

GCSE ENGLISH LANGUAGE

Paper 2 Writers' viewpoints and perspectives

Insert

The two sources that follow are:

Source A: 21st Century non-fiction
Have Yourself a Horrible Christmas
An extract from an entertaining children's educational book, 2020

Source B: 19th Century literary non-fiction
Christmas 1897 – A True Victorian Christmas
A teenage girl's diary entry, written in 1897

Please turn the page over to see the sources

SOURCE A is an extract from the children's book 'Have yourself a ... Horrible Christmas' by Terry Deary and Martin Brown (published in 2020). Part of a series of entertaining educational books, 'Horrible Christmas' uses humour to explore the factual history of festive traditions.



Curious Christmas Customs



There are hundreds of tall tales about Christmas customs. From not-so jolly holly to miserable mistletoe. They're berry interesting.

Christmas trees

One of the stories of why we have Christmas trees says it started with the pagans in Germany who worshipped the oak tree. When Christianity arrived they still wanted to worship a tree so the priests suggested the pine tree – it's a triangle shape, with each point standing for the Christian 'Trinity' of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.

For luck you should decorate your Christmas tree with ...

- A spider and a web (Lithuania – from a legend that said a poor woman had nothing to decorate her tree with. Her children woke on Christmas morning to find it covered in glittering webs.)
- Straw birdcages (Lithuania – maybe for the spiders when they've done their web-making?)
- Painted egg shells (Czechoslovakia – just for a yolk I guess.)
- Popcorn (America – streamers were made from popcorn dyed bright colours and laced on a string with nuts and berries. Berry pretty.)
- Horns and bells (meant to make noise and scare away any evil spirits.)



Scaring away spirits is also the idea behind putting a fairy on the top. But what good is a Christmas fairy supposed to be? Does it scare away pixies?



Martin Luther

There's another story about the first Christmas tree. The German preacher, Martin Luther, was walking through the forest one night in the 1520s and admired the stars twinkling through the branches of the fir trees. He cut down a small tree and took it home to show his family how wonderful God's universe is. Of course, the kids said, 'But we can't see the stars 'cos we're in the house, Dad!'

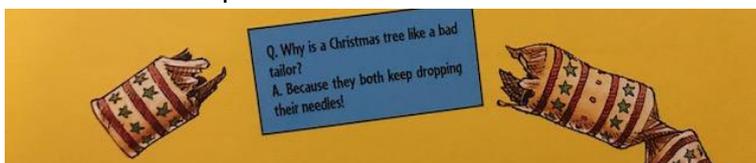
So marvellous Martin filled the tree with candles. 'Can you see them now?' he asked.

'Cor, Dad! Can we have one of these every Christmas?' they begged. And so the idea of a Christmas tree at Christmas was born. (Which is a bit of a cheat when you think about it ... they're NOT stars.)

FOUL FACT



Those old candle-lit Christmas trees may look very pretty on Christmas cards. But what the Christmas cards don't give you is the smell! Most people couldn't afford fine beeswax candles so they used 'tallow' which is usually made from sheep fat. So a room with a Christmas tree would stink of burning sheep fat!



SOURCE B is a diary entry extract from 1897, describing Victorian teenager Kate Frye's excitement at decorating the family Christmas tree for the first time; until 1897, the family had always spent Christmas at an Aunt's house. The tree is decorated with presents by the children and only revealed to the rest of the family after Christmas dinner.

Kate Frye's Diary: Christmas 1897 – A True Victorian Christmas

Wednesday December 22nd 1897

We have bought 10 shillings' worth of toys from Aunt Anne's charity bazaar for our Tree – a fairy for the top – glass balls and birds – drums – trumpets and penny toys of all kinds and many more little things.

Thursday December 23rd 1897

Directly after lunch Agnes and I started on the Christmas Tree. It is such a beauty and touches the Drawing Room ceiling. We did up part of the presents – the principal ones in coloured papers. Just as we were in the midst of it Constance and Katie [daughters of Aunt Agnes Gilbey] arrived down – we just let them peep in the room which was in a fine muddle. .. We allowed Mother in the room but she didn't assist but Daddie we couldn't allow in much to his annoyance really. The Tree looks lovely – it ought to be a huge success. I have never seen one look nicer and it is simply crammed with things.

Friday December 24th 1897

Christmas Eve

It was a beautiful morning though still most bitterly cold – ever so many degrees of frost – and we went out – the three of us – to try to get warm – the house is icy. Directly after lunch the three of us started decorating till four o'clock. Pratt [the gardener] cut up the Holly and we put it and lots of mistletoe up everywhere – except Daddie's room – he is most disagreeable just now.

Saturday December 25th 1897

Christmas Day

We had a quiet afternoon round the fire in the Morning Room – can't let anyone in the Drawing Room as the Tree is there. I slipped off after tea to finish it all off. We have got up fair fun and excitement over it – and made them all curious. We were all very merry at dinner – except Daddie who is still seedy – although we had no Turkey. Had a pair of our own fowls killed as they have not arrived – I don't like Christmas dinner without Turkeys – but we had the Pudding, mince pies and crackers alright. Then came the Christmas Tree which was a huge success and we all went quite mad.



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