

A fat, jolly man in a red suit flies through the air on his sleigh pulled by 8 flying reindeer. He lands atop a roof, jumps out, and squeezes down the chimney, lugging a huge bag of toys behind him. Once down, he places several packages from his sack under a tree, fills some stockings with candy, and with a "Ho, Ho, Ho," he's off again to another house to deliver more goodies.

Sound ridiculous? That's the custom about Christmas that Americans have followed for years. Have you even wondered what some of the strange beliefs and customs are from other countries around the world?

BELGIUM: Strange things are done on December 21st, the day of the feast of St. Thomas. In some towns, children tie their teachers to chairs and carry them to the local inn where the teachers can only get free by buying the child what he wants from the inn.

CZECHOSLOVAKIA: It was customary to take a part of every course of the Christmas dinner to the animals—so the cows could give more milk, the hens would lay all the eggs needed, the pigs would fatten. Another custom says that the farmer and his wife should go into the garden before the Christmas dinner and shake the fruit trees, hoping that they will bear well.

SILVER BELL

Tiny bell of Christmas
Tingle it did ring;
Jingle on this Holiday,
Love and joy it brings;
Hangs on the door, a day or so,
Then hid away again,
Christmas next year you'll hear
Ring, tingle-ling!

Pat Jones

GERMANY: Did you know that holly has sex? In this country, smooth-edged kinds are called "she" holly, and those that are heavily spined are referred to as "he". Which-ever kind was most abundant indicated who would rule the household during the coming year.

DENMARK: Santa Claus is a gnome!

GREECE: There is a 12-day period around Christmas when a species of goblin called the Kallikantzaroi is supposed to appear. They are described as looking like human beings, only dark, ugly, and very tall. They have red eyes, monkey's arms, bodies covered with hair and feed on worms, frogs, and snakes.

If a child is born on Christmas, it is believed he will turn into one of these goblins. Since the creatures have no toenails, the mother must sing her child's toenails to keep him from this fate.

NORWAY: A bowl of porridge is placed in the hayloft of the barn—the home of the "barn elf". If this act is overlooked, the elf becomes very angry and gives bad luck to the people who have forgotten him.

RUSSIA: Santa Claus is an old woman named Babouschka.

SWEDEN: Before daylight on December 6, families are awakened by the singing of Santa Lucia by a "Lucia", usually the eldest daughter of the family. Dressed in a white robe, she serves "breakfast in bed" to each member of the family. The meal usually consists of coffee, buns, and Christmas cookies.

GUATEMALA: Children receive their gifts in Christmas Day. Adults exchange gifts on New Year's Day.

CHINA: Children hand up muslin stockings for Santa Claus known as Lan Khoong-Khoong (Nice Old Father) or Dun Che Lao Ren (Christmas Old Man).

As you can see by now Christmas is celebrated in different ways all over the world. And each country has its own peculiar custom. That idea of the fat man flying around on a sleigh pulled by flying reindeer doesn't sound so bad after all, does it?

Diane Langdon

CHRISTMAS

C is for Christ, for without Him
Christmas would not be.
H is for Holly, hung for all to see.
R is for Rudolph, whose nose is so red.
I is for incense, which was brought to
the manger bed.
S is for Santa, who bellows "Ho, Ho, Ho"
T is for toys, that makes children's faces glow.
M is for Mary, who bore this child.
A is for angels, of how they did smile.
S is for special, which Christmas should be.

Connie Brothers

SHADES

Black, white, yellow, red, or brown, what color is Santa's skin? No one knows, and it's very possible no one ever will. So why all the talk about colors, why don't we start looking on the inside and forget the different pigments. We're all virtually the same inside-we want to be happy and, because happy is a state of mind, we can't be happy with hate, jealous feelings and prejudices built up inside of ourselves.

So, let's forget then and start over by letting Santa be the jolly little spirit that brings happiness to Christmas and not worry about something that a little dye could take care of.

Karen Riffey

MYSTERY IS GONE

Well, it's that time of year again, yet it doesn't seem the same. All the excitement is coming late, I'm not even looking forward to it.

Maybe because all the mystery is gone. I no longer wonder if there is a real Santa. I no longer wonder what I will receive because I know

I know all the answers without sneaking into dark corners or high cabinets. And that takes away a lot of the suspense of knowing but not supposed to.

I'd love to be a small kid again!

Sheila Page

Christmas is a time of happiness,
when everyone's full of joys.
The grown-ups gather 'round to talk
The children get new toys,

But everyone should realize,
what we're celebrating this day,
A Child was born in Bethlehem,
His name I need not say.

Rhonda Grannon

WHY DO WE CELEBRATE?

Why do we celebrate Christmas? What have we got to be thankful for?

Why, with all the poverty and drugs and problems of the world, do we take time out to celebrate? Some celebration! But you have to look on the other side and try to help. You can't just stand around and say, "Hey, we got a problem!"

To me, we are lucky that we were saved on that Christmas day long ago. Now we have hope, and a chance to straighten out the world. Now we have the courage to go on, unafraid of what others think of us, because we have faith from above; to guide us.

Please, don't despair,
with you and God, we can make it.

Sally Kerr

NO ONE CARED

It was the Eve of Christmas
but no one cared,
all were fighting, everywhere.

I urged them to stop,
but no one cared,
all kept fighting, everywhere.

One young lad went down,
but no one stopped,
no one cared.

A dim light appeared over head,
but no one noticed,
no one cared.

Brighter and brighter the dim light grew,
the fighting stopped,
and not too soon.

After the fighting it soon appeared,
It was kindness! It was cheer!

It seems strange but for once they cared.
The taste of Christmas was in the air.

Bailey Frye

MAKE CHRISTMAS ONE in PEACE

Christmas comes on the 25th of December
Joys of the last Christmas maybe you remember
You laugh and talk with an old friend
And wish this day would never end

Christmas is fun if you're in the right mood
There are pretty gifts and lots of food
It's a time when all fighting should cease
Let's make this Christmas one in Peace!

Adrian Davis

C H R I S T M A S

C is for Christ whom we celebrate
H is for Holly which we use to decorate
R is for Ribbons on presents of toys
I is for Icicles to look at with joys
S is for Santa who makes people sing
T is for Toys which Santa will bring
M is for Mistletoe which hangs from above
A is for Angels who bring people love
and
S is for Saviour whom we are proud of

Susie Dayton