

Holi

The Festival

What Is Holi?

Holi is the colourful Hindu festival celebrated since ancient times in **agricultural** areas to throw off the darkness of winter and welcome the light of spring. Holi is celebrated following the full moon in the month of 'Phalguna' in the Hindu calendar so its date varies. It usually falls between February and March.



Holi also commemorates various events in Hindu mythology, including the legend of a demon king. The name Holi is thought to come from Holika who was the sister of the demon king, Hiranyakashyap. In Hindu mythology, Holika is said to have been burnt in place of Hiranyakashyap's son Prahlad when he was sentenced to death by his father for worshipping the Hindu god Lord Vishnu. Therefore, Holi is also seen as a time to celebrate good overcoming evil.

Holi is a national festival celebrated across India which is mainly a fun festival where people can relax. It is celebrated over two days. The first day is known as Holika Dahan and the second as Rangwali Holi.



How Is Holi Celebrated?

Holi is associated with relaxed social expectations, which means that all people mix regardless of age, gender or wealth. Behaviour expectations are also relaxed, resulting in a fun but chaotic atmosphere. A common saying heard during Holi is 'Buran a mano, Holi hai', which means 'don't be offended, it's Holi.'

On the evening of Holika Dahan, a public bonfire is lit to celebrate the victory of good over evil. For the weeks leading up to Holi, people traditionally collect waste wood for the fire which is lit between 10 p.m. and midnight and everyone joins together in the street creating much noise. People perform religious rituals, asking for forgiveness from their god and praying that any evil will end.



During Rangwali Holi, the colourful part of the celebration occurs when people:



- throw coloured paint over each other;
- throw water bombs at each other;
- sing, dance and have fun together.

How Is Holi Celebrated Around the World?

Nepal, Asia

Holi is also celebrated in Nepal as a national festival and is celebrated on the same date as the Indian Holi. Many of the same activities take place as they do in India with a focus on traditional concerts being held in most cities.



Guyana, South America

Holi arrived in Guyana in the 19th century with forced workers from India but has changed to have a unique Caribbean-Indian feel with traditional Indian **chowtal** music combining with **Creole** influences. Most people wear old white clothes with the expectation that they will not remain white for long!

Germany, Europe

Held annually in the German capital Berlin, is a modern take on the traditional Hindu festival. The Holi Festival of Colours is an electronic music festival, combining DJs from around the world with the colourful powder paint of Holi. Bringing together people from all backgrounds, the partying is a colourful experience for everyone!

Glossary

agricultural: Linked to farming.

chowtal: Hindu folksong with singers and a drummer.

Creole: Originating from different ethnic backgrounds.

Questions

1. 'Holi also commemorates various events in Hindu mythology...' Which word is closest in meaning to **commemorates**? Tick one.

- ignores
- forgets
- remembers
- neglects

2. Draw **three** lines and match each question to its correct answer.

What is the first day of Holi called?

What is the second day of Holi called?

During which month in the Hindu calendar is Holi celebrated?

Phalguna

Holika Dahan

Rangwali Holi

3. What do people do during Rangwali Holi?

4. In which country is Holi combined with an electronic music festival?

5. Find and copy one word which shows that Holi is a hectic festival.

6. Explain why you think that Holi is popular around the world.

7. Why do you think that people in Guyana don't expect their clothes to remain white?

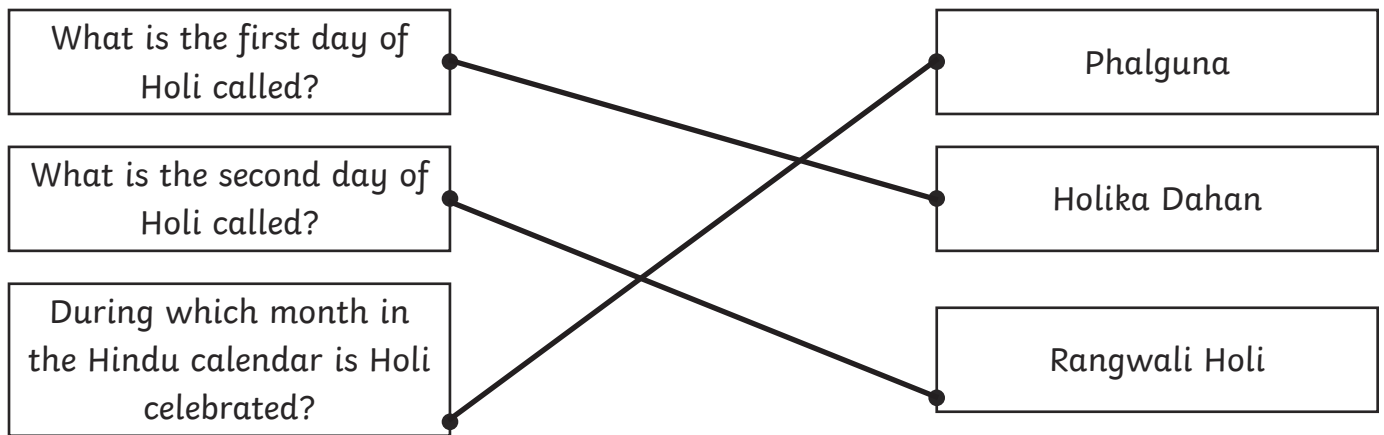
8. Would you prefer Holika Dahan or Rangwali Holi? Explain why.

Answers

1. 'Holi also commemorates various events in Hindu mythology...' Which word is closest in meaning to **commemorates**? Tick one.

- ignores
- forgets
- remembers**
- neglects

2. Draw **three** lines and match each question to its correct answer.



3. What do people do during Rangwali Holi?

Accept any of the following: During Rangwali Holi, people throw coloured paint over each other; throw water bombs at each other; sing, dance and have fun together.

4. In which country is Holi combined with an electronic music festival?

Holi is combined with an electronic music festival in Germany.

5. Find and copy one word which shows that Holi is a hectic festival.

chaotic

6. Explain why you think that Holi is popular around the world.

Pupils' own responses, such as: I think Holi is popular around the world because there are a lot of Hindu people living around the world and other people will join in because it is a fun festival.

7. Why do you think that people in Guyana don't expect their clothes to remain white?
Pupils' own responses, such as: I think people in Guyana don't expect their clothes to remain white because they know that there will be a lot of coloured paint and water thrown at them during Rangwali Holi.
8. Would you prefer Holika Dahan or Rangwali Holi? Explain why.
Pupils' own responses, such as: I would prefer Rangwali Holi because it sounds like so much fun to have a huge, colourful water fight and I am not keen on bonfires so would rather not go to Holika Dahan celebrations.

Holi

The Festival

Celebrated since ancient times in agricultural areas to throw off the darkness of winter and welcome the light of spring, Holi is a colourful Hindu festival. Holi is always celebrated following the full moon in the month of 'Phalguna' in the Hindu calendar; its date varies but it usually falls between February and March.



As well as celebrating the beginning of springtime, Holi also commemorates various events in Hindu mythology. The name Holi is thought to come from Holika, the sister of the demon king, Hiranyakashyap. In Hindu mythology, Holika is said to have been burnt in place of Hiranyakashyap's son Prahlad when he was sentenced to death by his father for worshipping the Hindu god Lord Vishnu. Prahlad survived and so Holi is also seen as a time to celebrate good overcoming evil.

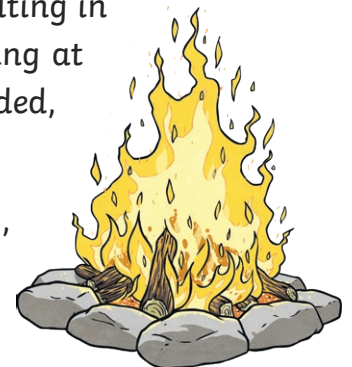
Holi, which is a national festival now celebrated across India, is mainly a time where people can relax with no religious requirements or prayers. The festival itself is celebrated over two days: the first day is known as Holika Dahan and the second as Rangwali Holi. Each day is associated with different activities with the main focus being on having fun!



Holi Celebrations

During Holi, one of the main characteristics is the relaxing of social expectations usually associated with Hindu cultures, allowing people of all ages, genders or wealth to mix. Behaviour expectations are also relaxed, resulting in an enjoyable but often chaotic atmosphere. A common saying at Holi is 'Buran a mano, Holi hai', which means 'don't be offended, it's Holi.'

On the evening of Holika Dahan (the first day of the festival), a public bonfire is lit (often in an unorderly way) to celebrate the victory of good over evil. For the weeks leading up to



Holi Around the World

Nepal, Asia

In Nepal, Holi - also known as Phagu Poonnima - is also celebrated as a national festival on the same date as the Indian Holi. Traditional music concerts are held in most cities along with many of the same fun and games that take place in India during Holi.

Guyana, South America

Holi arrived in Guyana in the 19th century with forced (indentured) workers from India, mainly Hindu people who were unwilling to give up their faith. Over time, Holi in Guyana has altered to have a unique Caribbean-Indian feel with traditional Indian chowtal music, which is Hindu folksong with singers and a drummer. This has combined with Creole influences including music of African origin with a variety of instruments such as drums. During Rangwali Holi, it is customary to wear old white clothes with the expectation that they will not remain white for long!

Germany, Europe

Held annually in the German capital, Berlin's Holi Festival of Colours is a modern take on the traditional Hindu festival. Holi Festival of Colours, Berlin, is an electronic music festival, combining DJs from around the world with the colourful powder paint of Holi. Bringing together people from all backgrounds, the partying is a colourful experience for everyone!



Questions

1. What is the main focus of Holi? Tick one.

- prayer
- having fun
- bonfires
- water fights

2. Draw **three** lines and match the sentences.

The name Holi is thought to...

various events in Hindu mythology.

Holi also commemorates...

come from Holika.

Holi is always celebrated...

following the full moon in the month of 'Phalguna' in the Hindu calendar.

3. Find and copy one word that shows that Holi is a hectic festival.

4. Fill in the missing words.

Holi, which is a _____ festival now celebrated across India, is mainly a time where people can relax with no religious _____ or prayers.

5. What time is the public bonfire lit on Holika Dahan?

6. 'Don't be offended, it's Holi.' Why do you think that people say this?

7. Explain why you think that Holi is popular with children.

8. How are the **three** other countries written about in the text similar in their Holi celebrations?

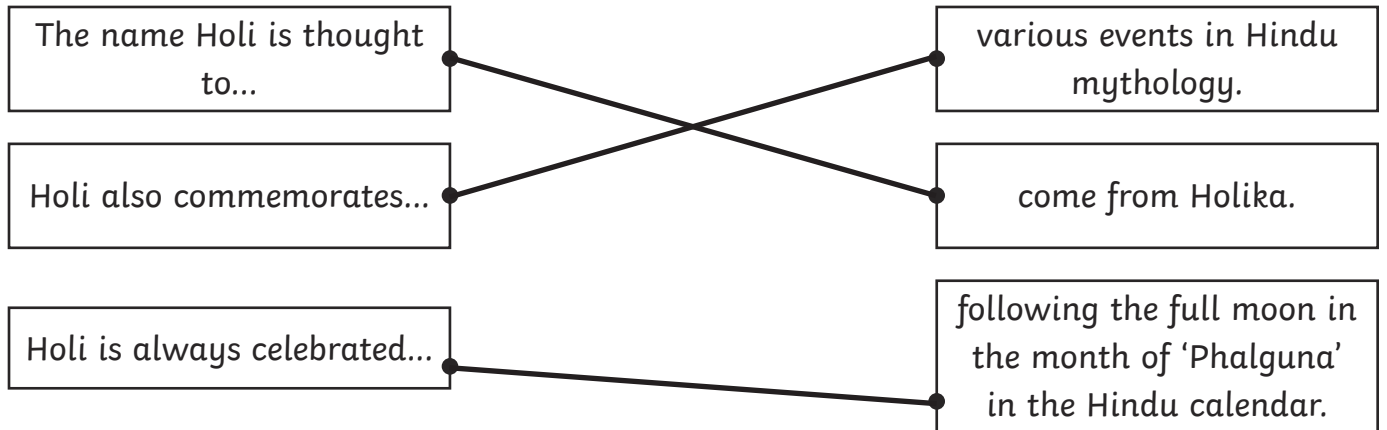
9. In which country would you prefer to celebrate Holi? Explain why.

Answers

1. What is the main focus of Holi? Tick one.

- prayer
- having fun**
- bonfires
- water fights

2. Draw **three** lines and match the sentences.



3. Find and copy one word that shows that Holi is a hectic festival.

Accept any of the following: chaotic; unorderedly

4. Fill in the missing words.

Holi, which is a **national** festival now celebrated across India, is mainly a time where people can relax with no religious **requirements** or prayers.

5. What time is the public bonfire lit on Holika Dahan?

The public bonfire is lit on Holika Dahan between 10 p.m. and midnight.

6. 'Don't be offended, it's Holi.' Why do you think that people say this?

Pupils' own responses, such as: I think people say 'Don't be offended, it's Holi' because people are behaving in ways they wouldn't usually due to the relaxing of social and behaviour expectations but they don't want anyone to be upset by the fun they are having.

7. Explain why you think that Holi is popular with children.

Pupils' own responses, such as: I think Holi is popular with children because Holi is a fun festival when everyone gets together to sing and play. Children love water fights and the addition of coloured paint will make it even more enjoyable for children.

8. How are the **three** other countries written about in the text similar in their Holi celebrations?

Pupils' own responses, such as: The other three countries written about in the text are similar in their Holi celebrations because they all have music as part of their celebrations.

9. In which country would you prefer to celebrate Holi? Explain your answer.

Pupils' own responses, such as: I would prefer to celebrate Holi in India because I would like to experience a more traditional festival with a large bonfire and all of the sweet foods.

Holi

The Festival

Celebrated since ancient times in agricultural areas to throw off the darkness of winter and welcome the light of spring, is the colourful Hindu festival of Holi. Holi is always celebrated following the full moon in the month of 'Phalguna' in the Hindu calendar so its date varies but it usually falls between February and March in the Gregorian calendar (the most widely used calendar across the world).



As well as celebrating the beginning of springtime, Holi also commemorates various events in Hindu mythology. One of these is the legend of a demon king. The name Holi is thought to come from Holika, the sister of the demon king, Hiranyakashyap. In Hindu mythology, Holika is said to have been burnt in place of Hiranyakashyap's son Prahlad, who had been sentenced to death by his father for worshipping the Hindu god Lord Vishnu. Prahlad survived and so Holi is also seen as a time to celebrate good overcoming evil.

Unlike many other Hindu holidays, Holi, which is a national festival now celebrated across India, is mainly a time where people can relax with no religious requirements or prayers. The festival itself is celebrated over two days: the first day is known as Holika Dahan and the second as Rangwali Holi. Each day is associated with different activities with the main focus being on having fun!



Holi Celebrations

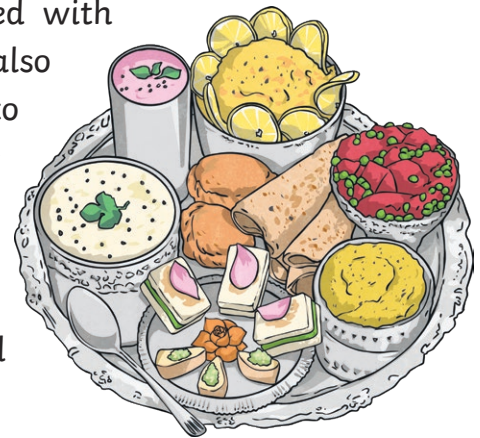
During Holi, one of the main characteristics is the relaxing of social expectations usually associated with Hindu cultures. This means that people mix regardless of age, gender or wealth and behaviour expectations are also relaxed, resulting in an enjoyable but often chaotic atmosphere. It is common to hear people saying, "Buran a mano, Holi hai," during Holi, which means 'don't be offended, it's Holi.'



On the evening of Holika Dahan (the first day of the festival), a public bonfire is lit, often in an unorderly way, to celebrate the victory of good over evil. For the weeks leading up to Holi, people traditionally collect waste wood from their

neighbourhood for the fire, which is lit between 10 p.m. and midnight (when the moon rises). It is a time when everyone joins together in the street creating lots of noise. People also perform religious rituals, asking for forgiveness from their god and praying that any evil will end.

During Rangwali Holi (the second day of the festival), the colourful part of the celebration occurs when people parade through the streets throwing coloured paint and water bombs over each other; many adults wear a white kurta - a traditional Indian tunic-style top - and carry some of the dried powder called gulal with them, while children tend to be armed with water squirters called pichkaris. Rangwali Holi is also a chance for friends and family to get together to sing, dance and have fun. Holi usually ends in the late afternoon when everyone goes home to wash and change clothes before visiting friends and relatives. Delicious feasts are prepared for sharing, including gujiya, which is a sweet delicacy stuffed with dried fruits, nuts and other sweet treats.



Holi Around the World

Now an international festival due to the movement of Hindu people around the world, Holi has altered according to the country within which it is being celebrated.

Nepal, Asia

In Nepal, Holi (also known as Phagu Poonnima) is also celebrated as a national festival on the same date as the Indian Holi. Traditional music concerts are held in most cities along with many of the same fun and games that take place in India during Holi although there is less of a focus on having bonfires as in India.

Guyana, South America

When forced (indentured) workers from India arrived in Guyana in the 19th century, they took Holi with them as most were Hindu people unwilling to give up their faith. However, over the years, Holi has changed to have a unique Caribbean-Indian feel. Traditional Hindu folksong with singers and drummers is played, known as chowtal. This has combined with Creole influences, including

music of African origin with a variety of instruments such as drums. As with most Holi celebrations, it is customary to wear old white clothes with the expectation that they will not remain white for long!

Berlin, Germany

Held annually in the German capital, Berlin's Holi Festival of Colours is a modern take on the traditional Hindu festival. Holi Festival of Colours, Berlin, is an electronic music festival, combining DJs from around the world with the colourful powder paint of Holi. Bringing together people from all backgrounds, the partying is a colourful experience for everyone!



Traditionally, Holi paint was made with natural ingredients, such as turmeric or sunflowers mixed with extracts of neem (Indian Lilac) and bilva (wood apple) to create a naturally coloured paste. Modern times have seen more people using dyes and synthetic chemicals, which are easier and cheaper to produce, but many people worry about the negative effects of these chemicals on people and the environment.

Questions

1. '...resulting in an enjoyable but often chaotic atmosphere.'
What does **chaotic** mean? Tick one.

- clean and tidy
- quiet and peaceful
- loud and untidy
- confused and disorderly

2. What does Holi celebrate? Tick one.

- the beginning of spring
- good overcoming evil
- various events in Hindu mythology
- all of the above

3. 'Holi, which is a national festival now celebrated across India...'
What does the word **national** mean?

4. What do people throw during Rangwali Holi?

5. Find and copy one phrase from the text which shows that Holi is celebrated around the world.

6. Explain why some people worry about the paint used during Holi.

7. Summarise what you have learnt about Holi in 25 words or fewer.

8. Explain why some people might be offended during Holi.

9. Explain why Holi is now celebrated around the world.

10. Do you think that Holi would be an enjoyable festival to attend? Explain why.

Answers

1. '...resulting in an enjoyable but often chaotic atmosphere.'

What does **chaotic** mean? Tick one.

- clean and tidy
- quiet and peaceful
- loud and untidy
- confused and disorderly**

2. What does Holi celebrate? Tick one.

- the beginning of spring
- good overcoming evil
- various events in Hindu mythology
- all of the above**

3. 'Holi, which is a national festival celebrated across India...'

What does the word **national** mean?

'National' means that something is happening across the whole country.

4. What do people throw during Rangwali Holi?

Accept any of the following: During Rangwali Holi, people throw coloured paint; water bombs; water; gulal.

5. Find and copy one phrase from the text which shows that Holi is celebrated around the world.

international festival

6. Explain why some people worry about the paint used during Holi.

Pupils' own responses, such as: Some people worry about the paint used during Holi because these may use dyes and synthetic chemicals which have negative effects on people and the environment.

7. Summarise what you have learnt about Holi in 25 words or fewer.

Pupils' own responses, such as: Holi is an international festival taking place over two days. On Holi Dahan, people have bonfires and on Rangwali Holi, people have paint fights.

8. Explain why some people might be offended during Holi.
Pupils' own responses, such as: During Holi, the usual religious, social and behaviour expectations are relaxed, meaning many people behave in a more disorderly manner, which could offend some.

9. Explain why Holi is now celebrated around the world.
Pupils' own responses, such as: Holi is now celebrated around the world because over time, Hindu people have travelled around the world and have taken their beliefs and festivals with them.

10. Do you think that Holi would be an enjoyable festival to attend? Explain why.
Pupils' own responses, such as: For me, Holi would not be an enjoyable festival to attend because I do not like loud noises or hectic places.