

TANENBAUM

Religions in My Neighborhood

Teaching Curiosity
and Respect about
Religious Differences

Including: The Seven Principles for Inclusive Education



Religions in My Neighborhood

Teaching Curiosity and Respect about
Religious Differences



Imagine...a more peaceful world that respects difference.
We are committed to making that vision a reality.

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INTRODUCTORY RESOURCES

Table of Contents	1
Open Letter to Facilitators, Teachers, Parents and Others	5
Overview of Major World Religions, Spiritual Traditions and Systems of Belief Practiced in the United States	13
Six Goals for Student Learning Outcomes	29
Meeting National Standards	30
The Tanenbaum Pedagogy: The Seven Principles for Inclusive Education	35
CHAPTER I: Differences are Normal: Identities, Families and Communities	47
Goals for Student Learning in Chapter I.....	47
Big Ideas for Chapter I.....	47
Essential Questions for Chapter I.....	47
Chapter I (Unit 1): My Responsibility in My Learning Community	48
Big Ideas for I (1).....	48
Essential Questions for I (1).....	48
National Standards for I (1).....	48
Chapter I (Unit 2): My Identity in My Learning Community	55
Big Ideas for I (2).....	55
Essential Questions for I (2).....	55
National Standards for I (2).....	55
Chapter I (Unit 3): My Participation in My Learning Community	63
Big Ideas for I (3).....	63
Essential Questions for I (3).....	63
National Standards for I (3)	63
Chapter I (Unit 4): My Family in My Learning Community; My Understanding of Difference	70
Big Ideas for I (4).....	70
Essential Questions for I (4).....	70
National Standards for I (4)	70

CHAPTER II: Big Questions with Many Answers	81
Goals for Student Learning in Chapter II.....	81
Big Ideas for Chapter II.....	81
Essential Questions for Chapter II.....	81
Chapter II (Unit 1): A Garden of Questions and Answers about Beliefs	82
Big Ideas for II (1).....	82
Essential Questions for II (1).....	82
National Standards for II (1)	82
Chapter II (Unit 2): Stories Told about Beliefs	88
Big Ideas for II (2).....	88
Essential Questions for II (2).....	88
National Standards for II (2)	88
Chapter II (Unit 3): Stories Told in Different Religions about Beliefs in a God or Gods	93
Big Ideas for II (3).....	93
Essential Questions for II (3).....	93
National Standards for II (3)	93
CHAPTER III: Common Understandings among Different Religions	101
Goals for Student Learning in Chapter III.....	101
Big Ideas for Chapter III.....	101
Essential Questions for Chapter III.....	101
Chapter III (Unit 1): Beliefs about Caring for Each Other	102
Big Ideas for III (1).....	102
Essential Question for III (1).....	102
National Standards for III (1)	102
Chapter III (Unit 2): Beliefs about Caring for the Environment	108
Big Ideas for III (2).....	108
Essential Questions for III (2).....	108
National Standards for III (2)	108
Chapter III (Unit 3): Beliefs about Caring for My Neighborhood and Serving My Community	113
Big Ideas for III (3).....	113
Essential Questions for III (3).....	113
National Standards for III (3)	113
CHAPTER IV: Rituals and Traditions	121
Goals for Student Learning in Chapter IV	121
Big Ideas for Chapter IV	121
Essential Question for Chapter IV	121

Chapter IV (Unit 1): Learning about Rituals and Traditions	122
Big Ideas for IV (1)	122
Essential Questions for IV (1)	122
National Standards for IV (1)	122
Chapter IV (Unit 2): Rituals and Traditions about Sacred Spaces	126
Big Ideas for IV (2)	126
Essential Questions for IV (2)	126
National Standards for IV (2)	126
Chapter IV (Unit 3): Rituals and Traditions about Prayer and Meditation	130
Big Ideas for IV (3)	130
Essential Questions for IV (3)	130
National Standards for IV (3)	130
Chapter IV (Unit 4): Rituals and Traditions about Renewal: Letting Go of Old Ways and Starting Fresh.....	135
Big Ideas for IV (4)	135
Essential Questions for IV (4)	135
National Standards for IV (4)	135
Chapter IV (Unit 5): Rituals and Traditions about Harvest: Collecting Resources	144
Big Ideas for IV (5)	144
Essential Questions for IV (5)	144
National Standards for IV (5)	144
Chapter IV (Unit 6): Rituals and Traditions about Light: Hopefulness and Waiting.....	151
Big Ideas for IV (6)	151
Essential Questions for IV (6)	151
National Standards for IV (6)	151
CHAPTER V: Learning about Religious Differences.....	167
Goals for Student Learning in Chapter V	167
Big Ideas for Chapter IV	167
Essential Questions for Chapter IV	167
Chapter V (Unit 1): Learning about Differences between Religious Groups	168
Big Ideas for V (1)	168
Essential Questions for V (1)	168
National Standards for V (1)	168
Chapter V (Unit 2): Learning from Religious Differences	174
Big Ideas for V (2)	174
Essential Questions for V (2)	174
National Standards for V (2)	174

Chapter IV (Unit 6): Rituals and Traditions about Light: Hopefulness and Waiting

BIG IDEAS FOR IV (6)

- There are many different religious rituals and traditions about light, hopefulness and waiting.
- The cycle of darkness and light in nature (day and night, summer and winter) influences many different rituals and traditions.
- Some religious rituals teach about patience during the waiting (of night, of winter) and hopefulness for better future (of day, of summer).

ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS FOR IV (6)

- What are the ways in which different religions use light in their rituals and traditions?
- How do religions remind people about being hopeful in dark times?
- What are some of the stories about light, hopefulness and waiting that are part of religious traditions?

NATIONAL STANDARDS FOR IV (6)

- English Language Arts: 1, 2, 4, 6, 9
- Social Studies: 1, 3, 5, 8

LESSON IV (6): RITUALS AND TRADITIONS ABOUT LIGHT: HOPEFULNESS AND WAITING

The information and activities in Chapter IV (6) have been adapted from Patty Bode's book *Cultural Connections through Art*, Amherst, MA: Amherst Educational Publishing (1993). (Out of print).

Rationale: Why teach this lesson?

There is a perennial question in public schools about how to teach or how not to teach about the winter holidays, which coincide around the winter solstice, and include the Christian Christmas, the Jewish Chanukah, and the African American Kwanzaa. Some people believe that any mention of religious holidays in public school violates separation of church and state, although this is not accurate. Other people believe that winter is the time for Christmas carols, Christmas trees, Santa Claus and red felt stockings, without including winter rituals that are not Christian. These alternatives illustrate extreme ends of the spectrum of possible practices, and each extreme end presents problems.

There are models of teaching that address the issue in a fair-minded and student-centered approach, which also comport with the Constitution and the way it has been interpreted by the courts. The critical point is to learn more each season through your students, their families and your own research. To ignore or prohibit discussion, research, reading and learning about the holidays is to neglect students' needs and to deprive them of a core element of their education. More importantly, ignoring children's experiences causes educators to miss out on an opportunity to learn more about the lives of their students in a deep and meaningful way, as members of a family, a religious community (or not), and a cultural community. By embracing the winter solstice as a common ground for different religious rituals and modes of celebration, opportunities for engaging pedagogy and curriculum can be created.

Think ahead:

Many subject area standards can be met by addressing the winter solstice and religious and cultural events that coincide with that time of year. However, because the holiday of Christmas has been the “norm” in U.S. society, it is critical to make space for student experiences to be affirmed outside that mainstream perspective. Educators are cautioned against trying to make all religious and cultural experiences “match” or fit the mold of Christmas. There are some similarities across religious groups, as well as many differences. Everything from school calendars, shopping events and entertainment schedules have been shaped by the mainstream adaptation to the needs of those who celebrate Christmas.

An effective way to make meaningful cultural connections with students, without honoring one student’s tradition more than another’s, is to focus on the human experience of light and darkness (day and night, summer and winter).

In science and math, students explore the astronomy and scientific context of the relationship between the sun and the earth and the lightness and darkness of our days and our seasons. They also learn that northern and southern hemispheres are experiencing different “seasons” during the year.

In social studies, students focus on the importance of ritual, custom and tradition related to the common daily and seasonal experience of light and dark.

In English Language Arts, they might have read creation myths about how the sun came to earth as well as researched and written about their own family traditions as compared to a classmate’s tradition.

In art class, students might have seen symbols of religion and culture, images of the sun, the use of candles and candle holders in art history throughout the world and across regions and time periods.

All students have experienced the long days of summer and the long nights of winter, and they share the “waiting” for summer when the winter nights seem longest. This is the common experience that teachers and facilitators can focus on in looking at the winter solstice celebrations.

Objectives for this lesson – Students will:

- Make connections between the earth’s cycles of darkness and light and the human need to celebrate light.
- Appreciate the range of diverse experiences that their peers have based on their various winter-based rituals and traditions.
- Notice how candles can be used to mark special occasions.
- Create a candle holder out of an egg carton with paper candles adorned with symbols that are based on each family’s or community’s traditions.

Materials needed:

- Old cardboard egg cartons (not plastic or Styrofoam egg cartons)
- Paint
- Glue
- Rectangles of paper measuring approximately 3” x 6” (all colors), scraps of yellow and orange tissue paper approximately 1” x 1 & 1/2.”
- Books: Choose several books from a collection of children’s literature about winter solstice and other holidays. Use examples of religious celebrations as well as secular celebrations that mark the change from the darker months of the year to longer days of light.
 - *Celebrate the Winter Holidays: Sensational Activities & Helpful Background Information That Help Kids Learn About & Appreciate Five Important Holidays* by Elaine Israel (2001).
 - *Celebrations Of Light: A Year of Holidays Around the World* by Nancy Luenn (1998).
 - Chapter on winter of the book *Children Just Like Me: Celebrations!* by Barnabas Kindersley (1997).
 - *The Shortest Day: Celebrating the Winter Solstice* by Wendy Pfeffer (2003).
 - *The Winter Solstice* by Ellen B. Jackson (1994).
 - *The Return of the Light: Twelve Tales from Around the World for Winter Solstice* by Carolyn McVickar Edwards (2005).
 - *Light The Lights! A Story About Celebrating Hanukkah And Christmas* by Margaret Moorman (1999).
 - *Latkes and Applesauce: A Hannukah Story* by Fran Manushkin (2007).
 - *Raven: A Trickster Tale from the Pacific Northwest* by Gerald McDermott (1993).
 - *Arrow to the Sun: A Pueblo Indian Tale* by Gerald McDermott (1974).
 - *My First Ramadan* by Karen Katz (2007) [Note to educators: Ramadan is on a rotating lunar calendar and does not always fall near winter solstice and is not related to solstice. Rather, it is a lunar determined date].
 - *Lighting a Lamp: A Diwali Story (Festival Time)* by Jonny Zucker (2004).

Time needed:

4 class meetings – or more – depending on choices of children’s literature, 45 minutes each

Setting the lesson:

Discuss the associations with the winter season and the characteristics of the weather and the patterns of lightness and darkness appropriate to your geographical region. Help students think about the importance of light to humans. For instance, humans do not see in the dark, although some animals do see in the dark. Help students imagine what it would be like to live before electricity, portable batteries and solar panels provided light through lamps, flash lights, or street lights. Imagine the urge to make light with fire and think about how human beings might have first developed candles and candle holders as functional and decorative components of daily life. Facilitate a discussion about traditions or unique days when candles are used in our contemporary society to mark a special occasion.

Procedure for the lesson:**Day 1: Exploring children’s literature**

Divide students into small literature circles or groups. Provide each small group with one to two children’s literature selections on the theme of winter, light, solstice and holidays.

For very young children, provide “reading buddies” from an older-age classroom. Each small group will read one or two books and discuss:

- What is familiar to me in this story? Are there experiences that remind me of my family’s traditions?
- What is new to me in this story? Are there experiences about which I hope to learn more?
- What are the ways in which different religions and different traditions use light in their winter rituals?
- How do religions remind people about being hopeful in dark times?
- What are some of the stories about light, hopefulness and waiting that are part of religious traditions?

Regroup into the full class. Discuss the questions and write students’ comments on chart paper to emphasize that each student’s perspective is valuable in this learning community. Listen to stories that students tell about traditions from their homes, neighborhoods and faith communities.

Discussion may include:

- Hanukkah menorah
- Diwali diva lamp
- Kwanzaa Kinara (Cultural but not religious)
- Ramadan, Eid & the sighting of the moon
- Christmas lights (outdoors, in windows, on Christmas tree)

Day 2: Making the candle holder

Each student will cut an egg carton down the center, so that they have two rows of six egg-carton-cups. The lid and flaps of the egg carton should be trimmed away so that there is only the row of egg-cups. Students flip egg-cups over, upside down, and puncture the top of each egg carton cup with scissors. The paper candles will later be placed in these holes. If students want more than six candles in their piece, they can simply add more egg-cups from another carton.

Decorate the egg carton using a variety of mediums: watercolor, tempera paint, markers, oil pastel, glitter, etc. Students should decorate their piece to represent the traditions that they celebrate in their families and communities.

Day 3:

Make the flame:

Students use yellow and orange colored tissue paper cut into approximately 1" & ½" squares. Students hold the tissue with one corner up (diamond shape) and twist the bottom corner to make it "flame-like." Make enough "flames" from twisted paper for each candle and set aside.

Make the paper candles with tissue paper "flame" sticking out:

Students should use rectangles of paper approximately 3" x 6" to make the candles. The paper can be any color, and can even be rectangles of wrapping paper or other decorative papers. Lay the 3" x 6" rectangle on table. Put a dab of glue on one of the "flames" and glue 1 ½" in from the side on the 3" side of the rectangle, and down only slightly, ¼ to ½". Roll the paper rectangle into a tiny, tight cylinder and add a touch of glue on the end to keep the paper candle together. The "flame" should be sticking out of the top!

Day 4:

Add candles to candleholders:

Students place the paper candles into their candleholders that have been crafted from egg cartons. Students return to their small group literature circles to discuss the similarities and differences between the stories they read and their own experiences with lighting candles on special occasions.

Closure for the lesson:

Display every student's candleholder in a prominent place. Go for a "candle walk" as a learning community to view and appreciate the display and comment on each student's work. Provide each student with time to say a few words about the candleholder he or she made.

Assessment for the lesson:

- Did students make connections between the earth's cycles of darkness and light and the human need to celebrate light?
- Can students interpret differences in experiences that their peers have based on their various traditions?
- Can students explain how candles are used to mark special occasions?
- Did students apply basic skills to create a candle holder related to their family's or community's traditions?

Chapter IV (6) Extensions:

- Studying and making sun images.
- Exploring the phenomenon of light and scientific properties of shadow through shadow puppets.
- Learning about the lunar cycle and its relation to the earth and its seasons. Included is a lesson on the lunar cycle from Tanenbaum's *Interreligious Understanding Guidebook: Changing Seasons, Changing World*.

Lunar Cycle

INTRODUCTION – SETTING THE FOUNDATION

Objectives:

- Children will learn about the lunar cycle through a continuing class activity and its relation to the earth and its seasons.
- Children will make connections between the earth’s rotation and the seasons.
- Children will notice the change of the “moon’s” appearance as it revolves around the globe, reflecting a light source.
- Children will create a moon journal.

Grades:

K-4

Time needed:

1 class meeting, 45 minutes

Materials needed:

- For teacher demonstration: Lamp (no shade), Globe, Small ball, Information sheet on festivals (included).
- For class activity, Over-size Wall Calendar (To make the calendar, divide several sheets of posterboard into sections appropriate for a month (30-31)/two weeks (14). Make sure each section is large enough for a piece of paper.)
- Paper
- Pencils
- “Draw what the moon looks like tonight” sheet
- Main Moon phases (turn to overhead)

Procedure for the lesson

Anticipatory Set/Hook/Do-Now

Ask students if they know any holidays that fall on the same date every year. Examples may include Christmas (Dec 25), New Year (Jan 1), Kwanzaa (Dec 26–Jan 1), Halloween (Oct 31st), Summer Solstice (June 21), or students’ birthdays.

Now ask students if they know of any holidays that fall on different dates each year. Examples may include Thanksgiving (the fourth Thursday of November in the United States), Eid Al-Fitr (Muslim), Hanukkah (Jewish), Diwali (Hindu), or Chinese New Year (East and South-East Asia).

Review of Previously Learned Material/Connect to Prior Knowledge

Explain to students that many cultures have their own calendars, which are partly or completely based on the movements of the moon. Some examples include the Islamic calendar, the Jewish calendar, the Hindu calendar, the Chinese calendar, etc.

In addition, the moon plays a central role in some harvest festivals (example – the Green Corn festival in North America, the Harvest Moon Festival in East and South-East Asia). Information sheets on these festivals follow for your reference.

Explain that today the children will learn about the relationship between the Earth, the Sun and the Moon.

Mini-lesson

- Have the students form a circle around the lamp, the globe and the small ball placed at the center of the room. Turn out the lights. Turn on the lamp and have a volunteer hold the ball, which will represent the moon. Explain that the lamp represents the sun.
- Place the globe a short distance from the lamp and the ball/moon held by the student a short distance from the globe. Ask the students to observe the shadows.
- Explain how the rotation of the Earth works, and rotate the globe around the static lamp, asking the students to notice what light is like in their part of the world at different times. Explain that the seasons are caused by the Earth's tilt and the Earth's revolution around the sun.
- Ask students: What does the moon look like?
- Explain that the moon itself is not actually changing shape, but rather, it is a reflection of its position in relation to the sun and the Earth. Have the moon student revolve around the earth, stopping in different places along the way.
- Each time the student stops, ask the class what the moon looks like at each point. The students should notice a pattern as the moon travels around the earth.

Questions can include:

How much of the moon is dark?

How much of the moon is lit?

How does it change shape?

Is there any time the moon is completely lit?

What do you notice as the moon revolves around the Earth?

Guided Practice

1. Regroup as a class and show the “Main Moon Phases” overhead. Ask if students recognize the moon looking these ways, and if they saw parallels with the demonstration.
2. Explain that as a class, you are going to keep a moon journal, where each day for the next few weeks, a volunteer is going to take home a “Draw the Moon” handout and draw the moon for that night. Then, it will be posted on that day's class calendar.

Teacher Information Sheet on the Moon

Day/Night

- Caused by Earth's rotation on its axis ("spin").
- One Earth rotation takes 24 hours, therefore we have 24-hour days: roughly 12 hours of darkness when we are facing away from the sun and 12 hours of light when we are facing the sun directly.
- Earth spins counterclockwise, thus the sun appears to rise in the East and set in the West.

Observing the Same Face of the Moon from Earth

- We always see the same face of the Moon when looking from Earth.
- On any given night/day, every place on the Earth sees the same face of the Moon.
- This occurs because the Moon spins on its axis once for every time it revolves around the Earth (28.5 days).

Phases of the Moon

- Every 28 days, we see a complete cycle of Moon phases: new moon, waxing crescent, first quarter, waxing gibbous, full, waning gibbous, third quarter, waning crescent.
- Thus, the Moon changes in appearance gradually each night.
- Phases are caused by the relative position of the Moon with respect to the Earth and Sun.
- The Moon's relative position changes as it revolves around the Earth.
- Waxing means increasing in size. A waxing phase appears to be lit on the right side.
- Waning means decreasing in size. A waning phase appears to be lit on the left side.
- One half of the Moon is always facing the sun and therefore one half is always lit.
- Because the Moon's position relative to the Earth is the same on any given day regardless of where one might be on Earth, the same phase of the Moon is visible from everywhere on Earth for any given night/day.
- Because the Moon revolves around the Earth in a counterclockwise direction, the Moon rises later each day (approximately 1 hour).
- The Moon rises in the east and sets in the west because the Earth rotates in a counterclockwise direction.
- The Moon is in the sky for roughly 12 hours in a 24-hour period. Therefore, if the full moon rises at 6 PM, it will set at 6 AM.
- The Full Moon rises at sunset and the new moon rises at sunrise. Based on the position of the Moon in its orbit around the Earth, it is possible to determine the approximate rise time of each phase.

Eclipses

Solar eclipses:

- The sun is blocked (eclipsed) by the Moon, thus the Moon is between the Earth and Sun.
- In this position, the Moon is in a new phase.
- Totality lasts only a few minutes.
- The shadow that is cast on Earth covers a relatively small area, and so can be seen from only a few places on Earth.
- Can occur twice per (Earth) year — when the Moon, Earth and Sun are aligned and in the same plane.

Lunar eclipses:

- The Earth is between the Sun and the Moon and casts a shadow on the Moon, thus causing it to appear grey, black, or red.
- In this position, the Moon is in a full phase.
- Totality lasts a few hours.
- Lunar eclipses can be seen from any place on the Earth that is experiencing night at the time of eclipse.
- Can occur twice per (Earth) year — when the Moon, Earth, and Sun are in the same plane.

Seasons

- Seasons are caused by the tilt of the Earth (23.5°) and the Earth's revolution around the Sun. Even though the Earth's orbit around the Sun is slightly elliptical, the distance of the Earth from the Sun IS NOT the cause of the seasons. In fact, the Earth is closest to the Sun while the Northern Hemisphere is experiencing winter.
- In the Northern Hemisphere, the Sun appears lower in the sky during the winter (is at its lowest noontime angular height on December 21), and higher in the sky during the summer (is at its highest noontime angular height on June 21).
- In winter, the Sun appears to rise in the southeast and set in the southwest, and the day length is at its shortest. In summer, the Sun appears to rise in the northeast and set in the northwest, and the day length is at its longest.
- In winter, the Sun's rays are less direct.
- In summer, the Sun's rays are more direct.
- Seasons are reversed in the Northern and Southern Hemispheres.
- The Sun is never directly overhead (at a 90° angular height) at any latitude further north than the Tropic of Cancer (23.5°N), or further South than the Tropic of Capricorn (23.5°S). Within the tropics (23.5°S–23.5°N) the sun is directly overhead two times each year.

Phases of the Moon



new moon



new crescent



first quarter



waxing gibbous



full moon



waning gibbous



last quarter



old crescent

Name _____

Lunar Cycle

(EXCERPTED FROM QA INTERNATIONAL)

What does the moon look like tonight?

Draw a picture of the moon!