

Two of Santa's Reindeer Flee in Texas

This story comes from VOA Special English, Voice of America's daily news and information service for English learners. Read the story and then do the activities at the end.

This is the VOA Special English Agriculture Report.

Two of Santa's reindeer -- Comet and Dancer -- got loose on a busy roadway in Texas just days before Christmas. Think we're joking? It happened halfway between Houston and Galveston. Reporter Deborah Wrigley from TV station KTRK picks up the story about the two runaway reindeer and their owner.

DEBORAH WRIGLEY: "His name is Joe Moorman. But his occupation is Santa Claus, from the beard to the reindeer, five tiny ones."



KTRK

Professional Santa Joe Moorman with his reindeer

JOE MOORMAN: "This is Prancer, that is Blitzen and that is Donner."

Joe Moorman is a professional Santa Claus, also known as Father Christmas or Saint Nicholas or Kris Kringle. But unlike many other Santas, this one really does travel in a sleigh pulled by reindeer -- except when he has to transport them.

Last Wednesday the back door of the trailer opened as he was driving them to an elementary school. Comet and Dancer escaped onto Interstate-45 -- not exactly the North Pole. Another driver alerted Santa.

JOE MOORMAN: "Someone pulled up beside us, actually, and blew the horn and was waving and all that, and told us we had some animals loose. Well, my heart did not do too well."

The morning traffic was heavy but slow with people on their way to work. Drivers called the police, who thought they were joking. Yes, there really were reindeer in the road. Then, says reporter Deborah Wrigley, Santa found that he had some helpers.

DEBORAH WRIGLEY: "People stopped traffic, got out of their cars."

One woman took off her shoes and ran after the reindeer. A man followed. But the reindeer themselves were the ones who ended the chase. They found a park and stopped to eat. Joe Moorman says he was more shaken than they were. Santa and his reindeer were able to visit the schoolchildren as promised.

JOE MOORMAN: "God was with the reindeer, you know. And he takes care of fools and things that cannot take care of themselves."

The Reindeer Owners and Breeders Association says reindeer are easy to train to pull a cart or sleigh. Greg Finstad at the University of Alaska Fairbanks says reindeer "like people and are pleasant to have around." He says reindeer management is not very difficult. That's good, since he also says -- and children might want to cover their ears for this part -- reindeer is a basic meat in the cold climate of Alaska.

You can [watch Deborah Wrigley's story](#) about Comet and Dancer at voaspecialenglish.com.

Now do the activities ...

Level: beginner - intermediate

Time: 20 - 30 minutes

This worksheet will help you learn new vocabulary about Christmas. You will answer questions about runaway reindeer, and write a short paragraph about a character that symbolizes a holiday in your country.

1. What are *reindeer*?

a large type of deer that lives in northern parts of the world

a large amount of rain that falls in the northern parts of the world

2. How are reindeer connected to Christmas?

they buy Christmas presents

they pull Santa's sleigh

they build Santa's house

3. What is this article about?

Santa Claus

runaway reindeer

how Christmas is celebrated

4. Look again at the title of this article: *Two of Santa's Reindeer Flee in Texas (Really)*. Choose the correct sentence below.

This article is meant to be funny.

This article is meant to be very serious.

How do you know?

5. Which two reindeer got loose?

6. Where did it happen?

7. What are some other names for Santa Claus? Check the correct answers.

Father Christmas

North Pole

Saint Nicholas

Kris Kringle

8. How did the reindeer escape?

9. How did the reindeer end the chase?

10. Read the last paragraph of the article. What is true about the following sentence?

Children might want to cover their ears for this part.

Children might be upset if they know that people eat reindeer.

[] Children hate reindeer.

[] Children should always know the truth about reindeer.

OVER TO YOU

Is there a character in your country like Santa Claus, which is a symbol for a holiday?

Write 5 or 6 sentences to describe this character.

ANSWER KEY

1. a large type of deer that lives in northern parts of the world
2. they pull Santa's sleigh
3. runaway reindeer
4. This article is meant to be funny. We know because 'Really' is included in parentheses. This lets us know that the title is surprising and meant as a kind of joke. Texas is very hot, and reindeer don't live there!
5. Comet and Dancer
6. halfway between Houston and Galveston in Texas
7. Father Christmas, Saint Nicholas, Kris Kringle
8. Last Wednesday the back door of the trailer opened as he was driving them to an elementary school.
9. They found a park and stopped to eat.
10. Children might be upset if they know that people eat reindeer.