

Traditions of Christmas

(NC)—It's pretty difficult to imagine a Christmas without Santa Claus or a Christmas tree, but in many parts of the world the appearance of Santa would puzzle people and a tree would be out of keeping with the Christmas spirit.

Roses Inc., representing Canada's Rose Growers, devised a special quiz to test your knowledge on Christmas customs around the world. Read on and see how many correct answers you can score.

- 1) There's a country where kids don't know about Santa Claus. On Christmas Eve they wait for an old woman on a broomstick to give them presents. What is she called and from what country does she come?
- 2) In Belgium and the Netherlands, people would gasp if they saw Santa Claus on a sleigh pulled by eight reindeers. How does St. Nicholas travel about in these countries?
- 3) In another country, people would shudder if someone brought an evergreen tree into the house on Christmas. Instead of the tree, wild flowers are used as seasonal decorations. Why, and in what country?
- 4) Christmas can be a solemn holiday as well as a joyful one, particularly for adults. Italy and Spain are two countries where some grownups don't think singing joyous Christmas carols is the only way to celebrate the holiday. How do they celebrate?
- 5) For centuries it has been a custom in Canada to have a symbol or token of Christmas spotlighted in a place of honor in your home. What are some of those symbols and where are they placed?
- 6) The custom of giving gifts for Christmas is believed to have grown from a different holiday that was celebrated before Christ was born. What holiday and in what country did this celebration take place?
- 7) All of us know that a Christmas tree would not be decorated properly without twinkling lights. In one country, however, flowers are used to decorate the tree. What is the traditional flower of this country and how is it used to decorate the tree and around the home?

These Christmas puzzlers all have relatively easy answers so read on and see how well you did.

- 1) Children from all around the world love the gifts and the special plans associated with Christmas. In every nation children celebrate the holidays with traditional customs. Canadian children leave milk and cookies by the fire for Santa Clause. Dutch children in Holland fill their wooden shoes with roses so as to please the old woman called "La Befana." "La Befana" makes her Christmas rides on a broomstick, leaving presents for good children and ashes in the shoes of bad ones.
- 2) In Belgium and the Netherlands, St. Nicholas rides a white horse instead of travelling with reindeer and a sleigh.
- 3) In Sweden, wild flowers were flowers grown in someone's garden. The most popular and colorful floral choice of most Swedes were roses. Oftentimes irises and fresh holly were also used. Picking fresh roses and other flowers this December may be somewhat difficult, depending on where you live and the climate. By making a personal visit to your neighborhood florist you can choose from a wide variety of fresh roses, and seasonal flowers and plants.
- 4) Devout Catholics in Italy and Spain often observe a day-long fast which begins at sunset on December 23.
- 5) Many families have a beloved

Madonna and Child—a print, a painting or perhaps an old icon or triptych they bring out during the Christmas season. It's a happy

custom that tells the true meaning of Christmas.

- 6) The custom of giving gifts for Christmas dates back to the ancient Roman Mid-Winter Festival.
- 7) In the country of Austria fresh roses placed in water tubes were

used to decorate the tree. Roses when placed on the tree were felt to symbolize the birth of life and the rewards of a new year. Roses in several vibrant colors and the spe-

cial water tubes you need to decorate your tree can be purchased at your local florist. Calling one to two weeks in advance of when you need them insures you the best quality blooms available.

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