

PORTLAND  
CENTER  
STAGE  
GERDING  
THEATER

# THE GUIDE **A CHRISTMAS CAROL**

A THEATERGOER'S RESOURCE PREPARED FOR PORTLAND CENTER STAGE BY SARA BANGERT

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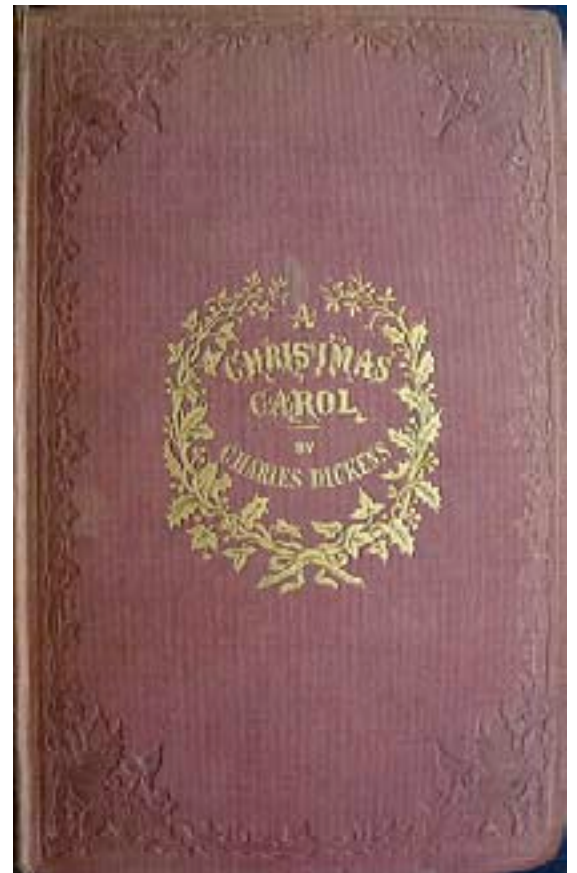
Gerding Theater at the Armory, 128 NW Eleventh Ave, Portland, OR 97209

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The original cover for the 1843 printing. Dickens paid to publish it with the gilding himself when his publisher refused due to expenses.



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## SUMMARY



Illustration by Arthur Rackham, 1915

Christmas—it's a time for joy, togetherness, celebration, and reaching out to others. With carols, presents, and family feasts, it's a time for everyone to be happy and count their blessings. Well, for everyone except Ebenezer Scrooge. For him, it's a time to count his money and wallow in his perpetual moodiness.

### ACT ONE

The story begins on Christmas Eve. Ebenezer Scrooge, the mean-spirited owner of a London counting-house, sits working. He takes comfort in nothing but his money, which doesn't even seem to bring him any real pleasure. All the while, his clerk, Bob Cratchit, is working away under Scrooge's watchful eye. They are interrupted by Scrooge's nephew, Fred, who has come to wish his uncle "Merry Christmas" and to invite him to feast with his family for the holiday. Scrooge berates his nephew for his festive mood and refuses to attend, as he does every year. Disappointed, but still in good spirits, Fred wishes his uncle and Bob well, and exits.

Upon his exit, two gentlemen come into the shop to talk to Scrooge. They are taking up a collection for the poor, to help them better enjoy the holiday. Scrooge lectures the men on his views of the poor, which aren't good, and refuses to contribute. The men leave. Soon after, Bob gets ready to leave for the night.

Scrooge discusses Bob's work schedule with him, and he is upset that Bob wants all of Christmas Day off to spend with his family. After threatening to dock Bob's pay, the clerk leaves, thanking Scrooge and wishing him well as he goes.

When Scrooge returns home, he is shocked by the appearance of an apparition identifying itself as the ghost of Jacob Marley, Scrooge's old business partner. Marley informs Scrooge that he's been wandering around for the past seven years, chained and suffering, due to his mean spirit and greed. He has come to warn Scrooge that if he doesn't change, he will suffer a similar fate. Marley then informs Scrooge that he will be visited by a series of spirits and exits.

The spirits show up and show Scrooge many visions. First, they show him visions of past Christmases. He sees himself as a lone boy reading, then with his only sister, who has since died. Then they take him to his old master's house, Mr. Fezziwig, who is throwing a grand Christmas party. He sees old friends, and everyone is dancing and enjoying themselves. Once again, the vision changes, and Scrooge sees himself slightly older than before, talking with his fiancée, Belle. Belle breaks their engagement, telling him that his love of money has replaced his love for her. Finally, the vision shows Belle older. She is now married with a daughter who is just as beautiful as Belle was at her age. Scrooge is extremely upset at these remembrances and asks to be taken home.

### ACT TWO

This act opens with the Ghost of Christmas Present showing Scrooge holiday celebrations at two different houses. First, we see the Cratchits. They live in humble surroundings. The eldest daughter has to work to help support the family. Tiny Tim is sick and crippled. However, the family is still happy and thankful to be with each other on this festive day. Their love for each other is quite apparent.

Next, we see Fred's celebration. He and his wife have friends over. The guests talk about Scrooge and what a mean man he is. Despite his uncle's ill treatment of him, Fred says that he still loves his uncle, and refuses to give up on him. He hopes that his uncle will reform.

## SUMMARY continued



"You there, boy! What's today?" "Today, Why, Christmas Day."

The scene shifts back to the Cratchit house, where they are just sitting down to eat. Bob Cratchit blesses and thanks Scrooge for providing him employment. Mrs. Cratchit takes issue with this, as she knows what kind of man Scrooge is. Bob, however, asks her to stop and reminds them they should be thankful that they're all together at Christmas. Scrooge seems touched, and he asks about Tiny Tim. He is saddened to hear that Tiny Tim will die if he continues to live under these circumstances. As Scrooge and the

spirit leave, they encounter two beggar children: Ignorance and Want. The spirit warns that their lives are doomed.

The final spirit appears. The Ghost of Christmas Yet To Come is silent. It does not speak, but points to where it wants

Scrooge to go. Scrooge sees a vision of himself dead. There are a few poorer workers; among them is a laundress, a charwoman, and an undertaker's assistant, and they are going through Scrooge's possessions. They discuss Scrooge's life and his character. They say that if he had been a kind, worthy man, they would respect him in death. However, because he was so greedy and mean, they feel no shame in looting his possessions to sell them on the black market.

Afterwards, Scrooge sees the Cratchit family mourning. He does not realize what is going on at

first. Bob comes home from church and tells his family that he met Fred, who offered his condolences and help. Then the family takes a minute to remember Tiny Tim.

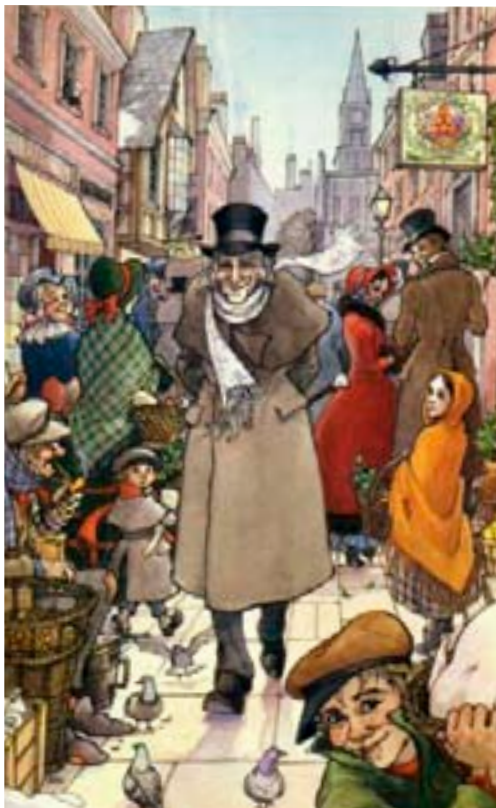
After the visions cease, Scrooge asks the Ghost whether these visions are definite or if the future can be changed. The spirit refuses to answer, which scares Scrooge. He pleads with the Ghost, promising to be a better person and to let Christmas live in his heart always.

At this, he reappears back in his room. He hears bells ringing and goes outside. He asks what day it is and rejoices upon hearing that it's Christmas Day. He arranges for a huge turkey to be sent to the Cratchit family. He also runs into the men who were collecting for the poor the previous day and surprises them by making a large donation. Afterwards, Scrooge visits his nephew's house to celebrate Christmas with him and his wife. They are shocked and gladdened by this surprise, and the day is spent most pleasantly.

The day after Christmas, Scrooge arrives to work early. Bob Cratchit is running late. When he apologizes, Scrooge plays a trick on him. He acts like he is going to fire Bob, but when Bob pleads, Scrooge announces that he is going to give him a raise and help out his family.

Afterwards, Scrooge keeps his word. He becomes a kind, friendly man, admired and respected by all.

Edwina Ellis, 1984



## CAST OF CHARACTERS



**EBENEZER SCROOGE** the unfriendly, cold-hearted, greedy owner of a London accountant's office, then known as a counting-house. He is visited by a series of Christmas spirits who try to help him mend his ways by showing him different visions.

**JACOB MARLEY** Scrooge's equally greedy partner. Marley died seven years before the opening of the story. He appears as a ghost who is doomed to wander the world bound in chains of suffering. Marley comes to warn Scrooge that he will be visited by the spirits of Christmas past, present, and future, and that if he is not careful, Scrooge will suffer the same fate.

### THE GHOST OF CHRISTMAS

**PAST** In our production, this spirit is represented by four different representatives of Christmas past. They take Scrooge back to his youth, when Scrooge was merry, friendly and enjoyed the holiday season. They show Scrooge the friends and family he once loved and admired.

**THE GHOST OF CHRISTMAS PRESENT** The next spirit to visit Scrooge. He allows Scrooge a glimpse of the Cratchits' celebration where, despite the lack of money and Tiny Tim's illness, the family is enjoying the love and happiness of Christmas. Bob Cratchit toasts his drink to Scrooge, despite the fact that Scrooge is unkind to him.

**THE GHOST OF CHRISTMAS YET TO COME** The final spirit to visit Scrooge. This mysterious figure shows Scrooge an ominous vision of his lonely death, as well as the lack of sadness and respect people will show Scrooge after his death.

**BOB CRATCHIT** Scrooge's clerk. He is a poor man with a large family, which he tries desperately to support. Despite his unfortunate circumstances, he continues to be kind, humble, and dedicated.

**MRS. CRATCHIT** Bob's wife, though kind and loving, she is nevertheless critical of her husband's employer.

**PETER CRATCHIT** The Cratchits' eldest son.

**MARTHA CRATCHIT** The family's eldest daughter who works in a millinery (a hat maker's shop).

**MARY CRATCHIT** The Cratchits' youngest daughter.



Tiny Tim and Bob Cratchit on Christmas Day by Jessie Wilcox Smith, 1910

**TINY TIM** The youngest Cratchit son. He is suffering from an unspecified ailment and is crippled. Despite this, he also remains in good spirits and is a warm-hearted young boy.

**FRED** Scrooge's nephew. Fred is a happy man who loves Christmas. Every year he invites his uncle to his annual Christmas party and is refused. Despite his uncle's crotchety nature, he continues to show Scrooge compassion and understanding.

**DORA** Fred's wife. She dislikes Scrooge, because he is so grumpy and unkind to Fred.

**OLD FEZZIWIG** The benevolent merchant with whom Scrooge apprenticed when he was younger. He was renowned for being jovial and hosting magnificent Christmas parties.

**BELLE** Scrooge's former fiancée. Despite Scrooge's deep love for her, she broke off the engagement when his greed started to consume him. She then married another man.

**FAN** Scrooge's sister; Fred's mother. In Scrooge's vision of past Christmases, Fan picks him up from boarding school and fetches him home.

**TWO GENTLEMEN** These two come to visit Scrooge at the beginning of the show. They are seeking donations for the poor, so that they can have a little something at Christmas. Scrooge kicks them out of his office. However, at the end of the play, Scrooge changes his mind and promises to make a sizeable donation if they return to his office.

**CHARWOMAN** She is one of the first people to realize that Scrooge is dead in the vision shown by the Ghost of Christmas Yet To



## CAST OF CHARACTERS *continued*



Come. She loots some of his possessions to sell. She says that had Scrooge been a better person in life and respected others, he would have been respected in death. However, since he was such a cold person, she uses his death to make a profit.

**IGNORANCE** A little beggar boy whom Scrooge sees while he is with the Ghost of Christmas Present. Serving as an allegory, the Ghost warns Scrooge to beware of this little boy more than anything because he is ultimately doomed.

**WANT** A little beggar girl; she is the allegorical sister of Ignorance. Scrooge must also watch out for her, though she is not as dangerous as her brother.

**OLD JOE** An underworld figure who specializes in fencing (the selling of stolen property).

**LAUNDRESS AND UNDERTAKER'S MAN** Characters who steal Scrooge's possessions after his death and take them to Old Joe for money.

**TOPPER** Fred's close friend and favorite party guest. He is fond of Dora's sister.



## UNDERSTANDING DICKENS: A GLOSSARY



**ALI BABA AND THE FORTY THIEVES** a story in the book *One Thousand and One Nights*. It tells of a poor woodcutter who steals a fabulous treasure from a hidden cave, after overhearing a gang of thieves discussing it.

**APPARITION** supernatural appearance of a person or thing, especially a ghost, specter, or phantom

**AUGHT** all; anything; everything

**BEDLAM** contraction of the Hospital of St. Mary of Bethlehem, a London hospital for the insane. The term is often used to indicate a place or situation of noisy uproar or confusion.

**BLIND MAN'S BLUFF** a game of tag in which the "tagger" is blindfolded and tries to capture others. It is like Marco Polo without the water.

**BRAZIER** a large, flat pan filled with coals and used as a heater

**CACHINATION** loud or immoderate laughing

**CALICO** a type of plain, white cotton cloth that is heavier than muslin

**CHARWOMAN** cleaning woman. "Char" comes from the root "chore."

**FORFEITS** a popular parlor game. One person designates a question or category, and each player tries to supply an answer. If not, the person is penalized.

**GRUEL** a small amount of oatmeal boiled in a large amount of water. It is extremely cheap to make and was thought to help cure colds.

**HALF-A-CROWN** a coin equal to 2 ½ shillings, or 30 pence

**HUMBUG** nonsense; rubbish; hoax; fraud; an expression of disgust or disbelief

Blind Man's Bluff



**MULLED WINE** a traditional Christmas drink that mixes red wine with spices, served hot. Also known as "smoking bishop," it is the modern name for the drink. See "smoking bishop."

**POULTERER** a butcher who deals in fowl, mainly chicken or turkey

**PUDDING** a Christmas dessert. The pudding is steamed and heavy with dried fruit and nuts, and sometimes contains brandy or other alcohol, plus suet (raw beef or mutton). It's also referred to as Christmas pudding or plum pudding.

**ROBINSON CRUSOE** Daniel Defoe's novel about an English castaway on a remote tropical island. It was Dickens' favorite novel.

**SAINT DUNSTAN** the Archbishop of Canterbury who lived from 909 to 988. His feast day is celebrated on May 19th.

**SHILLING** a monetary unit equal to 12 pence. 20 shillings equaled 1 pound in Dickens' era.

**SIXPENCE** a coin worth six pennies, known as pence

**SMOKING BISHOP** Christmas punch made from heated red wine and flavored with oranges, sugars, and spices. Its name comes from its deep purple color. It is the more traditional name for mulled wine. See "mulled wine."

**SPECTER** a visible, incorporeal spirit, especially of a terrifying nature

**SQUEAK PIGGY, SQUEAK** a game in which one player is the "farmer" and the others are the "piggies." The farmer stands in the middle of a circle, spins three times, and then sits on the lap of one of the piggies. The farmer says, "Squeak piggy squeak" and tries to identify which piggy he is sitting on by the sound of their squeaking. If the farmer guesses correctly, then he rejoins the circle and the pig becomes the farmer. If not, the farmer remains for another round.

**WORKHOUSES** publicly supported institutions to which the sick, destitute, aged, and impoverished went for food and shelter. The Poor Law of 1834 made them little better than a prison.

**YES AND NO** a game like 20 questions where people try to figure out something by asking yes/no questions.

## MEET MR. DICKENS



Charles John Huffam Dickens was born on February 7, 1812 in Portsmouth, England. His parents, John and Elizabeth, were reasonably well off for a time. John was a clerk in the Navy Pay office, which helped to support his wife and eight children (Charles was the second). Charles grew up in a comfortable, loving home and had many happy memories of his early childhood years.

That comfort and stability left Charles at the age of 12 ([www.charlesdickenspage.com](http://www.charlesdickenspage.com)). His father had a problem with money, often spending much more than he was making. For this, he was sent to Marshalsea's debtors' prison, and the family was forced to move into a tenement in Camden Town.



A drawing of Warren's Blacking Factory where Dickens worked at age 12 to help his family financially

To keep the family afloat, Elizabeth sent Charles to work in Warren's black booting factory. His job was to paste labels on to the jars, a chore he hated. The conditions were typical of a factory in the Industrial Revolution—very poor. He earned six shillings a week. Even after his father's debt was cancelled, Charles's mother forced him to continue working there for some time.

This experience was probably the most influential in Charles' life and career, as it was this event that instilled a respect for the poor and their suffering. That respect shows throughout many of his novels, including *A Christmas Carol*.

When the family's financial situation finally turned around and Charles was able to leave the factory, he turned to a number of interests before establishing himself as a successful novelist. His first pursuit was law, gaining entry to the field first as a junior office clerk on his way to becoming a lawyer, and secondly as a court stenographer. However, he thoroughly disliked his career and decided to pursue other interests, among them theater and writing ([www.wikipedia.org](http://www.wikipedia.org)).

While he seemed to have a knack for writing, he didn't immediately turn to novels. He started as a journalist, covering debates and elections. He also did a series of sketches, which were serialized under the name *Sketches by Boz* (Boz was his pen-name). This helped to produce his first novel, *The Pickwick Papers*, published in March 1836.

1836 was a big year for Mr. Dickens. On April 2 of that year, he married Catherine Thompson Hogarth, whose father was Dickens' editor. The two would go on to have 10 children together.

Afterwards, Dickens' career took off. He became the editor of *Bentley's Miscellany* for a while, but he continued to write many successful novels, as well as speak out against social injustice.



A young Charles

He toured America and Canada supporting abolitionism. Meanwhile, he continued to focus on the plight of the poor ([www.wikipedia.org](http://www.wikipedia.org)).

His personal life seemed to have suffered in later years, as did his health. He was involved in a rail accident, in which he miraculously managed to escape unharmed, as did one of his unfinished manuscripts. He died

of stroke exactly five years later on June 9, 1870.

He was buried in Poet's corner of Westminster Abbey. The inscription on his tomb reads: "He was a sympathiser to the poor, the suffering, and the oppressed; and by his death, one of England's greatest writers is lost to the world." Despite his wish that no memorial be erected to honor him, one life-size bronze statue exists, residing in Philadelphia.

### NOVELS

Most stories except the Christmas books (indicated by \*) were serialized before being reprinted in book format.

*The Pickwick Papers* (Monthly serial: April 1836-November 1837)

*The Adventures of Oliver Twist* (Monthly serial: February 1837-April 1839)

*The Life and Adventures of Nicholas Nickleby* (Monthly serial: April 1838-October 1839)

*The Old Curiosity Shop* (Weekly serial: April 1840-February 1841)

*Barnaby Rudge* (Weekly serial: February 1841-November 1841)

*A Christmas Carol\** (1843)

*The Chimes\** (1844)

*The Cricket on the Hearth\** (1845)

*The Battle of Life\** (1846)

*The Haunted Man and the Ghost's Bargain\** (1848)

*The Life and Adventures of Martin Chuzzlewit* (Monthly serial: January 1843-July 1844)





*Dombey and Son* (Monthly serial: October 1846-April 1848)  
*David Copperfield* (Monthly serial: May 1849-November 1850)  
*Bleak House* (Monthly serial: March 1852-September 1853)  
*Hard Times: For These Times* (Weekly serial: April 1854-August 1854)  
*Little Dorrit* (Monthly serial: December 1855-June 1857)  
*A Tale of Two Cities* (Weekly serial: April 1859-November 1859)  
*Great Expectations* (Weekly serial: December 1860-August 1861)  
*Our Mutual Friend* (Monthly serial: May 1864-November 1865)  
*No Thoroughfare* (1867)  
*The Mystery of Edwin Drood* (Monthly serial: April 1870-September 1870)  
*The Lazy Tour of Two Idle Apprentices* (1890)

### **SHORT STORY COLLECTIONS**

*Sketches by Boz* (1836)  
*Boots at the Holly-tree Inn: And Other Stories* (1858)  
*Reprinted Pieces* (1861)  
*The Haunted House* (1862)  
*The Mudfog Papers* (1880)  
*To Be Read at Dusk* (1898)

### **SELECTED POETRY, NON-FICTION, AND PLAYS**

*The Village Coquettes* (1836)  
*The Fine Old English Gentleman* (1841)  
*American Notes: For General Circulation* (1842)  
*Pictures from Italy* (1846)  
*The Life of our Lord: As written for his children* (1849)  
*A Child's History of England* (1853)  
*The Frozen Deep* (1857)  
*Speeches, Letters and Sayings* (1870)

## ABOUT THIS PRODUCTION: ADAPTING DICKENS BY MEAD HUNTER



If there is such a thing as personal genius, Charles Dickens certainly had it. His success as a writer was so colossal that his fellow 19th-century novelists could only advance their careers in reference to him. Literally and figurative, Dickens set the stage for British writing then and since.

But did you know that Dickens was also a failed playwright? In fact, early in his life he had dreams of making a life in the theater for himself – as an actor, manager and playwright. However, the runaway popularity of one of his earliest works, *The Pickwick Papers*, sealed his fate forever. It's hard to argue with commercial success, and his avid devotees demanded a continuous stream of new novels.

Later in his career, when Dickens could afford to take time out from his serialized yarns, he tried his hand at writing for stage. As you might guess from titles such as *The Village Coquettes*, these rather derivative works did only moderately well in Dickens' own time, and are of little interest to 21st-century audiences.

Significantly, critics have noted that out of all of Dickens' massive literary output, the prose work most akin to a stageworthy play is *A Christmas Carol*. The story has a tight structure: a first movement in which Scrooge shuns humankind, a final movement in which he welcomes it, and a middle section that moves from the past into the present and on into a possible future. Dickens refers to these five parts as "staves," referring to the staves of a song (we would now call them verses), placing them in a performative context. Also, long passages of the novella are expressed through dialogue, rather than through description; the reader comes to know Marley, Bob Cratchit, Old Fezziwig and many others through what their words express and how they behave toward each other. Any good play proceeds in just this way.

For all these reasons, I have had to take on the opportunity to adapt Dickens' masterpiece with humility. It's hard to accept a playwrighting credit for Portland Center Stage's version of *A Christmas Carol* when Dickens has already done all the heavy lifting. Making my task even easier, Dickens conceived the novel in psychological and philosophical terms that in some ways make more sense to us today than they did to the Londoners of 1843. Whereas much of the critical thinking of Dickens' era maintained that you had to change outer conditions for people to change internally, *A Christmas Carol* demonstrates the reverse proposition – that a spiritual change must come first, and everything else will follow after.

Perhaps this is one reason why we still care so much for Scrooge, 164 years after his first appearance. His rehabilitation and transformation holds out the promise that if only we are

put in touch with that most elemental part of ourselves – the part that yearns to belong to the human race and for the earth to be a better place for our having lived here – we too can rejoice in the season and know that next year is another chance to redeem our own promise.

Dickens' beautiful winter's tale gives us all these gifts. All I had to do was follow suit.

*Mead Hunter is PCS's Director of Literary & Education Programs.*

## LIFE IN VICTORIAN ENGLAND



Charles Dickens lived most of his life, as well as almost his entire writing career, in the Victorian era. It was aptly named to represent the reign of Queen Victoria, which spanned from 1837-1901. Victoria took the throne at age 18 and ruled for 63 years, which makes her the longest reigning monarch in British history.

The Victorian era represents a time of great change and progress. While the people of the era were highly mannered and governed themselves by strict social etiquette, they also possessed a longing for betterment, modernization, and invention. They believed that society could find solutions to any problem.

One such problem the Victorians saw was the lack of civilization of many different peoples around the world. This resulted in an age of rampant imperialism and the expansion of the British Empire, acquiring places such as India, Australia, and Hong Kong for the crown (to name a few in a long list). Often referred to as the “white man’s burden,” the Victorians felt it was their duty to pass on their knowledge of religion, manners, and general society to what they saw as inferiors. In addition to performing what they saw as Christian duty, they also gained considerable wealth.

While some would argue the growth of the Empire was a less-than-noble pursuit, the Victorian era did see a lot of real progress in other fields. Some of the most notable achievements came under the areas of science, transportation, and mechanization, such as Darwin’s scientific theories, the rise of trains and railways, and the rise of machinery and factory work. Of course, these advances also generated new problems, such as industrial pollution.

In order to better understand Dickens and the stories he wrote, it is helpful to understand the time and society in which he lived. The following sections tell about various characteristics of Victorian life.

### INDUSTRIAL REVOLUTION

The Industrial Revolution was a time of great change. It marked the rapid expansion of technological ideas, which helped move society from a more manual labor-driven society to a modern, mechanized one. The Industrial Revolution, with its numerous advances, helped to usher in society as we know it today.

While the Industrial Revolution has its beginnings in the 1700s, breakthroughs in many different areas of technology stretched until the late 1800s. According to wikipedia.org, it began with simple, agricultural advances. New tools and crop rotation techniques yielded better crops. Soon this search for better methods of production spilled over into other areas.



Queen Victoria

The first phase was textiles, with one major invention being the automated loom. The second phase was railroads and steel production, with the steam engine and metallurgy gaining quick momentum and popularity. The third phase was electricity and chemicals, and the fourth was information technologies, bringing with them such innovations as gas lighting and the telephone ([www.victorianweb.org](http://www.victorianweb.org)).

In addition to technology, the Industrial Revolution helped to shape society by re-arranging social patterns and the way people worked. Previously, people were more spread out, making a living anywhere they could. The economy was one based on manual labor, requiring many skilled workers. Once the Industrial Revolution took hold, there was a dramatic difference. New machines made work easy and cheap. They required less workers and less skill. Jobs became scarce, especially in the country. People were forced to move to the city, looking for work where they could get it.

Owners and managers often exploited this desperation. With profits rapidly increasing, they sought to keep it that way. They underpaid workers, subjected them to dangerous and depressing conditions, and made them work long hours, all while paying them barely enough to



survive. Women were often forced to work, as well as children, to make enough to keep a family alive and out of the poorhouse. Consequently, the rise in poverty and slums rose dramatically.

As you can see, not only did the Industrial Revolution better our lives by providing many helpful technological advances that made goods and services quicker and cheaper, but it also had some very real, and often negative, impacts on society. While there was a rise in the middle class, it also drew a very pronounced line between the struggling poor and the comfortable middle and upper classes. It set the stage for the modern work ethic, which often centers on long, hard hours and is based on profit. Also, with everyone fleeing to the cities for work, it led to urbanization, with all its advantages and disadvantages. It truly had enormous effects that not only shaped society in Victorian times, but helped to shape the way we function in society today.

### GENDER MATTERS

The Victorian era was a prime example of the inequality of the genders. Men and women were thought to be inherently different, and therefore, had two different roles in life. Women were private, moral, modest creatures who were thought to be biologically inferior. Their main goals in life were getting married and bearing children. A woman's place was always the home, where it was her duty to look after the children and keep the household. If a woman was of middle to upper-class, she stayed

An example of Victorian women's fashion



at home. Her days were spent dressing, calling on friends, arranging social engagements, and looking after the household staff to ensure everything was in order. If she was of a lower class, most likely she would be a domestic servant, taking care of the homes and children of the wealthier women. The poorest women worked in factories or resorted to prostitution ([www.victorianweb.org](http://www.victorianweb.org)).

Men, on the other hand, lived in the public sphere. They were expected to be seen around town, either for work or pleasure. It was their job to work, if necessary, to provide for their family. They were the head of the household and could govern it absolutely, as they saw fit. If they didn't need to work for money, men spent their days dealing with business, calling on friends, and enjoying sport, such as hunting. Men were free to do as they pleased. The ideal Victorian male was firm but fair ([www.channel4.com](http://www.channel4.com)).

These differences also carried over to education and law. Education wasn't compulsory until the late 1800s, so prior to that time, the type and level of learning a person received depended on their wealth and their gender. There were excellent schools for the sons of the wealthy. They were taught the classics, science, religion, politics—they learned things that would be useful for their lives in the public sphere. Females, on the other hand, were educated at home by a governess. Girls learned languages (almost always French), drawing, dancing, and music. They also could learn sewing, embroidery, and accounts—they learned things that would enhance or beautify the lives of those around them. The ideal Victorian female was modest, skilled at managing household affairs, and skilled at entertaining and being sociable ([www.channel4.com](http://www.channel4.com)).

As for the law, women had almost no rights. Typically, women either belonged to their father or husband. They could not vote and could not own property. Everything a woman had belonged to her husband and was subject to him.

### Ladies and Gentlemen

Still want to know more about the men and women of the Victorian era? Here is a list of distinguishing characteristics of true ladies and



Clothing worn by Victorian men

gentlemen, as well as some of the rules by which they governed themselves ([www.victorianstation.com](http://www.victorianstation.com)).

### **The Qualities of a Gentleman:**

He is brave, because, with a conscience void of offence, he has nothing to fear.

He keeps his honor unstained, and to retain the good opinion of others, he neglects no civility.

He opposes without bitterness and yields without admitting defeat.

He is never arrogant, never weak.

To his superiors, he is respectful without servility; to equals—courteous; to inferiors—kind.

He carries himself with grace in all places, is easy but never familiar, genteel without affection.

### **Street Rules for a Gentleman:**

A real gentleman never swears or talks uproariously. He should never fail to raise his hat politely to an acquaintance of either sex. If he should bump into someone or step upon a lady's dress he must "beg their pardon", and at no time should he lose his temper nor attract attention by excited conversation.

It is proper to offer a lady his arm, particularly in the evening and it should always be the right arm. People passing should observe the law of "turn to the right" and in this way the lady would not be jostled. It is always proper for a gentleman walking alone to give the lady or a gentleman with a lady, the inside of the walk.

### **The Qualities of a Lady:**

A lady should be quiet in her manners, natural and unassum-

ing in her language, careful to wound no one's feelings, but giving generously and freely from the treasures of her pure mind to her friends. Scorning no one openly, she should feel gentleness for the unfortunate, the inferior and the ignorant, at the same time carrying herself with an innocence and single heartedness which disarms ill nature, and wins respect and love from all.

### **Street Rules for a Lady:**

The true lady walks the street, wrapped in a mantle of proper reserve, so impenetrable that insult and coarse familiarity shrink from her, while she, at all times, carries with her a congenial atmosphere which attracts all, and puts all at their ease.

A lady walks quietly through the streets, seeing and hearing nothing that she ought not to, recognizing acquaintances with a courteous bow and friends with words of greeting. She is always unobtrusive, never talks loudly, or laughs boisterously, or does anything to attract the attention of the passers-by. She walks along in her own quiet, lady-like way, and by her preoccupation is secure from any annoyance. A true lady in the street, as in the parlor is modest, discreet, kind and obliging.

It is proper that the lady should first recognize the gentleman. A gentleman will never fail to bow in return to a lady; but a lady may not feel at liberty to return a gentleman's bow, which places him in a rather unpleasant position. Therefore, a lady should give the first smile or bow. She must refrain, at all times, from using the gentleman's Christian name.

## **MONEY**

British currency was split up into three different official monetary units—pounds (£), shillings (s.), and pence (d.). 12 pence equals 1 shilling and 20 shillings equals 1 pound. Additionally, prices were sometimes quoted in guineas. A guinea in an unofficial monetary unit used only for the wealthy, and it is equal to 21 shillings (or 1 pound, 1 shilling).

According to [www.victorianweb.org](http://www.victorianweb.org), it is hard to convert Victorian monetary units to their modern counterparts and figure out their worth, mostly because the Victorian area consisted of



roughly five separate periods, each marking rapid growth and change. Therefore, there isn't any consistent, reliable information to help us equate the Victorian price scale with today's scale. However, below is a sample of what the typical Victorian male would have earned.

### Typical Annual Incomes

Here are some typical Victorian salaries, as noted on [www.english.uwosh.edu](http://www.english.uwosh.edu):

Aristocrats: £30,000

Merchants, bankers: £10,000

Middle-class (doctors, lawyers, clerks): £300-800

Lower middle-class (head teachers, journalists, shopkeepers, etc.): £150-300

Skilled workers (carpenters, typesetters, etc.): £75-100

Sailors and domestic staff: £40-75

Laborers, soldiers: £25

### SOCIAL CLASS

The British class system is very complex and multi-layered. It is unlike the American system, which has three loose divisions (upper, middle, and lower class), all of which are based on money. Theoretically, anyone can shift from one position to another under the right circumstances. The British system, most specifically in the Victorian period, consists of a number of factors—money, family, marriage, profession and neighborhood. It is much more difficult for a person to change class, though it is not impossible. Below is a guide to the general social classes ([www.channel4.com](http://www.channel4.com)).

#### Royalty

At the very top of the social ladder was the monarch, the highest rank in the British class system. Queen Victoria, along with Prince Albert, their nine children, and the rest of the royal family, enjoyed the wealth and splendor that comes from ruling a wealthy, powerful empire. While Victoria was more modest than some monarchs, she was still entitled (and expected) to enjoy a number of lavish luxuries—palaces and estates, crowns and jewels, exquisite outfits, countless servants and attendants, and even countries. The Victorians were a theatrical people who enjoyed grandeur and spectacle, with Queen Victoria at the center of it, which was just as the people liked it.

#### Aristocracy

The aristocracy was a constant force in the British class system, with many families retaining their wealth and power for centuries. Inheriting land, titles, and most times a place in Parliament's House of Lords (not to mention the money), the aristocracy enjoyed a life almost as rich and fabulous as the

Royal Family itself. Many Victorian aristocrats ventured out into the business world, teaming with rich businessmen and industrialists, which expanded their wealth and influence. Marriage was also of the utmost importance to the aristocracy, as a smart match would help to ensure and increase a family's wealth and position in society. Since the aristocrats didn't have to work for their money, they were free to host lavish parties, hunt and fish, enjoy riding horses, and spend time going back and forth between grand homes in the city and the country.

#### The Middle Class

The middle class in Victorian society was still a formidable force. While they didn't share the same amount of wealth and position, they still benefited from well-paying, "clean" jobs which provided them a comfortable lifestyle that most people today would consider more than modest. The middle class split into two groups: upper-middle class and lower-middle class. The first consisted of doctors, lawyers, clergy, bankers and industrialists. Most sent their children to the top schools and universities, where they would meet and befriend aristocrats and try to advance in society. The second was made up of professional managers and civil servants. The people of the middle class owned villas and terraced houses, employed servants, enjoying shopping, and like their upper class counterparts, still had enough time for leisure activities.

#### The Working Class

The working class had its own ranking system, split into six different categories. The categories defined people by the cleanliness (and by extension, the morality) of the work, as well as the regularity and size of their income. For example, being a servant in an aristocrat's house was deemed a respectable way for a person to earn their living. And the bottom of the spectrum was the poor. Also known as "the lowest class," the poor often lived in unimaginable filth. Barely hanging on, begging for food and shelter, sometimes sent to the workhouse, and only enough money to buy gin, which was often their only pleasure and comfort, the poor made up a large and pitiful group of the working class. While the people in the various divisions of the working class varied in their money, living conditions, and jobs, the common characteristics of the working



class was the dependence on work to survive and a lack of material and leisurely excesses.

### THE WORKHOUSE

In medieval England, the poor, sick, and elderly were the responsibility of the church. Each parish would give them assistance. They would provide money, clothing, and food to those who were desperately in need. The money was generated by taxing local property owners, which would be given to the various parishes, then distributed to the needy. This was considered “out-relief.” However, this eventually became very costly, and many otherwise healthy individuals refused to work when parish relief was so easily available. Due to these two factors, parishes started to look for a way to provide “indoor relief.” This is how workhouses evolved ([www.workhouse.org](http://www.workhouse.org)).

Workhouses were notoriously unpleasant places to end up. It is a common misconception that workhouses were just another name for prison. While they were prison-like, they weren’t a place for criminals. They replaced out-relief, but continued to provide basic care for the extremely poor, the sick, the elderly, as well as unwed mothers. They provided basic housing and meals to those who needed their assistance. In exchange, any able-bodied person who accepted their assistance was expected to work.

According to [www.workhouse.org](http://www.workhouse.org), people were classified into one of seven categories, separating them by age, gender, and health. They were given uniforms and a bed, the only possessions which they were allowed to have. The workhouse itself was self-contained, with several different facilities for housing, the chapel, meals, school rooms, and a hospital. Each usually also contained a garden and/or orchard outside where workers farmed and kept animals.

While this may not seem too bad, those in workhouses led a dismal life. They shared sleeping quarters and primitive toilet facilities. The able-bodied performed backbreaking labor, such as breaking rocks; those who were too old or sick often sat in solitude. Meals consisted of gruel or crackers. Also, entering the workhouse stripped you of your right to vote. Overall, workhouse life meant a sad life, one without dignity.

### GAMES

In photographs, the people of the Victorian era always look sedate, as if they didn’t know how to have fun. In fact, the Victorians were very partial to their leisure activities, especially games. Many of their games have survived and are still popular today, such as cards, backgammon, checkers and chess. These, and many other long since forgotten, were played at small gath-

erings or large parties and amused the Victorians for hours. In addition to the ones mentioned in the glossary, here are a few others to help give you a better understanding of the people of the Victorian era ([www.angelfire.com](http://www.angelfire.com)).

#### Change Seats

A circle of chairs is formed. One person is chosen to start the game out in the middle of the circle. He will say, “Change seats!” as often as he likes. But everyone is to stay seated until he says, “The king’s come”. Then everyone must get up and change seats but not with the persons to their immediate left or right. Of course, the person left standing is the next one to stand in the middle and call out, “Change seats!”

#### Hunt the Slipper

This was a simple game where everyone joined a circle as one person remained in the middle of the circle with her eyes shut. A slipper or maybe even a shoe or boot was passed around behind the backs of everyone while the chosen person in the middle kept her eyes shut. But when she opened her eyes the slipper stops passing between everyone. The center player then must guess who has the slipper. If the correct answer is given, then another person will take the center of the circle.

#### Throwing the Smile

In this game the object is to win by not smiling. Everyone will form a circle. The chosen person will stand in the middle going about with a smile on his face, trying to make someone else laugh or giggle. Then he will hurriedly wipe the smile from his face and quickly throw his straight look toward someone trying to get them to laugh. This will continue until he can make someone laugh. Whoever laughs must sit out the rest of the game.

## CHRISTMAS PAST



The first Christmas card. It was designed by John Callcott Horsley in 1843

### TRADITIONS

It's a little known fact, but we owe a great many thanks to Charles Dickens for the way we celebrate Christmas today. It's not just because he gave us the classical novel, *A Christmas Carol*. It has more to do with the fact that, because his story was so well-loved, it helped to bring about a resurgence in celebrations and traditions that were beginning to wane and die off.

According to [www.charlesdickenspage.com](http://www.charlesdickenspage.com), Christmas previously combined the birth of Jesus with various Roman and Germanic traditions. These traditions held fast for a long time. However, during the rule of Oliver Cromwell and the rise of Puritanism, the celebration fell under scrutiny. It was a day to observe the birth of Jesus alone, not the pagan practices. The Industrial Revolution further helped to obscure the holiday, because focus became work, progress, and money, as opposed to family, holiness, and goodwill.

Dickens' main character, Scrooge, is a perfect example of the spirit of the Industrial Revolution. He worked long hours to make more money, and he forced his workers to do the same. It's not until he is visited by the Christmas spirits that he is able to free himself of this greed and let in the true joy of the season.

The book, which was immediately popular, helped show the Victorians the importance of the holiday season and the need to enjoy it once again. It helped to foster a resurgence of old traditions, as well as a general love and respect for the holiday that had been missing.

Dickens wasn't alone, however, in helping to shape the way we celebrate Christmas. He had help from Queen Victoria's husband, Prince Albert. Albert, who was German, brought with him the Christmas tree, which he and the royal family decorated. He also helped to re-popularize the singing of Christmas carols, a tradition that had all but died out decades before.

It was also at this time that Christmas cards became popular. The Victorians were an aesthetic society. They began sending colorful, festive cards to another to increase the holiday cheer and to emphasize the sharing of joy with others during the holidays.

Christmas without a tree, singing, or cards from the friends and family—it's hard to imagine. And while these things are not the meaning or focus of Christmas, their presence serves to remind us all that the holiday is a special time. It's an important time when we should go a little out of our way to be kind and gracious, to love and serve others, and a time for peace and happiness.

Those are the things that had gotten lost. Those are the things that Scrooge forgot. And those are the things that Dickens helped to give us back when he gave us *A Christmas Carol*.

Here are some other popular Victorian Christmas traditions according to [www.logicmgmt.com](http://www.logicmgmt.com):

**BELLS** The Victorians believed that the Devil and his evil spirits were more prevalent in the winter. It was easier for them to wreak havoc among good folk. So the Victorians rang bells in observance of the ancient folk belief that the noise would scare them away.

**BOXING DAY** The day after Christmas is known as Boxing Day. Churches almost always had little wooden boxes, known as poor boxes, in which churchgoers could put money to help the poor. It was on Boxing Day that the boxes were opened up. The clergy distributed the money among the poor, who would then have a little extra money to enjoy the holiday.

**CHRISTMAS CRACKERS** a cylinder tied at both ends containing sweets and/or toys. Inspired by crackling logs in a fire, it must be opened by pulling on both ends. When it breaks, it makes a cracking sound, hence Christmas "cracker." Then you are free to eat the treat or play with the toy. It is also usually accompanied by a paper hat or crown which is worn throughout the night.

**HOLLY** Holly was thought to be magical because of its shiny leaves and its ability to bear fruit in the winter. It used to be hung over the bed to bring sweet dreams, or made into syrup to prevent cough. The type of holly is also important. Prickly holly is referred to as "male" and





non-prickly holly is referred to as “female” holly. Whichever type was brought into the house first was said to determine who would rule the house in the coming year.

### FOOD AND DRINK

Holidays are usually marked by traditional food, and Christmas in Victorian England was no exception. Here are two traditional recipes which marked a Victorian Christmas.

#### Plum Pudding Recipe

- 1 cup finely chopped beef suet
- 2 cups fine bread crumbs
- 1 cup sugar
- 1 cup milk
- 1 pint flour
- 1 cup seedless raisins
- 1 cup dried currants
- 1 cup chopped almonds
- 1/2 cup citron, sliced thin
- 1 tsp salt
- 1 tsp cloves
- 2 tsp cinnamon
- 1 tsp nutmeg
- 4 well-beaten eggs
- 1 tsp of baking soda dissolved in 1 tbsp warm water

Flour the fruit thoroughly.

In a large bowl, mix the eggs, sugar, spices, and salt in the milk. Stir in the fruit, nuts, bread crumbs, and suet. Then stir in the dissolved baking soda. Then add in the flour. Boil or steam for 4 hours.

To flame pudding, warm 1/4 cup of brandy. Make a small depression in the top of the pudding and pour brandy over it. Light with a match ([www.charlesdickenspage.com](http://www.charlesdickenspage.com)).

#### Smoking Bishop Recipe

- 5 unpeeled oranges
- 1 unpeeled grapefruit
- 36 cloves
- ¼ pound of sugar
- 2 bottles of red wine
- 1 bottle of port

Wash the fruit and oven bake until brownish. Turn once. Put fruit into a warmed earthenware bowl with six cloves stuck into each. Add the sugar and pour in the wine—DO NOT ADD THE PORT. Cover and leave in a warm place for the day.

Squeeze the fruit into the wine and strain. Add the port and heat—DO NOT BOIL.

Serve “smoking” warm ([www.stormfax.com](http://www.stormfax.com)).



A Victorian drawing of Santa Clause, a.k.a. Father Christmas

### CAROLS

Christmas wouldn't be complete without the music which brings it to life. Here are some of the more popular Christmas carols that the Victorians would have sung ([carols.org](http://carols.org)).

#### The Wassail Song

Here we come a-wassailing  
Among the leaves so green,  
Here we come a-wand'ring  
So fair to be seen.  
Love and joy come to you,  
And to you your wassail, too,  
And God bless you, and send you  
A Happy New Year,  
And God send you a Happy New Year.

We are not daily beggars  
That beg from door to door,  
But we are neighbors' children  
Whom you have seen before  
Love and joy come to you,  
And to you your wassail, too,  
And God bless you, and send you  
A Happy New Year,  
And God send you a Happy New Year.

Good master and good mistress,  
As you sit beside the fire,  
Pray think of us poor children



Who wander in the mire.  
Love and joy come to you,  
And to you your wassail, too,  
And God bless you, and send you  
A Happy New Year,  
And God send you a Happy New Year  
We have a little purse  
Made of ratching leather skin;  
We want some of your small change  
To line it well within.  
Love and joy come to you,  
And to you your wassail, too,  
And God bless you, and send you  
A Happy New Year,  
And God send you a Happy New Year.

Bring us out a table  
And spread it with a cloth;  
Bring us out a cheese,  
And of your Christmas loaf.  
Love and joy come to you,  
And to you your wassail, too,  
And God bless you, and send you  
A Happy New Year,  
And God send you a Happy New Year.

God bless the master of this house,  
Likewise the mistress too;  
And all the little children  
That round the table go.  
Love and joy come to you,  
And to you your wassail, too,  
And God bless you, and send you  
A Happy New Year,  
And God send you a Happy New Year.

**The Gloucestershire Wassail**

Wassail, wassail all over the town  
Our toast it is white and our ale it is brown  
Our bowl it is made of the white maple tree  
With the wassailing bowl, we'll drink to thee

So here is to Cherry and to his right cheek  
Pray God send our master a good piece of beef  
And a good piece of beef that may we all see  
With the wassailing bowl, we'll drink to thee

And here is to Dobbin and to his right eye  
Pray God send our master a good Christmas pie  
A good Christmas pie that may we all see  
With the wassailing bowl, we'll drink to thee

So here is to Broad Mary and to her broad horn  
May God send our master a good crop of corn  
And a good crop of corn that may we all see  
With the wassailing bowl, we'll drink to thee

And here is to Fillpail and to her left ear  
Pray God send our master a happy New Year  
And a happy New Year as e'er he did see  
With the wassailing bowl, we'll drink to thee

And here is to Colly and to her long tail  
Pray God send our master he never may fail  
A bowl of strong beer! I pray you draw near  
And our jolly wassail it's then you shall hear

Come butler, come fill us a bowl of the best  
Then we hope that your soul in heaven may rest  
But if you do draw us a bowl of the small  
Then down shall go butler, bowl and all

Then here's to the maid in the lily white smock  
Who tripped to the door and slipped back the lock  
Who tripped to the door and pulled back the pin  
For to let these jolly wassailers in.

**We Wish You a Merry Christmas**

We wish you a Merry Christmas;  
We wish you a Merry Christmas;  
We wish you a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.  
Good tidings we bring to you and your kin;  
Good tidings for Christmas and a Happy New Year.

Oh, bring us a figgy pudding;  
Oh, bring us a figgy pudding;  
Oh, bring us a figgy pudding and a cup of good cheer  
We won't go until we get some;  
We won't go until we get some;  
We won't go until we get some, so bring some out here

We wish you a Merry Christmas;  
We wish you a Merry Christmas;



We wish you a Merry  
Christmas and a Happy  
New Year.

An illustration of the royal  
family celebrating around their  
Christmas tree, a tradition  
which Prince Albert brought  
over from Germany

# THE GHOST OF DICKENS PRESENT



Our production of *A Christmas Carol* isn't the only thing keeping Dickens' spirit alive and well. The man and his beloved tales are being celebrated the world over, most notably in the UK, through numerous festivals, museums, and even a theme park.

Here are some of the most notable tributes according to [www.wikipedia.org](http://www.wikipedia.org):

### **Charles Dickens Museum**

Located in Doughty Street in the London section of Holborn, this is the only one of his London homes to survive. During his two-year stay there, he wrote *The Pickwick Papers*, *Oliver Twist*, and *Nicholas Nickleby*. The museum contains a large number of manuscripts, memorabilia, and original furniture.

### **Charles Dickens Birthplace Museum**

The museum, aptly named, marks the place where Mr. Dickens was born. Located in the city of Portsmouth, it has been re-furnished to represent the style of the period and also houses some great Dickens memorabilia.

### **Dickens House Museum**

This house, located in Broadstairs, was the home of Mary Pearson Strong. Strong provided the basis for the character, Betsey Trotwood, in *David Copperfield*. The house sits across the bay from the original Bleak House where the novel was written. This museum also contains memorabilia, some of Dickens' letter, and general Victoriana.

### **Charles Dickens Centre**

The centre is located in Eastgate House, which is in Rochester. The house, which dates back to the 16<sup>th</sup> century, appeared in *The Pickwick Papers* under the name of Westgate House, as well as the Nun's House in *Edwin Drood*. It houses memora-

bilia, as well as displays relating to the author's life and/or works.

### **Dickens World**

This newly opened theme park is located in Chatham Maritime, Kent. Dickens lived in Chatham for a good deal of his childhood, and the park is located near the naval docks where Charles' father worked for a time. The park has re-created the Victorian sights and sounds described in many of Dickens' novels. Attractions include one of the largest dark boat rides in Europe, Ebenezer Scrooge's haunted house, animatronics shows, a Victorian school room, and Fagin's Den. The park also offers shops and restaurants, not to mention the overall ambience to complete the experience.

### **Rochester Dickens Festival**

The streets of Rochester, Kent fill up in the summer and winter with people filled with the Dickens spirit. The summer festival, which is held in late May or early June, kicks off with an invitation-only ball on Thursday night. The next three days see the city celebrating with costume-clad characters and music. The winter festival, which is the first Saturday and Sunday of December, takes it one step further. With the city

An artistic rendering of the Dickens World theme park





decorated for Christmas, there are carolers and street vendors peddling their wares for Christmas.

### **Riverside Dickens Festival**

Held in Riverside, California, this tribute to the late Charles Dickens not only provides entertainment for festival goers, but it also includes a number of literary studies regarding his works.

### **The Great Dickens Christmas Fair**

Another Californian tribute, this massive festival takes place in San Francisco. It takes place four or five weekends prior to Christmas, when approximately 500 costumed performers gather together in a full-scale, 90,000 square foot re-creation of Dickensian London. Festival goers interact with each other and enjoy various entertainments, as well as the atmosphere of Victorian London. It has long been heralded as the most impressive in the world and even has an international cast of characters, with Martin Harris flying from London to play Scrooge every year.

### **Dickens on the Strand**

California isn't the only U.S. state boasting a renowned festival. This time, Texas takes the reigns, holding its tribute on the first weekend in December. Visitors will find costumed Bobbies (the British slang term for a constable), Beefeaters (the common term for the Yeoman Warders who patrol and stand guard at the Tower of London), and the Queen herself, all in attendance to celebrate and re-create Dickensian London.



## NAME THAT ILLNESS



One of the most moving characters in *A Christmas Carol* is Tiny Tim, the young Cratchit boy whose unnamed ailment causes him to be crippled. Scrooge sees Tiny Tim through his various visions. First, he sees the boy dependent on his crutches but keeping his spirits high. He is in visibly poor condition, but his determination to overcome his condition is touching. Later, Scrooge's vision shows him the Cratchit family, mourning the loss of their son due to his illness.

The story never mentions a specific disease or disorder. This has intrigued readers and physicians for years. With only a few symptoms and causes, as well as knowledge about the medical technology of the day, a few professionals have ventured guesses and hypothesized as to what condition afflicts Tiny Tim.

Below are a few of the possibilities. The information was gathered from the McCarter Theatre website, as well as several leading health sites. While we can never know for sure, one of the following has been the most generally accepted among medical professionals. What do you think—can you guess which one it is?

### RICKETS

Rickets is a Vitamin D deficiency, which presents itself in young children. The deficiency can be caused by a variety of things—poor nutrition (especially a lack of milk), a lack of exposure to the sun, or malabsorption syndromes in which the intestines do not correctly absorb nutrients. Vitamin D is essential to metabolize calcium and phosphorus in the body, which affects how calcium is deposited in the bones; therefore, it is considered essential for proper bone development and growth. Symptoms of vitamin D deficiency rickets include bone disease, restlessness, and slow growth.

**Why it makes sense:** The Cratchits would not have been able to afford milk, which is rich in Vitamin D. Also, sunlight was scarce in the poorer, crowded, smog-filled area of London where the Cratchits lived. This lack of Vitamin D would have made Tiny Tim's bones weak, especially his legs which wouldn't be strong enough to support his whole body, hence the need for crutches.

**Why it doesn't make sense:** Rickets is rarely fatal. A Ghost of Christmas Present tells Scrooge that Tiny Tim will die if he continues to live in those conditions, and *The Ghost of Christmas Yet To Come* shows Scrooge a vision of the Cratchits mourning their son. Also, the rest of the family lived in the same conditions, so if it was a Vitamin D deficiency, the entire family would be suffering from rickets ([www.mayoclinic.com](http://www.mayoclinic.com)).

### TUBERCULOSIS

Tuberculosis (TB) is a bacterial infection that is most commonly found in the lungs, though quite often spreads throughout the body. It lives in areas of the body rich in blood and oxy-

gen. It is contagious, often passed by coughing or laughing.

**Why it makes sense:** While TB was more common in adults, it could appear in children. It would have resulted in crippling, fatigue, and weight loss. "Tiny" could have been a reference to his small size, which would correspond to weight loss. TB is a condition which, left untreated, would kill Tiny Tim. However, with Scrooge's help, he could have gotten much better.

**Why it doesn't make sense:** We learn at the end that Tiny Tim is cured of his illness. Tuberculosis never completely goes away. While it would go into remission and Tim could live in much better health, he could never be cured of TB. Also, in the book, Tiny Tim runs into Scrooge's arms near the end of Dickens' novel. Someone with TB would not be well enough for that, even with the disease in remission ([www.WHO.int](http://www.WHO.int)).

### RENAL TUBULAR ACIDOSIS

Renal Tubular Acidosis (RTA) is a condition in which your kidneys are unable to process and move acids in the body to urine. Without this release, the blood becomes heavily acidic. Without treatment, RTA leads to slowed growth and bone disease, among others.

**Why it makes sense:** Doctors would have more than likely thought Tim had TB and prescribed him medication that would actually make him sicker. The medicines would have contained even more acids that would have further strained Tiny Tim's kidneys. The acids would have stunted bone production and caused him to be short for his age, hence "Tiny" Tim. Also, one side of his body would have become weaker than the other, requiring the assistance of a crutch. Finally, RTA is totally treatable. It just requires a more skilled doctor, something that Scrooge's money easily could have provided. Left untreated, however, it would eventually cause death ([www.merck.com](http://www.merck.com)).

**The case against it:** As of right now, there isn't a case against it.

RTA is the most likely answer, with it fitting all the requirements. While there are other possible solutions, and we will never really know for sure, Type 1 Renal Tubular Acidosis is most likely the condition afflicting Tiny Tim.

## FILMOGRAPHY



A *Christmas Carol* is one of the most beloved stories of all times. It has been re-told scores of times, each one adding to the magic of the story, as well as to the magic of Christmas itself.

Internet surfers might be familiar with the Internet Movie Database (commonly known as IMDb). The site lists around 50 different versions of the movie. Here are some of the most popular:

*A Christmas Carol* (1938) starring Reginald Owen, Gene Lockhart, Kathleen Lockhart, June Lockhart, Leo G. Carroll, and Terry Kilburn.

*A Christmas Carol* (1951) starring Alastair Sim, Meryvn Johns, Michael Hordern and Glyn Dearman.

*Mister Magoo's Christmas Carol* (1962) an animated musical version for television with the voices of Jim Backus, Morey Amsterdam, and Jack Cassidy.

*Scrooge* (1970) starring Albert Finney, Sir Alec Guinness, Edith Evans and Kenneth More.

*A Christmas Carol* (1984) starring George C. Scott, David Warner, Susannah York, Frank Finlay, Edward Woodward and Nigel Davenport.

*Scrooged* (1988) starring Bill Murray, John Forsythe, Karen Allen, Carol Kane, and Bobcat Goldthwait.

*The Muppets Christmas Carol* (1992) starring Michael Caine, David Goelz, Steve Whitmire, Jerry Nelson, Frank Oz, David Rudman, Karen Prell, Robert Tygner, Donald Austen, William Todd Jones, Jessica Fox, and Steven Mackintosh.

*A Christmas Carol* (1999) starring Patrick Stewart, Nick Adams, Desmond Barrit, Charlotte Brittain, Tom Brown, Kenny Doughty, Laura Fraser, Richard E. Grant, Joel Grey, Roger Hammond, Celia Imrie, Ian McNeice, John Mills, and Saskia Reeves.



above: Marley's Ghost, original illustration by John Leech for the 1843 printing;  
below: Mr. Fezziwig's Ball, John Leech, 1843



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## SUGGESTED QUESTIONS/ACTIVITIES



### FOR YOUNGER STUDENTS

- 1 Read Dickens' *A Christmas Carol*.
- 2 Ask students which character is their favorite and why.
- 3 Have students read one of Dickens' other Christmas stories, such as *The Cricket on the Hearth*. What similarities can the students find?
- 4 Ask students to share their family's Christmas traditions to see which are common and which are unique.
- 5 Have students research the Christmas traditions of other countries. Also, have student research other seasonal holidays and their traditions (such as Kwanzaa and Hanukkah). What are the similarities and differences around the world?
- 6 Ask students' opinions on Scrooge and his greediness. Why was it important that the ghosts visited Scrooge? Why is he better off afterwards? What was Dickens trying to teach us about greed?
- 7 Have students host their own Christmas party, incorporating Victorian traditions and/or those of different countries.



Another original Leech illustration

### FOR OLDER STUDENTS

- 1 Read Dickens' *A Christmas Carol* or listen to a notable reading of it, such as Patrick Stewart's.
- 2 Ask students to discuss the story. In what ways is the story an allegory? What do some of the different characters mean? Why is this important to the overall message of the story?
- 3 What role does social criticism play in the story? Why do you think Dickens included it?
- 4 Read another novel by Dickens. What similarities exist between the two? How does this reflect upon Dickens' life? How does this reflect the society of the time?
- 5 Compare and contrast the ghosts. What is the function of each? What differences exist between the three and why? Is one spirit more important than another? Why do you think Dickens chose ghosts to teach Scrooge a lesson?
- 6 What is Dickens trying to say about wealth? When do you have enough? Is wealth inherently bad, even if it can be used for good? What distinguishes between good and bad wealth?
- 7 Many people today argue that Christmas is too commercialized and that the true meaning is lost. They argue that people spend too much time decorating, preparing meals, and throwing parties. However, Scrooge didn't do any of this and he is regarded as "the bad guy" of the story. What is the difference between two ends of the spectrum? Why do we complain about Scrooge's anti-holiday spirit at the same time we complain about spending too much time celebrating? Is one side right and one side wrong? What is the heart of the matter?
- 8 Spend time researching holiday traditions from different parts of the world, as well as Victorian Christmas traditions. Have students host a party incorporating these ideas.
- 9 Have students learn some traditional Christmas carols. Have them sing them for various audiences.
- 10 Take up a collection of food, clothing, and toys and donate them to a local charity that will distribute them to the needy.



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