

# Grab and Go Lesson Plan

## Inference, Empathy, and Sequencing

### **The Anchor: *Harvey Slumfenburger's Christmas Present***

It's Christmas - my favourite time of the year - time for shortbread, Christmas lights, holiday festivities and...BOOKS! When my boys were little, our Christmas book collection grew every year, but *Harvey Slumfenburger's Christmas Present* was always one they wanted to hear over and over. (Just the name "Slumfenburger" alone was a hit!)

This is a gentle, humorous story about kindness, perseverance, and gratitude. When Santa discovers one last present at the bottom of his sack when he returns from his present delivery, he sets back out on the long, difficult journey to deliver it. The present is for Harvey Slumfengurger - a little boy who only receives one present each year - and that present is from Santa.

There is something comforting about the journey Santa takes, his compassion for Harvey, his determination to deliver the present, the kindness of those who help Santa on his journey, and the extraordinary message of the Christmas spirit.

This story lends itself to **predicting, sequencing, inferring, and empathy**. It also invites thoughtful conversations with students about gratitude and fairness. Not every child receives many presents at Christmas, and Harvey's single gift reminds us that even small gestures can hold great meaning.

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### **Materials**

- [Harvey Slumfenburger's Christmas Present](#) by John Burningham (Online Read-Aloud [HERE](#))
- "Harvey Slumfenburger's Christmas Present" template (student reproducible)
- Santa's Journey Story Box template (student reproducible)
- Chart paper and markers

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### **1. Introduction**

- **Set the Context:**  
Ask students to brainstorm a list of things they have on their Christmas "wish list". For those students who may not celebrate Christmas, any other celebration where gifts are exchanged (birthdays, Lunar New Year, etc.) would work. Have them share their "wish list" with a partner.

- Tell the students if they could only have ONE gift on the list - which one would they choose? Share with a partner.
- Explain that you are going to be reading a story about a little boy who only ever gets one present every year from Santa Claus.

### Discussion Prompts:

- *“If you could only have **one** gift all year, what would you choose and why?”*
  - *“How might you feel if you only ever received one present all year?”*
  - *“What might be the reason a child might only get one gift a year? (Maybe the family can’t afford a lot of presents)”*
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## 2. Read Aloud

Read the story (muting the narration if using a YouTube version). Pause occasionally to discuss and wonder together:

Possible questions during the read-aloud:

- *“Why does Harvey only ever get one present?”*
- *“Why does Santa go himself instead of asking someone else to deliver the present?”*
- *“Why are there only two reindeer?”*
- *What clues show how far Santa travels?”*
- *“Why do you think people along the way want to help him?”*
- *“How would Harvey feel if he woke up on Christmas morning with no presents?”*

When the story ends, ask:

*“What do you notice? The author never tells us what Santa brought! Why do you think John Burningham didn’t let us know what Harvey’s present was?” (Maybe he wanted us to try to infer - figure out - what Santa gave him)*

Encourage students to use **text and picture clues** (such as the size of the package, Harvey’s age, and Santa’s effort) to infer what the gift might be.

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## 3. Activity: Harvey’s Gift

Distribute *Harvey Slumfenburger’s Christmas Present* template.

Invite students to draw and colour what they think Santa’s present to Harvey was. Underneath, students can write a sentence or two explaining **what** the gift was and **why** they think Santa chose that gift for Harvey.

Encourage thoughtful choices:

*“If Harvey only receives one present a year, what might he truly value?”*

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#### **4. End the Lesson**

Bring the class together to share their “Harvey’s Gifts.” Discuss:

- *What clues helped you decide on your idea?*
- *What would you have wanted if you were Harvey?*
- *What might be the real gift in this story?*

Discuss how Santa’s effort, thoughtfulness, and kindness were as valuable as the present itself. Introduce the word “empathy” - understanding how someone else might feel, seeing something from their point of view.

Ask students how Santa showed empathy towards Harvey. (i.e. *He travelled so far when he was already so tired because he KNEW how disappointed Harvey would feel if he woke up without a present, so he made the difficult journey*)

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#### **Extension Activities (Optional)**

##### **Sequencing Santa’s Journey**

Use the **Santa’s Journey template** to retell Santa’s route to Roly Poly Mountain. Review the different modes of transportation Santa used and the order he used them. Students can illustrate and label each mode of transportation along the way.

##### **Visualizing**

After reading the story, invite students to visualize (think about) one scene or part of the story that really sticks in their mind. Invite students to draw and colour the scene on a blank paper.

##### **Reader’s Theatre**

Because of its repetition and rich cast of characters, this story adapts beautifully to Reader’s Theatre. Assign narrator and helper roles for a short class performance.

##### **Letter from Harvey**

Students can write a thank-you letter from Harvey to Santa, explaining how much the gift meant to him.



# Favourite New Christmas Books (2025)

[Hap-pea Holidays](#) – Keith Baker

[The Christmas Sweater](#) – Jan Brett

[Llama Llama: A Gift for Mama](#) – Anna Dewdney

[Knight Owl's Little Christmas](#) – Christopher Dennis

[Secrets of the North Pole: Discover the Magic of Christmas](#) – Saskia Gwinn

[The Little Ghost Quilt's Winter Surprise](#) – Riel Nason

[The Old Sleigh](#) – Jarrett Pumphrey

[The Thirteenth Day of Christmas](#) – Adam Rex

[The Gift of Words](#) – Peter H. Reynolds

[A Snow Day for Amos McGee](#) – Philip C. Stead

[Interrupting Chicken Saves the Nutcracker](#) – David Ezra Stein

[When Santa Wrote Back!](#) – Nathan Christopher

[Dasher and the Polar Bear](#) – Matt Travers

## New for Hanukkah:

[A Dragon for Hanukkah](#) - Sarah Mlynowski

[Twinkle, Twinkle, Hanukkah](#) - Talia Benamy

## Favourite Holiday Classics

[The Polar Express](#) – Chris Van Allsburg

[How Does Santa Go Down the Chimney?](#) – Mac Barnett

[Santa's First Christmas](#) – Mac Barnett

[Who's That Knocking on Christmas Eve?](#) - Jan Brett

[The Snowman](#) – Raymond Briggs

[Snowman at Christmas](#) – Caralyn Buehner

[Little Red Sleigh](#) - Erin Guendelsberger

[It's Christmas, David!](#) - David Shannon

[\*How the Grinch Stole Christmas\*](#) – Dr. Seuss

[\*Dasher\*](#) – Matt Tavaras

[\*Red and Lulu\*](#) – Matt Tavaras

[\*The Christmas Magic\*](#) - Lauren Thompson

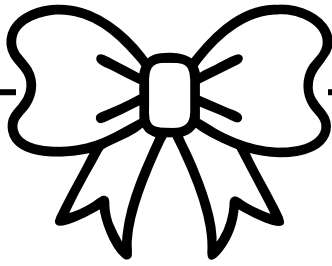
[\*The Night Before Christmas\*](#) - Clement Clark Moore

[\*How Santa Got His Job\*](#) – Stephen Krensky

[\*The Christmas Quiet Book\*](#) – Deborah Underwood

# Harvey Slumfenburger's Christmas Present

Name: \_\_\_\_\_



I think Santa brought Harvey a \_\_\_\_\_

because \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

# Santa's Journey To Roly Poly Mountain

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

<p>First, Santa...</p> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>	<p>Next, Santa...</p> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>	<p>After that, Santa...</p> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>
<p>Then, Santa...</p> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>	<p>Santa...</p> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>	<p>Finally, Santa...</p> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>