

# Break the language barrier with Vicki Riley

## LESSON 6 – The festive season

Hi all

Here are the answers to the translations from last week:

1. I´m scared of dogs- **Tengo miedo de los perros.**
2. They are very thirsty-**Tienen mucha sed.**
3. She is always right-**Siempre tienen razón.**
4. Manuel is 33 years old- **Manuel tiene 33 años.**
5. You(s) are cold in the garden- **Tenéis frío en el jardín.**
6. Carmen is scared of cats- **Carmen tiene miedo de los gatos**
7. They are right in everything they do- **Tienen razón en todo lo que hacen.**
8. I´m always thirsty after a long walk-**Siempre tengo sed después de un paseo largo.**

In this last **"Break the Language Barrier"** before Christmas, I am going to look at some of the traditions of Christmas and New Year in Spain.

As Spain is a predominantly Catholic country, whether practicing or not, Christmas is essentially a religious festival rather than a commercial one. The nativity scene, or **"Belén"**, is a huge tradition, and most Spanish houses will construct their own nativity scene, buying new figures each year and passing them down through generations. **"Belén"** is also a popular girl's name in Spain.

Another important event, though not so ethereal, is the announcement of the winners of **"El Gordo"**- **"the fat one"** or **"big one"**, on the 22nd of December. This is a massive National Lottery that has taken place since 1812, and the winning tickets take 3 hours to be drawn and the numbers sang out by pupils of the San Ildefonso School. This is broadcast on the television, and Spain more or less comes to a halt as everyone watches the draw and hopes to strike it lucky just in time for Christmas.

Christmas is a family celebration in Spain. On Christmas Eve, or **"Nochebuena"** (literally meaning "good night") all the family get together in the evening for a special dinner which starts late and goes on to the early hours of the morning. If they are religious, they will attend midnight mass, known as **"La Misa del Gallo"**, or rooster mass, as it was supposedly the rooster that announced the birth of Christ. Christmas day itself is quite low key, with few presents exchanged as the main day for exchanging gifts in Spain is actually the Epiphany, the 6th of January that we will look at later. However, **"Papa Noel"** or Father Christmas is definitely more in evidence these days than previously. Boxing day, the 26th, is business as usual in Spain and is not celebrated nor is it a Bank Holiday.

The 28th is the next essentially Spanish fiesta. **"El Día de Los Inocentes"** or The Day of the Innocents has bloody roots, as it was the day that Herod

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supposedly slaughtered the children of Judea. However, it has become a day of pranks and practical jokes, with bogus news stories in the papers etc, similar to April Fools day, so don't believe everything you hear on that day!!

New Year's Eve, or "**Nochevieja**" (literally "old night") is a fabulous celebration in Spain. It is considered to be good luck to wear red underwear on this night. The New Year is welcomed in with "**Cava**" (Spanish champagne) and the 12 chimes of the clock at midnight are counted in while trying to eat one grape for each, representing good luck for each month of the year, if you manage to do it!! It helps if you use seedless grapes! Celebrations go on to 5 or six in the morning, so don't start too early the night before...

January the 6th, or "**El Día de los Reyes**", (King's Day) is the day that gifts are exchanged in Spain, traditionally being the day the Three Kings gave Jesus their gifts. Children polish their shoes on the evening of the 5th and leave them outside, hoping to see them filled with sweets the next morning. Most towns have Kings Day parade on the early evening of the 5th, when the Three Kings roam the streets in floats and throw out sweets to the crowds. Make sure your children have a carrier bag to collect them in!!!

"**La Rosca de Los Reyes**", a traditional ring-shaped cake is eaten, containing plastic figures which bring luck to the person who gets them in their piece.

As you see, Christmas time is rich in tradition here in Spain, embrace it and enjoy it,

**"Felices Fiestas!!!"**

If you have any questions, please contact me at [info@elprincipecentre.com](mailto:info@elprincipecentre.com).