

## December Nights

Sadie - I just love December! There's so much going on everywhere around town! Plus, we get two weeks off school! I'm really looking forward to Christmas vacation.

Brooklyn -We do get a break just in time for Christmas, but not everyone celebrates Christmas. There are other holidays celebrated in December.

Sadie - Now that you mention it, I saw some unique candle holders in a Holiday store at the Mall. One of them had nine candles, one had seven, and there were some paper bags in the window that had sand and glowing candles inside. Maybe they have special meanings.

Brooklyn - They do! The one with nine candles is called a Menorah. The candles are lit during Hanukkah, a Jewish holiday that takes place in December.

Sadie - Some of my friends celebrate Hanukkah. But doesn't that last for eight nights? Why nine candles?

Brooklyn - The middle candle, called the shamash, is used to light each of the other candles to celebrate the eight nights the oil lamp in the temple burned. Listen and we will sing to you the story of the miracle of Hanukkah.

## **Light the Candles**

Brenna - Back in the 16<sup>th</sup> century, Spanish people began celebrating Christmas by reenacting Mary and Joseph's search for a room at an inn – or Posada – in Bethlehem. This tradition is still celebrated in many countries as guests go from house to house, asking for a place to stay.

Leah - They are turned away each time, just as Mary and Joseph were. More guests join in the search, and are turned away again. Finally, they come to a home where the pathway is lit by luminarias. In this house the guests are welcomed. That's when the party begins. Singing, dancing, celebrating and a piñata!

## La Fiesta de la Posada

Bella - Fiesta! What a great tradition. What else have I been missing?

Rosie - Well, there is another holiday I've been learning about that some African-American families celebrate. Kwanzaa. This is a time to remember traditions and the principles of living. It is celebrated for seven days.

Bella - Seven days? So that's what the other candle holder is for.

Rosie - It's called a Kinara. It holds one candle for each of the seven days. Families gather each night to light a candle and talk about the special principle of that day.

Bella - Seven special principles? What are they?

Rosie - There is unity, self-determination, responsibility, cooperating, purpose, creativity, and faith. All principals that build family and community.

## **Light the Kinara**

Kween - We've been singing about the traditions of Hanukkah, Las Posadas and Kwanzaa. Now, what do you think about when I say the word Christmas?

Kamilah - Well, our family lights candles in an evergreen wreath. They are the candles of Peace, Hope, Joy and Love

Kween - Do you know what I think about? Presents. Presents, presents, presents and snow!

Kamilah - Holly, ivy, mistletoe!

Kween - Elves, reindeer, ho-ho-ho!

Kamilah - Christmas trees with lights that glow!

## Holiday Lights

Samantha - No matter how or what you celebrate, always remember the important reasons behind the celebration

Taryn - The reasons for giving

Samantha - The reasons for sharing

Taryn - The reasons for loving

Samantha - The reasons for caring

Taryn - The reasons why on December nights we light December lights