

# CHRISTMAS in Germany

## ADVENT

A large part of the Christmas celebrations in Germany is Advent, the period of four Sundays and weeks before Christmas. Advent means "coming" in Latin, so it describes the coming of Jesus into the world. The four Sundays and weeks of Advent are used to prepare and remember the reason for Christmas. There are many different Advent calendars used in German homes. The traditional Advent calendar is made from cards. Another kind is made out of a wreath with 24 decorated boxes or bags hanging from it. Each bag or box contains a present. The Advent Kranz is a ring of fir branches with four candles. One candle is lit at the beginning of each week in the Advent.

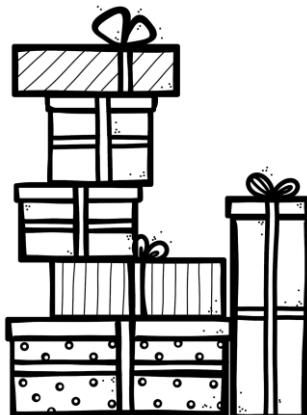


## TREES

In Germany, Christmas trees are very important. They were first used during the late Middle Ages. Christmas trees are usually secretly decorated by the mother of the family, if they have children. The Christmas tree was traditionally brought into the home on Christmas Eve. Families read the Bible and sing Christmas songs, like O Tannenbaum, Ihr Kinderlein Kommet, and Stille Nacht (Silent Night).

## PRESENTS

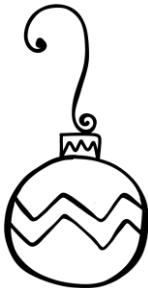
Germans typically exchange presents with their families on Christmas Eve. At small workplaces and school parties, secret presents are often exchanged.



## STERNSINGERS

Sternsingers, or star singers, go from house to house singing songs and collecting money for charity. They visit homes between December 27<sup>th</sup> and January 6<sup>th</sup>.

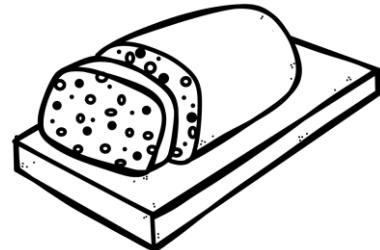
## MARKETS



Germany is known for its Christmas Markets where people buy Christmas foods and decorations. Glass ornaments are likely the most famous German decorations. They were imported to the United States in the 1880s by the Woolworth stores, becoming popular.

## FOOD

The main Christmas meal is carp or goose in Germany. Stollen is a popular fruitied yeast bread also consumed at Christmas.



## CHRISTKIND

Children write to "das Christkind" or "Christkindl" in Germany asking for presents. They decorate the letters with sugar glued to the envelope to make them sparkly and attractive. The letters are left on the windowsill at the beginning of or during the Advent. "Das Christkind" translates to "The Christ Child," but Germans do not think of the Christkind as the baby Jesus. The Christkind is often described as a young girl with "Christ-like" qualities. In Nuremberg, Germany a young girl is chosen to play the Christkind in a parade. She has long, blond curly hair and wears a gold crown. She wears a long white and gold dress and sometimes has wings like an angel. She is thought to bring presents to children on Christmas Eve.



## FATHER CHRISTMAS

Santa Claus, or Father Christmas brings the main presents on December 24<sup>th</sup>, Christmas Eve. Some people say Father Christmas brings the presents, while other believe it is Christkind.

## ST. NICHOLAS

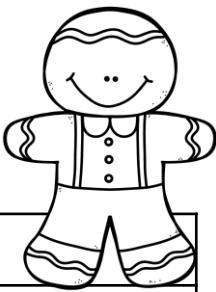
Children also hope for presents from "der Nikolaus," who brings small gifts, like sweets or chocolates on December 6<sup>th</sup>, St. Nicholas' Day. He comes the night between the 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> and puts presents in children's shoes, usually placed by their doors.



Name \_\_\_\_\_

# CHRISTMAS in Germany

**MATCHING:** Match each term with its description.



1. ____ Four	A. Popular fruited yeast bread
2. ____ Advent	B. Glued to the envelope of the letter for Christkind
3. ____ stollen	C. These were first placed in homes in the Middle Ages
4. ____ sugar	D. American department store who carried ornaments
5. ____ trees	E. The four weeks before Christmas
6. ____ Christkind	F. Delivers sweets and small gifts to children's shoes
7. ____ ornaments	G. Sing carols from house to house
8. ____ St. Nicholas	H. Young girl with Christ-like qualities
9. ____ Sternsingers	I. Sold in markets
10. ____ Woolworth	J. Number of candles on an Advent Kranz

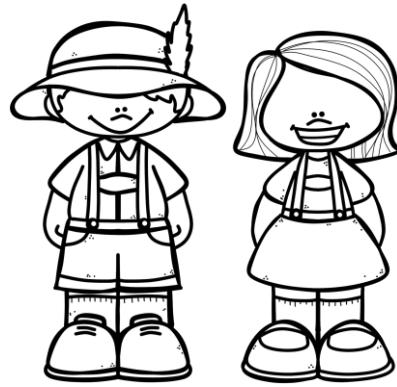
**TRUE OR FALSE?:** Place a check in the correct column.

STATEMENT	T	F
11. All Germans believe Father Christmas brings presents.		
12. Christkind is thought to possess Christ-like qualities.		
13. All Advent calendars look the same.		
14. St. Nicholas brings small gifts on December 6 <sup>th</sup> .		
15. Markets are popular in Germany around Christmas.		
16. Sternsingers go house to house on Christmas Eve singing carols.		
17. Secret presents are exchanged at school and work.		
18. Trees were typically brought into the house at the start of Advent.		
19. Families often sing carols and read Bible stories around Christmas.		
20. Germans think of the Christkind as Baby Jesus.		

## MULTIPLE CHOICE: Choose the best answer.

21. Which of the following best describes the text structure of the article?

- A. Compare and Contrast
- B. Problem and Solution
- C. Description
- D. Cause and Effect



22. Which of the following is NOT true about Advent in Germany?

- A. It means "coming" in Latin.
- B. It is important in Germany.
- C. Advent calendars are popular.
- D. It is the two weeks prior to Jesus' birth.

23. What is the main purpose of Sternsingers?

- A. To sing carols at the Christmas Eve church ceremony.
- B. To sing at the tree lighting ceremony.
- C. To sing carols and collect money for charity.
- D. To honor Christkind with music.

24. Which of the following is an accurate statement about Christkind?

- A. She is thought to be baby Jesus.
- B. She is thought to be the only one who brings children presents.
- C. Children write her letters on Christmas Eve.
- D. She is thought to have Christ-like qualities.

25. What is the author's main purpose in writing this selection?

- A. To explain how the Christmas tree became popular in Germany.
- B. To inform the reader of popular German Christmas traditions.
- C. To entertain the reader with an interesting story about Christkind.
- D. To persuade the reader to visit Germany during Christmas.

26. "They were imported to the United States in the 1880s by the Woolworth stores, becoming popular."

What is the best meaning of *imported* in the previous quote?

- A. Bring goods from a country to sell
- B. Send goods from a country to sell
- C. Purchased by a consumer
- D. Sent in bulk