



## Story Summary

The light from a menorah takes a young boy on a fantastical journey around the world to experience different festivals of light, and the people who celebrate them.

Nothing brings communities together like the warm glow of a lamp or candle flame, illuminating people and the stories they tell. In *The Light from My Menorah*, a young boy celebrating Hanukkah follows his menorah's light as it twists and turns in the night sky, carrying him to mountains, deserts, and even into space. On his journey he sees families from around the world sharing food and togetherness as they celebrate their own special holidays, lighting diya for Diwali, kinara for Kwanzaa, crowns of candles for St. Lucia Day, krathongs for Loy Krathong, and strings of lights for Christmas.

**Robin Heald** lives in Ashland, Oregon. Before her 30-year career as a drama teacher and preschool director Robin was a stage manager in regional theaters, and on and off-Broadway. Her previous works include *Pat, Roll, Pull* and *Liberty Saves the Day*, and her articles have appeared in *Exceptional Parenting Magazine* and *Children's Literature in Education*. Robin's picture book *Isadora's Sandalias* won the Katherine Paterson Prize for unpublished children's literature at Hunger Mountain in 2015. Her most recent picture book is *Whistling for Angela*. Robin holds a master's of fine arts in writing for children from Spalding University.

**Andrea Blinick** is an artist and an art educator with a passion for children's literature. After graduating from the Ontario College of Art and Design with an illustration diploma, she went on to receive a Bachelor of Design through OCAD in conjunction with Thompson Rivers University and then pursued a Bachelor of Education at York University. Her first picture book, *Outside, You Notice*, earned a starred review from Kirkus Reviews. Most recently she has published *Sun in My Tummy* and *Serge the Snail Without a Shell*. Andrea lives in Toronto with her husband and two daughters, who often inspire the storytelling behind her art. She enjoys music, writing, comedy, travel, and making a mess on her art table.

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**Reading Level** Fountas & Pinnell: M | Lexile measure : AD550L

**BISAC Codes** JUV017000 JUVENILE FICTION / Holidays & Celebrations / General  
JUV017110 JUVENILE FICTION / Holidays & Celebrations / Hanukkah  
JUV074000 JUVENILE FICTION / Diversity & Multicultural  
JUV057000 JUVENILE FICTION / Stories in Verse

## Learning Expectations

Students will have the opportunity to:

- Share stories about holidays celebrated in their families.
- Learn about the customs of holidays that are celebrated around the world (e.g. Hanukkah, Diwali, Christmas, Kwanzaa, Loy Krathong).
- Learn how candles and lights are an important part of many holiday celebrations.
- Compare how different holidays are celebrated.
- Prepare a report on a holiday celebration.
- Share information they know about light, raise questions about light, and conduct research to learn more about light.
- Identify key vocabulary from the story (i.e., verbs) and practice spelling those words.
- Critically analyze illustrations that appear in a picture book.

## Key Vocabulary:

- **Menorah:** a nine-branched candle holder lit to celebrate Hanukkah, the Jewish Festival of Light
- **Kinara:** a seven-branched candle holder used in the African American celebration of Kwanzaa
- **Diya:** small clay lamps used during the festival of Diwali, lit as a symbol of good triumphing over evil
- **Krathong:** a candle, three incense sticks, flowers, and coins are put in *krathong's* to celebrate Loy Krathong in Thailand

## Preparing To Read: We Celebrate!

Invite a discussion about different holidays that students celebrate. Students can volunteer information about each of these celebrations by considering:

- Why is this holiday celebrated?
- What is special about this holiday?
- How is it celebrated? (Customs, songs, food, clothing, etc.)

**Teacher Tip:** To encourage students to share their stories, tell students a personal experience about a holiday that you celebrate.

## Before Reading

- What do you know about the holiday of Hanukkah?

- What do you know about the *menorah*, which is used by Jewish people to celebrate the festival of Hanukkah
- What holidays are you familiar with that use candles or lights as part of the celebration?

## During Reading

- What do we learn about the holiday of Hanukkah from the opening pages of this picture book?
- Name three places where the light from the menorah travels to.
- Name three miracles that are part of the light of the menorah.
- What words are used to describe the movement of the light as it travels around the world? (e.g., **zigzags** up the mountains, **soars** into space, **sweeping** the miles of desert, **splashes** in the shimmering water.)
- Do you know where in the world these countries are located? As place names are cited in the story, use a world map to show their location (i.e. India, Africa, Scandinavia, and Thailand).

## After Reading

- How is *The Light from my Menorah* a fictional or nonfictional story?
- What information do we learn from this picture book?
- What did you wonder about as you read *The Light from my Menorah*?
- Which illustration in this picture book do you find to be the most appealing? What is special about this picture?
- Do you think Robin Heald's words give more information than Andrea Blinick's pictures? Or do the pictures give more information than the words? (Or are they equal in presenting information?)
- How many words can you list that rhyme with the word "light"?
- What other celebrations could have been included in this picture book?

## Activity #1: Written and Talk Responses

Students will have the opportunity to:

- Complete statements that reveal their response to a story.
- Discuss the story with others in small groups and as a whole class.

Provide the students with three thinking stems for them to copy. Provide time for students to work independently to complete each of the following sentences:

- I learned...

- I am reminded of... (or: I remember...)
- I wonder...

Students can work in groups of three or four to compare their written responses.

In a whole class discussion, have students share what they learned (facts), what they are reminded of (text-to-self connections), and what they wonder about (questions) after reading *The Light from my Menorah*.

### Activity: #2 Comparing Festivals / Social Studies

Students will have the opportunity to:

- Identify and Summarize information about three different festivals.
- Complete a chart to make comparisons about different holiday celebrations.

**Material:** reproducible master.

**Teacher Tip:** To prepare for this activity, students can read the Author’s Note at the end of *The Light from my Menorah* that provides information about the different festivals of light.

Provide students with a copy of the reproducible chart entitled “Comparing Festivals.” Students can choose any three festivals mentioned in this story and summarize the information about each festival by completing the following chart:

Comparing Festivals			
Name of Festival	Country of Origin of Celebration	Name of Candles or Lights	Reason for the Light

### Activity #3: Identifying Key Vocabulary / Verbs

Students will have the opportunity to:

- Identify key vocabulary from the story.
- To unscramble words and write verbs correctly.

**Material:** reproducible master.



Throughout this picture book, the author uses words to describe the movement of the light as it travels the world. Read each of the following statements and fill in the blank by unscrambling to find the word used in the story.

**Example:** The light from my menorah (SLOWG) GLOWS on our windowsill

The light of the menorah (WRAMS) \_\_\_\_\_ our home.

The light of the menorah (WAKSE) \_\_\_\_\_ animals in pastures, fields and forests.

The Lights (VRAVELT) \_\_\_\_\_ outside into the night.

The light from my menorah (ZZGGIAS) \_\_\_\_\_ up the mountains.

The light (SSAOR) \_\_\_\_\_ into space and (BBRIONS) \_\_\_\_\_ the planets.

The light (SWILRS) \_\_\_\_\_ down and (SSEEWEP) \_\_\_\_\_ across miles of dessert and dune.

The light (SEHSALPS) \_\_\_\_\_ in shimmering water.

The light (SWMIS) \_\_\_\_\_, (FRIDTS) \_\_\_\_\_, (FLAOTS) \_\_\_\_\_.

**Answer key:** 1. *Warms*; 2. *Wakes*; 3. *Travel*; 4. *Zigzags*; 5. *Soars, Ribbons*; 6. *Swirls, Sweeps*; 7. *Splashes*; 8. *Swims, Drifts, Floats*.

**Bonus:** How many words can you find by unscrambling the word “menorahs”?

**Answer key:** so, men, hoe, son, home, homes, roam, shoe, some, mean, hare, share, shore, horse,

## Activity #4: Festival Facts / Research and Reporting

Students will have the opportunity to:

- Share knowledge about a holiday they are familiar with.
- Research facts about a holiday of interest.

Have students work independently or in pairs to research any holiday celebration of their choice. This could be one featured in *The Light from my Menorah*, a holiday celebrated with their own families, or another holiday not mentioned in this picture book.

Invite students to list 5 important facts about their chosen holiday:

### **Holiday Name:**

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

**Extension:** invite students to create an illustration about this holiday.

**Extension 2:** once completed, invite students to orally report their findings about their specific holiday celebration.



## Activity #5: All About Light / Science

Students will have the opportunity to work in groups to:

- Record facts that they know about light.
- Raise questions that they have about light.
- Research facts about light and its properties.

**Materials:** chart paper and markers.

To begin, provide students with sticky notes to list facts that they know about light. Students can work independently, each listing one fact on a sticky note. Have students present information by offering their sticky note to be display on a board.

This activity can be done in groups of 2 or 3. Each group can complete a KWL chart to identify:

1. **K** = 5 interesting facts they **know** about light.
2. **W** = Questions they **want** answered about light.
3. **L** = Information they have **learned** about light through research.



*This Teacher's Guide was written by **Larry Swartz**, Larry has been an instructor in literacy as well as dramatic arts at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, University of Toronto for nearly two decades. He is well-known for his use of children's literature to help young people grow as readers, writers, and citizens of the world.*

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