

A Christmas Carol
the Musical
Study Guide

by:

The Performance Project Theater Company

STUDY GUIDE

Welcome to The Broward Center for the Performing Arts and The Performance Project Theater Company's production of A Christmas Carol, the Musical. We know you'll enjoy the show and we hope that attendance at live theatre will become a regular part of your entertainment activities. We have prepared this Student Enrichment Guide to help in your understanding and appreciation of the show. We encourage teachers to make full use of this guide and to make as many copies for your students as you wish.

To All Audience Members

The Director has requested that you, the audience, play the following important part in show!

- 1) Respect the actors and other audience members by listening quietly during the performance.
- 2) Laugh (like crazy) when something funny happens--it's okay to respond to the show!
- 3) Show your appreciation to the actors and crew by applauding at the end of songs, scenes and especially at the end of the show, they will appreciate it.
- 4) Stay in your seat until the play is over and the actors have taken their bows. Then, wait for your teachers to tell you where to go.
- 5) Food, drinks and candy are for the intermission or for after the show. We don't allow eating or drinking in the theatre, only in the lobby.
- 6) Now that you know your part, ENJOY THE SHOW!



A CHRISTMAS CAROL, The Musical

The History, the Story and the Author

This musical adaptation is based on the novel *A Christmas Carol* by Charles Huffman Dickens. Dickens was born in 1812 in Portsmouth, England. At the age of ten he moved with his family to London, where he spent most of his life. He was best known for his tales of Victorian life including *David Copperfield*, *A Tale of Two Cities*, *Great Expectations* and *Oliver Twist*. The stage, however, may be called his avocation. Dickens gave public readings, which were actually dramatic impersonations, and he was an enthusiastic actor on the amateur stage. He died in 1870 and was buried in the Poet's Corner of West Minster Abbey.

Charles Dickens created the perfect example of an "English Christmas" in his story *A Christmas Carol*. It reflects a time of good will, good works and a time when everyone you have ever loved returns from wherever they may be to celebrate a family festival full of fun and food. At an "English Christmas" party people tired from dancing sat by the fireplace and told ghost stories that always had an ending that left everyone with a warm secure feeling about life and "the simple joys" that make it special. Since 1843, *A Christmas Carol* has been making everyone happy. Tiny Tim echoes the words, "God bless us everyone!" in this holiday gift to the entire human race.

Further Reading

Written by Charles Dickens

Bleak House
David Copperfield
Great Expectations
Hard Times
Little Dorrit
Master Humphrey's Clock and Other Stories
Nicholas Nickleby
Oliver Twist
Our Mutual Friend
The Pickwick Papers
A Tale of Two Cities

Questions for Thought and Discussion

1. Ebenezer Scrooge was a wealthy man. Bob Cratchit and his family were poor. Who do you think was happier and why?
2. Why do you think Scrooge held on to every penny?
3. Did Scrooge have many friends? Why?
4. Who was Jacob Marley? What did his "chains" represent?
5. How many spirits appeared to Scrooge? Where did each one take him and why? What was Scrooge's reaction after each visit?
6. Did Scrooge change by the end of the story? What did the actor do to communicate that to you?
7. Have you ever experienced something that made you feel different about some thing or someone?
8. Why did Tiny Tim use a crutch? Did using a crutch make him sad? Why or why not?
9. All holidays have a special meaning. What is the special holiday message in *A Christmas Carol, The Musical*?
10. This tale is set in Victorian England. Did you notice any customs that were different than ours today? Did you notice any that are the same?
11. Do you think this story had a happy ending? What do you think happened to Tiny Tim in the future?
12. How did the director use costumes, scenery and lights to help tell the story?

Theater Games

1. An exercise to celebrate diversity. Have the students bring in their favorite holiday music. Prepare by asking the students to write their name, a description of their favorite holiday and how it is celebrated in their family. If you have students from other countries encourage them to include information on holiday traditions of that country. Place 6-8 chairs in a semi-circle facing the "audience." Play their music, softly, as each student reads or ad-libs what they have written. Costumes may also be worn to enhance the experience.
2. Using the above idea have each student select another country or culture and also create a character when they read. This will encourage research and imagination. If costumes and props are not available, make them from paper or materials on hand. Repeat presentation to "audience."
3. This famous story, while about Christmas, is even more concerned with goodness; something we should celebrate every day of the year. Break the students up into small groups and have them make up a new holiday. They should make up a holiday name, why it is important, how and when it is celebrated, and what the holiday means. They can also create characters and a story about them celebrating this holiday. Then, using some of the terms in the glossary, they can PUT ON A SHOW!

Glossary of Stage Terms

AD-LIB	To extemporize stage business or dialogue. To make it up as you go along.
BLOCKING perform.	The plan for the movement and stage business the actors perform.
BUSINESS	Any action performed on stage.
CHOREOGRAPHY	The art of creating and arranging dances and the steps which make up a dance movement in the show. The dancer's "blocking."
CONFLICT	The basic struggle underlying the plot of the play.
COSTUME	The carefully selected clothing worn by the actor.
CONDUCTOR the	The person who leads the orchestra. Sometimes we refer to conductor as "Maestro."
CROSS	The actor's movement from one stage location to another. For example, the director might instruct the actor (or "block" him) to "cross down stage."
CUE	The last words or action of one actor immediately preceding the lines or business of another actor. To "cue" someone is to let him know that his line, or perhaps his entrance, is next.
DIALOGUE	The stage conversation between characters.
DICTION	The clarity with which words are pronounced.
DOWN STAGE	The part of the stage closest to the audience. At one time stages were raked, or sloping, with the lower ("down") part closest to the audience, and the higher (UPSTAGE) part away from the audience.
FLATS	Canvas or wood-covered frames that are made to look like the walls of a stage setting.
GREEN ROOM	A room near the stage where actors await entrance cues and receive guests after the performance. There has been no satisfactory explanation as to why this room was traditionally painted green, and, in fact, today's green rooms may be any color.
MONOLOGUE	A solo speech. Often, this takes the form of a SOLILOQUY, in which the character reveals his personal, innermost thoughts when alone, or unaware of the presence of other characters. Hamlet's "To be, or not to be" monologue is perhaps the most famous soliloquy in theatre.

MUGGING	A derogatory term for exaggerated, uncalled-for, facial expressions or physical gestures.
ORCHESTRA	The group of musicians who play the music. This also refers to the area of the theatre closest to the orchestra "pit" where the musicians sit.
PIT	The large, sunken area in front of the stage ("down stage") where the orchestra sits.
"PLACES"	This is called by the STAGE MANAGER when it is time for the actors to be in their proper positions for the beginning of an act.
PROJECT	To speak loudly so the entire audience can hear you.
PROPS	All the stage furnishings, including furniture, that are physically used by the actors.
SCRIPT	The text of the play. Although the script may contain all the words of a play, it is considered in many ways an outline, or a starting point, for each individual production of a given play.
SET	The scenery--the walls, platforms, doors, etc.--which make up the environment of the imaginary world of the play.
STAGE LEFT	That part of the stage to the actor's left.
STAGE MANAGER	The person who runs the show in production and calls the cues for the actors and the technicians.
STAGE RIGHT	That part of the stage to the actor's right.
STRIKE	The dismantling of the set and the putting away of costumes and props at the end of the RUN of a show.

Pre-Performance Activities

1. Have the class read *A Christmas Carol* aloud. Discuss the time period and setting in which the story takes place.
2. Discuss with your students different views on holiday traditions, including views of different religions or cultures. Encourage your students to notice the similarities and differences between their traditions and those found in the production.
3. Scrooge is visited by four spirits in *A Christmas Carol* (Marley, Past, Present, and Future). Discuss the concept of past, present, and future and have your students imagine they are able to travel to any place in any of these times. Have them draw pictures, write essays, or talk about what they think life would be like in another time.
4. Talk to your student about the differences between watching television or a movie and coming to a live theatrical performance.
5. Have your students design costumes for what they think the ghosts will look like in the production of *A Christmas Carol*.

Post-Performance Discussion

1. Discuss how the Virginia Stage Company's production of *A Christmas Carol* was different from the book. What things were similar? Does the theme of the story still show through, even though the setting is in an attic?
2. Discuss scenery, costumes, lighting, and special effects as well as the acting. How do all these elements contribute to the production?
3. Talk about the transformation of Scrooge and what the students think made him change. Discuss their ability to change things about their own personality.
4. Have your students make Christmas cards to give to a local hospital or nursing home. Talk about the "Christmas spirit" and how they can help to foster it.

Recipe

Homestyle Bread Pudding

- 2 Eggs, slightly beaten
- 2 1/4c. Milk
- 1tsp. Vanilla
- 1/2 tsp. Cinnamon
- 1/4tsp. Salt
- 1/2c. Hot Water
- 2 c. 1-inch bread cubes
- 1/2c. Brown Sugar
- 1/2c. Raisins or Chopped Dates

In medium mixing bowl, combine eggs with milk, vanilla, cinnamon, salt, bread, sugar and raisins or dates. Pour into 1 1/2qt. Baking dish. Place metal trivet or rack in the bottom of the crockpot. Add 1/2c. hot water. Set baking dish on trivet. Cover pot; cook on high for about 2 hours. Serve pudding warm or cool. Makes 4–6 servings.

Costume Design

This is an excerpt from Charles Dickens' novel A Christmas Carol

It was strange figure, like a child; yet not so like a child as like an old man, viewed through some supernatural medium, which gave him the appearance of having receded from the view, and being diminished to a child's proportions. Its hair, which hung about its neck and down its back, was white as if with age; and yet the face has not a wrinkle in it, and the tenderest bloom was on the skin. The arms were very long and muscular; the hands the same, as if its hold were of uncommon strength. Its legs and feet, most delicately formed, were, like those upper members, bare. It wore a tunic of the purest white and round its waist was bound a lustrous belt, the sheen of which was beautiful. It held a branch of fresh green holly in its hand; and, in singular contradiction of that wintry emblem, had its dress trimmed with summer flowers. But the strangest thing about it was, that from the crown of its head there sprung a bright clear jet of light, by which all this was visible; and which was doubtless the occasion of its using, in its duller moments, a great extinguisher for a cap, which it now held under its arm.

Even this, though, when Scrooge looked at it with increasing steadiness, was not its strangest quality. For as its belt sparkled and glittered now in one part and now in another, and what was light on instant, at another time was dark, so the figure itself fluctuated in its distinctness: being now a thing with one arm, now with one leg, now with twenty legs, now a pair of legs without a head, now a head without a body: of which dissolving parts, no outline would be visible in the dense gloom wherein they melted away. And in the very wonder of this, it would

Based on this description, draw your version of the spirit of Christmas Past.



