



# Scripts for Schools

## The Night Before Christmas

Adapted by Lois Walker

An Audience Participation  
Play for the  
Elementary School

**HISTORY:** Clement Clarke Moore (1779 - 1863) wrote the poem "T'was The Night Before Christmas" also called "A Visit from St. Nicholas" in 1822. It is now the tradition in many families to read the poem every Christmas Eve. The poem has redefined our image of Christmas and Santa Claus. Prior to the creation of the poem, St. Nicholas, the patron saint of children, had never been associated with a sleigh or reindeers!

**CHANGE OF TENSE:** The original poem is written in the past tense, as though the author is recalling an experience from the past. This adapted version sets the story in the present, as though Santa's visit is unfolding as the actors perform. The adapted version has also been shortened.

**FORMATTING:** This script has been formatted for a cast of 9: DIRECTOR, ASSISTANT DIRECTOR, and 7 NARRATORS. If you do not have 7 actors to fill the narrator roles, the lines can easily be re-assigned and divided up between the number of actors available.

**STAGING:** Position DIRECTOR and ASSISTANT DIRECTOR downstage R and L (with microphones, if needed) so they can easily relate to the audience and the ASSISTANT DIRECTOR can easily move around the stage to help volunteers with positioning, movement, and mime. NARRATORS can be divided up and positioned wherever there is room and microphones can be shared. The bulk of the center stage area will remain open and be used as the space where you position your volunteers.

**PROPS/COSTUME PIECES:** Nightcaps for Ma and Pa, nightshirt and cap for child, cardboard window frame for child, antler headpieces for reindeer, Santa beard, hat, and toy sack for Santa.

**NOTE:** Before the play begins, slips of paper are given to each audience member. Printed on the paper are the CHORUS 1 and CHORUS 2 texts below. You are going to ask the audience to take part in reading the CHORUS lines aloud throughout the performance of the play. Practice reading both CHORUS 1 AND CHORUS 2 with the audience a few times before starting the play. Text for both can be found on the following page for easy printing.

**CHORUS 1:**

It's the night before Christmas and all  
through the house

We're waiting here quietly, just like a mouse.  
We're looking for Santa and watching because  
We can't fall asleep...  
Till we see what he does!

**CHORUS 2:**

It's the night before Christmas and all  
through the house

We've waited here quietly, just like a mouse.  
It was well worth the waiting and watching  
because

We finally saw him and know what he does.  
And we heard him exclaim, as he rode out of  
sight,

**HAPPY CHRISTMAS TO ALL AND TO ALL -  
A GOOD NIGHT!**

**The Night Before Christmas**  
Original Poem by Clement Clarke Moore

Adapted as an Audience Participation Play by Lois Walker

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**DIRECTOR:** Hello everyone and welcome to our play, "The Night Before Christmas". I'm the director of this play, and I am going to need some help from all of you in the audience. First, I will need all of you to read the CHORUS lines on the papers we handed out to you. Whenever I wave my hand like this (*hold hand high and wave*) that will be your cue to read the CHORUS lines out loud. I'll read along with you so we can all stay together.

**ASSISTANT DIRECTOR:** Hello. I'm the assistant director of this play, and I'm going to need volunteers to come up here on the stage and become characters in our drama. No, not yet! I'll let you know when I need your help.

**DIRECTOR:** And so, we begin! The play starts with CHORUS 1, so find the CHORUS 1 lines on your papers and watch for my waving hand. Now, let's get started...

**ASSISTANT DIRECTOR:** Introducing - "The Night Before Christmas" by Clement Clarke Moore and adapted for performance by Lois Walker. Let the play begin with CHORUS 1!

*(Director waves to audience and leads them in reading aloud the opening CHORUS 1).*

**CHORUS 1:**

It's the night before Christmas and all through the house

We're waiting here quietly, just like a mouse.

We're looking for Santa and watching because

We can't fall asleep...

Till we see what he does!

**NARRATOR 1:** Ma's in her kerchief and Pa's in his cap.

They've both settled down for a long winter's nap.

**ASSISTANT DIRECTOR:** Yes, now I need 2 volunteers to take the parts of Ma and Pa.

*(Volunteers are chosen and brought on stage. Each is given a nightcap to wear and shown where to stand together on the stage).*

**ASSISTANT DIRECTOR:** Now, Ma and Pa, we're going to say that line again. When you hear the words, I want you to put on your caps, yawn and stretch, then settle down on the stage for your nap.

*(The play continues, as volunteers mime the action).*

**NARRATOR 1:** Ma's in her kerchief and Pa's in his cap.  
They've both settled down for a long winter's nap.

*(Ma and Pa mime the words above. Narrators wait for actions to be completed before moving on with the story).*

**NARRATOR 2:** And out on the lawn, I hear such a clatter.  
It's time to explore and see what is the matter!

**NARRATOR 3:** Run to the window - just like a flash.  
Pull open the shutters and throw up the sash!

**ASSISTANT DIRECTOR:** Stop! Now I need a volunteer to take the part of the child who is running to the window and watching for Santa.

*(Volunteer is selected, helped to dress in a nightshirt and cap, and positioned on stage. He/she is given a cardboard window frame to hold up and look through, then shown where to run and stop on the stage).*

**ASSISTANT DIRECTOR:** Now, child volunteer, we're going to say those lines again. When you hear the words, I want you to run, stop, and look through your window frame for Santa.

*(The play continues, as volunteer mimes the action below).*

**NARRATOR 2:** And out on the lawn, I hear such a clatter.

It's time to explore and see what is the matter!

**NARRATOR 3:** Run to the window - just like a flash.

Pull open the shutters and throw up the sash!

**NARRATOR 4:** And what to my wondering eyes now appear?

It's a miniature sleigh and eight tiny reindeer!

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**ALL NARRATORS:** It's a miniature sleigh and eight tiny reindeer!

**ASSISTANT DIRECTOR:** Stop! Now we need volunteers to play Santa and a few of his reindeer.

*(Volunteers are chosen and brought on stage. Santa is given a beard, a Santa hat, and a toy sack. You can choose as many reindeer volunteers as you want or have room for on stage, but eight is probably too many. Three or four might be easier to manage. Position Santa and reindeer on stage. Reindeer can be asked to prance in place, Santa can smile, jiggle his belly, and wave).*

**ASSISTANT DIRECTOR:** Right! We're ready now. Let's hear those lines again.

*(The play continues, as volunteer mimes the action).*

**NARRATOR 4:** And what to my wondering eyes now appear?

It's a miniature sleigh and eight tiny reindeer!