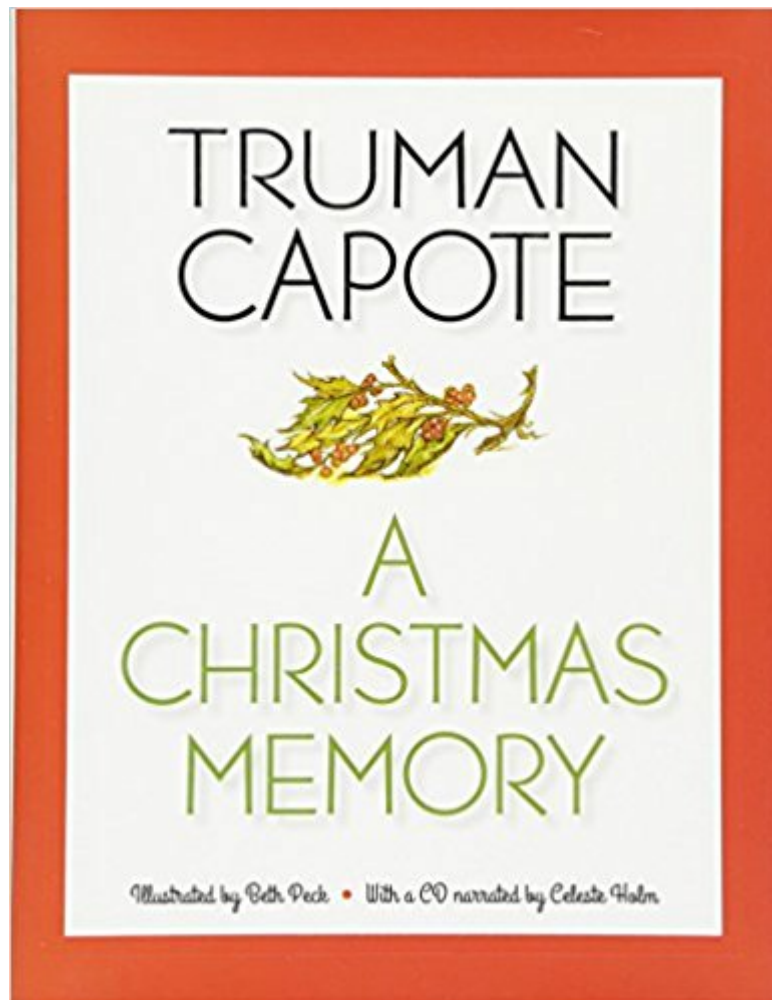




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A Christmas Memory



Synopsis

Truman Capote's boyhood Christmas memoir rereleased in a beautiful new package, which includes a CD with the audio version of the text. The classic story of Truman Capote's childhood Christmas ritual is more endearing than ever in this newly redesigned package. In celebration of *A Christmas Memory*'s enduring appeal, this repackaged edition retains Beth Peck's evocative watercolors and an audio CD narration by the venerable Celeste Holm (originator of the Ado Annie role in the 1943 Broadway hit "Oklahoma!" and an Academy Award-winning actress). Originally published in 1956, this is the story from Capote's childhood of lovingly making fruitcakes from scratch at Christmas-time with his elderly cousin, and has stood the test of time to become known as an American holiday classic. In its new size, it's perfect for reading alone or reading aloud, or following along while listening to the audio version.

Book Information

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Age Range: 7 - 10 years

Grade Level: 2 - 5

Customer Reviews

Truman Capote was born in 1924 and died in 1984. Based on his own boyhood in rural Alabama in the 1930s, *A Christmas Memory* was originally published in *Mademoiselle* in 1956 and later was included in *Breakfast at Tiffany's*. Beth Peck, a designer and illustrator of many children's books, fell in love with the writing of Truman Capote and counts her paintings for *A Christmas Memory* and *The Thanksgiving Visitor*, also by Capote, among the work that is closest to her heart.

Imagine a morning in late November. A coming of winter morning more than twenty years ago. Consider the kitchen of a spreading old house in a country town. A great black stove is its main feature; but there is also a big round table and a fireplace with two rocking chairs placed in front of it. Just today the fireplace commenced its seasonal roar. A woman with shorn white hair is standing at the kitchen window. She is wearing tennis shoes and a shapeless gray sweater over a summery calico dress. She is small and sprightly, like a bantam hen; but, due to a long youthful illness, her shoulders are pitifully hunched. Her face is remarkable-not unlike Lincoln's, craggy like that, and tinted by sun and wind; but it is delicate too, finely boned, and her eyes are sherry-colored and timid. "Oh my," she exclaims, her breath smoking the windowpane, "It's fruitcake weather!" The person to whom she is speaking is myself. I am seven; she is sixty-something. We are cousins, very distant ones, and we have lived together--well, as long as I can remember. Other people inhabit the house, relatives; and though they have power over us, and frequently make us cry, we are not, on the whole, too much aware of them. We are each other's best friend. She calls me Buddy, in memory of a boy who was formerly her best friend. The other Buddy died in the 1880's, when she was still a child. She is still a child. "I knew it before I got out of bed," she says, turning away from the window with a purposeful excitement in her eyes. "The courthouse bell sounded so cold and clear. And there were no birds singing; they've gone to warmer country, yes indeed. Oh, Buddy, stop stuffing biscuit and fetch our buggy. Help me find my hat. We've thirty cakes to bake." It's always the same: a morning arrives in November, and my friend, as though officially inaugurating the Christmas time of year that exhilarates her imagination and fuels the blaze of her heart, announces: "It's fruitcake weather! Fetch our buggy. Help me find my hat." The hat is found, a straw cartwheel corsaged with velvet roses out-of-doors has faded: it once belonged to a more fashionable relative. Together, we guide our buggy, a dilapidated baby carriage, out to the garden and into a grove of pecan trees. The buggy is mine; that is, it was bought for me when I was born. It is made of wicker, rather unraveled, and the wheels wobble like a drunkard's legs. But it is a faithful object; springtimes, we take it to the woods and fill it with flowers, herbs, wild fern for our porch pots; in the summer, we pile it with picnic paraphernalia and sugar-cane fishing poles and roll it down to the edge of a creek; it has its winter uses, too: as a truck for hauling firewood from the yard to the kitchen, as a warm bed for Queenie, our tough little orange and white rat terrier who has survived distemper and two rattlesnake bites. Queenie is trotting beside it now. Three hours later we are back in the kitchen hulling a heaping buggyload of windfall pecans. Our backs hurt from gathering them: how hard they were to find (the main crop having been shaken off the trees and sold by the

orchard's owners, who are not us) among the concealing leaves, the frosted, deceiving grass. Caarackle! A cheery crunch, scraps of miniature thunder sound as the shells collapse and the golden mound of sweet oily ivory meat mounts in the milkglass bowl. Queenie begs to taste, and now and again my friend sneaks her a mite, though insisting we deprive ourselves. "We mustn't, Buddy. If we start, we won't stop. And there's scarcely enough as there is. For thirty cakes." The kitchen is growing dark. Dusk turns the window into a mirror: our reflections mingle with the rising moon as we work by the fireside in the firelight. At last, when the moon is quite high, we toss the final hull into the fire and, with joined sighs, watch it catch flame. The buggy is empty, the bowl is brimful. We eat our supper (cold biscuits, bacon, blackberry jam) and discuss tomorrow. Tomorrow the kind of work I like best begins: buying. Cherries and citron, ginger and vanilla and canned Hawaiian pineapple, rinds and raisins and walnuts and whiskey and oh, so much flour, butter, so many eggs, spices, flavorings: why, we'll need a pony to pull the buggy home. But before these purchases can be made, there is the question of money. Neither of us has any. Except for skinflint sums persons in the house occasionally provide (a dime is considered very big money); or what we earn ourselves from various activities: holding rummage sales, selling buckets of hand-picked blackberries, jars of homemade jam and apple jelly and peach preserves, rounding up flowers for funerals and weddings. Once we won seventy-ninth prize, five dollars, in a national football contest. Not that we know a fool thing about football. It's just that we enter any contest we hear about: at the moment our hopes are centered on the fifty-thousand-dollar Grand Prize being offered to name a new brand of coffee (we suggested "A.M.

The story is, of course, timeless. I don't need to sell you on Capote. I must say, though, that of all the editions available, this one is certainly the one to purchase solely due to the Beth Peck illustrations. Having read this in an anthology, I had certainly visualized the story as I was reading, but Ms. Peck's illustrations bring those visualizations to life. I can't say enough just how beautiful they are.

Beautiful story. Also having the cd included with the book is very handy, so I can listen to the story while I work.

A Christmas Memory is a heartwarming story. Truman Capote is a wonderful storyteller and is recalling a memory from his young life. His grandmother is poor, but gives to others without regret. I bought two copies for two of my friends for Christmas. It is a "treasure".

Sent these as a gift to each of our grandchildren this season. I've read Capote's Christmas & Thanksgiving trilogy each year for years, and am still moved.

What is there to say? After all, it's Capote at his best. This is a twentieth century Christmas classic that has become a sine qua non for the season, in much the same way as Dicken's, perhaps even more. This is an American story, partly biographical, and it will touch your heart in a way that leaves you open for all the joys of the season that may follow. In our house, the season hasn't truly begun until we have re-read this story, and it is perfect for reading aloud to the family too. In fact, I recommend doing so as the best way to open the season. Invite friends. You'll be glad you did.

I love this book and purchase for friends every Christmas. A perfect antidote for the world we live in today; celebration and joy from a far simpler time. Reading this every Christmas is one of my favorite traditions. This poignant memoir from one of our great authors will surprise many. A must read!

Of all people! Truman Capote comes closer to capturing the meaning of the Incarnation than any story I know.

We LOVE this book!! It has become a Christmas tradition for our family to read. It is humbling to know what we have compared to what little others have. We even bake a fruitcake or fruitcake cookies!! Wonderful story!!

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