

Create a Manger Scene at Home

“Away in a manger...” plays in the background of many holiday festivities. Written in 1885, the song has endured and is as popular today as it ever was. Just about every Christmas album has its artist’s version of this holiday classic. We hum along reciting the lyrics without even realizing we’ve memorized them. No matter your beliefs, the Nativity Story is at the heart of the Christmas season. And despite the era of political correctness we’re living in, any baby born outdoors “...with no crib for a bed” is worthy of our attention. Not to mention a selfless mother who gave birth in a stable amongst horses and cows with only her husband in attendance. A compelling story, regardless of time or place, or whom many believe this child would grow up to be. So we sing along, pulling the verses up from that great archive of songs memorized in our childhoods and remember.

As the story goes, the family was turned away at an inn, mother nearing childbirth, so the husband settled them in a stable which was located under a very bright star, and filled with livestock. After the birth, the family was visited by 3 kings, a local shepherd and his flock, then finally, divinely blessed by an angel from heaven. Finding deeper meanings to these events is a matter for individual belief. Yet, the story endures as a testament to the power of the human spirit and possibility that the miraculous does indeed exist.

The Nativity Story is an important part of the Christmas season, for many people. Often families have Nativity sets that have been passed down for generations and creating the manger scene each year is a cherished tradition. Children especially love placing each piece carefully in the homemade manger, taking extra care with the baby. Gretchen Hillman holiday buyer for Wight’s Home and Garden in Lynnwood helps hundreds of people each year, select from the dozens of styles and sizes of Nativity sets on the market. They can be small, large, traditional or contemporary and are fashioned out of materials like: metal, ceramic, cloth, and/or poly resins.

“People are very particular about their choice of Nativity scene. Some prefer formal, others like simple styles and some even like child-size sets for small spaces like kids’ rooms. Sets range in number of pieces from 3 (the Holy Family: Joseph, Mary and Jesus) to 14 piece sets (Holy Family, 3 kings, angel, shepherds, and farm animals.). Often a manger or “crèche” comes with the set to display the pieces comprising the nativity scene. Better lines like “Fontanini” are considered collectables and are highly prized for their craftsmanship and yearly introductions. You don’t need a full nativity set to create a manger scene at home. Many sets allow for the addition of new pieces each year. “It’s common for people to start out with the 3 pieces of the Holy Family and add to it each year”. Gretchen says, “Some people already have a set and just need a crèche, or a palm tree, which we also carry”. Backdrops like paneled mirrors or those depicting the Bethlehem skyline are popular as well. Individual pieces like angels, crosses, stars, crowns and dozens of ornaments offer other options for symbolizing the nativity theme.

The Nativity Story, represented through nativity scenes, continues to be one of the most popular themes of the Holiday season. At Wight’s annual Wonderland of Christmas, a life size nativity scene is a central focus and one of the most popular of the store’s 31 themed sections. “People love Santa and snowmen,” Gretchen continues, “but, based on our observations, year after year, The Nativity continues to be special to a great many people.”