



The Annotated Night Before Christmas: A Collection Of Sequels, Parodies, And Imitations Of Clement Moore's Immortal Ballad About Santa Claus

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These familiar words begin the classic poem that has become a staple of America's annual Christmas ritual along with Dickens's A Christmas Carol and Dr. Seuss's The Grinch Who Stole Christmas. But how many people know anything about the origin and history of this enduring holiday favorite? In this engrossing, superbly researched, and beautifully illustrated book, Martin Gardner traces the beginnings of this beloved poem and its gradual rise to fame as an indispensable part of our yearly Christmas celebration.

Beginning with a discussion about whether or not to allow children to believe in Santa Claus, Gardner recounts the history of the famous poem. In 1822, Clement Clarke Moore, a scholar of classical and Oriental languages, dashed off the ballad merely as a way of entertaining his two young daughters at Christmas. Originally titled "A Visit from Saint Nicholas", the poem describes an elf-sized Santa Claus and "tiny reindeer," so getting down the chimney was no stretch of the imagination. After the poem was published in a Troy, NY newspaper, its popularity quickly grew and the cult of Santa Claus took off. Copious illustrations show Santa's evolution in the hands of various artists.

After setting forth the original poem, Martin Gardner proceeds to later imitations, parodies, and sequels, beginning with a series of hilarious specimens all titled "The Night After Christmas." The book concludes with a discussion of the only significant addition to the Santa Claus legend since Moore's — Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer. Born as the hero of a Montgomery Ward Christmas giveaway pamphlet, Rudolph became famous when songwriter Johnny Marks put him into a song that swept not only the nation but also the world.

This wonderful tribute to the greatest Christmas poem of all time is the perfect holiday gift and a superb addition to Christmas book collections.

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