



## HISTORIC CHRISTMAS FACTS: TRUE OR FALSE

Circle either true or false below each question and then read the answer page to see if you answered correctly!

1.) People living in the Victorian era (1837-1901) played a dangerous parlour game at Christmastime called “Snap-dragon” which involved plunging their hands into a bowl of brandy lit on fire.

True or False

2.) The Victorians often decorated their Christmas trees with food like popcorn, candy, oranges, and nuts.

True or False

3.) It was very common for Victorian children to receive plastic toys like dolls and trains as a Christmas gift.


True or False

4.) Victorian Christmas trees were often lit with wax tapers or candles lit at the ends of branches.

True or False

5.) It is believed that Scottish settlers brought the practice of decorating a tree for Christmas to North America in the early to mid-1800s.

True or False



6.) The original man known as St. Nicholas, also known as Santa Claus, Father Christmas, and Kris Kringle was born in the Middle Ages in Germany.

True or False

7.) Many ancient cultures used pine or fir tree branches to decorate their homes and temples during winter festivals, such as the Romans and Celtic Druids.

True or False

8.) Celebrating joyfully at Christmas time and decorating a Christmas tree was banned in Massachusetts, USA in 1659.

True or False

9.) French Queen Marie Antoinette made gingerbread houses popular after she infamously had a 6 foot tall gingerbread house created for her children at Christmas which was then paraded through the streets of France in 1790.

True or False

10). Mincemeat pies, a popular British Christmastime delicacy containing fruits, sugar, nuts, and often rum, originally contained meat as one of the ingredients.

True or False



## Christmas True or False Answers:

1.) **True:** Snap-dragon was a popular Christmastime game for the Victorian people to play. A bowl was filled with brandy and lit on fire. Raisins were placed inside the bowl of flaming brandy. Players would quickly try to snatch the raisins out of the brandy and quickly pop them into their mouths to extinguish the flame. The game likely led to many burned hands.


2.) **True:** Victorian trees were often decorated with things like popcorn garlands, dried orange slices, and candied or roasted nuts. Sometimes nuts were painted gold or silver and also placed on the trees.

3.) **False:** Plastic toys did not become common until the Second World War era. Before then, toys made out of wood, yarn, straw and later tin in the 1850s were commonly gifted to children. Spring activated toys that moved began to be produced in Germany in the 1850s as well.

4.) **True:** Electric Christmas tree light were not available in the 1800s. Instead, people would put wax tapers or candles at the ends of tree branches and light them. This was a fire hazard, and many Christmas tree fire mishaps were reported in newspaper in the period.

5.) **False:** German settlers were the first to bring the tradition of decorating a tree for Christmas to North America. According to one source, the first example of a Christmas tree being set up in Canada was in Quebec in 1781 by Baron Friederick von Riedesel.

6.) **False:** It is believed that the man originally known as Saint Nicholas was a monk who was born around 280 A.D. in Patara, Lycia (near modern-day Turkey). He dedicated his life to helping the poor and sick.



7.) **True:** The early Romans celebrated the god of agriculture Saturn by holding a feast called Saturnalia. They would decorate their homes and temples with the branches of evergreen trees. Druids, who were the religious leaders of the ancient Celtic peoples, decorated their temples with the branches of evergreen trees as a symbol of everlasting life. Many cultures believe that the branches of pine, fir and spruce trees would protect their homes from curses, illness, and evil spirits.

8.) **True:** Due to its roots in Christianity, Christmas was considered a sacred event by the Puritans in New England in the 1600s. This led to the creation of a law in Massachusetts in 1659 which banned any Christmas celebration to mark the holiday other than attending church. This meant that decorating a Christmas tree and singing Christmas carols was against the law. Christmas trees were frowned upon by the Puritans due to the tradition's pagan origins.

9.) **False:** French Queen Marie Antoinette did not have a giant gingerbread house made, and they were not popularized in France. In fact, they were made popular by Brothers Grimm (Wilhelm and Jacob), German writers who published the children's fairytale "Hansel and Gretel" in 1812. In the story, brother and sister Hansel and Gretel are abandoned in the woods by their parents where they become lost and come across a house made of gingerbread, cake and pastries. The gingerbread house is owned by a witch who wants to eat the children. The children escape and bring the witch's treasures back to their parents.

10.) **True:** Mincemeat pies traditionally contained chopped meat mixed with dried fruit, sugar and spices; often meat leftovers were used for the pies so the meat was not wasted.