

# CHRISTMAS TRADITIONS



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# CHRISTMAS TRADITIONS



Christmas has many traditions. We decorate our homes with trees, plants, and wreaths. Special treats are baked, friends and families gather together to exchange gifts. Holiday music is sung and played. All over America, people hang stockings by the fireplaces each Christmas. These traditions have a history. The customs of Christmas are a blend of the celebration of the birth of Christ and harvest and winter solstice festivals. Most American Christmas traditions began in Europe many years ago. **Immigrants** (*people who have moved from their home country*), brought these traditions to America from their **native**, (*home*) countries. The traditions were passed down from one generation to the next. Many of these traditions have become part of the way America celebrates Christmas. It is interesting to learn about American Christmas traditions and how they came about.

# The Christmas Story

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In a small village of Nazareth, in Israel, lived Joseph and Mary. Joseph was a carpenter and Mary was a young woman who would soon become his wife. Mary was visited by an angel who told her she had been chosen to bear a Son and his name was to be Jesus.



When Mary was pregnant, the emperor sent notice that everyone had to register for a new tax. Joseph and Mary left Nazareth for Bethlehem. Mary rode on a donkey while Joseph walked beside her. They traveled for many days and only rested at night.

When they reached Bethlehem it was night. They looked for a place to rest but there were no empty rooms when they reached the inn. The inn keeper felt sorry for them and told them they could stay in the stable where the animals were kept.



So Joseph and Mary went to the stable to stay. Joseph cleaned it and made beds of fresh hay. He found a **manger** (*feeding trough*) which he cleaned and filled with hay to use as a crib. Mary gave birth to a son and they named him Jesus.

When the child was born a bright star appeared over Bethlehem that could be seen from far away. In the fields nearby shepherds were tending their flocks of sheep. An angel appeared to them surrounded by bright light. The shepherds were frightened and tried to run.



"Fear Not," said the angel, "For I bring you tidings of great joy. For unto you is born this day in Bethlehem a Saviour who is Christ the Lord."

"And this shall be a sign unto you. You shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes and lying in a manger." Suddenly the sky was filled with angels, praising God and saying, "Glory to God in the Highest, and on Earth peace, good will toward men."

After the angels departed, the shepherds set out for Bethlehem. When they reached the stable they found the Christ child wrapped in swaddling clothes.



As the star shined over Bethlehem, in the east three Wise Men saw it. They knew it was a sign and they set off to follow the star. They traveled on camels for many days over the mountains, and through the deserts, and plains, following the bright star.

When they finally arrived in Bethlehem they found Jesus in the manger. The Three Wise Men bowed to their knees and offered gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh. They would stay the night in the stable and the next day they returned to their lands to spread the news.



1. Where did Mary and Joseph live?
  - A. Nazareth
  - B. Bethlehem
2. To where did Mary and Joseph have to travel to register for the new tax?
  - A. Nazareth
  - B. Bethlehem
3. Where did Mary and Joseph stay when they arrived?
  - A. the inn
  - B. a stable
4. Who came to visit the baby Jesus?
  - A. shepherds
  - B. The Three Wise Men
  - C. the shepherds and The Three Wise Men
- 5-7. Trace the dotted words, then draw a line from the word to its meaning.

immigrant

feeding trough

native

*person who has moved from their home country*










manger

*home*

# Baking Math



You want to make 96 cookies – half to give as gifts, and another half to bring to the Christmas party. The cookie recipe will make 48 cookies. This means you will have to **double**, or make *two times* the amount, of cookies. Figure out how much of each ingredient you will have to use to double the recipe.

Ingredient	Amount in recipe	Doubled amount
flour	1 ½ C 	1.
cocoa	½ C 	2.
salt	¼ tsp. 	3.
baking soda	¼ tsp. 	4.
baking powder	¼ tsp. 	5.
butter	½ C 	6.
sugar	1 C 	7.
egg	1 	8.
vanilla	1 ½ tsp. 	9.

## Continent of Australia

### *Merry Christmas*

Christmas in Australia and New Zealand comes in the middle of their summer – no White Christmas for them! Most of the time its blue skies, bright sunshine, and temperatures in the 80's or above.



### **Australia:**

Christmas is in the middle of summer.

Australians often enjoy a **barbie** (*barbeque*) on the beach. Christmas dinner is eaten outdoors and is followed by a visit to the beach or a game of cricket.

Santa may be seen in **swimmers** (*swimsuit*) arriving on a surfboard.

Decorations may include kangaroos and koala bears in Santa hats and red scarves. Australians have their own versions of Christmas carols: Santa's Moving to The South Pole, Six White Boomers, The Three Drivers.



Santa's sleigh is pulled by eight white **boomers** (*kangaroos*). To hear the Aussie song *Six White Boomers* follow this [link](#). The songwriter was thinking it was crazy to be singing Christmas songs about snow and ice when the temperature was

around 100° F.

In some parts of Australia there is a new tradition beginning to take hold – that of 'Christmas in July', which is the coldest month of the year as it is in the middle of their winter. Temperatures are still well above freezing but it is cooler than it is in December.

### **New Zealand:**

In New Zealand, it is the middle of summer at Christmas time. Instead of a hot drink Santa often gets a cooling beer as a snack on Christmas Eve. Christmas day families often have a picnic or go to the beach for Christmas dinner. It is more traditional to have a cold ham than a hot turkey.

## AUSTRALIA COMPREHENSION CHECK

Trace the correct answer.

1. In what season does Christmas arrive in Australia?

summer

winter

2. What are *boomers*?

kangaroos

reindeer

3. Where would an Australian or New Zealander most likely visit on Christmas day?

a ski resort

the beach

4. What drink would Santa receive for a snack in New Zealand?

beer

hot cocoa

5. Color Australia and New Zealand **red** on the world map.