



The Holiday That Was Once Against the Law

Read the passage and answer the questions. (CEFR B1–B2)

Class _____ No. _____ Name _____



- 1 It may be hard to believe, but Christmas was once illegal in parts of the English-speaking world. In the 1640s, Puritan leaders in Scotland and England banned it. They argued that the Bible never mentions the date and that the festival had become an excuse for heavy drinking and disorder. In Boston, from 1659 to 1681, anyone caught celebrating could be fined five shillings.
- 2 The quiet, family-centered Christmas many people imagine today was largely shaped in the nineteenth century. Charles Dickens's *A Christmas Carol*, published in 1843, linked the season with generosity. Printed cards, decorated trees, and a cheerful Santa Claus spread through newspapers and magazines. By 1870, the holiday that Boston had once punished was a federal holiday across the United States.
- 3 Since then, the holiday has kept changing as it travels to new places, from Manila to Tokyo. Advertisers have helped define what Santa looks like, and in many countries the weeks before Christmas are the busiest shopping season of the year. Some people complain that the religious meaning has been lost, while others see the mix of faith, family, and business as part of what keeps Christmas alive.

Comprehension

1. What is the main idea of the passage?

- (A) Christmas has been celebrated in the same way for hundreds of years.
- (B) Charles Dickens invented Christmas in 1843.
- (C) Christmas has changed greatly, from being banned to becoming a mix of faith, family, and business.
- (D) Advertisers have completely destroyed the meaning of Christmas.

2. Why did Puritan leaders ban Christmas in the 1640s?

- (A) They said the Bible never mentions the date, and the festival had led to heavy drinking and disorder.
- (B) They wanted people to work harder in winter.
- (C) They thought Christmas cost the government too much money.
- (D) They wanted to move Christmas to a different day.

3. According to the passage, what was true by 1870?

- (A) Boston still fined people five shillings for celebrating.
- (B) *A Christmas Carol* had not been published yet.
- (C) Christmas had become the busiest shopping season in Tokyo.
- (D) Christmas was a federal holiday across the United States.

4. What can we infer from the phrase "the holiday that Boston had once punished"?

- (A) Boston never accepted Christmas.
- (B) People's attitude toward Christmas in America changed greatly in about 200 years.
- (C) The federal government punished Boston for banning Christmas.
- (D) Christmas became a holiday in Boston before the rest of the country.

5. In paragraph 2, the word "generosity" is closest in meaning to

- (A) being happy to give to others
- (B) being afraid of the law
- (C) being very busy
- (D) being quiet at home

6. Why does the writer mention places such as Manila and Tokyo in the last paragraph?

- (A) To show that Christmas began in Asia.
- (B) To list the cities with the biggest Christmas sales.
- (C) To show that Christmas keeps changing as it spreads to new places.
- (D) To explain why Christmas was banned in Asia.



Vocabulary, Paraphrase & Summary

Match the words with the definitions. Then rewrite and summarize.

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| 1. illegal | a. a situation in which people behave in a noisy, violent, or uncontrolled way |
| 2. ban | b. to make someone pay money because they broke a rule or law |
| 3. excuse | c. the quality of being kind and happy to give money, time, or help to others |
| 4. disorder | d. to show or decide clearly what something is or what it is like |
| 5. fine | e. to say that you are not happy or not satisfied with something |
| 6. generosity | f. not allowed by law |
| 7. define | g. to officially say that something must not be done or used |
| 8. complain | h. a reason that someone uses to do something, often not the real or a good reason |

Paraphrase — say it in your own words

1. “It may be hard to believe, but Christmas was once illegal in parts of the English-speaking world.”

Hint: Start with "You may not believe it, but" and change "illegal" to "against the law". Use "some English-speaking places".

2. “The quiet, family-centered Christmas many people imagine today was largely shaped in the nineteenth century.”

Hint: Start with "Most of the ideas" and use "come from the 1800s".

3. “Some people complain that the religious meaning has been lost, while others see the mix of faith, family, and business as part of what keeps Christmas alive.”

Hint: Split it into two sentences. Use "Some people are unhappy because" and "But other people think".

Summary

Summarize the passage in about 50 words.



Debate & Opinion Essay

Prepare for a debate. Then write your opinion (100–150 words).

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Motion: The business side of Christmas has done more good than harm.

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- Shopping and advertising helped Christmas spread to places like Tokyo, where many more people now enjoy it.
- The busy shopping season gives jobs and income to many workers and small shops every year.
- Ads and products, like a friendly Santa, helped create a shared culture of giving and family time.

Add your own reason:

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- When the weeks before Christmas become the busiest shopping season, people may forget the religious meaning of the holiday.
- Advertisers decide what Christmas looks like, so the holiday is shaped by companies instead of by families or communities.
- Pressure to buy presents can cause stress and debt, which goes against the generosity that A Christmas Carol linked with the season.

Add your own reason:

Opinion	<i>I believe / I think that ...</i>
Reason 1	<i>First, ... For example, ...</i>
Reason 2	<i>Second, ... In fact, ...</i>
Counter	<i>Some people say ... However, ...</i>
Conclusion	<i>In conclusion, ...</i>