

personal english





X-mas Fun!

2015 Edition

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X-mas Fun!

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WARNING!



Levels of difficulty have not been marked on purpose. The Personal English method relies on the learner's exposure to authentic language: students of any level are therefore welcome to try their hand at any of the activities in this booklet, and to report their difficulties to the teacher upon resuming classes.

I livelli di difficoltà sono stati omessi intenzionalmente. Il metodo Personal English si basa sull'esposizione dello studente alla lingua reale: tutti gli studenti – qualsiasi sia il loro livello – sono invitati a sperimentare qualsiasi attività contenuta nel presente fascicolo e a comunicare le proprie difficoltà all'insegnante al proprio rientro.



X-mas Fun!

How to Make a Traditional Christmas Pudding



Legend has it that the pudding originated in the Middle Ages, but the earliest known pudding recipe actually dates back to **1420** and is featured in a manuscript referred to as **Harleian MSS.279**, held at the British Museum. The word pudding itself, though, has been in use since the 1300s to mean a kind of sausage: the stomach or one of the entrails of a pig, sheep, etc., stuffed with minced meat, suet, seasoning, boiled and preserved. Etymology, then, bears witness to its kinship with traditional Scottish **haggis**, a savory pudding containing sheep's pluck (heart, liver and lungs) minced with onion, **oatmeal**¹, **suet**², spices, and salt, mixed with **stock**³, traditionally encased in the animal's stomach.

The pudding remained a savory dish until the 18th century, when the so called **plum pudding** started gaining popularity. Its name, however, is misleading due to the pre-Victorian use of the word *plums* as a term for raisins. This sweet version is composed of a variety of dried fruits held together by egg and suet, sometimes moistened by **molasses**⁴ and flavored with such spices as cinnamon, nutmeg, **cloves**⁵ and ginger. The pudding is aged for a month, months, or even a year: the high alcohol content of the pudding, in effect, prevents it from spoiling during this time.



1

2

3

4

5











X-mas Fun!



<u>https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3anPAb-BoqY</u>

Watch the Video, then Answer Fill in the Recipe Template accordingly:





X-mas Fun!

Deck the Halls with Boughs of Holly,

Fa La la la la, la la la la...



Match each of the following Christmas Tradition with its Corresponding Name. Keys Available on page 6



1.

















A. Holly	B. King Cake	C. Christmas Tree
D. Nativity Scene	E. Christmas Crackers	F. Mistletoe
G. Molybdomancy	H. Moravian Star	I. Advent Calendar



1F. Mistletoe

The custom of kissing under the mistletoe (also called the *kissing bough*) originated in the **Victorian Age**. Back in those days, tradition had it that a **berry** should be plucked every time a kiss was stolen; once the berries were all gone, the kissing season was over.

Unlike today's mistletoe bough, the Victorian kissing bough was quite a complex construction made of five circles of wire joined together to form a globe with **evergreens** wrapped around the wires. **Apples** and **candles** were then hung in the center of the globe, and a large bunch of mistletoe was hung beneath. The mistletoe was often decorated with paper flowers.



Where does the significance of mistletoe come from?



Mistletoe, or "**the golden bough**", was held sacred by **Celtic Druids** and **Norsemen** alike. Also known as **heal-all**, it was used in folk medicine to treat a number of diseases. In addition, the gift of mistletoe represented an **offer of peace** in Scandinavian antiquity. If enemies were run across beneath the mistletoe in a forest, they would lay down their weapons and maintain a truce until the next day. Also, in Medieval England and Wales **farmers** would give the Christmas bunch of mistletoe to the first cow that calved in the New Year, as it was thought to bring good luck to the entire herd.

Vikings believed that the mistletoe had the power to resurrect the dead, and in their culture it was related to the resurrection of **Balder**, the god of the summer sun. **Celtic Druids** in Britain also believed that mistletoe could work miracles, and they would harvest it with a **golden sickle** five days after the New Moon following winter solstice. They then distributed the boughs to the people, who would hang them over their doorways as protection against thunder, lightning and other evils.

Kissing under the mistletoe is first found in connection with the Roman festival of **Saturnalia** and early **wedding ceremonies**. Mistletoe was believed to have the power of bestowing **fertility**. These belief lies at the core of the tradition according to which a couple that kiss underneath the mistletoe will have good luck, whether a woman who remains unkissed under the mistletoe will stay single for a yet another year. Accordingly, in the past maidens used to place a sprig of mistletoe under their pillow at night so as to find out the identity of their own **Prince Charming**.



2E. Christmas Crackers



Christmas crackers were invented in London in 1847 by Tom Smith as a promotional idea to increase the sales of his candies at Christmastime.

A cracker consists of a cardboard tube wrapped in a brightly decorated twist of wrapping paper that makes it resemble an oversized candy. During the Christmas meal, the cracker is pulled by two people, and, upon splitting, gives out a **snapping sound**. Much in the manner of a **wishbone**, the person left with the larger portion of the cracker is the lucky one, and therefore wins the contents of the cracker, which usually are a **paper crown**, a couple of **toys**, as well as a **joke**, a **riddle**, or **piece of trivia**.





Wishbone

Crackers



3D. Nativity Scene



A nativity scene or crèche is also known as a manger scene or crib and is the special exhibition of art objects representing the scene of the birth of Jesus. Saint Francis of Assisi is credited with creating the first nativity scene in 1223 (a "living" one) on the spur of his recent visit to the Holy Land, where he had been shown Jesus's birthplace. Since then, this tradition has gained popularity only in Catholic countries such as Italy, Spain and Poland.

4C. Christmas Tree

The custom of decorating an evergreen tree in the dead of the winter originated in **15thcentury Germany** as an upshot of the pagan **Yule** traditions. In effect, the significance of the tree as a symbol is tightly related to such Norse myths as that of **Yggdrasil** and, later, **Donar's Oak**, which marked the transition from paganism to Christianity.





Yggdrasil was central to Norse cosmology, as it was an immense ash tree whose branches were thought to extend far into the heavens and which was believed to provide shelter to such creatures as the sacred stags Dáinn and Dvalinn and the dragon Níðhöggr.



Instead of Yggdrasil, **Germanic tribes** used to worship oak trees, and the legend of **Donar's oak** is related precisely to this pagan practice. Upon seeing some men worshipping an oak in the environs of modern **Hessen** (Germany) in the **8th century**, **St. Boniface** cut down the oak tree and replaced it with an evergreen tree, telling them that its triangular shape was meant to remind humanity of the Christian Trinity.

At the beginning, the tree was traditionally decorated with edibles such as apples, nuts, or other foods. Starting from the 18th century, however, it began to be illuminated by candles, which would ultimately by replaced by lights after the advent of electrification. Today, there is a wide range of traditional ornaments, such as garlands, tinsel, and candy canes. In order to weaken the implications connected with the pagan cult of trees, Christian ecclesiastical authorities have always encouraged the presence of Christian symbols in connection with the tree, especially at its top - this accounts for the ubiquity of angels and stars representing the archangel Gabriel or the Star of Bethlehem from the Nativity.



5A. Holly



Click on the picture to listen to the song

As is the case with mistletoe, the association between holly and mid-winter festivities pre-dates Christianity and is rooted in **Druidic rites** belonging to **Celtic culture**. The **British folk Christmas carol The Holly and the Ivy** still retains traces of its original significance, which was related to the cult of the sun:

> The holly and the ivy, When they are both full grown, Of all the trees that are in the wood, The holly bears the crown.



The rising of the sun And the running of the deer, The playing of the merry organ, Sweet singing in the choir. The holly bears a blossom, As white as the lily flower, And Mary bore sweet Jesus Christ, To be our sweet Saviour. The rising of the sun, etc. The holly bears a berry, As red as any blood, And Mary bore sweet Jesus Christ For to do us sinners good. The rising of the sun, etc. The holly bears a prickle, As sharp as any thorn, And Mary bore sweet Jesus Christ On Christmas Day in the morn. The rising of the sun, etc. The holly bears a bark, As bitter as any gall, And Mary bore sweet Jesus Christ For to redeem us all. The rising of the sun, etc. The holly and the ivy, When they are both full grown, Of all the trees that are in the wood, The holly bears the crown.

The rising of the sun, etc.

5B. King Cake



Whereas in **New Orléans** (Louisiana, USA) this cake is eaten during the **Carnival** season (*Mardi Gras*), in most countries influenced by **French culture** (France, Belgium, Switzerland and Canada), this cake is traditional on the so-called **Twelfth Night**, that is, the eve of **Epiphany**.

Tradition holds that the cake is meant to draw the kings to the Epiphany. A **figurine** (called *la* fève) is hidden in the cake and the person who finds it in his/her slice becomes king for the day. Formerly, the cake was divided into as many shares as there were guests, plus one. The latter was called the "**share of the Virgin Mary**," was intended for the first poor person to arrive at the home.



7I. Advent Calendar

It has stemmed from the Scandinavian tradition of the **Julekalender**, which was originally meant as a way to **catechize kids** by having them recite a **prayer** every day. In order to sugarcoat this chore, in time nuts, candies, chocolates and other **treats** started to accompany the prayers – eventually, they would altogether replace the original prayers.



8H. Moravian Star



The Moravian Star has become a worldwide symbol of the Moravian Church, one of the oldest Protestant denominations in the world. The star originated in the church's school in Niesky (Germany) in the 1830s as a geometry lesson, but it was soon adopted throughout the Moravian Church as an Advent symbol. At the time daily life was centered on Christian faith and there was no distinction between the secular and the sacred. Since everything was considered worship, it was only a small leap for the star to turn from pastime to religious practice. The use of the stars at Christmastime is also traditional in such disparate places as the West Indies, Greenland, Suriname, Labrador, Central America, South and East Africa, Ladakh in India, and in parts of Scandinavia – that is, wherever the Moravian Church sent missionaries.

9G. Molybdomancy

This technique of **divination** based on melting **metals** dates back to ancient **Greece**, but has later become a New Year's tradition in **Germany**, **Austria** and, especially, **Finland**. Tin decorations from the Christmas tree or tin caps from the bottles drunk during the New Year's Eve meal are melted on a stove and poured into a bucket full of snow. The resulting shape are interpreted as **omens** for the new year.



Click on the picture for a video about this tradition



X-mas Fun!

A History of (British) Christmas



Conjugate the Verbs in Brackets into the Right Tense



Adapted from: http://www.bbc.co.uk/victorianchristmas/history.shtml

Click on the link to self-correct this exercise

Many attribute the change to Queen Victoria, and it was her marriage to the German-born Prince Albert that introduced some of the most prominent aspects of Christmas. In 1848 the *Illustrated London News* published a drawing of the royal family celebrating around a decorated Christmas tree, a tradition that ______ (be) reminiscent of Prince Albert's childhood in Germany. Soon every home in Britain had a tree bedecked with candles, sweets, fruit, homemade decorations and small gifts. [See the picture above]

In 1843 Henry Cole commissioned an artist to design a card for Christmas. The illustration __________(show) a group of people around a dinner table and a Christmas message. At one shilling each, these were pricey for ordinary Victorians and so were not immediately accessible. However the sentiment _________ (catch on) and many children – Queen Victoria's included – were encouraged to make their own Christmas cards. In this age of industrialisation colour printing technology quickly became more advanced, causing the price of card production _________ (drop) significantly. Together with the introduction of the halfpenny postage rate, the Christmas card industry ________ (take off). By the 1880s the sending of cards had become hugely popular, creating a lucrative industry that produced 11.5 million cards in 1880 alone. The commercialisation of Christmas was well on its way.

Another commercial Christmas industry ______ (bear) by Victorians in 1848 when a British confectioner, Tom Smith, invented a bold new way to sell sweets. Inspired by a trip to Paris where he saw bon bons – sugared almonds wrapped in twists of paper – he ______ (come up with) the idea of the Christmas cracker: a simple package filled with sweets that snapped when pulled apart. The sweets were replaced by small gifts and



paper hats in the late Victorian period, and _____ (remain) in this form as an essential part of a modern Christmas.

Decorating the home at Christmas also became a more elaborate affair. The medieval tradition of using evergreens continued, however the style and placement of these decorations became more important. The old custom of simply decking walls and windows with sprigs and twigs ______ (sniff at). Uniformity, order and elegance were encouraged. There were instructions on how to make elaborate synthetic decorations for those residing in towns. In 1881 Cassell's Family Magazine ______ (give) strict directions to the lady of the house: "To bring about a general feeling of enjoyment, much depends on the surroundings... It is worth while ______ (bestow) some little trouble on the decoration of the rooms".

Gift giving had traditionally been at New Year but moved as Christmas became more important to the Victorians. Initially gifts were rather modest – fruit, nuts, sweets and small handmade trinkets. These ______ (usually, hang) on the Christmas tree. However, as gift giving became more central to the festival, and the gifts became bigger and shopbought, they moved under the tree.

The Christmas feast has its roots from before the Middle Ages, but it's during the Victorian period that the dinner we now associate with Christmas ______ (begin) to take shape. Examination of early Victorian recipes shows that mince pies were initially made from meat, a tradition dating back to Tudor times. However, during the 19th century there was a revolution in the composition of this festive dish. Mixes without meat _____ (begin) to gain popularity within some of the higher echelons of society and became the mince pies we know today.

The roast turkey also has its beginnings in Victorian Britain. Previously other forms of roasted meat such as beef and goose were the centrepiece of the Christmas dinner. The turkey **(add)** to this by the more wealthy sections of the community in the 19th century, but its perfect size for a middle class family gathering meant it became the dominant dish by the beginning of the 20th century.

While carols were not new to the Victorians, it was a tradition that they actively revived and popularised. The Victorians considered carols to be a delightful form of musical entertainment, and a pleasure well worth cultivating. Old words were put to new tunes and the first significant collection of carols ______ (publish) in 1833 for all to enjoy.

The Victorians also transformed the idea of Christmas so that it _____ (become) centred around the family. The preparation and eating of the feast, decorations and gift giving, entertainments and parlour games – all were essential to the celebration of the feastival and were to be shared by the whole family.

While Charles Dickens ______ (not, invent) the Victorian Christmas, his book A *Christmas Carol* is credited with helping to popularise and spread the traditions of the festival. Its themes of family, charity, goodwill, peace and happiness ______ (encapsulate) the spirit of the Victorian Christmas, and are very much a part of the Christmas we celebrate today.



X-mas Fun!



An Anthropological Perspective on

St. Lucy's Day December 1.3th



Summarize the Text below (min. 5-max. 10 lines) by Using Some of the Words / Phrases from the Box on p. 14



Bergamo, Italy

According to the legend, Lucy (283-304 AD) was a **Christian girl** from **Syracuse** (Sicily) who refused her **betrothal**¹ to a pagan young man and distributed her **dowry**² among the poor. Upon

hearing of this, her betrothed denounced her to **Paschasius**, the Governor of Syracuse, for being Christian, and she was accordingly asked to **worship**³ the image of the Emperor –

which she refused to do. Lucy was thus sentenced to be defiled in a **brothel**⁴, but, when the guards came over to take her away,

a variety of supernatural events intervened to protect her virginity. First, not even **oxen⁵** would be able to move her by an inch in the direction of the brothel, then the wood that had been set on fire to **burn her at the stake**⁴ kept on getting extinguished. She was finally killed by a guard's **sword**, even though – according to a later version of the legend – before











Uppsala, Sweden

1

2

5

killing her the guards gouged out her eyeballs. Iconography has particularly highlighted⁷ this detail of the legend – so much so that in most paintings and frescoes Lucy is shown while carrying her own eyes on a platter.
All of these gory⁸ details comply with the traditional motifs of Christian romances involving virgin martyrs – the stories of St. Agnes, St. Agatha and St. Cecily do not significantly differ from that of Lucy. Lucy, however, has been made the object of a special cult in many countries, including some areas of Northern Italy and Sweden. The differences in her iconographies and

worship practices bears witness to the different roles this

legendary figure is given in the two countries.



In Italy Lucy is accompanied by a **donkey**⁹ and, in some areas, also by a **helper** named **Castaldo**. Traditionally, she wears a long **veil** that hides her completely, and she warns kids of her arrival by ringing a little **bell**. Even though she plays the role of a **donor** (that is, a **gift-giver**), her figure is not entirely reassuring. Whereas Lucy rewards kids who have behaved themselves by distributing **candies** and gifts (an action remindful of the legendary distribution of her dowry), she also punishes those who have misbehaved by giving them **coal**¹⁰. More disturbingly still, whoever dares to look at her is punished by being **blinded** with **ashes**¹¹ – which is again remindful of her own martyrdom.

The Italian version of Lucy, then, punishes and rewards – just like a **mother** does. As the picture above shows, the Italian Lucy impinges on the iconography of the **Madonna** (the donkey, the veil, the candor of her dress as a symbol of her virginity) and is first and foremost a mother figure. Much in line with the **matriarchal complex** Italian society suffers from, this mother figure is not entirely positive: she alternatively plays the role of the **archetypal mother goddess** offering abundance and protection (in her capacity as donor) and of the **wicked**, **punishing stepmother** from **fairy tales**¹². In this respect, then, she is also related to the figure of the **witch**¹³, and especially of **Befana**.

By contrast, the Swedish Lucy looks nothing like a mother: the iconography of the white dress and the red sash¹⁴ (a symbol of martyrdom) connote her exclusively as a maiden. Her figure has been incorporated into the older Yule tradition, a celebration of the longest night of the year in connection with the winter solstice and the rebirth of the sun. This older tradition accounts for her connection with **candles** and light and links her also to her (evil) male counterpart Lucipher: in effect, the pagan forerunner to Lucy, Lussi, was a female being with evil traits similar to a witch or a **succubus**. Lussinatt (Lussi's Night) was related to the Norse myth of the Wild Hunt of evil spirits, which made it particularly dangerous to be out during that night. Similarly to the current Italian tradition of coal-giving and ashblinding, also in Sweden children used to be threatened about behaving themselves, or Lussi would come down through the chimney and take them away. The tradition of Lussevaka - to stay awake through the Lussinatt to guard oneself against evil, has found a modern form through throwing parties until daybreak.



Unlike	Similarly to	Likewise	By contrast
More than	Lessthan	Comparatively	Akin to
To bear a resemblance to	To differ from	Differently from	However



X-mas Fun!

A Visit from St. Nicholas

By Clement Clarke Moore (1823)







'Twas the night before Christmas, when all thro' the house Not a creature was stirring, not even a mouse; The stockings were **hung**¹ by the chimney with care, In hopes that St. Nicholas soon would be there; The children were **nestled**¹ all **snug**² in their beds, While visions of sugar **plums³** danc'd in their heads, And Mama in her 'kerchief⁴, and I in my cap, Had just settled our brains for a long winter's **nap⁵**— When out on the lawn⁶ there arose² such a clatter⁷, I sprang³ from the bed to see what was the matter. Away to the window I flew like a flash, Tore open the **shutters**⁸, and **threw**⁴ up the **sash**⁹. The moon on the **breast**¹⁰ of the new **fallen**⁵ snow, Gave the luster of mid-day to objects below; When, what to my wondering eyes should appear, But a miniature **sleigh**¹¹, and eight tiny reindeer, With a little old driver, so lively and auick, I knew in a moment it must be St. Nick. More rapid than eagles his coursers they came, And he **whistled**¹², and shouted, and call'd them by name: "Now! Dasher, now! Dancer, now! Prancer and Vixen, "On! Comet, on! Cupid, on! Donder and Blitzen; "To the top of the porch! To the top of the wall! "Now dash away! Dash away! Dash away all!"

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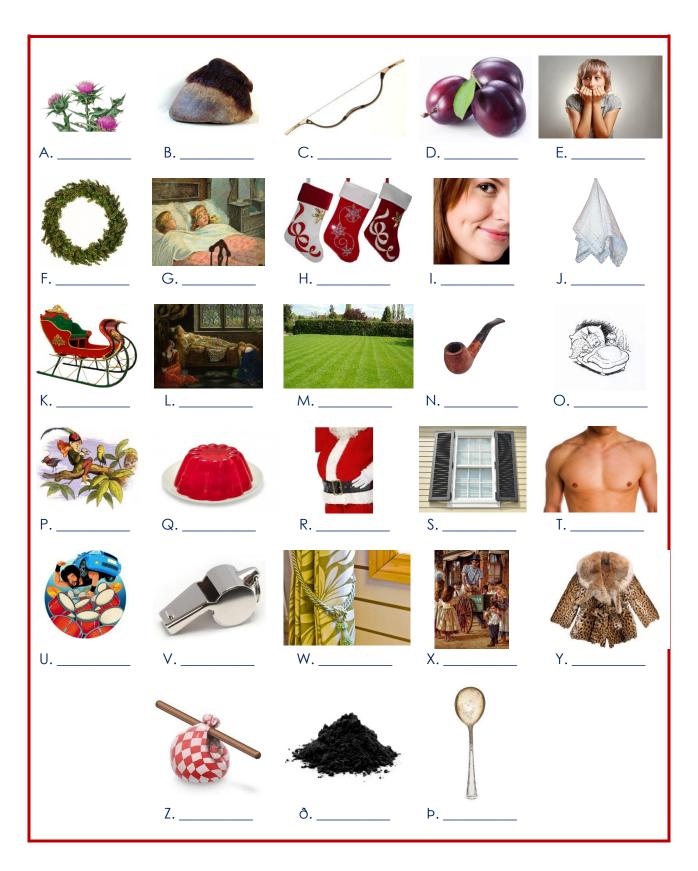
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As dry leaves that before the wild hurricane fly, When they meet with an obstacle, mount to the sky; So up to the house-top the coursers they **flew**⁶, With the sleigh full of toys — and St. Nicholas too: And then in a twinkling, I heard on the roof The prancing and pawing of each little **hoof**¹³. As I drew⁷ in my head, and was turning around, Down the chimney St. Nicholas came with a bound: He was dress'd all in **fur**¹⁴, from his head to his foot, And his clothes were all **tarnish'd**¹⁵ with ashes and **soot**¹⁶: A **bundle**¹⁷ of toys was **flung**⁸ on his back, And he look'd like a **peddler**¹⁸ just opening his pack: His eyes — how they twinkled! His **dimples**¹⁹: how merry, His cheeks were like roses, his nose like a cherry: His droll little mouth was drawn up like a **bow**²⁰, And the beard of his chin was as white as the snow: The **stump**²¹ of a pipe he **held**⁹ tight in his teeth, And the smoke it encircled his head like a wreath²². He had a broad face, and a little round **belly**²³ That **shook**¹⁰ when he laugh'd, like a bowl full of **jelly**²⁴: He was chubby and plump, a right jolly old elf²⁵, And I laugh'd when I **saw**¹¹ him in spite of myself; A wink of his eye and a twist of his head Soon gave¹² me to know I had nothing to dread²⁶. He **spoke**¹³ not a word, but went straight to his work, And fill'd all the **stockings**²⁷; then turn'd with a jerk, And laying his finger aside of his nose And giving a nod, up the chimney he **rose**¹⁵. He **sprung**¹⁴ to his sleigh, to his team gave a whistle, And away they all flew, like the down of a thistle²⁸: But I heard¹⁵ him exclaim, ere he drove¹⁶ out of sight — Happy Christmas to all, and to all a good night.



X-mas Fun!

Match the Words in Red from the Poem with their Corresponding Pictures:





Give the Paradigms of the Irregular Verbs in Bold in the Poem

	INFINITIVE	SIMPLE PAST	PAST PARTICIPLE	MEANING
1. Hung				
2. Arose				
3. Sprang				
4. Threw				
5. Fallen				
6. Flew				
7. Drew				
8. Flung				
9. Held				
10. Shook				
11. Saw				
12. Gave				
13. Spoke				
14. Rose				
15. Sprung				
16. Heard				
17. Drove				



X-mas Fun!

Yuletide Crafts

Yuletide was the winter solstice celebration common in **Norse Europe** during the pre-Christian era. It was connected with the **Wild Hunt** and the cult of **Odin**. Traces of these ancestral rites are still visible in today's Scandinavian Christmas traditions.



Yule Log

In the olden days, a specially selected log was burnt on a hearth around the period of Christmas. Today that log has become a **sponge cake** with **chocolate** and **buttercream** in the shape of a log.



https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GbjGalFvfAc

	TITLE: SERVES: INGREDIENTS:	
RECIPE grom:		



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Julbock



The **Yule goat**'s origins go as far back as pre-Christian days. The celebration of the goat is connected to worship of the Norse god **Thor**, who rode the sky in a chariot drawn by two goats, **Tanngrisnir** and **Tanngnjóstr**.



http://laughingcrowe.com/handcraft/to-make-a-yule-bock/

Tomtenisse Cupcakes

Traditionally, the Yule goat appeared on Christmas Eve, knocking on the doors to hand out presents. It was later replaced by the **tomtenisse**, who looks like a **garden gnome**. They delivers gift at the door, and it is customary to leave a behind a **bowl of porridge** with butter as a token of gratitude for the services rendered.



https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=t6yQyoDhy98

