

GREAT
LAKES
THEATER

65th Season

Est. 1962

TEACHER PREPARATION GUIDE

A Christmas CAROL

BY CHARLES DICKENS

ADAPTED & DIRECTED
BY GERALD FREEDMAN

Generous Support Provided By:



A CHRISTMAS CAROL

"What has ever got your precious father then?" said Mrs. Cratchit. "And your brother, Tiny Tim? And Martha wasn't as late last Christmas Day by half an hour?" "Here, Martha, mother!" said a girl, appearing as she spoke.

SECOND OF THREE SPIRITS

"Here's Martha, mother!" cried the two young Cratchits. "Hurrah! There's such a goose, Martha!"

"Why, bless your heart alive, my dear, how late you are!" said Mrs. Cratchit, kissing her a dozen times, and taking off her shawl and bonnet for her with officious zeal.

"We'd a deal of work to finish up last night," replied the girl, "and had to clear away this morning, mother!"



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Dear Educator,

We welcome you and your students to Great Lakes Theater's production of Charles Dickens' *A Christmas Carol*.

Northeast Ohio's best-loved holiday tradition — GLT's production of *A Christmas Carol* returns to the Ohio Theatre. Ebenezer Scrooge is literally haunted by his past — his present and future too! Aided by four lively, mysterious spirits, Scrooge re-examines his life, half-lived, and is given one last chance to change his fate. His exhilarating journey, filled with humor and music, abounds with charm — as well as dazzling stagecraft and enchanting effects. A cast of two-dozen actors recreates over sixty immortal characters in this heartwarming, timeless tale.

This guide is designed — through its essays, discussion questions and classroom activities — to give students both an introduction to, and a point of entry for, a personal exploration of *A Christmas Carol*. We offer special thanks to arts educator Jodi Kirk and Lakewood City Schools teacher Jessie Holland for their outstanding contributions to this guide.

Great Lakes Theater is proud to provide you with the finest in classic theater and with the necessary educational resources to support your work as an educator. We are thrilled that you will be coming to see us and we welcome your input on how best to support your classroom preparation for our work. Please let us know what you think!

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Kelly Schaffer Florian".

Kelly Schaffer Florian
Director of Educational Services
Kflorian@greatlakestheater.org

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "David Hansen".

David Hansen
Education Programs Manager
dhansen@greatlakestheater.org



A NOTE TO STUDENTS: WHAT TO EXPECT AT THE THEATER

You may or may not have attended a live theater performance before. To increase your enjoyment, it might be helpful to look at the unique qualities of this art form — because it is so different from movies or video.

The live theatrical performance not only involves the actors on the stage; it is meant to involve you, the audience, in ways that film and television cannot. In truth, although you are sitting in an auditorium and the actors are on stage, there is very little separating the audience from the performers. How you react to the play *deeply affects* the actors. Something as seemingly trivial as whispering or unwrapping a candy bar can distract them and disrupt the mood and tone of their performance. Due to the important relationship between actors and audience members, there are certain, perhaps obvious, provisions of live theater we wish to call to your attention.

In the Hanna Theatre, it is important to know that the taking of pictures, either with or without a flash, is strictly prohibited. Also, it is essential that all electronic equipment, including cell phones, music players (even with headphones), alarm watches, etc., be completely powered off once you have entered the theatre. Even the glow from a watch or a silent cell phone (used for checking the time, text messaging, or posting social network updates, for example) can be very distracting to fellow audience members, even if you try to mask it under your hand or an article of clothing. Our goal is to provide every person in the audience with the best possible theatrical experience, so we appreciate your respectful cooperation during the performance.

Other differences live theater provides: in film or video, the camera and editing define what we will see. In the theater, however, each of us works as our own camera and editor, choosing our own personal points of focus. And in the Hanna Theatre, you should know that often we do not use microphones. As audience members you'll need to actively listen and "tune in" to the sound of the unamplified human voice.

As for our lighting and scenery, it might surprise you to know that these are not necessarily meant to be realistic. In this production, for example, there may be design elements that are abstract or metaphorical.

The theater's ability to focus on human experience — distilled through the dialogue and behavior of people on stage and enhanced by the scenery, costumes, lighting, music and dance — is a centuries-old tradition. Being part of the communal magic when performer and audience connect — whether at a baseball game, music concert or theater performance — cannot be duplicated.

The performance you will see at Great Lakes Theater will happen only once. It is unique and personal. Though this play will be performed more than a dozen times, the performance you see belongs only to you.

We hope you enjoy it, and we'd like you to share your response with us.



Charles Dickens



Charles Dickens was born on February 7, 1812, the second of eight children and spent his young childhood in the city of Chatham, England.

Chatham is a seaside city, seventy miles from London, important because it was the home to a great shipbuilding dockyard. Dickens' father worked for the Navy Pay Office, and so he was afforded a pleasant childhood which included a great deal of unsupervised play in the outdoors.

Dickens was also a voracious reader, taking in adventures like "Robinson Crusoe" and "The Arabian Nights." He attended a "dame school" which was a kind of privately run school for a small number of students, all classes led by one female teacher.

When Dickens turned eleven, his life changed dramatically. The family had been living well beyond their means, and when his father was re-stationed in London he was soon forced by his creditors into a debtors' prison, to work until his debts were paid.

Because the family relied on the father for support, Dickens' mother and the youngest of his brothers and sisters had



A young Charles Dickens



Charles Dickens and his wife, Catherine

to live in the debtors' prison, with him! Young Charles boarded with various family friends, many of whom provided the inspiration for characters in his future written work, most notably "The Old Curiosity Shop." He also worked long hours in a factory that produced "bootblack" (shoe polish) to help raise money for his family.

Dickens' harsh and wearying experiences as a child laborer stayed with him his entire life, and his sympathy for the working class is reflected in novels like "Oliver Twist," "David Copperfield," and, of course, "A Christmas Carol." Upon the death of his grandmother, Dickens' father received an inheritance which freed his family from debtors' prison, and Charles was able to continue schooling.

As a teenager he found work as an assistant in a law office, and later as a journalist, selling his news stories to various papers. He began writing short stories as well, which were published by popular magazines. When he was twenty-four, a collection of these stories was published with the title "Sketches by Boz" – a pseudonym he often used for his articles.

Dickens was also an avid fan of the theater, and even tried to audition for a professional company but was unsuccessful in becoming an actor. He married Catherine Hogarth, the daughter of a newspaper editor, and together they would have

ten children. During the years that followed his success the novelist began to grow, one of his early champions was the young Queen Victoria! Many of his greatest works were serialized, or published one chapter at a time, one month at a time, in magazines. As a result, Dickens could gauge the popularity of his storylines and his characters, and change the direction of a novel he was in the process of creating before he had even finished them.

In 1842, Charles and Catherine traveled across the sea to tour the United States. In his published account of the journey, "American Notes for General Circulation," he condemned the American system of slavery – the Civil War was still twenty years away. He was also distressed to learn that his written work was freely published across the United States without regard to copyright. Thousands purchased and loved his work, from whom he hadn't received a penny.

A widely world-renown and successful writer, he was also editor of the London Daily News, which he used to put forth socially progressive ideals. He also took many journeys to neighboring France, which inspired his best-known work of historical fiction, "A Tale of Two Cities" which describes class conflict in both London and Paris. Perhaps you have heard the phrase, "It was the best of times, it was the worst of times" ..? Then you are familiar with the very first sentence of this novel.

During his later years Dickens returned to the United States for another reading tour. For many years he toured, reading his own work for packed houses of admiring fans. He finally fulfilled his dream of playing the stage! He had even started what he called his "Farewell Readings" tour at the age of 56, as he was becoming poor in health. This tour was even suspended for a time, during which he began writing his unfinished novel, "The Mystery of Edwin Drood."

Charles Dickens died on June 9, 1870 at the age of 58. One of the most-read English authors of all time, his works have never gone out of print, and over two hundred radio and television programs and films have been adapted from his written work. His novel "A Christmas Carol" is the primary subject of these, a work whose wide-ranging popularity has been credited with shaping the religious holiday of Christmas into the secular, family-centered season of giving that is celebrated around the world.



Charles Dickens House & Museum,
48 Doughty Street, London



Charles Dickens reading to two of his daughters
in the garden of his home, Gad's Hill, in Kent

DICKENS' LONDON

Until very recently, Queen Victoria was the longest reigning monarch in British history! The British often refer to periods of their history by the name of the reigning monarch. These periods can last a generation or so, and can be used to easily define changes in society, fashion, popular culture, government and the general mood and well-being of the population.



The 63 years Victoria was Queen of England (1837 – 1901) largely coincides with the period also referred to as the Industrial Revolution, when technological advances led to a massive increase in factory work and the rapid growth of the nation's capital city of London in size and population. Millions left the farms of England to find factory work in the city.



Now, London never had the best sanitation even before the 19th century. During Shakespeare's time there was nothing like what we would know as sanitation at all. The only drinking water in London four hundred years ago came straight from the Thames River, the same river everyone used to dump their waste!

A crowded river Thames running through London.



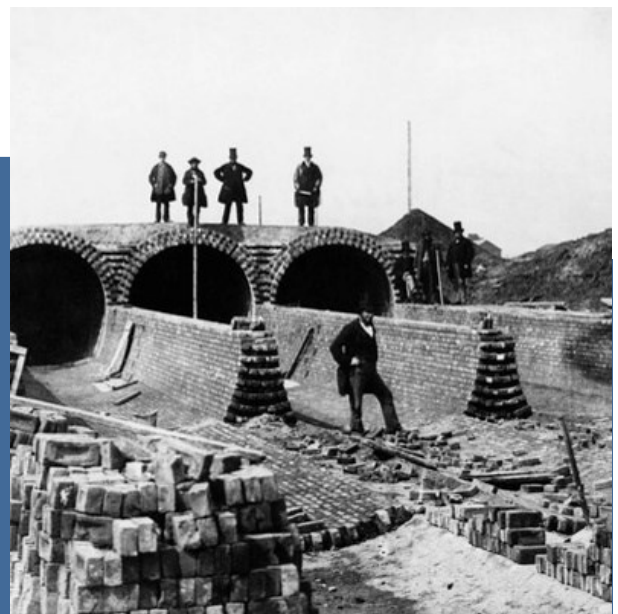
By Victoria's day things were considerably worse, with factories breathing toxic soot and smoke into the skies, the streets caked with droppings from horses drawing carriages. Young boys were even employed to get the dung off the streets.

Imagine you had a time machine, and wanted to meet Charles Dickens in 1843, as he was writing his new story, "A Christmas Carol." The very first thing you would notice, before even getting a chance to look around to see the smoke-blackened brick buildings lining narrow streets packed with people, would be the over-whelming stench of your surroundings!



Horses drive traffic on London's Oxford Street in 1890, producing approximately 1,000 tons of dung a day.

Under terrible conditions like these, diseases communicated through microbes — about which little was known at the time — such as cholera and typhus were often passed via unclean water and food stuffs.



Most people in the United States today (though it must be said, not all) take purified water and proper sewage systems for granted. But it was not until the 1890s and the very end of Victoria's reign that the city of London took action to create a public sanitation system.



A drawing of a crowded 18th century London neighborhood.

TIMELINE

KEY MOMENTS OF THE VICTORIAN ERA



June 20, 1837 — Queen Victoria ascends the throne at the age of 18.



1838 — Charles Dickens's *Oliver Twist* is published. It brings public attention to social issues like poverty and child labor.



Aug. 1, 1838 — Slavery is abolished in the British empire. Plantation owners received about 20 million pounds in government compensation. The former slaves receive nothing.



June, 1840 — Vaccinations for the poor, for diseases like smallpox, is introduced and is funded by taxpayers.

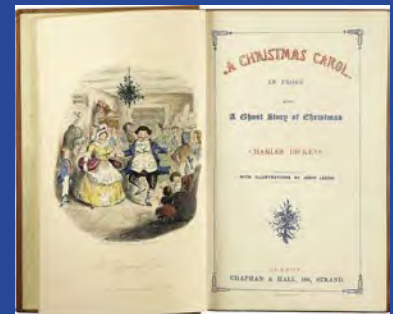


1840 — Victoria marries her first cousin Prince Albert of Saxe-Coburg and Gotha. They have 9 children.



Sept. 17, 1938 — London-Birmingham line opens and the railway boom begins. Hardwick's Curzon Street station is pictured.

1843 — Charles Dickens self-publishes *A Christmas Carol*. The book sells 6,000 in six days.



September, 1845 — Ireland suffers a great famine after disease destroys 60% of the country's potato crops. The famine lasts five years and saw more than 1 million deaths.



April 10, 1848 — Over 50,000 people attend the Great Chartist Meeting on Kennington Commons, London. The petition, said to have 5.7 million signatures calling for political reform, including the vote to all men, is delivered to Parliament in a series of coaches.

December 14, 1861 — Prince Albert dies at the age of 42 and Victoria spends the rest of her life in mourning.



1868 — The last shipment of convicts is sent from England to Australia. Some 164,000 convicts are transported to the Australian colonies between 1768 and 1868.

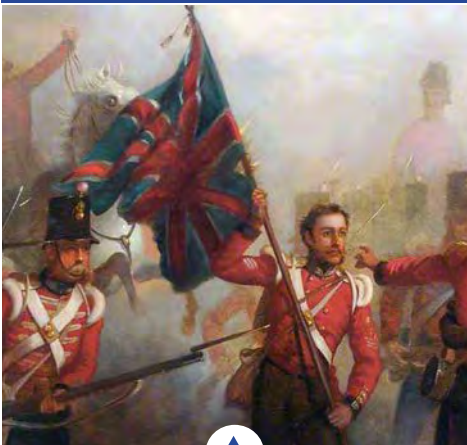
Jan. 22, 1901 — After a brief illness, 81 year-old Victoria dies at home, surrounded by members of her family. She is succeeded by her eldest son, Edward VII.



August 31, 1888 — “Jack the Ripper” commits the first of at least five ghastly murders in the East End of London. Despite an extended police search, the murderer’s identity is never discovered.



March 28, 1854 — The Crimean War begins after Britain and France declare war on Russia. Some 321,000 soldiers die in the conflict, most from disease and neglect.



August 1880 — The Elementary Education Act means children must attend school until the age of 10. Many children continue to work outside of school hours and truancy becomes a major problem.



1850 — Salford Museum and Art Gallery becomes England’s first free public library after the Public Library Act is passed.



October, 1897 — Millicent Garrett Fawcett co-founds the National Union of Women’s Suffrage, campaigning for the women’s vote.

The world's first commercially produced Christmas card, made by Henry Cole.



DICKENS AND CHRISTMAS

Dickens, particularly his 1843 masterpiece *A Christmas Carol*, that rekindled the joy of Christmas in Britain and America.

Dickens' description of the holiday as "a good time: a kind, forgiving, charitable, pleasant time: the only time I know of in the long calendar of the year, when men and women seem by one consent to open their shut-up hearts freely, and to think of other people below them as if they really were fellow-passengers to the grave, and not another race of creatures bound on other journeys," is the very essence of Christmas today; not at the greedy commercialized level, but in people's hearts and homes.

Dickens' name had become so synonymous with Christmas that on hearing of his death in 1870 a little costermonger's girl in London asked, "Mr. Dickens dead? Then will Father Christmas die too?"

from David Perdue's *Charles Dickens Home Page*,
www.fidnet.com/~dap1955/dickens

At the beginning of the Victorian period the celebration of Christmas was in decline. The medieval Christmas traditions which combined Christianity, the ancient Roman festival celebrating the Roman god of agriculture, and the Germanic winter festival of Yule, were discouraged by the Puritans under Oliver Cromwell. The Industrial Revolution, in full swing in Dickens' time, also allowed workers little time for the celebration of Christmas.

The romantic revival of Christmas traditions that occurred in Victorian times had other contributors: Prince Albert brought the German custom of decorating the Christmas tree to England, the singing of Christmas carols, which had all but disappeared at the turn of the century began to thrive again, and the first Christmas card appeared in the 1840's. But it was the Christmas stories of

"MAKE UP THE FIRES, ...and buy another coal-scuttle before you dot another i, Bob Cratchit!"

Londoners' intensive use of coal for hearth fires (they felt the more efficient Continental stove made rooms "close" and cheerless) helped raise the ambient temperature of the city two to three degrees Fahrenheit above that of the surrounding countryside, with a corresponding rise in humidity. Gas lights, introduced in the 1830s, produced another four to five degrees difference and added their fumes to the atmosphere. The smoke, mixed with caustic exhausts from coal gas works and the miasmas emanating from polluted watercourses, caused chronic respiratory ailments among its less fortunate denizens and blocked out perhaps three-quarters of the sunshine normally enjoyed by country towns. This "heat island," as Thomas Glick has called it, severely limited the species of animals, trees, and flowers (as well as parasites), favoring those which could flourish symbiotically with humans. Rats monopolized the city's sewers, and wrens proliferated amid the piles of manure in city streets. Pigeons, of course, adapted well to a regime of garbage and building ledges. Long before Darwin, they selectively bred for dark coloring as camouflage against the soot-covered buildings.



This passage has been excerpted from Dale H. Porter, *The Thames Embankment: Environment, Technology, and Society in Victorian London*. Akron, Ohio: University of Akron Press, 1998.

TINY TIM'S AILMENT

I

In the December 1992 issue of the *American Journal of Diseases of Children* Dr.

Donald Lewis, an assistant professor of pediatrics and neurology at the Medical College of Hampton Roads in Norfolk, Virginia, theorized that Tiny Tim, Bob Cratchit's ailing son in Charles Dickens' classic *A Christmas Carol*, suffered from a kidney disease that made his blood too acidic.

Dr. Lewis studied the symptoms of Tim's disease in the original manuscript of the 1843 classic. The disease, distal renal tubular acidosis (type I), was not recognized until the early 20th century, but therapies to treat its symptoms were available in Dickens' time. Dr. Lewis explained that Tim's case, left untreated due to the poverty of the Cratchit household, would produce the symptoms alluded to in the novel.

According to the Ghost of Christmas Present, Tim was supposed to die within a year. The fact that he did not die, due to Scrooge's new-found generosity, means that the disease was treatable with proper medical care. Dr. Lewis consulted medical textbooks of the mid 1800s and found that Tim's symptoms would have been treated with alkaline solutions which would counteract the excess acid in his blood and recovery would be rapid.

While other possibilities exist, Dr. Lewis feels that the treatable kidney disorder best fits "the hopeful spirit of the story."

AP Science Writer Malcolm Ritter – 1992



Bob Cratchit and Tiny Tim as depicted in the 1870s by Fred Barnard



ADAPTING CHARLES DICKENS



erald Freedman reflects on his role as adapter and director of Charles Dickens' *A Christmas Carol*.

I had never seen *A Christmas Carol* on stage or film before tackling an adaptation for Great Lakes Theater in 1989. The piece has, however, entered our literary and popular vocabulary as a metaphor for redemption and the possibility of change. So it was with great anticipation that I approached my job.

Our production takes place in a middle-class London home. It is Christmas Eve, 1864, Twenty years after Dickens wrote *A Christmas Carol*. As the Cleaveland family sits down to the traditional reading of the story, the youngest child, a boy, begins to imagine the story that is being told to him. We see the play from his point of view.

Articles from the family home roam freely through Dickens' story and the child's imagination. The family fireplace appears in Scrooge's home; a desk becomes the workplace of Bob Cratchit; Samuels, the butler and also disciplinarian for the boy, becomes Scrooge; and siblings variously appear as other characters.

Dickens called the story a Ghost Story, and we have tried to remain true to this description, while at the same time creating an entertaining piece of theater.

Scrooge is a young man born into poverty who grows up distorted into thinking money is everything. He rejects his spiritual side and his heart becomes small and cold. Through the course of the story, he learns that he can change. The Spirits show him how loving people were in the past, how needy they are in the present, and that the results of his current pattern of behavior are to die alone without family, friends or love.

The three Spirits are each larger than life and haunting for different reasons. I see the Ghost of Christmas Past as benevolent: Scrooge first does not want to deal with the past, which serves as a painful reminder of what he has lost, but it is familiar and potentially warm.

The Spirit of Christmas Present is huge and expansive, as he embodies the entire world with everyone's thought and feelings on Christmas Day. The most daunting of the three is the Spirit of Christmas Future. He is connected to the unknown and therefore represents the greatest threat.

I think Dickens is essentially saying it is never too later to change — not only yourself, but the world. One good deed, if allowed to, can and will spread through the world. The obstacles to the growth of a giving spirit are Ignorance and Want. As the poet Santanyana said, "Those who do not learn from the past are condemned to repeat it." It is this ignorance of the past and present which holds our downfall. Likewise, want of proper food and housing beget people who can't function properly.

“ I think Dickens is essentially saying it is never too late to change — not only yourself, but the world. One good deed, if allowed to, can and will spread through the world. ”

In *A Christmas Carol*, Dickens decries materialism in favor of generosity and social responsibility. The enduring popularity of the story is grounded in his faith in the idea of change. Dickens portrays the obstacle to change as the paralyzing fear of giving up something and being somehow diminished in the process.

In the end, Scrooge risks squandering his money to provide for the welfare of others, and risks opening his heart and giving of his love, which makes him vulnerable to hurt, but which paves the way for his redemption.



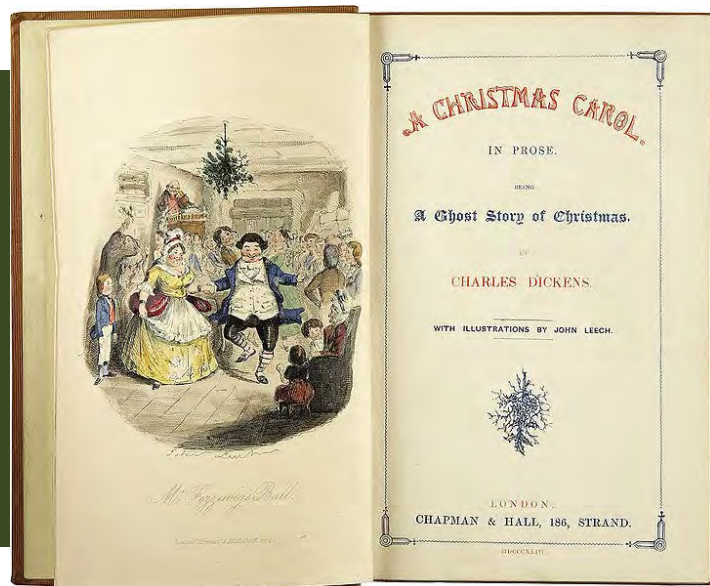
Gerald Freedman, former GLT artistic director

Freedman was born in Lorain, Ohio. He began his career as assistant director on Broadway with such projects as *Bells Are Ringing*, *West Side Story*, and *Gypsy*. His first credit as a Broadway director was the 1961 musical *The Gay Life*. Additional Broadway credits include the 1964 and 1980 revivals of *West Side Story*, *The Incomparable Max* (1971), Arthur Miller's *The Creation of the World and Other Business* (1972), the 1975 and 1976 productions of *The Robber Bridegroom*, both of which garnered him Drama Desk Award nominations as Outstanding Director of a Musical, *The Grand Tour* (1979) with Joel Grey, and *The School for Scandal* (1995) with Tony Randall. He was also the off-Broadway director of the rock musical *Hair* when it premiered at the Public Theater.

Freedman was leading artistic director (1960–1967) and artistic director (1967–1971) of Joseph Papp's New York Shakespeare Festival, artistic director of the Great Lakes Theater in Cleveland, Ohio (1985–1997), and co-artistic director of John Houseman's The Acting Company (1974–1977). He taught at Yale School of Drama and the Juilliard School. He was Dean of the Drama School at the University of North Carolina School of the Arts (1991–2012). He died on March 17, 2020 at his home in Winston-Salem, North Carolina.

PLAYNOTES

BY MARGARET LYNCH



The ghostly machinery brings Scrooge face to face with his painful, nearly forgotten past and, in a process akin to modern psychotherapy, leads him to reflect on the past experiences that shaped his selfishness...



Ignorance and Want, woodcut by John Leech — from *A Christmas Carol* by Charles Dickens

Scrooge. And "Bah, humbug." The name and phrase instantly conjure up the familiar tale retold from year to year. We all know Scrooge's story, his wondrous transformation from "squeezing, wrenching, grasping, scraping, clutching, covetous old sinner" to a man who "knew how to keep Christmas well." His very name has entered our dictionaries as a synonym for miser.

Since Charles Dickens (1812-1870) created this memorable character in his 1843 story, *A Christmas Carol*, we've met him in countless guises — as portrayed by Alistair Sim in the 1951 film classic or updated by comedian Bill Murray in the movie *Scrooged*, in the radio version of the story featuring Lionel Barrymore or the musical starring Albert Finney, even in the cartoon figures of Scrooge McDuck and Mr. Magoo. Scrooge and *A Christmas Carol* are indelibly imprinted in the heart of western culture.

Like most of Dickens' works, *A Christmas Carol* was born out of both expediency and deeply felt conviction. Its 31-year-old author was already the toast of England and America, with the phenomenally successful *Pickwick Papers*, *Oliver Twist* and *Nicholas Nickleby* to his credit. And yet, with a fifth child on the way, improvident parents and several siblings clamoring for support, and sales of his latest book, *Martin Chuzzlewit*, fizzling,

Dickens needed a new best seller. A warm-hearted holiday story seemed a sure bet.

At the same time, the young writer seized on the Christmas tale as an apt vehicle for his characteristic social and moral concerns. Driven by his own memories of an impoverished youth, Dickens ever championed the victims of urban industrialism in his work. His speaking and fund-raising efforts on behalf of education for the poor inspired him to write *A Christmas Carol*. He wanted, he said, to "Throw [himself] upon the truthful feeling of the people" at an abundant time of the year when they were most open to change.

While acutely aware that selfishness and greed infect materialistic society as a whole, Dickens focused in early works like *A Christmas Carol* on the need to transform individuals one by one. As novelist George Orwell observed, "he is always pointing to a change of spirit rather than a change of structure." Dickens' message, Orwell added, is a deceptively simple one: "If men would behave decently, the world would be decent."

A Christmas Carol was the first — and most enduring — of a series of Christmas books and stories that provided Dickens with a nearly annual forum for propounding similar themes throughout the 1840s. Most of these Christmas stories borrowed their forms from imaginative children's literature. This was the age of the brothers Grimm and Hans Christian Andersen; fairy tales, ghost stories and ballads were gaining popularity in educated English circles in the 19th century. For Dickens, hearing and reading fanciful and folk stories provided a vital oasis in his own otherwise barren youth.

A Christmas Carol borrows the fairy tale's "once upon a time" beginning and "happily ever after" ending. Subtitled "A Ghost Story for Christmas," it also shares the ghost story's supernatural characters and sense of time and space. By means of the Ghosts of Christmas Past, Present and Yet to Come, Dickens can transport Scrooge instantaneously from scene to vivid scene, from his lonely school days to his former employer Fezziwig's festive holiday ball to the humble home of his clerk Bob

Cratchit to his own desolate grave.

The ghostly machinery brings Scrooge face to face with his painful, nearly forgotten past and, in a process akin to modern psychotherapy, leads him to reflect on the past experiences that shaped his selfishness; to develop a new awareness of the consequences of his behavior; and to resolve, "I am not the man I was. I will not be the man I must have been but for this intercourse."

Most critics agree that one of Dickens' most profound personal myths is contained in his idealized memories of a sunny early childhood before his family's steady slide into indigence. He was, notes Paul Schlicke, "The first major novelist to place children at the center of his novels." In *A Christmas Carol*, Scrooge finds redemption in



"The Second of The Three Spirits" or "Scrooge's third Visitor" by John Leech (1843)

compassion for his own lost childhood as well as for the crippled but blessed Tiny Tim Cratchit. As scholar Harry Stone observes, Dickens evokes "the undefiled world of childhood and makes us feel that we, like Scrooge, can recapture it. Deep symbolic identifications such as these...give *A Christmas Carol* an enduring grip on our imagination.

Particularly potent are the links Dickens forges between childhood and the child- and family-centered feast of Christmas. He once proclaimed, "It is good to be children sometimes, and never better at Christmas, when its mighty Founder was a child himself." The marvelous transformations effected by Dickens' ghosts are of a kind with both the magical thinking of children and the wondrous promise that surrounds Christmas.

Bruno Bettelheim asks about Christmas, "what could be more magical than the birth of a child, or the rebirth of the world? What holds more magic for mankind than the promise of a chance of a new beginning?" And it is just such a joyful promise that *A Christmas Carol* holds out for the closed, hardened, isolated Scrooge in all of us. Scrooge's nephew calls Christmas a "kind, forgiving, charitable, pleasant time." For Dickens, says scholar Joseph Gold, it's a recurring invitation to rebirth.

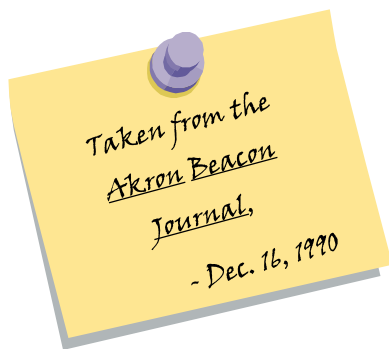
Dickens' vision of magical Christmas conversion is primarily a secular rather than a religious one. His contemporary John Ruskin grumbled that for Dickens, Christmas "meant mistletoe and pudding — neither resurrection from dead, not rising of new stars, nor teaching of wise men, nor shepherds." In fact, his holiday fable does depict the resurrection of a dead soul, but in moral and social terms. Decidedly anti-clerical, anti-dogmatic and anti-sectarian, Dickens shared the liberal Protestant emphasis on Jesus' humanity and was drawn to mesmerism and other non-traditional sorts of spiritualism. He longed for a human community infused with the grace of brotherly love.

It was Dickens' singular talent to convey this longing for



"Scrooge and Bob Cratchit," or "The Christmas Bowl" by John Leech (1843)

fellowship in the warm bond he struck with his public. According to critic Angus Wilson, "The Christmas articles and stories...were a yearly high point in Dickens' relations with his tens of thousands of readers." He affirmed this commitment to his audience in public readings of his works that absorbed his vast energies during the two decades before his death in 1870. In these readings — which began as benefits for worker education and from first to last almost always featured *A Christmas Carol* — Dickens created a sense of shared experience. When audiences roared at such lines as "and to Tiny Tim who did NOT die," he felt "as if we were all bodily going up into the clouds together." Whether read privately or brought to life dramatically as Dickens did in his own readings, *A Christmas Carol* still retains the power to communicate the force of its maker's direct, engaged voice as a personal holiday gift from Charles Dickens.



Humbug? It's More Like Hard Work

By Kathleen Kisner

Like a mad scientist in a grade-B movie, Tony Foreman racked his brain to perfect a formula for fog.

Simonson built a "star" trap through which the ghost of Christmas Past disappears.

Al Kahout struggled to duplicate the sweep of a Victorian woman's hoop skirt.

And Rich Costabile's arms ached from giving hundreds of cues to backstage technicians.

For when Gerald Freedman, artistic director of the Great Lakes Theater Festival in Cleveland, decided to mount a new production of Charles Dickens' *A Christmas Carol* last year, he was determined to shape his adaptation into a jazzy show worthy of the five-year corporate sponsorship it won from Ameritrust.

Now in its second season — the play is running through December 30 at the Ohio Theatre at Playhouse Square in Cleveland — *A Christmas Carol* was mounted at an initial cost of \$450,000. Borrowing from the cinematic coffers of Steven Spielberg, this punchy production features disappearing ghosts, flying actors, billowing clouds of fog, pyrotechnic flashes, and other special effects.

Audiences laugh, cry and applaud the sentimental story of Scrooge's change of heart.

But there is another carol behind the Carol — a holiday yarn that equals or surpasses Dickens' ghostly extravaganza. It is the drama of the folks behind the scenes who make the spectacle possible.



Jeffrey C. Hawkins as the Ghost of Jacob Marley

First Carol: A Dark and Foggy Production

Tony Foreman knows slight of hand. He can manufacture fog from a machine the size of a microwave oven and disperse it across the stage. He can transform an ordinary man into a giant.

But Foreman, 33, who moved to Cleveland in 1987 to take a job as production manager for the Great Lakes Theater Festival, doesn't regard his know-how as magical. Creating stage illusions is all in a day's work.

"I'm fond of saying that we don't have problems here — just

questions looking for solutions," says the tall, calm man with a puckish smile. "The problem is to make magic happen in front of somebody's eyes. There really is no such thing as magic. It's all hard work and planning."

Long hours of scheming and plotting went into the elaborate production of *A Christmas Carol*, which has hundreds of mechanical effects.

Foreman ordinarily plans the budget, calculates the numbers of staff persons needed for a production, and assists the director in the realization of his vision. He has a hard time squeezing lunch into a hectic schedule that requires frequent meetings and consultations with everyone from scene-shop carpenters to the costume-shop drapers.

But for the *Carol*, this down to earth administrator, who previously spent three seasons as assistant technical director for the New York City Opera and one season at the Goodspeed Opera House in Connecticut, became immediately involved in one production detail. He was drafted as "fog designer," when no one else wanted the job.

"As the set design evolved," he recalls, smiling wryly, "it became clear that there was not enough space in the Ohio Theatre to go quickly and effectively from location to location with complete sets.

"So John Ezell, the designer, decided to do the entire show in a black box with various elements that would take us to the location of Dickens' story, starting with Scrooge's office,

the streets to his house, and so on. The challenge is one of moving seamlessly through all these locations, and the solution was lots of fog and a black box."

But fog making is a tricky endeavor, since once the fog is "turned on," it tends to linger. And the fog doesn't always obey its maker in wafting exactly where it's directed.

"You have to determine how much and where and what kind of atmosphere the director and designer is looking for," Forman says. "Do they want it to look like clouds? Do they want it to look like ground fog? Do they want it to look like mist? You can go through all the flavors of fog."

Foreman used a combination of methods: submerging dry ice in hot water to create the ground fog in the graveyard scene and heating up a chemical mix in a microwave size machine to make the fog that hangs in the air.

He also worked closely with the Playhouse Square staff to regulate the ventilation system. "We have to make sure doors and windows are kept closed. We take a lot of simple measures to make sure the fog isn't all pushed to one side of the stage or pushed out into the house."

After completing the fog design, Forman was free to help solve other technical problems. Perhaps most memorable was the challenge of making the Ghost of Christmas Present appear as a giant. After a custom-designed pair of tall boots failed to be convincing, he and his colleagues discussed the possibility of using stilts. "But it didn't seem practical," Forman explains, "since the actor needed to keep his hands free."

Eventually they hit upon a solution: a pair of those easy-to-balance stilts used by construction workers who install Sheetrock walls.

"The stilts are commercially available," Forman says. "And it's the sort of thing that, by keeping our eyes open to the world, we're constantly thinking of and using in the theater."

"That's the beauty of this end of the business. We don't get the

spotlight, but we get the thrill and challenge of solving problems. And the better we do our job, the less aware the audience is of what we're doing behind the scenes."

Second Carol: Blue Foam And "Star" Traps

Blue Styrofoam shavings whizzed through the air as three scene-shop artisans wielded long utility knives and carved. The shavings settled in their hair, on jeans cuffs and sneakers. Every day, one of the artisans would collar Martin Simonson to moan, "I go home and dream of blue Styrofoam."

Simonson, 37, the bespectacled, jeans-clad technical director of Great Lakes Theater Festival, is normally sympathetic to the trials and tribulations of his artisans. But when John Ezell, designer for *A Christmas Carol*, demanded for his scenery massive Styrofoam bas-reliefs, including a 15-foot-tall Christmas wreath and a 19-foot tall cornucopia sporting 5,000 carved grapes the size of Ping-Pong balls, Simonson learned to be ruthless.

"I've tried to put the whole show out of my mind, it was so tough to build," he jokes. "One of the biggest challenges was the tremendous amount of sculpting of foam. I personally had never worked with that material on such a large scale."



Young Scrooge (actor, Joe Wegner) shares a tender moment with Belle (actor, Laura Welsh) as Ebenezer Scrooge (actor, Nick Steen) looks on.

Neither had Blake Ketchum, a recent graduate of the University of Michigan's fine arts program and a sculptor who started working in the theater's scene shop last fall. She insists that Styrofoam is one of the "most unforgiving" materials she has ever worked with.

"Our designer demands some pretty strange things sometimes, like extensive carving of foam," she says. "Now I do enough work with Styrofoam that it doesn't affect my subconscious, but all through *A Christmas Carol*, I dreamed about the stuff. It's one of the worst materials I've ever carved."

Simonson, who in addition to managing the scene shop, designs the mechanical effects, had problems of his own. He had to build a new stage — a wood frame floor 6 inches thick and riddled with elevators, trap doors, and even a plumbing system through which the fog could be piped.

"But my most vivid memory of *A Christmas Carol*," he recalls, "is of building and testing the 'star' trap."

A traditional theatrical device, this trap door usually consists of two triangular segments that open to form a star-shaped hole. Through this trap, an actor can vanish while a flash of light or a puff of smoke distracts the audience.

When the trap was built, someone had to test it. Although Simonson is no acrobat, he felt obliged to be the first person to stand on that section of the stage while tow men below released the catch that opens the door. He found himself falling a hair-raising eight feet through the air onto a gym mat below.

"I ended up having to be the victim, so to speak," Simonson says. "I felt that as the technical director, I should make sure the thing worked before an actor had to try it. But to paraphrase one of my favorite rock 'n' roll bands, I was scared 'senseless.'"

Grinning sheepishly, he admits he's glad he doesn't have to do it again. "It was one of the most terrifying experiences I've ever had in the theater. I applaud the actor who

was able to overcome my fear.”

Third Carol: Bending the Hoops

Al Kahout bent and twisted piano wire until his fingers were sore and stiff. He knew the effect he was striving for: he had studied old sketches of the oversize petticoats and bell-shaped hoops sported by Victorian women. But modern materials didn’t seem to cut it.

“The show spans about 40 years, from 1820 to 1860,” he explains. “But 40 years in the 19th-century is a long time. The silhouette changes quite a bit for women. We have to go from a simple empire line in 1820 into the stuffed petticoat look and the exaggerated bell-shaped hoop.”

As the head of the theater’s costume shop, which is headquartered in a quaint converted fire station in Lakewood, Kahout is accustomed to transforming modern materials into facsimiles of period costumes. Six months of the year he also works as a draper in New York City for Parson-Meares, where he has made costumes for such Broadway hits as *Cats* and *Phantom of the Opera*.

But finding the perfect material for 19th-century hoops proved mind-boggling. “It was almost

impossible to make a hoop 4 feet in diameter and coax it to keep its shape.”

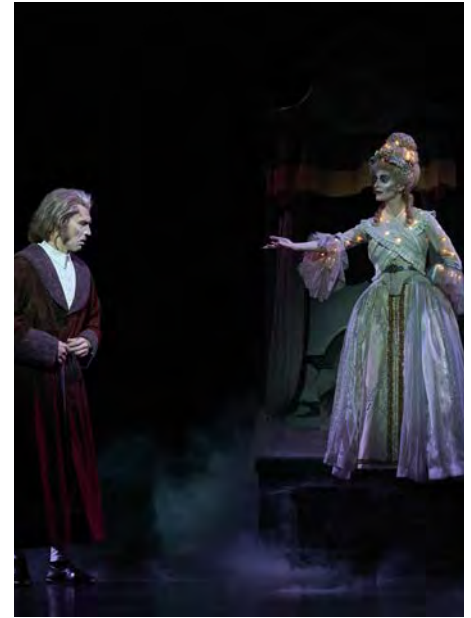
Last fall, when he began to make the actresses’ costumes from James Scott’s designs, he first tried to make the hoops from wire. He could bend the wire into a teardrop shape, but the hoop bent and twisted the minute someone put on the costume and sashayed across a room.

Kahout surmised that the old-time wire hoops had been thrust into a mold and heated and cooled so that they would hold their shape. Since he couldn’t duplicate the Victorian’s methods, he ordered a spring steel from a company from Illinois. It was durable enough to stay in shape.

“At least the steel can hold its tension,” he says. “If an actress bumps into something, the hoop holds its shape and doesn’t get an indentation in it.”

Then, Kahout had to find a durable material for the huge petticoats worn over the hoops. Although the hoops formed the basic structure for the dresses, the petticoats increased the volume from four to six feet.

“It’s tough to find a petticoat fabric that won’t die under the lights,” he says.



The Ghost of Christmas Past (actor, Ángela Utrera) summons Ebenezer Scrooge (actor Nick Steen) for a journey to his past 1

Kahout ended up using a tough industrial nylon organdy manufactured at Carnegie Textile Co. in Cleveland.

“Eventually, every material dies,” he says. “But I added two tiny hoops around the hips so the petticoat would hold its shape even if the fabric started to wilt from the body heat and sweat.”

Most of the men’s costumes were made in New York, but Great Lakes’ costume shop made what Kahout considers a “fearsome” number of women’s and children’s costumes — more than 30. Three drapers and five seamstresses toiled long hours to complete the costumes in a record four weeks.

“We couldn’t have handled both the men’s and the women’s costumes,” he says. “But I have to admit we did excellent work. Whenever possible, we kept the look as authentic as we could.”

Last Carol: Aerobic Workout

Wearing his leather sneakers, jeans and telephone headset, Rich Costabile looks like a cross between Mr. Mom and a switchboard operator. His arm suddenly shoots straight up



Scrooge (actor, Nick Steen) reacts to seeing his potential future.

above his head, then falls in a quick kamikaze gesture as he mutters a couple of urgent syllables into his headset.

Costabile, Great Lakes' stage manager, has been described by one colleague as "everybody's mom." The first to arrive at the rehearsal hall in the basement of a downtown YMCA each morning, he is the last to leave at night.

His scribbled detailed notes constitute a diary of artistic director Freedman's instructions, and Costabile refers to them constantly to ensure the consistency of the actors' performances. He also meets out hundreds of cues to actors and backstage folks alike.

"Every time the light changes, there is a cue," he explains in his deep, mellifluous voice. "Every time you hear a sound, every time you see something turn or move or appear or disappear, I have given a cue. I give the cues for the lighting man and the sound man and the fog man, to name a few."

Although managing the stage can be nerve-racking even under optimal conditions, the fast pace and split-second timing of *A Christmas Carol* make the job still more difficult. If someone misses a cue, it can ruin the effect.

"For instance," he says, "a lot can go wrong with the trap that Christmas Past falls through. Once the catch that releases the door jammed and the timing was slightly off. It's very tightly timed so he won't get injured. We have two people downstairs under the trap to release it, and we have the fog that has to happen at the same time, and the pyrotechnics and the flash. Five people and the actor have to be cued in a split second."

Costabile communicates with the lighting and sound people via a Bell Telephone headset. He cues the fog man by traffic cop gestures. Sometimes, when he has to cue a person standing farther away, he switches a light bulb on and off.

Occasionally, a nightmarish crisis will occur. Sometimes, during



Bob Cratchit (actor James Alexander Rankin) lifts Tiny Tim (actor Anthony Patrick Kenney) high into the air as the rest of the Cratchit family watches on.

the rapid-fire scene changes in *Carol*, a fireplace mantel or a kitchen stove or school desk isn't attached to the stage's revolving turntables before the actors play a scene.

"Then I have to make a judgment call," Costabile says. "Do we go ahead and put in a new unit and arrange the props in full view of the audience? Sometimes the actors need the props, and we just go ahead and do it — even though the equipment is heavy and awkward and the changes can be noisy. Fortunately, the scene changes usually go smoothly."

Not everyone could keep cool in the face of similar emergencies, but Costabile, who earned a degree in math from Fordham University, is an ace at problem-solving. He thrives on the

excitement of stage-managing.

"It's something I'm good at," he says modestly. "And it's fun. But there are times when I realize at IBM, where I worked for six years, it was more peaceful. But I love the theater. There's a magic about it. And *A Christmas Carol* is one of those magical productions I've worked on."

He smiles a worried smile as he calculates the number of problems he must solve between the last rehearsal and opening night. Then he straightens his shoulders, a true man of the theater, before rushing back to the rehearsal hall to avert the next Christmassy crisis.

Kathleen Kisner is a free-lance writer from Cleveland.

COSTUME DESIGN

BY JAMES SCOTT





A CHRISTMAS CAROL SUMMARY



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 peoples’.”

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

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 shows Scrooge 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 his own 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



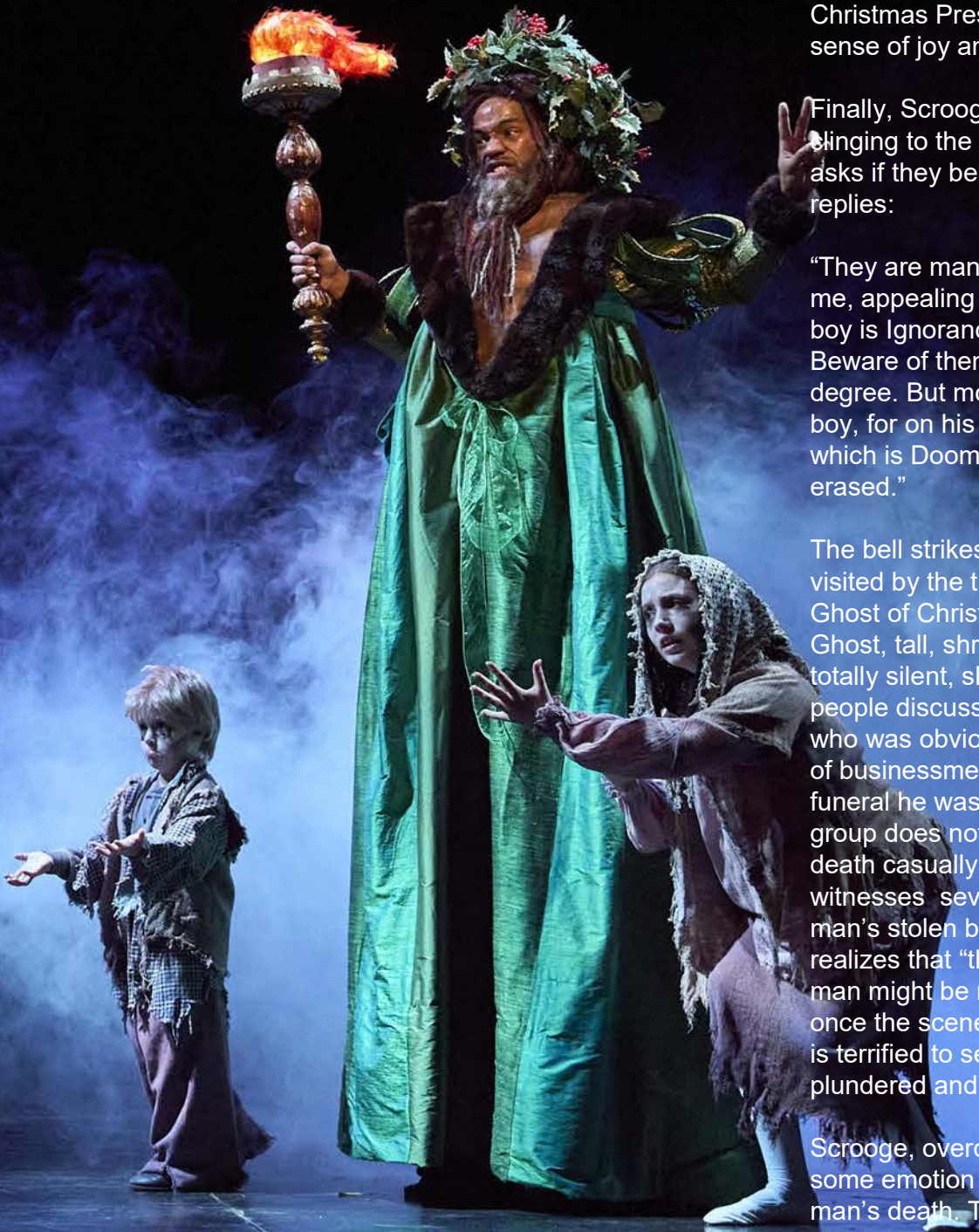
discussing his ill-temper and solitary nature. Fred tells the gathered guests that he means to continue asking his uncle to Christmas dinner, despite his rude refusals. Scrooge begins to realize he is only cheating himself out of happy experiences by not visiting. The Ghost and Scrooge continue to view 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.



QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION: PRIOR TO ATTENDING THE PERFORMANCE

1. What is the role of art in society? In what ways do the literary, visual and performing arts enhance, entertain and/or educate? Has a short story, novel, movie, television show, play, musical or song ever changed your understanding of the world or challenged a personal belief? Explain. How can art open your mind, expand your heart or help you escape? What moves you? What literary or dramatic genre — comedy, tragedy, history, mystery, romance, thriller, science fiction, or fantasy — are you most drawn to? Why? Give examples of you favorite books, movies, websites or TV shows. What makes them appealing?
2. What are some of your most cherished holiday traditions? What makes them so special? What, if any, holiday traditions do you hope to pass down or create for your children?
3. In what way is “happiness” a choice? What choices do you make to create personal happiness? What gets in the way?
4. How does money change you? Define and differentiate the concepts of thrift, greed and charity.
5. What, if any, choices from the past haunt you? Is regret a worthy feeling or emotion? Can you correct the past through present actions? How? What does it mean to “live in the moment”?
6. What scares you most about your future? What excites you? When you imagine or dream of your future self and/or circumstances, what do you see?
7. Why are some people poor? What are some examples of poverty, crime and injustice in today's society? Is the world we live in very different from the world of *A Christmas Carol*? Explain your answer. Do you think poverty and crime are more prevalent today than they were then? Why does poverty continue from age to age? What are some possible solutions to poverty?
8. 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. Why do you think some people are generous and some are greedy? Give examples of people who give without expecting or wanting anything in return. Why do you think they behave this way?
9. 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?
10. Have you ever wanted something so badly, that you would have done anything to get it? What did you do? When you don't get something you want very badly, how do you feel?

WRITING PROMPTS/ACTIVITIES



R.I.P.

EBENEZER SCROOGE

WRITING PROMPT

OBITUARY

Ebenezer Scrooge is visited by his business partner, Jacob Marley, and the spirits of Christmas past, Present and Yet to Come. The last ghost shows him his own death, and how it effects those around him. Scrooge awakens on Christmas morning a changed man.

An obituary is a notice of a death, especially in a newspaper, typically including a brief biography of the deceased person.

Write two obituaries, or death notices, for Ebenezer Scrooge. Write the first one as if he died before he is visited by the ghosts. Write the second one after Scrooge has lived a long life following the events in *A Christmas Carol*. A sample obituary is shown at right.

Frank Smith, 73

Former Findlay resident Frank Smith, 63, died Dec. 16, 2000, at his home in Boardman, Ohio. A service was held Friday at Fisher Funeral Home in Boardman, Ohio. Burial took place at West Lawn Cemetery. Mr. Smith was born Jan. 25, 1937, in Findlay, Ohio, to William H. and Shirley A. (Russo) Smith. He graduated from Findlay High School in 1955. He married Paula Sprouse on July 15, 1967, in Findlay. He came to the Youngstown area after serving U.S. Army as a communications technician the 1950s. After his discharge, he was employed by Chevron USA as an engineer technologist for 28 years, retiring in 1987. He coached Little League softball for 10 years in Boardman. In retirement, he enjoyed woodworking and especially wood art. He also volunteered at the local foodbank and Habitat for Humanity. Mr. Smith was a member of Chevron Retirees Association and the American Association of Retired Persons.

His family wrote: "Frank's generosity and kind heart were an inspiration to his family. He lived his life with integrity and bravery." He is survived by his daughter and son-in-law, Julie and Roger Holland of Williamsport; son and daughter-in-law, Kevin and Amy Smith of Gary, Indiana; grandchildren, Emma and Oscar Davis of Williamsport, Ind.; brother, Gus Smith of Auburn, Wash., and sister, Gwen Stevens of Seattle. Mr. Smith was preceded in death by his wife, Paula; an infant child; and his brother, David. Fisher Funeral Home was in charge of arrangements. Donations may be sent to Group Health Hospice Care.

OBIT #1—EBENEZER DIES BEFORE THE GHOSTS' VISITS

OBIT #2—EBENEZER LIVES MANY YEARS AFTER THE GHOSTS' VISITS

SCROOGE'S STATE OF MIND

Begin the lesson with a prompt for creative writing: "What was Scrooge like as a child? Specifically, think of and describe one event of his childhood—a birthday, a day at school, etc. How did he act? Was he bitter and miserly as we see him in the beginning of *A Christmas Carol* or was his temperament different? Did this event change him? How and why?" Allow the students 15 minutes of silent sustained writing.

Next, instruct the students to draw the outline of a head, divide the head into halves and label them: "Before" and "After." Ask the students to fill in the open-mind diagram with objects, images, symbols and quotations from *A Christmas Carol* to provide a picture of what is going on in Scrooge's mind before the visit by Marley and after the visit from the ghost of Christmas Yet to Come. Students should use two quotes, two original phrases, two symbols, and two drawings to represent Scrooge's state of mind at the two specific points in the story. When they are finished, give the students the opportunity to share their diagrams with their classmates to compare what different students thought was in Scrooge's head at those two times.

Finally, have students fold a new piece of paper in two, with one side headed "before" and the other "after." Ask students to think about a pivotal moment in their own lives (death of pet, a friend moves away, etc.). Have students write down how they felt before and after the event. This will give students further insight into Scrooge's character, and the flashback technique.

DICKENS' LITERARY DEVICES

The language of Charles Dickens is complex and colorful. In his novels, he often employs such literary devices as metaphors, similes, hyperbole, and personification, and *A Christmas Carol* is no exception. In fact, it is among his richest works in this regard. In this lesson, students will locate and interpret the many examples of figurative language in *A Christmas Carol*. In small groups, students will be instructed to choose a quotation from the story that demonstrates a literary device and to illustrate it, either using freehand drawing or collage techniques. When students can translate figurative language into visual representations, they develop a better understanding of the meaning and idea being conveyed.

Divide the class into groups of four students. Instruct each group to locate one of the literary devices in *A Christmas Carol*. Once the groups have found different examples of figurative language, have each group illustrate its chosen quote on poster paper using pens and other materials. The illustrations should represent the literal meaning of the words in the selected quote. They should write the quote on the poster and label the poster with the appropriate literary device.

Once the students have finished their posters, have them present their artwork to their classmates and explain their choices. The posters should then be displayed around the classroom to make ensuing class discussion more significant.

GHOSTBUSTERS

Start the lesson by writing the following statement on the board: "Scrooge is haunted by his own ghosts." Ask the students what this statement means to them. Have them jot down their ideas on a piece of paper (or in their journals). Assign one ghost to each group. Instruct the students in each group to engage in a discussion about the ghost's description as put forth in the book. Why does it look the way it does? What does the ghost symbolize to Scrooge? What does it symbolize to the students? One student in each group should take notes. Next, have each group design an image of the ghost based on Dickens' descriptions. They should factor the ghost's actions, any notable scenes with the ghost, and Scrooge's reaction to the ghost into their rendering.

When the groups finish, they will each present their image to the class along with an explanation for the design decisions they made (based on their earlier group discussion).

Now that the students have fashioned their visions, introduce some alternative interpretations of the ghosts' appearances by showing clips from film versions of *A Christmas Carol*. (See "What You Will Need," below, for suggestions.) Ask the class: In what ways were the ghosts created by the class similar to those envisioned by the filmmakers? In what ways were they different? Create two columns on the board labeled "Same" and "Different" and record the students' responses. End the lesson with one more question: "Whose ghosts do you prefer, ours or the filmmakers?"

What You Need: A film version of *A Christmas Carol*: Two faithful adaptations are *Scrooge* (1951), starring Alistair Sim, and *A Christmas Carol* (1999), starring Patrick Stewart. For an alternative version try *The Muppet Christmas Carol* (1992).

HELP SCROOGE RING IN THE NEW YEAR!

Explain to students that Ebenezer Scrooge's nephew Fred is hosting a New Year's Day party to celebrate Scrooge's new outlook on life. The revelations of his miserly, miserable past have left Scrooge eager to learn more about those who have helped him to change. In order to accomplish this, it is necessary to understand the values and customs each character represents in Victorian society. Explain that in order to connect with the people and places of Dickens' time, students will choose a character from the play and investigate four aspects of that character's Victorian life: History, Fashion, Etiquette, and Entertainment.

Explain to students, in addition to writing an essay, they will role-play the character and make a presentation to the class. The presentation can include costumes and props, but must be realistic and believable. Invite students to volunteer to share their character sketches, and remember to ask them to submit a copy of the text to you for Scrooge's scrapbook (this will be the copy that you'll use to provide students with feedback).

If desired, to accompany the presentations, provide hot spiced cider and cookies, lending wonderful aromas to the festivities. At the conclusion of the presentations, students may play Victorian parlor games.

TERMITES IN YOUR SMILE

Have students research language arts by analyzing several holiday stories. In this character development lesson, ask students to read *A Christmas Carol* and *How the Grinch Stole Christmas!* while identifying the characters, plot and settings. Have students complete a worksheet in which they demonstrate the similarities and differences between the main characters in both stories. Start by comparing and contrasting their characteristics on a Venn graph, then write an essay about the differences and similarities that you find.

I'M EBENEZER SCROOGE AND I APPROVE THIS MESSAGE

This Web Quest engages students in examining the complexities of Victorian society through the eyes of Ebenezer Scrooge. Having developed a new attitude after visitations from the three spirits, Scrooge is ready to change the world by running for mayor of London. Students — working as campaign managers — must help Ebenezer develop campaign points and outline strategies to woo the public into accepting his ideas for social reform. Students may wish to create posters, PowerPoint presentations, Twitter accounts, or mock commercials to go with their campaign materials. Aspects of Victorian life described in *A Christmas Carol* form the basis for this activity, although it could easily be adapted to any of his other novels.

EXTRA! EXTRA! THE SCROOGE SCOOP

Ask students to pretend to be a reporter from a London newspaper and interview Scrooge. In your news article answer the questions below. Students may wish to use a newsletter template in a publishing program to help their paper look more realistic.

- *Mr. Scrooge, you were once known as “a squeezing, wrenching, grasping, scraping, clutching, covetous old sinner!” How would you describe yourself now? What would you say caused this change?*
- *What was most important to you in the past? What is important to you now?*
- *What is your deepest regret about the past? Why is that such a cause of regret?*
- *Since you have changed, which deed are you proudest of and why?*
- *How has becoming a philanthropist affected the way you feel about others? How has it changed you?*
- *What advice would you give others, based on your own experience?*
- *How would you like to be remembered? In fact, how would you like your epitaph to read?*

MANKIND WAS MY BUSINESS!

Scrooge buys a huge turkey for the Cratchit's Christmas dinner. Ask the students to research what organizations in your community do to help bring cheer to others over the holidays. Students should interview members of at least three community organizations to find out what they do. (Have students submit their questions to be approved ahead of time.) Students may telephone the organization, visit in person or research on the web.

Have students create a poster that includes the names, phone numbers, web addresses and an explanation of the opportunities available for service. Remind students to include what their own school is doing. The final project should include the poster and an essay that includes the following: a copy of the questions and answers from the interviews, a paragraph that explains why it is important for these organizations to serve their communities and a paragraph that lists at least five characteristics of a philanthropic person. Finally, display the posters around the school to encourage other students to become involved.

ACROSTIC POEM

Research the life of Charles Dickens and create an acrostic poem that states what they have learned about the life and times of the author. For example:

D – During his lifetime, Charles Dickens
I – initiated a movement to help poor
C – children by supporting public education,
K – keeping the cost of books like *A Christmas Carol* low so that
E – every person could afford to read them, and demonstrating through his
N – novels the necessity for
S – social reform for the working class poor in England and America.

Another example:

Choose to follow your heart
Help your fellow man
And give what you can
Reverse the despair
Lend others your help
Every day of the year
Start today!

THE POWER OF THE PEN

Dickens wrote novels that criticized the attitudes of the greedy and exposed the abuses of the poor. Write a short story about an attitude or abuse that you would like to see changed. The story should motivate the reader toward a desire to work for reform. Possible topics include: the large number of homeless people, corporate greed, or racial injustice.

MORE WRITING PROMPTS

1. Write another chapter for Dickens' story that shows the characters five years later. Have any of them changed for the better? Was their change permanent or just a temporary one?
2. Suppose none of the three ghosts could convince Scrooge that he needed to change his ways. Write a dialogue between you and Scrooge in which *you* try to convince him to change before it's too late.
3. Write a story in which Scrooge comes from a different culture than that of 19th-century England. You may begin by asking: if Scrooge came from a different culture or heritage, how might he change, or how might the story be different? For example: American Indians believe that spirits are guides and friends that all people have in their lives; in many African cultures the entire village is responsible for a child's rearing. What kind of advice might the spirits in these or other cultures have given Scrooge?
4. Write song lyrics in which you are one of the children hidden under the Ghost of Christmas Present's robe ("This boy is Ignorance, the girl is Want.") — what might each of them have to say to Scrooge or to the world?
5. Write a dialogue as if you were a TV host interviewing the characters in *A Christmas Carol*. What would you ask them? What would you want the characters to admit or reveal about themselves?
6. Tell about a gift you received from someone for whom giving the gift was very difficult.
7. Do you see any modern day Scrooges (on television, at school, in your own family)? Who are they? Describe a contemporary Scrooge, showing his or her change of heart.
8. Imagine yourself as one of the characters in *A Christmas Carol*. Write several diary entries from the point of view of this character.
9. Choose a character from *A Christmas Carol* to identify with in your imagination. Write about what you would do and how you would feel if you were in that character's place, or what that character would do if they were in your place.

HOW TO WRITE A REVIEW

1

MORE HOW AND LESS WHAT

A theater review is not a book review, you do not need to summarize what happens. Provide the necessary background so the reader knows the name of the play and the basics of what kind of play it is, and then move into your commentary. You do not need to explain WHAT the play is, instead write about HOW successfully it was presented.

2

THE ACTOR NOT THE CHARACTER

You can dislike the decisions a character makes, but how well did the ACTOR perform the role? Was their behavior appropriate to the part as written? Feel free to share your opinions, comparing or contrasting their work with other actors with whom you are familiar.

3

WHAT IS DIRECTION?

Maybe you have heard of a “director” in theater or film, but do you know what they do? It is not a director’s job to tell the actors how to say every line, but they are the person responsible for creating the general mood and concept for the production. What was your impression of the production as a whole? Was it too funny for a serious play? Or not amusing enough for a comic play? Use words to reflect back to the director how successful the production is as a whole.

4

DON'T FORGET THE DESIGN

The set you see and the sound design you hear are also unique to this one production of this play. Describe what you see and hear, but also be sure to make clear how successful these designs are to telling the story of the play.

5

IN CONCLUSION ...

While it is not necessary to give a “thumbs up” or “thumbs down” your concluding sentence should summarize your impression of the production as a whole.

ADDITIONAL ACTIVITIES

WHERE DO YOU STAND? A CHRISTMAS CAROL

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 based upon 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.

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 EMOTIONAL 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 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 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 door bell 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?

PAY IT FORWARD

For a designated amount of time, say a week, challenge your students to commit random acts of kindness. Have them journal about the actions they took and the feelings that resulted. Have the entire class come up with a project that would fulfill a want or provide a service to someone in need. It could be as simple as donating a study hall period to copy test papers for an overwhelmed teacher, or clearing snowy windshields from the faculty parking lot, or volunteering a few hours at a local meals program. The class should collectively choose the class deed and follow through as a group. Discuss what the experience was like as both an individual and as a member of a larger community. What does it mean to truly serve others? In what way, if any, does service to others build character, build community and nurture goodwill?

CHAIN OF FOOLS

Jacob Marley, Scrooge's partner, is the first to haunt Ebenezer and warn him of the visitations of the Ghosts of Christmas Past, Present and Future. He laments his fate and warns Scrooge of the chain that he, too, may bear, the chain made — link by link — with countless thoughtless acts and selfish behavior. Have your students take time to reflect on the weight that they themselves carry and have them construct a physical chain made of paper links that give shape to past deeds, actions and/or behaviors that reflect their lesser moments. Once the chain has been constructed, ask them to examine and reflect on what they have written and created. What lessons have been learned, what actions may be taken, and what challenges remain in order to eradicate, erase and disassemble the chain? This should be a private exercise and need not be shared with classmates.

THE CHRISTMAS CAROL BANQUET

For the Victorians, Christmas was a time for feasting. Have your students plan and implement in cooperative groups a Dickens Christmas banquet. Each group must research, via the internet or library, foods and dress from the Victorian period. Each group is responsible for two dishes and two costumed characters for a classroom banquet. You may want to include authentic Victorian decorations and finish off the festivities with a traditional game as well.

PLUM PUDDING

Plum pudding is a featured entrée in the Cratchits' humble feast. Your students may wish to experiment in the kitchen this holiday season by creating a plum pudding of their own. The following description is from *A Christmas Carol Christmas Book*, with text by Tim Hallinan. The recipe includes an ignited cognac topping, but can be just as tasty without – especially for students!

“To Americans, it may seem strange that a pudding even contains flour; but it is positively paradoxical that a plum pudding, in addition to containing flour, contains not a bit of plum. In fact, the “plum” in the name may be a corruption of “plumb,” which, several centuries ago, meant “to swell,” as the raisins in a plum pudding do during the cooking process. At any rate, it is believed that the dish was first named in a 1791 cookbook, and “plumb pudding” is what it was then called.

Plum pudding has an evolutionary history that would be the envy of many biological species. It probably began in medieval times as “frumenty,” an unappetizing-sounding mess of boiled wheat and grain to which meat was often added. For centuries, the meat grew in importance until it became the prime ingredient. Today, however, it remains only in vestigial form as a cup of ground suet that acts as shortening.”

Plum pudding is often served with a topping of ignited brandy. This simplified modern recipe that follows is taken from Sunny O’Neil’s charming book, *The Gift of Christmas Past*.

Plum Pudding:

- 1 cup ground suet, 1 cup raisins, 2 cups dry bread crumbs, ½ cup chopped nuts, 1 cup sugar, ½ cup milk, 1 beaten egg ½ tsp. soda, 1 tsp. cinnamon , ½ tsp. each ground cloves, allspice, salt, coins (optional)*
- Mix all ingredients well and pour the batter into a greased pudding mold or a greased tin can. If you use a can, grease it well and fill about 2/3 full. Cover with a lid or foil. Steam for 2 hours in boiling water.
- Unmold, pour cognac over it, and ignite. 6-8 servings.

The Sauce:

- 2 egg yolks, 1 cup confectioners’ sugar, ½ cup whipping cream, vanilla extract, rum or sherry (optional)
- Beat the egg yolks, adding the sugar and continuing to beat until smooth. Whip the cream and fold it in. Then add vanilla and, if you wish, rum or sherry.

**In Dickens’ day it was customary to scatter silver coins into the pudding. Those supposedly brought luck to those who bit down on them. We live in more dental-conscious times, but the recipe would be incomplete if it failed to acknowledge this tradition. Allergy note — this recipe contains nuts.*

A Christmas Carol Christmas Book by Tim Hallinan

PAST, PRESENT... FUTURE

CREATE AN ASPIRATION BOX

A ghost took Ebenezer Scrooge to visit his past, present and future. But what about YOUR future? What are your hopes and dreams for the future? Create an Aspiration Box to collect your thoughts in one place — and to keep you on track for your future.

1. Find an ordinary shoe or gift box, or some other kind of small container.
2. Take maybe five to ten minutes to think about your wishes and hopes for the future. Write them down, both short- and long-term, as many as you can think of. Be specific and write in the affirmative (for example, *I will travel to Italy, I will find the perfect prom dress, I will get accepted to Ohio State University, I will get an "A" on next week's math test, etc.*)
3. Once you have articulated your dreams and wishes, secure them in the box. Decorate the outside with words and images that best reflect you. Put it away for safe keeping.

This is for you, to keep some place where you won't forget about it or lose it. Next spring, maybe next school year, 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? You can discard some, and create new dreams for the future. Allow this to be a ritual for yourself, a time where you can take stock, reflect and dream.

WANT AND IGNORANCE

Do we have control over what it is we want, or wish, for ourselves? What can we do to make our wishes come true? Is there power in making an unrealistic wish? If our lives are predetermined, should we even bother having dreams or wishes? What is the importance of having wishes or dreams?

The Ghost of Christmas brought Scrooge to see the way the holiday was being celebrated at the home of his employee, Bob Cratchit, his nephew Fred, and also the working people in the depths of mines and braving the sea. He saw humanity, rich and poor, come together for a single night of joy and gratitude. He also received a warning to beware the specters of want and ignorance, represented as two small children clinging to this giant ghost's robe.

What do these words mean to you, want and ignorance? Where do you see these worlds made real in your own life? If you had the money, power and influence of someone like Scrooge what would you do to relieve the world of these dangers?





VICTORIAN HOLIDAY TRADITIONS

that you can do at home!

HOLIDAY CARDS

The first Christmas Card was created in 1843. It featured a family sitting around a dinner table and a Christmas message. The idea caught on and soon many wealthy Victorian families were sending out their own cards. Victorian children were encouraged to make their own cards. In fact, Queen Victoria had her own children do this. Create some holiday cards for friends and family and spread some cheer!

CAROLING

Victorians revived the centuries-old custom of singing carols to celebrate the season, which included adding new life to the 400-year-old song "The First Noel." They not only went door to door singing for friends and neighbors, but they also enjoyed carols at home and during beautiful candlelit worship services in local churches. Bring good cheer to friends by caroling in your neighborhood, or record yourself singing or playing an instrument at home and send it to out-of-town friends and family.

VICTORIAN CRACKERS

The idea of a Christmas Cracker was born after a British sweet maker visited Paris and noticed that sugared almonds were sold in twists of paper. He used this as inspiration for his Christmas crackers – sweets wrapped in a paper package that snapped apart when you pulled the ends. Over the years the sweets were often replaced with Christmas paper hats and small gifts were added. You can make your own simple crackers by adding treats to empty toilet paper rolls and wrapping with tissue paper. Use string to tie the ends and place one at each family member's place at the holiday dinner table.

GOOD FORTUNE CHAIN

The first Christmas trees in England, introduced by Prince Albert of Germany, was often filled with ornaments that had been made mostly by hand by family members. The Good Fortune Chain is a decoration you can make at home. You will need multicolored gift-wrap paper (or construction paper) that is light-colored on one side to write on; glue (or a stapler), and pens. Cut strips of gift-wrap paper about 4 inches long and 1 inch wide. On some of these strips write fortunes or good wishes for the coming year. Then all the strips of paper are rolled into loops and glued so they interlock. Attach enough links to make a good sized garland and drape the tree or your room with it. No one will know what the fortunes are until the decorations are taken down; then each member of your family can choose a fortune link, break it, and read his or her own personal holiday fortune.

VICTORIAN PARLOR GAMES



THE AFTER-DINNER REVELS

When the crumbs were cleaned from the last plate and the setting had been cleared away, the Victorian family and guests adjourned to the sitting room, and the second phase of the festivities began. Often a good deal of preparation had gone into what followed.

Some gatherings were highlighted by theatrical presentations in which all members of the family played a part. Most middle and upper-class Victorians homes had a piano or spinet, and people far too respectable ever to sing in public took advantage of the holiday to entertain their friends with Christmas songs and other favorites. But for many — especially the young — games were the climax of the Christmas Eve celebration.



Today, few people play many of the games that Dickens and his contemporaries so enjoyed, even though they would enliven practically any gathering.

THE MEMORY GAME

The guests sit in a circle, and the host or hostess speaks a single word. The person seated immediately to the left must repeat the first word and add one of his or her own, and the next person must remember both the preceding words and add a third, and so on around the circle. Anyone who fails to

repeat correctly the ever-lengthening chain of words is eliminated, and thus the circle grows smaller as the list grows longer. The last person is the winner.

SHADOW BLUFF

This is a variation of Blind Man's Buff, in which the person who is "it" must identify others at the party by their shadows. It can be played in two ways. First, a sheet can be hung from floor to ceiling in the center of the room, and a strong light cast upon it. The person who is "it" stands on one side and the guest standing between the light and the sheet on the other side, casts a shadow. If no sheet is available, "it" can face a wall with his or her back to the person whose shadow is being cast on the wall. Either way, this game is even more challenging and authentic when the source of light is a flickering candle.

LITERARY SALAD

There are few games more Victorian in concept than this one. Pieces of colored paper are cut to resemble leaves of lettuce, slices of tomato, and other vegetables. On each is written a literary quotation or famous words from history. The papers are then jumbled together into a salad bowl, and each player draws one in turn. If the player cannot correctly attribute the words to the correct author, he must pay a forfeit by doing something silly, such as kissing his own shadow or crawling around the room twice. Thinking up forfeits is almost as much fun as playing the game.



A Christmas Carol Christmas Book, by Tim Hallinan

Nephew Fred, his Wife, Cynthia the Silly Sister and Topper from Great Lakes Theater's production of *A Christmas Carol* enjoying an after-dinner Christmas game of "Who Am I?"



VOCABULARY

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

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION: AFTER ATTENDING THE PERFORMANCE

1. What do you imagine it takes to produce a play the scope of *A Christmas Carol*? How does the experience of witnessing live performance differ from going to the movies, renting a DVD, or sitting in front of the TV? What does it take for you to personally lose yourself in the story and journey of the characters? Is this type of transcendence easier or more difficult at a live performance? Why?
2. Which characters did you identify with most? Which characters did you identify with least? Why?
3. Many of Dickens' protagonists and antagonists are outcasts of some sort. How does not fitting in shape character? How does the need to belong influence Scrooge's dreams and actions? What makes the feeling of belonging or the sense of connection such a powerful emotion? What does it mean to truly be alone? Can you be alone even when you are in the company of others? Explain. When is being alone necessary, desired and/or positive?
4. 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?" How does monetary and professional success require compromise and self-sacrifice? How will you know when you have gone too far? Scrooge becomes obsessed with making money, so much so that he forfeits love for profit. What is more powerful — love or money? Explain.
5. What does it feel like to shelve your personal dreams and hopes in order to support someone else? Are self-sacrifice and compromise required to make relationships — personal and professional — healthy, strong and functional? Why? How does Belle's decision to break her engagement affect and change Scrooge? When is it necessary to put your needs ahead of the ones you love? Under what circumstances should the needs and desires of others come first? How do you find the right balance? What does it feel like to be torn between pleasing yourself and supporting those you love? Have you ever grown to resent people or a circumstance based on a choice you made? What do you do when those bitter and resentful feelings begin to pop up? How do you confront someone who is slighting you and/or treating you unfairly?
6. What happens when preconceived notions of someone you know are turned upside down? How do past loyalties shift when a relative shocks and disappoints you? What does it take to continue to support and love them? Why do you think Fred is so determined to include his uncle in his Christmas celebration? What does it take to open your heart and/or home to disagreeable relatives or close family friends? Is there a point of no return or is the bond of family too strong to sever? How does their past history and/or current behavior affect celebrations and gatherings and color familial relationships? What are the steps to authentic forgiveness?
7. Identify the crimes and injustices that take place in *A Christmas Carol*. What are some of the evidences of poverty in the story? What does Dickens mean when he writes that in the future, children

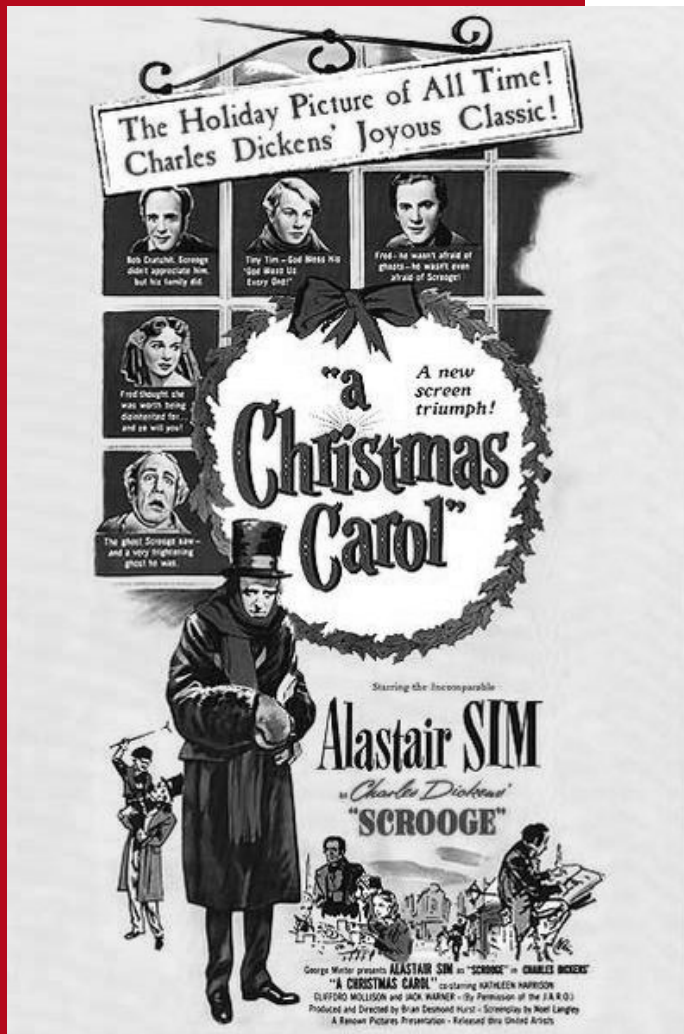
will be born with the words “Ignorance” and “Want” stamped across their foreheads?

8. 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 he such an inspiring figure?
9. What does it take for someone to truly examine who they are? What barriers prevent us from becoming our best selves? What must happen for personal change and transformation to occur? How do you break from destructive patterns to create a new path? Why do we sometimes sabotage our own efforts to manifest change? How does pushing yourself or being pushed out your comfort zone lead to personal transformation? Why is change so scary? What is more frightening, that which we already know or the unknown possibilities that lie before us? What propels Scrooge to finally let go of the past and make the choice to begin again? What is a stronger motivator for change/transformation — fear or possibility? Explain. What do you think must take place for in order to sustain new behaviors?
10. What would influence someone to change his or her lifestyle and values as drastically as 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 does 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?
11. 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. It seems as if every year a new adaptation of *A Christmas Carol* is made into a play, musical, movie, television special or cartoon. 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? What makes the Great Lakes Theater production noteworthy?
12. What were your favorite aspects of this production? How did the visual elements, the set, costume and lighting design, aid in the telling this literary classic? What actor do you believe had the most fully realized characterization? What was it about his or her performance that drew you in? What scene was most memorable? Why?
13. Music plays a key role in our adaptation. How did the classic English carols underscore the tale of Ebenezer Scrooge and aid to the overall spirit of the piece? What do you believe was added by including the theatrical conceit of having the ‘Cleaveland’ family narrate Dickens’ story and take on the various roles? Did the doubling of such major characters as Bob and Mrs. Cratchit, Tiny Tim and the butler deepen your understanding or appreciation of their character? How? What was the prevailing feeling upon exiting the Ohio Theatre?

IT’S A FACT

- Over 200 props are used our stage production.
- It takes a run crew of 19 to execute all of the sound cues, light cues, costume changes and special effects.
- The stage manager calls 255 sound and light cues and has an additional 100 cues for scene changes and special effects during each performance.
- There are a total of 25 cast members playing over 60 roles in this production.
- *A Christmas Carol* uses a total of 7 fog machines.

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. 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.

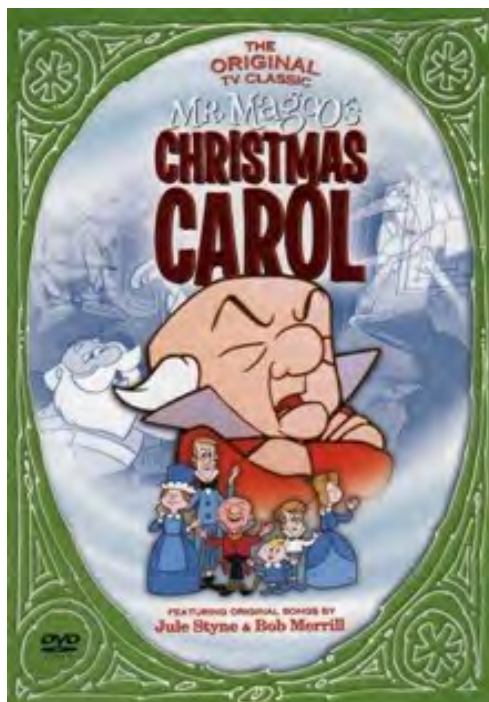
A Christmas Carol (1910) Produced by Edison Manufacturing Company, this silent film starred Marc McDermott as Scrooge.

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 Glynne, 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 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. This story is re-imagined to occur during early 20th century America.

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 entirely 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.

Compiled by the Cleveland Chapter of the Charles Dickens Society, winter 2009





School

Residency Program

Bring the Classics to Your Classroom!

Launched in 1981, Great Lakes Theater's in-school residency program is now one of the most successful artist-in-residence programs in the country. Each year over 16,000 students in over 100 schools experience the pleasure, power and relevance of classic literature brought to life in their own classrooms.



From *The Sneetches* to *Romeo and Juliet* (and so many more in between!) each week-long residency uses an interactive, hands-on approach, and is designed to meet the common core education standards. We visit your school with scripts, props, costumes—and for high schools, swords, daggers and stage blood—to explore classic literature in an unforgettable way!

For more information contact Lisa Ortenzi at 216.453.4446

Greatlakes theater.org/education



**GREAT
LAKES
THEATER**

65th Season

Est. 1962

Student Matinee Series 2026-2027 Season

The Winter's Tale by William Shakespeare

Sweeney Todd book book by Hugh Wheeler, music & lyrics by Stephen Sondheim

A Christmas Carol by Charles Dickens

The Comedy of Errors by William Shakespeare

Les Miserables by Alain Boublil & Claude-Michel Schonberg, based on the novel by Victor Hugo

The Importance of Being Earnest by Oscar Wilde

Make Classic Theater Come Alive for Your Students!

Since 1962, students have enjoyed the thrill of experiencing classic plays, professionally produced by Great Lakes Theater. Our student audiences experience the same top-quality productions offered in our public performances, but at a fraction of the cost. The state-of-the-art classical thrust stage configuration in the gorgeously renovated Hanna Theater affords students a dynamic audience experience unequaled in our region.

[Greatlakestheater.org/education](https://greatlakestheater.org/education)

Great Lakes Theater TEACHER WORKSHOP SERIES

INSPIRING CONFIDENCE IN TEACHERS AND IGNITING PASSION IN STUDENTS.

Join us for a professional development workshop series that equips teachers with the tools and confidence to bring Shakespeare's plays to life in the classroom. Through interactive, performance-based sessions, educators will gain hands-on teaching techniques and practical lesson plans drawn from GLT's 45-year residency program, making Shakespeare's language and themes accessible and engaging while meeting state curriculum standards.

1-DAY WORKSHOP

Deep Dive: *Hamlet* & a Shakespeare Performance



OCTOBER 9, 2026

Cost: \$175

Receive certificate with 11 contact hours

Join us for a deep dive into *Hamlet*. This professional development workshop equips educators with practical, performance-based strategies to navigate the play's language, themes, and characters, making them accessible and engaging for students. The session includes GLT's mainstage performance of *The Winter's Tale*, plus a Director's Night discussion in the Hanna Theatre.

1-DAY WORKSHOP

Deep Dive: *Julius Caesar* + Shakespeare Performance



FEBRUARY 5, 2027

Cost: \$175

Receive certificate with 11 contact hours

Experience the teacher workshop Deep Dive: *Julius Caesar*. This professional development workshop equips teachers with practical, rehearsal-room techniques to make the play's characters, themes, and language accessible to students. Through interactive sessions, educators will gain confidence teaching Shakespeare and fostering critical thinking in the classroom. The workshop includes GLT's mainstage performance of *The Comedy of Errors*, plus a Director's Night discussion in the Hanna Theatre.



New! Shakespeare Intensive workshop - AT YOUR SCHOOL!

Bring Shakespeare right to your school! Great Lakes Theater can deliver a professional development Shakespeare Intensive workshop for your entire English Language Arts department, with full- and half-day options available.

Email Lisa Ortenzi at lortenzi@greatlakes theater.org or call 216-453-4446 to learn more and schedule a session tailored to your district's needs.

For more information & to register:

www.GreatLakesTheater.Org/teacherworkshop

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About Us



Sara Bruner, Producing Artistic Director

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 company 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.

The company's commitment to classic theater is magnified in the educational programs (for both adults and students) that surround its productions. Great Lakes Theater has a strong presence in area schools, bringing students to the theater for matinee performances and sending specially trained actor-teachers to the schools for weeklong residencies developed to explore classic drama from a theatrical point of view. GLT is equally dedicated to enhancing the theater experience for adult audiences. To this end, GLT regularly serves as the catalyst for community events and programs in the arts and humanities that illuminate the plays on its stage.

Great Lakes Theater is one of only a handful of American theaters that have stayed the course as a classic theater. As GLT celebrates over a decade in its permanent home at the Hanna Theatre, the company reaffirms its belief in the power of partnership, its determination to make this community a better place in which to live, and its commitment to ensure the legacy of classic theater in Cleveland.

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greatlakestheater.org