

Observances and Meaning

Read for how religious observances matter in contemporary societies.

6.17.B “explain the significance of religious holidays and observances such as Christmas, Easter, Ramadan, the annual hajj, Yom Kippur, Rosh Hashanah, Diwali, and Vaisakhi in various contemporary societies.”

NAME _____

DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK _____ Read it twice

YOUR JOB Circle each religious holiday or observance. Underline the words or phrases that explain why it is important to people or communities.

Meaning in Community Life

- ① Religious holidays and observances can shape family life, public schedules, and community service in contemporary societies. Christians celebrate Christmas to remember the birth of Jesus. Many gather for worship, exchange gifts, or share meals. Easter remembers Jesus's resurrection and is often marked by church services and family traditions. During Ramadan, Muslims fast from dawn to sunset, pray, and give to people in need. The annual hajj brings Muslims who are able to travel to Mecca, Saudi Arabia, for a pilgrimage that expresses unity and devotion.
- ② Jewish communities observe Rosh Hashanah as the beginning of the Jewish New Year. It opens a period of reflection on actions and relationships. Yom Kippur, which comes soon afterward, is a day focused on repentance and seeking forgiveness. Many Jews fast and attend synagogue services. In places with Jewish populations, schools or workplaces may recognize these observances. This recognition can help people take part in important religious practices while also showing that a community includes people with different beliefs.
- ③ Diwali is celebrated by many Hindus, Jains, Sikhs, and Buddhists, although its meaning and customs vary. For many Hindus, it honors the triumph of light over darkness and good over evil. Homes may be cleaned, lamps lit, and relatives visited. Vaisakhi has special meaning for Sikhs because it commemorates the founding of the Khalsa in 1699. Sikhs may gather at gurdwaras, join processions, and serve free meals. These observances help people continue traditions, strengthen identity, and share their beliefs with neighbors in diverse societies.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE _____ Use the passage

1 What do Christmas and Easter each remember?

2 How does Ramadan show devotion and care for others, according to the passage?

3 How are Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur connected, and what is the focus of Yom Kippur?

4 Why is Vaisakhi significant for Sikhs, and name one way Sikhs may observe it.

3 YOUR TURN _____ Your own words

Choose one observance from the passage. Write four sentences that explain why it is significant, describe one practice connected to it, and explain one way recognizing it can matter in a contemporary society.

PART 1 • READ AND MARK

Circle each religious holiday or observance. Underline the words or phrases that explain why it is important to people or communities. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 • ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	What do Christmas and Easter each remember?	Christmas remembers the birth of Jesus. Easter remembers Jesus's resurrection.
2	How does Ramadan show devotion and care for others, according to the passage?	During Ramadan, Muslims fast from dawn to sunset, pray, and give to people in need.
3	How are Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur connected, and what is the focus of Yom Kippur?	Rosh Hashanah begins the Jewish New Year and opens a period of reflection. Yom Kippur comes soon afterward and focuses on repentance and seeking forgiveness.
4	Why is Vaisakhi significant for Sikhs, and name one way Sikhs may observe it.	Vaisakhi commemorates the founding of the Khalsa in 1699. Sikhs may gather at gurdwaras, join processions, or serve free meals.

PART 3 • YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

Rosh Hashanah is significant because it begins the Jewish New Year. It invites people to reflect on their actions and relationships. Jewish communities observe it before Yom Kippur. When schools or workplaces recognize it, people may have support to take part in this religious practice.

Accept accurate explanations that connect an observance to its religious meaning, practices, or role in community life. For the open response, accept any observance from the passage if all three requested parts are present and accurate.