

Before You Read

Step 1 – Freewriting

For 5 minutes, write without stopping while thinking about the following topic. Do not worry about making mistakes. You will share your writing with your classmates, but not with your teacher.

Topic:

Why do people give each other gifts during the holidays?

Now, share your freewriting with two or three classmates by reading it aloud. What kinds of similarities and differences do you see?

Step 2 – Generating background knowledge

1. Why would some Americans choose not to exchange gifts at Christmas?
2. Some people say that exchanging gifts is a sign of love. Do you agree? Why or why not?
3. Describe the qualities of the ideal Christmas gift.
4. Have you ever had an argument with a friend or family member during the holidays? What happened? What did it feel like?
5. The title of our story is “The Christmas Gift.” What do you expect to find in a story with such a title?

Reading

Read the story two times. The first time, write down any new words or phrases you come across. The second time, read it more closely and try to guess the meaning of the new words from the context.

In your group, write down all of the new words you have found. Choose one person to be your “scout” and send that person to the other groups with your list. The scout’s job is to find out from her classmates what these new words mean. The scout should report her findings back to her original group when she is done.

After You Read

Now, answer the following questions in your group. Try to come to a group consensus. Be prepared to share your answers with the whole class.

1. Kayleen and Hugo had decided not to exchange gifts this Christmas. Why?
2. What is “Kissmas?”
3. Hugo decided to give Kayleen a gift anyway. What was it? Do you think it was a good gift? Why or why not?
4. How did Kayleen react to the gift? What is your opinion of her reaction?
5. If you were Hugo, what would you have done differently?

Homework

For our next class, think of a time when you gave someone a gift that was either rejected or not appreciated as much as you had hoped. What happened? How did it make you feel? Write one paragraph describing this event and bring it to class.

The Christmas Gift¹

It was Christmas day. Kayleen had invited her boyfriend Hugo over for Christmas dinner. He arrived a little after 1:00. He was carrying a big plastic bag. He put the bag on the floor inside her front door. She looked at the bag, but she didn't ask what was in it. They had already agreed not to give each other gifts; they were trying to save money for a down payment on a house after they got married. They hugged each other.

Hugo asked Kayleen to give him a kiss. "No," she said. He asked her if she knew what day it was. Of course, she replied; it was Christmas day. No, he told her, it was actually "Kissmas" day—that's why she should kiss him. She laughed, and gave him a big kiss. She went back into the kitchen to continue with her dinner preparation. He turned on the bedroom TV and hoped that there was something interesting to watch; five minutes later, his nose was in a book.

A while later, Kayleen entered the bedroom and said, "Let's go for a walk in the park." It was a beautiful day—blue sky, some white clouds, and about 66 degrees. Who needs snow when you can have this, Hugo thought.

Many people were enjoying themselves in the park that Christmas day. A group of people were playing volleyball. All the tennis courts were packed. Some people were lawn bowling. Holding hands, Hugo and Kayleen walked all the way around the park. They played soccer with a pine cone. They petted a dog and talked to its owner.

When they returned to Kayleen's apartment, Hugo dug into the plastic bag and pulled out an old clamp-on lamp from his apartment that he hadn't used for years. "What's this?" Kayleen asked.

"I thought you might like this lamp," Hugo replied. "Your apartment needs more light. I was going to throw it out, but then I thought you might want it."

"It's Christmas day, and you're bringing me a used lamp? A used lamp that doesn't even have a bulb in it?! Is that the best thing you could come up with on Christmas day? Look here, you didn't even bother to clean this thing before bringing it into my house!" Indeed, Hugo had missed a couple of spots on the lamp where dust had accumulated. Jeez, Hugo muttered to her, if she didn't like it, he'd take it home.

"No," she ordered. "Give it to me." Feeling better, he gave it to her. She opened the door and threw it outside. "All you can give me on Christmas day is second-hand trash?! That's all I'm worth to you? Get out of here, and take your bag of garbage with you, Santa Claus!"

¹ This story was taken from <http://www.eslfast.com/>