



QUIZZES!
PUZZLES! **GAMES!**
AND MORE

Discover how the Irish
Shaped Christmas



NOLLAIG NEWS

Rudolf Radar Edition

Christmas 'Around the World' Pack



Learn about Maureen O'Hara
Celebrate Christmas 'Around the World'



A HISTORY OF... Christmas

summer solstice
June 20-21

Christmas is perhaps the most widely recognised celebration in the world. A time when family and friends come together to feast and share in the good in their lives, it is now an international festival influenced by many different cultures and beliefs.

winter solstice
December 21-22



THE BEGINNINGS

Christmas began as a Christian holiday celebrated to remember the birth of Jesus Christ, who Christians believe is the son of God. While no-one is sure what day Jesus was born on, the first recorded date of Christmas being celebrated on December 25th was during the time of the Roman Emperor Constantine in AD 336. Before this, the Christian Church did not place much importance on birthdays. They considered the day that a saint died much more important, as it was the day that they went to heaven.

THE WINTER SOLSTICE

Part of the reason the Christian Church may have chosen this date for Christmas was because of the Winter Solstice – the shortest day of the year. Usually celebrated around December 21st or 22nd, a number of different festivities took place, including a big feast called Yule in Celtic and Germanic countries. The celebration of Christmas as we know it today developed out of a mix of these ancient practices and new Christian traditions that evolved over time.

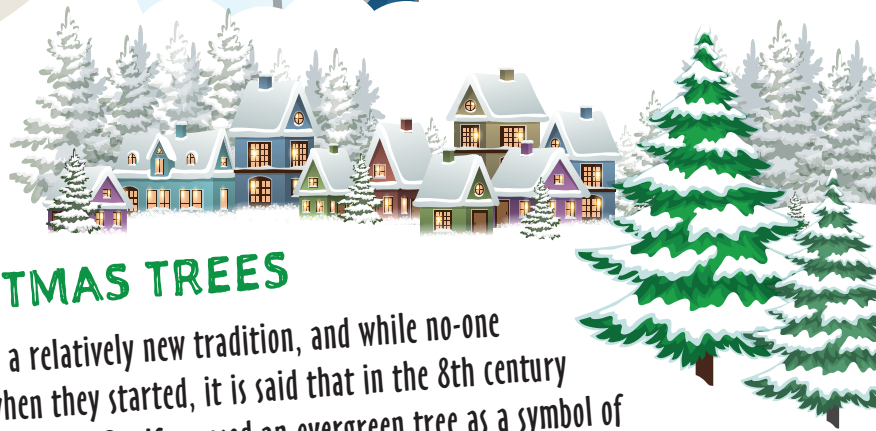
GIFT GIVING

The tradition of gift giving emerged out of a mix of the ancient Roman practice of giving gifts during the pagan festival of Saturnalia, and the Christian story of the Three Wise Men, who were said to have visited and given gifts to the baby Jesus in his manger. Legend has it that in the 4th century AD, there was a very charitable bishop called St. Nicholas who lived in what is now known as Turkey. He gave gifts to children and those in need, and is said to be the origin of Santa Claus!



DID YOU KNOW

Around the world Santa has many different friends who help to deliver gifts too? For instance, in parts of Russia, Grandfather Frost and his granddaughter the Snow Maiden are responsible for delivering gifts, while in Italy an old witch called Befana helps out.



CHRISTMAS TREES

Christmas trees are a relatively new tradition, and while no-one is certain where or when they started, it is said that in the 8th century an English missionary called St. Boniface used an evergreen tree as a symbol of Jesus in Germany. The use of a Christmas tree became widely popular in Germany first, but only spread further afield in the 19th century when the English Queen Victoria and her German husband Albert began using them. This tradition is still evolving too – in warm countries where there are no evergreen trees, people often decorate other trees instead, such as a mango or banana tree in India, a beautiful tree with red flowers called Pohutukawa in New Zealand, and palm and mango trees in parts of Africa!



CHRISTMAS TODAY

Nowadays, Christmas is celebrated by many people in many different ways. From the switching on of the Christmas lights in the UK and barbeques on the beach in Australia, to midnight mass in Egypt and a parade featuring the Three Wise Men in Spain, it's truly become an international event. How do you celebrate Christmas?



HOW THE IRISH... Shaped Christmas

At EPIC, we explore the story of Ireland and how the Irish influenced the world. Let's discover what Christmas is like in Ireland, and how the Irish have influenced the celebration of Christmas near, far and wide!



CHRISTMAS IN IRELAND

Christmas came to Ireland through immigration, that is, people moving to Ireland from abroad. According to Irish mythology, Christianity spread to Ireland around AD 432 with the arrival of St. Patrick, and sometime between AD 400 – 800, Irish people began celebrating Christian festivities and traditions, including Christmas.



TRADITIONS

While Christmas in Ireland is mostly celebrated through traditions that arrived through immigration, there are a few traditions that began in Ireland which have spread near, far and wide due to the Irish leaving (emigration). For example:

The tradition of lighting a candle on Christmas eve probably began in Ireland. During colonial times when Britain ruled Ireland, the Irish were forbidden from practicing any non-Anglican faiths, so Irish Catholics began lighting a candle in their window to send a sign to the priests that it was safe to visit once it was dark outside.



While the robin is widely associated with Christmas due to the UK, where postmen are known as 'robins' or 'redbreasts', another small bird is the star of Christmas in Ireland. The wren has been celebrated in Ireland since Celtic times, when the people believed that it was king of all birds, and used to hunt it for luck. Nowadays, on the day after Christmas called St. Stephen's Day, the 'Wren Boys' make an appearance. These people dress in costumes and march through the streets playing Irish instruments like the bodhrán and tin whistle, singing and asking for 'a penny for the wren'.



HOW THE IRISH... Shaped Christmas



Even though it is very cold at Christmas, for the last 40 years or so some Irish people have gathered to go for a swim on Christmas morning, usually in aid of charity. Some popular spots to go for a dip are Sandycove, County Dublin, Guillamene Cove in County Waterford, and the natural sea pool of Portnahapple in Portstewart, Derry/Londonderry.

January
6

Every January 6th, women are celebrated throughout Ireland on Nollaig na mBan or Women's Christmas. Traditionally the day that the Three Wise Men visited Jesus, this is a day of rest for women, during which they are encouraged to visit friends. It is also customary to take down all the Christmas decorations on this day, or risk bad luck for the rest of the year!

STORIES

The Irish are known for their storytelling prowess, so it's no surprise that they are behind many a Christmas tale around the world. From Irish-American, **Will Ferrell's** humorous portrayal of the iconic 'Buddy' in **Elf (2003)**, to Dublin-born **Maureen O'Hara's** performance as Santa sceptic, Doris Walker in the much loved **Miracle on 34th Street (1947)**, Irish actors have left their mark worldwide. O'Hara also appears in another seasonal favourite, **The Christmas Box (1995)**. Turn to pages 7 and 8 to discover more about her.



SONGS

What's Christmas without carols and hymns?

Unsurprisingly, Irish emigrants have also been responsible for the soundtrack of our Christmases – releasing many of the top festive hits that we know and love today! One of the oldest Christmas carols is **The Wexford Carol**, believed to have first originated in Enniscorthy, County Wexford many centuries ago. Irish emigrants

Terry Wogan and **Bob Geldof** have recorded some of the most famous Christmas tracks of all time including **Little Drummer Boy** and **Do they know it's Christmas Time?** Did you know that the biggest selling single of all time is **White Christmas** by Irish-American **Harry Lillis 'Bing' Crosby**? To date, it has sold over 50 million copies worldwide! His great-great-grandfather, Dennis Harrigan left Ireland back in 1831.



CHRISTMAS TRIVIA... wordsearch quiz

Answer the questions below and discover the words in the word search to see how much you've learnt about the origins of Christmas.

- 1 The Roman emperor who first began the celebration of Christmas
- 2 The feast celebrated in Celtic and Germanic countries at the Winter Solstice
- 3 Name the witch who helps deliver Christmas presents in Italy
- 4 The country where Christmas trees first became widely popular
- 5 The tree with red flowers that is decorated in New Zealand
- 6 Australians have these on the beach for Christmas dinner
- 7 The Irish put these on their windows on Christmas Eve
- 8 A type of small bird associated with Christmas in Ireland
- 9 The star of the Christmas film Elf
- 10 The name of the biggest selling single of all time

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

Answers:
Constantine,
Yule,
Befana,
Germany,
Pohutukawa,
Barbeque,
Candle,
Wren,
Will Ferrell,
White Christmas



MAUREEN O'HARA

FACT FILE

NAME

Maureen O'Hara

PLACE OF BIRTH

Ranelagh, Dublin, Ireland

ALIAS

The Queen of Technicolor

MUSEUM LOCATION

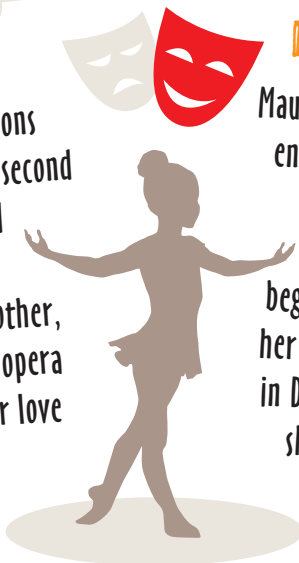
Storytelling Gallery

DATE OF BIRTH

17th August 1920

FAMILY

Maureen was born as part of the FitzSimons family in Ranelagh, Dublin. She was the second oldest of six children, and the only child with red hair in her family. Her father, Charles, was a businessman, and her mother, Marguerita, was a stage actress and opera singer – which may be where her love of performing came from.



PERFORMING ARTS

Maureen began dancing at just 5 years old. Her family encouraged her, and both her and her siblings enrolled at a drama school in Dublin. This was just the beginning of her sparkling career as an actress. At age 10, she began working in amateur theatre after her lessons, and in her teens went on to join the famous Abbey Theatre School in Dublin, where she studied drama and music. In 1936, she became the youngest ever pupil to graduate from the Guildhall School of Music at the time.

FILM

At just 17 years old, the silver screen called to her and she decided to try her hand at film acting! She took part in an audition in London and caught the attention of an Oscar-winning movie star and producer called Charles Laughton. He offered her a seven-year contract with his new company, Mayflower Pictures. Although her family were shocked, she accepted and, after convincing her to change her surname to O'Hara, Laughton helped launch her career by getting her a role in an Alfred Hitchcock film called Jamaica Inn (1939).



HOLLYWOOD ICON

Maureen moved to Hollywood and signed a contract with the famous American film studios RKO in 1939. She made her American debut as Esmeralda in the production of The Hunchback of Notre Dame, for which she received rave reviews. In 1941, she performed in How Green Was My Valley alongside John Ford. The film triumphed at the Oscars, winning in five categories, including Best Picture and Best Director.

HOLLYWOOD





THE QUEEN OF TECHNICOLOR

Before the 1940s, most films were in black and white. However, as colour film started to become more popular, Maureen's red hair, green eyes and peachy skin earned her the nickname 'The Queen of Technicolor' – something she wasn't fond of, as she thought it belittled her performances. In 1950, Maureen was cast alongside another Irish-American, John Wayne, in the Western, *Rio Grande*. They went on to star in more films together, including the famous Irish film, *The Quiet Man* (1952), which was shot in Co. Mayo and Co. Galway. It is one of the only Hollywood movies in which the Irish language can be heard spoken.



MIRACLE ON 34TH STREET

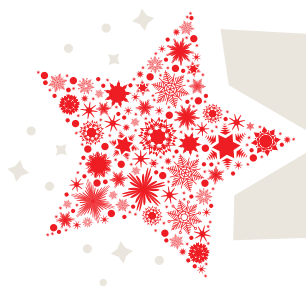
In 1947, Maureen was assigned a role in the Christmas classic *Miracle on 34th Street*. The film takes place between Thanksgiving Day and Christmas Day in New York City, and follows the story of a department store Santa Claus who claims to be the real deal. Maureen plays Doris Walker, a single working mother whose beliefs are challenged by meeting him.



LATER LIFE

In the early 1960s, Maureen decided to change her career focus and started to record albums and appear in musicals and comedies such as the 1961 *The Parent Trap*, before retiring to St. Croix in the Virgin Islands with her husband Charles F. Blair Jr., an aviator. When he died in 1978, she took over his career, becoming president of his airline Antilles Air Boats.

However, after 20-years away, she missed performing, and finally returned to the big screen in a role in *Only the Lonely* (1991). For the remainder of the 1990s, she landed parts in television movies, including another Christmas film, *The Christmas Box* (1995). In 2014, she received an honorary Oscar for her seven-decade career of onscreen roles.



MAUREEN O'HARA TRIVIA quiz



1 What was Maureen's original surname?

2 Maureen O'Hara played Doris Walker in what film?

3 What was Maureen's nickname when working in Hollywood, and why was she called that?

4 Maureen worked alongside another famous Irish-American actor, John Wayne, in many films. Using whatever resources are available to you, research three facts about John Wayne:

1.

2.

3.



5 Maureen starred in a few Christmas themed movies over the course of her career. Create a new Christmas film for her to star in below, including a title and a few lines to describe the plot.

Answers: 1) Fitzsimons. 2) Miracle on 34th Street. 3) The Queen of Technicolor, because of her red hair, green eyes and peachy skin.

CELEBRATE... Christmas Around the World

As we discovered, Christmas is truly a global celebration. This year, we may not be able to visit other countries, but we can celebrate their traditions right here at home with these fun activities. Remember to ask a grown-up to help you.

STEP 1 ...

Do some Christmas reportage

First, like any good reporter, identify the country that you'd like to explore. From Japan, where they eat fried chicken for Christmas dinner, to Sweden, where the Yule Goat helps Santa to deliver gifts, there's something unique to discover everywhere. Then, complete the activities below, before creating a Christmas advertisement to invite your friends and family to celebrate with you in the style of this country.

My chosen country is



STEP 2 ...

Craft a traditional decoration

In my chosen country they use

.....
as a Christmas tree, and decorate it with

.....
There are unusual Christmas decorations all around the world – from spider webs in Ukraine to the Tió de Nadal Yule log in Catalonia. Take inspiration from your chosen country's traditions to create something new to adorn your Christmas tree.

STEP 3 ... Become Santa's Helper

They give gifts in this country at Christmas by

While people do many different things at Christmas, no matter where you are in the world, Christmas is a time for giving to others. Whether it was the ancient Romans giving gifts to the poor, or donating food or clothes in charity appeals today, Christmas is a time of sharing and spreading good will to other people.

In the true spirit of Christmas, create a special Christmas wish as a gift for the people in the country that you have chosen.

Dear people of

This year I wish for you, that

From

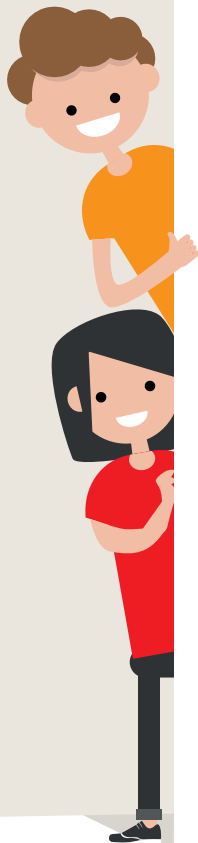
Colour, cut-out and
hang on your christmas tree

STEP 4 ... My Christmas Ad

NOW IT'S TIME TO BRING YOUR REPORTAGE
AND RESEARCH TOGETHER BY CREATING YOUR
CHRISTMAS ADVERTISEMENT OR POSTER

On your poster, highlight all the special things that you discovered about the country you selected. Don't forget to feature the most unique thing about Christmas in that country as the main image, and tell people how to celebrate, what to wear and what to bring!

Don't forget to enter your poster to **WIN A PRIZE!**



WIN A PRIZE!

**WIN AN EPIC
EXPLORERS
FAMILY
EXPERIENCE!**

Want to discover more? Escape the confines of your home and travel the world alongside famous Irish emigrants with one of EPIC's Explorers workshops!

Delivered remotely over Zoom, and covering topics such as space, pirates or Antarctic exploration; create fun arts and crafts as you traverse space and time. Get an adult to take a picture of your completed poster, and email it to groups@epicchq.com to be in with a chance of winning!

CHRISTMAS RESOURCES

Discover more about Christmas past and present, both in Ireland and around the world with these festive-themed resources and activities.



In Dublin over Christmas?

Don't forget to join us in person at EPIC The Irish Emigration Museum for our pop-up trail, where you can learn more about Christmas over the festive period! Head to our website epicchq.com to find out more.

A Christmas treat

by Edna O'Brien

Famous Irish novelist Edna O'Brien who was born in Co. Clare and emigrated to London has written a children's book series about a human called Timothy and a mouse called Dazzle. In one of their escapades, A Christmas Treat, the pair encounter strange adventures when they visit the city at night to see the Christmas decorations.

How will Santa find us?

by Shane O'Brien and Stephen Rogers

Released to raise funds for homeless charity Focus Ireland, this book tells the story of a family that becomes homeless right before Christmas, in the form of the stories that the parents tell to their kids as they move from one home to another.

Women's Museum of Ireland

Celebrate Nollaig na mBan or Women's Christmas and discover more about the roles women have played both in Ireland and abroad with a virtual trip to the Women's Museum of Ireland.

<https://womensmuseumofireland.ie/>

National Geographic Kids

Do you want to learn more about Christmas celebrations in other countries? A travel guide made especially for children, at the National Geographic Kids, you can find everything you need and more! Start off with their guide to Winter celebrations around the world.

<https://kids.nationalgeographic.com/explore/winter-celebrations/>

The Late Late Toy Show

A uniquely Irish tradition, celebrate an Irish Christmas anywhere in the world by tuning in to the Late Late Toy Show on Ireland's RTE Player. A talk show with a difference, all the guests are children who review the year's must have Christmas gifts.

<https://www.rte.ie/entertainment/late-late-toy-show/>

Irish Christmas Traditions

For those who want to delve a bit deeper and discover more about Christmas on Irish shores they have fantastic articles that delve into the origins of some popular and unusual Irish Christmas traditions.

<https://www.ireland.com/en-gb/> and <http://research.ie/>