

Inside This Issue

Aren't You Lucky!

I hope no one says to you (as I heard someone say the other day): "Aren't you lucky to be in the US at Christmas time?" If someone does, it means: "Christmas here makes me happy, so I assume it will make you happy too." But whether you celebrate Christmas or not, this assumption may surprise and frustrate you.

If you do celebrate Christmas as part of your religious tradition, you may think, "No, I would rather be with my friends and family at home for this holiday. Everything about Christmas here is wrong — the food, the decorations, the weather, the music.. I do not feel jolly. For me, this is a religious and family holiday but everything here is plastic and fake. Who is this Santa fellow anyway? And I'm tired of it already — it's been Christmas here since October. And even if I am happy to try Christmas here, why don't you ask me about how we celebrate it in my country? I would love to tell you."

You could say this to that well-meaning person: "Well, I'm sure you will understand that it is hard to be away from home at such a time. Yes, it is certainly interesting to see how different cultures celebrate the same holiday. Did you know that we don't have Santa Claus or stockings, but we have ____." Tell about the ways you celebrate Christmas, then pause for the polite and interested person to ask you more! As you discuss the holiday, listen for Americans to tell you about their spiritual and family

traditions. They do have them, but they are not very public. You will feel more connected to a US Christmas if you hear about them.

On the other hand, **if Christmas is not part of your family's custom**, you may think, "No, I feel very left out in this country in December. This is not my festival, but everywhere I go I am asked to participate in it. Parties at school and work. A gift for the person who delivers our newspaper. Stores pushing me to buy things I do not want. And why don't you ask me about the important holidays in my life? I would love to tell you about them."

So you could say to that person: "Well, as you may know, my family does not celebrate Christmas." (Tell a little about your religion or culture — education is the key!) "So, yes, it is interesting to learn more about how Americans celebrate Christmas. From the outside, it seems quite _____. I wonder what it is like for Americans, who are near their families and are enjoying their Christmas traditions." (Pause, and hear — I hope — about some family and spiritual values of the holiday.) Then: "I sometimes feel a bit left out. I guess this is how an American would feel in my country during the celebration of _____." (Tell a little about your most important holiday. Talk about any similarities between your holiday and Christmas — in how you celebrate it, in how families gather, in the holidays' values.)

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Christmas Symbols

Christmas Tree: An evergreen tree with lights and decorations is, perhaps, the most common symbol of Christmas in the US. Trees were symbols of strength and long life for centuries before Christian teachers used evergreens as a symbol of “endless life.”

Red and Green: The holly bush was popular among pre-Christian Europeans. The evergreen holly, with its red berries, stands for strength against the death of winter.

Mistletoe: If you stand under a piece of mistletoe (a branch with leaves and white berries), you will be expected to kiss the host. Be careful!

Stockings: Family members hang a “stocking” next to the chimney. If the children have been good, Santa Claus fills the stocking with an orange (in the toe) and small presents and candy. If the children have been naughty, they are told they will get lumps of coal. (Could any parent really do that?)

Gifts: Christmas has become a commercial holiday for many. But within Christian belief, there is a religious root to the custom — the three Wise Men brought gifts to the baby Jesus, and Jesus grew to give his life to others. Remember that, in private, most American families’ Christmas day includes a lot of warmth, love, sweetness, tradition, and generosity. Try to keep this in mind as you walk through the shopping mall...

The Story of Christmas

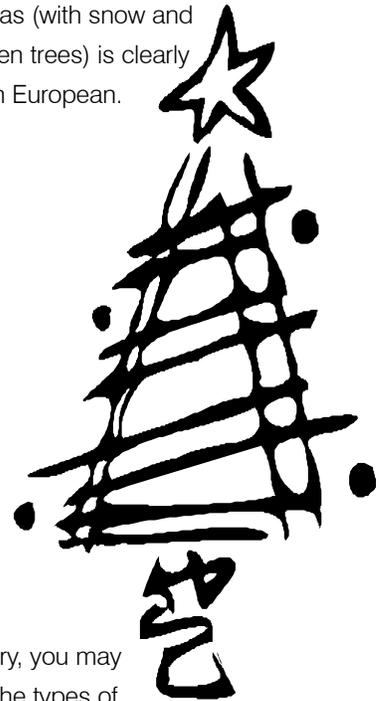
Each year on December 25, most Americans from a Christian background celebrate Christmas. Even those who are not religious the rest of the year will have a Christmas tree and give gifts.

The story of Jesus’ birth may be familiar to you: Jesus’ parents, Joseph and Mary, traveled to Bethlehem to be counted in a tax census. While there, Mary gave birth to Jesus in a stable, as there were no rooms in any inn. Shepherds heard angels tell them that the son of God had been born. The shepherds visited Jesus then went to tell the world what the angels had told them. Three kings (or Wise Men), following a bright star in the East, traveled for 12 days to visit Jesus, and brought him gifts.

No one knows exactly when Jesus was born. The Bible says there were “shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night.” Bethlehem in December is usually cold and rainy, so some scholars think Jesus was born some months earlier.

For centuries, people argued about when to celebrate Jesus’ birth. The Roman Church chose December 25, even though (or because) it was the date of a popular pagan sun celebration.

Because of this pagan and Roman root, English religious immigrants to the US in the 1600s refused to celebrate Christmas. The warm and joyful celebration of Christmas by German and Dutch immigrants, however, won popularity in the U.S. by the early 1800s. Today, even in the southern states, the “look” of an American Christmas (with snow and evergreen trees) is clearly northern European.



If You Have A Tree in Your Home: Safety Tips

Even if you have had Christmas trees in your home country, you may not be used to the type of heating in your home here, or the types of trees found in the U.S. To be safe:

- Be sure to buy a fresh (not dry) tree. Grab a branch about 6 inches from the end. Pull it toward you. If the tree is fresh, no needles will come off in your hand. Or, in some parts of the US, you can go to a farm and cut your own.
- Remember that home heat dries out trees. If possible, keep the tree outside until you are ready to decorate it. When you bring it inside, saw one inch off the bottom of the trunk, to re-open the cells that can absorb water. Always keep the tree in a large pot of water. Fill the pot once a day. *The average tree in the US absorbs a gallon of water per day.* If you ever let the tree become completely dry, the cells close up and will not absorb any water.
- Keep the tree away from candles and fire. Be sure the tree will not fall over. Use wire, tied from the tree to a wall, to support the tree if necessary.

Gift-Giving at the End of the Year

December is filled with the message of gift-giving. In its positive light, think of it as a time for generosity, appreciation, and community-building. Many Americans use this season to give a yearly gift or send a yearly card to others. They may do so regardless of the person's religion, by sending a card that says "Season's Greetings" rather than "Merry Christmas," and avoiding red and green paper. Here are some guidelines:

Teachers. Many young children bring a small present to their teachers on the last day of school in December. This is not necessary, and an expensive gift is not appropriate. But if you like, your child could make the teacher a gift. Or give a small craft or some food from your country. Or make a donation to a community charity in the teacher's name. High school and university students usually do not give gifts to their teachers.

Co-Workers. Some offices have a "Secret Santa" system: each employee is secretly given the name of one other employee, and buys a gift for him/her only. Others have a "Yankee Swap:" everyone brings a wrapped gift to a party. One person goes first and chooses a gift from the pile. The next person can either take a different gift from the pile or the gift that Person #1 picked.

Let's Get Specific Here

OK, enough generalities about gifts. Here's what I give (but please remember, there are local differences in what is appropriate — it's best to ask a friend where you live what is common):

Teachers: To elementary school teachers: homemade cookies or candles, a gift certificate to an office supply or book store, or a contribution to our town's Foundation that supports teachers' professional development. To high school teachers: just a smile.

Co-Workers: Nothing to peers or my boss. To secretaries: nuts, cookies, or a tree ornament if they celebrate Christmas. To my business manager: some favorite food.

Service Providers: To the letter carrier and newspaper deliverer: \$10. When we have had child care providers or house cleaners: one week's pay.

Neighbors: Cookies, made by my daughters and me.

The next person can take one from the pile, or Person #1 or #2's gift, and so on.

Except for these gift exchanges, you will probably not be expected to give gifts to co-workers, except, perhaps, to people who work *for* you. A small gift to a secretary (like the one for a teacher) might be appropriate. Gifts to superiors are usually not given. Expensive or personal gifts are almost never appropriate.

Regular Service Providers. Many people give money to those who give them regular and frequent service through the year, like the mail carrier, the person who delivers the newspaper, the doorman, or the baby-sitter. Some of these people may "help you remember" by including an empty envelope with their name on it, with one of their deliveries! How much money to give depends on how long you have known them, the number of other holiday gifts they are likely to get, the size of your weekly payment to them, how good a job they have done, and their (and your) personal financial situation. Ask a friend or neighbor about what is appropriate.

Neighbors. This is a good time to meet your neighbors, if you have not done so already. Sweets or traditional food from your country would be a welcome gift.

Santa Claus

Here is how Santa Claus works in the US. He "lives" at the North Pole, where he and his many *elves* (tiny helpers) work hard all year to make children's toys. Children write a letter to Santa, asking for the gifts they want. On Christmas Eve (December 24), Santa puts his toys in a sleigh pulled by eight reindeer. He flies from house to house, landing on the roof, but only when all children are asleep. He comes down the chimney with his bag of presents. Children leave milk and cookies for him. If these are gone in the morning, it is "proof" that Santa really came.

The character of Santa Claus evolved from stories about St. Nicholas, a bishop who lived in the fourth century. He was generous, especially to children and the poor. The name Santa Claus comes from St. Nicholas, or Sinterklaas in Dutch. Some people refer to Santa Claus as Kriss Kringle, from the German Christkindl, or Christ Child. But Santa Claus is not the Christ Child. This is a simple example of a slowly-changing tradition.

At times in US history, people thought of Santa Claus as a small elf. Then in the 1800s, an American cartoonist drew Santa as human-size, fat and jolly, bearded, and dressed in red with white fur trim. This is the Santa you will see in stores and on street corners. These Santas confuse children, who think he should be hard at work at the North Pole.

Free Conversations

Through your computer and one of several free downloadable programs, you can talk for free to your friends, family and colleagues all around the world. Many of the instant-messaging systems are adding this feature. Here are two I can vouch for:

- ♦ www.skype.com
- ♦ messenger.msn.com/Xp/Default.aspx

(Your friend has to be using the same program.) Talk and listen through your laptop's microphone and speakers, or use external ones. Or buy a simple headset for about \$10.

Both Skype and MSN also offer an instant messaging option while you talk (useful, for example, if you want to tell someone a long, complicated URL). You can send files too — they show up in your conversation screen as you talk. You might use this to send a photo as you talk, for example.

Or, if your hair looks nice, do all this plus video too, on the MSN site. You'll need a web camera (\$40-90); you'll be able to see your friends as you talk.

For a small monthly fee, you can use SkypeOut to call people around the world who do not have Skype. (The rate is about \$.023 any time, a rate you might be able to match using other bargain international calling cards or plans.)

Check it out.

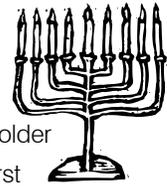
Hanukkah

Hanukkah (sometimes spelled Chanukah) is a Jewish festival of lights and dedication. The holiday has its roots in the second century, BCE, when Antiochus Epiphanes became king of the Syrian branch of Alexander the Great's empire. He made Jewish (and other local) religions illegal and forced people to become Hellenistic (Greek). On the 25th day of the month of Kislev in the Jewish calendar (probably at the time of a pagan sun celebration), he changed the Temple of Jerusalem into a temple of Zeus, a Greek god. A group of Jews, led by Mattathias and his five sons (called the Maccabees), began to fight against Antiochus. After three years of war, the Maccabees won. They took down the altar in the temple and built a new one. On the anniversary of Antiochus' actions, they re-dedicated the Temple. They had only one bottle of oil, enough for one day. By a miracle, the oil lasted eight days, through the whole celebration. For this reason, Hanukkah lasts eight days.

This year Hanukkah begins on the evening of December 25 and ends at sundown on January 2. Jewish families gather to light

candles, held in a special holder called a *menorah*. On the first night of Hanukkah, families use the middle candle to light one other one. On the second night, the middle candle is used to light two candles, symbolizing the new day and increasing light. This continues through the eighth night. As they light the candles, families say a blessing and may sing songs. Jewish children may receive a gift or money on each of the nights of Hanukkah.

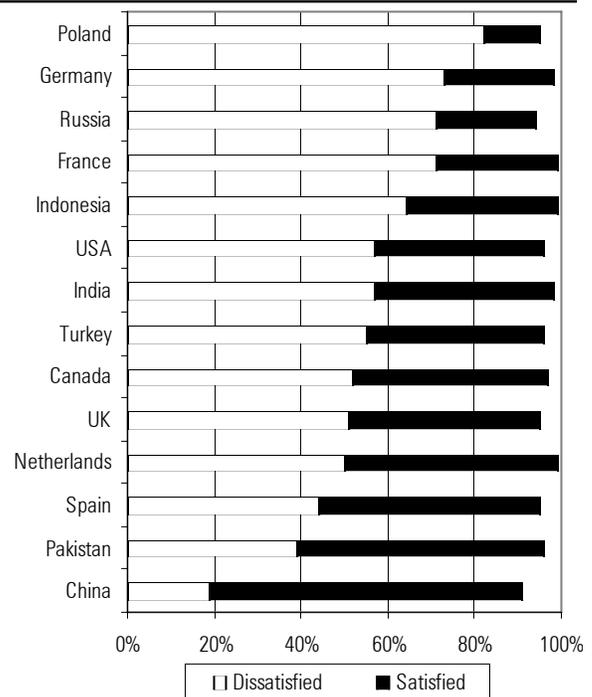
The story of Hanukkah is a story of despair and hope, of dark and light. On the 25th day of Kislev, the moon is always dark, as the Jewish calendar is a moon-based one. The end of Kislev is also usually very near the winter solstice, when the days in the northern hemisphere are the shortest. So Hanukkah always comes at the year's longest and darkest nights. Jews remember the darkest days of their history when the forces to give up their religion and culture were strong. And they remember their power to resist these forces. They remember the sadness of their people when they lost their temple, but also the joy of the miracle of the lasting oil.



Satisfied with National Conditions?

New results from the Pew Global Attitudes Project were just released. People around the world were asked their views on their countries' prosperity and their sense of personal achievement. To the right are findings from the question, "On balance, how satisfied are you with the way things are going at home?"

Check out other findings at people-press.org (click on *The Pew Global Attitudes Project*).



Kwanzaa

Kwanzaa is a relatively new family and community celebration for African Americans. It lasts seven days, from December 26 to January 1. The holiday is a time to honor one's ancestors, and to celebrate African culture and history. Friends, neighbors, and family gather to consider seven ideas that are important to the African American community:

- umoja:** unity, or coming together
- kujichagulia:** self-determination or having control of one's life
- ujima:** collective work and responsibility
- ujamaa:** cooperative economics, or sharing money and profits
- nia:** having a purpose or reason
- kuumba:** being creative
- imani:** having faith

New Year's Eve

I will be writing more about New Year's Day (January 1) in the next issue. But in December you may begin to make plans for New Year's Eve celebrations (on December 31).

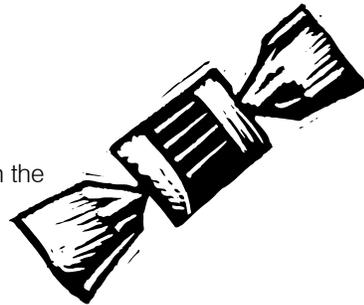
Your children, especially adolescents, may ask your permission to go to a New Year's Eve party. Some towns plan cultural and festive activities that continue all day, through midnight. Many people make their plans far in advance. If you will need a baby-sitter, start looking for one now.

Many parents and towns worry about car accidents on New Year's Eve, because so many people will have been drinking alcohol. In some towns, buses and subways are free, to encourage using them rather than a car. Taxi companies have many more drivers on duty than usual. Some companies will allow you to order a taxi ahead of time. Some groups of teenagers and/or adults hire a limousine for the evening, to drive from place to place. If they split the cost six ways, this may be a good, safe (and luxurious...) choice. Many restaurants and bars offer free coffee. Even if you and your children will not be drinking alcohol, remember that almost everyone else on the road will have been.

Some families have an at-home celebration. Children may invite groups of friends to sleep all night in their home, on the floor. If your child is invited to a friend's house, make sure that the parents will be home. Discuss with your teenagers your family rule about alcohol. If the party is not a sleep-over, make careful plans for how and when your child will get home safely.

Kwanzaa is not an ancient religious holiday. It was established in 1966 as part of the civil rights movement in the US. And so, families are still deciding what traditions they will develop and use.

However, a few customs have already been widely accepted. The symbolic colors of Kwanzaa are red (for hard work), black (for beauty), and green (for a plentiful future). Families put a straw mat (*mkeka*) on a table (to remember African culture), and on it, a candleholder (*kinara*). Every night, they light a candle to celebrate one of the seven ideas. Many families have a feast on December 31.



Birthday Biography: Frank Sinatra

If you spend any time in shopping malls, restaurants or elevators this month, you will hear plenty from Frank Sinatra. His Christmas songs — and so many other — are part of the American musical tradition.

Sinatra was born on December 12, 1915, in New Jersey, to Italian-born parents. His was a rough neighborhood — "Everyone carried a 12-inch pipe then -- and they weren't studying to be plumbers," he said. Sinatra was later frequently accused of having links to the Mafia; he consistently denied this.

He began singing on a radio amateur show. He was a fan of Bing Crosby, but wanted to differentiate himself from him. He tried a new style — soft on the high notes, glide the vowels, dip down low to the low notes. It worked...

The bandleader Tommy Dorsey hired him and, during the 1940s, he became a sensation, especially with teenage girls. In 1950, some voice problems and some public fist fights appeared to destroy his career. But not so — the best was yet to come. By the 1950s and 60s he was back on film (*The Man with the Golden Arm, Guys and Dolls*) and the song charts (*Strangers in the Night, New York New York*). He won Grammy awards in 1959, 1965, and 1966.

Happy Birthday, Ol' Blue Eyes.

Connecting with Home

Here are some web sites written for people from other countries who are living in the US (or, in some cases, who are living anywhere else in the world):

www.ozinamerica.org or
www.simplyoz.com
(Australia)

www.oceanatl.org (Asian Pacific)

home.sina.com (China)

www.eceb-usa.org (Egypt)

www.alliance-us.org (France)

www.serve.com/shea/germusa/germusa.htm (Germany)

www.hacusa.org (Hungary)

www.indolink.com (India)

kaigailink.com (Japan)

www.koreasociety.org (Korea)

www.missyusa.com (Korea)

www.latviansonline.com
(Latvia)

www.thehollandring.com/clubs_usa.shtml
(The Netherlands)

www.russianlink.com (Russia)

www.sacc-usa.org/5_profiles.html#sviv (Sweden)

www.britsonline.com (UK)

If you know of other good sites, please send them to newcomer@interchangeinstitute.org!

continued from page 1

Here are some tips for finding meaning in December with or without Christmas:

If You Do Celebrate Christmas...

Holidays are wonderful times for *rituals* (regular customs). Doing your holiday family rituals here can be a very important way of keeping you (and your family) connected to your home culture. Try to find some parts of your traditional Christmas (and other holidays) that you can re-create here. Maybe you have brought or can make a traditional Christmas decoration. Read aloud from a traditional Christmas book. Sing a familiar song in your language. Find a church with a familiar kind of service. Maybe a friend can send you a box of traditional food from your country. Wake up, eat meals, and go to sleep at the same time you do on this holiday at home.

However, be realistic about how traditional a holiday in a new country will be. Will it be OK to be “almost, but not quite, like home?” Or will that make you homesick? Maybe you know you cannot find just the right kind of sauce to go with your dinner. Will it be better to have something close, or to have a different menu altogether? You know you will miss your family. Will a telephone call on Christmas help bridge the distance? Or would it be better to call the day before?

Last, watch for some new holiday rituals in this culture that you like. Put a wreath on your door. Hang a stocking. Sing with friends in your neighborhood. These may help fill the gap left by the traditions you cannot replace from home.

...And If You Do Not

Even if you do not celebrate Christmas, you may feel connected to the spirit or meaning of its customs. The evergreens that people bring into their homes stand for long life. Candles are a symbol of hope, lit against

the cold night of loneliness. These are very old customs rooted in pre-Christian cultures in the northern hemisphere, where December brings the coldest and darkest days of the year. Christmas itself is the celebration of the birth of hope and the joy of anticipation. Santa Claus is the human expression of giving to and loving others.

Other December holidays that are celebrated in the US may have meaning for you, as well. Hanukkah is the Jewish festival of lights (see page 4). Here, one celebrates being able to save one's identity and faith in the face of strong outside forces. If you feel a struggle to stay connected (and keep your family connected) to your home culture while living in the US, you will understand the power of this holiday. Kwanzaa is an African American community celebration (see page 5). Especially if you come from a culture that is less individualistic than the US, you may find meaning in Kwanzaa's celebration of ancestors and the focus on living and working together as a community.

Talk with your family and others about how you celebrate these same basic values in your home country. At the same time, discuss the ways your holidays emphasize different beliefs and values. If you are invited to a friend's home to share in a December holiday, go and ask questions. I hope your friend will ask you questions too.

Connect with Home

In any case, this is a good time to connect with other people from your home culture. You can share traditions and/or reactions to American life. Many cities have cultural organizations with libraries, classes, discussion groups, lectures, and social events. To find them, look in your Yellow Pages telephone book under “Language Schools” (they often have cultural events as well as language classes) or on-line. Or try one of the sites listed in the Sidebar.

Background to the News: Judge Alito

Because US Supreme Court Judges, once appointed, can keep their jobs *for the rest of their lives*, and because their decisions affect so many aspects of US life, Americans watch every appointment closely. President Bush has nominated Judge Samuel Alito (born in 1950) to fill an empty seat. The Senate, which must approve the appointment, will begin formal hearings with Judge Alito in January. But Senators have already begun interviewing him and reading all that he has written, to try to learn about his views. Two issues have arisen in the media:

♦ *Judge Alito's views about the constitutionality of abortion.* While about 60% of Americans favor women having access to an abortion in at least some circumstances, this issue is very controversial in the US today. While Senators will probably not ask Judge Alito about his views on the morality of abortion, they may ask him how he thinks the Constitution should be used to guide abortion-related laws. In this context, you will hear reference to a 1973 Supreme Court decision, **Roe v. Wade**, which established a woman's right to have an abortion. The decision said that any state law that outlawed abortion violated a woman's right to privacy. While the US Constitution does not use the phrase "right to privacy," the court based its decision on the 14th Amendment which says, in part, "*...nor shall any state deprive any person of life, liberty, or property, without due process of law; nor deny to any person within its jurisdiction the equal protection of the laws.*" Since 1973, some states have passed laws that put some restrictions on access to abortion — for example, requiring that teen-age girls tell their parents, or requiring a 24-hour waiting period. If there is a question about whether such state laws are constitutional, they come before an

appeals court. In several cases, Judge Alito was one of the judges deciding on the constitutionality of these laws; his decisions on these cases, then, provide a window into his thinking about the issue. In 1992, Judge Alito argued that a Pennsylvania law that put some restrictions on abortions was legal. Among these restrictions was the requirement for a married woman to tell her husband before having an abortion. The Supreme Court, in this **Planned Parenthood v. Casey** decision, overruled Judge Alito, saying that this restriction put an "undue burden" on women and was unconstitutional.

♦ *Judge Alito's views about reapportionment.* Judge Alito wrote on a job application, in 1985, that he disagreed with the Supreme Court decisions of the 1960s having to do with *reapportionment*. Before these decisions, a state was able to draw its legislative districts based on geography rather than population. So, for example, in New Hampshire, one rural township with three residents had one state representative, while another district with 3244 residents also had one representative. The Supreme Court (under Chief Justice Earl Warren), noting the potential for abuse, made this practice unconstitutional. It required that states' districts be roughly equal in terms of population. The guiding principle of these decisions is called "one person, one vote" and focuses on equality and fairness in representation. These decisions were controversial at the time because they took power away from state governments. The "one person, one vote" principle is widely accepted today. Senators will probably ask Judge Alito what he believes now and about the reasons for his 1985 disagreement.



Background to the News: Plame Affair

In 2002, James Wilson traveled to Niger to investigate the Bush administration's claim that Iraq had tried to buy uranium there. Wilson found no evidence for these claims, and his report was damaging to Bush's rationale for a war in Iraq. Shortly after, it was reported in the news that Wilson's wife, Valerie Plame, had been an undercover CIA agent. Wilson accused the administration of punishing him for his report by exposing his wife's identity.

It is a violation of the federal **Intelligence Identities Protection Act** to knowingly reveal the identity of a covert agent. Therefore, a **special prosecutor** (Patrick Fitzgerald) was named to conduct a **grand jury investigation** into who leaked Plame's identity to the press. A *special prosecutor* is a non-government lawyer appointed to investigate a federal official for misconduct. A *grand jury* is a group of 25 citizens who hear preliminary information about possible misconduct, and decide whether there is enough evidence of a crime to **indict** the person (bring him/her to trial). One person has been indicted so far.

Recently, **Bob Woodward**, the investigative reporter who helped uncover the **Watergate** scandal in 1972-4, admitted hearing of Plame's identity from a government official, but hiding that information for two years.

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Newcomer's Almanac is published monthly by The Interchange Institute, for people who have recently moved to the United States. Its goal is to promote international understanding by providing information about the American holidays, customs, values, social issues, and language that often confuse and surprise newcomers. It is written by Anne P. Copeland, PhD, who is a clinical psychologist and the Director of The Interchange Institute. She is an American and has lived and worked overseas with her family.

The Interchange Institute is a not-for-profit organization that studies the impact of intercultural transitions on individuals, their families, and the organizations for which they work. From the results of this research, the Institute offers seminars and workshops, produces publications, and provides consultative services to the international newcomers, their organizations, and to host communities, recognizing that change and insight on both sides facilitates smooth transition.

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The
Interchange
Institute

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That Crazy English: Red and Green

Here starts a series of columns on color idioms, beginning with two you will see a lot of in December, red and green:

Her plants always thrive; she has a real *green thumb*. (...*she is very good at gardening.*)

When he saw his neighbor's snow blower, he was *green with envy*. (...*he was jealous.*)

I am a little *green* when it comes to using this photocopy machine. (*I am new and not very good at using...*)

The new principal is coming tomorrow; let's give her the *red carpet treatment*. (...*let's make her feel very special, important, and welcome*)

I am afraid our club is *in the red* this month; we will have to raise more money next month. (*I am afraid we owe money, are in debt this month...*)

He should not try to deny taking the money; they *caught him red-handed*. (...*they caught him while he was taking the money.*)

It's a happy day — let's *paint the town red*. (...*let's celebrate by going to some exciting restaurant, bar, or other social place*)

RED AND GREEN

Read *That Crazy English* on page 8. Match each of the people/situations on the left with the idiom on the right that might be used to describe it.

- | | |
|--|-------------------------|
| 1. a mother walked into the kitchen and found her son with his hand in the cookie jar | |
| 2. a 70-year-old man is using Skype for the first time | a. green thumb |
| 3. a small business has been losing money | b. green with envy |
| 4. a woman with a beautiful garden | c. green |
| 5. a person who misses her sister very much watches as old friends greet each other at an airport | d. red carpet treatment |
| 6. two people decide to celebrate their new jobs by going to their favorite restaurant and then a show | e. in the red |
| 7. a work group prepares for the president of the company to visit | f. caught red-handed |
| | g. paint the town red |

Now write a sentence using the correct idiom, to describe each of the people on the left:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____
7. _____

HOMEWORK

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WITH A PEN

1. Read *Gift-Giving at the End of the Year* on page 3. Write a list of the people in your home country (besides your family and friends) to whom you give a gift at least once a year. For each person, describe what a typical gift might be. Then write a list of the people in your home country who give you a gift at least once a year. What is a typical gift from each of these people?

2. Read *Christmas Symbols* on page 2 and *That Crazy English* on page 8. Think of holidays in your home culture in which some colors are symbolic or traditional. Write a brief description of the meaning of these colors. Then write a list of idioms that use these colors — first in your home language, then translated into English.

3. Read *Santa Claus* on page 3. Draw a picture of a person, animal or imaginary character that is a symbol of a holiday in your home country. Write a short description of your picture.

WHAT YOU USUALLY DO: SIMPLE PRESENT TENSE

Read about the various December holidays on pages 2-5. Think about your family's own rituals during one of its most important holidays. Complete each sentence below, using the simple present tense to describe what you usually do.

Name of Holiday _____

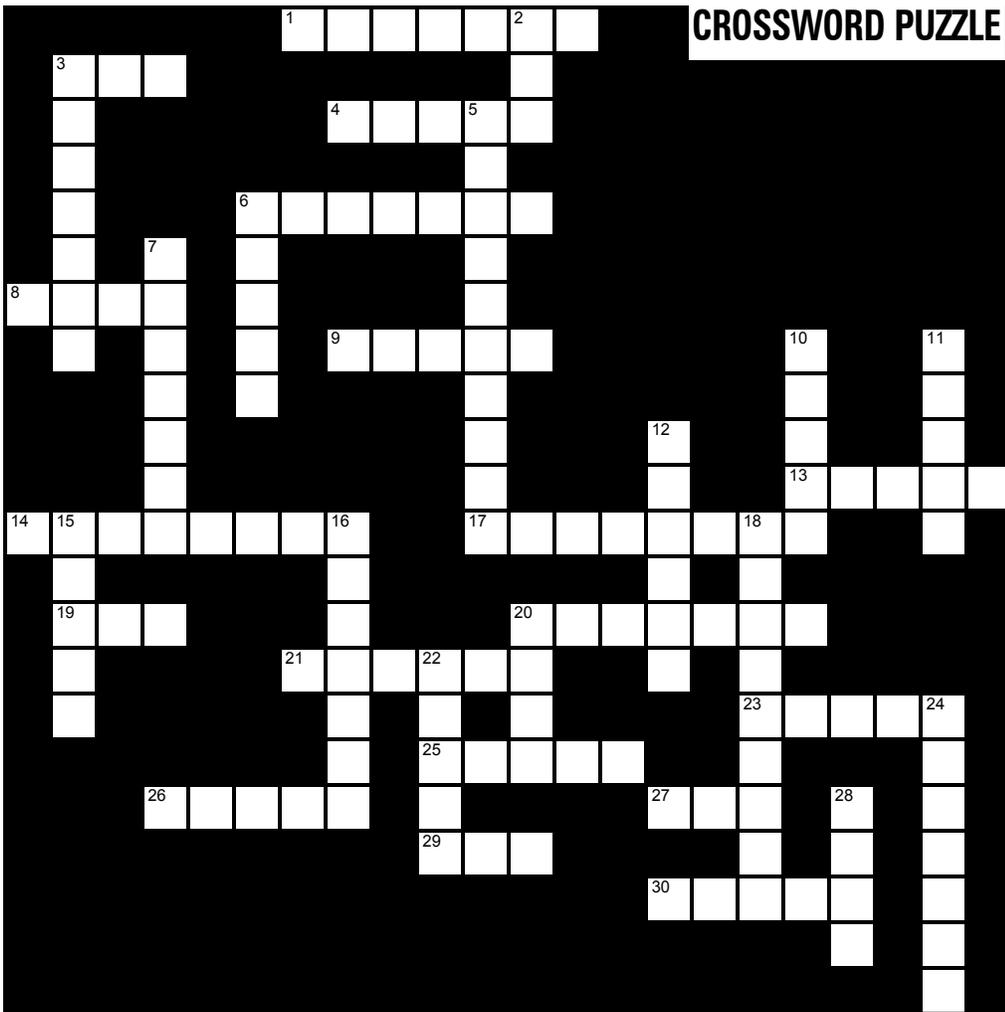
1. Every year we _____.
2. The day before this holiday, we _____.
3. Children always _____.
4. Men _____.
5. Women _____.
6. For dinner, we _____.
7. Some families _____.
8. Our neighbors _____.
9. Music _____.
10. For clothes, we _____.

UNDERSTANDING WHAT YOU READ

Read about *Christmas* on pages 2 and 3. Mark each of these TRUE (T) or FALSE (F). Correct any false statements.

- | | T | F |
|--|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| 1. Since a Christmas tree is dead, there is no need to give it water in your home. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 2. Nineteenth-century German and Dutch immigrants to the US made the celebration of Christmas popular in this country. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 3. Santa Claus is a modern-day symbol of Jesus. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 4. The Bible says that Jesus was born on December 25. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 5. According to US legend, Santa Claus travels in a sleigh that is pulled by eight reindeer. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 6. In the 4th century, St. Nicholas wore red clothes with white fur. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

CROSSWORD PUZZLE



Across

1. important in the celebration of several December holidays
3. a symbolic color of Kwanzaa and Christmas
4. a way to make free phone calls over the internet
6. Many people drink ___ at New Year's Eve parties.
8. the color of Frank Sinatra's eyes
9. the Kwanzaa symbolic color for beauty
13. They help Santa make toys.
14. This saint gave generously to poor children.
17. They pull Santa's sleigh.
19. One day's supply lasted 8 days, making it a symbol of Hanukkah.
20. A young child may give her ___ a gift in December.
21. Jesus was born here because there was no room in the inn.
23. A ___ jury's job is to decide if there is enough evidence that a crime happened that there should be a trial.
25. Be sure a Christmas tree is very ___ when you buy it.
26. the country feeling most satisfied with how it is doing
27. The ___ v. Wade decision argued for a woman's right to have an abortion.

29. Late December was a popular time for celebrating the ___ before Christianity.
30. Three of these visited baby Jesus.

Down

2. the night before a holiday
3. customs done in the same way every time
5. A special ___ is a non-government lawyer.
6. He has been nominated to be the next Supreme Court judge.
7. a Hanukkah candle holder
10. A Christmas tree needs a gallon of ___ every day.
11. With some messaging programs and a web camera, you can add ___ to your free internet phone calls.
12. formally accuse of a crime
15. At Kwanzaa, we celebrate ___, or unity and coming together.
16. One of the most famous American singers of the 20th century.
18. an ancient symbol of endless life
20. the most common symbol of Christmas
22. December is often a time to give these, regardless of your religion.
24. The winter solstice and a new moon make Hanukkah one of the ___ days of the year.
28. Prepare to do this under mistletoe.

OUT AND ABOUT

1. Read about *Santa Claus* on page 3. In one week in December, count the number of pictures of or people dressed as "Santa Claus" you see — on street corners (they are probably collecting money for the poor), department stores (they are probably talking to children, asking what gifts they would like for Christmas). At the same time, count the number of "nativity scenes" (models or pictures of the baby Jesus, his parents, and animals in the stable). Which number is higher — the number of nativity scenes or the number of people dressed as Santa? Compare this to your own country.

2. Read *New Year's Eve* on page 5. What activities (performances, parties, sales) will be offered in your community on December 31?

3. Read *Background to the News: Judge Alito and Plame Affair* on page 7. Read one article about each of these stories in a US national newspaper.

IF YOU USE THE WEB

1. Read *Aren't You Lucky!* on pages 1 and 7 and *Connecting with Home* on page 6. Using one of the sites listed or your favorite search engine (search for sites designed for people from your home country living in your city — for example, “Germans in Houston”). Do you find anything to help you feel connected to home?

2. Look at the *Satisfied with National Conditions?* chart on page 4. Go to **people-press.org** and open one of the reports listed under “The Pew Global Attitudes Project.” Do the results match your attitudes and impressions?

3. Read *Birthday Biography: Frank Sinatra* on page 5. Go to: **www.emusic.com/artist/11567/11567214.html** and click on one of the Albums. Listen for a few seconds to the velvet voice for free.



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WITH A FRIEND

1. Read *Kwanzaa* on page 5. Look at the list of seven ideas that are celebrated on this holiday. Do you have any holidays in your home country that celebrate any of these seven ideas? Describe them to a friend or partner.
2. Read *Hanukkah* on page 4. Hanukkah celebrates Jews' resistance against forces to give up their religion and culture. In the US, have you felt pressure — from your family or community — to change your values and culture, in ways you don't like? What can you do to resist this pressure?
3. Read *Aren't You Lucky!* on pages 1 and 7. If you celebrate Christmas in your home country, describe how your holiday traditions differ from what you see in the US. If you do not celebrate it in your home country, describe one of your important religious or national holidays.

SAYING WHAT YOU MEAN

Read *New Year's Eve* on page 5. With a partner:

Partner 1: You have a 14-year-old daughter who has been invited to a friend's house for a New Year's Eve party. You want to ask the friend's parents some questions about the party before you decide whether to let your daughter go.

Partner 2: You are the school friend's parent. You hope Partner 1's daughter will come to the party.

Have a conversation about the party. Then switch roles and try again.

Useful Expressions

Would you mind if I asked a few questions about New Year's Eve parties, because I don't know how they work here in the US.

In my country on New Year's Eve, children this age usually ____.

I wanted to be sure that you, or another adult, will be at home for the party.

I know families have different rules about drinking alcohol. In our family, our children _____. Will that be a problem at your party?

Because we are new here, I don't know what time parties like this are usually over.

ANSWER CORNER

RED AND GREEN

1f 2c 3e 4a 5b 6g 7d

Sample sentences:

1. “Hey! I caught you red-handed!”
2. Joe is a little green using Skype; can you help him?
3. We're in the red again; we have to cut costs.
4. I wish I had Mary's green thumb; my garden is very brown.
5. She was green with envy when she saw them at the airport, so she went home and called her sister.
6. Let's paint the town red!
7. We should put out the red carpet for President Lee.

UNDERSTANDING WHAT YOU READ

- 1.F (Even though a Christmas tree is dead, it still needs water.)
- 2.T 3.F (Santa Claus is a modern-day symbol of St. Nicholas.)
- 4.F (The Bible does not give a date for Jesus' birthday.) 5.T 6.F (The red clothes and white fur became a symbol of Christmas later.)

