Are the sentences true or false?

1. Some modern Christmas traditions date from Roman times.
2. British people send money to friends, family, colleagues, classmates and neighbours at Christmas
3. Gold, frankincense and myrrh are popular Christmas presents for young people in the UK.
4. Santa Claus is another name for Father Christmas.
5. 'Killing in the name' won number one position in the UK music charts one Christmas.
6. It doesn't always snow at Christmas in Britain.
7. A Christmas cracker is a type of dessert.
8. Only Christians celebrate Christmas.

Christmas

Christmas can mean different things to different people. For many people it means eating a lot and spending time with family and visiting relatives and friends. For children it often means presents, presents and more presents!

The origins of Christmas

In ancient times people had mid-winter festivals when the days were short and the nights were very long. They believed that their ceremonies would help the sun's power return. The Romans decorated their homes with green plants in December to remind Saturn, their harvest god, to return the following spring. In CE440 the Christian church decided that the birth of Christ should be celebrated every year on December 25th. Some of these ancient customs were adopted by early Christians as part of their celebrations of the birthday of Jesus Christ. Green plants are still used to decorate many British homes in December. At Christmas we cover trees (real ones or reusable synthetic trees) in with shiny balls and flashing lights!

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Cards and presents

It's very common to send Christmas cards to friends, family, colleagues, classmates and neighbours in the weeks leading up to December 25th. Christmas is traditionally a time for helping other people and giving money to charities. Many people send charity cards; where a percentage of the cost of each card goes to charity. People send fewer cards than in the past as they now send Christmas greetings by email or via Facebook. Christmas presents are reserved for close friends and family. Traditionally the giving of a gift is symbolic of the three wise men giving their gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh to the baby Jesus. Popular presents for young people in the UK in recent years include a Smart phone, a Playstation Move and 80's retro fashion.

Frankincense = incienso
Myrrh = mirra

Father Christmas (aka Santa Claus)

Every year small children tell Father Christmas (also known as Santa Claus) exactly what presents they would like to receive. They can write him letter with a list of requests or they can visit him personally in one of the large department stores across Britain in the weeks before Christmas. On the night of December 24th Father Christmas travels through the sky on a sleigh pulled by magic reindeers and delivers presents to children across Britain. How does he enter the children's houses? Via the chimney of course!





The Christmas number one

Every year, for a few weeks around Christmas time, the UK music charts go mad. Groups and singers who normally make cool music create a song that they hope will be number one on Christmas Day. The Christmas number one single is written about in newspapers, talked about on the radio and people can even bet money in betting shops to see which song will win the race. In the last ten years, the Christmas number one has been dominated by singers who have won reality television competitions. One year 'Rage Against the Machine' started a Facebook campaign to be the first group with a Christmas number 1 with a download only song. They won their anti- corporate campaign with the song 'Killing in the name'.

Snow

Snow at Christmas is part of British culture. 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. There was lots of snow last winter in the UK so many people enjoyed a white Christmas. People can bet on whether it will snow or not on December 25th at betting shops around the country.

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Turkey and crackers

Christmas dinner is usually eaten at midday or early afternoon. It traditionally includes roast turkey, vegetables and potatoes. There are also lots of alternatives to the turkey dinner for vegetarians who prefer a meat-free Christmas. Dessert is 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, you hear a loud 'bang!' and a paper hat, a joke and a small gift fall from the cracker. You have to wear the hat, tell the joke to the other people at the table and keep the gift.





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