

KS2 Christmas

Reading Comprehension



Name.....

Story 1

Babushka and the Three Wise Men (an old Russian folk tale)

Many years ago, an old woman named Babushka lived in a tiny cottage far from the city. One snowy evening, just as she was preparing her meal, Babushka heard a knock at the door. She opened it to find three men standing before her. From their rich clothing and fine features, Babushka guessed that they were men of learning who had travelled from far away in the East. They were shivering in the cold, and little icicles hung from their beards. In their arms they each carried packages and these were dusted with snow.



"Oh dear," Babushka said, "you must be freezing out there. Please come in and warm yourselves by my fire."

The three wise men bowed in thanks and followed the woman into her cottage. "Forgive us," one of the men said, "but we have been walking for a long, long time. Tonight our journey ends, for we are going to the place where the King of Kings will be born this very night. We are bringing Him gifts, and we wish only to stop for a while to warm ourselves."

"Of course," Babushka said, "but you must eat something. I have prepared some lovely, hot soup. Please join me." She set a table for the four of them, filling bowls with steaming soup and placing crusty bread in the centre.

They sat down at the table to eat, and the men told Babushka of the joyous birth of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. "We are waiting for the brightest star to rise," they said, "for we will follow its path. The star will guide us to the place where the King of Kings is to be born this very night."

"How I wish I could join you and bring a gift myself," Babushka sighed.

"Come with us, then," the men said heartily. "The King of Kings will welcome you, but we must be on our way soon. Will you come?"

Babushka looked around and frowned. "I cannot leave just now," she said. "I must clean the house and prepare myself, but I will come as soon as I am ready."

With that she bade the men farewell and watched from the cottage door as they set off, following the starlight's path. She waved until she could no longer see them.

Inside, Babushka washed the dishes, swept the floor, dusted and tidied the cottage. She bathed and dressed in her finest clothes, and then, looking around, she began to gather gifts to take to the new-born king. Babushka was a poor, hardworking woman who owned little, but she managed to gather several small toys, some sweets and tiny candles to take with her.

She walked to the door, tightly wrapping her coat and scarf around her to keep out the cold, and set off.

Babushka looked up at the sky, searching for the star that would lead her to the birthplace of the King of Kings. "Oh my," she said, for no matter where she looked, she could not find the star. She had washed and scrubbed and readied herself for a long time, and as she worked, the stars had moved across the sky.

Babushka tried one road. She walked for a while, but eventually she realised she must have taken the wrong turn. She tried a different road, and then another, and another, always searching the sky for the star the wise men had followed.

People say Babushka never did find the right road, and that she is wandering still. And every year, at Christmastime, the children run downstairs to search for the gifts Babushka has left for them as she travels the world, searching for the King of Kings. In every house where a small child lives, the people say, Babushka leaves a gift in honour of each and every child and Jesus Christ, the Son of God, who was born on Christmas Day.

The End

Reading Answers (section 1)

Multiple Choice Section

In this section you will be asked to choose the correct answer from a choice of four.

Circle the answer that you think is correct.

Answer these questions about Babushka's Christmas.

The first one has been done for you.

1. Who lived in a cottage far from the city?

Barbara

Babushka

Bethany

Belinda

2. What was Babushka doing when she heard a knock at the door?

preparing her
meal

having a snooze

washing the pots

reading a book

3. How did Babushka know that the three visitors were men of learning who had travelled from the East?

from the bags of
gold they were
carrying

from the way
they were
shivering

from their rich
clothing and fine
features

from their kind
faces

4. What hung from the men's beards?

ribbons

jewellery

baubles

little icicles

Written Answers Section

In this section you will need to write one or more sentences to answer the questions.

5. Why did the wise men stop at Babushka's house?

6. What food did Babushka give the wise men?

7. Who were the wise men going to visit?

8. What were the wise men waiting for?

9. What gifts did Babushka take with her for the new-born king?

10. Why was Babushka unable to find her way to the birth place of the new-born king?

11. Did Babushka ever find the new-born king?

12. Why do people think Babushka leaves gifts in every house where a small child lives?

You have finished section 1. Now move on to story 2.

The Legend of the Christmas Tree

Most children have seen a Christmas tree, and some may know that the lovely custom of hanging gifts on its branches comes from Germany. However, few will have heard the story that is told to German children, that explains how this custom started. The story is called "The Little Stranger."



In a small cottage on the edge of a forest lived a poor woodcutter. He had a wife and two children who helped him in his work. The boy's name was Valentine, and the girl was called Mary. They were good children, and made their parents very proud. One snowy winter's evening, this happy little family were sitting quietly round the fire eating their supper when suddenly, they heard a tap on the window and the voice of a small child calling,

"Oh, let me in, pray! I am a poor little child, with nothing to eat. I have no home to go to and I shall die of cold and hunger unless you let me in."

Valentine and Mary jumped up from the table and ran to open the door, saying,

"Come in, poor little child! We don't have much to give you, but whatever we have we will share with you."

The stranger-child came in and warmed his frozen hands and feet at the fire, and the children gave him a delicious bowl of porridge.

"You must be tired, too, poor child! Lie down on our bed; we can sleep on the bench for one night." said the kindly children.

So they took their little guest into their sleeping-room, laid him on the bed, covered him over, and said to each other,

"How thankful we ought to be! We have warm rooms and a cosy bed, but this poor child has only heaven for his roof and the cold earth for his sleeping-place."

When their father and mother went to bed, Mary and Valentine lay on the bench near the fire, feeling happy that the stranger-child was safely tucked away in a warm, comfortable bed.

These kind children had not slept many hours before Mary awoke and softly whispered to her brother,

"Valentine, wake up and listen to the sweet music under the window."

Then Valentine rubbed his eyes and listened. It was sweet music indeed, and sounded like beautiful voices singing to the tones of a harp:

"O holy Child, we greet thee! bringing
Sweet strains of harp to aid our singing.

"Thou, holy Child, in peace art sleeping,
While we our watch without are keeping.

"Blessed be the house wherein thou liest.
Happiest on earth, to heaven the highest."

As the children listened, their hearts filled with joy. Then they stepped softly to the window to see who might be outside. They saw a group of children standing in front of the house, clothed in silver garments and holding golden harps in their hands. As the children were still gazing out of the window, they felt a light tap. Immediately they turned round and there stood the stranger-child, clad in a glowing, golden gown with a gleaming halo round his curling hair.

"I am the little Christ-child," he said, "who wanders through the world bringing peace and happiness to good children. You took me in and cared for me when you thought I was a poor child, and now you shall have my blessing for what you have done."

A fir tree grew near the house; and from this he broke a twig, which he planted in the ground, saying,

"This twig shall become a tree, and shall bring forth fruit each year for you."

No sooner had he done this than he vanished, and with him the little choir of angels. But the fir branch grew and became a Christmas tree, and on its branches hung golden apples and silver nuts every Christmas-tide.

This is the story told to German children about their beautiful Christmas trees and although we know that the real little Christ-child is safe in heaven by his Father's side, we can learn from this story that whenever we help a child or adult in distress, it is very much as though we are helping Christ himself.

The End

Reading Answers (section 2)

Multiple Choice Section

Answer these questions about The Legend of the Christmas Tree

The first one has been done for you.

1. Who lived in a small cottage on the edge of the forest?

a poor farmer

a poor
woodcutter

a rich lady

a wicked king

2. What were the names of the woodcutter's children?

Valerie and
Melvin

Victoria and
May

Verity and
Malcolm

Valentine and
Mary

3. What were the woodcutter's family doing when they heard a tap on the window?

reading stories

playing cards

eating supper

watching TV

4. What did the stranger-child do when he came in from the cold?

he warmed his
hands and feet
by the fire

he played with
Valentine and
Mary

he took off his
hat and coat

he ate a bowl of
hot soup

5. What did Valentine and Mary give the stranger-child to eat?

soup

toast

stew

porridge

Written Answers Section

In this section you will need to write one or more sentences to answer the questions.

6. Why did Valentine and Mary think they should be thankful?

7. Where did Valentine and Mary sleep?

8. Why did Mary want Valentine to wake up?

9. How did the Mary and Valentine feel when they heard the music?

10. Who did the stranger-child say he really was?

11. Why did the Christ-child give the children his blessing?

12. Who were the singers outside the window?

13. What did the branch of the fir tree grow into?

You have finished story 2. Now move on to story 3.

Story3

The Little Match Girl

It was the night before Christmas. Huge snowflakes fell from the sky and covered the pavements like soft cotton wool. A little girl, bare-headed and barefoot, was out walking in the cold.

Her mother had given her shoes – but they'd been too big for her and she'd lost them crossing the street.

Then a boy had run off with them... Her feet ached with the cold and her hands were all red and numb. But the poor little girl didn't dare go home.



She hadn't yet sold a single box of matches and she was sure her father would beat her. The icy wind pinched at her cheeks and whirled around her neck. Exhausted and chilled to the bone, she found what shelter she could against a wall at the corner of the street. She was so cold, poor girl. If she could just strike one match at least she could warm her fingers a little! "Just one", she thought, "daddy won't even notice".

So she took a match from its box and struck it. The little girl cupped her hands round it and for a moment, it seemed as if she was sitting in front of an iron stove with a warm fire crackling away inside. She would have stretched out her legs to heat them, but suddenly, the stove disappeared. The match had gone out.

The little girl lit another match. This time, it lit up the wall and she could see into the house behind! There was a big table with a pretty tablecloth and candles; all sorts of china crockery and in the middle, a beautiful roast turkey stuffed with chestnuts and apple. And it smelt so good too! The little girl stretched out her arm to taste a little, but all she touched was the cold, grey wall. The banquet was gone and all that was left was the blackened and burnt stump of a match between her fingers.

She lit another match. This time, what did she see but an enormous Christmas tree. Not just any Christmas tree, but the most beautiful tree she had ever seen, sparkling bright with thousands of tiny lights hanging on its branches. Once again, the match went out and the tree disappeared, its tiny lights turning back into the stars.

She lifted her eyes skywards to see a shooting star. She thought of her grandmother, who before she died, told her: "When a star goes out, it means somebody has gone to Heaven".

She struck yet another match - and her grandmother appeared

"Oh grandma!" the little girl cried, "take me with you! I know you'll leave when the match goes out, just like the stove, the roast turkey and the Christmas tree!"

So she struck another match, and another, and another to stop her grandmother from leaving her. She struck a whole handful of matches and her grandmother seemed more beautiful, more real than ever. Then she took the little girl in her arms and the two of them flew away, up towards the stars, where it's never cold.

The next morning, they found the little girl dead from the cold, her tiny body half buried under the snow. On her face she wore a smile, and nobody could guess what she had seen that night, or know how she and her grandmother had gone up to be with the stars.

Reading Answers (section 3)

Multiple Choice Section

Answer these questions about The Little Match Girl

The first one has been done for you.

1. Who was out walking in the cold?

a little boy

a little girl

a little dog

a little cat

2. What was wrong with the little girl's shoes?

they were too
small

they were too
big

they had holes in
them

they were the
wrong colour

3. What was the little girl doing when she lost her shoes?

striking a match

running home

posting a letter

crossing the
street

4. Who ran off with the little girl's shoes?

a girl

a man

a woman

a boy

5. How did the little girl's hands feel?

sore

soft

numb

stiff

Written Answers Section

In this section you will need to write one or more sentences to answer the questions.

6. Why didn't the little girl dare go home?

7. Where did the little girl find shelter?

8. Where did the little girl imagine she was when she struck the **first** match?

9. Name two things the little girl saw when she struck the **second** match?

10. What did the little girl see when she struck the third match?

11. What did the little girl's grandma tell her before she died?

12. Where did the little girl and her grandma fly off to?

13. Why was the little girl smiling at the end of the story?

Well done - you have finished!