

Christmas Book Recommendations

December 18th, 2022

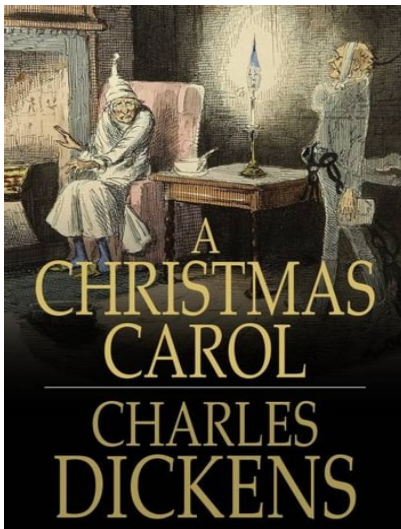
Is there anything better than curling up with a good book next to the Christmas tree? We celebrate Christmas with a lot of traditions, but reading Christmas stories by the light of the tree is one of my absolute favorites.

At this time of year, you will often see lists of favorite Christmas movies, music, etc. But I'm a passionate lover of books and stories, so I want to share with you my top 5 favorite Christmas books along with some honorable mentions. I tried to pick from a couple different genres as well as age

groups. These are great stories to read around the Christmas tree – or gift ideas for the bookworm in your life. I hope it inspires you to grab a book and make time underneath the tree with a good story.



1. A Christmas Carol, by Charles Dickens.

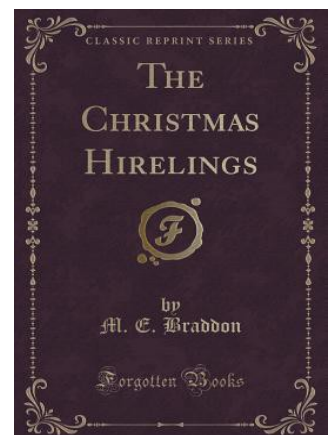


Ok so this one had to be on the list, so here it is. This is my favorite Christmas book, and one of my all time favorite novels. Who doesn't know the story by now? Ebenezer Scrooge is a miser, hates Christmas, treats everyone poorly. One Christmas Eve he is visited by Jacob Marley, his long dead business partner, who warns him that he would be visited by three spirits – and Scrooge is set off on a journey of redemption. This is one of the most influential stories ever written, and has spawned many films, plays, and tv shows. I will have to write more about this book in an upcoming blog post – it's had a significant impact in my life. I love the themes of kindness and care for others.

Dickens masterfully writes about situations and scenes that are relevant even today. If you are tempted to skip reading this book because you have watched one of the many excellent adaptations let me encourage you to read it anyway – the novel carries a more powerful punch than even the best adaptations can give.

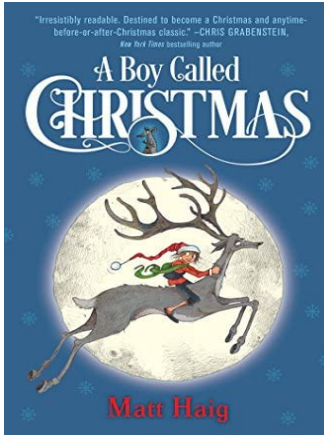
2. The Christmas Hirelings, by Mary Elizabeth Braddon classic fiction

Another Christmas classic novella, one that I wish more people



new about. Sir John Penlyon is planning on spending Christmas alone with just a few close friends and family. He is a bit like Scrooge, in that he is lonely and a bit gruff towards other people. So his friend, Danby, comes up with the idea to hire 3 children to come spend Christmas with them in order to bring some much needed Christmas cheer. Who those children are and how they impact him – especially “little moppet” - will leave you in tears. This story teaches the power and importance of forgiveness and opening your heart to others.

3. A Boy Called Christmas/The Girl Who Saved Christmas by Matt Haig YA



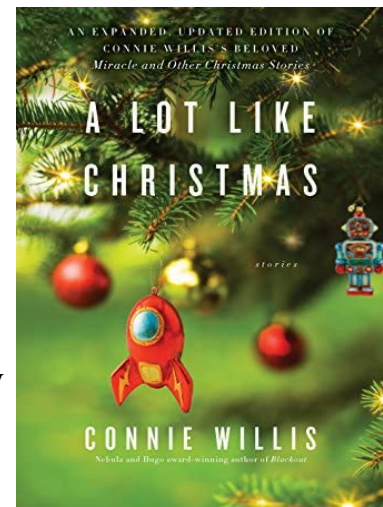
Yes I'm putting two books as #3, just so I can make room for other books in a top five list – it's my list, my rules! I consider these two books to be modern classics, and the first book gives us a funny and heartwarming Santa Claus origin story. Both of these books are perfect to read aloud to any children you might have staying in your house over Christmas break. Or better yet – invest in the audiobooks! A few years ago I read The Girl Who Saved Christmas to my daughter (age 10 or so at the time) and she loved it, as did my teenage boys.



Both books in the series also carry some emotional weight to it. There are genuinely sad parts in both books that will leave you reaching for the kleenex box. But that's part of why these books will have some staying power. I mean what would a Christmas Carol be if we didn't weep over Tiny Tim, or fear for Scrooge's future? These books have sugar, yes, but they also carry great substance.

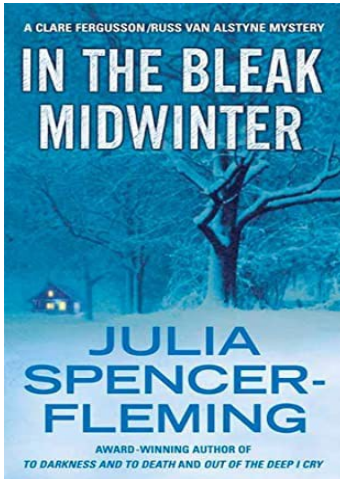
4. A Lot Like Christmas by Connie Willis, Science Fiction

This is a collection of science fiction Christmas short stories by one of the most talented, award winning science fiction writers of all time. You get quite the assortment of stories too everything from a Christmas apocalypse story to a toy store horror story to some really charming stories loosely based on Christmas classics - with a SF twist. Short stories are great to read at this time of year when things get really busy! If you can carve out even 30 minutes of reading time, you'll be able read most of these modern Christmas classics – and they only get better the more you read them.



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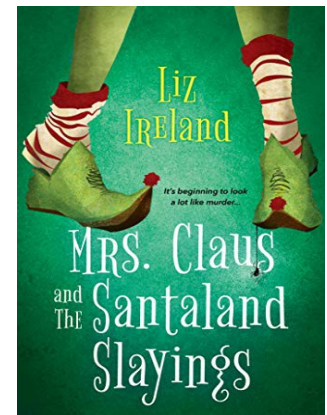
5. In the Bleak Midwinter by Julia Spencer Fleming.



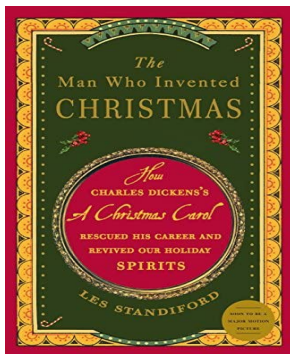
I love reading mysteries, especially at Christmas time and ESPECIALLY ones set at Christmas. This is the first book in the Rev. Claire Fergusson and Russ Van Alstyne series. Russ is a sheriff in a small town in upstate New York, and Rev. Claire is the new minister in town. This is a great mystery set at Christmas time, and the characters are very compelling. In addition to all that, Spencer-Fleming uses the words and themes of one of my all time favorite Christmas Carols throughout her book. In this compelling book, a newborn baby is left on the doorstep of Rev. Claire's church. Her investigation into finding the babies parents unravels many secrets that the town wishes would remain hidden. It's not too graphic, but it's definitely not a cozy mystery read. Speaking of which...

Honorable Mention #1: Cozy Mysteries

Pretty much every cozy mystery series has at least one book in it that is set at Christmas time. I love reading all of these this time of year. There are even some that take place around Christmas themes throughout the entire series. My favorites I'd recommend are the Mrs. Claus Mystery Series by Liz Ireland, The Year Round Christmas Mystery series by Vicki Delany, and the Christmas Tree Farm mystery series by Jacqueline Frost



Honorable Mention #2: The Man Who Invented Christmas by Les Standiford.

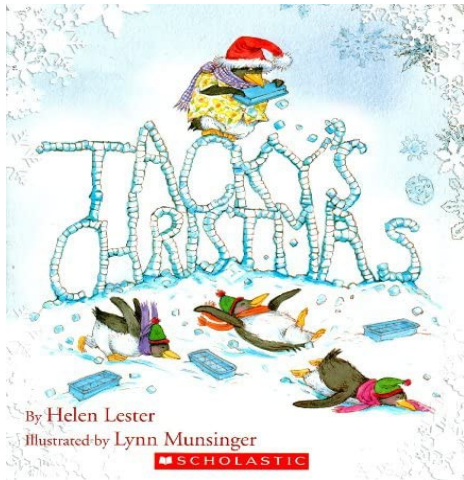


It's a nonfiction account of how Charles Dickens came to write A Christmas Carol. You might have seen a movie based on this book, and it's pretty good but the movie took some liberties with the history. Standiford's book puts A Christmas Carol in it's historical context along with it's context of Dickens' own personal life, and he explains how Dickens and this story made a significant impact on how we think about and celebrate Christmas.

Honorable Mention #3: Children's Books:

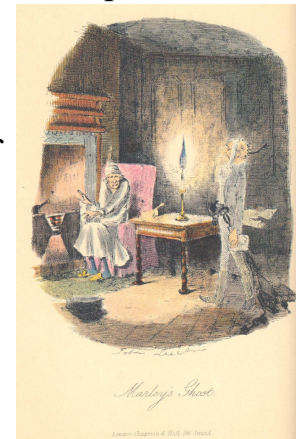
I don't really have any specific recommendations for younger children – pretty much pick any picture book about Christmas, they will love reading it's pages. But my favorite of those are The Polar Express, How The Grinch Stole Christmas, and Tacky the

Penguin: Tacky's Christmas. These books have been enjoyed by my children and many others.



If you are able, let me encourage you to make time to read this Christmas season. Even if you don't think you're a good reader, give it a try. Start simple – read a children's book or picture book to one of the many hyperactive young people who might just be running around your house this Christmas season. Reading is a sacred art, and it's one that many are losing the skill to do. This time of year there seems to be so much movement and noise and go go go – it's important to take time and slow down. And what better way is there than to read!

When it's time for my yearly reading of A Christmas Carol, I make it a special event. I dim the lights and let the Christmas tree be the main light source. I get a cup of eggnog or peppermint tea. I get comfortable on the couch – blanket, pillow, and music! I can't forget music – something soft and gentle, relaxing. And then I open the pages of that most wonderful work and read these familiar and fantastic opening lines...



“Marley was dead, to begin with.”

And suddenly, just like that, it's Christmas!

Whether it's a book or movie – make it a special time with you and your family.

What traditions do you have, what are some of your favorite Christmas books? Let me know at cozychristmaspodcast@gmail.com and I'd love to add them to my Christmas TBR!