

# FESTIVE FAKE NEWS: FACT OR FICTION?

*B2 (First Certificate)*

## Discuss the Questions (Pairs or Groups)

1. What winter holidays do people celebrate in your country?
2. Do you know any unusual or surprising holiday traditions from other places?
3. Have you ever heard a Christmas myth or story that turned out *not* to be true?




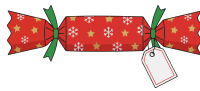



## Pre-Use of English (Part 2) Warm-Up

### A. Spot the Missing Words (Functions Focus)

Below are sentences about unusual Christmas traditions. In each one, identify **what type of word is missing**.

Choose from: **preposition / pronoun / linker / quantifier / auxiliary verb**

Icelandic children leave a shoe on the windowsill, ____ is then filled with small gifts.	Type of word	
The tradition started as a simple marketing idea but it ____ become very popular.	Type of word	
La Befana is a friendly witch in Italy who brings gifts to children ____ the 6th of January	Type of word	
Christmas crackers are common in the UK, but very ____ people know who invented them.	Type of word	
Many people believe mistletoe brings good luck, ____ others think it's just a fun tradition.	Type of word	

## B. Fixed Expressions & Collocations



Fill in the missing **collocation or expression** with ONE word from the list:  
**(advance / event / matter / least / instead)**

1. In some countries, families order Christmas sweets weeks in \_\_\_\_\_.
2. In the unlikely \_\_\_\_\_ that it snows heavily, many events are cancelled.
3. Many traditions continue no \_\_\_\_\_ how unusual they seem today.
4. At the very \_\_\_\_\_, most families decorate their homes in December.
5. Some families eat a special Christmas breakfast \_\_\_\_\_ of a big dinner.

## Use of English Part 2 – Open Cloze



### *Christmas Traditions Around the World*

Many Christmas customs seem ancient, but some are far more modern **(1)**\_\_\_\_ they appear. In Iceland, for example, children leave a shoe on the windowsill for the “Yule Lads,” a group of mischievous brothers who visit **(2)**\_\_\_\_ night in the days before Christmas. Each Lad leaves either a small gift **(3)**\_\_\_\_ a potato, depending on the child’s behaviour. Although the Yule Lads **(4)**\_\_\_\_ based on old folklore, their personalities and names were standardised only in the 20th century.

In Mexico, families take part in “Las Posadas,” a tradition in **(5)**\_\_\_\_ people reenact Mary and Joseph’s search for shelter. The celebration involves singing, candles, and eventually breaking a piñata. The custom is festive now, but it originally served **(6)**\_\_\_\_ a way to teach religious stories to children who could not read.

One of the strangest modern myths comes from Norway, **(7)**\_\_\_\_ many families hide their brooms on Christmas Eve. The belief dates back centuries to a superstition that witches would come out at night to steal them. Few Norwegians take the idea seriously today, **(8)**\_\_\_\_ plenty still hide their brooms “just in case.”

- Which tradition would you like to participate in? Why?
- Write down some ideas about your family’s holiday traditions. Do you have any unusual traditions?



## Pre-Reading (Part 5) Warm-Up

### 1. Quick Quiz: Fact or Fiction? (Guess Before You Read)

*Some of these are true, some false. Guess first — you'll check your answers in the reading.*

1. Santa has been wearing a red suit since the 1800s.
2. Chicken is a traditional Christmas dinner in Japan because of long-standing religious customs.
3. Santa's reindeer names are hundreds of years old.
4. Holiday traditions usually stay the same over time.
5. Advertising has played a major role in shaping some winter traditions



## Part 5 — Reading: Fake News Festive Myths



### Festive Myths: True or False?

Every December, millions of people around the world celebrate winter holidays with lights, food, gifts, and long-held traditions. But while these customs may *feel* ancient, many of them are actually far more modern than we imagine. From the true origins of Santa Claus to the surprising story behind a bucket of fried chicken, holiday history is full of myths—some charming, some strange, and some completely false.

### Did Coca-Cola Invent Santa Claus?

Many people are convinced that Coca-Cola *created* the Santa we know today: a smiling, red-suited man with a white beard and a round belly. In reality, Santa's roots go back centuries to Saint Nicholas, a 4th-century bishop known for his generosity.

By the 1800s, American artists had already begun drawing Santa in red, but his appearance varied wildly — sometimes he was tall and thin, sometimes short and elf-like. At this point, American artists were already portraying Santa in red, although his appearance varied widely. Some drawings showed him tall and thin; others made him small and elf-like. What Coca-Cola *did* contribute was consistency. Their 1930s holiday advertising campaign featured a friendly, red-suited Santa who looked the same every year, and this image quickly spread around the world. As a result, many people now assume Coca-Cola invented him — but they simply popularised an existing idea.

### KFC for Christmas? Only in Japan!

One of the most surprising holiday traditions takes place in Japan, where a large percentage of families eat Kentucky Fried Chicken on Christmas Eve or Christmas Day. This is not because of

religion — Christmas is not a national holiday in Japan — but because of a brilliantly successful marketing campaign in the 1970s.

KFC advertised its chicken as the perfect Western-style Christmas dinner at a time when few Japanese had ovens or access to traditional roast turkey. The idea caught on, and today KFC sells special Christmas boxes, complete with cake and champagne. Many customers order weeks in advance — and some even queue outside the restaurant in Santa hats.

## Reindeer Names: Fact or Fiction?

Everyone knows Santa's reindeer—Dasher, Dancer, Prancer, Vixen, Comet, Cupid, Donner, and Blitzen. But few people know where the names really come from. They were first introduced in the 1823 poem *A Visit from St. Nicholas*, which helped shape many modern Christmas ideas.

However, "Donner" and "Blitzen" were originally spelled "Dunder" and "Blixem," which mean "thunder" and "lightning" in old Dutch. The spellings changed over time, partly because English speakers found them easier to pronounce. Whether you say "Blitzen" or "Blixem," the names reflect the fast, magical energy of Santa's winter journey.

## So... Fact or Fiction?

Holiday traditions are a colourful mix of truth, imagination, advertising, and history. Some myths are harmless fun; others reveal how cultures change over time. The more we learn about the real stories behind these customs, the clearer it becomes that traditions aren't fixed—they evolve, just like the holidays themselves.



## Reading and Use of English Part 5: Multiple-Choice Questions

### 1. What does the author imply about the visual image of Santa before Coca-Cola's involvement?

- A. It was standardised by the 1800s, starting with the red suit.
- B. Artists portrayed him in inconsistent and changing ways.
- C. It was based closely on medieval depictions of Saint Nicholas.
- D. It featured the same characteristics found in modern images.

### 2. According to the text, why do some people believe Coca-Cola invented Santa?

- A. Because Coca-Cola redesigned Santa to replace older myths.
- B. Because earlier artists rarely used red in their illustrations.
- C. Because the Santa image produced by Coca Cola made it globally recognisable.
- D. Because Coca-Cola purchased the rights to the poem *A Visit from St. Nicholas*.



### 3. In the section about Japan, what does the author highlight as the key factor behind the KFC Christmas tradition?

- A. KFC provided the only affordable meal option during the holiday season in the 1970s.
- B. A marketing campaign successfully connected fried chicken with modern Christmas culture.
- C. Japanese families already associated chicken with important celebrations.
- D. KFC's Christmas boxes were originally designed to imitate American home cooking.

### 4. What point does the author make about the original reindeer names?

- A. They were changed because the original names were incorrect translations.
- B. They were influenced by traditional Dutch folklore.
- C. Their spelling evolved partly to make them easier for English speakers to pronounce.
- D. Their meanings were lost because the poem removed cultural references.

### 5. What broader idea about holiday traditions does the author suggest?

- A. Most traditions have remained unchanged since their creation.
- B. Many traditions are based on misunderstandings that should be corrected.
- C. Traditions are shaped by a mixture of history, imagination, and commercial influence.
- D. The most popular customs tend to be those with the deepest religious origins.

### 6. What is the author's main purpose in writing this text?

- A. To criticise how companies and advertisers influence modern celebrations.
- B. To explain how holiday practices differ across cultures around the world.
- C. To reveal the real origins behind well-known holiday myths and challenge assumptions.
- D. To encourage readers to celebrate holidays in a more authentic and traditional way.

#### Activity: "True Tradition or Clever Marketing?"

In pairs or small groups, discuss the following questions. Use examples from the text to support your ideas. Be ready to share your group's conclusions.



1. Which of the four myths surprised you the most, and why?
2. Do you think it matters if a tradition started because of marketing or a mistake? Why / why not?
3. Choose one Christmas tradition from your own country.
  - What do people *think* the origin is?
  - What do you think the *real* origin might be?
4. If you could invent a new holiday tradition, what would it be and how would you convince people to adopt it?
5. How do you think technology and social media might shape future traditions? Give examples

# ANSWER KEY

## Pre-Use of English (Part 2) Warm-Up

### A. Spot the Missing Words (Functions Focus)

Icelandic children leave a shoe on the windowsill, <b>which</b> is then filled with small gifts.	<b>Type of word</b> relative pronoun
The tradition started as a simple marketing idea but it <b>has</b> become very popular.	<b>Type of word</b> auxiliary verb
La Befana is a friendly witch in Italy who brings gifts to children <b>on</b> the 6th of January	<b>Type of word</b> preposition
Christmas crackers are common in the UK, but very <b>few</b> people know who invented them.	<b>Type of word</b> connector
Many people believe mistletoe brings good luck, <b>while / whereas</b> others think it's just a fun tradition.	<b>Type of word</b> linker

### B. Fixed Expressions & Collocations

1. In some countries, families order Christmas sweets weeks in **advance**.
2. In the unlikely **event** that it snows heavily, many events are cancelled.
3. Many traditions continue no **matter** how unusual they seem today.
4. At the very **least**, most families decorate their homes in December.
5. Some families eat a special Christmas breakfast **instead** of a big dinner

## Use of English - Part 2 (Open cloze)

Gap	Answer	Grammar Point
(1)	<b>than</b>	comparative structure
(2)	<b>each</b>	determiner in time expression
(3)	<b>or</b>	correlative pairing ("either...or")
(4)	<b>are</b>	passive voice
(5)	<b>which</b>	relative pronoun
(6)	<b>as</b>	fixed expression "serve as"
(7)	<b>where</b>	relative adverb of place
(8)	<b>though / although</b>	concessive linker

## Answer Key — Reading Part 5

- 1. B** — *Explanation:* The text says Santa was drawn "tall and thin," "short and elf-like," and varied widely before Coca-Cola made him consistent.
- 2. C** — *Explanation:* The reading states Coca-Cola "popularised" an existing idea by using the same friendly red-suited Santa every year, making people assume they invented him.
- 3. B** — *Explanation:* The text highlights the 1970s KFC campaign promoting chicken as a "Western-style Christmas dinner," which started the tradition.
- 4. C** — *Explanation:* The text explains that "Dunder" and "Blixem" later changed spelling because English speakers found them easier that way.
- 5. C** — *Explanation:* The final paragraph says traditions mix "truth, imagination, advertising, and history"—showing they evolve through many influences.
- 6. C** — *Explanation:* The text's purpose is to explore myths, correct misconceptions, and explain surprising origins—not to criticise or persuade.