

Name _____

What is Kwanzaa?

Kwanzaa is a special celebration that takes place every year from December 26th to January 1st. It's a time for African Americans to celebrate their heritage and culture. The name "Kwanzaa" comes from a Swahili phrase that means "first fruits," and it was inspired by African harvest festivals.



Kwanzaa was created in 1966 by Dr. Maulana Karenga, a professor of Africana studies. Dr. Karenga wanted a way for African Americans to celebrate their African heritage and to promote unity and pride in their community. He created Kwanzaa with these ideas in mind.

One of the most important parts of Kwanzaa is the seven principles, or "Nguzo Saba" in Swahili, that guide the celebration. Each of the seven days of Kwanzaa is dedicated to one of these principles: Unity, Self-determination, Collective Work and Responsibility, Cooperative Economics, Purpose, Creativity, and Faith. These principles are about working together, supporting each other, and making the community better.

So, how do people celebrate Kwanzaa? Each family might celebrate a little differently, but there are some common traditions. Every night, families gather together and a child lights one of the candles on the Kinara, a special candle holder. There are seven candles: three red, three green, and one black, which represent the African people, the struggle they have gone through, and the hope for the future.

After the candle is lit, the family talks about the principle for that day. They might share stories, sing songs, or discuss ways they can live out that principle in their own lives. Kwanzaa is also a time for feasting! Families and friends often get together to enjoy delicious meals.

Gifts are also given during Kwanzaa, but they're usually handmade and meaningful, rather than expensive store-bought items. The focus is on celebrating the bonds of family, community, and culture.

Remember, Kwanzaa is a wonderful time of year to learn about and celebrate African heritage, and to come together as a community!

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Reading Comprehension Questions

1. When is Kwanzaa celebrated?
2. Who created Kwanzaa and why?
3. What are the seven principles of Kwanzaa?
4. What does the Kinara in Kwanzaa symbolize?
5. How is Kwanzaa celebrated?

