

Weekly Wonder Tech: “Christmas Story Premium” App

Now that Collin is 4, I feel the need to go in greater depth when telling the story of the Nativity. He likes to ask “Why?” questions in his quest for greater detail. And like the children in at the beginning of the claymation holiday classic “Santa Claus is Coming to Town” or like Clarence, George Bailey’s guardian angel in “It’s a Wonderful Life,” Collin was curious about the details surrounding some of the characters associated with Christmas. I let him know about Santa and Rudolph, but made sure he understood the person who matters most this time of year: Jesus.

One of the ways I explained the folk and religious stories behind Christmas was through books. (I’ll be publishing a list of my top titles next week). I also used movies, though most were on the commercial end of things. But one new way I’ve added to my Christmas-sharing repertoire is the use of apps.

Collin and Frank love to play on my iPad. I keep a few educational games handy for them for long waits during outings or as a pre-bed wind-down. One of the apps I’ve added recently is “Christmas Story Premium” by TinySparks.



(Photo via itunes.apple.com)

“Christmas Story Premium” is an interactive storybook, which allows children to read the poetic version of St. Luke’s gospel on their own or have it read to them in a man’s gentle voice. Tinkly bells play music in the background and sound effects signal a page change or the placement of a puzzle piece (more on that later). All of the sounds may be turned on or off.

The pictures are soothing to look at and seem like digitally created watercolor and ink paintings. In addition to acting as an electronic book, the app offers very simple puzzles, most of which are based on images from the story.

Collin is beginning to understand the Christmas story better now, and I think the app has helped. He was, for awhile, focused on Mary’s lack of shoes, but after I explained that Jesus’ family was very poor, he began to zone in on the parts of the pictures that really matter.

Hearing and seeing the story read over and over on the iPad has been effective, as Collin is beginning to say the words along with the narrator. Repetition is important for children, in identical forms and through variety – hence my additional use of

books and traditional storytelling from memory.

Still, no matter how hard I try, I can't replicate my speech in the exact same way every time I read like this app can. For Collin, who likes to mimic the precise tones and cadences of his favorite movie quotes, uniformity of sound is vital.

My main criticism of the "Christmas Story Premium" is that it doesn't offer coloring, puzzles, and/or games, as it's competitors do. Additionally, the others' images are also a bit brighter and more kid-friendly.

Overall, the repetition and simplicity of this app is ideal for my young children, who need to see and hear this beautiful story in every way possible.

"Christmas Story Premium" is available for iPad only and retails 99 cents at Apple's App Store.