

What Makes Christmas?



IN MANY COUNTRIES OF THE WORLD, THE CELEBRATION OF CHRISTMAS ON THE 25TH OF DECEMBER IS A HIGH POINT OF THE YEAR. BUT WHY? CAN IT HAVE ANY REAL MEANING FOR US TODAY?



From November onwards, it is impossible to forget that Christmas is coming. Coloured lights decorate many town centers and shop windows.

In streets and shops, “Christmas trees” (real or plastic evergreen trees) are also decorated with lights and Christmas ornaments.



Shopping centres become busier as December approaches and often stay open till late. Shopping centres' speaking systems play Christmas Christian songs and groups of people often sing carols on the streets to raise money for charity. Most places of work hold a short Christmas party about a week before Christmas, where traditional Christmas food may be eaten.

By the middle of December, most homes are also decorated with Christmas trees, coloured lights and paper or plastic decorations around the rooms. These days, many more people also decorate garden trees or house walls with coloured electric lights, a habit which has been popular in the USA for a long time.





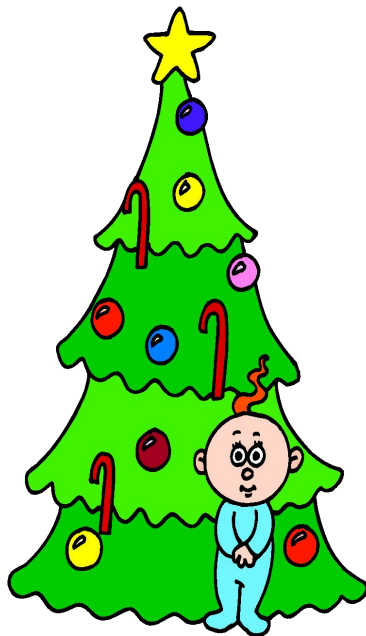
Christmas is associated not only with a fir tree, but with a person as well.

Look at this toy! Who's this? Right you are!

Everybody knows "Father Christmas" or "Santa Claus". He has become the human face of Christmas. Pictures are seen everywhere of the old man with a long white beard, red coat, and a bag of toys. Children are taught that he brings them presents the night before Christmas, and many children believe this is true.

In most countries, it is said that he lives near the North Pole, and arrives through the sky on a sledge pulled by reindeer. He comes into houses down the chimney at midnight and places presents for the children in socks or bags by their beds or in front of the family Christmas tree.

Christmas can be a time of magic and excitement for children.





By the way, do you know where this character comes from? Father Christmas is based on a real person, Saint Nicolas, which explains his other name "Santa Claus". Nicolas was a Christian leader from Myra in the 4th century BC. He was very shy, and wanted to give money to poor people without them knowing about it. It is said that one day, he climbed the roof of a house and dropped a purse of money down the chimney. It landed in the stocking which a girl had put to dry by the fire! This may explain the belief that Father Christmas comes down the chimney and places gifts in children's stockings.



Do you know the sound that is produced by Santa's sledge? Of course, it's jingling of bells. Let's sing the famous song "Jingle, Bells!"

Jingle bells

**Jingle bells, jingle bells,
Jingle all the way!
O what fun it is to ride
In a one-horse open sleigh.
Dashing through the snow
In a one-horse open sleigh,
Over the fields we go,
Laughing all the way;
Bells on bob-tail ring,
Making spirits bright,
What fun it is to ride and sing
A-sleighbing song tonight!**



Christmas is a time when carols, celebration songs and hymns, telling the story of birth and life of Jesus Christ, are sung. For example, this one:

Once in royal David's city
Stood a lowly cattle shed,
Where a mother laid her baby
In a manger for a bed.
Mary was that mother mild,
Jesus Christ her little child.



You know that Christmas is a great occasion and the majority of people gather together with their families to celebrate it, to share their happiness, attend church and exchange gifts. Usually the whole family has a big Christmas dinner in the afternoon or in the evening. The dinner includes the roast beef of old England, the more modern turkey or goose with chestnut stuffing and roast potatoes and a traditional Christmas pudding. The lady of the house who made the pudding fetches it herself. Brandy is poured over it, it is lit up and brought into the dark room to the triumph of the whole family.



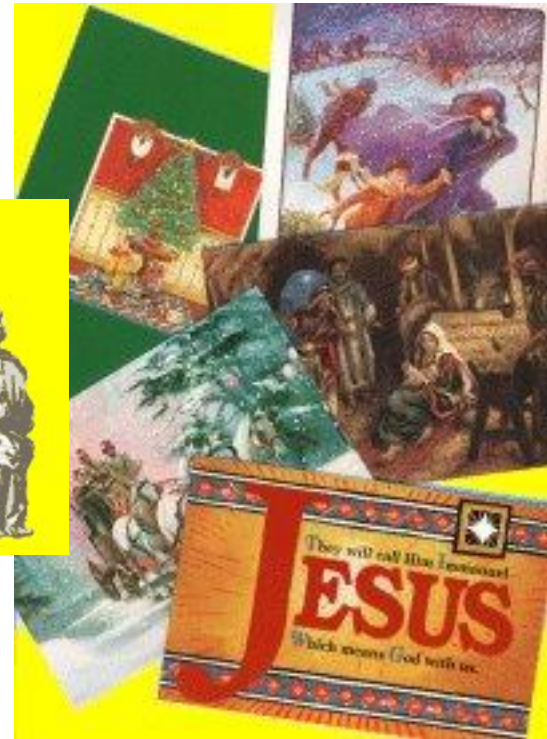
pudding which is the highlight of a Christmas dinner is a special rich dish made with lots of dried fruit, eggs, and very little flour. A proper Christmas pudding is always stirred from East to West (in honour of the three Wise Men). Every member of the family must give the pudding a stir and make a secret wish. A coin is traditionally placed into it and it will bring luck to one who will find it.



And what do you usually do when you can't congratulate somebody personally? Of course, we send a postcard. In many countries, most people post Christmas greeting cards to their friends and family, and these cards may be hung on the walls of their homes. In the United Kingdom this year, the British Post Office expects to handle over one hundred million cards EACH DAY, in the three weeks before Christmas.



Do you know where the tradition of Christmas cards began? Here's some information for you. The custom of sending Christmas cards started in Britain in 1840 when the first "Penny Post" public postal deliveries began. (Helped by the new railway system, the public postal service was the 19th century's communication revolution, just as e-mail is for us today). As printing methods improved, Christmas cards were produced in large numbers from about 1860. They became even more popular in Britain when a card could be posted without envelope for one half-penny – half the price of an ordinary letter.



As you can see there are so many aspects of Christmas: for some people it is just another winter holiday, for others - an opportunity to get together with their family, still for some people it is a great religious tradition to observe. Many people hope for more than presents at Christmas. They want somehow to return to a time in their childhood, when life was simpler before the troubles of adult life arrived. We shouldn't forget that behind all the fun and decorations, there must somehow be a message and we should decide for ourselves what makes Christmas for us.





Merry Christmas



- We wish you a merry Christmas
We wish you a merry Christmas
We wish you a merry Christmas
And a happy New Year.
- Good tidings we bring to you and your kin.
Good tidings for Christmas
And a happy New Year.
- We all know that Santa's coming
We all know that Santa's coming
We all know that Santa's coming
And he soon will be here.
- Good tidings we bring to you and your kin.
Good tidings for Christmas
And a happy New Year.
- We wish you a merry Christmas
We wish you a merry Christmas
We wish you a merry Christmas
And a happy New Year.

