

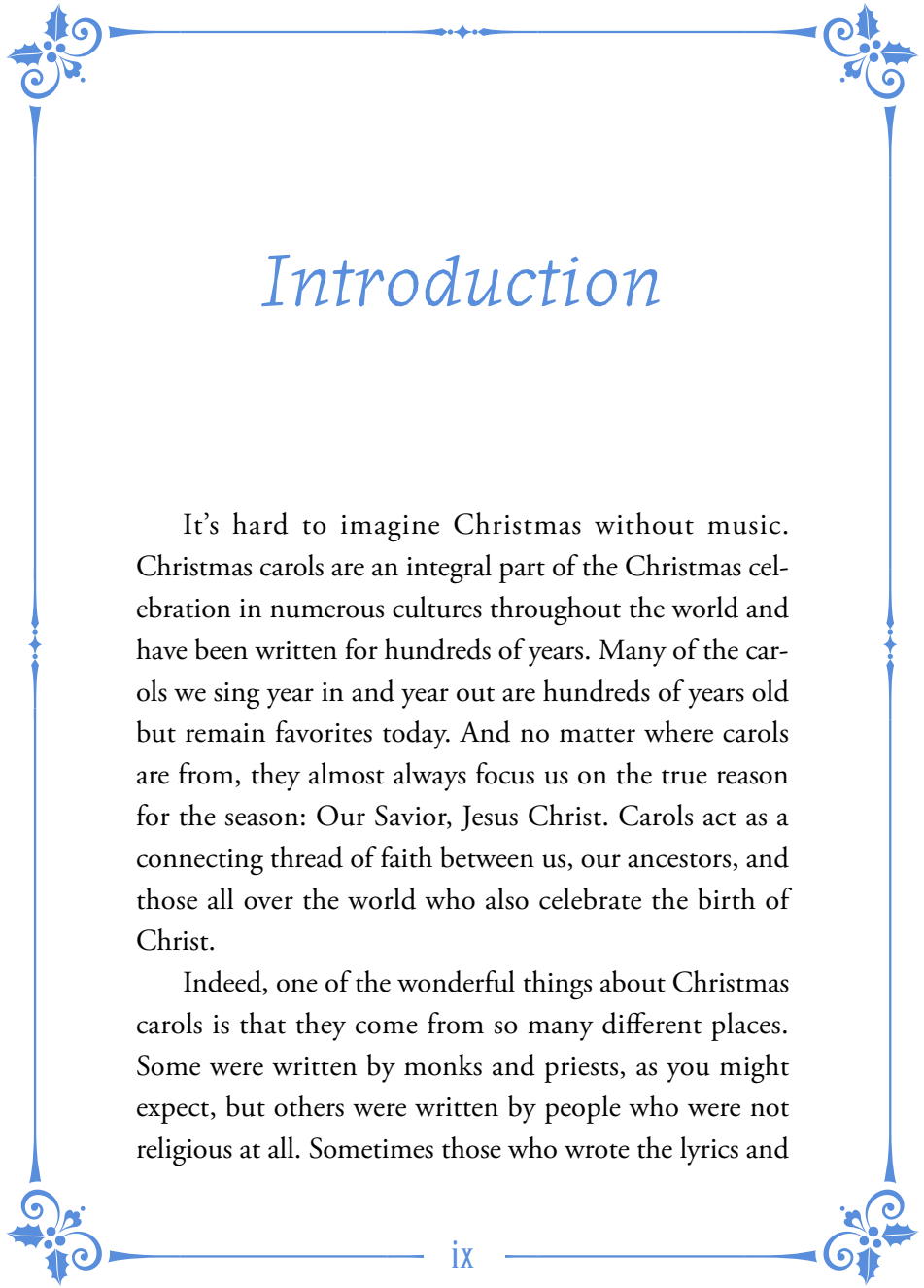
The background of the entire cover is a detailed illustration of a winter night scene. A group of seven people, including four adults and three children, are gathered in a snowy courtyard. The adults are dressed in late 19th-century attire: a woman in a green dress and bonnet, a man in a blue suit and top hat playing a violin, a woman in a green dress and red bonnet, a woman in a red dress and white bonnet, and a man in a brown coat and top hat playing a trumpet. The children are also in period clothing, with two boys in the foreground holding songbooks. A small dog sits in the lower left. In the background, a brick house with a large window and a wreath is visible, with snow falling around them.

AN ADVENT CAROLS COUNTDOWN

Stories behind the Most Beloved Music of Christmas

MICHAEL D. YOUNG

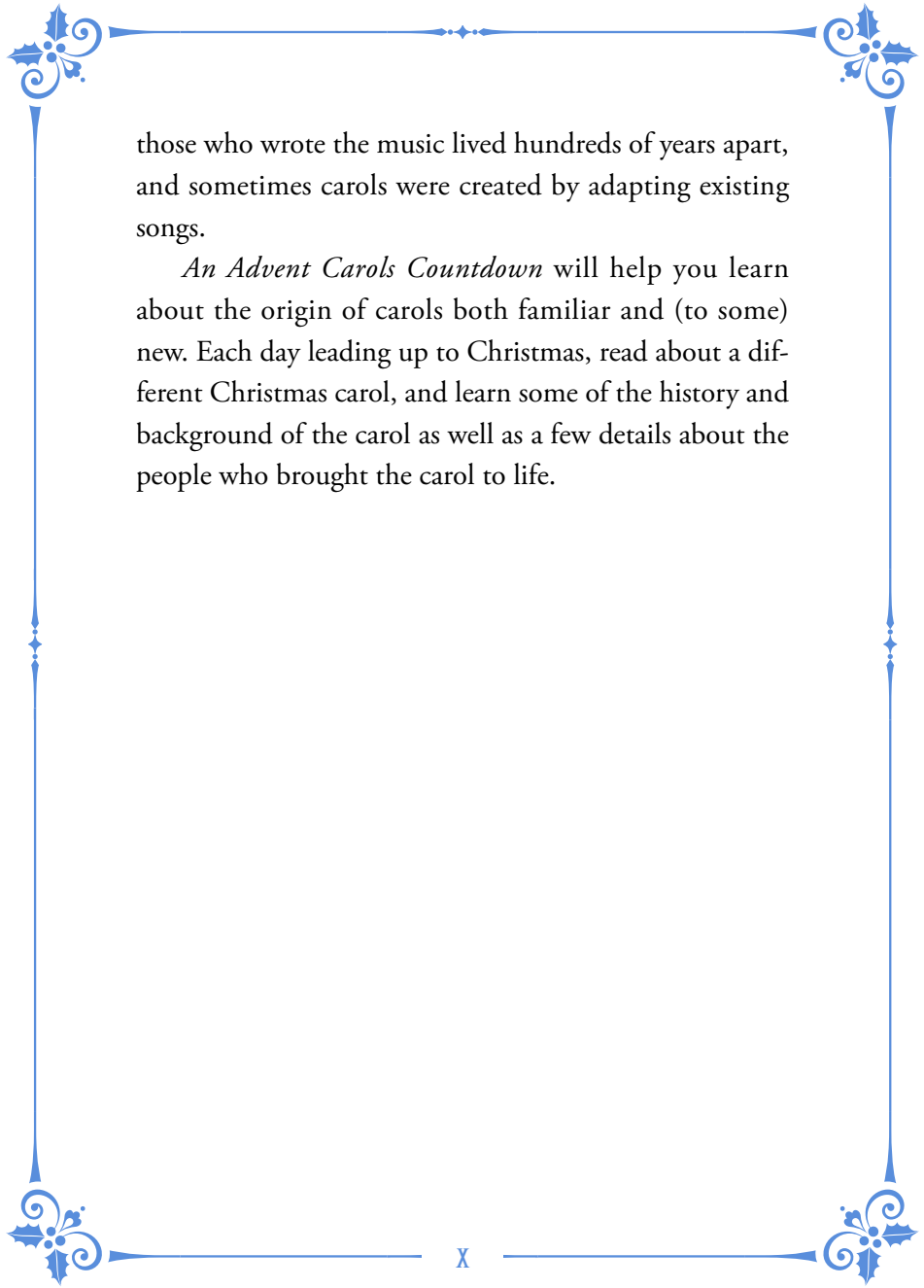
FREE READER SAMPLE



Introduction

It's hard to imagine Christmas without music. Christmas carols are an integral part of the Christmas celebration in numerous cultures throughout the world and have been written for hundreds of years. Many of the carols we sing year in and year out are hundreds of years old but remain favorites today. And no matter where carols are from, they almost always focus us on the true reason for the season: Our Savior, Jesus Christ. Carols act as a connecting thread of faith between us, our ancestors, and those all over the world who also celebrate the birth of Christ.

Indeed, one of the wonderful things about Christmas carols is that they come from so many different places. Some were written by monks and priests, as you might expect, but others were written by people who were not religious at all. Sometimes those who wrote the lyrics and



those who wrote the music lived hundreds of years apart, and sometimes carols were created by adapting existing songs.

An Advent Carols Countdown will help you learn about the origin of carols both familiar and (to some) new. Each day leading up to Christmas, read about a different Christmas carol, and learn some of the history and background of the carol as well as a few details about the people who brought the carol to life.



December



1



The Holly and the Ivy

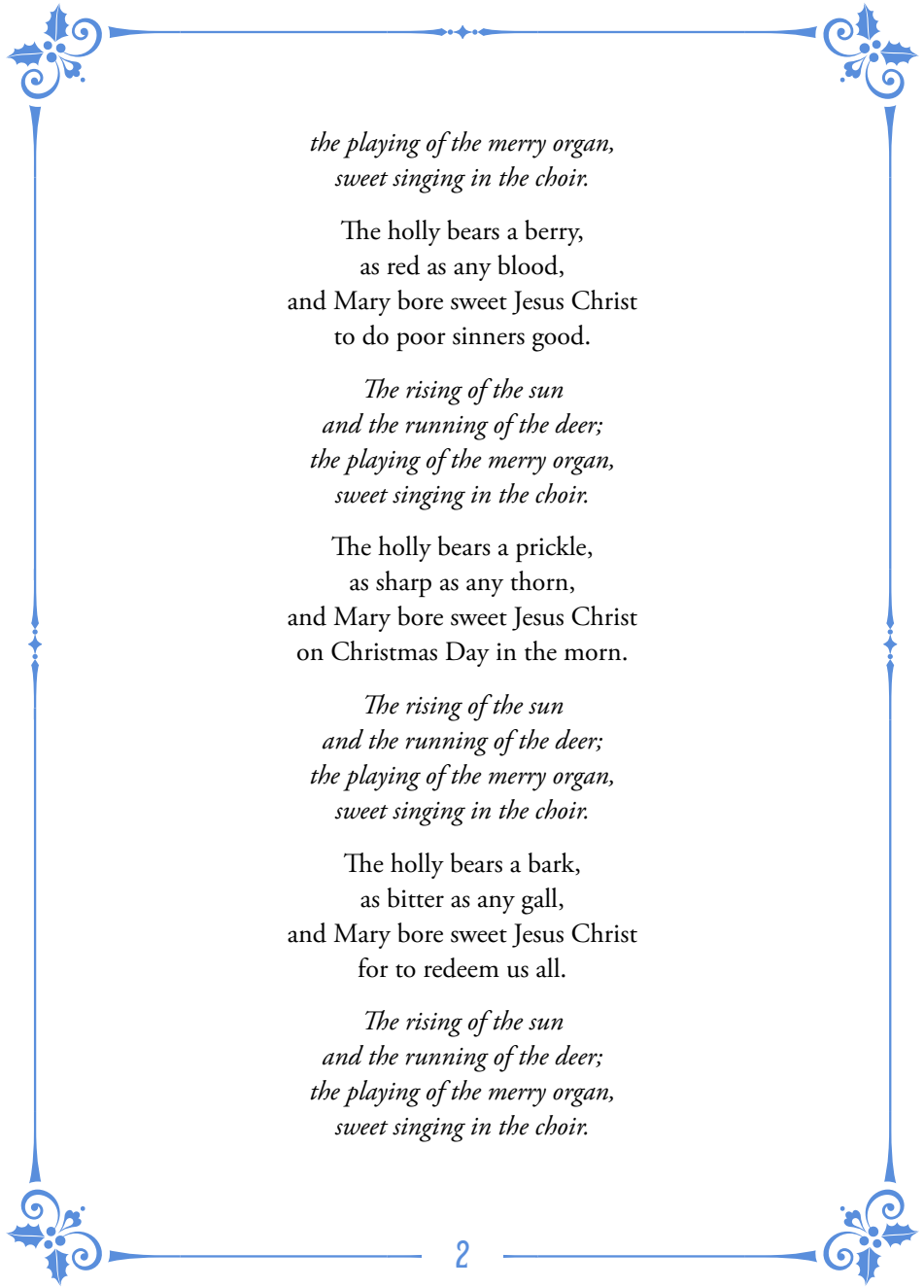
Lyrics

The holly and the ivy
when they are both full grown,
of all the trees that are in the wood
the holly bears the crown.

*The rising of the sun
and the running of the deer;
the playing of the merry organ,
sweet singing in the choir.*

The holly bears a blossom,
white as the lily flower,
and Mary bore sweet Jesus Christ,
to be our sweet Saviour.

*The rising of the sun
and the running of the deer;*



*the playing of the merry organ,
sweet singing in the choir.*

The holly bears a berry,
as red as any blood,
and Mary bore sweet Jesus Christ
to do poor sinners good.

*The rising of the sun
and the running of the deer;
the playing of the merry organ,
sweet singing in the choir.*

The holly bears a prickle,
as sharp as any thorn,
and Mary bore sweet Jesus Christ
on Christmas Day in the morn.

*The rising of the sun
and the running of the deer;
the playing of the merry organ,
sweet singing in the choir.*

The holly bears a bark,
as bitter as any gall,
and Mary bore sweet Jesus Christ
for to redeem us all.

*The rising of the sun
and the running of the deer;
the playing of the merry organ,
sweet singing in the choir.*



Scan this QR code to watch a musical performance of *The Holly and the Ivy*

About the Carol

This carol, which may date back to the seventeenth century, uses two evergreen plants to beautifully describe the symbolism behind the life of Jesus Christ. Holly and ivy plants were used in winter celebrations long before Christmas became a holiday. Their vibrant, green boughs—even amidst a cold, dark winter—were a sign of life. Some ancient peoples even believed the plants held magical qualities that could ward off evil. The Romans used holly and ivy in pagan celebrations, such as the mid-winter festival of Saturnalia, which honored Saturnus, the god of agriculture.

Over time, it appears that Christians borrowed from these celebrations, adapting the symbols for their own use. In Victorian England, the use of holly and ivy to decorate for the Christmas season became so popular that a merchant in 1851 is said to have ordered 250,000 bushels of holly to decorate that year.

In the carol, holly and ivy are used to describe the Christian symbolism attributed to the evergreen plants.



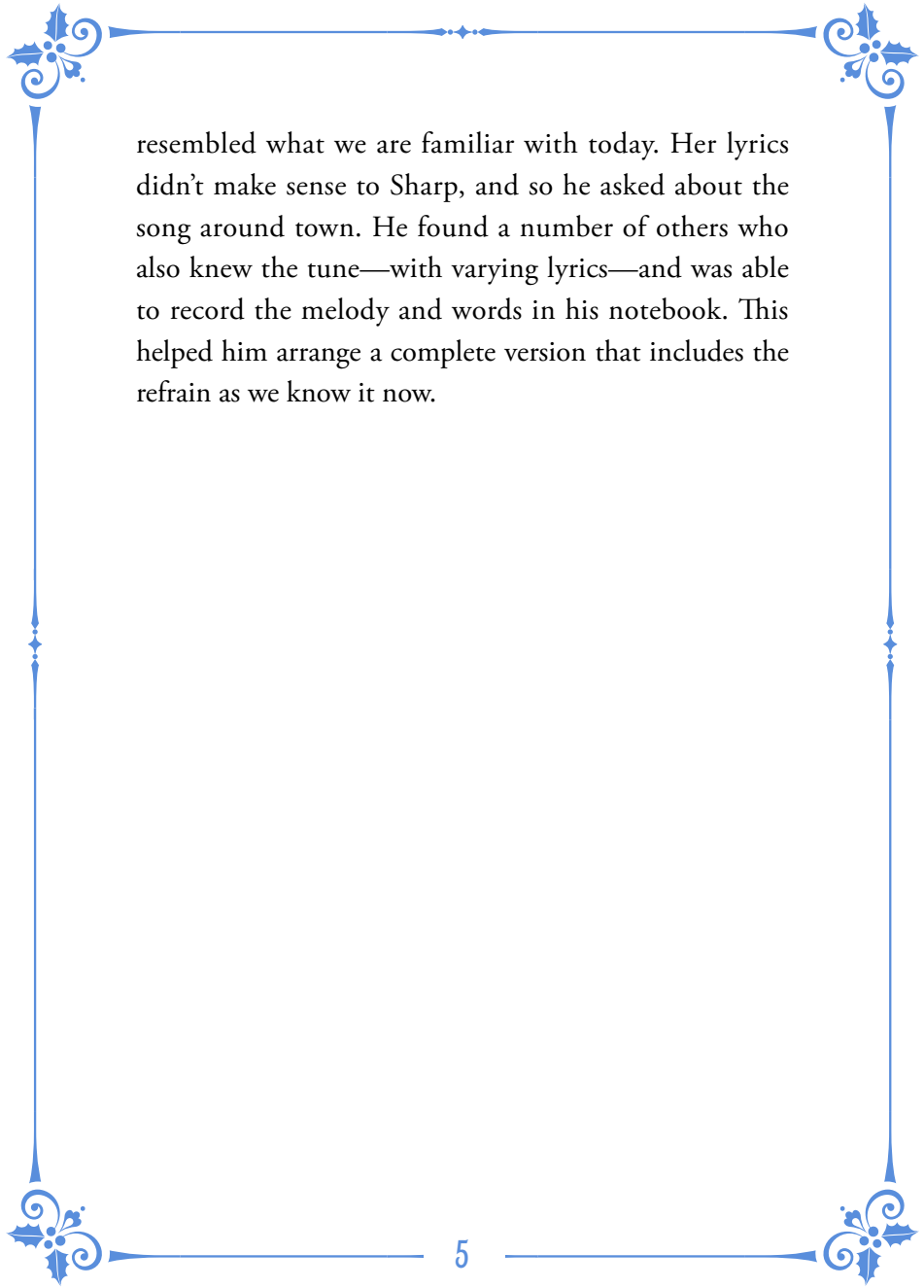
The white holly flower represents Mary's and Jesus's purity. The red holly berry symbolizes Christ's redeeming blood. The sharp prickle of the holly leaf is a reminder that the King of kings was forced to wear a crown of thorns on his head. And, of course, the evergreen nature of the plants points to the renewal of life through Christ.

Though the song is titled "The Holly and the Ivy," ivy is mentioned only in the song's first stanza. This may be a holdover from an earlier song called "The Contest of the Holly and the Ivy," which described a battle of the sexes, where holly represented the masculine sex and ivy represented the feminine.

Both the lyrics and the tune of the carol itself are anonymous. It was first officially published in 1911 by the great English folklorist Cecil Sharp. Sharp traveled all over Britain, collecting folk songs in villages small and large, recording melodies and poems that had been passed down for generations.

In 1909, Sharp reportedly talked to a Mary Clayton of Chipping Campden (located in Gloucestershire, England), who sang him a tune about holly and ivy. She said she'd learned the song as a child.

The tune she shared—which may be more than 1,000 years old—is the one we recognize today as "The Holly and the Ivy." The words, however, only somewhat



resembled what we are familiar with today. Her lyrics didn't make sense to Sharp, and so he asked about the song around town. He found a number of others who also knew the tune—with varying lyrics—and was able to record the melody and words in his notebook. This helped him arrange a complete version that includes the refrain as we know it now.

Continue the Countdown

24 days. 24 carols. One joyful journey to Christmas.



Inside the full book

- A different Christmas carol for every day from December 1 through Christmas Eve.
- The history, people, traditions, and faith behind beloved songs from around the world.
- Lyrics for each featured carol and QR-linked musical performances.
- A daily way to slow down, listen, learn, and keep Christ at the center of the season.

Ready for December 2?

BUY ON AMAZON

Keep the Christmas Music Playing

The book is only one part of the musical journey. Visit Michael D. Young online for the complete 24-day video countdown, more stories behind the songs, new releases, and reader updates.

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