**Christmas & Santa Claus**

**A movie actor once won the Academy Award for playing Santa Claus. It happened in 1947. Edmund Gwenn played the part of Santa Claus in the movie Miracle on 34th Street, and won the Oscar for Best Supporting Actor. In movie history, actors have won Academy Awards in a variety of roles, but no one would have thought a man could win the Academy Award for playing Santa Claus. *(Charles Reichblum, in Knowledge in a Nutshell, p. 49)***

**The actual Saint Nicholas was born around A.D. 270 and lived in Myra, a region in what is now known as Turkey. His parents died while he was young and left him a large inheritance. It is said that young Nicholas decided to forsake his fortune and dedicate his life to charity. He was renowned for his generosity and was especially loved by children. Historians claim that St. Nicholas died in A.D. 343, but children throughout the world believe he still celebrates the birth of Christ by delivering presents every Christmas Eve. *(Jeff Harris, in Shortcuts)***

**Even Santa Claus needs a hand to deliver presents to children in Alaska’s isolated villages, and he’s getting it from the Alaska National Guard. This year, Santa is hitching rides on C-130 transports and dog-drawn sleds to visit 18 tiny communities near the Arctic Circle, including Little Diomede Island, a remote atoll just east of the Russian border. “Some kids want guns,” said the jolly, white-bearded guardsman, who preferred to keep his identity a secret. “That’s really important here in the bush. One girl said she wanted fun for Christmas. I told her that was my favorite thing.” *(The Week magazine, December 17, 2004)***

**Dennis calls up Mr. Wilson during the night and says: “Hi, Mr. Wilson! Santa’s already been to our house. How about yours?” *(Hank Ketcham, in Dennis The Menace comic strip)***

**Santa Claus is one of the more memorable symbols associated with the celebration of Christmas. The image we have of Santa, with his long white beard, bulging fur-lined red suit and overflowing sack of gifts, is recognized and adored by children across America. The American version of Santa was actually created in just the past few hundred years by creative artists and writers. Other countries tell of similar characters, some of them dating back thousands of years. So who is this man we call Santa Claus and where did he come from? It all depends on what you choose to believe. *(Jeff Harris, in Shortcuts)***

**Snoopy: “I just don’t know. Anyone who would fly around from house to house in a sleigh with a bunch of reindeer, at night yet, has to be out of his mind! But I appreciate it!” *(Charles M. Schulz, in Peanuts comic strip)***

**President Bush is sitting on Santa’s lap as Santa responds to his Christmas wish: “Really, Sir, is ‘Me dancin’ the funky chicken on Saddam’s grave’ an appropriate Christmas wish?” *(Rocky Mountain News cartoon)***

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**The boy says as he spits out his words: “Hey, kid. Is this your first time seeing Santa?” Heart: “Uh, no. Just nervous, I guess.” Boy: “Listen, the trick is knowing what to ask for before you actually get up to the big guy’s throne. This way there’s no last minute panic, see? Anyway, that’s what I always tell my sister. You know what she wants for Christmas?” Sister: “One of those shields, like over a salad bar?” *(Mark Tatulli, in Heart Of The City comic strip)***

**The little boy begins to write a letter to Santa which is dated June 1: Dear Santa, Hi, how are you? Just fine, I hope. The reason I’m writing is because I think it’s a crying shame that everybody writes to you just to ask for toys and stuff at Christmas. Which is why I’m writing this way back in the summer; just to say hi and such. So, how are Rudy and the flying beasts? And how is your wife? I saw a picture of her and she’s not a bit fat. Well, take care, and have a great summer. I’ll be writing to you again in the winter. Signed, Joe. P. S. I sure hope I remember to mail this letter on time. The last part of the cartoon pictures the little boy dating a letter December 14 which starts out: Dear, Santa, Guess what happened? (Rick Detorie, in One Big Happy comic strip)**

**Dean: “Look, I didn’t mean to tease you, Heart. C’mon, tell me what you’re gonna ask Santa for.” Heart: “Sorry, Dean, it’s very personal.” Dean: “Oh, I get it. Time to re-stock the underpants department, eh?” Heart: “Might I suggest asking Santa for a sense of humor!” *(Mark Tatulli, in Heart Of The City, comic strip)***

**Dolly asks her Mom: “Is it too late to ask Santa to bring me a baby sister?” *(Bil Keane, in The Family Circus comic strip)***

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The child goes up and sits on Santa’s knee and says to him: “About that pony you back-ordered last year!” (*Tom Wilson, in Ziggy comic strip)***

**The Saint Nicholas Bank of New York City was chartered in 1865. It was one of five banks in the U. S. that at some time pictured Santa Claus on legal currency. *(L. M. Boyd)***

**Mother says to children: “We’ll see what Santa brought as soon as Daddy gets the battery into his camcorder.” *(Bil Keane, in The Family Circus comic strip)***

**The child says to Santa: “I have to be in bed at eight, so get there about five minutes past.” *(Jim Unger, in Classic Herman comic strip)***

**On Christmas Eve, my nine-year-old, David, put out milk and cookies for Santa, plus an extra treat – a beer. The next morning, David came tearing into our room. “Santa came!” he shouted. Holding up the half-full bottle of beer, he said, “See! There really is a Santa, because Dad would have drunk the whole thing!” *(Karen Bellamy, in Reader’s Digest)***

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**First, you believe in Santa Claus. Then you don’t believe in Santa Claus. And before you know it, you are Santa Claus. *(Bits & Pieces)***

**Dennis walks up to Santa and whispers in his ear: “Do you believe in yourself?” *(Hank Ketcham, in Dennis The Menace comic strip)***

**Boy: “If I stop believing in Santa Claus, will that mean he won’t bring me presents anymore?” Girl: “Nah. All that matters is that your parents don’t stop believing in Santa Claus!” *(Art Sansom, in The Born Loser comic strip)***  
  
**Stop believing in Santa Claus and you get underwear. *(Robert Orben)***

***\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\**A week before Christmas, a man asked his son what he wanted from Santa for Christmas. “Anything,” said the boy, “as long as it isn’t a bike!” “Why is that?” asked the father. “I found one hidden in the garage last night,” the boy replied. *(Rocky Mountain News)***

**Didn’t the $1 bill once have a picture of Santa Claus on it? No, but a $5 bill did. It was put out by a New York bank in 1858 when banks could do that. *(L. M. Boyd)***

**Grimm: “So he lives at the North Pole and he brings toys to every little girl and boy. But to some kids he just gives a lump of coal. Santa sounds a little bipolar to me.” *(Mike Peters, in Mother Goose & Grimm comic strip)***

**Santa Claus has the right idea. Visit people once a year.(Victor Borge)**

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**During the summer when Dennis is bored with everything, he says to his friend while swimming: “This year I’m gonna ask Santa to bring half of my stuff in the summer an’ the rest at Christmas.” *(Hank Ketcham, in Dennis The Menace comic strip)***

**The little girl says to Santa: “You'd better not bring my brother anything!” *(Jim Unger, in Classic Herman comic strip)***

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**Dennis notices Santa ringing a bell for Salvation Army and goes up to ask him: “You an’ Missus Claus aren’t broke, are you?” *(Hank Ketcham, in Dennis The Menace comic strip)***

**Dennis asks Santa: “How come you don’t have your own cable channel?” *(Hank Ketcham, in Dennis The Menace comic strip)***

**The famous cartoonist Thomas Nast drew a cartoon of Santa Claus in 1882 that showed him sitting on a box labeled “Christmas Box 1882, St. Nicholas, North Pole.” Three years later he drew another cartoon showing Santa at the North Pole. He never said why. *(Rebecca Jones, in Rocky Mountain News)***

**Andrew: “Mom, I decided for New Year’s I’m gonna make some positive changes in my life. I’m gonna make my bed, and not fight with Royboy, and then work toward world peace!” Mom: “That’s wonderful, Andrew.” Andrew: “Plus I figure Santa Claus will notice and then I’ll get a lot more presents next Christmas!” *(Rick Stromoski, in Soup To Nutz comic strip)***

**Our version of Santa is a combination of many different characters including the real St. Nicholas, with his short dark beard, the Viking god Odin, with his flowing white beard, Father Christmas from England and a Scandanavian character dressed in furs and skins known as “Winterman.” *(Jeff Harris, in Shortcuts)***

**A grandmother took her grandson to see Santa Claus in a department store after purchasing about a dozen Christmas gifts. Santa gave the boy a little present. “What do you say to Santa?” prompted grandma. “Charge it,” said the boy. *(Bits & Pieces)***

**St. Nicholas was known especially for his love of children, and many stories are told of how he helped the little ones. The most famous and fabulous tale concerns three schoolboys. The boys had wandered into some woods and after dark had found an inn in which to spend the night. The innkeeper was extremely poor and, fearing starvation, robbed and killed the boys. He then put them in a tub of saltwater, planning to use them for food! But St. Nicholas came to the inn, evidently knowing what had occurred and brought the boys back to life. The innkeeper tearfully repented and begged forgiveness, which the magnanimous bishop granted him. Because of this and other stories, Nicholas was made the patron saint of children. *(Jim Gaither)***

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**Son: “Come on, Dad! Santa’s been here!” Dad: “He has?” Son: “Yeah, look!” Dad: “Wow!” Son: “I wonder how Santa got all this stuff down the chimney?” Dad: “I don’t know.” Son: “Because you don’t even have a chimney.” *(Jerry Bittle, in Shirley & Son comic strip)***

**Why does Santa Claus go down the chimney? Because it soots him! *(Tidbits of Loveland)  
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**The little boy begins writing Santa a letter: “Dear Santa, Don’t worry. I plan to leave out some milk and cookies on Christmas Eve for you. Considering all the houses you visit, you must consume a lot of milk and cookies. Have you had your cholesterol checked recently?” *(Steve Breen, in Grand Avenue comic strip)***

**What is claustrophobia? It is either the fear of buying Christmas gifts or the fear of getting stuck in a chimney. *(Bits & Pieces)***

**As Dennis walks along with his friend he notices Santa and says to his friend: “That’s the third one today. I think somebody’s been cloning Santa.” *(Hank Ketcham, in Dennis The Menace comic strip)***

**Dennis says to Mr. Wilson: “Since Santa didn’t bring me a computer, I guess the Easter Bunny is my last hope.” *(Hank Ketcham, in Dennis The Menace comic strip)***

**Santa Claus comes to us under many names: Kriss Kringle, Saint Nicholas, MasterCard. *(Phyllis Diller)***

**Once upon a time, banks all over the country issued their own currency. Even after the National Bank Act of 1863 imposed a 10 percent tax on such notes, many banks continued to make their own money. By 1935, the national banks had transferred this power to the Federal Reserve. Yet throughout most of this nation’s history, bank-issued currency, now relegated to myriad numismatic collections, was as legal a tender as any. The banks issued every denomination of paper money now in circulation, plus one: the three-dollar bill. Specific designs varied from bank to bank. But one design was used more than any other. That preeminent picture was, as on current currency, of someone. Someone you’ve known all your life. He appeared on the three-dollar bills issued by the Howard Banking Company of Boston and the Central Bank of Troy and the Pittsfield Bank and the White Mountain Bank--and by one Manhattan bank bearing the name of the man on the three-dollar bill: the Saint Nicholas Bank of New York City. And yes, I do mean to tell you that the person whose image was once absolutely lawfully engraved on the dead-serious 100 percent legitimate three-dollar bill -- was Santa Claus. *(Paul Aurandt, in Destiny & 102 Other Real Life Mysteries, p. 89)***

**I figured that at age seven it was inevitable for my son to begin having doubts about Santa Claus. Sure enough, one day he said, “Mom, I know something about Santa Claus, the Easter Bunny and the Tooth Fairy.” Taking a deep breath, I asked him, “What is that?” He replied, “They’re all nocturnal.” *(Marie Warren, in Reader’s Digest)***

**Billy says to his mother: “Santa Claus’ mommy sure dresses him funny.” *(Bil Keane, in The Family Circus comic strip)*  
  
A book about the Dutch version of St. Nicholas, written by Washington Irving, was published in 1809. It was a fanciful account describing St. Nicholas as a jolly old elf who flew his horse drawn wagon over the tree tops to deliver yearly presents to children. *(Jeff Harris, in Shortcuts)***

**Billy asks his mom: “Can I just e-mail my list to Santa?” *(Bil Keane, in The Family Circus comic strip)\*  
England’s “Father Christmas” wears a red robe lined with fur and a crown of holly. He is said to fill children’s stockings with presents on Christmas Eve. *(Jeff Harris, in Shortcuts)***

**Son: “I’m home.” Mom: “Where have you been?” Son: “Me and Max had a very enlightening discussion about whether or not Santa really exists.” Mom: “And what did you decide?” Son: “We decided that some things are better left undecided.” *(Jerry Bittle, in Shirley & Son comic strip)***

**Why is Santa so fast on his feet? He has mistle-toes. *(Jeff Harris, in Shortcuts)*  
  
“And what would you like for Christmas this year?” a department-store Santa asked the cute kid sitting on his lap. The little girl was indignant. “Didn’t you get the fax I sent you?” *(Quoted by Elston Brooks in Fort Worth Star-Telegram)***

**Santa: “The sleigh is ready and the reindeer are hitched! Yo, elves! The Time is nigh! Fill my bag!” Elves: “Paper or plastic?” (Art Samsom, in The Born Loser comic strip)**

**What does Santa use when he goes fishing? The North Pole. *(Jeff Harris, in Shortcuts)*  
  
In Germany, St. Nick is accompanied by an assistant who punishes naughty children by hitting them with a rod. In Holland, St. Nicholas travels with “Black Peter” who takes bad children away. *(Jeff Harris, in Shortcuts)***

**Santa: “Were you a good boy all year, Spencer?” Spencer: “Well, um!” Santa: “Oh! So you were naughty?” Spencer: “Well, um!” Santa: “How many times were you naughty?” Spencer: “If I didn’t get caught does it count?” *(Bud Grace, in Piranha Club comic strip)***

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**As the child leaves Santa’s knee with a long list of Christmas wishes the size of a roll of toilet paper, the next boy gets up on his knee and says to Santa: “I’ll have what he’s having!!” *(Tom Wilson, in Ziggy comic strip)***

**Santa: “So, young man, tell Santa, have you been good?” Boy: “Define ‘good’?” *(Rick Stromoski, in Soup To Nutz comic strip)***

**Santa: “So have you been kind to your brother and sister?” Sister: “Yes, Santa.” Brother: “She’s lyin’! She tortures us!” Sister: “He’s the devil!” Third child: “Shut up, you mooks, or I’ll pound yer brains in! Of course I meant that in a good way.” *(Rick Stromoski, in Soup to Nutz comic strip)***

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**The little boy jumps up on Santa’s lap, gives him a present, and says: “It’s a hearing aid. Obviously you didn’t hear me last year.” *(The Saturday Evening Post cartoon)***

**With a whole package of paper in his hand Billy asks: “Who wants to help me write a letter to Santa?” *(Bil Keane, in The Family Circus comic strip)***

**Dennis: “I’m sure I’ll get what I want this year. I’ve already talked to five different Santas.” *(Hank Ketcham, in Dennis The Menace comic strip)***

**The child says to Santa: “Naughty or nice? Umm—don’tcha have something in between?” *(Bil Keane, in The Family Circus comic strip)***

**Dolly: “Instead of REINdeer at the North Pole, shouldn’t Santa have SNOWdeer?” *(Bil Keane, in The Family Circus comic strip)***

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**I figured that at age seven it was inevitable for my son to begin having doubts about Santa Claus. Sure enough, one day he said, “Mom, I know something about Santa Claus, the Easter Bunny and the Tooth Fairy.” Taking a deep breath, I asked him, “What is that?” He replied, “They’re all nocturnal.” *(Marie Warren, in Reader’s Digest)***

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**Santa: “Who's that lady who brought you here?” Little girl: “My Grandma!” Santa: “Tell you what . . . Santa will bring you that Barbie doll you want . . . if you give me Grandma's phone number!” *(Tom Batiuk & Chuck Ayers, in Crankshaft comic strip)*  
Miracle legends continued to be associated to his name, even after his death: children were rescued from all kinds of danger, lame men were healed, and sea disasters were averted when people called upon St. Nicholas to intercede. Today the spirit of St. Nicholas survives in our Christmas traditions. The Christmas Eve flights of Santa Claus are reminiscent of St. Nicholas’ reputed ability to travel instantaneously from one place to another. The gifts of Santa Claus remind us of St. Nicholas’ love for children and his almost extravagant generosity. *(Jim Gaither, in U.S.R.S. newsletter)***

**The little girl starts writing her letter to Santa: Dear Santa Claus, I have been a very good girl this year. Mom: “Okay, that’s a pretty good start. Now what?” Little girl: “How much paper do we have?” *(Rick Kirkman & Jerry Scott, Baby Blues comic strip)***

**Dad: “What are you going to ask Santa Claus to bring you this year, Nelson?” Nelson: “A bicycle, a scooter, a video game, a baseball mitt, a chemistry set, and a toy garage with cars and trucks.” Dad: “Wow. That’s a lot of stuff. Santa will probably have to check in his book to see if you were good.” Nelson: “If I just settled for a scooter would he still have to check in his book?” *(Brian Crane, in Pickles comic strip)***

**Santa: “Well, now! What can I bring you for Christmas, little lady?” Heart: “Two words . . . magic feed corn.” Santa: “That's three words.” Heart: “Magic feed corn, Santa! I saw it on a T.V. show! Isn't that what you give to your reindeers so they can fly?” Santa: “Uh . . . yeah . . . I suppose . . . See, my elves handle all that stuff.” Heart: “Well, you can put some magic feed corn in everybody's stocking this year! Then people could just eat some and fly to any place they wanted to go! Think about it, Santa! No more cars! No more buses! No more SUVs. You could get rid of air pollution and global warming in a one-shot deal!” Santa: “Yes, but if everybody could fly, what would we do with all the roller skates?” Heart: “Good ol' Santa . . . always the voice of reason.” Santa: “And a right jolly elf to boot.” *(Mark Tatulli, in Heart Of The City comic strip)***

**I played Santa Claus many times . . . check out the divorce settlements awarded my wives. *(Groucho Marx)  
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Miracle stories about St. Nicholas abound. He is said to have had the power to travel from one place to another instantaneously, to have been highly clairvoyant as well as a powerful healer, and to have had the power to calm the sea and walk on water. Nicholas always demonstrated those powers in acts of charity. *(Jim Gaither)***

**The St. Nicholas legend can be traced to a third-century Catholic bishop of Asia Minor, who allegedly worked many miracles. One story has him taking over the helm of a ship during a gale when the crew became paralyzed with fear. He calmed the gale, then plucked a drowned sailor from the sea and restored him to life. *(Rebecca Jones, in Rocky Mountain News)*  
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The former Soviet republic of Kyrgyzstan has mountains honoring Communist and Russian leaders. Just in time for Christmas, authorities say they plan to name a snowy peak “Mount Santa Claus.” Three climbers set off Wednesday to scale the designated peak and bury a capsule containing the flag of Kyrgyzstan at the summit of Christmas Eve. Why is a predominantly Muslin and former Soviet land honoring the jolly old elf. “We want to develop tourism, and Santa Claus is an ideal brand to help us to this,” said Nurhon Tadzhibayeva, an official with Kyrgyz tourist authorities. Plans are afoot to hold an international Santa Claus congress in Kyrgyzstan in the summer, Tadzhibayeva said. The country also intends to hold annual games in which Santas from all over the world will test chimney-climbing, sled-racing, and tree-decorating skills. *(The North Platte Telegraph, December 25, 2007)*  
  
Multilingual Santa: Santa Claus, as everyone knows, works at the North Pole, has a big belly like a bowl full of jelly -- and speaks seven languages. At least, that’s true at the Hilltop Mall in Riuchmond, California, where Santa is doing his best to keep up with the multicultural times. Santa, also known as Michael Cox, has solid command of French, Spanish, German, Italian, Russian, Arabic, and English. Cox, 46, also says he can fumble through -- or at least say hello -- in roughly 230 different languages, including Hindu, Vietnamese and Tagalog. *(San Francisco Monitor, as it appeared in the Rocky Mountain News on December 25th, 2003)*  
Dolly says to her mother: “Why don’t they get Santa new clothes? He wears that same red suit every year.” *(Bil Keane, in The Family Circus comic strip)***

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**Don't forget to check out Santa's travels this weekend at noradsanta.org, a Web site of the Colorado-based North American Aerospace Defense Command. In 1955, an ad for a Santa Claus hot line for children misprinted the telephone number, using the number of the Continental Air Defense Command. In 1958, when the U.S. and Canada created NORAD, the new organization continued taking calls from children keeping tabs on Santa's travels. *(Rocky Mountain News, December 20, 2004)***

**Radar and satellite experts at NORAD in Colorado Springs, Colorado, will track Santa Claus today as he makes his annual Christmas Eve flight around the world. NORAD will post a map on its Web site of Santa's exact whereabouts and where he's headed next. To follow his progress, go to www.noradsanta.org. *(Rocky Mountain News, December 24, 2004)***

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**Dennis says to his mother and father: “Did ya notice that Santa used our wrapping paper?” *(Hank Ketcham, in Dennis The Menace comic strip)***

**One store is so busy they have two Santa Clauses -- a regular one and a Speed Santa for kids who want ten toys or less. (Robert Orben)**

**A study in December 2004 found that parents enjoy a visit with Santa more than their children do. *(Uncle John’s Bathroom Reader: Extraordinary Book of Facts, p. 50)***

**Saint Nicholas, a fourth-century bishop of Myra, in Asia Minor, is the patron saint of children, virgins, sailors, thieves, and pawnbrokers, and also of Greece, Russia, and Sicily. Nicholas shouldn’t be confused with the patron saint of golfers, Nicklaus. *(J. Bryan, III, in Hodge Podge Two, p. 40)***

***\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\**Why you don’t let a 5-year-old play Santa Claus: “And here’s one for me, and another one for me, and look, this one’s for me too!” *(Michael Fry, in Committed comic strip)***

**Dolly asks her Grandma: “Grandma, were you and Santa Claus playmates when you both were little?” *(Bil Keane, in The Family Circus comic strip)  
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It was Clement Clarke Moore, author of the poem that begins “Twas the night before Christmas” who had St. Nick visit at Christmas rather than on St. Nicholas Day. Moore also added such touches as calling St. Nick a little old man who was lively and quick. And for reasons known only to himself, he did away with the horse St. Nicholas traditionally rode and substituted a magic sleigh with eight reindeer. The real name of that very famous poem, by the “A Visit From St. Nicholas.” Moore wrote it in 1822, but wouldn’t allow it to be published until 1844. *(Sheryld Ann Karas, in The Solstice Evergreen)***

***\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\**Santa Claus is OK, but in recent popularity polls among young kids, the tooth fairy got a much higher score. She comes more often, they said. *(L. M. Boyd)*  
For more than 20 years, starting in 1863, Thomas Nast popularized Santa Claus as a jolly elf with his illustrations for the newspaper “Harper’s Weekly.” *(Jeff Harris, in Shortcuts)*  
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Grandpa: “Where do you want me to put the plastic Santa this year?” Grandma: “Where do we usually put him?” Grandpa: “Sometimes on the roof, sometimes on the lawn, sometimes on the porch. Okay.” Grandma: “Well, just put it wherever you want.” Grandpa then throws it in the trash can. *(Brian Crane, in Pickles comic strip)***

**Santa Claus is based on a real-life bishop, St. Nicholas, born in the fourth century, in Myra, in Asia Minor. He was the son of wealthy parents and got a reputation for giving away money and gifts to people in his domain. He came to symbolize gift-giving. The name Santa Claus is a corruption of St. Nicholas. *(Charles Reichblum, in Knowledge in a Nutshell, p. 232)***

**Santa Claus topped the Forbes.com list of the richest fictional characters. His wealth was deemed to be “infinite” as evidenced by his annual gift-giving frenzy. Defense tycoon Oliver “Daddy” Warbucks came in second, with an estimated net worth of $27.3 billion. *(Forbes.com, as it appeared in The Week magazine on December 16, 2005)***

**My wife and I took our six-year-old nephew, Nicholas, to see Santa. While waiting in line, we remarked that both he and Santa had the same first name. When Nicky’s turn came, he enthusiastically climbed up onto Santa’s knee. “What’s your name?” Santa asked. “The same as yours,” the youngster replied. “Well, isn’t that nice,” said the tired and harried Santa. “And what would you like for Christmas, Leonard?” *(Neil Scott)***

**For the fourth straight year, a crew of “Secret Santas” has roamed the streets of Charlotte, N.C., handing out $100 bills to anyone who appears in need. The anonymous donors were accompanied this year by volunteers from the Charlotte police and fire departments. “It’s about the pure joy you’re able to give people,” one Charlotte businessman said. The Santas descended on a local thrift store, dispersing bills to shoppers and the store’s cashier. Many recipients cried. Foster parent Donna Green, who was recently laid off, said, “God bless you,” as she hugged a Santa. *(The Week magazine, December 17, 2010)***

**Because of my fluency in American Sign Language, I was hired to be a Santa Claus in a mall. My employer wanted to provide deaf children with a Santa who could communicate with them. I sat for hours, performing for the children who came to visit. But none of them was deaf. Then, two girls approached shyly. One explained that her sister was deaf and could not speak. “What is your name?” I signed slowly. “J-A-S-M-I-N-E,” she replied with her fingers, grinning from ear to ear. I was bubbling over with pride when I absent-mindedly signed, “My nameis H-E-N-R-Y, nice to meet you.” The startled child pulled back and furiously began signing, “I thought your name was Santa Claus!” *(Henry E. Lowe, in Reader’s Digest)***

**Billy says to Santa Claus: “If your sleigh breaks down, just use one of those scooters from your pack.” *(Bil Keane, in The Family Circus comic strip)***

**The solemn Saint Nicholas who first arrived in America with the 17th-century Dutch settlers bore little resemblance to today’s Jolly Old Saint Nick. It wasn’t until cartoonist Thomas Nast drew him in 1863 that he became the rotund, red-cheeked man with the white beard whom we know and love as Santa Claus. Every Christmas, Nast, famous for his illustrations of the Civil War in “Harper’s Weekly,” depicted buoyant scenes as a respite from the clever and often biting cartoons that had made his reputation. It was with these forays into the land of make-believe that Nast did a lot to popularize Santa Claus and his beloved world of holiday merriment, North Pole workshops, and a gift-filled sleigh pulled by obliging reindeer -- everything to delight children during the Christmas season. *(Reader’s Digest: Strange Stories, Amazing Facts of America’s Past)*The three stages of man: he believes in Santa Claus; he does not believe in Santa Claus; he is Santa Claus. *(Jim Guthrie)*  
Kris Kringle started out as Christ-Kindli. From the Swiss. *(L. M. Boyd)*  
One of the most famous stories about Saint Nicholas tells how he helped three poor sisters who could not marry because they had no dowries. Nicholas threw bags of gold into their homes and one bag supposedly landed in a stocking that was hung by the fireplace to dry. Afterward, whenever somebody received an anonymous gift, they thanked Nicholas. *(Jeff Harris, in Shortcuts)*  
Sleigh sold separately: $79.50 for the Deluxe Lightweight Flanelette Santa Suit with fur trim from www.SantaClaus.com. Includes jacket, hat, pants, semi-boots with fur-like trim, belt, beard and wig set and eyebrow whitener. It’s the standard 40-46 size. $489.50 for the Super Deluxe Santa Suit. The company says you can pass it on to your grandchildren and it’s designed to stand up to repeated dry cleanings. Beard and wig not included “another $32.50). $72.75 to complete the look: glasses, white gloves, eyebrows, the Jumbo Belly and a toy sack. *(Rocky Mountain News, Dec. 23, 2003)*  
At present there is no way to tell which stories about St. Nicholas are based on fact and which on fancy. Perhaps it doesn’t really matter, for he has become a symbol of generosity, love, and miracles, and symbols sometimes convey truth as accurately and as objectively as established facts. After all, mathematics relies heavily on symbols and who can deny the value of those symbols for science, business, and the arts? Then who can deny the value of love and faith, of which St. Nicholas is a grand symbol? *(Jim Gaither, in U.S.R.S. newsletter)*  
In another, more gruesome tale, he entered the shop of an evil butcher who seven years before had not only killed several little boys, but had cut them up and pickled them in a barrel in his shop. St. Nicholas in one day, confronted the butcher and subsequently pulled each of the pickled pre-teens out of the brine alive and in one piece. *(Sheryld Ann Karas, in The Solstice Evergreen)***

***\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\**Shirley Temple stopped believing in Santa Claus at age six, when her mother took her to a department store to see St. Nick and he asked her for her autograph. (Don Voorhees, in The Essential Book of Useless Information, p. 24)**

**I stopped believing in Santa Claus when my mother took me to see him in a department store, and he asked for my autograph. *(Shirley Temple)***

***\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\**Today is December 6, St. Nicholas Day. St. Nicholas was the bishop of Myra, a city on the coast of present-day Turkey, in the 4th century. He was noted for his generosity and love of children and was the inspiration for Santa Claus. (The Daily Chronicle)**

**The traditional image we have of Santa today was created by Haddon Sundblom in 1931. Sundblom’s version of Santa was created to advertise Coca-Cola. The actual Saint Nicholas was born around A.D. 270 and lived in Myra, a region in what is now known as Turkey. His parents died while he was young and left him a large inheritance. It is said that young Nicholas decided to forsake his fortune and dedicate his life to charity. He was renowned for his generosity and was especially loved by children. Historians claim that St. Nicholas died in A.D. 343, but children throughout the world believe he still celebrates the birth of Christ by delivering presents every Christmas Eve. *(Jeff Harris, in Shortcuts)*  
I believe I have a solution to a most contentious issue. From the very earliest years of their lives, young people are admonished to behave and act appropriately, and that in doing so Santa Claus (or some other benevolent being) will reward them with gifts at Christmas time. Nearly every young person understands this. Therefore, instead of posting “In God We Trust” in schools, the posting ought to be “In Santa Claus We Trust.” In public places, the posting could be “In Goodness We Trust." *(K. E. Stirling, in Rocky Mountain News)*  
Santa Claus, U.S.A.:  
- Santa Claus Church, Dillingham County, Alaska  
- Santa Claus Lake, Spencer County, Indiana  
- Santa Claus Spring, Humboldt County, Nevada  
- Santa Claus Lake, St. Louis County, Minnesota  
- Santa Claus Stream, Grant County, Oregon  
- Santa Claus Museum, Colorado County, Texas.  
*(World Features Syndicate)***

**A department-store Santa Claus asked a little boy if he had anything to say. Came his reply, “My daddy says to use your head this year and not bring anything he has to assemble.” *(Leslie B. and Bernice Flynn, in Humorous Incidents and Quips, p. 51)***

**After the little girl climbed onto Santa’s lap, Santa asked the usual question: “And what would you like for Christmas?” The child stared at him, open-mouthed and horrified, then gasped: “Didn’t you get my e-mail?” *(Rocky Mountain News)*  
Thousands of years ago, the Vikings believed their god Odin came down from the heavens dressed in a hooded cloak bearing gifts for the needy and worthy. *(Jeff Harris, in Shortcuts)***

**First boy: “And I want a new dump truck and ice skates and a new bike and . . .” Second boy: “Why are you yelling? Santa hasn’t a hearing problem.” The first boy after noticing Grandma sitting in the next room says to the second boy: “I know, but Grandma might.” *(Bud Blake, in Tiger comic strip)***

**Billy crawls up on Santa’s knee and says: “Doesn’t your mommy make you get out of those winter clothes when you’re inside?” *(Bil Keane, in The Family Circus comic strip)***

**Where is Santa Claus a woman? Maybe you mean Italy. The gift-giving Christmas figure there is an old lady called “La Befana.” *(Boyd’s Curiosity Shop, p. 185)***

**A man who had just won millions in the lottery wrote his first letter to St. Nicholas: “Dear Santa, If there’s anything you want for Christmas, just ask.” *(Bits & Pieces)***

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**Santa Claus is that jolly old gent who goes “Ho! Ho! Ho!” Then again, if you had to work only one day a year, you'd laugh too. (Orben's Current Comedy)**

**Yes, folks, Sid is working as a Santa at the 7-11. Santa asks the child approaching him: “So what do you want for Christmas?” Child: “A quart of milk, a 6-pack of coke, a Slim Jim, and a lottery ticket.” Santa responds: “Aisle 1, aisle 1, aisle 1, and aisle 1.” *(Bud Grace, in Piranha Club comic strip)***

**As holiday preparations began around the house, our seven-year-old was relaying all his worldly knowledge of Santa Claus to a neighbor’s four-year-old. “Santa Claus works real hard making all those toys,” he said, “and if you’re not good, you won’t get any.” “Well,” the four-year-old replied, “he can’t be working that hard. He’s always hanging out at the mall.” *(William D. Olson, in Reader’s Digest)***

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**Dennis says to his Mom: “Margaret said I should write to Mrs. Claus first ‘cause she probably handles the important things.” *(Hank Ketcham, in Dennis The Menace comic strip)***

**Charlie Brown: “I just don’t think you should write to Santa Claus and call him “Snooty.’” Linus: “Why not? He made me mad last year. I refuse to call him Mr. Claus!” Charlie Brown: “Well, give it some thought.” Linus says “I will.” as he writes Dear Shorty. *(Charles M. Schulz, in Peanuts comic strip)***

**Shortly before last Christmas my four-year-old daughter Vicki was laboriously writing on a piece of paper. “What are you writing, Vicki?” I asked her. “I’m writing a letter to Santa Claus,” she answered. “What are you telling him?” I inquired. “I don’t know,” she replied. “I can’t read.” *(Mrs. Beverly Bulligan, in Catholic Digest)***

**Charlie Brown: “I’m writing to Santa Claus, which should I ask for, a bicycle or a dog?” Lucy: “I think, maybe a dog.” Charlie Brown: “You can’t fall off adog.” *(Charles M. Schulz, in Peanuts comic strip)  
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A man who lives in North Pole, Alaska, which advertises its 99705 ZIP code as Santa’s ZIP code, takes it upon himself every year to answer many of the hundreds of thousands of letters that are sent to Santa via the town’s mailbox by children around the world. (Noel Botham, in The Amazing Book of Useless Information, p. 18)**

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