

Theatre IV Classroom Study Guide

2000-2001 Season



Santa's Christmas Miracle

Book, Lyrics and Music by Richard Geirsch

A Frontier Christmas

A stranger has been put in the Broken Bone, Montana jailhouse, charged with possession of a suspicious looking bundle of goods, which the Sheriff suspects might have been stolen. Big Bad Bart is also arrested and put into the local jail with the stranger. Soon the Sheriff's daughter visits the jail, having been let out of school early for Christmas. Christmas was outlawed in Broken Bone years ago, so the Sheriff and the school marm argue. Bart tricks Amy into thinking he is Santa Claus, and after Amy tells "Santa" what she wants for Christmas, Bart manages to outfox the child into letting him out of jail. The Sheriff is very upset when he learns what Amy did, and decides to let the stranger out of jail while he deals with Bart. Bart returns dressed as Santa and brings Amy the present she requested. Amy gives the present to her father. The warm gesture reminds the Sheriff of the happiness that holidays can bring, and he decides to begin Christmas celebrations again. Relinquishing his disguise, Bart announces he has been transformed by Amy's trust. The stranger reveals that he is the one true Santa, and everyone leaves for a grand Christmas feast together before Santa and his new elf, Bart, go to work.



The Story of St. Nicholas



The original Santa Claus, Saint Nicholas, was born in Turkey in the 4th century. He was an early Christian bishop who presided over Myra, a city in Asia Minor, who became widely known his love of children and for his generosity. He is the patron saint of sailors, Sicily, Greece, and Russia. He is also, of course, the patron saint of children. In 16th century Holland, Dutch children would place their wooden shoes by the hearth in hopes that they would be filled with a treat. The Dutch spelled St. Nicholas as Sint

Nikolass, which became corrupted to Sinterklass, and finally to Santa Claus. In 1822, Clement C. Moore composed his famous poem, "A Visit from St. Nick," which was later published as "The Night Before Christmas." Moore is credited with creating the modern image of Santa Claus as a jolly fat man in a red suit.

The Origin of Christmas

Christmas is a celebration of the birth of Jesus Christ in the Christian faith. Born nearly two thousand years ago, Christians believe Him to be the Son of God. Whether Jesus was really born on December 25th, no one can say for certain. The date was chosen because it already was a holiday in ancient time's - a pagan feast. It is thought that the Nativity did take place on the 25th of the month - but which exact month is uncertain - every month at one time or another has been assigned. The Roman Church picked December 25th, and though questioned for several generations by the Eastern Church, it became a universal date in the fifth century.



Mistletoe is often a holiday decoration. See page 4 for more.

Christmas Cards

Christmas cards are a major element in the observance of the season. Some 1.5 billion cards are sent annually, an average of about sixty per family. The exact year the custom began may never be established, but it seems clear that it was in the decade of the 1840's that the first cards were produced. George Buday states in his "The Story of the Christmas Card" that the Cole-Horsley card, which has received considerable attention, appeared in 1843. This card, made for Sir Henry Cole by John Calcott Horsely, portrayed "brimming cheer" in the center and at each side of the happy family group, in smaller panels, were shown acts of charity- "Feeding the Hungry" and "Clothing the Naked." A thousand of these were lithographed by a Mr. Jobbins of Warwick Court, Holborn, and sold by a gift-book company in Old Bond Street for a shilling a piece.

What is Xmas

A widely seen abbreviation for Christmas, Xmas has a Greek origin where the word for Christ is Xristos. During the 16th century, Europeans began using the first initial of Christ's name, "X" in place of the word Christ in Christmas as a shorthand form of the word. Although the early Christians understood that X stood for Christ's name, later Christians who did not understand the Greek language mistook "Xmas" as a sign of disrespect.

The Christmas Star

To most Christians the Christmas star is symbolic of Jesus, who is often called "the bright and morning star." Ancient people looked upon stars as gods and created myths about them. Before there was Christmas, stars held importance in ancient religions. The Babylonians used three stars to represent a god. The Egyptians believed that certain gods controlled different stars and constellations. The six-pointed star of David became the symbol of the Hebrew nation. The North American Blackfoot Indian believed that every star was at one time a human being. The Great Bear and the Little Bear are still worshiped by the Berber tribes of Africa today. But the five-pointed star of Christmas holds center stage. Its appearance is recorded in the Bible in the New Testament which says it appeared over Bethlehem and served as a guiding light to lead the wise men to the Christ child.



Selected Holiday Reading

The Cowboy's Christmas by Joan Walsh Augland

A Child's Christmas in Wales by Dylan Thomas

Holly, Reindeer, and Colored Lights; the Story of the Christmas Symbols
by Edna Barth

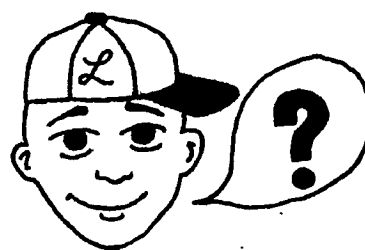
Christmas on the Prairie by Joan Anderson

Discussion/Activities

1. Discuss why Sheriff Twisdale outlawed Christmas and why it might be important for people to celebrate special times such as Christmas, Hanukkah, or birthdays.
2. Share some of your family's holiday traditions with the class. Compare traditions with other classmates. What are some of the differences in traditions between religions? Are there any differences in where you might be from, or where other students might be from?
3. What makes Christmas "Christmas?" Do you think it can be celebrated without presents? Without money? Without shopping malls? Write a short story about how you would celebrate Christmas if you lived on the frontier without modern conveniences. You can even make decorations out of objects found in nature like leaves, pine cones, twigs, or rocks.
4. Research and discuss the origins and meanings of holiday customs and traditions such as the Yule Log, Christmas Tree, Wassail Bowl, or Mistletoe.
5. Lead a brief discussion on gift giving. Then, have your students write their own letter to Santa Claus . . . including a gift request for someone special to them. (A friend, family member, perhaps even someone they do not know personally)

Mistletoe

Did you know that the tradition of hanging mistletoe in houses was started by the Druids? The Druids were ancient Celtic priests, and the plant symbolized hope and peace. When two enemies met under a sprig of mistletoe, they would drop their weapons and embrace in friendship. The modern custom of kissing under the mistletoe comes from this old ritual.



Leonardo Didja Noe

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Theatre IV gratefully acknowledges the major supporters of our touring programs: The National Endowment for the Arts, the Virginia Commission for the Arts; The Cincinnati Institute for the Arts; The Ohio Arts Council; the E. R. & Leona B. Carpenter Foundation; and the Flagler Foundation.

"Rootin' Tootin' Word Scramble" solutions:

- | | | |
|----------|-------------|-------------------|
| 1. ELF | 4. OUTLAW | 7. JAIL HOUSE |
| 2. TOYS | 5. SHERIFF | 8. BIG BAD BART |
| 3. SANTA | 6. REINDEER | 9. CHRISTMAS TREE |

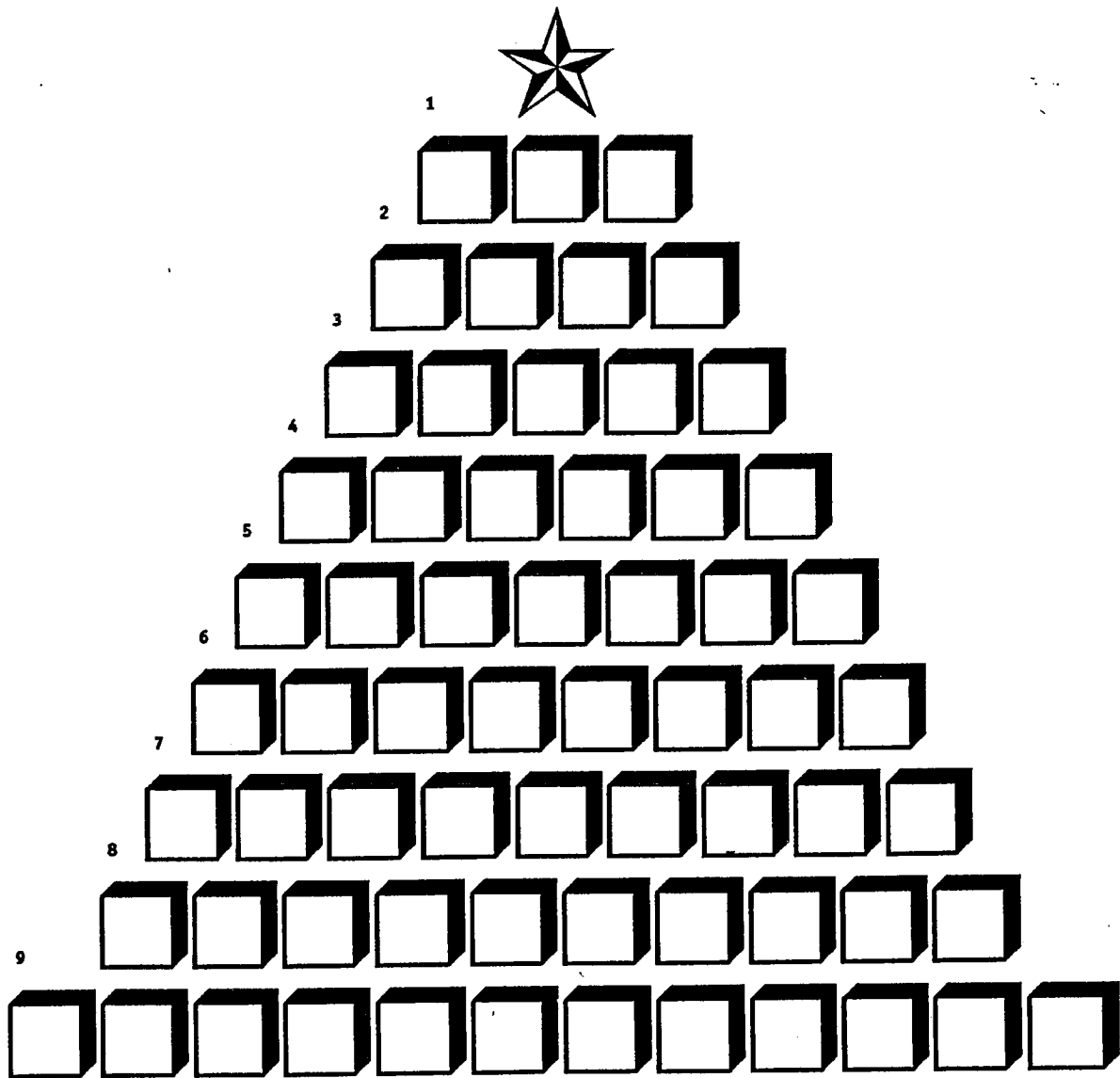
"Identify the Christmas Carol" solutions:

1. I'm Dreaming of a White Christmas
2. Noel
3. Let it Snow, Let it Snow, Let it Snow
4. Deck the Halls
5. O' Christmas Tree
6. Chestnuts Roasting on an Open Fire
(The Christmas Song)
7. Joy to the World
8. The Twelve Days of Christmas

Santa's Chrismtas Miracle

A Rootin- Tootin- Word Scramble

Fill in the blanks by spelling each of the scrambled words correctly, pardner.



1. LEF
2. SYTO
3. TANSA

4. TUWOAL
5. EFSHFIR
6. EREDINRE

7. IJLA SOEHU
8. IGB DBA TABR
9 TSHCARMIS RETE

Identify the Christmas Carol

Can you recognize all the Christmas Carols depicted here? After you identify these popular carols, make up some drawings for other Holiday songs (don't forget Hanukkah and Kwanza). Share your drawings with the class and see if they can guess the right song.

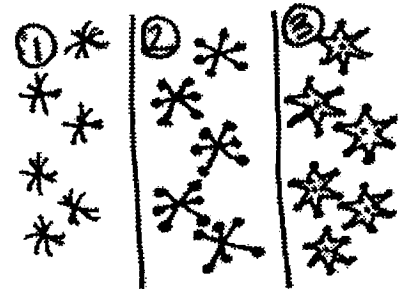
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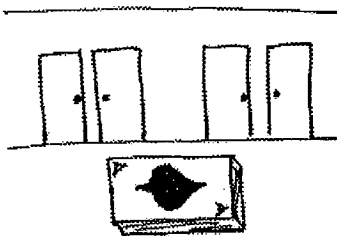
2.

ABCDEFGHI
JKLMNOPQR
STUVWXYZ

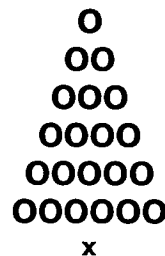
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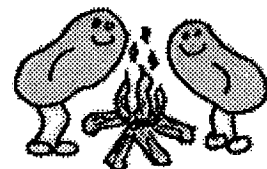
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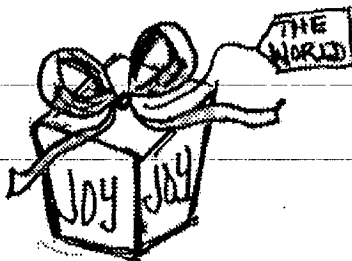
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6.



7.



8.

December

	1	2	25	4	5	
25	7	25	9	10	25	12
13	25	15	25	17	25	19
25	21	25	23	25	25	26
27	28	29	25	31		