

Merry Christmas

Auf Englisch durch die Weihnachtszeit

Mit 5 Abbildungen

Zusammengestellt von Andrew Williams

Reclam

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Einleitung

Ein *stocking filler* zum Weihnachtsfest!

Diese kleine Anthologie ist natürlich vor allem dazu gedacht, Vergnügen zu bereiten und auf das Weihnachtsfest einzustimmen. Sie enthält eine Reihe von stimmungsvollen Texten, die den Zauber des Weihnachtsfests zum Ausdruck bringen. Die biblische Weihnachtsgeschichte ist in der sprachlich eindrucksvollsten Version aus der *King James Bible* zu finden, aber auch einige der schönsten Weihnachtslieder. Die vorliegende Anthologie eignet sich also hervorragend als *stocking filler*, als Geschenk für Liebhaber der englischen Sprache, das in jeden *Christmas stocking* passt – gemeint sind jene Strümpfe, die traditionell am Kamin aufgehängt werden, auf dass sie mit kleinen Geschenken gefüllt werden.

Auf Englisch durch die Weihnachtszeit also! Das bedeutet, einzutauchen in die Kindheitserinnerungen großer englischsprachiger Dichter. Es kann aber auch heißen, sich mit griesgrämigen Menschen abzufinden, die Weihnachten ablehnen. Als Weihnachtsmuffel weltweit bekannt ist der kaltherzige Geschäftsmann Scrooge aus Charles Dickens' *A Christmas Carol*.

Auf Englisch durch die Weihnachtszeit bedeutet außerdem, sich auf schwierige lyrische Texte einzu-

lassen, die nicht selten das Wesentliche des Festes auf den Punkt bringen. Wer mag, kann sich aber auch an die Zubereitung eines echten *Christmas pudding* heranwagen. Wenn man dazu noch einen Becher *Smoking Bishop* genießt, kann man umso beherzter den Mitmenschen zurufen:

Merry Christmas!

THE NATIVITY ACCORDING TO ST LUKE



¹ And it came to pass in those days, that there went out a decree from Caesar Augustus, that all the world should be taxed.

⁵ ² (And this taxing was first made when Cyrenius was governor of Syria.)

³ And all went to be taxed, every one into his own city.

⁴ And Joseph also went up from Galilee, out of the city of Nazareth, into Judaea, unto the city of David, which is called Bethlehem; (because he was of the house and lineage of David:)

⁵ To be taxed with Mary his espoused wife, being great with child.

¹⁵ ⁶ And so it was, that, while they were there, the days were accomplished that she should be delivered.

⁷ And she brought forth her firstborn son, and wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a



¹ **The Nativity:** Christi Geburt * * ² **And it came to pass ...:** Und da begab es sich ... * ³ **decree:** Dekret; Gebot. * ¹² **lineage:** Abstammung. * ¹³ **his espoused wife:** sein vertrautes Weib. * ¹⁴ **great with child:** schwanger. * ¹⁶ **accomplished:** vollendet. * ¹⁸ **swaddling clothes:** Windeln. *

manger; because there was no room for them in the inn.

⁸ And there were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night.

5

⁹ And, lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them: and they were sore afraid.

¹⁰ And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people.

10

¹¹ For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord.

¹² And this shall be a sign unto you; Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger.

15

¹³ And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying,

¹⁴ Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men.

20

¹⁵ And it came to pass, as the angels were gone away from them into heaven, the shepherds said one to an-



1 **manger:** Krippe. * 4 **to abide:** warten. * 8 **sore:** sehr. *
10 **tidings:** Neuigkeiten. * 18 **heavenly host:** himmlische Heerschar. *

other, Let us now go even unto Bethlehem, and see this thing which is come to pass, which the Lord hath made known unto us.

¹⁶ And they came with haste, and found Mary, and
5 Joseph, and the babe lying in a manger.

¹⁷ And when they had seen it, they made known abroad the saying which was told them concerning this child.

¹⁸ And all they that heard it wondered at those
10 things which were told them by the shepherds.

¹⁹ But Mary kept all these things, and pondered them in her heart.

²⁰ And the shepherds returned, glorifying and
15 praising God for all the things that they had heard and seen, as it was told unto them.

(King James Bible, St Luke, Chapter II, verses 1–20)



2 **hath:** *has.* * 4 **haste:** Eile. * 7 **abroad:** überall. * 9 **to wonder at s.th.:** über etw. staunen. * 11 **to ponder s.th.:** über etw. nachdenken. *

CHRISTMAS IN THE ENGLISH-SPEAKING WORLD



Let us begin with a brief overview of what most people would recognise as a standard English Christmas:

- * Christmas Eve (family; last minute shopping; panics and squabbles; tree lights; drinking; too many nuts and chocolates; possibly church – early evening carols or midnight service); 5
- * Christmas Day (family; tree; present-giving rituals; marathon cooking and eating of huge Christmas lunch; the Queen’s broadcast on television/radio – or pointedly *not* watching/listening to the Queen; fall asleep – perhaps while watching *The Sound of Music*, *The Wizard of Oz* or similar; more food and drink; uncomfortable night); 10 15
- * Boxing Day (hangover; family outing) of some sort,



5 **Christmas Eve:** Heiligabend. * 6 **squabble:** Zankerei, Streit. * 8 **midnight service:** Christmette; Mitternachtsmesse. * 12 **pointedly** (adv.): hier: demonstrativ. * 13f. ***The Sound of Music:*** In Mitteleuropa kaum bekannter Kultfilm aus dem Jahr 1965 mit Julie Andrews in der Hauptrolle. * 16 **hangover:** Kater (vom Alkohol). *

if only to local park; long country walk; visiting the other set of relatives; escape from family to pub)¹

Many of these events, excursions, rituals (and troubles) will be familiar to people not just in England, but also in the United States and Canada, in Australia, and indeed all over the world. Christmas Eve, Christmas Day, Boxing Day: These are three days of Christmas that families plan for. They plan the food. They plan which relatives to visit, which to receive, and where and when. (Planning these visits can often lead to the squabbles referred to above.) They may inspect the television programme, even though it is more or less the same every year (offering a strange mixture of kitsch and violence). They plan a visit to the local church – and for many this will be the one time in the year that they go there.

Each family has its own traditions. Some enjoy a simple Christmas Eve and spend it decorating the house (in the United States many children will, before they go to bed, make sure to leave a glass of milk

1 Kate Fox: *Watching the English. The Hidden Rules of English Behaviour*. London: Nicholas Brealey 2008, S. 383.



9 **to receive s.o.:** jdn. empfangen. * 11 **to inspect s.th.:** etwas inspizieren. *

and a cookie for Santa Claus, who, after all, has a very exhausting night ahead). Other families are known to have a lavish meal on Christmas Eve – and then another big meal on Christmas Day.

Indeed, the most important thing about food at Christmas time is, it seems, not what you eat, but how much. The quantity is the key. The Christmas lunch is often turkey (in the United States typically served with Cranberry sauce) and roast vegetables, but it can also be pork, or beef or chicken. The meal is followed by a rich dessert, such as Christmas Pudding, and then there might be a glass of port or some other liqueur, accompanied by nuts and chocolates. A meal like this, which also involves generous quantities of alcohol, is more than enough to make anyone fall asleep. And indeed, falling asleep on the couch, or even in a comfortable chair, is an essential part of Christmas Day.

Boxing Day (named after the box containing money and presents that was traditionally given to tradesmen after Christmas) is an opportunity to recover, to go for a walk and, particularly in Australia, to watch live sports on television. And in those parts of the world where shopping is permitted on Boxing Day, it



3 **lavish**: üppig. * 20 f. **tradesman**: Handwerker. *



“Eating the X-mas pudding – the effect next morning”.
Zeichnung von Bullock Webster (1874–1880).

is the first opportunity to exchange unwanted presents, buy batteries for those presents that need them, and to take advantage of sales which often begin directly after Christmas.

The single biggest difference between English-speaking countries and German-speaking ones is, of course, the fact that, in the former, the exchange of gifts takes place on 25th December, usually in the morning. The idea that it is the *Christkind* himself who brings gifts seems curious to the English, as it does to most Americans and Australians; but equally strange is the idea that an old man wearing a red suit should bring us gifts in the middle of the night. And after all, why should we receive gifts at all when it is somebody else's birthday? The answer is simple: It is the practice of gift-giving itself that Christmas as we know it celebrates.

Overeating, overdrinking and the exchange of gifts all seem to be part of the Christmas experience all over the world. The Queen's address, however, broadcast on the BBC at 3 o'clock in the afternoon on Christmas Day, is indeed a typically English affair (also known as the "royal broadcast" or the "monarch's broadcast"). The first such address was given



20 **address:** Ansprache. *

on radio on the 25th of December 1932 by King George V: “I speak now from my home and from my heart, to you all”, he said, using words written for him by Rudyard Kipling. Elizabeth II was the first monarch to deliver the Christmas speech on television, in 1957. Although she sometimes seems awkward, she has become used to the format.

Watching a monarch say nice things on television is not everybody’s cup of tea, so for something more exciting, go to New York and marvel at the Rockefeller Center Christmas Tree (lit about four weeks before Christmas and now one of the main attractions in New York city during the holiday season). While you are there, be amazed at the window displays of the large department stores. Or even better, go to Australia to watch Santa Claus arriving by surfboard. This spectacle takes place every year at Sydney’s Manly beach (this is done mainly for tourists excited by the novelty of a beach Christmas).



4 **Rudyard Kipling:** (1865–1936) englischer Schriftsteller; am bekanntesten ist sein *Dschungelbuch* (1894). * 9 **not everybody’s cup of tea:** nicht für jeden Geschmack. * 10 **to marvel at s.th.:** etwas bestaunen. * 19 **novelty:** Reiz. *