Christmas Story Time

Four short Christmas stories to read aloud,
with simple comprehension questions for **Key Stage 1** (ages 5–7)

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Each story takes about 3–5 minutes to read aloud. The questions mix finding information in the text, simple inference, vocabulary and the children's own opinions. Use them for talk partners, guided reading or written answers.

More free stories, one for every day of December, at christmastales.co.uk

Biscuit Joins the Carol Singers

Every year, on a cold night in December, Alfie's family went carol singing round the village. Mum carried the song sheets. Dad carried the collecting tin for the hospice. Alfie's big sister Priya carried the lantern. And Alfie carried nothing, because he was the loudest singer, and that was his job.

This year, they took Biscuit too.

Biscuit was a scruffy brown dog with one ear that stood up and one that flopped down. He wore a red woolly jumper, and he was very excited, because he thought they were going for a walk in the dark, which was the best kind of walk.

At the first house, they stood on the doorstep and started to sing.

"Silent night, holy night—"

"AROOOOOO!" sang Biscuit.

Everybody stopped. The front door opened, and an old man peered out. Biscuit wagged his tail.

"Sorry," said Mum. "He gets carried away."

They tried again at the next house. "Away in a manger, no crib for a bed—"

"AROOOOOO-OOO!"

Priya started to giggle so much the lantern wobbled. Dad put his hand over his eyes. A lady in a dressing gown gave them a pound for the tin, but she put her fingers in her ears to do it.

"Biscuit," said Alfie sternly, kneeling down. "Carol singing is supposed to sound nice. You have to be quiet."

Biscuit licked his nose.

At the third house, Dad held Biscuit's lead very short and Mum sang extra loudly to cover up any noise. But Biscuit only waited until the big high note in "Hark! the Herald Angels Sing", and then he threw back his head and howled the loudest howl yet.

"That's it," said Dad. "I'm taking him home."

"No!" said Alfie. "He's having fun."

"He's ruining it," said Priya.

They argued all the way to the very last house in the village. It was a little cottage with a blue door at the end of the lane. Its curtains were closed and the path had not been swept.

"Nobody ever answers here," said Priya. "Mrs Morgan doesn't like visitors."

"We'll sing one carol and then go," said Mum.

So they sang "We Wish You a Merry Christmas", as nicely as they could. Biscuit, for once, sat quietly on the path and listened.

Nothing happened. The curtains stayed closed.

They turned to go. And then Biscuit stood up, looked at the blue door, and howled.

"AROOOOOO-OOO-OOOO!"

The curtains twitched. A light came on. The blue door opened, very slowly, and there stood Mrs Morgan in a long cardigan, holding onto the door frame.

"Was that a dog?" she said.

"I'm really sorry," said Alfie. "He can't sing. He only howls."

Mrs Morgan looked down at Biscuit. Biscuit looked up at Mrs Morgan. And something happened to Mrs Morgan's face. It went soft, and then it went crinkly, and then she laughed.

"My old dog used to do exactly that," she said. "Every Christmas. My husband would play the piano, and Bess would howl along to every single carol. I haven't heard a sound like that in years." She bent down and rubbed Biscuit's floppy ear. "Go on, then. Sing me another one."

So they did. They sang "We Wish You a Merry Christmas" one more time, and Biscuit howled all the way through it, and Mrs Morgan joined in, and so did Alfie, and so, in the end, did Priya, who said she was only doing it so Biscuit wouldn't feel silly.

Mrs Morgan put five pounds in the tin. Then she asked if they would come back next year.

"Only if you bring the singer," she said.

On the way home, Alfie let Biscuit carry the song sheets in his mouth. He'd earned it.

Biscuit Joins the Carol Singers: questions

Name: _____

1. Who is the loudest singer in Alfie's family?

2. What does Biscuit do when everyone sings?

3. Why does Priya say "Nobody ever answers here"?

4. Why do you think Mrs Morgan laughed when she saw Biscuit?

5. What does "carried away" mean when Mum says "He gets carried away"?

6. Would you like Biscuit to come carol singing with you? Why?

Draw your favourite part of the story.



Whose Footprints?

When Rosa woke up at Grandad's house, the light coming round the curtains was a strange, bright white.

She pulled them open. "SNOW!"

The whole garden was covered. The lawn, the bird table, the top of the wall, the roof of the shed. Everything was smooth and white and new, like a page in a fresh notebook.

Except that it wasn't smooth. Not quite. All over the snow were little marks.

"Grandad," said Rosa at breakfast, "somebody has been in your garden in the night."

Grandad put down his toast. "Has he now? Then we'd better find out who. Coats on, detective."

They went out of the back door, very carefully, so as not to spoil anything. The snow squeaked under their boots.

The first footprints were by the bird table. They were tiny, and there were lots of them, hopping about all over the place. Each one had three thin toes at the front and one at the back.

"Those are bird prints," said Grandad. "See how they go in pairs? That bird was hopping, not walking. Who hops round the bird table every morning?"

Rosa thought. "The robin!"

"I think so too."

The next prints went along the top of the wall. They were round, about the size of a big coin, and they went in a neat straight line, one in front of the other, as if somebody had walked along a tightrope.

"Paws," said Rosa. "With no claws."

"Good detective work. Cats keep their claws tucked in when they walk. Who's that, then?"

"Mrs Patel's cat! Toffee!"

The third prints were bigger. They came under the gate, went right across the lawn and stopped at the bin, where there was a lot of messy snow and a bit of eggshell. These prints had claw marks. They were long and thin, a bit like a dog's.

"There's no dog here," said Rosa.

"No," said Grandad. "But there is a fox. He lives on the railway bank. He comes to see if I've left the bin lid open." He picked up the eggshell and frowned. "Which, it seems, I had."

Rosa laughed. Then she went quiet. She was looking at the very bottom of the garden, past the shed, where the snow was deepest.

"Grandad," she whispered. "What are those?"

They walked down together.

These prints were different from all the others. Each one was shaped like a heart, split right down the middle into two halves. There were lots of them. They came out of the little wood behind the garden, wandered up to the apple tree, and stopped. All the snow had been nibbled off the lowest branch.

Then they went back into the wood.

Rosa looked at them for a long time.

"Grandad," she said slowly. "Those are hooves."

"They are," said Grandad.

"Split in two."

"They are."

"Reindeer have hooves that are split in two. We learned it at school."

Grandad scratched his beard. "So do deer," he said. "There are little deer called roe deer that live in the wood. They come out at night sometimes, looking for something to eat."

Rosa looked at the hoofprints. She looked at the nibbled branch. She looked up at the grey sky, where the snow was starting to fall again, very softly.

"It's nearly Christmas," she said. "Reindeer need to practise. And they'd need a snack."

Grandad opened his mouth. Then he closed it again. Then he smiled.

"Do you know," he said, "I think you might be right. Shall we leave a carrot out tonight, just in case?"

That night, Rosa put a carrot on the bottom branch of the apple tree.

In the morning, it was gone. And all around the tree, in the fresh new snow, were footprints shaped like little split hearts.

Whose Footprints?: questions

Name: _____

1. Where is Rosa staying when it snows?

2. How did Rosa and Grandad know the bird prints belonged to a robin?

3. Why are the cat's prints in a straight line on the wall?

4. Who knocked the bin over? What clue did they leave?

5. Grandad says the split-heart prints might be roe deer. What does Rosa think they are?

6. What do you think happened to the carrot? Explain your idea.

Draw your favourite part of the story.



The Two Snowmen

Mr Frost and Mr Chill were built on the same afternoon, by two children who lived next door to each other. Mr Frost stood in the front garden of number 7, wearing a top hat made from a plant pot. Mr Chill stood in the front garden of number 9, wearing a bobble hat that had fallen off a washing line.

They were separated by a low garden wall, and they could see each other perfectly. At first, they got on rather well.

"Nice hat," said Mr Chill.

"Yours too," said Mr Frost. "Very stylish."

But then came the problem. There was only one carrot. The boy who built Mr Frost had stuck it in as a nose, and Mr Frost was very pleased with it. He was the only snowman on the street with a proper carrot nose. Everyone else had twigs or stones or — in one embarrassing case — a banana.

"That's a lovely nose," said Mr Chill, trying not to sound jealous.

"Thank you," said Mr Frost, wiggling it slightly.

"I don't suppose you'd consider sharing it? Half an hour each?"

"Certainly not. It's MY nose."

Mr Chill huffed. A small puff of snow flew off his head. "Fine. I didn't want your silly carrot anyway." He turned his coal eyes away and refused to speak.

For two whole days, the snowmen stood in silence. It was the longest, coldest, most boring silence either of them had ever known. Snowmen, it turns out, have very little to do except talk to each other, and not talking was absolutely miserable.

On the third day — Christmas Day — Mr Frost cracked. "I'm sorry," he said. "I've been a frost-headed fool."

Mr Chill turned around slowly. "I'm sorry too. I was jealous, and that's no way for a snowman to behave."

"The truth is," said Mr Frost, "a carrot nose isn't much fun if you've got nobody to talk to."

"And being nose-less isn't so bad," said Mr Chill, "as long as you've got a friend."

At that moment, the little girl from number 9 came outside with her Christmas stocking. Inside it, among the chocolates and the tangerine, was a carrot. She looked at Mr Chill, looked at Mr Frost, and smiled. She snapped the carrot in half and gave one piece to each snowman.

Now they both had carrot noses. Not whole ones, but halves, which were actually much funnier — they stuck out sideways like little orange beaks.

"We look ridiculous," said Mr Frost.

"We look wonderful," said Mr Chill.

And they laughed — great, silent, snowy laughs that shook the snow off their hats — and talked and talked and talked until the thaw came in January and they melted into the same puddle, side by side, still talking.

The Two Snowmen: questions

Name: _____

1. What did Mr Frost wear on his head?

2. Why did Mr Chill stop talking to Mr Frost?

3. How did the snowmen feel when they were not speaking?

4. What did the little girl from number 9 do with her carrot?

5. Find a word in the story that means the snow melting away in January.

6. Have you ever fallen out with a friend? How did you make up?

Draw your favourite part of the story.



The Secret Code on the Fridge

On the twenty-third of December, Kemi came down to breakfast and found a piece of paper stuck to the fridge with a magnet.

It said:

8 9 4 4 5 14 21 14 4 5 18 20 8 5 19 15 6 1

And underneath, in tiny green writing: From an elf. Crack the code!

"Tom!" Kemi yelled up the stairs. "TOM! An elf has written to us!"

Her little brother came down the stairs on his bottom, one step at a time, still in his dinosaur pyjamas. He looked at the paper. "It's just numbers," he said.

"It's a code," said Kemi, who was seven, and knew about codes. "Each number is a letter. One is A. Two is B. Three is C. Like that."

They got a pencil and wrote out the alphabet on the back of an envelope, with a number under every letter. Then they worked it out, one letter at a time.

8 was H. 9 was I. 4 was D. 4 was D again. 5 was E. 14 was N.

"HIDDEN," read Kemi.

21 14 4 5 18. "UNDER," read Tom, very slowly, with his finger.

20 8 5. "THE."

19 15 6 1.

"SOFA!" they shouted together, and ran into the living room.

Under the sofa, among the fluff and a lost sock and one of Dad's slippers, was a small red envelope. Inside was another code.

23 8 5 18 5 20 8 5 2 15 15 20 19 7 15

It took them longer this time, because Tom wanted to do it by himself, and he kept counting on his fingers and losing his place.

"WHERE THE BOOTS GO!" he said at last.

The welly rack by the back door! Inside Mum's left welly, they found a green envelope. Inside the green envelope was another code. That one said COLD AND WHITE AND

FULL OF FOOD, and they found the next envelope stuck to the top of a pint of milk in the fridge.

By now, they had stopped needing to write the alphabet down. Kemi knew that M was 13 without even looking, and Tom knew that A was 1, B was 2 and C was 3, and that Z was 26, which he thought was a very big number for a letter.

The fourth clue said: LOOK UP IN THE TREE.

They looked in the Christmas tree. Hanging on a low branch, next to the felt robin, was a tiny parcel tied with string. Inside was a gold paper star and one last message.

7 15 20 15 20 8 5 19 8 5 4

"GO TO THE SHED," said Kemi.

They pulled their coats on over their pyjamas and ran down the frosty garden. The shed door was stuck. They pushed it together, and it opened with a creak.

Inside was Grandpa Joe, sitting on an upturned bucket with a flask of tea, mending a bicycle wheel.

"Grandpa!" said Tom. "Did you write the codes?"

"Codes?" said Grandpa Joe. "What codes?"

"The elf codes! Hidden under the sofa! And in Mum's welly! And on the milk!"

Grandpa Joe looked very surprised. He put down his spanner. "Well, it wasn't me," he said. "I've been out here since seven o'clock. My handwriting's far too wobbly for elf writing. Anyway, I don't know the alphabet backwards and forwards like you two do."

Kemi looked at him carefully. He looked back, with a perfectly straight face.

On the shelf behind him, next to the tins of nails, was a green felt-tip pen with the lid off.

Kemi saw it. She opened her mouth. Then she closed it again, and smiled.

"I think," she said, "we should write the elf a letter back."

"In code," said Tom.

"In code," said Kemi.

They spent the rest of the morning at the kitchen table, working out their reply. It said:

20 8 1 14 11 25 15 21

And they stuck it to the fridge with a magnet, where any passing elf could see it.

By teatime, the paper had gone. In its place was a single green star, drawn in felt-tip, and the number 100, which Kemi decided was elf for "a hundred out of a hundred".

The Secret Code on the Fridge: questions

Name: _____

1. Where did Kemi find the first code?

2. In the code, what number is the letter A?

3. Where was the clue that said WHERE THE BOOTS GO?

4. Who do you think wrote the codes? What clue did Kemi spot?

5. Why do you think Kemi did not say anything about the pen?

Be a code breaker!

In the elf code, every letter has a number. A is 1, B is 2, C is 3 … all the way to Z, which is 26.

A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
N	O	P	Q	R	S	T	U	V	W	X	Y	Z
14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26

Crack these elf messages

1. 13 5 18 18 25 3 8 18 9 19 20 13 1 19

2. 12 15 15 11 21 14 4 5 18 25 15 21 18 16 9 12 12 15 23

3. 19 14 15 23 9 19 3 15 13 9 14 7

Now write your own secret message in code

Answers: MERRY CHRISTMAS · LOOK UNDER YOUR PILLOW · SNOW IS COMING