

CHRISTMAS

Activities



CHRISTMAS AND NEW YEAR TRADITIONS



Read the text about Christmas traditions and answer the questions that follow:

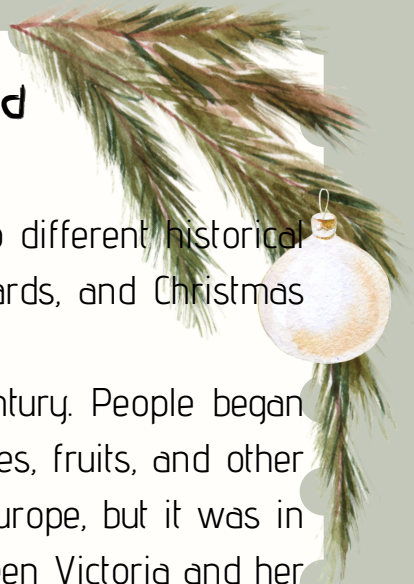
The origins of many Christmas traditions can be traced back to different historical periods and cultures, including the Christmas tree, Christmas cards, and Christmas carols.

The Christmas tree tradition started in Germany in the 16th century. People began bringing trees into their homes and decorating them with candles, fruits, and other decorations to celebrate Christmas. The custom spread across Europe, but it was in Britain, in the 19th century, that it became especially popular. Queen Victoria and her German husband, Prince Albert, were instrumental in making the Christmas tree widely fashionable in Britain. They set up a tree at Windsor Castle, and soon families across the country began decorating trees in their homes. Today, Christmas trees are decorated with lights, ornaments, and tinsel, and remain a central part of Christmas celebrations worldwide.

Christmas cards also have a rich history. The first Christmas card was created in 1843 by Henry Cole in the UK. Cole was a man who wanted to send a special greeting to his friends during the holiday season. He asked artist John Calcott Horsley to design the first card, which featured an image of a family celebrating Christmas. The card was a success, and soon others began printing and sending their own cards. By the late 1800s, Christmas cards became popular in many countries, and today, millions of Christmas cards are sent each year, featuring a variety of designs, from religious themes to humorous illustrations.

Christmas carols are another beloved tradition, with roots going back to medieval times. Originally, the word “carol” referred to a joyful song or dance, not necessarily associated with Christmas. However, by the 13th century, Christmas carols became more closely linked to the holiday. One of the earliest known Christmas carols is “The Boar’s Head Carol,” sung during a Christmas feast in the 15th century. Over time, carols spread throughout Europe and became an important part of Christmas celebrations. Today, Christmas carols like “Silent Night” and “Joy to the World” are sung in churches, homes, and public spaces around the world.

Together, these traditions—the Christmas tree, card, and carols—help shape the festive spirit of the holiday season, creating a sense of joy, family, and tradition that continues to be celebrated today.





1. Where did the Christmas tree tradition begin?
2. Who helped make the Christmas tree popular in Britain?
3. When was the first Christmas card created and who designed it?
4. What was the original meaning of the word "carol"?
5. What are some common decorations for Christmas trees today? How do you decorate the tree with your family?



Read the text about the traditions of the New Year and answer the questions that follow:

New Year's traditions vary widely around the world, but most celebrations share a common theme of welcoming the new year with hope, joy, and positive energy. In Spain, people eat twelve grapes at midnight, one for each chime of the clock. This is believed to bring good luck for each month of the year. Similarly, in many Latin American countries, people perform rituals to attract prosperity, like wearing colorful underwear, with red for love and yellow for wealth.

In Scotland, New Year is celebrated with "Hogmanay," a lively festival that includes fireworks, street parties, and the tradition of "first-footing." The first person to enter a home after midnight brings gifts, such as coal, to ensure good luck for the year. In the United States, especially in New York City, the famous ball drop in Times Square marks the countdown to the new year. Thousands of people gather to watch this event, and it's televised across the country.

In Brazil, New Year's Eve is marked by fireworks, and many people wear white clothing as a symbol of peace and renewal. At midnight, people also jump over seven waves at the beach to bring good luck. In Denmark, one unusual tradition involves smashing old dishes on friends' doorsteps to ensure good fortune for the upcoming year.

In Japan, New Year's celebrations are focused on family gatherings and quiet reflection. People visit temples and shrines, pray for health and happiness, and





enjoy traditional foods like osechi, a special New Year's meal.

These varied customs reflect how different cultures celebrate the same event with unique practices that bring joy and unity. New Year's is a time of renewal, and regardless of the country or tradition, it remains a moment for people to come together, reflect on the past year, and look forward to new beginnings with optimism.

1. What do people in Spain do at midnight on New Year's Eve?
2. What is the Scottish tradition of "first-footing"?
3. Where is the famous ball drop that marks the new year?
4. What is a popular tradition in Japan during New Year's celebrations?
5. What is the common theme of New Year's traditions worldwide?



Write a paragraph about the special New Year's traditions in your area or your family. How do you feel about them? Would you like to add some new activity based on what you've read?



CHRISTMAS AND NEW YEAR TRADITIONS

TEACHER'S B2

Christmas traditions

1. Where did the Christmas tree tradition begin?

The Christmas tree tradition started in Germany in the 16th century.

2. Who helped make the Christmas tree popular in Britain?

Queen Victoria and her German husband, Prince Albert, helped make the Christmas tree popular in Britain.

3. When was the first Christmas card created and who designed it?

The first Christmas card was created in 1843 and it was designed by artist John Calcott Horsley.

4. What was the original meaning of the word "carol"?

Originally, the word "carol" referred to a joyful song or dance, not necessarily associated with Christmas.

5. What are some common decorations for Christmas trees today? How do you decorate the tree with your family?

Christmas trees today are decorated with lights, ornaments, and tinsel. Students' own answers about their families.

New Year traditions

1. What do people in Spain do at midnight on New Year's Eve?

In Spain, people eat twelve grapes at midnight, one for each chime of the clock, to bring good luck.

2. What is the Scottish tradition of "first-footing"?

In Scotland, "first-footing" involves the first person to enter a home after midnight bringing gifts like coal to ensure good luck for the year.

3. Where is the famous ball drop that marks the new year?

The ball drop happens in Times Square, New York City.

4. What is a popular tradition in Japan during New Year's celebrations?

In Japan, people visit temples and shrines, pray for health and happiness, and enjoy a special New Year's meal called osechi.

5. What is the common theme of New Year's traditions worldwide?

The common theme of New Year's traditions worldwide is to welcome the new year with hope, joy, and positive energy.





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