

Super English



Level 7 Christmas

Winter Festivals Before Christmas

Discuss the words in bold and answer the questions.

Long before Christmas existed, people still celebrated **the darkest days of winter**. Romans held Saturnalia, a festival filled with feasting, singing, and **exchanging** small gifts. Northern Europeans celebrated Yule by burning huge logs and staying awake to “welcome back” the sun. Why celebrate in freezing weather? Winter felt **treacherous**, but gathering together brought warmth, hope, and a sense of community. These festivals helped people push through long nights and uncertain food supplies. In many ways, they created the **emotional blueprint** that later holidays would follow.

1. How did the environment influence the types of traditions people created during winter?
2. Why do you think holidays and festivals make cold winter seasons more tolerable?



The Religious Story

Discuss the words in bold and answer the questions.

1. Why might early Christians have chosen December 25th to celebrate the birth of Jesus?
2. How do you feel about celebrating an event even when the date is uncertain?



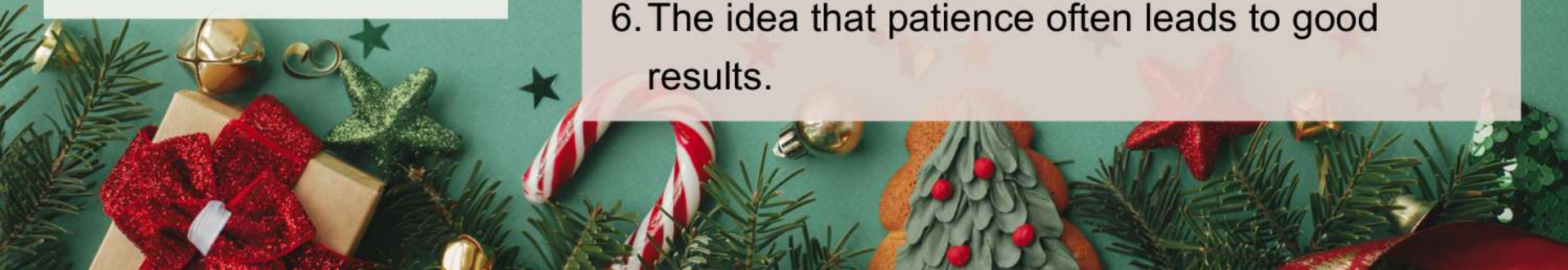
For **Christians**, Christmas is a **sacred** celebration remembering the birth of Jesus in Bethlehem. The story includes angels, **shepherds**, and a newborn placed in a **manger** because there was no room at the inn. But was Jesus actually born on December 25th? Probably not—the Bible gives no specific date. Historians think early Christians chose that day to connect with existing winter festivals, making the new holiday easier for people to accept. Blending **familiar customs** with new beliefs helped the celebration spread far beyond its original community.

Idioms

Match the idioms to their meanings.

- Break the ice
- Spread the joy
- Good things come to those who wait
- In the spirit of things
- Light up someone's day
- A mixed bag

1. To participate in the mood or atmosphere of an event.
2. To make someone feel happier.
3. Something that has both good and bad parts.
4. To help people feel more relaxed or comfortable together.
5. To share happiness or positive feelings with others.
6. The idea that patience often leads to good results.



The Origins of Santa Claus

Discuss the words in **bold** and answer the questions.

The modern Santa Claus comes from a long process of **cultural blending**. One major influence was Saint Nicholas, a generous **bishop** known for secretly giving gifts to children and the poor. In Europe, he evolved into figures like Sinterklaas, who visited families in early December. When **immigrants** brought these traditions to America, poems, illustrations, and advertisements reshaped him into today's Santa with a red suit, flying reindeer, and a **North Pole** workshop. Although not historically accurate, he remains a powerful symbol of **generosity** and holiday excitement.



1. How did immigration contribute to the development of the modern Santa image?
2. Why do you think Santa became more popular than Saint Nicholas in many countries?

Vocabulary

Match the vocabulary words to their definitions.

- hybrid
- generosity
- commercial
- sacred
- practical
- faith

1. Something done mainly to make money or sell products.
2. A mix of two different ideas, styles, or traditions combined into one.
3. A strong belief or trust in something, especially without needing proof.
4. Something connected to religion or treated with deep respect.
5. Willingness to give or help others without expecting anything back.
6. Useful, realistic, and focused on what actually works in real life.

Dialogue 1: The Gift Disaster



Read the dialogue and answer the question.

Mia: My brother got me a “surprise gift.” It was socks. Again.

Leo: Wow. He really knows how to light up your day.

Mia: I mean... they were fuzzy. That helped a little.

Leo: Seriously though, he tried. You should at least act in the spirit of things.

Mia: Fine. I'll pretend to love them.

Leo: Good plan. Fake enthusiasm is a holiday skill.

Question: Do you think people should pretend to like gifts, or be honest?

Dialogue 2: The Awkward Party



Read the dialogue and answer the question.

Jace: I walked into the holiday party, and everyone just stared at each other.

Rina: Yikes. Did anyone try to break the ice?

Jace: Nope. Not until someone dropped a cookie plate. Loudly.

Rina: Ah yes, chaos... the universal conversation starter.

Jace: After that, everyone relaxed.

Rina: Nothing bonds people like talking about someone's embarrassment.

Question: What's the most awkward party or event you've ever been to?

Why We Use Christmas Trees

Read the text and answer the question.

Evergreen trees were used in winter celebrations long before Christmas existed. Ancient people saw them as symbols of life that never dies, even in freezing weather. Later, European families decorated trees with candles, fruit, and paper ornaments. When German immigrants arrived in the U.S., they brought this tradition with them. Today's electric lights and themed decorations may look modern, but the idea behind the tree — bringing nature indoors to brighten dark months — is thousands of years old.



Discussion Question: What symbol from nature do you think deserves its own holiday tradition?

See you next time!

