

Knowledge organiser: Celebrations & Festivals

Books



Little Glow by Katie Sahota

The Quiet Little Firework by Nicola Coppack

Let's Celebrate! by Kate DePalma

Mog's Birthday by Judith Kerr

A Dinosaur came to my

Birthday Party by Frances Mackay

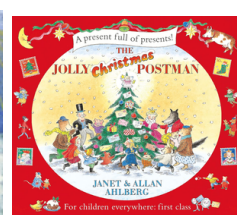
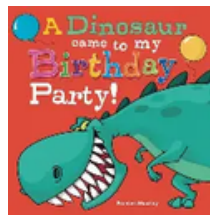
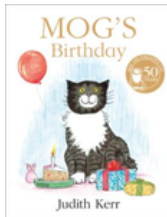
Winter Sleep by Sean Taylor & Alex Morss

The Snowflake by Benji Davies

Hanukkah Bear by Eric A. Kimmel

A Christmas Story by Brian Wildsmith

The Jolly Christmas Postman by Janet and Allan Ahlberg



Questions

- What is a celebration?
- Why do people celebrate special days?
- What makes a day feel different or exciting?
- Who do I like to celebrate with?
- What happens on my birthday?
- What festivals does my family celebrate?
- How do we get ready for a celebration?
- What do we wear or make for special days?
- What sounds, colours, and smells can we notice during celebrations?
- Why do people light candles and lamps?
- How do people show happiness, love, or thanks?
- What foods and songs are linked to celebrations?
- What festivals happen around the world?
- How do people celebrate light, new life, and new beginnings?
- What do all celebrations have in common?
- How can we make sure everyone feels included when we celebrate together?

celebrate

Activities we will enjoy...

Bonfire Night Creations – Creating colourful arts and crafts inspired by light, pattern, and joy. Talk about fire safety and the colours in the night sky.

Birthday Party Role Play – Set up a birthday corner with cards, presents, balloons, and a pretend cake; practise writing invitations and singing songs.

Card and Gift Workshop – Create handmade cards, wrapping paper, and simple gifts; practise writing names and kind messages.

Sharing Celebrations – Invite families to come in and show photos, artefacts, or foods from a festival they celebrate at home

Winter Lights Walk – Take a walk around the local area to spot lights, trees, or decorations in shop windows – noticing the sparkle and warmth that celebrations bring to our streets.

Music Morning – Explore songs and dances from different cultures; use scarves, ribbons, and instruments to celebrate joy.

Vocabulary

Global Celebrations – Diwali, Christmas, Hanukkah, Lunar New Year, Eid, Easter, Harvest, Bonfire Night, Holi, Passover, Ramadan, Birthday, Wedding, New Year, Christingle, Thanksgiving

Celebration & Joy – celebration, special, festival, tradition, family, community, belonging, invite, together, share, joy, happiness, memory, event, gather, honour, thankful, respect, welcome, kindness, pride

Objects & Symbols – candle, light, lamp, lantern, Diya, flame, sparkle, fireworks, star, menorah, moon, sun, tree, bell, card, gift, wrapping, ribbon, balloon, cake, decoration, confetti, banner, drum

Festive Actions – sing, dance, clap, march, parade, perform, cook, share, give, decorate, wrap, light, greet, celebrate, remember, invite, welcome, cheer, prepare, gather

Senses & Atmosphere – bright, colourful, shining, sparkling, glowing, sweet, spicy, loud, quiet, joyful, peaceful, warm, gentle, busy, exciting, quiet, calm, glowing, glittering



Communication & Language

Focus: Talking about celebrations, sharing personal experiences, and learning new vocabulary.

Engage in story times and recall key events.
Use new vocabulary in different contexts.
Ask and answer “why” and “how” questions.
Describe familiar events in detail using connectives.

Ask questions about different celebrations.

Activities:

- Talking about family celebrations and festivals.
- Listening to and retelling celebration stories.
- Circle-time “How do you celebrate?” discussions.
- Role play interviews (“Tell me about your party!”).
- Sequencing stories like Kipper’s Birthday.
- Exploring new celebration vocabulary through real artefacts and through play.

Literacy

Focus: Exploring celebration stories and using writing for purpose.

- Delight in stories, poems, and songs linked to celebrations; talk about favourite parts, characters, and ideas.
- Begin to see writing as a joyful way to share thoughts, messages, and memories - from cards and invitations to stories of their own.
- Blend and read short words.
- Write recognisable letters. Spell using known sounds.
- Compose short sentences for meaning.
- Write simple sentences that can be read by themselves and others.
- Enjoy and respond to a wide range of fiction and non-fiction about celebrations.

Personal & Social Development

Focus: Understanding belonging, respect, and joy in shared traditions.

See themselves as part of a family and community.

Build positive relationships with others.

Show sensitivity to others’ needs and feelings.

Express pride in their own heritage and respect for others’.

Activities:

- Class “Celebration Wall” of photos and drawings.
- Talking about how it feels to give and receive gifts / feeling grateful.
- Acting out birthdays in the home corner.
- Making “kindness stars” to share with friends.
- Creating cards for someone special.
- Learning simple greetings from other cultures.
- Show confidence in trying new activities and speaking in a group.

Physical Development

Focus: Expressing joy through dance, movement, and fine motor creativity.

Revise and refine movement skills through play and rhythm.

Use tools and materials safely.

Develop fine motor control to create, cut, and join. Discuss and practise healthy routines during festivals.

Activities:

- Dancing to festive music.
- Making paper lanterns and festival bunting.
- Using scissors, glue, and threading beads for decorations.
- Carrying out yoga-style “calm reflections” after excitement.
- Cooking simple festive foods like fruit kebabs or latkes.
- Building balance through parades, and performances.

Activities:

- Writing birthday cards and invitations.
- Making Diwali or Hanukkah information books.
- Labelling festival artefacts.
- Drawing and captioning favourite celebration moments.
- Making birthday cards and invitations, practising writing names, greetings, and short messages.
- Writing simple lists of party food, decorations, or gifts.
- Making speech bubbles for story characters — “Happy Diwali!” “It’s my birthday!” “Let’s celebrate!”
- Using story maps to plan and retell a favourite celebration tale.
- Role-play writing in the Celebration Post Office or Party Shop (labels, price tags, letters).

Maths

Focus: Counting, comparing, and exploring pattern through festivals.

Count objects, actions, & sounds reliably beyond 10.

Subitise up to 5 and begin to recognise patterns in numbers. / Compare quantities using language such as more than, fewer than, equal to.

Explore and talk about 2D and 3D shapes in the environment.

Begin to describe and measure length, height, and capacity.

Create and continue repeating patterns using natural and festive materials

Activities:

- Making Rangoli patterns.
- Counting candles, cards, or gifts.
- Comparing lengths of ribbons or wrapping paper.
- Birthday Balloons – number balloons 1–10; children place them in order or find the one that is one more or one less.
- Sorting decorations by colour and shape.
- Creating symmetrical stars and menorahs.
- Measuring ingredients for a baking celebration.
- Estimating how many lights decorate the class tree.
- Count out chocolate coins or counters for New Year envelopes and compare quantities.
- Match numbers to candles on cakes or menorahs and find one more or one less.
- Count plates, cups, and napkins for a class feast to make sure everyone has the same number.

Understanding the World

Focus: Discovering how people, places, and seasons shape the ways we celebrate. Children will explore traditions, observe change, and begin to see the beauty of difference and connection.

Talk about members of their family and community, and how they celebrate special times. Recognise that people have different beliefs, cultures, and traditions, and that these can be celebrated in many ways.

Explore the natural world around them and describe what they see, hear, and feel / seasonal changes.

Activities:

- Explore real artefacts from festivals around the world.
- Pin photos of global celebrations on a world map.
- Smell spices, fruit, and flowers linked to celebrations.
- Go on a seasonal walk to notice winter changes.
- Investigate ingredients used for festival foods.
- Share family celebration photos and stories.
- Compare old and modern birthday traditions.
- Listen to and move to celebration music from different cultures.
- Make lanterns and take a twilight walk.
- Learn how birthdays were celebrated long ago.
- Practise greetings from around the world.
- Deliver cards or decorations to a local care home.

Expressive Arts and Design

Focus: Expressing the joy of celebrations through art, music, dance, drama, and imaginative play. Explore and use a variety of materials, tools, and techniques.

Combine shapes, colours, textures, and materials for a purpose.

Create collaboratively, sharing ideas, resources, and skills.

Invent, adapt, and recount narratives through play and performance.

Sing a wide range of songs and experiment with rhythm, movement, and sound.

Activities:

- Paint bright firework pictures using flicks and splatters.
- Create clay or salt-dough candle holders and diya lamps.
- Design rangoli patterns with coloured rice or sand.
- Make paper lanterns, bunting, and hanging stars.
- Use foil, tissue, and sequins for celebration collages.
- Build a festival role play area with costumes and props.
- Create party hats and birthday crowns with jewels and ribbon.
- Sing songs and rhymes linked to celebrations around the world.
- Dance with scarves and ribbons in a “Festival Parade.”
- Design cards and wrapping paper with repeating prints.

PLAY

Play is at the heart of everything we do. It is through play that children make sense of the world, build friendships, solve problems, and begin their journey into reading, writing and maths.



LET'S CELEBRATE!

