



A
CHRISTMAS
Carol

STUDY GUIDE

SYRACUSE
stage
50th

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DEPARTMENT
OF DRAMA
S Syracuse University
College of Visual
& Performing Arts

PRODUCTION OF

A CHRISTMAS Carol

BY

Charles Dickens

ADAPTED BY

Richard Hellesen and David DeBerry

DIRECTED BY

Melissa Rain Anderson

MUSIC DIRECTION BY

Brian Cimmet

CHOREOGRAPHED BY

Andrea Leigh-Smith

SCENIC DESIGNER Kimberly Powers	COSTUME DESIGNER David Kay Mickelsen	LIGHTING DESIGNER Lonnie Rafael Alcaraz	SOUND DESIGNER Jacqueline R. Herter
WIG DESIGNER Ryan Moller	ORCHESTRATIONS BY Gregg Coffin	DIALECT COACH Blake Segal	2 RING CIRCUS Joshua Dean Ben Franklin
ASSISTANT MUSIC DIRECTOR Abel Searor	PRODUCTION STAGE MANAGER Stuart Plymnesser*	ASSISTANT STAGE MANAGER Bianca Mercado-Boller*	CASTING Bass/Valle Casting
Robert Hupp <i>Artistic Director</i>	Jill A. Anderson <i>Managing Director</i>	Melissa Crespo <i>Associate Artistic Director</i>	Kyle Bass <i>Resident Playwright</i>

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November 24 - December 31, 2023

NYS LEARNING STANDARDS FOR THE ARTS – THEATER

5th TH:Re8.1.5

a. Connect personal experiences to theater as a participant or observer

6th TH:Re7.1.6

a. Describe and record personal reactions to artistic choices.

7th TH:Re7.1.7

a. Compare recorded personal and peer reactions to artistic choices.

8th TH:Re9.1.8

b. Articulate the aesthetics of technical elements in a drama or theater work.

HS Proficient TH:Re9.1.HSI

b. Critique the aesthetics of technical elements in a drama or theater work.

HS Advanced TH:Re9.1.HSIII

c. Debate the connection between a drama or theater work and contemporary issues that may affect audiences.

EDUCATION LETTER

Dear Educators,

The best way of learning is learning while you're having fun. Theatre provides the opportunity for us to connect with more than just our own story, it allows us to find ourselves in other people's lives and grow beyond our own boundaries. While times are different, we are still excited to share with you new theatrical pieces through live and/or pre-recorded means. We're the only species on the planet who make stories. It is the stories that we leave behind that define us. Giving students the power to watch stories and create their own is part of our lasting impact on the world. And the stories we choose to hear and learn from now are even more vital. Stories bring us together, even when we must stay apart. Stories are our connection to the world and each other. We invite you and your students to engage with the stories we tell as a starting point for you and them to create their own.

Sincerely,

Kate Laissle, and Theorri London



Kate Laissle
DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION



Theorri London
COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT
+ EDUCATION COORDINATOR

SYNOPSIS:

Ebenezer Scrooge is a very selfish old man. He's made a living as a moneylender with his business partner Jacob Marley, who is now dead. Scrooge lives alone in a gloomy building, in a gloomy room, with a gloomy attitude. He's cruel to his employee, Bob Cratchit, who works in the cold building with Scrooge, who refuses to let Bob work by a fire to warm him up.

It's the Christmas season, and Ebenezer Scrooge does not like Christmas. Even though he has more than enough money, he refuses to donate to charity. Scrooge's nephew, Fred, is the only family who comes to visit him, and invites Scrooge to dinner. Scrooge's bad attitude drives him away when Scrooge says that love is the only thing more ridiculous than Christmas.

Scrooge starts seeing the face of his dead business partner, Marley, which scares him, but he keeps on with his night, warming himself by a fire. He believes the face of Marley is just his imagination. That is, until doors begin opening and closing by themselves, and the building shakes. The ghost of Marley appears, wearing heavy chains, and warns Scrooge that if he doesn't change his ways, Scrooge will share the same fate. He tells Scrooge that he will be visited by three spirits over the next three nights.

The first day passes quickly for Scrooge, and soon enough he's visited by The Ghost of Christmas Past. She shows him a vision of himself as a child, who liked to read, but was depressed. His sister, Fan, brought him a lot of joy, but

Scrooge tells Christmas Past that Fan has died, leaving behind her son and Scrooge's nephew, Fred. Christmas Past then shows Scrooge a vision of himself as a younger man with his old boss Fezziwig at a Christmas party. Fezziwig is a good boss, sharing his food and time in celebration with his employees. At the Christmas party, Belle arrives. Scrooge and Belle were in love in their younger years, and eventually married, until Belle divorced him because of Scrooge's selfishness.

Next, The Ghost of Christmas Present arrives. He shows Scrooge a vision of the streets he walks every day, and Scrooge sees for himself just how joyful the town is during Christmas. Because Scrooge had always focused on the negative, he never noticed how beautiful the celebrations were. He then shows Scrooge the Cratchit home: his employee Bob, Bob's wife Mrs. Cratchit, and their children: Martha, Belinda, Peter, and Tiny Tim. Tim is very sick, but the family is still filled with joy on Christmas. Christmas Present also shows Scrooge what Fred having dinner with his wife and some townsfolk, the same dinner Scrooge refused to attend. At the party, Fred says he feels sorry for Scrooge because he is so unhappy. When Christmas Present is done showing Scrooge the visions, Scrooge only has one question: Will Tiny Tim survive his sickness? Christmas Present tells him that if nothing changes about the present, Tiny Tim will die, because the Cratchits don't have enough money to care for him .

Finally, Scrooge is approached by The Ghost of Christmas Yet to Come who shows him a vision of the future. Scrooge has died, and townspeople who owed him money cry in relief, that the moneylender who will replace Scrooge will be less

cruel. Meanwhile, several people take Scrooge's things from his house to sell them. Christmas Yet to Come shows Scrooge his own gravestone, which terrifies Scrooge, and he promises to be a better person.

Scrooge wakes up from these visions, in his own room, in the present, on Christmas Day. He's thankful for the sun shining through his window, and the townspeople he speaks to. He's so happy to be alive that he buys the Cratchit family a Christmas turkey, is kind to his customers, and goes to Fred's Christmas dinner. Fred is very happy to have him there. The next day, when Bob Cratchit comes to work, Scrooge raises Bob's pay, knowing he needs the money for his family's wellbeing. Tiny Tim lives, and Scrooge becomes like a second father to him. Scrooge lives his life with joy from now on, caring for the people around him. -**Alethea Shirilan-Howlett**

MEET THE DIRECTOR **MELISSA RAIN ANDERSON**



Cruz Shakespeare; *The Book of Will* at Phoenix Theatre Company and *Romeo and Juliet* at Redhouse Arts Center. Upcoming work includes *The Play That Goes Wrong* at Cleveland Playhouse and *Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat* at Alabama Shakespeare Festival. Melissa lives in New York City with her husband, actor Jim Poulos. Melissa is a proud member of Stage Directors and Choreographers, SAG-AFTRA and Actor's Equity Association. Please visit Melissarainanderson.com

Melissa Rain Anderson (she/her) (Director) is happy to be back at Syracuse Stage where she directed last year's Holiday production of Disney's *The Little Mermaid* as well as *The Wolves*. Melissa most recently directed Agatha Christie's *Murder on the Orient Express* at Pioneer Theatre Company. Selected credits include: the Regional Premiere of *The Play that Goes Wrong* and *The Wolves* at The Repertory Theater of St. Louis; *Macbeth*, *Big River* and *The Cocoanuts* at Utah Shakespeare Festival; *A Christmas Carol* at Denver Center Theatre Company; *In the Heights*, *HAIR*, *La Cage Aux Folles*, *A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum*, *Spamalot* and *The 25th Annual Putnam County Spelling Bee* at Geva Theatre Center; *Dial M for Murder* at Theatresquared; *All is Calm* at Alabama Shakespeare Festival; *RII* at Santa

MEET SOUND DESIGNER JACQUELINE HERTER



Lesson Before Dying, Copenhagen, Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?, Inherit the Wind, and Big River.

Jacqueline R. Herter (Sound Designer) has served as resident sound designer at Syracuse Stage and Syracuse University Department of Drama since 1997. She shifted and combined theatrical design with video/film design for the 20/21 season. Herter has designed for Indiana Repertory Theatre, Studio Arena, the Wilma, Geva, Round House, Shakespeare Santa Cruz, Virginia Stage, and the Hangar Theater as well as other theatres across the nation. Some favorite designs have been: *Annapurna, Beauty and the Beast, Next to Normal, Mary Poppins, Nine, Hairspray, The Overwhelming, Caroline, or Change, The Miracle Worker, The Wolves, The Day Room, The Christians, Radio Golf, Parade, The Diary of Anne Frank, The Lieutenant of Inishmore, Red Noses, The Real Thing, Hedwig and the Angry Inch, M. Butterfly, A Raisin in the Sun, A*

MEET SCENIC DESIGNER KIMBERLY POWERS



Theatre Company. Kimberly has also been a freelance scenic artist since 2000, and has also worked professionally as a muralist, props master, event designer and coordinator, graphic designer, and exhibit designer. She occasionally teaches in the theater department at The University of Arkansas and is a proud member of United Scenic Artists, Local 829. Her work is available to view at kvpowersdesign.com and on Instagram @[kvpowersdesign](https://www.instagram.com/kvpowersdesign).

Kimberly Powers (Scenic Designer) is an Arkansas-based set designer and artist who is excited to return to Syracuse Stage, after designing *The Little Mermaid* with the glorious team last season. Regionally, her work has been seen at Lyric Theatre of Oklahoma (OK), Skylight Music Theater (WI), Arkansas Repertory Theatre (AR), Florida Repertory Theatre (FL), TheatreSquared (AR), Virginia Repertory Theatre (VA), Cape Fear Regional Theatre (NC), Charleston Stage (SC), Stages (TX), Red Mountain Theatre (AL), Casa Mañana (TX), and Northern Stage (VT), Stages (TX), Orlando Rep (FL), among other venues. She was the Resident Set Designer and Props Manager for Ocean State Theatre Company's inaugural season and Resident Set Designer for five years at Ohio Light Opera, as well as the first Design Assistant at The Denver Center

MEET LIGHTING DESIGNER LONNIE ALCARAZ



Great River Shakespeare Festival and Ballet Repertory Theatre. He is also an Associate Artistic Director at the Great River Shakespeare Festival. He is a member of the United Scenic Artists, Local 829/International Alliance of Theatrical Stage Employees. His complete design portfolio can be found at www.lradesigns.com.

Lonnie Rafael Alcaraz (he, him) (Lighting Designer) is a professor at the University of California, Irvine, where he is the head of the lighting program. He has designed *Disney's The Little Mermaid*, *Peter Pan*, *Deathtrap*, *White Christmas*, and *The Miracle Worker* previously at Syracuse Stage and is delighted to be back for *A Christmas Carol*. Recent designs include *A Raisin in the Sun*, *American Mariachi* and *La Havana Madrid* for South Coast Repertory, *Anatomy of a Home* and *Interview the Dead* for Transversal Theatre Company in Amsterdam, *A Christmas Carol* at the Denver Center, *All is Calm* at the Alabama Shakespeare Festival, and *Mojada* at Oregon Shakespeare Festival and Portland Center Stage. He is an associate artist at South Coast Repertory and Cornerstone Theater Company and is the Resident Lighting Designer at the

MEET COSTUME DESIGNER DAVID KAY MICHAELSON



been a proud member of USA 829 for 32 years. Originally from Canby, Oregon, David now makes his home in Palm Springs, California.

David Kay Mickelsen (Costume Designer) has designed over 500 productions at many theaters, including the Guthrie Theater, Denver Center Theatre Company, The Cleveland Play House, Cincinnati Playhouse in the Park, Ford's Theatre, Williamstown Theatre Festival, Berkeley Repertory Theatre, The Geffen, Pasadena and Laguna Playhouses, The Old Globe, Studio Arena Theatre, The Repertory Theatre of St. Louis and The Oregon, Utah, Colorado and Illinois Shakespeare Festivals. He has a B.A. from Western Oregon University, and an M.F.A. from California Institute of the Arts, and has

PRE SHOW ACTIVITIES

PRE SHOW QUESTIONS

What do you know about *A Christmas Carol*?

Have you seen different versions of *A Christmas Carol*?

Do you celebrate a holiday during winter? What holiday do you celebrate?

Who is Charles Dickens?

Have you read any of his other books?

What do you know about London in the Victorian era?

POST SHOW ACTIVITIES

POST SHOW QUESTIONS

Compare and contrast the world of *A Christmas Carol* to the present day. How are the living conditions different? How are working conditions different? How do you think people would react to Scrooge if he owned a business today?

Are the themes in *A Christmas Carol* still relevant today?

A Christmas Carol has been adapted into many different versions. What makes the story so adaptable? What elements can change to keep the story the same? What elements need to stay the same? How would you cast your own version of *A Christmas Carol*?

POST SHOW REVIEW

What is the moment you will most remember from the play?

Did you believe the actors? Which actors were most successful in their roles? What made them successful?

Could you find a theme in the production? What was it? How did the production show you that theme?

What did you think of the set? How did it add to the storytelling?

What did you think of the costumes? How did they add to the storytelling?

How did the lighting affect the mood of the storytelling?

Did this play have any observations about people, society, relationships, or anything else?

Would you recommend someone else to see this play? Why or why not?

Think, Pair, Share: Students will answer questions present in the post show review. Afterwards, students will be grouped into pairs and to discuss their answers to the questions in the post show review. The instructor will then lead a full group discussion on the questions in the post show review, and the many different experiences students had during the production.

CHARLES DICKENS



Charles Dickens Public Domain Wikimedia Commons

Charles Dickens was born in Portsmouth, England on February 7, 1812, to John and Elizabeth Dickens. John Dickens was a naval clerk whose low pay could barely support his family. In 1822, he was transferred to London, where the family struggled. When Dickens was twelve, his father was consigned to Marshalsea prison, where people unable to pay their debts were kept until their creditors were paid. Most of the family joined him there. However, young Charles left school and went to work pasting labels on boxes in a shoe polish factory to help pay his father's debts. He returned to school when his father received an inheritance and was released from prison.

Dickens once again had to leave school at fifteen when the family was evicted from their home for not paying the rent. This time, he found a job as a clerk in an attorney's office. He learned shorthand and worked as a reporter in the London courts. He published his own observations in periodicals under the family nickname, Boz. The pieces were collected in a book titled *Sketches by Boz* in 1836. The same year he married Catherine Hogarth. They had ten children.

His next literary endeavor, *The Pickwick Papers*, was a series of stories intended to accompany featured illustrations. His comic stories were more popular than the pictures, and Dickens's career as a writer was assured. At this time, novels were often published in installments in periodicals. While whole books might be out of the budget for many, a portion of a novel in thirty-two pages with two illustrations could be had for a shilling (around five cents).

As his writing career advanced, Dickens edited the periodical *Bentley's Miscellany*. His first novel, *Oliver Twist* was serialized in *Bentley's Miscellany* in 1838 to great success. He soon left *Bentley's Miscellany*, and over the next few years published weekly magazines of his own to showcase his work. In 1842, Dickens, now quite famous, set out on his first lecture tour of the United States. He observed the U.S. with amusement and annoyance, which he satirized in both *American Notes* and *The Life and Adventures of Martin Chuzzlewit*. In his enormously popular talks in the U.S., he spoke out passionately against slavery.

Before publishing *A Christmas Carol*, Dickens experienced a drop in his income. He conceived of *A Christmas Carol* as a stand-alone book that would put him back on his feet. However, it was produced in such an expensive deluxe edition that it did not immediately make him any money.

With the publication of *David Copperfield*, (1849) Dickens gained superstar status. *Copperfield*, which told of the daily life of a bright young man whose trials and brushes with poverty resembled those of the author in many ways, took England and indeed the entire English-speaking world by storm. The marriage of Dickens and Catherine became increasingly tense, and the restless author became enamored of a young actress by the name of Ellen Ternan. He and Catherine legally separated in 1858. Dickens and Ellen remained close for the rest of his life.



Charles Dickens Public Domain Wikimedia Commons

Dickens wrote twenty novels, among them such classic as *Nicholas Nickleby*, *Hard Times*, *A Tale of Two Cities*, *Bleak House*, *The Old Curiosity Shop*, and *Great Expectations*, which along with *David Copperfield* is considered a second psychological autobiography. Pip, the novel's hero, guilt-ridden and scarred by a childhood event, is uneasy in the face of his adult success.

In 1865, Dickens and Ellen Ternan were in a train accident. While he was not seriously injured, this marked the beginning of his physical decline. He suffered several strokes and died in 1870. His final novel, *The Mystery of Edwin Drood* was unfinished on his desk. Almost from the beginning of his fame, Dickens work was adapted for the stage. This was natural as the author's own love of the theatre was evident. As a young man, he toyed with becoming an actor. He wrote several plays and participated in amateur theatre. In his prime, his public lectures included readings of his work. He would call up the voices and gestures of the vivid characters he had created. His last public reading before he died included *A Christmas Carol*. -Information taken from work by Len Fonte

A DICKENSIAN TIMELINE

- February 7, 1812 Charles Dickens is born in Kent.
- 1823 The Dickens family moves to Cheapside, London; Charles is kept out of school to save money.
- 1824 Charles is sent to the boot-blackening factory. Two weeks later his father goes to debtor's prison; the rest of the family, except Charles, follows soon after. Charles continues to work after his family leaves prison.
- 1824-25 Charles returns to school.
- 1827-30 Charles becomes an office boy in an attorney's office, learns shorthand and eventually becomes a freelance reporter.
- 1830 He obtains a "reader's ticket" to the British Museum; becomes a staff reporter for *The Mirror of Parliament*.
- 1830 Begins seeing Maria Beadnell; her family does not approve and she strings him along until he finally breaks it off. She is said to be a model for *David Copperfield's* Dora.
- 1833 Publishes his first London sketch in *Monthly Magazine*.
- 1836 *Sketches by Boz* published.
- 1836 Charles marries Catherine Hogarth.
- 1836-37 *The Pickwick Papers* and *Oliver Twist* appear in monthly installments simultaneously. With *Pickwick* finished and *Oliver Twist* half written, he begins *Nicholas Nickleby*.
- 1841 Publication of *The Old Curiosity Shop* in *Master Humphrey's Clock* pushed that magazine's sales to a 100,000 per week.
- 1842 First American tour.
- 1843 His first Christmas story, *A Christmas Carol*, sells 6,000 copies the first day.

- 1843-44 *Martin Chuzzlewit*
- 1843 Dickens begins his private theatrical productions; public readings of *A Christmas Carol*, *Cricket on the Hearth* and other works begin.
- 1849 *David Copperfield*
- 1852 *Bleak House*
- 1854 *Hard Times*
- 1857 *Little Dorrit*
- 1858 Catherine Hogarth Dickens moves out of the Dickens household, having withstood Charles' flirtations with other women and neglect for many years.
- 1859 *A Tale of Two Cities*
- 1861 *Great Expectations*
- 1864-65 *Our Mutual Friend*
- 1867 Second American tour.
- 1860s Public readings supplant writing new novels.
- 1868 His health becomes increasingly delicate. Doctors counsel him that he is risking paralysis and a stroke.
- 1869 He begins *Edwin Drood*.
- March 15, 1870 Last public reading.
- June 1870 He moves to the Kent countryside, where he dies, June 9, surrounded by his children.
- June 14, 1870 Buried in Poet's Corner, Westminster Abbey.

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13 VICTORIAN ERA FACTS

1. The Victorian Era is the period between 1820 and 1914 in British history.
2. Queen Victoria was the monarch during this time. She is the second longest-ruling monarch in British history.
3. The British Empire became the largest empire in the world during the Victorian Era.
4. In 1834, slavery was ended in the British Empire with the Emancipation Act. However, only children under the age of six were immediately freed. Everyone else was forced to work as unpaid apprentices for their former owners until 1838. When enslaved people were actually freed, the former owners received \$20 million in government support. The formerly enslaved people received nothing.
5. In 1837, inventor William Fothergill Cooke and scientist Charles Wheatstone sent the first electric telegraph.
6. 1838- The London to Birmingham Railway opens. It was the first rail line in London.
7. 1839-The Daguerreotype becomes available for public use. The Daguerreotype is one of the first types of photography.
8. 1845-The Irish Potato Famine starts. A mold caused a disease to spread through the potato crop. This destroyed half the potato crop in the first year, and around 75% over the next seven years. Many Irish people were dependent on potatoes as a food source. The Potato Famine caused around 1 million people to die from starvation and another million people to leave Ireland.
9. 1848-The first Public Health Act is passed. Cholera was a big problem in Britain. It spread through drinking water that was infected with raw sewage. The first outbreak happened in 1831. The second outbreak in 1848 led to the passing of the Public Health Act. It created local groups that were responsible for disposing of

sewage and improving drinking water supplies to cities.

10. 1863-The 1st railway on the London Underground, the Metropolitan Railway, opens . It was the 1st underground railway in the world.
11. 1869-The Suez Canal opens. The Suez Canal is a 120-mile man-made waterway that connects the Mediterranean Sea to the Indian Ocean. It created a direct shipping route from Europe to Asia. It took 10 years to build and used mostly enslaved labor. People who worked on the canal often died from many diseases including cholera. The Suez Canal is still important to international trade today.
12. 1870-Joseph Lister introduced a system of antiseptics or using chemicals to destroy germs that cause infections. Before Lister's antiseptics system, people often died of infections after surgery. Doctors of the time did not know how to solve this problem. Lister decided to apply the Germ Theory of Disease to infections after surgery. He used a chemical called carbolic acid to kill germs on surgical tools and on the hands of the surgical staff. After the system was introduced, the number of infections after surgery fell.

Germ Theory of Disease-the scientific theory that specific microorganisms or organisms too small to be seen by the human eye are the cause of specific diseases.

13. 1880-The Elementary Education Act of 1880 makes school attendance mandatory for children from ages 5 to 10. Before this act, many young children did not attend school. To help their families, they would work in factories or take other jobs to make money. Children often worked long hours for low pay. This act helped to reduce the number of hours children could be required to work.

CHRISTMAS CUSTOMS & WINTER CELEBRATIONS

Christmas, New Year's and the winter solstice are celebrated all over the world. St. Lucy's Day, or *Luciadagen*, is celebrated on December 13 and marks the official beginning of the Christmas season in Scandinavian countries. St. Lucy was betrothed to a pagan nobleman against her will, so she put out her eyes on the shortest, darkest day of the year. But God restored her vision and she became the symbol for the preciousness of light. Lucy means "light" and she appears in a shining white robe crowned by a radiant halo of candles set into a metal crown covered with lingonberry leaves. The oldest daughter of the family usually assumes the "Lucia" role, followed by her entourage of younger members of the family. They serve the family on the morning of December 13 with a tray of coffee and saffron buns.



*Christmas Card-Adele Soderberg
(Public Domain Wikimedia Commons)*

December 16 opens the nine-day *Posada* season in Mexico. The *Posadas* re-enact the story of Mary and Joseph searching for shelter the night Christ was born. Singers/actors set out along the street to ask for shelter in various homes and finally find their kindly "innkeeper" who invites them in to feast.



Posada Celebration by the Casa del Migrante in the city of Saltillo, Coahuila state, Mexico, Dec. 20, 2022 (EPA Photo)



Photo from wineandtravelitaly.com

In Italy, the day of Epiphany (January 6) is the day of gift-giving. The "Befana," a benevolent old witch, comes down the chimney to fill children's shoes with "goodies" or, in retribution for some misdeed, a few pieces of charcoal.

Some festivals celebrate events other than Christmas. *Dewali* is a November Hindu festival. It is a week of festivities illuminated by lamps, fireworks and bonfires, and includes gifts and festive meals. Families clean their homes and draw elaborate designs (*alpanas*) on their floors with colored powder to welcome the Hindu goddess of wealth and prosperity. They set up little clay lamps (*diyas*) on courtyards, windows and roofs because *Lakshmi* won't bless a home that isn't lit up to greet her.



Dewali Lamps (Photo by Phadke09 licensed by CC BY-SA 4.0)



Menorah with donuts on the side (Photo by YB13D licensed by CC BY-SA 4.0)

The Jewish *Hanukkah* is celebrated for eight days that fall somewhere between November 25 and December 26. *Hanukkah* commemorates the successful rebellion of the Jews against the Syrians in 162 BC. After their victory, they cleansed and rededicated the Temple in Jerusalem and re-lit the Holy Perpetual Light. There was only enough oil to keep the lamp burning for one day and it would take eight days to get more. Miraculously, the oil lasted for the eight days. So, *Hanukkah* is also known as the Feast of Lights. It is celebrated by lighting a candelabrum called a *Menorah*, which holds eight candles, plus a ninth, the *shamash* or "server" used to light all the others. Gifts are given, especially to children.



Chinese New Year decorations along New Bridge Road, Singapore. (Public Domain Wikimedia Commons)

The Chinese New Year begins in the 12th month of the Chinese year. A rigorous housecleaning is done both materially and spiritually. Dirt is thrown out the door and with it goes evil. The Chinese family celebrates the hearth god on the 24th day of the 12th month. The family gives him a farewell dinner so that he can only say good things about them to the other gods. His image is set upon a chair

of bamboo stalks then set afire so that the god rides up to heaven. People buy each other the traditional New Year's gifts. The holiday ends with the Parade of the Golden Dragon, symbolizing strength that marks the end of one year and the beginning of another.



2003 Kwanzaa celebration with Ron Karenga (Public Domain Wikimedia Commons)

Kwanzaa was established in 1966 by Maulana Karenga. It is a time for African Americans to reaffirm their culture. Kwanzaa comes from a Swahili word meaning "first." Occurring annually from December 26 to January 1, Kwanzaa is a time of fasting, feasting and self-examination. It is

celebrated with the other seasonal holidays.

The celebration of Kwanzaa is guided by the Nguzo Saba or Seven Principles: unity, self-determination, collective work and responsibility, cooperative economics, purpose, creativity and faith. The symbols are fruits and vegetables, the placemat on which they are arranged and the seven branched candlestick that holds the red, black and green candles that are lit each evening. There are also the ears of corn representing each child in the home, the communal chalice from which a ceremonial libation

is poured, and the gifts. It is a family holiday where one is free to improvise on the music, food and language.

The winter observances described above, have in common a rededication celebrated with light, food and gifts during the dark time of the northern hemisphere; these signify an end of the year and a rebirth or new beginning.

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READING LIST

THE LEGEND OF THE POINSETTA

-Tomie dePaola

In Mexico, the poinsettia is called “flor de la Nochebuena,” flower of the Holy Night. At Christmastime, the flower blooms and flourishes, the exquisite red stars lighting the countryside. This Mexican legend tells how the poinsettia came to be, through a little girl’s unselfish gift to the Christ Child.

Beloved Newbery honor-winning author and Caldecott honor-winning illustrator Tomie dePaola has embraced the legend using his own special feeling for Christmas. His glorious paintings capture not only the brilliant colors of Mexico and its art but the excitement of the children preparing for Christmas and the hope of Lucida, who comes to see what makes a gift truly beautiful. -[Goodreads](#)

A YEAR FULL OF CELEBRATIONS AND FESTIVALS: OVER 90 FUN AND FABULOUS FESTIVALS FROM AROUND THE WORLD!

-Claire Grace, Christopher Corr (Illustrator)

Countless different festivals are celebrated all over the world throughout the year. Some are national holidays, celebrated for religious and cultural reasons, or to mark an important date in history, while others are just for fun. Give thanks and tuck into a delicious meal with friends and family at Thanksgiving, get caught up in a messy tomato fight in Spain at La Tomatina, add a splash of color to your day at the Holi festival of colors and celebrate the life and achievements of Martin Luther King Jr. on Martin Luther King Jr. Day.

With fact-filled text accompanied by beautifully bright illustrations from the wonderfully talented Chris Corr, prepare yourself for a journey as we travel around the world celebrating and uncovering a visual feast of culture. -[Goodreads](#)

SHARE SOME KINDNESS, BRING SOME LIGHT

-Apryl Stott

A little girl and her friend Bear learn the true meaning of selfless

kindness in this sweet, stunningly illustrated debut picture book.

Bear is sad. All the other animals think he’s mean because he’s so big. But his human friend, Coco, offers to help him. Coco shares her grandmother’s advice: “When life gets dark as winter’s night, share some kindness, bring some light.”

They decide to bake cookies to “share some kindness” and make lanterns to “bring some light.” But when the cookies and lanterns don’t work, they must look for another way to win over the other animals. And while they’re at it, Coco and Bear just might discover that kindness is a gift that only comes from the heart. -[Goodreads](#)

SOURCES

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2023/2024 EDUCATIONAL OUTREACH SPONSORS

Syracuse Stage is committed to providing students with rich theatre experiences that explore and examine what it is to be human. Research shows that children who participate in or are exposed to the arts show higher academic achievement, stronger self esteem, and improved ability to plan and work toward a future goal. Many students in our community have their first taste of live theatre through Syracuse Stage’s outreach programs. Last season more than 21,000 students from across New York attended or participated in the Bank of America Children’s Tour, artsEmerging, the Young Playwrights Festival, Backstory, Young Adult Council, and/or our Student Matinee Program. We gratefully acknowledge the corporations and foundations who support our commitment to in-depth arts education for our community.

The logo for Wegmans, featuring the brand name in a stylized, cursive script font.