

## These Are a Few of My Favorite Things:

### Pamela Mitchell-Legg's 10 Favorite Books to Recommend for Advent and Christmas

Pearl S. Buck, *Christmas Day in the Morning*, illustrated by Mark Buehner (Harper Collins).

Originally published in 1955, Buck's book has been reissued with illustrations by Buehner. It is a story of gift-giving within a family – not purchased gifts but little gifts of love and service.

Truman Capote, *A Christmas Memory*, illustrated by Beth Peck (Knopf, 2006)

Capote's memoir of his own childhood Christmas, spent with relatives who, though older and impoverished, brought warmth, love, and joy to the preparation and celebration of Christmas for a lonely little boy.

Dylan Thomas, *A Child's Christmas in Wales*, illustrated by Edward Ardizzone (David R. Godine, 1980)

Dylan Thomas' memoir of his childhood Christmas, is excellent to read aloud, bringing another time and place to life for hearers. This edition is accompanied by beautiful illustrations by Ardizzone.

J.R.R. Tolkien, *Letters from Father Christmas* (Mariner Books, 2004).

Tolkien not only wrote the Lord of the Rings quest sags, but every year he would write and send to his children a letter from "Father Christmas." The letters let the children into everyday life in Father Christmas' house. This is Tolkien fantasy, lovingly created for his own children.

Maya Angelou, *Amazing Peace: A Christmas Poem*, illustrated by Steve Johnson and Lou Fancher (Random House, 2008)

The contemporary poet and novelist, Maya Angelou, wrote this poem to be read at the 2005 White House Christmas Tree lighting. The book accompanies each line of the poem with wonderful color illustrations. Best of all, tucked inside the front cover of the book is a CD with Maya Angelou reading the poem aloud.

Jeff Brumbeau, *The Quiltmaker's Gift*, illustrated by Gail de Marcken (Orchard Books, 2001)

Although this is not technically a "Christmas book," the story of gift-giving is most appropriate for the Christmas season. It is the story of a solitary quiltmaker who creates incredibly beautiful quilts that she gives to poor, hungry, and cold people in the village. The rich king of the land learns about her beautiful quilts and wants them as treasures for the kingdom. How he comes to be worthy of having one of the quiltmaker's gifts, is a captivating story. The illustrations are beautiful and unusual. This could be a great book to give with a handmade quilt square!!

Leena Lane, ***Angels Among Us***, illustrated by Elena Baboni (Eerdmans, 2007)

This book does two-page retellings of selected Bible stories, accompanied by Baboni's fanciful color illustrations. While the book includes both Old and New testament stories, two of the included stories are specifically Christmas stories – Luke 1:26-44 and , Luke 2:8-20. Although the Biblical stories are retold by the author rather than directly quoted from the Biblical text, her interpretations and the accompanying full-page illustrations by Baboni do no harm to the texts, but rather bring the stories to life for young children.

Barbara Robinson, ***The Best Christmas Pageant Ever***, illustrated by Laura Cornell (Harper Collins, 2011)

This is the now “classic” story of six very disruptive children who do not “belong” in a Church Christmas pageant...indeed, they do not even know the Christmas story....yet they become part of the pageant and of the community of faith. Robinson and Cornell have a good 40-page edition of this well known story, for younger children!

Carol Heyer, ***Humphrey's First Christmas*** (Ideals Children's Books, 2007)

Okay, so this one is TOTALLY fanciful. Humphrey is a camel, who accompanies the magi on their visit to honor the baby Jesus. It is told in the first person, BY Humphrey, who talks about the journey to Bethlehem , his visit to the manger, and the gift even he, a camel, gives to the Christ child. You need to be clear this is NOT an actual Bible story, but falls more in the category of “midrash” on the story.

Jane O'Connor, ***Fancy Nancy's Splendiferous Christmas***, illustrated by Robin Preiss Glasser

The “Fancy Nancy” series is a popular best-seller for K-Grade 3 girls. This volume, a Christmas tale, depicts what happens when Nancy's usually expensive “splendiferous” Christmas is disrupted. Her grandfather helps her celebrate Christmas in a new way.