



Name _____

Date _____

Festival of Lights

Directions: Read the passage. Then complete the activity.

At Hanukkah, Jews remember the time when they dedicated the second temple again. The temple stood in Jerusalem.

At one time, Alexander the Great had conquered many lands. He had taken over the Jews. He said people could continue to practice their religion. The Jews kept their religion, but they blended in with the Greek culture.

Later, another ruler came to power. He did mean things to the Jews. He put a Greek priest in the temple and did other unholy things. He would not let them practice their religion any longer. Two groups joined together to revolt against this bad treatment. They succeeded, and the Jews dedicated the temple again.

Candles burned in the temple during the ceremony. They were in a holder called a menorah. Oil was needed to keep the candles burning. The candles were supposed to burn every night. There was only enough pure oil left for one day. It would take eight days to get new oil ready for the menorah. A miracle happened. The oil lasted for eight days and kept burning until there was new pure oil ready.

This holiday celebrates the miracle of the oil, not the victory. Jews do not celebrate war. Every year, they light the menorah in remembrance. It has nine candles. There is one candle for each of the eight days the oil burned. The ninth candle is called the servant candle. It is used to light the other candles. It stands at a different height than the other candles. On different nights, various blessings are said over the candles. One blessing is a prayer. Another blessing gives thanks for the miracles the ancestors experienced. A third blessing gives thanks for reaching this time of year again.

Families place their menorah in the window for all to see. This command has been handed down to Jews through the years. It says to let everyone know about the miracles. Jews celebrate that light came out of darkness in many different ways.

Activity: Think about good things that have happened in your family. Write one or more blessings or words of thanks about these good things.



Name _____

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Hanukkah Traditions

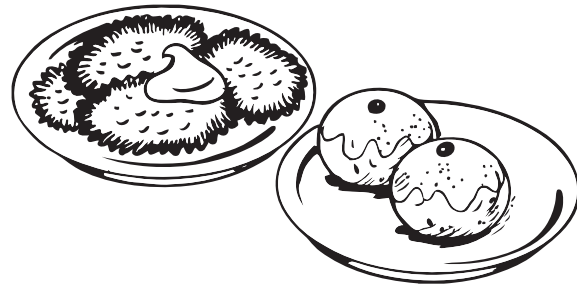
Directions: Read the passage. Then complete the activity.

Jewish culture has many traditions. Families hand down their customs and beliefs from one generation to the next. One Hanukkah tradition is lighting the menorah. The menorah holds eight candles. Each candle stands for a day the oil in the temple burned miraculously. A ninth candle is used to light the other candles. As families gather around the menorah, they may sing songs.

At first, the dreidel had a serious purpose. At one time, it was against the law to study the Jewish Torah. The men would keep a dreidel handy. If an official came around, they would pretend to play with the dreidel. The letters on the dreidel stand for words that form a phrase. It says that a great miracle happened there. The letters also stand for words that tell how to play the game.

Many celebrations have traditional foods. During Hanukkah, Jews eat fried foods. This stands for the oil that burned. A common food is latkes, or potato pancakes. There are many ways to make and eat this food. In Israel, people eat jelly doughnuts that have been cooked in oil.

People often give gifts to children. This might be a small amount of money, known as "gelt." Some believe this tradition comes from the time after the revolt. At that time, Jews could make their own coins. This tradition symbolizes Jewish independence. Today, people often give one another gold foil-wrapped chocolate coins.



Activity: Think about how these traditions are similar to or different from things you do with your family. Write about traditions your family keeps for special holidays.
