

# Today Is Christmas | Lesson Plan

What is the history and significance of Christmas?

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Students will demonstrate an understanding of the historical and cultural significance, including its origins, traditions, and reasons for its celebration in America.

## Learning Objectives:

- Understand the historical significance of the Christmas holiday.
- Analyze the influence of Christianity on Western Civilization through the Christmas Story.
- Explore the symbolism of Christmas decorations and traditions.
- Identify key vocabulary related to *Otto's Tales: Today is Christmas*.

## Key Vocabulary:

- **Christmas:** The day Christians celebrate the birth of Jesus.
- **Holy Land:** The area in the Middle East where many important events in Jewish, Christian, and Muslim history occurred.
- **Three Wise Men:** Three individuals, sometimes called “the Magi,” Christians believe traveled far to worship Jesus when he was born.
- **Gold, frankincense, and myrrh:** The gifts the three wise men gave to Jesus.
- **Jesus:** A religious leader from the Holy Land in the first century who Christians believe is the Son of God and the Savior of all who believe in Him.
- **Saint Nicholas:** A Christian bishop from Greece who lived in modern-day Turkey from 270 AD-343 AD. Legend has it that he would anonymously throw bags of gold coins into the windows of the poor.

**Educational Standards:** CCRA.SL.2, CCRA.SL.3, CCRA.SL.4, CCRA.L.6

**Academic Subject Areas:** America, Judeo-Christian Values, Bible

## What You'll Need

- Video: *Otto's Tales: Today Is Christmas* (Watch [Here](#))
- Book (Optional): *Otto's Tales: Today Is Christmas* (Purchase [Here](#))
- Worksheet: *Otto's Tales: Today is Christmas* (Click [Here](#))
- Drawing supplies: crayons, colored pencils, or markers

## Lesson Plan (45 mins.)

Warm-Up: (10 mins.)

1. Begin by showing students a picture of the Christmas nativity scene or displaying one for students to examine. Explain the meaning of the nativity scene to the students. Facilitate



a discussion by asking guiding questions about the nativity scene to encourage critical thinking.

2. Ask students to share what they know about Christmas and how their families celebrate.
3. Introduce key vocabulary and explain the significance of each in light of the Christmas holiday.
4. Introduce the topic of *Today is Christmas* for the Otto's Tales Video.

Watch and Complete: (25 mins.)

1. Show the video *Otto's Tales: Today is Christmas* for the students.
2. Encourage students to pay attention to the story, characters, and the values discussed.
3. Allow students to discuss the video in small groups, focusing on the main themes. Ask guiding questions for them to discuss:
  - Who are the main characters of the story?
  - Dennis and Otto travel to different places. Where are the different settings in the story?
  - What gifts did the Three Wise Men bring for the birth of Jesus? Why do you think they brought those gifts?
  - What did St. Nicholas throw through the open window that landed in the stocking by the fire? Why do you think that was the gift he chose to give?
  - Which president do Dennis and Otto visit at the White House?
  - Why does giving to others bring out the Christmas spirit?
4. Hand out the accompanying worksheet and coloring supplies for each student and give them the opportunity to decorate their own Christmas gift box. They should include a scene from the story or a tradition they celebrate at Christmastime with their families. Students can also dictate or write 1-2 sentences explaining why they think Christmas is important/why it is celebrated in the United States. When students are finished, allow them to share their designs with the class. (These can be collected as a formative assessment as well.)

Wrap-Up: (10 mins.)

1. Follow up the lesson by reiterating the themes and meaning of Christmas.
2. Encourage students to share what they have learned with their families.
3. Display their gift boxes around the classroom.

### **Extension Activity: Christmas Carol Sing-Along**

Organize a sing-along session where students can learn and sing popular Christmas carols like "Jingle Bells" or "Deck the Halls." Discuss the lyrics and their meaning to help students understand the joy and celebration associated with Christmas.

### **Don't have time for the complete lesson? Quick Activity (15-20 mins.)**

After watching the video, distribute the worksheet and coloring supplies and allow students to draw and color a picture to represent what they learned in this lesson.