Christmas Traditions

In the UK, comic theatre productions called pantomimes take place from December to January 5th. These productions are dramatized with women and men switching roles, and based on classic fairy tale stories.

Stockings are hung on the chimney mantel in both the UK and the USA, where children believe they receive gifts from Santa on Christmas Eve. The stockings are usually identified with the name of who they belong to. Many times some food is left out for Santa when the children go to sleep.

In the streets and cities lights are put up, as they are at people's homes. Many different events mark the lighting up of the Christmas decorations. In New York there is always the famous lighting up of the tree at Rockefeller Center.

The religious celebration of Christmas it is at midnight on December 24th. In the USA, the service is called "Midnight mass", in the UK it is called "Watch night service" and many children are baptized at this mass.

Christmas carols are sung at services in schools and churches. Some people go around houses in the neighbourhood "caroling" and receiving donations which are then given to charity.

Christmas cards are widely used. Even with the new technologies, people still exchange cards with family and friends.

In the UK, every year the Queen makes a speech on Christmas day at 3 p.m. Some years ago, this speech was broadcast live on radio and television, but nowadays it is recorded previously.

The 26th of December is a holiday in the UK and other Commonwealth countries – it's Boxing Day. On this day gifts are distributed to people who are less fortunate.

In the USA, candy canes are used to decorate Christmas trees. Traditionally these were red and white and with menthol flavour, but now they are in different colours and flavours.

New Year is also celebrated around the world with street parties and countdowns. In Scotland this festivity is called Hogmanay and the 2nd of January is also a holiday. The traditional pipers play the bagpipes, especially the theme of *Auld Lang Syne*.