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William Studwell. *The Christmas Carol Reader.* New York: Harrington Park Press, 1995. 219 pp. $39.95 (paper), ISBN 978-1-56023-872-0; $95.00 (cloth), ISBN 978-1-56024-974-0.

Reviewed by Robert G. Weiner (Mahon Library, University of North Texas)
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William Studwell's *The Christmas Carol Reader* traces the origins of over one hundred Christmas carols. It is divided into two sections: Christmas as a religious celebration and Christmas as a holiday. In the sacred section are carols about Jesus, angels, and shepherds. The holiday section includes Santa, festivals, and novelty songs. The book examines the popular carols as well as some less well-known ones. Studwell traces the history of the carol from the fourth century "Saviour of the Nations" to the contemporary "Jingle Bell Rock."

The Christmas Carol Reader dispels myths and historical fictions. Studwell refutes the myth that Martin Luther wrote "Away in the Manger" or that a carol called "The Cherry Tree Carol" actually exists. Although many think "Jingle Bells" is a twentieth-century composition, its beginnings are in the nineteenth century. The author looks at the origins of carols worldwide. Ample space is given to carols that originated outside of Europe such as the little-known "The Child Jesus" written in the Caribbean.

The Christmas Carol Reader captures the essence and fun of the holiday season and its role in popular culture. Studwell has done a thorough job with his research. He includes various anecdotes about the evolution of certain carols. The book belongs in any library with strong holiday collections and, as a reference tool, *The Christmas Carol Reader* is valuable to both academic and public libraries. Individuals will find many hours of delightful reading throughout its pages.

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