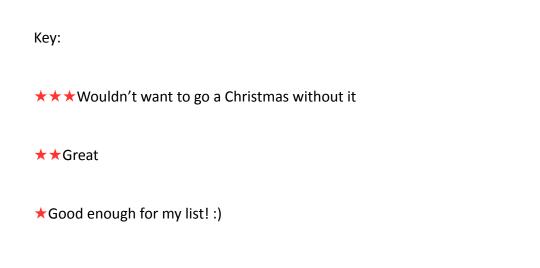


#### The Annotated Christmas Book List

Different ones have asked for more read aloud ideas, especially my very favorites, so I thought I would list them by age and by category (i.e. "Bible-related"; traditions; devotional; etc.) with three stars by my "very-most-favorite-if-we-only-read-a-handful-of-christmas-books-this-year-this-would-be-one-of-them"! Hope this helps you as you prepare to celebrate the birth of Christ with your sweet children.

Note: Many of the books on this list make for wonderful devotionals for anybody—not just for read alouds!



Note: I have included "out of print" ones because you can often pick them up used or at the library.

#### Christmas Read Alouds for Ages Ten and Under

#### **Bible/Nativity-Related Stories/Retellings**

- ★★★ <u>Adornaments</u> —different than your typical "nativity ornaments," which we also have had through the years, this adornaments set is a book with cardboard ornaments containing the names of Christ and a verse on each one to go with that name. I liked doing this with the kids as it connected the nativity story with Christ as our Savior (and more!) too.
- ★★★ <u>The Indescribable Gift</u> by Richard Exley; Illustrated by Phil Boatwright (out of print); this is a beautiful, elegant Christmas picture book with the Christmas story told from the point of view of all the major players: Zechariah, Mary, Elizabth, Joseph, The Innkeeper, The Shepherds, Simeon, and more. A truly lovely book—for up through adults. A chapter out of this a day makes a wonderful advent devotional.
- ★★ <u>Jotham's Journey</u> Arnold Ytreeide; "Over and over Jotham screamed for his family, but there was no one to hear him. They had vanished. He was alone. Where had they gone? How long ago had they left? Through quick, stabbing sobs Jotham told himself, "I must look for my family, I must search until I find them." And so his journey begins. In this widely popular, exciting story for the Advent season, readers follow ten-year-old Jotham across Israel as he searches for his family. Though he faces thieves, robbers, and kidnappers, Jotham also encounters the wise men, shepherds, and innkeepers until at last he finds his way to the Savior born in Bethlehem" (CBD Review).
- ★★ <u>Bartholomew's Passage</u> by Arnold Ytreeide; same type of story as "Jotham's Journey" but a different child and circumstances.
- ★★ <u>Tabitha's Travels</u> by Arnold Ytreeide; same type of story as "Jotham's Journey" but a different child and circumstances
- ★ <u>King of the Stable</u> by Melody Carlson; Illustrated by Chris Ellison (not in print); cute picture book about a boy who worked in the stable when Jesus was born; lovely illustrations.
- ★ <u>The Tale of Three Trees: A Traditional Folktale</u> by Angela Elwell Hunt; Illustrated by Tim Jonke; neat story about how three trees grew up to be the boat Jesus was on, the manger, and the cross.
- ★ <u>The Singing Shepherd</u> by Angela Elwell Hunt; Illustratoins by Peter Palagonia (out of print); a cute story about a little singing shepherd boy;

- ★ <u>The Black Sheep</u> by Elisabeth Heck; Illustrated by Sita Jucker (out of print); cute picture book about a little black sheep who met Baby Jesus.
- ★ <u>A King Is Born</u> by Patricia St. John; Illustrated by Richard Scott (out of print); nice picture book about the birth of Christ; more true to Scripture than many others (i.e. the wise men come when they are supposed to!)
- ★★ <u>Mary's Treasure Box</u> by Carolyn Walz Kramlich; Illustrated by Walter Porter; told from Mary's point of view when she was a grandmother, the cover says, "Beyond retelling the story of Christ's birth, "Mary's Treasure Box" creatively shares lessons about Christ gleaned through the objects in a simple wooden box—a bit of straw, wool, flut, and swaddling cloths." Neat way to tell the nativity story and provide insights into that first Christmas.
- ★ <u>The Crippled Lamb</u> by Max Lucado; Illustrated by Liz Bonham; another sweet Christmas story involving a little lamb on the first Christmas; nice illustrations
- ★★★ <u>The Very First Christmas</u> by Paul L Maier; Illustrated by Francisco Ordaz; from the cover: "No more fairy tales for Christopher; he wants a real bedtime story. So his mother tells the amazing and miraculous story of Jesus' birth. Along the way, Christopher learns the answers to some challenging questions about the Christmas story. And all the answers are right from the Bible. You have selected a wonderful gift for children, families, and friends. Written by best-selling author and historian, Paul L. Maier, and richly illustrated by Francisco Ordaz.." I agree!
- ★ <u>Mary's First Christmas</u> by Walter Wangerin, Jr.; Illustrated by Timothy Ladwig; the Christmas story written in journal form from the view of Mary; lots of good insights and lovely illustrations
- ★★★ One Wintry Night by Ruth Bell Graham; Illustrated by Richard Jesse Watson; from the cover: "When a young mountain boy is caught alone in a sudden snowstorm, he takes refuge in a cabin his grandfather had helped to build many years before. The woman living there shelters the boy, attends to his badly swollen ankle, and spends the hours they are snow-bound telling him the Christmas story —beginning with creation and concluding with the resurrection." This is a remarkable book—one that ties creation with Christmas and Easter! It is lengthy, so will likely take several reading sessions, but the amazing illustrations and deep-teaching-text are worth it!

#### "Traditions and More" Types of Books

- ★★★ <u>The ADVENTure of Christmas</u> by Lisa Welchel; One of my favorite easy-to-read-aloud Christmas books--filled with lots of activities, recipes, etc. about each tradition/entry. I like it more for the one-page-per tradition in easy kid language. I have a lot of books about Christmas traditions and symbols, but this is the best one I've found for younger kids.
- ★ <u>The First Christmas Tree: A Legend From Long Ago</u> by Helen Haidle Illustrated by David and Elizabeth Haidle (out of print); a story describing the origins of decorating with the evergreen tree
- ★★ <u>The Legend of the Christmas Tree: An Inspirational Story of a Treasured Tradition</u> by Rick Osborne; Illustrated by Bill Dodge; another story describing the origins of decorating with the evergreen tree
- ★ <u>The Real 12 Days of Christmas</u> by Helen Haidle; Illustrated by Celeste Henriquez out (of print); interesting and fun for those who know the song; nice pics
- ★★ <u>Saint Nicholas: The Real Story of the Christmas Legend</u> by Julie Stiegemeyer; Illustrated by Chris Ellison
- ★ <u>The Legend of the Candy Cane: The Inspirational Story of Our Favorite Christmas Candy</u> by Lori Walburg; Illustrated by James Bernardin; sweet, sweet story and tradition

#### Other Christmas Stories or Set at Christmastime Type Stories

- ★★★ <u>The Christmas Tapestry</u> by Patricia Polacco; this tale has been handed down for generations and is told in other settings/places/time periods (such as the "Ivory and Lace Tablecloth" in one of our Christmas collections); this is a lovely story; we read it yearly
- ★ <u>The Quiet Little Woman</u> by Louisa May Alcott; Illustrations by C. Michael Dudash
- ★★★ <u>A Christmas Treasury: The Children's Classic Edition</u> Illustrated by Christian Birmingham; from the cover: "Celebrate the magical Christmas season with this enchanting pageant of beloved classics that have earned their place as holiday favorites. This yuletide collection features Louisa May Alcott's vision of holiday spirit in "Little Women's A Merry Christmas," "The Night Before Christmas," "Jingle Bells," and much more." Beautifully illustrated—this is a lovely book. Hard to find Christmas "collections" for this age group with classic stories too (and not all contemporary mouse and reindeer stories); love this collection for this age group!
- ★★ <u>The Candle in the Window</u> based on a story by Leo Tolstoy by Grace Johnson; Illustrated by Mark Elliot; lovely and heartwarming (out of print)
- ★★ <u>The Christmas Miracle of Jonathan Toomy</u> by Susan Wojciechowski; Illustrated by PJ Lynch; amazingly heart warming story and awesome illustrations.
- ★ <u>A Child's Christmas at S. Nicolas Circle</u> by Douglas Kaine McKelvy; Illustrated by Thomas Kinkade; illustrations are beautiful (of course!); story is well-written and heartwarming

#### Christmas Read Alouds Ages Ten and Up

#### Bible/Devotional/Nativity-Related Stories/Retellings

- ★ One Incredible Moment: Celebrating the Majesty of the Manger by Max Lucado I do various Christmas "devotional" types of books with the family each year. I love different writers' inspirational thoughts on Christmas. This year I am doing Max Lucado's "One Incredible Moment: Celebrating the Majesty of the Manger" with the two little guys in the mornings. Very cool book!
- ★★ <u>Come and Behold Him...An Invitation to Christmas Worship</u> by Jack Hayford. I am re-reading this one aloud this year—and I read it fifteen years ago to my olders too. It is so inspirational and worshipful.
- ★ The Case for Christmas: A Journalist Investigates the Identity of the Child in the Manger by Lee Strobel--Just started a new Christmas book that I highly recommend for those with older kids who want "devotional" type of Christmas reading that is on the more serious side: Case for Christmas by Lee Strobel. We have a lot of his other books; some of his dvd's; and some audios--but this one is just the perfect size for Christmas reading and toting around. Warning: Read small portions at a time; it's fairly heady.
- ★★★ <u>Cosmic Christmas</u> by Max Lucado. We have read this short (sixty pages without much text on each page?) almost every year for the last six or eight as we drive to a relatives since it only takes an hour or so to read aloud. It tells the story of Christ's birth from heaven's viewpoint—with Satan and angels battling. An extremely cool nativity story that our teens love.
- ★★ <u>The Birth by Gene Edwards</u>; similar to "Cosmic Christmas" but lengthier and in more detail. Gene Edwards is a master storyteller.
- ★★★ <u>A Christmas Longing</u> by Joni Ereckson Tada. My favorite Christmas devotional—short entries, very poignant and moving. Love it!

#### "Traditions and More" Types of Books

★★ <u>Stories Behind the Great Traditions of Christmas</u> by Ace Collins; I have read from this ever Christmas for years and years. We never read the entire book—just a dozen entries or so each year. We use it in part in place of our history during December—it is so interesting!

#### \* \* Stories Behind the Best-Loved Songs of Christmas by Ace Collins

Instead of our regular history unit studies during December, we have always done various Christmas tradition books. This one is one that we have used often (and are using this year). It is so interesting to learn about the history of customs, songs, and traditions. This is a good book for Christian families with older children (say, ten or eleven and up).

\*\* Christ in the Carols: Thirty-One Devotionals for Christmas and Advent by Christopher and Melodie Lane; more devotional than educational, this book about Christmas carols has shorter entries than the previous one. It is a beautiful little book.

★★<u>Uncle John's Bathroom Reader: Christmas Collection</u> Portable Press; Yes, Uncle John's! This is like all of the other Uncle John books—informative essays about everything, except this one is Christmas only. Such interesting tidbits—secular and Christian about Christmas past and present. We get a kick out of this one!

#### Other Christmas Stories or Set at Christmastime Type Stories

- ★ <u>The Max Lucado Christmas Collection</u> by Max Lucado; this was recommended by a friend—and I love Max Lucado's writing style, so I'm sure we'll love it!
- ★★ <u>A Christmas Reader: A Collection of Family Favorites for the Holiday Season</u> compiled by Gail Harvey; has many classic stories too. I have read from this one off and on for twenty years!
- ★ <u>Startling Joy: Seven Magical Stories of Christmas</u> by James Calvin Schaap re-titled "Finding Christmas: Stories of Startling Joy and Perfect Peace" —a little longer "short stories" than the Christmas in My Heart series, but still filled with heart-warming ones.
- ★★ <u>Christmas in My Heart: A Treasury of Timeless Christmas Stories</u> compiled and edited by Joe L. Wheeler. One of my favorite Christmas collections is any of the Joe Wheeler Christmas story books. There are so many of them, so there are many out there for sale used too. Check out the extensive list of collections at his site below. These are heart-warming short stories for Christmas read alouds, gift books, and more! (This is the same author I wrote about earlier with the many wonderful "Great Stories Remembered" books.)
- ★★★ <u>Christmas Stories from the Heart</u> by Alice Gray. One of our top three "Christmas compilation" books. Heart-warming, amazing Christmas stories for family read alouds. I can't recommend this one highly enough for ALL Christian families who love to read and share stories together. (Note: Older editions have different covers. Libraries also carry this one.)
- ★★ <u>A Treasury of Christmas Classics</u> Harold Shaw Publishers (not in print anymore) –another one with classic stories. Great for literature!

Have any questions or comments? I'd love to connect with you! - Donna

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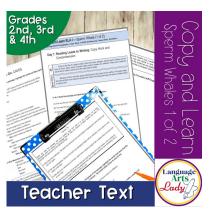
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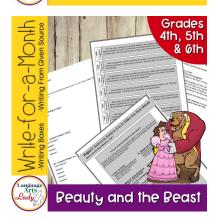
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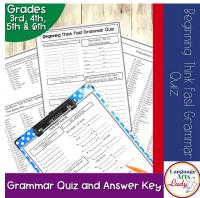


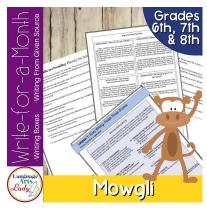




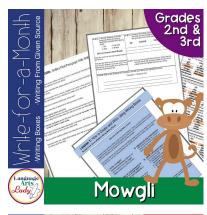




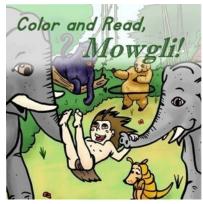














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Donna Reish, mother of seven grown children and thirty-two year homeschool veteran, is a prolific curriculum writer, blogger, and teacher from Indiana. She graduated from Ball State University with a degree in Elementary Education and did master's work in Reading Specialist following that. Donna began writing curriculum for a publisher out of Chicago specifically for homeschoolers twenty years ago. Following the completion of those thirty books

over ten years, she and her husband started a small press publishing company writing materials for homeschools and Christian schools. With the surge of digital products, Donna now writes curriculum books that are digital downloads (both secular and faith-based products), bringing her total curriculum products to 120 books of 50,000+pages. Donna tests all of her books with 50-80 in-person students each year locally before they are published--and this is her real love: Seeing the faces of students who achieve language arts goals that they never thought were possible using her creative, incremental approaches and materials. Donna teaches parents, teachers, and teacher parents, about grammar, language arts, writing, reading, learning, and more at her teaching website, *Language Arts Lady Blog*, and through her videocasts/podcasts, *How I Teach*.

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