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Introduction

Christmas contains a captivating whole-language, thematic unit. Its pages are filled with a wide variety of lesson ideas and activities designed for use with primary children. At its core are three high-quality children's literature selections, *Night Tree, Thank You Santa* and *The Polar Express*. For each of these books, activities are included which set the stage for reading, encourage the enjoyment of the book and extend the concepts gained. In addition, the theme is connected to the curriculum with activities in language arts, maths, science, social studies, geography, art, music, movement and life skills. Many of these activities encourage co-operative learning. Suggestions and patterns for games and ideas for display boards are additional time savers for the busy teacher. Furthermore, directions for making a class pillow, wall hanging or quilt allow students to make products that can be shared beyond the classroom. All of these activities combine to make this book a very complete teacher resource.

This thematic unit includes:

- **literature selections**—summaries of three children's books with related lessons (complete with reproducible pages) that cross the curriculum
- **poetry**—suggested selections and lessons enabling students to write and publish their own works
- **planning guides**—suggestions for sequencing lessons each day of the unit
- **whole-language ideas**—daily suggestions as well as activities across the curriculum, including Big Books
- **display board ideas**—suggestions and plans for student-created and/or interactive displays
- **homework suggestions**—extending the unit to the child's home
- **curriculum connections**—in language arts, maths, science, social studies, geography, art, music, movement and life skills
- **group projects**—to foster co-operative learning
- **a culminating activity**—which requires students to synthesise their learning to make a product or engage in an activity that can be shared with others
- **a bibliography**—suggesting additional literature and non-fiction books on the theme

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Night Tree

by Eve Bunting

Summary

This family has a unique Christmas tradition. Deep in a moonlit forest they have a special tree. They return to this tree every year to decorate it for all the forest creatures and to rekindle the Christmas spirit in their own way. The beautiful water-colour illustrations and the touching story make this a book children love to hear.

The outline below is a suggested plan for using the various activities presented in this unit. You may adapt the ideas to meet specific needs in your classroom.

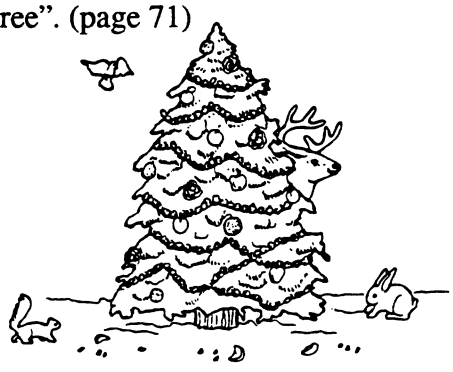
Sample Plan

Day 1

- Display pictures of different types of trees around the room. Discuss.
- Share the history of Christmas trees. (page 16)
- Read *Night Tree,* stopping at the page where they find their tree. What will the family do next? Discuss.
- Finish reading the book. Discuss.
- Begin making a Big Book. (page 9)

Day 2

- Continue work on the Big Book with story sequence strips. (page 9)
- Read the Big Book to partners.
- List "Animal Habitats". (page 59)
- Make Stand Up Christmas Trees. (page 16)
- Write about your tree. (page 16)
- Do Christmas tree maths. (page 54)
- Learn song "Let's All Decorate the Night Tree". (page 71)



Day 3

- Introduce Tagging Christmas Trees. (page 11)
- Find out where Christmas trees come from. (page 12)
- Do Geography questionnaire. (page 13)
- Play Wildlife Concentration. (page 59)
- Make Pop-up Christmas Cards. (page 63)
- Continue singing "Let's All Decorate the Night Tree".
- Make Fox Sandwiches. (page 73)

Day 4

- Complete What Do Animals Eat Chart? (page 45)
- Write sentence strips from the chart. (page 45)
- Play Wildlife Bingo. (page 60)
- Colour the Tree. (page 10)

Day 5

- Do Ornament Placement. (page 46)
- Make a stained glass Christmas tree. (page 64)
- Enjoy storytelling with your stained glass tree. (page 64)
- Make Christmas Bonbons. (page 65)
- Decorate Popcorn Christmas Trees. (page 17)

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Making a Big Book with Story Sequence Strips

Materials: An enlarged copy of the sentences at the bottom of this page for every four children; A4 construction paper in white or various light colours; scissors; stapler or book binder; a variety of materials for children to use to illustrate the book, i.e. crayons, water-colours, oil crayons, coloured chalk

Directions: Reread the book. Discuss the sequence of events in the story. Arrange the children in groups of four. Each group will make one book. Read the sentence strips together. Cut apart the sentence strips and glue each strip to a sheet of construction paper. Divide up the pages so each child will illustrate 2 to 3 pages. Put the pages in order so that it tells the story. Read the story again to make sure you have the pages in the correct order. Make a cover for the book. Include a title page at the beginning giving the book's author and students' names as illustrators. Number the pages by placing the correct number in the lower centre of each page. Staple or bind the book together. Have students read it to other classmates and show the illustrations. Place the book in the class library or make it available for class borrowing.

"Here's our tree," Dad says. It has been our tree forever and ever.
Mom says I should spread the blanket so we can sit and admire our tree.
"Look," he whispers. We stop. A deer is watching us.
We sing "Oh Come, all ye Faithful," and "Old MacDonald Had a Farm."
I lie in bed and think of our tree and the animals having Christmas dinner around it.
We scatter shelled nuts and bread crumbs and pieces of apple.
On the night before Christmas we always go to find our tree.
An owl hoots, deep in the darkness.
"Can I put on the popcorn chain?" Nina asks.

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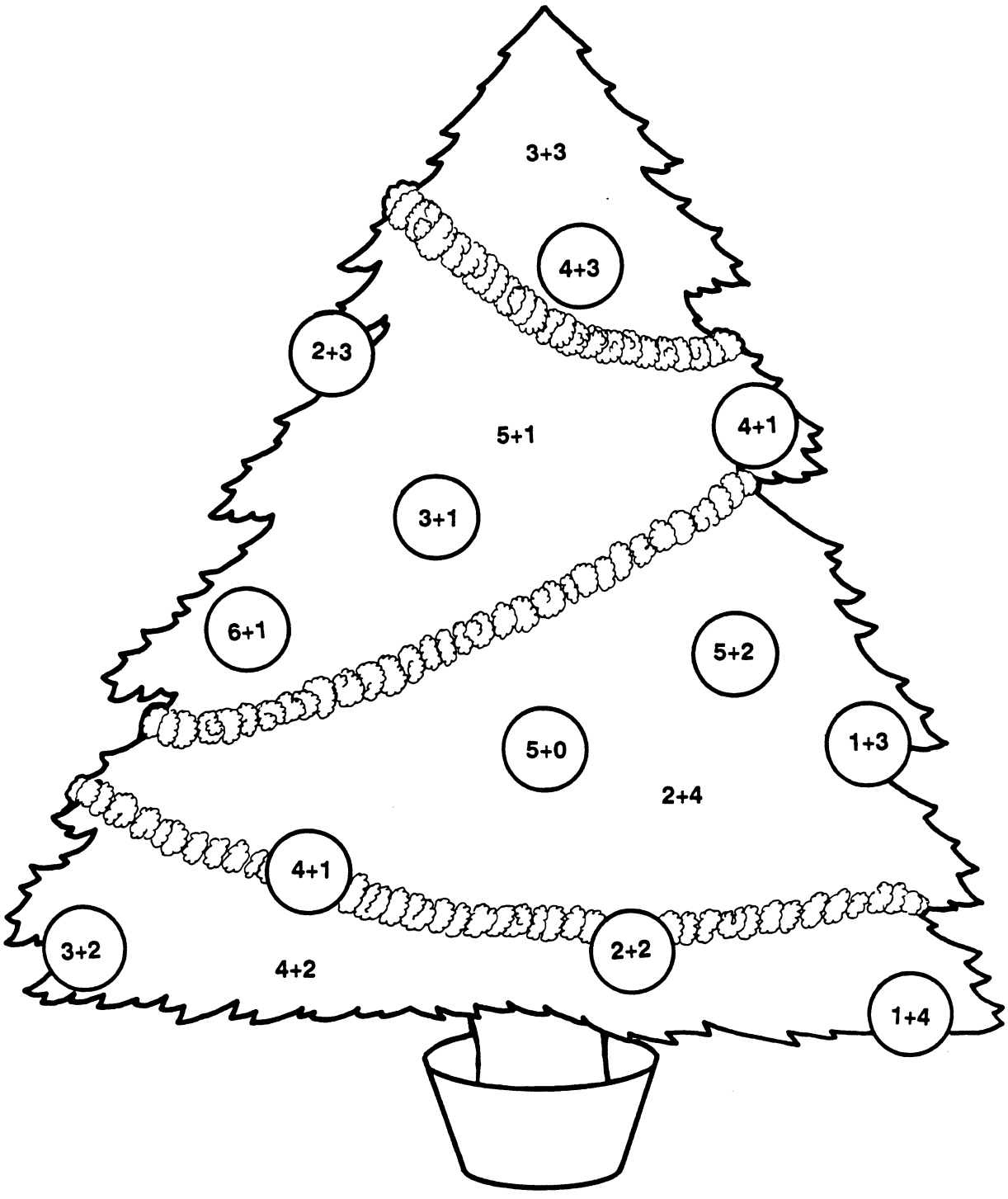
Colour the Tree

In the *Night Tree* the family left lots of food under the tree. Look at the colour code below and colour each bulb and part of the tree the correct colour.



4=orange **5=red** **6=green** **7=yellow**

Extension: Increase difficulty of maths problems.

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