

Diwali: The Festival of Lights with Max and Ellie

Learning objective: To understand the significance, traditions, and symbolic meaning of Diwali, the Hindu festival of lights.

Review these flashcards to test your knowledge of Diwali. Think about how the themes of light and goodness are represented in the traditions.

What is the primary meaning of the word 'Diwali' and what does the festival symbolise?

Diwali comes from the word 'Deepavali', meaning 'row of lights'. It symbolises the spiritual victory of light over darkness, goodness over evil, and knowledge over ignorance.

Who are the key figures often associated with the story of Diwali in North India?

The story involves Prince Rama and his wife Sita, who returned home to Ayodhya after fourteen years of exile, with the people lighting lamps to guide their path.

What are 'diyas' and why are they important during the festival?

Diyas are small clay lamps filled with oil or ghee. They are lit to represent the inner light that protects from spiritual darkness and to welcome positive energy.

How do families use 'rangoli' to celebrate?

Rangoli are intricate, colourful patterns created on the floor near the entrance of a home using coloured sand, rice, or flower petals to welcome guests and the goddess Lakshmi.

Which deity is traditionally worshipped on the main night of Diwali for prosperity?

The goddess Lakshmi, who is the Hindu goddess of wealth, fortune, and prosperity, is worshipped to seek blessings for the coming year.

Why do many people perform a 'puja' during Diwali?

A puja is a prayer ritual performed to show devotion, offer thanks, and seek spiritual guidance or blessings from deities within the home or a mandir.

Compare and contrast: Why is Diwali often compared to a 'New Year' celebration?

For many Hindu communities, Diwali marks the start of the new financial or calendar year, a time for cleaning homes, wearing new clothes, and settling debts, much like New Year traditions.

Explain why light is such a central theme throughout the five days of Diwali.

Light represents hope and truth. In the darkness of the new moon, the glow of the lamps serves as a beacon of positivity and a reminder to cultivate goodness in one's own life.

Justify your answer: Why might a family choose to share gifts and sweets (mithai) with neighbours during this time?

Sharing sweets is a way to build community, express kindness, and distribute prosperity, reinforcing the values of generosity and unity during the festival.

What might happen if the tradition of lighting lamps was removed from the festival?

The festival would lose its primary symbolic link to the story of guiding Rama home and the metaphor of 'light over darkness', potentially changing the focus from spiritual renewal to purely social gathering.

Critically analyse: How does the preparation of a home for Diwali reflect the festival's focus on 'purity'?

Families deep-clean their houses to prepare for the arrival of Lakshmi, suggesting that a pure, orderly physical environment encourages a pure and focused mind for the year ahead.