

THE NEW COURIER

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Institut d'Estudis Nord-Americans

Monthly Publication

CHRISTMAS IN THE USA



The U.S.A. has inherited customs, traditions, and legends that are actually from many diverse cultures. Americans celebrate in every possible way! They include many of the wonderful activities, songs, and stories from all over the world. Just like its people, a Christmas in America is a rainbow of culture!

Sometimes, though, they form new traditions! American Christmas characters like Rudolph the Red-nosed Reindeer and Frosty the Snowman are as highly esteemed as old St. Nick himself. "How the Grinch Stole Christmas" has become a legend. They have also created cultural Christmas icons in advertising, like the Coca-Cola Polar Bears.

For their hopping holiday fun, they do many of the things everyone else in the world does. They have a Christmas tree that they decorate with ornaments and lights, topping it with a star or angel. They have a big holiday dinner and get pinched and hugged ferociously by relatives they haven't seen in ages! There are gifts and sometimes, religious services.

Festive songs play a huge part in the holiday, permeating from every loud speaker in their homes, cars, malls, and even the telephone. Some especially American holiday tunes are "Frosty the Snowman", "Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer", "Jingle Bells", "Up On the Housetop", "The Christmas Song", "Silver Bells", "I'll Be Home for Christmas", and "White Christmas".

Since the United States is such a big place, there are some people celebrating in the snow and others exchanging gifts on a sunny beach. Many of them get snow, ice, or at least, cold weather. Then they get snowstorms to build snowmen, and play fun winter sports.

Unfortunately Christmas has become very commercialized. In many ways this makes the holiday very stressful and expensive. We need to remember the meaning, toss away our cares, and enjoy the holiday in traditional way.

Celebrating Without Stress

Christmas is supposed to be a time full of joy, good cheer and optimistic hopes for a new year. It is a time full of parties and family gatherings. Yet for many, it is also a stressful time, a time where sadness, loneliness, or depression sets in, where they reflect on past "failures" or feel anxious about an uncertain future. The National Mental Health Association (NMHA) states that nearly sixty percent of

all Americans suffer some sort of stress-related depression during Christmas that is directly attributed to the increased demands of shopping, parties, family and guests. These extraordinary demands ultimately lead to increased fatigue, stress, and depression over "expectations not achieved". Overzealous holiday advertising also places "hidden" demands on people to shop and spend inordinate amounts of money, thus increasing stress.

THERE ARE NINE SIGNIFICANT WAYS IN WHICH ONE CAN UNDERSTAND AND COPE WITH CHRISTMAS STRESS:

1. **Keep expectations for the holiday season manageable** by not trying to make the holiday "the best ever."
2. **Remember that the holiday season does not automatically banish reasons for feeling sad or lonely;** there is room for these feelings to be present, even if the person chooses not to express them.

3. **Let go of the past!** Don't be disappointed if your holidays are not like they used to be.

4. **Do something for someone else.** It is an old remedy, but it can help.

5. **Enjoy holiday activities that are free** such as driving around to look at Christmas decorations. Go window-shopping without buying anything.

6. **Don't drink (too much (or not at all!)).**

7. **Don't be afraid to try something new.** Celebrate the holidays in a way you have not done before.

8. **Spend time with people who are supportive and care about you.**

9. **Find time for yourself!** Don't spend all your time providing activities for your family and friends.

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FILM CLUB

AMERICAN NOVELS TURNED INTO FILMS: WORDS-INTO-IMAGES CYCLE

Words

Ernest Hemingway "For Whom The Bell Tolls", 1940



When *For Whom the Bell Tolls* was published in 1940, it immediately became a resounding critical and popular success and helped cement Ernest Hemingway's reputation as one of America's foremost writers. Readers praised its realistic portrait of not only the political tensions in Europe that would soon erupt into World War II, but also the complexities of the entire experience of war for the individual who found himself or herself fighting for a cause.

For Whom the Bell Tolls chronicles the experiences of American college professor Robert Jordan, who has volunteered to fight for the Loyalist cause in the Spanish Civil War. His initial idealism is quickly tempered by the realities of war. Yet his courage enables him to remain devoted to the cause, even as he faces death. Hemingway's compassionate and authentic portrait of his characters as they struggle to retain their idealistic beliefs has helped earn the novel its reputation as one of Hemingway's finest. Hemingway had previously explored this theme, most notably in his short story collection *In Our Time* (1924) and in his novels *The Sun Also Rises* (1926) and *A Farewell to Arms* (1929). Yet his attitude toward his subject in *For Whom the Bell Tolls* reveals a subtle shift. While his previous works focused more on the meaninglessness of war, this novel ends with a reaffirmation of community.

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Images

Sam Wood "For Whom the Bell Tolls", 1943

Based on the novel by Ernest Hemingway, *For Whom the Bell Tolls* is a romantic drama set against the turbulent tapestry of the Spanish Civil War. Gary Cooper plays Robert Jordan, an idealistic American fighting with a Spanish guerilla band. He is assigned to blow up a crucial bridge in order to halt the enemy's progress. He falls in love with Maria (Ingrid Bergman), a young peasant girl who's joined the fight after being ill used by enemy troops. Pablo (Akim Tamiroff), the eternally drunken leader of the guerillas, resents Jordan's attentions toward Maria, and he refuses to help Jordan in his sabotage work. Pablo's wife Pilar (Oscar-winner Katina Paxinou) takes over command of the guerillas and helps Jordan by arranging horses for the band's departure after their job is done. The man supplying the horses (Joseph Calleia) is killed, and Jordan is left to finish his task minus a means to escape. *For Whom the Bell Tolls* was a long, faithful adaptation of the Hemingway novel, with excellent performances, torrid love scenes, and first-rate Technicolor photography.

December 1st at 7:00 PM Theater

ACADEMIC INFORMATION

Looking Ahead to the Winter 2005 Trimester

Don't forget to register for your next course!!

Registration

Here are the dates you need remember:

WINTER 2005 Registration

From December 16 to December 23 and from January 7 to January 14

REGISTRATION OFFICE SCHEDULE

From 10 AM to 2:30 PM and from 3:30 to 8:30 PM
Monday through Friday

Remember you can both register and pay for your course by calling 93 240 2850. You can use your credit card, or your debit card if you prefer direct withdrawal from your bank account.

New Course! Adult program Literature Course

This 10-week, 30-hour course in literature in English is intended for advanced and proficiency-level EFL students — especially teachers of EFL. One week is devoted to each reading — approximately 10 pages to be read at home. Although narrative fiction is the predominant form studied, some poetry and nonfiction are included.

Class time consists basically of a pre-reading introduction to the author and a post-reading discussion of the piece — sometimes enhanced by an audio recording. Accompanying each reading are discussion questions, a glossary of new words with brief definition, a vocabulary exercise, an optional writing assignment, and a bibliography for further reading. The main course objectives are twofold: 1) to arouse interest in the message and work of each writer, and 2) to think critically. The secondary objective is to build passive vocabulary and become aware of certain style patterns.

Jubilee Jazz Club

This month we're having:



December 9th

CENTENARY OF FATS WALLER

Different Films:

THE JOINT IS JUMPIN, AIN'T MISBEHAVIN, HONEYSUCKLE ROSE...

Free! Thursday 9th December at 7:00 PM, IEN Conference Room

CHRISTMAS TRADITIONS

Long ago people believed that they could use bells to frighten away evil spirits. The tradition of using noisemakers like bells during these times carried over into the celebration of Christmas. But instead of making noise to keep away evil things, people made noise to celebrate something happy. You might hear this saying at Christmas: "Every time a bell rings, an angel gets his wings". Most people remember this saying from the movie "It's a Wonderful Life", but over a hundred years ago, this was a very common saying among kids. Back in those days, kids believed that making noise was just a part of Christmas.

Christmas Bells

And bells were an easy way to make that noise. Bells were inexpensive musical instruments that people could take with them caroling or wassailing (toasting) and almost every family had one or more. Bells also provided a bright and cheery sound and were acceptable to parents as proper tools to celebrate and make noise

at Christmas. Bells play an important part in other areas of celebrating Christmas. Some people probably picture Santa's reindeer with bells draped over them for decoration. Santa might also use bells to help find the reindeer in the dark or in the fog or snow. Christmas bells are remembered in classic holiday songs such as "Jingle Bells", "Silver Bells", and "Christmas Bells are Ringing". Bells



make a happy sound and are enjoyed in "ringing out the old and ringing in the new" each season at New Year's, as has been done in times past.

Like the majority of practices associated with Christmas, the tradition arose from the intermingling of ancient Roman beliefs and the spreading Christian religion. Early Christians believed certain trees flowered unseasonably on Christmas Eve as homage to Jesus's birth. This belief, combined with the Roman practice of decorating their homes with greenery for the New Year, formed the basis of our modern fascination with icicles and fancy angel tree toppers. The decorating of various structures and trees has been recorded in Europe since the 17th century, but the first written account of a "Christmas tree" did not appear until 1605. According to John Matthews's *The Winter Solstice*, that year an



anonymous German citizen recorded trees being decorated with "roses cut out of many-colored paper, apples, wafers, gold-foil, [and] sweets". What about chaser lights and oodles of wrapped gifts? It was more than 100 years later when Professor

Tree Decorating

Karl Gottfried Kissing of the University of Wittenburg wrote of people adding candles for decorations and placing children's wrapped branches around the bottom of the small indoor trees. Even though the practice was initially

Christmas Candle

Through the centuries, candles have been offered as gifts and used to ward off darkness. The first use of candles at Christmas was during the Roman festival of Saturnalia. Tall tapers of wax were given as gifts to guests and offered to Saturn as a symbol of his light. The Pagans also used candles during Yule festivities. Candlelight and bonfires were used as symbols of the sun, and a farewell to the past seasons as well as a welcome to the beginning of a new cycle of seasons. During the Victorian era, candles were used on Christmas trees and were considered a symbol of the Star of Wonder. Often, various merchants and tradesmen would give a bundle of pine-oil perfumed tapers, tied together with ribbon as gifts to their loyal patrons. Today, scented candles continue to enhance Christmas. Pine, cinnamon and gingerbread spice are just a few of the scented candles that have become popular over the



years. Even little tea-lights help to spread the wonderful smells of potpourri. Christmas dinner isn't the same without a couple of candles. Fringed with small wreaths or majestically standing in heirloom candlesticks, their warm glow cradles the faces of family and friends; and adds brilliance to the golden hue of a table laden heavy with feast.



In the Middle Ages, branches of mistletoe were hung from

ceilings to ward off evil spirits. It was placed over entrances to homes and doorways to stables to

prevent witches from entering. It was even believed that mistletoe could extinguish fire. In some areas of England, farmers would give the Christmas bunch of mistletoe to the first cow that calved in the New Year, thinking it would bring fertility and luck to the entire herd in the coming year. Mistletoe has always been symbolic of peace and love. In Scandinavia, mistletoe was considered a plant of peace, under which enemies could declare a truce or warring spouses kiss and make-up. The Greek festival of Saturnalia featured kissing under the mistletoe and it was included as part of marriage rites in ancient times to bless a couple with fertility. In some parts of England the Christmas mistletoe is burned on the night of the 12th Day of Christmas, lest all the boys and girls who have kissed under it never marry. And for those who wish to observe the correct etiquette; a man should pluck a berry when he kisses a woman under the mistletoe, and when the last berry is gone, there should be no more kissing!

Mistletoe

The Night Before Christmas (a famous traditional Christmas tale and poem)

"Twas the night before Christmas, when all through the house, Not a creature was stirring, not even a mouse; The stockings were hung by the chimney with care, In hopes that St. Nicholas soon would be there; The children were nestled all snug in their beds, While visions of sugar-plums danced in their heads; And mamma in her 'kerchief, and I in my cap, Had just settled down for a long winter's nap, When out on the lawn there arose such a clatter, I sprang from the bed to see what was the matter.

Away to the window I flew like a flash, Tore open the shutters and threw up the sash. The moon on the breast of the new-fallen snow Gave the lustre of mid-day to objects below, When, what to my wondering eyes should appear, But a miniature sleigh, and eight tiny reindeer, With a little old driver, so lively and quick, I knew in a moment it must be St. Nick. More rapid than eagles his coursers they came, And he whistled, and shouted, and called them by name:

"Now, Dasher! now, Dancer! Now, Prancer and Vixen! Oh, Comet! On Cupid! On, Donner und Blitzen! To the top of the porch! to the top of the wall! Now dash away! dash away! dash away all!"

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, 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. As I drew in my hand, and was turning around, Down the chimney St. Nicholas came with a bound.

He was dressed all in fur, from his head to his foot, And his clothes were all tarnished with ashes and soot; A bundle of toys he had flung on his back, And he looked like a peddler just opening his sack. His eyes - how they twinkled! His dimples how merry! His cheeks were like roses, his nose like a cherry! His droll little mouth was drawn up like a bow, And

the beard of his chin was as white as the snow.

The stump of a pipe he held tight in his teeth, And the smoke it encircled his head like a wreath; He had a broad face and a little round belly, That shook, when he laughed like a bowlful of jelly. He was chubby and plump, a right jolly old elf, And I laughed when I saw him, in spite of myself; A wink of his eye and a twist of his head, Soon gave me to know I had nothing to dread.

He spoke not a word, but went straight to his work, And filled all the stockings; then turned with a jerk, And laying his finger aside of his nose, And giving a nod, up the chimney he rose; He sprang to his sleigh, to his team gave a whistle, And away they all flew like the down of a thistle, But I heard him exclaim, ere he drove out of sight, "Happy Christmas to all, and to all a good-night!"

TEACHER PROFILE

This month we've talked with Lyn Jacob



Where were you born?

I was born in Cleveland, Ohio, on Lake Erie. When I was ten, we moved to Shaker Heights, a suburb of Cleveland, where Paul Newman is from.

2. What is your city like?

Shaker Heights is a very rich suburb with lots of mansions, parks, beautiful old trees and a series of small lakes. Our street was on the edge of Shaker, right on the border with Cleveland. There weren't any mansions in our part of town, but there were lots of trees and an absolutely enormous, magnificent public library where I spent probably thousands of hours.

3. If you were to prepare a trip to your city for someone, what would you recommend visiting?

Nobody visits Shaker Heights unless they're visiting someone there because all there is are shopping malls and private homes. Cleveland, however, is another story. It's a sprawling industrial city that was a magnet for immigrants -- primarily central European and Irish. In the summer there are numerous ethnic festivals that are lots of fun. Cleveland also has an excellent art museum, where I was first introduced to Dali, a superb symphony orchestra, and the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame.

4. Why did you decide to leave the US and move to Barcelona?

When I was getting my Master's at the University of Michigan, I coincided in a class with the then-director of the IEN, who was getting his Doctorate. He offered me a job at the IEN and

I took it with the idea of staying for two years and then traveling to some other exotic foreign country. Instead, I met my husband and stayed.

5. What do you like best and least about Barcelona?

What I like best about Barcelona is the life style. It's great to hear people talking politics, movies, jazz, and whatever. I love all the people in the streets, sidewalk cafés, lots of things to do and see. I like long, leisurely meals with before-, during- and after-dinner conversation and I adore being able to go to the Pyrenees or the coast on weekends and being only an hour and a half away from France. And, let's face it, the weather here beats Cleveland any day of the week. What I like least is that Barcelona is changing, is becoming more and more like the U.S., at least in the externals, and everyone is in a hurry now.

6. This month we're celebrating Christmas. What does this holiday mean to you? How do you celebrate it in the US? Do you celebrate it here?

Christmas is a family holiday. In the States, we always spent Christmas Eve at home decorating the tree and singing Christmas carols. On Christmas day we spent the afternoon with my mom's family and the evening with my dad's family. In both cases that meant lots of aunts and uncles and cousins and piles of Hungarian and Lebanese food. Here my husband and I usually go to Madrid to spend Christmas with my husband's family and then come back to Barcelona to spend New Year's with friends.

SOURCES

HYPERLINK "<http://www.enotes.com>" www.enotes.com , HYPERLINK "<http://www.imdb.com>" www.imdb.com , HYPERLINK "<http://www.gradesaver.com>" www.gradesaver.com , The New York Times, Mark Athitakis, Clement Clarke Moore, Erin Burnett, New York Sun, HYPERLINK "<http://www.mymerrychristmas.com>" www.mymerrychristmas.com , Celebrations the Complete Book of American Holidays, Contemporary Authors

PAST EVENTS: LECTURE JEAN SHINODA BOLEN



Author of *Godesses in Everywoman*, *Gods in Everyman*, and *Goddesses in Older Women*. On November 4th gave the lecture

"THE GRAIL AND THE WASTELAND" A Healing Story for Psyche and Planet

December Activities

1 Wednesday	7:00 PM	FILM CLUB FOR WHOM THE BELL TOLLS Directed by Sam Wood	Theater
9 Thursday	8:00 PM	JUBILEE JAZZ CLUB CENTENARY OF FATS WALLER FILMS THE JOINT IS JUMPIN AIN'T MISBEHAVIN HONEYSUCKLE ROSE	Theater

MONTHLY REGULAR EVENTS

Twice a month at 7:00 PM	FILM CLUB in the IEN Theater. American novels turned into Films.
Every two Thursdays at 8:00 PM	JUBILEE JAZZ CLUB Concerts and lectures.
Once a month at 10:30 PM	DINNER IN ENGLISH Practice your English in a natural setting while you eat, drink, and socialize with IEN teachers and fellow students!

*Tickets are available at the reception desk (approximately €26.00).

What activities would you like to see? Do you have other opinions or contributions? Write us at:
The Courier, Via Augusta, 123 T. 93 240 5110 e-mail: HYPERLINK "<mailto:mailto:info@ien.es>" info@ien.es