

# Celebrate winter

**19** RECENTLY RELEASED PICTURE BOOKS RING IN WINTER, THE HOLIDAY SEASON

BY WHITNEY BUTTERS WILDE  
 DESERET NEWS

From playing in the snow to decorating the Christmas tree, winter is full of seasonal activities that children look forward to each year. These 19 recently released picture books celebrate all things winter, including Christmas, and teach lessons of friendship, selflessness and love.



"The Lost Gift: A Christmas Story" is by Kallie George and illustrated by Stephanie Graegin.

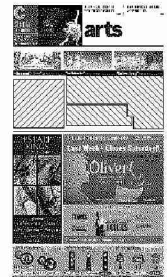
**"THE LOST GIFT: A Christmas Story,"** by Kallie George, illustrated by Stephanie Graegin, Schwartz & Wade, \$17.99 (f) (ages 4-8)

Rabbit, Deer, Bird and Squirrel can't wait for Christmas Day, so they stay up late to watch Santa's sleigh fly across their forest home. But as Santa flies on to continue his deliveries, one present accidentally falls out of his sleigh, and Rabbit, Deer and Bird decide it's up to

them to get the gift to its rightful owner. Squirrel tags along reluctantly as the animals build a sleigh of their own to deliver the present to New Baby Girl at the Farm.

Kallie George's words convey the message of thinking of others in a way children can understand, and Stephanie

**BOOKS C6**



Graegin's pencil, ink and digitally colored illustrations bring the story to life.  
**"THE MOST PERFECT SNOWMAN,"** by Chris Britt, Balzer + Bray, \$17.99 (f) (ages 4-8)

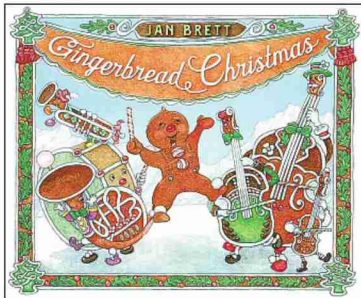
Drift is a plain snowman. He was made with the first snow of the year and forgotten, and he doesn't even have a carrot nose, fashionable hat or warm scarf. That he's missing those crucial elements is a fact all the other snowmen constantly make fun of, and Drift often feels alone.

Then one day, three children find Drift and give him what he's been dreaming of: a hat, scarf, mittens and, most importantly, a pointy carrot nose. Drift couldn't be more excited, but when a windstorm comes and blows away his hat and mittens, leaving him with just his scarf and hat, Drift must decide whether to keep his precious items to himself or to use them to help someone in need.

"The Most Perfect Snowman" has endearing watercolor and acrylic illustrations, but what really makes this book a worthwhile read is the powerful messages it teaches, including treating others with kindness and looking at the heart instead of the appearance.

**"GINGERBREAD CHRISTMAS,"** by Jan Brett, G.P. Putnam's Sons, \$18.99 (f) (ages 3-5)

Author Jan Brett continues the story of Gingerbread Baby in "Gingerbread Christmas" as he convinces boy Matti to help him create a Gingerbread Band.



Matti helps bake the creations and takes them into town, where the cookie group wows the villagers with their music and singing.

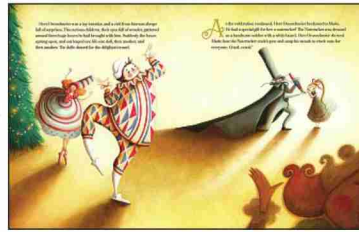
But when the villagers realize the band is made of tasty gingerbread and want to eat them, Matti and the Gingerbread Baby come up with a plan to protect their newly formed friends.

Brett's illustrations are intricate and eye-catching with a Swiss influence in their style.

Brett is the author and illustrator of multiple other children books, including "The Mitten" and "Trouble With Trolls." More than 40 million copies of her books are in print, according to information from the publisher.

**"THE NUTCRACKER,"** illustrated by Valeria Docampo, based on the New York City Ballet production, Little Simon, \$17.99 (f) (ages 4-8)

For parents who enjoy the ballet "The Nutcracker" and want to pass the tradition on to their children, "The Nutcracker," illustrated by Valeria Docampo and based on George Balanchine's 1954 New York City Ballet production, serves as an engaging introduction.



The story follows a girl named Marie (known as Clara in other versions of the story) as the nutcracker gift she received turns into a handsome prince and whisks her away to the Land of Sweets.

Docampo's delicate illustrations are full of soft colors and curvy lines and likely will appeal to young readers.

According to a news release, "The Nutcracker" is the first of three planned books based on ballet stories that will be produced by Simon & Schuster Children's Publishing and New York City Ballet.

**"PENGUIN'S CHRISTMAS WISH,"** by Salina Yoon, Bloomsbury Children's, \$14.99 (f) (ages 0-5)

Grandpa wants something useful, Pumpkin wants something to play with and Bootsy wants something she can use to be crafty, but all Penguin wants is to be able to share Christmas with the whole forest.

When a snowstorm hits on Christmas Eve, carrying away all the presents and decorations, Penguin has to use his creativity to come up

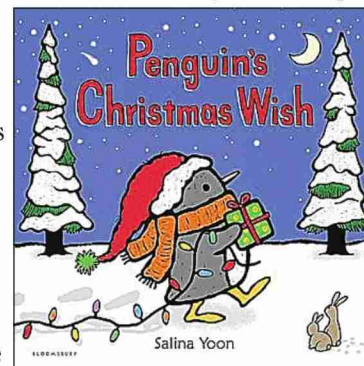
with a way to save Christmas. And along the way, his wish may come true, too.

Salina Yoon's simple story and illustrations are likely to

attract young ones who are learning to read, teaching them the joy of bringing Christmas cheer to others.

**"LITTLE PENGUINS,"** by Cynthia Rylant, illustrations by Christian Robinson, Schwartz & Wade Books, \$17.99 (f) (ages 3-7)

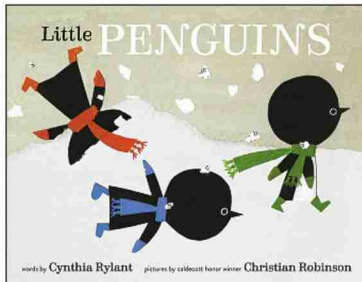
Five little penguins usher in winter with a day in the snow in "Little Penguins," written





by Cynthia Rylant and illustrated by Christian Robinson. The penguins get ready to play in the snow by finding their matching hats and scarves, then end the day with warm cookies and pajamas.

There isn't much to the story, as most pages have fewer than about five words on them, but the simplicity will likely



be welcomed by beginning readers.

What really elevates this book, however, is Robinson's unique illustration style, which is a combination of acrylic paint and cut-paper collage, according to the title page. The result is reminiscent of Eric Carle's illustrations in classics such as "Polar Bear, Polar Bear, What Do You Hear?" and "The Very Hungry Caterpillar."

**"THE BIGGEST SMALLEST CHRISTMAS PRESENT,"** by Harriet Muncaster, G.P. Putnam's Sons, \$16.99 (f) (ages 3-5)

Clementine's life is fairly ordinary: She lives in an ordinary house with ordinary parents and an ordinary brother named Charlie. But there's one big thing that makes Clementine different: She's the smallest girl in the world, which Santa doesn't seem to know based on the presents he brings her.

He's brought her a normal-sized paint set, puppy, fairy outfit and xylophone.



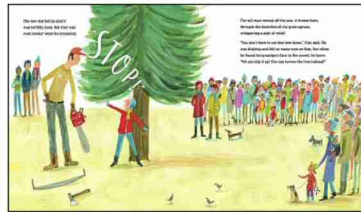
Clementine thinks each is a great gift, except for the fact that she is anything but normal-sized.

She decides to let Santa know she's small by writing it on a cookie and in the snow on the roof, but nothing seems to be working until her dad has an idea.

Harriet Muncaster's illustrations are full of the bright colors of the season, and Clementine's positive attitude provides an uplifting holiday message for young readers.

**"THE GREAT SPRUCE,"** by John Duvall, illustrated by Rebecca Gibbon, G.P. Putnam's Sons, \$17.99 (f) (ages 5-8)

A boy named Alec loves to climb all trees, but his favorite is the great spruce his grandfather planted. It is tall and allows him to see far away, and every Christmas, Alec and his grandfather decorate the great spruce with bright lights and tinsel.



But when a group from the city asks Alec's parents if they can cut down the tree to use in the annual Christmas celebration, Alec takes his stand. He suggests they borrow the tree instead, and the group works to transplant the

**BOOKS C7**

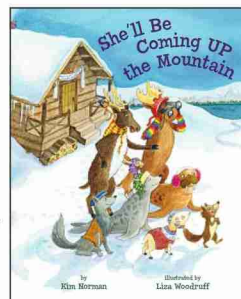
tree instead of cut it down.

John Duvall's story teaches readers to value nature and to stand up for what they believe in and shows how sharing and compromise can be important too.

An author's note at the back of the book provides interesting facts about the tradition of the Christmas tree and explains the process of transplanting a tree.

**"SHE'LL BE COMING UP THE MOUNTAIN,"** by Kim Norman, illustrated by Liza Woodruff, Sterling Children's Books, \$14.95 (f) (ages 3-7)

Polar Bear is about to return to her winter home after some time away, and all of her friends can't contain their excitement. They busily hang decorations, plan outings and wrap gifts to give their beloved friend. And as soon as Polar Bear comes up the mountain, her friends see she brought a surprise of her own.



Kim Norman's text is modeled after the song "She'll Be Coming 'Round the Mountain" and features clever rhymes that can be sung to the tune of the well-known song.

**"CLARK THE SHARK LOVES CHRISTMAS,"** by Bruce Hale, illustrated by Guy Francis, HarperCollins, \$17.99 (f) (ages 4-8)

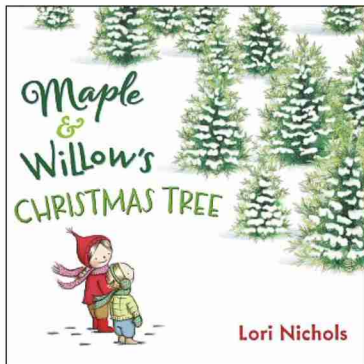
Bruce Hale and Guy Francis' Clark the Shark series continues with a holiday installment, "Clark the Shark Loves Christmas."

Clark the Shark is exuberant about Christmas but for all the wrong reasons. To him, it's all about eating treats and getting gifts, so when his class decides to do a secret Santa gift exchange, all he can think about is what he's going to get. When the time comes to give the gifts, he realizes he hasn't put any thought into what to get for Benny the Blowfish and he's used all of his allowance on a comic book for himself.

Clark makes the tough decision to give Benny his comic book and worries whether it's the right gift for him. But when the time comes to open gifts, Clark learns what's most important is giving from the heart.

**"MAPLE & WILLOW'S CHRISTMAS TREE,"** by Lori Nichols, Nancy Paulsen Books, \$16.99 (f) (ages 3-5)

Sisters Maple and Willow are excited to go pick out their first-ever live Christmas tree. They find what they believe is the perfect tree, until they discover one problem: Maple is allergic to their Christmas tree. Both girls are disappointed, especially Willow, since it is her year to put the star on the tree. Willow hurts Maple's feelings when she repeatedly shows how disappointed she is, so Willow plans a surprise to apologize, help Maple feel better and save Christmas.

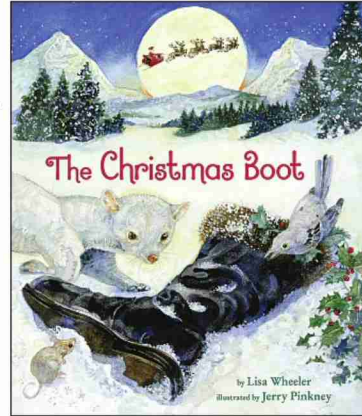


Lori Nichols' adorable illustrations combine with an easily understood storyline to create a book that has the potential to become a Christmas favorite for youngsters. Parents will also appreciate the story's emphasis on kindness and sibling love.

**"THE CHRISTMAS BOOT,"** by Lisa Wheeler, illustrated by Jerry Pinkney, Dial Books, \$17.99 (f) (ages 4-8)

Hannah Greyweather lives alone in a small

cottage deep in the forest. One day as she searches for firewood, she comes across a single boot. Unable to figure out who it belongs to, Hannah puts the boot on her own cold



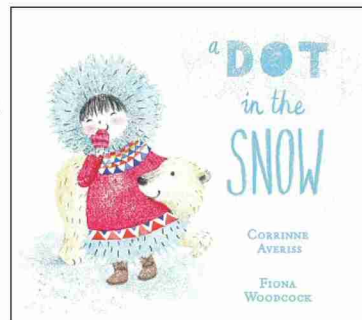
foot, and it magically fits perfectly.

The magic of the boot continues over the next several days as the boot's mate, a pair of mittens and even a large house appear. With a knock on the door, the magic makes sense as Santa Claus comes searching for his lost boot, which Hannah gives back willingly.

Hannah is a kind character who exhibits the important traits of humility and being happy regardless of one's circumstances.

**"A DOT IN THE SNOW,"** by Corrinne Averiss, illustrated by Fiona Woodcock, Sterling Children's Books, \$14.95 (f) (ages 3-7)

Miki the polar bear doesn't want to go fishing with his mom; he wants to play. So when he sees a red dot out in the distance,



he races to investigate. What he finds is a little girl he refers to as the Dot. The two play together until another red dot appears, the Dot's mom, and Miki realizes it's time for him to find his mom, too.

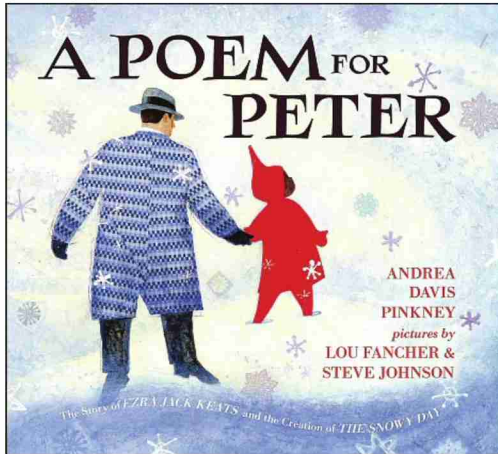


The story is told from Miki's perspective, which adds an air of curiosity and discovery as the polar bear interacts with a human for the first time, and Fiona Woodcock's soft illustrations make this a visually beautiful book.

**"FIVE LITTLE ELVES,"** illustrated by Dan Yaccarino, HarperFestival, \$6.99 (f) (ages 0-4)

Five little green elves work together to prepare Santa's sleigh on Christmas Eve in "Five Little Elves," illustrated by Dan Yaccarino.

This board book has bright, eye-catching images and simple text, making this a good Christmas book choice especially for young children.



**"A POEM FOR PETER: The Story of Ezra Jack Keats and the Creation of 'The Snowy Day,'"** by Andrea Davis Pinkney, illustrated by Lou Fancher and Steve Johnson, Viking Books for Young Readers, \$18.99

**BOOKS C8**

"A Poem for Peter" is less a winter-themed book and more a story behind another winter book. "The Snowy Day," written and illustrated by Ezra Jack Keats, was published in 1962 and tells the story of a boy experiencing the first snowfall of the year.

"A Poem for Peter" follows the life of Keats, telling of his early life and career leading up to the creation of "The Snowy Day." According to "A Poem for Peter," "The Snowy Day" was notable because it was the first mainstream book to feature an African-American child.

"A Poem for Peter" celebrates Keats' groundbreaking choice and the racial unity it promoted. While Keats' life is certainly an interesting subject to be explored, young readers may be bogged down by the writing style and length of this book.

**"ELENA OF AVALOR FELIZ NAVIDAD: A Royal Christmas,"** by Tom Rogers, illustrated by Mike Wall, Disney Press, \$12.99 (f) (ages 6-8)

Disney Channel's animated television

series "Elena of Avalor" finds its way to the page in "Elena of Avalor Feliz Navidad: A Royal Christmas."

According to ABC News, the TV show follows Elena, Disney's first Latina princess, as she rules

over and protects the kingdom of Avalor with the help of family, friends and a magic scepter.

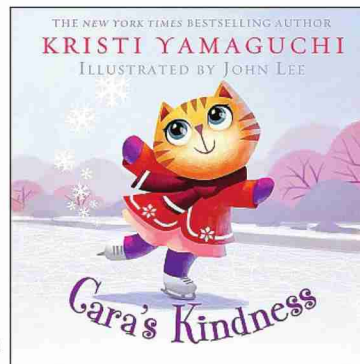
In "Elena of Avalor Feliz Navidad," Elena feels torn. She's been invited to many holiday festivities, and she doesn't want to disappoint anyone. She comes up with a plan to have everyone come together with one big celebration.

Dona Palmao, a greedy shop owner, sees the celebration as an opportunity to make money and convinces everyone to take part in a competition to create the biggest, grandest float. But when the competition gets out of hand, it's up to Elena to save the day and remind everyone of the true spirit of Navidad.

This children's book is likely to appeal most to children who are already fans of the TV show, but a character guide at the front of the book makes the story accessible to those who are less familiar with the story.

**"CARA'S KINDNESS,"** by Kristi Yamaguchi, illustrated by John Lee, Sourcebooks, \$16.99 (f) (ages 4 and up)

Cara the cat is looking for the perfect song for her upcoming figure-skating performance when she sees Darby the dog is sad. She takes time away from her preparations to cheer him up and teach him to skate, leaving him with the



charge to “pass on the kindness.”

The rest of “Cara’s Kindness” follows the kindness as it is passed from friend to friend, eventually making its way back to Cara.

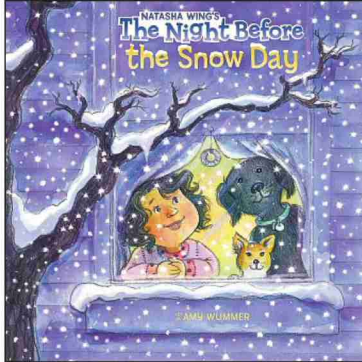
The book is written by Olympic figure-skating gold medalist Kristi Yamaguchi, so Cara’s talent for figure skating seems fitting.

Although parts of the story seem trite, the sentiment to pay it forward and pass kindness along is an important message for children to learn.

**“THE NIGHT BEFORE THE SNOW DAY,”** by **Natasha Wing**, illustrated by **Amy Wummer**, **Grosset & Dunlap**, **\$4.99 (f)** (ages 3-5)

Natasha Wing’s The Night Before series, which includes stories such as “The Night Before My Birthday” and “The Night Before Halloween,” continues with “The Night Before the Snow Day.”

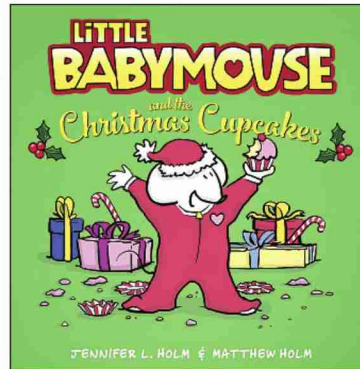
The book is a play on “’Twas the Night Before Christmas” and follows a similar rhyming scheme as it describes a girl



wishing and preparing for, then enjoying, a snow day and a day off school.

**“LITTLE BABYMOUSE AND THE CHRISTMAS CUP-CAKES,”** by **Jennifer L. Holm and Matthew Holm**, **Random House Books for Young Readers**, **\$17.99 (f)** (ages 3-7)

Babymouse ate all the cookies left out for Santa, so she decides to make cupcakes instead. With her mom’s help, Babymouse compiles all the ingredients, but when it comes time to frost the cupcakes, her mom has to go take care of Babymouse’s little brother.



Instead of waiting for her mom to return, Babymouse completes the cupcakes on her own and imagines she is a knight with the charge to protect the cupcakes.

The book has a comic book feel to it, with many pages having multiple panels depicting the scenes as they progress.

**EMAIL:** [wwilde@deseretnews.com](mailto:wwilde@deseretnews.com)

**TWITTER:** whitneybutters