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CENTER



# SEASON FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

EDUCATOR RESOURCES





# From our season sponsor



For 135 years Regions has been proud to be a part of the Middle Tennessee community, growing and thriving as has our region. From the opening of our doors on September 1, 1883, we have committed to this community and our customers.

One area that we are especially dedicated to is the education of our students. We are proud to sponsor TPAC's Humanities Outreach in Tennessee (HOT). What an important program this is - reaching over 30,000 students, many of whom would never get to see a performing arts production without this local resource. Regions continues to reinforce its commitment to the communities it serves, and in addition to supporting programs such as HOT, we have close to 200 associates teaching financial literacy in classrooms this year.

**Thank you, teachers,**

for giving your students this wonderful experience. You are creating memories of a lifetime, and Regions is proud to be able to help make this opportunity possible.





# Dear Teachers,

We are delighted to work once again with Mark Cabus and his one-man performance of Charles Dickens' *A Christmas Carol*.

Mark has adapted the novella into a script that tells the story in a little over one hour during which he plays 18 different characters. It is a truly enchanting experience to hear Dickens' words aloud and to see the book come to life right before your eyes.

This guide contains information on solo performance, a story synopsis, lesson plans, and information about Charles Dickens. We hope this will complement your unit of study.

Thank you for participating in our Season for Young People and *A Christmas Carol*.

## TPAC Education

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*Compiled, written, and edited by  
Kristin Dare-Horsley and Mark  
Cabus.*

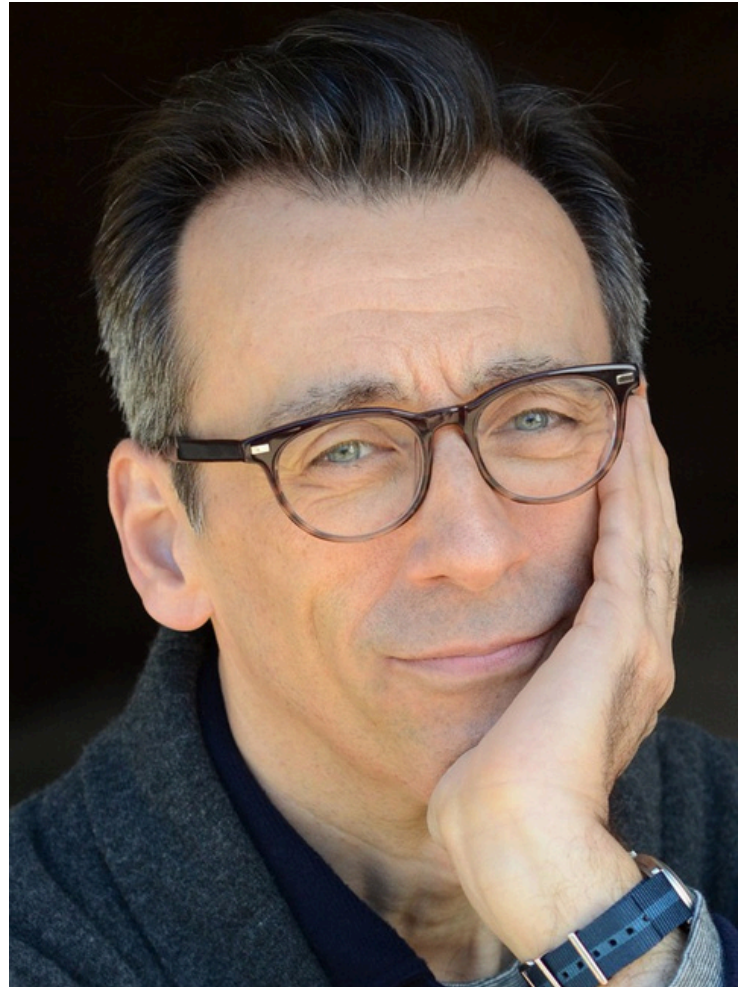


# Performer and Adaptor Mark Cabus

A show business professional for nearly 50 years, **Mark Cabus** is a skilled actor, director, and writer classically trained in England, New York, and Washington DC. While having performed all over the world, he is recognized in the Southeast for his work with the Alliance Theatre, Georgia Shakespeare, Theatrical Outfit, Actors Express, Horizon Theatre, the Clarence Brown Company, Nashville Rep, the Nashville Shakespeare Festival, and his own company, Naked Stages. Twice, *The Tennessean* and *Nashville Scene* honored Mark as the city's Best Actor and Best Director. His film and television credits range from the Oscar-nominated *Selma*, John Grisham's *The Client*, Nicholas Sparks' *The Longest Ride*, HBO's third season of *True Detective* to recurring roles on the Fox series *The Resident* and AMC's *TURN: Washington's Spies*.

An educator of merit, Mark serves on the faculties of both Vanderbilt and Belmont universities but has taught under the auspices of Emory University, the Brooklyn Arts Council, the Digital Arts and Cinema Technology School of Cobble Hill, the Georgia Shakespeare Summer Conservatory, the Tennessee Governor's School for the Arts, and the Nashville Film Institute. He served as a guest lecturer and teaching artist at the University of the South, the Alliance Theatre, and with the Tennessee Performing Arts Center's education program. As a Director of Education, he spearheaded programs at Atlanta's Theatrical Outfit and Nashville's Green Room Projects. He is recognized as both a Tennessee Arts Commission/Ingram Industries Individual Artist and a Tennessee Williams Fellow.

In its twenty-one years, over thirty thousand people throughout the Southeast have thrilled to his critically and publicly celebrated original solo performance of *Charles Dickens' A Christmas Carol*—a longtime holiday favorite.





# Huddled 'Round a Fire

## by Mark Cabus

Green Room Projects' *A Christmas Carol* is steeped in the great history of ancient oral traditions.

***Since language was invented, people have used storytelling as a way to convey the ideas and exploits of their communities.***

In earliest Africa, it was the griot whose job was to keep the stories and songs for the tribe. In Ireland, the task fell to the village Seanachie. In either case, these story tellers gathered their people around the harvest fires to sing and entertain them with tales of their ancestors and deeds long past.

Homer, the Greek teller of *The Odyssey*, was of this same tradition, as was the English minstrel and the French troubadour, the musical storytellers of medieval history. The lecture circuits, medicine shows and Chautauqua tent revivals of the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries are all apart of this practice of storytelling. Funny though it may seem, today, artists of the "Prairie Home Companion" share the same folklore with rappers like Jay Z and Ludacris. Live storytelling has along and colorful history.

First published in 1843, *A Christmas Carol* is perhaps Charles Dickens' best-loved work. It explores a theme common in the tradition of storytelling: that a man's thoughts and deeds may haunt his present and shape his future.



Charles Dickens himself used to perform staged readings to sold-out crowds throughout Europe and America. Sitting in a large wing-backed chair in front of a large screen, the author read from his text while utilizing "magic lanterns," a Victorian state-of-the-art projector of scenic images.

As the actor, adaptor and director of this version of *A Christmas Carol*, I assume the daunting task of doing Mr. Dickens' one better by performing all the characters of the story as well as the role of narrator. This type of storytelling, featuring one actor in multiple roles, is best described in modern terms as a "one-person show" or *solo performance*. This particular actor employs nothing but a table and three chairs to transform the stage into Scrooge's office, the Cratchits' parlor, and a

# Huddled 'Round a Fire

## (continued)

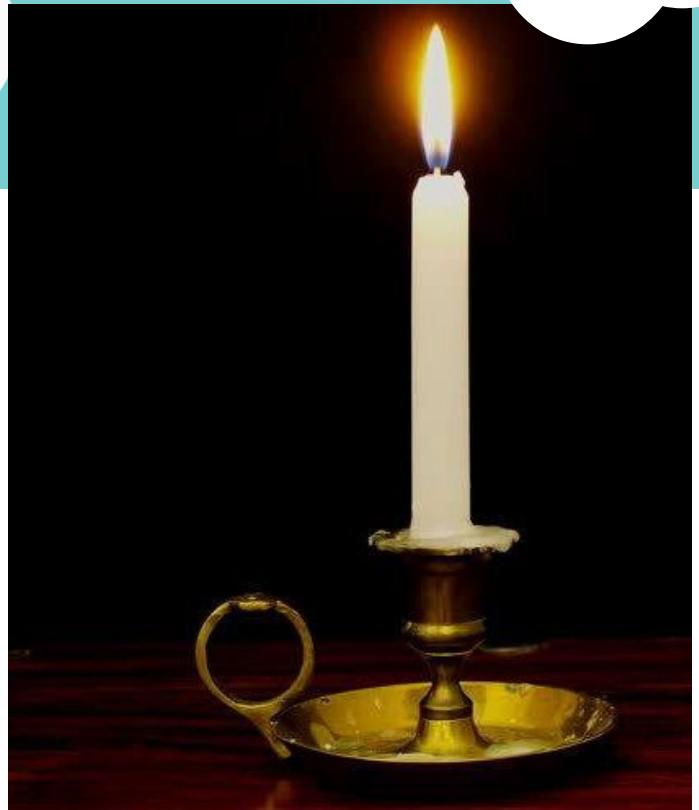
neglected cemetery overgrown with weeds. The roots of solo performance dig deep into the soil of traditional storytelling. Whether it's facing the cave fires of primitive shamans or the footlights of vaudeville comedians and cabaret soloists, storytelling tests both performer and audience alike. It necessitates the coming together of illusion and reality. The audience must willingly suspend its disbelief and join the storyteller on his journey, sometimes even actively participating in it.

Oral history depends upon great attention to text exclusively. With the exception of traditional carols, what you hear are the words Charles Dickens scratched out over a hundred years ago, plucked from the page and spoken aloud with all its eccentricity and wit.

***More than any other form of live performance, a one-person show expects and demands much from its audience.***

They are watched as they watch. They are spoken to directly. Their energy echoes the energy of the lone actor. A single performer can generate great power and vulnerability for both him and his audience.

In *The Nature of the Monologue*, written in 1917, the anonymous author writes, "The monologue means 'to speak alone' – and that is often how a monologist feels. If in facing a thousand solemn faces he is not a success, no one in all the world



is more alone than he." It is imperative that the audience works with the actor in order for the show to be a success.

All solo performers – whether they are ancient orator or modern actor – are storytellers. And if we assume that the very first performances in human history consisted of an individual telling stories to a group of people huddled 'round a fire, then this form is the most basic and vital.

In that spirit, Green Room Projects' production of *A Christmas Carol* stays true to the soul of storytelling by striking a match to light a candle. As the tale of Scrooge and his Christmas adventures unfold, you are encouraged to engage your imaginations with me and crowd around that flame to experience an age-old tradition made new and fresh. Much the same as our ancestors might have done thousands of years ago.



# Lesson One:

## Who is the Storyteller?

As Charles Dickens' novella became wildly popular, he toured throughout Britain and abroad for years performing readings - often being met by paparazzi and fans like a modern-day rock star. Dickens would change his vocal expression and tone for the various characters but probably told the story in the point of view of himself as the narrator. In Mark Cabus' version, he chooses to tell the story from the point of view of a character, not as Charles Dickens the author. Mark embodies 18 different characters during his one-hour performance of *A Christmas Carol*, and his narrator is a character whose identity is revealed at the end of the play.

This activity will be fun for your students as they will get to experience a little of what it is like to perform as a storyteller, all while improving reading fluency.

### Objectives:

- The students will consider ways to tell a story physically, vocally, and emotionally.
- The student will design a dramatic reading of the scene to perform.

**Materials needed:** Copy of script page (found on the next page in this guidebook); Copies of *A Christmas Carol* by Charles Dickens - It is recommended that students read at least Stave One before this doing this activity, so they are familiar with Dickens' writing style.

### Instructional Procedures:

- 1) Discuss with students that Mark Cabus' *A Christmas Carol* is a one-man show during which he will perform as 18 different characters, including the narrator or voice of the story. The script he uses is adapted directly from the novella, *A Christmas Carol* by Charles Dickens.
- 2) Ask your students how they think Mark will perform so many different characters without confusing the audience. How would they do it if they were to perform the text alone?



# Lesson One:

## Who is the Storyteller?

(continued)

- 3) Give students a copy of the script excerpt on the following page. Ask your students to read his/her page silently three times. They should look up words they don't know, or ask you what the words mean in context to their portion of the story.
- 4) Ask students to read their excerpts aloud three times, while remaining seated at their desks. Students will practice at the same time, so the noise level will go up. This practice will help them gain confidence and help them get used to hearing their own voices aloud.
- 5) Now, ask students to consider themselves the storytellers/actors and to become the character of the narrator. Who will their narrator character be? Will they be themselves? Will they choose to tell the story from the point of view of one of the characters in the story? Will they be someone else entirely?
- 6) Ask them to choose body positions, tone of voice, facial expressions, gestures, etc. for their narrator character. They will present their story to the class as a dramatic reading.
- 7) Allow time for students to practice performing their readings. Students should stand up, use appropriate voice changes, actions, and gestures for their excerpts.
- 8) Finally, students should take turns performing for the class. Allow a little time for applause (and encourage good audience etiquette).
- 9) After all have finished, discuss as a class how it felt for them to act as the narrator and perform dramatic readings. What influenced their decisions for who their narrator character was? Could the students easily differentiate between their classmates' characterizations?

**Assessment:** Look for student comprehension and proper pronunciation of the text while performing, and respectful behavior when listening.

**After the performance:** Ask students to recall their performances of the script. Discuss the similarities and differences between their personal choices and Mark's performance. Who was the narrator in Mark's version?





# Script Excerpt

# A Christmas Carol

Adapted by Mark Cabus

## ACTOR

*The actor strikes a match, lighting a candle. Slowly, he lifts the candle to his face, looks at the audience, and begins. —*

Marley was dead, to begin with.  
There is no doubt about that.  
The register of his burial was signed by the undertaker.  
Scrooge signed it. Old Marley was a dead as a doornail.

*The actor moves toward the audience. Setting down the candle, he sits on the edge of the table.*

Scrooge and he were partners for I don't know how many years. Scrooge was his sole executor, his sole friend, his sole mourner.  
And even Scrooge was not so dreadfully cut up by the sad event. He was an excellent man of business on the very day of the funeral.

*He stands and crosses stage left, reading the sign for the audience.*

Scrooge never painted out Old Marley's name.  
There it stood, years afterwards, above the warehouse door: Scrooge and Marley.  
And Scrooge answered to both names.  
It was all the same to him.

*He crosses down to the audience and takes them in his gaze, one at a time.*

Oh! But he was a tight-fisted hand at the grindstone, Scrooge. A squeezing, wrenching, grasping, scraping, clutching, covetous old sinner! Hard and sharp as flint; secret and solitary as an oyster.  
The cold within him froze his old features, stiffened his gait and spoke out shrewdly in his grating voice.  
Nobody ever stopped him in the street. No beggars implored, no children asked him what it was o'clock, no man or woman inquired the way to such and such a place of Scrooge.  
But what did Scrooge care?  
It was the very thing he liked.

# Lesson Two:

## Scrooge's Journal

In this activity, students will write a 1st person journal entry for each of Scrooge's ghostly experiences.

### Objectives

- The student will examine the text from a different point of view.
- The student will consider the story from a personal point of view, imagining how Scrooge felt, or why he made certain choices.
- The student will write and revise journal entries as the character Ebenezer Scrooge.

**Materials needed:** Notebook or paper, pen/pencils, copies of *A Christmas Carol* by Charles Dickens.

### Instructional Procedures:

- 1) Tell the students that for the following activity they will write in a journal as if they were Scrooge. *A Christmas Carol* is written mainly in the third person (he said, Scrooge saw), but the activity will be written in the first person (I felt, I saw).
- 2) Review each ghost's visit, starting with Marley. Writing as Scrooge, the students will write a journal entry after each encounter with a ghost.
- 3) Writing prompts for students for each entry:
  - How did you feel when you first saw the ghost?
  - Why did you go with the ghost?
  - What was it like to travel with the ghost?
  - Why is the ghost helping you?
  - What did the ghost teach you?
  - How do you feel now that the visit is over?
- 4) Students should review their entries, revise, and neatly re-write them to be turned in.

**Closure:** Ask students if they have more sympathy for Scrooge after stepping into his shoes.

**Additional Activity:** Ask students to write a sequel to the story from the point of view of Ebenezer Scrooge, describing how he lives out his everyday life and how he celebrates Christmas years after his experiences with the spirits. The sequels may be written in paragraph form or as a skit including multiple characters. How does he interact with his nephew after 10 years? Does he marry? How does he continue to support the Cratchit family?





# Lesson Three: The London Times

## Objectives:

- The student will define vocabulary words found in A Christmas Carol.
- The student will answer interview questions from the point of view of Ebenezer Scrooge.
- The student will utilize one “Dickensian” vocabulary word per answer to the interview questions.

## CHARLES DICKENS ON HIS CHRISTMAS BOOKS.

In a letter to Professor Felton, dated January 2, 1844, Charles Dickens writes of the “Christmas Carol”:—  
“Over which ‘Christmas Carol’ Charles Dickens wept and laughed and wept again, and excited himself in a most extraordinary manner in the composition, and thinking whereof he walked about the black streets of London fifteen and twenty miles many a night when all the sober folks had gone to bed. Its success is most prodigious, and by every post all manner of letters to him about their homes and hearths, and how this same Carol is read aloud there, and kept on a little shelf by itself. Indeed, it is the greatest success, as I am told, that this ruffian and rascal has ever achieved.”

This newspaper clipping is pasted into the back of an 1845 edition of “A Christmas Carol in Prose: Being a Ghost Story of Christmas,” in the collection of Oxford University.

<http://papercuts.blogs.nytimes.com/2008/12/25/christmas-lit/>

**Materials needed:** Copies of The London Times worksheet (on the following page), notebook or paper, a dictionary, pen/pencils.

## Instructional Procedures:

- 1) Review Scrooge’s experiences with the three ghosts and his great transformation. Ask students to imagine they were Ebenezer Scrooge. How would it feel to be given a second chance at life? Pass out The London Times worksheets. Ask students to copy the vocabulary words from the worksheet on a separate piece of paper; look up each word in the dictionary; and write a definition beside the word.
- 2) Tell the class they will take on the character of Ebenezer Scrooge to answer questions for the London Times newspaper. Each answer must be at least one sentence in length and must contain at least one vocabulary word from the list. Ask students to answer the interview questions as though they were Ebenezer Scrooge AFTER he has been given a second chance, after the big transformation. (Note: Students should put their own names on the line next to “Edited by” at the bottom right of the worksheet.)

**Closure:** Allow time for students to share their work with one another. You may choose to allow students to perform “live interviews” in class with one student acting as the reporter/interviewer, and one acting as Ebenezer Scrooge. Ask students to turn in their interviews at the end of the class period.

**Assessment:** Proper usage of the vocabulary words, grammar, spelling, and sentence structure.

# The Times

## OUR EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW WITH EBENEZER SCROOGE!

Edited by \_\_\_\_\_

*Mr. Scrooge, you were once known as “a squeezing, wrenching, grasping, scraping, clutching, and covetous old sinner!” How would you describe yourself now?*

*What would you say caused you to change?*

*What was most important to you in the past?*

*What is important to you now?*

*Since you have changed, which good deed are you proudest of and why?*

*How has becoming a philanthropist (or do-gooder) affected the way you feel about others? How has it changed you?*

*What advice would you give others, based on your own experience?*

*How would you like to be remembered? In fact, how would you like your epitaph to read?*

Use at least one word from the following vocabulary words in each answer.

executor   implore   rapture   solitary   recumbent   transition   aspiration   corroborate  
consolation   glee   demeanor   shabby   swarthy   ubiquitous   dismal   faltered  
beseech   repent   strive   recompense   jovial   endeavor  
giddy   amends   hearty



# Synopsis

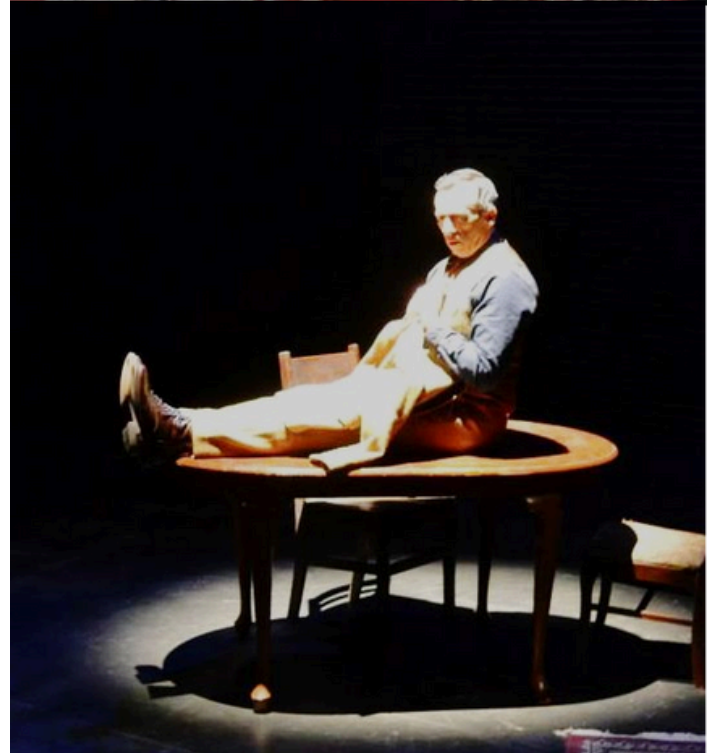
## A Christmas Carol

by Charles Dickens

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 visitation 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 with a brightly glowing head. 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.



# Synopsis

## A Christmas Carol

(continued)

The Ghost of Christmas Present, a majestic giant clad in a green fur robe, 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.

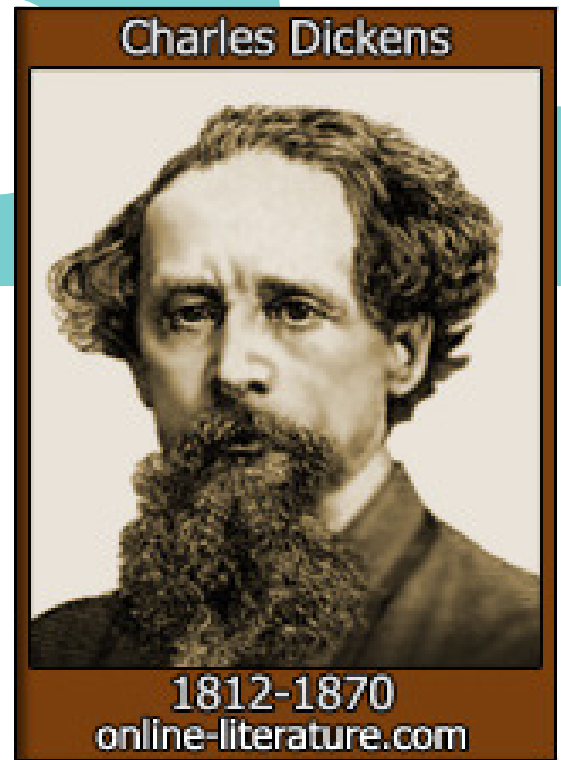
As the years go by, he holds true to his promise and honors Christmas with all his heart: he treats Tiny Tim as if he were his own child, provides lavish gifts for the poor, and treats his fellow human beings with kindness, generosity, and warmth.



From Sparknotes, written by Brian Phillips. <http://www.sparknotes.com/lit/christmascarol/>

# About Charles Dickens

**Charles Dickens** was born on February 7, 1812, and spent the first nine years of his life living in the coastal regions of Kent, a county in southeast England. Dickens' father, John, was a kind and likable man, but he was financially irresponsible, piling up tremendous debts throughout his life. When Dickens was nine, his family moved to London. At twelve, his father was arrested and sent to debtors' prison. Dickens' mother moved seven of their children into prison with their father but arranged for Charles to live alone outside the prison, working with other child laborers at a hellish job pasting labels on bottles in a blacking warehouse.



The three months Charles spent apart from his family were severely traumatic. He viewed his job as a miserable trap—he considered himself too good for it, stirring the contempt of his worker-companions. After his father was released from prison, Dickens returned to school, eventually becoming a law clerk. He went on to serve as a court reporter before taking his place as one of the most popular English novelists of his time. At age 25, Dickens completed his first novel, *The Pickwick Papers*, which met with great success. This started his career as an English literary celebrity, during which he produced such masterpieces as *Great Expectations*, *David Copperfield*, and *A Tale of Two Cities*.

Dickens' beloved novella *A Christmas Carol* was written in 1843, with the intention of drawing readers' attention to the plight of England's poor. (Social criticism, a recurring theme in Dickens' work, resounds most strongly in his novel *Hard Times*.) In the tale, Dickens stealthily combines a somewhat indirect description of hardships faced by the poor with a heart-rending, sentimental celebration of the Christmas season. The calloused character of the apathetic penny-pinching Ebenezer Scrooge, who opens his heart after being confronted by three spirits, remains one of Dickens' most widely recognized and popular creations.

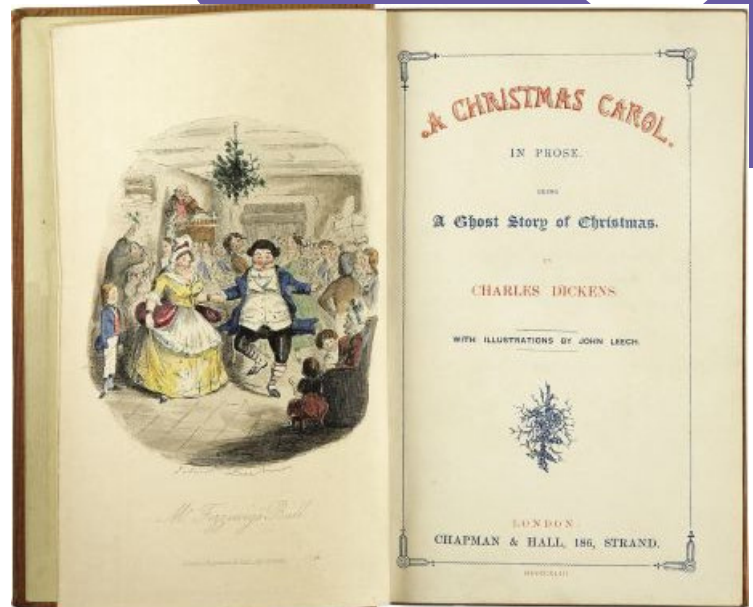
*A Christmas Carol* takes the form of a relatively simplistic allegory—it is seldom considered one of Dickens' important literary contributions. The novella's emotional depth, brilliant narration, and endearing characters, however, offer plenty of rewards for literature students, Dickensian fans, and Grinches alike. Like *A Tale of Two Cities*, *A Christmas Carol* has won much appreciation among general readers despite being dismissed by scholarly critics of Dickens' work.

From SparkNotes, written by Brian Phillips. <http://www.sparknotes.com/lit/christmascarol/>.

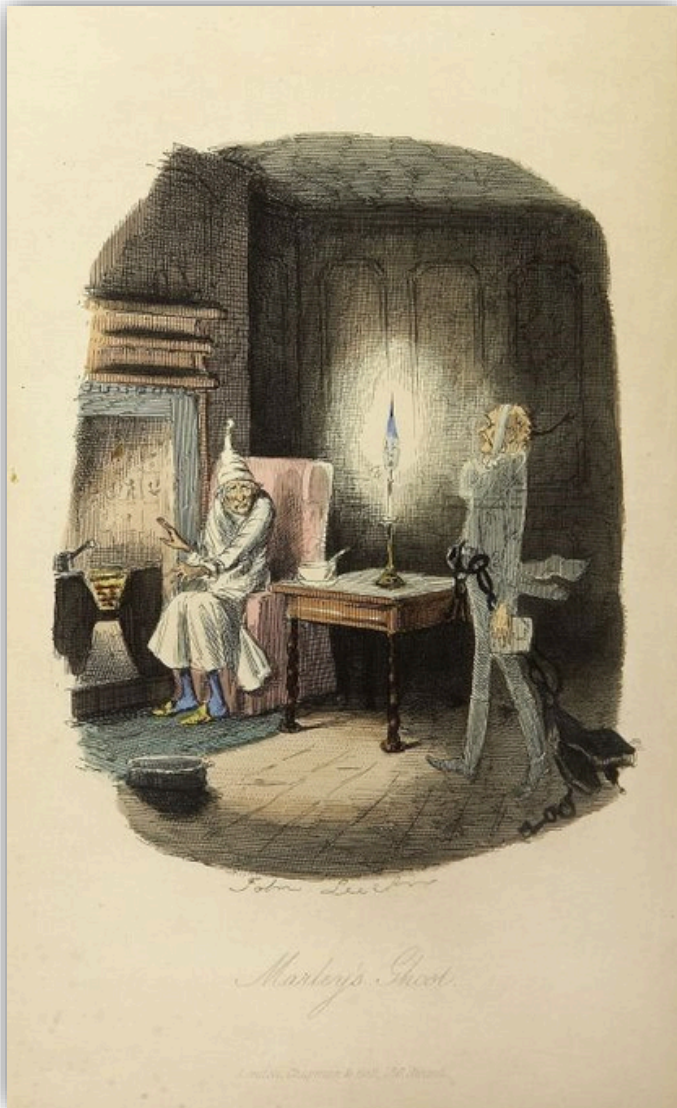
Picture from: <http://www.online-literature.com/authorpics/dickens.jpg>



# Illustrations



John Leech illustrated the first edition of Dickens' novella.



An illustration by John Leech from the first edition of Dickens' *A Christmas Carol*.





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