

A Classroom Guide to  
*The*  
**Queen**  
and *the* **First**  
**Christmas Tree**

Queen Charlotte's Gift to England



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Ages 4–8 // Grades PreK–3

This classroom guide is designed for students in first through third grade. It is assumed that teachers will adapt each activity to fit the needs and abilities of their own students. It offers activities to help teachers integrate *The Queen and the First Christmas Tree* into the curricula.

All activities were created in conjunction with the Common Core and other relevant content standards.

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# About *The Queen and the First Christmas Tree*: *Queen Charlotte's Gift to England*

9780807566367 // US \$16.99



*“The Queen and the First Christmas Tree is the story of an unconventional queen who founded hospitals, cared for orphans and helped transform the way we celebrate Christmas. Nancy Churnin brings Queen Charlotte and her Christmas tree to life for young readers, showing that there is more to being a princess than fancy dresses and jewels.”—Dr. Carolyn Harris, historian and author of *Raising Royalty: 1000 Years of Royal Parenting**

## Before Reading

### Look at the Front Cover

- Read the title aloud.
- Describe what you see.
- Who do you think the woman is? What is she doing?
- Imagine you are the woman in the illustration. How does this pose make you feel?
- When do you think this story takes place? Today or a long time ago? What clues on the cover tell you this?
- Can you guess what the story might be about?

### Look at the Back Cover

- Describe what you see.
- Read the text on the back cover.
- Does this text make you want to read the book? Why or why not?



# English Language Arts

## Reading Comprehension

Now read or listen to the book. Help students summarize in their own words what the book is about.

- How was Charlotte not like other princesses?
- Instead of a Christmas tree, what did Charlotte decorate? Draw a picture based on the illustration and text description.
- How did everything change when Charlotte turned seventeen?
- Why did Charlotte board a ship to England?
- In what ways is Charlotte different from the ladies who wait on her? How does this make her feel?
- What did Charlotte pack in her special trunk?
- In what way are Charlotte and George similar? Why do you think this matters?
- Why do you think Kew Gardens was so special to Charlotte?
- Describe, in your own words, how Queen Charlotte made the Christmas of 1800 special for the children of England.
- What items were used to decorate the first English Christmas tree? How are these items similar or different to the items that decorate Christmas trees today?
- In addition to the special Christmas party in 1800, what other ways did Queen Charlotte give to the children of England?

Let's talk about the people who made *The Queen and the First Christmas Tree*.

- Who is the author?
- Who is the illustrator?
- What kind of work did each person do to make the book?

Now, let's look closely at the illustrations.

- Look closely at how people are dressed in *The Queen and the First Christmas Tree*.
- Print out photos from the Internet of clothing styles in the early 1800s.
- Draw your own character wearing clothing from this time period.
- Display the finished drawings in the classroom.



## Reading Nonfiction

While reading *The Queen and the First Christmas Tree* aloud to the class, have students take notes in two columns: Things We Learned and Questions We Have.

Pause before each page turn to add notes to the columns. These columns can either be individual or hung on the board and worked on as a class.

Things We Learned	Questions We Have	Answers We Found

Once the story is read, discuss the *Questions We Have* column.

- Were any of these questions answered as the story went along?
- If so, ask students to find the answer within the text.
- Record the answer next to the question in a third column labeled *Answers We Found*.

For all remaining questions in the *Questions We Have* column, that have yet to be answered, students will need to take the steps to find answers, either through Internet or book research.

- Discuss how to find answers to questions through research.
- Assign students to specific questions to help them focus.
- Record all answers in the *Answers We Found* column.

After the answers have been shared with the class, engage in a discussion on research practices.

- What was the most difficult about finding answers?
- Was it easier to find answers on the Internet or in a book?
- Which source is more reliable, the Internet or a printed book? Why?
- How can you determine whether to trust a source?
- What tips would you give someone who is about to do research?

Read the About Queen Charlotte section at the back of the book.

- Create an additional chart to document what information in this section was included in the story and what information was not included.



- Why do you think Churnin chose to include certain information and leave other information to the back matter?
- Choose three facts from the back matter that were not included in the story and explain why you think each was excluded.

*Extension:* Design and illustrate posters representing each Fact, Question, and researched Answer based on *The Queen and the Christmas Tree* and display them within the classroom.

## **History** A Timeline of Charlotte and her Legacy

**May 19, 1744:** Princess Charlotte of Mecklenburg-Strelitz is born in Mirow, Germany.

**September 8, 1761:** Marries King George III (born June 4, 1738, crowned October 25, 1760).

**July 4, 1776:** American colonies declare independence from Great Britain.

**December 25, 1800:** Queen Charlotte brings the first Christmas tree to Windsor Castle.

**1809:** Queen Charlotte becomes patron to Queen Charlotte's Maternity Hospital.

**November 17, 1818:** Queen Charlotte dies at Kew Palace. She is buried in St. George's Chapel in Windsor Castle, where the Duke and Duchess of Sussex, Prince Harry and Meghan Markle, were wed on Queen Charlotte's birthday, May 19, 2018. Windsor Castle is where Queen Charlotte introduced the first Christmas tree 18 years earlier.

### **After Queen Charlotte's Death:**

**May 24, 1819:** Princess Victoria (daughter of Prince Edward, son of Queen Charlotte and King George III) is born.

**January 29, 1820:** King George III dies, King George IV (son of Queen Charlotte and King George III) becomes king.

**June 26, 1830:** King George IV dies, King William IV (son of Queen Charlotte and King George III) becomes king.

**June 20, 1837:** King William IV dies, Queen Victoria becomes queen.

**December 25, 1848:** The cover of *The Illustrated London News* shows Queen Victoria's family celebrating around their Christmas tree. Christmas trees become popular in England.

**December 25, 1850:** *Godey's Lady's Book* copies the cover of *The Illustrated London News* for American readers. Christmas trees become popular in America.

## Famous Christmas Trees and Their Roots

Queen Charlotte first brought the Christmas tree to England and her granddaughter Queen Victoria's tree became famous when it was featured in the *Illustrated London News*. But today there are several famous Christmas trees around the globe. Assign a famous tree to students to research in the library and on the Internet. A list of 6 are below, but do not feel limited to those on the list.

- Rockefeller Center – New York, New York
- Trafalgar Square – London, England
- Mount Igino – Gubbio, Italy
- Place Kebler – Strasbourg, France
- The Lagoa – Rio de Janeiro, Brazil
- Boston Common – Boston, Massachusetts

Possible sources for information:

- Nonfiction books
- Encyclopedias
- The Internet

Take notes and gather as much information as possible on the following five topics:

- Location
- History of the tree
- How the tree embodies the spirit of Christmas
- Other fun facts

Once the information is gathered, work to create either an illustrated poster or booklet of the findings.

## Charlotte, Martha, and Marie

Queen Charlotte and King George III were the royals on the throne during the American Revolution.

Pair *The Queen and the First Christmas Tree* with a biography about Martha Washington, President George Washington's wife and America's first First Lady. Just like Queen Charlotte, there was so much more to Martha Washington than being a famous wife.

Additionally, *The Queen and the First Christmas Tree* can be paired with a biography about another contemporary of Queen Charlotte's, Marie Antoinette, the queen during the French Revolution.

Research these three women and their legacies, or what they are most remembered for.

## Charlotte's Legacy

A eulogy is a speech that is often given at a funeral to highlight the key events of a person's life and their legacy or what they leave behind.

Write a eulogy for Charlotte, based on the back matter information provided in *The Queen and the First Christmas Tree* and your own research.

Do an internet image search of the two statues erected in Charlotte's memory: either the one in Queen Square in Bloomsbury or at the Charlotte Douglas International Airport in Charlotte, North Carolina. Then, in groups of 3-4, re-create a "still or frozen image" of one of these statues.

Share these statues with the rest of the class as eulogies are read.



# Social Studies



## A Kind Christmas

Queen Charlotte and King George III were the first royals to make charity an expected part of royal behavior. In addition to the Christmas celebration of 1800, Queen Charlotte founded several orphanages and a maternity hospital. Perhaps it is coincidence, but around the holidays many people around the globe also take time to invest in charities.

Brainstorm ways you can help others both during your holiday season or throughout the year. Suggested ideas may include donating clothes to the needy or singing for the elderly in hospitals.

Choose at least one act of charity to implement. Then, with parental permission, share photos and a description of how you've helped someone in need during whatever holiday you celebrate at [www.nancychurnin.com](http://www.nancychurnin.com).

## My Favorite Family Holiday Traditions

Not every family celebrates the same holidays. And even if they do, they don't always celebrate in the same ways.

Ask students to tell about their favorite holidays/holiday celebrations.

Have students recite the months of the year and create a holiday calendar bulletin board

Have students describe a holiday celebration in a paragraph and draw a picture to go along with it, if they choose.

## Make Your Own Yule Branch

Be like Charlotte and appreciate the natural world outside! Go on a nature walk around the school or ask students to take a nature walk in their neighborhoods and gather pieces of natural art that they find. Acorns, small pinecones, leaves, flowers, feathers, petals, small rocks, sticks, etc. *You may need to remind children not pick or harm any growing/ living thing as they gather items.*

Once items have been gathered, take time to look at each item closely.

- What are the shapes that make up this piece of nature?
- What are the different colors?
- How do the items smell?
- Are there small details that you didn't notice before?

Then, to create a Yule branch, wrap a stick loosely with ribbon or yarn. Leave enough space so that leaves, flowers, and other findings can be stuck under the ribbon.

An option, to add more symbolism would be to place an item on the Yule branch to represent each member of the family.

Once items are in place, begin gluing everything on. Add cinnamon sticks and berries for extra decoration and scent.

Display finished festive branches in the classroom.

# Geography

## Putting Charlotte on the Map

There are many places that were named for Queen Charlotte. Can you find them on a map?

- Queen Charlotte Islands in British Columbia, Canada
- Queen Charlotte City on Haida Gwaii
- Queen Charlotte Sound near the Haida Gwaii Islands
- Queen Charlotte Bay in West Falkland
- Queen Charlotte Sound in South Island, New Zealand
- Fort Charlotte in Saint Vincent
- Charlottesville, Virginia
- Charlottetown in Prince Edward Island
- Charlotte, North Carolina
- Mecklenburg County, North Carolina
- Mecklenburg County, Virginia
- Charlotte County, Virginia
- Charlotte County, Florida
- Port Charlotte, Florida
- Charlotte Harbor, Florida
- Queen Street in Penang, Malaysia
- Queen Charlotte's and Chelsea Hospital in London
- A Queen Charlotte statue in Queen Square in Bloomsbury, London
- A Queen Charlotte statue at the Charlotte/Douglas International Airport in Charlotte, North Carolina
- Queen's College was renamed Rutgers,

the State University of New Jersey in 1825 after the Revolutionary War officer Henry Rutgers, but the oldest existing building, Old Queen's and the city block at the core of the university, Queen's College, retain their names, which were given in honor of Queen Charlotte.

## The Royal Residences

A residency is a house or other building where someone lives. Throughout history, the British royal family have had many residencies. Here are a few:

- St. James Palace was the official residence of the royal couple
- The King and Queen moved into Buckingham House in 1762, which would later be expanded into Buckingham Palace
- King George bought Kew Palace in 1781
- Queen Charlotte purchased Frogmore House in Windsor Park in 1792

Compare the royal residences and find them on a map.

guide prepared by  
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