



Books for Giving Christmas 2012

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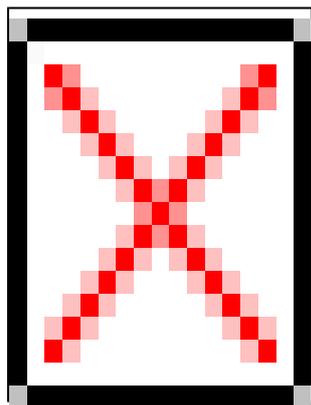
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The pick of the Christmas books.

Books for Giving

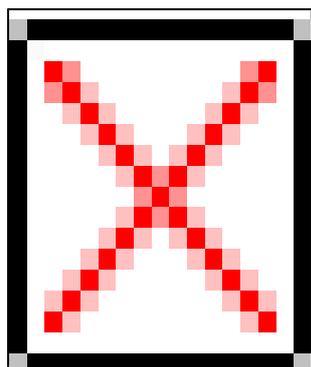
A truly happy Christmas is all about tradition, custom and the special joy of the familiar. No surprise then that a round-up of the best gift books for Christmas 2012 includes lots of well-known names and old favourites, nor that they provoke a particular thrill of delight that is as potent for being entirely anticipated.

Collections and old friends



A new [Quentin Blake Treasury](#) [3] brings together nine of his best-loved stories in a collection that spans his career, from **Patrick**, first published in 1968, to more recent adventures. The boldness and energy of Blake's line dazzles no matter how familiar it has become, and each of these stories feels completely fresh and timeless. The marketing emblem on the book's cover for once is entirely right when it proclaims the book 'A Quentin Blake Classic'.

Quentin Blake worked with Joan Aiken over many years, chiefly on the Arabel and Mortimer stories. However, another wonderful book, now available again as a handsome hardback, is their collection [The Winter Sleepwalker and Other Stories](#) [4]. Aiken's stories have their own special magic, and Blake's illustrations match them for invention, wit and a haunting streak of melancholy too.

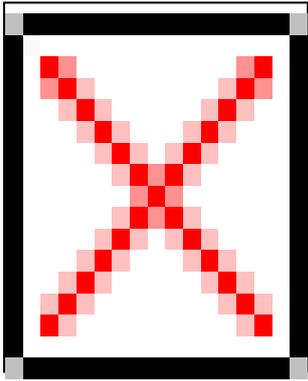


Blake is also one of four illustrators included in [Michael Morpurgo's Christmas Stories](#) [5], a collection of tales written to be read aloud and, just right for this time of year, with proper happy endings. There's a brand new story, 'The Goose is Getting Fat', that tackles the perennial townie question of how can you eat an animal

you've watched grow up? Morpurgo neatly sidesteps this with the warmth and humour we've come to expect. Sophie Allsopp's illustrations for the story match him for humour and capture the essence of the English countryside beautifully.

How very good too to see a new edition of [The Oxford Treasury of Fairy Tales](#) [6] by Geraldine McCaughrean, illustrated by Sophy Williams. Geraldine McCaughrean is the UK's finest storyteller and wordsmith, and this is still the very best introduction to the classic fairy tales for the young that there is.

The perfect introduction to Irish folk tales is also now available. Siobhan Parkinson, the Irish Children's Laureate, has gathered together a collection of her favourite stories in a fine new collection, [Spellbound: Tales of Enchantment from Ancient Ireland](#) [7], illustrated by Olwyn Whelan. [An Illustrated Treasury of Scottish Folk and Fairy Tales](#) [8] by Theresa Breslin and Kate Leiper will be enjoyed both sides of the border, Breslin recounting tales told to her in a way that is immediately engaging.



It would be impossible not to include a collection of Tales from the Brothers Grimm in this their 200th anniversary. The must have collection is [Grimm's Fairy Tales](#) [9] selected and illustrated by Hans Christian Andersen Award winner Lisbeth Zwerger and translated by Anthea Bell. The book brings together previously published stories and some new ones in an extraordinarily beautiful piece of visual storytelling. Zwerger's wit and the visual complexities of her art are perfectly suited to the strange world of the Grimms, while Anthea Bell's translation is lucid and sensitive. Recommended to readers aged from six to one hundred.

Fulvio Testa has fun with [Pinocchio](#) [10] in a new translation by Geoffrey Brock. Testa's vivid pen, ink and watercolour illustrations are perfect for a story that ranges across so many different settings, and features such a huge cast of colourful characters. They make the Disney images look very wooden.

Grahame Baker Smith won the Kate Greenaway Award in 2011 for his book [Farther](#) [11]. His rich collages mix paint and photoshop to remarkable effect and add depth and atmosphere to a beautifully designed new version of [Robin Hood](#) [12] retold by David Calcutt. Meanwhile, David Roberts brings his edgy line to a superb new edition of [The Wind in the Willow](#) [13]. Skilled use of colour throughout and Roberts' bright, spiky illustrations will certainly catch the young reader's eye, but while the characters are interpreted in Roberts' distinctive style, they remain recognisably Grahame's too. A classic given an interesting new life.

Poetry Collections

To mark the 200th anniversary of Edward Lear, there's a welcome reissue of his collection of [Nonsense Verse](#) [14] illustrated by John Vernon Lord, another example of happy author and illustrator combination. Vernon Lord's prancing characters, created in pen and ink, form perfect snapshots of Lear's verse, full of humour.

Look out too for [101 Poems for Children](#) [15], chosen by Carol Ann Duffy. Here illustrations are by Emily Gravett, and while the Owl and the Pussycat are dancing on the cover, her version of Lear's Akond of Swat is a real, enigmatic treat.

Books that do things

In this brave new digital age, we shouldn't forget that paper, and the words and pictures on a page, can still do the most extraordinary things. Novelty or pop-up seems too bland a description for these interactive works of art: in [Alienography: Tips for Tiny Tyrants](#) [16], Chris Riddell rethinks Machiavelli for a generation brought up on Star Wars. As always, Riddell's visual invention is matched by a sharp eye for pastiche. It comes with a free pack of Top Chumps cards too. The popular picture book [The Night Pirates](#) [17] by Peter Harris and Deborah Allwright becomes something akin to a doll's house in a new pop up version and will provide hours of fun.

Children and adults alike will be fascinated by [New York in Pyjamarama](#) [18]! Created by illustrator Frédérique Bertrand and storyteller/ animator Michaël Leblond, it takes us on a tour of the city at night, and, by means of the old Ombro-Cinema technique (lines embedded in the design create an illusion of movement when a simple sheet of acetate is placed over the top) brings it to life, all flashing lights and streaming traffic! The effect is irresistible, and Bertrand's bold colour and lines super-stylish.

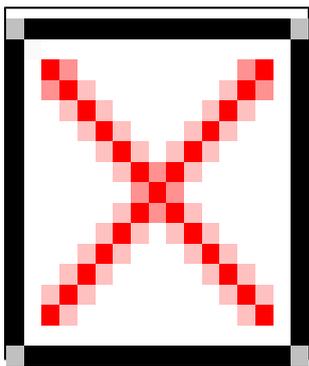
Hervé Tullet can work magic with paper and card too: open up [The Game of Sculpture](#) [19], pop out the pieces of card and you have all you need to create sculptures: the pieces can fit into ready made slots and holes, but you can add whatever else will fit too (toilet rolls is one suggestion!). The possibilities for creation are quite simply endless. Look out too for **The Game in the Dark** and **The Game of Red, Yellow and Blue**.

Picture book recommendations

Meanwhile, the inimitable Nick Sharratt scores again with [Fancy Dress Christmas](#) [20], peek-a-boo fun for the very young that makes wonderful use of surprise and the ridiculous: budge in disguise as a reindeer is a particular delight!

Axel Scheffler's style is unmistakable, expressive and humorous, and children immediately recognise themselves in his characters. Pip and Posy enjoy themselves in [The Snowy Day](#) [21], and though they have a falling out at the end of a long day, they are properly reconciled for a seasonal ending.

You can't get more seasonal than Jane Ray's beautiful [The Twelve Days of Christmas](#) [22], now available in paperback, while Angela Barrett has a new version of [The Night Before Christmas](#) [23]: the stillness and sense of quiet anticipation in her illustrations make this a particularly atmospheric and memorable telling.



[The Man from the Land of Fandango](#) [24] is not so traditional a Christmas gift, but nonetheless deserves a place under every tree in the land. Margaret Mahy's text is a joyous delight, and Polly Dunbar's illustrations have a freedom, a sense of life and space and comfort with colour that bring Quentin Blake's illustrations to mind.

And if there's still room in the stocking ?

Three paperback recommendations: [The Swallow Tales](#) [25] by K.M. Peyton, reissued by Corgi, will introduce young pony lovers to one of the best writers of the last century; young readers too will find so much to delight them in [Mouse Time](#) [26], two stories of not-so-domestic bliss by Rumer Godden; and everyone will enjoy dipping into [The Alien Schoolboy's Guide to Earthlings](#) [27], packed with more, and better, jokes than a warehouse full of Christmas crackers. Ho ho ho.

Andrea Reece is a marketing consultant and Marketing Director of **Books for Keeps**.

The Books

[Quentin Blake Treasury](#) [3] Jonathan Cape, 288pp, 978-0857550477 £19.99 hbk

[The Winter Sleepwalker and Other Stories](#) [4] by Joan Aiken, ill. Quentin Blake Jonathan Cape, 128pp, 978-0857550484, £12.99 hbk

[Michael Morpurgo's Christmas Stories](#) Egmont, 192pp, 978-1405265492, £14.99 hbk

[The Oxford Treasury of Fairy Tales](#) [6] by Geraldine McCaughrean, ill. Sophy Williams, Oxford, 240pp, 978-0192794451, £10.99, hbk

[Spellbound: Tales of Enchantment from Ancient Ireland](#) [7] by Siobhan Parkinson, ill. Olwyn Whelan Frances Lincoln Children's Books, 64pp, 978-1847801401, £14.99 hbk

[An Illustrated Treasury of Scottish Folk and Fairy Tales](#) [8] by Theresa Breslin, ill. Kate Leiper Floris Books 160pp 978-0863159077, £14.99 hbk

[Grimm's Fairy Tales](#) [9] trans. Anthea Bell, ill. Lisbeth Zwerger, Minedition, 96pp, 978-9881595379, £19.99 hbk

[Pinocchio](#) [10] trans. Geoffrey Brock, ill. Fulvio Testa, Andersen Press, 184pp. 978-1849392624 £16.99. hbk

[Robin Hood](#) [12] by David Calcutt, ill. Grahame Baker Smith, Barefoot Books, 112pp, 978-1846863578, £15.99 hbk

[The Wind in the Willows](#) [13] by Kenneth Grahame, ill. David Roberts, Oxford, 256pp 978-0192732347, £12.99, pbk

[Nonsense Verse](#) [14] by Edward Lear, ill. John Vernon Lord Jonathan Cape, 256pp. 978-0857550439, £14.99 hbk

[101 Poems for Children](#) [15], chosen by Carol Ann Duffy, ill. Emily Gravett Macmillan Children's Books 224pp 978-1447205166, £9.99 hbk

[Alienography: Tips for Tiny Tyrants](#) [16] by Chris Riddell Macmillan Children's Books, 48pp, 978-0230741041, £14.99 hbk

[The Night Pirates Pop Up Adventure](#) [17] by Peter Harris and Deborah Allwright Egmont, 14pp 978-1405256780 £12.99 hbk

[New York in Pyjamarama](#) [18]! by Michaël Leblond, ill. Frédérique Bertrand Phoenix Yard Books, 24pp, 978-1907912122, £9.99 pbk

[The Game of Sculpture](#) [19] by Hervé Tullet, Phaidon Press, 16pp, 978-0714864891, £7.95 hbk

[Fancy Dress Christmas](#) [20] by Nick Sharratt Alison Green Books, 32pp, 978-1407115894, £10.99 hbk

[Pip and Posy: The Snowy Day](#) [21] by Axel Scheffler Nosy Crow Books, 32pp, 978-0857631268, £7.99 hbk

[The Twelve Days of Christmas](#) [22] ill. Jane Ray Orchard Books, 32pp. 978-1408307045, £5.99, pbk

[The Night Before Christmas](#) [23] by Clement C. Moore, ill. Angela Barrett Orchard Books, 32pp, 978-1408307021, £11.99 hbk

[The Man from the Land of Fandango](#) [24] by Margaret Mahy, ill. Polly Dunbar

[The Swallow Tales](#) [25] by K.M. Peyton Corgi Children's Books, 592pp, 978-0552566926, £7.99 pbk

[Mouse Time](#) [26] by Rumer Godden Jane Nissen Books, 80pp, 978-1903252420. £6.99

[The Alien Schoolboy's Z - A Guide to Earthlings](#) [27] by Ros Asquith, Piccadilly Press, 192pp, 978-1848122710, £6.99 pbk

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- [24] <http://savfikn.booksforkeeps.co.uk/childrens-books/the-man-from-the-land-of-fandango>
- [25] <http://savfikn.booksforkeeps.co.uk/childrens-books/the-swallow-tales>
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