



Books for Giving Christmas 2016

Article Author:

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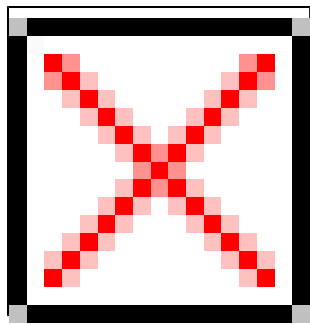
[221](#) [2]

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Ferelith Hordon makes Christmas shopping easy

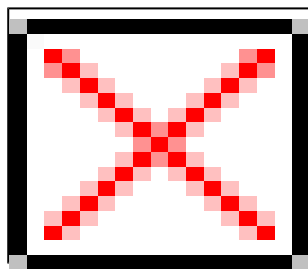
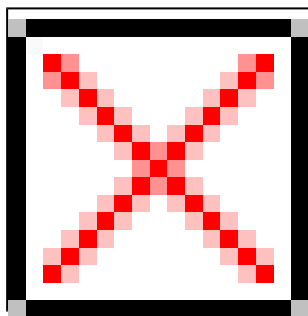
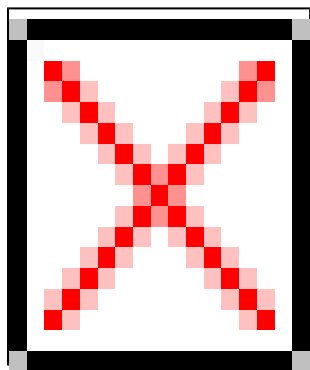
Christmas is coming and the displays on the tables and in the windows of bookshops are piled high as publishers jostle for space, vying to catch the eye. Picture books, novelty books, activity books, information books. What to choose? What to give? **Books for Keeps** editor **Ferelith Hordon** makes suggestions.

Setting the Scene - Books for the Season



There's a host of books reflecting the anticipation, the fun, the glitter, the potential for chaos that is so much part of Christmas, and familiarity often brings enjoyment. Dickens's **A Christmas Carol** is the classic and now available in an elegant and attractive edition beautifully illustrated by Alan Marks. You can cuddle up with **Elmer's Christmas** - satisfying board pages, bright colours, glitter and Elmer; join Santa as he takes the Queen for a ride searching for the perfect present in **The Queen's Present** from Steve Anthony; or become part of the magic in **Ollie's Christmas Reindeer** as Nicola Killen enchants with soft monochrome illustrations. Children will laugh aloud with Korcky Paul in **Winnie and Wilbur meet Santa** - complete with a pop-up surprise at the end. There is more laughter as Mouse tries to cancel the season in **The Mouse that Cancelled Christmas** by Madeleine Cook and Samara Hardy and more still as the inimitable Claude helps out in **Santa Claude**.

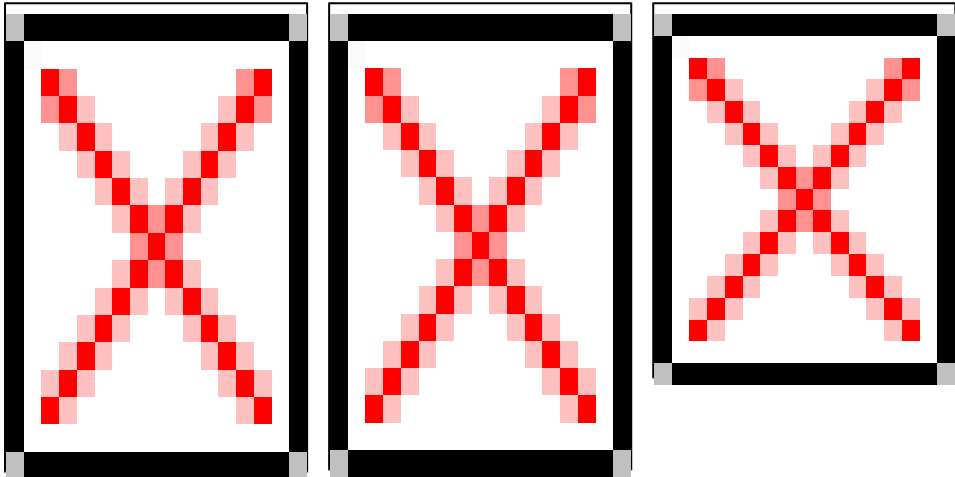
Picture Books to Give



Books are among the best gifts for the youngest offering the opportunity for sharing and play. **Can You Keep a Straight Face?** is a fun board book for little hands. Sumptuous colours, alliterative text that rolls off the tongue, **One Cheetah, One Cherry: A book of beautiful numbers** from Jackie Morris is a book to treasure, while **Some Birds** is another stunning visual treat full of humour as Matt Spink's stylised, colourful birds swoop, flap or even go pop across

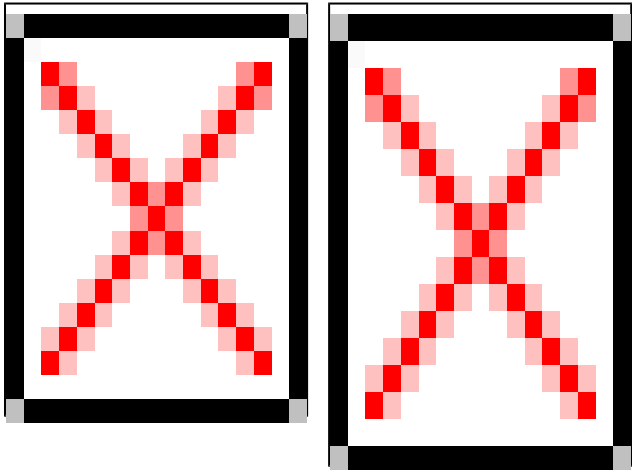
the pages. In **A Dot in the Snow** by Corrinne Averiss, beautifully illustrated by Fiona Woodcock captures the essence of friendship while **The Liszts** with its punning title, text and arresting illustrations is something different and enormous fun as the author, Kyo Maclear and illustrator Julia Sarda, play on the absurdity of lists. **A Bottle of Happiness** is written by Pippa Goodhart, her story stunningly reflected in the lively illustrations by the Iranian artist, Ensan Abdollahi. Different again, **A Day with Dogs** by Dorothee De Monfreid has no text to contend with but so much to explore and talk about.

Time for a Story



In **A Year Full of Stories** Angela McAllister has collected 52 tales from across cultures, both well known, and unfamiliar, all a delight with illustrations by Christopher Corr bursting from the pages. **Winter Magic** is a lovely collection of original tales from a galaxy of favourite authors as Michelle Magorian, Piers Torday and Berlie Doherty. For older members of the family **I'll Be Home for Christmas** offers a selection of thought-provoking stories again from outstanding authors with £1 from every sale going to charity **Crisis**.

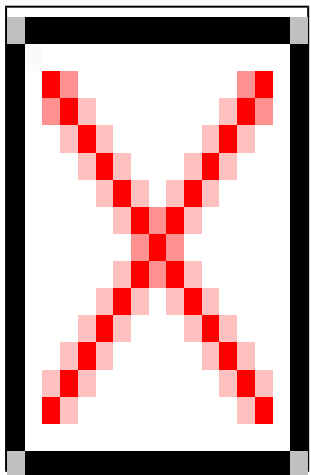
There can be nothing better than curling up with a good book that demands to be read. This is the case with [The Royal Rabbits of London](#). [3] What happens when Shylo learns of a dastardly plot by the rats against the Queen? Written by Santa Montefiore and Simon Sebag-Montefiore this is a book for bedtime whether shared or under the bedclothes. [The Cat and the King](#) [4] from the much loved Nick Sharratt who has written the story and illustrated it, will certainly raise a smile as the king has to learn to live at No. 37 Castle Close when the palace is destroyed in an Unfortunate Incident. Absurdity is at the heart of Luis Sepulveda's **The Story of the Seagull and the Cat Who Taught Her to Fly** so who better to illustrate it than Satoshi Kitamura? Lou Kuenzler takes Anna Sewell's classic and re-imagines it from the view point of Jo, a young girl who masquerades as a boy in order to become a groom, in [Finding Black Beauty](#) [5]. Attractively produced, attractively written, this is one both for young readers who may know the classic and those who don't, inspiring them to try it. Beautifully presented with atmospheric illustrations by Levi Penfold, a novel from the imagination of A.F. Harrold, **The Song from Somewhere Else**, is full of wonder but rooted in reality.



Christmas is a time for catching up, so ideal for series. **Black Light Express** from Philip Reeve takes us back to the world of **Railhead** and the singing trains that cross the galaxy. Meanwhile in [The King's Revenge](#) [6], Philip Womack brings his rich, imaginative fantasy series, **The Darkening Path**, to a gripping conclusion. Repackaged for new fans and old is Cornelia Funke's trilogy **Reckless**. All of these will provide hours of satisfying reading, journeying across new worlds.

Poetry

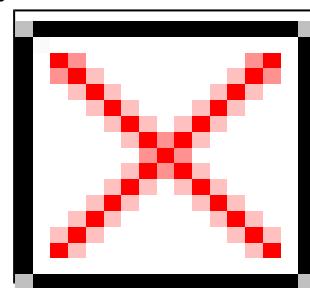
Dark nights, short days: it's the perfect time to discover the delights of poetry. How better than in **A Poem for Every**



Night of The Year, edited by Allie Esiri - complete poems, extracts and brief illuminating comments - this is one to open 'magic casements?'. In the **Poetry for Kids** series a selection of Emily Dickinson's poems are collected in **Emily Dickinson** and sympathetically illustrated by Christine Davenier making a perfect introduction to this appealing, always intriguing poet.

Information for All

The stream of gorgeously illustrated and imaginatively designed information books continues. One of the most arresting is Dieter Braun's **Wild Animals of the North** while Anna Wright's paintings for **Magnificent Creatures: Animals on the move** are very special, as are Petr Horacek's illustrations for **A First Book of Animals** which also features a poetic text from Nicola Davies. Encouraging young readers to take part in the story is **Story Worlds: Nature** created by

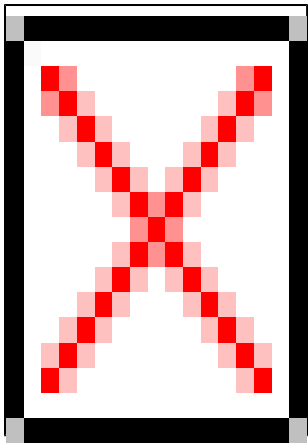


Thomas Hegbrook. This is a book to revisit, providing opportunity for curiosity and conversation. **Midnight Creatures** is a bit different and requires darkness and a torch - intriguing. Moving away from the natural world into the kitchen Nadiya Hussain's **Bake Me a Story** playfully links cooking with traditional tales. Great fun. Also not to be missed, **Vincent's Starry Night and other stories** from Michael Bird is a history of art but presented in an imaginative way introducing the stories around artists, bringing them and their works to life and possibly inspiring a visit to a gallery.

Activity books for Christmas

Keen to make a mark? For **Where's Wally?** enthusiasts **Pierre, The Maze Detective and the Great Colouring Adventure** by Hiro Kamigaki is one to keep them busy, while **Draw it, Colour it: Beasts** introduces young artists to a range of practical ideas from well known illustrators including Axel Scheffler, Chris Riddell and Emily Gravett.

Special gifts



As always there are one or two very special gifts. A boxed set of **King Rollo** stories from David McKee, now in miniature editions would be ideal for small hands. All four of A A Milne's Pooh stories are available in an attractive slipcase, just the thing to go with **The Best Bear in All The World**, a collection of four brand new stories by some very well known authors, while **The Velveteen Rabbit**, the classic by Margery Williams has been sensitively illustrated by Sarah Massimi. Finally, **Odd and the Frost Giants** from Neil Gaiman and Chris Riddell cannot be missed.

Happy Christmas reading to one and all!

Ferelith Hordon is active member of **CILIP YLG** and has served as Chair of both YLG London and of the National Committee. She is editor of **Books for Keeps** and of **IBBYLink**, the online journal of **IBBY UK**.

You'll find a list of all books mentioned [here](#) [7].

Page Number:

4

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[1] <http://booksforkeeps.co.uk/member/ferelith-hordon>

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[3] <http://booksforkeeps.co.uk/issue/220/childrens-books/articles/featured-author/an-interview-with-santa-montefiore>

[4] <http://booksforkeeps.co.uk/issue/220/childrens-books/reviews/the-cat-and-the-king>

[5] <http://booksforkeeps.co.uk/issue/221/childrens-books/reviews/finding-black-beauty>

[6] <http://booksforkeeps.co.uk/issue/219/childrens-books/reviews/the-kings-revenge>

[7] <http://booksforkeeps.co.uk/issue/221/childrens-books/articles/books-for-giving-2016-the-book-list>