



A Visit from St. Nicholas (Twas the night before Christmas)

Poem by Clement Clarke Moore, 1822

Lesson by Adam R. Mathews, 2017

This is possibly the famous of all English Christmas poems. The first and second lines of every verse rhyme, as do the third and fourth lines.

1. Complete the poem by matching the first and last lines of each verse with the middle two?
2. Now go through the text and underline each word you don't know. Can you guess their meaning from the context?

1	Twas the night before Christmas, when all through the house ... In hopes that St Nicholas soon would be there.	And filled all the stockings, then turned with a jerk. And laying his finger aside of his nose,
2	The children were nestled all snug in their beds, ... Had just settled our brains for a long winter's nap.	I sprang from the bed to see what was the matter. Away to the window I flew like a flash,
3	When out on the lawn there arose such a clatter, ... Tore open the shutters and threw up the sash.	On, Comet! On, Cupid! on, on Donner and Blitzen! To the top of the porch! to the top of the wall!
4	The moon on the breast of the new-fallen snow ... But a miniature sleigh, and eight tiny reindeer.	The prancing and pawing of each little hoof. As I drew in my head, and was turning around,
5	With a little old driver, so lively and quick, ... And he whistled, and shouted, and called them by name!	Not a creature was stirring, not even a mouse. The stockings were hung by the chimney with care,
6	"Now Dasher! now, Dancer! now, Prancer and Vixen! ... Now dash away! Dash away! Dash away all!"	Gave the lustre of mid-day to objects below. When, what to my wondering eyes should appear,
7	As dry leaves that before the wild hurricane fly, ... With the sleigh full of Toys, and St Nicholas too.	And his clothes were all tarnished with ashes and soot. A bundle of Toys he had flung on his back,
8	And then, in a twinkling, I heard on the roof ... Down the chimney St Nicholas came with a bound.	And away they all flew like the down of a thistle. But I heard him exclaim, 'ere he drove out of sight,
9	He was dressed all in fur, from his head to his foot, ... And he looked like a peddler, just opening his pack.	When they meet with an obstacle, mount to the sky. So up to the house-top the coursers they flew,
10	His eyes-how they twinkled! his dimples how merry! ... And the beard of his chin was as white as the snow.	I knew in a moment it must be St Nick. More rapid than eagles his coursers they came,
11	The stump of a pipe he held tight in his teeth, ... That shook when he laughed, like a bowlful of jelly!	His cheeks were like roses, his nose like a cherry! His droll little mouth was drawn up like a bow,
12	He was chubby and plump, a right jolly old elf, ... Soon gave me to know I had nothing to dread.	And the smoke it encircled his head like a wreath. He had a broad face and a little round belly,
13	He spoke not a word, but went straight to his work, ... And giving a nod, up the chimney he rose!	While visions of sugar-plums danced in their heads. And mamma in her 'kerchief, and I in my cap,
14	He sprang to his sleigh, to his team gave a whistle, ... "Happy Christmas to all, and to all a good-night!"	And I laughed when I saw him, in spite of myself! A wink of his eye and a twist of his head,

3. Practice saying the verses. Pay special attention to the rhythm of the piece and the rhymes. Do any of the rhymes surprise you?