

*A Christmas Carol*  
Man on a Journey to Find Himself

Course objectives covered in this unit:  
I, II, III, IV, V, VI, VII, VIII, X, XI, XII, XIII

Introduction:

**Focus on Tone and Mood**

Part I

The teacher should pass out the novels to each student. Prior to the class, the teacher will have located the passages in which Dickens describes the three ghosts. The teacher reads with the students the passages—one at a time—which describe the ghosts of past, present, and future. While reading, the teacher pauses and elicits words and phrases called out from the students; these words and phrases should be ones which impress the students as rich in description, feelings, etc. The teacher or a student can compile a list on the board or on poster board as the reading continues. The students will probably call words and phrases which will lead them to the tone/mood of that section. After the students call out words/phrases, the teacher calls attention to the list and asks the students, “How do these words make us feel?” Then the teacher continues the discussion until the students have found a word which denotes the tone/mood of that section. Perhaps not only one word is enough. Synonyms can be listed; and the mood may even change a little and more than one mood may be found.

Part II

To interest the students in the content of the novel, it is suggested that the teacher take the time to allow the students to look at ghost stories from the internet or from the library. Following are several web sites and books where students can find ghost stories and descriptions of the ghosts in these stories.

<http://www.derbycity.com/ghosts/ghosts.html>

<http://www.parascope.com/articles/0397/ghostin.htm>

<http://www.cs.cmu.edu/People/spok/metabook/tmghosts.html>

This site is from Carnegie Mellon University and contains a complete reading of “Tales of Men and Ghosts” by Edith Wharton

Anderson, Jean. The Haunting of America.

Brown, Raymond Lamont. Phantoms of the Theater.

Cohen, Daniel. Ghostly Terrors.

Ghostly Warnings.

Real Ghosts.

Fowler, Zinita. Ghost Stories of Old Texas.

Kettelkamp, Larry. Haunted Houses.

Leodhas, Sorche. Ghosts Go Haunting.

Mayne, William. Ghosts: an anthology

McKissack, Pat. The Dark-Thirty.

Norman, Michael. Historic Haunted America.

The teacher gives the students time to look up these resources and time to read. The students can keep a reading journal (or double-column notes) on their reading.

Assignment on ghost stories:

Direct the students to create a Venn diagram incorporated into a visual in which the students compare and contrast one particular ghost from their research with one of the ghosts from the novel. Since the students and the teacher have already spent time on the reading, the students have a basis for comparison and contrast. In the Venn diagram, the students should write words and phrases which show how the two ghosts are alike and words and phrases which show how they are different. The visual is particularly for students who would like to illustrate an impression they have of one or the two of the ghosts. The teacher should display these Venn diagrams.

### **Preview:**

The teacher should take time to preview the book early to show the students the organization of the book. The students will watch the movie of *A Christmas Carol*—one which the teacher chooses. The students need to be aware of what to look for in the movie as far as plot and changing scenes. Toward the end of the unit, the teacher will lead the students in a discussion of the differences between the movie and the novel. Though the students will not actually read every page in the novel, the teacher will have shared enough of the novel with the students that a good discussion will ensue.

### **Focus on Plot/Setting**

The teacher will procure her favorite movie of *A Christmas Carol*. The teacher may wish to stop the video and discuss the time and setting when deemed appropriate. The teacher should stop the video following each of the ghosts' appearances. This is an opportunity for the students to discuss the plot and the setting of time and place. As the movie is viewed, the students should keep the Archetype chart (given as resource in the introductory unit).

### **Focus on Characterization**

The students will need guidance and modeling as they look at how Dickens created his characters. Ask the students, "What devices does Dickens use to create characters?" Students should be led to notice that Dickens creates characters whose outward appearances symbolize their inner personality. He even uses the environment to represent the inner personality. Some devices to lead the students to notice:

1. diction—the author's words
2. the character's names
3. the character's physical appearance
4. the character's dialogue
5. the character's behavior
6. the character's environment

The teacher chooses passages which demonstrate these devices and read with the students. For example, Dickens' description of Scrooge at the beginning of the novel begins "Oh! But he was a tightfisted hand... 'No eye at all is better than an evil eye, dark

Master” Within this passage, the teacher leads the students to see the devices that Dickens uses to reveal Scrooge’s character. The teacher chooses several other passages to read and discuss Dickens’ devices. The teacher should also choose a passage from late in the novel which shows Scrooge in his changed character. The students should be able to tell from the same devices that the inner being has changed and shows outwardly.

### **Focus on Viewing and Representing**

Toward the end of the entire unit—especially after the characterization discussions, the teacher should lead the students in a discussion of a comparison/contrast between the movie and the readings completed in the novel. Ask the students, “Did we see evidence in the movie of the devices which Dickens uses to create his characters in the novel?” The teacher can lead the class in a discussion of **dramatic license** and discuss the liberties which screenwriters take with a book when they write the script for the movie version. The students will arrive at some examples themselves.

### **Focus on theme—THE QUEST**

The teacher puts the students into groups of 2-3. They use one student to create footprints. These footprints will represent Scrooge’s quest throughout the novel. On one side of the footprints, the group should write words/phrases/or create visual which represent catalysts to Scrooge’s changing and evolving character at different times in the novel. This is a good place to use all the knowledge which has been gleaned from the entire unit’s reading, watching, and discussing. Each group should create at least 4 footprints and these should be presented to the class and posted in the room.

### **Optional Activities:**

Because of the timing of the teaching of this novel, the teacher may be pushed to complete the first semester. If time allows, the teacher may consider one of the following activities:

1. literary writing, proofing, revision, editing, final copy from any of the discussions
2. Students create Christmas cards
3. Students create a Victorian banquet
4. Students research a Victorian Christmas

The following sites are especially geared to the Victorian Christmas or the Victorian era and can aid in teaching the setting of the novel:

<http://www.victoriana.com/christmas/index.html>

Christmas cards, decorations, entertainment, gifts

<http://www.fidnet.com/~dap1955/dickens/christmas.html>

Christmas traditions in Dickens’ time

<http://www.nashville-schools.davidson.k12.tn.us/CyberGuides/CC/ChristmasCarol.html>

Victorian Web Overview, Charles Dickens Overview, Ghosts