

YEAR 3: AUTUMN 2 – HAS CHRISTMAS LOST ITS TRUE MEANING?

RE: THE MEANING OF CHRISTMAS TO CHRISTIANS AND OTHER INDIVIDUALS

TO RECALL, UNDERSTAND, DESCRIBE AND EXPLAIN

Recall/Vocabulary:	<i>BC = Before Christ</i>	<i>Incarnation</i>	<i>Luke 1-2</i>	<i>Matthew 1-2</i>	<i>Bethlehem</i>	<i>Angel Gabriel</i>	<i>Mary</i>	<i>Joseph</i>
	<i>Census</i>	<i>Innkeeper</i>	<i>Stable</i>	<i>Shepherds</i>	<i>Wise men/Kings</i>	<i>Star</i>	<i>King Herod</i>	<i>Egypt</i>
	<i>Gold, Frankincense and Myrrh</i>		<i>Over 2 million Christians</i>	<i>Traditions</i>	<i>Religious traditions</i>	<i>Secular traditions</i>	<i>Epiphany</i>	

Understand/Describe/ Explain:

What do Christians believe happened at Christmas?

Christmas is an important time for Christians. It is the time when they remember God coming to Earth in the form of a baby (*incarnation*). The story of the first Christmas can be found in *Luke 1-2* and in *Matthew 1-2*.

Christians believe Christmas is a time to celebrate that Jesus is a gift from God, given to the world to show people how to lead good lives and save/help the world. Christians believe Jesus is God in human form (the *Incarnation of God*).

The Christmas Story for Christians

The *Angel Gabriel* visited *Mary* and told her she was going to have a baby called *Jesus*. The baby would be *God's son*.

Mary told *Joseph* what Gabriel had told her; they prepared for the arrival of the special baby.

Mary and Joseph had to travel to *Bethlehem* to register in a *census*. There was no room for them as the town was very busy. An *innkeeper* in Bethlehem let Mary and Joseph stay in his *stable* for the night. Baby Jesus was born in the stable. At the same time, an angel appeared to some *shepherds*.

The angel told them that the son of God had been born in Bethlehem. Far away in the East, *wise men* saw a bright *star* in the sky. They knew it meant that a new *king* had been born and followed the star. On the way they came to *King Herod's* palace. Herod was curious about the new king; he asked the wise men to tell him where the baby was. The wise men reached Bethlehem. They gave Jesus gifts of *gold, frankincense and myrrh*. That night, the wise men had a dream warning them not to tell King Herod where Jesus was. They did not return to King Herod's palace. Herod began to search for baby Jesus. He ordered that all baby boys in Bethlehem be killed. Joseph had a dream where an angel told him to take Mary and Jesus to *Egypt*. Mary and Joseph travelled to Egypt with baby Jesus and he was safe.



THINKING POINT:

Can you recall the Christmas story? Are there differences between Luke and Matthew's versions?

Our Christmas Traditions

Only **60% of UK population are now Christian** but **Christmas still remains the biggest holiday in the calendar**. It is now largely a **secular** (non-religious) holiday and many of the traditions have moved away from the religious aspect.

<u>Religious traditions</u>	<u>Secular tradition</u>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Advent wreath – One candle is lit each week in the four weeks running up to Christmas. The purple candle symbolises hope, the pink candle represents joy and the white candle symbolises light.  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Nativity – Children often rein act the Christmas story 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Gift giving/Santa Claus/Father Christmas - There's nothing about Christmas presents which is inherently religious or Christian.  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Putting up the Christmas tree and decorations – German tradition brought to Britain by Prince Albert in 1834. Sending Christmas Cards – Another Victorian tradition, made popular first in Britain and then started in America as a way of keeping in touch with loved ones. Gingerbread houses – A further German tradition, thought to be based on the story of Hansel and Gretel. Eaten at Christmas time because of the medicinal and warming properties of gingerbread.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Attending church – It is tradition for Christians to attend a mass on Christmas Eve night (usually called Midnight Mass). There are also church services on Christmas Day. Christmas Carols – Carols are different to Christmas songs. Carols are religious in nature while songs are secular. The earliest Christmas carol can be traced back to the year 129. 	

THINKING POINT:

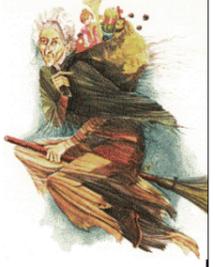
Through our secular celebrations, has Christmas lost its true meaning?

How Christmas is celebrated by Christians around the world?

There are over **2 million Christians** around the world (a religion based on the person and teachings of *Jesus Christ*, or its beliefs and practices). They have different Christmas *traditions* to mark their celebrations. For example:

- CHINA** - Christians in China often celebrate by lighting their houses with paper lanterns. Christmas trees are called 'trees of light' and are decorated with paper chains, paper flowers and paper lanterns.
- DENMARK** - The Christmas feast in Denmark is usually celebrated at midnight on Christmas Eve. It is common to have special rice pudding dessert in which a single almond is hidden. Whoever finds the almond will have good luck for a whole year. Instead of Santa Claus, the bringer of gifts in Denmark is known as Julemanden.

- **GERMANY** - According to legend, on Christmas Eve in Germany, rivers turn to wine, animals speak to each other, tree blossoms bear fruit, mountains open up to reveal precious gems and church bells can be heard ringing in the bottom of the sea. Only the pure of heart can witness the Christmas magic. In many homes, children will be distracted while a Christmas tree is brought out and decorated on Christmas Eve.
- **ITALY** - In Italy, the traditional Christmas cake eaten is called a 'panettone'. It is a sweet cake filled with candied fruit. In Italy, most children receive gifts on the 6th January. This day is called '**Epiphany**'. The legend witch 'La Befana' traditionally brings presents.
- **SPAIN** - In Spain, the main Christmas meal is usually eaten on Christmas Eve. After everyone has eaten, at midnight on Christmas Eve, lots of people in Spain attend a midnight mass. This mass is called 'The Mass of the Rooster'. It is called this because legend states that a rooster crowed the night that Jesus was born. Usually, children in Spain receive a few gifts on Christmas Day but most on the 6th of January for Epiphany. Tradition says that the three kings' travel around, continuing the tradition of giving gift, just like they did for baby Jesus. On the night of the 5th of January, children leave their shoes out before they go to bed to be filled with gifts.
- **INDIA** - Many Christians in India choose to decorate mango and banana trees at Christmas time. Decorations are colourful and bright. In some parts of India, small clay oil-burning lamps are used as Christmas decorations. They are placed on the edges of roofs and on the tops of walls. Churches are decorated with poinsettias (red Christmas flowers) and candles for the Christmas Evening service.
- **MEXICO** - The poinsettia is also native to Mexico that is used widely in Mexico as a Christmas decoration. It has been connected with Christmas since the 17th century. The main Christmas celebration in Mexico is called Las Posadas. People re-enact Joseph and Mary's search for somewhere to stay in Bethlehem. They go house to house getting refused until they finally reach a house where an altar and nativity scene have been set up. Once they have reached the right house, a traditional prayer is spoken and the party begins. Food and drink are served and then children take it in turns to break open the piñata.



the piñata.

THINKING POINT:

How do others around the world celebrate Christmas? How is it similar/different to our own celebrations?

EXIT ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS: HAS CHRISTMAS LOST ITS TRUE MEANING?

EXS:

- Can you talk about what you enjoy at Christmas?
- Can you retell the nativity story and explain what it tells Christians about Jesus?
- Can you explain some of the different ways Christmas is celebrated around the world?

GDS:

- Can you make links between Christian beliefs about Christmas and the way they celebrate it?
- Can you distinguish between Christmas traditions that are related to the Christian story and those which are not?
- Can you ask questions about why people celebrate Christmas differently around the world?