

ROBERSON MUSEUM AND SCIENCE CENTER

Pre-Visit Home for the Holidays/Holiday Traditions (The International Forest)

Grade level: 8-12

New York State Standards: Arts 1, 2, 4; SS 1, 2, 3; ELA 1, 4

Pennsylvania Learning Standards: A&H 9.2; H 8.3, 8.4

Objectives: Students will understand the connections between world cultures and that it is the contributions of these cultures that have defined American culture.

Materials:

- large sheets of paper
- marker (for writing on large paper/board)
- books with information on the meaning of the 5 holidays (Christmas, Hanukkah, Kwanzaa, Ramadan and Diwali)*ⁱ such as:
 - Ganeri, A. (2003). *Buddhist Festivals through the Year*. Smart Apple Media.
 - Goldsmith, D. (2002). *Celebrating Ramadan*. New York: Holiday House.
 - Harris, J. (1998). *A Kwanzaa Keepsake*. New York: Simon and Schuster.
 - Jeffrey, L. (2007). *Celebrate Ramadan*. Berkeley Heights, NJ: Enslow Publishers.
 - Moehn, H. (2000). *World Holidays: A Watts Guide for Children*. London: Franklin Watts.
 - Verma, J. (2002). *The Story of Divaali*. Bath, UK: Barefoot Books.
- Information Sheet (attached)

Procedure:

1. Student partners think and share the meaning of the word *culture*. The teacher may lead a conversation about a comparison study of American culture to French culture. (France has one official language, religion, and one way to celebrate the holidays, etc. While there are certainly people who deviate from this pattern, officially, this is France's stance.) The class may discuss which creates a stronger country - having one culture or being multicultural.
2. One way we see the contributions of immigrants is in the celebration of the winter holidays. List the five main winter holidays on the board: Christmas, Hanukkah, Kwanzaa, Diwali, Ramadan. Take a poll to see how many students celebrate each of these holidays. Divide class into five groups and assign each group (have books or computers ready in the classroom) one of the holidays to research. Have students complete a chart which answers these questions:
 - a. What is the reason for the holiday?
 - b. When is it celebrated?
 - c. Who celebrates it?

- d. What symbols and customs are connected to it?
3. Each group presents information to the class. In preparation for the trip to see the **International Forest** at **Roberson Museum and Science Center** students will complete the attached Information Sheet about their own heritage and family celebration. (This may be completed at home).
4. The Teacher should label large sheets of paper- “food,” “symbols,” “decorations,” “activities” and others as desired. Students come up and write information on the charts that they wrote on their information sheet. The class looks for commonalities that run across cultures and religions (examples include: light, feast, nature, religion, family). The teacher should keep this large piece of paper for later use with the post-visit lesson plan.
5. At the **International Forest** exhibition, students are to take notes on a culture they are unfamiliar with to see how they incorporate these unifying factors (light, feast, nature, religion, family) into their celebration.

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Information Sheet

Name _____

What winter holiday do you celebrate? _____

Looking back in your family tree, what country of origin did your ancestors come from?

Maternal _____

Paternal _____

Did your ancestors bring items used in holiday celebrations to this country when they immigrated?
Are there recipes in your family that are still prepared at holiday times? Are there any traditions still
honored during the holidays? (Be specific)

What is your favorite family tradition at holiday time? _____

What is your favorite family holiday decoration? _____

Does your family have any traditional holiday activities? _____

What are they? _____

Do you plan on continuing your family traditions when you are an adult with a family of
your own? _____

Why is that important or not important to you? _____

ⁱ The books listed in this lesson plan are really more appropriate for younger children. They give your students a quick overview of basic elements of the holiday celebrations. You may wish to research some titles that support themes such as religious tolerance or non-fiction/fictional works about themes such as immigration. Let us know what you select! Roberson wants to know how teachers are embedding these lesson plans in their curriculum.