

PRE-PERFORMANCE ACTIVITIES

- 1) Find a copy of any version of *A Christmas Carol* to read to or with your students.
- 2) Charles Dickens wrote *A Christmas Carol* in 1843. Talk with your students about the differences involved in writing a book in 1894 and in 2011. What challenges would the author face? Are there aspects of the book that seem “dated” to your students?
- 3) Ask your students to brainstorm the different kinds of people needed to create a musical (for example, actors, a director, songwriters, designers, etc.)
- 4) Gather some sample props and costume pieces that may be used by characters in *A Christmas Carol*. Divide the class into small groups. Select various scenes from the book and allow your students to choose which character that they would like to act out. Students could also make simple masks to represent the characters.
- 5) As you read scenes in the book, have your students act out how they believe each scene will be performed in the play.
- 6) Discuss with your students the etiquette of being an audience member at a live theatrical performance. Items for discussion: appropriate responses, no chewing gum, no talking, going to the bathroom before the performance, etc.

PLOT SYNOPSIS

Ebenezer Scrooge is a miserly old man who believes that Christmas is just an excuse for people to miss work and for idle people to expect handouts. He doesn't believe in all of the good cheer and charity that the season promotes, and he makes sure everyone knows it.

That night, Scrooge is visited by the ghost of his former business associate, Jacob Marley - - a man who was a greedy and cold as Scrooge is. Marley warns Scrooge that if he continues to live so selfishly, he will spend eternity wearing the chains that his greed has built.

Three ghosts visit Scrooge successively: the Ghost of Christmas Past, the Ghost of Christmas Present, and the Ghost of Christmas Yet to Come. They show Scrooge his error in valuing money over people. Scrooge is frightened by the bleak picture of his life and promises to change his ways. Scrooge awakes on Christmas morning a new man. He becomes jolly and charitable, and truly turns into the man he promised the ghosts he would become. He carries the spirit of Christmas with him all the year round.

CHARACTER LIST

Ebenezer Scrooge

The main character of the play, *A Christmas Carol*. His character begins as a greedy man who is consumed with his own needs. As the play progresses, Scrooge learns important life lessons that benefit him and the people around him.

Question: How might have Scrooge's life been if Belle had not broken off the engagement?

Bob Cratchit

Cratchit is Scrooge's dedicated clerk. Cratchit is a very kind and poor man. He remains humble and kind even when Scrooge mistreats him with his harsh words and actions. He loves his large family dearly and they are of utmost importance in his life. He strives to do what is best for them.

Question: What might have happened if Bob Cratchit had not been so nice to Scrooge?

Mrs. Cratchit

She is Bob Cratchit's wife. She is a kind hearted woman who loves her husband and family.

Question: How might the conversation go between Mrs. Cratchit and Scrooge at the dinner table?

Tiny Tim

Tim is Bob Cratchit's son. He is crippled and the audience identifies with him as a poor child in need of help.

Question: How would Tiny Tim's life be different if had he not been born crippled?

Fred

Fred is Scrooge's nephew. He is a gentle man who loves Christmas. He always invites Scrooge over for the holidays but is turned down. Scrooge wants nothing to do with Christmas!

Question: Why did Fred always invite Scrooge to his Christmas party?

Belle

A lovely woman who was going to marry Scrooge before he became so greedy and selfish. She broke off the engagement and told him that maybe his money will bring him happiness.

Question: What do you think that Belle meant when she dropped the ring in Scrooge's scale?

Fan

Fan is Scrooge's Sister and Fred's mom. Scrooge sees her when the Ghost of Christmas past takes him back to the place he was born. Scrooge has fond memories of his sister as his memories of the past are rekindled.

Question: How might have Scrooge's life changed if his sister did not die?

Fezziwig

A jovial man who brings good cheer to the people around him. He enjoys Christmas immensely and is known for his grand holiday parties.

Question: Why did Fezziwig have such great holiday parties in his community?

Two Portly Gentlemen

Two gentleman who visit Scrooge at the beginning of the play. They are looking for donations to help the poor. Scrooge is insensitive and rude to their requests for humanity and bids them farewell.

Question: What might the Two Portly Gentlemen do with the donations for the poor?

Jacob Marley

Marley was Scrooge's business partner when he was alive. His greed and selfishness matches Scrooges with complete accuracy. When Marley dies, he is condemned to wander through the world in heavy chains. Marley has learned from his mistakes and wants to save Scrooge from the same fate. He returns as a ghost because he wants Scrooge to change his ways before it is too late.

Question: How might Marley have avoided a life in heavy chains?

The Ghost of Christmas Past

This is the first ghost that visits Scrooge and the childlike personality takes Scrooge back in time to Christmases in his past. He ends his visit by telling Scrooge, "These are the shadows of the things that have been. They are what they are, Ebenezer. The past can not be changed."

Question: How do our past actions and decisions affect our future destiny?

The Ghost of Christmas Yet to Come

A slender phantom, 12 feet tall, draped and hooded, comes to tell Scrooge of his lonely death. This hooded ghost shows Scrooge what life will be like if he doesn't change his ways.

Question: Why is the Ghost of Christmas Yet to Come draped and hooded?

POST-SHOW CURRICULUM CONNECTIONS

MUSIC

Have your students learn the music for a song from the show. Have the students perform the song for another class that wasn't able to attend the show. (National Standard for Music Education: Content Standards 1, 5 & 6)

VISUAL ARTS

Throughout *A Christmas Carol* there are a number of visual clues that help establish the locales where individual scenes are taking place throughout the show. Have your students identify the specific props and scenery that allowed them to identify these different locales. (National Standards for Visual Arts: Content Standard 2)

ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS

Encourage each student who saw *A Christmas Carol* to take five minutes to think about the thoughts and feelings that the show inspired in them. Next, have them artistically express these feelings in a poem, picture, story or letter. Let them choose whichever form of expression they feel will best represent their individual experience. Encourage them to share these reflections with the other students in their class. (National Standards for Theatre: Content Standard 8)

SOCIAL SCIENCES:

In the past, a Town Crier would have to gather people at the Town Square and make an announcement in order to get news dispersed to other people. Various inventions over the past decades and centuries have made sending information much quicker in both written and verbal form. Have students brainstorm all the different ways that people previously used and currently use to get information to other people. Make a timeline in your classroom charting the developments. (National Standards for Technology: Content Standards 1 & 4)

TECHNICAL THEATRE

The Scenic and Costume Designers for the show did some very creative things to help tell their story. The costumes for the characters were all designed with common objects that can be purchased at any chain discount or department store. Ask your students to design their own costumes for one of the characters from the show using material they have in their own home. Scenically, the designer created many of the locales using a box in a variety of ways. Bring some cardboard boxes into your classroom and have your students design their own jungle or home by folding, cutting and reshaping the boxes. (National Standard for Theatre Education: Content Standard 3)