Christmas cards - an English tradition

THESE EXERCISES WILL BE CORRECTED BY USING THE EBAU RUBRICS

1. **Read the text and choose the right answers.**

The tradition of Christmas cards began in Britain in the time of Queen Victoria - over 170 years ago; it is still going well today, even if the number of cards sent each year in Britain is a lot less than it was before the age of mobile phones, email and instant messaging.

Christmas cards are a big tradition in the English-speaking world. In 2017, people in Britain sent and received about 900 million cards. That's an average of about twelve cards for every person, from tiny babies to the oldest grandparents.

The number of cards that are sent around Britain causes an annual headache for the postal service. Each year, the postal service has to take on seasonal staff to help with the extra mail, and postal sorting offices are stretched to their maximum capacity and sometimes beyond it.

In 1994, the service handled about 1.6 billion cards! – about 25 cards per person in Great Britain, including children!) In spite of advertisements telling people to "Post Early for Christmas", few people get round to sending off their cards before December 10th; and from that point on, the postal service slows down. Until the age of faxes, emails and social media, the pre-Christmas period often caused a lot of problems for firms and industry, as "urgent" letters and documents took several days to reach their destination by post, slowed down by the mass of Christmas mail!

During the month of December in Britain, a house with no Christmas cards is like a pub with no beer; it just does not exist except possibly at the home of a few radical non-Christians. For the most part, however, people of all faiths and of no faith join in the tradition of celebrating Christmas as a festival, whether they do so for religious reasons or not.

Christmas cards are an important part of the celebrations, and virtually any British home one goes into around Christmas time is merrily decorated not just with holly and mistletoe and paper decorations, but also with a display of Christmas cards, received from friends, family, neighbours, employers and a variety of other people.

LIVEWORKSHEETS

The tradition of Christmas cards began in Britain in 1843, just after the introduction of the first national postal service, the "penny post", which started in 1840. Today, almost 200 years later, Christmas cards– sometimes known as New Year cards – are a tradition all over the world, and not only in Christian countries.

And while more and more people send e-cards and Christmas selfies to their friends and family... and even to all their "friends" on Facebook, virtual cards are not the same as old-fashioned traditional Christmas cards. You can't hang an e-card on the wall, and you can't decorate a room with rows of e-cards. Thanks to phones and tablets, we can do lots of things better than we could do them before. But sending and receiving Christmas cards is still best done by "snail mail", using a real card and a real envelope. It's much more fun.

1.1. The number or cards sent and received by British people…

a) raised from 1997 to 2017.
b) has decreased in the last three decades.
c) was not as high in 2017 as in 1997.

1.2. Advertising for early posting Christmas cards…

a) has little effect on how fast the service is after 10th December.
b) makes the postal service slow down after 10th December.
c) makes the postal service slow down before 10th December.

1.3. In the houses of radical non-Christians…

a) there are no Christmas cards in December.
b) there may not be any Christmas cards in December.
c) there cannot be any Christmas cards in December.

1.4. The tradition of Christmas cards…

a) did not begin until 1840, when the “penny post” started.
b) did not begin until 1843, when the “penny post” started.
c) did not begin until 1843, after the “penny post” had started.

LIVEWORKSHEETS

2. Complete the following sentences with information from the text. Do not copy literally from it.

2.1. The pre-Christmas period had…

2.2. Religious reasons...

3. Fill in the gaps with the right choice (a,b or c):

The first cards are usually put 1._____ on the mantelpiece 2._____ the fire in the lounge; then 3._____ more 4._____ in, 5._____ available flat surface is put to use: bookshelves, the top of the T.V., window-sills, the top of any cupboard.

In some houses, cards are hung on ribbons on the wall, 6._____ vertically or in long arcs across the wall.

If the living room fills up, more cards 7._____ hung or placed in other rooms and in the hall. 8._____ Christmas time, the main rooms in almost any house are gaily 9._____ with cards of all shapes and 10. _____.

11._____ cheap Christmas cards 12._____ be bought from any supermarket, cards have recently become a major source of income for all sorts of charities. Many people like to feel that they are 13._____ something good by buying Christmas cards, and charities 14._____ Oxfam*, W.W.F., Cancer Research and Greenpeace (to name 15._____ a few) now sell millions of cards each Christmas.

LIVEWORKSHEETS

1.	a) up	b) down	c) out
2.	a) on	b) above	c) at
3.	a) like	b) for	c) as
4.	a) go	b) come	c) arrive
5.	a) all	b) any	c) some
6.	a) neither	b) whether	c) either
7.	a) are	b) have	c) can
8.	a) By	b) At	c) In
9.	a) festooning	b) festoon	c) festooned
10.	a) types	b) kinds	c) sizes
11.	a) For	b) While	c) Since
12.	a) must	b) should	c) can
13.	a) making	b) doing	c) having
14.	a) as	b) such	c) like
15.	a) but	b) just	c) only

LIVEWORKSHEETS