

The Fascinating Folklore Origins of Santa Claus

Source: <https://explorethearchive.com/where-did-santa-claus-originate-from>

We've all heard of the jolly gift-giver—but how did he come to be synonymous with Christmas?



The legend of Santa Claus is widely known throughout the West and many other parts of the world. A plump man sporting a white beard and a red suit, Santa is said to bring gifts to well-behaved children on Christmas Eve, and deliver a lump of coal to those whose manners could stand to improve.

Whether or not you celebrate Christmas, at one point you've probably wondered where the legend of Santa Claus originates from, and how the tale of a charitable man in a sled hailing from the North Pole became so closely associated with the Christian holiday. As it turns out, Santa Claus has roots in the folklore of several different European countries, and the gift-giving tradition stretches back much farther than most people realize.

Santa Claus may owe his earliest influence to Odin (also known as Wodan), a god revered by Germanic peoples in Northern Europe as early as 2 B.C.E. Odin was celebrated during Yule, a pagan holiday that took place midwinter. During this time, Odin was said to lead the Wild Hunt, a ghostly procession through the sky.

Like many other pagan holidays that later merged with early Christian traditions, elements of Yule influenced the celebration of Christmas, to the extent that the word "Yuletide" is now synonymous with the Christmas season. Examples of Yuletide traditions that merged with Christmas include the Yule log and singing door-to-door.

It's unclear to what extent Odin in particular has had an effect on Christmas. But as a bearded, cloaked man who traveled through the winter night sky, Odin undoubtedly bears similarities to Santa Claus, sparking speculation that the god was an early pagan influence on the modern-day mythical figure.

However, many elements of Santa Claus, especially his reputation as a secret giver of gifts, can be more concretely traced back to Saint Nicholas, a real historical figure. This 4th-century Christian bishop was of Greek descent and lived in the city of Myra (now located in modern-day Turkey), where he was known for his generosity. By the Middle Ages, a tradition had been established in which many European Christian children were left gifts on the evening of December 5, allowing them to wake up and open their presents in honor of Saint Nicholas's feast day on December 6.

The legend of Saint Nicholas became further mythologized in the Netherlands, Belgium, Luxembourg, and northern France, where he was known as Sinterklaas. Sinterklaas was said to have a long white beard and wore a red cape over a bishop's garment, similar to what the real Saint Nicholas would have worn. He also carried a big red book full of children's names, listing whether each had been naughty or nice that year.



December 2024 Calendar

*National Volunteers Month
Universal Human Rights Month*

- 1 – World AIDS Day
- 1-7 – Crohn's and Colitis Awareness Week (US)
- 2 – Special Education Day (US)
- 3 – First Sunday of Advent (Christianity)
- 7 – Hanukkah (Judaism)
- 8 – Bodhi Day (Buddhism)
- 15 – Bill of Rights Day (US)
- 17-23 – Saturnalia (International)
- 18 – International Migrants Day
- 20 – Sacagawea Day (US)
- 25 – Christmas (Christianity)
- Dec. 26 – Jan 1 – Kwanzaa (International)
- 27 – International Day of Epidemic Preparedness
- 31 – New Year's Eve (International)

The celebration of Saint Nicholas evolved once more during the 16th-century Protestant Reformation, which heralded a split from the Roman Catholic Church. During this time, Martin Luther discouraged the veneration of saints to prevent them from gaining a cult-like following.

The feast of Saint Nicholas was swept up in these changes, and the clergy urged Protestant parents to give gifts on Christmas Eve instead, to more closely associate the practice with Jesus’s birth. Although many complied with the new date, Saint Nicholas and the Dutch Sinterklaas remained the face of the gift-giving tradition among Christians of various denominations.

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While Sinterklaas and Saint Nicholas continued to play a pivotal role in Christmas celebrations in various areas of Europe, England eventually discarded the tradition in favor of Father Christmas, the personification of holiday cheer. A bearded reveler who brought gifts to children, references to Father Christmas appeared as early as the 15th century.

When the North American British colonies were established in the 17th and 18th centuries, European immigrants brought tales about Saint Nicholas, Sinterklaas, and Father Christmas from their own respective countries, and the stories from the Old World eventually began to merge together. The Dutch word Sinterklaas was Anglicized as Santa Claus as early as 1773, and the American Santa began to take on a life of his own.

Santa Claus was variously described in books such as Washington Irving’s History of New York (1809) and the poem Old Santeclaus with Much Delight, published in an 1821 collection. But it was the publication of the 1823 poem “A Visit from St. Nicholas” (also commonly known as “Twas the Night Before Christmas”) that made certain elements of Santa canon in American lore. From this point onward, he was decidedly a plump, jolly man in a red suit who rode a sled drawn by reindeer and slid down chimneys to deliver toys to well-behaved children.



Santa Claus made his way back overseas to England, Ireland, and Scotland by the 1850s, where he and Father Christmas became one and the same. The myth also superseded many traditions associated with Saint Nicholas and Sinterklaas in other parts of Europe.

As time went on, books, newspapers, magazines, radio shows, and films reinforced Santa’s popularity in the United States and elsewhere, with the cheerful character eventually becoming ubiquitous in countries where Christmas is celebrated by a significant portion of the population. Those who are interested in his origins will find that Santa Claus has a rich cultural history that evolved throughout the centuries to become the charming tale that it is today.

Exercises To Develop and Improve Simultaneous Interpreting Skills

Source: www.courts.ca.gov/documents/improvesimulskills.pdf

The suggested exercises listed here are based on experiences gained in the training of both conference and court interpreters. Since the various modes of interpretation involve many of the same mental tasks, the exercises recommended in the sight translation and consecutive interpreting sections will contribute to the development of simultaneous interpreting (SI) skills as well. The exercises in the sight translation section that are designed to develop analytical techniques are particularly applicable to SI, as are the memory-building exercises outlined in the consecutive interpreting section.

The following exercises, designed specifically to build the skills involved in SI, are divided into those that emphasize dual-tasking and those that emphasize input analysis. These exercises should be done in all of the interpreter’s working languages, beginning with the native or more dominant language. They should be practiced daily for about a half hour at a time, as SI skills must be acquired over time to allow for maximum routinization.

Dual-Tasking Exercises

1. Have someone record passages from magazines or newspapers on tape, or record radio or television talk shows or interview programs (news broadcasts are not suitable for these exercises because the pace is too fast and the content is too dense). The subject matter of these passages is irrelevant, but it should not be too technical or contain too many statistics and proper names. Essays and opinion columns are good sources of texts for recording. As you play back the tape, "shadow" the speaker: repeat everything the speaker says verbatim. Try to stay further and further behind the speaker, until you are lagging at least one unit of meaning behind.
2. Once you feel comfortable talking and listening at the same time and are not leaving out too much, begin performing other tasks while shadowing. First, write the numerals 1 to 100 on a piece of paper as you repeat what the speaker says (make sure you are writing and speaking at the same time, not just

writing during pauses). When you are able to do that, write the numerals in reverse order, from 100 to 1. Then write them counting by 5s, by 3s, and so on. Note what happens whenever numbers are mentioned in the text you are shadowing.

3. When you are able to do exercise #2 with minimal errors, begin writing out words while shadowing. Begin with your name and address, written repeatedly. Then move on to a favorite poem or a passage such as the preamble to the U.S. Constitution (always choose a passage in the same language as that which you are shadowing). When writing this text, you should copy from a piece of paper placed in front of you. Do not try to write the passage from memory while shadowing the tape.

4. While shadowing the tape as in the previous exercises, write down all the numbers and proper names you hear. Then play the tape back and check to see if you wrote them correctly. The purpose of the above exercises is to accustom your mind to working on two "channels" at once, and to force you to lag behind the speaker. If you find yourself breezing through the exercise with no problem, move on to the next one. You should be taxing your mental capacities to the fullest at all times. On the other hand, if you are having difficulty keeping up with the speaker and are barely able to mumble a few words at a time, move back to the previous exercise until you are comfortable doing it. These exercises should be repeated as many times as necessary over a long period of time.

Analysis Exercises

1. Using the same tapes you prepared for the above exercises (or new ones, if you have grown tired of those); rephrase what the speaker says rather than simply repeating it (see the paraphrasing exercise in the sight translation section). Stating a message in different words forces you to lag behind the speaker, waiting until he or she has said something meaningful for you to work with. To change the wording of the message without altering the meaning, you must thoroughly analyze and understand the original message. This exercise also develops your vocabulary because you are constantly searching for synonyms and alternative phrasing. It is perfectly acceptable, and even advisable, to look up words and phrases in a dictionary or thesaurus before attempting to rephrase a passage. It does not matter how many times you go over the tape. Even if you have memorized the passages, you are still deriving benefit from the exercise. Rephrasing simulates mental processes required in SI in that you must abandon the original wording and put the message into a different external form while retaining all of its meaning.

2. To develop your ability to predict the outcome of a message based on your knowledge of the source language syntax and style and on your common sense and experience, do the following exercises with written passages from a magazine or newspaper: a. Cover up the latter half of a sentence and try to predict what it says. Do certain key words in the first half provide important clues? b. Read the title of an entire article or essay and try to predict the content. Confirm or reject your conclusion as you read the article. c. Read the article, paragraph by paragraph, predicting what will come next. Again, pick out key words that contain hints about the direction in which the author is heading. d. Repeat exercises a and b with oral input, having someone read the passages to you. e. As you increase your awareness of key words, learn to look for pitfalls that can lead you astray, such as embedded clauses and dangling participles. Develop your ability to skip over those distractions and get to the heart of a sentence or passage.

3. Using all the techniques you have developed in the preceding exercises, begin interpreting from the source language to the target language. At first, use the tapes you have already recorded and worked on in the other exercises, then make new tapes specifically for interpreting practice. You may want to choose texts related to law and the courts for this purpose, but do not make them too technical at first. When you feel you are ready, record some actual court proceedings for practice. Court reporting schools are a good source of professionally recorded tapes of law-related texts.



Kwanzaa Traditions

Observed annually between December 26 and January 1, Kwanzaa draws from several African harvest festivals and blends elements of continental African culture, African American history, and traditional African values.

Kwanzaa centers culture and community and is rich in symbolism. The visual focal point of the celebration is Mkeka, a mat that is accentuated with symbols.

- **Mkeka**, the mat, symbolizes history and tradition that serve as the foundation of the community.
- **Mazao**, the crops, represent the first fruits that are brought to the community.
- **Kikombe cha Umoja**, the unity cup, represents the foundational principle of unity.
- **Muhindi**, the corn, symbolizes children who represent the future. Each ear of corn is meant to represent the number of children in the household. If they are none, at least two are placed on the mat.
- **Kinara**, the candle holder, represents the African ancestors that uphold the community.
- **Zawadi**, the gifts, tangibly represent the commitments participants make during the celebration. Children are usually the recipient of the gifts which include a book and a cultural heritage present.
- **Mishumaa Saba**, the seven candles, represent seven principles that particularly undergird and uplift communities of African descent.

Source: <https://www.goodhousekeeping.com/holidays/a38039247/kwanzaa-traditions/>