

WALNUT STREET THEATRE

C A CHRISTMAS C AROL



Study Guide

DIRECTED/CHOREOGRAPHED BY:

ELLIE MOONEY

A CHRISTMAS CAROL

WRITTEN BY:

CHARLES DICKENS

ADAPTED BY: BILL VAN HORN

MUSIC BY: MICHAEL BORTON

SHOW SYNOPSIS

Charles Dickens Biography

Our story begins on Christmas Eve in the London office of Ebenezer

Scrooge —a miserly old businessman. Scrooge is visited by 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, 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 and kindness. The Ghost of Christmas Present arrives next to show Scrooge the celebrations going on without him. 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.



Will these events change Ebenezer's view of life?



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.



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.

VICTORIAN ENGLAND

Life for Victorian Children in Victorian times (1830 to 1900) was nothing like childhood in today's world. For the wealthy there was an overwhelming sense of boredom and the constant prodding to be proper and polite with very little parent to child communication. For the poor Victorian Children life was much different. The poor children had to work public jobs for their families to survive. Toys were nothing more than homemade dolls or wooden blocks. On the other hand their family life was tighter knit and more loving.

(<http://www.victorianchildren.org/victorian-children-in-victorian-times/>)

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

BEFORE THE SHOW

1. Have you ever been to a play before? What are some difference between a play and a movie?
2. What did you know about Victorian England prior to attending this show?
3. Have you ever heard the saying, "money won't buy you happiness?" What do you think of that saying?
4. Why is it important to learn from your mistakes?
5. Do you think it's possible for someone to change?

AFTER THE SHOW

1. Think about the characters from the show. What did they do with their voices and bodies to portray their characters?
2. What things do you value more than money and possessions?
3. What are the attitudes of the different ghosts who visit Scrooge? What do they represent?
4. What lesson does Scrooge learn in the end? How is his personality and behavior different from the beginning?



THEATRE 101



Ever wondered how to put on a play?

There are many different elements that go into putting a show up on its feet. Please review the following with your students:

PLAYWRIGHT The playwright writes the script.

DIRECTOR The director is in charge of orchestrating the entirety of the production. They lead the actors, designers, and production crew to put the show on its feet.

COSTUME What the actors wear during the show.

SCENERY Everything on stage (*except props*) used to represent the setting, or the place in which the story is occurring.

PROPS All physical items on stage with the exception of the scenery. This includes lamps, chairs, pens, paper, books, and more!

LIGHTS Stage lights illuminate the actors so that they look their best. The colors used, focus of the light, and amount of lighting can really set the mood and environment of a scene.

SOUND Everything that you hear during a performance that does not come from the actors.

ACTORS The actors are the people that perform the show onstage.

AUDIENCE The lucky people that get to watch the show. New to being an audience member? Follow these rules and you will be a natural!



AUDIENCE RULES

- ◆ Unlike a movie, the actors are performing in front of you. They can see everything that you do. Talking, sleeping, poking your neighbor, or making noise during the performance distracts the actors and others around you.
- ◆ Don't bring electronics to the performance. The use of cell phones, cameras, computers, tablets, and video game devices are **not allowed**.
- ◆ Use your better judgment on when to laugh, clap, and/or cry during the performance. But don't forget to clap at the end of the show!
- ◆ Stay in your seat during the performance.
- ◆ Make sure you go to the bathroom *before* the show starts.

TRY IT YOURSELF!

DIRECTIONS

Give students a chance to act out a scene from *Charles Dickens's A Christmas Carol*. Before jumping into the performance, think about all of the elements that go into a play. Are there any props that we can use to help improve the scene? Where are the characters when this scene is taking place? What might the scenery look like?

SAMPLE SCENE

FRED: He said Christmas was a humbug, as I live! He believed it too!

FRED'S WIFE: More shame on him, Fred!

SCROOGE: Is that—?

GHOST OF CHRISTMAS PRESENT: Fred's wife... and your niece.

SCROOGE: My niece! Oh she is very pretty: exceedingly pretty...the sunniest pair of eyes I've ever seen...oh she is perfectly satisfactory.

FRED: He's a comical old fellow and I have nothing to say against him.

FRED'S WIFE: I'm sure he is very rich, Fred. At least, you always tell me so.

FRED: What of that, my dear. His wealth is of no use to him. He doesn't do any good with it. He doesn't make himself comfortable with it. He hasn't the satisfaction in thinking that he is ever going to benefit us with it.



FRED'S WIFE: I have no patience with him.

SISTER 1: Nor I.

SISTER 2: Nor I.

FRED: Oh, I have! I am sorry for him; I couldn't be angry with him if I tried. Who suffers by his ill whims? Himself, always. Here, he takes it into his head to dislike us, and he won't come and dine with us. What's the consequence? He doesn't lose much of a dinner.

FRED'S WIFE: Indeed, I think he loses a very good dinner!

SISTER 1: So do I.

SISTER 2: And I.

FRED: I mean to give him the same chance every year, whether he likes it or not, for I pity him. He may rail at Christmas till he dies, but he can't help thinking better of it — I defy him — if he finds me going there, in good temper, year after year, and saying Uncle Scrooge, how are you? If it only puts him in the vein to leave his poor clerk fifty pounds, that's something, and I think I shook him yesterday!

STUDENT WORKSHEET: LETTER TO MYSELF

DIRECTIONS

- Below, have students write brief letters to their past, present, and future selves.
- In these letters, encourage students to give advice and tips to themselves.

LIKE THE SHOW? LET US KNOW!

Send letters or drawings to:
Walnut Street Theatre
ATTN: Education Department
825 Walnut St.
Philadelphia, PA 19107



Dear past self,

Dear present self,

Dear future self,

CHARITY ACTIVITY

Encourage students to research charities in your community. As a class, or individually, students can sign up to participate in a charity of their choosing. Following participating in the charity, have students reflect on what they learned through a class discussion.

Philadelphia Charities:

- Sunday Breakfast Mission
- Silver Springs
- The Garces Foundation
- The Workshop School
- Ronald McDonald House





WALNUT STREET THEATRE

BIOGRAPHY



Walnut Street Theatre has the unique distinction of being the oldest, continuously operating theatre in the English-speaking world, having served Philadelphia audiences for over 200 years!

Today, under the direction of Producing Artistic Director Bernard Havard, Walnut Street Theatre is in its 34th season as a self-producing, non-profit theatre company. Walnut Street Theatre continues to entertain and enlighten diverse audiences with high quality theatrical programming. With more than 50,000 subscribers, the Walnut is also the most subscribed theatre company in the world!

Each season, Walnut Street Theatre holds a nation-wide search to recruit accomplished young professionals for Acting Apprenticeships. Four cast members of A Christmas Carol are this year's acting apprentices and the rest of the cast are students and faculty of our theatre school. For over 30 years the Theatre School at the Walnut Street Theatre has been providing training to kids and adults. Faculty and students are cast in our 5 Kid Series shows each year including A Christmas Carol. Last season, **172,000** children and adults were impacted by the Walnut's Education Programs: including our theatre school with classes for kids and adults, Camp Walnut, Our Touring Outreach Program to local schools and our artist in residency programs.

WALNUT STREET THEATRE EDUCATION STAFF

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION
ASSISTANT DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION
EDUCATION PROGRAMS ASSOCIATE
EDUCATION PRODUCTION ASSOCIATE
RESIDENT TEACHING ARTIST
EDUCATION APPRENTICE
ACTING APPRENTICES

Thomas Quinn
Ashley Kerns
Patrick Shane
Angie Confredo
Jasmine Hammond
Amanda Pasquini
Anne Bragg
Alexa Cepeda
Dana Orange
Austin Turner

WEB

- **Educational Drama Activities**
<http://plays.about.com/od/activities/>
- **Walnut Street Theatre Touring Outreach Company**
<https://walnutstreettheatre.org/education/outreach.php>



CHARLES DICKENS'S A CHRISTMAS CAROL CREATIVE TEAM

DIRECTOR/CHOREOGRAPHER.....Ellie Mooney
MUSIC DIRECTION.....Chris Burcheri
WRITTEN BY.....Charles Dickens
ADAPTED BY.....Bill Van Horn
MUSIC BY.....Michael Borton