

Read the text and think of the word which best fits each gap.

CHRISTMAS TRADITIONS IN THE UK

Christmas is traditionally a time of celebration and gift giving, both in the UK and (1) _____ in many places all over the world. But Christmas is (2) _____ the same everywhere, and there are some traditions which (3) _____ common in the UK but not in other cultures. However, many things (4) _____ the way Christmas is celebrated in the UK may be very familiar to those (5) _____ other parts of the world.

First, of (6) _____, in the northern hemisphere, Christmas is more or (7) _____ in the middle of winter, and Christmas Day is just three days after the winter solstice, the shortest day, so there is not (8) _____ daylight in the UK (9) _____ this time of year and the weather can be quite cold, with snow and ice, and Christmas is connected in people's minds with winter traditions. Much of the imagery and many of the customs which are followed over Christmas are related to the fact (10) _____ it is the winter.

Lights and colours are very important during this season; people like to fill their houses with brightly coloured decorations and lights, (11) _____ help to make the dark winter seem brighter and warmer. It is common to bring a small tree, (12) _____ a real or artificial one, into the house, and cover it with small presents (13) _____ children, and coloured balls or figures, and this tree often becomes the centrepiece in people's living rooms over the Christmas holiday.

Gift giving is very important, and (14) _____ the Christmas tree is often the place (15) _____ people put presents, wrapped in brightly coloured paper and ribbons, (16) _____ anticipation of Christmas Day, (17) _____ they are all opened. Children look (18) _____ to opening them, and Christmas is often a chance for parents and relatives to spend a (19) _____ of money on buying things for the young ones in their families. (20) _____ famous tradition connected to gift giving is the stocking, a large sock, usually a red colour, which children hang (21) _____ in front of the fireplace in the living room. On Christmas Day the children find that this stocking is full of gifts, and they believe that Santa Claus, riding (22) _____ a sleigh pulled by reindeer, (23) _____ visited the house, entered the room through the chimney, and filled the stocking.

People tend to eat very rich foods over the Christmas period, and eating and drinking are very important parts of the customs at this time of year. On Christmas Day (24) _____, families usually (25) _____ together for a large meal, the main course of which is usually turkey served (26) _____ potatoes and a variety of vegetables. This is often followed by a large, sweet pudding (27) _____ of fruit and a lot of sugar, called Christmas pudding, and in the afternoon or evening, people may eat mince pies, and drink hot mulled wine. Of course, many people eat (28) _____ much on Christmas Day, and all over the holiday period, and quite often (29) _____ begin the new year by promising to (30) _____ on a diet or planning to get much (31) _____ exercise!

The Christmas holiday period (32) _____ often a whole week in total, usually starting on Christmas Eve (December 24th), when people may finish work early and go to parties, where they will meet friends or family. Music is important at these parties; sometimes people sing traditional carols, which tend to (33) _____ older traditional songs about Christmas, or they may prefer to listen and sing (34) _____ to more modern Christmas pop songs, which are now becoming a very important part of Christmas customs.

Christmas Day itself (December 25th) is mostly spent (35) _____ the family, and people (36) _____ not tend to go (37) _____ as there is not usually any public transport and the shops are all closed. The following (38) _____ is called Boxing Day, which was traditionally a day for visiting neighbours and relatives, but it is becoming increasingly common for this to be a shopping day in the UK, as many of the shops open and have sales starting (39) _____ Boxing Day. Many people have the whole week (40) _____ Christmas Day and New Year as a holiday, and New Year's Day itself is also a public holiday when most shops and services in the UK are closed.

Source: Cambridge English