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THE COUNTDOWN BEGINS...

CHRISTMAS CHECKLIST

Can you find all of these festive words in the wordsearch? Tick them off as you go!

Tree

Baubles

Nativity

Stockings

Carols

Mince pies

Sprouts

Presents

Santa

Cards

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What is it
called when a
snowman has a
tantrum?
A meltdown!

What do
reindeer hang
on their Christmas
trees?
Horn-aments!

What do
you call an elf
who has won the
lottery?
Welfy!

heha

How did
Scrooge win the
football game?
The ghost of
Christmas
passed!

Who is
Santa's
favourite singer?
Elf-is
Presley!



THERE'S tons of fun to be had this winter! Here's our pick of the best events taking place across the UK.

DISNEY ON ICE PRESENTS ROAD TRIP ADVENTURES UK



Grab your mouse ears, as Disney On Ice is skating into venues over the festive season! You can enjoy the magical adventures of *Mary Poppins Returns, Toy Story 4, Incredibles 2, The Lion King, Aladdin, Moana* and *Frozen.* The show will tour Newcastle, Belfast, Manchester, Sheffield and London from now until 5 January next year. www.disneyonice.co.uk



Make like the royals and enjoy a Christmas like no other at the palace! Look out for the two 12ft-high (3.6m) Christmas trees taking centre stage! There's also a family Christmas activity day on 14 December. www.rct.uk



Britain's first seaside tourist resort is being brought to life with cool installations, sculptures and performances. Visitors will get to see venues across the town being reimagined through fire and light, and for five nights from 18 December, the Rose Garden will be lit by 230 Roman candles! www.scarboroughfair.uk



LEGOLAND Windsor Resort is being transformed into a bricktacular winter wonderland, complete with a giant DUPLO Christmas tree! Look out for cute festive scenes in Miniland, watch a DUPLO puppet show and check out Father Christmas' magical sleigh! www.legoland.co.uk

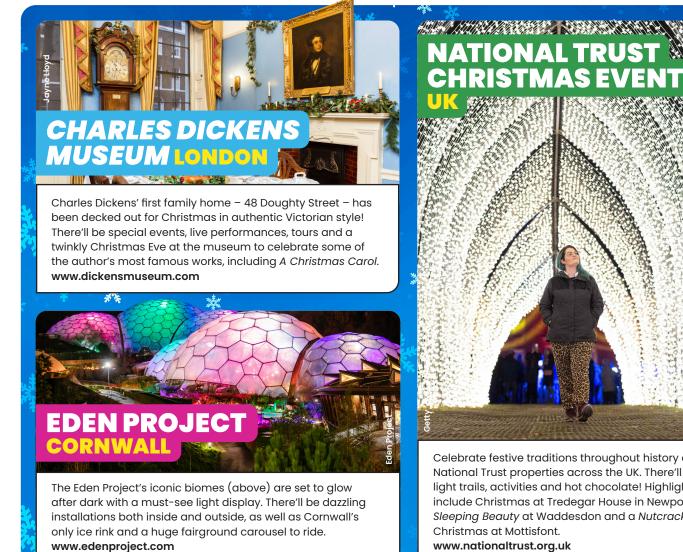


Experience the zoo after hours with a special trail called Lanterns and Light. The event features spectacular illuminations and colourful lanterns depicting all sorts of animals, from orangutans and butterflies to giraffes and wolves! You'll get to explore the zoo's 90-year history and learn about species that are threatened with extinction. www.chesterzoo.org/lanterns



It's Christmas in Wonderland, and mischief is afoot! You're invited to join Alice as she falls down the rabbit hole again, this time at the exciting new venue, Shakespeare North Playhouse. This festive sequel to the classic story takes to the stage from now until Saturday 11 January 2025. www.shakespearenorthplayhouse.co.uk

Festive special!



CHRISTMAS EVENTS THE SNOWMAN LONDON Looking for a family Christmas classic? Then look no further than The Snowman! From Saturday 23 November to Saturday Celebrate festive traditions throughout history at 4 January 2025, the magical show returns National Trust properties across the UK. There'll be to the Peacock Theatre in London's West light trails, activities and hot chocolate! Highlights End. Follow the story of a young boy's include Christmas at Tredegar House in Newport, adventures when his snowman - and new Sleeping Beauty at Waddesdon and a Nutcracker friend – comes to life on Christmas Eve! You'll also hear the iconic Walking In The www.nationaltrust.org.uk Air. www.sadlerswells.com





FESTIVE FEAST OF

CHRISTMAS is just around the corner, and we've been on the hunt for the best new books to enjoy. We've made a list, checked it twice and can officially confirm that the ones on this page are

They're filled with all the good Christmassy feels – joy, wonder and a big sprinkling of magic. They'd make a great addition to your stocking, too, so do enter our competition to win all ten!

AS a cracking early Christmas present, we're giving away all ten of the books on this page to a lucky First News reader! Will it be you?

A Christmas Carol?

a) Marcus Rashford b) Jane Aus c) Charles Dickens

ENTRIES XMAS

first.news/comps or see page 20. The closing date is 16 December.

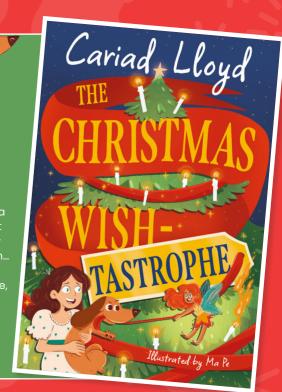


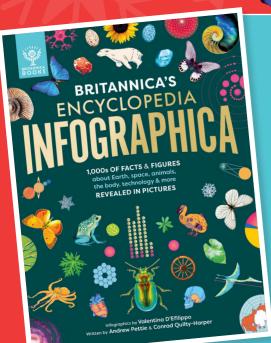




by Cariad Lloyd

Published by Hachette





Britannica's **Encyclopedia** Infographica

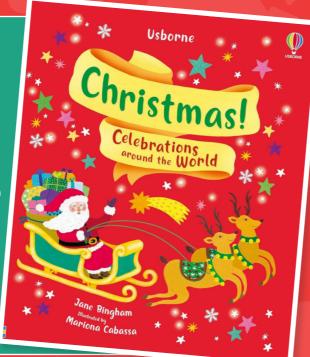
by Valentina D'Efilippo, **Andrew Pettie and Conrad Quilty-Harper**

The pictures do the talking in this epic, visual book to help you understand the world around us. The Earth, animals, humans and chnology are cleverly explained in imaginative maps, charts, timelines and more!



Discover all the surprising and wonderful ways that cultures around the world, rom roller-skating to church

from radishes!



Chefs Wanted! by Allegra McEvedy

THE HISTORY OF INFORMATIO



The Biggest Christmas **Secret Ever** by LD Lapinski The gingerbread biscuits have

come to life, flying reindeer have been spotted on the high street and the elves are on the lookout for trouble! Can Harper's family keep the BIGGEST Christmas secret ever?!

Published by Hachette



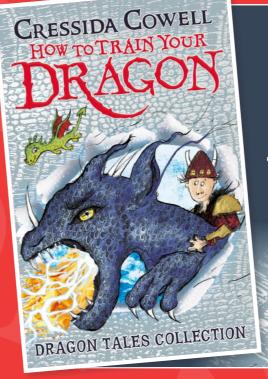
Loki: A Bad God's Guide to Making Enemies

by Louie Stowell

In this fourth doodle-packed diary from a young Loki, he's challenged to a duel by an angry elf called Vinir. Loki thinks he's sweet-talked his way out of it by telling Vinir to pick on someone his own size, until Vinir shows up at his school in child form... ready for a showdown at the Christmas fair!







How To Train Your Dragon: Dragon Tales Collection by Cressida Cowell

An unmissable collection of three How To Train Your Dragon stories, fully illustrated by the author and including an exclusive all-new short tale, packed with excitement, adventure... and a grand reveal!

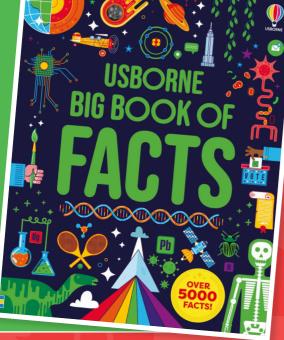


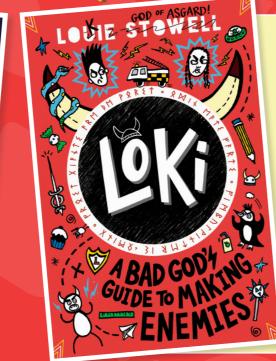
The Snowman Code by Simon Stephenson





and so much more.





Let's make the world better with a sweater.

Christmas Jumper Day 12 December

Shaun the Sheep

FAMOUS FACES UNITE

Dozens of famous faces across the worlds of TV, film, radio, comedy, music and sport are urging the nation to swap, buy second-hand or re-wear a pre-loved jumper for Save the Children's annual festive fundraiser, Christmas Jumper Day.

All the stars have pulled on preloved festive knits to encourage the public to join in the UK's biggest Christmas party in an eco-conscious way, and donate to Save the Children this Thursday 12 December.





HOW THE MONEY HELPS

Since launching in 2012, Christmas Jumper Day has raised over £37 million to create lasting change for generations of children. The money raised supports children in the UK and around the world to stay safe, healthy and learning.

- £2 could buy a packet of seeds for a family in Kenya to grow their own food, after drought has killed their crops
- £6 could make all the difference for people in Gaza who are struggling to access drinkable water, by providing a pack of 12 water bottles
- £15 could pay for two weeks of super-powered peanut paste to help a child beat hunger

A NEW HEAD OF WOOL

Joining this year's line-up of famous faces, Shaun the Sheep has taken on a new fleece of life in the hope of encouraging schools and youth groups up and down the country to sign up and take part in Save the Children's Christmas Jumper Day.

Shaun the Sheep's creators, Academy Awardwinning animation studio Aardman, have put together a new animation to celebrate the charity's fundraising campaign.

The festive film, The Knit Before Christmas, has launched today on Shaun the Sheep's YouTube channel, and Save the Children Ambassador Ashley Jensen hosted the film's premiere for schoolchildren at Launde Primary School in Leicester.



fundraising school for Save the Children's Christmas Jumper Day in 2023, raising £3,744.84 for the

HOW DO I TAKE PART?

Ashley with pupils from Launde Primary School

- 1. It's simple! All you need to do is sign up for your free fundraising pack at ChristmasJumperDay.org.
- 2. Get your jumper out. You don't have to buy a new one; upcycle an old jumper with tinsel and baubles, or pop to your local charity shop to buy a pre-loved Christmas jumper.
- 3. Donate to Save the Children. By having fun and raising money, you're helping children in the UK and around the world.

THE IMPACT YOU'LL HAVE

When you put on your silly sweater, it's important to remember it's for a very serious cause. The money you raise will support Save the Children's projects around the world, like this one in Cambodia. Khana is 12 years old and lives on Tonle Sap Lake, where she travels to school by boat. Unfortunately, pollution and rising water temperatures due to climate change have made it increasinaly difficult to live here.

One of the many initiatives Save the Children run is encouraging families to create floating gardens out of the plastic bottles and items they find in the lake. Not only do the gardens reduce pollution, but they also help families like Khana's to grow the food they need to eat.

Save the Children has also introduced eco-lessons in schools. After Khana and her classmates learn about the environment and climate change, they spread the word to people in their community.



MAGICAL FESTIVE SEASON AWAITS!

BRING your family along to a sleigh-full of shows at the Royal Albert Hall this Christmas!



Want a treat for the whole family? Invite everyone to the finest sing-along carol concert of the festive season with a great mix of carols, old and new!





Calling Santa's little helpers! Join us for a festive family journey through Christmas classical music.

THE NUTCRACKER Sunday 29 - Tuesday 31 December



Bring the whole family to Tchaikovsky's glorious ballet with gorgeous period costumes and dazzling projections.



shop online and at Doors 6 and 12

Find out more at royalalberthall.com/Christmas

Royal Albert Hall



MEET THE AUTHOR

AUTHOR and illustrator Alex T Smith chats to us about chickens, cookies, bongo drums... and his latest book!

What were you like as a kid, Alex?
I think maybe a little bit eccentric [bizarre]
I wanted to be a rabbit when I grew up.

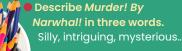
• What was your favourite school subject? Art. Although the classroom was freezing, so I wore a fake fur coat I found in a costume bin in the drama department during lessons!

• What's your best-ever memory?
Gosh! So many, but I think being in Iceland floating about in a thermal pool while it snowed on me was very special.

• What do you do outside of writing?
I am bossed about by four tiny dogs and three very opinionated chickens most of the time. Besides that, I like eavesdropping and people watching (I'm very nosy) and having naps on the sofa.

"A set of bongo drums hit me on the bonce!"

• Tell us a cool fact about yourself!
On my 14th birthday I had to get my head superglued, because a set of bongo drums fell off a shelf and hit me on the bonce.



Can you tell us about the book's main character?

Edna Gristle is nosy, giddy, opinionated, brave, hates onions, loves tortoises and spends most of the book detecting (and meddling) while dressed in her pyjamas.

• What was the hardest part of writing it?
When you write a mystery, you have to almost work backwards, making sure you keep 'whodunnit' a secret right to the very end.

• Who was your favourite character to draw?

I liked drawing them all, but Edna's elderly great aunt is very stylish and fabulous and terribly fond of wearing lots and lots of jewellery, so maybe she was my favourite to illustrate.

• Lastly... what snack can't you live without while you're writing books?

If you try to take cups of tea and chocolate chip cookies away from me, I will call the police!

Murder! By Narwhal! A Grimacres
Whodunnit! by Alex T Smith is out now.



Name: Alex T Smith Age: 39

Job: Author and Illustrator
About his latest book:
In Murder! By Narwhal!,
a big snowstorm traps
young Edna and her
trusted tortoise in her
grandad's country
estate... and worse still,

CHRISTMAS QUICK-FIRE!

there's murder afoot!

• Best Christmas song? Alex says: "I particularly like *The 12 Days Of Christmas* but I can never remember what present was given on what day!"

Best bit of Christmas dinner?

Alex says: "Roast potatoes,
obviously (but I do
also enjoy lighting the
Christmas pudding)."

• What are you hoping for from Santa this Christmas? Alex says: "An alpaca, but how he'll wrap it, I don't know..."



