

## Around the World Christmas Story

### Chapter One

Written by Reid Street Primary School, Darlington, Co Durham **England**  
(Teacher - Brian Humphrey)

It is Christmas Eve; outside it is cold and snowy. Every house is lit up with lights, wreaths decorate the doors. Outside children are playing, building snowmen, sledging and enjoying snowball fights.

December has been busy and exciting. Opening the first door of the advent calendar. Everybody has been busy writing cards and shopping for Christmas presents. Trees have been bought, when they got home everyone helped to decorate them with fairy lights, tinsel, baubles and finally an angel on the top. During the last days of the school term children all over the country have enjoyed performing their version of the nativity play which tells the story of the birth of Jesus.

It is Christmas Eve; children hang up their stockings and hope that Santa will visit on his sleigh, bringing them many presents. Before they go to bed they leave a drink and mince pie for Santa and a carrot for the reindeer. Can't wait for tomorrow! Opening presents, watching the family open the presents they received.

It is Christmas Eve; outside it is cold and snowy. Every house is lit up with light, but not Sophie's!

## Chapter Two

**Written by Hicksville Middle School, New York, USA**

Everyone's house glistens in the winter night, but Sophie's house stands bare. There are no Christmas decorations - no tree, no Santa, no nativity.

Instead of a wreath on her door there is a menorah in the window. A bright light from the candles will glow in a single window after eight nights.

Sophie is Jewish. She does not celebrate Christmas. Later tonight she will say a prayer and receive a gift from her parents. While her brothers play with their dreidels, she helps her mother and grandmother prepare the meal. They make potato pancakes, blintzes, doughnuts, and noodle pudding.

The kitchen is filled with the smells of Hanukah! At sundown her family will light the first candle to celebrate. They celebrate the miracle of the oil that the Maccabees found that lasted for eight nights.

Sophie is a Jewish girl who has felt all alone in her neighborhood. She is proud of her religion, but she wishes she were like the other kids. The other children wonder why Santa doesn't visit Sophie's house, even though she has been a good girl all year. Sophie feels embarrassed sharing her culture with them because she is a minority, and she thinks her friends will laugh at her.

Perhaps this year Sophie will gather up enough courage to share her religion with her Christian friends.

### Chapter Three

Written by Walter Zadow Primary School. Arnprior, Ontario, Canada  
(Teacher - Craig Myers)

Huge snowflakes were spinning down from the sky like angel parachutes. Sophie decided to tell her new friend the truth. She put on her snowsuit, her mittens, her scarf and her boots. Sophie felt scared.

She crunched through the new - fallen snow to Annie's house. She heard sounds of music, ripping paper and happy shouts.

The door opened and Annie said, "Hello Sophie, Merry Christmas! Come on in for some egg nog and Christmas cake." Sophie went inside. She saw stockings hanging from the mantle, a glittering Christmas tree and many presents. A plate of cookies and a glass of milk waited on a small corner table for Santa. Annie handed Sophie the glass of egg nog and Christmas cake. "We get to open one present on Christmas eve before we go carolling."

"We open one present every night for eight nights of Hanukkah," said Sophie.

"What is Hanukkah, exactly?" asked Annie.

"It's part of our Jewish tradition," answered Sophie.

"Oh," said Annie. Do you get presents like we do?"

"Yes we do. We don't have a Christmas tree. We have a Menorah. We also get gold covered chocolate coins and play games like dreidel," said Sophie.

"Can I play?" asked Annie.

## Chapter Four

Written by Lewis King Elementary School, Mascouche, Quebec, Canada  
(Teacher - Rhonda Steiner)

Sophie was so thrilled that Annie showed a sincere interest in Hanukah. Sophie reached for the small gift bag she brought with her and handed it to Annie. Annie's eyes lit up when she saw the beautiful gift she received. It was a tiny gold menorah with miniature candles and a shiny blue dreidel with silver writing on its sides.

"We can play the dreidel game if you wish?" asked Sophie.

"I'd love to!" shouted Annie.

"Each silver letter means something different. Nun means nothing, gimme! means you take it all, hay means you win half of what is in the kitty and shin means you lose, and must put some more goodies in the kitty," explained Sophie.

"What goes in the kitty?" asked Annie.

"Anything delicious to eat!" replied Sophie.

Annie ran to the kitchen and brought back a plate full of cookies, candy canes and chocolate. The two sat on the floor of Annie's cozy room playing the dreidel game. Sophie felt warm inside as she watched her best friend.

She knew what the spirit of the season truly was.

## Chapter 5

Written by The English Language Unit, Maktab Perguruan Batu Lintang,  
Kuching, Malaysia. (Lecturer - Angelia Lee)

After an hour of playing dreidel, Annie said, "Would you like to meet some of my friends?"

Sophie happily said, "Oh, yes!" She hoped Annie's friends were like her. Soon, a group of children started to arrive. First to arrive was Louisa. Then, came Darren and his sister Julia. Finally, there was Leon and his cousin, Tingang, who was visiting from Sarawak.

Sophie had never seen such a mixed group of people before - Darren and Julia are Chinese and Tingang is a Kelabit!

"I belong to a racial group known as the Kelabits. Our home is in the hills in an area known as Bario. It's in Sarawak."

Sophie listened attentively as Leon helped Tingang explain that Sarawak is a state in Malaysia.

Darren and Louisa still have family who live in Malaysia.

They told Sophie about how Christmas was just one of the many festive holidays celebrated in Malaysia.

She listened with amazement at how everyone, Christians and non-Christians visited their friends during Christmas in Malaysia.

Annie said, "You see, you don't have to worry about being different. My best friends and I are as different as can be."

"Children, it's stopped snowing. Why don't you play outside?" Annie's mum called out.

## Chapter 6

Written by 2nd graders - Cumberland Elementary School, Wisconsin,  
USA (Teacher - Michele Nash)

Annie said "Let's go out and build an igloo!"

Sophie and the other children agreed. They gathered huge blocks of snow, packed them together, and made a snow igloo with a fort around it.

One of the other neighborhood children named Kyla saw their fort and asked if she could play too. The children then decided to go inside their igloo and talk. They sat down in a circle and began talking about all of their Holiday Customs. One person talked about the Advent Wreath and how one candle is lit each Sunday in Church. Another person talked about the Menorah, and then Kyla mentioned the Kinara, which is used for celebrations. None of the other children had ever heard of Kwanzaa before.

"Is Kwanzaa like Christmas?" Annie asked!

Kyla just smiled and said "No, but it is held around the same time as Christmas."

Kwanzaa begins on December 26th, the day after Christmas, and ends on January 1st (New Years Day). Kwanzaa is not a religious holiday or one that honors a heroic person. It is a time when African-Americans join together to honor the traditions of their ancestors. Kwanzaa is a celebration of the past, the present, and the future. We give each other homemade gifts, have a special dinner, and most important of all, we share family love.

"Wow!" exclaimed Annie! "There are so many wonderful things to learn about people!"

"Hey!" shouted Darren. "Let's go outside the igloo now and build snow angels."

The children ran out of the igloo and plopped down on their backs in the cold soft snow. They also decided to make Christmas Lights, a Menorah, and a Kinara, all out of snow!!!!!! Then they decorated the Evergreen Tree that was in front of Annie's house! All of a sudden Julia had an idea.

"Let's walk around the block and ask all of the kids we find to tell us about their December holiday!"

"Great idea!" they said, and off they went!

## Chapter 7

Written by 4<sup>th</sup> graders- Billingsport Elementary School  
USA (Teacher Sara Schaub)

The children began walking around the neighborhood. They were knocking on their friends' door to learn about what winter holiday they celebrated.

They found that like them, many of their friends celebrated Christmas, Hanukah, and Kwanzaa.

Sophie thought it would be a great idea to hold a holiday party that celebrated Kwanzaa, Hanukah and Christmas.

Sophie asked her friends, "Since we all celebrate different holidays, I think we should have a party that celebrates them all!"

"That's a great idea!" replied Kyla. "I agree," replied Anne. "Why don't we plan it right now?" asked Darren.

So all the children went to Anne's house. Anne's mom gave them all cookies and hot chocolate while they planned their party.

"I think we should have decorations that represent each holiday." suggested Julia.

"Yes!" said Tingang.

"We should have a tree to represent Christmas." said Leon.

"I can draw an menorah to represent Hanukah." Remarked Sophie.

Kyle said, "And don't forget Kwanzaa."

The children began to draw items that represented Christmas, Hanukah, and Kwanzaa. They were proud that they were including everyone in the party, until Anne's mom asked if they were including the Winter Solstice and Ramadan in their holiday party. The children wondered who celebrated Winter Solstice and Ramadan.

## Chapter 8

Our Lady of Lourdes National School, Hospital Hill, Bunclody, Ireland  
(Teacher - James Roberts)

As the children sat wondering who celebrated the Winter Solstice and Ramadan, the doorbell rang.

In came Mr. O'Brien, Annie's neighbour. He sat down beside the children and listened to their conversation as they planned their party.

"Mr. O'Brien, you have been to many parts of the world", said Annie.

"Have you ever met anyone who celebrates Winter Solstice or Ramadan?" enquired Leon.

"Indeed I have", replied Mr. O'Brien. "Many people around the world celebrate Winter Solstice and Ramadan".

The children listened intently as they heard how, during Winter Solstice, people in Spain have a custom of putting all the names of people at family gatherings into a bowl. The names are drawn out in pairs and the people who are so joined are to be devoted friends for the year.

"In Scandinavia", continued Mr. O'Brien, "some families place all their shoes together as this will help them live in harmony throughout the year

"Can you tell us about Ramadan?" asked Louisa.

"Ramadan is a special month of the year for about one billion Muslims all over the world. They fast from dawn to sunset. At sunset they break their fast with dates. This is followed by sunset prayer, followed by dinner. Muslims often invite each other to share the Ramadan evening meal".

The children were fascinated by these stories. While Mr. O'Brien went to talk to Annie's mom, the children went back to planning their party. Some continued with their drawings. Others gathered holly, mistletoe, evergreen boughs and pinecones to make Winter Solstice decorations.

They decided to invite people from the neighbourhood to the party. Each person brought some food as a symbol of his or her culture and tradition. As they arrived each person took off their shoes and placed them together.

After the meal they played games, sang songs and told stories of their own culture. They set aside the remaining food to be shared with the poor. At the

party drew to a close, they all joined hands in prayer - each in their own way praying for peace on earth and goodwill to all people everywhere.

As the children trudged home through the snow with their parents they wished that the joy, friendship, peace and happiness they had all shared together at the holiday party would spread throughout the entire world this Christmas Eve.

THE END

We hope you enjoyed reading this 'Around the World' Christmas Story.

