

A traditional Christmas in England

Pre-Christmas - The English like to celebrate Christmas well ahead of the actual day. Before the kids break up from school toddlers might visit Santa's grotto in a local department store. Children at primary and secondary schools might hold Christmas bazaars. Kids at secondary schools normally have to go to church for the annual carol service. Adults meanwhile celebrate with the Christmas office party! That's always good festive fun! There are Christmas lights in the main parts of most towns and these days some people like to decorate the front of their houses with Christmas lights. Meanwhile many retailers in England have been flogging Christmas goodies since October! The advent calendar is also a must for kids to open daily in December. Christmas markets are now very popular.

Christmas Eve. It is the day before Christmas. The kids are off school. Traditionally, the Christmas tree would be decorated in the evening but these days many households in England put the tree up sometimes a fortnight before the big day! The tree has many different coloured balls on it. There is also a lot of tinsel, wonderful glowing flashing lights, many chocolates, and a fairy or star sits on the top of the tree. Other Christmas decorations like Chinese lanterns, bells and colourful paper or tinsel chains decorate the living room ceiling. In the old days an open fire would be lit. A letter would then be written to Father Christmas by every child. It would then be sent up the chimney. These days most people have gas fires, so that idea has been replaced with sending an email to Santa! Christmas Eve is a working day, though some companies do give a half day. Many people are travelling home, normally via the pub. Certainly in the evening many people have a quick drink in their local, though pubs do close early on Christmas Eve. In some churches there is a midnight service.

Christmas Day – December 25th - The big day finally arrives, the kids are up early, and I do mean early. All are eager to see what Father Christmas has brought them. If they have been good they will wake up to a Christmas stocking full of different sweets at the end of the bed that has replaced the small sock they should have left out for Santa! If they have been bad it used to be a lump of coal but these days it's less sweets! In the living room under the tree are many presents of all shapes and sizes. Some sit in the

A traditional Christmas in England – 15th December 2011

Christmas tree. After breakfast the family will gather, normally around 10am to open their presents together. Meanwhile the turkey is in the oven! Next is the big Christmas dinner. This is served between one and two. 'Christmas Top of the Pops' on BBC1 is on the telly in the background!

In England, Christmas dinner is traditionally a large roast turkey that is carved. There are roast potatoes, sage and onion stuffing, also Chestnut and apple stuffing. There are a lot of sausages and bacon, masses of gravy, and mountains of English vegetables {sprouts, peas, carrots, broccoli, cauliflower, swedes, turnips}. Champaign or a good white wine is also drunk with the meal. Silly hats are worn by everyone, which come from Christmas crackers that are pulled. Inside they will probably have a daft joke and silly useless small toy! Dessert is Christmas pudding, served with fresh cream or brandy butter. Watch out for the hidden coins of value in some homemade Christmas puddings!

The meal is timed so that it ends ahead of the Queen speaking to the nation on the box (TV) at 3pm. Everything stops while her majesty speaks. After this some families sit down and watch a top movie, while some go out to walk off the turkey! Later in the early evening some families have tree presents to give out. Christmas tea follows. This is normally cold turkey, ham, freshly made salad with tomatoes, cucumber, beetroot, egg etc...with bread and butter and different cheeses. The Christmas cake is cut with its thick white icing on top of the marzipan. If you have room there's also the Christmas chocolate log to sample, maybe a trifle and not forgetting the mince pies! Later, families do different things. Some visit their neighbours for a night of silly games and partying, while others watch the telly. These days some families will split up and log on to catch up with friends worldwide on Skype or Facebook. This idea has certainly replaced the annual call to Australia on BT! So a super day then suddenly it's all over.

Boxing Day - The English celebrate Boxing Day on the 26th December. Not many English people actually know why it's called Boxing Day – the reason is because in the 19th century traders in England would collect their boxes of presents on this day - in return to ensure good and reliable services the following year. These days Boxing Day is when whole families uproot en masse in the car to visit the relatives. People go for long walks in the country or by the sea. Boxing Day is a family day normally with family and friends. After this it's back to work for some, while for others it's an extended holiday till the New Year. **Happy Christmas everyone!**

EXERCISES

1. **Christmas in England:** Briefly, what three things do you know about Christmas in England? Go round the room swapping details.

2. **Geography: England:** Where is England? What is its capital? What countries surround it? What sea surrounds it? Draw a map on the board then **look on Google maps** to help you.

3. **Dictation:** The teacher will read four to six lines of the article slowly and clearly. Students will write down what they hear. The teacher will repeat the passage slowly again. Self-correct your work from page one - filling in spaces and correcting mistakes. Be honest with yourself on the number of errors. Advise the teacher of your total number of errors. Less than five is very good. Ten is acceptable. Any more is room for improvement! More than twenty - you need to do some work!

4. **Reading:** The students should now read the article aloud, swapping readers every paragraph.

5. **Vocabulary:** Students should now look through the article and underline any vocabulary they do not know. Look in dictionaries. Discuss and help each other out. The teacher will go through and explain any unknown words or phrases.

6. **The article:** Students should look through the article with the teacher.

- a) What is the article about?
- b) What do you think about the article?

7. **Let's think!** Think of five things you do before Christmas. Then add five things you put on the tree. Write them below. Explain to your partner why you chose these.

| Five things you do before Xmas | Five things you put on the tree |
|--------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| 1 | 1 |
| 2 | 2 |
| 3 | 3 |
| 4 | 4 |
| 5 | 5 |

The teacher will choose some pairs to discuss their findings in front of the class.

8. **Let's think!** In pairs. On the board write as many words as you can to do with the '**Christmas**'. *One-two minutes*. Compare with other teams. Using your words compile a short dialogue together.

9. **Let's debate!** In pairs. Student A loves Christmas! Student B dislikes Christmas. Why?

A traditional Christmas in England – 15th December 2011

10. Let's talk! Radio England: *In pairs/groups.* You are in the Radio England studio. One of you is the presenter; the other student(s) is/are one the people below. The subject being discussed is **Christmas**. *5 minutes.*

| | | | |
|---|---------------------------------|---|------------------|
| 1 | A fairy on top of the Xmas tree | 3 | A snowman |
| 2 | Rudolf the reindeer | 4 | Father Christmas |

The teacher will choose some pairs to tell their stories in front of the class.

11. Let's think! Think of five things you eat at Christmas. Then add five things you do at Christmas. Write them below. Explain to your partner why you chose these.

| Five things you eat at Xmas | Five things you do at Xmas |
|-----------------------------|----------------------------|
| 1 | 1 |
| 2 | 2 |
| 3 | 3 |
| 4 | 4 |
| 5 | 5 |

The teacher will choose some pairs to discuss their findings in front of the class.

12. Let's do 'The Article Quiz': Have the students quiz each other in pairs. They score a point for each correct answer and half a point each time they have to look at the article for help. See who can get the highest score!

Student A

- 1) What do the English eat with their turkey?
- 2) What does Christmas tea consist of?
- 3) Why is Boxing Day called Boxing Day?
- 4) What was put up the chimney?
- 5) What is put on the Christmas tree?

Student B

- 1) When is Boxing Day?
- 2) What do English people do on Boxing Day?
- 3) What do English people do on Christmas Day?
- 4) What do English people do on Christmas Eve?
- 5) What do people do pre-Christmas?

13. Let's write an e-mail: Write and send a 200 word e-mail to your teacher about: **Christmas in my country**. Your e-mail can be read out in class.

14. Presentation: In pairs, groups or individually: Prepare in class or at home a 2-minute presentation on: **The traditional story of Christmas**. *This should include Jesus, the three kings, the shepherd's, the Angel, Mary, and Joseph, King Herod etc...* Stand at the front of the class to give your presentation to the class. The class can vote on the best presentation. Class – After the presentations go through the good and weak points on each presentation. Learn from the results.

15. Sentence starters: Finish these sentence starters. Correct your mistakes. Compare what other people have written.

- a) Christmas _____
- b) I love Christmas _____
- c) Christmas Day _____

DISCUSSION

Student A questions

- 1) Did the headline make you want to read the article?
- 2) What do you think of Christmas?
- 3) Do you believe in Father Christmas?
- 4) What will you be doing this Christmas?
- 5) What has been your most unusual Christmas?
- 6) What was your worst Christmas? Why?
- 7) What three preparations will you do ahead of Christmas?
- 8) Will you be going to church over Christmas? Why? Why not?
- 9) Is Christmas too commercial these days?
- 10) How has Christmas changed since you were a kid?

Student B questions

- 1) What do you think about what you've read?
- 2) What makes Christmas special?
- 3) Has your family ever ended up having a big row at Christmas?
- 4) What do you like to watch on the telly at Christmas?
- 5) What three games do you like to play at Christmas?
- 6) What three drinks do you like to sample at Christmas?
- 7) Who does the washing up at Christmas?
- 8) Do you meet the neighbours or relatives at Christmas?
- 9) What do you hate about Christmas?
- 10) Did you like this discussion?

SPEAKING

Let's debate! Christmas in your country

Allow 10-15 minutes – As a class / small groups / pairs / 1 to 1

Christmas in your country – comparisons with other countries

The teacher can moderate the session.

GAP FILL: READING:

Put the words into the gaps in the text.

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toddlers

carol

grotto

flogging

kids

annual

bazaars

advent

Christmas Eve. It is the day before (1)_____. The kids are off school. Traditionally, the Christmas tree would be decorated in the evening but these days many households in England put the tree up sometimes a fortnight before the big day! The tree has many different coloured balls on it. There is also a lot of (2)_____, wonderful glowing flashing lights, many chocolates, and a (3)_____ or (4)_____ sits on the top of the tree. Other Christmas decorations like Chinese lanterns, (5)_____ and colourful paper or tinsel chains decorate the living room ceiling. In the old days an open fire would be lit. A letter would then be written to Father Christmas by every child. It would then be sent up the (6)_____. These days most people have gas fires, so that idea has been replaced with sending an email to (7)_____! Christmas Eve is a working day, though some companies do give a half day. Many people are travelling home, normally via the pub. Certainly in the evening many people have a quick drink in their local, though pubs do close early on Christmas Eve. In some (8)_____ there is a midnight service.

Santa

bells

churches

star

fairy

chimney

Christmas

tinsel

GRAMMAR

Put the words into the gaps in the text.

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some

though

with

other

many

these

there

would



SPELLING TEST

The teacher will ask the class individually to spell the following words that are in the article. Afterwards, check your answers with your teacher, using the following ratings:
Pass = 12, Good = 15, Very good = 18, Excellent = 20

| | | | |
|----|---------------|----|-------------|
| 1 | bazaars | 11 | vegetables |
| 2 | calendar | 12 | cauliflower |
| 3 | chimney | 13 | turnips |
| 4 | toddlers | 14 | broccoli |
| 5 | normally | 15 | everything |
| 6 | flogging | 16 | tomatoes |
| 7 | Christmas | 17 | telly |
| 8 | traditionally | 18 | grotto |
| 9 | decorations | 19 | secondary |
| 10 | certainly | 20 | lanterns |

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