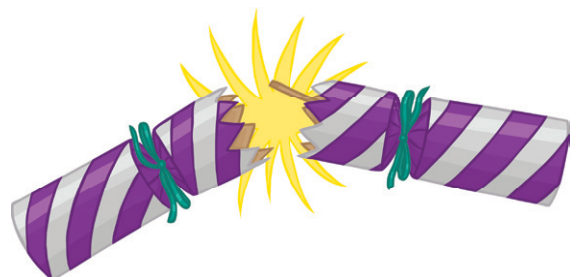


## Cards

- In 1843, Henry Cole asked an artist to create a card for him to send out at Christmas. The card featured a picture of Cole's family sitting around a dinner table with a Christmas message. The idea soon caught on, and many wealthy Victorian families began sending out their own Christmas cards.
- Victorian children were encouraged to make their own cards and there is evidence that Queen Victoria had her own children do this.
- The first printed Christmas cards were very expensive to manufacture, but the price dropped dramatically during the Victorian period. This was due to improvements in colour printing technology and the new halfpenny postage rate.
- In 1880, over 11 million Christmas cards were printed!

## Crackers

- In 1848, a British sweet maker called Tom Smith came up with a new idea for Christmas after visiting Paris and noticing that sugared almonds were sold in twists of paper. He used this as inspiration for his 'Christmas crackers' – sweets wrapped in a paper package that snapped apart when you pulled the ends.
- During the later 19th century, Tom Smith's idea was adapted and improved, with sweets being replaced with paper hats and small gifts.
- The Christmas crackers of the late 19th century were quite similar to the crackers we still enjoy today.



## Presents

- At the beginning of Queen Victoria's reign, families often gave and received presents to celebrate the New Year. However, as the importance of Christmas as a family celebration grew, gift-giving eventually moved to Christmas Day.
- At first, Victorian Christmas presents were usually small gifts, such as fruits, nuts, sweets and handmade items, and they were hung on the branches of the Christmas tree.
- Throughout the 19th century, the size and expense of the gifts steadily increased, as Victorians started to buy gifts from shops that were too big to hang from the tree. By the end of the Victorian era, most families had started to leave Christmas gifts under the tree instead.



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## Father Christmas

- Today, Father Christmas is mainly associated with gifts. However, this was not always the case.
- Father Christmas was originally part of an old English midwinter festival; he was usually dressed in green, which was a sign of the returning spring.
- Stories about St. Nicholas, a kind man who helped the poor and who lived in the 4th century, had been known and shared for centuries. In Holland, he was known as Sinter Klaas and when Dutch settlers moved to America they took their stories with them and an American myth around 'Santa Claus' developed.
- From the 1870s, ideas about the American Santa Claus and the British Father Christmas merged to create the Father Christmas we know now. Along with him came his unique gift and toy distribution system - reindeer and sleigh.

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## Dinner

- The Victorians were responsible for popularising many of our traditional British Christmas foods.
- The first Victorian mince pies were made of meat (a recipe that dates from Tudor times), but the mince pies made later in the 19th century did not contain meat and were pretty much like the ones we enjoy today.
- Although some Victorian families celebrated Christmas with roast goose or beef, it was in Victorian times that roast turkey became the main part of the Christmas dinner. By the end of the Victorian period, most families would roast a turkey for Christmas.



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## Family

- The family was really important to the Victorians. They saw Christmas as a time to focus on family relationships, and most of the Victorian Christmas traditions (such as gift giving, eating a Christmas dinner, decorating the Christmas tree) were shared by all of the family members.
- Charles Dickens is also credited with spreading many of the Christmas traditions in Victorian times. His famous book, *A Christmas Carol*, was very popular and it influenced how Victorian families approached the celebration of Christmas.



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