

Holidays Around the World

These are ideas that you can use in your classroom. Please incorporate your own ideas and find out what the children are interested in about the topic. Any books that are suggested can be found at your local library. Teachers should find out about how children in their classrooms celebrate the holidays.

Explore the way other cultures celebrate holidays. If you have children in your class from diverse cultures, please research information about their particular traditions and incorporate it into your lessons.

Go here to find out how other countries celebrate the holidays: <http://www.the-north-pole.com/around/>

You can also go here to research how various countries celebrate the holiday: <http://www.santas.net/aroundtheworld.htm>.

Below are a few samples of information that was extracted from the site above:

Christmas in Africa

Preparation for Christmas in the Congo begins when some group is designated to prepare the annual Christmas pageant.

Christmas day begins with groups of carolers walking to and fro through the village, along the roadway, by the houses of the missionaries, singing the lovely carols known the world around. Often people may be awakened by a group of carolers beginning to converge on the house of worship. They return home to make final preparation as to the clothes one must wear and also as to his offering for the Christmas service.

The most important part of their Christmas worship service is the love offering, this is the gift in honor of Jesus. Then at about 8 or 9 o'clock everyone makes their way to the celebration of the birthday of Jesus.

Everyone who attends the service goes forward to lay down their gift upon the raised platform near the Communion table. Not one person will attend the service without giving a gift.

Now people have Christmas dinners after the service, preparing tables out in front of their home and inviting many of their intimate friends to share.

Christmas in South Africa is a summer holiday. In December, the southern summer brings glorious days of sunshine that carry an irresistible invitation to the beaches, the rivers, and the shaded mountain slopes. Then the South African holiday season reaches its height. Schools are closed, and camping is the order of the day. In South Africa there is no snow, but it has many flowers, many beautiful varieties of cultivated and wild flowers being in their full pride.

In the cities and towns carolers make their rounds on Christmas Eve. Church services are held on Christmas morning. Christmas Eve celebrations in larger centers include "Carols by Candlelight" and special screen and floor shows.

Homes are decorated with pine branches, and all have the decorated Christmas fir in a corner, with presents for the children around. At bedtime on Christmas Eve, children may also hang up their stockings for presents from Father Christmas.

Many South Africans have a Christmas dinner in the open-air lunch. For many more, it is the traditional dinner of either turkey, roast beef, mince pies, or suckling pig, yellow rice with raisins, vegetables, and plum pudding, crackers, paper hats, and all. In the afternoon, families go out into the country and usually there are games or bathing in the warm sunshine, and then home in the cool of the evening. Boxing Day is also a proclaimed public holiday usually spent in the open air. It falls on December 26 and is a day of real relaxation.

In Ghana, on Africa's west coast, most churches herald the coming of Christmas by decorating the church and homes beginning with the first week in Advent, four weeks before Christmas. This season happens to coincide with the cocoa harvest, so it is a time of wealth. Everyone returns home from wherever they might be such as farms or mines.

On the eve of Christmas, children march up and down the streets singing Christmas Carols and shouting "Christ is coming, Christ is coming! He is near!" in their language. In the evening, people flock to churches which have been decorated with Christmas evergreens or palm trees massed with candles. Hymns are sung and Nativity plays are presented.

On Christmas Day, children and older people, representing the angels in the fields outside Bethlehem, go from house to house singing. Another church service is held where they dress in their native attire or Western costumes. Later on there is a feast of rice and yam paste called **fufu** with stew or okra soup, porridge and meats. Families eat together or with close neighbors, and presents are given.

On the west coast of Africa, in Liberia, most homes have an oil palm for a Christmas tree, which is decorated with bells. On Christmas morning, people are woken up by carols. Presents such as cotton cloth, soap, sweets, pencils, and books are exchanged. Also in the morning a church service is held in which the Christmas scene is enacted and hymns and carols are sung. Dinner is eaten outdoors with everyone sitting in a circle to share the meal of rice, beef and biscuits. Games are played in the afternoon, and at night fireworks light up the sky.

Extracted from <http://www.santas.net/africanchristmas.htm>

Christmas in Japan

Only 1 per cent of Japanese people believe in Christ. Even so, most Japanese people decorate their stores and homes with evergreens during Christmas.

They enjoy giving each other gifts, and this is the part they celebrate.

They have a Buddhist monk called **Hotei-oshō** who acts like Santa Claus. He brings presents to each house and leaves them for the children. Some think he has eyes in the back of his head, so children try to behave like he is nearby.

Among the Christian Japanese Christmas is not a day for the family. They do not have turkey or plum pudding, rather than that the day is spent doing nice things for others especially those who are sick in hospitals.

Christmas for those in Sunday schools is the happiest day of the year. On Christmas Eve or Christmas night, the children put on programs that last for hours, they sing, they recite and they put on a drama of the day Jesus was born in Bethlehem.

Most children may not like Hotei-osho so they may receive their presents from Santa who goes around with a red-nosed reindeer.

<http://www.santas.net/japanesechristmas.htm>

Christmas in Ireland

Christmas in Ireland lasts from Christmas Eve to the feast of the Epiphany on January 6, which is referred to as **Little Christmas**. Ireland's Christmas is more religious than a time of fun.

Lighted candles are placed in windows on Christmas Eve, as a guide that Joseph and Mary might be looking for shelter. The candles are usually red in color, and decorated with sprigs of holly.

Irish women bake a **seed cake** for each person in the house. They also make three puddings, one for each day of the **Epiphany** such as **Christmas**, **New Year's Day** and the **Twelfth Night**.

After the Christmas evening meal, bread and milk are left out and the door unlatched as a symbol of hospitality.

St Stephen's Day, the day after Christmas, is almost as important, with football matches and meetings going on. For children, the **Wren Boys Procession** is their big event. Boys go from door to door with a fake wren on a stick, singing, with violins, accordions, harmonicas and horns to accompany them. The reason for the ceremony is to ask for money 'for the starving wren', that is, for their own pockets.

Children often put out Christmas sacks instead of stockings.

It is tradition to leave mince pies and a bottle of Guinness out as a snack for Santa.

<http://www.santas.net/irishchristmas.htm>

Christmas in Mexico

Mexicans share many traditions with the Spanish. Their main Christmas celebration is called **La Posada**, which is a religious procession that reenacts the search for shelter by Joseph and Mary before the birth of Jesus. During the procession, the celebrants go from house to house carrying the images of Mary and Joseph looking for shelter.

Santa Claus is not predominant, but the bright red suit is represented in the traditional flower of the season. This flower is the **poinsettia**, which has a brilliant red star-shaped bloom. It is believed that a young boy walking to the church to see the nativity scene showing the birth of Jesus had realized on the way that he had no gift to offer the Christ child so he gathered up some plain green branches as he walked in he was laughed at but upon placing the branches near the manger they started to bloom a bright red **poinsettia** flower on each branch.

The Mexican children receive gifts. On Christmas day they are blindfolded and taken to try and break a decorated clay **piñata** that dangles and swings at the end of a rope. Once the piñata has

been broken, the children clamber to recover the candy that was inside the piñata. Those children who have been good also on January 6th receive a gift from the **Three Wise Men**.

Mexicans attend a midnight mass service which is called **la Misa Del Gallo** or "the rooster's mass," and at the mass they sing lullabies to Jesus.

<http://www.santas.net/mexicanchristmas.htm>

Christmas in China

The Christian children of China decorate trees with colorful ornaments. These ornaments are made from paper in the shapes of flowers, chains and lanterns. They also hang muslin stockings hoping that **Christmas Old Man** will fill them with gifts and treats.

The Chinese Christmas trees are called "**Trees of Light**." Santa Claus is called **Dun Che Lao Ren** which means "Christmas Old Man."

The non-Christian Chinese call this season the **Spring Festival** and celebrate with many festivities that include delicious meals and pay respects to their ancestors. The children are the main focus of these celebrations, they receive new clothes and toys, eat delectable food and watch firecrackers displays.

<http://www.santas.net/chinesechristmas.htm>

Education World has various lessons to choose from. Please go here to check out the various lessons: http://www.educationworld.com/a_sites/sites067.shtml. Here are some ideas to choose from:

Teach the children about Hanukkah:

Handprint Menorah

Materials: 2 clean hands, dark colored finger paint, 2 paper plates, large sheet of light colored construction paper, yellow finger paint.

Pour dark colored paint onto 2 paper plates side by side. Lay out light colored construction paper. Put one hand in each plate of paint. Carefully lift hands out of paint, link thumbs together so they overlap (they will make the center candle), and place both hands down on construction paper with fingers spread out to make a menorah print. Wash your hands and then dip your thumb into yellow paint and dab a "flame" at the top of each candle.

~Submitted by Fran

Homemade Hanukkah Menorah

9 blue birthday cake candles
11 white lifesavers
1" x 8" strip of posterboard
glue
1 white certs candy

Spread a thick coat of glue down the center of the posterboard. Glue 9 lifesavers in a row onto the posterboard. Glue four lifesavers on the left side of the strip and four on the right. Glue the certs candy in the center. Glue another lifesaver on top of each piece of candy on the bottom row. Glue a third lifesaver on top of the center stack. Let the glue dry completely. Set one candle in the hole of each candy piece.

~Submitted by Colleen in Kansas

Homemade Menorahs

Have children press one hand at a time into white paint and then onto a sheet of blue construction paper, thumbs overlapping. Then have them paint a tall shamash candle that extends up from their thumbprints. Then using orange paint, have them paint "flames" above each fingerprint so the handprints resemble a lit menorah.

~Submitted by Colleen in Kansas

Candelabras

I did this one with my kids....Take toilet tissue tubes (or from wrapping paper) and wrap colorful wrapping paper around them. Glue or tape into place. Glue a bit of yellow or orange tissue paper in the top opening (to make a "flame") you can glue them to a cardboard base and it makes a cute "candelabra" or Menorah. You can make them with as many candles as you like and make the candles any sizes you like, just be sure to use a good tacky glue to adhere them to the base and let it dry really well so it stays intact. If you are pressed for time you can slit the bottom of the tube and staple them to the base. The bases of the candles can be hidden with scrunched up green tissue paper too.

~Submitted by Ruth in PA

In the Kitchen:Marshmallow Dreidels (makes 12 dreidels)

Materials: 12 pretzel sticks, 12 large marshmallows, 12 milk chocolate kisses, icing, sprinkles or candy decorations.

Push 1 pretzel stick through each marshmallow leaving enough room on the end for the Hershey kiss. Pushing against the chocolate candy, twist the pretzel to attach the candy. Decorate sides of marshmallows with icing, sprinkles or candy decorations.

~Submitted by Fran

For more ideas, please go here: <http://www.stepbystepcc.com/holidays/hanukkah.html>

Kwanzaa:

Songs & Fingerplays:

The 7 Days of Kwanzaa - sung to 12 Days of Christmas

On the first day of Kwanzaa, my family gave to me, a cup for our family unity
on the second day of Kwanzaa, my family gave to me, 2 woven mats and a cup for our family unity

repeat the song, adding the following lines

3rd- 3 special flags

4th - four kinds of fruit

5th - five ears of corn

6th - six handmade gifts

7th - seven kinara candles

~Submitted by Colleen in Kansas

Arts & Crafts

Special Flag

The African American flag or bendera is striped w/3 colors of Kwanzaa: red, black and green. Use it to help little ones with this color-sorting activity. Cut out a rectangular flag shape, divide it in 3 equal parts vertically. Instruct child to sort black licorice candies, red M&M's and green M&M's. Color the flag with 3 colors (red on top, black in the middle and green on the bottom), then glue on the candies on the matching colors on the flag.

~Submitted by Colleen in Kansas

Christmas Songs and Fingerplays:

Songs & Fingerplays

Christmastime - sung to "This Old Man"

Christmastime, Christmastime,
Is a very special time,
With a tree and gifts and goodies to eat.
Christmastime is really neat!

Christmas Song - sung to "I'm A Little Teapot"

I'm a little snowman, round and fat,
Here is my scarf and here is my hat.
When Christmas comes around just hear me shout,
"Here comes Santa. You better watch out!"

Christmas Star - sung to "Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star"

Twinkle, twinkle, Christmas star,
Way up high is where you are.
Shining there for all to see,
On the tiptop of our tree.
Twinkle, twinkle, star so bright,
Shine up there till morning light.

Jingle Bells

Jingle Bells. Jingle Bells.
Jingle all the way!
Oh what fun it is to ride in a one-horse open sleigh -
Jingle Bells. Jingle Bells.
Jingle all the way!
Oh what fun it is to ride in a one-horse open sleigh!

Little Green Tree - sung to "I'm A Little Teapot"

I'm a little green tree in the house,
Here is my trunk,
(Raise arms up straight.)
Here are my boughs.
(Hold arms out to sides.)
Decorate me now with lights so fine,
(Move hands back and forth across body.)
Then plug me in and watch me shine!
(Hold arms out to sides and smile.)

Ring, Ring, Ring The Bells - sung to "Row, Row, Row Your Boat"

Ring, ring, ring the bells.
Ring them loud and clear.
To tell the children everywhere
That Christmas time is here.

Where Is Santa? - sung to "Are You Sleeping?"

Where is Santa? Where is Santa?
(Put hands behind back.)
Here I am! Here I am!
(Make a big belly with arms.)
Merry, Merry Christmas!
(Sing in Santa voice.)
Merry, Merry Christmas!
Ho-ho-ho! Ho-ho-ho!
(Put hands behind back.)

The Reindeer Pokey - sung to "The Hokey Pokey"

You put your antlers in.
You put your antlers out.
You put your antlers in,
And you shake them all about.
You do the Reindeer Pokey,
And you turn yourself around.
That's what it's all about!
You put your hooves in....
You put your red nose in....
You put your fluffy tail in...
You put your reindeer body in...

Boxing Day - December 26, 2008 – Celebrated in Great Britain, Canada, Australia, and several other countries

Brief Description

Boxing Day has nothing to do with fighting! Students learn about Boxing Day and participate in an activity about giving to people in need. Boxing Day is celebrated on December 26 in Great Britain, Canada, Australia, and several other countries.

Objectives

Students

- learn about Boxing Day.
- collect canned goods and/or clothing to give to those in need
- decorate boxes for the donated goods.

Keywords

December, holidays, Boxing Day, needy, celebration, England

Materials Needed

- Internet access or printouts from one or more of these sites:

[What Is Boxing Day?](http://www.factmonster.com/spot/boxingday1.html)

(<http://www.factmonster.com/spot/boxingday1.html>)

[Boxing Day](http://www.kidsdomain.com/holiday/xmas/around/boxingday.html?trnstl=1)

(<http://www.kidsdomain.com/holiday/xmas/around/boxingday.html?trnstl=1>)

[Boxing Day -- Australia](http://www.kidlink.org/KIDPROJ/MCC/mcc0064.html)

(<http://www.kidlink.org/KIDPROJ/MCC/mcc0064.html>)

[Urban Legends Reference Pages: Boxing Day](http://128.242.205.65/holidays/xmas/boxing.htm)

(<http://128.242.205.65/holidays/xmas/boxing.htm>)

[Boxing Day \(Canada\)](http://www.calendar-updates.com/Holidays/Canada/boxing.htm)

(<http://www.calendar-updates.com/Holidays/Canada/boxing.htm>)

- student and teacher collected canned goods and/or clothing
- student-selected materials to decorate boxes

Lesson Plan:

Prior to the lesson: Collect several large cardboard boxes.

- Begin the lesson by asking students what they think happens on Boxing Day. For younger students, read information from one or more of the sites listed in the Materials section. For older students, distribute printouts from one or more of the sites or, if Internet access is available to everyone, have students visit the sites online.
- Explain that in some countries, Boxing Day is a time for giving to people in need. Ask students to name some ways they can help needy people.
- Have students decorate the cardboard boxes, using materials of their choice. Ask students to bring in canned goods and/or clothing to put into the boxes.
- Donate the filled boxes to organizations in your community that help people in need.

Extension: Ask students to write short summaries about Boxing Day and put the summaries in the boxes to explain the story behind the donations.

Assessment

Observe students' participation in the activity.

Alicia created the next lesson plan idea:

NAME: Alicia Peterson

THEME: Christmas around the World

TOPIC: Christmas around the World Book

AGE GROUP: 3-5

OBJECTIVES: To have the children explore the meaning of Christmas in other cultures

MATERIALS:

1. Markers
2. Construction Paper
3. Yarn
4. Hole Puncher

PROCEDURES: Throughout the week teach the children about the different celebrations of the Christmas holiday. After each lesson have them do a journal entry on what they learned about each celebration. Also make sure to have them do an arts and crafts or cooking recipe for each so they can add that into their book.

Book List:

Books about Hannukah:

A Great Miracle Happened There: A Chanukah Story - Karla Kuskin
A Picture Book of Hanukkah - David A, Adler
Arielle and the Hanukkah Surprise - Devra Speregen and Shirly Newberger
Asher and the Capmakers: A Hanukkah Story - Eric A. Kimmel
Chanukah Fun - Tali Marcus Minelli (craft ideas)
The Chanukkah Guest - Eric A. Kimmel

Books about Christmas:

Olive, The Other Reindeer - Vivian Walsh
A Christmas Carol - Charles Dickens
A Christmas Memory - Truman Capote
A Christmas Miniature - Pearl S. Buck
A History of Santa Claus - W. Willis Jones
Christmas Is A Time For Giving - Joan Walsh Anglund
Jacob's Gift - Max Lucado

Books about Kwanzaa:

7 Days of Kwanzaa: a Holiday Step Book - Ella Grier
A Kwanzaa Celebration (pop-up book) - Nancy Williams
Celebrating Kwanzaa
My First Kwanzaa Book

Additional Resources:

Online resources to find more information on preschool lesson plans:

<http://www.stepbystepcc.com/themes.html>

<http://www.preschoolrainbow.org/multicultural.htm>

<http://www.atozteacherstuff.com/Themes/Christmas/>

<http://www.atozteacherstuff.com/Themes/Christmas Around the World/index.shtml>

<http://www.atozteacherstuff.com/Themes/Gingerbread/index.shtml>

<http://www.shirleys-preschool-activities.com/around-the-world-preschool-theme.html>

<http://www.lessonplanspage.com/Christmas.htm>

<http://www.preschoolerstoday.com/articles/holiday-winter/cultural-traditions-1541/#>