

November-December Books for Children

As I compiled this list of books for reading with young children during the months of November and December, I found myself wanting to read each book with a classroom of children or my grandchildren at the very least. What better way to enjoy one's children and be transported to another place and time than through a good book. Obviously, time and space prevented my inclusion of hundreds of titles that are equally enjoyable. The ones I have included are for the most part on a list of best books for Thanksgiving Hanukkah, or Christmas or are books I used as an elementary librarian and first and second grade classroom teacher. Christmas around the world was always my favorite Christmas theme. Children love to learn about how other children celebrate Christmas. Hopefully you will find included here some books that you, too, can enjoy with the child(ren) in your life. Lastly, I am including a link to an annotated bibliography of Appalachian Christmas books for children and young adults. One of my very favorite Christmas stories is set in the Appalachians—Gloria Houston's *The Year of the Perfect Christmas Tree*. Happy reading and have a blessed holiday season.

--Judy McDonald, Alpha Rho Chapter, Xi State Literacy Committee, Delta Kappa Gamma International

Thanksgiving Books

The Pilgrims' First Thanksgiving by Ann McGovern (Grades 1 and 2) Publisher Note: Tells of the voyage of the Mayflower and the Pilgrims' difficulties during the first year in the New World and how they celebrated their first harvest.

Turkey for Thanksgiving by Eve Bunting (Preschool-Grade 2) "Preparing the table for Thanksgiving dinner, Mrs. Moose confesses to Mr. Moose that everything would be quite perfect if only they had a turkey for dinner . . . With a plot twist that only young children will find surprising, Mrs. Moose offers the turkey a chair and treats him as an honored guest".--ALA Booklist.

The Night Before Thanksgiving (Reading Railroad Books) by Natasha Wing (Preschool – Grade 2) A creative spin on the Clement C. Moore classic, *The Night Before Thanksgiving* is a warm, whimsical celebration of everyone's favorite fun-filled, family-filled, food-filled holiday! Follow along as the feast is prepared, cousins are greeted, and thanks are given, all with an extra helping of holiday fun.

I Know an Old Lady Who Swallowed a Pie by Alison Jackson (Preschool-Grade 2) A take-off on the popular poem; in this version an old lady comes for Thanksgiving dinner and devours the whole meal by herself.

This First Thanksgiving Day by Laura Krauss Melmed (Preschool-K) Publisher Note: Countdown to Thanksgiving! This rollicking counting story celebrates the very first Thanksgiving Day with vibrant illustrations and lively verse. Follow the Pilgrim and

Wampanoag friends as they prepare for a great feast, and along the way look for the bold turkey on every page -- and for the very sharp of eye, there are all sorts of surprises hidden in the art!

A Plump and Perky Turkey by Teresa Bateman (Toddler-Grade 3) All the turkeys have fled town except for one fowl named Pete who responds to a ploy a "model wanted" ad for the local art show. After posing for various sculptors, painters and collage artists, Pete steals off with a turkey made from oatmeal as payment and joins up with his other feathered pals. --*Publisher's Weekly*

It's Thanksgiving by Jack Prelutsky (Grades K-2) Here are Thanksgiving poems that are good every day of the year! Twelve sprightly poems about Thanksgiving, including "When Daddy Carves the Turkey," "I Ate Too Much," and "If Turkeys Thought." A "delightful collection...that everyone can relate to."--*Childhood Education*.

In November by Cynthia Rylant, (Toddler –Elementary) In November, the air grows cold and the earth and all of its creatures prepare for winter. Animals seek food and shelter. And people gather together to celebrate their blessings with family and friends. This book is a great resource to share at Thanksgiving time, as it honors family traditions of this seasonal month. -- apples4theteacher.com (Note: apples4theteacher.com is a fun and interactive website for teachers and students)

Giving Thanks: A Native American Good Morning Message by Jake Swamp, (Preschool-Elementary) Adapted for kids and their families from a traditional Iroquois ceremony the Thanksgiving Address, this teaches Chief Swamp's vision and symbols of giving thanks to natural and spiritual elements in life, revealing Native beliefs in the process. A fine story which celebrates the Earth and Native traditions. -- *Midwest Book Review*

Samuel Eaton's Day: A Day in the Life of a Pilgrim Boy and ***Sarah Morton's Day: A Day in the Life of a Pilgrim Girl*** by Kate Waters (Preschool-Elementary) These books feature lovely color photographs of Plymouth Plantation and depict a young boy and a young girl in a typical day's activities including chores, lessons, and family activities.

The Circle of Thanks by Joseph Bruchac (K-Middle School) Fourteen poems with themes of thanksgiving and appreciation of nature, based in part on traditional Native American songs and prayers.

Clifford's Thanksgiving Visit by Norman Bridwell (Toddler-Grade 2) Clifford, the big red dog, starts out early Thanksgiving morning to spend the day with his mother, little suspecting the difficulties he will have in reaching her.

The Candy Corn Contest by Patricia Reilly Giff (Grades 1-3) Richard determines to win the Thanksgiving Candy Corn contest by guessing the correct number of candies in the jar but he accidentally eats 3 pieces.

Thank You, Sarah: The Woman Who Saved Thanksgiving by Laurie Halse Anderson (Grades 1-4) A little-known historical tidbit is recounted in a humorous and inspirational alternative to the standard Thanksgiving stories. After 38 years of persistence, Sarah Hale finally succeeded in her effort to have Thanksgiving designated as an official national holiday.

The Thanksgiving Story by Alice Dalgliesh (K-Grade 3) The Thanksgiving Story "is the only really distinguished book we have on that holiday. Miss Dalgliesh has told the Pilgrim story simply from the point of view of the Hopkins family whose little Oceanus was born on the Mayflower; and Miss Sewell has made wonderful full-color pictures. A beautiful book."--The Horn Book. Caldecott Honor Book.

Thanks for Thanksgiving by Julie Marques (Toddler-Elementary) Julie Marques reminds kids and adults alike about the little details that make each day enjoyable, while Doris Barrette's beautiful and striking illustrations bring her thoughtful words to life.

Thanksgiving: the True Story by Penny Colman, (Grades 5-9) Publisher Note: In her signature narrative nonfiction style, Penny Colman paints a fascinating picture of this cherished American holiday. She examines numerous Thanksgiving claims which were antecedents to the national holiday we celebrate today, raises the turkey question—does everyone eat turkey on Thanksgiving?—and shows Sarah Josepha Hale's instrumental role in establishing the holiday. Get ready to delve into the rich past of Thanksgiving in an enlightening history that uncovers the true story.

An Old Fashioned Thanksgiving Louisa May Alcott (Grades 4-5) Publisher Note: Thanksgiving morning is here, and the Bassett family's cozy kitchen is filled with the hustle and bustle of the holiday. But this year something is different: Tilly, Prue, and their brothers and sisters have been left in charge of everything from the roasted turkey to the apple slump. They tie on their aprons and step into the kitchen, but are they really up for the challenge of cooking a Thanksgiving feast?

Pioneer Thanksgiving, A: A Story of Harvest Celebrations in 1841 by Barbara Greenwood (Grades 3-5) Publisher Note: Combining fiction and nonfiction, this dramatic story follows the Robertson family as they prepare for Thanksgiving in the year 1841. Each chapter of the story is enhanced by information about the pioneer period and how Thanksgiving was celebrated in the past. The past comes alive through hands-on activities such as making a corn dolly or learning to play conkers. Historically accurate and beautifully rendered pencil illustrations make this a comprehensive resource for home or school.

December Children's Books Favorites Old and New

The Night Before Christmas by Clement Clarke Moore (Toddler-Grade 3) A well known poem about an important Christmas Eve visitor.

How the Grinch Stole Christmas by Dr. Seuss (Toddler-Elementary) The Grinch tries to stop Christmas from arriving by stealing all the presents and food from the village, but much to his surprise it comes anyway.

Clifford's Christmas by Norman Bridwell (Preschool-Grade 2) Clifford, the big red dog, and his owner, Emily Elizabeth, celebrate the holiday season through a variety of activities.

The Polar Express by Chris Van Allsburg (Preschool-Elementary) A magical train ride on Christmas Eve takes a boy to the North Pole to receive a special gift from Santa Claus.

A Child Was Born: a first nativity book by Grace Maccarone (Toddler-Grade 2) Rhyming text retells the story of the birth of Jesus.

The Christmas Miracle of Jonathan Toomey by Susan Wojciechowski (K-Elementary) The widow McDowell and her seven-year-old son Thomas ask the gruff Jonathan Toomey, the best wood-carver in the valley, to carve the figures for a Christmas crèche.

An Orange for Frankie by Patricia Polacco (Preschool – Grade 3) The Stowell family is abuzz with holiday excitement, and Frankie, the youngest boy, is the most excited of all. But there's a cloud over the joyous season: Tomorrow is Christmas Eve, and Pa hasn't returned yet from his trip to Lansing. He promised to bring back the oranges for the mantelpiece. Every year there are nine of them nestled among the evergreens, one for each of the children. But this year, heavy snows might mean no oranges . . . and, worse, no Pa! – amazon.com

Christmas Tapestry by Patricia Polacco (K-Grade 3) When a leak ruins the sacristy wall in his father's church, Jonathan Jefferson Weeks thinks Christmas Eve service will be ruined. Luckily he and his father find a beautiful tapestry, perfect for covering the damaged wall and giving the church a festive look! But then, an old Jewish woman recognizes the beautiful cloth. Her discovery leads to a real miracle on Christmas Eve.

The Year of the Perfect Christmas Tree: an Appalachian story by Gloria Houston. (Elementary) When Papa left for the war (World War II), Ruthie and her mother wonder how they would get the perfect Christmas tree to the town for the holiday celebration. This is a beautifully written and illustrated story, a must-read for elementary children.

Christmas in the Big Woods: adapted from the Little House books by Laura Ingalls Wilder. (K-Elementary) A young pioneer girl and her family celebrate Christmas in their cabin in the woods.

The Log Cabin Christmas by Ellen Howard (Preschool – Grade 3) Elvirey decides that her family really needs to celebrate Christmas even though it will not be the same since her mother died.

Carl's Christmas by Alexandra Day (Toddler-Grade 1) When baby's parents go out on Christmas Eve, Carl, the beloved Rottweiler, takes baby shopping and then home to witness Santa's arrival.

Merry Christmas, Amelia Bedelia by Peggy Parish (K-Grade 3) When Mrs. Rogers leaves Amelia Bedelia with a list of Christmas chores, Amelia completes them in very unique ways.

The Legend of the Candy Cane by Lori Walburg (K-Grade 4) With the help of a little girl, a mysterious stranger tells the story of the candy cane to the people of a small prairie town during Christmas time at the turn of the century.

Arthur's Perfect Christmas by Marc Tolon Brown (Preschool-Grade 2) Even without snow, turkey dinner and a perfect tree, Arthur and his family and friends have a wonderful Christmas—and Hanukkah—celebration.

The Wild Christmas Reindeer by Jan Brett (Preschool-Elem) After a few false starts, Teeka discovers the best way to get Santa's reindeer ready for Christmas Eve.

Louisa May Alcott's Christmas Treasury by Louisa May Alcott (Grades 3-Adult) Now for the first time, all of Alcott's known Christmas short stories and novellas have been gathered into a single exquisite collection, which is sure to brighten the holidays for book lovers.

The Gift of the Magi by O. Henry (Middle School – Adult) One dollar and eight-seven cents is all the money Della has in the world to buy her beloved husband a Christmas present. She has nothing to sell except her only treasure -- her long, beautiful brown hair. Set in New York at the turn of the twentieth century, this classic piece of American literature tells the story of a young couple and the sacrifices each must make to buy the other a gift.

Christmas Treasury by Jan Brett (Preschool-Grade 2) This gorgeous Christmas collection combines seven of Jan Brett's most famous, highly acclaimed, best-selling, beloved books: *The Mitten*, *The Wild Christmas Reindeer*, *Trouble with Trolls*, *The Twelve Days of Christmas*, *The Hat*, *Christmas Trolls*, and *The Night Before Christmas*. Jan Brett's exquisite art is universally recognized as being among the finest in children's books today. From the signature decorative borders, to impish trolls, to her warm and loving animals, Jan Brett draws upon the cultures of the countries in which her stories are set and brings us both original stories and classics as charming, lively, and timeless as her art.

The Jesse Tree by Geraldine McCaughrean (K-up) As Mr. Butterfield carves a Jesse Tree in an old dusty church, a curious young boy distracts him, asking about the various symbols on the tree. Against his better judgment, the old man finds himself retelling the

familiar Biblical tales that trace the lineage of Christ, from the Garden of Eden to Jesus' birth. Under the carpenter's skilled hands, the Jesse tree grows — and an unlikely friendship begins to take root as well.

Holiday Celebrations Around the World Titles

The Trees of the Dancing Goats by Patricia Polacco. (K-Elementary) During a scarlet fever epidemic one winter in Michigan, a Jewish family helps make Christmas special for their sick neighbors by making their own Hanukkah miracle.

Uncle Vova's Tree by Patricia Polacco (K-Grade 3) For the children in an extended family of Russian immigrants, Christmastime is special at Uncle Vova's house. Laughing and singing, he dances, takes the children on a sleigh ride, and gathers them to trim the tree that he and Svetlana planted when they first came to America. But when Vova is gone, to the surprise of everyone, the miracle of his tree—and the memories— only grow.

Hanukkah Haiku by Fred Ehrlich (Grades 1-2) Here's a cultural crossover that pays off: a traditionally Japanese poetic form used to celebrate the eight nights of Hanukkah. There's one haiku for each night and stepped pages add one candle to the menorah every time the page is turned. The simple poetry is set off perfectly by Karla Gudeon's vibrant freewheeling artwork. A perfect gift or good to reread each year Hanukkah Haiku is a jubilant unforgettable journey through the eight nights of Hanukkah.

Tree of Cranes by Allen Say (K-Elem) A Japanese boy learns of Christmas when his mother decorates a pine tree with paper cranes.

Who's That Knocking on Christmas Eve? By Jan Brett (Preschool-Grade 3) A boy from Finnmark to Oslo and his ice bear help scare away some hungry trolls so that Kyri and her father can enjoy their Christmas Eve meal.

Hanna's Christmas by Melissa A. Peterson (K-Elem) Hanna is sad about moving to America from Sweden until her grandmother sends her a magical creature, a tomten, who helps her to bring Christmas to her new home.

Lucia Morning in Sweden by Ewa Rydaker (K-Elem) Lucia Morning in Sweden" is a new children's book that tells the old story of Sankta Lucia through the eyes of three children in modern-day Sweden. The book follows the adventures of Sofie, Louise, and Carl as they prepare for Lucia Day, December 13th. On that day, many Swedish people celebrate the legacy of Lucia and the coming of the light with coffee, saffron buns, ginger snaps, and wonderful singing.

The Tomten by Astrid Lindgren (Preschool-Grade 3) This outstanding book by the author of Pippi Longstocking--and winner of the Hans Christian Andersen Award--has been called a "picture book of rare distinction" by the Chicago Tribune.

The Gift of a Traveler by Wendy Matthews (Grades 2-5) Seven-year-old Christine spends Christmas Eve helping her great-grandmother decorate her tree and sharing the story of a very special ornament that came from Romania many years before.

Babushka by Sandra Ann Horn (K-2) In a festive Russian folktale, Babushka, while traveling to Bethlehem, gives her gifts for the Christ child away and thinks she has nothing left to give the baby, only to discover that everything she gave away, she also gave to him.

The Nutcracker by E.T.A. Hoffman (Grades 1-3) After hearing how her toy nutcracker got his ugly face, a little girl helps break the spell and watches him change into a handsome prince. (The famous ballet is based on this story)

The Legend of Old Befana by Tomie dePaola (Preschool-Grade 3) This is a delightful reading of the favorite Italian Christmas story about an eccentric old woman and her never-ending search for the Baby King.

The Miracle of Saint Nicholas by Gloria Whelan (Preschool-Grade 3) Editorial Review "On Christmas Eve young Alexi sweeps out the village church, which has been empty since soldiers closed it sixty years ago--and the church's treasures miraculously reappear by Christmas morning. This touching story about the endurance of faith in a Russian village is illustrated with icon-like egg tempera paintings that contrast past violence with current joy."

The Legend of the Poinsettia by Tomie dePaola (Preschool-Grade 3) When her mother falls ill and cannot finish weaving a blanket for the church nativity, Lucinda tries to finish it and ruins it instead, but when Lucinda offers an armful of weeds for the manger, they are transformed into beautiful, red poinsettias.

Nine Days to Christmas: A Story of Mexico by Marie Hall Ets (Preschool-Grade 3) Published over 30 years ago, *Nine Days to Christmas* remains fresh and relevant. Ceci's first Christmas posada party and pinata have made her Mexican town come alive for generations of readers. "The youngest child will be completely transported by this lovely story."--The Atlantic. Caldecott Medal Winner

Too Many Tamales by Gary Soto (Preschool-Grade 3) Maria was feeling very grown-up on Christmas Eve as she helped her mother prepare the tamales for Christmas dinner. When she slipped her mother's diamond ring onto her finger, she only meant to wear it for a minute. But suddenly, the ring was gone, and there were 24 tamales that just might contain the missing ring. "A warm family story that combines glowing art with a well-written text to tell of a girl's dilemma."--School Library Journal, starred review.

Seven Spools of Thread by Angela Shelf Medearis (Grades 1-2) Publisher Note: When they are given the task of turning thread into gold, the seven Ashanti brothers put aside

their differences, learn to get along, and embody the principles of Kwanzaa, in a story with information on Kwanzaa and African weaving.

The Gifts of Kwanzaa by Synthia Saint James (Grades 1-2) "Saint James' clear, accessible introduction to Kwanzaa includes explanations of the Nguzo Saba (the Seven Principles) as well as information about the holiday's origin. . . . Enjoyable as well as handy, the book will be a strong addition to both school and public library collections".-- "Booklist"

Annotated Bibliography

Judy A. Teaford of Mountain State University has prepared a wonderful annotated bibliography of Appalachian Christmas books for children and young adults at: <http://www.ferrum.edu/applit/Bibs/ChristmasPictureBookBib.htm>