

CHANUKAH



Festivals of Light



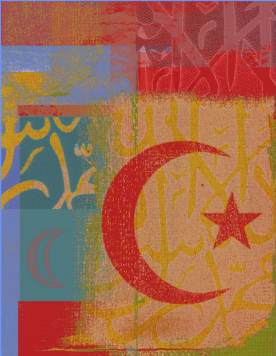
KWANZAA



DIWALI



RAMADAN

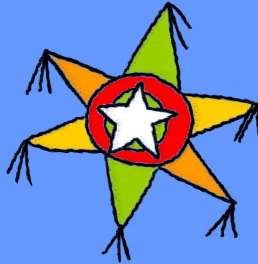


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ADVENT



LAS POSADAS



CHRISTMAS





RETHINKING HOLIDAYS

A publication of the GLOBAL EDUCATION CENTER
located at 4822 Charlotte Avenue, Nashville, TN 37209
615-292-3023; 615-292-4843 (fax)

Holidays are important events in the lives of our children. Whether a holiday is celebrated in a quiet, reverent, spiritual way or in a festive, colorful, gleeful way, such celebrations reflect cultural values, family traditions and, often, religious customs. To ignore holidays altogether is to negate an important part of a child's heritage. To celebrate one holiday to such an extreme that all others seem trite and abnormal is ignoring the global and religiously diverse population of our communities. Our goal then as educators and community leaders is to explore the cultural, religious and familial traditions of our children so that we can create an inclusive atmosphere in which no child feels either superior or left out -- an atmosphere in which the give and take of sharing personal information and traditions is natural and culturally sensitive.

Festivals of Light

by
Ellen S. Gilbert

Each winter as days shorten and the air chills, families across America share the traditions of their ancestors as they interpret and express their particular cultures' holiday celebrations. While Zuni children in New Mexico enjoy the reenactment of their people's history through the Shalako ceremony and Hindu children celebrate the return of light after darkness through the observance of Diwali, other children throughout America are excitedly preparing for their own families' winter holidays. Many of these celebrations are warmed by the glow of candles and colored lights, symbols representing new light and new life.

Many Christian families honor the birth of Christ, a child who brought wondrous miracles and new hopes to the people. Candles shine in windows and doorways to light the way for the Holy Child. Advent wreaths hold honored places in many homes, where a candle is lit on each of the four Sundays before Christmas, until all are lit, to honor the coming of Christ. Christmas candlelight services are held in homes and churches throughout our country, and lights decorate homes and trees to honor the child whose birth kindled this festival of lights.

Many Jewish families in America celebrate their religious freedom through the celebration of Chanukah. This glorious festival of lights, which often occurs in December, honors a miracle which occurred over 2000 years ago when the Jewish people were victorious over an invading monarch who tried to force them to give up their faith. The

eight nights of Chanukah represent the eight nights for which a few drops of oil miraculously burned in the Eternal Light. Candles are lit each night for eight nights in the family menorah to celebrate this miracle and to honor the rededication of the temple by the Jewish people.

In many African-American homes, regardless of religious faith, families celebrate the ties which bind their cultural and social history to the African harvest customs of their ancestors. Candles are lit each of the seven nights of Kwanzaa, beginning on December 26. Each night a candle is lit in the kinara to celebrate one of the seven principles of Kwanzaa: *umwa* - unity; *kujichagulia* - self determination; *ujima* - collective work and responsibility; *ujamaa* - cooperative economics; *nia* - purpose; *kuumba* - creativity; *imani* - faith. Each of the *Nguzo Saba*, or seven principles, is reinforced by the kindling of the Kwanzaa lights. The black, red and green candles glow with the warmth of families honoring their past by committing to a future filled with beauty, kinship and hope.

Christmas, Chanukah, Kwanzaa -- all are beautiful winter celebrations in which family and friends share special customs and ties which strengthen their unity. Regardless of the holiday being celebrated, the faces of children throughout our land flush with the excitement of anticipation, the joy of celebration and the warmth of giving. As we share the joy and light of our own celebrations and the celebrations of others, we are kindling a new spirit of peace and understanding. *Shalom*

FESTIVALS OF LIGHT

Festivals of Light is a program created in 1981 by anti-bias education specialist Ellen S. Gilbert, founding director of the Global Education Center, as a way to help teachers be inclusive to the diverse religious and cultural traditions of students in their classrooms. School cultural kits include a box for each of the following holidays, listed below in order of their ages.

Diwali (Divali) - a Hindu festival of lights, now celebrated throughout India and in Indian communities worldwide

Chanukah - a Jewish festival of lights that, while a minor holiday in most parts of the world, has evolved into an important cultural celebration for American Jew

Christmas, Advent, Las Posadas - a Christian festival of lights that is celebrated in many different ways around the world

Ramadan - an Islamic holy month, the end of which is often celebrated with lights, family and food

Kwanzaa - an African American cultural festival of lights designed in the mid-1960's as a way to celebrate the beauty of being of African descent

About Global Education Center

The Global Education Center is a nonprofit multicultural/anti-bias education center that uses the arts of diverse cultures as a pathway to understanding the various cultural, ethnic and religious groups residing in our community, partnering with artists from diverse cultures to promote cross-cultural understanding and respect through ongoing classes, workshops, teaching training, cultural presentations and performances. The year 2018 marks the 37th anniversary of the Center's popular Passport to Understanding school outreach program and the end of its 22nd year of its presence as an important and culturally unique nonprofit organization in Nashville's thriving art scene. Global Education Center is recognized as a national model for professional development of preK - 12 teachers in multicultural arts integration.

The overall goal of all Global Education Center programming is to highlight the commonalities of all people while creating experiences in the arts that aid in dispelling myths, dismantling stereotypes, unlearning biases and alleviating fears. All programming is designed to create an environment of inclusion and a climate promoting wellness and emotional well-being.

DIVALI



Diwali is a Hindu festival of lights, which usually falls in late autumn on the eve before a new moon. In India it is a national festival and holiday time, celebrated in slightly different ways throughout India. The word diwali comes from the Hindu word deepavali, which means "row of lights" or "clusters of lights."

Diwali is celebrated by Hindu families here in America as well, with preparations starting a few days before the actual holiday. Homes are scrubbed until sparkling clean, with doorsteps often decorated with welcoming Rangoli patterns. After the sun sets, the observance of Diwali begins with prayers to Lakshmi, the goddess of wealth and prosperity. Little clay lamps called diya are lit, lining windows, porches, gardens and walkways of Hindu homes to help guide the way for Lakshmi's visit. Original diya were small clay lamps filled with mustard oil in which floated small wicks; today many families use small candles instead. Each diya in the row of lights is lit from the first diya with different traditions requiring the lighting of at least 14 diya and as many as hundreds. On the night of the full moon, the lights of the diya are joined with the shooting of fireworks.

Another tradition of Diwali is to wear new and colorful clothing, with much festive shopping occurring in preparation of the festival.

Diwali calls for the preparation and sharing of festive foods, especially sweets such as burfi, a coconut candy; jalebis, a fried sweetmeat rolled in pistachio nuts; and patashe, little sugar disks, all of which are offered to the goddess Lakshmi and shared with all

participants in the household's festivities.

The painting of colorful Rangoli patterns on the doorstep in front of the home welcomes visitors, including Lakshmi, the goddess of good fortune and prosperity, who is said to visit every Hindu home once a year. These patterns, usually based on flower and leaf shapes, are painted with natural products and dyes, such as rice, flour and water or spices and flower petals.



By the time of Lakshmi's visit, all old account books must be closed, all debts must be paid, and all quarrels must be settled, with Diwali signifying the beginning of a new and prosperous year for both business and family. Often a picture of Lakshmi is included in new account books as a symbol of good luck for a prosperous New Year.

While most people recognize the importance of honoring Lakshmi, goddess of wealth and prosperity and the wife of Vishnu, through their observance of Diwali, many people view the festival as a celebration of the homecoming of Prince Rama and Sita from their fourteen year exile in the jungle and his victory over the evil king, Ravana. Regardless of how it is celebrated and what story is shared about its creation, Diwali remains an important and festive holiday celebrating the return of light after darkness and the victory of good over evil.





Chanukah -- The Traditional Story



Chanukah, which means *dedication*, is a celebration of religious freedom for the Jewish people. More than 2000 years ago, the Jewish people living in Palestine were robbed of their freedom by King Antiochus of Syria. He and his army took over the Temple in the city of Jerusalem and tried to force the Jewish people to do many things which were against their religion.

Several brave men came forth to lead the Jewish people in a fight to regain their religious freedom and their Temple. The most famous of these men, Judah the Maccabee, led the people to victory over the Syrians. When the people cleaned the Temple and prepared for its rededication, only a

small amount of oil was found to light the Temple menorah in which the everlasting flame glowed, an important flame which serves as a constant reminder to the Jewish people of their covenant with God. Miraculously, the oil lasted for eight days until new oil could be prepared.

In honor of this miracle of long ago and of the freedom to worship as they please, Jews throughout the world celebrate the holiday of Chanukah. This magnificent festival of lights displays the great sense of unity and beauty present when celebrating the wonders of the past and the great strength and faith of our ancestors.



Symbols of Chanukah



A menorah is a candelabrum with eight branches on the same level. The *shamash*, or helper candle, is on a different level and is used to light all other candles. Candles are placed in the menorah from right to left each night, but are lit from left to right. Blessings are said each night as the candles are lit.

Baruch atah adonai eloheinu melech ha'olam she'er kid'shamu b'nitzivotav v'tzivonei l'hadlik ner shel Chanukah.

We praise You, Adonai our God, Ruler of the Universe, who follows us with Your mitzvot and commands us to kindle the Chanukah light.

Baruch atah adonai eloheinu melech ha'olam she'asah aldim la'avoteinu bayamin habem baz'man hazeh.

We praise You, Adonai our God, Ruler of the Universe, who performed wondrous deeds for our ancestors in days of old at this season.

Latkes are pancakes made from shredded potatoes or other vegetables and fried in oil to symbolize the oil which burned in the Temple menorah for eight days. Potato latkes are traditional at Chanukah feasts and are often accompanied with sour cream and applesauce.



Chanukah gelt refers to the chocolate candy money traditionally given to children at Chanukah time. *Gelt* is the Yiddish word for money.

Draydel (dreidel) is the Yiddish word for a top. It comes from the German word *drehen*, meaning "to turn." The letters on the sides of the draydel say "A great miracle happened here." Legend says the draydel was first used by Jews during the time of the Maccabees when they were forbidden to worship in their own way. When they were discovered congregating for prayer, they would whip out a draydel and pretend to be playing a game.

The Draydel Game is played as follows: Each player places Chanukah gelt or some other small trinkets into a "kitty." The draydel is then spun by each of the players and the instructions listed below for each letter are followed according to the draydel's fall.



Nun means nothing. You win/lose nothing.



Gimel means you take all.



Hay means you win half of everything in the kitty.



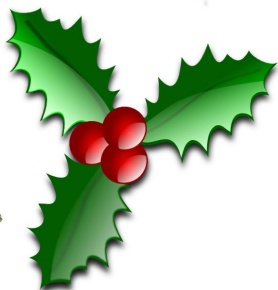
Shin means you put one in the kitty.

Christmas festivities occur on many different timetables throughout the world

- December 6 St. Nicholas Day
- December 13 St. Lucia Day
- December 16 Las Posadas begins
- December 24 Christmas Eve
- December 25 Christmas Day
- January 6 Three Kings Day/Epiphany/Twelfth Night

Symbols

- **Candles** – Jesus is the light of the world; light the way for Jesus
- **Advent** – Means arrival; celebrated for four weeks before Christmas Day (one candle has been lit so far)
- **Greens** – Everlasting life/new life/continued life
- **Gifts** – Connected to gifts brought to Jesus in the manger, such as gold, frankincense and myrrh
- **Gift Givers** – St. Nicholas (1700 years ago near Greece); Father Christmas; Pere Noel; Kris Kringle; Santa Claus; Christkind; Jultomten; The Three Kings; Baboushka; La Befana





Christmas - A Story of Traditions

Christmas is a religious holiday celebrating the birth of Christ. Some Christians prefer to honor only the spiritual aspects of Christmas and reject the more materialistic representations of the holiday. Other Christians choose to celebrate Christmas in a more festive and visible fashion, incorporating the sights, sounds, symbols and traditions associated with Christmas. Christmas festivities occur on many different timetables throughout the world, from December 5, known as St. Nicholas Eve, to December 13, which is St. Lucia Day, to December 24 and 25, known as Christmas Eve and Christmas Day, to January 6, known as both the Epiphany and as Twelfth Night.

Many of the symbols associated with Christmas were part of winter solstice festivities long before the birth of Christ. With the spread of Christianity, new believers took age-old customs and redefined them by connecting them to the birth of Jesus.

Symbols of Christmas

Candles have been a part of Christmas celebrations for many generations and are associated with the words of Jesus to the people, "I am the light of the world." Candles burn in windows at Christmas as a welcome sign to baby Jesus, the little wanderer, and his family and to greet visitors during the holiday season. In many homes, a yule log is still lit in the fireplace.

Advent, meaning arrival, is celebrated for four weeks before Christmas Day. Candles are placed among a wreath of greenery, with one candle lit each Sunday before Christmas. On Christmas Eve many families light all four candles plus one in the center.

Stars decorate homes and trees at Christmas time as symbols of the high ideals and hopes expressed by Jesus for the people. While scientists have ruled out many astronomical phenomena to explain the brilliant Star of Bethlehem, they tend to agree that at about the time of Christ's birth, planets Jupiter and Saturn were closely aligned between Pisces and Aquarius. Many Christians prefer to believe that there was a miraculous appearance of a bright new star. In many communities today, Christmas celebrations begin with the appearance of the first star on Christmas Eve.

Christmas trees have become an important symbol for many Christians around the world. While the decorating of trees was an important part of midwinter festivals long before the birth of Christ, warm, green firs and pines have taken on the meaning of new and continued life. The first documented tree decorating inside a house on Christmas Eve seems to be traced to German preacher Martin Luther, who decorated a small fir tree with candles to represent the stars shining above Bethlehem when Jesus was born. Immigrants to America from various parts of the world brought with them different customs for ornamentation; i.e., cookies, delicate braided and woven ornaments out of straw or corn husks; popcorn and cranberry garlands, etc.

Poinsettias, red and green flowers traditionally associated with Christmas, were brought to the U. S. in 1828 by Dr. Joel Poinsett, U. S. minister to Mexico. Known as the "Flower of the Holy Night," it became synonymous with Christmas when a poor young girl in Mexico, having no gift for the Christ child, gathered simple weeds from the side of the road to present to the newborn. The sincerity and joy in her heart evoked a miracle which created the beautiful poinsettia out of the weeds.

Gift giving at Christmas time is connected to the gifts brought to Jesus in the manger, such as gold, frankincense and myrrh. While gift giving has taken high priority among many American families, many people reflect the true beauty and meaning of the holiday by giving to those people who are less fortunate than they.

Santa Claus is just one of many gift givers associated with Christmas. St. Nicholas is believed to be the origin of many of the legends of various gift givers. He lived over 1700 years ago near Greece, traveling the countryside generously helping the poor, the sick and the weak. Children in various parts of the world celebrate Santa Claus, St. Nicholas, Father Christmas, Kris Kringle, Christkind, Jultomten, Pere Noel, The Three Kings, Baboushka, and La Befana, as special bearers of gifts to children.

Special foods at Christmas can be traced to ancient wintertime festivals before the birth of Christ. While many Christmas foods have their origins in Europe, some, such as the cranberry and the pumpkin, were introduced to the immigrants by America's indigenous peoples.



LAS POSADAS

In Mexico and in Mexican-American communities across America, the celebration of the Posadas begins on December 16. It typically lasts for nine nights, with a special evening of celebration on December 24, called Noche Buena.

Las Posadas means "the inns" and recreates the search for lodging which was the plight of Mary and Joseph before the birth of Jesus. Children dress up as Mary and Joseph and the shepherds or carry small figures of Mary, Joseph and the shepherds, and go from house to house seeking lodging. Some communities celebrate for the entire nine days; others celebrate just on Christmas Eve.

Candles are lit in brown paper bags called farolitos or luminaries to help light the way for Mary and Joseph. Neighbors follow the procession as they go from house to house singing the following song:*

Who will give lodging to these pilgrims,
who arrive exhausted from traveling the roads?

*Quien les da posada a estos peregrinos,
que vienen cansados de andar los caminos?*

People in the house respond:

Who is it that asks? I shall not give it
should you be robbers who wish to steal.

*Quien es quien la pide? Yo no le he de
dar si setan ladrones que quieren robar.*

*from *Fiestas, U.S.A.* by George Ancona

They sing a different request and denial at each house, singing the following at the last house on the ninth night:

Do not belittle this charity: Benevolent
Heaven, the Queen of Heaven.

*No tengáis en poco esta caridad: El Cielo
benigno, la Reina del Cielo.*

People in the house respond:

Open the doors, tear off the veils; who
comes to lodge is the Queen of Heaven.

*Abrañse las puertas, rompanse los velos;
que viene a posar la Reina del Cielo.*

On the last night, December 24, the hosts sing, *Entren, santos peregrinos*, Enter, holy pilgrims, at which time the procession is invited in and a baby doll is added to the crèche or nativity scene that has been prepared for the sojourners. A potluck dinner and the tradition of consuming *biscochitos*, *bunelos* and hot chocolate is shared with the participants. The festivities of this night often include the breaking of a piñata.

In many communities, the celebration continues through New Year's Day and Three Kings Day, *La Fiesta de Los Reyes Magos*, on January 6. On the eve of Three Kings Day, children put out grass and water in a shoe box for the camels or horses of the three kings in hopes that they will be rewarded with gifts from the kings. The 6th of January is often celebrated with a lively parade involving participants portraying the three wise men. After much song and celebration, the story of the three kings is told.



Holy Month of Ramadan

Ramadan is a special month of fasting and personal introspection for our neighbors who follow the path of Islam. Ramadan is the ninth month of the Islamic lunar calendar, beginning on the last full moon of the month and lasting 29 or 30 days, depending on the year. Ramadan celebrates the date 610 A.D. when tradition says the Qur'an was first revealed to the Prophet Mohammed.

The holy month of Ramadan changes dates each year, beginning with the physical sighting of the new moon. During this holy period of fasting and nightly exploration of the Qur'an, able Muslims refrain from food, liquids and spousal relations from sunrise until sunset. This time of personal sacrifice is designed to heighten self-discipline, self-restraint, a spirit of generosity and charity, and a love of Allah (God). During the holy month, all thirty sections of the Qur'an are recited by a spiritual leader who has absorbed the entire holy text by heart in the original Arabic. The close of Ramadan is marked by a festive day of celebration known as the Eid al Fitr. Eid begins on the first day of the Islamic lunar month of Shawwal and the celebration may last as long as three days. It is traditional to greet people by saying *Eid Mubarak* (Blessed Eid).



Info from brochures from Islamic Center of Tennessee as well as www.thoughtco.com/what-is-ramadan

Kwanzaa is an African-American holiday, begun in 1966 by Dr. Maulana Karenga, celebrating the ties that bind African ancestors and their harvest customs to the cultural and social history of people of African descent. It is a time for learning and practicing the important principles of values that are important to Africa's past and present as well as to African-American people. It is a celebration of kinship and gathering, remembrance and commitment.

The word **Kwanzaa** and the names for many of the symbols as well as the seven principles come from *Kiswahili*, a language spoken by many of Africa's people, especially in eastern Africa. **Kwanzaa** means "the first." **Matunde ya kwanza** means "the first fruits." An extra 'a' has been added to kwanza to give it seven letters, each one representing one of the seven principles of the **Nguzo Saba**.

Kwanzaa begins on December 26 and lasts through New Year's Day, January 1. However, the seven principles in the **Kwanzaa** value system are relevant to every day throughout the year. In keeping with the spirit of the holiday and the celebration of ties to African ancestors, many people decorate their homes with the colors and patterns of Africa, wear African clothing and enjoy musical rhythms of Africa in celebrating **Kwanzaa**.

The seven principles of **Nguzo Saba** are

umoja	unity
kujichagulia	self determination
ujima	collective work and responsibility
ujamaa	cooperative economics
nia	purpose
kuumba	creativity
imani	faith

Kwanzaa is an important celebration of the unity of all people of African descent. It is not a religious holiday; rather, it is a celebration of the beauty of our African roots.



Nguzo Saba are the seven principles, reflecting values which are important to Africa's past and present as well as to the cultural and social history of African-Americans.

Kinara holds candles for each of the seven nights of Kwanzaa and represents all black people, past and present, throughout the world. Each night a new candle is lit in the kinara and one of the seven principles is recited. The black candle in the middle is lit first. The next night a red candle is lit, followed by a green one on the third night, a red one on the fourth night, a green one on the fifth night, etc. The kinara is set with the three red candles to the left of the black one and the three green candles to the right of the black one.

Mkeke is the straw mat on which the kinara is placed; it represents connection to the past.

Kekombe cha umoja is a unity cup placed on the table to be passed among the people in memory of their ancestors and in the spirit of unity.

Vibunzi is corn which is placed on the table, one ear for each child present at the Kwanzaa celebration. This corn, along with a basket filled with other fruits and vegetables, represents the African harvest and thanks for its bounty.

Zawadi are gifts which are exchanged with loved ones, usually gifts that remind family members of their ties to Africa and their ancestors.

Karamu is the name of the Kwanzaa feast, at which the table is set in beauty with the symbols described above.

Colors of Kwanzaa

Black for the beauty and unity of people of African descent throughout the world

Red for the continuing struggle for freedom and equality

Green for the beauty of Africa and the hope of the children for a brighter future

Gift Givers Around the World for Christmas Season

December 6 - St. Nicholas Day

December 5 in The Netherlands; December 16 in Eastern European countries

St. Nicolas was a bishop of the church in what is now modern day Turkey, formerly part of Greece, who, around 1400 years ago, traveled the country-side secretly giving food and gifts to those who were in need. Through his many generous gifts and the miracles attributed to him, he became a saint after his death and is said to be the foundation for the creation of Santa Claus.

In many countries, St. Nicholas is the main gift giver during the holiday season. St. Nicholas Day is on December 6, which falls early in the Advent season.

Where St. Nicholas is prominent, his day, not Christmas, is the primary gift-giving day. Parties are often held on the eve of December 5th, and shoes or stockings left for St. Nicholas to fill during the night. Children will find treats of small gifts, fruit or nuts, and special Nicholas candies and cookies. Gifts from St. Nicholas are meant to be shared with family, friends and others in the true spirit of giving.



Info from www.stnicolascenter.org
www.globaleducationcenter.org

December 13 - Santa Lucia Day

Santa Lucia Day, also called the Feast of Saint Lucy, is a Christian feast day celebrated on the 13th of December, commemorating Saint Lucy, a Third-Century martyr during the time of persecution of Christians.

Legend states that Lucia brought food, blankets and other aid to Christians who were hiding in caves to escape persecution and that she wore a wreath of candles to light her way, leaving her hands free to carry as much food and blankets as possible.

While Lucia actually lived in an area where most people would have had brown skin, dark hair and eyes, she is often depicted with blonde hair, blue eyes and fair skin. This is because the Feast of Saint Lucy is widely celebrated in the Scandinavian countries, and people often re-image their heroes to look more like themselves.

The feast commemorating Santa Lucia was once tied to the Winter Solstice, the shortest day of the year; but with the birth of Christianity, her feast day became associated with the Christmas holiday, falling within the Advent season and signaling the arrival of the light of Christ.



Info from **Globalchild** by Maureen Cech, Addison-Wesley, 1991.

www.globaleducationcenter.org

December 16 - Las Posadas begins and runs through Christmas Eve, and in some places, through January 6

Las Posadas means The Inns and represents the search for lodging by Mary and Joseph before the birth of Jesus. In many communities, children dress up as Mary and Joseph and Shepherds and go from house to house seeking lodging, singing a song asking for a place to rest and give birth to baby Jesus. Luminaries or farolitos help light the way for Mary and Joseph.

An important symbol of Las Posadas is The Creche or Manger Scene. The first manger scene was acted out with real animals and people by St. Francis of Assisi to share the story of the birth of Jesus for people who could not read.



Info from Globalchild by Maureen Cech, Addison-Wesley, 1991.

December 24-25 - Christmas

Father Christmas, Sinter Klaas, La Pere Noel, Santa Claus

Below are different images of Father Christmas or Santa Claus, all of whom deliver gifts to children during the night of December 24, Christmas Eve.



December 24 - Jultomten in a Scandinavian/Norse Christmas

Christmas Eve is a big day in households in Sweden, Finland and Norway, where large feasts are thrown and a special bowl of soup is put out for Jultomten, a gnome or elf, also called Nissar or Tomte, who acts as Santa Claus and brings gifts to children. Jultomten travels around in a sled pulled by a Julbok, a special goat that is represented by straw goats throughout the Christmas season. Christmas in Sweden lasts until January 13, which is twenty days after Christmas.



Info from **Holly, Reindeer and Colored Lights** by Edna Barth, Houghton-Mifflin, 1971.

December 25 - Christkind

Christkind is believed to be the Christmas gift-giver in several countries around the world, including Germany, Croatia, the Czech Republic and parts of Switzerland. Also often called Christ Child, Christkind represents the incarnation of Jesus Christ, the infant, and was created by Martin Luther in the 16th Century to represent a more religious tone to the Christmas celebration than what he felt was represented by Santa Claus.

Unlike many other Christmas gift-givers, Christkind has never been seen in person because he always brings gifts for children inconspicuously. According to tradition, Christkind leaves presents for children that they find under the Christmas tree on Christmas morning. In some parts of the world, it is believed that Christkind rings a small bell after leaving gifts at a home, letting children know that he has blessed them at Christmas.



Info from **Holly, Reindeer and Colored Lights** by Edna Barth, Houghton Mifflin, 1971.

January 6 - Three Kings Day, Epiphany, 12th Night

Epiphany or Three Kings' Day is a Christian feast day that, in Western Christianity, commemorates the visit of the Magi to the Christ Child, and thus Jesus' physical manifestation to the people. According to legend, the three wisemen or Magi saw a bright star in the sky and followed it to Bethlehem where they saw the baby Jesus and presented him with gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh.

Many families throughout Mexico, Spain and Latin America celebrate La Fiesta de Los Reyes Magos. Traditionally, children receive gifts on this day, brought by the three kings, Melchor, Gaspar and Baltazar. In some families, figures of the three kings are placed in the manger scene on January 5, and in some homes, children leave hay in shoes for the camels of the Magi. On the morning of January 6, they awaken to find presents from the Three Kings.

A traditional part of the celebration of La Fiesta de Los Reyes Magos is the sharing of Rosca de Reyes, a sweet bread shaped like a wreath, with candied fruit on top, and a figurine of a baby Jesus baked inside. The person who finds the figurine is expected to host a party on Día de la Candelaria or Candlemas, celebrated on February 2nd.



Info from <http://tudecidesmedia.com/traditions-the-tradition-of-three-kings-day-p3002-128.htm>

January 5-6 - Epiphany, Twelfth Night - La Befana in Italy

Although Italians celebrate Babbo Natale, their version of Santa Claus, as the primary gift-giver at Christmas time, they also celebrate an ancient and still popular tradition from the 13th Century. On Twelfth Night, January 5, they celebrate the arrival of La Befana, a grandmotherly type witch dressed in a colorful patchwork jacket who is often shown riding a broom. She is also often clad in blue. According to legend, the Three Wise Men asked La Befana to join them in their search for the baby Jesus, which she first declined then changed her mind. To this day, children believe that she travels the countryside on her magic broom in search of the baby Jesus, bringing candy, fruits and other gifts to children. Children hang stockings and leave out shoes in hopes of receiving candy from La Befana on Epiphany morning.



Info from <http://www.italian-link.com/pages/labefana.shtml>

January 6 - Epiphany, Twelfth Night - Babushka and Grandfather Frost (Dyed Moroz) in Russia

In Russia, there are two legends that represent gift giving during the holiday season. During the time of Communist rule when religion was outlawed, families moved their celebrations to New Years Eve to avoid conflict with the religious ban. Today, people celebrate Christmas on December 25 as well as January 6.

Grandfather Frost existed long before the Communists came to power. In those days, however, he brought his gifts on Christmas Eve rather than on New Year's Eve. Grandfather Frost (Dyed Moroz) traveled with his grand daughter, The Snow Maiden, bringing gifts to well-behaved children at Christmas time.

Another legend has children receiving their gifts from Baboushka on Epiphany Eve. According to legend, Baboushka declined to accompany the three Magi's on their journey to worship the newborn baby Jesus. She changed her mind and has wandered the world ever since, bringing gifts to children on Epiphany Eve. The religious content of Baboushka's story made Communist leaders uneasy, since they opposed religion and the celebration of religious holidays on principle, so they pushed the image of Grandfather Frost as the giver of gifts to children.



www.globaleducationcenter.org

Info from Globalchild by Maureen Cech, Addison Wesley, 1991, and from <http://encyclopedia2.thefreedictionary.com/Grandfather+Frost>.

Bibliography

A Christmas Celebration

Affirmations for a Year Round Kwanzaa by Gwynelle Dismukes

Celebrations: Festivals, Carnivals and Feast Days from Around the World by Barnabas and Anabel Kindersley

Celebrating Kwanzaa by Diane Hoyt-Goldsmith

Come to Christmas: The Customs of the Advent Season by Abingdon Press

Fiestas, U.S.A. by George Ancona

Festivals Together: A Guide to Multicultural Celebration by Sue Fitzjohn, et al.

Globalchild: Multicultural Resources for Young Children by Maureen Cech

Hanukkah by June Behrens

Hanukkah Songs and Games Activity Book by Don Cooper

Holiday Customs Around the World by Barbara Schubert and Marlene Bird

Holly, Reindeer, and Colored Lights: The Story of the Christmas Symbols by Edna Barth

Kwanzaa by Deborah M. Newton Chocolate

Kwanzaa: A Progressive and Uplifting African American Holiday by Haki R. Madhubuti

Kwanzaa: An African-American Celebration of Culture and Cooking by Eric V. Copage

Rethinking Columbus by Rethinking Schools of Milwaukee, Wisconsin

Rethinking Holidays, Tennessee's Children, November, 1995

St. Lucie: Child of Light

The Power of Light: Eight Stories for Hanukkah

The Seven Days of Kwanzaa by Angela Shelf Medearis

The Story of Kwanzaa by Donna L. Washington

On Pine Trees

Baseball Bats for Christmas by Michael Arvaariuk Kusugak

The Big Tree and the Little Tree as told by Mary Augusta Tappage

The Crying Christmas Tree by Allan Crow

The Night Tree by Eve Bunting

A Possible Tree by Josephine Haskell Aldridge

A Tale of Three Trees

Tree of Cranes by Allen Say

On Social Justice Around the Holidays

The Christmas Menorahs

Christmas in the Big House, Christmas in the Quarters

THE ARTS - A BRIDGE TO UNDERSTANDING

Over generations throughout the world's many cultures, the arts have endured as vital, vibrant and dynamic necessities in the human desire to express innate creativity and passion for Life and its many traditions and circumstances. The arts have proven themselves to be wonderful teaching tools in the education of our children, especially when introduced at the younger ages. The broad spectrum of the arts includes visual, tactile, auditory and kinetic modes of learning. The arts promote aesthetic awareness and emotional, intellectual and physical development. The participatory nature of using the arts in the classroom encourages interaction between children and the various mediums of diverse art forms as well as interaction with the various cultural and spiritual elements indigenous to artistic expression. As children are encouraged to express their innate passion and understanding for music, folktales, literature, poetry, visual art, creative drama and dance, they are also developing an awareness of and hopefully a respect for the similarities, the differences, and the personal preferences of cultural traditions throughout time. The arts stimulate children to appreciate the inherent beauty within themselves and within the world at large, promoting a global awareness and a respect for all of humanity. The arts have great unifying power as we explore the issues and emotions expressed throughout the ages by all cultures, including those which have no word for art - where art cannot be separated from daily life - where it is a constant expression of a culture's worldview - where it is a reflection of human necessity.

GLOBAL EDUCATION CENTER

4822 Charlotte Avenue
Nashville, TN 37209
and

GLOBAL EDUCATION CENTER

at Casa Azafran
2195 Nolensville Road
Nashville, TN 37211
615-292-3023
ellen@globaleducationcenter.org
www.globaleducationcenter.org



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