

# Christmas Music Trivia

This program includes trivia questions about Christmas songs.

- This is a copy of the complete activity for the facilitator to present with trivia questions and answers.
  - Read and discuss the trivia questions and answers.
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## Trivia Questions and Answers

1. What holiday song was the first song to be broadcast in space?

**Answer:** “Jingle Bells.” In 1965, Gemini 6 astronauts reported a “low-flying object traveling from the north pole” to mission control. Then, they played “Jingle Bells” over the radio transmission using a harmonica that they smuggled aboard the spacecraft.



2. What holiday was “Jingle Bells” originally written for?

**Answer:** Thanksgiving. In 1867, James Lord Pierpont wrote the originally titled “One Horse Open Sleigh” to celebrate the Thanksgiving holiday. In the decades that followed, the song became associated with the Christmas holiday.

3. True or false? “Jingle Bells” was written by the uncle of J.P. Morgan, the American financier.

**Answer:** True. James Lord Pierpont’s sister married Junius Spencer Morgan. They named their son John Pierpont Morgan.

4. What song inspired the parody “All I Want for Christmas Is a Beatle”?

**Answer:** “All I Want for Christmas (Is My Two Front Teeth).” Don Gardner wrote this song in 1944 for a Christmas concert for his wife’s second-grade class. He noted that most of the children had their two front teeth missing. The parody was recorded in 1963 by singer-comedienne Dora Bryan.

5. True or false? Gardner didn’t think his song “All I Want for Christmas (Is My Two Front Teeth)” would be a hit.

**Answer:** True. Gardner sold the song to a New York music publisher who told him, “It’ll never be a hit.” However, it was immensely popular when it was released by Spike Jones and His City Slickers in 1948.

6. What Christmas song with a color in the title did Elvis sing for his 1968 Christmas TV special?

**Answer:** “Blue Christmas.” This TV special is the only existing video recording of Elvis singing a Christmas song. In 2008, video of country singer Martina McBride was digitally imposed onto the original Elvis video to make it appear as though they are singing a duet. When the duet hit #22 on the charts, it was the first time an Elvis single topped the charts since 1982.

7. A line in “Blue Christmas” goes, “You’ll be doing alright with your Christmas of white....” What other Christmas song is this line referring to?

**Answer:** “White Christmas.” The song “Blue Christmas” was released by Elvis 15 years after “White Christmas.”

8. What artist first popularized the song “White Christmas”?

**Answer:** Bing Crosby. Crosby recorded this song in October 1942. It topped the charts for 11 weeks after its release, well past the Christmas season.

9. True or false? The song “White Christmas” was written for the movie of the same name.

**Answer:** False. The movie *White Christmas* was actually developed in response to the popularity of the song of the same name. The song “White Christmas” debuted in the 1942 film *Holiday Inn*.

10. Who wrote the song “White Christmas”?

**Answer:** Irving Berlin. According to Berlin, who was a prolific American composer, it was one of his simpler songs, having only 54 words and 67 notes.

11. True or false? “White Christmas” is the best-selling Christmas song to date.

**Answer:** True. Bing Crosby’s 1942 version stayed on the “Hot 100” Billboard charts for over 20 years.

12. True or false? The Holiday Inn hotel chain took its name from the Irving Berlin movie of the same name.

**Answer:** True. The Holiday Inn hotel chain was created a decade after the release of the film.

13. What popular Christmas song is sung with the verses in English and the chorus in Spanish?

**Answer:** “Feliz Navidad.” José Feliciano wrote the song in both languages to make sure that it would get played on English-speaking radio stations.

14. What is the English translation of the song title “Feliz Navidad”?

**Answer:** “Happy Christmas” or “Merry Christmas”

15. Who wrote the Burl Ives’ hit “Holly Jolly Christmas”?

**Answer:** Johnny Marks. Marks wrote “Holly Jolly Christmas” in 1963. He had previously written another Christmas hit, “Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer,” in 1949.

16. Burl Ives sang “Holly Jolly Christmas” as the snowman in what 1964 animated TV special?

**Answer:** *Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer*. This holiday special features an animation technique known as stop-motion. In stop-motion animation, clay and other physical objects are slightly moved by hand in between photographic shots. In the final film product, the photographs are strung together to create the illusion of movement.

17. According to the lyrics in “Holly Jolly Christmas,” what should you say to “everyone you meet”?

**Answer:** “Hello.” The line goes, “Say hello to friends you know and everyone you meet.” It’s also recommended to have a “cup of cheer” and to “kiss her once” under the mistletoe.

18. What Christmas song about kissing did Jimmy Boyd record when he was only 13 years old?

**Answer:** “I Saw Mommy Kissing Santa Claus.” Jimmy Boyd was discovered as a child after he auditioned for *The Al Jarvis Show*. After “I Saw Mommy Kissing Santa Claus” became a hit, Boyd would go on to perform on *The Ed Sullivan Show* five times.

19. True or false? “I Saw Mommy Kissing Santa Claus” was banned by the Catholic Church.

**Answer:** True. When this song was released in 1953, it was banned by the Boston Catholic Church, which forbid many radio stations to play it because it mixed kissing with Christmas. Jimmy Boyd famously met with the Catholic Archdiocese to explain that the “Santa” in the song was actually the boy’s father dressed in a Santa suit. After that, the ban was lifted.

20. What department store gave away copies of an original poem entitled “Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer”?

**Answer:** Montgomery Ward. As a copywriter for the department store, Robert L. May wrote the poem in 1939 as a giveaway item for Christmas shoppers. Montgomery Ward gave away 2.4 million copies of the booklet in its first year.

21. True or false? Rudolph the red-nosed reindeer’s original name was Rollo.

**Answer:** True. Author Robert L. May also considered using the name Reginald.

22. Who was the “Singing Cowboy” famous for recording “Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer”?

**Answer:** Gene Autry. Originally, Gene Autry didn’t want to record a Christmas tune because he wanted to stick to his country-and-western genre, but he was persuaded by songwriter Johnny Marks.

23. What is the name of the fourth reindeer mentioned in the first line of “Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer”?

**Answer:** Vixen. The line begins, “You know Dasher and Dancer and Prancer and Vixen....”

24. In the song “Winter Wonderland,” what is the name of the snowman?

**Answer:** Parson Brown. The couple in the song is imagining that the parson will marry them soon.

25. Of Guy Lombardo, the Andrews’ Sisters, or Perry Como, which artists have recorded “Winter Wonderland”?

**Answer:** They all have! “Winter Wonderland” continues to have the top spot of the holiday charts. This song has also been recorded by many contemporary artists, including Garth Brooks and Bruce Springsteen.

26. True or false? Dick Smith penned “Winter Wonderland” while being treated for tuberculosis at a sanitarium.

**Answer:** True. Sadly, he never saw the song become a hit. He died from tuberculosis several years before it became a hit in 1935.

27. What song tells the tale of a grumpy protagonist in a 1966 Dr. Seuss TV special?

**Answer:** “You’re a Mean One, Mr. Grinch.” In the TV special, the Grinch is voiced by horror actor Boris Karloff.

28. True or false? Dr. Seuss, or Theodor Seuss Geisel, wrote the lyrics for “You’re a Mean One, Mr. Grinch.”

**Answer:** True. The TV special *How the Grinch Stole Christmas* is based on the book of the same name.

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