A Christmas Carol

KS2 Drama performance

Teachers resources
Primary programme
Contents

National Curriculum links and session description 1
Timetable 2
Practical guidelines 3
Teachers’ notes on Victorian Christmas 4 – 5
Teachers’ notes on Dickens and working children 6 – 7
Pre-visit activities 8 – 9
Follow-up activities 10
Planning your journey 11
Curriculum links

KS2 History, Literacy and Citizenship

The aim of this session is for pupils to experience a theatrical performance of the Dickens classic. It links to developing historical understanding of life in Victorian London (QCA units 11 and 12).

Learning objectives include gaining an understanding of the social, historical and cultural context of *A Christmas Carol* and the moral behind the story.

The gallery visit will develop investigative skills as pupils study objects and photographs as sources of evidence. Pupils’ understanding of chronology will be developed through the layout of the galleries, which encourage consideration the changes that occurred during the Victorian period.

Session description

The session takes place in the atmospheric Pleasure Gardens. It is an immersive musical experience that brings the Dickens’ classic to life. You and your pupils will be asked to join in singing along to original tunes.

The production is acted by two actors who play a number of characters in this Christmas tale of ghosts from the past, present and future, and a miser’s chance to change his ways and obtain redemption before it’s too late!

Gallery time

You will be allocated half an hour of self-directed time in the Dickens’ London exhibition, plus an hour in the Expanding City, Victorian Walk and People’s City galleries.

To ensure that the galleries do not become overcrowded, please keep to the times you have been allocated in each gallery.

To help you and your class to get the best possible educational value from your visit, we suggest some pre- and post-visit activities within this pack and offer a selection of activity sheets that can be used in the galleries.

Gallery activity sheets for Expanding City, Victorian Walk and People’s City galleries are offered in Microsoft Word format so that teachers can adapt them to the needs of their own class if they wish. You will need to photocopy enough for each group prior to your visit, and provide clipboards and pencils.

The *Dickens and London* exhibition opens on 9 December, so activity sheets will not be developed in time for your visit. We suggest you set pupils some open questions to investigate during their time in this exhibition.

We recommend teachers make a preparation visit. Free entry is available for teachers, but must be booked in advance on 020 7001 9844 quoting your booking reference.
Timetable

Christmas Carol

The session will run once only and at the times stated below so please arrive on time. There will be schools booked for the other sessions and you will not be able to overrun your allocated time.

Your group has been allocated ONE of the following session times; please check your confirmation letter:

Group 1
10am   Arrival
10.30 – 11am   Visit to Victorian Walk
11 – 12pm   A Christmas Carol performance
12 – 12.30pm   Lunch
12.30 – 1pm   Visit to Dickens and London exhibition
1 – 1.30pm   Visit to Expanding City gallery
1.30 – 2pm   Visit to People’s City gallery

Group 2
10am   Arrival
10.30 – 11am   Visit to Dickens and London exhibition
11 – 11.30am   Visit to Expanding City gallery
11.30 – 12pm   Visit to People’s City gallery
12 – 12.30pm   Lunch
12.30 – 1pm   Visit to Victorian Walk
1 – 2pm   A Christmas Carol performance
Practical guidelines

Arrival, cloakroom and toilets
When you arrive at the Museum please check in and show your confirmation form at the information desk at the main entrance. You will be directed to the Clore Learning Centre where you will be able to leave your coats and bags and go to the toilet before entering the galleries. Please do not leave valuables in the cloakroom area.

Lunch
You will be allocated a 30 minute slot when you arrive at the Museum. There is no eating or drinking in the galleries, so please ensure that all food stuffs are left in the Lunch Space.

SEN provision
The Museum is fully accessible. Parking is available for SEN groups. Please contact our SEN Programme Manager to discuss any specific needs on 020 7814 5549 or at SEN@museumoflondon.org.uk

Shop
The shop sells a variety of books and products to support learning, as well as pocket money items. Please request a time slot in the shop by calling 0870 444 3850 and quoting your reference number. If you would prefer the shop offer a time saving goody bag service at great value. For further details contact the shop by email at shop@museumoflondon.org.uk or call 020 7814 5600.

Photography
Photography is included as part of this session. You are also welcome to take photographs within the Museum galleries without flash or tripod use. These images may only be reproduced for personal or educational purposes, which include reproducing the image as a classroom teaching aid or as part of a school project. Any publication of the image for any other purpose is forbidden, which includes publication on any website. As an alternative pictures of many of our key objects are available to download from the Picture Bank on our website, www.museumoflondon.org.uk/picturebank. Postcards and posters can be purchased from the shop and prints may be purchased from our on demand print website www.museumoflondonprints.com

Risk assessments
It is the responsibility of the group leader to carry out a risk assessment and teachers are encouraged to make a planning visit and to carry out their own assessment. The Museum makes regular assessments of sessions and public spaces and this document is available on request, but this is only for teachers’ information and does not constitute an official risk assessment.

Organising your group
Split your class into small groups for working in the galleries and visiting the shop. Please ensure that you have at least one adult for every six pupils and that the adults accompany them at all times. Please ensure the children know the following information:
- work quietly – other groups and members of the public will be using the Museum
- please do not lean on the glass cases
- only use pencils in the galleries.
Teachers’ notes on Victorian Christmas

Origins

The Victorian Santa Claus was a combination of both the pagan Father Christmas of English tradition, who was part of the old midwinter festivals, and the Christian St Nicholas or Sinter Klaas. From 1870 Dutch settlers in America told stories of reindeer, sleighs and toys for children. These stories travelled back to England and remain part of Christmas folklore even today. The idea of Santa coming down the chimney originated in Lapland where igloos had only one hole in the roof to serve both as a chimney and an entrance.

In England and America the height of the festive season was the 25th December, ‘Christmas Day,’ but in continental Europe presents were exchanged on December 6th ‘Saint Nicholas day’, on Christmas Eve or at Epiphany, which fell on January the 6th. On Boxing Day workmen and traders were given a Christmas box by their employers.

Christmas trees and decorations

Prince Albert introduced the German tradition of Christmas trees into English homes. Trees were adorned with real candles that were lit on Christmas Eve and New Year’s Eve. Rooms were adorned with oranges stuffed with cloves, holly and ivy, mistletoe and home-made paper decorations.

Stockings

Christmas stockings were hung up on Christmas Eve from the 1870s. As the tradition became popular even fairly poor children were likely to receive a penny, nuts or an orange in their stockings. In other parts of Europe children used shoes or slippers instead.

The stocking tradition is believed to have originated from St Nicholas in the 4th century. The story is that he took pity on three girls who did not have dowries and tossed bags of gold through their window, the gold landed in their stockings that were hanging out to dry.

Christmas fun and games

Favourite games included:

- blind man’s bluff
- charades (mime a phrase or title and see if others can guess what it is)
- hide the slipper

Teachers resources

Primary programme
• magic lantern slide shows (a pre runner to the Christmas video)
• families putting on their own plays or telling stories.

Music

Many wealthier families had a piano and would sing and play songs together. Carols and Christmas songs included:
‘Jingle Bells’, ‘We Three Kings,’ ‘Once in Royal David’s City’ and ‘Hark the Herald Angels Sing’, written by Mendelssohn. He was a popular composer of the time and friend of Queen Victoria. In 1884 the children’s favourite ‘Away in a Manger’ first appeared in America.

Thanks to Prince Albert, the renewed interest in carols meant that older, traditional carols were sung again, such as the ‘Coventry Carol’, ‘Oh Come All Ye Faithful’ and ‘Oh Little Town of Bethlehem’.

Crackers

In the 1840s the confectioner, Tom Smith, sold his sugared almonds inside a twist of paper with a motto or love message (which led to the jokes and gifts put in crackers today). Tom then adapted the techniques used in making Chinese firecrackers to make them pop loudly when they were opened. Later small toys and paper crowns were included. And so the Christmas cracker was born. Silhouette profiles of well known political characters were a popular decoration for crackers.

Christmas cards

Christmas cards also appeared in the 1840s, but they were very expensive. By the 1870s the printed card was sold at an affordable price and the special Christmas stamp was only a halfpenny.

Food

In the south of England and Germany the goose was favoured on Christmas Day, but in the north they ate beef. The meat would be accompanied by Brussels sprouts, turnips, potatoes, bread sauce, stuffing and cranberry or apple sauce. Queen Victoria ate roast swan with her family and Henry VIII is thought to have been the first British monarch to eat a turkey!
Teachers’ notes on Dickens and working children

Charles Dickens’ life

Charles Dickens was born on 7 February 1812 in Landport, Portsmouth. His father John was a clerk in the Navy Pay Office. When Charles was 5 years old, John moved the family to Chatham and worked in the naval dockyard. It was at Chatham that Charles experienced his happiest childhood memories. His father was later transferred back to the London office and moved his family to Camden Town in 1822.

John Dickens, always living beyond his means, was imprisoned for debt in Southwark in 1824. Twelve year old Charles was removed from school and sent to work at a boot-blackening factory earning six shillings a week to help support the family. Charles considered this period to be the most terrible time in his life and would later write:

‘I wonder how I could have been so easily cast away at such an age.’

His childhood poverty and sense of abandonment was a heavy influence on Dickens' later views on social reform and the world he would create through his fiction.

Dickens' early books were first published in monthly instalments in journals. Rather like today’s soap operas, where viewers become familiar with the characters and tune in each week to follow their adventures. Victorian readers would queue up to get the latest instalment of *Oliver Twist* and *The Old Curiosity Shop*. When the character ‘Little Nell’ died, readers from London to New York were in floods of tears. Dickens began his career as a journalist, and after learning shorthand, he could take down conversations and speeches word for word!

Dickens wrote 15 major novels and countless short stories and articles before his death on June 9, 1870. The most famous include *Oliver Twist*, *David Copperfield*, *Nicholas Nickleby*, *The Old Curiosity Shop*, and *A Christmas Carol*.

A Christmas Carol

Dickens began writing his ‘Little Carol’ in October 1843, finishing it by the end of November in time to be published for Christmas. In the story Dickens uses supernatural characters to warn the miser, Scrooge, of what will become of him if he does not change his ways. It is a classic story of redemption.
After a quarrel with his publishers, Dickens financed the publishing of the book himself, ordering lavish binding, gilt edging, and hand-coloured illustrations, and then set the price at 5 shillings so that everyone could afford it. This combination resulted in high sales, but very low profits. In the first few days of its release the book sold 6,000 copies and its popularity continued to grow. *A Christmas Carol* has now become a Christmas tradition and is easily Dickens' best known book.

The inscription on Dickens' tombstone in Poet's Corner, Westminster Abbey reads:

‘He was a sympathiser to the poor, the suffering, and the oppressed; and by his death, one of England's greatest writers is lost to the world.’

**Working children**

Children were the cheapest labour force. Dickens was a great supporter of social reform regarding working children. Social reformers campaigned to set laws limiting the type and amount of work children could do. For instance in 1864 Lord Shaftesbury brought in the Act for the Regulation of Chimney Sweepers, which established a penalty of £10 for offenders. But even after the Education Act of 1870 it was common for poor children to work to earn a living. Many children worked on the streets, in factories, cotton mills and coal mines (where the machinery was new and dangerous).

Lord Shaftesbury was deeply concerned about the rights of children and persuaded the government to reduce the number of hours children worked in factories and to make it illegal for children under 10 years old to work in the mines. However children between the age of 13 and 16 years were still allowed to work 69 hours per week (11 hours a day!) Many children were so tired that they were injured or even killed when they dozed off while working with dangerous machinery.

Hundreds of orphans slept rough and were forced to steal or brush up horse dung for pennies. Many poor and orphaned children were sent to the workhouse (like Oliver Twist) where they had to work long hours for their bed and board.

Dr. Barnardo (who had originally trained as a medical missionary) was shocked by what he saw and founded his first home for destitute boys in the 1870s, also creating ‘poor schools’ or free schools such as the Ragged School in Mile End, the largest poor school in London in 1877. Families were often large, (for instance Dr Barnardo was one of 13 children) and many children died in infancy.
Pre-visit activities
We highly recommend doing one or more of these activities before the session.

Dickens’ characters

Ask pupils if they watch soap operas on TV – ask about the characters and storylines. Then explain that Dickens’ novels were written in instalments and that the characters were based on the people he observed in Victorian London. Often they deal with issues such as poverty and there are many poor children, such as Tiny Tim, among his characters.

Ask pupils if they know the story of *A Christmas Carol*, for instance have they seen films and cartoons? Discuss different interpretations of the story and how a play might be different from a film. Discuss what the moral of the story is and whether hoarding money rather being kind and generous is still a relevant moral for people today.

Working children

Use images and websites to consider the difference in life for rich and poor children in Victorian time. Explore the following website:

http://www.bbc.co.uk/schools/primaryhistory/victorian_britain

Historical evidence

Discuss how we know about the past and the difference between fiction and factual evidence. Dickens’ characters are fictitious although they were based on the lives and experiences of real people. Introduce the idea of historical knowledge being based on evidence. Discuss different sources of evidence for the Victorian period: documents, books, newspapers, art, buildings, music, objects, film etc.

Ask pupils to carry out an internet search for Henry Mayhew ‘London labour and the London poor.’ Mayhew made an influential survey, which involved interviewing, catagorising and illustrating the poor of London. Your pupils will find images and descriptions of real people, who closely resemble Dickens characters. Some of Mayhew’s book is on display in the Museum of London.

Use the Museum of London website to show some examples of things pupils will see on their visit. For instance you could make a virtual tour of the Victorian Walk so that pupils are familiar with the sorts of things they will be able to find at the Museum.
Collect photographs of Victorian families, schools and your local area in Victorian times. Ask pupils if any of them have old family photographs from the 1800s. Use photographs to generate discussion and questions. Discuss childhood in Victorian times and the differences for rich and poor children.

**British Empire**
Discuss London and Britain as the centre of an empire and how it influenced other countries. If your pupils’ families were not living in Britain at the time, discuss how Britain related to the countries they came from.

Explore the KS2 Victorian activities at: [http://www.movinghere.org.uk/schools/](http://www.movinghere.org.uk/schools/)

**Victorian Christmas**
Discuss Christmas with pupils and what it means to them and their families. Does their family celebrate a ‘traditional’ Christmas? How much do they see Christmas as a Christian celebration? How does it compare to other celebrations? Is Christmas still a time of giving to the poor?

Use the teachers’ notes on Victorian Christmas to discuss different traditions. This could be done before and after your visit.

**A Christmas song**
During the performance you and your pupils will be asked to sing along to the following song. You will be taught the chorus when you arrive, but if you want your class to impress the actors you could teach this chorus before they arrive.

**A Little Bit of Christmas Pud!**

CHORUS
But, we’ve only got a little bit of Christmas pud
A little bit of Christmas Pud,
A bigger bit of Chrissy pudding would be good
But we love our little bit of Christmas pud!
Follow-up activities for the classroom

These activities are designed to apply and extend the knowledge gained from your visit to the Museum of London.

Further research project
Ask pupils to choose subjects for a more detailed research project on particular aspects of Victorian Britain and Victorian childhood, as inspired by their visit. They could do this individually or in pairs and could present it in book form or as a PowerPoint presentation. They might want to focus on:
- schools
- working children
- the British Empire
- rich and poor
- the great stink, health issues in Victorian times
- toys
- Christmas traditions.

Make your own display of Victorian objects
Each child should choose a Victorian object that tells us about Victorian life. Use images of objects you saw at the Museum (or use real objects if you can make a collection at school). Each pupil could write captions explaining:
- what the objects tell us about Victorian times
- how the object varies from objects today
- which character/s from A Christmas Carol would use or own an object like this?

Christmas art activities
Make:
- Christmas crackers
- Victorian Christmas decorations for the tree
- Christmas cards with a Victorian theme.

Giving to charity
You could link some activities to the moral of A Christmas Carol. For instance, decorations and cards could be sold at school and the proceeds given to a charity of the pupils’ choice.
Planning your journey

Museum of London
Free admission
Open
Mon to Sat 10am - 5.50pm
Sun 12 - 5.50pm
Last admission 5.30pm

Museum of London
London Wall, London EC2Y 5HN
0870 444 3851
www.museumoflondon.org.uk
info@museumoflondon.org.uk

Free travel
All schools within the Greater London area can take advantage of Transport for London’s School Party Travel Scheme. See www.tfl.gov.uk/schoolparty or call London Underground Customer Services on 0845 330 9881 for details.

Getting to the Museum

By tube - St Paul’s, Barbican
By rail - Moorgate, Liverpool St, City Thameslink
By bus - 4, 8, 25, 56, 100, 172, 242, 501, 521

Travel by coach
The Museum does not have a coach park. Coaches may stop briefly to drop-off and pick up at bus stops on London Wall (travelling towards Moorgate) and Aldersgate Street (travelling towards the Museum). Please note that coaches must move on if requested to do so by a traffic manager/parking warden.

Cancellation charges
More than 8 weeks £30
8-4 weeks £50
Less than 4 weeks £100
On the day £150

Teachers resources
Primary programme

© Museum of London 2011