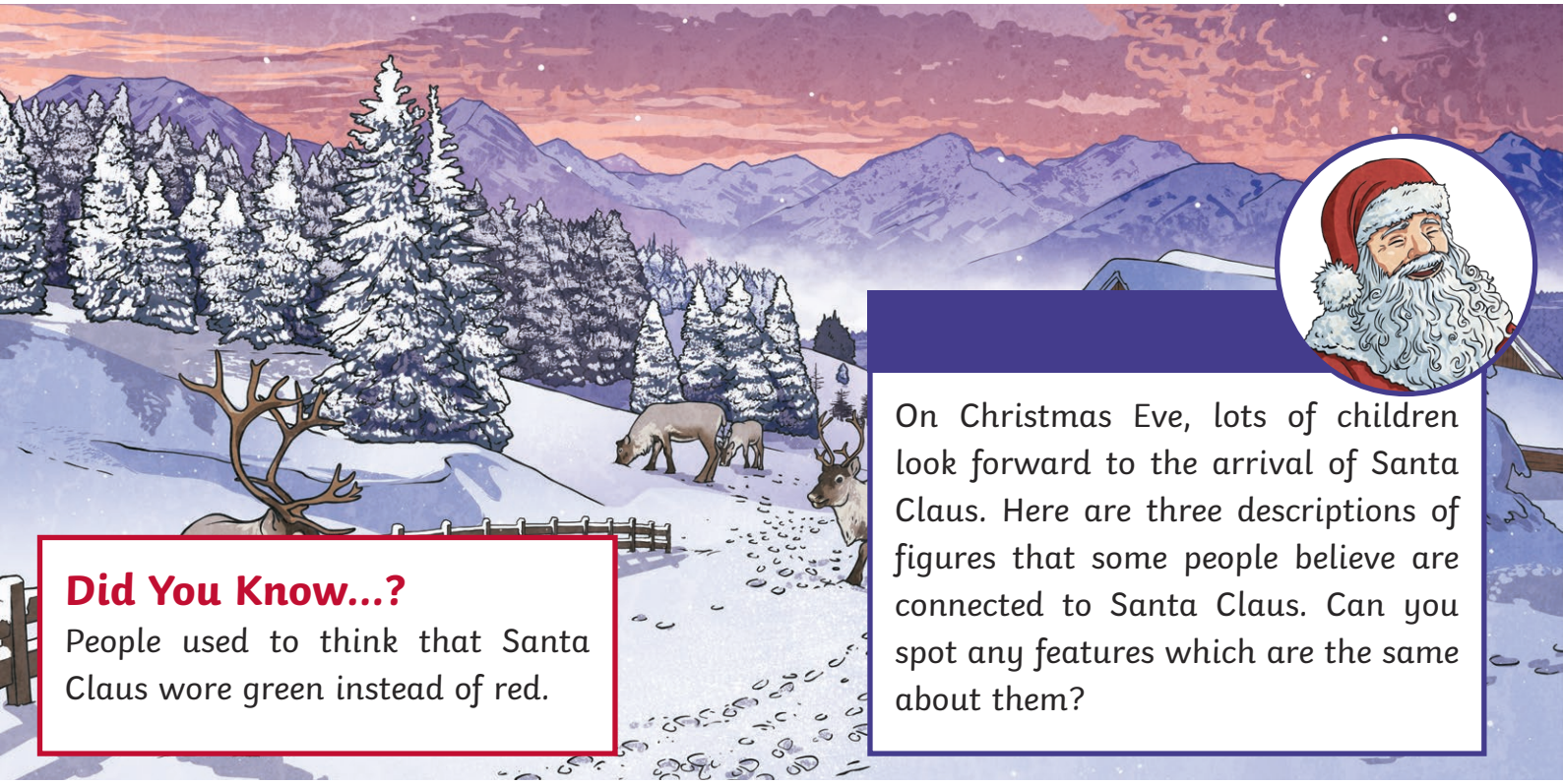
The History of Santa Claus



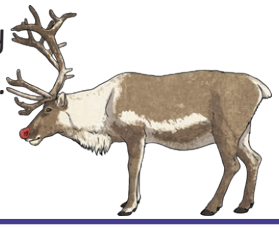
On Christmas Eve, lots of children look forward to the arrival of Santa Claus. Here are three descriptions of figures that some people believe are connected to Santa Claus. Can you spot any features which are the same about them?

Did You Know...?
People used to think that Santa Claus wore green instead of red.

Santa Claus

Many people think that Santa Claus lives somewhere very cold and quiet. He is also thought to own a workshop which is run by elves. Some Christmas stories say that the elves work really hard to make toys for well-behaved children to open on Christmas Day.

Nobody knows for sure how Santa Claus delivers so many presents in only one night. Some people think that his sleigh has a really powerful engine. Other people think that he can teleport!



Saint Nicholas

Saint Nicholas is thought to have been born over 1,500 years ago. He had lots of money and used it to help people. Many pictures of Saint Nicholas show him wearing red.

One story of Saint Nicholas tells the tale of him giving money to three sisters who truly needed it. He gave them each a bag of gold. Saint Nicholas delivered two of the bags of gold through an open window at night. Not wanting to be seen, he dropped the third bag of gold down their chimney. It is said that this bag of gold landed in a pair of stockings which were drying by the fire.

Did You Know...?
In Germany, Santa Claus is known as Weihnachtsmann.

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Odin



Odin is a powerful god from Norse mythology. Odin is said to be the god of many things, including wisdom and poetry.

One tale of Odin describes him moving through the air on his chariot which was being pulled along by an eight-legged horse. The story also says that Odin left gifts in well-behaved children's shoes.

Wherever you believe Santa Claus originally came from, don't forget to look out of your window for him on Christmas Eve. Will you be able to work out how he manages to move so quickly?

Did You Know...?

In France, Père Noël is said to leave presents in children's shoes.

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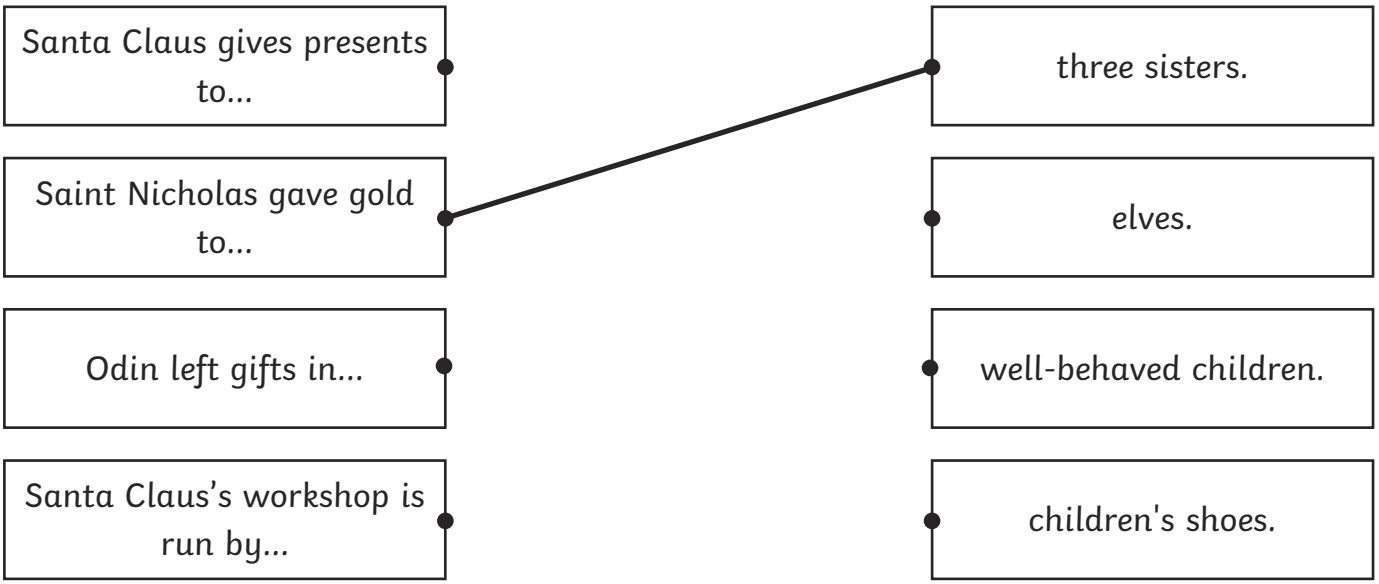
Questions

1. Where do many people believe that Santa Claus lives? Tick one.

   - ○ somewhere cold and quiet
   - ○ somewhere warm and sunny
   - ○ somewhere cold and noisy
   - ○ somewhere warm and quiet

2. Draw **four** lines and complete each sentence. One has been done for you.



3. In which country is Santa Claus known as Weihnachtsmann? Tick one.

   - ○ England
   - ○ France
   - ○ Germany
   - ○ Finland

4. How many legs did Odin's horse have? Tick one.

   - ○ six
   - ○ seven
   - ○ eight
   - ○ nine

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5. Before being red, what colour did people think that Santa Claus's clothes were?

_____

6. Fill in the missing words.

   Nobody knows for sure how _____delivers so many _____ in only one night.

7. Read the section on **Santa Claus**.
   How do you think Santa Claus delivers all of the presents so quickly?

_____

_____

_____

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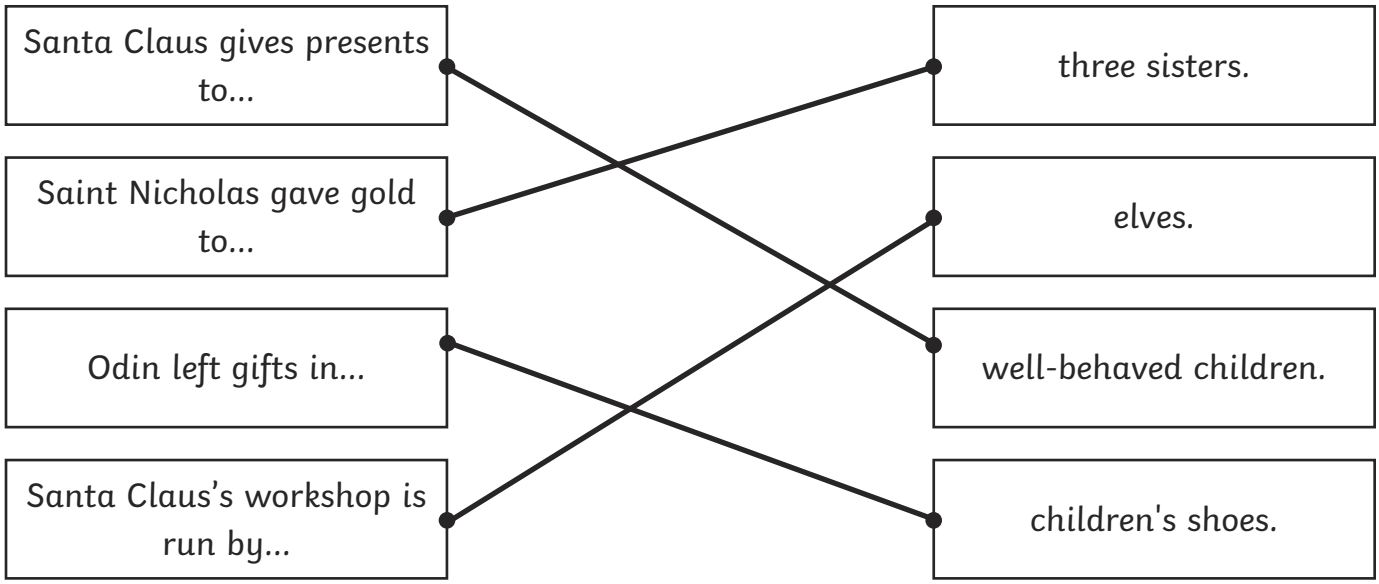
Answers

1. Where do many people believe that Santa Claus lives? Tick one.

- ✓ **somewhere cold and quiet**
- ○ somewhere warm and sunny
- ○ somewhere cold and noisy
- ○ somewhere warm and quiet

2. Draw **four** lines and complete each sentence. One has been done for you.



3. In which country is Santa Claus known as Weihnachtsmann? Tick one.

- ○ England
- ○ France
- ✓ **Germany**
- ○ Finland

4. How many legs did Odin's horse have? Tick one.

- ○ six
- ○ seven
- ✓ **eight**
- ○ nine

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5. Before being red, what colour did people think that Santa Claus's clothes were?
   People used to think that Santa Claus's clothes were green instead of red.

6. Fill in the missing words.
   Nobody knows for sure how **Santa Claus** delivers so many **presents** in only one night.

7. Read the section on **Santa Claus**.
   How do you think Santa Claus delivers all of the presents so quickly?
   Pupils' own responses, such as: I think Santa Claus's reindeers have rockets on the bottom of their hooves which they use to make the sleigh move at a super speed.

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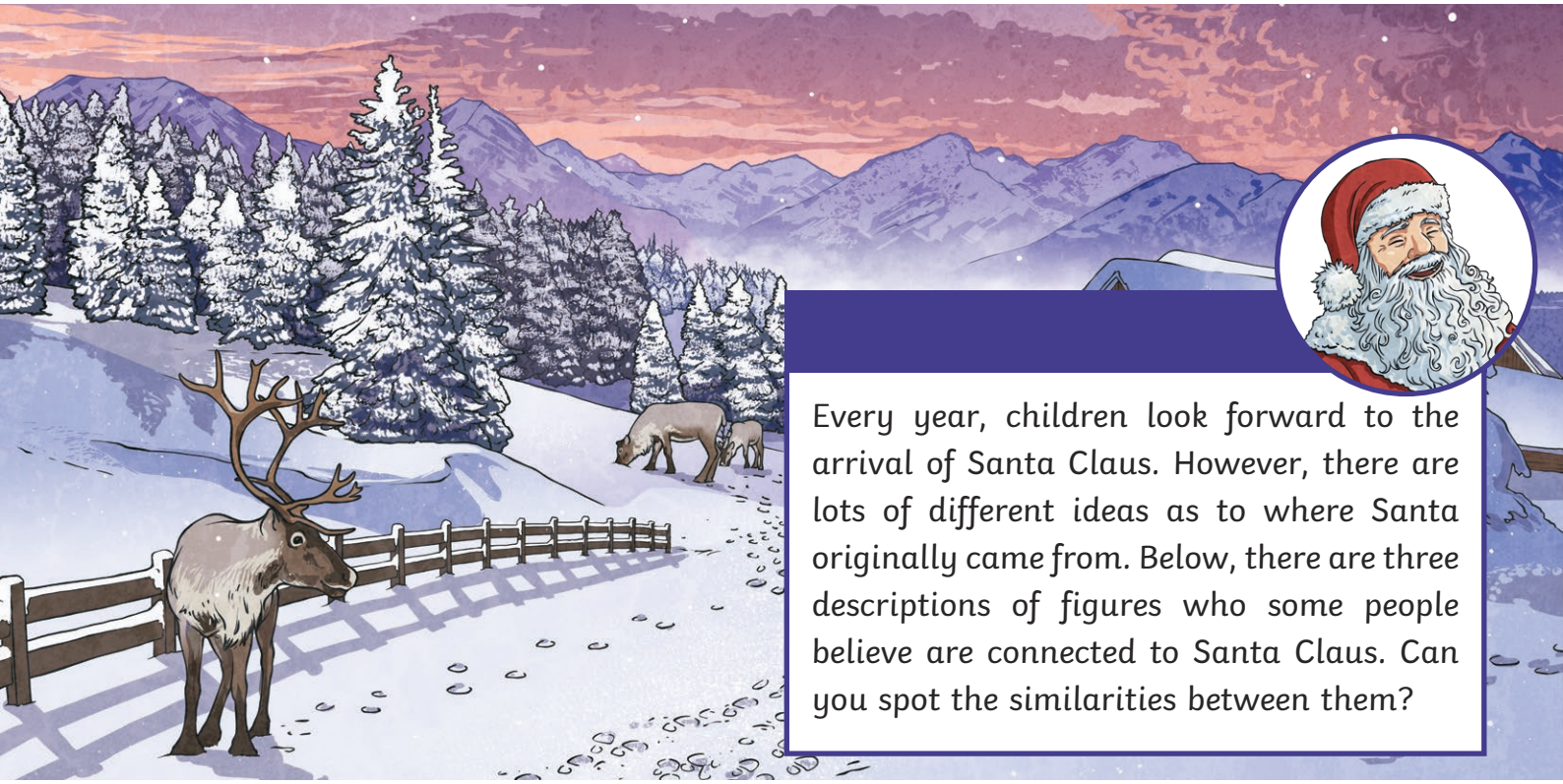
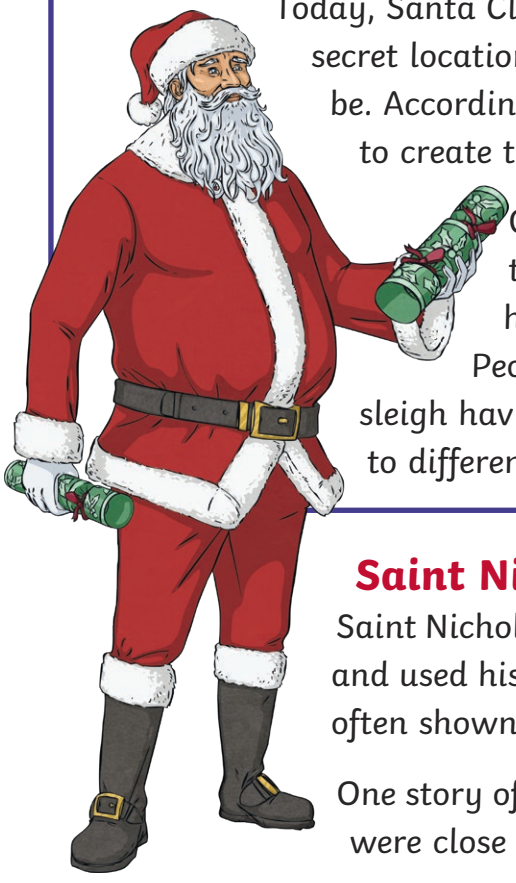


Every year, children look forward to the arrival of Santa Claus. However, there are lots of different ideas as to where Santa originally came from. Below, there are three descriptions of figures who some people believe are connected to Santa Claus. Can you spot the similarities between them?

Modern-Day Santa Claus



Today, Santa Claus is believed to live somewhere very cold and secluded. This secret location is also where his workshop, which is run by elves, is said to be. According to some Christmas stories, the elves work hard all year long to create toys for well-behaved children to open on Christmas Day.

On the 24th December, Santa Claus is said to deliver presents to all of the children on his 'nice list'. Nobody knows for sure how he manages to deliver so many presents in only one night. People have come up with many ideas, such as Santa Claus's sleigh having an incredibly powerful engine or even that he can teleport to different countries!

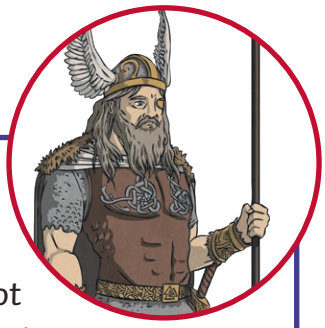
Saint Nicholas

Saint Nicholas is thought to have been born around AD 300. He was wealthy and used his money to help those who were less fortunate. Saint Nicholas is often shown with a long, white beard and wearing red robes.

One story of Saint Nicholas tells the tale of him saving three daughters who were close to being forced into a life of enslavement. Over three nights, he

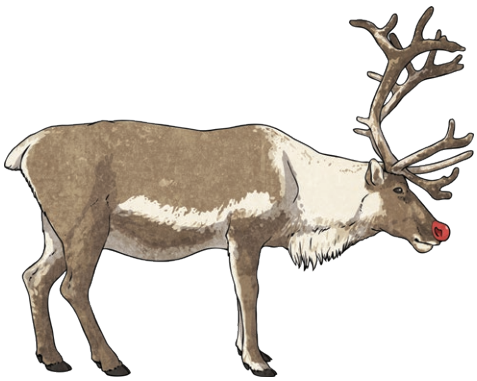
secretly delivered three bags of gold to their house – one for each daughter. However, by the third night, the father of the three girls wanted to thank the kind stranger so he stayed awake. Saint Nicholas was shy and felt as though he didn't need to be thanked so he delivered the third bag down the chimney instead. When the bag reached the bottom of the chimney, it is said to have landed in a pair of stockings which were hanging by the fire.

Odin



Odin is a powerful god from Norse mythology. Odin is said to be the god of many things, including wisdom, poetry and knowledge.

One tale of Odin describes him travelling through the air on his chariot which was being pulled along by an eight-legged horse. The tale also describes Odin as leaving gifts in the shoes of children who had been well-behaved.



All over the world, there are tales of people who bring gifts to children who deserve them. In countries outside of the UK, Santa Claus has different names. In Germany, he is known as Weihnachtsmann and he is known as Père Noël in France.

Wherever you believe Santa Claus originally came from and however you think he manages to deliver so many gifts in such a short space of time, don't forget to look out of your window for him on Christmas Eve!

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Questions

1. In which country is Santa Claus more commonly referred to as Père Noël? Tick one.

   - ○ England
   - ○ Germany
   - ○ France
   - ○ Belgium

2. Why did Saint Nicholas drop the third bag of gold down the chimney? Tick one.

   - ○ He wanted it to land in a pair of stockings.
   - ○ He thought that it would be fun.
   - ○ The window was closed.
   - ○ He didn't want to be thanked.

3. Draw **four** lines and complete each sentence.

In France, Santa Claus is known as...	children's shoes.
Odin was said to leave gifts in...	AD 300.
Odin was thought to fly in a...	Père Noël.
Saint Nicholas is thought to have been born in...	chariot.

4. Read the section on **Saint Nicholas**.
   Number the events from 1-4 to show the order that they occurred.

   - ☐ Saint Nicholas delivered the first bag of gold.
   - ☐ Saint Nicholas heard about three daughters who were in need of help.
   - ☐ The bag of gold landed in a pair of stockings.
   - ☐ Saint Nicholas delivered a bag of gold down the chimney.

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5. Look at the section entitled **Saint Nicholas**.
   Find and copy one word which means the same as **lucky**.

   _____

6. Where does the story of Odin originate from?

   _____

7. Explain how the layout of the text helps you to understand it.

   _____

   _____

   _____

8. Compare modern-day Santa Claus with Saint Nicholas.
   How are they **similar**?

   _____

   _____

   _____

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Answers

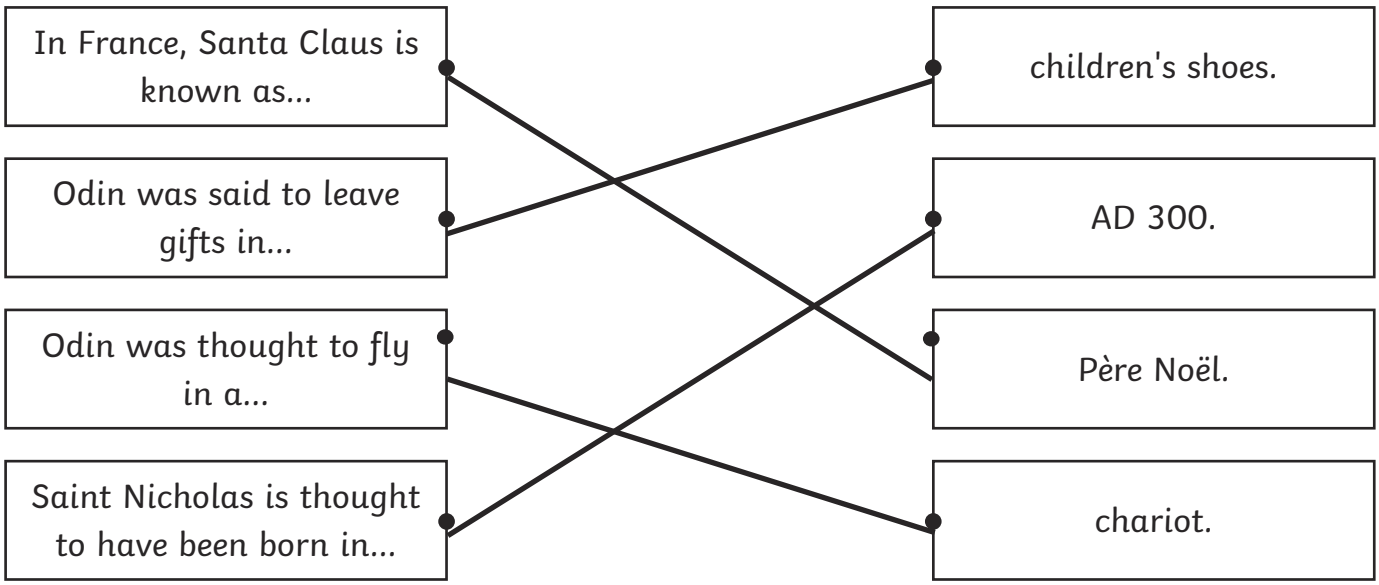
1. In which country is Santa Claus more commonly referred to as Père Noël? Tick one.

   ○ England
   ○ Germany
   ✓ **France**
   ○ Belgium

2. Why did Saint Nicholas drop the third bag of gold down the chimney? Tick one.

   ○ He wanted it to land in a pair of stockings.
   ○ He thought that it would be fun.
   ○ The window was closed.
   ✓ **He didn't want to be thanked.**

3. Draw four lines and complete each sentence.



4. Read the section on **Saint Nicholas**.
   Number the events from 1-4 to show the order that they occurred.

   2 Saint Nicholas delivered the first bag of gold.
   1 Saint Nicholas heard about three daughters who were in need of help.
   4 The bag of gold landed in a pair of stockings.
   3 Saint Nicholas delivered a bag of gold down the chimney.

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5. Look at the section entitled **Saint Nicholas**.
   Find and copy one word which means the same as **lucky**.

   fortunate

6. Where does the story of Odin originate from?

   The story of Odin comes from Norse mythology.

7. Explain how the layout of the text helps you to understand it.

   Pupils' own responses, such as: Each person has been given their own section which means that you can choose who to read about first. They also all have titles and illustrations so it is easy to find the information that you want.

8. Compare modern-day Santa Claus with Saint Nicholas.
   How are they **similar**?

   Accept any sensible response provided that a comparison has been made, such as: Modern-day Santa Claus and Saint Nicholas are both shown wearing red robes and as having a long, white beard. They also both deliver gifts to people at night without being seen.

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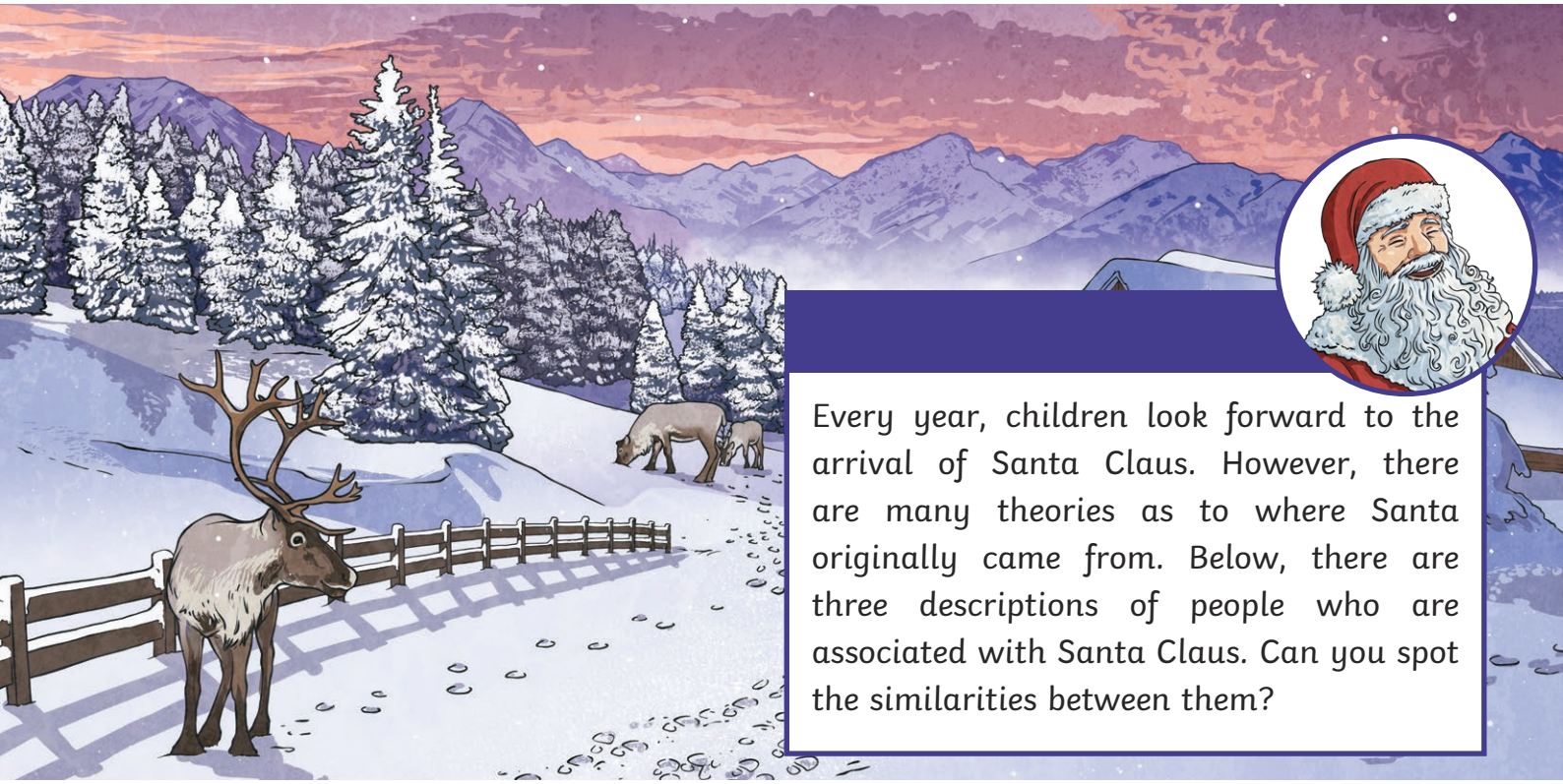

Every year, children look forward to the arrival of Santa Claus. However, there are many theories as to where Santa originally came from. Below, there are three descriptions of people who are associated with Santa Claus. Can you spot the similarities between them?

Modern-Day Santa Claus



Today, Santa Claus is thought to reside somewhere cold and isolated with his trusty reindeer. It is here that Santa's secluded workshop is said to be run by elves. According to some Christmas tales, the elves work hard throughout the year to create toys for well-behaved children to receive on Christmas Eve.

On the night of the 24th December, Santa Claus is said to deliver presents to all of the children on his 'nice list' in a single evening. Nobody knows for sure how he manages to deliver so many presents with such a limited time frame. This has led to many theories and speculations, such as Santa Claus's sleigh having an incredibly powerful engine or even that he can teleport to different countries!

Saint Nicholas

It is thought that Saint Nicholas was born around AD 300. He had inherited a large sum of money from his parents and used this to help those who were less fortunate. Saint Nicholas is often pictured with a long, white beard and wearing red robes.

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One story of Saint Nicholas tells the tale of him generously saving three daughters who were on the verge of being forced into a life of enslavement. Over three nights, Saint Nicholas secretly delivered three bags of gold – one for each daughter. However, by the third night, the father of the three girls was so desperate to thank the kind stranger that he stayed awake. Being a shy man and feeling no need for praise, Saint Nicholas delivered the third bag down the chimney so as not to be caught. When the bag reached the bottom of the chimney, it is said to have landed in a pair of stockings which were hanging by the fire.

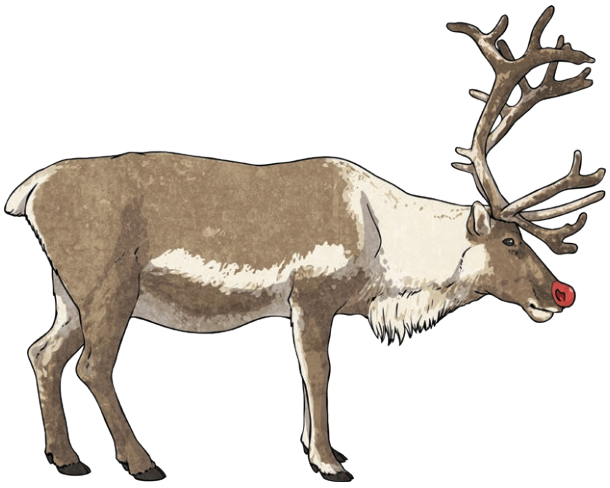
Odin



Odin is a powerful god from Norse mythology. Odin is said to be the god of many things, including wisdom, poetry and knowledge. He is also father to Thor who is thought to be the god of thunder and lightning.

One tale of Odin describes him travelling through the air on his chariot which was being hauled by an eight-legged horse named Sleipnir. The tale also describes Odin as leaving gifts in the shoes of children who had been well-behaved. Interestingly, some people also believe that Odin has the ability to determine whether a person has been good or bad.

All over the world, there are tales of figures who bring cheer during the winter months and give gifts to children who deserve them. Although some may have different names, such as Père Noël (France), Joulupukki (Finland) or Weihnachtsmann (Germany), many of them share a likeness with the three people mentioned in this text.



Wherever you believe Santa Claus originated from and however you think he manages to deliver so many gifts in such a short space of time, don't forget to look out of your window for signs of him on Christmas Eve!

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Questions

1. Which of the following people is **not** known for giving gifts to well-behaved children? Tick one.

   - ○ Santa Claus
   - ○ Père Noël
   - ○ Saint Nicholas
   - ○ Odin

2. Which of the following are similarities between modern-day Santa Claus and Saint Nicholas? Tick **two**.

   - ○ flying on a sleigh
   - ○ delivering presents at night
   - ○ wearing red
   - ○ owning a workshop

3. Look at the paragraph beginning **On the night of the 24th December...**
   Find and copy **two** words which mean the same as **ideas**.

   _____ _____

4. What did Saint Nicholas choose to do with the money that he had inherited?

   _____

5. Fill in the missing words.

   Odin was thought to have flown through the sky on a _____ which was pulled by a horse called _____.

6. Some people believe that Santa Claus originated from Odin.
   Why do you think that they believe this?

   _____

   _____

   _____

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7. **It is thought that Saint Nicholas was born around AD 300.**
   Why do you think that the author has chosen to use the phrase **it is thought**?

8. Describe the character of Saint Nicholas.
   Use the text to support your answer.

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Answers

1. Which of the following people is **not** known for giving gifts to well-behaved children? Tick one.

   ○ Santa Claus
   ○ Père Noël
   ✓ **Saint Nicholas**
   ○ Odin

2. Which of the following are similarities between modern-day Santa Claus and Saint Nicholas? Tick **two**.

   ○ flying on a sleigh
   ✓ **delivering presents at night**
   ✓ **wearing red**
   ○ owning a workshop

3. Look at the paragraph beginning **On the night of the 24th December...**
   Find and copy **two** words which mean the same as **ideas**.

   theories
   speculations

4. What did Saint Nicholas choose to do with the money that he had inherited?

   Saint Nicholas chose to use the money that he had inherited to help those who were less fortunate.

5. Fill in the missing words.
   Odin was thought to have flown through the sky on a **chariot** which was pulled by a horse called **Sleipnir**.

6. Some people believe that Santa Claus originated from Odin.
   Why do you think that they believe this?

   Pupils' own responses, such as: I think that people believe Santa Claus may have originated from Odin because there are similarities between the two. For example, they are both known for flying through the sky and for delivering presents to well-behaved children.

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7. **It is thought that Saint Nicholas was born around AD 300.**
   Why do you think that the author has chosen to use the phrase **it is thought**?

   Pupils' own responses, such as: I think that the author has chosen to use the phrase 'it is thought' to show that they are not certain of this fact. This might be because Saint Nicholas was born so long ago that nobody is sure of his real date of birth.

8. Describe the character of Saint Nicholas.
   Use the text to support your answer.

   Pupils' own responses, such as: Saint Nicholas is kind and generous because he chooses to use his wealth to help those who are in need. He is also shy because in the text it says 'being a shy man' and that he didn't want to be thanked.

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