



## Merry Christmas, Strega Nona

*Tomie dePaola*

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## **Merry Christmas, Strega Nona** Tomie dePaola

Strega Nona returns with her bumbling assistant, Big Anthony, and Bambolona, the baker's daughter, in time for the big Christmas Eve feast.

## **Merry Christmas, Strega Nona Details**

Date : Published September 15th 1991 by HMH Books for Young Readers (first published January 1st 1986)

ISBN : 9780152531843

Author : Tomie dePaola

Format : Paperback 32 pages

Genre : Holiday, Christmas, Childrens, Picture Books, Fiction



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## **From Reader Review Merry Christmas, Strega Nona for online ebook**

### **M says**

A heartwarming tale of Christmas charity and the season of giving.

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### **Kristine Hansen says**

What's not to like about Strega Nona?

The fact that Strega Nona doesn't want to use magic to prepare for this holiday tells such a deep and meaningful story right there. I love her attitude of reverence for the holiday, and her desire to prepare things the old way in her celebration for the town.

The surprise prepared for her is beautiful and allows so many to give back, as a reflection of everything she's given them.

This was a somewhat unusual tale, but one so enjoyable to read. I liked this one a lot, out of all the Christmas books we read this holiday season. This is one I would go back and re-read again with the kids next year.

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### **Genny Flett says**

I absolutely love Strega Nona books. In this story, Strega Nona is to prepare the Christmas feast for the town, so she asks Big Anthony to go out and buy her the supplies and food she needs to prepare the feast. However, Big Anthony forgets the food and supplies and Strega Nona realizes that she is going to have to spend her Christmas alone because no one will be coming over if there is no feast. After church, Strega Nona returns home and is surprised by Big Anthony and the towns people with a feast for her.

A good story to talk about Italian holiday traditions, sequencing, and conflict-resolution.

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### **midnightfaerie says**

Tomie dePaola is quickly becoming a household favorite. He's a little lengthy for my preschoolers, however, my 5 yr old loves him. dePaola is educational and enjoyable to read. The illustrations have a unique style all their own that even I enjoy while reading. A great educational read for any child.

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### **Genny Flett says**

Subgroup: Christmas (Christianity)

Genre: Fiction

Topics: Friendship, Italian culture and language, Traditions

Synopsis: A heartwarming Christmas story that focuses on the true meaning of the holiday, rather than Santa and gift giving. Every year, Strega Nona hosts a Christmas feast. In the days leading up to Christmas and the feast, she asks Big Anthony (works for Strega Nona) to go into town and buys things to help her prepare for the celebration. Big Anthony keeps telling her to just use her magic, but Strega Nona refuses to use it during the holiday because she believes Christmas is already magical. However, Big Anthony gets sidetracked and forgets to buy the things for Strega Nona, so she ends up having to cancel her feast. She goes to church on Christmas night and hears people talking about her celebration being cancelled. When she returns home, she is greeted by people from the town and they have made a surprise feast for her, thanks to Big Anthony.

DePaola, T. (1986). *Merry Christmas, Strega Nona*. New York: Scholastic Inc..

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### **Summer says**

A cute Christmas book with a thoughtful and kind surprise.

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### **Stacy says**

In this book we learn that every year at Christmas Strega Nona gives a feast for the townspeople. Because Bambolona is helping her father at the bakery, Big Anthony has to do extra chores. When asked why they cannot just use magic, Strega Nona is adamant that no magic should be performed at Christmas. Big Anthony is not happy, and ends up forgetting to buy all the ingredients for the feast, making Strega Nona sad. When she comes home from mass, though, the whole town is there, throwing her the feast, and Big Anthony learns that Christmas has a special magic all its own.

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### **Elizabeth Taylor says**

*Merry Christmas, Strega Nona* is one of my favorite holiday books! I still have a copy of this one from my childhood. I was drawn in by Strega Nona's relationship with Big Anthony. The two are so intriguing to me. Big Anthony is always questioning everything Strega Nona says and always is trying to come up with different ways to do things. But at the end of the day, he always complies and does exactly what she asks of him. I think that this book is very good for parents to read to their children, but I am not sure that I would use this in a classroom setting. If I were a teacher at a Christian or Catholic school, I would use this book around Christmastime.

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### **Nevada Libert says**

no magic on christmas strega nona tales big anthony. i love how she know that christmas had its own magic.

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### **Jess says**

January 2018 - Ben seems really into it, and always asks about the angels at the end. Tomie dePaola does Christmas right.

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### **Ronyell says**

“Merry Christmas, Strega Nona” is another classic from Tomie dePaola’s “Strega Nona” series and is probably the most heartwarming of all the Strega Nona stories. Join Strega Nona in her quest to learn about the true spirit of Christmas when a special someone gives her a gift that she will never forget.

Tomie dePaola’s writing is extremely warm-hearted as Strega Nona learns the true meaning of Christmas spirit when the townspeople gave Strega Nona a Christmas feast instead of her giving them a feast. Even though Big Anthony was always known as the troublemaker in most of the Strega Nona books, he proves to be the actual hero of the story when at first, he did not understand why Strega Nona is always working him hard during Christmas; but when he finally understands the reason, he goes out of his way to give Strega Nona the best Christmas of her life. Another advantage of this book is Tomie dePaola’s colorful and warm-hearted illustrations as each character are drawn simplistically and are most rounded around their bodies, which is a common trait in Tomie dePaola’s illustrations.

“Merry Christmas, Strega Nona” is a wonderful and heartwarming story about how true Christmas spirit exists in the love from your family and friends. For parents whose four year old or five year old child enjoys the magic of Christmas stories, then “Merry Christmas, Strega Nona” is certainly to be a true classic to them.

From my Epinions Review:

[http://www99.epinions.com/review/\\_200...](http://www99.epinions.com/review/_200...)

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### **Judy says**

*It was the first Sunday of Advent,  
and everyone in the little town in Calabria  
was busy getting ready for Christmas.*

In the first sentence dePaola's already introduced a traditional Christmas event and a specific location in Italy. And the story goes on from there -- introducing a little more about Italian culture and Italian traditions. But that wouldn't be enough to earn four stars. The fourth star means that the tale is also heart-warming and the three familiar characters -- Strega Nona, Big Anthony, and Bambolona -- make an appearance and do their parts to make for a memorable holiday. We all like it.

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### **Cassandra says**

It was a cute book and I really liked the illustrations. However, I didn't like how the ending came about. I didn't like that Big Anthony caused Strega Nona to stress all day because he wasn't coming back with the ingredients she needed to cook for a feast. Then he lied to her and told her that he didn't buy any. She wasn't able to make her feast for the village. Maybe acts of service is her love language and that's how she wanted to spend Christmas Eve. And yet he stressed her out all day, caused her to miss her service for the villagers, and this was considered a good thing. Somehow I can't agree.

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### **nicole says**

This was the first Christmas Eve that I didn't spend with my family. Like Strega Nona, my Nonni is from Calabria and we usually spend all day preparing meatballs, zeppolis, and other delicious dishes for my dad's side.

But things change as you get older. What was once everyone together under one roof became a smaller group. My Nonni and I cooking alone extended to my cousin's joining in as well. But this year was much different than the last. At 91, my grandmother wasn't up for cooking, and I was a two hour drive away to boot. My dad made some last minute vacation plans. And, oh, I now have my husband's family to celebrate the holidays with as well.

I had so much fun with my in-laws and nieces and nephews, but I couldn't help missing some of the comforts of my childhood Christmases past. I purchased new pajamas, like my aunt used to do for me, and climbed into bed with this picture book. I had never read it before, finding it (or so I thought... I'd actually confused it with Strega Nona's Gift when placing the library hold) at a local Barnes and Noble while doing holiday shopping.

I read it aloud to my husband before we fell asleep and it's a tradition I'd love to continue in our family Christmas Eves to come. It made me feel connected to my grandmother and our roots in Calabria, while bringing something new into our new family's blend of traditions.

Strega Nona is definitely my holiday spirit animal.

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### **Becky Long says**

K-4th grade

Merry Christmas, Strega Nona

The illustrations that Tomie dePaola is so noted for are no exception in this Christmas tale. The characters are colorful and cartoonish. The pictures are simple but show emotion. The text uses English and Italian words to tell the tale. Kids will be drawn to the character Anthony because he complains about all of chores he has to do but in the end realizes what all the hard work really is for.

Social Studies/Language Arts

Language Arts Example: This would be a good multi-cultural read along for primary grades.

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### **Anna says**

My first grader says he rates this 2 stars.

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### **babyhippoface says**

Okay, I'm just going to go right out and say it, and then you can start to throw cyber-tomatoes: I am not a big Tomie dePaolo fan.

*(I am awaiting the SPLATS of those tomatoes.)*

Well, I'm glad I got that off my chest. Anyway, on to Strega Nona and Big Anthony, who is whiny and lazy. Strega Nona should give him a couple of swift kicks. (It could be this isn't the best time for me to be writing this. I'm not in the merriest of holiday moods.)

Strega Nona loves Christmas and all the preparations and decorations and festivities that go along with it. Big Anthony would rather not work to get those things done, though. He'd rather Strega Nona use her magic. She refuses, though: "No magic. Not at Christmas. Christmas has magic of its own."

Long story short: Big Anthony messes up everything by not doing his job. Strega Nona goes to Christmas Eve services at church all alone, sad that she will not be able to have her annual feast and will spend the night alone. BA redeems himself when he manages to plan the party while Strega Nona is gone to church, and she gets a lovely surprise when she returns home. Everyone is happy.

But Big Anthony still needs a couple swift kicks so he'll learn to do his job right the first time. Just sayin'.

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### **Melki says**

With the whole town's help, Big Anthony plans a magical Christmas surprise for Strega Nona.

Buon Natale!

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### **Courtney says**

I will not lie, we did not make it past the second page on this short-story. The main character was a literal witch and we don't read such things in our household.

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### **Kendall Soffer says**

Title: Merry Christmas, Strega Nona

Author: Tomie dePaola

Illustrator:

Genre: European Folktale

Theme(s):

Opening line/sentence:

**Brief Book Summary:**

Strega Nona has to prepare for her feast to feed the whole town. Strega Nona must complete everything the hard way. She can't use any of her spells or potions so this story tells the difficulties she overcomes.

**Professional Recommendation/Review #1:**

**Publishers Weekly (Publishers Weekly)**

Strega Nona is busily preparing for her annual feast for the whole town of Calabria, a place readers will remember from the Caldecott Honor-winning Strega Nona. Because "Christmas has a magic of its own," Strega Nona and her bumbling assistant Big Anthony have to do everything the hard way this is the one time each year that "Grandma Witch" abandons her potions and spells. On the day before Christmas, Strega Nona sends Big Anthony to town with a shopping list, which he promptly forgets. For the first time ever, there will be no time for her to prepare anything; Strega Nona will be alone on Christmas. But it's not to be the townspeople bring their own feast, thanks to Big Anthony's plans. DePaola shows a master's touch for twisting readers' emotions, first when Strega Nona waits futilely for Big Anthony to arrive with supplies, then when she trudges up the hill toward her darkened, lonely looking home. The joyful ending and sparkling illustrations make this one of the most warmhearted selections of the season. (4-8)

(PUBLISHER: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich (San Diego:), PUBLISHED: c1986.)

**Professional Recommendation/Review #2:**

**Norine Odland (The Five Owls, November/December 1986 (Vol. 1, No. 2))**

The snow is on the roofs in Calabria, and Strega Nona is busy preparing for Christmas. She always invites all the townspeople to a feast at her house, so there is much work to be done. Big Anthony is Strega Nona's only helper because Bambolona must help her father in his bakery. But Big Anthony is tired, and he asks Strega Nona to help them with magic. Her answer is "No magic at Christmas." So off goes Big Anthony on the day of Christmas Eve with a list of things Strega Nona needs to cook and to bake. Alas, he comes home with empty hands. He has spent his time watching a puppet show. Now there is no choice. Strega Nona sends Big Anthony to tell the townspeople there will be no feast, and she walks alone on her way to church. In fine storytelling style, Tomie dePaola builds tension and then continues to a surprising but perfectly logical happy ending. The pictures, done in pencil, colored inks, and watercolor, tell the story as much as does the text. In the early part of the story more subdued colors give the feeling of the cold winter days with slightly overcast skies. As the story progresses the colors become more vivid and the starlit skies are deep blue. Especially striking is the double spread that shows Strega Nona walking home from church on Christmas Eve. Those who know dePaola's *Clown of God* (Harcourt, 1978) will recognize the picture to be a mirror image of the double spread that shows Giovanni walking toward the cathedral on Christmas Eve. Examining parts of *Merry Christmas*, Strega Nona risks losing the major strength of the book: its perfect simplicity. Children who read or listen to this story the first or second time are likely to say simply, "Read it again." Tomie dePaola, storyteller and artist, has created magic in a picture book that celebrates the joy of giving. 1986, Harcourt, \$12.95. Ages 3 to 8.

(PUBLISHER: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich (San Diego:), PUBLISHED: c1986.)

**Response to Two Professional Reviews:**

**Evaluation of Literary Elements:**

## Consideration of Instructional Application

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