

This World: Poems and Facts About Space). With just five hours of sunlight and freezing temperatures to fill her days in Alaska, a girl must also contend with the moose in her yard, where she prefers to make snow dreidels with friends. Even as Hanukkah's lights glow brightly, she despairs of ever regaining control of her backyard. Children will gain information about Alaska as well as a clever holiday-themed idea for keeping moose at bay. Ages 4–8. *Illustrator's agent: Christina A. Tugeau, CATugeau. (Oct.)*

The Perfect Christmas Pageant

Joyce Meyer, illus. by Mary Sullivan.

Zonderkidz, \$15.99 (40p) ISBN 978-0-310-72354-7

In this addition to Meyer's Everyday Zoo series, Christmas is coming to the zoo, and Hayley Hippo has big plans for the holiday pageant she will direct. Last year the Bunny family set a high bar, with spectacular performances and a manger made of carrots. But when rehearsal is a disaster (Arnold the Aardvark rolls into a ball, among other things), Hayley despairs until she realizes that the original Christmas was also something of a mess for baby Jesus and his parents. Meyer offers a laugh-out-loud contemporary take on a familiar tale, and it's fun to see Sullivan's hippopotami, camels, and ostriches (who don't typically get much holiday attention) get into the Christmas spirit. Ages 4–8. *(Oct.)*

Tallulah's Nutcracker

Marilyn Singer, illus. by Alexandra Boiger.

Clarion, \$16.99 (48p) ISBN 978-0-547-84557-9

Budding ballerina Tallulah is over the moon when she learns that she will be a mouse in *The Nutcracker*. Even though there are 11 other mice in the production, and it's not exactly glamorous to dress as a mouse, Tallulah takes her role seriously (she even misses out on selecting a Christmas tree because of rehearsal). But a mistake on opening night leaves Tallulah in tears until a few seasoned dancers offer their own stories of on-stage foibles. As in the previous Tallulah books, Boiger's muted watercolors offer understated elegance, while Singer gingerly addresses how the wisdom of caring adults and role models can bring valuable perspective to a moment of humiliation. Ages 4–8.

Illustrator's agent: Marcia Wernick, Wernick & Pratt. (Oct.)

The Twelve Days of Christmas

Susan Jeffers. HarperCollins, \$17.99 (40p)

ISBN 978-0-06-206615-2

In the spirit of her 2007 *The Nutcracker*, Jeffers reinterprets this classic carol, creating a narrative to bolster the song. While snooping on Christmas Eve, Emma discovers a gift from Santa—a snow globe containing a partridge in a pear tree. After she breaks it, she curls up in a chair and dreams that she and Santa accumulate the full complement of gifts from the song while winging his sleigh toward the North Pole.

The watercolor-and-ink paintings create an air of holiday magic, and the fantastical parade of gifts thrums with activity and attention-grabbing details, from the eight maids a'milking, whose bonnets match those of their cows, to the dapperly dressed and ethnically diverse lords and ladies who dance across pages bedecked with jewels. Ages 4–8. *(Oct.)*

The Christmas Visitors

Karel Hayes. Down East (NBN, dist.), \$16.95

(32p) ISBN 978-1-60893-248-1

Hayes follows *The Winter Visitors* and *The Summer Visitors* with a third story of a gentle ursine takeover of a cottage that's been closed up for the season by its owners. But when the family decides to celebrate the holidays in the cottage after all, the bears must skedaddle. In a nod to "The Night Before Christmas" one of the children catches the bears leaving a decorative surprise for the family on Christmas Eve night. Hayes's spare writing can, at times, be inscrutable ("Merry holidays,/ twinkling lights,/ and starlit skies;/ all go round and round/ and off to bed"), though the watercolor scenes of ice skating families (both human and bear) and holiday celebrations are fun and festive. Ages 4–8. *(Sept.)*

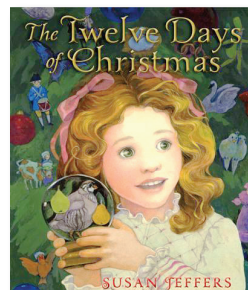
Santa Claus and the Three Bears

Maria Modugno, illus. by Jane Dyer and

Brooke Dyer. Harper, \$17.99 (40p) ISBN 978-0-06-170023-1

In a nifty holiday twist on the Goldilocks story, three polar bears prepare for Christ-

mas Eve. While waiting for their pudding to cool, the three stroll through the snowy mountain village to see the Christmas lights. Writing with humor and a natural storyteller's cadence, Modugno substitutes the proverbial intruder with Santa himself, who can't resist the puddings on the table, breaks Baby Bear's chair, and then takes a nap. The bears forgive the



snoozing (and comparatively diminutive) Santa when he reveals gifts for the whole family. The Dyers incorporate a touch of naturalism into their anthropomorphic bears, and their featherlight backdrops and cozy cottage details help create an endearing restaging of the fairy

tale. Ages 4–8. *(Sept.)*

Snow Bunny's Christmas Wish

Rebecca Harry. Scholastic/Orchard, \$16.99

(32p) ISBN 978-0-545-54103-9

Shimmering foil accents decorate this quiet Christmas story about a lonely bunny whose one request from Santa is for a friend. When Snow Bunny misses the Red Robin Postman, she follows the North Star to deliver the letter to Santa herself. But the shining lights she sees in the forest come from other sources—the moon reflected on a glassy pond where bears are ice-skating (Snow Bunny gives a small bear her mittens), or the star topping a Christmas tree that animals are decorating (she gives a fox a frosted cookie). Harry's eminently cuddly forest setting and creatures only add to the warmth of the underlying message about goodwill and generosity. Ages 4–8. *(Sept.)*

Esther's Hanukkah Disaster

Jane Sutton, illus. by Andy Rowland. Kar-Ben,

\$17.95 (32p) ISBN 978-0-7613-9043-5; \$7.95 paper ISBN 978-0-7613-9044-2

In this adorable and brightly illustrated Hanukkah story from Sutton (*Don't Call Me Sidney*) and Rowland (*Little Nelly's Big Book*), Esther the gorilla joyfully sets out to the Jungle Store to get everything she needs to give Hanukkah presents to her friends. She happily chooses the gifts, but as she hands them out to her monkey, elephant, hyena, turtle, and zebra pals, Esther realizes that her gifts may not have been as perfectly thought-out as she had