

Santa Claus

The origin of a legend



Santa is coming to town



Now that we are approaching the end of the year, children all over the world are writing their letters to Santa asking for gifts and looking forward to his visit on December 25th; however, do we really know who is Santa Claus and how he become associated with Christmas?

Who is Santa?

- Santa Claus, Saint Nicholas, Saint Nick, Father Christmas, Kris Kringle, Sinterklaas, Santy, or Viejito Pascuero, are different names from different countries for the same figure.
- This merry man is a figure with a legendary, historical and folkloric origins, from the Dutch **Sinterklaas** mixing up elements of the god **Odin** and finally brought up

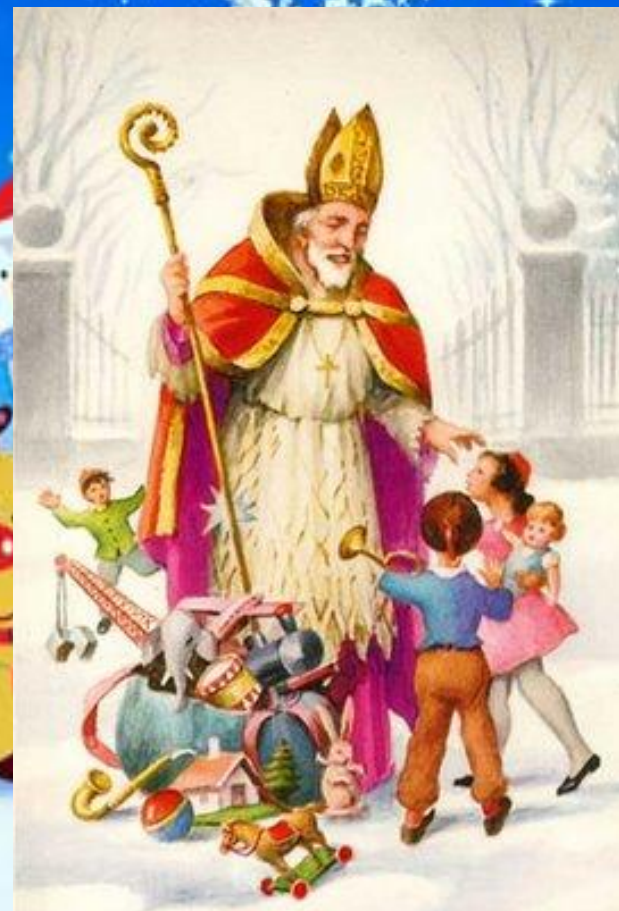
Saint Nicholas



- Saint Nicholas of Myra was a 4th-century Greek Christian bishop of Myra (now Demre) in Lycia, a province of the Byzantine Empire, now in Turkey.

- Nicholas was famous for his generous gifts to the

- He became the patron saint of little and school children.
- The Dutch were responsible for preserving the tradition of the feast of Saint Nicholas on December 6th (date of his death) after European countries tried to abolish it after



Germanic paganism, Odin, and Christianization



- Prior to Christianization, the Germanic peoples (including the English) celebrated a midwinter fest called *Yule*. During this period, a supernatural and ghostly event called *Wild Hunt* happened.
- The *Wild Hunt* was a ghostly procession through the sky whose

- From him the modern figure has his long beard and the horse he rides at night.

Dutch Connection



- In the Netherlands and Belgium, next to Sinterklaas the character of Santa Claus is also known. He is known as *Kerstman* in Dutch ("the Christmas man") and *Pere Noël* ("Father Christmas") in French. But for children in the Netherlands *Sinterklaas* is predominant gift-giver in December at Sinterklaas day,



Christmas is used

Miss Macarena Arévalo - English Teacher

by another half of the Dutch

- In Belgium, presents are given to children only, but to almost all of them, on Sinterklaas day. On Christmas Day, everybody receives presents, but often without Santa Claus's help. In the Netherlands Sinterklaas' helper is **Swarte Piet** not an elf
- After the XVII century, Dutch people emigrated to the United States. On several decades after the custom of celebrating the spread to the United States became Santa Claus for



Father Christmas



- **Father Christmas** dates back as far as 16th century in England during the reign of Henry VIII.
- He was pictured as a large man in green or scarlet robes lined with fur. He represented the spirit of good cheer at Christmas, bringing peace, joy, good food and wine.
- British didn't keep Saint Nicholas Day on December 6th, so Father Christmas celebration was moved to December 25th to coincide with

Father Christmas

- The Victorian revival of Christmas included Father Christmas as the emblem of 'good cheer'.
- His physical appearance inspired by one famous image: the illustration of the "Ghost of Christmas Present" in Charles Dicken's book "A Christmas Carol" (1843).

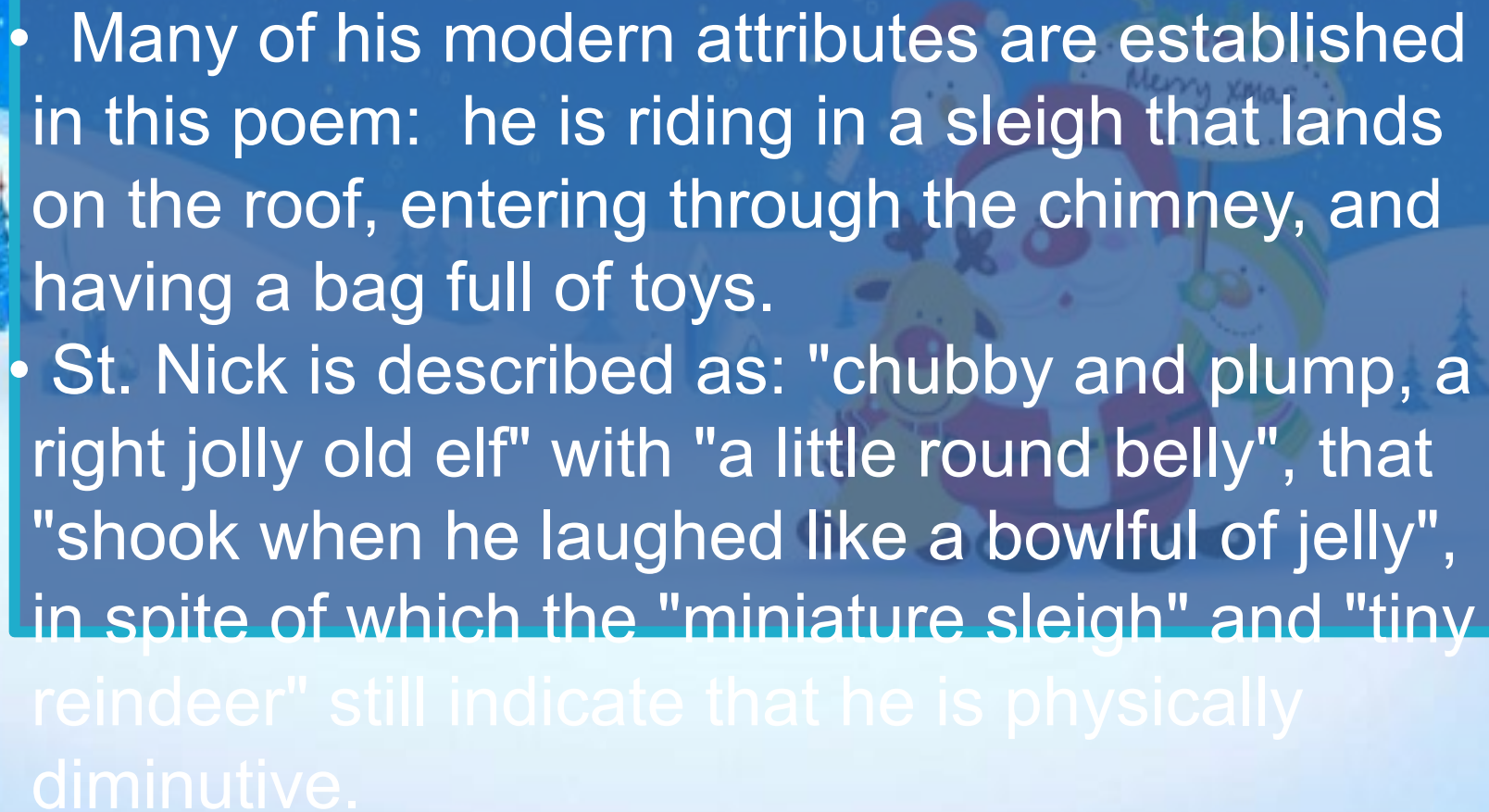


- Father Christmas is now widely seen as synonymous with the Santa Claus figure.

XIX Century written works



- Written version of the image of Santa Claus were published in United States.
- However in 1822, a dentist wrote a poem titled “A visit from Saint Nicholas”. In his description Santa Claus was a small person like fairy and he rid a sled and giving present to well behave children.

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- Many of his modern attributes are established in this poem: he is riding in a sleigh that lands on the roof, entering through the chimney, and having a bag full of toys.
 - St. Nick is described as: "chubby and plump, a right jolly old elf" with "a little round belly", that "shook when he laughed like a bowlful of jelly", in spite of which the "miniature sleigh" and "tiny reindeer" still indicate that he is physically diminutive.

- The reindeer were also named: Dasher, Dancer, Prancer, Vixen, Comet, Cupid, Dunder and Blixem (Dunder and Blixem came from the old Dutch words for thunder and lightning, which were later changed

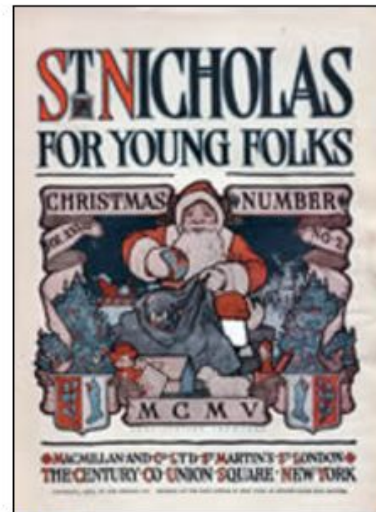


XX Century drawings

- From now on Santa was portrayed in dozen of drawings in different styles:



1881
Thomas Nast
Harper's Weekly
January 1, 1881
Val Berryman Collection



1905
Carl Stetson Crawford
St. Nicholas for Young Folks
Vol. XXXIII, No. 2
St Nicholas Center Collection



1908
E. Boyd Smith
Santa Claus and All About Him



1922
Norman Rockwell
Saturday Evening Post
December 2, 1922
Michigan State University Museum
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1925
N. C. Wyeth
Old Kris
The Country Gentleman
Print: *St Nicholas Center Collection*



1925
J. C. Leyendecker
Saturday Evening Post
December 26, 1925
Michigan State University Museum
Used by permission

- By the end of the 1920s, a standard American Santa had emerged from the work of N. C. Wyeth, J. C. Leyendecker, Norman Rockwell and other popular illustrators. Santa now was life-sized in a red, fur-trimmed suit.

- The image was solidified in 1931 by Haddon Sundblom when Coca-Cola published its thirty-five years advertisements using Santa's image as its center.



1931
Haddon Sundblom
First Coca-Cola Santa
Permission courtesy of the Coca-Cola Company



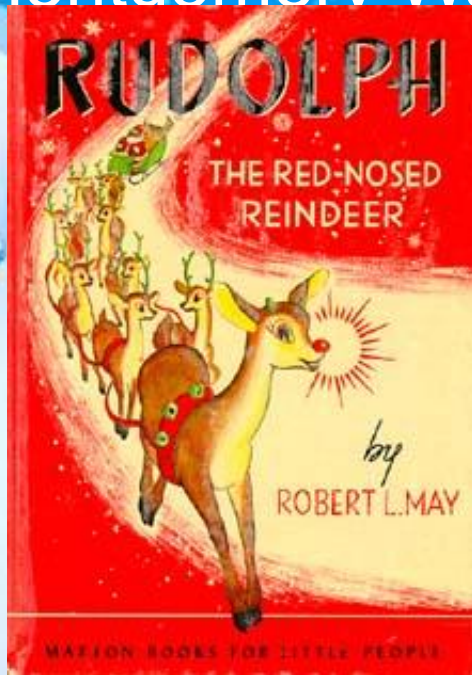
1939
Norman Rockwell
Saturday Evening Post
December 16, 1939
Print: St Nicholas Center Collection



1955
Haddon Sundblom
Time December 12, 1955
St Nicholas Center Collection

Rudolph

- Rudolph was added as the ninth reindeer in 1939 in a poem by Robert L. May of the Montgomery Ward Company.



Santa Claus in Advertisement



From Saint Nicholas to Santa Claus

- It's been a long journey from the 4th Century Saint Nicholas Bishop of Myra to America's merry Santa Claus.
- Even though modern Santa has become a commercial figure, he is still Nicholas, who expressed his devotion to God in extraordinary kindness and generosity to those in need, whose



caring surprises continue to model true giving and

Merry Christmas & Happy New Year!

Gerrybam.com

