

A Christmas Carol
A Readers' Theater Adaptation
Of the Story by Charles Dickens



Written by
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Act 1: Marley's Ghost

Scene 1: In the Counting House

Characters:

Narrator

Scrooge

Scrooge's Nephew

Gentleman 1

Gentleman 2

Clerk

Narrator: It is Christmas Eve. Scrooge sits in his cold, bleak counting house, occupied with his favorite activity—counting his money. He is keeping an eye on his clerk, who is copying letters in his own bitter- cold office. The door opens and Scrooge's nephew enters.

Nephew: (cheerfully) A very Merry Christmas, Uncle!

Scrooge: Bah! Humbug!

Nephew: Christmas a humbug, Uncle? Surely you don't mean that!

Scrooge: I do so mean it! And what reason have you to be so merry? You're poor enough.

Nephew: Come now, Uncle? What reason do you have to be so miserable? You're rich enough.

Scrooge: Bah! Humbug!

Nephew: Don't be cross, Uncle.

Scrooge: (crossly) What else can I be when I live in a world where everyone goes around wishing Merry Christmas? What is Christmas but a time for buying things you can't afford? You find yourself a year older, but not a penny richer. If I had my way, everyone who goes around with Merry Christmas on his lips should be boiled in his own pudding and buried with a stake of holly through his heart!

Nephew: (shocked) Uncle! Surely you don't mean that?

Scrooge: I do mean it! You keep Christmas in your way, and I'll keep it in mine.

Nephew: (chuckling) Keep it? Why, you don't keep Christmas at all.

Scrooge: Then let me leave it alone. It has never done you much good.

Nephew: There are many things in this world that have done me good, even though they haven't made me any money, including Christmas. I have always seen Christmas as not only a sacred time, but a time when people open up their hearts and think of others. It is a time to be charitable and forgiving. And even though it has not put a scrap of gold or silver in my pocket, I say, God bless it!

Narrator: The clerk involuntarily applauds the nephew's speech.

Scrooge: (to the clerk, angrily) Another sound out of you and you'll celebrate Christmas by losing your employment!

Nephew: Don't be angry, Uncle. Come and dine with us tomorrow.

Scrooge: Humbug! Tell me, why did you get married to that poor girl?

Nephew: Because I fell in love, of course.

Scrooge: Love? That's the only thing in this world more ridiculous than Merry Christmas. Now, good day, Nephew!

Nephew: Uncle, I have never asked anything of you. All I want is for us to be friends. Is that possible?

Scrooge: (pounding on his desk) I said good day!

Nephew: (giving up) Good day, Uncle. Merry Christmas to you.

Scrooge: Good day!

Nephew: And a Happy New Year, too!

Narrator: The nephew leaves his uncle and gives a holiday greeting to the clerk on his way out. The clerk returns the greeting.

Scrooge: (to himself) There's another one. My clerk is poor as a church mouse, with a wife and family, walking around saying, Merry Christmas. He must be insane.

Narrator: As the nephew leaves, two portly gentlemen enter. They are carrying books and papers. They bow to Scrooge.

Gentleman 1: A good day to you, sir! Do I have the pleasure of addressing Mr. Scrooge or Mr. Marley?

Scrooge: Marley has been dead these seven years. He died seven years ago this very night.

Gentleman 1: Well, yes, I hope that his generosity will be well represented by his surviving partner.

Narrator: The gentleman presents his credentials. Scrooge looks at them and shakes his head, thinking to himself:

Scrooge: Well, it certainly has. Marley and I were kindred spirits. We agreed heartily on matters of charity.

Gentleman 2: (offering a pen) At this most generous time of year, we ask only a small amount to help the poor and destitute. There are many who need a warm place to stay and some food to eat.

Scrooge: Are there no prisons?

Gentleman 1: Ah, yes, there are plenty of prisons.

Scrooge: And the workhouses, are they still in operation?

Gentleman 2: Oh, yes, sir; I wish they were not. What amount are you willing to give?

Scrooge: (loudly) Absolutely nothing! I don't make merry myself at Christmastime and I will not give so that others might. If there are so many who lack the basic necessities, then they should go to the prisons and the workhouses.

Gentleman 1: But sir, they are horrible places! Many would rather die than go there.

Scrooge: (angrily) Then they best get to it and decrease the surplus population. Good day, gentlemen!

Narrator: Seeing that it was useless to pursue the topic any longer, the gentlemen leave the counting house. It is becoming bitter cold outside. A thick fog begins to blanket the town.

Scrooge: (to his clerk) I suppose you'll want the day off tomorrow.

Clerk: (meekly) If you'll allow it, sir.

Scrooge: It's not fair. If I were to dock your pay, you would complain. But yet, you don't think it's unfair for me to pay you for not working.

Clerk: (timidly) But it's only once a year, sir.

Scrooge: Very well, but be here all the earlier the next day.

Clerk: (gratefully) Oh, thank you sir; I will, sir.

Narrator: Scrooge walks out with a gruff expression on his face. He walks to his favorite, gloomy tavern and has a solitary dinner.

Scene 2: A Visit from an Old Friend

Characters:

Narrator

Scrooge

Ghost of Jacob Marley

Narrator: Scrooge walks home through the frigid fog. At his door, he takes a look at the large knocker.

Scrooge: (shaking his head) My mind is playing tricks on me; for a moment that looked like Jacob Marley's face. Pooh, pooh!

Narrator: Scrooge goes into the house. But before he goes to his bedroom, he walks through all the other rooms.

Scrooge: (to himself) There, see, everything is as it should be. Nobody under the beds; nobody under the sofa; nobody under the table. (as he enters his bedroom) Now, we'll just lock both of these locks tonight.

Narrator: As Scrooge sits down to a bowl of gruel, suddenly the small bell in his room begins to sway. It rings so softly, Scrooge can barely hear it. Suddenly it rings louder. All the bells in the house begin ringing thunderously. As suddenly as they begin, they stop. Another noise can be heard coming from the cellar. It is a clanking noise, as if someone is dragging a heavy chain. The noise begins to come up the stairs, closer and closer...

Scrooge: Humbug! I won't believe it!

Narrator: Scrooge turns pale as the thing comes right through his double-locked door.

Scrooge: (urgently) I know him! It is Marley's ghost! What do you want with me?

Ghost: Much.

Scrooge: Who are you?

Ghost: Ask me who I was.

Scrooge: (annoyed) Who were you then?

Ghost: In life I was your partner, Jacob Marley.

Scrooge: Sit down.

Ghost: You don't believe in me.

Scrooge: I don't.

Ghost: Why do you doubt your senses?

Scrooge: Because the least little thing affects them, a disorder of the stomach, perhaps. You might be an undigested piece of beef, or a crumb of cheese. There's more of gravy than of grave about you, whatever you are. Humbug, I say, Humbug!

Narrator: At this the ghost raises a frightful cry and shakes his chain violently. Scrooge holds onto his chair to keep from falling if he faints.

Scrooge: Mercy! Why do you trouble me?

Ghost: (angrily) Do you believe in me or not?

Scrooge: I do, but why are you here?

Ghost: It is the duty of every man that the spirit within him should walk among his fellow men and witness what it cannot share. I must see what I cannot share, but should have shared when I was living, and turned it to happiness.

Scrooge: Why do you wear those awful chains?

Ghost: I wear the chain I made in my lifetime; it is the same as the chain you are making for yourself. It grows longer and heavier each year you are alive.

Scrooge: Dear Jacob, tell me more. Comfort me.

Ghost: I have no comfort to give you. Don't you know that we can never make amends for opportunities that are missed?

Scrooge: But you were a great businessman!

Ghost: Business! Mankind should have been my business. The welfare of others, charity, mercy, forgiveness, they were the vast ocean of my business. My daily money deals were like a drop of water in this ocean. It is this time of year that troubles me the most. I should have followed the Wise Men to a light that shone through the window of a poor home. Hear me! My time is nearly gone.

Scrooge: I hear you, Jacob, but, pray, go easy on me!

Ghost: My burden is not easy. I am here to warn you that it is not too late for you to escape this same fate. You will be haunted by three spirits.

Scrooge: (flippantly) Is that the chance you mentioned? If so, I think I'd rather not.

Ghost: (loudly) If they do not visit, you will not escape this fate. The first one will arrive tomorrow as the clock strikes one.

Scrooge: Couldn't we get through with it all in one day?

Ghost: (ignoring him) Expect the second the next night at the same hour. The third will visit the night after that at the stroke of twelve. Do not look for me again, but remember, for your own sake, what has happened between us.

Narrator: The ghost begins to step toward the window, which is raising itself slowly. He beckons Scrooge to follow him, and then holds his hand up for him to stop. The ghost floats out the window and takes his place among the wailing souls below. Scrooge looks out the window and then closes it. He turns back and sees that the door to his room is still double-locked.

Scrooge: (climbing into his bed) Hum- (he stops in the middle of the word and quickly falls asleep.)

Act 2: The First of the Three Spirits

Scene 1: Scrooge Meets the Spirit

Characters:

Narrator

Scrooge

The Spirit of Christmas Past

Narrator: Scrooge awakens at midnight and waits anxiously to hear the bell toll one o'clock. At last it does. Light flashes in his room and the curtains of his bed are drawn aside. A strange figure, much like a child, but also like an old man, appears. He is wearing a white tunic and carrying a sprig of holly, although his dress is covered with summer flowers. A bright jet of light springs from the top of his head. He carries a cap under his arm, which acts like a snuffer for the light.

Scrooge: Are you the spirit my former partner, Jacob Marley, told me about?

Spirit: (softly) I am.

Scrooge: (demanding) Who and what are you?

Spirit: I am the Spirit of Christmas Past.

Scrooge: Long past?

Spirit: No. Your past.

Scrooge: (with a tone of uncertainty) Please put the cap on your head.

Spirit: Your passions are the reason why I have been forced to wear this cap all my life. Why do you want to extinguish my light so quickly?

Scrooge: I meant no offense. I never knew I had put out your light during my lifetime. Please tell me why you are here.

Spirit: I am looking after your welfare. I have come to reclaim you. Take heed! (putting out his hand) Walk with me!

Narrator: The spirit leads Scrooge to the window. Scrooge clutches his robe to his chest, showing his fear.

Scrooge: I am but a mere mortal. I shall fall!

Spirit: (putting Scrooge's hand upon his heart) Touch your hand here and you will be lifted up in more ways than one.

Narrator: They pass through the wall.

Scene 2: Landing in Scrooge's Hometown

Characters:

Narrator

Scrooge

Spirit of Christmas Past

Narrator: The two land in an open country road, with fields on either side. It is cold; there is snow on the ground.

Scrooge: Good Heaven! I grew up here!

Narrator: Scrooge at once senses a thousand odors floating in the air, each one connected with a memory of the past. He quietly weeps.

Spirit: Your lip is trembling, and what is that upon your cheek?

Scrooge: (grumpily) It is only a pimple. What are you waiting for? Let's go!

Spirit: Do you know the way?

Scrooge: Know it? I could walk it blindfolded.

Spirit: Strange that you have forgotten it for so many years. Let us go.

Narrator: They walk along the road; Scrooge recognizes every gate and every tree. A little town appears on the horizon, with a little church, a bridge, and a winding river. Some boys trot merrily toward them on ponies.

Spirit: These are only shadows of the past. They cannot see us.

Narrator: Watching the happy travelers gives Scrooge a light heart for a moment. He rejoices when he hears them exchange greetings of "Merry Christmas!" He quickly slips back into his nasty temperament and remembers that Christmas has never done him any good.

Scene 3: Memories of a Schoolboy

Characters:

Narrator

Scrooge

Spirit of Christmas Past

Narrator: They arrive at Scrooge's boyhood school. It is a large brick mansion, long neglected and abandoned. It gives an air of chilly bareness.

Spirit: The school is not empty. There is still one boy left who has been deserted by his friends.

Scrooge: (sobbing) I know it.

Narrator: They enter one of the school rooms. At a desk, a small boy is reading alone by a dying fire. Scrooge sits down and sobs at the poor, forgotten image of himself. The spirit touches him on the arm and points to the image of a man, in strange clothing, standing outside with an axe in his belt, leading a donkey.

Scrooge: (suddenly delighted) Why, it's Ali Baba! Dear old Ali Baba! I remember how he appeared to this poor solitary boy one day, quite out of the blue. And there's Valentine! There they go. And here comes the Sultan, and the Genie!

Narrator: Scrooge's business friends would be very surprised to see the joy on Scrooge's face at that moment.

Scrooge: (excitedly) And there's Robinson Crusoe and the Parrot! Ho-ho! I had forgotten all about them! Such dear friends I had then.

Narrator: The blissful spell is broken. Scrooge once again begins to weep at the image of his boyhood.

Scrooge: I wish...

Spirit: Wish what?

Scrooge: Nothing... There was a boy singing a Christmas Carol at my door last night. I should have given him something.

Spirit: (smiling thoughtfully and waving his hand) Let us see another Christmas!

Scene 4: A Family Reunion

Characters:

Narrator

Scrooge

Spirit of Christmas Past

Little Fan

Young Scrooge

Schoolmaster

Narrator: Scrooge's former self grows a bit older and the room becomes even more dank and dirty. The young boy sits alone again, after his friends have left for the Christmas Holiday.

Suddenly, the door opens and a little girl, younger than Scrooge, runs in. She hugs Scrooge tightly and is delighted to see him.

Little Fan: (clapping her hands and laughing) I have come to bring you home, dear brother! Home, home, home!

Young Scrooge: (puzzled) Home?

Little Fan: (delighted) Yes! Yes! Home for good! Home forever! Father is so much kinder these days and home is like Heaven! He spoke so kindly to me the other night that I was not afraid to ask him again if you might come home. And he said yes! And he sent me in a coach to bring you home.

Young Scrooge: Home?

Little Fan: (dragging him toward the door) Yes, and you are going to be a man and never return to this place again. But first, we are all going to be together and have the merriest Christmas ever!

Young Scrooge: You are quite a young woman, Little Fan!

Schoolmaster: (in a loud, demanding voice) Bring down Master Scrooge's box!

Narrator: While they are waiting, the schoolmaster offers them light wine and cake. Finally, the box is secured to the coach. Little Fan and Scrooge shake hands with the schoolmaster and make their goodbyes. They get into the wagon and begin the journey down the snow-covered road to home.

Spirit: She was always such a delicate creature, but she had such a big heart.

Scrooge: You are very right, Spirit.

Spirit: She died a woman, and I believe she had children.

Scrooge: One child.

Spirit: Your nephew, I believe?

Scrooge: (uneasily) Yes.

Scene 5: Old Friends and Good Times

Characters:

Narrator

Scrooge

Spirit of Christmas Past

Fezziwig

Narrator: They leave the school behind and find themselves in the middle of a thriving city. The shops are all dressed for Christmas. They stop at a warehouse.

Spirit: Do you know this place?

Scrooge: Of course—I apprenticed here! (seeing a tall, old gentleman wearing a wig, sitting behind a desk) Why it's Old Fezziwig! Bless his heart! He's alive again!

Fezziwig: (looking at the clock and laying down his pen) Yo-ho, Ebenezer, no more work tonight! It's Christmas Eve! Clear the way!

Narrator: They watch as Ebenezer and the other workers quickly clear away the desks to make room for the party. It becomes a bright, warm ballroom. All the workers enter, along with the Fezziwig family and their friends. The fiddler begins to play a merry song, and they all begin to dance joyfully.

Fezziwig: (clapping his hands to stop the dance) Well done! Bring on the feast!

Narrator: A huge feast of meat, cakes, and delicious pies is brought in. Everyone fills themselves to the brim and then they dance again. At seven, the party breaks up. Mr. and Mrs. Fezziwig stand at the door, shaking hands and hugging their guests, wishing each of them a very merry Christmas. The guests thank them and praise them energetically. Scrooge watches it all, remembering the joy. Suddenly he realizes the spirit is still with him. The light on the spirit's head burns clearly.

Spirit: (sarcastically) Such a small matter to make all these people so full of gratitude toward the Fezziwigs.

Scrooge: (agitated) Small?

Spirit: Is it not? He has spent only a few dollars of your mortal money to give this party. Why is everyone praising him so?

Scrooge: It isn't the money that is so important. This man has the power to make us happy or unhappy. He can make our work light or burdensome. The happiness he gives us this night is as great as if it had cost a fortune. (He stops suddenly, realizing the spirit's gaze upon him.)

Spirit: What's the matter?

Scrooge: (quietly) Nothing... I just wish I could say a word or two to my clerk right now. That's all.

Spirit: My time is short. We must go on.

Scene 6: A Lost Love

Characters:

Narrator

Scrooge

Spirit of Christmas Past

Belle, Scrooge's former fiancé

Belle's Husband

Narrator: Again, Scrooge sees himself. He is a young gentleman now, in the prime of his life. There is a greedy glint in his eye. He is sitting beside a young woman who is weeping. The tears shine on her face in the light of the Spirit of Christmas Past.

Belle: It doesn't matter to you. Something has replaced your love for me. I hope it can cheer you and comfort you when you most need it, as I would have tried to do.

Scrooge: What has replaced you?

Belle: Something golden. I'm talking about money. It's what means the most to you.

Scrooge: Poverty is a terrible thing! It is not a sin to want to be wealthy.

Belle: You have changed so much. You have let your noble hopes fall one by one. The only dream you have left is to become rich. It has taken over all your desires.

Scrooge: But my feelings for you have not changed. Have they?

Belle: (shaking her head) Our marriage contract is old. It was made when you were another man.

Scrooge: I was a boy.

Belle: You admit then that you were another person. My feelings have not changed. However, I have thought about this over and over, and I wish to release you from your promise to marry me.

Scrooge: Have I ever asked for release?

Belle: Not in words, no.

Scrooge: In what, then?

Belle: Your actions; you have given up everything that has made me love you and everything that has given my love worth to you. Tell me, if we had just met, would you still ask for my hand in marriage, a girl with no dowry? I think not.

Scrooge: It is you who says so.

Belle: I wish I could think otherwise. I release you with a heart full of the love I have for the man you once were. I hope you will feel pain in this. But I believe it will last only a short while. I hope you are happy in the life you have chosen!

Narrator: She leaves him.

Scrooge: Spirit, show me no more! Why do you delight in showing me these scenes that torture me?

Spirit: One more.

Scrooge: No, take me home; I beg you! I wish to see no more!

Narrator: The spirit forces him to look at another scene. They are in a small, but comfortable room. A young woman who looks exactly like Scrooge's former fiancé is sitting opposite an older woman, whom Scrooge realizes is his Belle. There are other children in the room and the noise is deafening. No one seems to care and everyone laughs heartily. Scrooge is enjoying the scene and wishing he could be part of it. At last the father arrives and the children climb on him,

trying to find their presents in his pocket. After this delight, one by one the children go to bed, exhausted. The older daughter leans fondly on her father. They sit down by the fireplace, together with Belle. Scrooge thinks it would have been wonderful to have such a lovely creature call him father.

Husband: Belle, I saw an old friend of yours today.

Belle: Who was it?

Husband: Guess!

Belle: I have no idea! (laughing) Mr. Scrooge!

Husband: You are right! The light was still on in his office window as I passed by. He sat there all alone. His partner is dying, I hear. I believe he is quite alone in the world.

Scrooge: (pleading) Spirit, I wish to see no more! Take me from this place.

Spirit: These are shadows of things that have truly happened. Do not blame me for them.

Scrooge: Take me back. I can't bear it. Leave me!

Narrator: Scrooge sees the light burning brightly on top of the spirit's head. He grabs the cap to extinguish the fire. The spirit collapses and the cap covers all that is left of him. Scrooge tries with all his might, but he cannot put out the flame whose light escapes from beneath the cap. Wearily, he senses that he is once again in his own bed chamber. He climbs, exhausted, into bed.

Act 3: The Second of the Three Spirits

Scene 1: A Visit to the Cratchits' House

Characters:

Narrator

Scrooge

Spirit of Christmas Present

Bob Cratchit

Martha

Mrs. Cratchit

Cratchit Children
Tiny Tim

Narrator: Scrooge awakens just before the clock strikes one. He pulls back all his bed curtains. He wishes to confront this second spirit the minute he appears. He doesn't want to be startled. He is ready for whatever comes his way, no matter what form it comes in. However, as the clock strikes, nothing happens. At this, Scrooge begins to tremble. Suddenly a solitary light shines upon his clock. The light seems to be coming from the other room. Timidly, Scrooge goes to investigate. As his hand is on the doorknob, a strange voice bids him to enter. He obeys. As he opens the door, he recognizes his own room, but it looks very different. It is decorated with green holly, ivy, and mistletoe. A fire is roaring in the fireplace. Heaps of food: turkeys, oysters, pigs, sausages, pies, and puddings, are formed into a kind of throne. Upon it sits a giant who bears a torch.

Spirit: Come in and get to know me better!

Narrator: Scrooge hangs his head and does not look at the spirit.

Spirit: I am the Spirit of Christmas Present. Look at me!

Narrator: Scrooge obeys, seeing a giant man clothed in a simple green robe, with white fur around the border. His feet are bare, and he wears a wreath of holly around his head. He has sparkling eyes and a friendly face, framed with dark brown curls.

Spirit: You have seen me before.

Scrooge: Never!

Spirit: I have walked before you with my brothers.

Scrooge: Have you many brothers?

Spirit: More than eighteen hundred.

Scrooge: That's a tremendous family to provide for.

Narrator: The spirit rises.

Scrooge: (submissively) Spirit, take me where you will. I was forced to go last night, and I learned a lesson that is working now. Help me to profit by what you have to teach me.

Spirit: Touch my robe.

Narrator: As Scrooge obeys, the food and decorations suddenly vanish. They are in the middle of the village, with snow falling furiously around them. It is Christmas day and people are hastily trying to remove the snow from their doorsteps. They are very pleasant toward one another, in the face of such exhausting work. Even though the scene is dark and gloomy and bitter cold, there is an air of cheerfulness, as if it were a summer day. There are good-natured snowball fights and hearty laughter. The shops are still open. Fat turkeys and geese hang in the windows. Barrels of nuts, fruits, and vegetables decorate the sidewalks. There are candies and fruits and cakes everywhere. Soon the bells call the people to church. Afterward, people carry their dinners to their homes. These people attract the attention of the spirit. If they are cross with each other, he sprinkles their dinners with his torch and their good natures are restored. They say it is a shame to quarrel on Christmas Day.

Scrooge: Is there a special flavor you sprinkle from your torch?

Spirit: There is.

Scrooge: Will it work on any kind of dinner?

Spirit: To any that is given with kindness. A poor one especially.

Scrooge: Why to a poor one especially?

Spirit: Because it needs it most.

Narrator: They move on into the suburbs of the town and stop at the home of Bob Cratchit, Scrooge's clerk. The spirit blesses the home with the sprinkling of his torch. Mrs. Cratchit and the children are trying to make the dinner, creating quite a flutter of activity. Martha, looking very tired, comes through the door.

Mrs. Cratchit: My dear, you are later than I expected you to be.

Martha: There was so much work to do last night and we had to put it all away this morning.

Mrs. Cratchit: Well, sit by the fire and rest.

Cratchit Children: No, no! Father is coming with Tiny Tim. Hide, Martha, hide!

Narrator: Martha hides while Bob Cratchit comes in, carrying Tiny Tim on his shoulder. The child has a crutch in his hand and his leg is supported by a metal brace.

Bob: Where's our Martha?

Mrs. Cratchit: I'm afraid she's not coming.

Bob: (dejected) Not coming? But it's Christmas Day!

Narrator: Martha, not bearing to see him sad, even for a moment's joke, comes out from her hiding place. She runs into his arms and hugs him warmly.

Mrs. Cratchit: And how did little Tim behave?

Bob: As good as gold; better even. I think he gets thoughtful sitting alone so much. He comes up with the strangest ideas. Today he told me that he hoped the people in church saw him, because he is a cripple. He thought it might be nice for people to remember on Christmas Day who made lame men walk and blind men see. (with a trembling voice) I do believe he's getting stronger every day.

Narrator: The making of the dinner resumes. The two Cratchit boys fetch the tiny goose and bring it to the table. They all remark that such a wonderful goose has never been seen before. Mrs. Cratchit mashes the potatoes, and the others join in to set the table and put on the rest of the feast. The meal is meager, but they eat their fill and are all satisfied.

Mrs. Cratchit: (spying a bone on the platter) You see, we didn't devour it completely after all!

Narrator: Martha goes to get the pudding Mrs. Cratchit has made. Mrs. Cratchit waits nervously as it is brought in. The pudding is very small, but they all flatter her as if this was the best thing she has ever done. She blushes and cuts the pudding, serving everyone a very small piece.

Bob: (with his mouth full) What a wonderful pudding, my dear. You've outdone yourself again this year!

Narrator: The dinner is over and the cleaning is done. They gather in a half-circle around the fire. Bob pours them all a drink and raises his glass in a toast.

Bob: A Merry Christmas to us all!

All: A very Merry Christmas!

Tiny Tim: God bless us, everyone!

Narrator: Bob Cratchit hugs Tiny Tim to his side, holding his feeble little hand, as if he can't bear to have his little son taken from him.

Scrooge: Spirit, tell me if the boy will live.

Spirit: I see an empty chair by the fire and a crutch with no owner. If these shadows remain unaltered by the Future, the child will die.

Scrooge: Oh, no, Spirit! Tell me he will be spared!

Spirit: Why? If he's going to die, he'd better get to it, and decrease the surplus population.

Narrator: Scrooge hangs his head upon hearing his own words repeated by the spirit. He feels guilty and full of grief.

Spirit: (boldly) Curse that thought until you have discovered what the surplus is and where it is. Will you decide which men shall live and which shall die? It may be, that in the sight of Heaven, you are less fit to live than this poor child.

Narrator: Scrooge bends down at the spirit's reprimand, but rises when he hears his name.

Bob: (raising his glass) And here's to Mr. Scrooge, the founder of the feast!

Mrs. Cratchit: (haughtily) Mr. Scrooge? The founder of the feast, indeed! I wish he were here. I'd give him a piece of my mind to feast upon.

Bob: (quietly reprimanding) My dear, remember the children; it's Christmas Day.

Mrs. Cratchit: It must be Christmas Day if we have to drink to the health of that greedy, penny-pinching, unfeeling man. You, above all, should know what he's like.

Bob: My dear, the children.

Mrs. Cratchit: (raising her glass) I'll drink to his health, but only for your sake and because it's Christmas Day. I'll not give it for his sake. A long life for him; a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year. He'll be very merry; I have no doubt.

Narrator: They all drink to him, but not gladly. The mention of his name has cast a dark shadow on the party, which lasts a full five minutes. Soon the joyful mood returns. They drink and talk of work; they sing songs. They are not well-dressed or wealthy by any means, but they are happy and content with each other. They look even happier as Scrooge watches them under the sprinkling of the spirit's torch, and he looks over his shoulder at Tiny Tim as they leave.

Scene 2: More Travels

Characters:

Narrator

Scrooge

Spirit of Christmas Present

Narrator: They leave the Cratchit's house and wander through the village. Happy people are everywhere. Laughter can be heard coming from the brightly lit houses. Finally, they come upon a desolate place. There are masses of stone cast about, making it look like a graveyard for giants.

Scrooge: What is this place?

Spirit: It is where the miners live, people who work in the depths of the earth. But they know me; see!

Narrator: They pass through a wall of mud and stone and see a cheerful group gathered around a fire, singing joyfully. They are all dressed in their holiday best. The two do not stay there long, but keep travelling.

Spirit: Hold onto my robe.

Narrator: They continue on toward the sea. Scrooge is horrified to look back and see the last of the land behind them. The roaring of the water deafens him as it dashes against a solitary lighthouse. Here, two men also gather around a fire, with only each other for company. They join hands and ask the blessing on their meal and heartily wish each other a Merry Christmas. The older one strikes up a song sounding much like the howling wind. The travelers move quickly over the water, landing on a small ship. Every man is on deck watching for dangers, yet each is humming a happy Christmas tune. Each sends thoughts out to those at home, hoping they are all well and happy.

Scene 3: A Visit to Scrooge's Nephew

Characters:

Narrator

Scrooge

Spirit of Christmas Present

Scrooge's Nephew, Fred

Fred's Wife

Guests

Narrator: Scrooge is puzzled that while he is thinking deeply about all he has seen, he hears a hearty laugh. He finds his companion and himself looking into the home of his nephew, Fred. The room is brightly lit and beautifully decorated. The spirit is looking at Fred approvingly.

Fred: (heartily, rolling his sides and throwing back his head) Ha, ha, ha! I swear, he said Christmas is a humbug!

Fred's Wife: Well shame on him, then!

Fred: He's a funny old fellow, and mostly cranky, I'll agree. But I'm sure his offenses carry their own punishment. I have nothing bad to say about him.

Fred's Wife: I'm sure he's very rich.

Fred: And so what of it? His wealth does nothing for him. He doesn't use it to comfort or amuse himself. He doesn't use it to help others. I'm sure he will never give any to us, of course.

Fred's Wife: I have no patience with him.

Fred: Well, I have. I feel sorry for him. I could never be angry with him. Who suffers by his grumpy penny-pinching? Only he does. He has decided to dislike us, and he won't come and dine with us. What's the consequence? He hasn't lost much of a dinner.

Fred's Wife: (pretending hurt) I think he lost a very good dinner. (The other guests agree with her.)

Fred: What I mean to say is that by not making merry with us, he loses some pleasant moments, which would do him no harm. I will invite him every year, even if he turns me down each time,

because I pity him. Even if, by asking, he is shaken into leaving his clerk fifty dollars, it will be worth it. I think I really shook him yesterday.

Guests: Ha, ha, ha!

Narrator: They play music and dance. Later they play games, for it is good sometimes for adults to act like children. As he watches and thinks about all he has seen these past two nights, Scrooge softens little by little. He can't help thinking that if he could have really seen it in years past, he might have been able to mold his own happiness. As they play charades, Scrooge joins in, often shouting his guess quite loudly. The spirit is glad to see him in this mood.

Spirit: It is time for us to move on.

Scrooge: Oh, no, please Spirit! They are starting a new game. Can we please just stay for one half-hour more?

Narrator: It is a guessing game. Fred is up first.

Fred: I'm thinking of a live animal, a disagreeable animal, one that growls and grunts, and walks about the streets. It doesn't make a show about itself, or mingle with other animals.

Fred's Wife: (excitedly) I know! I know! It's your Uncle Scrooge!

Fred: (laughing with the others) It certainly is! He is a funny old fellow and we can tell quite a few jokes about him. It would be cruel not to drink to his health.

Guests: To Uncle Scrooge! A Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year!

Narrator: Scrooge is so caught up in the whole scene that he would give a toast himself, but the spirit is whisking him away.

Scene 4: A Shocking Sight for Scrooge

Characters:

Narrator

Scrooge

Spirit of Christmas Present

Narrator: Everywhere they pass, there is joy. Even hospitals, poor houses, and jails contain people who are singing and laughing. The spirit leaves his blessings upon them all. As they travel, Scrooge begins to wonder if it is still the same day as when they had left. He notices that he, himself, has not changed, but the spirit has grown noticeably older.

Scrooge: Are spirits' lives so brief?

Spirit: Our lives are very short. Mine ends tonight.

Scrooge: (shocked) Tonight?

Spirit: Tonight at midnight. It is almost time.

Scrooge: Forgive me for asking, but I see something sticking out the bottom of your robe. What is it?

Narrator: Scrooge watches in horror as two children come out from under the robe. They are dressed in rags, filthy, and foul-smelling. They are pale, thin, and old-looking. Scrooge starts to say what fine-looking children they are, but chokes on the words.

Scrooge: Are they yours?

Spirit: They are Man's. They belong to everyone. The boy is Ignorance. The girl is Want. Beware of them both, especially Ignorance. On his brow is written Doom, unless the writing is erased.

Scrooge: Have they nowhere to go to get help?

Spirit: Are there no prisons? Are there no workhouses?

Narrator: Again Scrooge hangs his head as his own words are used against him. Suddenly the clock strikes twelve. The spirit vanishes. Remembering the prediction of Jacob Marley, he sees a phantom, wearing a black hood, crawling toward him like a frightening mist.

Act 4: The Last of the Spirits

Scene 1: I Heard He's Dead

Characters:

Narrator
Scrooge
Spirit of Christmas Yet to Come (no speaking parts)
First Man
Second Man
Third Man

Narrator: The phantom slithers closer, through the mysterious gloom. Its head and face are concealed in a black hood. He stretches out one bony hand. Scrooge begins to feel a deep sense of dread. The spirit does not move or speak.

Scrooge: (timidly) Are you the Spirit of Christmas Yet to Come?

Narrator: The spirit says nothing but gestures forward with his outstretched hand.

Scrooge: You are here to show me shadows of things that will happen in the future, is that right?

Narrator: The spirit bows his head, the only answer given. Although he has seen several spirits by this time, this one makes Scrooge's legs tremble. He has trouble standing. The spirit stops to allow Scrooge to find his bearings. It unnerves Scrooge to think that the spirit is watching him, although his eyes cannot be seen.

Scrooge: (earnestly) Spirit of the Future! I fear you more than any who have come before you. I know you have come to do me good and I am thankful for you. Will you please speak to me?

Narrator: There is no reply. Scrooge continues to follow the outstretched hand.

Scrooge: Lead on Spirit! My precious time is going by quickly. Lead on!

Narrator: Scrooge follows, held up by the dress worn by the spirit. The city begins to spring up around them. They see the merchants counting their money, a familiar scene to Scrooge. The narrator points to a trio of businessmen and Scrooge listens in on their conversation.

First Man: I don't know much about it; I only know he's dead.

Second Man: When did he die?

First Man: Last night, I believe.

Third Man: What was the matter with him? I thought he'd never die.

First Man: (yawning) Who knows?

Second Man: What has he done with all his money?

First Man: I haven't any idea. I suppose he left it to his Company. He didn't leave any to me; I know that.

Second and Third Men: Ha, ha, ha!

Third Man: It's likely to be a very cheap funeral; I don't know a single person who might go.

Second Man: (cheerfully) I wouldn't mind going if they served me lunch.

First Man: Shall we go, then? I am thinking I was probably his only friend. We used to stop and talk sometimes.

Second Man: Very well.

Third Man: See you there!

Narrator: Scrooge is confused about this conversation and wonders whom the men were talking about. He takes in the whole scene and realizes that if this is the future, he, himself, is nowhere to be found. Looking back at the spirit, he shudders, suddenly feeling very cold.

Scene 2: Money to be Made

Characters:

Narrator

Scrooge

Spirit of Christmas Yet to Come (no speaking parts)

Old Joe, the shop owner

Cleaning Woman

Laundry Woman

Undertaker's Assistant

Narrator: They leave the busy scene and go to a desolate place where Scrooge has never gone before. The streets are dirty and narrow; the houses are in disrepair. The people are poorly

dressed and in a drunken state. There is a foul smell everywhere. Scrooge and the Spirit enter, unnoticed, into a shop littered with scrap metal, bones, and mountains of dirty rags. An old man sits smoking his pipe. A woman, carrying a large cloth bundle, enters, lays it on the floor, and begins to open it. Soon, another old woman, and then a man come in, also carrying bundles. The three look at each other, and joining the shop owner, begin to laugh.

All: Ha, ha, ha, ha!

Cleaning Woman: (looking defiantly at the other two with bundles) Let me go first, since I was here first. Then let the laundry woman, then the undertaker's man. I can't believe we're all here at the same time!

Old Joe: (taking his pipe from his mouth) You couldn't have met in a better place. Let me shut the door. Come into the parlor.

Cleaning Woman: (crossing her arms) What are the odds we'd all land here? Everyone has a right to take care of themselves. He always did!

Laundry Woman: That's for sure!

Cleaning Woman: Then why do you keep looking over your shoulder? A dead man won't miss a few of his things.

Laundry Woman: No, indeed. If he'd been a decent person, he wouldn't have had to die alone, gasping for his last breath.

Cleaning Woman: Very true! He deserved it!

Laundry Woman: I'd have taken more, if I could have gotten my hands on it. Open the pack, Joe, and let me know what it's worth. I don't care if they see it; we all knew what the others were doing, even before we met here.

Undertaker's Assistant: (forcefully) No, I'll go first! (He plops his bundle on the floor.)

Old Joe: Let's see, a pencil case, a pair of cufflinks, a brooch, is that all?

Undertaker's Assistant: Yes, that's all I could get my hands on.

Old Joe: (writing and then showing the figures to the other man) That's what I'll give you, and not a bit more! Who's next?

Laundry Woman: (stepping up) Take mine!

Narrator: She unpacks sheets and towels, some clothing, two silver teaspoons, a pair of sugar-tongs, and some boots. Joe writes down some figures and shows them to her.

Old Joe: I always give too much to the ladies. It'll probably ruin me. Don't ask me for another penny.

Cleaning Woman: Now open mine!

Old Joe: (untying the sack) What have we got here—bed curtains! (surprised) You mean to tell me you took his bed curtains, rings and all, while he was lying there?

Cleaning Woman: Why not?

Old Joe: (chuckling) You were surely born to make a fortune, and I believe you'll do it.

Cleaning Woman: I certainly wasn't going to hold back for the likes of him. (scolding) Be careful of the blankets now.

Old Joe: You took his blankets, too? I hope he didn't die of anything catching!

Cleaning Woman: (scoffing) Ha! Don't worry—I didn't bother to get close to him, even if he did. You can look all day at that shirt; you won't find one hole in it. It was his best one. Someone tried to waste it by putting it on him for the burial, but I snatched it right off him! He frightened us all away from him when he was alive, and we profited by his death. Ha, ha!

Scrooge: Spirit! I can see this is a life much like my own. Good Heaven! What is this?

Scene 3: Lying Cold and Dead

Characters:

Narrator

Scrooge

Spirit of Christmas Yet to Come (no speaking parts)

Narrator: The scene has changed; Scrooge shrinks back as he almost touches the bed in front of him. The bed is covered with a sheet; beneath the sheet lies something that, in the dark, looks

very disturbing. A light suddenly shines on the bed and Scrooge can tell it is the body of a man. The spirit points to the head, and Scrooge cannot bring himself to remove the sheet.

Scrooge: This man must have died alone. He must have been kind to no one; no one remembered him. Spirit! (begging) This is a frightful place; please let me leave it. I promise I will remember the lesson I learned here.

Narrator: The spirit continues to point to the head of the dead man.

Scrooge: I would do it if I could, but I have no power. (loudly) If anyone can show me someone who is affected by this man's death, please show him to me, Spirit!

Narrator: The spirit spreads his arm like a wing, withdraws it, and the scene changes.

Scene 4: An Unexpected Emotion

Characters:

Narrator

Scrooge

Spirit of Christmas Yet to Come (no speaking parts)

Wife

Husband

Narrator: The room is bright with daylight. They see a mother and her children. The woman is anxiously pacing up and down, waiting for someone. Finally her husband walks through the door, looking sheepishly happy. After a long silence, they finally speak.

Wife: Is the news good or bad?

Husband: Bad.

Wife: We are ruined, then?

Husband: Not yet; there is still hope.

Wife: Has he given in? It would be a miracle if he has forgiven our debt to him!

Husband: He is long past forgiving. He is dead.

Wife: To whom will our debt be transferred?

Husband: I don't know, but I'm sure there cannot be anyone as merciless as he. And by the time it is legally transferred, we will have the money. But for tonight, we can sleep soundly!

Narrator: They smile and their hearts are lighter. The feeling spreads throughout the room. These people are happy because of this man's death.

Scrooge: Spirit, please show me someone who is saddened by this man's death.

Scene 5: A Visit with the Cratchits

Characters:

Narrator

Scrooge

Spirit of Christmas Yet to Come (no speaking parts)

Voice

Mrs. Cratchit

Peter

Bob Cratchit

Cratchit Girl

Narrator: The spirit leads him through familiar streets. Scrooge notices that he, himself, is nowhere to be found. They enter Bob Cratchit's house; Mrs. Cratchit and the children are sitting by the fire. They are all very silent. Peter has a book in his hands.

Voice: And he took a child and set him in the midst of them.

Scrooge: Where did those words come from? Perhaps the boy read them aloud. Why doesn't he finish?

Mrs. Cratchit: (laying her sewing on the table and putting a hand up to her eyes) The color hurts my eyes. Ah, they are better now. It must be nearly time for your father to come home.

Peter: It is past time. He seems to walk a little slower these days.

Mrs. Cratchit: (faltering) I have known him to walk very fast with Tiny Tim on his shoulder.

Peter: So have I.

Mrs. Cratchit: But he was so light to carry, and your father loved him so; it was no trouble for him. Ah—here’s your father now.

Narrator: Bob sits down by the fire; the children huddle around him.

Peter: Don’t be sad, Father!

Bob: (cheerfully) I went today; I wish you could have gone. It would do you good to see what a green, beautiful place it is. I promised him we would all come by on Sunday. (suddenly crying) My child! My poor, poor child!

Narrator: He leaves the room and goes upstairs to a room hung with Christmas decorations. He sits alone, crying. Resigned to what has happened, he collects himself and leaves the room, returning to the family downstairs.

Bob: I saw Mr. Scrooge’s nephew today. He is a most pleasant fellow. He noticed that I looked a little down today and asked why. When I told him what had happened, he said he was most sorry for me and for my good wife. He gave me his card and told me that if he could ever be of service to our family, we shouldn’t hesitate to call on him. He is a very kind soul. He got Peter a better job.

Cratchit Girl: (teasing) And Peter will soon leave us to have a wife and family of his own.

Bob: You may be right. But as we part from each other, please let’s not ever forget our kind and patient Tiny Tim.

Children: Never, Father!

Bob: I am very happy!

Scrooge: Spirit, something tells me our time is almost up. Please show me what man that was, lying under the sheet.

Scene 6: To the Graveyard

Characters:

Narrator

Scrooge

Narrator: The spirit moves Scrooge through familiar spaces, but at sometime in the future. Again, Scrooge does not see himself there.

Scrooge: Spirit, I know this place. This is my place of business. Let me look into the window. Please show me the man I have become.

Narrator: The spirit stops and points in a different direction.

Scrooge: Spirit, my place is there; why do you point elsewhere?

Narrator: Scrooge looks into the window and sees that it is no longer his office. The furniture has changed and the man in the chair is not Scrooge. The spirit continues to point away from the building. Scrooge joins the spirit and they go through an iron gate that leads to a graveyard. The spirit points to one of the headstones. The grave is overgrown with weeds. Trembling, Scrooge moves toward it.

Scrooge: Spirit, please answer me one question before I look at the name on that headstone. Are these shadows of things that will surely happen, or are they shadows of things that are only possible?

Narrator: The spirit doesn't move.

Scrooge: Certainly men deserve the fates of their actions, but men can also change. Please tell me there is still hope for me.

Narrator: The spirit continues to point to the neglected grave. Scrooge looks down and sees his name carved on the stone.

Scrooge: Tell me, Spirit, am I the man lying dead on the bed?

Narrator: The spirit points to Scrooge and then to the grave.

Scrooge: (begging and clutching the spirit's robe) Oh, no, Spirit! Hear me; I am not the man I was. Why show me all of this if there is no hope for me? Please show me that the future will be different if I am a changed man!

Narrator: The spirit's hand begins to tremble.

Scrooge: (on his knees) I promise to keep Christmas in my heart on that day and all year long. The spirits of the Past, Present, and Future will live within me always. I will remember all that they have taught me. Please tell me I can wipe away the writing on this stone.

Narrator: Scrooge catches the hand of the spirit and holds it strongly. The spirit finally releases himself from Scrooge's grasp. As Scrooge watches, the spirit's hood and robe shrink and collapse, turning into a bedpost.

Act 5: The End of It

Scene 1: A New Day

Characters:

Narrator

Scrooge

Boy

Gentleman

Narrator: Scrooge awakens to find himself in his own bed. His face is wet with tears.

Scrooge: (joyfully) This is my own bed in my own room! And better yet, it's my own time. I have all the time before me to make amends! I will live in the Past, the Present, and the Future! I will keep all three spirits with me always. Oh, Jacob Marley, Christmas Time be praised! I am here; the shadows of what would have been can be dispelled! They will be; I know it.

Narrator: Scrooge dances about his room, barely touching the floor.

Scrooge: (excitedly) I don't know what to do. I'm as light as a feather, happy as an angel! I'm as merry as a school boy, giddy as a drunken man! A Merry Christmas to everyone! And a Happy New Year to the whole world!

Narrator: Scrooge pauses a moment to catch his breath; he opens the window as he hears the beautiful sound of church bells ringing. He calls to a boy on the street below.

Scrooge: What day is today?

Boy: (puzzled) Why, it's Christmas Day, of course.

Scrooge: (happily) Christmas Day! Ho, ho! I haven't missed it. The spirits did it all in one night! Hello, my fine young man.

Boy: Hello!

Scrooge: Do you know the meat shop on the corner?

Boy: Of course I do!

Scrooge: (chuckling) Such a bright boy! Say, have they sold the prize turkey that I saw hanging in the window?

Boy: You mean the one as big as me?

Scrooge: (laughing) Ho, ho! What a delightful boy! Yes, that's the one.

Boy: It's hanging there now, sir.

Scrooge: (delighted) Go and buy it, and I'll give you a dollar. Bring back the shop owner with it, and I'll give you two dollars. Hurry, boy!

Boy: Oh, boy! Yes, sir!

Scrooge: (to himself, pleased) I'll send it to Bob Cratchit's house! He won't know who sent it. Why, it's as big as Tiny Tim. What a surprise it will be!

Narrator: The boy and the man arrive with the turkey. Scrooge writes down the Cratchits' address with an unsteady hand.

Scrooge: (to the man) Well, it's the biggest turkey I've ever seen. You can't carry that clear to Camden Town. You'll have to have a cab.

Narrator: He chuckles all the while he is making arrangements for the turkey. He sits down in his chair and chuckles until he cries. After awhile, he gets up, shaves with an unsteady hand, and dresses in his best clothing. He goes out onto the street, noticing the scene is the same as he had encountered with the Spirit of Christmas Present. However, this time, he is a changed man.

Scrooge: (cheerfully to those he meets) Good morning! Merry Christmas to you!

Narrator: He says it over and over. After a few minutes, he encounters one of the men who had come to his counting house the day before, asking for a donation for the poor. Scrooge is embarrassed.

Gentleman: Scrooge and Marley's I believe?

Scrooge: (shaking the man's hand, earnestly) How do you do? A Merry Christmas to you! I hope you succeeded in your charity drive yesterday.

Gentleman: (doubtfully) Mr. Scrooge?

Scrooge: (still pumping his hand) Yes, yes. And I want you to do me a favor. Will you accept a donation for... (He whispers in the man's ear.)

Gentleman: (shocked) Are you sure, Mr. Scrooge? That is a very generous amount.

Scrooge: Yes, yes. I won't give a penny less. I have many years of donations to make up for. Come and see me tomorrow.

Gentleman: (still unbelieving) Thank you, thank you. And the poor people thank you, too.

Scrooge: I thank *you*, Sir. I look forward to seeing you tomorrow.

Gentleman: (happily) Good day, sir!

Narrator: Scrooge goes to church and then walks around the streets, happily greeting everyone he meets. He has never felt so happy in his whole life. He walks by the same house several times.

Scene 2: A Long-Overdue Visit

Characters:

Narrator

Scrooge

Girl

Fred

Narrator: Scrooge knocks on the door of the house he has passed by many times. A girl answers it.

Scrooge: Is your master at home?

Girl: Yes, sir, he's in the dining room, along with the mistress. Shall I show you in?

Scrooge: Yes, thank you very much.

Narrator: Scrooge goes in and looks at the table spread with delicious-looking food. He sees his nephew.

Scrooge: Fred!

Fred: (shocked) Uncle! I can't believe you're here!

Scrooge: I am here. May I stay for dinner?

Fred: (shaking Scrooge's hand, happily) Well, yes, of course! It's great to have you here!

Narrator: Scrooge has the best time of his life, dining and playing games with Fred's family and the other guests. He goes home happily and falls asleep.

Scene 3: Proof of the Change

Characters:

Narrator

Scrooge

Bob Cratchit

Tiny Tim

Narrator: Scrooge arrives early to the office the next morning. He wants to catch his clerk coming in late for work. He watches the clock. At eighteen past nine, Bob comes in. He quickly takes off his hat and muffler and takes his seat.

Scrooge: (gruffly) What do you mean coming in here at this time?

Bob: (sheepishly) I'm sorry, sir, I'm running a little late.

Scrooge: I should say you are! Come in here please.

Bob: (timidly) It's only once a year, sir. It won't happen again. I was making rather merry yesterday.

Scrooge: (pounding his fist on the desk) I'm not going to stand for this any longer! Therefore... therefore, I'm going to raise your salary! (He claps Bob heartily on the back.) A Merry Christmas, Bob! A merrier Christmas than I have ever given you! I plan to raise your salary and help your struggling family. We'll discuss this later this afternoon, over lunch. Now, build up the fire, make it warm in here, before you dot another I.

Narrator: Scrooge kept his word. He doubled Bob's salary, and helped his family. To Tiny Tim, who did not die, Scrooge was like a second father. He became a good friend to all he knew. He kept Christmas in his heart all through the year. He was a very happy man.

Tiny Tim: God bless us, everyone!

Activities for "A Christmas Carol"

Pre-reading Activities

1. Discuss the students' beliefs about ghosts. Are they real or not? You may want to form two debate teams to debate this topic.
2. Vocabulary Development: Have students demonstrate their understanding of these words:
charitable involuntarily credentials kindred spirits destitute welfare
extinguish temperament solitary blissful dank apprenticed sarcastically
agitated burdensome extinguish confront dejected devour feeble
unaltered reprimand desolate approvingly offenses consequence
charades ignorance concealed earnestly defiantly merciless
faltering amends encountered submissively dispelled
3. Discuss life events that cause people to change for either the better or worse.

Discussion Questions:

Act 1

1. Describe the character of Scrooge. What do you think has caused him to behave in this way?
2. What do Scrooge and his nephew argue about?
3. How does Scrooge treat his employee?
4. What is Scrooge's solution to provide for the needs of the poor? Do you agree with him?

Act 2

1. What does Scrooge believe caused him to envision Marley's ghost? What does this say about his character?
2. What caused Jacob Marley to carry the chains of his afterlife? What warning does he give to Scrooge?
3. Who were Scrooge's childhood friends? Why do you suppose he had only imaginary friends?
4. For what was Scrooge grateful to Fezziwig? How does he connect this to his present life?
5. Why does Scrooge's fiancé break their marriage contract? How does Scrooge take the news?
6. Give evidence that Scrooge is changing for the better.

Act 3

1. What does the Spirit do with his torch? Explain what he means when he tells Scrooge it works especially well on poor people.
2. Describe the feelings you get from the Cratchit family. What makes you feel this way?
3. What warning does the Spirit give about Tiny Tim? Who do you think has the power to alter the shadows?
4. Summarize the bold reprimand the Spirit gives to Scrooge.
5. If you had been Mrs. Cratchit, would you have given a toast to Scrooge? Tell why you would behave this way.

6. Discuss the symbolism of the young boy and girl who appear from under the Spirit's robe.

Act 4

1. What were Scrooge's employees doing with Old Joe? Do you think you could have taken part in a scheme such as this? Tell why you would act this way.
2. Why do you think the last Spirit does not speak? What mood does this create?
3. Describe the various emotions people have over Scrooge's death?
4. What do you assume about Tiny Tim from the scene at the Cratchits' house?
5. What does Scrooge notice about each scene from the future?

Act 5:

1. Describe the scene as you imagine it when the turkey is delivered to the Cratchits' house.
2. Describe the character of Scrooge's nephew. What must he have thought when Scrooge showed up for dinner on Christmas day?
3. Give evidence of Scrooge's new-found sense of humor.
4. What actions proved that Scrooge was a changed man?

Suggestions for Extended Activities for Students

1. Draw or paint a portrait of Scrooge with the spirits. Use the descriptions of the characters to help you.
2. With a partner, perform a debate on this topic: Which Spirit had the most impact on Scrooge? Be sure to support your opinions with evidence from the story.
3. Rewrite your favorite act, giving it a modern-day twist.
4. Make a snakes and ladders board game of the events in the story.
5. With a group, perform your favorite act from the play. Use costumes and props to make the story come to life for your audience.
6. Write and perform an interview of one of the characters in the story.
7. Perform a tribute to Scrooge as a changed man.
8. Do you believe that people can truly change so drastically? Write a persuasive essay on this topic.
9. Rewrite the story as a picture book for small children.
10. With a small group, play charades. Use the characters of the play for the subjects of your charades and have the others try to guess who they are.