

The Magic of Christmas

The magic of Christmas is so many things...
A holly wreath and a Church bell that rings.
A tree all a-glitter, a candle's soft glow
And moonlight reflected on new-fallen snow.

A kitchen's aurora of sugar and spice,
Bright packages wrapped up so pretty and nice.
Red stockings o'erflowing with candy and toys
And hung by the fireplace for good girls and boys.

The magic of Christmas is good everywhere -
Sweet voices of carolers upon frosted air.
The jingle of sleigh bells across hill and vale.
Glad ring of the postman delivering the mail.

Good friends dropping in and the laughter so gay
Store windows decked out with delightful display.
Dear Santa Clause chuckling his faded 'HO HO HO!'
And little tots whispering as Santa bends low.

The magic of Christmas is so many things...
A candlelit church and choir that sings
The being together with people we love
Belief that the Christmas star still shines above.

The caring and giving and goodwill towards men,
The Christ Child reborn in our hearts once again.
Contentment and peace and a faith strong within.
A spirit of love that makes all the world kin.

The magic of Christmas is all this and more,
May your day be merry with much joy in store.
And may the bright memories and glow ne'er depart -
The magic of Christmas live on in your heart!

By Beverly J. Anderson



Advent Tree: A way of marking the days until Christmas, start December 1st.



Christmas days will soon be here
And I can hardly wait;
I've made this little Christmas TREE
To help you celebrate!
Each day choose one thing
To help you remember.
That happy, happy Christmas day
The 25th of December.
Please put this tree where all can see
The symbols of the season.
And when you reach the very last piece
It will be Christmas Day!

Directions: Every day until Christmas, starting December 1st put a piece on the Tree. You don't have to go in any particular order. Find the card that goes with that piece and read it. On the bottom of the cards are some ideas you can do each day. **Have a Fun and Merry Christmas!**

Reason for Christmas

Christmas comes but once a year
for all adults, girls, and boys .
With gifts from family and friends
A lot of them made of toys.



Yes Christmas comes but once a year
and so they say
To brighten us on our merry way.
"Have good cheer and a joyous day"

But also remember the meaning
Of this much celebrated season,
For without the life of Christ
There wouldn't be a reason.

To have gentle hearts and willing hands
To help our neighbors far and near,
To spread Christ's love
And fill the world with cheer.

And so I say yet again
Tho Christmas comes but once a year
Keep the Spirit that makes the season
For without the life of Christ
There wouldn't be a reason.

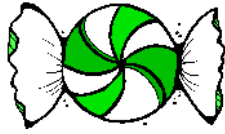
- Becky Pederson



PEPPERMINT COOKIES

Ingredients:

A bag of round peppermints
Cookie cutters
Cookie sheet
Cookie spray
Aluminum foil
Hot pad or oven mitt.



Instructions:

1. Pre-heat the oven to 325 degrees.
2. Cover cookies sheet with aluminum foil
3. Spray the cookie cutters with cooking spray and place on the cookie sheet.
4. Put peppermints in each cookie cutter. When you bake them the candies will melt and the mixture will need to reach the whole inside of the cutter, so be sure and put enough candies in.
5. Put the cookie sheet in the oven. Watch it carefully until all the candy has melted.
6. When the peppermints are melted, take the cookie sheet out and let the cookies cool.
7. When they are cool, pop them out and ENJOY!



STOCKING



The tradition of hanging stockings from the fireplace originated from one of the most famous Christmas stories of St. Nicholas.

The story comes from 1800's, when the father of three young maidens could not afford a dowry for his daughters to be married. From his castle, St. Nicholas heard of the poor misfortune of the maidens, and secretly threw three bags of gold coins down their chimney. It is said that the gold coins landed in the girls stockings, which were hanging in the fireplace to dry.

Later, in Holland, children would leave out their wooden shoes in hopes that St. Nicholas would fill them with goodies.

The first stockings filled were to help the poor. At this time of giving, remember those who don't have so much!



Make a special stocking stuffer for each member of your family.



Write a letter of appreciation to each member of your family and put it in their stocking to be opened on Christmas Eve, or Christmas Day.



What is Christmas?

Faith and hope and love, which cannot be bought or sold or bartered, but only given away, are the wellsprings - firm and deep - of Christmas celebrations. These are the gifts without price, the ornaments incapable of limitation discovered only within oneself, and are, therefore, unique.

They are not always easy to come by, but they are in unlimited supply - ever in the province of all.

This Christmas: Mend a quarrel. Seek out a forgotten friend. Dismiss suspicion and replace it with trust. Write a love letter. Share some treasure. Give a soft answer. Encourage Youth. Manifest your loyalty in word and deed. Keep a promise. Listen, Apologize if you are wrong. Try to understand. Flout envy. Examine your demands on others. Think first of someone else. Appreciate. Be kind. Be gentle. Laugh a little. Laugh a little more. Deserve confidence. Take up arms against malice. Express your gratitude. Go to church. Take pleasure in the beauty and wonder of this earth. These are inklings of a vast category, a more scratching of the surface.

They are simple things. You have heard them all before, but their influence has never been measured.

SNOWMAN



My Snowman Friend

I call him Mr. Frosty-Face!
He brings us to much fun
With black coal eyes, and carrot nose,
With a smile for everyone!

If we play ring-a-roses,
Then all our friends join in!
But when the game is 'statues',
He always know he'll win!



When I talk, I know he'll listen
To every word I say.
I can shout, or knock his hat off,
And he'll never run away!

But when the weather's warmer,
Then frosty-Face must go -
Until the next time that he comes
With winter's ice and snow.



Build a snowman with your family. If there's no snow, make a snowman ornament.



Go sledding or tubing. Take lots of hot chocolate!

POINSETTIA



The Legend of the Poinsettia

In a certain village in Mexico, many years ago, it was customary on Christmas Eve to take gifts to the church and place the before the crèche. One evening there was a small boy standing outside the church door. How he wished he could enter the church and present a gift to Jesus, but he was poor. He had nothing to give. "I can at least pray," he thought to himself. He knelt silently outside the church window and listened to the voices raised in song. When he rose to his feet again, he was amazed, at what he saw in the spot where he had knelt. It was a beautiful plant with scarlet leaves and yellow flower in the center. He had never seen anything like it. Realizing it was a miracle, he carefully plucked it and took it into the church. As he placed the beautiful flower before the manger, he whispered, "This is my gif to the Christ Child. My own precious gift."

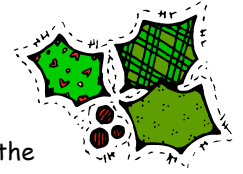


Take a poinsettia to your parents, grandparents, or a friend.



Learn about other Christmas plants and flowers.

HOLLY



Evergreens were used for decorative and ceremonial purposes long before the birth of Christ. The Romans, during their Saturnalia, or winter festival, carried laurel, holly, and other greens in processions. They also decorated their homes and temples with garlands and flowers.

Holly is one of the most common of the Christmas greens. It is said to symbolize Christ's crown of thorns; it's short, pointed leaves representing his wounds; and it's red berries, his blood.

There are two kinds of Holly, one prickly and one smooth. In a European household with prickly holly at Christmas, it was thought that the husband would rule during the coming year. Smooth holly meant the wife would rule.

Holly stands for PEACE and JOY!



Sing "Deck the Halls"



FIR TREE



Green is the color of the stately fir tree which remains green all year long. This color depicts the everlasting hope of mankind. Also the needles of the fir tree point heavenward symbolic of mans returning thoughts toward heaven.

Legend of the Christmas Tree

There is a legend that came down to us from the early days of Christianity in England. One of those helping to spread Christianity among the Druids was a monk named Wilfred. One day surrounded by a group of his converts, he struck down a huge oak tree which in the Druid religion, was an object of worship. As it fell to the earth the oak tree split into four pieces and from its center sprung up a young fir tree. Wilfred turned to speak. "This little tree shall be your Holy Tree tonight. It is the wood of peace for your houses are built of the fir. It is the sign of endless life for its leaves are evergreen. See how it points toward the heavens? Let this be called the tree of the Christ Child. Gather about it, not in the wilderness, but in your homes. There it will be surrounded by loving gifts and rites of kindness." To this day, that is why the fir tree is one of our loveliest symbols of Christmas.

* Take a miniature decorated Christmas tree to the home of a shut-in or elderly person to brighten their home.

CANDY CANE

The Candy Cane represents the Shepherd's Crook. The crook on the staff helps bring back the strayed sheep to the flock. The Candy Cane represents the helping had we should show at Christmas time. The Candy Cane is the symbol that we are our brother's keeper.

Meaning of the Candy Cane:

The first Candy Cane
Honors Jesus
A shepherd's crook
Inverted a "J" for Jesus
By Jesus' stripes we are heaped
Red is for the blood he shed
White is how he washes away our sins
And makes us pure as snow.
One blood stripe for the God
Of all the children of men.
Three fine stripes for
Father, Son, and the Holy Ghost.



- If you haven't already, put some candy canes on your Christmas tree to remind you about bringing his sheep back to the fold.
- Tie the poem to a candy cane and deliver to someone who needs your friendship.

CANDLE

The Legend of the Poinsettia

The candle shows man's thanks for the star of long ago. It's small light is the mirror of starlight. At first, candles were placed on the tree. They were light many glowing stars shining against the dark tree. The colored lights have now taken over their remembrance.

Many people place candles on their windowsills at Christmas time. This practice which originated in the Middle Ages, was intended to guide the Christ Child to Christian homes.



Keeping Family & Friends together at Christmas time. Ask them no matter where they are to join in a candle lighting ceremony on Christmas. At a certain time pre-arranged have each person light a candle with a special wish for the coming year.



Make your own Christmas candles as a family.



GINGERBREAD



The Story of the Gingerbread

Gingerbread is a popular treat during the Christmas holidays. Children often help in the making of gingerbread cookies, which are usually in the shapes of figures. Gingerbread "men" may be dried to hang later on the tree. Elaborately decorated gingerbread houses are a special treat, not only because of their beauty, but because they require so much care to make. Gingerbread hasn't always been so closely associated with Christmas.

The origin of gingerbread in Europe can be traced to the 11th century, when the Crusaders returning from the Middle East brought a new spice, ginger, back with them. Very soon after numerous varieties of gingerbread appeared throughout Europe. The name "gingerbread" a derivation of the Latin word for ginger, "Zingibar", did not actually come into use until the 15th century, Nuremberg Germany has become known as the 'gingerbread capital of the world'.

Gingerbread houses, first made Germany, and called 'Hexenhausle', were popularized in Europe and North America at the end of the 19th century by the Brothers Grimm fairy tale "Hansel and Gretel".

Gingerbread houses because a special favorite in the United States, where they were decorated much more elaborately, and are frequently given as presents.

- Make gingerbread ornaments or gingerbread house.
- Read 'Hansel and Gretel' or "The Gingerbread Man".

SANTA CLAUSE



The jolly, old elf, is a symbol of Christmas too. He's the sign of CARING, LOVING, & SHARING! The twinkle in his eye is a reflection of the joy that comes into a person's heart as he lovingly serves others, gives of himself, of his earthly goods. The Spirit of Christ prompts such loving acts from Santa, from me, and from you.

The History of Santa Clause

The jolly, plump, white-bearded man in the red suit who is the modern Santa Clause is largely a legendary figure. His name and some of his personal qualities however, are derived from those of an early Christian saint.

The saint, whose name was Nicholas, lived in Asia Minor between about 280 AD and 350 AD and was the Bishop of Myra. He was known for his great generosity and his love for children. It is said that he often went in disguise to give presents to the poor. As stories of his good deeds spread, people began to think of St. Nicholas as the donor of unexpected presents.

Saint Nicholas was called Saint Nicholas or Kris Kringle in Germany and Saint Nikolaas or Sinterklaas in Holland. After the Dutch colonists carried his legend to America in the 17th century, the English settlers began to call the saint, Santa Clause.

The Dutch thought of Sinterklaas as a round little man who wore a typical Dutch costume, including knee breeches and a broad-brimmed hat.



Write a letter to Santa about the good things you've done.

STAR



The star was the heavenly sign of promise long ago. God promised a Savior for the world and the star was a sign of the fulfillment of that promise. The countless shining stars at night, one for each man, now show the burning hope of all mankind.

Throughout history, the star has been a symbol of high hopes and high ideals - hope for good fortune, hope for reaching above oneself.

For all human beings, regardless of religion, stars in general have special meaning. And all share the same heavens, no matter what barriers keep them apart on earth.



Take time to look at the winter stars together. As you look talk about the special star that marked Christ's birth.



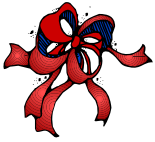
Put a star on top of your Christmas tree, to remind your family that Christ was announced by a star.

CHRISTMAS BOW

A bow is placed on a gift to remind us of the brotherhood of man. We should remember that the bow is tied as man should be tied, all of us together, with bonds of good will toward each other. Good will is the message of the bow.

Let There Be Peace on Earth

Sy Miller and Bill Jackson



Let there be peace on earth
And let it begin with me.
Let there be peace on earth
The peace that was meant to be.

With God as our Father
Brothers all are we
Let me walk with my brother
In perfect harmony.

Let peace begin with me
Let this be the moment now.
With ev'ry step I take
Let this be my solemn vow.



To take each moment and live
Each moment in peace eternally
Let there be peace on earth
And let it begin with me.

What can you do to bring peace into your family this Christmas?

CHRISTMAS GIFTS



The custom of exchanging gifts at Christmas time stems from an ancient Roman practice. During the Saturnalia, the Romans presented their emperor and each other with tokens of good luck, called *strenae*. At first, these had little material value, being merely symbols of the donor's good wishes. Later, it became customary to give precious gifts, including clothing and objects made of gold or silver. The story of the Tree Wise Men, who brought gifts to the Holy Child has also contributed to the Christmas tradition. Throughout the centuries the anniversary of the birth of Christ has renewed feelings of joy and thanksgiving in those who celebrate it.

Today, this wonderful tradition of giving still touches our hearts in a special way. It is not very difficult to look beyond all the colorful ribbons and bright paper to feel the same spirit of giving as on that very first Christmas. After all, the most precious gift is the gift of love!



Give a gift to Jesus, wrap it and put it under your tree.



Get a special box and have each person in your family write down what characteristic you are going to work on the next year. Make that your gift to Christ.

REINDEER



Rudolf the red-nosed reindeer came to life in 1939 when Robert Mays boss asked him to write a Christmas story to give away to the customer's children. At the time Robert's wife was ill with cancer, and he was filled with grief. He thought of his four year old daughter, Barbara. She didn't understand why her mother couldn't go places or play with her. Robert also thought of his own childhood. In school he was ahead of the other kids. Tall and thin, the youngest in his class, he didn't always fit in. The other children made fun of him. He decided to write a story to comfort Barbara and other children who felt different and left out. His boss said the story should be about an animal. Robert thought of a reindeer. The reindeer would be different as Robert had been when he was a child. But the story would have a happy ending. Whatever made the reindeer different would make him a hero. Santa would need a reindeer that was strong, fast, able to fly in the dark and snowy weather. Finally, he had it! A nose... to shine in the dark and light the way, a big red shiny nose. That is how Rudolf the red-nosed reindeer came to be. The children loved it. The department store gave out 2 million copies that first season. Robert's story was a great success. In 1949 Robert's brother-in-law Johnny Marks wrote the song, "Rudolf the Red-Nosed Reindeer", based on Robert's book. Gene Autry recorded the song in 1950

The story of the kind-hearted little reindeer still brings special cheer at Christmas - and all because Robert May remembered what it was like to be different.

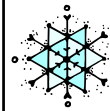


Sing the Song "Rudolf the Red Nose Reindeer"

SNOWFLAKE



Snowflakes falling from the sky
Help remind us exactly why
Christmas came so long ago
Cleansing the earth like each new snow
One pure, unique, and perfect form
Who came to each to withstand the storm.



Each snowflake melts as does the ice
But we can't forget the sacrifice;
So hang this as a symbol of the season
To recollect what gives us reason
One pure, unique, and perfect form,
Who came to earth to transcend the storm.

As you watch the snowflakes fall, remember everyone is unique in their own way.

- Make paper snowflakes to hang in the windows.



ORNAMENT

The 1st American Christmas Ornaments were homemade. Children enjoyed making long strings of popcorn and cranberries, paper chails, and paper stars. Sometimes they cut and colored a St. Nicholas figure. Their mothers would add apples, oranges, nuts, and popcorn balls.

Today most American Christmas trees are loaded with ornaments and colored lights bought from a store. Dazzling balls, bells, stars, elves, reindeer, angels, tiny stocking, and horns, sparkling tinsel, and gleaming icicles - symbols from many ages and many lands.



Talk about some of the Christmas ornaments on your tree and where they came from.



Make a special ornament representing your family to give to your parents or grandparents.

ANGEL



An angel at the top of the tree symbolizes the angel bringing glad tidings of great joy to the shepherds abiding in the field.

Angels do many important job's in God's kingdom. In the bible we see angels bringing special messages, helping God's people when they are in trouble, and inspiring them to God's will. And we know only a small part of all the work angel's do.

Some people in our lives are a lot like angels. They work behind the scenes to help us, and are examples that give us strength to do what is right.



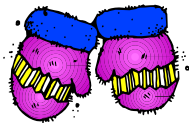
Make a special Thank You for angels who have blessed your life.



Think of reasons to be thankful for the gifts God has given you that have enabled you to be a blessing to others.

MITTENS

Winter Wonderland



The trees are thick with the New fallen snow. It covers the ground and hides all that is beneath it. The pure white on the trees and the ground mixes with the rich blue of the sky an all other colors fade away. The snow crystals reflect the brilliant light form the sun an d create a shimmering echo of the world. You can no longer tell the difference between the snowy reality and the sparkling illusion that clouds your head. As the fluffy snow falls thick on the ground in the dark of night.

Friends make you warm inside, even when it's cold outside!



Enjoy a hot cup of cocoa with family and friends. Share Christmas memories!

HEART - RED



Red is the first color of Christmas. It was first used by the faithful people to remind them of the blood, which was shed for all the people by the Savior Christ gave his life and shed his blood that every man might have God's gift of eternal life. Red is deep, intense, vivid. It's the greatest color of all. It is the symbol for the gift of God.

What Can I Give Him?

What can I give Him?

Poor as I am?

If I were a shepherd

I would bring a lamb.

If I were a wise man

I would do my part.

Yet what can I give him,

Give him my heart.

- By Christina G. Rossetti



This Christmas give gifts from the heart. Put a lot of thought into each of the gifts you give.



Share your heart with your neighbors.

CHRISTMAS BELL



As the last sheep are found by the sound of the bell, it should ring for man to return to the fold. It means guidance and return. It further signifies that all are precious in the eyes of the Lord.

Do you Hear the Bells?

As the legend goes, the bells of the small town would not ring unless a gift of love was placed on the altar. Kings and men of great wealth placed untold jewels on the altar, but year after year the bells remained silent. Then one Christmas Eve, a small child in a tattered coat made his way down the aisle and without anyone noticing, he took off his coat and placed it on the alter. The bells rang out joyously throughout the land to mark the unselfish giving of the small boy.

Listen carefully - do you hear the bells?

- Attach this story to a bell and give as a gift.

SANTA'S TOYS (bear)



How Santa Gets All Those Toys Into the Bag

It was the biggest accident since Blitzen fell into the chocolate vat. But I didn't know it would happen. Honest! You see, the problem started when I got curious about Santa's bag. I wanted to know just how it worked.

Bad decision. I should have just asked but instead I stuck my nose in the wrothe place and opened the bag. Ka-BOOM! Ker-Plooy! The whole tings blew apart, smashing me and the bag, and the toys into the next snow bank!

I've learned since that, the inside of the bag occupies a space beyond both time and space. It's like a little black hole, Santa can pack a thousand miles worth of stuff into one square inch.

I've also learned not to stick my nose where it doesn't belong!! Remember: No Peeking!!

- Buy some toys for children who won't have much of a Christmas.
- Make or buy a teddy bear and give to someone who could use a friend this Christmas.

CHRISTMAS LIGHTS

Before modern electricity, candles decorated Christmas trees. Now trees are usually strung with colored lights, and sometimes they decorate whole houses or whole streets. On roof tops and front lawns there are lighted Christmas figures from Santa and reindeer, to the entire manger scene.

The American Christmas is a feast of lights!

A flickering candle, a display of lights, a bonfire, or an exploding firecracker - all express Christmas joy, a joy in warmth, light, and life itself.

- Drive around town and look at all the Christmas Lights.
- Put up a few extra strings of lights in your yard to celebrate the season.



WREATH



The wreath symbolizes the eternal nature of love; it never ceases stops or ends. It is made of many things, and in many colors. It should remind us of all the things of Christmas.

The wreath had come that brittle cold winter, from a widow and child Father had helped. He'd taken them a cord of good pitch wood and stocked it neatly in the snow.

All bundled up, the young daughter, Martha, handed father the fragile Christmas wreath made from the willows and an old worn ribbon. A red ribbon we had seen in her hair.

Now every year since, the wreath had hung proudly at Christmas time on the front door. And each year I watch father hang the wreath and see a certain reverence in the task.

This year a three foot grandson scowled and said, "Grandpa, why do you hang that old wreath?" Father paused, then said quietly, "for Martha, and because it's the real meaning of Christmas"

Lovell M Durham, Jr.



Make a wreath to hang on your front door. If you already have one make it for a neighbor or friend.

JOY

A spontaneous embrace is filled with
Grateful affection
The warmth of a relationship is renewed
By a simple greeting card.
Mom and Dad share a deep closeness as they watch
Their children playing with new toys.

Joy!

Potpourri fills the house with the
Scent of the season
Cider tingles on the tongues of carolers just
Finishing their rounds
Loved ones, filled with lazy satisfaction following the
holiday dinner, surrounded the hearth...

Joy!

And most, joyous of all... He is with us.

- Jack Mayford

- Sing "Joy to the World"