

## STUDY GUIDE

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

Book by Steve Perigard  
Music and Lyrics by Paul Deiss

### TEACHER RESOURCES

*A Christmas Carol* and this study guide are produced in support of the Virginia Standards of Learning in Language Arts, History, Geography, Character Development, Music, and Theatre

### AT THE LIBRARY

***A Christmas Carol: A Young Reader's Edition of the Classic Holiday Tale***  
by Charles Dickens

***Christmas Ghost Stories***  
by Charles Dickens

***Great Expectations***  
by Charles Dickens

***Oliver Twist***  
by Charles Dickens

### ON THE WEB

***A Christmas Carol*** by Charles Dickens  
[https://web.archive.org/web/20110116051159/http://etext.lib.virginia.edu/etcbib/toccer-new2?id=DicChri\\_sgm&images=images/modeng&data=/texts/english/modeng/parsed&tag=public&part=all](https://web.archive.org/web/20110116051159/http://etext.lib.virginia.edu/etcbib/toccer-new2?id=DicChri_sgm&images=images/modeng&data=/texts/english/modeng/parsed&tag=public&part=all)

***Project Gutenberg: A Christmas Carol***  
<https://gutenberg.org/files/46/46-h/46-h.htm>

***Beyond the Story: A Dickens of a Party***  
<https://www.readwritethink.org/classroom-resources/lesson-plans/beyondstory-dickens-party-238.html>

***Charles Dickens' A Christmas Carol***  
<https://discover.hubpages.com/education/Dickens-Christmas-Carol-2>

# A Christmas Carol



### PLAY SYNOPSIS

Based upon the famous classic by Charles Dickens, *A Christmas Carol* is a heartwarming story of the transformation of Ebenezer Scrooge from a greedy, heartless miser to a generous, loving man. When the play opens, Scrooge is in his counting house in London. He is a “squeezing, wrenching, grasping, scraping, clutching, covetous old sinner!” Three ghostly visits – from the ghosts of Christmas past, present, and future – leave an indelible impression on Ebenezer.

Filled with love and the true spirit of the Christmas season, he begins to change his selfish ways and open his heart to those around him. Students will delight in this classic tale of Scrooge, the ghosts, Bob Cratchit, and Tiny Tim. Virginia Repertory Theatre brings all the characters to life on stage in this lively and heartwarming musical performance.

### DID YOU KNOW?

Even today, the word “scrooge” is used in the United States, the United Kingdom and beyond, to describe someone who is overly miserly, or always glum and complaining.

# A Change of Character

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Throughout the play, Ebenezer Scrooge's personality changes a lot.

Read the traits listed in the box. In the chart below, choose at least five traits that describe Ebenezer Scrooge at the beginning of the play, and at least five traits that describe Ebenezer Scrooge at the end of the play. Use a dictionary to help.

**Before**

**After**

### Character Traits

Arrogant	Jealous
Bold	Just
Bored	Kind
Brave	Lonely
Cautious	Merry
Civil	Modest
Confident	Mischievous
Considerate	Miserable
Cooperative	Miserly
Courteous	Negative
Disdainful	Petty
Determined	Polite
Eager	Respectful
Envious	Rude
Exhausted	Sad
Fair	Selfish
Focused	Selfless
Friendly	Shy
Frightened	Sneaky
Gentle	Spiteful
Giddy	Stingy
Giving	Sympathetic
Glum	Tolerant
Greedy	Thoughtful
Happy	Timid
Helpful	Tricky
Honest	Trustworthy
Honorable	Unhappy
Humble	Unpleasant
Inquisitive	Unwilling

**THINK ABOUT IT** What do Ebenezer Scrooge's possessions say about his personality? What types of things does he spend time with at the beginning of the play? What does he learn about his possessions from the spirits that visit him?

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### CHARACTER ACROSTIC

An acrostic is a type of poem that describes something by using each of the letters in the word as the beginning of a line of poetry.

For example, an acrostic about **America** might read:

**A**pple pie from ear to ear!  
**M**ajesty in its purple mountains  
**E**asy to love  
**R**evolutionary men set us free  
**I**ndependent from any other nation.  
**C**aring people live here  
**A**merica is a wonderful nation!



### WRITING POETRY

Write your own acrostic about your favorite character from *A Christmas Carol*.

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### PROSE FIT FOR A GHOST: EXPLORING DICKENS' WRITING

**prose:** the ordinary language people use in speaking or writing

"I wear the chains I forged in life. Do you know the weight and length of the strong coil you bear yourself? It was full as heavy and as long as this seven Christmas Eves ago. You have labored on it since. It is a ponderous chain. Oh! Captive, bound, and double-ironed. Not to know that no space of regret can make amends for one life's opportunity misused. Yet, such was I. Look, this is the fate that awaits you. I am here tonight to warn you, that you have yet a chance of escaping my fate."

1. What sort of mood does the text above evoke? Is it happy? Sad? Angry? What about the text makes you feel that way about it? Are there specific words used by Dickens to build that mood?
2. "I wear the chains forged in life." What does this mean? Are there other parts of text that give you clues?
3. Try to read the speech out loud. Does it read differently than it does silently? Why do you think that is? What do you notice about the sounds of the words? Is there rhythm and repetition? Why do you think a writer might do that?

Create your own 'prose fit for a ghost'. What would you write as a ghost character? Use the back of this page for writing.

# Vocabulary: Straight from the Play

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The following words can be found in the text of *A Christmas Carol*. How a word is used — its context — can help you figure out what the word means, even if you don't know its exact definition.

**apprentice:** a person bound by legal agreement to work for another in return for instruction in trade, art, or business

**destitute:** without the basic necessities of life

**farthing:** a former monetary unit and coin of the United Kingdom, equal to a quarter of an old penny

**gruel:** a thin, watery porridge

**half-a-crown:** the sum of two shilling and sixpence

**humbug:** nonsense, rubbish

**odious:** offensive

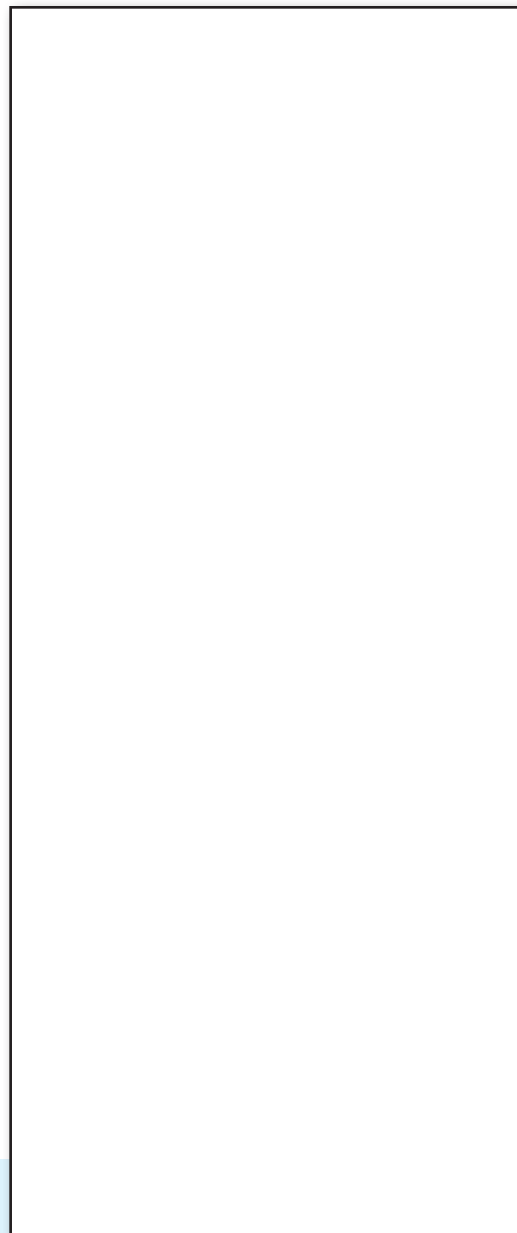
**pounds:** the basic monetary unit of the United Kingdom

**shilling:** a coin equal to 1/20 of a pound

**sixpence:** a coin worth six pennies

**specter:** a ghost, phantom, apparition

**surplus:** an excess of production or supply over demand



### Think About It: Word Imaging

Read some of the vocabulary words above out loud. Do their sounds influence what you think their definitions might be? Why?

Choose one word and draw how it sounds on a piece of paper or above on this page. What images do you think of when you hear the word? What emotions? Share your 'word imaging' with your classmates, then discuss the actual definitions of the words to see if your picture fits.



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1. *A Christmas Carol* is one of many stories that teaches values. What other stories can you think of that do this? How are they conveyed or communicated? Is there always a dramatic change in the main character?
2. Put yourself in Scrooge's shoes. Pretend you are taken away to see your past and future. What would the ghosts take you to see in your past? How would you feel about what you saw? If you could, would you want to know about your future, or would you rather wait for it to happen? Why?
3. Do you like ghost stories? Why or why not? Do you think fear is an important part of *A Christmas Carol*? Would Scrooge have gone through such a dramatic change if he hadn't been scared by the ghosts? In what other ways could he have been made to look at his life? Would they be as effective as his ghost visitors?
4. When a character does not change drastically or at all throughout the story, s/he is a static character. Can you think of any static characters in *A Christmas Carol*? Why do you think we need static characters?

## GHOST STORIES

Although *A Christmas Carol* is often thought of as a holiday story, it is also very much a ghost story. Jacob Marley and the three ghosts of Christmas are the forces behind Scrooge's transformation, and there are many scary moments in both Dickens' original novel and the production. With that in mind, consider the following questions regarding the tale of Ebenezer Scrooge, one of the most famous ghost stories written!

1. Think of some other ghost stories you've heard. List a few of them below.
2. What themes are present in most of the ghost stories you know?
3. What about costumes? How would you dress the three ghosts in *A Christmas Carol*? What would you do to make each of them unique?
4. How would you design a set for a ghost story? Draw a picture below.

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Now it's time to learn about other holidays! In groups or individually, research any holiday in another country. (Example: the Chinese New Year)

Prepare a presentation for your class about that holiday. This could include singing a traditional song or making a representative ornament to hang in the classroom. Anything goes! Fill in the form on this page as an outline for your presentation to the class, and be creative!

### BACKGROUND

Why is this holiday celebrated?



Why is the date chosen for the holiday important?



### TRADITIONS

Use this space to list or draw holiday traditions. Include other fun and interesting facts about the holiday.

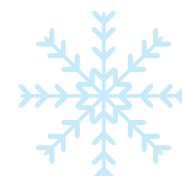


### FOOD AND DRINK

Are certain foods eaten for the holiday?



Is there a special dessert?



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Syria



Serbia



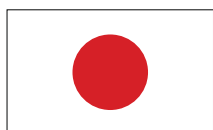
Australia



Iraq



India



Japan



Netherlands

# Christmas Around The World

In the United States, many boys and girls wake up early and run hurriedly downstairs to see what Santa Claus has left for them under the tree.

Around the world, children celebrate Christmas and the winter holidays in lots of different ways. Here are some holiday traditions from different countries. Try to match them to the correct flag. Write the letter of the tradition next to the flag.

- A** Sinterklaas, dressed in a red bishop's robe, arrives on a white horse and gives gifts to children on December 6th. Sarte Piet, a moor, accompanies him. Sarte Piet carries a birch rod to punish the naughty children.
- B** On Christmas Eve, a child in the family reads the story of the Nativity. When the story is finished, a bonfire of dried thorns is lit. When the fire is reduced to ashes, everyone jumps over the ashes three times and makes a wish.
- C** Children receive presents on New Year's Day. The gifts are brought by the youngest of the camels that carried the Three Wise Men to Bethlehem. The children leave water and hay outside the house for the camel. In the morning the water and hay are gone, replaced by presents.
- D** On New Year's Eve, the house is cleaned and decorated for New Year's Day. They dress in their finest, and the father marches through the house followed by the rest of the family. They drive out evil spirits and throw dried beans into the corners, bidding the evil spirits to leave and wishing good luck to those who enter.
- E** On Christmas Eve, thousands of people gather for "Carols by Candlelight." The evening is lit by many candles. They surround themselves with Christmas Bush, a native plant with little red flowers. At many beaches, Santa Claus arrives on a surfboard.
- F** On Christmas Eve, Christians go Christmas shopping and buy new clothes and shoes. It's a tradition to attend midnight mass in their new attire to bring Christmas spirit to families and communities. Once they reach home, they celebrate Christmas by lighting firecrackers.
- G** The second Sunday before Christmas is Mother's Day. Children creep in, tie her feet to a chair, and shout, "Mother's Day, Mother's Day, what will you pay to get away?" She then gives them presents. Children play the same trick on their fathers the week after, baking a gold or silver coin into their cake, chestnuts, and whoever gets it can expect lots of good luck.

Syria - A; Serbia - B; Australia - C; Iraq - D; Japan - E; India - F; Netherlands - G

Answer key:



# Cues at the Theatre

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