



Musing Our Children

*Pages and Pens – your tools to
imagination*

WINTER 2010

<http://musingourchildren.tripod.com>

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Welcome to our Winter 2010 issue of ***Pages & Pens*** - your tools to imagination!

EDITORIAL GUIDELINES:

If you'd like to contribute to our newsletter just send your items to:

cg20pm00@gmail.com

making sure to place "Musing Our Children

Submission" on the subject line.

We love to hear back from parents, teachers and students.

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PENS" on the subject line and your

message within the body of the email.

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Musing Our Children's List of Wintertime books



How to Use *Pages and Pens* in Classrooms By Lea Schizas and Cheryl Malandrinos

Pages and Pens ~ *your tools to imagination* is a FREE publication offered to parents, children, and teachers. Several writers work hard to bring you interesting material to read and use within your homes and classrooms. Here are some of the ways you can use our newsletter:

Discussions

Read or have the children take turns reading *Pages and Pens* then discuss with them what they learned. Our interviews with published authors open doors for children to read about the creative process from the artist's point of view. Perhaps one of the published books might spark an interest for a class project: to write their own collaborative book, bind it, and have it on display in the library for other classes to get a chance and read their work.

Our Wonderful World

Our history and geography section opens up doors to many interesting class projects. This is an interesting subject for children to look up further information on the country/city we are discussing in each issue. Have them draw a map indicating where this country/city is located and compare their own location. Having them see the difference in distance on paper gives them a better understanding of its location. Discuss important historical events that took place there.

Reading Tips

Implement some of our tips with your students/children and have them write some of their own thoughts on what motivates them to read, what books they enjoy, and so forth. We always welcome letters from students, parents, and teachers to publish in one of our upcoming issues. All you have to do is send us an email to cg20pm00@gmail.com with "Reading Tips Submission" on the subject line.



Reviews for Kids by Kids

Here is an excellent opportunity to have the class write a short review on any books they've read. All we need is:

The title and author
School name and grade
Their short review

We'll publish it in one of our issues as well as in the Kids Review section found on our Musing Our Children website: <http://musingourchildren.tripod.com/>

Authors Circle

This is a chance to learn more about well known children's authors. Each issue will feature a brief biography and list of works along with links to websites where children find additional information about the author.

Poetry Corner

Use the poems found in this section to encourage children to write their own poetry. Students can compile a poetry collection and hold a poetry reading in their backyard or for classmates and parents. Send us your poems by emailing cq20pm00@gmail.com. Please put "Poetry Corner Submission" on the subject line.

Cryptogram Corner

Author Renée Hand provides fun cryptograms and puzzles in each issue of the newsletter.

Game Time

Learning is fun! Each issue has a variety of puzzles, games and activities that flow into the theme of the newsletter.



Letter from the Editor



There is an old saying about best laid plans that applies to this newsletter. The intention was to get this issue compiled and sent out between Christmas and New Year's Day.

Obviously, that didn't happen!

So, the Holiday 2009 issue has quickly become a Winter 2010 issue.

In this issue Our Wonderful World will focus on the North Pole—both of them. Peggy Fieland is back with two new winter poems, and author Renee Hand has a new puzzle for you in the Cryptogram Corner. We review *Aurora of the Northern Lights* by Holly Hardin, and there is an interview with Mary Cunningham, author of the popular Cynthia's Attic series.

You'll find some great wintertime games and songs. We wrap up this issue with a list of wintertime books recommended by our members.

Until next time, keep reading and writing!

Cheryl C. Malandrinos

Reading Tip from Patricia Regan: Have your child read a familiar book to family and friends.



Our Wonderful World – The North Pole

The North Pole was long ago made famous by a toymaker in a red suit whose belly shook when he laughed "like a bowl full of jelly". This jolly old fellow, with the help of his elves, work hard all year long so that toys can be delivered each year on December 25th to the good boys and girls around the world.

Who is this mysterious man in the red suit?





Yes, it's Santa Claus!

Every year children around the world send letters to Santa Claus at the North Pole. But where is the North Pole? What is it like there?

Did you know there are actually two North Poles—the geographic North Pole and the magnetic North Pole.

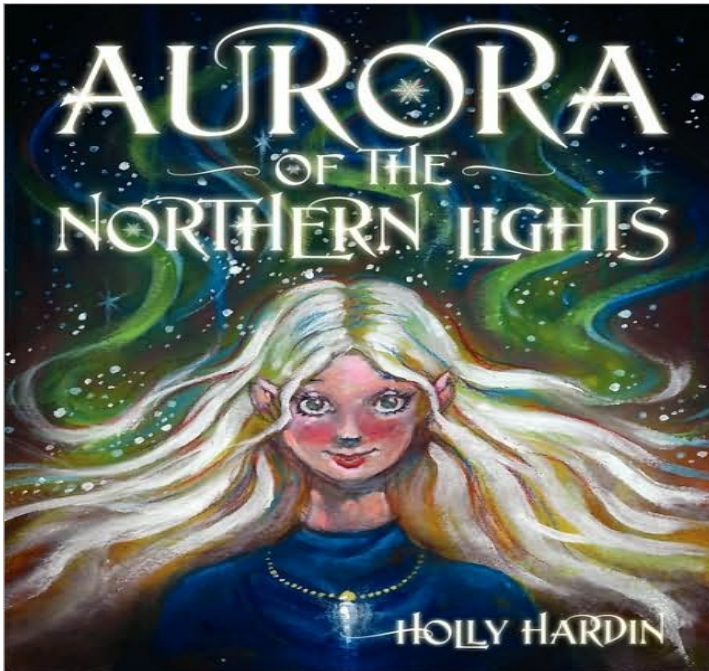
The geographic North Pole is the northernmost point on the earth's surface and the complete opposite point from the South Pole. The geographic North Pole is located in the middle of the Arctic Ocean and is usually covered by sea ice.

American explorer Robert Peary is the man credited as being the first person to reach the North Pole on April 6, 1909. Peary, along with his associate Matthew Henson, and four Eskimos journeyed by dog sled. The North Pole was reached by airplane in 1926, and the U.S. submarine *Nautilus* became the first vessel to cruise under the North Pole, in 1958.

The magnetic North Pole is the point to which compasses are set. The magnetic pole shifts every day. In this *National Geographic* article - http://news.nationalgeographic.com/news/2004/11/1108_041108_north_pole.html - it states that some scientists believe the Earth's magnetic field is reversing and that someday compasses will point south instead of north. What do you think about that?

You can find out more information about the North Pole by visiting <http://www.nationalgeographic.com/> and searching on "North Pole".

Reading Tip from Cheryl Malandrinos: Have your child grab a book and open it to any page. Then ask her to count how many times the letter "e" appears on that page.



Come enjoy a rhyming Christmas tale filled with magic and adventure in *Aurora of the Northern Lights*.

On a snowy night, a baby girl is born to a man and woman who name her after the Northern Lights. Years later, young Aurora finds herself alone after losing her parents. Follow Aurora on her journey through lands of mystical creatures and magic in her search for home.

This is a beautiful, touching story set to rhyme that follows the young protagonist, Aurora, as she travels from place to place in hopes of discovering where she truly belongs. Hardin's eloquent and lyrical prose, coupled with Donald Vanderbeek's stunning and delightful illustrations will touch your child's heart and fill her with the magic of Christmas. Your young reader will delight when Aurora discovers a famous bearded, jolly old fellow, and be inspired by the feeling of belonging once Aurora finds home.

I highly recommend [Aurora of the Northern Lights](#) by Holly Hardin and eagerly await her next release.

Publisher: Outskirts Press

ISBN-10: 1432724398

ISBN-13: 978-1432724399

SRP: \$18.95

Reviewed by: Cheryl C. Malandrinos



Joining us today is Mary Cunningham. Mary is the author of the Cynthia's Attic series, a set of fantasy/mystery time travel books for tweens. Book 4 in this series, *The Magician's Castle* was recently released by Echelon Press. We'll talk to Mary about this series, the challenges of writing for tweens, and what the future holds.

Welcome Mary. We're thrilled to have you with us. Can you start off by telling our readers a bit about yourself?

So happy to be here, Cheryl! Here's sort of a Reader's Digest.

I'm the author of the award-winning 'tween fantasy/mystery series, "Cynthia's Attic," and am proud to announce the release of book four, *The Magician's Castle*, DEC 1.

I'm also co-writer of the fabulously funny (No! Seriously, it really is) women's lifestyle book titled, *Woof: Women Only Over Fifty*, and am especially proud of my newly published short story, "Ghost Light" and my first "Cynthia's Attic" short story, "Christmas Daisy".

I'm a member of The Georgia Reading Association, and the Carrollton Creative Writers Club (A crazy-good bunch of writers!). When I give my fingers a day away from the keyboard, I enjoy golf, swimming and exploring the mountains of West Georgia where I make my home with my husband.

How long have you been writing and what is it that made you put pen to paper?

I guess I inherited the desire to write from my dad. He was a journalist for over 40 years and my inspiration. In fact, I'd go with him, on occasion, when he interviewed an interesting character for a story. Wish he'd been around to see the books!

From the time I was in 3rd grade, I was told to never stop writing. And, sure enough...40 years later, my first book was published! I have written all my life, but never considered writing fiction until I got the idea for "Cynthia's Attic." The first story was prompted by a recurring dream I'd had for over 20 years about playing in a mysterious attic. Once I realized that the attic was in the home of my childhood best friend, Cynthia, the dreams stopped and the writing began.



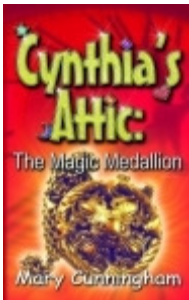


What about writing for the tween market is appealing to you?

I guess the best answer is that this age group is so open and honest. I do writing and idea presentations at elementary schools and I find the students to be so enthusiastic, not only about reading, but also about writing. I love the questions and the excitement on their faces when they describe a particular scene in one of the “Cynthia’s Attic” books. If I can inspire even one student to write, then I’ve done my job.

What is the greatest challenge of writing for this market?

Being on your toes! If you’re not completely factual, then this group will catch you.



Tell us about the Cynthia’s Attic series.

Disappearing stairs and a spooky attic filled with dusty antiques—what more could two adventurous young girls ask for? Best friends, Cynthia and ‘Gus’ are as “different as bubble gum and broccoli”. They discover a magical trunk in Cynthia’s attic, and are swept through the trunk back in time, into the lives of their ancestors, including their twelve-year-old grandmothers. So far, there are four books in the series, *The Missing Locket*, *The Magic Medallion*, *Curse of the Bayou* and *The Magician’s Castle*.

Did you plan this as a series from the very beginning?

Not at all! It began as a simple, 5-page memoir about playing in Cynthia’s attic. That didn’t satisfy my muse. So I started writing a fantasy/time travel story that turned into a 160 page book that led to the second book. Each story ended with a cliff-hanger leading to another Cynthia-Gus adventure.

Can you talk briefly about the first three books in this series and Cynthia and Gus’s adventures?

Each story is loosely based on family stories and ancestors. In *The Missing Locket*, Cynthia and Gus travel back to 1914 and are compelled to help find a missing heirloom, a gold locket. During their search, they meet their 12-year-old grandmothers who are also best friends! An unexpected trip across the Atlantic Ocean brings danger and friendship with a young ghost.



The Magic Medallion finds the girls in the middle of a family's battle for a precious magic medallion. They journey to a circus where they are forced to perform with the

clown troupe, get caught in the swirling waters of an underground river and then a forest fire!

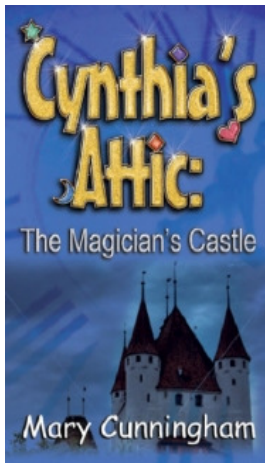
Our time-traveling duo find immediate danger in the Louisiana Bayou. They've traveled back to 1914 in *Curse of the Bayou* searching for Cynthia's great-grandfather who disappeared while taking a boat load of produce down the Mississippi River. Pirates, shape-shifting puma, an old Cajun guide named Mudbug and a hungry alligator keep them on the move.



What is it about Cynthia and Gus that readers will like and relate to?

Great question! Since the characters are based on me (Gus) and my real childhood friend, Cynthia, I'd love readers to embrace the loyalty and unquestioned friendship between the two girls. Although they argue from time-to-time, they always have the other's back.

Older readers will also enjoy the different time periods detailed in the books.



In Book 4, *The Magician's Castle*, a magician whose fiancée has disappeared through the magic trunk is seeking revenge against Cynthia's family. What year are we in during this book and where is it set?

Cynthia and Gus travel back to a 1914 Swiss castle searching for clues to the Kathryn's disappearance, then move unexpectedly forward to Southern Indiana in 2014, where they get the surprise of their lives when they meet another pair of best friends.

In addition to Cynthia and Gus, there is a long list of characters featured in the front of the book. Do you have a favorite character(s) from this book?

I have favorite characters in all four books, but in *The Magician's Castle*, I guess my favorite character is Molly. When I began writing the fourth book, Molly, my 16-year-old adopted mix doggie was a huge part of my life. Halfway through, I lost her to old age. During my grieving process, a friend suggested I write her into the book. What a great idea! She plays such a significant role, in helping Cynthia and Gus discover clues, that I can't imagine the story without her, and am satisfied that I've honored her memory for years to come.



Where can readers purchase a copy of *The Magician's Castle* and the other books in this series?

The books are available in paper back on Amazon and just about any online bookstore. They're also available as downloads on Kindle and through Fictionwise.

Do you have website and/or blog where readers can find out more?

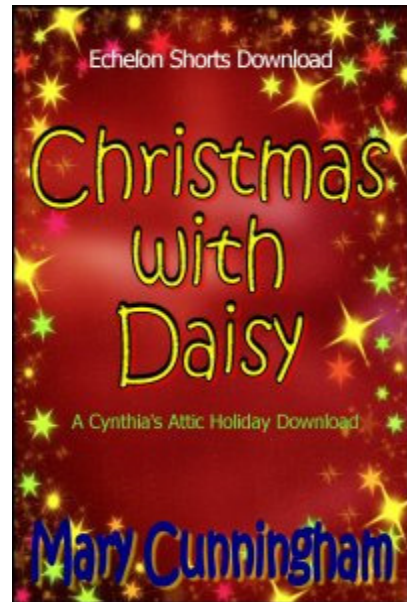
[Mary Cunningham Books](#) and [Cynthia's Attic Blog](#).

What does the future look like for Cynthia's Attic? Any news you would like to share with fans of Cynthia and Gus?

Although I've written another cliffhanger at the end of Book Four, I haven't decided on a storyline or even who the main characters are going to be! Stay tuned.

Is there anything else you would like to add?

I'm excited about a Cynthia's Attic short story that's coming out at the same time as *The Magician's Castle*, titled, "Christmas with Daisy". All buy links for short stories and books can be found on my [website](#).



Thanks, so much, for having me as a guest author. I've enjoyed the interview and hope readers of all ages will want to discover the time-travel adventures of Cynthia and Gus.

Thank you for spending time with us today, Mary. We wish you continued success.

Reading Tip from Cheryl Malandrinos: Allow children to select their own books as soon as they begin showing their preferences.



Poetry Corner by Peggy Fieldand

Winter Night

A silver sliver of slender moon

hangs high in a darkening sky.

The barren branches of empty trees

watch the moonbeams as they waft by.

The broken breeze blows through empty trees.

The dead foliage flutters and flies.

The echoing dark swallows the light

of stars that flicker and hid

A few clouds float across the stars.

There is no light to see

the trail that twists through the woods

thick with layers of leaves.

The icy branches heavily droop

down over the rambling road.

A few break off and fall to the earth.

The gale continues to blow.





Long Gone Fred

There once was a cowboy named Fred
who happened to fall on his head.
He slipped once or twice
when he stepped on some ice.
Now ice and snow fill him with dread.



He figured that for the duration
of winter, he'd go on vacation.
It was snowing outside
which helped him decide
to amble on down to the station.

He rode the bus south where there's never
snow, sleet, or icy cold weather.
I doubt he'll come back
or pine for the lack
of thick winter coats made of leather.

Cook with your child to raise a good reader. Yes, you read that right. Read recipes together and encourage your child to read the list of ingredients.

Maybe you can even put together a cookbook of your own that includes favorite family recipes. All it takes is paper, a three-hole punch, and some ribbon!



Cryptogram Corner by Renee Hand

This issue's theme is Christmas and the Holiday Season. All answers will be provided in the next issue.

ACTIVITY 1:

In this activity you will need to unscramble each word. Each word has something to do with the theme. After each word has been unscrambled, write down all of the letters in the circles in order on the lines provided. That is my Christmas message to you. Good luck and have fun!

Winter Word Scramble

giasnrh- _____ ○ _____

yflmia- _____ ○ _____

nposgiph- _____ ○ _____ ○ _____

vgigni- _____ ○ _____

nacel-pu _____ ○ _____

snifder- _____ ○ _____

nisposoamc- _____ ○ _____ ○ _____

sesstr- _____ ○ _____

elvo- _____ ○ _____

lvreat- _____ ○ _____ ○ _____

lidoglwo- _____ ○ _____



-----.



Fall Issues answers for Activity 1:

Message:

Fall is a grand time to remember the memories of summer.

Share your family memories with your children by telling stories. A favorite pastime in days of old was storytelling. Pop some popcorn and sit down together for Storytelling Night. Have each member of your family share a story. Talk about what you liked about each person's story. Then set a date for next month's Storytelling Night.



Frosty The Snowman by Steve "Jack" Rollins and Steve Nelson

Frosty the snowman was a jolly happy soul,
With a corncob pipe and a button nose
And two eyes made out of coal.
Frosty the snowman is a fairy tale, they say,
He was made of snow but the children
Know how he came to life one day.
There must have been some magic in that
Old silk hat they found.
For when they placed it on his head
He began to dance around.
O, Frosty the snowman
Was alive as he could be,
And the children say he could laugh
And play just the same as you and me.
Thumpetty thump thump,
Thumpety thump thump,
Look at Frosty go.
Thumpetty thump thump,
Thumpety thump thump
Over the hills of snow.

Frosty the snowman knew
The sun was hot that day,
So he said, "Let's run and
We'll have some fun
Now before I melt away."
Down to the village,
With a broomstick in his hand,
Running here and there all
Around the square saying,
Catch me if you can.
He led them down the streets of town
Right to the traffic cop.
And he only paused a moment when
He heard him holler "Stop!"
For Frosty the snow man
Had to hurry on his way,
But he waved goodbye saying,
"Don't you cry,
I'll be back again some day."
Thumpetty thump thump,
Thumpety thump thump,
Look at Frosty go.
Thumpetty thump thump,
Thumpety thump thump,
Over the hills of snow.





Sleigh Ride composed by Leroy Anderson, lyrics by Mitchell Parrish

Just hear those sleigh bells jingling,
Ring ting tingling too
Come on, it's lovely weather
For a sleigh ride together with you
Outside the snow is falling
And friends are calling "yoo hoo",
Come on, it's lovely weather
For a sleigh ride together with you.
Giddy yap, giddy yap, giddy yap,
Let's go, Let's look at the show,
We're riding in a wonderland of snow.
Giddy yap, giddy yap, giddy yap,
It's grand, Just holding your hand,
We're gliding along with a song
Of a wintry fairy land

Our cheeks are nice and rosy
And comfy cozy are we
We're snuggled up together
Like two birds of a feather would be
Let's take that road before us
And sing a chorus or two
Come on, it's lovely weather
For a sleigh ride together with you.

There's a birthday party
At the home of Farmer Gray
It'll be the perfect ending a perfect day
We'll be singing the songs
We love to sing without a single stop
At the fireplace while we watch
The chestnuts pop. pop! pop! pop!



There's a happy feeling
Nothing in the world can buy
When they pass around the coffee and the pumpkin pie
It'll nearly be like a picture print by Currier and Ives
These wonderful things are the things
We remember all through our lives!

Just hear those sleigh bells jingling,
Ring ting tingling too
Come on, it's lovely weather
For a sleigh ride together with you
Outside the snow is falling
And friends are calling "yoo hoo",
Come on, it's lovely weather
For a sleigh ride together with you.

It's lovely weather for a sleigh ride together with you.





Santa's Reindeer Word Search

d o n d e r h
m b e a r e p
r l y s c c l
v I x e n n o
r t h e r a d
e z e r I r u
c e s m t p r
n n m a o s l
a d I p u c u
d v s a n t a

Find all nine of Santa's reindeer and spell out the secret message with the letters that are left!

Do you remember them all?

Donder	Comet	Vixen
Prancer	Cupid	Dasher
Dancer	Blitzen	Rudolph



Snow in the House

By: VS Grenier

This is a winter activity for indoors. It comes in handy on a snowy day when you're too sick to go outside or have little ones around. You can even wear your jacket and mittens to add to the outdoor fun!

What You Need:

Cookie sheet or large plastic box

Snow (soft is best)

Mittens

Small toys such as: toy soldiers, little people, lego people, etc.

Optional Items:

Toy cars

Toy boats

Toy play sets

Instructions-Easy as 1 2 3:

Fill cookie sheet or large box with large mound of snow.

Use toys to play in snow.

Different ideas: Climb to Mount Everest, explore an ice cave, or make a mini snowman.

Encourage your child to write by having plenty of paper, pencils, crayons, and markers around the house. Before technology brought us email and texting, the primary way to share news with those you didn't see very often was to write a letter.

Have your child sit down to draft a letter to a friend or relative far away. Help him address the envelope and put a stamp on it. Allowing him to drop it in the mailbox at the post office will make it especially fun. You can also talk about how long it might take to get there.



Ice Magic

By: VS Grenier

Did you know you can do a magic trick with ice? It's really simple to do, and you'll have your friends and family in wonder.

The Magic Trick:

Picking up an ice cube with a piece of string.

What you'll need to work your magic:

Ice cubes.

A glass of water.

A piece of string about 10 inches long.

A salt shaker with table salt inside.

How to do the magic trick:

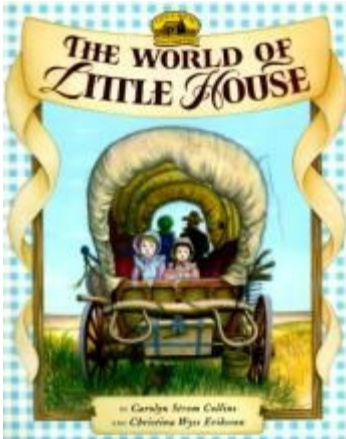
Have your friend or family member drop an ice cube into the glass of water. Ask them to try and pick it up with the piece of string.

Now it's your turn to work the magic. Lay the piece of string across the floating ice cube in the cup of water. Sprinkle a little salt on top. Say, "This is magic dust."

Wait two minutes before you lift the string pulling the ice cube out of the water.

What happens: The salt melts the ice and when the ice refreezes during the two minutes, the string is frozen onto the ice cube.

What is your family's favorite wintertime activity? Tell us and we'll print your answers in the next issue of *Pages & Pens*. Send emails to cg20pm00@gmail.com with "Wintertime Activities" on the subject line.



Molasses-on-Snow Candy from *The World of Little House* by Carolyn Strom Collins and Christina Wyss Eriksson

Caroline Ingalls, the mother of children's author, Laura Ingalls Wilder would make delicious treats around Christmastime. One of the *Little House* books tells us of how Ma made candy by drizzling a sweet mixture over clean snow. Here is Caroline (Ma) Ingalls' recipe:

1 cup molasses
1 cup brown sugar
Fresh clean snow (or finely crushed ice)
Measuring cup
Large pot

Spoon
Candy thermometer of cup of cold water
Shallow pan about 9"x13"
Clean tea towel or waxed paper

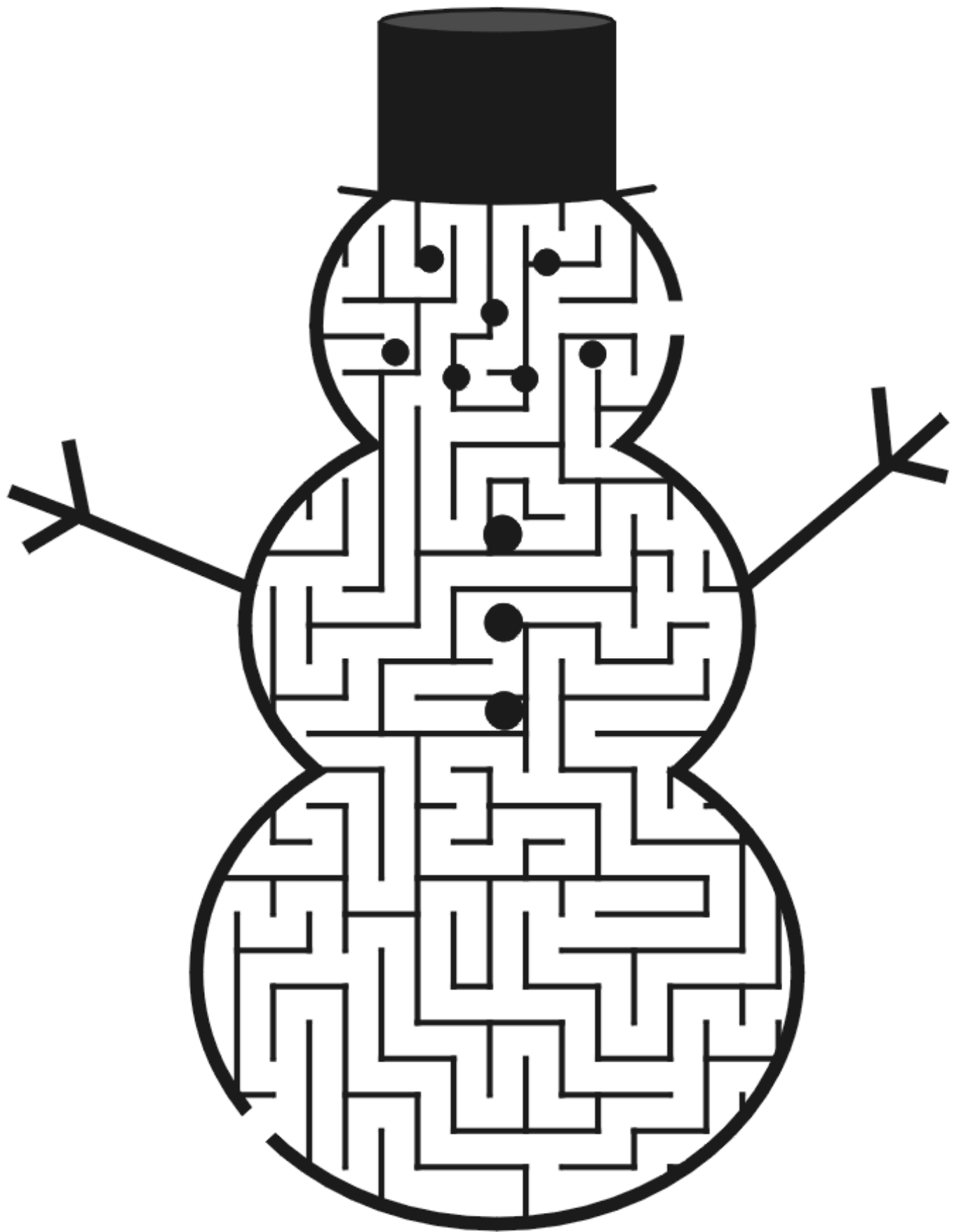
Mix the molasses and sugar together in the large pot and boil until the mixture reaches the "hard crack" stage on the thermometer or until a drop of the mixture dropped into the cold water forms a hard ball and cracks.

Remove the syrup from the heat. *Be careful—the syrup is very, very hot!*

Scoop fresh, clean snow into the shallow pan. You can also use finely crushed ice instead of snow.

Dribble a spoonful of syrup onto the snow or ice in "circles, and curlicues, and squiggledly things". Make lots of different shapes.

When the syrup has turned hard and becomes candy, lift it off the snow and place it on the tea towel or waxed paper to dry.





Wintertime Reading Recommended by the staff of Musing Our Children

- *Snowflake Bentley* by Mary Azarian
- *The Polar Express* by Chris VanAllsburg
- *The Snowy Day* by Ezra Jack Keats
- *The Rabbit and the Snowman* by Sally O. Lee
- *The Long Winter* by Laura Ingalls Wilder
- *The Biggest Snowball Ever!* by John Rogan
- *Snow* by Uri Shulevitz
- *Dream Snow* by Eric Carle
- *White Snow, Bright Snow* by Alvin Tresselt
- *Owl Moon* by Jane Yolen

What is your favorite wintertime read? Tell us and we'll print your answers in the next issue of *Pages & Pens*. Send an email to cg20pm00@gmail.com with "Winter Reading" on the subject line.

That's all for this issue of *Pages & Pens ~ Your Tools to Imagination*. See you in the spring!

