

Christmas—Why do we do that? By Sid River

Background

Written as a mock documentary with plenty of laughs but lots of real factual information about Christmas traditions. With the addition of some simple costumes and some songs/music this one proved a real hit with kids, parents, teachers and several pigeons!

Parts	Description
Judy & Angus	"Anchor men" for the news documentary. A bit like a married couple: she's in control and he's a daydreamer.
Marjorie, Trudy, Floella, and Nancy	Reporters out in the field conducting on the spot interviews. All dressed in winter woollies, they could quite easily be switched to male parts if necessary (except possibly for Floella who has a crush on Charles Dickens, and Marjorie who needs to avoid a kiss from farmer and roman - but it depends how liberal your audience is!)
Farmer	Rustic chap, Farmers accent, stick, flat cap, straw etc.
Druid	Large robe and beard. Speaks in a voice like Gandalf.
Roman	Could be a legionary or a toga wearing citizen.
Sir Henry Cole	An important Victorian gentleman with waistcoat and top hat. Handlebar moustache would be good!
John Horsley	A Victorian artist complete with smock and beret!
16th century Germans	Bickering Germans, a bit like the 3 Stooges. Simple but requires good timing.
Martin Luther	Simple non-controversial walk on info part.
Prince Albert	Another Victorian gentleman, only a lot posher and a lot richer!
Charles Dickens	Self-explanatory. Dress him a bit like the artful Dodger, only smarter.
Professor McBoffin	Stereotypical mad scientist, male or female with mad hair, glasses and a white coat.
Kimberley	Professor's assistant. Like a librarian with a white coat and clipboard.
St Nick	Not quite Santa. Bishops mitre and red cape, and, oh alright then, a long white beard!
3 Americans	Southern, brass, loud and dressed like line dancers (no stereotypes here!)
Robert May	Another Victorian gentleman but with an American accent and a wide-brimmed hat.
Conductor	Bow tie and tailcoat. Needs a baton and an upright stance.
Rev Vercross	Reverend sitting in the front row who gets up and shouts at the cast about the true meaning of Christmas.
Nativity characters	All the usual characters from an infants nativity. Could be other members of the cast doubling up (literally in the case of the animals!)

Notes

Music is suggested where appropriate and you may want to pad out the scene a bit if you are using it on its own.

Christmas—Why do we do that?

Scene is a stage with a news desk on one side of the stage. Music to a news-type program plays and after a few bars, two newsreaders enter waving and sit at the desk.

Judy: Hello, and welcome to this special edition of “Why do we do that?”, the program that asks the question . . .

Dramatic pause and both hold hands out, palms upwards in an overly rehearsed gesture—they should do this every time they say the programme’s name together as a question

Both: . . . WHY DO WE DO THAT?

Angus: (*sarcastically*) Hmm.. Yes. Strange that! Who would have thought it. My name is Angus Catchfondly.

Judy: And I am Judy Brew-ha-ha. And tonight we ask . . . (*dramatic pause etc*)

Both: . . . CHRISTMAS—WHY DO WE DO THAT?

Angus: On December 24th, Families all over Britain will be settling down for Christmas eve.

Judy: They will be singing their Christmas carols, reading their Christmas cards, decorating their Christmas trees...

Angus: (*Gradually becoming more misty-eyed and dramatic*) . . . wrapping their **Christmas** gifts and placing them into **Christmas** stockings which will be hung over **Christmas** fireplaces containing **Christmas** logs lit by **Christmas** flames from **Christmas** matches and..

Judy: (*Interrupting*) Ok! OK! I think we get the message. But we need to know why we do all this. Take... mistletoe for example.

She fetches out a sprig of mistletoe and mistakenly holds it up above Angus’s head. He thinks she is expecting a Christmas kiss!

Angus: (*sniggers and leans away*) No thank you! What are you suggesting?

Judy: (*sighs*) I’m suggesting that we go over to our expert in “all things green” to find out about this little plant and all the other vegetation that we hold special at Christmas.

Angus: (*relieved*) Oh, I see. Yes. Let’s go over to our expert, *in the field*, Marjorie Pottingshed. Marjorie, tell us where you are right now.

Marjorie: Hello Angus. Well not surprisingly, I’m in the middle of a field. And here with me is world renowned mistletoe farmer Albert Sickleswinger. Albert, you are somewhat of an expert in the history of mistletoe.

Farmer: (*Farmers accent*) That’s correct Miss Pottingshed. Did you know that mistletoe was used by Druid priests 200 years before the birth of Christ in their winter celebrations. They revered the plant because it appeared to have no roots yet remained green throughout the winter!

Enter Druid

Druid: *(booming voice)* Yes, and the ancient Celts, and presumably the not so ancient ones when necessary, believed that mistletoe had magical healing powers. They thought that it could act as an antidote to poison, an aid to infertility, *and* ward off evil spirits. All this for less than the price of a pack of multivitamins.

Enter Roman soldier/citizen who approaches Marjorie

Roman: And us Romans believed that enemies who met under hanging mistletoe would lay down their arms and embrace! *(lays down sword and holds out arms towards Marjorie enthusiastically)*

Marjorie: *(looking panicked)* But.. But.. We're not enemies!

Roman: No, but we could be friends! *(holds up mistletoe, closes eyes and puckers lips)*

Farmer: We do have to test the produce you know Marge, quality control! *(holds up another sprig of mistletoe, closes eyes and puckers lips towards Marjorie from the other side)*

Marjorie: *(cringing and looking scared)* This is Marjorie Pottingshed handing you back to the studio and making a hasty exit from the field of duty!

Farmer and Roman step towards each other with eyes closed thinking that Marjorie is still there. They open their eyes at the last minute, see each other and jump back in surprise. They beat a hasty exit. Attention focuses back on the news desk.

Judy: Err.. Thanks Marjorie. A fascinating report.

Angus: Is it time for the weather forecast yet?

Judy: No, I don't think a weather forecast is scheduled for today.

Angus: *(disappointed)* Oh. But we will have snow won't we?

Judy: *(sneeringly)* Snow? Didn't you know that snow at Christmas is a completely fictitious concept invented by the makers of seasonal TV advertisements! We get snow in May. Everyone knows that!

Angus: Well this is a Christmas play/assembly/story *(delete as appropriate)*. There's always snow at the end, isn't there?

Judy: *(getting impatient)* Look, let's just move on to the next item. Trudy Wignapper presents a special report on . . .

Both: CHRISTMAS CARDS . . . WHY DO WE DO THAT?"

Reporter enters with microphone.

Trudy: An early sort of Christmas card was first used in England when young boys were made to practice their writing skills by creating Christmas greetings for their parents. But the first real Christmas card was invented by a famous Englishman who was just too busy to write individual messages for all his friends!

Victorian gentleman enters

Sir Henry: *(posh voice)* My name is Sir Henry Cole and I was the first director of the very important Victoria and Albert museum. And yes, my job meant that I was just too busy to sit down and write individual greetings.

Victorian artist enters with several example illustrations.

John Calcott: *(sounding self-important)* So Sir Henry commissioned me, John Calcott Horsley, a somewhat talented artist, to illustrate a three panel card that he could send to all of his friends.

They look at the samples closely with serious looking faces.

Sir Henry: Hmm.. I don't think that we can use the one of the man with a Christmas pudding stuck over his head!

John Calcott: Too informal you think?

Sir Henry: No, just plain silly! We Victorians are not able to understand humour for at least another 50 years!

Trudy: They eventually chose a traditional picture of a family enjoying the Christmas festivities in a sensible way, the type of design that would still be popular today. Although, perhaps not as popular as a picture of a man with a Christmas pudding stuck over his head! Back to you in the studio.

Angus is away from his seat looking out of a window wearing a hat and scarf.

Judy: Thank you Trudy. *(whispers urgently to Angus)* Angus! Now on to our next item. **ANGUS!** *(Angus realises that they are on air and runs to his seat)* What would Christmas be without a Christmas tree.

Angus: Yes, we take a look at the origins of the humble Christmas tree with another of our green fingered experts, Floella Shinebrightly.

Judy: *(whispers 'off camera' and sounds irritated)* What on Earth were you doing? This is so unprofessional!

Angus: I was just looking out for the snow. There will be snow won't there?

Judy: *(exasperated)* Oh shut up!

Floella: *(Woman in gardening clothes and winter woollies enters)* Hi. Like me, I'm sure that many of you have often wondered why, each December, we decide to uproot a huge tree from the garden and place it in our living rooms. Well, to understand this strange custom, we have to travel back in history to 16th century Germany.

Three 16th century Germans enter in a military like line, all dressed identically. They can attempt accents if they are confident!

1st German: Hello. We are 16th century Germans.

2nd German: Yes. Now in Germany in the 16th century . . .

3rd German: *(interrupting)* You don't say!

1st German: *(affronted)* Yes, quite! Now in Germany in the 16th century . . .

2nd German: *(interrupting)* You said that!

3rd German: Get to the point!

1st German: I'm trying to! I n 16th century Ge . . .

2nd German: *(interrupting and pushing in front)* Oh let me! I n 16th century Germany . . .

3rd German: Now you're doing it! I t'll be the 17th century before you two finish. Let me! I n sixtee...

1st German: *(interrupts quickly with a loud shout)* TREES! *(glares at other two)* I n this place, at this time, *(pauses and stares hard at other two daring them to interrupt)* fir trees were decorated, both indoors and outdoors . . .

2nd German: *(trying to take over)* . . . with apples, roses, gilded candies, and coloured paper.

3rd German: A fir tree hung with apples symbolised the Garden of Eden and was known as a "Paradise tree".

Another 16th century German protestant /puritan in all black enters.

Martin Luther: I t was me, Martin Luther, another 16th century German and protestant reformer, who first decorated an indoor Christmas tree with lighted candles to recreate the beauty of the stars that I saw shining through the branches of a fir tree.

Floella: *(Stepping back to centre stage)* Like mistletoe, the evergreen fir tree was believed by ancient peoples to help keep away evil spirits, witches, ghosts and illnesses. They would hang boughs of such trees, along with holly, outside doors and windows. But how did the Christmas tree tradition find its way to these shores?

Very posh looking Victorian Gentleman stands in a stately fashion and strides on to stage with nose in the air

Prince Albert: I think that you will find that I was responsible for that!

All Germans: *(Pointing)* You're not a sixteenth century German!

Prince Albert: Certainly not! Although some of my ancestors were. I am Prince Albert. When I married Queen Victoria, I thought that it would be a really nice idea for us to have a Christmas tree like the ones we had in Germany. When people saw an etching of our family gathered around a Christmas tree at Windsor castle in 1848, they all wanted one. Well, all the rich people anyway!

Floella: Wasn't it another famous Victorian, Charles Dickens who invented Christmas?

Prince Albert: *(Peering across the stage)* Why don't you ask him, he's over there, behind the 16th century Germans!

ANOTHER Victorian Gentleman appears behind the Germans.

Charles Dickens: *(Modestly)* Well, I have to say that I did not really invent Christmas, but one of my little stories called "A Christmas Carol" did sell rather well and helped to make Christmas holidays and festivities popular again.

Floella: Is it true that for the first 8 years of your life, it snowed at Christmas?

Charles Dickens: Yes, its **snow** use denying it. *(cheesy grin at his own joke. Rest of cast groan loudly)* That's why I set the stories with a wintry backdrop. Did you know that to begin with, nobody wanted to publish "A Christmas Carol" so I had to pay for it to be published myself! *(Whole cast gasps incredulously)*

Floella: Well, thank you very much Mr Dickens *(she speaks aside to Charles and appears a bit star-struck,, simpering madly)* I love your books by the way. Would you mind awfully signing this one for me?

Charles: *(sounding pleased)* Of course not. What would you like me to put?

Floella: *(all giggly)* Oh, just put 'To Flowy, love from Charlie! *(He signs book and hands it back. She sighs and hugs it to her chest. Then she suddenly realised that she is still live on telly and snaps out of it)* Oh, and . . . Err . . . Back to you in the studio!

All exit. Attention back to Angus and Judy.

Angus: You see! Snow! We can't have Christmas without snow. Pleeese can we have some snow?

Judy: *(frustrated)* Look, just let it lie will you!

Angus: Oooo! There's no need to get frosty!

Judy: If you listen, our next feature has a connection to snow! See if you can guess. *(speaks condescendingly)* It's about someone very special who appears once a year at Christmas time.

Angus: *(screws up face thinking)* Err . . . My Uncle Hank. He only ever appears at Christmas time for a free glass of sherry and a buffet lunch!

Judy: *(tuts loudly)* No! *(sings and does little dance as if to mime)* "He's a jolly fat man all dressed in red!"

Angus: *(still thinking hard)* Err... Wayne Rooney! *(This name could be changed to another prominent celebratory figure who wears red if necessary)*

Judy: Nooo! Santa! Santa Claus!

Angus: Oh HIM! Yes, Let's find out about Santa by going over to our Lapland correspondent, Nancy Flamflinger and ask . . .

Both: SANTA CLAUS . . . WHY DO WE DO THAT?

Another reporter enters in winter garb with microphone.

Nancy: Thank you Angus, I'm going to chat to two people who can tell us the history of Father Christmas. *(two professors enter)* This is Professor Egghead McBoffin and his research assistant Kimberley Ovengloven. Professor, where did the story start?

Prof McBoffin: Well, the story began in the 4th century with a man known as Saint Nicholas, who was Bishop of a place called Myra. He was a generous sort of chap who was devoted to children.

Kimberley: His kindness and generosity led people to believe that he could perform miracles and after his death, he became the patron saint of Russia.

St Nick enters.

St Nick: I became known for my red cape, long flowing beard and Bishop's mitre. *(aside to audience)* That's a pointy hat to you and me!

Prof McBoffin: The reputation of Good old Saint Nick spread across Europe where different countries had different interpretations of his story.

Kimberley: The story survived the longest in Holland where the spelling of his name "Sint Nikolaas" *(these spellings should be displayed on cards or accompanying PowerPoint presentation)* was eventually transformed into "Sintaklaas" and he became known for rewarding good children by leaving treats in their shoes.

St Nick: It was a smelly occupation but somebody had to do it!

Nancy: As I understand it, when Dutch settlers went to America, the tradition went with them and his name became the more modern "Santa Claus"

Enter 3 Americans dressed for line dancing!

American 1: *(loud)* Yep, and when we Americans got our "Claus" on Santa, we turned him into the good ole boy that he is today!

American 2: That's right buddy, and when Coke Cola first used Santy on their advertising posters in the 1930's, they decked a large round Granddad out in his modern red coat and trousers, black boots and red and white hat.

American 3: And a great big American "HO! HO! HO!" belly laugh.

All Americans: Ho! Ho! Ho! God bless Santa and God bless America!

Nancy: But hold on. That's not the only contribution that you Americans have made to the modern Christmas. Of course, there is "White Christmas" and endless repeats of the Wizard of Oz on Christmas day, but there is another character who is very important to Christmas.

American 1: Gee! Aren't we great! *(looking confused)* Who is he?

Nancy: Here's a clue. *(she pretends to have a flashing nose and hums Rudolph the red nosed reindeer)*

American 2: *(looks blank with inane smile, then has sudden idea)* I've got it! Homer Simpson!

Nancy: *(Incredulous)* Duh! No, I'm talking about Rudolph the red nosed Reindeer!

American 3: Oh yeah him. *(confused pause)* Is he American? He sounds like a sixteenth century German!

American gentleman enters, looking like Doc Holliday.

Robert May: He certainly is! My name is Robert L May and in 1939, the department store company I worked for asked me to write a story for then to sell at Christmas. I came up with the idea for Rudolph and tested the story out on my 4 year old daughter. It was very successful and by 1946, despite the wartime shortage of paper, 6 million copies had been distributed.

All the Americans start whooping and "high-fiving" Robert May.

Conductor *(A snooty conductor enters and taps a baton on the news desk to get silence)*
An interesting fact about Robert's story was that it was based on the story of the ugly duckling and he nearly called the red nosed hero Rollo or Reginald, before he settled on Rudolph. Ready everybody 1..2..3..4.. *(conducts singing)*

All sing: "Reginald the red nosed reindeer, had a very shiny nose" (pause) Naw!

Stage empties.

Judy: Well, that was a nice way to end the programme. What a lovely Christmas story Rudolph makes.

Angus: Yes, a nice traditional Christmas story... with plenty of snow!

Judy: Oh do be quiet about the snow and wish everybody a Merry Christmas!

Angus: You're right! A merry Christmas to everyone and its goodnight from both of us and I hope . . .

Rev Verycross: *(voice from the back interrupts)* I object! *(A vicar approaches the stage)*

Judy: Pardon? Who are you? Don't you know that this is live television!

Rev Verycross: *(Angry)* I'll tell you who I am. I am the Reverend Verycross, and I am indeed, **VERYCROSS!**

Angus: W..W..why. What have we done to upset you. Did you not like the refreshments during the interval?

Rev Verycross: The refreshments were fine. But **you** are not. You have missed out the most important Christmas story of them all!

Judy: *(thinks hard and has sudden idea)* Oh, you mean the one about the elves and the shoemaker!

Rev Verycross: *(Climbing on to the side of the stage)* No I **do not** mean the one about the elves and the shoemaker. I mean the one about the first Christmas, the real Christmas!

As the Rev speaks, other members of the cast should enter dressed like characters from the Nativity to form a Nativity Tableau.

Rev Verycross: The one that ended in a stable with 3 wise men *(wise men enter and take up positions)*, shepherds *(shepherds enter)* angels *(angels enter)* farm animals *(animals enter)*, a man named Joseph, a woman named Mary *(both enter)* and a very special baby in a manger

*The Rev could then recite a Christmas prayer here if necessary. He/she should then ask the audience to join in with a traditional carol, followed by a rousing version of "**Reginald** the red nosed reindeer", during which, near to the end of the song, other cast members should throw 'snow' (shredded paper of confetti is good) over Angus and Judy.*

Angus: Yeeesss! I t's snowing. Merrrrrrry Christmas everybody!

THE END