

Celebrate Kwanzaa in the United States

<http://www.scholastic.com/teachers/lesson-plan/celebrate-kwanzaa-united-states>

By Steven Hicks

Grades: **PreK–K**

Unit Plan: **Everybody Celebrates!**

Overview

Kwanzaa, established in 1966, is a holiday in which African-Americans remember their heritage and remind people of the importance of sharing with family and friends. Kwanzaa begins on December 26 and continues for 7 days. In this lesson, children will learn about the celebration and will discuss the seven principles on which Kwanzaa is based: unity, self-determination, collective responsibility, cooperative economics, purpose, creativity, and faith. This lesson helps children understand how different people might celebrate the holidays during the same time as they do, but in a different way.

Objective

Students Will: Develop an understanding of how some African-Americans remember and celebrate their African heritage.

1. Participate in a chant about the seven continents.
2. Identify Africa on the globe.
3. Understand that there are other languages in the world.
4. Develop oral language skills.
5. Encourage classroom community.

Materials

1. Seven paper-towel rolls
2. A cardboard base
3. Yellow and orange tissue paper
4. Globe
5. Green, black, and red paint
6. Paintbrushes
7. Painting smocks
8. Chart paper
9. Seven different colored markers
10. For the Kwanzaa Karamu (optional):
Red, green, and black construction paper for invitations and paper chains
Traditional African music and CD player

Set Up and Prepare

1. Make a Kinara (Kee-nah-rah) out of seven paper-towel rolls (the candles) using the cardboard as a base.
2. I like to have my students help paint the Kinara during free choice time. I set up paintbrushes, smocks, and cups of green, black, and red paint in an area for them to use during this time. You can have them paint at an appropriate time during your daily schedule.
3. Each day before the students arrive, place a tissue paper flame on the candle.
4. Create a chart paper entitled "Seven Kwanzaa Principles."
5. If you choose to have a Kwanzaa Karamu (a feast and cultural program on the last day):
Ask parents to bring in fruit-kabobs on the last day.
Have the children make Kwanzaa invitations from colored paper in the shape of a map of Africa.
Decorate the room with red, green, and black construction paper chains and
Play traditional African music.

Directions

Day 1

Step 1: Show the children the globe and tell them that it is a model of the planet on which we live: Earth. Indicate that the blue areas represent water and the colored areas represent land. The large land areas are called continents. Point out each of the seven continents. Teach them this chant about the continents:

North America (touch your left shoulder in rhythm to the syllables)

South America (touch your right shoulder in rhythm to the syllables)

Europe (clap two times for the syllables)

Africa (touch your left hip in rhythm to the syllables)

Asia (touch your right hip in rhythm to the syllables)

Australia (roll your hands in a circular motion in front of you)

Antarctica (continue rolling hands all the way to over your head with arms outstretched in a V)

Step 2: Show the children the location of Africa and its location in relation to the United States. Tell the children that many Americans have ancestors from Africa. For this reason, sometimes they are called African-Americans. Beginning December 26th, the day after Christmas, some African-Americans celebrate a holiday that helps them remember their ancestors' homeland. This celebration is called Kwanzaa meaning "first fruits," which comes from the language of Swahili. The celebration does not last one day; it lasts seven days! Each day there is a different word to help us think about our lives and our future. And each day, they light a candle on the Kinara (Kee-nah-rah) or candle-holder. Show them the seven paper tubes glued to the cardboard base. Tell them that today, during free choice time, they can help paint the Kinara. The first three candles will be red for the people's struggle; the middle candle will be black to represent the people; and the last three will be green for the future and hope.

Step 3: Set out paint cups, paintbrushes, and smocks and allow children to help paint the Kinara during free choice time.

Day 2

The first day: Umoja (unity) (oo-MOE-jah)

Before the children arrive at school, add the tissue paper flame to the first "candle" (the black one in center).

Step 1: Sit with the children in a circle. Tell them that this is the first day of our Kwanzaa celebration. During Kwanzaa, we greet each other by saying, "Habari Gani (ha-BAH-ree GAH-nee), which means, "What's new?" The answer is the principle for the day. Tell the students that each day you will ask them, "Habari Gani?" Each day, they should answer with the principle for that day. Then you want them to share with the class how they show that principle or what they could do to show that principle throughout the day. The teacher and any other adults in the classroom always begin to model an example. Today the word is Umojo or unity. Unity means we work and play together as one. Discuss its meaning with the class. Write the principle on the chart paper entitled Seven Kwanzaa Principles. Use a different color marker for each principle so it stands out.

Step 2: Ask each student, "Habari Gani?" Encourage them to reply, "Umoja," and then tell what that means to them and how they can show unity today. Each day, repeat the same routine with the new principle, adding a flame before the children enter the classroom.

Day 3

The second day: Kujichagulia (self determination) (koo-jee-cha-goo-LEE-ah)

Before the children arrive at school, add the tissue paper flame to the red "candle" to the left of the black center one.

Step 1: In the circle, ask the children, "Habari Gani?" Encourage the students to reply "Kujichajulia" Talk about self determination and have the students share about what choices they make each day. Add the principle to the chart paper, using a different color marker.

Day 4:

The third day: Ujima (collective work and responsibility) (oo-JEE-mah)

Before the children arrive at school, add the tissue paper flame to the green "candle" to the right of the black center one.

Step 1: In the circle, ask the children, "Habari Gani?" Encourage the students to reply "Ujima." Talk about teamwork and responsibility and have the students share about how they help each other and solve problems. Add the principle to the chart paper, using a different color marker.

Day 5

The fourth day: Ujamaa (cooperative economics) (oo-JAH-mah)

Before the children arrive at school, add the tissue paper flame to the red "candle," two to the left of the black center one.

Step 1: In the circle, ask the children, "Habari Gani?" Encourage the students to reply "Ujamaa." Talk about sharing and have the students tell about a time when they shared money or when someone has shared money with them. Add the principle to the chart paper, using a different color marker.

Day 6

The fifth day: Nia (purpose) (nee-AH) - To make as our collective vocation the building and developing of our community in order to restore our people to their traditional greatness.

Before the children arrive at school, add the tissue paper flame to the green "candle," two to the right of the black center one.

Step 1: In the circle, ask the children, "Habari Gani?" Encourage the students to reply "Nia." Talk about doing your best and have the students share about what they could do better in school (for example, sharing, taking turns, and keeping hands to self). Add the principle to the chart paper, using a different color marker.

Day 7

The sixth day: Kuumba (creativity) (koo-OOM-bah)

Before the children arrive at school, add the tissue paper flame to the last red "candle."

Step 1: In the circle, ask the children, "Habari Gani?" Encourage the students to reply "Kuumba." Talk about art and being creative and have the students share how they could make our school or community more beautiful. Add the principle to the chart paper, using a different color marker.

Day 8

The seventh day: Imani (faith) (ee-MAH-nee)

Before the children arrive at school, add the tissue paper flame to the last green "candle."

Step 1: In the circle, ask the children, "Habari Gani?" Encourage the students to reply "Imani." Talk about trust and have the students share about what they think their teacher or parents do for them. Add the principle to the chart paper, using a different color marker.

Step 2: Enjoy the Kwanzaa Karamu! Enjoy the feast and have the students recall how they show each of the Seven Kwanzaa Principles.

Supporting All Learners

Some students may need some examples of the meaning of the principles to stimulate their oral language.

Lesson Extensions

Have groups of children prepare a speech to present each of the seven principles at the Kwanzaa Karamu.

Home Connection

Invite parents to the Kwanzaa Karamu on the last day of this lesson.