

GREAT
LAKES
THEATER

THE 37TH ANNUAL A CHRISTMAS CAROL WRITING CONTEST



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GREAT LAKES THEATER “A CHRISTMAS CAROL” WRITING CONTEST

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CONTEST STRUCTURE

Enter the 37th Annual Great Lakes Theater “A Christmas Carol” Writing Contest!

Your school will receive free tickets and transportation assistance to see Great Lakes Theater’s annual holiday production of Charles Dickens’ classic play “A Christmas Carol.”

Only CMSD students in grade levels SIX, SEVEN, and EIGHT are eligible.

HOW TO PARTICIPATE

1. Have your students write original stories, poems or lyrics inspired by Charles Dickens’ classic *A Christmas Carol*. Read the book or see a film version!
2. Choose ONE winning entry ***per grade level*** that will represent your school, to compete in the District-wide contest. ***We cannot accept more than ONE ENTRY PER GRADE LEVEL from any school.***
3. Email each grade-level winning entry, ***along with the cover sheet on page 20 of this booklet***, to David Hansen, Great Lakes Theater Education Programs Manager (dhansen@greatlakestheater.org) by the contest deadline: **Twelve Noon on Friday, October 31, 2025**. *Winning entries may also be sent via USPS, but they must arrive no later than the contest deadline.*

4. Great Lakes Theater will then judge all entries, and notify you of the number of tickets your school will receive, and which date you will be attending the play.

PLEASE NOTE: An allotment of tickets will be offered to each participating school. Great Lakes Theater reserves the right to determine how many tickets each school receives.

A FEW DETAILS

- Each school may select a maximum of ***ONE (1) WINNER PER GRADE LEVEL for grades 6, 7, and 8 only.*** Some schools may choose to select a grade level winner for just one of the three eligible grades, other schools may decide to submit one winner for all three eligible grades. This is entirely up to your school. ***However, we cannot accept more than ONE ENTRY PER GRADE LEVEL from any individual school.***
- Each school's English Language Arts department should develop its own system for nurturing the students' writing and selecting the grade level winner. This guide includes discussion questions, classroom activities and suggested writing prompts designed in alignment with Scope/Sequence objectives.
- ***Only one school winner per grade level*** should be submitted to Great Lakes Theater, and only for the eligible grades of sixth, seventh, and eighth. Each entry should be the work of one student, collaboratively written entries will not be considered.
- ELA departments **MUST include the cover sheet** provided on page 20 with each grade level winner (if you teach more than one grade level, please remember to submit a copy of this cover sheet for *each* entry you submit.)
- Great Lakes Theater will review the school-winning entries and will select two Grand Prize-Winning entries for each eligible grade.

AWARDS

School Award: One Very Special Matinee Performance of *A Christmas Carol*

This year, Great Lakes Theater will offer ONE special Cleveland Metropolitan School District matinee performances of GLT's production of *A Christmas Carol* will be presented on **Tuesday, November 25, 2025 at 11:00 a.m.**

The play will be performed in the Mimi Ohio Theatre at Playhouse Square. School winners will be recognized onstage immediately following the performances. The program will conclude by 1:15 p.m.

Each CMSD school that submits a school-winning entry will receive free tickets and transportation assistance to help pay for some of the cost of a bus (or buses) to attend the student matinee.

Schools must submit a school-winning entry in order to receive tickets, and tickets will be allotted on a first-come, first-served basis. Teachers may submit winning entries prior to the **Friday, October 31, 2025** deadline in order to secure tickets. Transportation will be coordinated with each individual school shortly after the contest deadline on **Friday, October 31, 2025**.

Student Awards

1. Each student writing a school-winning essay will receive an exclusive contest winners **T-shirt from GLT**.
2. School winners will be **recognized before their peers** at the *A Christmas Carol* matinee performance on stage after the play.
3. Before Thanksgiving, GLT will announce **TWO Grand Prize Winning essays PER GRADE** for grades six, seven and eight, for a total of **SIX Grand Prize-Winners**.

Grand Prize Student Awards

Grand Prize-Winning students will receive **free tickets** with their parents or guardians (**limit 4**) and teacher plus one to the **Secrets of “A Christmas Carol” Performance** on the evening of **Saturday, December 6, 2025 at 1:30 p.m.**, which includes an invitation to learn all the stage tricks involved in the production, immediately following the performance.

Grand Prize-Winning students will also receive a **fine hardcover edition** of Dickens’ *A Christmas Carol*, a **gift card**, and a **plaque** engraved with each award-winning writer’s name. In addition, their work will be read and professionally recorded by a company member of Great Lakes Theater’s *A Christmas Carol* which will be posted on the GLT website.

REVISED GUIDELINES

- This contest is open to sixth, seventh and eighth grade Cleveland Metropolitan School District students.
- Entries may take the form of a short story, narrative essay, poem, play script or movie screenplay, blog entry, news article, dialogue, song lyrics or any other genre chosen by the student.
- The entry must be written legibly in ink or typed, must be double-spaced, and include a cover sheet (see page 20 of this packet) with the student’s full name, school, grade level and teacher’s name and email address. Illegible entries will not be considered.

Revised criteria for selecting winning entries:

Written work will be adjudicated based on each of the following criteria:

1. Content and creativity: Is the work original and imaginative?
2. Adherence to theme: Has the work incorporated themes present in Dickens’ novel (see below)?

3. Clarity and coherence: Is the work accessible to the reader?
4. Language and style: Does the writer's personal voice and expression come through the work?
5. Structure and fluency: Is the work complete?
6. Overall impression: Is the work enjoyable and engaging?
7. Mechanics and convention: Does the work follow the conventions of contemporary spelling, punctuation, and grammar – with exceptions to these written purposefully?

COMMENTS! Judges will provide brief comments for each school winning entry.

Themes present in Charles Dickens' "A Christmas Carol"

All written entries must reflect one or more themes evident in Dickens' original work. These themes include (but are not limited to):

- Redemption & Transformation
- Social Justice & Generosity
- Family & Relationships
- Spirituality & Faith
- Time & Memory
- Celebration & Festivity

Regarding originality, plagiarism, and copyright

All student writing must be original with quotations properly attributed.

Writers may reinterpret characters in the public domain.

Written work incorporating characters under copyright will not be adjudicated.

If you have a question as to what may or may not be under copyright, please contact us.

EACH individual grade level winner must include the cover sheet provided on page 20.

Questions? Contact David Hansen at 216-453-4444 or via email at dhansen@greatlakestheater.org

SUGGESTED DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Identify the crimes and injustices that take place in *A Christmas Carol*. What are some of the evidences of poverty in the story? Is the world you live in very different from the world of *A Christmas Carol*? Explain your answer. Why does poverty continue from age to age? What are some possible solutions to poverty?
2. What do you think Dickens means when he writes that in the future, children will be born with the words "Ignorance" and "Want" stamped across their foreheads?
3. Define greed and generosity. Cite examples of greed and generosity in the story. Cite examples that promote and reinforce greed or generosity in our society today.
4. Why do you think some people are generous while others are greedy? Give examples of people who give without expecting or wanting anything in return. Why do you think they behave this way?
5. When you give a gift, what do you expect in return? How do you feel when you give a gift? When you receive a gift?
6. What would you be willing to change about yourself in order to achieve your dream? Is divisiveness and game-playing a necessary evil when climbing the ladder of success? What line would you refuse to cross in order to "make it to the top?"
7. What would influence someone to change his or her lifestyle and values as drastically as Ebenezer Scrooge does? Do you think this change in Scrooge will last? Has there ever been a time when you felt as mean and selfish as Scrooge is at the beginning of the story? Have you ever had a change of heart? What made you change your behavior? How do you feel when you have done something wrong? How does it feel to be forgiven for hurting another person?
8. Which characters did you identify with most? Which characters did you identify with least? Why?
9. How does your environment and/or opportunity shape who you are? In what ways does the core nature of who we are stay the same regardless of where we are or who are with? Why do some people rise above adversity while others let it define them and justify bad behavior? Have you ever known a person like Tiny Tim? Why is the character of Tiny Tim such an inspiring figure?
10. Charles Dickens was one of the most popular authors of his day. His works are still read and adapted into various mediums — plays, movies, and musicals — almost 140 years after his death. What makes the tale of Ebenezer Scrooge both timeless and relevant? How many versions have you experienced? Which adaptation do you most admire? What sets it apart from the others?

SUMMARY OF CHARLES DICKENS' "A CHRISTMAS CAROL"

A Christmas Carol is not merely a holiday tale; it is a retelling of the very human dilemma that many of us face. We often think of Scrooge as a stereotype: as just the mean old man who says, "Bah, humbug!" The character of Ebenezer Scrooge, however, is much more than that – he is a symbol of all people who close their eyes to the ignorance and poverty in the world. In the story, Scrooge is a strong supporter of, and active participant in, a corrupt and cruel system. He goes through life thinking only of himself. In his own words, "It's enough for a man to understand his own business and not to interfere with other people's."

It is Christmas Eve and Ebenezer Scrooge is busy in his counting house. His clerk, Bob Cratchit, works in the next room with the smallest of fires to keep warm. Scrooge's nephew, Fred, arrives to invite his uncle to Christmas dinner. Scrooge adamantly refuses, exclaiming, "Bah, humbug!" Fred tries to persuade him to change his mind, but to no avail. As Fred leaves, two gentlemen arrive and request a donation for the poor. Scrooge refuses, citing that taking care of the poor is the job of the prisons and workhouses. Scrooge grudgingly gives Bob Cratchit Christmas Day off and they both leave for the day.

As Scrooge returns home on Christmas Eve, he is startled by the appearance of his doorknocker, which suddenly takes the form of his deceased partner's face. It turns into a regular knocker again and Scrooge goes about his business, getting ready for bed. Scrooge is just settling down to a bowl of gruel when he is suddenly frightened by a loud ringing of many bells and the appearance of the ghost of his old business partner, Jacob Marley. Marley, doomed to wear heavy chains and wander the earth witnessing misery, cautions Scrooge to change his ways. Marley tells Scrooge of hundreds of ghosts, many of whom Scrooge knew when they were alive, suffering the same fate. He explains that their misery is caused by their powerlessness to interfere for the good in human affairs. In life, these people had been blind to the suffering around them, only to see, in death, what good they could have done. Marley warns Scrooge that his own chains are just as long and heavy, but that there is a chance of escaping this horrific fate.

Marley tells Scrooge he will be visited by three ghosts, the first at one o'clock. Marley departs and Scrooge convinces himself that the entire incident was only a dream. At the stroke of one, however, the Ghost of Christmas Past appears and takes Scrooge on a journey through his own life. During this visit to his past, Scrooge experiences a great deal of regret. He sees himself as a lonely young boy, a carefree young man and, finally, as a hardened adult. The ghost also shows Scrooge the woman he once loved. Scrooge begins to realize that the love of money became more important to him than the love of other people.

Scrooge is next visited by the Ghost of Christmas Present. In the course of this visit, Scrooge sees his clerk, Bob Cratchit, and his large family. The Cratchits are poor, but happy and grateful for one another. Scrooge is struck with a foreign emotion – compassion – when he sees Bob's youngest son, Tiny Tim, who is sickly and crippled. Scrooge and the Ghost then travel throughout the land, observing gatherings and party goers, miners on a distant moor and sailors in a ship at sea – all celebrating Christmas in their own way.

Almost immediately Scrooge and the Ghost find themselves at Scrooge's nephew Fred's home. Scrooge overhears Fred and his party guests discussing his ill-temper and solitary nature. Fred tells the gathered guests that he means to continue asking his uncle to Christmas dinner, despite his rude refusals. Scrooge begins to realize he is only cheating himself out of happy experiences by not visiting. The Ghost and Scrooge continue to view Christmases throughout the world – from homes to hospitals to jails. Scrooge witnesses that each person visited by the Ghost of Christmas Present feels a greater sense of joy and hope.

Finally, Scrooge notices two children clinging to the Ghost's robes. Scrooge asks if they belong to the Ghost, who replies:

They are Man's. And they cling to me, appealing from their fathers. This boy is Ignorance, the girl is Want. Beware of them both, and all of their degree. But most of all beware this boy, for on his brow I see that written which is Doom, unless the writing be erased.

The bell strikes twelve and Scrooge is visited by the third and final spirit, the Ghost of Christmas Yet to Come. The Ghost, tall, shrouded in black and totally silent, shows Scrooge various people discussing the death of a man who was obviously disliked. A group of businessmen laugh at what a small funeral he was likely to have. Another group does nothing but mention his death casually. Scrooge then witnesses several servants selling the man's stolen belongings. Scrooge realizes that "the case of this unhappy man might be my own." Almost at once the scene changes and Scrooge is terrified to see the body of the plundered and uncared for man.

Scrooge, overcome, requests to see some emotion connected with the man's death. The Ghost shows him a poor, young couple, overcome with relief that their relentless creditor has died. To purge the previous scenes from his mind, Scrooge then demands to see some tenderness related to a death. The spirit conducts him to Bob Cratchit's house. Scrooge realizes the quiet family is in mourning for the death of poor Tiny Tim. Scrooge, suspecting the end of the spirit's visit, begs the Ghost to tell him the identity of the unfortunate deceased man. Without speaking a word, the Ghost takes Scrooge to a graveyard, where Scrooge sees the neglected grave – his own. In anguish he cries out to the Ghost for mercy, swearing to change the course of the future.

Suddenly, Scrooge finds himself back in his own room and immediately sets out to make good on his promise. Bubbling with joy, he anonymously sends a large turkey to the Cratchit family, flags down the previous day's charity solicitor and promises a large sum, goes to church and spends the afternoon with Fred's family – much to their surprise and delight. The following day, catching Bob Cratchit coming in late to work, Scrooge surprises him by proposing to raise his salary and assist his struggling family.

VOCABULARY FROM CHARLES DICKENS' NOVEL "A CHRISTMAS CAROL"

Stave 1

ironmongery
simile
unhallowed
residuary
Ramparts
entreaty
trifle
phantoms
intimation
morose
impropriety
resolute
homage
ominous
facetious
brazier
solitude
misanthropic
garret
congenial
phenomenon
irresolution
balustrades
transparent
waistcoat
caustic
waggish
spectre
remorse
benevolence
supernatural
apparition
dirge

Stave 2

opaque
preposterous
perplexed
endeavoured
recumbent
extinguisher
fluctuated
supplication
vestige
extraordinary
condescension
celestial
terrestrial
decanter
chaise
agitation
avarice
supposition
tumultuous
uproarious
brigands
boisterous
onslaught
despoil
irrepressible
haggard
irresistible

Stave 3

apprehensive
spontaneous
combustion
consolation
predicament
transformation
petrification
capacious
artifice
scabbard
compulsion
diffuse
jovial
parapets
facetious
apoplectic
opulence
demurely
conspicuous
filberts
officious
zeal
livid
heresy
penitence
rebuke
odious
stingy
plaintive
scanty
desolation
cultivate
contortions

credulity
execrable
confidential
prostrate
perversion

Stave 4

shroud
pendulous
excrescence
skaiter
latent
resolutions
slipshod
cesspool
offal
defiance
obscene
repress
successor
foreshadow
Intercourse

Stave 5

extravagance
illustrious
courage
array
feign
alteration
malady
knowledge

ADAPTATIONS FOR THE SCREEN

Dickens himself performed *A Christmas Carol* from a lectern, acting out each of the many characters with true dramatic intensity. His classic story was adapted for performance shortly after its initial publication, December 19, 1843, and adapted for film with the birth of that medium. New versions appear on stage, film, and television every Christmas season.

Some teachers may choose to share all or part of a film adaptation of *A Christmas Carol* with their students, in addition to reading from the book itself. Each film adaptation, like Great Lakes Theater's own stage adaptation, reflects the era in which it was created, and different adaptations emphasize to a larger or lesser extent theme various themes present in Dickens' original work.

Although not comprehensive by any means, this list will give the reader a glimpse of the tremendous impact this wondrous story has had upon the world.

- ***Scrooge, or Marley's Ghost*** (1901) Considered to be the first film adaptation, this is a British short film.
- ***A Christmas Carol*** (1908) Silent film starring Thomas Ricketts as Scrooge.
- ***A Christmas Carol*** (1910) Produced by Edison Manufacturing Company, this silent film starred Marc McDermott as Scrooge.
- ***Scrooge*** (1913) This British silent film was adapted for the screen by the stage actor who also plays Scrooge, Seymour Hicks. He reprised his role in the 1935 film.
- ***Scrooge*** (1935) Considered by many to be the definitive version; this classic was televised annually for many years. Seymour Hicks, Donald Calthrop, Robert Cochran, Mary Glynn, the Lockhart family.
- ***A Christmas Carol*** (1949, TV) Narrator Vincent Price, with Taylor Holmes as Scrooge.
- ***Scrooge*** (1951) Alastair Sim plays Scrooge in what is widely regarded as the best film version of the Dickens classic.
- ***Mr. Magoo's Christmas Carol*** (1962) Classic animated musical version with Jim Backus, Jack Cassidy, Royal Dano and Jane Kean.
- ***Scrooge*** (1970) Musical film with Albert Finney, Alec Guinness, and Edith Evans.
- ***A Christmas Carol*** (1971, TV) Alastair Sim reprises his role as Scrooge in this PBS animated film, done with Victorian-style artwork. This Academy Award winning short film is considered by many to be the best of the many animated versions.
- ***Rich Little's Christmas Carol*** (1978) Rich Little impersonates famous people playing the characters: W.C. Fields as Scrooge, Paul Lynde as Bob Cratchit, Richard Nixon as Jacob Marley, and many more.
- ***An American Christmas Carol*** (1979) Henry Winkler, Dorian Harewood.
- ***Mickey's Christmas Carol*** (1983) Alan Young gives voice to Scrooge McDuck in this Walt Disney animated film. Mickey plays the role of Bob Cratchit.
- ***A Christmas Carol*** (1984, TV) Landing George C. Scott an Emmy nomination, many hold this television version in high regard.
- ***Scrooged*** (1988) A modern day Scrooge is played by Bill Murray, with Karen Allen, John Forsythe, Carol Kane, Robert Mitchum, Robert Goulet, and a host of other stars.
- ***The Muppet Christmas Carol*** (1992) Michael Caine, David Goelz, Kermit the Frog, Miss Piggy, and the rest of the Muppet characters.

- ***A Flintstones Christmas Carol*** (1994, TV) Fred Flintstone is cast as Scrooge in the Bedrock Community Players production of the play.
- ***Ms. Scrooge*** (1997, TV) Cicely Tyson as Ms. Ebenita Scrooge, Katherine Helmond as Maude Marley. A retelling, but with a female version of Scrooge.
- ***A Christmas Carol*** (1999, TV) Popular TV version with Patrick Stewart as Scrooge. Although the screenplay was adapted by British playwright Peter Barnes, it is in essence Stewart's one-man show brought to life with a full cast. Filmed in England, it was nominated for an Emmy award for outstanding cinematography.
- ***A Christmas Carol: The Musical*** (2004, TV) Kelsey Grammer, Jason Alexander, Jennifer Love Hewitt.
- ***A Sesame Street Christmas Carol*** (TV, 2006) Narrated by Tim Curry, with all the favorite Sesame Street characters.
- ***A Christmas Carol*** (2009) Directed by Robert Zemeckis, a computer animated adaptation with Jim Carrey, Gary Oldman, Colin Firth, Robin Wright Penn, Cary Elwes and Bob Hoskins.
- ***The Man Who Invented Christmas*** (2017) Directed by Bharat Nalluri, a fictionalized retelling of author Charles Dickens' struggles to write and publish *A Christmas Carol*. Includes Johnathan Pryce as Dickens' father and Christopher Plummer as Ebenezer Scrooge.

List originally compiled by the Cleveland Chapter of the Charles Dickens Society, 2009

CMSD SCOPE/SEQUENCE ALIGNMENT

KIND OF ACTIVITY	KIND OF LEARNING	STANDARDS
Creative Writing Exercises	Communicating in writing Synthesizing and applying knowledge Critical thinking Reasoning	-English-Language Arts Standards-College and Career Readiness-Anchor Standards for Reading CCSS ELA-Literacy. CCRA.R.7-8 (Integration of Knowledge and Ideas) -English-Language Arts Standards-College and Career Readiness-Anchor Standards for Writing CCSS ELA-Literacy CCRA.W.1-6 (Text Types and Purposes and Production and Distribution of Writing) -Ohio Drama/Theatre Standards: Responding/Reflecting (RE)

CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES

Classroom activities can stimulate discussion and thought. These activities have been tried and tested by Great Lakes Theater actor-teachers with great success with middle school aged students in CMSD schools.

WHERE DO YOU STAND

Teacher leads class through "Where do you Stand?" a non-verbal dramatic exercise where students move about the room aligning with their personal responses to specific spoken prompts. The room is divided into three response areas: (a) Strongly Agree (b) Unsure (c) Strongly Disagree. When the teacher reads a statement, the students silently move to one of the three areas in the room. The teacher waits until movement has completed before moving on to the next prompt.

After the exercise is completed, students return to their seats and teacher engages the class in a discussion drawing observations from how they responded to the prompts. For example:

Who strongly agreed with the first prompt, "Most people can never truly change?" Why? Who strongly agreed with the last prompt, "It's never too late to turn over a new leaf?" Explain. The exercise stimulates complex thought on the issues in the work.

I believe

- ... most people can never truly change.
- ... people require a life-altering experience to change their nature.
- ... people can change anytime they choose to.
- ... my past determines my future.
- ... our lives are predetermined.
- ... it is more important to do good than to be good.
- ... we make all decisions based on our own self-interest.
- ... fear of damnation is all that compels us to be good.
- ... everything that happens to a person, happens for a reason.
- ... someone will always look after the less fortunate.
- ... there will always be poor.
- ... people who can't stand up for themselves deserve what they receive.
- ... some actions are unforgivable.
- ... everyone deserves a second chance.
- ... it's never too late to turn over a new leaf.

EMOTIONAL GREETINGS and SCULPTURES

The emotional spectrum displayed in *A Christmas Carol* is vast and deep. The following exercises are designed to tap into these feelings. The first activity can serve as an ice breaker. As the facilitator, you are encouraged to push your students to be over the top and give them permission to be fully uninhibited. Have the class stand in a circle. Their objective is to “greet” everyone in the circle with a simple handshake and/or salutation. You will continue this process, but each new “greeting” will be colored by an extreme emotion:

- a) incredible excitement — you are on a major sugar high
- b) love with a capital “L” — you are giddy and full of joy!
- c) paranoid — you feel as if everyone is out to get you
- d) innocent — you only see the good in everyone you meet
- e) fearful — you are not sure who is around the corner, but you know you MUST deal with them
- f) loss/grief — you must go on even after you have lost everything that matters
- g) renewed possibility and a true spirit of giving — your goal is to create and bring joy to others
- i) return to neutral and greet each without any emotion attached

How did the emotions shape actions and/or behavior? How did the class dynamic change with the various emotions? What emotions were easiest to tap into? What emotions felt the most “real?” Why? What did it feel like to be on the receiving end of the various greeting? How did the group energy shape your actions and behavior? Once you have processed the exercise with the class, you can move on to create group sculptures based on the emotional themes of the play. This is a non-verbal exercise. Have the group count off in threes. Each group will collectively shape a living sculpture using their bodies to reflect the paradoxical images/themes and ideas listed below. Students should be encouraged to try to capture the *essence* of the feeling or idea, and should avoid literal representations.

- 1) GREED / CHARITY
- 2) FEAR / POSSIBILITY
- 3) JUDGEMENT / REDEMPTION
- 4) ISOLATION / RELATIONSHIP

Give each prompt adequate time to prepare (about five minutes) and without revealing the source, have each group present their sculpture. Ask the remaining students to comment on what they see and to name the sculpture. Talk about the process of creating as a group. Were you able to effectively communicate the theme or idea? What surprised you by your classmates’ interpretations?

BIRTH-TO-DEATH TIMELINES

BIRTH-TO-DEATH TIMELINE I:

Students are asked to physically transform as they walk through the various ages/stages of life starting as a baby and finishing at the end of life. This is a non-verbal exercise. Encourage students to take their time and invest in the discovery process of the physical changes that occur during the aging process. Make sure students have enough space to truly commit to physically embodying the life cycle. Their movement from point 'A' to point 'B' is a physical timeline. Sometimes quiet music helps to set the right environment. What, if any, discoveries did they make about growing up?

BIRTH TO DEATH TIMELINE II:

Have students create an imaginary box. Ask them to be very specific about size, shape, weight, color, and its overall physical attributes. Have the students walk across the room and find a spot where they will keep the "box" throughout the exercise. Have participants return to their opening spots. During the exercise students will be asked to cross the space at various life markers, placing an imaginary memento of each event in their imaginary boxes. Encourage participants to fully invest in and take time with each moment. You can alter the following timeline events and essential life markers but make sure that the span and depth of various moments are included to represent a life well-lived. Don't forget to remind students to place an imaginary keepsake in their box after every event. Again, this is a non-verbal exercise and requires time and space to truly engage the imagination and fully commit to each moment.

1. You are about one year old and you are taking your very first steps — you are walking to the person that you love best and trust most.
2. You are five years old and it is your very first day of school — kindergarten — you are walking to the door of your new classroom.
3. You are about eight years old and you have just done something really "bad" — you are walking to your mom or dad to confess and tell the truth.
4. You are thirteen and just about to leave for your first school dance — you are walking to the door getting ready to meet your "date."
5. You are sixteen years old and just got your driver's license — you are walking to the car for your first solo drive.
6. You are twenty-two years old — it is your college graduation — you are walking across the stage to get your diploma.

7. You are twenty-eight years old — it is your wedding day — you are walking down the aisle to meet the person that you want to share the rest of your life with.
8. You are thirty-three years old — you have a new baby — today is your first night home, you hear the baby cry and you are going to their crib to comfort the child.
9. You are forty years old — you must cross the room to deal with an event that will change your life forever the consequence of which will be forever with you.
10. You are forty-five years old — you are crossing to say your final good bye to someone you love deeply.
11. You are fifty — you are fulfilling a life dream — you are crossing to “take in” that moment.
12. You are sixty-seven years old and are walking to close your work space in order to retire.
13. You are seventy-four and living alone, the doorbell rings and you are walking to answer it hoping that the person you love best will be on the other side.
14. You are eighty and you are taking your grandchild to your favorite spot.
15. You have come to your last cross-over, walk to your box, slowly go through each memento choosing one to keep with you. In your own time, find a spot on the floor, breathe deeply, get comfortable and close your eyes until the end of the exercise.

After you have completed both exercises, take time to discuss the process of the physical transformation as well as the discoveries that accompanied each exercise. What were some of the mementos that students chose to place in their box? What memories were evoked when going through the box in the final cross over? What did they choose to take with them? Why? What were the most difficult stages of their imagined lives? How did they choose to deal with the challenges, joys, and sorrows? What was the cumulative effect? In what ways does this exercise relate to the life choices of the characters in Dickens' *A Christmas Carol*? What mementos would Scrooge have discovered in his “box?” What were the transformative moments that colored his soul and transformed his being?

WISH BOXES

Have students create a “Wish Box.” Take an ordinary shoe or gift box and decorate the outside with words and images that best reflect you. Now dream. Write down your wishes and hopes for the future, both short- and long-term and fill the box. Be specific and write in the affirmative (I will travel to Italy, I will find the perfect prom dress, I will get accepted to Mount Union College, Harvard, and Ohio State, I will get an “A” on next week’s math test, etc.) Once you have articulated your dreams and wishes, secure them in the box and put it away for safe keeping. Let a significant amount of time pass — a semester, perhaps, or even a year. Then open the box. Read through your wishes. What wishes were made manifest this time? What wishes no longer hold any significance? What new wishes and dreams do you want to nurture and grow? Allow this to be an authentic ritual for yourself, a time where you can take stock, reflect, and dream.

CREATE YOUR OWN TRADITION

A Christmas Carol is a holiday tale with a message that crosses cultural and religious boundaries. Not only was it instrumental in changing the public’s attitude towards the poor, but it also revived many long-forgotten holiday traditions, such as the singing of Christmas carols.

Have your class research the history and background of other cultural and/or religious holidays and occasions. What contemporary customs or practices have risen from these traditions? Have your class create a “world” holiday utilizing themes from as many different cultural traditions as possible. What messages do these traditions represent? Are there similarities in these different traditions? The class may also want to research additional contemporary rituals and investigate their origins, or even create their own modern tradition and/or holiday.

SUGGESTED WRITING PROMPTS

We offer here a range of possible writing prompts; of course, some topics will be more suited to particular grade levels than others. Please choose topics that best suit the needs and abilities of your class, and please feel free to create original prompts inspired by themes found in *A Christmas Carol*.

Generosity in Disguise: Craft a tale where someone seemingly selfish performs an anonymous act of kindness that has unexpected consequences. Explore how this act changes their life and the lives of others.

Family Reconciliation: Write about someone who estranges themselves from their family over a misunderstanding. They are given a chance to revisit their past and present, leading to an emotional reunion.

Lessons from the Past: A person finds an old journal or diary from their younger self. As they read through it, they are reminded of their lost dreams and ideals, leading them to rekindle their passion for life.

A Chance Encounter: Develop a story where someone who has been wronged in the past unexpectedly meets the person who wronged them. The encounter leads to surprising revelations and a path to forgiveness.

A Second Chance: Write about someone who gets a magical chance to relive a significant moment in their life. They must make different choices to avoid future regret or harm.

A Visit from the Future: A cynical teenager is shown a glimpse of their future if they continue their current path. How does this vision motivate them to alter their behavior and outlook?

Unlikely Allies: Write about two individuals who have been rivals but are forced to work together to help someone in need during the holiday season. How does this experience change their relationship?

The Secret Santa: In a workplace where the atmosphere is tense and competitive, a mysterious Secret Santa begins giving thoughtful gifts. How do these gifts impact the relationships among the employees?

A Lesson from the Less Fortunate: A privileged individual is required to spend a day living as someone less fortunate. What do they learn from this experience, and how does it affect their attitudes and actions?

The Spirit of Compassion: Someone known for their lack of empathy is guided by a series of chance encounters with people in need. How do these interactions change their view of compassion and kindness?

ABOUT GREAT LAKES THEATER

Sara Bruner, Producing Artistic Director

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Cleveland, Ohio 44115
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greatlakes theater.org

The mission of Great Lakes Theater, through its main stage productions and its education programs, is to bring the pleasure, power, and relevance of classic theater to the widest possible audience.

Since the company's inception in 1962, programming has been rooted in Shakespeare, but the company's commitment to great plays spans the breadth of all cultures, forms of theater and time periods including the 20th century, and provides for the occasional mounting of new works that complement the classical repertoire.

Classic theater holds the capacity to illuminate truth and enduring values, celebrate and challenge human nature and actions, revel in eloquent language, preserve the traditions of diverse cultures and generate communal spirit. On its mainstage and through its education program, the Theater seeks to create visceral, immediate experiences for participants, asserting theater's historic role as a vehicle for advancing the common good, and helping people make the most joyful and meaningful connections between classic plays and their own lives. This Cleveland theater company wishes to share such vibrant experiences with people across all age groups, creeds, racial and ethnic groups, and socio-economic backgrounds.

Great Lakes Theater's commitment to classic theater is magnified in the educational programs (for both adults and students) that surround its productions. The company has a strong presence in area schools, offering an annual series of student matinees and, for over 30 years, an acclaimed school residency program led by teams of specially trained actor-teachers.

Great Lakes Theater's educational programming is generously supported by: The Community Foundation of Lorain County, Cuyahoga Arts & Culture, Eaton Corporation, The Harry K. and Emma R. Fox Charitable Foundation, The Giant Eagle Foundation, The George Gund Foundation, The Martha Holden Jennings Foundation, The Laub Foundation, The Lubrizol Foundation, The John P. Murphy Foundation, The David and Inez Myers Foundation, National Endowment for the Arts, The Nord Family Foundation, Nordson Corporation Foundation, Ohio Arts Council, The Reinberger Foundation, The Shubert Foundation, The Kelvin & Eleanor Smith Foundation, U.S. Bank, The Thomas H. White Foundation, and more than 500 generous individual donors.



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A CHRISTMAS CAROL WRITING CONTEST COVER PAGE

This is a cover page for **EACH** *A Christmas Carol* Writing Contest entry. Please copy this form for each grade level participant and attach to each writing project submitted to Great Lakes Theater. ***We cannot accept more than ONE ENTRY PER GRADE LEVEL from any school.***

Note: Before you send the entry, please make a copy of each winning writing project for your own records.

Please print legibly.

Student's Name: _____

School Name: _____ **Grade:** _____

Teacher's Name (first & last): _____

Teacher cellphone number (not office no.): _____

Teacher's email address: _____

Total number of student entries written by your class: _____

Number of matinee tickets requested*: _____

**We will do our best accommodate all ticket requests, pending availability. Every school that participates will receive an allotment of no fewer than thirty (30) tickets to attend "A Christmas Carol" for their students and all chaperones.*

The "A Christmas Carol" Writing Contest Matinee will be: Tuesday, November 25, 2025

Contest Deadline is 12 NOON on: Friday, October 31, 2025.

Email entries (.doc, .docx or .pdf) **with this cover page** to dhansen@greatlakestheater.org

-OR-

Mail entries to: David Hansen, Education Programs Manager
Great Lakes Theater, 1501 Euclid Ave., Suite 300, Cleveland, Ohio 44115

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Comments