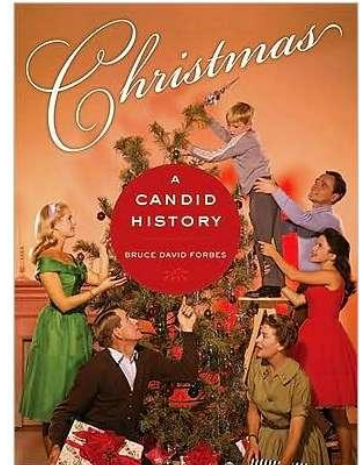


## Reading Guide:

### ***Christmas: A Candid History***

Bruce David Forbes (2007)



#### Thought Questions:

1. This author indicates that an important goal for this book is clarifying the historical reality of a custom that many people think they know well. Were you surprised by anything in the book? What is the most important or memorable thing you will take away from having read this book?
2. Christmas has been the subject of many books and histories over the years. Did you feel that this book added anything valuable to what has already been published?
3. This author is a professor of religious studies rather than a historian. How did you feel this background impacted his perspective? Did you feel that added to or subtracted from the value of the book for you, and why?
4. How did you feel the different chapters worked? Did you think there were stronger or weaker parts to the book? Was there anything you wished had been included that was not?
5. What did you think of the author's metaphor of Christmas as a "snowball"? Was it helpful to you in understand Christmas differently
6. Christmas is a major cultural phenomenon that impacts those who celebrate as well as those who do not. Did your perspective on Christmas change after reading this book?
7. Are there related books, museum exhibitions, websites, or other resources that you would like to share with fellow readers of this book?

## **Author Biography**

**Bruce David Forbes**, Professor of Religious Studies at Morningside College, is coeditor, with Jeffrey Mahan of *Religion and Popular Culture in America* (UC Press) and coeditor, with Jeanne Halgren Kilde, of *Rapture, Revelation, and the End Times: Exploring the Left Behind Series*. Professor Forbes holds a BA in Religious Studies from Morningside College, an MTh from Perkins School of Theology at Southern Methodist University, and a PhD from Princeton Theological Seminary.

### ***If you liked Christmas: A Candid History, you may enjoy these other books:***

***Thanksgiving: The Biography of an American Holiday*, James W. Baker (2009):** This book is an in-depth study of the most American of holidays, showing how this celebration day was born and grew to be an essential part of American culture. The holiday is examined in historical and contemporary detail that embraces everything from proclamations, sermons, and local and regional traditions to family reunions, turkey dinners, and recipes. The book is also illustrated with period prints that chart our changing attitudes toward the holiday.

***Holidays on Display*, William L. Bird (2007):** *Holidays on Display* is a comprehensive overview of the art and industry of the holiday display. William L. Bird traces its evolution as holiday decorations moved from shop windows to building exteriors and out into the street in the form of parade floats. Includes rarely seen photographs and ephemera. One fun fact you'll find in the book is that Frank L. Baum, author of *The Wizard of Oz*, was a celebrated window display dresser.

***Christmas Curiosities: Old, Dark, and Forgotten Christmas*, John Grossman (2008):** This heavily illustrated book draws from its author's own collection of Victorian and Edwardian postcards, ads and other ephemera, focusing on the images that seem slightly dark and scary to modern eyes. Grossman's book shows off another side to Christmas in Victorian times, one that often conflicts with our own ideas of a Victorian Christmas.

***Merry Christmas!: Celebrating America's Greatest Holiday*, Karal Ann Marling (2000):** This cultural history traces the rise of the consumerism that has become as integral to the celebration of Christmas in the United States through the media of mass culture. Marling examines every ancillary form of buying, from Christmas gift wrap to the commercialization of winter greenery in the home, while keeping a keen eye out for American cultural diversity.

***The Battle for Christmas*, Stephen Nissenbaum (1997):** Nissenbaum charts the invention of our current Yuletide traditions using period documents and illustrations, including examinations of St. Nicholas, the Christmas tree and the practice of giving gifts to children. This book has been used in the past by docents as part of their research for their Yuletide displays and includes a particularly interesting chapter on Christmas in the antebellum South.