

What do you know about Holi? Read the article to find out about this very colourful festival, celebrated by Hindus all over the world.

Tasks

Do the preparation task first. Then read the article and do the exercises.

Preparation task

Match the definitions (a–h) with the vocabulary (1–8).

Vocabulary

1. to originate
2. evil
3. a bonfire
4. powder
5. a spice
6. an inclusive spirit
7. to identify as something

Definition

- a. very bad and harmful
- b. a dry substance made up of extremely small pieces
- c. an atmosphere of including everybody
- d. to come from a particular place or time
- e. to recognise or say that you belong to a particular group of people
- f. a large, outdoor fire
- g. something that comes from plants that you use in cooking to give a strong taste

Holi

What and when is Holi?

Holi is an ancient Hindu festival that originated in India and Nepal and is now celebrated in many places around the world. Holi marks the beginning of spring. The date changes each year, depending on the full moon, but it is held sometime between the end of February and the middle of March and lasts a night and a day.

What does Holi celebrate?

Holi is a celebration of good winning over evil. It is also a time to forgive people, make peace and repair broken relationships, as well as playing and having fun.

What happens on Holika Dahan?

The festivities start on the night before Holi, which is called Holika Dahan. People build bonfires that represent good winning over evil and the end of winter. In ancient stories, the god Vishna destroyed a powerful evil being, called Holika, through fire. People start collecting

wood several days before so that they can build really big fires, and on Holika Dahan they meet around the bonfire to sing, dance and do other traditional activities.

What happens on Rangwali Holi?

The next day is called Rangwali Holi. In the morning everyone goes outside and throws coloured powders and water at each other. Some people use water guns and water balloons. There is music and drumming, and people run and laugh in the streets and parks. After a few hours everyone is wet and covered in a rainbow of different colours. In the evening people put on clean clothes and go and visit their friends and family. They share traditional food and drink, such as *gujiya*, a sweet made with dried fruit and nuts, and *thandai*, a delicious cold milk drink with nuts and spices.

Why do people throw colours?

Some people say that the colours are a way of celebrating the many colours of the flowers in springtime. But in some places, people also tell a story about the god Krishna. Krishna was passionately in love with a girl called Radha, but he was worried that she would not love him because their skins were different colours. Radha let him paint her face the same colour as his to show that she loved him. It is said that lovers nowadays often paint their faces the same colour during Holi to remember this story.

Can everyone celebrate Holi?

Holi celebrations are hundreds of years old. But recently, Holi-themed events have become popular with a new generation in Europe and North America. Many thousands of people go to Holi events, attracted by the bright colours and playful atmosphere. Holi has a friendly and inclusive spirit, so non-Hindus are often welcomed to join the celebrations. If you don't identify as Hindu, it's respectful to learn about how Holi is celebrated in India and Nepal before participating in this colourful festival. Happy Holi!

Tasks

Task 1

Are the sentences true or false?

	Answer	
1. Holi is a festival that celebrates the beginning of winter.	True	False
2. The Holi festival lasts for about a week.	True	False
3. On the night before Holi, people meet outside, around a big fire.	True	False
4. At Holi, people have fun throwing colours and water at each other.	True	False
5. People share traditional food and drinks with friends and family at Holi.	True	False
6. A very old story about the god Krishna, and a girl, Radha, explains why there are bonfires at Holi.	True	False
7. Only Hindu people are allowed to celebrate Holi.	True	False
8. Holi is also popular outside India and Nepal.	True	False

Task 2

Put the words in the correct order.

- an ancient and Nepal. originated Holi is in India festival that
- winning a celebration Holi is over of good evil.
- a time Holi is relationships. repair broken to make peace and
- Holika the name Dahan is Holi. of the night before
- Holi is Rangwali the day the name of throw colours. when people
- often join non-Hindus the celebrations. Holi has atmosphere, and a friendly

Discussion

Do you celebrate Holi? Is there a festival with lots of colours where you live?

Answers

Preparation task

1. d
2. a
3. f
4. b
5. g
6. c
7. e

Task 1

1. False
2. False
3. True
4. True
5. True
6. False
7. False
8. True

Task 2

1. Holi is an ancient festival that originated in India and Nepal.
2. Holi is a celebration of good winning over evil.
3. Holi is a time to make peace and repair broken relationships.
4. Holika Dahan is the name of the night before Holi.
5. Rangwali Holi is the name of the day when people throw colours.
6. Holi has a friendly atmosphere and non-Hindus often join the celebrations.