



INDIANA
REPERTORY
THEATRE

Lilly PRESENTS

Charles Dickens'

A Christmas Carol

adapted by
Tom Haas

November 14 – December 24, 2017

on the OneAmerica Mainstage

STUDY GUIDE

edited by Richard J Roberts & Milicent Wright

with contributions by

Janet Allen

Russell Metheny, Murell Horton,

Michael Lincoln, Andrew Hopson

Randy Pease

Indiana Repertory Theatre

140 West Washington Street

Indianapolis, Indiana 46204

Janet Allen, Executive Artistic Director

Suzanne Sweeney, Managing Director

www.irtlive.com

SEASON SPONSOR
2017-2018



TITLE SPONSOR



CHARLES DICKENS' **A CHRISTMAS CAROL** ADAPTED BY TOM HAAS

Join Ebenezer Scrooge, Tiny Tim and three lively ghosts on a dark, snowy journey that leads to a bright new day of joy, hope and renewal. Filled with music and wonder, joy and redemption, the IRT's timeless take on Dickens' most memorable story will help banish your bah humbugs. Celebrate the season with Indy's favorite holiday tradition!

Recommended for students in grades 4-12

THEMES, ISSUES, & TOPICS

Grace and Redemption, Social Class and Societal Roles, Holiday Traditions, Death and Fear of the Afterlife, Community Involvement, Heartbreak and Hope, Love and Greed

The performance will last 90 minutes with no intermission.

STUDY GUIDE CONTENTS

Synopsis	3
Author Charles Dickens	4
A Christmas Carol on Stage	6
From the Designers	8
From the Artistic Director	10
Playwright Tom Haas	11
Victorian Life	12
Music in the Play	14
Indiana Academic Standards	16
Resources	17
Discussion Questions	20
Writing Prompts	22
Activities	23
Game: 20 Questions	24
British Money in Scrooge's Day	27
Text Glossary	28
Going to the Theatre	32

EDUCATION SALES

Randy Pease • 317-916-4842

rpease@irtlive.com

Ann Marie Elliott • 317-916-4841

aelliott@irtlive.com

OUTREACH PROGRAMS

Milicent Wright • 317-916-4843

mwright@irtlive.com

cover painting by Kyle Ragsdale

*Robert Neal in
A Christmas Carol, 2010.*



THE STORY OF *A CHRISTMAS CAROL*

A Christmas Carol tells the story of Ebenezer Scrooge, a bitter, miserly man, who is visited by four ghosts on Christmas Eve. The first ghost, Jacob Marley—Scrooge’s former business partner—visits Scrooge to warn him against his miserly and heartless ways. Marley tells Scrooge that if he doesn’t change his selfish behavior and tend to the needs of his fellow man, he will be doomed to an afterlife of misery. In order to redeem himself, Scrooge must accept the visitations of three spirits: the ghosts of Christmas Past, Present, and Future.

The Ghost of Christmas Past shows Scrooge scenes from his childhood and early life. Along with such joyous events as a reunion with his sister and a lively holiday party, Scrooge relives many painful memories—including the day he lost the woman he loved.

The Ghost of Christmas Present shows Scrooge a range of Christmas gatherings. One is a lively celebration hosted by Scrooge’s nephew, where the merry group plays a word game that mocks Scrooge’s greed. Another is a modest Christmas dinner at the home of Scrooge’s employee, Bob Cratchit. The meal is meager but joyous, the only cloud being the illness of Cratchit’s son, Tiny Tim. Even Scrooge is touched by the boy’s bravery.

The Ghost of Christmas Future shows Scrooge horrifying scenes of a dark, dismal future—vagrants looting through a dead man’s stolen belongings, laughing and mocking the deceased; an unmourned corpse, left alone in an empty room—remnants of a life whose absence from the world is no great loss, and to some a source of joy.

Scrooge’s fate depends on his response to the spirits of Christmas Past, Present, and Future. The final moments of the story radiate a spirit of generosity and redemption, as well as sheer, giddy joyousness, which have helped to make *A Christmas Carol* one of the world’s most popular tales.

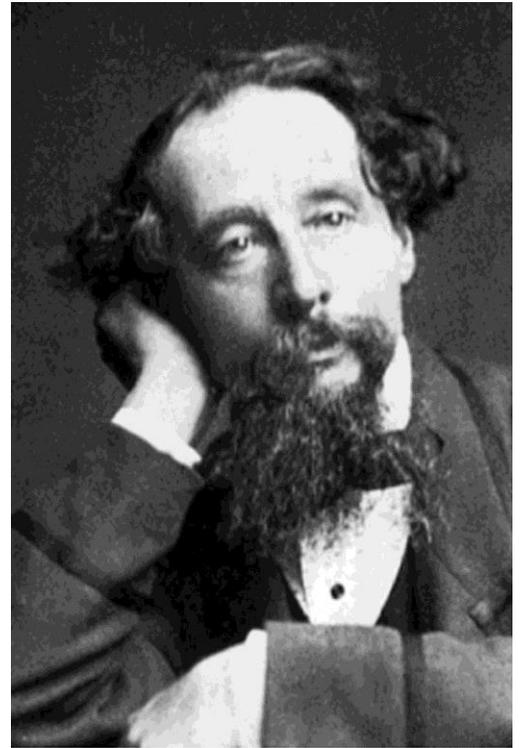


*The Cratchit family in
A Christmas Carol, 2012*

AUTHOR CHARLES DICKENS

Charles Dickens, the great English novelist, was born February 7, 1812, in Portsmouth, on the southern coast of England. His father lost his job in the Naval Pay Office when Charles was three, and the family moved to London. The Dickens family moved so often during Charles's childhood that he was unable to attend school regularly.

At the age of 12 Charles had to leave school to work in a rat-infested blacking (shoe polish) factory; two weeks later his father was sent to debtor's prison. Luckily, a small inheritance rescued the family, permitting Charles to return to school for two years; but his formal education was short-lived. At 15 he became a legal clerk and at 18 a court reporter for the *Mirror of Parliament* and the *True Son*. Dickens quickly earned a reputation as a top reporter.



In 1834, Dickens began to publish short narrative sketches under the pseudonym "Boz" in the *Morning Chronicle*. Two years later he married Catherine Hogarth, daughter of a newspaper editor. Together, they had ten children before they divorced in 1858. Shortly after marrying Catherine, Dickens resigned from the newspaper and became editor of a new monthly magazine. This new job allowed Dickens more time to focus on his writing. He explored the difficult lives of pauper orphans in his second novel, *Oliver Twist*.

Although Dickens enjoyed great prosperity, the poverty of his youth left him suspicious of the ruling class and sensitive to the plight of the downtrodden. His research on the notorious living conditions in lower-class boarding schools resulted in *Nicholas Nickleby*, in which a youth escapes from a tyrannical schoolmaster.

Dickens held strong views about the relationship between a lack of education and social oppression. He was giving a speech on education as the solution to England's problems when he conceived the idea of *A Christmas Carol*. Shortly thereafter, in autumn 1843, he started writing the short book. He composed it in a frenzy, alternately laughing and crying at the images that occurred to him; and he polished it in his mind while walking the streets of London at night. With illustrations by Dickens's friend John Leech, the book was published at Christmastime 1843.

Over the next few years, Dickens capitalized on the popularity of *A Christmas Carol* with several short Christmas stories written in haste for quick reward. Dickens was obsessed with making a sufficient living to support his large family, which included not only his ten children, but his and his wife's parents and siblings. Much of Dickens's writing was done for commercial purposes, which may surprise those who consider Dickens a writer of mythic literary greatness.

Dickens continued to incorporate his own life experiences into his works. *David Copperfield*, a semi-autobiographical novel about a young man who struggles through poverty to achieve respect, was an immediate success in 1849. The novels *Bleak House*, *Hard Times*, and *Little Dorrit* followed in rapid succession. Their genesis followed a similar pattern: Dickens wrote chapters of each book for publication in periodicals and later published them as complete novels. In this manner, the author was literally making up the story as he went along.

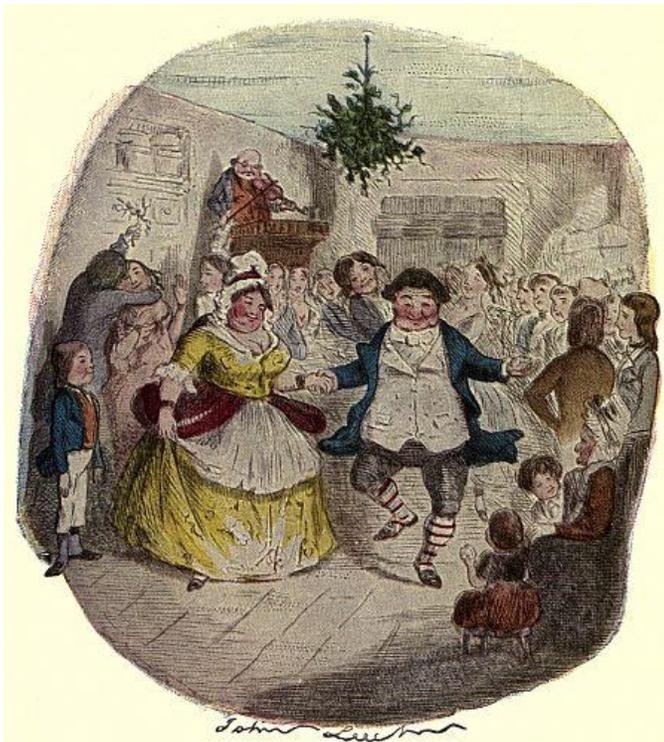
Dickens spent the last years of his life traveling throughout the world to perform public readings from his novels. He was hailed everywhere as the greatest writer of his age. Although he enjoyed traveling and exhibiting his acting skill, it was strenuous work. In June 1870 he suffered a stroke and died instantly at the age of 58. For three days, thousands of citizens passed by his open casket in Westminster Abbey, paying their respects to this most beloved of English writers.

DICKENS AND THE VICTORIAN CHRISTMAS

During the nineteenth century, as England became less rural and more industrial, old Christmas customs were lost. In *A Christmas Carol*, written and published in 1843, Charles Dickens found a way to both celebrate and revitalize old country holiday traditions by transplanting them to an urban setting.

As Scrooge revisited his childhood, readers were reminded of their own childhood celebrations, or those they had heard about from their parents and grandparents. When Scrooge journeyed with the Spirit of Christmas Present, readers encountered lavish and lengthy descriptions of a wide variety of holiday celebrations, from the humblest to the most luxurious. In reality, such Christmas revelry was

largely a product of Dickens's imagination. But *A Christmas Carol*, along with Dickens's other Christmas stories, enjoyed a wide audience, and these tales inspired readers as they prepared their own holiday celebrations.



Dickens was not alone in revitalizing the holiday. The same year *A Christmas Carol* was published, the first Christmas card was printed, and three years later Prince Albert, Queen Victoria's husband, introduced the German Christmas tree to England. But it was Dickens who became so synonymous with Christmas that, when he died in 1870, a little girl in London asked, "Mr. Dickens dead? Then will Father Christmas die too?"

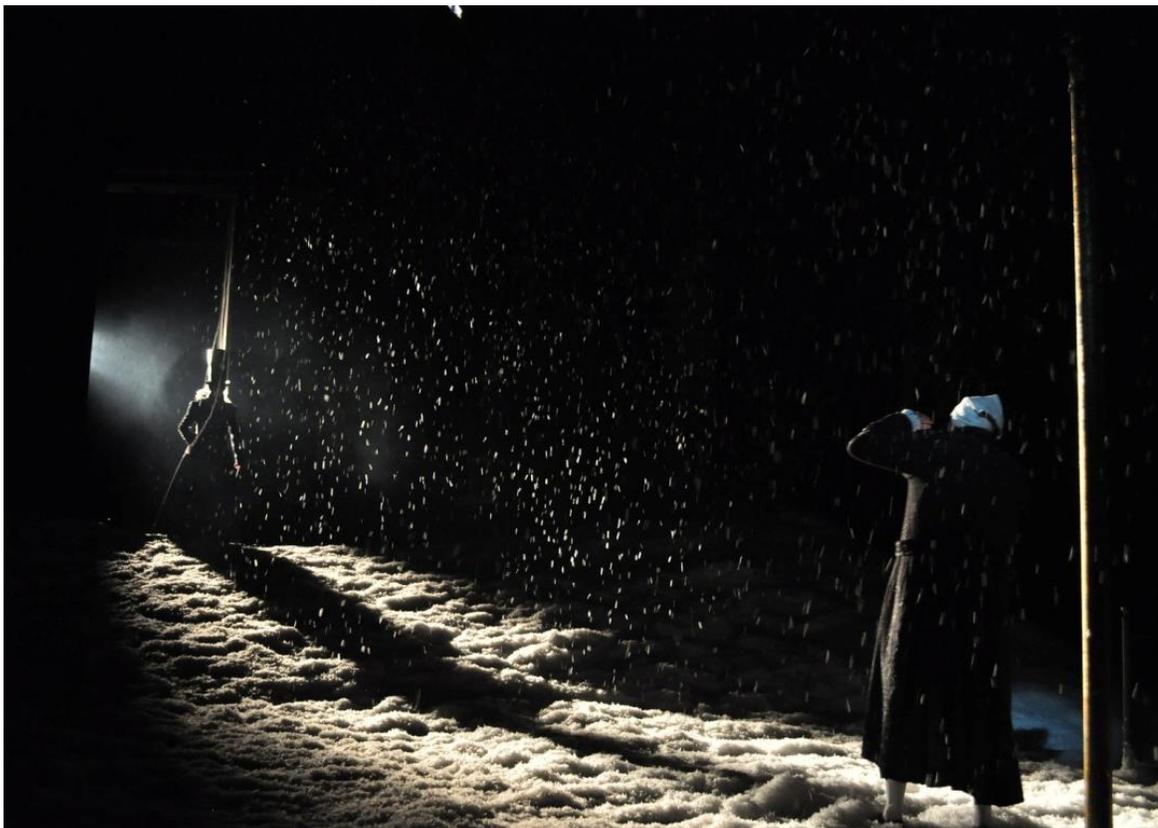
The Fezziwigs by Dickens's original illustrator, John Leech.

A CHRISTMAS CAROL ON STAGE

A Christmas Carol, like all of Charles Dickens's novels, contains a panorama of places and characters brilliantly described by a masterful storyteller. Bringing a novel to the stage is a challenge—the novel is primarily a narrative form and the theatre is a forum for action and dialogue—but it is a challenge the IRT embraces. Stage adaptations of novels recently produced by the IRT include *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time*, *The Cay*, *The Three Musketeers*, *To Kill a Mockingbird*, *The Great Gatsby*, *The Hound of the Baskervilles*, *The Giver*, *The Velveteen Rabbit*, *An Iliad*, *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*, and *Around the World in 80 Days*, not to mention our 2011 production of the non-fiction classic *The Diary of Anne Frank*.

The richness of Dickens's prose makes the task of adaptation to the stage especially daunting. The IRT's adaptation of *A Christmas Carol* uses Dickens's language not only as dialogue, but also as narrative, so we experience the story much as the author wrote it. This technique allows the audience to hear the original language of the novel, where Dickens makes meaning not only through story, but also through his choice of rhythms, sounds, metaphors, and dialects. This uniquely theatrical way of telling a story is a celebration of the craft of the actor and the power of the audience's imagination.

The IRT's adaptation of Dickens's novella was written by former IRT artistic director Tom Haas and produced at the IRT every year from 1980 through 1984. After a twelve-year hiatus, the play was brought back in 1996 and is now making its 27th appearance.



Ben Tebbe and Ryan Artzberger in A Christmas Carol, 2011. The snow is made of thin shredded plastic. Each 25-pound box of "snow" covers a 7-by-7-foot square on stage. To cover the entire stage with snow requires 23 boxes of "snow," or 575 pounds. During the full run of A Christmas Carol, the IRT uses about 40 of these boxes, or 1,000 pounds total. That's half a ton of snow!

The IRT production of *A Christmas Carol* varies from year to year, but always features Dickens's wonderful storytelling, presented by actors who play several roles. This year's production will be directed for the third time by the IRT's executive artistic director, Janet Allen, who previously directed the production in 1998 and 2016. Janet has recently directed the IRT's productions of *To Kill a Mockingbird*, *On Golden Pond*, *Who Am I This Time?*, and *The Diary of Anne Frank*.

As for the cast, some will return from previous years, some will be new, and some will be returning but in new roles. Ryan Artzberger, who has played many different roles in the *Carol* over the years, will play Scrooge for the eighth time. Lighting designer Michael Lincoln will fine-tune his special lighting effects. The production continues to use music by composer Andrew Hopson. Every year Murrell Horton's elaborate period costumes must be refit or rebuilt to suit a new company of actors; this season, as last year, the Ghost of Christmas Present will be played by a woman (Milicent Wright, *below*), which has called for some costume modification.

One thing that will not change this year is the snow. Audiences and actors alike delight in this production's endless snow-covered field, first envisioned by scenic designer Russell Metheny. During the performance actors make tracks through the snow, suggesting their individual journeys. Hidden objects and trap doors under the snow add to the mystery and spirit of this production. With the stage masking stripped away, the theatre's backstage area is revealed, allowing the audience to experience the magic of the story while seeing how it is created.

A Christmas Carol brings to mind visions of Christmas cheer and scenes of a distant past in which we wish we could participate: a merry gathering at the Christmas dinner table with roast goose and a steaming plum pudding; a lively dance of country folk on Christmas Eve; a family toast in which a poor boy calls forth the spirit of Christmas with a simple, "God bless us, everyone!" These impressions of *A Christmas Carol* are the essence of its lingering charm and create moments of celebration in the theatre. The IRT's production will be filled with such visions and much more; for these visions can inspire a spirit of generosity and goodwill that we need not only at the holiday season, but all the year through.

*Milicent Wright as
the Ghost of Christmas Present in
A Christmas Carol, 2016.*



“THE MERRIEST TIME IN ALL THE WORLD”

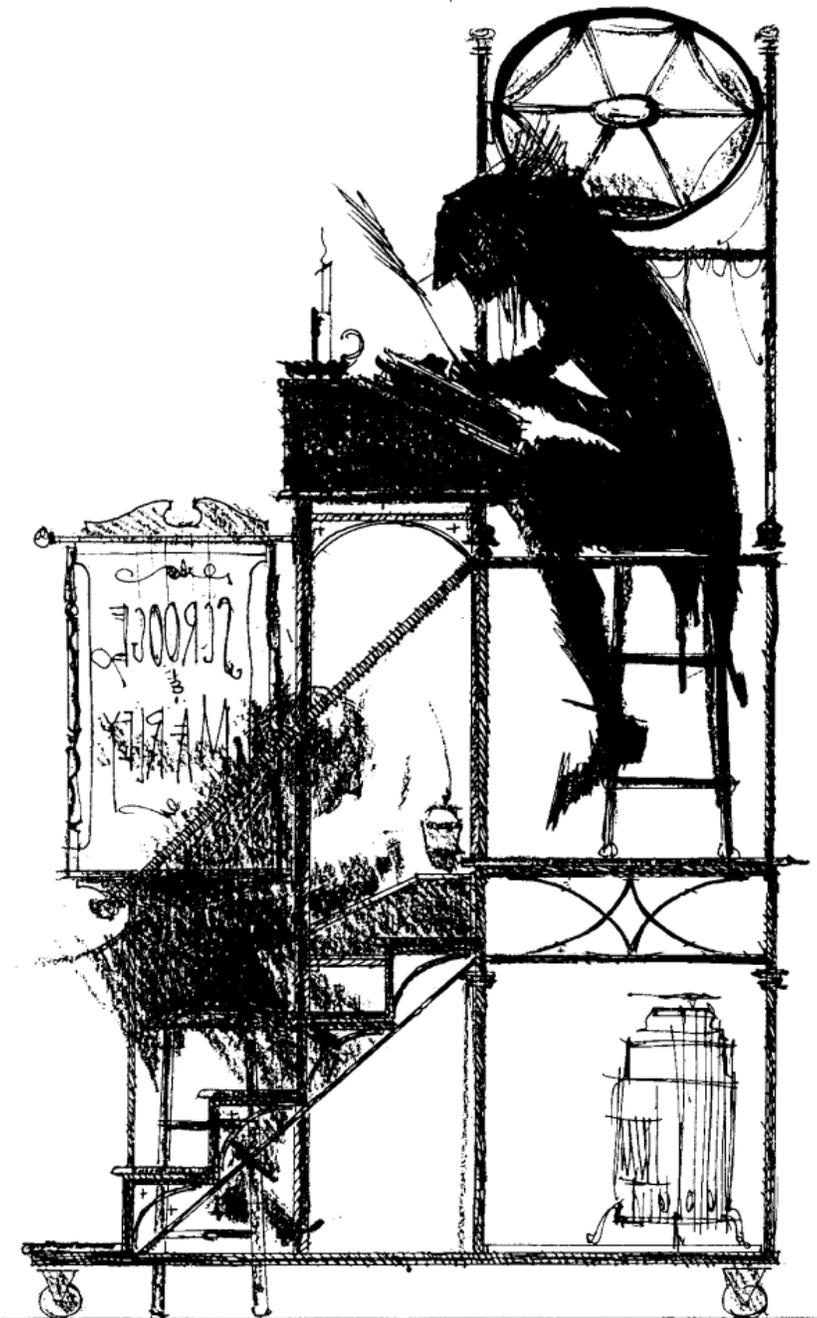
RUSSELL METHENY SCENIC DESIGNER

It's ironic, but as a scenic designer the thing I love most is great performances. I love creating an empty space in which great performances happen. That's what this set is all about: an empty field of snow in which wonderful actors tell a wonderful story. When I see something on stage that is not what it is and looks like something else—that to me is great theatre.

*Preliminary sketch for Scrooge's office
by scenic designer Russell Metheny.*

MICHAEL LINCOLN LIGHTING DESIGNER

Well of course, the first thing is the snow. That enormous field of white offers a technical challenge to a lighting designer. It's harder to create isolated lighting effects; everything just bounces all over the place. But I also have unique opportunities, such as creating silhouettes against the snow. In terms of design, the snow functions very much like a sky drop—it's a blank canvas on which I can paint any color. This production does not rely on theatrical “effects.” It's all about the magic created between the actors and the audience. There are always new discoveries to make in the snow. It's an unnerving yet exhilarating process.





MURELL HORTON COSTUME DESIGNER

One of the original goals for this design was to create costumes authentic to the period, based on real Victorian clothing rather than fanciful ideas of nostalgia. The clothes for this period (1840s) are industrial—top hats were called stove pipes—and dark, with sharp silhouettes against the beautiful snow (which is so white it makes its own set of rules). But the play also ventures into the past, which has a more dreamy, foggy, candlelit look; and into the future, which is darker and creepier

*Preliminary sketches for
(up left) Fred, (up right) the Charwoman,
(lower left) the Undertaker, & (lower right) the Lamplighter
by costume designer Murell Horton.*



ANDREW HOPSON COMPOSER

The pipe organ has the distinction of being associated with three diverse concepts: religion, theatre, and phantoms. Using an organ as one of the main instruments in *A Christmas Carol* was an obvious choice. For ghostly sound effects, I ended up using four metal instruments: for Marley, I used a waterphone (an instrument invented—I think—for the movie *Aliens*); for Christmas Past, I used wind chimes; for Christmas Present, I experimented with harp strings; for Christmas Future, I played a cymbal with a violin bow, and dragged a chain inside a piano.



REMINDERS

by Janet Allen,
Executive Artistic Director

Have you ever wondered why *A Christmas Carol* continues to bring so much joy to so many, despite the many strands of unfortunate events contained in the tale? Dickens knew more than a little about human nature. He knew that some of the best lessons in living come after we go through darkness and learn to appreciate life anew. His tale dramatizes a maxim that we often forget: money doesn't buy happiness. The Cratchits, despite their economic struggles, are "happy, grateful, pleased with one another, and contented with the time." Scrooge, for all his wealth, is "a wrenching, grasping, scraping, clutching, covetous old sinner; hard and sharp as flint, from which no steel had ever struck out generous fire." Although most of the time we're too consumed by our own challenges to really see our lives with much clarity, theatre is an excellent place to experience allegory. Somehow, we can transpose its lessons into our own lives.

The company of A Christmas Carol, 2016

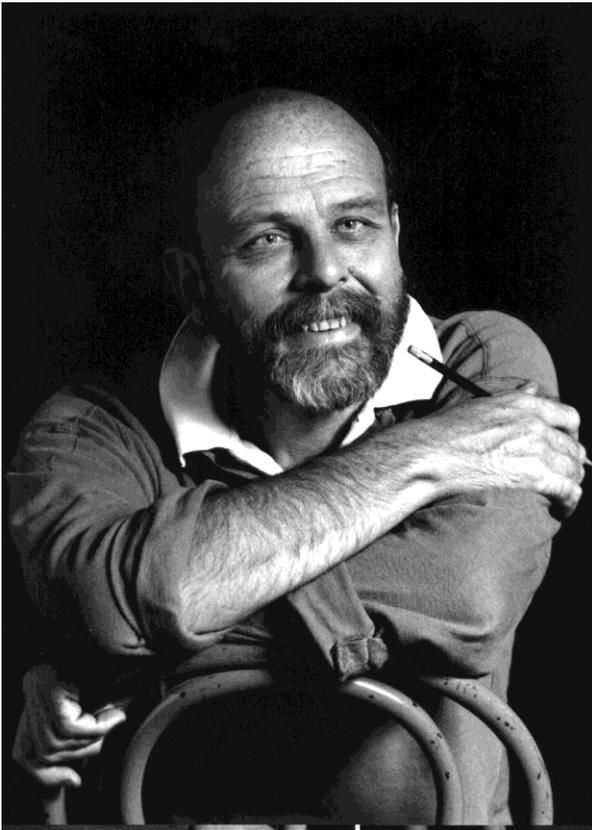


We seem to be at no loss today for continuous public displays of what's worst about human nature. Finding something we can all celebrate about humanity seems to elude us. Dickens, too, was living in a time of great change and unrest. The Industrial Revolution was rather like our Tech Revolution in the speed at which change was jarring people into the kind of freefall that can unhinge humans from remembering their best selves. At times like these, great writers gravitate to telling timeless stories: stories that focus on generosity, on the need for human connection, on the importance of seeing and helping others.

Scrooge lives in self-imposed isolation: he does not experience his humanity at all except as an act of survival. The spectral journey that Dickens launches Scrooge into is meant to jar him back into touch with his humanity by reminding him of what he's lost: his attachment to nature, to other people, to the joys of love. He needs very serious reminding.

Perhaps we all need reminders in this festive season. Reminders that it is the season of giving, not taking; the season of looking around ourselves to see how we can reach out, how we can be of service, how we can experience our humanity anew. Thanks, Mr. Dickens, for handing us this renewing lesson across 170 years. Perhaps you knew that we were still going to need it.

PLAYWRIGHT TOM HAAS



Tom Haas was artistic director of the IRT from 1980 until his untimely death in 1991. Prior to his association with the IRT, he was artistic director of PlayMakers Repertory Company in Chapel Hill, North Carolina. He was associate director at Yale Repertory Theatre and head of the Acting-Directing Program at Yale University, where his students included Henry Winkler, Sigourney Weaver, and Meryl Streep. At the IRT, Tom directed 40 productions, including memorable renditions of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *Mourning Becomes Electra*, *The Skin of Our Teeth*, *The Cocktail Party*, *Six Characters in Search of an Author*, and, of course, *A Christmas Carol*. IRT audiences also saw his stage adaptations of *Frankenstein*, *Dracula*, and *The Three Musketeers*, as well as the musical *Operetta*, *My Dear Watson* and dozens of Cabaret shows. Tom's adaptation of *A Christmas Carol* was produced at the IRT annually from 1980 through 1984. The play returned in 1996 and has been a holiday tradition ever since.

WHY DID THEY SAY THAT?

VICTORIAN LIFE AS SEEN IN *A CHRISTMAS CAROL*

Charles Dickens wrote *A Christmas Carol* in 1843, early in the Victorian Era (named after Queen Victoria, who reigned in the United Kingdom from 1837 to 1901). Life and social customs in this time differed greatly from today, as seen in the following quotes from the *Carol*.

“WHY DID YOU GET MARRIED?”

Victorian economists did not approve of those who married before they had sufficient income to support a family. To marry for love was a fairly new idea, and thought to be sentimental nonsense. Arranged marriages for economic benefit were still the norm.

“YOU’LL WANT ALL DAY TOMORROW, I SUPPOSE.”

At this time, it was not uncommon for businesses such as shops and factories to operate as usual on Christmas Day.

“OUR CONTRACT IS AN OLD ONE.”

Marriage in Dickens’s time was based more on economic arrangements than romantic interests. A “respectable” woman could not work for a living; therefore, if her father could not support her for life, she had no choice but to marry a man who could. Until the early 20th century, a man’s promise of engagement was considered a legally binding contract. If the man were to break the engagement, the woman’s reputation might be damaged, making it difficult or even impossible for her to find a husband to support her. The abandoned woman could therefore take him to court and sue him for “breach of

promise.” It was very unusual for a woman to break an engagement; Belle’s decision to do so puts her in a precarious situation, as she has no family income to fall back upon.



*Ashley Scallon,
Matthew Brumlow,
and Ryan Artzberger
in A Christmas Carol,
2012.*

**“OUTSIDE THE BAKER’S THEY HAD SMELT THE GOOSE,
AND KNOWN IT FOR THEIR OWN.”**

Bakeries were forbidden by law from baking bread on Sundays and holidays. Since poor families usually had no stoves, they could take their dinner to the bakeshops on such occasions and have one hot meal a week. The young Cratchits claim to have identified their own goose from all the meals cooking at the local bakery.

**“... TO THE WASHHOUSE, THAT HE MIGHT HEAR THE PUDDING
SINGING IN THE COPPER.”**

The English Christmas pudding is not like our modern, creamy pudding; it is more like a bread pudding. Flour, milk, and eggs are often combined with dates, plums, figs, and/or nuts. (There are numerous references to plum pudding or figgy pudding at Christmastime.) The batter is placed in a lidded tin mold and immersed in simmering water to steam it. A poor family without a tin mold would use a cloth bag instead, resulting in a cannonball-shaped pudding. The Cratchit’s steam their pudding in the washhouse, a shed in the back yard which holds the copper, a large pot used for boiling the family’s laundry. Traditional Christmas pudding is somewhat cake-like around the outside but moister in the center. It is often presented aflame and served with a sauce. Any dessert at all would be a rare luxury for the Cratchits; pudding is quite an extravagance. (Today, in Great Britain, pudding is a general term for dessert.)

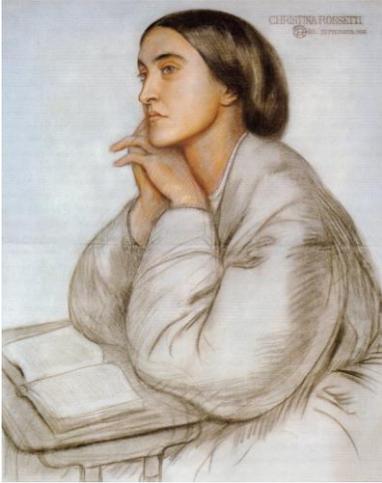


“HE MIGHT GET PETER A BETTER SITUATION.”

The word *situation* in this context means a position or job. Despite his young age, Peter has entered the work force. During the Industrial Revolution, the children of the poor were expected to help toward the family budget. Children as young as four were employed in factories, mines, and other locations under dangerous, and often fatal, working conditions. Charles Dickens worked in a blacking (shoe polish) factory as a child. He helped publicize the evils of child labor with his novel *David Copperfield*, published in 1850; although his efforts led to some restrictions, it was not until the early 1900s that child labor was finally banned in Great Britain.

CAROLS OF THE CAROL

The complete title of Dickens's book, as printed on the title page of the first edition, is *A Christmas Carol in Prose* (as opposed to the usual sung carol, which would be written in verse). Dickens extended the song metaphor by calling each chapter a "Stave," an archaic term for staff or stanza. A number of traditional holiday songs are heard in the IRT's production of *A Christmas Carol*.



"IN THE BLEAK MIDWINTER"

The poem "In the Bleak Midwinter" was written some time before 1872 by English poet Christina Rossetti (1830-1894), sister of Pre-Raphaelite painter Dante Gabriel Rossetti (1828-1882), who often used her as a model. The poem was published posthumously in Rossetti's *Poetic Works* in 1904. English composer Gustav Holst (1874-1934) wrote a hymn tune for the poem that first appeared in *The English Hymnal* in 1906. Holst's tune is called "Cranham" after the village in Gloucestershire where he lived when he wrote it.

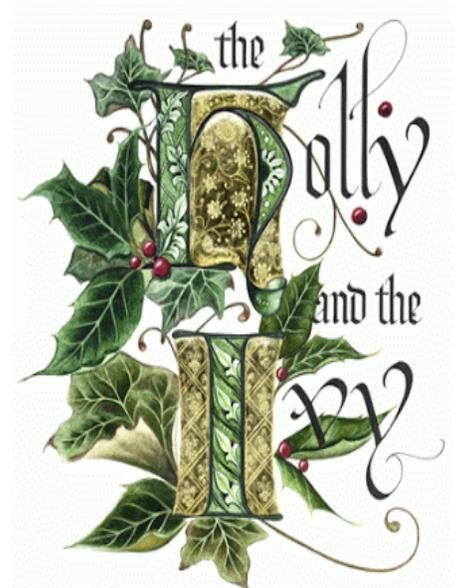
Poet Christina Rossetti painted by her brother Dante Gabriel Rossetti.

"GOD REST YE MERRY, GENTLEMEN"

The sense of this song is not "God rest ye, merry gentlemen," but "God rest ye merry, gentlemen." "God rest ye merry" was an old greeting, meaning literally, "sleep well," and more generally, "May God keep you well." The origins of this song go back to the fifteenth or sixteenth century. Some believe that it was a hymn of protest against the banning of Christmas in England in the 1640s. At the time, England's Puritan government saw Christmas as a pagan holiday that had defiled Christianity. It is thought that the song was sung outside places where people were imprisoned for celebrating Christmas. This history might also explain the song's minor key, which is unusual among Christmas carols.

"THE HOLLY AND THE IVY"

"The Holly and the Ivy" is a traditional English Christmas carol that intermingles Christian and pagan imagery. Holly was sacred to the Druids, who associated it with the winter solstice; for the ancient Romans, holly was associated with the god Saturn (whose holiday, Saturnalia, was also the winter solstice). Holly and ivy represented men and women, respectively, in ancient English village midwinter singing contests; the resolution between the two was under the mistletoe. These three plants are the most prominent green plants in British native woodland during the winter. Holly and ivy have been mainstays of Christmas decoration in English churches since at least the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries.



“TOMORROW SHALL BE MY DANCING DAY”

“Tomorrow Shall Be My Dancing Day” is a traditional English carol. The word *carol* derives from the French *carole* or the Latin *carula*, meaning a circular dance. Old carols that were written in three-quarter time were written as creche dances, to be sung as people danced around the creche or manger. The verses of “Tomorrow Shall Be My Dancing Day” progress through the story of the life of Jesus told in his own voice. “My dancing day” refers to the day of Jesus’s birth; throughout the carol, his life is repeatedly characterized as a dance. “My love” and “my true love” are references to the church, which is called the bride of Christ in many Christian writings.

“Tomorrow Shall Be My Dancing Day”
—the 2015 IRT cast of *A Christmas Carol*.



“CAROL OF THE BELLS”

“Carol of the Bells” is based on a Ukrainian New Year’s carol, arranged in 1916 by composer and teacher Mykola Leontovych (1877-1921). The Ukrainian song, which tells of a swallow flying into a home to herald a bountiful new year, was inspired by a traditional folk chant whose language was thought to have magical properties. The song was introduced to American audiences by the Ukrainian National Chorus at Carnegie Hall in 1921. American composer and choral conductor Peter J. Wilhousky (1902-1978), who was from a Ukrainian family, attended that concert; he later arranged the song as “Carol of the Bells” and published it in 1936. Wilhousky wrote new lyrics centered around the theme of bells because the melody reminded him of hand bells.



“HERE WE COME A-WASSAILING”

“Here We Come a-Wassailing” is a traditional English Christmas carol and New Year song thought to have originated in the mid-19th century. The “a-” is an archaic intensifying prefix, such as seen in the lyrics to *The Twelve Days of Christmas* (“Seven swans a-swimming,” etc.). Wassail is a punch made of wine, beer, or cider mixed with sugar, spices, and baked apples. It is served hot in a very large bowl—the wassail bowl. The word “wassail” is derived from the Middle English “wass-heil”—a greeting that meant “be of good health.” To go

wassailing is to go from door to door singing carols; hosts who receive such visitors may choose to treat them to something warm and comforting, such as wassail.

INDIANA ACADEMIC STANDARDS ALIGNMENT GUIDE

READING – LITERATURE

RL.2 – Build comprehension and appreciation of literature by analyzing, inferring, and drawing conclusions about literary elements, themes, and central ideas

RL.3 – Build comprehension and appreciation of literature, using knowledge of literary structure and point of view

RL.4 – Build comprehension and appreciation of literature by connecting various literary works and analyzing how medium and interpretation impact meaning

Sample: *4.RL.2.2: Paraphrase or retell the main events in a story, myth, legend, or novel; identify the theme and provide evidence for the interpretation.*

What does Scrooge learn at the end of the play? How did the ghosts help him learn that?

Sample: *8.RL.2.3: Analyze how particular lines of dialogue or incidents in a work of literature propel the action, reveal aspects of a character, or provoke a decision.*

In the scene where Belle and Young Scrooge part ways, she continually refers to their relationship as “this contract.” Why does she do this? What does her use of that phrase reveal about Young Scrooge? Does it confirm your beliefs about Old Scrooge? Why or why not?

READING – VOCABULARY

RV.3 – Build comprehension and appreciation of literature and nonfiction texts by determining or clarifying figurative, connotative, and technical meanings

Sample: *9-10.RV.3.1: Analyze the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in works of literature, including figurative and connotative meanings; analyze the impact of specific word choices on meaning and tone, including words with multiple meanings.*

The Ghost of Christmas Present tells Scrooge: “Man, if man you be in heart, forbear this wicked cant until you have discovered what true surplus is and where it is. Will you decide what man shall live, what man shall die?” Given Scrooge’s earlier feeling that the poor should “die and decrease the surplus population,” what does the Ghost mean by “true surplus”? Explain your answer using evidence from the text.

WRITING: EXTENSION

4.W.3.3: Write narrative compositions in a variety of forms that – A) Establish an introduction, with a context to allow the reader to imagine the world of the event or experience; B) Organize events that unfold naturally, using meaningful paragraphing and transitional words and phrases; C) Use dialogue and descriptive details to develop events and reveal characters’ personalities, feelings, and responses to situations; D) Employ vocabulary with sufficient sensory details to give clear pictures of ideas and events; E) Provide an ending that follows the narrated experiences or events.

Sample: Would you recommend that other students see *A Christmas Carol* at IRT? Why or why not? Write a persuasive letter to another student explaining your answer, using examples from the play.

CROSS-CURRICULUM: WORLD HISTORY

WH.5.6 Explain the causes and conditions of the Industrial Revolution in England, Europe, and the United States.

Throughout Dickens’ work there are reactions and responses to England’s Industrial Revolution. How did the Industrial Revolution inform the plot, characters, and setting of *A Christmas Carol*? Explain each thoroughly, and cite examples from the text.

RESOURCES

BOOKS

Other novels by Charles Dickens:

The Pickwick Papers, Oliver Twist, Nicholas Nickleby, David Copperfield, Bleak House, Hard Times, Great Expectations, many more

What Jane Austen Ate and Charles Dickens Knew by Daniel Pool

The Friendly Dickens by Norrie Epstein

Charles Dickens by Jane Smiley

Charles Dickens: An Authentic Account of His Life & Times by Martin Fido

Charles Dickens: A Centennial Volume edited by E.W. F. Tomlin

Dickens and His World by Ivor Brown

Dickens of London by Wolfe Mankowitz

Dickens's Christmas: A Victorian Celebration by Simon Callow

The Annotated Christmas Carol (2004), edited by Michael Patrick Hearn

The Dickens Encyclopedia by Arthur L. Hayward

The Lives and Times of Ebenezer Scrooge by Paul Davis

The Man Who Invented Christmas: How Charles Dickens's A Christmas Carol Rescued His Career and Revived Our Holiday Spirits by Les Standiford

Charles Dickens: The Dickens Bicentenary 1812-2012 by Lucinda Dickens Hawksley

Charles Dickens: England's Most Captivating Storyteller by Catherine Wells-Cole

Charles Dickens and the Street Children of London by Andrea Warren

The Financial Wisdom of Ebenezer Scrooge: Five Principles to Transform Your Relationship with Money by Tom Klontz, Brad Klontz, & Rick Kahler

WEBSITES

Literature, history, and culture in the age of Victoria; the section on Dickens is quite extensive

<http://www.victorianweb.org/index.html>

Charles Dickens Page, dedicated to bringing the genius of Dickens to a new generation of readers

<http://www.fidnet.com/%7Edap1955/dickens/>

Watch an animation on Dickens's life, or play the Dickens on-line game and fight your way through Dickens's London to get to the author himself.

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/drama/bleakhouse/animation.shtml>

Children in Victorian Britain—an interactive history

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/schools/victorians/>

Websites created in celebration of Charles Dickens's Centennial (2012)

<http://charlesdickenspage.com/>

<http://www.dickens2012.org/>

http://www.byerschoice.com/Page-Dickens>Returns_47.aspx

<http://www.themorgan.org/exhibitions/exhibition.asp?id=48>

Information about 5/3 Bank's financial empowerment programs for youth of all ages

<https://www.53.com/financial-empowerment/>

A Christmas Carol text online

<http://www.stormfax.com/dickens.htm>

YouTube selections

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=L189MhnAloM&feature=related>

Charles Dickens biography

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SEYdX5_U0Yg&feature=relmfu

Charles Dickens documentary (part 1 of 3)

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=c06WUYsI0ic&feature=relmfu>

"The Signal Man" – a ghost story by Charles Dickens (part 1 of 4)

VIDEO

A Christmas Carol starring George C. Scott (1984), an excellent TV version

A Christmas Carol (1951) starring Alastair Sim (British title: *Scrooge*)

Scrooge (1970) – a musical starring Albert Finney

The Muppet Christmas Carol (1992), starring Michael Caine—surprisingly faithful to the novel

A Christmas Carol (1999) with Patrick Stewart

Scrooged (1988) starring Bill Murray – a contemporary update

A Christmas Carol (2009), Disney animated film starring Jim Carey

Doctor Who: A Christmas Carol, the 2010 Christmas special

The Mystery of Charles Dickens, starring Simon Callow, directed by Patrick Garland

Biography - Charles Dickens (A&E 2004 DVD Archives)

Charles Dickens

boxed set exploring the life, times, and works of Charles Dickens

DVD 1 – Uncovering the Real Dickens

DVD 2 – David Copperfield (BBC Television, 1999)

DVD 3 – *A Christmas Carol*; Songs from Grape Lane;
The Making of “Uncovering the Real Dickens”

The Young Victoria (2009)

Her Majesty, Mrs. Brown (1997)

Becoming Jane (2007)

Amazing Grace (2006)

Charlie and the Chocolate Factory (2005), with Johnny Depp

A Canterville Ghost (1996), with Neve Campbell and Patrick Stewart

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Why is this story still relevant today?

At the end of the play Scrooge says, “And it was always said of him [Scrooge] that he knew how to keep Christmas well, if any man alive possessed the knowledge. May that truly be said of us, and all of us!” Keeping this line in mind, discuss how we keep Christmas in today’s world. What does this holiday mean to you and to others? What does the world do well today? How might the world do better? How might these ideas extend beyond December 25?

We live in a time of incredible and constant change in technology, medicine, the economy, society, and much more. Although today we might think of the Victorian Era as old-fashioned, it was also an era of innovation: the Industrial Revolution, advances in medicine and psychology, the rise of the middle class, and more. How do today’s changes make our lives easier? How do they make things more difficult? What technological advances and inventions made the Victorians’ lives easier? What elements of the Industrial Revolution made life more difficult? How do such issues as poverty, homelessness, health care, race relations, sexual equality, and social class compare between the two eras?

Although he gives us scenes from Scrooge’s past, Dickens does not dwell on the motivation behind Scrooge’s dark view of the world and of Christmas in particular. What hints are included in the story that might suggest the source of his miserly attitude? Imagine other events in Scrooge’s past, not depicted in Dickens’s story, which might help explain Scrooge’s outlook.

Imagine Scrooge’s future. What would the last year of his life have been like if the ghosts had not visited him? What changes—in his workplace, in his home, in his daily life—will Scrooge make as a result of his transformation?

The IRT production of *A Christmas Carol* uses very little scenery; the audience is asked to imagine the many environments suggested. Picture a particular scene from the play in your imagination. How large or small is the space? Picture the floor surface, the walls and ceilings, the windows, the furniture. Compare and contrast your ideas with those of your classmates.

The actors in *A Christmas Carol* each play a number of different characters. Choose one actor and think about his or her performance. What acting tools did the performer use to differentiate between characters? Think about posture, voice, gesture, costuming, and make-up. How effective were the transformations between characters?

The three spirits show Scrooge scenes from the past, present, and future. Which of these visions do you think is most responsible for Scrooge’s change? Why?

Do some research to learn more about the history of child labor in America. What types of jobs did children do? Who were early advocates for children's rights? Where in the world today is child labor still practiced? How would you feel if you had to go to work in a factory instead of going to school? How would that situation affect your future opportunities?

Compare the IRT production of *A Christmas Carol* to other stage or film adaptations you have seen of the same story. What scenes and elements seem to be common to all adaptations? What scenes appear in some versions and not others? What scenes have you seen that are inventions of the adaptors and not found in the original book? Why do you suppose the creators of these adaptations made the choices they did? What are the advantages and disadvantages of the IRT's use of narration?

Discuss some of the different charities in your community that help people during the holidays. Are you involved with them? What else could you do to help your community at this time?

The Ghost of Christmas Present shows Scrooge two children who represent "want" and "ignorance." Why do you think Dickens chose these two issues to highlight in this way? Why do you think he chose children to represent these issues? If you were Dickens, what two or three issues would you choose to highlight for today's readers?

Scrooge and his nephew Fred suffer similar challenges in their childhoods: the death of a mother, and a distant or absent father. How is it that the two characters' attitudes toward life are so different? Why do some people accept adversity as an obstacle while others make it an inspiration?



*The cast of A
Christmas
Carol, 2014*

WRITING

With the theme of Christmas past and present, interview one of your elders about how Christmas was celebrated when he/she was a child. Write a comparison of the events of his/her holiday and the Christmas holiday of today. What has changed? What has remained the same? What does this person miss and cherish? What is the happiest part of the holiday for you and your interview subject?

Dickens's stories are lush with imagery. Working in pairs, each person should write three basic plain sentences on a piece of paper. Then exchange papers with your partner and expand their sentences with as much imagery and descriptive language as you can. Make use of adjectives, adverbs, alliteration, onomatopoeia, similes, and other literary devices. Read aloud to the class: first the basic sentence, and then how it has been Dickensified!

Scrooge visits Christmases from his past, the present, and the future. Write about a memorable winter celebration in your life from the past. What made it memorable? What were the sights, the sounds, and the smells? Or imagine a celebration in your future. Let your imagination run wild.

A Christmas Carol is a holiday story told to teach something to its readers. Write a holiday story of your own that has a moral or teaches a lesson. Share it with your class and family.

Dickens wrote most of his books because he wanted to focus attention on a particular social issue. Write your own brief version of the *Carol* story set in contemporary times. What social issue(s) in today's world do you want to highlight? In what business does Scrooge work? Who are the three ghosts? What scenes do they show him? How does he change his ways?

Write a review of the play. What moments made an impression on you? How do the elements of scenery, costumes, lighting, and sound work with the actors' performance of the text to tell the story? What ideas or themes did the play make you think about? How did it make you feel? To share your reviews with others, send to: education.irt@gmail.com

ACTIVITIES

The actors of *A Christmas Carol* use Dickens's original story to help build their characters. After seeing the show, choose one of the characters, go through the story, and build a character analysis as if you were going to portray the character. Use the three big questions of character to begin your analysis: What does the character say? What does the character do? What do others say about the character? In addition, how does the author describe the character? What type of relationships does the character have with others? As an acting exercise, create physical mannerisms for your character. How does he or she move, walk, gesture, talk? Or, as a design exercise, create a visual palette for your character. Create drawings or collages of what he/she might wear, with fabric swatches to show color and texture.

The Victorians did not have TVs or computers to entertain themselves as we do today. One of their forms of entertainment was reading aloud. Choose another holiday story, perhaps one of Dickens's other Christmas stories, and take turns reading it aloud to the class. What do the actors at the IRT do with their voices that you can incorporate when you are reading?

Working in pairs or groups of three, choose one of the topics listed below to research and report on. Take your reports to the creative edge: sing a carol, make a Victorian Christmas card, create a financial game that illustrates how debtor's prison worked, etc.

England • London • Industrial Revolution • Queen Victoria

Debtor's Prison • British Empire • British Class System

Wassail • Carols • Christmas Tree • Christmas Cards • Plum Pudding

Look up holiday traditions from different religions and cultures around the world. What holiday traditions do we celebrate here in the United States that originated in other countries? Share your findings with your class.

Find the rules of Blind Man's Buff or other Victorian parlor games and play them. What similar games do we play today?

Look up recipes for a Christmas pudding or wassail and try your hand at preparing them. Ask an adult first!

GAME: 20 QUESTIONS ON *A CHRISTMAS CAROL*

1. *In what city is A Christmas Carol set?*
 - a. New York City
 - b. Edinburgh
 - c. London
2. *How many ghosts visit Scrooge?*
 - a. Three
 - b. Four
 - c. Six
3. *Who was Scrooge's business partner?*
 - a. Jacob Marley
 - b. Bob Marley
 - c. Christopher Marlowe
4. *Who is Scrooge's employee?*
 - a. Bob Cratchit
 - b. Philip Pirrip
 - c. Fred Cheriabie
5. *What establishments does miserly Scrooge support?*
 - a. The homeless shelters
 - b. The local charities
 - c. The prisons and the workhouses
6. *Does Scrooge give Cratchit Christmas Day off work?*
 - a. No, it is too much of a financial burden
 - b. Yes, if he comes in early the following day
 - c. He is only allowed half the day off
7. *How many children do the Cratchits have?*
 - a. Four
 - b. Five
 - c. Six
8. *Which of the following is a place where the Ghost of Christmas Past takes Scrooge?*
 - a. To the local convenience store
 - b. To his childhood boarding school
 - c. To his grave
9. *Where did young Scrooge spend Christmas?*
 - a. At school alone
 - b. At home with his family
 - c. At his grandparents' home
10. *What is the name of Scrooge's sister?*
 - a. Candace
 - b. Felicity
 - c. Fan
11. *What dessert do the Cratchits eat on Christmas?*
 - a. Pudding
 - b. Cheesecake
 - c. Baked Alaska
12. *Who was Scrooge's first employer?*
 - a. Topper
 - b. Mr. Fezziwig
 - c. The Lamplighter
13. *What does Mrs. Cratchit use to decorate her dress on Christmas day?*
 - a. Ribbons
 - b. Flowers
 - c. Buttons
14. *Whose funeral do the Brokers discuss?*
 - a. Tiny Tim's
 - b. Scrooge's
 - c. One of Scrooge's business colleagues

15. Which ghost shows Scrooge Ignorance and Want?
- Christmas Past
 - Christmas Present
 - Christmas Future
16. What does Scrooge anonymously send to the Cratchits on Christmas morning?
- A prize turkey
 - A snow shovel
 - A television set
17. When Scrooge visits his nephew on Christmas Day, what game does he not want to play?
- Yes and No
 - Blind Man's Buff
 - Duck, Duck, Goose
18. When Cratchit arrives late to work the day after Christmas, what does Scrooge give him?
- A harsh reprimand
 - A whack on the hand
 - A raise
19. What is Tiny Tim's signature phrase?
- God help us.
 - God bless us, everyone.
 - God watch over the poor people.
20. Who adapted *A Christmas Carol* for the IRT?
- Tom Haas
 - Charles Dickens
 - J. K. Rowling

Charles Goad in A Christmas Carol, 2014



GAME KEY

1. In what city is *A Christmas Carol* set?
c. London
2. How many ghosts visit Scrooge?
b. Four
3. Who was Scrooge's business partner?
a. Jacob Marley
4. Who is Scrooge's employee?
a. Bob Cratchit
5. What establishments does miserly Scrooge support?
c. The prisons and the workhouses
6. Does Scrooge give Cratchit Christmas Day off work?
b. Yes, if he comes in early the next day
7. How many children do the Cratchits have?
c. Six
8. Which of the following is a place where the Ghost of Christmas Past takes Scrooge?
b. To his childhood boarding school
9. Where did young Scrooge spend Christmas?
a. At school alone
10. What is the name of Scrooge's sister?
c. Fan
11. What dessert do the Cratchits eat on Christmas?
a. Pudding
12. Who was Scrooge's first employer?
b. Mr. Fezziwig
13. What does Mrs. Cratchit use to decorate her dress on Christmas day?
a. Ribbons
14. Whose funeral are the Brokers discussing?
b. Scrooge's
15. Which ghost shows Scrooge Ignorance and Want?
b. Christmas Present
16. What does Scrooge anonymously send to the Cratchits on Christmas morning?
a. A prize turkey
17. When Scrooge visits his nephew on Christmas Day, what game does he not want to play?
a. Yes and No
18. When Cratchit arrives late to work the day after Christmas, what does Scrooge give him?
c. A raise
19. What is Tiny Tim's signature phrase?
b. God bless us, everyone.
20. Who adapted *A Christmas Carol* for the IRT?
a. Tom Haas

BRITISH MONEY IN SCROOGE'S DAY

The **pound** (or pound sterling) was (and still is) the official currency of Great Britain.

The term originated when it was equal to the value of one pound (weight) of silver.

The Bank of England began to issue paper money in 1694.

1 pound = 20 shillings £1 = 20s

1 shilling = 12 pence (pennies) 1s = 12d (the d comes from the Roman *denarius*)

Amounts over a pound are written £2-12s-6d, etc.

Amounts below a pound can be written two ways:

12s-6d or 12/6

4s-8d or 4/8

Such notations would be pronounced "twelve and six" or "four and eight," etc.

Coins (*of those listed below, only the penny is still minted today*)

a **guinea** was a gold coin worth 21 shillings

guineas were used to pay gentlemen, artists, and other more genteel debts
(pounds were used for everyday, lower-class debts to tradesmen and such)

a **sovereign** was a one-pound gold coin (equal to 20 shillings)

a **half-sovereign** was a gold coin worth 10s

a **crown** was a silver coin worth 5s

a **half-crown** was a silver coin worth 2s-6d

a **florin** was worth two shillings.

First minted in 1849, they were not as popular as half-crowns.

a **shilling** was a silver coin worth 12 pence (12d)

(a shilling was sometimes called a "bob")

a **sixpence** was a silver coin worth 6d

a **groat** was a silver coin worth 4d

a **threepence** was a silver coin worth 3d

(pronounced and sometimes spelled "thruppence")

a **penny** was a copper coin (pennies were sometimes referred to as coppers)

Small amounts involving pennies were sometimes expressed with "p"

eg: four pence might be written "4d" but spoken of as "4p"

a **halfpenny** was a copper coin worth half a penny

(pronounced *hayp-nee* and sometimes written "ha'penny")

a **farthing** was a copper coin worth a quarter of a penny

GLOSSARY

apparition

something existing in perception only; a ghostly appearing figure

apprenticeship

At this time, an apprentice was basically an indentured servant, bound to work for a prescribed number of years in exchange for room and board and the opportunity to learn a trade.

bedight

adorned, arrayed, dressed

benevolence

kindness, charity, an inclination to do good

Bah!

an exclamation expressing contempt, scorn, or disgust

banker's book

a small paper book used to record the transactions of a bank account

Blind Man's Buff

a children's game, a variant of tag

brave ("brave in ribbons")

In this context, brightly colored or showy.

brokers

A broker arranges transactions between a buyer and a seller and gets a commission when the deal is executed. An example would be a stockbroker, who makes the sale or purchase of securities on behalf of his client. Brokers play a huge role in the sale of stocks, bonds, and other financial services.

business ("an excellent man of business")

Scrooge is a financier, or money-lender; he does not provide any actual goods or services; he deals only in the exchange of money.

capacious

large in capacity; capable of containing a great deal

charwoman

A part-time servant hired by the day to do odd housework (as opposed to a full-time live-in maid or housekeeper). “Char” is a corruption from Middle English of “chore.”

coalscuttle

A coalscuttle is a metal bucket with a handle and a sloped lip used for carrying coal. Here, Scrooge means buy another scuttle-full of coal.

comforter

scarf

counting house

a building, room, or office used for keeping books and transacting business

covetous

having or showing a great desire to possess something belonging to someone else

double-ironed

fettered; bound by chains fastened around both ankles

Ebenezer

from the Hebrew “stone of help”; the word can be used to describe a tombstone

the Exchange

the Royal Exchange, the financial center of London; the British equivalent of Wall Street

execrable

abominable; detestable

flint

a hard quartz that produces a spark when struck by steel; in the days before matches, this was one method of starting a fire

forbearance

patience, restraint, self-control

half of half-a-quartern

A quartern is a quarter of a pint, so half of half-a quartern is one ounce.

hob

an old-fashioned fire grate; a raised stone or iron shelf on either side of an open fireplace where things are set to keep warm

Humbug!

drivel, nonsense

lamplighter

In the 19th century, gas lights were the dominant form of street lighting. A lamplighter was a town employee who lit the street lights, generally by means of a wick or link on a long pole. (A link was a torch made of tow [short, untwisted, broken fibers of rope] daubed in pitch or tar.) At dawn, he would return and turn them off using a small hook on the same pole. Eventually systems were developed which allowed the lights to operate automatically. There is a long history in literature of the symbolic role of the lamplighter as a bringer of enlightenment.

lowering

scowling, frowning, glowering

milliner

one who makes hats

nip and tuck

a close result in a race or contest; neck and neck

Parliament

the national legislative body of Great Britain; the British equivalent of the U.S. Congress

plump (“the plump sister”)

having a full, rounded, pleasing form; in this time, plumpness was a sign of wealth and therefore a compliment

portly

stout; heavysset

post boy

the driver of a vehicle

poulterer’s

a dealer in poultry: the flesh of chickens, ducks, turkeys, or geese raised for food

residuary legatee

the person to whom the remainder of the estate is bequeathed after the payment of debts

Scrooge

the colloquial expression “to scrooge” means to crowd or squeeze someone

shutters

Exterior shutters would have been used to protect street-level windows when the business was closed. Unlike most shutters seen since the Victorian era, Fezziwig's shutters are not mounted on hinges next to the window; they must be stored inside during the day and then carried outside and mounted on the windows at closing time.

smoking bishop

A hot punch made from red wine, oranges, and spices (chiefly cloves, star anise, and cinnamon). The name comes from its red color, like a bishop's robes.

sweetmeats

candied fruit

twice-turned gown

When a dress became worn, it could be turned inside out to get further wear from it. A twice-turned gown would be so worn on the inside that the outside is once again the best side.

tucker

a piece of lace or other delicate fabric worn in the neckline of a woman's dress and covering part of the bosom

ubiquitous

being present everywhere at the same time

waistcoat

vest

Walk-er!

A Cockney expression of surprise or incredulity, one which Dickens himself used. Several origins are suggested for the expression, each involving an untrustworthy person named Walker with a large nose.

workhouse

A home for the destitute where they labored in exchange for their room and board; conditions were little better than prison. Once a family got into a workhouse, it was very difficult to get out because there was no way to pay off debts and no opportunity to seek employment.

THE ROLE OF THE AUDIENCE

You, the audience are one of the most important parts of any performance. Experiencing the theatre is a group activity shared not only with the actors, but also with the people sitting around you. Your attention and participation help the actors perform better, and allow the rest of the audience to enjoy the show. Here are a few simple tips to help make each theatre experience enjoyable for everyone:

Leave mp3 players, cameras, mobile phones, and other distracting and noise-making electronic devices at home.

You may think texting is private, but the light and the motion are very annoying to those around you and on stage. Do not text during the performance.

Food and drink must stay in the lobby.

The house lights dimming and going out signal the audience to get quiet and settle in your seats: the play is about to begin.

Don't talk with your neighbors during the play. It distracts people around you and the actors on stage. Even if you think they can't hear you, they can.

Never throw anything onto the stage. People could be injured.

Remain in your seat during the play. Use the restroom before or after the show.

Focus all your attention on the play to best enjoy the experience. Listen closely to the dialogue and sound effects, and look at the scenery, lights, and costumes. These elements all help to tell the story.

Get involved in the story. Laugh, cry, sigh, gasp—whatever the story draws from you. The more emotionally involved you are, the more you will enjoy the play.

Remain at your seat and applaud during the curtain call; this is part of the performance too. It gives you a chance to recognize a job well done and the actors a moment to thank you for your attention.

