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Plot Summaries

Dickens’ A Christmas Carol

Ebenezer Scrooge is the epitome of a tight-fisted miser. At the beginning of the book, his old business partner, Jacob Marley, has died. On a bitter and cold Christmas Eve, Scrooge displays his “Bah humbug” attitude and rejects an invitation from his nephew to a Christmas celebration, refuses to donate to a charitable organization, and demands his office clerk, Bob Cratchit, work extra hours if he is to take off Christmas Day. When he arrives home, Scrooge sees the face of Jacob Marley on his door knocker. Scared at first, Scrooge convinces himself this is part of his imagination. Before falling asleep, Scrooge is visited by the ghost of Jacob Marley who frightens the old man. Marley reports that three more spirits will visit Scrooge, and in order to change his unfavorable fate, he must pay close attention to them.

As the clock strikes one, the Ghost of Christmas Past appears and shows Scrooge his lonely childhood, his generous first employer, and the moment when his fiancée, Belle, left Scrooge because he was too obsessed with money and his work.

The Ghost of Christmas Present arrives as the clock strikes four a.m. Scrooge observes his nephew and his guests celebrating Christmas and making fun of Scrooge’s callous behavior. Next, the ghost shows Scrooge poor children singing in the street. When Scrooge and the ghost finally arrive at Bob Cratchit’s house on Christmas Day, Scrooge discovers that Bob’s son, Tiny Tim, is extremely ill. Scrooge is amazed when Bob Cratchit toasts a “thank you” to his boss despite his family’s disparaging remarks about the stingy old man. Sadly, the ghost reveals to Scrooge that unless the future changes, Tiny Tim will soon die.

The final spirit to visit Scrooge is the Ghost of Christmas Yet to Come who shows him scenes from the future. Scrooge sees people conversing about a lonely old miser who has died. Next, he watches as the Cratchit family mourns Tiny Tim’s death and finally, Scrooge visits his own grave where he realizes he is the man no one is sorry has died.

After this night of visitations, Scrooge awakens and realizes it is Christmas Day. It’s not too late for him after all, and he vows to become a changed man and turn over a new leaf in his life. He performs generous acts the entire day including celebrating with his nephew, providing Christmas dinner for the Cratchit family in addition to paying for Tiny Tim’s medical care and awarding his employee, Bob Cratchit, a bonus. Scrooge vows to keep the Christmas spirit alive within himself and others all year long.

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Jacob Marley’s Christmas Carol

This new twist on the traditional Christmas play brings Jacob Marley out of the shadows, away from the doorknocker and into the spotlight to tell his version of the Charles Dickens classic. As the play begins, the dead Jacob Marley is chained, shackled, and condemned to a dark eternity. The Record Keeper informs Marley that he incurred more debits than credits in his life and that in order to escape his horrible fate, Marley must redeem his former partner, Ebenezer Scrooge. If he can help the crotchety old Scrooge grow a heart, Marley has the chance to acquire his own heavenly wings. This is an endeavor Marley views as an impossible assignment. However, desperate to escape a fate in hell, Marley accepts this challenge, and with help from a sort of sprite/alter-ego named Bogle, he invents the three ghostly visitations for Scrooge the night before Christmas in order to awaken the generosity and love in his heart. So begins a journey that inspires laughter and awe, during which Marley earns his own salvation.
Character Descriptions
FOR JACOB MARLEY’S CHRISTMAS CAROL

All of the following will be played by a single actor who will signify the change from character to character by alterations in his voice, posture, facial expressions, and physicality.

NARRATOR
The actor, while not in character, speaking to the audience to fill them in on context and action.

JACOB MARLEY
“Middle-aged, awful; a sour, proud, lonely, angry old pill.” At the start of the play, recently deceased Jacob Marley finds himself trapped between heaven and hell. The only way for Marley to earn his heavenly wings is to redeem his former business partner Ebenezer Scrooge.

RECORD KEEPER
The first spirit Marley encounters in the afterlife. The Record Keeper tracks the good and bad deeds of all humanity and helps determine whether an individual is worthy of heaven or bound for hell. “Your debts are great, sir,” he tells Marley, “and your credits...almost non-existent.” The Record Keeper is the one who assigns Marley the task of redeeming Scrooge as a way of making up for his lack of charity on earth.

BOGLE
A small, energetic, and sometimes cruel demon that guides Marley through his post-mortem task. A sort of guardian angel, Bogle appears as a miniature version of Marley, and flutters about in an insect-like manner. Bogle appears to have a stake in ensuring Marley is successful in his assignment, though it’s not immediately clear what this stake may be.

SCROOGE
As in Dickens’ A Christmas Carol. Ebenezer Scrooge is a tight-fisted, foul old man with a complete lack of compassion and a disdain for the merriment of Christmas.

CRATCHIT
A low-level office clerk working for Scrooge and Marley who is afforded no generosity from his stingy employers. The Ghost of Christmas Present brings Scrooge to Cratchit’s home and shows the loveless old man how deeply bound the members of the Cratchit family are to one another despite their poverty and the physical weakness of Cratchit’s sickly young son.

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FRED
Scrooge’s nephew. Fred embodies the cheerful spirit of Christmas scorned by Scrooge.

CHRISTMAS PAST
The first spirit Marley conjures in order to urge Scrooge toward a more charitable disposition. In Dickens’ *A Christmas Carol*, the Ghost of Christmas Past appears as an ageless, genderless figure in a white robe; in this play, Christmas Past is portrayed as the Artful Dodger, an obnoxious young pickpocket from Dickens’ novel *Oliver Twist*.

MARLEY’S FATHER
A drunken and abusive character not introduced in the original novel, but seen here during Marley’s vision of his own past.

FEZZIWIG
The jolly, happy-go-lucky proprietor of the warehouse at which Marley and Scrooge were apprenticed during their young adulthood.

DICK WILKINS
A bully also apprenticed at Fezziwig’s warehouse. Young Marley and Scrooge are united by their common dislike of Dick Wilkins.

CHRISTMAS PRESENT
The second spirit Marley invents to affect Scrooge’s transformation. Here, the Ghost of Christmas Present appears just as he does in Dickens’ novel: huge in stature, jolly, and, in this version, an eventual manifestation of God.

THE SHADOW
Also called the Ghost of Christmas Yet to Come. This third spirit Marley embodies is robed entirely in black and does not speak, but uses his boney finger to point Scrooge toward the stark future that awaits him.

OTHER CHARACTERS
Several other minor characters are portrayed throughout the play including a few weary souls, a little girl, and younger versions of both Marley and Scrooge.
From Scrooge’s Pajamas to Marley’s Chains
A BIOGRAPHY OF PLAYWRIGHT TOM MULA

Tom Mula, an acclaimed actor, director, and playwright, has an intimate knowledge of Charles Dickens’ A Christmas Carol. He portrayed the role of Ebenezer Scrooge for seven seasons at Chicago’s Goodman Theater, racking up over 400 performances as the crotchety old miser. Having spent so many hours personifying Scrooge’s transformation from pitiless skinflint to joyful humanitarian, Mula began to wonder, whatever became of poor Jacob Marley?

Scrooge’s former business partner (and second most uncharitable scoundrel in all of London) makes brief appearances in Dickens’ novel, first as a moaning doorknob, and then as a chain-bound ghoul come to haunt Scrooge’s bed chamber. He then disappears from the story altogether. One could infer, given only the information provided by Dickens, that Marley is destined to rot eternally in hell, while Scrooge, arguably the more despicable of the two, is afforded a shot at redemption.

Tom Mula was ill at ease regarding Dickens’ seemingly unjust treatment of Marley. In a story all about second chances, where was Marley’s? When Mula was confronted by a friend’s daughter who shared his angst regarding the condemnation of Marley, Mula made the decision to finally free Marley from his chains—or, more accurately, give Marley the chance to unchain himself.

Jacob Marley’s Christmas Carol, unlike stage versions of the Dickens classic, isn’t a period piece. Stylistically, it’s a total departure from the source: no costumes, few props, and a minimalist set. All characters are played by a single actor who changes his voice and posture to conjure everything from a minute ear sprite to the enormous Ghost of Christmas Present. (Mula also penned a four-person version of the play, but it still relies on multiple casting.) Whereas traditional adaptations of A Christmas Carol can facilitate—even demand—grand displays of stage spectacle, Jacob Marley contents itself with far simpler storytelling, much like the Christmas ghost tales of Victorian England that inspired Dickens’ novella. “Let the audience see the magic in their minds,” Mula says in the author’s note, and “they’ll thank you for it.”

Despite the stylistic differences, Mula’s re-imagined Christmas Carol shares the original’s theme of salvation, but this time with an added twist: the protagonist is given agency in his own redemption. Jacob Marley, dead and condemned at the start of the play, is charged with bringing about “A Complete and Willing Change of Heart” in old Scrooge, which, if successful, will redeem Marley himself. Where Scrooge in the original was a

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character that was acted upon, Marley is a character who acts. Mula offers a behind-the-scenes view of Scrooge’s conversion in which it is Marley who conjures each of the Christmas Ghosts in order to enlighten Scrooge. A simple but powerful morality tale has been turned into a race against the clock in which Marley desperately tries every tool in his spiritual arsenal to somehow budge the unmoving Scrooge. The emotional pay off of seeing Marley’s struggle is every bit as poignant as witnessing Scrooge’s, and the sheer simplicity of the narration only further distills the story’s message of charity and compassion.

*Jacob Marley’s Christmas Carol* has won awards across a variety of media: Mula’s novelization quickly became a Chicago Tribune bestseller; the audio book was broadcast on NPR for seven seasons and earned Mula an INDI Award for Spoken Word; and the stage play was given the esteemed Cunningham Prize from Goodman School of Drama at Depaul. Now being performed all over the country, the play *Jacob Marley’s Christmas Carol* is becoming a holiday tradition in and of itself. Mula personally donned Marley’s chains in the original Chicago production of *Jacob Marley*, a performance that earned him a great deal of critical praise. It also, as was certainly one of his intentions, allowed Mula to hang up the all-too-familiar Scrooge pajamas for at least a little while.

*By Ryan Ripley*  
FORMER EDUCATION SALES AND SERVICES MANAGER
One of literature’s little ironies: Dickens’ parable of a reformed miser was written for the money. *Martin Chuzzlewit*, his current serial, was falling in sales, and in an effort to boost his flagging income, Dickens dashed off a tale for the Christmas of 1843 in about six weeks. The manuscript for his “Ghostly little book” is a scant sixty-six pages, as compared to the usual eight hundred for the typical Dickens blockbuster, yet it is the biggest seller he ever wrote.

Which doesn’t mean he didn’t believe passionately in what he was writing about. The previous summer he had visited a “ragged school,” part of an evangelical movement to provide basic instruction to poor children. Although he disapproved of religious indoctrination, believing that the poor need a bath more than a psalm, he firmly held that ignorance is inseparable from want. The school was Fagin territory: the children, poorly clothed and underfed, were already pimps, prostitutes, and thieves—hardly the cherubic waifs associated with Dickens. The sight of such wretchedness horrified and unnerved him: “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, who appear near the end of the story. 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.”

This sledgehammer of a Christmas story is a reminder that Dickens is one of the few, if not the only, examples in literature of someone who did well by doing good. Like the Scrooge at the tale’s beginning, Dickens was a man of business, and like the reformed miser of the last scene, he never forgot that mankind was his business.

Dickens worked like a demon to have the tale in the stores before Christmas. *A Christmas Carol* was published on December 19, 1843, and by Christmas Eve more than 6,000 copies had been sold. By January of the new year an extraordinary 9,000 copies were in print. But in February Dickens learned that he had only earned 230 pounds for the first 6,000 copies. He had, he confessed, “set [his] heart and soul upon a Thousand clear.” The book was beautifully and expensively packaged, and most of his royalties were absorbed by printing costs, which he paid himself. To add to his disappointment, the literary parasites were quick to swarm around the story, spewing out imitations, parodies, spin-offs, and sequels, from which he never received a cent.
Though critically well received, *Carol* did not do as well in the United States as Dickens had hoped. Americans, still smarting over his attack on their country in *American Notes*, were not yet ready to buy another Dickens book.

Haunted by the specter of his impecunious father, Dickens believed he was ruined. The financial failure of both *Carol* and *Chuzzlewit* embittered him, and deciding that it would be cheaper to live on the Continent, he packed up his entire family and moved to Italy where the bells of Genoa made him long for home. Thus in yet another great irony, the story that epitomizes English warmth helped drive its author abroad. But ultimately *A Christmas Carol* did not fail him; years later his dramatic readings of that one tale earned him more money than any of his books.
“Marley was dead to begin with. There is no doubt whatever about that.” This direct, clear, uncompromising fact begins both Jacob Marley’s Christmas Carol and Dickens’ classic A Christmas Carol. Though these stories begin with the same words and share many characters, the two take their protagonists on very different journeys. Jacob Marley’s Christmas Carol is told from the perspective of Jacob Marley, Scrooge’s business partner and the first ghost to haunt Scrooge in Dickens’ book. In A Christmas Carol, the fact that Marley is dead sets the stage for Scrooge to be haunted. We, the readers, have no doubt that when Marley appears he is a ghost, even though Scrooge himself does not want to believe it. In Jacob Marley’s Christmas Carol, however, the fact that he is dead actually frees Marley to behave differently than he did in life. He has nothing to lose and what he has to gain is far more important. By his own choices and actions, he can earn a place in hell or in eternal bliss. Telling the same story from Marley’s point of view gives us a refreshing new look at a familiar story and brings new opportunities for interpretation and understanding.

The poverty and desperation of London serve as the backdrop for both stories. Poverty was a very real and constant threat in Dickens’ England. While the upper and middle classes worked towards acquiring homes, arranging good marriages and sending their children to school, the working classes could easily descend into abject poverty overnight. Dickens himself experienced this when his family moved from the coast of England into London. His father found it difficult to manage their finances and was eventually sent to debtors’ prison, resulting in the temporary break-up of the family and Dickens having to find a job as a bootblack at a very young age, an experience which marked the author for life. Many of his novels include impoverished families and street urchins who must scrape together a meager living in the slums of London.

In A Christmas Carol we see Scrooge refusing to be touched by the fate of the poor. When two gentlemen come to Scrooge’s establishment asking for a donation to provide the poor with “some meat and drink and a means of warmth,” Scrooge replies, “It’s not my business” and sends them away empty-handed. Scrooge’s obsession with hanging onto his money goes well back into his past as Dickens shows us in the sequence from the chapter “The First of the Three Spirits.” As Scrooge’s fiancée Belle is releasing him from their engagement, she says, “Another idol has displaced me. . . I have seen your nobler aspirations fall off one by one, until the master passion ‘Gain’ engrosses you.”

Scrooge exhibits no compassion for the lower classes. In fact, the firm of Scrooge and Marley actually contributes to making people poorer and more desperate. In the chapter “The Last of the Spirits,” Dickens shows us a young couple who rejoice to hear of Scrooge’s death. They rejoice because now their loan, which

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we can infer had a crippling interest rate, will be transferred to another money lender who can not possibly be “so merciless a creditor” as Scrooge. In *Jacob Marley’s Christmas Carol*, we see the beginnings of their cruel partnership. Playwright Tom Mula writes, “Marley saw the firm become Scrooge and Marley . . . he saw the new owners go out into the world like a pair of ravening wolves, growing rich on the misfortunes of others.”

To contextualize their avarice as adults, both authors—Dickens and Mula — show us a child growing up in an environment lacking in love. The Ghost of Christmas Past shows us scenes of the men remembering their childhoods before they began their relentless pursuit of “Gain.” Scrooge recalls a father who took him out of school and sent him away to work in a factory, and Marley sees his drunken father throwing Marley, the boy, out of the study. He sees his mother dying and “other grimmer scenes that burned like a brand.” The narrator tells us that “Marley sadly watched his wretched, loveless Dickensian childhood.” Marley is now touched by what he sees. In death, he is able to be saddened and changed because he is no longer motivated by his obsession for wealth.

Later in the play, Marley witnesses another negative childhood memory of being bullied by Dick Wilkins and “comforted” by Young Scrooge:

**Young Scrooge:** I know how we can get even.

**Narrator:** — and with these words the partnership of Scrooge and Marley was born. Marley watched the history of their life together unfolding before him like some blighted gray flower. Scrooge and Marley, always off in a corner whispering together:

**Young Scrooge:** It’s an unfair world, Mr. Marley, and that’s how it is; but seeing as that’s how it is, I’m determined to be the one that’s stepping on and not the one getting stepped.

Mula’s play also shows us scenes which imply a sense of guilt or regret on both Scrooge and Marley’s parts. Traveling with the Ghost of Christmas Past, Marley and Scrooge “saw many things they had never seen, or had avoided seeing, or had forgotten that they had seen.” Marley begins to see himself from the perspective of the Record Keeper, as someone who has created a list of debits in his life rather than credits in his treatment of humankind. In the following scene, Marley finally comes to understand how callous he has been towards others:

Marley didn’t move. He had seen the sum of his life in a few moments and was surprised to see, looking back, how small it was – countless tiny cruelties, vicious little economies, mean pathetic little triumphs. ‘I deserved these,’ he said, running his chains through his fingers.

This moment and the moment when Marley observes Scrooge visiting the Cratchits with the Ghost of Christmas Present affect a significant change in Marley. He has gained the capacity to both witness and experience love:

He felt another light-headedness, another shift in his eyes; and what he saw was this: there was a golden cord that bound the family together, heart to heart; literally a shining cord of golden light went from each to the other and to all the rest and back again, so the whole family was bound together in a nest of shining gold. . . .and Marley saw what the cord was; he saw that he himself was a part of it; that the circle came from him too, and returned and that all were bound together.

The strength of *Jacob Marley’s Christmas Carol* is that it gives us a character with the power to change, whereas Dickens’ Scrooge is more passive. Marley is a more contemporary hero whose actions make a difference to the outcome of the story. Scrooge is changed by what the Ghosts reveal to him, while Marley changes his own fate by
taking action himself. Marley becomes the Ghosts of Christmas Past, Present, and Yet to Come, while Scrooge is merely visited by them.

The play and the novel are also very different in their portrayal of the Ghost of Christmas Past. Dickens describes the ghost as fluctuating “in its distinctness; being now a thing with one arm, now with one leg, now with twenty legs, now a pair of legs without a head, now head without a body. . . and in the very wonder of this, it would be itself again, distinct and clear as ever.” In contrast, when Marley transforms into the Ghost of Christmas Past in order to haunt Scrooge, he chooses the form of “a ragamuffin street-rat, a cockney boy, filthy, tattered, liberally freckled and missing a tooth. A shock of red hair hung down over one eye, and his grin was irresistible.” It seems that Marley chooses this character, who is reminiscent of the “Artful Dodger” from Dickens’ Oliver Twist, in order to doubly challenge Scrooge. Scrooge would never even look at such a child, let alone allow himself to be led or taught by one. Taunting Scrooge with his very appearance gives Marley, as the Ghost of Christmas Past, much more power than the original nebulous spirit. This cheeky, smart-mouthed ragamuffin that Mula gives us is a refreshing and humorous irritant to Scrooge’s curmudgeon. We laugh with Marley as he pokes and prods at Scrooge and, in laughing with Marley at what he does, we are transformed with him. It is laughter in Marley’s second visitation, as the Ghost of Christmas Present, that alters him completely: “...he felt the laughter rippling out of him, like a wave, released, flowing, blessing everything it touches, healing and making things grow . . . and he felt things cracking inside him, falling, exploding away – old ideas, brittle shells, papier-mâché husks — all too small for him now, now that he knew what he knew.”

Finally, we see Marley’s actual moment of transformation:

**Scrooge:** And Scrooge learned much.
**Narrator:** — but it was Jacob Marley, within the Spirit, seeing with His eyes and feeling with His heart who learned the most.
**Scrooge:** and Scrooge was changed by what he saw;
**Marley:** (very moved) — but Marley was changed by what he was.

This deep change of heart is not forced upon Jacob Marley; rather, Marley actively seeks to be changed. So it is no surprise in the final ghostly visitation that he risks his own chance of eternal bliss out of pity for Scrooge. During his journey, Bogle shows Marley that the Angel of Death walks beside every human being throughout life, and that if we only realized this, we would be better people. When Marley sees Scrooge, cringing in fear of death without redemption, he is moved to give Scrooge another chance. Even though Marley knows he is risking oblivion, he pushes Scrooge back into life and takes his place in death. This unprecedented action changes Marley’s fate for eternity. He has, in this last selfless act, erased all his debits and will escape hell.

In A Christmas Carol, we find the heartwarming and universal themes of fellowship and kindness. We receive the same message in Jacob Marley’s Christmas Carol. But Jacob Marley’s Christmas Carol intensifies the meaning of the story because Marley sacrifices himself for another human being. Both Dickens and Mula are trying to create empathy, to help us understand that there is more joy in helping others than in furthering our own desires. The twist given to the play by changing the point of view revitalizes, modernizes and amplifies this message. We see that by our actions we cause joy or tragedy, pleasure or pain, comfort or want, and Marley learns that we should take part in humanity by allowing ourselves to be touched and changed.

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By Cheryl Hornstein
FREELANCE THEATRE EDUCATOR
Objective
The purpose of this activity is to familiarize students with *Jacob Marley’s Christmas Carol* by exposing them to lines spoken in the play. Based on these lines, students are to make predictions about the play’s characters and central conflicts and discuss these predictions. This activity helps students form questions, gain insight, and build excitement for seeing and hearing these lines acted out on stage. “Tossing Lines” serves the students best if completed before they attend the play.

Time Allotted
20-30 minutes

Materials
Tennis ball or hackey-sack
Slips of paper cut from Tossing Lines on the following page

Procedure
Cut out the slips of paper printed on the following page and distribute them to volunteers. Give students a few minutes (or overnight, if appropriate) to practice or memorize their lines. When they’re ready, have these students form a circle and give one student the ball. After she speaks her line, the student tosses the ball to another student who speaks his assigned line. Students toss the ball across the circle until all lines have been heard a few times. Encourage students to speak lines with varying emotions, seeking out a variety of ways to perform the lines.

Optional
Re-assign lines within the group (or to other students in the classroom) and continue for another round.

Writing/Discussion
After lines have been tossed, allow students five minutes to write their ideas and questions about the content of the play. The following questions may be used to guide writing and/or discussion.

1. What is the play about?
2. What characters can you name/identify from the lines?
3. What are the characters in the play like?
4. How might this play be similar to and different from Dickens’ *A Christmas Carol*?
5. What do you think the moral or lesson of this play will be?
6. Do you expect this play to be a drama or comedy? Why?

Adapted from Peggy O’Brien’s *Shakespeare Set Free* (1993)
Tossing Lines
A PRE-PLAY CLASS ACTIVITY: QUOTES FROM THE PLAY

To the Teacher: Cut these apart and distribute to students.

“Your debts, sir, are great…And your credits…almost non-existent.”

“He had seen the sum of his life and was surprised to see...how small it was.”

“...his heart’s open a crack—all you have to do now is put something inside it.”

“He looked down and saw great iron chains hanging from his hands, his arms, his ankles, his neck.”

“I’m determined to be the one that’s stepping on and not the one getting stepped.”

“If you must know, I felt sorry for him.”

“Your contract, sir. You haven’t fulfilled your contract.”

“So are you some sort of devil, sent to torment me?”

“SCROOGE? I have to redeem old Scrooge?”

“Marley was dead. This must be distinctly understood.”

“—but it was Jacob Marley...seeing with His eyes and feeling with His heart, who learned the most.”

“This—this isn’t Scrooge’s past—”

“I’ll be damned if I’ll lift my littlest fingernail to save him!”

“He felt the laughter rippling out of him, like a wave...blessing everything it touches.”

“You ask too much! I can’t change! I’m too old!”

“I do pity the old wretch...pathetically begging for another chance. Let’s give it to him.”
To the teacher:

In this scene below from the first few pages of the play, we are introduced to Bogle, Marley’s attendant spirit, who accompanies him on his journey to earn his redemption from an eternity in hell. As background information, the word “bogle” used to mean a ghost, goblin, or bugbear (a hobgoblin in the shape of a bear which supposedly devoured naughty children in their sleep, hence a threat to little ones by their nannies or mothers to get them to behave). According to the *Old English Dictionary*, the meaning of “bogle” eventually morphed into “bug.” It is humorous then that the play’s author has Marley’s spirit actually appear in the shape of an insect. In addition, Bogle refers to himself as Marley’s *numen* or *genius*. Here *numen* means spirit and *genius* takes on the classical definition of the term: the spirit allotted to every person at birth to govern their fortune, determine their character, and conduct them out of this world into the next. (Note that Bogle looks just like Marley only in miniature.)

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**Marley:** (*Lights up.*) Marley awoke with a start. Someone was singing in his ear. Literally, in his ear. Marley could see no one, but the annoying buzzing persisted and seemed to be coming from his right ear, as if something had crawled in there while he was unconscious.

**Bogle:** “When was the last time you cleaned in here, old prune? Dis-gusting. We must have some discussions about hygiene.”

**Marley:** Marley hopped about with his finger in his ear, trying to dislodge the offender.

**Bogle:** (*Being jostled.*) “If you’ll take your bloody big finger out of my front hallway—I’ll come out.”

**Narrator:** Marley did. (*Pulling a penlight out of his pocket.*) A tiny man all made of light about the size of a raisin flew out of his ear and floated in the air before him.

**Marley:** Marley made a determined swat at the offender and was sincerely disappointed to see his hand pass entirely through the insect without any visible effect, except to set the little man dancing before him in a vulgar way.

**Bogle:** (*Doing a nasty little butt-dance.*) “It’s no good swinging at me, I’m afraid—and I wouldn’t do it any more if I were you—you’ll just tangle up your chains, and they’re the very devil to undo.”

**Marley:** Marley examined his companion. Floating in the air before him was a glowing figure—about the size of a healthy bird-dropping. (*To the Bogle.*) “Who the hell are you?”

**Bogle:** “Who the hell do I look like? Do you think I’d choose to look like this, given a choice?”

**Marley:** “Well, um, you look like me.”

**Bogle:** “Brill-yunt. Eternity’s going to be a long, long time.”

**Marley:** Marley paused. He had been thinking exactly the same thing. “So are you some sort of devil, sent to torment me?”

**Bogle:** (*Very wounded.*) “Devil is such a harmful word, don’t you think? And imprecise. (*Cheerier.*) The correct terminology is *numen* or *genius*, but the word I prefer is “Bogle.” (*Pulling down an imaginary chalkboard and using the penlight to write.*) That’s B-O-G-L-E, Bogle. It’s an old word, somewhat out of usage now, but with a sort of charm, don’t you think? But what you call me isn’t really so important; I want you to think of me as your welcoming committee, your guide to your new home.”

**Marley:** (*Nastily.*) “I thank you, sir, for your consideration. Good day.” (*Turning away.*)

**Bogle:** “Where are we going?” The insect was bobbing before his face once more.

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Scene to Read Aloud #1

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Marley: “We are not going anywhere. Don’t you have some pressing business that demands your presence elsewhere?”

Bogle: “Nope. You are my business, old pudding. Would it were not so. But we don’t have much to say in these matters, you and I. Bound together, we are, I’m afraid. Conjoined and conjunct. Birds of a feather. Peas in a pod. Siamese twins—”

Marley: Marley ground his teeth a bit; he was beginning to appreciate the idea of damnation. “What now?”

Bogle: “Well, we could do the grand tour. You know, poke about, get the feel of the place. After all, you’re going to be here a long, long time. (Noisily cartoon-kisses Marley’s nose. Crossing to another area.) Dante had it wrong. His sinners were operatic—betrayers of empires, pederastic popes. It’s not like that at all, or at least it wasn’t until you got here.”

Marley: Marley ignored his companion. All around him beings of nightmare floated by on the currents of air like exotic sea creatures. Marley felt like he was imprisoned in some hellish aquarium. He was surrounded by others, bound as he was—almost. One man was chained to a pack of yapping dogs; another to a dining table, piled high with rotting food; another to flamelike images of ladies, laughing, their mouths open showing rotten teeth. Yet what really horrified Marley were the creatures that were no longer human, and yet still lived.

Creatures: (Crouching on the floor.)—wardrobes and treasure-boxes with hands and faces that called to him, beckoning.

Narrator: He saw a woman, a lady of society that he had had some business dealings with; she was draped in jewels, nearly covered in them.

Woman: But as she floated past him, nodding a greeting,

Marley: he realized that he couldn’t differentiate the woman from her jewelry—it seemed as if the bangles and necklaces—

Woman: (Showing herself to Marley and relishing his horror.)—were growing from her, had embedded themselves, gnawed their way into her skin, and the flesh around them was sore and ragged-looking.

Bogle: (Enjoying this,.) “Yes, they grow together, eventually. Each becomes the thing he loves, in a way. Or hates. Those are the ones that are the most amusing. By the way, you’ll look fine as an animated pile of sovereigns and assorted loose change...”

Marley: Marley was revulsed.

Bogle: (Too sweetly, to the audience.) His companion took pity on him and led him away. “Come,” he said gently. “Let’s see some more. It’s not all like this.” (A pause, then showing his real colors.) Of course he was right. It was worse.
ACTIVITIES AND RESOURCES

Reading for Characterization

1. Assign students to read the following parts aloud, listening not just for the story but also for the voices of characters and of narration:

   - Student 1: Marley as Marley (when his lines are in quotation marks, i.e. actually spoken in his “voice”)
   - Student 2: Marley as narrator (“flat” voice), i.e. Marley adding to the narration elements that refer to him—his thoughts, feelings, sensations, etc.
   - Student 3: Bogle as Bogle (when his lines are in quotation marks, i.e. actually spoken in his “voice”)
   - Student 4: Bogle as narrator (“flat” voice), i.e. Bogle adding to the narration elements seen through his eyes
   - Student 5: Narrator
   - Student 6: Woman
   - Student 7: Stage direction reader
   - All: Creatures—the rest of the class speaking in unison

2. Explain to the students that one person will be playing all the parts and that he will have to distinguish for the audience between all the characters—including between their actual and their narrator voices—as well as when the actor is portraying other characters (and their real and narrator voices) such as Scrooge, the Record Keeper, et al. Discuss with the students what devices the actor can possibly use to differentiate between all the characters without confusing the audience (e.g. different voices, physicality, attitude, change of direction or height). How do the stage directions assist the actor?

Discussing Images and Themes

1. As Marley converses with Bogle about the nature of sin and punishment, he sees around him some nameless inhabitants of hell. Have the students brainstorm what the crimes/sins of these people may have been:

   a. A man “chained to a pack of yapping dogs”
   b. A man “chained to a dining table, piled high with rotting food”
   c. A man chained to “flame-like images of ladies, laughing, their mouths open showing rotten teeth”
   d. A woman “draped in jewels”

2. Marley will be laden with chains to which were fastened “leases and contracts, ledger-books and cash boxes, and most of all locks, steel and iron, rusty and new.” In pairs or small groups, have students brainstorm what chains certain public people they know (celebrities, actors, athletes, political or religious leaders, singers, etc.) might be made of in the afterworld. (Note: teacher discretion is advised—this might get rather heated.)

3. Depending on the class, it might be interesting to turn parts of this activity into an opportunity to create visuals for the various characters. The author, of course, must create all of these “pictures” with words—descriptions, metaphors, etc. For example, he describes what Marley is seeing as a “hellish aquarium.” You could ask students what aspects of Marley’s experience this image captures.
Exploring Humor and Tone

1. Have the students read through the scene again silently and underline words or lines they feel are funny, including both spoken text and stage directions.

2. In groups of three, have them compare their underlined notes and try to organize them according to:
   a. Humorous descriptions (e.g. “tiny man...about the size of a raisin”)
   b. Humorous names Bogle calls Marley (e.g. “old pudding”)
   c. Humorous stage directions (e.g. “nasty little butt-dance”)
   d. Humorous tone (e.g. “Brill-yunt”)

3. Questions for discussion:
   a. What tone is the author setting in the first part of the scene?
   b. How does the tone change by the end of the excerpt?
   c. Why might the author start lightly and then turn more serious?
   d. Why do you think the author would use humor in the play at all?
   e. What might you predict about the ending of the play based on this excerpt?
**Narrator:** When last they saw each other, Scrooge had been called to the deathbed by Marley’s housekeeper.

**Scrooge:** He stood silently in the door of Marley’s bedroom, watching as his former partner struggled to breathe his last.

**Marley in the Past:** At one point, Marley opened his eyes and stared at him—recognized him, surely, but said nothing, only glared at him accusingly.

**Scrooge:** Scrooge looked right back, bold as brass, and watched as the last choking gasping came and Marley’s breath was finally stopped. *(He watches for a long moment.)* Then he put on his hat and gloves (for he had never removed his coat) and went out and had his dinner.

**Bogle:** *(Gently.)* “You remember it now?”

**Marley:** *(Devastated.)* Marley didn’t move. He had seen the sum of his life in a few moments and was surprised to see, looking back, how small it was—countless tiny cruelties, vicious little economies, mean, pathetic little triumphs. “I deserved these,” he said, running his chains through his fingers.

**Bogle:** The Bogle nodded.

**Marley:** Then his hands clenched and Marley turned white-hot with fury. “And Scrooge! That wretch! He did this to me! Well, he can go to hell, now! He can rot in hell beside me for eternity — *(Sobbing in his rage.)* I’ll be damned if I’ll lift my littlest fingernail to save him! I’ll be damned if I will!”

**Bogle:** “Rather, old thing,” said the Bogle gently, “you’ll be damned if you don’t.” *(Marley turns away.)* The Bogle flew around and lit on his shoulder. “Don’t damn yourself to spite him, Marley me darlin’. He ain’t worth it. He’s your one chance to save yourself. Best take it, m’dear.”

**Marley:** Marley bit out through clenched jaws, “No. I’m done with him.” *(Although Marley doesn’t see it, the Bogle is destroyed by this—somehow, he has failed at something very, very important.)*

**Bogle:** “I understand. Well, perhaps you’re right.”

**Narrator:** Then they were back in Scrooge’s bedroom. *(Indicating a chair.)* The old man sat weeping in his chair, weeping over what he had seen. Marley and the Bogle watched a moment, invisible—

CONTINUED...
Bogle: Then the Bogle—(Attacking the chair viciously; taking out his rage and disappointment on Scrooge.) charged the weeping Scrooge’s head like a hornet, laughing and taunting him viciously. “That’s it, old fool! Cry! Louder! Louder! How does it feel?”

Marley: (Shocked.) “What are you doing?”

Bogle: “He deserves what he’s got,’ cried the little spirit, laughing and dive-bombing about the old man’s head. “Old fool! Old wretch! Should have thought! Should have paid some attention! No use sitting there blubbering now! You’ve made your empty bed—now you’d best get used to lyin’ in it!”

Marley: “Stop it.”

Bogle: “What?”

Marley: “Stop it. Leave him alone.”

Bogle: “Why? This is the man who—“

Marley: “I know who it is.”

Bogle: “But he—“

Marley: “I know what he did. Please—leave him alone.”

Narrator: The two of them watched the old man weeping in his chair. By the time they left, old Scrooge had cried himself to sleep. (Light change, back to St. Paul’s, as the Actor returns to sit on the table again.)

Bogle: (Angry.) “Why did you stop me? You hate him, don’t you, got a right to, after what he did to you?”

Marley: “Don’t know,” said Marley.

Bogle: “Yes, you do.”

Marley: “Can’t you leave me in peace for a while?”

Bogle: “I suppose you’re right, as usual. This is, after all, your last look at this city and these stars, now that you’ve decided to let the old cold-sore rot in his own mess. Not that he doesn’t deserve it, of course. He deserves that and a whole lot more. And he’ll get it. If you think your chains are heavy, wait til you see what they’ve got in store for old Scrooge. Once they’ve got him—“

Marley: “Do you mind?”

CONTINUED...
Bogle: “Mind what?”

Marley: “Would you mind plugging up that seemingly endless flow of chat?”

Bogle: *(Very surprised and offended.)* The Bogle, surprised and offended, did.

Narrator: For a while the two of them just watched the stars in silence, as they made their solemn rounds above them.

Marley: *(After a pause, oh the hell with it.)* “Shooting star,” observed Marley.

Bogle: *(Still very offended.)* The Bogle, still smarting, said nothing.

Marley: “If you must know, I felt sorry for him.”

Bogle: “Excuse me? Were you addressing me—”

Marley: “Oh, stop it. It was just that, bad as he no doubt is, and getting what he no doubt deserves, he just seemed so—”


Marley: “Human. He seemed so human, then, weeping over his lost love and his wasted life. Like all of us, somehow.”

Bogle: “Aren’t getting sentimental on me, are you?”

Marley: “What you were doing just—didn’t seem fair.”

Bogle: “I see.” The Bogle smiled then, a private little smile that Marley didn’t see.
Scene to Read Aloud #2
CONTINUED

Reading and Analysis

1. Students should be assigned the following parts:
   a. Narrator
   b. Marley as Marley
   c. Marley as narrator
   d. Bogle as Bogle
   e. Bogle as narrator
   f. Scrooge as narrator
   g. Reader of stage directions

2. Have the students read the scene aloud.

3. Discuss the following questions.
   a. What clues are we given in the narration to identify Scrooge’s attitude towards Marley’s death?
   b. What realization does Marley come to in regards to the value of his life? How does his view of his chains change?
   c. When Marley says, “I’ll be damned if I’ll lift my littlest fingernail to save him! I’ll be damned if I will!” Bogle answers, “...you’ll be damned if you don’t.” What does he mean? Explain the rest of that speech.
   d. Scrooge has just been reliving his past, and when Marley and Bogle find him next, he is in his bedroom. What is he doing?
   e. What does Bogle do next? Why?
   f. What is Marley’s initial reaction to Bogle’s anger? What does he tell Bogle to do?
   g. Explain the following statement that Marley makes about Scrooge: “Human. He seemed so human, then, weeping over his lost love and his wasted life. Like all of us, somehow.”
   h. Explain the final exchange between Marley and Bogle. What is the significance of Bogle’s “private little smile that Marley didn’t see”?
   i. Summarize what Marley is learning about himself and others?
   j. What do you think will happen next? Do you think Marley will be able to save Scrooge? Explain your answer.
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Yours sincerely,

The Staff at Park Square Theatre