



NOVEMBER 29 - DECEMBER 29, 2024

This production is made possible
by the generous support of



Generously supported by:



Stronger
Communities
Together™

TABLE OF CONTENTS

- 2** **HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE**
- 3** **ABOUT THE PLAY**
Summary
Character Breakdown
Historical + Social Context
- 7** **WHAT TO EXPECT AT THE THEATRE**
- 9** **CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES**
If you have 15 minutes...*Christmas Carol Tableaux*
If you have 30 minutes...*Ghost of Your Past*
If you have an hour...*Poverty Awareness Zines*
- 12** **QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION + DISCUSSION**

SPONSOR

Thanks to our Student Learning sponsor: **canada**  **life**™

HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

Welcome educators!

Theatre Calgary's 2024-2025 Play Guides are intended to support your students' experience at Theatre Calgary this season. We encourage you to use some or all of these materials to provide context for your students before, during, and after their visit to Theatre Calgary. While not mandatory for students to enjoy the production, opportunities to connect art to personal life can deepen understanding and appreciation.

With that in mind, each guide provides you and your students with a range of contextual material. You will find background information on the play and playwright; social, linguistic, and historical context; expectations for the theatre; activities for you to lead in the classroom; and reflection questions to guide discussions. You'll find activities that connect to current events, are interdisciplinary, can be tied into your curriculum, and can be facilitated for various lengths of time.

Pages marked with a ★ can be photocopied and distributed to students.

We hope that you and your students enjoy your experience at Theatre Calgary this year!

ABOUT THE PLAY

SUMMARY.

This adaptation of Charles Dickens's *A Christmas Carol* begins with a musician and a magic lantern that projects an animated scene. The audience is taken through the bustling streets of 1843 London on Christmas Eve, until they reach the offices of Scrooge & Marley.

Scrooge is working late in his office with his clerk, Bob Cratchit, when two charity workers arrive seeking a donation to help the poor and less fortunate. Scrooge refuses, though he reluctantly agrees to let Cratchit spend Christmas Day with his family, as long as he comes in early the next day. But he refuses an invitation to celebrate the season with his nephew, Fred.

Later that night, the ghost of Jacob Marley, his deceased business partner, appears to Scrooge at his home. He informs him that he will be visited by three spirits who will help him to avoid the terrible fate that Marley is suffering—wandering the earth bound by the “chains he forged in life.”

The Spirit of Christmas Past is the first to appear. They take Scrooge to see the places and people of his past. Scrooge is reminded of the deep affection he once felt for his sister, Fred's late mother. He visits his first employer, Mr. Fezziwig, and remembers the joy and happiness that the Fezziwigs spread at Christmas time. He also sees his former fiancé, Belle, who broke up with him because of his single-minded pursuit of wealth.

The Spirit of Christmas Present visits Scrooge next and takes him to see the celebrations happening around town. They visit the Cratchit home, where Scrooge first learns that Bob's son, Tiny Tim, is very ill. When they visit Scrooge's nephew, Fred, and his wife, Emily, they are gathered with their friends for Christmas Eve dinner playing a game where they're making fun of Ebenezer.

STORY WHOOSH

is an interactive storytelling technique that enables any kind of plot to come alive, even without participants having prior knowledge.

- The teacher facilitates the shared storytelling by bringing individuals and groups in and out of the action.
- As soon as characters, objects, places, or events in the story (i.e., servants, bad thoughts, ships, etc.) are mentioned, the first students step into the circle and make a shape or pose that represents what has been narrated.
- At any time the teacher can say “Whoosh!” and students quickly return to their ‘places’ in a circle.
- Continue the story around the group, so that different students get to play various characters and everyone gets a chance to try several roles, regardless of gender.

The Spirit of Christmas Yet to Come shows Scrooge three businessmen ruthlessly discussing the recent death of an unnamed associate. He is shown his belongings being sold off after his death. Afterwards, he is then taken to the Cratchits' home, where the family is mourning Tiny Tim's death. The spirit takes Scrooge to a graveyard and points to a tombstone that turns out to bear his own name. He begs for the spirit's pity and promises to keep the spirit of Christmas in his heart year-round.

Scrooge wakes up in his bedroom on Christmas Day a changed man—full of joy. He heads outside, happily greeting everyone he meets. He encounters the same two charity workers who had visited his office the night before and apologizes for his negative attitude with a donation to their cause.

He visits Fred's family and friends who have gathered for Christmas Day and asks for forgiveness. His next stop is the Cratchit home to give Bob a raise and a turkey for their feast. Fred brings his family and friends to the Cratchit home to celebrate, and the community gathers around.

The musician reappears and recounts Scrooge's change of heart. The play finishes with the famous line, "God bless us, every one!" exclaimed by Tiny Tim.

DID YOU KNOW?

During the COVID-19 pandemic, when live production was limited, Theatre Calgary commissioned *A Christmas Carol* playwright, Geoffrey Simon Brown, to revise his adaptation for a cast of just three actors who played 28 parts.

2018 | Commissioned by Theatre Calgary

2019 | World Premiere of the full 20+ actor adaptation at Theatre Calgary, directed by Stafford Arima

2020 | Condensed, 3-actor adaptation filmed and released online by Theatre Calgary, directed by Stafford Arima

2021 | Live stage premiere of the condensed 3-actor adaptation at Theatre Calgary, directed by Stafford Arima

2023 | Remount of the full 20+ actor adaptation at Theatre Calgary, directed by Stafford Arima



Haysam Kadri & Jamie Tognazzini at Theatre Calgary (2021)
Set, Projection, & Lights by Scott Reid • Costumes by Deitra Kalyn • Direction by Stafford Arima • Photo by Trudie Lee

CHARACTER BREAKDOWN.



SCROOGE

EBENEZER SCROOGE
a miser

BOY SCROOGE
a student

YOUNG SCROOGE
an apprentice

THE CRATCHITS

BOB CRATCHIT
Scrooge's clerk

ALICE CRATCHIT
Bob's wife

**MARTHA, PETER,
BELINDA, MARGRET,
BEN, & TINY TIM**
Cratchit children

FRED'S FAMILY

FRED
Scrooge's nephew

EMILY
Fred's wife

**PENNY, ROSE,
& TOPPER**
Fred & Emily's friends

TOWNSPEOPLE

ETHEL & BETHEL
charity workers

THOMAS
a child who sings carols

SAM
a beggar

**ARNAULT, WALTON,
& KOCH**
bankers

OLD JOE
a merchant

MRS. CHARNOCK
a cleaning person

MRS. DILBER
a laundress

CAROLINE & SIMON
a couple indebted to Scrooge

PICKLE
a girl who buys a turkey

GHOSTS & SPIRITS

JACOB MARLEY
the ghost of Scrooge's late partner

**GHOST OF
CHRISTMAS PAST**

**GHOST OF
CHRISTMAS PRESENT**

**GHOST OF CHRISTMAS
YET TO COME**

FIDDLER
a musician who steps in and out of
the world of the play

PEOPLE FROM SCROOGE'S PAST

FAN
Scrooge's sister

MR. CREAKLE
Scrooge's school teacher

**MOLLY, TOMMY,
STEERFORTH, JANE,
GEORGE, & SALLY**
Scrooge's classmates

MR. FEZZIWIG
Scrooge's first employer

GERTIE FEZZIWIG
Mr. Fezziwig's wife

DICK WILKINS
Scrooge's colleague & friend

BELLE
Scrooge's fiancé & Dick's wife

JILL
Dick & Belle's daughter



HISTORICAL + SOCIAL CONTEXT.



5 THINGS TO KNOW ABOUT CHARLES DICKENS

- 1 Charles Dickens's father, John, was imprisoned for outstanding debts.
- 2 At 15, Charles left school and educated himself while working at a law firm.
- 3 Dickens was an advocate for social good—specifically against child labour and poverty.
- 4 He and his first wife, Catherine, had 10 children together before separating after 22 years of marriage.
- 5 Dickens “practiced what he preached,” donating financially to causes like the abolition of slavery in the U.S. and the *ragged school movement*, which educated young people living in poverty.

READ YOUR WAY THROUGH THE HOLIDAYS



DISABILITY REPRESENTATION IN *A CHRISTMAS CAROL*

The character of Tiny Tim is a symbol of hope in the story of *A Christmas Carol*, used to show that people, and society, can change for the better. It is essential for modern theatre-goers to be mindful that this symbolism doesn't veer into the cliché of the “sweet innocent” with a “heart of gold.”¹

Whether the character of Tim, written in the Victorian era when the understanding and language surrounding disabilities was extremely limited, had a condition caused by malnourishment (like rickets) or was born with a disability, current stagings of *A Christmas Carol* aim to be thoughtful to avoid representing the Cratchit family as its own cliché—the caregivers who sacrifice their personal needs in order to care for their disabled child, lacking in any other character depth.

In reality, those with disabilities occupy a range of life experiences that cannot be captured in a single story. We encourage you to consider the following when talking about characters with disabilities in plays, movies, or on television:

- Consider person-first language (a person with a disability, rather than a person defined by disability)—Here's a great [cheat sheet](#).
- Not all disabilities are visible. Be kind, patient, and inclusive.
- Be careful not to assume that you know what someone needs. It's okay to ask.
- Language around disability is personal and always changing.

For more information on disability representation, we encourage you to check out some of [these resources](#).

¹ “The ‘Tiny Tim Effect’: Stereotypes of Disability in Popular Stories” by Adrianna Simmons

WHAT TO EXPECT AT THE THEATRE



An open mind.

Let the performance surprise you! Stay open to what can happen. Look for moments of theatrical magic (how did they change that costume so quickly?) and unexpected dialogue.

Assigned seats.

Every seat in the theatre offers a unique perspective on the action. Appreciate what you can see from your seat that someone else might not.

Live actors.

The performers on stage can see you, hear you, and feel your energy. And actors love student audiences! Laugh when something is funny! Gasp when you're surprised! Applaud when you're impressed! The actors thrive on audience reactions.

A break from reality.

Theatre-makers ask the audience to "suspend their disbelief." If someone on stage says the red ribbon is blood, then it is! If an actor takes flight, then imagine you can't see the strings. This is what the actors ask of the audience. Embrace the magic of theatre.

Questions.

Listen carefully to the story being told. If you have a question, keep your voice to a whisper so it doesn't disturb others. (See the call out on Q + As to help you form great questions for the team behind the show.) Let yourself be challenged by the content. What new ideas or perspectives are you hearing?

Disconnection.

Put your phone away and immerse yourself in the technology of the theatre. The sounds and lights from your device are distracting to the actors, fellow audience members, and you! Plus, the law says that photos and videos aren't allowed, anyway.

PREPARING Q'S FOR A Q + A

While you watch the show, consider how the creative team (see pg. 8) brings the story to life on stage for you.

Consider questions about the process:

- How did the lighting / set / costume / sound designer...
- What made the director choose to...
- How did the playwright decide to...

Ask questions about the story:

- Why did [character] make the decision to...
- Can you explain how...
- Why didn't _____ happen?

Learn more about each job:

- Why did you decide to become a...
- What do I need to do to become a...
- What has been your favorite...



THEATRE TEAM TALKBACK

Theatre is a 'team sport,' and it's not the actors alone who bring a production to life. After your show, you'll have a chance to ask questions of the creative team. Here are some of the folks you might expect to speak with:

The Playwright writes the script, sometimes from an original idea, and sometimes adapted from a book or story—decides what the characters say and, often, gives the designers guidelines on how the play should look.

The Director creates the vision for the production, how it will look on stage, and works closely with the actors, costume, set, and lighting designers to make sure everyone tells the same story.

The Actors use their bodies and voices to bring the playwright's words and the director's ideas to life on the stage.

The Designers imagine and create the lights, scenery, props, costumes, and sound that will compliment and tell the playwright's story in a way that matches the director's vision.

The Stage Manager assists the director during rehearsals by taking detailed notes and making sure the actors and designers understand these ideas. They run the show during each performance by making sure the actors' entrances and exits and the lights and sound all run smoothly.

CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES

IF YOU HAVE 15 MINUTES...

Christmas Carol Tableaux

This activity introduces the story of A Christmas Carol and encourages students to think quickly and collaboratively. It allows them to tell a story using only their bodies, exploring abstract concepts physically like hope or cheer.

Focus Question. How do you communicate ideas, story, or theme using only your bodies?

Objective. Students will be able to collaborate to create physical representations of concrete and abstract concepts and ideas.

Procedure.

- 1 Have students walk around the space at a safe speed, trying to fill in any gaps.
- 2 Ask them to FREEZE. Call out a number, and have them get into groups of that number (i.e., 3s, 5s, etc.).
- 3 Call out an object or place that appears in *A Christmas Carol* (i.e., graveyard, street lamp, turkey, ghost, wreath, etc.) and prompt each group to create a frozen image (or tableau) of that place or thing, using every member of the group.
 - Encourage them to create their images without talking
 - Give them a countdown of 10 seconds to help
- 4 Repeat Steps 2 and 3 until students can swiftly make choices.
- 5 Start providing more challenging, involved, or abstract prompts (i.e., a wealthy family at dinner, hope, change, holiday cheer, social justice, etc.)
- 6 It's important to discuss how groups made decisions about the more abstract ideas, particularly as it relates to exploring social justice or socioeconomic status.
 - How do we communicate wordlessly without leaning on stereotypes?
 - What were the types of physical choices you made to communicate your story / prompt without being able to speak?

IF YOU HAVE 30 MINUTES...

Ghost of Your Past

Ebenezer Scrooge begins to see his life differently when he is asked to 'visit' moments in his own life and look at them from outside of himself. This exercise asks students to look at a moment from their own lives from the outside: What might they do differently if they had the chance?

Focus Question. If you could relive a moment from your past, what would it look like?

Objective. Students will be able to write and draw a story from their past that taught them a valuable lesson.

Procedure.

- 1 Direct students to reflect on a moment in their lives that has impacted them. Provide examples from your own life as a model. As this prompt will be challenging for many, give them time to journal about this moment, while you circulate to help prompt students who may be stumped. Consider the following starters to help:
 - What changed in your life when a sibling was born? When a parent remarried? When you moved to a new place?
 - How did you feel after you started a new school? Got in a huge fight with a friend? Made a mistake you got in trouble for?
 - Who has had a significant influence in your life—a family member? A teacher? A coach?
- 2 Give students the option to write a narrative, [dialogue](#), or create a [detailed storyboard](#) or graphic depiction of this moment. Provide them the following reminders to help them add detail:
 - Who were the other people present that had an impact in this moment? (*characters*)
 - Where and when were you in time? How old were you? What time of year was it? (*setting*)
 - What were the events of that day? What happened before? After? (*plot*)
 - What did you learn from this moment? How did it change you? (*theme/message*)
- 3 Encourage students to reflect on any part of that moment they would do differently and include those details in their story.
- 4 Provide space and time for sharing—first in trusted partners, then, if time, as a larger group.
- 5 Reflect: *What surprised you in responding to this prompt? Was this a moment you'd thought of recently? What would be different today if you had a chance to make that change?*

IF YOU HAVE AN HOUR...

Poverty Awareness Zines

The modern connections to A Christmas Carol's theme of poverty is indisputable, even here in Calgary. Inspired by *Enough for All*, this lesson asks students to create a zine that raises awareness around what poverty looks like in Calgary.

Focus Question. What does it mean to live in poverty in Calgary today?

Objective. Students will be able to design and illustrate a zine that shares their perspective on poverty in Calgary in order to raise awareness within their community.

Procedure.

- 1 Review this [slide deck](#) with current statistics and definitions of poverty in Calgary, Alberta, and Canada.

* Note: Sources for this content come from the City of Calgary, Statistics Canada, and Enough for All

- 2 Give students time to reflect on this.
 - **JOT:** What do you feel when you hear this information? Is this new to you?
 - **TURN TO A PARTNER:** What role can you play in making a change?
 - **SHARE:** What would you want other people in your community to know about poverty in Calgary?

- 3 Introduce the concept of a zine as a social justice tool for sharing information on a specific topic in a personal way.

- 4 Guide students through the process of folding the page to make their zine (directions on [Slide 11](#)). For more details on the Enough for All Zine Project, [visit this site](#).

- 5 While students work on their zine, consider playing the [Let's Talk Poverty podcast](#) from Enough for All with Indigenous Elder Wanda First Rider.

- 6 Allow time at the end for students to share their zines at their tables or with a partner.



EXTENSION: Set up a gallery walk where students can view and respond to one another's zines using sticky notes.

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION + DISCUSSION

A theatrical experience is not complete without reflection. What is the audience talking about when they leave the theatre? Here are some questions to pose to your students following their experience with *A Christmas Carol* at Theatre Calgary.

- 1 Can you pinpoint the moment where Scrooge began to change? What do you think had the greatest impact on him?
- 2 Have you ever encountered a “Scrooge?” What did you say to them? What do you wish you had said?
- 3 What are essential holiday traditions in your community? (Not just in winter but any time!) What makes them feel special?
- 4 If you had money to donate to a cause, what would it be? Why would you pick that cause?
- 5 Why do you think *A Christmas Carol* is performed by theatre companies around North America year after year?

THEATRE CALGARY PLAY GUIDES DEVELOPED BY

Aliza Sarian

www.alizasarian.com