

STORIES TO TREASURE!

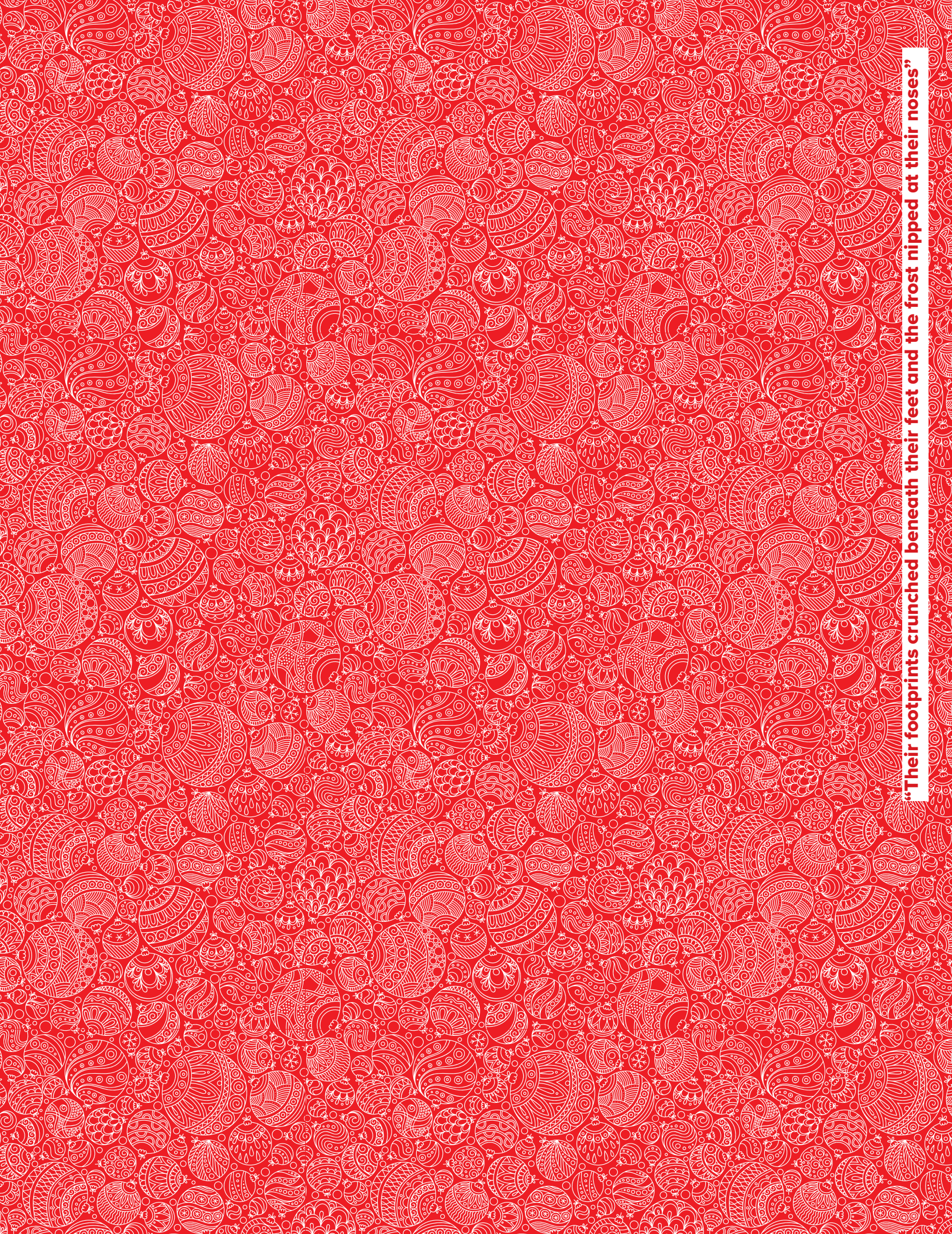
# Storytime™

THE  
CHRISTMAS  
ISSUE!

## The Nutcracker

A Christmas Carol, St Nicholas's Surprise,  
The Red Mitten, Christmas Gifts, and TINSEL!





“Their footprints crunched beneath their feet and the frost nipped at their noses”



Join us for fantastical,  
fabulous, festive fun!

Wishing you all a winter of  
wonders, blankety snuggles  
and stories galore.  
Merry Christmas one and all!  
This issue belongs to:

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Merry Christmas to our Storytime  
illustrators all over the world!



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# Christmas Gifts

Inspired by Carolyn Wells

Ten Christmas presents standing in a line;  
Robert took the bicycle, then there were nine.

Nine Christmas presents ranged in order straight;  
Bob took the train engine, then there were eight.

Eight Christmas presents – and one came from Devon;  
Robbie took the crayons, then there were seven.

Seven Christmas presents direct from St Nick's;  
Bobby took the candy cane, then there were six.

Six Christmas presents, one of them alive;  
Rob took the puppy dog, then there were five.

Five Christmas presents yet on the floor;  
Bobbin took the woolly hat, then there were four.





Four Christmas presents underneath the tree;  
Robbo took the writing desk, then there were three.



Three Christmas presents still in full view;  
Bobbers took the chess board, then there were two.



Two Christmas presents, promising fun,  
Robsy took the picture book, then there was one.

One Christmas present – and now the list is done;  
Bo-bo took the new sled, and then there were none.

And the same happy child received every toy ...  
So many nicknames for **ONE LITTLE BOY!**





# The Red Mitten

**T**here was once a little boy called Oliver who was walking home from school with his best friend Elliot just as the first snowflakes of winter began to fall.

As they tried to catch the flakes on their tongues, the snow started to come down thick and fast. It swirled around the two boys until their footprints crunched beneath their feet and the frost nipped at their noses. Oliver was so excited, he pulled on the new red mittens his grandma had knitted for him, and scooped up a crisp white snowball.





“Got you!” he laughed, as he threw the snowball at Elliot’s back.

Elliot wheeled round with a snowy missile ready and waiting in his hand. Grinning, he lobbed it at Oliver, who ducked just in time. And so began the first snowball fight of the season, and what tremendous fun they had!

When the boys grew tired of snowball fights, they made snow angels, and then they built a snowman that was three snowballs high! It was brilliant, except that they didn’t have a carrot for his nose, or coals for his eyes, or a warm scarf for him to wear! But they laughed and played, and the snow kept falling steadily down.

At last, when their tummies were rumbling for dinner and the air had grown sharp and icy, the boys headed for home, with rosy cheeks and with their

hands tucked in their pockets to keep them warm. However, Oliver didn’t realise that he had dropped one of his new gloves, so there on the freshly fallen snow lay a single red mitten.



As bright and red as a cherry, it sat on the crisp white snow, looking snug and inviting. Soon, a little mouse came scuttling by, shivering in the cold. It saw the mitten and crept inside. Oh, how cosy it was in there!

“I like it here,” thought the mouse, “so here I’ll stay!” And it curled up in a little ball of contentment and fell asleep.

A little while later, a rabbit hopped by and spotted the bright red mitten too. ➡

**DECORATE  
IT!**

Use your pencils or crayons to decorate Oliver and Elliot’s snowman. Make sure you give it a hat and a scarf too!







He poked his twitchy nose inside.  
“Is there anybody home?” asked  
the rabbit.

“Yes!” said the mouse. “It’s me, Nibbles  
the Mouse! Who is it?”

“It’s me, Hoppity the Rabbit! Please  
can I come in? It’s so cold outside!”

“Yes,” said the mouse. “Hop in.”

And so the rabbit squeezed and  
snuggled inside the mitten, which  
stretched a little out of shape.

Pretty soon, a fox came stalking by  
and sniffed at the bright red mitten.  
He peered inside and said, “Is there  
anybody home?”

“Yes, we are! It’s Nibbles the Mouse  
and Hoppity the Rabbit. Who is it?”

“It’s me! Sneaky the Fox. Please can  
I come in? It’s so cold outside!”

“Okay,” said the mouse and the rabbit.  
“You can come in, but there’s not much  
room in here.”

So the mouse and the rabbit moved  
to one side, and the fox squeezed  
and snuggled inside the mitten, which  
stretched and stretched out of shape.

Before long, a wild boar came  
snuffling by and poked its nose into  
the bright red mitten. He looked inside  
and said, “Is there anybody home?”



"Yes, we are! It's Nibbles the Mouse, Hoppity the Rabbit and Sneaky the Fox. Who is it?"

"It's me! Grunty the Boar. Please can I come in? It's so cold outside!"

"If you must," said the mouse and the rabbit and the fox. "You can come in, but it's very crowded in here."

So the mouse and the rabbit and the fox wriggled to one side, and the boar squeezed and snuggled inside the mitten, which stretched and stretched and stretched some more.

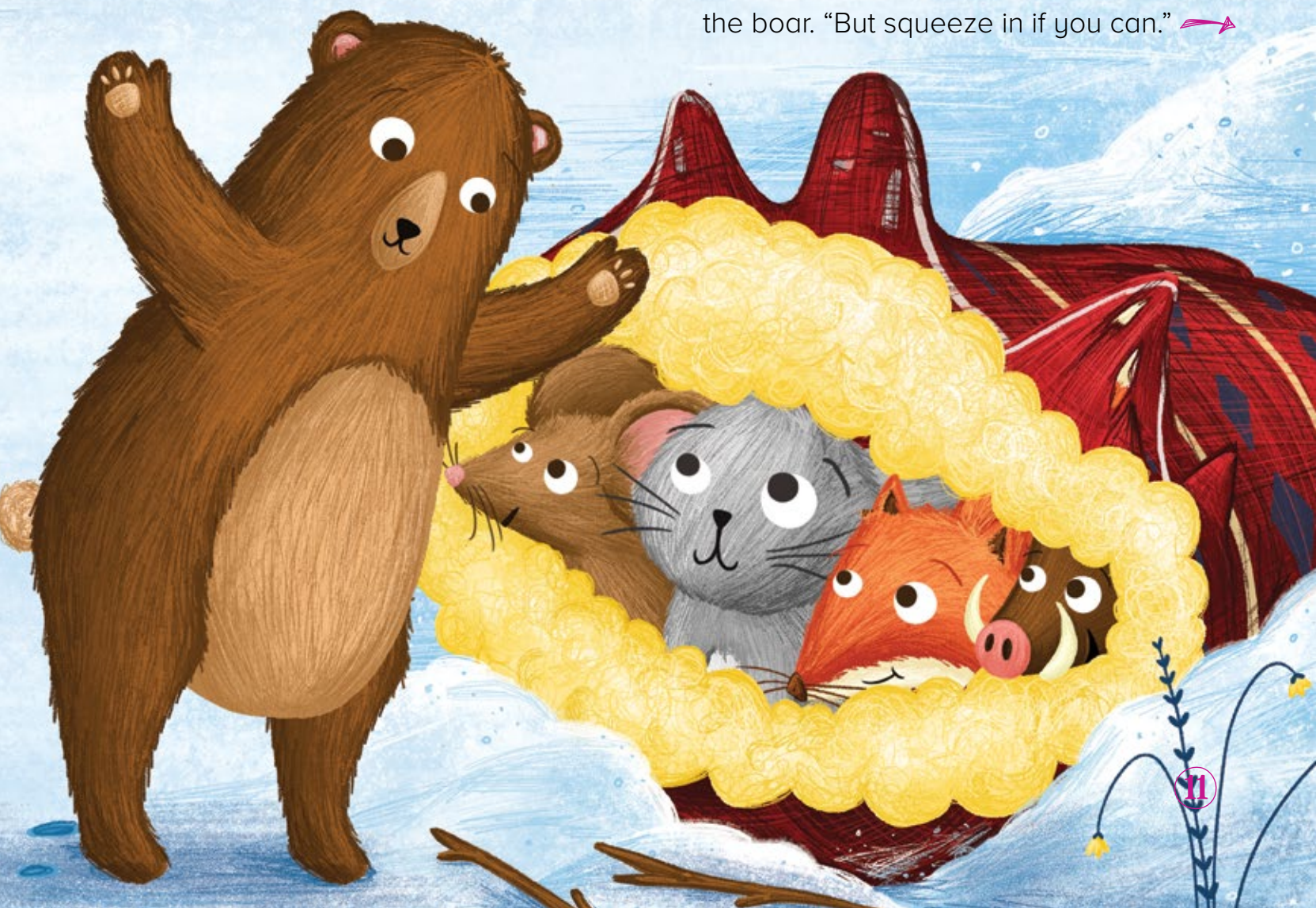
Now there were four of them tucked inside the red mitten and it was very cramped indeed.

A little while later, a big bear came lumbering by and sniffed at the bright red mitten. He looked inside and said, "Is there anybody home?"

"Yes, we are! It's Nibbles the Mouse, Hoppity the Rabbit, Sneaky the Fox and Grunty the Boar. Who is it?"

"It's me! Grizzly the Bear. Please can I come in? It's so cold outside!"

"We're not sure you'll fit!" sighed the mouse and the rabbit and the fox and the boar. "But squeeze in if you can." ➡





So the mouse and the rabbit and the fox and the boar tried to make some room, and the bear squeezed and wriggled and snuggled inside the mitten – which stretched and stretched and stretched and stretched a lot more. In fact, with five animals inside, the wool had stretched so much that the mitten suddenly burst open, throwing the animals out into the cold, powdery snow.

When they looked up, they saw that the red mitten was a mitten no more; it had come apart and wrapped itself around the snowman's neck, making a bright and cosy scarf – just what it needed! 🌀





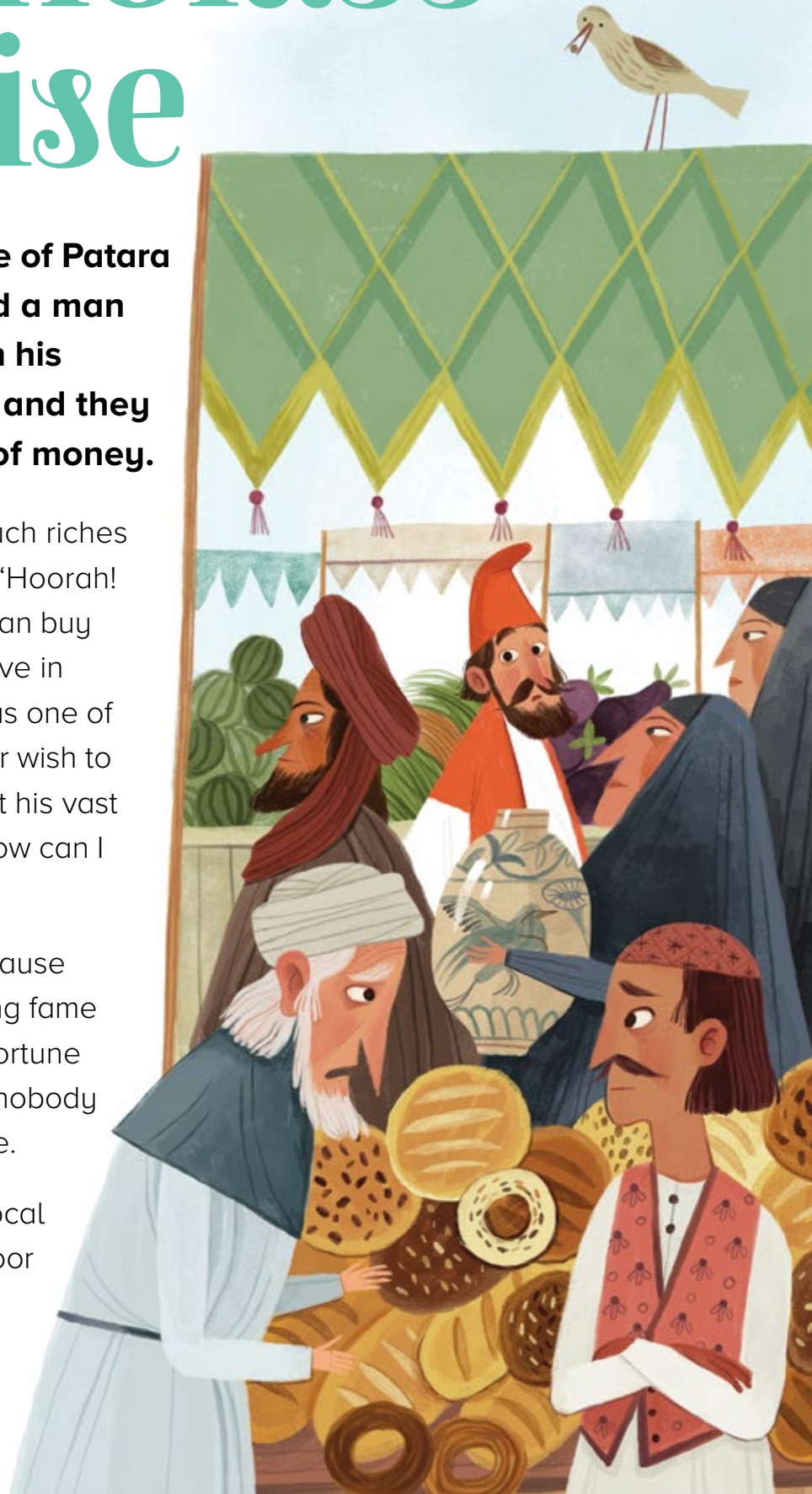
# St Nicholas's Surprise

**L**ong ago in the village of Patara in Turkey, there lived a man called Nicholas. Both his parents had recently died and they had left him a great deal of money.

Most men who had been left such riches would probably have thought, "Hoorah! I'll never have to work again. I can buy everything I ever wanted and live in luxury!" But not Nicholas. He was one of the kindest souls you could ever wish to meet. When he found out about his vast wealth, his first thought was, "How can I use my luck to help others?"

So that is what he did. And because Nicholas was not one for seeking fame or praise, he shared his good fortune quietly and secretly, so that nobody would know he was responsible.

One day, Nicholas was at the local market when he overheard a poor baker talking to his friend. ➡







“I’ve barely sold a crumb recently,” said the man in despair. “I don’t know what to do. My three daughters are all old enough to be married, and they have suitors, but I can’t afford to pay their dowries. What will happen to my precious girls?”

That very night, while the poor baker and his family slept, good, kind Nicholas climbed up onto their roof and dropped a bag of gold down the chimney. It landed inside a stocking, which was drying by the fire.

When the baker discovered the gold in the morning he wept with relief and joy. “It’s a miracle!” the man exclaimed, and his three daughters danced with happiness. That week, the eldest daughter accepted her suitor’s proposal of marriage and his family was most pleased with the dowry. Their wedding was a day to remember!



But the poor baker still had many sleepless nights worrying about his other two daughters and, though he worked longer and harder than ever before, he didn't seem to get any richer.

Nicholas noted the baker's tired and troubled expression and decided to help him again. In the dead of night, he climbed once more onto the man's roof and dropped a bag of gold down the chimney. This time, it landed in a shoe.

When the baker found the unexpected gift in the morning, he couldn't believe his luck. "What have we done to deserve such good fortune?" he thought. "How can it be?" But he got swept away in the celebrations and, as before, the dowry was delivered to the fiancé of his second daughter, and they had a wonderful wedding.

But when the celebrations were over, the baker could not stop thinking about the source of his good luck. Who could have been so kind to his family? He decided to spend every night sleeping on the floor by the fire, just in case it happened ➡





again. He was so desperate to thank his mysterious benefactor, he slept terribly and soon had dark rings under his eyes.

When Nicholas saw how worn out and weary the poor baker looked, he decided to pay him another secret visit. That night, he climbed onto the roof of the house and dropped a third and final bag of gold down the chimney. This time, there were no stockings hanging in the fireplace, so it crashed it onto the hearth and woke the baker with a jolt. He leapt up and ran out of his house just in time to see Nicholas clamber down onto the pavement.

“Nicholas!” gasped the baker. “It was you all along!” And he fell to his knees and thanked Nicholas with all his heart.





Nicholas blushed with embarrassment and backed away. “Please sir, please don’t tell anyone it was me.” Nicholas didn’t want any praise or attention.

The poor baker tried very hard to keep Nicholas’s kindness a secret, but one day when he had heard so many tales of mysterious gifts left for the poor, the sick and the needy, he could no longer hold his tongue. Pretty soon, the whole village knew about Nicholas, the kind-hearted giver of gifts. Very quickly, his fame spread far and wide. And that is why children still put out stockings (and, in some countries, shoes) at Christmas-time – in the hope that Nicholas will be kind and leave them a gift too! 🍷

Nicholas became the Bishop of Myra in Turkey, and is thought to have performed many miracles, as well as being kind-hearted. This is why he was made Saint Nicholas. Today, children know him better as Santa Claus or Father Christmas!





# Two Turtle Doves

**T**here were once two turtle doves who were brother and sister. They lived together in a pretty little dovecote on a farm.

The brother, who was called Soft Feather, loved nothing more than to cosy up at home, but his sister Fleet Wing was restless and longed to see the world.

One frosty morning, Fleet Wing said to Soft Feather, “This place is cold and miserable. Don’t you long to see faraway places? Don’t you dream of warm, sunny days and new adventures?”

“No, I don’t, sister,” said Soft Feather. “We have a good life here. We have this lovely dovecote to ourselves with all the home comforts we could possibly need. We get fed every day. The countryside is beautiful and we have many good friends. I’m happy right where I am.”





“But we’ve been here all our lives. Is this where you want to stay?” cooed his sister with frustration.

“The world can be a dangerous place for birds like us. There are men with traps, and other bigger birds who prey on us. And winter isn’t a good time to travel. Maybe we could go exploring together in spring?” suggested the brother.

“I can’t wait that long,” said Fleet Wing. “I’ve made up my mind. I’m leaving today!”

A tear rolled down Soft Feather’s velvety cheek. “But I’ll miss you and worry about you so much,” he said. “Maybe we should plan your journey first.”

But Fleet Wing wasn’t interested. “Don’t worry about me, brother,” she said. “I’ll be just fine.” And they hugged each other goodbye and away Fleet Wing flew. Soft Feather watched her disappear across the fields and over the trees.



Fleet Wing hadn’t gone far when there was a thunderous rumble and a bright flash of lightning in the sky. Moments later it began to rain heavily. Fleet Wing was over open fields, so she had to dart to the nearest tree for shelter. ➡



## IMAGINE IT!

Imagine you are going on an adventure to see the world, just like Fleet Wing. What do you need to take with you? Do you have a map? Write a kit list and draw a map for your imaginary journey.





Unfortunately, it was barely more than a sapling, so she was soon soaked.

When the storm cleared, Fleet Wing shook her bedraggled feathers and took flight. As she soared through the sky, she spotted some tasty-looking grain at the edge of a wood.

“That’s just what I need to get my energy back,” thought Fleet Wing, and she swooped down for a feast, but flew straight into a net.

Luckily, there was no farmer around to catch her and, though she was very tangled, she managed to peck

and wriggle her way out of the trap. However, she had hurt her foot. As she limped away feeling quite sorry for herself, Fleet Wing heard threatening squawks in the sky.

She looked up and saw a big hawk circling above her with its talons outstretched. Fleet Wing hobbled over to a bush to hide, but her progress was slow and, when the hawk was in striking distance, Fleet Wing cowered beneath her wing, believing her life was over. Suddenly, an eagle dived down and snatched the hawk in its sharp talons. Fleet Wing was saved!



“Phew, that was a narrow escape,” she thought, trembling. She fluttered up to a nearby wall to sit and recover for a while, but a farm worker came by and, seeing a plump turtle dove, pulled out a sling and took aim at her. Fleet Wing dodged the hurtling stone just in time.

“Soft Feather was right. The world can be dangerous,” she thought. “Perhaps I’ll begin my adventure another time...”

So, tired, hungry, cold, injured and scared, Fleet Wing flew home again.

The dovecote looked cosier and more inviting than ever before – and she had only been gone for a few hours.

When Soft Feather saw his sister, he was worried but overjoyed. “Was the world all you imagined?” he asked.

“Not quite,” said Fleet Wing. “But it is what you imagined.” So that’s how Fleet Wing learnt that, sometimes, there’s no place like home. Especially when it’s a cosy one! 🍵





# The Nutcracker

By E.T.A. Hoffmann


Once upon a Christmas Eve, a little boy called Fritz and his sister Clara were peering anxiously out of the window. They were waiting for their godfather to arrive – Godfather Drosselmeyer.

He was a toymaker and a clockmaker, and he always brought the most wonderful gifts to their Christmas Eve party. So while the adults and the other children made merry, all Fritz and Clara could do was stare eagerly out of the window.

When at last he arrived, the children leapt up and cried, “He’s here! He’s here!” and they hurried to the door to greet him. Godfather Drosselmeyer stepped into the brightly lit house, brushing a light covering of snow from his coat, and the children threw their arms around his waist.







Their godfather's eyes twinkled with delight to see them, and he pulled two carefully wrapped packages out of his pockets.

To Fritz, he gave a wonderful wooden castle, which had a little mechanical drawbridge and clockwork people moving around inside it and, to Clara, he gave a smart nutcracker, dressed like a soldier in a shiny red jacket with golden buttons. Fritz and Clara were thrilled and thanked their godfather over and over, then they ran into the party to show everyone their gifts.

"How does my nutcracker work?" Clara asked, and her mother showed her how to crack a nut in it. Clara put a walnut into the nutcracker and she squeezed it hard. The shell cracked with ease!

Naturally, all the children wanted to have a go, so the nutcracker got passed around the room. However, when Fritz used it, the nut he chose was so big and hard, the nutcracker's jaw broke and Clara was terribly upset. She clutched the little red soldier to her like a favourite doll.

"Don't worry, Clara," said Godfather Drosselmeyer. "I can fix it." And he took out a little tool and made the nutcracker as good as new.

After that, Clara didn't let go of her precious nutcracker and, when the party was over and all the guests had left, she begged her parents to let her stay up a little longer so she could put the nutcracker beneath the Christmas tree. She was very fond of her gift.

Clara tucked up the nutcracker in a bed of gift wrap. "Godfather fixed you. You'll be fine now," she said. Then she gasped as, for a fleeting moment, she was sure she saw the nutcracker wink at her. "I must have imagined it," she thought, and she let out a huge yawn and decided to rest her weary head for a second.



It seemed only moments later that Clara heard the grandfather clock chime midnight. When she looked up, she was surprised to see that the tree above her seemed to have grown, and she was now the same size as the nutcracker! ➡







“How can it be?” she wondered, and she saw that the whole room had grown around her – or had she shrunk?

Suddenly, a scuttling and a squeaking sound came from beneath the clock and out scurried an army of mice, each dressed in fine armour and carrying tiny swords. They were led by a fierce Mouse King with a jewelled crown.

As the mice quickly darted towards Clara, the nutcracker stirred and woke up, and all the toys that were scattered around the room – including some of Fritz’s toy soldiers – sprang to life too! The mice were almost upon them, so Clara grabbed a nutshell for a shield and a toothpick for a sword. All of a

sudden she was doing battle with the fiendish mice, fighting alongside the nutcracker and a battalion of toys!

As the fight wore on, the Mouse King’s forces seemed to grow in numbers. There were mice in every direction and soon the nutcracker was completely surrounded. In a desperate attempt to save him, Clara took off one of her shoes and threw it at the Mouse King, hitting him hard on the back of his head. He fell to the floor in an instant and his troops gathered around him, nudging him to see if he was alive.

While they were busy, the nutcracker ran over to Clara. He grabbed her hand and pulled her into a painted



wooden sleigh, which was hanging from the Christmas tree. All at once, colourful, dazzling lights danced around them and, in an instant, the nutcracker had transformed into a charming prince, and their sleigh was gliding through the night air!



Before long, Clara and the Nutcracker Prince came to a snowy forest, which glittered in the moonlight. As they drew nearer, Clara spotted sparkling snowflakes twirling around. Closer still, they saw that when the flakes touched the forest floor, they became

beautiful maidens, dressed in white shimmering gowns with intricate icy tiaras on their heads. The snowflake maidens swirled around the forest, weaving in and out of the trees, putting on a spectacular performance.

Clara's eyes were wide with wonder and the Nutcracker Prince grinned at her, then he drove the sleigh onwards through the forest.

When the Nutcracker Prince pulled up the sleigh again, it was in a land so incredible, Clara could hardly believe the sights that lay before her. ➡





*Everywhere she looked, everything*



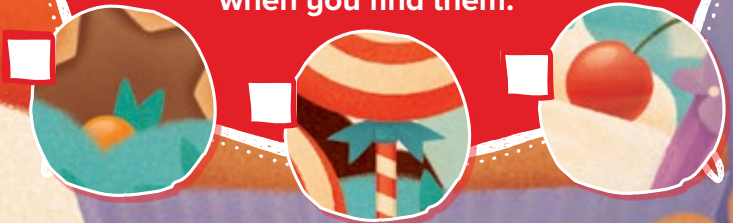


was made of sweet treats!



## Spot It!

Can you find these three close-up images on this page? Tick each box when you find them.





There were jelly mountains topped with peaks of whipped cream, pink milkshake waterfalls, candyfloss clouds, and hills made from stripy meringues. There were lollipop trees, bushes with gem-like berries of boiled sweets, and glossy gummy flowers in every colour of the rainbow. They had arrived in the Land of Sweets, and they were soon greeted by an elegant fairy queen.

“Welcome to the Land of Sweets!” she said in a melodic voice.

“I am the Sugar Plum Fairy.”

Clara curtsyed and the Nutcracker Prince bowed. The Sugar Plum Fairy invited them to her palace and, on the way, they told her of their brave battle with the Mouse King. The Sugar Plum Fairy decided to reward them with a grand celebration and a feast!

They sat on marshmallow cushions, and watched many wonderful dances.





There was the Chocolate Dance with Spanish flamenco dancers dressed like fine chocolates; the Gingerbread Dance with an enormous gingerbread house and little gingerbread men and women inside; the Coffee Dance with Arabian dancers who swirled silky veils; the Tea Dance performed by dainty dancers in traditional Chinese costume; and the Candy Cane dance from Russia.

But the most special dance of all was the one performed by the Sugar Plum Fairy herself, who delighted everyone

with her delicate arabesques, perfect pirouettes and leaps through the air. She was as light as spun sugar.

At the end of the festivities, everyone danced a beautiful waltz across the ballroom, including Clara and the Nutcracker Prince. It was the perfect ending to a magical night.

Exhausted but happy, Clara and the Nutcracker Prince said thanks and goodbye to the Sugar Plum Fairy, who gave Clara a magnificent ring made from sugar crystals as a gift. ➡





Clara reluctantly stepped into the sleigh and they began the long journey home. Her eyes soon began to feel heavy and she drifted off to sleep. When she woke up again, she found herself curled up under the Christmas tree, back to her normal size, and gripping the nutcracker tightly in her hands.

“It was all just a dream,” she thought with a sigh of disappointment, but then she spotted the sugar ring on her finger and was sure that she saw the nutcracker smile. Perhaps it wasn’t a dream after all! 🍷

## Act It Out!

Print out our Clara, Nutcracker Prince and Sugar Plum Fairy masks to act out this lovely Christmas story together!





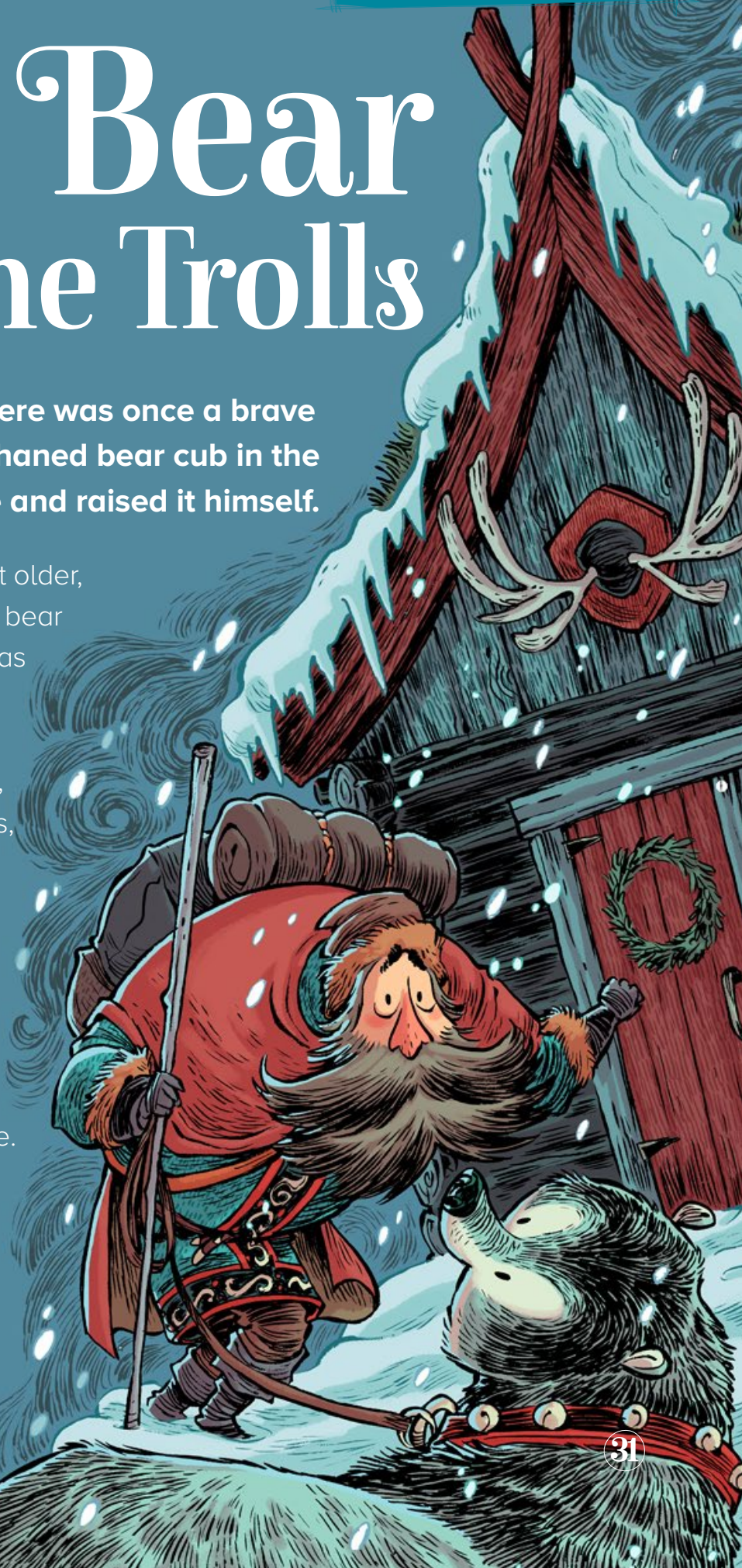
# The Bear and the Trolls

**I**n the wilds of Norway, there was once a brave hunter who found an orphaned bear cub in the forest, so he took it home and raised it himself.

He fed the bear well and, as it got older, he even taught it to do tricks. The bear was so tame, it would do exactly as its master told it. When the bear was grown, the hunter decided to give it to the king for Christmas, so he set off across the mountains, heading for the capital.

A few days into his journey, a harsh blizzard set in. The biting wind stung the hunter's face, but he struggled on, searching for shelter. He was greatly relieved when he saw lights in the distance. Soon, he reached a little house and knocked on the door.

It was answered by a man who looked like he was just about to venture into the cold night. ➡





“Sir, I am sorry to disturb you, but there’s a blizzard raging out here and I wondered whether you could spare us a warm corner for the night, please? I am travelling to the king to present him with this gift of a bear.”

“No!” said the man, looking horrified. “You mustn’t come in! Not even my family and I can stay here tonight. We’re packing up to leave right now.”

The hunter could see through the crack in the door that the table was laden with a hearty Christmas feast.

“Sir, I don’t mean to intrude on your feast. I don’t ask for any of your food. Do you have a barn I could shelter in, perhaps? The wind is so bitter.”

“This feast isn’t for me,” said the man, wringing his hands with worry. “I swear I’m telling the truth. Now you must leave quickly, and so must we before it’s too late. Wife, children, come now!”

And his wife and two children came to the door, bundled up in layers to protect them from the cold. The hunter knew then that the man wasn’t lying.

“Sir, it’s really not safe for you to travel. Why abandon such a fine feast?”

“We have no choice,” sighed the man. “Every Christmas, we are plagued by a pack of trolls who take over our house and eat all our food. If we don’t leave them a feast, they’ll destroy our home. They’ll be here soon. We must go!”

“Well, if it’s all the same with you,” said the hunter, “I’m quite accustomed to dealing with troublesome creatures. Let me stay here tonight and my bear and I will help. What is your name?”

“I’m Halvor,” said the man. “Very well, but don’t say I didn’t warn you!”

“Leave it with me, Halvor! You can trust me,” said the hunter, and he stepped into the warm house, as Halvor and his family set off into the icy gale.



The hunter and the bear warmed themselves by the fire and it wasn’t long before the giant bear curled up and began to snooze. ➡









The hunter crept into a bedroom and waited for the trolls to arrive. Soon enough, there were grunts and yells, and the trolls burst through the door.

What a rum bunch they were! There were big knobbly trolls, short dumpy trolls, trolls with noses like potatoes, and trolls with ears as big as cabbage leaves. But what they all had in common was that they were noisy, greedy and had no table manners at all! In fact, they were so greedy, they launched themselves at the feast and started to devour it, knocking over glasses as they climbed across the table, throwing food at each other and causing general chaos. They didn't even notice the great big bear curled up by the fire.

When they had eaten their fill and drunk every last drop, a small troll yawned and said, "Ooh, look at that big kitty by the fire. Let's wake it up and ride on its back!"

The hunter was watching the trolls through a gap in the bedroom door and this was just what he had hoped for – the bear didn't like being woken up and it certainly didn't let anyone ride on its back.

The small troll lurched over to the bear and nudged it, but the bear didn't stir, so he climbed onto its back. The other trolls shook the bear until it opened its eyes.





When it saw the unfriendly-looking trolls and felt something on its back, the bear stood up and let out a mighty, deafening roar, then it pelted through the door and came to a sudden halt, launching the troll headfirst into a mound of snow. The other trolls looked at each other in alarm, and ran as fast as they could out of the little house and back into the dark forest.

“Well done, kitty,” laughed the hunter, patting the bear affectionately. The hunter and the bear spent the rest of the night by the fire in a cosy, undisturbed sleep. ➡





When Halvor and his family returned the next day, they were surprised to see the hunter and bear looking so relaxed. The hunter had even tidied up for them. He explained what had happened with the trolls and, with endless praise, thanks and gifts from Halvor's family, he set off on his journey again.




A year later, when Christmas came round again, Halvor was hanging up his decorations when he heard someone with a gruff voice call, "Halvor, Halvor!" He looked outside and saw a troll peeping out nervously from the edge of the forest.

"Do you still have your big kitty?" asked the troll, quaking with fear.

"Yes!" replied Halvor. "And she's had seven kittens, all even bigger than she is!"

With that, the terrified troll bolted into the forest. And that was the last Halvor ever saw of his unwelcome Christmas guests – all thanks to the hunter and his bear! 🐾



There are many stories from Scandinavia about trolls. Some people used to believe that trolls lived in the mountains and would turn to stone if exposed to sunlight! That's why many large stones in Norway are called 'Troll Rocks'.



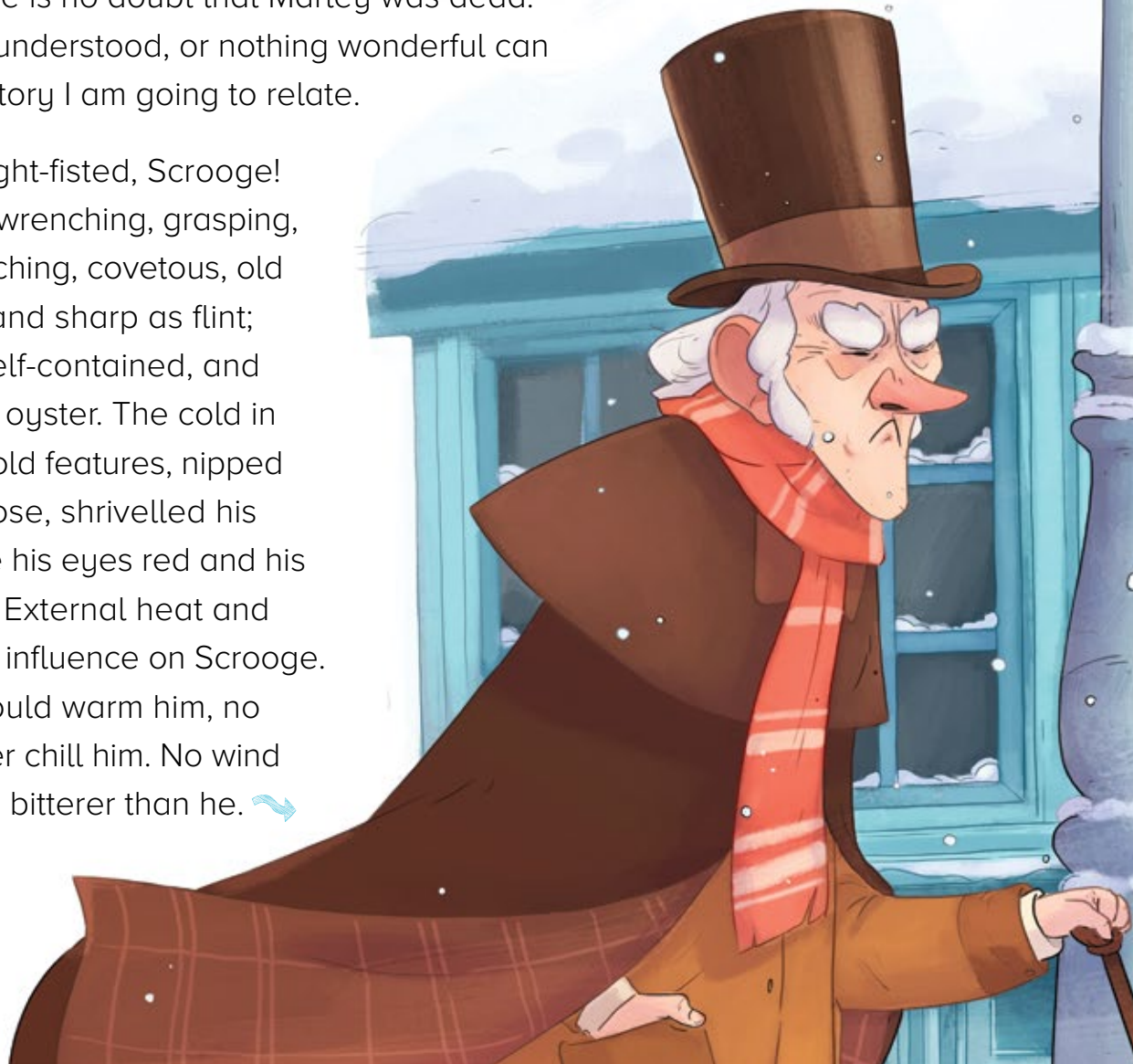
# A Christmas Carol

By Charles Dickens

**M**arley was dead: to begin with. There is no doubt whatever about that. Old Marley was as dead as a doornail.

Scrooge and he were partners for I don't know how many years. Scrooge was his sole friend, and sole mourner. There is no doubt that Marley was dead. This must be understood, or nothing wonderful can come of the story I am going to relate.

Oh, he was tight-fisted, Scrooge! A squeezing, wrenching, grasping, scraping, clutching, covetous, old sinner! Hard and sharp as flint; secret, and self-contained, and solitary as an oyster. The cold in him froze his old features, nipped his pointed nose, shrivelled his cheeks, made his eyes red and his thin lips blue. External heat and cold had little influence on Scrooge. No warmth could warm him, no wintry weather chill him. No wind that blew was bitterer than he. 🌀





Once upon a time, on Christmas Eve, old Scrooge sat in his counting-house. It was cold, bleak, biting weather and he could hear the people outside stamping their feet on the pavement to warm them. The city clocks had only just gone three, but it was quite dark already and candles were flaring in the windows of neighbouring offices. The fog came pouring in and was so dense that the houses opposite were mere phantoms.

The door of Scrooge's counting-house was open so he might keep his eye on his clerk, who was copying letters. Scrooge had a very small fire, but the clerk's fire was so very much smaller that it looked like one coal. But he couldn't replenish it, for Scrooge kept the coal in his own room. The clerk put on his scarf, and tried to warm himself at the candle.



"A merry Christmas, uncle! God save you!" cried a cheerful voice. It was the voice of Scrooge's nephew.

"Bah!" said Scrooge. "Humbug!"

He had walked so fast in the fog and frost, this nephew of Scrooge's, that he was all a-glow. His face was ruddy and handsome and his eyes sparkled.

"Christmas a humbug, uncle!" said Scrooge's nephew. "You don't mean that, I am sure?"

"I do," said Scrooge. "Merry Christmas! What right have you to be merry? What reason have you to be merry? You're poor enough."

"Come, then," returned the nephew gaily. "What right have you to be dismal? You're rich enough."

Scrooge having no better answer ready, said, "Bah!" again; and followed it up with "Humbug."

"Don't be cross!" said the nephew.

"What else can I be," said the uncle, "when I live in such a world of fools? Merry Christmas! What's Christmas to you but a time for paying bills without money; a time for finding yourself a year older, but not an hour richer? If I could work my will," said Scrooge, "every idiot who goes about with 'Merry Christmas' on his lips, would be boiled with his own pudding!" ➡



**WIN!**



**Will Scrooge stop being such an old "Bah humbug"? Turn to page 50 to win a brilliant hardback copy of *A Christmas Carol* by Charles Dickens.**







"Uncle!" pleaded the nephew.

"Nephew!" returned the uncle sternly, "keep Christmas in your own way, and let me keep it in mine."

"I have always thought of Christmas time," returned the nephew, "as a good time; a forgiving, charitable, pleasant time; the only time I know of when men and women open their hearts freely. And therefore, uncle, though it has never put a scrap of gold or silver in my pocket, I believe that it has done me good, and will do me good; and I say, God bless it!"

The clerk applauded, then realising he had done so out of place, he poked the fire, extinguishing the last frail spark forever.

"Let me hear another sound from you," said Scrooge, "and you'll keep your Christmas by losing your job! You're quite a powerful speaker, sir," he added, turning to his nephew. "I wonder why you aren't in Parliament."

"Don't be angry, uncle. Come! Dine with us tomorrow."

"Why did you marry?" said Scrooge.

"Because I fell in love."

"Because you fell in love!" growled Scrooge, as if that were one thing in

the world more ridiculous than a merry Christmas. "Good afternoon!"

"I am sorry, with all my heart, that you feel like this, but I'll keep my Christmas humour. So Merry Christmas, uncle!"

"Good afternoon!" said Scrooge.

"And a Happy New Year!"

His nephew left the room without an angry word. He stopped to bestow season's greetings on the clerk, and he returned them cordially.

"There's another fellow," muttered Scrooge, who overheard him, "my clerk, with fifteen shillings a week, and a wife and family, talking about a merry Christmas."



The clerk, in letting Scrooge's nephew out, had let two other people in. They were portly gentlemen, who stood with their hats off in Scrooge's office, and bowed to him.

"Scrooge and Marley's, I believe," said one of the gentlemen, referring to a list. "Have I the pleasure of addressing Mr Scrooge or Mr Marley please?"

"Mr Marley has been dead seven years," Scrooge replied. "He died seven years ago, this very night."



"In this festive season, Mr Scrooge," said the gentleman, taking up a pen, "it is usual to make some slight provision for the poor and destitute, who suffer greatly. Many thousands are in need of common comforts, sir."

"Are there no prisons?" asked Scrooge.

"Plenty of prisons," said the gentleman, laying down the pen again.

"And the workhouses?" demanded Scrooge. "Are they still in operation?"

"They are. Still," said the gentleman. "I wish I could say they were not."

"Oh! I'm very glad to hear it," said Scrooge.

"A few of us are trying to raise funds to buy the poor some meat and drink, and means of warmth. What shall I put you down for?"

"Nothing!" Scrooge replied. ➡





"You wish to be anonymous?"

"I wish to be left alone," said Scrooge. "Since you ask me what I wish, that is my answer, gentlemen. I don't make merry myself at Christmas and I can't afford to make idle people merry. I help to support the establishments I have mentioned – and those who are badly off must go there."

"Many can't go there; and many would rather die."

"Then if they would rather die," said Scrooge, "they had better do it, and decrease the surplus population. Good afternoon, gentlemen!"

Seeing that it would be useless to pursue their point, the gentlemen left.

Scrooge continued his work in an even worse temper than usual.



Meanwhile the fog and the darkness thickened and the cold became more intense. In the main street, labourers had lit a great fire in a brazier, round which ragged men and boys were gathered, warming their hands and blinking at the blaze. The brightness of the shops, where holly sprigs and berries crackled in the lamp heat of the windows, made pale faces look ruddy as they passed.

At length, the hour of shutting up the counting-house arrived. With an ill will Scrooge got off his stool, and told the





clerk that it was time to leave, who instantly snuffed his candle out, and put on his hat.

“You’ll want all day off tomorrow, I suppose?” said Scrooge.

“If it’s quite convenient, sir.”

“It’s not convenient,” said Scrooge, “and it’s not fair. If I was to stop half a crown for it, you’d think it unfair?”

The clerk smiled faintly.

“And yet,” said Scrooge, “you don’t think it unfair on *me*, when I pay you a day’s wages for no work.”

The clerk mentioned that it was only once a year.

“A poor excuse for picking a man’s pocket every twenty-fifth of December!” said Scrooge, buttoning up his coat to the chin. “But I suppose you must have the whole day. Be here all the earlier next morning!”

The clerk promised that he would; and Scrooge walked out with a growl.

The office was closed in a twinkling, and the clerk, wrapped in his scarf (for he didn’t own a great-coat), went down an icy slide at the end of the street twenty times in honour of it being Christmas Eve, and then he ran home to Camden Town as fast as he could pelt to play with his children. 🌀

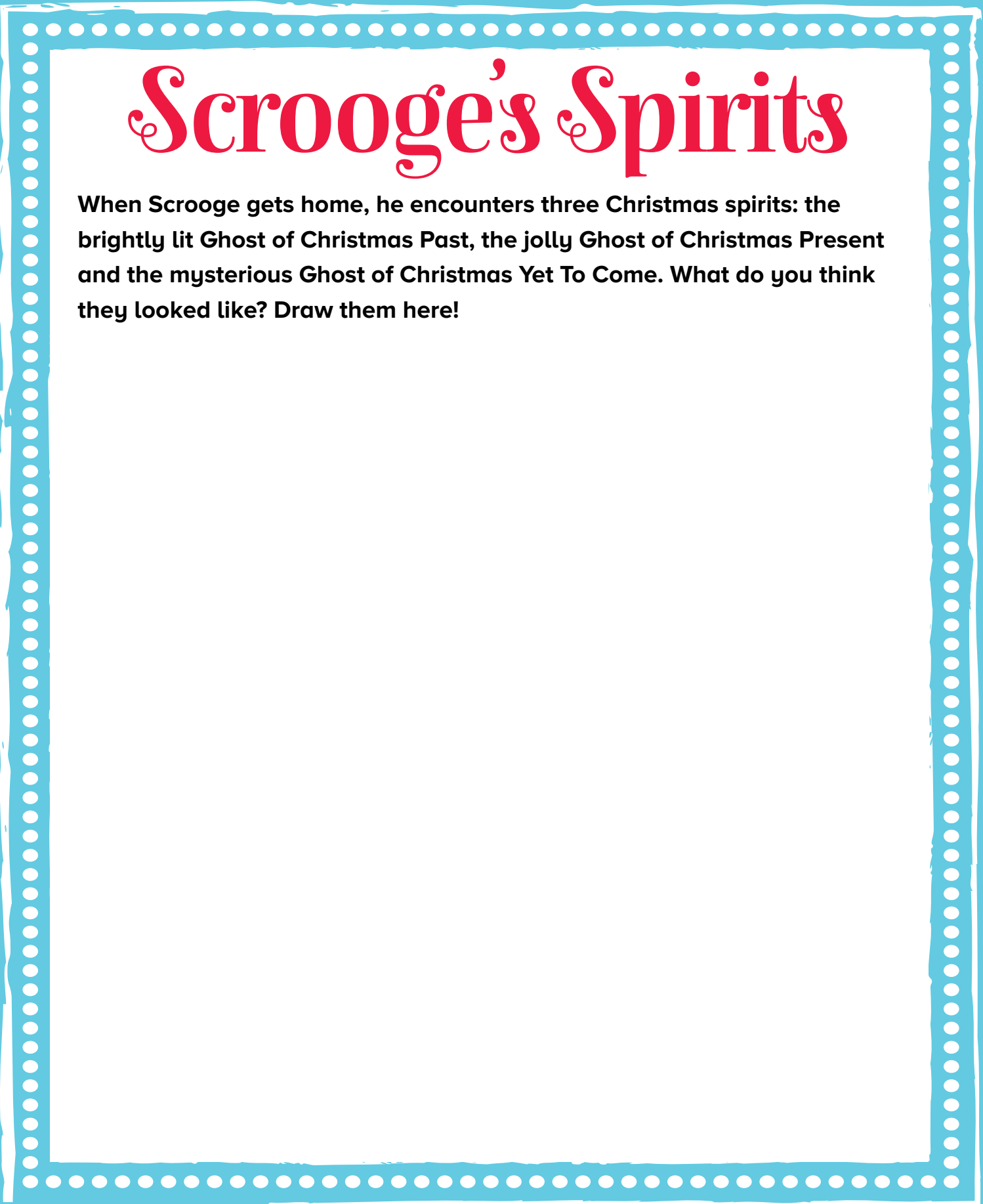






# Scrooge's Spirits

**When Scrooge gets home, he encounters three Christmas spirits: the brightly lit Ghost of Christmas Past, the jolly Ghost of Christmas Present and the mysterious Ghost of Christmas Yet To Come. What do you think they looked like? Draw them here!**







# storytime playbox

Have fun with our snowy puzzles, Christmassy colouring, mitten making, and our brilliant Nutcracker board game!

①

## SNOW IDEA!

One of the characters from this issue has got caught in a snowy blizzard! Can you work out who it is? Write his or her name in the box.



②

## MIXED-UP GIFTS

In our poem, lucky Robert got lots of pressies, but their names have got muddled up here. Can you work out what they are?





### 3 COLOUR IN CLAUS!

In our legend about St Nicholas, he hasn't got his wonderful red suit and boots yet. Colour him in and make him look like the Santa we all know and love!



### 4 QUICK QUIZ!

In *A Christmas Carol*, what is Scrooge's favourite saying?

a. **Hamburger!**

b. **Humbug!**

c. **Bedbug!**



## ⑤ TURTLE DOVE TRIANGLES

How many triangles can you count in the roof of our turtle doves' home? Circle the answer you think is correct!

a. 9      b. 10      c. 13



## ⑥ MAKE A MAGIC MITTEN!

In this cute craft project, make a red mitten and fill it with the animals from this issue's **Around the World Tale**, then act out our story as you tell it!

- Take two pieces of red card or paper and staple or tape them around the edges to hold them together.
- Draw a basic mitten shape on one side and cut around it.
- Leaving the bottom edge of the mitten open, stick the two mitten shapes together at the edges. Use a stapler, tape or glue the inside edges to do this.
- If you like, use crayons, pens, glitter or pompoms to decorate your red mitten.
- Download our **Red Mitten Story Animals** – a mouse, a rabbit, a fox, a boar and a bear – from [storytimemagazine.com/free](http://storytimemagazine.com/free) and cut them out.
- **As you tell the story, pop each of the animals into your red mitten. At the end of the story, open the mitten and scatter them all around!**



**TIP!** Attach our printable animals to lollipop sticks so you can use them like little puppets when you tell the story.



# Night of the Nutcracker

Help Clara and the Nutcracker Prince travel safely on their sleigh and get home in time for Christmas Day!

## How to Play

All you need to play is a dice and some counters – one counter for each player. You can use coins or download our Nutcracker Character Counters at [storytimemagazine.com/](http://storytimemagazine.com/) free! There's Clara, Fritz, the Nutcracker Prince, the Mouse King and the Sugar Plum Fairy to choose from.

- ★ Decide which character you will be and who will roll first.
- ★ Player 1 rolls the dice and moves his or her counter forward the correct number of spaces.
- ★ Players take it in turns to roll.
- ★ Follow the instructions on each square you land on.
- ★ The first player to cross the finish line is the winner.

Full up from the feast.

37

38

39

Miss a turn.

36

35

34

Jump in the sleigh.

17

18

19

20

Roll again!

16

15

14

13

Forward 1 space.

Godfather arrives!

The toys come to your aid!

Start

01

02

03

Roll the dice to see what he's made for you!





Magic is  
in the air.

Forward 1  
space.

Back 1  
space.

Someone  
treads on your  
toe when  
dancing.

The Sugar  
Plum Fairy  
gives you a  
sweet treat.

Admire the  
enchanted snowy  
forest.

Miss a turn.

Forward 2  
spaces.

Mouse  
attack!

Roll a 1, 3 or 5  
on your next  
turn to escape!

## Godfather's Gifts

What did you get from  
Godfather Drosselmeyer?  
Roll the dice to find out!

- Roll a 1: A clockwork mouse
- Roll a 2: Fritz's castle
- Roll a 3: A cuckoo clock
- Roll a 4: A train engine
- Roll a 5: Clara's nutcracker
- Roll a 6: A spinning top



# STORYTIME MAGIC

We think you'll love our Christmassy book recommendation and we have some fabulous festive offers for you too!

## Storytime Gift Bundles!

Share some Storytime magic this Christmas or catch up on issues you've missed by grabbing our gorgeous Storytime Gift Bundle – get three brilliant back issues and a FREE illustrated print for £11.99!\* Our gift bundle includes:

- 🕒 **Puss in Boots** – Starring panto favourite Puss in Boots, plus five more stories and a fun poem!
- 🕒 **Santa Claus** – Follow Santa on his first ever sleigh ride and enjoy six more seasonal stories and rhymes.
- 🕒 **Snow White** – See the seven dwarves come to her rescue, plus enjoy a polar bear story and five more stories and rhymes.
- 🕒 **PLUS a free print featuring one of our wonderful Storytime illustrations!**

## Book of the Month!

If you want some laugh-out-loud fun this winter, then we heartily recommend **Nuddy Ned's Christmas** by Kes Gray and Garry Parsons. It's about a little boy who's just so excited to see Santa, he braves freezing temperatures to meet him ... minus his pyjamas! Kids will love the cheeky lift-the-flap element to this book – and it makes the perfect read for Christmas Eve.  
(Bloomsbury)



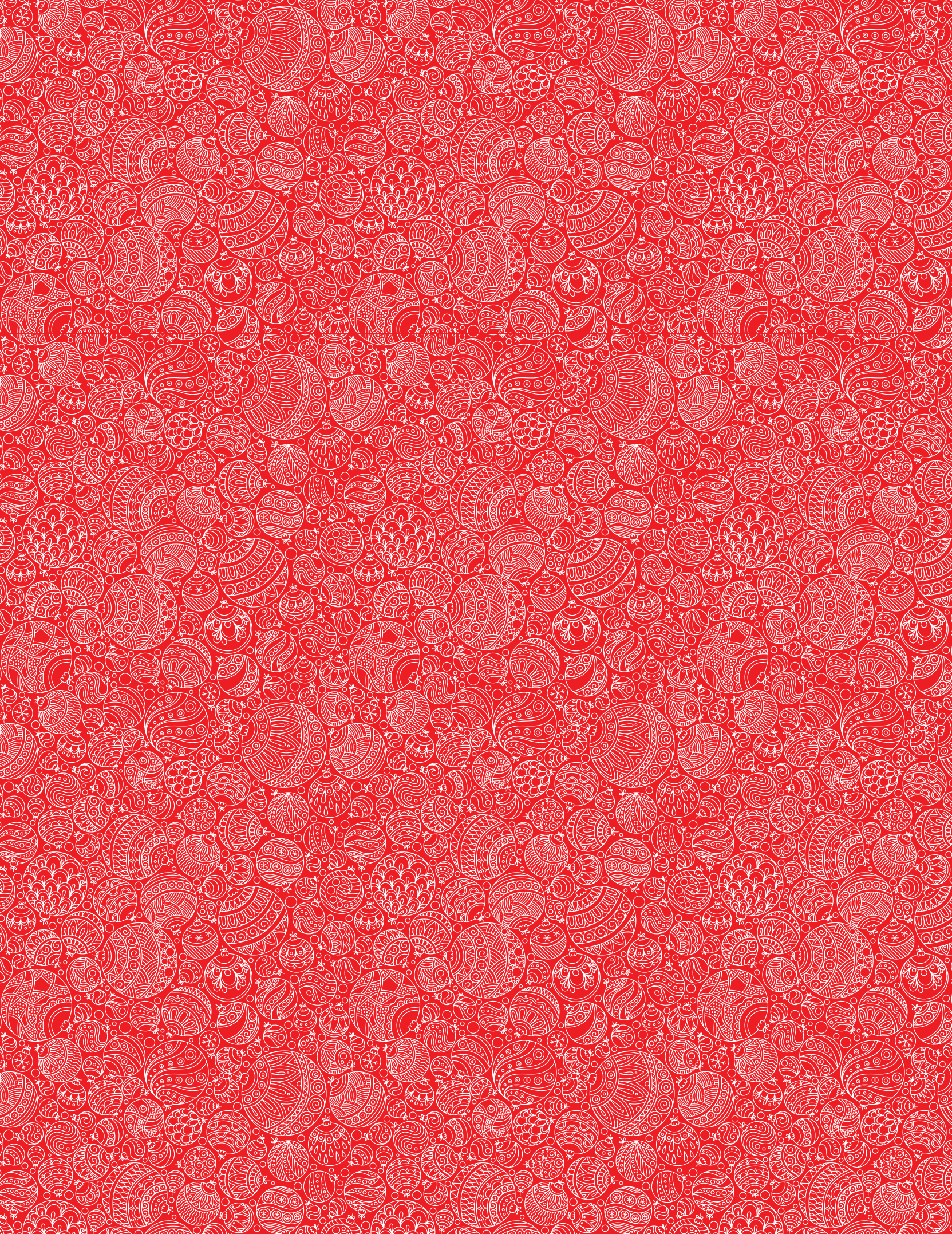
## WIN BOOKS!

Win a true Christmas classic to share this festive season – a child-friendly hardback edition of **A Christmas Carol** by Charles Dickens. To be in with a chance, visit:

[storytimemagazine.com/win](http://storytimemagazine.com/win)









# Sparkling seasonal stories inside!



Read a tale of two turtle doves



Meet the bear who saved Christmas



And find out just how many animals fit inside a mitten!



## Give the gift of stories!

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