



THE STA TIMES

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THE EVOLUTION OF SANTA CLAUS: FROM SAINT NICHOLAS TO THE JOLLY CHRISTMAS ICON

Seoyeon Lee

The name Santa Claus evolved from Saint Nicholas' Dutch nickname, Sinter Klaas, a shortened form of Sint Nikolaas, in Americanized pronunciation. Santa Claus has a long history steeped in Christmas traditions. Today, he is thought to be a jolly man, with a full, white beard, holding a sack laden with toys for good girls and boys on Christmas Eve. However, this tradition dates back to the 3rd century, when Saint Nicholas walked the earth and became the patron saint of children. Through this article, find out how people majorly influenced Santa Claus millions of children wait for each Christmas Eve.

The true story of Santa Claus began when Nicholas was born in the third century in the village of Patara in Asia Minor, Turkey, nowadays. He had wealthy parents, who raised him Christian, who died in an epidemic while he was still young. Following the words of Jesus, "Sell what you own and give the money to the poor," Nicholas assisted the needy, the sick, and the suffering. He dedicated his life to serving God and was made Bishop of Myra while still a young man. Bishop Nicholas became known throughout the land for his generosity to those in need, and his love for children.

Under the Roman Emperor Diocletian, who ruthlessly persecuted Christians, Bishop Nicholas suffered for his faith and was exiled and imprisoned. The prisons were full of Christians, like bishops, priests, and deacons, to the extent that there was no place for real criminals, such as murderers, thieves, and robbers.



After his release, Nicholas attended the Council of Nicaea in AD 325. He died December 6, AD 343 in Myra and was buried in his cathedral church, where a unique relic, called manna, formed in his grave. The anniversary of his death became a day of celebration, St. Nicholas Day, December 6th.

One story of numerous, tells of how he saved three poor sisters from being sold into slavery by providing them with a dowry so that they could get married. The larger the dowry, the

better the chance that a young woman can find a husband, but as the father was poor, she was unlikely to marry and, therefore, destined to be sold into slavery. Mysteriously, on three different occasions, a bag of gold appeared in their home—providing the needed dowries. The bags of gold, tossed through an open window, are said to have landed in stockings or shoes left before the fire to dry. This led to the custom of children hanging stockings or putting out shoes, awaiting presents from Saint Nicholas, and this continues to this time. The main influence of how Santa Claus is depicted nowadays is by literature.

One is Washington Irving's depiction in "Knickerbocker's History of New York (1809)": Mention of Saint Nicholas flying in a wagon. Moreover, the poem "An Account of a Visit from St. Nicholas," (1823, 'Twas The Night Before Christmas") by Clement Clarke Moore, an Episcopal minister, was written for his three children. Although some of Moore's imagery was probably borrowed from other sources, his poem helped popularize the now-familiar image of a Santa Claus who flew from house to house on Christmas Eve in "a miniature sleigh" led by eight flying reindeer to leave presents for deserving children. Thomas Nast drew a modern image of Santa Claus in Harper's Weekly, and Coca-Cola's advertising campaigns (1931), Artist Haddon Sundblom created the iconic red-suited Santa that solidified the modern image.

Santa Claus, as we know him today, is a blend of history, folklore, and artistic imagination, deeply rooted in the legacy of Saint Nicholas. From the humble beginnings of a generous bishop in 3rd-century Turkey to the global symbol of holiday cheer and giving, his story reflects the enduring power of kindness and charity. Over the centuries, literature, art, and culture have shaped Santa Claus into a beloved figure who brings joy to millions of children around the world. While his appearance and traditions may have evolved, the essence of Santa Claus—the spirit of giving, love for children, and spreading happiness—remains timeless. This Christmas, as we celebrate with gifts, laughter, and goodwill, let us remember the origins of this cherished tradition and the values it inspires in us all.

LIGHT UP THE NIGHT THIS HOLIDAY SEASON

Avery Mahony

The sea to sky region is bustling with activity this winter season. With Christmas right around the corner, everyone is in a flurry to find the best light shows that our city has to offer. Vancouver’s Christmas light shows are an enchanting highlight of the holiday season. Not only do these light shows create a mesmerizing spectacle of color and sparkle, but they also offer a sense of community, with families, friends, and visitors gathering to enjoy the seasonal cheer. Whether wandering through the captivating VanDusen Botanical Garden or marveling at the bright displays in Stanley Park, Vancouver’s holiday light shows capture the spirit of Christmas in a way that feels both dazzling and heartwarming. However, picking a light show to go to is hard, especially when there are so many, so here are some of the top light shows around!



VanDusen Festival of Lights

Coming back for its 40th season this winter, the Vandusen Festival lights are a must-see this holiday season. From November 29th to January 5th, you can go and see the ethereal lights of VanDusen Botanical Garden. This 15 acre wonderland is adorned with over one million shimmering lights. Starting at \$18 dollars per youth ticket, you and your family can get in the holiday spirit this Christmas season. They have dancing light shows that take 20 minutes at the top of every hour, along with various light tunnels that fully immerse you in the experience. This hidden gem is perfect if you want to avoid crowds and hoards of people. This light show is definitely a must-see this holiday season.



Bright Nights Stanley Park Christmas Train

Bundle up this winter and come down to Stanley Park to see this festive locomotive experience. Since 1998, the Stanley Park Christmas Train has been an iconic staple of Vancouver. This miniature train tours you through spectacular displays of Christmas lights. The Christmas train however, is not the only attraction within the bright nights, you can also see Santa's village/workshop and take a photo with Santa and his firefighter helpers since this. This attraction supports the Firefighter Burn Fund. The park board has donated over 2.5 million dollars since its opening in 1998.

With its heartwarming displays and community support, the Stanley Park Christmas Train is something you'll definitely want to savour, bringing joy to visitors of all ages.



Vallea Lumina

If you find yourself in Whistler this Christmas season, be sure to experience the Vallea Lumina winter wonderland. This enchanting, illuminated walk through of an old-growth forest blends stunning visuals with captivating stories, creating a magical atmosphere of adventure and mystery. The 1.75 kilometer trail, mostly flat and easy to navigate, takes about 50-80 minutes to complete. As you stroll through the forest, the multimedia light show brings Whistler's rich history to life, lighting up the night and offering a unique, immersive glimpse into the area's past. This light show is definitely something you'll want to see as it will create memories that'll last a lifetime.

Christmas light shows in Vancouver transform the city into a festive wonderland. From dazzling displays to neighborhood lights, these vibrant holiday attractions bring joy and create lasting memories for all. So bundle up this winter season, grab a hot cocoa and check out one or all of these amazing light displays!

WHY WE LOVE CHRISTMAS (OR WHY WE DON'T!)

Anna Hernandez

I know that for some people, November may be too soon to start celebrating Christmas time — but for me, I really enjoy the holiday season, so I start early. Elvis' Santa Claus Is Back In Town is constantly playing in my head, and I've already started my Christmas shopping. For most people, Christmas is a time of happiness and warmth, but for others, Christmas is a time of stress, overwhelm, and pain. I believe the psychology is truly fascinating, so I will be delving into why we love Christmas, or why we don't!

The main reason why we love Christmas is because of its nostalgia. It brings us back to when we were younger and when life was simple. Most people remember being around the age of 6 or 7, and waking up at 5 a.m on December 25th, eager to open presents and drink hot chocolate (I still do this at the ripe age of 14). CDN Life points out that “The holiday season triggers memories of past celebrations, creating a sense of continuity and connection with our past. These cherished memories, often associated with family, warmth, and togetherness, evoke feelings of comfort and happiness.” When we see pretty lights put up, and notice our foggy breath while out on a walk,



the memory kicks in as we remember all the fun times we had when we were younger, which evokes a sense of excitement and anticipation.

On the contrary, the main cause of people disliking Christmas can be for a variety of reasons. This includes family disputes, regrets from the past, and/or societal expectations. To some people, the holidays can trigger feelings of anxiety, and loneliness. To others, it may simply be economical stress, but sometimes, it goes deeper than that.

An article by Healthnews says that “Christmas may bring back distressing memories and traumas from the past. Those who have experienced loss or strained family dynamics may feel lonely and isolated, or they may find themselves grieving more intensely because of the pervasive festive spirit. Christmas can also be an unfortunate period for anyone who is grieving. There is a feeling of longing and emptiness that gets worse during festivities since the deceased is no longer with them, and memories abound.” Maybe there was a big family argument a couple years back, or there was a painful breakup close to Christmas in the past, or perhaps a loved one passed away during the holiday season. Whatever the reason may be, bad memories from the past may feel very big in contrast to the jolly jingles of the holiday season, which might amplify any feelings of grief, inadequacy, or trauma, which is completely valid.

The role of nostalgia is a complex process involving the senses and our past experiences. The MVS Psychology Group highlights that “Nostalgia acts as a psychological lifeline, connecting us to a time when life might have seemed simpler or happier. It’s not just a mechanism to escape the stressful present but also a way to revisit cherished memories, which can be especially comforting during the holidays.” Old Christmas songs or freshly baked cookies can make you sentimental because longing for the past can be a powerful trigger of emotional well-being.



Overall, the psychology of why we love or don’t love Christmas comes down to our past memories and experiences. If we had a good experience with Christmas in the past, we’ll probably look forward to the occasion with excitement. If there was painful trauma, and emotional wounds associated with the holidays, we would probably avoid anything to do with Christmas – If that is the case, I wish you healing during this holiday season. Nostalgia plays a powerful role in how our memories affect us in the future, and how we react to different circumstances. In my case, I am looking forward to a relaxing holiday season while patiently waiting for the Sabrina Carpenter Christmas Special on Netflix (very irrelevant, I know, but I'm excited!!)

Hopefully we can get some snow, although I doubt it. Enjoy the music, be nice, get presents for your loved ones, and don't be too naughty! Wishing you all a very Merry Christmas, and a Happy New Year! (Feliz Navidad, y Feliz Nuevo Año!)

IS FOOTBALL MORE IMPORTANT THAN FAMILY?

Neve Larson

There are not one, but two NFL games scheduled on Christmas Day this year. Is this really the world we live in? A day that should be brimming with family, friends, love, laughter, and Christmas music playing softly in the background will instead echo with shouts, stressed-out children, and eyes glued to flat-screen TVs. Just what Christmas is all about, right?

Take, for example, the infamous 2023 Tubi Super Bowl commercial—a clever prank that unexpectedly revealed an ugly truth. In the ad, it makes it seem like someone is sitting on the remote, and it switches the game off to go to Tubi. Chaos ensues. Men panic as if the remote holds the key to life itself. They fling their children off the couch, rip apart the cushions, and yell at anyone within earshot to help find it. While undeniably creative, the ad highlights the disturbing intensity of some football fans, showing how quickly a game can overshadow even basic human decency. Do we really want this kind of energy infiltrating Christmas Day? As a lifelong football fan (Go Seahawks), I understand the passion. But even if my team were losing by 100 points in the Super Bowl, no part of me would ever consider smashing a TV, let alone hitting a child in frustration.



Yet, these are the actions we see from some fans, and sadly, they're not rare. It begs the question: when did sports take priority over everything else?

This wasn't always the case. Once upon a time, Christmas was sacred—a day focused on togetherness and reflection. The “tradition” of football games on Christmas Day began in 1971, when the NFL scheduled two divisional playoff games when the regular season only spanned a 14-week period. The decision proved unpopular, and for years the league avoided scheduling games on Christmas. But in 1989, they brought it back, and it's been an intermittent feature ever since. From 1993 to 2017, there was usually just one game every couple of years. Then, in 2020, the league upped the ante, scheduling multiple games annually. This year, we're facing two games on Christmas, and for the very first time, they'll be streamed on Netflix.

And who's the halftime performer? None other than Beyoncé. Now, instead of just football fans glued to the screen, the entire family—including the kids—will be drawn in. Hurrah! A once-special holiday reduced to background noise for touchdowns and halftime shows. The games have never been more accessible; you don't need a fancy sports package or cable subscription.

It's already on your TV, just two clicks away from the likely screaming match that will ruin the holiday cheer. Instead of the joyous sound of children eagerly unwrapping gifts, households will be filled with the rapid-fire commentary of announcers, the booming shots of cheers or groans with every touchdown, and the staccato bursts of frustration when a play goes wrong—transforming what should be a peaceful morning into a war zone of emotions, with the TV as the commanding officer.



The timing of the games is equally disappointing. One kicks off at 10 a.m.—Christmas morning! Instead of the sound of children eagerly unwrapping gifts, households will be filled with game commentary. The second game starts at 1:30 p.m., right in the middle of prime cooking time, giving football fans the perfect excuse to dodge their holiday duties. Once again, the game wins over family.

Year after year, sports seem to take precedence over loved ones. But does it really have to take priority over Christmas too? A holiday meant to unite families is instead being pulled apart, one game at a time.

FAITH BEYOND THE CLASSROOM: A SENIOR'S PERSPECTIVE ON LOVE AND BELIEF

Maya Spadavecchia

From a young age, I was taught to follow the truth of the priest's teachings in church. As a Catholic child, this was simply what I was instructed to do, and without the maturity or knowledge to question them, I listened without hesitation. While I agreed with most of the teachings, I continued to struggle with finding a deeper connection to the faith. Now, as I walk through the halls of this school, I find myself in a place where many of my peers likely feel the same way as I once did. During high school, it's natural for us to start forming our own beliefs and sets of values. As this happens, we often find ourselves questioning the very teachings we've been raised with. Sometimes it's the questions we don't have enough knowledge to answer ourselves, or the ones that just simply don't sit right with us. Unfortunately, this among other things can cause many to turn away from the faith completely.

As a senior, I've observed religious teachers working hard to guide their students, trying to help them foster a relationship with God. Yet, many students remain indifferent or distant, never truly drawing closer to the faith. I don't believe this is entirely the fault of the students or the teachers. I think part of the problem lies in what we, as Catholics, emphasize in our efforts to bring others closer to God. For me, the key is love, something we see brought to life so clearly during the Christmas season.

Christmas is when we see the abstract idea of love come to life.

Whether that be through gift-giving, preparing home-cooked meals for others, or lending a hand to the friend whose legs tremble trying to skate for the first time. Love is the heart of it all. And, of course, we must not forget the greatest act of love we celebrate during this season, the birth of Christ, who came to save us all. These acts of love fill us with joy, warmth and connection. Love, in all of its forms, unites us, whether we are Catholic, Muslim, Agnostic, or anything else.

Theological debates aside, I believe that love and forgiveness are the most powerful ways to show others the goodness of the faith. It saddens me that Catholics are often misunderstood or seen in a negative light, especially in today's culture. Many of us may know or even be close to those who oppose the faith, some deeply entrenched in their views. Instead of engaging in arguments, I believe we should lead with love. When people see Catholics living out the love that God has shown them, they may begin to recognize the rejoicement, fulfillment and peace that our faith brings to our lives. This is not to say that theological debates are discouraged. In fact, I believe theological debates are essential to grow in an individual's faith, especially after they surpass the stage of unwillingness and enter into a place where the Holy Spirit has opened their heart to hear more with intent to listen and understand. However, for those who are highly opposed, unwilling to be open or turn to God, I think this is the most effective way to show the goodness of the faith. A way that begins with acceptance and love.

This Christmas season, I encourage you to be a reflection of God's love, to show it in the ways you treat others, in the kindness you offer,

and in the forgiveness you extend. In doing so, you may help others see just how beautiful and transformative the faith really is.

A SEASONAL ANTIDOTE FOR OUR TECHNOLOGICAL AGE

Jeremy Keong

We all know that Christmas is the season for joy, hope, and peace, brought on by the birth of Jesus. But what is the Christmas spirit that we live by during this “most wonderful time of the year”? The Christmas spirit, I argue, is an anti-technological spirit, for what does the spirit of technology do except try to get us to speed up, do more, and not wait? In contrast, the Christmas season begs us to slow down, and to rest in the light that comes to us from baby Jesus.

I can already hear the cries. “Mr. Keong, how dare you! On Christmas break, I use technology! I play video games, and make TikTok videos of my friends and I dancing to Mariah Carey songs at the mall!” But I am not speaking about pieces of technology; I’m referring to its mindset.

The Greek suffix “ology” can be translated as “logic.” The Greek word *techne* refers to crafting. So technology is “the logic of crafting.” This usually means wanting to create things that make our lives more convenient and more efficient. Whatever we could make to make life more comfortable, we should make. Notice though, how this never ends (and companies like Apple and Google know this (“Trust us. The front-facing camera is even better this year!”)). There will always be something else that we could make. And to be doing or making, isn’t resting.

But I believe that the infant Christ wants us to instead be more patient—for that is what his birth did to his parents, the shepherds, the angels, and the Wise Men. Such was God’s plan, to walk alongside us in the most inconvenient, slowest, some might say “least efficient” way possible. He could have snapped his fingers to save us. He chose to instead save us by becoming one of us. In doing so, He most definitely had to slow down. “In the beginning was the Word” - and the word “word” is another translation of logos. “And the Word was made flesh.” The logic of Christmas - the logic of Christianity - is found in a manger.



As long as we think the way our devices want us to think - as long as we think technologically - our yearning for the deepest depths of hope and joy that The Father shows us through the birth of Christ will continue to pass us by, or at the very least will never reach its deepest fulfillment. I say all of this not as an observer, but as someone who also personally wrestles with this technological spirit of the age. So I think we can tell how much we cave to the technological spirit, ironically, by **how quickly we start to celebrate Christmas.**

To slow down so as to better celebrate this upcoming Christmas season, I propose that we first celebrate the *Advent* season, the four weeks the Church gives us to prepare for the birth - and eventual return! - of Christ the Lord, which started this year on Dec. 1st.

The more we genuinely celebrate Advent, the more we will anticipate Christmas, and so, the more we will genuinely and excitedly celebrate the whole Christmas season from Dec. 25th - January 6th. I offer three things that I am trying to do. I invite you to think about doing the same!

GIVE SOMETHING UP

This is usually something we think of during the season of Lent leading up to Easter, but in a less intense way, Advent is also a time of penance and waiting. And what better way to push ourselves to slow down than to give up some of the very things that instill in us this technological mindset. Maybe you can give up (some of?) your social media for the next four weeks to create more time and space for prayer and reflection. Or perhaps you could lessen the amount of time spent watching TV, to not distract yourself from the things that God wants to speak to you about. The original Christmas morning was deafeningly quiet. Perhaps in the lead up to Christmas, we can be too.

SET UP THE ATMOSPHERE GRADUALLY

I know how it is. December 1st rolls around, and BOOM - Santas pop up, everyone’s singing Christmas songs, and yes, Mariah Carey starts playing in every mall (may I be so blessed as to be able to avoid that song entirely this year). Good intentions? Of course! But if we, like the Jewish people who waited thousands of years, and like Mary and Joseph who waited nine months, want to anticipate Christmas, it might do us good to gradually get things set up. Perhaps one weekend, set up the tree; the next, put up ornaments and lights; the next, play just a couple of Christmas songs. All the while, you could set up your nativity scene without baby Jesus in the manger, only to place him there on Christmas Eve

(and even after that, try to display the Wise Men closer and closer to the Holy Family as we move toward Jan. 6th, which is when we celebrate their arrival).

SAY SOME EXTRA PRAYERS

If prayer is nothing but a “simple look toward heaven” (St. Therese), then what better way to recognize the Son coming down from heaven? Maybe you can try praying a decade of the Rosary each day this Advent, to prepare our hearts (I recommend the Joyful Mysteries, which centre around Jesus’ birth). Or perhaps simply spend some quiet time first thing in the morning to anticipate how God might speak to you that day, in order to practice anticipating his birth.



I recognize that my proposal is counter-cultural, but then again, so is Christianity. But I agree with C.S. Lewis when he says that “Our Lord finds our desires not too strong, but too weak...we are far too easily pleased.” So I think it might help us celebrate Christmas if we, unlike what the technological mindset of our age tells us, wait a bit. Anticipate Christ’s arrival. Develop a deeper desire for it. Then, the reception of it will be all the more beautiful and peaceful.

I’ll leave you with a quote from the great St. Augustine of Hippo: **“Simply by making us wait, [God] increases our desire, which in turn enlarges the capacity of our soul, making it better able to receive what is to be given to us.”**

Do you want to truly celebrate and receive
Christmas? Then wait for it.

Happy Advent, everyone.

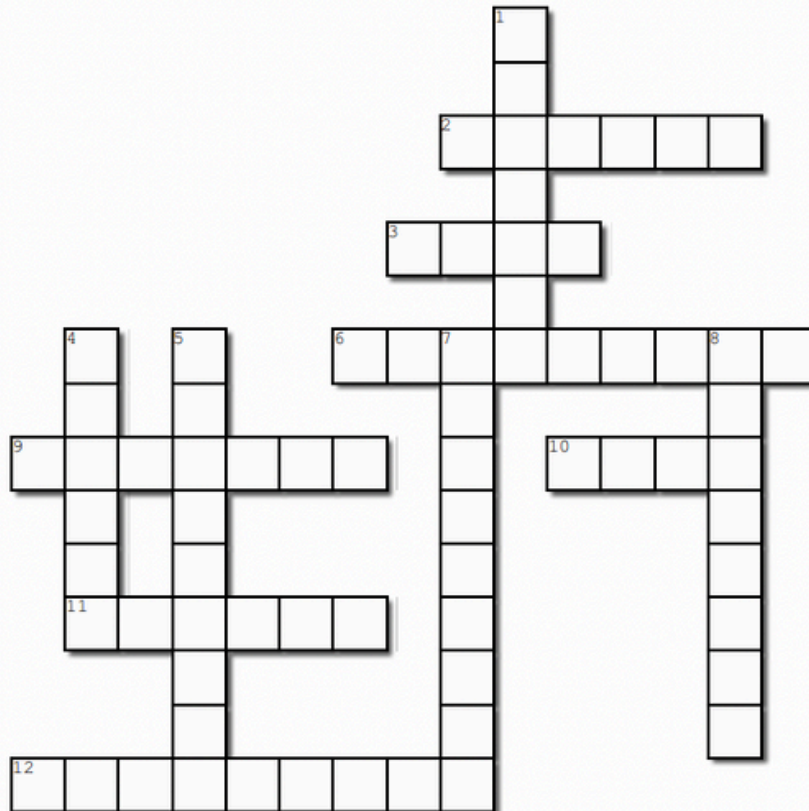
CHRISTMAS CROSSWORD

Gabriella Kasabashian

Name: _____

Christmas Crossword

Complete the crossword puzzle below



Created using the Crossword Maker on TheTeachersCorner.net

Across

- 2. Popular Christmas decoration
- 3. Shiny tree topper
- 6. Long striped candy
- 9. Wrapped package under the tree
- 10. Cold precipitation in winter
- 11. Santa's vehicle
- 12. Where stockings are hung

Down

- 1. Circular decoration with holly/Canucks number 8
- 4. Holiday songs
- 5. Plant kissed under at Christmas
- 7. Santa's home
- 8. 2nd holiday during the break

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