

# WEEKLY ENGLISH PRACTICE

## John's pick of the Christmas flicks

There are hundreds of Christmas movies. Here are some recommended by Coach John.



It's that time of year again, when believers and non-believers alike, and against their better judgement, **settle down** to watch the obligatory Christmas movie.

**When I were a lad** it was either 'White Christmas', starring Bing Crosby, or 'It's a Wonderful Life'. Of the two, I'd still say the second is one of the best Christmas movies of all time and well worth a watch. It's funny, heartwarming, profound, and an annual reminder that the holidays are about more than presents.

At the moment Netflix is showing over 20 Christmas movies and series. To be honest, most of them won't be remembered.

So for your festive season enjoyment, here is my list of my recommended Christmas movies.

'Scrooged' (1988). Bill Murray is a heartless TV executive, who is visited by three ghosts (you get the idea?). A black comedy and reworking of Charles Dickens' 'A Christmas Carol'.

'The Snowman' (1982) is a wonderful short animation with beautiful music and a cameo from David Bowie.

'The Nightmare Before Christmas' (1993). Those of you with children should watch this dark Tim Burton classic animation, an unmissable intertwining of Halloween and Christmas.

If the kids go to bed **scared witless** you can put on 'Bad Santa' (2003). Billy Bob Thornton is excellent as a disgusting and drunk department store Santa.

'Miracle on 34th Street' (1947) balances up the Christmas cynicism with a sweet story about another store Santa who claims he really is **Kris Kringle**. Let the children of New York decide!

'The Muppets' Christmas Carol' shows you can't really beat good material. Kermit and Miss Piggy are Mr and Mrs Cratchit, and Micheal Caine is Ebenezer Scrooge. Believe me, it really is a great movie.

Honourable mentions for 'Elf' (2003) 'Klaus' (2019) 'Little Women' (2019).

This Christmas, I'll be watching, as usual, 'Life of Brian' (1979)—the birth scene of Brian and Jesus is wonderfully funny. Of course I'll find time for James Stewart in 'It's a Wonderful Life', and my new tradition is to watch the "so bad, it's good" 'Love Actually' (2003). Yes, too many characters, but who can resist the endless declarations of love? It is Christmas after all, and at Christmas you tell the truth!



by ECP coach

**John Hird**

## Word list

**settle down:** to get comfortable

**when I were a lad:** colloquial phrase used by Northerners (North England) – grammatically incorrect

**scared witless:** extremely frightened

**Kris Kringle:** the Austrian and German Christmas gift-bringer. Assimilated into US English by immigrants

From the text below:

**lobby:** the act of trying to convince and influence (particularly a government)

**Ho, ho, ho!:** sound Santa Claus makes when he laughs

**Yippee ki-yay!:** claimed to be a cry shouted by cowboys in the Wild West. Probably false.

## Let's chat about that!

1. Do you watch Christmas movies? Why? / Why not?
2. Which of the movies in the list have you seen and which are your favourites?
3. Are there any movies you watch again and again?
4. Can you recommend any Christmas movies not in the list?
5. Do you know any Christmas movies originally in Spanish and Basque?
6. What does John really think of 'Love Actually'?
7. Is 'Die Hard' a Christmas movie? Why (not)?

## A Spiritual Review of the Christmas movie 'Die Hard'

ECP Learner Mikel Garnika explores the deeper meaning behind Bruce Willis' finest work.



Maite and Mikel, of the famous ECP *Cine Nights*, **lobbied** for the inclusion of 'Die Hard' (1988) in the list. Some argue it's not strictly a Christmas movie, but who needs, "**Ho, ho, ho!**" when you can have "**Yippee ki-yay, motherf--er!**"?

"It's Christmas Eve in LA. A New York cop has come to see his wife..." The original trailer opens with the Christmas song, 'Let it snow.'

*Here is Mikel's review of the seasonal classic:*

"When I think of my favourite Christmas movie I can't help but get a feeling of well-being. Watching a good Christmas movie invades my soul. Everything stops for a while in the middle

of the whirlwind of daily life. That feeling of cozy warmth, with the family all gathered in the living room next to the Christmas tree to see 'Die Hard' again.

Many people may not agree, but for me, 'Die Hard' is a parable about the life of Jesus, if he had been born in the 20th century as a psychopathic cop!

Not just a man, but a perfect example of masculinity, wisdom and caring. Forced to face the challenges that are presented to him in earthly life, he has no choice but to resort to violence, as Jesus did in the temple, in order to free his own from oppression and be on time for Christmas dinner.

John McClane even warns and guides us through the constant challenges that life can present, reminding us that even at Christmas we should always be prepared and alert and, if you live in the United States, heavily armed."

**Merry Christmas to all!**