

THE TECHNICAL COLLEGE PIATRA-NEAMT
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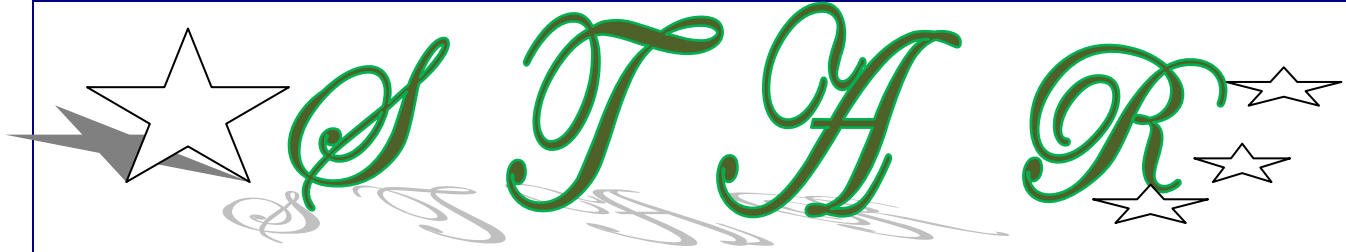
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Nicklas Fording / www.nall.se



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English written school magazine



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Let's Celebrate Christmas

The first recorded date of Christmas being celebrated on December 25th was in 336AD, during the time of the Roman Emperor Constantine (he was the first Christian Roman Emperor).

In the middle of the fourth century, Pope Julius I carried out a detailed investigation into the date of the birth of Jesus Christ. After his studies were completed he announced that, from that day on, Christ's official birthday would always be the 25th of December.

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 kindly 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.

STAR'S EDITORIAL TEAM

Christmas in Romania

Carols form an important part of the Romanian folklore. Romanian carols are not simple songs (a sort of invocation in verse sung by children and lads, on the evening of Winters Holidays) with religious origin, but wide windows through which we are allowed once in a year to go by the immaculate snow-towards the evergreen Heaven and to eye-touch God at least for an instant, in order to give us the power to surpass the life's obstacles. Carols put people in the mood for a perfect communion with the simple and healing greatness of Jesus' Birth.

On the first Christmas day, children walk in the streets of snow covered towns and villages, when holding in their hands a star made of board and paper with biblical scenes painted in water colors 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."*



WHO IS SANTA CLAUS?

The American version of St. Nicholas, originally from Dutch Sint(e) Klaas. The Dutch settlers in New Amsterdam (New York) brought his cult to America. This Santa has given the current myth its visual form: merry old man with red/white clothes, eight flying reindeers, living on or near North Pole, filling socks with presents, arriving through the chimney. The most important single source for Santa was the Christmas poem of Moore from year 1823 which was transmuted to image by Thomas Nast. Actually the cult of Santa Claus incorporates many traditions: Old Catholic, Scandinavian, Dutch, German, English. Sadly, its main feature nowadays is commercialism.



Etymology

The word *Christmas* originated as a compound meaning "Christ's Mass". It is derived from the Middle English *Christemasse* and Old English *Cristes mæsse*, a phrase first recorded in 1038. "Cristes" is from Greek *Christos* and "mæsse" is from Latin *missa*. In Greek, the letter *X* (chi), is the first letter of Christ, and it, or the similar Roman letter *X*, has been used as an abbreviation for Christ since the mid-16th century. Hence, Xmas is often used as an abbreviation for Christmas.

Christmas symbols

Trees were a symbol of life long before Christianity.

Ancient Egyptians brought green palm branches into their homes on the shortest day of the year in December as a symbol of life's triumph over death.

Ancient Finns used sacred groves instead of temples.

Romans adorned their homes with evergreens during Saturnalia, a winter festival in honour of Saturnus, their god of agriculture.

Druid priests decorated oak trees with golden apples for their winter solstice festivities.

During December in the Middle Ages, trees were hung with red apples as a symbol of the feast of Adam and Eve, and called the Paradise Tree.

The first Christmas trees

The first reference of a fir tree decorated for Christmas is at Riga in Latvia in 1510. In 1521, the Princess of Mecklenbourg introduced the Christmas tree to Paris after marrying the Duke of Orleans. There also is a printed reference to Christmas trees in Germany, dated 1531.

Another famous reference, to 1601, is about a visitor to Strasbourg, Germany (now part of France) who noticed a family decorating a tree with "wafers and golden sugar-twists (barley sugar) and paper flowers of all colors."

The Christmas tree was introduced to the United States by German settlers and by Hessian mercenaries paid to fight in the Revolutionary War. In 1804, US soldiers stationed at Fort Dearborn (Chicago) hauled trees from surrounding woods to their barracks.

Britain was introduced to the Christmas tree in 1841, when Queen Victoria's German husband, Prince Albert brought a Christmas tree to Windsor Castle for the Royal family. The custom of the Christmas tree spread quickly to the middle class, to working people, and throughout the colonies (where the Empire's flag would sometimes top the tree).

The first Christmas card

Though wood engravers produced prints with religious themes in the European Middle Ages, the first commercial Christmas and New Year's card was designed in London, England in 1843.

The card was not received without controversy, for it showed a family raising their glasses to toast Christmas. Puritans immediately denounced it. The idea was a hit with others. Christmas card became very popular, and other artists quickly followed Horsley's concept.

The first Christmas cards were printed in 1843 in lithography by Jobbins of Warwick Court, Holborn, London, and hand-coloured by an artist named Mason. They were lithographed on stiff cardboard, with the greeting, "A Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year to You." It also states that it was "Published at Summerly's Home Treasury Office, 12 Old Bond Street, London. New Year's greetings.

Father Christmas on Christmas cards



The first greeting card produced in the US was by German lithographer, Louis Prang, who emigrated to New York around 1850. Prang set up a workshop in Boston, Massachusetts in 1860 and began to produce the first colour cards with scenes of winter tales for Christmas and New Year.

During the American Civil War, Abraham Lincoln requested a political cartoonist, Thomas Nast, to illustrate Santa Christmas (Santa Claus) with the Union troops to bolster their spirits. Nast was the first to introduce a Father Christmas in the now-traditional red suit and big leather belt.

Mistletoe and Christmas holly

When Balder, the son of the Norse goddess Frigga, was killed by an arrow made of mistletoe by Loki, and evil spirit, she wept tears of white berries which brought him back to

life. Overjoyed, Frigga blessed the plant and bestowed to kiss all who passed beneath it.

Mistletoe was held sacred by the Norse, the Celtic Druids and the North American Indians. The folklore continued over the centuries. It was believed that a sprig placed in a baby's cradle would protect the child from goblins. Giving a sprig to the first cow calving after New Year would protect the entire herd.

Christmas holly was the sacred plant of Saturn and was used at the Roman Saturnalia festival to honour him. Romans gave one another holly wreaths and carried them about decorating images of Saturn with it. It was used as folk medicine for toothache, measles and dog bites.

Mistletoe and holly at Christmas

To avoid persecution during the Roman pagan festival of Saturnalis, the early Christians decked their homes with Saturnalia holly. As Christian numbers increased and their customs prevailed, holly and mistletoe lost their pagan associations and became symbols of Christmas.



About the mistletoe plant

Mistletoe is a partial parasite, a "hemiparasite." As a parasitic plant, it grows on the branches or trunk of a tree and actually sends out roots that penetrate into the tree and take up nutrients. It is also capable for growing on its own, producing its own food by photosynthesis.

There are two types of mistletoe. The European mistletoe (*Viscum album*) is a green shrub with small, yellow flowers and white, sticky berries which are considered poisonous. It is commonly seen on apple trees, and sometimes on oak trees. The rarer oak mistletoe was greatly venerated by the ancient Celts and Germans and used as a ceremonial plant by early Europeans. The mistletoe found in North America (*Phoradendron flavescens*) grows as a parasite on trees from New Jersey to Florida.

Mistletoe was held sacred by ancient peoples. It was forbidden to fight in the presence of mistletoe. Eventually the tradition carried through as the Christmas slogan "Peace and Joy onto all men."

In the Celtic language mistletoe means "all-heal." British bee farmers used to put sprigs of mistletoe on their beehives. They believed the bees hummed in honour of the Christ Child.

In France, the custom linked to mistletoe was reserved for New Year's Day. Today, kisses can be exchanged under the mistletoe any time during the holiday season.

To avoid persecution during Roman pagan festivals, early Christians decked their homes with holly.

Druids wore sprigs of holly in their hair when they went into the forest to watch their priests cut their sacred mistletoe.

The English had the "he holly and the she holly" as being the determining factor in who will rule the household in the following year. The "she holly" have smooth leaves and the "he holly" prickly ones.

Boxing Day

December 26 was traditionally known as St. Stephen's Day, after the first Christian martyr. It is now more commonly known as **Boxing Day**. This expression came about because money was collected in alms-boxes placed in churches during the festive season. This money was then distributed to the poor and needy after Christmas.

It is thought the Boxing Day was first observed in the Middle Ages. It found renewed popularity in the 19th Century when the lords and ladies of England presented gifts in boxes to their servants on December, 26 in appreciation of the work they had done over the Christmas celebrations.

The famous Christmas reindeer

At one stage it was thought that Father Christmas (Santa Claus) lives in the North Pole. In 1925 it was discovered that there are no reindeer in the North Pole. But there are lots in Lapland, Finland, which is on the Finnish-Russian border.

Names of the Christmas reindeer

Rudolph is the most famous reindeer. He is the leader of the other 8, whose names are Blitzen, Comet, Cupid, Dancer, Dasher, Donder, Prancer, and Vixen.

Rudolph

the Red-Nosed Reindeer

Rudolph the red-nosed reindeer
Had a very shiny nose,
And if you ever saw him,
You would even say it glows.

All of the other reindeer
Used to laugh and call him names,
They never let poor Rudolph
Join in any reindeer games.

Then one foggy Christmas
eve Santa came to say:
"Rudolph with your nose so bright,
Won't you guide my sleigh tonight?"

Then all the reindeer loved him
As they shouted out with glee,
Rudolph the red-nosed reindeer,
You'll go down in history!



The oldest Christmas Carols

One of the earliest known Christmas songs is from the 4th Century. During the 12th Century, St Francis of Assisi formally introduced Christmas carols to church services. The lighter joyous Christmas songs were introduced many years later in Renaissance Italy - the 1400s, the time of Leonardo da Vinci and Michelangelo. The earliest known copy of an English carol was written by Ritson about 1410.

Silent Night, Holy Night = Perhaps the best known Christmas carol is Silent Night, written in 1818 by an Austrian assistant priest Joseph Mohr. He was told the day before Christmas that the church organ was broken and would not be repaired in time for Christmas Day. Saddened, he sat down to write three stanzas that could be sung by choir to guitar music. "Stille Nacht, Heilige Nacht" was heard for the first time at that Midnight Mass in St. Nicholas Church in Oberndorf, Austria.

"A Christmas Carol" = Charles Dickens wrote A Christmas Carol in 1834. Dickens was one of the first to show his readers a new way of celebrating the old Yule holiday in modern ways. He adapted the 12-day Yule feast to a one-day party any family could hold in their own home instead of gathering together an entire village, as was the tradition.

The word "carol" is derived from the old French word caroller, which means

dancing around in a circle. It was derived from the Latin choraula, which in turn was derived from the Greek choraules.

The most popular Christian carols:

Silent Night, Holy Night
O Come All Ye Faithful
O Holy Night
Hark! The Herald Angels Sing
Little Town of Bethlehem
Angels From the Realms of Glory
The twelfth day of Christmas
Santa Claus is coming to town
Go Tell It On the Mountain
Away in a manger
Joy To the World
What Child Is This
The First Noel



Christmas Traditions

The Tradition of Christmas festival has gradually evolved over the years. The traditions of Christmas include the 12 days of Christmas, the bright fires, the yule log, the giving of gifts, carols, the feasts, and the church processions and they can all be traced back to the early times.

With the passage of time, the nature of Christmas celebration has undergone tremendous change and every year a new

tradition begins. Christmas, celebrated to remember and honour the birth of holy Jesus, has evolved from a religious celebration into a merry hearted event that includes carnivals, cookies and off course Santa Clause.

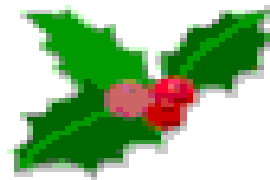
The Traditional Elements Of Christmas:

Snow

Christmas has been widely associated with snow fun activities such as skiing, snowboarding, sled riding, snow mobile riding, or hiking with snowshoes.

Mistletoe

Mistletoe is rarely used in churches because it comes from the ancient Druid ceremony celebrating winter solstice. This once pagan tradition started when a girl would stand beneath the hanging plant and a boy would walk up, pick a berry and then kiss her.



COOKIES

There is no exact date recorded but the idea of leaving cookies for Santa started sometime in the 1930's. Naughty kids use them to bribe Santa at the last minute and nice kids use them as a way of thanking him for all his hard work on Christmas Eve.

Santa Claus

Santa has been around since the 4th century. Originally known as Saint Nicholas, the patron of children and sailors, the bishop was immortalized because of his generous and loving nature towards children.

Lights

The very first person to have Christmas lights on their tree was Edward Johnson who worked for Thomas Edison. The use of decorative light has been imperative on the Christmas Day.

Christmas Tree

The tradition of the Christmas tree comes from Germany. The very first trees were oak, the same tree used for the Yule Log. Trees have been a symbol of good luck since the Middle Ages.

Carolling

The custom of singing Christmas carols is said to have come from 13th century Italy where a man named St. Francis of Assisi led songs of praise. It is very bad luck to send carollers away empty handed. It is customary to offer food, drink or even money.



Jingle Bells!

One of the most famous American Christmas songs, 'Jingle Bells' was originally written by a minister called James Pierpoint for Thanksgiving in 1857 for the children of his Boston Sunday School.

Later, it came to be associated with Christmas and the jingling bells became synonymous with the arrival of Father Christmas or Santa Claus!



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.

WHY DO WE DECORATE TREES?



The first Christmas trees were small—often just the tops of taller trees. The idea of bringing in a tall tree

stretching from floor to ceiling began later in America.

The first decorations were apples, paper roses, cookies, candy, and candles. Later, nuts, gingerbread, toys, dolls, oranges, glass icicles, and balls and other ornaments were added. Not all trees were decorated with expensive ornaments. Many children decorated their trees with pinecones, seed pods, strings of popcorn and cranberries, and other natural ornaments. Farm children often made gingerbread ornaments in the shapes of animals. A star is often placed at the top of the Christmas tree. This star represents the star shining over Bethlehem when Jesus was born. Some families place paper or glass angels on their treetops.

About a hundred years ago Thomas Edison invented the electric light bulb. One of his friends put some of Edison's

lights on his Christmas tree. With electric lights people could enjoy a lighted Christmas tree and worry less about fire. Since then, trees inside and outside have been shining brilliantly at Christmastime.

WHY DO WE SING CAROLS AT CHRISTMAS?

The first Christmas carols were dance tunes, not Christmas songs. Long ago in Greece, a "carol" was a ring of dancers who danced to flute music. The men and women dancers formed a chain holding hands as they danced. Carol dancing was such fun that it became part of many Christmas festivities. In many Spanish speaking countries, dancing and singing are a Christmas highlight.

Christmas music is a wonderful part of the season. Many popular carols, like "Silent Night" and "Hark! The Herald Angels Sing," came from Europe. "O Little Town of Bethlehem" and "We Three Kings of Orient Are" were written in America especially for children.

In America, going from house to house singing carols is popular. Swedish children sing carols and dance with their parents around the family Christmas tree. In France carols are often sung during Christmas plays and pageants. In Wales many carols are sung to gentle music of a harp.

All around the world, music is a special part of the Christmas season.

WHY DO WE GIVE PRESENTS AT CHRISTMAS?

In the Bible story, Joseph and Mary go to an inn but there is no room for them. They are sent to the stable, and that night Jesus is born. He is laid in a manger with animals all around.

Overhead a bright star shines, showing the way to the Three Kings who come to see the new baby, bringing precious gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh.

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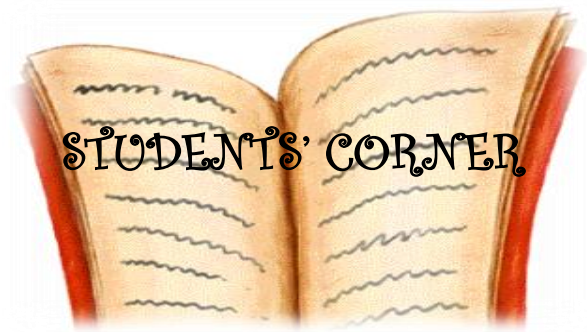


Do You have many ideas and nobody listens to you?

WE DO!

Nobody is paying attention to you?

WE ARE!



My Dream House

*I want my dream house to be bright and large. I want it to be the perfect resting place after a day at work. I want it also to be a place for my family. My dream house should be situated in the middle of nature, somewhere at the edge of the forest; I would love to see the autumn leaves with their beautiful colours. I would like to have some pets, especially dogs. I think that the dog is the best pet that one can have. It is the friend that never lets you down, which is beside you and accompanies you everywhere. A dog is also a good guardian and can protect you from dangers.

Alexandru Sofronia –XC

*My dream house should have a lot of windows but it should not be a big house. It should be situated in a beautiful area and it should have a garden, preferably an English garden with grass and lots of flowers and trees.

It should also have some cobbled alleys that lead to the different parts of the estate. I would love to have pets around the house. I would love to have dogs because I think that the dog is a very loyal friend and it never betrays its master.

Denis Corduneanu- X C

*I would not like my dream house to be situated in the mountains. I would like it to be situated near a big city, for example, New York City. I like nature very much but I would like to live in the suburbs of a big city. My dream house should be large enough to meet the requirements and the needs of my family. About pets, I would like to have a dog because a dog can protect me, it is a good companion, it is playful and friendly and it can help us to relax when we are too stressed out.

Silviu Manciu- XC



It has become customary that the students from the Technical College Piatra-Neamț participate in a Christmas celebration held in the festivity hall of our high school.

Our students like to evoke the traditions associated to Christmas and the coming of the New Year. Here are some photos taken during this year's celebration:





EDITORIAL TEAM:

Dumitrina Enache X C

Remus Grasu IX C

Silviu Manciu- XC

Alexandru Sofronia -XC

Denis Corduneanu- XC

COORDINATING TEACHER:

IRINA VREMIR



**WE WISH YOU ALL
A MERRY CHRISTMAS AND
A HAPPY NEW YEAR !**

