Christmas around the World

What Is Christmas?

Christmas is a religious holiday which celebrates the birth of the son of God, Jesus Christ, on the 25th December.

Celebrations

Christmas is celebrated by millions of people all over the world, Christian and non-Christian. It is a time to get together with family and friends.

There are some traditions which happen all over the world, such as decorating houses with lights, trees, candles and having a Christmas dinner. There are also some very special and unusual traditions which only take place in certain countries.

For example, some people of India like to decorate their houses and streets with colourful, folded paper stars.

Traditionally, people in Poland serve a total of 12 dishes, one for each disciple, at their Christmas dinner and some Spanish people leave out hay-filled boots or shoes at night so that, by the next morning, the hay would be replaced with chocolate, presents or money.

In some areas of Ireland, the people like to light candles in the windows of their homes to act as a guide for Joseph and Mary to travel to their resting place. The candles are often red and decorated with holly.

The French traditionally celebrate the feast of St. Nicholas, the patron saint of children, on the 6th December.

In Russia, some believe that an old lady called Baboushka gives presents to children, to make up for the mistake of being too busy to guide the wise men to the baby Jesus Christ in biblical times.

Traditionally in Sweden, the eldest daughter of each family dresses up with a wreath on her head that holds lighted candles. She then serves coffee and special buns to her family.

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Unusual Celebrations

In Slovakian tradition, the head of the family will throw a mixture of Loksa (bread, poppy seed and water) up at the ceiling. The longer the mixtures stays glued to the ceiling, the richer his crops are predicted to be.

In Japan, many people choose to have fried chicken for their Christmas dinner!

What is the true meaning of Christmas?

Everyone will have a different answer to this question. Some people think it is a time for gifts or family, whilst others think it's about watching Christmas films or eating lots. There are some people who think that Christmas has become too much about how much money shops can make. What do you think?

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Questions

1. Who celebrates Christmas?

2. Does everyone celebrate Christmas in the same way?

3. How is Christmas traditionally celebrated in Spain?

4. How is Christmas traditionally celebrated in Ireland?

5. Who is Baboushka and what role does she play at Christmas?

6. Which do you think is the most unusual tradition? Why?

7. Which traditions from other countries would you like to experience? Why?

8. What do you think is the true meaning of Christmas?

Answers

1. Who celebrates Christmas?
   Christmas is celebrated all over the world by millions of people, Christian and non-Christian.

2. Does everyone celebrate Christmas in the same way?
   No, there are some traditions that are celebrated all over the world, such as decorating with lights, however different countries have their own traditions.

3. How is Christmas traditionally celebrated in Spain?
   In Spain, people leave out hay-filled shoes or boots at night to be replaced with chocolate, presents or money by the next morning.

4. How is Christmas traditionally celebrated in Ireland?
   In Ireland, people leave candles in the windows of their homes to act as a guide for Mary and Joseph to travel to their resting place.

5. Who is Baboushka and what role does she play at Christmas?
   Baboushka is an old lady that some Russians believe brings presents to children to make up for not guiding the wise men to baby Jesus.

6. Which do you think is the most unusual tradition? Why?
   Pupil's own responses. Answers should use examples from the text to justify their answers.

7. Which traditions from other countries would you like to experience? Why?
   Pupil's own responses. Answers should use examples from the text to justify their answers.

8. What do you think is the true meaning of Christmas?
   Pupil's own responses.