

'twas the night before Christmas...

'Twas the night before Christmas, when all through the house not a creature was stirring, not even a mouse. The stockings were hung by the chimney with care, in hopes that St Nicholas soon would be there. The children were nestled all snug in their beds

And so was I, tucked up in a hospital bed just a few days before Christmas, with little hope of being home in time for the big day!

Oh, how the memories come flooding back; whether hearing a familiar tune or reading a memorable passage from a well loved book. As in this Christmas tale, the mind can be transformed into a memory time machine; whisking you back to earlier, warmer, sometimes happier times, all thanks to the love of music or reading.

In my case, I remember very well. I was in a children's hospital having my tonsil's removed, around 1965, in the days when they kept you in after a procedure, rather than kicking you out the door half an hour after the procedure, having just sadistically forced you to eat dry toast!

The chances of me getting home before Christmas were slim, and as I was miserable my mother brought me a beautifully illustrated copy of Clement C. Moore's *The Night before Christmas*, to cheer me up. I just loved it. With time on my hands, I read and re-read every page and marvelled at the Christmassy pictures. My imagination went into overdrive. In my mind, it was knee deep in snow outside (whilst in fact it was probably raining as per usual) and at home waiting for me was a glittering Christmas tree, surrounded by colourful presents.

The power of the imagination, especially in the young should be nurtured wherever possible and to my mind; one of the best gifts that parents can give their children is the love of reading. A great way of doing this is to include one good book in their stocking this Christmas!

So many books to choose from, so little time! To help, I have compiled a short list of some of the most popular Christmas books for children as well as few for adults, as to be frank the boundaries tend to blur at this time of year.

- *The Night before Christmas*, by Clement C. Moore. ISBN: 9780007167111. My own personal favourite.
- *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*, CS Lewis. – ISBN: 9780007115617. This is one of the most recommended books for children, by librarians. *The Times* - The magic of C. S. Lewis's parallel universe never fades.
- *Christmas Trees*, by Robert Frost, illustrated by Ted Rand – ISBN 9780805072310. A stranger arrives at the Poet's house and asks if I would sell my Christmas trees - Perfectly beautiful book for family sharing!

- One Snowy Night (Tales from Percy's Park), by Nick Butterworth – ISBN: 9780007146932. An absolute delight! Bound to be a bedtime favourite for both kids and adults alike.
- The Christmas Miracle of Jonathan Toomey by Susan Wojciechowski and Patrick Lynch - ISBN 9780744540079. Daily Telegraph - A deeply moving story. The masterly paintings have an extraordinary intensity and depth.
- Fill My Stocking: A Christmas Anthology, by Alan Titchmarsh. For adults – As featured in my Book of the Week on my website [www.handybookmark.com](http://www.handybookmark.com).
- Laura's Christmas Star by Klaus Baumgart. ISBN: 9781589253827. Wonderful ratings by parents on Amazon.
- Kipper's Christmas Eve (Kipper), by Mick Inkpen. ISBN: 9780340736937. Another great hit with the kids.
- The Snowman (Board book), by Raymond Briggs. ISBN: 9780241141038. No list would be complete without this Christmas classic!

And to end my tale - I did it make home from my hospital bed after all. On Christmas Eve!

Until next time, happy reading!

PS Remember to visit my website: [www.handybookmark.com](http://www.handybookmark.com) - Hints, tips and suggestions for book lovers everywhere.

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