

Holi is sometimes called the festival of colours. Find out more about this very special springtime festival in this article.

Before reading

Do the preparation task first. Then read the article and do the exercises.

Preparation task

Match the words (a–f) with the words (1–6) to make collocations.

Vocabulary

1. coloured
2. broken
3. soaking
4. passionately
5. ancient
6. clean

Definition

- a. clothes
- b. in love
- c. powders
- d. relationships
- e. stories
- f. wet

Holi

What is Holi and why is it celebrated?

Holi is an ancient Hindu festival that originated in India and Nepal and is now celebrated in many places around the world. The date changes each year depending on the full moon, but it is held sometime between the end of February and the middle of March, and lasts a night and a day. It also represents the arrival of spring and the victory of good over evil. An important part of the celebration is forgiving anyone who has upset you and repairing any broken relationships. Holi is sometimes called the festival of colours.

What happens on Holika Dahan?

The festivities start the night before Holi, which is called Holika Dahan. People build bonfires which represent good winning over evil and the end of winter. They perform rituals around the fire. In ancient stories, Holika was a devil whom the God Vishnu destroyed through fire. People start collecting wood for the bonfires several days before so that they can build really big fires.

What happens on Rangwali Holi?

The next day is called Rangwali Holi. In the morning everyone goes into the streets and people throw coloured powders and water at each other. Some people use water guns and water balloons. After a few hours everyone is soaking wet and covered in a rainbow of different colours. Many people prepare themselves by putting oil on their skin and hair to

make it easier to remove the colour afterwards. In the evening people put on clean clothes, go and visit their friends and family and exchange sweets and other delicious food.

Why do people throw colours?

Some people say that the colours are a way of celebrating the many colours of the flowers in springtime. But in the area around Mathura and Vrindavan the people also tell a story about the god Krishna. Krishna was passionately in love with a girl called Radha but he was worried that she would not love him because their skins were different colours. He didn't need to worry because Radha let him paint her face the same colour as his to show that she loved him. It is said that lovers nowadays often paint their faces the same colour during Holi to remember this story.

There is a spirit of togetherness and equality during the Holi festival as people from all backgrounds and walks of life celebrate and have fun together.

Tasks

Task 1

Are the sentences true or false?

	Answer	
	True	False
1. The festival of Holi lasts more than one day.	True	False
2. The bonfires on Holika Dahan celebrate the beginning of winter.	True	False
3. In the evening on Rangwali Holi, everyone throws coloured powder and water at each other.	True	False
4. People change their clothes in the evening of Rangwali Holi.	True	False
5. Radha did not love Krishna because of the colour of his skin.	True	False
6. Holi is a festival for all different types of people to celebrate together.	True	False

Task 2

Use the words in the box to complete the sentences.

bonfires	colours	forgive
guns	oil	popular

1. Holi is sometimes known as the festival of
2. On the first night of Holi people light
3. During Holi you should people who have hurt you.
4. Some people use water to spray water on other people.
5. People put on their skin to help remove the colour afterwards.
6. The festival of Holi began in India and Nepal, but is in many other countries as well.

Discussion

Have you ever celebrated Holi?

Answers

Preparation task

1. c
2. d
3. f
4. b
5. e
6. a

Task 1

1. True
2. False
3. False
4. True
5. False
6. True

Task 2

1. colours
2. bonfires
3. forgive
4. guns
5. oil
6. popular