



Is St. Nicolas the real Santa?

Read the story below and then answer the comprehension questions on the next page.

St. Nicolas is famous for giving gifts to children. But did he really exist? And is he the same as Santa Claus?

Researchers from Oxford University have been studying old bones from a church in Bari, Italy. They think these may be the bones of St. Nicolas. The bones were taken from Myra, in modern-day Turkey, about 1,000 years ago. But some people believe that the real St. Nicolas was born in Patara, also in Turkey. So what did he do there?

A 4th-century bishop called Nicholas of Myra is known for his kindness and generosity. He also helped the poor and the sick. He became a saint after he died. In the Middle Ages, people started giving presents on his feast day, 6 December. These presents were often toys for children. People celebrated St. Nicolas' Day in many different countries. In some places, he came with helpers who punished bad children.

In the 16th century, religious changes meant that people stopped celebrating St. Nicolas' Day in some countries. But they still wanted to give presents. In the Netherlands, they began to give presents on the evening of 5 December instead. Dutch settlers took this tradition to New Amsterdam, which later became New York City.

In the 19th century, a man called Clement Clarke Moore wrote a poem about St. Nicolas. In the poem, he had a sleigh and flew through the air. This is how Santa Claus was born. The red costume and white beard came later. In the 1930s, Coca-Cola used Santa Claus in its advertisements. Since then, Santa Claus has become one of the most popular symbols of Christmas.

Many people still celebrate St. Nicolas' Day today. In some places, he comes with helpers who punish bad children. In others, he comes with helpers who give presents to good children. So is St. Nicolas the real Santa? It's up to you!



True or False?



Tick the true statements and cross out the false ones.

Statements:

1. St. Nicolas is the same as Santa Claus.
2. The bones of St. Nicolas are currently in Turkey.
3. St. Nicolas became a saint after he died.
4. In the Middle Ages, people gave presents on St. Nicolas' feast day.
5. St. Nicolas' Day is celebrated in many different countries.
6. The tradition of giving presents on St. Nicolas' Day started in the Netherlands.
7. Santa Claus was created in the 19th century.
8. Coca-Cola popularized the image of Santa Claus.
9. St. Nicolas always comes with helpers who punish bad children.
10. St. Nicolas is the real Santa.

Kika's English

