**CHRISTMAS TRIVIA**

1) What Christian group banned Christmas in Boston from 1659 to 1681?

2) The French word “Noel” is often used around Christmas, but what does it mean in Latin?

3) What old Christmas tradition signals to people passing by that the residents of a house are Christian?

4) How many miles did Mary and Joseph have to travel to get to Bethlehem? (40, 80, or 160)?

5) True or False: The Bible says Jesus was born in December.

6) True or False: Christmas wasn’t celebrated for over 300 centuries after Jesus died.

7) What Roman holiday had a large influence when Christmas is celebrated?

8) What was the name of the angel who told Mary that she was with child?

9) In what century was the first written use of Xmas?

10) The modern Santa Claus is mainly a mix of what two figures?

11) What entrepreneur was the first person to dress up as Santa in his department store and started the tradition of department store / mall Santas?

12) The German Nazi Regime replaced Santa Claus / St. Nick with whom?

13) In what decade did NORAD (North American Aerospace Defense Command, formerly CONAD) start tracking Santa on Christmas Eve?

14) In what country did Silent Night originate?

15) What popular holiday song was written during the Cuban missile crisis and was a plea for peace?

16) What animal parts were the first artificial Christmas trees made from?

17) What plant-based Christmas tradition did servants in Victorian England popularize?

18) Who created the first electric light Christmas display?

19) What country is the Poinsettia, with its red and green foliage, native to?

Mexico

20) What former large retail store commissioned and published the book Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer?

21) True or False: The birthplace of Jesus is prophesied in the Bible.

22) Who was Good King Wenceslas, of whom the carol is written?

TRIVIA ANSWERS

**1) What Christian group banned Christmas in Boston from 1659 to 1681?**

The Puritans

Even though the ban on Christmas was lifted in 1681, Christmas didn’t become popular in Boston until the mid-19th century. Puritans also suppressed Christmas in England as well, during the Interregnum.

**2) The French word “Noel” is often used around Christmas, but what does it mean in Latin?**

Birth

You can definitely see why Noel became so synonymous with Christmas.

**3) What old Christmas tradition signals to people passing by that the residents of a house are Christian?**

**Putting candles in the window.**

It was not only a way for residents to show their faith but also an invitation for other Christians to join them in celebration.

**4) How many miles did Mary and Joseph have to travel to get to Bethlehem (40, 80, or 160)?**

80 miles.

**5) True or False: The Bible says Jesus was born in December.**

False. (The Bible does not state the exact date of Jesus’ birth.)

**6) True or False: Christmas wasn’t celebrated for over 300 centuries after Jesus died.**

True. (The first Christmas was celebrated on December 25th, 336 A.D.)

**7) What Roman holiday had a large influence when Christmas is celebrated?**

Saturnalia was held from December 17-23rd.

Saturnalia was one of the most popular holidays in the Roman calendar. It involved lots of feasts, drinking, and merry making. There was lots of gift giving especially on December 19th, Sigillaria.

Some people believe that the origin for the date for Christmas was the Roman feast day Sol Invictus (winter solstice on the Roman calendar) which was on December 25th.

Others argue that Jesus was conceived on March 25 (the date of the vernal equinox) and therefore his date of birth would be 9 months later, on December 25.

**8) What was the name of the angel who told Mary that she was with child?**

Gabriel.

**9) In what century was the first written use of Xmas?**

The 16th century

* The “X” in Xmas comes from the Greek letter Chi which looks like an “X”.
* The letter “X” has long been used as an abbreviation for Christ since the Greek word for Christ begins with what looks like an “X”.
* Christ was often written with the letters Chi (X) Rho (p) which looks like Xp.

**10) The modern Santa Claus is mainly a mix of what two figures?**

Saint Nicholas (Sinterklaas in Dutch) and

Father Christmas.

St. Nicholas was a Greek bishop who lived in the 4th century and was famous for his generosity and gift giving. Sinterklaas (Dutch for St. Nicholas) gives gifts on December 5th and is based on St. Nicholas.

Father Christmas dates back to at least the 16th century and is the personification of Christmas cheer and is widely considered synonymous with the modern Santa Claus.

There are lots of other gift giving figures around Europe and elsewhere, but Father Christmas and Saint Nicholas are the main influences behind Santa Claus as we know him today.

**11) What entrepreneur was the first person to dress up as Santa in his department store and started the tradition of department store / mall Santas?**

James Edgar

He owned a department store in Brockton, Massachusetts.

He first dressed up as Santa in 1890 to the great delight of his patrons,

with children coming from miles around to visit him.

**12) The German Nazi Regime replaced Santa Claus / St. Nick with whom?**

Odin.

Odin was branded as Solstice man – a catchy super hero name. They also renamed Christmas trees, changed the words to Silent night, and there were even swastika shaped tree lights.

**13) In what decade did NORAD (North American Aerospace Defense Command, formerly CONAD) start tracking Santa on Christmas Eve?**

The 1950’s (specifically 1955)

The NORAD Tracks Santa program officially started on December 24th, 1955 and has continued every year since. In 2004 Google started tracking Santa as well.

**14) In what country did Silent Night originate?**

Austria

It’s original German title was Stille Nacht, Heilige Nacht.

The lyrics were written by Joseph Mohr in 1816 and the music was composed by Franz Xaver Gruber 1818.

As a heartwarming Christmas miracle, it was sung during the impromptu WWI Christmas truce. Because it was a carol popular in both English speaking and German speaking countries, it was known by both sides. Both sides sang it in their respective languages.

**15) What popular holiday song was written during the Cuban missile crisis and was a plea for peace?**

Do You Hear What I Hear?

Gloria Shayne Baker composed the music, and the lyrics were written by her husband **Noel Regney**.

Born in France, **Regney** studied music in Paris. During WW2 he was drafted into the German army. He hated the Nazis. So, while still in the German army, Regney became a member of the French underground. He then deserted the German army and lived underground with the French for the rest of the war. In 1952, Noel Regney moved to Manhattan.

 “During the 1962 crisis, en route to my home, I saw two mothers with their babies in strollers. The little angels were looking at each other and smiling and reminded me of newborn lambs. Thus, the song begins, “Said the night wind to the little lamb….” The song concludes, “Pray for peace, people, everywhere.”

**16) What animal parts were the first artificial Christmas trees made from?**

Goose feathers painted green.

These feather trees were first made in Germany during the 19th century. Another form of artificial Christmas trees were wooden pyramids painted green and lit by candles.

**17) What plant based Christmas tradition did servants in Victorian England popularize?**

Kissing under the mistletoe.

Mistletoe was an important part of Celtic and Norse religion and became intertwined with Christmas, but no one knows exactly how the tradition of kissing started. Mistletoe did have an association with fertility among druids, which is one possible origin, but no one knows for sure. But what we do know is that the tradition of kissing under the mistletoe spread from the servants of Victorian households to the upper classes of Victorian society.

**18) Who created the first electric light Christmas display?**

Thomas Edison

In 1880 he put up the first Christmas display made from electric lights to advertise his light bulbs. A few years later an inventor named Edward Johnson, a colleague of Thomas Edision, created the first string of Christmas lights.

**19) What country is the Poinsettia, with its red and green foliage, native to?**

Mexico

It derives its English name from Joel Roberts Poinsett, the first US minister to Mexico. He introduced the plant to the US in 1825.

**20) What former large retail store commissioned and published the book Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer?**

Montgomery Ward

They ordered a new Christmas book be made so that they could hand them out for free to customers, which would be cheaper than buying and giving away coloring books for Christmas as they had done in the past. They gave the task to Robert L. May who wrote Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer in 1939. In a surprisingly generous gesture, Montgomery Ward gave May the copyright for Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer.

**21) True or False: The birthplace of Jesus is prophesied in the Bible.**

True: It was prophesied in Micah 5:2 that Bethlehem would be

the birthplace of the future King of the Jews. This small Judean city

near Jerusalem became the site of the Nativity.

Bethlehem, which means "house of bread," was also the home of King David.

**22) Who was Good King Wenceslas , of whom the carol is written?**

King Wenceslas became Duke of Bohemia in A.D. 924. He was a man of great faith who worked diligently to thread Christianity throughout Bohemia. King Wenceslas served his people very well, especially the children and the poor. His reign lasted only five years. His brother, Boleslaw, invited Wenceslas to a religious festival, then attacked and murdered him on the way there.