

Christmas Legends

1. Which of the images below are Christmas symbols? Do you know what they symbolize? What do you associate the rest of the images with?



2. Match these symbols to their meaning/origin

Star	A) The plant's connection with romance began with the Celtic Druids who saw it as a symbol of fertility.
Bells	B) One legend says that there was once a man with three daughters who was worried about finding suitable husbands for as he had no money for their dowries. Hearing about the family, St. Nicholas snuck down the chimney and filled the girls' stockings, set by the fire to dry, with gold coins.
Stocking	C) A symbol of peace and of the Holy Spirit
Candy Cane	D) This story from Mexican folklore tells about a girl who wished to bring an offering to her church on Christmas Eve but she had no money. An angel appeared and told the child to gather weeds from the roadside. She did, and when she presented them they miraculously bloomed into bright-red, star-shaped flowers.
Poinsettia	E) German publisher Gerhard Lang is most often credited as the creator of it in the early 1900s, inspired by a box of 24 sweets given to him by his mother when he was a boy; little Gerhard was allowed to eat one a day until Christmas.
Wreath	F) They proclaimed the news of the Saviour's birth
Evergreen Tree	G) The three Wise Men arrived with gifts for the baby Jesus: gold, frankincense, and myrrh.
Angels	H) It is also a symbol representing the star of Bethlehem and there is also a connection with Hanukkah, the Festival of Lights, in Judaism
Advent Calendar	I) It guided the three kings, or wise men, to the baby Jesus. It is also the heavenly sign of a prophecy fulfilled long ago and the shining hope for humanity.
Candle	J) A green, thriving plant in the dead of winter reminded people of hope and new life. Because of Jesus Christ, we can have <i>everlasting</i> life
Mistletoe	K) Its circular shape, one without an end, also came to symbolize eternity and the Christian concept of everlasting life.
Doves	L) They ring out to guide lost sheep back to the flock.
Presents	M) They are a reference to Jesus as the "good shepherd" who tends his flock.

The Story of Christmas Spiders

In a quiet cottage in the woods lived a gentle widow and her eight children. The widow worked very hard to keep her children warm and well-fed, but money was not **plentiful**. When the air grew **crisp**, and the snow began to fall, the widow knew Christmas was coming. But instead of feeling joyful as the holiday approached, she felt sadness and sorrow. She knew that she did not have enough money to buy her children any gifts to open on Christmas morning.



"I cannot afford new toys or books," she thought, walking home through the woods one night.

"What will I give my children?"

On Christmas Eve the family ate their simple Christmas dinner together, and the widow tried to **conceal** her worries. After **tucking** her excited children **snugly** into bed, she pulled her chair close to the fire and tried to erase the visions of their little disappointed faces from her mind. After all, what fun is Christmas morning without gifts to open?

"Perhaps a Christmas tree would make my children happy," the widow sighed.

She put on her coat and hat and walked through the woods in search of the right tree. She chose a small but beautiful evergreen, chopped it down with her husband's ax, and brought it to the cottage. For hours, the widow carefully decorated the **fragrant** tree branches with colorful fruits, bits of **ribbon**, and Christmas cookies. Then she blew out her candle and went to bed, hoping the tree would make her children's empty Christmas a little bit brighter.

While the tired widow slept, tiny spiders crept from the **cracks** and corners of the cottage. They had watched her hard at work, decorating the tree for her children. Onto the branches they jumped, **spinning** delicate **strands** of silky web which gracefully covered the small tree from trunk to top. It was a beautiful sight.

When the family **awoke** on Christmas morning, they could not believe their eyes. The webs of silk had been turned into pure silver, covering the tree with dazzling brightness! During the night, Santa Claus had come with gifts for the children and saw the tree covered with spider webs. He smiled as he saw how happy the spiders were, but knew how heartbroken the widow would be if she saw her tree covered with spider webs. So he turned the silky webs into pure, shining silver. The next morning, as the widow watched her children sing and dance around the beautiful shining tree, she knew it would be a wonderful Christmas after all!

From that day forward, people have hung strands of shiny silver tinsel on their Christmas trees in honor of the poor widow and her tiny Christmas spiders. (-- By Stephanie Herbek)

3. Match these words from the text to their definitions:

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|--------------------------|---|
| 1. plentiful | a) got up |
| 2. crisp | b) covering tight with a blanket |
| 3. conceal | c) fibers/filaments twisted together |
| 4. tucking snugly | d) twisting fibers of a material (wool, cotton) |
| 5. fragrant | e) cool, fresh |
| 6. ribbon | f) hide |
| 7. cracks | g) abundant, a lot |
| 8. spinning | h) thin, long piece of material used for tying up or decorating |
| 9. strands | i) having a sweet smell |
| 10. awoke | j) thin break in a surface |

4. Choose the correct answer:

1. Where did the widow live?
a) a cottage in the woods b) a house in a village c) a hut
2. How many children did the widow have?
a) six children b) ten children c) eight children
3. What did the family eat on Christmas Eve?
a) Christmas pudding b) simple Christmas dinner c) turkey with gravy
4. What did she think would make the children happy?
a) a party b) crèche c) a Christmas tree
5. What did she use to chop down the tree?
a) her husband's ax b) a handsaw c) a chainsaw
6. What crept from the cracks of the house?
a) tiny elves b) tiny spiders c) tiny fairies
7. What did they use to cover the tree?
a) Christmas decorations b) tinsel c) a silky web
8. Who came during the night?
a) Santa Claus b) Saint Nicholas c) angels
9. What did he turn the webs into?
a) pure gold b) pure silver c) tinsel
10. What did the children do around the beautiful Christmas tree?
a) told stories b) played a game c) sang and danced

You can now go back to exercise one and rethink your answers. Can there be any legend/story that might connect *the ghost* to Christmas?