Diwali: The Festival of Lights

Learning objective: To understand the significance, symbolism, and cultural practices of Diwali, and to critically evaluate how different traditions share a common theme of light triumphing over darkness.

Below is a list of symbolic elements and concepts associated with Diwali. Your task is to act as a cultural historian. Categorise each item under the correct heading: 'Symbolism', 'Tradition', or 'Significance'. Once categorised, use your knowledge to justify why these elements are central to the celebration.

Word bank: Diya lamps · Victory of good over evil · Rangoli patterns · New beginnings · Family reunions · Light vs Darkness · Cleaning the home · Goddess Lakshmi

1. Choose three items from the word bank and explain why they are categorised as 'Symbolism' rather than 'Tradition'. (3 marks)

2. Compare and contrast the practice of lighting Diya lamps with the practice of creating Rangoli patterns. How do both contribute to the atmosphere of the festival? (4 marks)

3. Justify why Diwali is often described as a 'new beginning' for many families. Refer to the tradition of cleaning the home in your answer. (3 marks)

4. What might happen to the cultural significance of Diwali if the 'light vs darkness' theme were removed? Explain your reasoning. (3 marks)

5. Max the monkey is trying to calculate the cost of a display. If one decorative clay Diya costs £1.25 and he needs 12 for his family gathering, what is the total cost in Australian dollars and cents? (2 marks)

6. Nova the owl is curious about the science of light. Explain why the flickering flame of a Diya might have been considered a powerful metaphor for human consciousness in ancient times. (3 marks)

Draw: Design an intricate Rangoli pattern for the entrance of a house. Use geometric shapes and symmetry to represent the balance of nature and the warmth of the festival.

Extension challenge: Research a different cultural festival that also celebrates light. Write a short comparative essay (200 words) discussing how both festivals use light to convey a message of hope or renewal, and evaluate which common values they share.