

## **Start The Year With Light.**

One of the great consolations(1) of the end of the year is a New Year's Eve party. We don't always go to a party on New Year's Eve. Sometimes we prefer to stay at home, by the fire, with good food and drink, family and maybe a few friends, and welcome the new year quietly. This December 31st, however, was different. We were invited to two parties, and we decided to go to both of them. The first was quiet and relaxed. A friend of mine, Barbara, was hosting(2) it, and she had decided that it should only be two hours long. It went from five o'clock until seven(3). She has two small children and wanted to be able to put them in bed by eight o'clock, which I understand. So, it was an unusual party, short and sweet(4). "The party will finish when it's New Year's in Sao Paolo" she joked. The next party was quite different. There were lots of people, lots of noise, food, music, drink, and games. This felt like a celebration. I bumped(5) into a few people I knew, and we caught up with each other. Then the hostess of the party announced that we all had to go outside. There was a large wooden fire burning in a round fire pit; people were standing around it keeping warm. Large, colored paper rectangles were handed out to groups of three or four people. They gently opened them, and I could see that they were tissue paper (6)bags. But they weren't just bags. These groups of people then held them upside down and lit a pad(7) of paper that was attached to a small wire frame. The paper had some kind of flammable fluid in it that burned well, and filled the paper bags, or lanterns with hot air. After a few minutes each lantern lifted slowly into the air and we all cheered and clapped. It was a beautiful sight. About seventeen of them, of different colors, floated up into the night's sky. We were all moved by the scene; it seemed to symbolize part of us leaving, and new hopes rising, a silent prayer for the New Year.

1. 'Consolation' is a noun that means a 'benefit' or 'positive element that makes up for negative ones'.

- a. He didn't win; he was second in the race. However, he got \$2000 which was a great consolation.
- b. We missed our plane, and got home late. Our only consolation was that there was no traffic.

2. 'To host' means to organise an event, and to be in charge of the location.

- a. Toyota will be hosting an international party celebrating clean energy cars.
- b. I'm going to host a surprise party for my best friend.

3. Often with expressions of time, we miss out the word 'o'clock'.

- a. The movie starts at five thirty and finishes at seven.
- b. We'll leave at six o'clock, so we should arrive at their place by eight.

4. 'Short and sweet' could be a literal description, but it is often used figuratively as 'conveniently brief and to the point'.

- a. My doctor's appointment was short and sweet. She answered all my questions and explained everything without going on and on.
- b. "Did you get your wall painted?"

"Yes, thanks. The project was short and sweet."

5. 'To bump into someone' can mean the literal act of knocking into someone, but it often means to meet someone by chance.

- a. I was coming out of Safeway, and I bumped into my neighbor.

**b. You'll never guess who I bumped into...my ex-husband.**

**6. 'Tissue paper' is a very fine, very breakable paper that is often used to fill up a gift bag.**

**a. Fill the bag with tissue paper so the present inside doesn't move around.**

**b. You can use tissue paper for many craft projects.**

**7. The word 'pad' has several meanings. 'A pad of paper' is like a small book of paper, pad being like a block. 'Pad' is also slang for a house/home. And 'cotton pads' are often used to cover injuries that have bled.**

**a. I need to buy each of my children 6 pads of writing paper for school.**

**b. Hey, this is a nice pad. How long have you lived here?**

**c. In the hospital they put cotton pads on his injuries and held them in place with bandages.**

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