

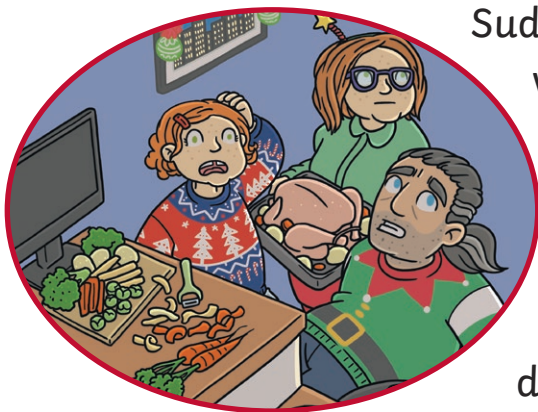
A Festive Feast

Orla was very excited. It was Christmas morning! Under the tree, some gifts were waiting to be opened. "Just one for now," said Mum. "You can open the rest after dinner."

While Orla was choosing the perfect present to open, Joe put on their favourite Christmas film. They sang along as the film started with a song they all knew by heart.



After they had each opened one present, it was time to start making Christmas dinner. Every year, Orla's special job was to peel the vegetables while Joe made the nut roast and Mum prepared the turkey.



Suddenly, the music stopped, the screen went blank, the lights on the tree went out and the oven stopped humming. "There must be a power cut!" said Joe.

"How are we going to cook our dinner now?" cried Orla.

Mum peered out the window. "We should check on Mr and Mrs D'Souza next door," she said. Orla went along with Mum, picking up the gingerbread biscuits they had made the day before.

"Merry Christmas!" said Orla, holding out the biscuits.

"Thank you, dear! Come on in," said Mrs D'Souza. "I was just about to start cooking our pork vindaloo when the power went out!"



"Can I smell gingerbread?" said Mr D'Souza. Orla laughed and offered him a biscuit. "Thank you!" he said with a smile. "That should keep me going for a while."

"Good thing I'd already made our bebinca," said Mrs D'Souza. "It took me nine hours!"

"It looks delicious!" said Orla.

As they were leaving, Mum and Orla spotted Julie and Don, who had returned from church to find that their power was off too. "Merry Christmas!" said Orla, offering them a gingerbread biscuit.

"That's very kind!" said Don. "Come on in."

"I put our turkey in before we left," he said. "I was hoping it would be nearly done by now."

"At least we've got some mince pies," said Julie, offering them to Orla and her mum.

"Could I take one for my friend Maria?" asked Orla.

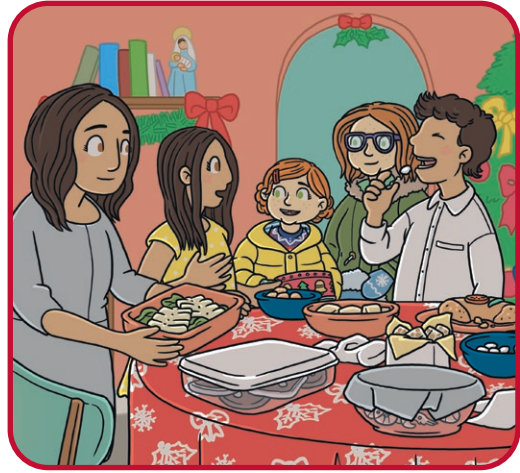


Next, Orla and Mum went to see Maria at number 65. "I was worried you wouldn't have any Christmas dinner so I brought you a mince pie," Orla said.

"Thanks so much," said Maria, "but don't worry about us – we've got loads of leftovers."

"Leftovers?" asked Orla, sounding very surprised. "It's only 11 a.m.!"

Maria laughed. "We have our family meal on Christmas Eve before we go to Midnight Mass."



Orla's face lit up as she had an idea. "Well, you have all these leftovers, we have some gingerbread biscuits, Julie and Don have mince pies and Mrs D'Souza has a yummy cake. Why don't we all share whatever we have?"

"What a great idea!" said Maria.

"I'm sure Joe will let us use the community centre," said Mum. "There's lots of room there so we can share our food with everyone!" Mum went off to get Joe and some other volunteers to help prepare the hall.

Meanwhile, Orla and Maria knocked on every door in their street to spread the word. It wasn't long before people started to head to the community centre, each carrying different kinds of food. Orla's teacher, Mr Hoffman, took along some German fruit bread.



Elena had made some scrumptious-looking Romanian cabbage rolls. Xiomara decided to share her delicious Venezuelan stuffed corn dough. And it wasn't just their food that people decided to share. Orla watched happily as her neighbours brought along candles, tinsel, wreaths and even a tree!

When Orla and Maria joined the party, they were amazed by all the different foods. Orla was excited to try something new for Christmas dinner!



Joe was playing Christmas songs on his guitar, accompanied by Mr Hoffman on the piano and Maria's brother, Javi, on his recorder. Slowly, other people joined in, filling the room with music and dancing.

Suddenly, the sound of bells floated through the hall and everyone stood still. To Orla's amazement, the lights came back on and there was an enormous cheer! "Maybe it was Santa," said Joe with a wink.



The celebrations carried on into the evening. Orla put her head on Mum's shoulder as they watched everyone eating, chatting and laughing together.

"It's getting late," said Mum. "Do you want to go home and open the rest of your presents?"

"I think I'll save them until tomorrow," said Orla with a grin. "I'm having way too much fun here. Everyone being together has made Christmas even more special. We should do this every year!"



Questions

1. When does the story take place? Tick **one**.

- ☐ at Christmas
- ☐ in the summer holidays
- ☐ at Easter

2. Why does the music stop suddenly? Tick **one**.

- ☐ Mum turned it off.
- ☐ There is a power cut.
- ☐ The radio is broken.

3. What type of biscuit does Orla take to the neighbours? Tick **one**.

- ☐ lemon
- ☐ gingerbread
- ☐ chocolate

4. What idea does Orla have? Tick **one**.

- ☐ Everyone could open their presents.
- ☐ Everyone could go to sleep.
- ☐ Everyone could share what they have.

5. Who does Joe say might have fixed the power cut? Tick **one**.

- ☐ Orla's mum
- ☐ Maria
- ☐ Santa

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- ☒ **Santa**

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1. Why is Orla excited at the beginning of the story? Tick **one**.

- ☐ It's Christmas morning.
- ☐ It's her birthday.
- ☐ She has a new bike.

2. What does Orla take with her when she visits Mr and Mrs D'Souza?
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- ☐ mince pies
- ☐ gingerbread biscuits
- ☐ fruit cake

3. Why do Maria and her family have leftovers?

4. Draw a line to match up the boxes to complete the sentences.

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"There must be

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5. Complete this sentence.

"We should do this every _____!"

holiday

Christmas

year

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They have their family meal on Christmas Eve before they go to Midnight Mass.

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Complete this sentence.

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- ☐ happy
☐ grumpy
☐ excited

2. What is Orla doing when the power cut first happens?

3. Why is Orla surprised that Maria and her family have leftovers?

4. Draw a line to match the word to its meaning.

volunteers

people who freely offer to help

leftovers

playing a musical instrument
with someone else

accompanied

remaining food after everything
else has been eaten

5. Why does Orla decide to save the rest of her presents for the next day?

6. Do you think it's a good idea to share what you have with others? Why?

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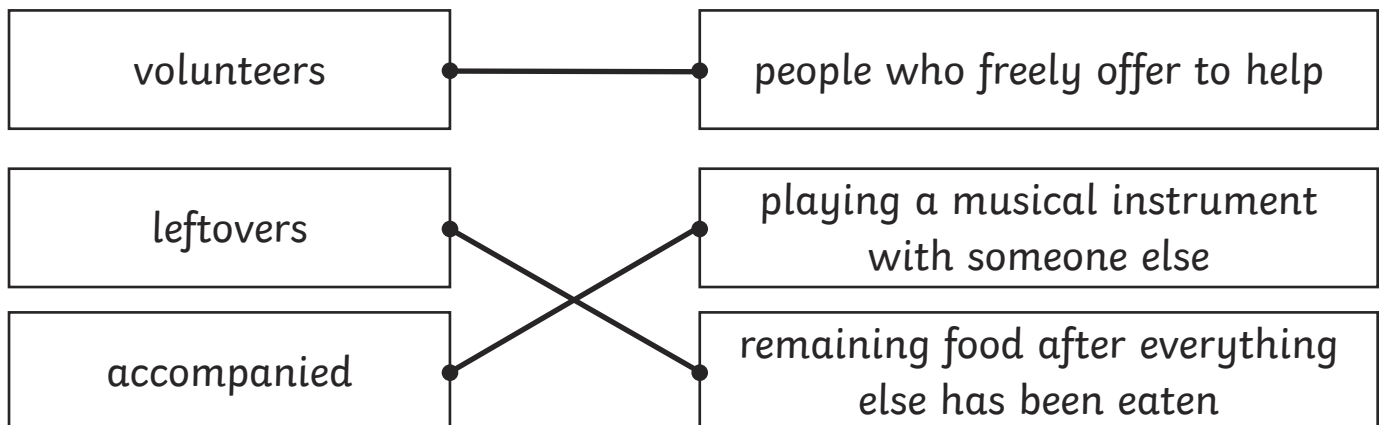
2. What is Orla doing when the power cut first happens?

Orla is peeling the vegetables.

3. Why is Orla surprised that Maria and her family have leftovers?

Because it is still the morning and many people won't have had their Christmas dinner yet.

4. Draw a line to match the word to its meaning.



5. Why does Orla decide to save the rest of her presents for the next day?

Because she is having too much fun and everyone being together has made Christmas even more special.

6. Do you think it's a good idea to share what you have with others? Why?

Children's own answers.