

The holidays are here again! Time to pull out the decorations, recipes, and the memories. Many will remember the flurry of activities and the anticipation leading up to the "big reveal" after the tree has been decorated and Santa has delivered his gifts. How many recall writing that Christmas wish list trying not to sound too greedy, but somehow always going over the 1 page limit and leaving it up to Santa to decide?

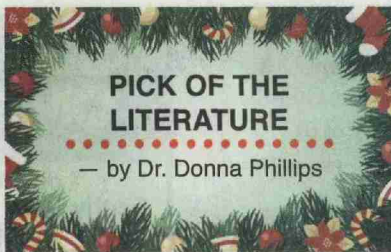
It's hard to recreate that now for ourselves as adults unless... you have seen the bounty of new books for the holiday season! Just as I tried to limit my wish list as a child and failed, I am afraid I have, once again, gone over the page limit. Books in so many sizes and shapes! So much color! So many stories! So many dazzling illustrations! So much to choose from! How could I do it? I didn't! I put them all on my list. So now, like Santa, it is your turn to choose!

## Board Books

**You are My Merry Little Christmas** (Scholastic, New York, 2016, \$6.99) written and illustrated by Joyce Wan. This little book celebrates elements of the season through a simple and delightful dialogue from a parent to a young child. The illustrations are the perfect match to the language and tone of this loving little book.

**Our Little Deer** (Scholastic, New York, 2016, \$7.99) written and illustrated by Sandra Magsamen. Little hands will love this book with soft antlers to hang onto as you read about the little deer that might well be them. This sweet book will delight with the adorable illustrations and a simple story that celebrate the season and your child's importance in your life.

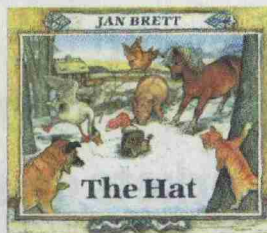
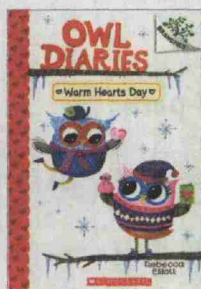
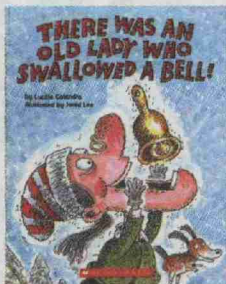
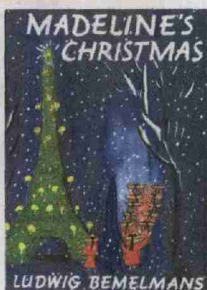
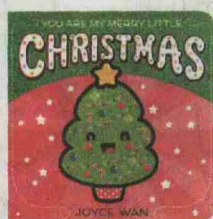
**Madeline's Christmas** (Penguin Young Readers Group, New York, 1956/2016, \$9.99) written and illustrated by Ludwig Bemelmans. This is the board book version of the magical Christmas story that has Madeline and her friends being visited by a mysterious stranger. Through her kindness and some



holiday magic, they all work together to make sure that everyone has a very Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.

**There Was an Old Lady Who Swallowed a Bell** (Scholastic, New York, 2006/2016, \$6.99) written by Lucille Colandro and illustrated by Jared Lee. What will this old lady swallow next? She swallows a bell, bows, gifts, a sack, and even a sleigh! What is she doing? When Santa shows up it all makes sense!

**The Hat** (G.P. Putnam's Sons, New York, 1997/2016, \$21.99) written and illustrated by Jan Brett. This beautiful board book version of her delightful story will keep even the youngest child mes-



merized. Jan Brett's illustrations fill each page and the borders with detail and intrigue that can tell the story without words. The charming barnyard animals try to figure out why hedgehog has a sock on his head, until they see more clothes that have blown off the clothesline. Soon we find them donning their own "hats" much to the surprise of the little girl who lost them.

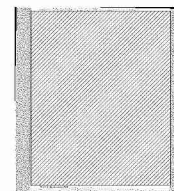
## Picture Books

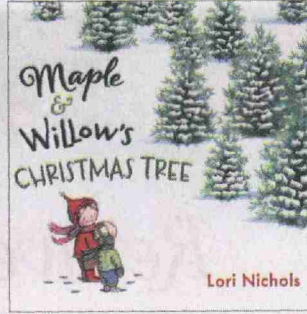
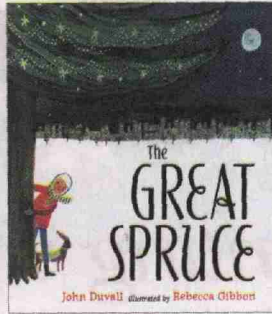
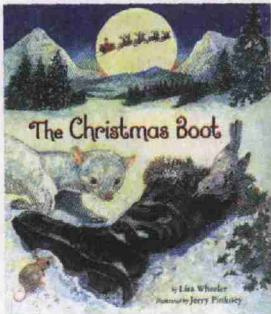
**The Gingerbread Christmas** (G.P. Putnam's Sons, New York, 2016, \$18.99) written and illustrated by Jan Brett. Jan Brett has done it again! The beautifully illustrated book, in her usual stunning style, is her new holiday story about Matti and the Gingerbread Baby who are determined to have a band for the holiday festival. Through some magical baking, gingerbread instruments come from the oven and begin to play. At the festival, all are mesmerized by their music but soon they begin to look like they would taste as good as they sound. The story ends with clever disguises and a beautiful pop-up Christmas tree.

**The Christmas Boot** (Dial Books for Young Readers, New York, 2016, \$17.99) written by Lisa Wheeler and illustrated by Jerry Pinkney. Hannah lived alone in the forest in a small ramshackle cabin. With her feet wrapped in rags, she headed out one blustery morning to find firewood and on her way she found a single beautiful fur lined black boot half buried in the snow. Putting it on, she pondered all day and into the evening where the mate might be. Low and behold, in the morning the second boot appeared! Cold hands were soon covered with warm red mittens and her cabin became a fancy house filled with beautiful furniture and plenty of food to eat. Even though she loved her new found blessing it just didn't seem to fit her. Not until a bearded stranger in a red suit knocked on her door did it all begin to make sense. Once she returned his belongings, she found herself back where she began... until the magic of Christmas gave her what she really wanted all along.

This gentle story and the wonderfully moving illustrations are truly this year's Christmas gift!

**The Biggest Smallest Christmas Present** (G.P. Putnam's Sons, New York, 2016, \$16.99) written and illustrated by Harriet Muncaster. Clementine is the tiniest girl ever and lives with her normal sized parents in a way too big





world. She loved being small except at Christmas time. All of her presents were too big! Would this one yet be any different? Santa has to work overtime to get this special present right... and he does!

**Maple and Willow's Christmas Tree** (Penguin Random House, New York, 2016, \$16.99) written and illustrated by Lori Nichols. Maple and Willow are finally getting a real tree for Christmas this year! All the excitement of finding and bringing it home results in a problem.

After it is all decorated and Christmas is here, Maple finds she is allergic to it. What will they do for a tree now? Willow has the perfect answer that starts a new family tradition.

**The Great Spruce** (G.P. Putnam's Sons, New York, 2016, \$17.99) written by John Duvall and illustrated by Rebecca Gibbon. The tall and stately tree that Alec's grandfather planted before Alec was born holds a special place in his heart. It is a source of inspiration and comfort for him and his whole family. This almost ends when it is selected to be cut down and taken to the city to become the official holiday tree. Alec is devastated until he figures out a way to save it and still share it. This story has an interesting historical context that describes how, for a period of time, the trees displayed at Rockefeller Center were living trees that were replanted back on the Long Island estates where they were taken. This book celebrates family, tradition, history, and an appreciation



**Owl Diaries: Warm Hearts Day** (Scholastic, New York, 2016, \$4.99) written and illustrated by Rebecca Elliott. Speech bubbles, adorable characters, and a last minute holiday

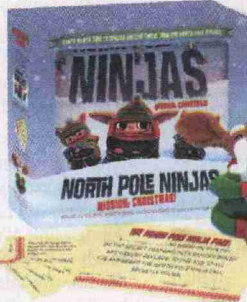
discovery are all made that much more engaging with colorful illustrations. This latest addition to the Owl Diaries will be a wonderful holiday surprise for anyone who is a follower and a believer in spreading holiday cheer at this time of year and all year long.

**Jingle** (Scholastic, New York, 2016, \$6.99) by Gordon Korman. A Christmas pageant and a prized Christmas possession worth millions stolen is the perfect setting for this holiday mystery. It's not a bad mission for Bing and his friends, but not when you have to play elves in the pageant. Things get even more complicated for everyone as the mystery deepens. Your older reader and even those who like to hear a good story read to them will enjoy this book before or even after the holiday.

You can't go wrong with books for gifts this holiday season. They are perfect memory makers that can become cherished for years to come. Whether it is Bodhi Day, Pancha Ganapati, Hanukkah, Soyal, Kwanzaa, Dongzhi, or Festivus, your local library or bookstore will certainly have something for everyone and every holiday celebration! Now go and write that list for your children and don't forget to add a few books for yourself. I am sure you have been very good this year!

Happy Holidays!

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 Dr. Donna Phillips is an associate professor in the Education Department of Niagara University, where her specialty is literacy and children's literature.



for the gifts that nature gives us all year long.

### Picture Book with Toy

**North Pole Ninjas Mission: Christmas!** (Penguin Random House, New York, 2016, \$29.99) written by Tyler Knott Gregson and Sarah Linden and illustrated by Piper Thibodeau.

Did you know that some of Santa's elves are Ninjas? They are led by Santa's secret sensei who gives them special missions throughout the year. This imaginatively rhyming story shares some of their adventures, but also invites the reader to become a North Pole Ninja, too. With a secret envelope filled with dozens of missions to be carried out, it can inspire your ninja throughout the holidays. If you receive a little extra loving kindness this Christmas or throughout the year, you will know that the North Pole Ninjas are at work.

### Chapter Books

**Fly Guy's Ninja Christmas** (Scholastic, New York, 2016, \$6.99) written and illustrated by Todd Arnold. There is nothing like an overzealous fly to upset Christmas but leave it to Fly Guy Buzz's pet fly to do so. This easy to read book will make you think twice about what you leave out for Santa to eat on Christmas Eve.