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Self-study

TOPIC: Christmas in England

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Christmas Traditions Around the World

Christmas in England

The English enjoy beautiful Christmas music. They love to decorate Christmas Trees and hang up evergreen branches.

One England's customs is **mumming**. In the Middle Ages, people called mummers put on masks and acted out Christmas plays. These plays are still performed in towns and villages.

The English gift giver is called **Father Christmas**. He wears a long red or green robe, and leaves presents in stockings on Christmas Eve. However, the gifts are not usually opened until the following afternoon.

Christmas in England began in AD 596, when St Augustine landed on her shores with monks who wanted to bring Christianity to the Anglo Saxons.

Father Christmas delivers them during the night before Christmas. The Children leave an empty stocking or pillowcase hanging at the end of the bed. In the morning they hope it will be full of presents.

In England the day after Christmas is called **Boxing Day** because boys used to go round collecting money in clay boxes. When the boxes were full, they broke them open.

In England Christmas dinner was usually eaten at Midday on December 25, during daylight.

In England, the only thing that people ate on the day before the feast was **Frumenty**, which is, was a kind of porridge made from corn. Over the years the recipe changed. Eggs, fruit, spice, lumps of meat and dried plums were added. The whole mixture was wrapped in a cloth and boiled. This is how plum pudding began.

In England the traditional Christmas dinner is roast turkey with vegetables and sauces. For dessert it is rich, fruity Christmas pudding with brandy sauce. Mince pies, pastry cases filled with a mixture of chopped dried fruit.

In England also they elect **Boy Bishops** in commemoration of St. Nicholas compassion for children. These mock bishops were allowed to do the duties of the ecclesiastic except deliver the Mass.

****Information from Suzanna Austin****

One point I would like to raise is on how Christmas is celebrated in England. As an English family living in rural England we have the pleasure of a traditional English Christmas with all the trimmings each year. You mention the Christmas trees and evergreen branches the Christmas trees are a tradition



we adopted from Germany during Victoria's reign and the branches are mistletoe and holly for symbolic reasons. As Christmas is a religious festival many people here still attend midnight mass on Christmas eve and this is usually seen as the start of festivities. Again the reason presents are not opened until afternoon is that we wait until after morning service / morning mass. Your description of the gluttonous amounts consumed by the average person at Christmas dinner is very sparse, typically there are 2 roasted meats 1 being either goose (traditional) or turkey (american) covered in bacon and stuffed with sausagemeat, the other meat being a gammon. A variety of seasonal vegetables but essential are roast potatoes and brussel sprouts and always kilted sausages (also called sausages in blankets). For dessert Christmas pudding with brandy butter or brandy custard / cream, the pudding is so rich in alcohol that it is usually ignited before serving. Mince pies not only contain dried fruit but also suet and brandy. Christmas cake is also eaten and is traditionally made a couple of months (end of September) before Christmas and matured by regularly feeding it brandy. Incidentally boxing day derives its name from the practice of opening the alms boxes in church and distributing the money collected amongst the poor in the parish.

Happy New Year

Today is the Chinese New Year, the beginning of the Lunar New Year as celebrated by Chinese, Vietnamese, Korean...most Asian cultures. It is the Year of the Bull.

I feel somewhat comforted by the fact that it is the Year of the Bull, as it seems, I think, that we're not going to get through this year without a lot of hard work, stubbornness and some good leadership. The first two, I'm pretty sure Americans (and all peoples of the world, in general), have in abundant supply. Life is a challenge most people meet, somehow.

What worries me is Leadership.

I'm not sure where we're going, but I'm pretty sure I don't want to be pulling around a multi-trillion dollar debt with me into the future. And I'm dang sure that, unless something drastic changes, the consumers who can really drive this economy into sanity aren't the ones who are going to see any of the bailout money. There will be some companies who benefit from the bailout, but there aren't really all that many jobs in building yachts, personal jets and in services that maintain the luxurious lifestyles of so many of the CEO's who seem to be skimming off the top of these bailout amounts.

The rest of us will just be working and paying for everything. Those of you with children, know that your children will be working to pay this off for several generations. We're going to be passing down a very heavy burden.

Sigh. I guess I'm worried about that other commodity produced by bulls. Good for the garden, after it's composted for a while, but toxic and foul smelling until it is transformed.

Happy New Year.

Back to g

ardening posts tomorrow. I've got seeds, and I'm not afraid to plant them.

It's Another New Year...

...but for what reason?

"Happy New Year!" That greeting will be said and heard for at least the first couple of weeks as a new year gets under way. But the day celebrated as New Year's Day in modern America was not always January 1.

ANCIENT NEW YEARS

The celebration of the new year is the oldest of all holidays. It was first observed in ancient Babylon about 4000 years ago. In the years around 2000 BC, the Babylonian New Year began with the first New Moon (actually the first visible crescent) after the Vernal Equinox (first day of spring).

The beginning of spring is a logical time to start a new year. After all, it is the season of rebirth, of planting new crops, and of blossoming. January 1, on the other hand, has no astronomical nor agricultural significance. It is purely arbitrary.

The Babylonian new year celebration lasted for eleven days. Each day had its own particular mode of celebration, but it is safe to say that modern New Year's Eve festivities pale in comparison.

The Romans continued to observe the new year in late March, but their calendar was continually tampered with by various emperors so that the calendar soon became out of synchronization with the sun.

In order to set the calendar right, the Roman senate, in 153 BC, declared January 1 to be the beginning of the new year. But tampering continued until Julius Caesar, in 46 BC, established what has come to be known as the Julian Calendar. It again established January 1 as the new year. But in order to synchronize the calendar with the sun, Caesar had to let the previous year drag on for 445 days.

THE CHURCH'S VIEW OF NEW YEAR CELEBRATIONS

Although in the first centuries AD the Romans continued celebrating the new year, the early Catholic Church condemned the festivities as paganism. But as Christianity became more widespread, the early church began having its own religious observances concurrently with many of the pagan celebrations, and

New Year's Day was no different. New Years is still observed as the Feast of Christ's Circumcision by some denominations.

During the Middle Ages, the Church remained opposed to celebrating New Years. January 1 has been celebrated as a holiday by Western nations for only about the past 400 years.

NEW YEAR TRADITIONS

Other traditions of the season include the making of New Year's resolutions. That tradition also dates back to the early Babylonians. Popular modern resolutions might include the promise to lose weight or quit smoking. The early Babylonian's most popular resolution was to return borrowed farm equipment.

The Tournament of Roses Parade dates back to 1886. In that year, members of the Valley Hunt Club decorated their carriages with flowers. It celebrated the ripening of the orange crop in California.

Although the Rose Bowl football game was first played as a part of the Tournament of Roses in 1902, it was replaced by Roman chariot races the following year. In 1916, the football game returned as the sports centerpiece of the festival.

The tradition of using a baby to signify the new year was begun in Greece around 600 BC. It was their tradition at that time to celebrate their god of wine,

Dionysus, by parading a baby in a basket, representing the annual rebirth of that god as the spirit of fertility. Early Egyptians also used a baby as a symbol of rebirth.

Although the early Christians denounced the practice as pagan, the popularity of the baby as a symbol of rebirth forced the Church to reevaluate its position. The Church finally allowed its members to celebrate the new year with a baby, which was to symbolize the birth of the baby Jesus.

The use of an image of a baby with a New Years banner as a symbolic representation of the new year was brought to early America by the Germans. They had used the effigy since the fourteenth century.

FOR LUCK IN THE NEW YEAR

Traditionally, it was thought that one could affect the luck they would have throughout the coming year by what they did or ate on the first day of the year. For that reason, it has become common for folks to celebrate the first few minutes of a brand new year in the company of family and friends. Parties often last into the middle of the night after the ringing in of a new year. It was once believed that the first visitor on New Year's Day would bring either good luck or bad luck the rest of the year. It was particularly lucky if that visitor happened to be a tall dark-haired man.

Traditional New Year foods are also thought to bring luck. Many cultures believe that anything in the shape of a ring is good luck, because it symbolizes

"coming full circle," completing a year's cycle. For that reason, the Dutch believe that eating donuts on New Year's Day will bring good fortune.

Many parts of the U.S. celebrate the new year by consuming black-eyed peas. These legumes are typically accompanied by either hog jowls or ham. Black-eyed peas and other legumes have been considered good luck in many cultures. The hog, and thus its meat, is considered lucky because it symbolizes prosperity. Cabbage is another "good luck" vegetable that is consumed on New Year's Day by many. Cabbage leaves are also considered a sign of prosperity, being representative of paper currency. In some regions, rice is a lucky food that is eaten on New Year's Day.

AULD LANG SYNE

The song, "Auld Lang Syne," playing in the background, is sung at the stroke of midnight in almost every English-speaking country in the world to bring in the new year. At least partially written by Robert Burns in the 1700's, it was first published in 1796 after Burns' death. Early variations of the song were sung prior to 1700 and inspired Burns to produce the modern rendition. An old Scotch tune, "Auld Lang Syne" literally means "old long ago," or simply, "the good old days." The lyrics can be found [here](#).