THE LONGEST NIGHT

A small, warm way to mark December 21

The winter solstice kit for little kids - free from Coryverse

Monday, December 21 is the shortest day and the longest night of the whole year. That sounds like a problem. Families have been treating it as a party for a very long time - a short walk in the dark with a light to carry, dinner by candlelight, and the longest bedtime story of the year.

You do not need all of it. One piece is a whole celebration: a ten-minute walk at dusk and one line at bedtime counts. This free kit gives you the pieces, sized for tired parents and kids who are in bed at a normal hour - because the longest night is also, not coincidentally, the easiest night of the year to get everyone into bed early. It is dark. That is the whole trick, and it is on your side.

What's inside

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For all ages - especially young children. No snow required anywhere in this kit: dusk is early, the walk is short, and the light is battery.

What to Tell the Kids

"Today is the shortest day and the longest night of the whole year. The Earth leans a little - like this - so our side gets less light right now. Tonight is the longest night. After it, the light comes back a little more each day."

The two-minute demo: lights off. A flashlight is the sun. Tip an orange a little to one side and walk it slowly around the flashlight, keeping the tip pointing the same way. The top half catches more light on one side of the circle and less on the other. Younger kids may just want to hold the flashlight. That counts.

One honesty note for sharp kids: the earliest sunset actually arrives in early December, before the solstice - the dark afternoons are already the worst of it. And tomorrow will look exactly the same as today. A little more light each day is the true version - promise that, never a visibly brighter tomorrow.

Piece 1 - The Lantern

Make it the weekend before (Dec 19-20).

Jar lantern: clean glass jar; glue (Mod Podge or school glue) a layer of coloured tissue, star and moon shapes on the OUTSIDE; seal with one thin coat; let it dry about an hour; battery tea light inside. Battery, always, for carried lanterns - small hands, mittens, wind.

No-jar route: battery tea light inside a plain paper lunch bag with a star punched or cut by a grown-up, weighted with a spoonful of sand or rice.

Grown-up note: real candles live on the dinner table, lit by a grown-up, out of reach - never carried, never in a bedroom.

Piece 2 - The Walk

Monday, December 21, at dusk. 10-15 minutes is plenty.

1. Look up your sunset that morning and tell your child the time - a countdown makes an ordinary Monday an event. (The solstice moment itself is 2:50 p.m. CT - mark the sunset, not the moment.)

2. The child carries the light.

3. Look for: the first star - a window with its light on - the last colour in the sky.

4. At the darkest point, say the line once: "This is the longest night. Tomorrow the light starts coming back - a little more each day."

5. If your sharp-eyed five-year-old reports tomorrow looks exactly the same: they are right, and this kit says so first.

6. Florida / South note: no coat drama required. Dusk is the event; ten minutes is the tradition; a driveway walk counts in full.

Do not turn it into a lesson. One element is a complete celebration.

Piece 3 - The Candlelit Dinner

That night: overhead lights off; battery candles or the table lanterns carry the room.

The child "brings the light": one light switched on at a time as everyone sits down.

One question, only one: "What's something good that happened when it was dark this year?" - answers go in the wish jar (Piece 4) if anyone wants them kept.

Piece 4 - The Wish Jar

Slips and a clean jar on the table: one hope each for the brighter half of the year, drawn or written, folded into the jar. The jar re-opens on the summer solstice - June 21, 2027.

Wish slips - cut on the lines, one per person:

My hope for the brighter half of the year: _____

My hope for the brighter half of the year: _____

My hope for the brighter half of the year: _____

Then: The Longest Story

A 3-minute told-story frame - tell it, don't read it. Fill the two blanks out loud:

"Once there was a small light named _____, and on the longest night of the year the small light grew sleepy. So everyone in _____ (your street / town) kept each other warm and lit their own small lights, one by one, until the whole dark was dotted with them. The small light slept. And in the morning - just a tiny bit earlier than the morning before - it rose again. A little more each day."

Already have a favourite bedtime book? Read that. The tradition is the dark + the light + the story, not the title.

Running a Book Advent? Night 24 is Flood night - see page 5.

Three Nights Later: The Book Flood

Thursday, December 24. In Iceland the main Christmas gift is a book - chosen for one person, opened on Christmas Eve after dinner, and read that night. The house rules:

- Choose for the person, not the bestseller list.
- Write one line in the front about why you chose it.
- Open it on the Eve. Phones in another room for the evening.
- Read wherever you land. Nobody has to finish.

A book given on Christmas morning is a present. A book given on Christmas Eve is an evening. The full catalogue - every Coryverse book written for choosing for one person - is at thecoryverse.com/book-flood.

The wrap band - print, cut out, wrap it around the Eve book:

OPEN ON CHRISTMAS EVE - after dinner.
This one is the evening.

The inscription card - cut out, fill in, tuck it inside the front cover:

I chose this for you because _____

_____

Love, _____ Christmas Eve 2026

The Longest Night - free from Coryverse, thecoryverse.com/longest-night. The Book Flood catalogue: thecoryverse.com/book-flood.