

History of The Christmas Tree-Topper

A Christmas tree-topper is the decoration that is placed on the very top of a Christmas tree. There are some traditional tree-toppers that have been around for hundreds of years and some more modern choices.



The most common tree-toppers include a star, an angel or a fairy. Other common choices include a rosette, a bow or a cross. Nowadays, almost anything goes on the top of the tree based on personal choice. Some of the more modern unusual choices are upside-down elf legs, a dinosaur or a favourite cartoon character.



Reasons for Traditional Tree-Toppers

Traditional tree-toppers are usually things that played a role in the story of Jesus being born. They help to mark the traditional Christian celebration of Christmas. A figure of the baby Jesus was one of the earlier items to be placed at the top of a tree by some people.

A star is chosen as it represents the 'Star of Bethlehem' that was seen and followed by the Three Wise Men to where Jesus was born.

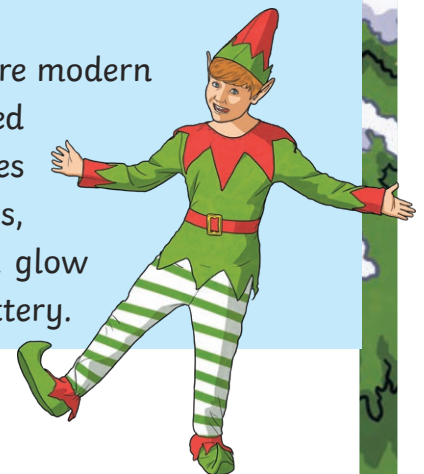


An angel may represent the angel that appeared to the shepherds to tell them about the birth or the Angel Gabriel who appeared to Mary to announce the coming of Jesus.



A Touch of Light

As with other tree decorations, some more modern tree-toppers have been given the added feature of lighting up. Just as candles on trees were replaced by electric lights, some tree-toppers have been given a glow from within, often powered by a battery.



Modern Favourites

Many people now see the Christmas tree-topper as the important finishing touch to their tree. Tree decoration has become a big business for shops, right from the tree-topper to the baubles, tinsel, lights and other additions.



Holiday figures, such as a snowman, Father Christmas or a reindeer, might give a more fun look to a tree. Flowers and leaves are more of a classic look. Snowflakes and starbursts are other commonly chosen alternatives.

There are some people who prefer to be completely original or unusual with their choice. How about personalised lettering or initials? For the extravagant finish, there's the sparkle of a jewelled crown. If lights and sparkle are not enough, there are even electrically-powered, moving tree-toppers now – but make sure you have a good, sturdy tree!

History of the Christmas Tree

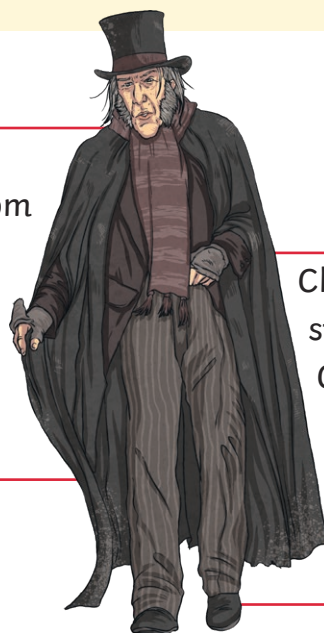


In the 1500s, real trees were brought into the home and decorated. The tradition is considered to stem from Germany. Sometimes known as 'Paradise Trees', they were first decorated with candles, apples, nuts and berries.

Other decorations started to become more popular in the 1700s, such as paper ornaments, fruits and sweets. Queen Victoria and her husband, Prince Albert, are often credited with making it more fashionable to have decorated trees in the home during the 1800s.

Did You Know...?

In the 1900s, artificial trees began to be produced, made from materials such as aluminum and plastic. These gained popularity and many people choose them for their homes now.



Charles Dickens' original story of 'A Christmas Carol', featuring the famous character, Ebenezer Scrooge, does not mention a Christmas tree at all.

Questions

1. How long have some traditional tree-toppers been around? Tick **one**.

- nearly ten years
- hundreds of years
- thousands of years
- since Jesus was born

2. According to the introduction, what are **three** of the most common tree-toppers?

3. Look at the section called '**Reasons for Traditional Tree-Toppers**'.
What is represented by a star being chosen as a Christmas tree-topper?

4. Look at the section called '**Modern Favourites**'.
Write **one** example of a tree-topper mentioned for each of the following headings.
The first one has been done for you.

Holiday Figures	Father Christmas
Other Commonly Chosen Alternatives	
More Unusual Choices	

5. Why do you think it is good advice to 'make sure you have a good, sturdy tree'?

6. Look at the section called '**History of the Christmas Tree**'.
Draw lines to match the development of the Christmas tree and its decorations with the correct time period.

1500s	●	●	Paper ornaments, fruit and sweets became more popular decorations to add.
1700s	●	●	Queen Victoria and Prince Albert made it more fashionable to have decorated trees in the home.
1800s	●	●	Real trees were first brought into the home and decorated.

7. Look at the sentence beginning 'In the 1900s, artificial trees began to be produced...'
Explain the meaning of the word, 'artificial'.

8. Look at the whole text.
Describe **two** different developments in Christmas tree decoration that have involved the use of electricity.

Answers

1. How long have some traditional tree-toppers been around? Tick **one**.

- nearly ten years
- hundreds of years**
- thousands of years
- since Jesus was born

2. According to the introduction, what are **three** of the most common tree-toppers?

The most common tree-toppers include a star, an angel or a fairy.

3. Look at the section called '**Reasons for Traditional Tree-Toppers**'.

What is represented by a star being chosen as a Christmas tree-topper?

A star is chosen as it represents the 'Star of Bethlehem' that was seen and followed by the Three Wise Men to where Jesus was born.

4. Look at the section called '**Modern Favourites**'.

Write **one** example of a tree-topper mentioned for each of the following headings.

The first one has been done for you.

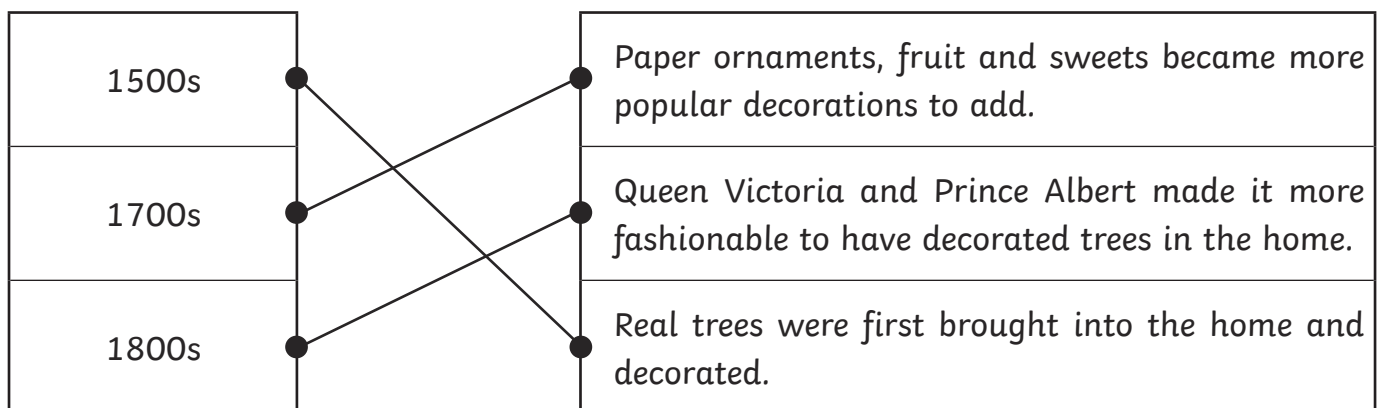
Holiday Figures	Father Christmas
Other Commonly Chosen Alternatives	snowflakes or starbursts
More Unusual Choices	personalised lettering or initials, a jewelled crown or electrical moving tree-toppers

5. Why do you think it is good advice to 'make sure you have a good, sturdy tree'?

The moving tree-topper may be heavy or its movement may make the tree topple if it is not sturdy.

6. Look at the section called '**History of the Christmas Tree**'.

Draw lines to match the development of the Christmas tree and its decorations with the correct time period.



7. Look at the sentence beginning 'In the 1900s, artificial trees began to be produced...'

Explain the meaning of the word, 'artificial'.

Artificial means made by humans/not natural/a copy of something natural.

8. Look at the whole text.

Describe **two** different developments in Christmas tree decoration that have involved the use of electricity.

Answers must include both of the following:

- **reference to the introduction of electric lights;**
- **moving tree-toppers.**

History of The Christmas Tree-Topper

A Christmas tree-topper is the finishing decoration that is placed on the very top of a Christmas tree. There are some traditional tree-toppers that have been around for hundreds of years and some more modern choices.



The most common tree-toppers include a star, an angel or a fairy. Other recognised choices include a **rosette**, a **finial**, a bow or a cross. Nowadays, almost anything goes on the top of the tree based on personal choice. Some of the more modern unusual choices are upside-down elf legs, a dinosaur or a favourite cartoon character.



Reasons for Traditional Tree-Toppers

Traditional tree-toppers are usually linked to the story of Jesus being born. They help to mark the traditional Christian celebration of Christmas. A figure of the baby Jesus was one of the earlier items to be placed on the top of the tree by some people.

A star is chosen by others as it represents the 'Star of Bethlehem' that was seen and followed by the Three Wise Men to where Jesus was born. An angel may represent the angel that appeared to the shepherds to tell them about the birth or the Angel Gabriel who appeared to Mary to announce the coming of Jesus.



A Touch of Light



As with other tree decorations, some more modern tree-toppers have been given the added feature of lighting up. Just as candles on trees were replaced by electric lights, some tree-toppers have been given a glow from within, often powered by a battery.

Did You Know...?

- Charles Dickens' original story of 'A Christmas Carol' featuring the famous character, Ebenezer Scrooge, does not mention a Christmas tree at all.
- In the 1900s, artificial trees began to be produced, made from materials such as aluminum and plastic. These gained popularity and many people choose them for their homes now.



Modern Favourites

As decorations have evolved, many people now see the Christmas tree-topper as the vital finishing touch to their tree. Tree decoration has become a big business for shops and manufacturers, right from the tree-topper to the **baubles**, **tinsel**, lights and other additions.

Holiday figures, such as a snowman, Father Christmas or a reindeer, might give a tree a fun or light-hearted look. An arrangement of flowers and leaves can provide a more classic contemporary option. Snowflakes and starbursts are other commonly chosen alternatives.

There are some people who prefer to be completely original or unusual with their choice. How about personalised lettering or initials? For the extravagant finish, there's the sparkle of a jewelled crown. If lights and sparkle are not enough, there are even electrically-powered, moving tree-toppers now – but make sure you have a good, sturdy tree to balance it upon!



History of the Christmas Tree

Christmas trees have been around for a long time. In the 1500s, real trees were brought into the home and decorated. The tradition is considered to stem from Germany. Sometimes known as 'Paradise Trees', they were first decorated with candles, apples, nuts and berries.

Having other types of decoration on the tree started to become more popular in the 1700s. These included paper ornaments, fruits and sweets. Queen Victoria and her husband, Prince Albert, are often credited with making it more fashionable to have decorated trees in the home during the 1800s. Now, you can often see electric lights and many other unique decorations hanging from Christmas tree branches in homes.

Glossary

bauble - A shiny ball-shaped object used to hang as decoration from a Christmas tree.

finial - An ornament or decorative feature which is positioned at the top of an object.

rosette - A circular decoration made from ribbons which looks a little like a rose design.

tinsel - A decorative material mainly for Christmas trees, usually consisting of thin metallic or shiny strips attached to a thread.

Questions

1. How long have some traditional tree-toppers been around?

2. Write one example of a tree-topper mentioned for each of the following headings.

Most Common Tree-Toppers	a star
Other Recognised Choices	
More Modern, Unusual Choices	

3. Look at the section called '**Reasons for Traditional Tree-Toppers**'.

Why is a star traditionally chosen as a Christmas tree-topper?

4. Look at the section '**Modern Favourites**'.

Which of these is closest in meaning to the phrase 'finishing touch'?

- a Christmas tree that is almost decorated
- the last kick before a goal is scored
- a fine detail or action which completes a job or piece of work
- putting your hand against something before it ends

5. Why are some tree-toppers described as being 'extravagant'?

6. Look at the section called '**History of the Christmas Tree**'.

Number the following events from 1 to 4 to order the development of the Christmas tree and its decorations from earliest to most recent.

- Having decorations such as paper ornaments, fruit and sweets became popular.
- Real trees, known as 'Paradise Trees' were first brought into the home and decorated.
- Electric lights were added as further decoration to Christmas trees in the home.
- Queen Victoria and Prince Albert made it more fashionable to have decorated trees in the home.

7. What is one feature of the Christmas tree or its decoration that has changed since the introduction in the 1500s?

8. Look at the whole text.
What is the meaning of the word, 'finial'?

9. How has light featured in Christmas tree decoration, both in the past and present?

Answers

1. How long have some traditional tree-toppers been around?

hundreds of years

2. Write one example of a tree-topper mentioned for each of the following headings.

Most Common Tree-Toppers	a star
Other Recognised Choices	a rosette, a finial, a bow or a cross
More Modern, Unusual Choices	upside-down elf legs, a dinosaur or a favourite cartoon character

3. Look at the section called '**Reasons for Traditional Tree-Toppers**'.

Why is a star traditionally chosen as a Christmas tree-topper?

A star is chosen by some people as it represents the 'Star of Bethlehem' that was seen and followed by the Three Wise Men to where Jesus was born.

4. Look at the section '**Modern Favourites**'.

Which of these is closest in meaning to the phrase 'finishing touch'?

- a Christmas tree that is almost decorated
- the last kick before a goal is scored
- a fine detail or action which completes a job or piece of work**
- putting your hand against something before it ends

5. Why are some tree-toppers described as being 'extravagant'?

They are relatively excessive, elaborate or 'over the top'; they may be considered more expensive than is necessary or reasonable; they are 'fancy' rather than necessary.

6. Look at the section called '**History of the Christmas Tree**'.

Number the following events from 1 to 4 to order the development of the Christmas tree and its decorations from earliest to most recent.

- 2** Having decorations such as paper ornaments, fruit and sweets became popular.
- 1** Real trees, known as 'Paradise Trees' were first brought into the home and decorated.
- 4** Electric lights were added as further decoration to Christmas trees in the home.
- 3** Queen Victoria and Prince Albert made it more fashionable to have decorated trees in the home.

7. What is one feature of the Christmas tree or its decoration that has changed since the introduction in the 1500s?

Accept reference to any of the following:

- **any specific change in typical decorations or tree-toppers;**
- **decorated trees in the home became more fashionable;**
- **electric lights were added;**
- **artificial trees began to be produced.**

8. Look at the whole text.

What is the meaning of the word, 'finial'?

A finial is an ornament or decorative feature which is positioned at the top of an object.

9. How has light featured in Christmas tree decoration, both in the past and present?

Answers should refer to at least two of the following (one past and one present):

- **light from the Star of Bethlehem represented by a star tree-topper;**
- **modern tree-toppers lighting up or having a 'glow from within';**
- **candles on trees as a decoration in the past ;**
- **electric lights replacing candles on modern trees.**

History of The Christmas Tree-Topper

A Christmas tree-topper is the decoration that is placed on the very top of a Christmas tree. There are some traditional tree-toppers that have been around for hundreds of years as well as more modern choices.

The most common tree-toppers include a star, an angel or a fairy. Other recognised choices include a **rosette**, a **finial**, a bow or a cross. Nowadays, almost anything goes on the top of the tree based on personal preference. Some of the more modern, unusual choices are upside-down elf legs, a dinosaur or a favourite cartoon character.

Reasons for Traditional Tree-Toppers

Traditional tree-toppers are objects that are usually linked to something that played a role in the story of Jesus being born. They help to mark the traditional Christian celebration of Christmas. A figure of the baby Jesus was one of the earlier items to be placed on the top of the tree by some people.

A star is chosen by others as it represents the 'Star of Bethlehem' that was seen and followed by the Three Wise Men to where Jesus was born. An angel may represent the angel that appeared to the shepherds to tell them about the birth or the Angel Gabriel who appeared to Mary to announce the coming of Jesus.

A Touch of Light

As with other tree decorations, some more modern tree-toppers have been given the added feature of lighting up. Just as candles on trees were replaced by electric lights, some tree-toppers have been given a glow from within, often powered by a battery.

Did You Know...?

- Charles Dickens' original story of 'A Christmas Carol,' featuring the famous character, Ebenezer Scrooge, does not mention a Christmas tree at all.
- In the 1900s, artificial trees began to be produced, made from materials such as aluminum and plastic. These gained popularity and many people choose them for their homes now.
- The angel and the star remain the most popular choice of tree-toppers but both come in many different forms and designs.
- Spruce and fir are the most common species of tree used for Christmas trees. Both of these are evergreen, meaning they still have their green **foliage** during winter.





Modern Favourites

As decorations have evolved, many people now see the Christmas tree-topper as the vital finishing touch to their tree. Tree decoration has become a big business for shops and manufacturers, right from the tree-topper to the **baubles**, **tinsel**, lights and other additions.

Holiday figures, such as a snowman, Father Christmas or a reindeer, might give a tree a more whimsical look. The choice of a bouquet of flowers and leaves can provide a more classic contemporary look. Snowflakes and starbursts are other commonly chosen alternatives.

There are some people who prefer to be completely original or unusual with their choice. How about personalised lettering or initials? For the extravagant finish, there's the sparkle of a jewelled crown. If lights and sparkle are not enough, there are even electrically-powered, moving tree-toppers now – but make sure you have a good, sturdy tree!



History of the Christmas Tree

Christmas trees have been around for a long time. In the 1500s, real trees were brought into the home and decorated. The tradition is considered to stem from Germany. Sometimes known as 'Paradise Trees', they were first decorated with candles, apples, nuts and berries.

Having other types of decoration on the tree started to become more popular in the 1700s. These included paper ornaments, fruits and sweets. Queen Victoria and her husband, Prince Albert, are often credited with making it more fashionable to have decorated trees in the home during the 1800s. Now, you can often see electric lights and many other unique decorations hanging from Christmas tree branches in homes.

Glossary

bauble - A shiny spherical object used to hang as decoration from a Christmas tree.

finial - A distinctive ornament or feature at the top of an object.

foliage - The leafy parts of a tree or plant.

rosette - A circular decoration made from an arrangement of ribbons which resembles a rose.

tinsel - A decorative material mainly for Christmas trees, usually consisting of thin metallic or shiny strips attached to a thread.

Questions

1. Look at the opening sentence.

'A Christmas tree-topper is the decoration that is placed on the very top of a Christmas tree.'

Which of these definitions is closest in meaning to the word 'decoration' in this sentence.

- putting up wallpaper or painting the walls in a room
- something added to an object or place to make it look more attractive
- giving someone a badge, honour or medal
- a section or part of a Christmas tree

2. Look at the opening paragraph.

Write **two** examples of tree-toppers mentioned for each of the following headings.

The first one has been done for you.

	Example 1	Example 2
Most Common Tree-Toppers	a star	
Other Recognised Choices		
More Modern, Unusual Choices		

3. Look at the section called '**Reasons for Traditional Tree-Toppers**'.

What two things might an angel traditionally represent as a Christmas tree-topper?

4. Look at the section called '**Modern Favourites**'.

What do you think is meant by the phrase 'finishing touch'?

5. What is meant by the word 'extravagant' and what do you think makes some examples of tree-toppers more extravagant than others?

6. Look at the section called 'History of the Christmas Tree'.

Write the correct years or period of time to match the development of the Christmas tree and its decorations.

Real trees, known as 'Paradise Trees' were first brought into the home and decorated.

Having decorations such as paper ornaments, fruit and sweets became popular.

Queen Victoria and Prince Albert made it more fashionable to have decorated trees in the home.

7. What are **two** different features of the Christmas tree or its decoration that have changed since its introduction in the 1500s?

8. According to the text, what are **two** different common species of Christmas tree?

9. Why is it important for Christmas trees to be from an evergreen species?

10. Which of the following statements are facts supported by the text? Tick **two**.

- There are many different types of Christmas tree-toppers but the angel and the star are the most popular.
- Queen Victoria and Prince Albert were the first to decorate their tree with electric lights.
- The tradition of having a Christmas tree in the home has existed for more than 400 years.
- The species of spruce and fir do not make a good choice for a Christmas tree.

Answers

1. Look at the opening sentence.

'A Christmas tree-topper is the decoration that is placed on the very top of a Christmas tree.'

Which of these definitions is closest in meaning to the word 'decoration' in this sentence.

- putting up wallpaper or painting the walls in a room
- something added to an object or place to make it look more attractive**
- giving someone a badge, honour or medal
- a section or part of a Christmas tree

2. Look at the opening paragraph.

Write **two** examples of tree-toppers mentioned for each of the following headings.

The first one has been done for you.

	Example 1	Example 2
Most Common Tree-Toppers	a star	an angel or a fairy
Other Recognised Choices	a rosette, a finial, a bow or a cross	a rosette, a finial, a bow or a cross (Must be a different choice from example 1.)
More Modern, Unusual Choices	upside-down elf legs, a dinosaur or a favourite cartoon character	upside-down elf legs, a dinosaur or a favourite cartoon character (Must be a different choice from example 1.)

3. Look at the section called '**Reasons for Traditional Tree-Toppers**'.

What two things might an angel traditionally represent as a Christmas tree-topper?

An angel may represent the angel that appeared to the shepherds to tell them about the birth or the Angel Gabriel who appeared to Mary to announce the coming of Jesus.

Answer must refer to both.

4. Look at the section called '**Modern Favourites**'.

What do you think is meant by the phrase 'finishing touch'?

A finishing touch is a fine detail or action which completes a job or piece of work.

(Answer may refer specifically, in this case, to the decoration of the Christmas tree.)

History of the Christmas Tree-Topper

5. What is meant by the word 'extravagant' and what do you think makes some examples of tree-toppers more extravagant than others?
Moving tree-toppers or sparkling crowns are described as extravagant because they are relatively excessive, elaborate or 'over the top'; they may be considered more expensive than is necessary or reasonable; they are 'fancy' rather than necessary.
6. Look at the section called '**History of the Christmas Tree**'.
Write the correct years or period of time to match the development of the Christmas tree and its decorations.
- | | |
|--|--------------|
| Real trees, known as 'Paradise Trees' were first brought into the home and decorated. | 1500s |
| Having decorations such as paper ornaments, fruit and sweets became popular. | 1700s |
| Queen Victoria and Prince Albert made it more fashionable to have decorated trees in the home. | 1800s |
7. What are **two** different features of the Christmas tree or its decoration that have changed since its introduction in the 1500s?
Accept reference to any two of the following:
- **any specific changes in typical decorations or tree-toppers;**
 - **decorated trees in the home becoming more fashionable;**
 - **electric lights being added;**
 - **artificial trees beginning to be produced.**
8. According to the text, what are **two** different common species of Christmas tree?
spruce and fir
9. Why is it important for Christmas trees to be from an evergreen species?
They still have their green foliage during the winter when Christmas time arrives.
10. Which of the following statements are facts supported by the text? Tick **two**.
- There are many different types of Christmas tree-toppers but the angel and the star are the most popular.**
 - Queen Victoria and Prince Albert were the first to decorate their tree with electric lights.
 - The tradition of having a Christmas tree in the home has existed for more than 400 years.**
 - The species of spruce and fir do not make a good choice for a Christmas tree.