

Two Short Christmas Stories

1. A Story of Christmas Kindness

Adapted from Harriet Beecher Stowe's story:
The Good Fairy

2. Christmas in America in 1776

Adapted from Anne Hollingsworth Wharton's story:
Christmas in Seventeen Seventy-Six

LEVEL B2



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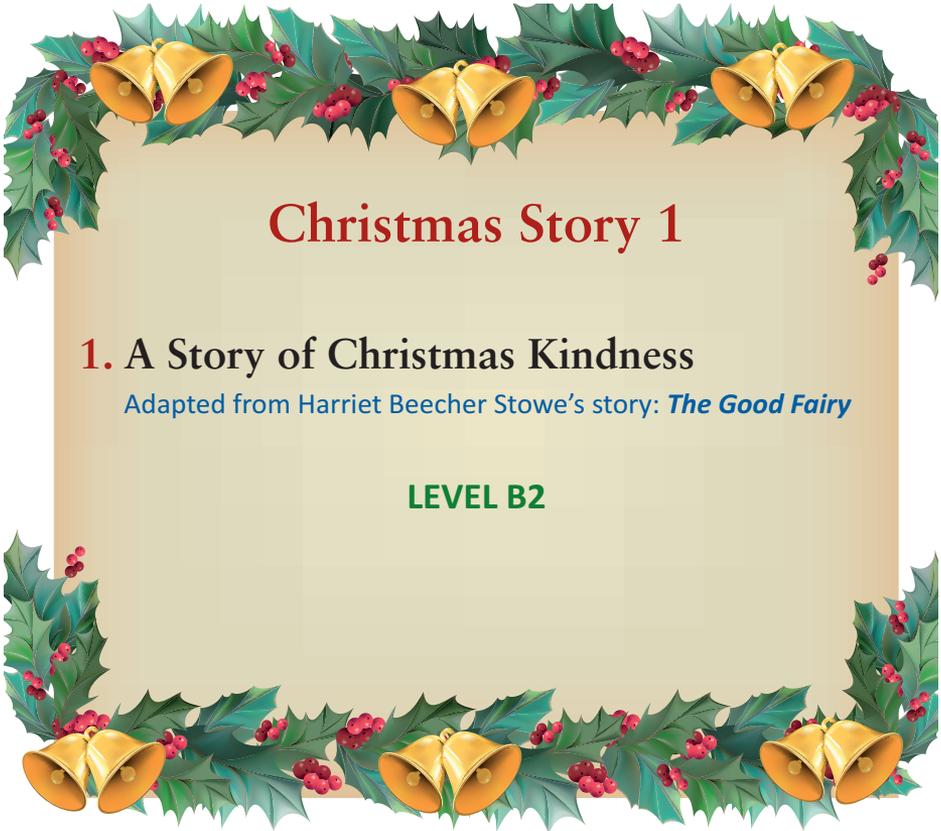
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Christmas Story 1

1. A Story of Christmas Kindness

Adapted from Harriet Beecher Stowe's story: *The Good Fairy*

LEVEL B2

CHAPTER 1

A Dilemma

Preview Questions

1. How do you feel about giving gifts at Christmas?
2. Is it difficult to find presents for people who have everything?



“Oh dear! Christmas is in a fortnight, and I have got to think up ideas for presents for everybody!” declared young Ellen Stuart, as she leaned lazily back in her chair.

“Dear me, it’s so boring! Everybody has got everything that they could possibly want.”

“Don’t worry” said her confidante, Miss Lester, in a comforting tone. “You have the money to buy anything you fancy; and when every shop and store is glittering with all kinds of wonderful things, surely you’ll find everyone the perfect gift.”

“Well, now, just listen. To begin with, there’s Mamma. What can I get for her? I have thought of ever so many things. She has three hairbrushes, lots of bottles of perfume, two or three gold chains, two jewellery boxes of different designs. And then, as for rings, brooches, earrings and other such things, I should think she is sick of the sight of them. I certainly am!” Ellen said, gazing at the many rings on her fingers.

Ellen’s statement seemed rather confusing to her confidante and there was a silence for a few moments, until Ellen, yawning, continued: “And then there are my cousins, Jane and Mary; I suppose they will arrive with a whole load of presents. And Mrs. B. will send me something; she did last year. And then there are my cousins, William and Tom. I must get them something; and I wouldn’t mind if I only knew what to get.”

“Well,” said Ellen’s aunt, who had been sitting quietly knitting in a corner during this speech, “it’s a pity that you weren’t around when I was a girl. Presents did not fly about in those days as they do now. I remember, when I was ten years old, my father gave me a most marvellously ugly sugar dog for a Christmas gift and I was perfectly delighted with it. Getting any kind of present was such a novelty.”

“Dear Aunt, how delighted I would be if I had such an undemanding person to get presents for! But to keep on getting presents for people who have more than they know what to do with, to add to their collection of pictures, books and jewellery, is really too much to ask of me! Well, I wish that I were not sick and tired with having everything in the world that has been given to me.”

Review Questions

1. What is Ellen’s dilemma?
2. Why does Ellen’s aunt refer to an ‘ugly sugar dog’?

Workbook

- ❖ *Glossary*
- ❖ *Vocabulary Building Exercises*
- ❖ *Reading Comprehension Questions*

A Story of Christmas Kindness

Chapter 1

fortnight *n* two weeks

confidante *n* sb you trust and share your thoughts, feelings, secrets with

tone *n* the way sb speaks that expresses their mood or feelings

fancy *v* like, want

glitter *v* to have small lights or bright colours on the surface of sth

brooch *n* a piece of jewellery worn on a blouse, dress or coat etc

gaze *v* look at sth or sb for a long time as though you are thinking deeply about it

marvellously *adv* very, in a really good way

delighted *adj* very happy

novelty *n* sth that is new, different or unusual

undemanding *adj* easily happy or satisfied, not asking for or needing much

Chapter 2

outburst *n* a sudden show of emotion or feeling

point sb in the right direction *exp* show or tell someone how to do sth

afford *v* have enough money to buy or do sth

assure *v* strongly say that sth is true to make someone believe it

laundry *n* dirty clothes that need to be washed

appetite *n* the feeling that you are happy to eat something

fever *n* when your body is too hot because you are sick

self-denial *n* when you stop yourself having sth that you need or want

dozen *n* twelve

sensation *n* an amazing experience or event

Chapter 3

prey on sb's mind *exp* for sth that keeps worrying sb and they can't stop thinking about it

on end *adv* continuing without stopping for a period of time

plump *adj* a little bit fat but not in an unattractive way

good-natured *adj* usually happy, friendly and in a good mood

wonder *v* to think about sth that you aren't sure about and ask yourself questions about it

Chapter 4

miserable *adj* depressing, unhappy, in bad condition

rheumatism *n* an illness that makes it painful to use parts of the body, especially the hands and fingers

tremble *v* to shake, make small movements especially when frightened or sick

charity *n* free help or money that is given to those that really need it

knit *v* make clothes out of wool

stockings *n(pl)* warm covering for the legs, usually worn under trousers, a skirt or dress

coal *n* a hard black substance taken from underground that is made from very old wood and burned to create heat

plead *v* ask sb in a very strong way to do sth that you really want or to ask their permission

starve *v* be very ill or even die because you are so hungry

give sb the go-ahead *exp* give sb permission to do something

spoil *adj* for sb who has been given everything they want

The Author

Harriet Beecher Stowe

Harriet Elisabeth Beecher Stowe (1811-1896) was an American author and abolitionist. She came from the Beecher family, a famous religious family.

Harriet Elisabeth Beecher Stowe became best known for her novel *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (1852), which depicts the harsh conditions experienced by enslaved African Americans. The book reached an audience of millions as a novel and play, and became influential in the United States and in Great Britain, energizing anti-slavery forces in the American North, while provoking widespread anger in the South.

She wrote 30 books, including novels, three travel memoirs, and collections of articles and letters. She was one of the most influential women of the 19th century.

(https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Harriet_Beecher_Stowe)

Christmas or *The Good Fairy* by Harriet Elisabeth Beecher Stowe was first printed on December 26, 1850, in the *National Era*, the abolitionist newspaper.

This Christmas story reminds us the importance of choosing the right gift for each of our friends and loved ones and the joy of seeing their appreciation when they receive their presents.