



- How much do you know about what happens at Christmas around the world? Try to match the customs on the left with the country on the right

Custom	Country
1) St. Nicolas brings presents on December 6 <sup>th</sup> to good children and a bag of sticks for bad children	a. China
2) December 26 <sup>th</sup> is called Boxing Day and was traditionally a day to give presents to the poor.	b. Spain
3) Tropical flowers are used as Christmas decorations.	c. Great Britain
4) The three Kings arrive on the night of January 5 <sup>th</sup> to give presents to children. Most towns have a carnival style parade.	d. Germany
5) ON January 6 <sup>th</sup> a special almond cake with a toy crown inside is eaten.	e. Czech Republic
6) Wooden decorations and candles are put in windows of homes.	f. France
7) The Christian population is between 4-6% and big cities put up Christmas trees.	g. Canada
8) Fir trees grow here and they always send the biggest and most beautiful tree to Boston in the USA.	h. Costa Rica

- Do you know anything about any of these customs?
- What would you write about your own country?

#### Task 4 – What does Christmas mean to people in the UK?

What does Christmas mean to people in the UK?

Work in small groups. Before you read the text imagine how Christmas is spent in the UK. Do you think it is similar or different to your own country? Discuss your ideas with your group.

Now each member of the group is going to read one or two paragraphs. When you have all finished reading your paragraph, explain it to the rest of the group then discuss these questions together.

- What are the origins of Christmas?
- Who gives cards and presents at Christmas?
- What do you know about Father Christmas?

- What is the Christmas number one (clue: it's about music)?
- Does it always snow at Christmas in Britain?
- What do people eat at Christmas in the UK?
- Do British people really like Christmas?
- Do the true or false exercise with a partner.

### **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!

### **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.

### **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.

**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.

**Christmas means.....**

Does everyone like Christmas? These comments from young Brits reflect some of the wide range of opinions about Christmas in the UK:

Yasmeen, 20, Liverpool: Christmas to me means catching up with your family and having a laugh. Last of all opening your presents.

Ruby, 15, London: It's too commercial. There are too many adverts trying to get everyone to spend their money.

James, 13, Crediton: Bringing all your family together, having a laugh, giving presents and eating loads of delicious foods. YUM! YUM!

Tony, 18, Bakewell: The shops start selling Christmas cards in September! That's 3 months before Christmas. Ridiculous!

Claire, 22, Derby: I work for a charity that gives food to homeless people every Christmas. These people have no home or family so we try to make December 25th a happy day for them.

Charlie, 15, Canterbury: I think Xmas is as much about giving as it is getting. I also think it's a time for the whole family to get together and enjoy being with each other.

Alisha, 16, Manchester: I think that Christmas is a religious time, not just for Christians but for Jews and Muslims too. I celebrate the season the Christian way.

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.

### Task 5 – New Year's Resolutions

Have you ever made any new year's resolutions? In the UK many people make resolutions for the new year. These are promises they make to themselves. Typical resolutions may be to give up smoking, do more exercise or to read more books. Think about what you would like to promise yourself for the next year. Write three new year's resolutions here:

1)

2)

3)

- Do you think you will keep the resolutions?

**Task 6 – Christmas poems**

You are going to write a Christmas poem. Use the letters in the word CHRISTMAS to start each line

C  
H  
R  
I  
S  
T  
M  
A  
S

**Task 7 – Unusual Christmas presents**

Read about these unusual Christmas presents and put them in order from the best to the worst.

**Teenager's Driving Course - £85**

You will take your first driving lesson with a professional instructor. You will be in a safe area and not on the roads and you will learn all the basics of driving a car. You will do a Little course of 90 minutes and then spend 45 minutes behind the Wheel. You'll get a certificate to take home with you.

**Makeover and Photo shoot - £50**

You will go to a professional photography studio for a full makeover of your clothes, hair and face. You will be able to ask to look like your favourite celebrity and they will take lots of photos of you. You will be able to take some of the photos home and you'll spend three hours with the professionals.

**Adopt a Dolphin with the World Wildlife Fund - £50**

You will receive an adoption gift pack which includes a cuddly toy, the adoption certificate, a WWF pen, an adoption card, and information about the dolphin you have adopted.

**Junior Popstar Experience - £89**

You will go to a recording studio and record a song with professional music producers. You will then have your photo taken for the cover of the CD and you will be able to take your CD home to keep forever.

**Parachute Jump - £75**

You will learn how to do a parachute jump and then you will go up in the plane and take a tandem jump (with an instructor). You will get a DVD of the whole event to show your friends afterwards, just in case they don't believe you were so brave!