

## Charles Dickens Reader's Theater Script

(Write student name on line prior to copying/printing.)

\_\_\_\_\_ Good morning and welcome to our Reader's Theater Event.

\_\_\_\_\_ We are going to start by asking you to raise your hand if you have a birthday in February.

\_\_\_\_\_ Thank you, please put your hand up if your birthday is on the February 7<sup>th</sup>.

\_\_\_\_\_ Those born on February 7<sup>th</sup> share your birthday with a very famous Victorian, and our show is going to be about him. In fact on February 7<sup>th</sup> 2012, it will be 200 years since he was born. See if you can figure out who he is...

\_\_\_\_\_ He is a famous author and lots of his stories have been made into movies, television shows and musicals. Whisper to your neighbor if you have a guess.

\_\_\_\_\_ Let's help you out/(or you are right! and) here is one of his most famous characters from perhaps the most famous Christmas story ever written.

\_\_\_\_\_ *But he was tight-fisted! A squeezing, wrenching, grasping, scraping, clutching old sinner! Hard and sharp as flint; secret and self-contained, and solitary as an oyster. The cold within him froze his old features, nipped his pointed nose, shriveled his cheek, made his eyes red, his thin lips blue; and spoke out shrewdly in his grating voice. He carried his own low temperature always about him; he iced his office and didn't thaw it one degree at Christmas. No warmth could warm, no wintry weather chill him. No wind that blew was bitterer than he.*

\_\_\_\_\_ Bah Humbug! Why are all of you smiling? I hate children having fun, I hate fun and most of all, I hate Christmas!

\_\_\_\_\_ Well, we love Christmas and we think you are a grumpy old man, Ebenezer Scrooge!

\_\_\_\_\_ Yes, our show is about the English author Charles Dickens who wrote *A Christmas Carol* and many other wonderful books, describing the lives of both rich and poor people. We are learning out about Dickens because he is such an important author whose stories have been popular for many years.

\_\_\_\_\_ The Victorian age was a time of great inventions and wonderful changes for society.

\_\_\_\_\_ The camera was invented!

\_\_\_\_\_ The first radios!

\_\_\_\_\_ The railways!

\_\_\_\_\_ The first postage stamp!

\_\_\_\_\_ The sewing machine!

\_\_\_\_\_ The first flushing toilet!

\_\_\_\_\_ It was also a time when authors wrote books about the lives of ordinary people. Before then most stories were only written about rich people. Charles Dickens changed that; his books were full of wonderful characters from all walks of life. His characters showed honesty, kindness and simple human decency. Even the evil characters in his story showed glimpses of not being completely bad, but having the chance of redemption.

\_\_\_\_\_ Please sir, what's 'redemption'?

\_\_\_\_\_ It means you can show that you can do something right and good, even if you have always done wrong or been bad before. You can change and be saved. Scrooge eventually came to love people and Christmas.

\_\_\_\_\_ Charles was born on February 7<sup>th</sup>, 1812, the second of eight children. When he was a boy, poor children did not always have the chance to go to school and instead had to work long hours just like the grown-ups.

\_\_\_\_\_ Charles himself knew what it was to be very poor because when he was 10, his father had to go to prison, because he did not have enough money to pay his bills. Charles had to go and work in a factory until he was 12 to help his family.

\_\_\_\_\_ Charles' father was lucky enough to have a relative who paid the money he owed, so that he could come out of prison. Charles was then able to go to school and get a good education.

\_\_\_\_\_ Please sir, what's an education?

\_\_\_\_\_ Education means gaining knowledge and understanding through learning. It means doing well at school so that you know lots of stuff and get a brilliant job or career!

\_\_\_\_\_ Because of his good education Charles was able to become a journalist and writer, and eventually became famous for his wonderful books. However, he never forgot what it was to be poor and he, along with other caring people, helped set up schools for poor children. These were called 'ragged schools'. Does anyone know why?

\_\_\_\_\_ Charles also said it was not enough that poor children could be taught lessons, he also said that children needed the chance to be clean, and that the schools should provide warm water for them to get washed, and even give them baths!

\_\_\_\_\_ Through his stories and the characters in his books, Dickens made people aware about the poverty and unhappiness that poor Victorians had to endure. *A Christmas Carol* let everyone know that poor people did not have wonderful happy times at Christmas, *Oliver Twist* told people about life inside a workhouse.

\_\_\_\_\_ Please sir, I know that story! And I know what a workhouse is! It's a place where people who had no money and nowhere to live were sent. The men and women and children were all separated, and you had to work all day and only get some potatoes or gruel to eat, and there was never enough!

\_\_\_\_\_ *Boys have generally excellent appetites. Oliver Twist and his companions suffered the tortures of slow starvation for three months. At last they got so wild with hunger, that one boy who was tall for his age, hinted that unless he had another basin of gruel, he was afraid he might some night happen to eat the boy sleeping next to him. A council was held; lots were cast for who should walk up to the master after supper that evening and ask for more; and it fell to Oliver Twist.*

\_\_\_\_\_ *The evening arrived; the boys took their places. The master served the gruel out after a long grace was said. The gruel disappeared; the boys whispered to each other and winked at Oliver; while his neighbors nudged him. Child as he was, he was desperate with hunger, and reckless with misery. He rose from the table; and advancing to the master, basin and spoon in hand, said:*

***"Please, sir, I want some more."***

\_\_\_\_\_ *The master was a tall, healthy man; but he turned very pale. He gazed with astonishment on the small rebel for some seconds; and then clung for support to the copper.*

***"What!"*** (in a faint voice).

***"Please, sir, I want some more."***

\_\_\_\_\_ *The master aimed a blow at Oliver's head with the ladle, pinioned him in his arms, and shrieked aloud for the beadle.*

\_\_\_\_\_ Poor Victorians had hard lives and poor children worked long hours in factories, in mines, on farms or as servants.

\_\_\_\_\_ Some unlucky children worked as chimney sweeps where they were lowered inside chimneys to scrape and brush away the soot. Some boys got stuck and died. Thankfully in 1832, using boys to sweep chimneys was forbidden by law.

\_\_\_\_\_ Charles Dickens was not the only Victorian to care about children or the poor. But through his books and his own actions he helped to influence people in power. He was someone who helped to make the world a better place.

\_\_\_\_\_ As we approach his birthday we would like to think of him, and be grateful for his life and work.

\_\_\_\_\_ Repeat after me: We are thankful for Charles Dickens and the wonderful stories that he wrote.

\_\_\_\_\_ Repeat after me: We are thankful for the gift of a free education, and for our teachers who help us to read, write and learn.

\_\_\_\_\_ Repeat after me: We will work hard in our lessons and use our education to have successful and happy lives.

\_\_\_\_\_ Repeat after me: We will think of others and not just ourselves.

\_\_\_\_\_ Thank you for coming to our show. We hope you learned some new information about Charles Dickens!