

A Christmas Carol

By Charles Dickens

Music by Jule Styne

Lyrics by Bob Merrill



Classroom Study Guide

Student Pages



One Special Night

The timeless Dickens' classic *A Christmas Carol* begins as we meet Ebenezer Scrooge, a man of great wealth, but with little love for life. Scrooge's assistant, Bob Cratchit, tries to share the spirit of Christmas with his family and pleads with Scrooge for the holiday off. Scrooge is unconvinced about the joys of Christmas. As the evening commences, Scrooge comes face to face with ghosts and frightening visions of his past, present and even his future.

On Christmas morning, Ebenezer wakes up a changed man, thanking the spirits who helped him see the real truth about all life has to offer beyond wealth. Scrooge vows to keep the spirit of Christmas in his heart and honor it always. The first step towards a new life begins as old Ebenezer Scroogs sets off for the Cratchit home to make amends with the Cratchit family, including young Tiny Tim.



What other choices could Scrooge have made early in life? How would those choices have changed him? Would the ghosts needed to have visited him still? Write or tell a brief story about your ideas.



The ghosts that visit Scrooge are trying to help him. Write your own holiday ghost story. Remember that you can use Christmas, Hanukkah, Kwanza, or any other Winter Holiday.

BACKGROUND

Charles Dickens (1812-1870)

Born in 1812, Charles John Huffam Dickens is one of the most popular and widely read authors of all time. His childhood was much like that of one of his early heroes, *David Copperfield* (1849-1850). Dickens' father was imprisoned in 1824 for debt, and the young boy was forced to work and to support himself. He went to school only for a short time and was almost entirely self-educated. Dickens was a man of numerous talents. He was an artist (he produced many drawings and sketch books using the pseudonym Boz), an actor and producer (he managed a theatrical company that performed for Queen Victoria), an editor, a social reformist, and first and foremost a novelist. His major works include: *Nicholas Nickleby* (1837-1838), *Dombey and Son* (1846-1848), *Bleak House* (1852-1853), *A Tale of Two Cities* (1859), *Great Expectations* (1860-1861), and *The Mystery of Edwin Drood* (1870) which he was working on when he died of a stroke on June 9, 1870.

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Charles Dickens had many different jobs. What kind of job do you want to have? What do you think you will need to do to get this job? Make a list of jobs you might want and things you will have to study in order to get this job.

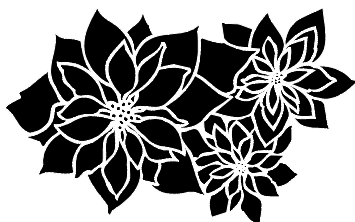
The Christmas Star

To most Christians the Christmas star is symbolic of Jesus, who is often called "the bright and morning star." Ancient people looked upon stars as gods and created myths about them. Before there was Christmas, stars held importance in ancient religions. The Babylonians used three stars to represent a god. The Egyptians believed that certain gods controlled different stars and constellations. The six-pointed star of David became the symbol of the Hebrew nation. The North American Blackfoot Indian believed that every star was at one time a human being. The Great Bear and the Little Bear are still worshiped by the Berber tribes of Africa today. But the five-pointed star of Christmas holds center stage. Its appearance is recorded in the Bible in the New Testament which says it appeared over Bethlehem and served as a guiding light to lead the wise men to the Christ child.



What are some other symbols of holidays that you list, other than the Christmas Star? You can think of symbols from any holiday, such as Easter (The Easter Bunny), Thanksgiving (Pilgrims), or St. Patricks Day (Four Leaf Clover).

What is Xmas



A widely seen abbreviation for Christmas, Xmas has a Greek origin where the word for Christ is Xristos. During the 16th century, Europeans began using the first initial of Christ's name, "X" in place of the word Christ in Christmas as a shorthand form of the word. Although the early Christians understood that X stood for Christ's name, later Christians who did not understand the Greek language mistook "Xmas" as a sign of disrespect.

HOLIDAY TRADITIONS



Christmas

Christmas is a celebration of the birth of Jesus Christ in the Christian faith. Born over two thousand years ago, Christians believe Him to be the Son of God. Whether Jesus was really born on December 25th, no one can say for certain. It was cho-

sen because it already was a holiday in ancient times - a **pagan** feast. It is thought that the Nativity did take place on the 25th of the month; but which exact month is uncertain, and every month at one time or another has been assigned. The Roman Church picked December 25th, and though questioned for several generations by the Eastern Church, it became a universal date for the holiday in the fifth century.

A **pagan** is a person who is not Christian, Jewish or Muslim.

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Hanukkah

Also known as Hanukka or Chanukah. In the Jewish faith Hanukkah is known as the Festival of Lights or the Feast of Consecration. By tradition, Hanukkah is the celebration and dedication of the new altar in the Temple at Jerusalem. The festival occurs in December near the Winter Solstice and lasts eight days. One of the traditions of Hanukkah is lighting special candles, one the first evening, two the second and so on. The eight-stemmed candlestand used in the lighting ceremony is called a menorah. Hanukkah is also celebrated by exchanging gifts and playing holiday games.



Kwanzaa



Kwanzaa is a seven-day festival, which begins on December 26th and ends on January 1st. It is based on traditional African harvest festivals and is celebrated by members of the African American community. Each day of the festival is devoted to a different idea (unity, self-determination, collective work, cooperative economics, purpose, creativity, and faith). Each night one of the candles on a seven-stemmed candlestand (kinara) is lit. Kwanzaa is also celebrated by giving gifts and an African feast.



Family and friends usually enjoy Holiday traditions together. At the library, research ways that Christmas, Hanukkah and Kwanzaa are celebrated. How are they similar? Different? How does your family celebrate the holidays? Share your holiday traditions with your classmates - maybe you will learn something new that you can do at home this holiday season!



The Meaning of the Holidays

The real meaning of the holidays can be easily lost in the hustle and bustle. Television and radio commercials remind us of the limited number of shopping days left until Hanukkah or Christmas. When children are busy making lists for presents from their parents or Santa, toys are the main attraction. It is easy for everyone, including children, to forget that the holidays are about giving as well as receiving. The holiday season should be a time when people think of helping others; bringing the dream of peace on Earth and good will to others closest to coming true.

Presents

Many American Christian families open brightly wrapped packages on Christmas Eve; others wait until the next morning. Presents are often hidden under the Christmas tree, or placed in stockings that are hung from the fireplace mantel. In France, Mexico, Brazil, and Argentina, children find presents in their shoes. Jewish families often hide their Hanukkah presents and play games until the children find them.

Some Latin-American children receive their presents in another unusual way. During the Christmas party, a Piñata (an earthenware jug or **papier-mâché** animal) is filled with surprises. The Pinata swings from a rope attached to a tree branch. One of the children is blindfolded and given three chances to break it open with a stick. If the child misses the Pinata as it swings overhead, the next in line tries, until some shatters it and releases the sweets and toys inside.



Papier-mâché: paper mixed with glue and other materials and pressed together to create a specific shape or form.



Write a letter to your parents or Santa requesting your holiday gifts. Don't forget to include a gift request for someone special (a friend, family member, or even someone you may not know personally!).



The Cratchit family did not have a lot of money for presents so any gifts given were probably homemade. Read the poem "A Visit from St. Nicholas," which Clement Moore wrote as a Christmas present for his children. These kinds of "homemade" presents are very special because they were created just for one person or family. Write your own holiday poem, story or letter and give it to your family or friends.



Take it one step further - read the poem and learn more about Clement Moore at: <http://virtualpubliclibrary.com/halloffamousauthors/CLEMENTCMOORE.COM/>

MERRY CHRISTMAS AROUND THE WORLD

The phrase "Merry Christmas" is spoken in many languages across the globe. The word Christmas follows the pattern of adding the syllable "mas" to the name of the person being celebrated, but opinions differ as the origin of "mas."

Here is a list of just some of the names for Merry Christmas:

Belgium - Zalige Kertfeest

Brazil - Feliz Natal

China - Sheng Tan Kuai Loh

Denmark - Glaedelig Jul

England - Happy Christmas

Finland - Hauskaa Joulua

France - Joyeux Noel

Germany - Frohliche Weihnachten

Greece - Eftihismena Christougenna

Ireland - Nodlig mhaith chugnat

Italy - Buon Natale

Mexico - Feliz Navidad

Netherlands - Hartelijke Kerstroeten

Norway - Gledelig Jul

Poland - Boze Narodzenie

Portugal - Boas Festas

Romania - Sarbatori vesele

Russia - Hristos Razdajetsja

Serbo-Croatia - Sretan Bozic

Slovenian - Srecen Bozic

Spain - Felices Pascuas, Feliz Navidad

Sweden - God Jul

Wales - Nadolig Llawen

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"Identify the Christmas Carol" solutions:

1. I'm Dreaming of a White Christmas
2. Noel
3. Let it Snow, Let it Snow, Let it Snow
4. Deck the Halls
5. O' Christmas Tree
6. Chestnuts Roasting on an Open Fire
(The Christmas Song)
7. Joy to the World
8. The Twelve Days of Christmas

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Holiday Word Search

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C

U H O

H B A I N

O M P R I C E

F E R I L A N T I

E F N A F E B A H D Z

S T C H R I S T M A S J O

D J P A K O C D S D X C P I D

V E J S R X S W I N T E R C H S R

Y F C I G O O S E C M L G O R U E G T

A X G M N U L R Q E K Z W H O U M N P L Q

Q P L I S G L M A R L E Y S O G T B W T E C S

W E K F F G L L O N D O N J V S E C U S I C L A C

S P I R I T R E E G V C S S A N T A H G H M W T B O F



Goose
Charles Dickens
Ghost

Scrooge
Tim
Christmas

Marley
Winter
London

Spirit
Gift
Carol

Tree
Bah
Humbug

Jingle
Crutch
Santa

Identify the Christmas Carol

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Can you recognize all the Christmas Carols depicted here? After you identify these popular carols, make up some drawings for other Holiday songs (don't forget Hanukkah and Kwanza). Share your drawings with the class and see if they can guess the right song.

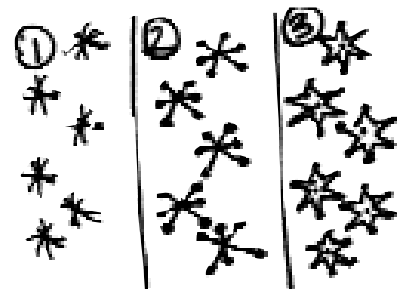
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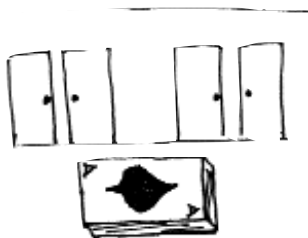
2.

ABCDEFGHI
JKLMNOPQR
STUVWXYZ

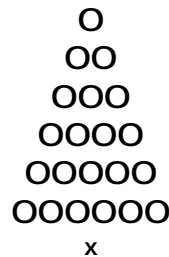
3.



4.



5.



6.



7.



8.

December

	1	2	25	4	5	
25	7	25	9	10	25	12
13	25	15	25	17	25	19
25	21	25	23	25	25	26
27	28	29	25	31		

For solutions see page five.