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Twas the Night Before Christmas

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Madeline Thomas
Smithfield, Utah
November 29, 2018

Twas the Night Before Christmas **Holiday Custom**

Informant: My name is Madeline Thomas, and I am a 19-year-old college student attending Utah State University. I was born and raised in Lebanon, Oregon, but now reside in Smithfield, Utah while I go to school. My parents and three siblings still live in Lebanon, and I am second in the line-up. My entire family belongs to the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints. I find Christmas to be the most delightful time of the year.

Context: This tradition takes place every year after dinner on Christmas Eve, when my immediate family and paternal grandparents gather in my grandparent's cozy living room. This tradition worked its way through each of us, from my older brother who is now 22 and continuing with my sister who is now 8. It was always the last thing we did, after eating dinner, opening presents, and celebrating my grandfather's birthday. The house was always decorated to a t, with the same decorations every single year, that my Grandma is consistent is vital to Christmas as a whole. This folklore was collected from my own memory, sitting on a couch watching Christmas movies in my home in Smithfield, Utah. There were no Christmas decorations up at the time of collection.

Text: We had this book that no one could remember where it came from, with a sepia toned picture of Santa Claus winking on the cover, which is now so torn that it looks way better in memory. Some years we had to pull out the book from the box of Christmas decorations, but other years one of the siblings would have stashed it on their bookshelves for the entire year. The book was *Twas the Night Before Christmas*, and every year after dinner on Christmas Eve, before heading home to go to bed, we would sit together in the living room and someone, at first my parents, but later one of the kids, would read it out loud to the group.

Texture: This was a straightforward story to type out, as it is such a familiar an integral part of Christmas Eve in my family. I spent a fair bit of time thinking about the picture on the cover, and why it sticks so well in my memory. It was easy to describe in words on a page, because there was no emotion other than nostalgia associated with the memory. I would consider myself as an active bearer of this tradition, if not now, then at some point, just as all of my siblings have been. It seemed to become tradition because we constantly reminded my parents, who probably got us the book, that it was something that we absolutely had to do on Christmas Eve. In the active use of this tradition, my family is fairly subdued in the reading, none of us naturally being overly dramatic or expressive in performance. The group that is not reading the book out loud stays

silent, half-listening to the poem that is so familiar to everyone. The atmosphere of the environment is very contented and subdued.

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ENGL 2210: Introduction to Folklore
Dr. Lynne McNeill
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