

A CHRISTMAS CAROL

By Charles Dickens
Adapted by Joseph Hanreddy and Edward Morgan

December 1-24, 2015
Pabst Theater

TEACHER'S GUIDE

CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES

Teacher's Guide Written by Hope Parow, Education Associate
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This teacher's guide is designed to be used in the classroom along with The Rep's study guide for *A Christmas Carol*. This study guide is available online at

<http://www.milwaukeeep.com/On-Stage/2015-16-Season/A-Christmas-Carol-PlayGuide/>

SUGGESTIONS FOR TEACHERS

Because of the open-ended nature of the following activities, they may be appropriate for a wide range of ages and grades. Adapt the activities to attend to student needs and interests, and over-arching classroom goals and objectives.

For extended reading and comprehension practice, provide students with a copy of *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>).

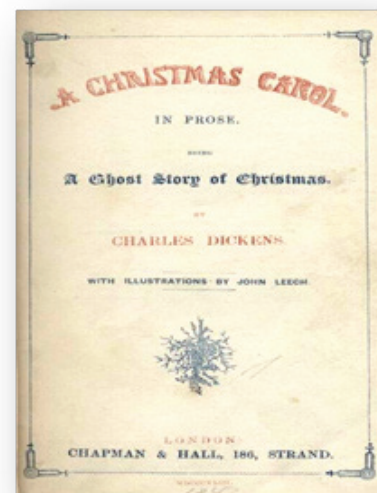
DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Younger Students

1. Which of the characters in *A Christmas Carol* do you most relate to, and why? (Consider what character traits you may share.)
2. Why is Scrooge given a second chance to choose an ending to his life?
3. Which ghost – Past, Present, or Future – do you feel influences Scrooge most? Justify your answers.
4. Have there been times when you were too selfish or too generous? Can there be a healthy balance between the two?

Older Students

1. To what extent do you think *A Christmas Carol* is an effective title for the play, and why?
2. What obstacles (both internal and external) does Scrooge face over the course of the story?
3. How are Charles Dickens' life and values reflected in the style and content of his writing?
4. In what way is *A Christmas Carol* an allegory? What do his main characters symbolize?
5. How is the timeline of *A Christmas Carol* unique? Why might Dickens have structured the plot this way, and why might it be important?
6. What aspects of humor and parody do we see at work in *A Christmas Carol*? What role (and to what extent) does social criticism play in *A Christmas Carol*?
7. How essential is the setting/historical context of *A Christmas Carol*? Could the story have taken place anywhere else or at any other time?



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



LITERARY ELEMENTS



An aerial view of Victorian London

SETTING

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. 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.

Lesson Extension (for older students): To have students **CONNECT** their understanding of Dickens' life as an advocate of social change and the thematic issues he presents in *A Christmas Carol* and his other works, see "Quote Interpretation and Social Action Plan" on Page 3

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 a change in perspective affects 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 might include Young Scrooge, Belle, Bob Cratchit, Tiny Tim, the Ghosts, Mr. Fezziwig, etc. Remind students that the tone and content of each letter should reflect not only Scrooge's attitude at that time but his relationship with the character to whom they have chosen to write. If necessary, have students **CREATE** Venn diagrams to better organize their thoughts as they **COMPARE/CONTRAST** Scrooge's perspectives.

Lesson Extension (for younger students): 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 define his character. Invite a few volunteers to **SHARE** their interpretations with the class.

Lesson Extension (for older students): 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 of language. Remind them to be specific and reference at least two literary or theatrical elements.



Charles Dickens as a young boy



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

Victorian Era Party: Ask students to apply understanding of *A Christmas Carol* characters and social context in order to **CREATE**, **DEVELOP**, and **PORTRAY** original era-specific characters attending a 19th century Victorian party. Invite students to **RESEARCH** the class system, social customs, food, dress, and music of the period, as well as **WRITE** a character sketch outlining the individual they have chosen to portray. Their character sketch may include name, age, physical description, family background/social status, personality traits, job/career, etc.; remind them to be specific in their choices. Once their personas are developed, throw a Victorian party for the class, providing refreshments, music, and activities, as available. Assess students based on the truth behind their choices and their commitment to their character.

THEME

Quote Interpretation and Social Action Plan

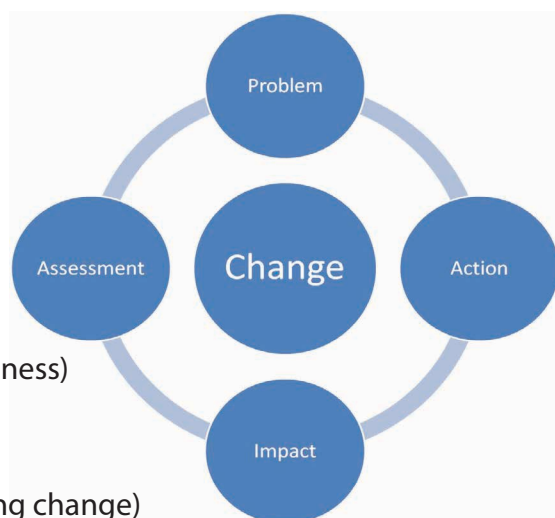
Have students **CONNECT** their understanding of Dickens' advocacy for social change to the thematic issues he addresses in his works. First, ask students to **REVIEW** what they know about Victorian England in order to **INFER** how the social climate affected Dickens as a citizen and author of the time. Next, present students with the Dickens' quotes (listed below) to both to **ANALYZE** and **INTERPRET**. Ask them to **IDENTIFY** the major theme represented by the quote (such as humility, civility, and generosity, etc.), as well as a prevalent modern issue that aligns with that theme (homelessness, bullying, world hunger, environmentalism, etc.). Finally, divide the students into small groups and have each group to select one quote to be the 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 attend to the needs of the class:



Young children plant a tree to affect environmental change

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

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."

REVIEW

NOTE: This activity can be used as either an introduction to or as a review of literary elements.

Mincemeat Plot Pies: Ask students to **CREATE** a lift-the-flap mince meat pie to analyze literary composition of the novella and/or play. To create the pie, secure two paper plates together using a brass paper fastener and, taking care not to cut too far into the center, cut the top plate into the desired number of “pieces”. Each top slice should identify a singular literary element, and underneath, a description (and small illustration, if pertinent) of that element. Elements may include: setting, character, plot diagram, mood, motif, protagonist, theme/allegory, tone, etc. After the students have created and discussed their pies, they can use the recipe below to **BAKE** their own minced meat pies, a long-standing Christmas tradition in Britain.

Math Integration (for younger students): Ask students to **IDENTIFY** and **SOLVE** problems with the fractions represented in their pies and mentioned in the recipe, including use of the four operations, the comparison of quantities on number lines, and the generation of improper fractions and decimal notation.

FUN FACT:

EDGAR ALLEN POE IS RUMORED TO BE THE ONLY PERSON CAPABLE OF PREDICTING THE ENDINGS OF DICKENS' COMPLEX PLOTS.

MINCEMEAT PIE

Ingredients

- 2 soda crackers
- 3/4 c. white sugar
- 1 1/2 c. seedless raisins
- 1/3 c. orange juice
- 1 Tbsp orange zest
- 1/2 c. apple cider
- 1/2 tsp ground cloves
- 1/2 tsp ground cinnamon
- 1 pastry for a 9-inch double-pie crust
- 4 Granny Smith apples – peeled, cored, and sliced



Directions

1. Preheat oven 425 degrees F.
2. Stir the raisins, apples, orange zest, orange juice, and apple cider together in a pan. Simmer over medium heat, stirring occasionally until apples are very soft (about 20 minutes).
3. Stir in the sugar, cinnamon, cloves, and soda crackers until well-blended. Refrigerate until ready to use, or pour apple

mixture into prepared pie crust. Top with second crust. Pinch and crimp the edges to seal the crusts. Pierce the top crust in several places with a fork.

4. Bake in preheated oven for about 15 minutes. Reduce oven temperature to 350 degrees F and bake until top crust is golden brown (about 30 minutes more). Cool before serving – enjoy!

MINCEMEAT PIE SUPERSTITIONS

- Mincemeat pie is a favorite food of Father Christmas (Santa), so children of 17th century England would leave one or two pies at the bottom of the chimney for his annual holiday visit.
- It is considered good luck to eat 12 pies in 12 different homes over the course of the 12 Days of Christmas.
- A wish should be made whilst eating one's first pie of the festive season, though the pie should be eaten in silence and never cut with a knife.

“It was his own room. There was no doubt about that. But it had undergone a surprising transformation... Heaped up on the floor, to form a kind of throne, were turkeys, geese, game, poultry, brawn, great joints of meat, sucking-pigs, long wreaths of sausages, mince-pies, plum-puddings, barrels of oysters, red-hot chestnuts, cherry-cheeked apples, juicy oranges, luscious pears, immense twelfth-cakes, and seething bowls of punch, that made the chamber dim with their delicious steam.”

-DICKENS' A CHRISTMAS CAROL

COSTUME

Costume Designer: Before going to 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 **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. Finally, invite them to see 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

Radio Show Production: Invite students to **WRITE** the script for and **PRODUCE** a radio drama adaptation of *A Christmas Carol*. Prior to dividing the students into small groups, have them **DISCUSS** how radio differs from stage and film productions. Invite them to **BRAINSTORM** ideas for their radio drama, first focusing on scene selection (each group should only do a small section of the text), 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**, and depending on available resources, either **RECORD** their drama or **PERFORM** it live 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.

PERFORMANCE

Thematic Improv Scenarios: Have students **IMPROV** the modernized *A Christmas Carol*-based scenarios described below. 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 and then encourage them 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 him his former diligence, the success others are now having in school, and what will happen in the future if he doesn't work harder.

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.

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

Improv scenarios from readwritethink.org

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.4-12.2 Write informative/explanatory texts to examine a topic and convey ideas, concepts, and information through the selection, organization, and analysis of relevant content

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

Math

3.G.2 Partition shapes into parts with equal areas. Express the area of each part as a unit fraction of the whole

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

B.4-12.1-3 Create a character based on scripted material or through improvisation, using props, costumes, and ideas

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

E.12.4 Research and design at least one element of a play (sets, costume, make-up, lights, and or/sound)

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