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# The Mice Before Christmas

By Anne L. Watson

## Reader's Theater Edition #43

Adapted for reader's theater (or readers theatre) by Aaron Shepard, from the [picture book](#) published by Skyhook Press, 2021

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PREVIEW: What *else* happened on the night before Christmas?

GENRE: Poetry

CULTURE: —

THEME: Christmas spirit

READERS: 8 or 9

READER AGES: 9–11

LENGTH: 7 minutes

ROLES: Narrators 1–6 (“1”–“6”), Santa Mouse (“SM”), Mama Mouse (“MM”), Grandma Mouse (“GM”)

NOTES: This poem is a prequel to Clement Clarke Moore’s beloved poem “A Visit from St. Nicholas” or “The Night Before Christmas.” MAMA MOUSE and GRANDMA MOUSE can be the same reader. Since a single verse line may be shared among readers, the start of each line in the original verse is marked by a bullet (•). To help readers find the rhythm, you can first read them the unscripted poem. This script is especially suitable for older readers to perform for a younger audience.

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|----|------------------------------------------------------|
| 1: | • 'Twas the day before Christmas,                    |
| 6: | and all through their house,                         |
| 2: | • The mice were preparing.                           |
| 5: | There wasn't a mouse                                 |
|    | • Who didn't join in for the holiday flurry.         |
| 3: | • From top floor to bottom,                          |
| 4: | they'd bustle and scurry.                            |
|    |                                                      |
| 1: | • Their party was planned for that evening at eight, |
| 6: | • With so much to finish before it got late!         |
| 2: | • So, they scrambled and scampered—                  |
| 5: | no task was neglected—                               |
| 3: | • To deck out the halls                              |
| 4: | for the guests they expected.                        |

1: • While Mama and Papa were trimming the tree,  
6: • The parlor was locked,  
2: and they'd taken the key.  
5: • The children crept close to the keyhole to stare,  
3: • But saw only curtains,  
4: and maybe a chair.

1: • Then Uncle festooned the front door with bright trims,  
6: • With garlands of holly and evergreen limbs,  
2: • And garnished the branches,  
5: from doorstep to header,  
3: • With morsels of chocolate  
4: and pieces of cheddar.

1: • The twins, in the front yard, were building twin snow mice,  
6: • While Aunt, in the kitchen, made gingerbread dough mice.  
2: • She opened the oven  
5: to check on the cooking,  
3: • And Billy snatched cookies  
4: while Aunt wasn't looking.

1: • Upstairs in their bedroom, the littlest mice  
• Began wrapping gifts, doing everything twice.  
6: • They cut paper crooked,  
2: got tape in their fur,  
5: • And switched all the labels for him and for her.  
3: • Then with sisters and brothers, they thronged through the hall  
• To hang up their stockings.  
4: It took a whole wall!

1: • Excitement kept building—  
6: while patience did not—  
2: • Till the clock in the hallway reached eight on the dot.  
5: • As the chimes started sounding,  
3: the door was thrown wide,  
4: • And the guests in their finery crowded inside.

- 1: • Good wishes and greetings turned into a din  
• Of merriments traded again and again.
- 6: • "Merry Christmas to *you!*"
- 2: • "And to all in *your* nest!"
- 5: • "I hope that the New Year will bring you the best!"
- 3: • They chatted and drank steaming cider from mugs
- 4: • That often got spilled in affectionate hugs.
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- 1: • While Grandpa played tunes on an upright piano,
- 6: • Matilda joined in with her squeaky soprano.
- 2: • The mice gathered round,
- 5: • singing carols in parts.
- 3: • Their voices rose high
- 4: • as they sang from their hearts.
- 
- 1: • At last it was time for the gifts!
- 6: • So they flocked  
• To the room with the tree, the big doors now unlocked.
- 2: • The tree was so lovely, they gasped with delight.
- 5: • It sparkled and shimmered, its candles so bright!
- 3: • Its garlands of beads hung from silvery ties,
- 4: • And the star shone on top like a star from the skies.
- 
- 1: • Beneath it were packages, gifts by the dozens,
- 6: • For all the relations, for fourth and fifth cousins,
- 2: • And presents for neighbors,
- 5: • and one for each friend,
- 3: • For schoolfellows, tradespeople—
- 4: • gifts without end.
- 
- 1: • The mice unwrapped presents and savored the pleasure  
• Of each special thoughtfulness, each little treasure.
- 6: • The gifts for the children were small, but they knew,  
• While they slept, Santa Mouse would be bringing some, too!
- 
- 2: • And after the singing and gifts came the feast.
- 5: • Food enough for a week of such parties, at least!
- 3: • There was course after course, and huge platters of cheese.
- 4: • No dish was left out that could possibly please!

- 1:     • A flaming plum pudding came last, then the toasts  
       • To the friends and relations, the guests and the hosts.
- 6:     • When all of the tributes and thanks had been said,  
       • The sleepy small children were bundled to bed.
- 2:     • Then they pushed back the tables and cleared off the floor  
5:     • As a seven-piece orchestra came through the door.  
3:     • The conductor stood tall, his baton gave the cues,  
4:     • And they danced like they all meant to wear out their shoes.
- 1:     • They were dancing in lines,  
6:         they were dancing in pairs.  
2:     • They waltzed down the hallways,  
5:         they polkaed up stairs.  
3:     • They spilled out the doorway in time with the tune  
4:     • And danced with the snow mice beneath the full moon.
- 1:     • And as they were dancing, what sight caught their eyes?  
6:     • A colorful, fast-moving blur in the skies!  
2:     • Then clearly they saw it:  
5:         a brilliant red sleigh.  
3:     • And lo and behold,  
4:         it was headed their way!
- 1:     • The hamsters that drew it were golden and white,  
       • While their harness was crimson.
- 6:     A marvelous sight!  
2:     • The sleigh streaked down wildly  
5:         and landed quite hard  
3:     • With all of the hamsters,  
4:         right there in their yard.
- 1:     • Then their eyes all grew wide as the driver stepped down  
6:     • With a look quite perplexed and a puzzling frown.  
2:     • "It's Santa Mouse!"  
5:         "Santa Mouse!"  
3:         all of them cried.  
4:     • And they ran to the sleigh to escort him inside.

1: • But Santa Mouse stood by his hamsters and said,  
SM: • "I'm sorry to say that there's trouble ahead.  
• A problem I've never run into before!  
• I won't fit your chimney, or even your door!  
• You've so many children, and all were so good,  
• I'm afraid this big bag won't squeeze through as it should."

6: • Then Mama replied to him,  
MM: "Don't be afraid!  
• We'll bring in the gifts like a bucket brigade!"

2: • So, they set up a line  
5: and passed one to another,  
3: • From neighbor to friend,  
4: and from father to mother.

1: • When all was inside, Santa came in the house,  
6: • And he filled up a stocking for each little mouse.  
2: • Then all the big toys, he set under the tree  
• While he joked and he laughed.  
5: It was jolly to see!

3: • Then Grandma, with cookies and milk for his thirst,  
• Said,

GM: "Don't you dare go till you've eaten this first!"

4: • He gratefully munched and declared through a bite,

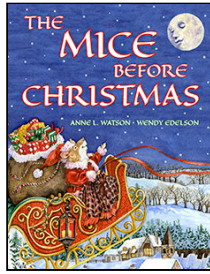
SM: • "Merry Christmas to all, and to all a good night!"

1: • When Santa Mouse left, all the guests went home, too.  
6: • They were nearly worn out, there'd been so much to do!  
2: • Then the rest of the family fell into beds,  
5: • Too tired for sugarplums dancing through heads.

3: • 'Twas the night before Christmas, and all through the house,

4: • Not a creature was stirring—

ALL: NOT EVEN A MOUSE.



*Read the book!*

## **The Mice Before Christmas**

By Anne L. Watson  
Illustrated by Wendy Edelson

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