

**Everything Christmas** Vol 1 Christmas Around the World *Australia-India*

Intelligent Australia Productions

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This book is dedicated to:

*Paul and Celine*

*Ador and Claire*

*Martin and Eliane*

Intelligent Australia Productions is committed to raising standards  
in Literacy and Numeracy in Australian schools.



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# Teachers Notes

In collaboration with Bill Egan, the world renowned Christmas historian, we are delighted to bring you Christmas Around the World *Australia-India*, Volume 1 of the 'Everything Christmas' series.

'Everything Christmas' is aimed at students in the 10-14 age group.

Questions, exercises and activities are framed to address student outcomes in English and SOSE. In this book students can practise (from the National Outcome Statements –English):

- thinking, writing and using language imaginatively, to express thoughts, feelings, ideas, values and opinions, in a range of texts and contexts
- using increasingly complex writing genres
- independently editing their writing by transforming, expanding, and/or reducing sentences to achieve an intended meaning
- recognising that adverbs enhance the meaning of sentences
- checking, after writing, for paragraphing, use of adverbs, correct punctuation, accuracy in conventions for using dialogue
- checking for relevance, sequence, coherence
- using dictionaries to correct spelling.

Teachers and their students will find this book informative, stimulating, thought provoking and challenging, with each page catering for fast finishers (often the brightest children who need to be further challenged).

The many topics for **class discussion** and **class debates** are sure to generate spirited responses from students across all ability levels.

The book is full of illustrations, many of which -especially if coloured- will result in attractive worksheets, ideal for a **classroom Christmas display**.

The best way to use this book is:

- *Distribute copies of page to every student.*
- *Students (silently) read the text and exercises.*
- *Open up for class discussion, clarification, questions etc.*
- *Set children to work.*
- *Correct sheets and discuss answers.*

We trust you will gain as much from using the book as we did in compiling it.

Wishing all teachers and students the compliments of the Christmas season.

Ron Shaw and Jacqueline Rey

*Authors*



# Christmas In Australia

## 'Down Under' Christmases



Unlike a northern hemisphere white Christmas, Christmases Down Under have offered up bushfires, electrical storms, floods, hailstorms and cyclones. But most of the time Christmas in Australia features blue skies and warm to hot temperatures, between the mid twenties and high thirties.

Christmas is special to the majority of Australians for it is the summer holiday season and students are 'wrapping' up their school year. It's a time of end-of-semester tests, waiting for results, and getting ready for the holidays. For most Australian students this means Sun, Surf, and Shopping. It's also an end to homework and studies and the beginning of lots of time for family, relatives and 'mates'.

So how do Aussies really celebrate Christmas? Australia is a successful mix of many ethnic groups. There are connections with the United Kingdom, Northern and Southern Europe, the Middle East, Africa, the Americas, Vietnam, China, Japan and many other nations. Each of these national groups brings the colour, customs and festive rituals of the Christmas celebrated in their respective homelands.

### Your Thoughts and Ideas

1. What is meant by 'a successful mix of many ethnic groups'?

.....  
.....  
.....

2. Which do you think is better, a 'white' Christmas or Christmas under a warm sun? Say why.

.....  
.....  
.....

3. Discuss your thoughts and feelings if you were now experiencing your first Christmas in Australia after spending your first 9 or 10 Christmases in a cold snowy country.

.....  
.....  
.....

4. What would you say is the best thing about Christmas in Australia?

.....  
.....  
.....

**\*\*For Fast Finishers:**

Write a few sentences explaining the clause 'wrapping up their school year'.

**Class Discussion**  
*\*humorous*

When visiting Australia at Christmas should Santa wear shorts and thongs instead of his red suit?





# Christmas In Australia

## *The Beginning of Christmas in Australia*



The first official Christmas Down Under was celebrated on the 25th December 1788 at Sydney Cove, in a ceremony conducted by Reverend Johnson. After the service, Governor Arthur Phillip and his officers dined heartily, toasting the King of England and his family. But for the majority of the first white inhabitants...the convicts...there was no change to their regular menu... bread rations only. The only goodwill which seemed to have been displayed was to Michael Dennison. He was a convict who stole a pound of flour from Martha Pugh. He was sentenced to 200 lashes by the whip. But since it was Christmas, only 150 were delivered.

### Your Thoughts and Ideas

1. For how many years has Christmas in Australia been celebrated? (*sentence answer*)

.....

.....

2. Governor Phillip and his officers showed they had the true Christmas spirit. Say why you agree or disagree with this statement. What else might they have done?

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

3. If you were Michael Dennison how would you have felt about Governor Phillip's gesture? Say why.

.....

.....

.....

.....

4. If you had been Martha Pugh what would you have said to Governor Phillip when he reduced the number of lashings? (*answer in the first person*)

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

**\*\*For Fast Finishers:**

- What is another way of saying 'dined heartily'?
- In line 3 of the passage what does 'toasting' mean?

**Debate Topic**

Prisoners should have special privileges at Christmas.



# Christmas In Australia

## 'The Twelve Days of Christmas': Australian version 1

*sketch some scenes in the boxes*

On the FIRST day of Christmas,  
My true love sent to me,  
A kookaburra in a gum tree.

On the SECOND day of Christmas,  
My true love sent to me,  
Two snakes on skis,  
And a kookaburra in a gum tree.

On the THIRD day of Christmas,  
My true love sent to me,  
Three wet galahs,  
Two snakes on skis,  
And a kookaburra in a gum tree.

On the FOURTH day of Christmas,  
My true love sent to me,  
Four lyrebirds,  
Three wet galahs,  
Two snakes on skis,  
And a kookaburra in a gum tree.

On the FIFTH day of Christmas,  
My true love sent to me,  
Five kangaroos,  
Four lyrebirds,  
Three wet galahs,  
Two snakes on skis,  
And a kookaburra in a gum tree.

On the SIXTH day of Christmas,  
My true love sent to me,  
Six sharks a-surfing,  
Five kangaroos,  
Four lyrebirds,  
Three wet galahs,  
Two snakes on skis,  
And a kookaburra in a gum tree.

On the SEVENTH day of Christmas,  
My true love sent to me,  
Seven emus laying,  
Six sharks a-surfing,  
Five kangaroos,  
Four lyrebirds,  
Three wet galahs,  
Two snakes on skis,  
And a kookaburra in a gum tree.

On the EIGHTH day of Christmas,  
My true love sent to me,  
Eight dingos dancing,  
Seven emus laying,  
Six sharks a-surfing,  
Five kangaroos,  
Four lyrebirds,  
Three wet galahs,  
Two snakes on skis,  
And a kookaburra in a gum tree.

On the NINTH day of Christmas,  
My true love sent to me,  
Nine crocs a-snoozing,  
Eight dingos dancing,  
Seven emus laying,  
Six sharks a-surfing,  
Five kangaroos,  
Four lyrebirds,  
Three wet galahs,  
Two snakes on skis,  
And a kookaburra in a gum tree.

On the TENTH day of Christmas,  
My true love sent to me,  
Ten wombats washing,  
Nine crocs a-snoozing,  
Eight dingos dancing,  
Seven emus laying,  
Six sharks a-surfing,  
Five kangaroos,  
Four lyrebirds,  
Three wet galahs,  
Two snakes on skis,  
And a kookaburra in a gum tree.

On the ELEVENTH day of Christmas,  
My true love sent to me,  
Eleven lizards leaping,  
Ten wombats washing,  
Nine crocs a-snoozing,  
Eight dingos dancing,  
Seven emus laying,  
Six sharks a-surfing,  
Five kangaroos,  
Four lyrebirds,  
Three wet galahs,  
Two snakes on skis,  
And a kookaburra in a gum tree.

On the TWELFTH day of Christmas,  
My true love sent to me,  
Twelve possums playing,  
Eleven lizards leaping,  
Ten wombats washing,  
Nine crocs a-snoozing,  
Eight dingos dancing,  
Seven emus laying,  
Six sharks a-surfing,  
Five kangaroos,  
Four lyrebirds,  
Three wet galahs,  
Two snakes on skis,  
And a kookaburra in a gum tree.





# Christmas In Australia

## "The Twelve Days of Christmas": Australian version 2

*sketch some scenes in the boxes*

On the FIRST day of Christmas  
My true love sent to me,  
An emu up a gum tree.

On the SECOND day of Christmas  
My true sent to me,  
Two pink galahs,  
And an emu up a gum tree.

On the THIRD day of Christmas  
My true love sent to me,  
Three kookaburras laughing,  
Two pink galahs,  
And an emu up a gum tree.

On the FOURTH day of Christmas  
My true love sent to me  
Four koalas cuddling,  
Three kookaburras laughing  
Two pink galahs  
And an emu up a gum tree.

On the FIFTH day of Christmas  
My true love sent to me  
Five kangaroos,  
Four koalas cuddling,  
Three kookaburras laughing,  
Two pink galahs,  
And an emu up a gum tree.

On the SIXTH day of Christmas  
My true love sent to me  
Six broilgas dancing,  
Five Kangaroos,  
Four koalas cuddling,  
Three kookaburras laughing,  
Two pink galahs,  
And an emu up a gum tree.

On the SEVENTH day of Christmas  
My true love sent to me  
Seven possums playing,  
Six broilgas dancing,  
Five kangaroos,  
Four koalas cuddling  
Three kookaburras laughing,  
Two pink galahs,  
And an emu up a gum tree.

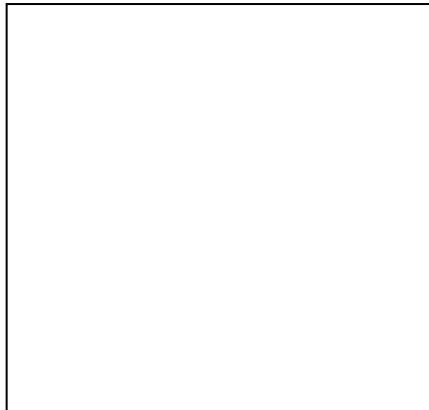
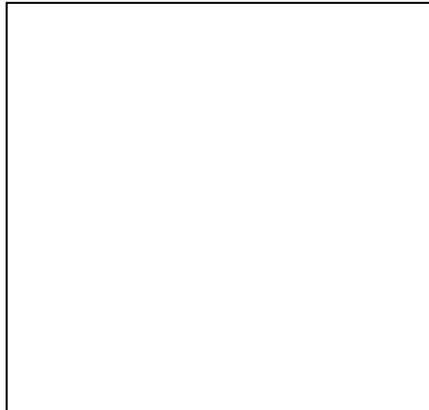
On the EIGHTH day of Christmas  
My true love sent to me  
Eight dingoes digging,  
Seven possums playing,  
Six broilgas dancing,  
Five kangaroos,  
Four koalas cuddling,  
Three kookaburras laughing,  
Two pink galahs,  
And an emu up a gum tree.

On the NINTH day of Christmas  
My true love sent to me  
Nine wombats working,  
Eight dingoes digging  
Seven possums playing,  
Six broilgas dancing,  
Five kangaroos,  
Four koalas cuddling,  
Three kookaburras laughing,  
Two pink galahs,  
And an emu up a gum tree.

On the TENTH day of Christmas  
My true love sent to me  
Ten lizards leaping,  
Nine wombats working,  
Eight dingoes digging  
Seven possums playing,  
Six broilgas dancing,  
Five kangaroos,  
Four koalas cuddling,  
Three kookaburras laughing,  
Two pink galahs,  
And an emu up a gum tree.

On the ELEVENTH day of Christmas  
My true love sent to me  
Eleven numbats nagging,  
Ten lizards leaping,  
Nine wombats working,  
Eight dingoes digging,  
Seven possums playing,  
Six broilgas dancing,  
Five kangaroos,  
Four koalas cuddling,  
Three kookaburras laughing,  
Two pink galahs,  
And a emu up a gum tree.

On the TWELFTH day of Christmas  
My true love sent to me  
Twelve parrots prattling,  
Eleven numbats nagging,  
Ten lizards leaping,  
Nine wombats working,  
Eight dingoes digging,  
Seven possums playing,  
Six broilgas dancing,  
Five kangaroos,  
Four koalas cuddling,  
Three kookaburras laughing,  
Two pink galahs,  
And an emu up a gum tree!





# Christmas In Australia

## Christmas Weather Extremes



Cyclones are a product of Australia's summer season and on 24th December 1974 Cyclone Tracy arrived in Darwin. The cyclone blew with such intensity it almost completely destroyed the city of 40 000 people. Most did not wake up on Christmas morning as they had been awake all night while their homes blew away in the furious winds.

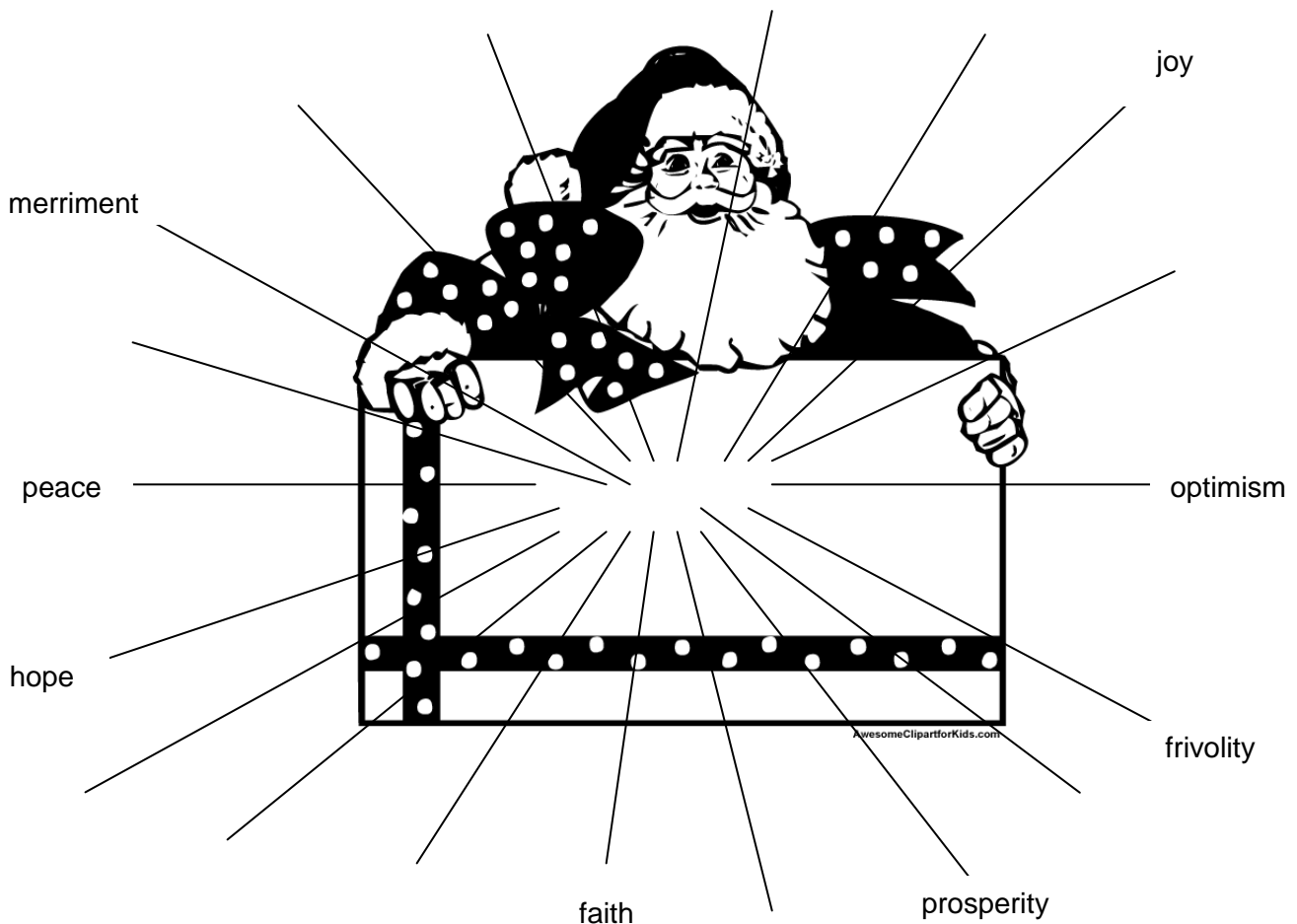
Mother nature was up to her tricks again in 2001.

With temperatures in the low 30's and strong winds, the state of New South Wales experienced about 70 major bush fires on Christmas Day. About 5 000 fire fighters and other emergency personnel were on duty on Christmas Day with up to 20 000 people being engaged in fire fighting and support services at the height of the blazes. The fires raged for 22 days before rain and calm conditions allowed them to be brought under control.

### Your Thoughts and Ideas

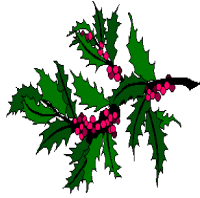
The residents of Darwin and New South Wales suffered greatly at the hands of nature, and to make matters worse it was at Christmas time.

Try to fill Santa's gift-box with **\*\*abstract nouns** that can be delivered to those whose Christmases were affected by the cyclone and bushfires. If you have trouble filling the box use synonyms of the words suggested here. Write them in as shown.



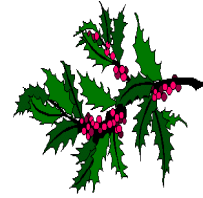
**\*\* Discuss abstract nouns with your teacher.**

**\*\*For Fast Finishers (and/or class discussion)**  
 How can disasters like these bring people 'closer together'?



# Christmas In Australia

*Outback Encounter*



A tribe of aborigines are performing a corroboree when one of them notices Santa by a billabong, boots and socks off, cooling his feet.



They cautiously approach Santa, and the Tribal Elder, who can speak English, engages in conversation with the man from the North Pole.

**Your Thoughts and Ideas**

**How might the conversation go?** *(students could work in pairs and perform this as a skit)*

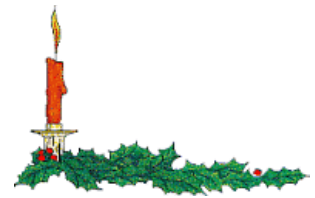
- T. Elder .....
- Santa .....
- T. Elder .....
- Santa .....
- T. Elder .....
- Santa .....
- T. Elder .....
- Santa .....
- T. Elder .....
- Santa .....
- T. Elder .....
- Santa .....
- T. Elder .....
- Santa .....

**\*\*For Fast Finishers:**  
List 10 (or more) ways in which Santa and the Tribal Elder are different.



# Christmas In Australia

## *Carols by Candlelight*



It is generally agreed that 'Carols by Candlelight' was started in Melbourne by radio announcer Norman Banks in 1937 after he saw a woman listening to carols alone by candlelight. Banks decided to do something to relieve the loneliness and isolation some feel during the Christmas period. He announced community carol singing for anyone who wanted to join in. The concept has grown in popularity over the years and is now an important feature of Christmas in many countries.

In Australia Carols by Candlelight is held every year in the week before Christmas, when thousands of people gather in the parks of the larger towns and cities to sing their favourite Christmas carols. Carol sheets and candles, with candle holders to protect tiny fingers from hot candle wax, are available for participants. Many people bring blankets or portable chairs for seating.

Carols singing commences before darkness falls. At twilight the person compering the evening announces the time has come to light the candles, causing much excitement among the children and older participants. The lighting is turned off and the park is lit by many candles while families and friends continue singing carols under a clear night sky with its Southern Cross stars.

The fact that the longest days of the year occur around Christmas in the southern hemisphere ensures warm weather, which allows Australians to enjoy this tradition.

Well-known entertainers sing solos and lead the audience in singing. There is usually a band or orchestra and Santa Claus often appears. At some Carols by Candlelight a Nativity scene may also be on display.



### Your Thoughts and Ideas

Make up an acrostic poem based on the passage above.

C  
A  
R  
O  
L  
S

**\*\*For Fast Finishers:**

List cities or countries beginning with each letter of *Carols by Candlelight*.



# Christmas in Austria

## *Krampus, St. Nicholas and Christkindl*



December 5<sup>th</sup> in Austria is known as Krampus Day. Krampus is an evil spirit usually clad in frightening fur. He has a long red tongue, bulging eyes and makes a loud racket with huge cowbells and rattling chains.

On Krampus Day, children and adults go together to the village to throw snowballs at this menacing figure. In Salzburg a Krampus runs through the streets of the city. But this is all done in fun, with much teasing and laughter. Krampus' purpose is simply to remind children to be good.



St. Nicholas, the patron saint of children, is widely honoured throughout the country. He is an ancestor of Santa Claus but in Austria he appears on his feast day, December 6<sup>th</sup>, a holiday separate from Christmas.

He traditionally wears a flowing robe and he carries a shepherd's staff and a thick book in which the good and bad deeds of the children are recorded.



In Austria the Christkindl is the star of the season. It is he who brings the children their presents on Christmas Eve. The Christkindl also decorates the tree, with assistance from mother, father, or other adults in the family. Austrian children do not see the decorated tree until Christmas Eve.

### Your Thoughts and Ideas

1. St. Nicholas is the patron saint of children. What does this mean?

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

2. What is meant by 'widely honoured'?

.....

.....

.....

.....

3. Sketch the evil Krampus.

**\*\*For Fast Finishers:**  
 Make a list of 10 (or more) bad things that Krampus might do.



# Christmas in Austria



## *Christkindlmarkt and Krippe*

One of the first signs that Christmas and the Christkindl are on their way is the appearance of the Christkindlmarkt, or Christmas market. Early in December these Christmas markets open in towns and cities all over Austria, with rows of booths and stalls selling colourful ornaments and decorations, gingerbread, Advent wreaths, candles, small gifts, and Christmas trees.

It's easy to work up an appetite at a Christkindlmarkt, especially when vendors offer pretzels, sausage, paper cones filled with roasted chestnuts, and hot spiced wine. Other booths sell Christmas sweets and cookies.

Nearly every church and most families in Austria have a Krippe or crèche, with miniature figures of the newborn Christ child and his parents.

A Krippe may have only a few figures, perhaps the Holy Family and a few animals. But other families display very elaborate scenes, with dozens of hand-carved shepherds, animals, and other figures.



Some families keep adding new characters and scenery each year, especially if an uncle, grandfather or other family member is a talented woodcarver. Often these crèches are hundreds of years old, treasured heirlooms handed down from one generation to the next.

The Krippe may be set up before Christmas Eve, especially if it is an elaborate one. But baby Jesus is not placed in the manger until Christmas Eve.

### **Your Thoughts and Ideas**

**1. What is a 'treasured heirloom'?**

.....

.....

**2. Write the first six words of the paragraph that best illustrates that Austrians are aware of the true meaning of Christmas.**

**3. Imagine you are at the Christkindlmarkt. It is twilight and light snowflakes are tumbling gently to the snow-covered ground. Describe the sights, sounds and smells you are experiencing.**

.....

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.....

**\*\*For Fast Finishers:**  
Write a paragraph of at least 10 lines pointing out why family heirlooms are so treasured.



# Christmas in Austria



## ***Weihnachtsbaum, Mitternachtsmette and Sternsinger***

The evening of the 24th, Christmas Eve, is the traditional time to exchange gifts with family and friends. For the children the excitement is almost unbearable.

Finally, the children hear the tinkling bell that summons them to the Christmas room. There is the tree -with dozens of real candles, sparklers, silver ornaments and candy- in all its splendour. Each year's Weihnachtsbaum (Christmas tree) seems to be the most magical ever.

Often, homemade ornaments and other handcrafted decorations have been in the family for generations. Silver and gold garlands criss-cross the tree. In a few Austrian homes wax candles have been replaced by electric lights, but most Austrians would never dream of lighting their own trees with anything other than the traditional Christmas candles.



As midnight approaches, the grown-ups and the older children go to the traditional Mitternachtsmette, the Midnight High Mass. In many churches, trumpeters climb up the church towers and trumpet forth Christmas music to call the faithful to worship. The Turmblasen (brass instruments playing chorale music from the city tower or steeple of the main church) is a traditional feature of Christmas Eve. Often the service features music written by Franz Gruber, the composer of 'Silent Night' who also wrote nearly 100 Masses, hymns and carols.

The Sternsinger, boys and girls in oriental costumes, move from house to house, singing traditional songs and receiving small gifts and money. They carry a lighted 'Star of Bethlehem' lantern, which guides them along the way. On this occasion people chalk the initials of the Three Wise Men: C (Casper) + M (Melchior) + B (Balthasar) on the doorways.

### **Your Thoughts and Ideas**

**1. Why do you think 'most Austrians would never dream of lighting their own trees with anything other than the traditional Christmas candles'?**

.....

.....

**2. What is meant by 'trumpet forth'?**

.....

.....

**3. Do a sketch showing the Sternsinger roaming the streets.**

**\*\*For Fast Finishers:**

*'Franz Gruber certainly left his mark on the Christian world'.*

What does this statement mean? (write 10 or more lines)



# Christmas in Belgium



On the evening of December 6th, St. Nicholas, dressed in his Bishop's robes, rides on the roofs of Belgian homes on his white horse, delivering gifts via the chimney. Children set their shoes at the fireplace and leave vegetables in them for the horse. In return, the goodly saint leaves sweets and small gifts in the shoes.

After the family celebration on December 25th, people, both young and old, flock to the frozen canals for an afternoon of skating. Here you'll see grandparents skating alongside little grandchildren who seem to be almost too young to even walk.

The churches in Belgium have beautiful Nativity scenes and they are quite popular in homes also. Some of the hand-carved figures handed down from generation to generation are works of great artistic merit.

Nativity plays are still popular in some areas and they are often performed in 16th century costume, similar to what was worn at the time the tradition began.

Another tradition continues in small villages where three men are chosen to portray the three kings. They move from house to house singing carols and are rewarded with small gifts of food. Since the food is consumed on the spot, the men are often selected for their girth as well as their virtue and musical ability.

## Your Thoughts and Ideas

Sketch three Belgian Christmas scenes. Give each one a title.

### **\*\*For Fast Finishers:**

There are at least 12 small words to be found by jumbling the letters in *Belgium*. How many words can you find?





# Christmas In Bethlehem



The little town where Jesus is said to have been born is the site of the Church of the Nativity, which is ablaze with flags and decorations every Christmas.

On Christmas Eve locals and visitors alike crowd the church's doorways and stand on the roof to watch for the dramatic annual procession. Galloping horsemen and police mounted on Arabian horses lead the parade. They are followed by a solitary horseman carrying a cross and sitting astride a coal-black steed. Then come the churchmen and government officials. The procession solemnly enters the doors and places an ancient effigy of the Holy Child in the church. Deep winding stairs lead to a grotto where visitors find a silver star marking the site of the birth of Jesus.

Christian homes in Bethlehem are marked by a cross painted over the door, and each home displays a homemade manger scene. A star is set up on a pole in the village square.

## Your Thoughts and Ideas

1. Label the figures in this Nativity scene.



2. Write down your own definitions for these terms and phrases as used in the passage.

a. *ablaze with*

b. *dramatic*

c. *solitary horseman*

d. *solemnly*

e. *coal-black steed*

f. *ancient effigy*

### **\*\*For Fast Finishers:**

In the Nativity scene Jesus is the centre of attention. How many words or phrases can you think of that mean the same as 'centre of attention'?





# Christmas in Canada

## English and French



Christmas in Canada is usually snowy and very festive-looking.

English-speaking Canadians focus on Christmas day, with the exchanging of presents in the morning, then off to church, and back later for a great feast. Dinner consists of roast goose or beef and plum pudding. One fun tradition is the kissing ball -- a ring of evergreen boughs with candles, apples and nuts is hung in the doorway. Young men steal a kiss from any single lady standing under it, hence the name.....kissing ball.

On Christmas Eve in Québec, the French-speaking part of Canada, many families eat duck, followed by rice pudding with almonds. Afterwards, presents from the family are opened, with the ones from Santa Claus waiting until the next morning. Most people eat turkey for their Christmas dinner, often followed by nut-loaf and Christmas pudding with custard. In former days people used to eat tourtière, which is a sort of stew made of a layer of meat, a layer of potatoes, a layer of onions, another layer of meat, potatoes, onions and so on till it is big enough. A layer of pastry went on top to cover and then it was cooked for a long time. The end of the Christmas period (6<sup>th</sup> January) is called La fête du Roi. For this, a cake with a bean inside it is made, and the person who gets the bean is the king (or queen).

### Your Thoughts and Ideas

1. 'Kissing ball' is a fun tradition. If you were asked to make up a fun Christmas 'tradition' what would it be?

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2. Write out a possible procedure for making tourtière (invent temperatures and times).

- a) .....
- b) .....
- c) .....
- d) .....
- e) .....
- f) .....

3. What benefits might the 'king' or queen' be granted at La fête du Roi? (imagine YOU are the one getting the benefits!)

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.....

**\*\*For Fast Finishers: (and/or class discussion)**  
 What could be some advantages of living in a country in which two major languages are spoken?  
 What would be some disadvantages?

# Christmas in Canada

## The Boston Christmas Tree Tradition



On December 6, 1917, two ships collided in the Halifax harbour and caused a large explosion, heard over 100 km away. The explosion and the tidal wave in its aftermath destroyed hundreds of hectares at the northern end of the city, killed almost 2000 people, and injured over 9000 more. In response to this devastation, the people of Boston in the US sent help in the form of doctors, nurses, food and supplies. As a small token of appreciation, Canadians send a special Christmas tree to Boston every year.

Christmas is a time for tradition and goodwill toward others. The story of the people of Boston helping others in their time of need, even though it was not actually Christmas, still exhibits the true spirit of Christmas.

And because of the kindness of strangers, a celebration between two cities in two separate countries has become a holiday tradition.

### Your Thoughts and Ideas

1. When the people of Boston helped out those in Halifax they expected nothing in return, yet their kindness has never been forgotten. What important lesson does this teach us?

.....

.....

2. Make up an acrostic poem which has kindness as a central theme.

H  
A  
L  
I  
F  
A  
X

B  
O  
S  
T  
O  
N

**\*\*For Fast Finishers:**

Can you think of two synonyms and two antonyms of 'kindness'? If you're sure you can't, use a dictionary or thesaurus...but then write *three* of each!



# Christmas In China



Christians in China celebrate by lighting their houses with beautiful paper lanterns and decorating their Christmas trees, which they call 'Trees of Light', with paper chains, paper flowers, and paper lanterns. Chinese Children hang muslin stockings and await a visit from Santa Claus, whom they call Dun Che Lao Ren (dwyn-chuh-lau-oh-run) which means 'Christmas Old Man'.

Since the vast majority of the Chinese people are not Christian, the main winter festival is the Chinese New Year, which takes place toward the end of January. Now officially called the 'Spring Festival', it is a time when children receive new clothing, eat scrumptious meals, receive new toys, and enjoy firecracker displays. An important aspect of the New Year celebration is the worship of ancestors. Portraits and paintings of ancestors are brought out and hung in the main room of the home.

## Your Thoughts and Ideas

1. How do our Christmas tree decorations differ from those of the Chinese?

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.....

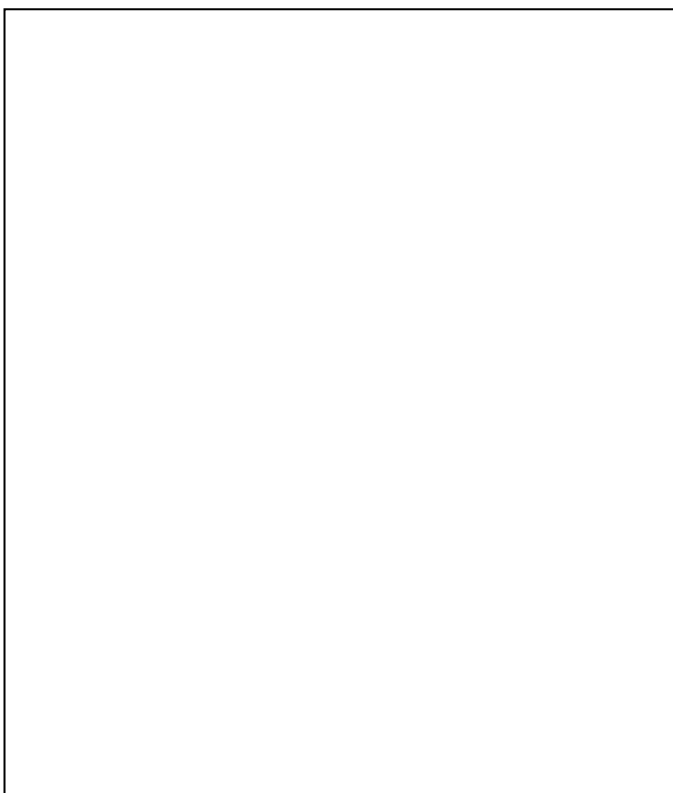
2. What is muslin?.....

3. What, in the passage, tells you that the Chinese place much importance on family?

.....  
.....  
.....

## 4. Illustration

Sketch either a Chinese lantern or a decorated Chinese Christmas tree.



**\*\*For Fast Finishers:**  
 How many words of 4 or more letters can you make from 'Spring Festival'?

- 4 letter words=1 point each
- 5 letter words=2 points each
- 6 letter words=3 point each
- 7 letter words=4 points each
- 8 letter words=5 points each



# Christmas In the Czech Republic



Until 1993 the Czech Republic and the Slovak Republic formed the nation known as Czechoslovakia. Centuries ago, the western half of Czechoslovakia was known as Bohemia. This was the 10th century home of Good King Wenceslas, the main character in the familiar English Christmas carol. It is said that English troops, fighting in Bohemia hundreds of years later, brought the song home with them.

In the Czech Republic, St. Nicholas is called Svaty Mikalas. He is believed to climb down to earth from heaven on a golden rope along with his companions, an angel and a whip-carrying devil.

An ancient tradition shared in the Czech Republic involves cutting a branch from a cherry tree and putting it in water indoors to bloom. If the bloom opens in time for Christmas it is considered good luck, and also a sign that the winter may be short. The hope of early spring helps keep spirits up during the long dark winter.

## Your Thoughts and Ideas

1. Create a possible dialogue between Svaty Mikalas, the angel and the devil with the whip, as they descend the rope.

*(you'll need to note the speaking order below)*

SM

A

D

A

D

SM

D

A

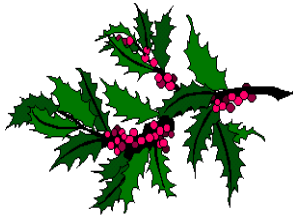
SM

D

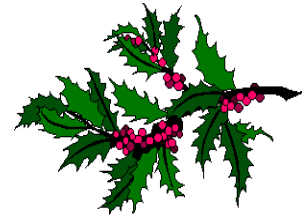
SM

2. Sketch a picture of Svaty Mikalas and his companions descending the golden rope.

**\*\*For Fast Finishers:**  
'Czechoslovakia' has 6 syllables. Can you think of any other words that have 6 syllables? (you may use a dictionary if you wish)



# Christmas in Denmark



## Land of Candles

There are few places on earth where Christmas is celebrated with such joy and with such a burst of light. To dispel the gloom of the never-ending twilight of winter, the Danes light thousands upon thousands of candles. They burn so many candles that the nation consumes more candles per capita than any other country on earth.

In the first week of Advent, the Mayor of Copenhagen lights a huge spruce, a gift to the people of Denmark from their neighbours in Norway.

Freshly baked cookies and cakes are always ready to serve to family, friends and neighbours. In Denmark, it is a very old belief that a visitor who leaves without being fed may carry the Yule spirit away from the house. Thus, every Danish kitchen buzzes with activity and is filled with the smells of sweets and spices in the weeks before Christmas and a recipe given by a Danish housewife will yield three or four hundred cookies.

### Your Thoughts and Ideas

1. What is meant by the phrase, 'dispel the gloom of the never-ending twilight of winter'?

.....  
.....

2. What does 'consumes more candles per capita' mean?

.....  
.....

3. Why would it be difficult to go hungry in Denmark around Christmas time?

.....  
.....

4. Add people, paths, a river, clouds, birds, and more Christmas trees to this Danish scene. Then colour.



**\*\*For Fast Finishers:**  
'Write a poem about Christmas in Denmark.  
Include a small illustration.



# Christmas in Denmark

## Danish Delights

On Christmas Eve the family gathers for an early meal. The Danish flag, along with the Christmas tree, decorate the home. The lighted candle in the window is an offer of food and shelter to travellers who may be passing, in the spirit of the Christ Child.

As the twilight falls, the father reads the Christmas Gospel, and in the darkening room the family sings the Christmas songs dear to their hearts, such as the one by the great Danish poet Hans Brorson:

*Thy little ones, dear Lord, are we,  
And come Thy holy bed to see.  
Enlighten every soul and mind  
That we the way to Thee may find.*

Julnisse, the mischievous elf,  
watching over the house.



The first course of the Christmas Eve dinner is the traditional rice pudding with a white almond in it. The one who finds the almond usually keeps the others in suspense until all the pudding is eaten. Then he or she announces the prize triumphantly and claims the reward -- usually a fruit of marzipan. The rest of the dinner consists of goose stuffed with apples and prunes and served with red cabbage, caramel-browned potatoes, and loganberry sauce. For dessert there is an astonishing variety of Danish pastries and baked goods.

A bowl of the rice pudding is left out for the Julnisse - a mischievous elf who lives in the attic and plays jokes on one and all. If he is placated by the pudding, he will watch over the household throughout the year. He is closely associated with the household cat, and there are those who attribute the disappearance of the Christmas Eve rice pudding to the cat itself rather than to the Julnisse.

### Your Thoughts and Ideas

1. What could be a reason(s) for the Danes choosing to display their national flag at Christmas time?

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2. What is meant by the last line of Hans Brorson's poem?

.....  
.....

3. What word or phrase could have been used instead of 'astonishing variety' at the end of the first paragraph? Perhaps you can think of more than one answer.

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.....

4. What does 'placated by the pudding' mean?

.....  
.....

**\*\*For Fast Finishers:**

Think up some jokes that Julnisse might play on the occupants of the house.





# Christmas in England



## Christmas Traditions

Throughout the month of December in England, people busy themselves preparing for the Christmas festivities. There are the mince pies and Christmas cakes to bake and decorate as well as the all-important Christmas pudding.

In England over the years many superstitions have surrounded this popular festive dessert. It is said puddings should be made by the 25th Sunday after Trinity, prepared with 13 ingredients (to represent Christ and His Disciples), and that every member of the family take turns to stir the pudding with a wooden spoon from east to west, in honour of the Three Kings. A silver coin is always dropped into the pudding mixture before it is cooked. This is said to bring wealth, health and happiness to whoever is lucky enough to find it when the pudding is cut.

People decorate their homes as well as a Christmas tree, with baubles, tinsel and fairy lights, with a star or an angel in pride of place, on the top of the tree. The decorating of Christmas trees has been widely popular in England since 1841 when Prince Albert had a Christmas tree decorated with candles, set up in Windsor Castle for his wife Queen Victoria and their children.

Children hang stockings on the fireplace or at the end of their beds so when Father Christmas pays a visit, they are stuffed full of goodies.....but only if the children have been good!

Children also send letters to Father Christmas. Legend has it that if the letters are tossed in the fireplace, the smoke from them burning gets carried up the chimney directly to the man in the red suit.

Advent Calendars help families count down to Christmas Day.

People give poinsettia plants as gifts because the general shape of the plant and the arrangement of leaves are seen as a symbol of the Star of Bethlehem, which led the wise men to the baby Jesus. The red coloured leaves symbolise the blood of Christ and the white leaves represent his purity.

In primary schools, the younger children re-enact the nativity story, dressed as Mary and Joseph, angels and the three wise men.

### Your Thoughts and Ideas

1. Tell (in your words) about the superstition surrounding English Christmas pudding.

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2. Why are poinsettia plants chosen as Christmas gifts?

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**\*\*For Fast Finishers:**  
The three wise men followed the Star of Bethlehem to find their way to Jesus and Mary. Ancient sailors also followed stars in their navigations. What are some modern methods of finding a way from one place to another?

**Class Discussion**  
or Research  
Why do superstitions arise?



# Christmas in England

## *Ebenezer Scrooge and the Queen*



'A Christmas Carol', by the English writer Charles Dickens, is a truly wonderful story about an old miser, Ebenezer Scrooge, who, thanks to some ghostly visions, comes to realise the true spirit of Christmas. This is a truly remarkable story and at Christmas time people are glued to their television screens when the movie is on because it is a Christmas story that still has a lot of meaning, especially today when Christmas has become so commercialised.

In the days leading up to Christmas, groups of carol singers holding candle lanterns, dressed in their hats and scarves to fight off the cold, go from door to door performing traditional Christmas songs for a small charitable donation to their cause. On Christmas Eve night, children leave out a glass of brandy and a mince pie for Father Christmas, and a carrot and bowl of water for the reindeer.

On Christmas morning, for many people, it's off to church for the morning service, to give thanks. Christmas dinner is usually had between 2 and 4 in the afternoon. The Christmas table is decorated with festive candles and crackers. A traditional English Christmas dinner is roast turkey with all the trimmings, like stuffing and cranberry sauce. For dessert there are mince pies, Christmas cake, Christmas pudding served with brandy sauce and cream and even sherry trifle.

At 3pm on Christmas Day it is time to watch the Queen's Speech to the Nation and Commonwealth.

### **Your Thoughts and Ideas**

**1. Why is Charles Dickens' 'A Christmas Carol' an important Christmas story?**

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**2. What is meant by the phrase, 'Christmas has become so commercialised'?**

.....

.....

**3. In paragraph two, what does the word 'cause' refer to?**

.....

.....

**4. ".....it's off to church for the morning service, to give thanks."  
What might be some things that people would wish to give thanks for?**

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**Debate Topic**

Christmas is commercialised.....and that's a good thing.

**\*\*For Fast Finishers:**  
What kinds of things do you think the Queen might talk about in her annual Christmas 'Speech to the Nation and Commonwealth'?



# Christmas in Finland



Families gather together on Christmas Eve, which is the most important day of the year in Finland. Most children who have grown up and moved away from home plan to return to their parents' home for that special day. The shops across the nation close at noon so everyone has to have their shopping done by that time.

At the stroke of noon the 'Peace of Christmas' is proclaimed in Turku, the former capital of Finland. This marks the official beginning of the Christmas celebrations and most families enjoy the first part of their Christmas meal at this point.

Around 5 in the evening, families go to the churchyard for a special service where candles are placed on the graves of loved ones. Seeing thousands of candles flickering in the Finnish twilight is a breathtaking sight.

Children await the arrival of Father Christmas on December 24<sup>th</sup>. In Finland, unlike in other nations, he enters the house for a daytime visit instead of during the night when the children are asleep. Father Christmas always asks the same question upon his arrival: "Are there any good children here?" The answer is always an enthusiastic "Yes". The kindly gentleman has a basket filled with gifts and, as his helpers distribute them, he tells about his journey from his home in Lapland and how he must hurry along to complete his rounds. After the children sing a final Christmas song, he moves on his way to visit other homes in the area.

**Your Thoughts and Ideas** *(see third paragraph)*

**Imagine you are a Finn and it is Christmas Eve. With your family you visit the grave of a departed relative. You are chosen to light a candle and place it on the grave. Describe the atmosphere and tell about your thoughts and feelings during this moving experience.**

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**\*\*For Fast Finishers:**  
The words 'Lapland' and 'Finland' have certain similarities.  
What are some of these?

# Christmas In France

## Nativity



Nearly every French home at Christmas time displays a Nativity scene or crèche. Crèche is a French word for manger or crib, and one little French town has become famous worldwide for its little figures used in Christmas cribs. It is Aubagne, a modest little rural town. Here craftsmen make unbaked clay figures called santons or 'little saints'. These were invented by Jean Louis Lagnel. He held his first Foire aux Santons (little saints festival) in 1803. It included the regular nativity figures and also a poacher (honoured for enterprise), a gendarme, a miller, a fishwife, a female musician, and the village simpleton (le ravi).

In addition to the usual Holy Family, shepherds, and Magi, today's craftsmen also produce figures in the form of local dignitaries and characters. The craftsmanship involved in creating the brightly coloured santons is quite astounding and the moulds have been passed from generation to generation since the seventeenth century.

### Your Thoughts and Ideas

#### 1. Give definitions:

- a. *poacher* .....
- b. *gendarme* .....
- c. *miller* .....
- d. *fishwife* .....
- e. *simpleton* .....
- f. *dignitary* .....
- g. *enterprise* .....
- h. *Magi* .....

#### 2. How many words of 4 or more letters can you make from the letters in Nativity scene? Write them here.

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#### **\*\*For Fast Finishers:**

What qualities do you think the craftsmen who make the santons probably possess?

# Christmas In France

## *Pere Noel and Friends*



At Christmas time French children receive gifts from Père Noel who travels with his stern disciplinarian companion Pre Fouettard.

Pre Fouettard reminds Père Noel of just how each child has behaved during the past year. Pre Fouettard (Father Spanker) could provide bad children with a spanking.

In some parts of France Père Noel brings small gifts on St. Nicholas Eve (December 6) and visits again at Christmas. In other places it is le petit Jésus who brings the gifts. Generally adults wait until New Year's Day to exchange gifts.

Christmas Day is celebrated in France with all of the family coming together.

On Christmas Eve, French children put their shoes (sabots) in front of the fireplace. They hope Pere Noel (Father Christmas) will fill them with presents.

### Your Thoughts and Ideas

1. Write 'yes' in the correct spaces:

	<i>Père Noel</i>	<i>Pre Fouettard</i>	<i>le petit Jésus</i>
<i>brings gifts</i>			
<i>spanks bad children</i>			

2. Some might say that Pre Fouettard should not be part of any nation's Christmas. What are your thoughts on this? Give reasons.

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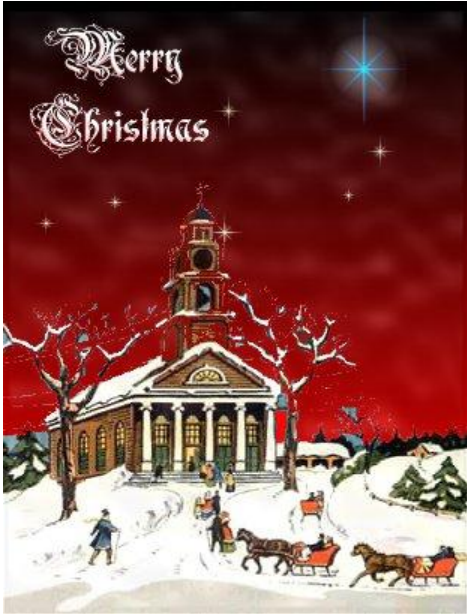
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### **\*\*For Fast Finishers:**

Make up an imaginary conversation between Pre Fouettard and Père Noel. Use humour if you wish.

# Christmas in Germany

## Gingerbread

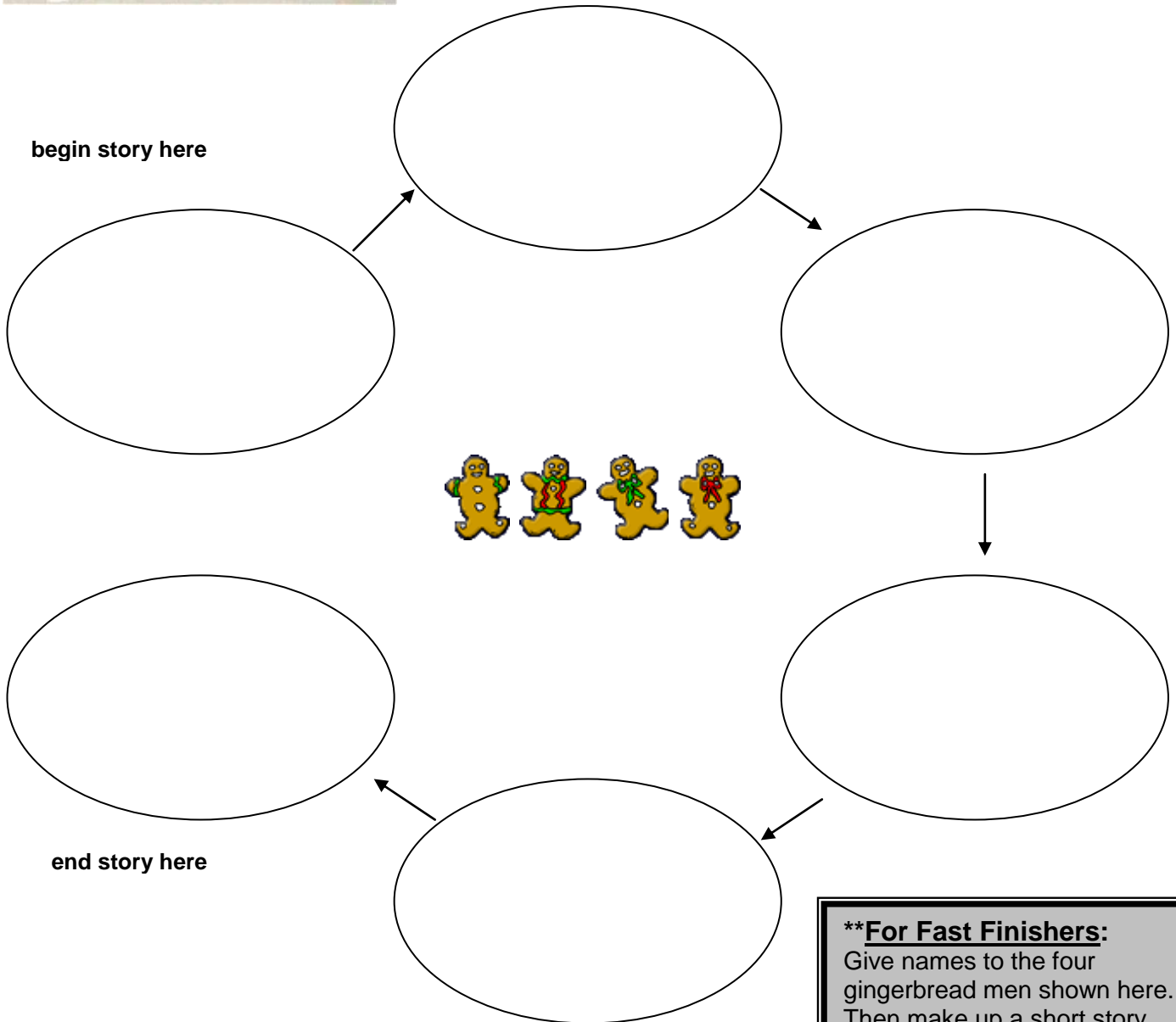


Froehliche Weihnachten!

Gingerbread figures are a great tradition from Deutschland. The famed Gingerbread House in the well-known German folk story, 'Hansel and Gretel' shows their immense popularity in this part of the world. As a charming Christmas treat, this delicious cookie has survived many years, either in the form of gingerbread people or their tasty homes!

### Your Thoughts and Ideas

Draw a gingerbread man sitting, standing or lying on each oval shape and then write the story of Hansel and Gretel in the shapes.



### **\*\*For Fast Finishers:**

Give names to the four gingerbread men shown here. Then make up a short story about them.



# Christmas in Germany



## Christmas Traditions

Like people the world over Germans enjoy singing carols, including, 'O Tannenbaum' ('O Christmas Tree') and 'Stille Nacht, Heilige Nacht' ('Silent Night, Holy Night').

Christmas celebrations begin on St. Nicholas Day. As in many other European countries, on the eve of December 6th children place a shoe or boot by the fireplace. During the night, St. Nicholas, the patron saint of children, moves from house to house carrying a 'book of sins' in which all of the misdeeds of the children are written. If they have been good, he fills their shoe or boot with delicious holiday edibles. If they haven't been good, their shoe is filled with twigs.

The *Weihnachtskrippe* (Nativity scene) is especially popular in the southern regions of Germany. In the weeks leading up to Christmas, moss is gathered, last year's figures are polished and repaired and consideration is given to adding new additions around the stable.

The Christmas tree, as we know it, originated in Germany. It has a mysterious magic for the young because they are not allowed to see it until Christmas Eve. While the children are occupied in another room (usually with Father) Mother brings out the Christmas tree and decorates it with apples, candy, nuts, cookies, cars, trains, angels, tinsel, family treasures and candles or lights. Somewhere, close to the bright display are laid brilliantly decorated plates for each family member, loaded with fruits, nuts, marzipan, chocolate and biscuits. When all is ready a bell is rung as a signal for the children to enter this Christmas fantasy room. Carols are sung, sometimes sparklers are lit and the Christmas story is read.

Dinner on Christmas Eve consists of dishes such as suckling pig, white sausage, macaroni salad, and many regional dishes. Christmas Day brings with it a banquet of plump roast goose, *Christstollen* (long loaves of bread bursting with nuts, raisins, citron and dried fruit), *Lebkuchen* (ginger spice bars), marzipan, and *Dresden Stollen* (a moist, heavy bread filled with fruit).

### Your Thoughts and Ideas

Choose two German Christmas traditions that you like. What is it about them that really shows the spirit of Christmas?

1. ....  
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2. ....  
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**\*\*For Fast Finishers:**  
 Make a list of entries in a 'Book of Sins'. (see 2<sup>nd</sup> paragraph)



# Christmas In Greece



St. Nicholas is important in Greece as the patron saint of sailors. According to Greek tradition, his clothes are drenched with brine, his beard drips with seawater, and his face is covered with perspiration because he has been working hard against the waves to reach sinking ships and rescue them from the angry sea. Greek ships never leave port without some sort of St. Nicholas icon on board. To members of the Eastern Orthodox Church (most Greek Christians belong to this Church), Christmas ranks second to Easter in the roster of important holidays. Yet there are a number of customs associated with Christmas that are uniquely Greek. On Christmas Eve, village children travel from house to house offering good wishes and singing kalanda, the equivalent of carols. Often the songs are accompanied by small metal triangles and little clay drums. The children are frequently rewarded with sweets and dried fruits.

The Christmas feast is looked forward to with great anticipation by adults and children alike. Pigs are slaughtered and on almost every table are loaves of christopsomo ('Christ Bread'). This bread is made in large sweet loaves of various shapes and the crusts are engraved and decorated in a way that reflects the father's profession.

Christmas trees are not commonly used in Greece. In almost every home the main symbol of the season is a shallow wooden bowl with a piece of wire suspended across the rim; from that hangs a sprig of basil wrapped around a wooden cross. A small amount of water is kept in the bowl to keep the basil alive and fresh. Once a day, a family member, usually the mother, dips the cross and basil into some holy water and uses it to sprinkle water in each room of the house. This ritual is believed to keep the Killantzaroi away from the house.

There are a number of beliefs connected with the Killantzaroi, which are a species of goblins or sprites who appear only during the 12-day period from Christmas to the Epiphany (January 6). These creatures are believed to emerge from the centre of the earth and to slip into people's houses through the chimney. More mischievous than actually evil, the Killantzaroi do things like extinguish fires, ride astride people's backs, braid horses' tails, and sour the milk. To further repel the undesirable sprites, the hearth is kept burning day and night throughout the twelve days.

Gifts are exchanged on St. Basil's Day (January 1). On this day the 'renewal of waters' also takes place, a ritual in which all water jugs in the house are emptied and refilled with new 'St. Basil's Water'.

## Your Thoughts and Ideas

Re-write paragraph 4 in your own words. Underline six key words.

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**Debate Topic**

It is wrong of the Greeks to slaughter pigs for the Christmas feast.

**\*\*For Fast Finishers:**

In paragraph 2 what does it mean by 'the crusts are engraved and decorated in a way that reflects the father's profession'?



# Christmas in Iceland

## Land of Christmas Lights



Icelanders are very big on Christmas. Due to the island's location, days are very short in winter. Perhaps that explains the enthusiasm with which Icelanders decorate and light up their houses during the holidays.

All sorts of Christmas lights appear in windows, along with a festive horde of snowmen, Santas and other Christmas figures who occupy windows, roofs, balconies and lawns, starting on the first Sunday of Advent at the beginning of December.

Advent lights (electric candlesticks with seven lights) shine from one or more windows in virtually every home in Iceland. Some Icelanders make and decorate Advent wreaths, lighting each of the four candles on each of the four Sundays in Advent.

By the middle of December many houses are fully decorated inside and out. But the crowning glory, the Christmas tree, is only decorated on St. Thorlakur's Day (December 23rd).

Traditionally, the lights are lit for the first time on the decorated tree when Christmas is 'chimed in' by every church bell in the land at six o'clock on Christmas Eve.

### Your Thoughts and Ideas

1. Why is the reason suggested for Icelanders' enthusiasm in the first paragraph?

2. What do you think is meant by 'a festive horde of snowmen'?

3. Who might be the 'other Christmas figures' referred to in paragraph two?

4. Write the phrase that tells us that Advent lights are extremely popular in Iceland.

5. What does 'the crowning glory' mean?

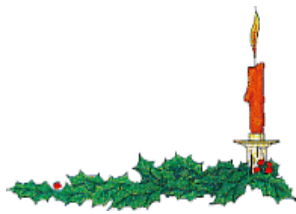
6. What would be another way to say 'chimed in'?

#### **\*\*For Fast Finishers:**

Paragraph 2 has been written as one sentence. Using two or three sentences, re-write it in your own words.

### **Class Discussion**

Can Australians, who have Christmas in summer, experience the same Christmas 'feeling' as Icelanders?



# Christmas in Iceland



## The Yulemen

Thirteen days before Christmas the Yulemen begin to arrive at farms and in towns. These 13 brothers are strange creatures, part troll and part prankster in human form. Actually, they are much meeker today than they were in former times, when according to Icelandic lore, they could be quite dangerous. Their father and mother, Grýla and Leppalúði, were terrible trolls who captured disobedient children. Even the family cat was a monster. On Christmas Day it searched out any child who didn't get a new piece of clothing for Christmas and ate his or her ration of Christmas food. The Yulemen played pranks on people and stole from them. Each had his special Christmas preference - food, or candles for example - and a distinctive way of getting his hands on it, which was reflected in his name.

Today's prosperity has softened the lads a bit and now they are good-natured boys who come bearing gifts. They used to dress in warm woollen clothes in tones of black, white, grey and brown. These days they sometimes put on red suits, which they claim are their best clothes. The night before the first Yuleman arrives (December 12th) there are suddenly little shoes on the windowsills of the bedrooms of all Icelandic children. The reason for the shoes is that the children know that if they have behaved well, they can expect the Yuleman to sneak a little treat into the shoe while they are asleep. If they have not behaved well, however, they may find only a potato or nothing at all in the shoe when they wake up. Sometimes the children leave a little something in the shoe for the Yuleman to find - a sausage for 'Sausage Snatcher' or maybe a candle for 'Candle Beggar'.

### Your Thoughts and Ideas

Use your best powers of imagination to visualise the two Yulemen below (appearance as well as actions). Write some appropriate descriptive words and then do a small sketch of each.

#### *Sausage Snatcher*

..... ..... ..... ..... ..... .....
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#### *Candle Beggar*

..... ..... ..... ..... .....
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**\*\*For Fast Finishers:**  
Why would you think the Yulemen used to wear clothes in tones of black, white, grey and brown?



# Christmas in Iceland



## The Yule Tree

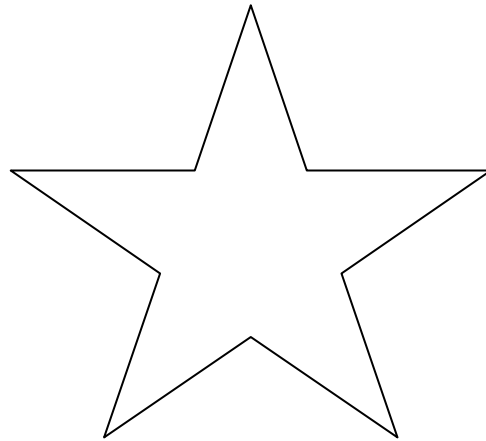
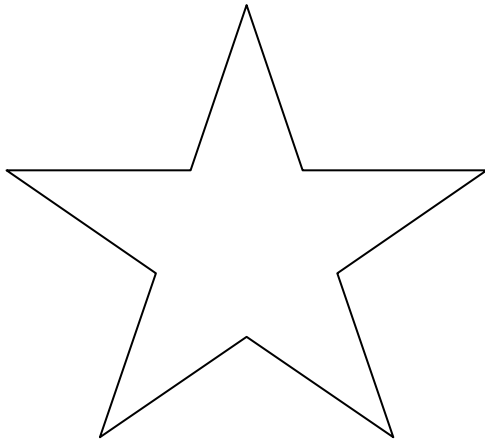


Yule trees, mainly homemade, first appeared in Iceland around the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. These were made from a central pole on which branches were nailed. On these branches candles were fastened. The Yule tree was usually painted green, and native foliage was used to decorate it. Numerous, coloured pouches were then hung on the Yule tree, often filled with sweets which the children were allowed to eat after the candles had burned out.

Nowadays most Yule trees in Iceland are locally grown. The tradition is to have a star or crown at the top, and to decorate the branches with light bulbs and Yule decorations. The Icelandic Flag is also commonly used as a decoration. The Yule tree is usually decorated early on December 24<sup>th</sup>.

### Your Thoughts and Ideas

Try to find 10 differences between our Christmas tree and Iceland's traditional Yule Tree. (write near the stars' points). In one star sketch our Christmas tree and in the other sketch a traditional Yule Tree (see picture).



## Class Discussion

How would Christmas be different if there were no Christmas trees?

### **\*\*For Fast Finishers:**

"A Christmas tree without candles *is like a cake without icing.*"

Beginning with, 'A Christmas tree without candles' can you make up some more similes like this?

# Christmas in Iceland

## Traditional Christmas Scene



### Your Thoughts and Ideas

The figures in this traditional Icelandic Christmas scene were probably made by a craftsman in a small village workshop. It depicts Christmas as it was in Iceland, perhaps 150 years ago. Note the clothing (scarves, head-coverings, footwear etc), the simple wooden cart and the wooden bowl and spoon.

What changes do you think an Icelander of that period might observe if he/she were to experience an Icelandic Christmas of the early 21<sup>st</sup> century? (a few things to consider are Christmas decorations, type of lighting, street scenes, music and Christmas dishes.....but there are many more). Write your responses in the first person, from the point of view of this 1850's Icelandic minstrel.



### **\*\*For Fast Finishers:**

Why might the small village craftsmen in 1850's Iceland have found their work very satisfying?

# Christmas in Iceland



## Three Christmas Delicacies: Laufabraud, Ptarmigan and Skate

The making of 'laufabraud' (leaf bread), is a very old Icelandic Christmas tradition. These are flat cakes made of flour and water and fried in oil or mutton-fat. The cakes are decorated by cutting a special pattern of 'leaves' in them. In earlier times Iceland did not produce grain of any kind and flour was an imported luxury. Therefore, the laufabraud was rolled out paper thin to get as many cakes as possible from the dough. Each cake was carefully decorated as a small work of art. This tradition is still very much a part of Icelandic Christmas custom.

Many Icelanders feast on ptarmigan (a wild bird) on Christmas Eve. Ptarmigan is a strictly Icelandic dish. Originally, only the poorest families, those who didn't have a lamb to slaughter, ate ptarmigan at Christmas. Nowadays it's consumed more widely.

Skate is a fish whose name is derived from its shape: a long, narrow tail and a pointed mouth. *Skata* in Old Norse meant long, narrow, or pointed. The tradition of eating this peculiar and smelly food (it has a strong odour of ammonia) arose in the West Fjords. The best time for catching skate is in the late autumn, and after the pickling process, it is ready and available around Christmas time. Fortunately skate doesn't taste anything like it smells. At the skate lunch, the fish is served in chunks (see picture), with boiled potatoes.



### Your Thoughts and Ideas

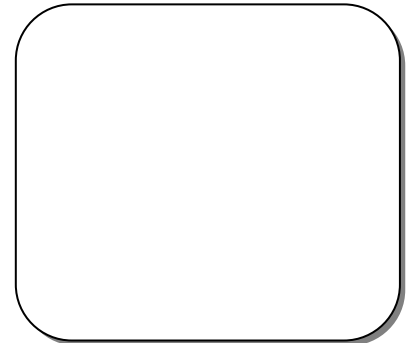
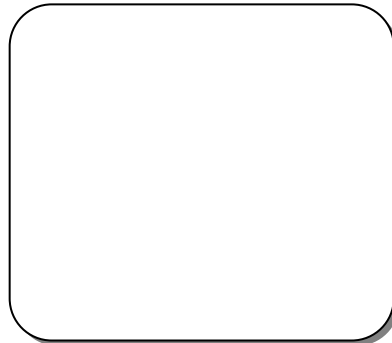
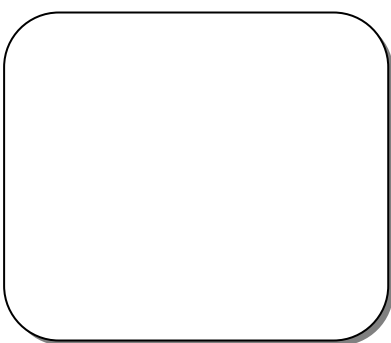
1. Which of the three dishes above do you think you might like best? Which might you least prefer? Give reasons.

.....

.....

.....

2. Draw intricate leaves on the 'dough' to show what laufabraud looks like.



### **\*\*For Fast Finishers:**

- In paragraph 1 what is meant by 'imported luxury'?
- What is meant by a 'strictly Icelandic dish' (paragraph 2)?



# Christmas in Iceland

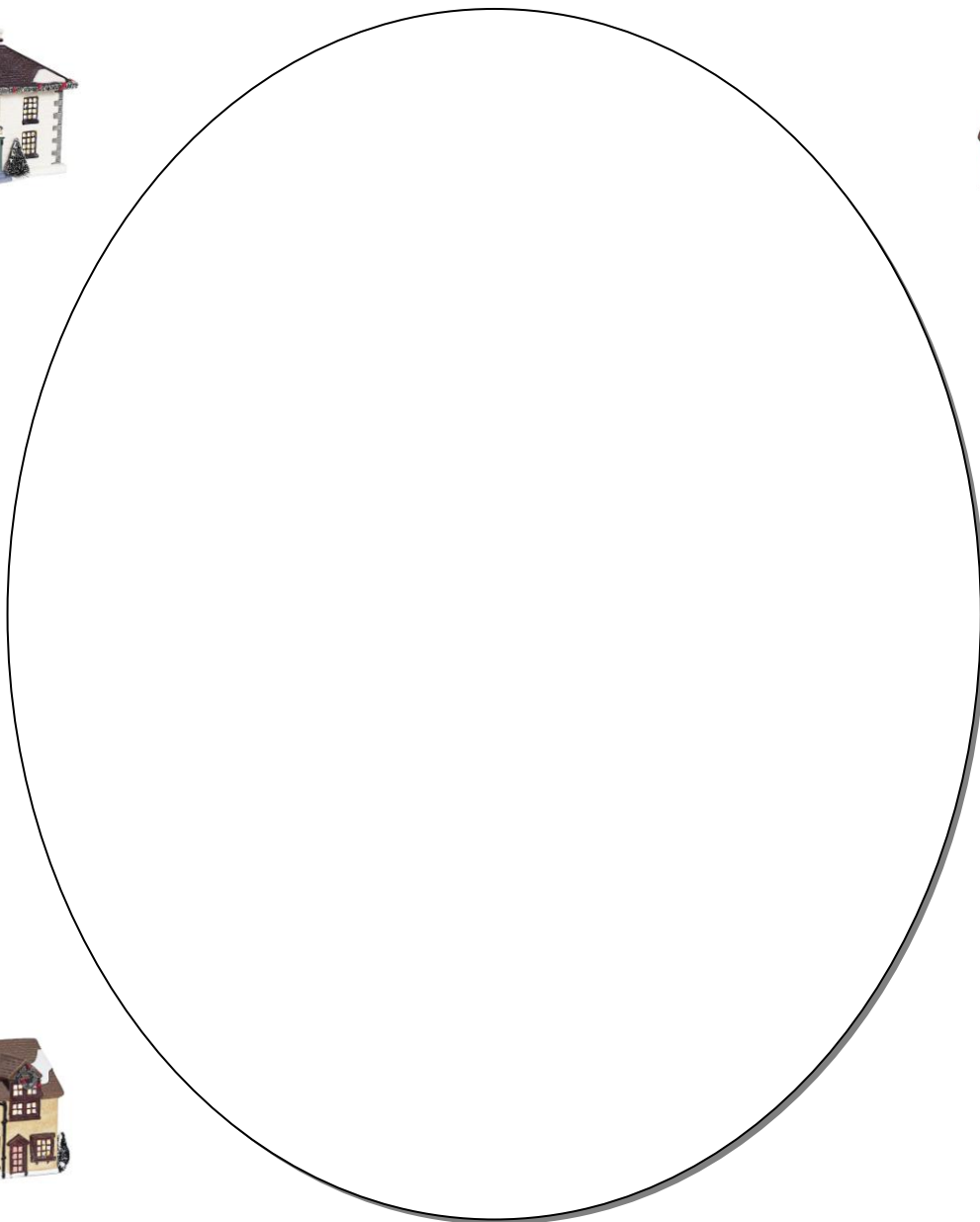


## Christmas Lights in Reykjavik

For half a century it has been tradition to celebrate when the giant Christmas tree is lit up in the centre of Reykjavik, Iceland's capital city. The tree is from Norway - the country that the settlers of Iceland came from 1125 years ago- and is a gift from the City of Oslo to the City of Reykjavik. The tree is always in the city square, Austurvollur.

### Your Thoughts and Ideas

**Sketch (in the oval) the giant Reykjavic Christmas tree, surrounded by city buildings and citizens in festive mood.** (the pictures are to help you draw the buildings).



**Class Discussion**

What similarities do you think there might be between the people of Norway and the people of Iceland?

**\*\*For Fast Finishers:**

Why do you think the City of Oslo presented the City of Reykjavik with a huge Christmas tree?



# Christmas In India



Most people would be surprised to learn that there are 24 million Christians in India. This is more than the entire population of Australia. So, there are many Indians who celebrate Christmas. Christians in India decorate banana or mango trees at Christmas time. Sometimes they also decorate their houses with mango leaves. In some parts of India, small clay oil-burning lamps are used as Christmas decorations; they are placed on the edges of flat roofs and on the tops of walls. Churches are decorated with poinsettias and lit with candles for the Christmas evening service.



### Your Thoughts and Ideas

1. 'Dress up' the banana tree with Christmas decorations.
2. Preparing for Christmas in India (largely a tropical country) must be quite different from preparing for Christmas in Iceland (a cold country). What could be some of these differences?

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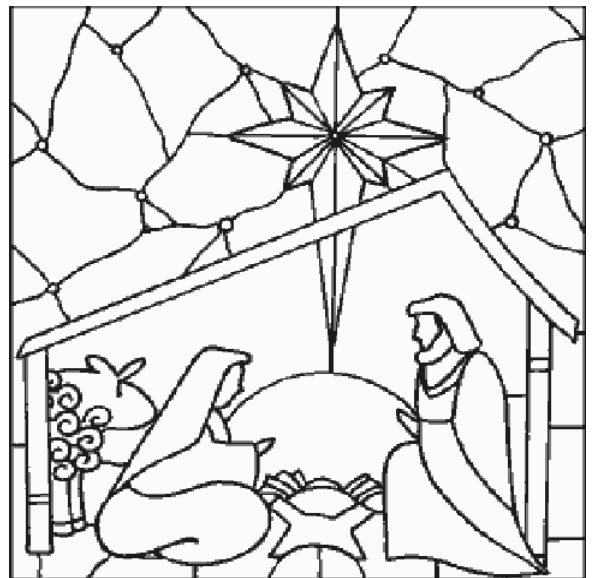
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## Debate Topic

Countries that have Christmas in their summer can never capture the true Christmas feeling.

### **\*\*For Fast Finishers:**

Does a palm tree or a fir tree make a better Christmas tree? Give reasons for your answer.







# Answers

Most questions in the book are open-ended, with no right or wrong answers.  
Other questions have answers that will be obvious to teachers.  
The answers here, however, will prove useful.

**P12** 1. *St Nicholas is a 'defender' of children*

**P13** 2. *Nearly every church and most families*

**P15** Fast Finishers: *mug, leg, gem, glum, big, glue, glib, bile, gibe, mule, lime, mile, guile, blue, .....*

**P17** Fast Finishers: *mysteriously*

**P19** 1. *people don't forget your acts of kindness*

**P20** 2. *muslin=plain-woven cotton fabric*

3. *An important aspect of the New Year celebration is the worship of ancestors.*

*Portraits and paintings of ancestors are brought out and hung in the main room of the home.*

**P21** Fast Finishers: *e.g. encyclopedia*

Activities and Research: 2. *Buddhism*

**P22** 3. *because 'a visitor who leaves without being fed may carry the Yule spirit away from the house'*

**P24** 2. *the shape of the plant and the arrangement of leaves are seen as a symbol of the Star of Bethlehem*

Fast Finishers: *map, compass, GPS (Global Positioning system)*

**P25** 1. *It is about goodwill and giving*

3. *the organization to which the donations will go.*

**P26** Fast Finishers: *7 letters, 2 syllables, 5 consonants and 2 vowels, emphasis on 1<sup>st</sup> syllable, both are countries, ...*

**P27** Fast Finishers: *good craft skills, patience, perseverance, .....*

**P31** Key words: *beliefs, goblins, Christmas, Epiphany, creatures, centre of the earth, chimney, mischievous, Killantzaroi, undesirable sprites, hearth*

**P32** 4. *shine from one or more windows in virtually every home in Iceland or every home in Iceland*

**P33** Fast Finishers: *drab colours are readily associated with evil*

**P37** Class Discussion: *appearance, customs, language.....*

Fast Finishers: *this gift is a goodwill symbol from the nation of Iceland's ancestors*

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*(see next page).*

