



## The Gifts of Nicholas: Success His Legacy

**James Marion King**

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*The Gifts of Nicholas is a pretty and exceedingly positive book that will appeal to both believers and nonbelievers.*

The Christmas spirit comes alive in lush color in James Marion King's *The Gifts of Nicholas*.

The book is equal parts a celebration and a work with a mission. King writes for those who await the Christmas season with childlike enthusiasm; he also sets out to influence and encourage his audience to open their hearts and minds, to learn to give to others, and to exemplify the true spirit of the season.

The book compiles poetry and essays, accompanied by lovely color stock images that reinforce a festive feeling. There are photos of snowy scenes, Christmas trees, wreaths, and other decorations. The origin of St. Nicholas is addressed in the poems. Many well-known Christmas song lyrics are incorporated, as with "on every street corner you can meet smile after smile, laughing all the way, bringing peace on earth."

Though it may seem perfect to read aloud to kids at Christmastime, the book definitely has a message for adults as well. Amid the interwoven poems and essays, a common theme and continuing story emerge. From the first-person perspective of a man living alone, interspersed essays tell a tale of unexpected contact between one ordinary person and the great St. Nicholas.

A mystery begins to build when a mysterious wrapped gift is found, and it could only have been left by Santa. The narrator's parents and siblings are involved, as is a whole lot of wonder. From one Christmas to the next, the story grows, becoming even more amusing and life-changing. Disbelief turns into something else entirely. These believable essays are the meat of the book, and the poetry functions more as dressing around them.

The tone is pointed, calm, and alive with possibilities along this holiday journey. King's writing is clear and easy to understand. His message is about giving to others, feeling good, achieving your dreams, and enjoying a special time of year. "Christmas is that time of year when we celebrate our humanity and build it, contagiously," King writes. "I believe that Santa Claus is the physical manifestation of the spirit of Christmas ... All those people who have written, sang, danced, or even dreamt about Christmas have ... because that spirit has touched them inside."

*The Gifts of Nicholas* is a pretty and exceedingly positive book, holding appeal for children and adults, both those who believe and those who don't.

BILLIE RAE BATES (January 8, 2018)

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