CHRISTMAS

Christmas

The origins of Christmas

In ancient times people had mid-winter festivals. They believed that the festivals would help the sun to return after the long winter. In the year 440, the Christian Church decided that the birth of Christ should be celebrated every year on 25 December. Christians started to include some of the mid-winter festival traditions in their Christmas celebrations, including decorating their homes with green plants. Today, a Christmas tree and other plants such as holly are still used to decorate many homes in December.

Cards and presents

In some parts of the world, it's common to send Christmas cards to people you know. These are cards with a picture on the front and a message inside to say 'Merry Christmas and Happy New Year'. But people send fewer cards than in the past as they now send Christmas greetings online by email, message or social media.

People usually give presents to their close friends and family. Traditionally, the giving of a present is a symbol of the Three Wise Men giving their gifts to the baby Jesus. Christmas presents are wrapped in colourful paper or put in a bag or a box so that you can't see what's inside. Then, they are put under the Christmas tree, and you have to wait until Christmas Day, 25 December, to finally open them. It's fun to pick up the present, shake it and guess what it is!

Father Christmas (aka Santa Claus)

Young children can tell Father Christmas, also known as Santa Claus, exactly what presents they would like to receive. They can write him a letter with a list of their requests, or they can even ask him personally as some department stores have special 'Meet Father Christmas' events. On the night of 24 December, Father Christmas travels through the sky on a sleigh pulled by flying reindeer and delivers presents to all the children. How does he deliver all those presents so quickly? Christmas magic of course!

LIVEWORKSHEETS

Snow

When many people think of Christmas, they think of snow! You often see it on Christmas cards, you can buy fake snow to decorate your house and there are even songs about snow at Christmas. In the UK, though, snow at Christmas is actually quite rare! So, it's really special to have a white Christmas.

Food

In the UK, the main Christmas meal is called Christmas dinner. Even though it's called 'dinner', it's eaten at lunchtime. People have it on 25 December, and it takes a long time to cook all the food, which usually includes roast turkey, vegetables and potatoes. There are also lots of alternatives to the turkey dinner for vegetarians who prefer a meat-free Christmas. For dessert, there's a rich, fruity cake called Christmas pudding.

Traditionally, a Christmas cracker is placed next to each person. When you pull the cracker with the person next to you, it makes a 'bang' noise, and a paper hat, a joke and a small gift fall from the cracker. You wear the hat, tell the joke to the other people at the table and keep the gift.

Task 1

Are the sentences true or false?

	Answer	
1. The celebration of Christmas is 440 years old.	True	False
2. Christmas includes both Christian traditions and mid-winter festival traditions.	True	False
3. Today, people send more Christmas cards than in the past.		
4. People open their Christmas presents on the last day of December.	True	False
5. Father Christmas delivers all the presents on the night of 24 December.	True	False
6. It snows in the UK every year at Christmas.	True	False
7. In the UK, people have the main Christmas meal on 24 December.	True	False
8. A Christmas cracker has several things inside it.	True	False
	True	False

LIVEWORKSHEETS

Task 2

Complete the sentences with words from the box.

celebrated	wrapped	called
decorated	given	eaten
included	pulled	put

1. Christmas Day is ..... on 25 December.
2. Some ancient mid-winter traditions are ..... in Christmas celebrations.
3. Homes are ..... with Christmas trees and fake snow.
4. Cards and gifts are ..... to family and friends.
5. Presents are ..... in colourful paper and ..... under the Christmas tree.
6. Father Christmas is also ..... Santa Claus.
7. Father Christmas's sleigh is ..... by flying reindeer.
8. In the UK, the main Christmas meal is ..... on 25 December, at lunchtime.

LIVEWORKSHEETS