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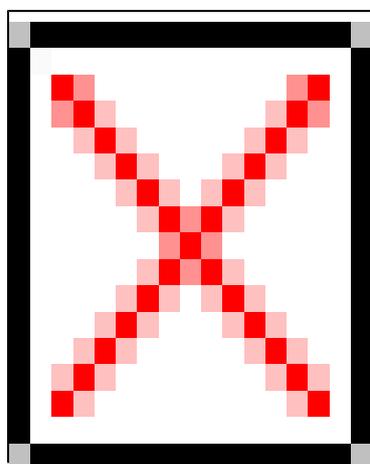
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Find room for these last-minute recommendations

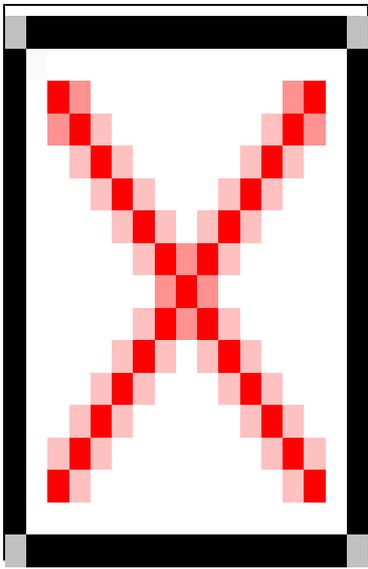
This issue of **Books for Keeps** is packed with gift recommendations but there should always be room for one or two more books, something to pop into a stocking or under the tree. With that in mind, here are some extra suggestions and, taking into account the amount of space you'll have, we've organised them by size: large to (very) small.

Board Games to Create and Play is unlike anything we've seen before: creators Kevan Davis and Viviane Schwarz have designed a book that gives families everything they need to make up their own boardgames. It contains a stack of blank boards and a set of different rules to try out, the rest is up to you: 'Some of the games you make will be great and some of them will be terrible', they say, 'but there's still a lot of strategy and fun to be had in trying to win a terrible game that you, your friends and family have just made'. Indeed.

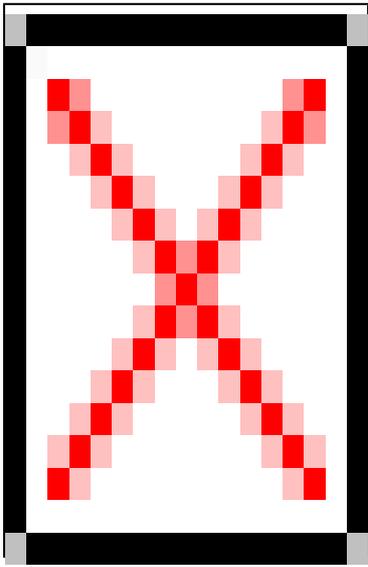
Paddington is the perfect house guest, and **Paddington's Post** is a fun novelty storybook containing six envelopes for children to open. There's a map of Notting Hill, special offers from some of Paddington's favourite shops, but the best has to be a card from Aunt Lucy in Peru, complete with an easy-to-follow marmalade cake recipe.



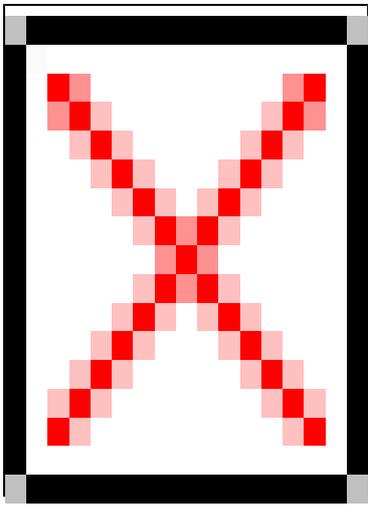
With appealing watercolour illustrations by Falmouth graduate Katie Hickey, **Christmas is Coming!** provides a countdown to the 25th December, with 24 festive activities - carols to sing, stories to read, things to make, games to play. The cover is an actual advent calendar, with 24 doors to open. **Sea Lights** by Ruth Symons is also beautifully illustrated. Carolina Rabei's rich, painterly artwork is perfectly suited to this night-time adventure starring a little girl and her fisherman father. Flaps and peepholes mean the lights of the town and its fireworks seem actually to be twinkling.



There should always be space for a bit of silliness in the holidays and Sue Hendra and Paul Linnet have a ball with **Oh Christmas Tree!**, the story of a tree that refuses to behave as it should. The rhyming text is as fleet as the baubles chasing the tree round the house, and it's a treat to read aloud. Joke books are of course 100% necessary to your seasonal celebrations, and there are some crackers this year. **The Football School Joke Book** will have fans of all teams in stitches, while the contents list of **The Treehouse Joke Book** by Andy Griffiths and Terry Denton gives an idea of its tone, with sheep jokes, sleep jokes and tree jokes amongst the categories. Best of all though is **The Bolds? Christmas Cracker**, a delightful mix of very funny jokes and entertaining activities starring everyone's favourite family of hyenas and illustrated with typical panache by David Roberts.



Not a joke book, but full of humour nonetheless, **Cookie and the Most Annoying Boy in the World** by Konnie Huq will hold the attention no matter what is going on around. Cookie is an irresistible narrator who tells her story of school, school rivalries, misunderstandings and competing in a TV junior quiz show at breakneck speed, veering happily off at tangents and always saying exactly what she thinks. With Huq's own black and white illustrations, it's fresh and inspiring, and there are more **Cookie** stories to come.

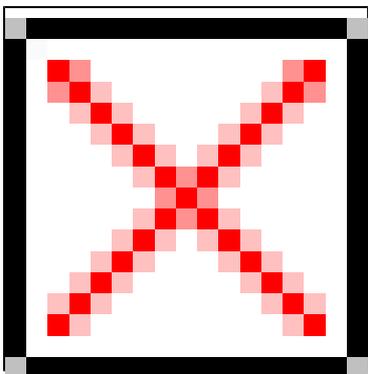


Slightly younger than Cookie, at 7¾ but just as good company is Jeanie, the star of Sophy Henn's glorious **Bad Nana** books. There are now three in the series, with **That's Snow Business** particularly fun for this time of year. Calling Jeanie irrepressible doesn't come close, and her energetic, direct-to-reader narratives pull everyone into the story. Bad Nana, her grandma and partner in crime, is just as appealing – who could resist someone who always has a whoopee cushion in her handbag? Henn's illustrations, in various day-glo colours, are as bright and engaging as the text.

This time of year calls for ghosts stories too, and **Zippel The Little Keyhole Ghost** by Alex Rühle will be a favourite. It's a warm-hearted story starring a boy called Paul and the cheeky ghost he discovers living in the keyhole of his front door. Together they have some excellent adventures, Zippel getting up to all sorts of tricks in an old castle and taking ingenious revenge on a couple of bullies who've been tormenting Paul. Full colour illustrations by Axel Scheffler perfectly capture the droll humour of the stories.

Scheffler's illustrations are on show too in Nosy Crow's **Flip Flap** interactive board book series. Brand new is **Frozen**, which features twelve different animals, all to be found in chilly locations, and presents the opportunity to create over 100 new creatures by flipping the page to mix and match tops and bottoms. The resulting combinations will have children giggling and the mixed-up names and rhymes are just as funny as the pictures.

Very little children will also have fun with **The Twelve Days of Christmas**, a small-scale novelty board book version of the old favourite by Britta Teckentrup. There's a peep-through hole in the very centre of the book and each page turn reveals more of those twelve gifts as the cut out gets bigger and more elaborate. Lots of fun and Teckentrup's artwork is always delightful.



The Lonely Christmas Tree by another **Books for Keeps** favourite Chris Naylor-Ballesteros is another dainty delight, and this time a reworking of the classic *'Twas the Night Before Christmas*. The story of a left-behind Christmas tree finding a welcome at the last minute at the centre of the celebrations, it's an uplifting story about friendship and love.

And finally, wafer-small but bursting with information, ideas and inspiration is **The Arty Fact Book** by Gary Panton for Tate Publishing. Only 9cm x 9cm, this tiny book nonetheless manages to tell you lots about art, artists and the creative process. Great fun to dip into, it's likely to lead to all sorts of discoveries and more research.

Happy reading, happy giving!

Details of all the books mentioned [can be found here](#) [3].

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