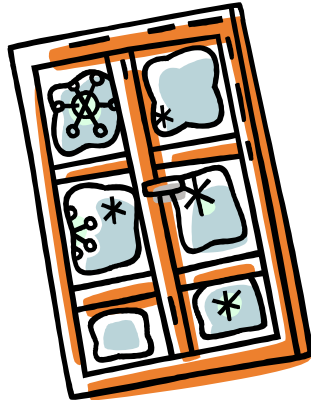


## Learning that's Hands-On Holiday Fun



Focus on reading and enjoy winter holidays at the same time, with these simple activities you can incorporate into your daily routine:

- Winter's chill offers a different medium for writing and drawing. Let your children "write" on frosted windows or in the snow.
- On short trips to the store or holiday vacations to visit family or friends, play this game to help [young readers] recognize different sounds. Say "We're going to the store. What sounds do you hear in the beginning of the word store? It's the /st/ sound. What else starts with /st/ that we can get at the store?" (Or, "What are we taking to grandma's house that starts with /st/?") (i.e. stamps, starch, etc).
- In conversation about holiday celebrations, introduce interesting and new words to your children. For example, "Dad got a *plethora* of ties last year. Since he has so many ties, let's get him a different gift" or "I like our family *tradition* of baking cookies together. It is something we do every year that I really enjoy."
- Let your children have a hand in making holiday lists. Even if it is just sitting with you as you write a shopping list, your child will benefit from exposure to the power and practicality of literacy.
- Set aside time just for reading. Curl up on the couch together and read aloud an old favorite or check out books about another culture's winter celebrations.

Adapted from <http://www.ldonline.org/article/20544>

## Did You Know...?



The idea for using electric Christmas lights came from an American named Ralph E. Morris in 1895. The new lights proved safer than the traditional candles, which often started fires by falling in the dry Christmas trees.



The use of a Christmas wreath as a decoration on your front door, mantel or bay window symbolizes a sign of welcome and long life to all who enter.



Today poinsettias are the most popular Christmas plant and are the number one flowering potted plant in the United States.



Christmas trees are edible. Many parts of pines, spruces, and firs can be eaten. The needles are a good source of vitamin C. Pine nuts, or pine cones, are also a good source of nutrition.



Candy canes began as straight white sticks of sugar candy used to decorate the Christmas trees. A choirmaster at Cologne Cathedral decided to have the ends bent to depict a shepherd's crook and he would pass them out to the children to keep them quiet during the services. It wasn't until about the 20th century that candy canes acquired their red stripes.



In 1836, Alabama was the first state in the USA to declare Christmas a legal holiday. And in 1907, Oklahoma became the last USA state to declare Christmas a legal holiday.



Due to the time zones, Santa has 31 hours to deliver gifts! This means that he would have to visit 832 homes each second!



The biggest selling Christmas single of all time is Bing Crosby's White Christmas.



A traditional Christmas dinner in early England was the head of a pig prepared with mustard.



In 1947, Toys for Tots started making the holidays a little happier for children by organizing its first Christmas toy drive for needy youngsters.

Excerpted from: <http://www.twinklebulbs.com/trivia.htm>

## Check Out These Books for the Holiday Season!

Warm your hearts with these holiday stories, from old favorites to new delights. These books are about generosity, love, and friendship and are perfect for the season, no matter what traditions you celebrate!

### For Beginning Readers & Read-Alouds:

***How the Grinch Stole Christmas***, by Dr. Seuss  
The classic tale of the Grinch is now more than 50 years old. But that's just why it's a classic: Seuss' grumpy stealer of Christmas is as fresh today as it was when first published in the mid 20th century.

***Mr. Willowby's Christmas Tree***, by Robert Barry  
Mr. Willowby, the unwitting hero of this Christmas classic, looks quite a bit like the little mustached mascot from Monopoly. But as befits a Yuletide tale, this diminutive millionaire turns out to be a good bit more generous.

***The Tomten***, by: Astrid Lindgren  
From Swedish folklore comes the story of the Tomten, a little gnome who watches over us while we sleep. Read this heartwarming version and celebrate a time-honored tradition for the Winter Solstice.

### For Independent Readers

***The Trees of the Dancing Goats***,  
by: Patricia Polacco  
A warm, colorful illustrative story of a Jewish girl, Trisha, and her Christian neighbors, whose bout with scarlet fever at Christmas threatens to ruin Trisha's Hanukkah. Trisha and her family respond with a loving gesture that is rewarded in kindness.

***The Polar Express***, by: Chris Van Allsburg  
A magical train ride on Christmas Eve takes a boy to the North Pole to receive a special gift from Santa Claus.

***Zigzak: A Magical Hanukkah Night***,  
by: Eric Kimmel  
This is a lighthearted story that teaches Hanukkah traditions--from kazatzkas to gelt--along with a wise, timeless moral.

### For Teens:

***Magna Claus, Honor, Loyalty, Tinsel, the Blade of Kringle***, by: Nathaniel Marunas  
When a disgruntled elf creates an army of evil teddies, Santa breaks out his ancient samurai swords to save Christmas.

***Listen for the Fig Tree***, by: Sharon Bell Mathis  
During her first celebration of Kwanzaa, a sixteen-year-old girl finds the strength to deal with her troubled mother and her own blindness.

***Ex-Mas***, by: Kate Brian  
While her parents are on vacation, Lila Beckwith plans to throw the Christmas party of the year. That is until her little brother and his best friend run away to save Santa from global warming. It's up to Lila and her ex-boyfriend to find the two before her parents get home.



*Catapult Learning wishes  
you and yours a very  
Happy Holiday Season*