



Reading Activities for December

There are a number of special celebrations during December. These include Hanukkah, Boxing Day (Canada), Kwanzaa, and of course Christmas. Each of these special celebrations bring families together and remind us all of how important family is.

<p>December 5</p>	<p>Hanukkah, also known as the Festival of Lights, is a Jewish festival commemorating the recovery of Jerusalem and subsequent rededication of the Second Temple at the beginning of the Maccabean revolt against the Seleucid Empire in the 2nd century BC. Eight candles symbolize the number of days that the Temple lantern blazed; the ninth, the shamash, is a helper candle used to light the others. Families light one candle on the first day, two on the second (and so on) after sundown during the eight days of Hanukkah, while reciting prayers and singing songs. A menorah (this is what holds the candles) is lit each night of the holiday. The word 'Hanukkah' means 'dedication'. While blue and white decorations are largely an American phenomenon and not part of the holiday's celebration elsewhere, the most common reason cited for the color choice is an international one: blue and white are the colors of Israel's flag.</p>  <p>Today you will listen to two stories about Hanukkah: <i>Night Before Hanukkah</i> https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=llKrj1PXfEA and <i>Hanukkah Cookies</i> https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4M22iuANJgo</p> <p>Please listen to each book and discuss with the children. The project for today is to decorate Hanukkah cookies. You can purchase sugar cookies from the store that are not decorated and have the children frost, sprinkle, and enjoy.</p> <p>What you will need:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Way to show the videos of the read alouds of both books • Plain sugar cookies-consider getting these at WalMart • Plastic knives and spoons (1 for each child) • Vanilla frosting (leave part of it white and make the other ½ blue by adding food coloring) • Blue food coloring • Sprinkles • Paper towels <p>What you will do:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Listen to the stories during Story Time 2. Discuss each of the books after listening. <i>Night Before Hanukkah</i> 3. Possible questions:
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	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. What is the menorah? b. Why do you think they had a shamash candle c. What is a dreidel? d. What do you think a latke (potato pancake) might taste like? e. On each of the nights of Hanukkah, the celebration looks different. What celebration occurs on each of the nights? <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 4. Hanukkah Cookies possible questions: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Sara is concerned about the man she sees eating the apple. What does she do about it? b. Sara thinks she recognizes the man. Who do you think he might be? c. Why do you think Sara wants to share her menorah from last year? How does the man react? d. Why does Sara want to invite the man to her house for dinner? e. How does Mr. Berger figure out it has been Sara leaving him food? f. What is it that Sara “gives” to Mr. Berger? What is it that Mr. Berger can give to Sara? 5. Once you’ve listened to and discussed both stories, its time to frost and decorate the cookies. 6. Divide children into groups of four and distribute the supplies (cookies, paper towels, plastic ware, sprinkles, and white and blue frosting) 7. Share with the children they will be able to decorate two Hanukkah cookies, one for themselves and one to share. 8. Enjoy!
<p>December 6</p>	<p>Kwanzaa is an annual celebration of African-American culture from December 26 to January 1, culminating in a communal feast called Karamu, usually on the sixth day. It was created by activist Maulana Karenga, based on African harvest festival traditions from various parts of West and Southeast Africa. Kwanzaa was first celebrated in 1966. Although Kwanzaa is primarily an African American holiday, it has also come to be celebrated outside the United States, particularly in Caribbean and other countries where there are large numbers of descendants of Africans. It was conceived as a nonpolitical and nonreligious holiday, and it is not considered to be a substitute for Christmas.</p>  <p>Each of the days of the celebration is dedicated to one of the seven principles of Kwanzaa: unity (<i>umoya</i>), self-determination (<i>kujichagulia</i>), collective responsibility (<i>ujima</i>), cooperative economics (<i>ujamaa</i>), purpose (<i>nia</i>), creativity (<i>kuumba</i>), and faith (<i>imani</i>). There also are seven symbols of the holiday: fruits, vegetables, and nuts; a straw mat; a candleholder; ears of corn (maize); gifts; a communal cup signifying unity; and seven candles in the African colors of red, green, and black, symbolizing the seven principles. On each day the family comes together to light one of the candles in the <i>kinara</i>, or candleholder, and to discuss the principle for the day. On December 31, families join in a community feast called the <i>karamu</i>. Some participants wear traditional African clothing during the celebration.</p>

There are two books for Kwanzaa: 7 Candles for Kwanzaa <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FBxXzc70-nw> and Kevin's Kwanzaa <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=l3Lyii40-G4>

What you will need:


- Ways to share the stories (computer)
- Music or drum beats for dance. You can find some on this YouTube, but you will need to look for the beats without the conversation: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lQzJ5GKpn5I>
- Corn to honor children:
 - Green and yellow construction paper
 - Bags of 15 beans
 - Scissors
 - Glue
 - Pencils

What you will do:

1. Create a KWL Chart. K = Know, W = Want to Know, L = Learned

K-Know	W-Want to Know	L-Learned

2. Bring children together and ask them what they know about Kwanzaa. Add this to the K column of the chart. Then ask the children what they "Want to Know", and list in the middle column.
3. Begin by sharing the story 7 Candles for Kwanzaa
4. During the story, 7 Candles for Kwanzaa, pause and capture the facts this book shares on a separate piece of chart paper. You can add to the KWL chart when you are finished
5. Be sure to capture the 7 Kwanzaa principles. (These are also listed in the background information above.)
6. When you have finished 7 Candles for Kwanzaa, have children view Kevin's Kwanzaa. After listening to this book, ask them to add to the chart anything else they have learned.
7. Explain to the children there will be two activities for today. The first is to celebrate "creativity"-this is day 6.
8. Divide the children into teams of 2 or 3. Each team is to create a dance, song, or rhythm to share with and teach to the other groups.
9. When the children have created and shared the dance, song, or rhythm, the second activity is to celebrate children by creating an ear of corn which is shared for each child during Kwanzaa.
10. Distribute the supplies and materials,
11. Explain to children they will be cutting out the shape of both the corn leaves and the corn cob as well
12. To make the corn cob youth should create a football shape and then flatten one end by removing the tip

	<p>13. Next, they should place the corncob on the green paper and trace it, being sure that one end is flat</p> <p>14. Youth should then draw the leaves for the corn (let them look at the sample) making sure the leaves are wider than the corn cob</p> <p>15. Then youth should glue the corncob onto the leaves</p> <p>16. Finally, youth should cover the corncob with a light layer of Elmer's Glue and then cover the cob with an assortment of different beans.</p> <p>17. Have children determine what to write on the "L = Learned" part of the KWL chart.</p> 
<p>December 12</p>	<p>Las Posadas is Spanish which means "the Inns". It is a religious festival celebrated in Mexico and some parts of the United States between December 16 and 24. Las Posadas commemorates the journey that Joseph and Mary made from Nazareth to Bethlehem in search of a safe refuge where Mary could give birth to the baby Jesus. The practice of Las Posadas was begun by Augustinian friars near Mexico City around the year 1586. They used the celebration to teach the indigenous Aztec population about the birth of Jesus by having daily Christmas masses for nine days. This also coincided with the winter solstice ceremonies of the Aztecs. Among the people in the procession, you will see some dressed up as shepherds, others as angels, and a lucky two will get to be the stars of the show by donning costumes of Mary and Joseph. In some neighborhoods, the procession is led by children who dress up as angels and carry images of Mary and Joseph.</p> <p>Traditionally, the holiday begins on December 16 and lasts until December 24, for a total of nine days. Members of the procession are offered refreshments at each house while they sing traditional Christmas songs, but they aren't invited inside until they reach the last house of the night, where the party continues. The house that is the designated "posada" changes each night.</p> <p>Children enjoy breaking open a five-star piñata that's filled with candy and goodies once they reach their final destination. The piñata's shape represents the star of Bethlehem.</p> <p>In addition to Las Posadas, the legend of the poinsettia is also shared with you. The activity for today will be making a poinsettia out of paper. The directions for this activity is attached to this lesson plan with all the directions.</p> <p>What you will need:</p> <p>Supplies for the poinsettia</p> <p>Access to the stories following these links:</p> <p>The Night of Las Posadas https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=79ArfIFunZk</p>

Legend of the Poinsettia

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8CZVR6l3z3s>

What you will do:

Bring children and ask them what they know about Las Posadas.

Record the information on a K-W-L chart

K-Know	W-Want to Know	L-Learned

Ask children what they know about poinsettias. Add this information to the chart as well.

Ask children what they would like to learn about both Las Posadas and The Poinsettia. Write it on the chart.

Explain they will listen to two stories by Tomie Paola. Have the children watch and listen to Las Posadas first and add to the chart. Then listen to The Legend of the Poinsettia and add to the chart again.

Share they will be making a poinsettia.

Utilize the lesson plan for the paper poinsettias which are attached.

When finished, have children share with one another.