

## Teacher's Notes



### *The Christmas Train*

Written by Mike Lucas

Illustrated by Sofya Karmazina

Teacher's Notes by Bec Kavanagh

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### LEARNING OUTCOMES

#### RECOMMENDED FOR

Pre-school & primary aged readers (ages 3+, grades P-2)

#### KEY CURRICULUM AREAS

- Learning areas: History, English
- General capabilities:
  - AC9HSFK02
  - AC9EFLA02
  - AC9E1LA04

### THEMES

- Family
- Celebration
- Christmas
- Holidays
- Magic
- Anticipation

### SYNOPSIS

It's the night before Christmas, and all over the world children are waiting in wonder for the Christmas Train, which arrives with a whistle and a puff of smoke.

The Christmas Train takes its passengers past people celebrating – from carollers to gingerbread houses and candlelight until they finally arrive (past the polar bears) to the North Pole, where Santa and his reindeer await.

The presents are packed, the reindeer are ready, and soon Santa takes off on his sleigh, dropping the children back home in their beds. But wait, what is that noise? Is it the stomp of a boot? Stay quiet as a mouse – Christmas is here!



## ABOUT THE AUTHOR/ ILLUSTRATOR

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**Mike Lucas** is a writer and owns a bookshop in Adelaide. In 2017 he was the lead organiser of the first ever Adelaide Festival of Children's Books. He has previously published several picture books including *Olivia's Voice*, a 2018 CBCA Notable title, *Bad Herbert*, *Let's Build a House* and *Let's Build a Backyard*. His debut YA novel, *What We All Saw*, was published in 2022.

**Sofya Karmazina** is a Sydney-based book designer and illustrator, who is passionate about great stories and children's books. She draws both digitally and using traditional media. All of Sofya's work is driven by curiosity and a perseverance to achieve the best results.

## THEMES

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### Christmas and Holidays

Christmas is a big event! But not everyone celebrates Christmas or celebrates it in the same way as other people. While this book can be used as a fun storytime in the lead up to the holidays, it also offers an opportunity to invite students to share their own experiences of Christmas and the other holidays their families celebrate.

### Family and Community

Christmas is a time where families of all kinds come together to celebrate. For some families this means celebrating their religion, while for others it means barbeques or picnics on the beach. Some people don't celebrate Christmas, and for some it's just time off work. What does Christmas mean to you?

## WRITING STYLE

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Mike Lucas uses simple rhyming couplets to create rhythm in the text. The rhyme in these couplets is an end rhyme, meaning that the rhyme is found in the last word of each line. Look at the following line and underline the end rhyme:

The elves wave and cheer, for their work is now done.  
They have built, wrapped and packed gifts for everyone!

Compare and contrast the rhyme in this book to a similar rhyming structure from another book you've read. Discuss the way that rhyme is used to create rhythm in a story by getting students to clap along as you read.



## COMPREHENSION

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- Where does the Christmas Train go?
- Who is the man in the big red suit?
- What are some of the ways people are celebrating Christmas in the story?
- How do the children get back to their beds?
- How would you describe the feeling of waiting for Christmas morning?
- What are some of the classic Christmas images shown in the illustrations?
- What are some of the sounds of Christmas described in the book?
- Is the Christmas Train real, or was it a dream?

## WRITING EXERCISE

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Come up with a rhyme for the following Christmas words and then use your favourite pair to write your own rhyming couplet.

- Elf
- Santa
- Presents
- Cake
- Tree
- Sleigh

Use your rhyming couplet to make a Christmas card for one of your friends.

## ILLUSTRATION STYLE

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Sofya Karmazina's illustrations capture the traditional Christmas excitement – snow, sparkles and decorations everywhere. Because the story takes place the night before Christmas, she uses a variety of blues to show the darkening sky as well as the chill in the air. The red of the train and the yellow of the window lights and fairy lights dotted around are a warm contrast, which helps to create a sense of cosy wonder in the reader. Discuss the way that colour can be used to create emotion in readers or to show the emotions of characters.



## CREATIVE ACTIVITIES

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- What do you and your family celebrate? Draw a picture of your favourite annual celebration.
- The Christmas Train takes its passengers past all kinds of celebrations – singing, skating, baking. Share something that your family likes to do each Christmas.
- In the story, the elves have packed presents for everyone, but not everyone has enough to celebrate Christmas. Many organisations now run an annual reverse advent calendar, where you give one item a day for twelve days rather than receiving one. When all of the items are collected they are donated to families who need them. As a class, work together to run a reverse advent calendar drive at your school. Think about ways that you can make it special, and encourage the whole school to get involved. Some organisations who run an annual collection are listed below, but there will be others more specific to your area!
  - Foodbank
  - Djarra (run a reverse advent calendar)
  - Smith Family

## RELATED READING

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*The Polar Express*

By Chris Van Allsburg

*An Aussie Night Before Christmas*

By Yvonne Morrison

*Reindeer's Christmas Surprise*

By Sue deGennaro

