The Festival of Lights: Writing About Hanukkah

Success criteria (tick when done)

[ ] I have used capital letters and full stops correctly.
[ ] I have included at least two relative clauses (using 'which', 'who', or 'that').
[ ] I have used at least three words from the word bank.
[ ] My writing is organised into clear, logical paragraphs.
[ ] I have explained the historical significance of the festival.

What to expect at this age

Year 6 pupils should be able to link historical facts with modern customs using cohesive devices. They should demonstrate an ability to use complex sentences with relative clauses.

Good, better, best: model responses

Good: Hanukkah is a significant festival that lasts for eight days. The origins date back to the rededication of the Temple in Jerusalem. A central tradition involves the lighting of the menorah, which has nine branches. Families eat latkes, which are potato pancakes, during the celebration. In conclusion, Hanukkah is important because it remembers a miracle.

Uses simple sentences and one relative clause. It covers all the main points clearly.

Better: Hanukkah is a significant festival that celebrates the rededication of the Temple. The origins date back to ancient times when a small amount of oil lasted for eight days. A central tradition involves the lighting of the menorah, which holds nine candles. Furthermore, families eat latkes, which are fried in oil to symbolise the miracle. In conclusion, Hanukkah is important because it brings families together to remember their history.

Uses better vocabulary (e.g., 'ancient', 'symbolise') and includes a cohesive device ('Furthermore').

Best: Hanukkah is a significant festival that commemorates the rededication of the Second Temple in Jerusalem. The origins date back to the Maccabean Revolt, when the Jewish people reclaimed their sacred space. A central tradition involves the lighting of the menorah, which is a special candelabra that holds nine candles. Furthermore, families participate in festive meals, eating latkes that are fried in oil to represent the miracle of the light. In conclusion, Hanukkah is more than just a festival because it teaches the importance of hope and resilience in the face of darkness.

Uses sophisticated vocabulary, accurate historical context, and multiple relative clauses to add depth and flow.

What a secure answer looks like

Focus on the use of relative clauses to expand sentences. Ensure pupils understand that the 'miracle' is the core reason for the eight-day celebration.

If your child is stuck

Ask your child to imagine they are explaining the festival to a friend who has never heard of it. What is the most important thing they should know?

Common mistakes to watch for

Pupils often confuse the Menorah with the Hanukkiah; clarify that the Hanukkiah is the specific nine-branched lamp used for Hanukkah. Another issue is forgetting to link the food (latkes) to the 'oil' theme of the miracle.