

CHRISTMAS TREE

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READING COMPREHENSION

AROUND THE WORLD

Polish Christmas trees

CHRISTMAS TREES

Trees have been a part of many holidays throughout history. The evergreen fir tree was traditionally used to celebrate winter festivals. Many believe Martin Luther, a 16th century German preacher, started the traditions of bringing a fir tree into the home. One legend says that he was walking home through the woods one night and notices how beautifully the stars shone through trees. He wanted to share the beauty, so he cut down the tree and took it home. He placed small, lighted candles on the branches and said it would be a symbol of the beautiful Christmas sky. It is thought this is when the Christmas tree was born.



ST. BONIFACE

Another story says St. Boniface left England and traveled to Germany to preach to the pagan tribes to convert them to Christianity. He had to have come across a group of pagans about to sacrifice a young boy while worshipping an oak tree. St. Boniface was angry and decided to have cut down the tree. However, to his amazement a young fir tree sprang up from the roots of the tree. St. Boniface took this as a sign of the Christian faith and his followers decorated the tree with candles so he could preach all night.

PRINCE ALBERT

The custom of decorating evergreen trees is thought to have come from 16th century Germany and then later adopted by Queen Victoria. Prince Albert, who was married to Queen Victoria, made Christmas trees popular in England in the Victoria Era. The first Christmas tree was put up for him in 1841 at Windsor Castle and decorated with candles, and spicy gingerbread. Wealthy English families decorated their trees with tiny musical instruments, costume jewelry,

angels, peacocks, and other figures. Children and families decorated their trees with painted eggshells, tinsel, and ornaments as Eve was forbidden to eat from the tree.

TREES

The leaves of most trees change color and drop off in the fall. Christmas trees are made from evergreens because they keep their green leaves all year long. Their long, thin leaves are called needles. Evergreens can even keep their leaves during snowstorms, making them perfect for celebrating Christmas.

AROUND THE WORLD

Polish Christmas trees often have angels, peacocks, and stars on them. Swedish trees are decorated with colorful wooden ornaments and straw figures of children and animals. In Japan, many Christmas trees have tiny fans and paper lanterns on them. Czechoslovakian families decorate their trees with ornaments made from painted eggshells. Tannenbaum (Christmas trees) in Germany are typically decorated in secret with lights, tinsel, and ornaments by the family. It is lit and revealed on Christmas Eve with nuts, and gifts under its branches.

ARTIFICIAL TREES

Some people do not use real trees for Christmas, but use artificial trees instead. Some look just like real trees, but others look very different. Artificial trees can even be made of shiny silver.

THE FIRST CHRISTMAS TREE

The first Christmas tree in New York City was put up in 1846. During the Depression era in 1931, a group of workers put a small tree at the center of the construction site. The tradition has been continued ever since. The Rockefeller tree is chosen each year, cut down, and transported to the city. The largest tree displayed at



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PRINCE ALBERT

The custom of the 16th century Prince Albert trees popular was put up with candles, and their trees dolls.

AROUND THE WORLD

Polish Christmas trees often have stars on them. Swedish trees are wooden ornaments and straw figurines. In Japan, many Christmas paper lanterns on them. Czechoslovak their trees with ornaments made of Tannenbaum (Christmas trees) in a decorated in secret with lights, for parents. It is lit and revealed on Christmas cookies, nuts, and gifts under its tree.

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Some people do not use real trees artificial trees instead. Some look like white others look very different. Artificial trees can even be bright pink or shiny silver.

ROCKEFELLER CENTER CHRISTMAS TREE

One of the most famous Christmas trees each year is the Rockefeller Center Christmas tree in New York City. This tree dates back to the Depression era in 1931. Construction workers put a small tree at the center of the construction site. The tradition has been continued ever since. The Rockefeller tree is chosen each year, cut down, and transported to the city. The largest tree displayed at Rockefeller Center arrived in 1948. It was a Norway Spruce from Connecticut that measured 100 feet tall. The Rockefeller Center tree lighting is a major televised event and thousands of people visit the tree throughout the holiday season.

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WILD TREES

Some people cut down wild trees to use for Christmas. One of the problems with wild trees is that they do not always grow in nice shapes. Most people buy Christmas trees grown on special farms. Trees from farms usually have better shapes. Choosing a Christmas tree is a fun holiday tradition for many families.

FARMS

Most people buy their Christmas tree from a farm. It takes around six to eight years for a tree to mature. Baby trees, called seedlings, are planted in rows. Growers shear the tips of the branches when they are around 2 feet tall to give them a nice shape. Once the tree is big enough, it is cut and baled in twine or plastic to be transported.

CHOOSING A TREE

Choosing a tree is a fun tradition for many families. They should choose a tree that has green, bendable needles. Once a tree is taken home and set up, people decorate their tree to give it a unique look. After the holiday season, the tree can be mulched or broken up.

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READING PASSAGE

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CHRISTMAS TREE Comprehension Questions

Name: _____ Date: _____

According to one legend, who is believed to have started the tradition of bringing a fir tree into the home for winter festivals?

- a. St. Boniface
- b. Prince Albert
- c. Martin Luther
- d. Rockefeller

What was Martin Luther's reason for bringing a fir tree into the home, according to the legend?

- a. To celebrate his birthday
- b. To symbolize the beauty of the Christmas sky
- c. To use as firewood
- d. To ward off evil spirits

St. Boniface, in the story, is said to have cut down an oak tree and witnessed the sprouting of a young fir tree as a symbol of:

- a. Pagan rituals
- b. Christian faith
- c. Winter festivals
- d. Martin Luther's teachings

Who is credited with making Christmas trees popular in England during the Victoria Era?

- a. St. Boniface
- b. Martin Luther
- c. Prince Albert
- d. Rockefeller

CHRISTMAS TREE Comprehension Questions

1. Prince Albert decorate the first Christmas tree?

a. No

b. Yes

2. The first Christmas tree was decorated with:

a. Tinsel

3. The first Christmas tree was made of:

a. Pine

4. The first Christmas tree was brought to England by:

- a. 1-2 years
- b. 3-5 years
- c. 6-8 years
- d. 10-12 years

What is a key criterion for choosing a Christmas tree, according to the text?

- a. Size
- b. Shape
- c. Color
- d. Bendable needles



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QUESTIONS

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Extension Questions

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