

THE WALNUT STREET THEATRE  
EDUCATION DEPARTMENT PRESENTS



# *A Christmas Carol*

*Adapted by Bill Van Horn*

*Music by Michael Borton—Lyrics by Bill Van Horn*

## Show Synopsis

Our story begins on Christmas Eve in the dingy London office of Ebenezer Scrooge—a miserly old businessman. Scrooge is visited by local solicitors who ask him for a donation for the poor. He declares that the only place for the poor is prison or death and continues counting his money. Even a visit from his cheerful nephew cannot improve his disposition. Only after some persuasion, does Scrooge begrudgingly give Bob Cratchit, his loyal employee, Christmas day off to spend time with his family and ailing son, Tiny Tim. Scrooge's response to the Christmas holiday is "Bah, Humbug!"

On Christmas Eve night, Scrooge is visited by the ghost of Jacob Marley, his former business partner. Marley cautions Scrooge that without a change of heart, his actions will condemn him to wear heavy chains for all eternity. He warns that three spirits will visit Scrooge throughout the night. The Ghost of Christmas Past is the first visitor, taking Scrooge back to his schooldays and to Christmases of merriment, feasting and kindness. The Ghost of Christmas Present arrives next to show Scrooge the celebrations going on without him: Bob Cratchit's sentimental celebration and his nephew's rollicking party. The last visitor of the night is the Spirit of Christmas Yet to Come who offers a glimpse of the world after Scrooge's death: no one will care that he is dead, his maid will steal the very blankets from his deathbed, and Tiny Tim, Bob Cratchit's youngest son, will succumb to his illness.



Moved by what he saw in his dreams, Ebenezer Scrooge awakens on Christmas morning filled with all the charity, good cheer and merriment of the season. He sends a prize turkey to Bob Cratchit's home and joins his nephew to celebrate the holiday.

## Charles Dickens

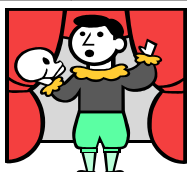
Charles John Dickens was born on February 7, 1812 in Landport, England, the second of eight children. In his early childhood, the family moved to London because they were short of money. Charles's father was continually living beyond his means and, in 1824, was imprisoned for debt. At the age of 12, Charles was taken out of school and put to work in a boot-blackening factory earning six shillings a week to help support the family who had left London, leaving Charles on his own. Charles considered this period to be the most terrible time in his life and would later write that he wondered "how I could have been so easily cast away at such an age." This childhood poverty and feelings of abandonment were a heavy influence on Dickens' later views on social reform and the world he would create through his fiction.



Dickens recounted his brush with hard times in the semi-autobiographical *David Copperfield*.

After six months, Charles' father was released from prison and sent Charles to Wellington House Academy. Charles enjoyed writing, but disliked school, so at the age of fifteen he left the Academy and became a free-lance reporter at Doctor's Commons Courts. For several years he alternated reporting, exploring the London streets, and reading avidly in London's libraries.

In 1836, Dickens began writing an amusing monthly newsletter called *The Pickwick Papers*, which soon became extremely popular. *The Pickwick Papers* brought him both wealth and immediate fame, which lasted throughout his whole life. Dickens went on to write 15 major novels and countless short stories and articles throughout his life before he died on July 9, 1870. He is buried in Westminster Abbey.



# FROM THE STAGE TO THE CLASSROOM



## Discussion Questions

### Before the Show

1. Discuss what it means to see “live theatre” with the students. Remind students of the responsibilities of being a good audience. It is important to remember that the actors can see and hear the audience.
2. Discuss the following vocabulary words and their meanings.

ACTOR	GREED
CHARACTER	SOCIAL CLASS
SETTING	HOLIDAY SPIRIT
PROPS	REDEMPTION
DIRECTOR	CHARITY
DIALOGUE	VICTORIAN ENGLAND
LYRICS	INDUSTRIAL REVOLUTION



### After the Show

1. How did the actors use their voices and bodies to portray the characters in the show? How did they portray a sense of time and place?
2. Discuss what it means to be in a different “social class” than someone else. How are people treated differently depending on whether they are rich or poor?
3. What things do you value more than money and possessions?
4. What are the attitudes of the different ghosts who visit Scrooge? What do they represent?
5. What lesson does Scrooge learn in the end? How is his personality and behavior different from when you saw him in the beginning of the show?

## Classroom Activities

### Before the Show

1. Read parts of *A Christmas Carol* aloud to your class. Set up a scene and encourage students to act it out. For example, one student can play Scrooge while another plays one of the ghosts who has come to tell him something important.
2. Discuss common Christmas carols, including Good King Wenceslas, Deck the Halls, God Rest Ye Merry Gentlemen, etc. What stories do these carols tell? What do they say about the time period in which they were written? Divide your class into small groups. Let them choose their favorite carol and write a skit (or story) to go along with it. After they’ve written the short skit, they can act it out in front of the class.

### After the Show

1. Have each student create a “life box” for one character from the show. A life box is a container of carefully chosen items that represent a particular character in a play. The box must contain things the character might use daily or have as a keepsake. For example, for Scrooge, students might choose a bag of coins because he was rich and miserly. A line from the play or book should be cited to justify each item. A shoe box is a good container. The students bring in the finished projects and present them to the class.
2. Ask your students to write a letter to Dickens, critiquing our performance. They should include comments about the actor’s performance, staging, props, costumes, etc. Would Dickens have liked our version of his story? Describe to him how it was different and what remained the same.

# Dickens Glossary Answer Key

C. **Almshouse:** Privately funded lodgings for the poor, as opposed to the workhouse, which was publicly funded.

E **Blacking:** Shoe or boot polish.

H **Constable:** A British policeman appointed by the parish to keep the peace.

A **Gammon:** A misleading or deceptive comment: nonsense.

G **Kith:** Friends, neighbors, or relatives.

D **Milliner:** Maker of women's hats.

F **Sepulchral:** Relating to the grave.

B **Turnkey:** A jailor.



## DICKENS' LONDON

Imagine yourself in the London of the early 19th century. Victorian London is the largest, most spectacular city in the world. While Britain is experiencing the Industrial Revolution, its capital is both reaping the benefits and suffering the consequences. The homes of the upper and middle class exist in close proximity to areas of unbelievable poverty and filth. The city's thousands of chimney pots are belching coal smoke, resulting in soot which seems to settle everywhere. In many parts of the city raw sewage flows in gutters that empty into the Thames. Street vendors hawking their wares add to the cacophony of street noises. Pick-pockets, drunks, beggars, and vagabonds of every description add to the colorful multitude.

Inside, the problem is not much better. Personal cleanliness is not a big priority, nor is clean laundry. In close, crowded rooms the smell of unwashed bodies is stifling. It is unbearably hot by the fire, numbingly cold away from it.

Until the second half of the 19th century, London residents were still drinking water from the very same portions of the Thames that the open sewers were discharging into. In addition to regular outbreaks of Cholera, the stench of the Thames actually caused Parliament to recess — a time now known as The Great Stink of 1858.

Imagine a thousand horse-drawn vehicles an hour passing through your neighborhood throughout the day. In addition, cattle were driven through the streets until the mid 19th century. All of this added up to an incredible amount of manure which had to be removed from the streets.

Fortunately, education, technology, and social reform have improved living conditions in many urban areas.



### Print Resources

*Charles Dickens: The Man Who Had Great Expectations* by Diane Stanley. William Morrow, 1993.

*Charles Dickens: Four Complete Novels (Great Expectations, Hard Times, A Christmas Carol, A Tale of Two Cities)* by Charles Dickens. Weatherlane.

*Charles Dickens and Friends* by Marcia Williams. Candlewick Press, 2002.

*Dickens: A Biography* by Fred Kaplan. Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998.

### Internet Resources

#### **Charles Dickens' Works Online:**

[www.underthesun.cc/Classics/Dickens/](http://www.underthesun.cc/Classics/Dickens/)

#### **Charles Dickens: An Overview:**

[www.victorianweb.org/authors/dickens/index.html](http://www.victorianweb.org/authors/dickens/index.html)

#### **A Christmas Carol:**

[www.gradesaver.com/ClassicNotes/Titles/carol/](http://www.gradesaver.com/ClassicNotes/Titles/carol/)

## About the Director

For Walnut Street Theatre, David Stradley recently directed the outreach company in *A Forest Fable*. For Delaware Theatre Company, he directed *The Drawer Boy*, *Underneath the Lintel*, *Retreat from Moscow*, 'Art', and *Picasso at the Lapin Agile*. Other local credits: *Hate Mail* (Act II Playhouse); *Henry IV, Part One* (Philadelphia Shakespeare Theatre).

[www.davidstradley.com](http://www.davidstradley.com)

## Walnut Street Theatre Education Department Staff

Director..... David Stradley  
Musical Director..... Michael Borton  
Choreographer..... Sammy Reyes  
Adaptation by..... Bill Van Horn  
Music by..... Michael Borton  
Lyrics by..... Bill Van Horn

***Did you like the show? Let us know!***

**Write to us at:**

Walnut Street Theatre  
Education Department  
825 Walnut Street



## WALNUT STREET THEATRE



Walnut Street Theatre has the unique distinction of being the oldest, continuously operating theatre in the English-speaking world, having served Philadelphia audiences for 200 years! It is also the Official State Theatre of Pennsylvania, and a National Historic Landmark.

Today, under the direction of Producing Artistic Director Bernard Havard, Walnut Street Theatre is in its 26th season as a self-producing, non-profit theatre. Walnut Street Theatre continues to entertain and enlighten diverse audiences with high quality theatrical programming. With more than 56,000 season ticket holders, the Walnut is also the most subscribed theatre company in the world!

The Walnut Street Theatre is celebrating 24 years of bringing high-quality professional theatre to schools across the Delaware Valley. Our multi-cultural Touring Outreach Company introduces students to the world of theatre through age-appropriate, curriculum-based pieces, that are socially relevant, entertaining, and exciting. Last season, 111,505 children and adults were impacted by the Walnut's Education Programs.

**The Walnut Street Theatre Educational Programs gratefully acknowledge support from the following:**

*ARAMARK \* The Barra Foundation*

*Bazelon, Less and Feldman, P.C. \* Louis N. Cassett Foundation \* Connelly Foundation*

*The Peter & Audrey Denton Fund \* Fox 29 \* William Goldman Foundation \* Hamilton Family*

*Foundation \* Harmelin Media \* Hassel Foundation \* Hellendall Family Foundation \**

*JAMS Foundation \* Liberty Property Trust \* Lincoln Financial Group Foundation \**

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*United Way of :Bucks County, Burlington County, Delaware,*

*Capital Region, North Penn, Southeastern PA, and Tri-State \* US Airways Education Foundation \**

*Virginia and Harvey Kimmel Arts Education Fund of the Philadelphia Foundation*

# A Christmas Carol

## Student Activity Page

### Word Search

Find and circle the following words:

CAROL  
CHRISTMAS  
CRACHIT  
DICKENS  
FAMILY  
FUTURE  
GHOST  
BAH HUMBUG  
JOY  
MARLEY  
MERRY  
PAST  
PRESENT  
SCROOGE  
TINY TIM  
TURKEY



You're Invited!



...to Scrooge's New Year's Celebration!!

Have your students create their very own sequel to Charles Dickens' *A Christmas Carol*.

Ebenezer Scrooge is planning a New Year's party to celebrate his new outlook on life. In groups of 4-6, have your students write a five minute skit about what happens at his party. A few things to think about before writing the skit are:

- Who are the party guests? (Try to use characters from *A Christmas Carol*)
- Do any ghosts visit on this night?
- Has Scrooge really learned his lesson or will he revert to his old ways?
- What are everyone's New Year's resolutions?
- How has Scrooge decorated for the party? What food is there? What is there to do at the party (i.e. dancing, singing, party games, etc.)

After they have written their skit, have each group perform it for the class!

# Dickens Glossary

The words below are common to Dickens' books. They paint a picture of what life was like in nineteenth century England. Match the words on the left with their correct definitions on the right.

- |               |       |   |
|---------------|-------|---|
| A. gammon     | _____ | Privately funded lodgings for the poor, as opposed to the workhouse, which was publicly funded. |
| B. turnkey    | _____ | Shoe or boot polish.  |
| C. almshouse  | _____ | A British policeman appointed by the parish to keep the peace.                                  |
| D. milliner   | _____ | A misleading or deceptive comment: nonsense.  |
| E. blacking   | _____ | Friends, neighbors, or relatives.   |
| F. sepulchral | _____ | Maker of women's hats.  |
| G. kith       | _____ | Relating to the grave.  |
| H. constable  | _____ | A jailor.   |



**Make a holiday card for Scrooge! Draw a picture from *A Christmas Carol* and write a letter wishing Scrooge a Merry Christmas!**

	<p>Dear Scrooge,</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>Merry Christmas,</p> <p>_____</p>
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