GOOD THEATRE MAKES YOU THINK. GREAT THEATRE MAKES YOU FEEL.
For use with theatrical production by The Hampstead Stage Company
Written by Jennifer Henry
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## A Christmas Carol

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ALL ABOUT HSC

This year marks our 31th season! We are a nationally touring children’s theatre that brings high quality, professional theatre to schools, libraries, and communities all over the 48 contiguous states (everywhere but Hawaii and Alaska!). The Hampstead Stage Company’s goal is to bring great books to life through live theatre; sparking an interest in reading, and creating a new way to use your imagination for everyone.

The Hampstead Stage Company got its name from our founders, who came to America from the Hampstead area of London, England to pursue their dreams. Since its inception, our company has grown into one of the largest educational touring companies in the nation. We have performed for over twenty million audience members!

Our interactive educational tours run year-round and are performed by two professional actors, each playing multiple roles. Our scripts are original adaptations, based directly on literary classics, and include children and adults from the audience. The plays last one hour, with a question and answer session following the performance. We travel to your space, and bring our own realistic sets and costumes; designed using extensive historical research. Our productions are flexible enough to fit into any assembly/performance space.

Theatre performance helps us learn things about ourselves and the world around us. But more than that, by using our imagination we can be proud of who we are, create goals for ourselves, and even help the way we think in school and at home! Sometimes not every school gets to see live theatre — it’s thanks to your teachers and parents for bringing cool shows like this to your school! So, make sure to say thank you to them the way we do at the theatre – give them a round of applause!!

The Hampstead Stage Company is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization. Every HSC study guide is available to download for free from our website!

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The Hampstead Stage Company specializes in a special form of theatre called pantomime. Don’t be fooled, we are not silent mimes with painted faces! Pantomime, also known as “panto”, goes back much farther than that. Panto is a form of theatre traditionally found in the United Kingdom, Australia, Zimbabwe, India, and Ireland; and has been performed since the time of Ancient Greece!

The world “pantomime” comes from the Greek words pantos, “every, all”; and mimos, “imitator, actor”. Pantomime in Ancient Greece used to mean a group of actors and musicians imitating a story. Many famous poets used to write scripts for these actors, and were paid very well!

Pantomime was first performed in England as a show between the acts of an opera, so they could change the set backstage. It became such a popular performance, that it soon became a show of its own. It is said that pantomime had its first full performance in the early 19th century. Actors travelled from town to town, performing well known stories that taught a lesson, or encouraged the audience to think about the characters, and how they solved the problems they were presented.

Now pantomime is a very well known form of theatre in England. Shows are based on traditional children’s stories, and call for a LOT of audience participation! In England, the audience often boos the villain character, “awws” for the damsel in distress, and yells comments to the characters such as: “he’s right behind you!”, “Oh, yes he is!”, or “Oh, no he isn’t!”. Volunteers are often called on stage by the Hampstead Stage Company to act as the Chorus. They become extras, playing many characters in multiple scenes, and are often on stage as much as the two other actors!

HSC actors follow traditional pantomime casting: girls play boys, boys play girls, and there are many, many costume changes. Actors rely on their voices and physicality (the way they move their bodies) to portray different characters. Just like all pantomime shows before; Hampstead actors travel all over the country, performing in many different types of spaces!
About the Book

A Christmas Carol is a novella written by British author Charles Dickens. Published in 1843, Dickens weaves a tale of a cold Ebenezer Scrooge in a dingy, cold London; and his transformation into a warm and lively part of the world around him. When this book was published, most of London was struggling with industrial ethics and extreme poverty. This story was a driving force to bring the focus of the holiday season back to creating happy memories and helping your fellow man. A Christmas Carol takes darkness and despair (which many people felt then and feel now), and uses it as a catalyst to bring one man to light and life, affecting all those around him. Charles Dickens read this book aloud at the holidays and other gatherings a reported 127 times, until the year of his death.

About the Author

Charles Dickens (7 February 1812 – 9 June 1870) was born in England to mother Elizabeth and Father John, who was a clerk in the Navy. Dickens loved spending time outside, but was a very avid reader. The combination of these led to a man with a strong imagination and a mind like a steel trap for people he met and places he visited. When Dickens and his family came upon hard times, his father, mother, and younger children were imprisoned in debtors’ prison. He was the sole bread winner in the house. These hard times, and the unfairness of the treatment of London citizens fueled Dickens to write articles and essays about it for the public to read. He became very popular for his descriptive writing, his passion for the every man, and his cheekiness. Soon, books followed: David Copperfield, Nicholas Nickleby, Oliver Twist, A Christmas Carol, and A Tale of Two Cities. Dickens and his Family visited America and read his stories there. Suffering multiple strokes, Dickens could feel his life coming to an end, and even arranged a “farewell tour” to see the places he loved visiting once more. After his death, his stories are still read in schools, in homes, and are made into films. His words have just as much meaning for us today as they did then.
We meet a young man of the upper middle class on a London street. Fred is very happy and very much in love. Everything is going his way in life, and he can't see why everyone else can't be happy too. He has been trying to cheer up his uncle, Ebenezer Scrooge, for years without success. Ever the prankster, he convinces passersby in the street to try to instill a little holiday spirit...which backfires horribly when Scrooge enters his office. Ebenezer Scrooge owns a money-lending business, and takes pride in keeping his books accurate, and his profits tallied. Ever the miser, he keeps his office cold and the lights dim.

Bob Cratchit, a clerk working for Scrooge and Marley, is late for work. This is something that happens quite frequently, yet Cratchit has hope that he can sneak by Scrooge without being detected. This does not work, and Scrooge belittles his employee for being late and so happy when he really has nothing to be happy about. Cratchit is very poor, and his youngest son Tim is very ill. Cratchit wants to give everything he can to his family, which is why he agrees to work such long hours for Scrooge to spend Christmas Day with them. After playing a little trick to give Scrooge a headache, Cratchit leaves with the apprentices to prepare for Christmas. After Scrooge is sure Cratchit is gone, he waxes poetic about his love of the profits he has gained over the years. He says anything you can't invest or horde is of no use to him. Not wanting to waste time, he returns to work.

Suddenly, he hears a strange and haunting noise. Explaining it away as indigestion, he is shocked when a ghostly spirit of Jacob Marley appears in his office. He has come to warn Scrooge against the path of avarice and greed. Because Marley lived that way until he died, he is doomed to walk the earth bound by the chains he created by his bad deeds. He tells Scrooge there is still a chance and hope of escaping that same fate. Scrooge will be visited by three spirits. Jacob implores Scrooge to listen to what they have to say, and to remember this night. He asks that Scrooge remember this visit, and vanishes as quickly as he came. Scrooge decides it must have been a dream, and goes to bed.

Throughout the night, Scrooge is indeed visited by three spirits. The first, a small, spritely Irish being that takes him to his past, and a much happier time for Scrooge. Secondly, a festive warm spirit that shows Scrooge people and places he passes by every day, and the happiness he is missing each time he turns his back on them. The third, Scrooge is afraid to meet. This is the Spirit of Christmas Future. This unearthly and faceless being transports Scrooge to a graveyard. Here, Scrooge sees his own gravestone. No flowers, no visitors. Scrooge realizes that this will be his end if he does not change his ways, and vows to do so.

When Ebenezer Scrooge wakes, he is again in his office. He promises Jacob Marley he will remember always what has happened to him, and thanks him for saving his life. Realizing that it is now Christmas Day, he goes about beginning to set things right. He buys the biggest turkey he can for the Cratchit family and sends it anonymously, and then goes to his nephew Fred's home to have his first holiday celebration in a long time.

Late as always, Cratchit arrives at the office the day after Christmas. He is still confused by the large turkey that arrived out of the blue, but is very thankful for the nourishment for his family. He arrives to Mr. Scrooge not being in the office, which is the first time this has ever happened. Scrooge plays a little trick of his own on Cratchit, and then vows to take care of him and his family. Wanting to make up for lost time, he offers money to Cratchit to get some coal for his furnace, and gives him a hearty handshake and holiday wishes. He has changed from a man who welcomed the dark and chill to one who revels in light and love. We end the show with seeing a much healthier Tiny Tim, who is saved by the change in Mr. Scrooge.
Meet The Main Characters

Fred: A young man of the upper-middle class, and the first person we meet. Scrooge’s nephew. Very happy, and very much in love. A practical joker!

Ebenezer Scrooge: a miser, and owner of a counting house in London. Very rich, and very content to stay miserly and unhappy. Through Scrooge, we see the story, and how one man can change for the better in as little as a night.

Bob Cratchit: A man of the lower class that works for Mr. Scrooge. He works long hours to support his family. Bob is a storyteller. He likes to dream of happy memories, and has a hope that one day, he can properly provide for his family.

The Solicitor: A man collecting money door to door. He wants to buy the poor food and drink for the holidays. Times are hard, and he wants to bring some light and warmth to even the darkest and poorest house.

The Apprentices: The part of our show where your teachers and friends help us out! Not only do these actors work briefly for Mr. Scrooge, but they help the Hampstead Stage actors backstage, and become different characters throughout the show.

Jacob Marley: Scrooge’s old business partner. We meet the ghost of Jacob Marley. He appears to Scrooge to warn him that unless he changes his ways, he will get the same nasty fate Jacob Marley has received. Marley’s selfless act is Scrooge’s redemption. He offers him the chance to become a better person through the nights three visitations.

Spirit of Christmas Past: A very spritely and leprechauny spirit. He helps Scrooge remember his past, and the good feeling he had then. This is the first spirit that Scrooge meets when the bell tolls twelve.

Spirit of Christmas Present: The second spirit Ebenezer Scrooge meets that night. She shows him people and things he has closed himself off to for many years, and offers him a gift - her words.

Spirit of Christmas Future: The third spirit, and most ghostly encounter of his evening. No face, no speaking, this spirit shows Scrooge what his fate will be if he continues down the road he is heading.

Tiny Tim: Bob Cratchit’s youngest son. A sickly boy. He would not have survived had Scrooge not decided to care for the Cratchit family! He also says quite possibly the most famous line in the book!
**The Places**

**Industrial London:** In the 1800s, London was abuzz with industry. The streets were full of coal dust and fog. Markets were open and on the street, so lots of noise from merchants, carts, wagons, and traders. Many people did not have a fixed place of work, so went from factory to business, asking for work. Many also had no homes. Things were very dirty, very cold, and very dingy. People gathered to warm themselves near fires made on the street, sang carols, and passed by shops full of good smells and decorated windows.

**Scrooge & Marley’s Counting House:** A small office in the back of the receiving room. Cratchit was not allowed to use the front entrance; he had to enter from the side alley so no one would see a poorer person going into the building. Dickens talks of the office lacking warmth of spirit, and being like a small, gloomy cell. There is a fireplace, but Scrooge only allows Cratchit to have one piece of coal and one candle. There is a window that Cratchit longs to look out of, to see the Christmas festivities outside, and callers dressed in their holiday best.

**Scrooge’s Childhood Home:** Scrooge is transported by the Spirit of Christmas Past to where he grew up. Very different from industrial London, Scrooge grew up in a healthier country setting, where you can see trees, freshly painted buildings, and children running and playing. Scrooge remembers the smell of winter, and has forgotten just how beautiful a blue sky is. There are fields, and a path leading down to the village where Scrooge went to school and walked with his friends and sister. He had good memories here.

**Graveyard:** An unnamed and haunting place. This graveyard is unkempt, dark, and full of decay. Most of the gravestones are not taken care of and crumbling. There is a new gravestone, and a freshly dug grave. When we get a little closer, we see “Ebenezer Scrooge” chiseled into the stone. No one goes near this graveyard; it is a place no one cares to visit, nor do they want to remember the people there. This image is the very thing that affirms Scrooge’s decision to become a better person. By Scrooge learning his lesson from this, he also saves other people from the same fate by becoming a better person.
Did You Know?

In our show we have a bit of verbal gymnastics when we introduce Scrooge’s apprentices as Who, He, and Where. Did you know there is another famous comedic bit this is based on? Abbott and Costello’s “Who’s On First?” gave our playwright inspiration to confuse Ebenezer Scrooge by calling his new workers silly little words instead of their real names! Have your parents or teacher find it on YouTube, and be prepared to giggle!
MAIN THEMES

SELFLESSNESS / BEING UNSELFISH: This story is full of people doing things for the people they love and care about! Cratchit works long hours for his family. The Ghost of Jacob Marley helps Scrooge become a better person. Even Scrooge becomes selfless in the end. Does being unselfish make us better? Does it help the people around us? How can we be unselfish at school? At home?

REDEMPTION: Many people are saved from doing something bad, or being a less than honorable person. How are wrongs made right in this story? Jacob Marley and the Christmas Spirits save Scrooge’s life and makes him realize the error of his ways. Scrooge wants to make up for what he did in the past. Is it important to give someone a second chance? What are some redeeming qualities about Ebenezer Scrooge? Bob Cratchit?

Did you Know?

This Book Helped Create the Christmas Card!

The Christmas Card was first given out the same year that A Christmas Carol was published. Because of the effect this book had on the citizens of England, and across the world, people wanted to spread good feelings to their friends and families. Since not many people traveled then, not many people knew of other religions or practices. Once they started learning of other traditions, Chanukah cards, Kwanzaa cards, even Yule cards and cards for well wishes started being sold!
**VOCABULARY**

**Carols:** A folk song or song of praise or joy sung by a group. Carolers often dance rounds, travel while singing, and encourage audience participation!

**Misery Gut:** A person who is full of misery. They purposefully do not join in the happiness they see around them, and have become accustomed to being so grouchy. A sourpuss.

**Equilibrium:** When things are balanced. Usually when two opposing things balance each other.

**Dividend:** A sum of money paid regularly by a company to its shareholders from the profit it makes.

**Interest:** A percentage of money charged to use it first, then pay it back.

**Gross Profit:** How much you sold minus the cost of making your product.

**Net Profit:** How much money you actually made.

**Pence:** Another word for a penny. A bronze coin equal to 1/100 of a pound.

**Wages:** The money paid to an employee on a regular basis for the work they did. Also called a salary.

**Workhouses:** A prison where people who couldn’t pay their bills would go to work off their debt.

**Measly:** Pathetic and small. Sickly, meager, unsatisfactory.

**Rising Damp:** When moisture would seep from the ground into buildings. This caused mildew and mold. It can damage buildings beyond repair for the bottom three feet of the structure!

**Hawthorn:** A thorny shrub in the rose family. It has white, pink, or red blossoms, and small dark red berries. Usually blooms in spring.

**Bracken:** A tall fern with weedy, large leaves.

**Miser:** A person who hordes wealth, and spends as little as possible.

**Greed:** When you want something selfishly and very badly. Usually money, wealth, power, or food.

**Selflessness:** Being unselfish. Taking care of others without thought to yourself.

**Redemption:** Being saved from sin, error, or evil. It also can be used as a noun for the thing that saves you.

**Spirit:** The nonphysical part of a person that is their emotion and character. The Soul. Can also be a supernatural being or ghost, but not intended to cause fear.
Vocabulary Continued

**Remorse:** Deep regret or guilt for a wrong committed.

**Overpopulation:** Too many people in one place.

**Visitation:** An official or formal visit.

**Hope:** A feeling or desire for a certain thing to happen.

**Past:** What happened before now.

**Present:** What is happening now.

**Future:** What will happen after this.

**Humbug:** False talk or behavior. Nonsense. Rubbish.

This is one of the first Christmas Cards ever sent! Many cards were hand painted, or printed in small batches by local companies.