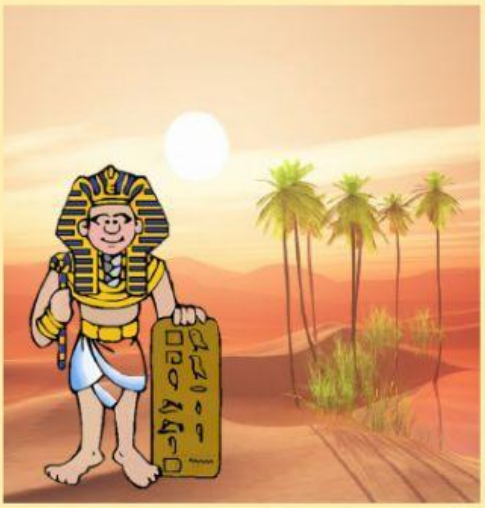


HISTORY OF THE CHRISTMAS TREE TRADITION.

Nowadays, there is a tradition to celebrate Christmas with a beautiful fir plenty of ornaments, and presents in the living room. The origin of Christmas tree comes from ancient times.

Let's learn something about it...



Egyptian origin.

Long ago, before Christianity people used evergreen plants to decorate their homes, to celebrate the Winter Solstice. On December 21st or December 22nd, the day is the shortest of the year. From that date the days are longer and longer. The evergreen plants symbolise the God of Sun will be strong again. Egyptians filled their homes with green palm plants in honour of the god Ra.



Northern origin.

In Northern Europe, the Celts decorated their homes and temples with evergreen branches which signified eternal life. The Vikings thought evergreens were the plants of Balder, the god of light and peace.

Roman origin.



The ancient Romans celebrated the Winter Solstice with a feast called Saturnalia in honor of Saturn, the god of agriculture. Saturnalia was the most important celebration in Roman life. It was a celebration between 17 and 25 December in which no one could be prosecuted for injuring or killing people, theft... But, Saturnalia could also be a time for kindness and exchange of presents. The birth of Jesus was set at the last day of Saturnalia by the first Christian Romans to attract pagans, and Saturnalia transformed into the celebration of the birth of Christ.

German origin.



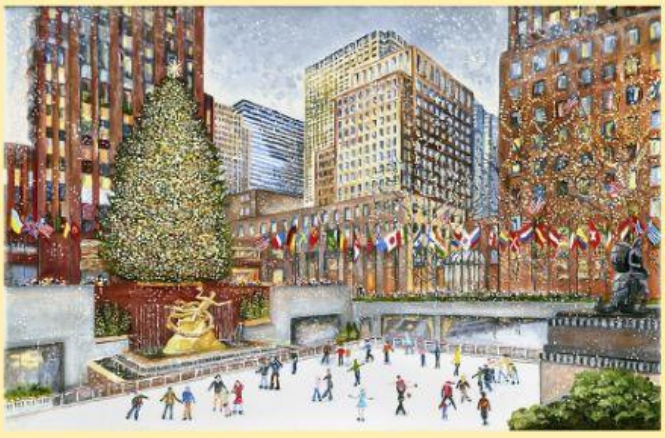
In the 16th century Germans started to decorate fir tres inside their homes. At the beginning Christmas trees were decorated with fruit, later some families decorated them with candles, one for each family member.

A legend says that Martin Luther was walking home through the woods, and he liked the beauty of starlights at night, so he wanted to share this experience with his family, and he placed small candles on the branches of a fir tree.

The modern Christmas Tree.

In the XIX century, German immigrants brought the tradition of Christmas trees to Britain. When Queen Victoria started to celebrate Christmas with fir trees and presents hung on the branches, everybody followed her and they placed presents around the decorated trees at home.

In America, the president Franklin Pierce decorated the first Christmas tree in the White House, about 1850. Now, Christmas tree tradition is all over the world. Many people of other religions have adopted the Christmas tree (even in Japan).



In the U.S.A. 35 million Christmas trees are sold every year. The most famous Christmas tree in the United States is placed in the Rockefeller Centre in New York. It is between 21 and 30 metres high, and about 125 million people visit it every year.

1.– Choose the correct answers about the text:

1.– What is the traditional Christmas tree nowadays? palm tree fir pine tree

2.– When is the Winter Solstice? 21st March 21st June 21st January 21st December

3.– Egyptians decorated their homes with green palm plants in honor of:
Christ Ra Zeus Balder

4.– Who thought that evergreen were the plants of Balder (the god of light and peace)?
Roman Celts Egyptians Vikings

5.– Who decorated their temples with evergreen branches because they signified eternal life?
Roman Celts Egyptians Vikings

6.– What was the name of the Roman festivities in Winter?
Christmas Easter Saturnalia Birth of Christ

7.– The exchange of presents started in: Egypt Rome Germany England

8.– In the 16th century, who decorated their homes with fir tres?
Germans Egyptians English American

9.– Who was the first character that started to decorate Christmas trees with candles?
Rockefeller Martin Luther Queen Victoria Franklin

10.– Who introduced Christmas trees in England?
Egyptians Romans Germans Americans

11.– Where is placed the most famous Christmas Tree in America?
New York Chicago Washington Los Angeles

12.– The Christmas tree placed in the Rockefeller Centre is about... high.
25 metres 10 metres 50 metres 250 metres

2.– Look up these words or expressions on the dictionary:

nowadays: fir: solstice: ancient times:

to symbolise: to fill: evergreen plants:

god: Celts: Egyptians: Northern:

branch: to injure: thought: past of "to think":pensar

to be prosecuted: ser perseguido to kill: theft: kindness:

to exchange: to set: establecer to attract pagans: para atraer paganos

Christ: century: through the Woods: a través del bosque

candles: starlight: brought: the past of "to bring": traer

to share: to hang: all over the world:

sold: past of "to sell": high: