

# Kwanzaa

## differentiated passages & activities

**The Seven Days of Kwanzaa**

What is the meaning of Kwanzaa? It means 'first fruits'. Kwanzaa is a holiday that begins on December 26th. It is not a religious holiday. Instead, it is a cultural holiday. It was created in 1966. A professor named M. K. Asante created it. He wanted to show the ways Africans celebrate the harvest and to create a new holiday.

The flag, called a *kinara*, represents Kwanzaa. Black represents the people, red represents their struggle, and green represents hope for the future.

Families celebrate Kwanzaa in many ways. They might sing songs and tell stories. Some play drums and dance. Almost all families light candles. Each night, they gather around the *kinara*. That's a special candleholder. They light one of the candles. Then they talk about that day's principle. The seven principles are values of African culture.

One principle is unity. It means togetherness among family and community. Another is self-determination. It means people speak for themselves. They make their own decisions. Next is collective work and responsibility. People work together to solve problems. The fourth principle is cooperation. People help each other. The fifth principle is business. Businesses help build the community. Purpose is the sixth principle. People have a purpose for their community. Day six is about creativity. The seventh principle is faith. People have faith in their community.

**Celebrating Kwanzaa**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Compare and contrast how you celebrate a holiday to how some African Americans celebrate Kwanzaa. What is the history behind the holiday you celebrate? What traditions do you have? How are they similar or different to Kwanzaa traditions?

Common CORE Kingdom

# ABOUT LEXILE LEVELS



Common Core Kingdom, LLC is a certified Lexile® Partner. These texts are officially measured and approved by Lexile and MetaMetrics® to ensure appropriate rigor and differentiation for students.

The Lexile Framework® for Reading measures are scientific, quantitative text levels. When the Lexile of a text is measured, specific, measurable attributes of the text are considered, including, but not limited to, word frequency, sentence length, and text cohesion. These are difficult attributes for humans to evaluate, so a computer measures them.

Common Core State Standards uses Lexile level bands as one measure of text complexity. Text complexity ranges ensure students are college and career ready by the end of 12<sup>th</sup> grade. Lexile measures help educators scaffold and differentiate instruction as well as monitor reading growth.

Grade Band	Lexile® Bands Aligned to Common Core Expectations
K-1	190L-530L
2-3	420L-820L
4-5	740L-1010L
6-8	925L-1185L

Keep in mind when using any leveled text that many students will need scaffolding and support to reach text at the high end of their grade band. According to Appendix A of the Common Core Standards, "It is important to recognize that scaffolding often is entirely appropriate. The expectation that scaffolding will occur with particularly challenging texts is built into the Standards' grade-by-grade text complexity expectations, for example. The general movement, however, should be toward decreasing scaffolding and increasing independence both within and across the text complexity bands defined in the Standards."



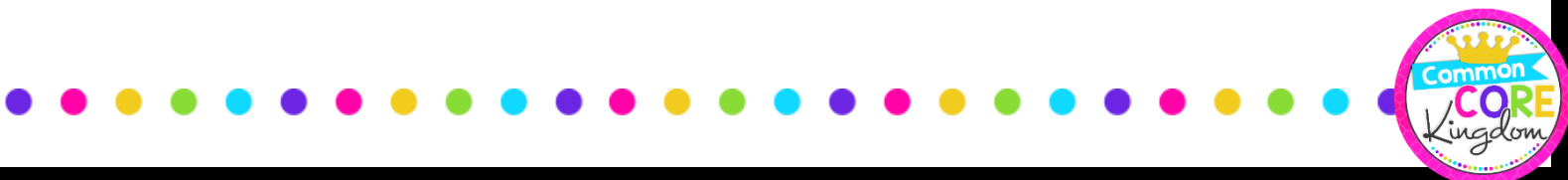
# Kwanzaa

1st – 5th grade

## Table of Contents

\*This product includes a nonfiction guided reading passage on three differentiated levels. The passages are in the 2<sup>nd</sup>-5<sup>th</sup> Grade Common Core Text Complexity Band (the range for 2<sup>nd</sup>-5<sup>th</sup> grade is 450-980).

1. Prereading Photo Prompt
2. Differentiated Passage - The 7 Days of Kwanzaa
  - The 7 Days of Kwanzaa (420L)
  - The 7 Days of Kwanzaa (680L)
  - The 7 Days of Kwanzaa (860L)
3. Comprehension Questions
4. Kwanzaa Symbols Foldable
5. 2 Writing Prompts with Toppers



Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

# Prereading

Look at this photograph. What do you notice in this photograph? Write your response in blue. After you have completed the readings, go back and add to your response in green, based on what you read.



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# The Seven Days of Kwanzaa

*Habari Gani!* That's Swahili for *What's the news?* It's a Kwanzaa greeting. Even the word *Kwanzaa* is Swahili. It means *first fruits*. Kwanzaa is a seven-day holiday. It begins December 26<sup>th</sup>. It ends January 1<sup>st</sup>. It's not a religious holiday. Instead, it celebrates African-American culture.

Kwanzaa was created in 1966. A professor wanted to build African-American community. He got ideas from the ways Africans celebrate the harvest. He combined them to create a new holiday.



This flag, called a *bandera*, represents Kwanzaa. Black represents the people, red represents their struggle, and green represents hope for the future.



Families celebrate Kwanzaa in many ways. They might sing songs and tell stories. Some play drums and dance. Almost all families light candles. Each night, they gather around the *kinara*. That's a special candleholder. They light one of the candles. Then they talk about that day's principle. The seven principles are values of African culture.

The first principle is unity. It means togetherness among family and community. The second is self-determination. It means people speak for themselves. They make their own decisions about their future. Next is collective work and responsibility. It means working together to solve problems. The fourth principle is cooperative economics. Owning businesses helps build the community. Purpose is the fifth principle. It brings focus to building community. Day six is about creativity. Those who celebrate Kwanzaa want beautiful communities. The seventh principle is faith. It means believing in one another.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

There are also seven symbols of Kwanzaa. Families set these symbols on a table. The first is the crops. Fruits, vegetables, and nuts stand for hard work and harvest. These crops are placed on the second symbol. It's a placemat called a *mkeka*. It stands for the history and culture of Africa. It is made of African cloth. The third symbol is an ear of corn. It stands for childbirth. There is one ear of corn for each child in the family. Fourth are the Kwanzaa candles. There's one black candle that stands for unity. It is placed in the middle of the kinara. On the right are three red candles. On the left three green candles. The kinara itself is the fifth symbol of Kwanzaa. It stands for African heritage. Sixth is the unity cup. Each person drinks from it. The seventh symbol are the gifts. Family members exchange gifts. The gifts should encourage growth. Or they can celebrate achievements. Handmade gifts promote purpose and creativity.

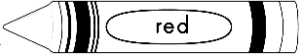


Families enjoy a Kwanzaa feast. They decorate the room in black, red, and green. They display the symbols of Kwanzaa. The feast ends as the old year ends. Families bring the values of Kwanzaa into the new year.

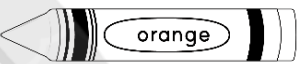
## Kwanzaa

Answer the following questions. Underline the text evidence in the color indicated. If there is not a crayon next to the question, you will need to infer the answer. You should still look for text evidence to help you infer.

1. How do the Kwanzaa gifts, or zawadi, support the principles of the holiday?

- a. The gifts are food that will be eaten at the Karamu feast. 
- b. The gifts reinforce the values of African-American culture.
- c. The gifts are purchased with money from community businesses.
- d. The gifts are only given from parents to children to represent the future of the community.

2. Which Kwanzaa symbol represents the history and culture of Africa?

- a. The kinara and seven candles 
- b. The unity cup
- c. The ear of corn
- d. The mkeka placemat

3. Which principle completes the web?

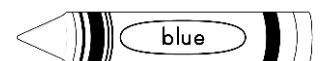
- a. Creativity
- b. Community
- c. Religion
- d. Togetherness



4. Which of these is most similar to a Kwanzaa tradition?

- a. Hanging ornaments on a Christmas tree
- b. Lighting candles on a Hanukkah menorah
- c. Baking a birthday cake
- d. Marching in a Flag Day parade

5. What does the author do to help readers understand Swahili words? Use details from the text to support your answer.



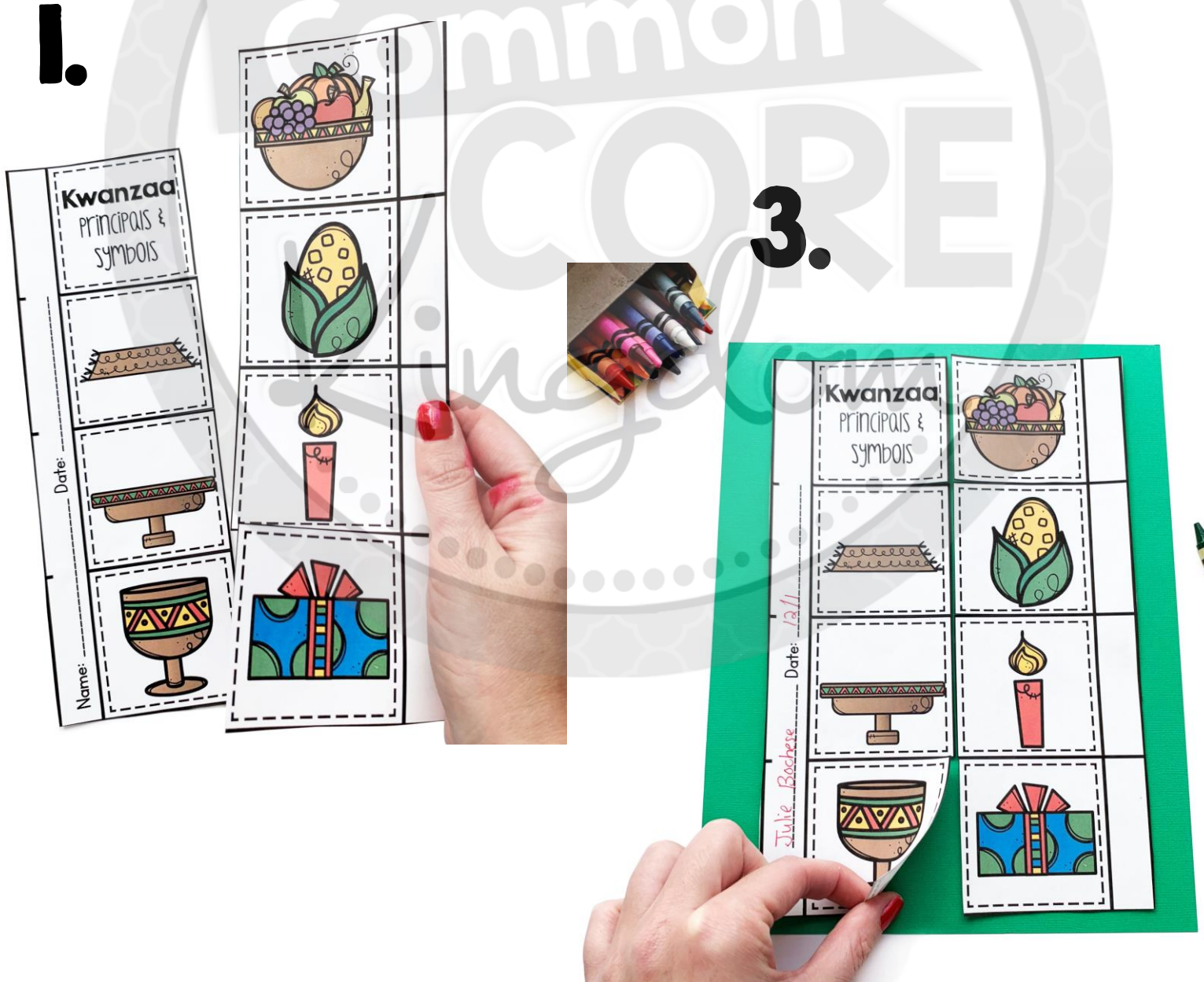
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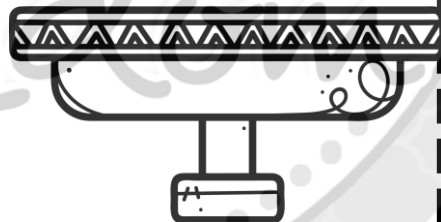
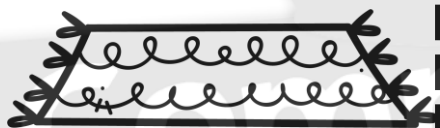
# Foldable Activity Instructions

1. Cut out the page as shown. The page should be cut along the border and down the middle vertically. The horizontal line should be cut only until the edge.
2. Paste the edge of the two flaps on a piece of paper or in student journals.
3. Students write the meaning of each symbol and the principle it stands for.



# Kwanzaa

principles &  
symbols



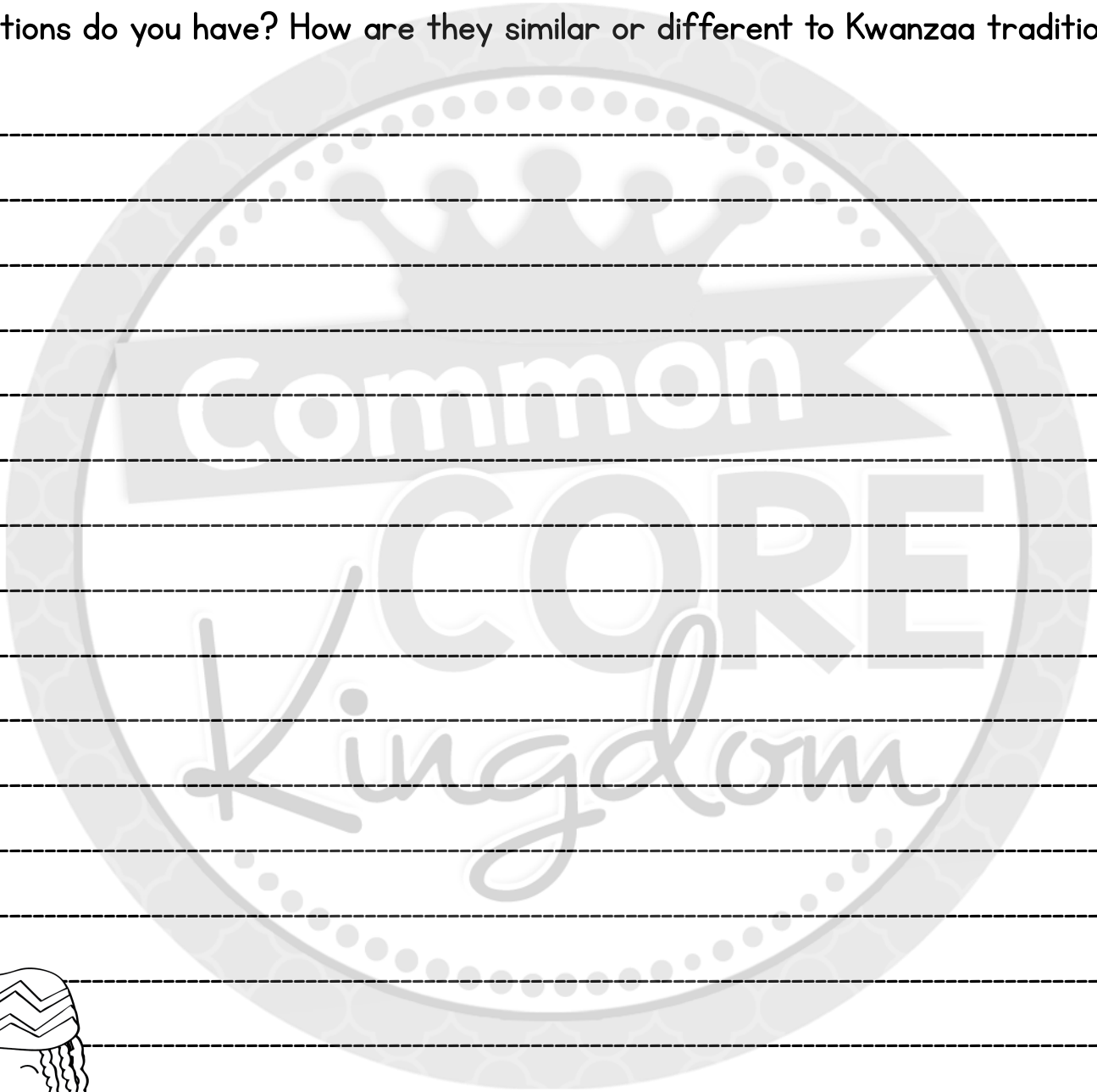
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Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

# Celebrating Kwanzaa

Compare and contrast how you celebrate a holiday to how some African-Americans celebrate Kwanzaa. What is the history behind the holiday you celebrate? What traditions do you have? How are they similar or different to Kwanzaa traditions?



Have students complete one of the writing prompts. Print out the toppers. Have students color their topper. Tape or glue the topper to the prompt sheet.



**Common Core**

**Winter Holidays**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Think about how people from different religions, cultures, and countries celebrate holidays in various ways. Reflect on why it is important to learn about other people's traditions and customs that are different from our own. Write about it below.

**Celebrating Kwanzaa**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Compare and contrast how you celebrate a holiday to how some African Americans celebrate Kwanzaa. What is the history behind the holiday you celebrate? What traditions do you have? How are they similar or different to Kwanzaa traditions?

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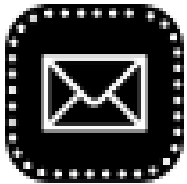
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[Julie@commoncorekingdom.com](mailto:Julie@commoncorekingdom.com)

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