

Christmas in England (Student A)

Christmas Eve - December 24th

In England less emphasis is placed on Christmas Eve than in other countries, much more is made of Christmas Day and Boxing Day. Carol singing, midnight church services and going out to the pub are some of the activities that many families enjoy (sometimes all three activities can be combined into one fun night out!).

Night time on Christmas Eve though is a very exciting time for young children. It is the time when Santa or **Father Christmas** comes. In the morning when the children wake up they open their stocking presents. Traditionally on Christmas Eve mince pies and sherry (or milk) are left out for Father Christmas and nowadays carrots are left for his reindeer. Most children are in bed way before midnight waiting for Father Christmas to visit.

Christmas Day December 25th

The origins of the now traditional Christmas Celebration, distinct from earlier pagan winter holidays, date back to sixth century England. By the middle ages, it was a well established important holiday, with traditional customs, music and feasting. Customs from pre Christian days were incorporated into the Celebrations, and many still remain.

The present day Christmas festivities in the UK sees the celebrators adorning their homes with Christmas trees, lights, tinsel (sparkly rope) and other decorative items.

The traditional Christmas dinner

It is a mouthwatering affair with the main dish being roasted turkey with vegetables (sprouts , potatoes and carrots) and sauces. The dessert is usually a rich, fruity Christmas pudding with brandy sauce . For English kids, Christmas is the time to have fun with family and friends and receive gifts from Father Christmas. **Crackers** are very popular and accompany many meals over the Christmas period, especially on Christmas Day .

The Queen's Message

One Christmas ritual is the British monarch's broadcast on Christmas day. The tradition began in 1932 when King George V read a special speech written by Rudyard Kipling. The broadcast was an enormous success. It began, "I speak now from my home and from my heart, to you all..."

Queen Elizabeth II continues the tradition to this day. Every year she broadcasts her message on Christmas Day, and it is heard by millions of people all over the world. In England most people watch or listen to it whilst digesting their Christmas Dinner! (it is broadcasted at 15.00. Dinner starts usually at 13.00 on Christmas day!)

SPEAKING ACTIVITY: Explain what you have learnt about Christmas to your partner. Your partner is going to tell you about crackers and Boxing Day.

FUN ACTIVITY: To know how people feel about traditional Christmas food go to: <http://nunzioweb.com/games/attacksprouts/attacksprouts2.shtml> and play the game.

To know more about British life and culture go to <http://projectbritain.com/festivals/december.htm>

Christmas in England (Student B)



What is a Christmas Cracker?

Crackers are very popular and accompany many meals over the Christmas period, especially on Christmas Day .

A Christmas Cracker is a brightly **coloured paper tube**, twisted at both ends. Two people pull an end of the cracker and when the cracker breaks, a small chemical strip goes “Pop!” and the contents fall out.

A Christmas cracker traditionally contains a paper crown (see photo above), a small gift and a joke written on a slip of paper.

The gift in a cracker depends on how much you have paid for the cracker. The more you pay the better the quality of the gift. A box of 12 crackers costing £10 could come with gifts such as a shoe horn, compact mirror, playing cards, screwdrivers, address book, tape measure, pad lock, bottle opener, tweezers, travel chess, photo frame and pen.

How to pull a cracker

The traditional way to pull a cracker is crossing your arms and pulling a whole circle of crackers around the table. Everyone holds their cracker in their right hand and pulls their neighbours cracker with the free left hand.

Boxing Day - December 26th

In England Boxing Day celebrated on December 26th, is traditionally a time to give gifts to tradesmen, servants, and friends.

It originated in medieval times, when every priest was supposed to empty the alms box of his church and distribute gifts to the poor. Wealthy people after Christmas dinner packed up the remains in boxes and gave them out to their servants.

In the UK Boxing Day is still a public holiday, some shops and supermarkets open nowadays, but banks and most offices remain closed.

New Year's Day

New Year's Day is the first day of the year, in the Gregorian calendar. In modern times, it is January 1. It is a time for looking forward and wishing for a good year ahead. It is also a holiday and time to make New Year Resolutions.

People welcome in the New Year on the night before. This is called **New Year's Eve**. All over Britain there are parties, fireworks, singing and dancing, to ring out the old year and ring in the new. As the clock - **Big Ben** - strikes midnight, people link arms and sing a song called Auld Lang Syne . It reminds them of old and new friends.

SPEAKING ACTIVITY: Explain to your partner what you have learnt about crackers and Boxing Day. Your partner is going to tell you about Christmas and *The Queen's message*.

FUN ACTIVITY: To see somebody wearing a paper crown go to:
<http://nunzioweb.com/games/attacksprouts/attacksprouts2.shtml> and play the game

To know more about British life and culture go to <http://projectbritain.com/festivals/december.htm>

