LIGHTS FOR GITA: Teachers' Guide

GENERAL THEMES AND CONNECTIONS:

1) Divali, the Indian festival of Lights Further topics for research:

* Divali
* Lakshmi, the Goddess of Wealth
* The epic story of Prince Ram and his wife Sita as in the Ramayana
* Indian sweets
* Diyas, the traditional clay pots lit during Divali
* Aspects of Indian culture

2) Themes of Light and Darkness

* connections with other festivals of light such as Christmas and Hanukkah, and the role of lights in those festivals
* the various meanings of light and darkness (used here in terms of hope and despair; also knowledge and ignorance; making one's own light)

3) Celebrations

* various holiday foods and customs
* the difficulties of celebrating a holiday when the society you live in does not share those traditions

4) The Immigrant Experience

* some of the challenges of adjusting to different traditions and customs
* the challenges of adjusting to a new climate
* the challenges encountered if the language is different

5) General experience of moving from one place to another

* missing grandparents and family
* making new friends
* adjusting to a new environment

6) Weather (a truly Canadian topic of discussion)

* how it impacts on our way of life
* Ice storms

CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES:

1) Topics of discussion

* What are the emotions/feelings that Gita experiences through this story? How would you feel in the same situation?

* Have you ever moved from one country to another? Or one Province to another? Or one city/town to another? Even one house to another? What did it involve? What were some of the difficult things about it? What were some of the exciting things about it? What were the hardest things and what were the best things about it?

* What do you think some of the challenges might be if you were to move to a country where you didn't at first speak the same language. Have any of you been in French Immersion? What was your first day in French Immersion like? What are some of the fun things about it and some of the difficult things about it?

* What does Gita miss most about her old life in India?

* Do you have Grandparents, or aunts and uncles and cousins, or other family members you are close to? Where do they live? If they are far away, do you miss them? How do you keep in touch? How often do you see them?

* Discuss the festival of Divali as described in this book. What do you think would be the most exciting part of it?

* Have you ever had your plans for a special occasion spoiled by the weather? Eg: Canada Day fireworks? How did you feel? What, if anything, did you do to make up for it? Did you manage to have fun in other ways?

* h) Have you ever experienced an ice storm? What was it like for you? What did you like about it and what did you dislike?

* What is your favourite festival or holiday and how does your family celebrate it? What are your favourite foods during this festival?

* What other festivals do you know that feature lights? What do you think the lights symbolize? Include discussion of the pagan Solstice celebrations. How do these celebrations tie in with the time of year and the Solstices? In what way are these festivals like Divali and different from Divali?

* If you were classmates of Gita, what could you do to make her feel more at home and to help her celebrate Divali?

* Have you ever lived in a country where the weather was very different from our Canadian weather? What was it like? How was your daily life different? Did you wear different clothes? Was your house different? What challenges do you think people might face, if they came to Canada from a very hot country?

2) Writing exercises

* Write a letter from Gita to her Grandmother describing her first Divali in Canada.
* Describe what happens the next day when Gita and Amy go sliding. What adventures might they have? Is there another story here? (This can be written or presented to the class or acted out.)
* Make a list of words to describe a snowstorm, an ice storm, a rainy day, a sunny day.
* Write a list of your feelings during a snowstorm, an ice storm, a rainy day, a sunny day.
* List ten things you love about the winter and ten things you don't like.
* Write a journal entry that Amy might write after going home from Gita's party.
* Write about your favourite holiday festival. Describe how you celebrate it. Try and describe it in terms of the five senses: things that you might see, smell, hear, taste and touch.
* Write about an imaginary festival that you would love to celebrate. Describe the traditions or activities that would be part of it.
* Word puzzle. Find the words listed below in the puzzle.

S	T	O	R	M	Y	M	A	L	F
H	O	M	E	S	I	C	K	I	E
J	G	S	A	D	I	O	G	G	S
D	O	A	R	D	L	Q	I	H	T
F	R	I	E	N	D	S	T	T	I
S	H	I	N	I	N	G	A	S	V
S	K	R	O	W	E	R	I	F	A
C	P	A	R	T	Y	L	H	E	L
G	I	S	A	Y	I	D	C	V	Y
I	L	A	V	I	D	I	D	H	I

AMY
DIVALI
DIYAS
FESTIVAL
FIREWORKS
FRIENDS
GITA
HOMESICK
ICE
LIGHTS
PARTY
SAD
SHINING
STORM

* Describe the kind of weather you like best. Make up a climate that would suit you the most and describe the kind of clothes you would wear.
* List the activities described in this story that are associated with Divali.

3) Art Activities

* With glue and glitter or coloured pencils or crayons, draw the fireworks that Gita and her friends share the next day.
* Create an invitation that Gita might send to her classmates next year inviting them to Divali. Explain what Divali is in a way that would make her friends want to come.
* Draw a picture of an ice storm.
* Draw four pictures, showing a scene from the Spring, Summer, Fall and Winter.
* Cut out snowflakes and decorate the class.
* Draw a picture of Amy and Gita going sliding the next day.
* Draw a picture of Gita and Amy playing hide and seek.
* Draw a picture of a blackout and show Gita's window, glowing with diyas.

4) Drama

* Act out a scene with Gita and her family watching the weather report on TV, on the day of Gita's party and for the following day. Have someone act out the part of the weather reporter.
* Act out a scene from another party Gita has, with the fireworks.

5) Extra Study and Research activities

* In groups, assemble a classroom display of things from India. Include items for each of the five senses: something that you can see, smell, taste, touch and hear.

    Eg: see and touch: a silk sari, some Indian jewellery smell and taste: some Indian sweets or snacks hear: Indian music, perhaps some sitar music

* Find out more about the festival of Divali. Do a class report.
* Research the planets, and in particular the position of the Earth around the Sun. Include information about the equator, the Tropics of Cancer and Capricorn. Include information on why, in Canada, the days are longer in the summer and shorter in the winter.
* Research weather patterns and find out why ice storms occur.

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