



TESOL Connections

Keeping English language professionals connected

ELT Resource Roundup: December Celebrations

by [Tomiko Breland](#)

No matter where in the world you teach, the upcoming season is abundant with holidays that offer an excellent opportunity to expose your English learners to our multicultural world through history, cultural practices, and intercultural exchange. Here are a few from around the web that we've compiled for you.

Getting Started

Before you begin planning holiday activities or lessons, it's important to take care with your content and show respect for your students and for the cultures you may be discussing. Ensure your plans to bring culturally enriching content into your classroom are respectful to all students and, in the case of religious content, appropriately academic. Start here:

- [Culturally Responsive Instruction for Holiday and Religious Celebrations](#) (Colorín Colorado)
- [Finding Common Ground: A First Amendment Guide to Religion and Public Schools](#) (First Amendment Center)
- [Teaching the Holidays: The December Dilemma](#) (Education Week)

Videos and Multimedia

These videos feature or are focused around holidays or holiday themes. Use these as a springboard for discussion or other activities.

- [The Christmas Gift Experiment](#)
The [lesson plan](#) included with this 2-minute video, from the British Council, is for teenagers and adults and focuses on vocabulary, creativity, fluency, and writing skills.
- [English Lesson | December Holidays Around The World](#)
Three YouTube English language teachers from different parts of the world discuss their various December holiday traditions; they also go over useful vocabulary and phrasal verbs in English.

- [Christmas Around the World](#)
This slideshow from *The New York Times* archives shows 10 images of how people celebrate Christmas around the world.
- [Arthur's Perfect Christmas \(Full Movie\)](#)
Use this episode with your younger students to introduce several winter season holidays (Christmas, Kwanzaa, Hanukkah) and related vocabulary.

Reading

These articles and webpages offer interesting and informative perspectives into some big (or, in some cases, new) holiday traditions.

- ["How we turned our family's holiday gift exchange into a chance to really connect"](#)
This article from Ideas.TED.com shares the story of how one family reimaged their annual gift exchange.
- ["Christmas becoming less religious in the U.S."](#)
This short article from Breaking News English can be viewed in three different difficulty levels, and it comes with multiple activities, including a text jumble and match, spelling practice, and a gap fill activity.
- ["The Gift of the Magi"](#)
This classic tale of sacrifice and giving by O. Henry is set during Christmas, but its lessons can resonate throughout the year.

Lessons and Activities

These lessons and activities can be used in your classroom this holiday season.

- [3 New Year's Activities](#)
This TESOL Blog post shares three writing activities focused on the New Year that can be adapted to different ages and proficiency levels.
- [Holidays Around the World Lesson Plans](#)
Education World shares nine lessons about December celebrations from multiple cultures around the world.
- [Ideas for Language Learners: Celebrate the Holidays](#)
This collection of activities from *The New York Times* includes learning about your students' unique holiday traditions, creating a small holiday gift with students, teaching about a number of international holiday traditions, and writing about New Year resolutions.

- [Lesson Plan: Intercultural Holiday Party Planning](#)
This activity from *TESOL Connections* is an exercise in cultural awareness; it allows student groups to choose their own holiday to celebrate.
- [Teaching Culture: Festivals of Light Around the World](#)
This TESOL Blog post shares the traditions and practices surrounding light festivals from several distinct cultures, which occur from October through December, and the author includes classroom activities for each.
- EL Civics offers lessons on various holidays, including these upcoming ones*:
 - [Hanukkah](#) (this year 22 December–30 December)
 - [Christmas](#) (25 December)
 - [Kwanzaa](#) (26 December–1 January)
 - [New Year's Day](#) (1 January)
 - [Chinese New Year](#) (25 January)

*These lessons are from 2017, so pay attention to dates as you share these lessons with your students.

Miscellaneous

- [Christmas Traditions From Around the World](#)
This infographic explains 12 different Christmas traditions that you can show and share with your ELs.
- [2019 Diversity Holidays](#)
No need to limit your holiday lesson plans to the month of December! Have students choose and research any holiday from this extensive list of observances celebrated by cultures around the world.

May the season bring you and your students joyful learning experiences! If you have any of your own December or holiday activities to share, please do so in the comments.

Tomiko Breland is TESOL project editor. She received her BA in English from Stanford University, her MA in writing from the Johns Hopkins University, and her certificate in TESOL from Anaheim University. In her free time, she writes and edits fiction.