

Santa Claus

WORKSHEET A

For many people, especially children, Christmas would not be the same without a jolly old man with a white beard and a red costume: Santa Claus, or Father Christmas. He is, of course, a fictitious figure whose generosity represents the spirit of Christmas. However, very young children are generally encouraged to believe that he really exists, and that they will receive Christmas presents from him if they have been well behaved.

Because Christmas is in mid-winter in the northern hemisphere, Father Christmas is associated with very cold weather. He is supposed to live somewhere in the far north — Lapland in northern Finland, or Greenland, or even the North Pole — and to transport his presents using a sledge, pulled by reindeer, which not only travels through snow but can also fly through the sky.

In countries where Christmas presents are given and received on Christmas Day, 25th December, Father Christmas delivers his presents at night on Christmas Eve, 24th December, after all the children have gone to bed. He enters people's homes by coming down the chimney, without waking anyone up, and usually places the presents under or by the side of the Christmas tree. (Many homes, of course, do not have chimneys, but young children are not encouraged to worry about such details.)

Some parents give their children a small amount of food and drink to leave for Father Christmas before they go to bed on Christmas Eve. This might be biscuits or a mince pie, with milk or even something alcoholic such as brandy, and perhaps some water for the reindeer. By Christmas morning the food and drink will have disappeared — which the parents, of course, will say is proof that Father Christmas really has visited, and nothing at all to do with them!

The idea of Father Christmas goes back a long way. In Britain, the fictitious figure of 'Old Christmas' or 'Sir Christmas', a jolly old man with a beard who visited people's homes at Christmas, was part of popular culture in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries — but he was not particularly connected with children, or presents, and his clothes were green rather than red. In the nineteenth century it seems this image began to merge with that of Saint Nicholas, a Christian saint who has a feast day in December and who is associated with the giving of gifts. The name of Saint Nicholas in Dutch is *Sinterklaas*, which is the origin of the other name Father Christmas is known by today: Santa Claus.

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WORKSHEET B

Exercise 1

Here are some simple definitions for words that appear in the text on Worksheet A. Find the words they refer to and fill in the gaps.

1. **_ r _ _ f** (noun): information or evidence that shows that something is definitely true or definitely exists
2. **d _ _ _ _ _ r** (verb): to take something (for example a letter or a package) to a place
3. **_ _ ll _** (adjective): friendly and cheerful
4. If you **e _ c _ u _ a _ _** (verb) someone to do something, you suggest that they do it because you think it would be good.
5. A **_ _ e _ _ e** (noun) is a vehicle you sit on to travel over snow. Sometimes it might be pulled by animals, sometimes (particularly when used by children) it might be pushed by another person.
6. **a _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _** (adjective): containing alcohol
7. If something **goes _ _ ck a l _ _ _ _ a _** (expression), it has existed for a long time.
8. **_ i _ ti _ _ o _ _** (adjective): not real or true; invented
9. **_ _ _ mn _ _** (noun): a tube or passage that takes smoke from a fire up through a building and out through the roof
10. **_ _ f _** (noun): present
11. If two things **m _ _ g _** (verb), they combine or become mixed so that you can no longer tell the difference between them.
12. **d _ t _ _ _** (noun): one of many small facts or pieces of information about a thing or situation
13. **o _ _ _ _ n** (noun): a place or moment where something begins to exist
14. **p _ _ c _** (verb): put
15. **_ _ a _ d** (noun): hair that grows on a man's chin and cheeks

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WORKSHEET C

Exercise 2

One word has been taken out of each line of the text: how many of the missing words can you remember and replace?

- (1) For many people, especially, Christmas would not be the same without a jolly old
- (2) man with a white beard and a red: Santa Claus, or Father Christmas.
- (3) He is, of course, a fictitious figure whose generosity represents spirit of Christmas.
- (4) However, very young children are generally to believe that he really exists, and
- (5) that they will receive Christmas presents from him if they have been well.
- (6) Because Christmas is in mid-winter in the hemisphere, Father Christmas is
- (7) associated with very cold weather. He is supposed to somewhere in the far north
- (8) — Lapland in northern Finland, or Greenland, or even the Pole — and to transport
- (9) his presents using a sledge, by reindeer, which not only travels through snow but
- (10) can also through the sky.
- (11) In countries where Christmas presents are and received on Christmas Day, 25th
- (12) December, Father Christmas delivers his presents night on Christmas Eve, 24th
- (13) December, after all the children have gone to. He enters people's homes by
- (14) coming down the chimney, without waking anyone up, and usually the presents
- (15) under or by the side of the Christmas. (Many homes, of course, do not have
- (16) chimneys, but young children are not encouraged to worry such details.)
- (17) Some parents give their children a small amount of food and to leave for Father
- (18) Christmas before they go to bed on Christmas Eve. This might be biscuits a
- (19) mince pie, with milk or even something alcoholic such brandy, and perhaps some
- (20) water for the. By Christmas morning the food and drink will have disappeared —
- (21) which the parents, of, will say is proof that Father Christmas really has visited,
- (22) and nothing at all to do with!
- (23) The idea of Father Christmas goes back a long way. Britain, the fictitious figure
- (24) of 'Old Christmas' or 'Sir Christmas', a jolly old man with beard who visited
- (25) people's homes at Christmas, was part of popular culture in the and eighteenth
- (26) centuries — but he was particularly connected with children, or presents, and his
- (27) clothes were rather than red. In the nineteenth century it seems this image began
- (28) to merge with that of Saint Nicholas, a Christian saint who has a day in
- (29) December and who is associated with the giving of gifts. The of Saint Nicholas
- (30) in is *Sinterklaas*, which is the origin of the other name Father Christmas is
- (31) known by today: Santa.