

The Festival of Lights: Hanukkah

Learning objective: To understand the origins, traditions, and significance of Hanukkah for Jewish people.

Read the text carefully and answer the questions below. Use full sentences where appropriate.

Hanukkah, often called the Festival of Lights, is a special eight-day Jewish celebration. It commemorates a historical event from over two thousand years ago. When the Jewish people reclaimed their sacred Temple in Jerusalem, they found only enough pure olive oil to light the holy lamp for one day. Miraculously, the oil lasted for eight full days, providing enough time to prepare a fresh supply. Today, families celebrate this event by lighting a special nine-branched candelabra called a Hanukkiah. Each night, one additional candle is lit until all are glowing brightly. Children often play with a four-sided spinning top known as a dreidel and enjoy delicious foods fried in oil, such as latkes (potato pancakes) and sufganiyot (jam-filled doughnuts). As Ellie the elephant explains, history is not just about dates; it is about remembering stories of hope and resilience. During Hanukkah, families gather to share these stories, exchange gifts, and appreciate the warmth of the lights during the darkest time of the year. It is a time for joy, reflection, and gratitude.

Word bank: Menorah · Hanukkiah · Maccabees · miracle · dedication · tradition · dreidel

1. How many days did the small jar of olive oil last, and what is the name of the nine-branched candelabra used today? (2 marks)

2. List two traditional foods mentioned in the text that are prepared using oil. (2 marks)

3. Why do you think families light one extra candle each night instead of lighting all of them on the first night? (2 marks)

4. Based on the text, why is Hanukkah considered a 'festival of hope'? (2 marks)

5. Ellie says that history is about 'resilience'. Do you agree that the story of Hanukkah shows resilience? Justify your answer using evidence from the text. (3 marks)

Draw: Draw a scene of a family gathered around a lit Hanukkah, including a plate of latkes and a wooden dreidel on the table.



Extension challenge: Compare and contrast Hanukkah with another celebration of light you know. Explain why light is such an important symbol in many cultures. What might happen if the oil had run out after only one day—would the celebration be the same? Justify your thoughts.