

Name _____

SCHOLASTIC



A Victorian Christmas

Carolling

The Victorians loved singing Christmas carols. Many well-known carols (such as 'Away in a Manger' and 'O Come All Ye Faithful') were written during this era. Families sang carols around the piano on Christmas day. Carollers also travelled from house to house singing.

Christmas trees

In the 1840s, Queen Victoria's husband, Prince Albert, decorated the first English Christmas tree at Windsor Castle. Soon all the wealthy families were erecting fir trees in their homes. Victorian Christmas trees were adorned with paper and glass ornaments, fruits, nuts, sweets, gingerbread and even burning candles!

Decorations

The Victorians used evergreen plants to decorate their homes. One popular ornament was the Kissing Bough. It consisted of a wire hoop on which was entwined ivy, holly, apples, pears and ribbons. It also contained a sprig of mistletoe. According to tradition, anyone caught standing beneath the mistletoe had to provide a kiss.

Christmas cards

Christmas cards were invented by a Victorian printer, Henry Cole. The Victorians liked to send and receive special 'trick' cards, which included pop-up sections or hidden parts. They were kept and displayed in scrapbooks.

Crackers

Crackers were invented by a baker and sweet-maker named Tom Smith in the late 1840s. The sweets inside the wrapping were later replaced with toys, games, fancy dress hats and other novelties. The Victorians loved the fact that they opened with a bang.

Entertainment

After a lunch of roast beef or goose, Christmas pudding and mince pies, wealthy Victorians would gather in the parlour (living room). Here they would sing carols around the piano, recite poems, play musical instruments and perform pantomimes for the rest of the family. Parlour games, such as Blind man's bluff and Charades were popular, and both adults and children joined in the fun. In the evening, families would gather around the fire to read ghost stories to each other.

Toys and gifts

Victorian children hung out their stockings on Christmas Eve in the hope that they would be full of presents the next morning. Handmade gifts (often sewn or knitted) were popular, and included pin cushions, bookmarks, scarves and blankets. Wealthier children received toys such as rocking horses, dollhouses, marbles, hoops, ice skates, wooden blocks, model trains and tin wind-up toys. Poorer children often discovered fruit, nuts or clothes in their stockings.

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