

Which is better? An artificial tree or a live tree?

- **Vocabulary:** artificial, natural, environmental impact, intensive, contribute, carbon dioxide, eco-friendly, repurpose,
- **Understand** the phrase “a little bit of a grey area”

Skills students need for this activity

- Listening
- Comprehension
- Critical thinking (environmental impact)
- Voicing opinions (optional debate)
- Writing (essay)

Warm-up

(5 - 10 minutes)

Ask the question: “Do you and your family do anything special during the Christmas holiday?”

- Ask students to elaborate.

Ask the question: “What types of decorations do you see put up around town (or at home) in the winter?”

- Ask for details.

If the students are still stuck, ask if anyone has heard of a holiday where one would decorate a TREE in the winter. Try not to mention “Christmas” by name but elaborate if necessary.

Lesson

(15 - 30 minutes)

–Depending on the activities the teacher wants to include.

- **SAY:** Many people around the world buy and decorate pine trees for Christmas. In America, over 80% of households buy and decorate a tree for Christmas. Many choose an artificial tree over a natural (real or live) tree. How do you think this impacts the environment? Keep this question in mind while watching the video

Wirecutter “Are Fake Christmas Trees

Actually More Eco-Friendly?”

- **Stop** at 3:53 (the video then discusses products to buy and is not necessary to the lesson)
- Watch the video 2 times through. First on its own. Then on the second round, give students a worksheet with the short answer questions. They can be fill-in-the-blank OR multiple choice.
- The pros and cons list can be used as well or as a supplement for a discussion piece.
 - Idea: create a debate-style discussion as to which type of tree is better and why one type of tree is better than the other

Assessment

Short answer or multiple choice (possibly fill in while watching)

- According to the video, which type of tree is better for the environment?
- How are many of the Christmas trees used in the United States grown?
- What is one major reason that people do not get an artificial tree?
- What is the name of the chemical that live trees absorb?
- How are live trees repurposed (recycled) after Christmas?
- According to the video how long does it take to offset (cancel out) the CO2 produced by an artificial tree?

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Assessment

Formative assessment or essay

- What type of Christmas tree do you have at home? Explain why you think your family has that type of tree.
- If you were to get a Christmas tree would you get a live, natural tree or an artificial one? Explain your answer.
- New artificial trees are becoming more and more lifelike (realistic) as time goes on. Describe how this could impact the sale of natural trees/artificial trees in years to come.

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- List the pros and cons of both types of trees. (See below)

You can create a debate-style discussion as to which type of tree is better and why one type of tree is better than the other

Sample answers:

Artificial		Natural	
Pros	Cons	Pros	Cons
Don't have to buy every year	Have to have lots of space for storage	Good for the Earth - limit erosion	Clean up of pine needles & sap
Easy to take care of	Expensive	Tree farms do not hurt the environment	Redecorate every year
Can last over a decade		Absorb CO2	
Pre-lit		Habitat (home) for wildlife	
		Repurposed after Christmas "recyclable"	

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