

Christmas Around the World

What Is Christmas?

Christmas is a religious holiday which celebrates the birth of the son of God, Jesus Christ, on the 25th December.

Celebrations



Christmas is celebrated by millions of Christian people and non-Christian people all over the world. It is a time to get together with family and friends.

There are some traditions which happen all over the world, such as decorating houses with lights, trees, candles and having a Christmas dinner. There are also some very special traditions which only take place in certain countries.

For example, some people in India like to decorate their houses and streets with colourful, folded paper stars.

Traditionally, people in Poland serve a total of 12 dishes, one for each disciple, at their Christmas dinner. Some Spanish people leave out hay-filled boots or shoes at night so that the hay would be replaced with chocolate, presents or money by the next morning.



In some areas of Ireland, the people like to light candles in the windows of their homes to act as a guide for Joseph and Mary to travel to their resting place. The candles are often red and decorated with holly.

In Ethiopia, Christmas is celebrated on 7th January in the Ethiopian Orthodox Church. It is called Ganna or Genna.

Some French people traditionally celebrate the feast of St. Nicholas, the patron saint of children, on the 6th December.

In Russia, some believe that an old lady called Baboushka gives presents to children, to make up for the mistake of being too busy to guide the wise men to the baby Jesus Christ in biblical times.

Traditionally in Sweden, the eldest daughter of each family dresses up with a wreath on her head that holds lighted candles. She then serves coffee and special buns to her family.



In Slovakian tradition, the head of the family will throw a mixture of bread, poppy seeds and water called Loksa up at the ceiling. The longer the mixture stays glued to the ceiling, the richer their crops are predicted to be.

In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, it is traditional for Christians to have a Christmas feast with meat and to wear new clothes.

In Japan, many people choose to have fried chicken for their Christmas dinner!

What Is the True Meaning of Christmas?



Everyone will have a different answer to this question. Some people think it is a time for gifts or family while others think it is about watching Christmas films or eating lots. There are some people who think that Christmas has become too much about how much money shops can make. What do you think?

Questions

- Who celebrates Christmas? Tick one.
 - thousands of people around the world
 - millions of people around the world
 - billions of people around the world
 - hundreds of people around the world

- What do some people in Spain leave out at night? Tick one.
 - stockings
 - carrots
 - hay-filled boots
 - mince pies

- What is Saint Nicholas the patron saint of? Tick one.
 - children
 - December
 - feasts
 - Christmas

- Draw **four** lines and match each country to its tradition.

Poland

Ireland

Russia

Slovakia

People might light candles in their windows as a guide.

Some people believe that Baboushka gives presents.

Many people serve a total of 12 dishes.

The head of the family might throw Loksa up at the ceiling.

5. Who is Baboushka?

6. Fill in the missing word.

Some people think that _____ is a time for gifts and family.

7. Which tradition from another country would you like to experience and why?

Answers

1. Who celebrates Christmas? Tick one.

- thousands of people around the world
- millions of people around the world**
- billions of people around the world
- hundreds of people around the world

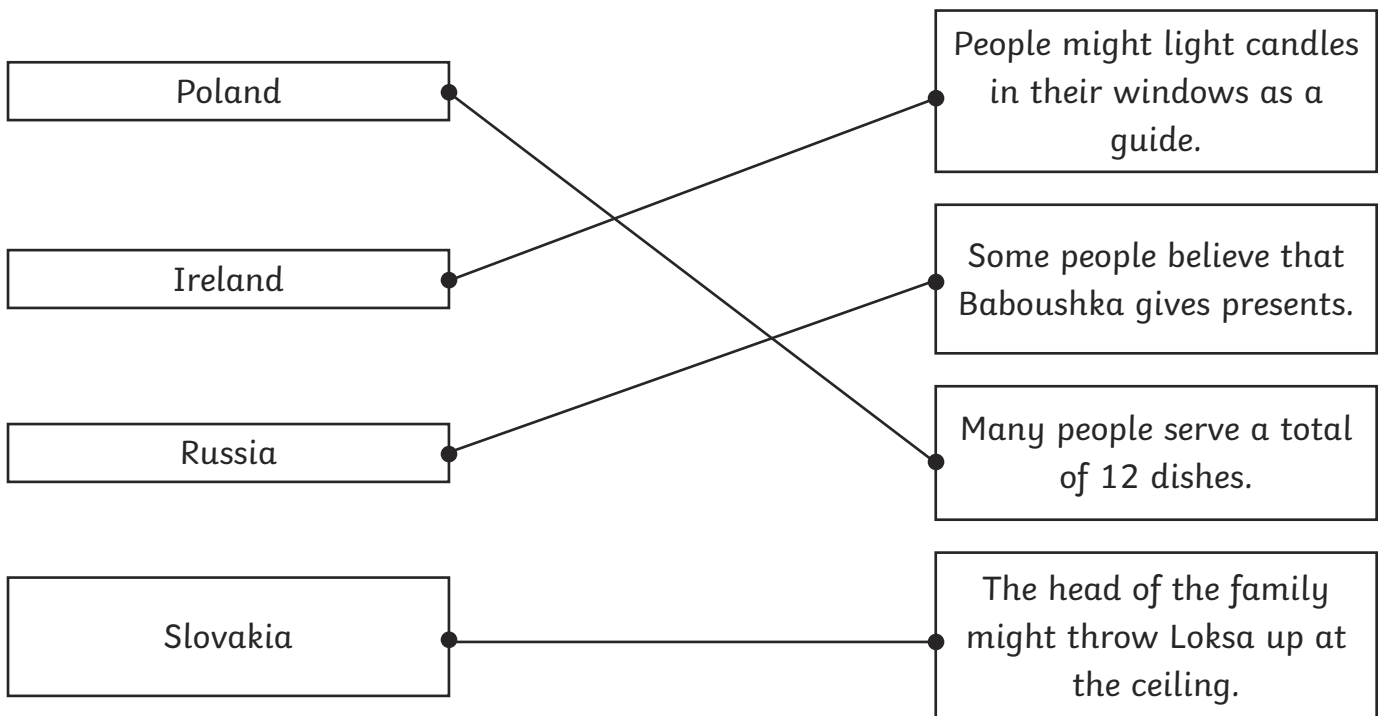
2. What do some people in Spain leave out at night? Tick one.

- stockings
- carrots
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- mince pies

3. What is Saint Nicholas the patron saint of? Tick one.

- children**
- December
- feasts
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4. Draw **four** lines and match each country to its tradition.



5. Who is Baboushka?

Baboushka is an old lady who gives presents to children to make up for the mistake of being too busy to guide the wise men to the baby Jesus.

6. Fill in the missing word.

Some people think that **Christmas** is a time for gifts and family.

7. Which tradition from another country would you like to experience and why?

Pupils' own responses, such as: I would like to experience the tradition from France because they have a feast on the 6th December.

Christmas Around the World

What Is Christmas?

Christmas is a religious holiday which celebrates the birth of the son of God, Jesus Christ, on the 25th December. Although it is a Christian holiday, it is actually one that derives from a lot of Pagan traditions.

The Christmas tree is a 17th century German tradition that is said to have been evolved from the Pagan practice of bring greenery indoors for decoration in winter. It was also believed that Father Christmas was a modern incarnation of old Pagan spirits flying through the sky in winter.

Celebrations



Christmas is celebrated by millions of people all over the world including Christian people and non-Christian people. It is a time for gathering with family and friends. Some Christmas traditions include, decorating houses with lights, trees, candles and having a Christmas dinner. There are also some very unique traditions specific to certain countries. Some people in India like to decorate their houses and streets with colourful, folded paper stars. Traditionally, Polish people serve a total of 12 dishes, one for each disciple, at their Christmas dinner and some Spanish people leave out hay-filled boots or shoes at night so hay has been replaced with chocolate, presents or money by the next morning.



In some areas of Ireland, the people like to light candles in the windows of their homes to act as a guide for Joseph and Mary to travel to their resting place. The candles are often red and decorated with sprigs of holly.

Over in the West Indies, some people like to clean their homes thoroughly before decorating for Christmas. Some people even repaint entire rooms!

Christmas is celebrated on 7th January in the Ethiopian Orthodox Church. It is called Ganna or Genna.

Some French people traditionally celebrate the feast of St. Nicholas, the patron saint of children, on the 6th December. On this day, Saint



Nicholas rides around town on his sleigh while the people in the town celebrate how he rescued three children from being eaten by a nasty butcher!

In Russia, some believe that an old lady called Baboushka roams around giving out presents to children, to make up for the mistake of being too busy to guide the wise men to the baby Jesus Christ in biblical times.

Traditionally in Sweden, the eldest daughter of each family dresses up with a wreath on her head, which holds lit candles. She then serves coffee and special buns to her family.

In some areas, single women of the Czech Republic perform a ritual every Christmas to see whether they will be single for another year. They turn their backs to the door and throw a shoe over their shoulder. If the shoe lands with the heel towards the door, then it is thought that she will stay single for another year. However, if the front of the shoe faces the door, then a wedding is likely to happen for her!



For over 40 years, the town of Gavle in Sweden has celebrated Christmas by erecting a huge straw goat and the challenge is to ensure the survival of the straw goat until Christmas Day. 'Vandals' will then attempt to burn the goat down every year. The goat has survived until Christmas day only ten times in 40 years.

In some areas of Slovakia, the head of the family will throw a mixture of bread, poppy seeds and water called Loksa up at the ceiling. The longer the mixture stays glued to the ceiling, the richer their crops are predicted to be.

In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, it is traditional for Christians to have a Christmas feast with meat and to wear new clothes.

Finally, in Japan, Kentucky Fried Chicken (KFC) has become a nation's favourite for a Christmas dinner. It is so wildly popular that you need to make a reservation to eat there on Christmas Day.

What Is the True Meaning of Christmas?

Everyone will have a different answer to the question 'what is the true meaning of Christmas?'. Some people think it is a time to spend together as a family, give gifts or think about the birth of Jesus Christ while others think it's a time to watch Christmas films and eat a lot. Some people believe that Christmas has become too commercialised because businesses use it as a time to make money. What do you think?



Questions

1. The Christmas tree is a German tradition from which century? Tick one.

- 14th century
- 19th century
- 17th century
- 20th century

2. **Although it is a Christian holiday, it is actually one that derives from a lot of Pagan traditions.**

Which phrase means the same as 'derives from' ? Tick one.

- is different to
- comes from
- is the same as
- is not like

3. Draw **four** lines and match each country to its tradition.

West Indies

Some women throw a shoe over their shoulder.

Czech Republic

Lots of families go to KFC for Christmas dinner.

Japan

Many people clean their homes before decorating.

Slovakia

The head of the family might throw Loksa up at the ceiling.

4. How many dishes are traditionally served in Poland? Tick one.

- 12
- 25
- 17
- 15

5. Fill in the missing words.

There are some very _____ traditions specific to certain _____.

6. List **two** things that some Spanish people might find in their shoes or boots the next morning.

- _____
- _____

7. In relation to the Swedish tradition, why is 'vandals' written in inverted commas?

8. Compare the traditions from **two** different countries. How are they similar?

Answers

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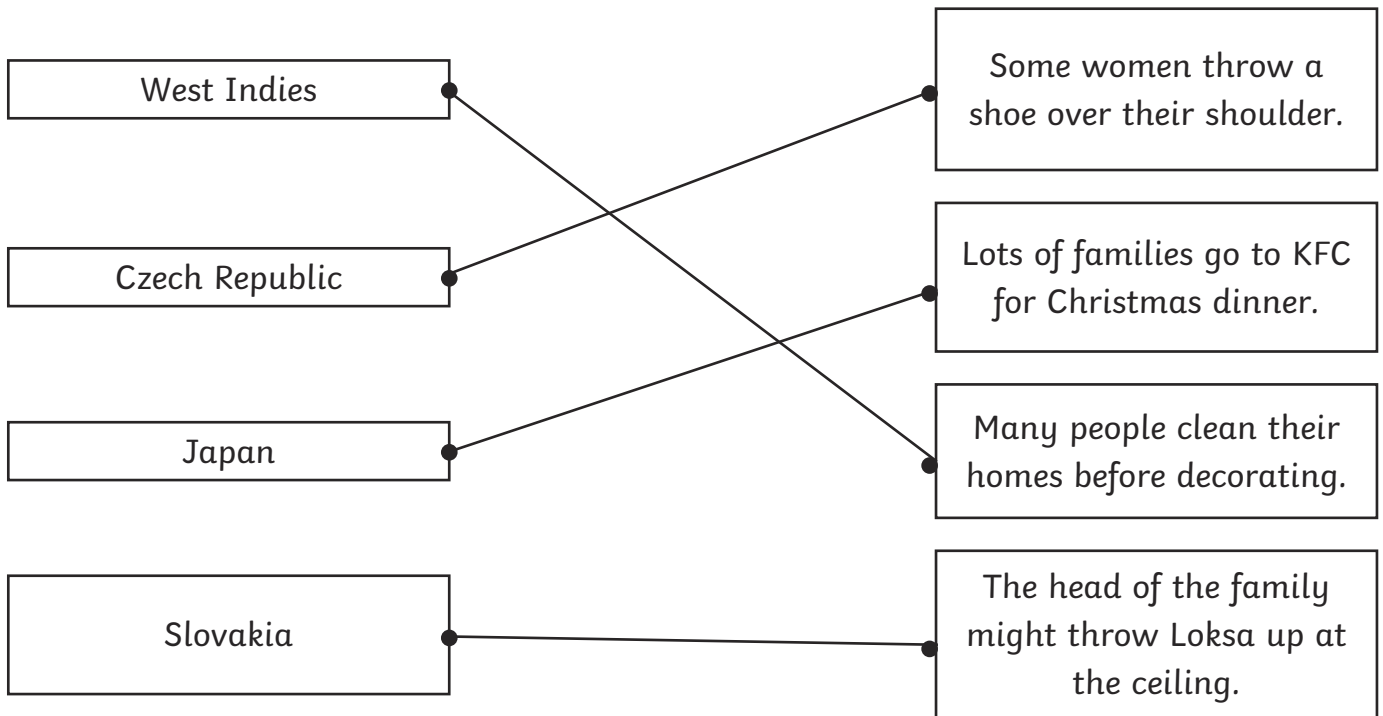
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4. How many dishes are traditionally served in Poland? Tick one.

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5. Fill in the missing words.

There are some very **unique** traditions specific to certain **countries**.

6. List **two** things that some Spanish people might find in their shoes or boots the next morning.

Accept any two of the following: chocolate; presents; money.

7. In relation to the Swedish tradition, why is 'vandals' written in inverted commas?

Pupils' own responses, such as: I think that the author has used inverted commas around the word 'vandals' because the people are only pretending to be vandals. It is a challenge set every year.

8. Compare the traditions from **two** different countries. How are they similar?

Pupils' own responses, such as: The traditions in the Czech Republic and Slovakia are similar because they both include predictions for the future.

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celebrate how he rescued three children from being eaten by a nasty butcher!

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Questions

1. **Although it is a Christian holiday, it is actually one that derives from a lot of Pagan traditions.**

Which phrase means the same as 'derives from' ? Tick one.

- is different to
 comes from
 is the same as
 is unlike

2. Draw **four** lines and match each country to its tradition.

West Indies

Some women turn their backs and throw a shoe over their shoulder.

Czech Republic

People might leave out hay-filled shoes overnight.

Spain

Many people clean their homes before decorating.

India

Some people decorate their houses with colourful, folded stars.

3. Find and copy a phrase which shows that KFC is hugely popular in Japan on Christmas Day.
-

4. Fill in the missing words.

There are some _____ who think that Christmas has become too _____ by shops.

5. List two things that some Spanish people might find in their shoes or boots the next morning.

- _____
- _____

6. In relation to the Swedish town, why is 'vandals' written in inverted commas?

7. Compare the traditions from **two** different countries. How are they similar?

8. Summarise what you have learnt about Christmas around the world in 25 words or fewer.

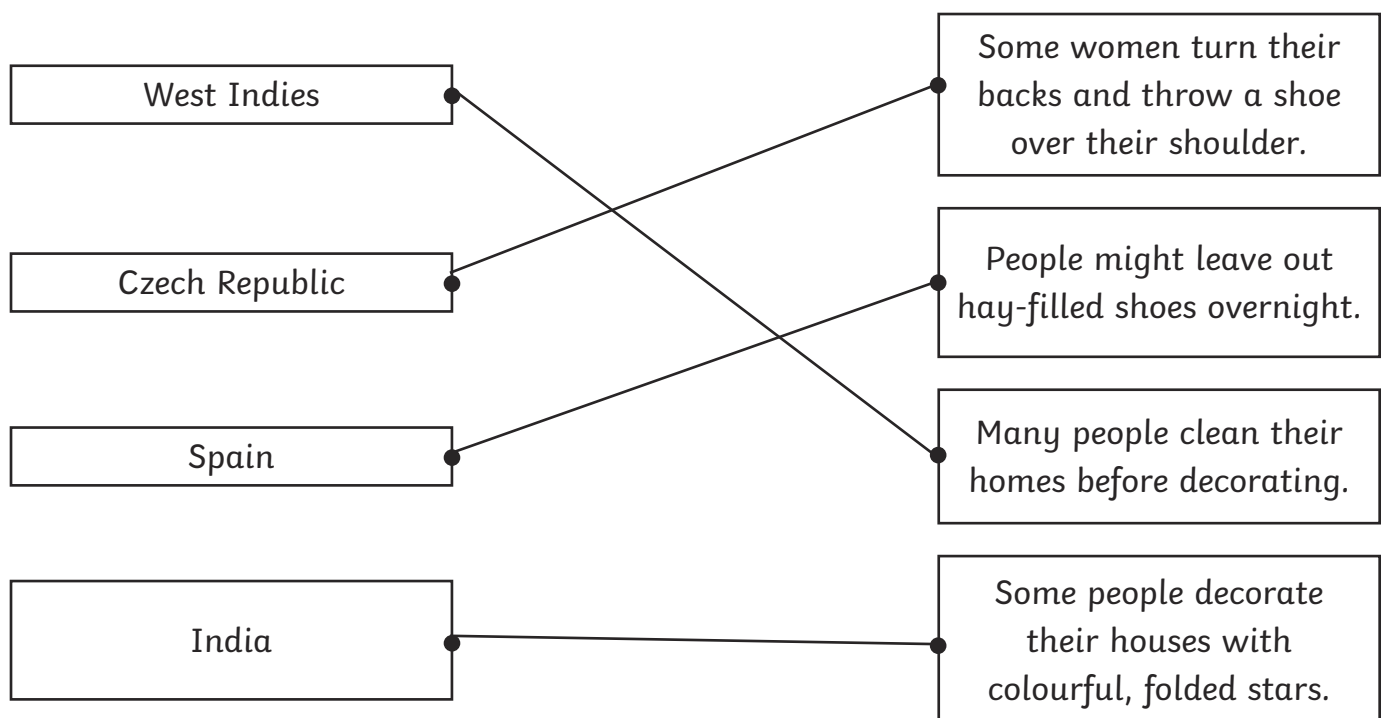
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a nation's favourite

4. Fill in the missing words.

There are some **people** who think that Christmas has become too **commercialised** by shops.

5. List **two** things that some Spanish people might find in their shoes or boots the next morning.

Accept any two of the following: chocolate; presents; money.

6. In relation to the Swedish town, why is 'vandals' written in inverted commas?

Pupils' own responses, such as: I think that the author has used inverted commas around the word 'vandals' because the people are only pretending to be vandals. It is a challenge set every year.

7. Compare the traditions from **two** different countries. How are they similar?

Pupils' own responses, such as: The traditions in the Czech Republic and Slovakia are similar because they both include predictions for the future: the shoe makes a prediction about the person's relationships; the Loksa predicts whether the crops will be rich or not.

8. Summarise what you have learnt about Christmas around the world in 25 words or fewer.

Pupils' own responses, such as: Christmas celebrations are very different around the world. Lots of countries have their own traditions and some of these are derived from Pagan traditions.