

READ★PRAY★WONDER★PLAY

A GUIDE TO SHARING STORIES WITH CHILDREN

The Worst Christmas Ever

By Kathleen Long Bostrom & Guy Porfirio

This story of family, transitions, and traditions could be a helpful conversation starter for those experiencing events that make celebrating feel difficult. While the story focuses on Matthew's family's move to a new state, the universal emotions of sadness and unfamiliarity that Matthew feels would apply to many childhood life changes. If your family has recently experienced a transition, this could be a good opportunity to check in on how your child is feeling. As you read this book, note that nearly half of the pages have no words, instead telling the story purely with illustrations. Be sure to pause at these pages, wondering together what feelings are expressed, but unwritten, with each image. Before reading, make predictions as to why the author chose the title and whether this story will have a happy or sad ending.



★ ★ WONDER TOGETHER ★ ★

- As Matthew and his family entered their new community, nothing felt right—from church to school—even to a Christmas tree farm. When have you had a time when you were in a new place where everything felt different (and maybe not right)? Where is a place where things always feel right for you?
- Of the two children in the story, Lucy and Matthew, which are you more like? Why?
- Although the book is called, *The Worst Christmas Ever*, it ends with Matthew declaring it the “Best Christmas ever.” Were you surprised by this ending to the book? Why or why not?
- Matthew defines a miracle as, “something more wonderful than you could ever imagine.” How would you define a miracle?

★ ★ EXPLORE THE STORY ★ ★

- Recall or imagine what it is like to move to a new place. If the children you're sharing this story with have never moved, have the adults share about their experiences.
- At the end of the story, when Jasper returns after being lost, Matthew used the word “home” twice to describe his return. Come up with a list of things that make the place you live feel like home.
- *With Younger Children:* draw a picture of something that makes Christmas special in your home.
- *With Older Children:* In two different instances in the story, Matthew exclaims “Jabberwocky!” This word comes from a poem by Lewis Carroll. Look up the original poem and consider why you think the author chose to use that word.

PRAY

God of new beginnings, it can be hard to leave something familiar to start something new, yet we know that no matter what or who we leave, you are always with us. May we find courage, seek community, and be on the lookout for your miracles wherever we go. Amen.



THE
PC(USA)
STORE

DISCOVER MORE

www.pcusastore.com/FlyawayBooksGuides

★ ★ DIG DEEPER ★ ★

All children experience transitions, whether they are small, expected shifts (such as progressing to the next grade level or school) or bigger, unforeseen changes (such as moving to a new place or experiencing a family change like divorce). These new realities are often highlighted around the holidays, when things may not remain “the way we’ve always done it.” Children often think that the way things happen in their family is the only way to celebrate. Explore customs and traditions using some of the ideas below or ones of your own:

- Visit another church during the Advent and Christmas season, either for a regular worship service or a special event. Notice things that are different as well as things that feel familiar.
- Explore how Christmas is celebrated in different areas of the US and the world. If your norm is a “white (snowy) Christmas” perhaps explore traditions in the southern hemisphere where Christmas falls during the summer (or vice-versa).

Finding your place in a new community presents both challenges and opportunities. In *The Worst Christmas Ever*, Matthew’s family volunteered for a special role in their church’s nativity even though they had just come to the area a few months ago. New neighbors helped search when Jasper ran away, and when he returned to them, the pastor and church folks shared their joy. At the same time, you don’t have to be new to a place to embrace an opportunity to try something new! Whether your family has deep roots in your community or are newcomers, explore different opportunities for connecting with people and organizations such as:

- Seeking out ways to volunteer
- Attending community events
- Organizing a block party or neighborhood picnic
- Participating in a fun run or 5K race/walk to support a cause close to your heart

MORE TO READ & DO

CLICK THE LINKS BELOW TO LEARN MORE

ADDITIONAL DOWNLOADABLE RESOURCE FOR *THE WORST CHRISTMAS EVER*

- Download the [Coloring Sheet](#)

ADDITIONAL BOOKS FOR HOLIDAYS & CELEBRATIONS

- [The Night of His Birth](#), by Katherine Paterson & Lisa Aisato
- [Home by Another Way](#), by Barbara Brown Taylor & Melanie Cataldo
- [Growing in God’s Love: A Story Bible](#), edited by Elizabeth F. Caldwell & Carol A. Wehrheim
- [Baptism Promises](#), by Carol A. Wehrheim & Roz Fulcher
- [Dedication Promises](#), by Carol A. Wehrheim & Roz Fulcher
- [Psalms of Wonder: Poems from the Book of Songs](#), by Carey Wallace & Khoa Le - [Also Available in Spanish](#)

Guide written by Becky D’Angelo-Veitch and created in partnership with PC(USA)’s initiative “[Around the Table](#)” (pcusa.org/aroundthetable).



THE
PC(USA)
STORE

DISCOVER MORE

www.pcusastore.com/FlyawayBooksGuides