

**"Outside of a dog, a book is a man's best friend. Inside of a dog, it's too dark to read."
Groucho Marx**

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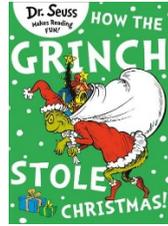
BOOK STUFF

Christmas books for children

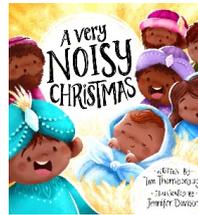
Do you remember Christmas stories you heard or read as a child? There are some great ones around, old and new. If you have kids, encourage whoever's looking after them to check out the library or local book shop for titles. Reading them is a great way to get everyone excited – about Christmas AND books!

A few suggestions:

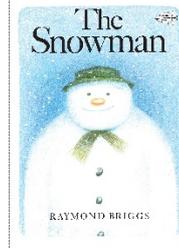
Dr Seuss, *How the Grinch Stole Christmas*



Tim Thornborough, *A Very Noisy Christmas*



Raymond Briggs, *The Snowman*



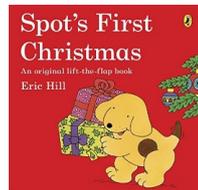
Janet and Allan Ahlberg, *The Jolly Christmas Postman*

Chris van Allsburg, *The Polar Express*

Mary Hoffman, *Grace at Christmas*

Rod Campbell, *Dear Santa*

Eric Hill, *Spot's First Christmas*



And for grownups:

If you're a fan of *The Muppets Christmas Carol* (who isn't?), maybe have a go with Charles Dickens's original. It's brilliant: a gripping story, great characters and genuinely scary.



Poem of the week

Fly

A fat fly fuddles for an exit
at the window pane.
Bluntly, stubbornly, it inspects it,
like a brain
nonplussed by a seemingly simple sentence
in a book,
which the glaze of unduly protracted
acquaintance
has turned to gobbledygook.



A few inches above where the fly fizzes
a gap of air
waits, but this has
not yet been vouchsafed to the fly.
Only retreat and a loop or swoop of despair
will give it the sky.

Christopher Reid

Blind

My girlfriend used my going blind as an excuse to start dressing sloppily. In the days when I could see her, she had always looked immaculate in the latest cuts of the best designer labels. Now, her high heels have been replaced by trainers, her silk stockings and short skirts by jeans, and her smart blouses and figure-hugging jackets by baggy jumpers. I haven't said anything yet, but it's getting to the point where I'm embarrassed to be seen with her as she gently holds my hand and guides me along, making sure I don't trip or bump into anything.

from Dan Rhodes, *Anthropology and a Hundred Other Stories*

Teaser and quick quiz

1. A woman had two sons who were born in the same hour of the same day of the same year. But they were not twins. How is this possible?

2. What are the five largest countries of the world by size?

3. Match these Union of European Football clubs with their home countries:

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|----------------------|-------------|
| i. Manchester United | Portugal |
| ii. Young Boys | England |
| iii. Sheriff | Malta |
| iv. Hibernians | Switzerland |
| v. Sporting CP | Moldava |

4. Match these rock groups with their hit songs:

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|-------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| i. Coldplay | Good Riddance (Time of Your Life) |
| ii. Green Day | Bent |
| iii. Maroon 5 | Viva La Vida |
| iv. The Black Eyed Peas | Goodnight, Goodnight |
| v. Matchbox Twenty | I Gotta Feeling |

A handy insult

Even in the season of good cheer, they can be useful:

Hence, horrible villain, or I'll spurn thine eyes
Like balls before me! I'll unhair thy head!
Thou shalt be whipped with wire and stewed in brine,
Smarting in ling'ring pickle!

Shakespeare, *Antony and Cleopatra*



ANSWERS

1. Triplets
2. Russia, Canada, US, China, Brazil
3. i. = England, ii. = Switzerland, iii. = Moldava, iv. = Malta, v. = Portugal
4. i. = Viva la Vida, ii. = Good Riddance, iii. = Goodnight, Goodnight, iv. = I Gotta Feeling, v. = Bent