

THE MONTHLY TRAILER



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Cultural Winter Festivals : A Journey Around the World

Elif Naz Nurtin

Winter, a season of snowflakes and fireplaces, is also a time for some of the most popular and exciting celebrations around the world. Each festival adds its unique flavor to this cold season, from the colorful lights of Christmas to the bright lamps of Diwali. Let's explore how different cultures celebrate the winter with their traditions.

Christmas: A Time for Joy and Giving



Christmas, celebrated by Christians on December 25th, is a festival of joy, remembering the birth of Jesus Christ. Streets are adorned with festive lights, homes are decorated with Christmas trees, and carols fill the air. A special figure in this celebration is Santa Claus, who brings gifts to children. Families gather to share a meal, usually serving roast turkey, and exchange presents, symbolizing love and togetherness.

Fun Fact: Did you know that in Iceland, there's a tradition of giving books on Christmas Eve and spending the night reading?

Hanukkah: The Festival of Lights



Hanukkah, a Jewish festival, is celebrated for eight nights and days, starting on the 25th of Kislev according to the Hebrew calendar. It commemorates the rededication of the Second Temple in Jerusalem. The main ritual is the lighting of the menorah, an eight-branched candelabrum, with an additional helper candle. Each night, one candle is lit, until all are ablaze. Traditional foods like latkes (potato pancakes) and sufganiyot (jelly-filled donuts) are relished, often fried in oil, symbolizing the oil miracle of Hanukkah.

Fun Fact: A popular game played during Hanukkah is dreidel, a four-sided spinning top, with each side marked with a Hebrew letter.

Chinese New Year: Welcoming Prosperity and Good Fortune



Chinese New Year, also known as the Spring Festival, is a lunar new year celebration that marks the beginning of a new year on the traditional Chinese calendar. Streets are decorated with red lanterns, families get together for a reunion dinner, enjoy dishes like dumplings and fish that symbolize wealth and abundance. The festival ends with the Lantern Festival, where people walk with lanterns and solve riddles on them.

Fun Fact: Each Chinese New Year is associated with one of the 12 animals in the Chinese zodiac.

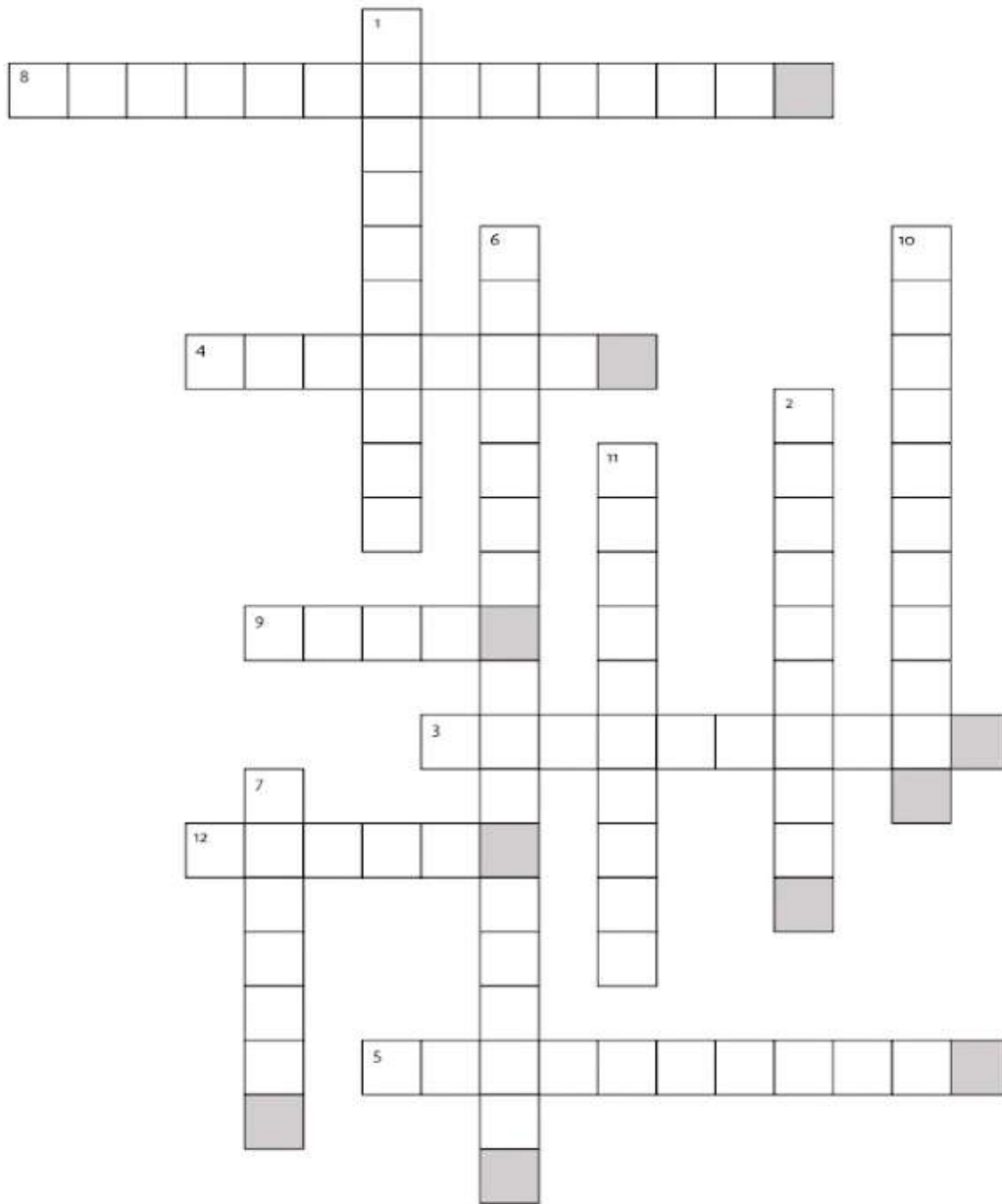
Diwali: The Triumph of Light Over Darkness



Diwali, or Deepavali, is a major Hindu festival known as the Festival of Lights. Celebrated over five days, it symbolizes the victory of light over darkness, good over evil. Homes and streets are enlightened with diyas (oil lamps) and colorful rangolis (floor art). Fireworks light up the night sky. People exchange gifts and sweets, and special prayers, or pujas, are offered to Lakshmi, the goddess of wealth and prosperity.

Fun Fact: Diwali is not only celebrated by Hindus but also by Jains, Sikhs, and some Buddhists, each with their unique customs and stories.

As we explore these festivals, it's evident that winter, often seen as a dark and cold season, is transformed into a period of warmth, light, and collective celebration. Each festival, with its distinct customs, foods, and symbols, enhances our understanding of cultural diversity and unity.



Across

- 3. CELEBRATION WITH EVENTS.
- 4. HINDU FESTIVAL OF LIGHTS.
- 5. CHRISTIAN CELEBRATION OF JESUS' BIRTH.
- 8. BEING CLOSE WITH OTHERS.
- 9. GREAT HAPPINESS.
- 12. SOMETHING GIVEN WILLINGLY.

Down

- 1. MARK AN OCCASION WITH JOY.
- 2. JEWISH FESTIVAL OF LIGHTS.
- 6. LUNAR NEW YEAR IN CHINA.
- 7. RELATING TO HINDUISM
- 10. RELATING TO CHRISTIANITY.
- 11. PASSED-DOWN CUSTOM OR BELIEF.

ORIGINS OF CHRISTMAS SYMBOLS Duru Berna Bilgin 10-C

Santa Claus

According to Christian traditions, Santa Claus is a legendary figure known as a symbol of kindness and generosity. His character is actually inspired by the life of Nicholas (St. Nicholas). Saint Nicholas was a man who lived in the 4th century, served as a bishop in the city of Myra in Ancient Greece, within the borders of today's Turkey, and helped the poor. The modern depiction of Santa Claus is generally as a cute character dressed in all red, with a white beard, who distributes gifts to children on Christmas night.

Christmas Tree

Although pine trees in forests that remain green even during winter are a symbol of hope and continuation of life, 16th century Germany probably gave publicity to the light-covered Christmas tree we are familiar with today. As the story goes, Martin Luther took a walk in the forest one night and was struck by the beauty of the stars filtering through the evergreen trees. He cut one up, brought it home, and decorated it with candles to recreate the scene for his family. The idea spread and now Christmas would feel incomplete without a Christmas tree.

Christmas Socks

People have been hanging up stockings on chimneys since at least the 1800s, and no one knows for sure how it started. According to the most popular tale, there was an old man who was worried about the future of his three daughters because he did not have enough money to give them a decent wedding dowry. Apparently St. Nicholas had heard of their plight and wanted to help, but he knew the man would not accept charity. Instead he slid it down their chimneys and left gold in the girls' stockings, which were hung by the fireplace to dry.

Poinsettia

You might think that the only reason we associate the Poinsettia (poinsettia) flower with Christmas is because of its bright red colour in contrast with its green leaves, but it actually has its roots in Mexican folklore. According to the story, two children named Maria and Pablo wanted to bring gifts to their town's Nativity scene, but they had no money. So they collected beautiful leaves on their way there. The townspeople mocked them for their offer, but as Maria and Pablo placed their gifts around the manger, star-shaped flowers magically bloomed.



Candy Cane

Allegedly, candy canes first came into existence with the purpose of quieting kids down, so if you're still using them for that reason, you have the past on your side. In 1670, a choirmaster at Cologne Cathedral could not stop the members of the choir from talking during a rehearsal of an upcoming live Nativity Scene presentation, so he wanted to hand out mint sticks (a popular treat at the time) to keep them busy. He asked a local candy store to bend them into the shape of a shepherd's hook to remind the children that Jesus was the "good shepherd" who kept his flock safe. Curve-shaped candies spread throughout Europe and are still consumed widely today.

Bells

Cymbals have been known as an instrument used in celebrations since ancient times. It also represents enthusiasm and joy during Christmas. On Christmas day, bells are rung to announce the arrival of the season and the birth of Jesus. The origins of bell ringing can be traced all the way back to pagan winter celebrations used to ward off evil spirits.

Holly

The thorny plant, with its thorny leaves and red fruits, reminds Christians of the crown of thorns that Jesus wore when he was crucified and the blood he shed on this occasion. This may seem like a grim reminder during a happy celebration, but the symbol has endured throughout the years. In fact, in some Scandinavian languages the word sacred is translated as "Jesus thorn".

Wreaths

In Northern Europe, pagans believed that the sun was a wheel moving away from the Earth in winter, and they decorated their homes with wheels adorned with greenery and lights to guide the sun back to them on the winter solstice. Wreaths took on new symbolism as they began to convert to Christianity. The ever-green trees and the uninterrupted circle reminded them of God's eternal love and the salvation Jesus brought to the world.

Gingerbread Man

Gingerbread was brought to Europe by an Armenian monk in 992. Throughout the 17th century, gingerbread was used in religious ceremonies. In the late 17th century, gingerbread started being associated with Christmas. Russian bakers often baked male and female gingerbread cookies as dummies of the people attending parties.

The Color Red

The color red is used during Christmas to represent the blood of Jesus when he died on the cross. This is also reflected in the color of sacred fruits, which had pagan symbolisms during winter solstice celebrations in ancient Rome.

The Color Green

The color green represents eternal light and life. Romans decorated their houses with evergreen branches on New Year's Eve, and in winter the tree symbolized life. There is also a legend that says that when Jesus was born in the middle of winter, all the trees in the world shook off the snow and revealed new green shoots.

Mistletoe

It seems that the mistletoe found meaning in Celtic Shamanism long before it was mentioned as a Christmas decoration or as a plant under which people who found themselves were expected to kiss. These shamans, who lived centuries before Christ and Christmas celebrations, saw the mistletoe as "a plant that fell from the heavens beyond and managed to grow on Earth." For this reason, they believed that the mistletoe was a bridge between the Earth and Heaven. "Kissing under the mistletoe" or decorating living spaces with mistletoe is a behavior that comes from these shamanic traditions and highlights concepts such as "glorifying heaven" and "interconnectedness"

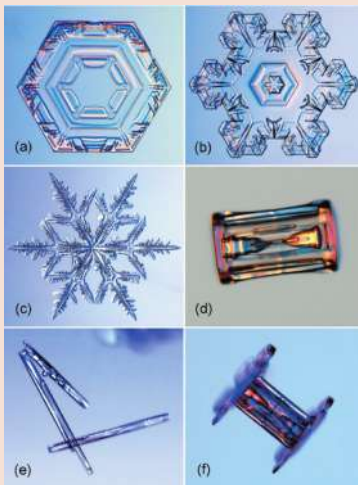
THE MAGNIFICENCE OF THE SNOWFLAKES Duru Işık 11-A

Every single creature in this world exists with its own distinctive beauty. They all take shape while coming into being and maintain their unique essence throughout the cycle of existence, whether they are born from the creativity of humankind or grow out of the endless springs of nature. While the frosty veil of winter covers the sky, let's analyze this occurrence by observing the scientific and philosophical parts through the snowflakes, which are substantially fragile yet conspicuous master-



pieces.

By changing states for adaptation purposes, water becomes a good example of matters changing their distinctive features depending on where or what conditions they are in. This occurrence is the foundation of the unique formation of snowflakes. The process begins in the clouds at a temperature below freezing. The molecules approach each other, as the matter ordinarily does in nature; thus, the ice crystals make a fusion. According to the phase diagram, the shape of the snowflake is one of the many possibilities of other shapes of ice crystals such as solid prisms, hollow columns, and needle-shaped ones. So, all of these shapes are different ways of reacting against the variability of temperature and pressure.



If we go deeper into this emergence, we come across the molecular part of it. Due to the structure with two hydrogens and one oxygen, the water molecules align to make hexagonal configurations. This combination, which we can consider as a typical orientation of these molecules, allows the ice crystals to have a hexagonal and symmetrical shape. And finally, the snowflakes get their near-perfect and aesthetic shapes. Moreover, while most of the snowflakes that we roughly see in general tend to have branches in multiples of six, some of the intriguing exceptions mentioned before may have irregular structures under extreme pressure and temperature conditions.

As we dive deeper, we bear witness to the beauty of every single detail. The winter season is a time when these details are most clearly to be seen. Our universe resembles a giant net made of endless and finely crafted details. The subtle patterns of the great universe give us their secrets when we know how to look at them. Water, a perfect example of these patterns, branches out in various miracles and gives us many hints about how the matter works and flows, as it never disappears but always shapeshifts. From ancient myths to contemporary reflections, from Thales to modern philosophers, the water cycle remains special with its adaptation ability. With their symmetrical and harmonious structure, the snowflakes are a fascinating part of this flow; we can see it through science. As they crystallize, we realize all these things once more and get amazed.

FEAR

ELİF KÜLAH 10-B

Fear is a universal emotion. It is a negative and debilitating feeling that one or many misfortunes may occur in the present and/or in the future. If there is a perceived threat, our body reacts in two ways, biochemical and emotional.

The amygdala is the brain's emotional alarm system that helps us feel fear. When we are afraid; our blood pressure increases and our pupils dilate, our face freezes, our mouth goes dry, and all our bodily fluids turn into sweat. Symptoms such as facial flushing, itching and burning sensation on the face, cold sweats, shortness of breath, tremors, blurred vision, dry mouth, fainting, nausea, difficulty swallowing, and loss of consciousness occur. When we are afraid, our eyes open wider. When we examine it from an evolutionary perspective, humans, just like other animals, need to be afraid throughout their lives. This way, we are able to fight against danger in the best way possible.

Psychological horror is a subgroup of horror and psychological fiction that relies on mental, emotional, and psychological states to frighten or disturb readers, viewers, or players. Did you know that there are 6,456 types of unfounded fears in the world that turn the lives of millions of people into nightmares? In addition to fear being a psychological mechanism that comes into play in threatening situations, people also consciously seek fear. Horror stories that used to spread by word of mouth in the past have now begun to be replaced by movies, video games and books. It is nothing new for humans to consciously seek out the experience of fear. The history of horror cinema dates back almost a century. Another reason why people turn to scenes containing fear and violence is the civilization we live in. The fact that the process of civilization offers us a life that is monotonous, routine, and devoid of excitement triggers our search for adrenaline.

Horror films are more attractive to people who are scared of their content. It is stated that these physiological and emotional arousals caused by horror movies allow people to express their emotions freely and thus provide a feeling of relaxation. When the threat is eliminated in the story, a transition from negative emotions to positive ones occurs. Thus, what scares us also comforts us. This leads us to believe that, despite the anxiety and dread, watching a horror movie is an emotionally safe and satisfying experience.

WEIRD AND TERRIFYING FACTS ABOUT YOUR FAVORITE HORROR MOVIES

“HERE’S JOHNNY!”



What does it take to drive someone crazy? Isn't being alone with someone's own troubled mind in a spooky place enough to drive him crazy? The Shining, with both its movie and book, looks at the process of going crazy from a very creative perspective. The movie is about a family who goes to a secluded hotel in the winter to take care of its maintenance. Jack, the father of the family, slowly begins to lose his sanity. Jack Nicholson embraced this role very well. In fact, his rolemate Shelly Duvall stated that after a while, she started to be really afraid of him on the set. In the scene where Jack tried to break the door with his axe, he said, "Here's Johnny!". This line was completely improvised. This scene was repeated 127 times and entered the Guinness World Records book.

DO YOU LIKE SCARY MOVIES?

Scream is an American slasher* series consisting of six films. Scream is about the killer known as Ghostface, who calls his victims on the phone and asks them about horror movies in the fictional location of Woodsboro, California. The chilling fact about this movie is that it was inspired by a real serial killer. Yes, you read it right! Serial killer Danny Rolling murdered college students in Gainesville, Florida for 3 days. He murdered eight people, including five college students. The university then canceled classes for a week. Students brought baseball bats with them wherever they went, and no one went out alone day or night. Rolling was caught and confessed to being the Gainesville killer. Prosecutors found enough evidence to convict him, and he was subsequently executed in Florida on October 25, 2006. Similar to the killers in Scream, Rolling apparently had a fondness for horror movies, and apparently there was no reason for his crimes.



IN SPACE, NO ONE CAN HEAR YOU SCREAM



H.R. Giger, who was responsible for the designs of the creatures in Alien, placed a real human skull on the terrifying creature's head! When they asked him where he found a real skull, Giger closed the subject by saying "Don't ask me where I got it."

SEVEN DAYS

There is an urban legend about a videotape that killed its viewers seven days after they watched it. Reporter Rachel Keller discovers this when her niece becomes one of four teenage victims, and she enters a race against time to uncover the mystery behind the girl in the video before she and her son die. Time is up. In order to give the viewer an unsettling feeling from the movie, cinematographer Bojan Bazelli used very deliberate lighting to remove shadows under the actors and have them look like they're "floating in space.". The green lighting and rain in the movie make the atmosphere of the movie more spooky. It's a really scary movie. In fact, Daveigh Chase, who plays Samara, revealed that when she watched The Ring in cinema, she had to close her eyes because she was afraid of herself. Some people she met after the movie came out were also afraid of her. Poor girl.



*A **slasher** film is a subgenre of horror films involving a killer stalking and murdering a group of people, usually by use of bladed or sharp tools such as knives, chainsaws, scalpels, etc.

How the story of Santa Claus began its journey

Doğa Özmen 10-C

The birthday of Jesus, celebrated on Christmas, has great meaning for Christians. This holiday, which is celebrated every year, began to separate from the religious motifs that spread around the world after the 20th century. For this reason, many people celebrated this holiday by associating it with giving gifts. And of course, our leading role in this process is: SANTA CLAUS. Father January, Father Christmas, Christkindl, Father Christmas... Whatever you want to call him, Santa Claus and his origins always arouse controversy. So, if you have ever grown curious about the origins of Santa, this article is for you.

Actually, it all started with a Scandinavian legend. In this legend there was a man called Odin. He was a person wandering through the snow on a sledge pulled by animals.

As the time went by, in 1821, a poem with eight colored engraved illustrations was published in New York by William B. Gilley as a small paperback book titled "The Children's Friend: A New-Year's Present to the Little Ones from Five to Twelve". That poem helped a lot with the development of our beloved figure; Santa Claus.

Here's the poem:

Old Santeclaus with much delight
His reindeer drives this frosty night,
O'r chimney tops, and tracts of snow,
To bring his yearly gifts to you.

The steady friend of virtuous youth,
The friend of duty, and of truth,
Each Christmas eve he joys to come
Where peace and love have made their home.

Through many houses he has been,
And various beds and stockings seen;
Some, white as snow, and neatly mended,
Others, that seemed for pigs intended.

To some I gave a pretty doll,
To some a peg-top, or a ball;
No crackers, cannons, squibs, or rockets,
To blow their eyes up, or their pockets.

Where e're I found good girls or boys,
That hated quarrels, strife and noise,
I left an apple, or a tart,
Or wooden gun, or painted cart;

No drums to stun their Mother's ear,
Nor swords to make their sisters fear;
But pretty books to store their mind
With knowledge of each various kind.

But where I found the children naughty,
In manners crude, in temper haughty,
Thankless to parents, liars, swearers,
Boxers, or cheats, or base tale-bearers,

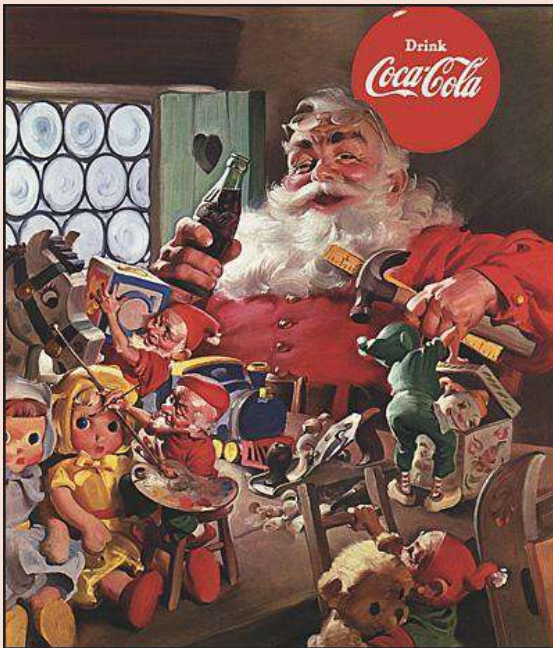
I left a long, black, birchen rod,
Such as the dread command of god
Directs a Parent's hand to use



. Now that Santa has entered our daily lives, this time Thomas Nast, the father of the American cartoon, makes a modern interpretation of Santa Claus inspired by St. Nicholas; he draws a cute old man with a white beard.

This picture was later published on the cover of Harper's Weekly magazine dated January 3, 1863.

The person who colored Nast's black and white Santa Claus figure was Swedish graphic designer Haddon Sundblom, who designed advertisements for Coca Cola in 1924.



Like that our lovely mister Santa was finally created. In 1939, 2.4 million copies of a brochure featuring our "Pere Noel" in the lines of another advertiser, Denver Gillen, were printed and distributed in America.

So tell me, what is your wish for the new year from Santa Claus?

The Snowman Tradition: A Historical Overview

Selen İnal 10-A

The tradition of making snowmen dates back centuries, with its origins rooted in different cultures and time periods. From ancient times to modern-day, the act of sculpting snow into a figure has captured the collective imagination and become an integral part of winter celebrations around the world. In exploring the history of the snowman tradition, it becomes apparent that various factors have influenced its development and evolution over time.

One of the earliest documented instances of snowman-making can be traced back to the Middle Ages in Europe, especially in Sweden, Norway and Finland. During this period, snow was seen as a symbol of purity and was often used to create decorative sculptures during the winter festivals. The concept of a snowman as we know it today began to take shape during Victorian England in the 19th century – in fact, the first photo of a snowman was taken by Mary Dillwyn in 1853. This is when the idea of using different materials, such as coal or buttons for eyes and a carrot for its nose, became popular. We can say that these creative additions gave the snowman “life”, giving it a more human-like appearance. Furthermore, as the Victorian era saw a rise in the popularity of Christmas traditions, the snowman became an iconic representation of winter festivities. The snowman tradition continued to evolve and spread, becoming a beloved symbol of the winter season worldwide. Its roots in Victorian England intertwined with the emergence of modern Christmas festivities that symbolize family, gift and card exchange, shopping, and Santa Claus. The Christmas tree, which was originally a German tradition, also became an integral part of the evolving winter celebrations during this time.

Moreover, the snowman tradition represented more than just a winter sculpture; it became a reflection of the social ties and integrative function of Christmas traditions. Its existence embodied the essence of the season, connecting people through the joy of creating and appreciating this iconic winter figure. In the broader context of Christmas, the snowman tradition became an inseparable part of the complex and myth-laden origins of modern-day celebrations. As the snowman tradition has continued to be an enduring festive icon, it has also been a subject of various studies. Some researchers have emphasized the significance of the snowman in reinforcing social ties during Christmas celebrations, while others have explored the magic and wonder associated with its creation. So, it may be said that the snowman tradition started as a basic decoration in ancient times and evolved into being one of the most important and beloved symbols of Christmas and winter time in general.

HOW TO MAKE THE BEST PLAYLIST EVER

Tan Gözalıcı 11-A

There are two ways you could go with creating a playlist, one, it could be an ensemble of songs that don't go together at all, it could be a mix of everything of your liking and the other way is that you'll choose a title, a theme, or a genre the playlist should be based on. A title could be a loved one's name, a cool-sounding word, a theme could be a feeling, a period, an event, and a genre could be any genre of music you'll decide.

The first way of making a playlist doesn't need much explanation, it's just a union of songs you want to put into a playlist and that aren't entitled to have anything in common. The other way around is what we can call the art of the playlist, its creation requires a deep dive into songs, a selection of songs that are harmonic together and it requires finesse. Talking by experience, the progress is very fun, and the results are very satisfying. Listening to all the songs all at once after finishing a playlist is really comforting. If you want your playlist to be immaculate, combine all of the things that a playlist could capture, a genre and a theme and a title you like, at the same time. If you can, consider yourself a pro.

1- A TITLE

Starting off with a playlist based on a title, the vibe that the title has should be your starting point. I'd like to exemplify by stating a playlist I created based on its title's vibe, "highs & lows". The title idea sounded nice to me and the songs I was listening to at the moment, on repeat, felt like a match to the title, it was a case of having highs and lows very frequently one after another that what had to be done was to pick songs to balance out the uneven sentiments I felt. Chill and slow soft rock songs and R&B songs were what resonated with me in that period of time and it genuinely, without a doubt, helped me stabilize my feelings. Maybe that's why I listened to music for 150 thousand minutes last year... Moving on!

2- A THEME

A theme can help you curate songs that will go with specific conditions. My friends and I make playlists for parties, for getting ready before anything, for car rides, for sleeping, for memorizing setlists of artists before their concerts, for sad evenings, for relationships and more.

Another example I could give off of myself is a study session playlist I made last year, like most of us I yearn to listen to music whilst studying because it calms my mind, so to this playlist I added melodic but soft songs, songs with less words in them and the songs that made me relax. Add 'SWEET / I THOUGHT YOU WANTED TO DANCE' by Tyler, The Creator to yours, trust me on this.

3- A GENRE

Next up, playlists that only include songs of one genre only is the second easiest type of playlist to make after mixed playlists, because you already have an idea of what to search for, if you aim to make a rap playlist, to make a rock playlist, a pop playlist, whatever genre it is, you already know which artist to go to, which discographies to search and to screen. You already have an idea as to where the playlist is going and whose songs are essential.

What I'm trying to say is that, if you don't know how to start making a playlist, just be sure to trust your instincts because every playlist you create goes somewhere and it belongs somewhere in your musical library. However, if you know how to make a playlist but want to make one as close to perfection as it could be, you can read this all again to guide you through your playlist-making journey. Even with that intention don't ever feel like you have to restrict yourself to only adding songs under specific categories. You're free! A playlist is yours and yours only. I dare you, the reader, to create a playlist after reading this and to find me on Spotify...

LET'S CELEBRATE

Bennu Turan

A large majority of the countries around the world use the same calendar, with the exception of a few countries like China, Saudi Arabia, etc., and celebrate the new year on the same day. Christmas is always celebrated in Christian countries but the non-Christian ones can be grouped in two categories: the ones that do not and the ones that do celebrate. However, the way Christmas is celebrated varies depending on their beliefs. How these countries approach the holiday season mostly depends on which category they find themselves in. Here are few examples:

- Germany:

Christmas is celebrated with a lot of enthusiasm, and they are famous for their cozy and warm Christmas markets where people sell mulled wine, sweet treats, street food and many hand-crafted gifts. With the activities like ice skating or concerts, the decorations and all those stands, the spirits are often high and it is always fun to spend that part of the year in Germany. Advent calendars that are increasingly becoming popular around the world are a really important tradition in Germany. Unlike Christmas, the new year is not the main winter holiday in Germany. Still, there are parties and huge firework displays at midnight in every German town symbolizing the beginning of the new year. A tradition that Germans have for the new year's eve is melting lead and dumping it into cold water. The shape of the lead predicts the kind of year you are likely to have.

- Mexico:

Mexico has a distinct Christmas tradition. It is celebrated from December 12th to January 6th, starting with "Posadas" which lasts nine days and represents Mary and Joseph's search for shelter. Christmas trees aren't really a tradition there, but they use pinatas and "nacimientos" (nativity scenes) as decorations that are usually life-sized clay statues of Mary, Joseph, Jesus, the Shepherds and Three Kings, that are often accompanied by the figures of various people. There in Mexico, too, the new year is celebrated with fireworks at midnight but there is a Mexican tradition that has become popular recently. Mexicans believe eating twelve grapes under the table at the stroke of midnight will bring them good luck and happiness throughout the following year. Some even say that each grape represents one month of the year and your wish for that month.

- Japan:

Unlike the other two examples, Japan is not a country that is predominantly Christian. Only one percent of the population identifies as Christian. As a result, Christmas is not a national holiday, but it is often celebrated with decorations and festive lights. Even if it isn't a family-oriented holiday and gifts aren't exchanged, people go out to romantic dinners with their partners or to parties with their friends to celebrate. A fun fact is, the 24th of December is considered the most romantic day of the year in Japan. It is celebrated like Valentine's day because the holiday is associated with romance. In Japan, the new year, known as "Oshogatsu" is a very family-oriented holiday with multiple unique traditions. Japanese start the year with lots of food and they believe in starting the new year with a clean slate, which happens with a big cleaning of the house. Envelopes with money inside are given to children on the new year's eve, this tradition is called "Otoshidama." Another gift tradition is "Fukubukuro" where people buy surprise gift bags without knowing what's inside. On January first, everyone visits the temple /shrine with their families in order to pay their respects and also to wish for a happy and healthy year.

These are only a few examples from around the globe. As these three countries show, in Christian countries Christmas is celebrated with family, exchanging gifts and sharing meals, but the new year is a night to spend having fun with friends and loved ones. On the other hand, in non-Christian countries, the new year is often celebrated with family, while Christmas is treated as a novelty. In countries where there are no Christmas celebrations at all, like Turkey for example, the new year celebrations usually reflect a mixture of the two holidays.

Love Letter to Winter

Ezgi Ece Biçer .

My Dearest Winter,

As the days grow shorter and the air turns crisp, my heart can't help but long for the enchanting embrace that only you bring. It's been too long since we last shared those quiet moments together, surrounded by the serene beauty that only you can paint across the world. Oh, how I yearn for the return of your icy touch and the magic that dances in the snowflakes.

The memories of our past encounters are etched in my mind like delicate frost patterns on a windowpane. I recall the way your breath hung in the air, creating a hushed symphony of stillness that resonated with the quiet depths of my soul. Your presence, Winter, is a poetic masterpiece that transforms the world into a tranquil wonderland.

I eagerly anticipate the soft crunch of snow beneath my boots, a sound that echoes the serenity that envelops us when you're nearby. The world, adorned in a blanket of white, becomes a canvas for our shared adventures – snowball fights, the building of snowmen, and the joyous laughter that accompanies every frosty escapade.

Your crystal-clear nights, adorned with a blanket of stars, are the perfect backdrop for whispered secrets and stolen kisses. The warmth of our breath creating delicate clouds in the frigid air, a testament to the passion that ignites when we are together.

As the world eagerly awaits your return, I find myself counting the days until I can once again be wrapped in the serenity of your chilly embrace. Until then, I'll hold onto the memories of our winter love affair and dream of the moments when you and I can create new ones beneath the soft glow of snowflakes.

With anticipation and love,

Ezgi

EXCEPTIONAL STYLE OF WINTER

Havin Akdeve 11-A

Winter, with its chilly embrace and frosty landscapes, orchestrates a unique symphony in the world of fashion. As the temperature drops and nature adorns itself in a pristine white, the effects of winter on fashion are not merely functional but transformative, shaping a distinctive aesthetic that blends warmth, style, and adaptability.

Firstly, winter heralds the reign of layering, a fundamental principle that transcends mere practicality to become an art form. The need for insulation against the biting cold prompts individuals to craft ensembles comprising sweaters, jackets, scarves, and coats. This layering not only shields against the elements but adds depth and complexity to outfits, allowing fashion enthusiasts to showcase their creativity in assembling a harmonious ensemble of textures and colors.

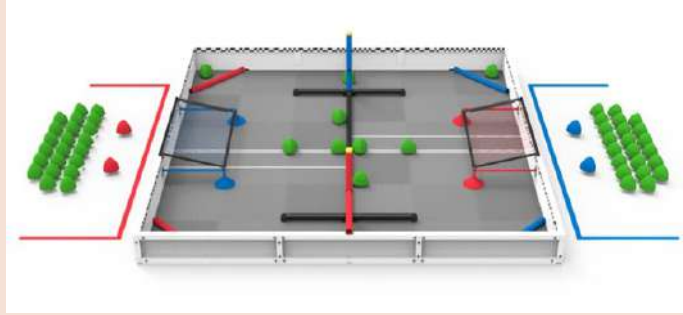
The fabrics of winter fashion become protagonists in this seasonal narrative. Wool, cashmere, and fleece step into the limelight, providing not just insulation but a tactile experience that defines winter style. The tactile pleasure of donning these heavy materials not only offers comfort but also contributes to the overall luxurious feel of winter wardrobes.

Outerwear emerges as a central character in the winter fashion tale. Coats, parkas, and jackets become more than mere necessities; they become statements of style. From classic silhouettes to contemporary designs, winter outerwear not only shields against the cold but also serves as a canvas for expressing individual tastes. The right coat can transform a mundane winter day into a fashion showcase, proving that functionality and style can seamlessly coexist.

In conclusion, the effects of winter on fashion extend beyond the pragmatic need for warmth. Also it is a great occasion to choose your style.

VEX ROBOTICS

Işık Yavuz



VEX Robotics is a robotics education program designed to encourage young people in STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) fields, to develop their creativity and increase their engineering skills. VEX Robotics competitions allow students to design and build customizable robots that can perform specific tasks. Competitions are usually centered around a specific game or task and include a series of constraints and challenges for students to accomplish that task most effectively. Every year, VEX Robotics organizes competitions worldwide based on a different game or task.

There are sixty (60) Triballs on a VRC Over Under Field. There are two netted Goals on opposite sides of the field. A Barrier divides the field into a Red Offensive Zone and a Blue Offensive Zone. Each Triball scored in a Goal is worth five (5) points, and each Triball ball entering an Offensive Zone is worth two (2) points. The VRC Lower Upper Field also contains two sets of Alliance-specific pipes on either side of the Barrier. These are called Elevation Sticks and are used to Elevate Robots at the end of the Match. At the end of the Match, each Robot's height above the ground is measured to determine its Height Tier.

We started working on the Vex competition weeks or even months in advance. Our school, 3390 Anatolian Eaglebots, decided to create one more team. Last year 33900A was formed. This year, 33900B, consisting of middle school students, joined our family. The tournament was filled with expected joy and thrill and sometimes stress as everyone awaited the results of the matches. Both teams reached the semifinals. We didn't make it to the final match. It was a great experience for us. We finished the tournament in third place. Team 3390A received the Design Award. This is an award given to the engineering notebook that was successful in the tournament 33900B team received the Built Award. Both teams competed very well



We say that we participated in this competition as two teams, but we also have a sister team. The 8862 Serçe Robotics team was established in Ankara in 2022 under the leadership of Team 3390. Although Serçe Robotics was established as an FRC team, they started to participate in VEX robotics competitions. An important feature of Serçe is that they are the first team in the world consisting of students with cerebral palsy. Serçe received the create award.

Celestial Symphony: The Science Behind the Northern Lights' Enchanting Dance

Zeynep Yanar 11-A

Nature has always been a source of wonder and amazement, offering breathtaking spectacles that capture the imagination. One of such awe-inspiring phenomena is the Northern Lights, also known as the Aurora Borealis. This celestial symphony is a mesmerizing dance of lights that occurs in the polar regions, creating a visual masterpiece in the night sky.



The name "aurora borealis" was coined by Galileo Galilei in 1619, but people have been fascinated by the northern lights for a very long time before that. A cave painting in France from 30,000 years ago is probably the oldest record of them. Different cultures, like the Inuit and Vikings, made stories about the lights, thinking they were spirits playing or reflections of warrior maidens' armor. In the 1900s, scientists like Kristian Birkeland started explaining the phenomenon.

Here's how it works: The Northern Lights are a result of the interaction between charged particles from the sun and the Earth's magnetic field. These charged particles, mostly electrons and protons, are carried by the solar wind towards the Earth. When these particles collide with the gas molecules in the Earth's atmosphere, such as nitrogen and oxygen, they emit light. The colors produced during this process depend on the type of gas and the altitude of the collision. The lights can be really bright and happen more often when the sun is very active, like in 2014.

This intricate dance of lights primarily unfolds around the North Pole, gracing countries such as Norway, Sweden, and Canada with its celestial allure. The most common colors associated with the Northern Lights are green, purple, pink, and blue, painting the night sky with an ethereal glow. The varying colors are a result of the different gasses present in the atmosphere, each emitting light at distinct wavelengths. The green lights, for instance, are often produced by oxygen molecules at lower altitudes, while the higher-altitude collisions with nitrogen may yield purples and pinks.

This cosmic ballet is not only a scientific wonder but also a captivating element in various cultural mythologies. In Inuit and Norse mythology, the Northern Lights are often seen as a dance of the gods or a conversation among spirits. These cultural interpretations add a layer of mystery and enchantment to an already mesmerizing natural occurrence.



Observing the Northern Lights is a memorable experience that leaves a lasting impression. As the lights gracefully dance across the sky, spectators find themselves entranced by the beauty of nature. The harmonious blend of colors and patterns creates a soothing and almost hypnotic atmosphere, allowing its observers to connect with the magic of the universe.

For those fortunate enough to witness this enchanting display, the Northern Lights offer not only a visual feast but also a moment of reflection. The dance of lights serves as a reminder of the immense power and beauty that nature holds.

Blending emotions and Christmas Eve

Duru Erciyas

Every event, every change, every person that comes and goes throughout our life, in short, everything leaves an impact on people. Seasons also affect people's emotions and thoughts. Winter is a very special one.

Some people love winter very much. Because winter has its own aura and vibe. Everywhere you look is covered in white, people adorn their boring houses with lights and decorations. They decorate Christmas trees in their homes with their families and sing Christmas songs. Since children believe that Santa Claus will visit to give them their gifts, they make a list of what they want from him and put milk and cookies near the Christmas tree for him. These traditions are very important and fun for children and people who still have a childish spirit within them. It brings out the inner child in people and awakens purer and more beautiful emotions in them. For those who find life ordinary, Christmas is the most fun and special time.

Some people find this ordinary. They say they do it every year anyway and it doesn't matter. They argue that Christmas Day is no different from other days. As people grow older, they generally start to think this way because the child inside them has died, whereas when they were little, they used to look forward to Christmas Eve with excitement.

To summarize, I think life is very ordinary and such special days make life more fun, also life is really short and we should enjoy every moment, so we shall never lose the child within us.