

The 12 children's books of Christmas

Sure you've read "The Night Before Christmas" and "The Grinch Who Stole Christmas," but here are 12 other children's titles worth sharing this Christmas season. My list goes from light and fun to deep and spiritual. I believe Christmas should be all of those things, but our focus should always remain on the birth of our Savior.

12. "Dinosaur Vs. Santa" written and illustrated by Bob Shea, published by Scholastic

Warning: This book is very silly. A precocious young dinosaur tries his very hardest to be good so that Santa will visit him. All hilarity breaks loose, instead.



11. "Disney Christmas Storybook Collection: A Treasury of Tales," published by Disney Press

Join your favorite Disney friends on many holiday adventures, where children can learn what it means to be kind, caring, and generous. The highlight of the book for me is "Mickey's Christmas Carol," a favorite from my childhood.

10. "Santa's Surprise Book" written by Joan Potter Elwart, illustrated by Florence Sarah Winship, published by Little Golden Books

When I was growing up, I thought this book was magical. It must have been the dramatic ending. This classic is no longer available new, but Amazon has used copies available for cheap. My original copy was 89 cents, but if you spend a little more, I promise it will be worth it.

9. "Santa is Coming to Maryland" written by Steve Smallman, illustrated by Robert Dunn and Jerry Pike, published by Sourcebooks Jabberwocky

As you can imagine, this book describes Santa's visit to my favorite state and yours, highlighting landmarks and destinations of great importance to those who call the Old Line State home.



8. "Baby's First Christmas" written by Rachel Elliot, illustrated by Pauline Siewart, published by Parragon

Frank received this book for Christmas last year. This year, we get to share with Leo its bright pictures, jolly songs and soothing lullabies, and stories of fantasy and faith.

7. "A Special Place for Santa: A Legend for Our Time" by Jeanne Pieper, published

by Roman

If you're familiar with the image of the kneeling Santa, then you'll understand the message of this book: It's OK to celebrate Christmas with Santa, but Jesus is the real reason for the season.

6. "Angela and the Baby Jesus" by Frank McCourt, illustrated by Raul Colon, published by Simon & Schuster

Frank McCourt is my favorite writer (he's part of the reason why I named my son Frank). Angela and the Baby Jesus takes us back to when his mother, Angela, was a child who found herself in a heap of trouble all because she wanted to keep her parish's baby Jesus warm.

5. "A Star So Bright: A Christmas Tale" by M. Christina Butler, illustrated by Caroline Pedler, published by Good Books.

A unique tale of creatures from the woodlands and the pastures who follow the star that leads them to the baby Jesus. The star lights up on each page, which is especially helpful in maintain the attention of little ones. Beautifully written and illustrated.

4. "Silent Night," published by Smart Kidz Media, Inc.

With music, lights, and a window revealing the baby Jesus on every page, this sing-along book has much to offer young readers. Adults can benefit, too, by learning additional verses to the song.

3. "Room for a Little One" written by Martin Waddell, illustrated by Jason Cockcroft, published by Little Simon Inspirations

In this gorgeously illustrated book, animals make room in their stable (and their hearts) for each other and for the baby Jesus. The book is deceptively simple in that it offers adults the opportunity to reflect upon times we've made ourselves, our things, our time, our space unavailable to those who need us most.

2. "The Christmas Story" written by Gill Davies, published by Igloo

Most of the kids I know love pop-up books. Here is one that tells the story of the Nativity in 3D. The narrative is simple, yet detailed. The pictures are fun and engaging. This book is a great way to bring the focus of the holiday back on Jesus' birth.



1. Matthew 1:18-2:12 and Luke 2:1-20 (NRSV)

When in doubt, always go directly to the source. The Bible can be hard for children to understand, but you can make it easier by breaking down each sentence, by translating into your own words, and by helping your children draw pictures to tell the true story of Christmas.

Just about all of these books are available at Amazon.com or Barnes & Noble (some

may need to be special ordered).

I'd love to hear some of your favorite Christmas book for children, so that I can read them to my boys!