



FAKULTAS SASTRA DAN BAHASA
UNIVERSITAS KRISTEN INDONESIA

FROM STREET TO STORIES

An Anthology of Indonesian Christmas Tales
from High School Students

in Collaboration with



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As we turn the pages of this collection...

...we celebrate not just the beauty of the written word, but also the diverse and heartfelt stories that reflect the spirit of Christmas across Indonesia.

The "**From Streets to Stories: An Indonesian Christmas**" writing competition has been a wonderful journey, bringing together young voices from all over the archipelago. In this book, you will find the stories of six talented winners, whose works stood out for their creativity, insight, and emotional depth. From the Non-Jabodetabek category, we are proud to feature:

- Dominique F. Angela from St. Louis 1 - Surabaya
- Ni Kadek Dea Putri C. from SMK Widya Dharma Bali
- Tiffany Claribel Hillary L. from Mawar Sharon Christian School, Surabaya

And from the Jabodetabek category, we are thrilled to present:

- Victoria Wijaya from SMA Tunas Bangsa
- Ester Puspita Ken Wulandari from SMA Yadika 5
- Alvita Marsandraputri from SMAN 8 Bogor

We would like to extend our heartfelt thanks to:

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- **Tabita Davinia Utomo**, Head Editor of Ignite GKI, for the time, and effort as one of the judges.
- **Aryanto Wijaya**, Creative Lead of Warung Sate Kamu, for the thoughtful evaluation of all the submissions.
- **For all the 22 participants**, we deeply appreciate everyone who submitted their work, as your participation has enriched this competition and made it truly meaningful.





Unity in Diversity: My Family's Christmas Legacy



Dominique Faradissa Angela
(St. Louis 1 Catholic Senior High School)



Christmas in Indonesia is as diverse as the archipelago itself, and my hometown of Surabaya, East Java, adds its own unique chapter to this story. Born into a family of mixed ethnicities and religions, Christmas is more than just a holiday—it's a celebration of love and unity in the face of diversity.

My father is Chinese-Indonesian, while my mother is Javanese. This blend of cultures shapes not only my identity but also how we celebrate Christmas. Being one of the few Catholics in an extended family where most members practice Islam makes our Christmas gatherings truly special.

Every December, our home transforms into a lively reunion, bridging distances and differences in a way that only family can.



The preparations for Christmas are always a team effort. The aroma of traditional Javanese dishes like opor ayam mingles with the sweetness of freshly baked nastar cookies as my parents decorate our modest Christmas tree.

My Muslim relatives often bring their own dishes—bowls of soto ayam, plates of rendang—reflecting the love and respect that bind us. These shared meals, blending cultural flavors, are a testament to the unity we cherish.

On Christmas Eve, our small house overflows with life. Laughter echoes through the rooms as children race around, and the living room transforms into sleeping bags for our cherished cousin sleepover. We stay up late, sharing stories and teasing each other, relishing the rare chance to be together.

While Christmas at home brought joy, my experiences outside painted a contrasting picture. Growing up as a Catholic in Indonesia wasn't always easy, even in spaces that seemed designed for acceptance.



While Christmas at home brought joy, my experiences outside painted a contrasting picture. Growing up as a Catholic in Indonesia wasn't always easy, even in spaces that seemed designed for acceptance. At my Christian international school, I was often teased. When I made the sign of the cross before meals, classmates would mockingly ask why I was making a "T" sign. Their ridicule made me feel like an outsider.

But at home, I was always loved and supported. My family showed me that belonging isn't about fitting in everywhere, but about the relationships we nurture. With our diverse cultures and religions, holiday gatherings taught me that unity is born from understanding and connection. For us, Christmas is a celebration of belonging, not just a religious occasion. Our family get-togethers reflect Indonesia's national motto, *Bhinneka Tunggal Ika*—Unity in Diversity—a reminder of the strength in embracing our differences.

Christmas in my family isn't about snowflakes or gifts. It's about the warmth of shared meals, the sound of laughter, and the joy of stories passed down through generations. These moments, in our small house, embody the true spirit of Christmas—a celebration of unity that mirrors both who I am and the Indonesia I hold dear.



A Magical Christmas in Bali

Kadek Dea Putri Cahyani
(SMK Widya Dharma Bali)

Bali is not a typical place to celebrate Christmas. When you think of Christmas, you imagine snow, cold weather, dazzling decorations, and bustling Christmas markets. In Bali, however, you can only find those festive elements in malls since the island is predominantly Hindu.

This year, however, felt different. Kevin's father, who usually brings the family together, couldn't make it home for Christmas. Kevin was visibly upset, and the usual festive atmosphere at his house was missing. Determined to lift his spirits, my friends and I decided to do something about it.

When we arrived at Kevin's house, his younger sibling greeted us and let us in. Kevin was sitting in the living room, looking sad. Without saying much, we knew what was on his mind. We quickly came up with an idea: we'd help him recreate the festive magic he loved so much.





We suggested decorating the Christmas tree together. Kevin hesitated at first but soon agreed. We brought out boxes of decorations, and the living room came alive with laughter and activity. Together, we hung shimmering lights, colorful ornaments, sparkling garlands, and topped the tree with a glowing star. We added wreaths to the doors, draped twinkling lights across the windows, and hung Christmas stockings along the staircase. The house transformed into a cozy Christmas wonderland.

Kevin's mom joined us midway, suggesting we bake Christmas treats together. It turned out to be a delightful idea. In the kitchen, we whipped up gingerbread cookies, rambutan cake, peanut cookies, cinnamon rolls, and other tasty desserts. The air filled with the sweet aroma of spices and laughter as we shared stories and sneaked bites of the delicious batter.

By the time we were done, Kevin was smiling again, his spirits visibly lifted. As the evening came to a close, Kevin's mom handed me a box of goodies to take home, making the day even sweeter.



On Christmas Eve, Kevin's family invited us over again. Their home sparkled with festive lights, and the atmosphere was lively. After attending a church service, Kevin's family welcomed us warmly, and we gathered around for a hearty Christmas dinner.

The highlight of the evening was the fun-filled games Kevin had prepared. We played the White Elephant Gift Exchange, where everyone brought wrapped gifts, and the exchange was filled with laughter as people picked, unwrapped, or "stole" presents from others. The gifts were a mix of quirky and surprising items, making the game incredibly entertaining.

Next, we played a Christmas song guessing game, where short clips of songs were played, and we had to guess the title as quickly as possible. Some players hummed while others used musical instruments, adding a creative twist.

Finally, we enjoyed a round of Christmas Bingo, with cards featuring festive images like Santa, Christmas trees, and stars. It was simple, fun, and perfect for everyone, regardless of age.





The evening was filled with laughter, delicious food, and a sense of togetherness. Despite being non-Christians, my friends and I felt completely embraced by Kevin's family's warmth and kindness.

The most heartwarming moment came when Kevin's father surprised him with a video call. Seeing his dad's face and hearing his voice brought tears of joy to Kevin's eyes. Though his father couldn't be there in person, the thoughtful gifts he had sent made Kevin feel loved and cherished.

That night, under the glow of twinkling lights and the sound of shared laughter, I realized the true meaning of Christmas: love, togetherness, and making memories with those who matter most. It was a magical Christmas in Bali that I will never forget.



Christmas Isn't a Season; It's a Feeling

Tiffany Claribel Hillary Lesmana
(Mawar Sharon Christian School, Surabaya)

"It's the most wonderful time of the year..." I sang as I skipped through the living room enthusiastically.

The cheery melody of the song resonates with vibrant memories of the one and only breathtaking tradition of the year, Christmas. Christmas being everyone's favourite for a reason too—the everlasting holidays, quality time with family and friends, and especially the unforgettable customs of Christmas. Every year's November, I can feel my heart's continuous thump with great anticipation for the lighthearted vibes Christmas will soon bring to my hometown, Surabaya.

As a 17-year-old Christian girl with Chinese-ethnicity born and raised in Surabaya, I've noticed that I partake in two sides of Christmas which vastly differ from one another—one similar to that of westernized countries and the other being religious-based.



Surabaya, as we know it, is well-known for its cosmic malls –Tunjungan Plaza, Pakuwon Mall, Ciputra World—and these malls never go undecorated each holiday season. In addition, the decoration team never fails to impress, “go big or go home” is undoubtedly their motto.

“Let’s take a picture there! Woah, the massively decorated Christmas tree just keeps enlarging every year doesn’t it?”

“Yeah, but we have to wait though—there’s so many other people here waiting their turn as well to take the perfect shot. Let’s go for the lovely Santa’s sleigh in the meantime, or perhaps the inviting candy canes or the lit-up garden? There’s so many to choose from!”

All around it feels like a dream to be present in Surabaya’s huge malls—in addition to the countless holiday discounts which lures customers in, whispering in their ear flirtatiously, “come on, you know you want to. I’m not going to be here for long.”





On the other hand, Christmas in my own home has never been warmer, earning a special place inside my heart. It all started when I was younger—countless presents under the tree, with all my wishlists fulfilled, being in Santa Claus' good list, eating cookies and milk—truly everything I've ever wanted for the holidays. I remember little me running towards my mother, who was busy hanging something up on the door.

"Mom, mom! Woah, is that the huge Christmas sock where Santa will put our gifts in?" I chanted with excitement. "It sure is, but do make sure you're on Santa's good list! Here, put your letter for Santa and your wishlist inside!" My mother picked me up to reach the Christmas sock hung up on my bedroom door.

I quickly folded my letter for Santa and tossed it inside the Christmas sock, praying Santa will truly read and consider it.



Fast forward a few days, my dad woke me up in the early morning softly as he smiled ear to ear, "Sweetheart, wake up! The Christmas sock is filled up! Santa dropped by last night! He even tried eating the cookies and milk from the fridge!"

I ran the fastest I could remember, and that concluded my wholesome childhood reminiscence of Christmas (albeit finding out later on in my teen days that these presents came from my parents, and that unfortunately, Santa isn't real).

Moreover, in my extended family and close friends, I recall annual traditions like potlucks (sharing a variety of food together), setting up and decorating the christmas tree, playing Secret Santa (buying secret gifts for one another), and praying for each other.

"Oh wow, a new cooking pan? Awesome!" I recalled my mom with a smile plastered on her face as she unboxed the gift from her Secret Santa, my aunt.



Nowadays, I fill the Christmas holidays by volunteering in the children's ministry of Rose of Sharon Church. As a Christian, we believe Christmas as the day our Lord and Savior was born into this world, none other than Jesus Christ. Therefore, our ceremonies include the praise and worship session, prayers, sermons, and consuming communion wine and communion circular bread.

To me, Christmas is not a mere holiday season to spread positivity, but it is the great celebration of the day Jesus Christ was born.

Overall, these are all wonderful customs my close friends, family, and I joyfully partake in every year—making every Christmas worth looking forward to. But none of these traditions nor customs would be the same without the people involved in it.

One thing I learned is that Christmas is all about the people you celebrate it with, and certainly not the gifts nor traditions—it's a feeling, not a season.



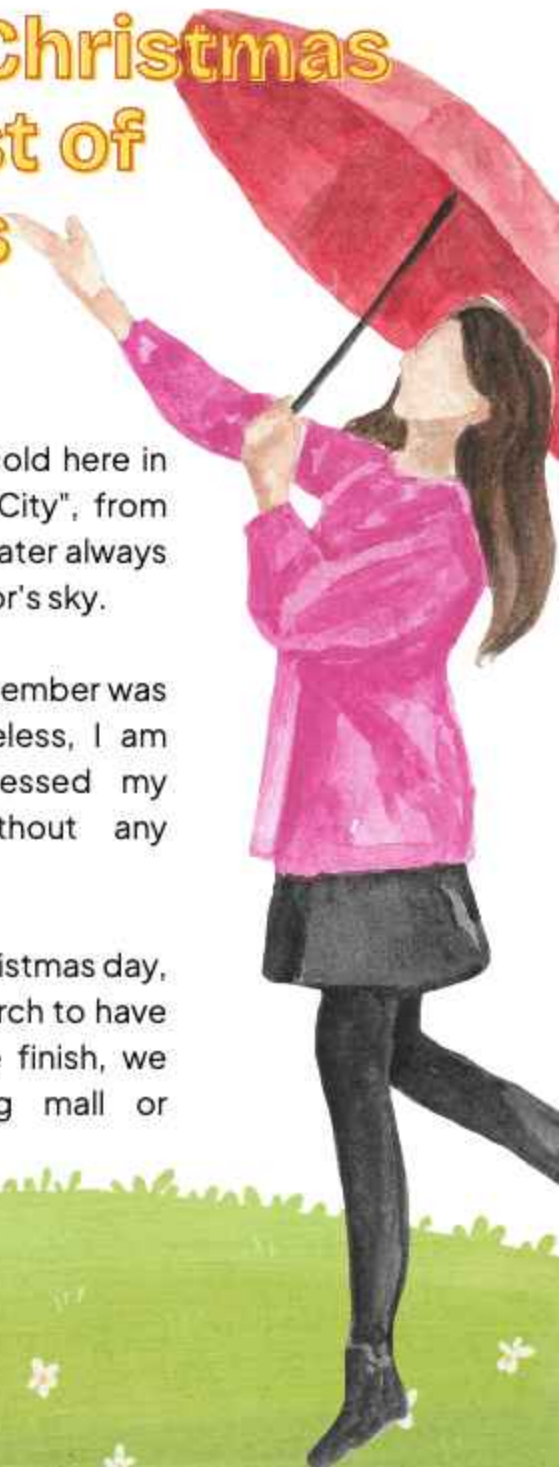
My Joyful Christmas in the Midst of Rainy Days


Alvita Marsandraputri
(SMAN 8 Bogor)

Christmas has always been cold here in Bogor. Known as the "Rain City", from October until early January, water always drops from the clouds in Bogor's sky.

Moreover, the rain in mid-December was always frightening. Nevertheless, I am still grateful that God blessed my Christmas every year without any calamities.

Usually, on the morning of Christmas day, my family and I go to the church to have our prayer service. After we finish, we usually go to a shopping mall or restaurant.






The Christmas celebration in Bogor has evolved rapidly, which made me happy. When I was still a kid, there were Christmas decorations, but I couldn't feel the Christmas spirit. However, now I could see Christmas ornaments, enormous Christmas trees, and Christmas songs played everywhere, which brought the Christmas spirit to life.

Also, there were many Christmas-themed shows such as a choir show or a Santa Claus parade. I remember when I was a kid, there was a Santa Claus who came riding his carol. He rode around the mall carrying a big sack. The children, including me, were very excited to see him.

When I and the other children had crowded around his carol, he stopped. With a smile covered by his bushy white beard, he said, "Ho Ho Ho, who wants to get candies from me?" I raised my hand enthusiastically. "Me! Me!" Santa opened his big sack and started handing out the candies.

The other children and I jostled to get the candies from him. Even though it was crowded, my struggle was worth it. I got a few candies from Santa. Unfortunately, the mall no longer hosts that kind of show. But until now, it was still one of the best Christmas memories of my childhood.





Now I'm starting to grow up. In my opinion, candies are no longer important for me to celebrate Christmas. What matters the most is how my Christmas celebration can have a positive impact on others.

Last year, my school's Christian community held a Christmas celebration at an orphanage after our semester break was over. At the orphanage, we worshipped together with the children and played fun games, one of which was "Flip the Bible" where we were given a verse and we had to look it up in the Bible. It was really fun but very challenging.

After the event ended, we gave groceries to the orphanage. We also gave bundles of snacks and books to the children. However, our Christmas celebration did not stop there. We read books together with the children and shared stories. I was very touched when I saw the condition of the children who were in need, but they were still enthusiastic to learn reading. They were still optimistic about becoming successful people in the future.

Even though it was raining that day, I was grateful to be able to spend my Christmas happily. And most importantly, I could share my happiness with other people.



My Unique Christmas Experience

Ester Puspita Ken Wulandari
(SMA Yadika 5)

My name is Ken, and I am a 17-year-old Christian. So, every Christmas, I celebrate it with great enthusiasm. Christmas is the day when Jesus was born. Usually, during Christmas, everyone is given a holiday. Not only do Christians enjoy Christmas, but people of other religions also use this time to enjoy their break. Many go back to their hometowns to spend time with their families.

I used to do the same thing when I was a child. My family and I would drive to our hometown—it was a really long ride, but I enjoyed the whole trip. We used to stay at my grandma's house, where my aunt, uncle, and cousins would also gather. Every Christmas, we would celebrate together at her place. But as I grew older, I was tasked with being a pianist at many Christmas and New Year events at church.



Honestly, I enjoy celebrating Christmas in Jakarta. It feels much more festive here, and I get to celebrate with my friends. However, at the same time, I don't enjoy it as much because of the pressure of my duties as a pianist at church. I have to practice almost every day, and sometimes it makes me wonder: is this why I can't feel the Christmas spirit? I feel like I should be relaxing and enjoying my holiday—not practicing every single day!

One day, while practicing at home, I stared at my piano in frustration. I didn't touch the keys. I just clenched my fists, staring at it in annoyance. I had no motivation to even move my fingers. I was so exhausted by the countless days of practice. I felt both anxious and stressed—it was overwhelming. I was even mad at God, questioning why He didn't allow me to rest during the holiday.

Finally, the day arrived when I had to play the piano for the Christmas event. I was so tired that I didn't even bother to properly prepare myself. When I arrived at church, I saw my two friends looking for me. The moment they saw me walking in, they ran up to me.



“Hey, Ken, after the worship is done, let’s celebrate Christmas together—just the three of us! We know you’re tired because of all your pianist duties, so we wanted to treat you,” one of my friends said.

I was so happy to hear that I forgot all about my exhaustion. That little interaction made me realize that Christmas is not just about enjoying yourself. It’s about spending time with the people you love. It’s about being thankful to God for giving you another full year to live. God has guided me throughout the year, even when I felt like He had left me. But He never did. I now understand that the little challenges in life are just God’s way of teaching me to be a stronger person.

So, from that day on, I decided to be thankful for every little thing, knowing that God had carried me through those moments.



A Hymn in the Stillness




Victoria Wijaya
(SMA Tunas Bangsa)

Christmas has always been my favorite holiday. Sitting in my grandma's—Popo's—kitchen, I would watch her shape kastengel cookies, the buttery aroma mingling with the earthy scent of brewing tea.

The Christmas tree stood tall in the living room, its branches adorned with ornaments—the broken gingerbread man I had made in kindergarten still hanging by a thread. There was an unhurried peace that seemed to pause the bustle of life. Most of all, I eagerly looked forward to the presents each year.

Every Christmas Eve, we attended midnight mass at GKY, our local church. After the sermon, the congregation would sing Malam Kudus, their voices harmonizing and echoing in unison. It always felt special to savor spicy grilled rice wrapped in banana leaves, bought from a vendor just outside the church. Those moments, though simple, defined the magic of Christmas for me.



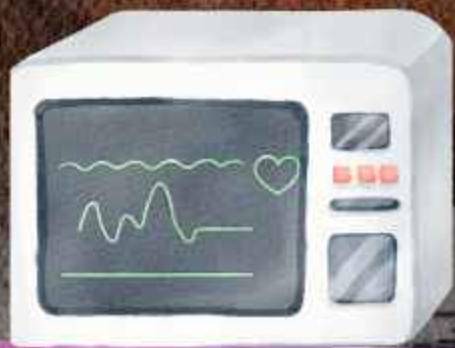


Three years ago, everything changed. Popo fell ill with COVID, and Mom wouldn't risk me visiting her. Each night, I watched Mom return late from the hospital, her red-rimmed eyes glistening with exhaustion. She would quietly repack her bag and whisper at the door, "Stay safe. Don't forget to pray for Popo."

Even though I identified as a Christian, I had never felt a genuine connection with God. But every night, I cried and begged Him to keep Popo alive. For the first time, I felt like God was listening.

That December was different. There were no gifts, no gatherings, no mass. Instead, we celebrated through a video call. Popo lay in bed, oxygen tubes in her nose, her pale skin almost ghostly. We played her favorite Christmas hymn, Gita Sorga Bergema. She sang along, pausing a few times to catch her breath.

*Gita sorga bergema,
"Lahir Raja mulia!"
Raja Damai yang besar,
Surya Hidup yang benar,
menyembuhkan dunia
di naungan sayap-Nya.*





Before that, I had never truly felt God's presence. To me, being a Christian had always meant going to church every Sunday, singing hymns, and praying out of habit. But that Christmas, something shifted. It wasn't that I suddenly "felt" God in a tangible way—that wasn't the right word. It was the first time I truly recognized Him.

I realized that God isn't something you feel, like warmth on your skin, or hear, like a song in your ears. He is intangible—like air. You can't see Him, but He is everything, everywhere, all at once. And you don't realize how vital He is until you truly need Him.

In the Christmases that followed, we returned to gathering at Popo's house. I remember eating her fishcakes with tangy vinegar sauce while sharing stories around the table. Occasionally, neighbors would stop by, bringing their warmth and food to exchange. One year, a Muslim family brought us Padang rice. Popo welcomed them inside, and I laughed while listening to their stories.



That's when I understood the true meaning of Christmas. It wasn't about the gifts, the decorations, or even the traditions I had clung to so dearly. At its core, Christmas stood bare, glowing in its light: Christ and community.

It was home.

It was Popo—her life, her resilience, her love.

It was His grace, manifested in the smallest, simplest moments.



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