

An American Christmas (B2)

A – Before you start

Answer the questions with a partner.

1. Do you and your family celebrate Christmas?
2. How do most people in your country usually celebrate it?
3. Have you got any plans for the holiday this year?

B – Listen and answer

Read these incomplete statements. Then listen (without reading) and fill in the blanks.

1. The first known Christmas celebration was held in the year _____.
2. In England, Christmas celebrations were banned by _____ in 1647.
3. From 1659 to _____, they were also banned in the Massachusetts Bay Colony in America.
4. British traditions became less popular in the US after the _____
_____.
5. In the early 19th century, two _____ helped to revive the celebration of Christmas in the US.
6. On _____, 1870, US President Ulysses S. Grant declared Christmas a national holiday.
7. The tradition of Christmas trees was brought to America by _____.
8. In the US and the UK, children usually open their presents on Christmas _____.

C – Read and answer

Read the article and the information box and answer the questions.

1. What are festivities usually like in the US, according to the article?
2. Who were the English separatists who lived in the early British colonies in the US?
3. Why did the works of Washington Irving and Charles Dickens change people attitudes?
4. How long have trees been associated with Christmas in Germany?
5. Which Christmas traditions do the US and the UK have in common?
6. How did the tradition of eating Chinese food at Christmas develop in the US?

D – Learn it! Use it!

Complete these sentences with words from the glossary. (You may have to adapt the expression in some way; e.g. change the verb tense.)

1. What's the matter with Simon? He looks really _____ today?
2. To _____ something means to ban it.
3. Children don't usually like eating green vegetables like _____ or spinach.
4. Our grandfather's a real _____. He hates spending money and never buys us presents.
5. That restaurant's expensive and the food's awful; _____, people still go there.
6. I can't lend you my dictionary. Daisy _____ it yesterday and she hasn't given it back yet.

E – Ready for the B2 FIRST Certificate in English? (Reading and Use of English, Part 4)

Complete the second sentence so that it has a similar meaning to the first sentence, using the word given. Do not change the word given. Use between 2 and 5 words including the word given.

Example: Christmas became a global celebration after that.

HAS Christmas *has become a global celebration* since then.

1. Before its arrival in the US, it was celebrated for centuries in England.

YEARS Before its arrival in the US, it was celebrated _____ in England.

2. The English separatists did not approve of Christmas celebrations.

OPPOSED The English separatists _____ celebrating Christmas.

3. In the US, the celebration of Christmas was revived thanks to two authors.

WAS In the US, _____ helped to revive Christmas.

4. Only in 1870 did Christmas become a national holiday in the US.

UNTIL It _____ that Christmas became a national holiday in the US.

5. In some rural areas, turkey isn't served. It is replaced with game meats.

INSTEAD In some rural areas, game meats _____ turkey.

6. In Hawaii, don't be surprised if you see local specialities on the table.

EXPECT In Hawaii, you _____ local specialities on the table.

F – Write about it

Write about a special occasion you celebrated during the year. Mention:

- what the celebration was about;
- when/where/how you celebrated it;
- who you celebrated it with.

Answers

B – Listen and answer

1. 336 2. the Puritans/Oliver Cromwell 3. 1681 4. American Revolutionary War
5. authors 6. 26th June 7. German immigrants 8. morning

C – Read and answer

1. They are usually elaborate and highly commercial. 2. They were Protestants who (had) separated from the Church of England. 3. Irving's stories described how Christmas had been celebrated in England before the Puritans outlawed it. Dicken's novella contained idyllic descriptions of the celebrations and showed the benefits of celebrating Christmas as a time of goodwill and charity. 4. Since the late 1400s. 5. The traditions that the US and the UK share are decorating trees, sending Christmas cards, exchanging gifts and having a big family dinner. 6. It developed because American Jews felt like outsiders at Christmas and saw Chinese restaurants, as safe havens.

D – Learn it! Use it!

1. miserable 2. outlaw 3. cabbage 4. miser 5. nevertheless 6. borrowed

E – Ready for the B2 FIRST Certificate in English?

1. for hundreds of years 2. were opposed to 3. it was two authors who/that 4. was not/wasn't until 1870 5. are served instead of 6. can/may expect to see