

The Festival of Lights: Understanding Hanukkah

Learning objective: To understand the significance, traditions, and historical context of the Jewish festival of Hanukkah.

Read each question carefully and provide detailed, thoughtful responses. Use the vocabulary provided to help structure your answers.

Hanukkah, the Jewish Festival of Lights, is an eight-day celebration commemorating the rededication of the Second Temple in Jerusalem. According to historical tradition, when the Maccabees reclaimed the Temple, they found only enough consecrated oil to light the ritual lamp for one day. Miraculously, the flame burned for eight full days. Today, families celebrate by lighting the Hanukkah, playing games with a four-sided spinning top, and enjoying foods fried in oil to symbolise the miracle.

Word bank: Menorah · Hanukkah · Maccabees · Dedication · Miracle · Dreidel · Gelt · Oil · Tradition

1. Explain why the Hanukkah has nine branches, even though Hanukkah is celebrated for eight days. What is the role of the ninth candle? (2 marks)

2. The Maccabees are central to the story of Hanukkah. Justify why the 'rededication' of the Temple was such a significant event for the Jewish people at that time. (2 marks)

3. Compare and contrast the symbolism of eating foods fried in oil during Hanukkah with the lighting of the Hanukkah. What shared theme do they both represent? (3 marks)

4. If you were explaining the concept of a 'miracle' to someone who had never heard the word, how would you describe the events in the Temple using your own words? (2 marks)

5. What might happen if a family celebrating Hanukkah only had enough oil for one day and it did not burn for the full eight days? How would this change the meaning of the festival? (3 marks)

Draw: Draw a traditional Hanukkah with all eight candles lit, plus the shamash (helper) candle. Surround your drawing with patterns inspired by traditional Jewish art or the four Hebrew letters found on a dreidel.



Extension challenge: Max the monkey is trying to work out the cost of a Hanukkah celebration. If a box of chocolate 'Gelt' coins costs £2.50 and a family buys 6 boxes for their celebration, how much do they spend in total? Furthermore, write a short poem from the perspective of a child watching the candles flicker, reflecting on the themes of hope and perseverance.