

Playstage
Junior

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WHO INVENTED CHRISTMAS?



The Sedgewick family suddenly find themselves taking part in a reality TV show to find out who actually invented Christmas. A jolly romp through the ages, experiencing Christmases from ancient times to WWII.

Written
by
Lynn
Brittney



MUSIC

Lyrics for 5 suggested songs included. Inclusion of these songs is optional. Please feel free to amend the script if you decided to omit any or all of the songs. The full lyrics are given but, in practice, most schools prefer to cut the songs down to about half of their written length. The Tudor Dance can be any piece of suitable music (perhaps Greensleeves?)

Backing tracks can be purchased and downloaded for a modest fee from various sources, as shown below. Or, you could source the original artiste's recording from amongst parents/grandparents and just have the children sing along to it, as many schools do. If you cannot source them from amongst the school community, then Amazon sell very cheap downloadable MP3 tracks for hundreds of thousands of songs. These can be purchased, downloaded on to a computer and then burnt on to a CD for performance. Below we give the song title and source of backing tracks. Where it says "Traditional" or "Disney" this means there is no backing track we know of but it may be in sheet music form in your school or on a children's school music compilation CD.

WHO INVENTED CHRISTMAS? SONGS

We Wish You a Merry Christmas	<i>Traditional</i>
Jingle Bells	<i>Traditional</i>
Tudor Dance (any)	<i>Traditional</i>
Rudolph The Red Nosed Reindeer (Harry Connick Jnr.)	www.ameritz.co.uk
Santa Claus is Coming to Town (Bing Crosby)	www.ameritz.co.uk
Have Yourself A Merry Little Christmas (Judy Garland)	www.ameritz.co.uk

WHO INVENTED CHRISTMAS?

CAST LIST

MUM

QUEEN VICTORIA

DAD

CHARLES DICKENS

MARK

SANTA CLAUS

GEMMA

MRS MOPP

HOLLY

MITCHELL TEMPLETON

TWO CAMERAMEN (*non speaking*)

TWO SOUND OPERATORS (*non speaking*)

TWO COSTUME PEOPLE (*non speaking*)

TWO MAKE UP ARTISTES (*non speaking*)

KING AGGA

SLAVE

PERSIAN

GREEK WOMAN

MAXIMUS THE ROMAN

PROFESSOR LUDWIG

ODIN

YULE GOAT

YULE ELF

WINTERMAN

DRUID

DARK HELPER

BISHOP NICHOLAS

HENRY VIII

SERVANT

HENRY COLE

TOM SMITH

27 speaking parts (some could be doubled) and 8 non-speaking parts (flexible – you could have one of each instead of two) RUNNING TIME – 40 MINS with songs..

WHO INVENTED CHRISTMAS?

SCENE 1 (*Continuous scene*)

The Sedgewick family home. There is a decorated Christmas tree with electric lights on, in the background. There is a sofa in front of it on which Dad is sitting watching TV with headphones on. Mum is sitting on the other end reading her Kindle. There is a table and chairs to one side with a lit standard lamp. Mark is sitting on one side of the table, with his headphones on, playing a computer game with a joystick on his laptop. Holly is seated the other side of the table, also on her laptop. Gemma is seated on the floor, listening to her Ipod with headphones on. No-one is speaking to anyone else. There is a large amount of crumpled wrapping paper on the floor. Enter Mitchell Templeton – documentary presenter – who carries a microphone and speaks to the audience in hushed tones.

MITCHELL

Here we have a typical family Christmas in the year 2012. As you can see, everything is silent. The presents – all pieces of state of the art technology – have been opened. Everyone – to use modern jargon – is in their own bubble. This is how modern Christmases are spent.

MOTHER (*looking up*)

Sshh!

MITCHELL (*ignoring her and carrying on*)

In a moment, these unsuspecting people will find that they are totally cut off from modern technology and they will be forced to engage in our experiment of reliving the Christmases of the past.

(MITCHELL gets a device out of his pocket, which has a button on the top.)

Five, four, three, two, one.

(He presses the button and all the lights on the Christmas tree go out, the standard lamp goes out, the TV and laptops go blank. There is a general outcry from the children and Dad.)

DAD *(Taking off his headphones)*

What's happened to the TV?

HOLLY

My laptop's not working!

MARK

Same here.

MOTHER *(looking up from her Kindle)*

The lights have gone off!

MITCHELL *(stepping into the room)*

Yes. That's because we have turned off the power.

DAD

We? Who's we?

MITCHELL *(Taking a business card from his pocket and giving it to DAD)*

Historical Productions Ltd. Reality television specialists.

MUM

Reality TV? Do you mean we are going to be on TV?

MITCHELL

Yes. But only when we have removed the final battery operated gadgets. *(He takes MUM's Kindle)*

MUM

Oy!

MITCHELL

And this one too. *(He takes GEMMA's Ipod)*

GEMMA

Hey!

MITCHELL

Right. Now I think we're ready. *(Calling)* Costume! Make-up please! Camera One and Two ready!

(Suddenly a flurry of people come onstage. Two cameramen with cameras, two sound boom operators, two make-up artistes and two costume people pulling a rail of clothes on wheels. MITCHELL moves forward to the front of the stage and begins to address the audience, whilst the others put Viking costumes on the family and smear dirt on their faces.)

MITCHELL

Many centuries ago, long before Jesus Christ was born, people all over the world celebrated the annual renewal of the sun after the shortest day of the year – the midwinter solstice. In fact, the first recorded people to do this – about two thousand five hundred years BCE - were the ancient Mesopotamians with their Festival of Zagmuk. Over now to our Mesopotamian expert – King Agga.

(KING AGGA comes on the opposite side of the stage, with a hand held microphone. Camera 2 moves over to film him.)

KING AGGA

Thank you Mitchell. Yes, the Festival of Zagmuk. Basically, we believed that our chief god, Marduk, had driven away the evil spirits that cause chaos but, as the year drew to an end, these evil spirits began to creep back into our lives.

MITCHELL

So what did you do, Your Majesty?

KING AGGA

Well, we made replicas of the evil spirits and burnt them all on a big bonfire, then we gave each other gifts. Then the king – in other words, me – was supposed to die, so that he could go to the underworld and help Mardock round up all the evil spirits and lock them away again.

MITCHELL

Good grief! Do you mean that the king had to die every year!?

KING AGGA

Ah...no...not really. We thought of a way round that. *(He calls offstage)* Bring on the slave!

(Two men bring on a slave, who has his hands tied in front of him.)

A slave or criminal would be crowned king for 12 days over the Festival period and then he would die at the end of it and I would be made king again.

SLAVE

This is really ruining the Festival of Marduk for me.

KING AGGA

Nonsense! You get to be king and do whatever you want for twelve whole days!

SLAVE

What...anything?

KING AGGA

Absolutely.

SLAVE

It still doesn't seem like a good deal to me.

(Enter the PERSIAN and the GREEK WOMAN)

PERSIAN *(grabbing the microphone from KING AGGA)*

Excuse me I would just like to say that this celebration was stolen from the Persians.

MITCHELL

And who are you?

PERSIAN

King Humbaba – and we were doing this years before he was, in our Festival of Sacaea. Only we weren't as barbaric as to kill the pretend king – he just went back to being a slave after the Festival.

SLAVE

That sounds like a better deal. Can I emigrate to Persia?

GREEK WOMAN *(Taking the microphone from the PERSIAN)*

Actually, they are both wrong. We Greeks started it all and it was a totally female festival of midwinter – you know – we sacrificed a goat and everyone had a jolly good time. The Festival of Lenaia it was called.

SLAVE

All women?

GREEK WOMAN

Yes.

SLAVE

Nice food?

GREEK WOMAN

Of course.

SLAVE

I've changed my mind, I'm emigrating to Greece.

MITCHELL *(to the audience)*

So it appears that no-one can agree which civilisation started the business of a midwinter celebration.

(KING AGGA, the PERSIAN and the GREEK WOMAN all start arguing with each other. The SLAVE runs across to MITCHELL)

SLAVE

Excuse me. Must dash. Got a boat to Greece to catch.

(He runs offstage.)

MITCHELL *(shouting)*

QUIET!

(Everyone stops arguing)