



INDIANA REPERTORY THEATRE

CHRISTEL DEHAAN
STUDENT MATINEE PROGRAM

at the Indiana Repertory Theatre



CHARLES DICKENS'

A CHRISTMAS CAROL

ADAPTED BY TOM HAAS
DIRECTED BY CARA HINH

STUDY GUIDE

November 11 – December 24 | OneAmerica Financial Stage

Artwork Design by Jake Lebowitz. Photos by Zach Rosing.

OneAmerica[™]
Financial



Lilly Endowment Inc.
A Private Philanthropic Foundation



Access/VSA
International Network
A Jean Kennedy Smith Arts and Disability Program
Program Site 2026

CHARLES DICKENS'
A CHRISTMAS CAROL ADAPTED BY TOM HAAS

**Content
Spotlight**

Contains mild profanity, blasphemy, and depictions of alcohol consumption, death as well as ghosts and other imagery and effects that might frighten young children.

Indy's holiday tradition

Banish your bah humbugs and celebrate the season at the Indiana Repertory Theatre! *A Christmas Carol* shines a light on the power of kindness and love in this uplifting tale of one man's journey to redemption. As the weather turns cold, warm your heart with story and song at the IRT.

Recommended for students in grades 3-12

The performance will last approximately 2 hours, including one 15-minute intermission.

INSIDE

Planning Your Visit	1
Indiana State Standards	4
The Story of <i>A Christmas Carol</i>	5
<i>A Christmas Carol</i> On Stage	6
From the Designers	8
Author Charles Dickens	10
Dickens and the Victorian Christmas	12
Playwright Tom Haas	13
Why Did They Say That?	14
Carols of the <i>Carol</i>	15
Disability As Seen in <i>A Christmas Carol</i>	16
How Did They Die?.....	17
Discussion Questions	18
Writing Prompts	20
Activities	21
Resources	22
Game: 20 Questions	24
British Money in Scrooge's Day	25
Glossary	26

BENJAMIN HANNA
MARGOT LACY ECCLES
ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

SUZANNE SWEENEY
MANAGING DIRECTOR

For more information, contact:

The Education Department
education@irtlive.com | 317.916.4841

140 W. Washington Street
Indianapolis, Indiana 46204 | irtlive.com

STAFF

Devon Ginn
Director of Inclusion and Community Partnerships

Anna E. Barnett
Education Manager

Claire Wilcher
Education & Artistic Associate

DESIGN

Noelani Langille
Multimedia and Design Manager

PLANNING YOUR VISIT



You, the audience, are one of the most important parts of any performance. Experiencing the theatre is a group activity shared not only with the actors, but also with the people sitting around you. Your attention and participation help the actors perform better, and allow the rest of the audience to enjoy the show.

Here are a few simple tips to help make each theatre experience enjoyable for everyone:

- Leave mobile phones, cameras, and other distracting and noise-making electronic devices at home or turned off.
- You may think texting is private, but the light and the motion are very annoying to those around you and on stage. Do not text during the performance.
- The house lights dimming and going out signal the audience to get quiet and settle in your seats: the play is about to begin.
- Don't talk with your neighbors during the play. It distracts people around you and the actors on stage. Even if you think they can't hear you, they can.
- Never throw anything onto the stage. People could be injured.
- Remain in your seat during the play. Use the restroom before or after the show, or during intermission.
- Focus all your attention on the play to best enjoy the experience. Listen closely to the dialogue and sound effects, and look at the scenery, lights, and costumes. These elements all help to tell the story.
- Get involved in the story. Laugh, cry, sigh, gasp—whatever the story draws from you. The more emotionally involved you are, the more you will enjoy the play.
- Remain at your seat and applaud during the curtain call; this is part of the performance too. It gives you a chance to recognize a job well done and the actors a moment to thank you for your attention.

STUDENT MATINEE ARRIVAL & PARKING INFORMATION

ARRIVAL & DISMISSAL

IRT is located one-half block west of Circle Centre Mall on Washington St., between north bound Illinois St. and southbound Capitol Ave.

- The physical address of IRT is 140 W. Washington Street, Indianapolis, IN 46204.
- Buses should unload and load directly in front of the theatre. (Do not block the entrance to Embassy Suites garage.) Please plan to arrive 20-30 minutes before your performance is scheduled to begin.
- You will be greeted at the curb by an IRT Staff Member and directed to the correct entrance.
- For shows on the Janet Allen Stage, students and teachers will take the stairs to the 4th floor.
- The teacher named on the reservation should check in with the IRT Education staff member stationed in the lobby.
- Your group will be ushered to your assigned seats.
- Students and chaperones should follow instructions of all IRT Staff for your safety.

LATE ARRIVAL

If you believe that you are going to be late, please contact the IRT House Manager, Katy Thompson at 317.916.4803. Provide them with a phone number and the name of the school so that Education staff may be in contact with you.

- You can contact IRT Education (education@irtlive.com) with non-emergency information on the day of the show.

PARKING

- Buses may park for free at Victory Field unless they are having an event - we will inform you if that is the case. The House Manager will give you a parking pass for each bus when you arrive at the theatre. It should be displayed in the windshield.
- Continue east on Washington St. past the JW Marriott and turn left across Maryland St. into the Victory Field lot.
- **PLEASE NOTE that Victory Field no longer has public restroom spaces available. We apologize for any inconvenience.**
- For car, and van parking information, please visit irtlive.com for the most up to date information
- **While IRT will make every effort to communicate parking information in advance, it is the responsibility of schools and drivers to make alternate arrangements.**



INDIANA STATE STANDARDS

Seeing a performance at Indiana Repertory Theatre is a great way to help make connections for students and facilitate their understanding of a text. Some key literature standards to consider on your trip can be found by scanning this QR Code:





— THE STORY OF *A CHRISTMAS CAROL* —

A Christmas Carol tells the story of Ebenezer Scrooge, a bitter, miserly man who is visited by four ghosts on Christmas Eve. The first ghost, Jacob Marley—Scrooge’s former business partner—visits Scrooge to warn him against his heartless ways. Marley tells Scrooge that if he doesn’t change his selfish behavior and tend to the needs of his fellow man, he will be doomed to an afterlife of misery. In order to redeem himself, Scrooge must accept the visitations of three spirits: the ghosts of Christmas Past, Present, and Future.

The Ghost of Christmas Past shows Scrooge scenes from his childhood and early life. Along with such joyous events as a reunion with his sister and a lively holiday party, Scrooge relives many painful memories—including the day he lost the woman he loved.

The Ghost of Christmas Present shows Scrooge a range of Christmas gatherings. One is a festive celebration hosted by Scrooge’s nephew, where the merry group plays a game that mocks Scrooge’s greed. Another is a modest Christmas dinner at the home of Scrooge’s employee, Bob Cratchit. The meal is meager but joyous, the only cloud being the illness of Cratchit’s son, Tiny Tim. Even Scrooge is touched by the boy’s bravery.

The Ghost of Christmas Future shows Scrooge horrifying scenes of a dark, dismal future—vagrants looting through a dead man’s stolen belongings, laughing and mocking the deceased; an un-mourned corpse, left alone in an empty room—remnants of a life whose absence from the world is no great loss, and to some a source of joy.

Scrooge’s fate depends on his response to the spirits of Christmas Past, Present, and Future. The final moments of the story radiate a spirit of generosity and redemption, as well as sheer, giddy joyousness, which have helped to make *A Christmas Carol* one of the world’s most popular tales.



Jennifer Johansen as the Lamplighter in the IRT’s 2019 production of *A Christmas Carol*.

A CHRISTMAS CAROL ON STAGE

BY RICHARD J ROBERTS, FORMER RESIDENT DRAMATURG



Rob Johansen as Ebenezer Scrooge in the IRT's 2022 production of *A Christmas Carol*. He plays the role again this season.

A Christmas Carol, like all of Charles Dickens's novels, contains a panorama of places and characters brilliantly described by a masterful storyteller. Bringing a novel to the stage is a challenge—the novel is primarily a narrative form and the theatre is a forum for action and dialogue—but it is a challenge the IRT embraces. Stage adaptations of novels recently produced by the IRT include *The 39 Steps*, *Mary Shelley's Frankenstein*, *Sense and Sensibility*, *Fahrenheit 451*, *The Watsons Go to Birmingham—1963*, *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time*, *The Cay*, *The Three Musketeers*, and *To Kill a Mockingbird*, not to mention non-fiction books *Tuesday with Morrie* and *The Diary of Anne Frank*.

The richness of Dickens's prose makes the task of stage adaptation especially daunting. The

IRT's version of *A Christmas Carol* uses Dickens's language not only as dialogue, but also as narrative, so we experience the story much as the author wrote it. This technique allows the audience to hear the original language of the novel, where Dickens makes meaning not only through story, but also through his choice of rhythms, sounds, metaphors, and narrative tone. This uniquely theatrical way of telling a story is a celebration of the craft of the actor and the power of the audience's imagination.

The IRT's adaptation of Dickens's novella was written by former IRT Artistic Director Tom Haas and produced at the IRT every year from 1980 through 1984. After a twelve-year hiatus, the play was brought back in 1996 and is now making its 36th appearance.

The IRT production of *A Christmas Carol* varies from year to year, but always features Dickens's



The cast of the IRT's 2025 production of *A Christmas Carol*. The snow is made of shredded plastic. Each 25-pound box of "snow" covers a 7-by-7-foot square. To cover the entire stage requires 23 boxes of "snow," or 575 pounds. During the full run of *A Christmas Carol*, the IRT uses about 40 boxes, or 1,000 pounds total. That's half a ton of snow!

wonderful storytelling, presented by actors who each play several roles. Four years ago, because of safety issues due to Covid, the cast was reduced to eight, half of the 16 actors it had been in past years. The script was considerably revised as well, with some old scenes gone and new scenes added. The IRT's artistic team went back to the novella to find even more of Dickens's original language to bring to life on stage. This year's production will continue to follow these innovations—with the addition of three more actors, making a total of eleven.

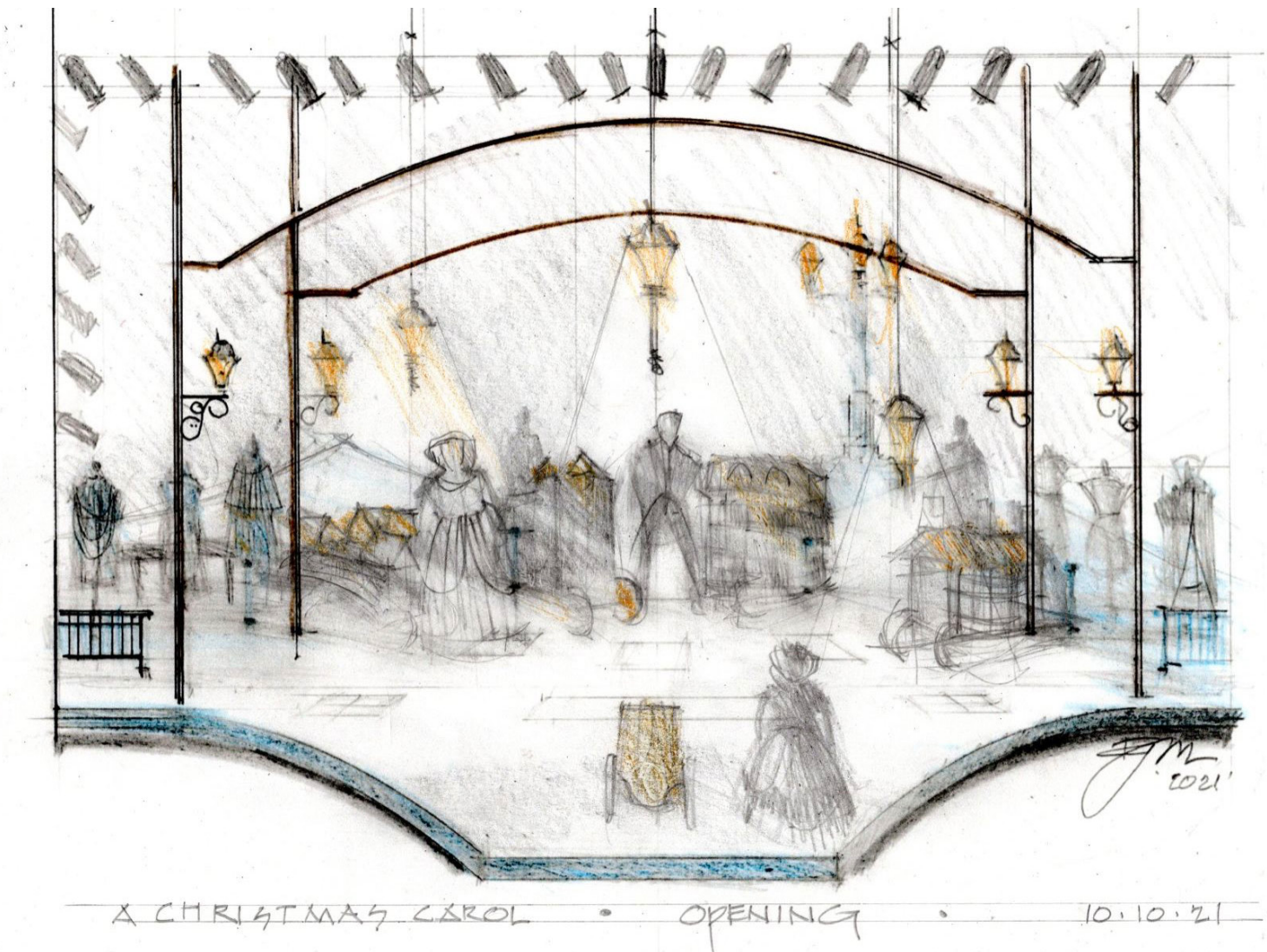
This year's production is directed by the IRT's Associate Artistic Director, cara hinh. As for the cast, some are new, and some are returning in both old and new roles. Rob Johansen, who has played many different roles in the *Carol* over the years, will be playing Scrooge for the sixth time. As always, director and cast have collaborated to discover new staging ideas while celebrating beloved traditions. Costume designer Linda Pisano and composer Michael Keck continue to fine-tune their work, while lighting designer Bentley Heydt is in his second year of building upon the original design of Michael Lincoln.

One thing that has not changed this year is the snow. Audiences and actors alike delight

in this production's endless snow-covered field as envisioned by scenic designer Russell Metheny. During the performance actors make tracks through the snow, suggesting their individual journeys. Hidden objects and trap doors under the snow add to the mystery and spirit of this production. Although there have been a few new scenic elements added in recent years—most notably a grove of small trees—the stage masking is still stripped away. The theatre's backstage area is revealed, allowing the audience to experience the magic of the story while seeing how it is created.

A Christmas Carol brings to mind visions of Christmas cheer and scenes of a distant past in which we wish we could participate: a merry gathering at the Christmas dinner table with roast goose and a steaming plum pudding; a lively dance of country folk on Christmas Eve; a family toast in which a poor boy calls forth the spirit of Christmas with a simple "God bless us, everyone!" These impressions of *A Christmas Carol* are the essence of its lingering charm and create moments of celebration in the theatre. The IRT's production will be filled with such visions and much more; for these visions can inspire a spirit of generosity and goodwill that we need not only at the holiday season, but all the year through.

“THE **MERRIEST** TIME IN ALL THE WORLD”



Preliminary sketch by scenic designer Russell Metheny.

RUSSELL METHENY | SCENIC DESIGNER

It’s ironic, but as a scenic designer the thing I love most is great performances. I love creating an empty space in which great performances happen. That’s what this set is all about: an empty field of snow in which wonderful actors tell a wonderful story. When I see something on stage that is not what it is and looks like something else—that to me is great theatre.

MICHAEL LINCOLN | ORIGINAL LIGHTING DESIGNER

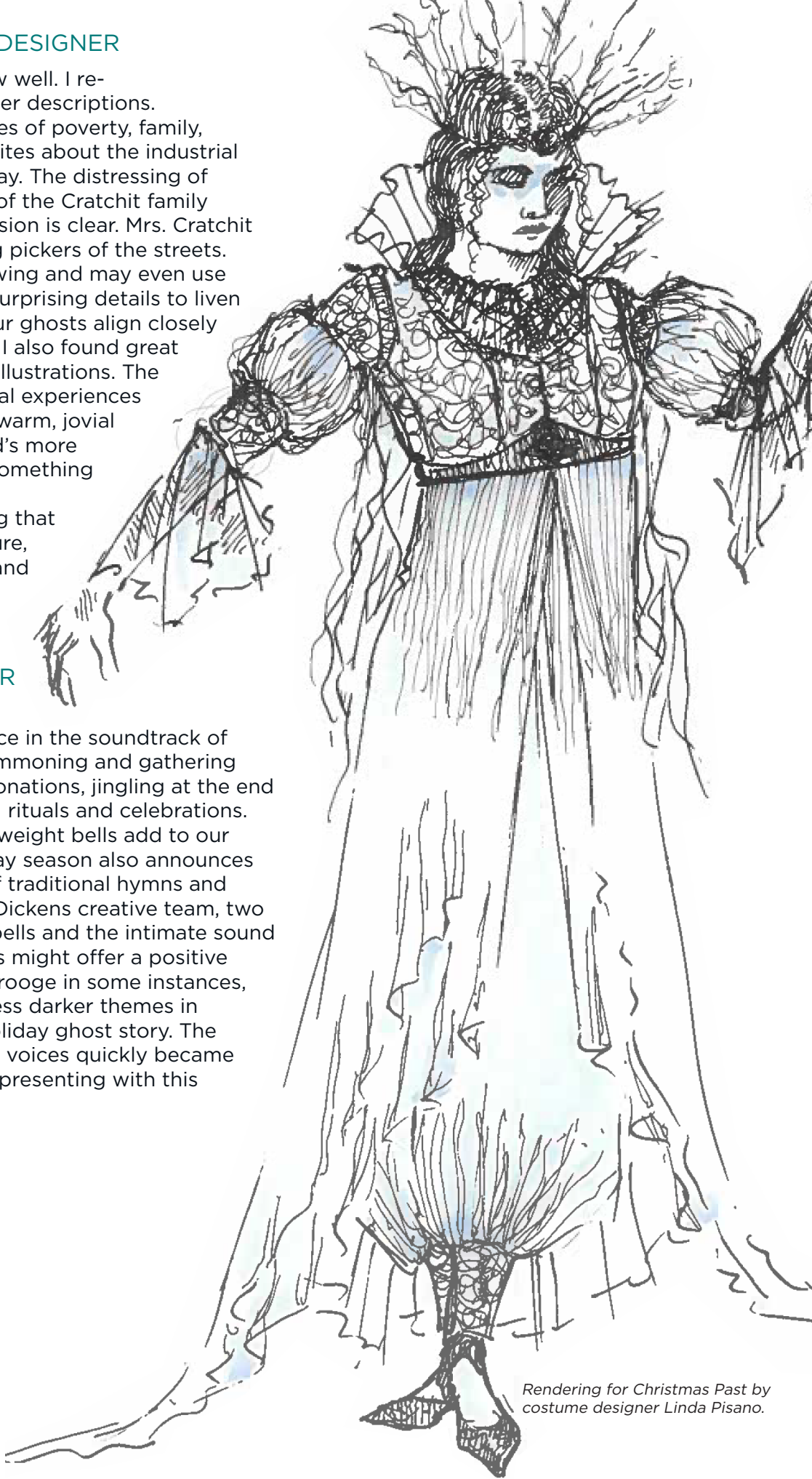
Well of course, the first thing is the snow. That enormous field of white offers a technical challenge to a lighting designer. It’s harder to create isolated lighting effects; everything just bounces all over the place. But we also have unique opportunities, such as creating silhouettes against the snow. In terms of design, the snow functions very much like a sky drop—it’s a blank canvas on which we can paint any color. This production does not rely on theatrical “effects.” It’s all about the magic created between the actors and the audience. There are always new discoveries to make in the snow. It’s an unnerving yet exhilarating process.

LINDA PISANO | COSTUME DESIGNER

This is a story that audiences know well. I re-read the novel to focus on character descriptions. Dickens’s work sheds light on issues of poverty, family, loneliness, and compassion. He writes about the industrial grime and soot of London in his day. The distressing of the costumes and the overall feel of the Cratchit family reflect these conditions. Class division is clear. Mrs. Cratchit is poor, getting fabric from the rag pickers of the streets. She is probably quite skilled in sewing and may even use pin tucks, embroidery, and other surprising details to liven up her family’s meager clothes. Our ghosts align closely with the descriptions in the novel. I also found great influence in John Leech’s original illustrations. The story presents a series of emotional experiences for Scrooge: Fezziwig’s party is a warm, jovial memory of the country, while Fred’s more urban and sophisticated party is something Scrooge has never attended. Both occasions hit home, demonstrating that for Scrooge to have a happier future, he must first deal with the issues and problems of his past and present.

MICHAEL KECK | COMPOSER

During the holiday season, bells of every size find their rightful place in the soundtrack of our lives. Bells are everywhere, summoning and gathering people together, ringing out for donations, jingling at the end of a stocking cap, and announcing rituals and celebrations. I am fascinated by the magic and weight bells add to our experiences. Meanwhile, the holiday season also announces its arrival with familiar melodies of traditional hymns and carols. So when asked to join the Dickens creative team, two ideas emerged: the musicality of bells and the intimate sound of carolers. Together these themes might offer a positive counter-narrative for Ebenezer Scrooge in some instances, while highlighting Dickens’s timeless darker themes in others. All nicely packaged in a holiday ghost story. The musicality of bells and community voices quickly became the foundation for the music I am presenting with this production of *A Christmas Carol*.



Rendering for Christmas Past by costume designer Linda Pisano.

AUTHOR CHARLES DICKENS



“It is a fair, even-handed, noble adjustment of things, that while there is infection in disease and sorrow, there is nothing in the world so irresistibly contagious as laughter and good humour.”

– Charles Dickens
1812–1870

Charles Dickens, the great English novelist, was born in 1812 in Portsmouth, on the southern coast of England. His father lost his job in the Naval Pay Office when Charles was three, and the family moved to London. The Dickens family moved so often during Charles's childhood that he was unable to attend school regularly.

At the age of 12 Charles had to leave school to work in a rat-infested blacking (shoe polish) factory; two weeks later his father was sent to debtor's prison. Luckily, a small inheritance rescued the family, permitting Charles to return to school for two years; but his formal education was short-lived. At 15 he became a legal clerk, and at 18 a court reporter for the *Mirror of Parliament* and the *True Son*. Dickens quickly earned a reputation as a top reporter.

In 1834, Dickens began to publish short narrative sketches in the *Morning Chronicle* under the pseudonym “Boz.” Two years later he married Catherine Hogarth, daughter of a newspaper editor. Together, they had ten children before they divorced in 1858. Shortly after marrying Catherine, Dickens resigned from the newspaper and became editor of a new monthly magazine. This new job allowed Dickens more time to focus on his writing. He explored the difficult lives of pauper orphans in his second novel, *Oliver Twist* (1838).

Although Dickens enjoyed great prosperity, the poverty of his youth left him suspicious of the ruling class and sensitive to the plight of the downtrodden. His research on the notorious living conditions in lower-class boarding schools resulted in *Nicholas Nickleby* (1839), in which a youth escapes from a tyrannical schoolmaster. In all, Dickens wrote 15 novels, including *David Copperfield* (1850) and *Great Expectations* (1861).

Dickens held strong views about the relationship between a lack of education and social oppression. He was giving a speech on education as the solution to England's problems when he conceived the idea of *A Christmas Carol*. Shortly thereafter, in autumn 1843, he started writing the short book. He composed it in a frenzy, alternately laughing and crying at the images that occurred to him; and he polished it in his mind while walking the streets of London at night. He finished it in only six weeks. With illustrations by Dickens's friend John Leech, the book was published at Christmastime 1843.

Over the next few years, Dickens capitalized on the popularity of *A Christmas Carol* with several short Christmas stories written in haste for quick reward. Dickens was obsessed with making a sufficient living to support his large family, which included not only his ten children, but his and his wife's parents and siblings. Much of Dickens's writing was done for commercial purposes, which may surprise those who consider Dickens a writer of mythic literary greatness.

Dickens continued to incorporate his own life experiences into his works. *David Copperfield*, a semi-autobiographical novel about a young man who struggles through poverty to achieve respect, was an immediate success in 1849. The novels *Bleak House*, *Hard Times*, and *Little Dorrit* followed in rapid succession. Their genesis followed a similar pattern: Dickens wrote chapters of each book for publication in periodicals and later published them as complete novels. In this manner, the author was literally making up the story as he went along.

Dickens spent the last years of his life traveling throughout the world to perform public readings from his novels. He was hailed everywhere as the

greatest writer of his age. Although he enjoyed traveling and exhibiting his acting skill, it was strenuous work. In 1870 he suffered a stroke and died instantly at the age of 58. For three days, thousands of citizens passed by his open casket in Westminster Abbey, paying their respects to this most beloved of English writers.



DICKENS AND THE VICTORIAN CHRISTMAS

During the nineteenth century, as England became less rural and more industrial, old Christmas customs were lost. In *A Christmas Carol*, written and published in 1843, Charles Dickens found a way to both celebrate and revitalize old country holiday traditions by transplanting them to an urban setting.

As Scrooge revisited his childhood, readers were reminded of their own childhood celebrations, or those they had heard about from their parents and grandparents. When Scrooge journeyed with the Ghost of Christmas Present, readers encountered lavish and lengthy descriptions of a wide variety of holiday celebrations, from the humblest to the most luxurious. In reality, such Christmas revelry was largely a product of Dickens’s imagination. But *A Christmas Carol*, along with Dickens’s other Christmas stories, enjoyed a wide audience, and these tales inspired readers as they prepared their own holiday celebrations.

Dickens was not alone in revitalizing the holiday. The same year *A Christmas Carol* was published, the first Christmas card was printed, and three years later Prince Albert, Queen Victoria’s husband, introduced the German Christmas tree to the British populace. But it was Dickens who became so synonymous with Christmas that, when he died in 1870, a little girl in London asked, “Mr. Dickens dead? Then will Father Christmas die too?”



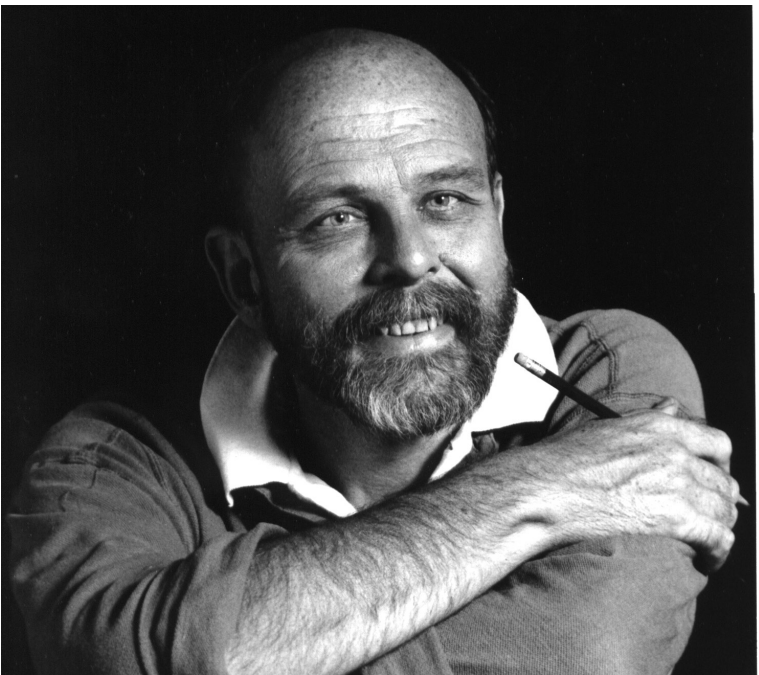
The Fezziwigs by Dickens’s original illustrator, John Leech.



The cast of the IRT’s 2022 production of *A Christmas Carol*.

PLAYWRIGHT TOM HAAS

Tom Haas was artistic director of the IRT from 1980 until his untimely death in 1991. Prior to his association with the IRT, he was artistic director of PlayMakers Repertory Company in Chapel Hill, North Carolina. He was associate director at Yale Repertory Theatre and head of the Acting-Directing Program at Yale University, where his students included Henry Winkler, Sigourney Weaver, and Meryl Streep. At the IRT, Tom directed 40 productions, including memorable renditions of *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*, *Mourning Becomes Electra*, *The Skin of Our Teeth*, *The Cocktail Party*, *Six Characters in Search of an Author*, and, of course, *A Christmas Carol*. IRT audiences also saw his stage adaptations of *Frankenstein*, *Dracula*, and *The Three Musketeers*, as well as the musical *Operetta*, *My Dear Watson* and dozens of Cabaret shows. Tom’s adaptation of *A Christmas Carol* was produced at the IRT annually from 1980 through 1984. The play returned in 1996 and has been a holiday tradition ever since.



The cast of the IRT’s 2022 production of *A Christmas Carol*.

WHY DID THEY SAY THAT?

VICTORIAN LIFE AS SEEN IN A CHRISTMAS CAROL

Charles Dickens wrote *A Christmas Carol* in 1843, early in the Victorian Era (named after Queen Victoria, who reigned in the United Kingdom from 1837 to 1901). Life and social customs in this time differed greatly from today, as seen in the following quotes from the Carol.



The cast of the IRT's 2019 production of *A Christmas Carol*.

“WHY DID YOU GET MARRIED?” Victorian economists did not approve of those who married before they had sufficient income to support a family. To marry for love was a fairly new idea, and thought to be sentimental nonsense. Arranged marriages for economic benefit were still the norm.

“ARE THERE NO PRISONS? ARE THERE NO WORKHOUSES?” Prison in this context means not only incarceration as punishment for crimes, but also debtors’ prison, which was designed specifically for people who could not pay their financial debts. Debtors’ prisons were similar to workhouses, which were homes for the destitute that each district was required to provide through the Poor Law of 1834. In both cases, those imprisoned were required to labor in exchange for their room and board. The able-bodied were put to work breaking stones, crushing bones for fertilizer, or picking oakum (unraveling old, tarred ropes to use for caulking). Their dependents were forced to live with them in purposefully unpleasant conditions. As little as possible was spent on food and shelter. Discipline was strict; the sexes were segregated; privacy was nonexistent. Conditions were little better than prison. Once a family got into a workhouse, it was very difficult to get out because there was no way to pay off debts and no opportunity to seek employment.

“YOU’LL WANT ALL DAY TOMORROW, I SUPPOSE.” At this time, it was not uncommon for businesses such as offices, shops, and factories to operate as usual on Christmas Day.



Caroline Chu, Maria Argentina Souza, Rob Johansen, and Elliot Sagay in the IRT's 2022 production of *A Christmas Carol*.

“OUR CONTRACT IS AN OLD ONE.” Marriage in Dickens’s time was based more on economic arrangements than romantic interests. A “respectable” woman could not work for a living; therefore, if her father could not support her for life, she had no choice but to marry a man who could. Until the early 20th century, a man’s promise of engagement was considered a legally binding contract. If the man were to break the engagement, the woman’s reputation might be damaged, making it difficult or even impossible for her to find a husband to support her. The abandoned woman could therefore take him to court and sue him for “breach of promise.” It was very unusual for a woman to break an engagement; Belle’s decision to do so puts her in a precarious situation, as she has no family income to fall back upon.

“OUTSIDE THE BAKER’S SHE HAD SMELT THE GOOSE, AND KNOWN IT FOR THEIR OWN.” Bakeries were forbidden by law from baking bread on Sundays and holidays. Since poor families usually had limited cooking space, they could take their dinner to the bakeshops on such occasions and have larger items cooked. Betsy claims to have identified the Cratchits’ own goose from all the meals cooking at the local bakery.



“NOW MRS. CRATCHIT SERVED THE PUDDING” The English Christmas pudding is not like our modern, creamy pudding; it is more like a bread pudding or heavy cake. Flour, milk, and eggs are combined with dates, plums, figs, and/or nuts. (There are numerous references to plum pudding or figgy pudding at Christmastime.) The batter is placed in a lidded tin mold and immersed in simmering water to steam it. A poor family without a tin mold would use a cloth bag instead, resulting in a cannonball-shaped pudding. Traditional Christmas pudding is often presented aflame and served with a sauce. Any dessert at all would be a rare luxury for the Cratchits; pudding is quite an extravagance. (Today in Great Britain, pudding is a general term for dessert.)

CAROLS OF THE CAROL

The complete title of Dickens’s book, as printed on the title page of the first edition, is *A Christmas Carol in Prose* (as opposed to the usual sung carol written in verse). Dickens extended the song metaphor by calling each chapter a “Stave,” an archaic term for staff or stanza. Many traditional holiday songs have been heard in the IRT’s production of *A Christmas Carol*.

“CHRISTMAS IS COMING” is a traditional British folk song, first published in the 1880s.

“GOD REST YE MERRY, GENTLEMEN” | “God rest ye merry” was an old greeting, meaning literally, “sleep well,” and more generally, “May God keep you well.” The origins of this song go back to the fifteenth or sixteenth century. Some believe that it was a hymn of protest against the Puritan banning of Christmas in England in the 1640s. This history may explain the song’s minor key, which is unusual among Christmas carols.

“DECK THE HALL” is a traditional Welsh carol. The melody dates back to the 16th century, when it was known as “Nos Galan” (New Year’s Eve). The English lyrics were written by Scottish musician Thomas Oliphant in 1862. It is thought that this carol may have originally been sung with a harpist, and that nonsense syllables (Fa la la la la) were substituted when there was no harpist. The word “hall” in the title refers not to (plural) corridors or hallways, but rather to the (singular) great hall, the largest room in a castle or manor house.

“THE CRICKET ON THE HEARTH” is the title of a Christmas novella that Dickens wrote in 1845; the IRT has long used this title for the Fezziwig dance. The tune in this production is a traditional sea shanty, “The Maid of Amsterdam,” arranged by Michael Keck.

“JOY TO THE WORLD” was written in 1719 by the English minister and hymnist Isaac Watts. The carol is usually sung to the American minister composer Lowell Mason’s 1848 arrangement of a tune attributed to George Frideric Handel. For the last century, “Joy to the World” has been the most-published Christmas hymn in North America.

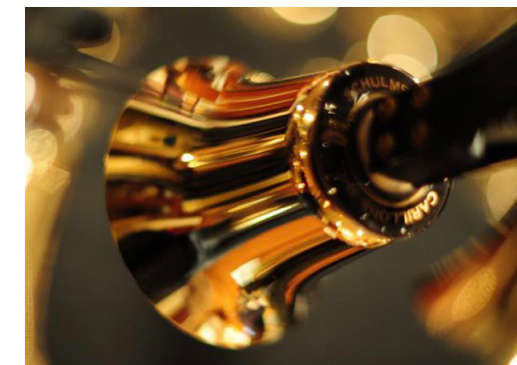


“HERE WE COME A-WASSAILING” is a traditional English Christmas carol and New Year’s song thought to

have originated in the mid-19th century. The a- is an archaic intensifying prefix, such as seen in the lyrics to “The Twelve Days of Christmas” (“Seven swans a-swimming,” etc.). To go wassailing is to go from door to door singing carols; often, hosts who receive such visitors choose to treat them to something warm and comforting, such as the drink wassail.

“THE HOLLY AND THE IVY” is a traditional English Christmas carol that intermingles Christian and Pagan imagery. Holly was sacred to druids, who associated it with the winter solstice; for Romans, holly was considered the plant of Saturn. Holly and ivy have been the mainstay of English Christmas decoration since at least the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. The text of the carol is thought to date to the early 18th century. An 1868 collection of carols coupled the words of “The Holly and the Ivy” to an “old French carol.”

“TOMORROW SHALL BE MY DANCING DAY” is a traditional English carol first published in 1833, although it is believed to be at least a century older. The word carol derives from the French carole or the Latin carula, meaning a circular dance. Old carols were written as Creche dances: as they were sung, people would dance around the creche or manger. This song progresses through the story of the life of Jesus told in his own voice. “My dancing day” refers to the day of his birth. “My love” and “my true love” are references to the church, which is called the bride of Christ in many Christian writings.



“CAROL OF THE BELLS” | “Shchedryk” was a Ukrainian New Year’s carol, arranged in 1916 by composer and teacher Mykola Leontovych (1877-1921) and introduced to

American audiences by the Ukrainian National Chorus in 1921 at Carnegie Hall. American-Ukrainian composer and choral conductor Peter J. Wilhousky (1902-1978) arranged the song as “Carol of the Bells,” published in 1936 with new Christmas-themed lyrics.

“WE WISH YOU A MERRY CHRISTMAS” is a traditional British folk song originating in the West Country (the southwestern corner of England). Like “Here We Come a-Wassailing,” it is derived from the tradition of carolers going from door to door and singing for those in the house. The treat requested in the second verse of this song is not wassail, but “figgy pudding” (which usually contained raisins or plums, not figs).

DISABILITY AS SEEN IN *A CHRISTMAS CAROL*

BY TALLERI A. MCRAE, IRT DISABILITY CONSULTANT

Many of society’s views or “models” of disability assume that having a disability is a bad thing to be judged, pitied, or fixed. For example, disability or difference has sometimes been judged through a “moral model” as a character flaw. Throughout history, people with disabilities have often been regarded as evil or morally flawed.

Using a “charity model,” disability is often reduced to being an object of pity in need of philanthropy to survive. This view of disability objectifies disabled bodies and minds, perhaps to make nondisabled audiences feel better about themselves—even subconsciously. (Think of any movie where the disabled character exists primarily to help a nondisabled character grow into a better person.) In *A Christmas Carol*, Charles Dickens embraced and embodied the “charity model” of disability prevalent in the society of his day (the early 1800s): the idea that support for disabled citizens involved help and charity. The assumption was that having a disability was a bad thing, but that helping others was a good thing. While disabled people in Victorian England were no longer vilified, they were objectified by their non-disabled peers.

Today, many people use a “medical model” to understand disability or difference as a problem to be fixed or cured. While it is true that medical differences and impairments can be challenging, the “medical model” of disability often focuses on “fixing” people and denies that someone can be a disabled person and also be a happy, creative, productive member of society.

These three views define disability as a loss or lack. Furthermore, representations of disability that show up in literature, television, and film often focus only on the character’s disability. Popular culture frequently leaves out the multifaceted experiences of disabled people who are also seen as “different” because of other factors such as race, class, and/or gender identity. Disabled advocates who identify as Black and/or Brown and/or Queer and Disabled offer other points of view.

Check out *The 10 Principles of Disability Justice* by Sins Invalid. These principles acknowledge the intersectionality of disability in a broader societal context. The principles remind us that disabled people are whole, and that having a disability is not a bad thing. Rather, disability is created by inaccessible systems and structures. Finally, the principles encourage all of us to work together to make a world that is more accessible.

CONSIDER THESE QUESTIONS

1. What if disability is not viewed as a bad thing, but as a tool for good?
2. What if disability is a creative, innovative, joyful experience?
3. What if disability offers skills and tools to dismantle many systems of oppression?
4. How is the Cratchit family disabled by their surroundings?
5. How is Scrooge disabled by his surroundings?
6. What changes could make the lives of the Cratchits and/or Scrooge more accessible?



Scan to learn more about
**The 10 Principals of Disability
Justice by Sins Invalid**

Jennifer Johansen and Quintin Gildon in the IRT’s 2021 production of *A Christmas Carol*. Photo by Zach Rosing.

HOW DID THEY DIE?

A brief note about death, illness, and life expectancy in *A Christmas Carol*

BY CLAIRE WILCHER, IRT EDUCATION COORDINATOR

One of the most common themes students bring up in post-show discussions for *A Christmas Carol* is death. Perhaps not the most cheerful subject, but not a surprising one, given that the story deals with ghosts, the deaths (real or imagined) of several characters, and a general acknowledgement of the strife of life’s realities. Since Charles Dickens wrote about the world around him (Victorian England in 1843), we can assume that the characters in *A Christmas Carol* reflect lived experiences of the people around him as well.

The average life expectancy in this era was around 40 years of age; this average could be unmet or exceeded depending on individual circumstances, genetics, access to health care, and socio-economic status. So, with that in mind:

Who lives? Who dies?

Ebenezer Scrooge: Scrooge is our protagonist, and he lives, of course; he is an example of second chances, of how life can be improved and worth living if you open your eyes and heart to love, kindness, and caring for others. Students often speculate, however, that Scrooge comes across as an “old man.” His stooped posture, his grumpy demeanor, and his nephew Fred (who is a young man himself) all point to Scrooge being older—most definitely older than 40. If the life expectancy is 40, how do you think Scrooge exceeds it? Well, he certainly has money and therefore could afford a doctor if he needs one. He does not work a physically stressful job like so many at the time, and he lives in relatively comfortable surroundings. Though he is unhappy, he is able to stay in good physical condition.

Fan: Ebenezer’s older sister is not so lucky. Although Dickens’s novel does not explicitly state the cause of Fan’s death, most Dickens scholars agree that Fan dies in childbirth, which was quite common at the time (1 maternal death out of 40 births, as compared to today’s rate of 1 out of 5,000). Even with proper health care, complications such as infection, hemorrhage, or convulsions were difficult to fight, yet Scrooge seems to blame his nephew, Fred, for Fan’s death.

Tiny Tim: Our favorite boy-wonder manages to both live and die in the story! In the scenario of Christmas Present, the ghost and Scrooge eavesdrop on Christmas in the Cratchit home, where the youngest son, Tim, suffers bravely from an unnamed illness or ailment. The spirit tells Scrooge that without proper care, the child will die. In the Christmas Future scene, we all learn of Tim’s death as a young boy. Doctors who have read the book suggest that Tim’s symptoms and physical condition indicate that he may have suffered from tuberculosis, a bacterial infection that weakens the immune system, or rickets, a bone disorder (which would explain Tim’s leg brace and crutch). Both of these diseases could have been cured or improved with Vitamin D and calcium, a better diet, and more sunlight. Cramped, polluted London would be tough for the poor. Luckily, Tiny Tim’s death is only imagined; he lives, thanks to Scrooge’s lesson learned, his newfound generosity, and of course, his access to money and good doctors who can help Tim.



Rob Johansen, Ryan Artzberger, and Kayla Carter in the IRT’s 2023 production of *A Christmas Carol*.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Why is this story still relevant today?

2. At the end of the play Scrooge says, “And it was always said of him [Scrooge] that he knew how to keep Christmas well, if any man alive possessed the knowledge. May that truly be said of us, and all of us!” Keeping this line in mind, discuss how we keep Christmas in today’s world. What does this holiday mean to you and to others? What does the world do well today? How might the world do better? How might these ideas extend beyond December 25?

3. We live in a time of incredible and constant change in technology, medicine, the economy, society, and much more. Although today we might think of the Victorian Era as old-fashioned, it was also an era of innovation: the Industrial Revolution, advances in medicine and psychology, the rise of the middle class, and more. How do today’s changes make our lives easier? How do they make things more difficult? What technological advances and inventions made the Victorians’ lives easier? What elements of the Industrial Revolution made life more difficult? How do such issues as poverty, homelessness, health care, race relations, sexual equality, sexuality, and social class compare between the two eras?

4. Although he gives us scenes from Scrooge’s past, Dickens does not dwell on the motivation behind Scrooge’s dark view of the world and of Christmas in particular. What hints are included in the story that might suggest the source of his miserly attitude? Imagine other events in Scrooge’s past, not depicted in Dickens’s story, which might help explain Scrooge’s outlook.

5. Imagine Scrooge’s future. What would the last year of his life have been like if the ghosts had not visited him? What changes—in his workplace, in his home, in his daily life—will Scrooge make as a result of his transformation?

6. The IRT production of *A Christmas Carol* uses very little scenery; the audience is asked to imagine the many environments suggested. Picture a particular scene from the play in your imagination. How large or small is the space? Picture the floor surface, the walls and ceilings, the windows, the furniture. Compare and contrast your ideas with those of your classmates.

7. The actors in *A Christmas Carol* each play a number of different characters. Choose one actor and think about their performance. What acting tools did the performer use to differentiate between characters? Think about posture, voice, gesture, costuming, and make-up. How effective were the transformations between characters?

8. The three spirits show Scrooge scenes from the past, present, and future. Which of these visions do you think is most responsible for Scrooge’s change? Why?

9. Do some research to learn more about the history of child labor in America. What types of jobs did children do? Who were early advocates for children’s rights? Where in the world today is child labor still practiced? How would you feel if you had to go to work in a factory instead of going to school? How would that situation affect your future opportunities?

10. Compare the IRT production of *A Christmas Carol* to other stage or film adaptations you have seen of the same story. What scenes and elements seem to be common to all adaptations? What scenes appear in some versions and not others? What scenes have you seen that are inventions of the adaptors and not found in the original book? Why do you suppose the creators of these adaptations made the choices they did? What are the advantages and disadvantages of the IRT’s use of narration?

11. Discuss some of the different charities in your community that help people during the holidays. Are you involved with them? What else could you do to help your community at this time?

12. The Ghost of Christmas Present shows Scrooge two children who represent “want” and “ignorance.” Why do you think Dickens chose these two issues to highlight in this way? Why do you think he chose children to represent these issues? If you were Dickens, what two or three issues would you choose to highlight for today’s readers?

13. Scrooge and his nephew Fred suffer similar challenges in their childhoods: the death of a mother, and a distant or absent father. How is it that the two characters’ attitudes toward life are so different? Why do some people accept adversity as an obstacle while others make it an inspiration?



Nathan Karnik and Rob Johansen in the IRT’s 2023 production of *A Christmas Carol*.

WRITING PROMPTS

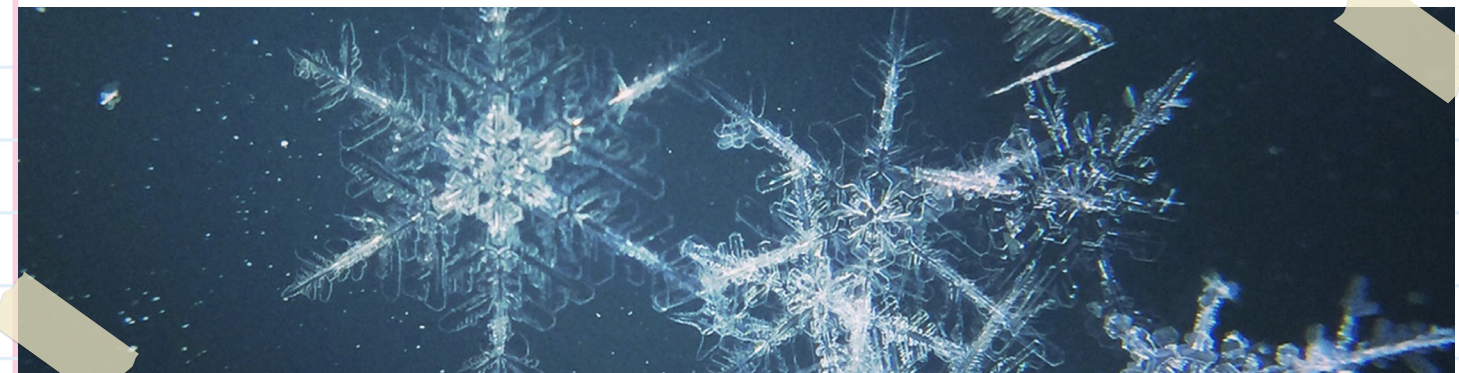
1. With the theme of Christmas past and present, interview one of your elders about how Christmas or another holiday was celebrated when they were a child. Write a comparison of the events of their holiday and way you celebrate that holiday today. What has changed? What has remained the same? What does this person miss and cherish? What are the happiest parts of the holiday for you and your interview subject?
2. Dickens's stories are lush with imagery. Working in pairs, each person should write three basic, plain sentences on a piece of paper. Then exchange papers with your partner and expand their sentences with as much imagery and descriptive language as you can. Make use of adjectives, adverbs, alliteration, onomatopoeia, similes, and other literary devices. Read aloud to the class: first the basic sentence, and then how it has been Dickensified!
3. Scrooge visits Christmases from his past, the present, and the future. Write about a memorable winter celebration in your life from the past. What made it memorable? What were the sights, the sounds, and the smells? Or imagine a celebration in your future. Let your imagination run wild.
4. *A Christmas Carol* is a holiday story told to teach something to its readers. Write a holiday story of your own that has a moral or teaches a lesson. Share it with your class and family.
5. Dickens wrote most of his books because he wanted to focus attention on a particular social issue. Write your own brief version of the *Carol* story set in contemporary times. What social issue(s) in today's world do you want to highlight? In what business does Scrooge work? Who are the four ghosts? What scenes do they show him? How does he change his ways?
6. Write a review of the play. A well-rounded review includes your opinion of the theatrical aspects—scenery, lights, costumes, sound, staging, acting—as well as your impressions of the script and the impact of the story and/or themes and the overall production. What moments made an impression? How do the elements of scenery, costumes, lighting, and sound work with the actors' performance of the text to tell the story? What ideas or themes did the play make you think about? How did it make you feel? Did you notice the reactions of the audience as a whole? Would you recommend this play to others? Why or why not? To share your reviews with others, send to: education@irtlive.com



The cast of the IRT's 2022 production of *A Christmas Carol*.

ACTIVITIES

1. The actors of *A Christmas Carol* use Dickens's original story to help build their characters. After seeing the show, choose one of the characters, go through the book, and build a character analysis as if you were going to portray the character. Start with the three big questions of character to begin your analysis: What does the character say? What does the character do? What do others say about the character? In addition, how does the author describe the character? What type of relationships does the character have with others? As an acting exercise, create physical mannerisms for your character. How do they move, walk, gesture, talk? Or, as a design exercise, create a visual palette for your character. Create drawings or collages of what they might wear, with fabric swatches to show color and texture.
2. The Victorians did not have TVs or computers to entertain themselves as we do today. One of their forms of entertainment was reading aloud. Choose another holiday story, perhaps one of Dickens's other Christmas stories, and take turns reading it aloud to the class. What do the actors at the IRT do with their voices that you can incorporate when you are reading?
3. Working in pairs or groups of three, choose one of the topics listed below to research and report on. Take your reports to the creative edge: sing a carol, make a Victorian Christmas card, create a financial game that illustrates how debtor's prison worked, etc.
[England](#) • [London](#) • [Industrial Revolution](#) • [Queen Victoria](#) • [Debtor's Prison](#) • [British Empire](#)
[British Class System](#) • [Wassail](#) • [Carols](#) • [Christmas Tree](#) • [Christmas Cards](#) • [Plum Pudding](#)
4. Look up holiday traditions from different religions and cultures around the world. What holiday traditions do we celebrate here in the United States that originated in other countries? Share your findings with your class.
5. Find the rules of Blind Man's Buff or other Victorian parlor games and play them. What similar games do we play today?
6. Look up recipes for a Christmas pudding or wassail and try your hand at preparing them. Ask an adult first!
7. It takes one 25-pound box of snow to cover a 7x7 foot square of space. Measure your classroom and find the square footage. How many boxes of snow will it take to cover your classroom? How much will that snow weigh?
8. In this production we see snow fall from the "sky." Design a machine that will make it snow inside. You can even make a scale model of a set complete with working snow machine.



RESOURCES

Books:

Other novels by Charles Dickens:
The Pickwick Papers, Oliver Twist, Nicholas Nickleby, David Copperfield, Bleak House, Hard Times, Great Expectations, many more.

What Jane Austen Ate and Charles Dickens Knew by Daniel Pool

The Friendly Dickens by Norrie Epstein

Charles Dickens by Jane Smiley

Charles Dickens: An Authentic Account of His Life & Times by Martin Fido

Charles Dickens: A Centennial Volume edited by E.W. F. Tomlin

Dickens and His World by Ivor Brown

Dickens of London by Wolfe Mankowitz

Dickens's Christmas: A Victorian Celebration by Simon Callow

The Annotated Christmas Carol (2004), edited by Michael Patrick Hearn

The Dickens Encyclopedia by Arthur L. Hayward

The Lives and Times of Ebenezer Scrooge by Paul Davis

The Man Who Invented Christmas: How Charles Dickens's A Christmas Carol Rescued His Career and Revived Our Holiday Spirits by Les Standiford

Charles Dickens: The Dickens Bicentenary 1812-2012 by Lucinda Dickens Hawksley

Charles Dickens: England's Most Captivating Storyteller by Catherine Wells-Cole

Charles Dickens and the Street Children of London by Andrea Warren

The Financial Wisdom of Ebenezer Scrooge: Five Principles to Transform Your Relationship with Money by Tom Klontz, Brad Klontz, & Rick Kahler

Internet:



Literature, history, and culture in the age of Victoria; the section on Dickens is quite extensive.



Watch an animation on Dickens's life, or play the Dickens online game and fight your way through Dickens's London to get to the author himself.



Websites created in celebration of Charles Dickens's Centennial (2012)



A Christmas Carol text online



YouTube Video: Charles Dickens documentary (part 1 of 3)



"The Signal Man" - a ghost story by Charles Dickens (part 1 of 4)

Movies:

A Christmas Carol (1951) NR starring Alastair Sim (British title: *Scrooge*)

Scrooge (1970) G, a musical starring Albert Finney

A Christmas Carol (1984) PG, an excellent TV version starring George C. Scott.

Scrooged (1988) PG-13, starring Bill Murray—a contemporary update

The Muppet Christmas Carol (1992) G, starring Michael Caine—surprisingly faithful to the novel

A Christmas Carol (1999) PG, starring Patrick Stewart

A Christmas Carol (2009) PG, Disney animated film starring Jim Carey

The Man Who Invented Christmas (2017) PG, about Dickens writing *A Christmas Carol*

Doctor Who: A Christmas Carol TV-PG, the 2010 Christmas special

The Mystery of Charles Dickens (2000) NR, starring Simon Callow, directed by Patrick Garland

Biography—Charles Dickens (A&E 2004 DVD Archives)

Charles Dickens boxed set exploring the life, times, and works of Charles Dickens:

- DVD 1 - Uncovering the Real Dickens
- DVD 2 - *David Copperfield* (BBC Television, 1999)
- DVD 3 - *A Christmas Carol*; Songs from Grape Lane; The Making of "Uncovering the Real Dickens"

The Young Victoria (2009) PG

Her Majesty, Mrs. Brown (1997) PG

Becoming Jane (2007) PG

Amazing Grace (2006) PG

The Canterville Ghost (1996) PG, with Neve Campbell and Patrick Stewart



GAME: 20 QUESTIONS ON A CHRISTMAS CAROL

1. In what city is <i>A Christmas Carol</i> set? A) New York City B) Edinburgh C) London	11. What dessert do the Cratchits eat on Christmas? A) Pudding B) Cheesecake C) Baked Alaska
2. How many ghosts visit Scrooge? A) Three B) Four C) Six	12. Who was Scrooge's first employer? A) Topper B) Mr. Fezziwig C) The Lamplighter
3. Who was Scrooge's business partner? A) Jacob Marley B) Bob Marley C) Christopher Marlowe	13. What does Mrs. Cratchit use to decorate her dress on Christmas day? A) Ribbons B) Flowers C) Buttons
4. Who is Scrooge's employee? A) Bob Cratchit B) Philip Pirrip C) Fred Cheriabie	14. Who does Scrooge see through the window the night his partner dies? A) Belle and her family B) The Cratchit family C) Miss Havershaw and her family
5. What establishments does miserly Scrooge support? A) The homeless shelters B) The local charities C) The prisons and the workhouses	15. Which ghost shows Scrooge Ignorance and Want? A) Christmas Past B) Christmas Present C) Christmas Future
6. Does Scrooge give Cratchit Christmas Day off work? A) No, it is too much of a financial burden B) Yes, if he comes in early the following day C) He is only allowed half the day off	16. What does Scrooge anonymously send to the Cratchits on Christmas? A) A prize turkey B) A snow shovel C) A television set
7. Where does Martha Crachit work? A) at a milliner's B) in a shoe polish factory C) at a bakery	17. When Scrooge visits his nephew on Christmas Day, what game does he not want to play? A) Yes and No B) Blind Man's Buff C) Duck, Duck, Goose
8. Which of the following is a place where the Ghost of Christmas Past takes Scrooge? A) To the local convenience store B) To his childhood boarding school C) To his grave	18. When Cratchit arrives late to work the day after Christmas, what does Scrooge give him? A) A harsh reprimand B) A whack on the hand C) A raise
9. Where did young Scrooge spend Christmas? A) At school alone B) At home with his family C) At his grandparents' home	19. What is Tiny Tim's signature phrase? A) God help us. B) God bless us, every one. C) God watch over the poor people.
10. What is the name of Scrooge's sister? A) Candace B) Felicity C) Fan	20. Who adapted <i>A Christmas Carol</i> for the IRT stage? A) Tom Haas B) Charles Dickens C) J. K. Rowling

BRITISH MONEY IN SCROOGE'S DAY

The **pound** (or pound sterling) was (and still is) the official currency of Great Britain.

- The term originated when it was equal to the value of one pound (weight) of silver.
- The Bank of England began to issue paper money in 1694.

1 pound = 20 shillings | **£1** = 20s
1 shilling = 12 pence (pennies) | **1s** = 12d (the d comes from the Roman denarius)

Amounts over a pound are written £2-12s-6d, etc.

Amounts below a pound can be written two ways:
12s-6d or 12/6 4s-8d or 4/8

Such notations would be pronounced “twelve and six” or “four and eight,” etc.

Coins (of those listed below, only the penny is still minted today)

a **guinea** was a gold coin worth 21 shillings
guineas were used to pay gentlemen, artists, and other more genteel debts (pounds were used for everyday, lower-class debts to tradesmen and such)

a **sovereign** was a one-pound gold coin (equal to 20 shillings)
a **half-sovereign** was a gold coin worth 10s

a **crown** was a silver coin worth five shillings
a **half-crown** was a silver coin worth 2s-6d

a **florin** was worth two shillings.
First minted in 1849, they were not as popular as half-crowns.

a **shilling** was a silver coin worth 12 pence (12d)
(a shilling was sometimes called a “bob”)

a **sixpence** was a silver coin worth 6d

a **groat** was a silver coin worth 4d

a **threepence** was a silver coin worth 3d
(pronounced and sometimes spelled “thruppence”)

a **penny** was a copper coin (pennies were sometimes referred to as coppers)
Small amounts involving pennies were sometimes expressed with “p”
eg: four pence might be written “4d” but spoken of as “4p”

a **halfpenny** was a copper coin worth half a penny
(pronounced *hayp-nee* and sometimes written “ha'penny”)

a **farthing** was a copper coin worth a quarter of a penny

GLOSSARY

amends compensation for wrongdoing.

apparition something existing in perception only; a ghostly appearing figure.

apprentice At this time, an apprentice was contracted to work for a prescribed number of years (usually seven) in exchange for room and board and the opportunity to learn a trade. Many apprentices were poor young people aged 14 to 21.

aspirations hopes or ambitions for achievement.

Bah! an exclamation expressing contempt, scorn, or disgust.

banker’s book a small paper book used to record transactions on a bank account.

bedight adorned, arrayed, dressed.

beguile to while away (time) by some agreeable occupation.

benevolence kindness, charity, an inclination to do good.

bestow to present (an honor or gift).

Blind Man’s Buff a children’s game, a variant of tag.

borough a town or, more often, a subdivision of a city.

brave (“brave in ribbons”) In this context, brightly colored or showy.

business (“an excellent man of business”) Scrooge is a financier, or money-lender; he does not provide any actual goods or services; he deals only in the exchange of money.

capacious large in capacity; capable of containing a great deal.

charwoman A part-time servant hired by the day to do odd housework (as opposed to a full-time live-in maid or housekeeper). “Char” is a corruption from Middle English of “chore.”

coalscuttle A coalscuttle is a metal bucket with a handle and a sloped lip used for carrying coal. Here, Scrooge means buy another scuttle-full of coal.

comforter scarf.

comprehensive complete.

counting house a building, room, or office used for keeping books and transacting business.

covetous having or showing a great desire to possess something belonging to someone else.

destitute without the basic necessities of life.

Ebenezer from the Hebrew “stone of help”; the word can be used to describe a tombstone.

endeavor to attempt by exertion of effort; to try.

the Exchange the Royal Exchange, the financial center of London; the British equivalent of Wall Street.

forbearance patient self-control; restraint and tolerance.

forlorn pitifully sad and abandoned or lonely.

fraught filled with or likely to result in (something undesirable).

half of half-a-quartern A quartern is a quarter of a pint, so half of half-a quartern is one ounce.

hob an old-fashioned fire grate; a shelf on either side of an open fireplace where food can be kept warm.

Humbug! drivel, nonsense.

incoherent unclear; confusing.

inexpressibly in a way that is too strong to be described or expressed.

intermediate coming between two things in time, place, order, etc.

jovial cheerful and friendly.

lamplighter In the 19th century, gas lights were the dominant form of street lighting. A lamplighter was a town employee who lit the street lights, generally by means of a wick or link on a long pole. (A link was a torch made of tow [short, untwisted, broken fibers of flax] daubed in pitch or tar.) At dawn, he would return and turn them off using a small hook on the same pole. Eventually systems were developed that allowed the lights to operate automatically. There is a long history in literature of the symbolic role of the lamplighter as a bringer of enlightenment.

lowering scowling, frowning, glowering.

melancholy sad and thoughtful.

milliner one who makes hats.

Parliament the national legislative body of Great Britain; the British equivalent of the U.S. Congress.

phenomenon a fact or situation whose cause or explanation is in question.

poulterer a dealer in poultry: the flesh of chickens, ducks, turkeys, or geese raised for food.

regale to entertain or amuse (someone) with a story or song.

Scrooge the colloquial expression “to scrooge” means to crowd or squeeze someone.

smoking bishop A hot punch made from red wine, oranges, and spices (chiefly cloves, star anise, and cinnamon). The name comes from its red color, like a bishop’s robes.

twice-turned gown When a dress became worn, it could be turned inside out to get further wear from it. A twice-turned gown would be so worn on the inside that the outside is once again the best side.

waistcoat vest.