

A Christmas Carol

By Charles Dickens • Directed by Joseph Hanreddy
Adapted by Joseph Hanreddy and Edward Morgan

December 2 - 24, 2011



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Study
Guide

MillerCoors® proudly presents
The Rep's production of

A Christmas Carol

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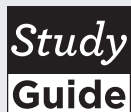


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MILWAUKEE REPERTORY THEATER
108 E. Wells Street
Milwaukee, WI • 53202



A CHRISTMAS CAROL

STUDY GUIDE

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A Christmas Carol

By Charles Dickens

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December 2 – 24, 2011 • Pabst Theater

“A Christmas Carol is an integral part of our season each year and we are so fortunate to be able to perform it in the beautiful Pabst Theater. It warms my heart to see so many families attend this iconic holiday production, and to hear their stories of what it has meant to them over the years. It really has become Wisconsin’s favorite holiday tradition.”

-Mark Clements, Artistic Director



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Cast of A Christmas Carol. Photo by Michael Brosilow.

CHARLES DICKENS

Charles Dickens was born in Portsmouth, England on February 7, 1812 during the Industrial Revolution. His father, John Dickens, worked as a clerk in the Navy Pay Office, which meant that his family was constantly moving. At the age of five, the Dickens family of seven moved to Chatham where they remained for six years. Unfortunately, unable to pay his debts, Charles' father was arrested and sentenced to a debtors prison. With his father in jail, Charles became the sole provider for his family; two days after his twelfth birthday, Charles was sent to work at a factory.

At the age of 25, Dickens went to school at Wellington Academy and eventually became a clerk at a legal firm. Dickens quickly landed a job at the Doctors' Commons, where all the legal offices and courts were located. In 1833, Dickens published his first story and quickly became known throughout England and the United States. Three years later, Dickens married Catherine Hogarth and began his first novel, *The Pickwick Papers*. This book, written originally in segments for a magazine, became a national favorite.



Charles Dickens.

Dickens and his wife decided to brave the Atlantic in 1841 to live in the United States, but Dickens returned to England by 1843. Starting a series of five novellas about Christmas, Dickens began his careful writing of the immediately popular story, *A Christmas Carol*. Dickens reported that, while writing the story, he "wept and laughed and wept again."

Taking a different turn in his career in 1848, Dickens organized an amateur theater company. During the ten years of operation, the company gave over sixty performances for charity in London. Dickens also was involved in public readings, traveling all around England to read his novels. In 1858, he began his own magazine called "All The Year Round" which featured weekly installments of his new book, *A Tale of Two Cities*. Following the book's completion in 1860, Dickens began working on *Great Expectations*, another classic novel.

Five years later, in 1865, Dickens was involved in a train wreck. After the accident, he experienced dizzy spells, arthritis, gout and swelling of his left foot, which further complicated his already failing health. On June 8, 1870, Dickens was diagnosed with a brain aneurysm and died the following day. His body is buried in Westminster Abbey's Poets' Corner in London, England.

LEARN MORE

INTERESTING FACTS

- > Dickens was an actor for a year while living in America.
- > The line "*Old Marley was dead as a door-nail*" came from a dream Dickens had. In his dream, a doctor used the phrase to report the death of one of Dickens' close friends.
- > Dickens **created 989 named characters** during his career.
- > In 1867, Dickens performed a public reading of *A Christmas Carol* in Chicago. One of the audience members, a factory owner named Fairbanks, was so moved by the story that he decided to "break the custom we have hitherto observed of opening the works on Christmas day." He gave all his employees a turkey and told them to take the day off.

OTHER WORKS BY CHARLES DICKENS

The Adventures of Oliver Twist
David Copperfield
Hard Times: For These Times
A Tale of Two Cities
Great Expectations

SYNOPSIS

CHRISTMAS EVE:

The play opens as Ebenezer Scrooge works on Christmas Eve night in his cold, dim office building with his assistant, Bob Cratchit. Before Scrooge goes home for the night, two men visit the office and ask him to donate money for people in need. Scrooge denies them any contributions, pointing out that he already pays taxes for the prisons and workhouses. Then, Scrooge's nephew, Fred, stops by and invites Scrooge to his home to have Christmas dinner with his wife and friends. Scrooge rudely declines the invitation and demands that Fred leave and take his Christmas joy with him. After resentfully granting Cratchit Christmas day off, Scrooge leaves his office, only to be bombarded by children singing Christmas carols.



Peter Silbert, Jonathan Gillard Daly, James Pickering and Lee E. Ernst. Photo by Michael Brosilow.

In a fury, Scrooge arrives home terrified to see not the knocker on his front door, but instead his deceased business partner's face, Jacob Marley. He is startled and cannot decipher whether it is his imagination or not. Once Scrooge's housekeeper, Mrs. Dilber, leaves, the ghost of Jacob Marley returns again. Draped with shackles and chains of guilt, Jacob Marley warns Scrooge that three

spirits will visit him before the night is over; and that Scrooge must listen to them if he hopes to escape the fate Marley endures.

CHRISTMAS PAST:



James Pickering, John Olsen, Nathaniel Johnson and Deborah Staples. Photo by Michael Brosilow.

When the clock strikes midnight, the Ghost of Christmas Past appears before Scrooge. The Spirit transports Scrooge back to his childhood, replaying fond memories between his sister, Fan, and himself. Scrooge next visits his younger self at a company Christmas Party for his old employer, Mr. Fezziwig. The memory forces Scrooge to relive his decision to leave behind a community of family and warmth in order to make more money. Before the Ghost of Christmas Past returns Scrooge home, she shows Scrooge his younger self letting his fiancée, Belle, slip away because he came to value money over her.



Kelley Faulkner, John Tufts and James Pickering. Photo by Michael Brosilow.

CHRISTMAS PRESENT:

As Scrooge is fast asleep, the Ghost of Christmas Present wakes him. The Ghost whisks Scrooge off to the Cratchits' household as that family gathers for Christmas dinner. Bob proposes a toast to Scrooge because he is less fortunate than the Cratchits' since Scrooge is alone and has no cheer in his life. The Ghost reveals to Scrooge that Tiny Tim will die if the future does not change. The Ghost of Christmas Present then takes Scrooge to his nephew's house where friends and family play games and make fun of Scrooge for his snide and cold attitude.



Jonathan Smoots, James Pickering and cast. Photo by Michael Brosilow.

CHRISTMAS FUTURE:

The Ghost of Christmas Future appears and emerges onto the scene of three business men discussing an old man's death. Scrooge watches and questions the Ghost of Christmas Future about what he is seeing, but the Ghost does not respond. Instead, Scrooge is shown another part of the future where people are pawning off property of the deceased. Scrooge realizes the dead person is himself. Finally, the Ghost shows Scrooge the funeral of Tiny Tim. Scrooge is left feeling helpless and begging for a second chance; without a word, the Ghost returns him home.



James Pickering and Ryan Krause. Photo by Michael Brosilow.

CHRISTMAS DAY:

Scrooge awakens as a new person, determined to revive his Christmas spirit and dismal attitude. Surprising everyone with his Christmas cheer, Scrooge gives Mrs. Dilber extra money and the Cratchits a prize turkey. Then Scrooge surprises his nephew by appearing at his house for Christmas dinner. The next morning at work, Cratchit is given a raise, and Scrooge promises to help the Cratchit family with all their needs. Filled with a new found spirit, Scrooge donates money to the two men from the first scene and vows to renew his donation every Christmas. Alive with a new outlook, Scrooge regains his humanity and pledges to keep his Christmas – giving spirit for the rest of his life.



Grant Goodman, James Pickering and Nell Geisslinger. Photo by Michael Brosilow.

VICTORIAN ENGLAND

GOVERNMENT



Queen Victoria

Unlike the governmental system that exists in America, England has a constitutional monarchy. In Dickens' day, Queen Victoria ruled the country. Under her direction, England gained control of India, Burma, New Zealand and Hong Kong, making England the largest imperial power in the world. Victoria did many good things to improve her country, but she also let the rich become richer and the poor become poorer.

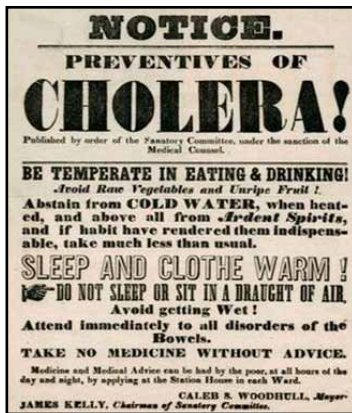
WORKING LIFE

Life was difficult for the working class in Victorian London. Today in the United States, a typical workweek is about 40 hours or five eight-hour days. In Victorian London, it was not unusual for employees to work six twelve-hour days or 72 hours per week. Even though most workers were given off every Sunday, May Day and Christmas, businesses were not required to provide days off. In Dickens' time, a typical clerk made about £80 (around \$130) per year, just enough to rent a house and raise a family.



Poor families in London, 1872.

HEALTH



Cholera newspaper clipping.

Victorian London was nicknamed "The Fever Patch" due to overcrowding, pollution and poor public sanitation. The city was rampant with disease including cholera, which is caused by impurities in drinking water. Killing 140,000 Londoners during Dickens' lifetime, cholera spread through the Thames River, London's central waterway. The Thames was also the main waste-disposal system. Two hundred opened sewers ran into the river, carrying bacteria from waste product that people then consumed in their water. Doctors believed disease was spread through tainted air rather than water. Therefore, the city's health problems were compounded by the ignorance of its medical professionals. Throughout the nineteenth century, it was widely accepted that proper ventilation was the key to preventing disease. Hospitals were also of little help because they were sparse and often times unaffordable as well as unsafe. Due to crude surgical techniques and flawed understandings about the nature of infections, hospitals led to an increase rather than a decrease in the death rate.



Working children.

INDUSTRY

During the first half of the nineteenth century, Great Britain was adjusting to the effects of the Industrial Revolution. The country's previously farming-based economy changed to one relying on industry and manufacturing. Britain underwent a period of swift urbanization, the movement of large populations from the countryside to cities. Scores of young men and women, as well as the rural poor, were drawn to London by the promise

of employment and entertainment. Between 1800 and 1850, the population of London doubled, reaching 2.3 million people. Becoming massively overcrowded, the city could not support such a rapid increase in its populace. According to social historian Kitson Clark, in London "suitable housing did not exist, and . . . additional numbers were crammed into every nook and cranny from attic to cellar of old decaying property . . . with little or no access to light and air." Moreover, the creation of a steam railway in 1804 proved incredibly profitable, but at the expense of increasing the population problem. Entire neighborhoods in London were demolished to make room for tracks, with no thought or aid given to the families who lived there. By the time laws were put in place to control the rail companies, over 76,000 people had been uprooted.

EDUCATION

Education was a privilege enjoyed by those who could afford it during the Victorian Era. In many cases, money was so scarce that children from poor families were sent to work in factories as young as the age of six. Taught only the basics in mathematics, reading and scripture, a fortunate few underprivileged children would attend charity schools. Wealthy young girls were taught by a governess, a woman who taught in the family's home and sometimes lived there. Governesses taught the "delicate" skills of dance, drawing, music and French; subjects generally accepted as appropriate and necessary for upper-class young women. Boys were typically sent to live in boarding schools, where they were taught a more rounded curriculum (reading, writing, history and mathematics). At Eton, one of the most prestigious schools of the time, boys were locked in their rooms from 8:00 pm until the next morning. Boarding schools were harsh places, where beatings were an accepted method of discipline and dunce caps (cone-shaped hats which labeled the wearer a "dunce" or idiot) were used to humiliate students who didn't learn fast enough.



Children and school teacher at school.

LONDON

London is the largest city in England and its capital. During the time of Dickens' writing, London held some of the largest factories in England and attracted people who were looking for jobs.



Map of England. Fleet Street in London, then and now.

WORDS OF THE TIME

Baffling British Money

Prior to 1971, British money consisted of overlapping units and sub-units called Pounds, Shillings and Pence.

Pound: Also known as a 'quid,' a pound originally had the same value as a gold 'sovereign coin.'

Shillings: Twenty shillings create a pound. A shilling is also known as a 'bob.'

Pence: A shilling is made up of twelve pence. There are 240 pence in a pound.



Scrooge (James Pickering) donates mere 'pence' to a philanthropist. (Jonathan Gillard Daly). Photo by Michael Brosilow.

Money found in *A Christmas Carol*

NAME	VALUE	MATERIAL
Farthing	$\frac{1}{4}$ of a Pence	Copper
Ha'penny	$\frac{1}{2}$ of a Pence	Copper
Pence	$\frac{1}{12}$ of a Shilling	Silver
Shilling	12 Pence (a bob)	Silver
Half-a-Crown	2 $\frac{1}{2}$ Shillings, or 30 Pence	Silver
Crown	5 Shillings, or 60 Pence	Silver
Pound	20 Shillings, or 240 Pence	Gold
Guinea	21 Shillings	Gold



Bizarre British Terms

Word choice changes with time. Here are a few terms used in *A Christmas Carol*.

Bedlam: A London hospital for the insane

Blindman's Bluff: A popular English parlor game where one person is blindfolded and must catch others

Brazier: An open pan used for holding coals

Chaise: A two-wheeled vehicle with a folding top, drawn by a single horse

Charwoman: A woman hired to do housework during the daytime

Comforter: A scarf

Copper: A large pot used for washing or cooking

Counting House: An office in which a commercial company corresponds and book-keeps

Fathom: A measurement of six feet used for calculating depths at sea or in mines

Garret: A room or set of rooms in an attic

Gratis: Freely, without expense

Gruel: Broth or soup of oatmeal and chopped meat

Old Screw: Slang for "Mister"



Cast of *A Christmas Carol* plays Blindman's Bluff. Photo by Michael Brosilow.

THEMES

The Christmas Spirit

A Christmas Carol is centered on a special time, as Christmas is the time of year where people forget their petty arguments, selfishness and work-centered lives; instead, people focus on love, friendship and charity. At some point throughout *A Christmas Carol*, each character embodies the Christmas spirit. Once all three ghosts visit Scrooge, he finally understands the importance of embracing the Christmas spirit year-round.



Cast of *A Christmas Carol* plays Blindman's Bluff. Photo by John Nienhuis.



Questions

- What is the important value found during Christmas time?
- Which ghost – Past, Present or Future – influences Scrooge the most during its visit?
- What does Scrooge do once he wakes up on Christmas day? How does this show his newly revived Christmas spirit?
- How can you create the kindness found in the Christmas spirit throughout the entire year?

Forgiveness and Choice

Throughout the play, Scrooge transforms from a money-pinching grump to a generous, loving person. The Ghost of Christmas Future shows Scrooge that his present choices determine his future. For example, Tiny Tim will survive only with Scrooge's help. Scrooge realizes that he can change the future by being more caring and understanding. This, however, involves forgiveness from others for Scrooge's harsh and rude behaviors in the past. The thread of forgiveness and choice are intertwined with Scrooge's journey in becoming a better person.



Questions

- Why is Scrooge given a second chance to choose a different ending to his life? What choices does he make knowing what the future could be like?
- How does Scrooge's transformation affect those around him? Does his life and that of those around him become better or worse?
- Why is it important to forgive others?

Greed and Generosity

At the beginning of the play, Scrooge symbolizes greed and selfishness; his refusal to donate money to the poor in the beginning of the play shows that Scrooge only thinks about money and himself. Scrooge has a terrible perspective; he only focuses on his own wealth. Disregarding his own family members and employees, Scrooge is portrayed as a mean and selfish person at the beginning of the play. However, through his transformation, Scrooge becomes a generous, caring person. He becomes reasonable in his actions and cares about both his family and employees.



Questions

- When does Scrooge allow greed to overtake his life? What event symbolizes this moment?
- In what ways can you see Scrooge's greed transform into generosity?
- Throughout the visits with the ghosts, Scrooge feels remorse and shame for being greedy. How does this self-realization make Scrooge a better person?
- What are some times where you have been too selfish or too generous? Can there be a healthy balance between being generous and greedy?

CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES

Elementary School: Draw a picture of your favorite memory of a past Christmas as a postcard you could send for Christmas.

Middle School: Write a letter to yourself in the future. What are dreams that you hope will come true? What are some choices that you can make? Reflect on your past as well as present self and then write about how you want to be in the future.

High School: Scrooge transforms throughout the play into a generous, understanding individual. Because he was able to reflect on his past and revisit certain events in his life, he was able to understand that his choices in life created his destiny. Write an essay about an event or moment where you made a choice that deeply affected you and changed who you are as a person. What about this moment or memory makes you a better person and why?

FUN FACTS

- There are over 400 props in *A Christmas Carol*.
- The children's cast comes from all over the Milwaukee area and is selected from auditions at The Rep.
- There are about 55 wigs in *A Christmas Carol*.
- Every year, it takes six semi trucks and two weeks to move the set and props into the Pabst Theater.
- The snow that falls during the play is actually soap bubbles.
- The candle that Scrooge carries in his bedroom is controlled wirelessly by the light board operator.
- Marley's chains are made of felt and sand so they are not too heavy for the actor.
- Eva Balistrieri, an Acting Intern at The Rep this season, has appeared in the play 10 times beginning when she was 9 years old and has played every Cratchit daughter.
- The poker on Scrooge's bedroom stove is held in place with a magnet.

FURTHER RESEARCH

EXPLORE

> BBC PRIMARY HISTORY, VICTORIAN BRITAIN

http://www.bbc.co.uk/schools/primaryhistory/victorian_britain/victorian_schools/

> DICTIONARY OF VICTORIAN LONDON

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

> DAVID PERDUE'S CHARLES DICKENS PAGE

<http://charlesdickenspage.com/>

WATCH

> There are many film versions of *A Christmas Carol*. Check one out from your local library and compare the way the movie tells the story to the way the story is told on stage. How are the two mediums different?

READ

> *Dickens' London: An Imaginative Vision*

Ackroyd, Peter. London: Pilot Productions, 1987.

> *Eyewitness Classics: A Christmas Carol*

Kellar, Shona. New York: DK Publishing, 1997.

> *The Population History of England, 1541-1871: A Reconstruction*

Wrigley, E.A. and R.S. Schofield

Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1981

EDUCATIONAL STANDARDS

READING STANDARDS FOR LITERATURE

R.8.3: Analyze how particular lines of dialogue or incidents in a story or drama propel the action, reveal aspects of a character, or provoke a decision.

R.9-10.3: Analyze how complex characters (e.g., those with multiple or conflicting motivations) develop over the course of the text, interact with other characters, and advance the plot or develop the theme

R. 11-12.3: Analyze the impact of the author's choices regarding how to develop and relate elements of a story or drama (e.g. where a story is set, how the action is ordered, how the characters are introduced and developed).

R.11-12.2: Determine two or more themes or central ideas of a text and analyze their development over the course of the text, including how they interact and build on one another to produce a complex account; provide an objective summary of the text.

R.11-12.5: Analyze how an author's choices concerning how to structure specific parts of a text contribute to its overall structure and meaning as well as its aesthetic impact.

R.11-12.7: Analyze multiple interpretations of a story, drama or poem (e.g., recorded or live production of a play or recorded novel or poetry), evaluating how each version interprets the source text.

READING STANDARDS FOR INFORMATIONAL TEXT

R.9-10.3: Analyze how the author unfolds an analysis or series of ideas or events, including the order in which the points are made, how they are introduced and developed, and the connections that are drawn between them.

R.9-10.7: Analyze various accounts of a subject told in different mediums (e.g., print vs. multimedia), determining which details are emphasized in each account.

WISCONSIN FAMILY AND CONSUMER EDUCATION STANDARDS

C.2: Understand and use reflection in everyday life

- > Describe what it means to be reflective
- > Explain the importance of using reflection, such as use of reflection to identify and evaluate attitudes and patterns of acting that affect accomplishment of goals
- > Identify situations that call for reflection in daily life

WISCONSIN SOCIAL STUDIES STANDARDS

Geography

A.8.7: Describe the movement of people, ideas, diseases, and products throughout the world.

A.12.4: Analyze the short-term and long-term effects that major changes in population in various parts of the world have had or might have on the environment.

History

B.8.4: Explain how and why events may be interpreted differently depending upon the perspectives of participants, witnesses, reporters, and historians.

B.12.18: Explain the history of slavery, discrimination, and efforts to eliminate discrimination in the United States and elsewhere in the world.

Behavioral Science

E.8.4: Describe and explain the means by which individuals, groups, and institutions may contribute to social continuity and change within a community.

E.12.2: Explain how such factors as physical endowment, family, gender, ethnicity, beliefs, religion, attitudes, social status and motivation contribute to individual identity and development.

WISCONSIN THEATER STANDARDS

Performance

A.12.2: Attend a theatrical performance and explain the personal meaning derived from the experience, and be able to analyze, evaluate and create meaning in a broader social and cultural context in either written or oral form

- > Articulate with increased understanding what they liked and didn't like and why
- > Explain what happened in the play and why they think the playwright made particular choices
- > Explain what happened in the play and why the director and actors made particular choices
- > Explain how technical aspects of the play supported the choices of the playwright, director and actors
- > Describe how the audience responded to the play
- > Explain the message of the play and its meaning to individuals and to society

VISITING THE REP

Milwaukee Repertory Theater's Patty and Jay Baker Theater Complex is located in the Milwaukee Center downtown at the corner of Wells and Water Streets. The building was formerly the home of the Electric Railway and Light Company.

The Ticket Office is visible on the left upon entering the Wells Street doors. The large space is the main hub for the businesses that share this building: The Rep, Associated Bank, an office tower, the Pabst Theater and the Intercontinental Hotel. *A Christmas Carol* will be held in the Pabst Theater, to the right of The Rep's Ticket Office.



Milwaukee Repertory Theater. Photo by Michael Brosilow.

THEATER ETIQUETTE

Attending the theater can be a fun experience for everyone if you observe a few simple courtesies:

- Turn off and put away all electronic devices prior to entering the theater. This includes cell phones, iPods and video games.
- Taking photographs and video recording in the theater is strictly prohibited.
- Do not place your feet on the seat in front of you.
- The actors onstage can see and hear the audience just as well as you can see and hear them. Please refrain from talking or moving around during the performance as it can be distracting to the actors as well as to other audience members.
- Feel free to respond to the action of the play through appropriate laughter and applause. The actors enjoy this type of communication from the audience!
- Have fun! Attending theater should be an enjoyable experience.

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