

<<圣诞节中的物理学THE PHYSICS>>

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内容概要

Roger Highfield loves science, and he loves Christmas, too. Combining the two in *The Physics of Christmas* is his attempt to refute the notion that "the materialist insights of science destroy our capacity to wonder, leaving the world a more boring and predictable place." To that end, Highfield presents an amusing, eclectic, and trivia-filled collection of scientific observations about one of the Western world's most beloved holidays. Contrary to the title, Highfield doesn't limit himself to physics. His anthropological observations include tracing the origins of Santa Claus--an especially amusing and enlightening chapter entitled "Santa: The Hallucinogenic Connection" examines the possibilities of the psychoactive mushroom *Amanita muscaria*'s red-and-white cap being the inspiration for Santa's robes. In a tip of the stocking cap to biology, Highfield hints at a parasitic infestation that may be responsible for poor Rudolph's red nose and examines the advantages of cloned Christmas trees. Psychologically speaking, we find an analysis of the emotional weight of gift giving and card exchanging (sever all relationships with those who send musical cards, research suggests), and how a holiday can be both religious and commercial. Even post-holiday depression is deconstructed, along with Santa's unhealthy obesity and apparent immortality, the effects of alcohol on sleep patterns, the astronomical origins of the Bethlehem star, and the ins and outs of snow. You'll never look at the trappings of Christmas the same way after reading Highfield's seriously funny book. And you may accidentally learn something, too.

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