

Turn of the Century

Ellen Jackson Jan Davey Ellis Illus.

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What would it have been like to be a child in the year 1000? As the new millennium looms on our horizon, Ellen Jackson takes us back in time to look at the old one in this unusual and informative picture book. Each double-page spread covers the life of an English or American child on New Year's Day at the beginning of each century. We meet Rhys, a merchant's son in 1300 who complains of maggots in his meat, and Annabelle, an earl's daughter in 1600, who marvels at her father's new custom of smoking. In addition to these first-person descriptions, there is a list of interesting facts about each century. Did you know that in 1400 most people ate with their fingers?

The colorful illustrations are full of detail and bordered in the style of an illuminated manuscript of the 12th century. Children will enjoy seeing the progression of civilization depicted in these drawings. Although only Caucasian children are shown, there is much variety in their social position. While the book would not be useful for actual research, it may well spark a child's interest in history, which can be satisfied by utilizing the extensive bibliography.

LEIGH FORREST (July / August 1998)

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