The origin of christmas

Christmas. It's the time of year where finals are either coming or are already gone. It's the time of year where you can hear everyone singing the same melodies that we all grew up with. It's the time of year that we drive around town to stare at the exterior of other people's houses and no one thinks that we're being creepy. It's the most wonderful time of the year.

We all have our traditions: some of us exchange gifts; others brace themselves for the in-laws. Some people go to a Christmas Eve service at church, and others prepare warm cookies for Santa Claus when he finally makes his arrival, sleigh bells and all. We all have our traditions. We all have what we love and hate about the holiday season. But where did all of this craziness begin? Was it always like this—with the Black Friday sales and overwhelming red and green tinsel being shoved down our throats? Really, when did it all begin? Many of us know that Christians celebrate the day as the birth of Jesus, who is their spiritual leader and whose teachings form the basis of their religion.

Christmas translates directly to " Mass of Christ," reminding us of the day that everyone goes to church to thank God for sending his Son into this world. But it is widely believed, in all factuality, that Jesus of Nazareth wasn't born on December 25th—the day we all know and love as Christmas day. In fact, it is believed that he wasn't even born anywhere close to that time of year. Wait . .

. what? So how has Dec 25th become the center of the biggest holiday of the year if it has nothing to do with the actual celebration? Well, I delved the cyberspace and came back with way more than I think I ever needed to

know. Embracing the lessons of preschool, I thought I would share my findings with all of you. After all, what better to do with this information? Truly, there are three celebrations that took place around the December time. In Mesopotamia, over 4, 000 years ago, the Mesopotamians celebrated the beginning of each year with a 12-day celebration called " Zagmuth." Though they had many gods, they had a chief god named " Marduk," who they believed battled chaotic monsters at the beginning of each winter.

Some scholars say that this is the origin of the 12 days of Christmas. The second celebration was that of " Saturnalia," celebrated by the Romans to honor their god " Saturn." This lasted in the middle of December until the first of January. Romans would decorate their houses with garlands and have feasts, putting candles on trees to illuminate their houses. Remember the drives that we take to stare at people's houses? Replace the car with a wagon and a horse and you've got bingo. It was also from " Saturnalia" that we got the tradition of gift exchanging.

Finally, the last celebration was that of " Yuletide," a Scandinavian tradition that would take place after the Winter Solstice. They would all gather around a big tree—illuminated with candles—and sing carols as they all ate a great feast. So is that the origin of Christmas? Well, no. We're not quite there yet. In the time of the Roman empire, there was an emperor named Constantine who was converted to Christianity during his rule.

He wanted to celebrate the birth of Christ, but also wanted the pagans to join in the celebrations. It's with those thoughts in mind that he mashed all of the holidays together into one big holiday. Eventually, the Roman church had

almost stomped out every pagan celebration, keeping the focus on Christ's birth. We've lost some of that these days, but the holiday still stands. So whether you're going to sleep in until noon on Christmas day, or not sleeping a wink (promptly running to your parents' room to jump on their bed to wake them up the second the clock turns 12: 01), I hope you have yourself a merry little Christmas, and a happy New Year.

Oh, so what's the origin of New Year? Well, that's for another article . . .