

personal english



Character #19

Santa Claus

Santa Claus (a.k.a. **Saint Nicholas**) is said to bring gifts to the homes of well-behaved children between Christmas Eve and the early morning hours of Christmas. The Santa we all know – the **white-bearded sledge-owner** with a passion for **red apparels** – is relatively recent, and has grown out of a blend of traditions. First and foremost, the legends surrounding historical **Saint Nicholas**, a fourth-century Greek bishop and gift-giver from Myra; along with him, the British figure of **Father Christmas**, the Dutch figure of **Sinterklaas**, the German figure of the **Christkind**, as well as such gift-givers as the **Three Kings** (based on the Magi of the Nativity) and **Befana**. Modern Santa Claus also incorporates elements of the Germanic god **Wodan**. This god was associated with the pagan midwinter event of **Yule**, which can be considered as the true origin of Christmas. On the occasion of Yule, Wodan would lead the **Wild Hunt**, a ghostly procession through the sky. The tradition of such scary creatures as the Germanic **Krampus** or the French / Belgian / Swiss **Father Whipper** (*père fouettard*) are the last vestiges of Yule traditions associated with the Wild Hunt. The modern depiction of Santa was shaped and popularized through a series of ads by the **Coca Cola company** in the 1930s. Prior to then, Santa was depicted as a variety of fairy creatures ranging from tall gaunt men to spooky-looking elves.



Click on the Pictures for two **VIDEOS** on Yule and Santa