



THE BEAR EDUCATIONAL THEATRE

A CHRISTMAS CAROL by C. Dickens

Teaching Materials - PART 1

Some background and the story

First some questions

- ◆ What do you already know about Charles Dickens?
- ◆ Can you name any novels from Charles Dickens? How many?
- ◆ What problem did the family have when Charles was twelve?
- ◆ In which years did Dickens write? a) 1780 – 1806 b) 1828 - c) 1894 - 1923
- ◆ How many children did he have? a) None b) 3 c) 10
- ◆ What is the name of his last novel?

a) David Copperfield b) War and Peace c) The Mystery of Edwin Drood

(You can find the answers in the passage below.)

Charles Dickens – A background

Charles Dickens was born in 1812. He started at school when he was nine, but when he was twelve years old a disaster hit the family. His father was arrested for debt and put in prison along with the others. Charles had to live alone and work in a factory, putting labels on shoe-polish bottles. This terrible experience only lasted for a few months, but it made a strong impression on him. In his novels he focused a lot of attention on the stories of children and the bad conditions they lived in at the time. His story Oliver Twist was the first major English novel to have a child as it's main character.

At the age of fifteen he started to work as a journalist and later made a reputation writing funny reports of what was happening in parliament. A

collection of these stories called 'Sketches by Boz' became his first published work. He produced many novels over his busy career, including David Copperfield, Great Expectations, Nicolas Nickleby and The Pickwick Papers. He also had ten children with his wife Catharine, although there are stories that he was quite mean to her and actually really loved her sister, Mary. This is not sure, but we do know that they separated after 22 years of marriage.

Dickens was always very popular, even in his day. He did tours of America and he used to sell out large theatres when he gave public readings of his stories. He died in the middle of writing a novel, 'The Mystery of Edwin Drood' and he is buried in the famous Westminster Abbey in London.

The story of A Christmas Carol

Section A

In the beginning of the story we meet Scrooge. Scrooge is a money lender and he is described as 'hard and sharp as flint and solitary as an oyster'. In short he is the meanest old man in London. Scrooge used to have a partner called Jacob Marley, but Marley died seven years before the story begins. He does have a clerk called Bob Cratchit who has to work in a small cold room because Scrooge doesn't want to pay for him to have a fire.

Mean - the opposite of generous.

Solitary - somebody who stays alone.

Clerk – an assistant in an office.

Section B

Scrooge's nephew comes to visit him and wish him a Merry Christmas and invites him to their house for Christmas. The nephew is very friendly and good natured but Scrooge is very rude to him and he refuses to come. He then sends away a man who is trying to collect money for the poor and homeless. Scrooge says that the poor can go to prison or the workhouse and if they don't want to then they should just die. Finally a boy comes with some carol singers. Scrooge sends them away too, without any money of course, and goes home to bed by himself.

Workhouse – a place where poor people used to work long hours for almost no money.

Carol – a special christmas song.

Section C

That night Scrooge is visited by the ghost of his old partner, Jacob Marley. Marley has to carry a heavy chain covered with safes and money boxes because when he was alive he only saved money for himself and didn't help other people. Marley tells Scrooge that he finishes the same if he doesn't change his life. Three ghosts are going to visit Scrooge. They are the only ones who can help him.

Safe – a special strong box for keeping money in.

Section D

The first one of the three is the Ghost of Christmas Past. This ghost takes Scrooge back into the past to look at his earlier life, before he was so cold and mean. First we see Scrooge as a young boy alone, reading a book, in a cold school on Christmas day. He is reading a story book. Next we see him a few years later. His younger sister Fan comes to take him away from the school and home for Christmas. Scrooge loves Fan and is very happy to see her. The ghost reminds Scrooge that she is dead now, but that she had a son, the nephew that Scrooge was rude to before.

Remind – to help somebody remember something.

Section E

Next they visit the place where Scrooge first worked and his first boss Fezziwig. Fezziwig organises a great party with dancing and music and food. Scrooge remembers that Fezziwig was a great boss because of his good nature and his kind looks. Scrooge thinks of his own clerk Bob Cratchit and how badly he behaves towards him. Finally the ghost shows him a scene of Scrooge and his fiancée of that time. The fiancée is leaving Scrooge because she can see that he is already more interested in money than in the relationship. She does get married to another man though and has a family, while Scrooge stays alone.

Fiancee – the person that you are planning to marry.

Section F

The next Ghost, Christmas Present is a very good-natured ghost with a special torch that makes people happy when he touches them with it. He takes Scrooge to visit his clerk Bob Cratchit at Christmas time. The family is very poor, but they love each other and there is a nice atmosphere in the house. They have an ill crippled son called Tiny Tim. When Scrooge asks, the ghost tells him that Tim will die if nothing changes.

Section G

The ghost takes Scrooge around the country to visit a mine, a lighthouse and even a ship at sea. Scrooge sees that everywhere people are singing and celebrating Christmas. Finally we see the evening at Scrooge's nephew's house. There is a party and games and Scrooge feels so happy watching the party there that he doesn't want to leave.

Mine – a place where men dig coal from under the ground.

Lighthouse – a tall building by the sea with a light that warns ships.

Section H

Finally the ghost of Christmas Present shows him two starving children, Want and Ignorance. They look hungry, dangerous and unhappy. When Scrooge asks if somebody can help them, the ghost reminds him of his own hard words, 'the poor can go to prison or the workhouse and if they don't want to then they should just die'. Scrooge feels ashamed at this.

Want – here the same as 'need'. The child is probably starving.

Ignorance – having no education.

Ashamed – feeling bad because of something you have done.

Section I

The last ghost, Christmas future, is dark and silent. Scrooge is very afraid of him. This ghost shows Scrooge some businessmen talking with little interest about someone who has died. Scrooge doesn't know who it is. Scrooge then sees two women stealing the clothes from a dead body, he is shocked, but understands that this could happen to him too as he has no friends. Then we visit the Cratchit family after Tiny Tim is dead. Of course they are very sad, finally the ghost forces Scrooge to look at the face of the dead man and he sees that this man really is him as he will be in the future, if nothing changes.

Section J

When he wakes up, Scrooge is a changed man. It is still Christmas Day and he realises that if he changes his ways then he can change the depressing picture of the future that he saw. He wishes everybody a merry Christmas, he buys the biggest turkey in the shop and sends it to Bob Cratchit's house. He visits his nephew's house and joins in the party there, he has a wonderful day. The next day at work the first thing he does is to promise his clerk more pay. He has changed from being the coldest and the meanest, to being the warmest and the most generous man in London.

Depressing – the opposite of positive or optimistic.

Questions to the sections of the story

Section A

Who is Jacob Marley?

Does Scrooge have a lot of friends?

Why is Bob Cratchit cold?

Section B

What is Scrooge's nephew like?

Does Scrooge feel sorry for poor people?

How much money does Scrooge give to the carol-singers?

Section C

What is the ghost of Marley carrying?

Why does he have to carry this?

Who is going to visit Scrooge?

Section D

What does the Ghost of Christmas Past show Scrooge?

What was Scrooge doing on Christmas day when he was a young boy?

Does Scrooge like his sister, Fan?

Section E

Who is Fezziwig?

Why does Scrooge's fiancée leave Scrooge?

What happens to her after she leaves him?

Section F

What is special about the Ghost of Christmas Present's torch?

What is the name of Bob Cratchit's crippled son?

What does the ghost tell Scrooge about this son?

Section G

Why does the ghost take Scrooge to visit the different places?

What is happening at the nephew's house?

Is Scrooge interested in what is happening there?

Section H

Who are the two children that the ghost shows Scrooge?

Are they happy children?

What does the ghost say when Scrooge asks who can help them?

Section I

Does the ghost of Christmas Future talk a lot?

What are the two women doing?

Who is the dead man that the ghost shows Scrooge?

Section J

What day is it when Scrooge wakes up after seeing the last ghost?

What does he send to Bob Cratchit's house?

How has Scrooge changed?



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Teaching Materials PART 2 Sections of the text

SECTION A

Scrooge's nephew comes to wish him Merry Christmas. Scrooge tells the nephew what he thinks of Christmas.

Nephew – A merry Christmas, uncle! God save you!

Scrooge - Bah! Humbug!

Nephew - Christmas a humbug, uncle! You don't mean that, I am sure?

Scrooge - I do, Merry Christmas! What right have you to be merry? What reason have you to be merry? You're poor enough.

Nephew - Come, then, What right have you to be dismal? What reason have you to be morose? You're rich enough.

Scrooge - Bah!..... Humbug!

Nephew - Don't be cross, uncle.

Scrooge - What else can I be, when I live in such a world of fools as this? Merry Christmas! Out upon merry Christmas. What's Christmas time to you but a time for paying bills without money; a time for finding yourself a year older, but not an hour richer. If I could work my will, every idiot who goes about with 'Merry Christmas' on his lips, should be boiled with his own pudding, and buried with a stake of holly through his heart. He should!

Nephew - Uncle!

Scrooge - Nephew! keep Christmas in your own way, and let me keep it in mine.

Nephew - Keep it! But you don't keep it.

Scrooge - Let me leave it alone then. Much good may it do you! Much good it has ever done you!

SECTION B

A man visits Scrooge to ask for some money to give to the poor. Scrooge sends him away too and tells him that the poor should go to prison or die.

Collector - Scrooge and Marley's, I believe, Have I the pleasure of addressing Mr Scrooge, or Mr Marley?

Scrooge - Mr Marley has been dead these seven years. He died seven years ago, this very night.

Collector - We have no doubt his generosity is well represented by his surviving partner,

Narrator - It certainly was, for they had been both the same. At the word 'generosity', Scrooge frowned, and shook his head.

Collector - At this festive season of the year, Mr Scrooge, we try to help the Poor and destitute, who suffer greatly at the present time. Many thousands don't have common necessities; hundreds of thousands don't have common comforts, sir.

Scrooge - Are there no prisons?

Collector - Plenty of prisons,

Scrooge - And the Union workhouses. Are they still in operation?

Collector - They are. Still, I wish I could say they were not.

Scrooge - Oh. I was afraid, from what you said at first, that something had occurred to stop them in their useful course, I'm very glad to hear it.

Collector - A few of us are trying to raise money to buy the Poor some meat and drink, and means of warmth. What shall I put you down for?

Scrooge - Nothing!

Collector - You wish to be anonymous?

Scrooge - I wish to be left alone. Since you ask me what I wish, gentlemen, that is my answer. I don't make merry myself at Christmas and I can't afford to make idle people merry. I help to support the establishments I have mentioned. They cost enough; and those who are badly off must go there.

Collector - Many can't go there; and many would rather die.

Scrooge - If they would rather die, they had better do it, and decrease the surplus population.

SECTION C

The ghost of Jacob Marley, Scrooge's old partner comes to visit him. The ghost tells Scrooge that he must change his way of life.

Scrooge - How now. What do you want with me?

Marley - Much.

Scrooge - Who are you?

Marley - Ask me who I was.

Scrooge - Who were you then?

Marley - In life I was your partner, Jacob Marley.

Scrooge - Can you-can you sit down?

Marley - I can.

Scrooge - Do it, then.

Marley - You don't believe in me,

Scrooge - I don't

Marley - At this the spirit raised a frightful cry, and shook its chain with such a dismal and appalling noise, that Scrooge held on tight to his chair, to save himself from fainting.

Scrooge - Jacob, Old Jacob Marley, tell me more. Speak comfort to me, Jacob.

Marley - I have none to give, I cannot stay, My spirit never walked beyond our counting-house-mark me!- in life my spirit never walked beyond the narrow limits of our money-changing hole; and weary journeys lie before me.

Scrooge - But you were always a good man of business, Jacob,

Marley - Business! Mankind was my business. The common welfare was my business; charity, mercy, and benevolence were all, my business. The dealings of my trade were but a drop of water in the ocean of my business!

SECTION D

The Ghost of Christmas Past takes Scrooge to look at the Christmas he spent with his old boss when he was an apprentice. It was a wonderful time and in the end he sees himself praising his old boss for his generous nature.

Scrooge - Why, it s old Fezziwig! Bless his heart; it s Fezziwig alive again!

Fezziwig - Yo ho, there! Ebenezer!

Narrator - Scrooge's former self, now grown a young man, came briskly in.

In came a fiddler with a music-book, and went up to the desk, and made an orchestra of it, and tuned like fifty stomach-aches. In came Mrs Fezziwig, one big substantial smile. In came the three Miss Fezziwigs, smiling and lovable. In came the six young followers whose hearts they broke. In came all the young men and women employed in the business. In came the housemaid, with her cousin, the baker. In came the cook, with her brother s friend, the milkman. In they all came, one after another; some shyly, some boldly, some gracefully, some awkwardly, some pushing, some pulling; in they all came, anyhow and everyhow.

There were dances, and there were and more dances, and there was cake, and there and there was a great piece of cold roast meat, and there was a great piece of cold boiled meat, and there were mince-pies, and plenty of beer.

The Spirit signed to Scrooge to listen to the two apprentices, who were pouring out their hearts in praise of Fezziwig:

Ghost - A small matter, to make these silly folks so full of gratitude.

Scrooge - Small!

Ghost - Why! Is it not? He has spent but a few pounds of your mortal money: three or four perhaps. Is that so much that he deserves this praise?

Scrooge - It isn t that, It isn t that, Spirit. He has the power to make us happy or unhappy; to make our service a pleasure or a toil. Say that his power lies in words and looks; in things so slight and insignificant that it is impossible to add and count them up: what then? The happiness he gives, is quite as great as if it cost a fortune.

Narrator - He felt the Spirit's look, and stopped.

SECTION E

Later the ghost of Christmas Past shows Scrooge a conversation between him and a girl that he was once engaged to.

Narrator - He was older now; he had begun to wear the signs of care and greed. He was not alone, but sat by the side of a fair young girl in a mourning-dress: in whose eyes there were tears.

Fiancee - It matters little, to you, very little. Another idol has displaced me; and if it can cheer and comfort you in time to come, as I would have tried to do, I have no just cause to grieve.

Scrooge - What Idol has displaced you?

Fiancee - A golden one.

Scrooge - This is the even-handed dealing of the world. There is nothing on which it is so hard as poverty; and there is nothing it criticises with such severity as the pursuit of wealth!

Fiancee - You fear the world too much, I have seen your nobler ambitions fall off one by one, until greed became everything. Isn't that so?

Scrooge - What then? Even if I have grown so much wiser, what then? I am not changed towards you.

Narrator - She shook her head.

Scrooge - Am I?

Fiancee - Our contract is an old one. It was made when we were both poor and content to be so. You are changed. When it was made, you were another man.

Scrooge - I was a boy,

Fiancee - Your own feeling tells you that you were not what you are, I am. How often and how keenly I have thought of this, I will not say. It is enough that I have thought of it, and can release you.

Scrooge - Have I ever sought release?

Fiancee - In words. No. Never.

Scrooge - In what, then?

Fiancee - In a changed nature; tell me, would you seek me out and try to win me now, a poor girl? Ah, no! I release you. With a full heart, for the love of him you once were. May you be happy in the life you have chosen!

Narrator - She left him, and they parted.

SECTION F

Scrooge and the Ghost of Christmas Present visit the house of Scrooge's apprentice, Bob Cratchit. Bob has a large family, including a weak and crippled youngest son called Tiny Tim.

Mrs Cratchit - And how did little Tim behave?

Bob Cratchit - As good as gold, and better. Somehow he gets thoughtful, sitting by himself so much, and thinks the strangest things you ever heard. He told me, coming home, that he hoped the people saw him in the church, because he was a cripple, and it might be pleasant to them to remember upon Christmas Day, the man Jesus who made lame beggars walk, and blind men see.

Narrator - But now Mrs Cratchit left the room alone to take the pudding up and bring it in.

Hallo! A great deal of steam! The pudding was out of the copper. A smell like a washing-day! That was the cloth. A smell like an eating-house and a pastrycook's next door to each other, with a laundress's next door to that! That was the pudding! In half a minute Mrs Cratchit entered-flushed, but smiling proudly-with the pudding, like a speckled cannon-ball with Christmas holly stuck into the top.

Oh, a wonderful pudding! Bob Cratchit said, and calmly too, that he regarded it as the greatest success achieved by Mrs Cratchit since their marriage.

Bob Cratchit - A Merry Christmas to us all, my dears. God bless us!

All - God bless us!

Tiny Tim - God bless us every one!

Scrooge - Spirit, tell me if Tiny Tim will live.

Ghost of Present - If these shadows remain unaltered by the Future, the child will die.

Scrooge - No, no, Oh, no, kind Spirit! say he will be spared.

Ghost of Present - What then? If he be like to die, he had better do it, and decrease the surplus population.

Man, if man you be in heart, forbear that wicked speech until you have discovered what the surplus is, and where it is. Will you decide what men shall

live, what men shall die? It may be, that in the sight of Heaven, you are more worthless and less fit to live than millions like this poor man's child.

SECTION G

The Ghost of Christmas Future shows Scrooge certain events that, normally, would happen after he is dead. One scene takes place at a pawnbroker's shop where people are trying to sell the things that were stolen from Scrooge after he died. Scrooge doesn't yet realise that he is the dead man.

Woman 1 - Open that bundle, old Joe, and let me know the value of it. Speak out plain. We know pretty well that we were helping ourselves, before we met here, I believe. It's no sin. Open the bundle, Joe.

Scrooge - What. Were these things stolen from a dead man?

Pawnbroker - (Writes an amount on a piece of paper.) That's your account, and I wouldn't give another sixpence, if I was to be boiled for not doing it. Who's next?

Woman 2 - And now undo my bundle, Joe,

Pawnbroker - What do you call this? Bed-curtains?

Woman 2 - Ah. Bed-curtains!

Pawnbroker - You don't mean to say you took them down, rings and all, with him lying there?

Woman 2 - Yes I do, Why not?

Pawnbroker - You were born to make your fortune, and you'll certainly do it.

Woman 2 - I certainly shan't hold my hand, for the sake of such a man as he was, I promise you, Joe, . Ah! you may look through that shirt till your eyes ache; but you won't find a hole in it. It's the best he had, and a fine one too. They'd have wasted it, if it hadn't been for me.

Pawnbroker - What do you call wasting of it?

Woman 2 - Putting it on him to be buried in, to be sure, Somebody was fool enough to do it, but I took it off again. He can't look uglier than he did in that one.

Scrooge - Spirit! . I see, I see. The case of this unhappy man might be my own. My life tends that way, now. Merciful Heaven, what is this?

Narrator - The body of a man lay, in the dark empty house, with not a man, a woman, or a child, to say that he was kind to me in this or that. A cat was tearing at the door, and there was a sound of gnawing rats beneath the hearth-stone. What they wanted in the room of death, and why they were so restless and disturbed, Scrooge did not dare to think.

SECTION H

When the Ghost of Christmas future has leaves, Scrooge is in a very positive mood.

Scrooge - I will live in the Past, the Present, and the Future! The Spirits of all Three shall strive within me. Oh, Jacob Marley! Heaven, and the Christmas Time be praised for this! I say it on my knees, old Jacob, on my knees!

I don't know what to do! I am as light as a feather, I am as happy as an angel, I am as merry as a schoolboy. I am as giddy as a drunken man. A merry Christmas to everybody! A happy New Year to all the world! Hallo here! What's to-day?

Boy - Eh?

Scrooge - What's to-day, my fine fellow?

Boy - To-day? Why, Christmas Day.

Scrooge - It's Christmas Day! I haven't missed it. The Spirits have done it all in one night. They can do anything they like. Of course they can. Of course they can. Hallo, my fine fellow!

Boy - Hallo!

Scrooge - Do you know the Poulterer's, in the next street but one, at the corner? .

Boy - I should hope I did,

Scrooge - An intelligent boy! A remarkable boy! Do you know whether they've sold the prize Turkey that was hanging up there? -- Not the little prize Turkey: the big one?

Boy - What, the one as big as me?

Scrooge - What a delightful boy! It's a pleasure to talk to him. Yes, my buck!

Boy - It's hanging there now, .

Scrooge - Is it? Go and buy it. I'll send it to Bob Cratchit's. He shan't know who sends it. It's twice the size of Tiny Tim.

Narrator - It was a Turkey! He never could have stood upon his legs, that bird. He would have snapped them short off in a minute.

Scrooge - Why, it s impossible to carry that to Camden Town, You must have a cab. Here's for the turkey, here's for the cab and here's for you my good good fellow.

He did it all, and infinitely more; and to Tiny Tim, who did not die, he was a second father. He became as good a friend, as good a master, and as good a man, as the good old city knew, or any other good old city, town, or borough, in the good old world.
