



SUNDOG THEATRE PRESENTS:

From the Page to the Stage – Bringing Literature to Life
Teacher and Student Activities Guide for Young Audiences

A Christmas Carol

By
Charles Dickens



TEACHER GUIDE

ALL TEACHER INFORMATION IS IN BLUE

About the Author...

Charles Dickens (1812 – 1870)

Charles Dickens was born in Portsmouth, England, on February 7, 1812. He was the second of eight children. His father John worked as a clerk for the Naval Pay office, and was imprisoned for debt when Charles was very young. Dickens went to work at a blacking warehouse, managed by a relative of his mother, when he was 12. His brush with hard times and poverty affected him deeply. He later recounted these experiences in the semi-autobiographical novel [David Copperfield](#).

Dickens's concern for social justice and reform surfaced in his writings of the harsh conditions he experienced in the warehouse. Although he had little formal schooling, he was able to teach himself shorthand and launch a career as a journalist. He would go on to write 15 novels.

As a young boy, Dickens was exposed to many artistic and literary works, allowing his imagination to grow and develop. He was influenced by the stories his nursemaid used to tell him and by his many theater visits. Dickens loved to read. Among his favorite works were [Don Quixote](#) by Miguel de Cervantes, [Tom Jones](#) by Henry Fielding, and [Arabian Nights](#). At 16, Dickens became a court reporter, and shortly thereafter he joined the staff of *A Mirror of Parliament*.

Disillusioned with politics, Dickens developed an interest in social reform and began contributing to the *True Sun*, a radical newspaper. Although his main work was as a novelist, Dickens continued his journalistic work until the end of his life. His serialized *The Pickwick Papers* over 1836-37 gave him his true success. Within a few years, he was regarded as one of the most successful authors of his time in Victorian England. [Oliver Twist](#) and [Nicholas Nickleby](#) reflected Dickens's understanding of the lower classes as well as his comic genius.

Dickens married Catherine Hogarth, with whom he had 10 children. In 1843, Dickens published one of his most famous works, [A Christmas Carol](#). He blamed much of society's ills on peoples' obsession with money and acquiring status based on money. On June 9, 1870, Charles Dickens died. He was buried in Poet's Corner of Westminster Abbey.

On the Web..... (for teacher resources)

www.webenglishteacher.com

www.lessonplanet.com

www.fidnet.com

<http://42explore.com/dickens.htm>

www.edHelper.com

www.abcteach.com

ALL STUDENT ACTIVITIES ARE IN RED

About the Play.....for teachers

A major theme in *A Christmas Carol* was the plight of the children of London's poor. Thousands of children at the time were living in unimaginable poverty, filth, and disease. In 1839, it was estimated that nearly half of all funerals in London were for children under ten.

A mean-spirited man, [Ebenezer Scrooge](#), sits in his counting house on Christmas Eve. His clerk, [Bob Cratchit](#), shivers because Scrooge refuses to spend money on heating coals. Scrooge's nephew, [Fred](#), visits his uncle and invites him to his Christmas party. Charity people ask Scrooge for money for the poor. Scrooge reacts to them with a bitter "[Bah! Humbug!](#)"

Returning home, Scrooge receives a chilling visit from the ghost of dead partner [Jacob Marley](#), who was punished in death for his greed. Marley wanders Earth, weighted down with heavy chains. He tells Scrooge [three spirits](#) will visit him to help him see his faults. Marley hopes to save Scrooge from pain like his. Scrooge, exhausted, goes into a deep sleep.

He wakes to see the [Ghost of Christmas Past](#), who takes Scrooge on a journey to the past. Invisible to everyone, Scrooge revisits his lonely childhood school days, happier times during his apprenticeship with a jolly merchant named [Fezziwig](#), and his engagement to [Belle](#), a woman who leaves Scrooge because his want for money impairs his ability to love. Scrooge, deeply moved by his memories, sheds tears of regret.

[The Ghost of Christmas Present](#), a robed figure, takes Scrooge through London to watch the bustling Cratchit family prepare a tiny meal in their small home. He discovers Bob Cratchit's crippled son, [Tiny Tim](#), a courageous boy who warms Scrooge's heart.

Later, [The Ghost of Christmas Yet to Come](#) leads Scrooge to an unnamed man's recent death. He sees people discussing the dead man, some trading his belongings for cash and others glad the man has died. Scrooge realizes it is him. The spirit takes him back to the Cratchit's, where he sees Tiny Tim's empty chair and asks the ghost if Tim has died also. There is no answer. Scrooge wants Tiny Tim to live and wants himself to be respected. The ghost returns him to his bed, ready to change his ways.

Overwhelmed with joy by the chance to redeem himself, Scrooge rushes onto the street hoping to share his newfound Christmas spirit. He sends a giant Christmas turkey to the [Cratchit's](#) and attends Fred's party. As years go by, Scrooge holds true to his promise, honoring Christmas with all his heart, treating fellow human beings with kindness and warmth.



ABOUT THE PLAY.....for students

Student Guide

A greedy man named **Ebenezer Scrooge** sits in his money house on Christmas Eve. His worker, **Bob Cratchit**, shivers because Scrooge won't spend money on heating coals for a fire. Scrooge's nephew, **Fred**, visits his uncle and invites him to a Christmas party. He won't go. People outside ask Scrooge for money for the poor, but he hates the holiday and angrily says "**Bah! Humbug**" when they say "Merry Christmas!" After Scrooge gets home, the ghost of his dead partner, **Jacob Marley**, visits. Marley was also greedy and he has been punished by walking the Earth with heavy chains on him. He tells Scrooge that **three ghosts** will visit him to help him be nicer. First, the **Ghost of Christmas Past**, takes Scrooge on a trip to

his lonely childhood to see how he got so mean. He sees his old boss, **Fezziwig**, and his girlfriend, **Belle**, who left Scrooge because she says he loved money more than people. Scrooge is very sad about this, and the ghost takes him back to his bed. Then, **The Ghost of Christmas Present** visits and takes Scrooge through London to watch the Cratchit family prepare a small meal in their poor home. He discovers Bob Cratchit's crippled son, **Tiny Tim**, a brave boy whose kindness warms Scrooge's heart. Scrooge sees how poor people live. Finally, **The Ghost of Christmas Yet to Come** shows Scrooge a funeral of someone who just died and how people are not saying nice things about this person. Scrooge sees they are talking about him. He also sees the empty chair where Tiny Tim once sat and asks the ghost if he dies—the ghost does not answer him. This all makes Scrooge very sad and he promises to change. He is returned to his bed. After he wakes, he is glad to get another chance, and rushes to buy a huge turkey for the Cratchit family. As the years go by, he keeps his promise to be kind and gives food and money to the Cratchit family so that Tiny Tim will live. He begins to honor the spirit of Christmas and to treat all people with kindness—he is a happier man because of it, and lives a long life helping others.

Activity 1 DEFINITIONS

Actors are people who portray the characters in the play. Also called the **Cast** (Do you recognize anyone you know?)

Characters are the people in the play that help tell the story through their dialogue (words) and actions.

Costumes are worn by the actors to help us learn more about their characters and time period.

Exit is what the actors do when they leave the stage.

Lighting lets you see the action, shows what time of day it is in the play, and tells when the scene is over (blackout).

Props are items used on the set and by the actors to add to the setting (book, candle).

Makeup is what actors wear on their faces to help them be seen better by the audience. It can also help them look younger, older, or different in some way.

Setting is where the play takes place. There can be more than one setting in a play (counting house, Cratchit's house, schoolroom).

Set pieces can tell us what setting we are in, or different places in the play (bed, desk, lamp post).

Script is the book that tells the actors what to say and gives them their lines (dialogue).

Sound is added to the play to let you know where the play takes place and what is going on during the show (wind).

Stage is the place where the actors do the play.

Wigs are what actors sometimes wear on their heads to make them look more like their characters, either older, younger, or from another place in time.

Activity 2 WHO'S WHO IN THE PLAY?

1. After reading the story above, make a list of the characters in the play.
2. Write what you remember about them (what they looked like and something they did).
3. Draw a picture of one of the characters and, under the picture, write some of the lines he or she said during the play.
4. Draw one of the characters with Scrooge.

WHERE THE PLAY TAKES PLACE AND WHAT THEY WEAR HELPS TELL THE STORY

1. List the places (settings) the play takes place.
2. Compare and contrast the different settings and costumes worn.
3. Choose your favorite set or costume and draw a picture of it – put in any elements that might add to the story or the characters.
4. If you were the set or costume designer, what would your set or costume look like? Draw it.



Activity 3

YOU ARE IN LONDON *(Giving a voice to...)*

There are many characters in London who are getting ready for the holiday. If you could be a character in London back in the 1800's who would you be? (**Create a new character** who enters the story). If you can't think of any new person, choose one you saw and **WRITE a short monologue** (speech) to be spoken about Scrooge and how mean and unhappy he is. **Note: Giving voice to...** is allowing a character to have a point of view and speak their mind!

EXTRA! – **Team up with other classmates as your new character. Create a scene about who should be the one to break the news to Scrooge that no one likes him and how he could be happier.**

Activity 4 **MAKE A TIME MACHINE**

The story of Christmas Carol takes us on a journey through time – if Scrooge needed to travel in a transportation vehicle, what might that look like? **DRAW A TIME MACHINE** and put Scrooge inside. Where would you make his first stop – who would he meet?

EXTRA! – Make a story board (**squares with drawn pictures**) that show the different places Scrooge visits. Put them in the correct order – sequence.

Activity 5 **EXTRA!! EXTRA!!! READ ALL ABOUT IT!**

Pretend you are reporting live from London Bridge about this breaking story about the new Scrooge - What questions will you ask? What facts will you report? Who will you interview? **Write down your ideas and comments!**

EXTRA! **Interview your classmates** about this breaking story to get their opinions and suggestions. **Do an improvised (without a script) scene about a TV News show, and perform** for the class!

Activity 6 **ADDING TO THE SCRIPT (THE PLAY)**

You are a playwright who has been asked to **write another scene at the end of the play. Write out a** short description of the scene when Scrooge spends the holiday with his nephew Fred and his guests, what will they talk about, what characters are in the scene, how are they dressed, and what music they might be playing. It must have something to do with the story. Also, let us know more about the new Scrooge and his relationship with Fred.

EXTRA! **Pick actors to play your scene,** have them perform the scene that came before your scene and what comes next! (Hint: If it is at the end of the play – your new scene is the new ending)

Activity 7 **HUM A TUNE, WRITE A NEW SONG**

Christmas Carol is a musical and has many songs that tell the story. Is there a time when a song might be added? Perhaps one for Tiny Tim or a song that he and his dad sing? **Write some lyrics (words to the song – they usually rhyme)** Example— **I wish I felt much better, so I could run and play. But all I do is sit and dream of being well someday.**



Activity 8

DESIGN A POSTER



There are wonderful events and decorations during the holidays: tree trim contests, holiday baking, gift giving, and more. Find out more about events and activities during Dicken's time in London. **Make a poster/drawing** showing a holiday scene putting an end to "Bah Humbug". Use some things you saw in the play, look at pictures in a book, or use your imagination. You might want to add a cheerful message like "God Bless Us Everyone" or "No more Bah Hum Bug". Posters and signs use lots of pictures and clear writing to make the point. Make your poster bright, clear, and colorful. You can include pictures.

Activity 9

YOU ARE THE LIFE OF THE PARTY

During the holidays, people make special foods for special occasions. Pretend you are going to Fezziwig's party and want to bring your favorite food. **Write the recipe** for your holiday dessert or specialty dish.

EXTRA! Make the dessert/dish at home with an adult and share it with family and friends!

Activity 10

WHO IS YOUR VOICE OF REASON?

Sometimes we are confused or scared and don't know what to do. We often know the right thing to do but need a little push – the voice of reason is someone or something that helps you make the right choices or makes you feel better when you are sick or scared. Scrooge has many voices (spirits) who show him the way. Using the list below, fill in your answers and then **write a story** about your hero.

Who is your voice or reason (helps you make choices)?

What is he/she like?

What has he/she done for you or others that makes him/her special?

How has this person helped you changed your or someone else's life? Make a decision?

EXTRA! Write a monologue (lines spoken by one person about something or someone they need to tell). These are written in first person singular. Have it begin with this line: **Every so often some one special comes along and helps me**finish your story about your voice of reason

Activity 11

TECHNICAL THEATRE

Besides actors and the script, there are many things that go into making a show come to life. Below is a list of behind-the-scenes theatre elements. **Write what you know** about these elements of the theatre and tell why they are important to a show. How were they used in the play?

Costumes

Lighting

Props

Sound

Set Pieces

EXTRA! Pick one "tech" area and **tell your classmates** what you noticed about that important part of this production. Did the clothing or the setting look different than what we wear today or where we live?



Some Facts about Charles Dickens and the Holiday Tradition

Charles Dickens has had much influence on the way that we celebrate Christmas today. At the beginning of the Victorian period, the celebration of Christmas was in decline. The Industrial Revolution, during Dickens' time, allowed workers little time for celebrating Christmas. Prince Albert brought the German custom of decorating the [Christmas tree](#) to England, and the singing of Christmas carols (which had all but disappeared at the turn of the century) began to increase, and the first [Christmas card](#) appeared in the 1840s. But it was the Christmas stories of Dickens, particularly his 1843 story, [A Christmas Carol](#), that rekindled the joy of Christmas in Britain and America. Today, after more than 160 years, *A Christmas Carol* continues to be relevant, sending a message that cuts through the materialism of the season and celebrates the holidays with the true meaning behind them—kindness, and good will toward all humankind.

VOCABULARY WORD FROM THE PLAY

Morose- (adj) gloomy or sad

Diligent – (adj) hardworking



Abundance – (noun) overflowing fullness

Shilling - (n) a coin used in London (money)

Anonymous – (adj) without any name

Parliament – (n) part of the British government – the law makers. Somewhat like the United States Congress.

Destitute – (adj) poor, homeless

Charity – (n) kind actions or money given to the poor

Delicate – (adj) easily damaged; frail

Wretched – (adj) miserable, unfortunate condition

FUN RECIPE FOR PLUM PUDDING



Plum Pudding

The famous plum pudding that Mrs Cratchit makes to crown the Cratchit Christmas dinner was not made of plums, but raisins.

The 'copper' used to boil the pudding was used the rest of the year for the Cratchit family laundry. The Cratchit children help Tiny Tim to the wash-house 'that he might hear the pudding singing in the copper'.

A Plum Pudding Recipe:

- 1 cup finely chopped beef suet
- 2 cups fine bread crumbs
- 1 cup sugar
- 1 cup milk
- 1 pint flour
- 1 cup seedless raisins
- 1 cup dried currants
- 1 cup chopped almonds
- 1/2 cup citron (lemon), sliced thin
- 1 tsp salt
- 1 tsp cloves
- 2 tsp cinnamon
- 1 tsp nutmeg
- 4 well-beaten eggs
- 1 tsp of baking soda dissolved in 1 tbsp warm water

Flour the fruit thoroughly.

In a large bowl, mix the eggs, sugar, spices, and salt in the milk.

Stir in the fruit, nuts, bread crumbs, and suet. Then stir in the dissolved baking soda. Then add in the flour.

Boil or steam for 4 hours.

GREAT SITES

- <http://www.victorianweb.org>
- <http://www.learnnc.org>
- <http://www.proteacher.com/080010.shtml>

- <http://coreknowledge.org/CK/index.htm>
- <http://artswork.asu.edu/arts/students/kidsites/kids3.htm>
- <http://www.leasttern.com>
- <http://playsandmusicalsnewsletter.pioneerdrama.com/public/item/139424>



A Christmas Carol quick quiz

1. Marley's first name was _____.
2. _____ is the name of Scrooge's nephew.
3. _____ and Scrooge were Fezziwig's helpers.
4. When he was young, Scrooge was in love with _____.
5. The holiday that everyone was excited about was _____.
6. If there was more _____ on the fire Bob's fingers would not get cold.
7. After being visited by the ghosts, Scrooge sent a _____ to the Cratchits.
8. Scrooge was wearing a _____ while he traveled.
9. Who was the person everyone was mourning? _____.
10. And so, as _____ observed, "God bless us, every one!"

SCROOGE SAYS!! (from the original text)

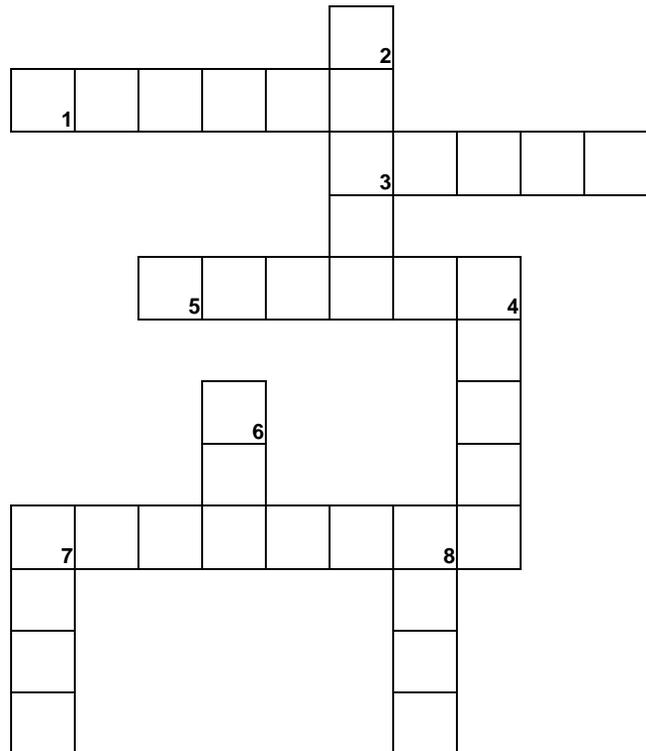
"I am as light as a feather, I am as happy as an angel, I am as merry as a school-boy. I am as giddy as a drunken man. A merry Christmas to everybody! A happy New Year to all the world! Hallo here! Whoop! Hallo!"

Across

1. Written words/book of the play
3. Person who acts in the play
5. Use this on the faces of the actors
7. Clothes worn on stage in a play

Down

2. You stand on the _____ to act
4. Items you hold on stage, like a tea cup
6. Buildings or places on stage
7. Actors in the play are called this
8. To leave the stage



SUNDOG THEATRE is a NYC-based performing arts company that offers original and contemporary theatre for adults and children. It also tours educational theatre for young audiences and offers in-school programs in theatre, dance, music, and visual arts help bring education to life!