

Teaching Children About The “Other” December Holidays

by Alyssa Chirco.

When most of us think of December holidays, we automatically think of Christmas. We see visions of Christmas trees, reindeer, and, of course, Santa Claus. However, there are many other holidays celebrated in the month of December. By teaching our children about the holidays other than the ones we celebrate in our own family, we can help them to embrace diversity and better understand the increasingly global and diverse world around them. We are all familiar with our own family traditions. If we celebrate Christmas, we most likely decorate a Christmas tree every year. We may bake gingerbread cookies or go to church to listen to the Nativity Story. If we celebrate Chanukah, we probably light a menorah. Often though, we don't know a lot about the traditions that are associated with holidays other than our own, and this can make it difficult to teach our children about them. Don't worry; you're in luck! I've compiled a list of five of the most commonly celebrated December holidays. You will also find a brief description of each and plenty of ideas and activities to help both you and your child branch out and learn more about December celebrations around the world.

Christmas: In the United States, Christmas is the most commonly celebrated December holiday. Some families celebrate primarily by giving gifts and waiting for Santa Claus, while others focus more on Christmas as a religious celebration of the birth of Christ. If you don't usually celebrate Christmas, but want to teach your child about the holiday, you might start by reading the [Classic Tale Of The Birth Of Jesus](#) or even by attending a Christmas service at a local Christian church. Christmas is a celebration of "peace on earth" and "good will toward men," an important message to share with children no matter what your beliefs.

Chanukah: Also known as Hannukah, this is one of the most important holidays in the Jewish faith. Chanukah is an eight-day festival designed to celebrate the triumph of light over darkness. The holiday commemorates the victory of a small group of Jews over a powerful Greek army, and the miracle of the one-day supply of oil that burned for eight days.

Kwanzaa: Unlike Christmas and Chanukah, Kwanzaa is not a religious holiday. It was developed in 1966 by [Dr. Malauna Karenga](#) as a way for African-Americans to connect with and celebrate their African roots. Kwanzaa is a seven-day celebration of [Nguzo Saba](#), the seven principles of African family, community, and culture. Kwanzaa is celebrated from December 26 to January 1 through the lighting of a special menorah called a kinara. Often, homes are decorated with colorful African cloths of black, red, and green, and people sometimes dress in traditional African clothing. Children usually receive small gifts that are symbols of their African heritage.

Saint Nicholas Day: Saint Nicholas Day is a holiday that is celebrated throughout Europe, usually on December 6. In most countries, it is meant to honor the [legend of Saint Nicholas](#), who was known as a giver of gifts. In countries like Belgium and the Netherlands, children leave their shoes by the fireplace on the night of December 5, and awake in the morning to find that Saint Nicholas has filled the shoes with small treats and toys.

Las Posadas: The Mexican holiday of Las Posadas is celebrated for nine days, from December 16 to 24. The *posadas* are re-enactments of the journey made by Mary and Joseph to Bethlehem, that take place each night at a different home within the community. Guests gather at a new neighborhood home each night, dressed as shepards, angels, or even Mary and Joseph, and sing songs and ask for shelter. When the hosts open their home, there is a big party with traditional Mexican foods like ponche and bunuelos, and at the end of the night there is a pinata shaped like a Christmas star.

Weather Art

Rain, clouds, snow, and sun, making all types of weather is really fun! To begin, fold a sheet of white construction paper into four equal columns.

First column: Press on blue tempera paint fingerprints to make rain.

Second column: Color the space blue, then glue on bits of white paper doilies to make snow.

Third column: Sponge-paint a yellow circle sun in the center, then add rays with gold glitter glue.

Fourth column: Color the space gray, then glue on torn pieces of cotton balls for clouds.



A Dreidel Snack

Provide each child with a paper plate, a large marshmallow, a kisses chocolate, a pretzel stick, and access to the vanilla frosting that has been heated slightly to thin it. Have each child push their pretzel stick into one end of her marshmallow. Then instruct them to hold the pretzel stick handle and dip their marshmallow in frosting. Have them unwrap the kisses chocolate and place it's flat side on the bottom of the marshmallow. Invite the children to spin their dreidel into their mouth!

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To: Miss Maria's Koalas

The Book Nook:

Chanukah Lights Everywhere

by: Michael L. Rosen

A little boy and his family celebrate the Festival of Lights in their home in the city. Each night something happens to remind him of the number of candles they have just lit



The Night Before Christmas

by: Mary Engelbreit

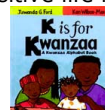
'Twas the night before Christmas, when all through the house, not a creature was stirring, not even a mouse. The stockings were hung by the chimney with care, In hopes that St. Nicholas soon would be there.



K is for Kwanzaa

by Juwanda Ford

K is for Kwanzaa explains different facets of the holiday, from A to Z. Each letter of the alphabet represents an English or Swahili word, accompanied by a simple definition explaining its importance or relation to Kwanzaa. For example: A is for Africa -- Africa is the second largest continent. It has many countries. African Americans' ancestors came from Africa. Kwanzaa is a holiday that celebrates the rich heritage of Africa. An introduction describes the origin of the holiday and the Seven Kwanzaa Principles, that guide the seven-day celebration and teach positive life lessons.



ImagiNation Learning Center

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Koala Kingdom

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December Birthday's!



Miss Maria



Michael Hong
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What to Expect in
Kindergarten this
Month...

Lessons:

Weather
Cultural Differences
Rhyming words
Sight words
Shapes
Extending patterns
Numbers

Important Dates:

Santa Visit ILC! 12/15
Holiday Parties 12/23
Center Closed for Holiday
12/26
Winter Break 12/ 27-30
No school – Center Open

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