

CLASSIC
a story with timeless
appeal

OUR FAVORITE
(CREEPY) CLASSIC
HOLIDAY TALE

ADAPTED BY SCOPE EDITORS
ILLUSTRATIONS BY
LISA K. WEBER

CHARLES DICKENS'S

A CHRISTMAS CAROL

CHARACTERS

Circle the character you will play.

***NARRATORS 1 & 2 (N1, N2)**

***BOB CRATCHIT**, Scrooge's clerk

***EBENEZER SCROOGE**, a rich old accountant

FRED, Scrooge's nephew

JACOB MARLEY, the ghost of

Scrooge's dead business partner

GHOST CHORUS

GHOST 1, the Ghost of Christmas Past

MR. FEZZIWIG, Scrooge's first employer

GHOST 2, the Ghost of Christmas Present

TINY TIM CRATCHIT, the Cratchits' sickly son

CAROLINE CRATCHIT, Bob Cratchit's wife

ALL CRATCHITS, Bob, Caroline, and Tiny Tim

GHOST 3, the Ghost of Christmas Yet to Come

Note: This part has no speaking lines.

BOY, a passerby

**Starred characters are major roles.*



AS YOU READ, THINK ABOUT:

What does it mean to live
a fulfilling life?

SCENE 1

N1: It's Christmas Eve in London, 1843. Jacob Marley is dead as a doornail.

N2: This is not recent news. Marley has been dead for years. But it is important that you understand this point—that Jacob Marley is dead—or nothing wonderful can come from the story we are about to tell!

N1: As I was saying, it is Christmas Eve in London. Our story begins in the offices of Ebenezer Scrooge and his long-dead business partner, Jacob Marley.

BOB CRATCHIT: Mr. Scrooge, sir, might I add some coal to the fire?

EBENEZER SCROOGE: Absolutely not! Coal costs money. Doesn't your coat keep you warm?

CRATCHIT: Not really, sir.

SCROOGE: Then I suggest you get a new one.

CRATCHIT: But sir . . .

SCROOGE: That's enough, Mr. Cratchit. I suppose you'll want the day off tomorrow too.

CRATCHIT (*hanging his head*): Yes, sir.

Christmas comes but once a year.

SCROOGE: You want me to pay you for a day when you're not working? Then you'd better be here even earlier the next morning.

N2: Scrooge's nephew, Fred, arrives in hopes of spreading cheer.

FRED: Merry Christmas, Uncle!

SCROOGE: Bah! Humbug!

FRED: For Christmas? Humbug? You don't mean it.

SCROOGE: I do! What reason have you to be merry? You're not wealthy.

FRED: Come, dear Uncle. What reason have you to be so gloomy—you, with all your riches?

SCROOGE: Bah! Humbug! What is Christmas but a time for wasting money on things you don't need? If I had my way, every idiot who goes about saying "Merry Christmas!" would be boiled in his own pudding.

FRED: Uncle!

SCROOGE: Nephew! You celebrate the holiday in your way, let me celebrate it in mine.

FRED: But you don't celebrate it.

SCROOGE: Then let me not celebrate it. What good will Christmas ever do for you? What good has it ever done?

FRED: Many things do us good without making us rich, Uncle. Though holidays have never put a scrap of gold in my pocket, I believe I am all the better for having celebrated them.

CRATCHIT: Yes, I agree.

SCROOGE: Quiet, Mr. Cratchit, or you'll celebrate Christmas by looking for a new job.

FRED: Don't be angry, Uncle. Have Christmas dinner with us tomorrow.

SCROOGE: Humbug.

FRED: But why not?

SCROOGE: That's enough! Good day, Nephew.



Charles Dickens is sometimes called "the man who invented Christmas." In England, Christmas wasn't a big holiday—but this famous story made it one.

FRED: So be it. But I shall keep my Christmas spirit. Merry Christmas, Uncle! Merry Christmas, Mr. Cratchit!

CRATCHIT: And a happy New Year!

SCROOGE: There's a **preposterous** notion: My clerk, with barely enough to feed his family, and a sickly child too, talking about a happy new year. I must be mad!

SCENE 2

N1: That evening, Scrooge sits alone by his fireplace.

GHOST CHORUS: Owwoooooh!

N2: He hears a door fly open and the rattling of chains.

SCROOGE: What's that noise?

N1: Passing through the heavy door, a ghost with death-cold eyes enters Scrooge's chamber. Its head is wrapped in bandages; chains are wound around its body.

SCROOGE: You don't scare me! I'm not a man to be frightened by shadows.

JACOB MARLEY: You don't believe in me?

SCROOGE: I do not.

N2: The ghost shrieks and shakes its chains. Scrooge drops to his knees and covers his face.

SCROOGE: Mercy, dreadful spirit! What is it you want?

MARLEY: There is much that I want! I am the ghost of your partner, Jacob Marley. I must drag this chain and

wander the world forever. Woe is me!

SCROOGE: But why are you chained?

MARLEY: Each link of this chain is a punishment for some kind deed I failed to do. Oh, why did I not show charity?

SCROOGE: But Jacob, you were always such a good businessman. You made so much money!

MARLEY: I should have been kinder. Ebenezer, do you know the weight of the chain you're making? Seven Christmas Eves ago, your chain was as heavy and long as mine is now. And you have been adding to it with each passing year.

SCROOGE: Jacob, what can I do?

MARLEY: Hear me, Scrooge! You will be haunted by three spirits. Listen to what each tells you! Expect the first when the clock strikes one.

GHOST CHORUS: Owwoooooh!

SCENE 3

N1: At 1:00 a.m., Scrooge awakens to see the first ghost, a gentle spirit in a long white gown.

GHOST 1: I am the Ghost of Christmas Past. I will show you your life as it used to be. Rise and walk with me.

N2: They pass magically into Scrooge's past. The ghost and Scrooge are suddenly standing inside an old

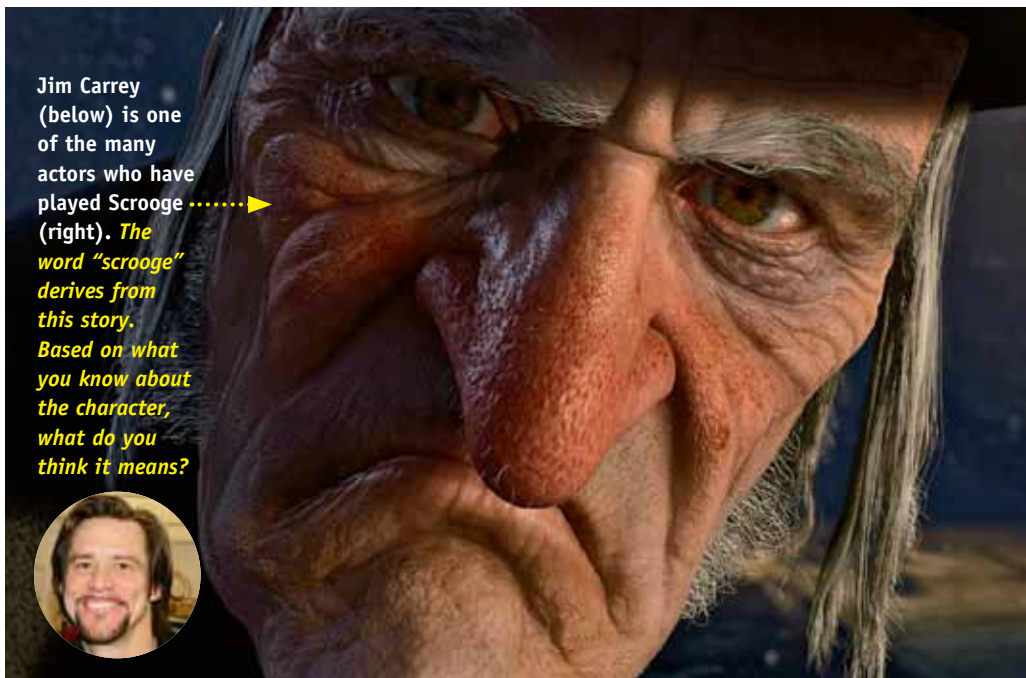
warehouse.

GHOST 1: Do you know this place?

SCROOGE: I held my first job here. Why, there's old Mr. Fezziwig. He was a decent man.

N1: Scrooge sees himself as a cheerful young man.

FEZZIWIG: It's Christmas Eve! Yo ho, everyone! No more work tonight. Clear the floor for dancing and fiddling and celebrating!



Jim Carrey (below) is one of the many actors who have played Scrooge (right). The word "scrooge" derives from this story. Based on what you know about the character, what do you think it means?

N2: Food is brought in.

The music begins.

Everyone starts dancing,
including young Scrooge.

GHOST 1: Look at this waste of
money . . .

SCROOGE: Waste of money?
Look how happy everyone is.
Fezziwig was always making
people happy. It was the
little things mostly—the way
he looked at you or patted
you on the back.

GHOST 1: With whom are you
dancing? You look so happy.

SCROOGE: It's Belle. Ah, young
Belle . . .

GHOST 1: You loved her, but you
didn't marry her.

SCROOGE: I needed to seek my
fortune first.

GHOST 1: You mean, you could earn no
money simply by loving her. You chose wealth
instead of love.

SCROOGE: Spirit, why do you torture me? Show me no
more. I don't wish to see it.

N1: The spirit disappears. Scrooge is suddenly back in
his room, alone.

SCENE 4

N2: The clock strikes two.

GHOST CHORUS: Owwooooh!

GHOST 2: I am the Ghost of Christmas Present. You
have never seen the likes of me before!

N1: The second spirit is gigantic, and as grand and
joyful as the Christmas season. Its eyes are clear and
kind, yet they frighten Scrooge.

SCROOGE: Spirit, take me where you will. Let me learn
from you.

GHOST 2: Look upon me! You and I will go and see
things as they are now. Off with us, then!

N2: The ghost and Scrooge appear in the doorway of a
small house. They see a table and a small fire burning.



SCROOGE: Where are we?

GHOST 2: You don't know the house of your own
clerk, Bob Cratchit? Come inside. The family is
sitting down to Christmas dinner.

N1: Cratchit's son, Tiny Tim, **hobbles** to
the table using an old wooden crutch.

TINY TIM: Mother, there never was such a
grand goose as this!

CRATCHIT: This is splendid, my dear,
a triumph.

SCROOGE: So excited over a small
goose! You'd think it was a prize
turkey.

GHOST 2: It is all they can
afford. They are not a well-off
family.

SCROOGE: True, but they're a
happy one. Look how pleased they
are—especially that little Tim.

CRATCHIT: A toast! To Mr.

Scrooge, the founder of
our feast.

CAROLINE (angrily): The founder
of our feast? The founder of our feast,
indeed! I wish Mr. Scrooge were here
right now. Why, I'd give him a piece of

my mind to feast upon!

CRATCHIT: My dear, let's not be bitter.

CAROLINE: I'll toast his health because it's Christmas,
but that's all. Merry Christmas to the unfeeling,
unkind, **miserly** founder of this feast, Mr. Scrooge.

ALL CRATCHITS: Merry Christmas!

TINY TIM: And God bless us, every one!

SCROOGE: Tell me, Spirit—will Tiny Tim live?

GHOST 2: I see an empty seat. I see a tiny crutch with
no owner.

SCROOGE: Oh, no! Say he will be all right. Say it!

GHOST 2: If there is no change in his surroundings, the
child will soon die.

GHOST CHORUS: Owwooooh!

N2: Scrooge stands horrified as the ghost vanishes.
Again, Scrooge finds himself back in his
bedroom.



SCENE 5

N1: At 3:00 a.m., another ghost appears. This third phantom is cloaked in a black robe. Nothing can be seen of it except one outstretched hand.

SCROOGE: Are you the Ghost of Christmas Yet to Come?

N2: The ghost does not answer. It points its long, bony finger into the night.

SCROOGE: Ghost of the Future, I fear you most.

N1: The spirit takes Scrooge to a lonely cemetery covered in weeds. A coffin is being lowered into a grave.

SCROOGE: Whose funeral is this? Why is no one here to mourn? Tell me, Spirit, is there anyone in this town who cared for this person?

PASSERBY 1: When did he die?

PASSERBY 2: Last week.

PASSERBY 1: What was the matter with him?

PASSERBY 2: An empty heart, I suppose.

PASSERBY 1: Little good his money did him.

PASSERBY 2: Not a single person to mourn him!

PASSERBY 1: But think of all the money he saved with such a cheap funeral!

PASSERBY 2: Ha ha ha ha ha ha ha ha!

N2: The phantom points toward the gravestone.

SCROOGE: Before I look, Spirit, tell me one thing. Can this future be changed?

N1: The spirit gives no reply. Scrooge trembles. He looks upon the gravestone and reads the words “Ebenezer Scrooge.”

GHOST CHORUS: Owwoooooh!

SCROOGE: No, Spirit! Hear me! Can I erase the name upon this stone? I am no longer the person I have been. From this night on, I will be a kind and generous man. I will honor Christmas with all my heart!

SCENE 6

N2: When Scrooge awakens the next morning, he is so happy to see daylight that he laughs out loud. For a man who has been out of practice for so long, it is a splendid laugh. He opens his window and calls to a boy



Charles Dickens's stories were the Harry Potter books of his day. Dickens published his novels in parts, and his eager readers would wait anxiously for each installment to come out.

passing by.

SCROOGE: What day is it today, my fine fellow?

BOY: Today? Why, it's Christmas Day!

SCROOGE: I haven't missed it—thank goodness! Do you know the prize turkey hanging in the butcher's window?

BOY: The one that's as big as I am?

SCROOGE: Yes, that one. I'll pay you to go buy it and have it brought to Bob Cratchit's house.

BOY: Yes, sir! Merry Christmas, sir!

SCROOGE: The Cratchits won't know who sent it. And then I must join my nephew for dinner. Oh, joy!

SCENE 7

N1: Scrooge spends the rest of the day spreading Christmas cheer, joyfully sharing his wealth with neighbors and strangers.

N2: The next day, Scrooge arrives at the office early. Cratchit enters, shivering from the cold.

SCROOGE: You're 18-and-a-half minutes late!

CRATCHIT: It's only once a year, sir. We had quite a celebration last night. A kind stranger sent us a prize turkey, and we had a merry time into the wee hours. It won't happen again.

SCROOGE: I'll tell you what. I'm not going to stand for this any longer.

N1: Poor Cratchit. He is certain he is about to be fired.

SCROOGE: Therefore, Mr. Cratchit . . . I'm doubling your salary!

N2: Cratchit is stunned.

SCROOGE: Merry Christmas, Mr. Cratchit! A merrier Christmas than I've ever given before. And your salary is just a start. I'll assist your struggling family any way I can. And Tim—whatever he needs, he'll have it. Now let's warm up this place. Put some more coal on the fire. Before you dot another *i*, let's have more coal!

N1: Scrooge is even better than his word. He becomes as good a man and as good a friend as the city has ever known. It is said from this point forward that if any man knows how to celebrate Christmas, it is Ebenezer Scrooge. ●

How Charles Dickens Changed the World

By Kathy Satterfield

Young Charles Dickens was living a nightmare. From sunup to sundown, he labored in a dark, rat-infested warehouse, applying labels to bottles. And the end of the workday brought no relief. He lived in a **dilapidated** boarding house. To escape, he would wander the streets of London.

At only 12 years old, Charles was on his own.

How had this happened? Charles's father had gone deep into debt. In 19th-century England, no programs existed to help the needy. In fact, the public tended to believe the poor deserved their suffering. To pay the butcher and the baker, Charles had to sell his family's belongings: chairs, pictures, carpets—even his beloved books. But that wasn't enough. And those who couldn't pay their debts, like Charles's dad, were sent to debtors' prison.

So that the family could

stay together, Charles's mom and five siblings went with his dad to jail. Charles, however, had to quit school and go to work to pay the family debts.

Those dark days would haunt



Charles until the end of his life, but they also inspired his stories. He was particularly concerned about the plight of the poor. Many of his novels dramatized the suffering they endured. In fact, he wrote so much about their hardships that a new word was added to the English

language: "Dickensian."

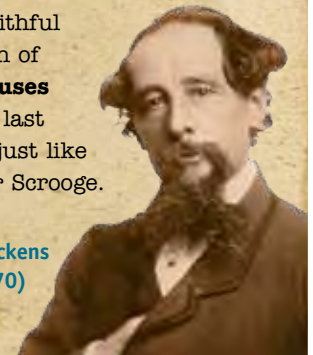
It means "resembling the conditions described in Dickens's stories." The word is used to describe particularly **squalid** and impoverished living and working conditions.

Dickens's tragic—yet incredibly popular—novels **evoked** a deep sympathy for society's most vulnerable. Wealthy readers were moved to call for reforms. In 1870, the year that Charles Dickens died, England passed a sweeping reform called the Education Act, which made it possible for all kids to go to school.

By then, Dickens had become a rich man, thanks to his runaway literary success. Yet he remained a faithful

champion of **social causes** until his last breath—just like Ebenezer Scrooge.

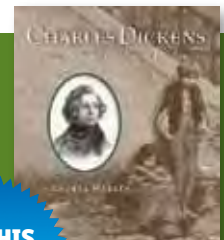
Charles Dickens
(1812-1870)



CONTEST

Write About Fulfillment Charles Dickens once wrote, "No one is useless in this world who lightens the burdens of another." What do you think that means? How does this quotation relate to *A Christmas Carol* and "How Charles Dickens Changed the World"?

Use evidence from both texts in your answer. Send it to **DICKENS CONTEST**. Five winners will get Andrea Warren's *Charles Dickens and the Street Children of London*.



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