

Young times

The story of Christmas

The presents are wrapped, the turkey's in the oven and the crackers are ready to pull. But have you ever wondered where our festive traditions come from? A new book by **Jonathan Green** reveals the truth about Christmas

Why do we hang a wreath at Christmas?

The pagan peoples of Europe believed that evergreen plants such as holly, fir and ivy possessed magical powers because they kept their leaves even in the freezing depths of winter. They twisted the branches into a hoop and attached candles, believing a circle of light would banish the winter darkness and hasten the coming of the spring.



Why do we hang stockings up on Christmas Eve?

This tradition comes from a story about the original Santa Claus, St Nicholas. St Nicholas was passing the house of a poor man, who could not afford to pay the dowries for his daughters' weddings. He decided to drop three bags of gold down their chimney, which landed in the girls' stockings hung out to dry by the fire.



Why is December 26 called Boxing Day?

It has nothing to do with the sport, if that's what you're thinking. In the Middle Ages, it was on this day that alms boxes — the collection boxes in churches — would be opened by priests, who then gave out the money inside to the poor.

Why do we pull crackers?

Crackers were invented by a London baker called Thomas Smith, after he visited France in 1840. He noticed shops selling bonbons in twists of paper, and stole the idea (if you think about it, a cracker looks a bit like an oversized wrapped sweet). Supposedly, he was inspired to add a "crack" sound after hearing the crackle of a log on the fire.



What Is Myrrh Anyway? by Jonathan Green is out now

Why do we kiss under the mistletoe?

Mistletoe has long been considered a healing plant that helps with fertility. Kissing under the mistletoe dates back to 18th-century England. If a young woman stood under the berries and remained unknissed it was said that she would not marry in the coming year.

daily dingbat

Which word or phrase is this? Say what you see.

tune
tune
tune teller
tune

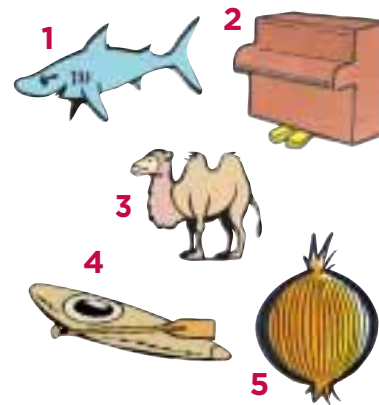
Yesterday's answer Short cut

Yesterday's riddle A comb

puzzle of the day

square deal

Write the name of each object in its row in the grid and then read down the shaded squares to reveal a name.



1				
2				
3				
4				
5				

Yesterday's answers 1. Troy Bolton, 2. Gabriella Montez, 3. Chad Danforth, 4. Taylor McKessie, 5. Sharpay Evans

PANDAPOLAR

