# Santa Klaas and Black Pete

Who is Santa Klaas? How did he get his name? Where does he live? Did you ever see him?These are questions, often asked of the storyteller, by little folks.Before Santa Klaas came into the Netherlands, that is, to Belgium and Holland, he was called by many names, in the different countries in which he lived, and where he visited. Some people say he was born in Myra, many hundred years ago before the Dutch had a dyke or a windmill, or waffles, or wooden shoes. Others tell us how, in time of famine, the good saint found the bodies of three little boys, pickled in a tub, at a market for sale, and to be eaten up. They had been salted down to keep till sold. The kind gentleman and saint, whose name was Nicholas, restored these three children to life. It is said that once he lost his temper, and struck with his fist a gentleman named Arius; but the story-teller does not believe this, for he thinks it is a fib, made up long afterward. How could a saint lose his temper so?Another story they tell of this same Nicholas was this. There were three lovely maidens, whose father had lost all his money. They wanted husbands very badly, but had no money to buy fine clothes to get married in. He took pity on both their future husbands and themselves. So he came to the window, and left three bags of gold, one after the other. Thus these three real girls all got real husbands, just as the novels tell us of the imaginary ones. They lived happily ever afterward, and never scolded their husbands.By and by, men who were goldsmiths, bankers or pawnbrokers, made a sign of these three bags of gold, in the shape of balls. Now they hang them over their shop doors, two above one. This means "two to one, you will never get it again"—when you put your ring, furs, or clothes, or watch, or spoons, in pawn.It is ridiculous how many stories they do tell of this good man, Nicholas, who was said to be what they call a bishop, or inspector, who goes around seeing that things are done properly in the churches. It was because the Reverend Mr. Nicholas had to travel about a good deal, that the sailors and travellers built temples and churches in his honor. To travel, one must have a ship on the sea and a horse on the land, or a reindeer up in the cold north; though now, it is said, he comes to Holland in a steamship, and uses an automobile.On Santa Klaas eve, each of the Dutch children sets out in the chimney his wooden shoe. Into it, he puts a whisp of hay, to feed the traveller's horse. When St. Nicholas first came to Holland, he arrived in a sailing ship from Spain and rode on a horse. Now he arrives in a big steamer, made of steel. Perhaps he will come in the future by aeroplane. To fill all the shoes and stockings, the good saint must have an animal to ride. Now the fast white horse, named Sleipnir, was ready for him, and on Sleipnir's back he made his journeys.How was Santa Klaas dressed?His clothes were those of a bishop. He wore a red coat and his cap, higher than a turban and called a mitre, was split along two sides and pointed at the top. In his hands, he held a crozier, which was a staff borrowed from shepherds, who tended sheep; and with the crozier he helped the lambs over rough places; but the crozier of Santa Klaas was tipped with gold. He had white hair and rosy cheeks. For an old man, he was very active, but his heart and feelings never got to be one day older than a boy's, for these began when mother love was born and father's care was first in the world, but it never grows old.When Santa Klaas travelled up north to Norway and into the icy cold regions, where there were sleighs and reindeer, he changed his clothes. Instead of his red robe, he wears a jacket, much shorter and trimmed with ermine, white as snow. Taking off his mitre, he wears a cap of fur also, and has laid aside his crozier. In the snow, wheels are no good, and runners are the best for swift travel. So, instead of his white horse and a wagon, he drives in a sleigh, drawn by two stags with large horns. In every country, he puts into the children's stockings hung up, or shoes set in the fireplace, something which they like. In Greenland, for example, he gives the little folks seal blubber, and fish hooks. So his presents are not the same in every country. However, for naughty boys and girls everywhere, instead of filling shoes and stockings, he may leave a switch, or pass them by empty.When Santa Klaas travels, he always brings back good things. Now when he first came to New Netherland in America, what did he find to take back to Holland?Well, it was here, on our continent, that he found corn, potatoes, pumpkins, maple sugar, and something to put in pipes to smoke; besides strange birds and animals, such as turkeys and raccoons, in addition to many new flowers. What may be called a weed, like the mullein, for example, is considered very pretty in Europe, where they did not have such things. There it is called the American Velvet Plant, or the King's Candlestick.But, better than all, Santa Klaas found a negro boy, Pete, who became one of the most faithful of his helpers. At Utrecht, in Holland, the students of the University give, every year, a pageant representing Santa Klaas on his white horse, with Black Pete, who is always on hand and very busy. Black Pete's father brought peanuts from Africa to America, and sometimes Santa Klaas drops a bagful of these, as a great curiosity, into the shoes of the Dutch young folks.Santa Klaas was kept very busy visiting the homes and the public schools in New Netherland; for in these schools all the children, girls as well as boys, and not boys only, received a free education. In later visits he heard of Captain Kidd and his fellow pirates, who wore striped shirts and red caps, and had pigtails of hair, tied in eel skins, and hanging down their backs. These fellows wore earrings and stuck pistols in their belts and daggers at their sides. Instead of getting their gold honestly, and giving it to the poor, or making presents to the children, the pirates robbed ships. Then, as 'twas said, they buried their treasure. Lunatics and boys that read too many novels, have ever since been digging in the land to find Captain Kidd's gold.Santa Klaas does not like such people. Moreover, he was just as good to the poor slaves, as to white children. So the colored people loved the good saint also. Their pickaninnies always hung up their stockings on the evening of December sixth.Santa Klaas filled the souls of the people in New Netherland so full of his own spirit, that now children all over the United States, and those of Americans living in other countries, hang up their stockings and look for a visit from him.In Holland, Black Pete was very loyal and true to his master, carrying not only the boxes and bundles of presents for the good children, but also the switches for bad boys and girls. Between the piles of pretty things to surprise good children, on one side, and the boxes of birch and rattan, the straps and hard hair-brush backs for naughty youngsters, Pete holds the horn of plenty. In this are dolls, boats, trumpets, drums, balls, toy houses, flags, the animals in Noah's Ark, building blocks, toy castles and battleships, story and picture books, little locomotives, cars, trains, automobiles, aeroplanes, rocking horses, windmills, besides cookies, candies, marbles, tops, fans, lace, and more nice things than one can count.Pete also takes care of the horse of Santa Klaas, named Sleipnir, which goes so fast that, in our day, the torpedo and submarine U-boats are named after him. This wonderful animal used to have eight feet, for swiftness. That was when Woden rode him, but, in course of time, four of his legs dropped off, so that the horse of Santa Klaas looks less like a centipede and more like other horses. Whenever Santa Klaas walks, Pete has to go on foot also, even though the chests full of presents for the children are very heavy and Pete has to carry them.Santa Klaas cares nothing about rich girls or poor girls, for all the kinds of boys he knows about or thinks of are good boys and bad boys. A youngster caught stealing jam out of the closet, or cookies from the kitchen, or girls lifting lumps of sugar out of the sugar bowl, or eating too much fudge, or that are mean, stingy, selfish, or have bad tempers, are considered naughty and more worthy of the switch than of presents. So are the boys who attend Sunday School for a few weeks before Christmas, and then do not come any more till next December. These Santa Klaas turns over to Pete, to be well thrashed.[Illustration: Santa Klaas and Black Pete.]In Holland, Pete still keeps on the old dress of the time of New Netherland. He wears a short jacket, with wide striped trousers, in several bright colors, shoes strapped on his feet, a red cap and a ruff around his neck. Sometimes he catches bad boys, to put them in a bag for a half hour, to scare them; or, he shuts them up in a dark closet, or sends them to bed without any supper. Or, instead of allowing them eleven buckwheat cakes at breakfast, he makes them stop at five. When Santa Klaas leaves Holland to go back to Spain, or elsewhere, Pete takes care of the nag Sleipnir, and hides himself until Santa Klaas comes again next year.The story-teller knows where Santa Klaas lives, but he won't tell.

## http://www.fairytales247.com/catalog/dutch-folktales/santa-klaas-and-black-pete-1179/