

A Beloved Poem



Mini Fact:
Clement C. Moore was an only child.

Moore's accidental fame

Many families have favorite books that they read during the holiday season. One that has been around for a long time is "A Visit From St. Nicholas" by Dr. Clement C. Moore. (You may know it as "The Night Before Christmas.")



Clement C. Moore

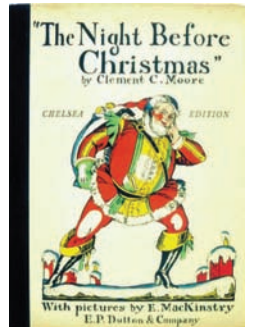
Legend tells that Dr. Moore, a scholar who grew up and lived in what is now New York City, wrote the poem for his family on Christmas Eve in 1822.

His children told a family friend, Harriet Butler, about the poem, and she sent it to the editor of the Troy Sentinel newspaper in New York.

The paper published it on Dec. 23, 1823, without naming an author. But in 1844, Moore took credit for "A Visit From St. Nicholas" when he included it in a book of his writing.

A book for everyone

Dr. Moore did not apply for a copyright for his book. A copyright prevents other people from copying something created by an individual or group. For this reason, his poem has been published over and over, but Moore is usually given credit as the author.



Over the years, Moore's poem has been published many times as a book. This version is from 1928.

Twas the night before Christmas, when all through 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 sugarplums danced in their heads.
And Mamma 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 luster of midday to objects below.
When what to my wondering eyes should appear, But a miniature sleigh, and eight tiny reindeer;
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 called them by name —

"Now, Dasher! now, Dancer! now, Prancer and Vixen!
"On, Comet! on, Cupid! on, Donder and Blitzen!



"To the top of the porch, to the top of the wall,
"Now, dash away, dash away, dash away all!"
As dry leaves that before the wild hurricane fly, When they meet with an obstacle, mount to the sky,
So, up to the housetop 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 dressed all in fur, from his head to his foot, And his clothes were all tarnished with ashes and soot;
A bundle of toys he had flung on his back, And he looked 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 on 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 laughed, like a bowl full of jelly.
He was chubby and plump — a right jolly old elf; And I laughed 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 filled all the stockings; then turned with a jerk, And laying his finger aside of his nose, And giving a nod, up the chimney he rose.
He sprang 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!"



Images courtesy The Project Gutenberg

Resources



On the Web:

- bit.ly/MPMoore
- youtu.be/cEkZK9NZGFg

At the library:

- "The Young Oxford Book of Christmas Poems," edited by Michael Harrison and Christopher Stuart-Clark

Mini Jokes



Clara: Who says, "Oh, oh, oh?"

Clint: Santa Claus walking backward!

Eco Note



One of the most powerful Pacific hurricanes on record obliterated a remote Hawaiian island, causing an important turtle nesting site to disappear in early October. Former Category-5 Hurricane Walaka was still packing Category-3 force just before it struck the remote French Frigate Shoals, about 400 miles northwest of the main Hawaiian Island of Kauai. Storm surge wiped out East Island, which is a critical habitat for green sea turtles, monk seals and various types of sea birds.

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1. Large animal with branching antlers and hoofs (8-letter noun)

2. To make a sound by forcing breath through teeth/lips (7-letter verb)

3. To shine with a sparkling light (7-letter verb)

4. Tall structure in a fireplace where smoke escapes (7-letter noun)

1. Most _____ have fur-covered branches on their heads.
2. Carlos will make a high-pitched _____ to call his dog.
3. Maria watched the holiday lights _____ red and green.
4. Julie opened the flue inside her red brick _____.

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Study the definition. When you know the missing word, fill in the letter boxes and the sentence blanks.

Answers: reindeer, whistle, twinkle, chimney.