



Light as a symbol in some religious celebrations

- How does light make people feel?
- How is light symbolic in some religious celebrations?
- What does light signify for me?

Lesson ideas

Additional material is on our Year 1 lesson page.

Hanukkah

The events celebrated at Hanukkah are described in 2 Maccabees.

N.B. The Books of the Maccabees are not found in all English Bibles as they form part of the 'Apocrypha' which is a set of 15 books, written by Greek speaking Jews. The list of books included in the Jewish canon of Scripture was not explicitly fixed until the 2 century CE and these extra 15 books are not universally regarded as belonging to the authentic canon of Scripture. If an English Bible does include the 'Apocrypha' the books will be found between the Hebrew Scriptures and the New Testament.

In 165 BCE Judas Maccabee was able to defeat the Syrian/Greek invaders who had desecrated the Jewish temple in Jerusalem. The temple was cleansed, reconsecrated and the seven branched Menorah was re-lit to signify Gods presence. Although only enough oil was found to normally keep the Menorah lit for one day, the oil lasted and the flames burned for 8 days.

Today Jewish children play with brightly coloured spinning tops (dreidles) and light candles and lamps in their homes to remind them of the temple Menorah that miraculously burned for eight days. They eat special fried potato cakes called Latkes.

The Light of the World

- Look at the painting [The Nativity at Night](#) by Geertgen tot Sint Jans.
- Use the National Gallery's 'Zoom' feature on this page to explore the picture in detail. There are two lights sources.
- How has the artist made the light look so bright?
- What other scene can you see through the window?
- The artist contrasts the darkness with the bright light of the angel and the baby. What reactions are the onlookers showing by the position of their hands?
- Explore the symbolism in 'The Light of the World' painting by Holman Hunt.
- We have a coloured acetate and background information about the painting available on request. The [Rejesus](#) website has further information about the painting.

- **To think about:** Why did Jesus describe himself as the Light of the World?
- Look at the Bible reference in John 8:12.
- Explain how important light was in the days before gas and electricity. No work could be done after dark. Today we use light so much that we cause light pollution. We take it for granted. Perhaps only the idea of the importance of a lighthouse for a ship conveys this sense of dependence.
- What would Jesus say about himself today?
- **Challenge:** Write an 'I am...' saying, using a modern idea such as 'I am the electricity which powers the world'.

Explore the concept of light in the Bible, looking at: Matthew 5:14-16.

Christians are described as the light for the whole world.

- What does this mean?
- If all Christians followed this teaching today, would others be able to see the difference?
- Look at the lives of some Christian reformers of the past such as Dr Barnado, Elizabeth Fry, Lord Shaftesbury and William Wilberforce (information available on the [Spartacus](#) website).
- We have a relatively good standard in our education system, welfare provision and prison service that it is hard to imagine what conditions were like when these reformers began their work.
- The Jesus video, which was given to all local primary schools for the Millenium, has a clip at the beginning that describes the way some of these Christian reformers changed our society.
- Let the children explore what Christian charities are doing today (using the [Request](#) website).

Christingles

- Find out where Christingles began and explore the symbolism of the different elements through the [Why Christmas?](#) website. There is a lovely story on this site about why the first Christingle may have been made.
- The [Request](#) website has information on making a Christingle.