

## The Science of Santa

UEA Christmas Lecture 2014

*“The children absolutely loved this year’s lectures in particular the science lecture which really inspired them. To which end we have been doing science experiments in the kitchen all afternoon.”*



The show uses popular science demonstrations to illustrate seemingly plausible explanations for customs and beliefs around the Santa story. The key was a narrative approach that aimed to enhance engagement, recall and understanding.

- ★ Maxine Rushton
- Stephen H. Ashworth
- 🏠 University of East Anglia
- 🔪 Chemistry, Physics, Hypothesis testing
  
- School of Education, UEA
- Norwich NR4 7TJ
- [www.uea.ac.uk/education](http://www.uea.ac.uk/education)

### The history of the show

The show was originally designed to show trainee primary school teachers how story-telling can be used as an effective teaching tool across the curriculum.

The success of the approach led to further development and in 2014 it was delivered as part of the UEA Christmas Lecture series.

### Designing the show

During the planning process the emphasis was on engagement and understanding. The age of the audience (in this case 8-12 years) was taken into account and suitable demonstrations and explanations were chosen.

The success of the show depended upon the ability to link the chosen demonstrations with the Santa story.

### Show Content

By attempting to answer a series of questions, plausible explanations were explored and hypotheses tested. For example:

*How does Santa fit down the chimney?*

*Why do we leave mince pies on the hearth?*

*How does Santa remain invisible?*