

TWELVE DAYS OF CHRISTMAS

What in the world do leaping lords, French hens, swimming swans, and, especially, the partridge that won't come out of the pear tree have to do with Christmas?

Today, I found out! From 1558 until 1829, Roman Catholics in England were not permitted to practice their faith openly.

Someone during that era wrote this carol as a catechism song for young Catholics, with two levels of meaning: the surface meaning, plus a hidden meaning known only to members of their church. Each element in the carol is a code word for a religious reality that the children would remember.

The partridge in a pear tree was Jesus Christ.

Two turtledoves were the Old and New Testaments.

Three French hens stood for faith, hope and love.

The four calling birds were the four gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John.

The five golden rings recalled the Torah or Law, the first five books of the Old Testament.

The six geese a-laying stood for the six days of creation.

Seven swans a-swimming represented the sevenfold gifts of the Holy Spirit: prophecy, serving, teaching, exhortation, contribution, leadership and mercy.

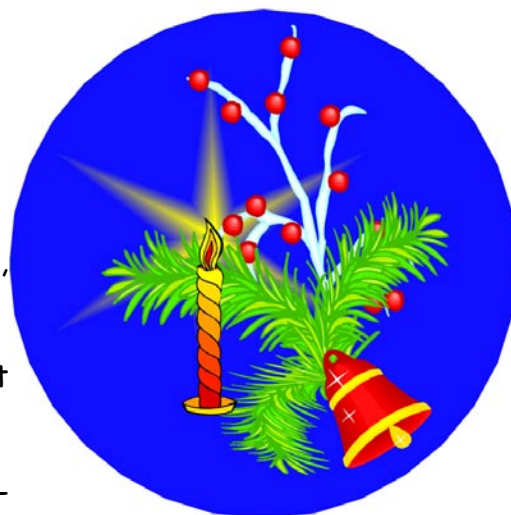
The eight maids a-milking were the eight beatitudes.

Nine ladies dancing were the nine fruits of the Holy Spirit: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self control.

The ten lords a-leaping were the Ten Commandments.

The eleven pipers piping stood for the eleven faithful disciples.

The twelve drummers drumming symbolized the twelve points of belief in the Apostles' Creed.





First Child: Last Christmas was a lucky one, in getting gifts for me. Most everything that I did want, was 'neath the Christmas tree. And in the center of it all, there stood a bike, all mine. Oh! Did you ever hear before, of anything so fine?

Second Child: The greatest gift I ever had was just a while ago. A birthday gift from mom and dad, the grandest watch I know.

Third Child: The greatest gift I ever had was a real ten-dollar bill. I got because I passed at school, I wish I had it still.

Fourth Child: The greatest gift I ever had was a Bible all my own. And that's by far the greatest gift, that I have ever known.

Fifth Child: The greatest gift I ever had, was a pair of skates and skis. I've never had, since I was born, such wond'rous gifts as these.

Sixth Child: Each year it seems we're given gifts, both presents great and small. But I can think of one tonight, that's greater than them all. The gift that God to earth did give, His only son divine, was greater far than all the gifts that ever will be mine.

- C is for **Christ**, He leads the list.
- H Is for the **Home** where Jesus may come.
- R for the **Rush** when Christmas folks push.
- I for the **Inn** where Joseph had been.
- S for the **Sheep** the Shepherds keep.
- T for the **Toys** for girls and boys.
- M is for **Me** so full of glee.
- A for **Angels** bright, that sang at night.
- S for the **Star** that led from afar.



The Angels' Assignment

A short play for primary grades
by Kay Gibson

Scene 1

Teacher: That was awful. Do you three ever practice?

Angel 1: We practice every day. I cannot hit those high notes.

Angel 2: We are off-key. We just can't harmonize.

Angel 3: Maybe we should give up.

Teacher: I have been teaching you three personally for three months, ever since you were kicked out of the angelic choir. I'm about ready to give up on you. You have not improved at all. (Teacher exits.)

Angel 1: What are we going to do?

Angel 2: They will never let us back in the choir now.

Angel 3: What will happen to us now?

(Curtain down)



Scene 2

Angel 3: Guess what our assignment is. (She carries a small scroll.)

Angel 1: What? Tell us.

Angel 3: You'll never believe this.

Angel 2: Come on, tell us. What have we been chosen to do?

Angel 1: Of course it was a miracle. All things are possible through Him. (Looks at baby.)

Angel 3: Telling the world about the birth of Jesus was the best job we could have ever had.

All: (Sing: "Joy to the World.")



AWAY IN THE MANGER

A Play for the middle grades
By Debbie G. Nettles

Characters

Joseph, Mary, three shepherds, angel (*who carries the star*), Three Wise Men, innkeeper, King Herod, the servant, men in the court square (any number of them), other angels (as many as desired)

Setting:

All characters are on stage when curtain opens except Joseph, Mary, the Wise Men and the Star. A child steps out in front of closed curtain and says:

The children here today
A story for you now will play.
It tells about a little child
So very tender, good and mild.

Wise men will come from lands afar
Led here by a shining star.
You'll see the gifts that they will bring
And hear the song the angels sing.

Good shepherds too will come tonight
To see the very wondrous sight.
They'll listen as the angels sing,
"Hosanna to the New Born King!"



The curtain opens. Joseph, Mary and donkey appear at the center of the stage within sight of the inn.

Joseph: Here we are at last, Mary, in Bethlehem. The journey has been hard for you but we had to come.

Mary: I know, Joseph.

Joseph: Yes, as I told you, the king ordered every family to come here to be counted and pay their taxes.

Mary: (putting her hand on the donkey) Our good little donkey made the journey easy for me and helped us to arrive safely.

Joseph: (*gestures toward inn*) See? Over there is the inn.

- Mary: I do hope we can be sheltered there. I am very weary. (*They walk a few steps toward it. Joseph leads the donkey, and then stops.*)
- Joseph: Rest here awhile, Mary. I will go ahead and see about a room for us. (*He goes to the inn, the innkeeper meets him at door.*) Please, sir, can you let me and my wife, Mary, have a room for the night?
- Innkeeper: Gladly would I care for you, my friend, but there is not an empty room in the house.
- Joseph: But my wife is very weary. She cannot go any further. It is too cold for her to spend the night outside.
- Innkeeper: I am sorry, but there is not a place for one more person. Even the court yard is full.
- Joseph: (*sadly*) But is there not some place, however humble, where she can lie down?
- Innkeeper: The only place I can think of is the old stable back of the inn, where cattle are kept. You could have some hay for a bed. It is a poor place, to be sure, but it will at least be warm.
- Joseph: It will have to do. My wife cannot sleep out in the cold tonight.
- Innkeeper: I will send a servant to take you to it. (*Goes inside and a servant comes out.*)
- Joseph: (*to servant*) Let us go to Mary with the good news. (*They go to her.*) Mary, the only shelter we can find is a stable back of the inn. (*Hesitates*) Cattle are kept in it.
- Mary: I shall not mind, Joseph. I like the smell of clean hay. The cattle and our good little donkey will keep us company.
- Joseph: (*turns to servant*) And now will you show us the place, kind sir?
- Servant: Gladly, sir. It is a poor place but it will be better than sleeping on the hill-side. (*Mary, Joseph, and the donkey start toward stable with servant.*) Here it is, sir. (*Servant points to stable and then goes back to the inn. Mary starts to enter stable.*)
- Joseph: (*turns to face audience as he is about to enter the stable; looks around for a second, then speaks impressively*) How still and peaceful it is here! Bethlehem is very beautiful tonight! (*As he speaks the lights begin to dim while the chorus behind the stage sings softly one verse of "O Little Town of Bethlehem" as the curtain goes down.*)

(Silent Night is played or sung off stage while the manger scene is being arranged. Mary



and Joseph kneel by the cradle. As the curtain rises, the group on stage sings "Little Baby Jesus," by Matti C. Leatherwood and Ethel Williams.) At the close of the song, Mary speaks:

Mary: You are tired, Joseph. You must lie down and sleep. See! The baby is sleeping. I think He likes his manger bed. (*Joseph lies down, Mary watches the baby, tenderly, while attention is drawn to either side of stage.*)

First Shepherd: The Wise Men say a great leader of our nation is soon to come.

Second Shepherd: It seems a long time that we have waited for the Promised One.

Third Shepherd: But in God's good time He will come. (*Listens*) What is that?

Second Shepherd: It sounds like music.

Third Shepherd: It is music!



(Angels stand and sing softly, "Glory to God in the highest, and, on earth peace, good will toward man," over and over. Shepherds fall on their knees and look up reverently at the angels. To the soft music of the song, the angel speaks:)

Angel: Do not be afraid. We have come to tell you good news. There is born this day, a baby. He will bring joy to you and to all men everywhere. You will find him in Bethlehem, lying in a manger.

(Shepherds rise and look at each other, confused.)

Third Shepherd: Did the angel say in **Bethlehem**?

First Shepherd: Yes. They said we would find the baby in a manger. Come, let us go to Bethlehem and find Him.

(It is effective for one shepherd to carry a toy sheep. Angels sing softly, until shepherds reach stable. First shepherd presents lamb and says:)

Here is a little lamb,
so warm and soft and white.
All that we had to give,
We brought Thee on this night.

All Shepherds: (*Fall on knees and sing*) Glory to God in the highest, and, on earth peace, good will toward men. (*Rise and stand at right of stable. A star appears above the king's palace on opposite side of stage. Wise Men have come out and are looking at it.*)

First Wise Man: What does this new star mean?

Second Wise Man: It can mean but one thing. A new King has been born. He must have been sent from God, since a star has told us the glad tidings. Let us go and find Him.

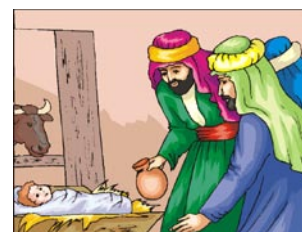
Second Wise Man: Surely a King would be found in a palace!

Third Wise Man: I will have servants prepare food for the journey, and bring camels for us to ride. And we must find gifts to take to the new King.

(Curtain briefly. Curtain rises again on palace scene. First Wise Man speaks to King Herod.)

First Wise Man: Where is the baby King, your Majesty?

King Herod: I do not know anything about a new baby King.
(Turns to members of his court.)
Have any of you heard or read about a new King?



Court Members: No. We know nothing of it.

One Court Member: Yes, I do remember. I read in an old book that some day a new King would be born in Bethlehem.

King Herod: Perhaps you will find him there. (The star moves on, the Wise Men follow. When it comes to the manger it stops.)

First Wise Men: The star! The star! See, it has come to rest. (They hurry to the manger, arranged so the scene is visible.)

(Extending gift) I bring a gift of gold, dear Lord, on Thy birth-night. It shines bright, like the star that led us by its light.

Second Wise Man: My gift is Frankincense, as fragrant as can be, I traveled many miles to bring it here for Thee.

Third Wise Man: The myrrh I bring, dear Lord, is very sweet and mild. Accept it with my love. It is for you, the Blessed Child.

All Wise Men: (Fall on knees and sing) Glory to God in the highest, and, on earth peace, good will toward men.

Wise men, in a moment, arise and stand by the side of the manger scene. Entire group on stage sings "Away in a Manger."

The Angels Sing

Name _____

Date _____

Angels sang as they announced the birth of Jesus. This was a happy occasion for them because angels like to bring joy. Find the answers for the puzzle in Luke 2 and write them on the lines.



T _ _ _ _ _	2:1 Caesar Augustus decreed that all the world shall be . . .
H _ _ _ _ _	2:4 Joseph was from the _____ of David.
_ _ _ _ _ E _	2:5 What Mary was to Joseph.
_ _ _ A _ _	2:9 How the shepherds felt when they saw the angels' light.
_ N _	2:7 There was no room for Joseph and Mary in the . . .
G _ _ _ _ _	2:14 A word from the song the angels sang.
_ _ E _ _ _ _ _ _	2:8 The men who watched their flocks.
_ L _	2:10 How many people did the angels bring joy to?
S _ _	2:7 Mary's firstborn child was a ...
_ _ S _ _	2:21 The name of the Baby.
_ _ A _ _ _ _ _ _	2:12 The kind of clothes Jesus was wrapped in.
_ _ N _ _ _	2:12 Jesus's first bed.
_ _ _ _ _ G	2:13 A word from the song the angels sang.

The Angels Sing

Name _____ KEY _____

Date _____

Angels sang as they announced the birth of Jesus. This was a happy occasion for them because angels like to bring joy. Find the answers for the puzzle in Luke 2 and write them on the lines.



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E S P O U S E D	2:5 What Mary was to Joseph.
A F R A I D	2:9 How the shepherds felt when they saw the angels' light
I N N	2:7 There was no room for Joseph and Mary in the . . .
G L O R Y	2:14 A word from the song the angels sang.
S H E P H E R D S	2:8 The men who watched their flocks.
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S W A D D L I N G	2:12 The kind of clothes Jesus was wrapped in.
M A N G E R	2:12 Jesus's first bed.
P R A I S I N G	2:13 A word from the song the angels sang.

The Words of Christmas

Name _____ Date _____

Find the words listed below in the puzzle. Words can go diagonally, horizontally, vertically and backwards.

angel
gold
manger
donkey
swaddling
wisemen

Jesus
Bethlehem
Heavenly Host
myrrh
frankincense
taxed

gifts
journey
Christ
star
shepherds

Augustus
goodwill
Mary
flock
Gabriel

Joseph
birth
innkeeper
peace
stable

H	I	S	T	A	B	L	O	I	D	I	L	S	J	N	I	S	H	E	P	H	E	R
E	C	W	R	O	T	E	O	N	D	G	R	Y	S	H	U	O	A	X	E	D	F	R
M	D	A	H	E	A	V	E	N	L	Y	H	O	S	T	L	L	I	W	D	O	O	G
M	L	D	R	Y	N	J	C	K	C	O	L	F	S	R	A	C	B	T	O	H	M	A
A	S	D	L	O	G	E	H	E	B	A	B	U	T	I	Y	R	K	I	N	C	A	N
N	S	L	E	F	E	S	R	E	R	O	G	S	H	B	E	T	H	L	E	H	E	M
U	T	I	I	F	L	U	I	P	E	U	L	R	L	O	K	E	R	O	W	R	S	T
E	I	N	R	W	S	I	S	E	A	M	R	B	R	O	N	W	L	R	A	I	I	D
L	C	G	B	A	T	N	O	R	D	Y	E	N	R	U	O	J	B	S	U	S	E	J
S	O	K	A	P	A	E	C	E	M	R	J	N	E	U	D	E	G	I	F	T	S	O
R	I	C	G	K	B	A	H	P	E	A	C	E	I	S	D	R	E	H	P	E	H	S
E	D	I	L	A	L	U	R	A	W	M	A	N	G	E	R	A	R	D	B	T	P	E
S	T	W	I	S	E	M	E	N	V	X	S	A	L	V	A	T	I	O	N	A	N	P
F	R	A	N	K	I	N	C	E	N	S	E	S	I	D	E	X	A	T	C	S	T	H

Bonus: See if you can find two hidden words that are not on the list.

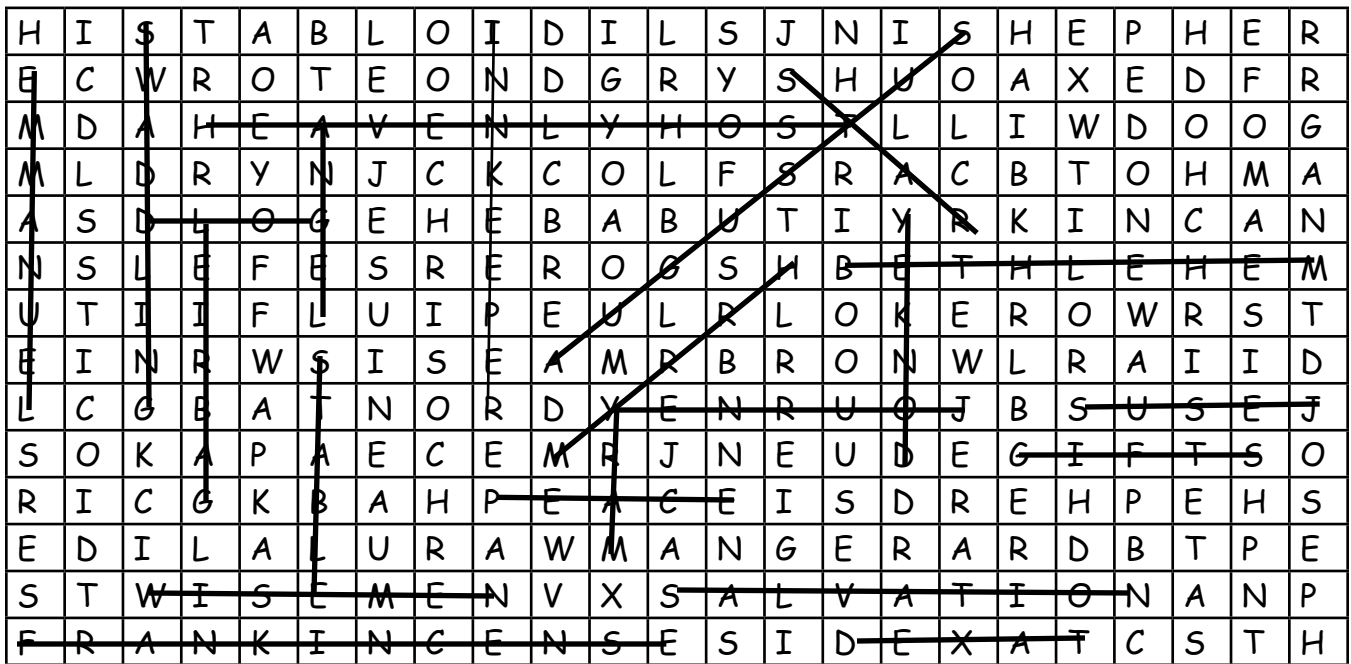


The Words of Christmas

Name _____ KEY _____ Date _____

Find the words listed below in the puzzle. Words can go diagonally, horizontally, vertically and backwards.

- | | | | | |
|-----------|---------------|-----------|----------|-----------|
| angel | Jesus | gifts | Augustus | Joseph |
| gold | Bethlehem | journey | goodwill | birth |
| manger | Heavenly Host | Christ | Mary | innkeeper |
| donkey | myrrh | star | flock | peace |
| swaddling | frankincense | shepherds | Gabriel | stable |
| wisemen | taxed | | | |



Bonus: See if you can find two hidden words that are not on the list.

_____ Emmanuel _____

_____ Salvation _____



A Christmas Quiz

Name _____

Date _____

How many facts do you know about the birth of Jesus? After reading Matthew 1 & 2 and Luke 1 & 2, take the quiz and see how many facts you can answer correctly. If the statement is true, write TRUE in the blank. If the statement is false, write FALSE in the blank.



- _____ The Bible says there were three wise men.
- _____ A prophet had foretold that Christ would be born in Bethlehem.
- _____ Christ was born in the days of Julius Caesar.
- _____ Matthew and Luke are the only Gospel writers to tell of the birth of Christ.
- _____ Jesus was not born before his cousin, John the Baptist.
- _____ Joseph was a direct descendant of King David.
- _____ It had been prophesied that the wise men would come to see Jesus.
- _____ The name Jesus means Savior.
- _____ The whole city of Jerusalem was troubled when it heard that Jesus was born.
- _____ An angel told the wise men not to return to King Herod.
- _____ The Bible says the wise men saw Mary and Jesus, but does not mention that they saw Joseph.
- _____ The Bible says the shepherds saw Mary and Jesus.
- _____ Nazareth is a city in Judea.
- _____ The word "sheep" is not mentioned in the Bible in connection with the Christmas story.

_____ One of the wise men said, "Thanks be unto God for His unspeakable gift."

_____ The wise men presented their gifts in this order: gold, frankincense, myrrh.

_____ Myrrh is a gummy substance, obtained from a shrub, and used in medicine and perfumes.

_____ The shepherds saw Jesus the very night He was born.

_____ The wise men came to see Jesus in the stable of Bethlehem.

_____ The Bible says the wise men came to see Jesus to present gifts to Him.



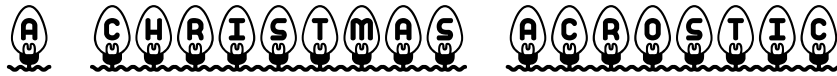
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- False The Bible says there were three wise men.
- True A prophet had foretold that Christ would be born in Bethlehem.
- False Christ was born in the days of Julius Caesar.
- True Matthew and Luke are the only Gospel writers to tell of the birth of Christ.
- True Jesus was not born before his cousin, John the Baptist.
- True Joseph was a direct descendant of King David.
- False It had been prophesied that the wise men would come to see Jesus.
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- True The word "sheep" is not mentioned in the Bible in connection with the Christmas story.
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- False The wise men presented their gifts in this order: gold, frankincense, myrrh. Myrrh is a gummy substance, obtained from a shrub, and used in medicine and perfumes.
- True The shepherds saw Jesus the very night He was born.
- False The wise men came to see Jesus in the stable of Bethlehem.
- False The Bible says the wise men came to see Jesus to present gifts to Him.



Name _____ Date _____

Write a Christmas sentence for each of the Christmas letters.



















Now write the sentences into a Christmas story.

The Most Memorable Christmas

Name _____

Date _____

Christmas is coming and you do not have money to purchase gifts. You wonder what your family and friends will think of you if they do not receive a gift. Then you remember the reason for celebrating Christmas - Jesus' birth - and you decide to make it the most memorable Christmas ever by giving gifts that keep the spirit of Christmas going throughout the year. List what these gifts are.

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

How did your family and friends react to your Christmas gifts? How did it make you feel?

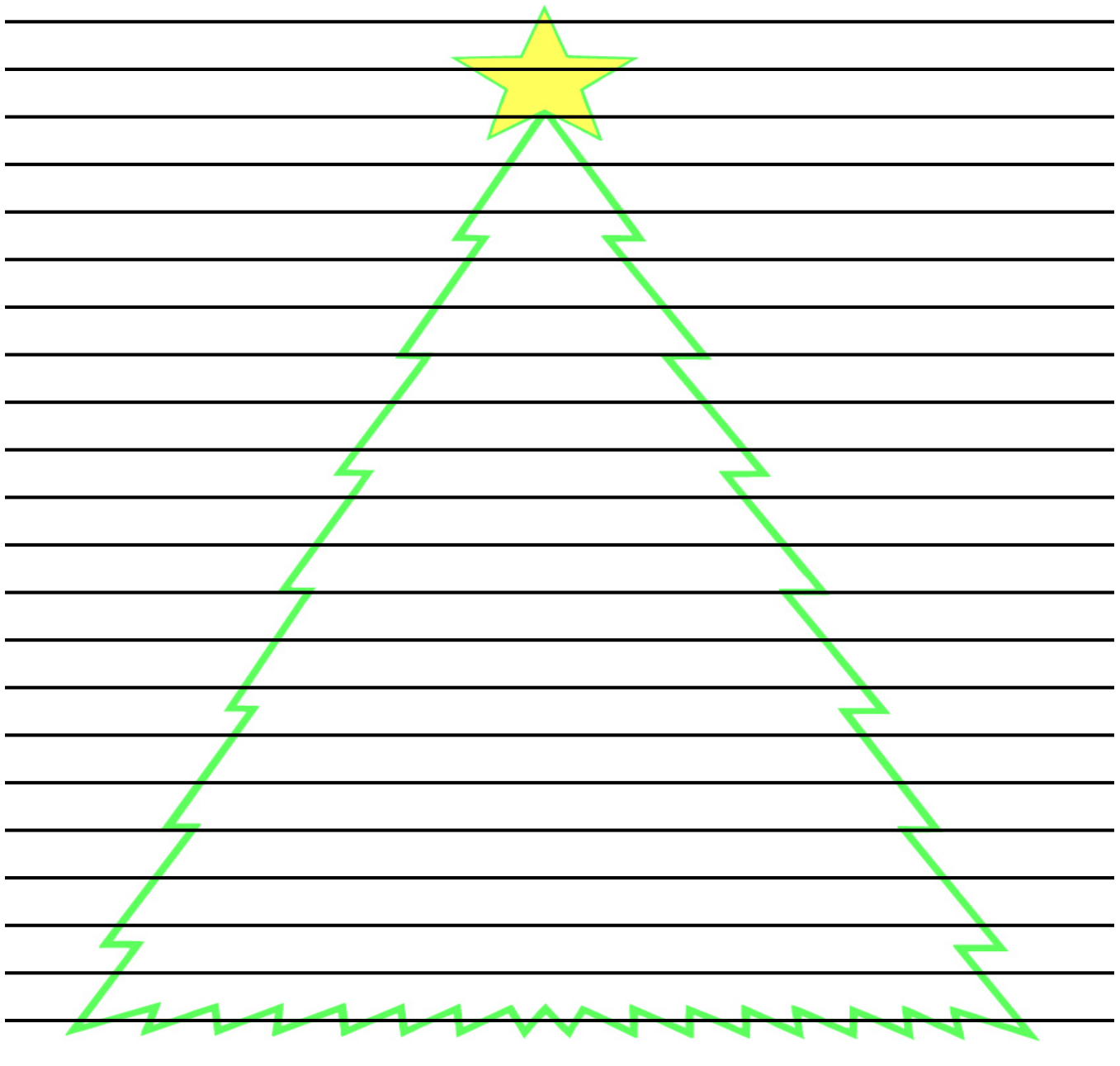


Christmas Traditions

Name _____

Date _____



Christmas is celebrated in different ways around the world. In Sweden, children make ornaments out of straw to remind them that Jesus lay in a manger of straw. In Mexico, children break open a piñata which is filled with candy and small toys. On the lines below, write about your family's traditions. What do you do on Christmas Day? Have fun and share the traditions with the class.



A Christmas Bulletin Board

Directions: Select samples of the students' writings and display them on the bulletin board.

Christmas Sampler

<p>My Visit to See Baby Jesus</p>		<p>The Memorable Christmas</p>
<p>Christmas Traditions</p>		<p>The Last Christmas Tree</p>

Stand Alone Star

This 3-dimensional star decoration is made from 2 paper stars that are interlaced. These stars stand by themselves on a table, and make a great patriotic or Christmas decoration.

Materials Needed

- 1 Printer (optional)
- 2 Card stock paper or oak-tag
- 3 Scissors
- 4 Crayons or markers
- 5 2 paper stars

Procedure:

1. Decorate the two stars on both sides and cut them out.
2. On one star make a slit from an inner corner to the center point
3. On the other star, make a slit from an outer corner to the center point.
4. Slip the two stars together through the slits you just made. For stability you may have to tape the stars a bit where they meet at the slit.

You now have a great three-dimensional star decoration that stands by itself on a table.

