



Meet the Characters in **The Best Christmas Pageant Ever**

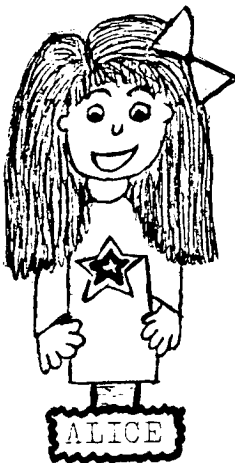
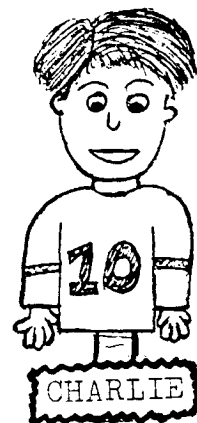


The Herdmans were six skinny, string-headed children of different sizes. Some say they were the meanest children they ever knew. Their names were Ralph, Imogene, Leroy, Ollie, Claude, and Gladys. They all took part in the town's Christmas pageant—one that will never be forgotten.

The director of the pageant was the mother of the narrator. Her son Charlie was also in the pageant. Mother was a fair, patient person who believed in giving everyone, including the Herdmans, a chance.

Another character was Alice Wendlehen. She was an extremely clean person. She also thought she was supposed to play Mary in the Christmas pageant every year.

Enjoy their story!



The Best Christmas Pageant Ever

Chapter Introductions, Highlights, and Follow-Up Thoughts

The Best Christmas Pageant Ever is a classic story that can be located in most libraries. It can be used in a variety of ways for curriculum connections, including the ideas presented in this packet. All activities in this packet (except those otherwise indicated) were prepared by Gerri Baker.

Teachers, librarians, or parents who use *The Best Christmas Pageant Ever* with young learners might profit from the introductions, highlights, and follow-up thoughts for each chapter in this book. These segments were prepared by Lori Bunton.

CHAPTER 1, Pages 1-14

INTRODUCTION: “Where is everyone going? Follow that fire engine!”

We all figured that those Herdman kids were the cause of the fire. So, we all wondered why they were at the scene of the crime with their pockets full of doughnuts. From the youngest to the oldest, these six kids can pull some of the meanest tricks you could ever imagine. Now, let’s meet the Herdmans.

HIGHLIGHTS:

1. The Herdmans are introduced.
2. The Herdmans steal a chemistry set and burn down a toolhouse.
3. The Herdmans’ home is described.
4. The Herdmans’ pet cat is described, as well as the time when Claude brought it to school for show and tell.
5. Imogene’s personality and actions are revealed.
6. The Herdmans’ parents are briefly mentioned.

FOLLOW-UP THOUGHTS: Now you have met the Herdmans. How do you feel about their actions? Do you think the fire in the toolhouse was an accident? Would you like to be in the same classroom as Imogene? After learning a little bit about the Herdmans’ parents, how do you feel about the way the Herdman children behave? Have the children really been taught the proper way to behave? At the end of Chapter 1, we find out that the Herdmans are going to go to church. Do you think they will know how to act in church? Let’s find out.

CHAPTER 2, pages 15-24

INTRODUCTION: A pageant is another word for a play. In Chapter 1, we find out that the Herdmans

are going to be involved in a Christmas pageant, and it is all Charlie’s fault. Let’s find out why.

HIGHLIGHTS:

1. Mother gets stuck with the Christmas pageant.
2. The usual casting for the pageant is stated.
3. Charlie tells Leroy about refreshments at Sunday school.
4. The Herdmans go to church.
5. The announcement is made for the Christmas pageant rehearsals.

FOLLOW-UP THOUGHTS: If you had been in church with the Herdmans, how would you have treated them? Would you be glad that they were coming to church? Why or why not? The Herdmans seem interested in the play. How do you think they will become involved in it?

CHAPTER 3, Pages 25-37

INTRODUCTION: I wonder what Mother would have done had she known that when she got stuck with the Christmas pageant she also got stuck with the Herdmans. We find out in this chapter just how difficult it is to assign the roles for the play since the Herdmans are involved. The casting for the play has always been the same—until this year.

HIGHLIGHTS:

1. Mrs. Armstrong tells Mother how to choose parts for the play.
2. Actors are chosen for the play with the Herdmans being the most important participants.
3. The Herdmans, being the main roles in the play, are the talk of the town.

FOLLOW-UP THOUGHTS: Can you believe Imogene and Ralph are going to play Mary and Joseph? Do you really believe the Herdmans will show up for the rehearsal? If you were Alice would you have given in to Imogene and let her play Mary? Explain your answer. Mother says she is going to make this the very best Christmas pageant ever. How do you think she will do this with the Herdmans being in the play?

CHAPTER 4, Pages 38-48

INTRODUCTION: The rehearsals are going to begin. What is a rehearsal? Why must they have

rehearsals? Let's read to find out if the Herdmans show up. If they do, how in the world will they behave?

HIGHLIGHTS:

1. The first rehearsal is held.
2. Mother begins the rehearsal by reading the Christmas story from the Bible.
3. The Herdmans become very interested in the story and especially in King Herod.

FOLLOW-UP THOUGHTS: For once the Herdmans really seem interested in something. Did you think the Herdmans would be on the good side and be against Herod? Why or why not? Did this change your feelings about the Herdmans? Do you think they may have some good in them?

CHAPTER 5, Pages 49-59

INTRODUCTIONS: Have you ever thought enough about the story of Jesus to want to find out more about it? Well, the Herdmans did! They gave everyone many new things to think about—including how in the world Mother would find someone willing to let their baby be Jesus for Imogene.

HIGHLIGHTS:

1. Mother and Father discuss the Herdmans' attitude toward the play.
2. The Herdmans go to the library to learn about Herod and Jesus.
3. Alice writes down all the awful things the Herdmans do.
4. The Herdmans rehearse the play.
5. Mother decides upon the role of baby Jesus.

FOLLOW-UP THOUGHTS: Give some details of what might have happened if the Wise Men had returned to Herod as Leroy proposed. Do you think the Herdmans really understand the difference between right and wrong? For example: they thought Herod was terrible and deserved to be punished, yet Imogene thought it would be all right to steal a baby.

CHAPTER 6, Pages 60-69

INTRODUCTION: At a dress rehearsal, the characters wear their costumes and act out the play as it will be done the night the audience comes—at least that is what is usually supposed to happen. But you know by now that when the Herdmans are involved, nothing is ever ordinary or predictable. And guess what? The fire truck is needed once again.

HIGHLIGHTS:

1. The dress rehearsal begins with much confusion.
2. Mother sees the rehearsal is not working.
3. The naming of baby Jesus is explained to Imogene.
4. Mrs. Hopkins takes a peak at the rehearsal.
5. Mother calls a five-minute recess.
6. Mrs. McCarthy calls the fire department because of Imogene's cigar smoke.
7. Reverend Hopkins visits Mother.

FOLLOW-UP THOUGHTS: Put yourself in Mother's place. What would you have done at this point? Now review what Mother said, and think of some words to describe what type of person Mother is.

CHAPTER 7, Pages 70-80

INTRODUCTION: The pageant does not go as planned, however it is not ruined. Let's read and see just why it was in fact the best Christmas pageant ever.

HIGHLIGHTS:

1. Everyone arrives and play begins.
2. Ralph and Imogene make their entrance as Joseph and Mary.
3. Gladys and the angels enter.
4. The Wise Men bring their gift.
5. Imogene cries.
6. The play is over and the Herdmans go home without their gifts, while the author evaluated the play.

FOLLOW-UP THOUGHTS: The author gives some possible reasons for Imogene's tears. Why do you think she cried? The Bible says, "Mary kept all those things and pondered them in her heart." Here are some things for you to ponder:

1. Why do you think the Herdmans refused the gifts at the end of the play?
2. Describe your own emotions as you read the last chapter.
3. Whose lives do you think were changed the most—those of the audience, the Herdmans' or those of the other actors in the play? How and why?
4. Do you think the Herdmans will return to church after the play is over?
5. Do you think that everyone will treat the Herdmans differently now? Why?
6. Do you think the Herdmans will treat other people differently now? Why?

The Best Christmas Pageant Ever

Action Cards for Creative Dramatics (Prepared by Lori Buntun)

The Best Christmas Pageant Ever

Action Card 1

Four characters needed:

Mother, Father, the author and Mrs. Armstrong

SITUATION: Mrs. Armstrong was well enough to come to the play on her crutches. Mother, Father and the author of the book go to her after the play is over to ask her what she thought. The conversation begins....

The Best Christmas Pageant Ever

Action Card 2

Two characters needed:

Imogene and Alice

SITUATION: After the play is over, Imogene goes to Alice and asks her what she thought about her performance. After all Alice is the expert at playing Mary. Let's listen to Alice's reaction....

The Best Christmas Pageant Ever

Action Card 7

Four characters needed:

The church program planning committee:

Mother, Mrs. Armstrong, Mrs. Wendlken, and Mrs. Bottles.

SITUATION: It's time to plan the Christmas program again. It is one year later and the Herdmans are still attending church. Should the play be the same? Should the characters be the same? The meeting begins....

The Best Christmas Pageant Ever

Action Card 4

Four characters needed:

Mr. and Mrs. Herdman, the pastor, and his wife

SITUATION: Mrs. Herdman goes to a pay phone and calls the pastor. She wants him to help her with marital problems. Mr. Herdman has come home! The pastor and his wife go to visit the garage home of Mr. and Mrs. Herdman....

The Best Christmas Pageant Ever

Action Card 3

Three characters needed:

Imogene, Leroy and the narrator of the book.

SITUATION: The narrator, who is Charlie's sister, is at the church and walks into the pastor's office to see if he is there. He isn't, but Imogene and Leroy are! Imogene is taking money from the desk and Leroy is tearing pages from the pastor's sermon books. Who will speak first and what will be said? Let's find out....

The Best Christmas Pageant Ever

Action Card 5

Seven characters needed:

Charlie and all the Herdman kids

SITUATION: Charlie does it again! He bragged to the Herdmans about all the toys he has. It's 6 p.m. and Mom, Dad and sister have gone to pick up some chicken dinners. There's a knock on the door. Charlie opens it, thinking Mom and Dad have returned. Instead, all six of the Herdmans come running through the living room....

The Best Christmas Pageant Ever

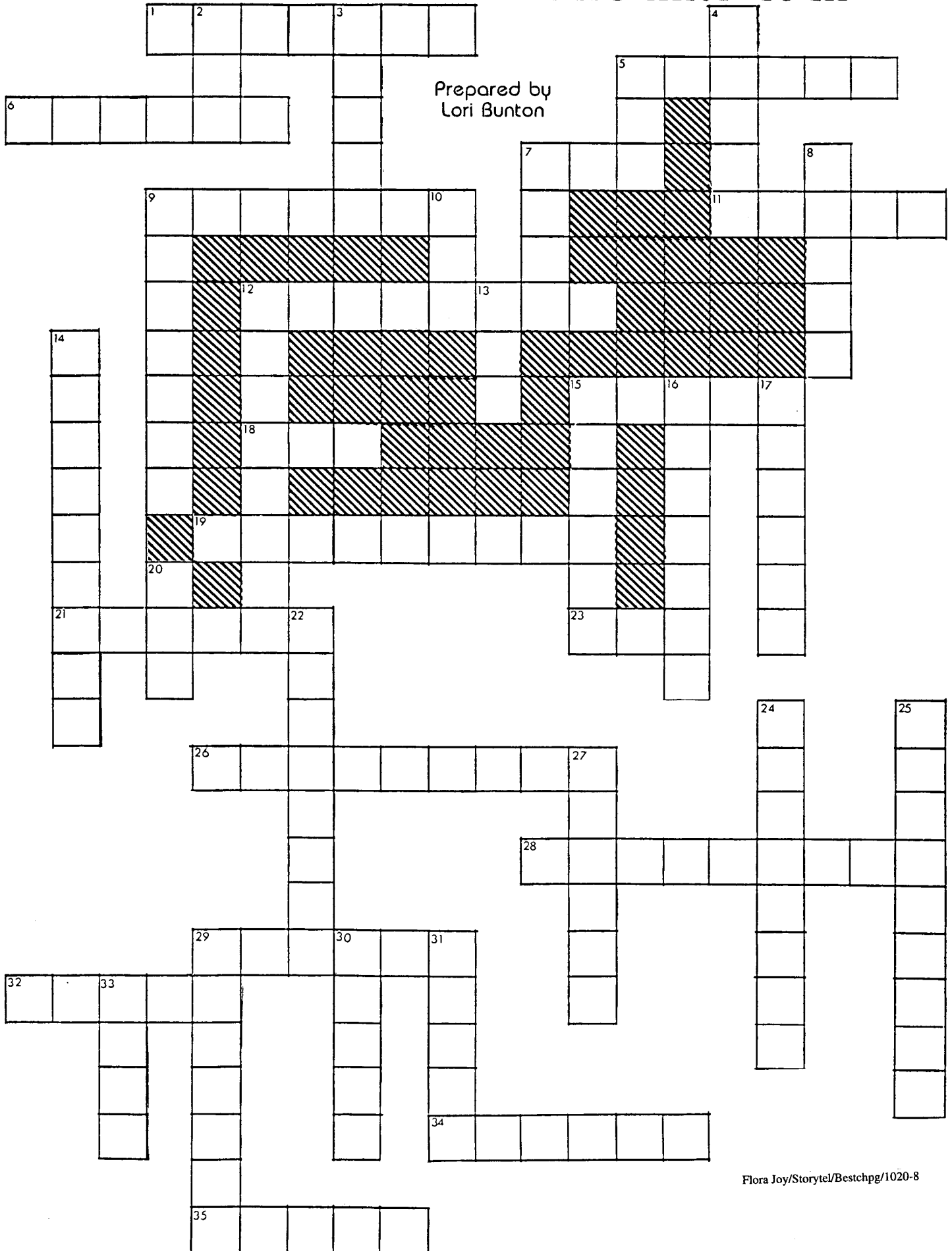
Action Card 6

Five characters needed:

Gladys, Ollie, Claude, foster mother, and foster father

SITUATION: Because the Herdmans' father left them and their mother worked two shifts, the social worker thought it would be best to place the Herdmans in foster homes. They were sent in groups of three to two foster homes. Gladys, Ollie and Claude are left alone with their new foster parents. The three do not like being separated from the other Herdmans. Let's listen as we enter the home of the foster parents....

THE BEST CHRISTMAS PAGEANT EVER-1



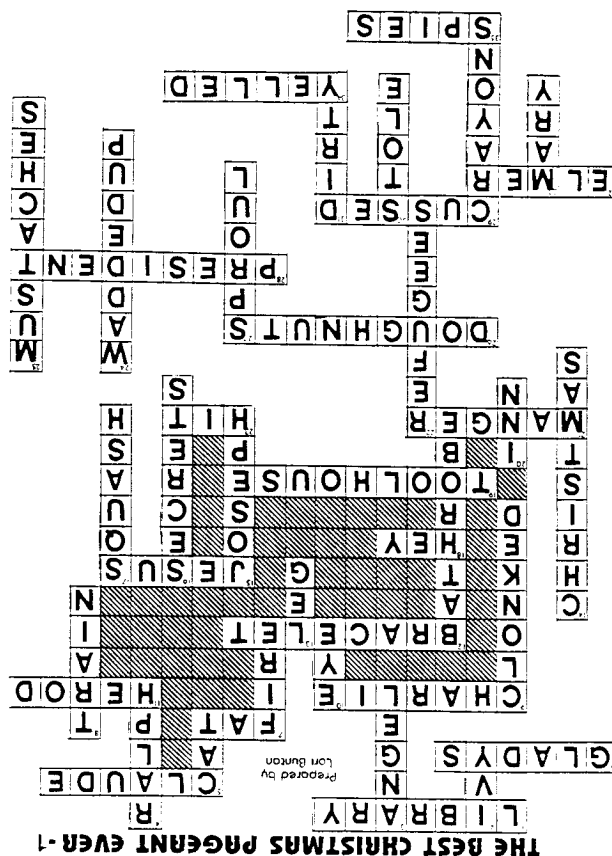
Crossword Puzzle 1 (Prepared by Lori Buntun)

Crossword Puzzle 1 (Prepared by Lori Bunton)

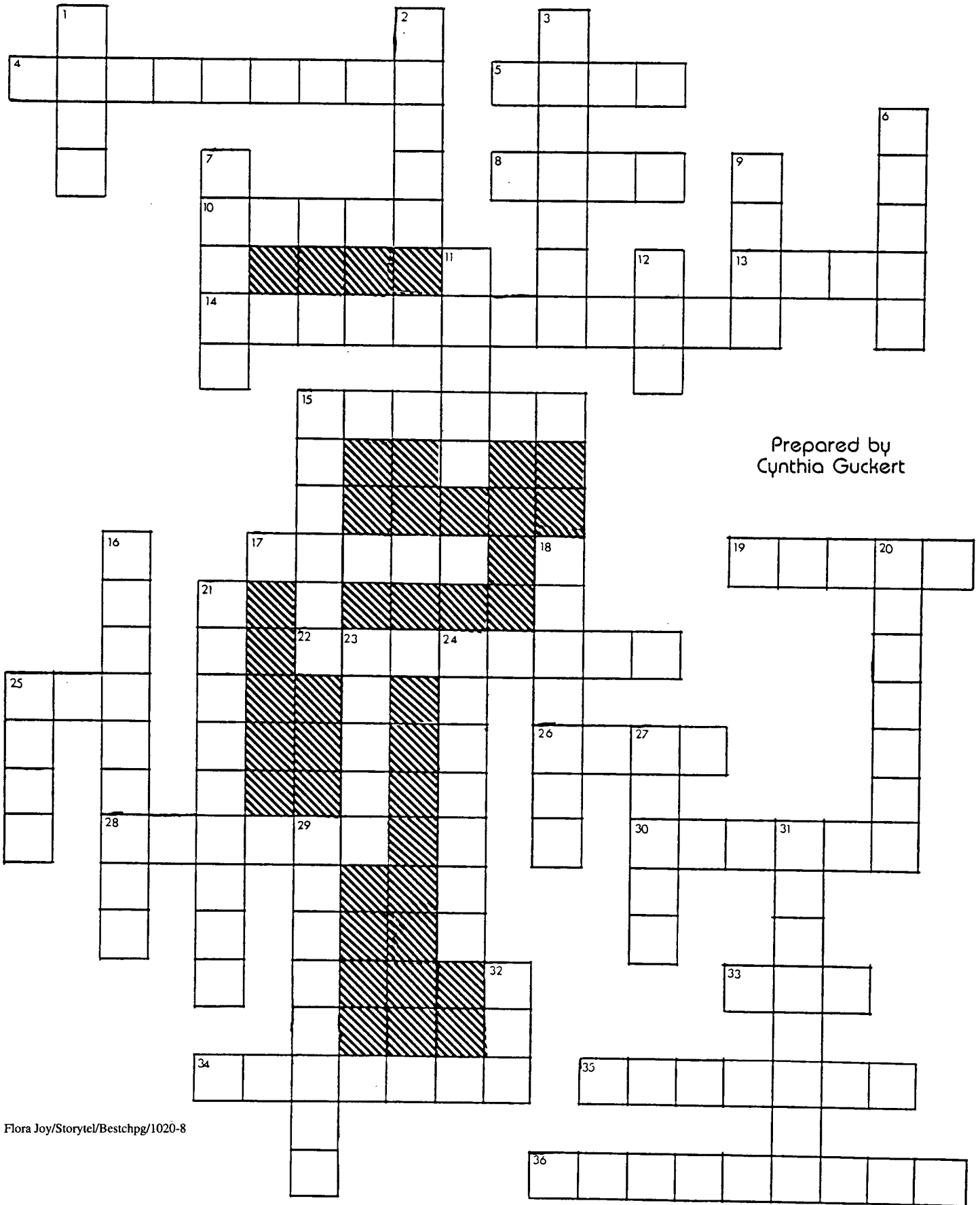
1. Mrs. Graebner wanted to retire when the Herdmans asked for one of these cards.
5. When it came time to pass second grade, this Herdman didn't know his ABC's.
6. She slept in a bureau drawer.
7. This describes Wanda Pierce and Albert Pelfry.
9. He wore his father's bathrobe in the pageant.
11. A Biblical character who killed his own wife.
12. Imogene blackmailed Wanda out of this.
15. Imogene would have named him Bill.
18. "_____, unto you a child is born." (The way Gladys yelled this in the play)
19. Everyone was relieved when the Herdmans burned this down.
21. Large wooden feeding trough for animals
23. The Herdmans did this to little kids.
26. The Herdmans stuffed these in their pockets and down their shirts.
28. Claude said the Wise Men were similar to this.
29. The Herdmans did this at their teachers.
32. The minister's son
34. Mrs. Santoro, at the Pizza Parlor _____ and hollered, like Imogene.
35. The Herdmans called the Wise Men a "bunch of dirty _____."

2. Where other people had hydrangea bushes, the Herdmans had poison _____.
3. Gladys' part in the pageant
4. He stirred up the rehearsal by saying that Mary was pregnant.
5. The sign in the Herdmans' yard said, "Beware of the _____."
7. The Herdmans started one of these with a chemistry set.
8. The Herdmans' father disappeared on one of these.
9. The Herdmans _____ each other to make black and blue place. (Hint: rhymes with honked)
10. The Herdmans' cat had one missing.
12. Reverend Hopkins had a woolly one.
13. Mrs. Armstrong broke hers.

14. The Herdmans had never heard this story.
15. Ralph's part in the play
16. Imogene loved to learn these about her classmates so she could tease them.
17. The Herdmans' idea of a game was to try and _____ one another with the garage door.
(Hint: rhymes with wash)
20. Where people go to spend the night
22. People who run away from their home to seek protection
24. What Claude called "swaddling" clothes (two words—no space between them)
25. Gladys and Ollie drew these on the disciples in the Bible. (There is more than one correct spelling for this word. Please use the one in the book.)
27. The Herdmans lived at the bottom of this Hill.
29. Alice said the Herdmans stole these from the Sunday School cupboard.
30. Leroy _____ a chemistry set.
31. The Herdmans talked this way.
33. Alice always got this part in the play.



THE BEST CHRISTMAS PAGEANT EVER



The Best Christmas Pageant Ever

Crossword Puzzle 2 (Prepared by Cynthia Guckert)

ACROSS

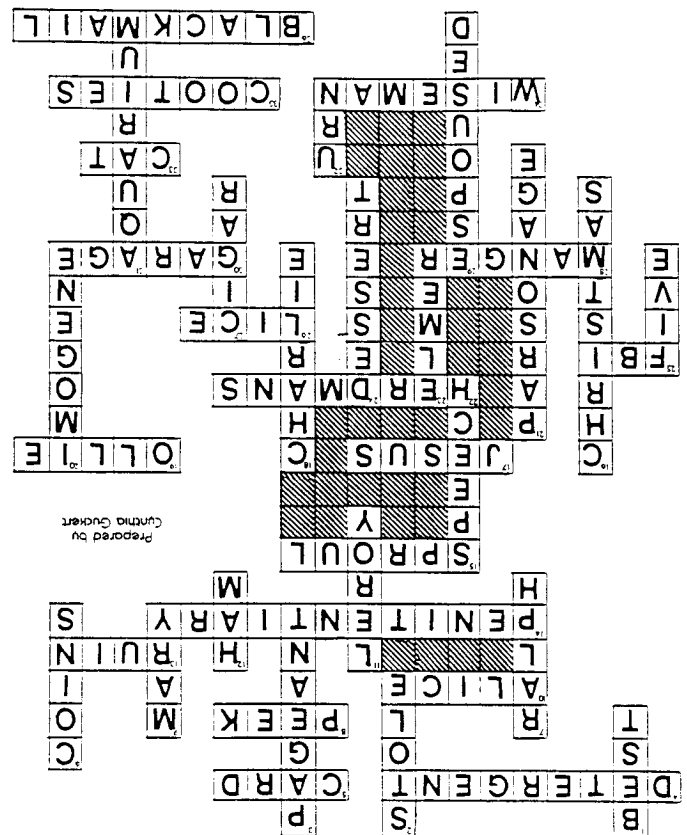
4. Alice had this kind of hands (also use this to wash dishes).
5. You need one of these to check out a book.
8. Mrs. Hopkins did this at the rehearsal (synonym of look).
10. She had always played Mary.
13. Alice said the Herdmans would have done this to the pageant.
14. Another name for a prison (an official name)
15. The Herdmans lived at the bottom of this hill.
17. A doll played this part.
19. He had a pussy willow growing in his ear.
22. All six of them were in the play.
25. "You would have thought the Christmas story came right out of the _____ files."
26. Alice has this at summer camp.
28. The Herdmans lived above this.
30. A large, wooden feeding trough
33. This had one eye missing.
34. Claude, Ollie and Leroy played these characters (two words).
35. Another name for lice (one that Imogene used in the story)
36. Imogene did this to get what she wanted.

DOWN

1. The _____ Christmas Pageant Ever.
2. Leroy _____ a chemistry set.
3. Another name for play
6. Imogene took a handful of these at church.
7. He played Joseph.
9. Imogene played this character.
11. He hit Charlie in the second grade.
12. Leroy almost dropped this on stage.
15. Mr. Grady gave this every year (this included the announcement for the play).
16. Holiday the story took place
18. Leroy took this person's dessert at school.
20. She said, "A doll can't bite you."
21. Where the Reverend lived
23. He did not want to play Joseph.
24. What the Herdmans expected to find at church, thanks to Charlie.
25. Number of rehearsals needed to present the

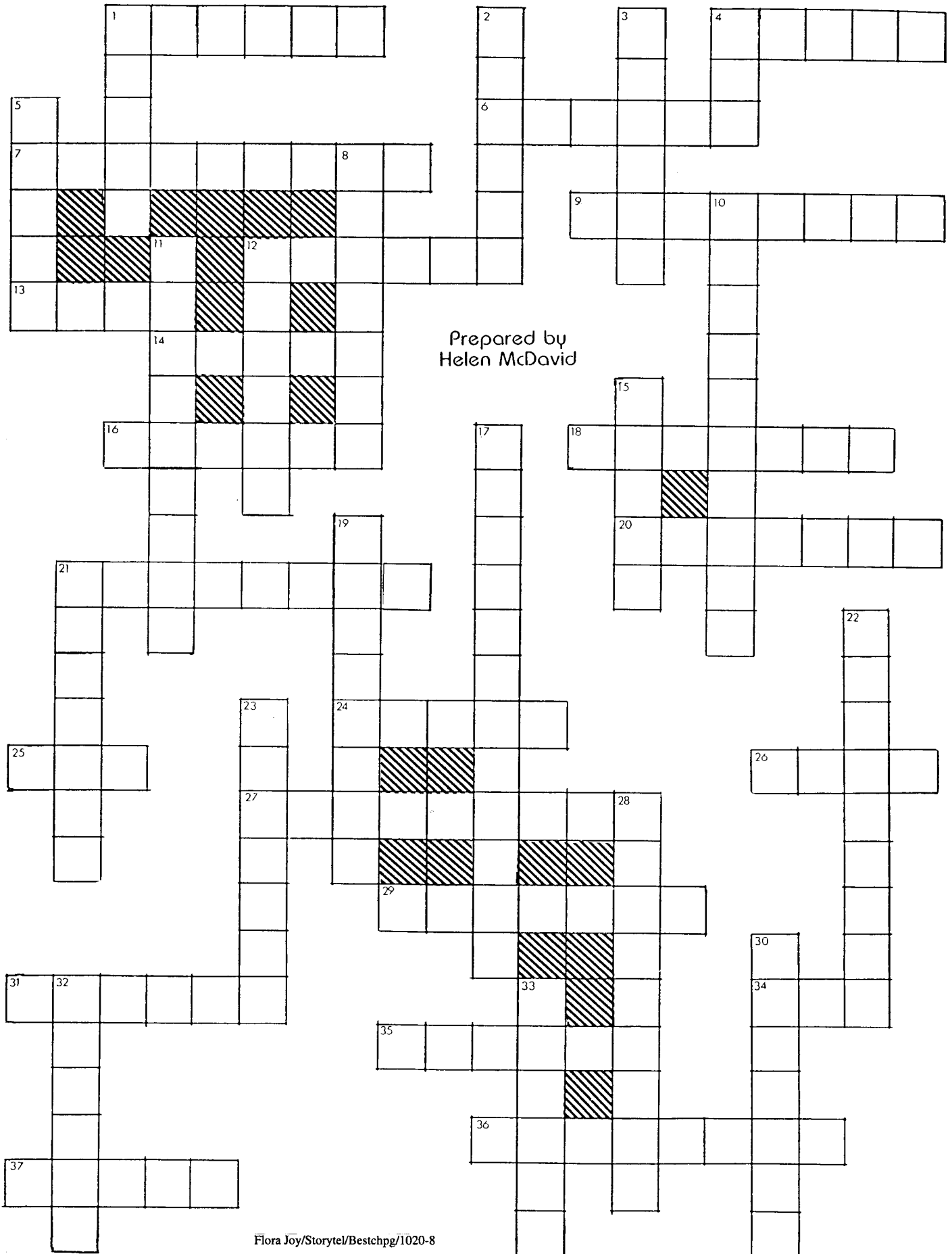
play.

27. Imogene smoked this in the Ladies Room at church
29. "Joseph and Mary, his _____ wife."
31. The teacher broke this as she was chasing the cat.
32. Played the part of Jesus at the last rehearsal



THE BEST CHRISTMAS PAGEANT EVER

3 - THE BEST CHRISTMAS PAGEANT EVER



The Best Christmas Pageant Ever

Crossword Puzzle 3 (Prepared by Helen McDavid)

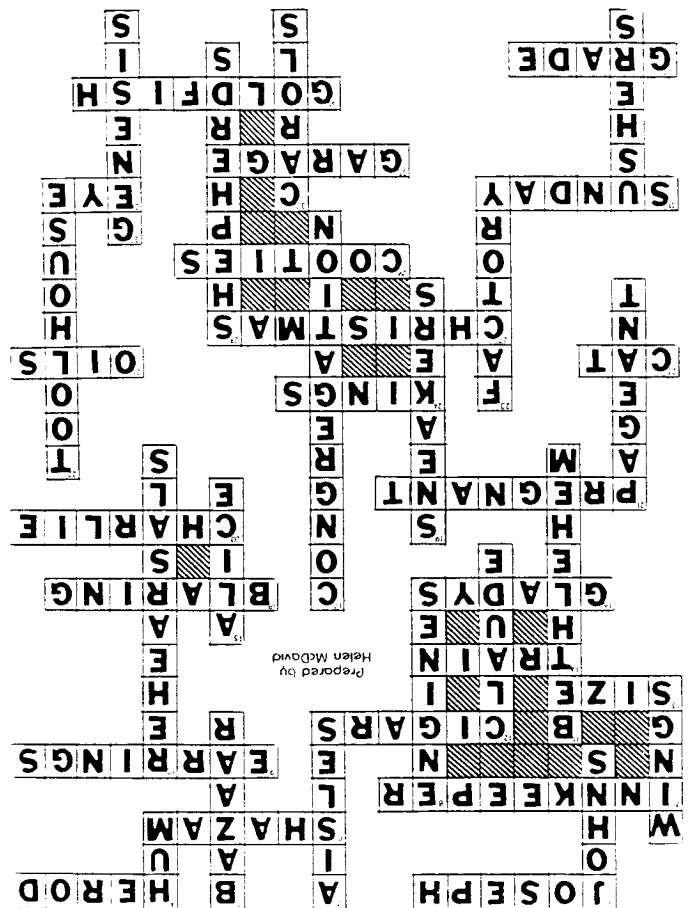
ACROSS

1. Mary and _____
4. King _____
6. One of Gladys' words from "Amazing Comics"
7. The landlord of an inn
9. Ornaments for the earlobes
12. What Imogene was smoking
13. Each Herdman was a different _____, weight and height.
14. A connected line of railroad cars
16. The meanest Herdman
18. On the fire engine, the lights were flashing and the siren was _____.
20. He told the Herdmans there was dessert at Sunday school.
21. Being with child
24. "We Three _____ of Orient Are"
25. This animal had one short leg and a broken tail.
26. The Wise Men brought resins and _____.
27. This was *The Best _____ Pageant Ever*.
29. What Imogene said Alice had
31. The Herdmans first came to church on this day.
34. The Herdmans' cat was missing this.
35. The Herdmans lived over this.
36. The teacher broke the aquarium of _____.
37. In school, the Herdmans were never kept back in a _____.

DOWN

1. Imogene smoked in one of these.
2. Miss Brandel ran up and down these types of rows, yelling at the Herdmans' cat.
3. Ladies Aid _____
4. The choir had to do this while waiting for Mary and Joseph to appear.
5. Part of the angels' costumes
8. The fire _____ came to put out the fire.
10. Practice sessions for the pageant
11. Where Jesus was born
12. He played one of the Wise Men in the pageant.
15. She was nasty-clean
17. People gathered in the church
19. Gladys had these sticking out from the bottom of her robe.

21. Charlie's mother was in charge of the Christmas _____.
22. The Herdmans burned this down.
23. Mrs. Herdman worked at a shoe _____.
28. They take care of sheep.
30. The beginning of the Bible
32. They lit the candles at church.
33. The choir sang Christmas _____.



3 - THE BEST CHRISTMAS PAGEANT EVER

"The Barest Christmas Tree Ever"

CREATIVE WRITING BOOKLET

Prepared by Flora Joy, Illustrated by Pat Harroll

Student Directions: After reading *The Best Christmas Pageant Ever*, write a story entitled "The Barest Christmas Tree Ever" on the enclosed blank pages. You may create your own complete story or select one of the following story beginnings:

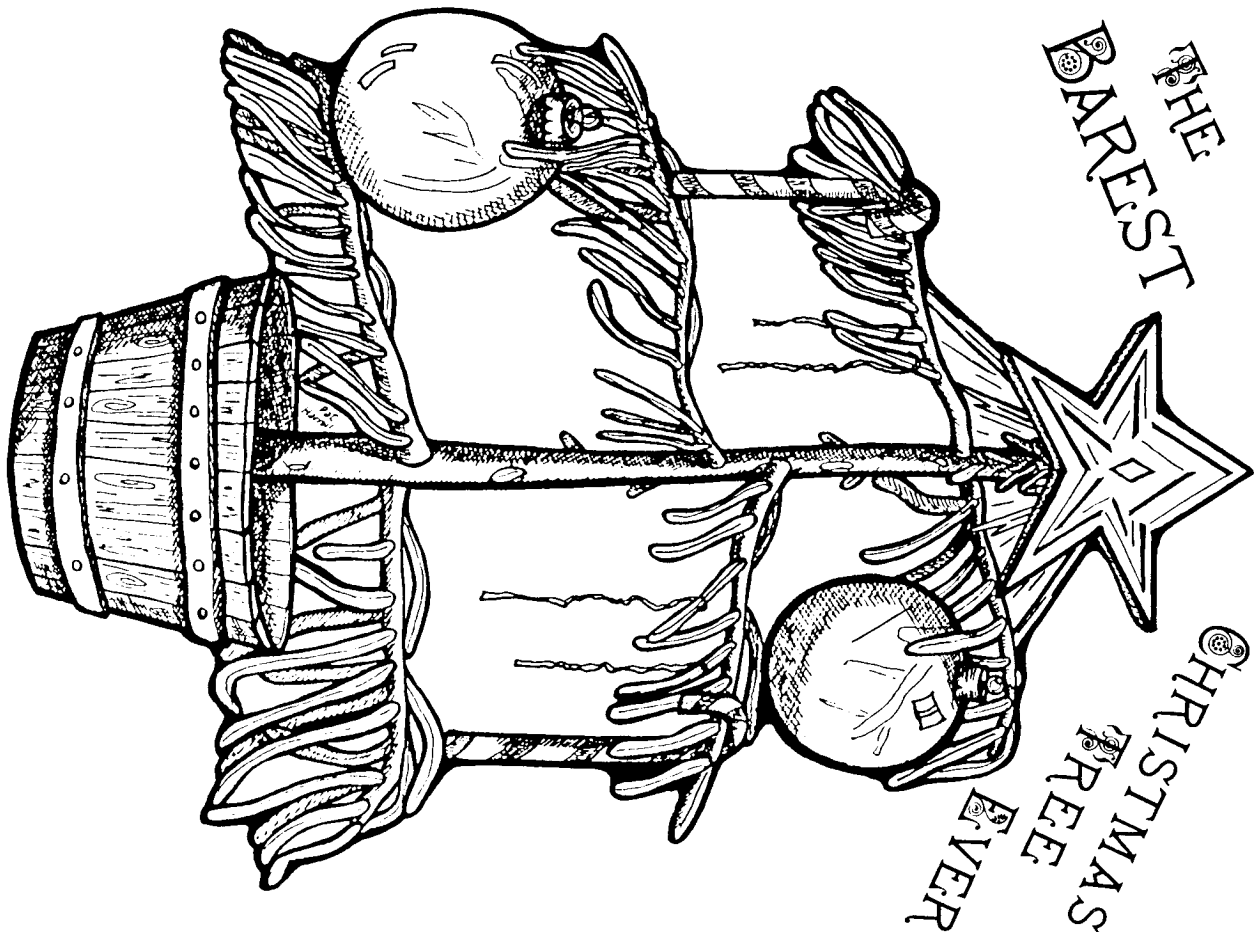
Story Starter 1: The Herdmans went home right after the Christmas pageant at church. They walked into their living room and looked at their tree. Never before had they noticed just how bare it was.

"I know what to do," Imogene yelled. Then she whispered something into the ears of each of her brothers and sisters. They all shouted with excitement and began to...

Story Starter 2: One year after the pageant was over, the Herdman children were walking through a small grove of trees near their home. As they entered the center of the area, Gladys suddenly noticed one small tree in the middle. The tree had but few branches and looked sad and bare. All the Herdman children gathered around the tree...

(Booklet Preparation: Place one or more 8 ½" x 11" blank pages behind this sheet.
Staple through all pages at the dotted line. Fold for a creative writing booklet.)

Flora Joy/Storytel/Bestchpg/1020-8



The Best Christmas Pageant Ever

Book by Barbara Robinson

Packet compilation by Gerri Baker and others

For any questions about this packet, contact

Flora Joy: florajoy@comcast.net

Barbara Robinson's story ***The Best Christmas Pageant Ever*** has been a favorite for many years. This book appeals to students and teachers alike and can be integrated into a variety of subject areas. It is appropriate for elementary age children and adaptable for use with many different educational goals.

A. Mindset

Begin the story with these questions: How many of you have ever been in a Christmas pageant? Did everything go perfectly?(Allow for responses.) Some of you had a positive experience and some...well, not so positive. Today, I am going to tell you a story about ***The Best Christmas Pageant Ever***. As you will see, though, it doesn't start out so smoothly.

B. Tell or Read The Best Christmas Pageant Ever.

C. Content Area and Integrated Activities

This collection of activities has been developed and created for a variety of age groups. The activities may be used in any sequence or order. Copy and use them as needed. This packet has been compiled for you by Gerri M. Baker, who served as author, editor, and computer guru. Ideas gained from specific resources have been noted within.

Creative Arts

Three activities introduce the story with an artistic flair. First, students can create a model of the Herdman's pet cat in *Beware of the Cat*. Second, a *Shoebox Diorama* will help students picture this scene more clearly. Individually or in groups they'll develop a visual of the stable in the pageant story. And third, students keep track of the Herdman family using a *Family Tree* and learn about their own family heritage in the process.

Language Arts

Teachers can choose from over 20 activities that will build a selection of language skills. Identifying words that mean the same thing is strengthened through *Synonym Match Ups*, and *Christmas Song Synonyms*. Choosing the central theme in *Mystery Message* and *Writing Activities* helps develop comprehension skills. *Library Skills*, categorization (*Which word doesn't belong?*), *Sequencing*, and communication (*TV Interviews*) are all skills that are enhanced in this section.

Math and Science Concepts

Who ate the most donuts? is the lead-in activity using fun word problems to determine which Herdman may have eaten the most donuts. *Graphing and Measurements* use height to teach math skills, as well as information analysis. Cooking *Buttermilk Doughnuts* as a class is a possible project to teach more about measurement and fractions. This is also a great way to teach group work, listening, and following directions

Two other activities listed in this subject area include the *Button Game* and *Alice Herman's List*, both pages keep students' multiplication and addition skills up to par with lots of practice. Lastly, *Fire Extinguisher* is an activity that every student will enjoy as they create this fire emergency tool out of everyday items. This is a great project that teaches observation, how to perform a scientific experiment, and a beginning understanding of some of the processes in chemistry.

Social Studies

Students will have an opportunity to work in groups and role-play some situations that could occur in this wonderful story. They will begin to appreciate the differences we have and the ways we can build each other up (*Self-Esteem Building*). In addition, their understanding of other cultures, our differences and likenesses, will be explored as we review some of the other Christmas celebrations around the world.

We hope you enjoy this story and these activities. Have a great Holiday Season!!

BEWARE OF THE CAT

Out of the supplies given, create a model of the Herdman's one-eyed cat that everyone was afraid of. Use the lunch sack as a base for the model. (See example.)

Here is what was said about the cat:

"That cat would attack anything it could see out of its one eye" pg. 4

"It was the meanest looking animal I ever saw. It had one short leg and a broken tail and one missing eye, and the mailman wouldn't deliver anything to the Herdmans because of it." pg. 4



Supplies:

Sack Lunch Paper bags
Newspaper to stuff the sacks
Construction Paper
Goofy eyes (optional)
Feathers
Yarn
Chenille Wire

Glue
Styrofoam pieces
Paint (optional)
Markers
Stapler and Staples
Poster paper
Other items

****This can be an individual or a group project. After the model is complete, have children describe their cat and what it likes to do.**

[illegible]

Shoebox

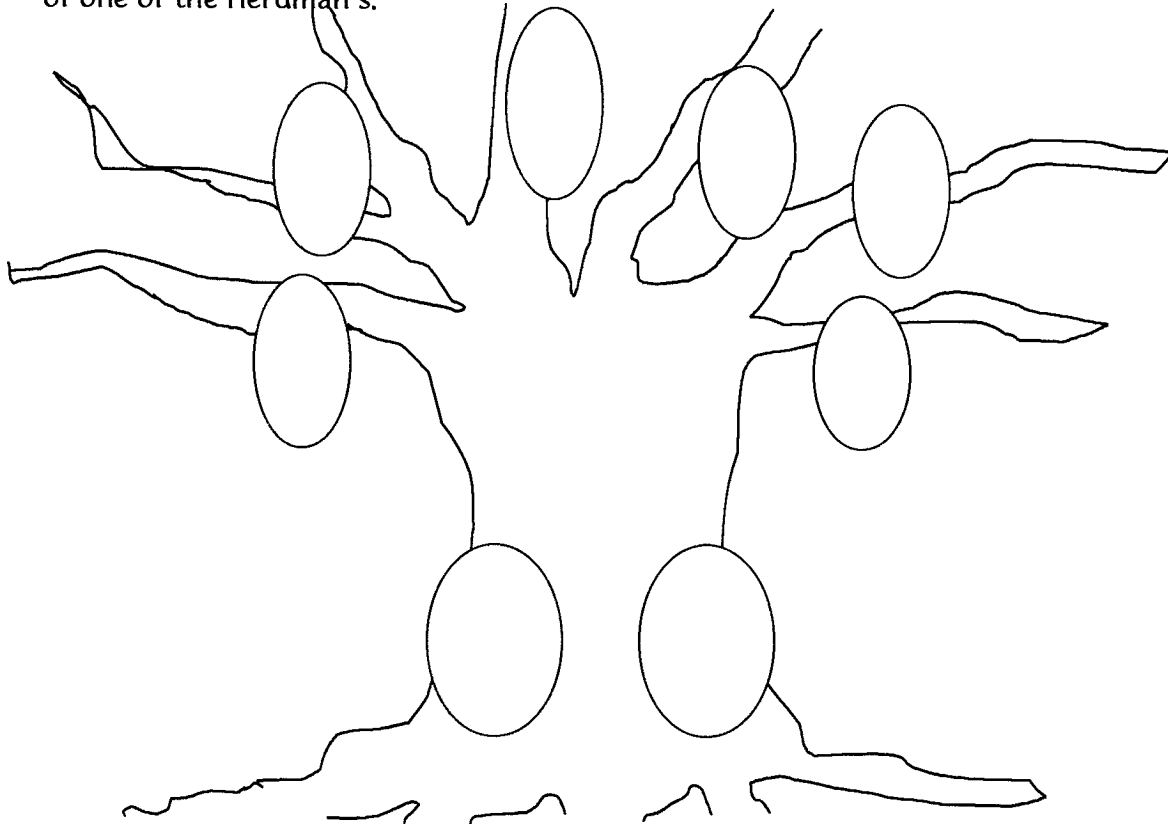
Diorama

Supplies listed above
Laundry clips
Clay
Hay
Cotton
Wire
Shoe box for every group or every student
Other supplies as desired

With the supplies listed, have students create a diorama of the stable scene. They may work in groups or as individuals.

Family Tree

The Herdman's have a large family. There are six children and a mother. Creating a family tree would help the family keep track of each child, as they grow older. In each circle, draw a picture of one of the Herdman's.



What would a family tree look like for your family?

By asking your parent's about your family history you can create a family tree of your own. Find out the answers below, and create a family tree of your family on another sheet of paper.

Your Mother's Name and Birthday: _____

Your Dad's Name and Birthday: _____

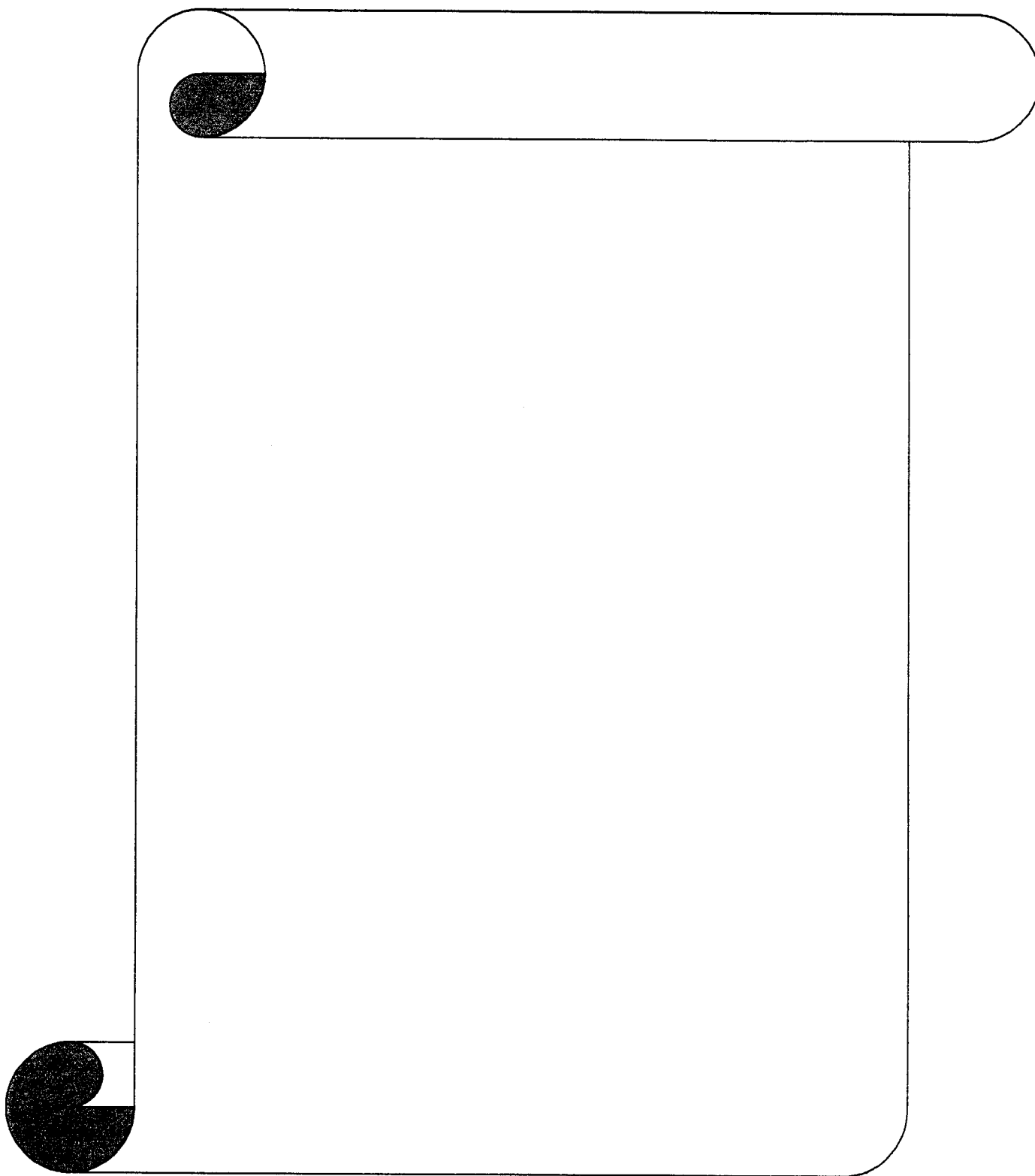
Your Brother and Sister's Names and Birthdays: _____

Your Name and Birthday: _____

If your class is older, you can add grandparents, aunts, uncles, cousins, and the like.

Flyer Fun

It's time for "The Greatest Christmas Pageant Ever" and you need to post some publicity flyers up around town. Create the flyer below that would best advertise this production:



Memo Master

Miss Brandel writes a memo to the students and their parents regarding bringing live animals to Show & Tell. She writes this note after the cat incident. On the memo sheet below, create the memo that you think she would write.

Memo from the Teacher's Desk:

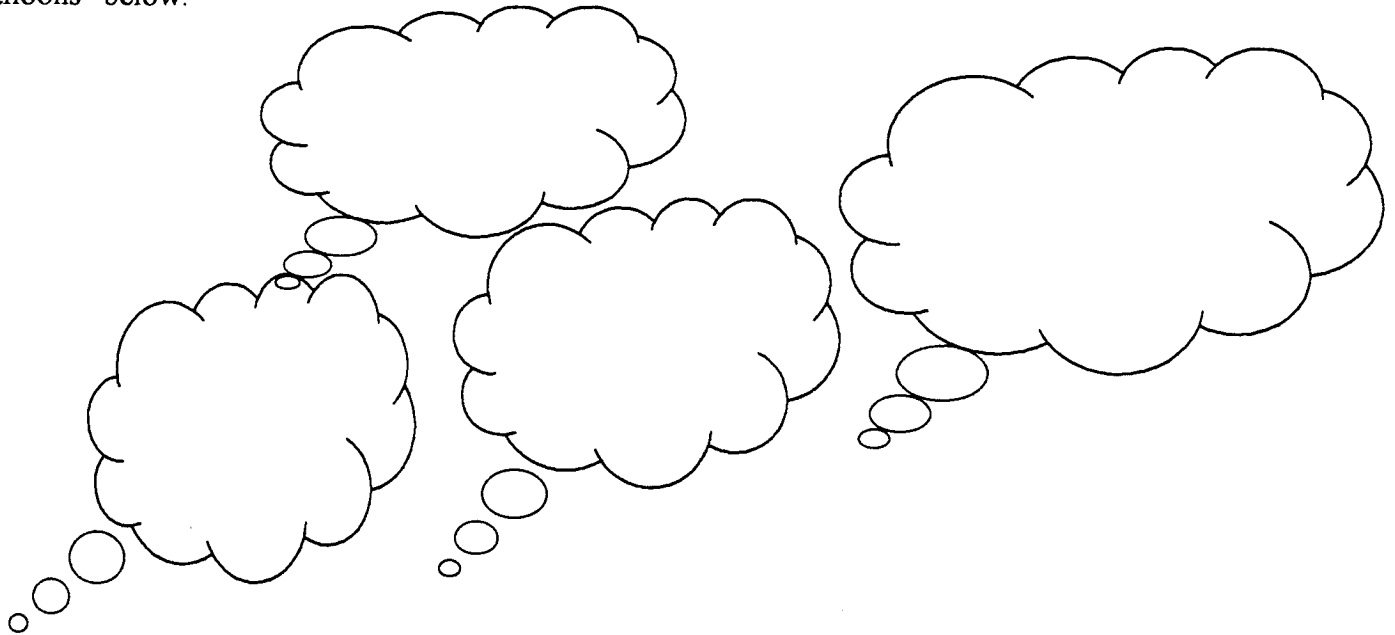
"There are no small parts, only small actors."

Mrs. Armstrong used to tell this to the characters in the pageant when she was in charge. Mother didn't think anyone really understood what it meant.

What do *you* think this quote means? Write your answer below:

What are you thinking???

On the Herdmans first visit to Sunday School, what do you think some of the children may have been thinking when they walked into the room? Fill in the children's thoughts by using the "thought balloons" below.



THE BEST CHRISTMAS PAGEANT EVER

Character Description

If you were asked to write down a description of the characters in the pageant for the church newspaper, how would you describe each character? Match the words that go together below by drawing a line to the correct description.

Mary

heavenly singers

Joseph

rich travelers from far away

Baby Jesus

young, gentle, and kind girl

Angel Choir

special messenger of the Lord

Shepherds

soft, sweet baby

Wise Men

sheep keepers in the field

Angel of the Lord

quiet, strong young man

Have students participate in one or more of the writing exercises below. Then have them share their final drafts in class.

Christmas pageants, lighted trees, gift giving and the like are all traditions that many of us follow around Christmas. Discuss as a class what some of the students traditions are in each family. Have students then write a story about a favorite tradition that they follow during this time. Have students read these in class.

Some of the children that Imogene made fun of kept a journal. Write a page of what you think they would have put in their journal when Imogene tried to blackmail them. Choose from one of the following people. Albert Pelfrey – fat kid; Wanda Pierce – charm bracelet; Lucille Golden – got her imitation alligator purse; Alice Wendleken-lice.

Mrs. Armstrong writes a letter of apology to Mother. She asks forgiveness for some of the things she said. Write the letter that Mrs. Armstrong would write.

The Tribune runs an article about the success of the pageant in the Sunday paper. With several other classmates, create the front page of the Tribune and that article. Include all the usual parts of a front-page to make it look like a real news article.

The Herdmans were attracted to the church by the possibility of getting refreshments. On their first visit they saw the pantry food that the church had collected for Thanksgiving baskets.

As a class, decide on a project and collect pantry food to be distributed to those in need for Christmas or for Thanksgiving.

What do you like best about Christmas?

In the spaces below, write a paragraph about what you like best about Christmas. Make sure to include capitals and punctuation.

On a separate piece of paper, draw a picture that represents what you like best about Christmas.

The Best Christmas Pageant Ever

Mystery Message

Supplies: paraffin, heavy stock 8 ½ x 11 white paper, red crayons

Purpose: To fix the theme of the book firmly in the minds of students.

Ask your students this question: If you could choose what this book's central theme was in just a few words, what would it be?

Once they have a central theme, have them write it with the paraffin on their white sheet of paper. Have students then trade papers and color the white sheets with a red crayon. The central theme will appear. Each student is then to tell why he or she think that central theme is appropriate for this story.

Theme examples: "People change," "There is Good In Everyone," "The Show Must Go On," and the like.

TV Interviews

Plan a special TV interview as a way to get your students to summarize the story *The Best Christmas Pageant Ever*.

Divide students up to be the following characters. Have each student plan their character's costume and responses to the questions below as that character.

Have a parent come in and video tape each character's interview in a private screening. On the last day of the unit on *The Best Christmas Pageant Ever*, play the interview tape.

Characters:

Ollie Herdman	Charlie (brother)
Miss Brandel	Fred Shoemaker (man whose shed burnt down)
Reverend Hopkins	Wanda Pierce (rich girl with charm bracelet)
Father	Alice Wendleken
Mrs. Armstrong	

Possible Questions:

What is your name and how do you know the Herdmans?

What did you think about them being in this year's Christmas Pageant?

Were you surprised by the outcome of the pageant?

Would you support them in being in this year's Easter Program?

[illegible]

WHO AM I?

On each student's back, place a piece of paper with the name of one of the characters in the story. Instruct the students that they are not allowed to tell each other which character anyone has on their back. Students are to ask one question to the other students in their class with the goal of trying to figure out "Who am I". For example, if they have the character Ollie Herdman on their back and they ask the question, "Am I in the pageant?" – the child they are asking the question to would respond "yes." If they ask, "Am I a 'mean' person?" – the child would respond accordingly.

Students cannot ask identity questions such as “Am I a Herdman?” nor “Am I Alice?” They must ask questions which may be answered with a “yes” or “no.”

They are to gather as much information as they can about their character by asking several children “yes” and “no” questions. After about 15 minutes, gather the children back into a group. See how many children can guess which character they have placed on their back. If you want to make this guessing game more difficult, you can have more than one student be the same character.

Synonym Match Ups

Draw a line to connect the synonyms. The first one has been done for you as an example.

pageant

hotel

start

feed trough

thief

large

inn

yelled

stirred

practice

odd

story

ordinary

break

yelped

mixed

manger

play

big

robber

recess

beginning

rehearsal

normal

parable

barn

stable

strange

DECODE THE MESSAGE

A B C D E F G H I J K L M N O P Q R S T U V W X Y Z
 . , / n : ; - + ! , y L m n o p q r s t u v w x y z

+ ; v u n t o v o u . / + i l n i s . o r n

Sequencing

The Best Christmas Pageant Ever

Language Arts

Cut the strips out below. Instruct students to place them in correct order and glue them onto an 11 x 14 sheet of paper. In the extra space on their sheets, they may illustrate one of the scenes listed. Please note: the correct order is as they are seen here. Please cut them apart before giving them to students.

The Herdmans visit Sunday School for the first time.

The Herdmans volunteer to be in the Christmas Pageant.

Mother explains the Christmas story to the Herdmans.

The Herdmans go to the library to learn more about King Herod.

The Herdmans bring their ham to baby Jesus.

Imogene Herdman cries over the baby Jesus.

Everyone was reminded of the wonder of Christmas.

Who Said It?

"Hey! Unto you a child is born!"

Mrs. Wendleken

"Why, it's going to be the best Christmas pageant we've ever had!"

Alice Wendleken

"His underwear."

Glady's

"Well, Mary the mother of Jesus had a black eye: that was something special. But only what you might expect."

Reverend Hopkins

"The whole church is in an uproar. Do you think we should call off the pageant?"

Mother

"I'd better tell my mother."

Hobie Carmichael

Directions: Draw a line from the saying to the person who said it in the story "The Best Christmas Pageant Ever."

Which word doesn't belong?

In each list, circle the item that doesn't belong and explain what the other items have in common.

1. Stable, manger, hay, feed, bed

2. Mary, Herod, Jesus, Angel, Joseph

3. Rainbow, star, dark, moon, sky

4. Frankincense, myrrh, ham, gold

5. Ollie, Gladys, Hobie, Leroy, Imogene

#####

RHYMING FUN

In each box, draw a picture of a word that rhymes with the word listed. Try to come up with a rhyming word from the story *The Best Christmas Pageant Ever*.

Monday tool
poke

tire
bake

preacher
tree

Comparison Challenge

Word forms are changed when making comparisons. Word forms that compare two things are called *comparative*. A *superlative* word form compares three or more items. Change the words below to create *comparative* and *superlative* word forms. Then, use each of the words in the proper form to complete the sentences below.

	Comparative "er" form	Superlative "est" form
mean		
happy		
dirty		
fat		
late		
pretty		
young		
crazy		

Sentences:

1. The cat is the _____ cat in the whole town.
2. She was _____ than her sister Imogene when the firemen arrive.
3. The floor was the _____ it had ever been.
4. Albert was getting _____ every year.
5. None of the children wanted to be _____ than the Herdmans to the first practice.
6. Alice made a _____ Mary than Imogene.
7. Gladys was the _____ of the Herdman family.
8. The boys acted _____ than the girls.



Mixed Up Stars



The stars of the pageant are all mixed up on what part they are playing. Look at the words below and unscramble the main characters and who played their parts.

army _____

gelna _____

pherdshes _____

ojseph _____

simewen _____

geneoim _____

phral _____

lielo _____

daucel _____

yorel _____

dagsly _____

Library Skills

Here is a short quiz about Christmas. Answer the questions and then go to the library and find out the history of these words by doing the following:

*Look up the word in the dictionary.

*Find out the history behind only one of the answers and write a paragraph telling about the history of the word.

1. Name the red flower commonly used as a Christmas decoration.

2. Who is the villain in Dr. Suess' famous Christmas book?

3. Who are the Magi?

4. What is a crèche?

5. What is the Jewish Holiday celebrated around the 1st of December?

6. What do people hang on their front doors at Christmas time?

7. What is the greenery that people kiss under at Christmas time called?

8. What do we roast over a fire around Christmas time? (song)

9. Where does Santa live?

10. Name a famous Christmas ballet.

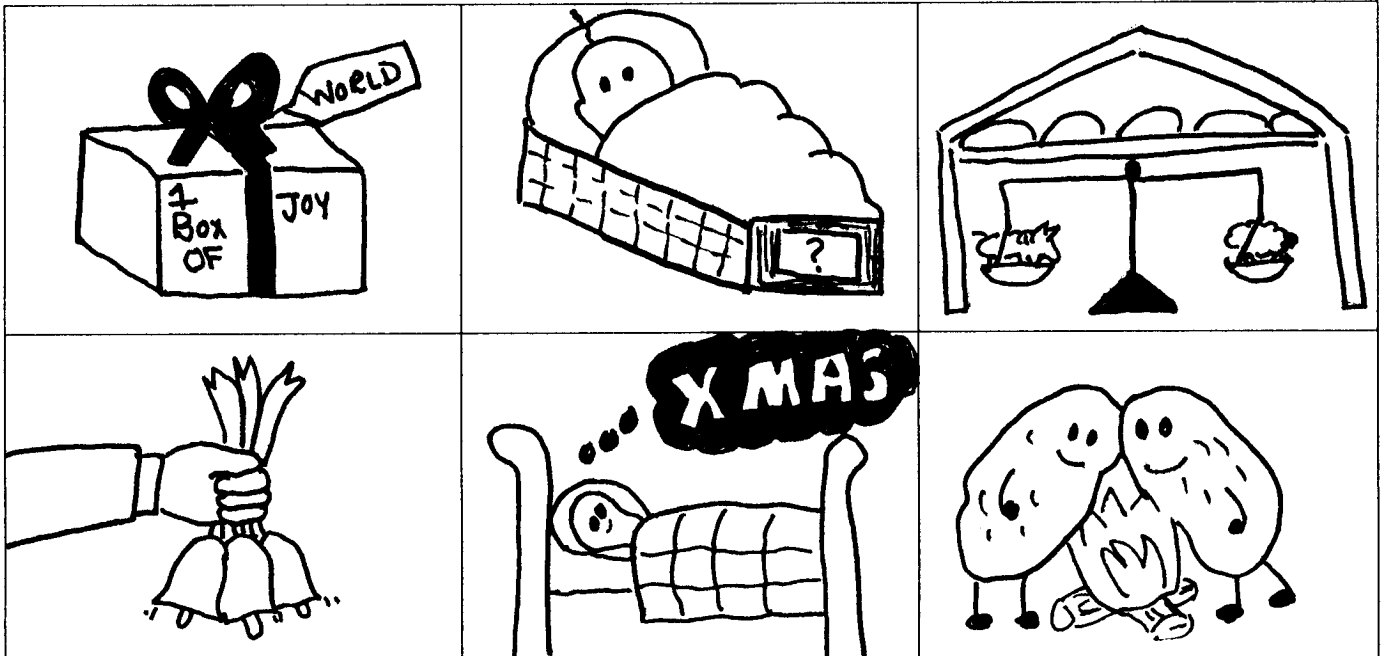
Christmas Song Synonyms

Here are some common Christmas songs disguised. See if you can translate these song titles to recognizable English. These Christmas songs were sung in the final program in *The Best Christmas Pageant Ever*.

1. In a distant bovine diner. _____
2. O miniature Nazarene village. _____
3. Pastoral woolies nocturnally overseen _____
4. Reigning monarchs of the far east _____
5. Who's the mystery kid? _____
6. Nocturnal timespan of unbroken quietness _____

Can You Guess?

Look at the pictures below and guess what common Christmas song is being shown.



Who ate the most donuts?

Below are several math word problems. See if you can figure out which of the Herdman children ate the most donuts that the Tasti-Lunch Diner sent for the firemen.

1. Ralph ate two donuts. Then he stuffed four in his right pants pocket. He stuffed three in his left pocket. On his way home, he gave two donuts to his mean cat and then he ate the rest. How many donuts did Ralph eat?

2. Imogene put four donuts in her purse and then six donuts in her bike basket. She parked her bike closer to the firetruck to get a peek inside and when she came back, three donuts were missing. She ate all the donuts she had left. How many donuts did Imogene eat?

3. Leroy stayed by the donut table all morning. Every half an hour he ate two donuts. He was there from 9:00am to 12:00pm. At noon, he went home to eat lunch. How many donuts did he eat before the morning was over?

4. Ollie was seen with doughnuts all around his middle. He carried 16 donuts tucked in his shirt. On his way home, he tripped and his donuts fell out all around him. Six rolled away and down a drain, a dog near by gobbled up four, and two got run over by a car. Ollie quickly ate those that remained. How many did he eat?

5. Claude decided it was too suspicious to hang around the donut table, so he followed Imogene on her bike. When she took a peek inside the fire truck, Claude grabbed some donuts from her bike basket. Look at question # 2 to see how many donuts Claude ate.

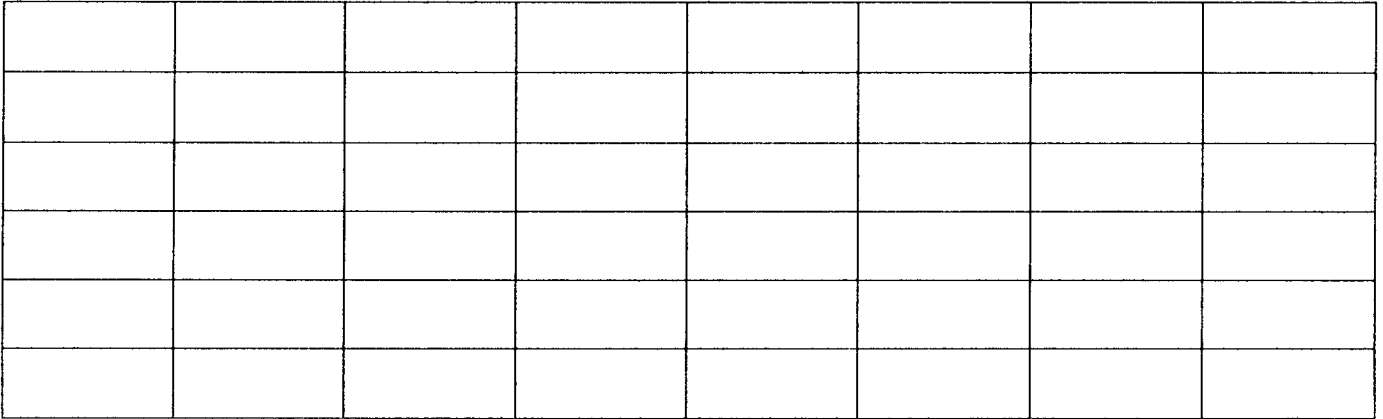
6. Gladys felt guilty about the fire, so her stomach was a little queasy. She was afraid they would all be taken off to jail. She decided to hide out in the bushes and didn't get any donuts, except for one that rolled by after she tripped Ollie as he passed by her bush. How many donuts did she eat?

Graphs and Measurement

Imogene liked to keep charts on the people in her class. What would her "height" chart of you and your classmates look like?

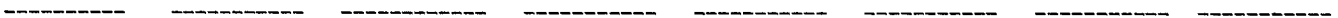
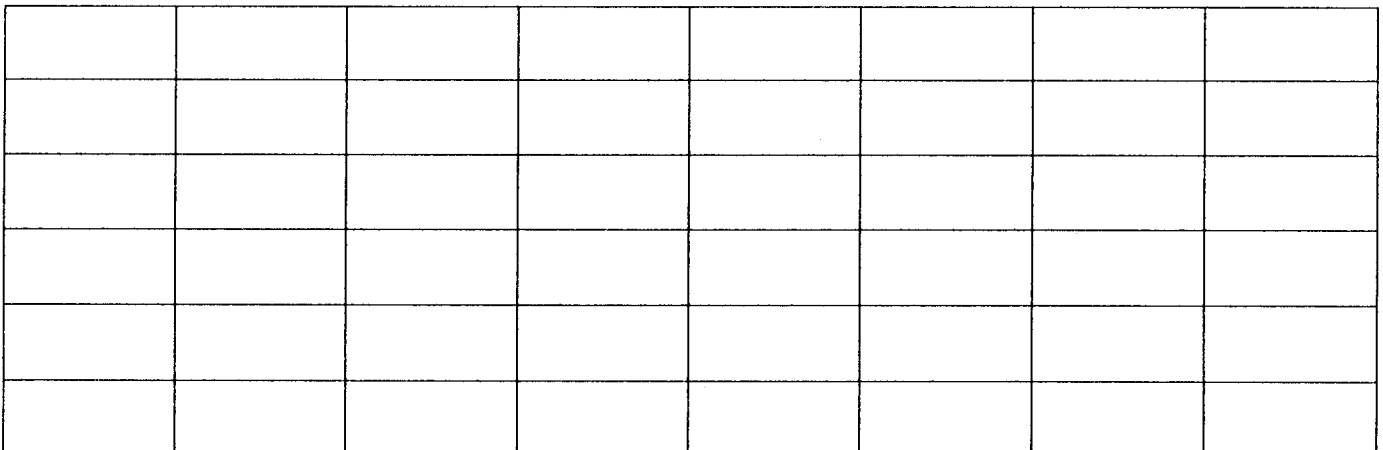
Line Graph

Create a height chart below of you and 8 of your classmates. Use a line graph to show who is tallest.



Bar Graph

Now, using the same information, create a bar graph by coloring in the areas below.



How to make Buttermilk Doughnuts

- 3 ¼ cups of all-purpose flour
- 1 teaspoon of baking soda
- ½ teaspoon baking powder
- ½ teaspoon ground nutmeg
- ½ teaspoon salt
- 2 slightly beaten eggs
- ½ cup sugar
- 2 tablespoons butter or margarine, melted
- 1 cup buttermilk or sour milk
- Shortening or cooking oil for deep fat frying

In a mixing bowl stir together flour, baking soda, baking powder, nutmeg, and salt; set aside. In a large mixer bowl beat eggs and sugar till thick and lemon-colored. Stir in melted butter or margarine. Add flour mixture and buttermilk or sour milk, alternately, to egg mixture; beat just till blended after each addition. Cover; chill dough about 2 hours.

Turn dough out onto a lightly floured surface. Roll to ½ inch thickness; cut with a 2 ½ inch donut cutter. Fry in deep, hot fat (375 degrees) about 1 minute per side or till golden, turning once. Drain on paper toweling. While warm, sprinkle with additional sugar, if desired. Makes 18.

(pg. 83, Better Homes and
Gardens, New Cook Book)

The Best Christmas Pageant Ever

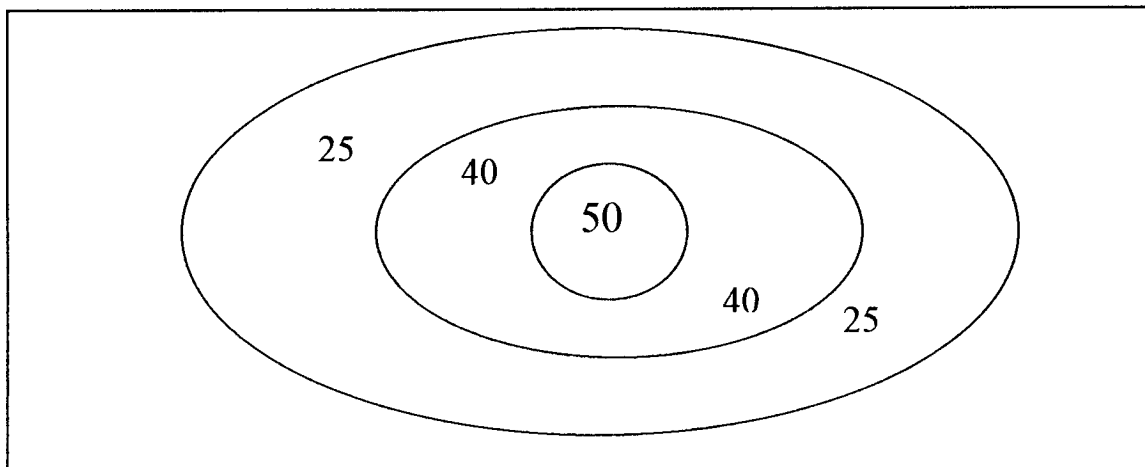
Math and Language Arts

Button Game

Create several game boards like the example below. Have students flip a button onto the game board to determine the amount of points they will receive for answering comprehension questions from the story *The Greatest Christmas Pageant Ever*. If the student gets the answer right, they get the number of points that their button was on. If they get the answer wrong, they lose 10 points. Each player is required to keep his or her own work and they must show the math computations.

The teacher chooses the questions that would best suit the purposes of the review.

Supplies: Poster board, markers, and buttons



ALICE'S HERDMAN LIST

Alice kept a diary of all the things the Herdmans did over the next year and put a numerical value on each thing they did. Work the math problems below by multiplying the times they got caught doing something by the value Alice placed on the activity. Find out which Herdman got caught doing the most nice things after all.

Carried grocery bags - 12
 Washed the chalkboard - 11
 Smiled at someone else - 10
 Opened the door - 9
 Went to the library - 8
 Brought flowers to the teacher - 7

Gave donuts to the firemen - 6
 Helped clean a school room - 5
 Did their homework - 4
 Made fun of someone - 3
 Brought the scary cat to school - 2
 Got caught smoking cigars - 1

R	Made fun of someone	$X 3 =$	$X 3 =$	Total points added together = _____
A				
L	Helped clean a school room	$X 2 =$	$X 2 =$	
P				
H	Opened the door for a teacher	$X 6 =$	$X 6 =$	

I	Got caught smoking cigars	$X 2 =$	$X 2 =$	Total points added together = _____
M				
O	Smiled at someone else	$X 5 =$	$X 5 =$	
G				
E	Went to the library	$X 3 =$	$X 3 =$	
N				
E	Brought flowers to the teacher	$X 1 =$	$X 1 =$	

L	Washed a chalkboard	$X 2 =$	$X 2 =$	Total points added together = _____
E				
R	Brought the scary cat to school	$X 4 =$	$X 4 =$	
O				
Y	Gave donuts to the firemen	$X 5 =$	$X 5 =$	

C	Carried grocery bags	$X 6 =$	$X 6 =$	Total points added together = _____
L				
A	Went to the library	$X 1 =$	$X 1 =$	
U				
D	Opened door for a teacher	$X 2 =$	$X 2 =$	
E				

O	Smiled at someone else	$X 8 =$	$X 8 =$	Total points added together = _____
L				
L	Washed the chalkboard	$X 1 =$	$X 1 =$	
I				
E	Did his homework	$X 3 =$	$X 3 =$	

G	Made fun of someone else	$X 1 =$	$X 1 =$	Total points added together = _____
L				
A	Brought flowers to the teacher	$x 4 =$	$X 4 =$	
D				
Y	Went to the library	$X 6 =$	$X 6 =$	
S				

Objectives:

To develop skills in performing a scientific experiment.

Materials:

baking soda

small-mouthed plastic bottles

fish line (10 LB test or stronger)

vinegar

modeling clay

Teaching Suggestions:

Building the Fire Extinguisher

Spread out a tissue. Put 3 teaspoons of baking soda along the length of the tissue. Roll the tissue into a long tube and tie one end with a piece of fish line. Tie the middle with a piece of fish line. Use a 6-inch piece of fish line to tie the other end. Leave a long piece of fish line dangling.

Place about 4 ounces of vinegar in a bottle. Stick a pencil through a lump of modeling clay. Feed a straw through this hole and mod the clay around the straw.

Place the baking soda tube in the bottle and let it dangle above the vinegar by holding the long piece of fish line. Place the straw and clay stopper in the bottle. Press the clay against the fish line and fit it tightly in the mouth of the bottle.

Using the Fire Extinguisher

Your teacher will light a candle. Shake the bottle and point the straw at the candle.

Describe what happened.

Food Collection Scavenger Hunt

The Herdmans didn't have a lot of money during the holiday season. That was one of the reasons they acted the way they did. Help other families this season by giving them a special gift of kindness with the activity below.

Supplies Needed:

Plastic grocery bags

Boxes

Parent Sponsors

Tally Sheets (optional)

Contact an organization that would be able to help distribute the items collected. Possible suggestions: Salvation Army, Red Cross, Harvest Centers, Crisis Centers, and the like.

Divide your class into small groups of 5-6, with one parent sponsor for each group. Instruct each group that they are to go door to door in the school's neighborhood asking for canned goods, peanut butter, and staples for a food collection project for those in need. (Follow rules and suggestions below)

When the students return, talk about people in need and food nutrition. Since protein is what people in need should have most in their diets, have students evaluate their collected cans for nutritional value. Also talk about the food groups and which food items would be best to give out. You could even award points for certain items that would be higher in nutritional value than others.

Objectives:

Students will participate in a project to help people in need.

Students will be able to identify foods and select items that have positive nutritional values.

Students will be able to identify with people in need and the trials they face when dependent upon others for their food supply. (This is done through having to ask for food donations. Some people may not be gracious.)

Suggestions:

- 1. Get prior approval from school officials. It may be that you will need to have students do the food collection on their own at home and bring it in instead of collecting this during school hours. This plan would also work. Students would need to keep a record of people's responses so that they could discuss how it felt to ask people for food.**
- 2. Create a small flyer for students to give out regarding where the donations will be given and include the objectives of the activity.**
- 3. If you do go door-to-door, develop strict rules. For example: Students are not allowed to go inside any home, parent sponsors are responsible for each student, parents sponsors must be approved, set a time limit (i.e. ½ hour), everyone must thank those who donate items.**

Christmas Songs

Many countries celebrate different Christmas traditions. Below are some simple songs that could serve as a springboard for discussion of different traditions for celebrating the Christmas holiday.

Christmas Star

Sung to: Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star

Twinkle, Twinkle, Christmas star,
Way up high is where you are.
Shining there for all to see,
On the tiptop of our tree.
Twinkle, twinkle, star so bright,
Shine up there till morning light.

Bonnie Woodard
Shreveport, LA

I'm A Little Dreidel

Sung to: I'm A Little Teapot

I'm a little dreidel (dray-dul)
Made of clay.
Spin me around
When you want to play.
When I fall down,
If you don't win,
Just pick me up and
Spin again!

Adapted, traditional

Feliz Navidad

Sung to: "The Farmer in the Dell"

Feliz Navidad (fey-lees nah-vee-dahd),
Feliz Navidad.
Merry Christmas everyone,
Feliz Navidad.

Jean Warren

(Spanish for "Merry Christmas")

O Christmas Tree

O Christmas Tree, O Christmas Tree,
How lovely are your branches.
O Christmas Tree, O Christmas Tree,
How lovely are your branches.

Not only green in summer time,
But also green in wintertime.
O Christmas Tree, O Christmas tree,
How lovely are your branches.

Traditional

Christmas Traditions

A Christmas pageant is only one tradition that we have here in the United States to celebrate Christmas. Other countries celebrate this tradition, and other traditions as well. The following pages will provide some information that you can use as you study other countries and their winter celebrations.

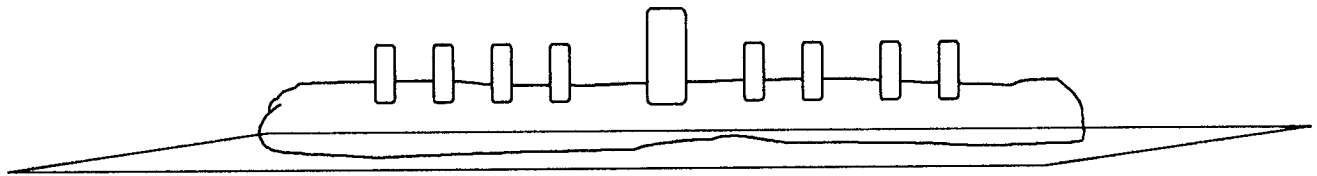
Hanukkah: A Jewish Celebration

Hanukkah, or the Feast of Lights, is the eight-day celebration of Jewish families. This celebration commemorates the rededication of the Temple of Jerusalem more than 2,000 years ago. When it was time to light the sacred Temple lamp, only enough oil to keep it burning for one day could be found; however, according to tradition, the lamp miraculously continued to burn for eight full days.

On every night of Hanukkah, families gather around the *menorah*, a special candelabrum that holds nine candles. Blessings are recited, and a candle is lighted for each of the eight nights (the center candle is used to light one smaller candle on each of the 8 nights). Children usually receive a present on each night of Hanukkah, they play with a wooden top called a *dreidel* with Hebrew letters *nun*, *gimel*, *hay* and *shin* written on it. These letters stand for "a great miracle happened there."

A traditional food of Hanukkah is cheese or potato *latkes*, crisp fried pancakes that are served with applesauce and sour cream.

Menorahs: Let the children make menorahs. For bases cut 12 by 2-inch strips out of heavy cardboard and paint them dark blue or cover them with dark blue construction paper. Give the children large lumps of clay or playdough and sprinkle them with gold glitter on a table top. Let the children work the glitter into the dough. Then have them make a small thick "snake" and put this on the cardboard. (See picture) Push 8 white candles into the dough so that they stand upright in their menorahs. Put one slightly larger candle right in the center.

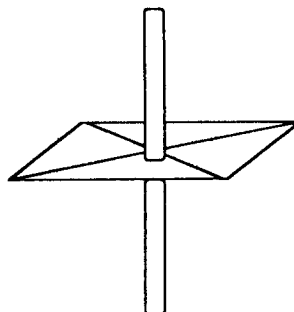
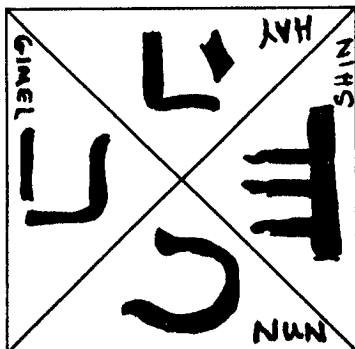


Caution: The candles in this menorah are not to be lighted.

Dreidels: Make a "dreidel" for each child by cutting a 2 inch square out of card board. Use a ruler, draw two diagonal lines across the square from corner to corner and write the Hebrew letters *nun*, *gimel*, *hay* and *shin* in the four sections. (see picture below) Use a small 3 inch dowel rod and place through the center of the square where the lines intersect. You may want to tape the dowel rod or glue it into place so that it will remain perpendicular to the paper. Let the children then practice spinning the dreidel with their fingers on a flat surface. Then they can play the following game.

With a jar of peanuts, give each student 10 peanuts to start with. When it is each student's turn, Have them spin their dreidel. According to whichever side ends up, then the student must receive or give peanuts. After everyone has had 10 turns, the student with the most peanuts wins.

- Nun – give each other player 2 peanuts
- Gimel – Receive 10 peanuts from the "pot" (peanut jar)
- Hay – every other play must give you 3 peanuts
- Shin – give each other players 1 peanut



Cheese Latkes: Make cheese latkes . Use a blender to combine 3 eggs, ¼ cup of milk, 1cup cottage cheese and ¼ teaspoon salt. Add 1-cup flour and blend again. Spoon the batter into a hot, greased frying pan to make 3-inch rounds. Fry on both sides until golden brown. Drain on paper towels, and then serve warm with sour cream, yogurt, or applesauce. Makes 18 latkes.

Las Posadas: A Mexican Celebration

December 16th is the beginning of Las Posadas. On each of the nine nights before Christmas, Mexican families re-enact the story of Mary and Joseph's search for a place to stay in Bethlehem. The families travel from house to house singing songs and asking for lodging. At each house they are turned away until they reach the final destination where the party is to be held. The highlight of this party is the breaking of a pinata, a clay pot shaped like a bird or an animal that is covered in tissue paper and filled with candies, fruits, nuts, and small toys. The pinata is hung from the ceiling with a rope. The children are blindfolded, one at a time, and given the chance to swing a stick at the pinata trying to break it. When the pinata is broken, everyone gets to join in gathering up the treats. On Christmas Day, some children may get presents, but traditionally, they must wait until Three Kings Day on January 6. Then they leave their shoes out the night before and awake to find their shoes filled with presents left by the Three Kings, who long ago brought gifts for the Baby Jesus.

Foil Christmas Ornaments: Many ornaments from Mexico are made out of brightly colored tin. To get the same effect, children can make ornaments out of foil cupcake liners and colored tissue paper. Flatten the liners out and have children glue the tissue paper around the center, overlapping colors. Have them leave the foil edges to be seen and reflect the light. When the glue has dried, punch a hole in the top and loop some yarn through the hole for the hanger.

Mexican Serapes (blankets): Use any kind of heavy long sheet paper, towels, or sheeting about 1ft. wide. Have students cut the edges so it looks like a fringe. With thick tempera paint, decorate the serapes with horizontal stripes. When the paint has dried, drape over one shoulder and fasten with safety pins.

Pinata: Let the children create a large bird out of a thick grocery bag (or several put together). Have children glue tissue paper and construction paper to form the bird. Partially fill the bag with treats. Fasten together and hang from the ceiling. If your class is older, you can create pinatas out of paper mache.

Cheese Nachos: Make your own corn chips by combining ½ cup yellow cornmeal and ½ teaspoon salt in a mixing bowl. Pour in 1 cup boiling water and stir. Add 1-teaspoon margarine and stir until melted. Add another ¾ cup boiling water and continue stirring. Drop small spoonfuls of the mixture (about the size of a quarter) on a greased cookie sheet. Then bake at 425 degrees for 12 to 15 minutes or until lightly browned. Makes approximately 3 dozen chips.

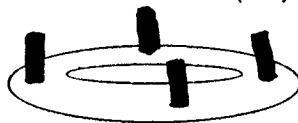
Story: The Flower of Christmas Eve (poinsettia)

Advent: Christmas in Germany

Advent is the celebration that children in Germany look forward to during Christmas. Advent starts on December 1 with families receiving Advent Calendars, which are used to count the number of days until Christmas. In each home there is an Advent Wreath that holds four red candles. One candle is lit as each of the four Sundays come before Christmas.

Advent Calendar: Have children create an advent paper chain calendar for the 24 days before Christmas. Have children glue together strips of red and green paper into a paper chain. On each paper have students write a Christmas wish. Each day they are to remove one loop and count how many days are left before Christmas by counting the loops that are left.

Advent Wreaths: Collect whipped cream or butter lids about 5-6 inches in diameter, one for each student. Cut the center of each lid out, leaving a rim about 2–3 inches wide. Have students paint these lids gold, green or white. You may want to sprinkle gold glitter in the paint to add an extra design to it. Then decorate the tops of the wreaths with small evergreen sprigs. Have students glue 4 small red candles onto the wreath. (They are not to light these candles, it is a decoration.)



Gingerbread Cookies: As a class, make gingerbread cookies for another class. Have the cookies already baked, or have the class help make them as well. Decorate the cookies and deliver them to another class or for a special project.

Christmas Tree: Bring in a Christmas tree if okayed by your school officials. Spend some time decorating it in old fashioned ways such as with popcorn, beads, and the like. Take some time and teach the children the song "O Christmas Tree" in German.

O TANNENBAUM (SUNG TO: "O CHRISTMAS TREE")

O Tannenbaum, O Tannenbaum
(o than-en-baum, o than-en-baum)

Wie treu sind deine Baltter.
(vee troy zint die-nah blet-ter)

O Tannenbaum, O Tannenbaum,
(o than-en-baum, o than-en-baum)

Du brunst nicht nur zur Sommerszeit,
(doo groonst nickt noor tsoor zohm-ers-tsite)

Nein, auch im Winter, wenn es schneit.
(nine, owk im vin-ter, venn es shnite)

(Tannenbaum, O Tannenbaum,
(O than-en-baum, o than-en-baum)

Wie treu sind deine blatter.
(vee troy zint die-nah blet-ter)

O Christmas Tree, O Christmas Tree,
How lovely are your branches.

O Christmas Tree, O Christmas Tree,
How lovely are your branches.

Not only green in summertime,
But also green in wintertime.

O Christmas Tree, O Christmas Tree,
How lovely are your branches.

Traditional

Kwanzaa: An Afro-American Celebration

Starting on December 26, Black American children begin a seven-day festival that began in the United States in the 1960's. *Kwanzaa* means "first" in Swahili. The festival's customs commemorate their African heritage and celebrate the values of family and community life. On each night of Kwanzaa, the children light one of seven Kwanzaa colored candles. The official colors are red, green, and black, and are often hung on walls or an evergreen "Kwanzaa bush." A straw mat is placed on the table, with a Kwanzaa candle holder, unity cup, and a bowl of fruits and vegetables. Every family member also places an ear of corn on the table. Each night as the family gathers, they talk about one of seven values of Black American family life: unity, self-determination, collective work and responsibility, cooperative economics, purpose, creativity and faith. Throughout Kwanzaa the children often receive presents in keeping with the spirit of the holiday, such as something homemade, a book, or a heritage item. The celebration ends on January 1 with a joyous feast with family and friends.

African Masks: Show pictures of African masks from your school library. Let the children use paper plates, construction paper, large popsicle sticks, crepe paper, paint, and such to create animal masks. Display the mask on the wall.

Drums: let children make drums out of various items such as oatmeal boxes, coffee cans, trashcans, etc. Have fun with practicing different rhythms and beats for the children to repeat. Play library recordings of African music and let the children play along.

Peanuts and how they grow: Peanuts grow in many parts of Africa and are called groundnuts. They belong to the same family as peas and beans and grow underground on long shoots. Discuss how peanut shells contain from one to three nuts and how each nut is covered with a brown skin and divided into two parts. Sample raw peanuts and compare the taste with that of roasted peanuts.

Gift exchange: Giving homemade presents rather than store-bought ones is emphasized at Kwanzaa. Choose a simple gift that all the children can make and exchange or give to someone at home. i.e. ornaments, cookies, candles, fabric or cornhusk doll, etc.

(Christmas Traditions selected and adapted from Small World Celebrations, 1988, Warren Publishing House, Inc.)

SELF ESTEEM BUILDING

As a self-esteem building exercise, discuss some positive things about Imogene Herdman. Ask the students why it was that Imogene seemed nicer at the end of the story; was it that she had changed or that the other students had changed? Include in your discussion the need to look for the "good" in every person.

After your discussion, have your students write their name on a piece of construction paper. Post these papers somewhere in the room. Then give each student a white label for each person in the classroom. Instruct them to find at least one good comment about each person in the room. They are then to write that compliment on a label and place it on the corresponding piece of construction paper. This activity takes time, so you will want to give them several opportunities to work on their labels. When all the labels are posted, each child will have a list of many compliments from their classmates. (This is a great activity to conclude the Holiday Season with.)



Divide students into groups of 3-4. Have them prepare to role-play a situation from the suggestions below or create your own. Instruct students to be as creative as possible.

The Herdmans decide not to be in the pageant after all. Unfortunately they decide just as it is their time to come onto the stage. Role-play what the rest of the actors do to "save" the play.

Role-play the moment when the Herdmans decide to give the ham to baby Jesus. Talk through how they came to that decision.

Prepare a role-play of how you think the Herdmans would tell their cousins about the pageant and what Christmas really means.

Role-play a scene where the other children in the play congratulate the Herdmans on their acting efforts.

Role-play a scene where Alice and Imogene become friends.

Role-play a situation where the other students find a secret about Imogene and they blackmail her with it just like she did with knowing the "weight" of everyone.

Role-play another situation in the Herdmans life that would make them become even nicer. Show how other people would respond to them.

WHICH ONE?

Read the statements below about the story *The Best Christmas Pageant Ever*. Circle the answer that fits best.

1. Which one of these items was the gift the Herdmans brought to the Christmas pageant?	myrrh	frankincense	gold	ham
2. Which of these people kept a list of wrongs?	Alice	Ollie	Reverend Hopkins	Claude
3. Which word best describes the dress rehearsal?	perfect	fire	okay	ready
4. How many times did they get through the whole dress rehearsal?	1	3	2	0
5. Who didn't think the church pageant was special?	Reverend Hopkins	Miss Brandel	Mrs. Wendleken	Lucille Golden
6. In this book, how many times was the fire department called to a fire?	4	2	1	0
7. What really burned during the dress rehearsal?	applesauce cake	church	Alice's hair	Bathroom
8. Who was determined that the "show must go on?"	Alice	Gladys	Mother	Father
9. Who was nicknamed "Cooties" because of rumors that Imogene spread?	Albert	Lucille	Alice	Wanda
10. Where did the Herdmans go to find out more about Herod?	Grocery Store	Library	Police Department	Hospital

Answer Sheet

Which Word Doesn't Belong?

1. bed – not in a barn usually
2. Herod – bad king
3. Rainbow – day sky
4. Ham – not usually a Magi gift
5. Hobie – not a Herdman

Synonym Matchups

Pageant/play; start/beginning; thief/robber
inn/hotel; stirred/mixed; odd/strange;
ordinary/normal; yelped/yelled; manger/
feed trough; big/large; recess/break;
rehearsal/practice; parable/story;
stable/barn.

Decode the Message

Hey! Unto you a child is born.

Library Skills

1. Poinsettia
2. Grinch
3. Wisemen
4. Manger
5. Hanukkah
6. Wreath
7. Mistletoe
8. Chestnuts
9. Northpole
10. Nut Cracker

Comparison

1. Meanest
2. Happier
3. Dirtiest
4. Fatter
5. later
6. prettier
7. youngest
8. crazier

Mixed Up Stars

Mary	Angel	Shepherds
Joseph	Wisemen	Imogene
Ralph	Ollie	Claude
Leroy	Gladys's	

Who Said It

In Order:

Gladys
Mother
Hobie Carmichael
Mrs. Wendleken
Reverend Hopkins
Alice Wendleken

Christmas Song Synonyms

1. Away in a Manger
2. O Little Town of Bethlehem
3. While Shepherds Watch their Flocks by Night
4. We Three Kings of Orient Are
5. What Child Is This?
6. Silent Night

Can You Guess?

1. Joy to the World
2. What Child Is This
3. Away in a Manger
4. Jingle Bells
5. I'm Dreaming of a White Christmas
6. Chestnuts Roasting On An Open Fire

Character Description

Mary – young, gentle, kind girl
Joseph – quiet, strong young man
Baby Jesus – soft, sweet baby
Angel Choir – heavenly singers
Shepherds – sheep keepers in the fields
Angel of the Lord – special messenger

Which One

- | | |
|-------------------|--------------------|
| 1. Ham | 6. 2 |
| 2. Alice | 7. Applesauce cake |
| 3. Fire | 8. Mother |
| 4. 0 | 9. Alice |
| 5. Mrs. Wendleken | 10. Library |

Who Ate the Most Donuts?

- | | |
|-------|------|
| 1. 7 | 4. 4 |
| 2. 7 | 5. 3 |
| 3. 12 | 6. 1 |