

Written by: Wynsor Taylor Words in bold type are defined in the Glossary on page 4

What Are Holiday Traditions?

A tradition is a pattern of ideas or actions passed down from one **generation** to the next. Many holidays have traditions. For example, carving a jack-o-lantern is a Halloween tradition. On Independence Day many towns have fireworks displays.

Holidays in December also have traditions. One Christmas tradition is to send cards to friends and



First Christmas Card

family. Playing a game with a driedel (DRAY-duhl) is a Hanukkah tradition. During Kwanzaa, people greet each other by saying "Habari Gani?" (ha-BAH-ree GAH-nee) which means "What's the news?" in **Swahili**.

Just like each holiday has its own traditions, each family has traditions. What are some of your family's holiday traditions? What are some new traditions that you could begin?



A Driedel



Celebrating Kwanzaa

Did you Know?



Kenneth Grahame (1859-1932) was born in Edinburgh, Scotland in 1859. He lived most of his life in England and worked as a banker. In his free time he wrote short stories. His two most famous stories, "The Reluctant Dragon" from the book *Dream Days* (1898) and *The Wind in the Willows* (1908), were both made into movies.

Different Traditions

Since everyone's family is different and traditions are passed down from one generation to the next, everyone's traditions are different. Because of this, people **celebrate** holidays differently. When someone does things differently than we are used to it can seem strange. Sometimes we may **assume** that people think a certain way because of their traditions.



Christmas Tree

If we are not careful, sometimes we may begin to think that just because something is different it is wrong. Have you ever heard the **idiom**, "Don't judge a book by its cover?" It means that we can't be sure what someone is like based on their outside appearance or actions. For example, the little boy in "The **Reluctant** Dragon" thinks that all dragons like to fight just because they are dragons. He finds out that things (and dragons) are not always as they seem.

Away From Home

Just like the family in the play, if someone in your family is away during the holidays, it



Military Service Members

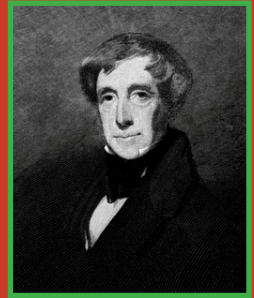
can make you miss them even more. Even though most adults have holidays off from work, there are some jobs that need people to work holidays. Police officers, firefighters, doctors, and nurses are some of the people who work on holidays. Some military service members are also away from home during the holidays. Contact local service organizations to find out how your family can start a new holiday tradition of giving back to these special members of our community.



Happy Holidays!

No matter where we live or what holidays we celebrate, we all have traditions that are special to us. Enjoy your holiday celebrations with your family!

Did you Know?



A Visit from Saint Nicholas is better known by its first line "'Twas The Night Before Christmas." Clement Clarke Moore (1779-1863) likely wrote this famous holiday poem in 1822 as a present for his children. The poem includes one of the first written descriptions of Santa Claus.

Draw a picture of your family enjoying one of your favorite holiday traditions.

Glossary

- **Assume**- to think something without proof
- **Celebrate**- take part in an event or holiday
- **Generation**- a group of people based on their age
- **Idiom**- a common saying that has a deeper meaning
- **Reluctant**- not willing
- **Swahili**- a language spoken in east Africa

Want to Learn More?

To learn more about winter holiday traditions, get your family's permission to check out these resources:

- *Horrible Harry and the Holiday* by Suzy Kline
- *Lights of Winter* by Heather Conrad
- <http://teacher.scholastic.com/activities/holidays/>