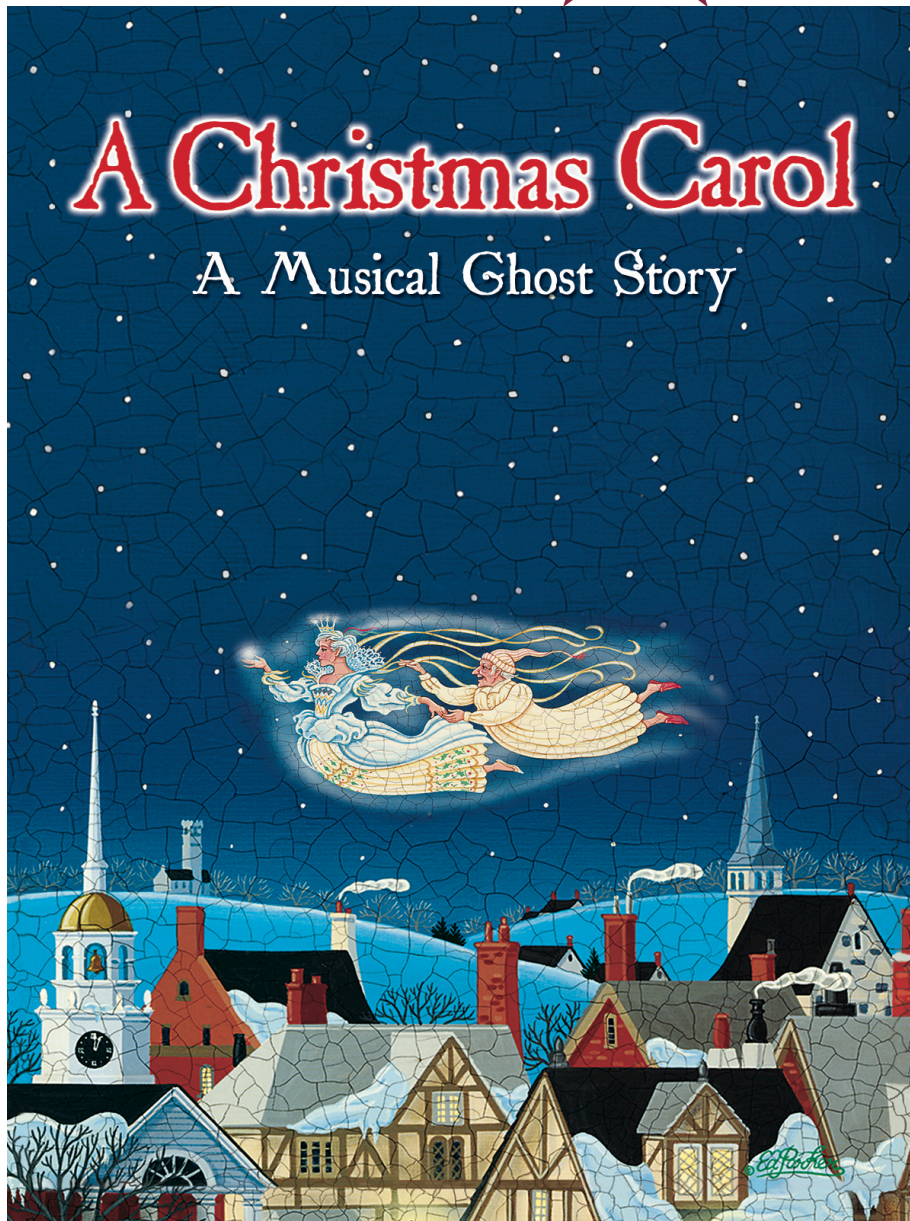


A Christmas Carol

BILL HANNEY PRESENTS
NORTH SHORE
MUSIC THEATRE



A Christmas Carol

A Musical Ghost Story

Teacher Guide 2010

A Christmas Carol

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History of the North Shore Music Theatre

Today, the most common stage used for theater in this country is the “proscenium” theater consisting of a raised stage with rows of seats directly in front. Most schools that have an auditorium will find it is set up as a proscenium stage. Most of the theaters on Broadway are proscenium theaters, and many movie houses are designed in this fashion.

The arena stage, or “theater-in-the-round” is vastly different from the proscenium stage and requires many different approaches to mounting a production. In a proscenium theater, the audience is looking straight ahead and the performance is staged for the singular view of the audience. In the arena theater, the audience is seated all around the stage and each area of the audience has a different view of the play. Artists in a theater-in-the-round setting must interact with the audience, and not strictly perform “to” them. Arena staging was a preferred method of the ancient Greeks.

North Shore Music Theatre was the first permanent stage in the country to be designed in the arena style. Opened in 1955, the unique design of NSMT, with a roof supported by trusses to provide patrons with unobstructed sightlines, won architect Ralph LeBlanc the Boston Arts Festival Award for Excellence.

The architecture of the theater involves the audience in a production in a way that other houses, or theaters, cannot. We are one of the few professional theaters in the USA performing in the arena style. Not one of the 1,500 seats is farther than 50 feet from the stage, and having audience members on all sides of a performer demands a certain energy, a constant awareness of words and actions in relationship to the audience.

Some NSMT Vocabulary

Aisles: walkways leading from the lobby to the stage that are used for entrances and exists by performers

Catwalk: attached to the steel frame of the theater building 18 feet above the audience, this walkway allows technicians to operate spotlights and flying scenery; connected to the catwalk is the truss, used to hold the lighting and sound equipment

Center Lift: an 8' x 8' platform used to raise and lower pieces of scenery or actors through the center of the stage

Orchestra Pit: a place where the orchestra plays, below the level of the main stage

Slip Stage: a motorized platform that travels across the stage

Vom: from the Greek word, “vomitorium,” which refers to the exit area on either side of the Greek stage; it leads underneath the stage and is used for entrances and exits

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Preparing for Your Visit: Theater Etiquette

In live theater, unlike the movies and television, the interplay between the actors and the audience is what brings the play to life. Understanding your role as an audience member can help you to enjoy the theater more. In this kind of “live” theater, both the actors and the audience take part.

- Please place chaperones in appropriate seats to monitor your students at all times. Groups that disrupt the performance will be asked to leave the theater.
- Plan to arrive **at least** 30 minutes before curtain time. Groups that arrive late will be seated at the discretion of the House Manager. Call the Box Office—978.232.7200—if there is a possibility that your group may arrive after that time.

In preparing young people to come to NSMT, many make the mistake of telling them that they must be completely quiet, thus denying them their rightful role. When the students are playing an active role in the performance, they discover the true excitement of theater. Students should be encouraged to:

- Listen carefully.
- Respond as they feel (laugh, applaud, etc.) but please no talking.
- Remain seated during the performance. Actors and stage crew use the aisles and we ask that everyone remain seated until the house lights are on.
- Cameras, iPods, and recording devices are not allowed in the theater.
- All hats must be removed before entering the theater.

A Christmas Carol

The Author: Charles Dickens

Considered by many to have been the greatest English writer of fiction, Charles Dickens wrote sixteen major novels. He wrote his famous Christmas stories and a vast amount of shorter working, including the “American Notes” following his famous trip to the United States to give public readings of his work. *The Pickwick Papers* was his first major success and *Oliver Twist*, published in 1838, was his second. His somewhat autobiographical novel, *David Copperfield*, came eleven years later and was followed by two of his other notable novels, *Great Expectations* and *A Tale of Two Cities*. Dickens was fascinated by the theater, and often directed an amateur group, but never wrote specifically for the stage.

Born in 1812, he was the second of eight children born to John and Elizabeth (Barrows) Dickens. At the time of his birth, his father was a clerk working in the Navy Pay Office. His position as a clerk earning a modest wage would have been enough to support his growing family, but John Dickens was a kind and generous man who often lived beyond his means and, as a result, was in and out of debt for most of his life. In fact, during Charles’ youth, his father was imprisoned twice for failure to pay his creditors causing him to frequently move into less than suitable, cramped quarters for his large family.

In 1817, the family moved to Chatham where the young Charles briefly attended school in Clove Lane run by William Giles. When his father had another transfer back to London in 1822, Charles soon joined them but did not resume his education for two years. In 1824, he resumed his education at Wellington House Academy while his older sister, Fanny, attended the Royal Academy of Music on a scholarship. Once again, due to his father’s poor financial standing, the family was evicted and both Fanny and Charles were removed from their schools in 1827.

At this time, he went to work as an office boy and soon began to teach himself shorthand. He soon found employment as a freelance shorthand reporter and later became known as a “top-rank reporter” in his early career. By 1833, Charles Dickens had published his first piece of fiction, “A Dinner at Poplar Walk” in the Monthly Magazine.

With many of his great works ahead of him, Dickens wrote *A Christmas Carol* in 1843, the first of five Christmas Books. In addition to the other Christmas Books, Dickens wrote a series of Christmas stories between 1850 and 1867, many of which were adapted for public reading. It was *A Christmas Carol*, however, that critics argue marked a turning point in Dickens’ development as a novelist.

Although Dickens considered *A Christmas Carol* to be “a most prodigious success,” selling over 6,000 copies by Christmas Eve, he was disappointed by profits and a dispute with his publisher, Chapman and Hall, which led to a break with the firm. Unfortunately for Dickens, the misrepresentation of publishers Chapman and Hall precipitated numerous plagiarized publications of the story as well as adaptations for theatrical presentation. However, Dickens continued to write some of his best known works and became one of the world’s most popular authors. He died in 1870 at the age of 58 in the midst of writing his final novel, *The Mystery of Edwin Drood*.

Several of his novels have been adapted for the stage and for the movie screen including *Oliver Twist*, *Nicholas Nickleby*, *The Mystery of Edwin Drood*, and *A Christmas Carol*.

A Christmas Carol

Structure and Themes of A Christmas Carol

A Christmas Carol is divided into five sections which Dickens called “staves,” because “staves” are a part of musical notation and a “carol” is a song. The first stave takes place on Christmas Eve. Each of the middle three staves revolves around a visitation of one of the three spirits—the Ghost of Christmas Past, the Ghost of Christmas Present, and the Ghost of Christmas Yet to Come. The fifth stave is set on Christmas Day.

The three spirits carry out a thematic function. The Ghost of Christmas Past represents **memory**, which serves to remind Scrooge of a time when he still felt emotionally connected to other people. The Ghost of Christmas Present represents **charity, empathy, and the Christmas spirit**. Through these lessons, Scrooge is able to sympathize with and understand those less fortunate than him, like the Cratchits. The Ghost of Christmas Yet to Come represents **fear**. The fear of death hints at imminent moral reckoning.

In A Christmas Carol, Dickens illustrates how self-serving, insensitive people can be converted in charitable, caring, and socially conscious members of society through the intercession of moralizing lessons. Scrooge’s “Bah! Humbug!” attitude embodies everything that suffocates the Christmas spirit—greed, selfishness, indifference, and a lack of consideration for one’s fellow man. However, warmth, generosity, and goodwill overcome Scrooge’s bitter apathy as he encounters the ghosts and learns from his memory, the ability to empathize, and his fear of death.

In his Preface to A Christmas Carol, Dickens makes these themes clear by claiming:

I have not endeavoured in this Ghostly little book, to raise the Ghost of an Idea, which shall not put my readers out of humour with themselves, with each other, with the season, or with me. May it haunt their houses pleasantly, and no one wish to lay it.”

Their faithful Friend and Servant, C.D.

December, 1843

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Life and Times during Victorian England

Health and Disease

In the 1830's and 1840's, there were two major waves of contagious disease. These epidemics would have played a role in the lives of the characters of *A Christmas Carol*, which was published in 1843 and set in its own time. The first wave, from 1831-1833, included two influenza epidemics and the initial appearance of cholera. The second, from 1836-1842, included influenza, typhoid, and cholera. Cholera was spread by contaminated water and affected mostly poorer neighborhoods, while influenza was not limited by economic or neighborhood boundaries.

The diseases erupted into epidemics when the right climactic conditions coincided with periods of severe economic distress. The frequency of the epidemics gave rise to the belief that one sort of disease brought on another and it was widely believed that influenza was an early stage of cholera. Before the cholera epidemic had completely run its course, it claimed more than 52,000 lives. There were also other illnesses that killed thousands without becoming epidemics. Measles and "whooping cough" accounted for over 50,000 deaths in England between 1838 and 1840.

Child Labor

The children of poor families were forced by economic conditions to work. Dickens himself, with his father in the debtor's prison, worked at age 12 in the Blacking Factory. In 1840, only 20% of the children of London had any schooling; the others were working. Many of the children worked 16-hour days under atrocious conditions, alongside their elders. Long hours, little rest, and dangerous machinery constantly put child workers in danger of injury or even death. The unfortunate children who worked in the iron and coalmines usually began work at age 5 and generally died before they were 25.

The use of child labor was influenced by the technology of the time. The first cotton spinning machines were so small that the persons most capable of operating and fixing them were children. Also, cotton spinning was easier for the children to learn. In the 1830s, children worked as piecers, joining together pieces of broken thread on spinning machines; a task that was easier for a child with small fingers. The children who tended to machinery were small. A consequence of this was that the rooms housing these machines were small, so there was not enough ventilation and air quality was poor.

It was not until 1833 that factory laws protecting children were enacted. This legislation required compulsory schooling and cleanliness in the workplace. In 1847, the Ten Hour Act was passed, limiting the number of hours worked by 13-18 year olds to ten hours a day. It was not until 1867, however, that these laws were extended to cover small factories and workshops.

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NSMT's Adaptation: Scenes

PROLOGUE

A theater, 1860's

STAVE ONE: MARLEY'S GHOST-Christmas Eve, 1843.

- Scene 1 A London street; later, Scrooge's counting house
- Scene 2 The street; later, Scrooge's chambers

STAVE TWO: THE FIRST OF THE THREE SPIRITS

- Scene 1 Scrooge's bedchamber
- Scene 2 A country road
- Scene 3 A school
- Scene 4 The Fezziwig's warehouse
- Scene 5 A London Street

STAVE THREE: THE SECOND OF THE THREE SPIRITS

- Scene 1 Scrooge's bedchamber

THE INTERVAL

- Scene 2 The Cratchit home
- Scene 3 Fred's home
- Scene 4 A wasteland

STAVE FOUR: THE LAST OF THE THREE SPIRITS

- Scene 1 Scrooge's bedchamber; later, a tavern
- Scene 2 A London Street
- Scene 3 At the entrance to a church
- Scene 4 The Cratchit home
- Scene 5 A churchyard

STAVE FIVE: CHRISTMAS DAY, 1843

- Scene 1 Scrooge's bedchamber; later, the street
- Scene 2 The street outside Scrooge's chambers
- Scene 3 Scrooge's counting house

EPILOGUE

A theater, 1860's

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NSMT's Adaptation: Musical Numbers

Throughout the play, instrumental arrangements of carols and original music underscore all scenic transitions, and several scenes with dialogue, much like a film's sound track. Additionally, original music and thematic underscoring have been composed for certain scenes or specific characters.

We Wish You A Merry Christmas. English traditional. The remnant of a closure much used by wassailers and other luck visitors, still in common use by modern doorstep carolers.

Patapan. Lyrics by La Monnoye. A traditional Burgundian carol, from the Renaissance.

The Coventry Shepherds' Carol. This carol refers to the Holy Innocents, whose feast day is December 28, observed in commemoration of the slaughter of male infants in Bethlehem during Herod the Great's attempt to kill the infant Jesus. Original tune.

Apple Tree Wassail. Based on a Somerset carol, this wassail reflects the early origins of the carol, and involves taking hands and dancing in a ring to bring good luck.

The Coventry Shepherds' Carol. This carol is from "The Pageant of the Shearmen and Tailors," originally published in 1591, and refers to the Holy Innocents, whose feast day is December 28 (i.e., during the Twelve Days of Christmas), observed in commemoration of the slaughter of male infants in Bethlehem during Herod the Great's attempt to kill the infant Jesus. Original tune.

God Rest Ye Merry, Gentlemen. West Country traditional. Lyrics for the text used by the Narrator are adapted by Jon Kimbell, the text used when the boys sing is from William Sandys' Christmas Carols, Ancient and Modern (1833), where it is associated with another tune, said to have been more usual in the West Country.

The Cold December [El Desembre Congelat]. Although specific origins are unknown, this carol comes from Europe sometime in the 16th to 18th centuries. The popular English translations of this title are The Cold December and Cold December's Winds Were Stilled. In this production, we use variants on this melody for two scenes between Scrooge and Mrs. Dilber.

A Dream Within A Dream, The Lullaby of Christmas Past. Lyrics by Jon Kimbell and David James, after by a poem by Edgar Allen Poe. Music by James Woodland.

Ding! Dong! Merrily on High. Thoinot Arbeau (1520-95). Although this may seem to be the most traditional of carols, it is anything but. The tune is set in the Ionian mode (the modern major mode), which at that time still had associations with hedonism and uninhibited enjoyment.

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Here We Come A-Wassailing. A well-known Yorkshire melody. There are many variations of this folksong, which is sung by the "waits" as they go caroling from door to door to bring luck for the New Year to their neighbors.

The Boar's Head Carol. A traditional English carol, c. 1500, probably from the West Country near Exeter. This carol has been sung at Queen's College, Oxford, since the 17th century, as the celebrated dish is borne into the dining hall.

The Gloucestershire Wassail. A traditional English carol. The word "wassail" comes from the Anglo-Saxon "wes hal," meaning "be hale," a greeting for good health. The wassailers traveled from house to house singing with a wassail cup, which their hosts were expected to fill.

I Saw Three Ships Come Sailing In. English traditional. The text and melody used here, from Sandys' Christmas Carols, Ancient and Modern (1833), is one of many variants, of which the earliest is in Forbes' Cantus (1666 edition). They all derive from the Mediterranean odyssey of the supposed relics of the three magi, the 'Three Kings of Cologne,' the splendor of whose final voyage has remained vivid in European folk memory.

In the Bleak Mid-Winter. (*Instrumental*) This poem by Christina Rossetti, with its tune from the English Hymnal, is a special favorite of ours.

Tomorrow Shall Be My Dancing Day. Lyrics adapted by Jon Kimbell. This melody is probably based on an 1833 secular song, but the interweaving of the two love motives is as ancient and widespread as the association of religion with the dance. The text goes back earlier than the seventeenth century.

Isn't it Grand, Boys? An old Irish drinking ditty.

The Little Child. Lyrics: Jon Kimbell. Inspired by a traditional Austrian lullaby, Still, Still, Still.

Past Three O'Clock. Traditional. Woodward and Wood published this ripe but well-loved piece of 'Olde Englishry' in The Cambridge Carol Book (1924), on which they collaborated. Although it looks like a romantic concoction, it has a genuine connection with the music of the London waits, who in the Middle Ages were employed to patrol the town each night, keeping watch and sounding the hours.

Begone Dull Care. (*Instrumental*) English Traditional. 1890. Richard Loveridge. This carol's origin cannot be traced beyond the reign of James II, but is widely believed to be older. The origin is to be found in an early French chanson.

Simple Gifts. (*Instrumental*) The melody is that of the well-known Shaker hymn.

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The Characters: Described by Charles Dickens

The Scrooges

Ebenezer Scrooge: a tight-fisted hand at the grindstone. A squeezing, wrenching, grasping, scraping, clutching, covetous old sinner

Young Scrooge: a clever chap, bright of face and filled with great potential

Fred: Handsome nephew of old Scrooge, with a cheerful voice and sparkling eyes

Meg: Fred's wife, very pretty with a dimpled, surprised look

Belle: Young Scrooge's betrothed, a fair maiden, beaming and loveable

Fan: Scrooge's sister, brimful of glee

Mrs. Dilber: Scrooge's housekeeper and therefore a Christian martyr

The Cratchits

Narrator: the teller of this ghostly tale

Bob Cratchit: a clerk in the service of Ebenezer Scrooge and the father of a fine family

Mrs. Cratchit: Bob's wife, poor in possessions but rich in family

Martha Cratchit: oldest of the Cratchit daughter's

Peter Cratchit: poor but gallantly attired

Belinda Cratchit: second of the Cratchit daughters

Tiny Tim Cratchit: thoughtful and brave with his little crutch and his goodly heart

The Spirits

Jacob Marley: Scrooge's first and only business partner; dead as a doornail

The Ghost of Christmas Past: first of the three, a strange figure—resplendent in the stars

The Ghost of Christmas Present: a jolly giant, glorious to behold

The Ghost of Christmas Yet to Come: Scrooge's nightmare of himself as a young man

Want and Ignorance: Two children, wretched, abject, frightful, hideous, and miserable

Pearlies: acrobatic street entertainers who perform for donations to help London's poor

Revelers, Townsfolk, Parasites, and Others

Mr. Fezziwig: Voluminous in his great jovial benevolence

Mrs. Fezziwig: one vast substantial smile

Joe: keeper of the Beetling Shop and Poulterer

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A Christmas Carol Vocabulary

Apparition: a ghostly appearance or a phantom

Cab: horse drawn carriage for public hire

Clerk: a person employed in an office or a shop to keep records, accounts, and files

Farthing: a bronze coin formerly used in Great Britain

Fettered: bound by chains and shackles at the feet

Half-Crown: a silver coin formerly used in Great Britain

Humbug: something devoid of sense or meaning; nonsense

Mortal: human; the idea that man is subject to death

Old Scratch: Satan

Pantry: room or closet where food and dishes are kept

Parliament: a legislative body of the British government

Resolute: set in purpose or opinion

Shilling: a silver coin formerly used in Great Britain

Taper: a candlestick

Victuals: food supplies

Wassail: a salutation wishing health to a person

Workhouse: a poorhouse in which the poor were fed, lodged, and set to work

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Pre-Show Activities

Read A Christmas Carol by Charles Dickens to your students. Review the story in class before going to the performance. During the review, discuss the Scenes and Characters found on pages 8 and 11 of this Teacher Guide.

- Reading and Literature Strand, Standards 7, 8, and 12

Review the words and definitions of the Vocabulary on page 12 of this Teacher Guide.

- Language Strand, Standard 4

Review the information about North Shore Music Theater found on pages 3 and 4 of this Teacher Guide with your students. When you arrive at the theater on the day of the show, have your students find these areas on the actual set.

- Theater Strand, Standards 4 and 5

Post-Show Activities

Questions for Group Discussion

1. Is there a moral to this story? What is it?
Language Strand, Standard 1; Reading and Literature Strand, Standard 8
2. Discuss the theme of “goodwill” in the context of A Christmas Carol and in the context of today’s society. What examples of goodwill have the students observed or experienced? Why does the consciousness of the community increase at Christmas time?
Language Strand, Standard 1; Reading and Literature Strand, Standard 11
3. How is seeing the story acted out on the stage different from reading the story?
Language Strand, Standard 1; Theater Strands, Standards 5 and 10
4. What were the similarities and differences between NSMT’s stage production and the original Dickens tale?
Language Strand, Standard 1; Theater Strands, Standards 5 and 10
5. How does the music in the play support the story?
Language Strand, Standard 1; Music Strand, Standards 5 and 10

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Post-Show Activities

Curriculum-Based Activities

- 1. Oral Presentations:** Discuss the lessons learned by Ebenezer Scrooge in the story. Having your students assume the role of Scrooge, instruct them to prepare a speech on the importance of goodwill from Scrooge's point of view. You may also do this activity from the point of view of the other characters.
Language Strand, Standard 3; Reading and Literature Strand, Standard 18
- 2. Book Report:** Have students read another Dickens novel and prepare a written report or an oral report to share with the class.
Reading and Literature Strand, Standards 7, 8, and 12; Composition Strand, Standards 19- 23; Language Strand, Standard 3
- 3. Research Project:** The Christmas stories by Dickens reflected on the Anglo-Saxon holiday celebrating the birth of Jesus Christ. Have your students research how other cultures celebrate holidays. Create a classroom chart that lists various cultures and their religious holidays and discuss the similarities and differences.
History Strand, Standards 3 and 5
- 4. Research Project:** In 1840, many children in England and the US were susceptible to disease and many children died very young or suffered great illness. Have students research the diseases that were prevalent in the 1840s. What has happened to these diseases? What illnesses are we concerned with today?
History Strand, Standards 3 and 6
- 5. Performance:** Review the scenes in the play/story when Scrooge encountered the ghost of Jacob Marley and the relationship between Scrooge and Belle. Create improvised scenes based on the following suggestions:
 - a. Scrooge and Marley as business partners
 - b. Scrooge sharing his "change of heart" with Marley's spirit
 - c. Scrooge and Belle reuniting after Scrooge's "transformation"*Reading and Literature Strand, Standards 18; Theater Strand, Standards 1 and 2*

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Post-Show Quiz

1. Who was Ebenezer Scrooge's business partner?
2. What is Scrooge's reason for not contributing money to the Gentlemen collecting for the poor?
3. Why does Scrooge's nephew Fred come visit his uncle's office on Christmas Eve?
4. Why does the Spirit of Jacob Marley visit Scrooge?
5. Where does the Ghost of Christmas Past take Scrooge?
6. Why does Scrooge's sister Fan come to see young Ebenezer in school?
7. What does young Ebenezer give to Belle?
8. Why does Belle leave young Ebenezer?
9. Why was Martha late in coming home to the Cratchit house?
10. What is the condition of Tiny Tim?
11. How does Mrs. Cratchit feel about Scrooge?
12. What does the Ghost of Christmas Present show Scrooge about Tiny Tim's future?
13. What does Scrooge's nephew, Fred, say about Scrooge's wealth?
14. Who does Scrooge see at the feet of the Ghost of Christmas Present?
15. What does the Ghost of Christmas Yet to Come show Scrooge?
16. What does Scrooge promise the Ghost of Christmas Yet to Come?
17. What does Scrooge give to the Cratchits on Christmas Day?
18. What does Scrooge promise to give the Gentlemen collecting charity when he sees them on Christmas Day?
19. What does Scrooge ask Fred and Meg on Christmas Day?
20. What happened when Bob Cratchit arrived at work the day after Christmas?

A Christmas Carol

Post-Show Quiz Answers

1. Jacob Marley
2. Scrooge does not give a donation to the Gentlemen because he already contributes to the workhouses and the prisons.
3. Fred comes to invite Scrooge to Christmas dinner.
4. The Spirit of Marley visits to warn Scrooge of his ill ways and to inform him of the visit from the three ghosts.
5. The Ghost of Christmas Past takes Scrooge back to his childhood, a happy time at Christmas.
6. Fan comes to inform her brother that he is going home to stay.
7. Scrooge gives Belle a ring.
8. Belle leaves young Ebenezer because he has placed his desire for money and profit before his love for her.
9. Martha is late coming home because she had to finish her work at the workhouse.
10. Tiny Tim has difficulty walking and uses a crutch.
11. Mrs. Cratchit despises Scrooge and actually calls him an “odious, stingy, hard, unfeeling man.”
12. The Ghost of Christmas Present shows Scrooge that Tiny Tim dies.
13. Fred says that Scrooge’s wealth is of no use to Scrooge because he doesn’t use it to make himself comfortable.
14. Scrooge sees two children at the feet of the Ghost, a boy named “Ignorance” and a girl named “Want.”
15. The Ghost of Christmas Yet to Come shows Scrooge his own grave.
16. Scrooge promises that he will change his life to be a more caring person.
17. Scrooge gives the Cratchits the largest goose at the poulterer’s shop.
18. Scrooge promises to give the gentlemen money for the poor and make up for the years when he has not given.
19. Scrooge asks Fred and Meg if he is still welcome to have Christmas dinner with them.
20. Bob Cratchit is late and expects to be scolded by Scrooge. Scrooge pretends to chide Bob and then promises to raise his wages and help with Tiny Tim’s medical needs.