

HANOVER THEATRE & CONSERVATORY

Presents

A CHRISTMAS CAROL

Written by Charles Dickens

Adapted & Directed by Troy Siebels

STUDY GUIDE

Tools for Teachers

- Lesson Plans
- Worksheets
- Essay Question
- Answer Key
- Educator FAQs
- Post-Show Q&A Info
- Theatre Etiquette
- And More...

Welcome to the Hanover Theatre for the Performing Arts! We are excited to have you join us at the show! Please feel free to use this study guide both before and after the performance to help students process what they see on stage. Charles Dickens' *A Christmas Carol* takes place on Christmas Eve, a time when most people are with family and friends sharing stories and laughter. However, Ebenezer Scrooge, a miserly old man, is not most people. Simply put, he finds the holiday season and Christmas in particular to be a waste of his time and infinitely more important, his money. However, Scrooge's negative

and downright malicious behavior towards everyone finally catches up with him. During the course of this adventure, Scrooge is visited by three ghosts, those of the past, present and future. They show him what was, what is, and what could be if he continues down his path of anger and discontent with society. You will see Scrooge struggle with what he holds most dear and important and the changes that he must make to put right the many wrongs that he has created during life. And during his struggle, the audience is reminded of what is most important during the holiday season, the act and spirit of giving.

Inside the Guide

The Story Behind:	
Charles Dickens	2
History of Victorian England	5
The Story Behind A Christmas Carol	7
Vocabulary	8
Characters	10
Class Work	11-20
FAQs	21
Theatre Etiquette	22
About the Director	22
Resources	23



THE AUTHOR: CHARLES DICKENS

Charles Dickens' life spanned 58 years; in that time he became one of Britain's most popular and successful novelists. He wrote 20 novels (including five short Christmas books), sketches, travel books, and edited two magazines. Among his collection are some of the finest books ever written including *Oliver Twist*, *Great Expectations*, *A Tale of Two Cities*, *Bleak House*, and *A Christmas Carol*. His success as a writer began almost as soon as he began writing and has continued for generations after his death.

Many of his stories and characters detail the harshness of life for many Londoners affected by the myriad of social injustices which plagued the poor and unfortunate. His books often included some element of autobiography and all of his books were strongly affected by the events of his own life.



Dickens' Childhood

Charles Dickens was born on Friday, February 7, 1812 in Portsmouth, England. His father, John, was a clerk in the Navy Pay Office, and was transferred to London when Charles was two years old. John was transferred again in 1817 and the family moved to Chatham, England. Charles later said that his happiest childhood memories are from his time there. Another move soon disrupted and relocated the family again in 1822 to Camden Town in London. The next family move, however, would affect Charles more than any others.

In 1824, John was imprisoned for debt at the Marshalsea debtor's prison and his entire family, save for Charles accompanied him there. Charles, now 12 years old, was sent to a boot-blackening factory where he pasted labels on bottles of shoe polish. The experience was so deplorable to Charles that he would remember it for the rest of his life, though he spent only a few months there.

Charles was in and out of school until the age of 15. His thirst for knowledge and learning made him successful in school but also led him to spend a lot of time observing the people who surrounded him, everywhere he went. He took this with him when he went to work at a law office and then as a newspaper reporter. As a reporter, he taught himself shorthand and covered the proceedings of Parliament. This work gave Charles the opportunity to gain first-hand experience and observations. By constantly listening to and reporting on conversations, he developed the ability to realistically write dialogue for his characters.

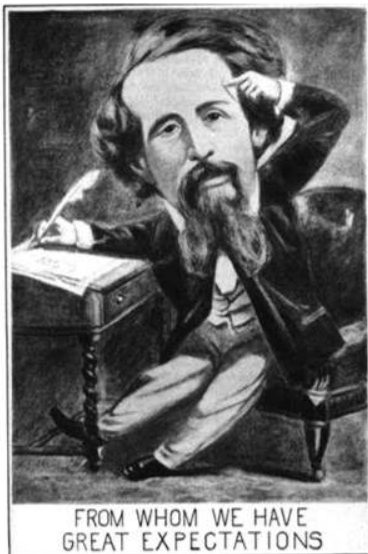
DICKENS' WRITING CAREER

His writing career began with a series of short stories and articles for the *Monthly Magazine* and the *London Evening Chronicle*. This collection of work eventually became known as *Sketches by Boz*. Boz was a family nickname for his younger brother, which Charles then adapted as a pen name.

His next work, *The Posthumous Papers of the Pickwick Club*, which would come to be called simply *The Pickwick Papers*, was Dickens' next piece and an immediate success. He published the book in a relatively new serial format. Each month, a section of the book was made available for one shilling. This method of publishing made long books more affordable to many people. Dickens embraced this form of publishing and each of his novels (until *A Christmas Carol*) was first published in serial form.

Charles Dickens was now 24 years old, famous, and newlywed to Catherine Hogarth. Catherine's youngest sister, Mary, soon moved in with the couple to help raise the first of the ten children that Charles and Catherine had. While there, Mary suddenly died and Charles forever mourned her death. Some believe that he loved Mary more than his wife. Dickens continued to write and his success grew. His career is often divided into two divisions.

The first phase began with *The Pickwick Papers* in 1836 and lasted until the first half of the 1840's. These novels were all published in serial form and dealt with serious issues and plots. *Oliver Twist*, which has become with contemporary audiences as a popular film and stage musical, described the adventures of a poor orphan boy, criticized the workhouse system and society's treatment of the poor. The book also demonstrated the nature of the criminal world. *Nicholas Nickleby* treated the subject of private schools and their atrocious treatment of students. *The Old Curiosity Shop* is less popular with modern audiences than with Dickens' contemporaries. *Barnaby Rudge* was the first of Dickens' historical novels and dealt with a series of riots that took place in London in 1780. Dickens' next two novels were based on a trip taken to America. *Martin Chuzzlewit* and *American Notes* both satirize American culture and depict the crudeness of its citizens' manners. The first phase concluded with *A Christmas Carol* which expresses Dickens' belief that a glimmer of goodness exists in every person, no matter how selfish or cruel he may seem. Although the plots of the novels from the first phase dealt with serious subjects, Dickens included enough humor to keep readers amused and interested.



As the 1840's and his career progressed, Dickens' work reflected his bitterness towards Victorian society. The books of the second phase became dark and often satirical. His work also became more mature and he began to pay more attention to the craft of writing and increased his use of symbolism. The second phase began with *Dombey and Son* in which Dickens condemns the emphasis placed on wealth as a measure of a person by Victorian society. His next novel, *David Copperfield*, differs from his other books and is more autobiographical than social criticism. By writing this novel, Dickens was able to deal with and set aside a number of issues which had been affecting him since childhood.

DICKENS' WRITING CAREER

Timeline of Dickens' Life and Works

1812 February 7, Charles Dickens born in Portsmouth, England.

1834 Dickens' first piece, *Sketches by Boz*, is published

1835 Dickens goes to work for The Morning Chronicle as a reporter.

1836 Dickens marries Catherine Hogarth and publishes *The Posthumous Papers of the Pickwick Club*

1838 Dickens publishes *Oliver Twist*.

1839 Dickens writes *Nicholas Nickleby*.

1840: *Master Humphrey's Clock*, *The Old Curiosity Shop*, and *Barnaby Rudge* are published

1841: Dickens publishes *The Picnic Papers*

1842: *American Notes for General Circulation* is published

1842 Dickens travels to America to campaign for the abolition of slavery.

1843 Dickens publishes *A Christmas Carol*.

1844: *Life and Adventures of Martin Chuzzlewit* is published

1845: Dickens publishes *The Chimes*

1846: *The Cricket on the Hearth*, *Pictures from Italy*, and *The Battle of Life* are published

1848: Dickens publishes *Dealings with the Firm of Dombey and Son* and *The Haunted Man and the Ghosts' Bargain*

1849 Dickens publishes *David Copperfield*.

1853: Dickens publishes *A Child's History of England* and *Bleak House*

1854: *Hard Times* is published

1857: *Little Dorrit* is published

1859 Charles Dickens publishes *A Tale of Two Cities* and *The Uncommercial Traveler*.

1860 Charles Dickens publishes *Great Expectations*.

1865: *Our Mutual Friend* is published

1867: Dickens goes on a public reading tour in America

1869: Dickens suffers a physical breakdown while on tour

1870 June 9, Charles Dickens dies at age 58 from a stroke, leaving *The Mystery of Edwin Drood* unfinished

Considered by some to be his greatest novel, *Bleak House* is a complex story which takes on many issues, including the corruption of the law profession, the clergy, and the neglect of the poor. Dickens followed this with *Hard Times* which was a response to the philosopher, Jeremy Bentham, and his theory of utilitarianism. *Little Dorrit* was Dickens next project and focused on snobbery and materialism. The second of his historical novels, *A Tale of Two Cities* was set in London and Paris and used fictional characters to depict the French Revolution. Dickens then returned to semi-autobiography with the story of Pip in *Great Expectations*. The last of the social criticism novels, *Our Mutual Friend*, again brought to the surface the materialism and greed of society. Dickens then seemed to move into a third phase of writing with *The Mystery of Edwin Drood*. The phase and the book, however, were never completed, as Dickens died after having written only about one third of his last novel. Despite speculation, no one knows how Dickens intended to end this novel.

Dickens' Death and Legacy

Dickens death on June 9, 1870 was the result of a stroke and five years of declining health. When he died, the Queen sent her condolences to the family and it was decided that he should be buried in Westminster Abbey in the Poet's Corner with England's other literary greats. It is written on his tombstone, "He was a sympathizer to the poor, the suffering, and the oppressed; and by his death, one of England's greatest writers is lost to the world."

In addition to his prolific writing career, Dickens had an active social life and spent a great deal of time with his friends and at the theatre. He was also involved in several charities for children and for the poor. In his later years, Dickens also spent a considerable amount of time touring both England and the United States performing public reading of books. He had always maintained an interest in theatre and in acting and had chosen this supplement to his writing career as a method of exploring that interest.

"He was a sympathizer to the poor, the suffering, and the oppressed; and by his death, one of England's greatest writers is lost to the world."

– Written on the tomb of Charles Dickens in Westminster Abbey, 1870

HISTORY LINK: VICTORIAN ENGLAND

Like his other work, Charles Dickens' *A Christmas Carol* is set in Victorian England and offers readers and audience members a view of the country during the time he was living and writing. The Victorian period spans the years of the reign of Queen Victoria (1837-1901) and has also come to connote prudish behavior or customs. It was also a time of great change, in industry, social wealth, and culture. The Victorian era saw the arrival of the Industrial Revolution and also offered people the opportunity and inspiration to improve their own lives and their societies. Through his writing, Charles Dickens was able to bring great awareness to the many forms of social repression and injustice of 19th century England. Dickens brought to light and helped resolve some of the issues of the time, such as filthy streets, inequality among the social classes, and the horrible work conditions that only grew worse as the Industrial Revolution began to flourish.

Over the course of this century, England went through many changes, from technology to voting rights. The Industrial Revolution boomed in England in the 1800's. The Revolution grew the most in London, which was considered to be the largest city in the world at the time. There were more factories than ever before and more jobs available. By the end of the century, the population would grow to 4.5 million. Expansion was everywhere. Upper class sections of the city were beginning to grow in the western part of London. In the east, docks were being built to support London as the "world's trade center" for supplies and shipping.

Thanks to the railroad and the Stage Carriages Act of 1832, methods of transportation were becoming more and more advanced. The omnibus quickly replaced the hackney cab as transportation within the city. By 1900, 3000 horse-drawn buses were transporting over 500 million people a year throughout the city. A traffic count in Cheapside and London Bridge in 1850 showed that one-thousand vehicles passed through these areas each hour. While the increased transportation meant growth for the city, it also meant horses in the streets and manure to be cleaned. The cleanliness of the city streets and water sources were a constant problem and health threat. London citizens' drinking water came from the Thames River where sewerage was dumped. There were several outbreaks of cholera and the smell of the

(continued on next page)

city and the Thames was so bad in 1858 that Parliament had to be recessed.

Timeline of Victorian England

- 1812** Charles Dickens is born
- 1830:** The first steam intercity railway opens
- 1831:** The first cholera epidemic spreads through northeast England
- 1832:** The first Reform Act is passed, granting voting rights to any man owning a household worth of £10
- 1832:** The second cholera epidemic spreads through London, killing over 6,000
- 1833:** The Factory Act is passed, making it illegal to employ children under 9, and capping the workday for 9-13 year olds to 9 hours per day.
- 1834:** The Slavery Abolition Act is passed, making slavery illegal in most of the British Empire
- 1834:** The Poor Law Amendment Law is passed, which aims to transfer the rural poor to urban areas, where jobs were in higher supply
- 1835:** The Municipal Corporations Bill was passed, giving some towns the right to take over municipal proceedings like education and housing
- 1836:** The London Working Men's Association is formed, as well as the Anti-Corn Law Association, who aimed to repeal the Corn Law, which forced people to pay higher food prices
- 1838:** The People's Charter is published, giving way to the world's first working-class labor movement
- 1838:** The London and Birmingham Railway opens
- 1838-1843:** The Rebeca Riots to protest the taxation and tolls on agricultural workers
- 1839:** The Anti-Corn Law Association (now the Anti-Corn Law League, advocates for free domestic and international trade
- 1839:** The Chartist Riot to fight for universal male voting rights
- 1840:** The Chimney Sweep Act is passed, preventing people under the age of 21 to be employed as chimney sweeps
- 1841:** The first British census is conducted, totaling over 20 million people in the UK
- 1842:** The Chartist petition is rejected by Parliament, touching off the Plug Plot Riots
- 1842:** The Mines Act prohibits women and children from working in mines
- 1844:** The Factory Act is passed, limiting women's workday to 12 hours and child aged 6-13 to 6 hours
- 1844:** Imprisonment for debt is abolished
- 1845-1849:** The Potato Famine
- 1846:** Parliament repeals the Corn Laws and introduces free trade
- 1847:** The Factory Act is amended, creating a 10 hour workday for women and boys aged 13-18
- 1848-1849:** A third cholera epidemic kills 15,000 in London alone
- 1848:** 150,000 attend a Chartist rally for universal men's voting rights
- 1848:** Parliament passes legislation to improved health conditions in cities, hoping to lower the death rate
- 1854:** A fourth cholera epidemic sweeps through British cities

VICTORIAN ENGLAND



While the expansion of transportation systems, like the railroad and omnibus, brought widespread prosperity to the upper class, it forced thousands who were already struggling to get by to uproot their homes and become poorer and poorer. While the rich continued to grow richer, the poor struggled under extremely harsh working conditions and long hours.

Unknown to most of the middle and upper classes, the working class families were not able to support themselves if the children did not work as well. Children as young as four were often sent to work under unimaginable conditions; many received little to no education because they were at work all day. In 1840, it is estimated that only 20% of the children in London had any schooling. By 1860, that percentage had risen to 50%. Many of the more fortunate children were apprenticed to tradesman or were working as general servants instead of in the factories. Alongside their elders, children worked 16 hour days in filthy factories with

unsafe machines which could easily injure or kill them.

In order to combat this way of life, many radical changes were made throughout the 1800's by various legislative acts. These acts eventually limited both adults and children aged 11-18 to a maximum of ten hours of work a day. These acts also demanded better working conditions and made accommodations for workers' safety.

The New Poor Law, enacted in 1834, created a new way to deal with the city's destitute population, who has previously been cared for by the parishes. The new law was responsible for the creation of regional workhouses. The workhouses were organized by groups of parishes to provide aid to the poor. However, these workhouses were little more than prisons and the those who received this "relief" lost their civil liberties, human dignity, and often times their family members, as families were split apart between different locations.

Parliament also passed the Reform Acts of 1832, 1867, and 1884 which extended voting rights to citizens who had previously not been allowed to participate in government. The first act forced Parliament to have the body "more accurately represent the citizens of the country," but also gave the power of voting to those lower in the social and economic scale. The second and third acts increased the voting rights to the lower social class as well as agricultural vote.



England emerged at the turn of the century and end of the Victorian Era as an increasingly important world city making huge strides in industry, transportation, and social reform. Thanks to reform laws like those mentioned above and an increased awareness of social injustices brought on, in part, by Charles Dickens, education, technology, and social consciousness had replaced the ills of the 19th century.

THE STORY BEHIND *A CHRISTMAS CAROL*

A Christmas Carol, one of the most well-known and endearing stories of Western culture was first created by Charles Dickens, in London in 1843. At age 31, Dickens was already a very successful novelist. Sales of his books, however, were declining and he was being pressured by his publishers to write again. They threatened to decrease his monthly salary from £200 to £150. His wife was expecting their fifth child and he was considering moving his family from England to Italy, where they could live more cheaply.

Dickens instead wrote *A Christmas Carol* in six weeks, completing the story in November 1843. It marked the first time that Dickens had written anything all at once, as opposed to the serial format in which he had published all of his previous work — month by month. It was an instant success and a bestseller. Dickens was confident that *A Christmas Carol* would deliver him out of debt and was expecting his first royalty check to the amount of £1000. High production costs, however, cut into the profits and he only received £250.

The publishing of *A Christmas Carol* was not only important to Dickens' career, but also his personal life. While writing the story, he wrote to a friend that he "wept and laughed and wept again, and excited himself in a most extraordinary manner in the composition; and thinking whereof he walked the black streets of London fifteen and twenty miles many a night when all the sober folks had gone to bed."

A Christmas Carol continued to be a success in both Europe and the United States, but he received money from royalties only for British sales. US publishers believed that British writers has already been compensated in their own country and the mere knowing that their stories were popular in the US was reward enough. Dickens fought this plagiarism and eventually became entangled in a complicated legal battle, which was finally decided in his favor.



Dickens giving his last public reading of *A Christmas Carol*

from Illustrated London News, 1870

GLOSSARY OF TERMS FROM THE SHOW

- **Ali Baba** – in the *Arabian Nights*, a poor woodcutter who gains entrance to the treasure cave of the forty thieves by saying the magic words, “Open Sesame!”
- **apprentice** – a person bound by legal agreement to work for another in return for instruction in a trade, art, or business
- **assign** – to set aside or appoint for a particular purpose. Scrooge was Marley’s “sole assign,” meaning the only person named in Marley’s will to inherit his part of the business
- **bedlam** – a notorious madhouse in London that no longer exists, but has become the term used when referring to any place of noise and confusion.
- **benevolence** – a tendency to perform charitable acts; good will
- **Camden Town** – a town of London, England comprising government divisions
- **colliery** – a coal mine
- **Counting House** – an office in which a business conducts operations such as accounting and correspondence
- **cravat** – a necktie or a scarf worn as a necktie
- **desert moor** – a broad tract of open land, often high but poorly drained, covered with Shrubs
- **diphtheria** – a contagious disease causing high fever and difficulty in breathing
- **dowry** – money or property brought by a bride to her husband upon marriage
- **forbearance** – the act of a creditor who refrains from enforcing a debt when it falls due
- **gainsay** – to declare false or contradict
- **gruel** – a thin, watery porridge
- **gumption** – boldness or enterprise
- **half-a-crown** – the sum of two shillings and sixpence
- **heed** – to listen and consider
- **homage** – public honor or respect paid to a person or idea
- **humbug** – nonsense, rubbish
- **morose** – gloomy, ill-humored
- **odious** – offensive
- **pallor** – extreme or unnatural paleness
- **Parliament** – the legislative body of the United Kingdom, made up of the House of Lords and the House of Commons
- **poulterer** – a poultry dealer
- **pounds** – the basic monetary unit of the United Kingdom
- **scarlet fever** – an acute contagious disease occurring particularly among children and characterized by scarlet skin and high fever
- **shilling** – a coin equal to 1/20 of an English Pound
- **sixpence** – a coin worth six pennies
- **smallpox** – by chills, high fever and headaches with subsequent eruptions of pimples
- **Smoking Bishop** – a Christmas punch made of red wine, oranges, and spices
- **Specter** – a ghost; phantom; apparition
- **Typhoid** – a disease transmitted by contaminated food or water and characterized by red rash, fever and bronchitis
- **Union Workhouse** – a former public institution in Britain where the poor were fed and forced to work

CHARACTERS

Ebenezer Scrooge - The miserly owner of a London counting-house, a nineteenth century term for an accountant's office. The three spirits of Christmas visit the stodgy bean-counter in hopes of reversing Scrooge's greedy, cold-hearted approach to life.



Bob Cratchit - Scrooge's clerk, a kind, mild, and very poor man with a large family. Though treated harshly by his boss, Cratchit remains a humble and dedicated employee.

Tiny Tim - Bob Cratchit's young son, crippled from birth. Tiny Tim is a highly sentimentalized character who Dickens uses to highlight the tribulations of England's poor and to elicit sympathy from his middle and upper class readership.

Jacob Marley - In the living world, Ebenezer Scrooge's equally greedy partner. Marley died seven years before the narrative opens. He appears to Scrooge as a ghost condemned to wander the world bound in heavy chains. Marley hopes to save his old partner from suffering a similar fate.

The Ghost of Christmas Past - The first spirit to visit Scrooge, a curiously childlike apparition with a glowing head. This ghost takes Scrooge on a tour of Christmases in his past. The spirit uses a cap to dampen the light emanating from his head.

The Ghost of Christmas Present - The second spirit to visit Scrooge, a majestic giant clad in a green robe. His lifespan is restricted to Christmas Day. He escorts Scrooge on a tour of his contemporaries' Holiday celebrations.

The Ghost of Christmas Yet to Come - The third and final spirit to visit Scrooge, a silent phantom clad in a hooded black robe. He presents Scrooge with an ominous view of his lonely death.

Fred - Scrooge's nephew, a genial man who loves Christmas. He invites Scrooge to his Christmas party each and every year, only to be refused by his grumpy uncle.



CHARACTERS

Belle - A beautiful woman who Scrooge loved deeply when he was a young man. Belle broke off their engagement after Scrooge became consumed with greed and the lust for wealth. She later married another man.

Peter Cratchit - Bob's oldest son, who inherits his father's stiff-collared shirt for Christmas.

Martha Cratchit - Bob's oldest daughter, who works in a milliner's shop. (A milliner is a person who designs, produces, and sells hats .)

Fan - Scrooge's sister; Fred's mother. In Scrooge's vision of Christmases past, he remembers Fan picking him up from school and walking him home.

The Portly Gentlemen - Two gentlemen who visit Scrooge at the beginning of the tale seeking charitable contributions. Scrooge promptly throws them out of his office. Upon meeting one of them on the street after his visitations, he promises to make lavish donations to help the poor.

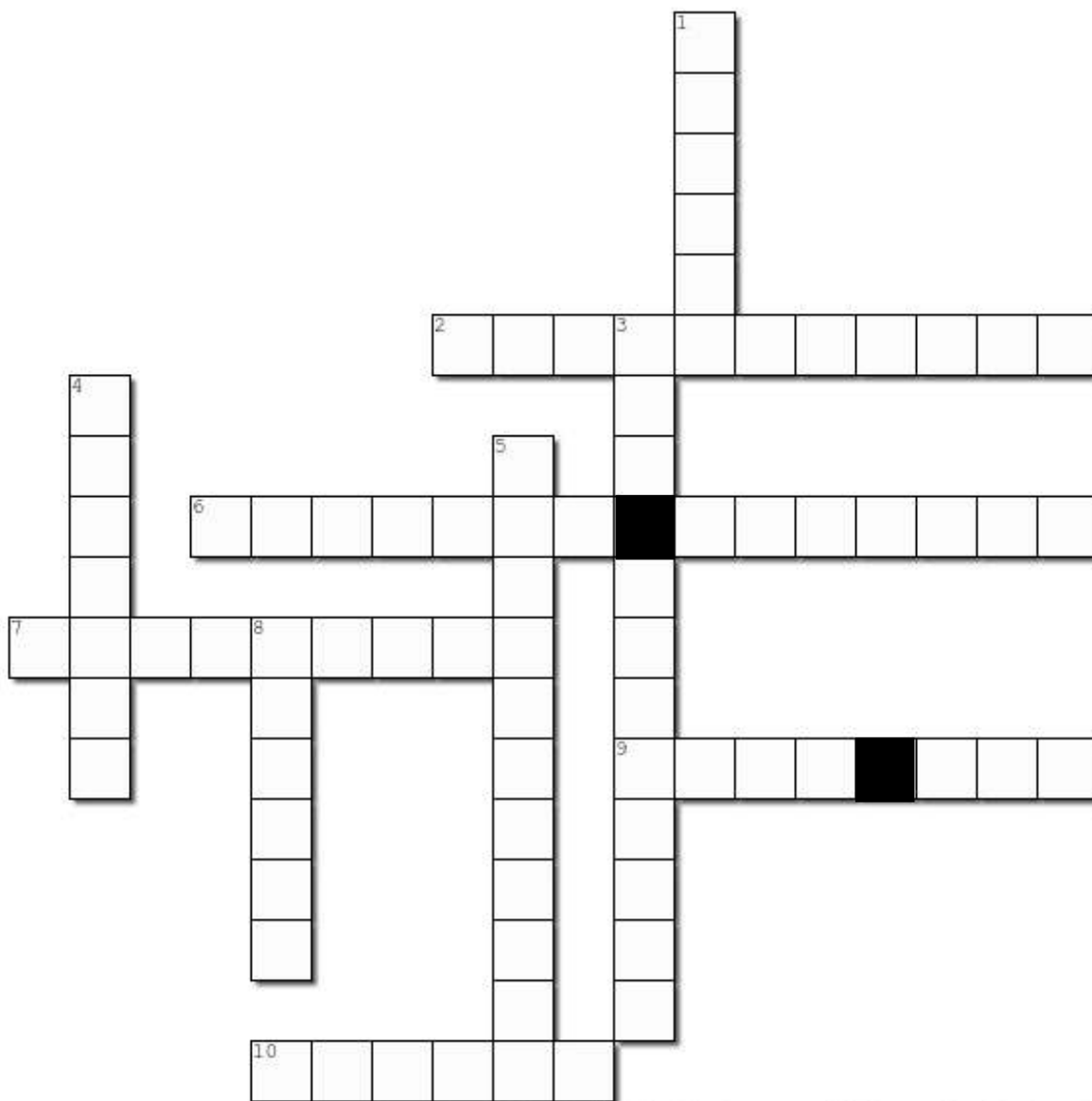
Mrs. Cratchit - Bob's wife, a kind and loving woman.



A CHRISTMAS CAROL CROSSWORD

Name: _____

Complete the crossword puzzle below



Created using the Crossword Maker on TheTeachersCorner.net

Across

- 2. the act of a creditor who refrains from enforcing a debt when it falls due
- 6. the author of A Christmas Carol
- 7. a former public institution in Britain where the poor were fed and forced to work
- 9. Bob Cratchit's young son, crippled from birth.
- 10. Scrooge's equally greedy partner. He appears to Scrooge as a ghost condemned to wander the world bound in heavy chains.

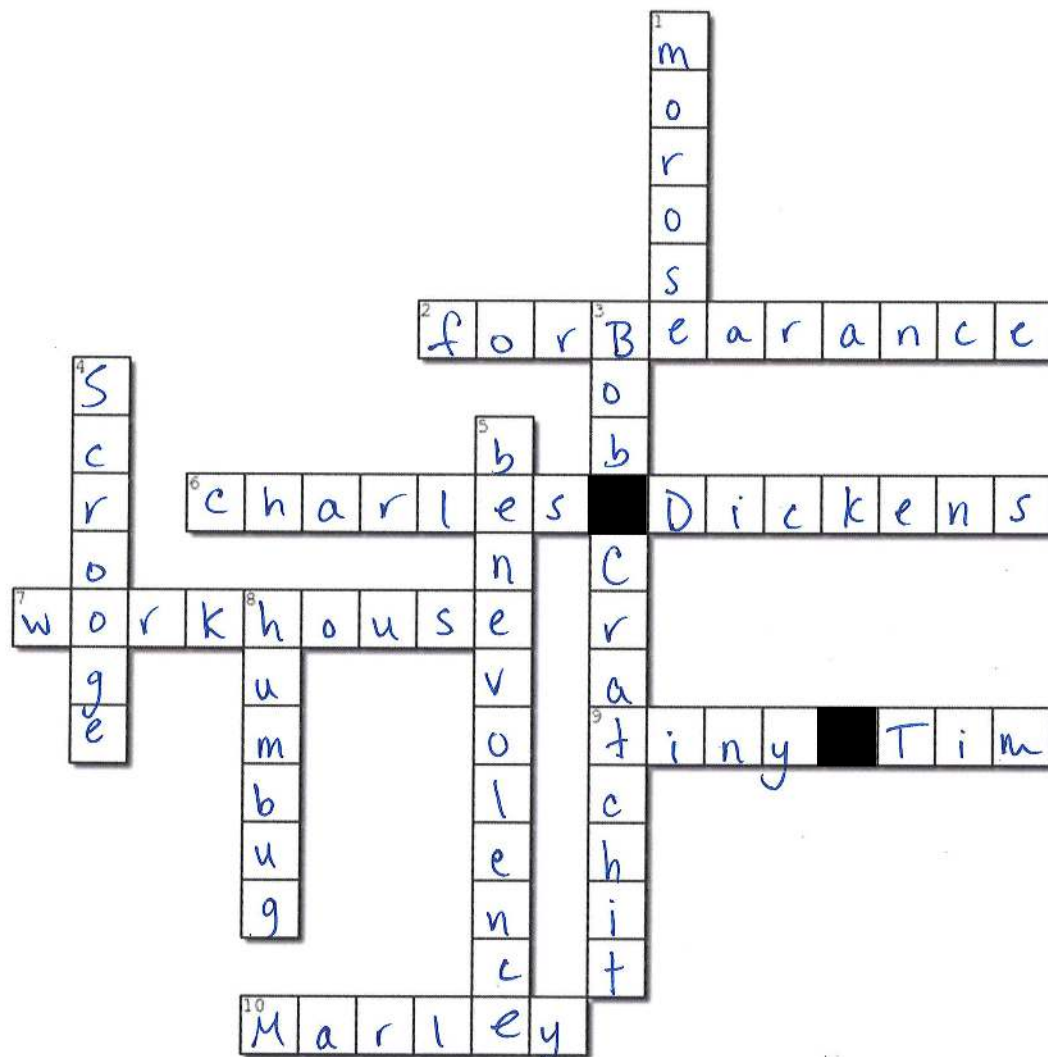
Down

- 1. gloomy; ill-humored
- 3. Scrooge's clerk, a kind, mild, and very poor man with a large family
- 4. The miserly owner of a London counting-house. The three spirits of Christmas visit the him, hoping to reverse his ways
- 5. a tendency to perform charitable acts; good will
- 8. nonsense; rubbish

A CHRISTMAS CAROL CROSSWORD

Name: Answer Key

Complete the crossword puzzle below



Created using the Crossword Maker on TheTeachersCorner.net

Across

2. the act of a creditor who refrains from enforcing a debt when it falls due
6. the author of A Christmas Carol
7. a former public institution in Britain where the poor were fed and forced to work
9. Bob Cratchit's young son, crippled from birth.
10. Scrooge's equally greedy partner. He appears to Scrooge as a ghost condemned to wander the world bound in heavy chains.

Down

1. gloomy; ill-humored
3. Scrooge's clerk, a kind, mild, and very poor man with a large family
4. The miserly owner of a London counting-house. The three spirits of Christmas visit the him, hoping to reverse his ways
5. a tendency to perform charitable acts; good will
8. nonsense; rubbish

MULTIPLE CHOICE REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Charles Dickens was born in:
a.) Germany c.) England
b.) U.S.A d.) Ireland
2. What era of England's history did Charles Dickens live during:
a.) Queen's Age c.) Napoleonic Age
b.) Elizabethan Age d.) Victorian Age
3. Scrooge fears this ghost more than all the others:
a.) Ghost of Christmas Present c.) Ghost of Time
b.) Ghost of Christmas Yet to Come d.) Ghost of Christmas Past
4. This piece of literature was also written by Charles Dickens
a.) A Tale of Two Brits c.) A Tale of Two Cities
b.) Adventures of Huckleberry Finn d.) Turn of the Screw
5. Scrooge receives a warning from an old dead friend; who was he?
a.) Jacob Marley c.) Walt Disney
b.) Winston Churchill d.) Jason Farley
6. What day does the story of *A Christmas Carol* start on?
a.) New Years Eve c.) Christmas Eve
b.) Kwanzaa d.) New Years Day
7. Where was the terrible job that Dickens' had as a young child
a.) A book blacking factory c.) A saw mill
b.) A glue factory d.) A paper boy
- 8.) In the year 1870, Charles Dickens...
a.) got remarried c.) died
b.) published *A Christmas Carol* d.) moved to the U. S.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS BY THEME

Free Will, Redemption and Rebirth

1. The themes of regeneration and rebirth are conveyed dramatically through Scrooge's transformation. In what ways are these themes universally true? Think about a time in your life when you needed to change the way you were behaving. How did you feel before, during, and after the incident? How did you change and what did you learn about yourself in the process?
2. When Jacob Marley visits Scrooge, he shows him what his fate could be; yet Scrooge is skeptical of that truth until he is visited by the Ghost of Christmas Future. What does the Ghost of Christmas Future show Scrooge that persuades Scrooge to change his ways and redeem himself? Why is this experience more impactful than simply seeing Jacob Marley's ghost?
3. Do you believe that you can shape your future with the choices you make today? Or do you believe that your fate is predetermined and everything will happen exactly as it was meant to? Why?

Capitalism and Greed

1. Although the Ghosts have shown Scrooge the error of his ways, and Scrooge commits to change, he still chooses to be a capitalist—he hires someone (a young boy on the street) to do a service for him (buy a turkey for the Cratchit family's Christmas dinner). Technically, Scrooge could go buy the turkey himself, but he has other things to do. How is the young boy's brief experience as Scrooge's employee different from Bob Cratchit's experience as Scrooge's employee? How do you predict Scrooge's work relationship with Cratchit will change?
2. Based on the plot of *A Christmas Carol*, how do you think Charles Dickens felt about the capitalist system? How is this reflected in his portrayal of wealth and in the characteristics of wealthy and non-wealthy characters?
3. What are the chief criticisms of capitalism today? What are the arguments in its favor? Research the economic systems of Great Britain and the United States. Does either country strictly follow capitalist philosophies?

Time

1. How does Scrooge change over the past, present, and future? How does each Spirit use time as a way to persuade Scrooge to change?
2. How have you changed over time, from the past to the present? What are your hopes for the future and how would you like to be viewed by others?

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

THE THREE SPIRITS

Compare and contrast the 3 spirits. Why do you think they each look so different? Think about thematic differences and pull evidence from the text to support your answer, if the book is available to you!

This image shows a blank sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

COSTUME DESIGN ACTIVITY

Directions: The costume designer of this show had their work cut out for them! Each character on stage needed to be researched and designed. Using Charles Dickens' description of Scrooge below, along with your knowledge or research of Victorian England, think like a costume designer and design what you think Scrooge's costume should be in the box provided.

"Oh! But he was a tight-fisted hand at the grindstone, Scrooge! a squeezing, wrenching, grasping, scraping, clutching, covetous, old sinner! Hard and sharp as flint, from which no steel had ever struck out generous fire; secret, and self-contained, and solitary as an oyster. The cold within him froze his old features, nipped his pointed nose, shriveled his cheek, stiffened his gait; made his eyes red, his thin lips blue and spoke out shrewdly in his grating voice. A frosty rime was on his head, and on his eyebrows, and his wiry chin. He carried his own low temperature always about with him; he iced his office in the dogdays; and didn't thaw it one degree at Christmas.

External heat and cold had little influence on Scrooge. No warmth could warm, no wintry weather chill him. No wind that blew was bitterer than he, no falling snow was more intent upon its purpose, no pelting rain less open to entreaty. Foul weather didn't know where to have him. The heaviest rain, and snow, and hail, and sleet, could boast of the advantage over him in only one respect. They often "came down" handsomely, and Scrooge never did.

Nobody ever stopped him in the street to say, with gladsome looks, "My dear Scrooge, how are you? When will you come to see me?" No beggars implored him to bestow a trifle, no children asked him what it was o'clock, no man or woman ever once in all his life inquired the way to such and such a place, of Scrooge. Even the blind men's dogs appeared to know him; and when they saw him coming on, would tug their owners into doorways and up courts; and then would wag their tails as though they said, "No eye at all is better than an evil eye, dark master!"

But what did Scrooge care? It was the very thing he liked. To edge his way along the crowded paths of life, warning all human sympathy to keep its distance, was what the knowing ones call "nuts" to



CREATIVE WRITING

Charles Dickens wrote many of his works as a commentary on social, political and economic issues happening during his life as a way to draw attention to issues he felt were important. Choose a social, political, or economic issue that is important to you and that you feel should be important to others. Create characters, a setting, and a conflict that would best bring your issue to light. Write a short story that shows the effect of this issue on others' lives. Use these questions to help get you started:

- What impact does political, social, and economic decisions have on you, your friends, or your family? How does it affect your life?
- Who are the people, or characters, involved? What are their stories? Are there any similarities, or themes, in the different stories?

This image shows a blank sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

VICTORIAN PARTY GAMES

Before modern entertainment like radio, television, and video games, families and friends used to entertain themselves by playing games as a group. The following games were played a lot during parties and are great for playing during Morning Meeting or Advisory!

Yes and No

Played in *A Christmas Carol* at Fred's Christmas Party, Yes and No begins by choosing one person to choose an object and remember what they chose. The other players ask yes or no questions in order to figure out what the object is. If they think they know the answer, they can make a guess on their turn. Be sure to only guess if you are certain you know what it is. If a person guesses incorrectly, they are out.

Speaking Buff

Someone stands in the middle of the rug and either closes their eyes or is blindfolded. The rest of the people form a circle around the person in the middle. The blinded person in the middle points to someone and utters a phrase which the person that is pointed to must repeat. If the blinded person can guess the identity of the person who repeated their phrase, they are out of the middle and the identified person becomes blinded in the middle. The people in the circle change places and play begins again.

Tip: It is more challenging if the people in the circle disguise their voice by speaking with a different accent, pitch, etc.



Hunt the Slipper

Players sit in a circle with one person in the middle. The player in the middle shuts their eyes while the people sitting in the circle pass an object behind their backs. When the player in the middle opens their eyes, they must guess who has the object. Players sitting in the circle may continue to pass the object behind their backs if they wish, to make it more difficult. If the player in the middle guesses correctly, the person named takes their place in the center of the circle.

Lookabout

One player shows the group a small object. The group closes their eyes while the player hides it in the room. Once it is hidden, the other players begin to look for it until they find it. When they find it, they don't announce it, but instead sit down at their seat. Continue until all players have found the object.

Tip: It's more challenging if players do not sit down immediately after finding the object and instead continue "searching" for a few more moments to throw other players off!

Charades

Just like modern times, charades was a popular party game in the Victorian era. Have everyone write a noun on a piece of paper, or a scene from a popular book/movie (like *A Christmas Carol*!) on pieces of paper and put them in a hat. Players form teams; one person from their team chooses something from the hat and acts out the noun without speaking. Their team must guess the word or scene before time is up or the other team gets one chance to guess. If either team is successful, they earn a point, and play is passed to the next team.

CELEBRATION TABLEAUS

Ask your students to recall the different styles of Christmas celebrations they saw in *A Christmas Carol*. Have them discuss the difference between Nephew Fred's gathering, Fezziwig's party and the Cratchits' celebration. Break the students up into groups and have each group create tableaus for each of the different celebrations. Every group member should take on a character that was or could be at that celebration. Create tableaus without talking. After they have created the three different images, ask them to stay in their groups and share some of the ways their families celebrate the holidays.



EDUCATOR FAQs

What time can we arrive at the theatre?

Students can arrive as early as 9am. Please plan to arrive no later than 9:45am so that we can seat your group and start the production on time. The show time cannot be delayed due to late arrivals.

Where should buses park?

Upon arrival, our house managers or police detail will give general parking instructions to your bus driver(s). Please be sure to get a phone number for the bus driver in the event you need to contact them.

If we are late, will you start the show without us?

Since many participating schools are on a tight timeline, we must start the performance on time.

We may miss lunch during this fieldtrip. Can the students bring lunch with them?

Unfortunately, we only break for a few minutes during the middle of the show and students are asked to remain in their seats during this time. Food and drink are not permitted inside the theatre. You may want to plan on eating lunch on the bus.

Will refreshments be available in the lobby?

In the interest of time, refreshments are not available during student matinees. Water fountains located in the lobby. If students are interested in buying souvenirs from the show, merchandise may be available for purchase.

Will our group be seated together?

Yes, we always make sure to seat the entire group together.

Do we get tickets? How do we find our seats?

In order to seat you as quickly as possible, you will not receive individual tickets. Before your arrival, our ushers will receive instructions on where to seat your group and they will bring you to these seats immediately upon arrival.

What time will the performance end?

The approximate end time for the performance is noon. Once the production ends, we will begin dismissing schools as quickly as possible in the order that their buses pull up. Dismissal can take up to 20 minutes. Please note that if you plan to stay for the "Post-Show Q&A" your dismissal will be delayed by approximately 30 minutes.

What is the theatre's cancellation policy?

If the show is cancelled, or school in your town is cancelled due to weather, you will receive a full refund or be offered a snow date. No refunds will be made for absences or changes in participation numbers after

Post-Show Q&A with the Cast

For those schools wishing to participate, we will be holding a Question & Answer Session with the cast following the student matinees. Before the performance, two students from each participating school should be selected to ask the cast a question. Following the performance, these students will be brought towards the stage and will need to ask their questions into a microphone. Questions can be asked about the cast members, the production itself, or Charles Dickens' story. Please keep in mind that participation in this activity will delay your departure by approx. 30 minutes depending on the number of participants.

In preparation for this activity, please notify us of your desire to participate in the Q&A by emailing kpheymannicie@thehanovertheatre.org

Your two questions must be sent in advance of the performance.

THEATRE ETIQUETTE

LIVE THEATRE: In live theater, unlike movies and television, the actors can hear and see you. If you talk or whisper during the play, you disturb not only the other audience members, but also the performers onstage, thus diminishing the performance and, ultimately, your enjoyment of it. This doesn't mean you have to remain silent. Actors want you to respond with laughter and applause, but such responses should always be genuine and appropriate to the moment. Such inconsiderate behavior as shouting, catcalling, or sustained whispering can ruin the concentration of actors and other audience members. Additionally, throwing paper or objects of any kind towards the stage is not only rude, it is extremely dangerous to the performers. In the event of any student misbehavior, the school will be contacted and the lead teacher and principal will be informed.

INTERMISSION: Intermissions are meant to be enjoyed by everyone. Use your time wisely and do not congregate in and around the restrooms. Have respect for your fellow playgoers by not talking too loud or showing off. Food and drink are strictly forbidden in the theater during the student matinees.

AUDIENCE ENJOYMENT: We want you to enjoy your visit to The Hanover Theatre and we rely on you to exercise your common sense and mature judgment. Thank you for being a valuable member of our audience!

ABOUT THE DIRECTOR



Troy Siebels serves as President & CEO for The Hanover Theatre and Conservatory for the Performing Arts and brought the \$32 million restoration project to fruition upon its opening in March of 2008. In addition, he wrote the adaptation for the theatre's stage production of "A Christmas Carol," and directs the production annually. Troy served as Producing Director at Stoneham Theatre for its first three seasons, achieving award-winning artistic excellence, and growing the theatre by more than 300% to an annual budget of \$1.5 million; creating a catalyst for revitalization of the downtown area. Troy spent three years in New York as General Manager of Focus Lighting, a leading architectural design firm; supervising 18 designers and growing income by 60% to \$5 million, with high-profile projects in most major cities in the U.S., Europe, Asia, South America and the Middle East. Troy served until 1998 as Managing Director of American Stage Festival in Milford and Nashua, N.H., supervising staff and guest artists in production of ten plays and musicals per year in two venues; also designing and supervising construction of the theatre's 277-seat second stage, and presiding over a major turnaround in marketing and fundraising campaigns. Troy served as Director of Production at Toledo Repertoire Theatre and as Associate Producer and Chairman of the Board of Trustees at Summer Theatre at Mount Holyoke; and currently serves on the Boards of Directors of Destination Worcester and Village Theatre Project; as a member of MAASH; and was recognized by Worcester Business Journal as one of 2006's "40 under Forty". Troy's directing credits include *Artist Descending a Staircase*, *The Mystery of Irma Vep*, *Jerry Finnegan's Sister*, *Dial M for Murder*, *Wait Until Dark*, and his own critically-acclaimed adaptation of Dickens' *A Christmas Carol*. Troy holds a BFA from the N.C. School of the Arts.

"A Christmas Carol is a timeless story that is every bit as poignant and relevant today as it was when it was written. We're excited to be bringing back this production in December. It has been our most popular show every year and is a wonderful family tradition." -Troy Siebels

RESOURCES

https://hartfordstage-fz6ppvdezcnknub.netdna-ssl.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/ACC_StudyGuide.pdf

https://static1.squarespace.com/static/55ec9db4e4b030b2e82f2aef/t/5bf5e0cb575d1f90eb590e54/1542840528243/VSC_ACC40_StudyGuide.pdf

http://www.victoriaspast.com/ParlorGames/parlor_games.htm