FESTIVALS OF LIGHT LEARNING ACTIVITIES
CHRISTMAS AND DIWALI

- Teachers and leaders can adapt the following to suit their own needs.
- The methodology that worked best on the pilots was 'circle time'. For more information about methodologies that build a positive learning environment please see the chapter on group work and facilitation in Lynagh N and M Potter, *Joined Up* (Belfast: NICIE, Corrymeela) 2005, pp 43 - 86. There is a hyperlink to this resource in the 'Getting Started' page in the Introduction.
- Teachers/leaders need to explore and be comfortable with their own identity before discussing identity with the class/group. It is important for us to accept others both for the ways in which we are different and also for the ways in which we are similar and to express our identity in ways that do not harden boundaries with others. You can find out more about sectarianism and approaches to difference in the trunk and branches sections of the downloadable 'Moving Beyond Sectarianism'(young adults) at: [www.tcd.ie/ise/projects/seed.php#mbstocks](http://www.tcd.ie/ise/projects/seed.php#mbstocks)
- Why not think about becoming a Rights Respecting School? See [www.unicef.org.uk/tz/teacher_support/rrs_award.asp](http://www.unicef.org.uk/tz/teacher_support/rrs_award.asp) for more details
- It is important that parents are aware of the issues in this unit. Write a letter to let them know what you will be covering and why.
- There are three festivals of light in this section - Diwali; Christmas and Hanukkah. They can be studied separately or comparatively. During the pilots they were studied comparatively - Christmas and Diwali and Christmas and Hanukkah over 6 sessions. In what follows the learning activities have been reduced to 4 and 5 sessions but these can be extended and other materials used in between or following the sessions.
# CHRISTMAS AND DIWALI

## STEPPING OUT LEARNING ACTIVITY

**CHRISTMAS & DIWALI**

A programme for 4 sessions of 30 - 40 minutes

**LEARNING INTENTION:**

In sharing our stories of the celebrations of events throughout the year and focusing on Christmas and Diwali, we recognise the similarities and differences amongst us as citizens of different ethnic/cultural background in the local and wider community.

## SUGGESTED SUCCESS CRITERIA:

- We will learn more about the Indian community in Belfast; Hindus; and Diwali
- We will learn more about the celebrations and links between Christmas and Diwali and encourage comparison; similarity and difference
- We will share what we have learnt about Diwali and Christmas
- We will continue to build trust and learn more about one another
- We will encourage active listening, empathy and interactive storytelling
- We will share our knowledge and understanding of similarities and differences amongst people of different ethnic/cultural background in the wider community
- We will evaluate what we have learnt from a baseline

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## CHRISTMAS AND DIWALI

This column gives suggestions for a lesson outline

**SESSION 1**

**Opening activity**

**Events Calendar** - Invite members of the class/group to share information on events. Focus on Diwali and Christmas as 'Festivals of Light' and the ways they are celebrated throughout the world. It might be useful to have a map of the world or a religious calendar handy. Can any of the children say why they might be known as Festivals of Light? Talk about light in darkness as a symbol of hope. What do the children understand about light and hope?

**Diya and Advent Wreath** - Introduce and 'light' the Diya and a candle on the Advent wreath.

**Tara** - Both an Indian word for 'star' and an Irish place name. Talk about lights we know in darkness - stars; moon; electric light; torch; lighthouse; candles and about how light makes us feel when we are frightened in the dark - safe; secure; less afraid.

**Closure - All Change**

Try using specific statements about customs & traditions around celebration e.g. whether they ever-visited India; sent cards to people for celebrations other than their own; went to church on Christmas day; celebrated Diwali; have a name beginning with 'T'; are afraid of the dark; etc.

## DETAIL OF WHAT TO DO

This column lists resources needed and gives sources for background information for each lesson

**SESSION 1**

**Opening and Closing activities** - Choose appropriate activities for opening and closing each session from ‘Games’ in the Resources section

**Events Calendar** - Print out your own copy from the ‘Resources’ section. Use this group activity as an opportunity to construct a baseline.

**Religious Calendars** - see also www.shap.org

**Map of the world** - Invest in an inflatable globe to pass around the circle as an opening or closing activity, inviting people to find the country - where they live now; have lived before; have visited or know someone

**Flashcards** - These will be helpful for new words/names - Diwali; Tara; Diya etc.

**Diya and Advent Wreath** - Print copies of these from the 'Non-Flame Light Holders' file. The non-flame candles and flame to accompany them are easily made.

**Tara Puppet** - print out the 'Knitted Puppet' pattern in the 'Resources' section. As a whole school activity why not make a few of these (for a whole school resource) inviting staff, governors, parents and extended family members to participate? Make and give her a sari using the pictures in 'Tara gets ready for Diwali' in this section to help.

**All Change Game** - read the instructions for playing this game in ‘Games’ in the Resources section. Think about how you will use it.
SESSION 2
Opening activity - Gate game - Talk about the word ‘minority’ and what it means to be in the smaller ‘minority’ group re gender; eye colour; whether or not you wear glasses/a brace etc. Express preferences for a particular group over the other – e.g. boys are stronger than girls; people who wear glasses are more intelligent etc. Talk about’ discrimination’ against people according to gender; eye/hair colour; age; skin colour; or religion and introduce the terms racism; sectarianism if appropriate.

Christmas Story - Talk about the characters in the story. Think about where Jesus and his family were from and why they had to travel to Bethlehem – Roman census; taxes. Do we know anything about their social background from this or any of the other Christmas stories? Talk about where we come from and where the wise men came from in relation to Israel – East; West; North or South. Talk about the reasons people leave one place for another – introduce the term ‘refugee’ - Jesus’ family escaping to Egypt from Herod. Talk about the term ‘messiah’ and relate to the discussion last week about light/hope in darkness.

Advent Calendar and related activities – use whatever aspects of it would be appropriate for your class/group in connection with this section

SESSION 3
Opening Activity - Share what we have learnt so far.

Diwali story - Relate what we have learnt about refugees in the Christmas story to this one. Any comparisons? Talk about the characters in the story – Think about Rama and Sita’s family and why they had to go to Lanka – family jealousy/rivalry. What do we know about their social background? Where is India/Sri Lanka in relation to Israel – East; West; North or South. Talk about the reasons people leave one place for another – re-introduce the term ‘refugee’ – any comparisons with the Christmas story? Talk about Rama and Sita’s return; how the people lit Diyas; and light/hope in darkness.

Hindus and the Hindu Temple in Clifton Street – what it is like; how many statues there are; what are the names of the various gods and goddesses; how big is the Temple etc, perhaps in anticipation of a future visit; some information about Diwali – when and how it is celebrated; for how long etc

Talk about – India in general; Indian food – mostly vegetarian; Dress - the visitor may demonstrate putting on a sari or use the picture set provided. Share stories about how Christmas is celebrated - opening presents; getting dressed up; visiting family members; going to church; lighting candles; sharing a meal – any comparisons?

SESSION 2
Gate Game - read the instructions for playing this game in ‘Games’ in the Resources section. Think about how you will use it. This game, which sorts’ people into categories according to gender; appearance; clothes worn etc. helps us experience what it’s like to be ‘grouped’ together.

Save the Children have produced a booklet, ‘Think of me, Think of you’ and another with Barnardo’s entitled, ‘Fair Play’ either of which you will find very useful for this session.

Christmas Story - print out the story from Matthew 1 with the picture set from this section

SESSION 3
A visitor from the Indian Community Centre – This would be a good session to have a member of the Indian Community present so if there isn’t one in the class, invite someone through the Indian Community Centre. Alternatively, arrange a visit. Contact the Indian Community centre and see if you can arrange a visit for the class/group during one of the sessions - See ‘Contacts’ in the Resources section

Diwali Story - print out the Diwali story and accompanying picture set from this section

Hindu Temple in Clifton Street - Print out the picture set ‘Diwali in Belfast’ onto OHP slides or use a data projector to project pictures of a Diwali celebration at the Indian Community Centre in Belfast in 2004. Or get a copy of James Nelson and Norman Richardson’s, Local People, Global Faiths: Sikhs, Jews and Hindus in Northern Ireland, 2005 available from Colourpoint Educational, price £7.99 (028) 91820505 and project some of those pictures. These would probably mean more to them after a visit to the Temple.

Flashcards - for new terms - minority; majority; discrimination as well as census; refugee; Messiah; etc.

Advent Calendar - Print out and make an advent calendar using as many of the associated activities as appropriate.

Background information - about Hinduism. Try www.bbc.co.uk/northernireland/schools/11_16/citizenship

Hindu Temple in Clifton Street - Print out the picture set ‘Diwali in Belfast’ onto OHP slides or use a data projector to project pictures of a Diwali celebration at the Indian Community Centre in Belfast in 2004. Or get a copy of James Nelson and Norman Richardson’s, Local People, Global Faiths: Sikhs, Jews and Hindus in Northern Ireland, 2005 available from Colourpoint Educational, price £7.99 (028) 91820505 and project some of those pictures. These would probably mean more to them after a visit to the Temple.

Flashcards - for new names - Rama; Sita; Hanuman; etc
SESSION 4
Opening Activity
Discussion - Using the images of Christmas and cards if available, discuss the celebration of Christmas in parts of the world where it is hot - Australia, India; overspending on lights; food; presents etc; the importance of giving... How does what we do to celebrate Christmas relate to the Christmas story? Is it celebrated as a festival of light? How does it differ from the way Diwali is celebrated? Many of the activities accompanying the Advent calendar also raise these questions.
Spaghetti Quiz - Share and discuss what we have learnt so far. Use this as an opportunity to talk about what we have learnt, the importance of connections and interdependence.
Closure activity - Light the Diya and four candles on the Advent Wreath

SESSION 4
'Images of Christmas' - print out your own copy of the cartoons from this section. Collect some foreign Christmas and Diwali cards.
Spaghetti Quiz - You can use up to 5 quiz rounds using 2 general knowledge rounds; 1 picture; 1 drawing and 1 puzzle round in whatever combination most suitable for you. An evaluation can be made of the learning from this and the baseline after the first session.
DIWALI Leaders notes

Diwali means 'rows of lighted lamps.' The Hindu calendar is a lunar one, so the exact date of the festival varies but it occurs in October/November every year. It celebrates the triumph of good over evil, light over darkness and is often referred to as the Festival of Lights. It falls at New Year and every home, from the hut of the poor to the mansion of the rich is thoroughly cleaned and alight with the orange glow of twinkling diyas, small earthen lamps, to welcome Lakshmi, the celestial consort of Lord Vishnu, Goddess of wealth and prosperity. Multi-coloured Rangoli designs, floral decorations and fireworks lend grandeur to this festival which heralds hopes for joy, mirth and prosperity in the year ahead. As a festival of light and beauty it encourages artistic expressions through home-decorations stage-plays, elocution competitions, singing and dancing programmes, thereby discovering new talents of younger people. In most parts of India, at some time during the festival, the story of Rama and Sita will be told. Gift items and delectable sweets will be made. As a result innumerable communities with varying cultures and customs mingle together to make Diwali celebrations a very happy occasion for all. Its celebration is important in continuing to maintain personal, family and community relationships in the local and wider community.
THE STORY OF RAMA AND SITA

Retiring King Dasaratha of Ayodha chose his son Rama as his heir. His wife Kaikeyi wanted him to appoint another son Bharata, instead. Kaikeyi felt that misfortune would come upon her if he didn’t crown Bharata king and banish Rama to the forest for fourteen years. The king reluctantly agreed, so Rama went to the forest with his beautiful wife, Sita, and his brother Laksmana, leaving their riches to live a simple life.

After hearing reports of Sita’s beauty, Ravana, the demon king with ten heads, ruler of the island kingdom of Lanka, decided that he must have her for himself. He disguised himself as a wandering holy man and found her in the forest. After distracting Rama and Laksmana, Ravana carried Sita off to Lanka.

Sita mourned for Rama in Ravana’s garden in Lanka, while Rama and Laksmana enlisted the services of Hanuman, the monkey king, to help them find her. Hanuman started his search for Sita by taking a giant step to the Island of Lanka. He found Sita and identified himself as Rama’s messenger by showing her Rama’s ring. Sita was delighted; Hanuman escaped and told Rama where she was.

Rama, Laksmana, Hanuman, and his monkey army made a bridge to Lanka to rescue Sita. After a long battle with spears, bows and arrows, Rama killed the ten-headed demon king Ravana.

As the fourteen years had now passed, Rama and Sita returned to Ayodha where they were crowned King and Queen. All the people were so pleased to see them that they put little lights outside their houses so that Rama and Sita would find the way. The little lights were called divas and that is why the festival is called ‘Diwali’.
The Story of Diwali
Non-Flame Advent Wreath Diya

Make your own candles/flame
Tara Gets ready for Diwali
Diwali
Hindu Temple Belfast
Diwali Celebrations at the Indian Community Centre in Belfast in 2004
SPAGHETTI QUIZ

A Spaghetti quiz brings a bit more equity into the competition between each small group. It introduces chance and takes the focus off the score. The important aim is to have fun learning from one another.

SUGGESTED SUCCESS CRITERIA:
- We will have fun finding out how much we do and do not know/remember about Christmas and Diwali
- We will affirm/be affirmed and encourage co-operation within each small group
- We will share what we have learnt about Diwali and Christmas
- We will work together as a team

TIME: 1 hour

EQUIPMENT:
Large saucepan; ball of wool cut into different lengths for the ‘spaghetti’; scraps of paper; pens; pictures for picture round; puzzles for puzzle round and prizes.

METHOD:
- You will need a large saucepan and a ball of wool cut up into different lengths of ‘spaghetti’- from 3” to 23” and any length in between.
- Arrange the pieces in the pot with the ends hanging over the side, so that when you put the lid on, they all look the same length.
- When a team gets an answer right, someone is appointed to choose a piece of ‘spaghetti’ for their team.
- The pieces are all joined together, and at the end all the teams compare their lengths of wool.
- The team with the longest piece of wool ‘wins’- The chance element keeps the suspense going and everyone interested.
ROUNDS

- Start with getting the large group into smaller teams of 6-8

- Ask the teams to choose a name by which they will be known

- Take turns to ask each team a question. If they get it right, one of them chooses a piece of ‘spaghetti’. If they get it wrong offer a bonus to the next team

- Let the teams complete the answers on a piece of paper

- With the Drama round, award a piece of spaghetti for the effort of each team member ‘taking the stage’

- With the Puzzle round award a piece of spaghetti for the first team to finish

- Try to mix the rounds. The following is a possible order:-

  General Knowledge round 1
  Picture round
  Drama round
  Drawing round
  Puzzle round
  General Knowledge round 2

- Finish by asking the teams to join up all their pieces of ‘spaghetti’ and compare the lengths to find the winning team

- Award prizes as appropriate
1. GENERAL KNOWLEDGE ROUND (Christmas/Diwali)

1. What is the Christian Festival of Light called?
   Christmas; Diwali; Hanukkah  
   (Christmas)

2. What is the Hindu Festival of Light called?
   Christmas; Diwali; Hanukkah  
   (Diwali)

3. Where were Rama and Sita sent to live when they got married?
   Ayodhya  
   Forest  
   Lanka  
   (Forest)

4. Where was Jesus born?
   Bethlehem  
   Jerusalem  
   Egypt  
   (Bethlehem)

7. What was the name of the king who wanted to kill Jesus?
   (Herod)

8. What was the name of the ten-headed demon who captured Sita?
   (Ravana)
2. PICTURE ROUND - CHRISTMAS AND DIWALI
See picture card. Put a 'C' beside the pictures that have something to do with Christmas and a 'D' beside those that have something to do with Diwali.

3. DRAMA ROUND – Cut the following into strips and let a member of each group choose one:
   - Mime Rama with his bow
   - Mime the wise men following the star

Own team is allowed to guess first. If they get it wrong, offer a guess to the other team.

4 DRAWING ROUND - Cut the following into strips and let a member of each group choose one:
   - Draw a symbol for Diwali
   - Draw a symbol for Christmas

5. PUZZLE ROUND – Print out a Christmas and a Diwali picture. Cut the picture into eight jigsaw pieces. Offer a set of pieces to each team and the first to finish wins.
6. GENERAL KNOWLEDGE ROUND 2 (Christmas/Diwali)
1. What was the name of the monkey king?
   - Hanuman
   - Laksman
   - Ravana
   (Hanuman)

2. What helped the wise men find baby Jesus?
   - A compass
   - A star
   - A map
   (A star)

3. Where did the battle between Rama and Ravana take place?
   - Lanka
   - Ayodhya
   - Forest
   (Lanka)

4. Who warned the wise man to go back home a different way?
   - Herod
   - Angel
   - Joseph
   (Angel)

5. What do people light during Diwali?
   - Diya
   - Candle
   - Torch
   (Diya)
   For an extra bonus why?

6. What do people light in the time leading up to Christmas?
   - Hanukkiah
   - Advent Candle
   - Torch
   (Advent Candle)
   For an extra bonus why?
Christmas and Diwali Picture Round
ESSENTIAL BIBLIOGRAPHY


*This book has information on Judaism and Hinduism, Jews and Hindus in Northern Ireland and has photographs of the Synagogue, the Temple and local people keeping Hanukkah, Diwali and other events. It also has a number of activities and personal accounts from children and young people about living in Northern Ireland.*


*This book has good background information about Hanukkah and lots of pictures and activities.*


*This is a good reference book about ethnic and religious minorities living in Ireland.*


*A useful resource for primary school teachers*


*This booklet contains useful information and contacts for the Faith communities in N. Ireland available from the N.I. Inter-Faith Forum.*


*The new edition of this excellent resource is particularly useful for RE teachers working with key stage 2 students.*

Save the Children, *Think of me, Think of you* (Belfast: Save the Children), 2003.

*Freely available from Save the Children, this booklet has a helpful glossary, facts about minority communities and terminologies and young peoples' stories.*

Connolly, Paul, *Fair Play* (Belfast: Save the Children and Barnardo’s), 2002.
Freely available from Barnardos or Save the Children, this booklet produced for parents and guardians of children in N.I. has very useful definitions, questions and stories relating to prejudice and discrimination.

CLASS LIBRARY

FIRST WORLD WAR

This is a very moving story of two brothers and their experiences in the trenches during the First World War - **key stage 3**

This is an account in a forgotten letter of one night during the Christmas truce in 1914 - **key stage 2**

Morpurgo, Michael, *War Horse* (London: Egmont), 1982
This is the story of Joey a young farm horse thrust into war on the western front. It is a tribute to the 2 million horses lost - **key stage 2**.

Morpurgo, Michael, *Farm Boy* (London: Collins), 1997
This is a bit of a sequel to War Horse, as a shortened version of that story is retold by Joey’s master’s son to his grandson - lovely illustrations - **key stage 2**.

This is the story of Roy a young farmer from County Antrim and events leading up to the Battle of the Somme - **key stage 1**.

SECOND WORLD WAR AND AFTER

This is a trilogy - the memoir of Elli Friedmann, 13 years old in March 1944, when the Nazis invaded Hungary and her journey to Auschwitz; her life under the Communists after the war; and her life in New York in the 1950’s - **key stage 4**.

A very moving true-life story, recorded in a diary from 1942 by a thirteen year old Dutch girl in hiding from the horrors of Nazi occupation which comes to an abrupt end when she is arrested in 1944 - **key stage 3**.

Set in Germany and England in 1938, this is a story about two children escaping from Nazi Germany on the Kindertransports. It reflects the feelings of the older child - issues of loss; identity; and comparisons of Christmas and Hanukkah both festivals of light - key stage 2.

Gibbons, Alan, Street of Tall People (London: Dolphin), 1996.

A story about the friendship of two boys, a gentile and a Jew, against all the odds in the Jewish East end of London, amidst the upsurge of fascist violence in 1936 - key stage 3/4.


This very moving story is told by a young Jewish boy in Poland in 1942. It highlights the children's' stories and some of the situations they found themselves in; and the importance of storytelling and its value as a tool in the healing process - key stage 2.


Judith Kerr was born in Berlin of German Jewish parents and left Germany in 1933 to escape the Nazis. This story about nine year old Anna is based on Judith's own experiences - key stage 2.


This is a true story about how Fumiko Ishioka, curator of the Holocaust museum in Tokyo, traced the story of a little girl called Hana from her suitcase which came to them from Auschwitz in 2000 - key stage 2.


This story about three schoolgirls and their 'file' on a German schoolteacher is set in Belfast in 1944 and highlights the damage that assumptions and prejudice can do to relationships for both the victims and the perpetrators - issues of persecution; racism & sectarianism: guilt and closure - key stage 3.


This is a very moving story about a Chelsea footballer who gets caught up in the Second World War - ambulance corps; prisoner of war; refugee; rescuing and burying victims of Belsen - issues of loss; post traumatic stress; war - key stage 2/3.


This story, set in South West France, is about Jo, a young French boy who stumbles on a dangerous secret about Jewish children being smuggled over the border into Spain close to his mountain village - key stage 2.
This story is one of a series in ‘Survivors,’ a collection of fictional stories about young people caught up in real-life conflicts. This moving story is based on the memories of Andor (Bandi) Guttmann, a 14 year old Jew in Budapest in 1944 - issues of racism, loss, hope and survival - **key stage 3**.

This is a survivor’s story of life in Vienna and Amsterdam in the 1930’s, and Auschwitz Birkenau from 1944 by the posthumous step-sister of Anne Frank - **key stage 3**.

This story, set in Warsaw, is based on fact, tells the story of a family torn apart by war - **key stage 2**.

This story, based on true events, describes the experiences of young refugees who came to Northern Ireland during World War Two. Set in Millisle, County Down - **key stage 2**.

**INDIA**

The issues of urbanisation in India, family life and survival are highlighted in this lovely story - **key stage 2**.

A story of friendship and the benefits of that in the longer term to the community - **key stage 1**.

There is a lesson in this story about being willing to learn from others - trusting another’s judgement and accepting that we don’t know everything - **key stage 1 up**.

A Panchatandra story about the value of friendship, in this case between elephants and mice - raising issues of solidarity; non-violence and conflict resolution - **key stage 1 up**.

This is a great story for raising discussion about conflict styles and conflict resolution - **key stage 1 up**.
*This story raises the issues of arranged marriages and family conflict – key stage 3.*

*This story raises issues of unresolved conflict amidst a history of revenge between two families – key stage 3.*

*This book has a collection of short stories from India – Key stage 1 up.*

**WEBSITES**

www.bbc.co.uk/religion/religions
www.multifaithnet.org
www.faithinschools.org
www.support4learning.org.uk for religious Calendars – see also
www.shap.org