



Holiday Recommendations by Joan Kindig

The Virginia Foundation for the Humanities' "VABooks!" suggests a book for Virginians to read in common. This month's children's holiday recommendations come from Joan Kindig, an Assistant Professor in Reading at the University of Virginia and member of the Children's Book Guild and is the chair of the Virginia State Reading Association's Young Readers Program.

The holiday season is upon us and this year's selection of holiday books is remarkable. They run the gamut from books that will make you chuckle to poignant stories that remind us what the holidays are really about. Open a present of a book together on Christmas Eve this year and start a holiday tradition with one of these wonderful books.

The Amazing Christmas Extravaganza by David Shannon (Scholastic, 1995)

You know that house in your neighborhood that is decorated beyond anyone's wildest imaginations? This hilarious book chronicles Mr. Merriweather and his endless decorating. Ages 7 and up.

The Christmas Barn by C.L. Davis (American Girl, 2001)

This novel set in remote Appalachia during the Depression tells the story of a close-knit family preparing for Christmas. All hopes of a wonderful Christmas are dashed when snow begins falling and continues to fall until they are entirely snowed in. A snow-laden tree topples and hits their log house, damaging it beyond repair. The family moves into the barn and each of them begins to make presents for the others. It's a nice reminder of what Christmas is truly about. Ages 8 and up.

Harriet and George's Christmas Treat by Nancy Carlson (Carolrhoda, 2001)

Mrs. Hoozit made fruitcake last year and Harriet and George remember it all too well. This year when Mrs. Hoozit suggests they stop by for a Christmas treat, they avoid her like the plague. When Harriet's little brother goes over to Mrs. Hoozit's for a treat, they are astonished that he got fudge! Harriet and George drop by but find that she's all out of fudge. Guess what Harriet and George end up getting! Ages 7 and up.

How Murray Saved Christmas by Mike Reiss, illustrated by David Catrow (Penguin Putnam, 2000)

Told in rhyme, this is a hilarious tale about Santa's replacement, Murray the delicatessen owner. Murray gets off to a bad start but once he gets the hang of it, this is a Christmas no one will ever forget. Ages 8 and up.

I'll Be Home for Christmas by Holly Hobbie (Little, Brown, 2001)

Toot is trying to get home in time for Christmas while Puddle is working feverishly to get all the decorating and baking done in time. Just when it looks like Toot will never make it in time, a mysterious gentleman in a sleigh gives him a lift home through the snow.

Hobbie deliberately ends the story with a tease, “And when they wake up, it will be Christmas.” This book will serve to keep children excited about the upcoming holiday.

Moishe’s Miracle by Laura Krauss Melmed, illus. by David Slonim (Morrow, 2000)

While poor himself, Moishe is a generous old milkman who helps the less fortunate whenever he can. His wife is not nearly as generous as Moishe. One night, Moishe finds an old latke pan that will make an endless amount of latkes for him. Moishe invites the whole village to share in their good fortune but his wife decides to use the pan to become rich. Read to see what happens when she fools with the magic! Ages 5 and up.

Silent Night by Sandy Turner (Atheneum, 2001)

Without words and with delightful drawings, this is the story of a small, yapping dog on Christmas Eve. His yapping worsens when Santa arrives and Dad puts him outside where he is quickly quieted by a neighborhood tomcat. On Christmas morning one of the children finds a patch of red fabric (did the dog bite Santa?) and Dad tosses it into the fireplace where the draft carries it skyward. On one of the endpapers is a patch of red fabric. A very clever way to bring the reader into the reality of the book. This is a most unusual book and lots of fun to mull over again and again.

For full annotations and many more recommendations, visit us at the Virginia Center for Children’s Books at <http://curry.edschool.virginia.edu/go/tempo/VCCB.html>

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