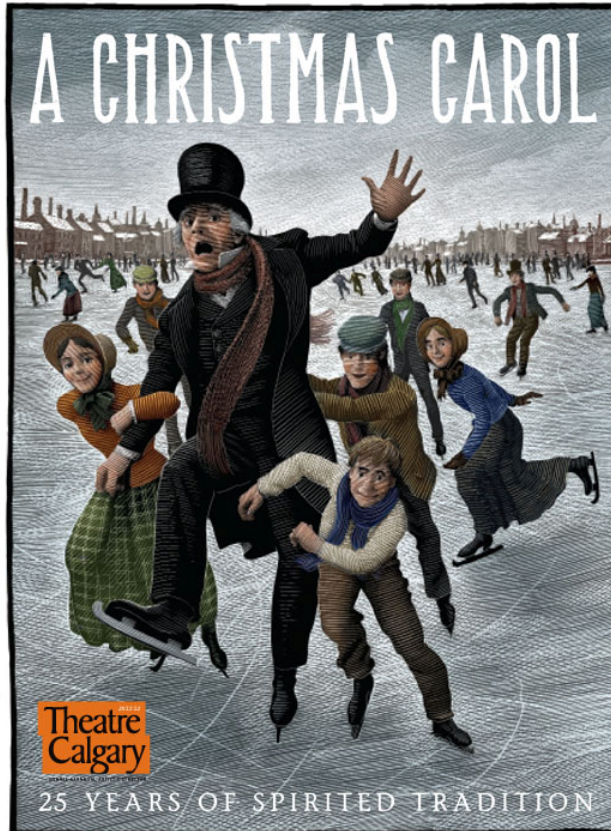


CANADA SAFEWAY PRESENTS THE THEATRE CALGARY PRODUCTION



THIS PRODUCTION IS MADE POSSIBLE WITH THE GENEROUS SUPPORT OF THE CAL WENZEL FAMILY FOUNDATION

By CHARLES DICKENS
Adapted for the stage by DENNIS GARNHUM
Starring STEPHEN HAIR as Ebenezer Scrooge

Student Activity Guide

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A Note to Students and Teachers:

We are delighted that you have chosen to participate in Theatre Calgary's Student Matinee Series and be a part of the audience in our production of A Christmas Carol.

If you are a student and this is your first experience with Theatre Calgary, we hope that this is the beginning of a life-long love affair with theatre and drama. If this is not your first time, we welcome you back and thank you and your teachers for your continuing support.

At Theatre Calgary, we believe that all students and adults should have the opportunity to experience great literature presented live on stage by professional and committed actors. We are optimistic that you will find this production to be an entertaining and memorable experience.

We also hope that you find the following learning suggestions helpful. They are divided into activities to complete before, during and after attending a Theatre Calgary performance of A Christmas Carol.

It is not necessary for students to complete all the activities.

Consider only those that you believe meet the needs and interests of your students.

Teachers, please feel free to post activities on D2L.

Enjoy.

I. BEFORE THE CURTAIN RISES

PREPARE TO ATTEND THE PERFORMANCE: THEATRE ETIQUETTE

Theatre etiquette — what is appropriate and not appropriate to do when you are in the theatre — is an important matter to consider before attending a play with your classmates.

In groups, generate as many theatre etiquette rules as you can, including both “dos” and “don’ts.” Give reasons for each.

Below is a list of some important “Dos & Don’ts” of theatre etiquette for your reference once the exercise is complete.

| Rule | Reasons |
|---|---|
| a. <i>Don't text message during the performance</i> | <i>The actors are not blind. They can see the illumination of your device as you are texting. This is rude to the actors who are working very hard to entertain you. It is also very distracting.</i> |
| 1. | |

DOS

- Arrive at the theatre early to ensure enough time to get to your seat before the performance starts.
- Stay seated with your feet on the floor.
- Turn off any cell phones, mp3 players, watch alarms or other electronic devices.
- Leave the talking to the actors on the stage.
- Eat your lunch or snacks in the lobby of the theatre before the performance or during intermission.
- Laugh, applaud, cheer and respond to the performance appropriately.
- Leave your cameras and recording devices at home.
- Feel free to share your thoughts about the performance with your teachers and fellow students after the performance.
- Make sure you thank the actors, crew and other theatre artists with your applause during the curtain call.
- Have an open mind and prepare to enjoy the performance beforehand.

DON'TS

- Don't arrive late. Latecomers may not be admitted depending on the performance.
- Don't put your feet up on the chair or stage in front of you.
- Don't let your phone ring, send/receive text messages, or listen to your mp3 player during a performance.
- Don't talk or make any noise once the performance has begun.
- Don't eat your lunch or snacks inside the theatre.
- Don't shout, whistle or make comments during the performance.
- Don't take pictures or video during the performance.
- Don't share your thoughts about the performance while you are watching it.
- Don't leave the theatre prior to the conclusion of the curtain call.
- Don't make up your mind about how you feel about a performance before you've had a chance to see it.

WHAT DO YOU REMEMBER OF THE *CHRISTMAS CAROL* STORY?

Dickens' *A Christmas Carol* is a story that is familiar to most people – young and old. In groups, create a list of narrative details that you recall from the versions that you have experienced.

After seeing the play, you will be asked to revisit this list and check the accuracy of your collective memories.

EXPLORE SITUATIONS AND THEMES

Before attending the play, consider some of the situations and themes that the play deals with. Below is a list of specific situations for you to consider.

Begin by asking yourself if you, or someone you know, have been in a similar situation as one of the characters in *A Christmas Carol*. Are there other stories, or films that you have read or viewed that deal with similar situations or ideas?

Explore your thoughts and feelings in regards to any of the following situations, issues or themes through personal journal writing.

Remember that you do not have to respond to all of the following - just the ones that you can most strongly relate to.

- a. The difficulties associated with being in debt
- b. Collecting money for charity or food items for Food Banks
- c. Working for an unpleasant employer
- d. Feeling unwanted or being alone during a special holiday season.
- e. Being with people who believe that success and material possessions are more important than relationships.
- f. Wishing for a second chance to do things differently.
- g. Sharing with others who are needy.
- h. Feasting and partying with family and friends.
- i. Undergoing a dramatic character and attitude change

READ THE ORIGINAL STORY

To maximize your enjoyment and appreciation of the Theatre Calgary production of *A Christmas Carol*, read the original Dickens tale. You might wish to consider using this [annotated version](http://www.fidnet.com/~dap1955/dickens/carol-dickens_reading_text.html) of the text. (http://www.fidnet.com/~dap1955/dickens/carol-dickens_reading_text.html)

Then, after viewing the performance, you can compare the two versions and decide for yourself if the book is better than the dramatization.

GO FROM PAGE TO STAGE

Assuming that you have acquired and read copies of Dickens' *A Christmas Carol*, divide into groups and prepare short scenes from the original story to present.

The first step would be to break up the original text into a series of short scenes.

Each presentation should be no longer than three to five minutes. You will need to create context, setting, narration, dialogue and stage directions. The length of each scene can be kept short by using a narrator to summarize action that will not be covered in the dialogue.

Rehearse your scenes and be sure to consider basic costumes and appropriate props.

Groups should present their scenes in chronological order.

TWEETING AND TEXTING CHRISTMAS CAROL CHARACTERS

Do you "tweet" on Twitter? Are you an obsessive texter?

If Dickens characters were alive today, they may very well be users of these two social media tools.

Choose any two characters from the *Christmas Carol* story and write an imaginary Twitter exchange or texting dialogue between them. In the messages, elements of the plot should be dealt with.

This exercise does not require a Twitter account or messaging phone. The imaginary tweets, or text can be written out in a document.

CREATE FACEBOOK PAGES FOR CHRISTMAS CAROL CHARACTERS

This activity can be completed before or after attending the performance.

Choose a character from *A Christmas Carol* and create a detailed Facebook page for that individual.

You can use the "Image Search" function on your browser to find graphics to include on the Facebook page as photos. Each "photo" should have a caption and you should include information (the URL) as to where you found the graphic.

Then visit each other's Facebook page and indicate whether you (acting as the character that you yourself created a Facebook page for) like the page and if you would like to be a "friend" if you are already not listed as a friend. You may also submit comments from your own character's point of view.

VOCABULARY IMPROVEMENT

To better understand and appreciate the performance, you may find it helpful to become familiar with the more difficult words in the play by completing the following activity.

Match the words from the play in Column A with their appropriate definitions in Column B.

If you are having trouble with any of the words, help is available online at <http://www.onelook.com/>

Check your answers here [Vocabulary Quiz Answer Key](#)

| Column A | | Column B |
|-----------------|---|---|
| 1. dismal | — | a. a bride with no money to bring into the marriage |
| 2. morose | — | b. formed or brought into being through effort |
| 3. veneration | — | c. ideal for bring about a certain effect |
| 4. resolute | — | d. the purposeful act of staying awake at night |
| 5. liberality | — | e. totally unpleasant or detestable |
| 6. destitute | — | f. constant; never ending |
| 7. condolences | — | g. wait patiently |
| 8. tidings | — | h. spirits or ghosts |
| 9. verily | — | i. chained; tied down |
| 10. apparitions | — | j. extremely poor |
| 11. fettered | — | k. news |
| 12. forged | — | l. determined |
| 13. girded | — | m. causing gloom or unhappiness |
| 14. incessant | — | n. criticism |
| 15. penance | — | o. decrease in size or strength |
| 16. conducive | — | p. glum; sad |
| 17. reclamation | — | q. punishment or suffering for wrongs done |
| 18. sordid | — | r. acts on behalf of another |
| 19. reproach | — | s. reinforced |
| 20. engross | — | t. great honour or respect |
| 21. dowerless | — | u. immoral; dirty or rundown |
| 22. aught | — | v. charitableness |
| 23. odious | — | w. saving one from error; recovery |
| 24. gainsay | — | x. extreme generosity |
| 25. bide | — | y. truly |
| 26. refuge | — | z. declare to be wrong or untrue |
| 27. waning | — | aa. expressions of sympathy |
| 28. intercedes | — | bb. hiding place; place of safety |
| 29. vigil | — | cc. archaic term for the word "anything" |
| 30. munificence | | dd. capture the whole attention of |

HOW MUCH DO YOU KNOW ABOUT CHRISTMAS TRADITIONS?

Test your knowledge of Christmas traditions by taking this website [Christmas Trivia Quiz](http://triviapark.com/quizzes/xmasquiz.html).
(<http://triviapark.com/quizzes/xmasquiz.html>)

Don't stop there. At this site you will find a variety of other on-line quizzes to test your Yuletide knowledge.

LEARN MORE ABOUT THE CONTEXT OF A CHRISTMAS CAROL

Complete one or both of the following activities. Recommended web sites are hyperlinked for you but do not limit yourself to these sites. There are countless other resources that contain similar and more detailed information.

- a) There was a great deal of social injustice and hardship during the period of time that Dickens wrote *A Christmas Carol*. Using [The Workhouse](http://www.workhouses.org.uk) website, prepare a brief written or oral report on the social conditions in England during the middle of the nineteenth century. (www.workhouses.org.uk)
- b) Christmas is celebrated differently in different countries. Go to the following site and read about how Christmas is celebrated in countries that you are interested in.
[Christmas Around the World](http://www.the-north-pole.com/around/) (<http://www.the-north-pole.com/around/>)

Choose any three countries to focus on. Using a combination of graphics and written text, describe how Christmas is celebrated in these countries.

REVIEW THE REVIEWERS

By the time you are scheduled to attend *A Christmas Carol* at Theatre Calgary, the local papers and magazines will have printed reviews of the play.

Find and read at least two of these reviews.

You can start by checking out the [Calgary Herald](#) and the [Calgary Sun](#) entertainment sections.

What did the reviewers think of the performance?

What did the reviewers like or dislike about the production?

What important information did you learn about the play and the characters by reading the reviews?

Based on the reviews, what are you looking forward to seeing in the performance of *A Christmas Carol* at Theatre Calgary?

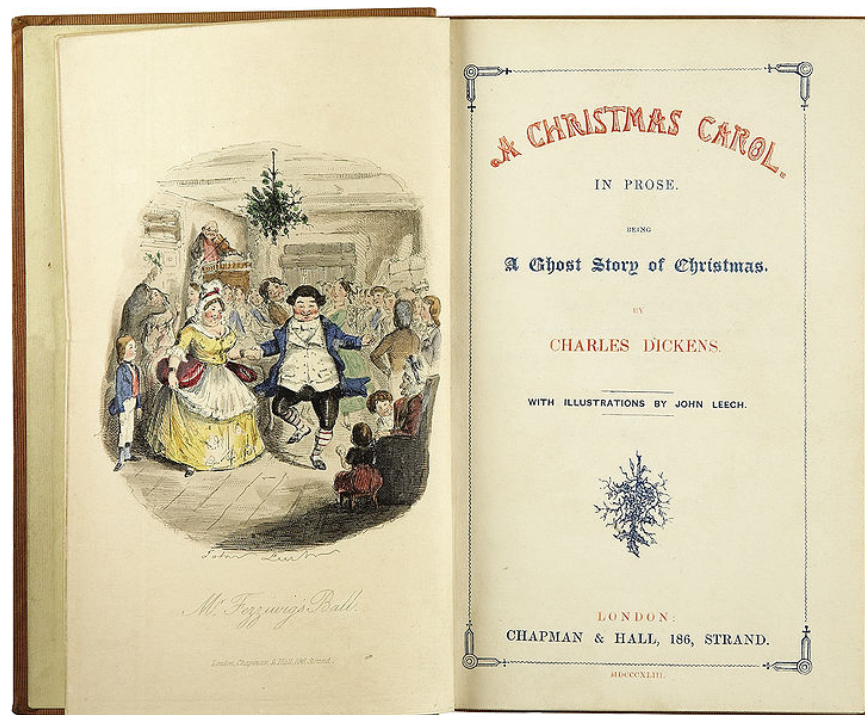
PREPARE FOR THE “MEET THE ACTORS” SESSION

After each student matinee performance, many of the actors make themselves available for a question and answer session with students.

From what you know of the play, which actors would you like most to talk with?

With a partner, generate at least three questions that you would like to ask these actors or you can adapt any of the following:

1. When and how they got into acting
2. Their favorite roles in past performances
3. What they do to prepare for their roles in the performance
4. Their interpretation of the work or the role they play
5. Special challenges of their roles
6. Any other aspect of acting or of the play that you are interested in



Title page from the first edition of A Christmas Carol, 1843.

II. WHILE THE CURTAIN IS UP - QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

PLOT

- The first two scenes of *A Christmas Carol* provide a great deal of exposition. This exposition or background information is provided through flashback and dialogue and is intended to help audiences understand and better appreciate the rest of the play.

List at least five important pieces of information shared in the first two scenes of the play that help us to better appreciate what happens later in the play.

- *A Christmas Carol* is quite humorous in many places.

Describe how humour is created in these scenes.

What specific things did the actors do to create the humour?

What effects are created or purposes served by using humour in this play?

- How realistic were the ghost sequences? In your opinion, which of the ghost appearances was the most effectively presented? Why?

- The ending of this play makes a serious statement about life and about people like Scrooge.

Comment on the ending of the play. To what extent was the ending realistic?

In other words, do people *in real life* change as dramatically as Scrooge does at the end?

Share stories with the class about people you know who have undergone dramatic personality changes.

- *A Christmas Carol* is basically a story about a bad man who by the end is redeemed and becomes a good man. Can you think of any other stories that have a similar plot sequence? Share these stories with your classmates.

- Flashbacks are frequently used in fiction and film to provide audiences with important background information. In a flashback, the reader or viewer enters the mind of a character and revisits some event in the past that serves to illuminate something that is happening or about to happen. Flashbacks are quite challenging in drama because audiences expect the action to be chronological and it is difficult to project on stage the concept that one is revisiting the past.

What purposes are served by the flashbacks in the play?

What purposeful choices were made by the actors and director to create the effect of visiting the past?

CHARACTER

- Casting the characters in a work such as *A Christmas Carol* poses a number of challenges for directors. Some of these challenges include:

- The requirement for children to appear in the production

- A large number of characters with whom the audience is already familiar

- The necessity for ghosts to appear on stage

As you watch the performance, consider how effective you feel these challenges have been met in the production.

- In your opinion, which actors were most effective in bringing their characters to life?
- According to Shakespeare, "Action is eloquence." What this suggests, in context of the theatre, is that actions – what a person does - often tells us more than words.

Identify three examples where *what* the character *did* on stage was more important in revealing or developing a character than what he or she said?

Identify what the actions revealed about the character(s).

- Much can be learned about a character by looking closely at how he or she reacts to something that is said on stage.

Can you recall any specific moments during the performance when a character's reaction to something that was said revealed something important about him or her? Describe these moments and what was revealed.

- Contrast is an effective tool for characterization. Identify the ways in which contrast is developed between the young boy Scrooge and the old man Scrooge? How did this production emphasize the contrast in their characters?
- Create a brief character sketch of Scrooge at the beginning of the play before the appearance of the ghosts. Be sure to identify important traits, values, beliefs, attitudes, dominant emotions, strengths, weaknesses, etc. Also create a character sketch of Scrooge at the end of the play.

SETTING AND MOOD

- This play is a challenge for set designers in that there are so many locations (scene changes) and special effects. Be sure to read the interview with set/costume designer Patrick Clark in the Audience Enrichment guide for his insights into these challenges.

What were your first impressions of the sets? How did the set design and props contribute to the overall effect of the play? Be specific.

- The sets and costumes should serve to bring the story and characters to life for the audience. As you watch the performance, consider how the sets and costumes succeeded in doing this for you.

In small groups, identify the purposeful choices that were made in the sets, props and clothing styles that were used. Also consider how the lighting effects helped to set the mood of various scenes and establish whether a scene takes place in the past or the future.

- Sometimes certain plays, or written works, are described as “dated” because they reflect a very specific period of time in the past that is long gone. Other works can be described as being timeless in that they continue to be relevant in the present and in the foreseeable future.

A Christmas Carol was written over 150 years ago. What has the director done to ensure that this play succeeds in appealing to modern audience?

THEME

- Why would Charles Dickens entitle his work “*A Christmas Carol*”?
Before answering this question, check the [dictionary](#) for alternate meanings for the word, “carol.”
- Titles of works are very important as they can suggest an important theme, or symbolism in the work. Create two alternate and appropriate titles for this play that suggest what you believe are the important ideas in the story.
- Dickens was very concerned about social injustice and worked hard to change how his society dealt with the poor and with underprivileged children.

Create three statements that Scrooge would have agreed with at the beginning of the play about how society should deal with those who are less fortunate. Then create three statements that he would agree with at the end of the play about how society should deal with the less fortunate.

- Some works are written merely to entertain and to help us escape from the real world. Such works of escape feature fantastical elements and exciting plots. These works are not intended to say significant things about life.

Other works are written to express significant insights about people and about life. Such serious works invite us to continue thinking about the ideas well after we have read or seen the work.

Still other works are created to teach moral lessons or to warn us about certain behaviours or attitudes. These *didactic* works tell us how to live our lives and how to avoid problems.

In what ways does *A Christmas Carol* accomplish all three purposes?

However, what do you think is the MAJOR purpose of this work?

Is it primarily to entertain, to reveal significant truths, or to teach?

Justify your opinion by using specific references to the play.

EXPLORING ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS

We continue to relate to the characters and situations in *A Christmas Carol* because the play poses basic essential questions about life.

For example, here are some of the many essential questions posed in the play:

Can bad people change for the better?

Is it ever too late to change?

What is happiness and how do we measure success?

What causes people to isolate themselves from family and friends?

What is the true nature of the Christmas spirit?

Why do some stories continue to be popular and appreciated long after they were first created?

Choose any of the above essential questions to focus on as you are watching the play. After the performance, complete any two of the following activities:

- a. Write a brief composition discussing what the play has to say about one or more of the essential questions.
- b. Create a poem (or series of poems) in which you share your thoughts and feelings on the treatment of any of the essential questions.
- c. Create a promotional poster advertising a performance of *A Christmas Carol*. The poster should draw people's attention to the fact that the play deals with one or more of the important essential questions listed above.
- d. Write a letter to Dickens, or to the director of the play, and share your thoughts and feelings about how the essential questions of the play are dealt with in the performance.
- e. Write at least three other essential questions that you think the play deals with.

III. AFTER THE CURTAIN FALLS – POST-PERFORMANCE ACTIVITIES

REFLECT ON PRE-PERFORMANCE ACTIVITIES

What pre-performance information and activities best prepared you for the play?

What else could you have done or wished you had done to have better prepared you for your viewing of *A Christmas Carol*?

CAST A FEATURE FILM “REMAKE” OF THE PLAY

Assume that the play is to be remade once again into a feature film.

What famous actors would you choose to play the major roles?

What well known actors would you choose to play the roles of the minor characters?

To justify your casting choices, you should refer to other similar roles handled by each of the actors.

Which, if any, of the actors used in the Theatre Calgary production would you cast in your movie? Why?

COMPARE THE ORIGINAL STORY TO THE PLAY

If you read the original story before attending the performance, consider the differences between the two versions.

To what extent was the play faithful to the original story in spirit, purpose and content?

CREATE AN ACT THREE, SCENE ONE FOR THE PLAY

What do you think happens next?

Assume that a year has passed and it is Christmas again. Create a scene in which you dramatize what you think has happened in the lives of Scrooge, his nephew Fred and to the Cratchits.

You may begin by considering any of the following questions:

Does Scrooge honour Christmas in his heart and has he kept it all the year?

Does Tiny Tim get better?

What relationship does Scrooge develop with the Cratchits and with his nephew Fred and his wife?

WRITE A REVIEW

Write a review of the performance of *A Christmas Carol* that you have just seen. Read several newspaper or magazine reviews to get a better idea of the style and structure of typical drama reviews.

A good central source for reviews can be found at:

<http://www.curtainup.com/goingall.html>

Make sure that you do not follow any one review too closely. Your review should reflect your personal take and evaluation of the performance.

WRITE A LETTER TO THE DIRECTOR

Write a letter to the director commenting on what you enjoyed, or did not enjoy about the production.

Focus on how elements such as sets, lighting, sound, music, costuming and acting contributed to your enjoyment of the production.

REFLECTIVE WRITING ON THE LIVE THEATRE EXPERIENCE

Consider the reasons why so many people prefer attending a live sporting event, such as a football or a hockey game over watching the same event on TV.

Now consider the ways in which attending a live theatre performance could be preferable to watching a feature film on the big screen or a DVD or video at home.

What did you enjoy most about being part of the audience attending Theatre Calgary and seeing *A Christmas Carol*?

Based on this experience, are you looking forward to attending another play in the near future? Explain.

CREATE A COLLAGE ABOUT THE MEANING OF CHRISTMAS

Theatre Calgary's performance of *A Christmas Carol* emphasizes that the Christmas season means many things to different people.

Using a standard sized 8.5" x 11" piece of blank paper, create a collage of graphics and words in which you present one of the following:

- the ideal - what many people think the Christmas season should be
- the reality - what many people think the Christmas season has turned into
- a contrast between the ideal and the reality

If you do not celebrate Christmas, you can still deal with any of the above choices as an observer of how the holiday is thought of by people in your immediate society.

Your collage should have as its title a brief one-sentence statement of the main idea you are projecting in your work.

Examples of titles:

- Christmas brings families closer together
- The giving of Christmas presents has gotten totally out of control
- Christmas is the best time of the year because ...

On the back side of your collage, include a series of sentences which explain why you chose the illustrations and words that you did.

CREATE A KEEPSAKE SCRAPBOOK

As a permanent keepsake and record of your experience at the Theatre Calgary performance of *A Christmas Carol*, create a scrapbook/journal which includes artifacts, assignments, and reflections.

Items could include theatre reviews from local newspapers, your ticket stub and program.

You should also include all the assignments and activities that you completed in preparation for your visit to Theatre Calgary as well as the “After the Curtain Falls” activities.

Here are some other ideas that you may wish to consider including with your scrapbook:

- journal entry about the actors and how they brought their characters to life
- a published review of the play
- photographs taken before and after the performance (Remember that you are not allowed to take pictures during the performance.)
- drawings or sketches of the set
- questions you would like to ask the actors or director
- journal entry dealing with your thoughts and impressions of being a part of a live theatre audience
- graphics found on the internet relating to *A Christmas Carol* and its author, Charles Dickens, and adaptor, Dennis Garnhum. Be sure to credit sources.
- colourful cover and a detailed table of contents
- anything else that you think will make your scrapbook/journal worth going back to several years from now

Once your scrapbook/journal is complete, you may choose to share it with the staff at Theatre Calgary.

To do so, you should contact Ryan Bump and he will ensure that it gets shown to the right people.

Ryan Bump can be reached at 294-7440 ext.1391 or by email at:

rbump@theatrecalgary.com

VOCABULARY QUIZ ANSWER KEY

| Column A | Column B |
|-----------------|---|
| 1. dismal | m. causing gloom or unhappiness |
| 2. morose | p. glum; sad |
| 3. veneration | t. great honour or respect |
| 4. resolute | l. determined |
| 5. liberality | v. charitableness |
| 6. destitute | j. extremely poor |
| 7. condolences | aa. expressions of sympathy |
| 8. tidings | k. news |
| 9. verily | y. truly |
| 10. apparitions | h. spirits or ghosts |
| 11. fettered | i. chained; tied down |
| 12. forged | b. formed or brought into being through effort |
| 13. girded | s. reinforced |
| 14. incessant | f. constant; never ending |
| 15. penance | q. punishment or suffering for wrongs done |
| 16. conducive | c. ideal for bring about a certain effect |
| 17. reclamation | w. saving one from error; recovery |
| 18. sordid | u. immoral; dirty or rundown |
| 19. reproach | n. criticism |
| 20. engross | dd. capture the whole attention of |
| 21. dowerless | a. a bride with no money to bring into the marriage |
| 22. aught | cc. archaic term for the word "anything" |
| 23. odious | e. totally unpleasant or detestable |
| 24. gainsay | z. declare to be wrong or untrue |
| 25. bide | g. wait patiently |
| 26. refuge | bb. hiding place; place of safety |
| 27. waning | o. decrease in size or strength |
| 28. intercedes | r. acts on behalf of another |
| 29. vigil | d. the purposeful act of staying awake at night |
| 30. munificence | x. extreme generosity |