

Lesson Plan: A Very Indian Christmas

Subject: World Cultures, Social Studies

Student: Madisyn (Age 13)

Time Allotment: 60-75 minutes

Learning Objectives

By the end of this lesson, you will be able to:

- Describe at least three unique traditions of Christmas celebrations in India.
 - Compare and contrast Christmas in India with your own family's traditions.
 - Create a unique craft inspired by Indian Christmas decorations.
-

Materials Needed

- Computer or tablet with internet access for viewing video clips/images
 - Notebook or paper and a pen/pencil
 - **For Venn Diagram:** Large sheet of paper and markers, or a digital tool like Google Drawings.
 - **For Craft Activity (Choose one):**
 - **Option A (Paper Diya Garland):** Colored paper (yellow, orange, red, green), scissors, glue or tape, string or ribbon.
 - **Option B (Mango Leaf Toran):** Green construction paper, scissors, stapler or glue, glitter glue or markers for decoration.
-

Lesson Structure

I. Introduction (5-10 minutes)

Hook: A Different Kind of Christmas Tree

Educator says: "Madisyn, when you think of a Christmas tree, you probably picture a pine or fir tree, right? What if I told you that in some parts of the world, families decorate a banana tree or a mango tree for Christmas? That's exactly what happens in India! Only a small part of India's population is Christian, but they celebrate Christmas with some really unique and beautiful traditions that blend their culture with the holiday."

Setting the Stage

Educator says: "Today, we're going to travel to India without ever leaving home. We'll explore how they decorate, what they eat, and how they celebrate. By the end of our lesson, you'll be able to teach someone else about Christmas in India and even make a decoration inspired by what you learned."

II. Body: Exploring Indian Christmas (35-45 minutes)

Part 1: I Do - Discovering the Traditions (15 minutes)

Educator presents the following information using a conversational tone. You can find images or short video clips online to illustrate each point.

Talking Points:

- **The Christmas Tree:** "Since pine trees don't grow everywhere in India, people get creative! They beautifully decorate mango trees or banana trees. They also use the leaves from mango trees to decorate their homes, which is a symbol of good fortune."
- **Lights and Decorations:** "Instead of just string lights, many people use small, oil-burning clay lamps called *diyas*. They place these on their windowsills and rooftops. It looks a lot like the festival of Diwali, which is India's 'Festival of Lights.' They also use colorful paper stars, called Christmas Stars, to hang outside their homes."
- **Santa Claus:** "Santa is a big deal there, too, but he has a different name! He's often called 'Christmas Baba' (which means Christmas Father) or 'Christmas Thatha' in different languages. Instead of a sleigh with reindeer, he might show up on a horse-drawn cart, called a *tonga*."
- **Church and Community:** "For many Christian families in India, Midnight Mass on Christmas Eve is the most important part of the celebration. The whole family goes to church, which is often decorated with poinsettias and candles. Afterwards, there's a huge feast of delicious food."
- **Christmas Food:** "The Christmas meal is amazing and varies by region. In places like Goa, which has a long history of Christianity, families share rich plum cakes and special sweets called *kuswar*. In other areas, the main dish might be a spicy curry like Biryani. It's all about a big family feast."

Part 2: We Do - Making Connections (10 minutes)

Activity: Compare and Contrast Venn Diagram

Educator says: "This is so interesting, right? Now let's see how these traditions compare to ours. Let's create a Venn Diagram together."

1. Draw two large overlapping circles on paper or open a digital tool. Label one circle "My Christmas Traditions" and the other "Indian Christmas Traditions." Label the overlapping section "Both."
2. **Discuss together:** Ask Madisyn questions to fill in the diagram.
 - "What do we use for a Christmas tree? What do they use?" (Goes in separate circles)
 - "Do we both have a special church service?" (Likely goes in 'Both')
 - "What kind of special food does our family eat? What did we learn they eat?" (Separate circles)
 - "What's a similarity you noticed? Maybe that Santa Claus brings gifts, or that it's a time for family?" (Goes in 'Both')
3. Fill out the diagram together based on the discussion. This is a great way to check for understanding.

Part 3: You Do - Creative Application (10-20 minutes)

Activity: Create an Indian-Inspired Christmas Craft

Educator says: "Now it's your turn to be creative and make something inspired by what we learned!"

You can choose which decoration you'd like to make."

Choice 1: Paper Diya Garland

- **Instructions:** Cut out flame shapes from yellow and orange paper. Cut out small bowl shapes from another color to be the 'diya' lamp. Glue the flame onto the lamp. Make several of these. Then, tape or glue them along a piece of string to create a beautiful garland to hang up.
- **Success Criteria:** Your finished craft should look like a string of lit oil lamps (diyas) and be ready to hang as a decoration.

Choice 2: Mango Leaf Toran (Doorway Hanging)

- **Instructions:** Cut out several mango-leaf shapes from green construction paper. The shape is long and oval, pointed at the end. Decorate the leaves with glitter glue or markers to make them festive. Staple or glue the tops of the leaves side-by-side onto a long piece of string or a strip of paper to create a door hanger (a 'toran').
- **Success Criteria:** Your finished craft should resemble a garland of mango leaves and be long enough to hang over a doorway.

(While Madisyn works, the educator can play some Indian Christmas carols found on YouTube to enhance the atmosphere.)

III. Conclusion (5 minutes)

Recap and Share

Educator asks:

- "Let's quickly recap. Tell me three things you learned about Christmas in India that you didn't know before."
- "What was the most surprising or interesting tradition to you? Why?"

Madisyn shares her finished craft.

Educator says: "Show me your amazing creation! Explain how it connects to the Indian Christmas traditions we talked about. You did a fantastic job bringing a piece of Indian culture to life."

Final Takeaway

Educator says: "This is a great reminder that while the heart of Christmas—celebrating joy, family, and peace—is the same everywhere, different cultures add their own beautiful and unique flavors to the celebration. Your decoration is a perfect example of that!"

Differentiation & Extension

- **Scaffolding Support:** If needed, provide pre-cut shapes for the craft activity or a worksheet with the Venn diagram already drawn out. You could also provide a list of key vocabulary (Diya, Kuswar, Christmas Baba) to reference.
 - **Extension Activity:** For an extra challenge, Madisyn can research and find a simple recipe for an
-

Indian Christmas sweet, like a Nankhatai (cardamom shortbread) or a simple Goan plum cake, to try making later. Or, she could write a short journal entry from the perspective of a teenager in Kerala, India, describing their Christmas Eve.