

Labor Gakuen Newsletter

December 2025



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What's coming up at Labor?

Here's a peek at some special events coming soon!

December 5th (Fri) 16:00 - 17:15 - I'll let the cat out of the bag. It's a special lesson with Kris all about idioms.

December 19th (Fri) 15:45 - 17:15 - the Christmas Party - have fun and meet some new people at the party.

January 19th (Mon) - Mark will have a special lesson called 'open conversation'. Chat and enjoy!

Next spring - a second pub quiz! Can your team win?



Did you know? Gingerbread man biscuits were started by Queen Elizabeth I in the late 1500s. She had them baked to look like important visitors.

Did you know? Roast chestnuts are popular at Christmas in many countries. They are a symbol of warmth and are often mentioned in Christmas songs



A Victorian Christmas Story

The Victorian era lasted from 1837 to 1901, during the reign of Queen Victoria in Britain.

It was during this time that Christmas became the festive holiday we know today. Families decorated Christmas trees, sent the first Christmas cards, and enjoyed carols and big holiday meals with roast goose or turkey and plum pudding. Gift-giving—especially for children—became popular, and there was a strong spirit of charity and goodwill, partly due to Dickens's 'A Christmas Carol'.



"On a cold Christmas Eve in Victorian England, young Clara Pembroke pressed her nose to the **parlour** window, watching **gaslight flicker** across the snowy street. Inside, the house was busy with preparations—holly hung along the **mantle**, oranges **studded** with cloves, and the scent of roasted chestnuts drifting in from the kitchen.

Her father brought in the Christmas tree, a relatively new tradition he had adopted with great enthusiasm after hearing of its popularity with Queen Victoria and Prince Albert. Clara adored the tree: the delicate glass **baubles** from Germany, the tiny tin soldiers, and—best of all—the little candles clipped to the branches. They would be lit only after supper, turning the room into a **twinkling** fairy garden.

While her father worked, Clara and her mother prepared small gifts for the servants: handkerchiefs and ribbons, each wrapped in **crisp** white paper and tied with red **twine**. The Pembroke family wasn't wealthy, but Christmas was a time for generosity, her mother always said.

As **dusk** settled, the family gathered for their favourite custom—reading from Dickens. Clara sat close to the fire as her father opened a worn copy of *A Christmas Carol*. The flames **crackled** while Marley's ghost **wailed** and Scrooge trembled, and Clara thought about Christmas in the London she knew: **chimney sweeps** covered in **soot**, **carollers** with lanterns, and bakers' shops **fragrant** with plum pudding.

Then came the lighting of the candles. Her father touched a match to each one, and the room bloomed with golden light. Clara's breath caught, as it did every year—amazed that something so simple could feel so magical.

Later, as she hung her stocking by the fireplace, she whispered her Christmas wish: not for toys or sweets, but for the moment to last just a bit longer. And when she climbed into bed and heard distant church bells ring midnight, she thought perhaps it had.

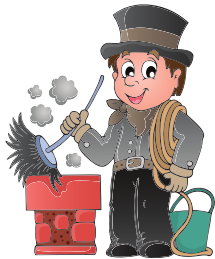
For in that glowing house, wrapped in tradition and candlelight, Christmas felt timeless—just as it always had, and just as she hoped it always would."

A Victorian Christmas Story Vocabulary



Vocabulary:

- Parlour** - old word for living room
- Gaslight** - the light from gas streetlamps
- Flicker** - light that quickly changes: bright, dark, bright, dark
- Mantle** - the shelf above the fireplace
- Stud(ded)** - decorated with many small things
- Baubles** - small round Christmas decorations
- Twinkle** - light that shines and flickers like a star
- Crisp** - stiff
- Twine** - string
- Dusk** - the time just before night when the sky is almost dark
- Crackle** - many short, sharp noises
- Wail** - a high, long cry
- Chimney sweep** - usually a child who went in a chimney to clean it
- Soot** - black dust from burning wood or coal
- Fragrant** - a sweet, pleasant smell



Justin's Christmas in Mexico City

About 25 years ago I was backpacking around the world. In December I was in Mexico and I knew I would be in Mexico City at Christmas. I told my friends and family that they could send Christmas cards to the Central Post Office, where I could pick them up. And so, on December 24th I went to the post office and found about 6 cards and two boxes waiting for me. I was very happy!

The next morning, Christmas Day, I opened the cards and boxes. My parent's had sent me some English snacks and mince pies, plus a cracker. They also sent some new socks and a travel shirt.

After I opened my presents I went to an internet cafe to send 'thank you' notes to everyone and to wish everyone a Merry Christmas. Then I went out for lunch. On most days in Mexico I had very cheap meals (about \$1) but because it was Christmas I had a nice lunch with chicken, rice, vegetables, a dessert, and a big fresh fruit juice.

Actually, most shops were shut so there wasn't much to do - I just went back to the hotel and watched Mexican TV. I went out again for a nice dinner and then sat in my room eating mince pies and reading a boring book I had got from another backpacker. I was asleep by 11pm! In fact, I finished up staying in Mexico City for almost a month because it was so difficult to travel or find hotel rooms. So I bought a dictionary and phrase book and studied Spanish every day!

Not a very exciting Christmas!

"Feliz Navidad y próspero Año Nuevo!"





The Banning of Christmas



A long time ago, in the 1600s, Christmas was very different in England. In the early 1600s many people celebrated with big parties, food, and games. But some groups, called Puritans (清教徒: プロテスタントの一つ), thought Christmas was wrong. They said it was too similar to old, non-Christian festivals.

In 1647, in England, the government banned (禁止した) Christmas. The law said no big meals, no drinking, and no singing. People had to work on Christmas Day. Soldiers (兵士) watched the streets to stop celebrations. Some people were very angry. They secretly had small parties at home.

The ban lasted 11 years. In 1660, after around 20 years without a king, King Charles II returned to power, and Christmas celebrations began again. People were happy. Christmas slowly became popular again, with decorations, food, and gifts.

Today, Christmas is a big holiday for families and children. There are lights, markets, songs, and food. But some people think it is too commercialized (商業的). Maybe, just maybe, it should be banned again, like long ago, so people can enjoy it more simply.



Christmas in the UK and the US



Christmas is one of the most widely celebrated holidays in both the United States and the United Kingdom, and the two countries share many traditions along with a few distinct differences. In both places, people decorate their homes with Christmas trees, lights, and ornaments. The tree is usually the centrepiece of the home, and festive lights appear indoors and outdoors. American houses, however, often feature more elaborate outdoor displays than those in the UK.

Gift-giving is another major similarity. Families exchange presents on Christmas Day, and children hang up stockings for Santa Claus—called Father Christmas by many in the UK—who is believed to deliver gifts on Christmas Eve. Christmas carols are also popular: in the US, singing mainly happens in schools, churches, and community events, while in the UK it is more traditional for groups to go door to door, sometimes collecting money for charity.

Despite these shared customs, the two countries have different holiday traditions as well. Christmas dinner in the UK usually includes roast turkey, potatoes, Brussels sprouts, stuffing, and gravy, with Christmas pudding and mince pies as classic desserts. In the US, meals vary more from family to family; turkey is common, but so are ham or roast beef, and popular sides include mashed potatoes, sweet potatoes, green beans, and cranberry sauce. American desserts such as pumpkin and pecan pie are more typical than the British Christmas pudding.

The UK also has Boxing Day on December 26th, a public holiday for relaxing with family or shopping the post-Christmas sales, while the day after Christmas is not a holiday in the US. Another uniquely British tradition is the Christmas cracker—a colourful tube pulled apart during Christmas dinner, containing a small gift, a paper crown, and a joke, all of which add a playful touch to the celebration.

