

Lesson plan

Me and the world

Holidays and food

1. **Theme:** Me and the world: Holidays and food
2. **Grade:** 4th
3. **Lesson type:** Lesson for acquiring new knowledge
4. **Duration:** 40 min.
5. **Basic terms:** world, country, holidays, traditions, rituals, religion, food, dish, festival, communication, culture, tolerance, charity.
6. **Pedagogical methods:** storytelling, presentation, discussion, dialog, group work, reflection.
7. **Means:** board (interactive or otherwise), markers, laptop/computer, multimedia (screen/projector), ppt presentations, sheets of paper, drawing tools.

8. Goals:

○ Educational:

The students

- ✓ Understand how food and holidays reflect cultural and religious values
- ✓ Know that different religions have signature holidays
- ✓ Develop critical thinking by comparing different cultural practices and understanding their meanings
- ✓ Develop skills for creative expression
- ✓ Foster cooperation and teamwork through collaborative activities such as group work and
- ✓ Build vocabulary related to cultural celebrations, food, religion, and emotions
- ✓ Develop listening and communication skills by participating in discussions

○ Formational:

The students

- ✓ Recognize cultural specifics such as different holidays
- ✓ Discuss the cultural value of traditional festive dishes
- ✓ Develop components of intercultural competence by comparing different traditions with their own
- ✓ Foster empathy and respect for diverse worldviews and celebrations

- ✓ Are curious about global traditions and inclusive attitudes

9. Cross-curricular connections: Geography, Religious studies, History

10. Intra-subject connections: with the lesson plans on the themes: Me and the others, Me and society, I support others, Me and my environment

11. Expected results:

- ✓ Students will be able to describe at least two holidays and food traditions from each of the three religions discussed
- ✓ Students will identify similarities and differences between their own traditions and those from other cultures
- ✓ Students will be able to compare how food is used to express values like sharing, kindness, and togetherness in different holidays around the world
- ✓ Students will demonstrate increased cultural awareness and respect through reflection and group discussion
- ✓ Students will have increased interest in various traditions regarding the celebration of holidays around the world

12. Preparation

- For the teacher: Reading the theoretical base, downloading the presentation, providing sheets of paper and drawing tools.

13. Structure of the lesson:

Me and the world: Holidays and food

1. Different holidays around the world
 - Examples of various holidays
 - Learning about different holidays brings us together
2. Specific examples of holidays and celebratory dishes around the world
 - Celebrating Christmas in Greece, Germany, and the UK
 - Celebrating Eid al-Fitr and Eid al-Adha (Islam), Vesak (Buddhism), and Diwali (a Hindu festival)
 - Similarities between the basic values of Christmas and Eid al-Fitr and Eid al-Adha (togetherness, care, charity, acceptance)
 - Activity

3. Reflection and discussion

- Posing several reflective questions and engaging the students in a discussion on the subject.

14. Structure, content and timeline

1. Introduction (6 min.)

- Teacher activity:
 - Actualization of prior knowledge on the subject: what holidays do you know of? What famous holiday traditions have you heard of? Can you think about some of the traditional food that people eat during a holiday that you know of? (3 min.)
 - Introduction of new information and terms: (3 min.)

Food and holidays are important parts of every culture. They help shape people's identities and connect them to their families, communities, and beliefs. All over the world, people celebrate holidays in different ways and eat special foods that are often connected to religion, history, or the seasons. For example, in some countries, people celebrate Christmas, which is a Christian holiday, while in others, people celebrate Eid, which is an Islamic holiday, or Vesak, which is an important holiday in Buddhism. Some holidays are based on nature or the calendar, while others come from important stories or religious teachings.

Different countries often celebrate different holidays because people belong to different religions or follow different traditions. In Christian countries, many families celebrate Easter, feasting with eggs and sometimes lamb. In Muslim countries, people celebrate Ramadan, while fasting during the day and then eating fresh fruits and vegetables. In Buddhist countries, people may celebrate Bodhi day with a dish of milk rice. Jewish people celebrate holidays like Hanukkah, where they light candles and eat foods like potato pancakes and jelly doughnuts. In Hindu cultures, people celebrate the Dussehra Festival, with sweets, such as Jalebi and Vella Dosai. Each holiday has its own special customs, foods, and meaning.

When we learn about these holidays and the foods people eat during them, we understand more about how others live and what they believe. It helps us become more open-minded, kind, and respectful toward people from different backgrounds. Even though we may celebrate in different ways, food and holidays bring joy and help people feel connected all over the world.

- Student activity:
 - Participation in the dialog, asking questions, active listening.
- Methods and tools:
 - Methods: dialog, storytelling
 - Tools: board, marker or an interactive whiteboard (for outlining the theme; optional, for writing down the student's ideas, thoughts)

2. Stating the theme of the lesson: Me and the world: Holidays and food (29 min.)
 - Teacher activity:
 - Short presentation, outlining several of the most famous holidays in Christianity, Islam, Buddhism, and Hinduism (9 min.)
 - Theoretical overview, performed with the presentation:

In Christianity, one of the most beloved holidays is Christmas, during which families often eat meals like roast meat, cookies, or special bread, depending on where they live. These meals bring families together and celebrate the love, care, and respect for one another. At Christmas, many families decorate a Christmas tree, sing songs called carols, and give each other gifts. In Germany, people like to eat a sweet bread called stollen (fruit bread with nuts and sugar), and in the UK, they often have roast turkey and mince pies (sweet pies with fruit). In Italy, families eat panettone, a yummy, sweet bread, and seafood on Christmas Eve. In Greece, the traditional Christmas meals include roasted meat, stuffed cabbage rolls, lemon chicken soup, and desserts like melomakarona (cookies with honey syrup and walnuts), kourabiedes, and mosaiko (chocolate desert). People in many countries drink warm drinks like spiced apple cider to stay cozy. Lots of families light candles or hang lights to make their homes bright and cheerful during the long, dark winter nights.

In Islam, one of the most important celebrations is Eid al-Fitr, which comes after Ramadan, a month when Muslims fast from sunrise to sunset. During Ramadan, people do not eat or drink during the day to show self-control and to remember those who are hungry. When Eid al-Fitr begins, families come together to enjoy a big meal with foods like rice dishes, lamb or chicken, sweet pastries, and dates. They also wear new clothes, visit friends and family, and give gifts or money to children. Another special holiday is Eid al-Adha, which remembers the story of the Prophet Ibrahim and his faith in God. On this day, families may prepare meat from a sheep, goat, or cow, and they often share it with neighbours and people in need. This shows kindness and generosity, which are very important in Islam. During both Eid celebrations, people go to the mosque to pray, decorate their homes, and make traditional dishes from their own country or culture. Food, prayer, and helping others are all important parts of these happy holidays.

In Buddhism, one of the most important holidays is Vesak, which celebrates the birth, enlightenment, and rest of the Buddha. On this special day, many people go to temples to pray, light candles or lanterns, and bring flowers as a sign of respect and peace. Instead of having big parties, Buddhists focus on being kind, calm, and thankful. They try to do good things, like helping others, being gentle, and thinking kind thoughts. During Vesak, many Buddhists eat vegetarian meals. Families may prepare simple, healthy dishes like rice, vegetables, and tofu. People often share their food with monks, who live in temples, and with those who are poor or in need. In some places, colourful lanterns are hung outside homes and temples, and children help clean or decorate the temple. The most important part of the holiday is showing compassion, kindness, and mindfulness.

Diwali, also known as the Festival of Lights, is one of the most important Hindu festivals, symbolizing the victory of light over darkness and good over evil. It's a time when families and

friends come together to light their homes with earthen lamps called “daiyas”, symbolic of chasing away the shadows of life and inviting prosperity during the upcoming year. Diwali is celebrated over five days, usually in October or November, with each day having its own significance. People participate in traditions that are rooted in Hindu mythology, such as clean and decorate their homes, set off fireworks, and perform religious rituals, especially worshipping the goddess Lakshmi for prosperity. Families exchange gifts, wear new clothes, and enjoy festive meals and sweets such as laddoo, barfi, and samosas, making Diwali a joyful and vibrant celebration. They exchange boxes of mithai (different sweets) with loved ones, hoping to spread good wishes and positivity.

Learning about different food traditions and holidays helps us see how people express their beliefs and values. It also reminds us that even though people celebrate differently, we all enjoy coming together to share, eat, and care for one another. A great example of this are the shared core values of Christmas and Eid al-Fitr and Eid al-Adha. While with different religious meanings, both focus strongly on compassion, generosity, and care for others. Christmas is associated with charity, kindness, and visiting or helping those in need. and Eid al-Fitr and Eid al-Adha which emphasize charity – especially zakat al-fitr at Eid al-Fitr (a charitable donation of food at the end of Ramadan) and the sharing of sacrificial meat with those in need during Eid al-Adha.

- Activity: “Our own holiday” (20 min.)

- ✓ The teacher divides the students into small groups (3-4 children)
- ✓ Each group has the task to create their own holiday, focusing on the name, main dishes (one/two main ones and one/two for desert), one associated tradition (lighting candles, or dressing in a specific way, or gift-giving, etc.)
- ✓ The students should also include drawings of the dishes, or the traditions – whichever they choose
- ✓ They write and draw the elements of their holiday on a sheet of paper
- ✓ Each group presents their holiday to the class
- ✓ A discussion is encouraged by the teacher, with the following main questions:
 - 1) what was most interesting for you from the holidays that you hear about?;
 - 2) did you notice any similarities with the holidays that we talked about previously?;
 - 3) can we say that even though every holiday is different and based on various traditions and different religions, we, as people, have similarities (like caring for our families, celebrating with food, trying to help others)?

• Student activity:

- Participation in the dialog, taking notice of the presentation, asking questions, active listening, participation in the activity

• Methods and tools:

- Methods: dialog, presentation, storytelling, group work, discussion

- Tools: interactive board or a screen, laptop/computer, board, marker, sheets of paper for each group of students, coloured markers and/or pencils (or other drawing tools).
3. Reflection and discussion (5 min.)
- Teacher activity:
 - Posing questions for a discussion:
 - ✓ How can learning about other people's holidays and food help us become better friends?
 - ✓ Would you rather spend a holiday at the beach or in the mountains?
 - ✓ Which is your favourite holiday?
 - ✓ How do you celebrate it at home?
 - ✓ Which of the holidays we discussed today was the most interesting for you?
 - ✓ Did you learn about a holiday today that was new or surprising to you? What was interesting about it?
 - ✓ Can you think of something that all holidays have in common, no matter where or how they are celebrated?
 - Engaging the students with prompts:
 - ✓ "I prefer to spend a holiday in the city, with family and friends"
 - ✓ "I would travel to a different country, to see a festival celebration"
 - ✓ "Would you?"
 - Answering questions and clarifying information
 - Student activity:
 - Engaging in the discussion
 - Reflection on their ideas and emotions on the subject
 - Methods and tools:
 - Methods: reflection, discussion, active listening
 - Tools: possible use for a board/flipchart and a marker – to write down interesting ideas and suggestions.

15. Variations:

- One or more of the activities could be adapted, removed, shortened.
- A short presentation on the "Why are we celebrating" theme, available from <https://artsandculture.google.com/story/VQUxoBzSfges-w>

- A detailed presentation about the Kwanzaa holiday (celebrating African culture and heritage), with an available online colouring book:
<https://artsandculture.google.com/story/tQUxNOcysS3iDw>
- A short presentation of different festivals around the world:
<https://artsandculture.google.com/story/XQWxisEZkxZx1A>
 - Extensive information on holidays around the world, with included photos (of clothes, food, celebrations), colouring books, interesting facts, etc.:
<https://artsandculture.google.com/project/celebrations-around-the-world>
 - The “Holidays timeline” activity: 1) students are divided into small groups; 2) they are prompted to do a research on the particular dates (periods) that different holidays are celebrated; 3) each group creates a timeline of their assigned holidays; 4) the timelines are presented to the class and together, the students create a general timeline of all of the mentioned holidays.
16. Fun facts (from <https://learnbright.org/holiday-fun-facts-from-around-the-world/>; and Lyons, D., 2024., <https://www.babbel.com/en/magazine/11-wacky-holiday-traditions-around-the-world>):
- ✓ In Norway, hiding brooms on Christmas Eve is common to ward off witches and spirits.
 - ✓ In Spain, during New Year’s Eve, people eat 12 grapes at midnight for good luck in the coming year.
 - ✓ Holi, India’s Festival of Colours, includes throwing powdered dyes to celebrate love and spring.
 - ✓ Thailand celebrates Songkran, the water festival, for the Buddhist New Year by splashing water on others.
 - ✓ The Italian version of Santa Claus is a kind old witch called *La Befana*. Instead of milk and cookies, Italians leave out a plate of sausage and broccoli and a glass of wine for her.
 - ✓ Ukrainian families decorate their trees with spider webs for good luck.