

# A CHRISTMAS CAROL

A novel by **Charles Dickens** | Adapted by **Mark Clements**

Directed by **Leda Hoffmann** | Based on  
original direction by **Mark Clements**

**November 27 - December 24, 2018** | Pabst Theater

## TEACHER'S GUIDE

## CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES

Teacher's Guide Written by Hope Parow, former Associate  
Education Director and Kristen Carter, Education Resident

This teacher's guide is designed to be used in the classroom along with  
The Rep's PlayGuide for *A Christmas Carol*. This PlayGuide is available online at:

<https://www.milwaukeeep.com/Tickets--Events/201819-Season/A-Christmas-Carol/A-Christmas-Carol-PlayGuide/>

The following activities and recommended discussions require that students be familiar with and/or read *A Christmas Carol*. Ask the students to use proof from the text to justify their choices and conclusions during discussion and activities whenever appropriate. (A digital copy of the novella can be found online through Project Gutenberg at <http://www.gutenberg.org/files/46/46-h/46-h.htm>).

## OPENING DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

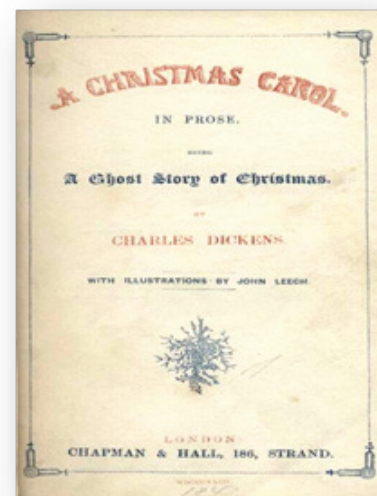
*Introduction to analyzing and critical thinking with the text*

### Younger Students (5-8 Grade)

1. Which character in *A Christmas Carol* are you most alike? Why? What character traits do you have in common?
2. Why does Scrooge get a second chance to choose a different path for his life?
3. What does Scrooge see from his past, present, or future that makes him want to change?
4. Which ghost (Past, Present, or Future) changes Scrooge most? Why?

### Older Students (9-12 Grade)

1. To what extent do you think *A Christmas Carol* is an effective title for the play, and why?
2. How is Charles Dickens' life and his values reflected in the style and content of his writing?
3. In what way is *A Christmas Carol* an allegory?
4. How is the timeline of *A Christmas Carol* unique? Why might Dickens have structured the plot this way, and why might it be important to the overall message of the play?
5. What aspects of humor and parody do we see at work in *A Christmas Carol*? How do these aspects aid in providing social criticism?
6. How important is the setting/historical context of *A Christmas Carol* to the message of the play? Could the story have taken place anywhere else or at any other time?



The cover of Charles Dickens' novella, *A Christmas Carol*



# ACTIVITIES INVOLVING LITERARY ELEMENTS



A skyline view of Victorian London



Upper-class citizens of Victorian England mingle and dance at a formal social gathering

## SETTING / HISTORICAL CONTEXT

**Social/Historical Research:** Prior to having the students **RESEARCH** working and living conditions of Victorian London, **DISCUSS** the importance of understanding social/historical context when reading literature and attending a theatrical production.

**Lesson Extension (5-8 grade):** Have students research images of Victorian England life. In either small groups, with the whole class, or with a partner share images or have students describe what they think life felt like for Victorian England citizens at that time.

**Lesson Extension (9-12 grade):** Divide the class into small groups and assign each group a social issue on which to become experts, including urbanization, factory/labor conditions, public health, education, and government. Ask each group to then **CREATE** a poster outlining their subtopic and **PRESENT** it to the class. *To explore this topic further, follow this activity with the **Social Action Plan** on Page 3.*

**Victorian Era Party:** Ask students to apply understanding of *A Christmas Carol* characters and social context in order to **CREATE**, **DEVELOP**, and **PORTRAY** an authentic 19th century Victorian party. Divide students into groups and have each group **RESEARCH** one topic regarding the Victorian era: social customs/manners, food, costumes/dress, and music of the period. Throw a Victorian party for the class, with each group providing things that they researched (i.e. refreshments, music, and activities, as available). Assess students based on both their quality of research and creative process.

## CHARACTER

**Character Letters:** Ask students to **IDENTIFY** from what point-of-view Dickens' *A Christmas Carol* novella is written (limited-omniscient third person narration). Then, **DISCUSS** how changing in point of view could affect the tone of the piece. Next, invite students to assume the persona of Scrooge and **WRITE** two letters, in first person, to another character. The first letter should represent Scrooge's "pre-Ghost" perspective, and the second, his "post-Ghost" perspective. Specific characters for students to write their letters to might include Young Scrooge, Belle, Bob Cratchit, etc. Remind students that the tone and content of each letter should reflect not only Scrooge's attitude at that time, but also his relationship with the character and how that relationship changes.

**5-8 Grade Addition:** Have students **CREATE** Venn diagrams to better organize their thoughts as they **COMPARE/CONTRAST** Scrooge's perspectives.

**Lesson Extension (5-8 grade):** Have the students **BRAINSTORM** how Scrooge might have behaved as a child. Then, ask them to **WRITE** a paragraph describing, in first person, a specific moment or event in Scrooge's childhood (such as a birthday, his first day of school, a holiday, etc.) that helped shape him into the cold-hearted character he was at the start of the play. Invite a few volunteers to **SHARE** their interpretations with the class.

**Lesson Extension (9-12 grade):** Ask students to **"PEER" EDIT** *A Christmas Carol* by having them **WRITE** a letter to Charles Dickens. In their critique, they might offer suggestions as to how to improve the plot, further develop a character, or affect the mood through change in language. Remind them to reference specific scenes in the text and reference at least two literary elements.



Charles Dickens as a young boy



## THEME

### Quote Interpretation and Social Action Plan

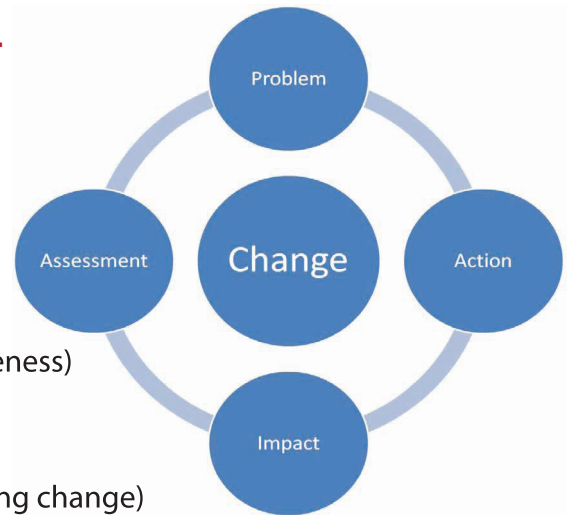
Have students **CONNECT** their understanding of Dickens' advocacy for social change to the thematic issues he addresses in his works. First, ask students to **REVIEW** what they know about Victorian England in order to **INFER** how the social climate affected Dickens as a citizen and author of the time. (We recommend using the Social/Historical Research activity to introduce these ideas. Next, ask the class to **IDENTIFY** the major theme represented by the first quote (quotes listed below) and have them connect that quote and theme to a prevalent modern issue (i.e. homelessness, bullying, world hunger, environmentalism, etc.). Repeat those steps with the rest of the quotes. Have the class use their findings as inspiration for a Social Action Plan they will **CREATE** and **IMPLEMENT** in the community. The Social Action Plan model below may be used and/or adjusted in order to fit the needs of the class (provided below).



Youth in Milwaukee Rep's After School Program use Storytelling as a tool to promote community change. Photo credit: Jenny Toutant.

#### SOCIAL ACTION PLAN: PROJECT-BASED MODEL FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF YOUNG GLOBAL CITIZENS

1. Social Issue/Problem (including target population)
2. Action (project goal/objective)
3. Primary Goals (over-arching, long-term goals)
4. Resources (materials, participating organizations, budget)
5. Documentation (videos, photos, written)
6. Measurement (use of documentation to assess plan effectiveness)
7. Milestones (step-by-step procedure, including timetable)
8. Impact (reflection of observed outcome)
9. Assessment (evaluation of plan effectiveness to affect ongoing change)



Adapted from: [theworldwewantfoundation.org](http://theworldwewantfoundation.org)

## FROM THE MOUTH OF DICKENS

"This is a world of action, and not for moping and droning in."

"Charity begins at home and justice begins next door."

"Electric communication will never be a substitute for the face of someone who, with their soul, encourages another person to be brave and true."

"No one is useless in this world who lightens the burden of it to anyone else."

"A day wasted on others is not wasted on one's self."

"Have a heart that never hardens, and a temp that never tires, and a touch that never hurts."

"The civility which money will purchase is rarely extended to those who have none."

# ACTIVITIES INVOLVING THEATRICAL ELEMENTS

## COSTUME

**Costume Designer:** Before seeing the play, have students **READ** and **ANALYZE** the passages in which Dickens describes the four spirits that appear to Scrooge on Christmas Eve. (The full text can be found through *Project Gutenberg*; see link on Page 1). Ask them to **IDENTIFY** the colorful verbs and adjectives Dickens' uses and to **VISUALIZE** the ghosts in detail as they read. Next, have each student **DRAW** a costume design that represents a ghost of their choosing and **PRESENT** their interpretation to their peers.

**Lesson Extension (all grades):** Finally, after seeing *A Christmas Carol* at The Rep, have students write a reflection on how their designs compare to the costumes used in The Rep's production.



Ebenezer Scrooge is visited by his late business partner, Jacob Marley

Scrooge meets the first Christmas spirit, the Ghost of Christmas Past



The merry Ghost of Christmas Present appears in Scrooge's bed chambers

The Ghost of Christmas Future shows Scrooge his undesirable fate



## SOUND

**Podcast Production Project:** Podcasts are modern and current avenues of audio entertainment and communication today. **DISCUSS** with the class how podcasts (audio entertainment) differ from stage and film (visual and audio) productions (you may have to explain what podcasts are to young students). Then, divide students into small groups and instruct students to **WRITE** a script for and **PRODUCE** a podcast adaptation of a scene from *A Christmas Carol*. Invite them to **BRAINSTORM** ideas for their podcast, first focusing on scene selection and division of roles and responsibilities (who will write, direct, design and operate sound, voice each character, etc.), and later, on specific creative choices, such as character voices, sound effects, narration, etc. Allow students time to **REHEARSE**, record their drama on a technological device (i.e. a smartphone, a computer with a microphone, etc.), and play their work in front of the class. Remind students to **LISTEN** and **VISUALIZE** as their peers present their work. Afterwards, ask each group to **REFLECT** upon their processes, as well as what did and did not work in the scenes they listened to.



Students in Illinois using audio technology to record a show





Ebenezer Scrooge (Jonathan Wainwright) and young girl interact in The Rep's 2017 Production of *A Christmas Carol*

## PERFORMANCE

**Thematic Improvisation Scenarios:** Have students engage in **IMPROV** scenes of the modernized *A Christmas Carol*-based scenarios (described below). Their scenes should be based on the quotes, but the rest of the basis for their scenes should be improvised on the spot. Prior to the exercise, **DISCUSS** "Yes, and" (the major rule of Improv), which dictates that in order to create successful scenes, actors must accept the premise (characters, setting, plot) their scene partner establishes and then add to the idea. Emphasize that an actor must never deny their fellow actor and instead, play the positive. Afterwards, ask the students to **REFLECT** on what did and did not work in each one. Encourage students to **CREATE** their own Improv adaptations of other books, theatrical productions, and movies.

*A lazy student is wakened in the night by the ghost of a drop-out and three ghosts who show her her former diligence, the success others are now having in school, and what will happen in the future if she doesn't work harder.*

*A bossy, mean, older sibling dreams of how her younger siblings greedily divide up or sell her possessions on eBay after she is found mysteriously missing.*

*The grumpy manager of a fast-food outlet bullies his employees to work harder. When he is knocked unconscious by a falling box of frozen meat patties, he dreams of how loved the former manager was and how hard everyone worked for him; upon his recovery he is transformed to a generous, congenial boss.*



The cast of the Rep's 2017 Production of *A Christmas Carol*. Photo by Michael Brosilow.

# Common Core State Standards and Wisconsin Model Academic Standards

## Common Core State Standards

### Reading – Literature

RL.3-12.1 Refer to details and cite textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text, including determining where the text leaves matters uncertain

RL.3-12.3 Analyze in detail how elements of a story or drama interact, including how plot, characters, and themes develop, as well as the impact of the author's choices regarding how to relate elements of the story or drama

RL.4-10.6 Describe and analyze how an author develops the point of view of the narrator or speaker in a text

RL.4-12.7 Analyze multiple interpretations of a text (e.g., written story, drama or poem, recorded or live production of a play, or recorded audio or poetry), including how each version interprets the source text

### Writing

W.4-12.3 Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, descriptive and well-chosen details, and clear, well-structured event sequences

## Wisconsin Model Academic Standards

### Social Studies – History

B.4.4 Compare and contrast changes in contemporary life with life in the past by looking at social, economic, political, and cultural roles played by individuals and groups

B.8.12 Describe how history can be organized and analyzed using various criteria to group people and events chronologically, geographically, thematically, topically, and by issues

B.12.7 Identify major works of art and literature produced in the United States and elsewhere in the world and explain how they reflect the era in which they were created

Political Science and Citizenship Performance

C.12.8 Locate, organize, analyze, and use information from various sources to understand an issue of public concern, take a position, and communicate the position

### Theater

A.4-12.1 Attend a live theatrical performance, discuss the experience, and also be able to analyze, evaluate, and create meaning in a broader social and cultural context in either written or oral form

C.12.2 Select a play, theatre-related event, or individual and research the topic, gathering information from more than one source

D.4-12.1 Explain strengths and weaknesses of scenes performed in class and reflect on and assess their own work and the work of others

E.4.1 Create a scene or play based on a story, another piece of literature, or an idea, with a beginning, middle, and end

### Technology

A.8.5 Use media and technology to create and present information

## MILWAUKEE REP EDUCATION DEPARTMENT

The Education Department offers backstage tours, pre- and post-show workshops and classroom residencies.

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