



Christmas in the Trenches

John McCutcheon , Henri Sorensen (Illustrator)

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Set in the trenches during World War I, this haunting story is based on a true event known as the Christmas Truce and is adapted by award-winning songwriter John McCutcheon. Full color. With CD

Christmas in the Trenches Details

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Author : John McCutcheon , Henri Sorensen (Illustrator)

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From Reader Review Christmas in the Trenches for online ebook

Denise says

I'm reading several children's books about the WWI truce of 1914. The historical & author's notes at the end of each are so interesting. This book is based on a song written my McCutcheon.

From his note: "Wars don't start on battlefields. They begin in people's hearts. And that is where wars can be ended."

Ruth says

A loving, respectful, reverent, and hopeful retelling of the famous Christmas Eve truce between British and German troops along the No Man's Land border during World War I in the trenches. A story everyone needs to know and internalize.

Eloise Davis says

It was Christmas night, all of the presents were unwrapped, the snow covered the ground, and Thomas and Nora were curled up on their Grandpa's lap. The story begins with Thomas asking his Grandpa if he has a favorite Christmas. Grandpa begins telling his grandchildren about his favorite Christmas in Liverpool, 1914, during the Great War. The children are shocked to discover that their sweet Grandpa was in the war and they express their curiosity. As the two children snuggle closer to their Grandpa, he dives deep into his Christmas story. He tells them about how young he was at the time and how scared they were during the long and cold months in the trenches. They were given no breaks from the war, and they all thought Christmas would be no exception. He made compared the Christmas night in the trenches to the Christmas they just shared as a family, clear skies and frost covered surroundings. They sat in the trenches waiting for the next move from the Germans. They sat in silence for a long time, until suddenly, they heard singing from the enemy side. One of the men in the trench spoke German and he said that the Germans were singing a Christmas carol. The soldiers were shocked, but as soon as the Germans finished their song, they sang right back at them. The Germans began singing a song that sounded very familiar to Grandpa and the other men, it was the song was Silent Night. The enemies joined in unison singing Silent Night in their own languages. Before they knew it, a German started coming toward them. He was holding a truce flag and a Christmas tree. Grandpa was so overwhelmed with excitement that he jumped out of the trench and started walking towards the German, his troop followed right behind him. The two sides began trading trinkets and candy. They even showed each other pictures of their families back at home. There was music, dancing, and playing all night long, almost like there was no war going on at all. Eventually the sun began to rise and they all headed back to their own sides, mesmerized by what had just happened. They went back to waiting in the trenches for the next move to be taken. Grandpa concludes his story by telling Thomas and Nora that he was a hero for one night and hugging them tightly.

The book is almost too upbeat given the circumstances. Grandpa should have gone into more detail about how cautious they had to be when approaching their enemy. The book would have had a bigger element of suspense if they had explained the fear in more detail.

I think this would be a good book to read to children during the holiday season. It can help make a transition

into how many people celebrate holidays all over the world. You could talk about how everyone's holiday situations are different.

Jesseca Wheaton says

A sweet, beautiful, timeless story! My siblings and I loved it; it's perfect for Christmas!

Mexy Gonzales says

The book entitled "Christmas in the Trenches", told the story about a grandpa telling a story of his favorite Christmas. This story was the story of the Christmas truce of 1914. The author explains how US soldiers spent their Christmas in war against the Germans and later were reunited by Christmas songs, a Christmas tree, and a white truce flag. The children's grandpa was the one whom shook the German's hand symbolizing the truce agreement and spent Christmas together until the sunrise came and they went their separate ways. The strengths of this book included: being easy to understand, gave great information, very detailed and realistic pictures. While I thought this book had quite a bit to offer I believe it lacked being descriptive. This book would be great when introducing history even to kids from k-2, which is the reading level of this book. A great picture book with great information!

McCutcheon, J. (2006). Christmas in the trenches. Atlanta, Georgia: Peachtree Publishers

Jess says

Based a true story, travel back to Christmas in the Trenches during the first World War.

I really like this one, but it's sad. Definitely sad. It isn't how it's presented, the author does nothing to depress you. It's set up as a memory that begins and ends on Christmas Eve. You're at a grandpa's house, see his favorite Christmas memory (in the trenches), and then you're back in his home 70 years later.

But the more you think about it, the more you realize that it's a story about kids who had Christmas in the middle of a battlefield and then had to go back to fighting the next day, without the choice of just ending it there. 30 yards apart, that's how close the trenches were in WWI. So think about that, think about what's it's like to be 18, and think about it being Christmas.

Now that's I've depressed you, let me go ahead and recommend this book. Seriously, I do. It's a good choice for 5th/6th grade, not only because this is when they start really getting into war books but also because they can handle the questions that go along with this. It's also good because they start thinking that maybe they're pretty lucky.

The wording is a bit awkward in places, so definitely run through it ahead of time for readalouds.

Cindy Mitchell *Kiss the Book* says

McCutcheon John Christmas in the Trenches PICTURE BOOK Peachtree –

Christmas Day 1914, the two armies of World War I exit their trenches and meet in the middle to celebrate the day during a spontaneous truce. Although these actions did not stop the war, it left a feeling of hope in the hearts of each soldier who participated. Also included is a CD of the original song that McCutcheon also wrote. Having been to Flanders Fields myself, I can tell you that this is an important part of the WWI story. This subject should be fit into the curriculum anywhere it can – English, Geography, Music, Art – wherever.

EL, MS, HS – ESSENTIAL
<http://kissthebook.blogspot.com/2007/...>

Kevin Summers says

Sample quote: "A single figure was coming across No Man's Land. In one hand he held a white truce flag, in the other a Christmas tree shining with candles."

Vera Godley says

Artist Henri Sorensen has beautifully illustrated Christmas in the Trenches with the drab colors that depict the drabness of war - though the colors are subdued "Christmas" red and green - as well as the bright cheeriness of the home of young Thomas. Beautiful art to bring to our heart the beauty of the story.

Christmas in the Trenches begins with an elderly gentleman telling his grandson, Thomas, the unbelievable story of the enduring Christmas Spirit that brought two opposing armies into "no-man's-land" to share a peaceful interlude on Christmas when they stepped out of the trenches into the fellowship of their fellowman.

The story written in 1989 is based on the actual event that occurred in 1914 during the "Great War" - WWI. "Although Francis Tolliver is a fictional character, the event depicted in the ballad is true. John McCutcheon met some of the German soldiers involved in this Christmas story when he toured in Belgium." (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Christmas_in_the_Trenches...).

The song and story are a beautiful telling by John McCutcheon that touches on a war era that now is fading into the background of World history. This children's storybook is a good introduction to that era as well as a telling that the human spirit can surpass the evil that is war.

This lovely hardcover book also includes a CD in the back cover slip of the author beautifully reading the story as well as singing his story-song of Christmas in the Trenches and Silent Night (both in English and German). A wonderful extra!

~~~~~ **GIVEAWAY** ~~~~~

(Begins Nov. 1 ENDS Nov. 15 12:01 a.m. EST)  
<http://ChatWithVera.blogspot.com>

DISCLOSURE: I was provided a complimentary copy of Christmas in the Trenches by Peachtree Publishers on behalf of the author in exchange for my honest review. I was not required to write a positive review.

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## **Carly says**

### **Summary:**

It was Christmas night, all of the presents were unwrapped, the snow covered the ground, and Thomas and Nora were curled up on their Grandpa's lap. The story begins with Thomas asking his Grandpa if he has a favorite Christmas. Grandpa begins telling his grandchildren about his favorite Christmas in Liverpool, 1914, during the Great War. The children are shocked to discover that their sweet Grandpa was in the war and they express their curiosity. As the two children snuggle closer to their Grandpa, he dives deep into his Christmas story. He tells them about how young he was at the time and how scared they were during the long and cold months in the trenches. They were given no breaks from the war, and they all thought Christmas would be no exception. He made compared the Christmas night in the trenches to the Christmas they just shared as a family, clear skies and frost covered surroundings. They sat in the trenches waiting for the next move from the Germans. They sat in silence for a long time, until suddenly, they heard singing from the enemy side. One of the men in the trench spoke German and he said that the Germans were singing a Christmas carol. The soldiers were shocked, but as soon as the Germans finished their song, they sang right back at them. The Germans began singing a song that sounded very familiar to Grandpa and the other men, it was the song was Silent Night. The enemies joined in unison singing Silent Night in their own languages. Before they knew it, a German started coming toward them. He was holding a truce flag and a Christmas tree. Grandpa was so overwhelmed with excitement that he jumped out of the trench and started walking towards the German, his troop followed right behind him. The two sides began trading trinkets and candy. They even showed each other pictures of their families back at home. There was music, dancing, and playing all night long, almost like there was no war going on at all. Eventually the sun began to rise and they all headed back to their own sides, mesmerized by what had just happened. They went back to waiting in the trenches for the next move to be taken. Grandpa concludes his story by telling Thomas and Nora that he was a hero for one night and hugging them tightly.

### **Strengths:**

- This book shines a light on a very serious time in history. The Grandpa in this story is able to share his experiences with his grandchildren and he is able to paint very clear pictures for the readers. The illustrations do a great job of following the story, but also telling a little bit of the story on their own.

### **Weaknesses:**

- The book is almost too upbeat given the circumstances. Grandpa should have gone into more detail about how cautious they had to be when approaching their enemy. The book would have had a bigger element of suspense if they had explained the fear in more detail.

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## **L. McCoy says**

Decided this would be a good read for Christmas Eve and I was right! This is one of my favorite Christmas

stories and it's really touching and emotional (I mean the real Christmas truce story that this book is about, not the Robot Chicken version, though if you haven't seen that, look it up, it's great!).

What's it about?

It's the story of the Christmas Truce in WWI (1914).

Why it gets 5 stars:

This is one of my favorite Christmas stories and like most great stories, it never gets old! It's really nice! It's also cool because it's a true story and it shows how wonderful Christmas is, it can even postpone a war for a day, that's amazing!

The illustrations are fantastic. I kept pausing for a minute to admire them, so wonderful.

The narrative is really good.

This includes a little CD with 2 songs and a telling of the story from the book, I didn't listen to the storytelling track (I did just read it) but I did listen to the 2 songs, both of them were good.

I read picture books no matter how old I am (a good book's a good book) but I know most of them are mostly for kids including this one I'm glad to see somebody trying to teach kids history in a book that isn't cheesy. Too often I think that history books for kids are a bit too cheesy and poorly written (don't get me started on Nathan Hale's One Dead Spy) but this one isn't and I'm glad especially since history is both interesting and important.

Overall:

This is a great book! I highly recommend it and hope you all have a merry Christmas!

5/5

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### **Luisa Knight says**

Based on the true story of what happened Christmas night in 1914 during World War I.

Ages: 4 - 8

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### **Michael Wiggins says**

I'm adding this to my read list to remind me of children's books I liked when my boys were younger. They were, and are, voracious readers. I need to create a children's bookshelf. This is a great Christmas story showing that even bitter enemies can set aside their differences for awhile, at least.

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**Karen says**

This was a delight because it had an audio cd that was very well read. It also had Silent Night sung in German and English at the end...krb 12/5/17

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**Maris Digiovanni says**

This book definitely celebrates the common bonds in humanity. It describes a time in history when hatred and death lingered over most people's lives and war was lasting longer than most people realized. This story tells of how during this horrible time the soldiers fighting each other stopped the fighting in order to celebrate Christmas with one another. I feel that this story is so touching because it conveys a lesson about being humane in a most inhumane situation and shows that bravery sometimes means more than just fighting and killing. As well it shows two different people with different mindsets coming together and doing so much more with their similarities rather than spending time hating others for their differences. I really enjoyed this book and I would recommend it to all teachers to have in their classrooms.

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