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Christmas Cracker by Jacqueline Wilson illustrated by Nick Sharratt

Publisher: Random House Childrens

RRP \$19.99

Fans of the award-winning UK writer will be delighted with this Christmas publication. It contains several Christmas short stories with some of the author's well-known characters, recipes, jokes, puzzles, gifts to make, and other fun things to do.

A longer story features the lippy, fiery-tempered Tracy Beaker. Tracy lives in a children's home and longs for her mother to come and watch her star in an end-of-year school play. It's a superb story about hopes and dreams, and how to cope when what you wish for doesn't work out. The perceptive tale is quite a tear jerker with a realistic, festive ending.

Copious black-and-white drawings aid readability and add humour to the stories. The artist highlights the characters' personalities, individuality, and eccentricities. Naturally, the Christmas theme is showcased throughout the book and ensures it will be a welcome companion to the celebrations.

The entertaining stories are a suitable reading level for middle to upper primary school students. This is a great Christmas gift for young people who enjoy a good book to curl up with over the holidays. At just over 300 pages, it will keep readers absorbed for quite a while.

Reviewed by children's author Jean Bennett

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