



 Prestwick House

# Activity Pack

## A CHRISTMAS CAROL

BY CHARLES DICKENS



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Written by Kelley McConathy

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**Pre-Reading****Research**

**Objective:** Establishing a historical context for reading *A Christmas Carol*

**Activity**

*A Christmas Carol* is set in London, sometime in the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. What was happening in the world, politically, at that time? What were the popular novels and songs of the day? What new inventions were being introduced? It will be beneficial to learn more about the world in 1850 before reading Dickens's novel.

Using the Internet or print reference sources to do your research, fill in the **World in 1850 chart** on the next page. You **must** make at least **five** entries in **each** column. Turn the completed chart in to your teacher.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**Stave I****Cliché and Simile**

**Objective:** Recognizing clichéd similes and writing more creative ones

**Activity**

The narrator tells us that Marley is “dead as a door-nail,” then goes on to comment that the phrase doesn’t necessarily make sense. As it is a time-honored, well-worn phrase, though, the narrator decides to stick with it.

“Dead as a door-nail” is a simile, but it is also a cliché: something that has been said so many times that it comes readily to the tongue but isn’t a fresh, original, lively use of language. To complete the **Clichés to Original Similes Chart** below, fill in the second column with the common, clichéd ending of each phrase in the first. Then, fill in the third column with your own fresh and original ending. Challenge yourself to be as creative as possible in creating your own similes. The first one has been done for you as an example.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## Stave I

Allusion

Objective: Understanding allusion

## Activity

Some human figures—whether “real people” or fictional characters—possess such distinctive personalities, characteristics, or achievements that they become somewhat “larger than life” to the rest of us, and we might **allude** to them to make a point. To allude is to make a reference, or an **allusion**, to something else (a person, place, event, film, et cetera).

Ebenezer Scrooge is one such figure. Even if you have not read or seen a film version of *A Christmas Carol*, you will probably know what it means to say, “My boss is a real Scrooge.” This implies that, at the very least, he’s a stingy, not particularly warm, kind of guy.

Below are five sentences containing references to other frequently alluded to figures. Complete each sentence in a way that shows that you understand the allusion—that is, that you recognize the reference and know what the speaker means by making it. When you finish with these, write three **original** sentences making allusions to three **other** people that you think most people your age and in your country will recognize.

1. You could say that my brother’s the Bill Gates of Fairfax County, because he...

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2. Ari’s such a Casanova that he even...

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3. Though Joyce would like to think she is, she’s no Mother Teresa—she doesn’t even...

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4. Jordan calls himself the next Will Smith because he...

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5. Cecilia’s friends told her she pulled an Agulera at the talent show because...

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Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**Staves I – V****Characterization****Objective:** Keeping a character log for Scrooge**Activity**

As *A Christmas Carol* progresses, more and more is learned about Ebenezer Scrooge. We learn from other characters' observations, Scrooge's actions, and Scrooge's words. As you read, keep a "character log" on Scrooge. In the left column, note down any significant or interesting actions or speeches of Scrooge's, as well as any insightful observations others make about Scrooge. In the right column, comment on what each entry in the left column tells you about Scrooge's character. If you quote directly from the book, remember to record page numbers along with the quotations.

Once you fill up the spaces allotted on this page, please use the back to continue your character log. **You should make a minimum of four log entries per stave.** One sample log entry (from Stave I) is provided for you.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**Stave II****Creative Writing and Dialogue****Objective:** Writing dialogue and writing descriptively**Activity**

We often learn as much about characters from their conversations as we do from their actions. This activity will enable you to demonstrate your knowledge of *A Christmas Carol's* characters and to exercise your imagination.

Suppose that, like Marley's Ghost, Fezziwig's Ghost comes to haunt Scrooge. Write at least a page of dialogue that might occur between them. Feel free to let the dialogue carry you beyond what you already know of Scrooge and Fezziwig, but strive to represent them accurately.

When you have finished your dialogue, write a descriptive, detailed paragraph outlining your idea of what Fezziwig's Ghost might look like. (Hint: Marley's Ghost wears chains. What would Fezziwig's wear?) Include—as Dickens does in his descriptions of the Ghosts—the details of Fezziwig's ghost's dress and demeanor.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**Stave III****Collage**

**Objective:** Creating visuals to complement and extend the meaning of the text

**Activity**

Much of Stave III reads like one great collage of images. Dickens energetically describes scenes of plenty and festivity throughout the town: heavily laden tables and, even where such tables are scarce, light hearts permeate the pages. At a number of points, Scrooge begins to feel close to and involved with the people who are celebrating Christmas—but a huge, seemingly impassable gulf lies between him and them.

Using your own drawn or painted illustrations, computer images, and/or images found in magazines and catalogues, create a collage that captures both the tangible and intangible riches Dickens describes in Stave III. Locate Scrooge, as you envision him, somewhere in your collage, and find some way to visually represent his estrangement from the rest of the scene.

Your collage should be at least 11" x 17" (the size of two pieces of printer paper stuck together). Be prepared to share it with the class and explain the artistic decisions you made, including how they specifically relate to Stave III.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## Stave IV

### Theme and Critical Thinking

**Objective:** Considering the significance of one of the novel's themes in our own lives

#### Activity

*A Christmas Carol* posits the idea that tangible riches (an abundance of food, luxuries, and so on) mean nothing unless they are accompanied by intangible ones, such as love and warmth of spirit. Intangible riches, Dickens argues, however, *do* have value independent of tangible ones; one can merrily celebrate Christmas even if one has no turkey or presents in one's possession.

With your group, brainstorm and list examples of the tangible riches you would like to possess as an adult and the intangible ones you would like to have in your adult lives. Then decide, as a group, which kind of riches you would choose if you could *only* have those in one of the columns. If members disagree, work together to come to a consensus: your group's decision must be unanimous.

Does your group come to the same conclusion as Dickens does in *A Christmas Carol*? Be prepared to explain and defend your answer to the rest of the class.



Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**Stave V****Political Cartoon and Satire****Objective:** Creating a satirical political cartoon**Activity**

Unlike comic strips, political cartoons tend to be made up of one panel only. Their subjects are generally political issues and figures currently in the news. Such cartoons are often a wickedly funny form of criticism.

Write and draw a one-panel political cartoon that includes one of the ghosts or Scrooge himself as a character: for example, you might show one of the ghosts haunting your state governor due to a bit of unpopular legislation, or Scrooge being in charge of spending on Social Security. Your cartoon should speak to some issue relevant to the current news (whether national, global, or local) in addition to employing one of these figures from *A Christmas Carol*.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## Wrap-Up

### Synthesis

Objectives:     Assessing the novel  
                  Creating a new cover for the novel

### Activity

It's said that you shouldn't judge a book by its cover, but there's no denying the power of an intriguing cover to drive us to pick up a book. Imagine that *A Christmas Carol* is about to be reissued, and that you are in charge of developing the cover art and the descriptive "blurb" on the back.

Fold a sheet of paper so that you can provide both a front and a back cover. For the front cover, you may use images collaged from elsewhere, draw the artwork, or make the art on a computer. You might depict a key scene from the book that can stand for the entire story; you might simply use a few well-chosen images that evoke the book's mood. Be sure to include the title and the author's name.

On the back cover, write a brief review of the book. Address such topics as

- what you learned from the novel
- what the novel's overall theme seems to be
- whether you would recommend this book to others, and
- why you do or do not think this is a good novel to teach in schools

Include a paragraph-long biography of the author at the bottom, using facts researched on the Internet or in other books. Be prepared to say why you think your cover design might attract more readers than the current design.