WHAT IS DIWALI

Diwali is a joyful festival celebrated by millions of people in India and around the world. Its name comes from Deepavali, a word often explained as meaning "a row of lamps".

Many Hindu families celebrate Diwali with lights, prayers, special foods and time together. Diwali is also important in Jain traditions. At about the same time, Sikhs observe Bandi Chhor Divas, a separate celebration with its own story and meaning.

There is no single way to celebrate. Customs can differ between families, communities and regions. That variety is part of Diwali's fascinating story.

VOCABULARY - Diwali
A festival associated with lights, reflection and celebration. Different communities connect it with different traditions.

DID YOU KNOW?
Diwali is also called Deepavali in many languages and regions.



WHY MANY PEOPLE CONNECT DIWALI WITH RAMA AND SITA

Stories help communities remember values, beliefs and important figures. Several sacred stories are connected with Diwali, but their importance varies by region and tradition.

When this book says, "one tradition tells", it is introducing a religious story rather than claiming that historians can prove every event in it. A sacred story can carry deep meaning for believers even when it belongs to an ancient epic or religious tradition.

Listening respectfully means learning what a story means to the people who tell it-and avoiding the idea that one version must represent everyone.

VOCABULARY - Sacred story
A story treated with special religious importance.

Rama and Sita are central figures in the Ramayana, an ancient epic told in many languages and versions across South and South-East Asia.

Rama is described as a prince of Ayodhya and an example of duty and righteous conduct. Sita is respected for her strength, courage and devotion. Rama's brother Lakshmana shares their long exile, while Hanuman becomes a loyal helper.

VOCABULARY - Epic
A long story about important events and heroic figures.



DIWALI IN NORTH INDIA

Northern India contains many states, languages and local traditions, so no single description fits everyone.

In parts of the north, the story of Rama and Sita's return to Ayodhya is strongly associated with Diwali. Homes, streets and temples may be lit with diyas. Lakshmi Puja is important to many families, and markets sell sweets, flowers and decorations.

Ayodhya holds large public light celebrations, but a spectacular city event should not be mistaken for the way every household observes the festival. Many families celebrate more quietly at home.

VOCABULARY - Ayodhya
An ancient city in Uttar Pradesh associated with Rama in Hindu tradition.



MATCH THE FESTIVAL WORDS

Draw a line to match each word with its meaning.

1. Diya	A. A colourful floor or ground design
2. Rangoli	B. A small lamp, traditionally made from clay
3. Toran	C. A decorative hanging placed above a doorway
4. Mithai	D. A broad name for South Asian sweets
5. Puja	E. An act of worship or prayer
6. Gurdwara	F. A Sikh place of worship and community gathering
7. Seva	G. Selfless service performed for others
8. Ahimsa	H. The Jain principle of non-violence and avoiding harm

BONUS
Circle the three things that may be placed near a doorway.





