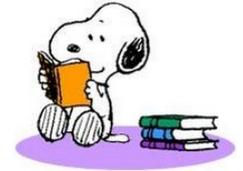




RGS: Bonkers About Books!

December 2020



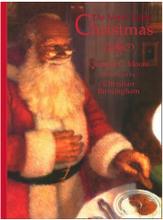
Hello and welcome to the final edition of Bonkers About Books for 2020! I'm sure that you're all looking forward to a cosy Christmas ... I know I am!

Now, it may not be a surprise for you to learn that I counted at least 20 books about Christmas nestled amongst my bookshelves at home! Yes, I love reading a good Christmas book so I'm dedicating this edition of the news letter to all things Christmassy! Books you may want to ask Santa for, books you may want to curl up with and read in the days before Christmas whilst sipping hot chocolate and eating mince pies (I love to do this!!) and books you may want to read aloud together as a family.

Have a wonderfully festive and book-filled Christmas, with at least one mince pie picnic!

Classics

There are some books that you're never too old for and should be read every year.

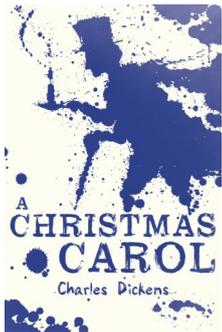
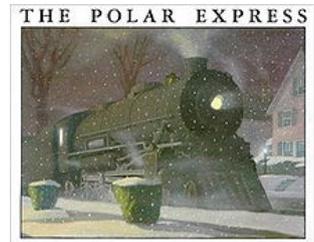


The Night Before Christmas—Clement C Moore

It's a poem that most of you will recognise but this is has to be one of my favourite Christmas books. Traditionally, we read it aloud at home on Christmas Eve before hanging up our stockings and leaving out milk and mince pies for Santa.

The Polar Express - Chris Van Allsburg

Made famous by the animated film with Tom Hanks, this is a wonderful story about a boy who travels to meet Santa and gets to choose the first gift of Christmas. This is a book I read every year!



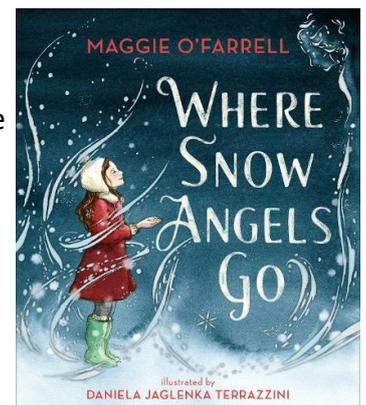
A Christmas Carol - Charles Dickens

One for the older children in school, this is the story of Ebenezer Scrooge, a miserly character who is visited by the ghost of his business partner as well as the ghosts of Christmas past, present and future. But can they change his ways and persuade him to become a better person?

Where Snow Angels Go—Maggie O'Farrell

Sylvie wakes one night to find an angel in her room, but not any old angel, a snow angel that she made. The angel is there to save her. The angel tells Sylvie that she won't remember her in the morning but Sylvie does and she longs to see her angel again.

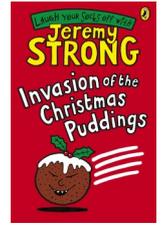
A beautifully written and illustrated book full of atmosphere, wonder and love that is perfect to read together. This is a book that will make you want to go out and create your own snow angel.



For Year 3 and 4

Invasion of the Christmas Puddings - Jeremy Strong

What happens when Father Christmas' evil brother is plotting to take over the world?! He tries to poison Christmas puddings so they'll turn people into zombies! But can he succeed with his evil plan? You'll have to read this hilarious story to find out!



A Christmas In Time - Sally Nicholls

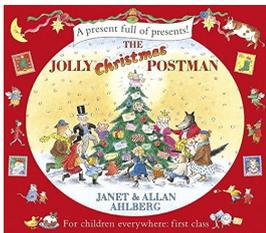
Alex and Ruby are visiting their Aunt when they fall through the mirror and end up in a Victorian Christmas with their ancestors. They quickly realise that they will only be able to return home when they help Edith to escape being sent to a cruel boarding school immediately after Christmas. This is a fast-paced adventure that will keep you entertained whilst also giving you a wonderful insight into how the Victorians celebrated Christmas.

The Night I Met Father Christmas - Ben Miller

Jackson knows all about Christmas, the flying reindeer, the elves, the North Pole & the magic that allows Father Christmas to deliver all his presents in one night, but what he wants to know is how Father Christmas became Father Christmas. And then, one night, Jackson meets Father Christmas and hears his incredible story.



The Jolly Christmas Postman - Janet & Allan Ahlberg



A wonderfully interactive book about all the things the postman delivers to everyone on Christmas Eve. Designed for younger readers, it's a book I still love and enjoy reading today!

The Christmasaurus by Tom Fletcher

Do you like Christmas?

Do you like dinosaurs?

Do you like adventure?

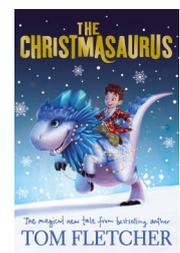
If so, then The Christmasaurus is the book for you!

We meet school boy William Trundle who has always dreamed of having a pet dinosaur and he asks for one for Christmas. Meanwhile, in the North Pole, we find Santa sitting on a prehistoric dinosaur egg - which the elves found - waiting for it to hatch!

I don't want to give too much away but we follow the Christmasaurus as he tries to make his dreams come true. He wants to be able to fly like Santa's reindeer. This will be crucial for him to escape from the evil Hunter.

So if you like Christmas, dinosaurs and adventure then you will definitely like this book. I think it's brilliant and I love the illustrations too. I'm hoping I find a dinosaur egg in my stocking this Christmas!

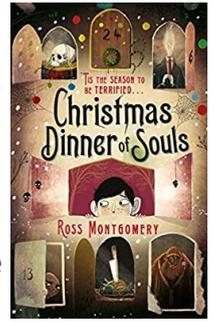
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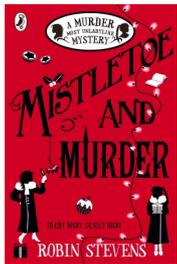
For Those Who Like A Bit of Drama At Christmas.

Christmas Dinner of Souls - Ross Montgomery

Lewis has been in trouble: caught throwing stones at the window of the crumbling Soul's College, he's now being made to work there on Christmas Eve as punishment. However, when he arrives, he quickly realises that all is not what it seems and he is being forced to serve dinner whilst 7 rather chilling ghost stories are told around the table. This is an eerie read in which each of the ghost stories are woven together by Lewis and the dean of the college who is hosting the meal. Definitely not your usual Christmas novel and one that absolutely made me jump (possibly because I read it whilst in a hotel room on my own!) A scarier read for those who are brave enough in Years 5 and 6.



Mistletoe and Murder - Robin Stevens



Daisy and Hazel have headed to Cambridge for the Christmas period but any thoughts of a quiet time amongst the stairwells of Maudlin College are dashed when there is a terrible accident 2 days before Christmas. Can the Detective Society prove that this is murder and not the terrible accident that everyone seems to think it is. As you would expect with a Murder Most Unladylike book, this is a gripping read that will keep you on your toes until the very end.

The Midnight Guardians - Ross Montgomery

It's Christmas 1940 and Col, more than anything else, is looking forward to seeing his sister again. With his mum having left when he was young and his dad having recently died in 'an incident', Rose is all Col has left. However, he's been staying with his aunt over the past few months whilst Rose helps the war effort in their home town of London. When he receives Rose's letter to say she won't be coming to see him, Col's emotions get the better of him and he flees, drawn back to the cottage where he, Rose and his dad used to spend their Christmases. When he arrives, he discovers that his childhood imaginary friends (Pandbury the tiger, Mr Noakes the badger and King of Rogues, a knight) are actually real and they all need each others' help: Col needs to save Rose from the bombs reigning down on London, and the guardians need help to defeat the Midwinter King who is desperate to bring darkness to everything on Earth and in the spirit world.

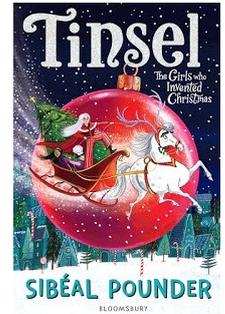


This is a fast-paced story, full of adventure. Set during WWII, the story sees Col and his guardians in a race against time, travelling through the British countryside in a quest to save Rose and the spirit world. It's a throw-back to traditional values (polite manners, no stealing, British spirit and helping each other in their time of need) and this is part of why it is such a heart-warming read.

This is a story of appreciating differences, of good versus evil, of needing the darkness in order to appreciate the light but, most of all, it's about hope and love. Hope and love resonate so strongly through the book and I experienced every emotion possible whilst reading it (and yes, I did hug the book at the end!). This book is perfect for fans of the Narnia series and of Amy Wilson's books.

Tinsel - Sibéal Pounder

Blanche Clause is living on the streets of Victorian London and hates Christmas: she's alone and spends the day counting down the seconds until it's over. But then a stranger gives her a red Christmas bauble, her first ever Christmas present, telling her: *'Never underestimate the gifts you are given. What you see inside might surprise you.'* Shortly after that, she meets a young girl called Rinki who is thrilled to have found somebody she can call a friend and their friendship becomes something that will change the world forever. Determined to have her own sleigh and to deliver a present to every child in the world, Tinsel, is the story of how Santa and the Christmas traditions we know and love today came to be.

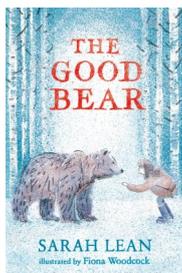


Ok, so, disclaimer: I love Christmas! I put the tree up at the beginning of December, play Christmas songs at full volume and will happily read any book to do with Christmas at any point in the year, so I was very much looking forward to diving into Tinsel and starting the festivities early this year (goodness knows, we need it!). And oh boy, what a book this is! From learning about the elves to discovering how Santa met Rudolf; from the creation of Tinsel to why Santa dresses in the red suit and beard, this book puts a rather wonderfully feminist twist on things that just make complete and utter sense when you read them! And as for Santa ... well, I should have known: we women always do have the best ideas!!!

From mince pie picnics (yes, they are a thing and I desperately want it to snow so I can enjoy one!) to climbing up and down chimneys, this book oozes festive spirit, is guaranteed to put a big smile on your face, make you laugh and leave you with a warm, fuzzy feeling inside. Full of magic, Tinsel is like a hug in paper format, a cosy blanket you'll want to wrap yourself in and I absolutely loved it!

Update: since beginning to write this edition of Bonkers About Books, I have managed to get Sibéal to do a virtual author visit with the school on the 10th December! Remember that an email has gone out about the event, including how to buy a book that will come with a signed book plate, should you wish to.

The Good Bear - Sarah Lean



Thea loves Christmas and the traditions she and her mum have developed over the years; however, this year things will be different as she is to spend Christmas with her father and his new family in Norway. Thea is anxious about the visit (having not seen her father in years and having been disappointed he didn't send her the typewriter she asked for in her letter) but hopeful that the visit will help to bring them closer together. However, things don't go well in Norway: Henry, Thea's father, is distant and the rest of his family don't seem to want to know her. Upset, she flees into the woods near her father's home only to come face to face with a bear; a bear in need of her help. As Thea and the bear grow close, can she help protect him against the entire town?

Thea is desperate to forge a relationship with her father who seems to want very little to do with her - it broke my heart to see her feeling so alone and isolated, especially at Christmas; however, without this, she would never have met the bear, nor the wonderful and rather enigmatic V who accepts her and allows her to explore her desire to be a writer. It's the father-daughter relationship that's at the heart of the book and I suspect is something many children experience when parents are no longer together. The relationship between Thea and the bear is one of trust and love; exactly what she is craving from her father. She feels very isolated but it is good to see her eventually be able to reflect on her own actions and behaviour.

The Good Bear is a heart-warming story of the bond that can grow between humans and animals. It's a huggable feast for the soul and most definitely a book to curl up with on a dark winter's night. It has a timeless quality to it - in the writing and the fact that it's a flashback to Thea's childhood - making it a book that you'll most definitely pick up again and again.