



**AVID**  
Decades of College Dreams



# PANTHER PRESS

Award Winning  
Vernon Middle School

Volume 3, Issue 4, December 2020



## PHILIPPINES

By Adeline Bernal

In the Philippines, people like to celebrate Christmas for a long time. September is when they start playing Christmas music and celebrate by going to parades, concerts, plays, and other events. Decorations can be seen everywhere, and every house has a nativity scene. Christmas lights are everywhere.

On December 16th, people attend up to nine different masses called 'Misa de Gallo' or 'Simbang Gabi'. The last mass is held on Christmas Eve. Then, Christmas celebrations begin and continue on to the First Sunday in January with the Feast of the Three Kings. The Wise Men are important as they are celebrated in a tradition called 'Parol'. Parol is a bamboo pole or frame with a lighted star lantern that represents the star that guided the Wise Men. They eat their favorite Bibingka and Puto Bumbong- specially seasoned rice dishes.

Santa R-Kayme Klaws, in his 70s, dresses up as Santa Claus for poor Filipino children. Children love receiving presents, but they like receiving little red envelopes with money inside even more.



## HOLIDAYS AND TRADITIONS AROUND THE WORLD



### ROMANIA

By Amy Rodriguez

In Romania, Christmas and Mid-Winter celebrations last from December 20th to January 7th. The 20th of December is called 'Ziua de Ignat' or 'Ignat Day'. It is a tradition that if the family keeps pigs, one of them is killed on that day by the head of the household. Shortly after the pig is killed, the family members share a dish called 'Pomana Porcului' or 'Pork's Charity'. It is traditionally cooked in a cauldron and consists of a variety of pork meat, such as pork belly, shoulder, liver, kidneys, etc. in a garlic sauce and served with polenta. The meat from the Pig is also used in the Christmas meals that they have. Romanians dress up in costumes including as bears and goats that dance and sing in the streets and at Christmas events.



## KAWNZAA

Kwanzaa is an African American holiday celebrated in the United and other countries. Created in 1966, the 7-day period is aimed at teaching and recommitting to 7 principles of Kwanza: Unity, Self-Determination, Collective Work and Responsibility, Cooperative Economics, and Purpose, as well as Creativity and Faith. Celebrations can include feasts, music, dancing, and speeches. At the end, people are supposed to reflect on the 7 principles in their lives.

People also recommit themselves to these 7 principles and other cultural values.



## GERMANY

By Michael Nila Torres

Christmas begins in Germany on Dec. 24th when gifts are exchanged, while on the 25th and 26th of Dec. families get together for celebrations. Religious Christians will observe the days of Advent by lighting candles and also going to Christmas masses.

On Christmas, Germans usually eat goose, rabbit, duck, and roast with apple sausage stuffing, red cabbage, and potato dumplings. One of the best German desserts/ pastries is Christmas stollen. The children wait for Father Christmas or St. Nicholas.





## Pausing with the AP...

As we close out 2020 and look ahead to the promises and hopes of 2021, I want you to take time to rest and reflect. Rest, because this has been a long year and many of us have been stretched in ways that we never imagined. Reflect, because in reflection lies growth and wisdom. As you embark on a new year of life, ask yourself the following questions.

- How have I grown as a person?
- What have I learned about myself?
- What behaviors or activities no longer serve me?
- What mindset do I need to adopt in the new year?
- And lastly, what changes do I need to make to be successful?



*I hope you have a wonderful break, Panthers! Take care and enjoy your time off!*

*Miss Scott, Assistant Principal*

## Pausing with the Principal...

Students and Families- 

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the staff, students and parents for their continued support and hard work. I know that this year has been one filled with many changes, emotions, adjustments, and a new way of teaching and learning.

I am incredibly proud of the hard work, positivity, perseverance, and grit that you have all shown during distance learning.

I know we all look forward to the day where we will all be together in person again.

I wish you all peace, joy, hope, health and happiness during this Holiday season and throughout the New Year. We will see you back in classes on Monday, January 4, 2021.

*With Love and Gratitude,*

*Ms. Medeiros-Tovar  
Principal*



### VIRTUAL ART POSTER CONTEST 2021

The Monte Vista Water District is hosting its Annual Art Poster Contest. The theme is "Water is Life." The deadline is **March 18, 2021**. Use the **yellow link** below for more information including how to upload your entry. You may use the following mediums or combination of crayons, pencils, watercolors, paints, markers, ink, pastels, chalk, cut paper or fabric. Successful entries will be bold, bright, and colorful.



**Jackie Nguyen, 2nd Place 2020, Vernon**

#### Entries must:

- \*be completed on 12" x 18" or 8.5" x 11" horizontal (landscape) white poster board or white drawing paper
- \*have a 1" white or blank border on ALL four sides
- \*have a short water message written on artwork, but not necessarily the words "Water is Life"
- \*have correct spelling and punctuation
- \*be original; no computer-generated, trademarked, or copywritten material

<http://www.mvwd.org/199/Water-is-Life-Student-Art-Poster-Contest>





# WINTER SOLSTICE-2020

By Grace Poulava

Later this month on the night of the Winter Solstice, you will see a very large "star" in the sky. This year in the northern hemisphere, Winter Solstice is on Dec.21 which is the shortest period of daylight and longest night of the year.

"You can witness a rare event in the night sky that has *not* been seen in almost eight centuries. The two largest planets in our solar system, Jupiter and Saturn, will align on Dec. 21 to create what's sometimes referred to as the "Christmas Star" or the "Star of Bethlehem," pointed out CBS News in "Rare 'Christmas Star' to Appear Dec. 21..."

The reason for the solstice and the season is that earth is tilted with respect to the sun at 23.5 degrees on average. The winter solstice celebrates the longest hours of darkness of the rebirth of the sun and is believed to hold a powerful energy for regeneration. The first winter celebration was in Ancient Rome. It began on December 17 and lasted for 7 days. Saturnalia banquets were held from as far back as around 217 BCE.

Later, Christians said that the "Bethlehem Star" appeared at this time of year. This year's Winter Solstice will be especially bright and beautiful due to the crossing of Jupiter and Saturn, creating an especially bright "star." Be sure to check out the night sky and enjoy what you see.



# HANUKKAH

By Samantha Jaimes



Hanukkah is one of the more well known December holidays, taking place December 10th-18th in 2020. This celebration lasts a total of eight days. The most well known and important tradition of this Jewish holiday is the lighting of the eight candles on the 9 armed candelabra known as the Menorah. The 9th candle, the shamash, is used to light the other eight candles and can be found in the middle of the Menorah. A new candle is lit every day throughout the eight days. Hanukkah is also celebrated by giving gifts each day.

In 171 BC Israel had a new king, Antiochus IV. Antiochus did not allow people to follow their own religions and practices. Instead, he wanted them to follow the Greek religion and way of life. He terrorized the Jews burning down their houses and had tens of thousands put into slavery or killed. A rebellion was started by the Jewish Priest, Mattathias. Eventually, the Jews won against Antiochus and took back their Temple, which had been turned into a shrine for Zeus. It was rebuilt and was dedicated to God once again. Hanukkah is celebrated for eight days because of the oil lamp inside the temple that only had enough fuel for a day, but lasted for eight days. Hanukkah celebrates the Jew's victory and the taking back and rededication of the Jewish Temple.

Popular foods during Hanukkah include latkes (potato pancakes) and sufganiyot (jelly-filled doughnuts). You can also find gelt (chocolate coins) which are used for the dreidel game. Gelts are used as money in the game. The dreidel game is played using a dreidel which is a spinning four-sided top. On each side, there is a Hebrew letter representing a word. The letter name Nun means to take nothing out of the pot. Gimmel means to get all, Hey is take half and Shin translates to share which means you add a gelt to the pot.

This game was created as a way for Jews to learn the Torah (Hebrew Bible). When Greek soldiers were nearby Jews would hide the Torah and would act as though they were playing a game with dreidels. Once again, the Jews found a way to persevere and continue to do what they believed in, even with all the hardships Antiochus gave them.





# LOS POSADAS

By Ronaldo Ramirez



Las Posadas is a holiday celebrated in Latin America, Spain, Mexico, Cuba, Guatemala, and in the United States by Latinx people.

This holiday is celebrated from December 16th through Christmas Eve. Las Posadas is a celebration of Mary and Joseph traveling to Bethlehem.

People's houses are decorated with moss, paper lanterns, and evergreens. Children are given candles and clay figures of Mary and Joseph. Then everyone goes to neighborhood homes and sings a song about Mary and Joseph asking for a room in the house.

The final Posada has a manger and figures of shepherds put onto a board. Once the people have found the baby, it is put into the manger and they go to a church service.

When it gets darker they start the party with food, games, and fireworks. Posada Pinatas are made out of paper mache and stuffed inside with treats. The goal is to break the piñata to get the treats out.



# EPIPHANY

By Aubrie Nungaray

Epiphany is a Christian feast day held on January 6, 2021.

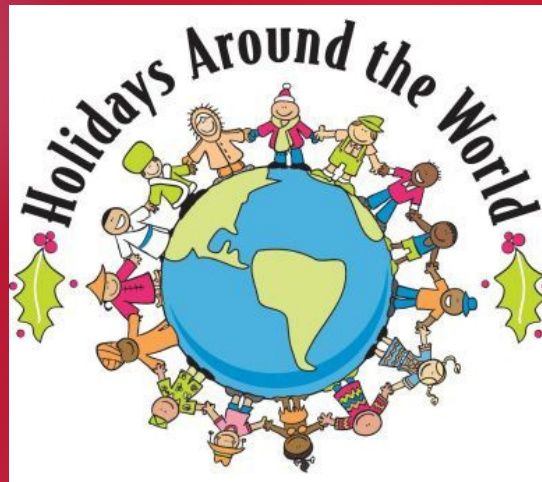
This event celebrates the arrival of the Magi, they visit the baby to bring him gifts from far off lands.

Epiphany is celebrated in many countries and is also called *The Feast of the Three Kings*. Some countries call it *The 12th Day of Christmas*.

In some countries, a special cake is baked with a small crown, baby figure, or bean baked into the cake for which the finder of the special object is recognized in different ways. Many of the Epiphany traditions include a feast and special pastries.



Children receive small gifts in their shoes in honor of the Magi's gifts to baby Jesus. Baptisms are common. In Eastern European tradition, houses may be blessed during Epiphany.



# Eid-Al-Fitr Muslim Celebration

While Muslims do not celebrate Christmas, they have a similar celebration that some American Muslims compare to the Christian Christmas. It is called Eid-Al-Fitr, and it is celebrated in the 9th month of the Hijri calendar (lunar calendar).

Eid-Al-Fitr is a three day celebration following Ramadan, a month of daytime fasting and praying.



First, Muslims are encouraged to dress in their finest clothes and go to prayer and services. Then they are expected to make their *Alms* payments, money that is put aside to be paid to the poor.

After services, children are given many gifts, and women receive gifts from family members. In addition, people are urged to settle feuds or arguments, especially with relatives.



Often, large celebrations are held in community centers and mosques. Sometimes, there are carnivals and rides. In the US, people take family outings to amusement parks, skating rinks, or other entertainment centers.



## RUSSIA

By Pedro Perez



In Russia, Christmas wasn't always easy to celebrate due to it being forbidden under communism-their old form of government.

But now, Christmas starts on December 31, and it ends January 10. Many people in Russia go to many church services during the Christmas holidays and fast (not eating) up to Christmas. Then they have dinners with 12 dishes to represent Christ's apostles.

Children all over Russia join hands around their Christmas trees and pray for Father Frost who delivers presents on New Year's. A common present for a child might be nesting dolls.

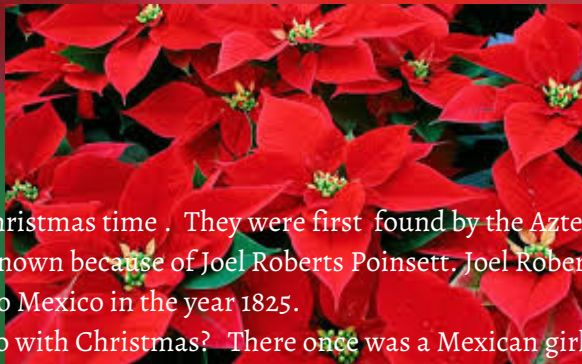


## India

by Eric Talamantes

Christmas in India is celebrated by fewer people due to most people being Hindu. India's population is over 1 billion, but it's estimated that only 25 million people celebrate Christmas. Midnight mass is also very important for Christians in India. The whole walk is followed by a massive feast.

Children believe in Father Christmas. People also believe that this man was kind and helpful to poor people, so they often participate in charitable activities to help others during the New Year's holidays.



## THE LEGEND OF THE POINSETTIAS

By Ronaldo Ramirez

Poinsettias are flowers originally from Mexico that are used at Christmas time. They were first found by the Aztecs and they called them *cuetlaxochitl*. Poinsettias became famously known because of Joel Roberts Poinsett. Joel Roberts was the very first Ambassador from the United States of America to Mexico in the year 1825.

But you might be wondering how Poinsettias have anything to do with Christmas? There once was a Mexican girl named Pepita who did not have a lot of money. Pepita had no presents to give to baby Jesus at Christmas Eve Services. Her cousin, Pedro, tried to cheer her up. He said "I'm sure that even the smallest gift given by someone who loves him will make Jesus happy."

Pepita had no idea what to give him so she picked weeds from the road side. As Pepita walked through the chapel to the altar she remembered what her cousin said and she felt better about her gift. She knelt down and placed the bouquet of weeds at the bottom of the nativity scene. Then suddenly the weeds bloomed into red flowers. Everyone there witnessed a beautiful miracle. After that, Poinsettias were known as 'Flores de Noche Buena', or 'Flowers of the Holy Night'.

## ENGLAND

By Grayson Cunningham



In many ways, Christmas in the United States and England may seem similar, but there are some differences. On Christmas weekend it's a tradition to reunite with middle school or high school friends. It's a good tradition if you like to spend time with your old friends.

Also, British children put their stockings on the end of their beds and hope Father Christmas fills them up with small toys and candy. Another tradition that I think is unique is many American children write Christmas letters and mail them or place them with cookies and carrots for Santa and his reindeer, but British children write their letters and throw them into the fire so that the letters go up the chimney for Santa to read the smoke.

Some food that English people eat on Christmas is turkey, their most popular dish. They also eat stuffing, roasted potatoes, cranberry sauce and Brussels sprouts. They also eat Yorkshire pudding, but it is not like our pudding. There is a dessert called a yule log, it's a popular dessert in some counties including England. It's a thin chocolate cake with a spiral of cream in the middle and some people decorate it and make it look like a log.

In England, you have to have your tree and decorations down 12 days after Christmas or you will have bad luck for the rest of the year.

Boxing day falls on the day after Christmas in England. Boxing day is when servants or workers receive a gift from their employers and are given a box with food and money.



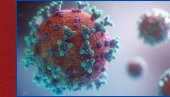


Thank you to everyone who supports our ability to remain safe & healthy. You are our real life heroes.



## By Emely Padilla-Solis Opinion Column

**Covid-19 Vaccines:** With a population of 331 million Americans awaiting the Covid Vaccine, 2.9 million vaccines are expected to be shipped out by the end of this week, according to CNBS news (12/9/2020). With a lot of vaccines coming we now have a possible timeline for the end of Covid. In December and January, health care workers will start getting the vaccines. In March, seniors over 65 will get the vaccine. In April, most Americans will be able to get the vaccines. Fall should see Americans returning to normal life if enough people have been vaccinated.



**Election:** After the election in November, there were fears of violence over the outcome. It was advised that people stay inside.

The Electoral College voted on December 14th. It is now official. Joe Biden is the President-Elect per the U.S. Constitution.



**Foreign Affairs:** Nigerian police mixed in real bullets with rubber bullets when stopping protests to end SARS. SARS stands for Special Anti- Robbery Squad and it is supposed to stop armed robberies in the city. But then they started operating without accountability and some SARS officers regularly were involved with kidnappings and murders.



## Covid-19 By Jonathan Alvarez

As we come closer to Christmas, we must realize that we are in the middle of our worst surge in Covid-19 cases during this Pandemic. The US Center for Disease Control (CDC) recently reported these numbers.

Worldwide, there have been 1.57 million deaths due to Covid. The U.S. death toll has risen to nearly 290,000 since January 21, 2020.

There were 217,046 new cases alone on December 9, with the total being 15,040,175 cases in all in the US.

The CDC reports that the overall percentage of getting Covid-19 is going up. CDC scientists say "The virus that is causing Covid-19 increased from 10.7% during week 47 to 11.7% during week 48."

We have to remember to be safe at all times, and we must try to stay with our immediate families only, as much as possible.



**STAY 6 FEET APART  
WASH YOUR HANDS  
ALWAYS WEAR A MASK  
WHEN GOING OUT**

### Christmas Word Scramble

Unscramble the letters to find words which have to do with Christmas. Some of the words have religious meanings, others are secular in nature.

- Groceos \_\_\_\_\_
- Naclorig \_\_\_\_\_
- Rats \_\_\_\_\_
- Scunttshe \_\_\_\_\_
- Porduhl \_\_\_\_\_
- Naast \_\_\_\_\_
- Skagceap \_\_\_\_\_
- Dressephh \_\_\_\_\_
- Gramen \_\_\_\_\_
- Galen \_\_\_\_\_
- Limesotte \_\_\_\_\_
- Vaniyitt \_\_\_\_\_
- Gotscink \_\_\_\_\_
- Virasou \_\_\_\_\_
- Traweh \_\_\_\_\_
- Gisehl \_\_\_\_\_
- Wamsonn \_\_\_\_\_
- Ejuss \_\_\_\_\_
- Stranneom \_\_\_\_\_
- Scamsthir \_\_\_\_\_

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## UGLY CHRISTMAS SWEATER CONTEST

Let's show 2020, we know how to celebrate the Holiday Season.

On Thursday, 12/11/2020, the Annual Vernon Ugly Christmas Sweater Contest will be held. Wear your Ugly Christmas sweater that day to class. Make sure your teacher takes a picture of you or that you upload a picture to Google Drive and send to Ms. Tovar! Great Job everyone!

## VERNON CLUB INFORMATION

Hey Panthers, do you need some fun in your life? Then check into our Virtual Vernon Campus Clubs. It's a chance to make new friends or find ones from last year. If you are interested, please send a Schoolloop Email to the Staff in charge. Check our Panther Phones for Staff Member names. Clubs will take a break during the holidays and be up and running again in January.

## HOLIDAY WISHES FROM MRS. PURCELL, ASB ADVISOR

ASB would like to remind everyone to stay safe and healthy through the holidays. Let's make 2021 an amazing year. Everyone has given up so much this year. Let's put 2020 behind us and come out strong and unified for 2021. ASB will be dedicating 2021 as The Year of Hope, Peace and Unity. We will have spirit days and giveaways that inspire and encourage positivity for all of us. Panthers are strong and we are all Panthers. Happy Holidays to everyone.

Thank you! ASB Co-Presidents Charlee Barnett & Audrey Razo

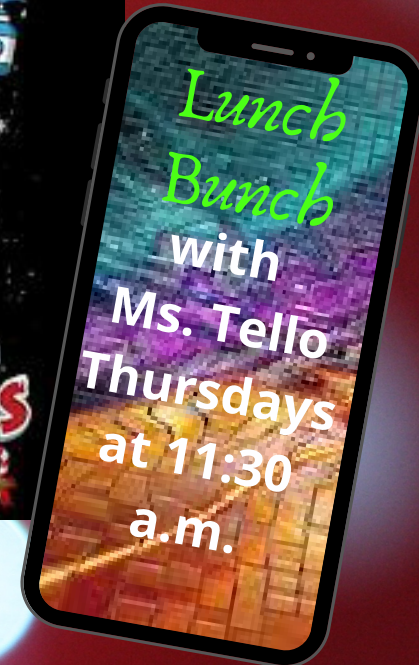
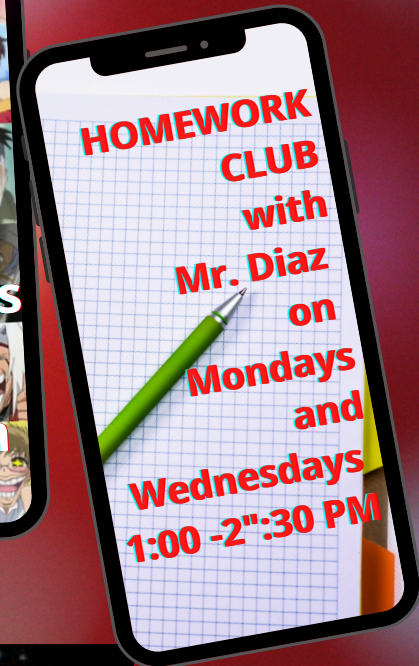
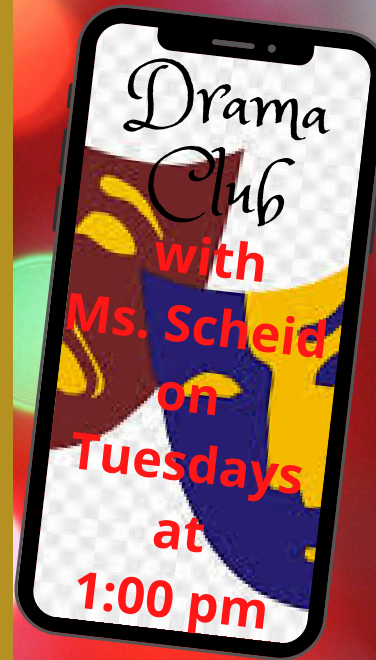


## HOLIDAY MATH RIDDLE!

Nick has a box of ornaments that he uses to decorate his tree each year. All of them are blue, except for six. All of them are green, except for six. All of them are red, except for six. How many of each colored ornament does Nick have?



#1 of 5





# Panthers Pause for the Holidays...



|   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
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| A | B | E | L | L | S | J | K | A | U | F | H | J | E | W | F |
| Q | W | E | R | T | A | T | M | L | M | Y | U | R | T | Y | R |
| N | Y | U | I | O | N | Y | U | I | S | I | O | E | U | I | O |
| G | O | H | L | M | T | O | P | A | A | W | P | I | O | P | S |
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| G | W | F | L | Y | N | T | C | N | Z | F | G | D | F | G | Y |
| I | E | Z | U | T | S | R | S | K | G | H | J | E | Q | M | O |
| F | R | X | Y | I | D | S | A | Y | M | S | K | E | A | S | Q |
| T | O | C | R | F | M | G | R | J | N | E | L | R | M | T | W |
| S | Y | H | S | L | H | R | T | H | B | V | Z | X | N | O | E |
| D | C | B | H | N | E | R | E | W | Q | L | C | V | B | C | R |
| Y | E | F | D | M | B | N | M | N | O | E | L | P | O | K | R |
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| Z | X | C | V | S | A | M | L | M | H | J | G | F | D | G | U |

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**Bells Santa Joy Merry Noel Elves Frosty  
 Christmas Sleigh Noel Reindeer Mistletoe  
 Gifts Stocking Snow**

**Answer to Holiday Math Riddle: Nick has 9  
 ornaments in total: 3 blue, 3 green, and 3 red.**