Charles Dickens' 

A Christmas Carol

Play Guide

Bonstelle Theatre

Wayne State University
2009 - 2010 Season

The Talented Tenth
by Richard Wesley
October 16, 2009 - October 25, 2009

A Christmas Carol
Adaptation from the book by Charles Dickens
December 4, 2009 - December 13, 2009

The Comedy of Errors
by William Shakespeare
February 19, 2010 - February 28, 2010

Pippin
Book by Roger O. Hirson
Music and lyrics by Stephen Schwartz
April 16, 2010 - April 25, 2010

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The 2009 - 2010 Playguide was created by Rebecca R. Lustig.
Dickens’ cherished little Christmas story, the best loved and most read of all of his books, began as the result of the author’s desperate need for money. In the fall of 1843 Dickens and his wife, Kate, were expecting their fifth child. Requests for money from his family, a large mortgage on his Devonshire Terrace home, and lagging sales from the monthly installments of *Martin Chuzzlewit* had left Dickens seriously short of cash (Dickens released many of his novels in monthly installments of a few chapters and illustrations.)

The seeds for the story that became *A Christmas Carol* were planted in Dickens’ mind during a trip to Manchester to deliver a speech in support of the Athenaeum, which provided adult education for the manufacturing workers there. Thoughts of education as a remedy for crime and poverty, along with scenes he had recently witnessed at the Field Lane Ragged School, caused Dickens to resolve to “strike a sledge hammer blow” for the poor.

As the idea for the story took shape and the writing began in earnest, Dickens became engrossed in the book. He wrote that as the tale unfolded he ‘wept and laughed, and wept again’ and that he ‘walked about the black streets of London fifteen or twenty miles many a night when all sober folks had gone to bed.’

At odds with his publishers, Dickens paid for the production cost of the book himself and insisted on a lavish design that included a gold-stamped cover and four hand-colored etchings. He also set the price at five shillings so that the book would be affordable to nearly everyone.

The book was published during the week before Christmas 1843 and was an instant sensation, but, due to the high production costs, Dickens’ earnings from the sales were lower than expected. In addition to the disappointing profit from the book, Dickens was enraged that the work was instantly the victim of pirated editions. Copyright laws in England were often loosely enforced. He ended up spending more money fighting pirated editions of the book than he was making from the book itself.

Despite these early financial difficulties, Dickens’ Christmas tale of human redemption has endured beyond even Dickens’ own vivid imagination. It was a favorite during Dickens’ public readings of his works late in his lifetime and is known today primarily due to the dozens of film versions and dramatizations which continue to be produced every year.
Synopsis

A mean-spirited, miserly old man named Ebenezer Scrooge sits in his counting-house on a frigid Christmas Eve. His clerk, Bob Cratchit, shivers in the anteroom because Scrooge refuses to spend money on heating coals for a fire. Scrooge’s nephew, Fred, pays his uncle a visit and invites him to his annual Christmas party. Two portly gentlemen also drop by and ask Scrooge for a contribution to their charity. Scrooge reacts to the holiday visitors with bitterness and venom, spitting out an angry “Bah! Humbug!” in response to his nephew’s “Merry Christmas!”

Later that evening, after returning to his dark, cold apartment, Scrooge receives a chilling visit from the ghost of his dead partner, Jacob Marley. Marley, looking haggard and pallid, relates his unfortunate story. As punishment for his greedy and self-serving life, his spirit has been condemned to wander the Earth weighted down with heavy chains. Marley hopes to save Scrooge from sharing the same fate. Marley informs Scrooge that three spirits will visit him during each of the next three nights. After the wraith disappears, Scrooge collapses into a deep sleep.

He wakes moments before the arrival of the Ghost of Christmas Past, a strange childlike phantom. The spirit escorts Scrooge on a journey into the past to previous Christmases from the curmudgeon’s earlier years. Invisible to those he watches, Scrooge revisits his childhood school days, his apprenticeship with a jolly merchant named Fezziwig, and his engagement to Belle, a woman who leaves Scrooge because his lust for money eclipses his ability to love another. Scrooge, deeply moved, sheds tears of regret before the phantom returns him to his bed.

The Ghost of Christmas Present, a majestic giant, takes Scrooge through London to unveil Christmas as it will happen that year. Scrooge watches the large, bustling Cratchit family prepare a miniature feast in its meager home. He discovers Bob Cratchit’s crippled son, Tiny Tim, a courageous boy whose kindness and humility warms Scrooge’s heart. The specter then zips Scrooge to his nephew’s to witness the Christmas party. Scrooge finds the jovial gathering delightful and pleads with the spirit to stay until the very end of the festivities. As the day passes, the spirit ages, becoming noticeably older. Toward the end of the day, he shows Scrooge two starved children, Ignorance and Want, living under his coat. He vanishes instantly as Scrooge notices a dark, hooded figure coming toward him.

The Ghost of Christmas Yet to Come leads Scrooge through a sequence of mysterious scenes relating to an unnamed man’s recent death. Scrooge sees businessmen discussing the dead man’s riches, some vagabonds trading his personal effects for cash, and a poor couple expressing relief at the death of their unforgiving creditor. Scrooge, anxious to learn the lesson of his latest visitor, begs to know the name of the dead man. After pleading with the ghost, Scrooge finds himself in a churchyard, the spirit pointing to a grave. Scrooge looks at the headstone and is shocked to read his own name. He desperately implores the spirit to alter his fate, promising to renounce his insensitive, avaricious ways and to honor Christmas with all his heart. Whoosh! He suddenly finds himself safely tucked in his bed.

Overwhelmed with joy by the chance to redeem himself and grateful that he has been returned to Christmas Day, Scrooge rushes out onto the street hoping to share his newfound Christmas spirit. He sends a giant Christmas turkey to the Cratchit house and attends Fred’s party, to the stifled surprise of the other guests. As the years go by, he holds true to his promise and honors Christmas with all his heart: he treats Tiny Tim as if he were his own child, provides lavish gifts for the poor, and treats his fellow human beings with kindness, generosity, and warmth.
Character List

**Ebenezer Scrooge** - The miserly owner of a London counting-house, a nineteenth-century term for an accountant’s office. The three spirits of Christmas visit the stodgy bean-counter in hopes of reversing Scrooge’s greedy, cold-hearted approach to life.

**Bob Cratchit** - Scrooge’s clerk, a kind, mild, and very poor man with a large family. Though treated harshly by his boss, Cratchit remains a humble and dedicated employee.

**Tiny Tim** - Bob Cratchit’s young son, crippled from birth. Tiny Tim is a highly sentimentalized character who Dickens uses to highlight the tribulations of England’s poor and to elicit sympathy from his middle- and upper-class readership.

**Jacob Marley** - In the living world, Ebenezer Scrooge’s equally greedy partner. Marley died seven years before the narrative opens. He appears to Scrooge as a ghost condemned to wander the world bound in heavy chains. Marley hopes to save his old partner from suffering a similar fate.

**The Ghost of Christmas Past** - The first spirit to visit Scrooge, a curiously childlike apparition. He takes Scrooge on a tour of Christmases in his past.

**The Ghost of Christmas Present** - The second spirit to visit Scrooge, a majestic giant. His lifespan is restricted to Christmas Day. He escorts Scrooge on a tour of his contemporaries’ Holiday celebrations.

**The Ghost of Christmas Yet to Come** - The third and final spirit to visit Scrooge, a silent phantom. He presents Scrooge with an ominous view of his lonely death.

**Mrs. Cratchit** - Bob’s wife, a kind and loving woman.

**Fred** - Scrooge’s nephew, a genial man who loves Christmas. He invites Scrooge to his Christmas party each and every year, only to be refused by his grumpy uncle.

**Fagin** - The jovial merchant with whom the young Scrooge apprenticed. Fezziwig was renowned for his wonderful Christmas parties.

**Belle** - A beautiful woman whom Scrooge loved deeply when he was a young man. Belle broke off their engagement after Scrooge became consumed with greed and the lust for wealth. She later married another man.

**Peter Cratchit** - Bob’s oldest son, who inherits his father’s stiff-collared shirt for Christmas.

**Martha Cratchit** - Bob’s oldest daughter, who works in a milliner’s shop. (A milliner is a person who designs, produces, and sells hats.)

**Fan** - Scrooge’s sister; Fred’s mother. In Scrooge’s vision of Christmases past, he remembers Fan picking him up from school and walking him home.

**The Portly Gentlemen** - Two gentlemen who visit Scrooge at the beginning of the tale seeking charitable contributions. Scrooge promptly throws them out of his office. Upon meeting one of them on the street after his visit, he promises to make lavish donations to help the poor.
In spite of humble beginnings, little education, and the sometimes-critical literary reviewers, Charles Dickens was loved by his public, and amassed wealth, prestige, and a large legacy of published works. He was one of the few writers to enjoy both popular acceptance and financial success while still alive. The drive for this success had its roots in his childhood.

Charles John Huffam Dickens was born in Portsmouth, England on Friday, February 7, 1812. He was the second of eight children born to John and Elizabeth Dickens. His father, John, was the son of illiterate servants. John Dickens managed to escape a similar fate when a family friend got him a job in a navy pay office. John continued his upward climb by keeping his own lowly background a secret and courting Elizabeth Barrow, the daughter of a wealthy senior clerk who worked there. The marriage succeeded, but John’s hopes for further advancement fizzled when his father-in-law was accused of embezzlement and fled the country. The loss of this financial opportunity did not slow the spending habits of John and Elizabeth, who liked the upper-class lifestyle. This problem would be their downfall as time went on.

During Charles Dickens’ early years, his family moved a great deal due to his father’s job and spending habits. He recalled later that the best time of his childhood was their five years in Chatham, where they moved when Dickens was five, and where life was stable and happy. Dickens loved the area, learned to read, and was sent to school.

His father’s financial problems, however, required a move to smaller quarters in London when Dickens was ten. Their four-room home was cramped, creditors called frequently trying to collect payments, and Dickens’ parents alternated between the stress of survival and the gaiety of continuing to party. Dickens wanted to return to school but was instead sent to work at the age of twelve to help support the family.

For twelve hours a day, six days a week, Charles Dickens pasted labels to bottles of shoe polish at the rat-infested, dilapidated Warren’s Blacking factory. He was ridiculed and harassed by the older, bigger workers and shamed by the stigma of working in such filthy, low-class surroundings.

Intellectually frustrated, resentful of his older sister (who was studying at the Royal Academy of Music), and hurt by his parents’ lack of interest in his education, Dickens despaired.
When his father was arrested for nonpayment of a debt, Dickens’ mother and younger siblings moved into prison with his father, leaving the twelve-year-old alone on the outside to continue working. His older sister remained at the music academy. Lonely, scared, and abandoned, Dickens lived in a run-down neighborhood close to the prison so that he could visit his family. It was a firsthand experience of poverty and prison life and a reinforcement of the considerable insecurity and emotional abandonment that marked his childhood.

A small inheritance a few months later allowed his family to leave prison. Dickens was finally allowed to attend school over his mother’s objections — she did not want to lose his income. School was short-lived though: At fifteen, Dickens had to return to work. Dickens never got over the time he spent at Warren’s and his fierce sense of betrayal and rage at his mother’s callousness stayed with him for life. Recalling that time, he said: “I never afterwards forgot, I never shall forget, I never can forget, that my mother was warm for my being sent back [to Warren’s Blacking].”

In the strictest sense, Dickens’ formal education was limited. His mother taught him to read when he was a young boy, and his early education was of a self-taught nature. By the age of ten, he had devoured novels such as Daniel Defoe’s *Robinson Crusoe*, Henry Fielding’s *Tom Jones*, and Miguel Cervantes’ *Don Quixote*. At nine, he experimented with writing a play for his family and called it *Misnar, the Sultan of India*.

In 1821, Dickens attended the Giles Academy in Chatham for about one year. Later, when he was twelve, he attended the Wellington House Academy in London. At fifteen, family problems required him to return to work, and so his last “schooling” was, again, self-taught. He purchased a reading ticket to the British Museum at eighteen and immersed himself in its large library. He also taught himself shorthand.
The story of the Crummles’ traveling theatrical troupe in *Nicholas Nickleby* was one close to Dickens’ heart. As a child Charles was exposed to, and loved, the theatre. As a schoolboy he formed a small dramatic company of his friends. Had it not been for an illness on the morning of a scheduled audition at the Covent Garden theatre in the early 1830s, just before his writing gained attention, he may have made a career on the stage.

After years away from the stage, Dickens agreed to direct and perform in three plays while in Montreal, Canada in 1842. The success of the Montreal plays provided the spark that rekindled Dickens’ love of the footlights.

Back home in London, Dickens gathered friends to perform Ben Jonson’s *Every Man in his Humour* for charity, which was a huge success.

These amateur theatricals continued throughout the middle years of Dickens’ career as a world-famous author. He worked tirelessly as actor and stage manager and, as his friend John Forster remarked, often adjusted scenes, assisted carpenters, invented costumes, devised playbills and generally oversaw the entire production of the performances.

Many of his friends and associates in the arts, including Forster, Douglas Jerrold, John Leech, Mark Lemon, Augustus Egg, Wilkie Collins, and George Cruikshank acted in these theatricals which were performed across Britain. The distinguished actor William Macready, a close friend of Dickens, provided guidance in the performance of the productions. Another friend, artist Clarkson Stanfield, lent a hand designing scenery. The schoolroom in his home, Tavistock House, could be converted to a theatre for small performances. The Dickens’ amateur troupe even performed twice for Queen Victoria and Prince Albert.

This close association with the theatre had an important impact on Dickens “the author.” Theatrical characters abound in the novels and the stories are told in such a visual way that they easily lend themselves first to illustrations in the novels, stage dramatizations, and finally, to film.

Later in his career Dickens’ theatrical training contributed to the success of public readings of his works, some of which were so physically taxing that they may have hastened his early death.
Dickens' Theatre (cont’d)

Dickens was, first and foremost, an entertainer. From childhood and into adult life he loved the stage and the adulation he received. He performed in amateur theatricals throughout the 1840s and 50s and, had he not achieved early fame as a writer, would almost certainly have made a career on the stage. In 1853 Dickens began giving public readings of his works, first for charity, and beginning in 1858, for profit. Before this time no great author had performed their works in public, but Dickens’ works were uniquely suited for performance, as they would later successfully adapt to the screen. Dickens’ friend and advisor, John Forster, argued unsuccessfully that such public exhibition for money was beneath his calling as a writer and a gentleman.

Throughout the 1860s, except for a break at mid-century when he was writing *Our Mutual Friend*, Dickens undertook reading tours of Britain, making more money from the readings than he could from writing, even though he always made sure that seats were available at working-class prices.

The performances initially included the Christmas books: *A Christmas Carol, The Chimes*, and *Cricket on the Hearth*. Later Dickens incorporated scenes from *Dombey and Son, Nicholas Nickleby, Pickwick Papers, Martin Chuzzlewit*, and his favorite, *David Copperfield*. He tightened the narrative, wrote stage directions to himself in the margins, and tried to infuse as much humor as possible, leaving out passages of social criticism as inappropriate for evenings of entertainment.

Dickens’ biographer, Edgar Johnson, on the public readings: “It was more than a reading; it was an extraordinary exhibition of acting ... without a single prop or bit of costume, by changes of voice, by gesture, by vocal expression, Dickens peopled his stage with a throng of characters.”

Thomas Carlyle, author and friend of Dickens, after attending one of the readings, remarked that Dickens was like an entire theatre company...under one hat. Dickens’ six-man entourage for these reading tours included his manager (Albert Smith, later George Dolby), a valet, a gas man, and a couple of others doing clerical work and odd jobs. The unique stage equipment included a reading desk, carpet, gas lights, and screens behind to help project his voice forward.

After much deliberation, and with the promise of big money, he undertook a reading tour of America between December 1867-April 1868 which earned him 19,000 pounds.

On his return to England, and with declining health, he began a farewell tour of Britain in October 1868. This tour included a new addition, a very passionate and dramatic performance of the murder of Nancy from *Oliver Twist*. Many believe that the energy expended in this performance, which he insisted on including even as his health worsened, hastened his early death in June, 1870.
# Dickens’ Works

## Major Works

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Year Published</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sketches by Boz</td>
<td>1836</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pickwick Papers</td>
<td>1836-37 serialized monthly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oliver Twist</td>
<td>1837-39 serialized monthly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nicholas Nickleby</td>
<td>1838-39 serialized monthly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Old Curiosity Shop</td>
<td>1840-41 serialized weekly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Barnaby Rudge</td>
<td>1841</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Martin Chuzzlewit</td>
<td>1841-44 serialized monthly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dombey and Son</td>
<td>1846</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>David Copperfield</td>
<td>1846-48 serialized monthly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bleak House</td>
<td>1849</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hard Times</td>
<td>1849-50 serialized monthly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Little Dorrit</td>
<td>1852-53 serialized monthly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A Tale of Two Cities</td>
<td>1854</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Great Expectations</td>
<td>1855-57 serialized monthly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Our Mutual Friend</td>
<td>1859</td>
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<tr>
<td>The Mystery of Edwin Drood - unfinished</td>
<td>1860-61 serialized weekly</td>
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## Minor Works

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Year Published</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>American Notes</td>
<td>1843</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pictures from Italy</td>
<td>1846</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Life of Our Lord</td>
<td>1846</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A Child's History of England</td>
<td>1851-53 serialized weekly</td>
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<tr>
<td>Reprinted Pieces</td>
<td>1858</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Uncommercial Traveller</td>
<td>1861</td>
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## Christmas Books

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Year Published</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A Christmas Carol</td>
<td>1843</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Chimes</td>
<td>1844</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Cricket on the Hearth</td>
<td>1845</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Battle of Life</td>
<td>1846</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Haunted Man and the Ghost’s Bargain</td>
<td>1848</td>
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## Weekly Magazines

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Master Humphrey’s Clock</td>
<td>1840-41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Household Words</td>
<td>1850-59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All the Year Round</td>
<td>1859-70</td>
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Dickens’ Timeline

Dickens in the Classroom

Lesson One (1-3):
The Writing on the Wall

A. Daily Objectives
1. Concept Objective(s)
   a. Students will gain an understanding of the way individuals, families, and communities live and work together now and in the past.

2. Lesson Content
   a. *A Christmas Carol* by Charles Dickens, Abridged by Shona McKellar

3. Skill Objective(s)
   a. Students will demonstrate the ability to respond to texts through a variety of methods, such as creative dramatics, writing, and graphic art.
   b. Students will sequence the events of a story.
   c. Students will understand that defining the beginning and ending of a story helps define the middle events.
   d. Students will recognize character traits in the book’s characters, and attach those traits in written expressions and illustrations.
   e. Students will demonstrate the ability to generate drafts that focus on a topic; have a beginning, middle, and end; and include relevant and supportive details.
   f. Students will demonstrate the ability to focus attention on the person who is speaking and listen politely without interrupting.

Materials
1. *A Christmas Carol* by Charles Dickens, Abridged by Shona McKellar
2. drawing paper, markers, pencils
3. 7 or 8 pieces of 11x17 construction paper, white or manila colored
4. Sharpie marker, black fine tip
5. magnets or tape

Key Vocabulary
1. Wall Book – A summary of a story, written and illustrated by students, then displayed on the wall in the correct sequence.

Procedures/Activities
1. Students will construct a wall book of *A Christmas Carol*. To do this, the teacher uses magnets or tape to affix 7 or 8 pieces of 11x17 construction paper onto the chalkboard. The paper should be positioned in landscape format. Starting at the beginning, write a 3- or 4-sentence summary telling what happens. The students should generate the sentence ideas, and the teacher should write the sentences at the bottom of the paper in a black marker. Then, do the same thing at the ending. Depending on how many pages you have placed between the beginning and the end, you may decide to pinpoint one major middle event and then two smaller events that happened on either side of the one in the middle. The idea is to have a summary in “big book” form that can be displayed on the wall.

2. Once the writing has been completed on each piece of paper, the students use the top part above the words to illustrate the summarized portion that is written on that page. Students work well in pairs or trios to complete the illustrations as small collaborative teams. For example, in class of 21 students, a group of 3 could work on 1 of the 7 pages of the Wall Book.

3. When the illustrations are complete, you are ready to display your “wall book” in the hallway to show others what you have learned. Arrange the pages on the wall in the order of the summary.

4. Early finishers can make a sequence chain link to go on their Christmas Trees by writing the sentences from the wall book on strips of drawing paper and then stapling the events of the story in order, in chain link formation.

Assessment/Evaluation
1. Teacher observation for participation in the class discussion of the sequencing of events. Check to see that each student contributes something to the discussion, and that students focus attention on the speaker without interrupting.

2. Check to see that each student takes part in the collaborative illustration assigned to his or her group.

2004 Core Knowledge® National Conference, 2nd, *A Christmas Carol*
Dickens in the Classroom (cont’d)

Lesson Two (k-12):
The Stage Production vs. the Book

A. Daily Objectives
1. Concept Objective(s)
   a. Students will gain an understanding of the way individuals, families, and communities live and work together now and in the past.

2. Lesson Content
   a. *A Christmas Carol* by Charles Dickens, Abridged by Shona McKellar

3. Skill Objective(s)
   a. Students will compare the stage production to the book.
   b. Students will demonstrate the ability to organize and classify information by constructing categories.
   c. Students will acquire an awareness of and appreciation for the development of the English novel.
   d. Students will recognize similarities and differences between various types of media presentations of the same story.
   e. Students will be introduced to the culture and times during which Charles Dickens lived.
   f. Students will recognize similarities and differences in Christmas today and Christmas during Dickens’s day.

Materials
1. *A Christmas Carol* by Charles Dickens, Abridged by Shona McKellar
2. Tickets to the Bonstelle Theatre’s production of *A Christmas Carol* Student Matinee December 4th or 10th @ 10:00 A.M. Call the Group Sales Coordinator today at 313-577-0852.
3. Pencils
4. Play vs. Book Form for each student (See Appendix A), plus one overhead transparency of this sheet
5. Overhead projector and pen

Key Vocabulary
none

Procedures/Activities
1. Students will attend the Bonstelle Theatre’s production of *A Christmas Carol*.
2. Class will discuss the differences and similarities in the story presentation by comparing the play to the book. Additionally, students may refer to a movie version they have seen as another type of media presentation. (Use the following link for a comprehensive list of movies: http://www.imdb.com/find?s=all&q=A+Christmas+Carol&x=14&y=14)
3. Students complete the Play vs. Book form to record their observations. You may wish to do this as a group and use the overhead to record the information as the students offer insights.

Assessment/Evaluation
1. Informal assessment takes place during class discussion of comparison ideas.
2. Check the Play vs. Book comparison sheet completed by each student.
Extension/Alternative: Arrange to watch a movie version.

2004 Core Knowledge® National Conference,
2nd, *A Christmas Carol*
Lesson Three (3-5): Acquiring New Vocabulary

Estimated Lesson Time
One 60-minute class session, plus time for extensions

Overview
This lesson explores various ways in which you can foster students’ vocabulary skills through direct instruction and small-group discussions. While reading the text A Christmas Carol by Charles Dickens, students identify words that are unfamiliar to them. Working collaboratively in small groups, they discuss the meaning of these new words using context clues from the text, prior knowledge, and print and online resources. They then apply their knowledge of the new vocabulary to further their understanding of the text. This particular lesson can be modified and reused for other areas of the curriculum, with moderate preparation and researching of topic-related resources. Extensions are included to further expand vocabulary acquisition and reading comprehension.

From Theory to Practice

- As children approach the middle grades and become more proficient in decoding and recognizing known words, vocabulary acquisition focuses more on meaning than recognition (Chall, 1987).

- Direct instruction is an important aspect of vocabulary acquisition, and relates to reading comprehension in that children integrate new words with their prior knowledge.

- An important component of vocabulary development is social interactions and interventions in the classroom. Grand conversations (Peterson & Eeds, 1990) about shared readings of literature can include rich discussions about new words and their meanings. Students can find it motivating to work collaboratively to define new words using creative means, such as context clues or drama, and traditional methods, such as a dictionary or other media sources.


Student Objectives
Students will:
- Develop new strategies to enhance reading comprehension
- Locate unfamiliar words in a story and determine their meaning using a variety of strategies (e.g., prior knowledge, context clues, group discussion, media sources)
- Acquire new vocabulary identified from the assigned text
- Enhance understanding of new vocabulary by making connections to related ideas and other words
- Aim to use new vocabulary in speaking and writing
- Aim to continually use the practiced strategies to enhance reading comprehension and acquire new vocabulary

Resources
- Individual Performance and Group Participation Rubric
- Dictionary (print or online version)
- Paper and pencil
- Thesaurus

Instructional Plan
Preparation
1. Prior to the lesson, read the text selection and make note of any words that may be unfamiliar or interesting to your students.

2. Bookmark related websites for students to use during their group work. A list of sites is provided for A Christmas Carol; however, if you are using this lesson with another book or topic, make sure to research a list of appropriate websites in advance of the lesson.
3. Arrange for students to have access to computers with Internet access.

**Instruction and Activities**

1. Read *A Christmas Carol* aloud to the whole class or have students read aloud, avoiding any interruptions from students who have questions. (Group discussion and understanding of the text will occur later in the lesson.)

2. To introduce the lesson activity, choose a word to model the strategy that students will later use in their small-group work. For example, introduce the term *surplus* as used in this passage:

   “If they would rather die,” said Scrooge, “they had better do it, and decrease the surplus population. Besides -- excuse me -- I don’t know that.” (Dickens, Stave I)

   Allow students the opportunity to comment on their ideas of what the word surplus means. Students can demonstrate their ideas using words and body movements. Then, share a media definition such as the one from dictionary.com. Other online sources can also be used to provide more information about the word’s meaning. Using a thesaurus, identify synonyms for the word and then plug in each synonym to see if it makes sense within the context of the original sentence.

   Ask students if they have any questions or comments about how to use this strategy when determining the meaning of an unfamiliar word. Model a few more examples if students need further clarification, or allow a few students to lead whole-class demonstrations of a few more examples for further reinforcement.

3. Divide the class into small groups and provide one copy of the book to each group.

4. Assign students in each group a role, per your discretion (e.g., teacher assignment, student choice, peer vote). Roles include:

   * **Vocabulary Enricher**--identifies interesting or unfamiliar words in the reading and leads a discussion about the new words
   * **Literary Luminary**--relates the new words back to the context of the passage, and provides supporting definitions by accessing a dictionary or other media sources
   * **Connector**--makes a connection between the meaning of words as used in the context of the text and prior knowledge or understanding
   * **Discussion Director**--facilitates the discussion among members of the group
   * **Summarizer**--records and reports the group’s activities to the whole class; similar to a secretary or reporter

   Ask students to assume their assigned or chosen role in the group, and make sure that they understand their individual responsibilities.

5. Explain that the group’s task is to locate and creatively define unfamiliar or interesting words from the text *A Christmas Carol*. When encountering new words, students should be encouraged to look at the context of the surrounding sentences, engage in a group discussion about the new words, draw upon their prior knowledge of the word or topic, and access print and online resources for supporting definitions. For the text *A Christmas Carol*, the following websites are recommended to assist students in defining unfamiliar words:

   * Dictionary.com. This website is an online version of the dictionary.
   * http://logicmgmt.com/1876/xmas/xmasintro.htm. This website provides information about Victorian Christmas Traditions.
   * http://charlesdickenspage.com/carol.html This site provides detailed information on the book *A Christmas Carol* and a list of “Related Areas on the Internet.”
   * https://secure.layingthefoundation.org/english/vocab/novels/A%20Christmas%20Carol.pdf This site aids students and teachers in learning vocabulary within the context of the novel.
This exercise gives students the opportunity to practice using a new strategy when encountering unfamiliar words. It also helps them to realize that understanding new words will enable them to understand the story better. Thus, they will be developing their reading comprehension skills while also acquiring new vocabulary.

6. Rotate among the groups as students are working and keep anecdotal records describing the students’ interactions with one another, participation in the discussion, and role behavior.

7. After the group work, which will assume the bulk of the time allotted, gather students as a whole class and ask the summarizer from each group to share the group’s activities.

8. Create a chart to record each group’s findings as the summarizer presents them.

9. Relate the new words that students identified back to the story *A Christmas Carol*. Engage in a whole-class discussion of the text, reinforcing the new vocabulary and students’ understanding of the story.

10. To end the session, ask students to choose one word that they learned during this session. Have them write their understanding of the word’s definition, copy the sentence from the text highlighting the specified word, rewrite the sentence substituting a synonym for the word that makes sense within the context of the sentence, and then provide an illustration of the word. The illustration does not have to be related to the story.

**Extensions**

*Have students keep a word log during Sustained Silent Reading (SSR) as a way to repeat this activity regularly on an independent level. The lesson Using a Word Journal to Create a Personal Dictionary, although intended for grades 6–8, can easily be adapted for younger students.*

*Practice the strategy using words that students encounter during their other classes. After introducing a word, ask students to predict what they think the word means, refer to the dictionary to find the actual definition, engage in a group discussion relating the word to their prior knowledge, and use the word in a sentence of their own. Continued repetition and practice with the strategy is beneficial.*

*Repeat this lesson with other trade books or basal assignments. Be sure to compile a list of age-appropriate resources related to the text selection to assist students in defining new words.*

**Student Assessment/Reflections**

*Teacher observation*  
*Anecdotal records*  
*Student’s written response*

**NCTE English Language Arts Standards: Lesson Three**

1 - Students read a wide range of print and nonprint texts to build an understanding of texts, of themselves, and of the cultures of the United States and the world; to acquire new information; to respond to the needs and demands of society and the workplace; and for personal fulfillment. Among these texts are fiction and nonfiction, classic and contemporary works.

3 - Students apply a wide range of strategies to comprehend, interpret, evaluate, and appreciate texts. They draw on their prior experience, their interactions with other readers and writers, their knowledge of word meaning and of other texts, their word identification strategies, and their understanding of textual features (e.g., sound-letter correspondence, sentence structure, context, graphics).

4 - Students adjust their use of spoken, written, and visual language (e.g., conventions, style, vocabulary) to communicate effectively with a variety of audiences and for different purposes.
Selected Resources

BOOKS:

WEB RESOURCES:
Read, Write, Think, http://www.readwritethink.org/
Once upon a time in Portsmouth, http://www.charlesdickensbirthplace.co.uk/
Lesson Planet, http://www.lessonplanet.com/

*A CHRISTMAS CAROL ONLINE:*
Bibliomania: Free online Literature and Study Guides, http://www.bibliomania.com/0/0/19/frameset.html

*A CHRISTMAS CAROL ON FILM, VIDEO, AND DVD:*
1938. Starring Reginald Owen, Gene Lockhart, Kathleen Lockhart, June Lockhart, Leo G. Carroll, and Terry Kilburn. 69 min.
1951. Starring Alastair Sim, Meryvn Johns, Michael Hordern and Glyn Dearman 86 min.
Before 1951, the University Theatre Department at Wayne State University produced plays in small quarters at the University or in the Detroit Institute of Arts Auditorium. In 1951, the University rented for the Theatre the historic Bonstelle Playhouse, prominent both in the cultural history of Detroit and in the history of the American theatre. Purchase of this building at 3424 Woodward by the University was completed in 1956. The name Bonstelle was restored in 1963, when the building became known as the Bonstelle Theatre.

Jessie Bonstelle, managing director of the famous Bonstelle Players, moved into the newly remodeled Bonstelle Playhouse in October of 1924, leaving the Garrick Theatre, which she had used for several seasons. The new theatre was the former Temple Beth El, designed by architect Albert Kahn. It was redesigned as a theatre by C. Howard Crane, who also designed the Theatre Guild Playhouse. The Bonstelle Playhouse opened on January 1, 1925. The theatre was reorganized in 1928 as the Detroit Civic Theatre, and continued under Miss Bonstelle’s direction through the season of 1931 - 32. Miss Bonstelle died October 4, 1932.

In eight years she had averaged twenty-seven and one-half productions a year; her longest season, 1926 - 27, saw 35 plays. Known as the “maker of stars,” Miss Bonstelle employed in her company many who became famous, such as Katherine Cornell, William Powell, George Seaton, Melvyn Douglas, Gale Sondergaard and Jessie Royce Landis. Her musical director was Nicholas Gargusi, later first violinist for the Detroit Symphony Orchestra and the New York Philharmonic, and her dance director was Mme. Cassan, the only person authorized by Pavlova to teach her method.

During this period she made her theatre a focal point of activity for schools, churches, commercial establishments and clubs in the community. Church services, speeches and concerts were held in the theatre. She and her theatre were known throughout the country and she was highly respected by many prominent people in the profession.

Following Miss Bonstelle’s death, the theatre was renamed the Bonstelle Civic Theatre, and opened its ninth season as she had planned. It closed during the Great Depression, however, and later housed the Mayfair motion picture theatre.

Since taking occupancy of the theatre in 1951, WSU Theatre has annually produced a season of five to nine plays at the Bonstelle. Bonstelle alumni include: S. Epatha Merkerson (Law and Order), Max Wright (Alf), Tom Sizemore (Saving Private Ryan, Heat, Relic), Robert Lambert (the Broadway revival of Gypsy with Tyne Dale), Robert Cicchini (Godfather III), David Ramsey (TV’s Good News; Pay It Forward) and Lily Tomlin. After the purchase of the building in 1956, extensive renovations were made, including the installation of a new electronic switchboard for stage lighting. Recently this was replaced by an updated light control system.

The Department now offers a Bachelor of Arts Degree in Theatre, available to all incoming students. After two years on this track, students may either continue toward this degree or audition for application into the Bonstelle’s Bachelor of Fine Arts Degree in Theatre, which is a more work-intensive program. It is available in acting; directing; stage management and scenic, lighting and costume design/technology. More information about the undergraduate acting program, audition dates and numerous scholarship opportunities are available by contacting the Theatre Department Office.

The Bonstelle Theatre is currently one of the University’s two major theatres, the other being the Hilberry Theatre at Cass and Hancock, home of the University’s renowned graduate repertory company.
Before Arriving at the Theatre

Thank you for participating in the 2009-2010 season at the Bonstelle Theatre. In order to make the experience enjoyable and educational for all student groups, guidelines for proper theatre etiquette have been established. Please share these house rules with other chaperones and your students.

1. Audience members are to remain seated, keeping aisles free, as actors sometimes enter and exit through the audience. Students need to be instructed to remain in their seats during the acts, as leaving the theatre during the performance could interfere with the show.

2. Teachers are to remain in the theatre during the entire show, seated among their students, to help the theatre staff control any problems that may arise during the performance.

3. Please keep lunches on the bus and all food, drink, candy and gum out of the theatre. If lunches cannot be left on the bus, make sure they are well marked. We will provide a space until the conclusion of the performance. Please notify us in advance if you will be needing this service. Also please remind students to dispose of chewing gum prior to entering the theatre.

4. Keep in mind that the actors can see and hear the audience members. It takes a tremendous amount of concentration to perform in front of a live audience. Live theatre is different from television and movies. Talking directly to the actors or each other while the show is in progress could prevent the actors from doing their best job for you.

5. Please let your students and chaperones know that copyright laws prohibit photographs of the stage or actors anytime during your theatre experience. Flashes during the performance also create a disruption for both the actors and other audience members.

6. Electronic devices such as CD or MP3 players, cell phones, pagers and laser pointers should not be brought into the theatre. The noises and sound waves of these types of devices can interfere with the headsets the stage manager and crew use during the performance. If these devices cannot be left on the bus, ushers will provide a safe place for them to be stored during the performance. If ushers find people using these devices during the performance, they will be confiscated until the conclusion of the show.

7. Please educate all students and chaperones that the stage is a creation by our design team that is to be viewed by the audience. Actors and stage hands are the only people allowed to walk or sit on the stage.

8. Students should be encouraged to listen carefully, respond to the story (laugh, applaud, etc.) and quiet down quickly to listen again. When they are actually playing an active part in the performance, they discover the true excitement of the theatre.

Here are some ways that you can help us run the student matinees in a more efficient and time-saving manner:

1. Plan to arrive at the theatre by 9:30 a.m. as the show is scheduled to begin promptly at 10 a.m. If you will be late due to bus arrival, traffic, etc., please contact the Bonstelle Box Office at (313) 577-2960.

2. Once you arrive at the theatre, please pick up your seating card at the box office before bringing the students off the bus. Have the students enter the theatre in an orderly fashion and we will direct them to their seats as quickly as possible.

3. If your group has to wait in the lobby before being seated, please help in keeping the noise level down to assist in communication and more timely seating.

Bus Instructions for Attending Student Matinees

While attending the Bonstelle Theatre, buses should park by the “No Standing” signs along the streets. There are usually several places along Woodward Avenue. Please do not park directly in front of the theatre or the lots surrounding the theatre. Those lots do not belong to the theatre. Please remember that Woodward is a major thoroughfare and many other buses will be trying to drop off and park as well. Please be patient and considerate during this potentially stressful time and always put the safety of the students first.

Ticket Exchanges

To change your number of tickets, please call the box office at least two weeks in advance. Once the group leader has confirmed the number of tickets reserved, the number cannot be reduced.

Talkbacks

Your group is invited to join us for a 10-15 minute Talkback immediately following the student matinee performance. A Talkback is a question-and-answer session with the actors and crew. This discussion is a great opportunity for students to ask questions concerning the development of a theatre performance. Students are encouraged to use this time to analyze the script and language. This optional session is a great way to meet many of the Michigan Arts Education and Language Arts curriculum guidelines by discussion. If you have any questions regarding the Talkbacks, please contact Group Sales and Services at (313) 577-0852.
## Directions to the Bonstelle Theatre

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<tr>
<th>Coming From</th>
<th>VIA</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>North</strong></td>
<td>I-75 south</td>
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<td>&quot;North of Detroit&quot;</td>
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<td><strong>West or East</strong></td>
<td>M-10 south (the Lodge)</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td><strong>South</strong></td>
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**North of Detroit**
- Exit at Mack Avenue (second exit south of I-94), turn **right** on Mack at the top of the ramp. Travel to Woodward Avenue, turn **left**. Travel one block to Eliot, turn **left**, the theatre is on the southeast corner of Woodward and Eliot.

**West or East of Detroit**
- Exit at I-75 **south**, follow the above directions.

**South of Detroit**
- Exit at Forest/Warren (immediately after I-94). Turn **left** at the top of the ramp on Forest. Travel 5 stoplights to Woodward, turn **right**. Travel about one mile to Eliot (one block south Mack), turn **left**. The theatre is on the southeast corner of Woodward and Eliot.

OR
- Exit at the Lodge Freeway northbound. Exit the Lodge at Forest/Warren, turn **right** on Forest at the top of the ramp. Travel 4 stoplights to Woodward, turn **left**. The theatre is on the southeast corner of Woodward and Eliot.

The Bonstelle Theatre is located on Woodward Avenue at the corner of Eliot (one block south of Mack Avenue). The actual address of 3424 Woodward Avenue is not displayed on the building, please look for the green awning over the entrance.

### PARKING

#### Schools and Tour Busses
- Please park on Woodward or Eliot near the theatre anywhere there is a “No Standing Zone.”
- Please DO NOT park directly in front of the green theatre awning.
- Please DO NOT park busses in the Red Cross parking lot adjacent to the theatre.

#### Individual Cars and Vans
- Please park on Woodward or Eliot near the Theatre.
Appendix A

Play vs. Book

Name____________________________________

1. Which did you like better – the play or the book? Why?

2. What did you like better about the book than the play?

3. What did you like better about the play than the book?

4. How were the characters different in the image that you had in your mind before you saw the play?

5. Did seeing the play help you understand the book better? In what ways?

6. Can you think of any other plays and books that you have compared? What were they?