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What the Dickens?

By John Lamb, Buck
Busfield, and Dave Pierini

Teacher's Guide



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TABLE OF CONTENTS

BEFORE, DURING, AND AFTER THE PLAY

Before the Play	3-4
About the Play: Synopsis, About Charles Dickens, Themes	
Shadows of Words to Come (Part A)	
Pre-Show Discussion Questions with Theatrical Terms List	
During and After the Play	5
Audience Behavior	
Post-show Discussion Questions	

CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES

Vocabulary	6
Shadows of Words to Come (Part B)	
Rhyme Time	
A Way with Words	
Breaking It Down	
Writing, Listening and Speaking	7
The Gift of Charity	
This vs. That	
Telling Tales	
Spelling and Comprehension Check	8
Word Finder	
Character Counts	9
Anti-bullying and History	10
Bring Us Your Tired, Your Poor	
Picture it!	

RESOURCES & ADDENDUMS

Further Reading and Learning, Index	11
A Way with Words Word Search	12

BEFORE THE PLAY

ABOUT THE PLAY

SYNOPSIS:

Charles Dickens takes us on a whirl-wind adventure through Victorian London and some of his most beloved holiday stories. We see Pip of *Great Expectations* earn a handsome fortune and the girl of his dreams thanks to an unlikely benefactor, while the Princess Alicia of *Holiday Romance* teaches her father the true value of hard work and genuine charity and we find out who is really haunting the manor of *The Haunted House*. Ebenezer And...Ebenezer Scrooge of *A Christmas Carol* takes his revenge on his ghostly Christmas visitors only to receive his come-uppance once more.

About Charles Dickens

Charles Dickens was born February 7th, 1812 to Elizabeth and John Dickens in Portsmouth, England. His family moved often according to their financial circumstances. The Dickens family moved to London in 1824, where at the age of 12 Dickens was forced to work at Warren's Blacking Warehouse packaging shoe polish. His father was thrown into the Marshalsea debtor's prison soon after, but upon his release he immediately sent his son to school. After three years, Dickens again entered the workforce. He served as an office boy at a law firm and later as a court reporter and journalist reporting on Parliament and political elections. He began his literary career by submitting his short stories or sketches to magazines, and then published his first novel in 1836. He penned such classics as *A Christmas Carol*, *Oliver Twist*, *A Tale of Two Cities*, and *Great Expectations* and enjoyed enormous success in his lifetime. Dickens died in 1870.

Dickens' 'novels' were first serialized in short installments released monthly or weekly over the course of 1 ½ to 2 years—a model of publication similar to comic books or the airing of TV series' today. His *Great Expectations* was published this way beginning in December of 1860. *A Christmas Carol* was released in the winter of 1843 as a shorter, stand-alone story. *The Haunted House* was a collection of stories penned by Dickens and other authors (male and female) published in 1859. *A Holiday Romance* was published in an American children's magazine in 1868 written from the point of view of several children.

Activity 1: Shadows of Words to Come (Part A)

READING: 1.0 Vocabulary and Concept Development
3:1.4 4:1.2, 1.5 5:1.3

Some of Dickens' stories adapted in *What the Dickens* depict ghosts and spirits. Using a THESAURUS, find as many synonyms for "ghost" as you can. Listen for these words during the performance.

BEFORE THE PLAY

THEMES:

Literature, Social Justice, Generosity,
Classic Archetypes, Character Counts

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

LISTENING & SPEAKING 1.0 Strategies:

Comprehension

K:1.2 3:1.3 4:1.1 5:1.2

LISTENING & SPEAKING 1.0 Strategies:

Organization and Delivery of Oral Communication

1:1.4 2:1.6 5:1.5

VISUAL & PERFORMING ARTS

1.0 Artistic Perception

1. What is the difference between a live play and a movie? How do you expect this play to be different from movies you have seen?
2. Introduce the terms listed in the Theatrical Terms list provided. Can you give examples of these terms from plays or movies you've seen?
3. What is a narrator and what does he or she do? Name examples from books, movies, or plays you have seen.
4. Summarize what you know about Charles Dickens: What stories did he write and what subjects did he write about? Why do you think he should be remembered?
5. How much control do you think a writer has over the way his or her stories are interpreted and reinterpreted? How much say should they have when their work gets adapted for the stage or screen?

THEATRE TERMS

VISUAL & PERFORMING ARTS

3.0 Historical & Cultural Context

Make sure you know the following terms so you can use them later.

SCRIPT: The written play that tells actors what to say and what to do.

ACTORS: The people who say the words and do the actions on stage.

CHARACTER: The person or thing that an actor pretends to be or portrays

DIRECTOR: The person who tells the actors how to say the words and how to do the actions.

SCENERY or the SET: The backdrops, furniture, and other pieces that show the audience where the play is happening.

COSTUMES or WARDROBE: The clothes and other items an actor wears to show who they are.

PROPS: The things that actors use (such as a book or broom) during the play.

SOUND: The sound effects (like a doorbell or thunder) that help to tell the story.

LIGHTING: The lights that help the audience to see the actors and scenery on the stage.

THEATER: The place where a play is performed. It is from the Greek word *THEATRON*, which means “*watching place*.”

DURING AND AFTER THE PLAY

DURING THE PLAY

AUDIENCE BEHAVIOR

While watching a live theatre performance, it is important to sit attentively and listen. It does not mean that you need to be silent. Be sure to laugh at the funny parts (or cry at the sad parts), and certainly applaud at the end! Actors love it when an audience is involved with the show by actively watching and listening.

AFTER THE PLAY

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

LISTENING & SPEAKING 1.0 Strategies: Comprehension

K:1.2 3:1.3 4:1.1 5:1.2

LISTENING & SPEAKING 1.0 Strategies: Organization and Delivery of Oral Communication

1:1.4 2:1.6 5:1.5

VISUAL & PERFORMING ARTS

1.0 Artistic Perception

4.0 Aesthetic Valuing

5.0 Connections, Relationships, Applications

1. Which was your favorite character or scene from the play? Why?
2. Who were the main characters? How do you know?
3. Refer back to the Theatrical Terms list on page 4. What examples of these terms did you find in the play?
 - a. What did you think of the scenery, costumes, and props? Did they help you to understand the stories that the actors told? Why or why not?
 - b. How did the music or sound effects used during the show help you to understand the stories being told?
4. Was there anything about the show that confused you or made it harder for you to follow the stories being told? What could have been done to avoid this?
5. Which stories from the play were told by a narrator? How did the narrator's personal perspective affect the way he or she told the story?
6. This play was based on books written by Charles Dickens such as *A Christmas Carol*, *Great Expectations*, *The Hunchback of Notre Dame*, and *Holiday Romance*. How did the way this play represented Dickens and his books depart from what you knew about Dickens and his work? Name some possible reasons for these departures.

CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES

Vocabulary

VISUAL & PERFORMING ARTS

5.0 Connections, Relationships, Applications

Activity 1: Shadows of Words to Come (Part B)

READING: 1.0 Vocabulary and Concept Development

3:1.4 4:1.2, 1.5 5:1.3

How many synonyms for “ghost” did you hear in the play? What other words could the characters have used?

Activity 2: Rhyme Time!

READING 1.0: Phonemic Awareness

K:1.10 1:1.6

Can you find words that rhyme with the following words from the play?

lad lord clerk runt mote

Activity 3: A Way with Words

The following words can be used in discussion of the play and in other activities.

LISTENING & SPEAKING: 1.0 Strategies: Organization and Delivery of Oral Communication

3:1.7

- | | | |
|------------|--------------|--------------|
| 1. orphan | 6. haunt | 11. stingy |
| 2. estate | 7. gentleman | 12. revenge |
| 3. charity | 8. repent | 13. hearth |
| 4. fortune | 9. constable | 14. civility |
| 5. miser | 10. mansion | |

1. Use a DICTIONARY to define the words, divide them into syllables, and identify the parts of speech.

READING 1.0 Vocabulary and Concept Development

2:1.10 3:1.7

2. Select five of these words and use the DICTIONARY to understand their Greek or Latin roots.

READING 1.0 Vocabulary and Concept Development

4:1.4 5:1.2,1.4

Activity 4: Breaking It Down

READING 1.0 Vocabulary and Concept Development

3:1.8 4:1.3 5:1.4

Divide the following words you may have heard during the play into syllables and identify roots, prefixes, and suffixes. How does this help you understand the meaning of each word?

- | | | |
|------------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| 1. covetous | 6. visitation | 11. machination |
| 2. subsequent | 7. exterminator | 12. expectation |
| 3. miserable | 8. reasonable | 13. perilous |
| 4. insubstantial | 9. dreadful | 14. superiority |
| 5. consideration | 10. ponderous | 15. benefactor |

CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES

Activity 5: The Gift of Charity

WRITING: Applications

1:2.2 3:2.2

LISTENING AND SPEAKING: Applications

1:2.3 3:2.3

In *A Christmas Carol* and *Holiday Romance*, Dickens shows how showing kindness (or not showing kindness) can change a person and affect how he or she sees the world.

Describe a time when you did something kind for someone else. Why did you do what you did and how did it make you feel?

Share with the class.

LISTENING AND SPEAKING

VISUAL & PERFORMING ARTS

5.0 Connections, Relationships, Applications

LISTENING AND SPEAKING: 1.0 Strategies:

Organization and Delivery of Oral Communication

LISTENING AND SPEAKING: 1.0 Strategies:

Comprehension

Listen carefully to your classmates' presentations and ask them questions. Which of your classmates' stories do you like best?

WRITING

VISUAL & PERFORMING ARTS

5.0 Connections, Relationships, Applications

WRITING: 1.0 Strategies: Organization and Focus, Penmanship

WRITING: 1.0 Strategies: Evaluation and Revision

2:1.4 3:1.4 4:1.10 5:1.6 6:1.6

Be sure to revise and edit what you write.

Activity 6: This vs. That

READING 3.0: Literary Criticism

5:3.6

From the stories presented in *What the Dickens*, identify which characters were presented as heroes and which were presented as villains. What did these characters represent? What other archetypal relationships did you see? You may want to draw pictures to illustrate your conclusions.

Activity 7: Telling Tales

WRITING: 1.0 Strategies: Organization and Focus

5:1.1

WRITING: 2.0 Applications

1:2.1 2:2.1 3:2.1 4:2.1 5:2.1

LISTENING AND SPEAKING: 2.0 Applications

1:2.1 2:2.1 3:2.1 4:2.1 5:2.1

Write a narrative based on your own experience and/or your imagination according to one of the following prompts. Share with the class.

- A. Write a ghost story of your own or one that you have heard. Use sensory details, foreshadowing, and/or repetition to create your desired effect upon the reader (dread, wonder, sympathy).
- B. Write a holiday story of your own according to a theme you think is appropriate for or indicative of the season. How do your characters' actions speak for or against this theme? What lesson can we learn from your story?
- C. Dickens often based his characters upon himself or people that he knew. Divide the class into groups of four and have each student in the group write a short story with characters who think and act like the other members of the group. Discuss what details are used from real life and why.
- D. Write a story using a narrator. Be sure to develop the narrator as a character and define his or her point of view clearly. How would your story be different if narrated by a different character?

CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES

SPELLING

READING: 1.0 Decoding and Word Recognition

1:1.10

Activity 8: Word Finder

One of the stories told during the play was based on *A Christmas Carol* by Dickens. Use the words A C H R I S T M A S C A R O L to spell as many words as you can. Here are some examples:

his	hat	mat	slam
chasm	mash	rat	clam
mast	smash	coal	charm
car	crash	coral	roast
harm	roam	ram	coast
mass	alarm	slot	most

COMPREHENSION CHECK

LISTENING & SPEAKING 1.0 Strategies: Comprehension

K:1.2 3:1.3 4:1.1 5:1.2

LISTENING & SPEAKING 1.0 Strategies: Organization and Delivery of Oral Communication

1:1.4 2:1.6 5:1.5

VISUAL & PERFORMING ARTS

1.0 Artistic Perception

Check your students understanding of the events presented during the play:

“Bah Humbug”—based on *A Christmas Carol*

1. Last Christmas, the ghosts of Christmas Past, Present, and Future tried to scare Scrooge and teach him to treat people better. What did he do to get back at those ghosts?
2. Why was Charles Dickens angry with Scrooge?
3. What lessons do you think Scrooge learned by the end of the story?

Great Expectations

4. Why does Magwitch give Pip his fortune?
5. What does Pip have to do to become a proper English gentleman?
6. Why does Miss Havisham wear a wedding dress?

Romance: from the pen of Alice Rainbird, aged 7—from Holiday Romance

7. What lessons does the Princess Alicia teach her father?
8. Why does the Princess Alicia wait so long to use the wishbone her father gives her from the Grandmarina?
9. How does the Princess Alicia manage all of her brothers and sisters?

The Haunted House

10. What do Ikey and his mother do to scare away the narrator and his family?
11. Why do Ikey and his mother haunt the mansion?
12. What solution does the narrator propose, once Ikey and his mother are unmasked?

CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES

CHARACTER COUNTS

HISTORY AND SOCIAL SCIENCE

A Child's Place in Time and Space 1.1

VISUAL & PERFORMING ARTS

5.0 Connections, Relationships, Applications

Thematic discussion questions for *What the Dickens?*

Charity:

1. What is charity? What does it mean to show charity or be charitable? What is a charity?
2. What characters in the play showed charity and how did they show it?
3. What characters refused to act charitably? How did this affect those around them?
4. What are some ways that you can show charity to friends, classmates, and family members?
5. Name some examples of charitable organizations or programs you have heard of. Explain what these organizations do and how their efforts impact your community.

Responsibility:

1. "To be responsible, people need to be able to foresee the consequences of their actions." (from Character Counts) What examples can you see of this in your life?
2. Which characters in the play behaved responsibly? How so? Were any of the characters irresponsible? Explain.
3. What consequences did they or others suffer because of their irresponsible actions?
4. If you make a mistake, what are some ways you can take responsibility for it?
5. In the play, Dickens describes how some young boys were forced to fend for themselves when their families could no longer care for them. Who do you think is responsible for making sure that everyone in a community has food and shelter?

Respect/Consideration:

Respect can be broken down in this acronym: TASC: Thoughtful, Aware, Sensitive, Courteous

1. What examples of these attributes did you see in the play? What examples do you see around you in school and at home?
2. In the scenes where you DIDN'T see this, what happened between the characters?
3. You can't force someone to respect you. How do you gain someone's respect? What did Pip do to win Miss Havisham's respect? Did it work?
4. What does it mean to be considerate of others? When have you tried to be considerate of others' needs or feelings?

Self-Reliance:

1. What does it mean to be self-reliant? You may want to look up the word "rely" and then use what you know about suffixes to infer the word's meaning.
2. Name specific incidents from the play where you saw characters solve their own problems or improve their own circumstances. What did they gain from these experiences?
3. How did the Princess Alicia know when to make her wish? How do you know when to ask for help and when to help yourself?

Fairness:

1. Where in the play did you see examples of fairness? Where did you see unfairness and how did the characters react?
2. Where in your life do you experience fairness and unfairness?
3. What can you do in your home, classroom, or community to promote fairness?

CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES

ANTI-BULLYING

HISTORY AND SOCIAL SCIENCE

People Who Make a Difference 2.3.2

VISUAL & PERFORMING ARTS

5.0 Connections, Relationships, Applications

Thematic discussion questions for *What the Dickens?*

1. In this play, who were the bullies? How did they bully other characters?
2. Who were the ones being picked on?
3. How did the ones being picked on resolve the problem? Can you do the same thing at school? Why/Why not?
4. In the play, Scrooge seeks revenge against the ghosts who tried to scare him into being a good person. How does seeking revenge against bullies or others who treat you badly affect the problem? What are some other ways to stop someone from bullying you?
5. How do you feel when you see someone else being bullied? What should you do?
6. How do you forgive someone who bullies you? What are some good ways to show forgiveness?
7. In the play, Dickens tells us how the legendary police force known as Scotland Yard came to be and how their tactics have influenced modern police work. How do you know when to solve a problem yourself and when to ask for help from a parent, teacher, or even a police officer? How can the police or other authorities help solve disputes and keep order?

HISTORY

Activity 9: Bring Us Your Tired, Your Poor

HISTORY AND SOCIAL SCIENCE

Continuity and Change 3.2

California: a Changing State 4.2

United States History and Geography: Making a New Nation 5.1,4

Create a brochure, poster, or other informational resource telling how the historical societies you are studying handled the following issues touched on in *What the Dickens?* Present to the class.

- A. In Dickens' time, British society prized work and productivity so highly, that widows, orphans, the elderly and disabled people who could not support themselves were forced to live in workhouses while others went homeless or lived and worked in deplorable conditions. How did the societies you have been studying help widows, orphans, the elderly, the disabled and others who could not support themselves? Where could such people go to find food and shelter? What was their social standing and how easily could they achieve self-sufficiency in these societies?
- B. As noted above, Scotland Yard became a real and formidable police force during Dickens' time—working to keep order and to make London a safer place to live. How did the societies you have studied keep order and ensure public safety? Who was specifically responsible for keeping order and enforcing laws? What tactics did they use?
- C. According to *What the Dickens*, London was also a very smelly, crowded place during Dickens' time. How did the societies you studied keep their homes and cities clean? How crowded were their cities, towns, and villages? Did they experience any outbreaks of deadly diseases? What caused these outbreaks and what did they do to stem and stop the spread of disease?

RESOURCES & ADDENDUMS

FURTHER READING & LEARNING

Electronic Resource

"Dickens' Christmas Stories" by the Florida Center for Instructional Technology: <http://etc.usf.edu/lit2go/67/dickens-christmas-stories/>

Charles Dickens: Biography

<http://www.biography.com/people/charles-dickens-9274087>

The Complete Works of Charles Dickens: <http://www.dickens-literature.com/>

Christmas History and Traditions: A Celebrate Winter Holidays Activity

<http://www.scholastic.com/teachers/activity/christmas-history-and-traditions-celebrate-winter-holidays-activity>

Books

The Friendly Dickens: Being a Good Natured Guide to the Art and Adventures of the Man Who Invented Scrooge by Norrie Epstein

Dickens by Peter Ackroyd

Victorian England by Ruth Ashby

INDEX

READING

Decoding and Word Recognition: 8

Vocabulary and Concept

Development: 3, 6

Phonemic Awareness: 6

Literary Criticism: 7

WRITING

1.0 Strategies

-Organization and Focus: 7

-Penmanship: 7

-Evaluation and Revision: 7

2.0 Applications: 7

LISTENING AND SPEAKING

1.0 Strategies

-Comprehension: 4, 5, 8

-Organization and Delivery of Oral

Communication: 4, 5, 6, 7, 8

2.0 Applications: 7

HISTORY AND SOCIAL SCIENCE

A Child's Place in Time and Space: 9

People Who Make a Difference: 10

Continuity and Change: 10

California: A Changing State: 10

Making a New Nation: 10

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS

1.0 Artistic Perception: 5, 8

3.0 Historical & Cultural Context: 4

4.0 Aesthetic Valuing: 5

5.0 Connections, Relationships,
Applications: 5, 6, 7, 9, 10

A Way with Words Word Search

Find these words in the word search.

CHARITY
CIVILITY
CONSTABLE
ESTATE
FORTUNE
GENTLEMAN
HAUNT
HEARTH
MANSION
MISER
ORPHAN
REPENT
REVENGE
STINGY

J	S	K	F	N	C	Y	E	T	I	U	G	W	V	S
I	K	F	O	A	A	H	G	Y	I	R	A	E	B	S
H	M	Y	R	M	V	S	Y	Q	E	U	E	Z	Z	C
S	L	F	T	E	C	C	I	V	I	L	I	T	Y	H
X	Z	U	U	L	B	H	E	N	B	D	Y	M	A	E
D	R	K	N	T	F	N	A	A	A	G	H	U	I	T
M	E	E	E	N	G	Q	T	R	N	H	N	S	H	A
M	U	K	A	E	V	S	H	I	I	T	P	Y	O	T
I	Z	C	U	G	N	F	T	E	I	T	B	R	F	S
S	L	M	M	O	P	S	Q	L	A	J	Y	U	O	E
E	P	A	C	L	O	V	D	Y	V	R	W	M	T	U
R	Z	N	U	O	F	K	M	R	O	P	T	Q	N	I
H	M	F	A	P	R	E	P	E	N	T	B	H	J	A
I	U	Q	C	R	G	B	R	R	H	X	N	G	J	P
W	E	C	D	J	N	O	I	S	N	A	M	P	C	K

ATTENTION 3rd-8th GRADE TEACHERS:

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Rules

- Students must be 7-14 years of age.
- Plays must be no longer than 10 pages.
- Plays may contain up to 8 characters.
- No more than 2 students may collaborate on a script.
- Send a photocopy of the play to *The B Street School Tour* with your student's name, telephone number, and name of school. Please note that scripts will not be returned.
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- Oscar Statuette
- Certificate of Achievement
- Official Notification of Award
- Name announced at every performance.
- Recognition in local newspapers
- Awards will be presented at a public performance in spring of 2014 at the B Street Theatre.



B Street Theatre School Tour
2711 B Street
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www.bstreettheatre.org

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B Street Theatre 2013-2014



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Student matinees

you come to us.

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An Original Adaptation

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by Jerry R. Montoya

Follow the incredible story of one woman's extraordinary courage and her riveting journey from slavery to freedom.

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Recommended for children ages 8+

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Music by Shelly Markham

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What the Dickens?

Charles Dickens' legendary tales come to life in a whirlwind of adventure, mystery and romance!

NOVEMBER 4 – 27, 2013

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The B Street School Tour performers add our traditional holiday twist to these legendary tales from Dickens.

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