

Around the world in December ... with Tom!

Hi, boys and girls!
For this year's holiday season, let's have a look at other parts of the world in December. Ready? Great, then hop on my special scooter (it's *really* fast!) and let's take a trip around the world!

Read my first report; it's about a Jewish¹ festival. Can you find the name of the festival in the wordsearch? And the words that I spilt candle wax² on? (Oops, sorry about that!)



When I was in Israel, I stayed with a nice mou³ family and we celebrated³ a won⁴ festival together. The 'Festival of Lights' is very, very old. It is a way to remember battles that the Jews fought and won over 2,000 years ago. Back then, when they celebrated their victories⁴, the oil they lit burnt for eight days – a miracle⁵! So now, Jewish people light eight candles in a special candelabrum, the *menorah*. (Well, actually there are *nine*: there's an extra candle in the middle!). So each day, we lit another candle. On the eighth night it was w⁶iful when all the candles were burning. But there's more: We also had presents and ⁷late coins⁶ for the children.

Wow, eight nights of giving and getting ⁷resents! And there was lots of food: fried potato pancakes and jelly doughnuts. *Mmmmm*, yummy!!! And one night, we played a very funny game with a *dreidel*, a top⁷. There are letters on it, and you have to get the Hebrew phrase "A great miracle happened here" when you spin the top. And I won!!! The ⁷g we sang were fun too; try them!



"The dreidel on the floor goes round and round"

(Tune: "The wheels on the bus go round and round")

The dreidel on the floor goes round and round,
round and round, round and round.
The dreidel on the floor goes round and round,
All around the room.
The children watch the dreidel go round and round,
round and round, round and round.
The children watch the dreidel go round and round,
On what letter will it stop?

"Hanukkah candles"

(Tune: "Ten Little Indians")

One little, two little, three little candles,
Four little, five little, six little candles,
Seven little, eight little, nine little candles,
In my Hanukkah lamp.

T	A	K	W	R	I	Q	F	S	X	A
X	L	M	Y	H	A	S	B	Z	L	L
C	F	C	V	W	I	P	M	U	G	O
L	M	O	U	S	E	L	F	O	D	L
U	E	W	T	C	E	R	R	Y	C	S
F	D	T	S	S	E	O	D	S	O	O
I	I	A	T	D	T	L	W	O	Z	N
T	R	N	N	R	T	Z	T	S	A	G
U	R	O	P	R	E	S	E	N	T	S
A	W	H	Y	T	F	R	F	S	E	D
E	H	A	N	U	K	K	A	H	O	H
B	E	T	A	L	O	C	O	H	C	T

Look for the words in these directions: → ↓ ↗ ← ↖

¹Jewish – jüdisch • ²candle wax – Kerzenwachs • ³to celebrate – feiern • ⁴victory – Sieg • ⁵miracle – Wunder

⁶coin – Münze • ⁷top – Kreisel

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Ladies and gentlemen,
boys and girls ... Next stop: **Mexico!**
Read my report and choose the right words.
Oh, and *Feliz Navidad y
Prospero Año Nuevo!*

It can be really **hot – cold – frosty** in Mexico in December. Last year was my first tropical **Easter – Christmas – spring**. Mexicans **finish – end – start** the party on 12 December. I saw so many things in Mexico – and I was in a play where we played the birth⁸ of Christ. My Mexican friends got a **visit – letter – banana** from St. Nick this year, and he brought many presents. On Christmas Eve, I had a visit from *el Niño Dios*, the Holy Child. Then we went to **church – the hotel – the cinema** at midnight. That was great! We had no Christmas tree, they are too **small – old – expensive**. Only rich people have one, and my mice friends aren't **rich – young – expensive**. But on 6 January, the three wise men came to visit for *Reyes Magos*. The Magi left more **exercise books – gifts – socks** for the children – in their shoes!



Partner A:
Read about what I saw in **Australia**.
Partner B: Read about **Kwanzaa**. Then
tell each other about December
'down under' and in the USA.

A The year
before my
Mexican

Christmas, I was in Australia for the holiday season – and it was *really* different! Christmas is in the middle of summer 'down under', so the food was like our Greenwich summer food – seafood, cold ham and cold turkey, salads and puddings with strawberries and passion fruit – I loved it!

On Christmas Eve – 24 December – we sang carols by candlelight, together with thousands of other people. We were outside, and after the second song there was a summer rainstorm. But everyone was really happy because Christmas in Australia is also the beginning of the long school summer break!

We had Chrissie pressies and a 'barbie' – a barbecue – on the beach on 25th December. There was Santa Claus in a swimsuit, and he arrived at the beach on a surfboard! The card my mouse friends gave me had kangaroos and koala bears with red scarves.



B But December is not just Christmas time, it's also the time to celebrate Kwanzaa. To celebrate this, I went to the USA. Kwanzaa is an African-American holiday when people stop to think about their African great-great-great-grandparents and about the original harvest festivals in Africa. The name Kwanzaa means 'first fruits' in Swahili, an African language. Kwanzaa is not very old, it started in 1966. Kwanzaa goes on for seven days, from 26 December to 1 January. Each day one candle is lit, and on each day people think about different things. The candles are black, red and green. I liked the straw mat, the fruit basket and the ears of corn¹⁰ for every child in the household. There was a lot of singing, speaking and dancing, too. And my friends gave me many presents they made. But Kwanzaa is not about gift giving or religion. Kwanzaa wants to bring people together to show us how important we are to each other.

⁸birth – *Geburt* • ⁹harvest – *Ernte* • ¹⁰ear of corn – *Maiskolben*

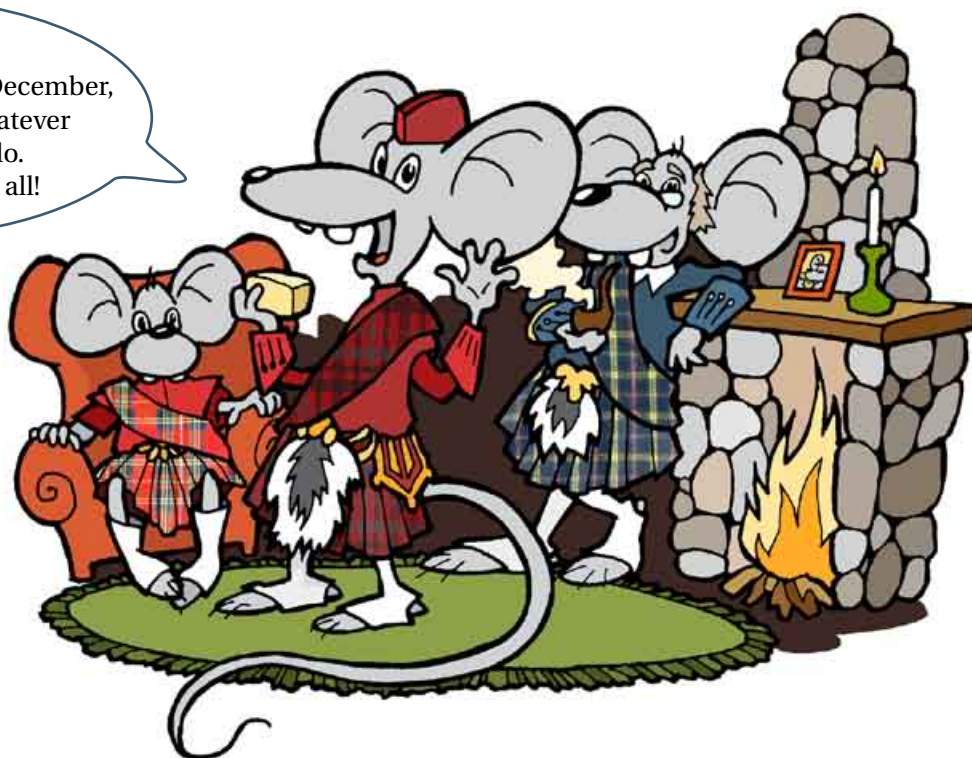
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And do you know where I'm going on December 31st? After my tour of the world, I'm going to Scotland for **Hogmanay** (say 'hog-ma-NAY'). I want to be the first mouse to come and visit my friends after midnight – this is called *first-footing* on Hogmanay. I'll bring them some shortbread and then we'll have food and drinks. And of course I want to sing "Auld Lang Syne" with them at midnight. I love that song! (Maybe you can find out more about it on the Internet.)

Last time I was in Scotland, my friends and I went to the Hogmanay fireball ceremony in Stonehaven in north-east Scotland. People walked through the streets at night with balls of fire on chains¹¹ and swung them round and round over their heads. That was a bit *scary*! And when we went to another family, we wished them *Lang may yer lum reek!* ("Long may your chimney¹² smoke!") because we want them to be nice and warm in the New Year. Hee-hee.

¹¹chain – *Kette* • ¹²chimney – *Schornstein, Kamin*

Well everyone,
I hope you have a very nice December,
wherever you are and whatever
you and your family do.
Happy Holidays to you all!



Questions:

1. Which places does Tom visit?
2. Which tradition is the oldest? Which is the youngest?
3. What is the shortest festival Tom talks about?
4. Tom doesn't talk about candles, flames or lights in one of his reports. Which report is it?

Additional activities:

- Find all the places on a map.
- Talk about how you celebrate Christmas / what celebrations you have in December.
- Do you know other countries and how they celebrate?

Teacher's notes

Questions you can ask your class:

Which places does Tom visit?

- Israel, Mexico, Australia, America, Scotland

Which tradition is the oldest / the youngest?

- Hannuka (over 2,000 years old);
Kwanzaa (started in 1966)

What is the shortest festival Tom talks about?

- Hogmanay (one night)

Tom doesn't talk about candles, flames or lights in one of his reports. Which report is it?

- Mexico

Solutions:

Hanukkah wordsearch:

T	A	K	W	R	I	Q	F	S	X	A
X	L	M	Y	H	A	S	B	Z	L	L
C	F	C	V	W	I	P	M	U	G	O
L	M	O	U	S	E	L	F	O	D	L
U	E	W	T	C	E	R	R	Y	C	S
F	D	T	S	S	E	O	D	S	O	O
I	I	A	T	D	T	L	W	O	Z	N
T	R	N	N	R	T	Z	T	S	A	G
U	R	O	P	R	E	S	E	N	T	S
A	W	H	Y	T	F	R	F	S	E	D
E	H	A	N	U	K	K	A	H	O	H
B	E	T	A	L	O	C	O	H	C	T

Mexico in December

It can be really **hot** – cold – frosty in Mexico in December. Last year was my first tropical Easter – **Christmas** – spring. Mexicans finish – end – **start** the party on 12 December.

I saw so many things in Mexico – and I was in a play where we played the birth of Christ. My Mexican friends got a **visit** – letter – banana from St. Nick this year, and he brought many presents. On Christmas Eve, I had a visit from *el Niño Dios*, the Holy Child. Then we went to **church** – the hotel – the cinema at midnight. That was great! We had no Christmas tree, they are too small – old – **expensive**. Only rich people have one, and my mice friends aren't **rich** – young – expensive. But on 6 January, the three wise men came to visit for *Reyes Magos*. The Magi left more exercise books – **gifts** – socks for the children – in their shoes!