

INFORMATIONAL TEXT PASSAGE WRITTEN AT TWO READING LEVELS!

Name: _____

Santa Claus

Who is the jolly old man in a red suit, with reindeer pulling his sleigh, delivering toys to children all over the world on Christmas Eve? It must be Santa Claus. Santa Claus also goes by Saint Nicholas, Kris Kringle or Saint Nick. Although not real, the myth of Santa may have been based on a real person. His myth has grown and evolved throughout history, resulting in different depictions of this gift-giving figure.

Giving gifts during the winter season has a very long history.

Saturnalia was one of the most popular Roman holidays. The ancient holiday of Saturnalia was generally celebrated toward the end of December. The holiday was a festival to venerate the Roman god Saturn. Celebration of Saturnalia often included many days of festivities, a banquet and exchanging gifts.

Saint Nicholas was an actual person. He was a Greek Christian bishop in Turkey in the fourth century who was famous for giving gifts to the poor. He was a saint and his name day was celebrated by giving children gifts in the Middle Ages. That tradition persisted even after he was no longer referred to as a saint, but rather as Santa Claus.

While different from Santa Claus, there have been myths about figures that brought gifts to children in many cultures in Europe. In England, the idea of Father Christmas has a long history, with origins that date back to the 1500s. He was depicted as a jolly and large older man who embodied the spirit of Christmas. He brought peace, joy and general good cheer. A German tradition centered on the Norwegian god Odin. He was depicted as having a long white beard and wearing a cloak. People also believed that Odin brought gifts on his travels.

The modern idea of Santa with his red suit and large stomach was first created in the early nineteenth century. Santa was described as a "jolly old elf" by Clement Clarke Moore in *A Visit from St. Nicholas*. The poem begins with the famous line, "'Twas the night before Christmas." This poem made popular the idea that Santa Claus trekked all around the world to deliver presents. Around the same time, illustrations of a larger, bearded man helped create a common idea of what Santa looked like. To this day, Santa is still portrayed in a very similar way.

While many European cultures had a figure that delivered gifts or represented the winter holidays, the modern incarnation of Santa as a jolly, portly man dressed in a red suit is most popular in the United States. Images of Santa appear on cards, clothing and decorations. Santa is a cultural icon and has inspired Christmas Eve rituals like leaving out milk and cookies and hanging stockings, as well as holiday events like photos with Santa.

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Name: _____

Santa Claus

Who is the jolly old man in a red suit delivering toys to children all over the world on Christmas Eve? It must be Santa Claus. Santa Claus also goes by Saint Nicholas, Kris Kringle or Saint Nick. Although not real, Santa may have been based on a real person. The myth about Santa has grown and changed over time. There are different depictions of this gift-giving figure.

Giving gifts during the winter season has a long history. The ancient holiday of Saturnalia was celebrated at the end of December. The holiday was a festival to venerate the Roman god Saturn. Celebration of Saturnalia often included a banquet and exchanging gifts.

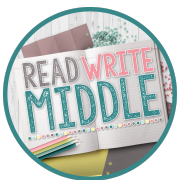
Saint Nicholas was an actual person. He was a Greek Christian bishop in Turkey who lived in the 300s and was famous for giving gifts to the poor. He was also a saint. His name day was celebrated by giving children gifts in the Middle Ages. That tradition persisted even after he was no longer referred to as a saint, but rather as Santa Claus.

There have been stories about mythical people that brought gifts to children in many cultures in Europe. In England, the idea of Father Christmas has a long history. He was described as a jolly and large older man who embodied the spirit of Christmas. The Norwegian god Odin was the basis of a German tradition. He had a long white beard, wore a cloak and brought gifts on his travels.

The modern idea of Santa with his red suit and large stomach was first created in the early nineteenth century. Santa was described as a "jolly old elf" by Clement Clarke Moore in *A Visit from St. Nicholas*. The poem begins with the famous line, "'Twas the night before Christmas." This poem made popular the idea that Santa Claus trekked all around the world to deliver presents. Around the same time, illustrations of a larger, bearded man helped create a common idea of what Santa looked like.

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DIFFERENTIATED CONTEXT CLUES ACTIVITY!

Name: _____

Context Clues

Look back in the passage and use context clues to determine the meaning of each word. Circle the answer, then write down the context clues from the text that helped you determine the answer.

- depictions
a. people b. denials c. descriptions
context clues: _____
- venerate
a. visualize b. honor c. misrep
context clues: _____
- persisted
a. stopped b. continue c. caused
context clues: _____
- embodied
a. represented b. depicted c. believed
context clues: _____
- trekked
a. walked b. traveled c. sailed
context clues: _____
- incarnation
a. form b. showing c. material
context clues: _____
- portly
a. round b. small c. tall
context clues: _____

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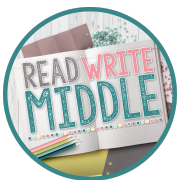
Name: _____

Context Clues

Look back in the passage and use context clues to determine the meaning of each word. Determine what each word means based on the way it is used in the passage, then write down the context clues from the text that helped you.

- depictions: _____
context clues: _____
- venerate: _____
context clues: _____
- persisted: _____
context clues: _____
- embodied: _____
context clues: _____
- trekked: _____
context clues: _____
- incarnation: _____
context clues: _____
- portly: _____
context clues: _____

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WRITING ASSIGNMENT AND COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS ALSO INCLUDED!

Name: _____

Comprehension Questions

Answer the following questions using evidence from the text to support your answer.

1. What is the central idea of the passage? List two supporting details to support your answer.

2. Who was Saint Nicholas? What connection is there between Saint Nicholas and the modern myth of Santa Claus?

3. The author states that there have been different mythical figures that gave gifts in many cultures in Europe. What is one example presented in the text?

4. What role did the poem by Clement Clarke Moore play in creating the modern story of Santa Claus?

5. The author states that Santa Claus is a cultural icon. What evidence in the text supports that statement?

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Writing Assignment

Giving gifts is an important tradition to celebrate holidays in many cultures. Children often enjoy receiving expensive toys, but gifts that have a lot of sentimental value are very meaningful. Sentimental means emotional. Think of a time when you received a gift that may not have been very expensive, but was very meaningful. Write a paragraph that explains what the gift was and why it was so important. In your writing, be sure to include the following:

- Explain who you received the gift from.
- Describe the gift.
- Explain why it was so important to you.
- Make sure you proofread your writing to check for spelling and grammar issues.

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