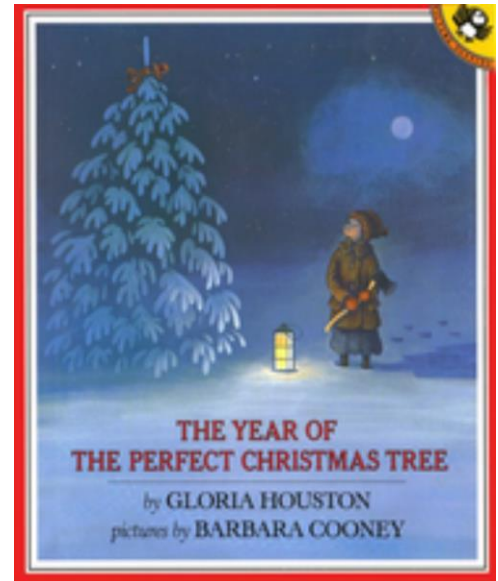


December 2014 Book of the Month
The Year of the Perfect Christmas Tree
 By: Gloria Houston

“1918: the Christmas Ruthie has longed for all her life and the Christmas she will never forget.” This is the year Ruthie's family has the honor of giving Pine Grove its tree. Last spring before he left for the war, Papa chose the perfect balsam tree from high on a rocky crag. But now, as Christmas draws near, Ruthie and Mama wait impatiently for the Appalachian mountain train to bring Papa home. Even with news of the Armistice there's no word from Papa. Soon it's Christmas Eve, and Ruthie and Mama can think only of seeing Papa again. But despite that, Papa promised the townsfolk a tree, and now--with Papa or without him---Mama will see that his word is kept.



Vocabulary:

Evergreen – A plant that has leaves throughout the year, always green.

Cedar – The common name for **cedar** wood, used for several different **trees** that grow in different parts of the world.

Balsam – A North American **fir**, native to most of eastern and central Canada and the northeastern United States.

Fraser Fir – The most premium species of the cut Christmas tree on the market.

Norway Spruce – A species of spruce native to Europe. It is also commonly referred to as the European spruce.

Fraser Fir Quick Facts:

The North Carolina Fraser Fir Christmas tree is the most popular Christmas tree in North America; shipped into every state in the U.S. as well as the Caribbean Islands, Mexico, Canada, Bermuda, and Japan.

- The Fraser Fir has soft, pleasant-to-touch needles, incomparable retention, long lasting aroma, pliable yet strong branches for the heaviest of ornaments.

- North Carolina has approximately 50 million Fraser Fir Christmas trees growing on over 25,000 acres of its western counties.
- Fraser Fir is grown mostly at elevations over 3,000 feet.
- Fraser Fir is grown mostly in 18 counties in the far Western section of North Carolina.
- North Carolina Fraser Fir has been judged as the Nation’s Best through the National Christmas Tree Association and chosen for the White House eight times....1971, 1973, 1982, 1990, 1993, 1995, and 1996.
- The 1996 Winner is Sanford Fishel & Family of Grassy Creek, NC with one of their Fraser Firs to be placed in the White House in 1997.

Christmas Tree Investigations

Build a Christmas Tree – How tall can you build a “Christmas Tree” using only 2 materials. Working in pairs or individually, have students use toothpicks and green modeling clay to build a tree as tall as possible. Record your findings and how much clay and how many toothpicks you used. This is a great **STEM** activity that allows students to collaborate with each other on how their structure was formed to be the tallest. Discuss the type of tree built, how it was constructed and why that method was used most effectively.

Sequencing- Have students write or retell the steps for decorating a Christmas tree from start to finish. This includes planting the tree, caring for the tree, cutting, and decorating. Then have students decorate a real Christmas tree or a paper cut out tree.

Family and Traditions - This is a story about traditions and family. Have students write or discuss the traditions of the village of Pine Grove, how mama was a hero in the story, and describe a tradition they have in his or her family.

Then and Now – How have things changed over time? What are similarities and differences in the story compared to families now?

Real or Artificial – Take a class poll of how many students have artificial trees and how many have fresh cut trees. Create a bar graph showing the results.

On the Map - Students will identify counties in NC that produce Christmas trees and discuss how the mountain region is the most appropriate area for tree production.

http://www.ncagintheclassroom.com/Portals/1/pdf/curricula/g3_lesson32.pdf

Will it Grow? – Have students research different types of evergreen trees and the environment necessary for successful growth and production.

http://www.ncagintheclassroom.com/Portals/1/pdf/curricula/g3_lesson31.pdf

NC Trees – Students will research and use information about NC Christmas trees to create picture and bar graphs.

http://www.ncagintheclassroom.com/Portals/1/pdf/curricula/g3_lesson30.pdf

For many more ideas, activities, and lesson plans visit NC Farm Bureau’s Ag in the Classroom website.

<http://www.ncagintheclassroom.com/>

Sources:

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