

Tyrannoclaus

By Janet Lawler

The “story behind the story”

I started thinking about and writing this book in 1994. My 6-year-old son and his 8-year-old cousin loved dinosaurs and Christmas. I decided that combining these two favorites in one book would capture much of the fun and delight of childhood.

This story was one of my earliest works as a children’s author. A common piece of advice to beginning writers is to avoid rhyme. So my first effort was a story in prose. My natural inclinations (I have written in rhyme since I was a young girl) soon took over. The next draft of the story closely mirrored the Clement Moore classic, and many of my early versions described the appearance of my prehistoric Santa. (The text of the original *The Night Before Christmas* actually is a little “short” on plot and “long” on description on Santa, certainly by today’s standards for picture books.)

Over the ensuing years, the story went in and out of the file drawer, as my craft improved and I undertook various submissions. I made numerous revisions, adding more plot and tension. I deleted unnecessary description, knowing a talented artist would take care of depicting **Tyrannoclaus** and his world. Finally, in 2005, **Tyrannoclaus** captured the heart of my agent, and subsequently, HarperCollins Children’s Books.

Many things changed over the course of the 15 years between idea and publication, including the proper scientific names of dinosaurs! So by the time I worked on final text revisions, I had to substitute “apatosaur” for “brontosaur”. And as an added challenge, my editor asked me to re-write the whole text from present to past tense. This forced me to revise quite a number of rhyming couplets, but ultimately resulted in a more satisfying story.

As final edits were in the works, HarperCollins located the perfect artist for **Tyrannoclaus**. John Shroades has created a world full of prehistoric holiday wonder that will delight young and old.

I hope you enjoy reading my story!

Janet Lawler

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