

CELEBRATIONS

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Hanukkah

Teacher's notes

Age: Adults

Level: Intermediate–Upper-intermediate (B1–B2)

Time: 60–90 minutes

Activity: In this lesson, students will:

1. read, discuss and discover facts about Hanukkah/Chanukah
2. deduce which words are missing from a traditional song
3. read and learn about portmanteau words

Language focus: vocabulary related to Hanukkah, portmanteau words

Materials: one copy of the worksheet per student

NOTE ABOUT SPELLING: In Hebrew, Chanukah/Hanukkah is pronounced with the guttural-sounding letter chet. The letter 'h' or the 'ch' sound is the closest English equivalent. So, some people spell and pronounce it 'Chanukah' and others 'Hanukkah'.

Hanukkah dates:

2018: December 2–10

2019: December 22–30

2020: December 10–18

2021: November 28–December 6

Procedure

1. Warmer

Students match the images to the short descriptions to ensure they understand the content of the following tasks and texts.

Key: a2, b1, c5, d4, e3

2. Find the information

In pairs, students read the text and find the information to answer the questions.

Key:

1. Over 2,000 years ago in a temple in Jerusalem.
2. The Seleucids (Syrian-Greeks).
3. Judah.

4. Although there was only enough holy oil to light the candle for one day, it lasted for eight days.

5. (Holy purified) olive oil.

3. Key words

Students go back over the text to find the key words and write them next to the definitions. They should try to notice how the words are used in context. Please note that the definitions are in the order that the words appear in the text. Also, when the words are verbs, the meaning of the infinitive definition is given.

Key:

1. miracle
2. rule
3. force
4. defeat
5. reclaim
6. recite
7. synagogue
8. foil

4. Hanukkah song

Based on the information they have already read, students decide which verbs are missing from this traditional Hanukkah song. There are many versions of the song online so students could listen to a couple and check their answers.

Here, for example, is the song in Yiddish and English and then Hebrew with images of menorahs, latkas, dreidel etc: www.youtube.com/watch?v=KxH0xF84h_0

A more upbeat version is this one from Canadian rock band the Barenaked Ladies (who sing the theme to the well-known US TV series *The Big Bang Theory*): www.youtube.com/watch?v=jLqG3BqMC8E

Key:

1. light
2. dance
3. play
4. eat
5. burning
6. remind

5. Portmanteau words

Students read about Christmukkah. Then in a. they should think of other (common) portmanteau words that they already know in English, e.g. *brunch*, *smog*, *motel*, *labradoodle*, etc (lists of these words can easily be found online). Then in b. they decide which words have been combined to make these

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five relatively new portmanteau words before they check their answers and the words' meanings by skimming or reading the blog entry at: www.macmillandictionaryblog.com/your-favourite-portmanteau-words

Key:

Bankster = *banker* + *gangster*. A person who works for a bank who is seen as dishonest.

Floordrobe = *floor* + *wardrobe*. Clothing that has been left on the floor of a room instead of being put away.

Tofurkey = *tofu* + *turkey*. A US vegetarian turkey replacement, usually made from tofu.

Spanglish = *Spanish* + *English*. A combination language that uses words and idioms from both Spanish and English.

Glamping = *glamour* + *camping*. A form of luxurious camping, staying in a spacious tent with a bed and other items of furniture.

6. Discussion

Students discuss the most likely reasons for the merging of the two holidays, Christmas and Hanukkah; e.g. both fall around the same time of year, both bring family members together, we may not have time in our modern lives to celebrate two separate holidays, etc.

Then they think about which other holidays they would like to merge and which names they could give them. These can be as inventive as they like, e.g. *Zoe's birthday plus Halloween = Zo-bir-ween*.

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Worksheet

Exercise 1: Warmer

Match the descriptions (1-5) to each of the things connected with Hanukkah (a-e).



a. dreidel / sevivon



b. menorah



c. latke



d. Horah



e. Hanukkah gelt

1. A tall silver seven or nine-branched candelabra. The branches are positioned in one line, and each branch holds one special candle.
2. A four-sided spinning top that people play with during Hanukkah.
3. Money and/or chocolate coins given to Jewish children for the festival of Hanukkah.
4. A traditional dance at weddings and holidays, in which people dance together in a circle to traditional Jewish folk music.
5. A potato pancake which is usually fried in oil and served with apple sauce or sour cream.

Exercise 2: Find the information

Read the text about Hanukkah. Answer the questions below with information from the text.

1. Where and when did the miracle of Hanukkah take place?

2. Who did the group of Jews reclaim the temple from?

3. Who was the leader of the group of Jews?

4. What miracle took place?

5. What kind of oil was used to light the temple menorah?

Hanukkah



Hanukkah is the Jewish eight-day 'festival of lights', celebrated with a nightly menorah lighting, special prayers, fried foods, games and music.

Hanukkah begins on the twenty-fifth day of Kislev, which is the ninth month in the Jewish calendar. This falls any time between late November and late December.

Hanukkah celebrates a miracle that took place over 2,000 year ago, according to the Torah, the Jewish holy book. At this time, the Holy Land (an area between the eastern shore of the Mediterranean and the River Jordan) was ruled by the Seleucids (Syrian-Greeks), who tried to force the Jewish people living there to worship Greek gods. Although there were only a few of them, a small group of Jews, called Maccabees and led by a man named Judah, defeated a group of Seleucids and reclaimed the city of Jerusalem for the Jewish faith.

However, when they wanted to light the menorah in Jerusalem's temple, they found that only a tiny amount of the holy purified olive oil had survived the battle; hardly enough to light even one candle. But they managed to light the menorah and miraculously the one-day supply of oil that had survived the battle lasted for eight days.

Today, the nightly lighting of the menorah is therefore a central part of Hanukkah. Most families place their menorah in a doorway or window so that everyone can see it. On the first night, just one candle is lit. On the second night, a second is lit. Often, family members take turns so that they all can light at least one of the candles. By the eighth night of Hanukkah, all eight candles are burning. On each night of Hanukkah, special prayers are recited before the menorah is lit, and traditional songs are sung afterwards. The menorah is also lit in synagogues and other public places such as parks and shopping malls.

Because oil is a central feature of the Hanukkah miracle, fried foods such as latkes and deep-fried doughnuts are usually eaten.

At Hanukkah children and adults play a traditional game with a 'dreidel' on which is written four Hebrew letters. In the game, players win or lose their pile of coins, nuts, or sweets depending which letter the dreidel lands on when it stops spinning.

The giving of gifts is also a part of today's Hanukkah celebrations. In the past, money was given to children to reward them for their good behaviour. Today this has developed into the giving of foil-covered chocolate money called 'Hanukkah gelt'.

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3. Key words

Find the words in the article that match the definitions below.

1. An event that cannot be explained according to the laws of nature and is considered to be an act of God.

2. Govern and have control of an area. _____
3. Make someone do something that they do not want to do, for example by using or threatening to use violence.

4. Win against someone in a fight or battle. _____
5. To receive an item back that somebody has taken from you. _____
6. Say a poem, story or prayer that you have learnt to other people. _____
7. A building used by Jewish people for worship and religious study. _____
8. Very light thin sheets of metal used for wrapping things, especially food. _____

4. Hanukkah song



Decide which verbs are missing from these song lyrics. Then listen to the song online to check your answers.

Hanukkah, oh Hanukkah

Come (1) _____ the menorah

Let's have a party

We'll all (2) _____ the horah

Gather round the table, we'll give you a treat

Dreidels (sevivonim) to (3) _____ with, and latkes to (4) _____

And while we are playing

The candles are (5) _____ low

One for each night, they shed a sweet light

To (6) _____ us of days long ago

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Worksheet

5. Portmanteau words

Portmanteau word = a word that combines the sound and meaning of two other words

Chrimukkah is a portmanteau word used sometimes to describe the merging of the celebrations of Hanukkah and Christmas in interfaith families. The term made its way into everyday English at the beginning of this century when it was used in a US TV series that was popular with teenagers and young adults.

a. Do you know any other portmanteau words in English?

b. Which two words have been combined to make the portmanteau words below, and what do you think they mean?

bankster = _____ + _____

floordrobe = _____ + _____

tofurkey = _____ + _____

spanglish = _____ + _____

glamping = _____ + _____

You can find the answers here: www.macmillandictionaryblog.com/your-favourite-portmanteau-words

6. Discussion

- Why do you think some people have tried, or found it convenient to, merge Hanukkah and Christmas?
- Which other holidays would you like to merge, and what new names would you give to these new holidays?
- How would you celebrate your new festival – which foods would you eat, what gifts would you give, etc?