

Discuss the topics: { Why do people decorate a Christmas tree?
 What does the tree symbolize?
 Who 'invented' the Christmas tree?

1. Do you know the words? Match the words and their meaning.

Fir tree	świątynia
Solstice	jodła
Temple	kaznodzieja, pastor
Everlasting	przesilenie
Preacher	jadalny
Forester	nieustający

The History of Christmas Trees

The evergreen fir tree has traditionally been used to celebrate winter festivals (pagan and Christian) for thousands of years. Pagans used branches of it to decorate their homes during the winter solstice, as it made them think of the spring to come. The Romans used Fir Trees to decorate their temples at the festival of Saturnalia. Christians use it as a sign of everlasting life with God.

The first person to bring a Christmas Tree into a house, in the way we know it today, may have been the 16th century German preacher Martin Luther. A story is told that, one night before Christmas, he was walking through the forest and looked up to see the stars shining through the tree branches. It was so beautiful, that he went home and told his children that it reminded him of Jesus, who left the stars of heaven to come to earth at Christmas.

There is another legend, from Germany, about how the Christmas Tree came into being, it goes: Once on a cold Christmas Eve night, a forester and his family were in their cottage gathered round the fire to keep warm. Suddenly there was a knock on the door. When the forester opened the door, he found a poor little boy standing on the door step, lost and alone. The forester welcomed him into his house and the family fed and washed him and put him to bed in the youngest sons own bed (he had to share with his brother that night!). The next morning, Christmas Morning, the family were woken up by a choir of angels, and the poor little boy had turned into Jesus, the Christ Child. The Christ Child went into the front garden of the cottage and broke a branch off a Fir tree and gave it to the family as a present to say thank you for looking after him. So ever since then, people have remembered that night by bringing a Christmas Tree into their homes!

In Germany, the first Christmas Trees were decorated with edible things, such as gingerbread and gold covered apples. Then glass makers made special small ornaments similar to some of the decorations used today.

2. Are the sentences true or false?	3. Complete the sentences with words from the text.
The evergreen trees were associated with winter festivals.	The longest days are during the summer
Martin Luther believed that Jesus decorated the trees with stars.	When I look at this picture, it me of your mother.
The forester's son came back home late at Christmas Eve.	Christians believe that God lives in
The branch of the fir tree was a gift from little Jesus.	To make you need some flour, butter, honey, eggs and lots of spices.
The first Christmas tree decorations were made from wood.	They left the city, moved to the country and hired an old

Based on: James Cooper, 'The History of Christmas Trees',
<http://www.whychristmas.com/customs/trees.shtml> (access date: 14.12.2016)

Key:

Exe 2: T, F, F, T, F

Exe. 3: solstice, reminds, heaven, gingerbread, cottage