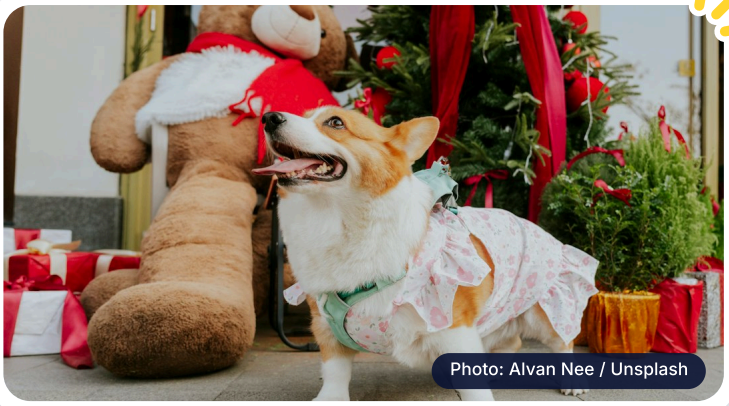
Norway's gift tree heads to London

LEVEL B1


Photo: Alvan Nee / Unsplash

I. WARM-UP

1. What decorations make your town feel festive?
2. Do you prefer real or artificial Christmas trees? Why?
3. What family tradition have you been doing for years?

II. KEY VOCABULARY

- **tradition**
  A custom people repeat regularly, often every year.
- **mayor**
  The elected head of a city or town.
- **ceremony**
  A formal event with special actions or speeches.
- **cargo**
  Goods carried by a ship, plane or truck.
- **port**
  A place where ships load and unload.
- **decorate**
  To make something look nicer by adding lights or other items.
- **symbol**
  An object that stands for an idea or feeling.
- **biodiesel**
  Fuel made from plants or waste oils, used instead of diesel.

III. READING

A giant Christmas tree called Jolly Cheery has begun its journey from a forest near Oslo to Trafalgar Square in London. The spruce is about 21 metres tall, roughly the height of five double-decker buses. It grew on Høgåsen, a wooded ridge by Norway's capital, and is around 75 years old.

The trip started on 20 November with a ceremony. The Mayor of Oslo, Anne Lindboe, and the Lord Mayor of Westminster, Karen Scarborough, began cutting the tree with a large two-handled saw while local schoolchildren sang. Experts then finished the job and prepared it for transport.

The tree is travelling by road to the port of Brevik, then across the North Sea on a cargo ship. Electric and biodiesel vehicles are being used on road sections to reduce the journey's environmental impact. In London, it will be decorated in a simple Norwegian style, with lights hanging straight down.

The annual gift is a tradition that began in 1947, and the tree is a symbol of thanks, friendship and peace after the Second World War.

Reading text adapted from reporting by **BBC News:** *"Giant Christmas tree begins its journey from...". Original article linked at* theenglishwire.com.

IV. COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

1. Where in London will the tree be displayed?
2. How tall is Jolly Cheery?
3. Who began cutting the tree at the ceremony?
4. When did this tradition begin, and what does it represent?
5. How is the tree travelling from Norway to the UK?

V. DISCUSSION

1. What public decorations make your town feel special in winter?
2. Do you prefer one huge tree or many smaller ones? Why?
3. What tradition has your family or school kept for a long time?
4. How could festivals be greener, like this tree's journey?



VI. GRAMMAR FOCUS

Present perfect continuous

Use have/has + been + verb-ing for actions that started before now and are still continuing, or for recent activity with a present result. SINCE + a point (since 20 November); FOR + a period (for two days).

"Since 20 November, the tree **has been travelling** *to London."*

"Crews **have been preparing** *the spruce for transport."*

VII. GRAMMAR EXERCISE

Complete each sentence with the present perfect continuous (have/has been + -ing).

1. Since 20 November, students (follow) ___ Jolly Cheery online.
2. For two days, crews (secure) ___ the trunk and branches.
3. All morning, a driver (wait) ___ at Brevik port.
4. For about 75 years, the spruce (grow) ___ on Høgåsen.
5. Lately, my friends (discuss) ___ its lights and style.

Teacher's Notes

TEACHERS ONLY

These notes are designed to help you get the most out of this lesson. Please do not share this page with students.

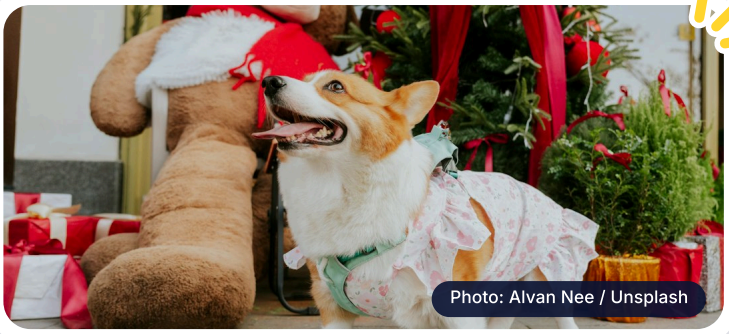


Photo: Alvan Nee / Unsplash

I. LESSON GUIDE

- Timing: 6–8 minutes warm-up, 8–10 minutes vocabulary, 10–12 minutes reading, 8–10 minutes comprehension, 8–10 minutes grammar, 10 minutes discussion.
- Pre-teach or board key items: tradition, mayor, ceremony, cargo, port, decorate, symbol, biodiesel; highlight place names (Oslo, Brevik, Trafalgar Square) and the figure 21 metres.
- Run the reading in pairs: students skim for where, who, how tall, and how it travels; then scan for dates and reasons. Sensitivity: the backstory mentions the Second World War, so keep the focus on gratitude and friendship, and allow students to discuss the news rather than personal experiences.
- Fast finisher idea: students list three eco-friendly choices in the tree's journey and suggest one realistic improvement for a public event in their town.

II. DISCUSSION FACILITATION TIPS

1. Take a quick class vote on the best decoration, then ask pairs to explain why it adds to the mood.
2. Split the room: "big tree" vs "many small". Swap partners and make each side give one benefit of the other.
3. Have students tell a short story (who, when, what). Prompt with time words like every year or since.
4. Put ideas on the board (electric trucks, recycling). Push for one concrete action each student would try.

III. EXTENSION ACTIVITIES

Writing: In pairs, write a 70-word announcement for the switch-on in Trafalgar Square, including who, when and why.

Presentation: In groups of three, make a one-minute pitch for a greener festival idea your town could adopt next year.

IV. ANSWER KEY OVERVIEW

Comprehension questions: short factual answers from the text.

Grammar exercise: Present perfect continuous

Discussion: open-ended. Accept any reasonable ideas supported by examples and reasoning.

Answer Key

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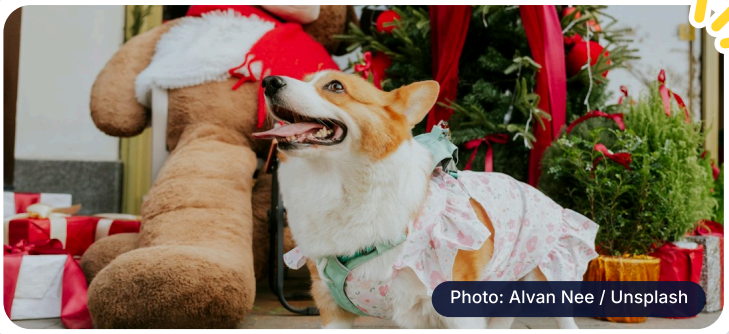


Photo: Alvan Nee / Unsplash

IV. COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

1. Where in London will the tree be displayed?
   Trafalgar Square.
2. How tall is Jolly Cheery?
   About 21 metres.
3. Who began cutting the tree at the ceremony?
   Anne Lindboe and Karen Scarborough.
4. When did this tradition begin, and what does it represent?
   It began in 1947 and represents thanks, friendship and peace.
5. How is the tree travelling from Norway to the UK?
   By road to the port of Brevik, then by cargo ship across the North Sea.

V. DISCUSSION

Open answers. Accept any reasonable ideas supported by examples and reasoning.

VII. GRAMMAR EXERCISE

Complete each sentence with the present perfect continuous (have/has been + -ing).

1. Since 20 November, students ___ Jolly Cheery online. **have been following**
2. For two days, crews ___ the trunk and branches. **have been securing**
3. All morning, a driver ___ at Brevik port. **has been waiting**
4. For about 75 years, the spruce ___ on Høgåsen. **has been growing**
5. Lately, my friends ___ its lights and style. **have been discussing**

VI. GRAMMAR FOCUS

Key point: Use have/has + been + verb-ing for actions that started before now and are still continuing, or for recent activity with a present result. SINCE + a point (since 20 November); FOR + a period (for two days). (Examples constructed.)

"Since 20 November, the tree **has been travelling** *to London."*

"Crews **have been preparing** *the spruce for transport."*