

# Resource reviews

- ★★★★★ very highly recommended / absolutely outstanding
- ★★★★☆ highly recommended / extremely good
- ★★★☆☆ recommended / good
- ★★★☆☆ recommended with minor reservations / mediocre
- ★★☆☆☆ recommended with major reservations / weak
- ★☆☆☆☆ not recommended / extremely weak

## I can make things for Christmas

Christina Goodings, 2005  
Lion Publishing  
paperback, 16pp, £5.99  
illustrations: colour photos and illustrations  
ISBN 0-7459-4960-6  
use: primary school / church



This book sells itself as suitable for parents and teachers of 4–7 year olds. I think that the author has overestimated what 8 and 9-year-olds can do and would enjoy making for Christmas – I know about lower juniors and I am absolutely sure that this age group would enjoy many of the activities described. They would be more independent whilst doing them which is never a bad thing for a busy class teacher or parent prior to Christmas!

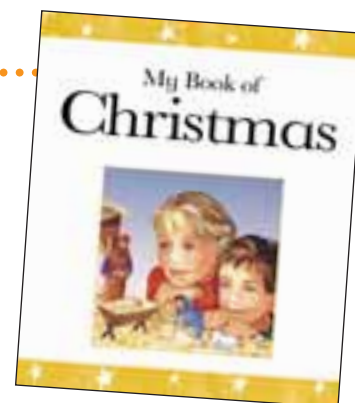
Each of the 16 activities is on a colourful double page spread. The instructions are clearly numbered and there is a photo of the finished article so that the child has a clear idea of what they are aiming to produce. Most activities are set in context within the Christmas story – even Santa's shoes are explained as coming from the tradition of putting out shoes for St Nicholas on 6 December. My only slight sadness is that there was no box listing what each activity would need; if it had been included it would have made the children even more independent and I could have used the book for teaching explanatory texts to Year 3 and 4!

I would highly recommend this book to anyone who is looking for a range of fresh ideas for Christmas crafts, be it for your own children or those that you teach in school or church. It will richly repay the £5.99 that you spend on its purchase.

**REVIEWER** Jan Randall, Year Leader and RE Manager, Weston Park Junior School, Southampton, Hampshire.

## My Book of Christmas

Lois Rock, 2005  
Lion Publishing  
hardback, 95pp, £4.99  
illustrations: colour  
ISBN: 0-7459-4850-2  
use: primary classroom



*My Book of Christmas* is a much needed resource for the primary school teacher for a number of reasons. Lois Rock retells the Christmas story using the Gospels of Luke and Matthew. It is delightfully illustrated by Carolyn Cox, with pictures that draw together the nativity story and present day celebrations. What makes this book different from any other retelling is the additional information included.

The story is interspersed with information on a variety of Christmas related themes, such as simple explanations of Advent, Epiphany and the meaning of the gifts brought by the Magi. Also included are a number of relevant child-friendly prayers that link into different parts of the story. What also makes this book interesting is the way it looks at Christmas myths and Biblical truth. For example there is a section that looks at the fact that we don't actually know how many Magi there were, and then goes on to explain why they are sometimes called Kings or Wise Men. All the extra material helps to put the very familiar Christmas story into its correct context, and helps to explain in simple language some of the more complex themes and issues that arise from the story.

This very reasonably-priced hardback book is a lovely book to read to gain a fresh, detailed and accurate account of the Christmas story. It is also a great book for Primary teachers who are looking for new readings, prayers and ideas for a Christmas Service or assembly.

**REVIEWER** Kathryn Baker, Senior Co-ordinator/Middle Schools Co-ordinator, ICE Charitable Trust, Exeter, Devon.

## Topsy Turvy Christmas

Lucy Moore, 2003  
BRF  
paperback, 64pp, £8.99  
illustrations: colour  
ISBN: 1-84101-340  
use: KS2 Christmas concerts



*Topsy Turvy Christmas* is a musical re-telling of the Christmas story for 7–11 year olds. It looks at the events of Christmas through the eyes of two angels who express their concern that things are not as they should be. The writer states that the script is true to the first Christmas story, although it includes visits from a group of children and the two angels who observe the events. However, particularly through the songs, it considers seriously the meaning of the events of Christmas

A CD is available with sung versions of all the songs and backing tracks which could be used for the performance. The musical score is printed in the back of the book so that live performance of the accompaniment can easily be used. Large print words, with simple fun illustrations, are also printed in the back of the book to enable easy photocopying for pupils' copies. Suggestions are made for additional traditional carols.

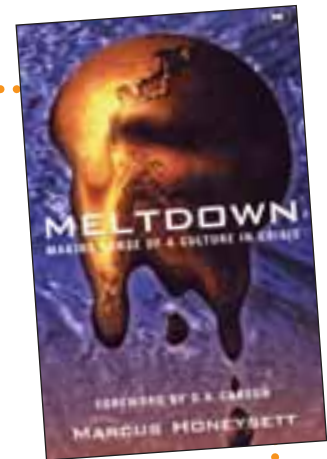
Unfortunately the layout of the script itself is somewhat confusing, with song words and instructions for actions during the songs not always appearing in the position in the script that they should be performed. More helpfully, the script contains a list of required props and costumes as well as diagrams to aid the staging.

The script itself is simple and requires limited word learning for the majority of parts. Some of the songs have quite a lot of words to learn, suggesting that they would be more suitable for the older end of KS2; but the melodies and themes of the songs are perhaps more suited to younger children. Overall, the play would be much more suited to Year 3 and 4 than Year 5 and 6, but would require some work to enable the younger children to learn all the song words.

**REVIEWER** Andrew Hornsby, KS2 teacher, Music and RE Co-ordinator, Holton-le-Clay Junior School, Nr Grimsby, Lincolnshire.

## Meltdown

Marcus Honeysett, 2002  
Inter-Varsity Press  
paperback, 223pp, £7.99  
illustrations: none  
ISBN: 0-85111-492-X  
use: VI Form and beyond



Marcus Honeysett has done a sterling job in setting out to explain Postmodernism in an intelligible way to the student world. It is by no means a simplistic approach; he has gone about his task very thoughtfully, devoting a full chapter to outlining the main theories and beliefs of the main exponents of Postmodernism: Michael Foucault, Jacques Derrida, Walter Benjamin, Judith Butler and Jean Baudrillard. Each chapter concludes with a Christian response to the particular challenge that is highlighted in the previous paragraphs.

Part 2 responds to the question as to how we have arrived at this stage in our culture – why the rise of Postmodernism? Modernism, the product of rational scientific thinking, proved flawed by the end of World War II, and late 20th century society moved from modernist thinking to a culture that glorifies self, promotes individualism and the pursuit of pleasure, and challenges the role of any authority, whether this lies in the form of an organised religion or the meganarratives [*sic*] that have formed the building blocks of religion. Life has to lose its moral boundaries, there are no meganarratives, and social fragmentation, pluralism and political correctness have become the order of the day.

The final section offers a Christian response to some of the issues raised by Postmodernist thinking – how can we cope with Christians' belief in the authority of the Bible in the light of the rejection of absolute authority? How do we regard worship, and how have we responded to today's moral and ethical issues, where uncertainty seems to reign?

I read this book twice, because I felt that it would help to answer some of my questions.

I wholeheartedly recommend it to today's thinking students.

**REVIEWER** David Edgington, Retired Head of RE, Watford Grammar School, Hertfordshire.