Charles Dickens’ immortal *A Christmas Carol* (1843) has the unusual honor of being a story turned into myth. *A Christmas Carol* has inverted the usual folk process; rather than beginning as an oral story that was later written down, the Carol was written to be retold, adapted, and revised over the years.

We remember *A Christmas Carol* as a series of images, phrases, and ideas: Tiny Tim riding on Bob Cratchit’s shoulder; Scrooge, huddled at his desk, muttering, “Bah, Humbug!”; the enormous Ghost of Christmas Present atop a mound of food and drink; etc. Whether it is Scrooge McDuck or the voice of Lionel Barrymore, whether Scrooge is a furniture dealer or a CEO or Jim Carrey, *A Christmas Carol* has become a major facet of Western culture.

“In reading it, one becomes Scrooge himself: feels with him the terrible power his ghostly visitants have over him, the softening influence of the various scenes through which he passes, the very pangs that are caused by the ghosts’ rebukes. One feels too, how very natural and how delightful it is when he is ultimately reclaimed ...”

-- R. L. Stewart writing in *The Dickensian* (1907)
Theatre Three and the Spectre of Want
Perhaps the image that has driven Theatre Three’s productions for over close to three decades has been the spectre of Want. Dickens wrote of Want in the novel as one of two children (paired with Ignorance) who cling to the Ghost of Christmas Present. Through these two children, Dickens expresses his strongest plea for the children of the poor. Dickens found the source for these children during a visit to the Ragged Schools of Field Lane, Holborn, free institutions for poor children, located in the most dismal part of London (where Oliver Twist’s Fagin lived). In a letter to Miss Burnett Coutts (September 16, 1843), Dickens wrote of these children:

> “Who know nothing of affection, care, love or kindness of any sort … I have very seldom seen in London and elsewhere, anything so shocking as the dire neglect of soul and body exhibited in these children. And … I know … that in the prodigious misery and ignorance of the swarming masses of mankind in England, the seeds of its certain ruin are sown, I never aw the Truth so staring out in hopeless characters as it does in the walls of this place. The children in the Jails are almost as common sights to me as my own; but there are worse, for they have not arrived there yet, but are as plainly and certainly traveling there, as they are to their graves.”

Clearly, these images followed Dickens beyond A Christmas Carol. In his final Christmas book, The Haunted Man (1848), he proffered another child with no name: “a baby savage, a young monster who had never been a child, a creature who live to take the outward form of man, but who, within, would live and perish as a mere beat.”

The embodiment of these outsiders is fully-realized in Jo, the doomed street-sweep in Bleak House (1853): “Dirty, ugly, disagreeable to all the senses, in body a common creature of the common streets, only in soul a heathen. Homely filth begrimes him, homely parasites devour him, homely sores are on him, homely rags are on him; native ignorance, the growth of English soil and climate, sinks his immortal nature lower than the beasts that perish. Stand forth, Jo, in uncompromising colours! From the sole of thy foot to the crown of thy head, there is nothing interesting about thee.” And, yet, it is his death the so affects many of the major characters of this epic book.

Embodying this concept of the outcast in Theatre Three’s production is a mute girl who follows Scrooge throughout his journey. When finally Scrooge comes to terms with his responsibility, it is not the proffered money that
she wants—it is Scrooge’s acceptance of her existence. When he takes her outstretched hand, he is embracing his responsibility to the world around him.

In 1842, a report revealed that half of all children died before their fifth birthdays.

Charles Dickens: A Time Line

- 1812 - Born on February 7 to John and Elizabeth Dickens.
- 1824 - John Dickens arrested and sent to the Marshalsea prison. Charles Dickens worked at the Warren's Blacking Factory.
- 1827 - Rejoins the workforce as the clerk of an attorney.
- 1830 - Dickens meets Maria Beadnell, his first love interest.
- 1833 - The relationship with Maria Beadnell ends. A Dinner at Poplar Walks is published.
- 1834 - Began using the pseudonym "Boz". Meets his future wife, Catherine Hogarth.
- 1835 - Becomes engaged to Catherine.
- 1836 - The first chapters of The Pickwick Papers are published. Marries Catherine Hogarth.
- 1837 - The first of his 10 children, Charles Culliford Boz Dickens, is born. Mary Hogarth, Catherine's sister, dies. The publication of Oliver Twist begins.
- 1838 - Dickens and Hablot Browne travel to Yorkshire to see the boarding schools. His daughter, Mary, is born. Publication of Nicholas Nickleby begins.
- 1839 - His daughter, Kate, is born.
- 1840 - Publication of The Old Curiosity Shop begins
- 1841 – Barnaby Rudge is published. Charles and Catherine tour Scotland. Their son, Walter, is born.
- 1842 - Charles and Catherine travel to America. Late in 1842 or early in the next year Dickens begins work on Martin Chuzzlewit.
- 1843 – A Christmas Carol is published.
- 1844 - His son Francis Jeffrey (Frank) is born. Dickens and family travel to Italy. Treated Madame de la Rue with mesmerism.
- 1845 - Another son, Alfred, is born.
• 1846 - Dickens and his family travel to Switzerland. Publication of *Dombey and Son* begins.

• 1847 - His son, Sydney, is born.


• 1849 - His son, Henry Fielding Dickens, is born. The publication of *David Copperfield* begins.

• 1850 - His daughter, Dora Annie Dickens, is born.

• 1851 - Catherine Dickens suffers a nervous collapse. John Dickens, the father of Charles Dickens, dies. Dora Dickens dies when she is only eight months old. *What Shall we have for Dinner?*, a cookbook by Catherine Dickens is published.

• 1852 - The publication of *Bleak House* begins. His son, Edward or "Plorn", is born.

• 1853 - Dickens gives his first public reading of one of his works.

• 1854 - Publication of *Hard Times* begins.

• 1855 - Dickens has a disappointing reunion with Maria Winter (Maria Beadnell). Publication of *Little Dorrit* begins.

• 1856 - Dickens works with Wilkie Collins on *The Frozen Deep*. Dickens purchases Gad's Hill Place.

• 1857 - Hans Christian Anderson is entertained at Gad's Hill Place. Dickens meets Ellen Ternan.

• 1858 - Dickens separates from Catherine, his wife.

• 1859 - *A Tale of Two Cities* is published.

• 1860 - Publication of *Great Expectations* begins in *All the Year Round*. His daughter, Katie, marries and ten days later his brother, Alfred, dies. Dickens burns his personal papers.

• 1863 - Dickens' mother, Elizabeth, dies. Dickens begins work on *Our Mutual Friend*.

• 1864 - His son, Walter, dies in India. The first installment of *Our Mutual Friend* is printed.

• 1865 - Dickens is involved in the Staplehurst railway accident along with Ellen Ternan and her mother.

• 1867 - Dickens tours America for the second time.

• 1868 - He gives his first *Murder of Nancy* reading.
• 1869 - Dickens is ordered by doctors to discontinue readings. Dickens begins writing The Mystery of Edwin Drood.


The Many Works of Charles Dickens
Few authors could make claim to having created as large a number and as memorable a body of work as Dickens. His vivid characterization along with his clever and impassioned prose has provided us with some of the great moments in literature. Pip, Estella, and Miss Havisham of Great Expectations (1861); Nancy, Oliver, Bill Sikes, and Fagin of Oliver Twist (1839); Little Nell and Mr. Quilp of The Old Curiosity Shop (1841); Wackford Squeers and Smike of Nicholas Nickleby (1837); Uriah Heep and Wilkins Micawber of David Copperfield (1850); John Jasper of Edwin Drood (1870); Pickwick of The Pickwick Papers (1837); Sidney Carlton of A Tale Of Two Cities (1859); etc., etc., etc.

Even for those who have never read these great works, images of recognition come to mind at the mention of these characters and stories.

Charles Dickens’ London
“[London was], in fact the largest [city] in the world (Paris only a remote second), grown from about a million in 1801 to more than twice that by 1841. No country in the world, in fact, had ever before seen such a large city. A vibrant, growing city—young, like the men such as Dickens and [William] Thackeray who dined in its rollicking taverns and the clubs springing up along Pall Mall, riding on the city’s outskirts, going to whorehouses, and starting more feisty magazines.”

--from Daniel Pool’s DICKENS’ FUR COAT AND CHARLOTTE’S UNANSWERED LETTERS

London was the heart and soul of Dickens’ world; and although much squalor and great poverty prevailed in his day, he loved the intricate streets, the jumbled tenements, the little city churches, and, not least, the crowded and cheap lodging houses of London better than the great public buildings and the mansions of the wealthy. When his family was in dire straits, they moved from home to home and from lodging to lodging; and the young Charles often had to make do on his own.

It was then that he first acquired the habit of walking the streets, first by day and later by night, until this became a necessary imaginative stimulus that he greatly missed during his periods abroad. He was particularly attracted to London’s river. Dickens, despite his passion for reform—the fuel that created A Christmas Carol—was temperamentally affected by the
“attraction of repulsion,” and he found himself particularly drawn to the sordid areas of London, to the slums and cheap eating-houses, and even on occasion to the opium dens, to which he would sometimes conduct visitors and which proved one of the famous themes for his final novel, The Mystery Of Edwin Drood (left incomplete at his death in 1870).

But the London of Dickens’ was a great deal more than a poverty-stricken metropolis. From his youth on, Dickens saw and enjoyed its healthier excitements. As a boy he was addicted to the theatre, so much so that at one point he contemplated a theatrical career. Then, as a lawyer’s clerk, he saw something of the fun and humor and recreations of the lower and middle classes.

As an increasingly prosperous author, he would enjoy a ride or walk in the gardened suburbs, especially Hampstead or Highgate, and visits to the gracious homes of friends. Of Dickens, one can say that he loved and revered the traditional institutions of London even when he criticized and satirized them; and he enjoyed good company at a good inn rather than the newer gin-palaces which he regarded as corrupting.

Even today, despite enormous changes, the London which feeds the imagination, and excites the interest of the world, is still largely the London of Dickens.

Mud and Dust of London (from The Working Man’s Friend and Family Instructor)

*The 300,000 houses of London are interspersed by a street surface, averaging about 41 square yards per house, and therefore measuring collectively about 12 ¼ million square yards, of which a large proportion is paved with granite. Upwards of two hundred thousand pairs of wheels, aided by a considerably larger number of iron-shod horses’ feet, are constantly grinding this granite to powder, which powder is mixed with two to ten cart-loads of horse-droppings per mile of street per diem, besides an unknown quantity of the sooty deposits discharged from half a million smoking chimneys ... The close, stable-like smell and flavor of the London air; the rapid soiling of our hands, our linen, and the hangings of our rooms, bear ample witness to the reality of this evil, of which every London citizen may find a further and more significant indication in the dark hue of the particles deposited by the dust-laden air in its passage through the nasal respiratory channels. To state this matter plainly, and without mincing words, there is not this moment a man in London, however scrupulously cleanly, nor a woman, however sensitively delicate, whose skin, and clothes, and nostrils are not of necessity more or less loaded with a compound of powdered granite, soot, and a still more nauseous substance. The particles which today fly in clouds before the scavenger’s broom, fly in clouds before the palourmaid’s brush, and the next day darken the water in our toilet-basins, or are wrung the laundress from our calico and cambric.* [August 23, 1851]
A Christmas Carol - History

Dickens’ reasons for writing *A Christmas Carol* were twofold. The first report of the Commission for Inquiring into the Employment and Condition of Children in Mines and Manufactures (1842) so incensed Dickens that he went to Cornwall in the fall of that year to see the appalling conditions for himself. One of the four Infant Labour Commissioners, Dr. Thomas Southwood Smith, kept Dickens informed of the progress of the second report (1843) to encourage Dickens to write about the commission’s revelations.

At first Dickens was reluctant to get involved; he feared that the workers needed the work hours and a reduction would result in smaller wages. However, when the report was published, he was “so perfectly stricken down by the blue book” that he decided to write a pamphlet “on behalf of the Poor Man’s child.” The blue book revealed the heinous conditions of parish orphans and other children of the destitute, often employed at as young as seven years-old, some as young as three, who were brutalized, ill-fed, and ill-clothed, during their fifteen to eighteen hour workday. The children were promised skilled training and other education but received little. The meager wages went into their parents’ pockets.

The Industrial Revolution had taken a heavy toll on the London poor and the children in particular:

“But then this was not a kind of world, this brave new world of large enterprises and bold ventures struggling slowly into existence. A fast-moving and complicated world compared to the one of simple handicrafts that went before, it was a world of steam, calico, Wedgwood pottery, and iron shipped on British vessels to Calcutta, Buenos Aires, Halifax, and Hong Kong: a world that displaced farmers for mines and mills, silence the traditional village spinning wheels as the giant looms turned all night and ay, sending the artisans they had deprived of livelihoods to the workhouse. It was a world that made orphans at five and six of the songs and daughters of the mill or factory ‘hands’ killed by dangerous machinery, unsanitary working conditions, or disease. Children of six or seven, some naked, hauled the coal needed for the steam engines and railroads
that powered this new economy, often dragging the carts full of the precious fuel from the mines on their hands and knees through spaces only eight to ten inches deep with the aid of a chain passed around their waist and then between their legs. Rioting engulfed the countryside in 1830, and five hundred people were sent as convicts to Van Diemen’s Land and New South Wales.”

--from Daniel Pool’s Dickens’ Fur Coat and Charlotte’s Unanswered Letters

It should be noted that during the Industrial Revolution, employers kept their factories running through Christmas Day.

The second motive was a more personal one. His current work, Martin Chuzzlewit, which was being published in monthly installments, was not holding its audience. This dark tale of greed was found to be depressing for its readers. Dickens goal in the piece was “to exhibit in a variety of aspects the commonest of all the vices; to show how Selfishness propagates.” Certainly, this theme is one that courses through A Christmas Carol but is approached from a much more palatable and gentler angle. Because of the lack of interest Chuzzlewit, Dickens’ publishers threatened to reduce his monthly payment by fifty pounds. With these two pressures, Dickens began the creation of A Christmas Carol.

Dickens became so engrossed in the story that, as he related in a letter, he “wept and laughed and wept again” and was so “very much affected by the little Book: that he walked about the black streets of London, fifteen and twenty miles many a night, when all the sober folks had gone to bed.”

He completed the work in a little over a month, and, on December 19, A Christmas Carol, In Prose, Being a Ghost Story of Christmas, was on the stands. Ever aspect of the book was supervised by Dickens and the result was a beautifully designed volume that far exceeded anything being sold for only five shillings. Dickens’ colleague William Makepeace Thackery (author of Vanity Fair, among others) wrote in Fraser’s Magazine:

“Who can listen to objections regarding such a book as this? It seems to me a national benefit, and to every man or woman who reads it is a personal kindness.” From the first day of publication, sales were tremendous; by December 24, the book was in its sixth thousand and there were nine thousand in print at the first of the year. Unfortunately for Dickens, the high cost of the book and Dickens insistence on a low price, saw a paltry £230 pounds on the first six thousand. Dickens, wrongly, blamed the publishers for the low profit, claiming they dragged their feet on promoting
the work (this is the inspiration for the novel *A Midnight Carol*) rather than his insistence on a luxurious product at an accessible price.

Its immediate success lead to piracy within weeks. A pirated, “improved” edition appeared in one of London’s two weekly penny newspapers shortly after the original’s release. Dickens sued and won but the pirates went bankrupt and Dickens received no settlement and was forced to pay the court costs.

In addition, by February, no less than eight theatrical companies had mounted unauthorized adaptations of this already popular story. (Only one stage adaptation was “sanctioned” by Dickens—that of Edward Stirling, which opened at the Adelphi Theatre, on February 5, 1844—one of three that opened that night.) One of the versions even reunited Scrooge with his former fiancée, Belle, in the final scene. Dickens was outraged by the plagiarism around him; what he did not realize was that he had created a myth, a legend—a story that would live on. In the Adelphi Theatre revival (December 24, 1959), the production featured an actual cooked goose that was consumed onstage.

According to Robert L. Patten, the book sold 20,930 copies in its first year. It is interesting to note that during the 1840’s *A Christmas Carol* consistently outsold The Bible.

And, of note …

There are no Christmas trees in *A Christmas Carol*. It was still considered a German tradition at the time.

The graveyard in which Scrooge sees his own gravestone is most like All Hallows Staining, Star Alley, off Mark Lane in the Langborn Ward.

Originally Dickens had Marley die “ten years ago, this very day,” but halfway through the story he decided on the far more effective “seven years, this very night.” Traditionally, the number seven has extraordinary magical powers. The name “Scrooge” contains seven letters, a number supposedly fatal to men. In addition, it was exactly seven years before that Dickens had written his last Christmas story: “The Story of the Goblins Who Stole a Sexton.” Featured in Chapter 28 of *The Pickwick Papers*, the story focused on a Scrooge forerunner, the ill-humored sexton Gabriel Grub. The number seven is mentioned exactly seven times in reference to Marley’s death.
A Christmas Carol and Dickens’ Childhood
In 1824, Twelve-year-old Charles Dickens was sent to work. His first job was at Warren’s Blacking House, a factory that manufactured boot blacking. Charles spent ten hours a day putting labels on bottles of this noxious substance. His salary was a paltry six or seven shillings a week (about thirty to thirty five cents). Dickens later wrote of this period with great sadness; “My whole nature was... penetrated with... grief and humiliation.”

That same year, his father, John, who had always mismanaged his money, ran into debt with the local baker, James Karr. When John could not pay the bill, he was incarcerated in London’s Marshalsea Prison, the most infamous of all English debtor’s prisons.

These two events had a deep and long-lasting effect on the young Charles. Not only had his family been torn apart, he was now working for a pittance. These two themes--destruction of the family and child labor--would become prevalent concepts to which he would return to in many of his works, most notable in A Christmas Carol.

The difficulty of the 1840’s
Social problems were rife in England of the 1840’s. The term “hungry forties” was applied to the earlier part of the decade. In 1842, more than fifteen percent of the population received some form of public assistance. Food prices were high, especially bread because of the Corn Laws which heavily taxed imported grain. Not until 1849 were the Corn Laws repealed.

The Workhouse, The Treadmill, The Poor Law
The Poor Law of 1834 provided that two or more parishes unite to provide a home for the destitute where they might labor in exchange for their room and board. It divided England and Wales into twenty-one district and empowered in each a commissioner to form “poor law unions” by grouping parishes together for administrative purposes and to build workhouses to contain the poor. The able-bodies were worked in penury, and their dependents were kept in the house where as little as possible was spent on food and shelter. They were characterized by strict discipline; the sexes were segregated and classified, and preliminary inquiries into the private lives of the inmates were generally conducted. It was considered a disgrace to go to such a place.

The Treadmill was a mill operated by persons walking on steps fastened to the circumference of a great and wide horizontal wheel. This form of criminal punishment was introduced as hard labor in 1817, at Brixton Prison.

Dickens fiercely attacked these institutions; “I believe there has been in England, since the day of the Stuarts,” Dickens wrote in the postscript to Our Mutual Friend (1865), “no law so often
infamsously administered, no law so openly violated, no law so habitually ill-supervised. In the majority of the shameful cases of disease and death from destitution that shock the Public and disgrace the country, the illegality is equal to the inhumanity—and known language could say no more of their lawlessness.” Not until 1871 was the law more humanely administered, through the establishment of local Boards of Guardians and Guardians’ Committees. Not until the 1940’s was the law replaced by modern social welfare.

“… And decrease the surplus population.”

In his 1803 Essay on the Principles of Population, economist Thomas Malthus stated: “What the surplus is, Where it is … a man who is born into a world possessed, if he cannot get subsistence from his parents, on which he has a just demand, and if society do not want his labour, has no claim of right of the smallest portion of food, and in fact, has no business to be where he is. At Nature’s might feast there is no vacant cover for him. She tells him to be gone …”

Mr. Filer, a student of Malthus, shares this opinion: the poor “have no earthly right or business to be born. And that we know they haven’t. We reduced it to a mathematical certainty long ago!” (Dickens harbored no sympathy for political economists; in Hard Times (1954), his most scathing attack on these philosophers, he planned to name among the victims two of the Gradgrind children, after Adam Smith and Malthus.)

Child Labor in 1843
(selected from Second Report of the Commissioners on the Employment of Children)

- That instances occur in which Children begin to work as early as three or four years of age; not infrequently at five, and between five and six; while, in general, regular employment commences between seven and eight; the great majority of the Children having begun to work before they are nine years old, although in some few occupations no Children are employed until they are ten and even twelve years old and upwards.
- That in all cases the persons that employ mere Infants and the very youngest Children are the parents themselves, who put their Children to work at some processes of manufacture under their own eyes, in their own houses; but Children begin to work together in numbers, in larger or smaller manufactories, at all ages, from five years old and upwards.
- That in a very large proportion of these Trades and Manufactures female Children are employed equally with boys, and at the same tender ages: in some indeed the number of girls exceeds that of boys; and in a few cases the work, as far as it is performed by those under adult age, is carried on almost entirely by girls and young women.
• That in some few instances the regular hours of work do not exceed ten, exclusive of the time allowed for meals; sometimes they are eleven, but more commonly twelve; and in great numbers of instances the employment is continued for fifteen, sixteen, and even eighteen hours consecutively.

• That in all these occupations, in all the districts, some of the Children are robust, active, and healthy, although in general even these are undersized; but that, from the early ages at which the great majority commence work, from their long hours of work, and from insufficiency of their food and clothing, their “bodily health” is seriously and generally injured; they are for the most part stunted in growth, their aspect being pale, delicate, and sickly; and they present altogether the appearance of a race which has suffered general physical deterioration.

The Middle Class
Technically, England had only two classes: aristocrats (those who had inherited titles and land) and commoners (everyone else) but the Victorians understood that there were really three classes. The working classes did visible work; their labor was physical and they were paid a daily or weekly wage. The emerging middle class did “clean” work that was more mentally-centered and earned a monthly or annual salary. The elite/upper classes did not work (aristocracy and landed gentry).

The characters in A Christmas Carol are predominantly members of the middle class but can be divided between the lower middle and upper middle class. Cratchit clearly belongs to the former; Scrooge and Fred, to the latter. Even a wealthy banker (for instance, a Rothschild) would be considered middle class—but clearly upper middle class. Scrooge, through sheer monetary worth, belongs to this tier. Small shopkeepers and clerical workers populate the lower middle class.

The middle class valued hard work, sexual morality, and individual responsibility. They were churchgoers. Family was at the heart of the middle class. Members of the middle class tended to be sober, thrifty, ambitious, punctual, and used to their leisure time constructively. The middle class rule of thumb was the ten percent of one’s annual income might be spent on rent.

Bob Cratchit
Cratchit (whose name is not revealed until half-way through the book in Stave 3) is Scrooge’s clerk. In The Pickwick Papers, Dickens describes various levels of clerks of which Cratchit would the be the lowest: “The middle-aged copying clerk, with a large family, who is always shabby and often drunk [the latter not being applicable to Cratchit].” These men were little more than scriveners who made multiple copies of documents.

In “The Streets—Morning” (from his Sketches by Boz), Dickens vividly depicted these men “whose salaries by no means increased in the same proportion as their families … [who] plod steadily along, apparently with no object in view by the counting-house; knowing by sight almost every body they meet or overtake, for they have seen them every morning (Sundays excepted) during the last twenty
years, but speaking to no one. If they do happen to overtake a personal acquaintance, they just exchange a hurried salutation, and keep walking on, either by his side, or in front of him, as his rate of walking may chance to be. As to stopping to shaking hands, or to take a friend’s arm, they seem to think that as it is not included in their salary, they have no right to do it.”

The name “Cratchit” is probably derived from “cratch,” an archaic English word for crèche, the manger in which the infant Jesus was laid. The name also suggests the clerk’s pen in the countinghouse.

The Cratchit family resides in Camden Town. It was very possible that Dickens selected this location from his own childhood when the family resided at 16 Bayham Street, in what, at the time, was one of the poorest parts of the London suburbs. “The house was a mean small tenement, with a wretched little back-garden abutting a squalid court,” wrote Dickens biographer John Forster. “Here was no place for new acquaintances to him: not a boy was near with whom he might hope to become in any way familiar.” Living here gave Dickens “his first impression of that struggling poverty which is nowhere more vividly shown than in commoner streets of the ordinary London suburb.”

At the time of their Bayham street residence, the Dickens family paralleled the Cratchit family: Six children with Martha Cratchit being Frances “Fanny” Elizabeth (1810 – 1848); Peter is Charles (1812 – 1870); Belinda is Letitia Mary (1816 – 1893); the unnamed boy and girl are Frederick (1820 – 1868) and Harriet (1819 – ?); and the youngest, Tiny Tim, is Alfred Allen (1813 – 1814). Two more children, Alfred Lamert (1822 – 1860) and Augustus (1827 – 1866) were born after the family left Camden Town.

Tiny Tim called also be based on Dickens sister Fanny’s invalid son Harry Burnett Jr. Harry died in 1848 and became the basis for another of Dickens’ sickly children, Paul Dombey of Dombey and Son.

Clerks
Clerks were considered middle class because the work required at least some education and didn’t involve manual labor, but, as indicated, the salary was often lower than a laborer’s. In the early nineteenth century, an office boy typically began at fourteen or fifteen years old, after passing a test in handwriting, arithmetic, and general knowledge. He would begin at no wages as an errand-boy to learn the business. He would then move up to junior clerk and begin to earn a small wage for copying letters, etc. While some attended night classes for shorthand and bookkeeping, and some formally apprenticed, most learned on the job. Clerks often had a ten-hour day with unpaid overtime.
Is Cratchit making a fair wage?
This has been a commonly asked question and in looking at figures the answer is a fairly unqualified “no.” At fifteen shillings a week (thirty-nine pounds per annum), he is making almost half of what skilled workers earned (cabinetmakers, carpenters, senior dressmakers, etc.) and less than many semiskilled works in factories and shops and even farm laborers. Only the lowest ranked shop assistants and domestic servants made considerably less—but often these people were not supporting a family. On the wage of one pound a week (and Cratchit is making twenty-five percent below this), a family could only achieve reasonable comfort—and this would only be possible if the man had a small family. About sixty percent of adult male workers averaged below twenty-five shillings a week. Towards the end of the nineteenth century, social scientist Charles Booth determined the poverty line to be eighteen shillings a week (forty-five pounds a year). Clearly, Cratchit is not doing well.

“God bless us everyone!”
This, the most famous phrase in the book, may have come from the carol about the Holy Well in Sandy’s collection Christmas Carols, Ancient and Modern (1933):

\[ He \ said, \ God \ bless \ you, \ every \ one \\
And \ your \ bodies \ Christ \ save \ and \ see. \]

As it was forbidden to say “God” on the London stage in 1844, the line was changed to “Heaven bless us, every one!” at the Adelphi, the Strand, and other theatres.

Martha Cratchit—Working in Dickens London
In second report of the Children’s Employment Commission (February 1843), R.D. Grainger, who wrote the section of the report on the dressmaking industry, described the “protracted labour” in the London sweatshops as “quite unparalleled in the history of manufacturing processes.” The young women testifying in the report, typically in their teens in early twenties, worked long and debilitating hours. The account of Emily Pennington, sixteen years old, might well be that of Martha Cratchit:

\[ Has \ been \ apprentice \ as \ a \ milliner \ 2 \ years \ and \ three-quarters; \ is \ boarded \ and \ lodged; \ paid \ premium \ of \ 20l. \ for \ five \ years. \ There \ are \ two \ busy \ seasons; \ one \ beginning \ in \ October \ and \ ending \ about \ Christmas; \ the \ second \ begins \ about \ April \ or \ Easter, \ and \ ends \ at \ the \ latter \ part \ of \ July. \ In \ the \ winter \ season \ begins \ to \ work \ half \ past \ 7 \ A.M., \ and \ leaves \ off \ about \ 11 \ P.M., \ if \ they \ are \ not \ very \ busy; \ occasionally \ goes \ on \ till \ 12, \ not \ later. \ In \ the \ summer \ begins \ at \ half-past \ 6 \ A.M., \ and \ leaves \ off \ about \ 1 \ in \ the \ morning; \ “has \ sat \ up \ till \ 2 \ or \ 3.” \ Has \ never \ worked \ all \ night. \ Generally \ the \ work \ is \ finished \ earlier \ on \ Saturdays \ than \ on \ other \ nights, \ being \ about \ 10 \ in \ the \ busy \ season. \ Does \ not \ begin \ earlier \ on \ Mondays. \ Never \ works \ on \ Sunday: \ goes \ to \ church \ regularly. \ In \ the \ winter \ busy \ season \ has \]
breakfast at 7 A.M., for which a quarter of an hour is allowed; dinner at half-past 12, for which there is no limited time, generally about a quarter of an hour; tea at 6, a quarter of an hour allowed; supper at 10, for which there is a quarter of an hour or 20 minutes .... If they sit up till 1 or 2 in the morning a cup of coffee is allowed, but nothing to eat .... When she has sat up a long time has pain the back, and the legs ache; has had swelling of the feet. The work does not try her eyes. Is rather round-shouldered; this is not uncommon. Had very good health before she came here, but since has been several times ill: has a cough every winter .... One or two of the young women have fainted when they have gone up to bed or to tea. Two of the dressmakers wear spectacles: they are 18 or 20 years of age. Has as much food as she likes.

In *Sketches by Boz*, Dickens described milliners as “the hardest worked, the worst paid, and too often, the worst used class of the community.”

**The Goose**

Around Victorian times the traditional Christmas feast was roasted goose. Most Londoners have the opportunity of joining a “goose club,” which was a method of saving to buy a goose for Christmas. Goose clubs were popular with working-class Londoners, who paid a few pence a week towards the purchase of a Christmas goose. The week before Christmas, London meat markets were crammed with geese and turkeys, many imported from Germany and France, although some were raised in Norfolk, and taken to market in London. The birds were walked from Norfolk to the markets in London, to protect their feet the turkeys were dressed in boots made of sacking or leather and geese had their feet protected with a covering of tar.

Dickens and *A Christmas Carol* did much to make turkey the preferred bird of choice at Christmas. “Dickens’ *Christmas Carol* helps the poultry business amazingly,” noted *Wilke’s Spirit of the Times* (December 21, 1897). “Everybody who reads it and who has money immediately rushes off and buys a turkey for the poor.”

**Scrooge: The Definitive Miser**

While on a visit to Edinburgh, Scotland, in 1841, Dickens came upon a headstone in the Canongate Kirkyard (Churchyard): “Ebenezer Lennox Scroggie. Meal Man.” Perhaps this somehow translated to “Ebenezer Scrooge. Mean Man.”

Part of Scrooge’s character was based on John Elwes (1714-1789), a Member of Parliament for Berkshire (1772-1784) a notorious miser, who, among
many other actions, was said to have gone to be when darkness fell to save on candles.

There is no doubt that Scrooge is the most famous of all literary misers. Clearly, both the old gravedigger Gabriel Grub of “The Story of the Goblins Who Stole a Sexton” in The Pickwick Papers (1837) and Dickens’ other notorious man of business, Ralph Nickleby, from Dickens’ Nicholas Nickleby (1839) were the forerunners to Scrooge. Grub is described as “an ill-conditioned, cross-grained surly fellow—a morose and lonely man, who consorted with nobody but himself, and an old wicker bottle which fitted into his large deep waist coat pocket—and who eyed each merry face, as it passed by him with such a deep scowl of malice and ill-humour, as it was difficult to meet, without feeling something the worse for.”

What defines a miser?

Honre de Balzac in describing the miser Grandet in his Eugenie Grandet (1834), could have been describing Scrooge. His eyes “seemed to have absorbed the glint of the yellow metal. The eyes of a man accustomed to deriving enormous interest from his capital, like those of a libertine, a gambler or a sycophant, necessarily contract certain indefinable habits, certain furtive, avid, mysterious movements which do not escape his brethren.” He goes on further to describe his actions: “He knew how to conceal himself, lie in wait, watch his prey for a long time and finally leap on it; then he would open the jaws of his purse, gulp down a bellyful of gold and placidly lie down like a snake digesting its prey, impassive, cold and methodical.”

It should be noted that Scrooge is defined as “man of business.” The Dickensian (April 1924) stated that Scrooge was a financier, “something in the nature of a company promoter or a moneylender.” Scrooge thus does not provide any actual services or goods; he deals only in the exchange of money.

Dickens never tells us how old Scrooge is. Charles Webb, in his 1844 play A Christmas Carol; or, The Past, Present, and Future, suggests that Scrooge is fifty-seven.

Autobiography in A Christmas Carol

There are clearly elements in the story that correspond to Dickens’ own life. Fred, himself, is a representative of the author, particularly in his countinghouse speech discussing his feelings towards Christmas as a reminder that it is “a good time: a king forgiving charitable pleasant time: the only time I know of, in the long calendar of the year, when men and women seem by one consent to open their shut-up hearts freely …” According to Charles Kent in Charles Dickens as a Reader (1872), the introduction to Fred—“this nephew of Scrooge’s, that he was all in a glow; his face was ruddy and handsome; his eyes sparkled, and his breath smoked again”—was “quite unconsciously but most accurately, in every word of it, a literal description of [Dickens] himself, just as he looked upon any day in the blithest of all seasons, after a brisk walk in the wintry streets or on the snowy high road.”
Further, “Christmas was always a time which in our home was looked forward to with eagerness and delight,” wrote Dickens’ daughter Mamie, “and to my father it was a time dearer than any other part of the year … He loved Christmas for its deep significance as well as for its joys …” Mamie’s brother Henry remembered that Christmas in their home “was a great time, a really jovial time, and my father was always at his best, a splendid host, bright and jolly as a boy and throwing his heart and soul into everything that was going on.”

The “little market town” to which the Ghost of Christmas Past first transports Scrooge is Strood, Rochester, and the River Medway, where Dickens spent part of his childhood.

The school—“a mansion of dull red brick”—portrayed in *A Christmas Carol* is Wellington House Academy, where Dickens received his brief formal education (a year and a half). He described the schoolmaster, William James, as “by far the most ignorant man I have ever had the pleasure to know … one of the worst-tempered men perhaps that ever lived.”

And the Cratchits? Perhaps a small parallel with Dickens own childhood with the family residing in Camden Town. For a short time, the Dickens family resided at 16 Bayham Street. There were six Dickens children who then corresponded to the six Cratchits: Fanny is the eldest Cratchit, Martha; Charles is Peter; Letitia is Belinda; Frederick and Harriet are the unnamed “ubiquitous” Cratchits, also a boy and girl; and the youngest Alfred, is Tiny Tim. (This parallel could be drawn no further is there is no similarity with the loving Cratchit parents to Dickens own cold and removed mother and spendthrift father).

**Belle**

Could this name be an abbreviation of “Maria Beadnell,” the woman young Dickens loved and lost to what he believe were economic necessities? Scrooge’s sentiments toward Belle (much like David Copperfield’s toward Dora) are the same as Dickens’ for his Maria; as he wrote to his friend (and later biographer) Jon Forster in January 1855, “Why is it, that as with poor David [Copperfield], a sense comes always crushing on me now, when I fall into low spirits, as of one happiness I have missed in my life, and one friend and companion I have never made?”

The picture of domestic joy in Belle’s household was complete fancy for Dickens (as it was for Scrooge who never experienced it); Dickens did not meet Maria again until both were in middle age, and was so disappointed by what he thought she had become that he caricatured the now Mrs. Maria Winter as the pitiful Flora Finching in *Little Dorrit* (1857).
Old Joe’s Rag-and-Bottle Shop (also called a Rag-and-Bone Shop)
These shops bought and sold rags that could be made into paper (since much clothing was then linen) and bones that could be ground up and made into manure. In addition, they sometimes bought other rather odiferous things like drippings (fat from roasted animals, often used by the poor in place of butter).

Henry Mayhew describes one of these ships vividly in *London Labour and London Poor* (1851): “The stench in these shops is positively sickening … Here in a small apartment may be a pile of rags, a sack-full of bones, the many varieties of grease and ‘kitchen-stuff,’ corrupting an atmosphere which, even without such accompaniments, would be too close. The windows are often crowded with bottles, which excludes the light; while the floor and shelves are thick with grease and dirt. The inmates seem unconscious of this foulness … The door-posts and windows of the rag-and-bottle shops are often closely placarded, and the front of the house is sometimes one glaring colour, blue or red; so that the place may be at once recognized, even by the illiterates, as the ‘red house’ or the blue house.” According to Mayhew, these merchants were more obvious at Christmastime when their signs and handbills sported pictures of great plum puddings; they hoped these cuts would encourage the poor to sell them their miscellaneous items to pay for their holiday feasts.

A rag-and-bottle shop features centrally in Dickens’ *Bleak House*. Its owner, Krooks, has the honor of being one of the few characters in literature to die by spontaneous combustion.

What is gruel?
Gruel is an oatmeal or other cereal boiled in lots of water. It was often taken to relax one. This meager fare was common food provided in the prisons and workhouses; the most famous taker of gruel was unquestionably Oliver Twist. Dickens indicates that Scrooge takes the gruel because “he had a cold in his head.”

Wassail
Drinking Wassail is an age-old winter custom. It is drunk at Christmas time, New Years, and the Twelfth Night and has a long association with caroling. There are stories of men carrying a large vessel (some reports say a bowl with twelve handles, some say wooden, and some used pitchers) from house to house. They would sing, get the vessel filled again and go on to the next house. It was a sign of good luck to have them visit.

The term “Wassail” (or “Wassel”) is said to have come from the early fifth century: Rowena, daughter of one of the Saxon Hengist, on presenting a bowl of punch to the English King
Vortigern, greeted him with “Louerd king, wass-heil (“be of good health”). The term “wasseling” is also synonymous with carousing or revelry.

A Traditional Shropshire Wassail Recipe

10 very small apples
1 large orange stuck with whole cloves
10 teaspoons brown sugar
2 bottles dry sherry or dry Madeira
1/2 teaspoon grated nutmeg
1 teaspoon ground ginger
3 cloves
3 allspice berries
2 or 3 cinnamon sticks
2 cups castor sugar
12 to 20 pints of cider according to the number of guests
1 cup (or as much as you like) brandy

Core the apples and fill each with a teaspoon of brown sugar. Place in a baking pan and cover the bottom with 1/8-inch of water. Insert cloves into the orange about 1/2” apart. Bake the orange with the apples in a 350° oven. After about 30 minutes, remove the orange and puncture it in several places with a fork or an ice pick. Combine the sherry or Madeira, cider, nutmeg, ginger, cloves, allspice berries, cinnamon, sugar, apple and orange juice and water in a large, heavy saucepan and heat slowly without letting the mixture come to a boil. Leave on very low heat. Strain the wine mixture and add the brandy. Pour into a metal punch bowl, float the apples and orange on top and ladle hot into punch cups. Makes enough for 15-20 people.

Sir Roger de Coverly

But the great effect of the evening came after the Roast and Boiled, when the fiddler (an artful dog, mind! The sort of man who knew his business better than you or I could have told it him!) struck up “Sir Roger de Coverley.” Then old Fezziwig stood out to dance with Mrs Fezziwig. Top couple, too; with a good stiff piece of work cut out for them; three or four and twenty pair of partners; people who were not to be trifled with; people who would dance, and had no notion of walking.

But if they had been twice as many: ah, four times: old Fezziwig would have been a match for them, and so would Mrs Fezziwig. As to her, she was worthy to be his
partner in every sense of the term. If that's not high praise, tell me higher, and I'll use it. A positive light appeared to issue from Fezziwig's calves. They shone in every part of the dance like moons. You couldn't have predicted, at any given time, what would become of 'em next. And when old Fezziwig and Mrs Fezziwig had gone all through the dance; advance and retire, hold hands with your partner, bow and curtsey; corkscrew; thread-the-needle, and back again to your place; Fezziwig cut—cut so deftly, that he appeared to wink with his legs, and came upon his feet again without a stagger.

A Christmas Carol (Stave II)

From The Annotated Christmas Carol, edited by Michael Patrick Hearn:

[The Sir Roger de Coverly] was also known as “slip or Sir Roger,” a dance similar to the Virginia reel. Sir Richard Steele (1672-1729) too the name for a member of the fictitious club of The Spectator (March 2, 1711); his great-great grandfather supposedly invented the dance. It was first described by John Playford’s Dancing Master (1692): the first man goes below the second woman, then round her, and so below the second man into his own place; then the first woman goes below the second man, then round him, and so below the second woman into her own place; then the first couple cross over below the second couple, and take hands and turn round twice, then leap up through and cast off into the second couple’s place. Dickens describes a more complex pattern, with steps borrowed from other dances. Sir Roger de Coverly was the most raucous and best known of the country-dances in the nineteenth century and traditionally the last one performed on a night of merrymaking. It was a bit out of fashion at the time of [A Christmas Carol], however, “Country-dances being low, were utterly proscribed,” Dickens notes in Chapter 8 of The Old Curiosity Shop (1841). The quadrille was considered far more chic at the time. A Christmas Carol and its dramatizations may well have done much to revive Sir Roger de Coverly in the cities.

Richard Henry Horne reported in The New Spirit of the Age (1844) that Charles Dickens was “very much given to dancing Sir Roger de Coverly” (p. 75). Dickens himself confessed in “Where We Stopped Growing” (Household Words, January 1, 1853) that “we have not outgrown Sir Roger de Coverly or any country dance in the music-book.” He was by no means a gifted dancer, but what he lacked in technique, he made up for in enthusiasm. “His dancing was at his best, I think, in the ‘Sir Roger de Coverly’—and in what are known as country dances,” wrote his daughter Mamie in My Father As I Recall Him (1896). “In the former, while the end couples are dancing, and the side couples are supposed to be still, my father would insist upon the sides keeping up a kind of jig step, and clapping his hands to add to the fun, and dancing at the backs of those whose enthusiasm he thought needed rousing, was himself never still for a moment until the dance was over” (p. 31). Her brother Henry confirmed in My Father As I Knew Him (1934), how Dickens, like old Fezziwig, would dance “down the middle and up again! There was no stopping him! His energy, his light-heartedness, his buoyancy, were simply immense” (p. 44).
Dickens and the Theatre
Dickens was passionate about the theatre. Had it not been for an illness that scuttled his schedule audition at Covent Garden in 1832, he might have pursued a career as an actor. Throughout his life, he was heavily involved in amateur theatrics as actor, author, and director, involved in high-production value productions. He had the deepest respect for performances and the legendary William Macready was a close friend.

At the Annual Dinner of the General Theatrical Fund (for which he was a trustee), on April 14, 1851, he delivered the following address:

“Lest any of us look back upon his past life and say whether he owes no gratitude to the actor’s art! Not just because it is often exercised in the midst of sickness, poverty and misfortune—other arts, God knows, are liable to like distresses! Not just because the actor sometimes comes from scenes of affliction and misfortune—even death itself—to play his part before us; all men must do that violence to their feelings, in passing on to the fulfillment of their duties in the great strife and fight of life …

... But because in the relief afforded us by the actor’s art, we always find some reflection, humorous or pathetic, somber or grotesque, of all the best things that we feel and know. If any man were to tell me that he owed no great acknowledgement to the stage, I would only ask him one question, whether he remembered his first play? Oh, gentlemen, if you can but carry your thoughts back to that night, and think a little of the bright and harmless world it opened to your view …”

Dickens made a second career of reading, first for charity and later for profit. His first public readings were of A Christmas Carol. They were held December 27 and 30, 1853, in Birmingham. Dickens insisted that the second performance offer tickets at reduced prices for working people. His first reading of the book was unabridged and ran over three hours. Eventually, he worked it down to an hour and half. The one sequence that remained in its entirety, and perhaps closest to his heart, was the Cratchit dinner. Appropriately, it was also his last reading—March 15, 1870. He did nearly 450 readings and made approximately £93,000, more than he ever made on his writings.

Redemption (from Charles Dickens: His Tragedy and Triumph by Edgar Johnson)
Marley’s Ghost is the symbol of divine grace, and the three Christmas Spirits are the working of that grace through the agencies of memory, example, and fear. And Scrooge, although of course he is himself, too, is himself not alone: he is the embodiment of all that concentration upon material power and callous indifference to the welfare of human beings that economists had erected into a system, businessmen and industrialists pursued relentlessly, and society had taken for granted as inevitable and proper. The conversion of Scrooge is an image of the conversion for which Dickens hope among mankind.
A Christmas Carol - Through the Years

A Christmas Carol has had many interpretations throughout its existence. The Victorian Carol advocated a return to the country traditions of Christmas—the extended family as exemplified by the Fezziwigs. It is a plea to not let urbanization destroy the holiday spirit. It is a passionate cry to be aware of the “poor and destitute who suffer greatly at the time.”

In “The Dark Pilgramage,” Edgar Johnson described the work as “a serio-comic parable of social redemption: the miserly Scrooge is the embodiment of the pursuit of material gain and indifference to human welfare represented by both the businessmen and the nineteenth century economists, and his conversion is a symbol of that change of heart in society on which Dickens had set his own heart.” Scrooge is the archetypical “economic man,” a utilitarian whose sole purpose is the single-minded accumulation of wealth for wealth’s sake.

Following Dickens’ death, the text became almost a retelling of the biblical Christmas story with Scrooge seeking the Christ child and the Cratchits reenacting the Holy Family; in essence, the later Victorian Carol functioned as a secular scripture.

This is an interesting as its day, it was seen as a secular text: “There was more piety in being human than being pious … In reviving Christmas, Dickens transformed it from the celebration of a metaphysical mystery into a feast of overflowing simple kindness and good cheer; the church bells were still there … in the orchestra; and the angles of Bethlehem were still there—painted on the back-curtain.” (Philosopher George Santayana).

In the decades preceding World War I, A Christmas Carol became a children’s story—a fantasy of the ogre changed. Before and after the stock market crash of 1929, the Carol was used as a denunciation of capitalism as well as an escape from oppressive economic realities. This version (most popular in the U.S.) places Cratchit, rather than Scrooge, at the center.

Restored to his central role in the fifties and sixties, Scrooge became a Freudian figure, tormented by his past. His odyssey is a therapy of redemption as he finds the spirit of Christmas within him.

We have come full circle with A Christmas Carol. Once again it has become a plea for awareness of the people around us—the poor, the needy, the homeless. It is Scrooge’s awakening to his self-interest. The theme, once again, is want and the poor man’s child.
Several years ago, Joseph D. Cusumano’s published his *Transforming Scrooge*. In this, *A Christmas Carol* is interpreted from a therapeutic standpoint:

Because] of the childhood abuse and abandonment Scrooge was subjected to, he snapped in order to physically survive. He paid a price by concomitantly developing the ability to go into extended states of dissociation. In these states, because of his fertile imagination and his love of fanciful fiction, his mind developed the ability to perceive alternate realities. The characters he projected onto the physical plane helped him to survive the extended isolation he was forced to endure.

As Scrooge grew, he developed a variety of adult defense mechanisms, the ego’s fearful and inadequate attempt to deny the past and to defend against the threat of further pain. Instead, he compulsively repeated the abandonment and neglect he experienced in his childhood for a large part of his adult life on himself and on others. Fortunately, however, as he aged, his defense mechanisms naturally weakened.

On that fateful Christmas Eve, at the darkest time of the year, he was presented with a late mid-life crisis. Because of the charity solicitors’ visit, Marley, his dysfunctional “twin,” reentered his consciousness. In addition, because of his nephew Fred’s compassionate visit, his deceased loving sister, Fan, somehow also broke into his preconscious mind. The combination of their return to him, and the “psychological absorption” that he had developed during his childhood because of his abuse and trauma, caused him to shift into the realm of an “alternate reality” with the onset of the crisis.

Later that night, his combination, or mixed motif, NDE/CE-IV [Near Death Experience/Close Encounter of the Fourth Kind, i.e., alien abduction] experience began in earnest. Like on an initiatory mythological adventure, typical of either experience, he went through the process of separation, ordeal, and return. Upon his return, the phenomenon caused a tremendous rise of kinadlini energy to flow through his physical system. this led, of course, to his wondrous and permanent psychobiological transformation and spiritual awakening.

Furthering this path, in his essay, “The Two Scrooges,” Edmund Wilson diagnosed Scrooge thus:

"Shall we ask what Scrooge would actually be like if we were to follow him beyond the frame of the story? Unquestionably, he would relapse, when the merriment was over--if not while it was still going on--into moroseness, vindictiveness, suspicion. He would, that is to say, reveal himself as the victim of a manic-depressive cycle, and a very uncomfortable person."

A bit extreme in its interpretation, but it once again proves the power and reach of the source material.
Imagine the following – you have a very crabby and very wealthy uncle. One day he says he saw ghosts. Not one ghost, but three ghosts. Now he’s a changed man. What would you do? You might very well take your uncle to a psychologist.

This psychological analysis was done in November of 2005 by Karen Eveland, a student at Texas A&M University Kingsville for an abnormal psychology class. Her professor is Dr. William E. Kelly.

Psychological Evaluation  
Date: January 15, 1844  
Patient: Ebenezer Scrooge  
Tests Administered: Clinical Interview  
Psychologist: Karen Eveland

Personal Data: Ebenezer Scrooge is an approximately 50-year-old Caucasian male. He is single and has never been married. Mr. Scrooge lives alone. He owns his own business. Mr. Scrooge’s closest living relative is his nephew, Fred.

Presenting Problems: Mr. Scrooge states that he has no complaints, however he has agreed to meet today in order to satisfy the concerns of his nephew Fred.

Fred states that he is concerned about Mr. Scrooge’s mental state. He claims Mr. Scrooge has been unusually active and emotional, and that he has been giving away his money in large sums. Although Fred admits that Mr. Scrooge’s heightened generosity is somewhat of a pleasant change; he is concerned that Mr. Scrooge may not be mentally competent. At this time, Fred is requesting that Mr. Scrooge be evaluated for mental competency to determine if he is in need of a guardian.
History: Mr. Scrooge and his nephew participated in providing details about Mr. Scrooge’s life history.

Mr. Scrooge reports that he spent most of his childhood in boarding school. He was often isolated and forgotten by his family. He felt and still believes that his father did not care much for him. He states the only relative that paid much attention to him was his sister, Fan. She was the mother of Fred, and is now deceased. Mr. Scrooge states that he had few close friends during his childhood. During young adulthood, Mr. Scrooge was engaged to be married. However, when his bride-to-be expressed concerns about Mr. Scrooge’s obsession with money, the wedding was called off. After the wedding was called off, Mr. Scrooge, states he turned his focus completely to his business and did not attempt to make any friends or to maintain any other relationships. He does state that he had one friend, Jacob Marley, who was also his business partner. Jacob Marley is now deceased and Mr. Scrooge reports having no other close friends until very recently.

Fred states that in the past he has attempted to visit Mr. Scrooge frequently, but that he generally found him inhospitable. Further Fred, states that the last seven years or so, Mr. Scrooge has worked late on a daily basis, isolating, and depriving himself and his sole employee of even adequate heating at his place of business.

Approximately two weeks ago, on Christmas Eve, Mr. Scrooge claims that he was visited by his deceased friend, Mr. Marley as well as by three other spirits. Mr. Scrooge states that initially he thought his vision of Mr. Marley was a hallucination brought on by indigestion, however, he now believes the event to be have been real. He states that Mr. Marley warned him about being punished in the after-life and told him to change his ways before it was too late. Mr. Scrooge states that after Mr. Marley departed, he saw three other spirits who transported him through time and space to view Christmases in the past, present and future. He says two of the spirits actually spoke with him and warned him about living his life selfishly. Mr. Scrooge says that the last spirit did not speak but did take him to visit his own grave. Mr. Scrooge states that upon awakening Christmas morning and finding himself still alive, he determined to change his ways. He says that his sudden generosity is a result of this determination. He also claims that he is happier then he has ever been in his life, and that each new day brings him more joy. Mr. Scrooge is insistent that the experiences with his deceased friend and the three spirits were real. Mr. Scrooge states that he has never used any drugs and that he drinks alcoholic beverages rarely. Fred, Mr. Scrooge’s nephew, confirms this information.

Current Status: Mr. Scrooge appears to be coherent. He is able to identify place, time, and people. He reports no other delusions or hallucinations, with the exception of the events he reports took place on Christmas Eve.

Diagnostic Considerations: Mr. Scrooge appears to be coherent and stable. Initial impressions of Mr. Scrooge’s symptoms indicate a possibility of Bipolar disorder. These symptoms include sudden onset of extreme mood fluctuations, racing thoughts, increased social activity, and a decreased need for sleep. However, these symptoms are balanced with intermittent periods of deep thought and reflection occurring several times within the same day. Mr. Scrooge is able to
remain calm and collected for long periods of time. He also reports no symptoms of depression. Therefore, he does not meet the criteria for Bipolar, hypomania, or cyclothymia.

Due to the sudden onset of Mr. Scrooge’s psychotic like symptoms (hallucinations and delusions) and the extremely short duration of these symptoms (one night), Mr. Scrooge does not meet criteria for Schizophrenia or Schizophreniform. Although Mr. Scrooge’s thinking is somewhat symptomatic of delusional thinking, in that he maintains that the hallucinations he experienced on Christmas eve were real, he otherwise displays no other indications of irrational thought.

Mr. Scrooge appears to have suffered from Brief Psychotic Disorder, without marked stressors. The hallucinations and delusions he experienced two weeks ago evidence this. The fact that he maintains the reality of the events does not necessarily indicate deluded thinking, since the trauma from experiencing delusions and hallucinations of the magnitude reported by Mr. Scrooge could be enough to convince him of their reality. It is common for people to believe such hallucinations are real when the only alternative explanation is for them to accept that they were temporarily psychotic. To accept the notion of psychosis is extremely frightening and it is sometimes easier for some to believe the event really happened.

It is quite possible that Mr. Scrooge did suffer from some type of food poisoning, which in turn caused him to hallucinate. However, after this much time has elapsed it would be very difficult to investigate this hypothesis.

It seems more likely that Mr. Scrooge experienced a brief psychotic episode. Although undiagnosed, Mr. Scrooge appears to have suffered from obsessive-compulsive personality disorder in the past, as evidenced by his hoarding money and extreme work history. People who suffer from personality disorders are more at risk to experience a brief psychotic disorder than the general population. It is impossible to diagnose Mr. Scrooge with this disorder however, since he has no current symptoms.

As for Mr. Scrooge’s current mental state, he appears to be competent. Although he is giving away large sums of his money and is very emotional, he is able to mentally assess the risks of his behavior. Mr. Scrooge does not appear to be a danger to himself or others.

Notes:
- **Axis I – Clinical Disorders:** Brief Psychotic Episode (December 24, 1843)
- **Axis II – Personality Disorders:** Possible history obsessive compulsive personality disorder (rule out)
- **Axis III – General Medical Condition:** Deferred
- **Axis IV – Psychosocial and Environmental Problems:** Stress related to holidays, lack of friends and family support system, and what appears to have been a brief psychotic episode.
- **Axis V – Global Assessment of Functioning:** Highest level of functioning in past year: 75; present functioning: 75
The Story as Inspiration
Perhaps there is no story that has lent itself to retelling and re-envisionments than *A Christmas Carol*. For over one hundred and fifty years, writers have used the structure, the concept, and the characters to create, recreate, and commentate.

Some versions take a different trace the story through another character’s eyes. Tom Mula’s delightful *Jacob Marley’s Christmas Carol* tells the story from the point-of-view of Scrooge’s deceased partner. In a sensitive, humorous, and often moving narrative, we are shown how, to free himself from his fate, Marley’s ghost engineers Scrooge’s awakening. Based on Mula’s one-man show (which played the Goodman Theatre for many seasons), *Jacob Marley’s Christmas Carol* puts a new but respectful twist on this classic. A more dense if less success take is *Marley’s Ghost* (Mark Hazard Osmun).

Often, writers cannot resist answering the question of “What’s next?” and have speculated Scrooge’s post redemption in a range of sequels: *Scrooge and Cratchit: A Sequel to a Christmas Carol* (Matt McHugh) is fairly straightforward as is *A Christmas Carol Part II: The Next Year*. The Charity of Ebenezer Scrooge* (Glen L. Bledsoe) focused on the challenges of giving and also throws in a challenge from the Devil. *A Christmas Carol 2: The Wedding of Ebenezer Scrooge* (Anne Moore) and the appalling *The Lust of Ebenezer Scrooge* (John Thomas) explore his personal relationships in his awakening. *The Last Christmas of Ebenezer Scrooge* (Marvin Kaye) and *The Trial of Ebenezer Scrooge* (Brue Bueno de Mesquita) present the very end and the aftermath of Scrooge’s life. *Mr. Timothy* (Louis Bayard) deals with Tiny Tim as an adult and gives a glimpse of a continuing but complicated relationship with his benefactor, told against a mystery setting.

Of course, updating and resetting has been a common occurrence in the story’s history. *A Maine Christmas Carol* (Philip F. Harris) has a sixteen year-old Scrooge coming to terms with the death of his father in Iraq. *Marly’s Ghost* (David Levithan) has another young adult coming to terms with death, this time the suicide of his girlfriend. *Scrooge Meets Dick and Jane* (Roger C. Schank) uses the story as a platform to rail against anti-educational testing; *A Capitalist Christmas Carol* (Donald R. Burelson) is an extremely right-wing attack on the any forms of liberalism in the U.S. (clumsy and rife with typos). *Scrooge’s Cryptic Carol* (R.S. Gilmore) deals with quantum physics.
There have been many female Scrooge’s throughout the modern cannon: A Christmas Caroline (Kyle Smith), a Devil-Wears-Prada meets A Christmas Carol; Carol for Another Christmas, where Ms. Scrooge is a computer business mogul; and the execrable Ruth Gogoll’s Christmas Carol (from a literary standpoint, it is as valid as the Tori Spelling and Tom Arnold contributions to the television history of the Carol). I Am Scrooge: A Zombie Story for Christmas (Adam Roberts) is a mish-mash of science fiction time travel, gore, and sophomoric humor. Hanukkah, Schmanukkah (Esme Raji Codell) and LeUyen Pham needs no explanation.

**A Christmas Carol**—Radio, Film, Television
The first film version was the 1901 British Scrooge, or Marley’s Ghost. Essanay made a silent film in 1908 and Thomas Edison produced his in 1910. Bransby Williams played Scrooge on the stage, made the earliest sound recording in 1905 and also appeared in the first sound version in 1928, as well as the first television adaptation in 1946 (for the BBC).

The list of actors who have portrayed Scrooge on stage, radio, film, and television reads as a roster of the theatrical Hall of Fame.

Whether Reginald Owen or Basil Rathbone, Alastair Sim or Albert Finney, George C. Scott, Henry Winkler, Frederick March, Bill Murray, Michael Caine, Jim Carey, or Jack Klugman, actors have flocked to this character. The story has been seen as cartoon (McGoo, Brer Rabbit, Mickey Mouse, Fred Flinstone, etc.), musical (Scrooge; Scrooge, The Stingiest Man In Town, A Muppet Christmas Carol, and the Paramount’s A Christmas Carol); or one-man play (Patrick Stewart’s brilliant celebration of the story, which played three sold-out Broadway engagements; Stewart subsequently played Scrooge in a made-for-t.v. movie). Jim Carrey is in pre-production for a live-action/computer generated film in which he will play Scrooge and all three ghosts.

The Madison Square Garden musical ran for ten years with various personalities ranging from Tony Randall to Tim Curry to Roger Daltry. This incarnation will see a television version featuring Kelsey Grammer as Scrooge. Female Scrooge’s have included Cicely Tyson (Ms. Scrooge), Susan Lucci (Ebbie), and Vanessa Williams (A Diva’s Christmas Carol). A Christmas Carol, in its many guises and forms, has never failed to delight and touch audiences all over the world.
Money in Dickens’ England

Here are some of the terms used in A Christmas Carol:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Basic Units</th>
<th>Value</th>
<th>Coin</th>
<th>Slang Term</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>21 shillings</td>
<td>guinea</td>
<td></td>
<td>quid</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20 shillings</td>
<td>sovereign</td>
<td></td>
<td>quid</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 shillings</td>
<td>half sovereign</td>
<td>crown</td>
<td>half a crown</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 shillings</td>
<td>crown</td>
<td></td>
<td>half a crown</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 1/2 shillings</td>
<td>half crown</td>
<td></td>
<td>half a crown</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 shillings</td>
<td>florin</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>One Shilling</td>
<td>12 pence</td>
<td>shilling</td>
<td>bob, hog</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 pence</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>tanner, bender</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 pence</td>
<td>groat</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 pence</td>
<td>threepence</td>
<td></td>
<td>thrupence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 pence</td>
<td>twopence</td>
<td></td>
<td>tuppence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 pence</td>
<td>penny</td>
<td></td>
<td>copper</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1/2 pence</td>
<td>farthing</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1/8 pence</td>
<td>half farthing</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

What is the value of the pound?
Economists and historians both have had a hard time defining its value. Because we do not buy the same goods as people did in the last century, it is difficult to define its actual worth (they did not buy cars nor do we buy candles). Estimates have placed the pound equivalent as anywhere in the neighborhood of $20, $50, or $200. [See detailed information in next section.]

What would 16/- signify?

[From Prof. George Landow:] This would be 16 shillings (which equals 4/5 of a pound sterling), and a pound (£) was worth about $11.00 for much of the period. Before the recent introduction of decimal currency, British money was written in the following order: pounds/shilling/pence (or £/s/d). Prices less than one pound generally appeared as shilling/pence (e.g., 10/6).

Two things in particular about British money drove foreigners crazy, the first being that twelve pence (or pennies) made up a shilling, but twenty shillings made up a pound. Adding up the cost of several items became quite a chore, as one can imagine, but the
British long remained committed to their bizarre monetary system, and, indeed, a sign of the impracticality of one of Trollope's major characters, Plantagenet Palliser, the Duke of Omnium, lay in the fact that his political program advocated decimal currency. A second maddening thing involved a peculiar, obviously classed-based pricing scheme in which prices were quoted in guineas, the guinea being a nonexistent denomination worth 21 shillings (or a shilling more than a pound). Items intended for the wealthier classes were listed in guineas.

In C.Z. Banrett’s *A Christmas Carol; or the Mister's Warning!* (1944), a theatrical adaptation of *A Christmas Carol*, it cost Bob Cratchit his full week’s wages to buy the Christmas feast: seven shillings for the goose, five the pudding, and three for the onions, sage, and oranges.

**Wages and Cost of Living in the Victorian Era**

Making a definitive statement about the cost of living in Victorian England is difficult, particularly in the last half of the century, because the economy went through a long period of growth, followed by slumps at the end of the nineteenth century. A worker in 1870 might make 150% what a worker in 1850 made, but because different prices had increased at different rates, the actual buying power of the wages increased only moderately. At the end of the century, prices fell greatly, more rapidly than wages, so that despite a lower wage, the workers buying power actually increased.

Answering questions regarding cost of living becomes complicated for several reasons, the first is that the Victorian period lasted a good long time, during which the UK went from being a largely rural, lightly industrialized country to a heavily industrialized urban nation. Therefore, one often has to phrase a question in the following manner: "What was the cost of living in 1850?"

A second complicating factor is that specific goods and services cost far less or far more than they do now, so any comparison inevitably misleads. For example, during the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries, the post office delivered two or even three times daily, and the system was so efficient that Londoners would arrange social engagements, sending queries and receiving answers within a few hours. A penny postcard, in other words, brought one something very like a personal courier service. Does one then say that a British penny in 1879 is equivalent to $10 or $15, the cost of modern commercial delivery services?

A third complicating factor is that unlike the relative closeness of modern economic and social classes, which form a spectrum, large gaps separated those in Victorian England so that moving from one class (or really set of classes) to another required a kind of quantum leap. Thus, as M. W. Flynn has pointed out, doubling a worker's wages would not, as it would now, markedly improve his or her lifestyle, particularly in regard to sanitation and healthiness, because such enormous gaps existed between the costs of housing for the working and middle classes that one would have had to raise the wages enormously to affect the kind of available housing.
In the mid-1860s workers in London received the following wages for a 10-hour day and six-day week:

- common laborers 3s. 9d.
- excavators wearing their own "long water boots" 4s. 6d.
- bricklayers, carpenters, masons, smiths 6s. 6d.
- engineers 7/6 (= £110 pounds/year)

These wages reflect weekly pay in the mid- to late '60s:

- Mail Coach Guard ... 10/0 + tips
- Female telegraph clerk ... 8/0
- London artisans ... 36/0
- London laborers ... 20/0
- Farm hands ... 14/0
- Sailors ... 15/0
- Seaman on steamers ... 16/4

In better paid positions, particularly the professions, salaries were indicated in annual amounts. Two positions for which information is available are:

- Army Cornet ... £200/0/0
- Indian Civil Service officer ... £300/0/0

Cost of Living for a Senior Clerk (1844)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Amount</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rent</td>
<td>25/0/0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taxes</td>
<td>5/0/0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maid</td>
<td>7/0/0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coal 5 tons</td>
<td>6/5/0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Candles and Wood</td>
<td>2/0/0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tea</td>
<td>7/16/6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sugar</td>
<td>6/14/2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Butter &amp; Eggs</td>
<td>9/12/0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meat</td>
<td>18/6/0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fish</td>
<td>2/0/0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vegetables</td>
<td>5/0/0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beer</td>
<td>6/10/0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Washing woman, soap, and her meals</td>
<td>6/13/0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ironing and mangling</td>
<td>1/0/0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clothing</td>
<td>23/6/0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Church and charity</td>
<td>3/10/0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Doctor</td>
<td>5/0/0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Misc.</td>
<td>1/8/0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amusements</td>
<td>1/19/4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Savings</td>
<td>6/0/0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>£150/0/0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Cost of Living for a typical, rising professional man with a £700 annual income (early 1900s)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Cost</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rent and Taxes</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two maids</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Food &amp; Cleaning materials For 4 people</td>
<td>104</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Washing</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coal 1 ton/month</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Electric Light</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wine</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Office expenses, train fair and lunches</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Insurance</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dress x2</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Savings</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td><strong>487</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Tiny Tim Syndrome**

Often the question of “What as Tiny Tim’s ailment?” arises. There are many possibilities given the poor health conditions of Dickens’ England. Because of poor diet, unsanitary living quarters, and the fact that antibiotics were still one hundred years in the future, there are any number of congenital abnormalities that could lead to Tiny Tim’s symptoms.

Yet, there is one type of chronic, deadly infection that was so prevalent in Dickens’ era that it could easily have provided inspiration for his character of Tiny Tim; and it is one consistent with the condition of the often-alleged model for Tim, Dickens’ nephew Harry Burnet.

In 1843, approximately one half of the English population was affected by tuberculosis. It was the single greatest cause of death and disease in the western world. It was particularly common among families in the lower classes.

Tuberculosis spondylitis, also called “Pott’s” disease, was first described in 1779. The vertebrae, or backbones of the rib cage, are the most commonly affected, and the majority of cases in children occur between the ages of three and ten years. Patients develop pain and stiffness, followed by a wasting fatigue and fever. Paralysis of the legs accompanies tuberculosis of the spine in as many as one quarter of patients. Death occurs if the tuberculosis abscess ruptures through the dura and drains into the spinal canal. Tiny Tim may have suffered from tuberculosis of the hip, known as “caxaglia,” certainly an equally plausible explanation.

Dr. Donald Lewis, a pediatric neurologist, offered
another possible explanation. He has diagnosed Tiny Tim with distal renal tubular acidosis. This also allows for Dickens’ happy ending because medics of the era had an effective antacid treatment for this particular condition.

In March 2012, Russel Chesney, a physician at Le Bonheur Children’s Hospital at the University of Tennessee Health Science Center, Memphis, published a paper in the journal of the American Medical Association attributing Tiny Tim’s illness to a combination of rickets and tuberculosis. He came to his conclusions based on Dickens’ description of Tim’s deformities and that Tim would be curable if Cratchit was making a higher salary. Rickets is a bone disorder caused by a deficiency of vitamin D, calcium, or phosphate. Between a poor diet and lack of exposure to the sun, Tim could be susceptible to this condition. Chesney asserts that sixty percent of London’s working classes children had rickets.

In NPR’s program Inventing the Poster Child, it is suggested that Tiny Tim was the first “poster child” for disabilities:

*The dependent person with a disability—especially the child—was able to awaken the heart of Economic Man (Scrooge) and soften the iron laws of economics. Though the laws cannot be abrogated, charitable feelings can be exercised outside their sphere. Public philanthropy directed toward those who fall out of the economic equation is the secular version of longstanding Christian charitable imperatives directed toward the poor and helpless in general. The dependent person with a disability—Tiny Tim—has no independent character in this drama. In this tale, there is no possibility that a person with a disability might be able to have an independent economic function if adaptations are made. Nor does Tiny Tim have the option of refusing the charity he inspires. Tiny Tim's innocent goodness, helplessness, and cheerful acceptance of his "affliction" remind some people with disabilities of Harriet Beecher Stowe's near-contemporaneous Uncle Tom.*

**A Christmas Carol:** Two Oddities and a Strange Thought

A Christmas Carol has been translated into hundreds of languages. Why is it so hard to find a copy of it in Greek?

During the German occupation of Greece in World War II, the Greek underground used foreign classics to pass secret messages. Charles Dickens’ A Christmas Carol was one of three books used in Athens for this purpose. Today, copies of A Christmas Carol are hard to come by because of this unusual history.

Why are there so many copies of A Christmas Carol in various shorthands?

Around 1827 or so, Dickens taught himself Gurney’s shorthand (the most complicated of all shorthands) while he was working in the courts as a reporter. By methodically applying himself to this series of “chicken scratches and curls,” Dickens became
the fastest shorthand reporter in the country. Perhaps in homage to its most illustrious practitioner, several of his novels have been translated into shorthand.

Is Ebenezer Scrooge Jewish?

Jonathan Grossman put one of the strangest proposals forward in his essay “The Absent Jew in Dickens.” Here he makes a case for Scrooge as Jewish. He links Scrooge and Marley’s first names—Ebenezer and Jacob—to the Old Testament. In addition, Scrooge’s rejection of his nephew in the first scene could be referring to Fred’s intermarriage.

When Fred responds to Scrooge’s inquiry of why he got married with “Because I fell in love.”

“Because you fell in love!” growled Scrooge, as if that were the only one thing in the world more ridiculous than a merry Christmas. (A Christmas Carol, Stave I)

It could also explain why Scrooge never having gone home for the Christmas holidays as well as Scrooge’s telling the Ghost of Christmas Present that he has never celebrated Christmas. (Overall, a bizarre concept but one worth putting out in passing.)

Charles Dickens and Christmases Yet to Come

There is no question that A Christmas Carol was Dickens’ greatest Christmas story—perhaps the most famous Christmas story ever told (save the original). While Dickens continued to write new Christmas stories (including Cricket on the Hearth, The Chimes and The Haunted Man), none ever achieved the success and the acclaim that this first one did. A Christmas Carol continued to be a part of Dickens’ life. He continually revived it as part of his staged readings of his works, both in England and in his U.S. tour.

Londoners, who had never read a word of Dickens, were nevertheless familiar with his name. Dickens became the spirit of Christmas—indeed, Father Christmas himself. Although his many works shall endure, notable Oliver Twist, Great Expectations, David Copperfield, among others, Dickens will be most remembered for this short but brilliant contribution to literature, to culture, and to the spirit of mankind.

A Final Note from Theatre Three

Why A Christmas Carol?

To answer this we offer a quote from Jerry Patch’s introduction to his stage adaptation of A Christmas Carol:

“The account of one Christmas Eve and Day in the life of Ebenezer Scrooge offers people of different faiths and ages a common spiritual experience in a secular setting. Each performance unites an audience, whose members in these times are rarely united in anything. They recognize, as Scrooge’s nephew Fred says, a time ‘in the long calendar of the year when men and women seem by one consent to open their shut-up hearts freely and to the grave and not another race of creatures on other journeys.’
“Quite simply, it celebrates the season. It is also a terrific ghost story, and at its center is the redemption of one of the great archetypes of our culture. *A Christmas Carol* shows up every year for the same reasons Christmas and Hanukkah do—it expresses an important part of our culture, of ourselves.*

This year, **Theatre Three** presents its thirty-sixth annual production of *A Christmas Carol*. Our goal is to continue to bring our community the most authentic, innovative, and hopefully, enlightening adaptation.

*“Scrooge represents every man who has hardened his heart, lost his ability to feel, separated himself from his fellow men, or sacrificed his life to ego, power, or accumulation. The symbolic force of Scrooge’s conversion is allied to the relief we feel (since we are all Scrooge’s in part) in knowing that we too can change and be reborn.”*

—Harry Stone on *A Christmas Carol*

*“Scrooge represents every man who has hardened his heart, lost his ability to feel, separated himself from his fellow men, or sacrificed his life to ego, power, or accumulation. The symbolic force of Scrooge’s conversion is allied to the relief we feel (since we are all Scrooge’s in part) in knowing that we too can change and be reborn.”*

—Harry Stone on *A Christmas Carol*

*The story of Scrooge and Marley, Scrooge and Bob Cratchit, Scrooge and the spirits, Scrooge and Tiny Tim is unending. Each Christmas, we create it anew. And so, as Tiny Tim observed, “God Bless Us, Every One!”*

**Sources:**
Ackroyd, Peter. *Dickens.*
Balzac, Honre. *Eugenie Grandet.*
Cusumano, Joseph D. *Transforming Scrooge.*
Devito, Carlo. *Inventing Scrooge.*
Dickens, Charles, with notes by Michael Patrick Hearn. *The Annotated Christmas Carol.*
------------. *Bleak House.*
------------. *The Life and Adventures of Nicholas Nickleby.*
------------. *The Pickwick Papers.*
Kaplan, Fred. *Dickens: A Biography.*
Landow, George P. “Wages, the Cost of Living, Contemporary Equivalents to Victorian Money.”
Mula, Thomas. *Jacob Marley’s Christmas Carol.*
Patch, Jerry. *A Christmas Carol.* (stage adaptation)
------------. *What Jane Austen Ate and Charles Dickens Knew.*
Sibley, Brian. *A Christmas Carol: The Unsung Story.*
Slater, Michael. *Charles Dickens.*
Tomlin, Claire. *Charles Dickens: A Life.*
------------. *The Invisible Woman: The Story of Nellie Ternan and Charles Dickens.*