

WU?@therep

A CHRISTMAS CAROL

Adapted by David H. Bell

From the novella by Charles Dickens

Directed by Steven Woolf

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Shaping a Vibrant Arts Community For All
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Missouri Arts Council
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the 411

At The Rep, we know that life moves fast—okay, really fast. But we also know that some things are worth slowing

down for. We believe that live theatre is one of those pit stops worth making and are excited that you are going to stop by for a show. To help you get the most bang for your buck, we have put together WU? @ THE REP—an IM guide that will give you everything you need to know to get at the top of your theatergoing game—fast. You'll find character descriptions (A/S/L), a plot summary (FYI), biographical information (F2F), historical context (B4U), and other bits and pieces (HTH). Most importantly, we'll have some ideas about what this all means IRL, anyway.

CU@therep!



The Teacher's Lounge

In an effort to make our educational materials accessible to students and easy for educators to incorporate into the classroom, our study guide is written in a student-oriented format. We hope that you will circulate this guide among your students in the weeks preceding your visit to The Rep, encouraging them to browse it before and after class and as time allows, using it as a launch point for both pre- and post-performance discussions. You may also want to visit our website, www.repstl.org, for additional information including activity suggestions and behind-the-scenes information. Any materials, either from this guide or from our website may be reproduced for use in the classroom.

NEATO!

As always, we appreciate your making live theatre a part of your classroom experience and welcome your feedback and questions.

The desire to learn, insatiable when awakened, can sometimes lie dormant until touched by the right teacher or the right experience. We at The Rep are grateful to have the opportunity to play a role supporting you as you awaken the desire for learning in your students.

Ghosts, a curmudgeon, Tiny Tim and "bah humbug"—your students have heard it before. Here is a chance for them to go beyond listening to Dickens' holiday story and to look deeper at what Dickens was trying to tell us about choices we make and their consequences. Was Scrooge always this miserly and miserable, or did something happen to lead him here? Most importantly, is there a way to right the wrongs for Scrooge and for anyone?

It would be a good idea to take a minute to give your students these quick theatre etiquette reminders:

- This show has one intermission; there will be time for bathroom breaks before the show and halfway through.
- The actors can hear the audience and appreciate the laughter, gasps and quiet attention to action. However, talking, moving around and making noise is very distracting to others and can dampen the energy on stage.
- Pictures, phone calls and texting are not allowed at any time during the performance.

Live theatre won't allow your students to take a passive role—they must work with us to create the experience which takes the learning deeper. Our unique ability to fuse words and images onstage allows your students to explore new ideas as well as excites their imaginations. We will do our part so your students will be stirred to understandings and self-awareness while delving into new and familiar worlds. You are doing your part by using The Rep to extend your intellectual and aesthetic curriculum. Thank you!

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A/S/L

EBENEZER SCROOGE: A moneylender who dislikes Christmas and would rather focus on business

JACOB MARLEY: Scrooge's former business partner who died on Christmas Eve seven years ago

GHOST OF CHRISTMAS PAST: A spirit who shows Scrooge visions from Christmases throughout his past

GHOST OF CHRISTMAS PRESENT: A spirit who shows Scrooge how other people celebrate Christmas

GHOST OF CHRISTMAS FUTURE: A spirit who shows Scrooge how the future could be if he does not change his ways

BOB CRATCHIT: Scrooge's clerk whose large family includes MRS. CRATCHIT, MARTHA, TINY TIM, PETER, BELINDA, MELINDA, WYATT and DANIEL

MR. FEZZIWIG: A generous man and Scrooge's boss during his apprenticeship, married to MRS. FEZZIWIG

FAN: Scrooge's late sister

FRED: Scrooge's nephew, married to ALICE

DICK WILKINS: Scrooge's school friend and colleague during his apprenticeship

TOM WATKINS: A client who is behind in his payments to Scrooge; his wife MISSY WATKINS is expecting a child

BELLE: Scrooge's one-time sweetheart

MRS. DILBER: Scrooge's housekeeper

H

BILIOUS: bad-tempered

COUNTING HOUSE: a business office, usually used in reference to an accounting firm

DERISION: ridiculing or mocking

DIES IRAE: Latin for "day of wrath"

DRAY: a sled or cart

FLARING LINK: a torch

FRIVOLITY: the quality of carelessness and giddiness

GENTRY: a class of high rank in society

MAWKISH: nauseating, unpleasant taste; also sickly sweet sentimentality

MISANTHROPIC: characterized by distrust or hatred of other people

ODIOUS: disagreeable and offensive

PITTANCE: very small amount

ROTTER: a cruel or unkind person

SLUGGARDS: lazy or slow people

SUNDRY: distinct or different individuals

TROTH: one's pledged word

VERITABLE: genuine or true

VISAGE: a person's face or expression

WORKHOUSE: a place for poor people to live that is paid for by the taxes and donations of others

EN

SPOILER ALERT!

On Christmas Eve, seven years after his business partner, Jacob Marley, died, we find Ebenezer Scrooge going about business as usual: collecting debts from those less fortunate, refusing to accept good cheer, and overworking his underpaid clerk, Bob Cratchit. Back at the office, Scrooge's nephew, Fred, pays a visit. Scrooge shuts down each of Fred's attempts to connect with jabs at Fred's lifestyle and wife. Fred refuses to let Scrooge dampen his holiday spirit, however, and gives Cratchit money to help support his family before he leaves the office.

While Bob Cratchit continues working with Scrooge, his family runs errands to prepare for Christmas. Mrs. Cratchit buys a small goose while the children gush about the Christmas display in a store window. However, when Mrs. Cratchit realizes how cold the ill Tiny Tim has grown, she sends the children home. Peter carries Tim on his back like their father normally does.

At Scrooge's office, charity workers visit seeking donations to help the poor. Scrooge refuses to donate to the cause, while Cratchit donates the money Fred shared with him. At 7:00 pm Scrooge finally lets Cratchit go home and grudgingly gives him Christmas day off.

After eating dinner, Scrooge goes to bed. However, he is soon awoken by the ghost of Jacob Marley, who warns Scrooge that if he does not change his ways, he too will be doomed to wander the world weighed down by the chains he earned with his unkindness during his life. Marley informs Scrooge that he has the chance to turn things around with the visit of three spirits—the Ghosts of Christmas Past, Present and Future. Marley disappears, leaving



Scrooge to wonder if it was a dream or if more spirits are on the way.

His questions are soon answered as the Ghost of Christmas Past arrives to take Scrooge back in time. We see schoolboy Scrooge almost spend Christmas alone; a young Scrooge propose to his girlfriend, Belle, at Mr. Fezziwig's Christmas Eve party; Scrooge repossessing Mr. Fezziwig's home while Belle breaks up with him; and many years later, we see Belle serving the poor on Christmas Eve.

Next, Scrooge is visited by the Ghost of Christmas Present. The spirit and Scrooge observe how others spend Christmas. After the Ghost spreads kindness to the poor, Scrooge watches the Cratchits make the most of their Christmas despite their poor financial state and Tim's health. Then Scrooge witnesses his nephew Fred joyously celebrate Christmas with his wife and friends.

Finally, the Ghost of Christmas Future visits Scrooge to show him what could happen in the future if Scrooge does not change his ways. He watches as the Cratchit family mourns Tiny Tim's death, and then sees businessmen discuss his own death without a hint of sadness as Mrs. Dilber, Scrooge's maid, sells items stolen from his home.

The next morning, Christmas morning, Scrooge awakens and immediately sets to work righting his wrongs. Scrooge raises Mrs. Dilber's pay, buys the Cratchit family a large turkey, donates a large sum to charity, and takes time to celebrate Christmas with his family. The following day at work, Scrooge raises Bob Cratchit's salary and surprises the entire Cratchit family with a holiday outing, leading Tiny Tim to exclaim that famous phrase, "God bless us, everyone."

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POSITIVITY

When faced with adversity or challenges in life, we have two choices to make: we can stay positive or we can fall into a slippery slope of negativity. Tiny Tim is a great example of someone who chooses to stay positive about life despite his poor health and his family's financial situation. Bob Cratchit remains positive about his son's health, too. On Christmas Day, Cratchit says about Tim, "But everyday he gets stronger, Mother, stronger and more full of life." Mrs. Cratchit, however, remains unconvinced.

▷ *When you face struggles in life, do you stay positive like Tiny Tim and Mr. Cratchit? Or do you tend to see things in a more negative light like Mrs. Cratchit?*

REDEMPTION

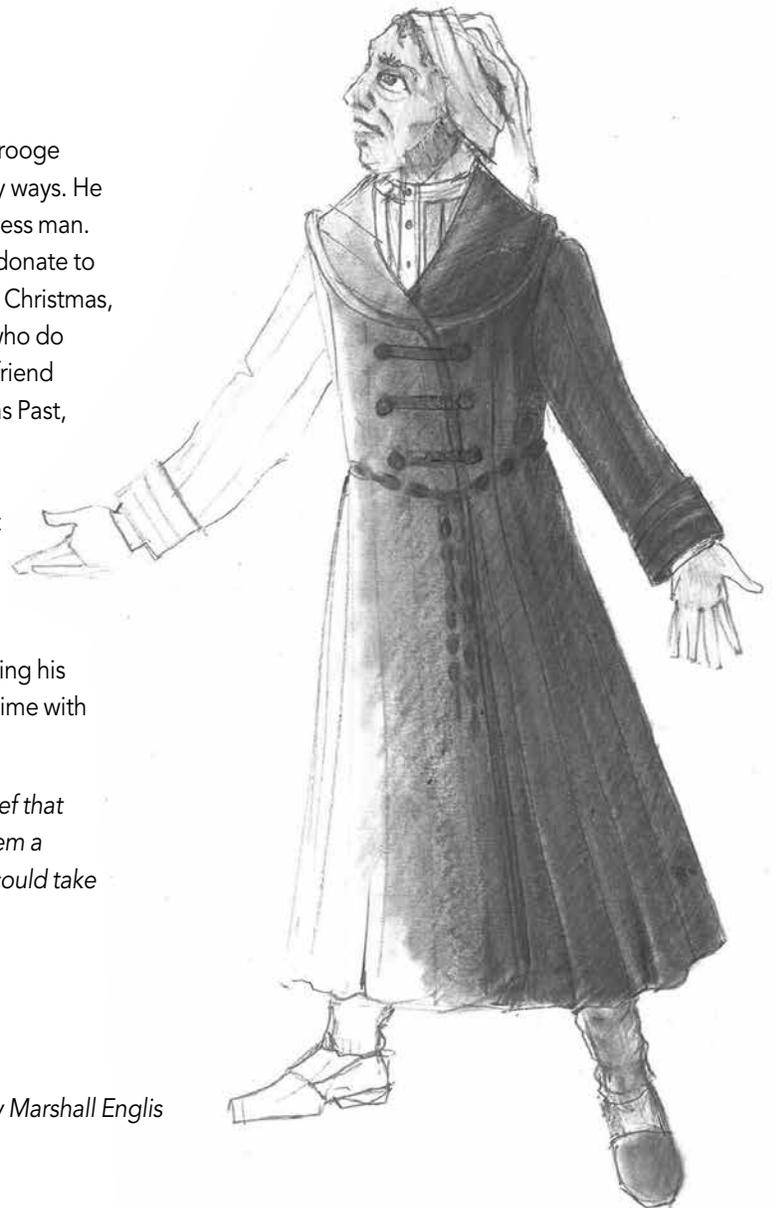
During *A Christmas Carol* we watch as Scrooge redeems himself from a lifetime of miserly ways. He starts the play as a grumpy, uncaring, joyless man. This is evidenced by his unwillingness to donate to those in need and his refusal to celebrate Christmas, even going so far as to begrudge those who do celebrate. However, the ghost of his old friend Jacob Marley and the Ghosts of Christmas Past, Present and Future force Scrooge to acknowledge the error of his ways by showing him just how unpleasant his past behavior has been and the true meaning of the Christmas season. When Scrooge awakens after his night of revelations, he quickly begins to right his wrongs by sharing his wealth with those in need and spending time with his only remaining family.

▷ *Scrooge's actions and newfound belief that "mankind is our business" begin to redeem a lifetime of misery. Are there actions you could take to right a previous wrong?*

GENEROSITY

Although Scrooge may not show generosity for most of *A Christmas Carol*, many of the other characters highlight the importance of generosity and goodwill. During the course of the play, we see Fred give to the Cratchits and Bob Cratchit give to the poor. However, money is not the only way that people can give. We also witness carolers share their spirit and joy and the Fezziwigs open their homes and hearts to their friends and family. Even Belle, in a difficult situation herself, finds ways to support those around her.

▷ *Can you think of ways to be generous to people in your life? What about ways you can give to those in need?*



Costume design by Dorothy Marshall Englis



CHARLES DICKENS

Great Expectations, A Tale of Two Cities, A Christmas Carol—Charles Dickens made a name for himself with many famous novels, but his life did not begin quite as grand. Dickens was born in 1812 in Portsmouth, England to a middle-class family. His father, John, was a clerk for the Naval Pay Office, a job that forced the family to move constantly. When Dickens was 12 years old, his family moved to London. Soon, his father was unable to keep up with the family's bills, landing all the Dickens family except young Charles in debtor's prison. He left school to work 10-hour days at a shoe polish factory to earn money to repay his family's debt. Three months later, the family was released from prison and Dickens returned to school.

After a few years, Dickens again left school to work as a clerk in a law office. Unhappy with this work, he instead became a journalist, writing mostly about politics. However, he also drew humorous sketches for magazines, which were compiled to create his first book, *Sketches by Boz*. Dickens went on to become the editor of a literary magazine and published many of his novels in monthly installments. He published his first novel, *The Pickwick Papers*, in 1836, and followed it up with several other novels during this time, including *Oliver Twist* and *The Old Curiosity Shop*.

While writing *The Pickwick Papers*, Dickens married Catherine Thomson Hogarth. They visited the United States in 1842, inspiring Dickens to write *American Notes*, a travelogue in which he criticized the US for the country's practice of slavery, widespread violence and frequent spitting, among other things. Upon his return to London he penned *A Christmas Carol*, hoping the profits would boost his family's financial situation. However, after footing the bill for book production himself and keeping the cost of the book low so all could afford it, Dickens made very little money.

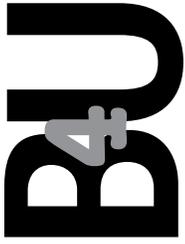
Dickens' financial situation improved as he continued to write and give public readings of his work. During this time, Dickens' family grew as he and Catherine raised 10 children. In 1858, Charles and Catherine divorced, which was unusual for that period, especially for someone in the public eye.

In the later years of Dickens life, he produced two of his most famous novels: *A Tale of Two Cities* and *Great Expectations*. In 1870 as he worked on *The Mystery of Edwin Drood*, he suffered a stroke and passed away. Charles Dickens was buried in Poet's Corner in Westminster Abbey. A marker next to his grave reads, "He was a sympathizer to the poor, the suffering and the oppressed; and by his death, one of England's greatest writers is lost to the world."



Costume design by
Dorothy Marshall Englis





VICTORIAN ENGLAND

The Victorian Era lasted from 1837, the year Queen Victoria ascended the English throne, to 1901 when Queen Victoria died. During the Victorian Era, England experienced vast amounts of growth and change in everything from industry to infrastructure. Even the population exploded, with the population in London alone growing from one million in 1800 to 4.5 million in 1880.

As illustrated in *A Christmas Carol*, the rich and the poor led vastly different lives. Much of this was due to the Industrial Revolution, which transformed England from an agriculture-based society to an urban-focused manufacturing society. With this transformation, many in the upper classes found prosperity and wealth, while those in the lower classes faced poor living conditions and long working hours. Children from poor families were forced to work, often in dangerous factories—just as young Charles Dickens was. Unfortunately no laws protected child workers from long hours or hazardous conditions at this time. Additionally, children were not required to go to school until 1870. Although the classes were defined by stark differences, they lived in extremely close proximity, crammed into a London that had not yet grown to accommodate the rapidly expanding population.

To make matters worse, the crowded city was filthy and crime-ridden. Manure from horse-drawn carriages filled the streets, chimneys belched black coal and smoke, and raw sewage flooded into the River Thames. Sometimes the fog in London was so thick that lamps had to be lit during the day. People did not have great hygiene either, rarely bathing or wearing clean clothing.

Despite these poor conditions, civic engagement was high. Business profits were channeled to create civic buildings, libraries and wash-houses. Citizens formed charities and many felt it was a duty to give to worthy causes. However, as we see in *A Christmas Carol*, Scrooge clearly did not buy into this notion. Charles Dickens, on the other hand, was an advocate for the poor and suffering. He used his novels as a platform to call out the atrocities of poverty.

As the Victorian Era progressed, life in London improved. The Metropolitan Police force was established in 1829, founded by Sir Robert Peel. Hackney coaches were replaced by the omnibus, a horse-drawn bus. The Metropolitan Board of Works was formed in 1855, helping to build adequate sewers for London and pass laws to protect drinking water. By the time the Victorian Era came to a close, England had completely transformed and improved due to social reform and technological innovations.

From the cost of a Christmas goose to the amount of a Christmas bonus to the sum still owed on a loan, we hear a lot about money in *A Christmas Carol*. Certainly, hearing about money is nothing new, but what about when it's a currency we're not familiar with? Take a look at this chart on Victorian currency to better understand the terms you'll hear in the show.



FARTHING	$\frac{1}{4}$ A PENNY	HALF A CROWN	2 $\frac{1}{2}$ SHILLINGS OR 30 PENCE
HA'PENNY	$\frac{1}{2}$ A PENNY	CROWN	5 SHILLINGS
PENCE	PENNY	POUND	20 SHILLINGS OR 240 PENCE
SHILLING	12 PENCE	GUINEA	21 SHILLINGS

CHRISTMAS CELEBRATIONS AROUND THE WORLD

In *A Christmas Carol*, we see Charles Dickens highlight Christmas traditions in England, a country with a large Christian population. Typically, the Advent season (which lasts 40 days) leads up to the Christmas celebration, but the season does not end there. The Christian Christmas season extends to January 6, the Feast of the Epiphany. During *A Christmas Carol*, we also see another, perhaps more universal tradition—spending quality time with family and friends during the holidays. As we learn about holiday traditions from around the world, think about how your family’s traditions compare.

SWEDEN

In Sweden and many other Scandinavian countries, St. Lucia Day on December 13th begins the Christmas season. On St. Lucia Day, the eldest daughter dons a white gown with a red sash and crown complete with nine candles. She wakes the family and together they eat breakfast by the candlelight. The day ends with a parade and bonfire.

GERMANY

The tradition of decorating evergreen trees for Christmas originated in Germany. The practice began as part of the winter solstice; however, in the 17th-century the trees began to be associated with Christmas. German immigrants brought Christmas tree decorating to the United States in the 1820s, and when Germany’s Prince Albert married Queen Victoria, Christmas trees made their way to England.

AUSTRALIA

Australians share many Christmas traditions with people in the United States and England. However, Christmas falls during summertime in Australia, so many families spend time at the beach or at barbeques.

ETHIOPIA

Christmas, or Leddāt (“birth of Christ”), falls on January 7 in Ethiopia. Leddāt is a purely religious holiday celebrated with an all-night vigil on Christmas Eve, processions where churches carry religious artifacts through town for all to view, and a Mass with religious dances. Many Ethiopians play a ball game called Genna during the afternoon on Christmas day. No gifts are exchanged during Leddāt.

EGYPT

Similarly to Ethiopia, Christmas in Egypt falls on January 7. After Christmas Eve Mass, which lasts until midnight, families return home for a meal called *fata*. *Fata* traditionally consists of bread, rice, garlic and boiled meat. On Christmas morning, people visit their friends and neighbors, sharing a kind of shortbread called *kaik*.

MEXICO

On December 16, Christmas season begins with *Las Posadas*. In the following nine days leading up to Christmas, people recreate Mary and Joseph’s journey in Bethlehem searching for an inn while carrying statues of Mary and Joseph. On Christmas Eve, the statues are placed in a Nativity scene. At midnight, everyone attends *Misa de Gallo*, or *Midnight Mass*. Presents are usually given out on January 6, the Feast of the Epiphany, otherwise known as *Three Kings Day* or *El Día de los Reyes*.

PHILIPPINES

Throughout the Philippines history, the country was occupied by Spanish and American forces. These two cultures influenced the Philippines holiday traditions, creating a blend of cultures. Just as in Mexico, the Christmas season starts on December 16. For the next nine days leading up to Christmas, people attend a series of religious ceremonies beginning at 4:00 am. On Christmas Eve, *Midnight Mass* is also celebrated. From the United States, the Philippines adopted gift giving, Christmas carols, Santa Claus and Nativity scenes. Since the Philippines is a tropical country, fresh flowers are used for Christmas decorations.

