

THE GREAT TREE DEBATE

A LOOK AT THE PROS AND CONS OF REAL
AND ARTIFICIAL CHRISTMAS TREES!

Name: _____ Date: _____ Hour: _____

The Great Tree Debate

It's a familiar sight in December: twinkling lights, silvery tinsel, round shiny bulbs, a gold star, and presents, all on or under a fir or pine tree. Some people have a tradition of dusting off a box and bringing out a tree to assemble. Other families enjoy the annual outing to find the perfect real Christmas tree. But which is better: a real Christmas tree or an artificial one?

According to the National Christmas Tree Association, between 25 and 30 million real Christmas trees are sold in the United States each year. They are grown in all fifty states, and popular varieties include the balsam fir, Douglas fir, Fraser fir, Scotch pine, Virginia pine, and white pine. It is better to get a real Christmas tree than an artificial one for many reasons. For one thing, the majority of the trees are grown in the United States, which helps our economy, whereas about 80% of artificial trees are made in China. Another benefit is that real trees are a renewable resource, since they can be grown again. Since most trees come from a tree farm, usually one to three seedlings are planted for each real tree that is harvested. Artificial trees are plastic- (and therefore oil-) based products. Oil is a non-renewable resource. Finally, real trees are biodegradable and can be re-used to enrich water environments, as mulch, or as a natural soil erosion barrier. By contrast, artificial trees are not biodegradable and some might contain lead, which is known to be harmful.

Despite these benefits of real trees, many people think artificial trees are better than real ones. One reason is that it saves time and money to have an artificial tree that is used year after year. Why keep paying \$25 every year for a tree when you could buy an artificial tree and use it for many years? Another reason is that people who might have allergies around real trees won't have problems with an artificial tree. Real trees give off fragrances and pollen that could be irritating. Third, you can buy fire retardant trees. Natural trees are wood, of course, and could potentially catch fire in your house. Additionally, artificial trees give you more options- you might be able to find a manufactured variety of tree that is not grown in your area. Furthermore artificial trees are easier to take care of: unpack, set up, take down, re-pack. There is no watering or cleaning up dead needles off the floor.

There are many good reasons for having either a real or an artificial tree; it comes down to your personal preference and priorities. You'll need to consider the environment and what is best for it. You'll also need to consider how much your time is worth and whether or not you can care for a real tree. So even though I prefer real Christmas trees, either way, trees are a great tradition around Christmastime and both trees look great with that handprint ornament you made in preschool hanging on them.



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“The Great Tree Debate”

1. What is the central question posed in the article? _____

2. What is the claim and counter-claim addressed in the article? _____

3. Circle all the transition words or phrases you can find in the article.

4. Fill out the diagram with pros and cons for artificial and real trees.

<u>Real Trees- Pros</u>	<u>Real Trees- Cons</u>
<u>Artificial Trees- Pros</u>	<u>Artificial Trees- Cons</u>

5. What is your final opinion- are real or artificial Christmas trees better? Why? _____

The Great Tree Debate questions

1. Central question = Which tree is better, real or artificial?
2. The claim is that it is better to get a real tree than an artificial tree.

The counter-claim is that artificial trees are better than real ones.

3. Transition words/ phrases:

Paragraph 1: other families, but,

Paragraph 2: According to, For one thing, whereas, Another benefit, since, Finally, By contrast

Paragraph 3: Despite, One reason, Another reason, Third, Additionally, Furthermore

Paragraph 4: Also, Either way

4. Real tree pros: grown in US, helps economy, renewable resource, biodegradable, can be used as mulch or to enrich water ecosystems

Real tree cons: cost money every year, time to get it, allergies, not fire proof, less options (grown locally), harder to care for

Artificial tree pros: save money, save time, more options, no irritants, fire proof, easier to care for

Artificial cons: made in China, oil-based so non-renewable resource, non-biodegradable, might have harmful lead