



Books for Giving

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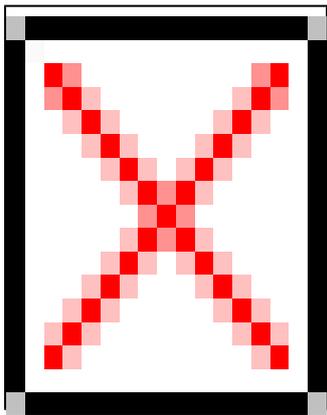
Rosemary Stones selects ideal gifts for young readers.

Presents for Younger Readers

Novelty titles, picture books and story collections can all make ideal gifts for young readers as stocking fillers or under the tree. **Rosemary Stones** chooses books with Christmas themes and books that are evocative and entertaining.

With a nod to Christmas proper **Baby's First Christmas**

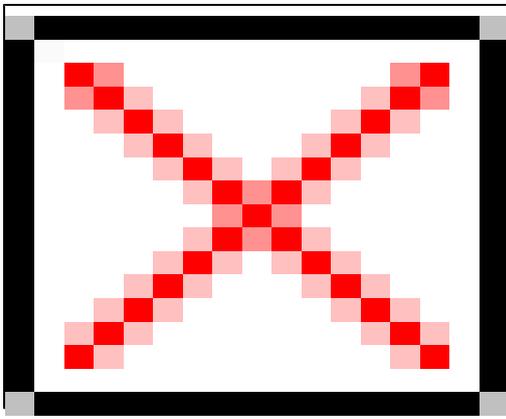
is a small square board book for the very young. With its bright and friendly illustrations, this well devised little book pictures and names the elements in the Christmas story (?Mary?, ?Joseph?, ?donkey?, ?shepherds? etc) while the sequencing allows the adult to weave the tale around them if the baby is ready. Age: under 3



Subtitled ?an African Twelve Days of Christmas?, **A Stork in a Baobab Tree** sets each double page spread featuring a gift (from woven baskets to Khangas, from grazing goats to playing children) in a different African country affording an opportunity to portray a variety of cultures and customs. Polly Alakija's distinctive stylised illustrations include lots of well observed detail while Catherine House's explanatory notes are full of information about each country. The new words can be sung to the tune of the traditional carol. Age 3+

Children love making Christmas lists and the latest ?Zoe and Beans? picture book is **Zoe's Christmas List**. Zoe's list has one item on it ? a Kylie Kurlz doll - and she decides to go to the North Pole to be sure that Father Christmas finds it. Zoe's long suffering dog Beans is roped in to help, patiently swimming the final distance with Zoe aboard when more traditional forms of transport run out. A lost baby polar bear joins them for more adventures before Zoe and Beans return home ? to open the present that awaits. What can it be? The Inkpens? (father and daughter) expressive line and consummate use of the page results in a gentle, low key drama full of amusing touches. Children will love it. Age 3+

Now available in paperback, **Cat on the Hill** is Michael Foreman's moving tale in the spirit of Christmas. A ship's cat, now a stray without friends, is having a hard time surviving as winter sets in until he finds he has friends after all? In a final tableau reminiscent of depictions of the Bethlehem stable, cat is cuddled up on the fisher boy's lap surrounded by donkey, horse and dog. St Ives in different seasons is the backdrop to the story, lovingly depicted in Foreman's atmospheric watercolour illustrations. Age 3+



Stories about helpful elves (eg **The Elves and the Shoemaker**) were collected by the Grimm brothers and are often retold and remade. **The Helpful Elves** is a version of a tale first written down by Cologne teacher Ernst Weyden in 1826 which later became a famous poem by August Kopisch. It tells how busy house elves do all the chores (building, baking, making sausages and wine, sewing) at night while the lazy inhabitants of Cologne sleep soundly. But one evening a tailor's wife, curious to see who is doing all the work, scatters dried peas on the steps so that the elves fall over and wake her up. But all she glimpses is 'the back of their caps as they race out of the city' and ever since, the inhabitants of Cologne have had to do their own work. In this facsimile edition of the delightful novelty picture book illustrated by Beatrice Braun-Fock, the die-cut front cover reveals a row of ten laughing elves who act as a knowing, if mute, chorus to the events that unfold at their feet. Each time the page is turned an elf is subtracted from the line-up on the recto to join his friends on the verso. This is a tale with a moral but it's also delightful fun! The original publication date is not given but from the illustrative style it is c1920s. Age 3+

The front cover of **The Giant Book of Giants** which features a gigantic hand pulling down a corner to reveal a fierce eye glaring at the reader, presages the delights that await inside this large format novelty book. For it includes, alongside a selection of six tales about giants, an actual giant in the form of a dramatic 3D giant poster that is likely to be taller than its young readers. The giant stories (from 'Jack and the Beanstalk' to 'The Curious Giantess') are vividly retold by Saviour Pirotta and dramatically illustrated. Age 4+

First published in 1995, Philip Pullman's masterly retelling of the Aladdin story, **Aladdin and the Enchanted Lamp** with elegant silhouette illustrations by Ian Beck has been reissued in a handsome clothbound edition with foil lettering. With immediate, buttonholing style and its large typeface, this is an ideal book to give young readers of 5+.

Baby's First Christmas by Christina Goodings, ill. Stephen Barker, Lion, 978 0 7459 6256 6, £3.99 board

A Stork in a Baobab Tree by Catherine House, ill. Polly Alakija, Frances Lincoln, 978 1 8478 1116 6, £11.99 hbk

Zoe's Christmas List by Chloë & Mick Inkpen, Macmillan, 978 0 230 75055 5, £10.99 hbk

Cat on the Hill by Michael Foreman, Andersen, 978 1 8427 0471 4, £6.99 pbk

The Helpful Elves by August Kopisch, ill. Beatrice Braun-Fock, Floris, 978 0 8631 5815 5, £10.99 hbk

The Giant Book of Giants retold by Saviour Pirotta, ill. Mark Robertson, Egmont, 978 1 4052 6008 4, £14.99 hbk novelty

Aladdin and the Enchanted Lamp retold by Philip Pullman, ill. Ian Beck, Scholastic, 978 1 4071 2054 6, £12.99 hbk

Rosemary Stones is Editor of **Books for Keeps**.

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