STEPPING STONES

Let's write Christmas cards!

Noordhoff

Brengt je verder

The history of
Christmas cards

Ho ho ho! Soon you could be writing or getting your first Christmas cards of this year. But do you know why and when the first commercial Christmas card was sent?

The custom of sending Christmas cards, as we know them today, was started in England in 1843 by Sir Henry Cole. Back then, in the Victorian era, it was already common for people to send Christmas letters about their year. Cole was a very busy man who didn't have time to write lots of letters, so he asked his friend, artist John Calcott Horsley, to design a card that he could send to all his friends and family. The card was about the same size as a post card and on it was the message: 'A Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year to You.' About 1000 cards were printed and sold for 1 shilling each (that's only 10 cents nowadays!).

Creative Victorians

Other people followed Sir Henry Cole's example and from then on, sending Christmas cards quickly became very popular. The cards they sent were very unique and original: the Victorians were known for their creativity and their Christmas cards showed this. Card designers came up with all sorts of new ideas. They invented cards with fabrics, pop-up cards and a perfume maker even made a card that smelled of flowers!

Creepy cards

But not all Christmas cards looked fresh or exciting. Some of those Victorian cards look strange and creepy to us. It's good to keep in mind that there were no rules for what Christmas cards should look like. For centuries, Christmas, and not Halloween, was considered the spookiest time of the year. So the Victorians were already used to creepy images and dark humour in December. It's probably no coincidence that the ultimate Christmas story, A Christmas Carol by Charles Dickens, which is also from 1843, is a ghost story!
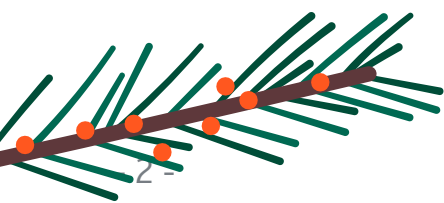
A merry … sunny Christmas?

Instead of creepy things, Christmas cards now usually show winter scenes. But in Australia, they show Santa having fun in the sun! There, December is a hot summer month, so don't be surprised if you see Santa arriving on a surfboard! Or in a sleigh pulled by six kangaroos, of course.

VMBO ONDERBOUW

STEPPING STONES

STONE Writing a Christmas card

| Have | a holly jolly | Christmas! |
| | a very merry | Xmas. |

| Merry Christmas | and | I hope you have a brilliant 2024. |
| Best wishes | | a happy new year to you all. |

| Best wishes for the | festive season | and | a happy 2024. |
| Happy | Holidays | | a wonderful new year. |

| Thanks | for | being the best grandparents. |
| Thank you | | everything you do. |

| We | hope | you have a nice, relaxing Christmas. |
| I | | your holiday season is filled with good things. |

EXERCISES

1 Read *The history of Christmas cards* and answer the questions.

a Work in pairs. Go online and look up the first Christmas card created by John Horsley. What is 'Christmassy' about the card?

b You want to send this card to someone. Where would you write your name? Where would you write the name of the person you want to send it to?
Hint: look at the top and bottom of the card!

2 Work in pairs. Go to this website (bit.ly/StStkerst1) and answer the questions.

a Look at cards 1 to 20. Choose the card that you think is the weirdest. Explain to your classmate why you think so.

b Draw and write your own creepy Victorian card with a fitting Christmas greeting. You can also create a fun modern Christmas card with a greeting.

3 Watch the video (bit.ly/StStkerst3) about some strange Christmas traditions around the world. Answer the questions.

a Make the correct combinations. Choose from:
extra present – fried chicken – masks – monster – pickle – slogan
- Japan:
- Austria:
- Germany:

b Go online, search for **two** strange Christmas traditions in Australia (like Santa on a surfboard). Write them down.

c Work together with another pair. Compare your answers. Who found the strangest Australian Christmas tradition?

4 Look at the *Stone*.

Write a short Christmas message to your pet or another animal. You can make it as funny as you want. For example: *We Woof You a Hairy Christmas!* Or: *Have a very meowy Christmas. I hope you get a bunch of new toys!*

Tip!
You can also write about what your pet's Christmas dinner will be or the fun things you're going to do together next year!

5 Write a Christmas card to someone you like.

a Choose someone you want to send your Christmas card to.

b Choose a card.

c Use the *Stone* to write your card.

d If you want to, you can write a longer card by;
- asking about how they are;
- asking what they've done in the past year;
- writing about you/your family's plans for the next year.

Tip!
Use words such as 'lovely,' 'brilliant,' 'excellent' or 'great' to make your card more fun to read.

HAVO/VWO ONDERBOUW

STONE Writing a Christmas card

Merry Christmas	and	I hope you have a brilliant 2024.
Best wishes		a happy New Year to you and your loved ones.
Happy Holidays		all the best in the New Year.

| 2023 | has been | an eventful | year for us. |
| This year | was | an extraordinary | |

| Thanks for | being an awesome friend | this year. |
| Thank you for | all your support | over the past year. |

| Sending | thoughts and warm wishes | from | our home to yours. |
| | lots of love and positive vibes | | far away. |

| Looking forward to | seeing you in the | new year! |
| | an exciting | |

EXERCISES

1 Read *The history of Christmas cards* and answer the questions.

a Work in pairs. Go online and look up the first Christmas card created by John Horsley. What is 'Christmassy' about the card?

b Work in pairs. For many Christmas is about celebration and charity *(liefdadigheid)*. Is this card also about those things? Explain your answer.

c Some people think this card is controversial. Why do you think that is?
Hint: Look at the children in the picture.

2 Go to this website (bit.ly/StStkerst1) and answer the questions.

a Look at the cards. What makes the cards creepy and weird?

b Look at cards 1 to 20. Choose one of the cards. Your classmate asks you *Yes/No questions* to find out which card you've chosen. Switch roles after your classmate has found out which card you chose.
For example: Do you see birds on the front of the card?

3 Watch the video (bit.ly/StStkerst2) to get a taste of what Christmas in Australia looks like. Next, go online and look for more Australian Christmas traditions.

a Look up five things that make it different from the way you celebrate Christmas.

b If you could spend Christmas in Australia, what three things would you absolutely want to do?

4 Look at the *Stone*.

Write a short Christmas message to your pet or another animal you would like to send a card to. You can make it as funny as you want. For example: *We Woof You a Hairy Christmas!* Or: *Have a very meowy Christmas. I hope you get a bunch of new toys!*

Tip!
Also write about what your pet's Christmas dinner will be or the fun things you're going to do together next year!

5 Write a Christmas card to a friend or family member.

a Choose someone you want to send your Christmas card to.

b Choose a card.

c Use the *Stone* to write your card.

d If you want to, you can write a longer card by;
• asking about the latest (family) news;
• asking about updates and activities during the holidays;
• writing about a new hobby.

Tip!
Use words like 'lovely,' 'brilliant,' 'excellent' or 'great' to make your card more fun to read.

6 Work in pairs. Answer one of the questions:

1 What fun, weird or interesting Christmas traditions does your family have?

2 What other fun or interesting traditions does your family have for other holidays?

Steppingstones.noordhoff.nl

Noordhoff

Brengt je verder