

# CHRISTMAS

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At this time of year, the thoughts of most people, voluntarily or otherwise, turn towards Christmas and the preparations for it. In all the flurry of pre-Christmas activity, though, many people tend to lose sight of the true meaning of Christmas.

In an effort to instil into the minds of our readers some contemplative thoughts about Christmas, we offer the following list of things that Christmas means to us. Naturally, as a logologist we checked the word Christmas in a number of references to gain some idea as to its true range of meaning. Our findings, we hope, will put Christmas into its proper perspective. Christmas is:

- an annual church festival kept on December 25 or by the Armenians on January 6 in memory of the birth of Christ, celebrated generally by a particular church service, special gifts and greetings, and observed in most Christian communities as a legal holiday
- any similar festivity or revelry
- the Christmas season
- the festival season from Christmas Eve till after New Year's or (especially in England) till Epiphany
- Christmas day, the 25th of December
- Christmas holidays
- something connected with the celebration of Christmas, as a gift
- any gift or present bestowed at Christmas time
- Christmas decorations
- evergreens used for decorations at Christmas, as the European holly
- the holly, *Ilex Aquifolium*
- something special to drink at Christmas time
- a Texas term for whiskey
- a cake made on Christmas Eve
- any ostentatious display, as of clothing, jewelry, etc.
- a garish article of clothing or jewelry, or one that sparkles
- a shower of metallic foil dropped by an airplane or released from an artillery shell to jam enemy radar or communications systems
- a mild, euphemistic expletive
- payday
- a baptismal name, now uncommon as a boy's name and practically unknown as a girl's
- a frequent surname for one born at Christmas

- the surname of Gerard Christmas, an English carver who died in 1634
- the surname of Henry Christmas, an English writer who lived from 1811 until 1868
- a surname that appears over 40 times in the London Telephone Directory
- a town in Gila County, Arizona, with a 1960 population of 190
- a town in Orange County, Florida, with a 1960 population of 250
- a town in Alger County, Michigan, with a 1960 population of 100
- a lake in Hennepin County, Minnesota
- a place in Bolivar County, Mississippi
- a town in Morgan County, Tennessee, with a 1960 population of zero
- a mountain in the Antarctic, at 82 degrees south, 159 degrees east
- a British island in the Indian Ocean about 190 miles south of Java, with an area of 60 square miles, and a 1940 population of 1060
- one of the Line Islands in the central Pacific Ocean south of Hawaii, being the largest atoll in the Pacific, with an area of 234 square miles, of which 94 are land, and having a population of 42
- a verb meaning "to celebrate Christmas"
- an obsolete verb meaning "to provide with Christmas cheer"
- a verb meaning "to decorate with evergreens for Christmas"
- a verb meaning "to sell Christmas decorations"
- a verb meaning "to adorn with Christmas decorations"
- a verb meaning "to spend Christmas"
- a verb meaning "to provide cheer to a female and to oneself with the phallus erectus"
- a verb meaning "to engage in pudendal activity"
- a verb, short for "Christmas Eve", that is rhyming slang for "to believe"

#### LITTLE-KNOWN PALINDROMES

Throughout word-puzzle literature one continually comes face to face with palindromes -- usually the well-known NOON, LEVEL, MADAM, MALAYALAM, and so on. Recently Darryl Francis encountered three palindromes which apparently have never been recognized:

KELEK - a raft or float supported by inflated animal skins, used in Iraq and Armenia; this appears in the Random House Dictionary and Webster's Second

HAWWAH - a female given name listed in The Harrap Book of Boys' and Girls' Names; it is the Hebrew form of Eve, the wife of Adam

SNEDDENS - a provincial English word for wide-mouthed sand-eels; though not in Webster's Second or Third, the singular form is given in both the Funk & Wagnalls New Standard Dictionary and the English Dialect Dictionary