

Countdown to Vaisakhi

Vaisakhi is a major celebration in the Sikh calendar which takes place on April 14th each year. It commemorates an event in 1699 when the tenth Guru of the Sikhs initiated the Khalsa – a new generation of citizens with equal rights and a distinct appearance that ensured members always stood out in a crowd.

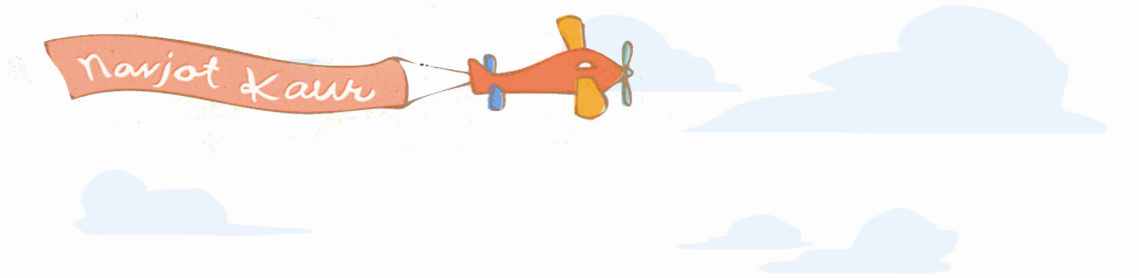
The Khalsa identity gave members a common last name (Kaur for women and Singh for men) to negate the ruling caste system. A visible appearance makes Sikhs accountable for their own actions and reminds them of their responsibility to stand up for others in need.

Here are some ideas and resources to plan the countdown to the special day. One or many of these activities could be integrated into your Spring unit of study or Language block. (All hyperlinks are displayed in full on the last page).

1. Have students create a **poetic performance** for the special day. After all, April is Poetry Month! The Five Beloved Ones who were the first to be initiated into the Khalsa in 1699, represent five key human characteristics: **Daya** - kindness, **Himmat** - courage, **Mohkem** - determination, **Sahib** - strength and **Dharam** - fairness. (You may choose to use A Lion's Mane as a [mentor text](#) to introduce the Sikh identity).

Have children (or 5 small groups) brainstorm ideas that represent each characteristic. Have them write an [ode](#) (or simple poem for younger children) to someone who defines one of the characteristics. The ode can be performed to a musical composition. ([Authentic Sikh string instruments](#) were carved out of gourds such as: **Taus** ; **Dilruba** – the stealer of hearts; **Sarangi** etc.) The **Tabla** or drum would offer an alternate, more easily accessible instrument to use too.

2. Hold a [Crown Day](#) to celebrate the special qualities of everyone and to encourage global citizenship. (The Sikh turban is like a “crown”).
3. A [Phulkari](#) is an authentic Panjabi quilt embroidered with geometric patterns in bright colours. Children can decorate one square each to show their own or their family's understanding of one of the five key characteristics of Vaisakhi. Attach all of these together to create a Phulkari!
4. Assemble these Global Citizens [pillow boxes](#) by printing the template onto cardstock and fill with sweets, nuts or dried fruit and share as gifts with family and friends. I have also found [blank templates](#) online that children can decorate themselves.
5. Print these [Vaisakhi cards](#) to colour and send greetings to family and friends.
6. Spend the month of April focused on **Making a Difference**. Carry out a random act of *seva* (kindness) each day and plan a Vaisakhi fundraiser to support a local charity which combines the five key characteristics beautifully. (You could use tags to write names of people who make a difference for this activity and then hang them from the ceiling).



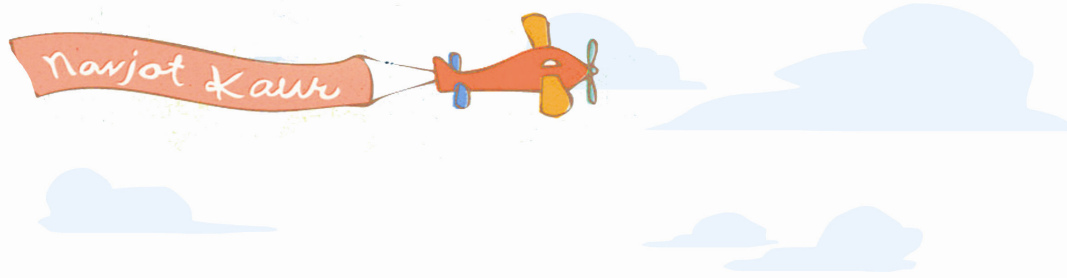
7. Make [lion masks](#) to create a ROAR about Vaisakhi!
8. Design and create [colourful kites](#) to fly on the special day.

The spring air of Vaisakh makes kite flying a popular pastime. A kite is called a *Patang* or *Guddi Manjha* in Panjab. The wood and bamboo roll on which the string is wound is called a *Charkhadi*. Children often give their kites a special name to reflect their personal designs such as: *Pari* (fairy), *Chand Mama* (man-in-the-moon/uncle moon), *Shakkar Para* (a panjabi sweet). Poetry may also be written in Panjabi on the Patang to send messages to a special person up on the roof.

Your students can design a kite or write their favourite poem on the kite to deliver to someone special on Vaisakhi day!

9. Check out this great link to a Spring Kite activity
http://k2printables.com/documents/March/kite_kit.pdf
10. Get 20 kids flying their own kites in 20 minutes
<http://www.allfreecrafts.com/kids/paper-kites.shtml>
11. Here's a "how-to" video – I am a visual person so it helps me to see what I will be teaching. (For older children due to complexity of skill).
http://www.ehow.com/video_4790375_make-paper-kite.html
12. Check out [instructions](#) for making your own toy kite from Artists Helping Children.
13. A Nagar Kirtan or parade takes place every April. Saffron is a prominent colour in this celebration so you often see a sea of orange through the parade. This parade is held to share the spirit of unity and humanitarian service with the larger community.

How did you celebrate Vaisakhi? Please send me your stories and pictures to navjot@navjotkaur.com and I promise to reply!



Here are the links within the document:

- mentor text: <http://teachwithpicturebooks.blogspot.com/2011/02/making-peace-with-picture-books.html>
- Origin and development of the Ode: <http://academic.brooklyn.cuny.edu/english/melani/cs6/ode.html>
- Authentic Sikh instrument being played: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EZ8hWA1edVI&feature=related>
- Crown template: <http://navjotkaur.com/wp-content/uploads/2010/09/crown01.pdf>
- Phulkari image: <http://www.potalaworld.com/catalog/textiles/phulkari1.html>
- Global Citizens pillow box template: <http://navjotkaur.com/wp-content/uploads/2010/09/SP-pillowbox4x3color.pdf>
- Pillow boxes: <https://s3.amazonaws.com/dnp-images/9833/9833-Pillow-Box.pdf>
- Blank pillow box template: http://cateholst.typepad.com/Pillowbox/How-to_Pillowbox_dieline.pdf
- Printable Vaisakhi card image: http://navjotkaur.com/wp-content/uploads/2010/09/colorsheets_card.pdf
- Some charitable organizations you may wish to consider:
www.seva.ca (Restoring sight and preventing blindness around the world).
<http://www.mmfc.org/> (Medical missions for children)
<http://www.dalitfoundation.org/> (Striving for equality, dignity and fairness)
<http://www.care.ca> (empowering the world's women and girls)
- Create a lion kite (print on light printer paper): <http://navjotkaur.com/wp-content/uploads/2010/09/lionkite.pdf>
- Lion mask: <http://navjotkaur.com/wp-content/uploads/2010/09/How-to-make-a-Lion-Mask.pdf>
- Keep checking my site and www.saffronpress.com for additional resources and feel free to get in touch.