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## Counting at Christmas

### Aim:

- To look at counting and costing Christmas

### Introduction

#### Looking back at Christmas

Christmas may be over but looking back at Christmas 2010 is very relevant, particularly as the first Christmas took place in the context on a census.

But what does Christmas time mean? To some it means spending large amounts of money on presents, food and drink.

- We cook over 10 million turkeys worth an estimated £400 million.
- It is estimated we eat 25 million Christmas puddings.
- The average family spends £170 on their Christmas dinner.
- We spend an eye watering £50.6 million on 370 million mince pies and eat, on average, 27 mince pies each.
- We put up 7.5 million Christmas trees worth an estimated £245 million.
- We write 1.7 billion Christmas cards.
- The average shopper spends £384 on presents.
- Christmas costs the average household £975 for the day.
- The Christmas period accounted for approximately 29% of total retail sales in 2009.
- The UK spends around £20bn on Christmas with about £1.6bn going on food and drink.

<http://the-magic-of-christmas.com/index.php/welcome/christmas-statistics>

- We spend £30 million on brussel sprouts with 4 billion of them being

bought in the week before.

- We spend 25% of shopping time in queues and four broken arms were reported last year after cracker pulling accidents.

#### What do children say about Christmas?

"The three wise men brought Jesus presents of gold, frankincense, smurr (sic) and silver. But I think he would have preferred wrestling toys."

Jay, five, from Broomhill Infant School, Bristol

"The Angel Gabriel is a big white fairy. He helped Mary and Joseph look after the baby, kind of like a doctor."

Erin, six, Broomhill Infants

"Jesus is Mary and God's little boy."

Antonia, seven, Merchant Taylors

"Jesus was a king and he wore a crown even though he was a baby. It was a really small crown."

Jay, five, Broomhill Infants

#### Other people have said about Christmas:

"When we were children we were grateful to those who filled our stockings at Christmas time. Why are we not grateful to God for filling our stockings with legs?"

G K Chesterton

"I have always thought of Christmas as a good time; a kind, forgiving, generous, pleasant time; a time when men and women seem to open their hearts freely, and so I say, God bless Christmas!"

Charles Dickens

I think that not only is Christmas about being with family but it is a time for giving and not only to your family and friends but to the less fortunate people in third world countries. Christmas is also about realising when Jesus was born and that he died for us.

Phoebe, 13, Shropshire

[http://news.bbc.co.uk/cbbcnews/hi/newsid\\_619000/newsid\\_6193200/6193289.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/cbbcnews/hi/newsid_619000/newsid_6193200/6193289.stm)



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## Looking Deeper

### It started with a census

But where did all of this come from?

The first Christmas happened over 2000 year ago, but no one at the time thought it was so special. The major event of the day was a census. This was all about the Roman occupation force in Judea wanting to count the population. They insisted that all people went back to the place of their birth to be counted. So an out of work carpenter called Joseph had to go back to Bethlehem for the census. Now at the time he had a girlfriend, called Mary, who was pregnant, but it wasn't Joseph's. It belonged to a guy called 'The Holy Spirit'. Both of them knew all about what was going on as an angel guy called Gabriel had appeared to them and told them all about it. However Joseph had proposed to Mary and they got married. Then off they went to Bethlehem. Finding accommodation was a problem when they got there, as all the rooms had gone to other people. Some kindly hotelier took pity on them and said they could stay in his shed. That's where Mary gave birth to Jesus. At visiting time along came three foreign guys, with expensive gifts and some local farm labourers. The visitors warned them that the bloke in charge of the census, called Herod, was trying to find them to do serious damage to their child as he'd heard a rumour that the child was a king so he felt threatened.

So as you can see all the action that we have now 2000 years later kicks off as a result of people having to be part of a census.



Now here's a thing. On March 27th 2011 there will be a census in the UK. The last census took place 10 years ago. In the last 10 years a lot has changed.

The government has to find out how people's lives and needs have changed, so that they and local authorities can plan the kind of services we need.

The census is compulsory for all households. Forms will be sent to all the places where people live to be completed and sent back. The census can also be completed on line. It is a legal responsibility for all people who live in the UK to be part of the census. There are penalties for those who don't, a £1000 fine and a criminal record.

I wonder if some action will start during this census which in 2000 years may result in a big celebration.

## Reflection

Many parents when surveyed thought that Christmas should be less money-orientated, with four out of five (81%) admitting that Christmas has become too materialistic and nearly three quarters (71%) saying that the festive season is a time to think of those less fortunate than us.

<http://www.parentdish.co.uk/2010/11/16/christmas-should-be-a-time-to-think-of-others-say-most-parents/>

What will you do about this? You could give 10% of what you would spend at Christmas to charity and tell you're parents your doing it. That should set them thinking.

## Prayer

Father God as we remember Christmas help us to focus on what happened during a census over 2000 years ago. That you sent your Son to be born as a child on earth, that this child would grow to be a man who was crucified so that our sins would be forgiven.  
Amen