

A book for Christmas Eve

By Sharon E. McKay
Special to HHTW

Odds are it will become a children's literary classic. "Ten Small Tales", (Groundwood) by an award winning team of author Celia Barker Lottridge and Georgetown illustrator Joanne Fitzgerald have come together to produce ten tiny treasures.

Each story has the simplicity of old tales but without the chilling consequences. (Remember "The Red Shoes"? Brrr).

In "Ten Small Tales", gentleness has replaced the blood-curdling morality plays that once passed as children's stories. (To this day I get the creeps when crossing little foot bridges lest a troll pop up and demand payment. Ya just never know...).

The drawings are book illustrations at their very best. They appear where they should, do not interfere with a child's imagination and bolster, never dominate, the stories.

This is Fitzgerald's fourth book, but her first since scooping The Govern General's Award for "Dr. Kiss Says Yes" (Groundwood) in 1991.

More stories, this time from around the world. "The Book of Magical Tales, retold by Margaret Mayo, illustrated by Jane Ray takes a more traditional approach to fairy tales. The fables retain the good vs. bad legacy and you'll recognize many of the main charac-

Parent - to - Parent

ters - the stepmother is evil, the princess is beautiful, the price is ... And yet, the book works. The tales chosen are exciting, mysterious, some are very funny.

Both books are beautifully bound and will be passed down from child to grandchild.

O.K., you've found the perfect book but, in a world of mega toy advertising, how do we get a child to appreciate such a gift? True, it can be successfully argued that books really do give more bang for the buck. It's really hard to see our children toss a \$24.95 plus GST book onto the underwear and mitten pile under the Christmas tree without so much as a second glance.

Here's an idea that works for us:

Several years back, on Christmas Eve, when the kids were literally pasted to the ceiling and when I had it up to here with "please, let us open just one gift..." I came up with a desperate but simple plan.

Yes, they could open one gift each. My choice.

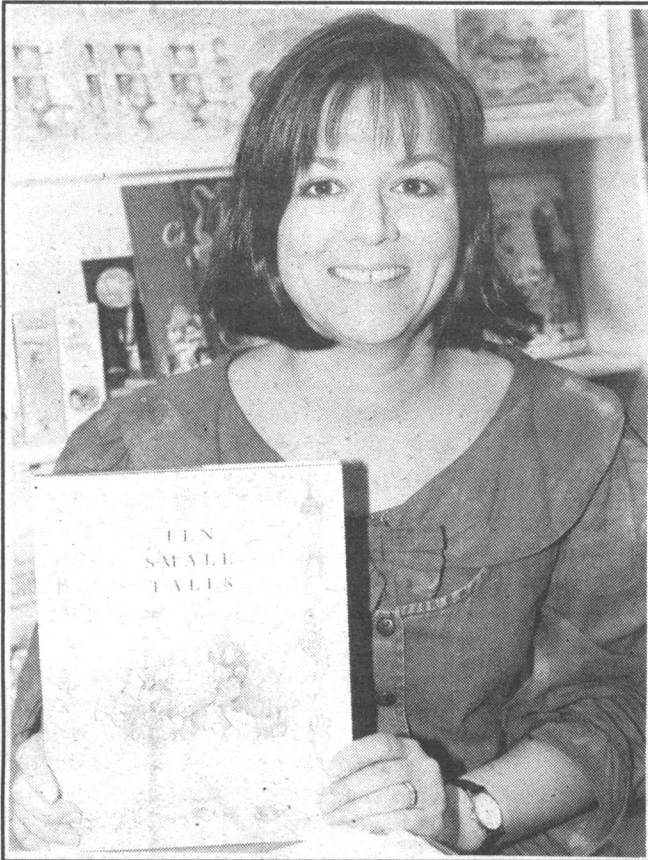
The gift they were allowed to open then and on every Christmas Eve since, is the gift of a book.

By giving The Book it's own special time slot, by allowing the children the time to smell the pages, hear the crack of the binding as it is, gently, please, opened, the gift

of a dear ol' book is elevated to something very special - something to be treasured.

Lest you think this Hallmark moment lasts more than a moment - remember, Santa is but a blink and a nod

away. "Ten Small Tales" can be purchased locally at Oxbow Books, 102 Main Street S. in Georgetown. Autographed copies can be arranged by telephoning 877-8861 and speaking to owner Norman Holt.



Governor General's Award winner, Georgetown resident Joanne Fitzgerald, has her illustrations featured in Celia Barker Lottridge's book, Ten Small Tales. The book is available at Oxbow Books in Georgetown. photo by Simon Wilson/HHTW

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