

CHRISTMAS

SPOTLIGHT

Meet
your
new
writers
and
much
more...

*READ ABOUT
ALL THINGS
CHRISTMAS!*

11.12.23

Contents

- Get to know your writers
- The festive food we all love, but never respect
- A guide to Christmas movies
- Fabulous or Flop? Comparing the Grinch movies
- Have over commercialised movies forgotten the true meaning of Christmas?
- A Christmas story
- Competition
- Reverse Advent
- The True Meaning of Christmas
- If Jesus was alive today...
- Chrizzmas
- Questionnaire

Get to know your new writers!

Charlotte

Favourite Subject - Philosophy, Religion, and Ethics

Favourite Song - King

Favourite Movie - 10 Things I Hate About you

Favourite Artists - Taylor Swift and Lucy Dacus

Favourite Book - Sex Object: A Memoir

Sasha

Favourite Subject - Photography

Favourite Song - Somebody that I used to Know

Favourite Movie - Mamma Mia

Favourite Artists - Bruno Mars

Favourite Book - Little Women

Emma

Favourite Subject - English lit

Favourite Song - Bye Bye Baby

Favourite Movie - Love Actually

Favourite Artists - Ricky Montgomery

Favourite Book - Know my name: *a memoir* - Chanel Miller

Lucy

Favourite Subject - Philosophy

Favourite Song - Friday I'm in love

Favourite Movie - The Hunger Games

Favourite Artists - Phoebe Bridgers

Favourite Book - The Bell Jar



Get to know your new writers!

Freddy

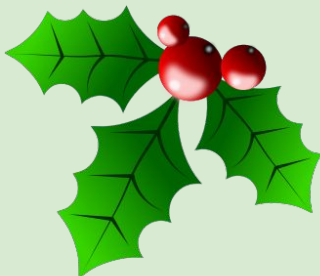
Favourite Subject - Drama
Favourite Song - Love, Ire and Song
Favourite Movie - Spirited Away
Favourite Artists - The Vaccines
Favourite Book - Good Omens

Eleanor

Favourite Subject - History
Favourite Song - Ivy (Taylor Swift)
Favourite Movie - Portrait of a Lady on Fire
Favourite Artists - Taylor Swift and Maisie Peters
Favourite Book - The Seven Husbands of Evelyn Hugo (Taylor Jenkins Reid)

Freya

Favourite Subject - Sport Science
Favourite Song - White Ferrari
Favourite Movie - Home Alone
Favourite Artists - The Weeknd, SZA
Favourite Book - Reminders of him



The Festive Food we all Love, But Never Respect.

By. Freddy Jones

Everybody loves festive food, we can all agree it's one of the few highlights of the most miserable season of the year. The tasty turkey, the voluminous number of veggies, and my personal favourite: the spectacular stuffing; this fanciful feast is a staple for the holidays. However, embedded within this gluttonous glee, is a cream-filled layer of ignorance that I aim to completely make a hash of. (Excuse the pun). We are all overlooking a truly appetising anchor - the core to the season, ensuring love, peace, and the spirit of Christmas to last throughout the lead up to the fateful day:

Festive-Themed Supermarket Sandwiches, especially when they are part of a Meal Deal.

- *Shortened to FeTSS for easy consumption. (Get it?)*

Now, I know what you might be thinking:

'How do FeTSS fill me with love, joy, and Christmas spirit?'

'Christmas music and films fill me with way more festive cheer than silly old FeTSS'

or even,

'Surely FeTSS are just another example of major corporations capitalising on a season originally founded on love, corrupting the message in order to increase profits for the oligarchical upper class?'

Well, to that I say:

There were already other people writing about all of that, and I like sandwiches quite a lot.

Within this insightful exposee, not only will we embark on a savoury adventure, discovering the truly most delicious FeTSS, but perhaps along the way we will grow to respect these commonly-overlooked treasures. Maybe, after you read this article of course, you may even journey out into the real world in order to experience the true bliss in which these angelic treats can ensue upon you. However, this brings us to our question. Throughout my studies of the sandwich-arts, I have toiled to discover the answer to one interrogative question.

Which Supermarket Chain has the Best Festive-Themed Supermarket Sandwich?

Throughout this list, not only will our contestants be judged on festive flavour, but a variety of expectations. Price, Meal Deal Variety, Dryness, Size, Taste, Snack Support, and Individual Flair, all serve as some of the many criteria that a true FeTSS critic, such as myself, must hold these competitors to. Each FeTSS will be granted a score out of 11 - It's a prettier number than 10 - and we shall go from worst to best.

So then, everyone get comfortable, as we start from the bottom:

Number 5: The Shame of Sainsbury's

Sainsbury's... What happened? As a proud Sainsbury's shopper, it is frankly appalling that I would be betrayed like this. Not only are you slowly falling into the trap of the so-called 'luxury meal deals', a plague on all that is good in the world, but even then, it is below average at best. The recent surge in the 'better' £5 Meal Deal is shocking nobody, we all see what you are trying to do, pull the wool over our eyes, until we wake up and realise that the classy £3 Meal Deal is lost in the past. And, even then, the sandwiches still struggle to even take part in the same race as its competition! It is £3.50 for a Meal Deal, fairly standard in these trying times, for the smaller of the sandwiches, the most exciting of the festive treats are locked away behind the staggering £5 price of the 'bigger' Meal Deal. Now, my regular Sainsbury's is rather large, but even within this hulking 'supermarché' (as they say in France), the selection of drink and snack to top off the meal is frankly lacking. Boring sides, a couple of bags of crisps, and some disappointing chocolate bars, is all you can expect while shopping for snacks, and, while drinks fare slightly better, many are hidden away in various aisles throughout the store, with the mass of milk based drinks hidden away somewhere that even most trained in the Way of the Meal Deal cannot locate. Do not even get me started on the taste of many of the sandwiches, with the usual delicious 'Pigs in Blankets' and my usual favourite, 'Turkey Feast' both tasting bland, boring, and outright unoriginal. You can throw some basic Christmassy ingredients between some bread, but it does NOT make it a true FeTSS, Sainsbury's. The cheaper sandwiches are shrinking, as an attempt to push the scam that is the £5 Meal Deal, and there just does not seem to be any passion in the sandwich department anymore. The 'Ho Ho Hot One' seems interesting, but it is underwhelming, expensive and, honestly, offensive to the taste buds. A largely disappointing performance from this usually reliable shop. Sainsbury's? Please do better next year.



**Sainsbury's
Over-Priced
Rubbish.
£4.50 Indv £5 MD**

Number 4: Co-Op? More like Co-Operate-Your-Sandwich-Production-Better.

Co-op is a weird one. While being a very varied chain, with delicious freshly baked goods (including festive ones), the Meal Deal is largely disappointing. The sandwiches are expensive, being £3.25 alone, and the Meal Deals being a surprisingly high £4 without a membership, or £3.50 with. Not only are the sandwiches incredibly mediocre, with some of the driest turkey I have even put in my mouth, but the selection is incredibly limited. There are 4 Christmas sandwiches, with my local Co-op only displaying 2, and rarely a third, and they all act as limited versions of the usual classics. It seems that this year, Co-op is rationing the sandwich fillings. The sandwiches were averaged sized, yet portioned for a child, and the taste resembles cardboard. Frankly, not the best. Not only this, but most snacks do not even count as part of the meal deal. Disappointing! Now, don't get me wrong, I think overall, Christmas at Co-op is really great; there are little jokes around my local shop, the Turkey, Stuffing and Cranberry hot pastry that they make is absolutely divine, but unfortunately these are not part of the Meal Deal, therefore I cannot count it within this very official, very fact-based article. Also, side tangent, the Meal Deal at Co-op is absolutely rubbish. The snack collection is barely existent so it never feels worth it to invest in a Meal Deal, and not just a hot baked good and a drink, (my current favourite being the Wild Cherry flavoured Rubicon Spring sparkling water. If you haven't tried it, you should.) All in all, Co-op has managed to produce a really quite disappointing Christmas selection, only made so clear by the juxtaposing joy that the rest of the festive environment instils. It is so close to being great, make the sandwiches a bit more interesting, or even add hot food to the meal deals, and you will sky rocket on the charts, Co-op.

4/11



**The Shame of
Co-op.
£3.25 Indv
£3.50 MD**

Number 3: Average Aldi

I don't think anyone is surprised by this. Aldi, and its practically identical twin Lidl, are widely known for being fairly reliable, yet boring supermarkets. It is so average, I wrote a poem on how average it is:

**Aldi's aisles, a monochrome sea,
Generic products lack identity.
Bland and average, a sterile sight,
No charm, no warmth, just fluorescent light.**

**Shopping carts squeak on linoleum floors,
No allure in this grocery store.
A symphony of mediocrity plays,
Aldi's essence lost in the mundane craze.**

It's really quite average, okay? The sandwiches taste fine, their sizes are fine, prices are decent, but the one thing holding it back from being at all something to write home about, is the fact that there isn't anything that stands out. Nothing spectacular, nothing interesting really. I don't even know what else to say about it all. To quote the critically acclaimed 2017 feature film, 'The Emoji Movie'; 'Meh.'

5.5/11



**Aldi's Alright
£1.99 Indv
N/A MD**

Number 2: The Trials of Tesco

Many people would be surprised to see Tesco only reaching second place. It is a shop catapulted in popularity due to the legend of their ultimate Meal Deal. They have scrumptious signature snacks, a decent price, even after the Price Purge that the Tories reaped upon Meal Deals across the country, and the trustworthy, reliable food we all look for in a supermarket. The food is tasty, you can get a lot for your money! The FeTSS themselves are decent, with a large variety of sandwiches, each with decent filling, and at a decent size! My personal favourite is the duo dish of one-half Turkey and Trimmings, and the other half Pigs Under Blankets. Neither are too dry, and both are sufficiently tasty. However, what I personally love about Tesco Meal Deals around the holidays, are the Pork and Cranberry pies. When I tell you that there is not a single other snack that forms the perfect side for a Meal Deal, you have to believe me, because it is absolutely incredible. Tesco is a very good shop, with some pretty decent Meal Deal material. An overall good job done!

10/11



**A Treat from
Tesco
£3 Indv
£3.40 MD**

Number 1: The Christmas King

ASDA.

Let me explain.

Although ASDA may not seem like the best supermarket in world, which I completely agree with, nor are the Meal Deals particularly exciting, with the expensive, 'Buy 3, Get the Cheapest Free' scheme being notoriously tricky when it comes to pricing. No, the reason for this shocking placement is for one reason, and one reason only. My own personal bias. When I say that the ASDA's Christmas sandwich is most probably the most delicious sandwich I have ever eaten, that is NOT an exaggeration. I beg of you, the next time you are near an ASDA try the Turkey and Trimmings sandwich, or whatever it's called, as it is the most filled, delicious masterpiece that has been created this season. In fact, this sandwich alone was what inspired me to write this article. It contains; turkey, sausage, bacon, stuffing, cranberry sauce, some ketchup-esque sauce, all topped by what can only be described as gravy-naise. It is paradise between two slices of bread. When I say that I leap at any excuse to visit ASDA, just for the soul reason of purchasing this silly little sandwich, I mean it. It is rich, it is tasty, it is perfectly moist, creating an excellent balance of sweet and savoury, with the cranberry sauce contrasting the surprisingly flavoursome meats. I'm getting hungry just thinking about it. I regularly buy this, yet as my supermarket trips are usually in the morning, it is always gone long before lunch, and you can ask anyone I am close to about how much I rant about how tasty this sandwich is. I don't even care about a single other of my so called factors, at this point I might as well be honest, this entire article was just so I can rant even more about this sandwich. It is so good. This is what every FeTSS, or whatever silly acronym I came up with, should be. It is honestly incredible. I would give an arm and a leg to have one of these each and every day.

I'm not really sure how to end this thing. A moral of the story? Some deep profound message about the commercialisation of this holiday? Another poem? All I do know, is that I highly recommend this sandwich to everyone. Especially if there's another soul out there who has a weird fixation on Meal Deals like I do. So, without further or do, I wish you all a Merry Christmas, and a Happy New Year!

11/11



**The Love of my
Life
£3 Indv
£3+ MD**

A Guide to Christmas Movies

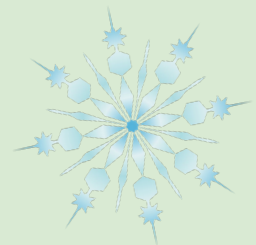
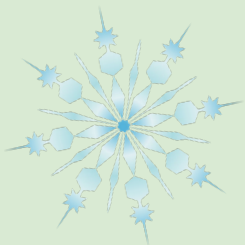
By. Emma Bazell

The holiday season is upon us, which obviously means it's time for us to put away our differences on earth, goodwill towards others etc, etc, and kickback with a great Christmas movie.

No one would argue that early efforts were anything but a Christmas movie, these days, the question comes up frequently: What exactly *is* a Christmas movie? Is merely being set at Christmas enough? Or is there some elusive other element that makes a Christmas movie a Christmas movie? It's the old, now tired, "Does *Die Hard* count?" debate. (It's not by the way). Anyway. To aid your endless struggle to choose a perfect Christmas movie, I have compiled a list of the 8 best Christmas movies of our time.

Honourable mentions:

Miracle on 34th Street, Home Alone, National Lampoon's Christmas Vacation, The Holiday, Die Hard (by Freddy's request)





It's a Wonderful Life- Frank Capra, 1946 Initially received with faint praise, this sentimental story of George Bailey, the decent small-town guy dedicated to family and community, was intended by Capra and his pre-war star James Stewart to celebrate their joint return from service in the second world war.

On the point of suicidal despair on Christmas Eve, Bailey is escorted by probationary angel Clarence (Henry Travers) around his native Bedford Falls to discover how worthwhile his life has been. It's Dickens's Christmas Carol with Bob Cratchit as its hero, and is now the Christmas movie

Grinch (2000)- In this live-action adaptation of the beloved children's tale by Dr. Seuss, the reclusive green Grinch (Jim Carrey) decides to ruin Christmas for the cheery citizens of Whoville. Reluctantly joined by his hapless dog, Max, the Grinch comes down from his mountaintop home and sneaks into town to swipe everything holiday-related from the Whos. However, the bitter grump finds a hitch in his plans when he encounters the endearing Cindy Lou Who (Taylor Momsen).- Charlotte's favourite.



Polar Express- It's Christmas Eve, and a young boy is waiting to catch a glimpse of Santa as his belief begins to fizzle out. When a train pulls up instead, he soon finds himself on the Polar Express, chuffing away to the North Pole, with scores of other children. At the North Pole, he meets the elves and Santa, and waits to see which child will be given the first gift of Christmas. His life takes a turn after he encounters special people that make his journey of self-discovery important.



Love Actually- Nine intertwined stories examine the complexities of the one emotion that connects us all: love. Among the characters explored are David (Hugh Grant), the handsome newly elected British prime minister who falls for a young junior staffer (Martine McCutcheon), Sarah (Laura Linney), a graphic designer whose devotion to her mentally ill brother complicates her love life, and Harry (Alan Rickman), a married man tempted by his attractive new secretary.- Emma's favourite.



The Muppets Christmas Carol- The Muppets perform the classic Dickens holiday tale, with Kermit the Frog playing Bob Cratchit, the put-upon clerk of stingy Ebenezer Scrooge (Michael Caine). Other Muppets: Miss Piggy, Gonzo, Fozzie Bear and Sam the Eagle, weave in and out of the story, while Scrooge receives visits from spirits of three Christmases past, present and future. They show him the error of his self-serving ways, but the miserable old man seems to be past any hope of redemption and happiness.



Santa Paws- Santa Claus and his faithful canine companion Santa Paws leave their chilly home at the North Pole on an important mission. They must try to persuade the heir of one of their greatest benefactors, toy store owner Mr Huckle Buckle, to continue with his grandfather's good works.- Lucy's favourite



Elf- Buddy (Will Ferrell) was accidentally transported to the North Pole as a toddler and raised to adulthood among Santa's elves. Unable to shake the feeling that he doesn't fit in, adult Buddy travels to New York, in elf uniform, in search of his real father. As it happens, this is Walter Hobbs (James Caan), a cynical businessman. After a DNA test proves this, Walter attempts to start a relationship with the childlike Buddy with increasingly chaotic results.- Sasha's favourite.



Prep & Landing- Wayne is an elf who believes that Christmas is just a job. After working for 227 years preparing homes for Santa's arrival, he wonders if all his efforts make any difference. His patience is put to the test when he is paired with Lanny, an idealistic rookie who embraces the holiday spirit. The elves encounter unexpected challenges on their mission, and Wayne learns that his job does indeed have impact in a very surprising way.- Freddy's favourite

‘Dr Seuss’ The Grinch’ (2018): Fabulous or Flop?

By. Eleanor Partington

Contains spoilers

Personally, I grew up watching the 2000 film ‘How the Grinch stole Christmas’ and adored it immensely, rewatching it as much as I could every year. I was nervously anticipating the 2018 remake of this classic, knowing I wouldn’t like it as much as I did the original, but I knew I had to watch it in case I was pleasantly surprised. So, the real question is, Dr Seuss’ The Grinch: fabulous or flop?



Firstly, I would like to answer the question: what makes the 2000 ‘How the Grinch stole Christmas’ so good? I believe that the main success of this film was the character given to the Grinch. He became understandable and relatable to a wide audience as someone who had been bullied and made to mistrust those around him, causing him to forever hate the society which had shunned him. He wasn’t a character who was just ignorant, but a character with depth who needed to be understood and cared for. His hatred for Christmas grew from the isolation he had suffered at school and particularly when he had tried to open up and care for someone who he was interested in, ending in him being shamed. He was a selfless character as a child, but was turned bitter by society. This is so reflective of our own world, creating a mirror that people can use to assess their own lives when watching this film. We understand the hurt of the Grinch and we are reminded of the core value of kindness, something that is particularly prevalent at Christmas time. However, this narrative is somewhat lost in the 2018 version of the Grinch.



‘Dr Seuss’ The Grinch’ (2018) was the second animated film to be made from Dr Seuss’ book and the third film overall. The basic storyline of the Grinch hating Christmas, trying to destroy everyone’s Christmas, and then loving it is still the same however, it is nowhere near the same standard as the 2000 version. The film’s quality is noticeably better due to the improvement of technology over the past 20 years, as we can notice due to the bright colours and vivid characters. This would be a positive thing, yet the producers chose to have no noticeable difference between the brightness of Whoville and the Grinch’s cave and character. This lack of change removes the danger and bitterness that the Grinch is known for. It is like the producers wanted us to see him as a lovable character, instead of the evil one that he supposedly is. This choice of colour can truly influence the audience’s perception on who we are supposed to view the Grinch as; is he evil? Is he misunderstood? Is he nice? This is completely different to the 2000 version in which the Grinch is living in darkness, surrounded by hatred and disgust, while Whoville is filled with brightness and cheer. This just illustrates one of the failures of the newest adaptations of the Grinch, as we fail to interpret who the Grinch is, through the setting changes that we see.

‘Dr Seuss’ The Grinch’ (2018): Fabulous or Flop?

By. Eleanor Partington

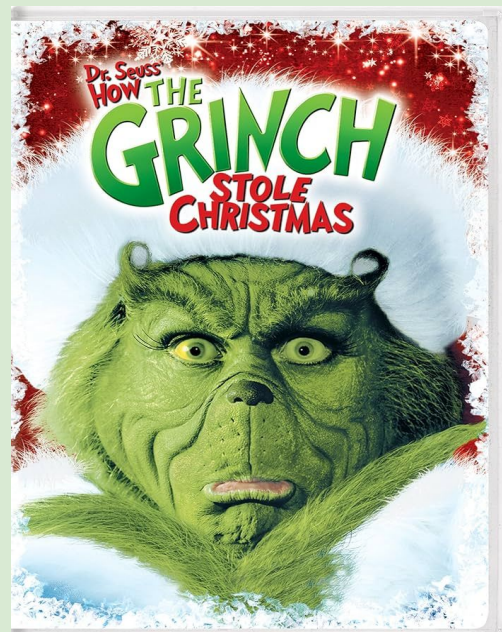
Contains spoilers

I would also like to draw your attention to the fact that the 2018 Grinch film has no kind of character development. In the 2000s film we can see the failures and cracks of the society of the Whos, as well as how that affected the character of the Grinch. However, in the 2018 film we don't truly see the Grinch change drastically and Whoville is supposedly perfect in every way. I feel that this takes away from the meaningful message that was related in the first version of the film.

In the 2000s film, Whoville was obsessed with consumerism and outdoing one another during the Christmas season, completely ignoring the true meaning of Christmas. This is interrupted by the character of Cindy Lou as this innocent child begins to feel lost in a world full of hatred disguised as love. She then reaches out to the Grinch, who has been wronged by that society, and tries to help him find love again. Her innocence saves Whoville in the end and makes it a happier place for everyone. In contrast, the 2018 film makes Cindy Lou the same as everyone else. She becomes irrelevant, but is still shown to the audience with no clear link to the Grinch.

In the end, the Grinch is invited to a Christmas party with everyone, including Cindy Lou, and his heart grows, yet it doesn't seem to truly change his character as he wasn't that evil to begin with. Interestingly, the Whos don't seem to change either, as they didn't really hate the Grinch from the beginning. Sadly, I feel that this takes away the magical message that was related in the 2000s version of the Grinch. The 2018 version becomes just another meaningless, feel-good Christmas story, but the one made in the 2000s was so much more.

In conclusion, I feel that the 2018 film was fine. It certainly generates a Christmasy feeling that can be shared with a family or your loved ones. However, in comparison to the masterpiece of the 2000s, it does not come close to being good. We learn so much more from 'How the Grinch Stole Christmas' (2000) and it instils important values in society, making it a far better film.



Have over commercialised movies, forgot the true meaning of Christmas? Or do some do it just right?

Love, actually, is all around – a piece by Emma Bazell

The word love has been tossed around by everybody and not very many people really understand the true meaning of the lexis. I think one reason why people use the word love so carelessly is because of what our culture portrays it as in books and movies. Love is portrayed as a casual feeling that can come and go. However, the movie 'Love Actually' (2003), by Richard Curtis, demonstrates how the connections between people are limitless and that love is a concept that has the ability to lift people up and tear people down, not a mere feeling that may pass.

The movie follows the lives of nine different relationships and the audience is able to see every aspect of love: romantic, platonic, familial and others. This film does an admirable job of showing that not all loves are happy and congenial all the time. Seija Rankin points out that "people do refer to their desired relationships in the context of popular films", which is why Christmas movies are so important, especially in a culture that romanticises everything. People need to see real world examples of what love looks like. They need to be aware that love does not always go right, and everything is not always flowers and daisies. 'Love actually' is just that, portraying love as it actually is. What this film tries to showcase is that societal values do not always allow these relationships to blossom because of the perceived licentiousness even though western culture has surged ahead to an advanced state of permissiveness, many unspoken relationships between couples are treated with derision and suspicion.

Loving someone can be a completely captivating experience unlike any other. When that special someone doesn't return your feelings, you can feel crushed. Unrequited love can hurt badly, but you can also move on from it. For example, the story of Juliet, Peter, and Mark. Juliet and Peter got married at the beginning of the film, and Peter (Mark's best man) filmed the whole encounter, and even surprised the newlyweds by serenading them, seemingly genuinely. Although Mark is shown to enjoy himself on the wedding day, pouring love and congratulations on the new couple, secretly, it appears as if the wall has come crashing down on him. Juliet had the impression that Mark did not like her as he never really made any attempts to get close to her or get to know her in any way. Later, when he watches the video in his private studio, Juliet trespasses into the finer details of the video, including Mark's admission that he has always been in love with Juliet. When she confronts him over the topic, he says that while there is no doubt that he has always been in love with her, he did not press ahead because of a strong fear of rejection.

Have over commercialised movies, forgot the true meaning of Christmas?

Apparently, he was so deeply in love that he couldn't imagine being rejected by the love of his life. Mark was walking a tightrope on his feelings for Juliet. On the one hand, he was too proud to admit it, but on the other hand, he needed the reassurance of Juliet's presence in his life. For this reason, he didn't mind hanging out with her new lover and husband Peter. He would consider one thing that, somehow, he would remain a very important person in Juliet's life, if not the most important. Love Actually highlights the unhappy sides of a relationship that movies never show, that being when love cannot be returned by the one they desire. It shows the audience that actually, not all love is some picture perfect fantasy as it is so often portrayed on screen. There is no certainty in love. It is a risk we all must take. It can be a very slippery slope to tread regardless of any protective barriers we may have built. Love is a wonderful thing but it also bears the most poignant sorrow.

Another storyline follows the young bachelor British Prime Minister David having a secret crush for his attractive personal assistant Natalie. While on one hand, he's unwilling to admit his craving for her nubile charms, on the other hand, he does not want to create a scandal for the avid British media who watches his every move at 10 Downing street. No matter how David tried to keep the status quo, his feelings could not be brushed away forever. In one of the scenes, when the visiting American President makes passes at Natalie, David is seen frothing with jealousy. It forces him to come out of his shell and deliver a strongly worded action against the American President's bullying tactics. David's jealousy for his unspoken love, and sudden want to prove himself to her, unexpectedly changed the citizens of England's future showing the power love can have over you. In the scene where David radically calls out the American in his speech, "I love that word 'relationship'. Covers all manner of sins, doesn't it? I fear that this has become a bad relationship. A relationship based on the President taking exactly what he wants and casually ignoring all those things that really matter to, erm... Britain.". This outward demonstration is a failure of an attempt to suppress his core feelings of intimacy for the object of his affection. His final outburst at the American President reflects the deeply buried feelings of love he harboured for Natalie. It's the intimacy which counts in the end. The couple's happy ending contrasts to the unfortunate ending of Mark's love triangle, redeeming the audience's confused view on love with the stereotypical happy ending.

Have over commercialised movies, forgotten the true meaning of Christmas?

However, it was not always an easy journey for the pair but their crave to be together overrides these problems, presenting the idea that love always wins. David's love, at the end of the day, was the most powerful weapon he wielded. Conveying that love is the most boundless power in our world, it rips down a barrier and creates a universe where everything is in harmony.

In the words of Jane Austen, "It is not what we think or feel that makes us who we are. It is what we do. Or fail to do." - Sense and Sensibility. In love, actions speak louder than words and this movie perfectly presents that. From bungling Jamie learning Portuguese to propose to his foreign love Aurelia, to the adorable Sam valiantly breaking through the doors of Heathrow airport to say goodbye to his crush Joanna, the one (iykyk) for him. It is the strength of this feeling that makes love the most powerful emotion that most of us will ever experience. People can do some dreadful things out of hate and fear, but love can push us to do much worse. Love, ultimately is a sacrifice, whatever the relationship, and it must be the most powerful force in the universe because as human beings, we make true sacrifices for nothing less. Christmas is a time to emulate these feelings of love and Love Actually does this perfectly. Of course Christmas is about the birth of Jesus, and how he came to give us love, hope, and joy. And that message will never change as years pass on. However, Christmas is not just a celebration of God's love for everyone. It is also a celebration of our love for one another too. So this festive season when you're doing the frantic rush of Christmas dinner shopping, buying a scanty last minute present for a forgotten long distance relative, or just walking around your town, taking in the Christmas spirit - take a deep breath and embrace the warmth around you, "if you look for it, I have a sneaky feeling that love actually is, all around".

A Christmas Story by Lucy

I've heard the old tales of the Brothers Grimm, whispered from ear to ear by milkmaids and memorialised as a magical fairytale of a curious wood with a sugar topped house. Of course, not originally as merry as a Christmas carol, but children loved Hansel and Gretel and talked constantly of their cryptic trip to that gingerbread house. It seemed people saw much charm in the idea of such a home: the sugar glazed windows that blurred the bearing sun and the fire that danced within the fireplace, waving a scent of just charred ginger through each room and up the oddly large chimney. Crystalized sugar settled on top of the colourful sweets stacked on the roof, surrounded by white and red icing loosely sketched to look like roof tiles which dropped in sharp icicles off the edges. At the front was a green sugar paper reef that hung upon the stiff door, a perfect circle for a perfect seasonal cycle with a small bell dangling from its centre that chimed when the wind brushed past. A house one could only ever dream of...unless of course, they had been good.

In the old days, when Christmas celebrations still surrounded a burning yule log, the ginger of this house was an exclusive good - speculated as a medicinal spice of miraculous origin and a cure someday to someone of the plague. I, personally, was never given such a service but did watch as old women scavenged through the forests, searching by illumination of a single bright star. They would load all sorts of plants into hand woven baskets and gently dust the sprinklings of snow off the top. Then, returning home they would work through the winter until the ginger was imported just before Christmas, ready to work, again, day and night in the hope of making remedies for the cold winter months. After a few years of this hushed treatment, the apothecaries realised that the ginger cure could be curated into a sweet biscuit and built to become all the more exciting when every winter came, forming the famous 'gingerbread'. It was such a thrilling idea that even the Queen took interest. Her servants scuttled the frosted kitchens and were forced to adapt their taste to the newly contradictive ginger aroma, watching the biscuits brown through the gleaming fire. It is told that the maids would steal some syrup for themselves, indulging their crumbling homes with a divine sweetness. They worked with what they could and collected the crumbs of bread from savings for the ducks, adding the rest of their spices and sugar to ensure a makeshift feast for the children of the village. Once, a few years ago one of them cupped a little gingerbread in her hand and offered it up to me. Eating it was unpleasant. I'd much have preferred a fresh carrot and maybe a less daunting sweet treat, not too dry and no spice, some shortbread would have done nicely. Apparently, my opinion was not unpopular and despite the excitement of this 'state of the art confection' the gingerbread did not seem to be such a hit - the children complained about the gritty crumbs in their mouths - however they still wolfed down every last trace.

By the time a second batch was made, they bundled around the table and tried to rectify the bitter flavour of the crumbling treats with shapes and people and sugar dusted silhouettes. The glisten in their eyes grew so bright, beaming over their assembled families, friends, sisters, and brothers until eventually the recipe rallied up into a traditional winter treat. It was made into houses or homes for the characters created, decorated with bright gold leaf and tin foil to please the desires of the little gingerbread children.

Joy replaced the sweet aroma that swept through the room - laughter being the music that circulated everyone's ear and songs being formulated in the name of the gingerbread house. I assume that this soon grew into the flourishing tale of Hansel and Gretel but my knowledge of folk tales is highly unsound. Of course, I only get to see the village children in the midst of winter and last time I thought I heard them say something about the 'fastest' reindeer with the glowing red nose. As if he was quicker than me! Those children must've been playing tricks! Covetous young sinners!

But, disregarding their silly stories, as winter grew colder and the nights felt long, the village children tumbled into a sorrowful dispirit. They warmed their hands next to the coals that were left after a days worth of work and resorted to the wishes of storytelling to thaw their shivering bodies. Bright red noses huddled together and their rosy cheeks blushed further with each craving that came up in every story. They rehearsed the old folk tale of the siblings that ran into a witches home and in a hysteric hunger a small boy cheered that she lived in a gingerbread house - those just like the stolen syrup and foraged ginger biscuits I had been offered so many years ago.

Nonetheless, today I wander the woods in the midst of a post-snowy evening. I watch the snowflakes drift and fall and sit atop my nose, tickling slightly and beckoning a sneeze. All around me they tumble and twist and find gentle cessation on the frozen ground, melting when they meet the floor to make a mellow fleece for the warm earth. The settled weather seems to silence the echoes of the carolers and bells in the town behind me, intertwining with the sound of the wind in the trees and cracking ice below my hoofs. It orchestrates a kind melody between dulled laughter and winters whisper, that falls into perfect pace with my prancing down the wood.

After long, my ears pricked up and heeded the twinkling sound of a bell in the breeze. I didn't stop my stroll or slow my pace but there was an odd sense of uneasy ground that I would soon encounter.

Onwards, there were less plants that sprouted in the snow and few frosted berries on the bushes that seemed to grow taller with every step forward I took, even tree stumps seemed to sprout at the same pace as seeds. I wasn't scared, I don't get scared! But my walk had fallen into an uncomfortable nightmare, just before Christmas.

Suddenly then, a strange scent seeped through the crisp air; hot, bitter, charred, bitter, with a helping of sugar and hint of cinnamon too, a ration of syrup and some sprinkles on top...

It smelled nostalgic and 'hygge', like a cup of warm milk and a fresh shortbread. My posture picked up and I merrily pranced around a large oak into a small opening at the heart of the forest, feasting my eyes on the gingerbread house that each of the children had asked for long ago.

Competition

Fancy joining in with the Christmas fun? We're launching a baking competition for every student and staff member. This Christmas put your baking skills to the test and create a fantastic and festive gingerbread house - just like the one in Lucy's story. We want to see photos of every tasty treat you try so make sure to send them to us so we can choose the best one! Prizes will be awarded to the best entry in each tutor, so use your creativity and imagination to produce the best gingerbread house.



Reverse Advent

By Sasha and Charlotte

When you think of Christmas, what comes to mind? For many, the holiday season invokes images of a deep green tree, covered with decorations, towering over an abundant pile of gifts, waiting for an overweight visitor, resplendent in a bright red suit and a fluffy white beard, who adds meticulously wrapped gifts to a growing pile. The kitchen cupboards are bulging full of festive food, waiting to be eaten on the 25th. For the 13.4 million* people in the UK who are currently living in poverty, this is not necessarily an accurate depiction of Christmas. The Reverse Advent Calendar Scheme aims to make Christmas a time of joy and relief for everyone, regardless of income.

Christmas has a different meaning for everyone. For some, Christmas is a time of love and happiness; it's a time for family, friends, and community. Whether it's Yule, or the birth of Christ, hope has always been at the heart of Christmas. Hope is defined as both 'a person or thing that may help or save someone', and 'the grounds for believing that something good may happen.' Christmas is about hope and giving another person a reason to believe in good; it is about giving before, and more, than you take. It's a magical time that is full of joy. However, for many the lead up to Christmas and the day itself won't be an enchanting experience. Whilst we are warm at home and surrounded by an abundance of food and leftovers that will last for weeks, there will be many families grateful for a meal. This Christmas, we ask you to think about those who are struggling and those who are without the basic necessities that everyone should have access to. We ask you to donate to the food bank. Even the smallest item could go a long way.

So, what is Reverse Advent? For the past few years, TKASA has connected with the local food bank to collect non-perishable food items that will go a long way for those in need. In a contrasting approach to the traditional advent calendar, the reverse advent scheme focuses on the giving of gifts to others, rather than the receiving of them ourselves. Over the month of December, there will be students placed on each school gate with a trolley ready for the collection of donations. On the last day of term, the student union will take a trip to Highbridge food bank to donate all the items.

Reverse Advent

The head of the Student Union (SU), Libbie Hall, said that the food bank is giving out around 600 meals per week at the moment. Unfortunately, due to the cost of living crisis, in-store donations, such as the ones at Tesco, have declined. Libbie revealed that this cause is particularly important to her as it has affected her personally. Due to unfortunate circumstances, Libbie and her family were left with the only option of going to the food bank to be able to eat. Fortunately, this time didn't last very long and they are now in a much better position. However, with this first hand experience, Libbie feels she has learnt that an issue like this can affect anyone. In a final statement, she said that donations from our school could potentially feed many families in need.

After having numerous conversations with other students about the reverse advent scheme, we came to the conclusion that for a lot, Christmas is a period of giving, a time for reflection, and an appreciation for what we would normally take for granted.

One student stated "It's great to contribute to such a significant cause especially during this giving period of time."

A second student said that donating and helping with reverse advent and being included in "creating something for a greater good" was a "rewarding experience".

Many described taking part in this scheme as a valuable opportunity that shows the kindness of our community - whatever the weather!

What can you do to help? Everyday this month there is the opportunity to donate to the thousands of families in need of food and support this winter. As previously mentioned, in store-donations have decreased, but this means even more families are struggling - any non-perishable, in-date donations will be delightedly accepted. The Highbridge Area Food Bank is constantly updating their most needed items; as of right now, the most important are as follows: pasta sauces, small jars of coffee, tea bags, tinned fish, tinned spaghetti, and deodorant. Please donate as much as you can, just a little could feed a myriad of families.

Reverse Advent

Although Reverse Advent is a Christmas Scheme, it is important to remember that Christmas is not the only time of year people need help; Christmas is a time for giving, but the rest of the year should be too. There is a regular increase of donations around Christmas, but this is not enough to support the hundreds of families in need all year round. In-store donations are constantly open from all supermarkets in the area, including Tesco and Asda. The act of giving is not a gift to be granted only on the 25th December, it is a virtue to be taken every other day of the year.



The True Meaning of Christmas

by Charlotte Avery

When most people think of Christmas, they think of Santa Claus, the fat man in a red suit and a white beard, with a bag full of presents. Then, they sit through countless lectures about the ‘true’ meaning of Christmas: Angel Gabriel, Mary and Joseph, a barn, the North Star, the birth of Jesus, the shepherds, three Wise Men, gold, frankincense, and myrrh, hope, light, and love. Christianity, right? But what if this was never the whole story?

The winter celebration of what we’ve been taught to call ‘Christmas’ has been around far before the (often violent) Christianisation of Europe. Before everyone peacefully and gracefully turned Christian, Europe was predominantly comprised of religious believers who we would now generally refer to as ‘pagans’; so, what is paganism? When Christians went around the world ‘converting’ entire cultures, they, in their own ignorance, disregarded any other religion as ‘paganism’: referring often to non-Abrahamic religions, especially those which were polytheistic. Today, paganism is not entirely used to describe polytheism, for example even people who, incorrectly, believe Hinduism is polytheistic would not usually refer to it as a pagan religion. Instead, the term is often reserved for the old religions of, often European, cultural groups, such as the Germanic people (think Vikings), the Celts, or the Greek and Roman pantheons. Today, the stories of these religions are taught in school as ‘myths’, based solely in delusion and story, but they were once almost universally believed in their respective societies as truth. Just imagine the outrage if we started teaching the Bible as a bundle of myths, legends, and lies based solely on the delusions of a ‘primitive’ 2000 year old society! So, from paganism to now, what changed, and how did Christmas change with it?

Nowadays, Christmas is celebrated on the 25th December, coincidentally coinciding near the (Northern hemisphere’s) winter solstice: the shortest day of the year, where light is at its lowest, usually occurring around the 21st. This is even more coincidental when we realise in the old Julian Calendar, the solstice fell typically on the 25th. The credit for the origins of Christmas can most greatly be attributed to the pagan tradition of ‘Yule’; the origins of what we refer to as Yule are complicated, the term itself not being used until the 700s by a Christian monk, but its practices are predominantly Germanic. Much like our modern Christmas season, the period of Yule began on the solstice and continued for 12 days, although time frames may vary slightly with societies. With the coming of the solstice, the hardships of a cold hard winter were at their peak, but this meant they would soon begin to thaw; soon, the days would begin to lengthen and the period of light, warmth, and fertility would begin. Prayers, feasts, and fires were made to welcome the coming of the sun and the new year, with a worship of nature far from our modern ideas of a present perfect Christmas. Ultimately, Yule stood as a symbol of hope.

Interestingly, Yule was not the only pagan tradition Christianity decided to magpie a few ideas from, the Roman festival of Saturnalia deserves its own lot of credit. Like Yule, Saturnalia followed the celebration of the winter solstice through a period of celebration much like Advent, ending in the day of Brumalia, on, coincidentally, the 25th December. This festival celebrated the final planting season of the year, and gave thanks to the God of Agriculture and Time, Saturn. Like Yule, the holiday essentially celebrates nature, the ending of hardship, and the coming of the sun of the seasons. In idea, it does not have that much relativism to Christmas, but some of its traditions share a remarkable resemblance.

Okay, sure the Christians adopted the same general time frame for their festival, but surely they made the traditions and ideas their own, right? Well, almost all modern Christmas traditions, whether cultural or religious, can be attributed to some extent back to the pagans! Let's start back at Yule, with the idea of the Yule Log. If you imagine the aftermath of a Christmas dinner, especially if there are children who might not share your affection for traditional Christmas pudding, you'll probably imagine a rich chocolate yule log, decorated with icing sugar or holly-like decor. If you backtrack just a couple millenia, you'll probably find the yule log in a Celtic or Anglo-Saxon home looked much different. For them, the Yule log was a wooden log or tree burned for an extended period of time, often the 12 day period of the holiday. This symbolised overcoming the darkness of winter, and reassuring the sun would continue to return with the changing of the seasons. Later Christians, such as the Victorians, burnt a smaller log in their homes, often for 12 hours rather than 12 days. The cake form of the Yule Log we have come to know likely originated from the Parisian bakeries of the 1800s, and made its way across the world into modern culturally Christian traditions.

At the mention of holly-like decorations, the traditions of holly and mistletoe as symbols of Christmas are rooted in the Celtic and Norse traditions of Yule, as well as Saturnalia. Starting with holly, the Romans celebrating Saturnalia, viewed this as a sacred plant associated with the God Saturn, and they would gift each other wreaths of it for goodluck, and the affection for greenery symbolised the coming of light and spring. Mistletoe, being able to bloom even in the cold of winter, became a symbol of fertility from Scandinavia to the Victorians. In Norse mythology, the Goddess of Love's (Frigg) son was prophesied to die, so she went to all the beings in the natural world to make them promise they would not harm him. However, she failed to ask Mistletoe to make this promise, so Loki made an arrow of mistletoe and shot Frigg's son dead. Her tears turned to the berries of mistletoe, and her son was resurrected: Frigg transformed mistletoe into a symbol of love, for which she would plant a kiss on anyone who walked beneath it. In Victorian England, the tradition had evolved from Pagan to Christian, and mistletoe was hung, under which men could steal kisses from girls, which they weren't really allowed to refuse unless they wanted a world of bad luck...kinda weird?

Talking of the more cultural traditions of Christmas, most people have heard of St Nicholas, the altruistic story behind Santa Claus. St Nick, the Patron Saint of children, sailors, and the unmarried. He is most famously known for giving gifts to young kids, but his reputation as the protector of children comes from a disturbing legend about child cannibalism. During a famine, three boys were taken into a butcher's shop, killed, and brined to be sold. According to the story, St Nicholas performed a miracle and was able to resurrect the boys, giving him his name as child protectorate. He also earned this title and his gift-giving name by saving three young girls from prostitution. St Nick slipped bags of gold in their home during the night, so their father could pay their dowry for respective husbands, therefore saving them from being economically forced into prostitution.

Today, the image of Father Christmas can be attributed not to St Nick, or the Bible, or even paganism, but to capitalism, consumerism, and gluttony. Most people believe Coca-Cola ads made our image of Santa, a chubby jolly man in a red suit, but some people resent this, claiming Santa had been depicted as red, as well as a myriad of other colours, far before 1930s capitalism. Nevertheless, it is undoubtedly the multi-billion-dollar company, Coca-Cola, which standardised this image of Christmas. Ironically, a political ideology which prioritises superiority and success by any means, and promotes the unequal and unnecessary consumption of goods, forefronting Christmas kinda takes away from its origins of worshipping nature. Santa, the image of Christmas, in his own obesity, glorifies the West's tendency to hoard wealth and resources, to the detriment of the rest of the world.

Chrizzmas

By. Emma Bazell

Oxford University Press has announced 2023's word of the year. The moment is an awaited one for a subspace of internet users, encapsulating the year in a way that's witty and smart. This year's word narrowly avoided Taylor Swift-mania, with Oxford University Press announcing that the word "Swiftie," the noun used to refer to Taylor Swift fans, was almost selected as this year's pick. Instead, the dictionary opted for a different celebrity this year: the beloved, Tom Holland.

Oxford's 2023 word of the year is Rizz. The word means charisma or charm and it went viral in the summer of this year, when Tom Holland was asked about his rizz levels in an interview. "I have no rizz whatsoever," he said. "I have limited rizz." It goes without saying that the moment resulted in thousands of memes. Oxford University Press credits Holland in making it very popular, revealing that searches for the word spiked the minute his interview went viral.

The Oxford University Press describes the word as "Pertaining to someone's ability to attract another person through style, charm, or attractiveness, this term is from the middle part of the word 'charisma', which is an unusual word formation pattern."

This event has become a worldwide phenomenon for all of Gen Z, being talked about all over tiktok. The word finally being published as *legit* will also broaden the lexical usage, spreading from teens to adults alike. Ultimately, generalising the word for everyone. So who knows, maybe one day at dinner, your mum may decide to tell you of her "rizz back in the day", just make sure you don't laugh in her face.

Christmas Questionnaire

Where was Saint Nicholas born?

What do they leave for Santa in Sweden instead of milk and cookies?

What country gifts Trafalgar Square a giant Christmas tree each year?

How many days did it take the three kings to reach the baby Jesus?

The song “Jingle Bells” isn't actually a Christmas song, what holiday was it originally created for?

What is traditional in Japan to eat for Christmas?

Christmas Questionnaire

- Turkey
- Coffee
- Norway
- 12
- Thanksgiving
- KFC