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Top store fires Santa for telling a joke

http://www.breakingnewsenglish.com/1012/101210-santa_claus.html

Contents

The Article	2
Warm ups	3
Before Reading / Listening	4
While Reading / Listening	5
Listening Gap Fill	6
After Reading / Listening	7
Student Survey	8
Discussion	9
Language Work	10
Writing	11
Homework	12
Answers	13

THE ARTICLE

From http://www.BreakingNewsEnglish.com/1012/101210-santa_claus.html

A top New York department store has fired its Santa Claus after two customers did not like one of his jokes. John Toomey, 68, had worked as Macy's Santa for 20 years. A middle-aged couple asked him why Santa was always so jolly, to which he replied, "because I know where all the naughty boys and girls live". They complained his humour was in bad taste. He was shocked to receive his marching orders the following day. Toomey instantly became the world's second most famous Santa. Thousands of customers complained to Macy's about his firing. He was offered dozens of new jobs around the world. He accepted one just down the road from Macy's. He told reporters: "Helping the kids - that's what it's all about, you know."

Macy's has refused to comment on the incident, calling it a simple personnel matter. Employees and former colleagues of Mr Toomey described his sacking as "devastating" and definitely not in the spirit of Christmas. Santa Toomey was a very popular and professional Father Christmas. He even had his own white beard. He claimed he was "no bad Santa". He explained to the San Francisco Chronicle that no one had ever disliked his jokes before. He said he would never use inappropriate humour with children. He gave the newspaper another of his favourite jokes: "When I ask the older people who sit on my lap if they've been good and they say 'yes', I say 'Gee, that's too bad'".

WARM-UPS

1. SANTA CLAUS: Walk around the class and talk to other students about Santa Claus. Change partners often. Sit with your first partner(s) and share your findings.

2. CHAT: In pairs / groups, decide which of these topics or words from the article are most interesting and which are most boring.

department stores / jokes / middle-aged / jolly / humour / bad taste / complained / personnel / colleagues / devastating / professional / white beard / inappropriate

Have a chat about the topics you liked. Change topics and partners frequently.

3. SANTA: What do you know about Santa? Complete this table with your partner(s). Change partners and share what you wrote. Change and share again.

His favourite...	is...	because...
TV show		
music		
food		
computer game		
hobby		
thing to do after Xmas		

4. XMAS: Students A **strongly** believe Santa Claus is an essential part of Christmas; Students B **strongly** believe he isn't. Change partners again and talk about your conversations.

5. CHRISTMAS: What are the most important things for you? Rank these and share your rankings with your partner. Put the most important at the top. Change partners and share your rankings again.

- Santa Claus
- Jesus
- Christmas tree
- presents
- food
- no work
- family
- church

6. JOKE: Spend one minute writing down all of the different words you associate with the word 'joke'. Share your words with your partner(s) and talk about them. Together, put the words into different categories.

BEFORE READING / LISTENING

From http://www.BreakingNewsEnglish.com/1012/101210-santa_claus.html

1. TRUE / FALSE: Read the headline. Guess if a-h below are true (T) or false (F).

- | | |
|--|-------|
| a. A store fired a comedian Santa for not being funny enough. | T / F |
| b. The Santa, John Toomey, had been Santa at the store for two decades. | T / F |
| c. A couple complained the Santa's humour wasn't in good taste. | T / F |
| d. Mr Toomey is now looking for another job. | T / F |
| e. The department store told reporters exactly why they fired Mr Toomey. | T / F |
| f. Mr Toomey's ex-coworkers are happy to see the back of him. | T / F |
| g. Mr Toomey doesn't need to wear a white beard to look like Santa. | T / F |
| h. Sometimes adults sit on Mr Toomey's lap when he plays Santa. | T / F |

2. SYNONYM MATCH: Match the following synonyms from the article.

- | | |
|------------------|----------------|
| 1. top | a. speak |
| 2. fired | b. unsuitable |
| 3. jolly | c. sacked |
| 4. in bad taste | d. unfortunate |
| 5. complained | e. leading |
| 6. comment | f. upsetting |
| 7. colleagues | g. crude |
| 8. devastating | h. criticized |
| 9. inappropriate | i. happy |
| 10. too bad | j. coworkers |

3. PHRASE MATCH: (Sometimes more than one choice is possible.)

- | | |
|-------------------------------------|-------------------------|
| 1. A top New York | a. down the road |
| 2. Santa was always | b. humour with children |
| 3. his humour was | c. all about |
| 4. He accepted one just | d. former colleagues |
| 5. that's what it's | e. on the incident |
| 6. Macy's has refused to comment | f. department store |
| 7. Employees and | g. of Christmas |
| 8. definitely not in the spirit | h. on my lap |
| 9. he would never use inappropriate | i. so jolly |
| 10. people who sit | j. in bad taste |

Top store fires Santa for telling a joke – 10th December, 2010

WHILE READING / LISTENING

From http://www.BreakingNewsEnglish.com/1012/101210-santa_claus.html

GAP FILL: Put the words into the gaps in the text.

A top New York department store has _____ its Santa Claus after two customers did not like one of his jokes. John Toomey, 68, had worked as Macy's Santa for 20 years. A _____ -aged couple asked him why Santa was always so _____, to which he replied, "because I know where all the _____ boys and girls live". They complained his humour was in bad taste. He was shocked to receive his _____ orders the following day. Toomey instantly became the world's second most famous Santa. Thousands of customers _____ to Macy's about his firing. He was _____ dozens of new jobs around the world. He accepted one just down the road from Macy's. He told reporters: "Helping the kids - that's what it's all _____, you know."

naughty
middle
about
complained
fired
jolly
marching
offered

Macy's has refused to _____ on the incident, calling it a simple personnel matter. Employees and _____ colleagues of Mr Toomey described his _____ as "devastating" and definitely not in the spirit of Christmas. Santa Toomey was a very _____ and professional Father Christmas. He even had his own white beard. He claimed he was "no bad Santa". He explained to the San Francisco Chronicle that no one had ever _____ his jokes before. He said he would never use _____ humour with children. He gave the newspaper another of his favourite jokes: "When I ask the older people who sit on my _____ if they've been good and they say 'yes', I say 'Gee, that's too _____'".

disliked
lap
former
popular
comment
bad'
inappropriate
sacking

LISTENING – Listen and fill in the gaps

From http://www.BreakingNewsEnglish.com/1012/101210-santa_claus.html

A top New York department store has fired its Santa Claus after two customers _____ jokes. John Toomey, 68, had worked as Macy's Santa for 20 years. A middle-aged couple asked him why Santa _____, to which he replied, "because I know where all the naughty boys and girls live". They complained _____ taste. He was shocked to receive his marching orders the following day. Toomey _____ second most famous Santa. Thousands of customers complained to Macy's about his firing. He was offered dozens of new jobs around the world. He accepted one _____ from Macy's. He told reporters: "Helping the kids - that's _____, you know."

Macy's _____ on the incident, calling it a _____. Employees and former colleagues of Mr Toomey described his sacking as _____ not in the spirit of Christmas. Santa Toomey was a very popular and professional Father Christmas. He even had his own white beard. He claimed he was "no bad Santa". He explained to the San Francisco Chronicle that no one had ever disliked his jokes before. He said he would _____ humour with children. He gave the newspaper another of his favourite jokes: "When I ask the older people _____ if they've been good and they say 'yes', I say _____".

AFTER READING / LISTENING

From http://www.BreakingNewsEnglish.com/1012/101210-santa_claus.html

1. WORD SEARCH: Look in your dictionary / computer to find collocates, other meanings, information, synonyms ... for the words 'Father' and 'Christmas'.

Father	Christmas

- Share your findings with your partners.
- Make questions using the words you found.
- Ask your partner / group your questions.

2. ARTICLE QUESTIONS: Look back at the article and write down some questions you would like to ask the class about the text.

- Share your questions with other classmates / groups.
- Ask your partner / group your questions.

3. GAP FILL: In pairs / groups, compare your answers to this exercise. Check your answers. Talk about the words from the activity. Were they new, interesting, worth learning...?

4. VOCABULARY: Circle any words you do not understand. In groups, pool unknown words and use dictionaries to find their meanings.

5. TEST EACH OTHER: Look at the words below. With your partner, try to recall how they were used in the text:

<ul style="list-style-type: none">• customers• middle• jolly• taste• instantly• kids	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• comment• sacking• spirit• beard• never• gee
---	--

STUDENT SANTA CLAUS SURVEY

From http://www.BreakingNewsEnglish.com/1012/101210-santa_claus.html

Write five GOOD questions about Santa Claus in the table. Do this in pairs. Each student must write the questions on his / her own paper.
When you have finished, interview other students. Write down their answers.

	STUDENT 1 _____	STUDENT 2 _____	STUDENT 3 _____
Q.1.			
Q.2.			
Q.3.			
Q.4.			
Q.5.			

- Now return to your original partner and share and talk about what you found out. Change partners often.
- Make mini-presentations to other groups on your findings.

SANTA CLAUS DISCUSSION

STUDENT A's QUESTIONS (Do not show these to student B)

- a) What did you think when you read the headline?
- b) What springs to mind when you hear the word 'Santa Claus'?
- c) What do you know about Santa Claus?
- d) 'Santa Claus' (USA) or 'Father Christmas' (UK) – which is the best term?
- e) What does Santa Claus really have to do with Christmas?
- f) What is Christmas spirit?
- g) Do you think Macy's should have shown more Christmas spirit?
- h) Should there be more images of Jesus and fewer of Santa at Xmas?
- i) What do you think of the joke he told the middle-aged couple?
- j) Was this bad for Macy's public image?

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SANTA CLAUS DISCUSSION

STUDENT B's QUESTIONS (Do not show these to student A)

- a) Did you like reading this article?
- b) Would Macy's have been better to comment on the sacking?
- c) What should a professional Santa do?
- d) 'Christmas' (USA) or 'Xmas' (UK) – which is the best spelling?
- e) What does Santa do after Xmas has finished?
- f) What questions would a department store job interviewer ask someone wanting to be a Santa?
- g) Is it better for a store Santa to be a man or woman?
- h) How does Santa get into houses or apartments that don't have a chimney?
- i) What would you like from Santa this Christmas?
- j) What questions would you like to ask Santa?

LANGUAGE – MULTIPLE CHOICE

From http://www.BreakingNewsEnglish.com/1012/101210-santa_claus.html

A (1) _____ New York department store has fired its Santa Claus after two customers did not like one of his jokes. John Toomey, 68, had worked as Macy's Santa for 20 years. A (2) _____-aged couple asked him why Santa was always so (3) _____, to which he replied, "because I know where all the naughty boys and girls live". They complained his humour was in bad (4) _____. He was shocked to receive his marching orders the following day. Toomey instantly became the world's second most famous Santa. Thousands of customers complained (5) _____ Macy's about his firing. He was offered dozens of new jobs around the world. He accepted one just down the road from Macy's. He told reporters: "Helping the kids - that's what it's all (6) _____, you know."

Macy's has refused to comment on the (7) _____, calling it a simple personnel matter. Employees and former colleagues of Mr Toomey described his sacking as "devastating" and definitely not in the (8) _____ of Christmas. Santa Toomey was a very popular and professional Father Christmas. He (9) _____ had his own white beard. He claimed he was "no bad Santa". He explained to the San Francisco Chronicle that no one had ever disliked his jokes before. He said he would never (10) _____ inappropriate humour with children. He gave the newspaper another of his favourite jokes: "When I ask the older people who sit on my (11) _____ if they've been good and they say 'yes', I say '(12) _____, that's too bad'".

Put the correct words from the table below in the above article.

- | | | | | |
|-----|---------------|----------------|-------------|-------------------|
| 1. | (a) tap | (b) top | (c) tip | (d) pit |
| 2. | (a) medium | (b) median | (c) middle | (d) mid |
| 3. | (a) jolly | (b) golly | (c) dolly | (d) folly |
| 4. | (a) feel | (b) sight | (c) hearing | (d) taste |
| 5. | (a) at | (b) up | (c) to | (d) on |
| 6. | (a) about | (b) around | (c) at | (d) approximately |
| 7. | (a) incidence | (b) incitement | (c) indices | (d) incident |
| 8. | (a) ghost | (b) spirit | (c) will | (d) phantom |
| 9. | (a) ever | (b) evens | (c) odd | (d) even |
| 10. | (a) talk | (b) joke | (c) use | (d) laugh |
| 11. | (a) cap | (b) lap | (c) gap | (d) zap |
| 12. | (a) Gee | (b) Bee | (c) Fee | (d) Zee |

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HOMework

1. VOCABULARY EXTENSION: Choose several of the words from the text. Use a dictionary or Google's search field (or another search engine) to build up more associations / collocations of each word.

2. INTERNET: Search the Internet and find out more about Santa Claus. Share what you discover with your partner(s) in the next lesson.

3. SANTA CLAUS: Make a poster about Santa Claus. Show your work to your classmates in the next lesson. Did you all have similar things?

4. FIRED: Write a magazine article about the firing of John Toomey. Include imaginary interviews with him and the boss of Macy's.

Read what you wrote to your classmates in the next lesson. Write down any new words and expressions you hear from your partner(s).

5. LETTER: Write a letter to Santa Claus. Ask him three questions about being Santa Claus. Give him three ideas on how he can help children more. Read your letter to your partner(s) in your next lesson. Your partner(s) will answer your questions.

ANSWERS

TRUE / FALSE:

- a. F b. T c. T d. F e. F f. F g. T h. T

SYNONYM MATCH:

- | | |
|------------------|----------------|
| 1. top | a. leading |
| 2. fired | b. sacked |
| 3. jolly | c. happy |
| 4. in bad taste | d. crude |
| 5. complained | e. criticized |
| 6. comment | f. speak |
| 7. colleagues | g. coworkers |
| 8. devastating | h. upsetting |
| 9. inappropriate | i. unsuitable |
| 10. too bad | j. unfortunate |

PHRASE MATCH:

- | | |
|-------------------------------------|-------------------------|
| 1. A top New York | a. department store |
| 2. Santa was always | b. so jolly |
| 3. his humour was | c. in bad taste |
| 4. He accepted one just | d. down the road |
| 5. that's what it's | e. all about |
| 6. Macy's has refused to comment | f. on the incident |
| 7. Employees and | g. former colleagues |
| 8. definitely not in the spirit | h. of Christmas |
| 9. he would never use inappropriate | i. humour with children |
| 10. people who sit | j. on my lap |

GAP FILL:

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LANGUAGE WORK

- 1 - b 2 - c 3 - a 4 - d 5 - c 6 - a 7 - d 8 - b 9 - d 10 - c 11 - b 12 - a