

Task 1 – Speaking

Work in pairs. Look at the expressions below and complete the sentences in a way that makes sense to you.

- a. When I was six...
- b. A long time ago...
- c. When I went on holidays in...
- d. One late evening in....

Now compare your sentences with your classmate. Talk about the time, places and people in the situations you imagined/remembered.



Dylan Thomas 'painted pictures' by putting words together, not only in poetry but also in prose. He combined nouns and adjectives to create memorable and evocative images. The words above come from a little book called *A Child's Christmas in Wales*, where he describes the festive day from the point of view of a little boy.

Task 2 - Reading

Read the extracts below from *A Child's Christmas in Wales*. Underline the words and expression used to indicate the story timeline. Then put the extracts in the order in which they appear in the book.

(1) One Christmas was so much like the other, in those years around the sea-town corner now out of all sound except the distant speaking of the voices I sometimes hear a moment before sleep, that I can never remember whether it snowed for six days and six nights when I was twelve or whether it snowed for twelve days and twelve nights when I was six.

() For dinner we had turkey and blazing pudding, and after dinner the Uncles sat in front of the fire, loosened all buttons, put their large moist hands over their watch chains, groaned a little and slept. Mothers, aunts and sisters scuttled to and fro, bearing tureens.

() It was on the afternoon of the day of Christmas Eve, and I was in Mrs Prothero's garden, waiting for cats, with her son Jim. It was snowing. It was always snowing at Christmas. December, in my memory, is white as Lapland, though there were no reindeers. But there were cats.

() And I remember that we went singing carols once, when there wasn't the shaving of a moon to light the flying streets. At the end of a long road was a drive that led to a large house, and we stumbled up the darkness of the drive that night...

() And on Christmas morning, with dog-disturbing whistle and sugar fags, I would scour the swathed town for the news of the little world, and find always a dead bird by the Post Office or the white deserted swings; perhaps a robin, all but one of his fires out. Men and women wading, scooping back from chapel, with taproom noses and wind-bussed cheeks, all albinos, huddled their stiff black jarring feathers against the irreligious snow.

() In the rich and heavy afternoon, the Uncles breathing like dolphins and the snow descending, I would sit among festoons and Chinese lanterns and nibble dates and try to make a model man-o'-war, following the Instructions for Little Engineers, and produce what might be mistaken for a sea-going tramcar. Or I would go out, my bright new boots squeaking, into the white world, on to the seaward hill, to call on Jim and Dan and Jack and to pad through the still streets, leaving huge, deep footprints on the hidden pavements.

() Always on Christmas night there was music. An uncle played the fiddle, a cousin sang "Cherry Ripe," and another uncle sang "Drake's Drum." It was very warm in the little house. Auntie Hannah, who had got on to the parsnip wine, sang a song about Bleeding Hearts and Death, and then another in which she said her heart was like a Bird's Nest; and then everybody laughed again; and then I went to bed.

() And then, at tea the recovered Uncles would be jolly; and the ice cake loomed in the centre of the table like a marble grave. Auntie Hannah laced her tea with rum, because it was only once a year.

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Task 3 - Speaking

Discuss the questions below with your classmates:

- How have you imagined the weather? What words and expressions suggest that?
- How have you imagined the atmosphere in the house? What words and expressions suggest that?
- How important is food in the story?
- How important are sounds and music in the story?

Task 4 – Language work

Besides time markers (e.g. day, afternoon), the author uses other ways to indicate time in the story. Which time do the following phases refer to?

Time period/season	a. when I was six b. when there were wolves in Wales c. ice-cream hills d. all the churches boomed for joy e. singing carols	<i>childhood</i>
Time of the day	f. after midday dinner g. the shaving of a moon h. at tea i. back from chapel j. the lights in the windows	

Task 5 – Language work and writing

Write sentences using the expressions below:

- a. a moment before sleep

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- b. it was in the afternoon of ...

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- c. on the ice-cream hills

.....

- d. the shaving of a moon

.....

- e. the lights in the windows

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Task 6 – Speaking

Work in pairs. Discuss the questions below with your classmate:

- What are the most important festivals in your country/culture?
- How do people typically celebrate them?
- Do you have any childhood memories of a festive day?

Homework

Write your own short story (approx. 500 words)

- Choose a festive period or date you are familiar with
- Write a description of a day from a child's point of view
- Create your own adjectives to give a vivid impression of the scene and atmosphere
- Use/adapt some of the time expressions and vocabulary studied in the lesson



Materials by Chris Lima