



So many stories are tied to Christmas and to our memories of Christmases past. I always enjoy re-reading favourites and discovering new ones, and from the number of Christmas books that circulate in the branches at this time of year, I'm obviously not the only one. Especially popular are mysteries set at Christmas time, but ones I most enjoy are the shorter, classic stories, particularly ones good to read aloud. A few that I return to are relatively new, published within the last ten years, I believe, by Canadian writers from the east coast.

To Every Thing There Is a Season; A Cape Breton Christmas Story is by the gifted writer, Alistair Macleod. Sadly, he died in April of this year at the age of 77.

His seasonal tale is a simple one of an adult remembering Christmas when he was 11 years old, back home on the farm on the west coast of Cape Breton. It is set in the 1940s as the family of six children waits for Christmas, and especially for their older brother, Neil, to come home. He has been on the Lake boats in Ontario, and sends mysterious packages of "clothes" back for Christmas. On Christmas Eve this oldest brother arrives to a happy reunion, followed by a sleigh ride to church through the silent white woods. It's a bittersweet story as the narrator then stays up late with the adults for the first time to help with gift-wrapping and becomes aware of his passing to adulthood in the doing. The clear, sparse prose is remarkable and the illustrations in black and white by Peter Rankin in the hardcover version nicely complete the package. This would make a great gift for a book lover.

The second book by a Canadian east coast writer tells two children's stories. It's written by master storyteller David Adams Richards and set on the great Miramichi River in New Brunswick. The stories could, however, be set in any Canadian childhood winter.

The Christmas Tree is the first story and captures flawlessly the anticipation of searching for the perfect Christmas tree in snowy woods. The other story, *Carmichael's Dog*, is a heartwarming tale of a Christmas Eve when boys with red cheeks and snow covered mittens from a day of sledding on cardboard, find a round black puppy stuck in the snow bank waiting to be rescued.

Lastly, *The Penguin Book of Christmas Stories* includes writing by great storytellers including *The*

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Turkey Season by Alice Munro, *Christmas Is a Sad Season for the Poor* by John Cheever, *Crèche* by Richard Ford, *Horatio's Trick* by Anne Beattie, *Another Christmas* by William Trevor, and *The Leaf-Sweeper* by Muriel Spark. Also in the book are works that have seldom or never been translated into English, such as *The Night Before Christmas* by Theodore Odrach and *A Risk for Father Christmas* by Siegfried Lenz. These three titles are, of course, available at the library.

The winter is also a time of knitting – and handmade gifts – and for those of you interested in knitting, crochet and any other needlecraft, the Knit & Chat group continues to meet at the Milford branch each Tuesday from 10:00 a.m. to 12:00 noon. Both the absolute beginner and advanced are welcome.

The Intermediate French Group, still going strong after a number of years, meets each Tuesday at 2:00 p.m.

Looking outside of the library, many will have noticed that a brand new railing has been installed up the ramp and around the front entrance. A special thank you goes to the Friends of Ann Farwell for their efforts and helping with the funding, as well as to the individuals who made donations toward this much needed improvement possible.

Lastly, on Friday afternoon December 12th, from 2:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m., we invite all in the community to stop by the Ann Farwell branch for hot cider, cookies and to make an old-fashioned tree ornament, or just come and chat about Christmas and books.

I look forward to seeing you then.

Milford Library Hours

Tuesday	10:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m.
Wednesday	3:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m.
Thursday	10:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m.
Friday	2:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m.
Saturday	10:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.

Open certain evenings for special events and club meetings