

Stress Busting Holiday Reading Tips for Families

While the holidays can be stressful and frantic for many moms and dads, spending time reading together is a great reason to turn off the television, cuddle up, and relax.

To make reading a part of your holiday traditions, try some of these fun activities.

- Encourage your child to create bookmarks to enclose in a gift book or to mark the place in your own book where you leave off during read-aloud time.
- Ask your child to help with holiday shopping. Have him or her write out the list or draw pictures and then read the items aloud as you shop together.
- Give your child a companion book to traditional holiday gifts, such as a book on juggling and several brightly colored balls; a book about fossils and a bag of plaster of Paris; or a book about stamp collecting and a stamp album.
- When it's time for holiday baking, read the directions out loud and have your child measure out the ingredients with you. While the cookies are in the oven, read a short book together.
- Suggest that your child's teacher turn the classroom holiday gift exchange into a book exchange.
- Help your child make his or her own holiday gifts for family and friends by following the directions in a how-to-book.
- Ask your child to help you write out gift nametags. Use extra large gift tags for tiny hands!
- Encourage your child to volunteer to read to residents in a local retirement home or hospital.
- Give a bookstore gift certificate as a holiday present so your child can select a new book on his or her own. Read the book together.
- Visit the library and pick out some holiday favorites for festive family reading all season long.

Adapted from Reading is Fundamental website

Ten Books for the Holiday Season from Reading Rockets

Warm your hearts with these holiday stories, from old favorites to new delights. These recommended books for kids ages 0-9 are about generosity, love, and friendship, and are perfect for the season, no matter what traditions you celebrate!

Hanukkah: A Counting Book in English, Hebrew, and Yiddish

By: Emily Sper

Age Level: 0-3

Reading Level: Pre-Reader

The Festival of Lights, or Hanukkah, celebrates the rededication of the Jewish temple after a group of ancient heroes defended their right to worship as they wished. This handsome little counting book honors the most joyful of Jewish holidays, and teaches readers how to count from one to eight in English, Hebrew, and Yiddish.

How the Grinch Stole Christmas

By: Dr. Seuss

Age Level: 3-6

Reading Level: Beginning Reader

The classic tale of the Grinch is now more than 50 years old. But that's just why it's a classic: Seuss' grumpy stealer of Christmas is as fresh today as it was when first published in the mid 20th century.

Mr. Willowby's Christmas Tree

By: Robert Barry

Age Level: 3-6

Reading Level: Beginning Reader

Mr. Willowby, the unwitting hero of this Christmas classic, looks quite a bit like the little mustachioed mascot from Monopoly. But as befits a Yuletide tale, this diminutive millionaire turns out to be a good bit more generous.

Seven Candles for Kwanzaa

By: Andrea Pinkney & Brian Pinkney

Illustrated by: Brian Pinkney

Age Level: 6-9

Reading Level: Independent Reader

Although Kwanzaa commemorates an ancient African harvest ritual, it is a relatively new holiday in North America. Seven Candles for Kwanzaa comfortably explains the origins, language, and daily themes of this warm and festive seven-day holiday.

The Gifts of Kwanzaa

By: Synthia James

Age Level: 3-6

Reading Level: Beginning Reader

"Habari gani? What news?" Synthia Saint James presents the language and origins of Kwanzaa with enticing writing and bold pictures that honor the people and colors of Africa.

The Night Before Christmas

By: Clement Moore

Illustrated by: Tasha Tudor

Age Level: 6-9

Reading Level: Independent Reader

In 1822 Clement Clarke Moore wrote The Night before Christmas for his own children. Now, of course, his poem is read aloud to children around the world who are anticipating Santa's arrival.

The Polar Express

By: Chris Van Allsburg

Age Level: 6-9

Reading Level: Independent Reader

A magical train ride on Christmas Eve takes a boy to the North Pole to receive a special gift from Santa Claus. This holiday classic earned a Caldecott Medal.

The Tomten

By: Astrid Lindgren

Illustrated by: Harald Wiberg

Age Level: 3-6

Reading Level: Beginning Reader

From Swedish folklore comes the story of the tomten, a little gnome who watches over us while we sleep. Read this heartwarming version, from the author of Pippi Longstocking, and celebrate a time-honored tradition for the Winter Solstice.

The Trees of the Dancing Goats

By: Patricia Polacco

Age Level: 6-9

Reading Level: Independent Reader

Polacco has a warm, colorful illustrative style she applies to what at first seems the simple story of a Jewish girl, Trisha, and her Christian neighbors, whose bout with scarlet fever at Christmas threatens to ruin Trisha's Hanukkah. Trisha and her family respond with a loving gesture that is rewarded in kind.

Zigzak: A Magical Hanukkah Night

By: Eric Kimmel

Illustrated by: Jon Goodell

Age Level: 6-9

Reading Level: Independent Reader

Is Hanukkah really all about dancing dreidels and high-flying latkes? Maybe not, but Eric Kimmel and Jon Goodell have put these devilish phenomena to good use in a lighthearted story that teaches Hanukkah traditions--from kazatzkas to gelt--along with a wise, timeless moral.