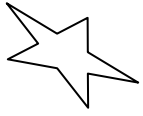


THE TECHNICAL COLLEGE PIATRA-NEAMT



S T A P

ENGLISH WRITTEN SCHOOL MAGAZINE

Issue no.68

December, 2011

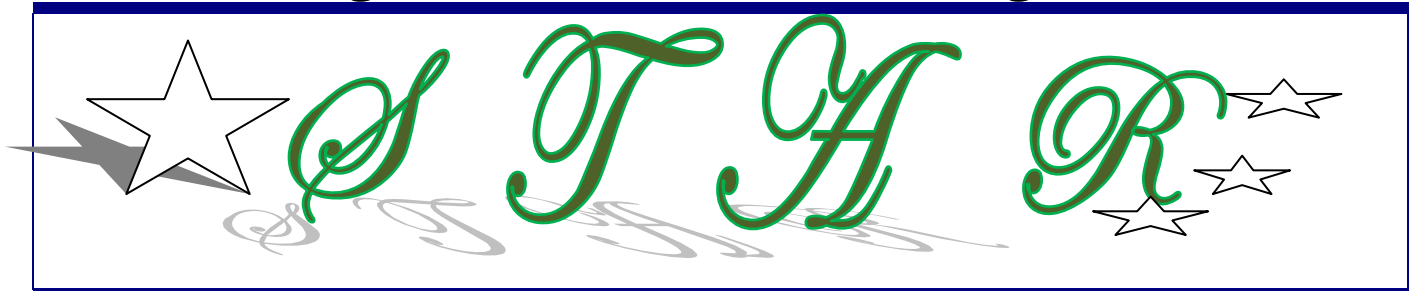




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THE TECHNICAL COLLEGE
PIATRA-NEAMT
English written school magazine



Issue 68

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Christmas



The history of a Christmas festival dates back over 4000 years. Ancient Midwinter festivities celebrated the return of the Sun from cold and darkness. Midwinter was a turning point between the Old Year and the New Year. Fire was a symbol of hope and boughs of greenery symbolized the eternal cycle of creation.

The term "Xmas" instead of "Christmas" is Greek in origin. The word for "Christ" in Greek is "Xristos." during the Sixteenth Century, Europeans began using the first initial of Christ's name...the "X" of "Xristos"...in place of the word "Christ" as a shorthand version of the word "Christmas." Although early Christians understood that the "X" was simply another form for the name of Jesus Christ, later Christians, who had no

knowledge of the Greek language, mistook "Xmas" as a sign of disrespect. Eventually, however, "Xmas" came to be both an accepted and suitable alternative to the word "Christmas."

The colours most often associated with Christmas decorating are green, red, white, blue, silver and gold. These colours have been used for centuries and, as with most traditions, the reason may be traced to religious beliefs. In this instance, green represents everlasting life, red represents the bloodline of Jesus Christ, blue represents the sky from which the angels appeared, white represents the purity of the Virgin Birth, and silver and gold represent the richness of God's Bless.

Santa Claus

The best-known and best-loved of all Christmas gift-givers is Santa Claus, whose identity is probably more entangled in a variety of different legends than any other seasonal spirit.

The genial side of his personality is usually credited to the Norse god, Odin, who flew the skies of Winter and was able to cure diseases and predict the future, or the Germanic god, Thor, who rode on a chariot drawn by goats named Cracker and Cruncher. Some of the magical elements associated with Santa Claus came from Melchior, the oldest of the Three



Kings who followed the Star to Bethlehem. It is generally accepted that the name "Santa Claus" was derived and abbreviated from his original Dutch title of "Sinterklaas."

During the 1500s, people in England stopped worshipping Saint Nicholas and favoured another gift-giving figure called Father Christmas, who was known to their ancestors as Christmas itself. Always depicted with sprigs of holly or ivy or mistletoe, the English Father Christmas is often an austere and thinner version of the modern day Santa Claus, sometimes accompanied by a character more jolly than himself in nature known as Uncle Holly, who favours green for the colour of his robes.

The Christmas Tree



Since ancient times, evergreen trees have been revered as a representation of fertility. For centuries, evergreens have played an important role in winter celebrations. Carried into homes and adorned with apples and other fruits, they were set up as symbolic idols. Such decorations were intended as food offerings to the tree and may be where the modern custom of placing gifts beneath the Christmas tree

originated. According to some sources, the Christmas tree is actually a throwback to "Yggdrasil," the Great Tree of Life mentioned in Norse mythology.

The modern custom of an indoor Christmas tree is thought to have originated in Germany. German Christians would bring trees into their homes to decorate. In some areas where evergreen trees were scarce, the families would build a Christmas pyramid...a simple wooden structure which would then be adorned with branches and candles.



The Queen's Christmas tree at Windsor Castle 1848. Republished in *Godey's Lady's Book*, Philadelphia, December 1850.

In England, royalty helped to popularize the notion of a Christmas tree by decorating the first at Windsor Castle in 1841. Prince Albert, husband and Consort of Queen Victoria, adorned this first English Christmas tree with candles, candies, fruits and gingerbread. Already a popular tradition in Germany...the country of Albert's birth...the Prince Consort suggested the idea as a reminder of his homeland. Ever ready to comply with her beloved husband's desires, Queen Victoria readily agreed. Although generally adverse to anything German in origin, the public held their

Queen in such high regard that they had soon adopted the custom for themselves.

The first written record of a Christmas tree is that of an anonymous Frenchman who was a visitor to Strasbourg, Germany, in 1601. He describes a fir tree he had seen in a home upon which had been hung: "wafers and golden sugar-twists (Barley sugar), roses cut out of many-coloured paper, apples, gold foil and sweets."

Christmas Carols



Christian scriptures detail a world of spirits and nine choirs of Angels who were sent by God into the lives of humankind. Legend tells that in Bethlehem, people heard the Angels sing one time in unison to announce the birth of the Christ Child. The words thought to ring out at that moment were: *Gloria in excelsis Deo, et in terra pax hominibus bonae voluntatis*. Therefore, this is considered to be the first Christmas carol.

According to ancient tradition, Christmas carols of all times and all nations should adhere strictly to the narrative of Saint Luke, which has three distinct points: the recitive of the Angel of the Lord, the choir of the multitudes of Angels and the reaction of the shepherds.

Christmas time music began with the *litanies*, or musical prayers, of the Christian Church. An early historian wrote that in approximately 100

A.D., the Bishop of Rome urged his people to sing "in celebration of the birthday of our Lord." By 400 A.D., priests would stroll around their parishes on Christmas Eve singing these Latin hymns.

The word "carol" derives from a Greek dance called a *choraulein*, which was accompanied by flute music. The dance later spread throughout Europe and became particularly popular by the French, who replaced the flute music with singing. Originally, people performed carols on many occasions during the year. By the 1600s, carols involved singing only and Christmas had become the chief holiday for these songs. Counted among the most favoured of non-religious carols are "Jingle Bells" and "White Christmas," both of which first appeared as popular songs in the United States.

Greetings Cards



Although European wood engravers produced prints with religious themes as early as the Middle Ages, the sending of greeting cards at Christmas truly began during the Victorian Era and is one of the youngest yuletide traditions.

Christmas cards were introduced in England in the 1840s. Their forerunners were the letters (known as "Christmas Pieces") written by schoolboys being educated away from home who would send seasonal correspondences to their parents. The letters, written on special paper

with elaborate engraved or printed borders and headings, were adorned with scrolls, Biblical scenes and flowers. The writing of these letters gave the boys an opportunity to display proof of their penmanship and progress they had made in the art of writing throughout the school year.

England's penny post, by which a letter could be sent anywhere in the country for only one penny, helped to accelerate the use of Christmas cards as a holiday greeting. Commercial production of cards took on growth in the 1860s in England, but Christmas cards were not introduced into America until the 1870s when Louis Prang, a German emigrant, opened a small lithograph store in Roxbury, Massachusetts. There, Prang began producing his first samples...simple flower designs with the words "Merry Christmas." By 1881, Prang was producing five million cards a year and was following the practice of English printers who offered substantial prizes to artists for their best designs for the cards. Many of the winning entries depicted the Nativity and other Biblical scenes. These works helped put religious significance, previously lacking, into the cards.

Silent Night, Holy Night



There are numerous stories detailing the origin of "Silent Night, Holy Night," which is quite possibly the favourite among all Christmas carols. The most popularly-told tale is one whose roots are to be found to Austria.

In the winter of 1818 at St. Nicholas' Church in Obendorf, a village not far from Salzburg, Joseph Mohr, assistant to the priest, was faced with something of a dilemma. It was only days

before Christmas, and the church organ, so vital in providing music for the services, was broken. Since the repairman was not a village local, it would be months before the organ could be put back into working condition...by which time, Christmas would be long past. Mohr's solution to this problem resulted in one of the most popular Christmas carols of all time.

Two years before, Mohr had written a simple poem, easily understood by the people of the village, which expressed the wonder of the birth of the Christ Child. Mohr had asked his friend, Franz Gruber, the organist at St. Nicholas' Church, to compose music for his poem, so that they might sing it together using the accompaniment of a guitar.

Thus, the newly-composed carol was first performed during the Christmas Eve midnight service held at St. Nicholas' Church on December 24, 1818. It did not, however, instantly receive the worldwide recognition that it has since garnered. It was not until some years later, in 1825 when Carl Mauracher was rebuilding the broken organ, that a handwritten copy of the words and accompanying sheet music was discovered in the organ loft.

Mauracher was from an area in the Tyrol Mountains where there were many travelling folk choirs who performed throughout Europe. He returned with the carol to his home and it soon became a favoured song with the travelling singers. Thus, did the popularity of "Silent Night, Holy Night" spread as these choirs journeyed the countryside, singing their songs.

In some versions of this story, it is said that mice had eaten the bellows of the organ. Still others maintain that Gruber himself had broken the organ, or that frequent flooding of the area often caused rust and mildew to affect the condition of the church organ, such that it became unplayable.

In all truth, it is unknown whether the organ was truly broken during the Christmastime of 1818. It is rumored that perhaps Mohr simply wanted a new carol for the service and was fond of the

guitar as an accompanying instrument. Other tales suggest that both the poem and the music were hastily written on that Christmas Eve.

In 1995, a manuscript entitled "Silent Night" was unearthed, written in Mohr's hand. It is dated 1816 and credits the melody to Franz Gruber. Nevertheless, no matter what the details of the circumstances regarding the contribution of this carol by Joseph Mohr and Franz Gruber, they gave the world what is considered by many to be one of the most beautiful of all Christmas songs. The popularity of Silent Night can almost be termed "miraculous." After all, the words were written by a modest curate and the music composed by a musician hardly known outside the province where he resided. There was no celebrity to sing at the world premiere and no mass-communication systems existed to spread the fame of "Silent Night," however, its powerful message of heavenly peace has crossed all borders and language barriers, conquering the hearts of Christmas-celebrating people everywhere.

The Reindeer

The Reindeer driven by Santa Claus are the only known flying Reindeer in existence, believed to have been endowed with the power of flight by virtue of magic corn given to Kris Kringle by a great and wonderful wizard. Through this magic corn, the strength of the Reindeer is increased threefold, their stamina increased to infinity and their hooves can manipulate the air as though it were solid ground. Thus, a complement of nine Reindeer would be able to pull a sleigh brimming with 13,500 pounds of toys for an unlimited amount of time.

"Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer" is perhaps the most modern of all Christmas symbols and certainly the most familiar of Reindeer, even though he was not a member of Santa's original team. Created in 1939 by a 34-year old copywriter named Robert L. May, Rudolph was the product of a request made by May's employer, Montgomery Ward, which wanted a Christmas story it could use as a promotional tool

for its chain of department stores. The Chicago-based company had been buying and distributing colouring books for children at Christmas for many years and the idea of creating a giveaway booklet of its own was perceived to be an excellent means of saving money. May, who had a penchant for writing children's stories and limericks, was called upon to create the booklet.

The eight named reindeer of Santa Claus first appeared in American literature in 1823, featured in the famous poem penned by Clement Clarke Moore entitled, *'Twas the Night Before Christmas*, also known as *A Visit from Saint Nicholas*. Prior to the appearance of this rhyme, legend had the jolly toy-bringer's sleigh pulled by one singular anonymous reindeer. By virtue of Moore's poem, Santa was gifted with eight reindeer: Dasher; Dancer; Prancer; Vixen; Comet; Cupid; Donner; and Blitzen. Unfortunately, for Donner, however, this particular reindeer is not always given the recognition so well-deserved, frequently being referred to as "Donner."

FOLIAGE AND FLORA



The carrying and draping of foliage and flora in homes at Christmastime originates from pagan worship,

particularly that of evergreen plants, practiced by the Druids, who conducted many such rituals during their Midwinter season. Most plants used for holiday decoration, in both ancient and modern times, are favoured because they symbolize a quality or emotion important to the basic spirit of the festivities. Since any plant that remained green in the Winter was considered to possess special powers, so evergreen trees, such as the holly, fir and pine and other plants such as the ivy were often used as religious symbols.

Mistletoe



Today, kissing under the Mistletoe is a popular Christmas custom. However, in observance of strict etiquette, one berry of the plant should be plucked off for each kiss. When the sprig runs out of berries, then there ought to be no more kissing. In some parts of England, the Christmas Mistletoe is burned on Twelfth Night, lest all the boys and girls who have kissed beneath it never marry, and any unwed lady who is not kissed under the Christmas Mistletoe is fated to remain single for yet another year.

The Poinsettia



Perhaps the first religious connotation placed on Poinsettias originated during the Seventeenth Century. Due to the plant's brilliant colour and holiday blooming time, Franciscan priests near Taxco, began to use the flower in the Fiesta of Santa Pesebre, a Nativity procession. It soon came to be symbolic of the Star of Bethlehem and quickly associated itself with the Christmas season.

Holly and Ivy

Although holly is the only decorative tradition which remains of this once famous duo, the origins of both plants' usage during the holiday season is an ancient one. The Romans were very fond of using holly during their Solstice celebration, known as Saturnalia. It was also closely associated with the God Dionysus. Gifts of holly boughs were exchanged during this time,

since the plant was believed to ward off lightning and repel evil spirits.

The Druids also held holly, one of the only vibrant plants to be found during the Winter, in high esteem as a plant of regeneration. Since its berries are red, the colour of life and blood, it was perceived as a "female" plant, representative of the Goddess. Ivy, the accepted symbol of friendship, was believed to represent the consort of the Goddess and, therefore, "masculine" in nature.

Tradition held that whoever first brought holly into the house at Christmastime, whether it be the master or mistress, would be the one who should rule the household for the coming year.

Christmas Herbs



Leaves of costmary or alecost were used to add spice to holiday ale (also known as "wassail") in olden Europe, while bay laurel, along with other

forms of greenery, have been used in decorations since ancient European times to help celebrate the Winter Solstice. Bay laurel is associated with Apollo, God of Light, and serves as a reminder that the long Winter will soon melt into Spring.

Frankincense and myrrh were two of the gifts offered by the Magi to the Christ Child (the other being gold). Frankincense pods and myrrh gum are both scented plant materials which may be classified as herbs. Frankincense, also called *Olibanum*, has been used for centuries in religious rites and as a medicinal treatment for both internal and external ailments. It is a resin found in small thorny trees known as *Boswellia Thurifera* which grow in Africa, Yemen and countries around the Red Sea. The sap oozes from the trees, forming small white pod which harden upon contact with the air and turn yellow.

These pods are then burned for their aroma. The oil of frankincense is calming and soothing and deepens breathing.

Myrrh was used by the Egyptians and Hebrews for incense, cosmetics, perfumes and medicines. It has also been used as an embalming tool. Like frankincense, myrrh was once considered to be a rare treasure. Again, it is a resin and is derived from the shrub *Commiphora*, which is found in Arabia and Abyssinia. Another name for garden myrrh is "sweet cicely." The plant has fern-like foliage with dull white flowers and grows to be approximately three feet tall. Myrrh is an effective medicine for treating sore throats, infected gums, thrush and athlete's foot. It contains cleansing agents, useful in countering poisons found in the body, and helps to stimulate the circulatory system.

Frankincense and myrrh are becoming available today through dealers in potpourri materials. Blended with gold yarrow, they are used to create the "Potpourri of Three Kings." Yarrow also bears significance in the Christmas tradition in its own right. Sometimes called "carpenter's weed" (because of its purported folk-healing powers against cuts), it is associated with Joseph the Carpenter, who was the earthly father of Jesus.

Christmas Stockings



WHY DO WE HANG STOCKINGS AT CHRISTMAS?

A special Christmas tradition is hanging your stocking for Santa to fill with small presents.

This tradition comes to us from Holland, where children hang stockings for Sinter Klaas to fill .

But why stockings? Here is one story. Long ago

there was a merchant who had three daughters. Sadly, the merchant somehow lost all of his money. His daughters were going to be sold as servants to pay his bills. During their last night at home the girls washed their stockings and hung them by the fire to dry. Bishop Nicholas, hearing about their fate, dropped gold down the chimney into each girl's stocking.

The girls were saved!

When their father heard who had given the gold, he went around town praising Bishop Nicholas.

Ever since, children have hung stockings by the chimney in the hopes that Santa Claus will fill their stockings with gifts, too.



Christmas around the world

All around the world, Christmas is one of the happiest and busiest times of the year. Many people look forward to family parties and the exchanging of gifts.



Great Britain



Christmas in England began in 596 A.D., when Saint Augustine and his monks landed, bringing Christianity to the Anglo Saxons. The old medieval type of English Christmas dinner would include brawn (headcheese), roast peacock, boar's head and mutton pie (from which the modern mince pie developed). English cooks originally baked pies in the shape of a manger. Modern Christmas dinners consist of a roast turkey, goose or chicken with stuffing and roast potatoes, followed by mince pies. The pulling of Christmas crackers containing a party hat, riddle and toy (or other tiny trinket) often accompanies the Christmas meal. Later, Christmas cake may be served...a richly baked fruit cake decorated with marzipan, icing and sugar frosting. Another traditional feature of Christmas Day afternoon is the Queen's Christmas Message to the nation, broadcast on radio and television.

December 26th is the Feast of Saint Stephen and the British call this day after Christmas "Boxing Day." It is when most families give gifts, also known as a "Christmas Boxes," in the form of money or food to tradespeople, such as milkmen or

postmen or others who have served them during the year. This custom is unique to Great Britain. Traditionally, it was on December 26th that the alms boxes in English churches were opened and their contents distributed to the poor. It was also the day when indentured servants were given the day off to celebrate with their families. Thus, it became traditional for working people to open their "Christmas Boxes" on December 26th. The ancient roots of the Boxing Day custom are unknown.

The first ever Christmas card was posted in England during the 1840s but the decorations, in general, have much earlier origins, many associated with pagan rituals predating the Dark Ages. The English were also the first nation to use mistletoe as a decoration during the Christmas season. Each year since 1947, the country of Norway has presented Great Britain with a large Christmas tree which is placed in Trafalgar Square and commemorates Anglo-Norwegian cooperation during the Second World War.

Germany & Austria



Many Christmas customs practiced around the world today are believed to have originated in Germany, the chief of which is probably the Christmas Tree. The modern German

Tannenbaum is traditionally decorated in secret by the matriarch of the family and revealed on Christmas Eve. The trees are decorated with lights, tinsel, ornaments and candy, *lubecker marzipan* being one of the favoured sweets.

On Christmas Eve, everyone gathers for the *Bescheerung* (the ceremony of lighting the tree). Afterward, the Christmas story is read, children receive their gifts, and everyone eats fruits, nuts, chocolate and biscuits from brilliantly decorated plates displayed close to the tree. Many German families enjoy roast goose for Christmas dinner, followed by cookies and beautifully-made gingerbread houses. Other popular treats include *Christstollen* (long loaves of bread bursting with nuts, raisins, citron and dried fruit), *Lebkuchen* (spice bars) and *Dresden Stollen* (a moist, heavy bread filled with fruit). Another favorite is the Christmas tree pastry known as *Christbaumgerback*, a white dough that can be pressed into shapes and baked for tree decorations which can later be consumed when the tree is taken down.

Switzerland



Young people visit nine fountains on their way to midnight church services. They take three sips of water from each fountain. A legend tells that if they do this, they will find their

future spouse waiting at the door of the church. The week prior to Christmas, children dress up and visit homes with small gifts. Bell-ringing has become something of a tradition in Switzerland and each village competes with its neighbours when calling people to Midnight Mass. After the service, families gather to share huge homemade doughnuts known as *ringli* and to drink hot chocolate. The Swiss gift-giver is *Christkindl*, a white-clad figure who wears a veil held in place by a jewelled crown. *Christkindl*, who arrives to the herald of a silver bell and the lighting of tree candles, enters each house to distribute presents from a basket carried by her child helpers. In some areas, it is believed that animals are able to speak at midnight on Christmas Eve and that the beasts kneel in honour of the Christ Child.

France



Children put shoes on the doorstep or by the fireplace on Christmas Eve, in order that *Petit Noel* (the "Christ Child") or *Pere Noel* ("Father Christmas") might fill them with gifts. The houses are decorated with mistletoe, considered to be a symbol of good luck, and the French gift-giver has been known to leave sweets, fruit, nuts and small toys hanging on

the Christmas tree. In cathedral squares, the story of Christ's birth is reenacted by both living players and puppets. In Provence, an area of southeastern France, the entire family helps bring in the Yule Log, which must be large enough to burn from Christmas Eve until New Year's Day. Many years ago, part of this log was used to make the wedge for the plough as good luck for the coming harvest. French families often set up a small Nativity scenes in their homes and, for their Christmas meal, will frequently serve Strasbourg (liver) pie and black pudding.

Italy



In Italy, the people fast, going with little or no food, the day before Christmas. At the end of the day, a celebration meal is eaten, in which a light Milanese cake known as *panettone* is featured. Families then hold a ceremony around the *Prespio*, a miniature Bethlehem scene complete with the Holy Family, shepherds and Wise Men, usually hand-carved from clay or plaster, and very detailed in feature and dress. An ox and ass are an important part of the tableau because legend states that these animals warmed the Christ Child with their breath. The scene is often set out in the form of a triangle and provides the base of a pyramid-like structure called the *ceppo*, which is a wooden frame

arranged to make a pyramid several feet high. Tiers of thin shelves are supported by this frame which is entirely decorated with coloured paper, gilt pine cones and miniature coloured pennants. Small candles are fastened to the tapering sides and a star or tiny doll is hung at the apex. The shelves above the manger scene hold small gifts of fruit, candy and presents. The *ceppo* is the ancient "Tree of Light" tradition which became the Christmas tree in other countries. Some houses have a *ceppo* for each child in the family. While the mother places a figure of the *Bambino* or infant Jesus in the manger of the *Prespio*, the rest of the family prays. After this, the Christmas gifts are brought in and distributed from a large crock known as the "Urn of Fate," which contains empty boxes as well as presents, but always holds one gift for each person.

At twilight, candles are lighted around the *Prespio*, prayers are said and the children recite poems. Italian children set out their shoes for their female version of Santa Claus, La Befana, to fill with gifts of all types, such as toys, candies and fruit.

If the children have been good, their shoes are full of good things on Christmas morning but if they have been bad, their shoes are full of coal. Christmas Day itself is reserved for religious ceremonies and the Pope gives his blessing to crowds who gather in Vatican Square.

CHRISTMAS IN ROMANIA



Carols are an important part of Romanian Christmas tradition. Singers walk the streets of the villages and towns holding in their hands a star fashioned from board and paper and painted with biblical scenes, or displaying icons of the Virgin Mary and Baby Jesus. Carols form an important part of the Romanian folklore. Romanian carols are not simple songs. Carols put people in

the mood for a perfect communion with the healing greatness of Jesus' Birth.

On the first Christmas day, children walk in the streets of snow covered towns and villages, holding in their hands a star made of board and paper with Biblical scenes painted in water colours or an icon showing Virgin Mary and baby Jesus, they sing somewhat of a question: "Do you receive the

pretty star,

Pretty and so bright?

It has appeared on the earth Just like God
through it would be right
And it could be seen on high,
Just like we did, in the sky.

Spain



The people enjoy dancing at Christmastime. After Midnight Mass on Christmas Eve, the streets quickly fill with dancers and onlookers. The words and music for the Christmas dance, known as the *Jota*, have been handed down for centuries. Spaniards call their miniature Nativity scene the *Nacimiento*. Another popular Christmas custom is *Catalonia*, a lucky-strike game. A tree trunk is filled with treats and children hit at the trunk trying to knock out the hazel nuts, almonds, toffees and other goodies. One Spanish Christmas custom not at all common anywhere else in the world is that of *Hogueras*, or bonfires. This tradition originated long before Christmas itself and was the observance of the Winter Solstice, the shortest day of the year and the beginning of Winter. The ceremony is characterized by people jumping over fires as a symbolic protection against illness. This fire-jumping is seen primarily in Granada and Jaen. Christmas dinner is never eaten until after midnight. It is a family feast, often featuring *Pavo Tufado de Navidad*, a turkey with truffles (truffles being a mushroom-like delicacy found underground). After the meal, everyone gathers around the Christmas tree

to sing carols and hymns. This rejoicing continues until the early hours of the morning.

United States & Canada



Christmas celebrations differ greatly between the regions due to the variety of nationalities who have settled in the United States. Generally, cities, towns and even simple villages are adorned with sparkling lights and colourful decorations. Store windows are full of enticing gifts and people decorate their homes and lawns with fairy lights and festooned trees. Many churches and houses put up a *creche* or tableau of the Nativity scene, complete with a manger surrounded by Mary, Joseph, the Wise Men, Angels and Shepherds. For weeks prior to the holiday, people begin to prepare for the festivities. Gifts are bought or made and wrapped with brightly-coloured paper and ribbons. Greeting cards and gift packages are sent to friends and family, and some practice in church choirs or rehearse Christmas plays. On Christmas Day, families traditionally gather to exchange presents, although some people exchange their gifts on Christmas Eve. The Christmas meal is usually served in the afternoon and usually features turkey, chicken, duck, goose or ham.

Christmas Symbols



There are many things that became a regular part of

Christmas festivities and celebrations with time.

There are Christmas toys that became popular gifts for kids and Christmas ornaments that graced Christmas trees and other holiday decorations. Christmas stockings became a part of the celebrations due to the story of kind Saint Nicholas or Santa Claus, who is believed to bring toys for children who wash and hang their stockings near the fireplace. Stars of all sizes symbolize the divine Christmas Star that made its appearance when the Christ was born. Christmas angel ornaments are symbolic of divine angels while Santa Claus is symbolic of not only the kind patrons that delighted in giving gifts to the poor and the children to bring happiness to them during the Christmas season but also of the kindness and charity that are integral part of

Christmas spirit.

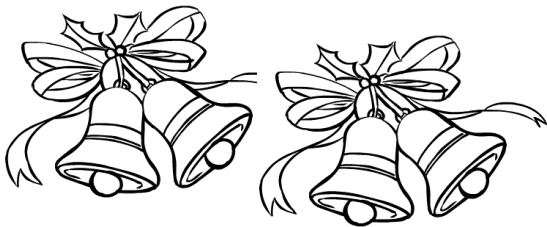


Christmas cakes and puddings were part of the Christmas festive meals and Christmas crackers and candy canes became popular sweets that had a touch of fun and looked quite interesting to children.

Christmas trees such as firs and pines and other evergreens such as holly and ivy were symbolic of long life and hope. They also add cheer to the look of the household. Holly with its red berries and ivy were fashioned into wreaths and garlands and were used to decorate the house. Tinsel, Christmas ornaments and toys were added to Christmas trees to make it look sparkling and livelier. Hanging mistletoe and kissing under it is considered to bring good luck to the household and spread the message of love all over the world.



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STUDENTS' CORNER



LONDON

London is the capital of the United Kingdom. It was settled by the Romans as an important shipping point for crops and mineral resources. Since World War II, the city's prominence on the international stage has slightly diminished, but it remains a flourishing financial centre, a centre of academic excellence and one of the cultural capitals of the world. London's museums and art galleries contain some of the most important collections of objects of artistic, archaeological and scientific interest.



The British Museum is one of the biggest and most famous museums in the world. Its collections range from Egyptian and Classical Antiquity through Saxon treasures to more recent artefacts.

London is one of the world's leading centres for theatre and there are about 100 theatres in the capital.

Other sights that are emblematic to London are Madame Tussaud's Wax Museum, Big Ben, Buckingham Palace.

RADU STEFAN -XI A

VISITING LONDON

Would you like to visit London? My answer to this question is: yes, I would. I want to go to London because there are so many different things to do and so many places to visit. I want to see Buckingham Palace which is the Queen's London home and see the Changing of the Guards at 11.30 a.m. every day. I would also like to visit the Tower of London because there you can see the Crown's Jewels. But I would also like to see the gardens from Hampton Court because there is a famous maze which is easy to get in but not so easy to get out. I like the rain and London is one of the best places to be on a rainy day (which happens quite often)



I also like machines and I would enjoy taking a tour of the Science Museum.

For those who enjoy music, like myself, Covent Garden is a great destination to listen to jazz, pop and classical music.

Finally, I will have to buy something from this city, a souvenir, so I go to Oxford Street or to the famous market at Portobello Road to buy a souvenir from all these places.

I think it's great to visit other places because you can meet new and interesting people and tourist attractions and you can also have lots of fun.

ONU TALIDA -XI A

THE REAL FACE OF COMMERCIALS

Almost all the time, the target public of commercials is represented by kids and teenagers. Not only because they can be easier influenced by images, colours, etc, but because they can spend lots of money on things without realizing it.

Commercials show us that food is tasty but we don't know how healthy, that some clothes are trendy but without having a great quality. Some studies have demonstrated that the people who watch the commercials from an early age are more influenced by them than the ones who watch them occasionally.

Nobody is forced to watch commercials or to trust their message. People should be

able to analyze the quality and the message of the commercials they are watching. Unfortunately, the commercials can also create certain standards and needs that have not existed before and in this way they can manipulate people.

VILCU IONUT - XI A

THE ADS WE ARE WATCHING

The advertisements should inform us about a new product on the market or promote a certain product. The ads are very useful for the people who are looking for new products. Some ads are funny and entertaining while others can even have an artistic value. Some ads are boring and annoying and they can interrupt the programme in an abrupt or in a very important moment.

Advertisements are expensive to make and it costs a fortune to place them or to invite a famous actor to present the products.

So, ads can be useful for some people or entertaining for others but for most of the people they are long, boring and even annoying.

POPINCIUC MARIUS - XI A

GLOBAL VILLAGE CONTEST

The Global Education Week of this year had the logo ACT FOR OUR PLANET. Every year the National College Piatra-Neamt organises the Global Village Contest. The Technical College Piatra-Neamt attended this event with a group of 6 students from the 11th and 12th grade, as it follows:

- Nicoleta Ivan - 12 A
- Talida Onu - 11A
- Vîna Cristian - 12 C
- Alexandru Tonu - 12 A
- Tudor Chirilă - 12 C
- Vlad Butnariu - 12 C

They students had half an hour to draw a poster on the topic ACT FOR OUR PLANET and then each team had to explain in English the significance of the poster and express their opinion on the topic in front of a jury of English teachers.

We are very proud to inform that our team received the 3rd prize from ten participating schools.

Here are some photos taken at this activity:



*ACT FOR OUR
PLANET!*



Christmas is a wonderful celebration ! The students from the Technical College Piatra-Neamt will honour it with carol singing, performing sketches and dancing and most of all, with a lot of joy and happiness !



**COORDINATING
TEACHER:
IRINA VREMIR**

Time
to do
the tree kids!
Hurry
up and get
the decorations
from the dusty storage box-
Dad will
string the lights
while we sing carols we
don't know all the words to in out
of key voices, interrupted by giggles
from me and groans from your dad. He always
pretends to hate
carols, but I still catch
him smiling when he thinks we can't see.
In a flurry of tinsel and baubles and macaroni
decorations that you kids made at school, I know that
this will all be over before I blink. The tree will stand quietly
in the corner for
the next month and
we will switch on the lights once or
twice – if we remember! On Christmas Day we
will sit around the tree for mere moments opening presents
and watching your faces light up with each gift from Santa. Then,
back into its box, stored until next year when we do it all again - funny tradition
when you think about it, but one I love. The tree is always a source of the most precious
memories of the busy
Festive Season,
and of this brief
time I get to spend
with you kids.
Of childhood...

*Worth*1000.com