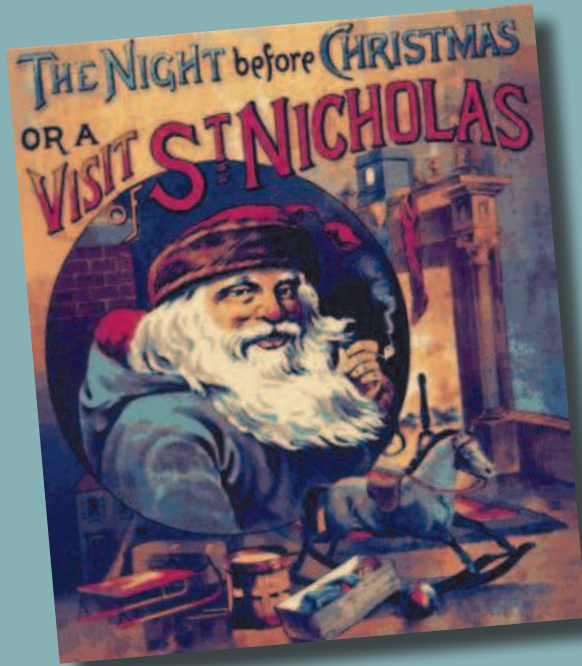


# THE INKWELL

By Lynn Berry

This month, the poem is an oldie but such a classic, if not "the" traditional American holiday poem. Enjoy re-reading this poem, looking for details previously unnoticed. Commonly recognized to be written by Clement Clarke



Moore and originally titled "A Visit From St. Nicholas," the poem, "Twas the Night before Christmas" was first published December 23, 1823 in the Sentinel, a New York newspaper. The poem is known to have been responsible for influencing the creation of the "Americanized" or the modern version of the Santa Claus most have come to know. Imagine that? A poem that influences culture as we know it---it wouldn't have been the first and won't be the last time that poetry and art has shaped culture. Keep writing, keep creating, and keep changing the world.

## Twas the Night before Christmas Poem

Twas the night before Christmas, when all through the house  
Not a creature was stirring, not even a mouse.  
The stockings were hung by the chimney with care,  
In hopes that St Nicholas soon would be there.

The children were nestled all snug in their beds,  
While visions of sugar-plums danced in their heads.  
And mamma in her 'kerchief, and I in my cap,  
Had just settled our brains for a long winter's nap.

When out on the lawn there arose such a clatter,  
I sprang from the bed to see what was the matter.  
Away to the window I flew like a flash,  
Tore open the shutters and threw up the sash.

The moon on the breast of the new-fallen snow  
Gave the lustre of mid-day to objects below.  
When, what to my wondering eyes should appear,  
But a miniature sleigh, and eight tinny reindeer.

With a little old driver, so lively and quick,  
I knew in a moment it must be St Nick.  
More rapid than eagles his coursers they came,  
And he whistled, and shouted, and called them by name!

"Now Dasher! now, Dancer! now, Prancer and Vixen!  
On, Comet! On, Cupid! on, on Donner and Blitzen!  
To the top of the porch! to the top of the wall!  
Now dash away! Dash away! Dash away all!"

As dry leaves that before the wild hurricane fly,  
When they meet with an obstacle, mount to the sky.  
So up to the house-top the coursers they flew,  
With the sleigh full of Toys, and St Nicholas too.

And then, in a twinkling, I heard on the roof  
The prancing and pawing of each little hoof.  
As I drew in my head, and was turning around,  
Down the chimney St Nicholas came with a bound.

He was dressed all in fur, from his head to his foot,  
And his clothes were all tarnished with ashes and soot.  
A bundle of Toys he had flung on his back,  
And he looked like a peddler, just opening his pack.

His eyes-how they twinkled! his dimples how merry!  
His cheeks were like roses, his nose like a cherry!  
His droll little mouth was drawn up like a bow,  
And the beard of his chin was as white as the snow.

The stump of a pipe he held tight in his teeth,  
And the smoke it encircled his head like a wreath.  
He had a broad face and a little round belly,  
That shook when he laughed, like a bowlful of jelly!

He was chubby and plump, a right jolly old elf,  
And I laughed when I saw him, in spite of myself!  
A wink of his eye and a twist of his head,  
Soon gave me to know I had nothing to dread.

He spoke not a word, but went straight to his work,  
And filled all the stockings, then turned with a jerk.  
And laying his finger aside of his nose,  
And giving a nod, up the chimney he rose!

He sprang to his sleigh, to his team gave a whistle,  
And away they all flew like the down of a thistle.  
But I heard him exclaim, ere he drove out of sight,  
"Happy Christmas to all, and to all a good-night!"

---**Writer's Idea:** Write a poem, take a chance, and share your art by sending your poem to the Inkwell. We are always looking for submissions.

---**Writer's Tip:** Be conscious of the unique textures, scents, tastes, and brilliance this holiday provides. Use these sensory details in your poems.

---Please send your original submissions to, (or if you would like a copy of any of the published poems) [InkwellVernonia@gmail.com](mailto:InkwellVernonia@gmail.com) or by mail: PO Box

333 Vernonia, OR 97064. Please include your name and contact information. Write—Express--Expand.

Lynn Berry holds an M.A. in English, specializing in feminist literature and literary criticism. She has spent several years teaching Literature, Composition, Poetry, Creative Writing, and Critical Thinking at various school districts and colleges, and occasionally provides writing workshops.

Wishing you a Merry Christmas



from the Vernonia Dental Team  
622 Bridge Street

Wishing you a  
Happy Holiday!

from  
STORAGE, TOO

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