

Comprehension Worksheet

PICCOLA

By Celia Loughton Thaxter, who was born at Portsmouth, N. H., June 29, 1836. Much of her childhood was passed at White Island, one of the Isles of Shoals, off the coast of New Hampshire. "Among the Isles of Shoals," is her most noted work in prose. She published a volume of poems, many of which are favorites with children. She died in 1894.

Poor, sweet Piccola! Did you hear
What happened to Piccola, children dear?
'Tis seldom Fortune such favor grants
As fell to this little maid of France.

'Twas Christmas time, and her parents poor
Could hardly drive the wolf from the door,
Striving with poverty's patient pain
Only to live till summer again.

No gift for Piccola! Sad were they
When dawned the morning of Christmas day!
Their little darling no joy might stir;
St. Nicholas nothing would bring to her!

But Piccola never doubted at all
That something beautiful must befall
Every child upon Christmas day,
And so she slept till the dawn was gray.

And full of faith, when at last she woke,
She stole to her shoe as the morning broke;
Such sounds of gladness filled all the air,
'T was plain St. Nicholas had been there.

In rushed Piccola, sweet, half wild—
Never was seen such a joyful child—
"See what the good saint brought!" she cried,
And mother and father must peep inside.

Now such a story I never heard!
There was a little shivering bird!
A sparrow, that in at the window flew,
Had crept into Piccola's tiny shoe!

"How good poor Piccola must have been!"
She cried, as happy as any queen,
While the starving sparrow she fed and
warmed,
And danced with rapture, she was so
charmed.

Children, this story I tell to you
Of Piccola sweet and her bird, is true.
In the far-off land of France, they say,
Still do they live to this very day.



Questions:

1. What is meant by the following words according to the passage? Consult a dictionary if necessary.
 - a. Dawned
 - b. Befall
 - c. Shivering
 - d. Rapture
 - e. Charmed
2. What is meant by "*driving the wolf from the door*"?

3. In the third stanza, what does "*St.*" before Nicholas mean?

4. Who is St. Nicholas?

5. What did Piccola find in her shoe on Christmas morning?
