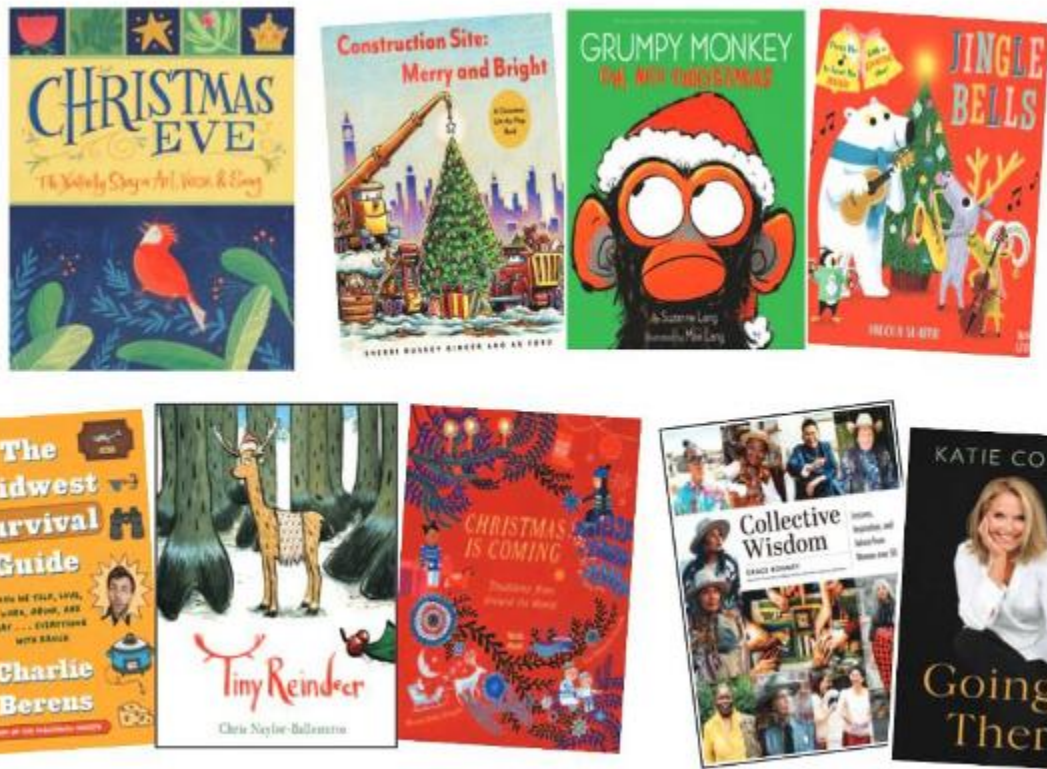


The Book Buzz: 'Tis The Season For Christmas Books And More

by George Rishel

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VIRDEN - The Christmas season is now here, and with it comes a shelf full of Christmas books for the young ones. What better way to begin than with two new books to remind us why we celebrate Christmas.

Christmas Eve: The Nativity Story in Art, Verse, and Song tells the nativity story through a combination of the lyrics of songs such as "Away in the Manger," "Hark! The Herald Angels Sing," "Silent Night," and others along with scriptural verse and stunning artwork. Similarly, *The First Christmas* by Phillips Brooks and Will Moses uses the

lyrics of "O Little Town of Bethlehem" along with the characteristic folk are of Will Moses. Both books are unique, entertaining, and remind us of the true meaning of Christmas.

Youngsters have been trying to find "Where's Waldo?" for years. Now they get a special treat with *Where's Waldo: Santa Spotlight Search*. Besides the usual collection of super-challenging puzzles and games, there is a spotlight-searcher wand to illuminate the scenes.

Twas the Night Before Christmas by Clement Moore is a two-century-old Christmas story that has seen many interpretations. Now, Mr. Boddington's Studio, a high-end New York design and stationery store, offers a fresh, modern take on the story. Another long-time favorite is *The Nutcracker*, often a play or ballet. Jan Brett presents her own artistic style to illustrate a new version of this tale in Jan Brett's *The Nutcracker*. It makes a great bedtime story to read with a child during the holidays.

But Christmas is not just an American and European celebration, but one that exists worldwide. *Christmas is Coming: Traditions from Around the World* by Monika Utnik-Strugala and Ewa Poklewska-Koziello captures the smells and taste of Christmas customs and legends from around the world. Who invented the first glass ornament. Why people build nativity scenes and more.

And, of course, Christmas-time is also toy-time for kids. In *The Toys' Christmas* Claire Clement and Genevieve Godbout tell how Santa tries to make sure each child gets the right gift with help from the toys themselves. Toys from around the world make a trip to Santa to tell him what each child wants most of all.

New interactive books this season include *Jingle Bells: A Musical Instrument Song Book* by James Lord Pierpont and Nicola Slater. A merry band of musicians goes on a sleigh ride, playing their instruments along the way in this sound-button board book. Another interactive book is *Christmas Mouse: Finger Puppet Book* by Emily Dove, a board book with a mouse finger puppet.

The Grinch may have met his match in the Grumpy Monkey, who appears this year in *Grumpy Monkey Oh, No Christmas* by Suzanne Lang and Max Lang. This relatively new series seems to have caught many kids' imaginations. Jim Panzee, our favorite grumpy monkey, just can't get into the holiday spirit, especially after eating a green banana and getting sick. Then his friend Norman shows him if he focuses on the good things around him instead of his own problems, he'll find a reason to celebrate.

A tiny reindeer finds he is too small to help pull Santa's sleigh and appears left out on Christmas eve in *Tiny reindeer* by Chris Naylor-Ballesteros. Then a letter arrives from a

little girl looking for a tiny reindeer to pull the tiny sleigh her grandfather made for her—his final gift. Will Tiny Reindeer make the leap into the unknown, and can Santa help?

For more mechanical or vehicular-oriented kids there are two new books that are such a delight. *Construction Site: Merry and Bright* by Sherri Duskey Rinker and AG Ford continues her popular construction site series. On each page, kids can lift the flap to see what each vehicle is bringing to the Christmas celebration, discovering that the best gift of all is being together.

Rhyming text and heartwarming illustrations should bring smiles to big truck fans. *Twenty Big Trucks in the Middle of Christmas* by Mark Lee and Kurt Cyrus adds a dose of Christmas cheer to an array of trucks for counting. A procession of trucks of all shapes and sizes help to set up the town's majestic Christmas tree. The star at the top wobbles and crashes. What to do now?

Is the Midwest a distinct region like the South, the West, or New England? comedian, journalist, and musician Charlie Berens thinks so. He's written *The Midwest Survival Guide*, subtitle *How We Talk, Love, Work, Drink, And Eat...Everything with Ranch*. He includes a recommended playlist when driving, what you need for a vehicle emergency pack, recipes, a glossary, and a whole bunch of other fun stuff. Read it in short takes, or peruse it on a lazy afternoon. Great gift for someone who is not an avid reader.

have you ever had someone tell you, "Don't go there"? Katie Couric may have, but she's rejected that advice in writing her memoir, *Going There*. She covers her 40 years in the media with candid comments about a lot of people she's dealt with along the way. And she talks about the lessons she's learned. You'll hoop, holler, scream, and gasp as you read her book.

Another collection of advice for women is *Collective Wisdom* by Grace Bonney, subtitled *Lessons, Inspiration, and Advice from Women over 50*. Many of the women who impart their wisdom in this book are probably those you never knew existed. One tidbit: "It is better to live your own life imperfectly than to live a perfect imitation of anyone else's life."

George Rishel is the owner of *The Sly Fox Bookstore*, which has been in business for 22 years. *The Sly Fox* is located on the West Side Square in Virden. They can be reached at slyfox@royell.net or 217-965-3641. Find them on Facebook or at www.slyfoxbookstore.com.

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