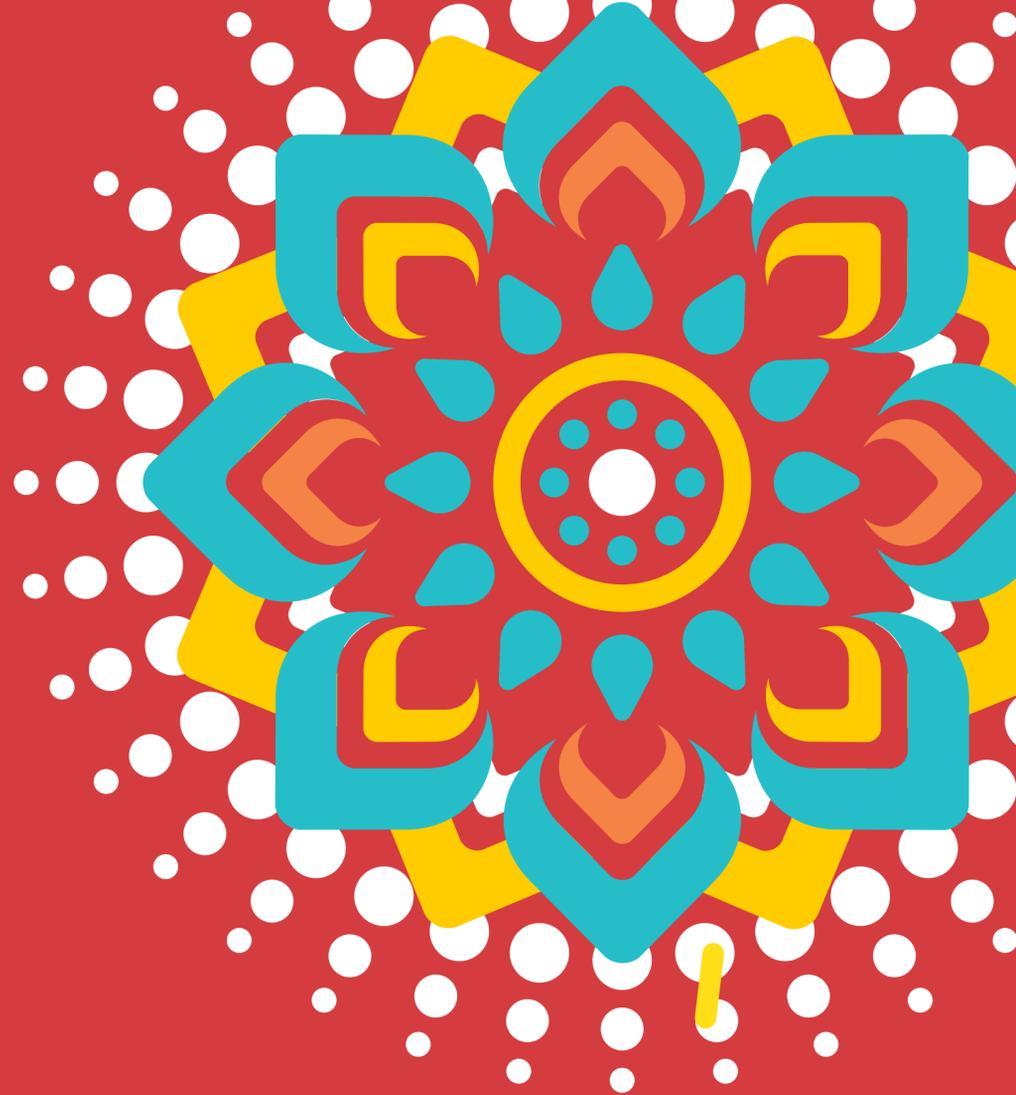




IMMIGRANT
HISTORY
INITIATIVE



Bimmy's Diwali

**FESTIVAL
OF LIGHTS!**

IHI Lesson Plan Resource



Table of Contents

ABOUT THE BOOK.....3

VOCABULARY, THEMES, STANDARDS.....4

DIWALI BACKGROUND INFO.....6

READING QUESTIONS.....13

ACTIVITIES.....21

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES.....23

Developed by Immigrant History Initiative and Maya Espiritu
of Maistorybook for New Jersey public schools.

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ABOUT THE BOOK



Today is Binny's day to share her favorite holiday with her class. She's excited to share about Diwali, but a bit nervous, too. After struggling in the beginning to find her words, Binny takes a deep breath, and then shares the magic of Diwali. Learn along with Binny's classmates as she shows them the glowing clay lamps, called *diyas*, explains the fireworks of gold, green, and red that burst through the night sky, and shares delicious *pedas* and *jalebis* treats. Book includes background info on Diwali.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR: THRITY UMRIGAR



Thrity was born in Bombay, India and came to the U.S. when she was 21. She currently lives in Cleveland, Ohio. She loves cats, puppies, summer vacation, and ice cream, and spends her time daydreaming and writing award-winning books.

ABOUT THE ILLUSTRATOR: NIDHI CHANANI

Born in Calcutta and raised in suburban southern California, Nidhi creates because it makes her happy – with the hope that it can make others happy, too. She currently lives in San Francisco Bay where she draws and dreams.

VOCABULARY

Suede: (n) soft, velvet material, feels fuzzy

Glimpse: (n) a quick look, a peek to see only part of something

Exchanged: (v) to trade

Fidget: (v) to make small movements with your hands and feet when you can't sit still

Victory: (n) when you win or defeat the enemy

Flickering: (adj) burning or shining and waving back and forth unsteadily

Shimmering: (adj) shining with a soft glowing light

THEMES

- Holidays are a special time to celebrate traditions and culture with family and friends.
- Different families and cultures celebrate different holidays and traditions. Listen and learn about different holidays to appreciate cultural differences.
- When you are nervous, take deep breaths. Believe in yourself. People want to hear what you have to say.
- Good and light can triumph over evil and darkness.



Standards

COMMON CORE

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.K.1: With prompting and support, ask and answer questions about key details in a text

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.K.3: With prompting and support, identify characters, settings, and major events in a story.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.K.4: Ask and answer questions about unknown words in a text

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.K.6: With prompting and support, name the author and illustrator of a story and define the role of each in telling the story.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.K.10: Actively engage in group reading activities with purpose and understanding.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.K.2: Confirm understanding of a text read aloud or information presented orally or through other media by asking and answering questions about key details and requesting clarification if something is not understood.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.K.3: Ask and answer questions in order to seek help, get information, or clarify something that is not understood.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.K.4: Describe familiar people, places, things, and events and, with prompting and support, provide additional detail.

NEW JERSEY STATE



9.4.2.GCA:1: Articulate the role of culture in everyday life by describing one's own culture and comparing it to the cultures of other individuals.

6.1.5.CivicsCM.3: Identify the types of behaviors that promote collaboration and problem solving with others who have different perspectives.

6.1.2.CivicsDP.3: Explain how historical symbols, monuments and holidays reflect the shared values, principles, and beliefs of the American identity.

6.1.2.HistorySE.1: Use examples of regional folk heroes, stories, and/or songs and make inferences about how they have contributed to the development of a culture's history.

6.1.2.Geo.HE.3: 6.1.2.Geo.HE.3: Identify cultural and environmental characteristics of different regions in New Jersey and the United States.

6.1.2.HistorySE.1: Use examples of regional folk heroes, stories, and/or songs and make inferences about how they have contributed to the development of a culture's history

6.1.2.HistoryUP.2: Use evidence to demonstrate how an individual's beliefs, values, and traditions may change and/or reflect more than one culture

6.1.2.CivicsCM.3: Explain how diversity, tolerance, fairness, and respect for others can contribute to individuals feeling accepted.



BACKGROUND

About Diwali

INFORMATION





ABOUT DIWALI



- Diwali, or Deepavali, is a Sanskrit word meaning “rows of lighted lamps.”
- Diwali, also known as “the festival of lights,” is a holiday celebrated in India, Pakistan, Nepal, and other countries by Hindus, Jains, Sikhs, and other faiths.
- People interpret the Diwali story differently based on where they live.
 - For example, northern India celebrates King Rama's defeat of Ravana, southern India celebrates Lord Krishna's defeat of Narakasura, and western India celebrates the descent of King Bali to the underworld
- No matter where Diwali is celebrated, one common theme is **the triumph of good and light over evil and darkness.**

WHEN IS DIWALI?

- Diwali falls between October and November. The exact dates change each year based on the Hindu lunar calendar.
- It lasts five days, with the major celebrations occurring on the third day.
- The first day of Diwali for the next 5 years:

2021: Nov. 4	2024: Nov 1
2022: Oct. 24	2025: Oct. 20
2023: Nov 12	



DIWALI TRADITIONS: DIYAS



A **diya** is an oil lamp made from clay with a cotton wick. Diyas are a part of Indian culture, and are used to represent the idea that light destroys darkness. They are used as decoration during Diwali, the festival of lights. Traditionally, Indians light a diya every morning and evening.

DIWALI TRADITIONS: RANGOLI



Rangoli means a row of colors, and is a Hindu folk art made from colorful powders. Rangoli are traditionally made in the early mornings, on a cleaned floor outside the front door. Rangoli are created to represent happiness and positivity, and they are used to welcome Goddess Lakshmi, the goddess of wealth and good luck, into the household. Rangoli designs can be simple shapes, flowers, or petal shapes.

IMPORTANT FIGURES



Goddess Lakshmi is the goddess of wealth and fortune. On Diwali, she visits each house with blessings and leaves tiny footprints on the floor.

Prince Rama defeated the evil Ravana with the help of Hanuman the Monkey King to save his wife, Sita, in the Northern India story of Diwali.



Hanuman is the Monkey King who helped Rama. He is the god of wisdom, strength, courage, devotion, and self-discipline.

Lord Krishna is the god of love, tenderness, and compassion. He defeated the demon Narakasura in the Southern India story of Diwali.



Lord Vishnu restores the balance of good and evil in the world. He sent the demon King Bali to the underworld in the Western India story of Diwali.

The Victory of Rama

NORTHERN INDIAN DIWALI STORY

Once upon a time there was a great warrior, Prince Rama, who had a beautiful wife named Sita. They lived in Ayodhya. There was also a terrible demon king, Ravana. He had twenty arms and ten heads, and was feared throughout the land. He wanted to make Sita his wife, and one day he kidnapped her and took her away in his chariot.

Clever Sita left a trail of her jewelry for Rama to follow. Rama followed the trail of glittering jewelry until he met the monkey king, Hanuman, who became his friend and agreed to help find Sita. Messages were sent to all the monkeys in the world, and through them to all the bears, who set out to find Sita.

After a very long search, Hanuman found Sita imprisoned on an island. Prince Rama's army of monkeys and bears couldn't reach the island, so they began to build a bridge. Soon all the animals of the world, large and small, came to help. When the bridge was built, they rushed across and fought a mighty battle.

When Rama killed the evil Ravana with a magic arrow, the whole world rejoiced. Rama and Sita began their long journey back to their home in Ayodhya, and everybody lit oil lamps to guide them on their way and welcome them back. Ever since then, people light lamps at Diwali to remember that **light triumphs over dark and good triumphs over evil.**

Adapted from: <https://www.activityvillage.co.uk/the-story-of-diwali>



The Defeat of Narakasura

SOUTHERN INDIAN DIWALI STORY

Narakasura was believed to be a filthy demon, covered in dirt. He was a giant who was often good but at times, behaved very badly. He used to kidnap beautiful young women and force them to live with him. He also stole the earrings of Aditi, mother of the gods.

The gods asked Lord Krishna for help, and after a mighty battle he killed the demon, freed the girls and recovered the earrings. First, Krishna had to fight with a five-headed monster that guarded the demon's home. Then, he rescued the 16,000 girls. Krishna granted Narakasura one last request, because of the good deeds he had done when he wasn't behaving badly. Narakasura hoped that his death might bring joy to others. So, before being killed, he cried, "Let this day be celebrated as a day of feasting in the World!" Krishna granted his request and the women were freed.

After his victory Krishna returned very early in the morning and was bathed and massaged with scented oils. Taking an early morning bath with oil is still a Deepavali tradition. For Hindus, this story is a reminder that **good can defeat evil.**

Adapted from: <http://www.diwalicelebrations.net/diwali-legends/krisna-narakasur.html>



The Legend of King Bali

WESTERN INDIAN DIWALI STORY

King Bali was a generous ruler but also very ambitious. To please the gods he performed a Yagna (fire sacrifice). His Yagna was so successful that even the gods were terrified to appear before him and grant him a wish in the fear that he might ask something they weren't powerful enough to grant. Some of the Gods asked Lord Vishnu to check King Bali's power. Vishnu came to earth in the form of a dwarf dressed as priest.

When the priest reached King Bali's court, King Bali told him to ask for anything he wanted. The priest said, "You are the ruler of the three worlds: the Earth, the world above the skies, and the underworld. Would you give me the space that I could cover with three steps?" King Bali laughed. This request seemed strange to everyone, but King Bali granted it. Surely a dwarf could not cover much ground in 3 steps, thought the King, who agreed to dwarf's request.

Once the request was granted to him, the priest, who was Vishnu in disguise, covered the entire world (Mrityu-loka) with one step, with the second he covered heaven (Swarga-loka), and for the third step, he asked the confused King Bali where he should put his foot down. The noble King Bali offered for Vishnu to step on his head. The priest placed his foot over King Bali's head, but also thrust Bali into the underworld (Patala-loka), which in Hindu is hell and lies below the surface of the earth.

Adapted from: <http://www.diwalicelebrations.net/diwali-legends/bali.html>

The top half of the page is decorated with various colorful patterns. On the left, several vertical strings of orange thread hang down, each adorned with different styles of flowers in shades of red, blue, and yellow. On the right side, there are two stylized firework bursts in white, red, and yellow, with small white dots scattered around them.

BEFORE READING

Binny's Diwali

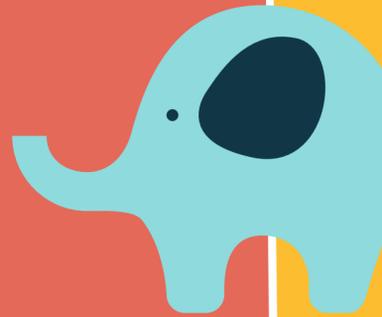
QUESTIONS



CONNECT TO THE TEXT

What holidays do you and your family celebrate?

- Have students share different holidays.
- Record them on the board.
- Comment on how different families living in the same place can celebrate different holidays.
- Tell students that in this book, Binny will be sharing about a special holiday her family celebrates.



READ THE TITLE ALOUD

- Have you heard of Diwali before?
- What do you know about Diwali?
- What do you want to know?
- Make a KWL Chart to record prior knowledge and what you learn throughout the reading.

EXPLORE THE COVER

- What do you notice on the cover?
- Point out the decorations on the top.
- What is Binny holding?
- What colors do you notice?





WHILE READING

Binny's Diwali

QUESTIONS



READING QUESTIONS

PAGE 1 - 2



- Which holiday would you share with the class?
 - Note: Rosh Hashanah is the celebration of the Jewish New Year
- **ILLUSTRATION ANALYSIS:** What do you see in Binny's room?
 - Possible answers: Elephant decoration, hair supplies, library books, backpack, etc.

PAGE 3 - 4



- **ILLUSTRATION ANALYSIS:** What do you notice about Mom and Binny's special outfits?
 - Note: A sari is traditional female clothing in South Asia. It is one long piece of cloth wrapped around the body to make a skirt and a shoulder or head covering.
- Do you wear a special outfit on holidays? What does it look like?

PAGE 5 - 6



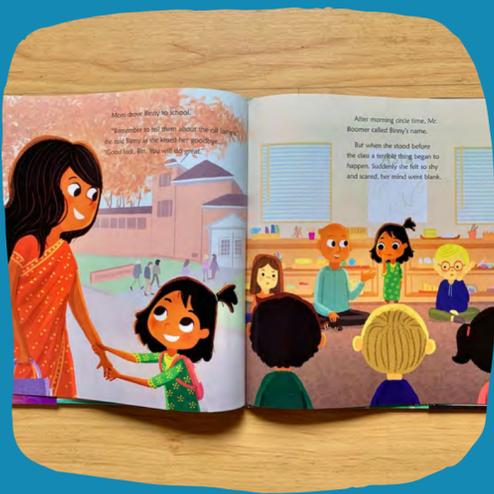
- What do people buy for Diwali? Add some things that you learned to your KWL chart, or to the board.
- Read the names of the storefronts. "Chai" means tea, and "Chaat" means Indian snacks.
- Do you see words in different languages on stores in your town? What do you see?
- Are there special things you buy for your holiday that you celebrate?

READING QUESTIONS



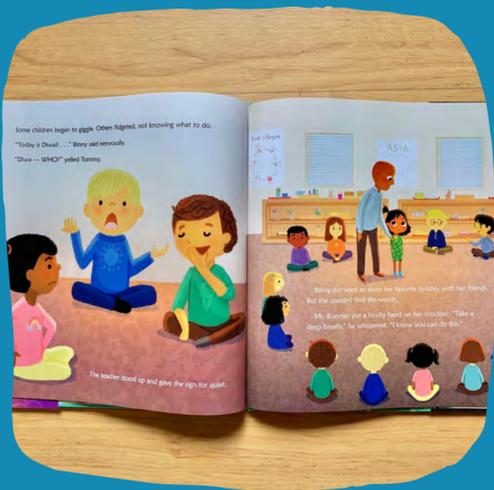
PAGE 7 - 8

- **ILLUSTRATION ANALYSIS:** Mmm! Binny is eating special treats for breakfast for Diwali. Do you see the jalebis? Which ones are the pedas?
 - What else do you notice on the table?
- Do you have special foods that you eat on the holidays?



PAGE 9 - 10

- Have you ever felt like Binny? Shy or nervous to talk in front of people? What will happen?
- **SOCIO-EMOTIONAL LEARNING:** What can you do when you feel shy and nervous?



PAGE 11 - 12

- **AFTER PAGE 11:** If a friend is feeling shy or nervous, what could you say or do to help them feel better?
- **MOVEMENT:** The teacher encourages Binny to take deep breaths to calm her nerves. Practice taking deep breaths together!



READING QUESTIONS



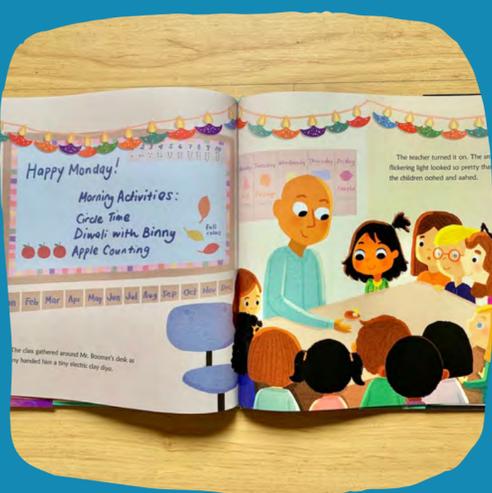
PAGE 13 - 14

- Add to your Diwali notes: diyas, victory of goodness and light
- **ILLUSTRATION ANALYSIS:** What do you notice? What patterns do the lamps make? What do you notice about the people?
- Do you decorate with special lights on your holiday?



PAGE 15 - 16

- **MOVEMENT:** Open and close your fists to mimic fireworks. Pretend to hold a sparkler and guide students on how to make a figure-eight shape in the air.
- What decorations do you use for your holiday?



PAGE 17 - 18

- Have the class "oooooh" and "aaaaah" together when the diya is lit.
- Point out what else is in the classroom. Read the board. What season is it?



READING QUESTIONS



PAGE 19 - 20

- Have students close their eyes and imagine a dark sky with a million twinkling stars.
- Has anyone seen the stars at night in the sky?
- Do you celebrate with fireworks? When have you seen fireworks before?



PAGE 21 - 22

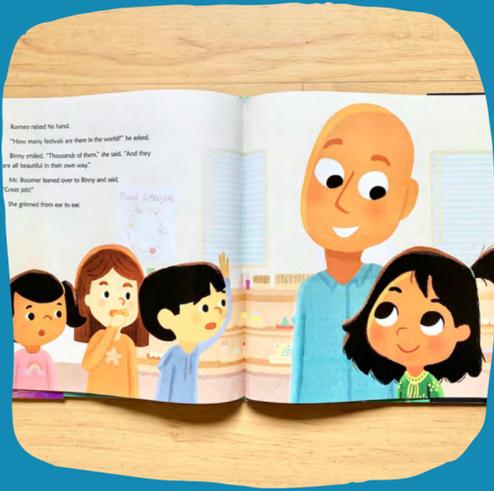
- Explain that a tradition of Diwali is to use powdered chalk to draw pretty designs on the ground. These designs are called "rangoli."



PAGE 23 - 24

- **SOCIO-EMOTIONAL LEARNING:** It's kind to share your food, and it's fun to try new foods. What can you say or do if you don't like a food someone shares with you?
 - You can discuss how someone would feel if you said "yuck" about a food they liked. How can you be polite if you don't like something?

READING QUESTIONS



PAGE 25 - 26

- Reference the list of holidays and festivals you brainstormed before reading the book. There are all these holidays and festivals and more!
- Is there a holiday or festival on the list that you want to learn more about?



PAGE 27 - 28

- Look at Binny's house at night! What do you notice?
 - Point out the diyas lighting the pathway.
- **AFTER READING DISCUSSION:**
 - What did you learn about Diwali?
 - What was your favorite part of Diwali?
 - Share a time that you spread light and goodness, or in other words, a time that you were kind and helped make others happy.

5 DAYS OF DIWALI ACTIVITIES

DAY ONE

People clean their homes and shop for gold or kitchen utensils to bring good fortune.

Activity Idea: Clean the classroom together. Print out attached utensil templates (p. 22) and have students color them gold. Cut out and display for good fortune.

People decorate homes with diyas and create rangoli.

Activity Idea: 1) Create a diya by making a small bowl with clay, then drying and painting it. Use tea lights to light them. 2) Use chalk to draw in rangoli patterns outdoors, or color in [rangoli coloring pages](#).

DAY TWO

DAY THREE

On the main day of the festival, families gather to pray to Goddess Lakshmi, then feast and have fireworks!

Activity Idea: Trace your feet, then cut them out and decorate! Scatter them around the room to represent Goddess Lakshmi's footprints bringing you good luck.

On the first day of the new year, friends and relatives visit with gifts and best wishes.

Activity Idea: Design Diwali cards to gift to friends or family. Decorate with Diwali symbols such as diyas, rangoli, fireworks, elephants, or peacocks.

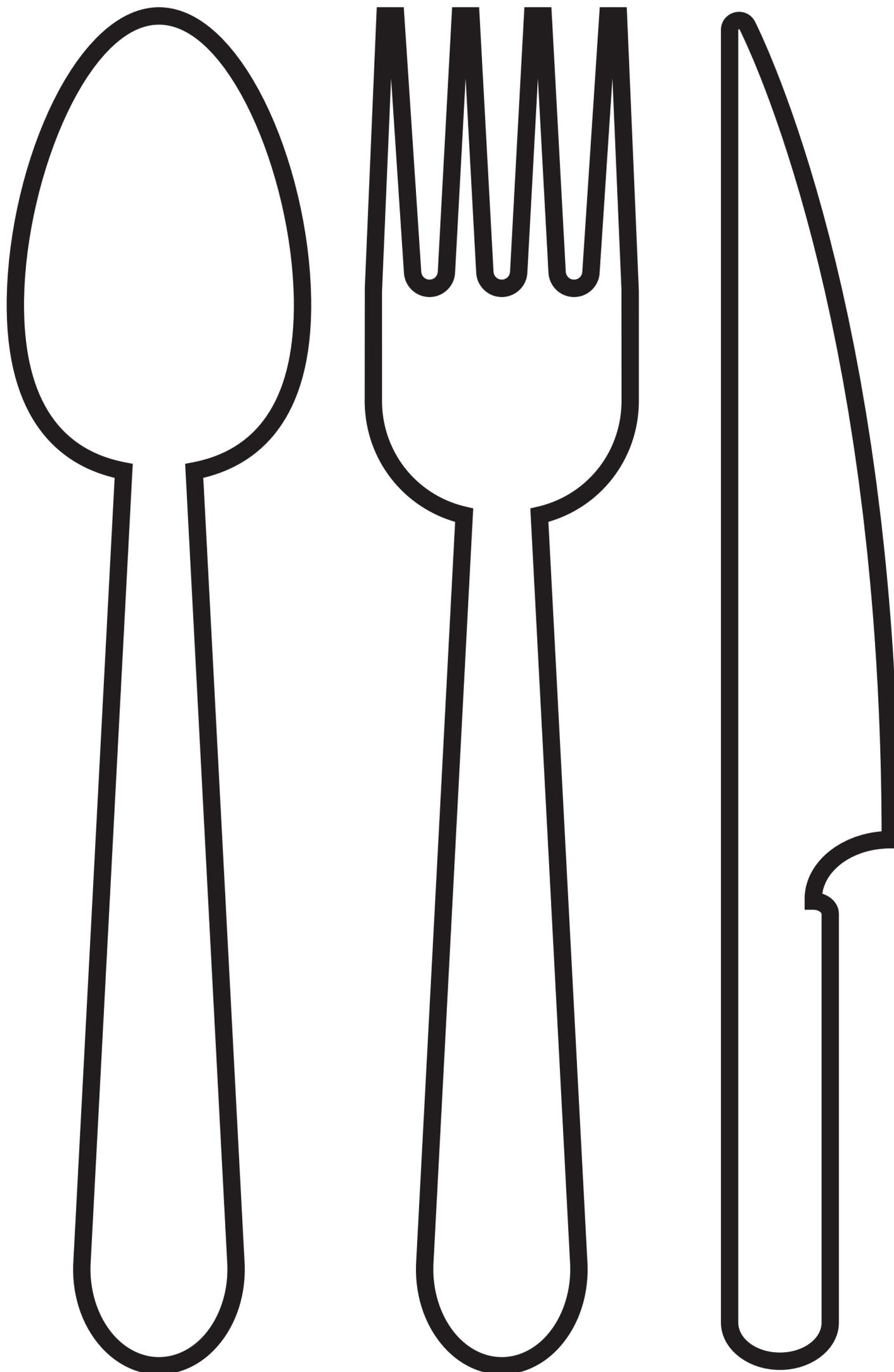
DAY FOUR

DAY FIVE

Siblings visit each other and exchange gifts.

Activity Idea: Celebrate with a treat, such as these easy [Doodh Peda Indian sweets](#) (microwave needed).

UTENSIL TEMPLATE



Additional Resources

FOR DIWALI

SCHOLASTIC DIWALI ACTIVITY KIT

[Link here.](#) Includes templates to make paper diya streamers, a word search, and a gift basket drawing activity



ADDITIONAL BOOKS (READ-ALOUD VIDEOS)

- **Shubh Diwali by Chitra Soundar**: A sweet introduction to the Hindu festival of lights
- **Let's Celebrate Diwali by Anjali Joshi**: A story about Diwali traditions and how they are celebrated by Hindus, Jains, Sikhs, and Buddhists



VIDEOS ABOUT DIWALI

- [Ramayana : Story of Diwali | Mythological Stories from Mocomi Kids](#)
- [Jalebi Street: Happy Diwali | Diwali Animated Story For Kids- a family celebrates Diwali](#)
- [The Diwali Goddess: The importance of Goddess Lakshmi for Diwali](#)
- [Diwali - Festival of Lights | National Geographic](#)