

The Boy Who Laughed at Santa Claus by Ogden Nash

In Baltimore there lived a boy.
He wasn't anybody's joy.
Although his name was Jabez Dawes,
His character was full of flaws.

In school he never led his classes,
He hid old ladies' reading glasses,
His mouth was open when he chewed,
And elbows to the table glued.
He stole the milk of hungry kittens,
And walked through doors marked NO
ADMITTANCE.
He said he acted thus because
There wasn't any Santa Claus.

Another trick that tickled Jabez
Was crying 'Boo' at little babies.
He brushed his teeth, they said in town,
Sideways instead of up and down.
Yet people pardoned every sin,
And viewed his **antics** with a grin,
Till they were told by Jabez Dawes,
'There isn't any Santa Claus!'

Deploring how he did behave,
His parents swiftly sought their grave.
They hurried through the portals pearly,
And Jabez left the funeral early.

Like whooping cough, from child to child,
He sped to spread the rumor wild:
'Sure as my name is Jabez Dawes
There isn't any Santa Claus!'
Slunk like a weasel of a marten
Through nursery and kindergarten,
Whispering low to every tot,
'There isn't any, no there's not!'
The children wept all Christmas eve
And Jabez **chortled** up his sleeve.
No infant dared hang up his stocking
For fear of Jabez' ribald mocking.

He sprawled on his untidy bed,
Fresh malice dancing in his head,
When presently with scalp-a-tingling,
Jabez heard a distant jingling;
**He heard the crunch of sleigh and hoof
Crisply alighting on the roof.**
What good to rise and bar the door?
A shower of soot was on the floor.

What was beheld by Jabez Dawes?
The fireplace full of Santa Claus!
Then Jabez fell upon his knees
With cries of 'Don't,' and 'Pretty Please.'
He howled, 'I don't know where you read it,
But anyhow, I never said it!'
'Jabez' replied the angry saint,
'It isn't I, it's you that ain't.'
Although there is a Santa Claus,
There isn't any Jabez Dawes!'

Said Jabez then with impudent vim,
'Oh, yes there is, and I am him!
Your magic don't scare me, it doesn't!
And suddenly he found he wasn't!
From grimy feet to grimy locks,
Jabez became a Jack-in-the-box,
An ugly toy with springs unsprung,
Forever sticking out his tongue.

The neighbors heard his mournful squeal;
They searched for him, but not with zeal.
No trace was found of Jabez Dawes,
Which led to thunderous applause,
And people drank a loving cup
And went and hung their stockings up.

All you who sneer at Santa Claus,
Beware the fate of Jabez Dawes,
The saucy boy who mocked the saint.
Donner and Blitzen licked off his paint.

Name:

After reading the poem, answer these questions:

- _____ 1. What is the most likely reason that the author names this character “Jabez Dawes”?
- a. He had a childhood friend named Jabez who didn’t believe in Santa Claus.
 - b. Dawes rhymes with Claus
 - c. Dawes is Latin for mocking
 - d. Jabez Dawes is an old name for Santa Claus
- _____ 2. In the second stanza is the line: “And elbows to the table glued.” This is an example of:
- a. simile
 - b. alliteration
 - c. symbolism
 - d. metaphor
- _____ 3. Look at the third stanza. What is the meaning of the word “antics”?
- a. tricks
 - b. tears
 - c. beliefs
 - d. smiles
- _____ 4. Which line from the poem shows that Jabez Dawes did not respect his parents?
- a. “He wasn’t anybody’s joy.” *stanza 1*
 - b. “And Jabez left the funeral early.” *stanza 4*
 - c. “He sprawled on his untidy bed.” *stanza 6*
 - d. “I don’t know where you read it.” *stanza 7*
- _____ 5. Another word that could be used for “chortled” (stanza 5) would be:
- a. snorted
 - b. cried
 - c. shoved
 - d. snickered
- _____ 6. In stanza six, the phrase, “He heard the crunch of sleigh and hoof / Crisply alighting on the roof,” is an example of:
- a. imagery
 - b. pun
 - c. hyperbole
 - d. symbolism
- _____ 7. The poem is written in rhyming couplets (every two lines rhyme). The author most likely wrote it this way because:
- a. it fit the lighthearted tone
 - b. it is the format of a sonnet
 - c. the author is not very skilled at poetry
 - d. it makes the poem sound more serious