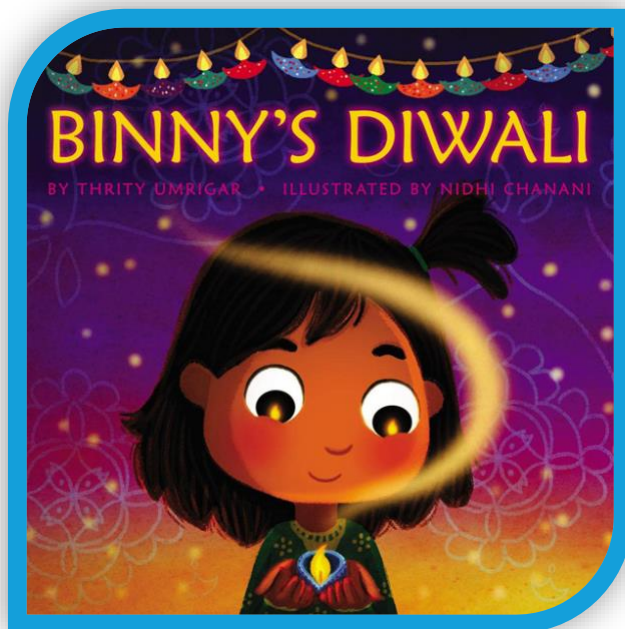




Book of the Month

Presented by ADL's Education Department

About the Book of the Month Parent/Family Discussion Guide: This collection of featured books is from Books Matter: The Best Kid Lit on Bias, Diversity and Social Justice. The books teach about bias and prejudice, promote respect for diversity, encourage social action and reinforce themes addressed in education programs of [A World of Difference® Institute](#), ADL's international anti-bias education and diversity training provider. For parents, guardians and family members, reading the books listed on this site with your children and integrating the concepts into your interactions with them is an excellent way to help children grapple with and learn about these important principles.



Binny's Diwali

Thrity Umrigar (Author), Nidhi Chanani (Illustrator)

ISBN: 978-1338364484

Publisher: Scholastic Press

Year Published: 2020

Age Range: 4–8

Book Themes

Activism, Diversity, Social Change

About the Book

Binny wakes up happy but nervous. It is her day to share about Diwali, the Festival of Lights! She is excited to talk to her class about her favorite holiday. But she struggles to find the words. Taking a deep breath, she tells her classmates about the fireworks that burst like stars in the night sky, leaving streaks of gold and red and green. She shares with them delicious *pedas* and *jalebis*. And she shows them clay lamps, called *diyas*, which look so pretty that all the children ooh and aah. Includes detailed information about the Hindu festival of lights in the back.

Conversation Starters

Whether you read the book along with your child or your child reads it on their own and you discuss it later, use these open-ended questions to deepen the conversation. Remember not to judge their responses and to listen thoughtfully and engage in a conversation that helps them expand upon their understanding of the book and its themes.

- What happens in the story?
- Did you know anything about Diwali before reading the book? What did you learn about it?
- Why do you think Binny felt shy and scared to tell her classmates about Diwali? Have you ever felt that way?
- How do you think Binny feels after she shares about her favorite holiday with the class?
- Have you ever talked with others about holidays that are important to you? What was that like?
- The book explains that the lights during Diwali are about the “victory of goodness and light.” What do you think this mean?
- For those who celebrate Diwali, how does it feel to read about a holiday you celebrate and what else would you add? Why do you think it is important to learn about other people’s cultures and holidays?
- Why do you think the author wrote this book?
- What is the message of the book?

Talking Points

Below are some important considerations that will make this a learning opportunity for your child and your family.

1. People, Identity and Culture

Ask your child how Binny and her family identify in terms of their culture (she is South Asian and Indian). With your child, talk about what “culture” means. You can define culture as: the patterns of daily life that can be seen in language, arts, customs, holiday celebrations, food, religion, beliefs/values, communication style, music, clothing and more that a group of people share. Explain that these aspects of culture can (but not always) be handed down from one generation to the next through family, relatives and ancestors. Culture can also come from the place where your family and ancestors live or are from. Explain that culture also can include one’s region of the country, whether you live in a city, suburban or rural setting, one’s family traditions including how you celebrate holidays, religion, etc. Elicit what they learned from reading the book about Binny and her family’s culture (i.e., celebrating Diwali, clothing, food). Talk with your child about the aspects of culture that are important in your family. Explain how you would define your family’s culture(s), and together identify what foods, holidays, customs, and other parts of daily life are important to your family. Your family may connect with more than one culture or may not have a strong cultural identity, and that can also be discussed. Talk with your child about what they know and don’t know about their culture, what they may have found out about their culture from you (their parent), grandparents or other relatives, what more they want to know and the questions they have in order to learn more. Also emphasize the importance of learning about other people’s culture, which helps us feel more connected to others and part of our diverse world.

2. Sharing about Our Holidays and Others

In the book, Binny does a presentation for her classmates about Diwali. At first, she feels scared and shy about sharing this in her class. Talk with your child about why Binny may feel this way, including the possibility that she is the only one in her class who celebrates Diwali. Ask your child if they ever feel shy or scared to talk with others about themselves, or aspects of their culture or identity. Talk together about your own holiday celebrations and traditions and where they come from (religion, ethnic/racial group, family), if you have those. Talk together about their favorite family or holiday traditions and why those traditions are meaningful to them. Explain to your child that not everyone in

a certain cultural group celebrates the same holidays or in the same way. And there are families who do not celebrate holidays at all. Therefore, it's important to explain to your child not to assume people celebrate holidays or celebrate holidays in the same way. Listening and asking instead of assuming is a good strategy. You can also talk with them about the importance of learning about the holidays, culture and identity of others. In addition, ask questions and talk about how sometimes/often certain holidays are acknowledged in school/community more than others, usually those of the dominant culture. You can ask questions such as: What holidays do you talk about in school? Does your teacher talk about the holidays we celebrate? Do we get days off for our holidays? How does it feel when the holidays that are important to us are not discussed at all? What can we do about that?

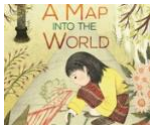
3. Diwali and “Light Over Darkness”

Talk with your child about what they learned about Diwali by reading the book. Together, read aloud pages 30-31 that explain more about Diwali, including “The Five Days of Diwali.” Explain that Diwali is known as the “festival of lights,” which marks the victory of good over evil or “light over darkness.” Diwali is a national holiday in India. Even though it is part of the Hindu religion, it is celebrated by people of different religions all across India and celebrated by people who are Indian all over the world. Talk with your child about other holidays, those you celebrate and those you do not, that feature lights, such as Christmas, Chanukah and Kwanzaa. The light celebrated during Diwali focuses on and symbolizes “light over darkness;” ask your child what “light over darkness” means to them. Then talk about what that means to you. This could be about focusing on positive things vs. negative things, good times over bad times, emphasizing the importance of that concept.

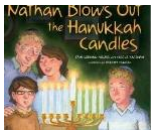
Other Books You May Like



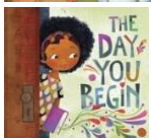
Always Anjali by Sheetal Sheth, www.adl.org/education/educator-resources/childrens-literature/always-anjali



A Map into the World by Kao Kalia Yang, www.adl.org/education/educator-resources/childrens-literature/a-map-into-the-world



Nathan Blows Out the Candles by Tami Lehman-Wilzig and Nicole Katzman, www.adl.org/education/educator-resources/childrens-literature/nathan-blows-out-the-hanukkah-candles



The Day You Begin by Jacqueline Woodson, www.adl.org/education/educator-resources/childrens-literature/the-day-you-begin

ADL Additional Resources

The following are curriculum and resources on people, identity and culture, and holidays and celebrations.

Websites

Asian American Pacific Islander (AAPI) Heritage Month Resources

www.adl.org/education/resources/tools-and-strategies/asian-american-pacific-islander-aapi-heritage-month

Asian American Pacific Islander (AAPI) Heritage Month is a celebration of the culture, traditions and history of Asian American and Pacific Islander people in the United States. Use these resources to teach and commemorate this heritage in school, communities and at home.

Calendar of Observances

www.adl.org/education/resources/tools-and-strategies/calendar-of-observances

Use this calendar of observances to increase your awareness and sensitivity about religious holidays, observances as well as ethnic and cultural festivities that may affect students, colleagues and neighbors in your community.

Considerations for Inclusive Holidays and Observances

www.adl.org/education/resources/tools-and-strategies/considerations-for-inclusive-holidays-and-observances

Holiday celebrations are an excellent opportunity to provide a window into a culture or understand more about a group of people. Here are some important considerations when planning holiday observances in your classroom or school.

Parent, Family and Caregiver Resources

www.adl.org/education/resources/tools-and-strategies/parent-family-and-caregiver-resources

Strategies, tips, guiding principles and resources to help parents, family members and caregivers impart values and principles to the children in their lives.

The Question Corner: Early Childhood FAQs

www.adl.org/education/resources/tools-and-strategies/question-corner

A collection of answers to frequently asked questions about anti-bias issues faced by early childhood professionals and family members interested in promoting respect for diversity among young children. See [How Can "Looking at Lights" Promote Respect Among Children For Various Holidays, Celebrations and Traditions?](#)

Table Talk: Family Conversations about Current Events

www.adl.org/education/resources/tools-and-strategies/table-talk

Provides the tools parents and family members need to engage their families in conversations about important news stories and other timely discussions about societal and world events. Includes discussion guides containing a topic summary, questions to start the conversation and dig deeper, ideas for taking action and additional resources. See [Why We Need Diverse Books](#).

Winter Holidays: December Dilemma or Teaching Opportunity?

www.adl.org/education/resources/tools-and-strategies/winter-holidays-december-dilemma-or-teaching-opportunity

December can be a fun and festive time of year, or it can make some students feel excluded and marginalized if not approached with respect and care. This resource provides considerations for school officials to ensure inclusivity and not give students the impression that one set of holidays or beliefs is more important or more acceptable than others.

Children's Books

Below are links to lists of recommended anti-bias and multicultural books for the indicated category.

People, Identity & Culture, [www.adl.org/education-and-resources/resources-for-educators-parents-families/childrens-literature?childrens-lit-select-all-7=1&tid\[201\]=201&tid\[202\]=202&tid\[203\]=203&tid\[204\]=204&tid\[205\]=205&tid\[206\]=206&tid\[207\]=207&tid\[208\]=208&tid\[209\]=209&tid\[210\]=210&tid\[211\]=211&tid\[212\]=212&tid\[213\]=213&tid\[214\]=214&tid\[215\]=215](http://www.adl.org/education-and-resources/resources-for-educators-parents-families/childrens-literature?childrens-lit-select-all-7=1&tid[201]=201&tid[202]=202&tid[203]=203&tid[204]=204&tid[205]=205&tid[206]=206&tid[207]=207&tid[208]=208&tid[209]=209&tid[210]=210&tid[211]=211&tid[212]=212&tid[213]=213&tid[214]=214&tid[215]=215)

People, Identity & Culture: Asian/Asian-American/South Asian/South-Asian American/Pacific Islander, [www.adl.org/education-and-resources/resources-for-educators-parents-families/childrens-literature?tid\[203\]=203](http://www.adl.org/education-and-resources/resources-for-educators-parents-families/childrens-literature?tid[203]=203)