

“Christmas Every Day”
By William Dean Howells
Teacher Guide

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Suggested Lesson Procedure: (~4 days)

1. Have students complete the “Before Reading” worksheet. “Finish the phrase” is an activation strategy that gets students actively thinking and making connections to the themes that will be present in the story. Have volunteers share their answers in a class discussion. (~10 minutes)
2. Read the short story “Christmas Every Day” by William Dean Howells. (~30 minutes)
3. Have students work in pairs on the reading questions. There are 25 questions, some are reading comprehension questions, some are literary analysis questions, and some require students to answer based on their personal experiences. Review the answers as a class. (~45 minutes)
4. Extension Activity: Have students watch the Christmas Classic: “It’s a Wonderful Life” directed by Frank Capra (1946). The film lasts 2 hours and 10 minutes. Have students fill out the worksheet for “It’s a Wonderful Life” as they watch. The last question, number ten, requires an extended response. In 7-10 sentences, students will compare the themes from “Christmas Every Day” and “It’s a Wonderful Life.” They will also compare and contrast how the characters in each story learn a lesson and how the resolutions differ.

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Name:

Date:

Before Reading

Part A: Finish the following phrases.

Answer so the statement is true in your own opinion. There's no right answer.

1. Too much of anything is _____

2. Getting everything you want can make you realize _____

3. Tis the season to be _____

4. Happiness comes from _____

5. No matter how much someone has, they will always _____

Part B: Answer the following questions.

1) What holiday is most special to you? What makes it special?

2) If you had three wishes, what would you wish for? (You can't wish for more wishes.)

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“Christmas Every Day” by William Dean Howells

1) How is the little girl (the one asking for a story) related to the little girl in papa's story?

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2) Why does the little girl in the story wish for Christmas every day?

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3) Who grants the little girl's wish?

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4) Why does the little girl keep her wish a secret after it's promised to come true?

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5) Why does the family go to bed in a bad mood on the first Christmas evening?

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6) Why does the girl say the characters in the story are acting like pigs?

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7) Explain the simile: "She was dreadfully sleepy, but she sprang up like a lark."

8) How do the mother and father respond when they wake up and it's seemingly Christmas *again*?

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9) Why is the little girl in the story reluctant to take back her wish?

10) What were some of the unintended consequences of Christmas every day? List at least three.

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11) Overall, how did the people's perception of Christmas change?

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12) What happens when the girl's secret is discovered?

13) The fairy warns the little girl not to wish away Christmas forever. What does the little girl learn?

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14) How does irony contribute to the story's message?

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15) What is the theme or author's message in the story?

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16) How does the author use dialogue to develop the relationship between the little girl and her father?

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17) How does the setting of Christmas Day influence the mood at the beginning of the story? How does the mood change as the story progresses?

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18) What is the significance of the fairy in the story?

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19) How does the story use humor to convey its message?

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20) How does the story-within-a-story framework impact the overall narrative?

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21) If you could make one holiday happen every day, which one would you choose, and why?

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22) How would you feel if Christmas actually happened every day?

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24) This story was published in 1892. If Christmas were celebrated every day, what problems or consequences might occur in today's world?

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25) How does the author use the story to comment on the social and cultural aspects of Christmas? Is his critique still relevant today?

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Name:

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***It's a Wonderful Life* Directed by Frank Capra**
Media Analysis

1) How does George save his brother Harry? What happens to George as a result?

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3) Why does George stay in Bedford Falls instead of going to college?

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4) Who is Mr. Potter?

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5) What causes George to consider ending his life?

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7) In what ways would Bedford Falls be different if George Bailey had never been born?

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9) What does the inscription in the book from Clarence say?



10) EXTENDED RESPONSE: Answer the following question in 7-12 fully developed sentences.

How does each piece of work, "It's a Wonderful Life" and "Christmas Every Day," explore the theme of appreciating life and being grateful for what you have? Compare and contrast how the characters in each story learn this lesson and how the resolutions differ.

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