ForeWord Reviews

JUVENILE FICTION

The Christmas Dream
Patti Teel
DreamFlight Productions
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According to a recent study of 494 elementary aged children at Brown University, thirty-seven percent of them have problems sleeping. The children felt they were being pushed hard by their parents' schedules, teachers' expectations, and peer pressure.

The author, a former schoolteacher and mother of three, has used her talents as an educator, folksinger, yogini, and parent to create The Dream Maker, The Floppy Sleep Game, The Inside-Out Sleep Game, and most recently, The Christmas Dream to help children relax and rest. Her work grew out of her own need, eight years ago, to get her own daughter, then four years old, to sleep.

Through soothing music and gentle rhymes, reminiscent of lullabies crossed with Beethoven, Brahms, and Mozart, the author/musician, in pleasant, soft tenor voice, teaches children good bedtime routines in time for the busy holiday season. The first routine consists of a progressive relaxation, using modified yoga relaxation techniques, and is called "reindeer flight training."

The second, and more intriguing, bedtime routine takes youngsters on a trip around the world with Santa. On their global journey, children become Santa's helpers in delivering gifts. They visit the moon, experience the mountains and oceans, hear prayers from children all over the world, visit Bethlehem, and learn the importance of caring for and sharing with people all over the planet. Teel's gentle messages of "loving one another and spreading kindness every day," and "hearing the same prayer of gratitude from everyone" are age-appropriate, sensitive to gender and class, and culturally diverse.

Teel has won the Oppenheim Gold Toy Portfolio Award, the Gold Award from the National Parenting Publication, the California Arts Council, and the Dr. Toy Award. She certainly succeeds here: a three-year-old visiting the house of this reviewer repeatedly asked if she could take the Christmas Dream CD home.

Pam Kingsbury