

Christmas Traditions Quiz

There are a lot of traditions around the whole Christmas season – but do you know where they came from, or what the stories are that are attached to them?

1. Tinsel represents:

- a) *a spider's web*
- b) *a glittering crown*
- c) *a Jewish shawl*



2. Christmas Trees were first brought indoors and decorated:

- a) *To give insects a place to keep warm in winter*
- b) *To try and stop them from dying*
- c) *To ward off the devil*



3. Crackers were inspired by:

- a) *The crackle and pops of a log fire*
- b) *The sound of Cossack guns going off*
- c) *Two children fighting over a toy*



4. Boxing Day was originally for:

- a) *Having a fight after Christmas excesses*
- b) *Opening the alms box for the poor*
- c) *Boxing up the Christmas decorations*

5. Filled stockings by the fireplace originally started:

- a) *To stop evil elves from visiting children in the bedroom*
- b) *As shoes filled with food that gods swapped for sweets*
- c) *To stretch them so that new ones wouldn't have to be bought*



6. Wreaths were made to represent:

- a) *A victor's crown*
- b) *Everlasting life*
- c) *An amulet to ward off evil*

7. Mistletoe was brought indoors:

- a) *To endow the male members of the house with*
- b) *To give people an excuse to kiss*
- c) *To protect the home from fire and lightning*



vitality



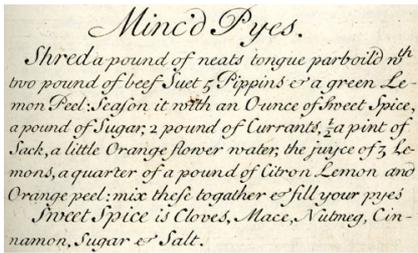
8. Candy canes represent:

- a) *The purity and blood of Jesus*
- b) *A shepherd's crook*
- c) *J for Jesus*

9. Christmas cards were designed to:

- a) *Make it easier to keep in touch with relatives*
- b) *Make sure that good luck was sent around the world*
- c) *Avoid meeting up with relatives*





went to see Jesus

10. The ingredients of Mince Pies represent:

- a) The three kings who visited Jesus
- b) The sweetness of the Christmas message
- c) The sheep who were left on the hills when the shepherds

11. According to legend, Poinsettias were:

- a) Drops of blood from the crucifixion
- b) A gift for Jesus from a poor Mexican boy
- c) The star of Bethlehem fallen to earth



12 You may have heard of Wassailing, but what does it mean?

- a) It's a Roman word for drinking
- b) It's a druid term for feasting
- c) It's an Anglo-Saxon word for "Good Health"

Christmas Traditions - Answers

1. Tinsel represents:

- a) *a spider's web: When Joseph and Mary and Jesus were on their way to Egypt, the story runs, as the evening came they were weary, and they sought refuge in a cave. It was very cold, so cold that the ground was white with hoar frost. A little spider saw the little baby Jesus, and he wished so much that he could do something for him to keep him warm in the cold night. He decided to do the only thing he could do, to spin his web across the entrance of the cave, to make, as it were, a curtain there. Along the path there came a detachment of Herod's soldiers, seeking for children to kill to carry out Herod's bloodthirsty order. When they came to the cave, they were about to burst in to search it, to see if anyone was hiding there, but their captain noticed the spider's web. 'Look,' he said, 'at the spider's web there. It is quite unbroken and there cannot possibly be anyone in the cave, for anyone entering the cave would certainly have torn the web.' So the soldiers passed on, and left the holy family in peace because a little spider had spun his web across the entrance to the cave.*

2. Christmas Trees were first brought indoors and decorated:
 - c) *To ward off the devil: they were believed to have some special power against the darker magics of winter because they were the only plants that stayed green throughout the year.*

3. Crackers were inspired by:
 - d) *The crackle and pops of a log fire: A London sweet maker called Tom Smith was sitting in front of his log fire, he became very interested by the sparks and cracks coming from the fire. Suddenly, he thought what a fun idea it would be, if his sweets and toys could be opened with a crack when their fancy wrappers were pulled in half*

4. Boxing Day was originally for:
 - e) *Opening the alms box for the poor: During the Age of Exploration, when great sailing ships were setting off to discover new land, A Christmas Box was used as a good luck device. It was a small container placed on each ship while it was still in port. It was put there by a priest, and those crewmen who wanted to ensure a safe return would drop money into the box. It was then sealed up and kept on board for the entire voyage. If the ship came home safely, the box was handed over to the priest in the exchange for the saying of a Mass of thanks for the success of the voyage. The Priest would keep the box sealed until the day after Christmas when he would open it to share the contents with the poor.*

5. Filled stockings by the fireplace originally started:
 - d) *As shoes filled with food that gods swapped for sweets: The idea comes from Odin, a figure in Germanic history. Originally, children would take their boots and fill them with straw, sugar, or carrots, so Odin's flying horse Sleipnir would have a treat to enjoy. In response, Odin would reward the children by replacing Sleipnir's food with gifts and candy.*

6. Wreaths were made to represent:
 - d) *A victor's crown: In ancient Rome, people used decorative wreaths as a sign of victory. Some believe that this is where the hanging of wreaths on doors came from.*

7. Mistletoe was brought indoors:

e) *To protect the home from fire and lightning: Mistletoe was held sacred by the Norse, the Celtic Druids and the North American Indians. Druid priests would cut mistletoe from an oak tree with a golden sickle. The branches had to be caught before they touched the ground. They then divided the branches into many sprigs and distributed them to the people, who hung them over doorways as protection against thunder, lightning and other evils.*

8. Candy canes represent:

e) *A shepherd's crook : at the suggestion of the choirmaster at the Cologne Cathedral in Germany. The candy treats were given to children to keep them quiet during ceremonies at the living creche, or Nativity scene*

9. Christmas cards were designed to:

d) *Make it easier to keep in touch with relatives: Our modern day greeting card can trace its origin to a card printed in December 1843 at the instigation of Sir Henry Cole, first director London's Victoria and Albert Museum. Sir Henry would hand write greetings and best wishes to his family, friends, and acquaintances on sheets of paper decorated with Christmas themes or generic holiday cards to which the specific holiday could be added. Sir Henry felt this was most inefficient so he commissioned a Christmas card with a single message that could be duplicated and sent to everyone on his list. The card was produced with the Words "A MERRY CHRISTMAS AND A HAPPY NEW YEAR TO YOU" written across a banner covering the bottom half. This expression was to become the "standard" Christmas card message.*

10. The ingredients of Mince Pies represent:

d) *The three kings who visited Jesus: Cinnamon, cloves and nutmeg were added to dried fruit meat and suet. The three spices represented the three gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh. Oliver Cromwell declared it illegal to eat one on Christmas Day. And they are still illegal to eat today. It is one law that has never been revoked.*

11. According to legend, Poinsettias were:

e) *A gift for Jesus from a poor Mexican boy: There was once a poor Mexican girl called Pepita who had no present to give the the baby Jesus at the Christmas Eve Services. As Pepita walked to the chapel, sadly, her cousin Pedro tried to cheer her up. 'Pepita', he said "I'm sure that even the smallest gift, given by someone who loves him will make Jesus Happy." Pepita didn't know what she could give, so she picked a small handful of weeds from the roadside and made them into a a small bouquet. She felt embarrassed because she could only give this small present to Jesus. As she walked through the chapel to the altar, she remembered what Pedro had said. She began to feel better, knelt down and put the bouquet at the*

bottom of the nativity scene. Suddenly, the bouquet of weeds burst into bright red flowers, and everyone who saw them were sure they had seen a miracle. From that day on, the bright red flowers were known as the 'Flores de Noche Buena', or 'Flowers of the Holy Night'. The red petals are in fact leaves.

12. You may have heard of Wassailing, but what does it mean?

- f) *It's an Anglo-Saxon word for "Good Health": the leader of a group of party goers is described as taking a bowl of drink and, raising it to the assembled crowd, shouting "Wassail!" in the same way one might say "Cheers!" today.*