



# The Christmas Miracle of Jonathan Toomey

Written by Susan Wojciechowski Illustrated by P.J. Lynch

*The Christmas Miracle of Jonathan Toomey* is the heart-warming story of a talented, yet lonely woodcarver and his chance at making friends. This book reminds us to make time for each other during the happy times and the sad times. The best and most unexpected blessings come from helping others. Beautiful illustrations add another layer of emotion to this Christmas tale.

## READ

**Before:** Introduce the book and tell the children a little bit about it. Follow with a comment or question that is related to the story such as, what do you think this story is about? Encourage a discussion so the children can comment, ask questions, and express their feelings. Set the stage for listening by asking an "I wonder" statement based on the cover illustration.

I wonder where they are going in all that snow?

**During:** Encourage the children to comment on the illustrations, ask questions, and predict what will happen next in the story. Children gain confidence and a sense of achievement through being able to correctly predict how a story will end. Point out "rare words" (e.g., those words that are not commonly used in everyday conversation) and help the children relate the meaning in a way that makes sense to them.

### Rare Words

- shrilly – having a very loud, high-pitched sound
- widow – a woman whose husband has died
- woodcarver – someone who uses a knife to cut wood into objects
- pish-posh - silly
- chimed - a sound like the sound made by a set of bells
- virtue – having good and moral behavior

**After:**

- How would you describe Jonathan Toomey?
- What did he do better than anyone else in the valley?
- What was the reason for his gloom?
- What did the widow McDowell want Jonathan to carve for her and why did it have special meaning to her?
- Do you think Jonathan enjoyed when Thomas and his mother would visit his cabin?
- Why do you think Jonathan did not allow widow McDowell or anyone else to sit in the rocking chair?
- What animals did Jonathan carve?
- What animal did Jonathan help Thomas to carve?
- What virtue could Thomas learn from Jonathan?
- Why do you think Jonathan didn't want anyone to open the drawer in the cupboard?
- What were the most special figures Jonathan carved? What were they modeled after?



## Soap Carving for Kids

### Materials:

Ivory bar of soap for each student (Ivory soap works best as it doesn't crumble as easily)  
tongue depressors or popsicle sticks  
sandpaper  
newspapers  
watercolor paints & brushes (optional)

1. Have students make their carving tools using the sandpaper to shape a point at one end of their stick and a chisel at the other end. To make a chisel shape, rub only the widest side of the stick against the sandpaper.
2. Using the sharper end of the stick, have students sketch an outline of their design into the soap. Then they can use the wider end to chisel out the soap and get their desired shapes. Place newspaper on the ground and tables to catch the shavings.
3. When students have completed carving their project, they can paint their sculptures with watercolors.