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TEACHER RESOURCE GUIDE



Dolly Parton's Smoky Mountain Christmas Carol

Adapted by David H. Bell, Paul T. Couch & Curt Wollan

Book by David H. Bell

Music & Lyrics by Dolly Parton

2024.25 Season

Stanley Industrial Alliance Stage

November 14, 2024–December 24, 2024

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Don Lindsay and Jennifer MacKenzie

To:

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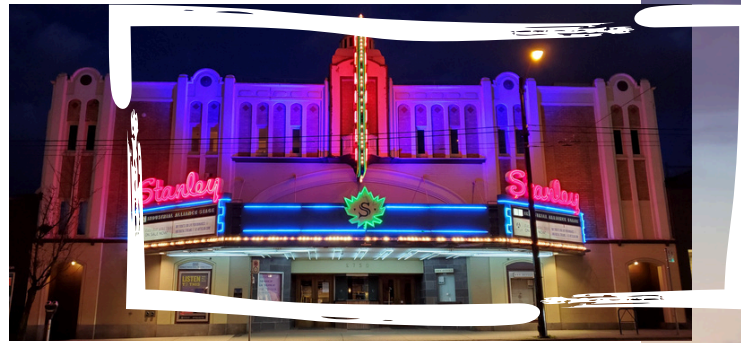
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WELCOME

This guide was created for teachers and students. It contains an overview of the play's story as well as informative resources and activities for teachers and students. The guide aims to provide background knowledge and critical perspectives on the play that will yield fruitful discussion and foster an understanding and appreciation of theatre arts.

If you have any questions, comments, or suggestions for the guide, please contact our Education and Community Engagement Coordinator, Mikenzie Page, at mpage@artsclub.com.

This study guide was written by Sydney Marino and Mikenzie Page



ABOUT THE ARTS CLUB THEATRE COMPANY

The Arts Club of Vancouver was founded in 1958 as a private club for artists, musicians, and actors. It became the Arts Club Theatre in 1964 when the company opened its first stage in a converted gospel hall at Seymour and Davie Streets.

Now in its 61st season of producing professional live theatre in Vancouver, the Arts Club Theatre Company is a non-profit charitable organization that operates three theatres: the Granville Island Stage, the Stanley Industrial Alliance Stage, and the Newmont Stage at the BMO Theatre Centre. Its popular productions range from musicals and contemporary comedies to new works and classics.

Learn more about the Arts Club Theatre Company at artsclub.com



Ćəsnaʔəm: The Story of this Land

The Stanley theatre stands on the ancestral territory of the xʷməθkʷə́yəm (Musqueam) Nation, and the former city of ċəsnaʔəm, which was located at the mouth of the Fraser River. The city of ċəsnaʔəm is an important historical site for Musqueam. It symbolizes the nation's resilience and its connection to the land. We honour the history of this land as a step towards recognition and respect to the Musqueam people. Just as Musqueam was named for the blooming flower məθkʷə́y, we hope to grow our connection with the land and its people.

The Arts Club Theatre Company would like to acknowledge the traditional, ancestral, and unceded territories of the xʷməθkʷə́yəm (Musqueam), Skwxwú7mesh (Squamish), and səliłwətał (Tsleil-Waututh) Nations, the original stewards of this land on which we operate. We would like to ask those visiting or living here to share their thanks by supporting local Indigenous artists and communities. Acknowledging is always a start to supporting; as we step forward, we wish to be better partners, healers, and helpers to our Indigenous neighbours.



LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After viewing *Dolly Parton's Smoky Mountain Christmas Carol* and working through the following activities, students will:

- Be able to engage critically with adaptations of classic works
- Reflect upon the impact of personal transformation as well as the transformation of characters from the play.
- Explore the way theatre uses traditional literary conventions on stage. (e.g flashbacks)

BC CURRICULUM CONNECTIONS:

Drama 8-12

- Describe, interpret, and evaluate how performers and playwrights use dramatic structures, elements, and techniques to create and communicate ideas
- Develop and refine performance skills in a variety of contexts
- Intentionally select and combine dramatic elements and conventions

Creative Writing 10-12

- Respond to text in personal, creative, and critical ways
- Evaluate how text structures, literary elements, techniques, and devices enhance and shape meaning and impact
- Use writing and design processes to plan, develop, and create engaging and meaningful texts for a variety of purposes and audiences

Musical Theatre 10-12

- Document, share, and respond to creative works and experiences in a variety of contexts
- Explore educational, personal, and professional opportunities in musical theatre or related fields



SPOILER ALERT!

*Anything past this page may
contain major plot point
spoilers!*

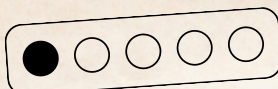
Read at your own discretion.

Alcohol/Drugs:



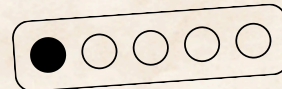
There may be depictions of drinking alcohol onstage, discussion of prohibition.

Violence:



Depiction of a riot, possible gunshots, characters are arrested. Descriptions of poverty and the hardship of the 1930's are discussed and depicted.

Strong language/Sexuality:



No strong language or sexuality; there may be kisses between some characters.



SYNOPSIS



ACT ONE

The show opens in Morton's Hollow, a small town in the Appalachian Mountains. The townspeople gather on Christmas Eve to explain that for the last seven years, every business in their small town has been owned and run by the cold-hearted Ebenezer Scrooge. Over the last seven years, the town's inhabitants have barely been able to make ends meet, and those who couldn't were evicted or made to work in Scrooge's coal mines. Scrooge enters on his way to his bank where Bob Cratchit, his employee, is shivering because Scrooge refuses to pay for coal. Scrooge's nephew, Fred, comes to pay his uncle a visit and invite him to Christmas dinner, which Scrooge refuses. As Fred exits, Tiny Tim comes to see his father, Bob Cratchit. To ensure that Bob will not get distracted from his work, Scrooge lets the boy sit in his office until they are interrupted by two charity collectors. The collectors attempt to get a donation for the poor from Scrooge but are quickly shut down and pushed out of the office. The work day ends, and Scrooge treks home in the beginning of a blizzard.

Later that evening, Scrooge is visited by the ghost of his former business partner, Jacob Marley. Marley warns Scrooge that he will be visited by three ghosts of Christmas and that Scrooge must change his selfish ways or else he will end up in hell like Marley. Scrooge believes this apparition must have not been real and goes to bed.

When the clock strikes 1:00, Scrooge is visited by the Ghost of Christmas Past, who takes him on a journey back through his own life. Scrooge revisits his childhood with his beloved sister Fanny and later Fustbunch's General store, where he worked as a young adult. Eben (a young Ebenezer Scrooge) learns his co-worker, Dick, has been putting alcohol in the store's syrup and selling it without their boss, Fustbunch, knowing. Later that evening is the annual Fustbunch Christmas party where Jacob Marley offers Eben a job working for him. Eben initially declines but chooses to accept after being rejected by his young love, Sadie Riley. Later, Eben begins working for Marley and together they tell the authorities about the Fustbunch General Store's illegal activities. Dick and Fustbunch are arrested and the store is sold to Marley and Scrooge.

SYNOPSIS



The miners in Morton's Hollow begin to protest the unfair working conditions set upon them by Marley, and in retaliation seven miners are shot and killed. To avoid being charged, Marley signs over his business to Scrooge with the expectation that once everything calms down, Scrooge will sign everything back over to him. As Marley leaves, Scrooge calls his accountant to take away any access Marley may have to any of his accounts. The Ghost of Christmas Past then returns Scrooge to his bed to prepare for the next two spirits.

ACT TWO

Scrooge awakens to the Ghost of Christmas Present and together they depart to find the entire town singing over the Sears and Roebuck catalogue. The town is wishing for Christmas presents which Scrooge initially finds foolish. The pair visit the Cratchit family's home to find the entire family bustling about, preparing for Christmas. Tiny Tim and Bob Cratchit have brought home a Christmas tree and Mrs. Cratchit scolds Bob for bringing a sickly Tiny Tim out in the cold. Scrooge asks the Ghost of Christmas if Tiny Tim will get better, and the Ghost of Christmas Past explains that Tiny Tim's future is bleak unless his family can get help from doctors in Nashville.

The next visit is to Fred and his wife who are chopping up their own wood furniture to give to less fortunate families who can't stay warm through the blizzard. Fred makes a wish that Scrooge will come for Christmas. At the end of their visit, The Ghost of Christmas Present shows Scrooge a local, starving boy and departs with the child to allow Scrooge to prepare for the next spirit.

The final spirit, the Ghost of Christmas Future, visits Scrooge, and together they appear at a funeral. Scrooge realizes it is his own and watches as everyone in attendance laughs and celebrates his death. The spirit then takes him to the auction where all Scrooge's earthly belongings are being sold for ten cents on the dollar, yet Scrooge still does not repent. The scene changes to Scrooge's grave where Fred and Bob Cratchit run into each other.

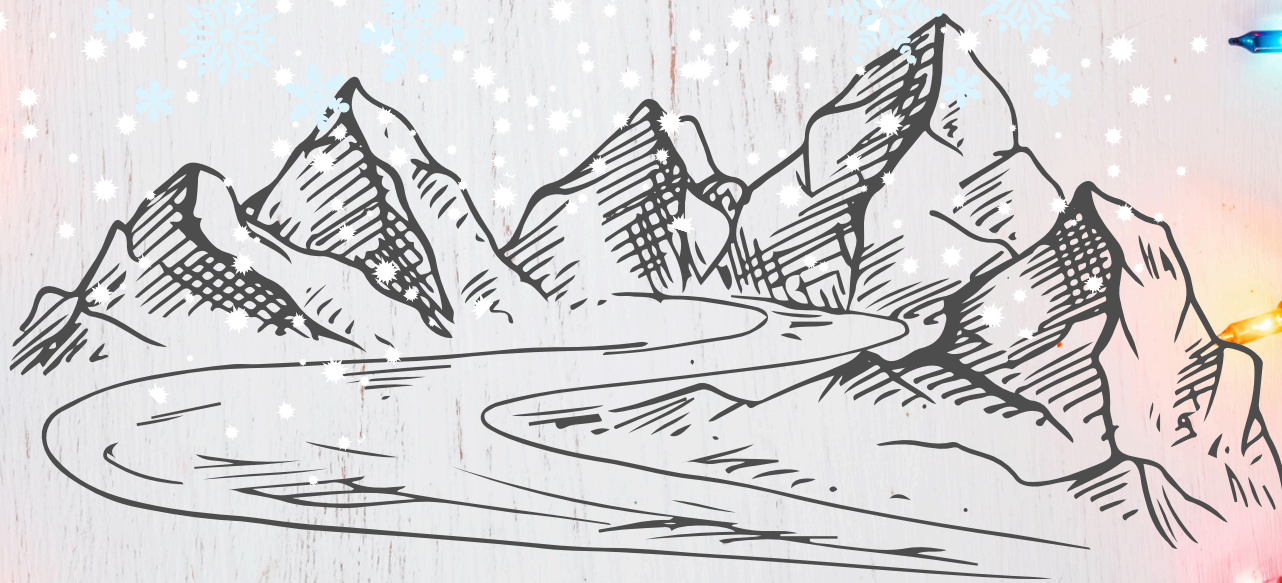
Bob Cratchit explains that Tiny Tim has died and that they will be burying him next to Scrooge, so that at least Tiny Tim will have someone to look over him. Scrooge begs the ghost to take him instead and repents for his cold, loveless life.



SYNOPSIS

Suddenly Scrooge wakes up in his own bed and finds out it is Christmas day. He realizes that it is not too late and rushes out the door to spread goodwill around. Scrooge ends Christmas day celebrating with Fred and the Cratchits proclaiming "Mankind is our business, Mr. Cratchit, and never you forget it. I won't"

End



CHARACTER LIST

Ebenezer Scrooge: A stingy, cold-hearted older businessman, described as “the first meanest man in Morton’s Hollow.”

Tiny Tim: The hopeful youngest son of Bob Cratchit. He is sick and the Cratchit family is unsure if this will be his last Christmas.

Bob Cratchit: A bank clerk working for Scrooge. He is a kind, devoted family man and a hard-working, loyal employee.

Jacob Marley: Scrooge’s business partner. He was described as “the second meanest man in Morton’s Hollow” when he was alive. At the beginning of the show Jacob Marley has been dead for seven years.

Past: The ghost of Christmas Past.

Present: The ghost of Christmas Present.

Future: The ghost of Christmas Future.

Fred: Scrooge’s nephew and the son of Scrooge’s beloved sister, Fanny.

Fanny: Ebenezer Scrooge’s sister and Fred’s mother.

Eben: A young Ebenezer Scrooge.

Sadie Riley: A young woman living in Morton’s Hollow in a courtship with Eben.

Fustbunch: The jolly owner of Fustbunch’s General Store.

Mrs. Fustbunch: The wife of Mr. Fustbunch.

Dick: Eben’s co-worker at the Fustbunch General Store.

Mrs. Cratchit: Bob Cratchit’s wife and the matriarch of the Cratchit family.

Daniel Cratchit: One of the Cratchit children.

Wyatt Cratchit: One of the Cratchit children.

Jenny Cratchit: One of the Cratchit children.

Eliza Cratchit: One of the Cratchit children.

Jabeth Cratchit: One of the Cratchit children.

Amy Sue: Fred’s wife.

Mrs. Dilber: Scrooge’s no-nonsense housekeeper.

Zachary Henderson: A poor local child.

Cyrus Mudge: The local sheriff of Morton’s Hollow.

Watkins Boy: A local child.

Mabel: A townspeople of Morton’s Hollow.

Leslie: A townspeople of Morton’s Hollow.

Ensemble: Various characters/townspeople.



About the Playwright



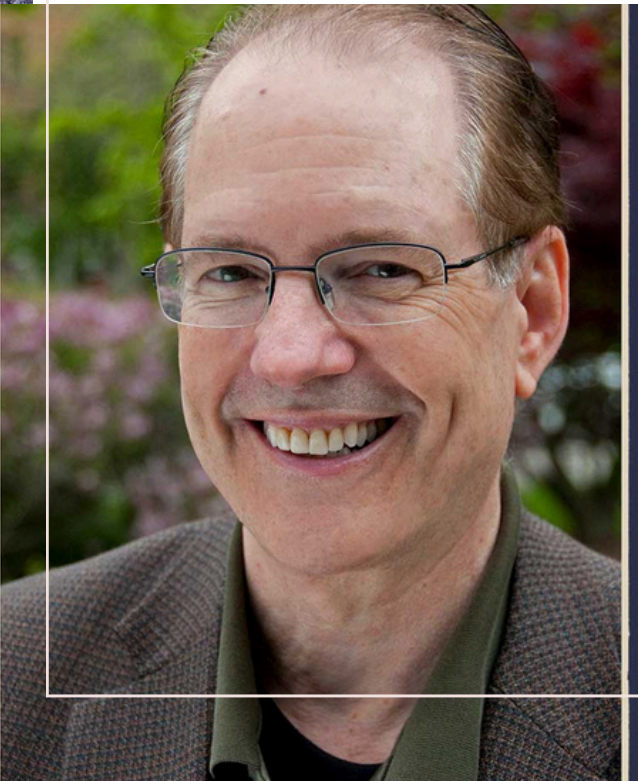
ABOUT DOLLY PARTON

Dolly Parton is an American singer, songwriter, musician, and actress, known for her contributions to country music. She was born in 1946 in Pittman Center, Tennessee, as the fourth of twelve children, and grew up in rural Appalachia, later moving to Nashville to start her country music career. Parton gained popularity from her appearances on country singer Porter Wagoner's show, and they later recorded many hit songs as a duo. In 1974, Parton embarked on her solo music career, creating hit songs such as "Jolene" "I Will Always Love You" and "9 to 5". She has appeared in numerous films, such as *Steel Magnolias*, *Rhinestone*, and *9 to 5*, which earned her two Grammy awards for the title song that was later turned into a Broadway musical. Amidst her success, Parton even opened her own theme park named "Dollywood" in 1986. Parton has enjoyed continued success throughout her varied acting and musical career, and in 2011 she was awarded a Lifetime Achievement Award at the Grammys. She continues to write and record music today.



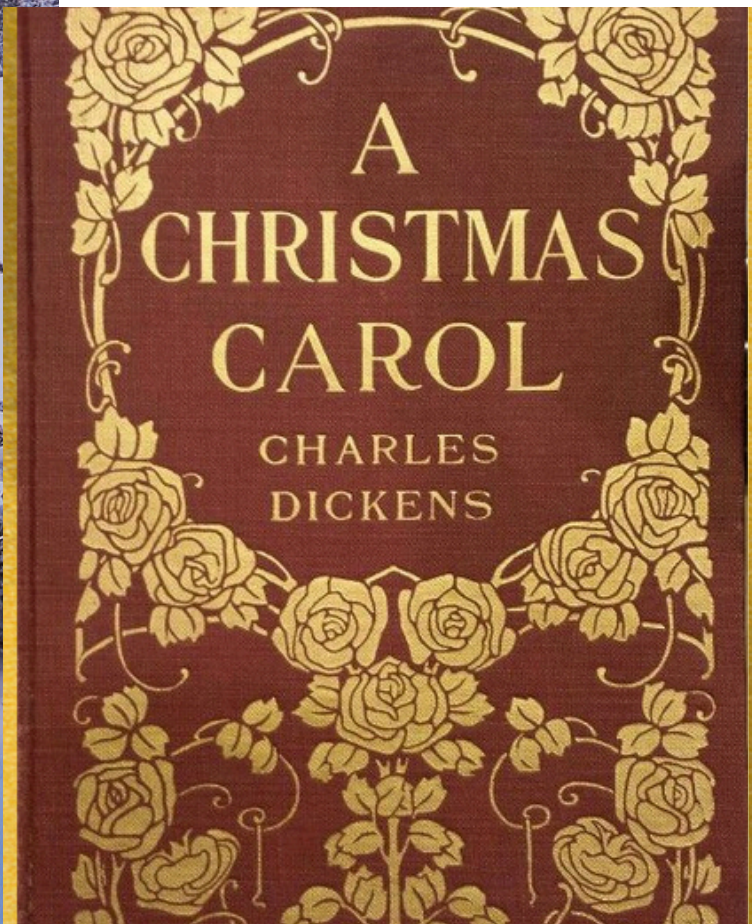
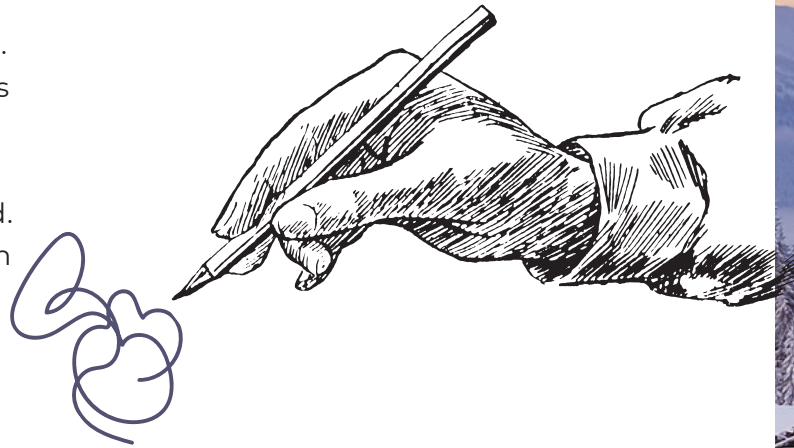
ABOUT DAVID H. BELL

David H. Bell adapted and wrote the book of *Dolly Parton's Smoky Mountain Christmas Carol*. He is an international director, choreographer, and writer. Bell has directed on and off Broadway, worked on London's West End, and his work in Chicago has earned him 43 Joseph Jefferson Award nominations. He is a prolific director, having directed over twenty productions at Atlanta's Alliance theatre alone. Bell is the Artistic Director of The American Music Theatre Program and is a professor and Director of Music Theatre at Northwestern University.



ABOUT A *CHRISTMAS CAROL*

In 1843, English novelist Charles Dickens wrote the novella *A Christmas Carol* in response to the greed and wealth inequality he witnessed around him. He had intended to write a pamphlet in support of impoverished children after reading a parliamentary report about child labour in Britain, but he decided that he would create a stronger impact by writing something that would grab the public's attention. While on a trip to Manchester, Dickens was confronted by the image of starving families and the difficulties that his nephew with disabilities faced. These encounters served as inspiration for the societal issues he wanted to highlight in his story.



Dickens wrote *A Christmas Carol* in six weeks, finishing a few weeks before Christmas. At this time, his publishers were unsupportive and skeptical of his work, forcing Dickens to pay part of the publishing cost himself. Fortunately for Dickens, the book became an immediate commercial success. Since then, *A Christmas Carol* has been made into countless adaptations across mediums such as theatre, radio, and film and is still seen as a holiday classic to this day.

Discussion Questions



Pre-Show Discussion Questions

- Have you seen any live performances on stage before? What are your expectations about what you will see on stage in this production?
- What technical elements do you anticipate seeing in the production? How do you think these elements will affect the audience's experience of the play?
- What do you already know about the story A Christmas Carol? In this adaptation of the story, which elements do you think they will keep? Which elements do you think will be changed?
- Are you familiar with Dolly Parton or her music? How does this knowledge influence what you think you will see in this play?

Post-Show Discussion Questions

- Think about a time that you experienced a change in perspective or a personal transformation. What caused this? Based on this production, how might you show this transformation onstage?
- What ideas or themes did this show make you think about?
- How did the technical elements of the show contribute to the story? How did the music and genre/style contribute to the story?

Warm Up 1: Theme Music Improv

*(RECOMMENDED FOR DRAMA
CLASSES GRADE 8-12)*

Rationale: Musical theatre is a form of theatrical performance involving music, movement, spoken dialogue, and acting. This warm up breaks the ice and helps explore using music thematically and effectively, and it demonstrates the impact music has on how the audience consumes theatre.

Explanation: This game is suitable for 2-3 students at a time.

- The non-performing students (audience members) will begin by suggesting a non-geographical location and relationship for actors. The actors will then begin to have a normal, everyday conversation.

For example:

- “Son, the principal called...”
- “Welcome to _____ coffee shop, how can I help you?”
- “Hey Amy, did you hear about that promotion?”



- As the conversation progresses, begin to play instrumental music from any movie soundtrack of your choosing. This could be action/adventure, romantic, whimsical, science fiction, etc. The actors will then match their dialogue and actions to fit the music. Whenever the music changes, so does the scene.

Warm Up Debrief:

- How did the music affect and change the choices you made in the scene?
- How does music affect the general tone of stories, movies, or plays?

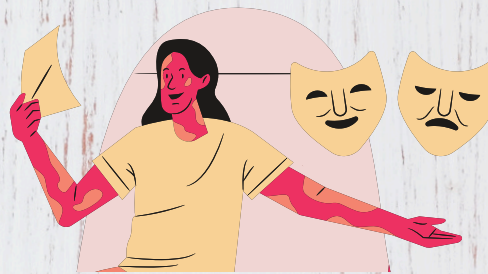


Warm Up 2: Character/ Physical Exploration

RECOMMENDED FOR DRAMA CLASSES GRADES 6-8



Rationale: In Dolly Parton's Smoky Mountain Christmas Carol, many actors play multiple roles throughout the course of the show. Actors switch costumes and change their voices, physicality, and overall demeanor to switch from one character to the next. This warm up will invite students to experience the excitement and challenges of playing multiple roles while helping them warm up their bodies and voices.



Explanation:

- This exploration begins by having students simply walk around the room however they normally would move.
- Once they have walked around for a while, begin to call out one descriptive word at a time until the students have a good mix of words to play with.
- E.g. frail, walks only on their toes, heavy, light, fast, slow, sharp, confident, shy, big steps, small steps, leads with their nose, etc.
- The students will be instructed to adjust their body to find the physicality of the character. Once the students have engaged physically, they can add the voice of the character and begin to interact with others in the room.
- Once the students have a grasp on the character they've created, switch to new descriptive words to create a brand new character.

Example:

The words called out are light, leads with their nose, and fast. Students could physically become a snooty, high powered character or a curious fairy. It all depends on their own creativity, imagination, and their perception of different descriptive words.

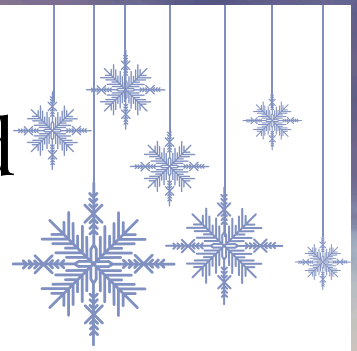


Warm Up Debrief:

- How does it feel to quickly change from one character to the next? Challenging or fun?
- How does physicality change the way a character perceives and receives the world?

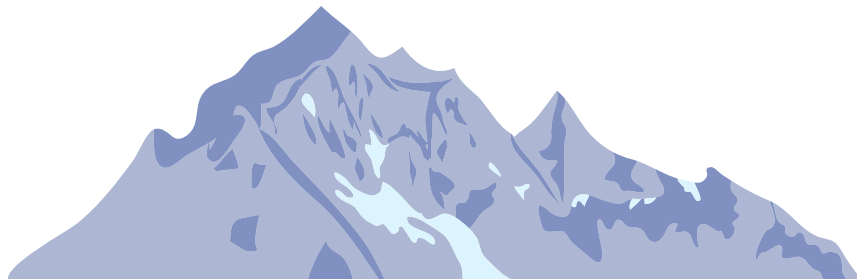
ACTIVITY 1: Repetition and Raising the Stakes

(RECOMMENDED FOR DRAMA CLASSES GRADE 8–12)



Rationale: Dolly Parton’s *Smoky Mountain Christmas Carol* uses repetition to raise the stakes of Scrooge’s fate and to prompt his transformation. Throughout the musical, Scrooge is visited by three ghosts who show him increasingly worrying scenes of Christmases past, present, and future. With each vision the fate of Scrooge and the fate of the town become grimmer and Scrooge’s incentive to change grows.

In other words, there is more at risk as the play progresses and, as the stakes are raised, the audience becomes more invested. In storytelling, raising the stakes is used to give the audience a story and characters that they truly care about. This exercise asks students to create scenes that will capture the audience’s attention by raising the stakes of their plots.



Explanation:

Part 1

- In pairs, students can improvise a scene at a restaurant where a customer wants to order a specific food item and the waiter tells them they are sold out
- Raise the stakes. The teacher will reveal new information to the students—the customer has travelled halfway around the world to try this food and is going home tonight. Students will adjust their scenes based on this new information.
- Raise the stakes again. Reveal that the customer is sick and they believe that this food is the only cure! Students will adjust their scenes accordingly.

Explanation:

Part 2

- Now that they have seen how raising the stakes works, students will work in groups to create short, simple, scenes with a clear conflict. Then, they will create a second version of the scene that reveals more information to show that more is at risk for one or both characters in the conflict. Finally, they will create a third version of the scene with even higher, exaggerated stakes.
- Feel free to have fun and make these as ridiculous as you want!
- Students can perform the scenes and discuss the effects of raising the stakes.



Activity Debrief:

- Which versions of the scene were you most invested in? What effect did raising the stakes have on this?
- What were the advantages of raising the stakes? What were the challenges?

ACTIVITY 2: Tactics and Transformation

RECOMMENDED FOR DRAMA CLASSES GRADES 6-8



Rationale: In Dolly Parton's Smoky Mountain Christmas Carol, Scrooge is set in his ways for the majority of the play. Throughout the action, the other characters try different tactics to get him to change his mind and become kind-hearted. These range from scolding him, asking him to change, and eventually showing him the effects of his actions. This activity asks students to explore different ways of changing a character's mind in a scene. If they do not respond to one tactic, they will have to adapt and try another.

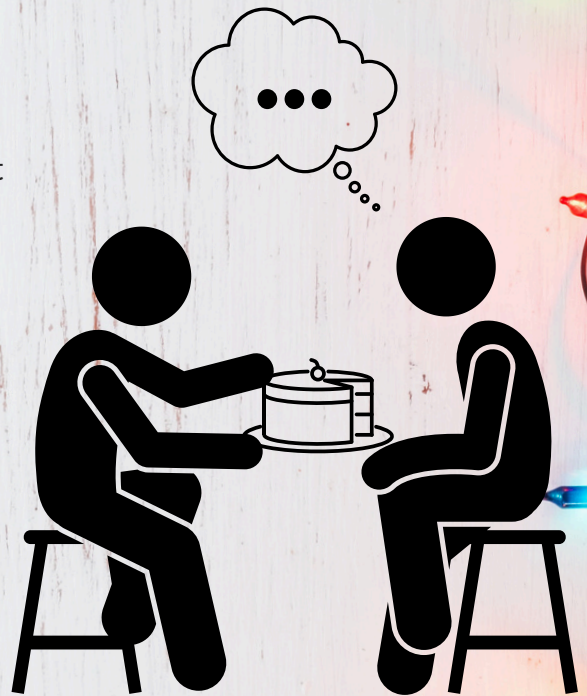
Explanation:

Part 1

- In pairs or small groups, students will improvise scenes at a bakery. Character A is given the opinion that they hate cake. The other characters want them to try it.
- The teacher will read out certain tactics that the characters can use to get character A to eat the cake.

Example:

- Ask them to try it
- Get them to smell it
- Eat it in front of them to show them how good it is
- Offer a reward if they eat it
- Command them to eat it
- Character A should respond to these tactics accordingly, and if one of them works to change their mind, the scene ends.



Part 2

- Now that they are familiar with tactics, students can improvise their own scenes incorporating them.
- Working in their groups, one character will adopt a strong opinion (Ex. they will ONLY sit on a chair if it is red)
- The other student(s) will take turns, in character, using different tactics to encourage that character to change their mind.
 - Note: this doesn't mean that they should be repeating the same points over and over more forcefully, but instead, using different strategies to approach the problem at different angles.
 - The character with the strong opinion should listen and respond to the tactics, instead of just saying "no" every time.
- The scene concludes when the character changes their mind.
 - If they refuse to change their mind, you can discuss why this is. Are there any other tactics you can try?

Activity Debrief:

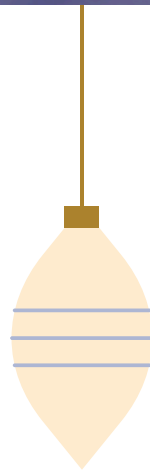
- What challenges did you face while trying to change the characters' minds? What worked and what didn't?
- If you were the person being convinced, which tactics changed your mind? Why?
- What are some tactics people tried to use to change Scrooge's mind in the musical?



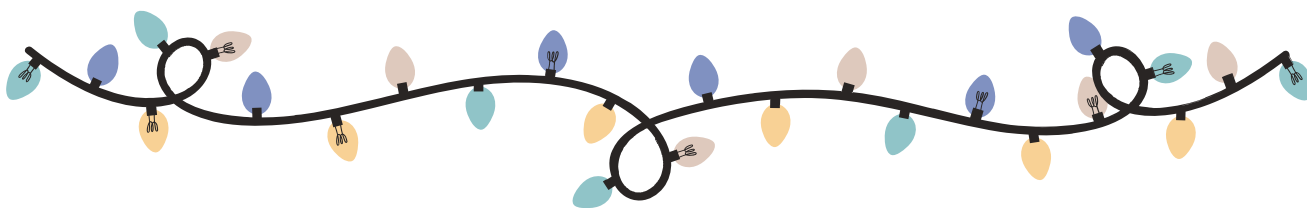
PROJECT: Reimagining Classics

(RECOMMENDED FOR DRAMA CLASSES GRADE 8–12, OR CREATIVE WRITING 10–12.)

THIS ACTIVITY IS INTENDED TO TAKE LONGER THAN ONE CLASS DEPENDING ON YOUR PERSONAL CLASSROOM GOALS/NEEDS



Rationale: Dolly Parton's Smoky Mountain Christmas Carol is a reimagining of A Christmas Carol revamped to fit Dolly Parton's style. This musical successfully keeps the basis of the original story while adapting it enough to be recognizable as a Dolly Parton piece. This activity asks students to identify what elements of a story are vital, and which ones can be tweaked to create a unique version of a classic. Students will learn to bring their own style and voice into a story while keeping the essential parts of the plot and message preserved.



Explanation:

- In small groups, students will think of a classic story they want to retell—preferably something simple, like a fairytale or fable.
- Students will identify the style or genre they want to use to retell the story.
- Students will identify the key plot points that are needed to make that story work. For example, in A Christmas Carol, it is essential that Scrooge is visited by the ghosts of Christmas Past, Present, and Future. However, the setting of this classic story, as seen in Dolly Parton's Smoky Mountain Christmas Carol, is interchangeable. The general plot is the same, but the details can be changed or added to adapt to different styles.

For Drama Classes:

- Once they have chosen these plot points that create the basic structure of the story, they will get on their feet and brainstorm what they can add/ adapt to make it fit the new genre. This can be explored through improvisation.
- Students will then present their new scenes to each other.



For Creative Writing Classes:

- Students can create a brainstorming web to explore their ideas of what to add/adapt in the story.
- They can then create a list of plot points breaking down their new stories, and share it with the class.
- If you wish to turn this into a longer project, students can write their adapted stories (or one scene) and bring it to the next class.



Activity Debrief:

- What was challenging about deciding what to keep and what to cut? What was enjoyable?
- What was important to consider while making changes to the story?
- What do you think is the benefit of creating adaptations of classic stories?





SOURCES



Dolly Parton Bio:

<https://www.biography.com/musician/dolly-parton>
<https://www.britannica.com/biography/Dolly-Parton>
<https://www.imdb.com/name/nm0000573/bio>

A Christmas Carol:

<https://www.bbc.com/culture/article/20171215-how-did-a-christmas-carol-come-to-be>

David H. Bell Bio:

<https://www.davidhbell.com/bio.html>
Curriculum Connections
<https://curriculum.gov.bc.ca/>

About the Playwright Photos

<https://smokymountainchristmascarol.com/>

