

Alliance Theatre

Institute

A Christmas Carol Pre-Show Lesson Plan & Resources

How can we relate to the world and language of <i>A Christmas Carol</i> ?	
GSE – Theater	<p>TA6.PR.1 Act by communicating and sustaining roles in formal and informal environments.</p> <p>a. Demonstrate effective verbal and non-verbal communication skills (e.g. rate, pitch, volume, inflection, posture, facial expression, physical movement).</p> <p>TAHSFT.PR.1 Act by communicating and sustaining roles in formal and informal environments.</p> <p>a. Observe and demonstrate aspects of verbal and non-verbal techniques in common human activity for performance (e.g. voice, breathing, posture, facial expression, physical movement).</p>
GSE – English Language Arts	<p>8.L.VII. BIG IDEA: Vocabulary Students engage in a wide range of written and spoken activities during which they expand and deepen their vocabularies, build word analysis skillsets (morphology), and determine or clarify the meanings of words and phrases.</p> <p>11.L.VII. BIG IDEA: Vocabulary Students engage in a wide range of written and spoken activities during which they expand and deepen their vocabularies, build word analysis skillsets (morphology), and determine or clarify the meanings of words and phrases.</p>
Student Objective	Students will utilize drama strategies (research, pantomime, tableau, and improvisation) to explore the vocabulary of <i>A Christmas Carol</i> .
Space Set Up	Open space for students to move & work in small groups
Materials	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Resource – Vocabulary List • Graphic Organizer (for student use): Vocabulary and Context

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Resource (for teacher use) – Vocabulary, defined • Access to dictionaries or internet for vocabulary research • Writing utensils (pencils, pens)
Agenda	<p>Welcome & Introduction (5 minutes) Directions: Introduce <i>A Christmas Carol</i> (an Alliance Theatre adaptation of the classic Charles Dickens novel from 1843. Option to review the Synopsis on pages 6-7 of the Study Guide with your students) and let students know that they will have the opportunity to engage in an interactive pre-show lesson to prepare to engage with the show.</p> <p>Warm Up: What Are You Doing? (10 minutes) This game is reminiscent of a Victorian-era Parlor Game, like we'll see in <i>A Christmas Carol</i>! It utilizes pantomime (exaggerated physical movement that represents a specific action) and improvisation (making something up on the spot without a script!)</p> <p>Directions: Have students create a large circle Select a student to begin the game. That student should enter the center of the circle and begin miming an action (for ex: brushing your teeth, riding a horse, writing in a journal, reading a book, dancing, etc.) The next student in the circle enters and asks the student: "What are you doing?" The first student responds verbally with a different activity (different to what they have been doing) and leaves the circle. (For example, they could be miming brushing their teeth, but they'd say aloud "I'm walking my dog.") The second student immediately starts acting out the new activity that was just said aloud to them (walking a dog), until the next student enters and asks: "what are you doing?" They must then come up with a new activity. Continue the game around the circle, and encourage students to make new choices each time, with no repeated actions. Encourage exaggerated physical movements and quick-thinking!</p>

Examples: brushing my hair, digging a ditch, wrestling an alligator, walking on a tightrope, dancing ballet, dribbling a basketball, trying to catch a butterfly, etc.

Extension: Option to layer in topics and themes from *A Christmas Carol*:

- ☐ Play a round with holiday activities (decorating, baking treats, singing songs, wrapping presents)
- ☐ Play a round with activities and actions pulled from the Victorian Era and Industrial Revolution (dancing, working on an assembly line, working in a coal mine, making a dress, blacksmithing, creating plans for an invention, etc.)

Pre-Show Discussion (10 minutes)

Directions: The facilitator will guide students through (3) scaffolded Pre-Show Discussion prompts, landing on the essential question:

1. What do we know about the world of Charles Dickens and *A Christmas Carol*?
 - ☐ Setting: where and when does the story take place? (Dickens wrote the story in 1843. It takes place in Victorian-era London during the Industrial Revolution)
 - ☐ How was the world different during this time? How was it the same?
2. What experiences or events might have led Charles Dickens to write this story? Consider personal experiences as well as larger world events.
3. How can we relate to the world and language of *A Christmas Carol*?
 - ☐ When you encounter a word you don't know (either while reading or listening), what steps do you take to determine its meaning?
 - ☐ Are some words specific to a particular time period or era? Can you think of any examples?
 - ☐ Why do some words fall out of use over time?

Interactive Activity: (30 minutes)

Parlor Game – Vocabulary Tableau

Directions (Step 1): Introduce the list of vocabulary words and phrases pulled from *A Christmas Carol*. Project these on to a screen, or write them on a large flip chart or white board. (see: **Teacher Resource: A Christmas Carol Vocabulary**)

Explain that we are going to engage with these words through a theatrical guessing game in which we create frozen **tableau** representing each term.

Directions (Step 2): Research and Rehearsal

Put students into small groups, and assign each group a vocabulary word/phrase to research (see: **Graphic Organizer – Vocabulary and Context**)

Using dictionaries and/or the internet, students should look up the meaning of their word/phrase, and write their meaning in the corresponding column. Students will also be provided an example of that word/phrase in context from the play.

Then, they should work collaboratively to build and rehearse a tableau (frozen image) representing their word/phrase.

A tableau is a frozen snapshot of a group of actors that represents and explores a particular moment in a story.

Elements of a strong tableau:

- ☐ Incorporate facial expressions that help convey the thoughts and feelings of the characters, as well as their relationships to the other characters in the scene.
- ☐ Incorporate the use of levels. High, low, and medium body positions make the tableau more interesting for the audience.
- ☐ Are frozen and silent.
- ☐ Suggest movement even in stillness.

Directions (Step 3): Guessing Game and Improvised Dialogue

One at a time, invite groups into the playing space to share their tableau. Make sure to remind them not to reveal their word or phrase! Count down “3-2-1 freeze” or “3-2-1 curtain up” to freeze the actors into their tableau.

Once frozen, the audience may share observations about what they see, and make guesses about which vocabulary word/phrase is being depicted.

	<p><i>Option: If the class is struggling to guess the correct word/phrase, prompt the actors to bring the tableau to life and improvise a few lines of dialogue to provide more context clues.</i></p> <p>Once the correct word/phrase has been guessed, the actors may relax out of their tableau. They may then share the definition of their word/phrase.</p> <p>Closure & 3-2-1 Reflection (5 minutes) Directions: Facilitate a whole group 3-2-1 discussion: (3) – Discuss (3) favorite vocab words/phrases depicted today. (2) – Discuss (2) vocab words/phrases that are no longer in regular use in our modern era. Why do we think these phrases are no longer relevant in our society? (1) – Discuss (1) prediction for the show based on this lesson.</p>
Assessment	Formative: Student participation & engagement in Interactive Activity, Sharing, and Reflection

Teacher Resource – *A Christmas Carol* Vocabulary

Project this list on to a smart board or white board during the guessing game!

- | | |
|---------------------|---------------------|
| 1. Gruel | 12. Redemption |
| 2. Impertinent | 13. Miser |
| 3. Arrears | 14. Specter |
| 4. Workhouse | 15. Amends |
| 5. Lamplighter | 16. Scurvy |
| 6. Blimey | 17. Apprentice |
| 7. Blind Man's Buff | 18. Principal |
| 8. Prison Barge | 19. Parsimonious |
| 9. Pauper | 20. Debt |
| 10. Humbug | 21. Accrued |
| 11. Parlor | 22. Promissory note |

Graphic Organizer – *A Christmas Carol* Vocabulary and Context

Word (Part of Speech)	Definition – write your definition in this column	In Context: How your word or phrase is used in <i>A Christmas Carol</i>
1. Gruel (n.)		"As you wish- I was putting out your supper. Would you like your gruel cold or hot?"
2. Impertinent (adj.)		"Out with you, you impertinent wretch and I'll expect you tomorrow as usual, Christmas or no."
3. Arrears (n.)		"In full. Mr. Watkins- that is one hundred and twenty five pounds. You are in arrears ."
4. Workhouse (n.)		"And union workhouses ? Are they still in operation?"
5. Lamplighter (n.)		<i>As dawn light reveals the stage, a lamplighter slowly extinguishes the lamps as his equipment is carried by his young son.</i>
6. Blimey (int./slang)		" Blimey - a whole thirty pounds?"
7. Blind Man's Buff (n.)		" Blind man's buff - and Topper you're first."
8. Prison Barge (n.)		"As if the day wasn't already bad enough- your father sent word there's no room in the clink- so they're trying to move him out to a prison barge ."

9. Pauper (n.)		"None, but for a nephew, he hardly knows; so tell me which is the rich man and which is the pauper ."
10. Humbug (n.)		"So say you... I say you're a humbug ."
11. Parlor (n.)		"What parlor trick is this?"
12. Redemption (n.)		"You tire on your path to redemption ?"
13. Miser (n.)		"I know he's your family, Fred - but all society agrees he's a most notorious miser ."
14. Specter (n.)		<i>The Ghost of Christmas Future appears. Scrooge, in chasing the Ghost of Christmas Present collides with the specter.</i>
15. Amends (n.)		"I need to make amends ."
16. Scurvy (n.)		"If you don't eat it, you'll get scurvy - I read that somewhere."
17. Apprentice (n.)		"He's my apprentice , he must do as I tell him."
18. Principal (n.)		"But it is the principal that has fallen due, Mr. Watkins. You may arrest him, Officer."

19. Parsimonious (adj.)		"It's a tribute to your parsimonious old Uncle Scrooge?"
20. Debt (n.)		"The Marshalsea Prison until the debt is paid. It is the law, sir."
21. Accrued (adj.)		"He has accrued a fortune simply because he has no idea how to spend it."
22. Promissory note (n.)		"Mr. Watkins to warm your Christmas dinner, I suggest you set fire to your promissory note ."

Teacher Resource: *A Christmas Carol* Vocabulary, defined

Word (Part of Speech)	Definition	In Context
1. Gruel (n.)	A thin liquid food of oatmeal or other meal boiled in milk or water.	"As you wish- I was putting out your supper. Would you like your gruel cold or hot?"
2. Impertinent (adj.)	Not showing proper respect; rude.	"Out with you, you impertinent wretch and I'll expect you tomorrow as usual, Christmas or no."
3. Arrears (n.)	The state of being behind in paying a debt.	"In full. Mr. Watkins- that is one hundred and twenty five pounds. You are in arrears ."
4. Workhouse (n.)	A public institution in which the destitute of a parish received board and lodging in return for work.	"And union workhouses ? Are they still in operation?"
5. Lamplighter (n.)	Someone who lights the streetlamps.	<i>As dawn light reveals the stage, a lamplighter slowly extinguishes the lamps as his equipment is carried by his young son.</i>
6. Blimey (int./slang)	Used to express one's surprise, excitement, or alarm	" Blimey - a whole thirty pounds?"
7. Blind Man's Buff (n.)	A game where one player is blindfolded and tries to tag the other people	" Blind man's buff - and Topper you're first."
8. Prison Barge (n.)	A boat to transfer prisoners	"As if the day wasn't already bad enough- your father sent word there's no room in the clink- so they're trying to move him out to a prison barge ."
9. Pauper (n.)	A very poor person	"None, but for a nephew, he hardly knows; so tell me which is the rich man and which is the pauper ."
10. Humbug (n.)	Deceptive or false talk or behavior	"So say you... I say you're a humbug ."

11. Parlor (n.)	Sitting room where guests would be entertained	"What parlor trick is this?"
12. Redemption (n.)	The act of making something better or more acceptable	"You tire on your path to redemption ?"
13. Miser (n.)	A person who hoards wealth and spends as little money as possible.	"I know he's your family, Fred- but all society agrees he's a most notorious miser ."
14. Specter (n.)	A visible disembodied spirit: Ghost	<i>The Ghost of Christmas Future appears. Scrooge, in chasing the Ghost of Christmas Present collides with the specter.</i>
15. Amends (n.)	To "make amends" means to correct a mistake	"I need to make amends ."
16. Scurvy (n.)	A disease caused by a deficiency of vitamin C, characterized by swollen bleeding gums and the opening of previously healed wounds, which particularly affected poorly nourished sailors until the end of the 18th century.	"If you don't eat it, you'll get scurvy - I read that somewhere."
17. Apprentice (n.)	A person who is learning a trade from a skilled employer, having agreed to work for a fixed period at low wages.	"He's my apprentice , he must do as I tell him."
18. Principal (n.)	The original sum invested or lent	"But it is the principal that has fallen due, Mr. Watkins. You may arrest him, Officer."
19. Parsimonious (adj.)	Unwilling to spend money or use resources; stingy or frugal.	"It's a tribute to your parsimonious old Uncle Scrooge?"

20. Debt (n.)	Something, typically money, that is owed or due.	"The Marshalsea Prison until the debt is paid. It is the law, sir."
21. Accrued (adj.)	Accumulated over a period of time	"He has accrued a fortune simply because he has no idea how to spend it.
22. Promissory note (n.)	A signed document containing a written promise to pay a stated sum to a specified person or the bearer at a specified date or on demand.	"Mr. Watkins to warm your Christmas dinner, I suggest you set fire to your promissory note ."