



**CHRISTMAS AROUND
THE WORLD**

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**Teachers & Members
Handout**

CHRISTMAS AROUND THE WORLD TEACHER'S GUIDE

The teacher and member handout is the same.

Some suggestions for teaching the lesson:

The quiz can be given at the first of the lesson with the answers being given after the quiz or give the answer during the lesson. The answer page to the quiz has page numbers by the answer that corresponds with where the answers are. You could also give the quiz at the end of the lesson. Give about 5 minutes for the quiz.

You can have everyone read part of the lesson to get them involved with the lesson.

There are some craft projects that you can do at the end of the lesson or just make them for an example. You can ask someone that does crafts to do the crafts and/or teach the crafts.

There are recipes in this lesson. If you have a potluck with your meeting you can ask someone to make some of these recipes to go along with your potluck. If you don't like any of these recipes see if someone has a dish that they make for Christmas that has roots in another country.





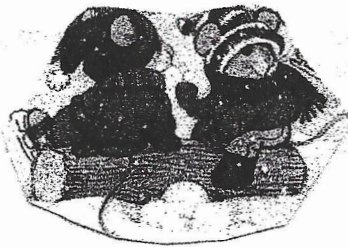
CHRISTMAS AROUND THE WORLD QUIZ



- True or False 1. Yule was used to describe pagan midwinter festivals in honor of the sun.
- True or False 2. Turkey was first brought to Europe from America around 1520.
3. Crackers are put by everyone's plate at the Christmas dinner in what country?
A. France
B. England
C. Sweden
4. The first Christmas card was printed in England in what year?
A. 1843
B. 1900
C. 1890
5. In this country children play a game called "Pass Around the Parcel." What country is it?
A. Russia
B. Philippines
C. Britian
- True or False 6. In Sweden the Christmas gnome, Tomte, lives under the floorboards of homes or barns, distributes gifts from his sack and rides a straw goat.
7. In this country there is a Christmas Eve tradition to grant amnesty to military and political prisoner and criminals. What country is this?
D. Spain
E. Greece
F. Netherlands
8. In this country the children have a tradition called "Swinging the Sun." What country is it?
A. Belgium
B. Italy
C. Spain
- True or False 9. The Mexican flag, which is red, white and green, is used as part of the Christmas decoration in Mexico.
10. "Night of the Radishes" contest was started in 1897 in what country?
A. Canada
B. Mexico
C. Spain

CHRISTMAS AROUND THE WORLD ANSWERS TO THE QUIZ

1. True (see page 4)
2. True (see page 5)
3. B. England Crackers are a crepe paper covered tube with small trinkets inside. The paper is treated so it will make a popping or cracking noise. (see page 4)
4. A. 1843 (see page 5)
5. C. Britain The children sit in a circle and pass around a wrapped gift with music playing. When the music stops the child holding the gift gets that gift. (see page 7)
6. True (see page 8)
7. A. Spain (see page 9)
8. C. Spain Swing sets are set up in the public square and the children compete to see who can go the highest. They believe that this helps the sun on its return journey. (see page 9)
9. True (see page 10)
10. B. Mexico This contest is to encourage farmers to grow big radishes. They are then craved into religious scenes, animals, folktale characters, or spaceships. They are judged and prizes are awarded. (see page 10)



CHRISTMAS AROUND THE WORLD

INTRODUCTION

Before we look into what other countries do for Christmas we will look into some Christmas traditions, legends and words. By looking into these things associated with Christmas it will help us to understand other traditions, legends and words. These can be as diverse as the cultures and religious practices of each and every country in the world.

CHRISTMAS: Telesphorus, the second bishop of Rome, (A.D. 125-c. 136) declared that public church services should be held to celebrate the “Nativity of our Lord and Savior.” By A.D. 320, Pope Julius I and other religious leaders specified December 25th as the official date of the birth of Christ. It is believed that December was chosen so the Catholic Church would compete with rival pagan rituals held at that time of the year.

MANGER SCENES: St. Frances of Assisi began the practice of using figures to re-create the Nativity scene. The manger scene is called crèche or cradle (France); krippe or crib (Germany); presepio (pray-SEH-pee-oh) or manger (Italy); nacimiento (nah-see-mee-EHN-toh) or Nativity scene (Mexico, Guatemala).

EPIPHANY, TWELFTH NIGHT, THREE KINGS DAY, OR BEFANA: The word Epiphany comes from a Greek word meaning “manifestation” or “revelation.” Epiphany is celebrated on January 6th and is the day when the Christ Child was shown to the Magi, who brought gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh. It is also associated with the baptism of Jesus, which began his ministry. In certain parts of Spain, where it is called Three Kings Day, it is also known as “little Christmas” or “old Christmas.”

HANUKKAH: Hanukkah is on the 25th day of the Hebrew month Kielev. It is a Jewish holiday commemorating the rededication of the Holy Temple in Jerusalem after its desecration by the Syrians.

CANDLEMAS: February 2nd is Candlemas. This is a religious ceremony which celebrates Mary taking Jesus to the temple in Jerusalem to present him as her first born. Candles are used in this ceremony. This ceremony is called el Dia de la Candelaria (ehl DEE-yah day lah kahn-deh-LAHR-ee-uh) in Mexico.

MAGI: Magi are plural of magus, a Latin word that means magician, or member of a group of ancient priests. The Wise Men of the East were also known as Magi.

XMAS: Xmas is an abbreviation of the word Christmas. The letter X is the Greek letter Chi, the first letter of Christ’s name written in the Greek alphabet.

BOXING DAY: December 26th is Boxing Day in England. The churches have special boxes to collect contributions at the Christmas services. The day after Christmas they open these boxes and the money inside is given to the poor. This day was also called St. Stephen’s Day. St. Stephen was the patron saint of the horse. Today it is referred to as The Boxing Day. Some other countries also celebrate this day.

GIFT GIVERS: St. Nicholas was born in A.D. 280 in Patara, a city of Lycia in Asia Minor and was the bishop of Myra. He gave out Christmas gifts late at night so his identity would remain secret. St. Nicholas was named the patron saint of children, sailors, Russia and Greece. His birthday is December 6th. Kris Kringle came from the German name for the Christ Child, Christkindlein (krist-KIN-tlihn). Pere Noel is the French term for Father Christmas. French children also receive gifts from le Petit Noel, or Little Christmas. Russian children expect gifts

from Baboushka during the night of January 5th. In Brazil Papa Noel arrives on Christmas Eve. In New York they changed St. Nicholas to Sinta Claes. This eventually became Santa Claus.

CHIMNEY: Hanging stockings from the mantel may have come from the legend of St. Nicholas. The legend is that a nobleman squandered his fortune so his three daughters had no dowries. When St. Nicholas heard about this he went to the nobleman's house and threw three pouches of gold coins down the chimney. Fortunately the girl's stockings were hung by the fireplace drying and the coins went into those stockings.

CRACKERS: In 1844 Thomas Smith, an English candy maker, visited France and saw cosaques, or crackers, sugar-coated almonds wrapped in squares of colored paper that were twisted at the end. When he got back to England he made crackers and put candy, mottos, jokes and riddles in them. Today's cracker is a crepe-paper covered tube with small trinkets inside. At Christmas dinner a cracker is placed beside each plate, and when its end tabs are pulled, a chemically treated paper strips breaks and makes a popping or cracking noise.

MUMMER: This word also means "masked" and is used for any person who masquerades as someone else in a parade, play, or pageant. In ancient Rome, during the festival called Saturnalia, people masqueraded as someone else and made loud music and created a disruption. Philadelphia has a Mummer's Parade that is over one hundred years old. Canada also has a mummer tradition.

CAROLS: St. Francis of Assisi introduced carols to the church services. Some of the oldest carols were French Noels. Noel comes from the Latin word natalis or birthday. Noel is also used to describe the Christmas season.

AULD LANGE SYNE: These Scottish words mean "good old days" or "time remembered with fondness" and are sung at Christmas and New Year Eve.

CHRISTMAS TREE: In 16th century Germany the fir tree was decorated with apples, roses, gilded candies and colored paper. It was believed that the Protestant reformer Martin Luther was the first to add candles to the branches. The Christmas tree was brought to America in the late 19th century by the Germans who settled in Pennsylvania. In ancient Rome they believed that the Evergreens had special powers and symbolized the promised return of life and eternal life for Christians. The Vikings hung fir and ash trees with war trophies for good luck.

MISTLETOE: The Scandinavians associated the plant with Friggs, their goddess of love and it may be from this that we derive the custom of kissing under the mistletoe. Those who kissed under the mistletoe had the promise of happiness and good luck in the following year.

HOLLY: In Northern Europe Christmas is in the middle of winter when ghosts and demons can be heard howling in the winter winds. Holly is believed to have magical powers, since they remain green throughout the winter. It is also believed that good spirits live in the branches of holly. Christians believed that the berries had been white before they were turned red by Christ's blood when he was made to wear the crown of thorns.

POINSETTIAS: The Poinsettia is a native Mexican plant and was named after Joel R. Poinsett a U.S. Ambassador to Mexico. He brought the plant to the U.S. in 1828.

YULE: Yule in Old English was spelled as geol, houl, hioul and in Norse is jul. Yule was used to describe pagan midwinter festivals in honor of the sun. Yule logs were burned during these rites for protection against evil spirits and to destroy old misunderstandings and hatreds. To ensure the sun's continued warmth, a part of the log was saved to light the Yule log the following year. Today the word Yule is used to describe the Christmas season.

WASSAIL: The word wassail comes from the Old English words waes hael, which means "to your health," "here's to you" or "be whole." The word was originally a Scandinavian term brought to England by the Vikings. It was also called "lamb's wool." Wassail was also a hot drink made from

a mixture of wine or ale, eggs, sugar, nutmeg, cloves, ginger, and roasted apples. It was served in a bowl with pieces of toast floating on top. The old custom of carrying a wooden wassail bowl from home to home evolved into the tradition of caroling parties whose singers are invited inside for a cup of fruit like punch or wassail.

TURKEY: One of the most popular main courses for the Christmas dinner was goose, but many other meats were also served. Turkey was first brought to Europe from the Americas around 1520. The earliest known consumption of turkey in England was 1541.

MINCE PIES: Mince pies were made of shredded or minced meat and were baked in oblong castings to represent Jesus' crib and it was important to add three spices (cinnamon, cloves and nutmeg) for the three gifts given to the Christ Child by the Magi.

CANDY CANES: Shortly after they started to decorate trees for Christmas they started using a straight white candy stick for decoration. Legend has it that during the 17th century a craftsman created the white sticks of candy in the shape of a shepherd's crook at the suggestion of the choirmaster at the Cologne Cathedral in Germany. There is another legend about the candy cane. The white of the candy cane represents Christ's purity, the red the blood he shed. The three red stripes represent the Holy Trinity.

CHRISTMAS CARDS: In 1843 John Calcott Horsley designed a hand-colored, printed Christmas greeting card. Horsley designed this card for Henry Cole, director of London's Victoria and Albert Museum. In 1880 Great Britain had a Christmas card design competition which helped develop the Christmas card industry. Putting a red-breasted robin on the cards was popular at this time. The robin was a favorite because it represented a cheery, bright contrast to winter's bleakness. The message is the same today as it was back in the 1800's "peace and good will toward men." (Look at page 13 for pictures of the first Christmas cards.)

CHRISTMAS TIME IN AFRICA

In Africa Father Christmas is the one that gives the gifts. In the **Congo** their Christmas worship service is very important. In this service they celebrate the birthday of Jesus with love offerings or gifts. No one comes to this service without a gift and they put the gifts by the Communion table. After the church service they have their Christmas dinner outside in front of their homes. In **South Africa** Christmas is a summer holiday. The schools are closed and camping is popular. Christmas Eve celebrations include "Carols by Candlelight" and a church service on Christmas morning. Their homes are decorated with pine branches and fir trees with presents underneath. At bedtime on Christmas Eve the children may also hang their stockings for presents. Their dinners may include turkey, roast beef, mince pies, suckling pig and yellow rice with raisins, vegetables and plum pudding. They also celebrate Boxing Day. In **Ghana** on Africa's west coast the Christmas season happens during the cocoa harvest, so it is a time of wealth. On Christmas Eve the people go to churches that are decorated with evergreens or palm trees and lots of candles. At these services they sing hymns and have a Nativity play. On Christmas Day they have another church service. After the service they have a meal of rice and yam paste called fufu with stew or okra soup, porridge and meats. After the meal presents are given and opened. In **Liberia**, which is also on the west coast, their homes have an oil palm for a Christmas tree and have bells as decorations. On Christmas morning they exchange gifts and then they go to a church service. Dinner is eaten outdoors where everyone sits in a circle to share the meal of rice, beef and biscuits. In the afternoon they play games. At night there are fireworks.

CHRISTMAS TIME IN THE ASIAN COUNTRIES

In **China** and **Hong Kong** Santa Clause is called Christmas Old Man (Dun Che Lao Ren). In **Hong Kong** he is also known as Lan Khoong and is known to have reindeer. Also in Hong Kong the church services are in Chinese or English. They decorate their homes with Poinsettias and Nativity scenes. The Christians in **China** decorate their trees with ornaments made out of paper in the shapes of flowers, chains and lanterns. The trees are called "Trees of Light." They also hang up muslin stockings for gifts. The non-Christians call the Christmas season the Spring Festival. In **Japan** only 1% of the people believe in Christ. Santa Clause is a Buddhist monk called Hotei-oshō. Even the non Christian Japanese decorates their homes and exchange gifts. Christmas for Christians is not a family day but the day is spent in doing nice things, like visiting people in the hospitals. They don't have a special Christmas meal. For the children that don't like Hotei-oshō Santa with his red-nose reindeer delivers their presents. The Christians in **India** decorate their homes with banana or mango trees, poinsettias and small oil burning lamps. They give presents to family members, charities and the poor. In **South India** they have small clay lamps that they put on the rooftops and walls of their homes, just like the Hindus. This is done for a festival called Diwali. In **Pakistan** December 25th is a public holiday to honor the memory of the founder of Pakistan, Jinnah. The Christian's do exchange gifts and go to a church service on Christmas Day. Christmas is called Bara Din, which means the big day. In the **Philippines** the pageants, festival and music for their Christmas celebrations come from old tribal customs mixed with Chinese, Spanish and American traditions. The Philippines is the only Asian nation in which Christianity is the religion of choice. The days during the Christmas season are filled with firecrackers, star lanterns called parol (pah-ROHL), and the smell of fruit drinks and a special steamed rice called puto bumbong (poo-toh boom-bong). On Christmas Eve they have a pageant which reenacts Joseph and Mary's search for shelter. They have strolling minstrels called cumbancheros (kuhm-bahn-CHEHR-ohs) that use handmade instruments made of coconut shells, carabao bones, split bamboo and tin can ends. At the end of their performances they sing Maligayang Pasho (mal-ee-gay-yang PAHS-koh) or Merry Christmas to the tune of "Happy Birthday."

CHRISTMAS TIME IN AUSTRALIA

The weather in Australia for Christmas is very hot, close to 100 degrees. Since the weather is hot they have Christmas dinner at midday on the beach or a picnic. Their day involves outdoor activities. Their Christmas meal may include turkey, ham, pork, mince pies and plum pudding for dessert. Many of their traditions come from the early settlers from England. Father Christmas or Santa Claus leaves gifts for children on Christmas Eve. These two gifts givers can be seen arriving by helicopter or boat for parades or at the beaches on a surfboard or even on a surf lifesaving boat. Gifts are sometimes tucked into the pillowcases on children's beds or found at the breakfast table. Homes are decorated with ferns, palm leaves, red and green flowering Christmas bush and the yellow-edged bell-shaped Christmas flower. Since 1937 on Christmas Eve they have "Carols by Candlelight" and the program concludes at midnight with them singing "Auld Lang Syne." This event is held in many of the cities.

CHRISTMAS TIME IN BETHLEHEM

The Church of the Nativity, in Bethlehem, is ablaze with flags and decorations every Christmas. On Christmas Eve they have a parade to the church where a solitary horseman rides a black horse and carries a cross. The Christian homes in Bethlehem are marked by a cross painted over their doors. Modern day Jews celebrate the Miracle at the Temple, the transformation of spiritual darkness into

light, with the ritual lighting of candles in every home. They use a special Hanukkah menorah, which has nine lamps or candle branches rather than the usual seven. They light one candle every evening. Families with young children give their children a modest gift on each of the nights.

CHRISTMAS TIME IN THE EUROPEAN COUNTRIES

In **Britain** Santa Claus is called Father Christmas. He is usually pictured as rather thin and tall, with a white beard and wearing a long crimson robe with a hood or cap trimmed in white fur. Father Christmas appears in department stores to listen to children's wishes. The children write letters to Father Christmas and then throw them into the fireplace so they will float up the chimney and fly to the North Pole. If the lists catch fire first, they have to rewrite them. On Christmas Eve children hang up their stockings on the ends of the bed or by the chimney. They open up their gifts on Christmas Day. On Christmas afternoon the children play a game called "Pass Around the Parcel." They sit in a circle and pass around a wrapped gift with music playing. When the music stops the child holding the gift gets that gift. The word Christmas comes from Christes (Christ) and Masse, and old English word for feast or festival. Back in 1643 the celebration of Christmas was outlawed by English Puritans because they thought it was too closely tied to pagan beliefs. The holiday was reestablished as a celebration in 1660. January 5th marks the end of the Christmas season. Some of the Noels or carols of **France** have a widespread popularity in other countries. Two of the songs are "O Holy Night" and "Angels We Have Heard On High." Petit Jesus, or Little Jesus once was believed to visit the children personally on Christmas Night. Most children believe Jesus sent Pere Noel or Father Christmas in his place. Pere Noel is tall and slender, has a white beard and wears a long red robe trimmed with fur. Sometimes he wears wooden shoes. He has a donkey that accompanies him. Instead of "ho, ho, ho" he says "tralala, tralala, bouli, bouli, boulah." The children leave a snack and maybe a glass of wine for Pere Noel and food for the donkey. Pere Noel comes on Christmas Eve, like our Santa Claus. Children leave their shoes or wooden clogs, called sabots, by the fireplace to fill with gifts. In the north of France children are given gifts on December 6th which is St. Nicholas Day, instead of Christmas Day. The adults exchange gifts on New Years Day. The French love good food at Christmas. They have 5 to 6 courses and the meal lasts for hours. The meal might start with oysters, some Pates, turkey, potatoes, salad, cheeses, fruits and nuts. Some meals have more food than this. In **Germany** the children leave letters on the windowsill for Christkind. They decorate these letters with glue and sugar to make them sparkle. Christkind is a winged angel sent by the Christ Child, dressed in a white robe and a golden crown. There is also a Christmas Eve figure called Weihnachtsmann or Christmas Man that looks like Santa Claus and brings gifts. Another tradition happens on December 6th, which is called Nikolaustag. This is St. Claus or St. Nicholas Day. They put shoes or boots outside by the front door on December 5th. They fill them with straw and carrots in hopes that St. Nicholas will feed his horse and leave a gift. If you have misbehaved you may find sticks or coal instead. In the rural area of the town of Bavaria three Thursday evenings before Christmas they have knocking nights, which is called Klopfelnachten (KLOH-pfehl-nahckt-en). The children go through the neighborhood clanging cowbells and banging lids. They knock on doors and recite a rhyme that begins with knock. The children can receive candy, coins or fruit for their efforts. Another tradition in Bavarian is called the "Bride's Tree." This tree has twelve special ornaments on it which are; Angel (God's guidance), bird (joy), fish (Christ's blessings), flower basket (good wishes), fruit basket (generosity), heart (true love), house (protection), pine cone (fruitfulness), rabbit (hope), rose (affection), Santa (goodwill) and teapot (hospitality). This is to ensure a better life for the couple. Heiligabend (HIGH-likh-ar-bernt) or Christmas Eve is when you can hear animals talking. The

adults decorate the tree at this time. The children are not allowed to view the tree and presents until a bell rings. Boxing Day is also a holiday, like it is in Britain. **Austria** has a lot of the same Christmas traditions as Germany. Their St. Nicholas Day on December 6th is called Heiliger Nikolaus. There is a story about how the song Silent Night came about. On Christmas Eve, 1818, the priest went into his church and found that the organ was not working. He went to the organist Fanz Bauer and said he had written a new Christmas hymn but didn't have music for it. Franz quickly composed a tune for it that could be played on a guitar. This happen in the town of Obendorf. The traditional Christmas dinner is baked carp. The **Switzerland** Christmas traditions have a touch of German traditions. In parts of Switzerland the children receive their gifts on Christmas Day from Christkindli. In other parts of Switzerland children get their gifts on December 6th, St. Nicholas Day. St. Nicholas has a helper called Schmutzli. Schmutzli is mean spirited and he carries a large sack to haul off naughty children. Epiphany is the official end of the Christmas season. In the town of Ticino they have one more holiday that they celebrate. January 17th is Feast of Saint Anthony, Festa di San Antonio. This is the day that farmers bring their animals to church for a blessing. They believe that the animals can talk on Christmas Eve. In Ticino some families celebrate Epiphany the Italian way, with a visit from Befana (beh-FAH-nah). According to legend Befana was an old lady, maybe even a witch that the Three Wise Men approached for directions to Bethlehem. Befana was so busy with her household chores that she couldn't be bother with giving directions. After they left she felt ashamed of not helping them. She tried to catch up with them but couldn't. To this day she roams the world at Epiphany giving gifts. The naughty children get a whack from her broom. In some households they hang a stivale, or a boot, by the fireplace. Befana comes down the chimney and fills the boot with presents. Some traditional Christmas dinners have ham or the regional specialty, Bundnerfleisch. This specialty is air dried beef pressed into rectangular loaves and served in paper thin slices. In **Sweden** they decorate their trees one to two days before Christmas. Their decoration may include candles, apples, Swedish flags, small gnomes wearing red tasseled caps and straw ornaments. The house may be decorated with red tulips and the smell of pepparkakor (PEH-pahr-kaa-koor), which is a heart, star or goat shaped gingerbread biscuit. Their Christmas Eve dinner, which is called Julafton (yool-AHF-ton), may consist of ham, pickled pig's feet, lutfish or dried codfish. Dessert maybe a special rice porridge, called Risgrynsgrot (rees-grewns-grurt), which is served hot with cinnamon and sugar sprinkled on it. They hide an almond in this porridge and whoever finds it will get married in the coming year. After this dinner the Christmas gnome, called Tomte (TAWM-teh), distributes gifts from his sack. The gnome lives under the floorboards of the house or barn and rides a straw goat. The gnome has a white beard and wears a red robe. The gifts are given with a funny rhyme that hints at the contents. In **Poland** they have a big meal on Christmas and after that meal they gather around the Christmas tree and exchange simple handmade gifts. At midnight they go to the Shepherd's Mass, called Pasterka. They also celebrate December 26th, called "The Second Day of Christmas." This second day is for commemoration of the life of St. Stephen. The children in **Italy** get their gifts on Christmas Day from Baby Jesus, called Bambino Gesu (bahm-BEE-noh jay-ZHOO) or Father Christmas, called Babbo Natale (BAH-boh nah-TAH-lay). Some children also get gifts on January 6th from Befana (Switzerland also does this). Their Christmas Eve dinner may include a baked eel that may be four feet long, pasta, a capon or chicken with chestnut dressing and a loaf shaped Christmas cake made with raisins and citron. This cake is called Panettone (pah-neh-TOH-neh). In **Belgium** the children get gifts from either St. Nicholas or Pere Noel on December 6th. Pere Noel has a companion Pere Fouettard. December 6th is St. Nicholas' birthday and the Feast of St. Nicholas is a religious occasion. On December 25th some children also get gifts under the tree. If

there are little children in the home it is Santa that brings the gifts, otherwise Santa doesn't bring the gifts. American tradition is taking hold in Belgium. In Greece the homes have an evergreen tree trimmed with tinsel and a star on top. They exchange gifts on January 1st which is St. Basil's Day. St. Basil is one of the four Fathers of the Greek Orthodox Church. He is supposed to visit all the homes in Greece. Some families leave a log in the fireplace for him to step on when he comes down the chimney. When they get together for any Christmas gathering they greet one another by saying, "Hronia polla" (hroh-nee-yah poh-LAH) which means "many happy years." Their celebrations conclude on Epiphany. The word carol comes from the Greek word choraulein (khoh-roh-lihn). The word is the combination of choros, or dance and aulein, to play the flute. In the Netherlands they have several different days for celebration. December 6th is Sinterklaas Avond, December 25th is First Christmas Day, December 26th is Second Christmas, New Year's and January 6th is Three Kings Day or Epiphany. The Dutch's favorite day is Sinterklaas Avond. Sinterklaas is their name for St. Nicholas. December 5th is like our Christmas Eve. St. Nicholas arrives by ship in Amsterdam three weeks before December 5th. He wears a white robe, a scarlet cape, miter (Bishop's hat) and carries his crozier (Bishop's crook). He rides a white horse down the gangplank. In other parts of the Netherlands St. Nicholas comes on a barge, motorcycle, wagon, bicycle, helicopter or any other mode of transportation. Sinterklaas always has a companion named Zwarte Piet or Black Pete. Pete dresses flamboyantly with an embroidered tunic, puffed velvet breeches and a plumed cap. Pete carries a red ledger to record the behavior of the children. He also has birch rods for unruly children. He has a big sack of goodies, like fruits, candies and cookies. This bag is also large enough to hold a naughty child or two. The children believe that St. Nicholas and Pete spend their nights scurrying across rooftops, eavesdropping down the chimneys and sometimes coming down the chimneys. The children fill their shoes with carrots and straw for the horse and snacks for Sinterklaas. Sinterklaas and Pete usually visit several times. The Feast of St. Nicholas dinner may begin with a roast chicken or duck. In Spain January 6th or Three Kings' Day is their big day. This day is also known as "little Christmas" or "old Christmas." The children write letters to the Kings and department stores hire people to dress as the Three Kings to listen to their wishes. Just before they go to bed on January 5th everyone puts out a pair of shoes so the Kings will leave them presents and treats. They place their shoes outside on balconies, at windows, doors or near the fireplace. Most families leave out three dishes of food for the Kings and for the camels. They stuff their shoes with straw, oats, barley or carrots. In urban Spain they are starting to celebrate Christmas Day with gift giving. Santa Claus is the gift giver on these two days. In the Pyrenees the people living in the rural areas remember the dead on Christmas Eve. They leave out a loaf of bread with a knife in it before going to midnight mass. Another Christmas Eve tradition in Spain is the granting of amnesty to military and political prisoners and also criminals. One of Spain's traditions that we do in the Southwestern part of the U.S. is putting out luminous or festive lights on Christmas Eve. Luminous are made of a candle in a paper bag with sand in it. These lights are to guide the Christ Child to each home on Christmas Eve. Many of the city families are putting up a Christmas tree. If they live in apartments and have a balcony they put the tree out there. For large condominiums they have a community tree in the outdoor courtyard area. In Cadiz the children have a tradition called "swinging the sun." Swing sets are set up in the public squares and the children compete to see who can go the highest. They believe that this helps the sun on its return journey. In the Catalonia villages young boys dray a Yule log through the streets on Christmas Day. They drag the log from door to door and at every home they stop at they are given nuts and candies. Another variation of this theme is to hang a hallow log for Christmas. The log is covered with burlap and gifts are crammed in it. On Christmas Day the children beat the log until

the gifts come out. As Christmas approaches their standard greeting is, "Felices Pascuas" (Happy Holiday) or "Felices Pascuas de Navidad" (Happy Holiday of the Nativity). Most Christmas dinners include roast turkey, goose or capon. Another dish that they might have for dinner is called Puchero olla, which is made of chicken, beef, mutton, bacon, pig's feet and garlic. One of the most popular sweets for this time is marzipan. Marzipan was an Arabic delicacy.

CHRISTMAS TIME IN MEXICO

Many of the traditions in Mexico come from Spain. The first Christmas in Mexico was celebrated in 1538 by missionaries from Spain. December 16th through December 24th the children take part in the las posadas (lahs poh-SAH-dahs). This is a daily reenactment of Mary and Joseph's journey to Bethlehem. They go house to house seeking posada or shelter for Mary and Joseph. If the procession is invited into a home they place the figures of Mary and Joseph in the nacimiento (nah-see-mee-EHN-toh) or manger scene. On Christmas Eve the procession goes to the church and places the figure of the Christ Child in the nacimiento. Christmas Day is welcomed with a medley of bells, whistles and firecrackers. In the northern states Santo Clos (Santa Claus) brings the children the big presents. On January 6th the Reyes Magos (RAY-es MAH-gohs) (Three Wise Men) bring small presents. In the southern states "El nino Dios" (Jesus) brings a few presents and on January 6th Reyes Magos brings the big presents. The Mexican flag, which is red, white and green, is used as part of the Christmas decorations. The children have piñatas to break during the Christmas season. On December 23rd in the city of Oaxaca, which is 340 miles southeast of Mexico City, they have la Noche de los Rabanos (lah NOH-cheh day lohs-RAH-bah-noass) or Night of the Radishes. This contest started in 1897 to encourage farmers to grow big radishes. These radishes grow from a few inches to one to two feet. The contest is about them carving the radishes in religious scenes, animals, folktale characters, or spaceships. The roots may be used in the figure. These figures are judged and prizes are awarded. These radishes are not for eating. Their meals during the holiday season may include, roast turkey, tortillas, ensalada de la noche buena (ehn-sah-LAH-dah day lah NOH-cheh boo-AY-nuh), which is a fruit and vegetable mixture, ensalada navidena (ehn-sah-LAH-dah nah-vee-DAY-nyah), which is a Christmas salad made of fruit, beets, sugarcane and nuts and is decorated with small candies, hot chocolate with vanilla and cinnamon, and bunuelos (boo-NYWAY-lohs), which is a thin round pastry covered with sugar and cinnamon. They also celebrate December 28th, Day of the Innocents; December 31st, New Year's Eve; January 6th, Day of the Three Kings; and February 2nd, Candlemas.

CHRISTMAS TIME IN NORTH AMERICA

Christmas celebrations in **Canada** are similar to the celebrations in the U.S. Two of the differences are in some provinces, a big winter festival called Sinck tuck, is celebrated by the Eskimos, with dancing and gift giving. In Labrador turnips are saved from the summer harvest and are given to children with a lighted candle pushed into a hole. In Nova Scotia and Newfoundland during the twelve days of Christmas a small group of belsnicklers or mummers appear in neighborhoods. In Vancouver Harbor a flotilla or parade of ships happens two weeks prior to Christmas. The harbor is filled with ships silhouetted in lights with their mastheads decorated with Christmas trees. From October through the first day of December, Christmas trees are baled and loaded for their journey to the U.S. and South America. In British Columbia for their dinner they may have turkey and fresh or smoked salmon with brussel sprouts, mincemeat pie or trifle. They have a Christmas cracker at each plate. In Quebec one of their favorite foods is a tourtiere (tor-tee-AIR) which is a pork pie. Another favorite is boulettes (boo-LEHT) which is small meatballs. In Canada the traditional

Christmas meal is roast turkey with vegetables and sauces, minced pies, pastries filled with a mixture of chopped fruit and a fruity Christmas pudding with brandy sauce. Back in the 17th century the Dutch colonists brought their tradition of Sinterklaas to the **United States**. Sinterklaas is the Dutch word for St. Nicholas. In 1863 St. Nicholas became Santa Claus and he wore a red suit, had a pipe and a sleigh with reindeer. The early European settlers brought their traditions with them. These early settlers wanted to send their distant neighbors greetings so they shot off firearms and fireworks. In Hawaii they still do this. In Hawaii Christmas starts with the coming of the Christmas Tree Ship. Santa Claus also arrives by boat. On Kodiak Island in Alaska the descendants of Russian settlers follow the calendar of the Russian Orthodox Church, which places Christmas on January 7th. In their Christmas celebrations they have a procession called "Carrying the Star." For three nights starting on January 7th they carry a star from house to house. The star bearers represent the angels who came to earth to announce the birth of Christ. In Boston carol singing festivities are accompanied by hand bells. In New Orleans an ox is paraded around the streets decorated with holly and ribbons. In Arizona the Mexican ritual called Las Posadas (lahs poh-SAH-dahs) is kept up. In California Santa Claus can come in on a surf board. There are two homes for Santa Claus in the United States. One is in Torrington, Connecticut, where Santa and his helpers give out presents. The other is in Wilmington, New York, where a village for Santa and his reindeer is located.

CHRISTMAS TIME IN RUSSIA

Christmas in Russia is January 7th. The Festival of Winter is starting to take the place of Christmas. But some Russians do celebrate their traditional Christmas. On January 6th, which is their Christmas Eve, they have special prayers and a twelve course dinner to honor the twelve apostles. On Christmas they go to church and have the usual Christmas tree. Their gift giver is D'yed Moroz or Grandfather Frost. He has a white beard and wears a red robe and hat. Both the robe and hat are trimmed in white fur. The other gift giver is Babushka. This one is a Grandmother figure. Legend has it that she declined to go with the wise men to see Jesus because of the cold weather. When she changed her mind she was not able to catch up with the wise men and she never found Jesus. This is why she visits every house and leaves presents.

CHRISTMAS TIME IN SOUTH AMERICA

In **Argentina** they celebrate Jesus' birthday on December 24th. They decorate their homes with red and white garlands and the usual Christmas tree. The only thing different on their trees is Father Christmas sits on the top of the trees. The children put Father Christmas' boots by the door for their presents to be put in. Their meals may consist of roast turkey, roast pork, stuffed tomatoes, minced pies, Christmas breads and puddings. In **Brazil** the gift giver is Father Noel or Papai Noel. Legend has it that Father Noel lives in Greenland and when he arrives in Brazil he is wearing silk clothing due to the heat. Their nativity scene is called Presepio (pray-SEH-pee-oh). The word originates from the Hebrew word "presepium" which means the bed of straw upon which Jesus first slept in Bethlehem. Their dinner may consist of turkey, ham, colored rice, vegetables and fruit dishes. Their festivities go until January 6th, Three Kings Day. In **Bolivia** their Christmas is a harvest festival where they give thanks for the year's crop. They honor the Goddess Mother Earth. In **Ecuador** the children write letters to the Christ Child. They place shoes in the windows for their gifts. Since the weather is very warm they do most of the celebrations outside with firecrackers, brass bands and dancing. In **Guatemala** and most of the Central American countries the main holiday is January 5th and 6th. This is Epiphany; sometimes call the Day of the Kings or Twelfth

Day. Epiphany is called el Dia de los Reyes (ehl DEE-yah day lohs RAY-ehs). The children write letters to the Three Kings. They place their shoes on the balcony or by the front door. Sometimes they also put hay and water for the camels by their shoes.

In conclusion you can see a lot of these countries are alike in their celebrations and traditions. Maybe you would like to use some of these traditions in your celebrations.

A CHRISTMAS CHRONOLOGY

- A.D. 280 Approximate birth date of St. Nicholas
- 320 Pope Julius I, Bishop of Rome, proclaims December 25th the official celebration date for birthday of Christ.
- 567 Council of Tours establishes Advent as a period of fasting and the time between Christmas and Epiphany as a sacred, festive season.
- 1561 First printed reference to Christmas trees, in Germany
- 1643 British Parliament officially abolishes celebration of Christmas
- 1818 "Silent Night" is written on Christmas Eve, in Obendorf, Austria.
- 1822 Dr. Clement Moore writes "A Visit from St. Nicholas," better known by its first line, "Twas the night before Christmas."
- 1836 Alabama is the first state to declare Christmas a legal holiday.
- 1843 First Christmas card is printed, in England.
- 1843 Charles Dickens writes *A Christmas Carol*.
- 1856 President Franklin Pierce decorates first White House Christmas tree.
- 1857 "Jingle Bells" is written by J. Pierpont.
- 1890 Oklahoma, which became a state in 1907, is the last territory to declare Christmas a legal holiday.
- 1926 United States dedicates the Nation's Christmas Tree, a giant sequoia, in Kings Canyon National Park, California.
- 1937 First postage stamp to commemorate Christmas is issued, in Austria.
- 1949 "Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer" is recorded by Gene Autry.
- 1962 First Christmas postage stamp is issued in the United States.

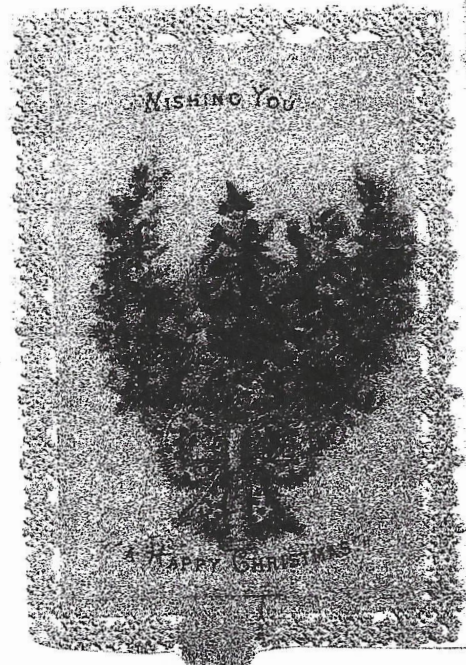
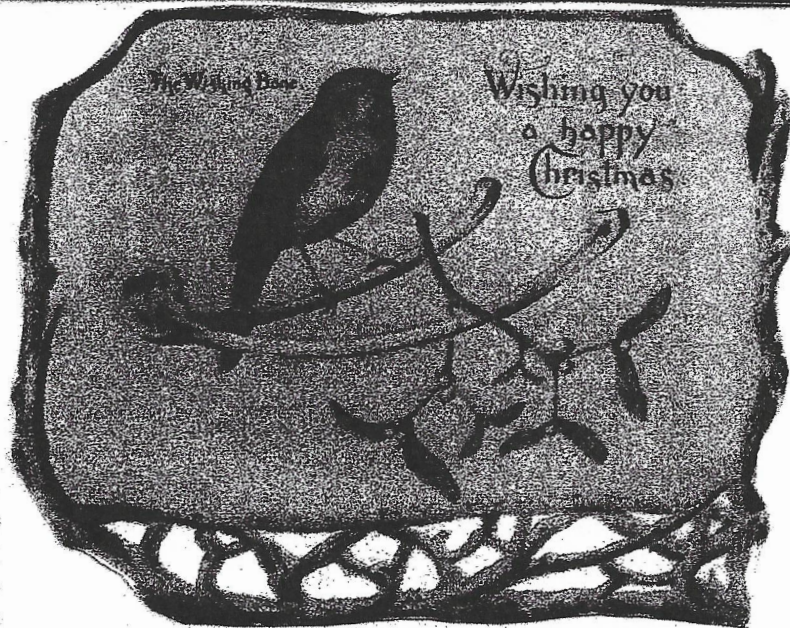


Here are some samples of the first Christmas cards.

Along with other costumed children, a young chef points a dancing toe in a merry Christmas celebration. The card was printed by Marcus Ward and Co. of London in the late 1800's.



The cheery red-breasted robin has long been a Christmas symbol in Britain.



The dancers in this card produced in 1872, move when the tab at the bottom of the card is pulled.

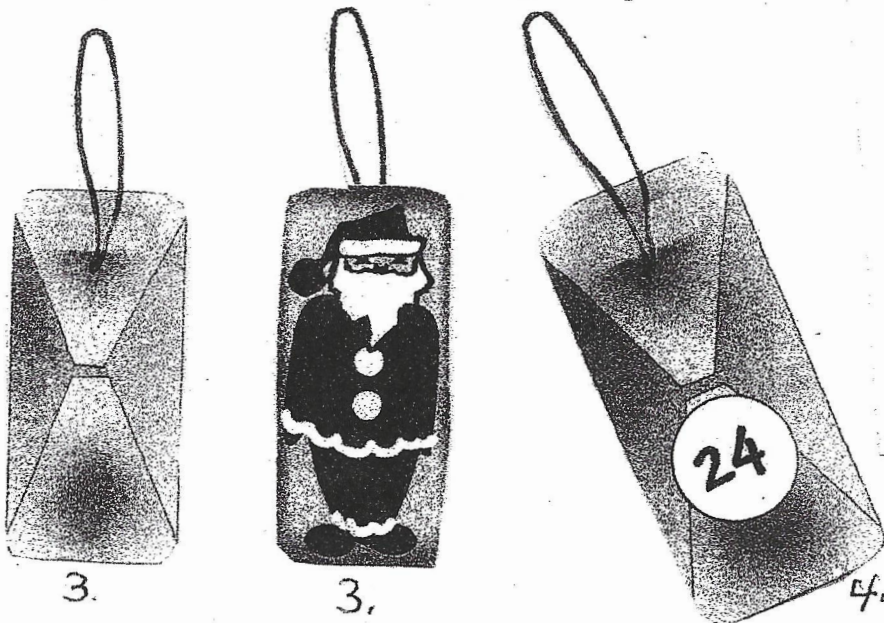
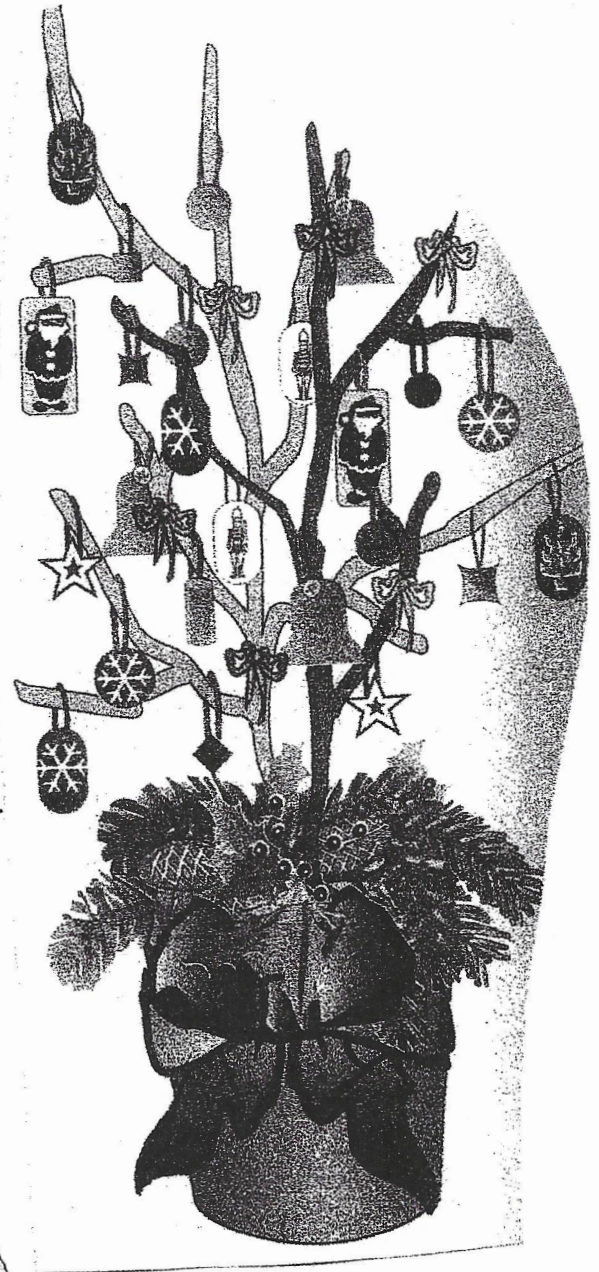
CHRISTMAS CRAFT PROJECTS

CHOCOLATE ADVENT TREE FROM SWITZERLAND

Materials you will need: one or more bare twiggy branches about 24 inches long; large, deep container such as a flower pot (at least 6 inches in diameter); pebbles to fill the container; thin ribbon, about 8 feet; transparent tape; 24 foil wrapped chocolates; 24 self-adhesive labels or circles; felt tipped pen; a garland; bell ornaments; assorted ribbons to make bows for decoration; wide red ribbon; and pine cones, pine sprigs, holly sprigs.

What to Do

1. Place the branch or branches in the center of the container, making sure that the bottom of each branch touches the bottom of the container.
2. While holding the branches straight, put the pebbles into the container. Fill the container to the top with pebbles so that each branch is held securely.
3. Cut the thin ribbon into 4 inch lengths. Tape the end of each piece to the back of a foil wrapped chocolate, creating a loop from which to hang the chocolate.
4. Number the self adhesive labels from 1 to 24. Peel off the labels and put one on each chocolate.
5. Hang the chocolates on the tree branch. The chocolates should not be hung in numerical order.
6. You can further decorate the tree branch with the garland, bell ornaments and ribbon bows.
7. To decorate the container, use the wide red ribbon to make a bow, and then wrap it around the container.
8. Place pine cones and pine and holly sprigs around the base of the tree branch to cover the pebbles.
9. To count down to Christmas, start on December 1st. Each day search for the numbered chocolate that corresponds to the date.



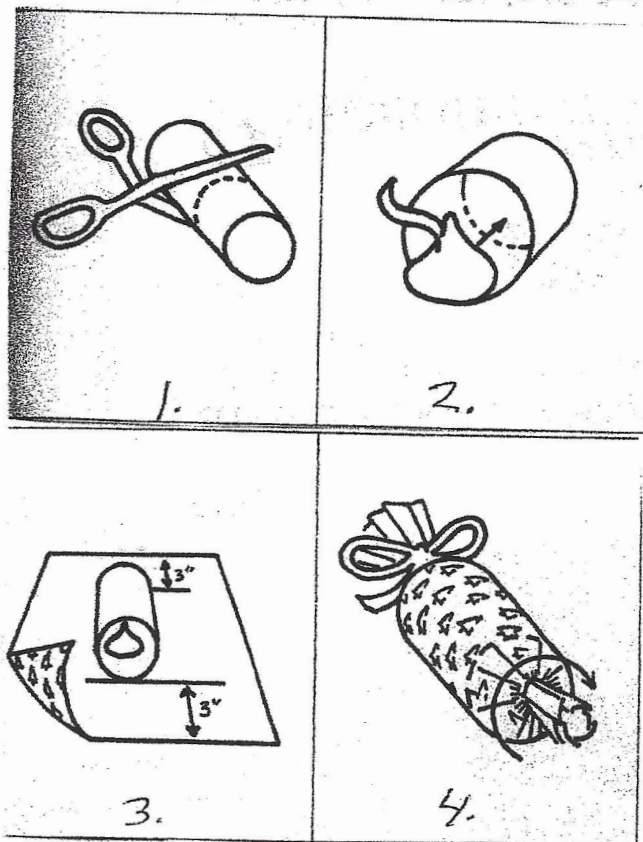
CHRISTMAS PARTY CRACKERS FROM ENGLAND

You can use this as a party favor or put them beside each plate at a dinner. You can put a small ornament and small trinkets inside along with a saying, a wish or a fortune. You can also add candies, nuts or money inside.

Material you will need: Christmas wrapping paper; paper towel tubes; string or ribbon; small toys or other small favors.

What to Do

1. Decide how many crackers you want to make,
And then cut tubes into equal lengths.
2. Fill with a small toy or other favor and sayings.
3. Roll tube in Christmas wrapping paper large enough to lap over each end at least 3 inches.
Do not use tape or glue.
4. Twist the paper at the ends to seal the cracker
Or tie it with string or ribbon.



Here are some sayings to put in the crackers.

On Christmas Eve all animals can speak. However, it is bad luck to test this superstition.

The child born on Christmas Day will have a special fortune.

Good luck will come to the home where a fire is kept burning throughout the Christmas season.

To have good health throughout the next year, eat an apple on Christmas Eve.

Snow on Christmas means Easter will be green.

Eat plum pudding on Christmas and avoid losing a friend before next Christmas.

Place shoes side by side on Christmas Eve to prevent a quarreling family.

Wearing new shoes on Christmas Day will bring bad luck.

PINECONE PINE TREES FROM CANADA

Materials you will need: pinecones; rye grass seed; tuna fish cans or plastic butter tubs; sand; paint, contact paper, or ribbon.

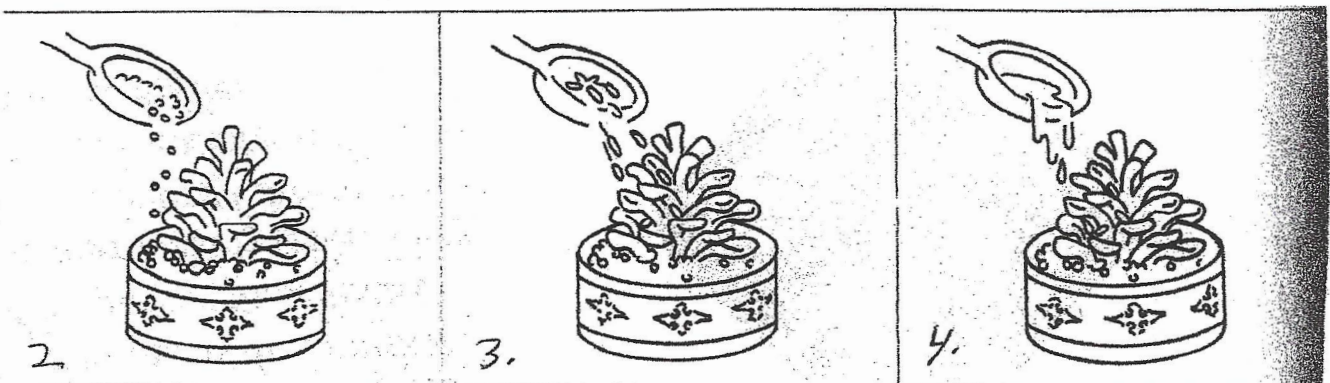
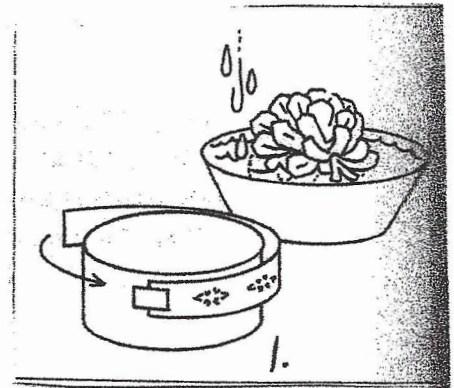
What to Do

1. Soak pinecones in water overnight. Decorate tuna cans or butter tubs with paint, contact paper or ribbon.

2. Fill tuna cans or butter tubs with sand, and bury pinecones deeply enough that they stand upright.

3. Sprinkle grass seeds between petals of cones while they are wet.

4. Keep sand wet and each day spray cones with water. Grass will sprout in ten days. Your pinecones will look like miniature Christmas trees, with grass that resembles pine needles.



RECIPES

POTATO LATKES (Jewish)

5 medium potatoes
1 medium onion, chopped
2 large eggs, lightly beaten
3 tablespoons flour or matzo meal
Salt and pepper to taste
½ cup vegetable oil

Applesauce or sour cream and chopped scallions

Scrub and peel potatoes. Finely grate into a large bowl. Stir in onion, eggs, flour, salt and pepper until smooth. In a large skillet heat 2 to 3 tablespoons of the oil over medium heat. Drop large spoonfuls of batter into oil and fry about 4 minutes, turning once, until golden and crisp. Drain on paper towels. Continue with remaining batter adding more oil as necessary. Serve with applesauce and/or sour cream.

CHEESE LATKES (Jewish)

2 cups small curd cottage cheese
3 eggs, lightly beaten
1 cup all-purpose flour
1 tablespoon granulated sugar
1 teaspoon baking powder
½ teaspoon salt
Vegetable oil

Confectioners' sugar

In medium bowl, stir all ingredients until smooth. In large skillet, heat about ¼ inch oil over medium heat. Drop about ¼ cup batter into oil and fry about 4 minutes turning once, until golden. Repeat with remaining batter. Sift confectioners' sugar over Latkes, if desired.

WASSAIL BOWL (England)

3 cups granulated sugar
12 cups ale or beer
2 cups dry sherry
1 teaspoon each ground cinnamon, ginger, and nutmeg
1 lemon, cut into thin slices

Put sugar into a large punch bowl. Stir in remaining ingredients except lemon slices. Float lemon on top and serve. Serve with toast triangles, if desired. Makes about 4 quarts.



CHRISTMAS PUDDING (Britain)

1 cup all-purpose flour
½ teaspoon salt
½ teaspoon each cinnamon, nutmeg, and allspice
¼ teaspoon cloves
½ pound suet, finely chopped
2 cups fine dry breadcrumbs
1 cup sugar
4 eggs, slightly beaten
½ cup brandy or rum
¼ cup milk
Grated peel and juice of 1 lemon
1 cup chopped walnuts
1 cup currants
1 cup seeded raisins
¾ cup golden raisins
¾ cup diced mixed candied fruit

Sift flour, salt, and spices together. Put suet, breadcrumbs, sugar, eggs, brandy, milk and lemon peel and juice into a bowl; mix well. Stir in nuts and fruit. Add dry ingredients and mix well. Turn batter into a thoroughly greased 2 quart mold. Cover tightly with a greased cover or tie on aluminum foil, waxed paper or parchment paper. Place mold on trivet or rack in a steamer or deep kettle. Pour boiling water into steamer to about one half the height of the mold. Cover. Steam pudding 4 hours. Add more boiling water if necessary during steaming. Remove pudding from steamer and unmold on a serving plate. Serve with Hard Sauce. Makes about 16 servings.

Hard Sauce: Cream ½ cup butter with 1 cup packed light brown sugar until fluffy. Add 2 to 3 tablespoons dark rum gradually, beating well. Chill.

POTATO DUMPLINGS (Germany)

10 slices white bread
½ teaspoon salt
¼ teaspoon freshly ground pepper
1 onion, grated
2 teaspoons fresh parsley, chopped
5 potatoes, peeled and grated
2 large eggs, beaten
¼ cup all-purpose flour

Soak bread briefly in cold water, then drain and squeeze out moisture. Mix with salt, pepper, onion and parsley. Stir in grated potatoes and the eggs. Form into even size patties and coat in flour. Bring a large pot of salted water to a boil. Add patties to water, reduce heat to a simmer, cover and cook 15 minutes or until cooked through. Makes 6 servings.

FLAN (caramel custard) (Spain)

Caramelized sugar: 10 tablespoons sugar and 5 teaspoons water – Heat sugar and water in small skillet over medium high heat, stirring constantly, until sugar is golden. Remove from heat and pour into 6 ovenproof custard cups.

Custard

3 eggs

3 egg yolks

¼ teaspoon grated lemon rind

6 tablespoons sugar

2 ½ cups milk

Beat eggs and egg yolks together lightly with a wire whisk. Add lemon rind, sugar and milk. Pour into the caramelized cups and place cups in pan of hot water. Cook on top of stove over medium heat 1 hour. Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Cook flan 25 minutes or until knife inserted in center comes out clean. Remove from water and cool, then refrigerate. To serve, loosen sides of custard with knife and invert onto dessert dishes. Makes 6 servings.

MAZAPAN (marzipan) (Spain)

3 cups whole almonds, blanched and ground

2 cups sugar

1 cup water

2 egg whites, lightly beaten

3-4 tablespoons confectioners' sugar

1 teaspoon vanilla

In a saucepan, heat water and sugar until sugar dissolves and mixture comes to a boil. Let it boil steadily without stirring until the temperature reaches 230-234 degrees on a candy thermometer. Remove from heat and beat until mixture turns slightly cloudy. Stir in ground almonds, egg whites and vanilla. Cook over gentle heat for 2-3 minutes or until mixture pulls away from sides of pan. Turn mixture onto a surface that has been sprinkled with some of the confectioners' sugar. Knead the mixture until smooth, working in the rest of the confectioners' sugar. Pull off pieces and roll into balls or olive-shaped pieces. Wrap in foil or wax paper and store in airtight container.

MAPLE PIE (Canada)

¼ cup butter, at room temperature

½ cup granulated sugar

3 large eggs

1 cup pure maple syrup

1 cup coarsely chopped pecans

1 9 inch unbaked pie shell

½ cup whipped cream

Heat oven to 400 degrees. In bowl of electric mixer, cream butter and sugar; beat in remaining ingredients except whipped cream. Pour into pie shell. Bake 40 to 50 minutes or until set and crust is golden. Cool on wire rack. Just before serving garnish with a border of whipped cream. Makes 8 servings.

RESOURCES

Books:

Christmas Around the World, by Mary D. Lankford

Joy Through the World, by Allen D. Bragdon

Christmas World Books

Switzerland

France

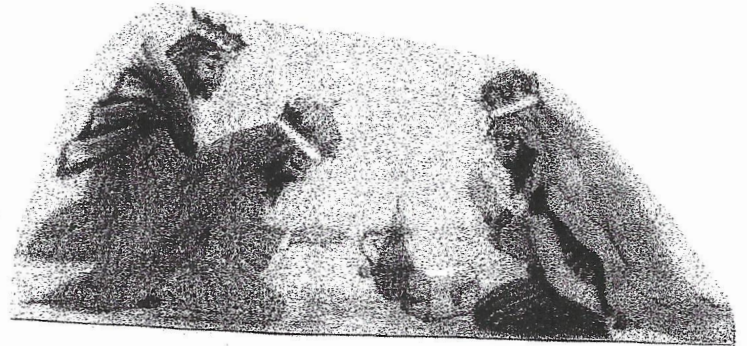
Spain

Mexico

Britain

Newspaper:

Upper Rogue Independent 2007 and 2009



Internet:

www.santas.net

www.german-way.com

www.christmaslore.com

www.allthingschristmas.com

www.historymedren.about.com

Thanks to Sue Larson for proof reading this lesson for me.

