A CHRISTMAS CAROL

From the Novella by CHARLES DICKENS
Adapted by TOM CREAMER
Directed by STEVE SCOTT

Contents

2 The Magic of Bah, Humbug!
3 An Introduction to the Production
6 Charles Dickens, and How a Story Came to Be
10 Dickens the Writer
11 An Introduction to the Industrial Revolution
12 Dickens’ Times: A Global Perspective
14 The Growth of a Global Economy
15 Dining with the Cratchits
17 Victorian Etiquette
18 Dickens’ London/Our Chicago
20 Dickens’ Christmas Revival: Our Traditions
22 How the Consumer Stole Christmas
24 How to Celebrate the Reason
25 Poverty in America: Millions in Need
26 Langston Hughes’ Black Nativity: A Journey
28 Chicago Pilgrims
30 Theatre Etiquette
32 Writing Your Response Letter
33 Reading Your Ticket

Co-Editors | Willa J. Taylor, Teresa M. Rende, Elizabeth Rice
Production Manager | Teresa M. Rende
Designer | Teresa M. Rende

Contributing Writers/Editors | Eleanor Davis, Lesley Gibson, Elizabeth Gottmann, Jessica Hutchinson, Jasmine Lake, William Landon, Elizabeth Mork, Teresa M. Rende, Elizabeth Rice, Willa J. Taylor

SPECIAL THANKS: Jessica Hutchinson, Steve Scott, the Goodman Theatre Production Department, Christmas.

This study guide is published by Goodman Theatre’s Education and Community Engagement Department for participants in the Student Subscription Series.

For more information related to A CHRISTMAS CAROL, lesson plans and activities, please visit our Education website at:
http://education.goodmantheatre.org
The Magic of Bah, Humbug!

BY WILLA J. TAYLOR

I have seen some version of *A Christmas Carol*, Charles Dickens’ tale of the redemptive power of Christmas joy, since I was five. It was a holiday tradition in my family. The Saturday after Thanksgiving marked the official beginning of the Christmas season: Daddy would put up the lights to outline our house; Mama and I would go pick out a tree. That night, after decorating and singing carols, we would huddle in front of the television to watch “Scrooge”, a 1951 film adaptation starring Alistair Sims.

By the time I was in my teens public theaters in Dallas (where I grew up) were desegregated, and we started attending the annual production of *A Christmas Carol* at Dallas Theatre Center. But the movies continued to play a significant part in our holiday reverie. In the 1970’s, I fell in love with a new musical version of “Scrooge” starring Albert Finney. It remains my favorite film adaptation to this day.

I have worked on high school, college and community theater productions. I have even seen it performed in Greek. I watched Patrick Stewart – Captain Jean-Luc Picard of the Starship Enterprise – act out all the parts in a one-man version that is, without a doubt, one of the best productions I’ve ever seen. And I have watched any number of celluloid Scrooges – Susan Lucci, Bill Murray, Cecily Tyson, Jim Carrey and, of course, Kermit and the Muppets.

But every year around October I become a little like Scrooge. As we gear up to rehearsals for yet another production of *A Christmas Carol*, I find myself a bit jaded. The theater collectively goes into ACC mode - the sets and props come out of storage to be buffed and polished; actors who perennially do the show are in the halls running lines; the coffin – the most macabre set piece – is stashed in the loading dock. Ads appear on cabs and buses. The commercials run on radio and television. And the requests for tickets start pouring in. It is a Victorian Christmas in the building but it’s still warm outside. It’s not even Halloween. Why are we getting ready for Christmas when I haven’t even had Thanksgiving dinner?

Our production opens just after Thanksgiving, and during the first Wednesday matinee, I go down to the theater just to make sure everything is running smoothly. I only intend to stay for a scene but I find myself sitting through the entire show, crying at the end and awed by the magic of the production and the power of the story.

Charles Dickens’ novella, written in just six weeks and published in 1843, is the ultimate tale of transformative power of love and joy. The change in Scrooge from a miserable uncharitable miser to a generous Uncle Ebenezer is a tale all too relevant today. His realization that all his material wealth is nothing without a richness of spirit is a message with resonance in a world obsessed with material things. It reminds us of our responsibility to humankind, of our obligations to eradicate want and ignorance from this world, and of our ability to give of ourselves to others less fortunate. These are the lessons of this 167-year old story, lessons I hope I can live by in this joyous season and in the year to come.
This year we celebrate the 34th anniversary of *A Christmas Carol* at the Goodman. We spoke with director, Steve Scott, about his experiences and thoughts on this production.

**LESLEY GIBSON:** Do you want to start by describing your history with *A Christmas Carol* at the Goodman?

**STEVE SCOTT:** I began working with *A Christmas Carol* while I was still the Director of Education. I used to go out and lecture to a lot of groups about *A Christmas Carol*. I would tell them the background of the story and the history of the story on stage and off stage, so I was thoroughly indoctrinated into *A Christmas Carol* before I took over as director, which I did in 1989. I directed four productions of *A Christmas Carol* from 1989 to 1992. Since then I have been involved each year as the producer of the show. I think I have seen ACC more than any person on earth, actually, but it’s always been one of my favorite events at Goodman. I think it is one of the best things we do and it certainly has become a tradition for the whole city. It was really wonderful when I got the chance to direct it once more this year.

**LG:** What do you do as the producer?

**SS:** I basically oversee things like the adaptation of the story. We are still using the same adaptation that we have used for many years, which was by our former dramaturg, Tom Creamer. But every year that is refreshed a little bit, things are added and rephrased. The technical production also changes slightly every year. I work with the production department on that and the production director. And the casting of the show also changes. Although our casting director takes the lead, I kind of oversee that and certainly give my opinion as we go along with the casting.

**LG:** How is your perspective different with this 20 year break?

**SS:** Well it’s interesting since I haven’t done it in 20 years. Certainly directing the show, you are going to become much more involved in it than if you were a producer. My perspective now has changed, certainly since I’m older and in some ways perhaps more cynical and perhaps more Scrooge like, I think. I am even more affected now than I was before by the transformation that Scrooge makes and the kinds of things he learns, which, I think, is really at the heart of the show. I would hate to identify myself as Scrooge incarnate, but in some ways I think as you get older you do become a little more cynical. I think it’s even more important as you get older to come back to this story and see how you are reflected in what Scrooge is and how maybe that isn’t so good.
LG: This is the same translation that we have been doing for awhile, how is it going to be different from recent productions of the show?

SS: Even though it’s the same story, I think different directors bring different emphases to various facets of the story. One of the things that I really enjoyed doing before, and want to do again now, is to heighten the emotional journey through the story. To me, A Christmas Carol is like an emotional rollercoaster. It’s joyous and happy at one moment, very sad and tragic at another moment, then really, really scary. I think the audience gets on at the beginning, and it’s like a ride through a theme park almost, where you see lots of different things coming at you very, very quickly and you respond viscerally to it. Really, it’s trying to get back to that visceral response that we’ve had with the production in the past.

LG: How do you plan on using some of the more fantastic production elements?

SS: Certainly something we are always reinvestigating is how the ghosts appear and how to make those sequences scary and more impactful. We have a couple of tricks we are going to try this year on how to establish the ghosts and making them truly terrifying creatures. We’re also renovating some elements of the set so that there is a greater disparity between the feeling of Scrooge and his counting house and all the other places that he visits, especially the Fezziwig scene, which is the site of the happiest moments of his youth. Interestingly, his counting house is in the same building that Fezziwig’s offices were, but we are trying to go for a larger contrast there to see what has happened, what’s decayed through the years, and where Scrooge ended up. And, we are looking at a couple of other elements to make the story a little warmer, the family sequences a little fuller and richer, just kind of broadening the emotional context of the show.

LG: What is your opinion on cast diversity and how did that affect your casting of A Christmas Carol this year?

SS: A Christmas Carol is a staple of the Goodman’s season and a tradition for many Chicago area families. As a director, I hope to not only present Dickens’ beautiful story, but to show the timeless nature of its message of charity by having the production reflect the world we live in today; the community on stage should reflect our community. A diverse cast is paramount in achieving this, and it adds a beautiful authenticity to the play. This is true for all Goodman productions, and any play I direct outside of the Goodman, as well. Theater is all about telling stories—and those stories are made rich by finding a wide variety of voices to tell them. As the American theater progresses, inclusiveness—both for artists and audiences—is essential to make it thrive.

LG: Are there any big surprises?

SS: There are some big surprises, but I’m not going to tell you what they are. You are going to have to come and see that.

LG: Why do you think this story still resonates with people after 160 years? How does it stay relevant and meaningful?

SS: I think the story resonates now even more than in the past because not only does it contain all these wonderful theatrical elements, but it is a story where we can all see ourselves reflected in whatever stage of life we are in. I think young people can see themselves in the Cratchit family and the Cratchit children. Parents see themselves in the same way. I think we all do, especially as life gets tougher and especially in the last few years as people have been suffering a great deal because of various economic hardships. I think we all need to come back to the idea that it isn’t really money that matters, and it isn’t the kind of material possessions that we have that matter, it’s really ourselves and how we are tied to each other. In a world where we tend to be more and more fractionalized, it’s really important and really refreshing and comforting to come back to that realization.
every year. We all are together on this journey through life. It’s important reaffirm that and reaffirm what that really means to us.

LG: Why do you think it is important for us to continue to do this year after year?

SS: It’s important that we do it for the reasons I just said. I think it’s an important story to revisit. It has become a tradition, I think, in a city where almost all of the holiday traditions that we’ve seen have kind of gone away. A Christmas Carol still remains. I think it is one of those events that one loves to experience with one’s loved ones: family, friends. It has become a hallmark of the whole season of rebirth and reinvestigation and kind of beginning anew. I think it’s important that we do it for the audiences who love to see it every year. But, I think it is an important kind of social message, too, that we are bringing audiences, and I think that’s important to go back and revisit every year for the people who come but also for the artists involved in the show. I think a lot of the people, certainly at the Goodman, feel the same way about the production and view the coming of A Christmas Carol as a major event in their lives, not just in their professional lives.

LG: Do you think it is different directing A Christmas Carol from any other show?

SS: Oh, very much so. It’s very different from directing any other show because there are certain elements in the production that need to be preserved. They are things that audiences have come to expect over some 30 odd years, so you have to preserve those but refresh them so they don’t just become set pieces. The structure of it is relatively the same each year. When you are directing other shows, you are usually starting from scratch and building from the ground floor. Here you are kind of taking something that has already been established and trying to put your own imprint on it in whatever ways you can, which is an interesting challenge. I think in some ways it’s more fulfilling than directing other shows because you have such a rich tradition of things to draw upon. There have been so many wonderful directors attached to this production that have put their imprint on it and so many actors that have been involved with it; it has such a rich history that it’s wonderful to be able to pull from all of that. It really is a great deal of fun, although it is a different kind of challenge for a director.

LG: What is most fun about it?

SS: What is most fun about this? I think certainly in the past the thing that I’ve enjoyed the most about directing A Christmas Carol, aside from the audience response which is always very gratifying, is if you do the show the right way there is a real family feeling that builds up with the cast, the crew and the people who are working on the show. It’s a much closer bond than you get with any other production, through the rehearsal and the performance period, you really grow together. It makes the Christmas celebration mean a lot more when you have all of these people who are really part of your family that year to celebrate with. That’s the thing I enjoy the most. It is a very moving experience to get to know all these people in this context and work with them in the most significant part of the year for everybody.
Charles Dickens was born the second of eight children in the town of Portsmouth, England on February 7th, 1812. His father, John Dickens, worked as a clerk in the Naval Pay office which forced him and his family to move constantly. As a result, young Charles’ early years were spent in various cities in England - including London.

The family moved to London just before Charles’ 12th birthday. Charles received some basic formal education at a private school before tragedy struck. His father was very irresponsible with the family’s finances, and constantly spent more money than he earned. Soon after moving into their new home, John Dickens was arrested for outstanding debt. The entire family, except for Charles, was sent to Marshalsea Debtor’s Prison; a prison specifically for individuals and their family members who were unable to pay back their debt.

Charles began to work ten hour days at Warren’s boot-blacking factory. At the age of 12, he spent his days applying labels to jars of shoe polish, earning only six shillings per week—the equivalent of earning $26 per week today—the majority going to support his family.

After the family had been imprisoned for three months, John Dickens declared himself an “Insolvent Debtor,” one who has insufficient funds to get out of debt. This enabled him to release his family from jail. John removed Charles from the warehouse and promptly sent the adolescent to private school where he did extremely well. Three years later, when he was fifteen, Charles began working as a clerk in a law office. Unhappy with the position, Charles left the profession of clerk to become a journalist, and wrote most about parliamentary debates and campaign elections. He also penned humorous sketches for magazines in his free time. As his popularity grew, these sketches were complied and published in his first book, *Sketches by Boz* (1836). They were very well received by both critics and the public. He followed this success with his first novel, *The Pickwick Papers* (1836-37), which was released in monthly installments (as were many of Dickens’ works, including *A Christmas Carol*). To this day, none of his novels have gone out of print in England!

Due to his days working in the factory, he was also very interested in social reform. Throughout his works, Dickens retains empathy for the common working man.
and skepticism of the upper classes.

Unfortunately, his climb to success took a significant downturn during the next few years. *The Old Curiosity Shop* (1840), his follow-up to *Nicholas Nickleby*, was less than successful, and *Barnaby Rudge* (1841) did even worse in sales. During 1842 he toured the United States, where he enjoyed favor in all of his travels. He was keenly disappointed, however, by the social issues he identified in America. He upset his hosts by condemning slavery, in the spirit of the social issues he took to heart. This distaste was evident in his travelogue *American Notes*, written that same year, which was highly critical of the new nation. By the fall of 1843 Charles Dickens had lost social and financial favor. The author was in need of a new source of inspiration. Considering Dickens’ own personal history and fierce dedication to exposing the conditions of the poor, it is not altogether surprising where he found this muse.

How A Christmas Carol Came to be

“In the little world in which children have their existence, whosoever brings them up, there is nothing so finely perceived and so finely felt, as injustice.” - Charles Dickens, *Great Expectations*
The Impact of the Industrial Revolution

In 1834, the year when Charles Dickens began writing *A Christmas Carol*, the Industrial Revolution was in full swing. The results were a mix of positive and negative on the needy population of England. The Revolution caused a huge amount of low-paying, low-skill jobs to grow within the cities. Manufacturers began hiring children in large numbers for these positions due to the fact these unprotected workers would do the job for little pay, leading to huge profits for the company. No laws protected children in the workplace. Some children were forced by their parents into the factories before the age of seven. These young workers often labored for more than 12 hours a day. Horrifyingly dangerous and unsanitary conditions were common.

Enraged by the situation of the poor, Dickens continually chronicled these atrocities and searched for ways to change them.

Ragged Schools: Ignorance and Want

Dickens’ interest in education’s potential to save children from poverty rapidly grew. In the fall of 1843, Charles personally went to several institutions known as “Ragged Schools,” schools that were a direct product of the industrial revolution, which provided free education to inner city children searching for answers. One school in particular Dickens described as “more than a ‘ragged’ place”. He recalls that the children were filthy and dressed in tatters. Some had already succumbed to the pressures of poverty by becoming pimps and thieves – many had lost their innocence. The children’s schoolrooms were in an equally depressing state. He wrote to a friend about the experience, “On Thursday night I went to the Ragged School; an awful sight it is. I have very seldom seen in all the strange and dreadful things I have seen in London and elsewhere, anything so shocking as the dire neglect of soul and body exhibited in these children.”

In a piece for the Examiner, he wrote, “Side by side with Crime, Disease, and Misery in England, Ignorance is always brooding.” Thus the germinating image of *A Christmas Carol* was not that of the ghosts, Scrooge, or even Tiny Tim, but the two “monsters,” the allegorical children Ignorance and Want. Dickens had intended a tract on education for the poor, but he now decided to write a story that, he announced with justifiable hyperbole, would hit his readers over the head like a “sledge-hammer.” And this is exactly what it achieved.

Charles wrote non-stop for the six weeks following his visit. He notes that while writing *A Christmas Carol* he often “wept and laughed and wept again.” At times his agitation was so great that he would “walk about the back streets of London fifteen and twenty miles many a night when all sober folks had gone to bed.” During these six weeks, he was able to turn out the story of the Christmas of 1843 in the form of *A Christmas Carol*. It was, in some ways, a push for a new literary hit as well as a cry for the public’s attention to a vast and deadly problem. He worked tirelessly to get the story into print by that Christmas, and put a lot of his own money into the publication process to do so.

Financial Problems

Response to *A Christmas Carol* was immediate and positive. A remarkable 6,000 copies were sold on the day of its publication. However, due to the book’s
moderate price and beautiful but expensive packaging, profits were lower than Dickens originally thought and of which he was in need. In 1844 he complained to a friend, “Such a night as I have passed! The first 6,000 copies show a profit of 230 pounds! And the last four will yield as much more. I had set my heart and soul upon a thousand. What a wonderful thing it is that such a great success should occasion me such intolerable anxiety and disappointment!”

A Universal Success?

A Christmas Carol’s popularity turned the public eye back to Dickens’ work, dramatically increasing the sales of his future novels. He became one of England’s most beloved writers, and was similarly admired later in other countries, such as the United States.

America had not been ready for a new Dickens book following the perceived injury of American Notes, but still, Dickens revisited America in 1867. He came for a speaking tour, during which he read excerpts from his books and acted out all of the characters. On the night before tickets went on sale in New York, a line of people stretched half a mile down the street and by morning more than 5,000 eager audience members were in line waiting. A Christmas Carol was the book most often requested.

The End of An Author’s Life

Charles Dickens died from a stroke on June 8th, 1870 at the age of 58. He was mourned by peers, friends, family, and the public at large. Charles Dickens is buried in the distinguished Poet’s Corner in Westminster Abbey, where his grave marker still stands today. The inscription on his tombstone reads: “He was a sympathizer to the poor, the suffering, and the oppressed; and by his death, one of England’s greatest writers is lost to the world”.

A story circulated after his death. A man tells of when he was in a tobacco shop and a laborer came in and flung two pence on the counter for his shag. The shop keep asked him why he looked so wretched. “Charles Dickens is dead,” he replied, “We have lost our best friend.”
Dickens the Writer
EDITED BY ELIZABETH MORK

Charles Dickens had a critical eye and a sympathetic heart for issues of the poor. The themes of social injustice, greed among government powers, and hypocrisy in the church repeatedly appear throughout works such as Oliver Twist, Nicholas Nickleby, and Our Mutual Friends. Bleak House also aimed at this, and was partially autobiographical. Similarly to A Christmas Carol, Dickens set The Chimes and The Cricket on the Hearth during the holiday season in order to create a greater focus on the issues of everyday poverty. Some of Dickens’ other works, like Oliver Twist and The Mystery of Edwin Drood, which he died before completing, have also been adapted for the stage and film. All remain beloved classics to this day.

A Chronology of Dickens’ Major Works

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

Did you know?

Until the very end of Dickens’ life in the later half of the 19th century, only one child in every three had the opportunity to attend school. Likewise, it has been estimated that during that time in London more than 100,000 children of the poor never even attended a “Ragged School.”
An Introduction to the Industrial Revolution
BY ELEANOR DAVIS

Charles Dickens’ *A Christmas Carol* is set against the backdrop of the Industrial Revolution. The Industrial Revolution was a period when much of society moved from working on the land as farmers to working in manufacturing and commerce in factories. It marked a major turning point, wherein almost every aspect of daily life was influenced by industrialization.

The move towards factory labor began in Britain, and spread throughout the rest of Europe and North America, lasting form the middle of the 18th century to the early 1900’s. There were two main phases of the revolution: the first was founded on iron, steam, and coal; the second was founded on steel, electricity, and oil. Throughout both these phases, cities grew very quickly and modern sciences were developed. New inventions, ideas, and methods led to more efficient means of production.

During this move from the farm to manufacturing, workers found increased opportunities for unskilled employment in numerous new mills and factories, but these jobs often included long hours and low pay, leading to very poor working environments where dangerous and unsanitary conditions were common. Manufacturers even began hiring children in large numbers and forcing them to work for up to 12 hours a day. While workers slaved for long hours and little pay, the owners of the factories made huge profits, causing the gap between the rich and the poor to increase exponentially.

Many individuals spoke out against the conditions of the working class and the effects of the Industrial Revolution, most famous among them being Karl Marx. According to Marx, the industrialization of society formed two different groups: the bourgeoisie (business owners) and the proletariat (working class). Marx asserted that the defining characteristic of the Industrial Revolution was a shift in the ownership of the means of production, and this led to an unfair imbalance between the two groups. Prior to the industrial revolution, a man could own his own farm and work for his own livelihood, following it, a very few rich men owned the factories, the means of production, and the majority of men had to work for those at the top. The bourgeoisie was becoming absurdly wealthy from the proletariat’s labor, and the proletariat was not able to reap the benefits of their hard work. Nor were they able, he argued, to feel any sense of pride or ownership over the products that they made, because the factory system was set up so that they would perform the same menial tasks again and again in quick succession for many hours and never see a finished product. He felt that the capitalist economy created by the industrial revolution was not beneficial to all of society.

So, in the 19th century, London was the largest and richest city in the world, yet it was struggling to cope with large numbers of desperately poor people. The conditions of the Industrial Revolution had caused the population to skyrocket, and in the first 80 years of the 19th century alone, London increased from a million to more than 4.5 million people. The city became divided geographically between the very rich and the very poor as factories moved in and the rich moved out of the dirty manufacturing areas. The West End was populated by the aristocracy, while the bulk of the middle and lower classes lived down both sides of the Thames river from the Tower of London in what came to be known as the East End. Approximately one third of London’s population lived in very unsanitary and neglected areas called slums. The city was rife with pollution and filth, from horse manure to sewage. Crime was rampant, water was polluted (many citizens drank water from the same part of the Thames where sewage was dumped), drainage was inadequate, and diseases and epidemics spread like wildfire. Housing was cramped, with entire families crammed into one room apartments. This was the London about which Charles Dickens was writing when he spoke of Oliver Twist, the young orphan boy who grows up on the streets of London, and of the rampant poverty and horrible conditions of the poor population in *A Christmas Carol*. 


Dickens’ Time: A Global Perspective
BY WILLIAM LANDON

The timeline below details important events in Charles Dickens’ life as well as happenings in Great Britain and around the world. As you look over the timeline, consider how Dickens’ life relates to what was happening elsewhere.

1812
Charles Dickens is born at Landsport, Portsmouth on Feb. 7.

1814
Congress of Vienna, a year-long meeting to determine the future of Europe, convenes.

1822
Dickens and his family move to London. Due to limited finances, he can no longer attend school.

1824
Charles’ father and family are arrested for debt; he begins working at Warren’s Blacking warehouse. He resumes schooling after his family is released from prison.

1832
Slavery is abolished in the British Empire.

1833
Dickens meets Catherine Hogarth, daughter of a Morning Chronicle music critic. Dickens works at the Morning Chronicle from 1833 to 1836.

1834
The Poor Law Amendment Act in Britain is passed under the belief that if a person was poor, it was his/her fault. It established workhouses, which were notorious for their dangerous conditions.
1836
Dickens and Hogarth marry on April 2.

1842
British East India Company defeats the Qing Dynasty in the First Opium War, forcing China to tolerate smuggling of opium from British India into China. Dickens and his wife go on a six-month American tour. His account of the trip, American Notes, criticized slavery and angered many Americans.

1848
Seneca Falls Convention for women's rights organized in New York; Manifesto of the Communist Party published in Germany.

1851
Dickens gives his first staged reading of A Christmas Carol before 2,000 people at a benefit for the Birmingham and Midland Institute, a pioneer of adult scientific and technical education.

1865
Exhaustion and illness force Dickens to return home from an English tour of A Christmas Carol, after delivering 74 of a planned 100 readings.

1870
On June 9, after a day of work on his novel in progress, The Mystery of Edwin Drood, Dickens dies. He had presented a total of 444 readings of A Christmas Carol in Great Britain and the United States.

1869
The American Civil War begins. Following the Crimean War, the Emperor of Russia abolishes serfdom, or "enforced labor."

1864
Taiping Rebellion in China ends; death toll is an estimated 20 million civilians and soldiers.

1861
American Civil War ends; death toll is an estimated 620,000 soldiers and undetermined number of civilians; Thirteenth Amendment to the Constitution abolishes slavery in the United States.
When Charles Dickens was born in 1812, Great Britain, and indeed the entire world, was entering a time of great change. From the mid-1800s onward, society moved toward an increasingly global economy. Improvements in transportation and communication resulted in more countries being able to sell their agricultural goods and raw materials at an international level. The industrial era was evolving quickly, and many countries sought to benefit immensely from it while others fell behind because of their inability to participate.

Britain’s success in industrialization was unmatched by any nation. The success Britain held from the late 1700s through the 1800s actually pushed other countries out of the competition. Countries like China and India experienced periods of de-industrialization as certain industries, such as the textile markets, became obsolete when compared to the cheap, high quality and swiftly produced British textiles. As such, these non-western countries suffered the plight of growing populations and decreasing household income. Furthermore, the prosperity and technological advances of western nations allowed them to travel more often, meaning western folk were spreading new goods, religions and diseases abroad, while using their advanced weaponry to further their own agenda in foreign countries.

Emerging philosophies of free trade and “international peace” (influenced primarily by the prosperity that followed international trade), only added to the economic situation that aided a number of western nations. This is not to say that international peace served as the standard. There was, in fact, the same fancy for conquest that European nations had exhibited in the past. As industrialization pushed on, the focus of conquest changed dramatically. Differing from the many Napoleonic battles of the late 1700s and early 1800s, conquest battles of mid- to late 1800s were characterized by the overthrow of many less developed nations. Interstate battles still existed, but they were shorter and more internally isolated than were conquest and territorial battles of prior decades. Historian Paul Kennedy explains that, “In the year 1800, Europeans occupied or controlled 35 percent of the land surface of the world; by 1878 this figure had risen to 67 percent, and by 1914 to over 84 percent.”

Changes in international banking and the concept of “credit” also gave advantages to certain nations during this period. The new practice of amassing resources in a short time and winning any given conflict quickly moved the focus away from long-term military mobilization. Simply being a “wealthy nation” was not enough to ensure success. Instead, a country had to have a well-balanced economy with healthy credit, international trade and, most importantly, a national stake in industrialization. The combination of these varied factors made Britain more powerful than any nation in the world.
Dining with the Cratchits  
BY JASMINE LAKE

As animals, human beings must eat to survive, which should indicate just how vital a role food plays in our existence. The irrefutable need to eat has always brought humans, especially families, together in an attempt to assure that basic survival needs are met. While food remains a unifying force in modern society, it has evolved into an art form with many variations unique to different regions and cultures. This evolution has allowed Dickens, along with many others, to define entire worlds and people through food. The type of food a person eats can give many clues as to where a person is from, their economic status, and even the time of year in which they’re eating. In this vein, something as simple as Charles Dickens’ description of the Cratchits’ Christmas dinner tells a great deal about who the Cratchits are and the kind of world in which they live.

Dickens links the Cratchits to food for the first time in Act II, Scene 8, when the ghost of Christmas Present shows Scrooge a street scene. Finishing some last minute preparations for Christmas dinner, Emily and Belinda Cratchit spot an assortment of delicious food for sale: sausages, meat pies, pears, apples, plums, and, last but not least, chestnuts. These items are salivated over, but completely unattainable to the Cratchits. This seemingly insignificant moment speaks volumes about Victorian society and where the Cratchits fall within the socioeconomic hierarchy. They cannot spare a penny for a dozen hot, smokin’ chestnuts, let alone a meat pie! Meat was a luxury for the average Victorian family, their inability to indulge in such a treat makes obvious the Cratchits’ poor financial standing. Though frivolous meat pies were out of the question, the Cratchits did manage to afford a cooked goose for the Christmas festivities. This goose was the most expensive item on the menu, as Mrs. Cratchit informs the family, solidifying meat’s status a lavish indulgence.

Like meat, fruit was also a luxury in Victorian England. Consider England’s geography; it is a Northern island with notoriously wet, dreary weather, not ideal for growing fruit. For fruit to be sold in London during the Christmas season, it must be imported from a country with a warmer climate, many miles away. As is still the case today, imported goods were more expensive than regionally available goods, especially in 1843 when transportation was difficult and took longer. The affordable, regional staples of a working class family in Victorian England would have been bread and potatoes. If the family had money to spare, they might have been able to also buy cheese, butter, sugar, tea, salt, or a small amount of meat (Broomfield 85). Above all, fruit was an expensive luxury reserved for the most special of occasions.

Despite it being a luxury item, the Cratchits manage to purchase enough fresh or dried fruit to make the traditional Christmas pudding. Their willingness to budget in this costly dessert is very indicative of the Victorian mindset; even the poorest of families expected to have a Christmas pudding, made as decadently as the budget would allow. If you read through the “Christmas Plum Pudding,” recipe you’ll notice the inclusion of spices like nutmeg, mace, cinnamon, and cloves, all key ingredients to the success of a pudding. Like fruit, these spices were not regional and had to be imported from across the globe. The willingness of financially strapped families to purchase lavish ingredients speaks to the cultural significance of this dish, which had great religious and familial significance to Victorians.

Between fruit, spices, and a cooked goose, it is apparent that the Cratchit family was able to afford at least some minor luxuries; so, just how poor were they? It is difficult to accurately compare the value of money then and now; likewise, it is almost impossible to get an accurate comparison of wages. Dickens does, however, give us some clues that help put things into perspective. In Act II, Mrs. Cratchit recounts how much their Christmas feast cost saying, “Seven bob for the goose, three for the onions and sage, and four for the pudding,” (the term “bob” is slang for a shilling, much like the words “dough” and “green” are slang for money in our culture). All in all, their meal cost a total of 14 shillings, which Scrooge observes is, “Nearly a week’s wages,” for Bob Cratchit. From this comment we can tentatively estimate Bob Cratchit’s wage at 16 shillings a week, a low, but decent wage for a working class family with seven mouths to feed. During the Victorian era, thousands of people were as poor or worse off than the Cratchits, yet having a Christmas feast was of the utmost importance. For Victorians, a Christmas celebration had only begun to be fashionable again and provided one of few occasions to honor family and tradition as well as Christ’s birth. The Cratchits themselves were willing to spend almost an entire week’s wages on one meal! There were actually Christmas clubs that helped people save a few pennies
every month just to prepare for Christmas dinner. Dickens makes no mention of the Cratchits belonging to a Christmas club, but Mrs. Cratchit does reveal that she pawned the candlesticks to help pay for dinner. It may seem ludicrous to pawn a prized possession just to pay for a holiday meal, but this gesture indicates how significant a meal it was.

By highlighting the Cratchit’s dinner menu, Dickens was able to showcase Victorian culture, traditions, and values while giving his audience valuable information about the Cratchits and how they lived. He presents Christmas dinner as the most important part of a poor family’s holiday celebration; from exotic spices to meat, the Cratchits exemplify this by selling household necessities to help pay for Christmas dinner. Dickens not only reveals Victorian values but also acknowledges the significance of food as a primary, unifying force across social strata. Upon closer examination, we can even gather information about England’s geography based on the few foods Dickens mentions and how accessible they are to the Cratchits. The next time you sit down at a gathering with food take a look around and ask yourself, “What does this food say about me, my culture, and where I’m from?” You may be surprised at just how long of an answer that turns out to be.

A recipe for cooked goose as it appears in the 1849 edition of Modern Cookery, in All its Branches:

Recipe by Eliza Acton

Roast Goose with Sage and Onions: After it has been picked and singed with care, put into the body of the goose two parboiled onions of moderate size, finely chopped, and mixed with half an ounce of minced sage-leaves, a saltspoonful of salt, and half as much black pepper, or a proportionate quantity of cayenne; to these add a small slice of fresh butter. Truss the goose, and after it is on the spit, tie it firmly at both ends that it may turn steadily, and that the seasoning may not escape; roast it at a brisk fire, and keep it constantly basted. Serve it with brown gravy, and apple or tomato[sic] sauce. (Broomfield 148).

Christmas Plum Pudding

(makes one large pudding, approx. 15 servings)

Ingredients:
- ¾ cup flour
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 1 teaspoon cinnamon
- ¾ teaspoon baking soda
- ½ teaspoon mace
- ½ teaspoon ground cloves
- ¼ teaspoon grated nutmeg
- ½ cup find bread crumbs, softened in ¾ cups hot milk
- 1 cup soft brown sugar
- 1 cup grated suet (or vegetable shortening or butter cut into small pieces)
- 1 cup raisins
- 1 cup currants
- 1 cup candied fruit
- ¾ cup chopped almonds
- ¾ cup brandy

Directions:
Mix flour, spices, and sugar in a large bowl. Cut the fat into the flour until the mixture resembles tiny peas. Add mild and breadcrumbs. Add 2 tablespoons of brandy. Stir until well mixed. If batter is too stiff to spoon into the mold easily, add more hot milk. Coat nuts, candied peel, and dried fruit with a bit of flour. Add in nuts, candied peel, and dried fruit to the batter. Mix again. Use the same technique for steaming this pudding as suggested for treacle, or use a pudding mold that can be tightly covered. Steam the pudding for approximately 2 ½ hours until it is completely cooked. You will need to replenish the water in the pot once or twice. Unmold the pudding on platter, cool, and cover until ready to serve, (most Victorians stored the plum pudding for several days to allow it to season). When ready to serve, pour the brandy over the pudding and around it. Ignite and carry to the table while it is still flaming. Plum pudding is best served with a hard sauce, (“hard,” meaning alcohol-based, such as brandy or whiskey). Whipped cream or warm caramel sauce are also good accompaniments.
Victorian Etiquette
BY JESSICA HUTCHINSON

In Victorian England, strict social rules determined interactions between men and women. Some of these may play into relations in *A Christmas Carol*, and may differ by class – but many, as you will see below, span social status. Think about it: are any of these rules, or variations of them, followed in the US today? Which?

The Gentleman

1. In riding horseback or walking along the street, the lady always has the wall.

2. When meeting a lady in the street or in the park whom you know only slightly, you wait for her acknowledging bow—then and only then may you tip your hat to her, which is done using the hand farthest away from her, to raise the hat. You do not speak to her—or to any other lady—unless she speaks to you first.

3. If you meet a lady who is a good friend and who signifies that she wishes to talk to you, you turn and walk with her if you wish to converse. It is not “done” to make a lady stand talking in a street.

4. In going up a flight of stairs; you precede the lady (running, according to one authority); in going down, you follow.

5. In a carriage, a gentleman takes the seat facing backward. If he is alone in a carriage with a lady, he does not sit next to her unless he is her husband, brother, father, or son. He alights from the carriage first so he may hand her down. He takes care not to step on her dress.

6. At a public exhibition or concert, if accompanied by a lady, he goes in first in order to find her a seat. If he enters such an exhibition alone and there are ladies or older gentlemen present, he removes his hat.

7. A gentleman is always introduced to a lady—never the other way around. It is presumed to be an honor for the gentleman to meet her. Likewise (and it is the more general rule of which this is only a specific example), a social inferior is always introduced to a superior and only with the latter’s acquiescence.

8. A gentleman never smokes in the presence of ladies.

The Lady

1. If unmarried and under thirty, she is never to be in the company of a man without a chaperone. Except for a walk to church or a park in the early morning, she may not walk alone but should always be accompanied by another lady, a man, or a servant. An even more restrictive view is that “if she cannot walk with her younger sisters and their governess, or the maid cannot be spared to walk with her, she had better stay at home or confine herself to the square garden.”

2. Under no circumstances may a lady call on a gentleman alone unless she is consulting that gentleman on a professional or business matter.

3. A lady does not wear pearls or diamonds in the morning.

4. A lady never dances more than three dances with the same partner.

5. A lady should never “cut” someone, that is to say, fail to acknowledge their presence after encountering them socially, unless it is absolutely necessary. By the same token, only a lady is ever truly justified in cutting someone: “a cut is only excusable when men persist in bowing whose acquaintance a lady does not wish to keep up.” Upon the approach of the offender, a simple stare of silent iciness should suffice; followed, (if necessary), by a “cold bow, which discourages familiarity without offering insult,” and departure forthwith. To remark, “Sir, I have not the honour of your acquaintance,” is a very extreme measure and is a weapon that should be deployed only as a last resort.
London is as much a character in Charles Dickens’ novels as Ebenezer Scrooge or Tiny Tim. To Dickens, London was a living, breathing entity for which he had an enduring fascination.

In the 19th century, London was the largest and richest city in the world, yet it was struggling to cope with large numbers of desperately poor people. The city was divided geographically between the very rich and the very poor. The aristocracy were building town houses in the elegant squares and crescents near Westminster in the West End. The bulk of the middle and lower classes lived down both sides of the Thames River from the Tower of London in what came to be known as the East End. Approximately one-third of London’s population lived in very unsanitary and neglected areas called the Slums. The Cratchits lived in Camden Town, an area in the north of the city. The city expanded outward at a rapid pace in just a couple centuries. In the early 1600s, almost all of London was contained in the walled City of London.

In 1666, the Great Fire of London consumed almost the entire city - Dickens’ London was a fairly new one; changes had been made. These problems may have increased due to the city’s growth: between 1800 and 1880, London’s population soared from 1 to 4.5 million people.
Our Chicago

Most of Dickens’ novels take place in London, the city in which he lived. He would often walk the streets, sometimes as many as 10 or 20 miles at a time! Due to this, his descriptions of 19th Century London allow readers to experience the sights, sounds, and smells of the city.

Think about how today’s Chicago is similar to, and different from, London in the 1800s. Consider how was Chicago influenced by its catastrophic 1871 Fire, in comparison to London’s 1666 fire. There may be some patterns in the socioeconomic disparity throughout these cities. On the West side of Chicago neighborhoods like Wicker Park and Bucktown have become areas where the hip and social elite migrate. Prices on rent, food, and drink are higher in these neighborhoods, and they see a proliferation of high scale dining, clothing boutiques, and non-essential retail. Similarly, the North Side of Chicago holds numerous neighborhoods, areas such as Old Town, Lincoln Park and Rogers Park, which enjoy a similar level of affluence. Compare the dining, housing, and shopping options in Pilsen, Bronzeville, or Englewood on the South Side; there is a distinctly different quality of life across mere miles.

Like London, the nature and boundaries of Chicago’s neighborhoods are always changing. Think about the Chicago you know today. What do you think makes Chicago’s geography different from London? How is it similar? Think about what the Chicago River, in particular, does to the layout of the city. What impact do you think bodies of water like the Chicago River and Lake Michigan have had on the formation of the city and access to different parts of the city?
The writing of A Christmas Carol in 1843 took place at a time when what are now central Christmas traditions were being established. In the 1840s Prince Albert introduced the German Christmas tree to the English celebration, and in the same years Christmas cards became popular greetings to send friends and family. One of Dickens’ best gifts to the holiday is a simple phrase we still use today. Scrooge’s nephew Fred’s cry of, “A Merry Christmas, uncle!” was the first use of this standard holiday greeting. As Dickens’ granddaughter, Monica, pointed out, “When you say, ‘Merry Christmas,’ you are quoting Charles Dickens.”

Just as Scrooge’s persona is wrapped up in humbug, Charles Dickens’ is intertwined with Christmas. In one of Dickens’ obituaries it was reported that a young girl, upon hearing that Dickens was dead, asked, “Then will Father Christmas die too?” J.W.T. Ley noted in the 1906 Christmas issue of The Dickensian, “Beyond question, it was Charles Dickens who gave us Christmas as we understand it to-day.”

The singing of carols by waifs is an English tradition. Waifs were originally watchmen who patrolled the streets of the older walled cities, keeping guard against dangers such as fire and singing out the hours of the night. During the holiday season they would include some carols for people along the way - but many complained about the nighttime disturbances.

The Christmas Tree display in Sao Paulo, Brazil. Photo courtesy of Silvio Tanaka.

The Christmas Tree

Carolers

The Victorians loved music, and Christmas was no exception. They revived older carols and hymns from the medieval period, and also created new pieces that were both secular and religious. Their interest in parlor singing sparked the use of cheerful, easily sung music in their Christmas celebrations. Musicians collected old nativity carols and wrote new ones to suit the tastes of the time. During Christmas Mass, popular music such as ‘O Holy Night’ and Handel’s ‘Messiah’ filled the churches.

Today’s Christmas carolers may sing in the cold with hopes of being invited inside for hot chocolate and cookies, but in Dickens’ time many carolers sang to keep from starving. This form of begging was illegal; it was a last resort for families struggling to stay out of the poorhouse. Dickens may well have considered the irony between the joyous nature of the carols themselves and the pitiful situation of the people he heard singing them in the London streets when he titled his book A Christmas Carol.

The Christmas Tree

The Christmas tree can truly be called a Victorian
innovation. The custom of a lighted tree began in Germany and German settlers brought the idea to America. However, it wasn’t until Prince Albert wedded Victoria, and brought the Christmas tree with him that the tree gained popularity. By 1847, the trees at Windsor Castle were laden with presents as well as wax candles. The tradition spread as English citizens followed the Royal example. The trees and other decorations were removed on Twelfth Night (January 6). To do so before or after was considered bad luck.

Christmas Cards

John Calcott Horsley designed the first Christmas card in 1843. Only 1000 cards were printed that first year and were expensive. By 1870, postage was reduced and a cheaper color lithography was used for printing. Thus began the real spread of the Christmas card — it reached the United States early that decade. Popular designs included Christmas feasts, church bells, snowbound mailcoaches and turkey and plum puddings. Popular designs today include traditional elements, as well as pop culture and other contemporary references.

Food

Christmas dinner was a grand affair! Goose, chicken, turkey or a joint of roast beef took center stage on the table. Christmas pudding, made with beef, raisins and prunes, was mixed on Stir-up Sunday, the Sunday before Advent, in order for the mixture to mature. All present in the house took turns stirring the pudding with a wooden spoon (in honor of the Christ child’s wooden crib). The stirring had to be done in a clockwise direction for luck. Mince pies were another traditional dish. They were sweeter, made with mincemeat, fruit and spices, and had to be eaten for the 12 days of Christmas to ensure 12 months of luck in the coming year. Each one had to be baked by a different person.

The famous “plum pudding” that Mrs. Cratchit makes was not made from actual plums, but raisins. At this economic level, the ‘copper’ - the pot used to boil the pudding - would have been used the rest of the year for the Cratchit family laundry. Poorer families like the Cratchits ate goose instead of turkey, as it was much cheaper. “Goose clubs” - places geese were raffled off just before the Christmas holiday - were very popular with the working classes.

History of Humbug

In Dickens’ time the word “humbug” was a common and witty expression used to proclaim a hoax, trick or deception. A 1751 paper noted humbug as “a black-guard sound, made use of by most people of distinction! It is a fine make-weight in conversation and some great men deceive themselves so egregiously as to think they mean something by it!”

The word’s origins are unknown, but Scrooge’s use of “Bah! Humbug!” to belittle Christmas and Marley’s Ghost would have marked him as a man of fashion, albeit a grumpy one. Dickens’ conjunction of Scrooge and “Humbug” acknowledged the word’s popularity and made use of his readers’ associations of humbug with the model businessman of England’s Industrial Age, interested only in hard economic fact and with no time for useless sentiment. Today, the word humbug has slipped out of popular usage, but remains a symbol of Scrooge and his cantankerous manner. John Irving sums it all up in an article on A Christmas Carol when he states, “Ebenezer Scrooge is the original Bah-Humbug man.”

To learn more about Christmas traditions around the world, visit: http://education.goodmantheatre.org
The word “Christmas” literally means “Christ’s Mass”. It originated as a celebration of the birth of Jesus Christ, a birth that many still celebrate today. What Christmas has come to mean in American culture and media, however, is much different. How the birth of Jesus Christ became a secularized celebration of spending can be explained through a rapid progress of marketability and consumer spending combined with the adaptation of Pagan symbols and Dutch folk tales. How this evolution shifted the holiday was surely a complex and layered process, but certain events are landmarks of this Christmas transformation.

One may assume that Christmas has always been a celebration that has taken place in the United States, but this is very untrue. The U.S. became a sovereign nation in 1776 after the signing of the Declaration of Independence, Christmas did not become a national holiday until president Ulysses S. Grant declared it so in 1870, about one hundred years later. Christmas traditions however, had been brought over by Europeans many years prior. In Europe, the folk tales of a Sinterklaas had been told for a long time. He would ride in on a horse and visit houses, children would leave carrots in their shoes for Sinterklaas’ horses to enjoy and he would leave presents (mainly some kind of candy) in the shoes in return. Sinterklaas was also said to have a group of playful helpers. When Christianity reached the Netherlands, Sinterklaas’ folk tale was celebrated and associated with the bishop Saint Nicolas. Saint Nicolas was said to have left money in the chimneys of women who were without a dowry, which was essential in marriage arrangements at the
time. These tales combined and created America’s modern Santa Claus, a man with a group of elf helpers that brought presents to children through a chimney. Instead of the carrots for the horse, it became cookies for Santa. No more horses either, magical reindeer were much more fantastical. When Santa first reached the U.S., his image was that of a thin, normal looking man. Images of Saint Nicolas were of a statuesque bishop, who didn’t always wear a red robe. Our modern image of Santa came to be the same way that many of our modern images are generated, through artists.

In the 20th century, as writers and artists such as Washington Irving, Clement Clark Moore, Thomas Nast, and Katherine Lee Bates began to artistically create Santa’s home, wife, workshop and overall story, one man would cement the image of Santa into our minds forever. Haddon Sundblom would create the image of Santa Claus we know today, to be used as a marketing campaign for Coca-Cola. The friendly, plump and jolly face was seen enjoying a Coke and wearing a red coat with white trim (Coca-cola’s trademark colors). Coke sales skyrocketed and it did not take long for more companies to jump on the bandwagon. Soon images of Santa were everywhere. The epicenter of this Christmas market was New York, and for good reason. New York, named New Amsterdam when it was first settled by the Dutch, was a hub of Dutch traditions, folklore and Sinterklaas, the model for the modern Santa Claus. Big stores like Gimbel began having Santa characters take present requests from eager children as their parents shopped. Santa became the grand finale in the Macy’s Christmas Day parade. The Yule log, Christmas tree, and mistletoe became symbols for the season, traditions also brought over by the Dutch and other European nations. Soon a medley of secularized carols and Christmas specials became staples of the season. Before long everyone had somebody to celebrate on Christmas, and it was not (necessarily) Jesus Christ.

The transformation of Christmas into a more secular consumer holiday is not all negative, though! In present day America, many of the messages associated with Christmas are accessible to those not wishing to partake in a religious celebration. Messages that encourage time spent with family, charity and peace are told through the lens of Christmas; it has become a time of family and friend togetherness, regardless of religious affiliation. Those wishing to celebrate Christmas in a more traditional, religious way still do so. Now, a main success Christmas accomplishes is bringing people together in a loving and joyous way. It is a time for all people to come together and bask in the things that connect us. The joy of Christmas time is a transcendent feeling that, even with a little bit of market coercion, many are proud to celebrate.
How to Celebrate the Reason
BY ELIZABETH GOTTMANN

It’s hard to escape the commercial imagery and appeal of Christmas. Undoubtedly, getting presents, drinking eggnog, and singing “Frosty the Snowman” are all fun things to do. Yet there are those who wish to celebrate a more traditional Christmas. One of the main differences in celebrating a more spiritual Christmas versus a more “Santa-Esque” Christmas is the time of year in which you begin celebrating. The Christmas season in America generally begins on Thanksgiving. As Thanksgiving has nothing to do with Christmas in origin, Thanksgiving’s association with Christmas has been it’s position as the start of the Christmas shopping season. During this shopping season, we decorate and throw parties; the Christmas season then ends on, well, Christmas, after all the presents have been handed out and the big dinner is done. To a more religious group, though, the Christmas celebration actually begins on Christmas. In my family, we begin the celebration with midnight mass on the night of Christmas eve. About an hour before midnight, the entire congregation gathers in a dimly lit church and sings spiritual psalms. As midnight approaches, and the church bells ring, a statue of infant Christ is placed in the manger to symbolize birth, and the mass begins. Celebratory songs are sung and everyone is joyous in the holiday that has now begun.

The next morning instead of waking up and rushing to open presents, my family once again returns to church. We still give each other gifts, but the tradition is much different. About a week before Christmas, we gather up in the car and drive to the local dollar store. We all scatter and find the most perfect gifts we can for one another; each person picks out one present per family member. On Christmas eve night we open our gifts and laugh together as some people open packages of electrical tape or a loofah. It’s never about the quality of the gift, its simply about being together. The Christmas celebration continues until the Epiphany, which can be celebrated as the day the three Magi visited Christ. During Epiphany, we mark our doors in chalk as a blessing and walk around our home burning incense, sprinkling holy water, and saying prayers. The date of Easter is officially announced at church and we begin to spiritually prepare for the next season. These are the Christmas memories and traditions I hold dear to my heart and that I celebrate with my community.

Not everyone has to celebrate Santa or go shopping to have Christmas cheer. For some, like me, a spiritual celebration is more of a gift than anything wrapped under the tree.
The poverty rate represents an average over the entire population. While it provides a general number, it fails to illustrate who in particular suffers the most from poverty. Therefore, it is necessary to research and examine particular groups of people in order to find more dynamic poverty levels. Specifically, African American and Hispanic populations report higher poverty rates than the national average. The poverty rate for both of these groups remained near 30 percent of the national average during the 1980s and mid-1990s. It began to fall in 2000. The rate for African Americans dropped to 22.1 percent and for Hispanics to 21.2 percent—the lowest rate for both groups since the United States began tracking poverty levels.

The total United States population was last listed as 310,729,000. According to recent statistics, 36.5 million people, 12.3 percent of the total U.S. population, live in poverty during the past four years. This equates that one family in eleven lives in poverty. Children make up the largest poor population in the United States, with more than 12 million living below the poverty line. According to the United Nations Children’s Fund, UNICEF, the United States has the second highest child poverty rate of all industrialized nations. By comparison, Sweden is less than 3 percent, the Czech Republic is less than 8 percent; France is just under 8 percent and Germany is just over 10 percent. Roughly 7.2 million people living in poverty are the working poor. Most are families with children. They represent the fastest-growing population living in poverty. A study by the U.S. Conference of Mayors found that children under the age of 18 accounted for 25 percent of the urban homeless. Families comprised 37 percent of the homeless population; single men and women comprised 45 percent and 14 percent respectively.

Poverty in Chicago
A city of homelessness and millionaires

According to the 2007 Report on Illinois Poverty by the Mid-America Institute on Poverty of Heartland Alliance, Cook County, IL has the second-highest number of millionaire households (167,873) and the second-highest number of poor households (273,658) of any county in the nation.

For reference, there are currently 3,141 counties in the U.S. The disparity of wealth among Chicago citizens is second highest of them all. In 2006, the Chicago City Council voted for an ordinance that would have required mega-retailers such as Wal-Mart and Target to pay their workers higher wages, totaling at least $10 per hour by 2010. Mayor Richard Daley vetoed the ordinance in September of that year, in what was his first veto in 17 years in office. He reasoned it would cost the city jobs and hurt the people who need them most. In other words: a minimum wage job is still a job. Major retailers agreed they would be less likely to build stores in Chicago if the ordinance had been passed. The minimum wage in the state of Illinois is currently $8.25 an hour, considerably higher than the federal minimum wage of $7.25 per hour. An estimate of the “living wage” in Chicago using the Living Wage Calculator—a computing website created by the Living Wage Project at Penn State University—puts this amount at $9.95 per hour for a single adult. Add a child to the picture, and that amount jumps to $18.13, nearly nine dollars more per hour than Illinois’ minimum wage.

Although none are as popular or widely produced as *A Christmas Carol*, there are other theatrical productions in Chicago, and throughout the nation, that capture the Holiday season and have become annual classics.

An ever present and beloved holiday event is *Black Nativity* by Langston Hughes. Hughes’ “gospel song play” is a musical production which goes up in churches, theaters, and college campuses, among other venues, in nearly every major city in the United States. This joyful retelling of St. Luke’s story of the birth of Christ is done by way of gospel music, dance, poetry and narrative.

On Dec. 11, 1961, the play originally titled *Wasn’t It a Mighty Day?*, was first produced off Broadway. Hughes himself adapted the tale from his 1958 novel *Tambourines to Glory*. Originally intended as a play, Tambourines prominently featured the use of gospel music and lyrics. Gospel music was very popular during this time in America. Its presence and popularity inspired Hughes to incorporate more of the music into his dramatic writing. He was also aware of the popularity of Gian Carlo Menotti’s Christmas television opera, *Amahl and the Night Visitors*. Rather than write a play featuring a few gospel songs, he would create a Nativity play with gospel music at its heart.

The original off-Broadway cast featured the talents of Alvin Ailey and Carmen de Lavallade. Opening night

audiences gave such an enthusiastic applause that the cast sang for an additional half hour after the close of the show. Gian Carlo Menotti arranged to take the show to his Spoleto Festival in Italy in 1962. It quickly became the hit of the festival. The musical then toured Europe for the rest of the year before returning to New York’s Lincoln Center for Christmas.

Although best known as a poet, Hughes wrote more than twenty plays and other musicals prior to and after Black Nativity. Tambourines to Glory, Mulatto, Emperor of Haiti, Simply Heavenly and Jericho-Jim Crow are a few of the stage works by Hughes, a writer very interested in the African-American oral tradition. His political plays include Scottsboro Limited, Harvest, Angelo Herndon Jones, and De Organizer. He also wrote Mule Bone with Zora Neale Hurston.

Many contemporary productions of Black Nativity have tweaked the original musical to reflect today’s cultural interests. As the Goodman does its annual production of A Christmas Carol, Chicago’s Congo Square theatre does an annual adaptation of Black Nativity. This year, they will be performing McKinley Johnson’s adaptation The Nativity, inspired by Langston Hughes’ African American classic Black Nativity. Congo Square Theatre’s last production at the Goodman in 2010 ushered in a hope-filled holiday season. Amidst troubling headlines of war, starvation, genocide and natural disaster over the years since, prayers for “peace on earth and good will toward men” have echoed across the globe. This play and its message are needed perhaps more than ever, and take on a whole new meaning in light of the Obama administration. The following is a description from Theatre in Chicago:

“This production has become a Christmas tradition, much like A Christmas Carol in the city of Chicago. This tradition is a legendary celebration of the biblical narrative of the Nativity [the birth of Christ] told through dance and gospel music. Black Nativity personifies the messages of family, unity, and the ultimate love.”
Gospel music plays a large role in Langston Hughes’ work. *Black Nativity* and *Tambourines to Glory* were written for the stage to allow for a celebration of all the gospel music Hughes included within the text. Gospel’s origins as a musical form can be traced back to the “Negro spirituals” and work songs of oppressed African American slaves in the late 18th century through the 19th century.

Black spirituals and work songs, while very religious and based heavily in Biblical texts, usually had a double meaning. They combined themes of a Christian belief in life after death and the idea of Heaven with the longing for freedom from slavery and segregation. Originally, the worship service was one of the few places white “masters” could openly monitor slaves—and no more than a few slaves were allowed to gather at once without white supervision. As a result, black slaves often attended worship with the masters. Through their attendance of church services, many slaves grew in their understanding of the role music played in their spirituality and relationship to their circumstances. Through a process of adaptation and reappropriation of the traditional white themes, black slaves created new versions of classic hymns. These were influenced by New World Christian practices as well as musical traditions from various African heritages. Much of this they did through secret “camp meetings,” illegal large gatherings done outside of a church service in which participants interpreted hymns in a way that made the music relevant to them personally. Group hymns were characterized by physicality—clapping, dancing and other body movements were just as important as the singing—and involved participants standing in large circles or groups. Thus black spirituals were born.

One of the characteristic elements of black spirituals was call and response, in which the congregation or choir offered a musical reply to something sung by the choral leader. In this style, beliefs were reinforced through direct participation—if the recipient of a musical call agreed with the message, he or she would give an enthusiastic response. This tradition has carried through to today and is still a defining musical characteristic of gospel.

During the Civil War, as the wartime climate directly affected the lives of slaves, themes of escape and freedom became even more determined in black spirituals. Many claim that some of these spirituals made use of coded messages for runaway slaves. After the Civil War, black interpretations of religious music became so popular that white Christians adopted some of their music. As the musical form developed, new African American colleges were economically unable and unwilling to adopt many aspects of the Euro American worship music, namely organs and hymn books. These were not only financially unavailable, but symbols of white attempts at “civilizing.” Black students and musicians developed music through choral arrangements and the use of physical percussion, a cappella style. It wasn’t until later that instruments were introduced—drums, piano and guitar among them. Other instruments, such as the electric organ, were later introduced in modern gospel.

Modern gospel music as we know it was created and popularized in Chicago, the unofficial “Home of Gospel Music.” In the first half of the 20th century, great changes brought gospel music out of the churches and to the country at-large. Thomas A. Dorsey, a Chicago jazz musician, receives much of the credit for popularizing and giving the form a contemporary vibe. Born in Georgia in 1899, he was torn between religious and secular pursuits from an early age. He was introduced to blues and jazz music through the black community and vaudeville theater, and he became passionate about them. Dorsey moved to Chicago during World War I and joined the Pilgrim Baptist Church on the South Side. His musical career took off. After studying at the Chicago College of Composition and Arranging, he began to play in speak-easies (special lounges) and other venues around the city with other jazz and blues musicians, including the famous Ma Rainey and her band. But Pilgrim Baptist would come to serve as his most important musical venue.

Dorsey became widely known for his skills as a pianist and singer. In the process, however, he pushed himself too far. After a return home and a series of nervous breakdowns, he turned his attention to religious music. His music was unwelcome in most mainstream churches, and it was after he lost both his wife and son to childbirth that he turned to the piano and began writing the music that would reinvent the form. He felt that his religious music came to him from God. He co-founded...
the National Convention of Gospel Choirs and Choruses and later teamed with Mahalia Jackson, Sam Cooke, James Cleveland, Roberta Martin and others to usher in what became known as the “Golden Age of Gospel Music.” Mahalia Jackson had plenty of her own accomplishments independent of Dorsey, including designation as the first gospel singer to host and star in her own CBS radio program, and singing prior to Martin Luther King’s “I Have A Dream” speech. Pilgrim Baptist Church served as their Chicago home, nurturing their careers and providing support as well as musical resources. As Dorsey was named the Father of Modern Gospel Music, Jackson was dubbed the World’s Greatest Gospel Singer.

Their accomplishments inspired black musicians all over the city and the nation. In the following decades, other gospel musicians and gospel ensembles began to appear and travel around the country. Black performers were broadcast on radio throughout the ’40s and ’50s, and retained a prominence in black Pentecostal and Baptist churches. Despite hardships suffered by many gospel singers, gospel grew to influence soul, Motown of the ’60s and ’70s, and music and religious services for white and black Americans alike.
Theatre Etiquette
With Santa Claus

What should I wear?

Definitely dress nicely but comfortably; try business casual. No tank tops, ripped jeans, etc. Baseball caps or hats must be moved once you enter the theatre. The Goodman is air-conditioned so be sure to bring an extra sweater or dress warmly.

What should I bring?

Only what you really need. Electronic devices such as PSP, Nintendo DS, smart phones, and laser pointers are not permitted during the show. If it makes noise or is distracting, please refrain from having it out in the theatre. A purse, bag, or backpack is fine. School supplies are not necessary. Remember that you are here to sit back, watch and enjoy, so don’t bring anything you don’t need.

(Please remember):
No smoking, and
no eating or drinking
while inside the theatre.

What if I need to leave the theatre during the show?

Only if it is an emergency. Otherwise, it’s very disrespectful. Make sure to use restrooms before the show, or wait until intermission.

Have respect for other audience members. This means no talking during the performance, no feet on seats, and no kicking. (For your safety and others’!)
How should I respond to what’s going on on the stage?

Honestly but appropriately. If you find something funny, then laugh—but don’t laugh for five minutes straight or laugh so hard that you need to leave the theatre. Theatre is very different from watching a movie at home. Always remember that you are in a room full of people who are there to watch the performance. They can hear your responses just as well as you can hear theirs. Most important, the actors can hear and see you. They will appreciate any appropriate feed back but might be extremely offended if it is inappropriate. Whether you enjoy the play or not, you owe respect to the actors for having given it a try.

What to do during Intermission:

Most plays have a 15 minute intermission. This gives you time to stretch your legs, walk, use the restroom, get water and discuss the play with your friends.

We do ask that if you are sitting on the main floor that you remain downstairs and if you are sitting in the mezzanine that you remain upstairs. There are restrooms on both floors. When intermission is over, the lights in the lobby will flash several times; that is your cue to get back to your seat because the performance is about to begin.

What to do after the show:

There will be a post-show discussion immediately following the performance. Members of the cast will come out on stage and answer your questions. Feel free to ask anything that’s on your mind about the show, but please remember to be respectful.

What to do before the show:

When your class arrives, your teacher will let the Education staff know how many people are in your group. It is a good idea to arrive at least 15-20 minutes before the performance.

If you are late, often you will not be allowed to enter the show until after intermission. Once your group is called, an usher will lead you to your seats and hand you a program.

Please promptly sit where you have been assigned. Remember that the show needs to begin on time and everyone needs to be seated.

And remember the Golden Rule of Theatre-going:

Theatre artists are paid professionals. When you enter a theatre, you are entering their work space. Respect their work as you would have them respect yours.

Enjoy the Show!
After you have seen the show and discussed your responses in the classroom, it’s time to let us know what you thought! Your response letter plays an important role at Goodman Theatre. All of the letters we receive are forwarded to our artists, and you may get a response!

Pick one of the artists involved with Candide whose work was particularly memorable to you—an actor, designer, the playwright or the director—and write that artist a letter describing your experience of the show and your feedback about his or her work. Be honest and ask any questions that are on your mind.

Send us your letter within one month of seeing the show, and we’ll forward it on to that artist!

Dear Cast and Crew,

I would have to say that every single one of you have done a superb job in this play. All the effort you have put forth into this play has resulted in a memorable experience for all of us. I thought it was clever that the actors, actresses and the orchestra interacted with the audience. From viewing the original film of Animal Crackers, I think the cast played in the play and the original cast of Animal Crackers very similar! This play might have been the first encounter of the Marx brothers for many teenagers and children and I believe that the crew and cast of Animal Crackers proved that early comedy can also be entertaining and memorable!

The director’s vision of the play was a rather conscious one. Exposing the Marx brothers to the vast majority of people who never knew about them and bringing back nostalgic memories to the older audience was a great idea. This play was actually my first play and a first trip to Goodman Theatre. I myself, as a young adult, finally realized that plays are enjoyable and gratifying. The play had all the elements of emotion and slapstick comedy which made it a great one. The technical aspects as well as the props were amazingly set to follow each scene. My favorite scene had to be the scene where Harpo and Rivelli tried to clear up the misunderstanding of “The Flash.” I though the script was very flowing and comfortable. Was there any improv involved? I did not find any negative aspects of this play. I have found the play and the ambiance of Goodman Theatre very positive. I give Animal Crackers two thumbs up.

Sincerely,
A CPS student

Send your letters to:
Education and Community Engagement
Goodman Theatre
170 North Dearborn Street
Chicago, IL 60601
Or email us at:
education@goodmantheatre.org

Goodman Theatre’s Education & Community Engagement is also online! Check us out on Facebook:
http://www.facebook.com/goodmaned
Or Twitter:
http://twitter.com/GoodmanEd
Or on our blog at:
http://education.goodmantheatre.org/blog/

We love hearing your thoughts, so don’t be afraid to drop us a line, comment, tag us in a note, @reply, or retweet us. Also check out our online educational resources for more information regarding the play you’ve seen, or anything else you’d like to know about how our programs (and theatre) work!

Keep checking in for updates online!

Important information to include:

• Your name, age and school

• Your mailing address (where a response may be sent)
Reading Your Ticket

As a patron of the theatre, it is important to know how to read your ticket and find your seat. Generally, seats for all performances in the Goodman’s Albert Theatre are assigned seating, so be sure to know how to be able to find your seat. When you come with your school, you will be ushered to a section where you and your fellow students can sit and enjoy the play together.

Below is a seating chart—a map of all the seats in the Albert Theater—and an explanation of how to read your ticket. If you have any problems, ask an usher for help. They’re here for you!

This will guide you to the lobby door closest to your seat—aisle numbers are on plaques that hang above the doors to the theater.

The section of the theatre you will be sitting in: Main Floor or Mezzanine.

This is your seat number, located on the edge of the bottom seat cushion.

The row where your seat is located, noted in a letter on the side of the end seat of each row.

Play you are seeing and its author.

Day and date of performance.

Curtain time.

Goodman’s Albert Theatre

Albert Ivar Goodman Theatre—Main Floor

Albert Ivar Goodman Theatre—Mezzanine

Stage

Stage