

Ode to E Pluribus Unum for Sunday December 25th 2022

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Westward Leading



We Three Kings

John Henry Hopkins

We three kings of Orient are
Bearing gifts we traverse afar
Field and fountain, moor and mountain
Following yonder star

O Star of wonder, star of night
Star with royal beauty bright
Westward leading, still proceeding
Guide us to thy Perfect Light

Born a King on Bethlehem's plain
Gold I bring to crown Him again
King forever, ceasing never
Over us all to reign

O Star of wonder, star of night
Star with royal beauty bright
Westward leading, still proceeding
Guide us to Thy perfect light

Frankincense to offer have I
Incense owns a Deity nigh
Prayer and praising, all men raising
Worship Him, God most high

O Star of wonder, star of night
Star with royal beauty bright
Westward leading, still proceeding
Guide us to Thy perfect light

Myrrh is mine, its bitter perfume
Breathes of life of gathering gloom
Sorrowing, sighing, bleeding, dying
Sealed in the stone-cold tomb

O Star of wonder, star of night
Star with royal beauty bright
Westward leading, still proceeding
Guide us to Thy perfect light

Glorious now behold Him arise
King and God and Sacrifice
Alleluia, Alleluia
Earth to heav'n replies

O Star of wonder, star of night
Star with royal beauty bright
Westward leading, still proceeding
Guide us to Thy perfect light

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5A8JkIqciV4>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vIEQYueIQJU&t=53s>

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Christmas Carol

By Sara Teasdale

The kings they came from out the south,
All dressed in ermine fine;
They bore Him gold and chrysopease,
And gifts of precious wine.

The shepherds came from out the north,
Their coats were brown and old;

They brought Him little new-born lambs—
They had not any gold.

The wise men came from out the east,
And they were wrapped in white;
The star that led them all the way
Did glorify the night.

The angels came from heaven high,
And they were clad with wings;
And lo, they brought a joyful song
The host of heaven sings.

The kings they knocked upon the door,
The wise men entered in,
The shepherds followed after them
To hear the song begin.

The angels sang through all the night
Until the rising sun,
But little Jesus fell asleep
Before the song was done.

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The Magi

By William Butler Yeats

Now as at all times I can see in the mind's eye,
In their stiff, painted clothes, the pale unsatisfied ones
Appear and disappear in the blue depths of the sky
With all their ancient faces like rain-beaten stones,
And all their helms of silver hovering side by side,
And all their eyes still fixed, hoping to find once more,
Being by Calvary's turbulence unsatisfied,
The uncontrollable mystery on the bestial floor

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The Three Kings

By Henry Wadsworth Longfellow

Three Kings came riding from far away,
Melchior and Gaspar and Baltasar;
Three Wise Men out of the East were they,
And they travelled by night and they slept by day,
For their guide was a beautiful, wonderful star.

The star was so beautiful, large and clear,
That all the other stars of the sky
Became a white mist in the atmosphere,
And by this they knew that the coming was near
Of the Prince foretold in the prophecy.

Three caskets they bore on their saddle-bows,
Three caskets of gold with golden keys;
Their robes were of crimson silk with rows
Of bells and pomegranates and furbelows,
Their turbans like blossoming almond-trees.

And so the Three Kings rode into the West,
Through the dusk of the night, over hill and dell,
And sometimes they nodded with beard on breast,
And sometimes talked, as they paused to rest,
With the people they met at some wayside well.

"Of the child that is born," said Baltasar,
"Good people, I pray you, tell us the news;
For we in the East have seen his star,
And have ridden fast, and have ridden far,
To find and worship the King of the Jews."

And the people answered, "You ask in vain;
We know of no King but Herod the Great!"
They thought the Wise Men were men insane,
As they spurred their horses across the plain,
Like riders in haste, who cannot wait.

And when they came to Jerusalem,
Herod the Great, who had heard this thing,
Sent for the Wise Men and questioned them;
And said, "Go down unto Bethlehem,
And bring me tidings of this new king."

So they rode away; and the star stood still,
The only one in the grey of morn;
Yes, it stopped—it stood still of its own free will,
Right over Bethlehem on the hill,
The city of David, where Christ was born.

And the Three Kings rode through the gate and the guard,
Through the silent street, till their horses turned

And neighed as they entered the great inn-yard;
But the windows were closed, and the doors were barred,
And only a light in the stable burned.

And cradled there in the scented hay,
In the air made sweet by the breath of kine,
The little child in the manger lay,
The child, that would be king one day
Of a kingdom not human, but divine.

His mother Mary of Nazareth
Sat watching beside his place of rest,
Watching the even flow of his breath,
For the joy of life and the terror of death
Were mingled together in her breast.

They laid their offerings at his feet:
The gold was their tribute to a King,
The frankincense, with its odor sweet,
Was for the Priest, the Paraclete,
The myrrh for the body's burying.

And the mother wondered and bowed her head,
And sat as still as a statue of stone,
Her heart was troubled yet comforted,
Remembering what the Angel had said
Of an endless reign and of David's throne.

Then the Kings rode out of the city gate,
With a clatter of hoofs in proud array;
But they went not back to Herod the Great,
For they knew his malice and feared his hate,
And returned to their homes by another way.

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The Magi

By William Butler Yeats

Now as at all times I can see in the mind's eye,
In their stiff, painted clothes, the pale unsatisfied ones
Appear and disappear in the blue depths of the sky
With all their ancient faces like rain-beaten stones,
And all their helms of silver hovering side by side,
And all their eyes still fixed, hoping to find once more,

Being by Calvary's turbulence unsatisfied,
The uncontrollable mystery on the bestial floor.

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Journey of the Magi

T. S. Eliot

A cold coming we had of it,
Just the worst time of the year
For a journey, and such a long journey:
The ways deep and the weather sharp,
The very dead of winter.'
And the camels galled, sorefooted, refractory,
Lying down in the melting snow.
There were times we regretted
The summer palaces on slopes, the terraces,
And the silken girls bringing sherbet.
Then the camel men cursing and grumbling
and running away, and wanting their liquor and women,
And the night-fires going out, and the lack of shelters,
And the cities hostile and the towns unfriendly
And the villages dirty and charging high prices:
A hard time we had of it.
At the end we preferred to travel all night,
Sleeping in snatches,
With the voices singing in our ears, saying
That this was all folly.

Then at dawn we came down to a temperate valley,
Wet, below the snow line, smelling of vegetation;
With a running stream and a water-mill beating the darkness,
And three trees on the low sky,
And an old white horse galloped away in the meadow.
Then we came to a tavern with vine-leaves over the lintel,
Six hands at an open door dicing for pieces of silver,
And feet kicking the empty wine-skins.
But there was no information, and so we continued
And arriving at evening, not a moment too soon
Finding the place; it was (you might say) satisfactory.

All this was a long time ago, I remember,
And I would do it again, but set down
This set down
This: were we led all that way for
Birth or Death? There was a Birth, certainly

We had evidence and no doubt. I had seen birth and death,
But had thought they were different; this Birth was
Hard and bitter agony for us, like Death, our death.
We returned to our places, these Kingdoms,
But no longer at ease here, in the old dispensation,
With an alien people clutching their gods.
I should be glad of another death.

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Handel's Messiah; Unto Us a Child is Born



[tps://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MS3vpAWW2Zc](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MS3vpAWW2Zc)

Messiah: For Unto Us a Child is Born

For unto us a child is born
Unto us a son is given
And the government shall be upon his shoulder
And his name shall be called
Wonderful
Counsellor
The mighty God
The everlasting Father
The Prince of Peace.

Sir Colin Davis conducts the London Symphony Orchestra, Susan Gritton, Sara Mingardo, Mark Padmore, Alastair Miles and the Tenebrae choir performing Handel's Messiah.

Messiah (Complete Concerto) **London Philharmonic** <https://youtu.be/71NCzuDNUcg>

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Hark the Herald Angels Sing

King's College Cambridge 2011 #17

Hark! The Herald Angels Sing" first appeared in 1739 in the collection Hymns and Sacred Poems. It features lyrical contributions from Charles Wesley and George Whitefield, two of the founding ministers of Methodism, with music adapted from "Vaterland, in deinen Gauen" by Felix Mendelssohn.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=A_iLXNSIaYc

Hark the Herald Angels Sing

Charles Wesley and George Whitefield

Music by Felix Mendelssohn

Hark the herald angels sing
"Glory to the newborn King!
Peace on earth and mercy mild
God and sinners reconciled"
Joyful, all ye nations rise

Join the triumph of the skies
With the angelic host proclaim:
"Christ is born in Bethlehem"
Hark! The herald angels sing
"Glory to the newborn King!"

Christ by highest heaven adored
Christ the everlasting Lord!
Late in time behold Him come
Offspring of a Virgin's womb
Veiled in flesh the Godhead see

Hail the incarnate Deity
Pleased as man with man to dwell
Jesus, our Emmanuel
Hark! The herald angels sing
"Glory to the newborn King!"

Hail the heaven-born Prince of Peace!

Hail the Son of Righteousness!
Light and life to all He brings
Ris'n with healing in His wings
Mild He lays His glory by

Born that man no more may die
Born to raise the sons of earth
Born to give them second birth
Hark! The herald angels sing
"Glory to the newborn King!"

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O Come, All Ye Faithful;
King's College Choir,

O Come All Ye Faithful is the English translation of the latin hymn Adeste Fideles., John Francis Wade is assumed to have written Adeste Fideles. The English lyrics to the Christmas carol O Come, All Ye Faithful was written by the priest Frederick Oakeley.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EiJhJIYbVQ4>

O Come All Ye Faithful
Frederick Oakeley

O come, all ye faithful,
Joyful and triumphant!
O come ye, O come ye to Bethlehem;
Come and behold him
Born the King of Angels:

O come, let us adore Him,
O come, let us adore Him,
O come, let us adore Him,
Christ the Lord.

God of God,
Light of Light,
Lo, he abhors not the Virgin's womb;
Very God,
Begotten, not created:

Sing, choirs of angels,
Sing in exultation,

Sing, all ye citizens of Heaven above!
Glory to God
In the highest:

Yea, Lord, we greet thee,
Born this happy morning;
Jesus, to thee be glory given!
Word of the Father,
Now in flesh appearing!

O Come All Ye Faithful
Epic Flash Mob Carol



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XI2c9yptr4U>

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O Come, O Come, Emmanuel

The hymn has its origins over 1,200 years ago in monastic life in the 8th or 9th century. Seven days before Christmas Eve monasteries would sing the "O antiphons" in anticipation of Christmas Eve when the eighth antiphon, "O Virgo virginum" ("O Virgin of virgins") would be sung before and after Mary's canticle, the Magnificat (Luke 1:46b-55). The Latin metrical form of the hymn was composed as early as the 12th century

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iO7ySn-Swwc>

O come, O come, Emmanuel
Monastic Antiphon

O come, O come, Emmanuel
And ransom captive Israel

That mourns in lonely exile here
Until the Son of God appear

*Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel
Shall come to thee, O Israel*

O come, O come, Thou Lord of might
Who to Thy tribes, on Sinai's height
In ancient times didst give the law
In cloud, and majesty and awe

*Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel
Shall come to thee, O Israel*

O come, Thou Rod of Jesse, free
Thine own from Satan's tyranny
From depths of hell Thy people save
And give them victory o'er the grave

*Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel
Shall come to thee, O Israel*

O come, Thou Dayspring, come and cheer
Our spirits by Thine advent here
Disperse the gloomy clouds of night
And death's dark shadows put to flight

*Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel
Shall come to thee, O Israel*

O come, Thou Key of David, come
And open wide our heavenly home
Make safe the way that leads on high
And close the path to misery

*Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel
Shall come to thee, O Israel*

O come, Thou Wisdom from on high
And order all things, far and nigh
To us the path of knowledge show
And cause us in her ways to go

*Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel
Shall come to thee, O Israel*

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What Child is This?

Lindsey Stirling, Violin



The Lyrics for "What Child Is This?" were written in 1865 by William Chatterton Dix an insurance company manager who suffered a severe illness. While recovering, he underwent a spiritual renewal that led him to write several hymns, including lyrics to this carol that was subsequently set to the tune of "Greensleeves", a traditional English folk song.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1A3i0GATnRI>

What Child is This?

William Chatterton Dix

What Child is this, who laid to rest,
On Mary's lap is sleeping?
Whom angels greet with anthems sweet,
While shepherds watch are keeping?

Chorus: This, this is Christ, the King,
Whom shepherds guard and angels sing:
Haste, haste to bring Him laud,
The Babe, the Son of Mary!

Why lies He in such mean estate,
Where ox and ass are feeding?
Good Christian, fear: for sinners here
The silent Word is pleading.[Chorus]

So bring Him incense, gold, and myrrh,
Come, peasant, king to own Him.
The King of kings salvation brings;
Let loving hearts enthrone Him

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Carol of the Bells

Libera

"Carol of the Bells" is a popular Christmas carol, with music by Ukrainian composer Mykola Leontovych in 1914 and lyrics by Peter J. Wilhousky. The song is based on the Ukrainian folk chant " Shchedryk ". Performed by LIBERA, from the 2019 album 'Christmas Carols with Libera'. Conductor - Robert Prizeman
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SQadcm_dwEM

Carol of the Bells

Peter J. Wilhousky



Hark! how the bells
Sweet silver bells
All seem to say
"Throw cares away."
Christmas is here
Bringing good cheer
To young and old
Meek and the bold

Ding, dong, ding, dong
That is their song
With joyful ring

All caroling
One seems to hear
Words of good cheer
From ev'rywhere
Filling the air

Oh how they pound
Raising the sound
O'er hill and dale
Telling their tale
Joyf'ly they ring
While people sing
Songs of good cheer
Christmas is here
Merry, merry, merry, merry Christmas
Merry, merry, merry, merry Christmas

On, on they send
On without end
Their joyful tone
To ev'ry home

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Christmas Dance Italia Milano Duomo



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MQAKGGcuEZw>

or

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZeXvPmt5BqE>

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God Rest You Merry Gentlemen

Justin Johnson; Fingerstyle acoustic guitar



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pvE2-ktLdws>

God Rest Ye Merry, Gentlemen has been a traditional Christmas carol since the mid-18th Century. This may be due to Queen Victoria's love for carols, which found their way into the Anglican Church and soon spread to America and Europe. The upbeat melody also helped to keep the popularity of the song alive.

God Rest You Merry, Gentlemen

Traditional

God rest you merry, gentlemen
Let nothing you dismay
Remember, Christ, our Saviour
Was born on Christmas day
To save us all from Satan's power
When we were gone astray
O tidings of comfort and joy,
Comfort and joy
O tidings of comfort and joy

In Bethlehem, in Israel,
This blessed Babe was born
And laid within a manger
Upon this blessed morn
The which His Mother Mary
Did nothing take in scorn
O tidings of comfort and joy,
Comfort and joy
O tidings of comfort and joy

From God our Heavenly Father
A blessed Angel came;
And unto certain Shepherds
Brought tidings of the same:
How that in Bethlehem was born
The Son of God by Name.
O tidings of comfort and joy,
Comfort and joy
O tidings of comfort and joy

"Fear not then," said the Angel,
"Let nothing you affright,
This day is born a Saviour
Of a pure Virgin bright,
To free all those who trust in Him
From Satan's power and might."
O tidings of comfort and joy,
Comfort and joy
O tidings of comfort and joy

The shepherds at those tidings
Rejoiced much in mind,
And left their flocks a-feeding
In tempest, storm and wind:
And went to Bethlehem straightway

The Son of God to find.
O tidings of comfort and joy,
Comfort and joy
O tidings of comfort and joy

And when they came to Bethlehem
Where our dear Saviour lay,
They found Him in a manger,
Where oxen feed on hay;
His Mother Mary kneeling down,
Unto the Lord did pray.
O tidings of comfort and joy,
Comfort and joy
O tidings of comfort and joy

Now to the Lord sing praises,
All you within this place,
And with true love and brotherhood
Each other now embrace;
This holy tide of Christmas
All other doth deface.
O tidings of comfort and joy,
Comfort and joy
O tidings of comfort and joy

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Christmas in Poland



*Christmas Market on central square of old city Wroclaw in Poland.
Credit: dreamstime.com*

During Advent, the weeks leading up to Christmas, people in Poland are encouraged to practice moderation. As in Lent before Easter, Polish people abstain from anything

excessive, choosing to give up their favorite foods or alcohol in preparation for Christmas. They also spend the month of December cleaning their homes and washing carpets, so everything can be sparkling on Christmas Day. When Christmas Eve, known as Wigilia, finally arrives, families eat 12 dishes for 12 months of good luck. However, no one is allowed to eat until the first star is spotted in the sky.

A dozen years ago, several of the Ode Gang were hosted by our friends at Volvo Construction Equipment at a visit to the company's Wroclaw factory four days before Christmas. As pictured above, the city's Central Square was alive with people (mostly young as Wroclaw is a 'student city'). Great food.

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The Christ Child's Lullaby



Tàladh Chrìosda (Christ's lullaby) is the popular name for the Scottish Gaelic Christmas carol Tàladh ar Slànaigheir (the Lullaby of our Saviour). It is traditionally sung at Midnight Mass in the Outer Hebrides in Scotland. The 29 verses of the hymn date from the 19th century and are intended to represent a lullaby for the Christ Child by the Blessed Virgin.

Bill Warner, who has contributed generously to this and other Odes says, "Here's another beautiful carol I've always loved -- simply one of the finest musical works in existence, IMHO. I play it on the mandolin every year, and no matter how stiff and ever more arthritic my fingers get, it never fails to touch the soul!"

My favorite version, though, is probably the live John Doyle/Karine Polwart arrangement. Think of a Midnight Mass somewhere out in the cold and windswept Hebrides!

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Jq1rLCTO904>

The Christ Child's Lullaby

Oh dear, the eye that softly looks
Oh dear, the heart that foundly loves

Though but a tender babe thy arth
The graces all grow up with thee

Oh dear, the wind that pulls the trees
Oh dear, the rain that softly falls
Though but a tender babe thy arth
The graces all grow up with thee

Oh sweet, the night that holds your name
Oh sweet, the star that truly shines
Though but a tender babe thy arth
The graces all grow up with thee

Oh dear, the eye that softly looks
Oh dear, the heart that foundly loves
Though but a tender babe thy arth
The graces all grow up with thee

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Wexford Carols; Tell Shepherds

Caitríona O'Leary

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=89c3HSG4PZg>

The Wexford Carols is a 2014 album of traditional Irish carols by Caitríona O'Leary featuring guest singers Tom Jones, Rosanne Cash and Carolina Chocolate Drops singer Rhiannon Giddens. The carol texts are mainly taken from the collections by Bishop Luke Wadding (1684) and Father William Devereux (1728). In the case of Devereux's carols, the tunes were not indicated, so O'Leary matched surviving folk tunes fitting the poems.

The Wexford Carol

Yo-Yo Ma, Alison Krauss



https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yxDZjg_Igoc

Good people all, this Christmas time,
Consider well and bear in mind
What our good God for us has done
In sending his beloved son

With Mary holy we should pray,
To God with love this Christmas Day
In Bethlehem upon that morn,
There was a blessed Messiah born.

The night before that happy tide,
The noble Virgin and her guide
Were long time seeking up and down
To find a lodging in the town.

But mark how all things came to pass
From every door repelled, alas,
As was foretold, their refuge all
Was but a humble ox's stall.

Near Bethlehem did shepherds keep
Their flocks of lambs and feeding sheep
To whom God's angels did appear
Which put the shepherds in great fear

Prepare and go, the angels said
To Bethlehem, be not afraid
For there you'll find, this happy morn
A princely babe, sweet Jesus, born.

With thankful heart and joyful mind
The shepherds went the babe to find

And as God's angel had foretold
They did our Saviour Christ behold
Within a manger he was laid
And by his side the virgin maid
Attending on the Lord of Life
Who came on earth to end all strife.
There were three wise men from afar
Directed by a glorious star
And on they wandered night and day
Until they came where Jesus lay
And when they came unto that place
Where our beloved Messiah lay
They humbly cast them at his feet
With gifts of gold and incense sweet.

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The Coventry Carol

ANÚNA :

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Wit-jGD4wCw>

Coventry Carol.

Lully, lullay, Thou little tiny Child,
Bye, bye, lully, lullay.
Lullay, thou little tiny Child,
Bye, bye, lully, lullay.

O sisters too, how may we do,
For to preserve this day
This poor youngling for whom we do sing
Bye, bye, lully, lullay.

Herod, the king, in his raging,
Charged he hath this day
His men of might, in his own sight,
All children young to slay.

That woe is me, poor Child for Thee!
And ever mourn and sigh,
For thy parting neither say nor sing,
Bye, bye, lully, lullay.

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The Boar's Head Carol

The Chieftains



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oJpKnHG3u8A>

The Boar's Head Carol

The boar's head in hand bring I,
Bedeck'd with bays and rosemary.
And I pray you, my masters, be merry
Quot estis in convivio

*Caput apri defero
Reddens laudes Domino*

The boar's head, as I understand,
Is the rarest dish in all this land,
Which thus bedeck'd with a gay garland
Let us servire cantico.

*Caput apri defero
Reddens laudes Domino*

Our steward hath provided this
In honour of the King of Bliss;
Which on this day to be servèd is
In Reginensi atrio.

*Caput apri defero
Reddens laudes Domino*

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Dylan Thomas: A Child's Christmas in Wales



More noted for his poetry, Welsh poet, Dylan Thomas's *A Child's Christmas in Wales* is a prose piece he recorded in 1952...a year before his death. The work is a young boy's reminiscence of a Christmas in a simpler time. While many academicians dismiss Thomas for what they see as mawkishness (among other supposed crimes against their high standards) it is in my opinion just what makes him popular with less fastidious readers...I being one.

It begs to be read aloud, and who better to do so than Dylan Thomas, himself.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JC3AnDL1ic8>

A Child's Christmas in Wales.

One Christmas was so much like another, in those years around the sea-town corner now and out of all sound except the distant speaking of the voices I sometimes hear a moment before sleep, that I can never remember whether it snowed for six days and six nights when I was twelve or whether it snowed for twelve days and twelve nights when I was six.

All the Christmases roll down toward the two-tongued sea, like a cold and headlong moon bundling down the sky that was our street; and they stop at the rim of the ice-edged fish-freezing waves, and I plunge my hands in the snow and bring out whatever I can find. In goes my hand into that wool-white bell-tongued ball of holidays resting at the rim of the carol-singing sea, and out come Mrs. Prothero and the firemen.

It was on the afternoon of the Christmas Eve, and I was in Mrs. Prothero's garden, waiting for cats, with her son Jim. It was snowing. It was always snowing at Christmas. December, in my memory, is white as Lapland, though there were no reindeers. But

there were cats. Patient, cold and callous, our hands wrapped in socks, we waited to snowball the cats. Sleek and long as jaguars and horrible-whiskered, spitting and snarling, they would slink and sidle over the white back-garden walls, and the lynx-eyed hunters, Jim and I, fur-capped and moccasined trappers from Hudson Bay, off Mumbles Road, would hurl our deadly snowballs at the green of their eyes. The wise cats never appeared.

We were so still, Eskimo-footed arctic marksmen in the muffling silence of the eternal snows - eternal, ever since Wednesday - that we never heard Mrs. Prothero's first cry from her igloo at the bottom of the garden. Or, if we heard it at all, it was, to us, like the far-off challenge of our enemy and prey, the neighbor's polar cat. But soon the voice grew louder.

"Fire!" cried Mrs. Prothero, and she beat the dinner-gong.

And we ran down the garden, with the snowballs in our arms, toward the house; and smoke, indeed, was pouring out of the dining-room, and the gong was bombilating, and Mrs. Prothero was announcing ruin like a town crier in Pompeii. This was better than all the cats in Wales standing on the wall in a row. We bounded into the house, laden with snowballs, and stopped at the open door of the smoke-filled room.

Something was burning all right; perhaps it was Mr. Prothero, who always slept there after midday dinner with a newspaper over his face. But he was standing in the middle of the room, saying, "A fine Christmas!" and smacking at the smoke with a slipper.

"Call the fire brigade," cried Mrs. Prothero as she beat the gong.

"There won't be there," said Mr. Prothero, "it's Christmas."

There was no fire to be seen, only clouds of smoke and Mr. Prothero standing in the middle of them, waving his slipper as though he were conducting.

"Do something," he said. And we threw all our snowballs into the smoke - I think we missed Mr. Prothero - and ran out of the house to the telephone box.

"Let's call the police as well," Jim said. "And the ambulance." "And Ernie Jenkins, he likes fires."

But we only called the fire brigade, and soon the fire engine came and three tall men in helmets brought a hose into the house and Mr. Prothero got out just in time before they turned it on. Nobody could have had a noisier Christmas Eve. And when the firemen turned off the hose and were standing in the wet, smoky room, Jim's Aunt, Miss. Prothero, came downstairs and peered in at them. Jim and I waited, very quietly, to hear what she would say to them. She said the right thing, always. She looked at the three tall firemen in their shining helmets, standing among the smoke and cinders and dissolving snowballs, and she said, "Would you like anything to read?"

Years and years ago, when I was a boy, when there were wolves in Wales, and birds the color of red-flannel petticoats whisked past the harp-shaped hills, when we sang

and wallowed all night and day in caves that smelt like Sunday afternoons in damp front farmhouse parlors, and we chased, with the jawbones of deacons, the English and the bears, before the motor car, before the wheel, before the duchess-faced horse, when we rode the daft and happy hills bareback, it snowed and it snowed. But here a small boy says: "It snowed last year, too. I made a snowman and my brother knocked it down and I knocked my brother down and then we had tea."

"But that was not the same snow," I say. "Our snow was not only shaken from white wash buckets down the sky, it came shawling out of the ground and swam and drifted out of the arms and hands and bodies of the trees; snow grew overnight on the roofs of the houses like a pure and grandfather moss, minutely -ivied the walls and settled on the postman, opening the gate, like a dumb, numb thunder-storm of white, torn Christmas cards."

"Were there postmen then, too?"

"With sprinkling eyes and wind-cherried noses, on spread, frozen feet they crunched up to the doors and mittened on them manfully. But all that the children could hear was a ringing of bells."

"You mean that the postman went rat-a-tat-tat and the doors rang?"

"I mean that the bells the children could hear were inside them."

"I only hear thunder sometimes, never bells."

"There were church bells, too."

"Inside them?"

"No, no, no, in the bat-black, snow-white belfries, tugged by bishops and storks. And they rang their tidings over the bandaged town, over the frozen foam of the powder and ice-cream hills, over the crackling sea. It seemed that all the churches boomed for joy under my window; and the weathercocks crew for Christmas, on our fence."

"Get back to the postmen"

"They were just ordinary postmen, found of walking and dogs and Christmas and the snow. They knocked on the doors with blue knuckles"

"Ours has got a black knocker...."

"And then they stood on the white Welcome mat in the little, drifted porches and huffed and puffed, making ghosts with their breath, and jogged from foot to foot like small boys wanting to go out."

"And then the presents?"

"And then the Presents, after the Christmas box. And the cold postman, with a rose on his button-nose, tingled down the tea-tray-slithered run of the chilly glinting hill. He went in his ice-bound boots like a man on fishmonger's slabs. "He wagged his bag like a frozen camel's hump, dizzily turned the corner on one foot, and, by God, he was gone."

"Get back to the Presents."

"There were the Useful Presents: engulfing mufflers of the old coach days, and mittens made for giant sloths; zebra scarfs of a substance like silky gum that could be tug-o'-

warred down to the galoshes; blinding tam-o'-shanters like patchwork tea cozies and bunny-suited busbies and balaclavas for victims of head-shrinking tribes; from aunts who always wore wool next to the skin there were mustached and rasping vests that made you wonder why the aunts had any skin left at all; and once I had a little crocheted nose bag from an aunt now, alas, no longer whinnying with us. And pictureless books in which small boys, though warned with quotations not to, would skate on Farmer Giles' pond and did and drowned; and books that told me everything about the wasp, except why."

"Go on the Useless Presents."

"Bags of moist and many-colored jelly babies and a folded flag and a false nose and a tram-conductor's cap and a machine that punched tickets and rang a bell; never a catapult; once, by mistake that no one could explain, a little hatchet; and a celluloid duck that made, when you pressed it, a most unducklike sound, a mewling moo that an ambitious cat might make who wished to be a cow; and a painting book in which I could make the grass, the trees, the sea and the animals any colour I pleased, and still the dazzling sky-blue sheep are grazing in the red field under the rainbow-billed and pea-green birds. Hardboileds, toffee, fudge and allsorts, crunches, cracknels, humbugs, glaciers, marzipan, and butterwelsh for the Welsh. And troops of bright tin soldiers who, if they could not fight, could always run. And Snakes-and-Families and Happy Ladders. And Easy Hobbi-Games for Little Engineers, complete with instructions. Oh, easy for Leonardo! And a whistle to make the dogs bark to wake up the old man next door to make him beat on the wall with his stick to shake our picture off the wall. And a packet of cigarettes: you put one in your mouth and you stood at the corner of the street and you waited for hours, in vain, for an old lady to scold you for smoking a cigarette, and then with a smirk you ate it. And then it was breakfast under the balloons."

"Were there Uncles like in our house?"

"There are always Uncles at Christmas. The same Uncles. And on Christmas morning, with dog-disturbing whistle and sugar fags, I would scour the swatched town for the news of the little world, and find always a dead bird by the Post Office or by the white deserted swings; perhaps a robin, all but one of his fires out. Men and women wading or scooping back from chapel, with taproom noses and wind-bussed cheeks, all albinos, huddles their stiff black jarring feathers against the irreligious snow. Mistletoe hung from the gas brackets in all the front parlors; there was sherry and walnuts and bottled beer and crackers by the dessertspoons; and cats in their fur-about watched the fires; and the high-heaped fire spat, all ready for the chestnuts and the mulling pokers. Some few large men sat in the front parlors, without their collars, Uncles almost certainly, trying their new cigars, holding them out judiciously at arms' length, returning them to their mouths, coughing, then holding them out again as though waiting for the explosion; and some few small aunts, not wanted in the kitchen, nor anywhere else for that matter, sat on the very edge of their chairs, poised and brittle, afraid to break, like faded cups and saucers."

Not many those mornings trod the piling streets: an old man always, fawn-bowled, yellow-gloved and, at this time of year, with spats of snow, would take his constitutional to the white bowling green and back, as he would take it wet or fire on Christmas Day or Doomsday; sometimes two hale young men, with big pipes blazing, no overcoats and wind blown scarfs, would trudge, unspeaking, down to the forlorn sea, to work up an appetite, to blow away the fumes, who knows, to walk into the waves until nothing of them was left but the two furling smoke clouds of their inextinguishable briars. Then I would be slap-dashing home, the gravy smell of the dinners of others, the bird smell, the brandy, the pudding and mince, coiling up to my nostrils, when out of a snow-clogged side lane would come a boy the spit of myself, with a pink-tipped cigarette and the violet past of a black eye, cocky as a bullfinch, leering all to himself.

I hated him on sight and sound, and would be about to put my dog whistle to my lips and blow him off the face of Christmas when suddenly he, with a violet wink, put his whistle to his lips and blew so stridently, so high, so exquisitely loud, that gobbling faces, their cheeks bulged with goose, would press against their tinsled windows, the whole length of the white echoing street. For dinner we had turkey and blazing pudding, and after dinner the Uncles sat in front of the fire, loosened all buttons, put their large moist hands over their watch chains, groaned a little and slept. Mothers, aunts and sisters scuttled to and fro, bearing tureens. Auntie Bessie, who had already been frightened, twice, by a clock-work mouse, whimpered at the sideboard and had some elderberry wine. The dog was sick. Auntie Dosie had to have three aspirins, but Auntie Hannah, who liked port, stood in the middle of the snowbound back yard, singing like a big-bosomed thrush. I would blow up balloons to see how big they would blow up to; and, when they burst, which they all did, the Uncles jumped and rumbled. In the rich and heavy afternoon, the Uncles breathing like dolphins and the snow descending, I would sit among festoons and Chinese lanterns and nibble dates and try to make a model man-o'-war, following the Instructions for Little Engineers, and produce what might be mistaken for a sea-going tramcar.

Or I would go out, my bright new boots squeaking, into the white world, on to the seaward hill, to call on Jim and Dan and Jack and to pad through the still streets, leaving huge footprints on the hidden pavements.

"I bet people will think there's been hippos."

"What would you do if you saw a hippo coming down our street?"

"I'd go like this, bang! I'd throw him over the railings and roll him down the hill and then I'd tickle him under the ear and he'd wag his tail."

"What would you do if you saw two hippos?"

Iron-flanked and bellowing he-hippos clanked and battered through the scudding snow toward us as we passed Mr. Daniel's house.

"Let's post Mr. Daniel a snow-ball through his letter box."

"Let's write things in the snow."

"Let's write, 'Mr. Daniel looks like a spaniel' all over his lawn."
Or we walked on the white shore. "Can the fishes see it's snowing?"

The silent one-clouded heavens drifted on to the sea. Now we were snow-blind travelers lost on the north hills, and vast dewlapped dogs, with flasks round their necks, ambled and shambled up to us, baying "Excelsior." We returned home through the poor streets where only a few children fumbled with bare red fingers in the wheel-rutted snow and cat-called after us, their voices fading away, as we trudged uphill, into the cries of the dock birds and the hooting of ships out in the whirling bay. And then, at tea the recovered Uncles would be jolly; and the ice cake loomed in the center of the table like a marble grave. Auntie Hannah laced her tea with rum, because it was only once a year.

Bring out the tall tales now that we told by the fire as the gaslight bubbled like a diver. Ghosts whooped like owls in the long nights when I dared not look over my shoulder; animals lurked in the cubbyhole under the stairs and the gas meter ticked. And I remember that we went singing carols once, when there wasn't the shaving of a moon to light the flying streets. At the end of a long road was a drive that led to a large house, and we stumbled up the darkness of the drive that night, each one of us afraid, each one holding a stone in his hand in case, and all of us too brave to say a word. The wind through the trees made noises as of old and unpleasant and maybe webfooted men wheezing in caves. We reached the black bulk of the house. "What shall we give them? Hark the Herald?"

"No," Jack said, "Good King Wencelas. I'll count three." One, two three, and we began to sing, our voices high and seemingly distant in the snow-felted darkness round the house that was occupied by nobody we knew. We stood close together, near the dark door. Good King Wencelas looked out On the Feast of Stephen ... And then a small, dry voice, like the voice of someone who has not spoken for a long time, joined our singing: a small, dry, eggshell voice from the other side of the door: a small dry voice through the keyhole. And when we stopped running we were outside our house; the front room was lovely; balloons floated under the hot-water-bottle-gulping gas; everything was good again and shone over the town.

"Perhaps it was a ghost," Jim said.

"Perhaps it was trolls," Dan said, who was always reading.

"Let's go in and see if there's any jelly left," Jack said. And we did that.

Always on Christmas night there was music. An uncle played the fiddle, a cousin sang "Cherry Ripe," and another uncle sang "Drake's Drum." It was very warm in the little house. Auntie Hannah, who had got on to the parsnip wine, sang a song about Bleeding Hearts and Death, and then another in which she said her heart was like a Bird's Nest; and then everybody laughed again; and then I went to bed. Looking through my bedroom window, out into the moonlight and the unending smoke-colored snow, I could see the lights in the windows of all the other houses on our hill and hear the

music rising from them up the long, steady falling night. I turned the gas down, I got into bed. I said some words to the close and holy darkness, and then I slept.

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O Little Town of Bethlehem

The King Singers



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VJqgspx57C0>

O Little Town of Bethlehem

O little town of Bethlehem
How still we see Thee lie
Above Thy deep and dreamless sleep
The silent stars go by

Yet in thy dark streets shineth
The everlasting light
The hopes and fears of all the years
Are met in Thee tonight

For Christ is born of Mary
And, gathered all above
While mortals sleep, the angels keep
Their watch of wondering love

O morning stars, together
Proclaim the Holy birth
And praises sing to God the King
And peace to men on earth

How silently, how silently
The wondrous gift is given

So God imparts to human hearts
The blessings of His heaven

No ear may hear His coming
But in this world of sin
Where meek souls will receive Him
Still the dear Christ enters in

Where children, pure and happy
Pray to the Blessed Child
Where misery cries out to Thee
Son of the Mother mild

Where charity stands watching
And faith holds wide the door
The dark night wakes, the glory breaks
And Christmas comes once more

O Holy Child of Bethlehem
Descend to us, we pray
Cast out our sin and enter in
Be born in us today

We hear the Christmas angels
The great glad tidings tell
O come to us, abide with us

Christmas Really is a Time for Flash Mobs

Silent Night- Christmas Shoppers Didn't Expect This Performance

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=h-MpEn8Nyc4>

Flash Mob Christmas Carol at Mall

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=f7baFMmSv4k>

Christmas Flash Mob At Saint George Hospital Beirut

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mlSkI91ErQ4>

A Christmas Flash Mob Visit to a Home

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QY8Jf-45DzE>

British Army musicians at Gateshead's Metrocentre

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Z2GMP08UIqk>

Christmas Food Court Flash Mob, Hallelujah Chorus

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SXh7JR9oKVE>

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A Ceremony of Carols

Benjamin Britten



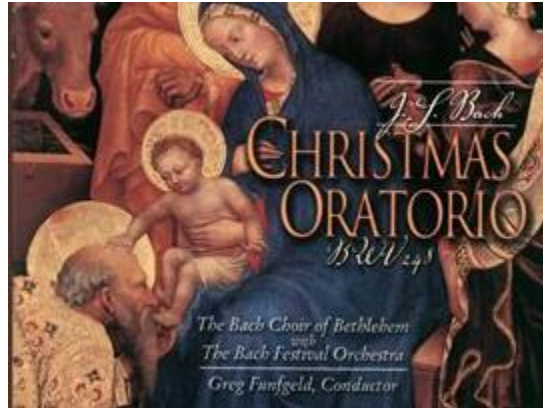
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-IEuxKCB6o8>

S:t Jacobs Ungdomskör performs Benjamin Britten's A Ceremony of Carols in concert, at S:t Jacobs Kyrka

- 1 Procession
- 2 Wolcum Yole!
- 3 There is no rose
- 4 That yongë child
- 5 Balulalow
- 6 As dew in Aprille
- 7 This Little Babe
- 8 Interlude (Harp Solo)
- 9 In freezing winter night
- 10 Spring carol
- 11 Deo Gracias
- 12 Recession

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Bach: Christmas Oratorio BWV 248, part 1/2



Part 1 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zpaNo4mWRBE&t=110s>

Part 2 <https://youtu.be/1NafQeEWNks>

From the Herderkirche in Weimar, Germany; John Eliot Gardiner - conductor

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Christmette Christmas Mass; Kyrie

Michael Praetorius

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TpZOzipx_SA

Gabriell Consort & Players; Paul McCreesh

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Do You Hear What I Hear?

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VVvj_LOpLBk

Tricia Boutte · Allen Toussaint · Scott Goudeau · Charles Moore ·

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Joy To The World

Salvation Army Kettle Brass Ensemble



"Joy to the World" is a popular Christmas carol. The words are by English hymn writer Isaac Watts, based on the second half of Psalm 98 in the Bible. The song was first published in 1719 in Watts' collection; *The Psalms of David: Imitated in the language of the New Testament, and applied to the Christian state and worship*. Watts wrote the words of "Joy to the World" as a hymn glorifying Christ's triumphant return at the end of the age, rather than a song celebrating his first coming. The nations are called to celebrate because God's faithfulness to the house of Israel has brought salvation to the world.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=feqksqCZNQE>

Joy to the World

Joy to the world, the Lord has come
Let earth receive her King
Let every heart prepare Him room
And heaven and nature sing, and heaven and nature sing
And heaven, and heaven and nature sing

Joy to the world, the Savior reigns
Let men their songs employ
While fields and floods, rocks, hills, and plains
Repeat the sounding joy, repeat the sounding joy
Repeat, repeat the sounding joy

No more let sins and sorrows grow
Nor thorns infest the ground
He comes to make His blessings flow
Far as the curse is found, far as the curse is found
Far as, far as the curse is found

He rules the world with truth and grace
And makes the nations prove
The glories of His righteousness
And wonders of His love, and wonders of His love
And wonders, wonders of His love

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Angels We Have Heard On High

Andre Bocelli

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aN73no1jFAg>

Angels We Have Heard on High

Angels we have heard on high
Sweetly singing over the plains
And the mountains in reply,
Echoing their joyous strains.

Glo-ori-a
In excelsis de-o
Glo-ori-a
In excelsis de-o

Shepherds, why this Jubilee?
Why your joyous strains prolong?
What the gladsome tidings be
Which inspire your heavenly song?

Glo-ori-a
In excelsis de-o
Glo-ori-a
In excelsis de-o

Come to Bethlehem and see
Him whose birth the angels sing;
Come, adore on bended knee
Christ, the Lord,
The newborn King

Glo-ori-a
In excelsis de-o
Glo-ori-a
In excelsis de-o

See Him in a manger laid
Jesus, Lord of heaven and earth!
Mary, Joseph, lend your aid,

With us sing our Savior's birth.
Glo-ori-a
In excelsis de-o
Glo-ori-a
In excelsis de-o
=====

O Holy Night
Nat King Cole

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JJ6b2F9qnFg>

O Holy Night

O Holy Night
The stars are brightly shining
It is the night of our dear Savior's birth
Long lay the world in sin and e'er pining
'Til He appeared and the soul felt its worth
A thrill of hope the weary world rejoices
For yonder breaks a new and glorious morn.

Fall on your knees O hear the angels voices.
O night divine O night when Christ was born
O night divine, O night, O night divine.

Led by the light of Faith serenely beaming,
With glowing hearts by His cradle we stand.
So led by light of a star sweetly gleaming,
Here came the wise men from Orient land.
The King of Kings lay thus in lowly manger;
In all our trials born to be our friend.

He knows our need, to our weakness is no stranger,
Behold your King! Before Him lowly bend!
Behold your King! Before Him lowly bend!

Truly He taught us to love one another;
His law is love and His gospel is peace.
Chains shall He break for the slave is our brother;
And in His name all oppression shall cease.
Sweet hymns of joy in grateful raise we,
Let all within us praise His holy name.

Christ is the Lord! O praise His Name forever,

His power and glory evermore proclaim.
O night divine, O night, O night divine.

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It Came upon the Midnight Clear

Mormon Tabernacle Choir

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=m71c9p9a1dA>

It Came Upon A Midnight Clear.

It came upon a midnight clear,
That glorious song of old,
From angels bending near the earth,
To touch their harps of gold:
"Peace on the earth, goodwill to men,
From heaven's all-gracious King."
The world in solemn stillness lay,
To hear the angels sing.

Still through the cloven skies they come,
With peaceful wings unfurled,
And still their heavenly music floats
O'er all the weary world;
Above its sad and lowly plains,
They bend on hovering wing,
And ever o'er its Babel sounds
The blessed angels sing.

Yet with the woes of sin and strife
The world has suffered long;
Beneath the angel-strain have rolled
Two thousand years of wrong;
And man, at war with man, hears not
The love-song which they bring;
O hush the noise, ye men of strife,
And hear the angels sing.

And ye, beneath life's crushing load,
Whose forms are bending low,
Who toil along the climbing way
With painful steps and slow,
Look now! for glad and golden hours
come swiftly on the wing.
O rest beside the weary road,
And hear the angels sing!

For lo!, the days are hastening on,
By prophet bards foretold,

When with the ever-circling years
Comes round the age of gold
When peace shall over all the earth
Its ancient splendors fling,
And the whole world give back the song
Which now the angels sing.

=====

Deck the Halls

Mannheim Steamroller

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bFMOMYzqRGY>

Deck the Halls

Deck the halls with boughs of holly,
Fa la la la la, la la la la.

'Tis the season to be jolly,
Fa la la la la, la la la la.

Don we now our gay apparel,
Fa la la, la la la, la la la.

Toll the ancient Yule tide carol,
Fa la la la la, la la la la.

See the blazing Yule before us,
Fa la la la la, la la la la.

Strike the harp and join the chorus.
Fa la la la la, la la la la.

Follow me in merry measure,
Fa la la, la la la, la la la.

While I tell of Yule tide treasure,
Fa la la la la, la la la la.

Fast away the old year passes,
Fa la la la la, la la la la.

Hail the new, ye lads and lasses,
Fa la la la la, la la la la.

Sing we joyous, all together,
Fa la la, la la la, la la la.

Heedless of the wind and weather,
Fa la la la la, la la la la.

=====

Away in a Manger

Kings College Choir

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pbQpEdwGEXo>

Away in a Manger

Away in a manger
No crib for his bed
The little Lord Jesus
Laid down his sweet head
The stars in the sky
Looking down where he lay
The little Lord Jesus
Asleep on the hay

The cattle are lowing
The poor baby wakes
But little Lord Jesus
No crying he makes
I love Thee, Lord Jesus
Look down from the sky
And stay by my cradle
Till morning is nigh

Be near me, Lord Jesus
I ask Thee to stay
Close by me for ever
And love me, I pray
Bless all the dear children
In Thy tender care
And take us to Heaven
To live with Thee there
And take us to Heaven
To live with Thee there

=====

White Christmas

Big Crosby

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FVEv-b7DID8>

White Christmas

I'm dreaming of a white Christmas
Just like the ones I used to know
Where the treetops glisten and children listen
To hear sleigh bells in the snow

I'm dreaming of a white Christmas
With every Christmas card I write
May your days be merry and bright
And may all your Christmases be white

I'm dreaming of a white Christmas
Just like the ones I used to know
Where the treetops glisten and children listen
To hear sleigh bells in the snow

I'm dreaming of a white Christmas
With every Christmas card I write
May your days be merry and bright
And may all your Christmases be white

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A Sleigh Full of Poems



Good King Wenceslas

By John Mason Neale

Good King Wenceslas look'd out,
On the Feast of Stephen;
When the snow lay round about,
Deep, and crisp, and even:
Brightly shone the moon that night,
Though the frost was cruel,
When a poor man came in sight,
Gath'ring winter fuel.

"Hither page and stand by me,
If thou know'st it, telling,
Yonder peasant, who is he?
Where and what his dwelling?"
"Sire, he lives a good league hence.
Underneath the mountain;
Right against the forest fence,
By Saint Agnes' fountain."

"Bring me flesh, and bring me wine,
Bring me pine-logs hither:
Thou and I will see him dine,
When we bear them thither."
Page and monarch forth they went,
Forth they went together;
Through the rude wind's wild lament,
And the bitter weather.

"Sire, the night is darker now,
And the wind blows stronger;
Fails my heart, I know now how,
I can go no longer."
"Mark my footsteps, good my page;
Tread thou in them boldly;
Thou shalt find the winter's rage
Freeze thy blood less coldly."

In his master's steps he trod,
Where the snow lay dinted;
Heat was in the very sod
Which the Saint had printed.
Therefore, Christian men, be sure,
Wealth or rank possessing,
Ye who now will bless the poor,
Shall yourselves find blessing.

Good King Sauerkraut

By Walt Kelly

Good King Sauerkraut looked out
On his feet uneven...
Beware the snow lay round an' bout...
All kerchoo achievin'...

=====

The Twelve Days of Christmas

Anonymous



The first day of Christmas,
My true love sent to me
A partridge in a pear tree.

The second day of Christmas,
My true love sent to me
Two turtle doves, and
A partridge in a pear tree.

The third day of Christmas,
My true love sent to me
Three French hens,
Two turtle doves, and
A partridge in a pear tree.

The fourth day of Christmas,

My true love sent to me
Four colly birds,
Three French hens,
Two turtle doves, and
A partridge in a pear tree.

The fifth day of Christmas,
My true love sent to me
Five gold rings,
Four colly birds,
Three French hens,
Two turtle doves, and
A partridge in a pear tree.

The sixth day of Christmas,
My true love sent to me
Six geese a-laying,
Five gold rings,
Four colly birds,
Three French hens,
Two turtle doves, and
A partridge in a pear tree.

The seventh day of Christmas,
My true love sent to me
Seven swans a-swimming,
Six geese a-laying,
Five gold rings,
Four colly birds,
Three French hens,
Two turtle doves, and
A partridge in a pear tree.

The eighth day of Christmas,
My true love sent to me
Eight maids a-milking,
Seven swans a-swimming,
Six geese a-laying,
Five gold rings,
Four colly birds,
Three French hens,
Two turtle doves, and
A partridge in a pear tree.

The ninth day of Christmas,
My true love sent to me
Nine drummers drumming,
Eight maids a-milking,
Seven swans a-swimming,
Six geese a-laying,
Five gold rings,
Four colly birds,
Three French hens,
Two turtle doves, and
A partridge in a pear tree.

The tenth day of Christmas,
My true love sent to me
Ten pipers piping,
Nine drummers drumming,
Eight maids a-milking,
Seven swans a-swimming,
Six geese a-laying,
Five gold rings,
Four colly birds,
Three French hens,
Two turtle doves, and
A partridge in a pear tree.

The eleventh day of Christmas
My true love sent to me
Eleven ladies dancing,
Ten pipers piping,
Nine drummers drumming,
Eight maids a-milking,
Seven swans a-swimming,
Six geese a-laying,
Five gold rings,
Four colly birds,
Three French hens,
Two turtle doves, and
A partridge in a pear tree.

The twelfth day of Christmas
My true love sent to me
Twelve fiddlers fiddling,
Eleven ladies dancing,
Ten pipers piping,

Nine drummers drumming,
Eight maids a-milking,
Seven swans a-swimming,
Six geese a-laying,
Five gold rings,
Four colly birds,
Three French hens,
Two turtle doves, and
A partridge in a pear tree.

Account of a Visit from St. Nicholas

By [Major Henry Livingston, Jr.](#)

'Twas the night before Christmas, when all thro' the house,
Not a creature was stirring, not even a mouse;
The stockings were hung by the chimney with care,
In hopes that St. Nicholas soon would be there;

The children were nestled all snug in their beds,
While visions of sugar plums danc'd in their heads,
And Mama in her `kerchief, and I in my cap,
Had just settled our brains for a long winter's nap —

When out on the lawn there arose such a clatter,
I sprang from the bed to see what was the matter.
Away to the window I flew like a flash,
Tore open the shutters, and threw up the sash.

The moon on the breast of the new fallen snow,
Gave the lustre of mid-day to objects below;
When, what to my wondering eyes should appear,
But a miniature sleigh, and eight tiny rein-deer,

With a little old driver, so lively and quick,
I knew in a moment it must be St. Nick.
More rapid than eagles his coursers they came,
And he whistled, and shouted, and call'd them by name:

"Now! Dasher, now! Dancer, now! Prancer, and Vixen,
"On! Comet, on! Cupid, on! Dunder and Blixem;
"To the top of the porch! to the top of the wall!
"Now dash away! dash away! dash away all!"

As dry leaves before the wild hurricane fly,
When they meet with an obstacle, mount to the sky;
So up to the house-top the coursers they flew,
With the sleigh full of Toys — and St. Nicholas too:

And then in a twinkling, I heard on the roof
The prancing and pawing of each little hoof.
As I drew in my head, and was turning around,
Down the chimney St. Nicholas came with a bound:

He was dress'd all in fur, from his head to his foot,
And his clothes were all tarnish'd with ashes and soot;
A bundle of toys was flung on his back,
And he look'd like a peddler just opening his pack:

His eyes — how they twinkled! his dimples how merry,
His cheeks were like roses, his nose like a cherry;
His droll little mouth was drawn up like a bow.
And the beard of his chin was as white as the snow;

The stump of a pipe he held tight in his teeth,
And the smoke it encircled his head like a wreath.
He had a broad face, and a little round belly
That shook when he laugh'd, like a bowl full of jelly:

He was chubby and plump, a right jolly old elf,
And I laugh'd when I saw him in spite of myself;
A wink of his eye and a twist of his head
Soon gave me to know I had nothing to dread.

He spoke not a word, but went straight to his work,
And fill'd all the stockings; then turn'd with a jerk,
And laying his finger aside of his nose
And giving a nod, up the chimney he rose.

He sprung to his sleigh, to his team gave a whistle,
And away they all flew, like the down of a thistle:
But I heard him exclaim, ere he drove out of sight —
Happy Christmas to all, and to all a good night.

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In the Bleak Midwinter

By Christina Rossetti

In the bleak midwinter, frosty wind made moan,
Earth stood hard as iron, water like a stone;
Snow had fallen, snow on snow, snow on snow,
In the bleak midwinter, long ago.

Our God, Heaven cannot hold Him, nor earth sustain;
Heaven and earth shall flee away when He comes to reign.
In the bleak midwinter a stable place sufficed
The Lord God Almighty, Jesus Christ.

Enough for Him, whom cherubim, worship night and day,
Breastful of milk, and a mangerful of hay;
Enough for Him, whom angels fall before,
The ox and ass and camel which adore.

Angels and archangels may have gathered there,
Cherubim and seraphim thronged the air;
But His mother only, in her maiden bliss,
Worshipped the beloved with a kiss.

What can I give Him, poor as I am?
If I were a shepherd, I would bring a lamb;
If I were a Wise Man, I would do my part;
Yet what I can I give Him: give my heart.

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Christmas Trees

By Robert Frost

(A Christmas Circular Letter)

The city had withdrawn into itself
And left at last the country to the country;
When between whirls of snow not come to lie
And whirls of foliage not yet laid, there drove
A stranger to our yard, who looked the city,
Yet did in country fashion in that there
He sat and waited till he drew us out
A-buttoning coats to ask him who he was.
He proved to be the city come again
To look for something it had left behind
And could not do without and keep its Christmas.
He asked if I would sell my Christmas trees;
My woods—the young fir balsams like a place
Where houses all are churches and have spires.
I hadn't thought of them as Christmas Trees.
I doubt if I was tempted for a moment
To sell them off their feet to go in cars
And leave the slope behind the house all bare,
Where the sun shines now no warmer than the moon.
I'd hate to have them know it if I was.
Yet more I'd hate to hold my trees except
As others hold theirs or refuse for them,
Beyond the time of profitable growth,

The trial by market everything must come to.
I dallied so much with the thought of selling.
Then whether from mistaken courtesy
And fear of seeming short of speech, or whether
From hope of hearing good of what was mine, I said,
"There aren't enough to be worth while."
"I could soon tell how many they would cut,
You let me look them over."

"You could look.
But don't expect I'm going to let you have them."
Pasture they spring in, some in clumps too close
That lop each other of boughs, but not a few
Quite solitary and having equal boughs
All round and round. The latter he nodded "Yes" to,
Or paused to say beneath some lovelier one,
With a buyer's moderation, "That would do."
I thought so too, but wasn't there to say so.
We climbed the pasture on the south, crossed over,
And came down on the north. He said, "A thousand."

"A thousand Christmas trees!—at what apiece?"

He felt some need of softening that to me:
"A thousand trees would come to thirty dollars."

Then I was certain I had never meant
To let him have them. Never show surprise!
But thirty dollars seemed so small beside
The extent of pasture I should strip, three cents
(For that was all they figured out apiece),
Three cents so small beside the dollar friends
I should be writing to within the hour
Would pay in cities for good trees like those,
Regular vestry-trees whole Sunday Schools
Could hang enough on to pick off enough.
A thousand Christmas trees I didn't know I had!
Worth three cents more to give away than sell,
As may be shown by a simple calculation.
Too bad I couldn't lay one in a letter.
I can't help wishing I could send you one,
In wishing you herewith a Merry Christmas

Mistletoe

By Walter De La Mare

Sitting under the mistletoe
(Pale-green, fairy mistletoe),
One last candle burning low,
All the sleepy dancers gone,
Just one candle burning on,
Shadows lurking everywhere:
Some one came, and kissed me there.

Tired I was; my head would go
Nodding under the mistletoe
(Pale-green, fairy mistletoe),
No footsteps came, no voice, but only,
Just as I sat there, sleepy, lonely,
Stooped in the still and shadowy air
Lips unseen—and kissed me there.

[little tree]

By E. E. Cummings

little tree
little silent Christmas tree
you are so little
you are more like a flower

who found you in the green forest
and were you very sorry to come away?
see i will comfort you
because you smell so sweetly

i will kiss your cool bark
and hug you safe and tight
just as your mother would,
only don't be afraid

look the spangles
that sleep all the year in a dark box
dreaming of being taken out and allowed to shine,
the balls the chains red and gold the fluffy threads,

put up your little arms
and i'll give them all to you to hold

every finger shall have its ring
and there won't be a single place dark or unhappy

then when you're quite dressed
you'll stand in the window for everyone to see
and how they'll stare!
oh but you'll be very proud

and my little sister and i will take hands
and looking up at our beautiful tree
we'll dance and sing
"Noel Noel"

**To Mrs K_____, On Her Sending Me
an English Christmas Plum-Cake at Paris**

By Helen Maria Williams

What crowding thoughts around me wake,
What marvels in a Christmas-cake!
Ah say, what strange enchantment dwells
Enclosed within its odorous cells?
Is there no small magician bound
Encrusted in its snowy round?
For magic surely lurks in this,
A cake that tells of vanished bliss;
A cake that conjures up to view
The early scenes, when life was new;
When memory knew no sorrows past,
And hope believed in joys that last! —
Mysterious cake, whose folds contain
Life's calendar of bliss and pain;
That speaks of friends for ever fled,
And wakes the tears I love to shed.
Oft shall I breathe her cherished name
From whose fair hand the offering came:
For she recalls the artless smile
Of nymphs that deck my native isle;
Of beauty that we love to trace,
Allied with tender, modest grace;
Of those who, while abroad they roam,
Retain each charm that gladdens home,
And whose dear friendships can impart
A Christmas banquet for the heart!

The Burning Babe

By Robert Southwell Sj

As I in hoary winter's night stood shivering in the snow,
Surpris'd I was with sudden heat which made my heart to glow;
And lifting up a fearful eye to view what fire was near,
A pretty Babe all burning bright did in the air appear;
Who, scorched with excessive heat, such floods of tears did shed
As though his floods should quench his flames which with his tears
were fed.

"Alas!" quoth he, "but newly born, in fiery heats I fry,
Yet none approach to warm their hearts or feel my fire but I!
My faultless breast the furnace is, the fuel wounding thorns,
Love is the fire, and sighs the smoke, the ashes shame and scorns;
The fuel Justice layeth on, and Mercy blows the coals,
The metal in this furnace wrought are men's defiled souls,
For which, as now on fire I am to work them to their good,
So will I melt into a bath to wash them in my blood."
With this he vanish'd out of sight and swiftly shrunk away,
And straight I called unto mind that it was Christmas day.

On the Morning of Christ's Nativity

By John Milton

This is the month, and this the happy morn,
Wherein the Son of Heav'n's eternal King,
Of wedded Maid, and Virgin Mother born,
Our great redemption from above did bring;
For so the holy sages once did sing,
That he our deadly forfeit should release,
And with his Father work us a perpetual peace.

That glorious Form, that Light unsufferable,
And that far-beaming blaze of Majesty,
Wherewith he wont at Heav'n's high council-table,
To sit the midst of Trinal Unity,
He laid aside, and here with us to be,
Forsook the courts of everlasting day,
And chose with us a darksome house of mortal clay.

Say Heav'nly Muse, shall not thy sacred vein
Afford a present to the Infant God?
Hast thou no verse, no hymn, or solemn strain,
To welcome him to this his new abode,

Now while the heav'n, by the Sun's team untrod,
Hath took no print of the approaching light,
And all the spangled host keep watch in squadrons bright?

See how from far upon the eastern road
The star-led wizards haste with odours sweet:
O run, prevent them with thy humble ode,
And lay it lowly at his blessed feet;
Have thou the honour first thy Lord to greet,
And join thy voice unto the angel quire,
From out his secret altar touch'd with hallow'd fire.

It was the winter wild,
While the Heav'n-born child,
All meanly wrapt in the rude manger lies;
Nature in awe to him
Had doff'd her gaudy trim,
With her great Master so to sympathize:
It was no season then for her
To wanton with the Sun, her lusty paramour.

Only with speeches fair
She woos the gentle air
To hide her guilty front with innocent snow,
And on her naked shame,
Pollute with sinful blame,
The saintly veil of maiden white to throw,
Confounded, that her Maker's eyes
Should look so near upon her foul deformities.

But he, her fears to cease,
Sent down the meek-ey'd Peace:
She, crown'd with olive green, came softly sliding
Down through the turning sphere,
His ready harbinger,
With turtle wing the amorous clouds dividing;
And waving wide her myrtle wand,
She strikes a universal peace through sea and land.

No war or battle's sound
Was heard the world around;
The idle spear and shield were high uphung;
The hooked chariot stood
Unstain'd with hostile blood;

The trumpet spake not to the armed throng;
And kings sate still with awful eye,
As if they surely knew their sovran Lord was by.

But peaceful was the night
Wherein the Prince of Light
His reign of peace upon the earth began:
The winds with wonder whist,
Smoothly the waters kist,
Whispering new joys to the mild Ocean,
Who now hath quite forgot to rave,
While birds of calm sit brooding on the charmed wave.

The Stars with deep amaze
Stand fix'd in steadfast gaze,
Bending one way their precious influence;
And will not take their flight,
For all the morning light,
Or Lucifer that often warn'd them thence,
But in their glimmering orbs did glow,
Until their Lord himself bespake, and bid them go.

And though the shady gloom
Had given day her room,
The Sun himself withheld his wonted speed,
And hid his head for shame,
As his inferior flame
The new-enlighten'd world no more should need:
He saw a greater Sun appear
Than his bright throne or burning axle-tree could bear.

The shepherds on the lawn,
Or ere the point of dawn,
Sate simply chatting in a rustic row;
Full little thought they than
That the mighty Pan
Was kindly come to live with them below:
Perhaps their loves, or else their sheep,
Was all that did their silly thoughts so busy keep;

When such music sweet
Their hearts and ears did greet,
As never was by mortal finger strook,
Divinely warbled voice

Answering the stringed noise,
 As all their souls in blissful rapture took:
The air such pleasure loth to lose,
With thousand echoes still prolongs each heav'nly close.

Nature, that heard such sound
Beneath the hollow round
 Of Cynthia's seat, the Airy region thrilling,
Now was almost won
To think her part was done,
 And that her reign had here its last fulfilling:
She knew such harmony alone
Could hold all heav'n and earth in happier union.

At last surrounds their sight
A globe of circular light,
 That with long beams the shame-fac'd Night array'd;
The helmed Cherubim
And sworded Seraphim
 Are seen in glittering ranks with wings display'd,
Harping in loud and solemn quire,
With unexpressive notes to Heav'n's new-born Heir.

Such music (as 'tis said)
Before was never made,
 But when of old the sons of morning sung,
While the Creator great
His constellations set,
 And the well-balanc'd world on hinges hung,
And cast the dark foundations deep,
And bid the welt'ring waves their oozy channel keep.

Ring out ye crystal spheres!
Once bless our human ears
 (If ye have power to touch our senses so)
And let your silver chime
Move in melodious time,
 And let the bass of Heav'n's deep organ blow;
And with your ninefold harmony
Make up full consort to th'angelic symphony.

For if such holy song
Enwrap our fancy long,
 Time will run back and fetch the age of gold,

And speckl'd Vanity
Will sicken soon and die,
 And leprous Sin will melt from earthly mould;
And Hell itself will pass away,
And leave her dolorous mansions to the peering Day.

Yea, Truth and Justice then
Will down return to men,
 Orb'd in a rainbow; and, like glories wearing,
Mercy will sit between,
Thron'd in celestial sheen,
 With radiant feet the tissu'd clouds down steering;
And Heav'n, as at some festival,
Will open wide the gates of her high palace hall.

But wisest Fate says no:
This must not yet be so;
 The Babe lies yet in smiling infancy,
That on the bitter cross
Must redeem our loss,
 So both himself and us to glorify:
Yet first to those ychain'd in sleep,
The wakeful trump of doom must thunder through the deep,

With such a horrid clang
As on Mount Sinai rang
 While the red fire and smould'ring clouds outbrake:
The aged Earth, aghast
With terror of that blast,
 Shall from the surface to the centre shake,
When at the world's last session,
The dreadful Judge in middle air shall spread his throne.

And then at last our bliss
Full and perfect is,
 But now begins; for from this happy day
Th'old Dragon under ground,
In straiter limits bound,
 Not half so far casts his usurped sway,
And, wrath to see his kingdom fail,
Swinges the scaly horror of his folded tail.

The Oracles are dumb;
No voice or hideous hum

Runs through the arched roof in words deceiving.
Apollo from his shrine
Can no more divine,
 With hollow shriek the steep of Delphos leaving.
No nightly trance or breathed spell
Inspires the pale-ey'd priest from the prophetic cell.

The lonely mountains o'er,
And the resounding shore,
 A voice of weeping heard and loud lament;
From haunted spring, and dale
Edg'd with poplar pale,
 The parting Genius is with sighing sent;
With flow'r-inwoven tresses torn
The Nymphs in twilight shade of tangled thickets mourn.

In consecrated earth,
And on the holy hearth,
 The Lars and Lemures moan with midnight plaint;
In urns and altars round,
A drear and dying sound
 Affrights the flamens at their service quaint;
And the chill marble seems to sweat,
While each peculiar power forgoes his wonted seat.

Peor and Ba{ :a }lim
Forsake their temples dim,
 With that twice-batter'd god of Palestine;
And mooned Ashtaroth,
Heav'n's queen and mother both,
 Now sits not girt with tapers' holy shine;
The Libyc Hammon shrinks his horn;
In vain the Tyrian maids their wounded Thammuz mourn.

And sullen Moloch, fled,
Hath left in shadows dread
 His burning idol all of blackest hue:
In vain with cymbals' ring
They call the grisly king,
 In dismal dance about the furnace blue.
The brutish gods of Nile as fast,
Isis and Orus, and the dog Anubis, haste.

Nor is Osiris seen

In Memphian grove or green,
 Trampling the unshower'd grass with lowings loud;
Nor can he be at rest
Within his sacred chest,
 Naught but profoundest Hell can be his shroud:
In vain with timbrel'd anthems dark
The sable-stoled sorcerers bear his worshipp'd ark.

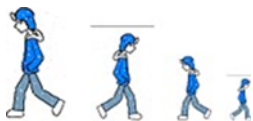
He feels from Juda's land
The dreaded Infant's hand,
 The rays of Bethlehem blind his dusky eyn;
Nor all the gods beside
Longer dare abide,
 Not Typhon huge ending in snaky twine:
Our Babe, to show his Godhead true,
Can in his swaddling bands control the damned crew.

So when the Sun in bed,
Curtain'd with cloudy red,
 Pillows his chin upon an orient wave,
The flocking shadows pale
Troop to th'inferral jail,
 Each fetter'd ghost slips to his several grave,
And the yellow-skirted fays
Fly after the night-steeds, leaving their moon-lov'd maze.

But see, the Virgin blest
Hath laid her Babe to rest:
 Time is our tedious song should here have ending.
Heav'n's youngest-teemed star,
Hath fix'd her polish'd car,
 Her sleeping Lord with handmaid lamp attending;
And all about the courtly stable,
Bright-harness'd Angels sit in order serviceable.

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My Walking Thoughts for



Sunday December 25 2022

There's nothing I can add to the above but to reflect on the words, images, and hopes that have carried down to us for millennia.