

Christmas Around the World

Internet Lesson Plan

Grade level: 5-8

Teacher Activities

Goal:

To utilize Internet resources to learn about countries around the world that celebrate Christmas and their traditions.

Objectives:

At the end of the unit, the participant will be able to:

- Find out how to say "Merry Christmas" in several languages.
- Design a Christmas card utilizing one or more languages.
- Explore three children's Christmas traditions from different countries.
- Outline a region of the world and compare holiday traditions of different countries in that region.
- Retell the legend of the Christmas tree.
- Create an informational flyer for his/her community on the environmental benefits of having a live Christmas tree.
- Describe the origins of Father Christmas.
- Create a short story describing the legends of St. Nick.
- Calculate the countdown to Christmas.
- Calculate the distance Santa Claus will travel on Christmas Eve.

Duration:

Two weeks, one hour of on-line time each day.

Instructional strategy:

Divide the class into pairs or small groups of approximately 3-4 participants each. Provide each group with a two-pocket folder. Distribute the activities in the

left pocket of each folder to encourage problem-solving strategies within the group. Have students utilize the right hand pocket of the folder to record their strategies, take notes, and track project completion. Students should store information they have gathered or printed from the Internet in this pocket as well.

Additional suggestions for off-line activities and projects have been included. You may find current curriculum projects, lessons and activities may also be incorporated into this unit, providing a cross-curricular approach to the subject.

Prerequisite:

A short introduction to the Internet with information on access and addresses is required before participants go on-line. Ensure that students are familiar with the Web browser they will be utilizing.

Assessment/Evaluation:

The activities in this unit will be evaluated on the basis of student participation and performance. Team folders will include information gathered in the process of completing the activities. Encourage cooperative learning, group process, problem-solving, competition, and the use of the Internet as these activities are completed. Serve as facilitator and guide throughout the activities.

Other projects:

- Read the book Polar Express by Chris Van Allsburg (Houghton Mifflin Publishers).
- Read a little each day from The Pine Tree by Hans Christian Andersen or Why the Evergreen Trees Never Lose their Leaves: An Old Legend by Florence Holbrook. Both stories can be found at "Literature Web Guide: Christmas Stories" at <http://www.ucalgary.ca/~dkbrown/christmas.html>.
- Place the country flag on a world map for each country that celebrates Christmas.
- Collect old Christmas cards for reference as you design your own.
- Create a "Christmas Around the World" book from information learned in these activities.
- Brainstorm an alphabetical list of Christmas/holiday words.
- Play "Name that Christmas Carol."
- Research Christmas in _____. Choose a country to study in-depth.
- Collect and study the variety of evergreens available in your area as Christmas trees. Visit a local nursery or Christmas tree farm to analyze and compare the available species.
- Write a tongue twister about Christmas.

- Teacher: Participate in charitable activities like the "Toys for Tots" program sponsored by the Marine Corps Reserve. Learn how you can make a difference in the life of underprivileged children by collecting toys for the holidays at the Web site "Toys for Tots" at <http://www.toysfortots.org>.

Materials needed by teacher:

- Two-pocket folders
- World map for each group
- Construction paper/drawing paper
- Rulers
- Crayons
- Markers or colored pencils
- Scissors

Teacher notes:

Before beginning this unit on "Christmas around the world," make yourself familiar with your school or district's policy on the topic. Some schools frown on the celebration or study of holidays. The activities provide a social studies perspective on holidays rather than a religious one. They are cross-curricular in nature, providing opportunities for hands-on learning experiences. Also note that although students will be studying and learning about Christmas around the world, they will not actually be celebrating it.

Activities have also been geared towards a middle school population, however they could easily be adapted to meet the needs of lower or even higher grade levels.

A listing of "Christmas fun sites" accompanies the student activities. The Web sites listed can be used as extra-curricular activities as you wind things down for the winter break. Kids may have fun writing letters to Santa for younger students, completing crossword puzzles and word finds, along with discovering other seasonal activities found on the Internet. You may find the following sites are more "fun" than educational. Use them at your own discretion.

Christmas Around the World

Student Activities

Activity #1: Global greetings

Many ways exist to express a holiday wish to friends and loved ones. Since Christmas is observed in many countries, people say Merry Christmas in a variety of languages. Search the web for "Many Ways to Say Merry Christmas".

<i>Language</i>	<i>Merry Christmas</i>	<i>Happy New Year!</i>
Bohemian		
Chinese (Mandarin)		
Danish		
Eskimo		
Finnish		
German		
Hawaiian		
Italian		
Norwegian		
Portuguese		
Spanish		
Vietnamese		

- Have each member of your group select one of the languages above. Practice the greeting until you have it memorized and feel confident using the greeting. Present your interpretation of the greeting to the class.
- Select a language and design a Christmas card which says "Merry Christmas" in that language. Be creative and culturally sensitive as you design your card.

Activity #2: Sharing traditions

Although Christmas is one of the most well-known holidays around the world, it is celebrated in very different ways. To learn more about this celebration and some of the traditions, visit the Web site "A World Wide Christmas Calendar" at <http://www.algonet.se/~bernadot/christmas/calendar.html>. This site contains holiday experiences from children around the world.

Select three presents to learn about other children's Christmas celebrations and traditions. Complete the table below:

<i>Package</i>	<i>City, Country</i>	<i>Day Christmas is Celebrated</i>	<i>Tradition</i>

- On a world map, locate each of the three locations.
- Place a picture of the country flag as a marker on each location. (To see different countries' flags, visit the Web site "National Flags" at <http://155.187.10.12/flags/nation-flags.html>.)

Activity #3: Christmas around the world

Christmas is one of the few holidays that is celebrated worldwide. The customs, traditions and countries in which it is celebrated may vary widely, but the spirit of Christmas remains universal - that of peace, giving and good will towards all.

Explore Christmas around the world by visiting the Web site "Christmas.com" at <http://www.christmas.com> which lists regions around the globe. Select an area of the world to explore.

- Which area did you select to explore?
- What countries make up this region?
- Briefly outline how Christmas is celebrated in each country.
- Compare and contrast the traditions and celebrations which take place.
- How do these celebrations compare to the ones in your country?

Activity #4: O Christmas tree

Many people who celebrate Christmas participate in the tradition of decorating a tree with lights, ornaments and garland. This tradition goes back centuries with many legends associated with it. To learn more about the origins, and legends of this age old custom, visit the Web site "National Christmas Tree Association: Fun Facts and Figures Index" at <http://www.christree.org/factnfig/index.html>.

- Where did the custom of a Christmas tree begin?
- What is the legend of the Christmas tree?
- When did decorations on the tree begin? With what were they decorated?
- Who brought the Christmas tree tradition to the United States?
- Who brought the tradition to the White House?
- Who started the National Christmas Tree Lighting Ceremony?
- Do you think there are benefits to having a live Christmas tree during the holiday season? To learn about the "life after the holidays" for a tree, visit the Web page "National Christmas Tree Association: Christmas Trees Take on New Life After the Holidays" at <http://www.christree.org/environ/recycle.html>.
- Create a flyer for your class to distribute to the community which outlines the environmental benefits of having a live tree versus an artificial one.
- Find out where people in your community can drop off their old Christmas trees for recycling. Add this information into your flyer.

Activity #5: A man of many names

He is known by many names and is one of the most recognized symbols of the Christmas season. Santa Claus has changed his name and his looks over the years and from country to country, but he still is seen as the gift bearer of the season. To learn more about the history and legends of this jolly old guy, visit the Web site "Festivals.com" at <http://festivals.com/nick/origin.htm>.

- Where did the real St. Nicholas live? Describe the origins of St. Nick.
- As you follow the legend of St. Nick around the world, record the name(s) associated with each country:

<i>Country</i>	<i>St. Nick Names</i>	<i>Legends of the Land</i>
Russia		
The Czech Republic		
The Netherlands		
USA		
England		

<i>Country</i>	<i>St. Nick Names</i>	<i>Legends of the Land</i>
France		
Germany		
Austria		
China		
Japan		

- Now that you've traveled the world with St. Nick, create a short story which describes the legend of St. Nick. Use information from the countries of the world. Take some liberty and create additional twists to the folklore.

Activity #6: Christmas countdown

Children all over the world have begun to count down the number of weeks, days and maybe even minutes until Christmas morning. Most of these children are really counting the arrival of Santa Claus, anxious to see what presents await. Even the Internet can provide you with a countdown to the celebration. Visit the Web site "Countdown to Christmas" at http://www.auburn.edu/~vestmon/xmas_cnt.htm.

- Record today's date and time.
- Record the length of time until Christmas according to this Web page.
- The days, hours and minutes were calculated for you. Now calculate the number of seconds until Christmas.
- Number of seconds until Christmas.

One last thing, whether you believe in Santa Claus or not, let's determine how far and how long it will take Old St. Nick to travel to your house on Christmas eve. Use the Web site "How far is it?" at <http://www.indo.com/distance/> to determine the distance from North Pole, Alaska, (a city north of Anchorage) to your city.

- Distance from North Pole, Alaska, to your hometown.
- How long will Santa have to travel if his sleigh and reindeer travel at a speed of 700 mph?

Christmas fun sites

- Write letters to Santa: "Welcome to North-Pole.Net!" at <http://www.north-pole.net/> - correspondence with Santa, information about him and other fun kid stuff.

- "Winter Web Wonderland: Letter to Santa" at <http://usacitylink.com/xmas/scletter.html> - opportunity to e-mail Santa Claus and if you're good, he may even reply.
- "Santa Claus Message Form" at <http://www.mofile.fi/santa/clus.htm> - chance to correspond with Santa and his virtual flying red-nosed reindeer.
- "Post Office" at <http://www.claus.com/postoffice.html> - e-mail delivery to Santa by Freddy Fast 'n Quick Elf. A reply from the jolly old guy can be expected within 4 days.

Christmas art to download:

- "Celeste's Holiday Graphic Collection" at http://www.graphics-by-celeste.com/holiday_graphics/ - holiday backgrounds for Christmas, Chanukah and New Year's.

Extra Christmas fun:

- "Lots of Christmas Fun" at <http://www.night.net/christmas/fun12.html-ssi> - a collection of fun activities celebrating Christmas.
- "Billy Bear & Kidz Storybooks" at <http://www.worldvillage.com/kidz/bilybear/christms/christms.htm> - fun seasonal activities for kids of all ages.
- "Christmas Mazes" at <http://www.gamesdomain.com/tigger/xmas/maze.html> - mazes for all ages, from preschool on up.
- "Christmas Word Puzzle" at <http://www.worldvillage.com/kidz/games/wp-xmas.htm> - a crossword puzzle with holiday-related words.
- "A Christmas Coloring Book" at <http://www.myhome.org/hoho.html> - holiday pictures which can be printed and colored for instant coloring fun.
- "John's Word Search Puzzles" at <http://members.macconnect.com/~jrpotter/holidays.spml> - word searches for American holidays.
- "The Christmas Trivia Quiz" at <http://www.familygames.com/quiz/> - a "quiz show" in Santa's Secret Valley with the opportunity to answer Christmas trivia questions.
- "A Winter Web Wonderland" at <http://usacitylink.com/xmas/> - fun holiday-related things like cards, gifts, holiday recipes, screen savers and an interview with Santa Claus.