



Educator's Guide

A Kids Book About Diwali by Chhavi Arya Bhargava | Grades K-6 | Read-aloud 12-15 minutes



This book does three things. It explains what Diwali is. It retells the Ramayana story behind the holiday. And it shares the author's own memory of being the only child at her school who celebrated.

That last part is what makes the book useful beyond a holiday lesson. It gives every student, whether they celebrate or not, a way to talk about belonging.

Before reading (5 minutes)

1. What holidays does your family celebrate? What do you do to celebrate them?
2. Have you heard of Diwali before? What do you already know about it?
3. Diwali is called the festival of lights. Why might light matter in a celebration?
4. Look closely at the cover. What do you notice? (The dots on the letter i are tiny flames.)

During reading: where to pause

Stop here	Ask the class
After the author says her name and how to say it	How do you say your name? Does anyone ever say it wrong?
After deep and avari are explained	What would a row of lights look like at night?
After she describes feeling left out at school	Has there been a time you felt like the only one? Give quiet think time. Do not call on anyone.
Just before the Ramayana begins	You are about to hear a story people have told for about 2,500 years.
After Ravana takes Sita to the island	Make a prediction. How will they find her?
After the city lights diyas to guide Ram home	Now, why do you think people light diyas every year?
After the five days	Which day sounds most like a holiday you already celebrate?



After reading: discussion questions

1. Why do people light diyas during Diwali? What does the light stand for?
2. The book names four things Diwali celebrates: good over evil, light over darkness, knowledge over ignorance, and justice over inequality. Which one feels most important to you? Why?
3. In Northern India the story is about Ram. In Southern India it is about Krishna defeating Narakasura. Why might the same holiday have different stories in different places?
4. The author's mom sent sweets to school, but nobody knew what they were for. What could a classmate have said or done that day?
5. The book says you do not have to celebrate Diwali to wish someone a happy Diwali. What is one thing you could actually do this year?
6. Day 4 is a new year. What would you want to leave behind, and what would you want to start fresh?

Key vocabulary

These pronunciations are the ones given in the book. Say each word out loud before students see it written.

Word	Say it	What it means
Diwali	Di-Vah-Lee	The festival of lights. From deep (light) and avali (row). It means "a row of lights."
Deepavali	Dee-pah-va-lee	The Sanskrit name for the same festival.
Bandi Chor Divas	Bun-dee Chor Dee-vus	The Sikh name for the day. It honors the Sikh struggle for freedom.
diya	dee-ya	A small oil lamp. Families place them in rows and put one in every room.
rangoli	rung-go-lee	Colored patterns made on the floor with flowers, powder, lentils, rice or sand.
puja	poo-ja	A prayer, done at home or in a temple.
Aarti	aar-tee	A song sung at the end of the puja while holding a diya.
Dhanteras	Dun-teh-rus	Day 1. Cleaning, buying something new, and making sweets.
Choti Diwali	Cho-tee Di-Vah-Lee	Day 2. Choti means small.
Bhai Duj	Bhai Dooj	Day 5, Brother's Day. Siblings and cousins share a meal and play games.
Ramayana	Ra-my-un-a	The story told in the book. It is about 2,500 years old.



Ways to extend the lesson

Language arts

Retell the Ramayana in six panels. Compare the short version in the book with a longer retelling. What got left out, and does it change the story?

Math

Diwali lasts five days and moves each year. Calculate date spans, or work out roughly what year the festival began if it is about 2,500 years old.

Science

Diwali falls on the new moon. Chart the moon phases and ask why the darkest night was chosen. A diya needs fuel, a wick and air. Label all three.

Social studies

Map where Diwali is celebrated. Compare it with other festivals of light around the world.

Art

Design a rangoli using symmetry. Decorate a paper diya. Both connect directly to pages in the book.

Social and emotional learning

Use the author's school memory to talk about what it feels like to be unseen, and what specific actions change that.

Six things worth getting right

1. **Diwali is not only Hindu.** Hindus, Sikhs, Jains and Buddhists all observe it. Sikhs mark Bandi Chor Divas.
2. **No two families celebrate the same way.** Do not present one version as the version.
3. **Not everyone uses fireworks.** Some families skip them on purpose to cut pollution.
4. **Do not make one student the class expert** unless they volunteer.
5. **The date moves.** Diwali follows a lunar calendar and lands in October or November on the new moon. Check it each year.
6. **Flame safety.** Never light anything without an adult.

Read-aloud tip. When Hanuman shows up, the book gives you an "ooh-ooh-ah-ah." Let the whole class do it. It is the loudest and best page in the book.

Standards: CCSS RI.K-5.1, RI.2-4.3, RL.2-4.2, SL.K-5.1 | NCSS themes: Culture; Time, Continuity and Change; Global Connections | CASEL: social awareness. Codes are given at grade-band level. Map to your state standards as needed.