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IMAGINATION OVER KNOWLEDGE

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Saint Nicholas and Pete

Who is Saint Nicholas? How did he get his name? Where does he live? These are questions that young children often ask.

Before Saint Nicholas came to Holland, he had many other names in the different countries where he lived. Some say he was born in Turkey, many hundreds of years ago. One story about that same good Nicolas goes like this:

"Once there were three beautiful girls. Their father had lost all his money. The girls really wanted a man but had no money to buy a wedding dress. Nicolas heard this and felt sorry for the father and his daughters. He left three bags of gold under their window, one for each girl. So these three good girls got three good husbands with whom they lived happily ever after."

There are countless stories about this good Nicolas, who is also said to have been a bishop who traveled along the churches. Sailors and travelers built churches in his honor. To travel, one had to have a ship at sea or a horse on land, and in the cold north, one had to have a reindeer. Now Saint Nicholas comes to Holland on a steamship and he always brings his horse with him. Sometimes he rides in a car. Maybe he will come by plane in the future.

On the evening before Saint Nicholas' birthday, Dutch children put their shoe by the fireplace. They put a

carrot or some hay for the horse in the shoe because Saint Nicholas rides on his horse past all the houses.



Saint Nicholas wears the clothes of a bishop, a long white dress with a long red cloak. He has a kind of high hat, a mitre, on his head. In his hands he holds a staff that he borrowed from a shepherd but a golden knob was put on it. Saint Nicholas has white hair and pink cheeks. He is an old man who is still very fit. In his

heart, he is still a little boy.

When Saint Nicholas traveled north, he changed his clothes. He then wore a short white jacket, trimmed with ermine fur. He wore a fur hat on his head and left his staff at home. He also then rode in a sleigh pulled by two deer with large horns. In those northern countries, he put gifts in the stockings that the children had hung by the fireplace. In Greenland, he often gave fishing hooks. His gifts are not the same in every country. If children have been naughty, he does not give gifts.

When Saint Nicholas travels, he always brings fun things. On his travels, Saint Nicholas met a nice boy who became his helper.

Saint Nicholas also always visited many schools. There he heard about pirates who robbed ships instead of giving gifts to children and the poor, like he did. Saint

Nicholas doesn't like such people. His helper remained loyal to him in the Netherlands as well. He helped carry boxes with dolls, boats, drums, balls, books, trains, and much more fun toys. There were also boxes full of candy.

His helper, named Pete, also took care of the horse.

It doesn't matter to Saint Nicholas whether children are rich or poor, he loves all children if they behave well and do their best throughout the year.

In Holland, Pete wears a short jacket with wide pants in various bright colors. He also has a cap on his head and a beautiful collar around his neck.

Sometimes he scares naughty children. When Saint Nicholas

leaves Holland to go back to Spain, Pete also always goes along to take care of the horse there.

And where Saint Nicholas and Pete live in Spain is still a big secret.

