

STUDY GUIDE

# Dickens' A Christmas Carol



December 2 – 23, 2016

# Study Guides from **A Noise Within**

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***A rich resource for teachers of English, reading arts, and drama education.***

Dear Reader,

We're delighted you're interested in our study guides, designed to provide a full range of information on our plays to teachers of all grade levels.

A Noise Within's study guides include:

- General information about the play (characters, synopsis, timeline, and more)
- Playwright biography and literary analysis
- Historical content of the play
- Scholarly articles
- Production information (costumes, lights, direction, etc.)
- Suggested classroom activities
- Related resources (videos, books, etc.)
- Discussion themes
- Background on verse and prose (for Shakespeare's plays)

Our study guides allow you to review and share information with students to enhance both lesson plans and pupils' theatrical experience and appreciation. They are designed to let you extrapolate articles and other information that best align with your own curricula and pedagogic goals.

More information? It would be our pleasure. We're here to make your students' learning experience as rewarding and memorable as it can be!

*All the best,*

Alicia Green  
DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION



The Tempest. PHOTO BY CRAIG SCHWARTZ.

# A Christmas Carol

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Marley's Ghost Original Illustration from *A Christmas Carol*

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## CHRISTMAS PAST



## CHRISTMAS PRESENT



## CHRISTMAS YET TO COME

### EBENEZER SCROOGE

The protagonist; a bitter old creditor who does not believe in the spirit of Christmas, nor does he possess any sympathy for the poor.



### JACOB MARLEY

"Dead to begin with."

Ebenezer Scrooge's former business partner, who died seven years prior. His ghost appears before Scrooge on Christmas Eve to warn of him of the Three Spirits, and urges him to choose a new path in life.

### GHOST OF CHRISTMAS PRESENT

A lively spirit who spreads Christmas cheer.

### GHOST OF CHRISTMAS YET TO COME

Scrooge fears this ghost's premonitions.

### GHOST OF CHRISTMAS PAST

Invokes images from Scrooge's past to serve as a reminder that Christmas once meant something to him.

### FRED

Scrooge's optimistic, kind-hearted nephew; he overlooks Scrooge's negativity.

### OLD JOE, MRS. DILBER, LAUNDRESS, AND UNDERTAKER'S MAN

In the future, they meet to share in the profits of selling-off Scrooge's belongings.

### MR. & MRS. FEZZIWIG

Mr. Fezziwig was Scrooge and Marley's former boss at the warehouse. A generous man, who held Christmas parties for his staff every year.

### BOB CRATCHIT

Scrooge's overworked and underpaid clerk. Although he and his family struggle for money, they carry on and look towards the future.

### OTHERS:

#### NARRATOR

Kindly provides story information to you, our spectators.

### MRS. CRATCHIT

Bob's wife.

### TINY TIM

Bob's youngest son; crippled at birth and equipped with a loving spirit.

### GENTLEPEOPLE, CAROLERS, PARTY GUESTS, SERVANTS, ETC.

### BELLE

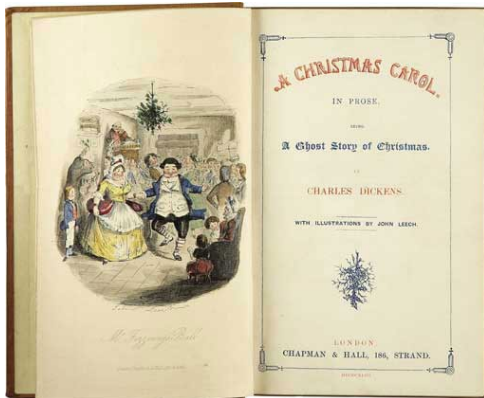
Scrooge's former fiancée; he chose greed over love.

### FAN

Scrooge's older sister and Fred's mother.

### PETER, MARTHA, BELINDA, & THE LITTLE CRATCHITS

Other Cratchit children.



# A CHRISTMAS CAROL

By Charles Dickens

Adapted for the stage by Geoff Elliott

**ON A FRIGID** Christmas Eve, a miserly old man named **Ebenezer Scrooge** sits in his counting house, keeping an eye on his clerk, **Bob Cratchit**. The stingy Scrooge refuses to spend money on heating coals, so poor Cratchit shivers in the dim room. Scrooge's nephew, **Fred**, drops by and wishes him a Merry Christmas, though Scrooge replies with a bitter "Bah! Humbug!" Later, two gentlemen enter his office and ask him to donate money for a fund that will feed the hungry. Scrooge feels no pity for the plight of those less fortunate and promptly dismisses the gentlemen. At closing time, Scrooge reluctantly gives Cratchit the day off for Christmas.

Scrooge returns home, where he lives in a house that belonged to his deceased business partner, Jacob Marley. Late at night, the sound of dragging, metal chains announces the arrival of **The Ghost of Jacob Marley**. Marley has a grave message for Scrooge. Because Marley lived a greedy and selfish life, his ghost now wanders the Earth in heavy chains as punishment. He hopes he can help Scrooge avoid the same fate. He tells Scrooge that three spirits will visit him, with the first arriving when the bell tolls one.

As promised, the **Ghost of Christmas Past** arrives, leading

Scrooge on a journey to the Christmases of his childhood. He sees himself as a lonely child, an apprentice to **Fezziwig** the merchant, and as a young man who loses his sweetheart **Belle's** love to his greed. Tortured, Scrooge begs the ghost to take him home.

The **Ghost of Christmas Present** takes Scrooge through London to unveil the Christmas holiday as it will unfold that year. Scrooge watches the large and bustling Cratchit family prepare a miniature feast in their 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 whisks Scrooge to his nephew Fred's house to witness their 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 progresses, the spirit ages, and we see a noticeably older ghost. Prior to his departure, the ghost reveals to Scrooge two starved children, **Ignorance** and **Want**, living under his coat. He vanishes instantly as Scrooge notices a dark and hooded figure approaching.

The **Ghost of Christmas Yet To Come**, the spirit Scrooge fears most of all, 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 and some thieves pawing his personal effects for cash. 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 the Christmas spirit. He suddenly finds himself safely tucked in his bed.

Overwhelmed with joy at 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 gifts to the poor, and treats his fellow human beings with kindness, generosity, and warmth. ❖



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“Bah! Humbug!”

“I WILL LIVE IN THE PAST,  
THE PRESENT, AND THE FUTURE!  
THE SPIRITS OF ALL THREE  
SHALL STRIVE WITHIN ME!”

“These  
are but  
shadows of  
the things  
that have  
been...”

“GOD BLESS US,  
EVERYONE!”

“**Scrooge**  
was the Ogre of the  
family. The mention  
of his name cast a  
dark shadow on the  
party, which was not  
dispelled for a full  
five minutes.”

“Are these the  
shadows of the things  
that *will* be, or are  
they shadows of things  
that *may* be, only?”

“Merry  
Christmas!”

“The Cratchit’s *were not a handsome family; they were not well dressed; their shoes were far from being waterproof; their clothes were scanty; and Peter might have known, and very likely did, the inside of a pawnbroker’s. But they were happy, grateful, and pleased with one another, and contented with the time.*”



Dickens in New York, 1867, Wikipedia.

**CHARLES DICKENS**, English writer of novels and short stories, was the second of eight children born to John and Elizabeth Dickens in Portsmouth, England on February 7, 1812. He is one of the most famous English novelists of the Victorian Era. As a young child, Dickens spent most of his time reading; he was also quite fond of theatricals, puppet plays, and had a natural singing voice.

Due to Dickens' father's job, the family relocated several times until they settled in Camden Town, a poor neighborhood in London, where Bob Cratchit and his family dwell in *A Christmas Carol*. At the age of 12, Dickens' father was sentenced to debtor's prison, so young Charles left school and went to live with a family friend and work in a shoe-blackening factory. Dickens' family, excluding his sister Fanny, all lived at the prison. Each Sunday, Charles visited the prison and witnessed the disgusting conditions in which London's working poor were forced to live.

After several months, an unexpected inheritance relieved Dickens' father from his debt, and Charles eventually left the factory and returned to school. Still, Charles' job gluing labels on bottles traumatized him, leaving a deep impression that would haunt him for the rest of his life. These difficult times inspired Charles Dickens to include many economic and child labor issues in his fiction.

At age 15, Dickens' father met with new financial difficulties, which caused Charles to leave school and seek permanent employment. Although his formal education was limited, his enthusiasm for reading and his natural writing ability carried him far. He first worked as a clerk in a legal office, and later as a stenographer in the law courts of London.

By 1832 he became a reporter for two London newspapers. In the following year, he began to contribute a series of impressions and sketches to various publications under the pen name "Boz." The same year, Dickens began to write *The Pickwick Papers* in several monthly installments. This form of serial writing became a standard method of writing fiction in the Victorian Era. In fact, many of Dickens' successful novels, such as *Oliver Twist*, *Nicholas Nickleby*, *Great Expectations*, and *A Tale of Two Cities* began as magazine installments.

In 1836, Dickens married Catherine Hogarth, the daughter of the editor of a London newspaper. Together they had ten children.

In 1842, Dickens went on a five-month long lecture tour of America, speaking out strongly for the abolition of slavery and of other reforms, during which he wrote his travelogue, *American Notes for General Circulation*.

Soon after his return to England, Dickens began to write *A Christmas Carol* (1843), the first of three stories Dickens penned about Christmas (followed by *The Chimes* (1844) and *The Cricket on the Hearth* (1845)). *A Christmas Carol* was immediately popular, but Dickens received few of the initial profits due to poor contract agreements. The next year, Dickens performed a live reading of *The Chimes*, which launched Dickens' extensive career in delivering oral interpretations. Dickens continued performing this way for charity and for pleasure for the remainder of his life, and even formed an amateur theatre company in 1848, where he served as manager, producer, and actor.

In the early 1850s, Dickens was confronted with the death of his father and one of his daughters within two weeks. Partly in response to these losses, Dickens began writing what are now known as his "dark" novels which include *Bleak House*, *Hard Times*, and *Little Dorrit*.

In 1857, Dickens fell in love with an actress named Ellen Ternan, and separated from his wife, Catherine, after many years of incompatibility.

From December 1860 to August 1861, Dickens serialized the largely autobiographical *Great Expectations*. The story was published in *All the Year Round*, a periodical owned and created by Dickens.

In the 1860s, Dickens devoted much of his time and energy to public readings from his novels. Traveling grew tiresome, and a train wreck in 1865 left Dickens with dizzy spells, arthritis, gout, and swelling in his left foot. Still, he carried on and performed throughout the United States and Britain.

On June 8, 1870, Dickens spent all day working on *The Mystery of Edwin Drood*, which was rare for the man who normally only wrote for a couple of hours each day. That night, Dickens complained of a toothache, and lost consciousness.

Charles Dickens died from complications of a stroke on June 9, 1870. He is buried in Westminster Abbey. ❖

Other novels by Charles Dickens that were adapted into plays produced at A Noise Within include: *Great Expectations* and *Oliver Twist*.

### A Chronology of Dickens' Major Works

- 1836: *Pickwick Papers*
- 1837: *Oliver Twist*
- 1838: *Nicholas Nickleby*
- 1840: *The Old Cottage*
- 1841: *Barnaby Rudge*
- 1843: *A Christmas Carol*
- 1844: *The Chimes*
- 1845: *The Cricket on the Hearth*
- 1846: *The Battle of Life*
- 1847: *Dombey & Son*
- 1848: *The Haunted Man*
- 1849: *David Copperfield*
- 1853: *Bleak House*
- 1854: *Hard Times*
- 1855: *Little Dorrit*
- 1856: *Our Mutual Friends*
- 1859: *A Tale of Two Cities*
- 1860: *Great Expectations*
- 1870: *The Mystery of Edwin Drood*





# Charles Dickens: Timeline

**1807:** Abolition of the British slave trade

**1812:** Charles Dickens born on February 7 in Landsport, Portsmouth, England

**1822:** The Dickens family settles in Camden Town, a London suburb

**1824:** Charles Dickens works in Warren's Shoe Blacking Factory as a result of his family's sentence to the Marshalsea Debtor's Prison

**1825:** The world's first public passenger railway opens in northeast England

**1833:** Abolition of slavery in the British Empire. Charles Dickens meets future wife, Catherine Hogarth, and begins working at the *Morning Chronicle*.

**1834:** The Poor Law Amendment Act sets up workhouses, where the poor are sent to work off their debts. They are notorious for their poor conditions

**1836:** Dickens collects his previously published stories into his first book, *Sketches by Boz*. Marries Hogarth on April 2

**1837:** Queen Victoria becomes Queen at the age of 18

**1840:** First postage stamps came into use. Only approximately 20% of children in London receive any schooling at all

**1842:** The Mines Act ends child labor in underground mines. Dickens first visits America and writes *American Notes*, which criticizes slavery and upsets many.

**1843:** Publishes *A Christmas Carol*

**1845-49:** The Great Potato famine of Ireland. 800,000 people die of starvation. Large numbers of immigrants flee to Britain, Australia, Canada, and the United States.

**1847:** Parliament passes the Ten Hours Bill — which limits both women and children to work 10 hours per day. This bill is to be enforced in all of England by a total of four inspectors.

**1848:** Cholera breaks out in British towns. Seneca Falls Convention for women's rights organized in New York. *The Communist Manifesto* published in Germany

**1850:** Approximately 120,000 domestic servants in London alone—most work 80-hour weeks for one halfpence per hour. Thousands of prostitutes between the ages of 15-22 at work in London.

**1851:** The Crystal Palace Exhibition—a fair of modern engineering and manufacturing arts

**1853:** Dickens gives his first staged reading of *A Christmas Carol* before 2,000 people at a benefit for Birmingham and Midland Institute, a pioneer of adult scientific and technical education

**1861:** The American Civil War begins. In Russia, following the Crimean War, the Emperor abolishes serfdom, or "enforced labor"

**1865:** Dickens badly injured in a train wreck. The American Civil War ends. The Thirteenth Amendment abolishes slavery in the United States.

**1869:** Exhaustion and illness force Dickens to return home from an English tour of *A Christmas Carol*

**1870:** Charles Dickens dies from complications of a stroke on June 9.



Image credits top to bottom left to right: Dickens: <http://www.wpclipart.com>, Train: <http://workenglish3.blogspot.com>, Queen Victoria: <http://www.gogmsite.net>, Crystal Palace Exhibition: <http://www.johnpaulcatton.com>, Farm: <http://www.irishpotato-famine.net>.

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# *Dickens' Times:* VICTORIAN LONDON

By Jessica Hutchinson



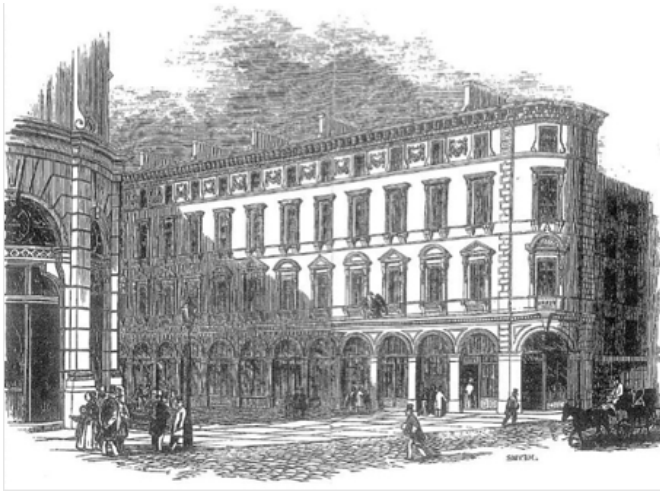
River Thames

**LONDON GEOGRAPHY** was determined by the **Thames**. The great river ran from west to east through the city after a dogleg north past Westminster — so, too, did the city itself, its two great thoroughfares being the Strand — Fleet Street and Oxford Street — Holborn — Cheapside.

At its core was the old **City of London** — known as “the City” as the century wore on — an entity consisting of the roughly square mile making up the area that had once been inside the old walls of the medieval city of London, bounded by the Thames on the south, the Inns of Court and Temple Bar on the west, and the Tower in the east, with its seven gates (Newgate of prison fame being one), which had all been torn down save for “that leaden-headed old

obstruction,” as Dickens calls it at the beginning of *Bleak House*, “appropriate ornament for the threshold of a leaden-headed corporation, Temple Bar.”

Within the City lay the **Royal Exchange**, (the ‘Change upon which Scrooge’s word in “A Christmas Carol” is said to be so good), which was a gathering place for merchants in different trades, and the **Bank of England**, the financial nucleus of the nation, together with the financial offices and activities that naturally clustered around them. In fact, the term “the City” was also used to denote the financial heart of England in the way that “Wall Street” is used to describe the financial heart of the United States. In Jane Austen’s day, it was still customary for some merchants to live in the City, but as railroads were thrust through it and



Royal Exchange



Bank of England



Fog in London

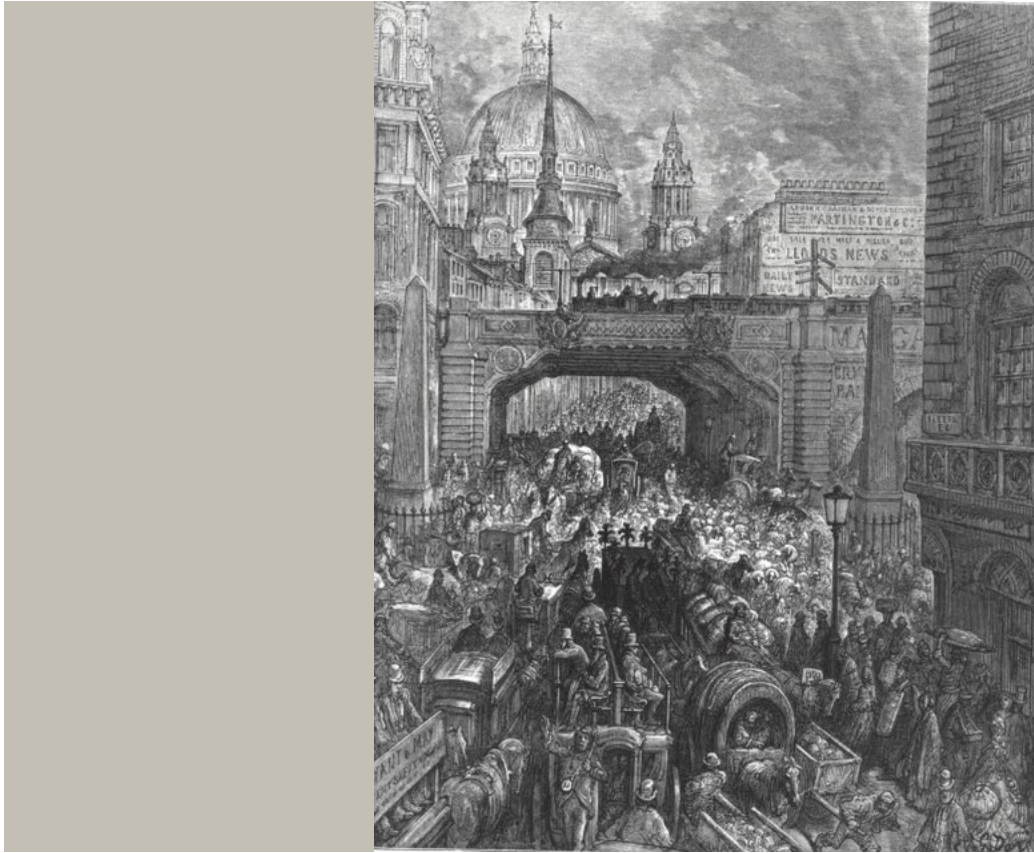
commuting became more feasible, even poor clerks began commuting to work from fringe or suburban areas the way we are told that Bob Cratchit does from **Camdentown**. In the first 80 years of the 19th century, in fact, the resident population in the City dropped from 128,000 to 50,000, while greater London as a whole mushroomed from 1-million to more than 4.5-million people.

The fancy area of London was the **West End**, which lay west of Temple Bar and London's center, Charing Cross. At the historic core of the West End lay what had once been the royal city of Westminster, with its palaces of **St. James** and **Whitehall**, along with **Westminster Abbey** and the **Houses of Parliament**. The Treasury building was here, along with Downing Street, the Foreign Office and the Horse Guards (army headquarters). These had now become part of the larger, expanded London, and adjacent to this nerve center of government and royalty the ultrafashionable West End residential area of Mayfair (and, later, Belgrave Square and the unfashionable Chelsea farther south) grew up. Mayfair was the location of the posh men's clubs on Pall Mall, the exclusive shops on Bond Street and the fancy houses on the ritziest residential street in the city, Park Lane, overlooking the great greensward of Hyde Park on Mayfair's western border. All were within a short distance of the new royal residence, **Buckingham Palace**. Such was London. But what was it like to live in?

The **fog** in London was very real. Just why it was the color it was no one has ever been able to ascertain for sure, but at a certain time of the year—it was worst in November—a great yellowness reigned everywhere, and lamps were lit inside even during the day. In November, December, and January the yellow fog extended out some three or four miles from the heart of the city, causing "pain in the lungs" and "uneasy sensations" in the head. It has been blamed in part on the coal stoves.

At 8:00am on an average day over London, an observer reported the **sky began to turn black** with the **smoke** from thousands of **coal fires**, presumably for morning fires to warm dining rooms and bedrooms and to cook breakfast. Ladies going to the opera at night with white shawls returned with them gray. It has been suggested that the black umbrella put in its appearance because it did not show the effects of these London atmospherics. The fog was so thick, observed a foreigner at mid-century, that you could take a man by the hand and not be able to see his face, and people literally lost their way and drowned in the Thames. In a very bad week in 1873 more than 700 people above the normal average for the period died in the city, and cattle at an exhibition suffocated to death.





Crowded London smoke

There were problems underfoot as well as in the air. **100 tons of horse manure** dropped on the streets of London each day, and a report to Parliament said that “strangers coming from the country frequently describe the streets of London as smelling of dung like a stable-yard.” Originally, many **streets were not paved**; by midcentury, however, the dust from the pulverized stone with which London streets were coated in good weather turned to mud when it rained. An etiquette book advised gentlemen to walk on the outside of the pavement when accompanying a lady to ensure that they walked on the filthiest part of it, and every major street had a crossing sweeper like Jo in *Bleak House*, who for a penny swept the street before you made your way across it on rainy days so your boots did not become impossibly filthy. Nor was the Thames any better. **London sewage**, some 278,000 tons daily at mid-century, as well as pollutants from the factories along the river’s banks, was dumped untreated into the water, presumably helping to fuel the cholera epidemics that swept the city in the early part of the century. The smell was bad enough in the summer of 1858 to cause Parliament to end its session early.

There was what we would surely call **noise pollution**, too—the incessant sound of wheels and horses’ hooves clacking over the pavement, the click of women’s pattens (protective overshoes) on the sidewalks in the rain, the bell of the muffin man, and the cries of the street peddlers selling such items as dolls, matches, books, knives, eels, pens, rat poison, key rings, eggs, and china, to say nothing of the German bands, the itinerant clarinet players, and the hurdy-gurdies. The children who added their din to that of the costermongers remind us that London was an overwhelmingly young city, as we are apt to realize when we read, say, *Oliver Twist*, a city of multitudinous street arabs, young costermongers, crossing sweepers like Jo, or the mud larks who scavenged the bed of the Thames all playing in the streets or crying their wares, holding horses for gentlemen, fetching cabs for theatergoers on rainy nights, carrying packages or opening cab doors or doing cartwheels or handstands in the street in the hope of earning a ha’penny or penny. There was no compulsory school until 1880, and children under 14 made up 30 to 40 percent of the population. ❖

Source: Goodman Theatre — [www.goodmantheatre.org](http://www.goodmantheatre.org)

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# Poverty in America: Millions in Need

Edited By Elizabeth Mork and William Landon



**Children make up the largest percentage of the poor in the United States, with more than 12-million living below the poverty line.**

**THE POVERTY LINE** refers to the minimum amount of necessary income to live upon as deemed by each country's standard of living. In America, this line sits at \$10,830 for a single person. As of 2009, the amount of Americans below this line was 14.3%. Although a significant figure, this statistic fails to illustrate who in particular suffers the most from poverty. It is necessary to research and examine particular groups of people in order to find more dynamic poverty levels. Specifically, African American and Hispanic populations report higher poverty rates than the national average. The poverty rate for both of these groups remained near 30% of the national average during the 1980s and mid-1990s. It began to fall in 2000, and has risen again in recent years. The percentage of African Americans in poverty rose to 25.8% in 2009. Poverty among the Hispanic population in 2009 also rose to 25.3%.

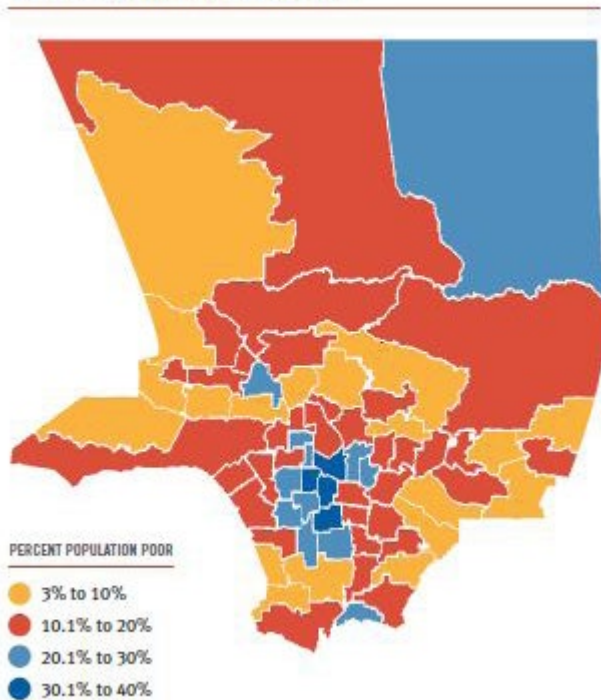
According to the U.S. Census, national poverty levels have risen to 43.6 million people in poverty from 39.8-million in 2008 — these figures were heightened from those in previous years due, in part, to the 2007 economic downturn. Children make up the largest percentage of the poor in the United States, with more than 12-million living below the poverty line. According to the United Nations Children's Fund, UNICEF, the United States has the second highest child poverty rate of all industrialized nations. Sweden's child poverty rate is less than 3%, the Czech Republic is less than 8%, France is just under 8%, and Germany is just over 10%. Roughly 7.2-million people living in poverty are the working poor. Most are families with children. They represent the fastest-growing population living in poverty. A study by the U.S. Conference of Mayors found that children younger than the age of 18 accounted for 25% of the urban homeless. Families comprised 37% of the homeless population; single men and women comprised 45% and 14% respectively. ❖

**Source:** Goodman Theatre — [www.goodmantheatre.org](http://www.goodmantheatre.org)



# Poverty in *A Christmas Carol* and Connections to Los Angeles

## POVERTY IN LOS ANGELES COUNTY 17



*A Christmas Carol* conjures up various emotions for many people.

- How does Charles Dickens' timeless story relate to your life, and to our greater Los Angeles Community?
- How do these facts about Dickens' London and our modern Los Angeles affect your mode of thinking this holiday season?

Charles Dickens viewed London as a character in many of his novels. To Dickens, London was a living, breathing entity for which he had an enduring fascination.

Dickens' London and modern day Los Angeles have many things in common, particularly in regard to the divide between wealthy and poor inhabitants. In the 19th century, London was the largest and richest city in the world, yet it was struggling to cope with large numbers of desperately poor people. The city was divided geographically between the very rich and the very poor. The aristocracy built townhouses in the elegant squares and crescents near Westminster in the West End. The bulk of the middle and lower classes lived down both sides of the Thames River from the Tower of London in what came to be known as the East End. About one-third of London's population lived in very unsanitary and neglected areas called the Slums.

- Can you relate this information to your knowledge of Los Angeles geography?
- How would you describe various Los Angeles communities?
- Do you notice any socioeconomic disparities?
- What would you do to improve Los Angeles, and how do you feel Charles Dickens worked to improve London during his lifetime?

The Cratchits lived in Camden Town, an area in the north of the city. The city expanded outward at a rapid pace in just a couple of centuries. In the early 1600s, almost all of London was contained in the walled City of London.

Between 1800 and 1880, London's population soared from 1 to 4.5 million people. Please continue reading for specific Los Angeles figures as they relate to our local economy. ❖

**Source:** Original ANW material and excerpts from the Goodman Theatre's *A Christmas Carol* guide, 2010 — [www.goodmantheatre.org](http://www.goodmantheatre.org)

## Around Los Angeles

Figures by United Way of Greater Los Angeles

- With a population of close to 10 million people, if L.A. County were a state, it would be the country's 8th largest.
- The median age in L.A. County is 35 years old, which makes us slightly younger than the country as a whole.
- We are a multi-cultural community. Latinos are the county's largest ethnic group with 48%. 29% of us are White, 14% of us are Asian/Pacific Islanders, and 10% of us are African-American.
- If L.A. County were a country, it would be the 19th largest economic power in the world. In 2008, the county's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) was just over 513 billion dollars.
- The poverty rate in L.A. County is higher than the nation as a whole. Over 1.47 million or 15% of people in L.A. County are living in poverty, defined as an income of \$22,000 per year for a family of 4, compared to 13% for the nation.
- Nearly 30% of our full-time workers earn less than \$25,000 a year.
- We have 250,000 millionaires and 1.4 million poor people.
- Nearly 4 in 10 poor people in L.A. County suffer extreme poverty. Over 570,000 people in L.A. County
- live in extreme poverty, defined as living on less than \$5,400 a year for a single person, or about \$11,000 for a family of four.
- We are the homeless capital of the nation. And the number one reason for homelessness is loss of a job.
- More than 93,000 families in L.A. County earn less than \$10,000 a year.
- 1 in 5 of our children live in poverty. This is slightly higher than the national rate of children living in poverty (about 18%).
- There is still significant inequity as related to poverty among racial/ethnic groups. 8% of Whites and 11% of Asians are living in poverty, compared to 19% of African-Americans and 20% of Latinos.

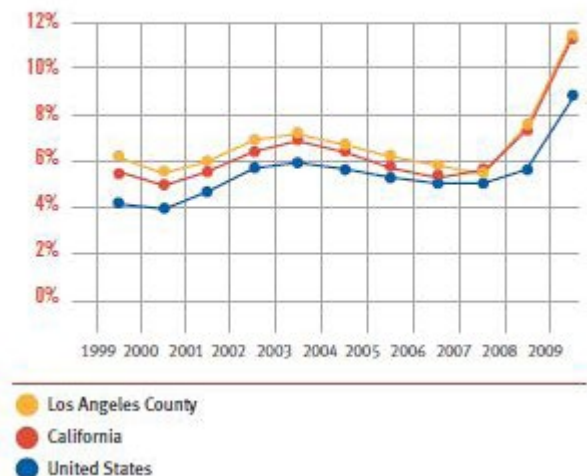
### WORKING POOR POPULATION<sup>30</sup>



#### Our percentage of "working poor" is higher than in the U.S. as a whole.

- From 2000 to 2008, the number of those considered working poor (Household Income under \$44K for a family of four) was nearly 6 percentage points higher than the state as a whole, and 7.5 percentage points higher than the nation.

### UNEMPLOYMENT RATE<sup>31</sup>



#### Not all job loss was the result of the recession. Over the course of the decade, slow steady attrition of jobs occurred in several key industries.

- Manufacturing showed the greatest decline (-36%) followed by the Information sector (Publishing, Movies, TV, Radio) with a 16% drop.
- Transportation and Utilities declined by almost 12%.

#### However, certain industries did show growth.

- Educational and Health Services grew by 27% followed by Leisure and Hospitality with a 14% increase.

**Source:** According to the United Way's 2010 study, "L.A. County 10 Years Later: A Tale of Two Cities, One Future" [http://unitedwayla.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/11/TaleOfTwoCities\\_Feb2010.pdf](http://unitedwayla.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/11/TaleOfTwoCities_Feb2010.pdf)



# Currency & Wealth

By Jessica Hutchinson

**"GUINEAS, SHILLINGS,** half-pence. You know what they are?" Mr. Dombey asks his little son Paul in Dickens' novel, *Dombey and Son* (1847). Paul, Dickens tells us, knew, but the average reader of today is not always likely to be so knowledgeable.

In the 1800s, British money was calculated in units of pounds, shillings, and pence. These were the units of value—like the American mill, cent, and dollar—in which all transactions were reckoned, regardless of whether the value was represented by a bookkeeping entry, by coin, by bank notes, or by notations written on a check. The actual physical instruments of currency were paper bank notes and gold, silver, copper, and bronze coins like the sixpence, the crown, the sovereign, the shilling piece, and the penny. Thus, for example, the physical units called pennies were used to measure the value created by an equivalent number of pence. (The guinea, uniquely, was a unit of physical currency that also became an abstract measure of value as well; that is, long after the actual guinea coin itself stopped being minted in the early 1800s, prices for luxury items like good horses and expensive clothes continued to be quoted in guineas as if it were some independent unit of value like the pound.)

BASIC UNITS	Value	Coin	Paper	Slang Term
	1,000 pounds		1,000-pound note	
	500 pounds		500-pound note	
	200 pounds		200-pound note	
	100 pounds		100-pound note	
	50 pounds		50-pound note	
	20 pounds		20-pound note	
	10 pounds		10-pound note	tenner
	5 pounds		5-pound note	fiver
One Pound	21 shillings	guinea		
	20 shillings	sovereign	1-pound note	quid
	10 shillings	half sovereign	½-pound note	
	5 shillings	crown		bull
	2½ shillings	half crown	half a crown	
One Shilling	2 shillings	florin		
	12 pence	shilling		bob, hog
	6 pence	sixpence		tanner, bend
	4 pence	groat		
	3 pence	threepence		thruppence
	2 pence	twopence		tuppence
	1 pence	penny		copper
	½ pence	halfpenny		ha'pence
	¼ pence	farthing		
	⅛ pence	half farthing		

Rough monetary values and terms in Dickens' time.

Sovereigns and half sovereigns were gold; crowns, half crowns, florins, shillings, sixpences, and threepences were silver; pence, ha'pence, and farthings were copper until 1860, after which they were bronze. The coins were issued by the Royal Mint, but the bank notes got their names from the fact that they were not issued by a government agency but by a bank, in fact— after the mid-1800s— only by the bank—the Bank of England. Until



then banks all over the country issued their own bank notes (or promises to pay), which circulated more or less like money. Private banks in the provinces are by one estimate believed to have cranked out about £20,000,000 worth of notes between 1810 and 1815. With the Bank Charter Act of 1844, however, the government gave the Bank of England a monopoly on the issuance of bank notes. As the currency of other banks subsequently disappeared from circulation, “bank note” or “note” in consequence became synonymous with the paper issued by the Bank of England.

To abbreviate their money, Britons used the symbol £ for pound, s. for shilling, and d. for pence, although five pounds, ten shillings, sixpence could be written £5.10.6. “Five and six” meant five shillings and sixpence, and it would have been written “5/6.”

It is very difficult to know what a pound or shilling from 1800 to 1859 is worth in American currency today, and, as any economist will volubly inform you, the fact that the Victorians had no Hondas and we have no candles, i.e., we don’t buy the same goods and don’t have the same economic needs, makes the purchasing power of the two currencies fundamentally incommensurable. Nonetheless, intrepid estimates have put the pound’s worth in the neighborhood of \$20, \$50 or \$200.

## Being Wealthy

What did it mean to be wealthy in the days before tax shelters, credit cards, junk bonds, and golden parachutes? No stocks and bonds, no money market funds—what did you put your money into? First and foremost, it went into land. Land was socially prestigious and it also produced rent from tenant farmers that was probably the major source of income for most of the landed gentry and nobility during much of the 1800s. Good land, however, was not likely to be easily attainable. Much of it was tied up through entail in family estates, and it was an extremely complicated and expensive procedure to purchase it. A contemporary observer toward the end of the century said the legal fees involved were enormous and also pointed out that by then the 2 percent return on land made it a bad investment unless you didn’t need a big income. In families, land always went to the men, while the women got things like government securities...

It may well be asked—what about taxes? When the young visitors are shown around Sotherton in Jane Austen’s novel, *Mansfield Park*, the author comments at one point that they were not shown the chapel until after “having visited many more rooms than could be supposed to be of any other use than to contribute

to the window tax.” It is a passing remark; but one that gives a small glimpse of the remarkably extensive system of taxation that must have made the English one of the most taxed peoples in the world. During the nineteenth century, for example, there was a tax on land, income, the practice of law, newspaper advertisements, glass, candles, beer, malt, carriages, menservants, coats of arms, newspapers, paper, bricks, stone, coal, windows, corn, soap, horses, dogs, salt, sugar, raisins, tea, coffee, tobacco, playing cards, timber, and silk—but the extent of the taxation begins to become clear. There was even a tax on headgear, which, after Wordsworth was appointed as a collector of stamp duties, moved Byron to write: “I shall think of him often when I buy a new hat. There his works will appear.”

The taxes were important not only because of the bite they put on people but because of their individual social consequences. Until repealed in 1861, for example, the tax on paper helped to keep books scarce and expensive. Soap was taxed until 1853 with the consequence of the poor personal hygiene which may have contributed to some of the epidemics of typhus and other diseases that periodically devastated elements of the population. (In fact, a black market sprang up in soap, and it was smuggled in from Ireland, where there was no tax, to the western shore of England.) The tax on windows mentioned in *Mansfield Park* was perhaps the most pernicious one, since even a hole cut in a wall for ventilation was counted as a window, making, among other things, for dark houses for the poor. The fact that a family was taxed £2 8s. for each male servant in 1812 (bachelors £4 8s.) helped to steer people toward womenservants — both this and the tax on carriages were based on the government’s (correct) assumption that these were two of the leading ways to get revenues from the wealthy.

And these were only the national taxes. At a local parish level from the 1800s on, one could be required to pay a “rate” for the maintenance of the poor (one reason why people were always anxious to have the poor settle somewhere else besides their parish), to which, in due course, were added rates for highways and other local expenses. There was also a local church rate for the physical upkeep of the local Church of England house of worship until 1868. To the national taxes and this local tax must then be added the tithes which farmers and craftsmen had to pay the local clergyman in support of the Church of England. These amounted to one-tenth of the value of the year’s annual produce and, until 1840, also had to be paid in kind, when it was “commuted” to payment in money. ❖

Source: Goodman Theatre — [www.goodmantheatre.org](http://www.goodmantheatre.org)

# About: Scenic Design

BY JEANINE A. RINGER

**WHEN I FIRST** approach designing a new show, I always try to find initial inspiration in the text. As I read the script for the first time, I jot down any imagery or words that pop out at me. Then, I attempt to find interesting visual research to accompany it.

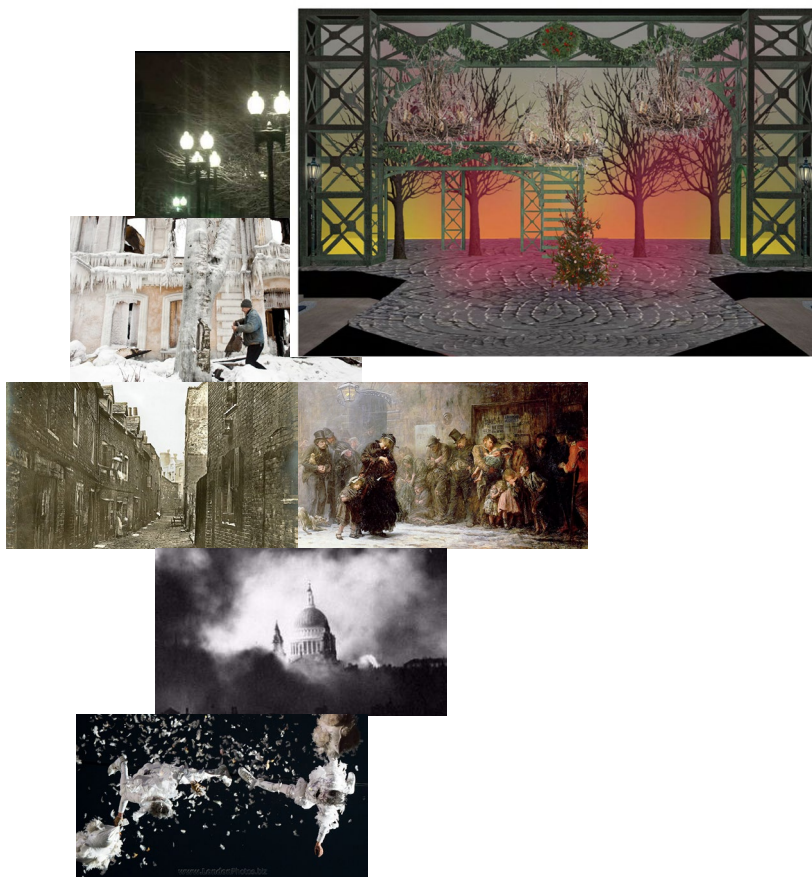
Next, I typically meet with the director; in this show's case, the directors: Geoff Elliot and Julia Elliot-Rodriguez. Geoff and Julia provided me with some of their visual research, which, coupled with my own research, led to some very interesting choices.

There are three different urban worlds in *A Christmas Carol*: the past, the present, and the future. One of the main challenges was visually defining Scrooge's three worlds. As I moved forward with my designs, I found a link between trees and their cyclical lives. You will see an overriding theme of rebirth in this production, and trees and their branches also play a central visual theme.

We begin in the present, which I view as a very de-saturated, stripped away world. Scrooge himself is in a winter stasis, like a tree without leaves: cold, brittle, scary, and seemingly dead. Take note of the overcast, greyscale color palette in these scenes.

The past is definitely a much brighter and colorful place for Scrooge. His memory is visually depicted in a grander scale—magnified and vivid.

The future I laid out is not a place that many of us would wish to visit. It is a very dark, almost grotesque place. In the end, however, Scrooge's present world blooms once again, much like a tree in the Spring. ❖



**Ms. Ringer** has spent the last decade working in television, film, theater, and other live events. She received her MFA from the University of California, Irvine. There, she took a particular interest in immersive theater, where the scenic environment completely surrounds the audience, and provides the spectator with an opportunity to interact with the production. From there, she went on to work in film and television both as a Production Designer and as a Stylist/Dresser. She has since had opportunities to work on multiple theatrical productions, films, commercials, music videos, and live events. *A Christmas Carol* was Ms. Ringer's first production with A Noise Within, which was shown during the 2010-2011 Season. Since then she has worked as a Scenic Designer on numerous A Noise Within productions including: *Figaro*, *The Importance of Being Earnest*, *Endgame*, *Pericles*, *Prince of Tyre*, and *Eurydice*.

[www.jnicholasdesigns.com](http://www.jnicholasdesigns.com)



# About: Costume Design

BY ANGELA BALOGH CALIN

**A CHRISTMAS CAROL** is a favored tale produced by many theatres during the holiday season. Many productions stay true to Charles Dickens' original story and time-period, but our production here at A Noise Within attempts to change things up a bit, particularly in our distinctive choices in defining the past, present, and future worlds.

This might sound strange, but the costume design concept all started with an image of an oversized hat. Then, it snowballed into defining the past through the eyes of a child. When you are a small child, everything seems bigger; it is a time of wonder, and a time of laughter. In *A Christmas Carol*, The Ghost of Christmas Past whisks Scrooge to various scenes from his childhood. I view it as a very romantic, idyllic place, and the Ghost herself appears this way in her white, flowing robe. I also incorporated flowery imagery into the costumes, and you will find an oversized hat, large wigs, and other elements to create a fanciful past.

The present is one world where we opted to stay true to the Victorian time-period. Costumes are realistic in form and in scale. Ebenezer Scrooge himself is drab, but surprisingly, the other characters in the present appear in warm, earthy tones. Fred, Scrooge's nephew, wears rich, jewel tones. The Cratchit Family, who we know is quite poor, is actually the warmest in tone, which reflects their love for each other and belief in the holiday spirit. Even The Ghost of Christmas Present is bright: look for touches from his red costume in the past and future as well.

The future is somber, dark, and nearly apocalyptic. This portion of the show is abstract and very theatrical; color drained from each of the characters. The Ghost of Christmas Yet to Come wears black from head to toe—aside from that one streak of red, which ties this spirit to Scrooge's past and the present worlds.

After viewing *A Christmas Carol*, you will come to understand how my research affected my designs. Costuming research is an exciting journey into the world of the play, and world history in general. I enjoy

designing costumes because I discover something with each new play. For my research, I plunge into costume books, fashion books, and, of course, the Internet for inspiration.

The Internet is a great tool for easily referencing costume ideas as well as the vast quantity of readily available information. The only problem is combing through it all. It is very time consuming. However, searching the Internet is always worth it because I typically find interesting images that are extremely useful to my research. I never know what will inspire me: street scenes, candid shots, a runway fashion show, or something as basic as patterns and textures. ❖

## Angela Balogh Calin ANW Resident Artist.

**With ANW:** Set Design: *The Dance of Death, Ghosts, The School For Wives, Julius Caesar, The Seagull, The Winter's Tale, As You Like It, Twelfth Night, Cyrano de Bergerac (1995), The Country Wife*. Costume Design: *Julius Caesar, Figaro, The Threepenny Opera, The Dance of Death, The Tempest, Tartuffe, Pericles, Prince of Tyre, The Beaux' Stratagem, A Christmas Carol, Cymbeline, The Bunter, Antony and Cleopatra, Twelfth Night, Or What You Will, The Comedy of Errors, The Chairs, Great Expectations, Waiting for Godot, Loot, As You Like It, A Midsummer Night's Dream* at The Hollywood Bowl and at ANW among others **Other Theatres:** South Coast Repertory, Pasadena Playhouse, Denver Center Theatre, The Old Globe, Laguna Playhouse, West Coast Ensemble, Milwaukee Rep., Georgia Shakespeare, Chautauqua Theatre Co., Ensemble Theatre Co., Antaeus Theatre, among others **Film/TV:** 16 productions with I.R.S.Media, PBS, Full Moon Productions, Moviestore Entertainment, Romanian Films **Education/ Training:** MFA in Set and Costume Design at The Academy of Fine Arts in Bucharest, Romania. Member of the Costume Designers Guild in the USA and Romania

Images by Spanish photographer, Eugenio Recuenco, caught the eyes of *A Christmas Carol*'s Co-Directors, Geoff Elliott and Julia Rodriguez-Elliott. Recuenco's "cinematic" and "pictorial" photos are featured in many fashion magazine editorials and advertisements. His photos, some of which are pictured here, inspired the overall design concept for Ebenezer Scrooge's uncertain FUTURE...



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## About: Production Music BY EGO PLUM

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**I STARTED OFF** as a drummer, performing in punk rock bands with my friends and older brothers. I also always loved cartoons and was fascinated by the music in them. Particularly, the music Carl Stalling had done on the Warner Bros. Looney Tunes. Growing up watching “PeeWee’s Playhouse” made me want to make music as well. I never had any interest in theater until I was approached to compose music and songs for the *Gogol Project* in 2010 for which I was recognized by the LA Stage Alliance with an Ovation Honor.

For this project, my biggest influence may be John Morris’ score for David Lynch’s film *Elephant Man*. I love that way that music feels. Other composers that inspire me include Raymond Scott, Dee Dee Ramone, Paul McCartney—so many!

Generally, in film and television, we have something that is called a “spotting session.” It’s a meeting where I sit with the director and watch through a film and decide where music is needed. In theater, it’s a bit more difficult and nebulous because no two performances are ever the same. Scenes are not “locked” to precise timing like they are in film, but this is the beautiful thing about theater as well. The fact that it has to be experienced in person, and how once the scene passes before your eyes, it’s gone forever! The things that make it beautiful are also the things that make it very challenging for a composer. Music sometimes needs to be “open ended” and continuous, rather than specific and landing on certain marks. Music helps create general moods and transitions, rather than specific hits, like in cartoons or movies.

The most important thing to me was figuring out what the EMOTIONAL NEEDS of the play are. I need to know what the characters are feeling, what they are trying to convey, and more importantly, what we need our audience to be feeling. These are the important issues that need to be solved in the composer/director relationship. Ultimately, you could use any absurd combination of instruments, but as long as the emotional needs are met, the score has achieved its purpose. Once these questions are answered, we can

move further into talking about the actual sound palette and what instruments we'd like to hear. At this point in a meeting, we will listen to examples to see if they feel right. For example, I brought in the theme to the film *Elephant Man* as well as some wonderfully whimsical cues from *Corpse Bride* that Danny Elfman had written. I also suggested using tuned chromatic bells as a central element to the score.

One of the most exciting and exhilarating parts of the composing process is the "fear of the unknown." The melodies and instruments I'm choosing tend to dictate the direction of the music itself. I can best describe it as trying to climb a ladder AND building it at the same time. You take one step up, but there is not another rung to step on. So you start to carve away at a piece of wood and then you hammer it in and then you take another step. In fact, I don't know what I'm going to see at the top of the ladder until I actually get up there, but I hope to see a musical landscape that is distinct between the past, present, and future.

Ultimately, music is simply particles of sound that are pushing through the air. And their sole purpose is to help tell a story that already exists. It's like a wind that helps push leaves in certain directions...but in this case, the leaves are emotions and story lines. *A Christmas Carol* is the ultimate story of second chances and redemption, so the music needs to help reflect that and reflect the journey Mr. Scrooge goes through to come to his realization about the spirit of Christmas. The music should help propel the story along, providing an emotional undercurrent whenever it's necessary. This is all very poetic and abstract again, but I do really look at it this way... But I cannot deny that sometimes music is simply just there to help kill time while a piece of a set is moved around the stage as well. Music serves many purposes in a show.... So as an audience, you may recognize some musical cues to simply be "transitional", while other musical cues serving to help convey the emotional depth of a certain scene or character. ❖

**Ego Plum** is an American musician, award-winning composer, and producer from Los Angeles. *A Christmas Carol* is the first show he has worked on at A Noise Within. His inventive & eccentric musical style stems from a variety of unconventional influences: The quirky jazz of Raymond Scott, the spastic stop-and-go arrangements of Carl Stalling, the frenetic energy of Oingo Boingo, Devo, The Residents, and the Dead Kennedy's, with the haunting beauty of Franz Waxman and Bernard Herrmann. He has recorded, performed, and collaborated with artists such as David J (Bauhaus/Love & Rockets), Frank Black (Pixies), Steve Bartek & Johnny Vatos (Oingo Boingo), Gidget Gein (Marilyn Manson), and Genesis P. Orridge (Throbbing Gristle/Psychic TV). Ego Plum performs live with his group Ebola Music Orchestra, and had toured the United States playing guitar with the Grammy-nominated, comedy-rock group Green Jëlly. He got the attention of Nickelodeon in 2008 and he was hired to compose music for Amy Winfrey's hit series, *Making Fiends*, which aired around the world. Ego's musical subversions can be heard on everything from KROQ radio bumpers to television commercials to fashion shows. Projects for 2013 include writing original music and songs for Rogue Artists Ensemble's stage production of *Pinocchio* and scoring Richard Elfman's long-awaited sequel to his cult classic, *Forbidden Zone*. *Forbidden Zone 2: The Forbidden Galaxy* will find Ego Plum co-composing the original music and songs alongside the illustrious Danny Elfman.



**MANY OF YOU** are already familiar with Charles Dickens' story. Perhaps you have seen another stage production, or viewed the classic film versions of *A Christmas Carol* (1938) and *Scrooge* (1951) on television. Mickey Mouse, the Muppets, and the Looney Toons took their stabs at Dickens' story. Various films like *It's A Wonderful Life* (1946), *Scrooged* (1988), and *Disney's A Christmas Carol* (2009) also draw basic plot points from

*A Christmas Carol* to serve as inspiration, and you'll notice countless TV shows do the same thing right around the holiday season. All of these productions speak to the spirit of Christmas, family values, holiday traditions, etc.

After viewing our version of *A Christmas Carol* here at A Noise Within, test out some of these discussion points, writing activities, or artistic endeavors:

## Discussion Points:

1. How did you feel about the characters in the story, and the way the ANW actors portrayed them?
2. How did ANW portray the past, the present, and the future in regards to their scenic, costume, and sound & music designs?
3. How do you think Scrooge wound up the way he did?
4. Would Scrooge have changed his ways without the visits from Jacob Marley and the three spirits?
5. If you or a spirit had the ability, would you desire a glimpse into your future, or would you prefer to wait for it to happen?
6. If you possessed wealth and power like Ebenezer Scrooge, would you behave that way, too? What would you do with the money, and how would you treat your employees?
7. Charles Dickens wrote "for change." Can you think of any other authors we study in class that also carry this same philosophy (novelists, essayists, playwrights, etc.)?

## Essay Topics

1. Read Dickens' original novel (free download available at: <http://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/46>) As a class, discuss the similarities and differences between Dickens' story and our ANW production, and write a brief essay to compare and contrast.
2. You have all the money in the world, just like Ebenezer Scrooge. Research various charities and non-profit organizations in the Los Angeles area, and write a brief essay on why you would support them.
3. It may come as no surprise to you that many Angelinos are preoccupied with money and material objects (clothes, cars, electronics, etc.). Do we, as a segment of society, need to change our opinions about the importance of money? Why or why not?
4. Read Charles Dickens' biography and timeline (included in this Study Guide). How do you feel Dickens' childhood affected his writing and activities as an adult? Next, write a short essay about your own childhood, and how it affects what you believe in, how you behave, and what activities you partake in today (ie creative writing, acting, volunteer work, etc.).
5. Put yourself in Scrooge's shoes: spirits whisk you away to view your past, your present, and your supposed future. What important moments would this ghost take you to see? How would you feel about seeing these things? Would you change anything in the present that would affect your future? Why or why not?

A Noise Within has developed these activities according to The Common Core State Standards for Language, Reading, Speaking, Listening and Writing at the 9<sup>th</sup> grade level and the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Learning and Thinking Skills.



### Art Imitates Life: The Industrial Revolution vs Today in LA

- Child Labor
- Environment
- Housing
- Gender Roles
- Literacy
- Organization of Labor/The Economy

Grab a partner and choose to explore one aspect of the Industrial Revolution from the list above.

One of you must research the effect your topic had on society during London's Industrial Revolution, and the other must research the issue and its current impact on Los Angeles.

Next, work together to create a collage/piece of visual artwork that summarizes your findings. Or, write a short play, poem, story, or song to depict your findings, and present it to the class.



Old Fezziwig from A Christmas Carol

### What if....?

Ask your students to imagine what if!

- What if Scrooge didn't change after all the ghosts came?
- What if the ghosts were different?
- What if Scrooge had chosen Belle all those years ago?

Have them write and perform the various outcomes!

### Character Building

Have each student choose a character to embody. They must work on posture, gestures and facial expressions to become these characters-no words! Have them interact with each other silently in character.

### Re-Set It!

A Christmas Carol has been reimaged in a million different ways. Now is the chance for your students to do it how they want to! Have them design sets, costumes and music for how and where they would like to see A Christmas Carol. Maybe they do it in the 60's, maybe today, maybe in Ancient Egypt... the possibilities are endless!

## BOOKS

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- Douglas-Fairhurst, Robert. ***Becoming Dickens: The Invention of a Novelist***. Harvard U. Press. 2011.
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- Slater, Michael. ***Charles Dickens: A Life Defined by Writing***. New Haven: Yale U. Press, 2009.
- Standiford, Les. ***The Man Who Invented Christmas: How Charles Dickens's a Christmas Carol Rescued His Career and Revived Our Holiday Spirits***. New York: Broadway Paperbacks, 2008.
- Tomalin, Claire. ***Charles Dickens: A Life***. Penguin, 2011.

## FREE E-BOOKS

- **Dickens' Original A Christmas Carol Manuscript:** <http://www.themorgan.org/collections/works/dickens/ChristmasCarol/1>
- **Dickens' A Christmas Carol (various formats):** <http://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/46>

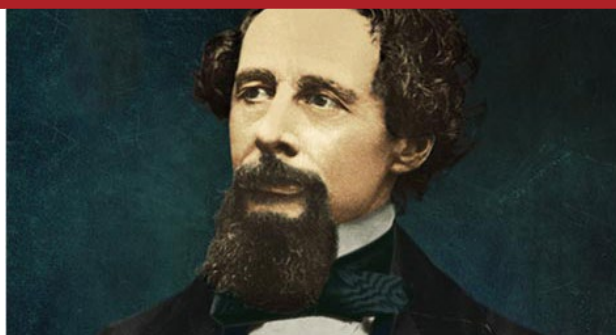
## FILMS

- **A Christmas Carol**. Dir. Hugh Harman. With Reginald Owen and Gene Lockhart. 1938.
- **A Christmas Carol** (also known as **Scrooge**). Dir. Brian Desmond Hurst. With Alastair Sim and Mervyn Johns. 1951.

## WEBSITES

- **The Dickens Project** (UC Santa Cruz): <http://dickens.ucsc.edu/>
- **David Purdue's Charles Dickens Page:** <http://charlesdickenspage.com/index.html>
- **Charles Dickens Museum, London:** <http://www.dickensmuseum.com/>
- **PBS Dickens Page:** <http://www.pbs.org/wnet/dickens/life.html>
- **Victorian Web Dickens Page:** <http://www.victorianweb.org/authors/dickens/index.html>

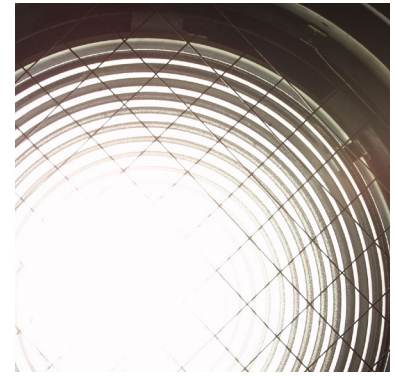
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# About: Theatre Arts

## KEY THEATRICAL TERMS



Today, movies and television take audiences away from what was once the number one form of amusement: going to the theatre. But attending a live theatrical performance is still one of the most thrilling and active forms of entertainment.

In a theatre, observers are catapulted into the action, especially at an intimate venue like *A Noise Within*, whose thrust stage reaches out into the audience and whose actors can see, hear, and feel the response of the crowd.

Although playhouses in the past could sometimes be rowdy, participating in the performance by giving respect and attention to the actors is the most appropriate behavior at a theatrical performance today. Shouting out (or even whispering) can be heard throughout the auditorium, as can rustling paper or ringing phones.

After *A Noise Within's* performance of *A Christmas Carol*, you will have the opportunity to discuss the play's content and style with the performing artists and directors. You may wish to remind students to observe the performance carefully or to compile questions ahead of time so they are prepared to participate in the discussion.

**blocking:** The instructions a director gives his actors that tell them how and where to move in relation to each other or to the set in a particular scene.

**character:** The personality or part portrayed by an actor on stage.

**conflict:** The opposition of people or forces which causes the play's rising action.

**dramatic irony:** A dramatic technique used by a writer in which a character is unaware of something the audience knows.

**genre:** Literally, "kind" or "type." In literary terms, genre refers to the main types of literary form, principally comedy and tragedy. It can also refer to forms that are more specific to a given historical era, such as the revenge tragedy, or to more specific sub-genres of tragedy and comedy such as the comedy of manners, farce or social drama.

**motivation:** The situation or mood which initiates an action. Actors often look for their "motivation" when they try to dissect how a character thinks or acts.

**props:** Items carried on stage by an actor to represent objects mentioned in or implied by the script. Sometimes the props are actual, sometimes they are manufactured in the theatre shop.

**proscenium stage:** There is usually a front curtain on a proscenium stage. The audience views the play from the front through a "frame" called the proscenium arch. In this scenario, all audience members have the same view of the actors.

**set:** The physical world created on stage in which the action of the play takes place.

**setting:** The environment in which a play takes place. It may include the historical period as well as the physical space.

**stage areas:** The stage is divided into areas to help the director to note where action will take place. Upstage is the area furthest from the audience. Downstage is the area closest to the audience. Center stage defines the middle of the playing space. Stage left is the actor's left as he faces the audience. Stage right is the actor's right as he faces the audience.

**theme:** The overarching message or main idea of a literary or dramatic work. A recurring idea in a play or story.

**thrust stage:** A stage that juts out into the audience seating area so that patrons are seated on three sides. In this scenario, audience members see the play from varying viewpoints. *A Noise Within* features a thrust stage.

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# About: A Noise Within

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**A NOISE WITHIN'S MISSION** is to produce great works of world drama and to foster appreciation of history's greatest plays and playwrights through comprehensive educational programs. ANW is the only theatre in Southern California and one of only a handful in North America to exclusively produce year-round classical dramatic literature — from master works by Euripides, Moliere and Shakespeare, to modern classics by Arthur Miller, Henrik Ibsen and Samuel Beckett — in rotating repertory with a company of classically trained resident artists.

The company was formed in 1991. All of A Noise Within's Resident Artists have been classically trained, and many hold Master of Fine Arts degrees from some of the nation's most respected institutions.

In its 24 year history, A Noise Within has garnered over 500 awards and commendations, including the Los Angeles Drama Critics' Circle's revered Polly Warfield Award for Excellence and the coveted Margaret Hartford Award for Sustained Excellence.

More than 33,000 individuals attend productions at A Noise Within annually. In addition, the theatre draws over 10,000 student participants to its arts education program, *Classics Live!* Students benefit from in-classroom workshops, conservatory training, subsidized tickets to matinee and evening performances, post-performance discussions with artists, and free standards-based Study Guides.

A Noise Within's vision is to become a national leader in the production of classical theatre, creating an environment that continues to attract the finest classical theatre artists, educates, and inspires audiences of all ages, and trains the leading classical theatre artists of tomorrow. ❖

## Study Guides

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A Noise Within creates study guides in alignment with core reading, listening, speaking, and performing arts standards to help educators prepare their students for their visit to our theatre. Study guides are available at no extra cost to download through our website: [www.anoisewithin.org](http://www.anoisewithin.org). The information and activities outlined in these guides are designed to work in compliance with the California VAPA standards, The Common Core, and 21st Century Learning Skills.

Study guides include background information on the plays and playwrights, historical context, textual analysis, in-depth discussion of A Noise Within's artistic interpretation of the work, statements from directors and designers, as well as discussion points and suggested classroom activities. Guides from past seasons are also available to download from the website.

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### Study Guide Credits

Alicia Green *Education Director and Editor*

Skip Nicholson *Author*

Craig Schwartz *Production Photography*

Teresa English *Graphic Design*

Anna Rodil *Administrative Assistant*

Leah Artenian *Education Associate*

Savannah Gilmore *Education Intern*



Geoff Elliott & Julia Rodriguez-Elliott, Producing Artistic Directors  
3352 E. Foothill Blvd., Pasadena, CA 91107  
Tel 626.356.3100 / Fax 626.356.3120  
[anoisewithin.org](http://anoisewithin.org)