

## Oh Christmas Tree, Oh Christmas Tree, How lovely are your branches!



It's not just the Christmas song *Oh Tannenbaum!* that has been imported from Germany to Great Britain for Christmas. There are other songs and traditions, too.

Perhaps the most famous of the imported German Christmas songs is *Silent Night (Stille Nacht)*, translated into English in 1859 and now performed at thousands of carol services and Christmas concerts around the country every year. What a wonderful, spine-tingling moment it is to hear the beautiful melody. Much easier to sing for many people is *Oh Christmas Tree* (translated from the well-loved German song *Oh Tannenbaum!*). This is a popular song, first heard in English at the beginning of the twentieth century, and while it refers to the fir tree growing wild in the woods, many people associate it with the decorated Christmas trees that most of us have in our homes. And the third German Christmas song that is sung in English is *Still, Still, Still*, a haunting lullaby.

But what about the Christmas tree itself? – Yes, that is also a German import! Although evergreens were sometimes used as decoration in British homes during the Christmas festival, it was the German royal family in the 19<sup>th</sup> century who were instrumental in the Christmas tree becoming a popular fixture of Christmas in the UK. In 1832, the thirteen-year old Princess Victoria wrote in her diary on Christmas Day that there were, '... two trees hung with lights and sugar ornaments. All the presents being placed round the trees ...'. After her marriage to Prince Albert in 1841, the tradition became widespread amongst middle class families. And three years later a book entitled *The Christmas Tree* was published which described the history of the Christmas tree.

Unlike in Germany, Christmas trees in the UK are decorated and lit at the beginning of the advent period. Rather like seeing the first swallow of the summer, British people make a joke of seeing the first Christmas tree in a front room window. And, just like in Germany, the traditional day to remove them is Twelfth Night, 6<sup>th</sup> January.

In the last ten or fifteen years another custom has taken a strong foothold in the UK: German Christmas markets. Leeds, Manchester, Birmingham, Bristol, Lincoln are just some of the cities that have wooden chalets selling *Glühwein* and *Bratwurst* and all the other German festive goodies. Germany has well and truly arrived in the United Kingdom at Christmas. To find more about twelve UK Christmas traditions click here: <http://usa.britishcouncil.org/british-christmas-traditions>.

To read more about all UK Christmas markets click here: <http://www.christmasmarkets.com/UK.html>.

And if you would like to use the festive season as a topic in your classroom from B1.1 upwards, then we have provided you with two activities that have been specially adapted from two of the *Conversation springboards* on pages 61-64 in the *Network Now B1.1 Teacher's Book*. To find out more about all the other extra features of the *Network Now B1.1 Teacher's Book*, just click [here](#).

You'll find our two Christmas activities in the following **Teacher's Notes** and on **Worksheet 1** and **Worksheet 2**.

## Teacher's Notes

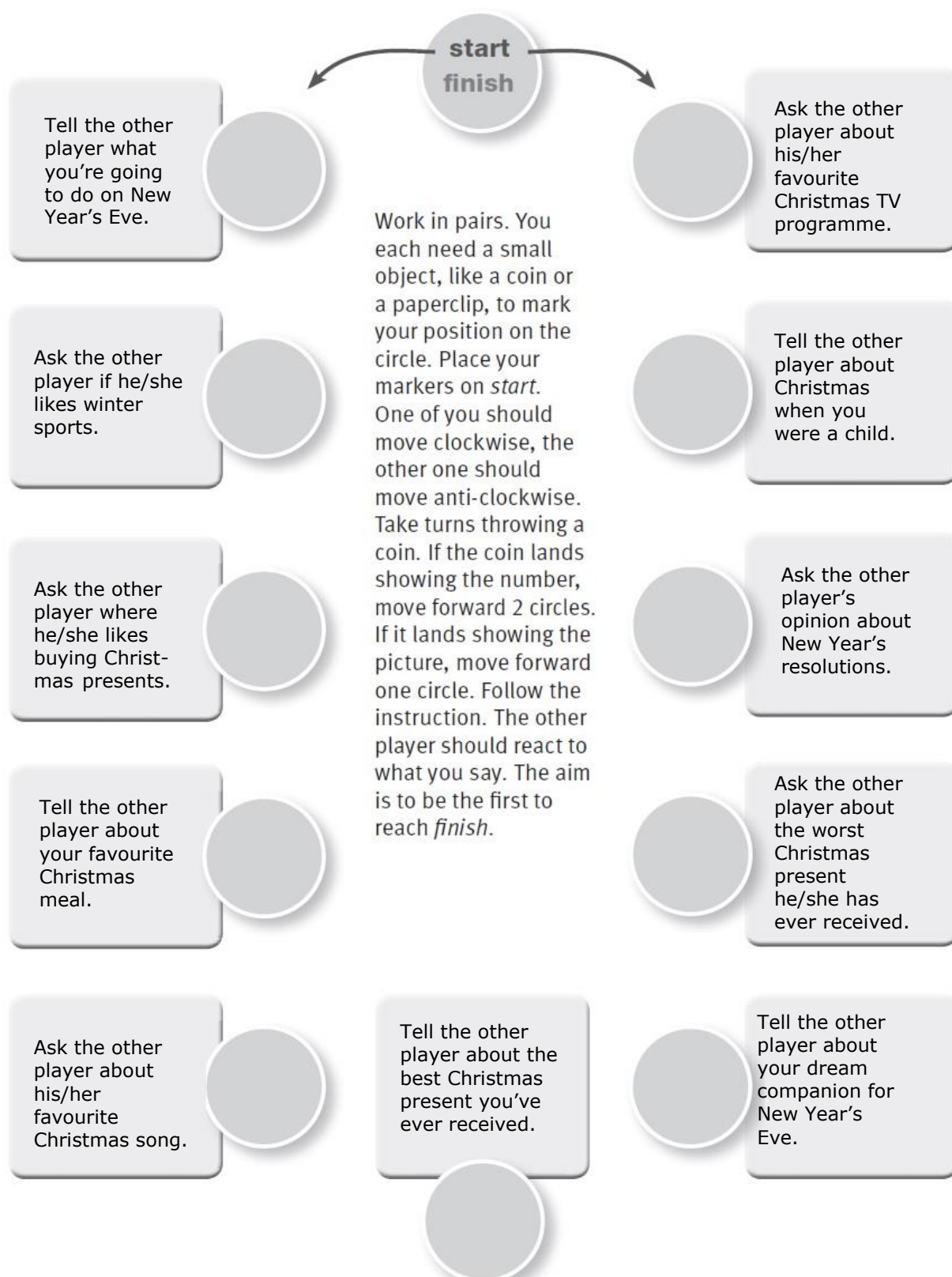
### Activity 1 (level B1.1 upwards) (20+ minutes)

Make one copy of **Talk about Christmas and New Year** for each pair of students. The instructions for the activity are printed on **Worksheet 1**.

### Activity 2 (level B1.1 upwards) (20+ minutes)

Make one copy of **The best and the worst Christmas present** for each pair of students. The instructions for the activity are printed on **Worksheet 2**.

## Worksheet 1 - Talk about Christmas and New Year



## Worksheet 2

### The best and the worst Christmas present

- Play this game with a partner.
- Each of you needs a small marker, e.g. a coin.
- Partner A puts his / her marker on a square in the top row, e.g. *dictionary* and talks for about half a minute on why he / she thinks this is the best *or* worst present for him / her.
- Partner B puts his / her marker on a square in the bottom row, e.g. *recipe book* and talks for about half a minute on why he / she thinks this is the best *or* worst present for him / her.
- The aim is to change sides – the winner is the first one to reach the row their partner started from.
- You can move to one neighbouring square, in any direction, but not if your partner's marker is, or has been, on it.

