



Name _____

Date _____

Gingerbread Cousins

Directions: Read the story below and on page 115. Then answer the questions on page 115.

I don't know how the tradition started, but in our family, we make gingerbread houses at Christmas. One year, all the cousins decided to have a contest.

"Make sure we have plenty of decorations!" I reminded Grandma.

"Tootsie rolls® for logs, please," Jessie added.

My brother put in his request.
"Gumdrops!"

Grandma wrote it all down on a piece of paper. "Your mom and I will go to the store. We'll leave all of you to clean the kitchen and get ready. Aunt Darcy will bring the frosting over in a little while."

"I hope she doesn't get it too thick," Jessie said. "When I helped her at school yesterday, we had to thin the frosting so we could spread it."

Hayley sauntered through the kitchen.
"My house will win. I'm sure of it."

"I thought we were going to be on teams," I said.

David teased the soapsuds in the dishwasher. "I get to be on Hayley's team."

That was fine with me. Jessie and I would work well together, and we'd probably win. Just like the story of the tortoise and the hare, steady and sure would get the job done. While we waited for Grandma and Mom to get back with supplies, we got some paper and colored pencils and began to plan.

"Ready?" Mom set the grocery bags on

the counter and began unloading them. I watched, amazed at all they had bought. Graham crackers, licorice, candy.

"What's the licorice for?" I moved the graham crackers over to the table where we had set up places to build our houses. We had covered large pieces of cardboard with foil so once the houses were finished, they could be moved as necessary.

"How will we know which house is the best? Are there prizes?" David grabbed bowls and sacks of candy and began dumping it all out. Jessie came through and sampled this and that.

Hayley pretended to slap her sister's hand. "Stay out of that! We want to have enough for decorating."

Aunt Darcy banged through the kitchen door carrying a covered bowl and a grocery bag. In the bag were two boxes of powdered sugar. I hoped that was enough, but then I remembered what Jessie said about the frosting being too thick. Aunt Darcy must know what she's doing. She's been doing this for her students at school for years.

We unwrapped graham crackers and carefully dipped knives in the frosting to glue the sides of our houses together. "They're falling over!" Hayley held two sides together gingerly. "Now what?"

David stirred the frosting. "It's too thin. We need more powdered sugar."



Name _____

Date _____

Gingerbread Cousins *(cont.)*

Directions: Read the story beginning on page 114. Then answer the questions.

I added a bit more sugar as he stirred. We'd made lots of frosting before, helping Mom make birthday cakes. We could do this.

"It needs to be thick." Jessie reminded us. "These houses have to stand up."

"There isn't any more powdered sugar. Maybe they can be A-frame houses." I touched two end pieces of graham crackers together at an angle.

Grandma looked in the cupboard. "Here, I have another box."

"We need more green candies." Hayley licked her fingers after pressing the candies into the frosting to make a lawn in front of their house.

"Use orange. Pretend it's a pathway." Jessie said. "We're out of green."

1. What does the word *sauntered* mean in the following sentence?
Hayley sauntered through the kitchen.

- a. wandered around like she was lost b. walked from room to room c. walked in a slow, casual way

2. What problems did the cousins have in the story? How did they solve them?

3. Write an ending for this story.

4. On the back of the page, draw a picture showing how you would design and decorate a gingerbread house.



Name _____

Date _____

A Special Gift

Directions: Read the passage. Then answer the questions.

Stories of gift giving go back through the years. One old story tells about wise men who gave gifts to a baby. The baby was born in Bethlehem. They believed the baby would grow up to be a king. They brought gifts of gold and valuable spices.

Another story about giving gifts is about a husband and wife. They did not have very much money. They wanted to give each other a gift at Christmas. She knew he wanted a chain for his watch. Della had beautiful hair that gave her great pride. She sold her hair to get money to buy the watch chain. Her husband wanted to buy Della new combs for her hair. He sold his watch to buy the combs. They each gave up something they valued. They wanted to buy a special gift for the other person.

Yet another story is about a man named Scrooge who learned how to have a giving spirit. On Christmas Eve, three spirits visited him during the night. They showed him his past, present, and future. He learned his actions can make a difference. The next morning, he was happy to be alive. He was so glad to have a second chance that he acted like a different person. He gave a goose to a poor family and visited his nephew for Christmas dinner.

People in many parts of the world give gifts to friends and family members at Christmas. Not all children receive toys. Gifts vary greatly from one country to another. Children in Romania might receive bread in the shape of a knot. They also get sweets, fruit, nuts, and pastries. These gifts are common in France as well. The items are put on the Christmas tree. Common gifts in Lebanon are candy and clothes.

In Sweden, a family member used to dress up as Tomte. Tomte was a Christmas gnome that lived under the house. He carried a sack with gifts. He gave each person his or her gift and said a funny rhyme to give clues about the gift.

Gifts reflect the place where people live as well as the culture. In Greenland, the most common gift is a model sledge. Another popular gift is sealskin mittens. In parts of Africa, the most common gift is new clothes to wear to a church service. Some families do not have enough money to buy gifts. If children do receive a gift, it is practical, such as schoolbooks or soap. Soap is also a common gift in Micronesia. In that country, the person receiving the gift claps as he or she gets the gift.

1. Why do some children receive clothes as a Christmas gift?

2. In your opinion, what is the most unusual gift mentioned in this passage?

3. On the back of the page, describe the most special gift you have received for Christmas or another celebration.



Name _____

Date _____

O Christmas Tree

Directions: Read the passage. Then complete the activity.

A Christmas tree just isn't the same without the decorations. Why do people hang things on a tree at Christmas? A man named Martin Luther put candles on a fir tree. He wanted to show his children how stars twinkled in the night. Long ago in Germany, people put sweets and flowers on their Christmas trees.

Germans brought the idea of Christmas trees to England. At first, people did not want to have Christmas trees. Those who did hung silver tinsel from the branches. They put candles and small beads on their trees. Christmas trees became more popular in England and America. People made things to decorate their trees. Ornaments were made of paper and beads. People hung small paper baskets with nuts or fruit on the trees. They cut out paper snowflakes.

Over time, more people heard about Christmas tree customs. Glass ornaments became popular. They were expensive, so most people still had homemade decorations. Through the years, people have used different kinds of decorations. Some people trim their trees all in one color. Others decorate their trees the way people did in the past. Many families put their own well-loved ornaments on the tree year after year.

Activity: On the tree below, draw your favorite ornament. It might be something you have made. It might be an ornament that has been in your family a long time. Perhaps it has special meaning. Below and on the back of the page, write about how your family decorates for the holidays. Describe your favorite ornament or other decoration.

