



Monster Needs a Christmas Tree

BY PAUL CZAJAK * ILLUSTRATED BY WENDY GRIEB

Growing up with Monster is fun! He has all sorts of things to learn and experience for the first time, and the young boy who takes care of him will help him along the way. Written in humorous, read-aloud verse, the Monster & Me™ series makes growing up a whole lot easier and a lot more interesting.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Paul Czajak got an “F” with the words “get a tutor” on his college writing paper and after that, never thought he’d become a writer. But after spending twenty years as a chemist, he knew his creativity could no longer be contained. Living in Massachusetts with his wife, and two little monsters, Paul has rediscovered his passion for writing and looks forward to sharing his stories for years to come.



ABOUT THE ILLUSTRATOR

Wendy Grieb is a storyboard artist, Illustrator, and teacher. She has worked on a variety of productions and won an Annie Award for storyboarding in 2004. She has also been an animation development artist, children’s book illustrator, and character designer for companies such as Disney, Nickelodeon, Sony, Klasky-Csupo, Scarletta Press, White Wolf, and more. She was a storyboard artist at Disney TV for sixteen years and has worked on Disney’s hit TV show *Phineas and Ferb*. She also teaches animation at California State University–Fullerton.



ABOUT THIS GUIDE

The material in this Educator’s Activity Guide was created by Michele Pickel, Ph.D., Associate Professor of Education at Concordia University, St. Paul, MN utilizing *Monster Needs A Christmas Tree* by Paul Czajak as part of her early literacy teaching curriculum and written in collaboration with Karen Latchana Kenney.

Michele Pickel is a Horse Powered Reading Instructor and EAGALA Advanced Certified Equine Specialist (www.crosspranch.com). She is also a Licensed PK-6 teacher with K-12 reading endorsement, Coordinator of Lutheran Classroom Teacher Program, and afterschool PLUS Time facilitator. For more information please contact Scarletta, info@scarlettapress.com, 1201 Currie Avenue, Minneapolis, MN 55403, 612-455-0252.

EDUCATOR'S ACTIVITY GUIDE



Read It!

ABOUT THE BOOK

It's almost Christmastime, and Monster needs a tree. But the holidays are filled with joy and so many fun things to do! After snowballs, sleds, and Santa Claus, will he find a tree in time? In this festive, rhyming story, Monster shows young readers that with a little creativity, a tree can be perfect any way you look at it.

BEFORE YOU READ

- ▶ Watch the book trailer for *Monster Needs A Christmas Tree* as a class. Find it here: <http://scarlettapress.com/store/monster-needs-a-christmas-tree/>
- ▶ Ask students: What do you know about Christmas? What other holidays are celebrated in December? Write answers on the board.
- ▶ Tell students to think of a favorite gift they have received for a holiday or birthday. Ask them to draw a picture of it and describe it in a short paragraph. They should explain why it was their favorite gift.
- ▶ Read the glossary words and their definitions. Ask students to look for the words as they read.



GLOSSARY

- battlefield** (BAT-uhl-feeld) A place where a war occurs.
- creature** (KREE-chur) A living being, person, or animal.
- dismay** (diss-MAY) A feeling of distress or worry.
- dynamite** (DYE-nuh-mite) Exciting and pleasing.
- evergreen** (EV-ur-green) A bush or tree that has green leaves during the entire year.
- exhausted** (eg-ZAWST-id) To be very tired.
- glee** (GLEE) Delight and joy.
- jubilee** (JOO-buh-lee) Great happiness.
- overrated** (oh-vur-RAY-tid) When something is not as great as others say it is.
- rotten** (ROT-uhn) Very bad.
- sculpture** (SKUHLP-chur) Something, such as a piece of art, that is carved from stone or wood or made from another materials.
- slunk** (SLUNK) To have moved in a slow or shameful way.
- suspicious** (suh-SPISH-uhss) To think that something is wrong or bad, but no have proof that is true.
- vicious** (VISH-uhss) Cruel and mean.

EDUCATOR'S ACTIVITY GUIDE



Know It!

DISCUSS THE BOOK

- › **Making Evergreens:** Monster wanted an evergreen tree for his Christmas tree. Evergreen trees stay green even when other trees' leaves change colors. Ask students: Do you have a Christmas tree? If so, is it an evergreen tree? Then ask: What might you use if there were no evergreen trees? What did Monster use? How was his "tree" like an evergreen tree? (it was made of plants, it was green, it was shaped like a triangle ...). Have students brainstorm what could be used as a Christmas tree. Let students work in groups to come up with a solution to Monster's problem. Ask groups to sketch out their alternate trees and explain them to the class.
- › **In My Words:** Let students pick a favorite part of the story. Then ask them to retell the story using their words. Encourage students to use drama, music, and art to further express themselves. Have students perform their retold scenes in front of the class.



- › **What Did Monster Do?:** Discuss the challenge Monster faced in the book (he was too late to buy a Christmas tree). Ask students to write a paragraph describing how Monster responded to this challenge? They should explain how he felt and also his actions and solution. Then ask students to imagine an alternate solution to Monster's problem. Have them share their ideas with the class.



EDUCATOR'S ACTIVITY GUIDE



WRITE ABOUT IT

- › **Monstrous List:** Explain to students that some of the words used in the book are difficult to understand for young readers. Seeing those words used in sentences along with high interest illustrations helps readers understand their meanings. Watch the short video at www.elementary.com, to see how the advanced vocabulary used in the *Monster & Me™* books challenges young readers to become better problem solvers and quicker thinkers. Ask students to complete the “Monstrous List” worksheet on page 7, describing their gift wish list using monstrous words from the book.
- › **Monster’s Diary:** What would Monster write in his diary? Ask students to imagine being Monster. Tell them to fill out his diary page on page 10. They should retell the events of the day, explain how Monster felt during the day, and conclude with a lesson they think Monster learned by the end of the day.
- › **Monstrous Story:** Ask students to imagine that Monster and the boy suddenly appeared in one of their stories! What would they do? Pick a story starter on page 9 of this guide. Then have students craft a story using Monster and the boy as starring characters.

MAP IT OUT

- › **Christmas Eve Timeline:** Monster and the boy had an eventful Christmas Eve! Explain that timelines can be used to map out the events of a story. The first event goes at the beginning of the timeline and later events follow. Ask students to make timelines for *Monster Needs A Christmas Tree* using the worksheet on page 8.



EDUCATOR'S ACTIVITY GUIDE



Try It!

FUN ACTIVITIES

- › **Collage Trees:** Use magazines to find bits of green in different pictures. Have students tear out those bits of green and glue them onto a tree shaped background to make their own alternate Christmas tree for Monster. Use the outline on page 11 worksheet.
- › **Snowball Fun:** Fill out the snowball shaped word cards on page 12. Ask students to connect the word “snow” with a new word (such as ball, man, monster, and fort) to make compound words. Explain that compound words are two words combined to make one word. Encourage students to think of silly snow-words such as snowworm, snowpeanut, snowtroll, etc. Ask them to pick their silliest compound creature and create it using cotton balls or white modeling clay. Make sure students label their creations with their compound words.
- › **Giving Gifts:** In *Monster Needs A Christmas Tree*, Monster has a list of gifts he'd love to get on Christmas. This holiday is also about giving gifts to others. As a class, brainstorm ways you can give a gift to someone in need. Help students research charities in your area. Pick one as a class and come up with a gift you may be able to donate to the charity.



CONNECT

- › Read the poem “[little tree]” by E.E. Cummings. It can be found online here: <http://www.poetryfoundation.org/poem/176724> Discuss what students think the poem means or how it makes them feel.
- › Watch a movie about snowmen or Christmas trees. Ask students to pick one scene that includes a problem the characters face. Then have students imagine how Monster would have acted in that movie. Ask them to write down their answers and share with the class. Here are some movie ideas:
 - › *A Charlie Brown Christmas*
 - › *A Christmas Story*
 - › *Frosty The Snowman*
 - › *The Snowman*

EDUCATOR'S ACTIVITY GUIDE



EXPLORE MORE

Visit the following Web sites to learn more about Christmas trees and sledding, and also make a snowman:

› **Environmental Education for Kids, Forever Green**

<http://dnr.wi.gov/org/caer/ce/eek/veg/trees/evergreen.htm>

Check out this Web site to learn about evergreen trees.

› **Highlights Kids, Build a Snowman**

<http://www.highlightskids.com/games/build-snowman>

Change hats, heads, scarves, and more to make a unique snowman in this fun game!

› **History Channel, The Life of a Christmas Tree**

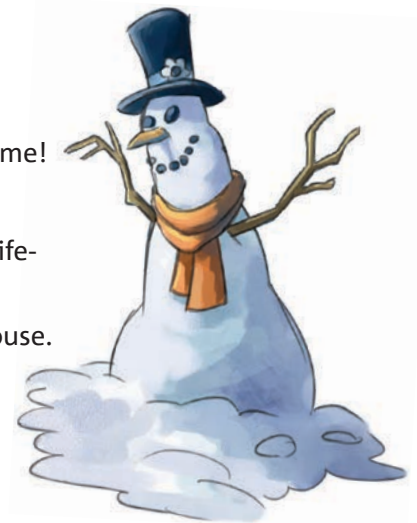
<http://www.history.com/topics/christmas/history-of-christmas-trees/videos/the-life-of-a-christmas-tree?m=528e394da93ae&s=undefined&f=1&free=false>

Watch this video to learn how a Christmas tree makes it from the farm to your house.

› **Kidz World, The History of Sledding**

<http://www.kidzworld.com/article/27758-the-history-of-sledding>

Learn about the history of sledding on this Web site.



COMMON CORE STATE STANDARDS

The activities and discussion questions in this guide support the following Common Core State Standards.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.2.3 Write narratives in which they recount a well-elaborated event or short sequence of events, include details to describe actions, thoughts, and feelings, use temporal words to signal event order, and provide a sense of closure.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.2.8 Recall information from experiences or gather information from provided sources to answer a question.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.2.1 Ask and answer such questions as who, what, where, when, why, and how to demonstrate understanding of key details in a text.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.2.2 Recount stories, including fables and folktales from diverse cultures, and determine their central message, lesson, or moral.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.2.3 Describe how characters in a story respond to major events and challenges.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.2.5 Describe the overall structure of a story, including describing how the beginning introduces the story and the ending concludes the action.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.2.7 Use information gained from the illustrations and words in a print or digital text to demonstrate understanding of its characters, setting, or plot.

MONSTER NEEDS A CHRISTMAS TREE

Monstrous List

Monstrous words are nothing to be afraid of! In picture books, the illustrations can help you understand those words. Read the glossary. Pick five words you want to use. Find the words in the book. Then make your own gift wish list. But there's a trick! You must use a glossary word in each item description on your list.

GLOSSARY WORDS

- battlefield**
- creature**
- dismay**
- dynamite**
- evergreen**
- exhausted**
- glee**
- jubilee**
- overrated**
- rotten**
- sculpture**
- slunk**
- suspicious**
- vicious**



MY MONSTROUS LIST

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

5. _____

MONSTER NEEDS A CHRISTMAS TREE

All on Christmas Eve

Fill out this timeline of Monster and the boy's Christmas Eve.

Use as many monstrous vocabulary words as you can.



MONSTER NEEDS A CHRISTMAS TREE

What If . . . ?

Read the following story starters. Pick one that you like the most.

Then imagine what Monster and the boy might do.

Finish the story starter with your own story about Monster and the boy.

STORY STARTER #1

Make a story using these three things:
a magical hat, a stolen gift, and a snowstorm.



STORY STARTER #2

Use this as a first line to your story:
As they slid down, Monster saw a curious
door hidden in snow on the side of the hill.

STORY STARTER #3

Write a story around this idea:
Monster's new puppy was not
quite what it seemed.



MONSTER NEEDS A CHRISTMAS TREE

Tree Collage



MONSTER NEEDS A CHRISTMAS TREE

Snowball Fun

Make new snow creatures using the word "snow." Add a word to each snowball.
See what silly beasts you can create!

SNOW _____

SNOW _____

SNOW _____

SNOW _____

SNOW _____

SNOW _____

SNOW _____

SNOW _____

SNOW _____