

How We Celebrate Christmas

Those who celebrate this important Christian festival might describe it as the most wonderful time of the year. Here are some ways in which Christmas is celebrated in the UK today.

Traditions

Pantomimes or 'pantos' are shows performed at Christmas time. They involve music and jokes and are generally based on fairy tales such as Cinderella or Peter Pan. Here are a few well-known sayings you may hear at a pantomime:

'It's behind you!'

'Oh not it isn't!'

'Oh yes it is!'

There is usually a pantomime dame in the show. The dame is an actor dressed up as a woman and usually wears a very colourful costume. There may also be women who act out the male roles. Villains usually enter from stage-left whereas heroes enter from stage-right. Stage-left and stage-right describe the the different sides of the stage. Many famous people take part in pantomime performances across the country. Audience members are often involved in some way and may get the opportunity to go up on stage.



Christmas Carols

Christmas carols are sung at this festive time of year. Choirs perform carol concerts for audiences. There are many different carols, e.g. 'Away in a Manger', 'Silent Night' and 'Good King Wenceslas'.

Sending Christmas cards is a way of wishing family and friends a happy Christmas and New Year. Christmas is a very busy time for the postal service and cards must be posted by certain dates in order to arrive in time.

Families who celebrate this important Christian festival may have their own traditions, such as watching The Queen's Speech on Christmas Day.

Decorations

Mistletoe can be hung in homes as a decoration; it is traditional for loved ones to kiss underneath it. Hundreds of years ago, people would use holly, ivy and herbs to decorate their homes at Christmas time and these evergreens are still used today. It's also common to see holly wreaths on the front door of houses.



One tradition which became fashionable in Victorian times was the introduction of the Christmas tree in the home. Christmas trees are decorated with lights, baubles, tinsel, beads and topped with a star or angel. Gifts are often placed under the tree ready for Christmas Day morning. Many villages, cities and towns have their own Christmas trees and carol concerts sometimes take place around them.

Today, Christmas lights are very popular as they brighten up the dark and dreary winter evenings. Many cities and towns have an official 'Switch On'. There is a countdown, then the lights are turned on for the festive season. It is also very common to see lights in people's windows and gardens.

Food

Many who celebrate Christmas will eat a traditional Christmas dinner with their family or friends on Christmas Day. One of the most common meats is turkey, although some people have other alternatives. Sprouts are a Christmas tradition, as are pigs in blankets (sausages wrapped in bacon). Most people eat their Christmas dinner at lunchtime, however some people eat it later in the afternoon or evening. To accompany the dinner, Christmas crackers are often seen decorating the table. Crackers bang when pulled and they usually contain a paper hat, joke and small toy.

What is the best Christmas present in the world?

A Christmas drum, you can't beat it!

Who hides in a bakery at Christmas?

A mince spy!

Popular Christmas desserts include Christmas pudding, mince pies, chocolate Yule log and Christmas cake (fruit cake).

True Meaning of Christmas

Different people may have different answers to the question, 'What is the true meaning of Christmas?' - some people believe it is a time for giving and receiving gifts, while others think it's about watching Christmas films and eating lots of food! Some people think that Christmas has become too commercialised by shops and has lost its true meaning altogether. Christians celebrate this festival to mark the birth of Jesus Christ. Children act out the Nativity and many people attend church to give thanks.

Did You Know?

- The phrase 'White Christmas' refers to snow on Christmas Day. For Christmas Day to be a 'White Christmas', only one snowflake has to fall.
- The Christmas tree in Trafalgar Square in London is an annual gift from Norway.



How We Celebrate Christmas Questions

- 1. What is a pantomime?

- 2. Explain stage-left and stage-right. Who enters from these sides?

- 3. Which service is particularly busy at this time of year?

- 4. Why do you think evergreens such as holly, ivy and herbs were used as decorations hundreds of years ago?

- 5. What is sometimes seen hanging on front doors during the festive season?

- 6. When did Christmas trees become fashionable to own in the home?

- 7. Why are Christmas lights popular?

- 8. What do some people believe to be the problem with Christmas today?

- 9. What does the term 'White Christmas' mean?

- 10. Which do you think is the best aspect of these Christmas celebrations? Explain your answer.

How We Celebrate Christmas **Answers**

1. What is a pantomime?

A pantomime is a show performed at Christmas time.

2. Explain stage-left and stage-right. Who enters from these sides?

Stage-left and stage-right describes the left and right of the performer on the stage, performing to the audience. Villains usually enter from stage-left whereas heroes enter from stage-right.

3. Which service is particularly busy at this time of year?

The postal service is particularly busy at this time of year.

4. Why do you think evergreens such as holly, ivy and herbs were used as decorations hundreds of years ago?

Various answers.

5. What is sometimes seen hanging on front doors during the festive season?

It is common to see wreaths hanging on front doors during the festive season.

6. When did Christmas trees become fashionable to own in the home?

Christmas trees became fashionable to own in the home during Victorian times.

7. Why are Christmas lights popular?

Christmas lights are popular because they brighten up the dark and dreary winter evenings.

8. What do some people believe to be the problem with Christmas today?

Some people believe that Christmas has become too commercialised by shops and has lost its true meaning altogether.

9. What does the term 'White Christmas' mean?

'White Christmas' refers to snow on Christmas Day. For Christmas Day to be a 'White Christmas', only one snowflake has to fall.

10. Which do you think is the best aspect of these Christmas celebrations? Explain your answer.

Various answers.

How We Celebrate Christmas

Those who celebrate this important Christian festival might describe it as the most wonderful time of the year. Here are some ways in which Christmas is celebrated in the UK today.

Traditions

Pantomimes or 'pantos' are shows performed at Christmas time. They generally involve lots of music, jokes and a pantomime dame. The dame is a male actor dressed up as a woman who usually wears a very colourful costume. There may also be women who act out the male roles. Pantomimes are usually based on fairy tales.



Christmas Carols

Christmas carols are sung at this festive time of year. Choirs perform carol concerts for audiences. There are many different carols, e.g. 'Away in a Manger', 'Silent Night' and 'Good King Wenceslas'.

Sending Christmas cards is a way of wishing family and friends a happy Christmas and New Year.

The Queen's Speech is another Christmas Day tradition.

Decorations

Mistletoe can be hung in homes as a decoration; it is traditional for loved ones to kiss underneath it. Hundreds of years ago, people would use holly, ivy and herbs to decorate their homes at Christmas time. These evergreens are still seen in many homes today. It's also common to see holly wreaths on the front door of houses.

One tradition which became fashionable in Victorian times was the introduction of the Christmas tree in the home. Christmas trees are decorated with lights, baubles, tinsel, beads and topped with a star or angel. Gifts are often placed

under the tree ready for Christmas Day morning. Many villages, cities and towns have their own Christmas trees and carol concerts usually take place around them.

Today, Christmas lights are very popular as they brighten up the dark, winter evenings. Many people put lights in the windows of their home or in their gardens too.

Food

Those who celebrate Christmas may eat a traditional Christmas dinner with their family or friends on Christmas Day. One of the most common meats is turkey. Sprouts are a Christmas tradition, as are pigs in blankets (sausages wrapped in bacon). Christmas crackers are traditionally pulled at the table. Crackers bang when opened and they usually contain a paper hat, joke and small toy.

What is the best Christmas present in the world?

A Christmas drum, you can't beat it!

Who hides in a bakery at Christmas?

A mince spy!

Popular Christmas desserts include Christmas pudding, mince pies, chocolate Yule log and Christmas cake (fruit cake).

True Meaning of Christmas

Different people may have different answers to the question, 'What is the true meaning of Christmas?' - some people believe it is a time for giving gifts, while others think it's about watching Christmas films and eating lots! Christians celebrate Jesus Christ being born at Christmas. Children act out the Nativity and many Christians attend church to give thanks.



How We Celebrate Christmas Questions

- 1. What are pantomimes sometimes called?

- 2. Give one traditional feature of a pantomime.

- 3. What is 'Silent Night' an example of?

- 4. Can you explain why people send Christmas cards?

- 5. When did it become fashionable to own a Christmas tree?

- 6. List three traditional foods eaten at Christmas time.

- 7. What might you find inside a Christmas cracker?

- 8. What do Christians celebrate at Christmas?

Extension research task: Find out as many different ways of saying 'Happy Christmas' in as many different languages as you can!

How We Celebrate Christmas **Answers**

1. What are pantomimes sometimes called?

Pantomimes are sometimes called 'pantos'.

2. Give one traditional feature of a pantomime.

Answers will include one of the following: music, jokes, based on a fairy tale, pantomime dame or women who act out the male roles.

3. What is 'Silent Night' an example of?

'Silent Night' is an example of a Christmas carol.

4. Can you explain why people send Christmas cards?

Sending Christmas cards is a way of wishing family and friends a happy Christmas and New Year.

5. When did it become fashionable to own a Christmas tree?

It became fashionable to own a Christmas tree in Victorian times.

6. List three traditional foods eaten at Christmas time.

Answer will include three of the following: turkey, sprouts, pigs in blankets, Christmas pudding, mince pies, chocolate Yule log and Christmas cake.

7. What might you find inside a Christmas cracker?

You might find a paper hat, joke and small toy inside a Christmas cracker.

8. What do Christians celebrate at Christmas?

Christians celebrate this festival to mark the birth of Jesus Christ.

How We Celebrate Christmas

Traditions

Pantomimes are shows put on at Christmas time. There is usually lots of music, jokes and a pantomime dame. The dame is a male actor dressed up as a woman. There may also be women who act out the male roles.



Christmas Carols

Christmas carols are sung at this festive time of year. Choirs perform carol concerts for audiences. There are many different carols, e.g. 'Away in a Manger', 'Silent Night' and 'Good King Wenceslas'.

Sending Christmas cards is a way of wishing family and friends a happy Christmas and New Year.

Decorations

Mistletoe can be hung in houses and the tradition is for loved ones to kiss underneath it. Wreaths are often seen on front doors, usually made from green plants and berries.



Christmas trees are decorated with lights, baubles and tinsel and topped with a star or angel. Christmas lights are very popular as they brighten up the winter nights.

Food

Many people who celebrate Christmas will eat a traditional Christmas dinner with their family or friends on Christmas Day. One of the most common meats is turkey. Sprouts and 'pigs in blankets' (sausages wrapped in bacon) are also eaten. Christmas crackers are pulled at the table. When they are opened, they bang and a paper hat, joke and small toy may fall out.

Popular Christmas desserts include Christmas pudding, mince pies and Christmas cake (fruit cake).

What Is the True Meaning of Christmas?

Different people may have different answers to this question but Christians celebrate this festival to mark the birth of Jesus Christ. Children act out the story of this special night and many Christians go to church to give thanks.



How We Celebrate Christmas Questions

- 1. What is a pantomime dame?

- 2. What are often sent through the post at Christmas time?

- 3. What can wreaths be made up of?

- 4. Why are Christmas lights popular?

- 5. List two traditional foods eaten at Christmas time.

- 6. What do Christians celebrate at Christmas?

How We Celebrate Christmas **Answers**

1. What is a pantomime dame?

The pantomime dame is an actor dressed up as a woman.

2. What are often sent through the post at Christmas time?

Christmas cards are often sent through the post at Christmas time.

3. What can wreaths be made up of?

Wreaths can be made up of green plants and berries.

4. Why are Christmas lights popular?

Christmas lights are popular as they brighten up the winter nights.

5. List two traditional foods eaten at Christmas time.

Answers will include two of the following: turkey, sprouts, 'pigs in blankets', Christmas pudding, mince pies and Christmas cake (fruit cake).

6. What do Christians celebrate at Christmas?

Christians celebrate Jesus Christ being born at Christmas.