

Learning Tool Code	Title
SDG15-SDGfP	THE STORY OF A CHRISTMAS TREE
Objectives	
<p>Trees are guardians of the majesty of the Bulgarian forests. They are silent witnesses to historical events and preserve folk traditions. They are a breath of fresh air and a visual delight for the restless spirit of the city man. This is one of the reasons to protect the trees.</p> <p>Trees are the lungs of our planet. Unfortunately, the increase in agricultural land and industrialization are increasing the rate of deforestation.</p> <p>Decorating a tree for the New Year holiday is an ancient tradition. Is it possible, without violating the tradition of the holiday, to maintain the ecological balance of our planet.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Analysis of the statistics for the felling of pine trees for the New Year holidays. 2. How to deal with the issue of tree felling? 3. Expand your horizons for replacing live trees with artificial ones and those grown in greenhouses. 4. To develop a system of measures for preserving the New Year's beauties. 5. Think of ways to dispose of Christmas trees. 6. Can we make artificial Christmas trees to protect nature? 	
Activity details	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Materials - mobile phones to fill in the Google survey, printed the fairy tale "THE STORY OF A CHRISTMAS TREE" ❖ Duration – 90 minutes ❖ Number of groups - several groups of students - (5 grade, ages 11-12) 	
Instructions	
I. Relevance of the research	

Life is such that every year is followed by a new year. New Year is a fun holiday with a decorated Christmas tree. How many trees have been cut down for this holiday? Is this harmful to the environment?

II. Hypothesis

We assumed that decorating a tree for the New Year's holiday is an ancient tradition and we set out to find out whether it is possible to maintain the ecological balance of our planet without violating the tradition of the holiday.

Research goals:

1. Analysis of the statistics for the felling of pine trees for the New Year holidays.
2. How to deal with the issue of tree felling?
3. Expand your horizons for replacing live trees with artificial ones and those grown in greenhouses.
4. To develop a system of measures for preserving the New Year's beauties.
5. Think of ways to dispose of Christmas trees.

III. Object of research- Christmas tree

Research methods:

1. Study and analysis of scientific literature.
2. Working with information from Internet sources.
3. Questionnaire.
4. Self-reflection.

IV. Questionnaire

Before studying history, statistics, and problems, we decided to find out what my students knew about it.

For this purpose, a Google form was compiled and the survey was made.

V. Interest in the problem

As a result of the survey, it turned out that everyone decorates Christmas trees, mostly artificial, not many people decorate live Christmas trees. But it turned out that after the

holiday almost all families just throw New Year's beauty in the trash. Only two students planted the tree again. On this occasion, I told them the following environmental story:

THE STORY OF A CHRISTMAS TREE

What grows at the end of the forest is a sad story told to me by an old pine tree. Let's get started.

Once a Christmas tree appeared in our forest. It was small and defenseless. Everyone took care of it - the big trees protected her from the wind, the birds cleaned her of black, hairy caterpillars, the rain watered her, the wind cooled her through the heat. Everyone loved the Christmas tree, and it was good and kind. No one better than her could hide the little bunnies from the evil wolf or the cunning fox. All beasts and birds were treated with its aromatic resin.

Time passed and our Christmas tree grew and became very beautiful. All the birds, even from the neighboring forests, came to admire her. Until now, there has never been such a slender, beautiful and green Christmas tree in the forest. The Christmas tree knew about her beauty, but she was never proud of it, she remained kind and good.

As the New Year approached, everyone in the forest worked hard. After all, there are many forest beauties. A beautiful fate awaited the beautiful Christmas trees - to fall under the ax of a woodcutter. Once two magpies arrived and started whispering that people were going to the forest looking for the most beautiful Christmas tree. Our Christmas tree began to wave its green twigs to attract the attention of the woodcutters. Poor thing, she didn't know what they needed. She thought that they, like everyone else, wanted to admire her beauty. One of the woodcutters saw her.

"Stupid, stupid, she was waving branches and squeaking old pine - hide, hide!"

Never before had a woodcutter seen such a beautiful, slender, or kitschy Christmas tree.

"Beauty, just what I need," said the woodcutter ...

He rolled up his sleeves and began to cut her thin trunk with the ax. The Christmas tree cried out in pain, but it was too late and she fell into the snow. Astonishment, pain and fear were her last feelings. When the woodcutter dragged the Christmas tree, its delicate green twigs broke and left traces in the snow. A scary, ugly stump, that was all that was left of the beautiful Christmas tree in the forest.

This is the story the old pine tree told me.

All the students liked the ecological story "The Story of a Christmas Tree". and it touched their souls.

VI. History of the publication. Where does the custom come from

I was very interested in why the tree was chosen among all the trees. I studied materials on this topic and met my students.

We are all looking forward to that moment of the year when small evergreen Christmas trees appear in our houses. The shiny toys, the twinkling lights and the gifts left under the branches of the Christmas trees bring coziness and joy to the home and seem to remind us that all adversity can be left behind if we are peaceful and positive.

However, we rarely think about where the Christmas tree originates and who was the first to decorate it. To satisfy not only yours but also our own curiosity, we did a quick study of the history of the Christmas tree. Here's what we found:

There are many legends telling strange stories about the Christmas tree, but the historical evidence for the decoration of Christmas trees is only from the last few centuries. Some of the customs associated with evergreen trees are pagan, while others bear the imprint of Christianity, making the Christmas tree one of the brightest symbols of the Nativity. From ancient times, people brought evergreens into their homes because they believed that they had magical and healing properties. The Greeks and Romans used ivy twigs, while the Celts and Scandinavians preferred mistletoe. Jelly, prickly broom (butcher's broom), laurel and pine twigs were also not neglected in ancient times, because they were believed to drive away diseases. These beliefs were especially prevalent among the inhabitants of the northern regions, because the evergreen plants revived the thoughts of spring and the revival of new life during the long cold nights.

Legend has it that at the time of Jesus' birth, each tree bore fruit to honor the appearance of the new king. Only the little Christmas tree did not bear fruit, but God had mercy on her and made her shine in the light. Hence the tradition of decorating Christmas trees with lights - initially with candles, and today - with flashing lights in all colors.

Saint Boniface and the oak of Odin

One of the first stories about the Christmas tree is related to St. Boniface and is widespread in Germany. Boniface was a priest in the 8th century and spread the true faith

in the province of Germany. Returning from a visit to the pope in Rome, the priest was horrified to find that the locals, who had been converted to Christianity, had returned to their pagan customs and were willing to sacrifice a young man by killing him under Odin's oak.

Angry, Boniface took an ax and went to cut the oak. Historical sources stop there, but the legend continues: when the priest struck the oak with his ax, he was knocked down instantly. The Germans were defeated and acknowledged God's intervention, and Boniface pointed to a small Christmas tree that remained intact when the huge tree fell. He suggested that the locals take one such Christmas tree home, because it symbolizes peace and immortality, and its upward peak shows where the house of the Lord is.

Wooden trees

It is believed that 1000 years ago in many parts of Northern Europe, fir trees were hung with chains to hang from the ceiling like candlesticks. Another tradition was to bring cherry or hawthorn twigs into the house in the hope that they would bloom at Christmas. However, if the owners could not afford real wood, they formed a wooden pyramid from twigs and twigs, which they then decorated with paper, apples and candles. Often these wooden trees went from house to house, bringing joy to the whole village.

Probably the wooden trees symbolized the trees of paradise. They are common in the medieval mysteries presented in Germany in front of churches before Christmas. In the early church calendars, December 24 was celebrated as the day of Adam and Eve. The tree of paradise symbolized the Garden of Eden and was often carried through the streets of the village before the theatrical performance to provoke the residents to come to the church and hear the biblical passages presented to them by actors.

The first Christmas tree

The first written evidence of the use of Christmas trees as a symbol of the Christmas and New Year holidays can be found not anywhere but in the square in Riga, Latvia. There is a plaque engraved in eight languages with the inscription "The first Christmas tree in Riga in 1510".

Little is known about what happened in the capital of the Baltic state in 1510: young men in black hats, accompanied by groups of girls, came to the square and first danced and

then lit the decorated Christmas tree. Probably the tree was not real, but like the wooden trees. The custom is very reminiscent of the holiday of Yul, dedicated to the birth of the sun god.

The Christmas tree in the 16th century

If we look at Germany in 1521, we will see a tree carried through the streets of the cities, and behind it rides a man on horseback, dressed as a priest, probably representing St. Nikolaus. In 1570, a small tree decorated with apples, nuts, bretzels and paper flowers was documented in Bremen.

The first person to bring a Christmas tree into his home, as we do today, was the German preacher Martin Luther. According to the story, the day before Christmas, as Martin Luther walked through the woods, he looked up at the sky to see the stars through the branches of the trees. He found it so beautiful that he returned home and decorated a small tree with candles, showing the children how it reminded him of Christ who left the stars of heaven to come down to earth with people on Christmas Eve.

Christmas decorations in the 16th and 17th centuries

In the middle of the 16th century, Christmas markets became very modern. Through them, people were provided not only with gifts, but also with delicious food and other practical paraphernalia necessary for the holiday (for example, knives and rolling pins). The bakers surpassed themselves, preparing delicious gingerbread and wax figures to decorate the Christmas trees. A written source from 1601 tells of a tree in Strasbourg decorated with waffles, golden sugar sticks and paper flowers.

Garlands appeared around 1610 in Germany. At that time, real silver was used, and even machines were invented to pull the silver threads for the garlands. Silver is as durable as metal, but it turns black quite quickly. Attempts were later made to replace the silver garlands with those of a mixture of lead and tin, but the attempt was unsuccessful due to the heavy alloy. Thus, the garlands remained silver until the middle of the 20th century.

The Christmas tree in our lands

The tradition of decorating Christmas trees in Bulgaria is relatively new, unlike other parts of Europe. However, we are famous for our custom, namely decorating the Christmas

tree. From it comes the name of Christmas Eve. Unlike the Christmas tree, the Christmas tree is made of deciduous wood, a symbol of renewal and the revival of new life.

The Christmas tree is a stump of beech, oak or pear tree. It is selected by the owner of the house and a hole is drilled in it, in which olive oil and incense are placed. Then the tree is wrapped in a white cloth, placed by the hearth to wait for the festive evening. The oldest person in the home smokes the rooms, barns and stables for health and fertility with the Christmas tree, and then puts it in the hearth and someone has to wake up all night until the magic stump burns completely. In the morning, his ashes are scattered on the ground to give birth to spring.

In the 20th century, the Christmas tree was brought to the Christmas ritual in Bulgaria as a symbol of the coming of Christ to earth to illuminate the people and their kingdom. The decoration of the Christmas tree with figurines, balls and candles symbolizes the essence of Christ - light, knowledge, purity and truth.

In Bulgaria, the custom of decorating a Christmas tree comes from Russia. The Russians arranged Christmas trees in the larger cities of Bulgaria during the Russo-Turkish War of Liberation. In this way, the Christmas tree became popular in our country, as it is not only a Christmas tree, but also a Christmas tree.

In our country, too, the celebration of Christmas is not tolerated during socialism, as the main holiday is the celebration of the New Year. Subsequently, the tradition is restored today, Christmas and Christmas are established as purely family holidays, at home, accompanied by the long - awaited exchange of gifts by children. And many people celebrate the New Year outside. It is a great occasion to gather with friends.

VII. Deforestation statistics

A month before the New Year, Christmas tree markets appear, where you can see mountains of Christmas trees. For example, 60,000 to 62,000 trees are felled for sale in Moscow alone each year, and imagine how many trees are felled in America. Globally, more than 7 billion people live on our planet, even if every seventh person wants to buy a Christmas tree, then 1 billion trees will have to be cut down. And then all these trees go to the dump.

Digging deeper into the topic, we identified two problems:

1. This is deforestation. But forests are the lungs of our planet. Especially conifers are very valuable because they produce special phytoncides that kill pathogenic microbes. Sanatoriums are often built next to coniferous forests. And lately, people have begun to understand and appreciate this. As it turned out in the modern world, a ban on felling trees in forests has been introduced; they are planted in special nurseries.
2. But the second problem turned out to be even more serious than the first - the disposal of Christmas trees.

VIII. Options for New Year's beauties for the New Year

Live felled tree.

When buying New Year's beauty, we must make sure that it is grown in a special nursery. Special nurseries are engaged in growing Christmas trees. In these nurseries, Christmas trees are planted in large quantities every year. As a result, these areas function as forest areas, performing all the ecosystem functions inherent in young forests: they are home to many species of animals, birds and insects. In addition, actively growing young Christmas trees absorb large amounts of carbon dioxide from the atmosphere and actively release oxygen. Most often the plantations are located where the normal forest cannot grow. On New Year's Eve, trees from 8 to 15 years old are cut down. In the future, young trees will be replanted and the nursery will remain "green".

Live tree in a pot.

Decorative conifers in pots, tubs or boxes. It is true that it is extremely difficult to keep such a tree after the New Year holidays (and the bigger the tree, the harder it is to keep it), it is a whole art, without special knowledge and skills it is not easy to keep alive trees. That is why it is best to use as a Christmas tree those species that can grow indoors all year round: cypress, araucaria and other southern trees grown in our climate as houseplants.

Christmas tree in your yard.

If you have a summer villa, then the easiest and best way is to decorate a Christmas tree in the yard and celebrate the New Year in nature. You can decorate a Christmas tree that grows near the house.

Christmas trees with their own hands.

In the classroom and at home we make Christmas trees with our own hands. It's exciting, interesting and fun.

My Christmas tree is at home.

Christmas trees can be made of different materials, saving ours living beauties.

IX. The main problem is the disposal of Christmas trees after the New Year

1. Disposal of felled trees.

There are countries that set up points from January to March to dispose of Christmas trees. Citizens can donate for free the withering trees that were the decoration of their holiday.

All trees are sent for processing, and they will become the basis for new plant soil. If they are thrown in an ordinary container, they end up in a landfill and are useless.

2. Planting trees in pots.

Potted trees are stored until they are planted in the spring.

3. Christmas tree in the zoo.

Conifers are collected mainly for elephants, monkeys and ungulates. The latter often gnash their teeth at them. As for taste preferences, horned goats eat pines, musk oxen prefer Christmas trees. Also, Christmas trees in pots are used to enrich the zoo's environment.

4. Collecting cones and planting seeds.

Specialists grow new trees from the seeds of cones. After the Christmas toys are removed, a few hundred cones are carefully collected from the tree. Then the best seeds are selected from them and sent to nurseries for growing conifers.

X. Conclusion

With our research, we confirmed our hypothesis that it is possible to maintain the ecological balance of our planet without disturbing the tradition, after receiving the joy of the holiday.

Now the Christmas tree is a good friend of mine that I meet every year. This communication brings me joy. Let everyone be friends with nature.

The choice is yours.

Tips for the facilitator

- 1) The teacher asks the students a question - in the future can we protect the conifers without breaking the tradition?
- 2) The teacher encourages a discussion of which option students prefer to decorate a Christmas tree?

Debriefing

Students to make an artificial Christmas tree with waste materials

Follow-up/Inspiration for the future

Information on social media, school website.

References/Further reading

<https://bg.decor-modern.com/7490634-make-an-artificial-and-original-christmas-tree-from-christmas-balls>

Annex

Christmas tree survey <https://forms.gle/Cee1daJz4s9GXqe>