

THE PAPER MILL

THE PPE NEWSPAPER | CHRISTMAS 2023

Goodbye 2023

Dear students, staff & teachers,
2023 is almost over and it's been an exciting year: PPE got Roland as the new Dean, we had Klaas Knot and Federica Mogherini as our guests, had a John Stuart Mill Lecture with Rainer Hegselmann, and the new member room as well as our own library were opened. Many things have happened. But now it is time for holiday and celebration, time for family and friends, time for rituals and traditions. But before we are "Driving home for Christmas", let's have a look on holiday- and Christmas-traditions throughout the world! Enjoy this year's last Paper Mill, have a wonderful holiday and a happy New Year!

Best,
Katharina & the Paper Mill Team

Hanukkah - Festival of lights

"On Hanukkah we celebrate the recapture of the Jewish temple after the Greek Empire had conquered Israel. In the temple a jug of oil was found, and even though it was tiny its light lasted for eight days. This is why we celebrate Hanukkah for eight days and every day we light another candle on the nine-armed Menorah (a traditional candle holder) - but it is not about being a source of light, it is just about its beauty.

Furthermore, to celebrate the oil, you traditionally eat deep-fried food. The different kinds differ between the origins of people, but it is usually "Latkes", which is made from potato and Sufganiyot, which is fried dough, filled with jam." - Yael



A holiday of 'gezelligheid'

"Much to the regret of the senior population of the Netherlands, the once dominant Sinterklaas (Saint Nicolaus) holiday now has to compete with Christmas. This is in part the result of general discomfort surrounding the Black Pete discussion as well as Christmas being an irreversible import of American origin. Nevertheless, Sinterklaas should not be written off too easily: The 'gezelligheid' of writing each other poems, making surprise gifts and the overall festiveness that the holiday brings, ensures that it remains loved across the country. Regarding the poems - this year my sister wrote me a one about the many benefits of becoming an alcoholic. Now honestly, if that doesn't make you want to implement this tradition into your own, what will?" - Eise

The number has to be odd

On Christmas Eve we gather at my parents' place in Plovdiv and start with an odd number of non-meat dishes (beans, cabbage rolls, potatoes): the number has to be odd, so one keeps adding nuts and fruits to the table until the math checks out. We also have a 'banitsa', a traditional pastry dish, with a coin lucky charm. My father, the eldest (well, man) in the family, breaks it up and hands everyone a piece: whoever gets the coin will most definitely have many riches in the coming year. Normally, no one else in the family can last a day without meat, so at midnight everyone else runs to get some 'lukanka', a type of salami. On Christmas, there's usually 'lukanka' or meatballs, potatoes, Shopska or Russian salad. We have another 'banitsa' with more lucky charms, just in case: this time they run the spectrum from 'health', 'love', and 'happiness' to 'a new car' and 'a new house'. Luck has it that inexplicably, whenever they are with their grandmother, my nephew and niece collect all the best lucky charms. In-between, we talk, drink raki and/or wine, and annoy the neighbours downstairs by playing football or tag with the kids. For a hassle-free evening, it's essential that the kids win. But sometimes the raki makes us daring and we end the holiday with a crying or two. - Marina

Holidays around the world

Gold, Frankincense and Myrrh

"In Spain the Three Kings Day is for us just as important as Christmas Day.

There are numerous parades all over the country celebrate the arrival of the Three Wise Men on the night of the 5th of January. The kings travel on their camels from the Far East and head to visit the newborn child in Bethlehem to pay homage and present him with gold, frankincense and myrrh. That is why the Christmas presents reach the children the evening of the 5th of January.

The morning of the 6th of December, the family gathers and eats together after opening the gifts. If you haven't behaved well during the year, the kings will make sure you get a good dose of coal, which is very often a black rock-shaped candy.

The 'roscón de Reyes' is the most typical dessert of the festive season. It is a round cake with candied fruit and cream filling in which two figures are hidden: a king and a bean. The person who wins the bean has to pay for the cake, and the person who finds the king receives a paper crown." - Carolina

'Turkish sausage'

"We celebrate with special desserts: Pandoro or Panettone. People keep arguing and making memes about which is better. Apparently, we can't agree on this, but the common ground is that the one with raisins (which is usually the Panettone) is the worst, and the piece that has most sugar is the best. Another typical desert is "salame turco". The literal translation of the first name would be "Turkish sausage" but it is neither Turkish nor a sausage. It is a sausage-shaped chocolate pastry, which is typical of the Sicilian tradition. We usually set up the Christmas tree on the 8th of December, and sometimes we're a bit to lazy to set it off, so it stays till late in January. But that makes Christmas even longer." - Sofia

Babies in the cake

"Navidad is a very important holiday in Mexico. On Christmas Eve we enjoy this incredible dinner with our family and friends and eat tamales and turkey, exchanges gifts and watch fireworks. But also the weeks before we like to celebrate and have parties, which we call posadas, where we smash piñatas and drink Ponche Navideño, a type of fruit punch.

Because we are a very catholic country, the Christmas decoration evolves a lot around the birth of Jesus, so much that we even have cakes with little plastic babies inside!" - Ani

Unsuccess Stories special edition: Christmas failures

For the Christmas edition of my „unsuccess stories“, I asked people what their biggest Christmas failure was.

Maurits: Once we played a game of „Who am I“, and everyone ended up being a dictator. And nobody knew who Francisco Franco was!

Me (Nele): This Christmas, my grandparents are too lazy to drive from Cologne to Berlin to spend Christmas with their (grand)children - because they are driving to France afterwards to see their friends for Silvester! And combined it would be too much driving (they do both events each year, so France is not a one-time thing either) - they are prioritizing their friends over their family!

Enora: My family really values eating goose for Christmas - it's a sacred tradition. One year, my grandmother messed up the goose - it was inedible. She tried low heat cooking, and somehow dehydrated the goose to the point where all the meat was condensed to an unrecognisable mass. It was the 25th (a holiday), and my grandparents live in a village, so we couldn't buy any other food. We only had some chili con carne in the freezer - so we ate chili con carne with red cabbage and potato dumplings for Christmas.

Ansgar: My grandma came to us three years ago. She has pretty bad dementia, and everytime she would open a present, halfway through unpacking her brain reset, and when she saw the halfway packed present without context she would start packing the present again and putting it

back under the christmas tree. Because what do you do when you see a half packed present? You finish it.

Hidde: Once my grandfather decided to record the entire Christmas evening, and we did all these special things for the camera, made commentary, and in the end it turned out that my grandfather had not pressed the recording button.

Faye: Last year, I had to make lasagna, and I only looked at the recipe an hour before it had to be done, when I realised that it took 6 hours to make.

Ina: In my sister's building, they have an automatic parking system. On Christmas, it failed, and nobody could come to fix it, since it was Christmas, so a lot of people were stuck at home on Christmas eve and could not drive to their families.

Sanne: After christmas dinner with my parents and grandparents we sat down for the TV, and as I reached for the remote I dislocated my elbow. So I was stuck on the 25th in the emergency room.

Curiously enough, most people I asked could not remember any Christmas failure. And even the failures that people could remember were pretty mild most of the time. It seems that Christmas runs fairly smooth for most people. Let's just hope that Christmas will run well this year as well for the PPE community!

Nele Faßhauer



Love and Joy are all around! Katharina Graf

Decorated houses, cheesy Christmas movies and “Last Christmas” in infinite loop. Christmas cookies, kissing under the mistletoe, and setting up the Christmas tree. Mariah Carey, overcrowded shopping centers and “driving home for Christmas”. Excitement, happiness and joy is what most people associate Christmas with. It is not said for nothing, that it is “the best time of the year”.

You may or may not like all of this. And that is totally up to you. But let me convince you that you should like Christmas at least a little bit - because that is not what it is actually about:

In the Christian belief everything started with a little boy, born in a straw barn. Angels came down from heaven to spread joy and peace. Until today, we remember this special night and celebrate the spread joy and peace. And in the 3rd century a man, St. Nicholas, gave away all of his wealth to help the poor and sick and became known for his piety and kindness. Following his example, Santa Claus, Papa Nol, Sinterklaas, Weihnachtsmann or Święty Mikołaj – variations of St. Nicholas successors around the world – remind of his benevolence, give presents to children and spread his kindness. Stories and legends mixed throughout the centuries but until today people's lives are interrupted by one occasion each year: On Christmas. On Christmas, live stops for a second, reminding people to focus on the important things in life. Christmas makes people step out of their life and narrow views and investigate the world from a wider perspective. On Christmas, everything is a little bit different: During World War I, on the 24th of December 1914, British and

German soldiers stopped the war for one night, left their trenches, and gathered on the field. Although hostiles in war, they came together to sing Christmas songs and share pictures. The occasion of Christmas brought back their humanity – even if for one night only.

The willingness of people to donate for a good is particularly high during Christmas time. People volunteer to cook for homeless people and elderly. Some make a nice gesture of giving the postman a little Christmas card and candy. And isn't it striking that we hear Michael Jackson singing “heal the world, make it a better place” mostly during Christmas time?

- For some reason people are more generous, more kind and helpful as soon as Christmas time begins. And that brings me the faith in our humankind and the world: There is joy, there is kindness, there is love. We just sometimes need to be reminded. And this is what Christmas does: On Christmas you see people kissing and holding hands, driving home to their loved ones, showing affection to the ones they hold in their heart. On Christmas you see that joy, kindness, and “love (...)” are “actually all around”. Hence, you should at least like Christmas a tiny little bit.

It might be hectic, annoying, or even capitalistic sometimes. But its core is pure and wonderful:

Having all you need in life by just being with the ones you love.

May your Christmas, even if you don't celebrate it, be exactly like this: Full of joy and happiness and love.

Why I hate Christmas! Martina Belotti

When I say I hate Christmas I usually get two responses, either “you are the Grinch” (so if you thought about it when reading the title, you are very unoriginal, I am sorry); or “why?”. And I am proud that today I will have an entire article to vent about all the reasons. Firstly, I want to say that as in this year, for the first time in my life, I met two people that share my hatred. It is very nice to share this feeling with people that understand the struggle of having to be put through hours of horrible songs, tacky decorations, and people constantly acting extremely, and might I say, excessively happy. It is difficult to give one explanation why I don't like Christmas. One of the justifications that the Christmas lovers adore to tell me is that it is because I have divorced parents, and that is why I have grown to not like the festivity. That this is actually true. In my memories the first Christmas that I truly hated was the first after my parent's separation. But, that was not the first time I had the feeling of deep dislike for Christmas. So, let's not be simplistic and blame my poor parents. I will give you the real reasons: The most simple and shallow reason for which I do not like Christmas is the aesthetic. I hate the trees full of glittery balls, adorned as if they were beauty pageant puppies. I will admit that the music is catchy, but do we really need to play it every hour, of every day, repeatedly? Also, for some reason, people have the genius decision of starting putting on Christmas decoration even earlier than a month before Christmas. I wish people prepared as well for elections. This raises me to the second reason of why I hate Christmas, and the closest to my heart: It is a holiday with no meaning, capitalistic, and embedded with American

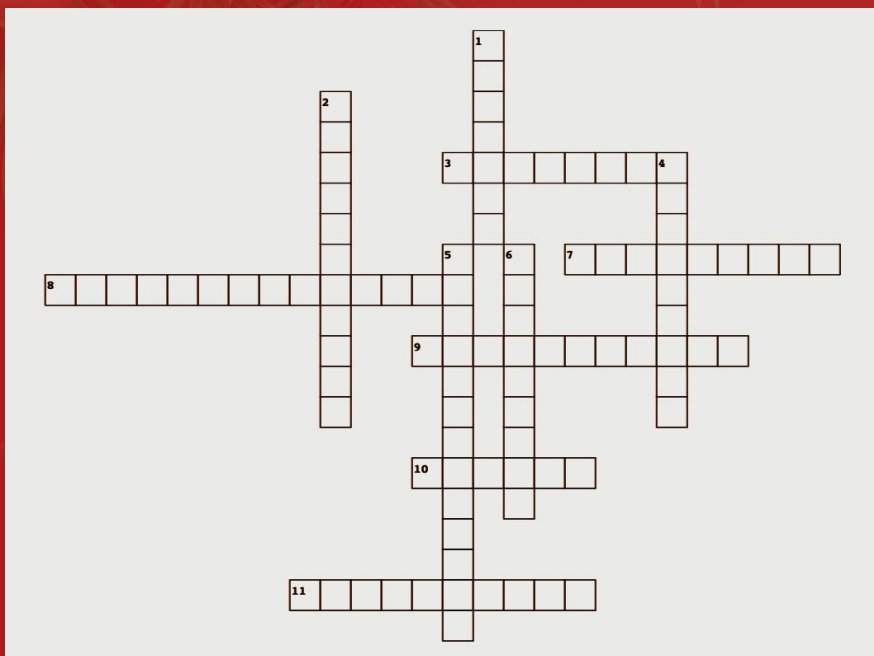
propaganda. I find it very sad that this loved Western world loved holiday just about waiting for presents from a guy that was depicted the way we know him by Coca-Cola. The original meaning of Christmas is the birth of Jesus, so if you are a Christian, congratulations, this argument does not apply to you. For the majority of the people I know, Christmas has no meaning whatsoever, and I really do not understand how someone can feel so passionate in celebrating a holiday that merely means anything to them. I have heard the argument: “it is about spending time with family.” I hate this argument, it is so simplistic. I think people should do a bit of a moral evaluation, if their only reason to spend time with family is Christmas. The solution to my hatred: I want to present the value of finding meaning in holidays. My favorite holiday is women's day. Every year I organize something special. Usually, I participate in the student protest, and either go out to, or make a nice dinner with the women I love. There is something fundamentally different and better in giving importance to what you are celebrating means. For example Día de los Muertos: It is a beautiful holiday, that aims to remember our ancestors, and pass time with your family. So, if you like Christmas because it of spending time with your family, I invite you to try Día de los Muertos. Also, the aesthetic of it is much prettier. To conclude, I do understand the appeal of the holiday. Different people have different tastes. That being said, I still think it is nice to evaluate the habits that we get fed by society, our family, or whatever, and maybe try to make this packaged norms more personal, so that when you celebrate you can truly feel the magic of the moment.



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Christmas Crossword



1. The reindeer with the red nose. (7)
2. Most international students will be... (6,4)
3. Drunken western-european tradition (8)
4. _____ Before Christmas. (9)
5. Spanish christmas song. (5,7)
6. Hemiparasitic plant of love. (9)
7. Where, according to the Christmas story, was Jesus born? (9)
8. Artificial or real? (9,4)
9. Dutch Christmas (11)
10. Christmas songs sung by choirs. (6)
11. Everybody's favorite Christmas movie. (4,5)

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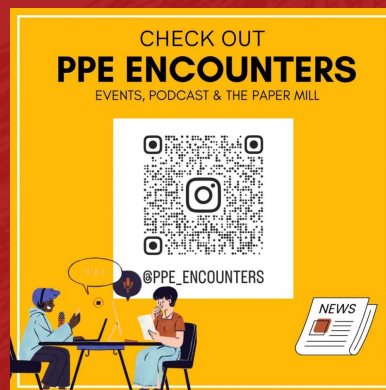
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Happy Holidays!