

# Christmas Fact File

## Why 'Christmas'?

The word 'Christmas' originates from the old English phrase Cristes maesse, which means 'Christ's mass'. This was shortened to 'Xmas' as the Greek word for Christ is Χριστός.

## Did you know Christmas wasn't always on 25th December?

Christmas is a Christian festival which celebrates the birth of Jesus Christ; however, the date of December 25th isn't mentioned anywhere in the Bible. Some historians believe Jesus was born in spring not winter! The Roman Catholic Church chose to mark Jesus' birthday on the 25th December, with this date becoming an annual feature of the Christian calendar from 336 AD.

## Do you know why people give gifts at Christmas?

Christians give gifts at Christmas as an acknowledgement of the presents the Wise Men gave to the baby Jesus. Winter gift-giving also has its roots in a pagan celebration called Saturnalia, where offerings were given to the gods.

## Christmas Tree oh Christmas Tree!

Why do people put up and decorate a Christmas tree? Evergreen trees have been used to decorate homes since the Ancient Egyptian times, where green palms were used to mark the winter solstice. The tradition of decorating a Christmas tree came from Germany but rose in popularity when Queen Victoria and her German husband, Prince Albert-the prince consort, were sketched standing in front of their tree sharing gifts with their children. This image made Christmas trees fashionable and in high demand.

## Jolly St. Nick!

Father Christmas, or Santa Claus, was a Christian bishop called Saint Nicholas. Whilst he didn't always wear a red suit, an image which became popular in the 1930s in Coca-Cola adverts, he did give all his inheritance to the poor and needy. His name was Sinter Klass, which later became known as Santa Claus. Early pictures of Father Christmas weren't too child-friendly, showing him with quite a serious face-very different to the image now know and love of plump, smiling Santa.

## Did you know?

The amount of wrapping paper used in the UK at Christmas could cover the whole island of Guernsey.

## Christmas Food!

Turkey hasn't always been the food of choice on Christmas Day, traditionally it used to be a pig's head served with mustard.

On Christmas Day in Japan, fried chicken is eaten making it the busiest time of year for KFC.

The earliest Christmas decorations were apples to remind people of the story of Adam and Eve.



## Stay Safe!

A study in America showed that almost 240 injuries a day took place in November and December due to people falling or hurting themselves whilst putting up Christmas decorations.

# Christmas

## Reflect

- Where does the name 'Christmas' originate from?
- Who made it fashionable to put up and decorate Christmas trees?
- What is usually eaten in Japan on Christmas Day?

## Write

Write a new verse for the well-known Christmas song. "When Santa Got Stuck Up The Chimney."

## Resolve

- George goes Christmas present shopping. He has saved £42.68. He spends £15.30 on his mum, £10.57 on his dad and £8.88 on his brother. How much money has he got left to buy a gift for his nan?
- It costs £7.45 to deliver a parcel weighing up to 15kg and 55p for every extra 500g. How much would it cost to post a Christmas present which weighs 21kg?



## Reason

At The Literacy Shed, our favourite drink is a good old cup of tea. Because of this, we believe on Christmas Eve a cup of tea should be left out for Santa, reflecting what the nation (and we) love to drink! Discuss and debate.

## Research

Research three fascinating facts about Christmas that were not shared in this fact file.