

Library Lines from Ruth Gilbert, Youth Librarian KTL

October is coming! It's a month best known to many for that holiday stuck right on the end: Halloween. But did you know it's a month full of other celebrations, too? Luckily your public library has a book for just about every occasion. If your family is looking for more reasons to celebrate this October, check out these festivals, holidays, and month-long observances, and the books that bring them to life.

The month kicks off with a unique and beautiful festival out in New Mexico - the Albuquerque International Balloon Fiesta. People lucky enough to attend can watch hundreds of hot air balloons launched into the blue southwestern sky during this week-long festival. If you can't make it to New Mexico this year, try reading "Sebastian and the Balloon" by Philip Stead, or "Sally's Great Balloon Adventure" by Stephen Huneck instead. Both picture books will take you on floating adventures through the sky.

October 24 is the start of Diwali, one of India's biggest and most important holidays. This festival of lights celebrates the power of light over darkness and is celebrated with candles and lanterns, dressing up, visiting friends and family, good food, and religious ceremonies. To learn more about Diwali, read "Archie Celebrates Diwali," by Mitali Banerjee Ruths, a sweet picture book that tells the story of a girl who throws a Diwali party for her classmates.

There also are plenty of fun, unofficial month-long observances in October that you can celebrate no matter where you are.

Do you love pizza? Then it's your month! October is National Pizza Month. For a fascinating, playful history of pizza, check out "Pizza! A Slice of History," by Greg Pizzoli. You'll pick up fun facts about pizza from all over the globe in this nonfiction picture book.

How do you feel about squirrels? You'll have all of October to decide because it's also National Squirrel Awareness Month. Perhaps you have a love/hate relationship with them, just as Old Man Fookwire does in "Those Darn Squirrels!" by Adam Rubin and Daniel Salmieri. This hilarious picture book by the author of "Dragons Love Tacos" tells the story of a battle between a man and the squirrels who steal his birdseed.

If you're a person who needs an excuse to indulge in a sweet treat, go ahead and celebrate National Cookie Month. Grab a cookie or two and read "The Smart Cookie," by Jory John and Pete Oswald, about a cookie who learns that intelligence is about more than high test scores and perfect grades. Or try "A Big Mooncake for Little Star," by Grace Lin, about a little girl who sneaks bites of a delicious cookie and unknowingly changes the shape of the moon.

October also presents the opportunity for some more serious observances, like LGBTQ+ History Month. There are some great history titles for kids available, including a graphic novel called "The Stonewall Riots: Making a Stand for LGBTQ Rights," by Archie Bongiovanni, and the thorough "Gay and Lesbian History for Kids: The Century-Long Struggle for LGBT Rights," by Jerome Pohlen.

National Bullying Prevention Month also falls in October, and provides a great opportunity to talk with children about how to treat others with respect and kindness. For some inspiration, try "I Walk With Vanessa," by Kerascoët, a wordless picture book about a girl who sees a classmate being bullied and what happens when she chooses to act with kindness instead.

Let the October fun begin! Visit your local library for these books, and don't forget to pick up a Halloween story or two.