

## Christmas

### General

- What do you know about Christmas?
- Is Christmas celebrated in your country? If not, do you have any other kind of celebration around that time of year?
- Do you like Christmas? Why, why not?
- How do you and your family celebrate Christmas?
- What are the traditions or customs you need to follow during Christmas?
- If Christmas were abolished, how would you feel?
- Sometimes people complain they are "expected to be happy" over Christmas, and this expectation annoys them. What do you feel about the "obligation to be happy"?
- When does the "Christmas period" start and end in your country? How many holidays, if any, do you have over the December-January period.
- Are any particular films shown during the Christmas period in your country?
- Many people like to have a "white Christmas," i.e., with snow. How do you feel about this?
- When was the last time you made a snowman?
- When was the last time you had a snowball fight?
- Tell us about the most memorable gift you've ever received during childhood Christmas.
- What kind of gift are you expecting to receive this year's Christmas?

### During the Christmas period

- If your country celebrates Christmas, when do the endless Christmas songs begin in the shops? Which Christmas song do you find the most annoying?
- How would your family react if you decided to spend the Christmas holiday in another country?
- Do you give or receive Christmas cards in your country? How many do you send and receive?
- What do you think of the tradition of giving Christmas cards?
- Has the internet changed the way you send Christmas greetings? How so?
- Do you let off fireworks during the Christmas period? What do you think of this practice?
- Some Christians fast from certain foods before Christmas. Do you think you could do that if you had to attend lots of Christmas parties?
- Do you attend any special religious services over the Christmas period? Which ones?
- Do you know when the "**Twelve Days of Christmas**" fall on the calendar? What is the holy day (or feast day) that marks the end of the Twelve Days of Christmas?

### Christmas gifts

- When do you do your Christmas shopping? Well in advance. A week in advance. The day before.
- Do you tell people what you want for Christmas or do you prefer it to be a surprise?
- Do you find choosing presents for the opposite sex difficult? In what way?
- Do you give presents to everyone in your family, including cousins, aunts and uncles?
- How often do you receive presents that you really like, and how often do you have to pretend you are happy with a present?
- Do you enjoy carefully wrapping all your presents or do you feel it is waste of time?

- Are there certain presents that you know you'll always receive from certain people?
- On what day are gifts exchanged in your country? Do you know anything about traditions in other countries?
- When are gifts opened in your society?
- Which gives you the most pleasure - giving presents or receiving them?
- What presents did you get for Christmas - or - what do you hope to get?
- Some people who feel that Christmas is too commercial donate their Christmas present money to charity and, instead of sending presents, send their friends a card telling them how much has been donated to charity on their behalf. What do you think of this idea? How would you feel if you received such a card?
- Do you think that people in general give more or less to charities over Christmas? Why?
- What do you think will be the most popular electronic gadget given as a gift this year?
- Some people wait for the January sales before they buy their "Christmas" presents as they can save a lot of money this way. What do you think of this suggestion?
- Do you do any of your Christmas shopping on the internet? What do you think of the method of shopping?
- If you received a gift you didn't really like or want how would you feel about asking for the receipt so that you could change it at the shop?

## Food

- How many people came round (or will come round) for lunch or Christmas dinner this year? What did/will you eat?
- What foods are traditionally eaten in your country at Christmas?
- Do you usually feel that you have eaten too much after the end of Christmas? Do you feel guilty about it?
- Are there any drinks which are traditionally drunk over Christmas or the New Year?
- On what days do people traditionally have big meals during the Christmas period in your society?

## Controversies

- In some countries there are moves to change the name of Christmas to "Winterval" and to change the greeting "Merry Christmas" to "Happy Holidays". The objective is to make the holiday more inclusive to non-Christians. What is your opinion?
- In the United States Hanukkah (a Jewish holiday) and Kwanzaa (a celebration for African Americans) are also included in the *Holiday Season*. Do you think it is necessary to give each religion or ethnicity equal time at the end of the year?
- If you had to rename Christmas, what name would you give it?
- What is your opinion of the alleged commercialisation of Christmas?
- Sometimes people complain that we are losing the "true spirit of Christmas". What do you think?
- The original pre-Christian winter solstice celebration was a pagan event which involved a lot of eating, drinking and general permissiveness. Are we perhaps returning to the original spirit of Christmas?
- The vast majority of the traditional Christmas symbols are pagan in origin. For example mistletoe, the Christmas tree and holly are all pagan relics. Is this important?
- It seems to be highly unlikely that Christ was actually born on 25th of December. Should that matter to Christians?
- Some atheists celebrate Christmas along with the rest of society while others try to avoid all contact with it. Should Christmas only be for Christians?