

Grade 6—Unit 8

A Christmas Peace

Sometimes a radio receives two stations at the same time, superimposed on each other. Some years ago, singers Simon and Garfunkel used that idea in one of their musical pieces. They superimposed the carol “Silent Night” with a typical evening news broadcast. Vietnam War casualties and racial violence brought an eerie dissonance to the peaceful music of Christmas. Yes, we celebrate the kingdom of love as we remember the birth of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Yet we live in a world of violence.

In the midst of this Christmas paradox, two concepts emerge. First, Christ’s kingdom breaks down the walls of nationalism that lead to war. The Christmas story belongs to every culture, every race, and every person across the world. God’s kingdom includes people from every tribe and nation. Those who have not yet joined this kingdom are invited to do so. The message of Christmas leaves no room for arrogant exclusivism. The door to God’s kingdom is always open.

Second, Christmas is truly celebrated as we recognize our own brokenness. Each of us needs God’s love and redemption. In turn, we can welcome the poor, the hungry, and the hurting. In doing so, we participate in the reign of the Prince of Peace each day of the year.

LESSONS

1. O Come, Immanuel
2. Peace on Earth
3. Christmas Circles the Globe

Unit 8: A Christmas Peace

Unit Information

SUMMARY

The angel choir proclaimed “Peace on earth!” to the shepherds. At Christmas, Christians recognize Jesus as the promised Immanuel, which means “God with us” (Isaiah 7:14). Christmas peace happens wherever the light of God’s kingdom dispels vile sin. It is important to understand that God’s kingdom and the Christmas story circle the globe. Wherever sacrificial love absorbs the pain caused by alienation, greed, selfishness, and hatred, there is peace.

KEY BIBLE TEXTS

Isaiah 7, 9

Matthew 1

Luke 2

BIBLICAL BACKGROUND

A Kingdom for Peace

At the time of Jesus’ birth, the Roman world was experiencing the *Pax Romana*. It was a world peace upheld by Rome’s formidable military might. It was a peace gained by the power of the sword. Such peace had little to do with justice and righteousness.

In the Jewish community into which Jesus was born, the inequity and repression of the *Pax Romana* was keenly felt. The census that brought Mary and Joseph to Bethlehem probably related to taxation that brought great economic gain to the Roman rulers. The poor, known as “the people of the land,” suffered the most.

When the heavenly angels chorused their message to the lowly shepherds on the hillside, they were proclaiming a peace quite different from the *Pax Romana*. “Peace on earth!” they clearly proclaimed. But it was not the peace of an earthly king who ruled by imperial force. It was a peace brought by the child whose coming had been foretold by prophets (Isaiah 9:6, 7). This “ruler” would establish a kingdom of justice and righteousness.

We, who have the benefit of hindsight, can learn the meaning of Christmas peace through the teachings and suffering love of Jesus. He taught us to love our enemies (Matthew 5:43ff), give to the needy (Matthew 25:31-40), welcome the weak and powerless (Mark 9:36-37), and forgive those who have hurt us (Matthew 6:14).

For whom was this message? Whom would it affect? Isaiah proclaimed that “of the increase of his government and peace there will be no end” (Isaiah 9:7). The angel said, “I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all people. Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is Christ the Lord” (Luke 2:10-11). True Christianity recognizes that God’s kingdom is not owned by any one culture. Jesus was a Jew. As Messiah, he belongs to every tribe, nation, and ethnic group.

At Christmastime, we recognize that the kingdom of God has indeed scattered the darkness with the coming of Jesus. We struggle with the violence and greed that still exists. The kingdom is both now and not yet. We who are part of Christ’s kingdom are called to a Christmas peace that extends love and forgiveness

throughout the year. We are called to promote peace to our brothers and sisters and potential brothers and sisters who circle the globe.

ESSENTIAL UNDERSTANDINGS

- As members of God’s kingdom, we are called to promote peace.
- Christ’s reign brings righteousness and justice.
- Christmas is a time to celebrate Jesus’ coming to bring peace to all peoples of the earth.

WORSHIP

Use any of the following songs:

“O Come, O Come, Immanuel” (Lesson 1), *Hymnal: A Worship Book* #172

“Christ is the World’s True Light” (Lesson 2), HWB #334

“Silent Night” (Lesson 3), HWB #193

In Lesson 2, students invite Christ to work in current situations as they prayerfully respond in unison, “Come, Lord Jesus.” In Lesson 3, the use of candlelight and manger scenes is meant to be a reflective time of worship. Invite students to worship Christ as they sense the mystery of the birth story.

MEMORY PASSAGES

In this unit students will be introduced to both of these memory verses/passages. They will need to decide which one to memorize by the end of the unit, for the assessment.

Isaiah 9:6-7 (Lessons 1 and 2)

Isaiah 7:14 (Lesson 1)

Isaiah 9:6-7

For a child has been born for us, a son given to us;

Authority rests upon his shoulders;

And he is named Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. His authority shall grow continually, and there shall be endless peace for the throne of David and his kingdom.

He will establish and uphold it with justice and with righteousness from this time onward and forevermore. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will do this.

Isaiah 7:14

Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign. Look, the young woman is with child and shall bear a son, and shall name him Immanuel.

MEMORY VERSE CONNECTIONS

In Isaiah 9:6-7, students are introduced to the magnitude of Jesus’ presence on earth: everything Christ means to the people. Emphasis is placed on Jesus’ reign as fulfillment of the kingly line of David, but in terms of justice and righteousness instead of political power. Isaiah 7:14 affirms Christ’s birth as a sign from God.

ASSESSING TEACHING / LEARNING

Students are asked to enter into the Christmas story in a personal way throughout this unit. In the lessons and unit quiz, they are asked to describe how Christ's peace can transform a current situation, and to recognize cultural variety in celebrating Christ's birth. Be aware of students who are unable to imagine Christ's presence in situations around the world. For these students, it may be helpful to first think backwards and describe a situation where they have seen Christ's peaceful presence, and then to imagine its absence and how the situation would be different.



For a child has been born for us,
a son given to us;
Authority rests upon his shoulders;
And he is named Wonderful Counselor,
Mighty God, Everlasting Father,
Prince of Peace.

His authority shall grow continually,
and there shall be endless peace
for the throne of David and his kingdom.

He will establish and uphold it
with justice and with righteousness
from this time onward and forevermore.
The zeal of the Lord of hosts will do this.

Isaiah 9:6-7



Therefore the Lord himself
will give you a sign.
Look, the young woman is with
child and shall bear a son,
and shall name him Immanuel.

Isaiah 7:14

A Christmas Peace

LESSON 1: O COME, IMMANUEL

Objective

Students will identify with the Jews' eager anticipation of the promised Messiah. They will find current situations where Christ's peace is needed.

Text: Isaiah 7:14, 9:1-7; Micah 5:2-4; Luke 2:8-15

Key Concepts

- The Hebrew people awaited the Messiah who would reign on David's throne and set right the wrongs of the world.
- At Christmas, we celebrate the coming of Jesus as Messiah. Until his kingdom comes in fullness, many people will not experience Christmas peace.
- We can prepare the way for God's redemptive action in the world by our prayers, attitudes, actions, and obedience.

Essential Questions

- In what ways was Jesus needed when he was born on earth?
- In what ways is Jesus needed today?

Estimated Lesson Time: 45 minutes

Materials

- Bibles
- Current news magazines and newspapers, or Internet access
- "Where is Christ's peace needed?" (p. 268)

Teacher Preparation

- Make one copy per student of "Where is Christ's peace needed?"
- Gather news magazines and newspapers (*or plan to take the students to visit your school's media center to browse*). You may also want to make sure computers and Internet access are available.

INTRODUCING THE LESSON

Ask students to recall a time they anticipated something—seeing signs that it was coming, but not knowing when it would happen. Simple examples of this are: wiggling a tooth before losing it, seeing presents wrapped for Christmas but being too young to understand when they could be opened, planting bulbs in the fall and seeing green shoots peek above the ground in the spring, but not knowing when the flowers would bloom. Encourage students to share about the experience and their feelings once the event occurred.

LESSON STEPS

1. Connect the students' stories of anticipation with the Jews' anticipation of the promised Messiah. Lead them in singing "O Come, O Come, Immanuel" (*from worship ideas on page 262*).

2. Introduce the word *Immanuel*, meaning “God with us.” During the Exile and after returning to Jerusalem, the Jews eagerly anticipated the promised Messiah referred to by the prophets. This Messiah, *Immanuel*, was foretold in Isaiah 7:14, 9:1-7 and Micah 5:2-4, among other places. Invite student volunteers to read these passages while the class listens for the signs of the Messiah.

After each reading, list the signs on the board (*young woman has a son; boy is named Immanuel; light and joy come; burdens and oppression are lifted; an authority will reign with justice and righteousness over the Jewish kingdom; ruler comes from Bethlehem and will bring peace.*)

Explain that for this unit students have a choice of which memory verse to learn. The verses are the passages just read. They may choose between Isaiah 7:14 and Isaiah 9:6-7. Ask them to choose now and begin working on the memory verses immediately at home. If there is time in class, let students get started on memorization. Make sure they know to be ready to recite the work at the end of the unit, for the assessment.

3. Respond to the signs listed on the board. Does this sound like the Jesus the students know and have studied? Invite them to give examples of ways they see Jesus fulfilling these prophecies. Read Luke 2:8-15 together, to verify how Jesus began fulfilling these prophecies immediately, from his birth.

4. “Where is Christ’s peace needed?” Although Christ has already come to earth, his peace is still needed today. We anticipate Christ’s peace to be active among us through the Holy Spirit. Assign students to find one current situation in the news where Christ’s peace is needed and write about it on the student page. Use the news magazines and newspapers you brought, or visit your school’s media center. You may also use an Internet news website. Instruct students to bring their completed pages to class tomorrow, prepared to share about the situation they researched.

EXTEND THE LESSON

(This activity will extend the lesson to longer than 45 minutes.)

- **Sing familiar Christmas carols.** After each song, identify the references to Christ’s peace found within the carols. Also notice the signs of the Messiah.

Name _____

Where is Christ's peace needed?

Assignment

Find one situation in the current news where you think Christ's peace is needed.

Summary

Write one paragraph to explain the main facts in the situation.



A decorative border consisting of blue ribbons and yellow stars surrounds the writing area. The border is composed of four corner pieces, each featuring a large blue ribbon bow and several smaller yellow stars. The writing area is a large rectangle with horizontal lines, intended for a student to write a paragraph.

A Christmas Peace

LESSON 2: PEACE ON EARTH

Objective

Students will recognize the difference between peace forced by a political power and the peace of Jesus Christ. They will plan and carry out a Christmas peace project to be agents of Christ's peace in their community.

Text: Isaiah 9:6, 7; Luke 2:13-14

Key Concepts

- The peace that Christ brings is accomplished through self-giving love.
- Jesus wants us to be peacemakers.

Essential Questions

- How is Christ's peace different from the world's definition of peace?

Estimated Lesson Time: 45 minutes

Materials

- "Where is Christ's peace needed?" student pages from Lesson 1 (*completed*)
- "A Kingdom for Peace" (p. 271)
- Student Bibles
- For Extend the Lesson: "Christmas with Francis of Assisi" (p. 272)

Teacher Preparation

- Make copies of "A Kingdom for Peace," one per student.
- If desired, investigate opportunities for students to bring Jesus' peace to their communities, as described in lesson step 3.

INTRODUCING THE LESSON

Have students share their responses from the Lesson 1 student page. After each student shares a current situation where Christ's peace is needed, lead the class in responding prayerfully, "Come, Lord Jesus." Offer a brief prayer for that specific situation if you wish.

LESSON STEPS

1. "A Kingdom for Peace." Distribute today's student page and allow several minutes for students to read quietly the two sections, Pax Romana and Christ's Way. When they are finished, read Luke 2:13-14 aloud. Give another period of quiet time for students to fill out the comparison table. Ask them to share their comparisons aloud. (*Below are suggested answers for the comparison table.*)

Pax Romana way of peace

gained by power of sword
proclaimed by rulers and soldiers
imposed census and taxes that
made poor suffer

Christ's way of peace

gained by love through baby Jesus
proclaimed by angels
justice and righteousness

2. Recall the situations shared during Introducing the Lesson. Ask each student to suggest a way Christ’s peace could be present in the situations. Again respond with “Come, Lord Jesus” after each, and add the phrase “Bring your peace.”

3. Brainstorm a tangible way that your class can help to bring Jesus’ peace on earth to needs in their local community. For example, some communities offer sponsorship programs through the Salvation Army or an immigration service where persons can purchase gifts and/or household items for people in need. Decide as a class on one Christmas Peace project and give students responsibility to research, promote, and participate in it. Parent volunteers can also help to make this project a reality.

EXTEND THE LESSON

(This activity will extend the lesson to longer than 45 minutes.)

- **Christmas with Francis of Assisi.** Read the story on page 272, which describes the origins of the manger scene.

Select students randomly to play the various roles in the manger scene as you read. Some can even pose as baby Jesus and the animals. Ask students to bring costumes from home. Share the “Christmas with Francis of Assisi” reading and manger scene in a Christmas program or chapel presentation.

Name _____



A Kingdom for Peace

Pax Romana

At the time of Jesus' birth, the Roman world was experiencing the *Pax Romana*. It was a world peace upheld by Rome's military might. It was a peace gained by the power of the sword. Such a peace had little to do with justice and righteousness.

In the Jewish community into which Jesus was born, people felt keenly the inequality and repression of the *Pax Romana*. The census that brought Mary and Joseph to Bethlehem was probably related to taxes that brought great economic gain to the Roman rulers. The poor, known as "the people of the land," suffered the most.

Christ's Way

When the angels chorused their message to the shepherds on the hillside, they proclaimed a peace quite different from the *Pax Romana*. "Peace on earth!" they sang. But it was not the peace of an earthly king who ruled by imperial force. It was a peace brought by the child whose coming had been foretold by the prophets (Isaiah 9:6, 7). This ruler would establish a kingdom of justice and righteousness.

And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God and saying, "Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace among those whom he favors!" (Luke 2:13-14).

Directions:

Contrast the ways of peace of the Pax Romana and Jesus Christ by describing them below.

Pax Romana way of peace

Christ's way of peace

Christmas with Francis of Assisi

Francis of Assisi lived in the time of knights and castles. His father was a wealthy merchant, and for a time Francis lived a wild life with his father's money. He was the life of the party, for he had a way with words and loved to make music. He hoped to become an important and famous knight.

Then came a turning point in Francis' life. Instead of pursuing fame and fortune, he chose poverty. Instead of giving his allegiance to an earthly king, he chose to make the Lord his king. He chose to live the way of Jesus as reflected in the gospels. He now sang the joy of serving God and being at one with all creation.

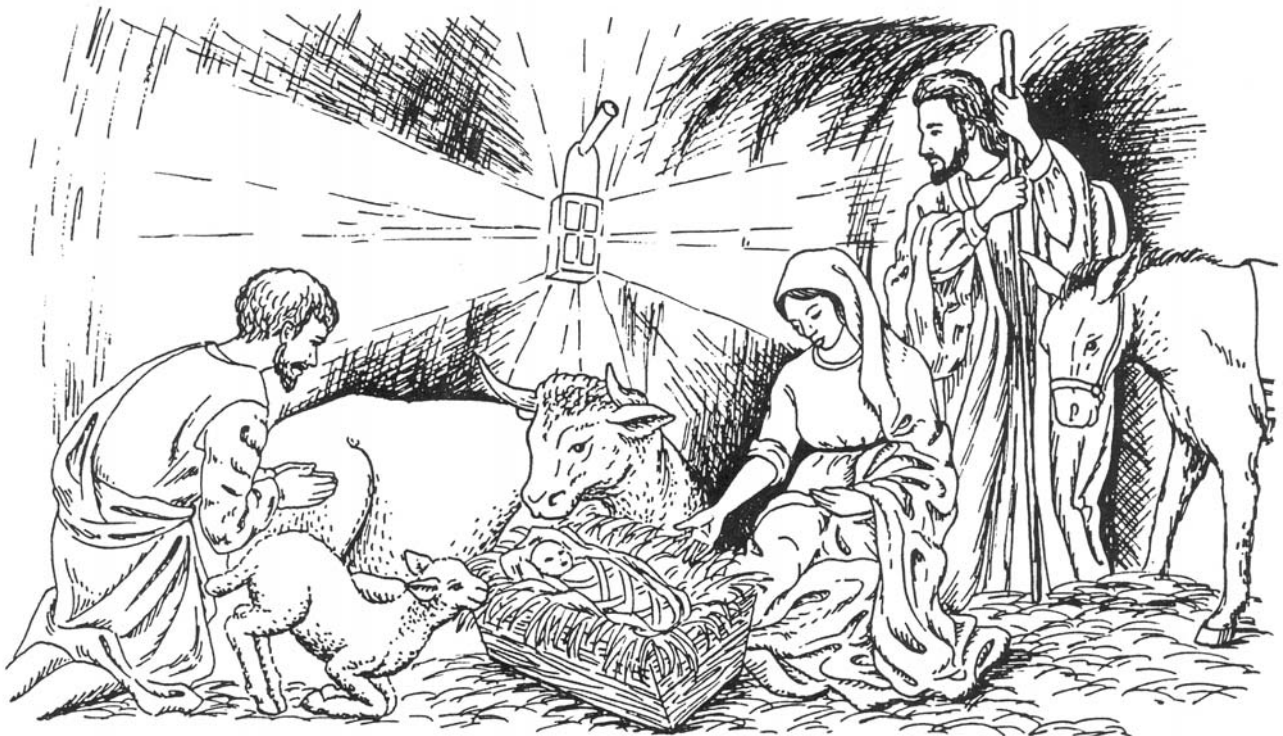
There are many stories told of Francis of Assisi, for when someone decides to become a radical disciple of Jesus Christ, the light of God's kingdom shines brightly and people take notice. Here is one of those stories.

In Francis' time, many people could not read. The Bible was not in the language of the people and was not available even to people who *could* read. Francis saw how people constantly hurt each other by their selfish ways. He cared about them deeply, and thought of a way to make the Christmas story come alive to them.

One Christmas, Francis invited the people from the surrounding area to come to a large cave. Meanwhile, inside the cave he had prepared the scene with a manger full of hay and animals from a nearby farm standing by. A young father and mother laid their baby in the manger. When the men, women, and children approached the cave bearing candles, they saw the Christmas story before their eyes.

Then Francis stepped forward and told the Bethlehem story of Mary and Joseph, the shepherds, and the wise men. He also spoke of Jesus the man, and invited his listeners to follow Jesus' way of love.

Thus it was, in the year 1223, that the first manger scene was created so that people might truly experience the Christmas message of love and peace.



A Christmas Peace

LESSON 3: CHRISTMAS CIRCLES THE GLOBE

Objective

Students will recognize that Christ is celebrated in all cultures and was sent for all peoples.

Text: Luke 2:10

Key Concepts

- Though Jesus was born into a specific time and place, he transcends time and cultures.

Essential Questions

- How do other cultures celebrate the birth of Christ?
- For whom did God send Jesus?

Estimated Lesson Time: 45 minutes

Materials

- Candles, matches
- Manger scenes (borrowed or from home)
- Reflective Christmas music, CD/tape player
- World map
- 4 copies of “’Twas in the Moon of Wintertime” (#190, *Hymnal: A Worship Book*)
- “They Stitch Christmas Molas” (p. 276)
- “Christmas in Nigeria, Germany, and Costa Rica” (p. 277)
- Words of “Silent Night” or another carol in language of your guest (*see Teacher Preparation*)
- For Extend the Lesson, option one: “Journey to Pacifism” video (available to borrow from Mennonite Central Committee, www.mcc.org)
- For Extend the Lesson, option two: “Christmas in India” (p. 278), ingredients for *Galab Jaman* (see story)

Teacher Preparation

- Collect manger scenes from a variety of cultures, including ones that represent the students in your class. Borrow these from parents and other teachers, or from a local world craft shop such as Ten Thousand Villages. Ahead of time, set up the scenes around the classroom.
- Select four student soloists and give each a copy of “’Twas in the Moon of Wintertime,” to prepare to sing a verse of the carol for the class.
- Make copies of “They Stitch Up Christmas Molas” and “Christmas in Nigeria, Germany, and Costa Rica,” for selected students to read aloud.
- Invite a student, parent, or community member to sing “Silent Night” or another carol in a different language. Make copies of the text for students to learn. Ask the guest to be prepared to share about Christmas in that culture.

INTRODUCING THE LESSON

Turn out the lights and light the candles, making sure they are in a safe place. Play the Christmas music. The manger scenes should be set up around the classroom. As students enter the room, invite them to view the manger scenes quietly.

Ask the students to decide which manger scene they like best, and to explain why. After all have shared, summarize their reasons. For instance, some may choose a scene representative of their culture, which demonstrates the natural tendency to imagine biblical characters in our own culture. Others may select a scene from a culture very different from theirs, fascinated to imagine the biblical characters in a new context.

LESSON STEPS

1. Turn on the lights and locate the cultures represented by the manger scenes on a world map. Ask students to volunteer to point out each location.

2. “’Twas in the Moon of Wintertime.” Share the origins of this carol: It was written in 1643 by Jean de Brébeuf, a Jesuit missionary at Sainte-Marie, among the Hurons in Canada. Brébeuf wrote the words in the native language of the Huron/Wendat people. The melody is a traditional French folk song. Teach the students the chorus, then sing the song together, with the pre-arranged soloists singing the verses.

3. Select students to read “They Stitch Up Christmas Molas” and “Christmas in Nigeria, Germany, and Costa Rica.” After the readings, locate these places on the map. Lead the class in comparing and contrasting the Christmas customs in the stories with their own.

4. Read Luke 2:10, and ask the students to identify who was to receive the good news. Jesus was born for everyone! Just as it is appropriate to translate the Bible into all languages of the world, it is helpful to create manger scenes of all cultures, so everyone can better identify with Jesus, their king. Although it is true that Jesus was born into a specific culture, he is the king of all nations and in Godly form does not represent any one culture.

5. Invite your special guest to sing “Silent Night” (*or another Christmas carol*) in a different language. Distribute copies of the text, and with the guest’s help, teach the students to sing in the new language. Let them ask questions and learn about Christmas celebrations in your guest’s culture.

Turn out the lights again and relight the candles. Students may move close to the candles, so they have enough light to see the words of the carol. Sing “Silent Night” (*or the chosen carol*) in the language just learned from the guest, and then sing it in English.

EXTEND THE LESSON

(These activities will extend the lesson to longer than 45 minutes.)

- **“Journey to Pacifism.”** View this 22-minute video that tells the story of Siegfried Bartel, a German officer in World War II, who heard Russian troops singing “Silent Night.” Realizing that he was prepared to kill other Christians, he began his journey to pacifism. Discuss his journey, and sing “Silent Night” together.
- **Read “Christmas in India”** (p. 278) and make the recipe for *Galab Jaman* for students to taste.
- **Memory work.** Give time students time to practice reciting their selected memory verses to each other, in preparation for the unit assessment.



They Stitch Christmas Molas

A group of Kuna women run barefoot down the beach, their red headscarves blowing in the wind, looking as colorful as a flight of jungle butterflies. A tropical sun sparkles on their gold noserings, saucer-like earrings, and bead-wrapped arms and legs. Multiple strings of necklaces (*some made of animal teeth or old coins*) and rings on every finger complete their festive traditional outfits. But the glory of each woman is her *mola* blouse!

The Kuna Indians live in small thatch houses on the island of Ailigandi, just off the Atlantic coast of Panama. Ailigandi is one of some 300 islands that extend from the Panama Canal to Colombia, South America. Fewer than 50 of these islands have people living on them, as most lack fresh water. The islands are claimed by Panama, but are mostly self-governing.

Until 1933, the Kuna people fiercely isolated themselves. Permission from the chief was required to leave the island and to enter it. A tribal law once sentenced to death any outsider found on the island after sunset. Then Christmas came to Ailigandi and things changed.

Molas are still created by the women and girls as they sit in the doorways of their homes, which have stick walls and dirt floors and no windows. It may take weeks or months to finish the design and intricate stitchery for one mola. The fabric art is created with layers of colorful fabric. The layers are stacked and the design sketched on the top layer. The mola maker then snips through the layers to whatever color she fancies for that part of the design. The rough edges are then turned under and held firmly with tiny stitches.

In December of 1933, the women gathered curiously around a girl called Chi, wondering what strange design she was snipping with sharp scissors on the panels of her fabric. Soon they knew. It was a Christmas nativity, showing the stable, Joseph, Mary, the baby Jesus, and stable animals, all intricately stitched on a mola!

How had the story of Christmas come to Ailigandi? It came through one of their own tribe. Lonnie Iglesias, a respected Kuna, had gone “outside” to attend a missionary institute in Nyack, New York. There he met and married Marvel, an American. Lonnie and Marvel returned to Ailigandi with permission to start a school.

Gathered on the moonlit beach under palm trees, the Kunas of Ailigandi listened as Lonnie and Marvel told the story of Jesus’ birth. They struggled to understand. Later, as the men fished the ocean in their *cayucos*, they discussed this strange news. So did the women, sitting in their doorways and stitching molas. Captivated by these new tales, the girl Chi stitched the story into her new mola, which in turn would be made into a blouse.

“Little by little my people are beginning to understand,” Lonnie told Marvel. He read to the people from a Spanish Bible, then translated it into Kuna. But the Kunas began to say, “God must be a Spaniard, since the Bible is in Spanish. And we don’t forget what the Spanish gold-seekers did to our ancestors!”

A Kuna Bible was needed. With the help of the American Bible Society, Lonnie and Marvel devised a Kuna alphabet and to translate the Bible into Kuna. American Bible Society linguists helped them. In 1948 the book of Mark was published. The Christmas story was read from the Kuna-language Bible for the first time. The excitement was overwhelming. “Now we know that the babe in the manger was Kuna!” the people sang out.

Now Kunas gather to read and study from a complete New Testament in their language. The molas the women wear depict Noah’s ark, Jonah and the whale, and David and Goliath, along with other subjects. But the Christmas molas are favorites. The Kunas told Lonnie and Marvel, “We used to mark the years from one iguana season to the next. Now we will measure the years from Christmas to Christmas!”

—Excerpted from *Christmas: The Annual of Christmas Literature and Art*, Vol. 59.
This volume includes pictures of molas and a wealth of other art and literature.

Christmas in Nigeria, Germany, and Costa Rica

Christmas in Nigeria

In Nigeria, Christmas is an exciting, festive day. Early in the morning, people put on new clothes and admire each other's outfits. Some families have tea and *kwasi* (fried bean cakes) before going to church or to a nativity drama, instituted by early missionaries.

This Christmas morning drama is a long and elaborate production, including many actors and scenes. The audience follows the whole Bible story, beginning Mary being told by the angel that she is to be the mother of Jesus. The story goes on to her marriage with Joseph, the trip to Bethlehem, the searching for a room at many inns, and finally being able to sleep in the stable. Then Jesus is born and a star appears.

An angel comes to the shepherds to tell them of Jesus' birth of Jesus and they are *so-o-o* afraid. (*The Nigerians always turn this part into a comedy.*) The wise men are told of the birth and go by Herod's palace to ask for directions to Bethlehem. The audience appreciates Herod's guile as he asks the wise men to return and tell him where to find the new king, so he may worship him. The drama may go on for a couple of hours. The Nigerians love dramas, so this is no problem. Unlike our idea of a play, Nigerian dramas have no set script. Lines are all ad-libbed and there is a lot of overacting and upstaging.

Christmas for Nigerians is a time when every family has something special to eat. Instead of the usual guinea corn mush, all who can afford it have rice and add meat to the soup. In the afternoon, children may go caroling at homes of wealthier neighbors, hoping for candy or cookies.

Christmas in Germany

The German celebration of Christmas begins with the first Sunday of Advent. The family gathers to make the traditional wreath of spruce branches. The wreath hangs by four red ribbons from the ceiling or on a special little stand made to sit on the table. Sometimes the wreath is placed on a large plate and the center is filled with fruit and nuts. The wreath has four red candles and may also be decorated with four red bows. On the first Sunday of Advent, one candle is lighted. An additional candle is lighted the next Sunday, and so on.

On the December 6, Germans celebrate St. Nicholas Day. St. Nicholas was known for secretly leaving gifts for poor children at Christmastime. On that evening, German children put their shoes out on the doorstep or on the wide window ledge. During the night, St. Nicholas visits, leaving nuts and candies in the shoes.

On Christmas Eve, all families go to church services, where they sing carols and watch pageants of the nativity. When they come home, they light the Christmas tree. They still use small wax candles, so the trees are lit only a short time.

The Christmas tree is always spruce and is decorated with handmade ornaments in the shapes of stars, angels, little Santas, etc. They are made from silver and gold papers. There are also cookie ornaments and little candies called "sugar kringles." Sometimes decorations are also made of straw or gilded nuts.

On Christmas morning, the family again goes to church. At noon a special dinner is served, often with a roasted goose as the main course. Children are presented with tiny marzipan piglets. Every family enjoys the traditional Christmas stollen, a sweetbread made of yeast dough with raisins, almonds, and candied citron.

Christmas in Costa Rica

By November, the regular afternoon rains of the rainy season have stopped. Dry winds blow, and temperatures drop to a cool 70 degrees. It is then that Costa Ricans say the feel of Christmas is in the air. On city streets, people throw confetti on friends and strangers. Children are not visited by Santa Claus, but by "El Niño Jesus" (*the child Jesus*), who brings gifts on Christmas Day.

Huge manger scenes occupy the city plazas. They are usually found in homes as well. In the countryside, people climb to a forested area beside a stream or waterfall the day before Christmas to collect soft green moss to arrange around the creche. The creche remains at least until Epiphany and sometimes as long as the entire month of January.

Hot *tamales* are the distinctive holiday food. *Masa* dough (*made from ground corn*), mixed with meat and hot peppers is steamed inside a corn husk.

CHRISTMAS in



There is much preparation when Christmas time in India is near. Dirt floors need to be replastered, walls are whitewashed both at church and at home, the brass is shined and all sparkling for guests, the church decorated and the Christmas drama is rehearsed.

The preparation and celebration go on for many days. As early as the eighteenth and nineteenth of December, the mission schools have a three-to-four hour program. Drama, singing and dancing are old traditions in India, and all of them have been incorporated into the celebrating of Christ's birth.

The drama or pageantry begins with an angel appearing to Mary, telling her that God has chosen her to be the mother of Jesus, and continues with her meeting with Joseph, their trip to Bethlehem, the night of Christ's birth, the news brought to the shepherds and wise men, and their visit. The drama is given sometimes two or three days before Christmas or it can be presented on Christmas morning or evening.

Church service on Christmas morning is a Sunday-type service celebrating Christ's birth. However, things look very different on this day. Everyone present has on new clothes and the church building is decorated. In the church there are many banners, palm leaves, and flowers. The walls are fresh and bright with new whitewash. After the services everyone gets an Indian sweet or candy.



Galab Jaman (Sweet milk ball in syrup)

- 3 c. non-fat dry milk powder
- 1 c. baking mix
- 4 tbs. butter, melted
- ½ c. milk

Combine and form into balls. Fry the balls at 375 degrees F. until brown.

In large saucepan combine

- 2 ½ c. sugar
- 3 ½ c. water

Bring to a boil and cook for 10 minutes and keep warm. Keep balls in syrup.

Name _____

A Christmas Peace: Unit 8 Quiz

Part 1: Memory Passages

Write out, or say aloud to your teacher, one of the two memory passages for this unit. Be sure to include the reference.

Part 2: Short Answer

Briefly respond to each question in the space provided.

1. Describe two current situations in the world where Christ's peace is needed. Explain how Christ's presence in those situations could bring peace.

2. List two differences between the Pax Romana and Jesus Christ's way of peace.

3. Describe one Christmas tradition of another culture that you do not practice during the holiday.



ANSWER KEY

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Part 1: Memory Passages

Write out, or say aloud to your teacher, one of the two memory passages for this unit. Be sure to include the reference. *Isaiah 9:6-7 or Isaiah 7:14*

Part 2: Short Answer

Briefly respond to each question in the space provided.

1. Describe two current situations in the world where Christ’s peace is needed. Explain how Christ’s presence in those situations could bring peace.

Answers will vary.

2. List two differences between the Pax Romana and Jesus Christ’s way of peace.

Students may list two of the following options: Gained by the power of the sword vs. gained by love through baby Jesus; Proclaimed by rulers and soldiers vs. proclaimed by angels; Imposed a census and taxes that made the poor suffer vs. justice and righteousness

3. Describe one Christmas tradition of another culture that you do not practice during the holiday.

Answers will vary. Students may cite practices from the cultures studied in this unit.

