

## Working With Texts: Merry Christmas!

### Christmas Day

December 25th was not celebrated as the birthday of Christ until the year AD 430. For hundreds of years before that there were a number of pagan festivals celebrated around this date. 25th December gradually spread around the Christian world as the date on which Jesus was born, as a way of conveniently fitting in with existing celebrations.

### Epiphany

Epiphany, 6th January, is the traditional end of the Christmas holiday and is the date on which we take down the tree and decorations. To do so earlier is thought to bring bad luck for the rest of the year. From the Middle Ages until the mid-nineteenth century, Epiphany was more popular than Christmas Day. Even today some countries celebrate Epiphany as the most important day of the Christmas season.

In Germany, Epiphany is known as 'Three Kings Day' as this is the date on which the Magi (The Three Kings) visited, and gave gifts to the baby Jesus.

### Christmas Banned

In 1647, the English parliament passed a law that made Christmas illegal. Christmas festivities were banned by Puritan leader Oliver Cromwell, who considered feasting and revelry on what was supposed to be a holy day to be immoral. Anybody caught celebrating Christmas was arrested. The ban was lifted only when the Puritans lost power in 1660. In the USA, the Puritans in Boston banned Christmas celebrations between 1659 and 1681.

### Christmas tree

Christmas trees were first used in Germany and date back to more than 1,000 years. In England, Christmas trees became popular after Queen Victoria's husband Albert, who came from Germany, made a tree part of the celebrations at Windsor Castle. In the United States, the earliest known mention of a Christmas tree is in the diary of a German who settled in Pennsylvania in the 18th Century.

Now, each year around 35 million Christmas trees are grown to cope with the holiday demand.

- a *Pagan* is an adjective that relates to ancient religions that had many gods. Find what else they worshipped in your dictionary.
- b Is the word *around* in line 4 a preposition or an adverb?
- c What the opposite of *conveniently*?
- d 1 Where and when does the *Middle Ages* refer to?

\_\_\_\_\_

2 What is the adjective used to describe this period?

\_\_\_\_\_

3 What was the period before it called?

\_\_\_\_\_

4 What was the period after it called?

- e *Epiphany*, the end of the Christmas holiday, is on 6th January. But what is *an epiphany*?
- f The *Magi* are also known as *The Three Kings*. Find one more name for them in your dictionary.
- g The verb *pass* collocates with a *law*. Which of the nouns below does *pass* not collocate with? Check your answers in your dictionary and write an example sentence for each of the remaining four.

	✓/✗	Example sentence
<i>a test</i>	_____	_____
<i>the time</i>	_____	_____
<i>homework</i>	_____	_____
<i>the ball</i>	_____	_____
<i>comment</i>	_____	_____

- h *Cromwell* **considered** *revelry to be immoral*. Find two more examples of *consider sb /st (to be) sth* in your dictionary and write them below.

1 \_\_\_\_\_

2 \_\_\_\_\_

- i What's the opposite of *lift a ban*?

\_\_\_\_\_

- j The dictionary gives thirteen meanings of the verb *settle*. Which is used in the text? \_\_\_\_\_

When *settle* means *end a disagreement* write five nouns that commonly collocate with it.

1 \_\_\_\_\_

2 \_\_\_\_\_

3 \_\_\_\_\_

4 \_\_\_\_\_

5 \_\_\_\_\_

- k What does *cope with* mean?

- l What is the American English equivalent of  
1) a holiday 2) a bank holiday