



SERVANT
STAGE
*Educational
Theatre*

A CHRISTMAS
CAROL

Study Guide



making exceptional theatre accessible to everyone in our community
INSPIRE • EDUCATE • CHALLENGE • ENTERTAIN

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Welcome to Servant Stage's A Christmas Carol

WHO WE ARE:

SERVANT STAGE COMPANY

Servant Stage Company exists to serve our community with outstanding musical and theatrical experiences; make the arts accessible to all, especially those with financial or physical limitations; provide a creative outlet for artists in our community to develop and share their talents; create performances that inspire, educate, challenge and entertain...and have fun while doing it!

WHAT WE DO:

A CHRISTMAS CAROL

This adaptation of Charles Dickens' classic tale seeks to honor the original text by using it as the narration, dialogue, and lyrics of this play. It is our hope that you will be inspired and challenged by the redemption, charity, and Christmas spirit found in this production.

THEATRE ETIQUETTE

WHEN ATTENDING A PERFORMANCE

Clap when you like what you see.

Keep talking to a minimum.

Stay seated through the entire show.

Do not record or stream at any point.

Keep phones, watches, etc. quiet.

No photography please.



AUTHOR STUDY: CHARLES DICKENS



Charles Dickens lived in England following the industrial revolution of the late 18th century; born in Portsmouth in 1812 and dying in Kent in 1870. His family maintained middle-class standing, permitting him a few years of formal education, until his father's irresponsible spending took their family to Marshalsea debtor's prison. Twelve-year-old Charles was left in London to work in a shoe-polish factory, earning a particularly meager salary and laboring under terrible conditions. These events influenced much of his writing, raising his skillful prose as a voice for the social injustices of his time. As a journalist in his twenties, he began publishing works serially in monthly installments, including many of his notable novels (*Oliver Twist*, *A Tale of Two Cities*). *A Christmas Carol* was also released in this fashion in 1843, along with four other Christmas stories that shape our current Christmas traditions.

...Christmas time...the only time I know of, in the long calendar of the year, when men and women seem by one consent to open their shut-up hearts freely.

PLAY SYNOPSIS: A CHRISTMAS CAROL

On a Christmas Eve in the mid-1840's, Ebenezer Scrooge, who runs a counting house in London, turns down invitations to celebrate Christmas, frowning upon something he finds so frivolous. Upon returning home that evening, he is met by the ghost of his former business partner Jacob Marley who is wearing chains in the afterlife as a consequence of the choices he made while alive. He warns Scrooge that his fate will be the same if Scrooge does not change his ways, telling him that three other spirits are on their way to help him see the changes he ought to make. As foretold, Scrooge is visited by the Ghosts of Christmas Past, Present, and Future. They show him snippets of his life as it has been, as it currently is - with him missing out on so much, and as it may end. Scrooge awakes on Christmas morning, having fully internalized the message the ghosts had issued overnight, and goes out to meet those he dismissed the day before, making amends and living with generosity of spirit and of wealth.

Setting Analysis

The story of A Christmas Carol takes place in and around **London, England** during the **Victorian Era**. This time period was named for England's ruling queen Victoria. It was marked by the recent **Industrial Revolution**, a time when the population of the city exploded with those seeking work in factories and those seeking to profit off of their labor. There were serious divides between the upper class - who had means to education and entertainment, often without having to work much - and the lower class - who could barely afford to live, working long hours in dreadful conditions for minimal pay. Because the poor could barely afford their lives, they were crowded on top of each other in tiny apartments with poor sanitation systems. Disease ran rampant and the air was filled with the filth of the factories. Even children were forced into employment to support their families, taking up years-long **apprenticeships**. Those who could not afford their lives went into debt, eventually finding themselves in workhouses or **debtors' prisons** like the one Charles Dickens' family moved into, Marshalsea.

Though the setting described above is dismal, the spirit of Christmas was alive and well in Victorian London, bolstered by the popularity of Charles Dickens' Christmas stories. Lovely images of carolers, parties, feasts, and lighted Christmas trees were the backdrop for both rich and poor in his stories, by which he meant to inspire charity and hope. He succeeded in cementing the ideas that are the foundation for many of our current **Christmas traditions** by imbuing them with meaning and an attitude of goodwill that everyone can appreciate.

...candles burned like ruddy smears of dismal light. Dingy clouds hang down, obscuring everything...



CHARACTER ANALYSIS



EBENEZER SCROOGE

The main character of this tale. A miserly old man who has lost touch with his family and his humanity in his pursuit of wealth. He spends most of his time alone, and does not seek joy for himself or others at Christmas. His journey is one of redemption.

*But he was a tight-fisted
hand at the grindstone,
Scrooge!*

BOB CRATCHIT

Scrooge's clerk, who works terribly hard for woefully little pay. He has a large family, including children who work. He is happy despite his situation, and grateful to Scrooge for the work that he provides.

TINY TIM CRATCHIT

The youngest of Bob Cratchit's children, he walks with the aid of a crutch and is frequently carried on his father's shoulders. He is incredibly merry and thoughtful.

JACOB MARLEY

Scrooge's former business partner, who died on Christmas eve seven years before the story begins. In death, he wears a heavy chain that was brought on by his poor choices in life. He is the first apparition to visit Scrooge, warning him of the ghosts to come as his only chance to escape the same fate.

FRED

Scrooge's nephew, and the only son of Scrooge's beloved sister Fan. He is exceedingly generous of spirit, decidedly playful, and determined to invite Scrooge over for Christmas dinner.

FAN

Scrooge's deceased sister, the mother of Fred.

BELLE

Scrooge's former fiancée, who breaks off their engagement when Scrooge begins to seek after money rather than a family life.

CHARACTER ANALYSIS

GHOST OF CHRISTMAS PAST

A spirit who is at once young and old. He leads Scrooge through events, both joyful and heart-breaking, that have already taken place in his life.

GHOST OF CHRISTMAS PRESENT

A jubilant spirit who shows Scrooge the current Christmas Day as celebrated by the Cratchits and Fred. It also introduces him to Ignorance and Want.

GHOST OF CHRISTMAS FUTURE

A silent and unsettling spirit who shows Scrooge the potential ends of his current choices in life. The scenes wherein Scrooge has died reveal the thoughts of those who worked for and with him.

CAROLERS

This quartet kicks off the story with a delightful and haunting song that sets the stage for our tale.

SOLICITORS

Women who seek out Scrooge to request donations for the poor and destitute, who experience hardship year-round, but especially feel it at Christmas.

MR. FEZZIWIG

The business man under whom Scrooge was an apprentice. Mr. Fezziwig is kind and generous toward his employees, quite in opposition to Scrooge.

TOPPER

A friend of Fred's, seen playing parlor games at Fred's Christmas Party.



OLD JOE

A disgusting man who buys stolen goods, seen in a vision of Christmas future purchasing a deceased Scrooge's belongings from his servants.

IGNORANCE & WANT

Depicted as children, these vices of mankind are introduced to Scrooge as a warning by Christmas Present. Ignorance is foretold as 'doom' for Scrooge.

THEMES, MOTIFS, & VALUES



THEMES & MOTIFS

Time

Clock chimes are indicative of the passing of time and what loss or gain that might mean for Scrooge.

Generosity

Parties, balls, and feasts are seen repeatedly as a symbol of generosity. While those hosting the gatherings don't always have much to give, they do so freely and with abundance.

Family

Scrooge's repeated **interactions with Fred and the Cratchits** display the importance of coming together - and staying together - as a family.

Christmas Traditions

Carolers, solicitors, parties, and time away from work are all joyous nods to things repeated year after year at Christmas.

Social Divides

The class divisions that separated London at the time can be seen in **prisons, workhouses, and the working Cratchit children**.

VALUES

FORGIVENESS | WEALTH | CHARITY | FAMILY | COMPASSION |
GENEROSITY | STATUS | HEALTH | MERCY | COMMON WELFARE

*The happiness he gives is quite as
great as if it cost a fortune.*



DISCUSSION QUESTIONS & JOURNAL PROMPTS

1. How is watching a live theatre performance different from watching television or going to a movie?
2. When Scrooge is introduced to the characters Ignorance and Want, why do you think the Ghost of Christmas Present tells him to beware Ignorance most of all? What is Scrooge ignorant of? What does he want?
3. How does what we value shape our actions?
4. Write about what one of the ghosts might show you if they were to visit you this Christmas?
5. Were there words that you encountered that made the story difficult to understand? How did seeing people tell the story and hearing them say the words make it easier to understand than simply reading the book?
6. How did the elements of the show (the set, costumes, music, lights) help tell the story? Is there anything you would have done differently?

ACTIVITY IDEAS

Reenact the story with your class. (Be sure to remember the minor characters that were an important part of Scrooge's life!)

Draw the Ghosts that visit Scrooge, incorporating Charles Dickens' descriptions.

Try your hand at rewriting popular Christmas carols with words from a Christmas story of your choice.

God Bless Us, Everyone!



ASSEMBLED BY
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For more information about Servant Stage's educational performances, workshops, and classes, or our Youth Theatre program, email amberly@servantstage.org.

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