



## 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 ever-green 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 ever-green 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 trees 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.



