
A CHRISTMAS CAROL

Based on the story by Charles Dickens

Adapted by David Bell

Directed by Rosemary Newcott

Study Guide, grades 6-12

Created by the Counterpane Montessori Middle and High School Dramaturgy Team of
Martha Spring and Katy Farr

As part of the Alliance Theatre Institute for Educators and Teaching Artists'

Dramaturgy by Students program

Under the guidance of Resident Teaching Artist Kim Baran



Celebrating the 24th year of *A Christmas Carol* at the Alliance Theatre.

Featuring Chris Kayser's 20th and final season as Scrooge!

"Stories like *A Christmas Carol* become classics for a reason. Brilliant writing, vivid characters, and a story that touches on the human condition that bears up under repeated revisiting. It's kept me coming back for 20 years." —Chris Kayser

On the Alliance stage November 29 through December 29, 2013

Happy Holidays from the Alliance Theatre!

Welcome to the Alliance Theatre's production of *A Christmas Carol*, written by Charles Dickens and adapted for stage by David H. Bell. This Study Guide has been created with the student audience in mind with the intent of providing a starting point as the audience prepares and then reflects together upon the Alliance Theatre for Youth and Families' series production of *A Christmas Carol*.

A note from the director, Rosemary Newcott, the Sally G. Tomlinson Artistic Director of Theatre for Youth and Families:

"I think of this show as a gift to Atlanta. I always hope it reflects the look and spirit of our community. The message is one that never grows old – that one is still capable of change — no matter what your age or what you have experienced!"

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Language Arts Core Curriculum Standards

CCRR3. Analyze how and why individuals, events and ideas develop and interact over the course of a text.

CCRR4. Interpret words and phrases as they are used in a text, including determining technical, connotative and figurative meanings and analyze how specific word choices shape meaning or tone.

CCRL3. Apply knowledge of language to understand how language functions in different contexts, to make effective choices for meaning or style and to comprehend more fully when reading or listening.

CCRS12. Integrate and evaluate information presented in diverse media and formats, including visually, quantitatively, and orally.

ELACC6-12RH2. Determine the central ideas or information of a primary or secondary source; provide an accurate summary:

- Of the source distinct from prior knowledge or opinions (grades 6-8)
- Of how key events or ideas develop over the course of the text (grades 9-10)
- That makes clear the relationships among the key details and ideas (grades 11-12)

Theatre Standards (GPS)

TAES 1. Analyzing and constructing meaning from theatrical experiences, dramatic literature, and electronic media

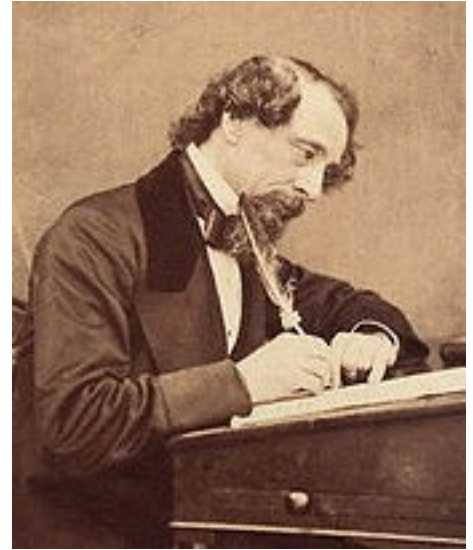
TAES 8. Examining the roles of theatre as a reflection of past and present civilizations.

TAES 11. Engaging actively and appropriately as an audience member in theatre or other media experiences,

Additional suggested curriculum connections: Social Studies and Geography



Charles Dickens



Charles Dickens was born February 7, 1812 in Portsmouth, Southern England into a poor family, the second of seven children. As a young boy, Dickens often read novels in his free time which would later inspire him to begin writing. His parents considered him a reject. At age twelve Dickens' father was jailed in Marshalsea Prison for debt and the young Dickens was sent to work at Warren's Blacking Factory. A few months after entering prison, Dickens' father inherited a sum of money from his paternal grandmother and was released from debtor's prison. However, his mother decided to leave the young Charles at the blacking factory to which Dickens would later say, "how I could have been so easily cast away at such an age?". The cruel and difficult working conditions would later reflect in his work as a writer and champion of the poor and destitute.

Dickens did eventually attend school at the Wellington House Academy. At age 25, he worked as a law clerk and then a year later became a freelance reporter for *The Doctor's Commons*.

Charles Dickens started his writing career in journalism and in 1833 he published his work of fiction, "A Dinner at Poplar Walk" in the *Monthly Magazine*. Dickens' first collection of pieces was published in 1836 called *Sketches by Boz*. Boz was a nickname of his from childhood. The piece had an assortment of stories to go along with sketches. Dickens became a popular writer very quickly and was asked to write a serial book that same year. His first book was *The Posthumous Papers of the Pickwick Club* published in 1836 in the *Morning Chronicle*. Also in 1836, Dickens married Catherine Hogarth. They would travel the world and have 10 children together.

In 1838, Dickens wrote *Oliver Twist* which was the first Victorian novel to have a child protagonist, and reflected upon his own youth and seeing other poor children in the streets. One of his most beloved books is *A Christmas Carol* written in 1843. It is a story about second chances and the true meaning of Christmas.

Many of his major works were written as monthly serials and include: *The Adventures of Nicholas Nickleby* (1838), *David Copperfield* (1849), *Bleak House* (1852); *A Tale of Two Cities* (1859), and *Great Expectations* (1861).

In 1853, Dickens gave his first of many public readings and it was a great success. He was also the publisher and editor of, and a major contributor to, the journals *Household Words* (1850–1859) and *All the Year Round* (1858–1870).

In 1857, Dickens met a young actress named Ellen Ternan and cast her and some of her relatives to perform in his play *The Frozen Deep* in Manchester. Dickens and Ternan fell in love and against the Victorian convention, he separated from his wife to be with Ternan. Their relationship would last the rest of his life, referring to her as his "magic circle of one."

Ternan and Dickens traveled very often. In 1895, as Dickens, Ternan, and her mother were traveling by train they were in a horrible wreck called the Staplehurst Rail Crash. Fortunately, their first class carriage was the only one that didn't fall over the bridge.

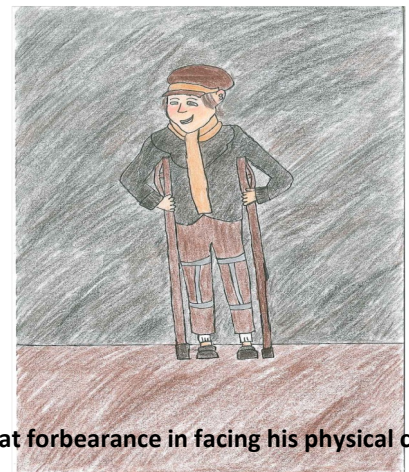
Charles Dickens wrote a total of 34 books during his lifetime and is considered the finest writer of the Victorian Era. He was writing the book *The Mystery of Edwin Drood* when he died of a cerebral hemorrhage on June 9, 1870. He is buried in Westminster Abbey in London.

A Christmas Carol Index of Vocabulary Words

- abode-** n. a dwelling place; a home
- addle-** v. to muddle; confuse
- alms-** n. something (normally money or food) given for free to help the poor
- amorous-** adj. strongly attracted or dealing with love
- apparition-** n. a ghostly figure; a specter.
- beadle-** n. an official whose duties include ushering and keeping order
- Bedlam-** n. first insane asylum built in England; a scene or state of wild confusion
- beseech-** v. to beg for urgently or anxiously
- besiege-** v. to surround around assault with hostile forces
- brethren-** n. used to address members of the same profession, society, or sect
- bilious-** adj. of, relating to, or containing bile
- commodity-** n. advantage; benefit.
- comprehensive-** adj. so large in scope or content as to include much
- congeal-** v. to solidify by or as if by freezing
- cornucopia-** n. a goat's horn overflowing with fruit, flowers, and grain, signifying prosperity; also called horn of plenty
- covet-** v. to desire for (that which is another's)
- crone-** n. an ugly, withered old woman; an old hag
- cavort-** v. to prance about in a sprightly manner
- derision-** n. jeering laughter; ridicule
- destitute-** adj. utterly lacking; devoid (poor)
- Devon-** n. a county in Southwestern England
- devon-** n. English cattle used for milk and meat
- Dies Irae -** (Day of Wrath) is a thirteenth-century Latin hymn best known to be used in the Roman Catholic Requiem mass
- dotage-** n. feebleness of mind, especially as a result of old age
- dowry-** n. money or property brought by a bride to her husband at marriage
- dray-** n. a strong cart or wagon with sides
- florid-** adj. elaborately decorated
- fob-** v. to deceive; a short chain attached to a pocket watch
- forbearance-** n. tolerance and restraint in the face of provocation; patience
- furtively-** adv. to be done stealthy
- garish-** adj. with flashy colors or excessive ornamentation; gaudy
- gruel-** n. a thin porridge
- humbug-** n. a quality of falseness or deception.
- impertinent-** adj. improperly forward or bold
- implored – v.** to beg someone desperately to do something
- intones-** v. to recite in a singing tone
- Lancaster Gate-** n. Lancaster Gate is a mid-19th century development in the Bayswater district of west central London



Scrooge meets the *apparition* of Christmas Future



Tiny Tim shows great *forbearance* in facing his physical challenges.

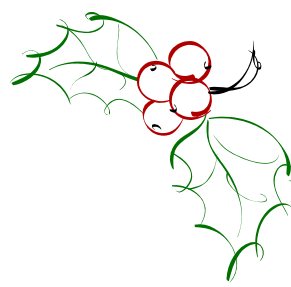
A Christmas Carol Index of Vocabulary Words (cont.)

- ledgers-** n. a book in which the monetary transactions of a business are posted in the form of debits and credits
- mawkish-** adj. excessively and objectionably sentimental
- meager-** adj. deficient in quantity, fullness, or extent; scanty
- misanthropic-** adj. characterized by a hatred or mistrustful scorn for humankind
- miser-** n. one who lives very meagerly in order to hoard money
- multitude-** n. the condition or quality of being numerous
- obscene-** adj. repulsive
- odious-** adj. arousing or meriting strong dislike, aversion, or intense displeasure
- ominously-** adv. in a menacing or threatening way
- pall-** v. to lose strength or effectiveness
- pantomime-** n. a story told by a narrative chorus and dance
- parsimonious-** adj. excessively sparing or frugal
- pittance-** n. a meager monetary allowance, wage, or remuneration
- ponderous-** adj. having great weight
- protestations-** n. an emphatic declaration
- raucous-** adj. rough-sounding and harsh
- reclamation-** n. the act or process of reclaiming
- redemption-** n. the act of redeeming or the condition of having been redeemed
- relinquish-** v. to leave behind
- sonorous-** adj. having or producing a full, deep, or rich sound
- suffice-** vb. to meet present needs or requirements; be sufficient
- sullenly-** adj. showing a brooding ill humor or silent resentment; sulky
- sundry-** adj. various; miscellaneous
- surplus-** adj. being more than or in excess of what is needed or required
- Thames-** n. a river that flows through England
- troth-** n. Betrothal
- unrepentant-** adj. non-apologetic
- valiant-** adj. possessing valor (brave)
- veritable-** adj. being truly so called; real or genuine
- vestibule-** n. a passage or hall between the outer door and the interior parts of the house or building
- vexed-** adj. irritated, distressed, or annoyed
- vigil-** n. the act or a period of observing; surveillance
- vigor-** n. physical or mental strength, energy, or force
- visage-** n. appearance or aspect
- vixen-** n. a woman regarded as quarrelsome, shrewish, or malicious
- wends-** v. go in a specified direction, typically slowly or by an indirect route
- whittle-** v. to reduce or eliminate gradually, as if by whittling with a knife



Ebenezer Scrooge is a *misanthropic miser*.

Cast of Characters



Ebenezer Scrooge

Bob Cratchit, Scrooge's clerk

Mrs. Cratchit, Bob's wife

Tiny Tim Cratchit, the Cratchit's youngest son

The Cratchit children: Martha (the oldest), Melinda, Belinda, Daniel, Peter, Wyatt

Jacob Marley, Scrooge's deceased business partner

Fred, Scrooge's nephew & son of Fan

Mr. Fezziwig, Scrooge's former boss

Mrs. Fezziwig, his wife

Mrs. Dilber, Scrooge's housekeeper

Ghosts of Christmas Past, Christmas Present and Christmas Future

Belle, Scrooge's former fiancé

Fan, Scrooge's sister

Dick Wilkins, a childhood friend of Scrooge

Various townspeople of London



Characters & Occupations of *A Christmas Carol*

In the play *A Christmas Carol* some of the class positions and jobs that the characters hold are clearly stated but some can only be guessed. For example, most people assume that Scrooge is either a creditor or a money lender of sorts because he asks for people to pay back their loans. However other characters in the play only say that Scrooge was a 'man of business'. In Victorian England creditors gave loans to people and if the loans were not paid back in the time that the creditor asked for, and the loan was over £100, the person that owed the creditor was thrown into debtor's prison. Currently, £100 is roughly 155 US dollars.

Bob Cratchit is a clerk for Scrooge. A clerk worked with the letters and figures of the business in Victorian England, they were the bookkeepers of their time. Martha Cratchit, Bob Cratchit's daughter in the play, is apprenticing for a milliner which is someone who makes or sells hats. It's very likely that she was a seamstress at the millinery; there were a lot of seamstresses in the Victorian age because many women knew how to sew. Wages for seamstresses were very low because of the large number of seamstresses in the workforce.

A toy vendor is the job of the man who tries to sell Tiny Tim and Bob Cratchit a train. In the scene where people are selling the deceased Scrooge's possessions, we see a laundress, a woman who washes clothes and linens, as well as an undertaker.

Money in Victorian England

Money plays a key part in the story of *A Christmas Carol*. Here is a guide and some history on money in Victorian England.

Pound Sterling £ The official currency of the United Kingdom

Farthing- A former British monetary unit equal to $\frac{1}{4}$ of an English penny

Halfpenny - 2 'haypennies' = 1 penny

Penny/pence- 240=pound

Sixpence- equivalent to six pennies

Shilling- 1 shilling = 12 pence or $\frac{1}{20}$ pound

Crown (money)- Coin that is worth about 5 shillings

Guinea = 21 shillings

Sovereign- any of various gold coins of the United Kingdom



Crown

The smallest unit of change was the farthing, which was a quarter of a penny, cutting pennies into four pieces originally created its name from fourthing. Between farthings and pennies (also called pence) there was an intermediate coin called the halfpenny. Next was the penny; unlike modern currency there were 240 pennies to a pound. There were also two penny piece and a groat which were two and four pence respectively, although they were not widely used.

Shillings were a more valuable type of coin. They were worth 12 pence and there were 20 shillings to the pound. Shillings were minted in silver. Other common coins were florins and crowns, which were worth five shillings. The largest denomination of coinage was the sovereign. Minted in gold, it was called a sovereign because Henry VII, the British king at the time, wanted to prove how rich his kingdom had grown under his rule by issuing currency of solid gold. Guinea is a gold coin worth 1 pound and worth 21 shillings. Its nick name was yellowboy. It was used for professional transactions. You would pay a doctor or a lawyer with it. Most guineas belonged to upper class people.

Front and back of a Half Penny



Shilling



Farthing



Victorian England: The setting of *A Christmas Carol*

1837-1901

Charles Dickens's London was one of the world's most crowded cities, grappling with major sanitation, corruption, and crime problems. The Industrial Revolution had begun, calling for mass production in factory settings. The Class System was fully evident in the daily life of a Londoner.

Class System of Victorian England

Upper class

The land owners of the upper class were called "squires." Land was an important source of income as it would bring the estate 1 pound per acre each year. The money and land of an estate was passed on to the oldest son. The younger brothers and sisters of an upper class family had to either marry into wealth, have a profession such as clergy or lawyer, or go into the military.

Middle Class

The middle class grew in size during the Victorian Era. Middle class jobs included bookkeepers, clerks, bankers, railway engineers, printers, lower government workers, and managers.

Lower Class

Most lower class people were hard labor workers, servants, factory workers, fishing, mining, trading, and government industry. Most earned enough to barely stay alive. Working conditions for the lower class were difficult and unhealthy, with child laborers working in manufacturing at very young ages.

When families were unable to care for their children, the child laborers were often 'sold' in essence by their families to the factories that employed them, with the child working and living in the factory and their families receiving the child's salary.



Education

At the start of the Victorian age, few children attended school. Almost all children from lower class families had to work instead of going to school because. Rich, upper class families could afford to pay for schools for their male children, but some schools did give out free places to lower class boys. At the beginning of the Victorian age, girls from poor families didn't go to school, and girls from wealthy families were taught in their homes by governesses or went to boarding school. Girls and boys were taught very differently in school; boys were taught technology, woodworking, mathematics, and technical drawing because they were believed to be the more masculine subjects. Girls were taught things like cooking, sewing, drawing and music because they symbolized femininity.

Around the year 1870 reformers wanted new laws to be made to better the working conditions for children. Reformers also wanted to give every child in Victorian England the chance to go to school. In 1870 Parliament decreed that every town and village had to have at least one school. School boards, made up of local people, built and ran the new schools. Families only had to pay a few pennies a week to send their children to school, and by 1880 all children ages five to ten had to go to primary school, and every child received at least a basic education and in 1891, parents no longer had to pay for school.

Workhouses and Poverty in Victorian England

It was exceedingly easy to fall into poverty in Victorian England. Debt was easily acquired through the overuse of the predominantly trust-based credit system, and then not so easily paid off. This becomes especially challenging if you found yourself in debtor's prison for your inability to pay off your credit. Debtor's prison was usually a separate section of the prison, though there were a few separate buildings for debtors to be kept. One of the things keeping people from falling into poverty, other than obvious negative aspects of poverty and being sent to prison, was the looming threat of workhouses.

The Poor Law of 1834 was devised to make workhouses responsible for the poor rather than each parish. Workhouses were designed so that only the people who desperately needed help would go there. Families would be split up, meals were meager, and the rules were very strict. Men and women were put to work and children would sometimes get sent out to work in factories or mines.

Workhouses were large factories where those too poor to take care of themselves were often sent. Some common residents in workhouses were orphans, other abandoned children, the elderly, and single mothers. If a family were to live in a workhouse, they would almost certainly be split up, as children worked and lived in one place, men in another, and women yet somewhere else. The workhouses utilized the poor for manual labor and in turn, provided them with a roof over their heads, medical care, and food. Children in workhouses were also likely to be 'hired out' or in effect sold to mines or factories. The public feared these workhouses, and the government encouraged this fear, as it reduced poverty.

Some relief was brought by The Ten Hours Act, passed in 1847, which dictated that women and children not be made to work more than 10 hours a day on weekdays, eight hours on Saturdays and not at all on Sundays. It was, in its time, quite controversial and took many attempts to pass.

Disease and Illness

Diseases were at a high in London when the slums developed in the nineteenth century because of the population increase and decrease in sanitation and unhygienic environment. For the poor and lower class, the water wasn't clean, the ventilation was poor and space was nonexistent so diseases like cholera, smallpox, typhoid and typhoid were widespread. The upper class was mostly unaware of the disgusting living conditions of the poor, and many of them who were aware believed that their suffering was punishment for their sins and laziness. Things didn't start changing until the upper and middle class citizens started to explore the slums as if they were one of them.

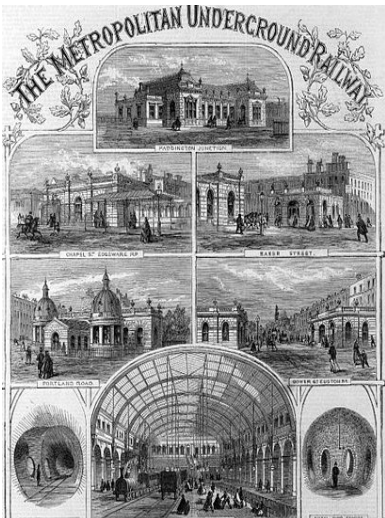
Transportation

The streets of Victorian London were horribly crowded with horses pulling omnibuses, cabs, carriages and carts. Agriculture in rural England had gone down since the 1800s and many of the farmers left and came to the city. In a twelve-hour day, between the hours of 9 am and 9 pm, an average of 125,859 vehicles passed through the streets. In the 1830s London Bridge was finished by a man named John Rennie, making it possible for people to cross over the Thames River.

The steam engine became a popular mode of transportation and by the 1860s the people of England were riding trains everywhere. The Metropolitan railway was opened underground and helped other subway trains come, starting the subway era. The railways started carrying tens of thousands of people every day.

Communication

In The Victorian Era, they had primitive telegraphs, telephones, news paper, and the radio. William F. Cooke, an English Doctor returned to London with a primitive version on the telegraph. In 1876 Alexander Graham Bell made the telephone, which was later improved by another American inventor, Thomas Edison. In 1846, the London Daily News printed its first news paper. The editor was Charles Dickens. Guglielmo Marconi was born in 1874. He received an education in science. He worked on electromagnetic waves, that were as fast as light, and then he moved with his mom to England and helped create the radio.



Queen Victoria



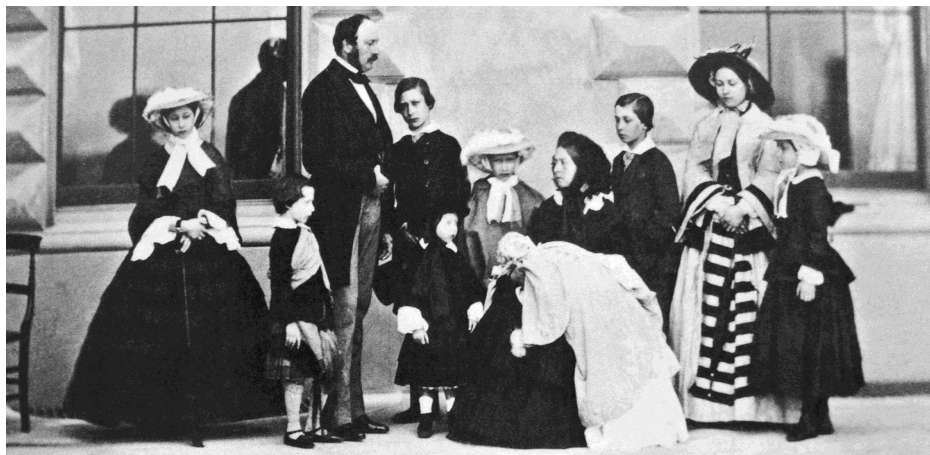
Queen Victoria ruled England during a turbulent era, the Victorian Era, which was named after her. She was born on May 24, 1819. Her parents were Edward, the Duke of Kent, and Victoria, the princess of Germany. She was raised very simply. Princess Alexandrina Victoria had a sheltered, fatherless childhood. Her father died when she was eight months old and her mother was overly protective. Her mother made Victoria sleep in the same bedroom as her; Victoria finally had a room to herself when she became queen at age 18 on June 20, 1837.

Victoria but she was not crowned queen until the next year, June 28, 1838 at Westminster Abbey. It was very difficult for her in the beginning. Even though Victoria had a good education, she still had a lot to learn about ruling. Queen Victoria didn't just rule over Great Britain, and India but also one quarter of the world's land and people.

On February 10, 1840, Queen Victoria married her distant cousin Prince Albert in the Chapel Royal at St. James Palace. Many citizens didn't approve of Prince Albert because he was German royalty, but Victoria didn't let them influence her. Queen Victoria depended on him, as the master of the house and her moral guide. Prince Albert had lots of responsibilities. They had nine children and tried to have a normal family life by reading together and going ice skating often. In December, 1861, Albert died from typhoid fever. Queen Victoria was devastated and withdrew from public life for years.

The Victorian Era was a time of great expansion of the United Kingdom as well as developments in industry, medicine, politics, culture and science. Queen Victoria's own strict standards and morality was publically lauded and she would often try to privately influence government policy.

Queen Victoria died on January 22, 1901, at 82 years old, surrounded by all of her children and grandchildren. Her reign had lasted 63 years, and she was the longest reigning British monarch in history. Her 60 year old son, Alfred, took the throne. Queen Victoria was buried next to her beloved husband, Albert, who had died 40 years earlier. The citizens of Britain honored their queen by draping the streets in purple hangings and white bows, her favorite colors. Queen Victoria was loved and respected by her people.



Queen Victoria (seated) with Albert and their nine children, 1857

Traditional English Christmas Carols:



Traditional English carols are prominently featured in *A Christmas Carol*. Here is a history of two of the carols:

I Heard the Bells on Christmas Day is a Christmas Carol written in 1863. It is based on the poem "Christmas Bells" by Henry Wadsworth Longfellow. He wrote this poem on Christmas day, December 25, 1864. It is a paraphrase in the Holy Bible that says "Glory to God in the highest, and on Earth peace, good will toward men (Luke 2:14). The poem reflected off of the Civil War and how Longfellow wanted there to be peace on earth. The original poem was called *Christmas Bells* with seven stanzas.

In 1872, John Baptiste Calkin dropped the 2 stanza that referred to the Civil War and wrote the music for the Christmas carol. People used to wait for Christmas and sing the song all day.

Here We Come a Wassailing is a traditional English carol written around 1850. People would sing *Here We Come a Wassailing* door to door. Wassail is a salutation wishing health to someone. It is also a warm drink of spiced ale. The orphans used to dance around England singing the song on December 25th. The rich sometimes would help the orphans out and sing along or give them money while they were singing door to door. The song is also known as *Here We Come a Caroling*.

Famous Actors who Have Played Scrooge

Jim Carrey: Voiced the character of Scrooge in the 2009 animated version of *A Christmas Carol*

Kelsey Grammer: Played Scrooge in the 2004 film *A Christmas Carol: The Musical*

Tom Hanks: Voiced Scrooge in the *Polar Express* in 2004

Vanessa Williams: Played Scrooge in *A Diva's Christmas Carol* in 2000

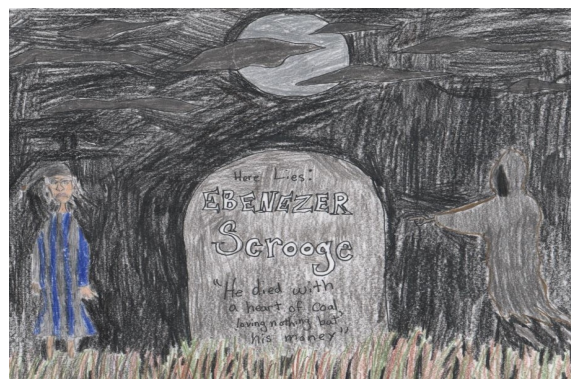
Susan Lucci: Played Elizabeth Scrooge in the movie *Ebbie* in 1995

James Earl Jones: Played Scrooge in *Bah, Humbug!: The Story of Charles Dickens' 'A Christmas Carol* in 1994. It was a dramatic reading that was held in the Pierpont Morgan Library in New York.

Patrick Stewart: Played Scrooge in *A Christmas Carol* in the 1999 movie.

Bill Murray: Played a Scrooge-typed character in the 1988 movie *Scrooged*.

Albert Finney: Played Scrooge in the movie *Scrooge* in 1970.



Scrooge sees what his fate might be. Is it too late to change?

***A Christmas Carol* in the Classroom**



Use these questions as group discussion starters and writing prompts for before and after the play .

Pre- show questions

Have you read *A Christmas Carol* by Charles Dickens?

Have you seen a movie based on *A Christmas Carol* by Charles Dickens?

Post-show reflection questions

Victorian England and *A Christmas Carol*

Did the threat of debtor's prison affect the story and characters in any way? (see page 9)

How does the play reflect on the issues of money and the class system in Victorian England? (see page 8)

Scrooge

How would you react if you met Scrooge in real life?

Was what Scrooge experienced with the ghosts real or a dream?

If he was dreaming, why did Scrooge let these dreams affect him so deeply?

How would Scrooge be looked upon in today's world? Would he be considered a 'bad' person or just a good businessman?

Why did Scrooge hate Christmas?

If Scrooge had been less fortunate would he have the same view about Christmas? Why or Why not?

How would you react to the events of the night if YOU were Scrooge? Why?

A Christmas Carol

What character did you sympathize with?

What was the moral of the story?

Which lines of dialogue were most memorable to you? Why? Who spoke them?

What do you think was Tiny Tim's illness? Why?

How would the Cratchit family be living today?

Would you have been spiteful towards Scrooge if you were Mrs. Cratchit? Why or why not?

If you were Fred, would you have been so nice to Scrooge? Why or why not?

Do you think refusing to give money to charity makes Scrooge a bad person?

Has the play made you want to give money to the poor?

Resources

Books

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