TEACHER’S GUIDE

2014-2015 Class Acts season sponsored by PNC

A Christmas Carol

Tuesday, December 16, 2014
10:00 AM

SANGAMON AUDITORIUM
Dear Educator,

Welcome to Class Acts at Sangamon Auditorium, UIS! We hope this guide will help you expand on concepts from this particular performance and incorporate them into your classroom teaching, both before and after the performance. We want students to think of the arts as an integral part of their lives, not just a one-time isolated event.

Before arriving at the Auditorium, you can prepare your students by helping them understand the story or by sharing basic information about the performing art form they are going to see. We also ask you to review the theater etiquette information with your students (found on pages 2-3 of this guide) to help prepare them for attending a live performance.

After the performance you can talk to your students about their experience. Did they like the performance? What did they learn? How was the performance different than what they expected? We hope the information and activity ideas included in this guide will help your students gain a deeper understanding of the performance they see.

We look forward to seeing you! If you have any questions about these materials, please feel free to contact me at 217.206.6150 or azepp2@uis.edu.

Amy Zepp
Audience Development Coordinator

Youth programming in the Class Acts series and in conjunction with other Sangamon Auditorium events is supported in part by the Helen Hamilton Performing Arts Endowment for Youth Fund, gifts from Elizabeth and Robert Staley, and a grant from the Illinois Arts Council, a state agency.
Theater Etiquette

Going to a live theatrical performance is different than watching a movie or TV show – the members of the audience are very important, and the way they behave will affect the performance. Therefore, theaters have their own special rules about behavior.

- **Ask the ushers if you need help with anything** – The people who wear red coats are volunteer ushers, and they want to make sure everyone is able to enjoy the performance. They will guide you to your seat, and they can help you find a restroom. In any emergency situation, the ushers will help guide your class to safety. There may be as many as 1700 people coming to see the performance. Please follow the instructions of the ushers at all times.

- **Turn off and put away cell phones, iPods, electronic games, beeping watches, or anything else that can light up or make noise** – These can be very distracting to the performers and your fellow audience members.

- **Do not eat, drink, or chew gum in the auditorium** – Even the quietest chewers and slurpers make a great deal of noise in the auditorium! The noise is very distracting to the performers and to the other people around you. Also, even if you are very careful, food and drinks can sometimes make a mess in the auditorium. We try to keep the auditorium as clean as possible so that it will be just as nice for the next audience.

- **Never throw anything in the auditorium** – This is distracting and dangerous for the performers and people in the audience.

- **Do not put your feet on the back of the seat in front of you**

- **Please do not wear a hat inside the auditorium** – It is difficult for the people behind you to see the stage if you’re wearing a hat.

- **Use the restroom before the performance begins** – As soon as your class arrives and is seated in the auditorium, your teacher can arrange visits to the restroom before the performance begins. The ushers will help you find the closest restroom. Of course, if you must use the restroom during the performance, please be as quiet as possible about leaving your seat. Once you get to the aisle, an usher will help you find the way.

- **When the lights begin to dim, the performance is beginning** – This tells the audience to stop conversations, get settled in their seats, and focus their attention on the stage. A person will come out and make an announcement before the performance begins. Pay close attention to the announcement because it might include special instructions that you will need to remember.
• **Remember that the overture is part of the performance** – If the performance has music in it, there might be an opening piece of music called an overture before any actors appear on stage. Give this piece of music the same respect you give the performers by being silent and attentive while the overture is played.

• **Do not take pictures or recordings during the performance** – The flashes can be distracting to performers, and it is against the law to take pictures or recordings of many performances.

• **Refrain from talking, whispering, singing along, or tapping in time to the music during the performance** – Remember that live performers can see and hear you from the stage. It is very distracting to the performers and the other audience members if you talk during the performance. After all, the audience came to hear the professionals perform, not you! Save your singing for the ride home.

• **It’s ok to react to the performance** – Spontaneous laughter, applause, and gasps of surprise are welcome as part of the special connection between the performers and the audience during a live show. However, shouts, loud comments, and other inappropriate noises are rude and distracting to the actors and your fellow audience members.

• **Clap at the appropriate times** – If you are enjoying the performance, you can let the performers know by clapping for them. During a play or musical, you can clap between scenes (during a blackout) or after songs. During a music concert or dance performance you can clap after each piece is performed. In a jazz music concert it is ok to clap in the middle of a song when a musician has finished a solo. If a music ensemble plays a piece with several sections, called movements, the audience will usually only clap at the very end of all the movements.

• **The performers will bow when the performance ends** – This is called a curtain call. You should applaud to thank the performers for their hard work, but you should not move around or begin to leave the auditorium until the curtain call is over and the lights become brighter. If you really enjoyed the performance, you are welcome to give a standing ovation while you applaud. This is reserved for performances you feel are truly outstanding!

• **Respect the hard work of the performers** – You may not enjoy every performance you see, but I hope you will recognize that each performance requires a tremendous amount of dedication on the part of the performers and those who work backstage. It is polite to keep any negative comments to yourself until you have left the building.
Class Acts and Common Core

Attendance at any Class Acts event can help teachers meet Common Core Standards. The clearest example can be found in the Standard for Speaking and Listening, #2:

*Integrate and evaluate information presented in diverse media and formats, including visually, quantitatively, and orally.*

The experience of attending a live performance is a unique format that can greatly enhance a student’s understanding of an important topic or theme.

Additionally, in the Common Core Standards for Reading, the definition of the word “text” can be expanded to include non-printed works such as dance, music, theater, and visual arts. This makes the arts an important part of all standards in the Reading category, at every grade level.

Write to Us!

We would love to hear from you and your students! If your students write about the performance they saw or create artwork related to it, you are welcome to send it to us via email to azepp2@uis.edu or through the mail to

*Class Acts*
Sangamon Auditorium, UIS
One University Plaza, MS PAC 397
Springfield, IL 62703-5407

We love sharing student work with our Class Acts sponsors, so they can see the impact of their donations.
INTRODUCTION

Charles Dickens (1812-1870) is considered by many to be the greatest English novelist of all time. In addition to the creation of remarkable, and often eccentric, characters, (who often have eccentric names to match) Dickens also sought to provide social commentary along with his memorable stories. His style is so distinctive that similar works are often described by the term “Dickensian.” In addition to being a writer, he was a court reporter, a magazine publisher, and an accomplished actor. At the end of his career, Dickens was very much in demand on the lecture circuit, and was acclaimed for his dramatic readings of his own work.

Dickens’ first novel, The Posthumous Papers of the Pickwick Club (1837), established his reputation as a skillful writer; it was followed closely by another popular work, The Adventures of Oliver Twist (1838). It was fashionable at the time to publish novels one chapter at a time (serial publication), a method that Dickens favored because it made his work affordable to the average citizen. Yet even after these and successive literary triumphs, the author found himself in need of money in the fall of 1843. With a baby on the way (his fifth), Dickens quickly penned a story with a Christmas theme to be published that December – the first of his works to be published “all at once”. Because he paid for the cost of publication himself, he was able to make the little book affordable to as many people as possible (it sold for about 1/6 of the price of a full-length novel).

A Christmas Carol was an instant success (although, ironically, Dickens did not make a fortune because of the high cost of the book’s production; however, its popularity did help future sales of his work). The time of its publication coincided with a revival of Christmas traditions in Victorian England, including the custom of decorating a Christmas tree (made popular again by Prince Albert), the singing of Christmas carols, and the introduction of the Christmas card (c. 1843)

The immense popularity of Dickens’ A Christmas Carol contributed to these holiday traditions and is part of the reason that the Victorian era is so closely associated with the Christmas holiday. After A Christmas Carol, fans demanded a new Christmas story each holiday season (see FOR FURTHER INFORMATION); but the original remained the most popular, and is easily the most widely read of Dickens’ works. In fact, its main character, Ebenezer Scrooge, is even immortalized in the English language – the term Scrooge is now used to describe any miserly person. Most significantly, the moral message of A Christmas Carol – that the holiday season should be “a kind, forgiving, charitable time” – is still remembered in modern times.

THE PLAY

The best way to familiarize students with the story of A Christmas Carol is to read Dickens’ original story (or an abridged version for younger readers, of which there are many). The characters in our musical adaptation include the miserly Ebenezer Scrooge; his poor but happy employee, Bob Cratchit; Cratchit’s family, including the frail Tiny Tim; Ebenezer’s loyal nephew, Fred; and, Fan, Scrooge’s late sister (in flashback). The day before Christmas, Scrooge is as surly as on any other day of the year; refusing to see any significance to the holiday, he acts as he always does -- mistreating Bob Cratchit, his clerk, refusing to contribute to the local charity, and turning down his nephew’s invitation to celebrate Christmas with his family. Ebenezer insists that Christmas is nothing but “humbug” -- he’s even grateful that it only comes “but once a year.” It is only that night when he is visited by a succession of spirits – the ghost of Jacob Marley (his deceased partner) and the Ghosts of Christmases Past, Present, and Yet-to-Come -- that Scrooge learns the consequences of both his past and present actions and reconsiders his point of view. Grateful for a “second chance,” Scrooge vows to help his fellow man – including Bob Cratchit and his little son, Tiny Tim – and is reunited with his family, finally accepting his nephew’s offer to share his holiday celebration. Though it all may only have been a dream, Ebenezer Scrooge is a changed man.

BEFORE SEEING THE PERFORMANCE

1. Familiarize students with the country and customs of England (Great Britain). Where is it located? How long has the country been in existence? How is Great Britain different than the United States (language? customs)? Have they ever heard someone speak with a “British accent”? The story was written in the 1840s and takes place in the large

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1David Perdue’s Charles Dickens Page (Dickens and Christmas), see address at the end of this guide.
2. What do you associate with the holiday season (whatever holiday your family celebrates)? (“Peace on Earth, Good Will Toward Men?”) What special things do you do? Do you eat special foods? Do you visit family? Does your school do something for the community, like collect toys, clothing, or canned goods? Why do you think that people do these kinds of things around this time of year? Watch for the ways that the characters in *A Christmas Carol* celebrate the holiday.

3. Review the brief **Vocabulary** list below. You may also wish to review Charles Dickens’ original story, or an abridged version for younger readers, although it is not necessary in order to understand the play. (Although a film version, of which there are many (see “FOR FURTHER INFORMATION”) would be interesting to compare to the play, we suggest that students view a film adaptation after seeing the play -- to avoid confusion and to preserve the element of surprise!)

**A CHRISTMAS CAROL: Vocabulary**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>English</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>carol</strong></td>
<td>a song associated with Christmas; from the medieval (14th century) French word, <em>carole</em>, which originally meant a circle dance; the word could also have been derived from the Latin <em>choraula</em> (choral song).</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>mistletoe</strong></td>
<td>a type of plant with green leaves and white berries; according to Christmas tradition, if you meet someone “under the mistletoe,” you are obligated to KISS them!</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>crown</strong>*</td>
<td>British coin (no longer in use) = five shillings</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>shilling</strong>*</td>
<td>British unit of money (c. 1840 = 12 British pennies, or “pence”)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>ha’penny</strong>*</td>
<td>British unit of money, = half a penny</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>workhouse</strong></td>
<td>a place where poor people or those guilty of minor crimes (usually owing money) were sent and forced to work as their punishment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>humbug</strong></td>
<td>nonsense; especially something designed to be deceptive or misleading</td>
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*NOTE REGARDING CURRENCY: Although it’s hard to translate exchange rates from so long ago, to give students an idea of the worth of British currency c. 1840, bread or a drink cost about a penny, a full meal was 4 “pence” to sixpence, and a cheap room could be had for about sixpence -- source: Educational Management Group

**POST-PERFORMANCE DISCUSSION**

1. As soon as possible after seeing the play, talk about it with your class. Discuss the theatrical elements of the performance. How did the set design, costumes, music, etc., enhance the story? (Example: How did the music help to set the mood?) Who was their favorite character and why? Did they notice which actors played more than one part? How did the costumes help to make the actors look like different characters? What did the actors do (change their voices and accents, or move differently?) to make you think they were different people (or ghosts)? Can a volunteer from the class imitate their favorite character?

2. When the character of Scrooge first appeared, what did you think of him? Did your opinion change after the Ghost of Christmas Past took him to revisit his younger days? What kinds of things happened in Ebenezer’s childhood that influenced his life as an adult (and his feelings about Christmas)? Why do some people become bitter when they are mistreated while others don’t? Do you think that someone like Scrooge would always have the potential to change, or is it ever “too late” for someone to change their ways?

3. What kinds of things did the characters in *A Christmas Carol* do to celebrate the holiday? How did the celebrations of the different families differ? (For instance, Fezziwigs’ lavish party and the Cratchits’ modest feast.) Did the cost of the celebrations influence the enjoyment of the participants? What kinds of things did they do that didn’t cost anything?

4. When the Ghost of Christmas Present takes Scrooge to see Bob Cratchit’s home, he is surprised to learn that the Cratchits are happy even though they have very little money. What does Bob Cratchit mean when he says, “Not a penny in my pocket, but I’m wealthy as can be”? Why are the Cratchits so content with so little, while Scrooge is so miserable despite his wealth?
5. Why do you think that Scrooge resisted his nephew’s invitation to join him for the holiday? What reminded him of the importance of family? (Seeing his sister in his past? Watching the Cratchits?) Why do you think that people like to be around their family members (and friends) for the holiday season? Who do you like to celebrate the holidays with, and why is it important for you to have those people with you?

SUGGESTED ACTIVITIES

Alternate Endings. Have students write their own version of A Christmas Carol, each starting at the same point in the story (such as when Scrooge meets the first ghost). Read essays aloud, comparing each student's conclusion to the story. (For example, if Scrooge chose not to change his ways, would it happen exactly as the Ghost showed?) Or, if they would prefer, have them write a modern adaptation of the story.

Christmas Celebrations. What kinds of things did the characters in the play do to celebrate the Christmas holiday? (Older Students: Research the Christmas traditions popular in England at the time of the story’s publication - 1843.) Do they do any of the same things when they celebrate the holiday season at their house? (Dancing, singing, game playing, special foods, decorations, etc.) How is their celebration similar or different (especially if they celebrate a holiday other than Christmas)?

Christmas Carols. Find some Christmas carols that you might have heard on a London street in the 1840s (see some of the verses below to get you started). Divide the class into groups and have each learn a different song and present the “carols” at your holiday party.

| WE WISH YOU A MERRY CHRISTMAS, |
| WE WISH YOU A MERRY CHRISTMAS, |
| WE WISH YOU A MERRY CHRISTMAS, |
| AND A HAPPY NEW YEAR! |

| DECK THE HALLS WITH BOUGHS OF HOLLY. |
| FA, LA, LA, LA, LA, LA, LA, LA! |
| ’TIS THE SEASON TO BE JOLLY, |
| FA, LA, LA, LA, LA, LA, LA, LA! |

| CHRISTMAS IS COMING, THE GOOSE IS GETTING FAT. |
| WON’T YOU PLEASE PUT A PENNY IN THE OLD MAN’S HAT? |
| IF YOU HAVEN’T GOT A PENNY, A HA’PENNY WILL DO. |
| IF YOU HAVEN’T GOT A HA’PENNY, THEN GOD BLESS YOU. |

Charles Dickens’ Christmas Stories. Write an essay or prepare an oral report comparing A Christmas Carol to another of Dickens’ Christmas stories, such as The Chimes (see FOR FURTHER INFORMATION). What themes do the stories have in common? How are they different? How are the main characters similar (or different)? Which story do you prefer and why?

Social Class in Literature. Read another story which describes people of different social classes, (such as Mark Twain’s The Prince and the Pauper, Victor Hugo’s Les Misérables, or Dickens’ own Oliver Twist). How does each author describe the “upper” and “lower” classes? How do the “poorer” characters in each of the stories manage to survive? What point do you think the author was trying to make? Report your findings to the class.

Imitation -- the Sincerest Form of Flattery. Write an essay comparing a film version of A Christmas Carol to the original story (and/or to the musical that you’ve just seen). Which did you prefer and why? Why do you think that Dickens’ story is so often imitated? (Scrooge’s tale has even been acted out by Mickey Mouse and the Muppets!)

Traveling Through Time. The idea of a character going back to the past and forward to the future was quite an innovative plot device in the 1840s! Can you think of any other stories that use similar themes? (The films Back to the Future and It’s a Wonderful Life are good examples.) Write an essay or present an oral report comparing the modern story to Dickens’ original.
FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

**Selected Works by Charles Dickens**


The Posthumous Papers of the Pickwick Club (1837)

(Dickens’ first published novel; noted here for the two chapters with Christmas themes - Chapter XXVIII, A Good-Humoured Christmas Chapter, and Chapter XXIX, The Story of the Goblins Who Stole a Sexton, a precursor to Scrooge’s Ghosts.)

**For Teachers and Older Students**


Charles Dickens-A Tale of Ambition and Genius. (VHS Video) A biography of Dickens from the acclaimed A & E Biography television series (available in bookstores).

**For Younger Students:**


Dickens, Mary Angela. Children’s Stories from Dickens. Derrydale Press, 1998. (Stories of children from Dickens’ works written by the author’s granddaughter, including Tiny Tim, David Copperfield, and Oliver Twist.)

**Film/ Audio versions (available on video/cassettes or CD)**


A Christmas Carol. Directed by Edwin L. Marin, 1938. (Starring Reginald Owen as Scrooge.)

Scrooge. Directed by Brian Desmond Hurst, 1951. (Starring Alastair Sim.)

A Christmas Carol. TV version directed by Clive Donner, 1984. (Starring George C. Scott.)

**THE WORLD WIDE WEB**


In addition to a complete bibliography of Dickens’ works, this site offers a special section on “Dickens and Christmas.” Follow the many links to other Dickens websites for more information.


Contains a wealth of information on Christmas celebrations in Victorian England, including plum pudding recipes and the first Christmas card, printed in 1843 (the same year that A Christmas Carol was published).