

LS and US B2.2 Christmas Homework 2023

Activity 1: Can you write a caption for each of these photos?





Activity 2: Read about 'Not your typical Christmas' by Gracel



I work at a school in Germany and recently I have been going into lots of different English lessons to explain how Christmas is in England and how it is for me. I find it difficult to explain how it is in England for most people as my Christmas is totally different! In this post I will tell you about how my family and I spend the day and our own family traditions.

We don't wake up as early as we did when we were younger on Christmas day; some time around 9am. We sit and eat breakfast together and then we go to a famous place called Stanage Edge.

Stanage Edge is well known to climbers and walkers and is in a very beautiful place called the Peak District. For climbers it is a popular tradition to climb up a special climbing route called "Christmas Crack". It is quite an easy climb that people do for fun. There are always lots of people waiting to do the climb and it's nice to stand and talk with them and friends. We usually drink hot chocolate together and eat mince pies while we wait. After we have finished the climb, we go for a short walk with our friends.

Afterwards we drive home and the long day of cooking begins! My mother and I are vegetarian, so we don't eat the usual Christmas turkey. In the past we have eaten mushroom and chestnut wellington or nut roast. It's always delicious and we always eat it for a few days afterwards because there is so much! We usually eat our "dinner" at about 6pm (dinner is normally eaten in the afternoon, much earlier) and we watch the TV program Doctor Who. There is always a Christmas special and it's fun to watch.

At the end of the day we are so tired and so full that we can't do much more! We sit and play board games or sing together. My parents are divorced so it's nice to have the family all together.

Is your Christmas Day different too? How do you celebrate?

Activity 3: Read about Christmas in the UK and do the exercises

Christmas in the UK is the biggest holiday of the year. Family gatherings, turkey, presents and parties are just some of the things that come to mind when we think about Christmas time.



Preparation

Christmas can mean different things to different people. For many people it means eating a lot, spending time with family and visiting relatives and friends. For children it often means presents, presents and more presents!

Do the preparation task first. Then read the text and do the exercises to check your understanding.

Preparation task

Match the vocabulary with the correct definition and write a–h next to the numbers 1–8.

- | | |
|------------------------------|--|
| 1..... a charity | a. a tube made of card that goes 'bang' when you pull it |
| 2..... a department store | b. a bird, similar to a chicken but larger |
| 3..... a chimney | c. a type of large shop that sells many different things |
| 4..... the music charts | d. an organisation that tries to help people |
| 5..... to bet (on something) | e. having a strong, heavy or sweet flavour |
| 6..... a turkey | f. to try to win money by guessing correctly what is going to happen in the future |
| 7..... a Christmas cracker | g. a list of the best-selling songs at the moment |
| 8..... rich (flavour) | h. a part of a house above a fire that lets the smoke out. |

The origins of Christmas

In ancient times people had mid-winter festivals when the days were short and the nights were very long. They believed that their ceremonies would help the sun's power return. The Romans decorated their homes with green plants in December to remind Saturn, their harvest god, to return the following spring. In the year 440 the Christian church decided that the birth of Christ should be celebrated every year on 25 December. Some of these ancient customs were adopted by early Christians as part of their celebrations of the birthday of Jesus Christ. Green plants are still used to decorate many British homes in December. At Christmas we cover trees (real ones or reusable synthetic trees) with shiny balls and flashing lights!

Cards and presents

It's very common to send Christmas cards to friends, family, colleagues, classmates and neighbours in the weeks leading up to 25 December. Christmas is traditionally a time for helping other people and giving money to charities. Many people send charity cards, where a percentage of the price of each card goes to charity. People send fewer cards than in the past as they now send Christmas greetings by email or via Facebook.

Christmas presents are reserved for close friends and family. Traditionally the giving of a gift is symbolic of the Three Wise Men giving their gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh to the baby Jesus. Popular presents for young people in the UK in recent years include a smartphone, a Playstation and 80s retro fashion.

Father Christmas (aka Santa Claus)

Every year small children tell Father Christmas, also known as Santa Claus, exactly what presents they would like to receive. They can write him a letter with a list of requests or they can visit him personally in one of the large department stores across Britain in the weeks before Christmas. On the night of 24 December, Father Christmas travels through the sky on a sleigh pulled by magic reindeers and delivers presents to children across Britain. How does he enter the children's houses? Via the chimney, of course!

The Christmas number one

Every year, for a few weeks around Christmas time, the UK music charts go mad. Groups and singers who normally make cool music create a song that they hope will be number one – the best-selling song on Christmas Day. The Christmas number one is written about in newspapers, talked about on the radio and people can even bet money in betting shops to see which song will win the race. Recently, the Christmas number one has been dominated by singers who have won reality television competitions.

However, some music fans are not happy about this dominance. One year, they started an anti-corporate Facebook campaign to try and prevent the Christmas number one being another reality show song. Instead, they encouraged people to buy a song by the rock band Rage Against the Machine. They won!

Snow

Snow at Christmas is part of British culture. You often see it on Christmas cards, you can buy fake snow to decorate your house and there are even songs about snow at Christmas. It doesn't snow every year in Britain, but many people hope for a white Christmas. People can bet on whether it will snow or not on 25 December too.

Turkey and crackers

Christmas dinner is usually eaten at midday or early afternoon. It usually includes roast turkey, vegetables and potatoes. There are also lots of alternatives to the turkey dinner for vegetarians who prefer a meat-free Christmas. For dessert, there's a rich, fruity cake called Christmas pudding.

Traditionally, a Christmas cracker is placed next to each person. When you pull the cracker with the person next to you, you hear a loud 'bang!' and a paper hat, a joke and a small gift fall from the cracker. You have to wear the hat, tell the joke to the other people at the table and keep the gift.

Christmas means ...

Does everyone like Christmas? These comments from young Brits reflect some of the wide range of opinions about Christmas in the UK.

Christmas to me means catching up with your family and having a laugh. Last of all opening your presents.

Yasmeen, 20, Liverpool

It's too commercial. There are too many adverts trying to get everyone to spend their money.

Ruby, 15, London

Bringing all your family together, having a laugh, giving presents and eating loads of delicious foods. YUM! YUM!

James, 13, Crediton

The shops start selling Christmas cards in September! That's three months before Christmas. Ridiculous!

Tony, 18, Bakewell

I work for a charity that gives food to homeless people every Christmas. These people have no home or family so we try to make 25 December a happy day for

them.

Claire, 22, Derby

I think Xmas is as much about giving as it is about getting. I also think it's a time for the whole family to get together and enjoy being with each other.

Charlie, 15, Canterbury

I think that Christmas is a religious time, not just for Christians but for Jews and Muslims too. I celebrate the season the Christian way.

Alisha, 16, Manchester

1. Check your understanding: true or false

Circle True or False for these sentences.

1. Some modern Christmas traditions date from Roman times. True/ False
2. British people send money to friends, family, colleagues, classmates and neighbours at Christmas. True/ False
3. Gold, frankincense and myrrh are popular Christmas presents for young people in the UK. True/ False
4. Santa Claus is another name for Father Christmas. True/ False
5. A song by Rage Against the Machine was the best-selling song at Christmas one year. True/False
6. It doesn't always snow at Christmas in Britain. True/ False
7. A Christmas cracker is a type of dessert. True/False
8. Only Christians celebrate Christmas. True/ False

2. Check your grammar: multiple choice – prepositions

Circle the best preposition to complete these sentences.

1. The Romans decorated their homes with green plants in / on / at December.
2. In the year 440 the Christian church decided that the birth of Christ should be celebrated every year in / on / at 25 December.
3. In / On / At Christmas we cover trees with shiny balls and flashing lights.
4. In / On / At the night of 24 December, Father Christmas travels through the sky.

5. Groups and singers create a song that they hope will be number one in / on / at Christmas Day.
6. People can bet on whether it will snow or not in / on / at 25 December.
7. Christmas dinner is usually eaten in / on / at midday.
8. The shops start selling Christmas cards in / on / at September.

Discussion

Do you celebrate Christmas?

If you do, what do you like best about it?

If not, what is your favourite holiday of the year?

Do you buy presents for your friends and family?

What is the best and worst present you have received?

Activity 4: Watch this video about Christmas shopping

Jingle bells, jingle bells ... Have you done your Christmas shopping yet? Watch this video to see how a shop is getting ready for Christmas.

<https://learnenglishteens.britishcouncil.org/study-break/video-series/word-on-the-street/christmas-shopping>

Check your understanding: multiple choice

Circle the correct answers.

1. What kind of things do Fortnum & Mason (the shop in the video) sell?
 - a. discount goods
 - b. luxury goods
 - c. electrical goods
2. What's the theme of this year's Christmas window displays in Fortnum & Mason?
 - a. trees and nature
 - b. food and drink
 - c. dancing and shows
3. How does Paul Symes, the designer of the window displays, feel just before the displays are revealed?
 - a. very proud
 - b. very excited
 - c. very nervous

4. When did Christmas shopping become such an important tradition in Britain?
a. two thousand years ago b. in the Victorian era c. within the last twenty years
5. What are Fortnum & Mason's biggest-selling Christmas items?
a. Christmas hampers b. Christmas crackers c. Christmas trees
6. What's inside Christmas hampers?
a. toys b. flowers c. foods and drinks

Activity 5 : First Certificate exam practice (from *Grammar and Vocabulary for First and First for Schools* Cambridge University Press 2015)

Read about Paco and his school.

Choose the correct words in his email to a penfriend.

Hi Paco

You asked me about the education system in my country. I'm still at (1) **school / the school** because it's (2) **essential / compulsory** here up to the (3) **age / year** of 16. We go to a kindergarten or nursery school first and then, when we're four or five years of (4) **old / age** we (5) **start/ join** primary school, where we spend seven years.

I now (6) **go / attend** a state secondary school, which has about 1,000 (7) **pupils / undergraduates**. We have six lessons a day and each subject is (8) **taught / learnt** by a different teacher. We have a lot of homework and projects, and if we (9) **lose / miss** an important deadline, we have to stay (10) **following / after** school to finish the work and hand it in. We have to wear a uniform until we're 15 but after that we're (11) **let / allowed** to wear our own clothes.

When we're 16 we (12) **take / pass** some exams. Then we can either (13) **leave/ depart** school and go to a different college or stay on for two more years. During those years we (14) **learn / study** just three or four subjects. There are also (15) **opportunities / occasions** to do vocational courses like sport or mechanics at a college of further education. I haven't decided what to do yet.

All the best,

David

Have a lovely Christmas holiday and see you in the New Year 2024!