



Primary Times



Christmas joy to all our readers!

A warm welcome to one and all to this **tenth** December issue of **Primary Times**. Ten issues full of teaching ideas for exploiting the theme of Christmas. Many of the photocopiable worksheets we have published in previous issues are now downloadable from the festivities page which can be found by clicking on the **IMPAROFACILE ONLINE** logo on our home page at www.lang-longman.it. The festivities page includes worksheets, cut and paste activities, extended reading texts as well as songs with the theme of Christmas.

This issue of Primary Times includes very interesting articles on the teaching of pronunciation and reading skills as well as an overview of the most prominent external English language tests for children. CLIL and festivity worksheets complete this issue. The class projects continue their extraordinary success with, literally, thousands of children involved in each project. We have created lots of new gadgets to send to the children who participate by sending their personal work to us. Full details of the new project are on page 23. There may still be time to get your children to take part in the previous project described in the October issue. Entries for this project have to be posted to us before 15th December.

From all of us in the LANG-Longman Primary Team

Our very best wishes for an enjoyable and peaceful Christmas to you and your children.

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What does the ear hear?

Matilde Gagliano

Pronunciation is a hot topic both for the students and the teachers who are not native speakers of the language. Even more so if the language in question is English.

Some consider that the main aim of learning a language is to be able to communicate and, as long as we attain a certain degree of fluency, it does not really matter whether the pronunciation is accurate. However, an excessive dissimilarity from received pronunciation can hamper understanding. Others argue that mastering the written language is the principle objective. Researchers often develop only reading and writing skills, but even *they* might need to use spoken English – at international conferences, for example. Honestly, can you really say you know a language if you cannot speak it?

Languages in schools are sometimes taught using the traditional method of focusing more on the written language skills: teachers using this method are often unable to teach acceptable pronunciation and can never expect their students to be proficient in the language.

On the other hand, many teachers agree that pronunciation plays an important role in the whole language acquisition process. Having a better understanding and awareness of pronunciation can help children to remember vocabulary and to acquire fluency. It is true that to a certain extent this is an innate gift:

students with good hearing can reproduce sounds and intonations more easily.

A little exercise, though, can be helpful for everybody.

A key issue in the field of second language acquisition is the question of whether or not there is a critical period for second language learning. In other words, does the nature of second language acquisition change if the first exposure to the new language comes after a certain age?

This question is closely linked to the question of whether first language (L1) acquisition and second language (L2) acquisition are essentially the same process, or different processes. Some studies have suggested that as the brain matures, the prospect of acquiring a second language becomes much more difficult. This is because plasticity and the capabilities of the brain are thought to be at their greatest during childhood. It is widely believed that the earlier children start to develop a physical skill, the better they will be at that skill. This appears to be true for children who start to learn another language or study a musical instrument at a very young age. The child learns to develop and control dozens of muscles and speech organs such as the tongue, lips, throat and mouth. This helps them attain native-like or natural pronunciation. It is after puberty that people often experience more difficulty in acquiring a second language and a natural or native-like accent and in overcoming foreign accents.

This is why primary school teachers play a crucial role in the language acquisition process of the student. Exposure to the correct models and continual practice are essential as the children are at the best age to acquire new sounds and intonation.



English pronunciation is, for Italian learners, quite difficult for various reasons:

- The presence of sounds that do not exist in Italian, such as the much dreaded /th/ or, the even worse /thr/, and the excruciating aspirate /h/.
- The fact that there is a wide number of vowel sounds in English as opposed to only five in Italian and also the further complication that the vowel sounds are more than the vowel letters. Not to mention diphthongs. This creates great confusion, especially for the parents who try to help their kids at home, who come to you and ask questions like: 'Maestra, do you pronounce black with an /a/ or with an /e?'
- The non-correspondence between written and spoken English which creates all sorts of problems when it comes to reading and spelling words.
- The presence of silent letters such as /b/ in comb or /t/ in listen.
- The wide variety of accents and models to refer to; for example the difference between British and American English that is between the audio material children are exposed to in the classroom and what they hear at home if they watch American cartoons.
- Homonyms (words that are spelled the same but pronounced differently, e.g. tear/tear, record/record) and homophones (words that are pronounced in the same way but have a different spelling, e.g. witch/which).
- The fact that English is a stress-timed language, unlike Italian that is a syllable-timed language, makes it difficult for Italian speakers to produce the right intonation and sentence stress patterns.
- Contractions (I am/I'm) and assimilation (when we link two words together pronunciation changes, e.g. in Good girl /d/ sounds like /g/).
- And finally, to make everything worse, the fact that there are no rules for pronunciation.

However, as people say; *where there is a will there is a way*, we must try to make the most of our student's phonological skills. Here are a few ideas to help children with difficult words and sounds:

the /th/ sound



We have all experienced frustration when trying to show our students how to pronounce the 'th' cluster, especially the voiceless /θ/ sound. No matter how much saliva comes splattering out of our distorted face, they just don't seem to get it. You might try instead this simple approach: take the words *thin*, *thirteen* or *Thursday*, for example. Tell the students to put a finger on their lips while they say the words. If the tongue touches the finger they are pronouncing the sound correctly. Tell them to check that their fingers are wet.

The /h/ sound

To practise the aspirate /h/ tell the children to put a tiny piece of paper on their palm and keep their hand next to their mouth while they pronounce words like *horse* or *hen*. If the paper flies up in the air, they are doing it right. Show them first and you will see in a couple of seconds paper flying everywhere. The only problem about this activity is that the kids tend to get carried away and the caretaker will not be happy about it.





Noughts and crosses

I presume that you are not prepared to strike your students' hands with a stick to make them scream /ai/, so why not try to play pronunciation games like battleships, bingo or even noughts and crosses! The latter requires no preparation and is generally popular with kids: draw a grid to play on the board and write in each square a number (1-9) and 9 words all containing the vowel /i/ pronounced /ai/ in some of the words and /i/ in the others – *lion, big, nice, fish, ice cream, sister, I, five, rice* for example. Divide the students into two teams. They take it in turn to choose a number and to read the corresponding word. If the pronunciation is correct, they get their cross or nought. The winning team is the one that completes a row of three Os or three Xs.

Long and short words

To make the students aware of something they already know, remind them that some words make you smile. They have all been told to say *cheese* when taking a photograph. Explain that there are other words that are pronounced in the same way, like *green, cheap, feet, peach, sheep, sleep* or *bean*. Comparing minimal pairs – *grin, chip, fit, pitch, ship, slip, bin* – can be a useful exercise as Italian speakers tend to overlook the difference between long and short vowels.

Recognising sounds

Another typical problem occurs with words that are stressed in a different way in English but are otherwise similar in Italian, such as *assistant, Religion, Italian, Japanese*. We might try to visualize stress with big dots (stressed syllable) and small dots (unstressed syllable) and clap hands accordingly (louder to mark the stress) while saying the word.

Rhymes can be used to help memorize the pronunciation of words. You could play games such as Find a word that rhymes with (*fat, lake, night...*). In teams or individually, the first who says a rhyming word (e.g. *cat, snake, white...*) wins a point.



Primary Times

keeping the teacher informed

Further worksheets and audio files for teaching pronunciation can be found on
www.lang-longman.it → **IMPAROFACILE ONLINE** → Pronunciation
or go direct to <http://www.lang-longman.it/servizi/pronunciation/pronunciation.htm>

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Confident and Clear About CLIL

Joanna Carter

In recent years there has been a great flurry of interest in CLIL as an approach to teaching and learning languages. It has been a prime topic at EFL conferences, it has been advocated in articles in many English teaching magazines, it has had books written about it and course books dedicated to it.

Therefore, most teachers know what the acronym stands for (**Content and Language Integrated Learning**) and are clear about the basic concept behind it: content subjects such as Maths or History are taught and learnt in a language which is not the mother tongue. The students use the L2 as a tool for developing knowledge about a subject and at the same time develop their linguistic ability in this target language.

However, many teachers may still be reticent to fully embrace the idea of using CLIL as they have been led to believe it is a sophisticated and complicated system of teaching and learning that involves a lot of organisation and work that could outweigh any benefits to be gained.

This misconception may have come about due to the settings in which CLIL, first became popular. It has been successfully developed in the last few years in many ESL (English as a Second Language) situations, for example in Canada and the USA, where it is essential that the learners gain both an education and efficiency in L2 in order to survive, thrive and get on in a community. The use of CLIL is also prevalent in bilingual situations, i.e. countries with a second national language (for example Spain, France and Wales). In these settings, CLIL is very much content driven and there is a strong commitment to content learning objectives. This naturally requires the teacher to be totally competent in the L2 AND the subject being taught. This is not always easy and teacher training may be needed. In these situations, usually the entire school is dedicated to the implementation of CLIL, so liaison between teachers and teamwork is essential, which implies extra hours of work. If there is also a lack of appropriate materials, lesson preparation could be a time consuming task.

However, the implementation of CLIL really does not have to be this complicated for the simple reason that different types of CLIL exist. It is a very broad term and in fact any learning situation that incorporates both content and a foreign language can be considered CLIL. As Snow (1919) says; it is a 'method with many faces'.

The previous situations described are a very strong form of CLIL, but a much softer approach may be used, or indeed be more appropriate for an EFL setting or better the primary English language classroom. This could be a kind of theme-based CLIL where the teacher designs a course of study – a lesson or series of lessons – around a theme chosen for its interest value to the students. The subject can be anything from another subject on the curriculum (Science, Geography etc.) to simply the students' favourite film star, sports star or hobby. The teacher really does not have to be an expert but can be guided by the cognitive level of the students and use very general sources on the subject such as books aimed at children, magazines and the Internet.

Although a more gentle form of CLIL, the benefits of this approach still apply. It lends itself easily to task based learning and collaborative project work. There can be greater exposure to the language and less emphasis on the systematic learning of grammar which is considered a much more natural way of acquiring a language.

To convince teachers on how clear and simple theme-based CLIL can be, I'd like to propose a lesson plan. This is in fact a tried and tested CLIL lesson that I did myself with a 5th year class. The theme is simple astronomy and the solar system. Some of the materials are taken or adapted from www.enchantedlearning.com and www.learnenglish.org.uk, the British Council website.

Lesson Plan

Step 1

Introduce the theme of astronomy through some simple flashcards teaching vocabulary that will be needed throughout the lesson. E.g. sun, Earth, solar system, rock, gas, dust, space craft etc. (Flashcards can be made by copying and pasting images from Google onto A4 paper.)

Create a word and picture matching worksheet using the same images copied and pasted into a Word document to consolidate the vocabulary.



Step 2

With the whole class brainstorm, elicit or teach the 9 planets in the solar system in ITALIAN.

Step 3

Divide the class into groups of 3 or 4. Give each group a pre-prepared envelope containing the letters to make up the name of one planet in the solar system in ENGLISH. There should be 9 envelopes in total, each containing a different name. The students try to rearrange the letters to make the name of the planet. Walk around the class checking answers and giving suggestions. The students write the names in a notebook and put the letters back in the envelopes. The envelopes are continually circulated until each group has 9 words.

Step 4

Go to www.learnenglish.org.uk and click on 'kids' then 'topics' then 'space'. Look for the activities under Our solar system and download the ANSWER sheet. This has a short description of each planet in our solar system and the name of the planet. Enlarge the answer sheet, cut out the nine boxes of information and stick them around the classroom wall.

Give each group of students cut out pictures of the 9 planets (make sure they are named) and the sun. The pupils walk around the class and read the texts stuck on the wall. They use the information to put the planets in the right order.

Step 5

Give each group of pupils the Worksheet below. They walk around the classroom, reading the text boxes on the wall from the previous activity and completing the sentences.

Step 6

As a class, brainstorm information about the Earth. E.g. Where is it in the solar system? What is it made of? Who lives on it? Make comparisons between the Earth and the other planets. E.g. Are there the same number of moons? Are they made of the same material? Do they have something extra such as rings? In their groups, get the students to write a fact sheet about the Earth.

Step 7

Tell the students that in their groups they are going to invent a totally new planet and write a fact sheet about it. Go back to the topic on space on the British Council website and look for the story called *The Cold Planet*. There is a worksheet here that has question prompts and ideas to help pupils invent a planet.

Step 8

To finish this theme lesson on space, the pupils could either make a model of their invented planet or more simply the fact sheets about them could be displayed on the classroom wall. The students read all the fact sheets and vote on which planet they think sounds best.

As I have said, the inspiration for this lesson came from the websites www.enchantedlearning.com and www.learnenglish.org.uk. There is an abundance of ideas, activities and worksheets on the theme of astronomy and many more themes and they really are two invaluable sites to use when creating CLIL style lessons. Why not try them out or try this lesson out and become confident and clear on how to use CLIL in the primary classroom!

<p>Saturn is made of _____.</p> <p>Mars is often called the _____ planet.</p> <p>The Earth is _____ years old.</p> <p>Jupiter is the _____ planet from the sun.</p> <p>Venus is very _____ and extremely _____.</p> <p>Pluto has a moon called _____.</p> <p>Mercury may have active _____ on it.</p> <p>Uranus is a _____ colour.</p> <p>Neptune has _____ moons.</p>
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WORKSHEET

Sources


D. Banzato and F. Dalziel, *Learning English through civiltà*, British Council, Milano, 2005
 Steve Darn, Think Articles www.teachingenglish.org.uk
 Adrian Tennant Introduction to CLIL
www.onestopenglish.com



WORKSHEET

Christmas Fun!



• Choose the correct words and complete the rhyme.


- reindeer (2)
- Santa
- sleigh
- laugh
- red-nosed (2)
- history
- tonight
- glows
- games

Rudolph the  _____ reindeer has a very shiny nose, and if you ever see him, you can even say it _____.

All of the other  _____  _____ and call him names, they never let poor Rudolph join in any reindeer _____.

Then one foggy Christmas eve  _____ comes to say 'Rudolph, with your nose so

bright, can you guide my  _____, _____?' Then all the 

_____ love him, as they shout out with glee, Rudolph the  _____ reindeer, you'll go








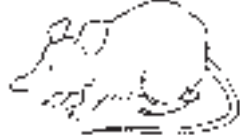






down in _____!



WORKSHEET

ANAGRAMS

• Find the words in CHRISTMAS TREE. Use the picture prompts to help you.

	_____		_____
	_____		_____
	_____		_____
	_____		_____
	_____		_____
	_____		_____
	_____		_____



Kids' Corner

Giulia Abbiati

Every year, as Christmas approaches, children feel more and more excited and it is often difficult to keep their attention focused: presents are about to arrive, holidays, snow, surprises etc.

Why not give them the chance to experience all this excitement in a useful way?

Let's just think of Christmas as an opportunity to teach more language and to give the children the chance to dream in English!

Is there anything more fantastic than making a list of the presents children would like to receive? Is there any fairy tale more absorbing than one in which they are the characters?

Before using an activity, pre-teach all the Christmas vocabulary that children will need to understand and enjoy the exercise. Always keep

*Kids' Corner is a special section of **Primary Times** dedicated to very young learners.*



in mind that children should speak in English while working on crafts: this will focus their attention on both the specific lexical set for the festivity and the craft-making vocabulary.

They will not be aware of how much they are learning, but the next time you work on crafts with them, they will be able to remember a lot of words and expressions.

Next year, they will probably be able to write their list for Santa on their own!

Activity 1: Santa Claus List

Children in the first years of primary school do not know how to write yet? No problem, they can make a beautiful list with drawings.

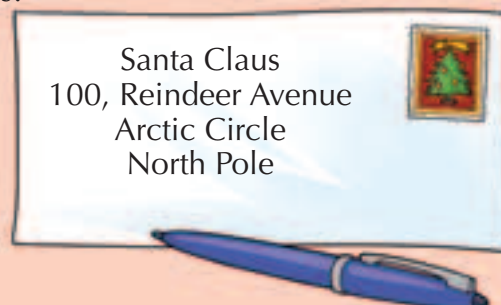
The teacher should first ask the children what kind of presents they would like to receive. If video games, rollerblades, computers and mp3 players are among them, children will realise that they already know their names in English! The teacher can then write the names of all the objects on the blackboard.

What you need:

- one sheet of paper for each child
- pencil
- felt-tip pens in different colours
- one envelope for each child

Give each child a piece of paper, a pencil and some coloured felt-tip pens. They must draw a list of the presents they would like to receive. If children are skilled enough, the teacher can ask them to copy the names of the objects under the drawings.

Once the lists are ready, the teacher should write Santa's address on the blackboard and get the children to copy it on the envelopes.





Activity 2: Christmas Song

Children will probably know the famous nursery rhyme 'One little, two little, three little Indians...': we can change it into a Christmas related song!



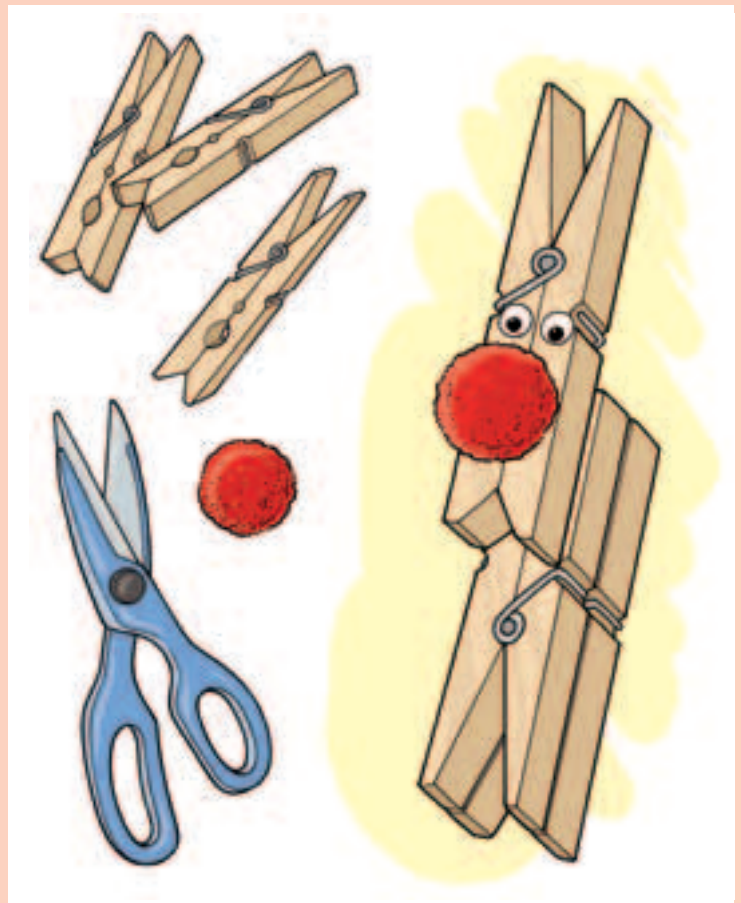
Activity 3: Clothes Peg Reindeer

What you need:

- 3 wooden clothes pegs for each child
- black felt-tip pen
- brown paint
- brush
- one small pom-pom
- glue

What you do

1. In order to make the body of the reindeer, glue two pegs on top of each other.
2. To form the head and antlers, glue the third clothes peg upside down on top of the others (see drawing).
3. Draw the eyes of the reindeer with the black felt-tip pen.
4. Glue the red pom-pom to make the nose.
5. You can also use the reindeer as an ornament for the Christmas tree!



Activity 4: Ice Lolly Stick Santa Claus

What you need:

- 3 clean ice lolly sticks
- black felt-tip pen
- a small piece of red cloth
- cotton wool
- glue
- scissors

What you do

1. Glue the three ice lolly sticks together to form a triangle.
2. Draw the eyes on the upper part of the triangle with the black felt-tip pen.
3. Cut a triangle the same size as the face from the red piece of cloth.
4. Glue the red triangle of cloth on top of the face triangle.
5. Decorate the hat with some cotton wool: a small pom-pom on top of it and some cotton wool on the base.
6. Use the rest of the cotton wool to make Santa's beard and glue it onto the bottom of the triangle.
7. You can use your Santa to decorate your Christmas Tree!



Activity 5: Make A Reindeer Garden

What you need:

- one clay pot for each child
- brown, white and red cardboard
- pencil
- scissors
- adhesive tape or strong glue
- black felt-tip pen

What you do

1. Draw two antlers on the brown cardboard. Make sure that the size of the antlers matches the size of the pot you are using. Cut them out.
2. Draw and cut out the eyes of the reindeer on the white cardboard.
3. Draw and cut out the nose of the reindeer on the red cardboard.
4. Glue the antlers on the back of the pot. Then glue the nose and eyes on the front of it.
5. Draw the mouth of the reindeer with the black felt-tip pen.
6. Fill the pots with Christmas cards, tree decorations, sweets or whatever you like.
7. Put all the reindeer-pots together on a desk: now you have a Reindeer Garden!





Activity 6: Christmas Cards

What you need:

- red and green pieces of cloth
- white cardboard
- scissors
- glue
- black felt-tip pen

What you do

1. Fold the white cardboard in two.
2. Cut out Christmas shapes from the red and green cloth; they can be small trees, stars, stockings, tree decorations etc.
3. Glue the pieces of cloth in order to make a Christmas decoration onto the outside of the cardboard.
4. Write MERRY CHRISTMAS on the blackboard and ask the children to copy it inside the Christmas cards.
5. Sign the inside of the card and give it to someone you love!



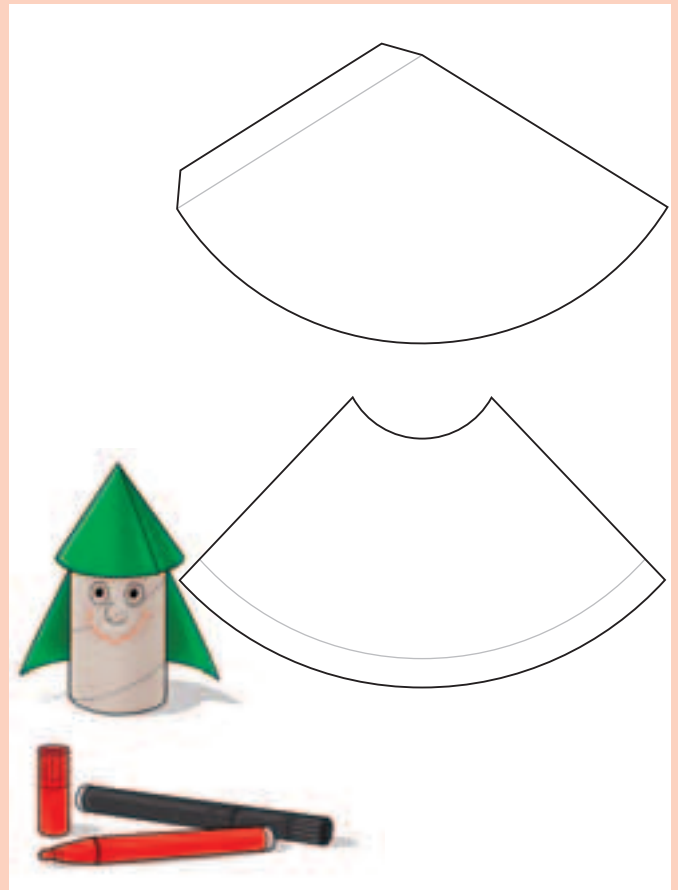
Activity 7: Santa's Little Helper

What you need:

- one toilet paper roll per child
- one photocopy of templates for each child
- green and red cardboard
- black and red felt-tip pens
- scissors
- glue

What you do

1. Draw the eyes and mouth of the elf with the black and red felt-tip pens on the toilet paper roll.
2. Cut out the templates and glue them onto the red and green cardboard (choose a red or green cloak and hat).
3. Cut out the shapes, then glue the sides of the hat to make it stand.
4. Glue the hat and cloak onto the toilet paper roll.
5. You can use the elf, Santa's little helper, as a decoration for the Christmas tree!





It's Christmas!

Cecilia Perillo

Every year more than 400 million people celebrate Christmas around the world!

Christmas is a season of traditions, family gatherings, festive meals, glittering lights, laughter, holidays, shopping, decorating trees, listening to Christmas music and stories, caroling, baking cakes, making gifts, sending cards or emails.

Many families, all over the world, set up the **nativity scene**, one of the central themes of the festive season, and it is interesting to see how different countries celebrate this wonderful event in different ways! (Refer to *Primary Times December 2008 Issue 31 - Celebrate Christmas across the world through the curriculum*). A Venn diagram may be useful in language instruction for examining similarities and differences, and in this particular case it can be used as a prewriting activity to enable children to organize and support thoughts visually and appreciate other cultures.

German Christmas traditions have influenced holiday traditions around the world. Germans love to decorate their homes with little wooden cribs - a model of the stable where Jesus was born, in **Italy** it is called *Presepe*, the traditional name of this place in English is the manger.

Let's teach our children the true **Spirit of Christmas**: the birth of Christ, the good, generous feeling of giving, being kind and caring. You may also like to refer to the character of Ebenezer Scrooge in Dickens's classic *A Christmas Carol*, and to his discovery of the joys of sharing. **Storytelling** is an excellent resource for enriching EFL (English as a Foreign Language) classes and it facilitates comprehension. (Refer to *Primary Times October 2009 Issue 33 - From Pictures to Stories*).

The **concept** of **caring** and being **kind** to others may be taught through the use of simple, practical dialogues such as this:

Jonathan: I'm bored!

Greg: Let's play baseball!

Nancy: Great idea!

Beth: Let's go!

Nancy: Oh, no! Roger can't play baseball!

Beth: Come back!

Greg: Let's play another game!

Nancy: We can play Monopolis.

Jonathan: This is fun!

Roger: I like Monopolis. It's my favourite game.

Friends: It's our favourite game, too!

Source: *English On The Road 4 - Think and Learn (Convivenza Civile)* Learning about consideration.

The true meaning of the festivity, however, is sometimes lost and for this reason teachers may like to set up a giving tree in the classroom. Children often associate Christmas with getting more than giving. Tell the children that the tree is going to be a giving tree and the gifts will go to children and families in need. The concept of giving may be introduced by telling the story of *The Giving Tree*,



first published in 1964: it is a tale about a relationship between a young boy and a tree in a forest. The class can watch the film on www.youtube.com/watch?v=up7-xHm6jIA. The lesson may continue with a reference to the history of the Christmas Tree as a symbol and tradition.

Queen Victoria often visited her relatives in Germany and fell in love with Prince Albert who introduced the concept of Christmas trees to England (Geography: a map of Europe / world to refer to places). Prince Albert set up a Christmas Tree at Windsor Castle in England and the custom soon spread all over Europe and the world. <http://www.christmasarchives.com/trees.html>.

At this stage, a mini CLIL (Content and Language Integrated Learning - teaching a specific subject in the target language) Science lesson can be integrated by exploiting the concept of caring for our planet by having a Green Christmas and a Green Tree.

Trees give us food and shelter from the sun or rain and all kinds of animals rely on trees for homes or food. Trees absorb pollutants from the atmosphere and as green plants they make oxygen for us to breathe. A White Christmas is nice, but a green one is better for the environment.

Environmentally Friendly Decorations

In Japan (refer to a map) people write prayers and wishes on strips of paper and hang them on trees. Children may be encouraged to write Christmas wishes on coloured paper to promote a green tree and make recyclable/recycled decorations like biscuit stars and candles, egg carton bells, painted pine cones and bread shapes. How simple is that?

Recycle buttons for a Button Wreath

Materials: you simply need different coloured assorted buttons, gold spray paint, glue, cardboard and scissors.

Procedure: cut a circle from the cardboard, spray paint the front and back of the cardboard and use the glue to arrange buttons on the cardboard.

As opposed to traditional methods, the recent ones attempt to grasp children's attention through the concept of communicative situations in which learners are encouraged to communicate orally and/or through writing. Emphasis is placed on the meaningful and motivated use of language.

I wish you all a wonderful Christmas.

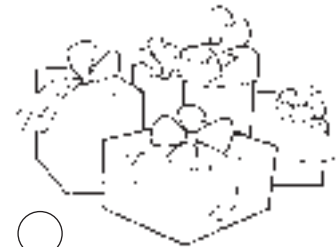
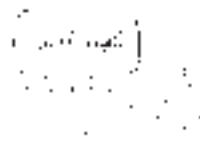
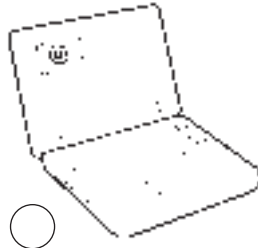
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- English On The Road SB 4 - Frances Foster & Brunel Brown - Pearson Paravia Bruno Mondadori 2009
- www.christmasarchives.com/trees.html
- www.youtube.com/watch?v=up7-xHm6jIA
- www.christmascrafts.com

WORKSHEET

Match the picture to the word

1. sending Christmas cards
2. sending emails
3. having a family dinner
4. going shopping
5. decorating a Christmas Tree
6. listening to music
7. listening to Christmas stories
8. caroling
9. baking cakes
10. making gifts

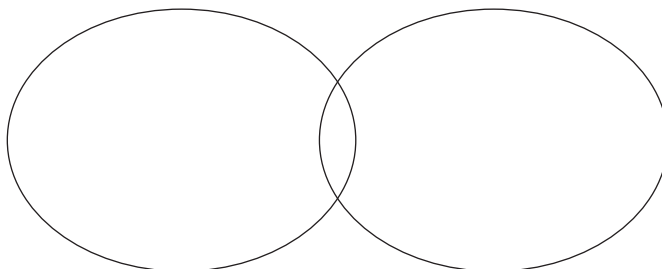


Teacher's Worksheet

Compare your country with another country.

Christmas traditions

Name : _____





Panic! I need more exercises!

How many times have you been in this situation?

You have used all the exercises in the student's book to teach and practise a language item, for example adjectives of size (big – small – tall – short – thin etc.) but the children still don't remember them!

You need other exercises so that the children can hear, read and use the adjectives in order to become familiar with them and memorise them in their long-term memory banks.

But where can you find more exercises? You spend hours searching in other course books for children or even on the Internet for appropriate exercises or games but you can never seem to find exactly what you need.

Here is the answer

Primary Teaching Files (PTFiles) are two archives of supplementary teaching materials for the primary school teacher. The files are divided into two publications: PTFiles for levels 1, 2 and 3 and PTFiles for levels 4 and 5 so that the materials are linguistically appropriate to the levels.

Each archive is divided into various files to make it as simple as possible to locate materials.

Lesson File

Hundreds of photocopiable lesson plans cross indexed by language skill and language item.



Cut-out File

A series of cut and paste activities linked to language use.

Computer Science File

Worksheets to introduce and practise computer terminology and use.

Life and Traditions File

Aspects of civiltà related to Great Britain, the United States and Australia.

Song File

Songs plus language activities. A recording of the songs can be found on the audio CD included with PTFiles, instrumental versions of the songs can be downloaded from www.lang-longman.it/servizi/teacher_res/primaryteachingfiles

Festivities File

Worksheets introducing aspects of various festivities celebrated in English speaking countries.

Fotocard File

Fotocards (photographic flashcards); 160 for levels 1, 2 and 3 and 128 for levels 4 and 5 are included in the PTFiles as well as a manual for teachers outlining various games and activities appropriate with fotocards.

Want to know more about **Primary Teaching Files**?
Contact your local **LANG-Longman** agent. He can help you!



Developing Reading Skills

Sarah Gudgeon

The importance of reading in the primary classroom should never be underestimated as its successful inclusion can mean that students reap the benefits for years to come. Research has shown that L2 reading has a positive impact on language learning as a whole (Krashen, 1993) and that it can lead to students becoming part of the virtual circle of reading (Nuttal, 1996).

The **virtual circle of reading theory** maintains that the more you read, the better you become; the better you become, the more you want to read and the more you want to read, the more you read. Turning students into **extensive readers**, where they read widely and for pleasure, is the ultimate goal of all teachers, but one that cannot be achieved without first laying the foundations for enjoyable reading.

Students can often feel overwhelmed by the amount of text on a page and, in particular, by the number of words that they do not know. Reading with limited vocabulary can be seen as an insurmountable task and this can foster a defeatist attitude, with children giving up before they have even started. It is up to the teacher to introduce the children to different reading strategies and, in the early stages, to keep them task focused.

When setting a reading task, it is important to decide whether it is going to be **intensive** or **extensive**.

Intensive will mean that you can only use pre-taught vocabulary as you want the children to understand everything, whereas with an **extensive** task you can introduce some new vocabulary and structures as the children are only expected to get the general meaning. An intensive text should, of course, be quite short as it will require a deeper level of concentration, but an extensive one could be a storybook for example. Referring to the illustrations and using flashcards and mimes will help the children to follow the plot of the story.

Regardless of whether you choose an intensive or extensive task, the stages of the activity must still be clear. You need to do **pre-reading activities**, then the **reading** and then **post-reading activities**.

Good pre-reading activities are essential as they help to build student confidence and give you a chance to lead into the topic. Once children know what they are going to read about, then their levels of anxiety will be reduced and they will be better able to both absorb new information and retrieve previously learnt words.

The aim of the reading itself should be clear and the teacher should consider:

- do you want them to read intensively or extensively?
- do you want them to **skim** the text, just reading it quickly for the main points?
- do you want them to **scan** it, quickly identifying specific information?

Finally, an appropriate post-reading activity should be chosen based on the kind of reading the children had to do. If you asked them to read something extensively, like a story, then a plot summary would be a good idea as this would allow you to verify how much they have understood overall. If they had to read a short text intensively, then a True/False exercise would be suitable.

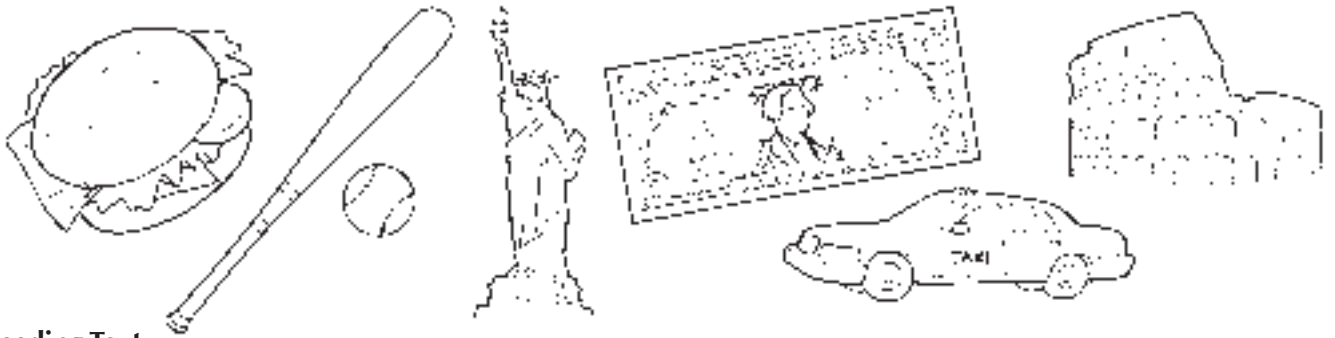
When planning reading based lessons, remember that this particular skill and CLIL go hand in hand. Look at the Worksheet on the following page and see how History and practising English language reading skills can be integrated together.

Pre-reading Activities

1. Match Christopher Columbus to the right country and the right means of transport.



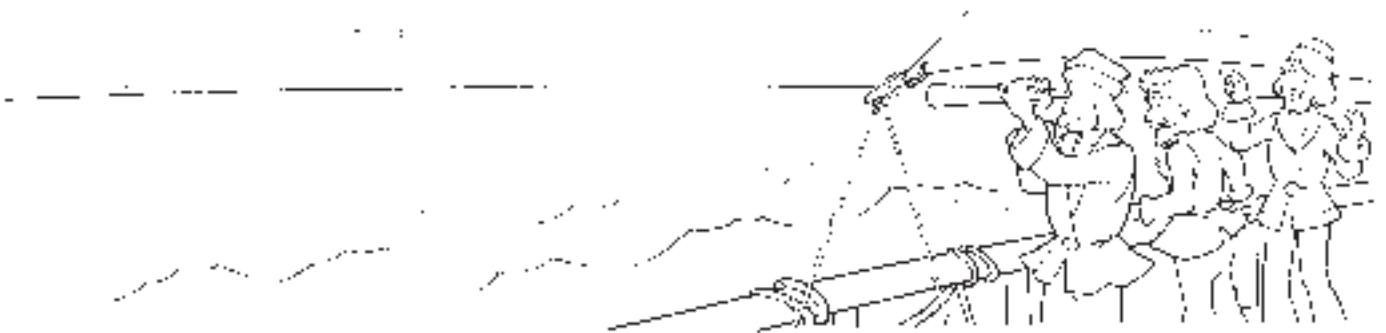
2. Circle the picture that is not American.



Reading Text

It is 1464. Christopher Columbus lives in Genoa with his mother and father. He is thirteen years old. He goes to sea on big ships. He loves sailing. He sails to many different countries.

It is 1492. The King and Queen of Spain give Christopher Columbus some money. He uses the money to sail three big ships around the world. One day, he discovers America. He is very happy.



Post-reading Activities

Write True or False next to each sentence.

Example: Christopher Columbus lives in Genoa in 1464.

- He goes to sea on small ships.
- He doesn't like sailing.
- The King and Queen of Spain give him some money.
- He sails four big ships around the world.
- He discovers America.

True



There are, of course, a whole range of reading activities that you can use (tasks 1-2 below are just a couple of examples) and if you don't want to dedicate a whole lesson to this skill, then it can be practised by using stand-alone exercises. These can be used to consolidate a particular lexical set or specific grammar. Some pre-reading is always necessary, just so that the children know the purpose of the exercise and what is expected of them. A quick five minute preliminary exercise, where ideally you elicit either some text-related vocabulary or the rules of the grammar to be practised, should be sufficient to make the children feel that they are ready to try the task.

Cut up the sentences for Task 1, which ties in with Geography, and mix them up. Children should skim the text before putting it in the right order. They will then have to read it intensively to check that all the sentences fit together. For Task 2, white-out words before distributing the exercise to the class. Children have to read the text intensively to decide which word fits best. Finally, to encourage extensive reading and set the children on an excellent learning path, start using graded readers with the class. The headword limit means that they should find the stories relatively easy to understand and an early love of literature will serve them well in the future.

References:

Krashen, Stephen - *The Power of Reading*; Libraries Unlimited Colorado.
 Nuttal, Christine - *Teaching Reading Skills in a Foreign Language*; Macmillan Oxford.
www.bbc.co.uk/schools/famouspeople/standard/columbus

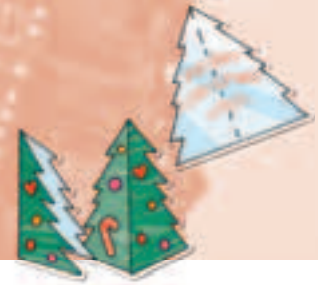
Task 1

- It's December in Australia and it's very hot.
- Australia is a very big country in the southern hemisphere of the world.
- It is summer in December and winter in June.
- Italy is a European country in the northern hemisphere and in Europe it's winter in December and summer in June.
- Many Australian people love going to the beach and sometimes they have Christmas lunch there.
- Italian people have Christmas lunch inside, not on the beach or in the garden, because it's usually very cold.

Task 2

Hi Lucy,
 My name is Jane and I'm seven years old. I live (1) a big house in London (2) my family. I've got one brother and two sisters. My (3) name is Philip and my sisters are called Amy and Sophie. We've got a dog and a cat. We play in (4) garden with the dog every afternoon, but the cat sleeps (5) the sofa in the living room.
 Have you got (6) brothers or sisters or any pets?
 Write soon. Love,
 Jane

- | | | | | | |
|----|------|-----|-----|----|-----------|
| on | with | any | the | in | brother's |
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Young Learner Tests and Examinations

Sarah Gudgeon

Young learner tests and exams seem to be becoming increasingly popular with both teachers and parents keen to set children on a clear language learning path. Having fixed objectives can, of course, help to keep lessons focused, but it is important that the need to do well on an exam doesn't overshadow overall learning aims. If approached correctly, children will see the exam tasks as fun games and something that gives them the opportunity to show what they **do** know and not what they **do not** know. The idea is to get the children into the English language exam system so that each test becomes an outward marker of their progress and something that they continue with into adolescence and beyond. Most students wishing to enter higher education or certain professions will find that some kind of English language certification is mandatory and so the right study programme now will pay dividends in the future.

For primary school children there are two main examinations; one offered by the University of Cambridge Local Examinations Syndicate (UCLES) and the other by Trinity College London Graded Examinations in Spoken English (GESE). One of the main differences between the two language tests is that whereas the **Cambridge Starters Test** tests listening (approximately 20 minutes), reading and writing (20 minutes) and speaking skills (3-5 minutes), the **Trinity Initial** exam tests only speaking (5-7 minutes) although implicit in this is listening comprehension as the children have to respond to the examiner's questions. Another difference is the marking system; in the UCLES **Starters Test** children can be awarded a maximum of five shields for each paper, with each child who tries to complete the paper receiving a minimum of one shield. This means that all children who take the test receive a certificate and are not discouraged from further English language study.

The Trinity GESE **Initial level exams** are suitable for children aged seven and upwards and the idea is that because there is a grade for every individual level (grades 1-3 are available for the **Initial test**), as long as you enter the child for the right exam they will receive a certificate. Below is an outline of the syllabus for both exams, but you should consult the Cambridge and Trinity handbooks before deciding which exam to put the children in for.

Lexical sets

UCLES Starter Test: animals • the body and the face • clothes • colours • family and friends • food and drink • the home • numbers 1–20 • places and directions • school • sports and leisure • time • toys • transport • weather • work • the world around us.

(From *YLE Handbook*, University of Cambridge)

Trinity Initial Examination: personal information • immediate surroundings including classroom objects • parts of the face and body • animals – common, domestic, farm and wild • cardinal numbers up to 20 • colours • items of clothing.

(From *Initial Steps with Trinity*, Trinity College London)

As you can see, the vocabulary for both exams is very similar and this is also the case for the **grammar**, which is based on getting the children up to the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR) **level A1**. Typically, they would be expected to be able to recognize and use some adjectives to describe people and places, there is/there are, prepositions of place etc.

Handbooks for both language tests can be downloaded from the Internet and contain guidelines, tips and practice papers. Visit www.cambridgeesol.org and www.trinitycollege.co.uk.

If you want to try out both UCLES and Trinity style materials with your class, photocopy and distribute the worksheets on the following pages.

UCLES Starters Test - Listening

Instructions: Give each child a copy of the picture. Read out the text below (play the recording if you have one) and ask the children to draw lines to put each vegetable(s) in the right place on the picture. Text for the teacher to record before the lesson or read out:

Example:

1. Boy: Put the potato next to the bicycle.

Girl: The potato?

Boy: Yes, that's right. Put it next to the bicycle.

2. Boy: Put the yellow pepper on the horse.

Girl: Sorry?

Boy: The yellow pepper. Put it on the horse.

3. Boy: Put the beans under the big tree.

Girl: Put the beans where?

Boy: Under the tree.

4. Put the tomato behind the football.

Girl: Behind the football?

Boy: Yes, that's right. The tomato behind the football.

5. Boy: Put the peas in the rucksack.

Girl: Sorry?

Boy: The peas. Put them in the rucksack.

6. Put the carrots between the children and the big tree.

Girl: The carrots?

Boy: Yes, that's right. Put them between the children and the big tree.

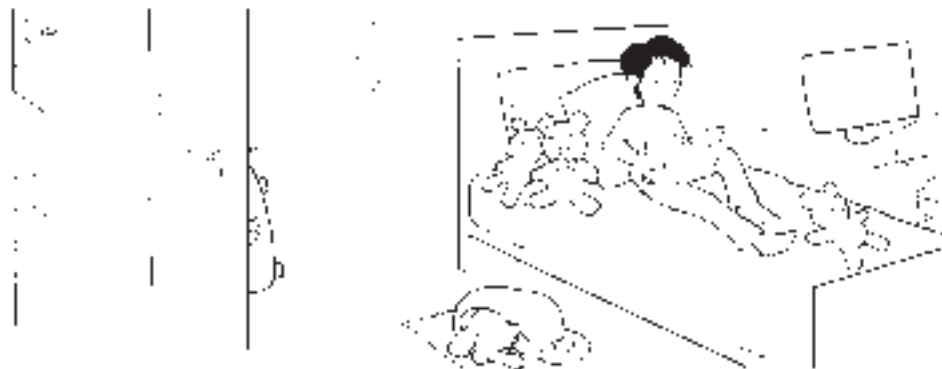
Fold the top part of the page before making photocopies.

- Listen and put the vegetables in the right places.



UCLES Starters Test - Reading and Writing

Instructions: Look and read. Write yes or no.



Example: There is a computer on the desk

yes

1. The boy is reading a comic.

2. There is a skateboard behind the door.

3. The dog is sleeping.

4. There are two teddy bears on the bed.

5. The boy has got blond hair.



UCLES Starters Test - Speaking

Instructions: Show the children the pictures below and use similar questions/statements to the ones given to elicit responses.

Suggested questions/statements:

'Where's the tiger?'

'What's this? What colour is it?'

'What's this? Do you like reading comics?'

'What's this? Have you got a bicycle?'

- the children have to point to the right picture

- point to one of the pictures

- point to one of the pictures

- point to one of the pictures



3.



Trinity GESE Initial Examination – Speaking

Instructions: Set the whole class a reading or writing activity and then call out students individually and initiate a conversation with them, based on the model below. These are only examples of the kinds of phrases that an examiner would use and the responses that they would expect to elicit. The examiners will use a range of visual aids, such as a numbers grid that the children can point to if necessary when asked how old they are. Each conversation should last between five and seven minutes.

Teacher	Student
Hello. My name's ... (Mary). What's your name?	Hello. My name's ... (Francesco).
How old are you? (show numbers grid)	I'm (seven).
My birthday's in ... (June). When's yours? (show calendar)	My birthday's in ... (May).
What colour is this? (show a picture of a ... jumper)	It's ... (blue).
Do you like ... (blue)? What's your favourite colour?	Yes/No. My favourite colour is ... (red).
What's this? (show a picture of a ... ball)	It's a ball.
Stand up, please. Go to the door. Touch the door.	Child stands up, goes to door, touches it.

PROJECTS FOR
CLASS AND TEACHER

Class project

The class project in this issue is an individual project. Each child must draw and colour a picture of TWO of their favourite cartoon characters on two separate sheets of paper. On the reverse sides they must write a physical description of the characters and the clothes they are wearing.

Before asking the children to start drawing, teach/revise the key lexical sets: physical descriptions, parts of the body, colours and clothes.

When the children have finished their drawings (they may spend time in several lessons to complete their pictures),

collect them and send them to **Primary Times**. Each child will receive a special present from LANG-Longman as a token of our appreciation for their efforts.

The complexity of the language the children should use depends on the number of years the children have been in the primary school. The suggestions given below presume that the children are in their fifth year. Children in earlier years of study will be expected to use simpler language and fewer lexical sets.

Class project – December 2009 – Issue 34 Cartoon fever!

Explain to the children: they must choose two of their favourite cartoon characters, draw and colour them and on the reverse side of each sheet write a physical description and a description of the clothes they are wearing.

Ask the children to work in groups and write a list of the cartoon characters they like. Then get them to read their lists and, when necessary, give them the English names of the characters (you can find them through <http://it.wikipedia.org>). Presuming that the children have learned the key lexical sets in previous years of study, use the brainstorming technique to revise them.

Brainstorming

- Ask the children to work in groups and to make a list of adjectives of **physical description** (*tall, short etc.*).
- Mix the groups and ask them to read their lists and to add new words.
- Ask the children to read their lists word by word and write the words on the blackboard so that they can check their spelling.

In this way the children create the lists together on the theory that **individually the children remember very little but collectively they remember a lot!**

Over a period of lessons, use the same methodology to brainstorm **parts of the body, colours and clothes**.

Send the project materials together with the completed project form to:

Primary Times, Class Project – Issue 34
Pearson Italia S.p.A., Corso Trapani 16
10139 Torino

The materials should arrive in our offices by 26.2.2010.

We may publish extracts from some of the projects in future issues of **Primary Times**.

All the materials submitted become the property of Pearson Italia and reproduction rights are reserved.

This form must be completed and attached to the front page of the project materials.

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Name of school _____

Address _____

City _____ CAP _____

E-mail _____ @ _____

Name of teacher _____

Number of children presenting their illustrations and texts _____

Signed by the teacher _____ Date _____



Pearson Italia S.p.A.
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End notes

If you are sending projects or writing by post to *Primary Times*, please note the modification to the name of our company from PPBM S.p.A. to Pearson Italia S.p.A.

One of the implications of the reforms to the Italian primary school system is that there are many new teachers of the English language, many of whom do not have a profound knowledge of the culture of Great Britain as they have specialised in other curriculum subjects.

Aspects of this 'civiltà' must be passed on to the children who are expected to be able to compare their own traditions with those of Great Britain by the end of year five.

Teachers who need background information on Christmas will find this site very useful.

www.woodlands-junior.kent.sch.uk/customs/Xmas/

It is a site built and up-dated by the children of an English primary school.

Background information about Christmas traditions such as cards, carols, crackers, Boxing Day, jokes and pantomimes can be found here.

The next issue of *Primary Times* will be published at the end of February 2010 and should arrive in time for the lessons dedicated to the theme of Easter.

IMPORTANT NOTICE

Primary Times is only distributed through a free subscription service and during seminars and conventions for teachers of English.

Primary Times is published three times a year, in March, October and December. Teachers can register subscriptions either on-line at www.lang-longman.it or by using the coupon below. Future issues of *Primary Times* will be posted to home addresses.

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34

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Signed

Date