

## Weihnachten in Deutschland- Christmas in Germany

### Teachers' Notes

#### Introduction

This presentation wants to familiarise young learners with Christmas traditions in Germany and introduce basic descriptive vocabulary. It is suitable for beginners and for learners with very basic language.

Christmas is celebrated in Germany in a very traditional way and quite different from celebrations in Great Britain. For example: presents are exchanged on the 24th December (*am Heiligabend – Christmas Eve*)), Christmas day, the 25<sup>th</sup> of December, is slightly less special and reserved for a wider circle of family and friends.

We have included a short quiz activity as a possibility to test learners' knowledge and to motivate them throughout the presentation.

Slide	Explanation /Translation
1	This slide can be used to introduce the topic to the pupils. The teacher might start by asking the children about Christmas traditions in their families.
2	<p><b>Die Adventszeit – The Advent</b>  <b>Wir freuen uns auf Weihnachten – We look forward to Christmas</b></p> <p>The presentation starts with a very important part of German Christmas: <i>die Adventszeit</i> – a time to prepare and of awaiting the birth of Christ. Advent starts on the first Sunday after November 26<sup>th</sup> (when you light the first candle on your Advent wreath). After the fourth Advent Sunday (when you light the fourth and last candle on your Advent wreath) follow Christmas Eve and Christmas Day.</p>
3	<p><b>Der Adventskalender – The Advent calendar</b>  <b>Jeden Tag öffnet man eine Tür – Each day you open one Door.</b></p> <p>In Germany the magic of Christmas starts with the arrival of the advent calendar. Advent calendars with their bright Christmas pictures hang often at a child's bedside. Children open a new window every morning starting with number 1 on the 1<sup>st</sup> December and ending with number 24 the morning of Christmas Eve.</p>
4	<p><b>Der Adventskranz – the Advent wreath</b>  <b>Jeden Sonntag zündet man eine Kerze an – Every Sunday you light a candle.</b></p> <p>The Advent wreath is a central part of the Christmas decoration in the family-home as well as in schools and public places. The wreath is made of fir twigs with four candles attached. The first candle is lit on the first Advent Sunday, then another one on the second Advent Sunday and so on until all four candles are lit on the last Sunday before Christmas. Children often say a little rhyme when they light the candle(s).</p> <p>No one knows when the Advent wreath came to Germany and where it originated. Today however it is a well-established custom and before the first Sunday in Advent you will see many Advent wreaths in flower shops and supermarkets.</p>

5	<p><b>Der Weihnachtsmarkt – The Christmas market</b>  <b>Wir gehen zum Weihnachtsmarkt – We are visiting the Christmas market.</b>  From the end of November booths and stalls are set up on market-places in most German cities. There you can buy everything you need for Christmas: decorations (<i>der Weihnachtsschmuck</i>), candles (<i>die Kerzen</i> pl.), crib figures (<i>die Krippe</i>) and gingerbread (<i>Lebkuchen</i>), Christmas trees, and presents. These Christmas markets are very atmospheric and put young and old into the Christmas spirit. The lights, the scents, roasted almonds and chestnuts, mulled wine (<i>Glühwein</i>) and Christmas music make the Christmas markets a memorable experience and attract lots of visitors from near and far every year.</p>
6	<p><b>Wir backen für das Weihnachtsfest – We bake for the Christmas days</b>  <b>Die Plätzchen – Christmas biscuits</b>  <b>Die Lebkuchen(plural) - ginger bread</b>  Baking ‘<i>Stollen</i>’, Christmas biscuits and ginger bread are part of the Christmas preparations during advent. There are special evenings when the whole family comes together to do Christmas baking. Children enjoy cutting out and decorating biscuits with chocolate, nuts and icing.</p>
7	<p><b>Die Weihnachtsgeschenke – The Christmas presents</b>  <b>Wir basteln Geschenke. – We make our own presents.</b>  Especially children in Germany do handicrafts and make their own presents for parents, family and friends. ‘<i>Basteln</i>’ is a German verb which belongs to Christmas nearly as much as <i>der Tannenbaum</i> (the Christmas tree).</p>
8	<p><b>Weihnachtsschmuck im Haus – Christmas decorations at home</b>  <b>Die Lichterkette – fairy lights</b>  <b>Die Tannenzapfen – fir cones</b>  <b>Der Stern - star</b>  <b>Der Weihnachtsstern – Poinsettia</b>  Christmas decoration is very important in Germany. Besides Christmas trees and Advent wreaths there are many other traditional items of decorations such as <i>die Fenstersterne</i> (cut out stars for the window pane) fairy lights, fir cones and <i>Tannenzweige/der Tannenzweig</i> (fir twigs) or plants typical for Christmas like the popular Poinsettia.</p>
9	<p><b>Wir feiern Weihnachten – We celebrate Christmas</b>  <b>Am 24.12. ist Heiligabend – On the 24<sup>th</sup> December is Christmas Eve</b>  This part of the presentation focuses on Christmas Eve. For many families this magical event is the most important part of Christmas: the whole family comes together to eat traditional dishes, to read the Christmas story, to sing carols and then to exchange and finally open their presents.</p>
10	<p><b>Der Weihnachtsbaum – The Christmas Tree</b>  <b>Wir schmücken den Weihnachtsbaum – We decorate the Christmas tree</b>  <b>Mit Kerzen – with candles</b>  <b>Mit Kugeln – with baubles</b>  <b>Mit Strohsternen – with straw stars</b>  The Christmas tree (<i>der Weihnachtsbaum</i> or <i>der Tannenbaum</i>) has a special significance for Germans and is also known as "tree of life". Germans who immigrated spread the custom of the Christmas tree to many other countries. Traditionally, the Christmas tree is decorated on Christmas Eve by parents and the children only see the decorated tree when the bell rings to announce that <i>Christkind</i> (<i>das Christkind</i>) has delivered the presents. Today with the commercialization of Christmas, in Germany too many families enjoy the decorated Christmas tree days before Christmas eve.  Another custom are colourful plates (<i>der Weihnachtsteller</i>) which are laid out for each family member and filled with fruits, nuts, marzipan, chocolate and biscuits.</p>

11	<p><b>Wir singen Weihnachtslieder – We sing Christmas carols</b></p> <p>Singing is very important part of the Christmas Eve tradition. The family sings carols together in front of the Christmas tree. The most famous German Christmas carol is “<i>Stille Nacht</i>” (Silent night) which was composed 1818 in Salzburg (Austria) and performed there for the first time.</p>
12	<p><b>Wir bekommen Geschenke – We exchange presents</b></p> <p><b>Das Christkind bringt die Geschenke – The Christ Child brings the presents.</b></p> <p>In many parts of the country, it is believed that “Christkind” (Christ child) brings the presents. The Christ child is imagined as an angel in a white robe, a fairy-like figure which is never seen or encountered. Usually the exchange of presents (<i>die Bescherung</i>) is taking place in the late afternoon of the 24<sup>th</sup> of December after the family had their Christmas meal (<i>das Weihnachtsessen</i>).</p>
13	<p><b>Das Weihnachtsessen – The Christmas meal</b></p> <p><b>Der Bratapfel – baked apple</b></p> <p><b>Der Gänsebraten – roast goose</b></p> <p><b>Der Stollen (German Christmas cake)</b></p> <p>There are many regional differences regarding what is put on the table at Christmas. Most common and traditional is ‘<i>der Gänsebraten</i>’ (roasted goose). Equally important and eaten right through the Christmas period are <i>der Christstollen</i>, <i>Lebkuchen</i> (ginger bread), baked apples and Christmas biscuits. The German Christmas meal is traditionally rather simple and not as opulent as in Great Britain.</p>
14	<p><b>Weihnachtsquiz – Christmas quiz</b></p> <p>What is used to decorate the Christmas tree?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) mit Kugeln</li> <li>b) mit Geschenken</li> <li>c) mit Rosen</li> <li>d) mit Büchern</li> </ul> <p>How many doors does the advent calendar have?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) 23</li> <li>b) 24</li> <li>c) 25</li> <li>d) 26</li> </ul> <p>Who brings the presents?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) a Osterhase</li> <li>b) Santa Claus</li> <li>c) Aschenputtel</li> <li>d) Christkind</li> </ul> <p>What people eat on Christmas?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) Eis</li> <li>b) Erdbeeren</li> <li>c) Stollen</li> <li>d) Ostereier</li> </ul>