

THIS CHRISTMAS, DECK THE HALLS WITH

hope
TOGETHER

LET'S GET
EVERYONE,
EVERYWHERE
KNOWING JESUS



The Gift of Christmas All Age Talk/School Resource

Aim

To understand what a tradition is and to explore the origins of some popular Christmas traditions using information from The Gift of Christmas. To discover together that many Christmas traditions are linked to the birth of Jesus and explore what Christians believe about his birth.

Connections Slide (on screen)

Images from The Gift of Christmas but no labels...if we can get all of them on a slide great!

e.g. Christingle, Advent calendar, Christmas Card, Gift, Nativity, Food, Decorations, Giving to Charity, Church Christmas Service, Carols

Text 'What's the connection?'

Welcome and Introductions

Introduce yourself if people don't know you.

Ask if they spotted the connection? They are all Christmas traditions.

The Best Christmas Tradition

Say that you are going to be really controversial, but you don't care and are confident that you are right (playful, humourous) but you think that X (choose a tradition...but not presents) is the most important Christmas tradition. Say it in a way that will attract a response. Hopefully they will disagree, perhaps even shout out alternative answers.

Pick up on one or two answers and then either:

Ask them to tell you what they think the best Christmas tradition is and why
Or

Ask them to talk to the person sat next to them about the best Christmas tradition and why.

Invite feedback

You might want to run a clapometer where you invite people to choose the tradition, they think is best from the ones on screen and to clap for it. They can only choose one and only clap once...as loud as they can!

You should have a clear winner...if not engineer it. It's likely to be presents.

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Meaning Behind Traditions

Explain that all of these are traditions and that traditions are like 'always did's'...things we do, routines and ways of behaving. Traditions are often handed down from one generation to the next, from parents to children and so they become a behaviour that lots of people do.

Do they have any other Christmas traditions in their family?

Ask whether they know where any of these traditions come from?

You won't have time to go through all of them but pick up on the most popular. Have a slide with a picture of the tradition and an explanation but where the explanations are mixed up.

Can they match the tradition to the reason for it?

Advent Calendars

A way of counting down to the birth of Jesus. Churches used to use 4 candles, one for each Sunday in the weeks before Christmas, but now people use these as well...often with bonus chocolate!

Nativity Plays

This way of telling the Christmas story has become particularly popular since Victorian times. It helps to get the message of Christmas and the birth of Jesus across to people in a way that is easy to understand.

Gifts

The wise men gave these to Jesus to show his importance to the world. We give them today as a reminder of Jesus was one, given by God to the world at the very first Christmas.

Food

Special times are often linked to feasts and this...think of birthday cake! For a long time, Christmas has been one of the most celebrated times of the year. A time in the middle of winter to celebrate Jesus' birth with family and friends. A feast 'fit for a king' to mark the birth of Jesus the king.

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Another Connection

Do they notice anything about the reasons behind the traditions? What do lots of the traditions have in common?

Be prepared to field different responses but you want to land on:

The traditions are linked to remembering and celebrating the birth of Jesus.

Point out how interesting that is. That even though now we might not think of Jesus when we eat yummy, special food at Christmas, open all our presents or the doors on our Advent calendar; these traditions go back to a time when Jesus' birth is what people were remembering.

A Significant Historical Event

Can they think of some important historical events?

Slide with example pictures - Romans, moon landings, Henry viii, World War 1 and 2, release of Nelson Mandela, Covid

People say that events like these are important because they shaped history and they affect the way we live today.

If all these Christmas traditions came about because people wanted to mark and remember the birth of Jesus, they must have thought it was a pretty special event.

Explain that Christians believe that the birth of Jesus at the very first Christmas is probably the most significant event in human history.... even more than Covid or the moon landings. This is because Christians believe that at the first Christmas God was born as a baby in Bethlehem. Imagine that...Almighty God, the creator of everything being born as a tiny baby, Jesus. Why would God do that?

Christians believe the answer is that God wanted to show us what he is like. That God made us, loves us, and wants a relationship with us. So, he came to earth, as Jesus, to help us get to know him. Christmas presents might be our favourite tradition now but the very first Christmas present was Jesus.

So, whatever your favourite Christmas tradition, perhaps this year as you celebrate you might want to think of the meaning behind some of the things we do. To help you and if you're interested to find out more, we have a book, 'The Gift of Christmas' with lots more information in about Christmas traditions and why we do them.

Gift of Christmas slide on screen