

# *A Christmas Carol*

*By Charles Dickens*

## **STUDY GUIDE**

**CREATED BY NTC PRODUCTIONS**

A study guide for the CHARLES JONES' Adaptation

UPDATED OCTOBER 2010

# CHARLES DICKENS' VIEWS ON SOCIETY AND CHRISTMAS



A native of London, England, Charles Dickens wrote A Christmas Carol in 1843, when he was at the height of his career. He was a proud, successful writer whose novels brought tears to the eyes of devoted readers as far away as America.

At 31, Dickens had worked his way from the humble, often brutal experiences of a poverty-stricken childhood to the drawing rooms of London's literary set. He was the head of a large and costly household, and he felt hounded by the necessity to earn money and, at the same time, to maintain a brilliant career.

One of his greatest wishes as a writer was to expose the suffering and hopelessness of the poor working class in England during the Industrial Revolution. Written in just a month's time, A Christmas Carol contains Dickens' philosophy about the brotherhood of man and the necessity of good

will in human conduct.

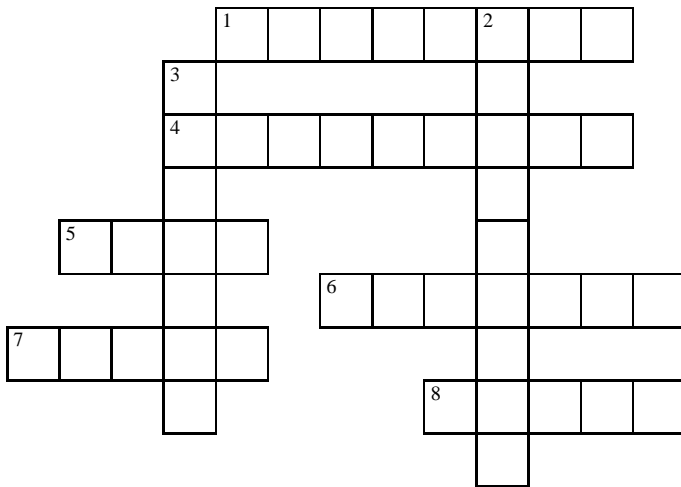
The characters and story of A Christmas Carol actually represent the problems that existed in England at the time. Scrooge represents the middle class society that was more interested in wealth and profit than brotherhood and equality. The Cratchit Family represents the poor working class. Scrooge mistreats Bob Cratchit in the same fashion that Dickens saw the middle class society treating the working class.

Perhaps Dickens chose Christmastime as the timeframe for his story because he truly believed in the power of Christmas to unite fellow men. Some of his thoughts on Christmas were included in his *Sketched by Boz*, written in 1836:

"Who can be insensible to the outpourings of good feeling, and the honest interchange of affectionate attachment which abound at this season of the year? A Christmas family-party! We know nothing in nature more delightful! There seems a magic in the very name of Christmas. Petty jealousies and discords are forgotten; social feelings are awakened in bosoms in which they have long been strangers. Father and son, or brother and sister, 'who have met and passed with averted gaze or a look of cold recognition for months before, proffer and return to the cordial embrace and bury their past animosities in their present happiness. Kindly hearts that have yearned towards each other but have been withheld by false notions of pride and self-dignity are again reunited, and all is kindness and benevolence! Would that Christmas lasted the whole year through (as it ought) and that the prejudices and passions which deform our better nature were never called into action among those who they should ever be strangers."

# VOCABULARY

Use the vocabulary words to fill in the crossword puzzle. Each word will be used once. Clues are listed below the puzzle.



## ACROSS

- 1 Something pleasing to eat that is considered rare or luxurious
- 4 To transfer from one place to another
- 5 The will or principle or determining cause by which things in general are believed to come to be as they are or events to happen as they do
- 6 To shake involuntarily
- 7 A mean grasping person, especially one who is extremely stingy with money
- 8 A long, usually plain, close-fitting jacket with a high collar

## DOWN

- 2 Not named or identified
- 3 To speak with involuntary disruption or blocking of speech

miser  
anonymous  
tremble  
fate  
tunic  
transport  
delicacy  
stutter

A SYNOPSIS OF THE CHARLES JONES' ADAPTATION OF

# *A Christmas Carol*

BY CHARLES DICKENS

ACT ONE

**Scene 1 – Christmas Eve on the streets of London, England, just outside the Counting House of Scrooge and Marley, 1885.**

***Music: GOD REST YE MERRY GENTLEMEN***

A wintry Christmas Eve is full of excitement as Londoners, both high born and low, prepare for the Christmas Holiday. One of them is Fred, the kind, well-educated nephew of Ebenezer Scrooge, who has come once again to visit his estranged uncle and invite him to Christmas dinner. Although Fred is determined to extend this invitation each year to his uncle, he is always refused and rudely dismissed by the ill-tempered and bitter man.

While on the street, Fred purchases some gifts for Scrooge, first from the vendor Jake, who sells a variety of fruits and vegetables, soup and wassail\*.

*JAKE: Why lad? Why do you do it? Coming down here every Christmas to be tossed out on your ear by that old skinflint - your Uncle Scrooge. And him without a kind word for anyone, let alone you sir.*

Nell is another vendor on the street, who, like Jake, owes her living to Scrooge, whose high rent fees leave her little on which to live. Jake points out that even though Scrooge's partner Marley has been dead for seven years, his name is still painted on the Counting House doorway.

*NELL: Some say Scrooge is so busy counting his money he's not had the time to notice that his old partner Marley's been dead and gone – dead and gone.*

***Music: GLOUCESTERSHIRE WASSAIL\****

\* NOTE: "Wassail" was originally a word that meant to greet or salute someone -- groups would go out wassailing on cold evenings, and when they approached a door would be offered a mug of warm cider or ale. Jake's wassail is made with ale or some other alcohol such as brandy.

**Scene 2 - Inside the cold, confined Counting House\* of Scrooge and Marley, late afternoon of the same day.**

Ebenezer Scrooge, a grumpy, heartless miser, who is as cold and sharp as the weather outside, sits at his desk counting money. His clerk,\* Bob Cratchit, sits at his desk and tries desperately to keep warm in an office where coal is used sparingly.

Fred enters with a lively “Merry Christmas, Uncle,” and his greeting is returned by Scrooge with a dismissive “Bah! Humbug!”

*FRED: Christmas a humbug, Uncle? You don't mean that I'm sure.*

*SCROOGE: I do. If I could work my will, every idiot who goes about with Merry Christmas on his lips should be boiled with his own pudding and buried with a stake of holly through his heart.*

Scrooge grudgingly accepts Fred's gifts of soup and a red knit scarf but he cruelly refuses the dinner invitation.

*FRED: I'm sorry with all my heart to find you so resolute. But I'll keep my Christmas humor to the last. So a Merry Christmas, Uncle!*

*SCROOGE: Bah Humbug!*

As Fred leaves, some children enter the Counting House\*, infuriating Scrooge with their playful attempts to get some coins. Scrooge kicks them out, just as two businessmen enter the Counting House, requesting charitable donations for the poor and destitute, “who suffer greatly at the present time.” Scrooge refuses to part with any of his money, saying, “I help to support the prisons and workhouses...those who are badly off must go there.”

At the end of the long, dreary day, Bob Cratchit happily gets his meager pay and takes his leave of the Counting House, thrilled to not have to return until the day after Christmas.

\*NOTE: A counting house was where business accounting took place, loans were created and money was kept, as in a bank. In England, the word “clerk” is pronounced “klark,” and rhymes with bark. A clerk is an employee in the legal or banking business.

**Scene 3 – The streets of London, early evening.**

***Music: THE HOLLY AND THE IVY***

Bob Cratchit leaves the Counting House, surprised to find that four of his children (Peter, Belinda, Francis and his small crippled son, Tiny Tim) have come to walk him home for Christmas Eve. With his few precious coins, Bob encourages the children to buy a goose and other treats for their Christmas dinner and to purchase a present for their mother.

***Music: SUNNY BANK***

Bob and the children start off to their house in Camden Town\* as the people on the streets wish one another a glad Christmas and head homeward. As Scrooge locks the Counting House door, he hears a mournful voice call his name and sees a ghostly apparition on the door sign: the face of Jacob Marley! Just as suddenly, the apparition is gone. Dismissing the ghostly image with a, "Humbug," Scrooge makes his way home through the empty streets.

**Music: COVENTRY CAROL**

NOTE: Camden Town is a poor working class neighborhood in the center of London.

**Scene 4 – Later that night in Scrooge’s vast bedchamber, once quite splendid, but now neglected and in decay.**

Scrooge sits in his nightshirt in the chilly bedroom, eating the soup he received from his nephew. He is interrupted by a mysterious and spontaneous ringing of bells that grow incessantly louder and then are silenced as quickly as they began. Confused, he dismisses the noise and prepares for bed. As the clock chimes 12:00 midnight, sounds of heavy chains, wind and agonized cries spring from everywhere as smoke from the fireplace permeates the room.

Out of the wild screams and billowing smoke now stands what appears to be the ghost of Scrooge’s former business partner Jacob Marley in the burning fireplace, wearing his familiar coat and boots, but wrapped and burdened with heavy chains, locks and a cashbox lashed to his chest.

*MARLEY: Man of the worldly mind do you believe in me or not?*

*SCROOGE: I do. I must. But why do spirits walk the earth and why do they come to me?*

*MARLEY: I am doomed to wander through the world. Oh, woe is me! And I must witness what I cannot share but might have shared in life and turned to happiness.*

Marley explains to Scrooge that he created his burden of chains during his lifetime and that Scrooge should be aware of the heavy, strong coil he has crafted for himself.

*MARLEY: Why did I walk through the crowds of my fellow beings with my eyes turned down? Why? Hear me, Scrooge. My time is nearly gone.*

Marley advises that Scrooge has a chance and hope of escaping a similar fate, where he is doomed to wander, burdened by his selfish choices in life. He predicts that Scrooge will be haunted by three spirits during the next three nights. Scrooge asks if they all might visit on the same night so that he can have it over and done. Marley ignores the request and tells him to remember what has passed between them and then, with a rumble of the earth, he disappears into the ominous smoke.

Initially terrified by the event, Scrooge eventually dismisses it all as a dream and goes back to bed.

**Scene 5 – Later the same night in the bedchamber as the clock strikes 1:00 a.m.**

Suddenly with the clock strike, the windows of Scrooge’s bedchamber fly open and wind blows snow into the room. With a tinkling of bells, a beautiful woman from an earlier time, dressed elegantly in red and winter white, enters miraculously from the window.

Scrooge awakes and, trembling, asks, “Are you the spirit, Madam, whose coming was foretold to me?”

*PAST: I am.*

*SCROOGE: Who and what are you?*

*PAST: I am the Ghost of Christmas Past.*

*SCROOGE: Long past?*

*PAST: No, your past, Ebenezer Scrooge – your past.*

Suddenly the Ghost enchants the bed causing it to spin and fly, magically transporting Scrooge out of his bedchamber and into his own past. The bed lands in the place where he was born, and later where he attended school. He sees once again his little sister Fan, alive and beautiful, singing a Christmas carol with her brother, once again a young schoolboy.

***Music: AWAY IN A MANGER***

Later, Fan would marry and die in childbirth, but her son, Scrooge’s nephew Fred, would live and prosper. Scrooge is quite moved to see his sister alive again and, finding himself uncomfortable with the feeling, wants nothing but to go back home. Before he can insist on it, the bed ferries him to a new location.

Scrooge now finds himself in a place of business, the Fezziwig Warehouse, where he was apprenticed as a young man. He witnesses once again the kind, fun-loving Mr. and Mrs. Fezziwig as they host a Christmas party for their employees and friends, filled with food, ale, gifts and merriment.

***Music: MY DANCING DAY***

Scrooge sees Belle Fezziwig during the spirited dance, and sees his young, handsome self as her partner. He is dumbstruck by her beauty and youth – and powerfully recalls the love he felt for her. The music is infectious and Scrooge gets quite carried away with the music, dance and celebration.

*PAST: Come now, Ebenezer. Contain yourself, sir. What old Fezziwig has done seems a small matter, a trifle, to make all these silly folk so full of gratitude.*

*SCROOGE: A small matter?*

*PAST: He has spent but a few pounds of your mortal money, three or four perhaps. Is that so much that he deserves this praise?*

*SCROOGE: The money is of no consequence, Spirit. He has the power to render us happy or unhappy, to make our service light or burdensome; a pleasure or a toil. The happiness he gives is quite as great as if it cost a fortune.*

**Music: SUSANNI**

At the end of the evening the Fezziwigs and their guests sing a tender Christmas song and say goodnight to one another. Just as the guests are leaving, Scrooge sees his younger self propose marriage to Belle and she joyfully accepts his ring.

Feeling tortured by his memories, Scrooge demands to return home. The ghost insists on showing him one more event from the past. In spite of his objections, Scrooge sees himself one year later, obsessively working late into the night at the warehouse. Belle enters and tells him, "Dear Ebby, your business has quite consumed you."

Scrooge answers her by insisting that he will be a good man of business. Belle tries to make him see that he is changed, that he worships his gold coins in a way that surpasses his own affection for her. He dismisses their early relationship, explaining, "I was a boy," condemning his former, loving behavior towards her as immature and foolish.

*BELLE: Perhaps your coins can cheer and comfort you in time to come, as I would have tried to do. Now I release you, with a full heart, for the love of the man you once were.*

Just before Belle leaves his office, she drops the engagement ring into the weight scales on the desk. She has with great sadness ended the engagement.

The Ghost of Christmas Past returns Ebenezer to his own bed, saying, "I told you these are but shadows of the things that have been. They are what they are, Ebenezer. The Past cannot be changed." And then she is gone.

**Music: OH COME, OH COME, EMMANUEL**

Scrooge examines his now very ordinary room, looking for any signs of the visiting ghosts – but he finds nothing. Emotionally exhausted, he climbs into his bed and closes the bed curtains with a dismissive, "Bah! Humbug!"



## ACT TWO

### Scene 1 – In Scrooge’s bed chamber, the same night, as the clock strikes two.

**Music: THE BOAR’S HEAD CAROL**

Scrooge, unable to sleep, stands staring at the clock as it strikes the two o’clock hour, when suddenly he is aware of great boisterous laughter, golden light and a great bounty of food, delicacies and greenery. Appearing before him is a giant, joyful man who introduces himself as The Ghost of Christmas Present and who shares with him the “milk of human kindness” from a pitcher that never runs dry.

*SCROOGE: Spirit. Conduct me where you will. If you have ought to teach me, let me profit by it.*

*PRESENT: Touch my robe.*

### Scene 2 – The humble home of Scrooge’s clerk Bob Cratchit, his wife and five children.

As Scrooge touches the ghost’s garment, he is quickly spirited away to the home of his long-time clerk Bob Cratchit, a place he has never been before. The family is poor, but a great faith and love pervade the household as they excitedly prepare their meager feast and welcome home their eldest daughter from her apprenticeship at a milliner’s\* shop.

**Music: THE OTHER NIGHT**

*BOB CRATCHIT: A Merry Christmas to us all my dears. God bless us.*

*TINY TIM: God bless us everyone!*

Scrooge asks the ghost if the crippled boy Tiny Tim, whose great capacity for love has surprisingly touched him, will live. The ghost responds, “If these shadows remain unaltered by the future, the child will die.”

Scrooge witnesses the loving family propose a toast to “Mister Scrooge – the founder of our feast,” in spite of the hardships he causes them to endure. The shadows fade as Scrooge is ferried off to witness yet another present-day Christmas celebration.

\*NOTE: Milliner – A person who designs, makes, or sells hats for women

### Scene 3 – The beautiful home of Scrooge’s nephew Fred and his wife Millie.

Now the ghost brings Scrooge to the home of his nephew, Fred, where he and his wife Millie host a festive holiday party where guests dance the polka and play lively games such as “Blind Man’s Bluff” and “Yes and No.” Scrooge is overwhelmed by the generosity and amiability of both his nephew and niece.

*FRED: To Uncle Scrooge – Bless him.*

*MILLIE: A Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year to him – wherever he is.*

*FRED: He wouldn't take it from me but may he have it nevertheless. Uncle Scrooge!*

**Music: GREENSLEEVES**

The guests all assemble for one last song and say goodnight. Scrooge is fascinated and emotional, unaware that the hearty ghost has now become an old man and is starting to disappear.

*SCROOGE: No, come back! There are more games...Spirit – Spirit of Christmas Present – Where are you? Dear Spirit, don't leave me.*

*PRESENT: The Present is fast fading Scrooge. Seize it. Love it. Care for your fellows, Scrooge; for the Present is fading now and soon gone.*

**Scene 4 – As the clock chimes three, Scrooge now finds himself in a disorienting fog as an ominous Phantom appears.**

Suddenly aware of a dark, silent presence, Scrooge addresses the final ghost.

*SCROOGE: Ghost of the Future, I fear you more than any specter I have yet seen. Will you not speak to me? Lead on then, dread specter – lead on.*

As the ghost points out into the void, the fog clears to reveal three men warming themselves around a small fire. They are discussing the death of some clearly disliked, unfortunate man with disrespectful sarcasm. One of them says, "It's likely to be a very cheap funeral for upon my life, I don't know of anybody to go to it."

Scrooge is confused by their conversation, but before he has a chance to think, the spirit reveals another dark place, though somewhat familiar, a place very like his own bedroom.

**Scene 5 – A bed, much like Scrooge's own, appears out of the darkness. A man lies in the bed, seemingly dead.**

Two charwomen\* examine the room and prepare to brazenly steal anything they think might bring a good price, in spite of their superstitious discomfort in the presence of the dead man. One of them justifies their cause, saying, "If he wanted to keep 'em after he was dead, why wasn't he more natural in his lifetime? If he had been, he'd have had someone to look after him when he was struck with death, instead of lying, gasping out his last, alone, by himself."

They pack up the bed covers, bed curtains and curtain rings – when suddenly they are thrilled to discover a money purse, still strung around the corpse's neck. They take the purse

and split the money between them with great glee, saying, “He frightened everyone away from him when he was alive, to profit us when he was dead!.” As they fade from sight, Scrooge addresses the ghost.

*SCROOGE: Spirit, the case of this unhappy man might be my own. This is a dreadful place. Let us go. Let me see some tenderness connected with death.*

\*NOTE: Charwoman - a woman hired to do general cleaning, especially in an office or large house.

### **Scene 6 – The Cratchit house appears out of the gloom.**

Mrs. Cratchit and her four elder children quietly work by the fire, sewing and reading. There is an underlying sadness as they wait for Bob Cratchit to return home. Finally Bob arrives later than expected, explaining that he stopped to visit Tiny Tim’s grave along the way. “I took some flowers – primroses. Tim used to love the colors so.” The family tries valiantly to be brave for one another in their grief for this young boy taken much too soon.

*BOB: But however and whenever we part from one another, I am sure we’ll none of us forget poor Tiny Tim shall we? Or this first parting there was among us.*

Scrooge approaches the fragile family, attempting to embrace them as they vanish into the darkness. He asks the Phantom who the unfortunate man was that he saw lying dead and alone in the bed. In response, he hears a great powerful noise - a wailing that screams the name that is now visible, clearly etched on a revealed tombstone: “Ebenezer Scrooge.” Scrooge falls onto the tombstone and weeps.

*SCROOGE: No – No! I may yet change these dread shadows! I shall honor Christmas in my heart and keep it all the year round. I shall live in the Past, the Present and the Future....Spirit! Hear me! I am not the man I was...*

### **Scene 7 – Early morning, Scrooge’s own bedchamber.**

Scrooge is awakened by the sound of ringing church bells and streams of morning light. Slowly he realizes that he is back in his own bed and that the bed curtains have not been torn down.

*SCROOGE: The room is my own. Best and happiest of all, the time before me is my own to make amends. Jacob Marley and the Christmas Time be praised for this!*

**Music: GOOD CHRISTIAN MEN REJOICE**

Scrooge dives into his suit of clothes and runs out into the street, delighted by the ringing church bells. A young boy passes with his sled and Scrooge calls to him, "What's today my fine fellow?" The boy tells him with a perplexed glance that it's Christmas Day. Scrooge realizes that the ghosts have all visited in one night and that he now has all of Christmas Day to "make amends."

He continues joyfully into the streets, surprises people with his new-found generosity and buys a number of gifts for Bob Cratchit's family. He approaches the street vendors Jake and Nell and, in with an open-hearted gesture, he releases all their past debts! Jake is shocked with disbelief.

*JAKE: Mr. Scrooge! Perhaps a bit of a lie down, sir! Until you've recovered yourself.*

*SCROOGE: That's it Jake! Yes, my man, I have recovered myself. Merry Christmas!*

Scrooge greets everyone on the street with generous good will, including the same two businessmen who had come to the Counting House the day before with their charitable request. Scrooge pledges a significant contribution to the dumbfounded gentlemen, explaining that there are a great many back payments included in the sum. Scrooge then sees his nephew and niece in the marketplace. He first approaches Fred with trepidation awkwardly wishing the two of them a Merry Christmas. He then takes Millie's hand and humbly and sincerely asks Fred's forgiveness for all his past, foolish behavior.

His answer comes in a heartfelt, emphatic embrace from Fred and an affectionate invitation from Millie to come to Christmas dinner. Scrooge accepts with glee, looking forward to a rousing game of Blind Man's Bluff. However, he insists that first he deliver a collection of gifts to his clerk's family.

***Music: HERE WE COME A WASSAILING***

Scrooge, Fred, Millie and everyone present follow Scrooge to the home of an unsuspecting Bob Cratchit, who is just beginning to celebrate Christmas with his family.

At the sound of carolers, the eldest daughter Martha Cratchit opens the door to a rush of well-wishers led by Scrooge, bearing a turkey, sugar cakes and gifts for all. To the Cratchit family's great surprise, Scrooge takes Bob's hand and sincerely asks his forgiveness. He then requests permission from Mrs. Cratchit to have a doctor examine Tiny Tim, adding, "the bill will come to me." The Cratchits are overwhelmed and overjoyed.

*TINY TIM: Mr. Scrooge, Mr. Scrooge, won't you stay for dinner? We have a goose you know.*

*SCROOGE: No, my fine lad, I must have dinner with my family. But I wish you a Merry Christmas, Tim, with all my heart. God bless you, lad.*

*TINY TIM: God bless us, Everyone!*

**FINAL NOTE:**

**At the end of Charles Dickens' 1846 original novella, he writes:**

Scrooge was better than his word. He did it all, and infinitely more; and to Tiny Tim, who did not die, he was a second father. He became as good a friend, as good a master, and as good a man, as the good old city knew, or any other good old city, town, or borough, in the good old world. Some people laughed to see the alteration in him, but he let them laugh, and little heeded them; for he was wise enough to know that nothing ever happened on this globe, for good, at which some people did not have their fill of laughter in the outset; and knowing that such as these would be blind anyway, he thought it quite as well that they should wrinkle up their eyes in grins, as have the malady in less attractive forms. His own heart laughed: and that was quite enough for him.

He had no further intercourse with Spirits, but lived upon the Total Abstinence Principle, ever afterwards; and it was always said of him, that he knew how to keep Christmas well, if any man alive possessed the knowledge. May that be truly said of us, and all of us! And so, as Tiny Tim observed, God Bless Us, Every One!

## STUDY QUESTIONS

1. What was Ebenezer Scrooge's business and what was the most important thing in the world to him?
2. Why wouldn't Scrooge permit a fire in the counting house?
3. Jacob Marley's ghost left Scrooge with a lesson and a prediction. What was the lesson and what was the prediction?
4. Based on the trip taken with the Ghost of Christmas Past, how did Scrooge compare his old boss to Fezziwig?
5. Why didn't Scrooge marry the lady he knew from the past?
6. What did the Ghost of Christmas Present tell Scrooge about whether Tiny Tim would live or die?
7. What two things did the Ghost of Christmas to Come show Scrooge that upset and frightened him?
8. After he was returned to his home and to his own time, Scrooge did three good deeds. What were they?
9. What do you think is meant when a person describes another person as a "Scrooge"? Have you ever known or heard about someone being described as a "Scrooge"? Who?
10. What physical things began to happen to Scrooge when he became very frightened? Have you ever experienced the same symptoms? What frightened you and how did you feel?
11. Scrooge promised he would keep Christmas in his heart throughout the year. How do you think people can keep Christmas in their heart even when it isn't Christmas?

## A DICKENS OF A SCRAMBLER!

Try to unscramble the following words taken from names, places, and things from Charles Dickens' *A Christmas Carol*:

1. SAMSIRTC H
2. COGREOS
3. THOGS
4. ROCAL
5. TACRITCH
6. GUMHUB!
7. NYIT MIT
8. SENDICK
9. DONLON
- 10.REENBEEZ

Unscrambled Words:

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_
5. \_\_\_\_\_
6. \_\_\_\_\_
7. \_\_\_\_\_
8. \_\_\_\_\_
9. \_\_\_\_\_
10. \_\_\_\_\_

## ACTIVITY SUGGESTIONS

Most of the following activities can be used either before or after the performance.

### LANGUAGE ARTS ACTIVITIES

#### Storytelling Methods:

1. Discuss all the ways a story can be told: in a book, by a storyteller, through a play, in a dance, through music, in a comic book, on television, or in a movie. Are there other ways?
2. Talk about how the story is told in the production of *A Christmas Carol*. Prepare students for the different ways the story will be presented to them.
3. Choose a familiar story. Choose three ways it can be told and choose groups to tell it these three different ways in class. Younger children may need to work together as one group for this activity.

#### Develop "What If" Stories:

1. What if Scrooge did not meet Marley's Ghost? What might have happened to him?
2. What if Scrooge had been very poor?
3. What if Scrooge did not see his grave?

### ART ACTIVITIES

In order to approach these activities, illustrations of period clothing and London streets might be useful to generate ideas.

#### Costume Design:

Talk about the importance of the costume designer in every theatrical production. Costume design usually begins with a drawing or rendering of what each character will look like at each moment of the play. Ask the students to design their own costumes for Scrooge, Tiny Tim, The Ghosts and Bob Cratchit.

#### Set Design:

Discuss the time period and location for *A Christmas Carol*. Ask students to be designers for their own production of the play and to draw a location for one of the scenes. Students might choose from the following: Scrooge's Counting House, Bob Cratchit's House, Scrooge's Bedchamber, Fezziwig's Party, Scrooge's gravesite, or an exterior London scene.

### OTHER ACTIVITIES

1. Try this exercise based on the idea of visiting the Past, Present, and Future. Have students pair off into Scrooge and Ghost pairs. One student leads the other, who is blindfolded, around the classroom, through the school building, outdoors, etcetera, leading and taking them through various barriers in their way. At the end of this "trust" exercise, have the two students change places and return. Following this exercise, discuss trust and ask students to share their feelings about the experience.
2. Write a review or critique of the play. Be sure to include personal responses to the plot, the characters and the theatrical presentation.

## EXPRESSIVE MOVEMENT

1. Explore natural movements that express greed. Exaggerate these movements.
2. Explore natural movements of giving. Exaggerate these movements.
3. Select a scene in the play *A Christmas Carol* that contains these attitudes. Using the greed and giving exaggerated movements, choreograph the scene, either with or without music. Any music can be used: traditional, rock, jazz, rap, classical, etc. Let the movement tell the story of the scene. If music is used, choreograph the scene in two different ways. The first time, allow the movement to be dictated by the music. The next time, let the music be secondary and the movements be primary. The second way may feel as if the movement is fighting against the music, but this often results in a more interesting piece of choreography.
4. The most important element in this creation is the feeling from inside that first the choreographer, and then the performers, bring.



## REACHING INSIDE THROUGH ART:



We can use art to express what Scrooge is like and how he feels on the inside. Examine the colors, textures, and shapes of Scrooge. (This may also be done using any of the characters in the play as well as the student's own self.) Create a three-dimensional piece of artwork that expresses Scrooge at the beginning of the play and a piece that expresses Scrooge at the end of the play.

\*Created by Carole Edie Smith



## THE ORIGIN OF SOME OF OUR CHRISTMAS TRADITIONS

**THE CHRISTMAS CAROL:** The Christmas carol began as a non-religious song which served as the accompaniment to a dance. Carols were sometimes used as processional songs in courtly or civic processions as well as those in church. Gradually, carols became associated with important Christian festivals, and the carols we know today are almost exclusively Christmas songs.

The carol is made up of a "burden" (refrain) and a series of stanzas. The burden begins the carol and is sung after each stanza. Each carol celebrates or refers to a single theme, and in this stage version of Charles Dickens' *A Christmas Carol*, the carol is used throughout the production.

**THE CHRISTMAS CARD:** In the very month in which Charles Dickens was completing *A Christmas Carol* (1843), another Englishman, Sir Henry Cole, had an idea that has become one of our most popular Christmas traditions of all.

Cole suggested to his artist friend, J.C. Horsley, that they design an illustrated card that could be used to send Christmas greetings to friends. Horsley went straight to work to produce the first illustrated Christmas card. Roughly 1,000 copies of the card were sold that year.

The idea of Christmas cards became more popular each year, and Horsley designed many new versions of his Christmas card in later years. Not all of his designs were met with wide-spread approval, however. One of his cards which showed a circle of friends raising their goblets to propose a Christmas toast was sharply criticized for "encouraging drunkenness."

Thanks to Sir Henry Cole and Horsley, Christmas cards have become a colorful addition to our Christmas traditions.

**PLUM PUDDING:** Roast goose and plum pudding were the two essential items for the Christmas feast in Victorian England. Charles Dickens described Mrs. Cratchit's plum pudding as a "speckled cannon ball . . . with Christmas holly stuck into the top." Although plum pudding had been made with plums in the past, raisins and currants, replaced them well before the nineteenth century, and one definition of the Victorian plum pudding became "a pudding without plums."

There are numerous Victorian recipes for plum pudding - - including a monster pudding used by the Queen of England's chef, which was sufficient to make 150 small puddings to distribute to the entire royal household staff. The ingredients are fairly overpowering: 60 lbs. flour, 30 lbs. sugar, 40 lbs. currants, 40 lbs. raisins, 30 lbs. canned peel, 50 lbs. chopped beef suet, 4 gals. Strong ale, 150 eggs, .1lb. mixed spices, 1 bottle of rum, and 1 bottle of brandy. (Everything but plums and the kitchen sink!!!)

# THEATRE ETIQUETTE

Here is a wonderful opportunity to help children learn what happens when they go to a live performance and what behavior is appropriate. Please discuss the following procedures with your students.

## What to DO at the theatre:

1. Have your ticket in hand. Give your ticket to the ticket taker as you enter the theatre.
2. Walk slowly and talk quietly as you enter the theatre.
3. An usher will show you where to sit. Use the restroom and/or get a drink BEFORE the performance begins.
4. Once you are seated, you may talk QUIETLY to the person next to you until the performance begins.
5. You will know when the performance begins because the theatre will get darker. This is the signal for you to become very quiet. The lights in the auditorium will be turned down and the lights in the stage area will become much brighter.
6. Sometimes the auditorium will remain dark for awhile before the stage lights come up. Do not be alarmed – the stage lights will come up soon.
7. Stay in your seat throughout the performance.
8. Here are some appropriate ways to let the performer know if you are enjoying the play:
  - a. Listen quietly and watch closely. This is not a film. The performers can hear you if you speak and will think that you do not appreciate what they are doing.
  - b. If something on stage is funny and you enjoy it, laugh if you want to.
  - c. It is not necessary to applaud for every scene or song. Applaud when you want to, but only if it doesn't interfere with someone speaking or singing.
9. There may be an intermission halfway through the performance. This is usually a fifteen-minute break where you may be allowed to move out of your seat and use the restroom facilities. If you have no reason to be out of your seat at this time, it is best to remain.

## What NOT to do at the theatre:

1. Do not talk, or make other disruptive, verbal noises. This distracts the actors on stage as well as the audience members around you.
2. No cell phones. Turn your phones off, or don't bring them in the theatre at all. They distract everyone on and off stage.
3. No texting. You are to focus on the production. You can text your friends after the show, telling them how much you loved the show!
4. No kicking. Do not kick the seat of the person in front of you.