



The Tale of the Cailleach and the Stags

Long ago, in the rugged lands of Scotland, where mountains brushed the sky and forests stretched endlessly, the seasons followed the will of the Cailleach, the ancient winter goddess. Her power was vast, her wisdom deep, and her connection to the natural world unbreakable.

As autumn's warmth faded and the winds grew colder, the Cailleach would awaken from her summer slumber. With her great staff in hand, she strode across the land, bringing frost to the fields and snow to the hills. Beneath her touch, rivers froze, and the world fell into a deep, still quiet.

But not everyone welcomed the coming of winter. Some feared its hardships and blamed the Cailleach for their struggles. Warriors, driven by

anger and desperation, sought to drive her away, believing they could banish winter and summon an eternal summer.

The Cailleach, though powerful, knew she could not confront these warriors head-on. Standing atop a snow-covered hill under a moonlit sky, she called out in a voice as clear as the icy air. Her call was answered by the thunder of hooves. From the dark forest emerged her faithful stags.

These were no ordinary stags; their coats shimmered like silver beneath the moonlight, and their antlers were twisted like the bare branches of ancient trees, glowing faintly with an otherworldly light. Their eyes shone with wisdom, and their breath rose in steaming clouds as they surrounded the Cailleach.

With her staff, the Cailleach gestured to the lead stag, who knelt before her. She whispered an incantation, and her form began to change. Her flowing silver hair became a sleek white coat, her hands became nimble hooves, and she transformed into a magnificent white deer. The stags bowed their heads in reverence, and together they vanished into the forest, moving as one with the shadows.

As the warriors searched in vain, the Cailleach and her stags roamed the frozen woods. The stags were not mere companions; they were her helpers, carrying the seeds of life in their coats. With every step they took, these seeds fell to the earth, ready to awaken when spring returned. The stags also kept watch, their keen senses alert to those who would harm the delicate balance of nature.

Though her presence brought hardship, the Cailleach was not without mercy. She understood the need for rest, both for the earth and its people. Winter's stillness was essential to prepare the land for spring's rebirth.

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As winter reached its peak, the Cailleach grew weary. She led her stags to the highest mountain, where she returned to her human form. Planting her staff deep into the frozen ground, she broke the earth, and streams of water began to flow. Her stags pawed at the snow, revealing the first shoots of green beneath the frost.

With the first blush of spring, the Cailleach and her stags retreated into legend, their work complete. But each winter, when frost creeps across the land and snow blankets the hills, their tale is remembered. The Cailleach and her stags remind us that winter is not just an end, but a beginning – a time of rest that brings renewal and hope.

The End



Interactive Elements

Discussion Questions:

- o Why do you think the Cailleach transforms into a deer? What does the deer represent?
- o How does the story reflect the importance of balance in nature?

Activity Suggestions:

- o Research Celtic mythology and create your own story about a mythical deer.
- o Write a reflection on how the seasons impact your life or local environment.

Takeaway Point:

“Just as winter gives way to spring, every challenge we face can plant the seeds for growth and renewal.”





Christmas Deer Quiz

Duration: 20-25 minutes

OBJECTIVE: Engage older children and families in a fun, interactive quiz about deer and their role in nature.

Materials Needed:

- Printed or written quiz questions
- Markers for scoring

Instructions:

This quiz includes multiple-choice, true/false, and open-ended questions. Play individually or in teams, and award points for correct answers. For a festive twist, you can add a fun penalty (e.g., singing a Christmas carol) for incorrect answers.



Scoring:

Multiple-choice and True/False questions:

1 point for each correct answer

Open-ended questions:

2 points for thoughtful, accurate responses

Total points:

20–22 points (depending on the bonus question)

Round 1:

Deer Species (Multiple Choice)

1. **Usually only male deer grow antlers. In which species does the female normally grow antlers as well?**

- a) Red deer
- b) Roe deer
- c) Fallow deer
- d) Reindeer

Answer: d) Reindeer

Explanation: Both male and female reindeer grow antlers, which is unique among deer species.

2. **What size do adult male red deer (stags) typically stand at the shoulder?**

- a) 1.52m to 1.62 m
- b) 1.07m to 1.37m
- c) 0.82m to 0.97m
- d) 0.61m to 0.75m

Answer: b) 1.07m to 1.37m

Explanation: Red deer are the largest land mammals in the UK, with stags standing at this height.

3. **What is the most distinctive feature of roe deer?**

- a) Large, highly branched antlers
- b) A white rump with no visible tail
- c) A dark line along their back
- d) Small hooves about 4–5 cm long

Answer: b) A white rump with no visible tail

Explanation: Roe deer are easily identifiable by their white rump patch and lack of visible tail.

4. **True or False: Deer can swim?**

- True
- False

Answer: True

Explanation: Deer are good swimmers.

5. **Out of the following deer species, which is the only one with palmate (flattened) antlers?**

- a) Sika deer
- b) Fallow deer
- c) Red deer
- d) Roe deer

Answer: b) Fallow deer

Explanation: Fallow deer are known for their flattened, palmate antlers, unlike other deer species found wild in Britain.

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Round 2: Deer Welfare and Human Interaction (True/False)



6. **True or False: It's necessary to feed wild deer in your garden, especially during the winter months.**

-  True
 False

Answer: *False*

Explanation: Feeding wild deer can disrupt their natural diet, cause digestive issues, and create an unnatural dependency on humans. Wild deer can usually find all they need naturally.

7. **True or False: Deer can be approached and petted, especially in parks where they are accustomed to humans.**

-  True
 False

Answer: *False*

Explanation: Deer, even in parks, are still wild animals. Approaching or petting them can be dangerous for both humans and deer. Always keep a safe distance and follow park guidelines for safety.

8. **True or False: It is okay to surround a deer to get a closer look when you are watching them in the wild or in a park.**

-  True
 False

Answer: *False*

Explanation: Surrounding deer can cause them stress and panic. It's important to keep a safe distance and not to encroach on their space.

9. **True or False: It's best to spot deer at dawn or dusk when they are most active.**

-  True
 False

Answer: *True*

Explanation: Deer are most active around dawn and dusk, making it the best time for deer watching.



Round 3: Deer Adaptations and Behaviour (Multiple Choice)

10. **How do water deer (Chinese water deer) differ from other deer species?**

- a) They have antlers
b) They are much larger in size
c) They have tusks instead of antlers
d) They are nocturnal all year round

Answer: *c) They have tusks instead of antlers*

Explanation: Water deer, unlike other species, have tusks, which they use in display and defence, instead of antlers.

11. **Which of these deer species can swim at speeds up to 6 mph during migration?**

- a) Red deer
b) Sika deer
c) Reindeer
d) Fallow deer

Answer: *c) Reindeer*

Explanation: Reindeer are exceptional swimmers and can travel long distances across water during migration.

12. **True or False: Roe deer typically live in large herds year-round.**

-  True
 False

Answer: *False*

Explanation: Roe deer are generally solitary or live in small family groups, particularly outside the breeding season.

13. **How do muntjac communicate with each other when alarmed?**

- a) A high-pitched squeak
b) A loud fox-like bark
c) A deep grunt
d) By waving their tails

Answer: *b) A loud fox-like bark*

Explanation: Muntjac are known for their repeated fox-like barks, which they use to alert others when they feel threatened.

14. **What is the typical diet of a roe deer in winter?**

- a) Reindeer moss
b) Herbs and berries
c) Young trees and hedgerow plants
d) Fungi and mushrooms

Answer: *c) Young trees and hedgerow plants*

Explanation: Roe deer are selective feeders and rely on woody plants and young trees during the winter when other food sources are scarce.

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Round 4: Deer Habitats and Conservation (Multiple Choice)

15. Where do water deer (Chinese water deer) typically live?

- a) Open grasslands
- b) Wetlands, reedbeds, and riverbanks
- c) Upland moorland
- d) Dense woodlands

Answer: b) Wetlands, reedbeds, and riverbanks

Explanation: Water deer prefer wetter habitats like reedbeds and riverbanks, where they can find plenty of food and cover.

16. Which of the following deer species has expanded its range the most in recent years?

- a) Roe deer
- b) Muntjac deer
- c) Red deer
- d) Fallow deer

Answer: b) Muntjac deer

Explanation: Muntjac deer have rapidly expanded their range throughout the UK, adapting well to urban areas and woodland environments.

17. True or False: Sika deer are native to the UK.

- True
- False

Answer: False

Explanation: Sika deer were introduced to the UK from the Far East during the 19th century.

18. Which action can help protect deer populations and their habitats?

- a) Feeding deer in urban areas
- b) Building more deer-proof fences
- c) Supporting deer welfare charities like the BDS
- d) Creating more deer parks for controlled feeding

Answer: c) Supporting deer welfare charities like the BDS

Explanation: Supporting deer welfare organisations ensures sustainable deer management and habitat conservation efforts.

Bonus Question (For Extra Fun!):

19. What Christmas song would you choose as the reindeer's favourite and why?

(Encourage creativity! Answers could be based on a fun or festive song like "Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer" or "Jingle Bells.")



Enjoyed the quiz and learning about reindeer, red deer, roe deer, fallow deer, sika deer, water deer, and muntjac?

This Christmas, help support deer and their habitats by donating to the BDS. Your support makes a difference in protecting these beautiful creatures during the winter months and beyond.

Want to do more? Become a member today and join us in our ongoing work.



Deer Silhouette Wall Art

Materials Needed:

- Black construction paper
- White or metallic paint (silver, gold, or copper work well)
- Paintbrushes (variety of sizes)
- Scissors
- Glue
- A canvas, thick paper, or cardstock for the base

Instructions:

1. Prepare the Background:

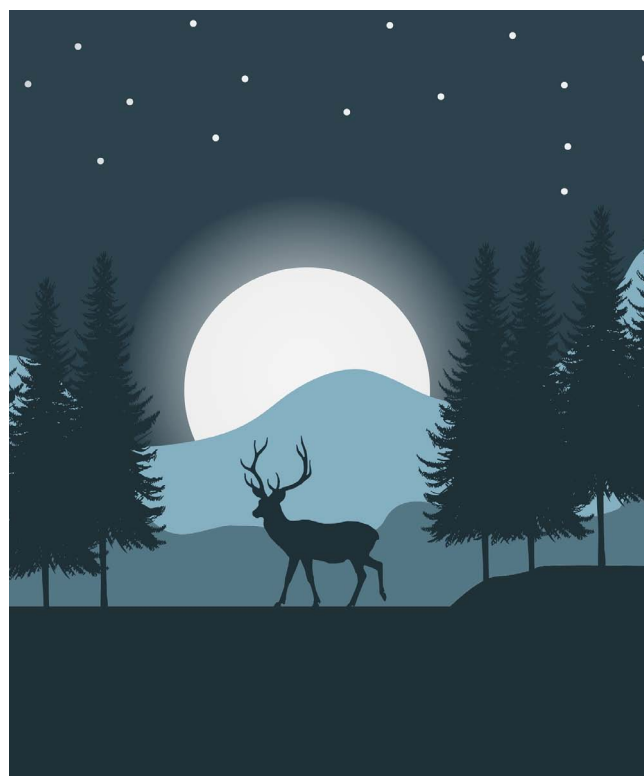
- Use white or metallic paint to create a background on the canvas or thick paper.
- Ideas for the background include:
 - A snowy forest with trees
 - A winter night sky with stars
 - A simple gradient of winter colours like blue, white, and silver

2. Create the Deer Silhouette:

- Draw a deer outline onto black construction paper (a stag with antlers can be particularly striking).
- Cut out the deer shape carefully using scissors.

3. Assemble the Artwork:

- Once the background is dry, glue the black deer silhouette onto the painted base. Position it to create a dramatic focal point.
- You can add more than one deer if you like for example a male and female.



4. Add Finishing Touches:

- Use paint or metallic markers to add details like falling snow, stars, or even a moon in the background.
- Optional: Add texture by gluing small elements like glitter for snow or foil for a shiny effect.

5. Display:

- Once everything is dry, the finished piece can be framed or hung up as a striking piece of seasonal art.

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Learning Element:

How Deer Adapt to Winter:

- 🌲 Deer grow thicker, hollow-haired winter coats to protect them from the cold.
- 🌲 Deer are less active in winter so they can conserve energy. They also eat less and have reduced digestive activity.
- 🌲 Its important not to disturb deer so they don't waste the energy.
- 🌲 Reflect on how the silhouette mimics how deer are often seen in the wild, standing out as dark figures in winter landscapes.

Why This Activity is Great:

- 🌲 **Encourages Artistic Skill:** Teens can practice blending colours, using contrast, and creating depth in their artwork.
- 🌲 **Fosters Creativity:** This project allows personal interpretation of winter landscapes and deer, making each piece unique.
- 🌲 **Raises Awareness About Wildlife:** Teens learn about deer behaviours and their survival strategies during winter while creating something meaningful.
- 🌲 **Inspiring Décor:** The finished artwork doubles as a beautiful seasonal decoration or gift.

This craft combines artistic expression with a deeper understanding of deer and their winter adaptations, making it an inspiring and educational activity for teens.



Upcycled Jar Lid Deer Ornament

Materials Needed:

- Old jar lids (from jam, sauces, or pickles)
- Twine or ribbon
- Paint (acrylic works well for a strong finish)
- Glue (strong craft glue or hot glue, with supervision if needed)
- Thin wire (for reinforcing antlers)
- Scrap fabric, beads, buttons, or small embellishments for decoration

Instructions:

1. Prepare the Jar Lids:

- Wash and dry the jar lids thoroughly.
- Paint the inside or outside of the lid in festive colours (brown for the deer face, with optional metallic touches for a holiday theme). Allow to dry.

2. Create the Antlers:

- Cut and shape thin wire into antler forms, ensuring they are sized to balance well with the lid.
- Wrap the wire with twine for a natural appearance, securing it with glue.
- Glue or tape the antlers securely to the back of the jar lid.



3. Decorate the Face:

- Use buttons or beads to create the eyes and nose of the deer. A red bead can be used for a "Rudolph" style.
- **Optional:** Cut fabric scraps into ear shapes or small bows to add personality to the deer.

4. Add a Hanger:

- Attach twine or ribbon to the top of the lid (either glued or looped through a hole if the lid has one).

5. Personalise and Display:

- Teens can customise their deer ornaments by adding glitter, painting festive patterns like snowflakes, or even adding small names or messages.
- Hang on a tree, wreath, or wall as unique Christmas decorations.

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Learning Element:

Sustainable Craft Making:

- "This project turns everyday waste into something creative and beautiful."
- "Upcycling materials reduces landfill waste and helps protect wildlife habitats."
- "By repurposing items, we're helping conserve resources and reduce environmental harm."

Deer and Winter Wildlife:

- "Winter is a challenging time for deer, but they survive by adapting their behaviour and diets."
- "Small changes, like reducing waste, contribute to preserving their natural habitats."

Why This Activity Works:

- 🌲 **Reuses Common Items:** Jar lids provide a larger, sturdier surface to work on, allowing for more detailed designs.
- 🌲 **Promotes Creativity:** Teens can personalise their ornaments to reflect their style and interest.
- 🌲 **Raises Awareness:** Highlights the connection between sustainability and wildlife conservation in a fun, hands-on way.
- 🌲 **Functional Art:** Creates durable, reusable decorations that can be cherished for years.

