



TEACHERS' NOTES

RECOMMENDED FOR

Pre-prep and lower-middle primary (ages 3-8)

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KEY CURRICULUM AREAS

- **Learning areas:** English, The Arts and SEL
- **General capabilities:** Literacy, critical and creative thinking, personal and social capability

REASONS FOR STUDYING THIS BOOK

- Draw connections between personal experiences and the worlds of texts, and share responses with others
- Understand that imaginative and informative texts have different purposes
- Explore the different contribution of words and images to meaning in stories
- Identify, discuss and respond to features of texts including events and characters
- Use reading comprehension strategies
- Create short texts
- Explore ideas, experiences, observations and imagination to create visual artworks

THEMES

- Friendship, family, Australian culture, summer, Christmas, family and cultural traditions,

PREPARED BY

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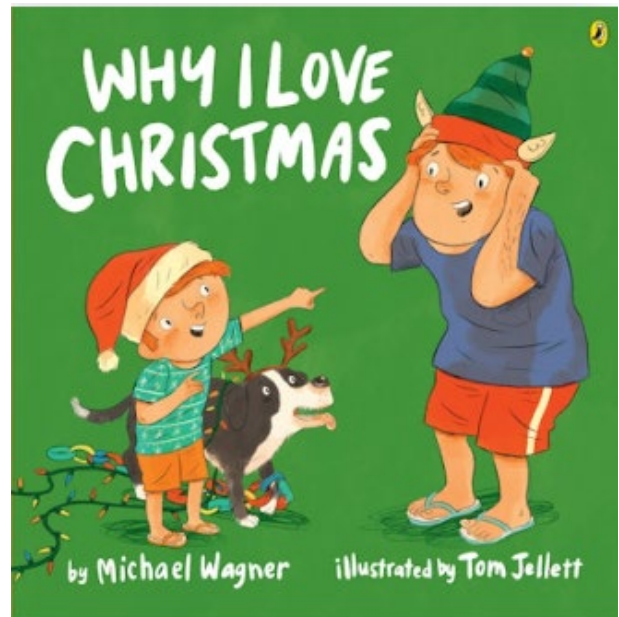
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Why I Love Christmas

Michael Wagner

Illustrated by Tom Jellett

PLOT SUMMARY

Do you know what the best time of the year is? I do. It's easy. CHRISTMAS! I love it so much. And here's why.

From fake snow in the heat of summer to kids busking carols, from late night drives to see the lights to dogs wearing reindeer antlers – an Australian Christmas is unique.

In this book Christmas is for everyone. It's all about sharing traditions and spending time with the people we love and missing some people too.

A perfect book to share from the team who bought us the much-loved *Dirt by Sea*, *Why I Love Footy* and *Why I Love Summer*.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Michael Wagner is a children's author, speaker and storyteller. He writes for early childhood and for older children, and runs the publishing venture Billy Goat Books. Some of his most-loved picture books include *Why I Love Footy*, *Why I love Summer* and *Dirt by Sea* illustrated by Tom Jellett.

Prior to becoming a children's author, Michael played in a band that almost became famous, spent ten years working as a radio broadcaster with the ABC, wrote and produced award-winning animation for television, and wrote and performed comedy.

Tom Jellett is an Australian book and editorial illustrator based in Sydney. Some of his work includes the Sporty Kids and The Besties series written by Felice Arena, *Grandpa's Big Adventure* and *Grandpa's Space Adventure* written by Paul Newman, his picture books with Justine Clarke and Arthur Baysting, *The Gobbledygook is Eating a Book* and *The Gobbledygook and the Scribbledynoodle*, and his acclaimed picture books with Michael Wagner *Why I Love Footy*, *Why I Love Summer* and *Dirt by Sea*.

His work can also be seen in a number of magazines and newspapers.

AUTHOR'S INSPIRATION

First of all, I love Christmas, so this book comes from a very authentic place. And what I love best about it is that it's a happy time we can all share together.

Of course, not everyone celebrates Christmas in the same way or even as a religious event, but on a community level, it feels like a time when we put aside our differences and remember what binds us: a belief in simple kindness, and generosity, and gratitude, and peace.

It's also a time to participate in community and family traditions that help to create a sense of a shared history.

Every event Mitch describes in the *Why I Love Christmas* comes from my own family's experiences. We used to give our kids advent calendars when they were little (we still do, actually, just not with chocolate in them anymore), we always buy and decorate a real Christmas tree, we close off our street for the annual street party, we invite all the cousins over to decorate gingerbread houses, we make home-made gifts and cards, we often visit the famous street lights where people have elaborately decorated their houses for everyone to enjoy, and our extended family always attends carols in the park. That's a lot of traditions to get through, but it's worth the effort.

Then, on the big day itself, we try to slow down the gift giving so it's not too much of a frenzy, we have a little toast at lunch for the people we wish could be still with

us, we laugh, we eat, we sing, we play games and we have a wonderful day. Then, when it's over, we leave feeling full and happy and tired and glad.

This book describes not only how Mitch sees Christmas, but how my family and I do too. I hope your next Christmas is full of kindness, love, joy and togetherness.

Questions

1. Do you celebrate Christmas? Or is there an important festival or family event that you celebrate towards the end of the year? What other celebrations do you have throughout the year?
2. Does your family have traditions for important events? Can you share what you do and why? Are there speeches, greetings, songs, decorations, special recipes, different clothing, gifts or traditions?
3. What is your experience of the end of the year - with all the excitement of school holidays and summer? Can you describe your favourite things to do with your friends and family?

Activities

1. Draw a picture of you and your family or friends celebrating a significant event. Include any decorations or elements that make it special.
2. Look up with your teacher the different cultural events that fall around the same time as Christmas. What are the similarities/differences in how people celebrate?
3. Can you tell a story or draw a comic or piece of art to show us your favourite things to do in the school holidays?

WRITING AND DRAWING STYLE

1. Sometimes the words and pictures have to work together to tell the whole story

For example, when Mum says, 'I guess you can never have too many lights', how do you think she is saying that? Try to work out what she's feeling from the context (the words and pictures that surround the words). What is the look on her face telling you?

Do you think there are too many lights? What do you think their pet dog thinks about it?

2. How do the images in this book help you to understand what's happening in the text? How has the text left room for the pictures to tell the story?



For example, when a character at Christmas lunch says, 'I think Santa was more scared of him!' what is she referring to? Is she being serious or humorous? How do you know from the illustration?

3. There is so much humour in Tom's illustrations. Do you leave treats out for Santa and his reindeer on Christmas Eve? Look at the image of Mitch with Santa's treats. Mitch looks sneaky! What do you think is happening here? What do you think the dog thinks about it?
4. The family dog is a major character in the illustrations but he doesn't appear in the text.

Look closely at all the scenes he appears in. Write a diary from his point of view about all the events of Christmas and what he thinks about each scene he is in.

5. Look carefully at the illustrations throughout the book. Can you see what Mitch chose for his sister as a present? Does she like it? How do you know?
6. Mitch says that Christmas Day is the 'happiest, kindest, nicest, most fun day of the whole year'.

Find an example of something happy, kind, nice and fun that is happening in the illustrations of Christmas lunch.

FOR OLDER STUDENTS

7. This story is told in the present tense. Choose one page of text and change it to past tense.
8. The story in the text is from Mitch's point of view and in his voice. This is called 'first person narration' (you will see words like 'we', 'I', 'ours').

Choose one page and see if you can write it in the 'third person' – that's when the narrator is not someone in the story and is telling us about what happens (you will use words like 'they', 'he', 'her', 'their').

9. All writing has a 'tone'. Some ways to describe tone might be 'formal' or 'informal', 'humorous' or 'serious', 'enthusiastic' or 'matter-of-fact'. Mitch is excited so we could say that his tone is enthusiastic and informal.

What give you clues to the tone (look at word choice and sentence structure, and in written language sometimes we use punctuation to show tone as well)?

PRE-READING QUESTIONS

1. Read the writing on the back of the book (the blurb). What do you expect the book will be about?

Do you have any questions? Are those questions answered in the story?

2. What can you tell about the book when you look at the cover? 'Characters' are the important people, animals or things in the story, 'setting' is the place where it happens and a 'theme' is the idea or subject. Can you guess at the characters, setting and theme?

KEY STUDY TOPICS

Social Emotional Learning

1. Name a happy and a sad emotion that you think Mitch is feeling at Christmas lunch? Can you make an infographic with that emotion at the centre and surround it with ten things that make you feel that way?
2. Look at the scene of the cousins making gingerbread houses. Have a look at everyone's expressions. What do you think they are feeling? Write down each feeling and surround the word with ten things that might make you feel that way.
3. Mitch and his family miss Grandpa very much, especially at Christmas when everyone is together. In what ways do they remember him and keep his memory alive at Christmas? How do they celebrate him?
4. The best thing about Christmas is everyone being together. Mitch has a big extended family. What is your family like? Can you draw a family tree, drawing pictures of each person.
5. Some books aim to leave you with a message as well as enjoy the story. What is the 'moral of the story' or the message here? If you wrote a book, what would be your message?

English

1. In Australia, lots of kids get their photos taken with Santa. Do you have a photo with Santa? Did you tell Santa what you wanted that year?

Write an imaginative text about the most exciting thing that could happen if you met Santa.

2. Have you ever given a speech? Dad's speech is short and sweet, but very meaningful. If you were giving a Christmas speech to your family, what would you say?
3. Different countries celebrate Christmas in different ways. In Australia it's summer, but on the other side of the world it's winter in December. Can you think of Christmas traditions that refer to the European Christmas (fake snow, Santa's warm clothing, reindeer, beanies, for example). Think



about the differences between the two seasons of Christmas.

Which do you prefer – a winter or a summer Christmas? Write a persuasive text or a compare and contrast table explaining your choice.

4. Is your Christmas week the same each year like Mitch's? Write a diary of your Christmas week with drawings or stories of things that happen on each day.
5. Have you ever experienced a 'gift-giving' frenzy? Tell the class what it was like.
6. What's your favourite Christmas joke? If you don't have one, choose a favourite from a book like Penguin Book's *These Jokes Will Annoy Everyone You Know at Christmas*.

Present it to the class and see who can get the loudest laugh!

6. Using your research from earlier about different cultural traditions that mark the end of the year, choose one (that is not yours) and create a poster summarising what you know. Draw any symbols or items that are relevant, draw scenes from the celebrations.

Find someone in class who has researched a different tradition and share your information.

7. Do you know the story of the First Christmas? Read a book describing why people celebrate (for example, *The First Christmas* by Jess Racklyeft). Turn the story into a storyboard or comic, with dialogue in quote bubbles.
8. Have a Merry Christmas!

The Arts

1. Make your own advent calendar by cutting out windows from stiff paper and folding them back. Glue another sheet to the back, number the windows and decorate!
2. Do you have a pet? Have you ever dressed them up? Design the very best pet Christmas outfit. Make sure to draw a picture of it being modelled by your favourite dog, cat, rabbit or pony . . . or whatever your dream pet might be.
3. Do you want to make Christmas cards just like Mitch and his sister? Fold some paper and pens and draw Santa, or even make potato stamp cards!

Grab a potato, shaped cookie cutter, paint and paper (your teacher will help you to cut the shape out with a knife).

<https://www.bbcgoodfood.com/howto/guide/how-make-potato-stamps>

You can even make your own potato stamp wrapping paper.

4. One of Mitch's favourite things is fake snow in the middle of summer. Learn how to make some with just cornflour, bicarbonate of soda and water.

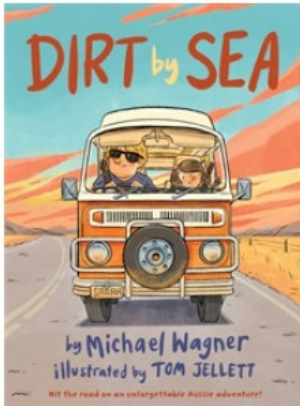
<https://www.bbcgoodfood.com/howto/guide/how-make-fake-snow>

5. You can make a paper angel just like the one on Mitch's family tree. Decorate and colour it in however you like.

<https://www.instructables.com/Fast-and-Easy-Paper-Angel/>



FURTHER READING FROM PENGUIN RANDOM HOUSE AUSTRALIA



Dirt by Sea

Honour CBCA Picture Book of the Year

Explore our wonderful coastline and the joy of a family road-trip with Dad and Daisy! Along the way, they will discover all about Australia and much, much more.

Daisy lives in inland Australia with her dad and her grandparents, loving the red-dirt land around her. But when her dad realises she's never seen the beach, they set off on a trip you won't want to miss.

A once-in-a-lifetime father-daughter trip along the Australian coast that was inspired by the first holiday Daisy's dad took with her mum. With a journey map in the endpapers, you or your young ones could even start planning your own Aussie adventure . . .

Activity pack available online

[Teachers' notes available.](#)



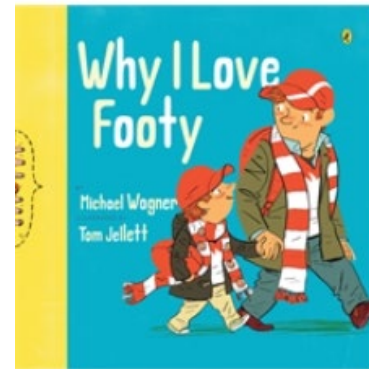
Why I Love Summer

There are four seasons in a year, and they're all awesome, but only one of them gets to be summer!

An ode to a uniquely Australian experience and the joy of family and friends.

Sunny days, weekends at the pool, games in the backyard, daylight until late and long, lovely holidays . . . that's summer, the best season ever.

Activity pack available online



Why I Love Footy

Notable CBCA Picture Book of the Year

There are a bazillion reasons to love footy! These are just my biggest ones . . .

There's the big tackles and amazing marks. There's wearing the scarf and singing the song. But whether your team wins or loses, from the opening bounce to the final siren, the very best thing about footy is that we do it together.

An ode to a uniquely Australian experience and the joy of family and friends.



ORDER FORM

TITLE	AUTHOR	ISBN	AGE	RRP	QTY	TOTAL
Why I Love Christmas	Michael Wagner Tom Jellett	9781761344688	3+	\$19.99		
Dirt by Sea	Michael Wagner Tom Jellett	9781760894061	3+	\$24.99		
Why I Love Summer	Michael Wagner Tom Jellett	9780143783749	3+	\$19.99		
Why I Love Footy	Michael Wagner Tom Jellett	9780143506003	3+	\$44.99		
TOTAL						

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