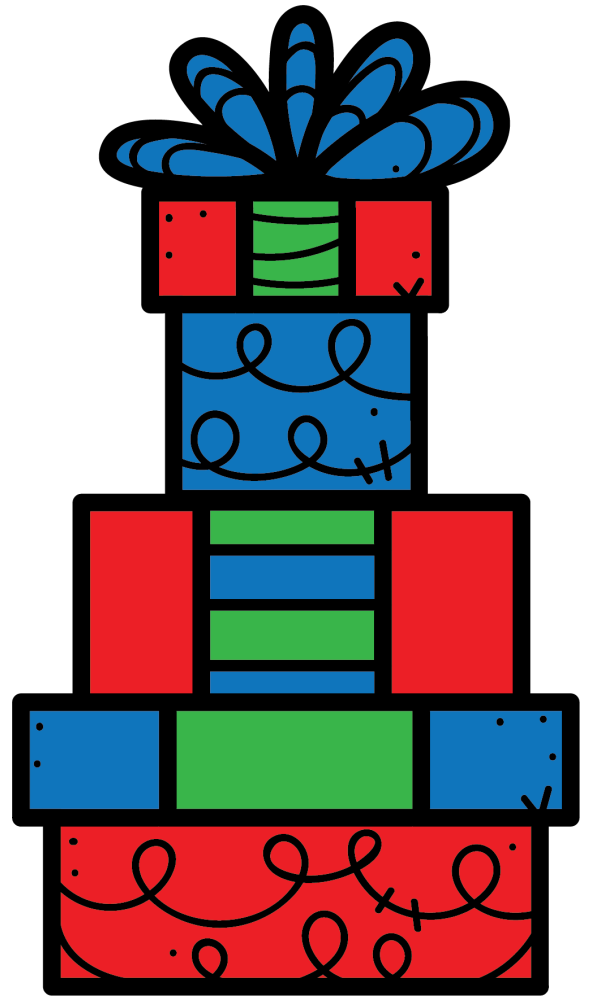


Christmas Around the World



France

Christmas in France

Book List:

Joyeux Noël: Learning Songs and Traditions in French (Teach Me series) by Judy R Mahoney.

Madeline's Christmas by Ludwig Bemelmans

The Family Under the Bridge by Natalie Savage Carlson

Geography:

France is a country in western Europe and is about the size of the state of Texas. The Alps border it in the southeast and the Pyrenees span the border between France and Spain. The Seine River runs through Paris. Paris is the capital of France. The Eiffel Tower in Paris is France's most famous landmark. The Cathedral of Notre Dame is also in Paris. In December the weather in France is cold and snowy in the north but mild and sunny in the south.

Preparations:

Christmas decorations are better known as 'sapin de Noël' introduced in early 14th century when people decorated their homes with apples, paper flowers, and ribbons, though this custom has undergone several changes, yet it's still continued in France where people beautifully decorate their homes, shops, offices and streets.

The crèche (pronounced KRESH) or nativity scene is set up in many homes. It is believed that the first crèche appeared in France in the early 1300's. Clay figurines called santons (sahn-TOHN) are used in the crèche. While some homes do have Christmas trees, they are not as popular as they are in the USA.

Mistletoe is hung above the door during the Christmas season to bring good fortune throughout the year.

Traditions/Customs:

The traditional French Christmas greeting is Joyeux Noël --pronounced (jwah-Yeuh no-El). Which means " Happy Christmas".

In France, Christmas is a time for family and for generosity, marked by family reunions, gifts and candy for children, gifts for the poor, Midnight Mass, and /e

Réveillon.

The celebration of Christmas in France varies by region. Most provinces celebrate Christmas on the 25th of December, which is a bank holiday. However, in eastern and northern France, the Christmas season begins on 6 December, *la fête de Saint Nicolas*, and in some provinces *la fête des Rois** is one the most important holidays of the Christmas season. In Lyon, 8 December is *la Fête de lumières*, when Lyonnais pay homage to the virgin Mary by putting candles in their windows which light up the village.

Père Noël (pronounced PEHR no-EL) is father Christmas. He looks different than the American Santa. He is a tall, thin man. He has a white beard and wears a long red robe. Sometimes a donkey helps him carry his sack of gifts. French children put their shoes in front of the fireplace, on Christmas Eve in the hopes that *Père Noël* (aka *Papa Noël*) will fill them with gifts. Candy, fruit, nuts, and small toys will also be hung on the tree overnight. In some regions there's also *Père Fouettard* who gives out spankings to bad children (sort of the equivalent of Santa Claus giving coal to the naughty).

In some parts of France Pere Noel brings small gifts on St. Nicholas Eve (December 6) and visits again on Christmas. In other places it is le petit Jesus who brings the gifts. Generally adults wait until New Year's Day to exchange gifts.

In 1962, a law was passed decreeing that all letters written to Santa would be responded to with a postcard. When a class writes a letter, each student gets a response.

Many people celebrate on Christmas Eve. They go to midnight church services. A meal called le réveillon (pronounced reh-vay-OHN) is eaten after services. Réveillon means the awakening. Réveillon is a meal with many courses. It may include roast goose, turkey, oysters, lobster, salad, cheese, fruit, etc. depending on the regional customs. Most include a traditional dessert called *bûche de Noël*.

On January 6th Epiphany or Three Kings Day is celebrated. The day the three kings first saw Jesus. In the past it was celebrated with a special cake in which a bean or

tiny figurine is baked into the cake. The person who finds this becomes "king" for the day.

In years past, people use to burn a large log for Christmas called a yule log. Now many people like to eat a special dessert called a bûche de Noël (pronounced BOOSH DUH no-EL). It's a sponge cake shaped like a yule log. It's filled with chocolate filling and decorated to look like a log.

Recipes:

Bûche de Noël

Ingredients:

- 2 cups heavy cream
- 1/2 cup confectioners' sugar
- 1/2 cup unsweetened cocoa powder
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract
- 6 egg yolks
- 1/2 cup white sugar
- 1/3 cup unsweetened cocoa powder
- 1 1/2 teaspoons vanilla extract
- 1/8 teaspoon salt
- 6 egg whites
- 1/4 cup white sugar
- confectioners' sugar for dusting

Directions:

Preheat oven to 375 degrees F (190 degrees C). Line a 10x15 inch jellyroll pan with parchment paper. In a large bowl, whip cream, 1/2 cup confectioners' sugar, 1/2 cup cocoa, and 1 teaspoon vanilla until thick and stiff. Refrigerate.

1. In a large bowl, use an electric mixer to beat egg yolks with 1/2 cup sugar until thick and pale. Blend in 1/3 cup cocoa, 1 1/2 teaspoons vanilla, and salt. In large glass bowl, using clean beaters, whip egg whites to soft peaks. Gradually add 1/4 cup sugar, and beat until whites form stiff peaks. Immediately fold the yolk mixture into the whites. Spread the batter evenly into the prepared pan.

2. Bake for 12 to 15 minutes in the preheated oven, or until the cake springs back when lightly touched. Dust a clean dishtowel with confectioners' sugar. Run a knife around the edge of the pan, and turn the warm cake out onto the towel. Remove and discard parchment paper. Starting at the short edge of the cake, roll the cake up with the towel. Cool for 30 minutes.
3. Unroll the cake, and spread the filling to within 1 inch of the edge. Roll the cake up with the filling inside. Place seam side down onto a serving plate, and refrigerate until serving. Dust with confectioners' sugar before serving.

Songs:

One famous Christmas song that originated in France in 1847 is Oh, Holy Night or "Minuit Chrétiens". Other popular songs include "Noel Nouvelet" which means Christmas Comes Anew and "Il est né, le divin enfant," He Is Born the Divine Child.

See the book *Christmas in France* by Corinne Madden Ross for sheet music.

Crafts:

Make a paper bûche de Noël [Link](#)

Design your own advent calendar.

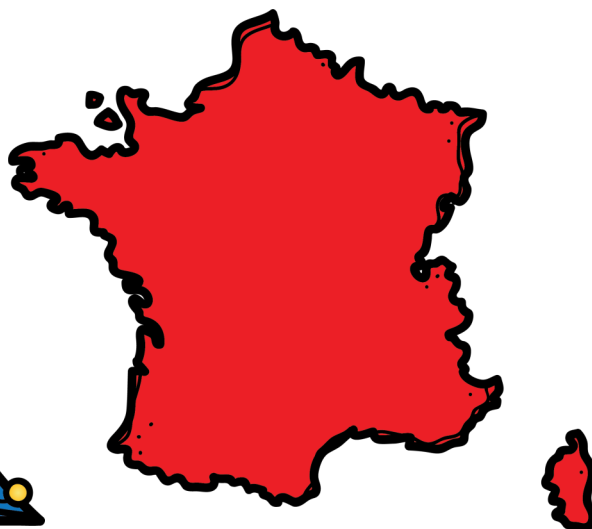
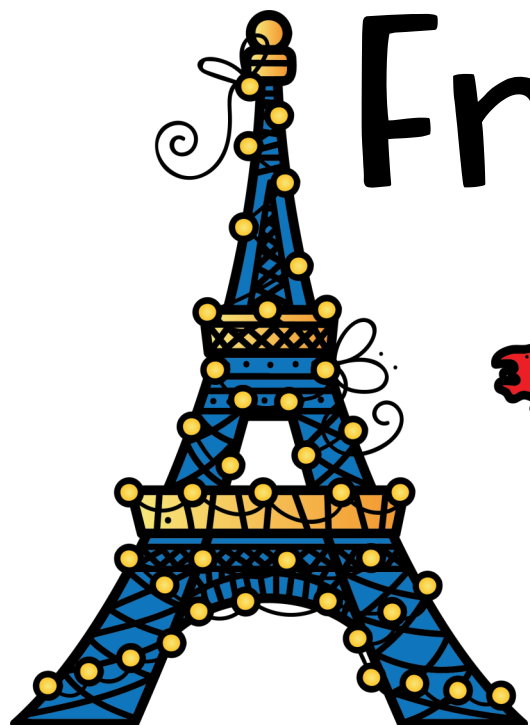
Design Christmas cards with the greeting "Joyeux Noël."

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Directions: Cut out book as one piece. Fold in half. Paste the map (next page) inside the book.

Where in the World is France?



Directions: Cut out book. Fold in half. Use the inside of the book to record the names of songs or song lyrics.

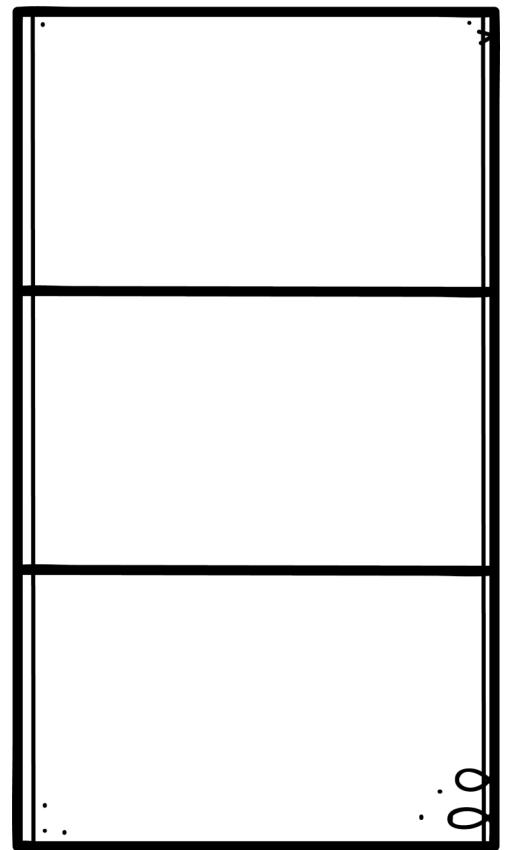
Christmas Songs



Find and color France on the map below.



Directions: Paste map to the inside of the book on the previous page. © Homeschool Share



Directions: Cut out book as one piece. Fold it like a pamphlet, using the dotted lines as your guide.

Color, cut, and paste the flag inside the book. If desired, use the rest of the book to write flag facts.

FRANCE



Preparations and Traditions

Directions: Cut on solid. Fold on dotted. This is the cover book.

Cut out the two books on the next page. Fold in half. Paste them inside the cover book.

Record preparation and tradition information inside the books.

Preparations



Traditions



Directions: Cut out books. Fold in half. Paste into the cover book on the previous page.

Directions: Cut out books. Fold in half. Use the inside of the book to record information.

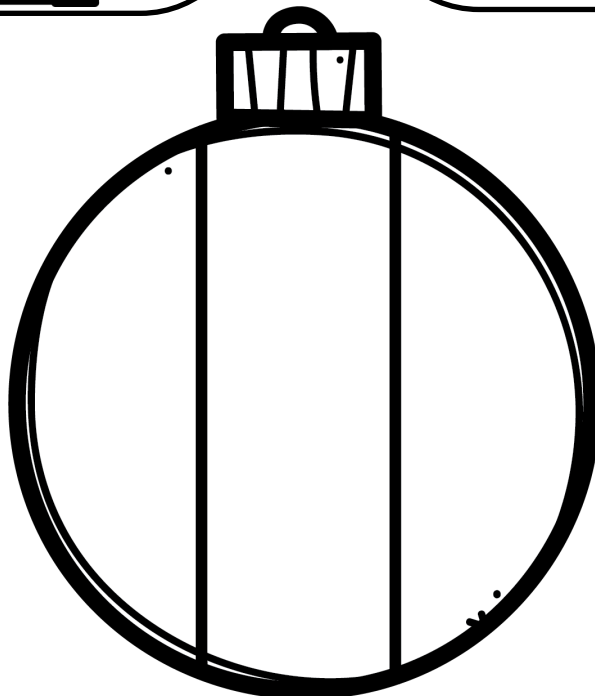
The Crèche



Père Noël



Directions: Color and cut out ornament. Write the name of the country on the back. Add the ornament to your Christmas Around the World tree.



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