Free Christmas stories for kids

Peabody · checked 2026-10-19

Peabody has 7 free Christmas stories for kids, from Piccola at level 5 to A Christmas Carol at level 14, including the Nutcracker as Hoffmann first wrote it. Each opens at once with no sign-up, and the two with ghosts or a Mouse King carry a scary mark. Free through the end of 2027.

- Story: Piccola · Level: Level 5 · Pages: 24 · What happens: Piccola's family has no money for a gift, so she puts her little wooden shoe by the fire and waits.
- Story: The Christmas Cuckoo · Level: Level 7 · Pages: 20 · What happens: Two poor cobbler brothers burn an old tree root for their Christmas fire, and a cuckoo wakes up inside it.
- Story: The Elves and the Shoemaker · Level: Level 8 · Pages: 12 · What happens: A poor shoemaker has only enough leather for one last pair of shoes.
- Story: 'Twas the Night Before Christmas · Level: Level 8 · Pages: 15 · What happens: On the night before Christmas, a small house is fast asleep, until a clatter out on the lawn sends the father to his window.
- Story: The Nutcracker · Level: Level 10 · Pages: 18 · What happens: On Christmas Eve, a girl named Marie falls in love with a nutcracker doll that nobody else wants to look after.
- Story: The Gift of the Magi · Level: Level 14 · Pages: 13 · What happens: On Christmas Eve, Della Young has one dollar and eighty-seven cents with which to buy a present for her husband Jim, and the only treasures the couple own are her long hair and his gold watch.
- Story: A Christmas Carol · Level: Level 14 · Pages: 14 · What happens: On Christmas Eve, the stingiest man in London is visited by the ghost of his old partner, rattling in chains, and then by three spirits.

Where these stories come from

'Twas the Night Before Christmas is Peabody's retelling of the poem "A Visit from St. Nicholas", in short plain sentences, keeping only its two most famous lines in their original words. The Nutcracker is retold from E. T. A. Hoffmann's story of 1816, long before the ballet, so its characters are Hoffmann's. Every story's page says who first told it and when. Stories marked scary have a ghost, a monster or a tense night; read the first page yourself if you are not sure.

Winter stories too

Not every winter story is about Christmas. These are snowy or wintry, and open to read the same way:

• Lou and the Snow Dad (level 4): Lou makes a snow Dad with a rock nose and Dad's big hat, and Dad adds his scarf.
• The Run to Nome (level 8): A true story about the winter of 1925.
• Snow White and Rose Red (level 9): Two sisters, one with hair as white as snow and one with cheeks as red as roses, share their home with their mother.
• The Snow Fort Treaty (level 10): Milo has seen snow exactly once, and Ruby builds a wall in it every winter that falls down every winter.
• The Selfish Giant (level 11): The children play in the Giant's beautiful garden every afternoon, until the Giant comes home and builds a high wall to keep them out.
• The Winter Count (level 17): Kit finally gets to join her mother's winter animal-track count, secretly hoping to fill a lynx column that has been empty for forty years.

Reading them over the holidays

The stories run from levels 5 to 14, so there is one for most ages: a grown-up can read 'Twas the Night Before Christmas aloud to the youngest children, and a confident reader can take the longer ones alone. Every story is free and opens at once, so none needs setting up the night before.

Printable passages with questions

Every story here is also a free printable reading passage with comprehension questions and an answer key, for a classroom or the kitchen table. No sign-up.

• Piccola: reading passage — level 5, 5 questions
• The Christmas Cuckoo: reading passage — level 7, 5 questions
• The Elves and the Shoemaker: reading passage — level 8, 6 questions
• 'Twas the Night Before Christmas: reading passage — level 8, 6 questions
• The Nutcracker: reading passage — level 10, 6 questions
• The Gift of the Magi: reading passage — level 14, 6 questions
• A Christmas Carol: reading passage — level 14, 6 questions

More free stories

• The whole library: free stories by reading level, no account needed.
• Classic stories retold short: fables, fairy tales, myths and legends.
• Free Halloween and scary stories for kids
• Free short bedtime stories for kids
• Free classic fairy tales for kids
• Free winter stories for kids
• By level: Level 5 · Level 7 · Level 8 · Level 10 · Level 14

Questions parents ask

Which Christmas story is easiest to start with?

Piccola (level 5) and The Christmas Cuckoo (level 7) are the easiest here, and either reads aloud in a few minutes.

Are the Christmas stories scary?

Most are not. The Nutcracker and A Christmas Carol carry the scary mark, one for a Mouse King and one for the ghosts. Stories marked very scary or horror are not in the open library at all.

Do the stories cost anything?

No. Every story on this page is free to read through the end of 2027, with no account and no card.

Free at peabody.kids/holidays/christmas/stories