

THE BEST CHRISTMAS PRESENT EVER

by Rachel Olson



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The Best Christmas Present Ever

A Sunday school pageant
with parts for everyone

by RACHEL OLSON

CAST OF CHARACTERS

READER 1 & 2

FAMILY:

**Mom
Dad
Child 1 & 2**

TOYS:

**Buy Me Doll
Lettuce Patch Kid
Race Car Driver
Dog
Teddy Bear**

NATIVITY CHARACTERS:

**Gabriel
Mary
Joseph
Roman Soldier
Townsperson 1 & 2
Donkey
Innkeeper
Cow
Shepherd 1, 2, 3 & 4
Angel 1, 2, 3 & 4
Balthazar
Melchior
Caspar**

PRODUCTION NOTES

The Best Christmas Present Ever really holds the attention of even the youngest children since they love to see their favorite toys come to life. It may be presented by an entire Sunday school department using children from the third grade and up for the major roles. As you read the play, you will notice that the parts vary in difficulty and length. Your older students could play the parts of Mary, Joseph, Gabriel, the three wise men, etc. The youngest children could be the donkey, cow, townspeople, etc.

Cast size may be expanded by adding additional angels and shepherds, or it may be reduced by doubling the roles of the Nativity characters. Though Mary, Joseph and Gabriel need to be On-stage throughout most of the performance, the other Nativity characters (shepherds, angels, magi, etc.) may leave after their lines are said if you need to double the parts. Various ages of children come onto the stage or chancel area to sing appropriate songs throughout the play. In doing so, they form a barrier behind which the crew may unobtrusively remove and add props and set pieces as needed. The singing also provides a way for everyone to participate — even those without speaking parts.

SYNOPSIS: The play centers around five toys: a fashion doll; a soft, cuddly doll; a race car driver; a “walking” dog; and a teddy bear. When the play begins, the toys are real ones that Mom and Dad bring home from Christmas shopping. After they leave the house, however, the toys “come to life” — live toy characters enacted by the children come On-stage and replace the “prop” toys. The toy characters bicker about which of them is the best present. They don’t realize that a few Nativity characters have entered the room. Gabriel narrates the Christmas story to the toys, with the help of additional Nativity characters. The toys then realize that Jesus is the best Christmas present ever. The toy characters exit and the toy props are returned to their places by the time the family returns home again.

SET: A podium is needed for the two readers — preferably one with a microphone. Place the podium in a visible spot, yet away from the main action. A decorated Christmas tree stands Center Stage. Two tables flank the tree: one to hold the Nativity set and one for the toys. When the script calls for it, a large piece of cardboard which has been painted to resemble the inside of a stable should be placed Stage Left. A straw-filled manger with a blanket-wrapped baby doll inside should be placed in front of the stable backdrop.

PROPS: A **Nativity set**. The minimum pieces required are a stable, Mary, Joseph, and the baby Jesus. It needs to be large enough (a foot high or higher) so as to be visible to the audience. If you can't obtain a real Nativity set that large, you may want to make big, free-standing cardboard cutouts of the pieces. (NOTE: When the play begins, the only pieces of the Nativity set that should be set up on the table are the stable, Mary and Joseph. The baby Jesus in the manger will be added later.)

A **scroll** is needed for the soldier.

Prop toys needed are a Barbie doll (or other fashion doll), a Cabbage Patch Kid (or other cute and cuddly doll), a teddy bear, a "walking" dog, and a race car and driver. These toys may be either the real thing or facsimiles, such as cardboard cutouts. The toys should be as large as possible for better audience visibility. All the prop toys should have ribbon bows and gift tags attached. Make two oversized price tags with the words "cute and lovable" printed on them — one for the Cabbage Patch Kid prop and one for the Lettuce Patch Kid character.

COSTUMES: **Toy Characters** — The Buy Me Doll, Lettuce Patch Kid, Race Car Driver, Dog and Teddy Bear should all be dressed as closely as possible to their real toy counterparts and should have bows and gift tags attached. The Buy Me Doll may wear a fancy dress and have long, curly hair. Don't forget to pin the "cute and lovable" tag on the sleeve of the Lettuce Patch Kid. The Race Car Driver may wear a jumpsuit and motorcycle helmet and carry a steering wheel to represent his car. Construction paper ears which are fastened to headbands work well for

the Dog and Teddy Bear. Physical movements are helpful to establish the characters. For example, the Dog should be on all fours and the Buy Me Doll should hold her arms and hands slightly outward.

Nativity Characters — For Mary, Joseph, Townspeople and the Innkeeper, simple toga-style biblical robes will do. The Shepherds also wear togas and also carry staffs. The Angels wear robes of white. The Wise Men wear robes of a richer or different color to show their wealth. They may also wear crowns on their heads. The Donkey and Cow may be dressed in plain brown togas rather than full costumes, with ears fashioned from construction paper and fastened to headbands.

No special costumes are required for the two Readers and the Family.

LIGHTING: If available, use a spotlight to give the impression of night. If not available, try to turn out all the lights except those in front where the play is being performed. This directs all audience attention to the performance.

MUSIC: Song titles included are only suggestions. The last page lists the publisher and address for those selections which may not be familiar to you. Lyrics to two songs (the tunes are familiar) are also included. Please feel free to substitute songs of your choosing.

SOUND EFFECTS: Live or taped trumpet music to herald the arrival of the soldier.

PLAYING TIME: This is a complete service of forty-five minutes to one hour, depending on the number of songs included and the length of the Christmas message.

AT RISE: A decorated Christmas tree is Stage Right. It is flanked by two tables. One table holds an incomplete cardboard Nativity set (just Mary and Joseph in a stable — no baby Jesus). It should be visible to the audience. The other table is empty — it will be the “gift table” where Mom and Dad place the toys.

PIANO PROCESSIONAL: “O Come, Little Children”

(All child SINGERS enter during the song and take their places in the front pews. After the song is finished, MOM and DAD enter carrying prop toys [either real or facsimiles] with bows attached: a Barbie doll, Cabbage Patch Kid, a race car and driver, a walking dog, and a Teddy bear.)

DAD: *(As they set the presents on the gift table)* This sure looks like a lot of gifts.

MOM: I know. I ran all over town looking for just the right things. I hope the kids like them. *(If using real toys, MOM can demonstrate the walking dog for DAD.)*

DAD: I'm sure they will. *(Glances at the table with the Nativity set.)* Hey, you got out the Nativity set.

MOM: Yes, the kids set it up today.

DAD: Looks good! Only where's the baby Jesus?

MOM: I don't know. It must have gotten lost when we moved. All we could find were Mary and Joseph.

DAD: Hmmm. We'll have to look for him. So, which present do you think the kids will like best?

MOM: I don't know. *(Looks at watch.)* But I do know that we're going to be late for the program if we don't hurry. *(MOM and DAD exit and READERS 1 and 2 take their places at the podium.)*

READER 1: Welcome, people of God, to our Christmas program. Tonight's program is about presents — those special gifts we give to each other out of love.

READER 2: It just wouldn't be Christmas without presents by the tree and the excitement in the eyes of children as they wonder what is buried beneath all the brightly

1 colored wrappings.

2 **READER 1:** But gifts come in many sizes, shapes, and ways.

3 Here are the youngest children to give a special gift to
4 you: their songs.

5 **SONGS:** *(Nursery/preschool/kindergarten departments)* Suggested
6 selections: “In a Little Stable,” “Christmastime Is Full of
7 Joys.”

8 *(While the children are singing, the CREW takes away the prop*
9 *toys. They set up the cardboard stable backdrop and manger*
10 *Stage Left. After their singing, the children go to their assigned*
11 *seats. All lights in the sanctuary are turned off. In the darkness,*
12 *the live toy characters enter and sit on the gift table where the*
13 *prop toys had been, and MARY, JOSEPH and GABRIEL take*
14 *their places around the manger and freeze until it is their turn*
15 *to speak.)*

16 **BUY ME DOLL:** Oh, it’s sooo dark in here. Can’t someone find
17 the light switch?

18 **RACE CAR DRIVER:** I’ll get it. *(Spotlight or other lights come*
19 *on.)* How’s that?

20 **BUY ME DOLL:** Much better. Now, do I look all right? I mean,
21 my hair isn’t messed up, is it?

22 **DOG:** You look fine, but why worry?

23 **BUY ME DOLL:** Well, you heard the parents. I’m the best
24 present.

25 **RACE CAR DRIVER:** What do you mean? I’ve got a three-
26 speed turbo race car!

27 **LETTUCE PATCH KID:** Right . . . but *no batteries!* It’s one
28 look at you and on to the next present.

29 **RACE CAR DRIVER:** And I suppose you think you’re the
30 best?

31 **LETTUCE PATCH KID:** Of course. I’m so cute and lovable.
32 It says so right here on my tag. *(Holds up tag pinned to her*
33 *sleeve.)*

34 **DOG:** Give me a break. I bark, wag my tail, and the kid can
35 even take me for a walk. Top that.

1 **TEDDY BEAR:** I have to agree with you, Dog. You certainly
 2 *can* do a lot of things. And Buy Me Doll is really beautiful.
 3 Your race car sounds awesome, and Lettuce Patch Kid,
 4 you are just too cute. But I'm afraid I'm the best. (*All TOYS*
 5 *react to TEDDY BEAR.*)

6 **RACE CAR DRIVER:** And how do you know?

7 **BUY ME DOLL:** Yes, just tell me one reason!

8 **LETTUCE PATCH KID:** I can't believe what I'm hearing.

9 **DOG:** Let's beat up on him! I can bite, too! (*GABRIEL has been*
 10 *standing behind MARY and JOSEPH, silently watching.*)

11 **GABRIEL:** Excuse me, toys, but I think you're missing the
 12 whole point of Christmas.

13 **RACE CAR DRIVER:** Who are you? You don't look like a
 14 present.

15 **GABRIEL:** My name is Gabriel. I'm an angel. Long ago I
 16 brought news about the best Christmas present to some
 17 very special people. Come over here. I'd like you to meet
 18 them. (*TOYS cross to MARY, JOSEPH and the manger.*)

19 **MARY:** Hello! I'm Mary, and this is my husband Joseph.

20 **JOSEPH:** And this (*Points to the baby in the manger*) is the best
 21 Christmas present ever.

22 **DOG:** A baby! You're kidding.

23 **LETTUCE PATCH KID:** Certainly doesn't look very cute or
 24 cuddly to me.

25 **BUY ME DOLL:** And it doesn't even have a very good
 26 wardrobe.

27 **TEDDY BEAR:** He doesn't even look new. How could he be
 28 the best present?

29 **MARY:** I don't think you toys know about the baby Jesus at
 30 all. Would you like to hear the story?

31 **TOYS:** (*Ad lib*) Yes. Sure. OK.

32 **JOSEPH:** When Adam and Eve, the first people on earth,
 33 sinned, God told them they would die.

34 **MARY:** But he loved them so much that he decided to send
 35 someone to save them. That person was his only son, Jesus.

- 1 **Jesus is God's gift of love to the whole world.**
- 2 **SONGS:** (*Grades 1 and 2*) Suggested selections: "Christmas Is a
3 **Time to Love," "What a Wonderful Gift."** (*CHILDREN return*
4 *to their seats after their songs.*)
- 5 **DOG:** Can you tell us how this all happened?
- 6 **GABRIEL:** God chose Mary, a young girl, to be the mother of
7 Jesus. I was sent by God to the village of Nazareth to tell
8 her she would bear a child.
- 9 **MARY:** At first I was afraid. I knew about God's promises,
10 but I wasn't sure why he chose me to be the mother of his
11 son.
- 12 **GABRIEL:** Mary trusted God completely, though, and she
13 believed his promises.
- 14 **JOSEPH:** I wasn't sure what to think when I first heard the
15 news, but Gabriel came to me in a dream and assured me
16 that this was God's will for Mary.
- 17 **LETTUCE PATCH KID:** This baby is part of a great plan,
18 huh? From the almighty God? Why is he lying on some hay?
- 19 **TEDDY BEAR:** Yeah, and why are you in this strange-looking
20 house?
- 21 **JOSEPH:** We'll get some of our friends to help tell you that
22 part of the story. (*DONKEY, COW, INNKEEPER, TOWNS-*
23 *PEOPLE and ROMAN SOLDIER enter. Trumpet fanfare*
24 *announces the SOLDIER.*)
- 25 **SOLDIER:** (*Unrolling scroll and reading*) Attention, all Roman
26 citizens. The great and mighty Caesar Augustus wants to
27 count all the people under his rule.
- 28 **TOWNSPERSON 1:** How is he going to do that?
- 29 **SOLDIER:** You must travel back to the city of your ancestors.
30 There, you must sign up. Anyone who disobeys this rule
31 will be punished. Hail, Caesar! (*Trumpet fanfare again.*)
- 32 **TOWNSPERSON 2:** I only have to walk a few miles. My family
33 are farmers from the countryside around Nazareth. Where
34 do you go, Joseph?
- 35 **JOSEPH:** Both my family and my wife's family are

1 descendants of King David. We have to travel down to
2 Bethlehem.

3 TOWNSPERSON 1: God be with you in your travels.

4 MARY: *(To TOYS)* We had to travel many miles to Bethlehem,
5 and I was ready to have my baby.

6 RACE CAR DRIVER: So you hopped in your car. What's the
7 problem?

8 DONKEY: There were *no cars!* They traveled on *me* all the
9 way from Nazareth. It was a really long journey.

10 DOG: But why did you pick this horrible motel?

11 DONKEY: They didn't have any choice. Beside, this is a stable.
12 There weren't motels back then either.

13 GABRIEL: You see, there were special houses called inns that
14 took care of travelers, but Bethlehem just wasn't big
15 enough to accommodate all the people who came to be
16 registered. It was like this . . . *(JOSEPH, MARY and the*
17 *INNKEEPER step forward and act out the following dialog.)*

18 JOSEPH: *(Pantomimes knocking on a door.)* Hello? Hello?
19 Anybody home?

20 INNKEEPER: Good evening. May I help you?

21 JOSEPH: Yes. We'd like a room.

22 INNKEEPER: I'm sorry — there just isn't any room. I've had
23 to turn people away all night.

24 JOSEPH: Please, sir. My wife is very tired. Our baby is due
25 very soon. We just need a place to lay down for the night.
26 Please?

27 INNKEEPER: I've got an idea. I have a stable out back. There
28 are just a few animals in there, and it's clean. You can
29 stay there if you like.

30 JOSEPH: Thank you, sir. *(MARY, JOSEPH and the INN-*
31 *KEEPER rejoin the living Nativity scene.)*

32 BUY ME DOLL: You stayed in a *barn?* With *animals?!* How
33 horrible!

34 COW: Oh, it wasn't *that* bad. Besides, the lady was very tired.
35 I had clean straw to lie on, and I can be very quiet.

- 1 GABRIEL: It was kind of the cow to let the humans into her
2 home.
- 3 DONKEY: Animals are a part of God's creation too, you know.
4 We wanted to have a part in this plan too.
- 5 COW: And that night, Jesus was born right here in my stable.
6 Donkey and I saw him first. He used my manger for his
7 bed, *and no one complained!*
- 8 LETTUCE PATCH KID: I guess he is a pretty baby. Were you
9 all alone?
- 10 MARY: We had some surprise visitors.
- 11 JOSEPH: Yes, some shepherds. (*SHEPHERDS enter from Left*
12 *and ANGELS from Right.*)
- 13 SHEPHERD 1: We were just a short distance from Bethlehem
14 — in the hills, taking care of our sheep.
- 15 SHEPHERD 2: The night was quiet for a change. There had
16 been so many people on the roads traveling, but not
17 tonight.
- 18 SHEPHERD 3: We were watching the stars when suddenly,
19 out of nowhere, this really bright light appeared.
- 20 SHEPHERD 4: We couldn't see anything! Then the light
21 started talking.
- 22 ANGEL 1: (*To SHEPHERDS*) Don't be afraid. I have been sent
23 to bring you some very good news.
- 24 ANGEL 2: This very night, the promises made to your
25 ancestors, to King David, to Jacob, to Abraham, and even
26 to Adam and Eve, have been fulfilled.
- 27 ANGEL 3: This news is for all people. In the town of
28 Bethlehem, the Messiah foretold by Isaiah has been born.
- 29 ANGEL 4: This is how you will know you have found the right
30 baby. You will find the child wrapped in cloth and lying
31 in a manger. (*Older CHILDREN, grades 3, 4 and 5, walk to*
32 *the front as the SHEPHERDS and ANGELS say the next lines.*)
- 33 SHEPHERD 1: Suddenly the whole sky was filled with angels.
- 34 SHEPHERD 4: It was so very beautiful.
- 35 SHEPHERD 3: The angels began talking to us.

- 1 **ALL ANGELS:** *(Together)* “Glory to God in the highest,
 2 **And on earth peace, good will toward men.”** *(Luke 2:14, KJV)*
- 3 **SONGS:** *(Grades 3, 4 and 5)* Suggested selections: “Angels We
 4 **Have Heard on High,” “Were You There on That Christmas**
 5 **Night?”** *(CHILDREN return to their seats following their songs.)*
- 6 **SHEPHERD 2:** Then the angels disappeared, and we went to
 7 see the baby.
- 8 **SHEPHERD 3:** We found him, just like the angels told us we
 9 would. *(SHEPHERDS and ANGELS take their places at the*
 10 *live Nativity.)*
- 11 **TEDDY BEAR:** This is really something! All this excitement
 12 over a little baby.
- 13 **DOG:** No one at the factory was excited when I was made.
- 14 **GABRIEL:** That’s because this is a special baby. He was
 15 promised for a long time. He is the savior of everyone,
 16 even those who aren’t born yet.
- 17 **TEDDY BEAR:** Wow! Is there more?
- 18 **JOSEPH:** Oh yes. We had moved to a regular house in
 19 Nazareth and had been living there for almost a year.
- 20 **MARY:** One day, some very special people arrived who had
 21 traveled a long way to find Jesus. *(BALTHAZAR, CASPAR*
 22 *and MELCHIOR walk up the aisle, starting from the rear of the*
 23 *sanctuary.)*
- 24 **GABRIEL:** The night Jesus was born, God placed a large star
 25 in the heavens as a special birth announcement. Some
 26 astrologers saw this star and wondered what it meant.
- 27 **BALTHAZAR:** *(To congregation)* Greetings. My friends and I
 28 study the stars. One night we noticed a very special star.
- 29 **CASPAR:** It was so large that we knew it had to signify
 30 something of great importance.
- 31 **MELCHIOR:** We had read that a Messiah would come to the
 32 Jewish people and that he would be a great savior. We
 33 believed we could find this Messiah by following the star
 34 as it moved across the sky.
- 35 **BALTHAZAR:** We felt compelled to search for him so we



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