

## **Food, Religion & Holiday Celebrations**

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### **Introduction**

When I first started teaching FCS (Family Consumer Science) classes, I taught Textiles and Clothing at a school in the Christina School District. When we began working on the unit related to different cultures and expressions of religion in the form of clothing, my students had many questions related to specific religious and cultural dress. Obviously, I couldn't answer all of their questions because I didn't have an in-depth knowledge of any religious practice as it related to dressing a specific way. Originally, I decided to do my project for my fashion classes, but I was moved to another school and my classes changed from teaching Textiles and Clothing at the high school level to teaching FCS in middle school. I decided to focus on the food portion of my FCS classes because most of my students are more interested in cooking and eating in class, of course. I have many students who come from families from different religious backgrounds. Most of my students were born in the United States, and some were born in other countries and now attend Kirk Middle School. The makeup of the diversity in my students isn't always apparent, until it comes to lunch time. Aside from being some very picky eaters, you can see the differences in what students put in their lunch boxes.

One year I had a Muslim student. I didn't know she was a Muslim for my first two years of knowing her. In her senior year, she began to talk about her religion more openly with me. She expressed to me that she wanted to actively practice her religion now that she was getting older. From what little information I knew at the time about Islam, I found myself curious and I began asking her many questions about her religious customs and practices. I asked her about some of the holidays that she celebrated. She would often join me for lunch but not bring any food. I figured that she maybe didn't have money for lunch or that she wasn't feeling well. One day I asked her why she wasn't eating and she mentioned that she was fasting during certain parts of the year because she was observing a religious practice or holiday. She explained details and revealed some information about what it means to be a practicing Muslim. She also told me what she knew about other people in her family and community who actively practiced the religion. I knew many of my students didn't know about some of the aspects of the Islam religion that she was talking about during our conversation. However, after talking to her, I started to understand why she wanted to practice and noticed that she was slowly starting to change the way she dressed and her overall behavior. I began to wonder about some of my other students as well. I knew I wanted to participate in the Comparative Religion Seminar

because I wanted to learn about different religions and be able to understand more about the cultures and also the food related religious customs of my students who practiced different religions.

Another thought that I have is from my own experiences of growing up with people who actively practice Catholicism which is a denomination of Christianity. I grew up in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. Where I was raised, there is a very high population of Italians in that area. My family was combined with an Italian family when I was about eight years old. My step mom is Italian and she is Roman Catholic. We would celebrate Christmas Eve by eating the Feast of the Seven Fishes. I remember the first Christmas we spend as a combined family. My dad never made me eat fish before and it was a new experience for me. I didn't want to eat the fish because I didn't like how it smelled. It was explained to me that the reason we were only eating fish or seafood was because we were making a sacrifice by not eating meat which would symbolize waiting for the birth of Jesus. This meant that we had to give up meat until Christmas Day which represented the birth of Jesus. My father was not catholic, and we did not practice these customs until we combined families. As a kid, I didn't understand why the rules had suddenly changed as it related to religious practices, but I noticed more of a change when it came to dinner during specific holidays that were observed by Catholics. Of course, I didn't know the reasons behind the changes until I got older. This Seminar not only helped me understand some of my own religious beliefs in a new light, but also helped me understand the different religions my students practice.

## **Background**

Kirk has about 700 students currently enrolled. My class is only offered to the 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> graders because of the way CTE (Career & Technical Education) funding works in the state of Delaware and across the country. The goal of the FCS exploratory classes are to help the students decide what career path they are interested in pursuing when they reach high school. Their selection will determine which high school they will attend based on their specific needs. I have roughly 110 7<sup>th</sup> graders and 110 8<sup>th</sup> graders who attend my class. At Kirk, we have a rotating block schedule combined with an A B day scheduling format. This means that their classes change every day and the order of the classes change as well. I see my students two to three times a week depending on the rotation cycle and if we have any days off. My students attend my class for the entire year of school.

Additionally, there is a heavy population of students who have IEPs and require additional instructional supports in various subject areas. As a school, we are focused on

literacy due to us being deemed a focus school by Delaware Department of Education (DDOE) for the deficit in literacy standards according to a state wide test. These results are calculated from a test given to students called the I Ready test. I do not personally conduct this test because I'm not a core class teacher. This evaluation process determines if the students are above, below or at grade level for reading, writing, and math skills.

## **Rationale**

I decided to focus on four different religions for my students. The reason I chose these specific religions was because they are the most represented by the student body in my school. My students would highly benefit from this experience because it will encourage them to learn more about others and be accepting of those who are different from themselves. Collectively as a school initiative, we focus on character and tolerance of others heavily because there are many students who are from other countries and sometimes, they speak very little or broken English. Our students are encouraged to learn about other cultures and celebrate the differences that everyone may have. The four religions I chose to focus on are; Christianity, Judaism, Hinduism and Islam.

I have learned quite a lot from the readings during my Comparative Religion Seminar and the discussions we held in class with other seminar participants. We have read multiple books and passages about many religions in the world. I found the different religions we studied very interesting and disturbing at the same time. We discussed how many religious texts are the interpretation of God's word by man and how they have been translated and re-translated over the thousands of years. Religion itself has changed depending upon who the information was coming from and the message they wanted to send to the people. Another thing I realized throughout our seminar was that Christianity, Judaism and Islam have many similar concepts. All three of them believe in the same god. They may have different names for God, but all they all mean the same god, it's just a different language. After reading the texts from each of these religions and our discussions as a group in the seminar, I see even more similarities between the three.

I hadn't taken the time to truly learn about other religions outside of what my experiences were with people from different countries before this Seminar. I'd like to think of myself as a compassionate person, especially when it comes to others who may be different from me in whatever way, but I never really took the opportunity to learn specific information about other religions and would find myself stereotyping how others may think based upon what little information I did know or assume about their religion.

I read another book on my own that was interesting and helpful for my research of this topic was *Food and Faith: A Theology of Eating* by Norman Wirzba. It made me think about how we eat food as a society in general and how it's viewed when you eat food with a purpose usually tied to religious views. In chapter two of this book Wirzba talks about how creation stories or the beginning of the world is centered on a garden. It nourishes humans and is considered a gift to humans from God according to this chapter. In chapter four of his book, he talks about how food is just as much about life as much as it is about death.

“Eating is the daily reminder of creaturely mortality. We eat to live, knowing that without food we will starve and die. But to eat we must also kill, realizing that without the death of others- microbes, insects, plants, and animals – we can have no food.”<sup>1</sup>

After reading this book, I thought about food in a different way. Not necessarily as it is tied to religion like it is in this book, but more as a reflection for myself and my personal thoughts related to how I value and eat food.

In the high school environment, students who are different because of their religion and culture, usually stay around like-minded people. In my opinion, when this happens, it's harder for them to make friends, socialize outside of their group, and in some of their cases, learn English. Socializing with others who speak English is heavily impactful when it comes to trying to learn the language at a faster rate. It also impacts their grades if they can't speak or read English and they have a less successful experience in school as a result. I would see this happen first hand with students at the high school level and it was typically more difficult for students who didn't socialize with others outside their own culture.

This is my first time at a middle school position and I didn't really know what to expect. I got a lot of feedback from parents, students and other teachers in the building about the FCS program at Kirk. The class wasn't going very well the previous year due to the lack of instructional content that was supposed to be covered for each grade. I also found out that the teacher mainly focused on the culinary lessons last year. I chose to do my project focused on food and its religious ties related to holiday celebrations as a result. I also got an opportunity to rewrite the curriculum for my FCS class and incorporate life skills, clothing & textiles, and early childhood education. I separate each topic according to different marking periods.

## **Unit Description**

In this unit eighth grade middle school students will learn how to make a personal connection with their own religion and how it impacts their lives and food choices. They will identify religious practices related to food such as fasting or a specific type of dietary guideline, identify foods from various cultures used in celebratory practices for an observed holiday in the four religions that we are covering. They will also learn about other religions, holidays they celebrate, and how they celebrate through food and cultural customs. Students will also make some of the most recognized food dishes and evaluate the reasons why specific recipes are tied to specific religious customs or celebrations.

## **Objective**

In this unit I'm going to be focusing on concepts from a chapter of the book I use in my 8<sup>th</sup> grade Family Consumer Science classes called Applying Life Skills. In Unit Seven: Chapter Twenty: Recipes and Measuring<sup>2</sup> the goal is for students to learn how to cook and bake successfully by knowing how to read a recipe, measure ingredients accurately, and understand commonly used recipe terms. Chapter twenty will be taught before this unit. Students will be applying content knowledge they learned from chapter twenty in this unit when we begin working in the kitchen to make the traditional holiday recipes. My goal for this unit is to teach students about major holidays for each identified religion and how to prepare foods from some of the different cultures that practice the holiday. They are expected to learn and apply specific skills related to cooking methods, meal preparation, mise en place (a French term referring to having ingredients and tools needed to cook in order and ready to use in preparing a dish commonly used in the culinary industry), food safety standards, kitchen safety, and measurement conversions within this unit. Students will also be expected to identify content vocabulary terms related to the lesson.

The differentiated instruction methods I plan to implement are; close reading, jigsaw and hands on learning. My lesson is heavily influenced by the readings from Mircea Eliade's "The Sacred and the Profane, The Nature of Religion", and I am specifically relating my topic to Eliade's notions of sacred time and profane time. According to Eliade's book, sacred time is a time of celebration or recognition of significant times in history or when mythical time is represented. Profane time is the ordinary passing of time, experiences, which is boring and has no religious significance.

I plan to do this project with my 8<sup>th</sup> graders because it will prepare them for future projects they will be assigned in high school next year. It will also help them have a better understanding of the new people they will meet, especially if they have a different religious or cultural background. They will be able to relate to them better and understand the religious customs they may practice. The first thing I want to do is present the students with a working definition of each religion. I do realize that each of the religions chosen have many differences within them. I have included that issue in the Essential Question for Part I of this unit.

There are differences in denominational beliefs that change how some holidays are observed. As a result some denominations follow rules or practices of their religion in different ways according to their beliefs. I want the explanation of each religion I chose to be basic in order for the students to understand the most important aspects of each religion. I chose to use a website I found that is geared specifically towards kids and explains what religion is and the different aspects of each religion they have featured on their page<sup>3</sup>. I just want to provide my students with a brief synopsis of what each religion is, the belief system, principles of the religion, and what holidays they celebrate or observe and food that may accompany the celebrations, where they worship, and several visual examples of religious imagery. I will be explaining to my students after they read the passage during their close reading exercise that every religious denomination is not represented by the passage they read and there are significant differences between denominations.

According to uni.org Christianity is based on the belief in one God. However, all denominations of Christianity are not represented nor do they all believe in the Holy Trinity among other outlying differences. The quote below represents the Catholic perspective and is not a representation of all Christian denominations.

“Christians believe that Jesus Christ was the Son of God – fully human and fully divine – and that through believing in him and following his teachings they can inherit eternal life. Christians believe that Jesus died for humanity, that God raised him from the dead, and that Jesus will come again at the end of time. In addition, Christians believe in the Trinity, or the three parts of God: God the Father or Creator, God the Son (Jesus) or Redeemer, and God the Holy Spirit or Sanctifier. The Holy Spirit is God’s presence in the world.”<sup>4</sup>

The teachings of Jesus stem from Jewish law called commandments. These were the laws in which Jesus was raised. The sacred text for Christianity is the Holy Bible. However, different versions of the bible are used for specific Christian denominations.

“The Christian Bible has two parts: the Old Testament which is essentially the Hebrew

scriptures of Jesus' time; and the New Testament which contains writings about Jesus Christ and about the early church.”<sup>5</sup>

Christians worship in a church. They worship on Sundays and other sacred times such as Lent, Ash Wednesday, Advent, Christmas, and Easter. All Christians may not worship during these sacred times due to differences in denominations or cultural customs. Some people who represent religious leadership are called priests, pastors or ministers. The religious leaders may be called by other names in other Christian denominations. How Christians worship differs by denomination and cultural influences.<sup>6</sup> In the United States, there was a survey conducted in 2001 that identified 35 of the largest Christian denominations. The top five denominations according to the findings of this study are Catholic, Baptist, Methodists/Wesleyan, Lutheran, and Presbyterian.<sup>7</sup> Common celebrations for Christians are;

“Advent- the four week season of preparation for the birth of Christ, and for the second coming often an Advent wreath is used as a focus for prayer during Advent

Christmas- Jesus’ birth often celebrated with nativity scenes, stories, pageants recalling the story of Jesus’ humble birth in a stable surrounded by animals.

Epiphany- the visit of the three wise ones to Jesus just after his birth and their subsequent spreading of the news of his birth throughout the world.

Lent- the period leading up to Easter commemorating the 40 days Jesus spent in the desert fasting and praying. A time for personal reflection and improvement through prayer fasting and study.

Holy Week- the last week of Jesus’ life, including Palm Sunday, which celebrated his triumphal entry into Jerusalem the week before he was crucified, Maundy Thursday, a remembrance of the last supper with the disciples, and Good Friday, the day Jesus was crucified on a cross, which is the most recognized symbol of Christianity.

Easter- Jesus’ resurrection from the dead. Eggs are a major symbol of Easter since they symbolize new life. Crosses are often covered with flowers to symbolize Jesus’ victory over death.

Ascension Day- when Jesus’ ascended into Heaven.

Pentecost- the gift of the Holy Spirit, God’s presence in the world, to Jesus’ followers in the form of a mighty wind and tongues of fire.

Saints’ Days- official days, recognized by many Christians, especially Catholic, Orthodox and Anglican, celebrating people who have lived particular holy lives and are recognized as official saints.<sup>8</sup>

These holidays are mostly based upon important dates in the life of Jesus. There are also celebrations that are celebrated for an individual. Baptism is the birth into a Christian church, confirmation is making commitment to church membership, also weddings and funerals are recognized in the church.<sup>9</sup>

In Judaism, the followers of the religion are called Jewish people. They also believe in one God.

“Jewish people believe in the Torah, which was the whole of the laws given to the Israelites at Sinai. They believe they must follow God's laws which govern daily life. Later legal books, written by rabbis, determine the law as it applies to life in each new place and time.<sup>10</sup>”

There are six hundred thirteen commandments which are written in the Torah. The Torah is the sacred text for Judaism. There are four basic groups of the Jewish religion. The differences are due to how they interpret the Torah.

“Orthodox Jews believe that all of the practices in the Torah which it is practical to obey must be obeyed without question.

Conservative and Reform Jews believe that the ancient laws and practices have to be interpreted for modern life with inclusion of contemporary sources and with more concern with community practices than with ritual practices.

Reform Jews also allow everyone to sit together, men and women, and both Hebrew and the local language are spoken in services.”<sup>11</sup>

There is another group is not included in uri.org. This fourth group is called Reconstructionist. According to myss.com, Reconstructionist have adapted classical Judaism to current ideas related to science, art and reason. They see it as an evolving civilization rather than religion. They reject the idea of a personal deity, miraculous deeds, and chosen people. Women receive religious rights along with males.<sup>12</sup>

The sacred texts for Judaism are the Tanakh which is ancient collection of texts that includes the Torah, the writings of the Prophets, and miscellaneous texts. The Torah are sacred scrolls. The Talmud is a collection of writings commenting on the Tanakh which is important to the Jewish religion.<sup>13</sup> Jewish people often make a pilgrimage to Jerusalem because it is the site of the original temple, though this is not required. The Synagogue is the physical space where Jewish people go to worship.<sup>14</sup> Common Jewish Holidays are;

”Rosh Hashanah is the Jewish New Year festival which usually takes place in September or October.

Yom Kippur is the Day of Atonement during which Jewish people fast, pray, and atone for their sins, asking God for forgiveness. This happens ten days after Rosh Hashanah.

Passover or Pesach is in the spring and marks the liberation of the Jews from slavery in Egypt, the giving of the Ten Commandments and the journey to the Promise Land. The Hagaddah, which is the story of the exodus from Egypt, is read at this celebration, which takes the form of a ritual meal. There are many ritual objects which enable the family to experience the Exodus as



they sit around the dinner table.

Hanukkah is the festival of lights. It is held in late November or December. When the temple was rededicated after a period of persecution, the eternal light was rekindled but there was only enough oil for a few days. Miraculously, the oil lasted for eight days, until more oil could be found. The Menorah, a candelabra with eight candles representing the eight days, plus an additional candle to light the others, is a central focus for prayers said during the nights of Hanukkah.

Important passages in Jewish life are marked by special observances. There are specific traditions for the birth of a child and for when someone dies.

“Bar mitzvah and Bat mitzvah ceremonies mark a child's thirteenth birthday (in some traditions, a girl's twelfth birthday). The first act of adulthood is reading from the Torah scroll during services.

All Jewish holy days begin at sundown and end at sundown. The Shabbat begins at sundown each Friday and lasts until dark on Saturday. There is a special Sabbath meal which includes special foods, songs and readings and prayers. Families hold this ceremony together, beginning with the blessing of Shabbat candles, wine and bread (challah).”<sup>15</sup>

Jewish people follow dietary laws called Kosher.<sup>16</sup> These guidelines specify what kinds of foods Jewish people can and cannot eat. It also provides the rules that must be followed in order to prepare the food in order for it to be considered Kosher. There are nine basic laws that have to be followed to keep Kosher. Certain animals are not permitted to be eaten period. Further restrictions specifically refer to meat or organs of certain animals being forbidden. Animals have to be killed in accordance to Jewish law in order to be considered Kosher. This entails blood being removed from the meat before eating. Meat can't be eaten with dairy, fruits and vegetables have to be insect free because insects are not kosher. Kitchen equipment used to prepare meat can't be used to prepare dairy products or vice versa. There are more rules, but it depends on the specific cultural differences and how strictly the law is being followed and sacred times like Shabbat.<sup>17</sup>

In Islam the basic belief system is the belief in one God whom they refer to as Allah. However, they do not recognize the Holy Trinity like Christians.<sup>18</sup> Surrender, submission, commitment and peace is what Islam means in Arabic.<sup>19</sup> People who follow Islam are referred to as Muslims. Muslims operate on the basis of five pillars of Islam that are used to guide daily practice. The Five Pillars are;

“Shahadah (declaration of faith)—to bear witness or testify that there is no god except one God (Allah) and Muhammad is His prophet or messenger.

Salat (ritual prayer)—the five daily prayers are performed at dawn, noon, mid-afternoon, sunset and night. The prayers are offered in Arabic language and facing the direction of Mecca.

Zakah (alms tax) –Giving 2.5% of one's wealth to the poor and needy.

Sawm (fasting)—Muslims fast during the daylight hours in the ninth month of the Islamic lunar calendar called Ramadan. The purpose is to remind people of the goodness of what they have and to show equality with the poor. Ramadan is a time for study and self-discipline.

Hajj (pilgrimage): Muslims believe in making a pilgrimage to Mecca to the Ka'bah at least once in their lifetime. The Ka'bah is believed to have been built by Ibrahim (Abraham) and one of his sons [Isma'il or Ishmael]. Muhammad restored it to worship Allah. For this reason it is a very sacred place to Muslims.”<sup>20</sup>

The sacred text for Islam is called the Qur'an or Koran. It is considered to be the word of God for Muslims delivered through the prophet Muhammad. The Koran is not considered as authentic if it is translated to any other language, so Muslims often learn Arabic in order to be able to read the sacred text.<sup>21</sup> The Sunnah is another sacred text which is basically a record of Muhammad's words and deeds. It is used to help interpret the Koran, and provides instructions about belief, worship and behavior for Muslims. Places of worship for Islam are called mosques.

Mecca is also a place of worship. Muslims must make a pilgrimage to Mecca at least once in their lifetime if it is financially possible. When they go to Mecca, they perform the hajj or pilgrimage which happens during the 12<sup>th</sup> month of the Islamic calendar. While the mosque is a place of worship, Muslims also pray at home or where ever they might be at the time of prayer. They always pray toward the direction of Mecca which is important to Islam because it is the birth place of the prophet Muhammad. Common Islamic holidays are;

“Id ul-Fitr-This festival marks the end of the month of fasting, Ramadan. It ends with the sighting of the new moon in the sky. Muslims visit their mosque to say special prayers, visit friends and relatives, eat special feast foods and exchange gifts and cards. It is a time of thankfulness for Allah's blessings which are better appreciated because of the experience of fasting during Ramadan.

Hajj-This is the pilgrimage to Mecca to worship in the Ka'bah. Muslims try to do this at least once in their lifetime. Pilgrims wear plain, identical clothes to show that all are equal in Allah's eyes. They walk around seven times, counterclockwise. They they walk or run seven times between two hills followed by a 16 mile walk to Mount Arafat where Muhammad preached his last sermon. On the way back to Mecca, Muslims throw stones at three stone pillars which represent Satan. Then they make a final seven circles around the kA'bah.

Id ul-Adha-The Hajj, whether on pilgrimage or at home, ends with the festival of Id ul-Adha in which a sheep or goat is sacrificed. This is a reminder of the sacrifice Ibrahim (Abraham) was asked to make of his son, Isma'il (Ishmael). When Ibrahim was just about to sacrifice his son to show his obedience to God, God provided a lamb instead. The festival celebrates God's mercy and Ibrahim's obedience. This story in different versions is in the Koran, the Bible, and the Old Testament which shows the common heritage of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam.

Id Ul-Ghadir-This festival in Shia communities around the world celebrates the anniversary of the Holy Prophet Mohammed's completion of his final message to humankind with regard to his

succession. Ghadir-e-Khun is the famous place where this event took place during the month of Hajj in the 10th year of the Hijra, or migration, of the Prophet Mohammed from Mecca to Medina.

Milad an-Nabi (birthday of the Holy Prophet)-Muslims celebrate this occasion with great rejoicing. Muslims gather to narrate the stories of the Prophet's birth, childhood, his character, manhood and his mission.

Lailat al-Qadr (Night of Power)-The night in which the prophet Mohammed received the first revelation from God. The Night of Power is one of the odd-numbered nights of the last ten days of Ramadan. A portion of this night is spent reading the Qur'an and making special prayers.”<sup>22</sup>

Since many of these holidays refer to Ramadan, I wanted to make sure that I cover what Ramadan is and it is also one of the holidays I've selected for the unit. Ramadan is a month of holiness.

“It is the ninth month of the Islamic year, in which "the Quran was first sent down as a guidance for the people" {1}. Ramadan is similar to the Jewish Yom Kippur in that both constitute a period of atonement; Ramadan, however, is seen less as atonement and more as an obedient response to a command from Allah. {2} During Ramadan, those who are able must abstain from food and drink (including water), evil thoughts and deeds, and sexual intercourse from dawn until dusk for the entire month. Because the holiday cycles through the solar year, this fast can be much more challenging in some years than others. When Ramadan falls in the summer season, the days of fasting are longer and it is a greater hardship to do without water.”<sup>23</sup>

Muslims follow Islamic dietary laws referred to as Halal. Halal means lawful or permissible in Arabic. It sets guidelines for food and daily life which is outlined in strict from the Koran. There is also a term which is the opposite meaning of Halal and it is Haram which means unlawful or prohibited.<sup>24</sup> In order for food to be considered halal, it has to be on the list of permitted foods to eat, and animals have to be killed in accordance to Islamic law which prohibits unnecessary suffering to the animal. Because Muslims believe that all life is sacred, any animal killed for consumption should only be killed in the name of Allah according to Islamic law. It is also prayed for using the prayer.

“In the name of God – God is the Greatest/Bismillahi Allahu Akbar”<sup>25</sup>

The basic list of guidelines that determine whether a food is Halal or Haram are;

“Foods containing ingredients such as gelatine, enzymes, emulsifiers, and flavours are questionable, because the origin of these ingredients is not known. In the meat and poultry food industry, animals such as cows, veal, lamb, sheep,

goats, turkeys, chickens, ducks, game birds, bison, venison, etc., are considered halal, but they must be prepared according to Islamic laws in order for their meat to be suitable for consumption (see below).

Fish and seafood (with the exception of crocodiles, alligators and frogs) are generally acceptable for Muslims but as always check first, as there may be a personal dietary preference or allergy. The preparation of the fish or seafood should not include alcohol (ie batter or wine, or anything considered haram).

In cases of necessity, prohibited things may become permissible (halal) for the duration of the emergency or need, as Islam puts a priority on life over death. Refer to Qur'an at Chapter 2:173 (Al Baqarah)."<sup>26</sup>

There are several web sites you can use as a resource to find information that identify specific food items as halal or haram in accordance to Islamic dietary laws. The lists follow the same guidelines, but may differ in the specific food items provided on each list. There may also be foods on some lists based upon the location of where individuals may live which may not be available in all places in the world.

Hindus believe in multiple gods. Each one serves a different purpose in the religion. Also, there are many denominations of Hinduism. In India alone, there are many different types of Hindus based upon cultural practices, where people live, and individual gods or goddesses a group recognizes. It is impossible to adequately recognize every single type of Hindu, but here are the basics of Hinduism;

“The fundamental teaching of Hinduism is that a human being's basic nature is not confined to the body or the mind. Beyond both of these is the spirit or the spark of God within the soul. This spirit is within us and also within everything we see. All beings and all things are really, in their deepest essence, this pure or divine spirit, full of peace, full of joy and wisdom, ever united with God. This is not just theory, but it can actually be experienced. Anyone who takes the trouble to undergo the necessary training to purify and refine the mind and senses can begin to feel the truth of this. This training can take various forms and is known as yoga ("union" - union of the individual self with this inner spirit).”<sup>27</sup>

The sacred Hindu texts are the Vedas the oldest of which are approximately 3000 years old. Hindu places of worship are called Mandir which are temples dedicated to a specific deity which may be male or female. The temple represents a god's earthly home. They may have statues that depict a particular god as a shrine in the Mandir. When visiting the temple, certain guidelines must be followed like taking off shoes before entering. The Ganges River in India is a sacred place visited by Hindus. Many make a pilgrimage to bathe in the waters because the water is considered sacred. It's also where they spread cremation ashes.<sup>28</sup>

Common holidays or celebrations observed by Hindus are Diwali, Holi, Dussehra, and Kumbha Mela.

“There are three main yearly festivals. All major festival celebrations include visiting a temple, eating special foods and exchanging gifts.

Diwali is the festival of lights. Light represents knowledge. It is celebrated in late October or early November. This is the Hindu New Year.

Holi is the festival which marks the coming of spring. It is held in March or April. There are processions and people light bonfires and cover each other with colored water and powders.

Dussehra is the festival which marks Rama's triumph over the evil Ravana. It is held in September. There are dances and plays with events in the life of the god Rama depicted. Every twelve years in January or February:

Kumbha Mela: This celebration is a huge bathing affair. Millions of Hindu pilgrims go to the River Ganges at Allahbad for this festival.”<sup>29</sup>

Hindus may follow different dietary guidelines in accordance to their religious practices. In fact, during my research, I found quite a few variations of dietary restrictions. Tamas, Rajas and Sattva are qualities of vibrations which affect physical and astral bodies. Tamasic foods are eaten by the lowest caste, Rajasic are eaten by middle caste, and Sattvic are consumed by the highest caste. This is particularly true in Indian Hindu society, though the caste system is technically against the law today<sup>30</sup>. Many Hindus are vegetarian, and some may allow fish as part of that diet.<sup>31</sup>

“Tamasic (heavy) foods such as meat and fermented foods (including alcohol) promote dullness and inertia.

Rajasic (expanding) foods including onions, garlic, hot spices, stimulants, fish, eggs and salt are thought excite intellect and passion which interfere with meditation.

Sattvic (ascending) foods including fruits, vegetables and grains are thought to promote transcendence, sublimity and orderliness.”<sup>32</sup>

The Brahmin diet puts a large focus on sattvic foods, reduces rajasic and totally avoids tamasic foods. Here are the general guidelines for the diet;

“Meat is forbidden along with all meat products.

Eggs are forbidden.

Milk and milk products are permitted, butter, yogurt, cream, etc. (but in India they're very expensive).

Cheese must not be coagulated with rennet (an animal product). In India the acid coagulated cheese panir predominates. It is roughly the same as hoop cheese, a form of farmer's cheese with more of the liquid squeezed out.

Onions - forbidden along with all other members of the Allium genus, including

garlic, scallions, chives, shallots, etc.

Mushrooms are forbidden along with all other fungi.

Stimulants - coffee, tea, etc. are rajastic and to be avoided as they interfere with meditation.

Alcohol - no.”<sup>33</sup>

There are, of course, exceptions. In Kashmir Brahmins eat meat (though not beef) and to a lesser extent in Orissa, Bengal and Maharashtra where eggs, fish, chicken and even lamb and goat may also be included. Another diet recognized is called the Krishna Diet which follows the Brahmin diet but has made adaptations for some of the western foods since there is a high population of Hindus in America.

I have identified at least two major holidays for each religion and one food linked custom from each of them. I decided upon a major holiday that is celebrated by the majority of the followers for each religion and a holiday that celebrates the New Year if possible. The New Year is celebrated at different times of the year due to the religious calendar used to determine when the New Year begins.

The major holiday I chose for Christianity is Christmas and the New Year as the Feast of the Circumcision of Christ<sup>34</sup>. This takes place after the eighth day after the birth of Jesus. The circumcision is regarded as a sign of god's covenant with Abraham and it is when Jesus was named. It is celebrated on January first. This New Year holiday may not be observed all Christians<sup>35</sup>. For Judaism I chose Hanukkah. Hanukkah is a festival of lights. It is held in late November or December. I also selected Rosh Hashanah. Rosh Hashanah is the Jewish New Year<sup>36</sup>.

For Hinduism there are many holidays that celebrate New Year's Day but they differ by names, regions, and cultures all over India and parts of Asia<sup>37</sup>. For the purpose of this lesson, I will just use Diwali which is celebrated by most Hindus and is considered as their New Year celebration<sup>38</sup>. While it is not a winter holiday, I chose Holi which is also known as the festival of colors celebrated by most Hindus.<sup>39</sup> This holiday is celebrated in March or April in the Hindu month called Phalguna. Holi celebrates the arrival of spring and several events that take place in Hindu mythology

For Islam I did not select a New Year holiday. Instead, I chose Id Al- Adha<sup>40</sup>. This holiday is the festival of sacrifice that takes place at the end of Hajj or pilgrimage. It may happen during different times of the solar year because it is based on the Islamic calendar which is in lunar. Even though it's not during winter time, I selected Ramadan for the

second Islamic holiday. I chose this because I have a lot of Muslim students and it is a major holiday in the Islamic communities around the world.

For the traditional dishes for each holiday, I made sure they followed the dietary guidelines for each religion as closely as I could. I basically searched for traditional dishes related to each holiday and chose what I wanted to make with my students. Most of the choices will have an American influence because the students are more likely to have had these dishes before during holiday celebrations. I will not be able to simulate the kosher laws because the utensils in my classroom kitchen have been used to prepare meat and dairy products during the course of my food preparation classes. The students will not be making an entire meal for each holiday due to the constraints of our class period. Instead, we will make a signature dish that is typically eaten on specific holidays. I've provided the types of meals for each holiday.

Traditional holiday or festival dishes for the four identified religions. For the Feast of the Circumcision of Jesus, I selected Vasilopita. It is a cake decorated with blanched almonds.<sup>41</sup> For Christmas, I selected a Christmas cake made with fruit or nuts.<sup>42</sup>

The traditional dish for Hanukkah will be latkes which are like fried potato pancakes.<sup>43</sup> For Rosh Hashanah we are going to make Potato Kugel. This dish looks like a shredded potato casserole with onions, eggs, and oil as the primary ingredients.<sup>44</sup>

For Diwali I selected aloo tikki. This dish reminds me of an Indian version of latkes. They are made with shredded potatoes and aromatic herbs, formed into small patties, and pan fried. This dish is typically served with a spicy condiment. The most popular sauces are made from mint, yogurt, or tamarind.<sup>45</sup> The Holi dish is called gujiya. Gujias are sweet fried dumplings with dried fruit and khoya, a reduced milk paste similar to the consistency of cooked oatmeal.<sup>46</sup> There are different variations of this dish which may be baked instead of fried, and some include chocolate or coconut.<sup>47</sup>

For Id-Al-Adha I selected kebabs which are usually lamb or chicken.<sup>48</sup> Ramadan dishes that are commonly served are suhor. These dishes are served during pre-dawn meals which provide energy throughout the day due to fasting from sun up to sun down in observance of Ramadan. Rice pudding with dates are what I chose to represent a Ramadan suhor meal.<sup>49</sup>

## **Classroom Activities**

Before the lesson:

For the opening of the lesson I will start the class with a warm up question which we call a Do Now. The purpose of this is to see if the students have any prior knowledge of the topic or focus of the lesson. I will project a question on the smart board that asks each student what they think the word religion means. After the students have written their responses, we review their answers as a class through having a class discussion. They will share their ideas with the class about what they think it means. After, the class discusses their thoughts, I provide a general working definition they would likely find from google or in the dictionary to make it more comprehensible for middle school aged students to have a better understanding. Once we review the Do Now question, we begin the lesson. Since this unit is covered over a course of several days, I've chosen many Do Now questions that will be addressed for the duration of each lesson. They are all listed.

Key terms for the lesson will be introduced for the students to understand the meanings when they see it in their research or when I talk to them about the specific topics related to the chapter or religion. The terms from chapter 20 are recipe, abbreviation, customary measurement system, metric system, equivalent, acquire, adequate, yield, alter, and flexible. The terms I've selected that will help students as they read the material about the religions and add to their presentations are religion, tradition, observe, Kosher, Halal, fasting, abstain, prohibit, and permit. These terms will be defined together as a class before we begin the lesson. This will be a student led activity. I will select students who volunteer to go to the front of the classroom and research each term as a class. The students will select the best meaning for our lesson.

This unit will be taught in four parts. The first part will be about the four religions. I originally planned for this unit to be covered over ten days. However, I decided to revise it to fourteen days. I decided to do this so that students would have more time in the kitchen and have the opportunity to prepare culturally or religiously traditional dishes they have in their home.

#### Part I: Four Religions Close Reading

Essential questions: How does my religion or culture influence the food that I eat?

This part of the lesson will take one day. I will provide basic information about the four religions I've selected along with at least two major holidays observed by each religion. The students will do a close reading exercise with their group. During the close reading of the text, which will be a printed out version of the information I got from [uri.org](http://uri.org),



students will identify words they will be expected to define utilizing a dictionary. This will most likely be an online dictionary since we will have use of the computer lab for parts of this lesson. They will come up with their own vocabulary for the section they have read. They will be expected to include these new vocabulary terms in their presentation when they work on it for the class.

I aimed to focus on winter holidays and New Year holidays for each religion if it was possible. There are some holidays I selected that didn't fit into either category but are still highly recognized for the religion in which it was connected. This information will be heavily sourced from the books we read, a web site I found that teaches kids about world religions [uri.org](http://uri.org),<sup>50</sup> and discussions held in the comparative religion seminar.

Students will be assigned to groups. They will work as a group and will be assigned a specific holiday. They will come up with decorations and activities one might do in order to practice the holiday they were assigned. They will get this information I provide about the holiday and some research online. We will utilize the computer lab for this part of the assignment.

## Part II: Holidays are kind of a big deal!

This lesson will take three days. In this project, all of students must identify words or phrases used during holiday times such as “Merry Christmas or Happy Hanukah”, they must also identify words of which others may not know the meaning, and explain what they mean. The students who watch the presentation are to complete a definition graphic organizer for the holiday that is being presented. In the graphic organizer they write the word, the definition and draw a picture of what that word might look like to them. This will help students grasp the meaning of the new terms.

After completing the graphic organizer, students will create a visual presentation using the PowerPoint program, which they will present to their fellow class mates. In the presentation, they will explain basic information about their assigned holiday and answer the essential questions that relate to the religion the holiday is based upon. The specific questions will be provided by the teacher in a rubric. They will include at least four vocabulary terms they came up with in their presentation including images related to the holiday or religion that they will teach to their fellow students. Students will be expected to address six preselected questions in their presentation about their project which will be categorized on the grading rubric. The questions are; what is the holiday you are presenting? What or who does the holiday celebrate? Are there any dietary restrictions

for people who participate or observe this holiday? Are there periods of fasting? Are there specific terms related to dietary guidelines that are religion based? What religion celebrates this holiday? Students will also be graded on the rubric for spelling, grammar and formatting standards. Students will be expected to produce a five question quiz relevant to their topic for others to complete at the closing of their presentation. Each of the four groups will conduct a presentation in a similar fashion.

### Part III: Let's celebrate!

This will take two days to complete this part of the lesson. After each group presents the religion they assigned, they will be assigned to groups once again, but having the choice of who they want to work with. Each group will have a maximum amount of peers who can work in the group. In this part of the lesson, they will work on a large shadow box. I wanted students to represent how this holiday might be celebrated by someone from one of the religions without necessarily making them celebrate something they may not believe in. So each student group will collaborate to create a shadow box or shoe box model of what it might look like at their house if they were to celebrate the holiday they chose. For this activity, I didn't want to limit my students to just my holidays that I chose for the class, I want them to have the choice to select something that isn't on my list. I think this is an opportunity for them to share more about different parts of the religion that they are assigned. Once they complete their shadow box, they will present it to the class and explain how the decorations in the shadow box represent their holiday, what is being celebrated, and activities they might do during this day or time.

### Part IV: Preparing Traditional Holiday Food

This part of the lesson will take eight days to complete. I was originally going to make it four days. However, I thought it might be a good idea to allow the students to express their own customs they might practice at home through food. So, there are two parts to this lesson. The first part is that I will choose a recipe that is connected to each holiday related to a specific practices for each religion. There will be eight dishes since I chose eight holidays. The students will apply the skills they learned from Chapter 20 of their book to make each holiday dish. After they make the recipes they will taste all of the food from each of the four groups. We will evaluate reasons why the specific recipe is appropriate for the identified religion that is represented. Since I have four kitchens, I am going to organize the cooking schedule so that two groups prepare recipe A and two groups prepare recipe B. this will be the first four days of the lesson.

For the remaining four days, we will compile a list of holiday recipes that students might like to share from their own cultural or religious background. I will combine the list for all eight of my classes. I will eliminate recipes that might take too long for our class time or just make parts of a recipe. Once I've reviewed recipes that we can do in a forty-five minute time period, I will present it to my classes. Each class will vote on narrowing down their list to eight recipes. Once we've selected the recipes, we will cook each one over a period of four days similar to the first part of the cooking lab lesson. The students will be able to taste each dish. We will not conduct an evaluation for this part of the lesson, but they will be expected to identify which religion is represented by each dish.

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## Appendix

Delaware does not have specific standards for Family Consumer Science so, the standards that I use follow the Delaware Common Core Standards for math and ELA. Integrating of knowledge and ideas:

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RST.6-8.7

Integrate quantitative or technical information expressed in works, in a text with a version of that information expressed visually.

CCSS.Math.Content.7.RP.A.1

Compute unit rates associated with ratios of fractions, including ratios of lengths, areas and other quantities measured in like or different units. For example, if a person walks  $\frac{1}{2}$  mile in each  $\frac{1}{4}$  hour, compute the unit rate as the complex fraction  $\frac{1/2}{1/4}$  miles per hour, equivalently 2 miles per hour.

These standards will be implemented when students begin making the traditional dishes. Each of the four groups of students will receive a recipe. They will be expected to read the recipe. Students will identify technical terms, accurately measure ingredients, use math to convert measurements, mix ingredients at the appropriate time, and use specific cooking methods in order to make a final product. The product will be a food dish that is prepared correctly.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RST.6-8.6

Analyze the author's purpose in providing an explanation, describing a procedure, or discussing an experiment in a text.

Analyze proportional relationships and use them to solve real-world and mathematical problems:

To apply this standard to the unit, students will do a close reading exercise. They will explain the purpose of the text, analyze important aspects of the text, and apply their knowledge with a visual presentation comprised of the information they have collected.

## Notes

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