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Christmas School

2026 FAMILY BOOK CLUB GUIDE

Read-Aloud Revival®

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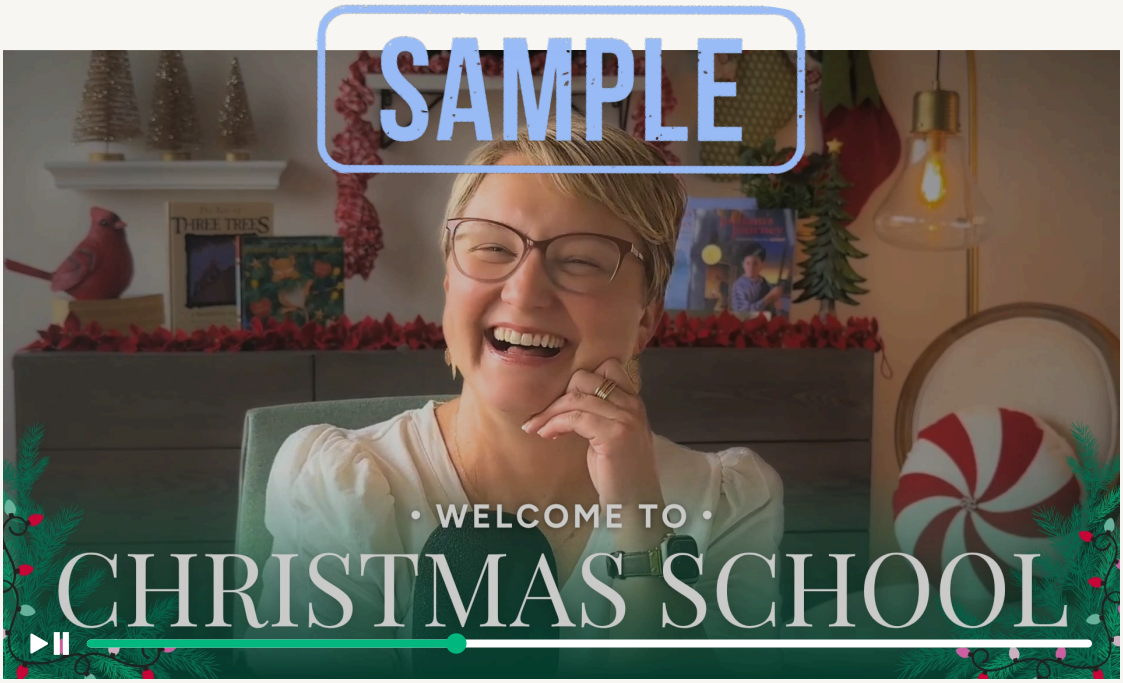
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Welcome to *Christmas School* with Read-Aloud Revival



Click the link or scan the QR code to the left to watch the video.

WE'RE SO GLAD YOU'RE HERE!

Christmas School is our most anticipated Family Book Club that 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.

This guide is here to help your family **make meaningful and lasting connections** during a season that is meant to be holy, set apart, and full of wonder.

This year, we're keeping **the Nativity story right at the center of our Christmas, and these books are the hearthfire that everything else warms itself by.**

CONTINUED ON THE NEXT PAGE →

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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.***



The picture books are for everyone, and *Jotham's Journey* will give your family a beautiful story to come back to again and again throughout the Advent season. Visit "About the Books" on pages 13-14 for more information on which stories you and your family will want to visit this Christmas.

As far as your guide, we've organized **Christmas School like a menu**. You get to pick and choose which parts you want to do, which parts fit your family best.

Inside this guide, you'll find supply lists, simple weekly plans, clickable resources, conversation starters, music, Scripture, Christmas carols, crafts, and more, gathered in such a way 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.

Remember, no matter how much you get to, or don't, Christmas 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.

Merry Christmas Schooling.



Love,

Sarah and the RAR Team



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How to Use This Guide

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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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Using Christmas School with Various Ages

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RAR's Christmas School is designed to help nurture your family culture of reading, while touching on a variety of interests, such as language arts, drawing, painting, handicrafts, baking, science, nature study, history, music, and more!

WITH KIDS UNDER AGE 10:

This guide is all you need. If you'd like, you can continue using any math and/or phonics instruction you're already doing, but that isn't required. (Taking a month off is often just the rest your kids need to come back to those subjects refreshed in January.)

WITH KIDS AGES 10–13:

In addition to Christmas School, you may like to continue your child's normal math and music lessons, as applicable. You will also likely want to schedule some free reading time, when your child is invited to read for their own enjoyment.

WITH KIDS AGES 14–18:

Use Christmas School as the basis of your high schooler's learning, adding in whatever math and/or outsourced classwork (music lessons, co-op classes, or online coursework, for example) your student is using, and making sure they have time set aside for free reading. We know this is a busy season for your teen, and we hope Christmas School is just the invitation they need as well to slow down and savor the season with family.



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Planning & Scheduling

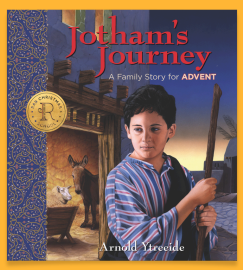
This guide is open-and-go. While you may want to take a peek at the optional activities in advance to acquire your supplies, there is minimal prep needed—we've done all the planning for you!

Pick and choose what suits your family best. Christmas School can be as relaxed or as planned-out as you'd like it to be.

DONE-FOR-YOU PLANS

You'll find suggested weekly schedules with options for the following below.

OPTION 1



Read *Jotham's Journey* over three weeks

OPTION 2



Read the three Picture Books, one per week

OPTION 3



Read Jotham's Journey + the three weekly Picture Books

You can choose to follow along with Options 1, 2 or 3 as best suits your family. The weekly schedules are laid out as a four-day plan to provide a little more breathing space to simplify your December.

Following these plans, Christmas School will take about 1-2 hours a day, depending on what you choose to read and how immersive you desire to make your experience.

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Language Arts with RAR

If you'd like to use Christmas School to enhance language arts in your homeschool, you'll find activities in this Language Arts Companion for ages 6–12 that include:

- **Writing**
- **Copywork**
- **Literary devices**
- **Grammar and usage**
- **Poetry**

(Please note: Phonics and spelling are not included in RAR Premium. You can see a list of our recommendations for those programs here.)

A NOTE ON WRITING:

To become good writers, students need to develop the ability to ask good questions, think deeply, connect ideas, and communicate those ideas effectively.

How do we go about teaching our kids to develop these skills? We do it primarily by **reading aloud** and **discussing what we read** . . . something you're already doing as part of Christmas School!



Students also benefit from **copywork** and **various writing opportunities** to practice the craft of written communication, depending on their ages.

You will find suggestions for both copywork and writing suggestions in each week of Christmas School.

If you are seeking more writing instruction for ages 12+, Sarah Mackenzie's favorites are listed here.

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Copywork

GREAT FOR YOUNGER KIDS

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For students under age 10, writing instruction includes three things:

1. **Reading Aloud** (to store grammatically correct, sophisticated language patterns)
2. **Discussing what you read** (to learn to ask questions, think deeply, and connect ideas)
3. **Copywork** (to practice handwriting and become familiar with correct usage and mechanics)

COPYWORK

is the simple act of ***copying an example of good writing.*** We recommend copywork for ages 6+. Copying well-written sentences exposes your children to a grammatically correct sentence and gives them the opportunity to be a grammar detective as they find grammar rules they're learning in the books they're reading.



Writing Projects

GREAT FOR OLDER KIDS

For students age 10 and over, or earlier if your child is interested, writing instruction includes three things:

1. **Reading aloud** (to store grammatically correct, sophisticated language patterns)
2. **Discussing what you read** (to develop the habit of asking questions, thinking deeply, and connecting ideas)
3. **A variety of writing prompts** (to practice the craft of written communication)

No writing is wasted when it comes to developing the skills of a writer.

We recommend inviting your child to **write a few times per week**. Choose a writing prompt from this guide if you'd like to connect the writing to your read-aloud.

Then, occasionally invite them to choose **one piece** of writing to polish and edit. It's usually best to focus on just one editing component per piece of writing (i.e., spelling, punctuation, grammar, using strong verbs, etc.).

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BUILDING WRITING SKILLS

Depending on where your student is at, consider building their writing skills in the following sequence:

- **DICTATION** (your child orally responds, and you write down their answers)
- **BULLET LISTS** (for example, "Write a list of three things that you . . .")
- **SENTENCES** (for example, "Write three sentences about . . .")
- **PARAGRAPHS** (for example, "Write three paragraphs about . . .")



For Christmas School, we have provided optional writing projects (choose just one per week, or one for your whole month). Consider creating a special "**Christmas Family Keepsake**." This keepsake journal could house your Christmas School writing, art projects, pictures, commonplace quotes, or whatever you'd like to keep in it.

Grammar

Mastering good language is best done incrementally over time. Good grammar appears again and again as your student reads and copies well-written language. It's best to learn grammar in the context of a story, because it has more meaning and usefulness that way.



At RAR, we like to look at grammar as **"language arts in the wild"** and find grammatical tools that help our story come to life! Each week, you will find a grammar tool geared towards kids ages 6-9 or 10+.

Choose the lesson each week that best fits your kids in this season.

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Part 1

Getting Ready

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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.

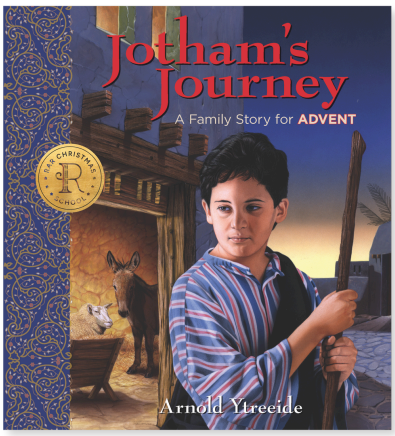
Merry Christmas Schooling!

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About the Books

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

ABOUT THE BOOK

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.

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 moments you may like to review, and have provided possible quick summaries that you can use, if you choose to skip those sections. These would be a helpful litmus test to gauge sensitivities in your readers. Alternatively, you can also choose to continue reading this book, while simply offering a summary of a skipped page for their benefit.

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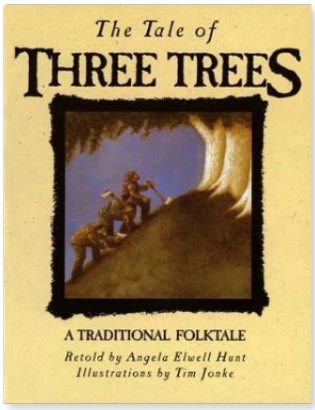
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TITLE	*Mortimer's Christmas Manger*
AUTHOR & ILLUSTRATOR	Karma Wilson & Jane Chapman

ABOUT THE BOOK

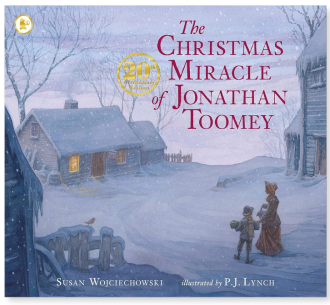
It's Christmastime, and Mortimer Mouse, unhappy in his cramped, cold hole, goes in search of a new home. He spies a nativity scene that looks just right for him, so he moves the statues out and settles himself into the manger! But when he hears the Christmas story being told and realises that the statues 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)

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BOTH READ-ALOUD OPTIONS

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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*.



Another way to enjoy a sensory experience is to pull up the curated **playlist** for this season. You can find it **here**.

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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BOTH READ-ALOUD OPTIONS

STARGAZING

GO OUTSIDE TO LOOK AT THE STARS

Pick an evening to step out-of-doors at night (with an adult) and let your mind "wander and wonder among the stars."

Take a few minutes to allow your eyes to adjust and rest. **What do you see? Do you recognize any night-sky features?**

Learn more about the night sky and constellations in this **3-min video** from Nat Geo Kids.

> *Jotham: He gazed into the sky and let his mind wander and wonder among the stars.(page 28)*

MAKE A GINGERBREAD HOUSE...

. . . LIKE THE ONE MORTIMER MOVES INTO FOR HIS CHRISTMAS HOLIDAY.

You can pick up a gingerbread house kit. You can also use graham crackers or Pop-Tarts, frosting, and small candies to decorate!

For a longer lasting option, you could even build it out of cardboard and art supplies!



BUILD A COZY CHRISTMAS FORT...

Set up a special place in your home using blankets and pillows. Snuggle in just like Mortimer, and don't forget to make room for the ones you love!

Bonus: Watch a family favorite Christmas movie from your spot!

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“From Our Happy Home”

BY LOUISA MAY ALCOTT

Through the world we roam
One week in all the year,
Making winter spring
With the joy we bring,
For Christmas-tide is here.

Now the eastern star
Shines from afar
To light the poorest home;
Hearts warmer grow,
Gifts freely flow,
For Christmas-tide has come.

Oh, happy chime,
Oh, blessed time,
That draws us all so near!
"Welcome, dear day,"
All creatures say,
For Christmas-tide is here.

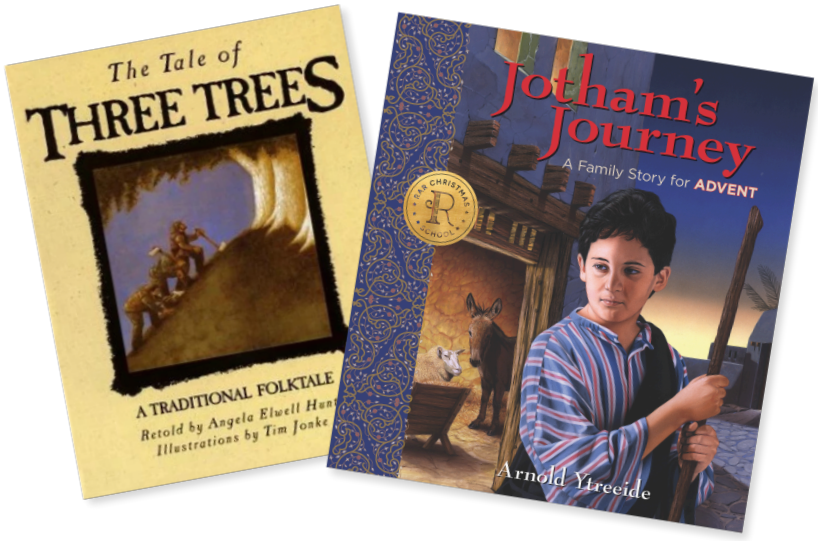


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Perhaps best known for her semi-autobiographical work, *Little Women*, Lousia May Alcott was a 19th-centry American author who captured the essence of home, love, sacrifice, and belonging. “From Our Happy Home” is a festive poem that appeared in her 1885 short story titled "A Christmas Dream, and How It Came True.”

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Week Two



The Tale of Three Trees/
Jotham's Journey

(pages 57-113)

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Christmas School Week Two

THE TALE OF THREE TREES **JOTHAM'S JOURNEY** pages 57-113

	DAY 1	DAY 2	DAY 3	DAY 4
READ	Read *The Tale of Three Trees*	Watch the Looking Closely video for *The Tale of Three Trees*	Re-read *The Tale of Three Trees* or a related read	
	Watch the Looking Closely video for *Jotham's Journey: Week Two* Read *Jotham's Journey* pages 57-68	*Jotham's Journey* pages 69-79	*Jotham's Journey* pages 80-95	*Jotham's Journey* pages 97-113
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 chocolate dipped pretzel sticks			
SCRIPTURE	Isaiah 9:2,6			
CHRISTMAS CAROL	"O Sing a Song of Bethlehem"			
READ-ALOUD EXTRAS	"The Star of Bethlehem" Watercolor Class with Whitney Newby at Brighter Day Press	Make wood slice-ornaments	Learn about the Sea of Galilee and the Dead Sea (optional: salt water science experiment)	Make an urn, manger, boat, or cross out of air dry clay Extra: Have a family movie night!
LANGUAGE ARTS	Copywork *or* choose one writing project for the week	Read a grammar lesson	Read the poem "People, Look East" by Eleanor Farjeon	

Access the guide **here**.

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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.

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.

Work-worn	Roughened by hard work
Lumberyard	A yard where a stock of lumber is kept for sale
Thrashing	Wild, violent movement
Shuddered	To shiver convulsively, as from fear or revulsion
Jeering	The act of laughing, shouting insults, or making mocking remarks at someone to show disrespect, contempt, or ridicule

2 Read *The Tale of Three Trees*



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Scripture

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ISAIAH 9:2,6

2 The people walking in darkness
have seen a great light;
on those living in the land of deep darkness
a light has dawned.

6 For to us a child is born,
to us a son is given,
and the government will be on his shoulders.
And he will be called
Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God,
Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.



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Christmas Carol

O SING A SONG OF BETHLEHEM

1 O sing a song of Bethlehem,
Of shepherds watching there,
And of the news that came to them
From angels in the air:
The light that shone on Bethlehem
Fills all the world today;
Of Jesus' birth and peace on earth
The angels sing alway.

2 O sing a song of Nazareth,
Of sunny days of joy,
O sing of fragrant flowers' breath,
And of the sinless boy:
For now the flow'rs of Nazareth
In ev'ry heart may grow;
Now spreads the fame of his dear name
On all the winds that blow.

3 O sing a song of Galilee,
Of lake and woods and hill,
Of him who walked upon the sea
And bade the waves be still:
For though, like waves on Galilee,
Dark seas of trouble roll,
When faith has heard the Master's word,
Falls peace upon the soul.

4 O sing a song of Calvary,
Its glory and dismay;
Of him who hung upon the tree,
And took our sins away:
For he who died on Calvary
Is risen from the grave,
And Christ, our Lord, by heav'n adored,
Is mighty now to save.

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Author: Louis F. Benson (1889)
Tune: KINGSFOLD

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BOTH READ-ALOUD OPTIONS

SPECIAL WORKSHOP

"THE STAR OF BETHLEHEM" WATERCOLOR CLASS

with Whitney Newby from Brighter Day Press

This **watercolor tutorial** is one way for the whole family to slow down and anticipate the birth of Jesus.

Follow the printable tutorial on pages 80-83 to prepare your space and supplies, then turn on some quiet Christmas music as you paint this stunning Bethlehem skyline.



Once your outline are supplies are ready, watch **this 28-min video.** Merry painting!



CONTRIBUTOR

Whitney Newby is a follower of Christ, wife, homeschooling mother of four, speaker, and the founder of Brighter Day Press, where she creates literature-rich homeschool curriculum, watercolor classes, and tools for family discipleship. You can connect with Whitney on Instagram at @brighterdaypress and on her website, brighterdaypress.com.

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BOTH READ-ALOUD OPTIONS

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LEARN ABOUT THE SEA OF GALILEE, THE GALILEE BOAT, AND THE DEAD SEA

The **Sea of Galilee** is a large freshwater lake in northern Israel surrounded by hills and fertile countryside. The **Jordan River** flows through the lake and continues south toward the **Dead Sea**.

Can you find these waterways and landmarks on a map of Israel?

In towns and villages around its shores, Jesus carried out much of his ministry. Several of his disciples—including Peter, Andrew, James, and John—were fishermen from this region. Jesus taught crowds along its shores, called his first disciples there, calmed a storm, and walked upon its waters.

In *The Tale of Three Trees*, we see our second tree upon the Sea of Galilee during a sudden and violent storm, and it bears witness to the power of Jesus.

An exciting discovery was made on the shores of the Sea of Galilee in 1986—**a 1st century fishing boat**, similar to the one in our story, was discovered. It is now on display in the **Galilee Boat Museum** on the northwest shore of the Sea of Galilee.



Watch this **3-min video** for a quick overview of this discovery.

Dive into this **22-min video** to learn even more about the people who discovered and excavated the boat. This video is great for older kids (it's more detailed and includes interviews in Hebrew with English subtitles.)

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Week Three



The Christmas Miracle of Jonathan Toomey / Jotham's Journey

(pages 115-165)

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3 Looking Closely

Let's see how the Hero's Journey plays out in a picture book story! Watch **this 21-min video** together to notice some of this story's particular treasures.



WHAT WE'LL LOOK AT CLOSELY

Hero's Journey The Hero's Journey is a pattern that shows up in stories over and over again. It usually has three main parts, which we call Acts.

Act 1: The Set-Up Act

- Character in their 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 character and the world are transformed _____

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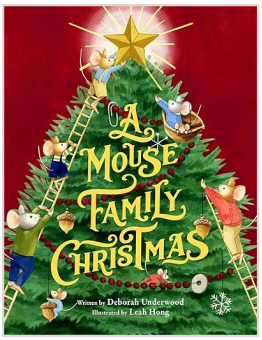
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Related Reads

Can't quite get enough of reading this book? Here's a list of related books we recommend. After all, reading begets reading: the more you read, the more you want to read!

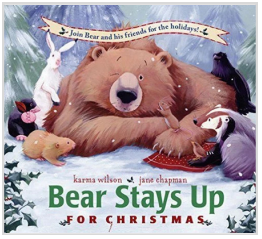
PICTURE BOOKS



A MOUSE FAMILY CHRISTMAS

Written by Deborah Underwood, Illustrated by Leah Hong

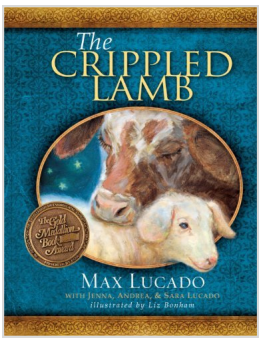
A little family of mice who jump in and care for someone in need–it's Christmas perfection! This one is sure to be read over and over again.



BEAR STAYS UP FOR CHRISTMAS

Written by Karma Wilson, Illustrated by Jane Chapman

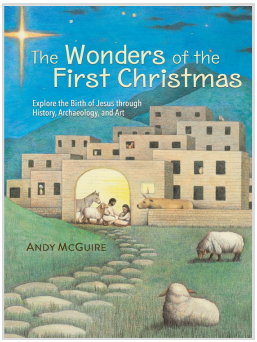
Bear's friends are determined to keep Bear awake for Christmas! So they wake Bear up and have him help them find a Christmas tree, bake cakes, hang up stockings, and sing Christmas songs. Bear stays up—by discovering that giving is one of the best Christmas presents of all!



THE CRIPPLED LAMB

Written by Max Lucado

The Crippled Lamb follows the story of Joshua, a lamb with a crippled leg who feels left out because he can't run and play like the other lambs. But God has a special plan for Joshua's life, as He does for all who feel alone.



THE WONDERS OF THE FIRST CHRISTMAS

Written by Andy McGuire

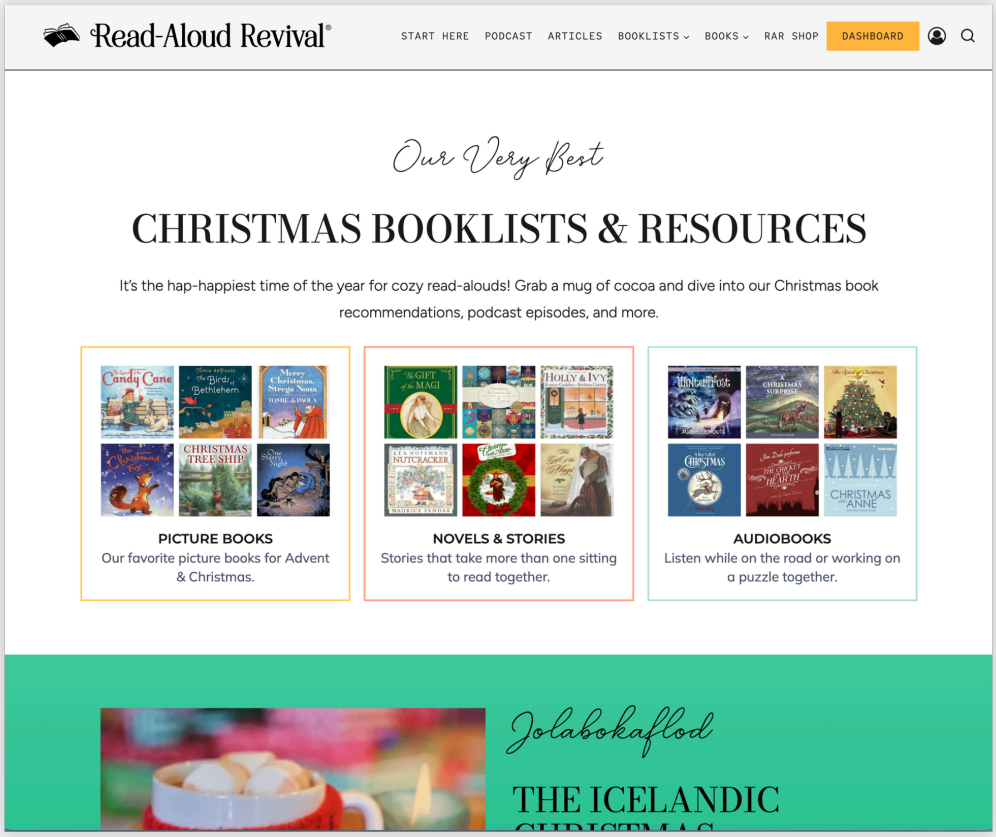
Approaching the story with historical insight and a child's sense of wonder, Andy McGuire crafts a tale that feels fresh and insightful, using well-researched material and beautiful original artwork.

CONTINUED IN THE FULL GUIDEE →

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RAR Christmas Resources

If you're looking for more delicious Christmas book recommendations and enjoyable podcast episodes for the season, be sure to visit our [Read-Aloud Revival Christmas page] for more!



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Sarah Mackenzie
Contact: support@readaloudrevival.com
Website: ReadAloudRevival.com

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