

Why is it "Merry Christmas" not "Happy Christmas"?

15 ANSWERS



Matt Jason Brown

Answered May 10, 2013

Though Christmas has been celebrated since the 4th century AD, the first known usage of any Christmas greeting dates was in 1565, when it appeared in The Hereford Municipal Manuscript: "And thus I comytt you to God, who send you a mery Christmas." "Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year" (thus incorporating two greetings) was in an informal letter written by an English admiral in 1699. The same phrase is contained in the 16th century secular English carol "We Wish You a Merry Christmas," and the first commercial Christmas card, produced in England in 1843.

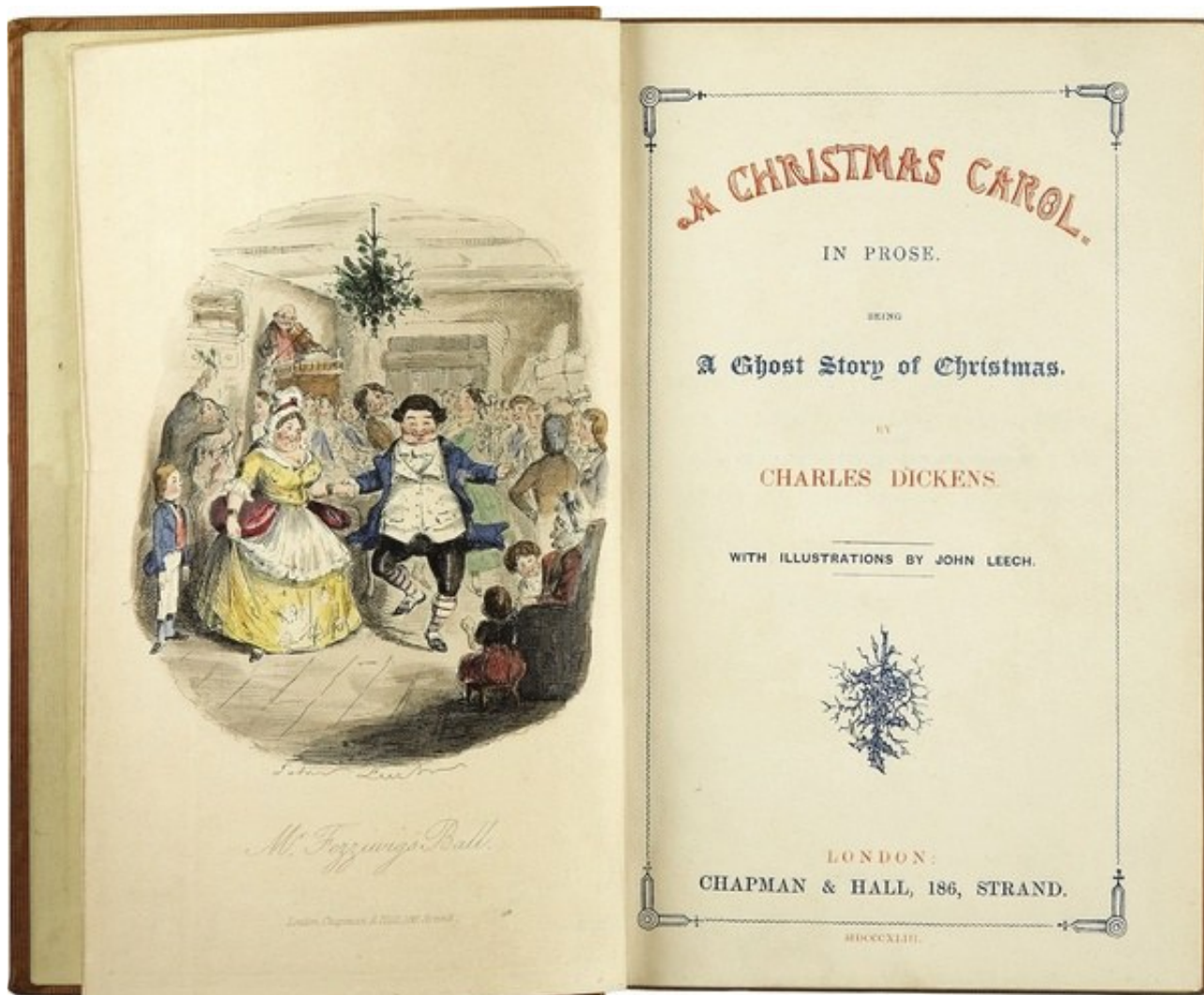
Also in 1843, Charles Dickens' A Christmas Carol was published, during the mid Victorian revival of the holiday. The word Merry was then beginning to take on its current meaning of "jovial, cheerful, jolly and outgoing". "Merry Christmas" in this new context figured prominently in A Christmas Carol. The cynical Ebenezer Scrooge rudely deflects the friendly greeting: "If I could work my will.. every idiot who goes about with 'Merry Christmas' on his lips should be boiled with his own pudding." After the visit from the Ghosts of Christmas effects his transformation, Scrooge exclaims;



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ody!" and heartily exchanges the wish to e Victorian era Christmas traditions it popularized the phrase "Merry



The alternative "Happy Christmas" gained usage in the late 19th century, and is still common in the UK and Ireland alongside "Merry Christmas". One reason may be the Methodist Victorian middle-class influence in attempting to separate wholesome celebration of the Christmas season from common lower-class public insobriety and associated asocial behaviour, at a time when merry also meant "tipsy" or "drunk". Queen Elizabeth II is said to prefer "Happy Christmas" for this reason. In the American poet Clement Moore's "A Visit from St. Nicholas" (1823), the final line, originally written as "Happy Christmas to all, and to all a good night", has been changed in many later editions to "Merry Christmas to all", perhaps indicating the relative popularity of the phrases in the USA.

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OTHER ANSWERS



Bart Taylor, studied at Wattsumatta U.

Answered Dec 12

Originally Answered: Is it Merry Christmas or Happy Christmas?

Yes. It just depends on which side of the Atlantic you're on. Americans are accustomed to, "Merry' Christmas!". On the other side of the "lake", they say, "'Happy' Christmas". [UK]. In Spanish, it's Feliz Navidad! In Italian: "Buon Natale!". In German: ----- well, actually, ----- in German, they have no word for, "Happy" or "Merry". Loosely translated, it's something like, " Stomping on my enemy's neck, with my boot". Like I said: "Loosely", translated. [Please...only kidding, about the German part. They really have been known to be "happy/merry" at times. But that's usually availed when.....well...stomping the necks of their enemy's neck with their boots.....] :)

504 Views · 3 Upvotes · Answer requested by Brioche O'leary



Wayne Clarke, I've studied the history of Christmas, especially the English Victorian period.

Answered Dec 29, 2014

Originally Answered: Do Brits say "Happy Christmas" more than "Merry Christmas"?

No, not really. In Britain we tend not to use the phrase "happy holidays" but we use "happy Christmas" and "merry Christmas" interchangeably. My experience is that "merry Christmas" comes naturally to more people. Some people who say "happy Christmas" do so because the word "merry" has become associated with drinking too much, and "being merry" often means being drunk. British people first started saying "merry Christmas" because of the Charles Dickens novel "A Christmas Carol", where the term "merry Christmas" is used frequently.

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Logan Grodsky, former Chief Scientist at Hydra
Answered Nov 7

Because happiness is actually a distinct idea from merriment.

For someone who loves Christmas in a secular way, I really can say that I mostly admire the *feeling* of Christmas.

The music, the excitement, the lights, and what I call the “good winter.”

By good winter, I mean that that specific hour of the season has a very different feel than the later parts of Winter. While Christmastime is sort of fun, most of the winter after that is bleak and dreary.

Christmas to me is a celebration of our own merriment, a last hurrah for the dying year.

Merry Christmas!

481 Views · 4 Upvotes

Kenneth Comer, works at Fort Worth, TX
Answered Dec 25, 2016

Originally Answered: Is it Merry Christmas or Happy Christmas?

It depends on the person. If you see someone with the surname "Christmas," ask them (and be prepared to duck). I remember one Christmas, everyone was feeling Merry, so Merry left.

436 Views · 4 Upvotes



Joshua Engel, worked at The Rude Mechanicals

Answered Dec 21, 2012

It's hard to say why some phrases catch on and others don't, but the term appears to have been popularized by the carol "We Wish You A Merry Christmas" which also wishes you "a Happy New Year". The proximity of the two holidays gave the lyricist the opportunity to stick two different greetings into the song, perhaps to keep it from being repetitive.

The song dates back to the mid 16th century, and for whatever reason, appears to have caught on. The term "merry" had been applied to Christmas before that, as well as to other things. But the fact that we're still singing that particular song nearly 500 years later attests to the staying power of its simple tune, and the lyrics come along with it. And so "merry Christmas" appears to stick as well.

4.2k Views · 11 Upvotes · Answer requested by Pengyuan Jiang



Adam Mac, Technology and media nerd

Answered May 25, 2016

You can say it either way. Nobody will correct you. In America, it is commonly said Merry, but if you've ever watched a British movie or TV show, you'll see they often say "Happy" Christmas (Harry Potter for example). Merry means cheerful, so it certainly makes sense to wish someone a cheerful holiday. Also, Happy Christmas just doesn't sound quite as fitting when you say it out loud.

1.8k Views · 1 Upvote



Cody Scholberg, Real Estate Investor (2013-present)

Answered Thu

Because → Mary Christ-mass. Mary did come first, and she birthed Christ, who came next, all on this special day of the most sacred Mass.

Just like when he returns to rule the world, where else would he go besides the head building of the world - the White House - which is inside the states of **Virgin-ia Mary-land**.

Hahahaha, I'm just yankin' yer chain!

Happy Holy Days!

56 Views



MK Hamza, Student, Gamer, Blogger.

Answered Fri

It doesn't matter now, if you want to say Happy or Merry the meaning will remain same

Americans like to say Merry Christmas and british like to say Happy Christmas

Well do you [31 best ways to celebrate christmas](#) ↗? Check it out

31 Views



Stephen McBride, B.Sc Mathematics & Physics, University of Cape Town (1985)

Answered Dec 26, 2016

Originally Answered: Is it Merry Christmas or Happy Christmas?

If you are Christian it is “Blessed Christmas” or “Holy Christmas”. If you are not Christian then it is Merry Holiday.

Merry as it is a season of fun and frolicking rather than Happy which is a state of being doing what makes you happy like working to achieve your goal or sweating to make you loves comfortable.

177 Views · 1 Upvote



Simon Bridge, Scientist

Answered Dec 25, 2016

Originally Answered: Is it Merry Christmas or Happy Christmas?

Thank you ... it's whatever one you want to use. You can also use happy Hanukkah, Yuletide Greetings, Season's Greetings, or “may The Ancient One bless you with joy”.

Probably “Ai Shub Nigurath Ai Ai Cthulhu ftagn...” may be a little too wierd.

352 Views · 4 Upvotes · Answer requested by Sean Halliday



Simon Bridge

But fuuuunnnn! I dare you...



Eric Pepke, Cuning Linguist

Answered Dec 21, 2012

It's "Merry Christmas" due to the influence of the carol "God Rest ye Merry Gentlemen."

It's "Happy Christmas" in England because Queen Elizabeth II prefers it.

1.3k Views · 3 Upvotes · Answer requested by Pengyuan Jiang



Craig Mowbray, Irreverent, creative, inquisitive, flaneur

Answered Dec 30, 2016

Originally Answered: Is it Merry Christmas or Happy Christmas?

Merry Christmas to you Sean, and a Happy New Year.



Juan Carlos Barbosa Padilla, Test Engineer at Tiempo Dev. (2011-present)

Answered Dec 30, 2016

Originally Answered: Is it Merry Christmas or Happy Christmas?

Both count as good, however, May the Force be with you (considering this tendency to see Star Wars movies on Christmas)

134 Views · 2 Upvotes · Answer requested by Sean Halliday



Sue Noon

Answered Dec 25, 2016

Originally Answered: Is it Merry Christmas or Happy Christmas?

I heard both, but I'm not a native English speaker. So no idea, sorry.
Thanks for the request.

228 Views · Answer requested by Sean Halliday

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