

trinity repertory company

Presents



By Charles Dickens

Adapted by Adrian Hall and Richard Cumming

Directed by Christopher Windom

PROJECT DISCOVERY STUDY GUIDE

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TRINITY REPERTORY COMPANY

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THEATER AUDIENCE ETIQUETTE AND DISCUSSION

PLEASE READ CAREFULLY AND GO OVER WITH YOUR CLASSES
BEFORE THE SHOW

TEACHERS:

Speaking to your students about theater etiquette is ESSENTIAL. Students should be aware that this is a live performance and that they should not talk during the show. **If you do nothing else to prepare your students to see the play, please take some time to talk to them about theater etiquette** in an effort to help the students better appreciate their experience. It will enhance their enjoyment of the show and allow other audience members to enjoy the experience. The questions below can help guide the discussions. Thank you for your help and enjoy the show!

ETIQUETTE:

- What is the **role of the audience in a live performance**? What is its role in a film? Why can't you chew gum or eat popcorn at a live theater performance? Why can't you talk? What can happen in live theater that cannot happen in cinema?
- **Reiterate that students may not chew gum, eat, or talk during the performance. If there is a disturbance, they will be asked to leave and the class will not be invited back to the theater. Students may not leave the building during intermission.**

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS BEFORE SEEING THE SHOW AT TRINITY REP:

- What are the **differences between live theater and cinema**? (Two dimensional vs. three dimensional; larger than life on the screen vs. life-size; recorded vs. live, etc.) Discuss the nature of film as mass-produced, versus the one-time only nature of live performances. Talk about original art works versus posters. Which do they feel is more valuable? Why?
- **Observation #1** – When you get into the theater, look around. What do you see? Observe the lighting instruments around the room and on the ceiling. Look at the set. Does it look realistic or abstract? Try to guess how the set will be used during the show.
- **Observation #2** -- Discuss the elements that go into producing a live performance: The lights, set, props, costumes, and stage direction. All the people involved in the “behind the scenes” elements of the theater are working backstage as the play unfolds before the students’ eyes. Tell them to be aware of this as they watch the show. Observe the lighting cues. How do special effects work? How do the actors change costumes so fast?
- **Actors in a live performance are very attuned to the audience and are interested in the students’ reactions to the play.** Ask the students to write letters to the actors about the characters they played and to ask questions of the actors. **Send these letters to:** Trinity Repertory Company, c/o Meredyth Pederson, 201 Washington St., Providence, RI 02903 **or email to:** education@trinityrep.com.

USING THIS STUDY GUIDE IN YOUR CLASSROOM

A Letter from Education Director Caroline Azano

Welcome to Trinity Rep and the 45th season of Project Discovery! The Education Staff at Trinity had a lot of fun preparing this study guide, and hope that the activities included will help you incorporate the play into your academic study. It is also structured to help you to introduce performance into your classroom. The elements of the process include:

- **Community Building in Your Classroom** (Applied Learning New Standards: A1; A2; A5)
- **Inspiration and Background on the Artist** (English Language Arts New Standards: E1; E2; E3; E5; E6; Applied Learning New Standards: A2; A3; A5)
- **Entering and Comprehending Text** (English Language Arts Standards: E1; E2; E3; E5)
- **Creating Text for Performance** (English Language Arts Standards: E1; E2; E3; E5)
- **Performing in Your Class** (Applied Learning Standards: A1; A2; A3; A4; A5)
- **Reflecting on Your Performance** (E2; E3; A1; A2; A5)

Further, the New England Common Assessment Program has developed GSE's (Grade Span Expectations) in content, knowledge and skills that will be used to assess all students. It should be argued that Trinity Rep's Project Discovery student matinees help students in the following GSE areas:

WRITING

- **W-2:** Writing in Response to Literary Text (showing understanding of ideas in a text). A "text" covers not only books and plays, but film and other kinds of media.
- **W-3:** Making Analytical judgments about text (how good was it? What stuck out?)
- **W-4:** Creating a Storyline
- **W-5:** Applying Narrative Strategies (how did they tell the story?)
- **W-14:** Reflective Essay

ORAL COMMUNICATION

- **OC-1:** Interactive Listening (how well students listen; how much information they pick up hearing something once – asking a student to write a comprehensive account of a play certainly works)
- **OC-2:** Making Presentations (each senior in Rhode Island will be asked to put on a senior exhibition, capstone project or portfolio that includes a public demonstration on a particular subject. Learning about public performance is an obvious tie-in).

READING

- **R-4:** Initial Understanding of Literary Texts (where is the climax in a story? How would you set this play in contemporary society?)
- **R-5:** Analysis and Interpretation of Literary Text/Citing Evidence

We hope that this guide will be a useful classroom tool for you and your students. We are extremely interested in your feedback about the plays and study guides, as well as any ideas that you may have that can help us to better serve the teachers and students who come to Trinity. Feel free to call us anytime at (401) 521-1100, ext. 230, or e-mail us at education@trinityrep.com. For further information on upcoming productions and other educational programs please visit our website at www.trinityrep.com.

Enjoy the show!

A Conversation with the Director: Christopher Windom



It's often a Trinity Rep tradition for a recent graduate of our Brown/Trinity Rep MFA program to direct A Christmas Carol. This year, it's Christopher Windom '10. He is an award-winning director and choreographer active in regional theaters all over the country, and has also performed regionally, on Broadway and in national tours. In June, he shared his big-picture plans with Emily Atkinson, Trinity Rep's Literary Manager...

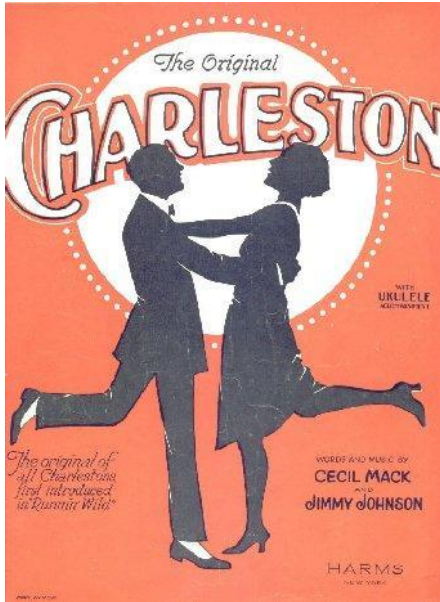
Emily Atkinson: Tell us about your impressions of *A Christmas Carol*, here at Trinity Rep.

Christopher Windom: I'm so excited to be a part of 2011's *A Christmas Carol*. Having been a part of the creative team in 2008 as assistant director and choreographer, it's thrilling to return to direct this year's production. I've had the fortune of seeing every production of *A Christmas Carol* since 2007. It's become an annual favorite for me.

EA: Are you planning a Dickens'-London setting, or will you take us somewhere new?

CW: Although the basic story will be unaltered, the setting will be a departure from the traditional Dickensian setting. At its core, this is the story of Ebenezer Scrooge, an alienated man who in the end chooses to honor the spirit of Christmas and discovers his happiness. When Dickens wrote *A Christmas Carol* in the Victorian Age, he was writing in hopes to inspire a similar call-to-arms against the high-brow mentality of the upper-class elite. He depicted Scrooge as an example of the failings of the privileged and their treatment of the underprivileged. Our production will be set in 1959, and Scrooge's past includes some iconic events in the first half of the 20th century. We'll see Scrooge revisit the freshness and optimism of his youth at the turn of the new century, the buoyancy of the roaring twenties, the sobriety of the great depression, and the booming hope at the end of World War II when he was an adult. These specific eras will illuminate Scrooge's choices in a fresh way. We'll see the points of departure between Scrooge and his community; the community chooses a life of generosity while Scrooge chooses to live in isolation.

EA: Does this mean a new adaptation of the text?



The Charleston is a dance that became popular in the 1920s, during the era of jazz music, speakeasies and Flappers.

CW: By setting the play in mid-century, we can keep a sense of the once-upon-a-time feeling that the traditional Dickensian story offers. To most of our audience, especially our young audiences, the 1950s has a unique quality of feeling historical yet contemporary. The text will be adapted only to make it resonate with 1950s culture and phraseology. A few changes to the vernacular will enhance the storytelling, and make the text feel as immediate as possible.

EA: Sounds like a lot of opportunities for the music, and choreography.

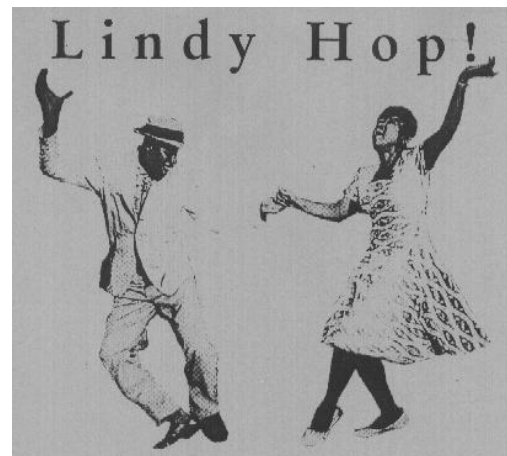
CW: I'm very excited about the music! I come from a musical theater background so I'm very picky about how music can be incorporated into a story. Setting *A Christmas*

Carol in this time period will require a specific soundscape, so the audience can expect to hear different instrumentation. Without giving too much away, you can

expect a midcentury rock 'n roll sound for some of the "present" scenarios. But we also have to cover the first five decades of the 20th century, so the music will create 19th-century parlor music, a razz-a-ma-tazz Charleston, a bleak depression-era folk sound, as well as the big band music of the 1940s.... all of this while interpreting some of our most beloved holiday songs. It's a tall order for the music and sound design, but I think it's one of the exciting parts of the production and essential to the storytelling.

Another element of the process will be creating a physical vocabulary that lets us understand life in the mid-century. Social dances throughout the first half of the century were indicative of class and moral standing. As a company our goal will be to mine the storytelling qualities of dances like the Charleston, lindy-hop or rock n' roll bop. As a director-slash-choreographer, it's a thrill for me to find danceable moments in a story. It's about observing what the actors naturally bring to the table, then shaping it in a physical sense. But movement and dance has to serve the story or it will feel extraneous and distracting.

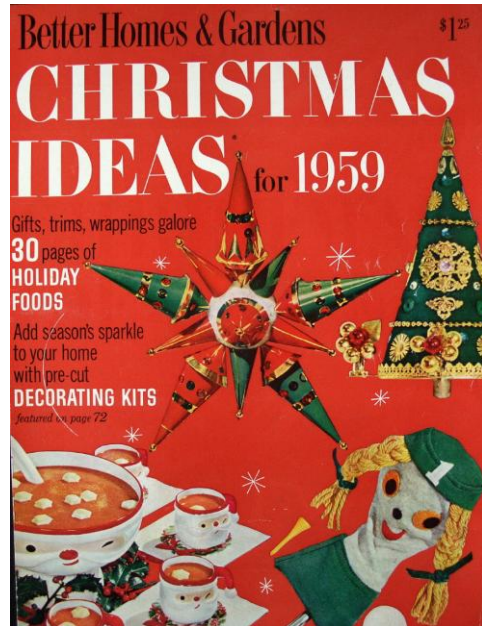
Set design, lighting design and costume design will play an essential role in crafting this story. The right look and feel for the environment will help enliven our imagination and stay riveted to the story.



The Lindy Hop is an American social dance, from the swing dance family, that evolved in Harlem, New York City in the 1920s and '30s with the jazz music of that time.

EA: This is so exciting, Christopher! The pleasure of *A Christmas Carol* is reinventing it every year, from top to bottom. Over the years we've enjoyed wonderful versions set beyond London, 1843. It's re-invigorating for the audience, the company and the staff.

CW: Now's a great time to investigate *A Christmas Carol* through the lens of the first half of the 20th century. One reason to explore Christmas 1959 is that 1960 is one week away: a new year and a new decade. Today we know the 1960s as a vibrant and expressive time full of social and political changes. In 1959, especially in America, people were on the precipice of taking chances in a profound way. It's a time when you see people beginning to leave the conservative 1950s behind and wake up to their life's potential. Young people led a movement to become more globally aware and locally active towards positive change. I see that change in Scrooge. We won't get to explore the 1960s fully in this production, but I'm a big fan of theatrical productions having a sense of "the monster waiting in the wings" -- who wants to enter and wreak havoc on the world of the play. To Scrooge, that monster could be his future, and his fear of leaving behind a selfish legacy. With this as the backdrop, I hope to present *A Christmas Carol* in a way that's relevant and exciting to see but true to the original story. These kinds of productions speak to me.



A 1959 special Christmas edition of Better Homes and Gardens magazine.

EA: How about the children in the show?

CW: Their presence is essential in order to present our 1950s community. An important discovery Scrooge realizes is children are our future, so to incorporate them fully into this holiday event is in essence the manifestation of Charles Dickens' wish. I hope our audience will see a bit of their youthful selves in the personas created by the youngest actors.

Trinity Rep is special because many audience members see *A Christmas Carol* year after year. It's been an exciting year for me since graduating; I've had the chance to work on some rich theater projects across the country. It's such a gift to return to help tell this story. As I imagine this production, I reflect on a story my friend Billie told me. Billie was a teenage girl in the 1950s when Elvis Presley was gaining popularity. Her mother, of course, was enraged at her daughter listening to those "obscene" sounds, so Billie resorted to listening to Elvis on her transistor radio, in her bedroom, under her sheets. That opposition between my friend and her mother is the kind of tension that exists between Scrooge and the community in 1959...the battle between expression and restraint: between guarding your feelings versus expressing your passions to the fullest. This is why our production will have to be very specific in order to depict life in the 1950s while creating an impressionistic collage of a world at a time of celebration. We'll add a twist to the classic Christmastime story while maintaining the essence that Charles Dickens intended – compassionate reform and human growth.

UNIT 1: RESOURCE PAGES

Biography of Charles Dickens (1812-1870):

The following is an excerpt from *A Little Book about A Christmas Carol*, by Linda Rosewood Hooper



Money had always been a worry for Dickens. He was born into a struggling lower-middle class family. When he was ten, Dickens's father moved the family from Chatham to a smaller house in Camden Town, London which is thought to be the model for the Cratchits' house.

Even with the move to London, his family could not afford to send Dickens to school. When he was twelve, his father found work for him in a factory. Soon afterward, his father was imprisoned for debt, and the family moved to a debtors' prison except for Charles, who kept working.

As an adult, Dickens found work in a law office, and then as a newspaper reporter, covering the proceedings of Parliament. While working as a reporter, Dickens began writing semi-fictional sketches for magazines, eventually publishing them as *Sketches by Boz*. His next work was *The Pickwick Papers*, which was published in a relatively new serial format. Each month, a twelve thousand-word section of the book was sold for a shilling each. This made a long book affordable to many more people. After *Pickwick*, all of his subsequent books, until *A Christmas Carol*, were first sold in serial form.

Despite Dickens's frequent criticism of organized religion and religious dogma, he loved celebrating Christmas. Of the Christmas following the publication of *A Christmas Carol*, Dickens wrote in a letter, "Such dinings, such dancings, such conjurings, such blind-man's bluffings, such theater-goings, such kissings-out of old years and kissings-in of new ones never took place in these parts before."

After *A Christmas Carol*, Dickens wrote another "Christmas book," *The Chimes*, for Christmas 1844. Dickens wrote three more Christmas books and many Christmas stories. He edited two magazines, *Household Words*, and *All the Year Round*, which published annual "Christmas numbers" for which he wrote and edited stories. Writing about Christmas and, later, giving readings from the *Carol* were important sources of income for Dickens for the rest of his life. It is possible that Dickens sometimes regretted this relentless association with the holiday. In a letter to his daughter Mamie he wrote that he felt as if he "had murdered a Christmas a number of years ago, and its ghost perpetually haunted me."



The Plot Synopsis:

The story opens with Ebenezer Scrooge, working at his office on a cold, snowy Christmas Eve, along with his clerk, Bob Cratchit. Two men come into the office and ask Scrooge to make a donation for people in need. Scrooge points out that he already supports prisons and workhouses through his taxes and refuses to contribute any more. Scrooge's nephew, Fred, comes into the office and invites Scrooge to have Christmas dinner with his family. Scrooge tells him to go away and take his Christmas spirit with him. After resentfully granting Cratchit Christmas day off, Scrooge goes out, but not before a group of children comes in singing Christmas carols. Scrooge angrily chases them out the door as well.

When Scrooge gets to his front door, he is shocked and terrified to see not the knocker on the door, but the face of Jacob Marley. He jumps back but then shakes it off, thinking it was just his imagination. Once in his home, Mrs. Partlet, his maid, brings Scrooge his gruel (oatmeal). Once she leaves, suddenly the bells in the house begin to chime in unison and Scrooge hears the sound of dragging chains in the cellar. The ghost of Jacob Marley appears, heavy with chains. Marley warns Scrooge that three more spirits will visit him before the night is over, and Scrooge must listen to them if he wants to change his fate.

When the clock chimes one, the Ghost of Christmas Past appears. The spirit shows Scrooge his own lonely childhood and his sister Fan, who was his only friend. Then Scrooge watches himself as a happy young man at a Christmas Party with Mr. Fezziwig, his first employer. Finally, the spirit shows him the moment when Scrooge's fiancée, Belle, left him because he cared more about money than about her.

As the clock strikes four a.m., the second spirit, The Ghost of Christmas Present, arrives and whisks Scrooge off to his nephew's house where everyone is playing games and making fun of Scrooge. Then, the ghost shows him Bob Cratchit's tiny home on Christmas Day. Cratchit proposes a toast to Scrooge's health, but the rest of the family makes several remarks about how stingy and mean Scrooge is. The ghost tells Scrooge that unless the future changes, Tiny Tim will die.

The third spirit does not speak but Scrooge guesses correctly that he is the Ghost of Christmas Yet to Come. The spirit shows him several conversations in which people are discussing the death of a lonely old miser. The spirit brings Scrooge to a pawnshop where the dead man's clothes and household items are being sold while he lies dead and alone. Scrooge and the ghost go to Bob Cratchit's house, where Scrooge sees how deeply saddened the family is by Tiny Tim's death. Finally, the ghost brings Scrooge to his own tombstone, and he realizes that the lonely miser whose death is being celebrated rather than mourned is himself.

Scrooge awakens on Christmas Day and vows to turn over a new leaf. He sends a boy to buy the huge prize turkey in the window of the poultry shop and to bring it to the Cratchits' house as a surprise. He startles Mrs. Partlet by hugging her and giving her a Christmas bonus. Then he goes to his nephew's house and sings and dances with them. The next day when Cratchit comes in to work, Scrooge gives Cratchit a raise, and offers to be a second father to Tiny Tim and pay for his medical care. Scrooge vows to keep the spirit of Christmas alive and well for the rest of his life.

The Characters:



EBENEZER SCROOGE: A wealthy moneylender who is known by all as selfish and greedy

JACOB MARLEY: Scrooge's best friend and fellow moneylender, he died seven years before and is now a ghost filled with guilt and remorse

BOB CRATCHIT: Scrooge's clerk, a devoted and hardworking family man with little money

MRS. CRATCHIT: Bob Cratchit's wife, she dislikes Scrooge and struggles to make ends meet

MARTHA, PETER, BELINDA AND TINY TIM: The Cratchit children. The oldest work to support the family while Tiny Tim is ill.

FRED: Scrooge's cheerful nephew, who believes in celebrating the holiday season and the goodness of others

LUCY: Fred's wife

SISTER-IN-LAW: Lucy's sister

TOPPER: A guest at Fred and Lucy's Christmas party

FAN: Scrooge's beloved sister who died giving birth to Fred

MR. FEZZIWIG: Scrooge's first employer, a kind and generous man

BELLE: The former fiancée of Scrooge

THE GHOST OF CHRISTMAS PAST: A spirit who represents the past years of Scrooge's life, and shows him images of events that have occurred in the past

THE GHOST OF CHRISTMAS PRESENT: A jolly spirit of the present day, showing Scrooge what's happening around him right now

THE GHOST OF CHRISTMAS YET TO COME: A darker spirit who shows Scrooge what will happen in coming years

MRS. PARTLET: Scrooge's housekeeper

MRS. DILBER AND OLD JOE: The people Scrooge sees in the future, robbing his home and benefiting from his death along with his own housekeeper



A History of the English Christmas:

When Charles Dickens wrote *A Christmas Carol* in 1843, English Christmas traditions had been in decline for centuries. Stores and factories remained open on December 25th, and many people were forced to work on Christmas Day.

Christmas was first promoted as a major holiday in England by Pope Gregory in 601 C.E. In his effort to convert the Anglo-Saxons to Christianity, he urged Christian missionaries to adapt the local traditions of pagan winter festivals into a celebration of Christ's birth, which was traditionally placed around December 25th. The traditional Christmas celebration that we are familiar with is primarily a mixture of pre-Christian elements: Druid Festivals, the Saxon feast called Yule, and the Roman Saturnalia, all of which celebrated the winter solstice and the return of lengthening days.

Pope Gregory and his successors did not see a conflict between pagan roots and Christian applications of the hybrid holiday. On the contrary, they hoped that by adapting the Anglo-Saxons' own traditions into the Catholic Church, they would be more likely to accept the religion. At this time, and for the next several centuries, the English lived in rural areas and rarely left the place where they grew up, which made it easier for traditions to be preserved and passed on. "Christmas" was a 12-day festival taking place in the manor of the local lord, and included burning the Yule log, playing traditional games and telling folktales, and feasting on traditional foods. By Shakespeare's time, these Anglo-Saxon traditions had grown into elaborate Christmas revels with evenings of elaborate feasting and theatricals among the wealthy.



All of this came to a halt when the Puritans took control of the English government in 1642. The Puritans felt that Christianity should be purged of pagan elements and restored as closely as possible to the form of worship used by Jesus and the apostles. Not only did Puritan leader Oliver Cromwell close England's theaters, but, distressed by its pagan roots, his Parliament also outlawed the holiday of Christmas.

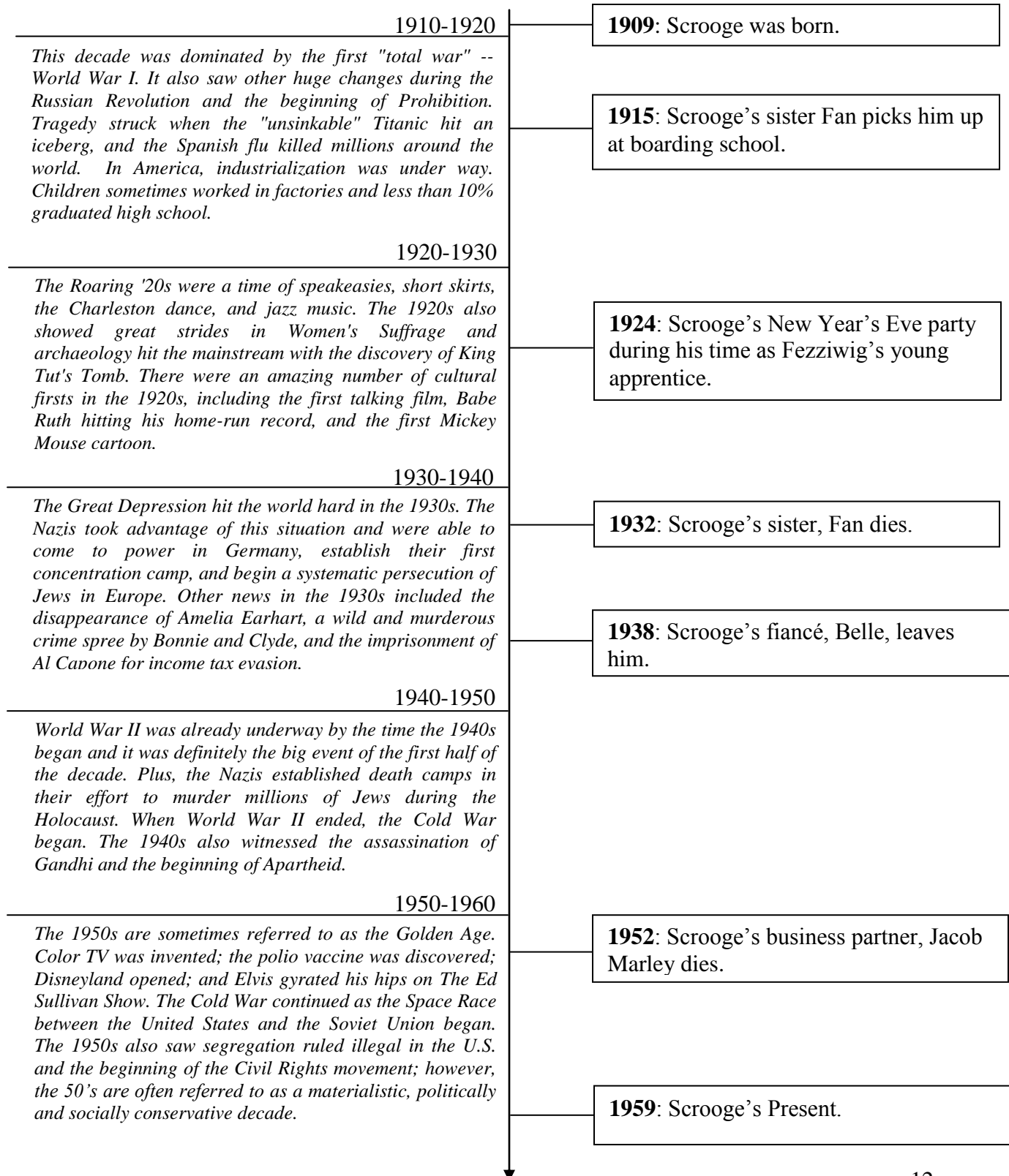
When the Puritans were finally overthrown at the end of the 17th century, and the English monarchy reestablished, the Christmas traditions were slow to reappear. Many Christmas traditions had been forgotten or survived only in rural areas and among the elderly.

Dickens was one of the first of these writers to not only record the old holiday traditions in his story, but also to show his readers a way to adapt them to their modern lives. Instead of gathering together an entire village, Dickens showed his readers Christmas celebrations that brought together the "nuclear family" and close friends. *A Christmas Carol* made the Christmas traditions accessible to an urban, industrial society, and evoked the childhood memories of people who had moved to the cities as adults.

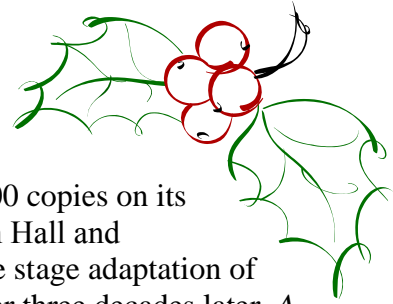


Timeline: A 20th-century Christmas Carol

This year, director Christopher Windom decided to set *A Christmas Carol* in 1959, just a few weeks away from the turn of the decade. The 60's, with all their promise of revolution and change, are on the horizon. How does this new setting affect the story of Scrooge's life?



35 Years of Holly and Ivy, Spirits and Smiles:



Just as Charles Dickens had no idea that his little book would sell 6,000 copies on its first day of publication, Trinity Rep's founding artistic director Adrian Hall and composer Richard Cumming had no idea that tickets for their premiere stage adaptation of Dickens' classic would nearly sell out before it was even written. Over three decades later, *A Christmas Carol* is New England's favorite holiday tradition.

In 1977, Hall and Cumming wrote an adaptation with music of the Dickens novel for the stage. It was such a great success that audience demand warranted another production the following year. This challenged the company of directors, designers and actors to re-invent the story of *A Christmas Carol* each season. It remains the most anticipated and highly attended production in Trinity's season, a family tradition for thirty-five years ... and counting!

If you were directing A Christmas Carol- how would YOU do it...?

A Christmas Carol has been directed in many different ways throughout its run at Trinity Rep, everything from traditional Dickensian interpretations to setting it in RI, or even making it reminiscent of a Japanese horror film or a page from a story book...

Create a mood board for your own concept for the show! You can include drawings of the set or costumes, pictures of props, taglines, music, etc. Get creative! Include a description of why you chose your interpretation and how your original concept will best serve to tell the story.



UNIT 2: ENTERING THE TEXT

Scrooge's Journey : An Activity

This exercise serves to introduce the students to the dramatic changes experienced by the character of Ebenezer Scrooge in *A Christmas Carol*. Depending on the number of students in your class, assign each person one of the following lines:



1. Bah! Humbug!
2. What reason do you have to be merry? You're poor enough.
3. Out upon Merry Christmas!
4. What's Christmastime to you but a time for paying bills with no money?
5. Every idiot who goes about with "Merry Christmas" on his lips should be boiled in his own pudding.
6. Let me hear another sound from you and you'll keep your Christmas by losing your position.
7. Are there no prisons?
8. I don't make merry myself at Christmas, and I can't afford to make idle people merry.
9. If they would rather die, they had better do it and decrease the surplus population.
10. Pooh! Pooh!
11. Dreadful apparition, why do you trouble me?
12. I am a mortal and liable to fall.
13. I wish...but it's too late now.
14. The happiness he gives is quite as great as if it cost a fortune.
15. I should like to be able to say a word or two to my clerk just now.
16. Spirit, show me no more! Conduct me home. Why do you delight to torture me?
17. I cannot bear it!
18. Spirit, conduct me where you will. I went forth last night on compulsion, and I learnt a lesson, which is working now.
19. Tonight, if you have aught to teach me, let me profit by it.
20. Spirit, tell me if Tiny Tim will live?
21. Oh no, Kind Spirit! Say he will be spared!
22. Have they no refuge or resource?
23. Ghost of the Future, I fear you more than any Spectre I have seen.
24. I know your purpose is to do me good, and as I hope to live to be another man from what I was, I am prepared to bear your company, and do it with a thankful heart.
25. I see! I see! The life of this unhappy man might be my own.
26. Spirit, this is a fearful place. In leaving it, I shall not leave its lesson, trust me.
27. Are these the shadows of the things that will be, or are they shadows that may be, only?
28. I am not the man I was!
29. Why show me this if I am past all hope?
30. I will honor Christmas in my heart and try to keep it all the year.

31. I will live in the past, the present and the future. The Spirits of all three shall strive within me. I will not shut out the lessons that they teach.
32. I am as light as a feather. I am as happy as an angel. I am as merry as a schoolboy.
33. I thank you fifty times! Bless you!
34. A Merry Christmas to everybody!
35. I'll raise your salary and endeavor to assist your struggling family.

Even though each of the lines is taken out of context, the tone and the meaning of each line is very clear. Ask each reader to make a clear vocal and physical choice for each line. What might Scrooge be doing while saying the line? What might he be feeling? Give the students a minute to rehearse their line and their action or physicalization of the line. Have the students stand in numbered order and speak their lines one after the other.

Post-activity reflection: Even though this exercise only involved one line of dialogue for each student, did it help to show the complete arc of Scrooge's character? What information about the characters were students able to discern from just a single line of dialogue? What causes the changes in Scrooge? What caused him to be so unpleasant in the first place?



A Christmas Carol, 2002

Embodying the Text: An Activity



Hand out the following lines of each character to each group. One student in the group will be the reader, and the others will each create a full-body pose that physicalizes their line (a frozen sculpture). Encourage them to improvise on the spot – they can use the whole line, or merely a phrase or word that inspires them to create a physical picture of their line. Give them thirty seconds to decide their pose, and then hand their lines to the designated reader. Have one group line up in numerical order (the other three groups will be the audience). One by one, each student should strike their pose, as the reader reads the line that corresponds. Each should stay frozen while the others pose, forming a character arc and sculpture garden. After the last pose, the reader announces the name of the character. Repeat for the other three characters.

EBENEZER SCROOGE:

- What is fun but is not funny? Can't you guess? It's counting money.
- Bah. Humbug.
- If they would rather die, they had better do it and decrease the surplus population.
- I will honor Christmas in my heart and try to keep it all the year.

JACOB MARLEY:

- Ebenezer! I'm your only friend. I am near the end.
- My spirit never walked beyond our counting house.
- Why did I walk through crowds of fellow beings with my eyes turned down?
- Remember what has passed between us.

BOB CRATCHIT:

- A Merry Christmas to us all, my dears...
- Oh... my little, little child. My little child...
- I am sure we shall none of us forget poor Tiny Tim – shall we?

MRS. CRATCHIT:

- I'd give him a piece of my mind to feast upon and I hope he'd have a good appetite for it.
- Such an odious, stingy, hard, unfeeling man as Mr. Scrooge.
- Ah, the poor dear, little lad.
- I wouldn't show weak eyes to your father when he came home for the world.

FRED:

- I have always thought Christmas time as a good time – a kind, forgiving, charitable, pleasant time.
- I'll keep my Christmas humor to the last.
- I pity him.

101 Ways to Read a Monologue – An Activity

A monologue, or soliloquy, is a long speech made by one person. Sometimes it can be a challenge for a young actor to take on a piece of text and perform it on his or her own, so this activity is a way to get your students to forget their inhibitions and have fun with it.



A Christmas Carol, 2005

1. Pick one or more of the monologues below, and hand them out to your students. You can assign or let them choose which monologue they want to do, and give them a few minutes to read it over a few times and familiarize themselves with it.
2. In partners, let them read it out loud to one another a few times in whichever way they want to.
3. Pick a few brave souls to come up and read/perform their own interpretation of the monologue for the rest of the group.
4. After this, using your own suggestions and those of your students, throw out different ways to read the monologue. Feel free to be as wacky as you want -- this is supposed to be fun. You can filter the suggestions, and pick one that you think would work and let them do it that way. Let each volunteer perform the monologue, or part of the monologue, three different ways before moving on. Some examples of different ways to read it include (but are *definitely* not limited to): an aerobics instructor, an army general, a drunk, someone who desperately has to go to the bathroom, a squirrel, the laziest person in the world, singing it, whispering it, telling it like it's a scary story, like an interpretive dancer, like they are in a musical, like a President, or a King...you can even use celebrity names and have them imitate them using the monologue.
5. After every willing student has performed, take some time to talk about what they got from it. Did it help them understand the monologue better? If so, how? Did they find that any of the interpretations, as silly as they may have been, actually worked and made some sense? Which ones, and why? How does this help them as actors?

FEMALE MONOLOGUES:

FAN: I have come to bring you home, dear brother. Home! Home! Home, for good and all. Home, for ever and ever. Father is ever so much kinder than he used to be. He sent me in a cab to bring you. You're to be apprenticed to Mr. Fezziwig and never come back to school. But first we're to be together all Christmas long and have the happiest time in all the world.

BELLE: You and Jacob Marley drove poor Fezziwig to bankruptcy and ruin – only so you could take over his business. Is that what you call getting on? Ebenezer! Mr. Fezziwig was your employer! He trusted you! Money is all you care for. Our engagement is an old one. It was made when we were both poor and content-to-be. When it was made, you were another man. I have often thought of this and so – I release you from your promise to marry me.

MRS. PARTLET: Well he isn't likely to catch a cold without them! Now wait, wait until you see. You may look through this shirt til your eyes ache but you won't find a hole in it, nor a threadbare place! It's the best he had – a fine one too! They'd have wasted it, if it hadn't been for me! Somebody was fool enough to put it on him for him to be buried in! But I corrected that mistake!

MRS. CRATCHIT: The sewing hurts my eyes. This dim light makes them weak. It's all right. They're better now. I wouldn't show weak eyes to your father when he comes home for the world. It must be near his time. I have known him to walk with... I have known him to walk with Tiny Tim on his shoulder very fast indeed. But he was very light to carry and his father loved him so that it was no trouble. No trouble. This sewing! Hurts my eyes so much.

MALE MONOLOGUES:

SCROOGE: What else can I be when I live in such a world of fools as this? Merry Christmas? Out upon Merry Christmas! What's Christmastime to you but a time for paying bills without money? A time for finding yourself a year older but not an hour richer? If I could work my will, every idiot who goes about with "Merry Christmas" on his lips should be buried with a stake of holly through his heart. He should!

FRED: I am sure I've always thought of Christmas time as a time for good, and not a time for profit; a kind, forgiving, charitable, pleasant time; the only time I know of, in the long calendar of the year, when men and women seem to open their shut-up hearts freely, and to think of other people as if they really were fellow-passengers to the grave. And therefore, uncle, though it has never put cash or coins in my pocket, I believe that it has done me good, and will do me good; and I say, God bless it!

MARLEY: In our lifetime, it is required of every mortal that we walk abroad and help our fellow men. And if we go not forth in life, our spirit is condemned to do so after death. We are doomed to wander through this world—oh woe is me! And witness what we might have shared on earth and turned to happiness. I wear the chain I forged in life. I made it link by link and yard by yard, and of my own free will I wore it. Yours is a ponderous chain, Ebenezer. It was as heavy and as long as this seven Christmases ago. You have labored on it since.

SCROOGE: I will not shut out the lessons the spirits have taught me. I will live in the Past, the Present and the Future. I will honor Christmas in my heart and try to keep it all the year! My bed curtains, they're still here. I am here. There's my T.V. dinner. I don't know what to do. I'm as light as a feather. I'm as happy as a drunken man. I don't know what day of the month it is. I don't know how long I've been among the Spirits. I don't know anything. I'm quite a baby. Never mind. I don't care. I'd rather be a baby.

Character Descriptions: A Writing Activity

Based on the monologue they have chosen in the previous activity, ask the students to write a description of their *Christmas Carol* characters. Use the following questions to prompt writing:

- *What seems to be at stake? Is there a conflict?*
- *Where does this person live?*
- *Does the character have certain morals and values?*
- *What is his/her everyday behavior and mood?*
- *What is something he/she would never tell anyone about himself/herself?*
- *Does the character work for a living? What is his/her economic situation?*
- *Who takes care of him/her, and whom does he/she take care of?*
- *Who does he/she love? Hate?*
- *How does he/she feel about himself?*
- *Does the character value friendship?*
- *How old is the character?*
- *Personal habits: nail biter? Nose picker?*
- *Character-mood-intensity (vital statistics on the character):*
 - *Heartbeat: rate*
 - *Perspiration: heavy, light, etc.*
 - *Stomach condition: ulcers, light or heavy eater*
 - *Speech patterns: slow, medium or fast speaker*
 - *Posture*

An example of a character description:

Elvin Crumbs is a 68-year old garbage collector. He and his wife have six children and he figured that he would never get to retire. He is a small, wiry man, with large, scarred hands. His hair is fine and very white and he keeps it cut in a military crew cut. All of his children went to the best colleges, but only their third child, Charlie, stays in touch with them. Even though he complains about it, Elvin secretly loves trash collecting. He loves getting out of bed at 3:00 a.m. and especially enjoys driving the truck. He and his wife have played the same Powerball numbers every week for 11 years. Last Saturday, their numbers came up and they won 31 million dollars, but he hasn't told anyone yet.



Stephen Berenson and Annie Scurria in *A Christmas Carol*

Scene Studies, Characters, and Conflict:

Divide the class into groups, and hand out the following scenes. Let the students read through the scene once amongst each other, and ask them to guess what sort of character they have from their speech patterns and responses. Encourage them to make clear, bold choices to best show their character.

SCENE ONE –3 CHARACTERS

Two gentlemen enter the office of Ebenezer Scrooge, seeking donations to their cause.

GENTLEMAN #1: Scrooge and Marley's, I believe? Have I the pleasure of addressing Mr. Scrooge or Mr. Marley?

SCROOGE: Mr. Marley is dead. He died seven years ago, this very night.

GENTLEMAN #2: We have no doubt his liberality is well represented by his surviving partner.

GENTLEMAN #1: At this festive season of the year, Mr. Scrooge, it is desirable that we should make some slight provision for the poor and destitute who suffer greatly at the present time. Many thousands are in want of common necessities. Hundreds of thousands are in want of common comforts, sir.

SCROOGE: Are there no prisons?

GENTLEMAN #2: Plenty of prisons.

SCROOGE: And what about the poorhouses? Are they still in operation?

GENTLEMAN #1: They are. Still we wish we could say that they were not, but... both very busy, sir.

SCROOGE: Oh... I am very glad to hear of it. I was afraid, from what you said at first, that something had occurred to stop them in their useful course.

GENTLEMAN #2: A few of us are endeavoring to raise a fund to buy the poor some meat and drink and means of warmth. We choose this time because it is a time when want is keenly felt. What shall we put you down for?

SCROOGE: Nothing.

GENTLEMAN #1: You wish to be anonymous?

SCROOGE: I wish to be left alone. Since you ask me what I wish, gentlemen, that is my answer. I don't make merry myself at Christmas and I can't afford to make idle people merry. I help to support the establishments I have mentioned- through taxation, they cost enough.

SCENE TWO – 2 CHARACTERS

Staging Idea: Cast each half of the class as Fred and Scrooge. Read the scene in a choral format, one group character on each side of the room.

FRED: A Merry Christmas, Uncle!

SCROOGE: Bah. Humbug.

FRED: Christmas a humbug, uncle! You don't mean that, I am sure?

SCROOGE: I do. Merry Christmas! What right have you to be merry? You're poor enough.

FRED: Come, then. What right have you to be dismal? You're rich enough.

SCROOGE: Bah. Humbug.

FRED: Don't be upset, Uncle.

SCROOGE: What else can I be when I live in such a world of fools as this? Merry Christmas! Out upon Merry Christmas!

FRED: Uncle!

SCROOGE: Nephew! Keep Christmas in your own way and let me keep it in mine.

FRED: Keep it? But you don't keep it.

SCROOGE: Let me leave it alone, then. Much good may it do you. Much good it has ever done you.

FRED: I have always thought of Christmas time as a good time – a kind, forgiving, charitable, pleasant time. The only time I know of when men and women seem to open their shut-up hearts freely. And, therefore, Uncle, though it has never put a scrap of gold or silver in my pocket, I believe that it has done me good and will do me good. And I say, God bless it! Don't be angry, Uncle. Come... dine with us tomorrow. You have not met Lucy.

SCROOGE: I'll see you in hell first.

SCENE THREE –2 CHARACTERS

The ghost of his dead business partner, Jacob Marley, has just visited Scrooge. Marley lets out a frightful cry, shaking his chains. Scrooge falls to his knees, clasping his hands.

SCROOGE: Mercy! Dreadful apparition, why do you trouble me?

MARLEY: Do you believe in me or not?

SCROOGE: I do—I do. I must. But why do spirits walk the earth and why do they come to me?

MARLEY: In our lifetime, it is required of each of us that we walk abroad and help our fellow men. And if we go not forth in life, our spirit is condemned to do so after death. It is doomed to wander through the world—oh, woe is me—and witness what it might have shared on earth and turned to happiness.

(Again, Marley emits a frightful cry and shakes his chain. Thunder and lightning. Scrooge reacts in horror.)

SCROOGE: You are fettered. Tell me why.

MARLEY: I wear the chain I forged in life. I made it link by link and yard by yard, and of my own free will I wore it. Yours is a ponderous chain, Ebenezer. It was as heavy and as long as these seven Christmas Eves ago. You have labored on it since.

SCROOGE: Speak comfort to me Jacob...

MARLEY: I have none to give.

SCROOGE: But you were always a good man of business, Jacob.

MARLEY: Business? Mankind was my business. The common welfare was my business. Charity, mercy, forbearance and benevolence were all my business. Hear me! My time is nearly gone.

SCROOGE: I will. I will. But don't be flowery, Jacob, pray

MARLEY: You will be visited by three spirits. Expect the first when the bell tolls one.

SCENE FOUR-2 CHARACTERS

SCROOGE AS A YOUNG MAN: Now Belle, you're being ridiculous!

BELLE: It matters little. To you, very little. Another idol has displaced me.

SCROOGE AS A YOUNG MAN: What idol has displaced you?

BELLE: A golden one.

SCROOGE AS A YOUNG MAN: Belle, I try to get on in the world. That is all.

BELLE: You and Jacob Marley drove poor Fezziwig to bankruptcy and ruin—only so you could take over his business. Is that what you call getting on? Ebenezer! Mr. Fezziwig was your employer! He trusted you!

SCROOGE AS A YOUNG MAN: Humbug, Belle! That's not the way it was at all! Old Fezziwig had no idea what business...

BELLE: Money is all you care for! Isn't it?

SCROOGE AS A YOUNG MAN: I am not changed towards you, am I?

BELLE: Our engagement is an old one. It was made when we were both poor and content-to-be. When it was made, you were another man. And so—I release you from your promise to marry me.

SCROOGE: Have I ever sought release?

BELLE: In words? No. Never.

SCROOGE: In what, then?

BELLE: In altered spirit. In everything that made my love of any value to you.

SCROOGE: That's not true.

BELLE: Tell me, if you were free today, can I believe that you would choose me—a penniless woman with no money of her own? Of course not. So, I release you. *(She hands back her ring.)* With a full heart for the love of him you once were.

SCROOGE: Belle!

BELLE: May you be happy in the life you have chosen.

SCENE FIVE- 8 CHARACTERS

Bob, Mrs. Cratchit, Martin, Peter, Belinda, and Tiny Tim celebrate Christmas while Scrooge and the Ghost of Christmas Present look on.

BOB: Mr. Scrooge. I give you Mr. Scrooge, the founder of the feast.

MRS. C: The founder of the feast indeed. I wish I had him here. I'd give him a piece of my mind to feast on and I hope he'd have a good appetite for it.

BOB: My dear! The children...Christmas Day.

MRS. C: It should be Christmas Day, I am sure, on which one drinks the health of such an odious, stingy, hard, unfeeling man as Mr. Scrooge.

Martin: Mr. Scrooge.

PETER: Scrooge the Baleful!

BELINDA: Scrooge the Ogre!

MRS. C: You know he is, Robert. Nobody knows better than you poor fellow.

BOB: Sweet heart...Christmas Day...

MRS. C: I'll drink his health for your sake and the day's...not for his. Long life to him. A Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year. He'll be very merry and very happy, I have no doubt.

BOB: Merry Christmas to us all. God bless us.

PETER, MARTIN, BELINDA: God bless us.

TINY TIM: God Bless Us, every one.

SCROOGE: Tell me Spirit...will Tiny Tim live?

GHOST: I see an empty place at the Cratchit kitchen table, and a small crutch, carefully preserved. If these shadows remain unaltered by the future, the child will die.

SCENE SIX-2 CHARACTERS

SCROOGE: Aaaaah! Are you the spirit whose coming was foretold to me?

PAST: I am!

SCROOGE: Who and what are you?

PAST: I am the Ghost of Christmas Past.

SCROOGE: Long past?

PAST: No. Your past.

SCROOGE: What business brings you here?

PAST: Your welfare!

SCROOGE: I cannot help thinking that a night of unbroken rest would have been more conducive to that!

PAST: Rise and walk with me!

SCROOGE: But I am mortal, and liable to fall.

PAST: Bear but a touch of my hand there, upon your heart, and you shall be upheld in more than this!

SCROOGE: Good Heavens! I was bred in this place. I was a boy here.

PAST: Your lip is trembling. And what is that upon your cheek?

SCROOGE: A pimple - only a pimple.

PAST: You recollect the way?

SCROOGE: Remember it? I could walk it blindfolded.

PAST: Strange to have forgotten it for so many years.

SCROOGE: I know these people. I'm acquainted with them all. Hello! Hello!

PAST: They cannot see us. They have no consciousness of us. These are but the shadows of the things that have been.

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