

THE CHRISTMAS TREE

Before the advent of Christianity, many pagan cultures used trees in their celebrations. The Romans decorated trees with toys during their winter celebrations and ancient tribes brought trees into their homes to create a sense of nature being with them. Originally Christmas was called *Christes Masse* and officially begun in 350A.D. Christmas began to be celebrated Julius I, the Bishop of Rome, set aside December 25th as the day of celebration of the birth of Jesus. Trees were part of the festivities. Evergreens were used to signify the eternal nature of the new life because they remain green all year long.

Many tales are told about how the Christmas tree came to be an important part of our celebrations. In Germany the story about Marin Luther is a very popular story. After admiring the stars during a Christmas Eve walk through the woods, he cut down a fir tree, brought it home and decorated it with candles for his children.

There is also a story about St. Boniface. He was a missionary in Germany. It's said that he cut down an oak tree that the pagans used in their rituals and behind it he saw a small evergreen. He told the pagans that they should look at the tree and see it as a tree of peace, because their very houses were made of fir trees. He also said it was the sign of eternal life because it was always green. And, he added that its needles and branches pointed upward, signifying heaven. He told them to take it into their homes and offer gifts and kindness to each other.

In more modern times, the Christmas tree seems to have become popular in Germany, then spread to other European countries and then to England, followed by the United States. Tinsel was place on the tree to decorate it and make it look like it was covered with spider webs, as in the forest. In 1841 in England, the first tree went up in queen Victoria's Windsor Castle. It became a staple of the English Christmas from that time on.

The first Christmas tree was brought to the United States by an Ohio pastor in 1851 and Calvin Coolidge placed the first Christmas tree in the White House there in 1929. The National Christmas Tree was placed in Sherman Square in Washington D. C. in 1924. Sherman Square is very close to the White House and every year, the President of the United States lights it to inaugurate the American Christmas season.

Name _____

Questions "The Christmas Tree"

1. Who was St. Boniface?
2. Why did ancient pagans bring trees into their homes?
3. How did the Romans decorate their trees?
4. Name two things St. Boniface said the little evergreen stood for.
5. Where is the National Christmas Tree placed?
6. Who lights the National Christmas Tree every year?
7. When was the first Christmas tree put up in England?
8. Where was the first Christmas tree in England located?
9. When was the first Christmas tree brought to the United States?
10. When was the first Christmas tree placed in the White House and by what President?

**Paragraph and Designed Tree Decoration
Rubric**

The students will write a paragraph, tell why they designed the tree decorations, what the decoration would be made of, and how they would explain the decoration to their grandchildren as they hung it on a tree in the year 2052.

For a grade of:	The student has:	Teacher check list:
D	-drawn a tree decoration	
C	-drawn a tree decoration -explained why they designed the tree decoration	
B	-drawn a tree decoration -explained why they designed the tree decoration -explained what the decoration would be made of	
A	-drawn a tree decoration -explained why they designed the tree decoration -explained what the decoration would be made of -told how they would explain the decoration to their grandchildren as they hung it on a tree in the year 2052	



White House Christmas Tree Rubric

Student Group Names: _____

For a letter grade of:	The Cooperative Group must:	TECHER CHECK LIST
D	-Provide a sketch of their proposed White House Christmas Tree	
C	-Provide a sketch of their proposed White House Christmas Tree	
	-Draw and Decorate their White House Christmas Tree	
B	-Provide a sketch of their proposed White House Christmas Tree	
	-Draw and Decorate their White House Christmas Tree	
	-Write a paragraph explaining why they feel that their tree and decorations would be appropriate for the White House	
A	-Provide a sketch of their proposed White House Christmas Tree	
	-Draw and Decorate their White House Christmas Tree	
	-Write a paragraph explaining why they feel that their tree and decorations would be appropriate for the White House	
	-Give a finished report to the class	

Holiday Recipes

Gingerbread

The easiest thing to do is purchase a Betty Crocker or other brand Gingerbread cake and cookie mix and make it according to the directions on the back of the box.

Hot Lemon Sauce (one recipe for each Gingerbread Cake)

1/2 cup sugar

1-tablespoon cornstarch

1/4 teaspoon salt

1/4 cup cold water

3/4 cup boiling water

3 tablespoons lemon juice

1 teaspoon grated lemon rind

1/2 teaspoon vanilla extract

2 tablespoons butter

Combine sugar, cornstarch, and salt. Gradually stir in cold water. Gradually stir in boiling water and cook for 3 minutes, or until smooth, clear and thickened slightly. Stir in remaining ingredients. Make 1-1/2 cups.

Wassail (Serve hot or cold)

Any spiced fruit punch will do.