

[www.history.com/topics/christmas/history-of-christmas/videos/bet-you-didnt-know-christmas](http://www.history.com/topics/christmas/history-of-christmas/videos/bet-you-didnt-know-christmas)

## Bet You Didn't Know: Christmas

Before watching a [History.com](http://www.history.com) video about Christmas, make sure that you know the words in the box. Consult the dictionary if necessary.



significance / the Bible / pagan / settlers / to oppose / long-time / to remind / incarnation / custom / to catch on / image / evergreen

Now watch the video twice and decide whether the statements below are True or False. If False, try to change the statement so as it could sound right!

- 1) When most people think about Christmas they think about decorating trees, exchanging gifts, and singing songs about Santa Claus. – T  / F
- 2) Christmas honours the birth of Jesus Christ some two and a half thousand years ago. – T  / F
- 3) It was only in the 3rd century that December, 25<sup>th</sup> became the official celebration of the birth of Jesus. – T  / F
- 4) By the end of the 8<sup>th</sup> century across Europe people marked Christmas with wild parties. – T  / F
- 5) In fact, Christmas as we know it didn't really begin until the 1900s. – T  / F
- 6) Germany's Prince Albert brought the tradition of decorating evergreen trees to England after his marriage to Queen Victoria. – T  / F
- 7) When an image of the Royal Family standing next to their 40 foot Christmas tree was published in British magazines, the custom caught on in Britain as well. – T  / F
- 8) Giving gifts is a relatively old tradition concerned with the gifts brought to baby Jesus by the Three Kings. – T  / F
- 9) Santa Claus is based on Saint Nicolas of Myra – a German saint famous for giving gifts. – T  / F
- 10) When Coca Cola advertisement in the 1930s showed Santa Claus wearing red and white, the image stuck. – T  / F



## KEYS

[www.history.com/topics/christmas/history-of-christmas/videos/bet-you-didnt-know-christmas](http://www.history.com/topics/christmas/history-of-christmas/videos/bet-you-didnt-know-christmas)

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## TRANSCRIPT

Decorating trees, exchanging gifts, and singing songs about Santa Claus. It's what most people think of when they think of Christmas, but for Christians, December 25 has a more important significance. The holiday honours the birth of Jesus Christ some two thousand years ago, but we bet you didn't know that in the early years of Christianity, Christians didn't celebrate Christmas at all.

In fact, there is no mention of December 25 in the Bible. Early Christians couldn't even agree on which date Jesus was actually born.

It was only in the 3rd century that December 25 became the official celebration of the birth of Jesus. Most likely because it coincided with already existing pagan festivals.

By the end of the eighth century, Christmas was widely celebrated across Europe, but its pagan roots died hard and for many centuries, people marked the holiday with wild parties, similar to Mardi Gras celebrations.

This would lead some religious purists, such as the Puritan settlers of colonial America to oppose Christmas celebrations.

In 1644 the Massachusetts legislature fined anyone who observed Christmas five shillings, which was a lot of money at the time. In fact, Christmas as we know it didn't really begin until the 1800s.

That's when Germany's Prince Albert brought his country's long-time tradition of decorating evergreen trees to England after his marriage to Queen Victoria.

When an image of the Royal Family standing next to their 40 foot Christmas tree was published in American magazines in 1848, the custom caught on in the United States as well.

The tradition of sending Christmas cards also started in England around the same time.

Giving gifts is a relatively old tradition with roots going back many centuries.

At first, gift-giving had religious significance to remind people of the gifts brought to baby Jesus by the Three Kings, but the industrial revolution and the rise of advertising in the 19th and 20th centuries made Christmas the commercial holiday it is today even as it continues to have religious meaning to Christians.

What about the most famous of all Christmas characters Santa Claus?

He's actually based on Saint Nicolas of Myra - a Dutch saint famous for giving gifts, who is known as Sinterklaas. In early incarnations, Santa Claus wore many different colours, but after a Coca Cola ad in the 1930s showed him wearing red and white, the image stuck. From the day of the holiday itself to the traditions associated with it, Christmas has a long and colourful history.

We bet you didn't know!