



STUDY GUIDE FOR

THE NIGHT BEFORE CHRISTMAS

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TO THE PARENT/TEACHER

This guide has been provided to help children benefit the most from experiencing a live theatrical event. The activities described herein are only suggestions. Please feel free to pick and choose the things that will most benefit your children in the time you have available. It is our hope that the performance is not only entertaining, but is a valuable educational experience as well.

You will find that some of the activities contained in this guide are geared for younger, some for older children-- but there is something for everyone. Please feel free to reproduce and distribute any of the enclosed pages and activities for your personal use.

Theatre Etiquette

- 1> Attending a theatrical performance is a social event. Just as the way you act (and behave) in church or temple is different than the way you act on the playground, there is certain behavior that is appropriate in a live theatre. Discuss with your children the types of behavior that is appropriate when they are members of an audience.

- 2> Explain that they need to act differently when they're watching a live play than if they're watching a movie in a theatre. Live actors can hear the audience's laughter and applause as well as their talking to their neighbor or rustling papers. And their responses-- appropriate or not-- really do affect the actors' performance. The end line is: How would they want to be treated if THEY were up on the stage.

- 2> Audience Participation. Normally, audience members should never talk during the play--and especially not talk directly to the actors (it distracts other audience member and may even make the actors forget their lines). But the plays by KMR Scripts are unique in that we offer the audience special opportunities to participate in the production. They will probably not be asked to come onstage, but there are various times throughout the production where the actors will ask them questions. At those times we encourage the audience to answer them wholeheartedly (but not in an overly loud yell). Over the years, this has become one of the hallmarks of KMR Scripts productions.

A Visit From St. Nicholas

('Twas The Night Before Christmas)

By Clement Moore

'Twas the night before Christmas,
when all through the house,
Not a creature was stirring, not even a mouse;
The Stockings were hung by the chimney with care,
In hopes that St. Nicholas soon would be there;

The children were nestled all snug in their beds,
While visions of sugar-plums danced in their heads;
And mama in her 'kerchief, and I in my cap,
Had just settled down for a long winter's nap,

When out on the lawn there arose such a clatter,
I sprang from the bed to see what was the matter.
Away to the window, I flew like a flash,
Tore open the shutters and threw up the sash.

The moon on the breast of the new-fallen snow
Gave the luster of mid-day to objects below,
When, what to my wondering eyes should appear,
But a miniature sleigh, and eight tiny reindeer,
With a little old driver, so lively and quick,
I knew in a moment it must be St. Nick.

More rapid than eagles his coursers they came,
and he whistled, and shouted, and called them by name:
"Now, Dasher! now, Dancer! now, Prancer and Vixen!
On, Comet! on, Cupid! on Donner and Blitzen!
To the top of the porch! to the top of the wall!
Now dash away! dash away! dash away all!"

As dry leaves that before the wild hurricane fly,
When they meet with an obstacle, mount to the sky,
So up to the house-top the coursers they flew,
With the sleigh full of toys, and St. Nicholas too.
And then, in a twinkling, I heard on the roof,
The prancing and pawing of each little hoof.

As I drew in my head, and was turning around,
Down the chimney St. Nicholas came with a bound.
He was dressed all in fur, from his head to his foot,
And his clothes were all tarnished with ashes and soot;
a bundle of toys he had flung on his back,
And he looked like a peddler just opening his pack.

His eyes--how they twinkled! his dimples how merry!
His cheeks were like roses, his nose like a cherry!
His droll little mouth was drawn up like a bow,
And the beard on his chin was as white as the snow;

The stump of a pipe he held tight in his teeth,
And the smoke it encircled his head like a wreath;
He was chubby and plump--a right jolly old elf--
And I laughed when I saw him, in spite of myself.

A wink of his eye and a twist of his head
Soon gave me to know I had nothing to dread.
He spoke not a word, but went straight to his work,
And filled all the stockings; then turned with a jerk,

And laying a finger aside of his nose,
And giving a nod, up the chimney he rose.
He sprang to his sleigh, to his team gave a whistle,
And away they all flew like the down of a thistle.

But I heard him exclaim ere he drove out of sight,
"Happy Christmas to all, and to all a good night!"

ACTIVITIES

1. **STORY CIRCLE.** Have the children make up their own version of **THE NIGHT BEFORE CHRISTMAS**. Have them sit in a circle. Pick one child to begin the story and go clock-wise around the circle, allowing everyone a chance to add to the story. You may have to limit each child's contribution to one story event (some children are avid storytellers!).
2. **SEASONS.** This play was set at Christmas time, which is in the winter. Discuss each of the four seasons. What is its effect on nature? What is its psychological effect on humans? Do we feel as excited about the beginning of fall as we do about the beginning of spring? Why or why not?
3. **HOLIDAYS.** When someone wishes you "Happy Holidays," they may not be just talking about Christmas. Christians celebrate the birth of Christ as Christmas, Jews celebrate Hanukkah, and people of many faiths celebrate the Santa Claus part of Christmas. New Year's Day is also a part of the holiday season. How do your students celebrate the Holidays? Possibly you have different faiths and cultures represented in your class.
4. **HEROS, VILLAINS, CONFLICT AND PLOT.** There are many different types of stories (which utilize many different types of plot structures). Some are high in adventure, some are not; some cover a time period of many years, others may take place in a span of a half hour. The story of this play is called a "slice of life" story. The plot involves an isolated period of time in the lives of the characters. Most story plots involve heroes and villains (Dorothy VS Wicked Witch of the West), conflict and resolution (the Witch tries to hurt Dorothy but Dorothy melts her with water), and subplots (The stories of the Scarecrow, Tinman and Lion). This play is different. There are no villains, the conflict (if there is one) is in the anxiety of the children whether they've been good enough this year, and there are no subplots. It's just a typical (?) Christmas Eve day in the lives of the family. If a "slice of life" story was made about your family, what day of the year would be the most interesting? Have the children write a story using their family members as characters. It could be about a real event that took place or an imaginary one.
5. **SANTA, CHRIST, HANUKKAH.** Jews do not believe Jesus Christ was the prophesied Messiah so they do not celebrate his birth as do Christians. Santa Claus has very little to do with Christ's birth--why do your students think few Jews believe in Santa Claus? Your Jewish students may be able to shed light on this subject. Should we "feel sorry" for our Jewish friends or think they're "weird" because they don't celebrate Christmas? Do your students think Jewish children feel sorry for their Christian friends who don't celebrate Yom Kippur or Rosh Hashana?





