

Name: _____

Date: _____

“Starting a New Tradition”

Shantelle Davis is a nine-year-old girl in New York.

On a cold night in December, her family is standing around the kitchen table while she lights a **candle**. The table is decorated with baskets of fruit and vegetables and **ears of corn** for Shantelle and her two brothers.

“This candle represents *umoja*, an African word that means being together,” Shantelle says. “That’s the most important thing for a family.”

More than 5 million African Americans celebrate Kwanzaa every year from December 26 until January 1. It’s a time when they get together with their families to think about their history and their ancestors in Africa.

Kwanzaa is very unusual because it was started by one man. In 1966, an American named Maulana Karenga wanted a holiday for African Americans to **honor** their culture and traditions. So he used words and customs from Africa to create a new celebration. He took the Kwanzaa from the words for “first fruits” in Swahili, an African language. At first, only a few families had celebrations. Now, there are Kwanzaa events in schools and public places, and Kwanzaa has even spread to other countries, like Canada and Jamaica.

The main symbol of Kwanzaa is a **candleholder** with seven candles, one for each of the principles of Kwanzaa. Each night, a family member lights one of the candles and talks about the idea it represents: being together, being yourself, helping each other, sharing, having a goal, creating, and believing. The candles are red, black, and green, the colors of Kwanzaa. The parents also **pour** drinks to honor family members who have died. On the last night of Kwanzaa, there is a big dinner with African food, and children receive small presents.

Today, people can buy Kwanzaa greeting cards and special Kwanzaa clothes. Stores sell Kwanzaa candles and candleholders. Some people don’t

believe that Kwanzaa is as important as other holidays because it's so new. But other people say that Kwanzaa shows what is important in people's lives.

***candle:** stick of hard wax burned to provide light **ear of corn:** part of the corn plant **honor:** show great respect for someone/something **candleholder:** device to hold a candle **pour:** make a liquid flow into a container*

Find this information in the reading.

1. the number of people who celebrate Kwanzaa now _____
2. the dates of Kwanzaa _____
3. the year when Kwanzaa started _____
4. the person who started Kwanzaa _____
5. three countries where people celebrate Kwanzaa _____

6. the most important symbol of Kwanzaa _____
7. the colors of Kwanzaa _____

Circle T (true) or F (false) or NI (no information - not in the reading)

- | | | | |
|---|---|---|----|
| 1. Kwanzaa is celebrated at the end of the year. | T | F | NI |
| 2. Kwanzaa is a holiday for African Americans. | T | F | NI |
| 3. Kwanzaa is a very old holiday. | T | F | NI |
| 4. People in Africa celebrate Kwanzaa. | T | F | NI |
| 5. People spend a lot of time with their families during Kwanzaa. | T | F | NI |
| 6. Children receive presents at the end of Kwanzaa. | T | F | NI |
| 7. Everyone thinks Kwanzaa is an important holiday. | T | F | NI |

What's the main idea of the article? What is the article about?
