



# Kwanzaa Traditions

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Kwanzaa was created by  
Dr. Malauna Karenga in  
1966 to bring  
African-Americans together  
as a community.

It lasts for seven nights,  
from December 26 to  
January 1.





The word Kwanzaa is from a phrase that means “first fruits of the harvest” in **Swahili**.

Kwanzaa combines **traditions** from **harvest** festivals in different African countries.



The *Kinara*, or candleholder, holds seven candles.

A child lights one candle each night of Kwanzaa.

On the first night, the child lights the middle candle.





Each night celebrates a different traditional African value.

The first night celebrates *Umoja* (oo-MO-jah), or **unity**.

Other values include self-determination, purpose, creativity, and faith.

There are seven symbols of Kwanzaa.

The *mazao*, or crops, include fruits, nuts, and vegetables.

The mazao are placed on the *mkeka*, or placemat.





The end of Kwanzaa is celebrated with a feast called *Karamu*.

Families gather together and exchange gifts, or *zawadi*.

Gifts are usually handmade or educational, like books.

# Glossary

**Harvest** -the season when crops are picked

**Swahili** - the most common spoken language across the countries of Africa

**Traditions** - a belief or custom handed down from one generation to another

**Unity**- coming together into one; together



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Purple level  
Multisyllabic Words  
Three syllable words

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