

Christmas traditions (teacher's notes)

1. Warm-up (Activity 1) 5 mins

Aims: to break the ice and foster a safe environment for learning.

Procedure: Ask the students to read the quotes and guess the missing word. It's the same in every quote.

Key:

Christmas

Ask if the students like Christmas or not.

2. Vocabulary work (Activity 2) 5 mins

Aims: to generate interest in the topic and revise basic vocabulary.

Procedure: Divide students into groups. Ask students to look through the list of words, brainstorm what they know and make sentences how these words are connected with Christmas. While the students are having a discussion in their groups, play the song:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=M-b3iU-INDo>

Monitor closely. After they finish, collect an open class feedback, ask them to give a definition of the most difficult word. If students have difficulties, show them the pictures.

3. Quiz 10 mins

Aims: to practise listening skills and to learn more about the holiday.

Procedure: Students are divided into groups. Ask them to give a Christmas name to their group. Write the names on the board. Set the task: now we're going to have a quiz. I will read the question, groups take turns to answer the question. Your team gets one point if the answer is correct. If the answer is wrong, the question goes to the next group. The winner is the group which gets more points.

Questions:

- 1) When is Christmas celebrated in English-speaking countries? (the 25th of December)
- 2) Where does Santa Claus live? (the North pole)
- 3) Who helps sants to make presents? (elves)
- 4) What do reindeer pull? (a sleigh)
- 5) How many reindeer does Santa have? (9)
- 6) What colour is Rudolph's nose? (red)

- 7) What does Santa use to get into the house? (a chimney)
- 8) What do people do under the mistletoe? (kiss)
- 9) What do people hang up on the front door? (wreath)
- 10) What colour is the candy cane? (red and white)
- 11) What do people put on the Christmas tree? (baubles, lights, angels, candles, a star etc)
- 12) What does Santa bring to bad children? (a coal)
- 13) What are traditional Christmas treats? (a candy cane and a gingerbread man)
- 14) Who first saw the star of Bethlehem in the Bible story? (three wise men)
- 15) Name three words Santa says when he's happy. (Ho, ho, ho)
- 16) What is the famous Christmas song which was originally supposed to be a Thanksgiving song? (Jingle bells)
- 17) What popular drink created an image of nowadays Santa Claus? (Coca Cola in 1930s advertisement)
- 18) On which saint is the legend of Santa Claus based? (St. Nicholas, a Christian bishop living in Turkey in the 4th century AD, he was known for giving away his wealth to help the needy. When sainted, he became the protector of children.)
- 19) What's the name of the period leading up to Christmas? (Advent)
- 20) According to the song how many days of Christmas are there? (The 12 days of Christmas begin on Christmas Day and end on the fifth of January, traditionally when Christmas trees are supposed to be taken down. The 12 days of Christmas are represented in a song - from the first to the twelfth day. Each day is represented by a symbol. Religious significance is attached to each symbol. For example, the second day is represented by two turtle doves, which signify the old and new testaments.)
- 21) In what country does the tradition of Christmas tree started? (Germany)
- 22) What animal gives out the presents in Syria? (In Syria, Christmas gifts are given out by a camel. It is supposed to have belonged to one of the three wise men who visited the newborn Jesus.)
- 23) In Lithuania, what do children have to do before they receive their presents from Grandfather Christmas? (In Lithuania, children must sing a song for Kaledu Senelis, or Grandfather Christmas, before they can receive their presents. If they don't do this, they forfeit the presents, which are given to another child.)

4. Video (Activity 4) 15 min

Set the task: Now we're going to learn more about British and American traditions.

Pre-teach the blocking vocabulary:

- 1) [a mince pie](#) - a covered pastry case filled with mincemeat, nowadays it is filled not only with meat.



- 2) [a cracker](#) - a paper tube with fun prizes that is covered with bright paper and makes a short, sharp sound when both ends are pulled. A tiny explosive inside makes a loud cracking noise, hence the name!



- 3) [mandatory](#) - something that is mandatory must be done.

4) [a nativity](#) - a play that tells the story of Jesus Christ's birth, usually performed by children at Christmas

Ask students to watch the video and complete the table. Play the video

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=v2W3QR9WXdA>

Key:

Tradition	Britain	America
Letters to Father Christmas	Yes	Yes
Hanging stockings	Yes	Yes
Christmas crackers	Yes	Not mentioned
Christmas dinner	Yes	Yes
Christmas dessert	Yes	Yes
The Royal Christmas Message	Yes	Not mentioned
Boxing day	Yes	Not mentioned
Pantomime	Yes	Not mentioned
Taking down the Christmas tree	Yes	Now

Ask students to read the questions. Then students should watch the video again and answer the questions. Play the video

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=v2W3QR9WXdA>

If you work in a group, let students speculate in pairs before checking the answers.

Key:

1. In the USA children send letters to Santa but in England, they burn them.
2. American children traditionally hang stockings around the fireplace for Santa to fill with presents but in the UK they hang stockings around the bed
3. American children leave milk and cookies for Father Christmas, British children leave him brandy and a mince pie.

4. Inside the cracker there is usually a cheesy plastic prize, a paper crown and a terrible joke. Also Inside the Christmas cracker there are colourful paper hats that it is absolutely mandatory to wear!
5. In the UK the main dish is usually roast turkey often surrounded by bacon wrapped chipolatas which are mini pork sausages. Bacon wrapped miniature pork sausages. The turkey is served with roast potatoes and veggies, traditionally Brussel Sprouts. There is also gravy to smother everything in and something called bread sauces. For dessert the Americans have pumpkin and pecan pies but in the UK, people have Christmas pudding.
6. Her Majesty The Queen gives a holiday speech reflecting on the events of the past year.
7. People go shopping.
8. Brits believe the Christmas tree and the decorations should be taken down within twelve days of Christmas, otherwise you'll have bad luck for the rest of the year. Some Americans don't take down their Christmas trees until almost the fourth of July.

Transcript

HOW TO HAVE A BRITISH CHRISTMAS?

Burning letters to Father Christmas, setting off explosives at the dinner table, these may seem crazy to you but they're perfectly normal behaviour at a British Christmas or as we sometimes call it "Crimbo".

Here are 10 Christmas traditions that never made it to America.

Letters to Father Christmas

In America, kids write letters to Santa and put them in the mailbox but in England, we toss them straight in the fire! We're not trying to make children cry; burning the letters sends them directly to the North Pole where Santa can read your Christmas wishes in the smoke. Yes, it may seem a little weird but it does save on postage.

Hanging stockings

American children traditionally hang stockings around the fireplace for Santa to fill with presents but in the UK, we hang stockings around the bed; being surrounded by presents is a great way to wake up on Christmas morning and a great way to let Father Christmas, a total stranger who's been watching you all year, get really close to your sleeping body. Sweet dreams!

Also, instead of leaving out milk and cookies for Father Christmas, we leave him brandy and a mince pie because he is a grown-up.

Christmas crackers

A cracker may not seem like the most festive thing to serve on Christmas dinner but these are not the type of crackers that you put cheese on.

A Christmas cracker is a brightly decorated cardboard tube filled with fun prizes. When grabbed and pulled apart, a tiny explosive inside makes a loud cracking noise, hence the name! Inside the cracker is usually a cheesy plastic prize, a paper crown and a terrible joke: "Why are ghosts so bad at lying ? Because you can see right through them". I'm so sorry.

Christmas hats

Inside the Christmas cracker are colourful paper hats that it is absolutely mandatory to wear! In fact, 90% of

Christmas arguments stem from trying to make your grumpiest relative put their paper crown on; the other 10% comes from playing monopoly because there are some Christmas traditions that we share, unfortunately...

Christmas dinner

A British Christmas dinner is just as big a feast as an American one.

The main dish is usually roast turkey often surrounded by bacon wrapped chipolatas which are mini pork sausages. Bacon wrapped miniature pork sausages, now that's a tradition that you Americans should get behind.

We serve the turkey with roast potatoes and veggies, traditionally Brussel Sprouts which are gross but it's tradition, so we eat them anyway. We have gravy to smother everything in and something called bread sauce which is not a sauce to put on bread but a sauce that's thickened with bread which looks a little lumpy but tastes delicious.

Then we eat until we can't move and watch telly until we pass out. Sound familiar?

Christmas pudding

Americans love to have their pumpkin and pecan pies for Christmas dessert but in the UK, we have Christmas pudding. This is a very dense boiled cake flavoured with dried fruit and spice ; it's then soaked in alcohol, aged for several months, boiled again, soaked in alcohol again and then set on fire. Come to a British Christmas, we soak everything in alcohol and then light it on fire.

The Royal Christmas Message

That's right, every Christmas day, Her Majesty The Queen gives a holiday speech reflecting on the events of the past year.

We all sit around pretending to pay attention but secretly carrying on with whatever it was we were doing before ; think of it as the state of the union but with much more gold.

Boxing day

Boxing day is the day after Christmas day. Its origins are debatable. Some say that it's a day when workers would receive a box of gifts from their bosses. Others say that it's a day when people would box up gifts for the poor...but the main thing that happens on Boxing Day nowadays is shopping. It's kind of like our Black Friday only nobody gets trampled to death.

Pantomime

Every year around the Christmas hols pretty much every theatre in the country puts on a pantomime.

These are plays for kids based on fairy tales such as Cinderella and Aladdin involving a lot of *high camp*, cross dressing and audience interaction. They're normally starring jaded celebrities, so if the idea of seeing David Hasslehoff in a dress excites you, you should definitely check one out

Taking down the Christmas tree

Brits believe the Christmas tree and the decorations should be taken down within twelve days of Christmas, otherwise you'll have bad luck for the rest of the year. This is maybe a tradition that Americans should consider adopting ; I've certainly seen people keep their old brown dry withered Christmas trees until almost the fourth of July.

Those are some of the major differences between British and American Christmases.

5. Productive Follow-up (Speaking) (Activity 5) 10 min

Aims: to personalise the text and practice speaking for fluency.

Procedure: Let the students discuss the questions in pairs or small groups. Encourage them to ask follow-up questions to get more details. After they finish get a content feedback from them.

6. Song (Activity 6) 10 mins

Aims: to practise listening skills.

Procedure: Ask students to listen to the song and complete the gaps. Play the video:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-iWck8AkNrk>

Lyrics:

Last Christmas I gave you my heart
But the very next day you **gave** it away.
This year to save me from **tears**

I'll give it to someone special

Once bitten and twice **shy**

I keep my distance

But you still catch my eye.

Tell me, baby, Do you **recognize** me?

Well, It's been a year,

It doesn't surprise me

(Merry Christmas)

I wrapped it up and **sent** it

With a note saying, "I love you," I **meant** it,

Now I know what a fool I've been.

But if you **kissed** me now

I know you'd fool me again

After that students can sing the song all together. Play the video:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=T4pTMZuAux4>

6. Sum up 5 mins

Put errors on the board or whiteboard and let student(s) correct them.

Ask students what they have learnt today and if they have any questions.