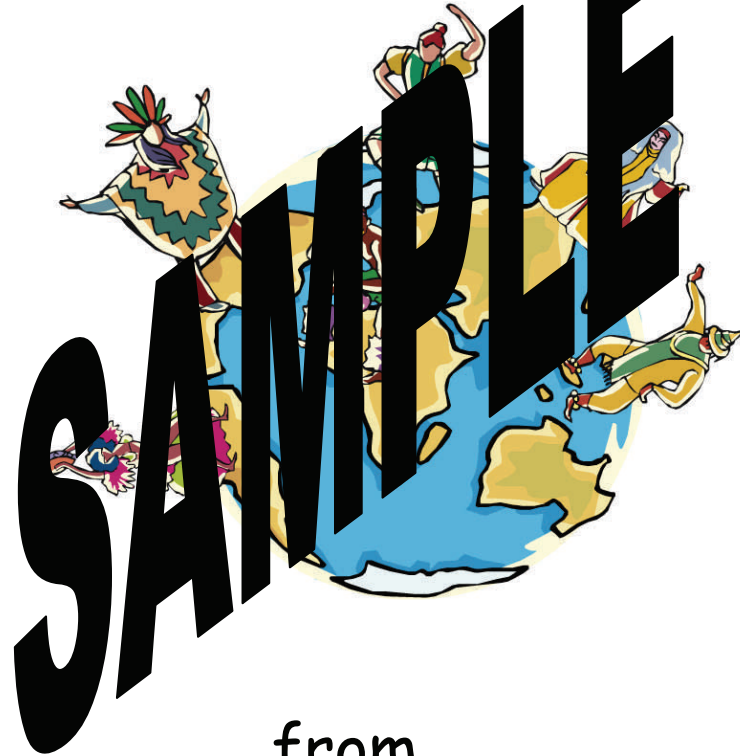




Holiday Traditions



from

Around the World

By _____



Christmas Tree

The first Christmas tree was created in Germany by Martin Luther. He brought the tree into the house and decorated it with lighted candles. Since then, the Christmas tree has become a very special holiday tradition in America.



Chinese New Year

One of the biggest and most exciting holidays in China is Chinese New Year. The celebration takes place in January or February. It lasts for three to five days. One of the main events of this holiday is a large parade in which people dress up in dragon costumes and dance down the streets in celebration.



Poinsettia

A legend from Mexico tells that on Christmas eve long ago, there was a poor young girl. She really wanted to bring a beautiful gift to church, but had nothing to offer. Just before she arrived, the girl pulled some weeds so that she would have something to give. She entered the church with good will and love in her heart which caused the wilted weeds to turn into dazzling red flowers. Today, we know them as poinsettias.



Hanukkah

A Midwinter

Hanukkah is also known as the Festival of Lights. This is a midwinter festival celebrated by Jewish people. They celebrate this holiday by lighting a special candelabra called a menorah. Each evening for eight nights, another candle on the menorah is burned until all eight candles are burning together. After lighting the menorah, the family play games together and exchange gifts.



Santa Lucia

Santa Lucia, also known as the queen of lights, is celebrated in Sweden on December 13, one of the shortest days of the year. During the feast, a young woman from each village will represent Santa Lucia by dressing in a white gown, red sash and a wreath of lighted candles on her head. She will go from farm to farm bringing baked goods and visiting the people. Santa Lucia means "the saint of vision and light" and brings good will and light to the long winter's night.



Kwanzaa

Kwanzaa is an African-American holiday celebrated for seven days, from December 26th to January 1st. Families decorate their homes in the colors of red, black and green. Kwanzaa has seven principles, one for each day, that are shown through the following symbols: ears of corn, fruits, vegetables, a unity cup, a mat made of straw and a special candle holder. On the last day of Kwanzaa, gifts are exchanged between parents and children.



La Befana

La Befana is the legend of an old woman in Italy who goes door to door on January 6th, the eve of the Epiphany, leaving treats in the stockings of good little children. She is often seen as old and ugly, but the children of Italy love her very much! That is, unless they have been naughty because then they will receive lumps of coal in their stockings instead of treats.



Sinterklaas

Sinterklaas is a tradition that came to us from Holland. He is an old man with a beard who rides upon a white horse. During the two weeks before his birthday, December 6th, he travels across rooftops listening for good children through the chimneys. Nice children, who leave hay and carrots for his horse, will wake up to wooden shoes full of candy and treats. Then on December 5th, he knocks on the doors of the good children leaving them gifts outside the door. The bad children will receive coal instead of presents.



Pere Noel

Pere Noel visits the good children in France. He has a beard, wears a red suit and rides upon a reindeer. The children fill the shoes with carrots and hay for his reindeer and leave them by the fireplace. Pere Noel exchanges the shoes for gifts during the night. Some good children will receive gifts twice, once on St. Nicholas eve (December 6th) and once on Christmas eve (December 24th).



How will you celebrate your holiday?

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