Jigsaw reading: pre-intermediate and above

This activity teaches students about different Christmas customs. Students complete a jigsaw reading, write questions, share information about the custom in their text, and then interview each other about their own traditions. You can point out that, although there is a general custom in each country, not every family in that country celebrates in the same way.

Instructions for the teacher

1. One way to lead into the topic and get students interested in it is to put up a picture of Father Christmas on the board. Ask students who it is and if they know of any other names for him. Write these on the board (e.g. Santa Claus, Saint Nicholas, Saint Nick, Kris Kringle, Sinterklass etc.) Ask students why he has so many different names to initiate a discussion about how different cultures have adopted the idea of Father Christmas, but have different names and customs.

2. Divide the class into three groups, A, B and C. Give text A to each student in group A, text B to each student in group B, and text C to each student in group C. Ask students to read the texts and try to remember the information. They can take some notes to help them remember.

3. Take away the texts. Write on the board: How to they celebrate Christmas in…(Holland, the UK, Poland)? Regroup the students so that each new group has a student from groups A, B and C in it. Ask them to share the information they learned from the text.

4. Keep the students in the groups, and stage a little competition quiz to see what they remember from the text:
   * What is the name of Father Christmas in Holland?
   * When does Father Christmas give presents to children in the UK?
   * When can Polish people start to eat their Christmas meal?
   * Why do people in Poland have an extra plate?
   * In What country do people cook food at the table?
   * Where does the British Father Christmas come from?
   * What does the Dutch Sinterklass ride?
   * What do Polish children have to do to get a present?

5. Tell students they are going to interview 3 people about their Christmas traditions. Don’t worry if you have students who all come from the same culture. Each family has different traditions! Ask students to write five questions about Christmas.
6. Re-group students so they have a new partner. Ask them to interview their partner. Repeat so that each student interviews 3 students.

7. EXTENSION: Students can use the same questions to find out about other cultures using the internet. Give each student or pair of students a country and ask them to research Christmas traditions there. Other questions they might research include: *What is Father Christmas called in different countries? How do they celebrate? What do they eat?* Here is a suitable site: [http://www.whychristmas.com/cultures/](http://www.whychristmas.com/cultures/)
Christmas in the United Kingdom

We put up a Christmas tree with lights and decorations at the beginning of December. We put an angel at the top of the tree and we also have a nativity scene. We put a wreath on the door. We also hang up stockings for Father Christmas to fill.

During the month of December, we go to a lot of Christmas parties and invite friends to our house. Music is an important part of Christmas. The radio plays Christmas songs all through December and we go carolling in the village. Christmas day is usually for family, but sometimes we invite friends, too. We eat our Christmas dinner on Christmas day at around 1:00. We usually have a turkey, roast potatoes, vegetables and bread rolls. For dessert we have Christmas pudding, cheese, biscuits and coffee. After dinner we go for a walk around the village.

Father Christmas delivers presents for the children on Christmas Eve when everyone is asleep. He comes from Lapland in a sleigh pulled by reindeer. He climbs down the chimney and puts presents in the stockings and under the tree. Children leave milk and a plate of biscuits for Father Christmas to eat. They also leave a carrot for the reindeer. We open our presents on Christmas morning. Presents are an important part of Christmas, so we give lots of presents to our family and friends.
Christmas in Poland

We put up the Christmas tree on Saint Nicholas’s Day on the 6th of December. We put on lights, decorations and at the top we put a star. On this day, Saint Nicholas puts sweets and small gifts into the children’s shoes. We have to take all the decorations down before Kings Day on the 6th of January. Kings Day is also called the 12th Night. It is the day that the three kings found the baby Jesus.

Christmas Eve is when we have our big celebration. On Christmas Eve we have a big, traditional meal. It starts as soon as we see the first star in the sky. We always have 12 traditional dishes. We don’t eat meat, but we eat fish. The traditional fish is carp. One of the dishes is a red soup called ‘barszcz z uszkami’ made from beet root with ‘little ears’. The ears are made from flour and eggs and are filled with mushrooms. Everyone has to eat a little bit of every dish. We always prepare an extra plate for an unexpected guest. We start the meal by sharing bread and good wishes with everyone. We go to midnight mass after dinner.

Father Christmas usually brings presents while the family is eating dinner, but no one can open the presents until dinner is finished. Sometimes Father Christmas comes after dinner so that he can talk to the children. (Father Christmas is usually a neighbour who has dressed up as Father Christmas for the children). He asks them if they have been good during the year. Sometimes he asks them to sing him a song. Then he gives them a present.

Glossary

beet root – a red vegetable
unexpected guest – someone who comes to your house that you did not invite.
midnight mass – a church celebration that starts around 10pm and ends at midnight on Christmas Eve.
to dress up as someone – to put on the costume or clothes of someone
Christmas in Holland

We put up the Christmas decorations two to three weeks before Christmas. We put a star with white or red lights in the front window. When you walk down the street you can see the stars shining in everyone’s windows. It looks very pretty. This is the star of Bethlehem that the kings followed to find the baby Jesus. We also have a Christmas tree and decorations outside the house.

On Christmas Eve, many people go to church for midnight mass. After church we eat breakfast at midnight! Christmas day is for the family. In the past, people prepared a big pot of cooking oil. They placed the pot over a fire on the table. Around the pot were dishes of small pieces of meat, vegetables, and bread. To cook the food, people use a long stick called a skewer. They put the food on the skewer and held it in the hot oil to cook. Now we usually have an electric fire. We cook meat, vegetables and cheese at the table over the electric fire. We call this dish and type of cooking gourmet. We eat for about three hours.

Sinterklass comes in a boat from Spain, but he rides a white horse in Holland. On the night of the 5th of December, children put out their shoes near the chimney. They put some hay and a carrot in their shoe for the horse. Sinterklass puts toys or sweets down the chimney. He has a big book which tells him if the children have been good or bad. Sometimes Sinterklass visits children at school.

On Christmas day we give each other a small present and a poem. The poem is a funny story that we write about the person.

Glossary

- **decorations** – things you put in your house to make it look more attractive for a special occasion.
- **midnight mass** – a church celebration that starts around 10pm and ends at midnight on Christmas Eve.
- **chimney** – a hole at the top of the house where the smoke from the fire comes out.
- **hay** – dried grass that animals eat.
Word search puzzles for the reading texts: pre-intermediate +

Find 10 words about Christmas from “Christmas in the United Kingdom”
Words can go across or down.

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Write the words here:

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Puzzle solved by (name): ________________________________

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How many words can you make from the letters in:

**MERRY CHRISTMAS**

What is your longest word?
Write the words here.
Complete the sentences about “Christmas in Poland”. Find the words in the puzzle. Words can go across, down, or diagonally.

1. We put on _______________, decorations and at the top we put a star.
2. Saint Nicholas puts _______________ and small gifts into the children’s shoes.
3. Kings Day is also called the 12th _______________.
4. On Christmas Eve we have a big, traditional _______________.
5. We don’t eat meat, but we eat _______________.
6. We always prepare an extra plate for an unexpected _______________.
7. We go to _______________ mass after dinner.
8. No one can open the _______________ until dinner is finished.
9. _______________ Christmas comes after dinner so that he can talk to the children.
10. Sometimes Father Christmas asks the children to sing him a _______________

Puzzle solved by (name):_________________________________

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How many words can you make from the letters in:

MERRY CHRISTMAS

What is your longest word?
On Christmas Eve, many people go to ___________ for midnight mass. After church we eat ___________ at midnight! Christmas day is for the ___________. In the past, people ___________ a big pot of cooking oil. They placed the pot over a ___________ on the table. Around the pot were dishes of small pieces of meat, vegetables, and ___________. To cook the food, people use a long stick called a skewer. They put the food on the skewer and held it in the hot ___________ to cook. Now we usually have an electric fire. We cook meat, vegetables and ___________ at the table over the electric fire. We call this dish and type of cooking ___________. We eat for about ___________ hours.

Puzzle solved by (name): ____________________________________________

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How many words can you make from the letters in:

MERRY CHRISTMAS

What is your longest word?