



*The Spirit of  
Christmas:*

*The Magic That  
Began Over a  
Century Ago*

*By Callie West*



## Poem Background:

- ★ Poem remains unknown until 1844→ Moore publishes anthology of poems
- ★ Believed Moore wrote the poem Dec. 24, 1822→ Shared with family and guests on Christmas day
- ★ Moore lived to see his poem rise to popularity

# Thesis

## *Analyzing Poem & St. Nicholas*

- ❖ St. Nicholas feels so real to many
- ❖ Christmas seems so magical

# Overview

- ❄️ St. Nicholas  
Historical Analysis
- ❄️ St. Nicholas  
Character  
Comparison
- ❄️ Poem Analysis
- ❄️ Conclusion



*St. Nicholas  
Historical Analysis*

- ★ Born 270 AD in Parata Greece → now modern day Turkey
- ★ Wealthy parents → passed away when he was young
- ★ Help the needy motto: “Sell what you own and give to the poor” (“Who is St. Nicholas”)
  - Kind
  - Prayed for others
  - Fond of children

- ★ Becomes Bishop of Myra
- ★ Powerful Prayers
  - Calm storms for sailors
  - End famines
  - Make money appear in families' homes in perilous times of need
  - Bless children
- ★ Died Dec. 6 343 AD



*St. Nicholas  
Character Comparison*



## Description of New:

- ❖ “A little old driver so lively and quick” on “a miniature sleigh [with] eight tiny rein-deer” (Moore lines 16-17)
- ❖ “Now, Dasher! now, Dancer! now, Prancer and Vixen! On, Comer! on, Cupid! on, Donner and Blitzen! To the top of the porch! to the top of the wall! Now dash away! dash away! dash away all!” (Moore lines 20-24)

## Description of Old:

- ❖ Original St. Nicholas: no reindeer, especially not in Greece

## Clothing:

- ❖ **New:** Beautiful warm “fur from his head to his foot” but the fur is “tarnished with ashes and soot” (Moore lines 33-34)
- ❖ **Old:** Bishop clothing, yet on poorer side compared to a bishop in a wealthier land

## Description of New:

- ❖ Peddler
- ❖ Twinkling eyes, rosy cheeks, merry dimples, a snow-white beard, a broad smile, and a pipe in his mouth, (Moore lines 37-44)

## Description of Old:

- ❖ Encouraging and hopeful
- ❖ Likely more serious
- ❖ Most likely no pipe in his mouth

❖ **New:** Given child like qualities

➤ “Little round belly that shook when he laughed”  
(Moore lines 43-44)

❖ **Old:** Likely scrawny for being bishop in poorer land and giving all he had to others

❖ **New:** “Laying his finger on aside of his nose” (Moore line 51)

➤ Mischievous and playful

❖ **Old:** Leader in church, likely not mischievous or playful to people in town

- ❖ **New:** “Jolly old elf” → mythical quality (Moore line 45)
- ❖ **Old:** A man → realistic quality

### **Argument on Moore’s intentions for “elf”**

- ❖ Friar Lawrence Farley: Moore’s use of “elf” may symbolize the old, holding the essence of the original godly man
- ❖ Others: Moore unintentionally/intentionally used “elf” to ridicule righteous St. Nicholas
- ❖ Others: Moore wanted to keep the fantastical feel of the poem and refer back to the original St. Nicholas
- ❖ Others: Moore creating an entirely new, larger-than-life person that was a true embodiment of Christmas holiday (Hughes 337)

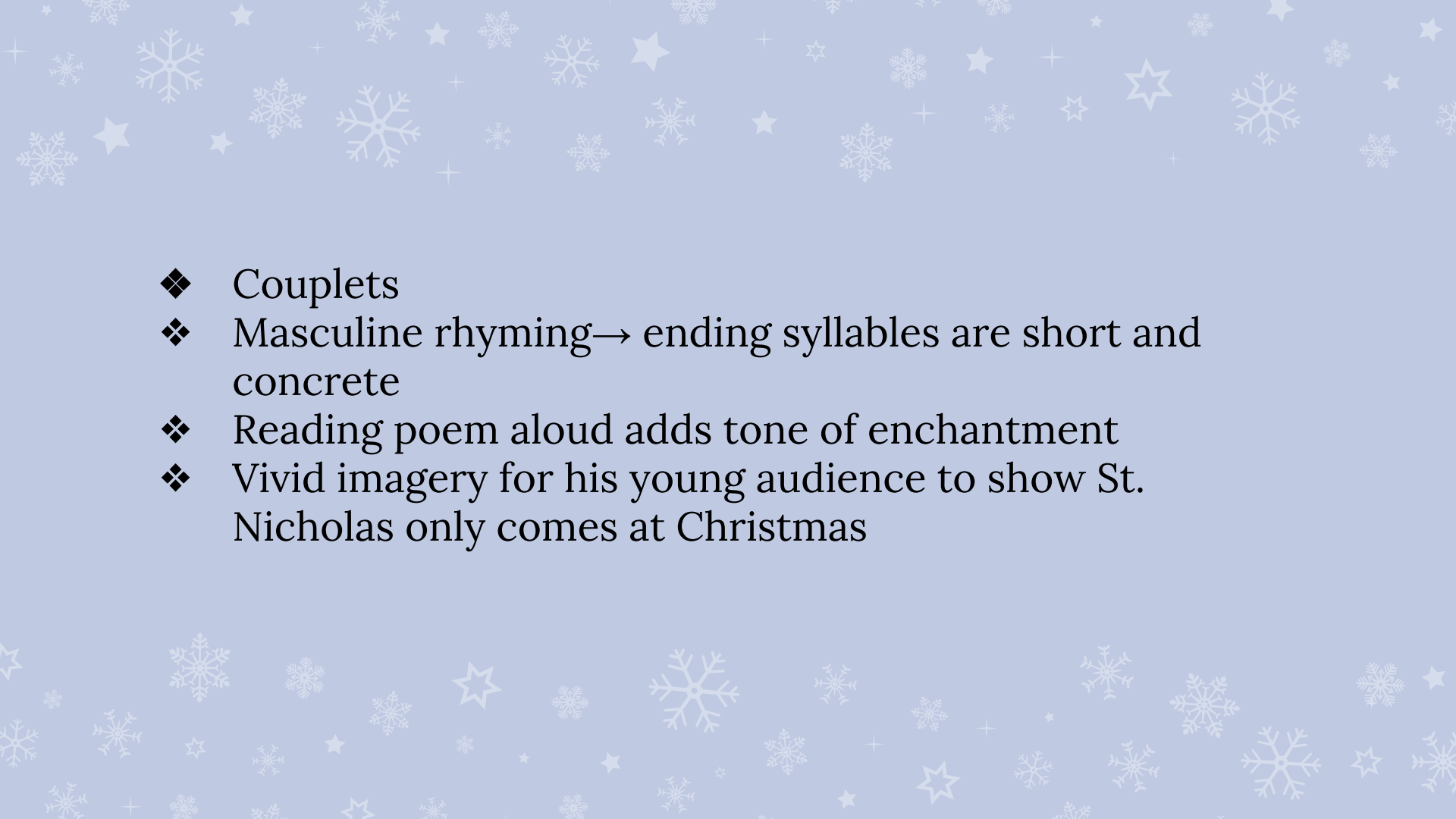


## Both:

- ❖ Power of words- especially for encouragement
- ❖ Generosity to others, especially through gifts:
  - New: Annually
  - Old: Yearly
- ❖ Depicted as selfless



*Poem Analysis*

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- ❖ Couplets
  - ❖ Masculine rhyming → ending syllables are short and concrete
  - ❖ Reading poem aloud adds tone of enchantment
  - ❖ Vivid imagery for his young audience to show St. Nicholas only comes at Christmas



## Night Before Christmas Setting:

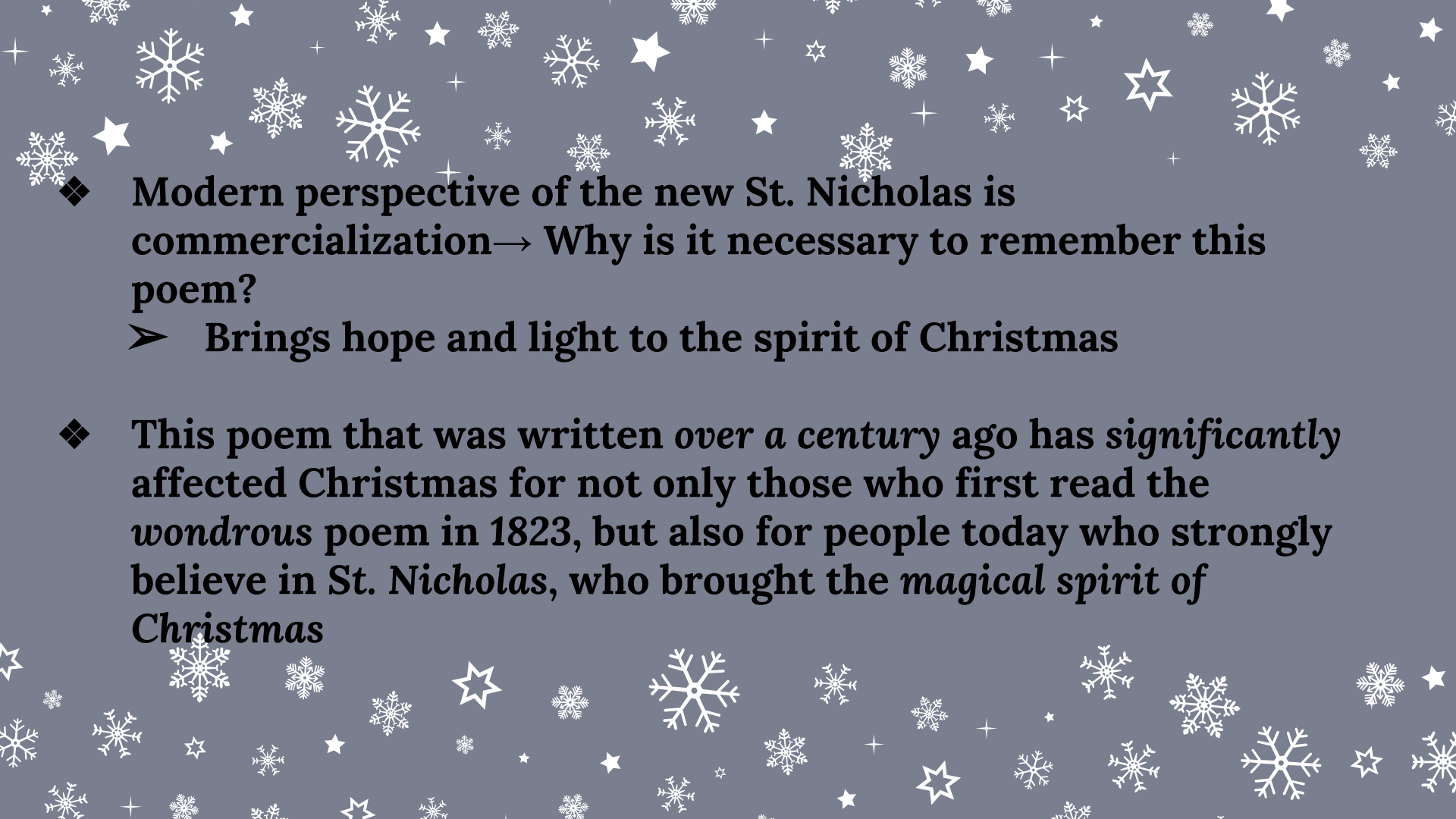
- ❖ “’Twas the night before Christmas, when all through the house  
Not a creature was stirring, not even a mouse;  
The stockings were hung by the chimney with care,  
In hopes that St. Nicholas soon would be there;  
The children were nestled all snug in their beds;  
While visions of sugar-plums danced in their heads” (Moore lines  
1-6)
- ❖ Mother and father laying down for bed after Christmas  
preparations for the morning

- ❖ Christmas simile enhances fantastical feel
- ❖ Setting Christmas traditional artifacts gives a sense of *realism* for this new fantastical character
- ❖ In vice versa, putting a fantastical character in a *real setting* makes Christmas seem to be more *fantastical*, or if one dares to say *magical*, than before, for it is the sole *environment for St. Nicholas to be present and even exist*

- ❖ Narrator= father→ adults can experience this magic as well as children→ making it more real for a fantastical story
- ❖ Father as narrator symbolizes Moore and his children
- ❖ In having a father-narrator speaking to a possible child-like audience, the poem now positions *Christmas spirit* and this *new character of St. Nicholas* as the same, thus, highlighting Christmas themes of *family, magic, and tradition*.



*Conclusion*



❖ **Modern perspective of the new St. Nicholas is commercialization→ Why is it necessary to remember this poem?**

➤ **Brings hope and light to the spirit of Christmas**

❖ **This poem that was written *over a century ago* has significantly affected Christmas for not only those who first read the *wondrous* poem in 1823, but also for people today who strongly believe in *St. Nicholas*, who brought the *magical spirit of Christmas***



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