

Diwali – My favourite festival

Task 1

You are going to read a text about the festival of Diwali.
Read the text and match these headings to each paragraph:

- Celebrations in the temple
- Diwali and families
- Celebrations in Leicester
- The meaning of Diwali
- The legend associated with Diwali

My favourite festival – Erisha Singh

Every Autumn I go to stay with my cousins in Leicester so we can all celebrate Diwali together. My family are Hindus, our grandparents came to Britain from India. Diwali is the biggest Hindu festival and people celebrate it all over the world. We come to Leicester because it has the largest Hindu population in Britain and the celebrations are fantastic.

Diwali is a magical time for children because of the lights. We light candles and lamps called divas in our homes, especially in the windows. All the streets, houses and shops are decorated with light. Diwali comes from the Sanskrit word Deepavali which means 'rows of lights'. It is our festival of Light and starts the Hindu year. If we light our house well, we will have good fortune because the Goddess of wealth and prosperity, Lakshmi, will see our lights.

At Diwali we tell the legend of the Hindu god, Lord Rama. He had a beautiful wife called Sita and she was captured by the demon king Ravana. Lord Rama fought the demon king and rescued his wife. We celebrate Rama's return with his wife. It signifies that good triumphs over Evil. People light their lamps to celebrate the god Rama's victory.

On the first day of Diwali I walk to the temple in the next street with all my family. We always dress in our best clothes. My grandmother makes me a new Indian sari to wear for Diwali every year. We spend a long time getting ready, putting on bright clothes and jewellery. Lots of our friends come to the temple and we sing, dance and enjoy ourselves. My cousin plays an Indian instrument called a harmonium at the temple. There are always delicious sweet foods to eat. This starts five days of celebrations, my favourite five days of the year.

Back at my Uncle's house we exchange presents and eat lots of good Indian food. Many more relatives come over to celebrate with us and it is a very special time for families. If anyone has had an argument it is a good time to make friends and forget the past. Some people say that it is a sort of Christmas for Hindus.

In Leicester the Asian community is very proud of their celebrations. There are very big crowds with music, dancing and fireworks. 6,500 Diwali lights are switched on in the streets and we have a big party in the streets on Diwali day. This year Diwali is

celebrated in the UK on 25th October.

- Who celebrates Diwali?
- What does Diwali celebrate?
- When do people celebrate?

Task 2 – After reading

1. Describe a typical Diwali day for Erisha:

“She gets up in her cousin’s house and then she...

2. Describe three things people do to celebrate Diwali.

3. Tick the best answer in each case

Why are the celebrations in Leicester special?

- They are larger and more spectacular than other places
- They are special to Erisha because she shares them with family members
- Leicester has the UK’s largest Hindu population.

Why is Diwali important for families?

- It is a chance to all be together
- It is a time for making friends and forgiving other people
- it is a time to visit family members you may not usually see often.

Task 3

In pairs, discuss the questions:

- What will happen if you light your house well during the 5 days of Diwali?
- Are there any superstitions in your country or town?
- Are any superstitions associated with festivals?

Task 4

Work in pairs. Look at the words in the table and try to re-tell the legend of Diwali in your own words.

Lord	god	Sita
Rama	King	demon
Ravana	capture	fight
rescue	return	

Task 5

Think about your favourite festival or a special day that you celebrate and make notes about these things. Then talk to your partner and describe your festival.

- Food
- Clothes
- Music
- Customs
- Activities