

THE HISTORY OF CHRISTMAS

Christmas, celebrated on December 25th, is a joyful holiday that commemorates the birth of Jesus Christ according to Christian beliefs. However, Christmas has not always been associated with Santa Claus and gift-giving.



In ancient Rome, people celebrated Saturnalia, a festival honoring Saturn, the god of agriculture. This week-long party was filled with fun and games, and everyone was given a break from their work. As Christianity spread, some of these traditions became intertwined with Christmas.

The name "Christmas" comes from "Christ's Mass," which refers to a special church service. Initially, Christmas was primarily observed as a religious day. However, over time, it evolved into a celebration that incorporated various customs from different regions.



During the 1800s, Christmas trees gained popularity in Germany as they brought greenery and life into homes during the cold winter. The trend further spread when Queen Victoria of England displayed a Christmas tree, causing the idea to quickly catch on.

Santa Claus, the jolly man in red, has his roots in St. Nicholas, a kind bishop from Turkey who lived in the 4th century. St. Nicholas was famous for secretly giving gifts to people in need. The image of Santa flying in his sleigh pulled by reindeer was dreamed up much later.

In many countries, Christmas is a time for family gatherings, delicious feasts, and giving gifts, but each culture adds its own unique touch to the celebration. From Christmas carols to special treats, the spirit of Christmas brings warmth and happiness during the winter season.



Name _____

Date _____

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Use context clues to determine the meaning of the following words.

1. commemorates _____

2. Saturnalia _____

3. intertwined _____

4. Christ's Mass _____

5. incorporated _____

6. greenery _____

7. jolly _____

8. culture _____



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Answer the following reading comprehension questions about the passage.

 According to the passage, what was the original purpose of Christmas?

 Why did Christmas mix with traditions like Saturnalia?

 Why might Christmas have evolved from a religious day to a global celebration?

 How might Christmas trees have affected winter spirits?

 What can you infer about the role of Santa Claus in Christmas?

 How has Christmas evolved over the centuries?
