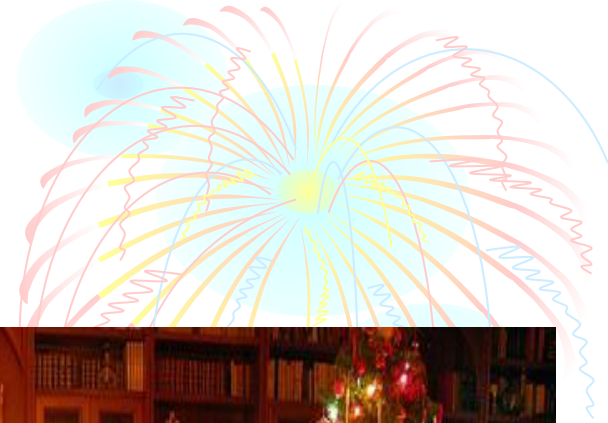


Christmas Traditions in Great Britain



Christmas



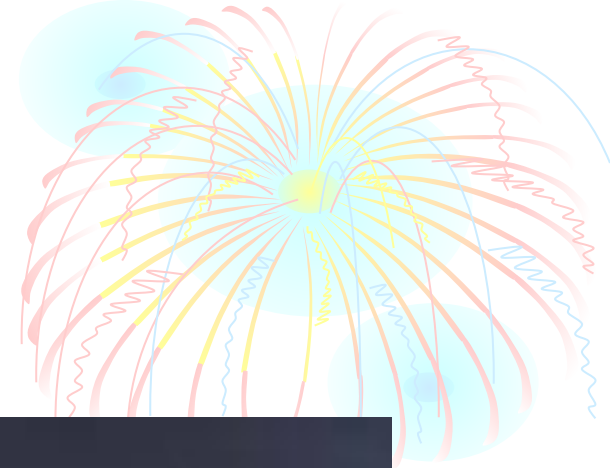
**Christmas Day ,
December 25, is
probably the most
popular holiday in
Great Britain. It is a
family holiday.
Traditionally all
relatives and friends
get together and give
each other presents.**



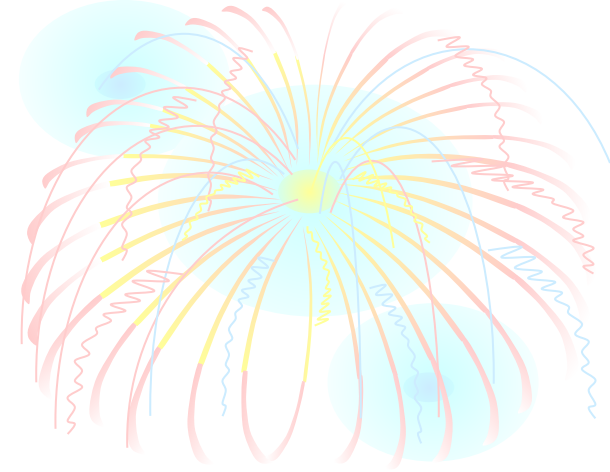
History of Christmas



The history of Christmas dates back to thousand years. The first recorded date of Christmas being celebrated on December 25th was in 336AD in the time of the Roman Emperor Constantine (he was the first Christian Roman Emperor). A few years later Pope Julius I officially declared that the birth of Jesus would be celebrated on the 25th December.



This date was probably chosen because the Winter Solstice and the ancient pagan Roman midwinter festivals called 'Saturnalia' and 'Dies Natalis Solis Invicti' took place in December.



St Augustine was the person who really started Christmas in the UK by introducing Christianity in the 6th century. He came from countries that used the Roman Calendar, so western countries celebrate Christmas on the 25th December. Then people from Britain and Western Europe took Christmas on the 25th December all over the world!

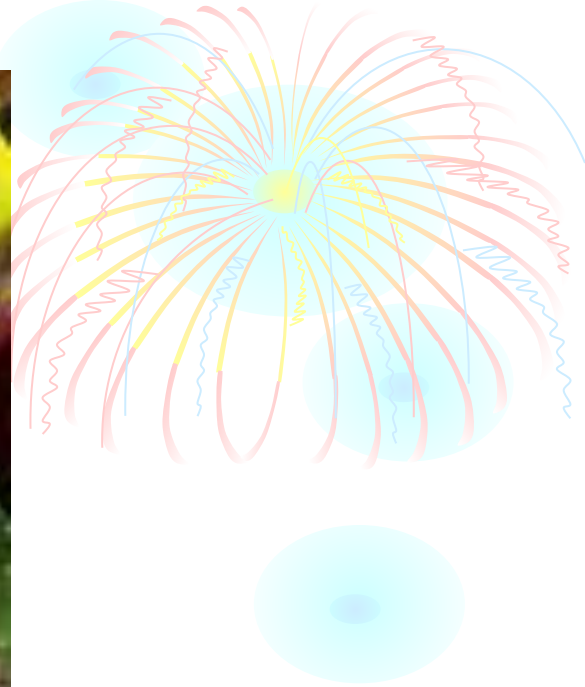
Boxing Day

Boxing Day takes place on December 26th and is only celebrated in a few countries. It was started in the UK about 800 years ago in the Middle Ages. It was the day when the alms box, collection boxes for the poor often kept in churches, were opened so that the contents could be distributed to poor people. Some churches still open these boxes on Boxing Day.



Boxing Day has now become another public holiday in countries such as the U.K. , Canada, Australia and New Zealand.

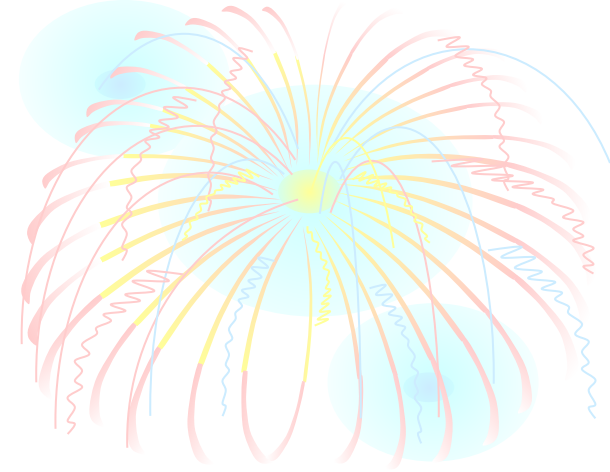




If we are to find the roots of the Christmas traditions, we may need to go back to the age of Mesopotamian culture which had the tradition of celebrating New Year.

The same kind of tradition was also the part of the Persian and Babylonian culture. They had the festival called the 'Sacaeta'. On the other hand, there was also a festival in Scandinavia known as 'Yule', which was celebrated during the winter months. All these festivals have had great impact on the present day Christmas.

Stockings



Christmas - is a holiday for the whole family, but most of all children love it and wait for Christmas. They hang out near the fireplace stockings for gifts.

Christmas Tree

The first Christmas Trees came to Britain in the 1830s. They became very popular in 1841, when Prince Albert (Queen Victoria's German husband) had a Christmas Tree set up in Windsor Castle. Ever since then, Christmas Trees have been a part of a British Christmas.



Because of the danger of fire, in 1895 Ralph Morris, an American telephonist, invented the first electric Christmas lights, similar to the ones we use today.





Holly, Ivy and other greenery such as Mistletoe were originally used in pre-Christian times to help celebrate the Winter Solstice Festival and ward off evil spirits and celebrate new growth.

The U.K. and Germany were the main countries to keep the use of the greenery and here the Christian meanings are :



Holly



Holly became the recognized symbol of Christmas. According to some versions, from it the wreath of the Christ was done, and a berry holly have reddened from blood of the Savior. The prickly leaves represent the crown of thorns that Jesus wore when he was crucified. The berries are the drops of blood that were shed by Jesus because of the thorns.

Ivy

It has to cling to something to support itself as it grows.



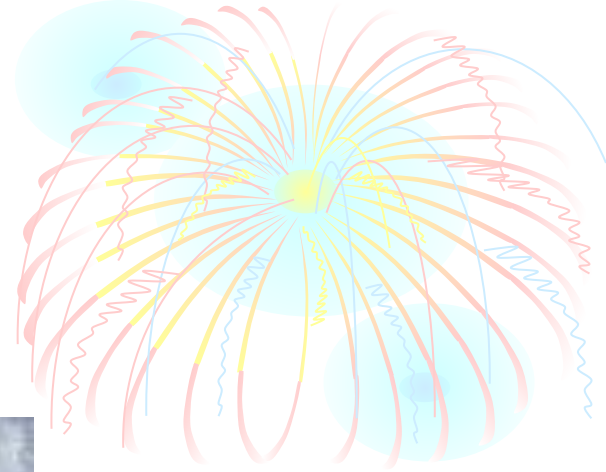
This reminds us that we need to cling to God for support in our lives.

Mistletoe

The practice of hanging it in the house goes back to the times of the ancient Druids.

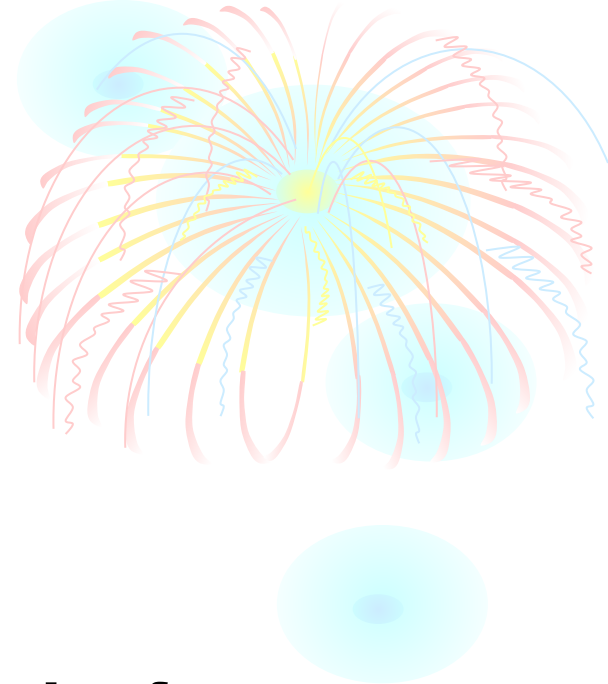


It is supposed to possess mystical powers which bring good luck to the household and ward off evil spirits. It was also used as a sign of love and friendship in Norse mythology and that's where the custom of kissing under Mistletoe comes from.



The custom of kissing under Mistletoe comes from England! The original custom was that a berry was picked from the sprig of Mistletoe before the person could be kissed and when all the berries had gone, there could be no more kissing!

Carols



Carols were first sung in Europe thousands of years ago, but these were not Christmas Carols. They were pagan songs, sung at the Winter Solstice celebrations as people danced round stone circles. The Winter Solstice is the shortest day of the year, usually taking place around the 22nd December. The word Carol actually means dance or a song of praise and joy! Carols used to be written and sung during all four seasons, but only the tradition of singing them at Christmas has really survived!



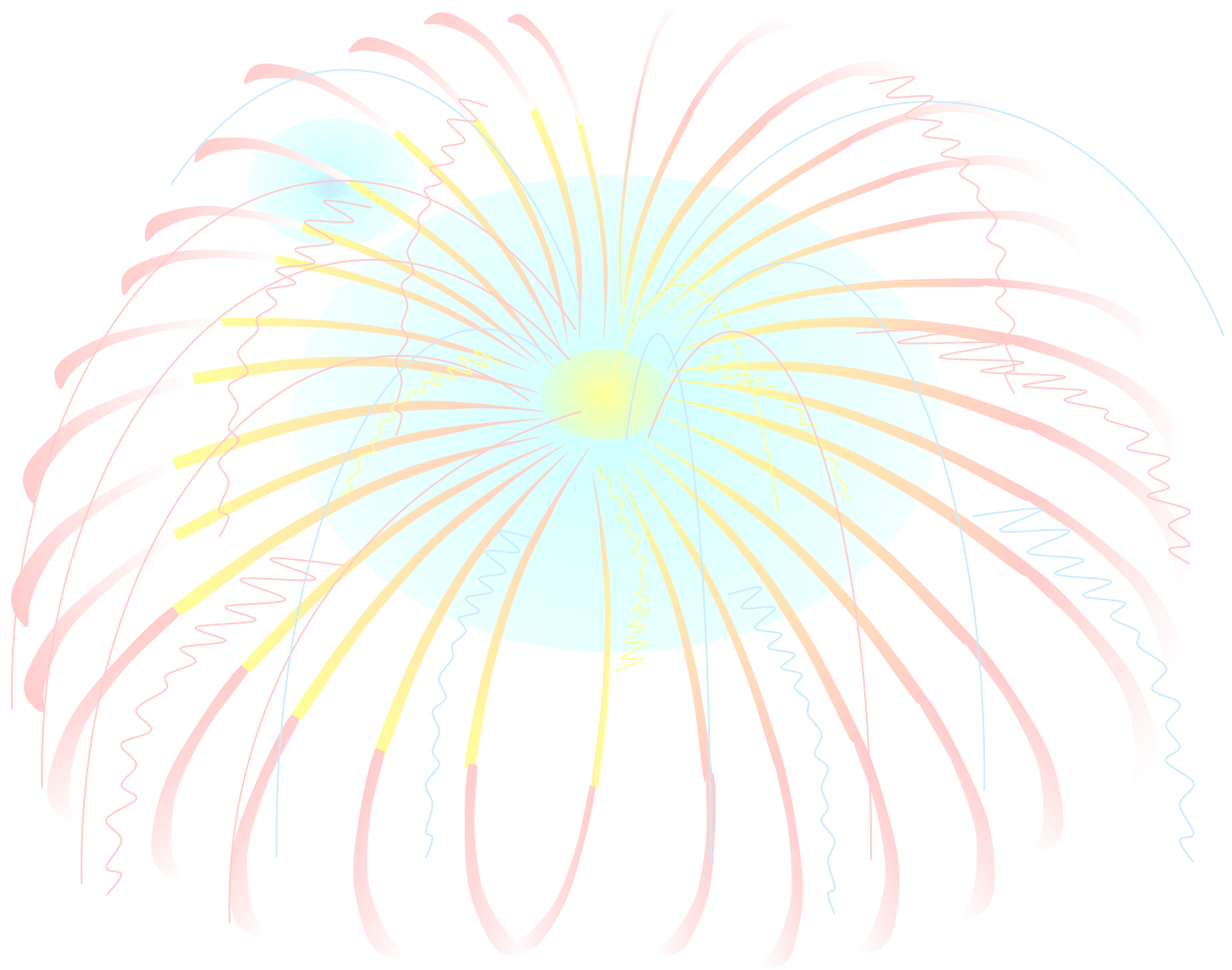
Carols

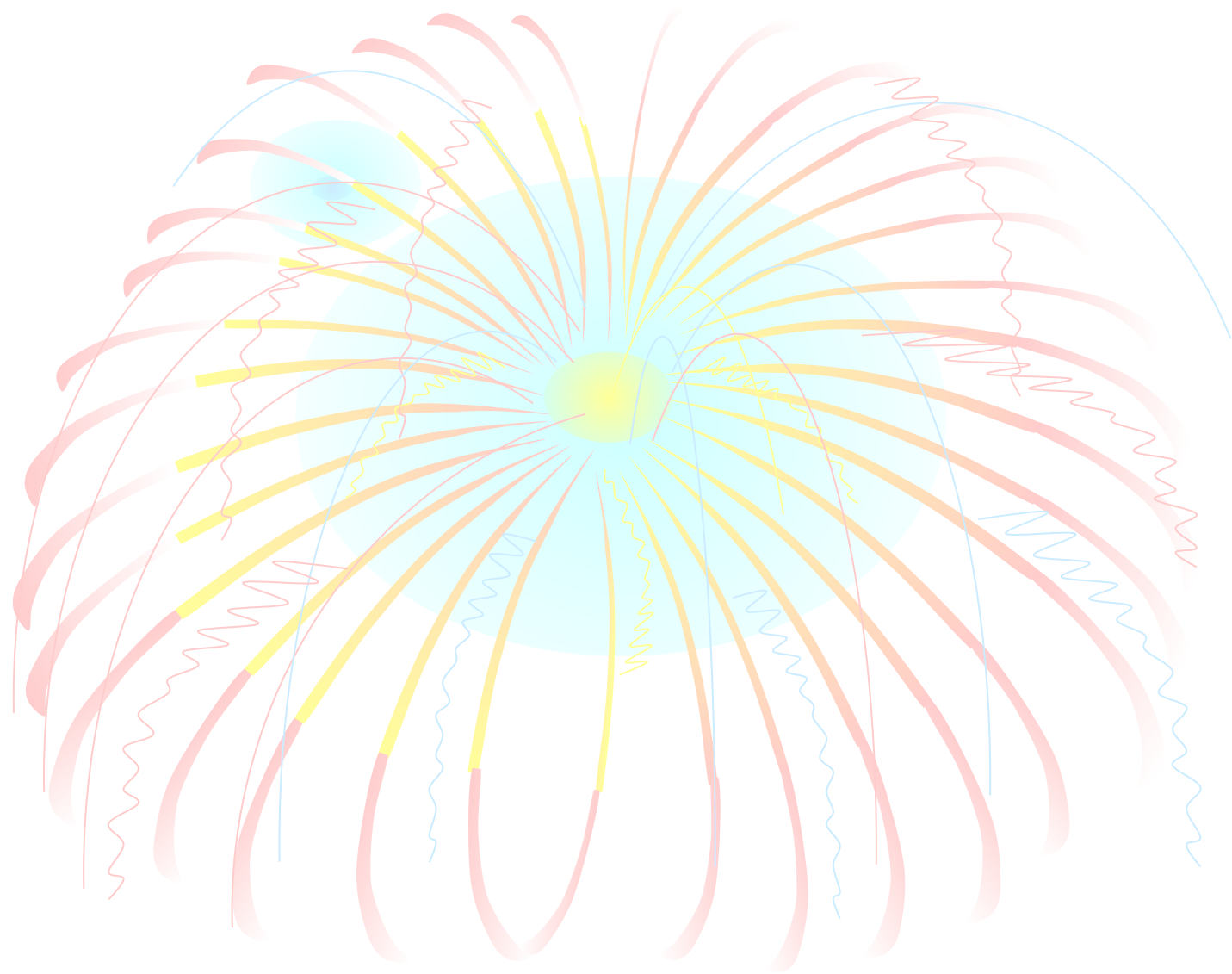
Christmas carols are special songs which are sung during a Christmas season.



The songs are about Jesus and the time when he was born.







Candles



One of the main traditions of these weeks are wreaths with candles which have special meaning. Such wreaths are done on the first Sunday of this period, and usually they consist of 5 candles: four red and one white.

Christingle

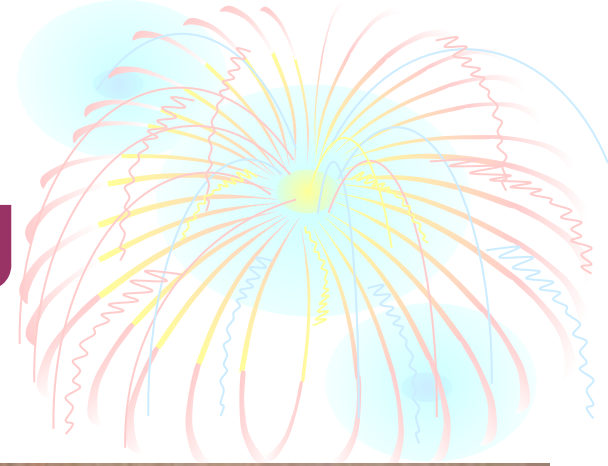
It actually means 'Christ Light' and celebrates the light of Jesus coming into the world: but no one is really sure how the Christingles came into being.



- ❖ **The orange is round like the world.**
- ❖ **The candle stands tall and straight and gives light in the dark like the love of God.**
- ❖ **The red ribbon goes all around the 'world' and is a symbol of the blood Jesus shed when he died for us.**
- ❖ **The four sticks point in all directions and symbolise North, South, East and West – they also represent the four seasons.**
- ❖ **The fruit and nuts (or sometimes sweets!) represent the fruits of the earth, nurtured by the sunshine and the rain.**



The Christmas log



Nowadays the Christmas log should be cut down by the head of family, instead of being bought from someone. It should be burnt down in a fireplace together with the rest of the last year's Christmas logs. The log should be burnt for all twelve days of Christmas. There is a superstition, that if the person sees the shadow rejected from a fireplace where a log burns, without a head, he will die in the following year. It is said that ash of a Christmas log cures illnesses.





Santa Claus is often connected with the name of St. Nicholas.

St. Nicholas was a Bishop who lived in the 4th century AD in a place called Myra in Asia Minor (now called Turkey).

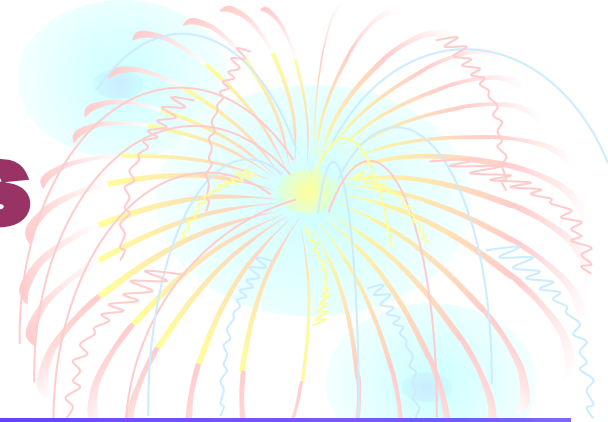
He was a very kind man and had a reputation of a man who helped the poor and gave secret gifts to people who needed it.

Because of his kindness Nicholas was made a Saint.



Santa Claus

Santa Claus, also called Santa, Father Christmas (in Britain), or Kriss Kringle (in America) is an imaginary old man in red clothes and with a long white beard.





Some people say that Santa lives in the North Pole.



In Finland, they say that he lives in the north part of their country called Lapland.

But everyone agrees that he travels through the sky on a sledge that is pulled by reindeer, that he comes into houses down the chimney at night and puts



presents for the children in socks, in front of the family Christmas tree, or near the fire place.



Presents

One of the main reasons we have the custom of giving and receiving presents at Christmas, is to remind us of the presents given to Jesus by the Wise Men: Frankincense, Gold and Myrrh.



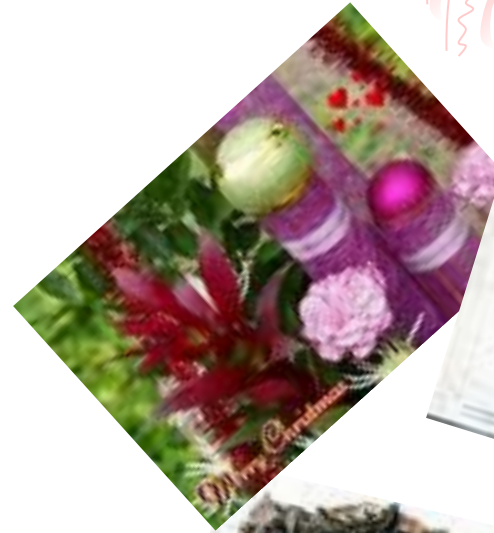
- Frankincense was a perfume used in Jewish worship and, as a gift, it showed that people would worship Jesus.
- Gold was associated with Kings and Christians believe that Jesus is the King of Kings.
- Myrrh was a perfume that was put on dead bodies to make them smell nice and, as a gift, it showed that Jesus would suffer and die.



Christmas Cards

People around the world send Christmas Cards to their friends and family.

The first Christmas card was created and sent in 1843. A man named John Calcott Horsley printed the first Christmas card for Sir Henry Cole, the friend who had given him this idea.



Christmas Dinner

The typical dinner consists of turkey with potatoes and other vegetables such as carrots and sprouts. In Britain this is followed by Christmas pudding - a sweet pudding containing a lot of dried fruit and often covered with burning brandy. Other traditional dish in Britain is a Christmas cake - a cake containing a lot of dried fruit and usually having a covering of icing (hard sugar) made to be eaten at Christmas.



Turkey and Potato Salad.

Ingredients:

2 cups cooked, diced turkey

2 stalks celery, chopped

2/3 cup diced water chestnuts

3 green onions, cut up

2 red potatoes, cooked and cut into cubes

**1 cup lowfat plain yogurt,
(or light or fat free mayonnaise)**

2 tablespoons parsley flakes (or to taste)

2 teaspoons dill weed pepper

Lightly mix the turkey, celery, water chestnuts, onions, potatoes, parsley and dill. Add the yogurt or mayo and mix. Add pepper to taste. Serve with a roll or on a bed of lettuce with bean sprouts.

Cranberry Sauce - a traditional accompaniment to roast turkey.

- 500 g (18 oz.) fresh cranberries

- 250 ml (1 cup) cider vinegar

- 250 ml (1 cup) water

- 250 g (9 oz.) brown sugar

- 1 cinnamon stick

- 1 tsp. ground allspice

- 1 piece of peeled ginger

Place all the ingredients in a saucepan and simmer over low heat for about 20 minutes; remove the cinnamon stick and ginger; pour into a sauce boat or bowl.

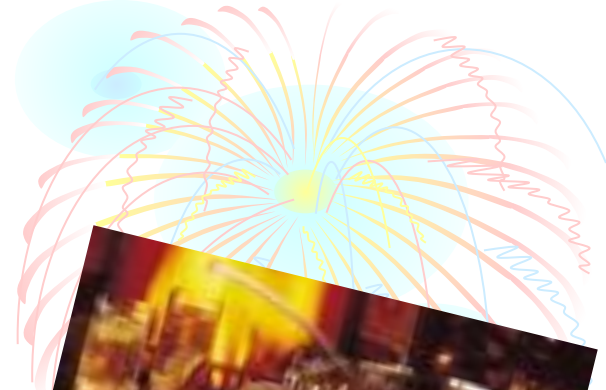


Santa's Punch

Ingredients:

- 1 quart pineapple juice**
- 1 pkg (2 qt) lime Kool-aid**
- 1 qt lime sherbet**
- 2 qts ginger ale**

**Mix Kool-aid in punch bowl. Add pineapple juice.
Just before serving, add sherbet by spoonfuls.
Add ginger ale. For red punch, use raspberry
Kool-aid and sherbert.**



Candycane



Parents treat children for Christmas candycane with sticks in the shape of a cane (or the shepherd's staff).

The sugar candy reminds letter J with which name Jesus begins.



Cookies for Santa

Children leave on a fireplace cookies for Santa as a token of gratitude for work which he does each Christmas.



Christmas Crossword

1. Who invented



?

2.



5.



6.



11.



12.



13.



4.



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9.



10.



8.



14.



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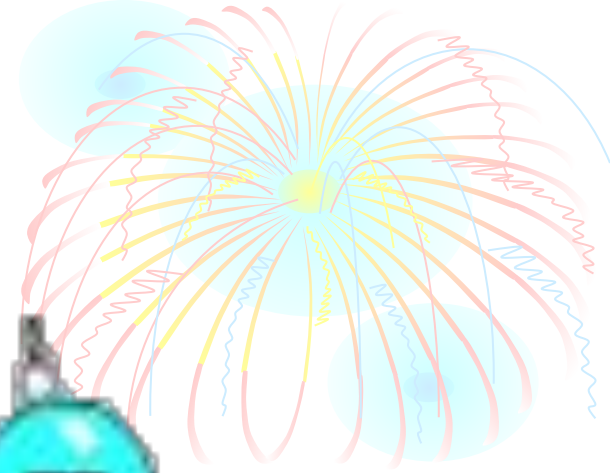
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12

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3.



MERRY
CHRISTMAS