Theatre Memphis Presents:

Charles Dickens’

A Christmas Carol

About ShoWagon:
Having started as an outreach program more than 30 years ago by Theatre Memphis, ShoWagon is a children’s theatre company made up of professional actors. These actors are dedicated to bringing classic works of literature to life while providing a knowledge and experience base for educators to draw from. It is the goal of ShoWagon’s members to deepen and broaden each student’s understanding of literary and dramatic works of art and to inspire confidence in their own abilities to articulate their perspectives of the world. In the past, ShoWagon has performed MacBeth, Tom Sawyer, Twelfth Night, The Crucible, Rikki-Tikki-Tavi, Aesop’s Fables, American Heroes of Tall Tales, Alice in Wonderland, Little House, and A Christmas Carol.

About the Artists:

Jason Spitzer, (Director, Playwright)
A very talented local director and actor, Jason has helmed such productions as Beauty and the Beast, South Pacific, Forbidden Broadway, and Gorey Stories, while appearing in productions of Cats, Bus Stop, Dracula, The Violet Hour, and The King and I. Mr. Spitzer holds a bachelor’s degree in English and a master’s degree in education.

Christopher McCollum (Resident Scenic Designer) Before joining Theatre Memphis he has spent over 20 years working as a freelance Set and Costume designer. His work has been seen throughout the country, including designs for Houston Grand Opera’s LITTLE WOMEN, seen on PBS. In 2010 he received the Individual Artists Grant for excellence in Theatre Design from the Tennessee Arts Commission. He is also a graduate of Carnegie-Mellon University and a member of United Scenic Artists, Local 829.
# 2014 Christmas Carol Cast & Crew

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<td>Fred</td>
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<td>Coachman</td>
<td>Karl Guenther</td>
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<td>Beggar</td>
<td>Alexis Barganier</td>
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**Director**: Jason Spitzer  
**Music Director**: Jeff Brewer  
**Scenic & Properties Designer**: Jack Yates  
**Costume Designer**: Paul McCrae  
**Sound Designer**: John Hiltonsmith  
**Light Designer**: Jeremy Fisher  
**Stage Manager**: Melissa Andrews & Amy Salerno Hale  
**Assistant Stage Manager**: Susan Strickland
The Author
An extensive Biography

DICKENS, CHARLES JOHN HUFFAM (1812—1870).

Life

Early years

2 Ordnance Terrace, Chatham, Dickens's home 1817–1822

Charles Dickens was born at Landport, in Portsea, on February 7, 1812, to John and Elizabeth Dickens. He was the second of their eight children. His father was a clerk in the Navy Pay-office, and was temporarily on duty in the neighborhood. Very soon after the birth of Charles Dickens, however, the family moved for a short period to Norfolk Street, Bloomsbury, and then for a long period to Chatham, in Kent, which thus became the real home, and for all serious purposes, the native place of Dickens. His early years seem to have been idyllic, although he thought himself a "very small and not-over-particularly-taken-care-of boy". He spent time outdoors, but also read voraciously, especially the picaresque novels of Tobias Smollett and Henry Fielding. He spoke, later in life, of his poignant memories of childhood, and of his near-photographic memory of the people and events, which he used in his writing. His father's brief period as a clerk in the Navy Pay Office afforded Charles a few years of private education at William Giles's School, in Chatham.

This period came to an abrupt end when the Dickens family, because of financial difficulties, moved from Kent to Camden Town, in London in 1822. John Dickens, continually living beyond his means, was eventually imprisoned in the Marshalsea debtor's prison in Southwark, London in 1824. Shortly afterwards, the rest of his family joined him – except 12-year-old Charles, who boarded with family friend Elizabeth Roylance in Camden Town. Mrs. Roylance was "a reduced old lady, long known to our family", whom Dickens later immortalized, "with a few alterations and embellishments", as "Mrs. Pipchin", in *Dombey and Son*. Later, he lived in a "back-attic...at the house of an
insolvent-court agent...in Lant Street in The Borough...he was a fat, good-natured, kind old gentleman, with a quiet old wife"; and he had a very innocent grown-up son; these three were the inspiration for the Garland family in *The Old Curiosity Shop*.

[Image: The Marshalsea around 1897, after it had closed]

On Sundays, Dickens and his sister Frances ("Fanny") were allowed out from the Royal Academy of Music and spent the day at the Marshalsea (Dickens later used the prison as a setting in *Little Dorrit*). To pay for his board and to help his family, Dickens was forced to leave school and began working ten-hour days at Warren's Blacking Warehouse, on Hungerford Stairs, near the present Charing Cross railway station. He earned six shillings a week pasting labels on blacking. The strenuous – and often cruel – work conditions made a deep impression on Dickens, and later influenced his fiction and essays, forming the foundation of his interest in the reform of socio-economic and labor conditions, the rigors of which he believed were unfairly borne by the poor. He would later write that he wondered "how I could have been so easily cast away at such an age." As told to John Forster (from *The Life of Charles Dickens*):
The blacking-warehouse was the last house on the left-hand side of the way, at old Hungerford Stairs. It was a crazy, tumble-down old house, abutting of course on the river, and literally overrun with rats. Its wainscoted rooms, and its rotten floors and staircase, and the old grey rats swarming down in the cellars, and the sound of their squeaking and scuffling coming up the stairs at all times, and the dirt and decay of the place, rise up visibly before me, as if I were there again. The counting-house was on the first floor, looking over the coal-barges and the river. There was a recess in it, in which I was to sit and work. My work was to cover the pots of paste-blacking; first with a piece of oil-paper, and then with a piece of blue paper; to tie them round with a string; and then to clip the paper close and neat, all round, until it looked as smart as a pot of ointment from an apothecary's shop. When a certain number of grosses of pots had attained this pitch of perfection, I was to paste on each a printed label, and then go on again with more pots. Two or three other boys were kept at similar duty down-stairs on similar wages. One of them came up, in a ragged apron and a paper cap, on the first Monday morning, to show me the trick of using the string and tying the knot. His name was Bob Fagin; and I took the liberty of using his name, long afterwards, in Oliver Twist.

After only a few months in Marshalsea, John Dickens' paternal grandmother, Elizabeth Dickens, died and bequeathed him the sum of £450. On the expectation of this legacy, Dickens was granted release from prison. Under the Insolvent Debtors Act, Dickens arranged for payment of his creditors, and he and his family left Marshalsea for the home of Mrs. Roylance.

Although Charles eventually attended the Wellington House Academy in North London, his mother Elizabeth Dickens did not immediately remove him from the boot-blacking factory. The incident may have done much to confirm Dickens's view that a father should rule the family, a mother find her proper sphere inside the home. "I never afterwards forgot, I never shall forget, I never can forget, that my mother was warm for my being sent back." His mother's failure to request his return was no doubt a factor in his dissatisfaction towards women.
Righteous anger stemming from his own situation and the conditions under which working-class people lived became major themes of his works, and it was this unhappy period in his youth to which he alluded in his favorite, and most autobiographical, novel, *David Copperfield*: "I had no advice, no counsel, no encouragement, no consolation, no assistance, no support, of any kind, from anyone, that I can call to mind, as I hope to go to heaven!" The Wellington House Academy was not a good school. 'Much of the haphazard, desultory teaching, poor discipline punctuated by the headmaster's sadistic brutality, the seedy ushers and general run-down atmosphere, are embodied in Mr. Creakle's Establishment in *David Copperfield*. Dickens worked at the law office of Ellis and Blackmore, attorneys, of Holborn Court, Gray's Inn, as a junior clerk from May 1827 to November 1828. Then, having learned Gurneys system of shorthand in his spare time, he left to become a freelance reporter. A distant relative, Thomas Charlton, was a freelance reporter at Doctors' Commons, and Dickens was able to share his box there to report the legal proceedings for nearly four years. This education informed works such as *Nicholas Nickleby*, *Dombey and Son*, and especially *Bleak House*—whose vivid portrayal of the machinations and bureaucracy of the legal system did much to enlighten the general public, and was a vehicle for dissemination of Dickens's own views regarding, particularly, the heavy burden on the poor who were forced by circumstances to "go to law".

In 1830, Dickens met his first love, Maria Beadnell, thought to have been the model for the character Dora in *David Copperfield*. Maria's parents disapproved of the courtship and effectively ended the relationship by sending her to school in Paris.

**Journalism and early novels**

In 1833, Dickens' first story, *A Dinner at Poplar Walk* was published in the London periodical, *Monthly Magazine*. The following year he rented rooms at Furnival's Inn becoming a political journalist, reporting on parliamentary debate and travelling across Britain to cover election campaigns for the *Morning Chronicle*. His journalism, in the form of sketches in periodicals, formed his first collection of pieces *Sketches by Boz*, published in 1836. This led to the serialization of his first novel, *The Pickwick Papers*, in March 1836. He continued to contribute to and edit journals throughout his literary career.
In 1836, Dickens accepted the job of editor of *Bentley's Miscellany*, a position he held for three years, until he fell out with the owner. At the same time, his success as a novelist continued, producing *Oliver Twist* (1837–39), *Nicholas Nickleby* (1838–39), *The Old Curiosity Shop* and, finally, *Barnaby Rudge: A Tale of the Riots of 'Eighty* as part of the *Master Humphrey's Clock* series (1840–41)—all published in monthly installments before being made into books. During this period Dickens kept a pet raven named Grip, which he had stuffed when it died in 1841. (It is now at the Free Library of Philadelphia).

On 2 April 1836, he married Catherine Thomson Hogarth (1816–1879), the daughter of George Hogarth, editor of the *Evening Chronicle*. After a brief honeymoon in Chalk, Kent, they set up home in Bloomsbury. They had ten children:

- Charles Culliford Boz Dickens (C. C. B. Dickens), later known as Charles Dickens, Jr., editor of *All the Year Round*, and author of the *Dickens's Dictionary of London* (1879).
- Mary Dickens
- Kate Macready Dickens
- Walter Landor Dickens
- Francis Jeffrey Dickens
- Alfred D'Orsay Tennyson Dickens
- Sydney Smith Haldimand Dickens
- Sir Henry Fielding Dickens
- Dora Annie Dickens
- Edward Dickens

Dickens and his family lived at 48 Doughty Street, London, (on which he had a three year lease at £80 a year) from 25 March 1837 until December 1839. Dickens's younger brother Frederick and Catherine's 17-year-old sister Mary moved in with them. Dickens became
very attached to Mary, and she died in his arms after a brief illness in 1837. She became a character in many of his books, and her death is fictionalized as the death of Nell in *The Old Curiosity Shop*.

**First visit to America**

In 1842, Dickens and his wife made his first trip to the United States and Canada, a journey which was successful in spite of his support for the abolition of slavery. It is described in the travelogue *American Notes for General Circulation* and is also the basis of some of the episodes in *Martin Chuzzlewit*. Dickens includes in *Notes* a powerful condemnation of slavery, with "ample proof" of the "atrocities" he found. He also called upon President John Tyler at the White House.

During his visit, Dickens spent a month in New York City, giving lectures, raising support for copyright laws, and recording many of his impressions of America. He met
such luminaries as Washington Irving and William Cullen Bryant. On 14 February 1842, a Boz Ball was held in his honor at the Park Theater, with 3,000 guests. Among the neighborhoods he visited were Five Points, Wall Street, The Bowery, and the prison known as The Tombs. At this time Georgina Hogarth, another sister of Catherine, joined the Dickens household, now living at Devonshire Terrace, Marylebone, to care for the young family they had left behind. She remained with them as housekeeper, organizer, adviser and friend until her brother-in-law's death in 1870).

Shortly thereafter, he began to show interest in Unitarian Christianity, although he remained an Anglican for the rest of his life. Dickens's work continued to be popular, especially *A Christmas Carol* written in 1843, which was reputedly a potboiler written in a matter of weeks to meet the expenses of his wife's fifth pregnancy. After living briefly abroad in Italy (1844) and Switzerland (1846), Dickens continued his success with *Dombey and Son* (1848) and *David Copperfield* (1849–50)

**Philanthropy**

In May 1846, Angela Burdett Coutts, heir to the Coutts banking fortune, approached Dickens about setting up a home for the redemption of "fallen" women. Coutts envisioned a home that would differ from existing institutions, which offered a harsh and punishing regimen for these women, and instead provide an environment where they could learn to read and write and become proficient in domestic household chores so as to re-integrate them into society. After initially resisting, Dickens eventually founded the home, named Urania Cottage, in the Lime Grove section of Shepherds Bush. He became involved in many aspects of its day-to-day running, setting the house rules, reviewing the accounts and interviewing prospective residents, some of whom became characters in his books. He would scour prisons and workhouses for potentially suitable candidates and relied on friends, such as the Magistrate John Hardwick to bring them to his attention. Each potential candidate was given a printed invitation written by Dickens called ‘An Appeal to Fallen Women’, which he signed only as ‘Your friend’. If the woman accepted the invitation, Dickens would personally interview her for admission. All of the women were required to emigrate following their time at Urania Cottage. In research published in 2009, the families of two of these women were identified, one in Canada and one in Australia. It is estimated that about 100 women graduated between 1847 and 1859.
Middle years

Photograph of the author, c. 1852

Dickens painted by Ary Scheffer, 1855. Dickens wrote to John Forster of the experience: "I can scarcely express how uneasy and unsettled it makes me to sit, sit, sit, with *Little Dorrit* on my mind."

In late November 1851, Dickens moved into Tavistock House where he would write *Bleak House* (1852–53), *Hard Times* (1854) and *Little Dorrit* (1857). It was here he got up the amateur theatricals which are described in Forster's *Life*. In 1856, his income from his writing allowed him to buy Gad's Hill Place in Higham, Kent. As a child, Dickens had walked past the house and dreamed of living in it. The area was also the scene of some of the events of Shakespeare's *Henry IV, Part 1* and this literary connection pleased him.
In 1857, Dickens hired professional actresses for the play *The Frozen Deep*, which he and his protégé Wilkie Collins had written. With one of these, Ellen Ternan, Dickens formed a bond which was to last the rest of his life. He then separated from his wife, Catherine, in 1858 – divorce was still unthinkable for someone as famous as he was.

During this period, whilst pondering about giving public readings for his own profit, Dickens was approached by Great Ormond Street Hospital to help it survive its first major financial crisis through a charitable appeal. Dickens, whose philanthropy was well-known, was asked to preside by his friend, the hospital's founder Charles West. He threw himself into the task, heart and soul (a little known fact is that Dickens reported anonymously in the weekly *The Examiner* in 1849 to help mishandled children and wrote another article to help publicize the hospital's opening in 1852). On 9 February 1858, Dickens spoke at the hospital's first annual festival dinner at Freemasons' Hall and later gave a public reading of *A Christmas Carol* at St. Martin-in-the-Fields church hall. The events raised enough money to enable the hospital to purchase the neighboring house, No. 48 Great Ormond Street, increasing the bed capacity from 20 to 75.

That summer of 1858, after separating from his wife, Dickens undertook his first series of public readings in London for pay which ended on 22 July. After 10 days rest, he began a grueling and ambitious tour through the English provinces, Scotland and Ireland, beginning with a performance in Clifton on 2 August and closing in Brighton, more than three months later, on 13 November. Altogether he read eighty-seven times, on some days giving both a matinee and an evening performance.

![At his desk in 1858](image)

Major works, *A Tale of Two Cities* (1859); and *Great Expectations* (1861) soon followed and would prove resounding successes. During this time he was also the publisher and editor of; and a major contributor to, the journals *Household Words* (1850–1859) and *All the Year Round* (1858–1870).
In early September 1860, in a field behind Gad's Hill, Dickens made a great bonfire of nearly his entire correspondence. Only those letters on business matters were spared. Since Ellen Ternan burned all of his letters as well, the dimensions of the affair between the two were unknown until the publication of *Dickens and Daughter*, a book about Dickens's relationship with his daughter Kate, in 1939. Kate Dickens worked with author Gladys Storey on the book prior to her death in 1929, and alleged that Dickens and Ternan had a son who died in infancy, though no contemporary evidence exists. On his death, Dickens settled an annuity on Ternan which made her a financially independent woman. Claire Tomalin's book, *The Invisible Woman*, set out to prove that Ternan lived with Dickens secretly for the last 13 years of his life, and was subsequently turned into a play, *Little Nell*, by Simon Gray.

In the same period, Dickens furthered his interest in the paranormal, so much that he was one of the early members of The Ghost Club.

**Franklin incident**

A recurring theme in Dickens's writing reflected the public's interest in Arctic exploration: the heroic friendship between explorers John Franklin and John Richardson gave the idea for *A Tale of Two Cities*, *The Wreck of the Golden Mary* and the play *The Frozen Deep*.

After Franklin died in unexplained circumstances on an expedition to find the North West Passage, Dickens wrote a piece in *Household Words* defending his hero against the discovery in 1854, some four years after the search began, of evidence that Franklin's men had, in their desperation, resorted to cannibalism. Without adducing any supporting evidence he speculates that, far from resorting to cannibalism amongst them, the members of the expedition may have been "set upon and slain by the Esquimaux ... We believe every savage to be in his heart covetous, treacherous, and cruel." Although publishing in a subsequent issue of *Household Words* a defense of the Esquimaux, written by John Rae, one of Franklin's rescue parties, who had actually visited the scene of the supposed cannibalism, Dickens refused to alter his view.

**Last years**

Crash scene after the Staplehurst rail crash
On 9 June 1865, while returning from Paris with Ternan, Dickens was involved in the Staplehurst rail crash. The first seven carriages of the train plunged off a cast iron bridge under repair. The only first-class carriage to remain on the track was the one in which Dickens was travelling. Dickens tried to help the wounded and the dying before rescuers arrived. Before leaving, he remembered the unfinished manuscript for *Our Mutual Friend*, and he returned to his carriage to retrieve it. Typically, Dickens later used this experience as material for his short ghost story *The Signal-Man* in which the central character has a premonition of his own death in a rail crash. He based the story around several previous rail accidents, such as the Clayton Tunnel rail crash of 1861.

Dickens managed to avoid an appearance at the inquest, to avoid disclosing that he had been travelling with Ternan and her mother, which would have caused a scandal. Although physically unharmed, Dickens never really recovered from the trauma of the Staplehurst crash, and his normally prolific writing shrunk to completing *Our Mutual Friend* and starting the unfinished *The Mystery of Edwin Drood*. Much of his time was taken up with public readings from his best-loved novels. Dickens was fascinated by the theatre as an escape from the world, and theatres and theatrical people appear in *Nicholas Nickleby*. The travelling shows were extremely popular. In 1866, a series of public readings were undertaken in England and Scotland. The following year saw more readings in England and Ireland.

![Photograph of Dickens taken by Jeremiah Gurney & Son, New York, 1867](image)

**Second visit to America**

On 9 November 1867, Dickens sailed from Liverpool for his second American reading tour. Landing at Boston, he devoted the rest of the month to a round of dinners with such notables as Ralph Waldo Emerson, Henry Wadsworth Longfellow and his American publisher James Thomas Fields. In early December, the readings began and Dickens spent the month shuttling between Boston and New York. Although he had started to suffer from what he called the "true American catarrh", he kept to a schedule that would have challenged a much younger man, even managing to squeeze in some sleighing in
Central Park. In New York, he gave 22 readings at Steinway Hall between 9 December 1867 and 18 April 1868, and four at Plymouth Church of the Pilgrims between 16 and 21 January 1868. During his travels, he saw a significant change in the people and the circumstances of America. His final appearance was at a banquet the American Press held in his honor at Delmonico's on 18 April, when he promised to never denounce America again. By the end of the tour, the author could hardly manage solid food, subsisting on champagne and eggs beaten in sherry. On 23 April, he boarded his ship to return to Britain, barely escaping a Federal Tax Lien against the proceeds of his lecture tour.

**Farewell readings**

Between 1868 and 1869, Dickens gave a series of "farewell readings" in England, Scotland, and Ireland, until he collapsed on 22 April 1869, at Preston in Lancashire showing symptoms of a mild stroke. After further provincial readings were cancelled, he began work on his final novel, *The Mystery of Edwin Drood*. In an opium den in Shadwell, he witnessed an elderly pusher known as "Opium Sal", who subsequently featured in his mystery novel.

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**Poster promoting a reading by Dickens in Nottingham dated 4 Feb. 1869; two months before he suffered a mild stroke**

When he had regained sufficient strength, Dickens arranged, with medical approval, for a final series of readings at least partially to make up to his sponsors what they had lost due of his illness. There were to be twelve performances, running between 11 January and 15 March 1870, and the last taking place at 8:00 pm at St. James's Hall in London. Although in grave health by this time, he read *A Christmas Carol* and *The Trial from Pickwick*. On 2 May, he made his last public appearance at a Royal Academy Banquet in the presence of the Prince and Princess of Wales, paying a special tribute to the passing of his friend, illustrator Daniel Maclise.
Death

On 8 June 1870, Dickens suffered another stroke at his home, after a full day's work on *Edwin Drood*. The next day, on 9 June, and five years to the day after the Staplehurst rail crash 9 June 1865, he died at Gad's Hill Place never having regained consciousness. Contrary to his wish to be buried at Rochester Cathedral "in an inexpensive, unostentatious, and strictly private manner", he was laid to rest in the Poets' Corner of Westminster Abbey. A printed epitaph circulated at the time of the funeral reads: "To the Memory of Charles Dickens (England's most popular author) who died at his residence, Higham, near Rochester, Kent, 9 June 1870, aged 58 years. He was a sympathizer with the poor, the suffering, and the oppressed; and by his death, one of England's greatest writers is lost to the world." Dickens's last words, as reported in his obituary in The Times were alleged to have been:

Be natural my children. For the writer that is natural has fulfilled all the rules of art.

On Sunday, 19 June 1870, five days after Dickens's interment in the Abbey, Dean Arthur Penrhyn Stanley delivered a memorial elegy, lauding "the genial and loving humorist whom we now mourn", for showing by his own example "that even in dealing with the darkest scenes and the most degraded characters, genius could still be clean, and mirth could be innocent." Pointing to the fresh flowers that adorned the novelist's grave, Stanley assured those present that "the spot would thenceforth be a sacred one with both the New World and the Old, as that of the representative of literature, not of this island only, but of all who speak our English tongue."

Dickens's will stipulated that no memorial be erected to honor him. The only life-size bronze statue of Dickens, cast in 1891 by Francis Edwin Elwell, is located in Clark Park in the Spruce Hill neighborhood of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania in the United States. The couch on which he died is preserved at the Dickens Birthplace Museum in Portsmouth.

Literary style

Dickens loved the style of the 18th century picturesque or Gothic romance novels although it had already become a target for parody. One "character" vividly drawn throughout his novels is London itself. From the coaching inns on the outskirts of the city to the lower reaches of the Thames, all aspects of the capital are described over the course of his body of work.

His writing style is florid and poetic, with a strong comic touch. His satires of British aristocratic snobbery—he calls one character the "Noble Refrigerator"—is often popular. Comparing orphans to stocks and shares, people to tug boats, or dinner-party guests to furniture are just some of Dickens's acclaimed flights of fancy. Many of his characters' names provide the reader with a hint as to the roles played in advancing the storyline, such as Mr. Murdstone in the novel David Copperfield, which is clearly a combination of "murder" and stony coldness. His literary style is also a mixture of fantasy and realism.
Dickens is famed for his depiction of the hardships of the working class, his intricate plots, and his sense of humor. But he is perhaps most famed for the characters he created. His novels were heralded early in his career for their ability to capture the everyday man and thus create characters to which readers could relate. Beginning with *The Pickwick Papers* in 1836, Dickens wrote numerous novels, each uniquely filled with believable personalities and vivid physical descriptions. Dickens's friend and biographer, John Forster, said that Dickens made "characters real existences, not by describing them but by letting them describe themselves."

Dickensian characters—especially their typically whimsical names—are among the most memorable in English literature. The likes of Ebenezer Scrooge, Tiny Tim, Jacob Marley, Bob Cratchit, Oliver Twist, The Artful Dodger, Fagin, Bill Sikes, Pip, Miss Havisham, Charles Darnay, David Copperfield, Mr. Micawber, Abel Magwitch, Daniel Quilp, Samuel Pickwick, Wackford Squeers, Uriah Heep and many others are so well known and can be believed to be living a life outside the novels that their stories have been continued by other authors.

The author worked closely with his illustrators supplying them with a summary of the work at the outset and thus ensuring that his characters and settings were exactly how he envisioned them. He would brief the illustrator on plans for each month's installment so that work could begin before he wrote them. Marcus Stone, illustrator of *Our Mutual Friend*, recalled that the author was always "ready to describe down to the minutest details the personal characteristics, and ... life-history of the creations of his fancy." This close working relationship is important to readers of Dickens today. The illustrations give us a glimpse of the characters as Dickens described them. Film makers still use the illustrations as a basis for characterization, costume, and set design.

Often these characters were based on people he knew. In a few instances Dickens based the character too closely on the original, as in the case of Harold Skimpole in *Bleak House*, based on Leigh Hunt, and Miss Mowcher in *David Copperfield*, based on his wife's dwarf chiropodist. Indeed, the acquaintances made when reading a Dickens novel
are not easily forgotten. The author, Virginia Woolf, maintained that "we remodel our psychological geography when we read Dickens" as he produces "characters who exist not in detail, not accurately or exactly, but abundantly in a cluster of wild yet extraordinarily revealing remarks."

**Autobiographical elements**

An original illustration from the novel "David Copperfield" Widely regarded as Dickens' most autobiographical work.

All authors might be said to incorporate autobiographical elements in their fiction, but with Dickens this is very noticeable, even though he took pains to mask what he considered his shameful, lowly past. *David Copperfield* is one of the most clearly autobiographical but the scenes from *Bleak House* of interminable court cases and legal arguments are drawn from the author's brief career as a court reporter. Dickens's own father was sent to prison for debt, and this became a common theme in many of his books, with the detailed depiction of life in the Marshalsea prison in *Little Dorrit* resulting from Dickens's own experiences of the institution. Childhood sweethearts in many of his books (such as Little Em'ly in *David Copperfield*) may have been based on Dickens's own childhood infatuation with Lucy Stroughill. Dickens may have drawn on his childhood experiences, but he was also ashamed of them and would not reveal that this was where he gathered his realistic accounts of squalor. Very few knew the details of his early life until six years after his death when John Forster published a biography on which Dickens had collaborated.

**Episodic writing**

As noted above, most of Dickens's major novels were first written in monthly or weekly installments in journals such as *Master Humphrey's Clock* and *Household Words*, later reprinted in book form. These installments made the stories cheap, accessible and the series of regular cliff-hangers made each new episode widely anticipated. American fans even waited at the docks in New York, shouting out to the crew of an incoming ship, "Is little Nell dead?" Part of Dickens's great talent was to incorporate this episodic writing style but still end up with a coherent novel at the end. The monthly numbers were illustrated by, amongst others, "Phiz" (a pseudonym for Hablot Browne). Among his
best-known works are *Great Expectations*, *David Copperfield*, *Oliver Twist*, *A Tale of Two Cities*, *Bleak House*, *Nicholas Nickleby*, *The Pickwick Papers*, and *A Christmas Carol*.

"Charles Dickens as he appears when reading." Wood engraving from *Harper's Weekly*, 7 December 1867

Dickens's technique of writing in monthly or weekly installments (depending on the work) can be understood by analyzing his relationship with his illustrators. The several artists who filled this role were privy to the contents and intentions of Dickens's installments before the general public. Thus, by reading these correspondences between author and illustrator, the intentions behind Dickens's work can be better understood. These also reveal how the interests of the reader and author do not coincide. A great example of that appears in the monthly novel *Oliver Twist*. At one point in this work, Dickens had Oliver become embroiled in a robbery. That particular monthly installment concludes with young Oliver being shot. Readers expected that they would be forced to wait only a month to find out the outcome of that gunshot. In fact, Dickens did not reveal what became of young Oliver in the succeeding number. Rather, the reading public was forced to wait two months to discover if the boy lived.

Another important impact of Dickens's episodic writing style resulted from his exposure to the opinions of his readers. Since Dickens did not write the chapters very far ahead of their publication, he was allowed to witness the public reaction and alter the story depending on those public reactions. A fine example of this process can be seen in his weekly serial *The Old Curiosity Shop*, which is a chase story. In this novel, Nell and her grandfather are fleeing the villain Quilp. The progress of the novel follows the gradual success of that pursuit. As Dickens wrote and published the weekly installments, his friend John Forster pointed out: "You know you're going to have to kill her, don't you?" Why this end was necessary can be explained by a brief analysis of the difference between the structures of a comedy versus a tragedy. In a comedy, the action covers a sequence "You think they're going to lose, you think they're going to lose, they win". In tragedy, it is: "You think they're going to win, you think they're going to win, they lose". The dramatic conclusion of the story is implicit throughout the novel. So, as Dickens wrote the novel in the form of a tragedy, the sad outcome of the novel was a foregone conclusion. If he had not caused his heroine to lose, he would not have completed his
dramatic structure. Dickens admitted that his friend Forster was right and, in the end, Nell died.

**Social commentary**

Dickens's novels were, among other things, works of social commentary. He was a fierce critic of the poverty and social stratification of Victorian society. Dickens's second novel, *Oliver Twist* (1839), shocked readers with its images of poverty and crime and was responsible for the clearing of the actual London slum, Jacob's Island, which was the basis of the story. In addition, with the character of the tragic prostitute, Nancy, Dickens "humanized" such women for the reading public; women who were regarded as "unfortunates", inherently immoral casualties of the Victorian class/economic system. *Bleak House* and *Little Dorrit* elaborated expansive critiques of the Victorian institutional apparatus: the interminable lawsuits of the Court of Chancery that destroyed people's lives in *Bleak House* and a dual attack in *Little Dorrit* on inefficient, corrupt patent offices and unregulated market speculation.

**Literary techniques**

Dickens is often described as using 'idealized' characters and highly sentimental scenes to contrast with his caricatures and the ugly social truths he reveals. The story of Nell Trent in *The Old Curiosity Shop* (1841) was received as incredibly moving by contemporary readers but viewed as ludicrously sentimental by Oscar Wilde. "You would need to have a heart of stone", he declared in one of his famous witticisms, "not to laugh at the death of little Nell." (though her death actually takes place off-stage). In 1903 G. K. Chesterton said, "It is not the death of little Nell, but the life of little Nell, that I object to."

In *Oliver Twist* Dickens provides readers with an idealized portrait of a boy so inherently and unrealistically 'good' that his values are never subverted by either brutal orphanages or coerced involvement in a gang of young pickpockets. While later novels also centered on idealized characters (Esther Summerson in *Bleak House* and Amy Dorrit in *Little Dorrit*), this idealism serves only to highlight Dickens's goal of poignant social commentary. Many of his novels are concerned with social realism, focusing on mechanisms of social control that direct people's lives (for instance, factory networks in *Hard Times* and hypocritical exclusionary class codes in *Our Mutual Friend*). Dickens also employs incredible coincidences (e.g., Oliver Twist turns out to be the lost nephew of the upper class family that randomly rescues him from the dangers of the pickpocket group). Such coincidences are a staple of eighteenth century picaresque novels such as Henry Fielding's *Tom Jones* that Dickens enjoyed so much. But, to Dickens, these were not just plot devices but an index of the humanism that led him to believe that good wins out in the end and often in unexpected ways.
Legacy

Statue of Dickens in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

A well-known personality, his novels proved immensely popular during his lifetime. His first full novel, *The Pickwick Papers* (1837), brought him immediate fame, and this success continued throughout his career. Although rarely departing greatly from his typical "Dickensian" method of always attempting to write a great "story" in a somewhat conventional manner (the dual narrators of *Bleak House* constitute a notable exception), he experimented with varied themes, characterizations, and genres. Some of these experiments achieved more popularity than others, and the public's taste and appreciation of his many works have varied over time. Usually keen to give his readers what they wanted, the monthly or weekly publication of his works in episodes meant that the books could change as the story proceeded at the whim of the public. Good examples of this are the American episodes in *Martin Chuzzlewit* which Dickens included in response to lower-than-normal sales of the earlier chapters. Dickens continues to be one of the best known and most read of English authors, and his works have never gone out of print. At least 180 motion pictures and TV adaptations based on Dickens's works help confirm his success. Many of his works were adapted for the stage during his own lifetime and as early as 1913 a silent film of *The Pickwick Papers* was made. His characters were often so memorable that they took on a life of their own outside his books. Gamp became a slang expression for an umbrella from the character Mrs. Gamp and Pickwickian, Pecksniffian, and Gradgrind all entered dictionaries due to Dickens's original portraits of such characters that were quixotic, hypocritical, or emotionlessly logical. Sam Weller, the carefree and irreverent valet of *The Pickwick Papers*, was an early superstar, perhaps better known than his author at first. It is likely that *A Christmas Carol* stands as his best-known story, with new adaptations almost every year. It is also the most-filmed of Dickens's stories, with many versions dating from the early years of cinema. This simple morality tale with both pathos and its theme of redemption sums up (for many) the true meaning of Christmas. Indeed, it eclipses all other Yuletide stories in not only popularity, but in adding archetypal figures (Scrooge, Tiny Tim, the Christmas ghosts) to the
Western cultural consciousness. A prominent phrase from the tale, 'Merry Christmas', was popularized following the appearance of the story. The term Scrooge became a synonym for miser, with 'Bah! Humbug!' Dismissive of the festive spirit. Novelist William Makepeace Thackeray called the book "a national benefit, and to every man and woman who reads it a personal kindness". Some historians claim the book significantly redefined the "spirit" and importance of Christmas, and initiated a rebirth of seasonal merriment after Puritan authorities in 17th century England and America suppressed pagan rituals associated with the holiday. According to the historian Ronald Hutton, the current state of the observance of Christmas is largely the result of a mid-Victorian revival of the holiday spearheaded by A Christmas Carol. Dickens sought to construct Christmas as a family-centered festival of generosity, in contrast to the community-based and church-centered observations, the observance of which had dwindled during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Superimposing his secular vision of the holiday, Dickens influenced many aspects of Christmas that are celebrated today among Western nations, such as family gatherings, seasonal food and drink, dancing, games, and a festive generosity of spirit. A Christmas Carol rejuvenated his career as a renowned author. A Tale of Two Cities is Dickens best selling novel. Since its inaugural publication in 1859, the novel has sold over 200 million copies, and is among the most famous works of fiction.

Photograph of Charles Dickens 1852

At a time when Britain was the major economic and political power of the world, Dickens highlighted the life of the forgotten poor and disadvantaged within society. Through his journalism he campaigned on specific issues—such as sanitation and the workhouse—but his fiction probably demonstrated its greatest prowess in changing public opinion in regard to class inequalities. He often depicted the exploitation and repression of the poor and condemned the public officials and institutions that not only allowed such abuses to exist, but flourished as a result. His most strident indictment of this condition is in Hard Times (1854), Dickens's only novel-length treatment of the industrial working class. In this work, he uses both vitriol and satire to illustrate how this marginalized social stratum was termed "Hands" by the factory owners; that is, not really
"people" but rather only appendages of the machines that they operated. His writings inspired others, in particular journalists and political figures, to address such problems of class oppression. For example, the prison scenes in *The Pickwick Papers* are claimed to have been influential in having the Fleet Prison shut down. As Karl Marx said, Dickens, and the other novelists of Victorian England, "...issued to the world more political and social truths than have been uttered by all the professional politicians, publicists and moralists put together..." The exceptional popularity of his novels, even those with socially oppositional themes (*Bleak House*, 1853; *Little Dorrit*, 1857; *Our Mutual Friend*, 1865) underscored not only his almost preternatural ability to create compelling storylines and unforgettable characters, but also ensured that the Victorian public confronted issues of social justice that had commonly been ignored.

His fiction, with often vivid descriptions of life in nineteenth century England, has inaccurately and anachronistically come to symbolize on a global level Victorian society (1837 – 1901) as uniformly "Dickensian", when in fact, his novels' time span spanned from the 1770s to the 1860s. In the decade following his death in 1870, a more intense degree of socially and philosophically pessimistic perspectives invested British fiction; such themes stood in marked contrast to the religious faith that ultimately held together even the bleakest of Dickens's novels. Dickens clearly influenced later Victorian novelists such as Thomas Hardy and George Gissing; their works display a greater willingness to confront and challenge the Victorian institution of religion. They also portray characters caught up by social forces (primarily via lower-class conditions), but they usually steered them to tragic ends beyond their control.

Novelists continue to be influenced by his books; for instance, such disparate current writers as Anne Rice, Tom Wolfe, and John Irving evidence direct Dickensian connections. Humorist James Finn Garner even wrote a tongue-in-cheek "politically correct" version of *A Christmas Carol*, and other affectionate parodies include the Radio 4 comedy *Bleak Expectations*. Matthew Pearl's novel *The Last Dickens* is a thriller about how Charles Dickens would have ended *The Mystery of Edwin Drood*. In the UK survey entitled *The Big Read* carried out by the BBC in 2003, five of Dickens' books were named in the Top 100, featuring alongside Terry Pratchett with the most. [66]

Although Dickens's life has been the subject of at least two TV miniseries, a television film *The Great Inimitable Mr. Dickens* in which he was portrayed by Anthony Hopkins, and two famous one-man shows, he has never been the subject of a Hollywood big screen biography.
A Christmas Carol History and Influence

*A Christmas Carol* is a novella by English author Charles Dickens first published by Chapman & Hall on 17 December 1843. The story tells of sour and stingy Ebenezer Scrooge's ideological, ethical, and emotional transformation after the supernatural visits of Jacob Marley and the Ghosts of Christmas Past, Present, and Yet to Come. The novella met with instant success and critical acclaim.

The book was written and published in early Victorian era Britain when it was experiencing a nostalgic interest in its forgotten Christmas traditions, and at the time when new customs such as the Christmas tree and greeting cards were being introduced. Dickens' sources for the tale appear to be many and varied but are principally the humiliating experiences of his childhood, his sympathy for the poor, and various Christmas stories and fairy tales.

The tale has been viewed as an indictment of nineteenth century industrial capitalism and was adapted several times to the stage, and has been credited with restoring the holiday to one of merriment and festivity in Britain and America after a period of sobriety. *A Christmas Carol* remains popular, has never been out of print, and has been adapted to film, opera, and other media.

**Source of *A Christmas Carol***

Dickens was not the first author to celebrate the Christmas season in literature, but it was he who superimposed his secular vision of the holiday upon the public. The forces that impelled Dickens to create a powerful, impressive, and enduring tale were the profoundly humiliating experiences of his childhood, the plight of the poor and their children during the boom decades of the 1830s and 1840s, Washington Irving's stories of the traditional old English Christmas, fairy tales and nursery stories, as well as satirical essays and religious tracts.
While Dickens' humiliating childhood experiences are not directly described in *A Christmas Carol*, his conflicting feelings for his father as a result of those experiences are principally responsible for the dual personality of the tale's protagonist, Ebenezer Scrooge. In 1824, Dickens' father was imprisoned in the Marshalsea and twelve-year-old Charles was forced to take lodgings nearby, pawn his collection of books, leave school, and accept employment in a blacking factory. The boy had a deep sense of class and intellectual superiority and was entirely uncomfortable in the presence of factory workers who referred to him as "the young gentleman". He developed nervous fits. When his father was released at the end of a three-month stint, young Dickens was forced to continue working in the factory, which only grieved and humiliated him further. He despaired of ever recovering his former happy life. The devastating impact of the period wounded him psychologically, colored his work, and haunted his entire life with disturbing memories. Dickens both loved and demonized his father, and it was this psychological conflict that was responsible for the two radically different Scrooges in the tale – one Scrooge, a cold, stingy, and greedy semi-recluse, and the other Scrooge, a benevolent, sociable man whose generosity and goodwill toward all men earn for him a near-saintly reputation. It was during this terrible period in Dickens' childhood that he observed the lives of the men, women, and children in the most impoverished areas of London and witnessed the social injustices they suffered.

Charles Dickens in 1842

Dickens was keenly touched by the lot of poor children in the middle decades of the 19th century. In early 1843, he toured the Cornish tin mines where he saw children working in appalling conditions. The suffering he witnessed there was reinforced by a visit to the Field Lane Ragged School, one of several London schools set up for the education of the capital's half-starved, illiterate street children. Inspired by the February 1843 parliamentary report exposing the effects of the Industrial Revolution upon poor children called *Second Report of the Children's Employment Commission*, Dickens planned in May 1843 to publish an inexpensive political pamphlet tentatively titled, "An Appeal to the People of England, on behalf of the Poor Man's Child" but changed his mind, deferring the pamphlet's production until the end of the year. He wrote to Dr. Southwood Smith, one of four commissioners responsible for the *Second Report*, about his change in plans: "[Y]ou will certainly feel that a Sledge hammer has come down with twenty times
the force – twenty thousand times the force – I could exert by following out my first idea." The pamphlet would become *A Christmas Carol*.

In a fund-raising speech on 5 October 1843 at the Manchester Athenæum (a charitable institution serving the poor), Dickens urged workers and employers to join together to combat ignorance with educational reform, and realized in the days following that the most effective way to reach the broadest segment of the population with his social concerns about poverty and injustice was to write a deeply-felt Christmas narrative rather than polemical pamphlets and essays. It was during his three days in Manchester, he conceived the plot of *Carol*.

Washington Irving's *The Sketch Book of Geoffrey Crayon*, depicting the harmonious warm-hearted English Christmas festivities he experienced while staying at Aston Hall, Birmingham, England, that had largely been abandoned, attracted Dickens, and the two authors shared the belief that the staging of a nostalgic English Christmas might restore a social harmony and well-being lost in the modern world. In "A Christmas Dinner" from *Sketches by Boz* (1833), Dickens had approached the holiday in a manner similar to Irving, and, in *The Pickwick Papers* (1837), he offered an idealized vision of an 18th century Christmas at Dingley Dell. In the *Pickwick* episode, a Mr. Wardle relates the tale of Gabriel Grub, a lonely and mean-spirited sexton, who undergoes a Christmas conversion after being visited by goblins who show him the past and future – the prototype of *A Christmas Carol*.

Other likely influences were a visit made by Dickens to the Western Penitentiary in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania in April 1842; the decade-long fascination on both sides of the Atlantic with spiritualism; fairy tales and nursery stories (which Dickens regarded as stories of conversion and transformation); contemporary religious tracts about conversion; and the works of Douglas Jerrold in general, but especially "The Beauties of the Police" (1843), a satirical and melodramatic essay about a father and his child forcibly separated in a workhouse, and another satirical essay by Jerrold which may have had a direct influence on Dickens' conception of Scrooge called "How Mr. Chokepear keeps a merry Christmas"
The Plot

Dickens divides the book into five chapters, which he labels "staves", that is, "(song) stanzas" in keeping with the title of the book (he uses a similar device in his next two Christmas books, titling the four divisions of *The Chimes*, "quarters", after the quarter-hour tolling of clock chimes, and naming the parts of *The Cricket on the Hearth* "chirps").

The tale begins on Christmas Eve in the 1840's, exactly seven years after the death of Ebenezer Scrooge's business partner, Jacob Marley. Scrooge is established within the first stave as a greedy and stingy businessman, who has no place in his life for kindness, compassion, charity or benevolence. After being warned by Marley's ghost to change his ways (so that he may avoid a miserable afterlife like him), Scrooge is visited by three additional ghosts; each in its turn, and each visit detailed in a separate stave, who accompany him to various scenes with the hope of achieving his transformation.

The first of the spirits, the Ghost of Christmas Past, takes Scrooge to the scenes of his boyhood and youth, which stir the old miser's gentle and tender side by reminding him of a time when he was more innocent. The second spirit, the Ghost of Christmas Present, takes Scrooge to several radically differing scenes (a joy-filled market of people buying the makings of Christmas dinner, the family feast of Scrooge's near-impoverished clerk Bob Cratchit, a miner's cottage, and a lighthouse, among other sites) in order to evince from the miser a sense of responsibility for his fellow man. The third spirit, the Ghost of Christmas Yet to Come, harrows Scrooge with dire visions of the future if he does not learn and act upon what he has witnessed. Scrooge's own neglected and untended grave is revealed, prompting the miser to aver that he will change his ways in hopes of changing these "shadows of what may be".

In the fifth and final stave, Scrooge awakens Christmas morning with joy and love in his heart, and then spends the day with his nephew's family after anonymously sending a prize turkey to the Cratchit home for Christmas dinner. Scrooge has become a different man overnight, and now treats his fellow men with kindness, generosity and compassion, gaining a reputation as a man who embodies the spirit of Christmas. The story closes with the narrator confirming the validity, completeness and permanence of Scrooge's transformation.
Publication

Dickens began to write *A Christmas Carol* in October 1843, and completed the book in six weeks with the final pages written in the beginning of December. As the result of a feud with his publisher over the meager earnings on his previous novel, *Martin Chuzzlewit*, Dickens declined a lump-sum payment for the tale, chose a percentage of the profits in hopes of making more money thereby, and published the work at his own expense. High production costs however brought him a mere £230 (equal to £19,128 today) rather than the £1,000 (equal to £83,164 today) he expected and needed, as his wife was once again pregnant.

Bound in red cloth with gilt-edged pages, the book was published in London by Chapman and Hall, and released on 17 December 1843. Four expensive, hand-colored etchings and four black and white wood engravings by John Leech accompanied the text. Production was not without problems. The drab olive endpapers were replaced for the second printing with yellow endpapers, but, once replaced, clashed with the title page which was then redone.

Modestly priced at five shillings (equal to £20.79 today) the first run of 6,000 copies sold out by Christmas Eve and the book continued to sell well into the New Year. By May 1844, a seventh edition had sold out. In all, twenty-four editions ran in its original form. In spite of the disappointing profits for the author, the book was a huge artistic success with most critics responding positively.
Critical reception

The book received immediate critical acclaim. The London literary magazine the *Athenæum* declared it, "A tale to make the reader laugh and cry—to open his hands, and open his heart to charity even toward the uncharitable [...] a dainty dish to set before a King." Poet and editor Thomas Hood wrote, "If Christmas, with its ancient and hospitable customs, its social and charitable observances, were ever in danger of decay, this is the book that would give them a new lease. The very name of the author predisposes one to the kindlier feelings; and a peep at the Frontispiece sets the animal spirits capering [...]."

William Makepeace Thackeray in *Fraser's Magazine* (February 1844) pronounced the book, "a national benefit and to every man or woman who reads it, a personal kindness. The last two people I heard speak of it were women; neither knew the other, or the author, and both said, by way of criticism, 'God bless him!'" Thackeray wrote about Tiny Tim, "There is not a reader in England but that little creature will be a bond of union between the author and him; and he will say of Charles Dickens, as the woman just now, 'GOD BLESS HIM!' What a feeling this is for a writer to inspire, and what a reward to reap!"

Even the caustic critic Theodore Martin (who was usually virulently hostile to Dickens), spoke well of the book, noting it was "[...] finely felt, and calculated to work much social good". A few critics registered their complaints. *The New Monthly Magazine*, for example, thought the book's physical magnificence kept it from being available to the poor and recommended the tale be printed on cheap paper and priced accordingly. The religious press generally ignored the tale but, in January 1884, *Christian Remembrancer* thought the tale's old and hackneyed subject was treated in an original way and praised the author's sense of humor and pathos. Dickens later noted that he received "by every post, all manner of strangers writing all manner of letters about their homes and hearths, and how the Carol is read aloud there, and kept on a very little shelf by itself". After Dickens' death, Margaret Oliphant deplored the turkey and plum pudding aspects of the book but admitted that in the days of its first publication it was regarded as "a new gospel" and noted that the book was unique in that it actually made people behave better.

Americans were less enthusiastic. Dickens had wounded their national pride with *American Notes for General Circulation* and *Martin Chuzzlewit*, but *Carol* was too compelling to be dismissed, and, by the end of the American Civil War, copies of the book were in wide circulation. *The New York Times* published an enthusiastic review in 1863 noting that the author brought the "old Christmas [...] of bygone centuries and remote manor houses, into the living rooms of the poor of today" while the *North American Review* believed Dickens's "fellow feeling with the race is his genius"; and John Greenleaf Whittier thought the book charming, "inwardly and outwardly".
For Americans, Scrooge’s redemption may have recalled that of the United States as it recovered from war and the curmudgeon’s charitable generosity to the poor in the final pages a reflection of a similar generosity practiced by Americans as they sought solutions to poverty. The book’s issues are detectable from a slightly different perspective in Frank Capra's *It's a Wonderful Life* (1946) and Scrooge is likely an influence upon Dr. Seuss's *How the Grinch Stole Christmas!* (1957).

**Impact**

*The Ghost of Christmas Present*

*Parley's Illuminated Library* pirated the tale in January 1844, and, though Dickens sued and won his case, the literary pirates simply declared bankruptcy. Dickens was left to pay £700 in costs, equal to £56,364 today. The entanglements of the various suits Dickens brought against the publishers, his resulting financial losses, and the slim profits from the sale of *Carol*, greatly disappointed Dickens. He felt a very special affection for the book's moral lesson and its message of love and generosity. In his tale of a man who is given a second chance to live a good life, he was demonstrating to his readers that they, too, could achieve a similar salvation in a selfish world that had blunted their generosity and compassion.

The novella was adapted for the stage almost immediately. Three productions opened on 5 February 1844 with one by Edward Stirling sanctioned by Dickens and running for more than forty nights. By the close of February 1844, eight rival *Carol* theatrical productions were playing in London. Stirling's version played New York City's Park Theater during the Christmas season of 1844 and was revived in London the same year. Hundreds of newsboys gathered for a musical version of the tale at the Chatham Theater in New York City in 1844 but brawling broke out which was only quelled when offenders were led off by police to The Tombs. Even after order had been restored in the
theater, the clamorous cries of one youngster drowned out the bass drum that ushered Marley onto the stage as he rose through a trap door.

In the years following the book's publication, responses to the tale were published by W. M. Swepstone (*Christmas Shadows*, 1850), Horatio Alger (*Job Warner's Christmas*, 1863), Louisa May Alcott (*A Christmas Dream, and How It Came True*, 1882), and others who followed Scrooge's life as a reformed man – or some who thought Dickens had gotten it wrong and needed to be corrected.

Dickens himself returned to the tale time and again during his life to tweak the phrasing and punctuation, and capitalized on the success of the book by annually publishing other Christmas stories in 1844, 1845, 1846, and 1848. *The Chimes, The Cricket on the Hearth, The Battle of Life*, and *The Haunted Man and the Ghost's Bargain* were all based on the pattern laid down in *Carol* – a secular conversion tale laced with social injustice. While the public eagerly bought the later books, the critics bludgeoned them. Dickens himself questioned *The Battle of Life's* worth.

By 1849, Dickens was engaged with *David Copperfield* and had neither the time nor the inclination to produce another Christmas book. Disappointed with those that followed *Carol*, he decided the best way to reach his audience with his 'Carol philosophy' was via public readings. In 1853, *Carol* was the text chosen for his first public reading with the performance an immense success. Thereafter, he read the tale in an abbreviated version 127 times, until 1870 (the year of his death) when it provided the material for his farewell performance.
Themes

Dickens wrote in the wake of British government changes to the welfare system known as the Poor Laws, changes which required among other things, welfare applicants to work on treadmills. Dickens asks, in effect, for people to recognize the plight of those whom the Industrial Revolution has displaced and driven into poverty, and the obligation of society to provide for them humanely. Failure to do so, the writer implies through the personification of Ignorance and Want as ghastly children, will result in an unnamed "Doom" for those who, like Scrooge, believe their wealth and status qualifies them to sit in judgment of the poor rather than to assist them.

Some critics have suggested that Scrooge's redemption underscores what they see as the conservative, individualistic, and patriarchal aspects of Dickens's 'Carol philosophy', which propounded the idea of a more fortunate individual willingly looking after a less fortunate one. Personal moral conscience and individual action led in effect to a form of 'noblesse oblige' which was expected of those individuals of means.

Legacy

While the phrase 'Merry Christmas' was popularized following the appearance of the story, and the name 'Scrooge' and exclamation 'Bah! Humbug!' have entered the English language, Ruth Glancy argues the book's singular achievement is the powerful influence it has exerted upon its readers. In the spring of 1844, The Gentleman's Magazine attributed a sudden burst of charitable giving in Britain to Dickens's novella; in 1874, Robert Louis Stevenson waxed enthusiastic after reading Dickens's Christmas books and vowed to give generously; and Thomas Carlyle expressed a generous hospitality by staging two Christmas dinners after reading the book. In America, a Mr. Fairbanks attended a reading on Christmas Eve in Boston, Massachusetts in 1867, and was so moved he closed his factory on Christmas Day and sent every employee a turkey. In the early years of the 20th century, the Queen of Norway sent gifts to London's crippled children signed "With Tiny Tim's Love"; Sir Squire Bancroft raised £20,000 for the poor by reading the tale aloud publicly; and Captain Corbett-Smith read the tale to the troops in the trenches of World War I.

According to historian Ronald Hutton, the current state of observance of Christmas is largely the result of a mid-Victorian revival of the holiday spearheaded by A Christmas Carol. Hutton argues that Dickens sought to construct Christmas as a family-centered festival of generosity, in contrast to the community-based and church-centered observations, the observance of which had dwindled during the late 18th and early 19th centuries. In superimposing his secular vision of the holiday, Dickens influenced many aspects of Christmas that are celebrated today in Western culture, such as family gatherings, seasonal food and drink, dancing, games, and a festive generosity of spirit.
Curriculum Connections

The following curriculum elements have been taken from the Memphis City Schools Instructional Guides. In general, each objective either relates directly to the study and performance of A Christmas Carol. This list is not meant to be exhaustive, and we encourage teachers to look at their curriculum guides and use the stories as a springboard for many kinds of learning—in the language arts and in other subject areas. The writing objectives, especially, can be approached through the stories in many different ways.

The guide covers grades 1-5 language arts; teachers of older students will easily be able to adapt the 5th grade guide or any of the appropriate activities for them. Kindergarten teachers will be able to adapt the 1st grade activities. Some social studies curriculum connections follow the language arts connections.

Grade 1

Reading Comprehension

Determine an unstated main idea.
Respond to the text by drawing conclusions.
State the main idea of a passage or story.
Find the stated main idea of a passage.
   State in own words the main idea of a story or passage that was read aloud.
For all of these objectives, the folktales/myths are an excellent source of learning. They lend themselves to summarizing, since the whole purpose of a myth is to explain some natural phenomenon—where does wisdom come from, or the moon. Finding these allows the students to easily state the main idea of a story.
Distinguish between fact and fantasy in terms of “real” and “not real.”
   Explain the sequence of a story that was read aloud by recalling main events and retelling the story in order.
The stories—short, repetitive, climactic—lend themselves to this activity.
   Listen to, read, and discuss a wide variety of literary genres.
Other Explore literary media through read-aloud, tapes, library centers.
Drama is the ultimate read-aloud.
Compare and contrast events and characters.
Classify characters and events.
   Describe characters and the roles that they play.
Several characters lend themselves to compare and contrast—Scrooge, Fred, Bob Crachit—also lend themselves to classification and description.
Make predictions based on picture clues and prior knowledge.
Theatre uses pictures to tell a story, just like a beautifully illustrated book. Where the actors are standing on stage, how they are facing each other, their body posture—all these things tell audience members what is happening within the scene. Children can be asked to recreate a picture that they saw on stage, and to explain what was happening, either orally or through writing.
Distinguish between reality and fantasy.
   Verbalizing this difference is much easier when actors are used to illustrate the concept.
Identify the theme in terms of “what the text is mostly about.”
   Discuss an author’s purpose for writing.
The myths have a clearly defined purpose that is easily discussed.

Reenact or retell the plot of a story.
Draw conclusions based on prior knowledge and form unique interpretations.
Determine the sequence of events in a story.
Determine cause and effect by describing “what caused something to happen.”
Create unique interpretations.
This could lend itself to an especially rich activity, in which children write and perform their own fable.
Describe/Depict the order in which events occurred.

**Speaking and Listening**
Describe the characters in a story.
Describe the setting of a story.
Summarize a story.
The dramatic form lends itself well to all of these activities.
Listen to and comprehend stories read aloud.
Answer questions after listening to an oral selection.
Participate in a discussion.
The excitement that will be generated by seeing a live performance helps with these objectives.
Observe conventions for polite listening.
Theatre etiquette is covered before each performance.
Dramatize/role-play a character.
Retell a story or message.
Give an oral description of characters or events.
Identify the main idea of a story read aloud.
Draw conclusions from stated facts within a speech/story.
At a post-performance discussion, all of these things happen easily.
Listen to a description and respond by writing or drawing.
Recite an original work.
Participate in a discussion of a poem or story.

**Grade 2**
**Reading Comprehension**
Recognize and retell the sequence of events in a story.
Infer the cause and effect relationships in a story or passage.
Determine cause and effect in stories.
Some sample questions include, “How did people react to Scrooge? Why did they react that to him? How did Scrooge behave toward people?”
Compare and contrast story events.
Draw conclusions from given facts.
Identify the main idea of a story.
Determine an unstated main idea.
Discuss or write about the theme (message) of the book.
Determine the topic, main idea, and important details in a passage.
Identify and explain the sequence of the story.
    Identify and describe the characters in the story.
    The characters in these pieces are brought to life in an immediate way, and students will be eager to describe and depict them.
Identify the author’s purpose in a narrative.
Identify the setting of a story.
Describe the setting in a story.
    Recognize literary devices—point of view, narration, rhythm, dialogue.
    Each of the previous literary devices mentioned is used within the production of A Christmas Carol.
Explore a variety of literature—animal fantasy.
Compare realism vs. fantasy.
Distinguish between realism and fantasy.
Discuss the plot of a story.
Describe, depict, or re-enact the plot of a story.
Summarize stories.
Put events in sequential order.
    Make predictions that extend beyond the text.
    Identify and depict character traits (through drawing or dramatization).
    Make judgments about the actions of characters in stories.
Use evidence from the text to make judgments about characters and events.
    Read a wide variety of texts—drama.

Writing
Recognize and compose complete sentences.
Narrate events in sequence.
Arrange words in logical order to form sentences, paragraphs.
Select a variety of writing assignments, independent and collaborative—stories, character descriptions, plays/scenes, paragraphs.
Compose brief stories, with beginnings, middles, and ends.
    Incorporate dialogue and description into…plays or scenes.
    Each of these objectives can be met by writing in various genres about the performance.

Speaking/Listening
Listen politely, observing conventions for listening etiquette.
Listen to and comprehend stories read aloud.
Listen for musical elements—rhythm, repetition.
    Listen to passages attentively and state the purpose of the passages.
    Each of these objectives may be met during the performance, provided some guidance is given in the classroom previously, and checked post-performance.
Communicate thoughts, feelings, and information orally.
Answer questions after listening to oral selections.
Participate in class discussions.
Describe events, characters, or ideas.
    Respond to stories by giving reviews or discussing plot development.
Each of these objectives may be met during a class discussion following the performance.

Tell original stories.
Role-play characters from stories or passages.

**Grade 3**

**Reading—Literary Exploration**

Explore a wide variety of grade level texts, including drama, folktales, myth. (3.1.spi.10 and 3.1.spi.15)

Reading Comprehension
Identify cause and effect relationships.
E.g., “Scrooge changed his mind about Christmas because…,” or “Belle called off her engagement from Scrooge because he was becoming too greedy.”

Predict outcomes and draw logical conclusions.
E.g., “If Scrooge doesn’t change his ways, he won’t be mourned when he dies,” or “If Tiny Tim doesn’t receive medical help, he will die.”

Recall the sequence of events.
State the author’s purpose.
Explain an author’s purpose.
- Discuss an author’s main purpose for writing.
  - The myths have a very clear purpose, easily grasped by students of this age.
- Make judgments about the actions and characteristics of characters.
  - E.g., “Marley’s Ghost is eager to prepare Scrooge for the arrival of the Christmas ghosts, since that might provide them both with some relief.”

Identify main idea and supporting details.
Identify stated and unstated main ideas.
Locate and collect information—use library skills to find information and sources.
Distinguish between realism and fantasy
- Use context clues to determine the meaning of unfamiliar words.
  - The student will, in all likelihood, encounter many unfamiliar words. Seeing them used in a play enables the student to determine the meanings of those words, and better understand what context is.

Place or retell events in sequential order.
Use prior knowledge and story details to analyze story elements—theme, setting.
Determine cause and effect.
Compare and contrast different types of texts—other folk tales.
- Describe important events in a story that make up a plot.
**Writing**

Write creatively to story responses.
Create dialogue for original stories.
Develop a character sketch that uses descriptive words and phrases to make the character come alive.
Create your own holiday story involving a lesson
Write “thank you” letters that follow correct friendly letter format.
A letter to the actors telling them thank you is always appreciated! Too, the children may articulate their favorite parts of the production.

**Speaking/Listening**
Tell original stories.
Listen to stories and make inferences.
Observe proper listening etiquette.
Brainstorm ideas in group settings.
Retell stories or speeches by summarizing, clarifying, and acting out.
Role play different story characters.
Use proper voice and enunciation.
Participate in literature discussion groups.
Read aloud with fluency and expression.
Perform dramatic interpretations or pantomimes.
Draw inferences from oral presentations.
All of these will be addressed in the Activities section.

**Grade 4**

**Literary Exploration**
Read and interpret a wide variety of texts and genres, including folk tales, myth, drama/plays. (4.1.spi.4 Unit)

**Reading Comprehension**
Describe a story’s setting in terms of time and place.
Identify clue words that show comparison and contrast.
Discern an author’s purpose (entertain, inform, express, or persuade).
Analyze characters…
By attending to what they think, say, and do,
By paying attention to how other characters treat them,
By paying attention to what others say about them.
Use sensory input to create mental pictures of characters, settings, and events.
Infer cause and effect relationships.
Identify stated and unstated main ideas.
Use text evidence and prior knowledge to make predictions about characters and situations.
Use context clues to draw conclusions and make predictions.
Make judgments about people, situations, and ideas in reading selections.
Draw conclusions about characters and situations in stories and support them with evidence from the text.
Make connections between characters and events in one story or between different stories. This will be particularly exciting when the stories that the connections are being made among are presented in close proximity to one another.

Check understanding of story by summarizing/paraphrasing important points.

Trace plot development and describe the problem around which the plot revolves.

Use summarizing to enhance comprehension.

Identify parts of a plot (background, problem/conflict, climax, resolution).

Predict an author’s purpose and adjust reading strategies to fit that purpose.

Use sensory details in the text combined with prior knowledge to form mental images.

Discern the main idea and supporting details in works of fiction and nonfiction.

Predict an author’s purpose and adjust reading to fit that purpose.

State an author’s purpose and support with evidence from the text.

Discuss how the purpose affected/guided reading behaviors.

Recognize literary devices and determine the meanings of figurative terms—imagery, narration, humor.

Writing

Use an organized writing process to compose original works.

Write personal narratives that have clear beginnings, middles, and ends.

Write organized paragraphs that contain a variety of sentence lengths and types.

Write comments or summaries that extend the meanings of reading selections.

Choose/select an appropriate title.

Write fables and other original stories that imitate or alter elements of stories read in class.

Write comparison/contrast essays.

Write news articles describing real or fictitious events.

Include the 5 W’s (who, what, where, when, why).

Target a specific audience for the articles.

Compose thank-you notes.

Write character sketches.

Incorporate dialogue and punctuate quotations correctly.

Use vivid words to create a detailed impression.

Write well-developed stories.

Write biographical and autobiographical texts.

Speaking/Listening

Describe the characteristics of good listeners and speakers.

Use listening and speaking to monitor personal learning.

Storytelling—share original stories, or retell stories discussing specific character and events.

Retell fairy tales, changing some aspect of the tale.

Present a readers theatre performance.

Divide parts among group members.

Depict mood, tone, and characters’ voices/mannerisms.

Develop speaking skills through dramatic interpretation.
Tell stories or anecdotes.

**Viewing/Representing**
Choose a story character deserving of an award; design and construct awards.
Depict a scene from a story by creating a mural.
Use a variety of media (art, etc.) to respond to literature.

**Grade 5-Grade 12**

**Reading**
Reading Comprehension Strategies and Concepts
Sequence
Recognize that chronological order is a way of organizing events in a story.
Learn to keep track of a sequence in order to recognize how one event leads to another.
Identify clue words from the story to help determine the sequence of events.
Analyze how the sequence of events in the story can help build suspense.

**Plot**
Identify the four parts of a story plot: conflict, rising action, climax, and outcome.
Describe what takes place in each part.
Analyze elements of plot structure.

**Character**
Analyze characters on the basis of what they say and do and how other characters react to them.
Analyze character traits and examine characters’ relationships with others.
Recognize that both people and animals can be characters in fiction.
Use character traits to understand characters’ motives and predict how they will change.

**Generalizing**
Recognize that a generalization is a statement about several things or people
Use clue words to identify generalizations
Support a valid generalization with evidence from the text

**Cause and Effect**
Identify what happens (effects) and why it happens (causes) when no cue words are provided and when a cause is not directly stated.
Track situations with multiple causes and/or effects.
Visualize story clues to identify cause and effect.

**Author’s Purpose**
Recognize that authors often have more than one purpose for writing, such as to persuade, to inform, to entertain, or to express.
Identify an author’s purpose that is not stated in the text.
Analyze the author’s choice of words and phrases to identify the author’s viewpoint.
Recognize balanced and unbalanced writing on the basis of the sides of an issue presented.
Use word choice to figure out the author’s viewpoint when it is not directly stated.

**Drawing Conclusions**
Use details and facts from the text, as well as own experience, to draw conclusions.
Use logic to form reasonable conclusions.

**Fact and Opinion**
Realize that facts can be proven true or false.
Explain why opinions cannot be proven true or false.
Identify facts and opinions.

**Short Stories**
Identify the distinguishing characteristics of short stories.
Trace plot development in short stories.

**Literary Devices**
**Mood**
Learn how the author uses details to create a particular mood.
Describe the meaning of mood in a story.
Identify elements that determine mood.

**Narration and Dialogue**
Identify dialogue in a work of fiction.
Explain how dialogue can help the readers know a character.
Distinguish between narration and dialogue.
Identify how narration and dialogue move the story forward.

**Humor**
Define “humor.”
Identify examples of humor.

**Research and Study Skills**
**Poster/Announcement**
Interpret a poster/announcement
Create a sample poster/announcement
Creating a poster for Anansi Does the Impossible is a great way to get students excited about the upcoming production.

**Writing**
**Forms of Student Writing**
Write descriptive passages that paint mental pictures.

Write character sketches using sensory images to create vivid pictures.
Write stories and personal narratives.
Select the best/most appropriate title for a written selection.
Write newspaper articles that report facts accurately, objectively, and in a logical order. (See activities)
Compose expository paragraphs that explain something.
Write paragraphs or essays that compare and contrast characters, situations, or events.
Write well-developed stories and personal narratives.
Create scenes for a play using dialogue and stage directions to tell a story and convey a mood.

**Speaking and Listening**

**Speaking**
Determine the appropriate etiquette for speaking in different situations and for different purposes.
Select a play to be presented as a readers theatre.
Participate in readers theatre productions—use dramatization, improvise scenes, and incorporate pantomime.
Exhibit poise and confidence in oral presentations.
Describe the imagery in a passage read aloud.
Present oral reports that use visuals, props, and graphic tools to support ideas.
Participate in literary discussions.

**Listening Strategies**
Discuss literature to enhance understanding.
Listen for order and sequence in a story and write down the events.
Determine the main idea and supporting details of a text by listening for text structure, chronological order of events, and cause and effect relationships.
Compare and contrast a book and a movie version (substitute dramatic version) of the same story.
Read and record a story or passage and critique own performance.

**Social Studies Curriculum Connections**

**Culture**

*Diversity of Human Culture*
Recognize that people live in many different places throughout the world
Demonstrate that people everywhere have the same basic needs but may meet them differently
Retell stories from diversely selected folk tales, myths, and legends.
Recognize contributions of individuals and people of various ethnic, racial, religious, and socioeconomic groups.

*Cultures and Human Patterns*
Determine similarities and differences in the ways different cultural groups address basic human needs—literature and music
Identify and explain the significance of selected individual writers and artists and their stories, poems, statues, paintings, and other examples of cultural heritage from regions
Diversity
Recognize the major components of a culture (3.1.spi.1)
Customs, beliefs, language
Changes in culture
Demonstrate how language helps us understand other cultures.
Stores from Folktales, Myths, and Legends
Recognize that fables and other stories teach lessons
Describe how children can discover many new things about their world
through folktalkes, myths, and legends.

History
Historical people and events in context of past, present, and future
Recognize that other countries have a longer history than the US

Projects for the Classroom

The following projects can be either far-reaching and thorough or quick and simple. Shorter activities are listed first, and longer activities follow. Variations for accommodating your individual needs follow each activity.

Shorter Activities

Students compare and contrast two of the ghosts in A Christmas Carol.

Students can write a letter to the actors. A thank you letter is always lovely, but a friendly letter that discusses some of the performance details is also nice. These letters may be accompanied by illustrations, if desired. A variation on this theme—students can write a letter to one of the characters in the stories, or even as one of the characters in the story. (e.g., “Dear Belle, I have always wanted to tell you…” etc.)

Students may design and build awards suggested by the play. Fezziwig might receive the merriest award, Mrs. Dilber might receive the tricky award, or Mrs. Fezziwig might receive best dancer!

Students may design and build masks for the characters in the stories. Since this play uses a mask for Marley’s ghost, a jumping-off point for discussion already exists. The ghosts in particular lend themselves to masks. The students’ mask designs will be particularly interesting if they have examined different kinds of masks from different cultures, and if they design the masks before seeing the performance. An interesting discussion can develop from comparing the students’ designs with the masks worn by the actors. Some kinds of masks to study include Japanese Noh theatre, Ancient Greek theatre, African tribal, and modern theatre.
**Longer Activity**

*Write and perform your own Myth.*

Students write a holiday—a story that in some way illustrates the. Characters within the story will most likely be limited to 2 or 3. When finished, the student presents the story to the class.