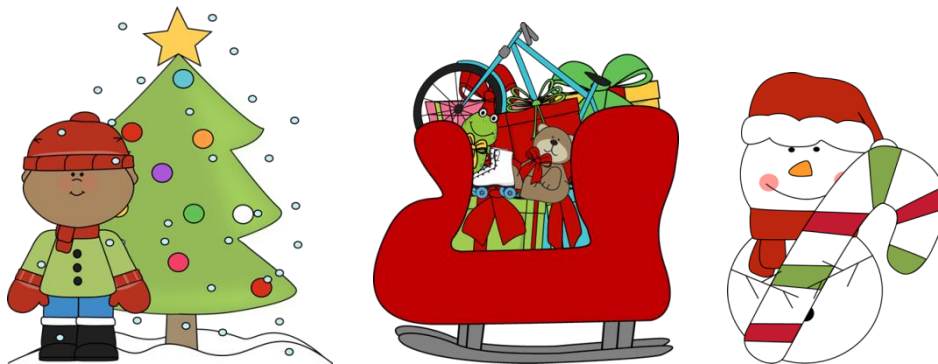




Christmas is one of the most popular holidays in America. Over 90% of Americans celebrate it, and they spend about \$900 a year during on this holiday. Although people in America celebrate Christmas on December 25th, the entire month of December is usually dedicated to Christmas. Radio stations will begin playing popular Christmas carols, such as “All I Want for Christmas is You” by Mariah Carey or “Jingle Bells” December 1st, and stores will start having sales as soon as Thanksgiving is over. Like many other countries across the world, Americans have developed their own Christmas traditions that are constantly evolving.

Today, most Americans blend religious and secular customs with their own family traditions. For example, my family likes to cook southern cuisine and stuff Christmas stockings. Other popular Christmas activities are decorating the house in Christmas lights and wreaths, and of course, decorating Christmas trees. We also celebrate Christmas by caroling in our neighborhoods, watching Christmas movies, like *Home Alone*, *How the Grinch Stole Christmas*, and *Elf*, on television, and attending performances of *The Nutcracker*, a popular Christmas themed ballet.

While more and more Americans consider Christmas a cultural holiday rather than a religious one, the holiday’s original religious meaning remains an important element. Some church congregations create nativity scenes—replicas of the stable where Jesus is believed to have been born, with figures representing the infant Jesus and those present at his birth. Other churches may hold Christmas Eve candlelight or midnight services. As with so many aspects of U.S. cultural life, Christmas in the United States reflects the values of a diverse and ever changing population.



Quiz:

1. How much does the average American spend on Christmas?
2. What are the names of the two popular Christmas songs mentioned in the article?
3. How do people decorate their houses for Christmas?
4. What is the name of the popular Christmas-themed ballet?
5. What is a nativity scene?