

The Tomten Circle

~ Sarah Mortenson-Gauss

To honor and include a hearing impaired student, gestures for the animals and some other words come from American Sign Language (ASL). Checking with the ASL website will lead to a dictionary of signing gestures.

Song: The North Wind Doth Blow

The north wind doth blow
And we shall have snow
And what will the robin do then
Poor thing
He'll sit in the barn to keep himself warm
And hide his head under his wing
Poor thing

Spoken:

On the old family farm
It's a cold winter's night
The snow is lit up
By the moon shining bright

The night is so still
No words, not a peep
Could it be that
Everyone's fast asleep

The Tomten's awake
But who could he be?
He's a kindly old gnome
'Bout as tall as my knee

The people don't see him
But sometimes they see
His tiny footprints
As small as can be

Does he crawl along?
Does he hop along?
Does he skip along?
Does he jump along?

They don't know
They just see his footprints
Outside in the snow

With his long gray beard
And his slouchy red hat
He makes friends with
The cows, the sheep, and the cat

Walk in circle holding hands

Stomp feet
Walk in circle holding hands
Tuck head under arm
Stomp feet

Sign "farm"
Cross arms, shiver
Squat down, hands move out over ground
Arms circle upwards while coming to standing

Stiff arms down and out at 45 degrees
Finger to lips, then shake head "no"
Palms up
Tilt head to left, resting on hands together

Fingers splayed on each side of face
Palms up
Pull down from chin, as if a beard
Lift one knee up, hold with hands

Index fingers touch outside edge of eyes, shake head
Get down on hands and knees
Looking closely at the ground
One hand gestures small with thumb and index finger

Crawl some distance around the circle
Hop some distance around the circle
Skip some distance around the circle
Jump some distance around the circle

Shake head side to side
Get on hands and knees
Looking down at the ground

Pull down from chin
Both hands above head, bounce down, touch head
Sign "friends"
Sign "cow, sheep, cat"

He talks to them with Tomten words
Words that we can't hear
The animals, they understand
To them it's very clear

First he visits the cows (pause)
They're dreaming of when
Their pastures are green
And delicious again

"I see the fence around your pasture
needs some mending."

He brings out his saw
His hammer and nails

He's ready to fix up the old fence rails

Sing the Tomten Song:

Winters come and winters go

Summers come and summers go
I'll bring you food and care for you

I'll be your friend the whole night through

Spoken:

Next, he visits the sheep
In their pen
Wool coats keep them cozy
Though they are hungry again

"I see that the food
In your trough is all gone
Here is some hay
To make you happy and strong"

Sing the Tomten Song again

Spoken:

Now he comes 'round the corner
And what does he find?
A bowl full of porridge
The sweet and buttery kind

Where did it come from?
How can this be?
It's a gift from
The grateful farm family!

Lean toward right, cup hand by mouth
Lean toward left, cup hand by mouth (whisper)
Sign "animals," sign "understand"
Sign "understand" 3x

Sign cow
Get on hands and knees, close eyes
Open eyes, sign "green"
Rub tummy

Kneel, turn 360 degrees, look

Palms together, move out and back
Pound left palm with right fist
Hold imaginary nail with left, pound with right
Repeat above

Lean right on one foot, hands move to right
Lean left on one foot, hands move to left
Same as above
Walk toward center, hands gesture forward
Walk backward, hands gesture back
Spin in a circle, arms out
Walk in, hold hands or touch neighbors' shoulders

Sign "sheep"

Cross arms, rub hands up and down upper arm
Rub tummy

Kneeling, hands behind back, lean forward to look down

Twist around to gather hay from behind, put down in front
Point to smile and show off arm muscles

Kneel, walk on knees
Arms behind, bend over, looking at ground
Scoop up bowl with both hands
Smiling

Palms up by shoulders
Shrug shoulders
Palm together at chest
Bow, sign "family"

He loves to eat porridge
But even more than that
He loves to eat porridge
Along with the cat!

Now where is the cat?
He climbs up to the loft
Surely she's sleeping
Somewhere warm and soft

There in the corner
He sees a straw pile
Where the barn kitty
Makes her domicile

She's waiting for Tomten
He might bring a scrap
Of fish or of porridge
Before her catnap

They eat porridge together
They share this sweet treat
And, there's more in the bowl
For others to eat

Sing the Tomten Song again

Spoken:
So out goes the Tomten
Back out in the snow
There's more porridge to share
To the forest he'll go!

He'll cross over the river
And roll down the hill
He'll crawl through the bushes
Then shake off the chill

Who else could be hungry?
There's not much food around
On the trees or the bushes
Or even the ground

Maybe the fox?
Maybe the moose?
Maybe the raccoon
Or the Canada Goose?

Sing the Tomten Song once more

*Eat with spoon and bowl
Index finger of right hand points upwards, slightly forward
Eat with spoon and bowl
Sign "cat"*

*Palms up
Step up onto box or bench and walk along
Look around
Jump down*

*Sitting with legs open in a V, arms in a V resting on legs
Hands form shape of a straw pile
Sign "cat"
Cross legs, lean forward, bring leg under, sit like a cat*

Pretend to lick paws and bathe ears

*Hand swims like a fish, then hands form bowl
Close eyes, purr*

*Take bite with bowl and spoon
Offer a bite to your neighbors
Sign "more"
Sign "eat"*

Take steps as if walking in deep snow

*Walk across the board or balance beam
Log roll or somersault down the mat
Crawl through one of the tunnels
Shake body*

*Rub tummy
Shake head back and forth
Reach high with hand, stand on tiptoes
Get on hands and knees, looking at ground*

*Sign "fox"
Sign "moose"
Sign "raccoon"
Sign "goose"*

Sarah Mortenson-Gauss teaches mixed-age kindergarten and parent child classes at Windsong School in Spokane, Washington. After having spent a year living in Norway, she became quite fond of the Scandinavian lifestyle, the culture, and also the art and folklore of the Nisse, as it's called in Norway or the Tomte, as it's called in Sweden. This circle was inspired by one of her favorite picture books, *The Tomten*, by Astrid Lindgren, as well as by a desire to bring examples of practical work and caring to the children in her class.