

Christmas School

2026 FAMILY BOOK CLUB GUIDE

Read-Aloud Revival®

Welcome

THANKS FOR YOUR INTEREST IN CHRISTMAS SCHOOL!

Christmas School is our most anticipated Family Book Club of the year. It invites your family to do December a little differently—to slow down, savor the season, and wait in joyful hope for the birth of our Lord.

I created Christmas School 7 years ago because I wanted a plan. Not a plan to do or accomplish *more* at this time of year, but a plan to *focus* on what really matters.

What matters most to me at this time of year (and I'm guessing what matters most to you, too) is relationships: relationships with my kids and my relationship with God. Books are always my go-to when it comes to strengthening my family and connecting with Christ. So books are at the heart of Christmas School, too.

In this sample, you'll find a few highlights from this year's guide.

In the full guide, you'll find supply lists, simple weekly plans, clickable resources, conversation starters, music, Scripture, Christmas carols, crafts, and more, curated and organized to make it easier and more enjoyable to make meaningful and lasting memories with your kids all month long.

I am quite sure that Christmas School will rank among your and your kids' favorite memories of the year.

If you have any lingering questions about Christmas School, please let us know! You can email support@readaloudrevival.com.

Remember, whether you join us for Christmas School or not, the joyous day will soon be here.

The baby King will be born.
So enjoy your kids.
Enjoy the season.
And most of all, enjoy the reason we're celebrating in the first place.



Love,

Sarah and the RAR Team

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Christmas School Overview

THIS YEAR, WE ARE FEATURING FOUR BOOKS ABOUT THE BIRTH OF CHRIST:

- ***Jotham's Journey,***
- ***Mortimer's Christmas Manger,***
- ***The Tale of Three Trees,* and**
- ***The Christmas Miracle of Jonathan Toomey.***



	WEEK 1	WEEK 2	WEEK 3
PICTURE BOOKS	**Mortimer's Christmas Manger** Aliteration · Strong Verbs · Dramatic Irony	**The Tale of Three Trees** Folktale · Personification · Foreshadowing	**The Christmas Miracle of Jonathan Toomey** The Hero's Journey · Realistic Illustrations
READ-ALOUD NOVEL	**Jotham's Journey** PP 7-56 The Hero's Journey	**Jotham's Journey** PP 57-113 Deep Dive: Act One · Symbolism	**Jotham's Journey** PP 114-175 Deep Dive: Act Two · Cliffhangers · Deep Dive: Act Three
MORE TO LOVE (AND LEARN)	**Christmas Carol Study** O Little Town of Bethlehem **Craft**: 3D Paper Star Garland	**Watercolor Workshop** Star of Bethlehem **Craft**: Wood Slice Ornaments	**Nature Study** From Trees to Treasure **Craft**: Paper Christmas Angels

Each week comes with a suggested schedule spread over four days. Customize it to fit your family.

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SAMPLE

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How to Use This Guide

At Read-Aloud Revival, we help you **build a family culture around books**.
This guide is designed to help you make connections and build relationships—with each other, with books, and with the ideas we encounter within them.

HERE'S HOW IT WORKS



1

READ ALOUD
(the foundation)
Homeschooling is about relationships, and reading aloud is the best, most effective way to nurture the relationships that matter most.

2

RELATE
(the frosting)
By engaging in open-ended conversations, we give our kids some of their fondest childhood memories.

3

REMEMBER
(the sprinkles)
Sharing a cozy memory around the table and following a "reading trail" of related reads can enhance your experience with your read-aloud!

4

READ-ALOUD EXTRAS
(the star on top)
When time and energy allows, you can extend the story with subjects like history, nature study, and art to enhance the experience.

The Christmas School Guide will take you through those three steps: **read aloud, relate,** and **remember**. This guide is also packed with **read-aloud extras** featuring Scripture passages, Christmas carols, ornament-making, writing ideas, geography fun, and more, for whatever interests you and your kids.

Happy reading!

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Part 1

Getting Ready

SAMPLE

1 Gather your books

Read through the descriptions of the books on pages 13-14 to choose what you'd like to read for your family this Christmas School.

Each week's guide will lead you through a Looking Closely video for both the picture book and *Jotham's Journey* options. The recipe and activity ideas will be the same no matter which option you choose.

2 Gather your supplies

Remember, **Christmas School is a menu of options** that can be chosen as best reflects your family and your current season. You'll find details on each of these activities in the weekly guides.



Use the Master Supply List on pages 15-18 to help you choose and prepare for the meaningful memories ahead.

3 Choose your schedule

Take a look at your calendar and consider when you'd like to set aside time for Christmas School. We've provided suggested weekly schedules to help guide you, but use them in whatever way best serves your family and your season.

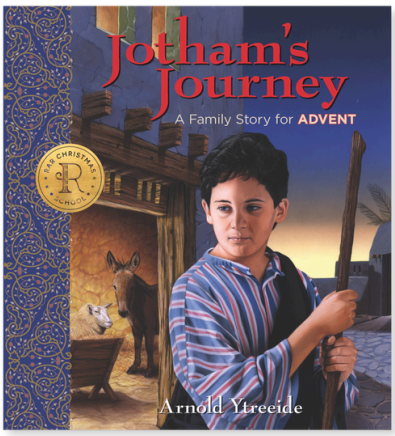
4 You're ready!

We pray that as you **do December a little differently** with your family, that you and your family are blessed with time to pause, reflect, savor, and celebrate the season.

Merry Christmas Schooling!

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About the Books



TITLE	***Jotham's Journey***
AUTHOR & ILLUSTRATOR	Arnold Ytreeide
RECOMMENDED FOR	10+

ABOUT THE BOOK

In this widely popular and 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.

WONDERING IF THIS BOOK IS A GOOD FIT FOR YOUR FAMILY THIS SEASON?

While this book is a beautiful story for the whole family, early Israel can be violent, so we've noted a few places you may like to review. These pages would be a helpful litmus test to gauge sensitivities in your readers. Alternatively, you can also choose to continue reading this book, using the quick summaries provided below that you can use if you choose to skip those sections, keeping your readers filled in on the plot.

Page 14: Jotham intentionally hurts himself to stage an attack
Page 19: Jotham has an intense and bloody dream about a wild animal attack
Page 34: Violence and kidnapping
Page 38: A young boy is severely punished in front of Jotham
Page 76: A sword fight which results in a death
Page 149: A Jewish man is whipped by a Roman soldier
Page 160: A noose is used on a character



As always, you are the best person to make these kinds of decisions for your family, so we highly encourage you to follow your instinct.

Decide it's not the right season for your family? No problem, we've created this guide to work with either *Jotham's Journey* or our three picture book selections, or both!

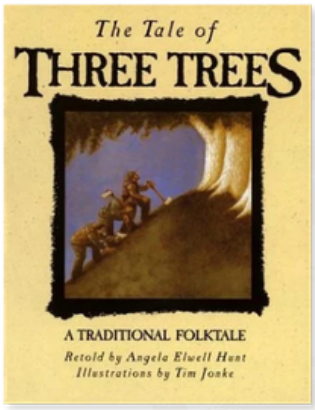
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TITLE	***Mortimer's Christmas Manger***
AUTHOR & ILLUSTRATOR	Karma Wilson & Jane Chapman

ABOUT THE BOOK

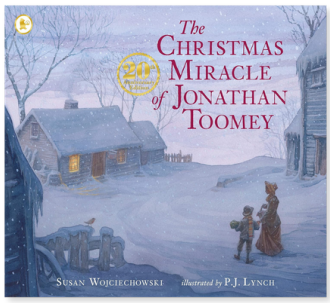
It's Christmastime, and Mortimer Mouse, unhappy in his cramped, cold hole, goes in search of a new home. He spies a nativity scene that looks just right for him, so he moves the statues out and settles himself into the manger! But when he hears the Christmas story being told and realises that the statues are of Mary, Joseph and Jesus, he understands that the crèche is meant for them. Where will Mortimer live?



TITLE	***The Tale of Three Trees***
AUTHOR & ILLUSTRATOR	Angella Elwell Hunt & Tim Jonke

ABOUT THE BOOK

"Once upon a mountaintop, three little trees stood and dreamed of what they wanted to become when they grew up ..." So begins this enchanting American folktale. Angela Elwell Hunt's ingenuous retelling of this timeless story, with illustrations by Tim Jonke has delighted readers of all ages for twenty-five years.



TITLE	***The Christmas Miracle of Jonathan Toomey***
AUTHOR & ILLUSTRATOR	Susan Wojciechowski & P. J. Lynch

ABOUT THE BOOK

Jonathan Toomey is the best woodcarver in the valley, but he is always alone and never smiles. No one knows about the mementos of his lost wife and child that he keeps in an unopened drawer. But one early winter's day, a widow and her young son approach him with a gentle request that leads to a joyful miracle.

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Week One



Mortimer's Christmas Manger / Jotham's Journey

(pages 7–56)

WEEK 1

Mortimer's Christmas Manger & Jotham's Journey

(pages 7–56)

Supply list:

STAR OF BETHLEHEM CRISPY RICE TREATS

- ◯ 9x13 pan
- ◯ 4-5in. star-shaped cookie cutter
- ◯ Wax paper (optional)
- ◯ ¼ cup butter
- ◯ 4 cups miniature marshmallows
- ◯ 5 cups crispy rice cereal

3D PAPER STAR GARLAND

- ◯ Choice of decorative paper *(cardstock, scrapbook paper, old book pages, etc.)*
- ◯ Plain cardstock *(for the template)*
- ◯ A star template *(provided)*
- ◯ A pair of scissors
- ◯ Hot glue or a glue stick
- ◯ Twine *(ribbon or string work too)*
- ◯ Pencil

GINGERBREAD HOUSE SUPPLIES

- ◯ A gingerbread house kit OR
- ◯ Graham Crackers / Pop Tarts with candy decorations OR
- ◯ Cardboard and art supplies

FAMILY MOVIE NIGHT

- ◯ Family favorite movie

CHRISTMAS FAMILY KEEPSAKE JOURNAL (OPTIONAL)

- ◯ A large journal or folder to hold writing projects, art work, or other miscellaneous throughout your family's Christmas School

Christmas School Week One

MORTIMER'S CHRISTMAS MANGER **JOTHAM'S JOURNEY** pages 7-56

	DAY 1	DAY 2	DAY 3	DAY 4
READ	Read *Mortimer's Christmas Manger*	Watch the Looking Closely video for *Mortimer's Christmas Manger*	Re-read *Mortimer's Christmas Manger* or a related read	
	Watch the Looking Closely video for *Jotham's Journey: Week One* Read *Jotham's Journey* pages 7-18	*Jotham's Journey* pages 19-29	*Jotham's Journey* pages 31-44	*Jotham's Journey* pages 45-56
RELATE	Discuss a question from the Conversation Starters list or with a question from **How to Talk with Your Kids About Books**			
AROUND-THE-TABLE	Make "Star of Bethlehem" crispy rice treats			
SCRIPTURE	Micah 5:2			
CHRISTMAS CAROL	Christmas Carol Study: "O Little Town of Bethlehem" with Mary Prather from SQUILT			
READ-ALOUD EXTRAS	Make a 3D Paper Star Garland	Go outside to gaze at the stars	Make a gingerbread house	Build a cozy fort and have a family movie night
LANGUAGE ARTS	Copywork *or* choose one writing project for the week	Read a grammar lesson	Read the poem "From Our Happy Home" by Louisa May Alcott	

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1 Get Ready . . .

WORDS TO WATCH FOR

If you'd like, **review this list** of interesting words with your kids before reading, or have it on hand to provide an explanation as you go. No need to turn this into an assignment. We suggest simply explaining the words and making it a fun game to listen for them, or use them throughout the day!

TIP

Remember, read-alouds don't have to be still and silent. If kids are wiggly, let them move quietly nearby or keep their hands busy with quiet toys, coloring, or snacks.

Dwell	To live in a particular location
Tidbits	A small, tasty morsel or appetizer
Spy	As a verb, to watch secretly
Nestled	To be settled snugly or comfortably
Lugged	To drag or carry something with great effort
Snuffled	To breathe in quickly and repeatedly through the nose, usually because you are crying or because you have a cold

2 Read *Mortimer's Christmas Manger*

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3 Looking Closely

There are few things Sarah Mackenzie enjoys more than looking closely at a picture book and inviting you and your kids to do the same. Watch **this 8-min video** together to notice some of this story's particular treasures.



WHAT WE'LL LOOK AT CLOSELY

Alliteration Alliteration occurs when words that are close together begin with the same sound: *"Too **cold**. Too **cramped**. Too **creepy**."*

Strong Verbs Strong verbs are verbs that are chosen carefully and, because they are precise, paint a clear picture in your mind. They paint a picture with action!

Dramatic Irony Dramatic irony occurs when you, as the reader, know something that the character in the story does not.

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Conversation Starters

To help your kids develop the skill of becoming thoughtful, discerning readers, use the following open-ended conversation starters to discuss the book.

1. Look closely at the pictures on each page. **What toys can you see around the house? What do you think the kids in this family like to do for fun? What might you have in common with them?**

2. Mortimer had a few great words to describe his first home - the dark hole under the stairs. **What word would you use to describe it? What word would you use to describe the house he lives in at the end of the story?**

TIP

It's not a quiz, it's a conversation. We suggest starting a conversation by picking any one of these questions and answering it yourself. Then ask your child what they think.

SAMPLE

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JOTHAM'S JOURNEY

PAGES 7-56

1 Get Ready . . .

WORDS TO WATCH FOR

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TIP

Remember, read-alouds don't have to be still and silent. If kids are wiggly, let them move quietly nearby or keep their hands busy with quiet toys, coloring, or snacks.

WORD	PAGE #	DEFINITION
Tunic	11	A simple slip-on garment made with or without sleeves and usually knee-length or longer, belted at the waist, and worn as an under or outer garment
Craggy	11	A surface that is uneven, rough, or jagged.
Caravan	26	A company of travelers on a journey through desert or hostile regions
Barren	31	Unable to produce plants or fruit
Thistles	37	A wild plant with sharp points on the leaves and, typically, purple flowers
Sheckles	40	The chief silver coin of the ancient Hebrews
Leper	42	The word leper was historically used to refer to someone who suffered from leprosy, a bacterial illness that affects the nerves, skin, and respiratory tract. Because leprosy was thought to be highly contagious, the word "leper" also came to be used more generally to mean "an outcast" or "a person to be avoided."

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WORDS TO WATCH FOR (CONT.)

	WORD	PAGE #	DEFINITION
○	**Essenes**	45	Nathan is a part of a Jewish sect known as the Essenes. These were communities of religious Jews who removed themselves from the population of Jerusalem in protest to the way the Temple was being run in that day. The Essenes are credited with copying texts from the Old Testament, which are now known as the Dead Sea Scrolls. Nathan himself is from the region of Qumran (*Jotham's Journey*, page 48), where the Dead Sea Scrolls were originally discovered in 1947 by Beudoin farmers. Nathan shows Jotham the scribes' rooms where they copied the Holy Scriptures on pages 52-53 in your book. Head to page 83 of this guide to learn more about the Dead Sea Scrolls.
○	**Peril**	45	At risk of being injured, destroyed, or lost
○	**Scepter**	47	A scepter is a ceremonial staff, often used by kings. With its jewels and ornamentation, a scepter is a symbol of power.

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2 Looking Closely

Join Sarah in uncovering the **Hero's Journey** this Christmas School!

Before you begin reading, watch **this 18-min video** together to orient yourself to the incredible adventure ahead!



WHAT WE'LL LOOK AT CLOSELY

Hero's Journey There are many different ways to describe a Hero's Journey, but in short, it's a **three-act structure that most books, stories, plays, and movies follow.**

Jotham's Journey has a classic three-act structure, and our main character, Jotham of Jericho, undergoes quite a transformation from the first page of this story to the last.

Act 1: The Set-Up Act

- The main character in the normal world
- Character wants/needs
- Inciting incident

Act 2: The Adventure Act

- World of adventure
- Series of obstacles
- Midpoint

Act 3: The Transformation Act

- All is Lost
- Finale
- The world is transformed

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BOTH READ-ALOUD OPTIONS

Around the Table

The simplest way to help your kids form a happy memory is to make it **sensory** and **social**. You can do both by transforming a meal you're already making into something bookish and fun. We do that by pairing our conversation with something delicious, shared around the table.

Feel free to substitute your own favorite recipes. It doesn't matter if it's homemade, from a box, or store-bought—what matters is that your kids share the experience with *you*.

STAR OF BETHLEHEM CRISPY RICE TREATS

Make a batch of crispy rice treats, and use a star-shaped cookie cutter to make them extra festive! Pour a cup of hot chocolate for an extra special time together around the table.

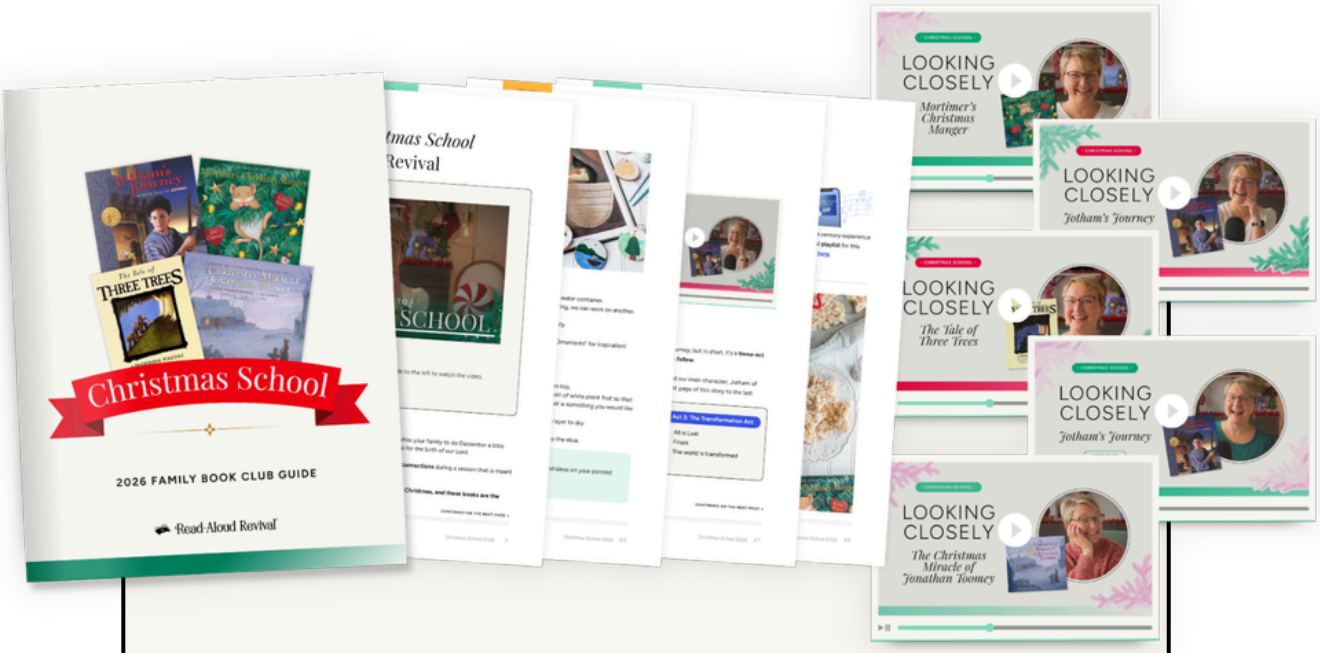
Printable recipe on the next page.

> *"Nestled on top was a bright, shining star."*
>
> - Mortimer's Christmas Manger



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The Simple Plan for a Peaceful Christmas Season



"I love the slower pace that Christmas School brings during a very busy season. From my oldest teen to my littlest preschooler, Read-Aloud Revival has thought of something to inspire each one of them through literature and activities. It's a must-do delight on my Christmas season list."

— Meagan Hemingson

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