The Trial of Ebenezer Scrooge
By: Mark Brown

(Interactive Study Guide for Student Audiences)

Orlando Shakespeare Theater in Partnership with UCF
**Introduction**

The goal of the Orlando Shakespeare Theater in partnership with UCF is to ensure that all patrons experience the best quality theater that the region and nation has to offer. With that, it is important to us that each audience member gets the most out of every performance he or she attends. This is why a number of years ago, we developed a concept to bridge the gap between our younger audience members and the often complex language of Shakespeare and various other playwrights used in the season. The plays of a season come to life with the creative explanation of certain themes, character analyses, and modern parallels that many elementary through high school students can identify with. It is our desire that this guide will kindle the desire for its readers to learn more about Charles Dickens long after the curtain closes. Enjoy the experience!

**Synopsis of A Christmas Carol**

*The Trial of Ebenezer Scrooge* is a sequel to *A Christmas Carol* by Charles Dickens. The later is set in 19\(^{th}\) century England where Mr. Ebenezer Scrooge is a miserly old who owns his own business in London. He is known around the town for being extraordinarily mean and disagreeable to his employee Bob Cratchit and to the townspeople. One night Scrooge receives a visit from the ghost of his dead business associate Jacob Marley who tells him that he will be visited by the Ghosts of Christmas Past, Present, and Future. From each visit, Scrooge is shown a portion of his life and the lives of others. At the end of the last visit, the Ghost of Christmas future shows Scrooge a vision of his tombstone. After seeing this horrible vision, Scrooge wakes up in his bed terrified. As a result, Scrooge instantly changes his selfish ways and goes out on Christmas day to donate to the poor and feed the hungry and right any wrongs that he has done to people over the years. *The Trial of Ebenezer Scrooge* picks up a year later where we see that Scrooge has reverted to his old self.
Plot Summary
The Trial of Ebenezer Scrooge picks up a year or so after the disagreeable Mr. Ebenezer Scrooge (Scrooge) has changed his ways due to the visitation of three spirits: the Ghost of Christmas Past, the Ghost of Christmas Present, and the Ghost of Christmas Future. A year after his transformation, Mr. Scrooge contends that he was kidnapped and tricked into being a changed man for the year following Christmas. As a result, Mr. Scrooge draws up a whole list of criminal charges: breaking and entering, kidnapping, attempted murder and theft. He charges the three ghosts as well as the other characters in the story. The play becomes more interesting and hilarious when Mr. Scrooge is the prosecuting attorney in the trial, opposite the compassionate defense attorney, Solomon Rothschild, who represents all of the accused. In an effort to show the absurdity of the trial, Mr. Rothschild brings all of his clients and Mr. Scrooge to the witness stand in order to get down to all the facts. During the proceedings, each witness contributes his or her account of the story that is in some way contradicted by Mr. Scrooge. There are also characters that cause Mr. Scrooge’s confidence to temporarily disappear. When Scrooge’s old fiancée Belle takes the stand, she forces him to face mistakes of his past where he chose money over happiness.

After all the testimonies were given, Judge Pearson declares that the three ghosts and Jacob Marley (Scrooge’s deceased associate) are “guilty of all said charges” after which he calls for a “termination of all their ghostly duties.” The ghosts’ careers are saved when Scrooge drops the charges based on the agreement that the ghosts carry out the Christmas spirit everyday in addition to Christmas. It is a nail-biting comedy that ends with all parties being satisfied.
**Character Breakdown (Who’s Who)**

“**Scrooge**”: is the character that the play revolves around. Scrooge is a miserly bookkeeper in the city of London.

“**Jacob Marley**”: is the deceased business partner of Scrooge. Marley’s ghost visits Scrooge to forewarn him of the impending visits from the three ghosts.

“**Ghost of Christmas Past, Present, and Future**”: are the three ghosts on trial for breaking and entering and kidnapping Scrooge. There is a **Translator** who converts the gibberish of the Ghost of Christmas Future into English.

“**Solomon Rothschild**”: is the eloquent and confident defense attorney for all of the accused.

“**Judge Pearson**”: is the grumpy judge, much like Scrooge in *A Christmas Carol*, who presides over the trial with an iron fist.

“**Mr. Connolly, the Bailiff**”: is the deputy of the courtroom and offers a voice of hope despite Judge Pearson’s pessimistic attitude. The Bailiff is akin to Bob Cratchit in A Christmas Carol.

“**Fred**”: is Scrooge’s nephew who always invites Scrooge to Christmas Dinner.

“**Belle**”: is the former love interest of Scrooge who comes to the witness stand and her presence forces Scrooge to acknowledge a bitter part of his past where money meant more than anything.

“**Fan**”: is Scrooge’s sister who offers insight to Scrooge’s painful childhood.

“**Bob Cratchit**”: is the clerk at Mr. Scrooge’s business.

“**Mrs. Cratchit**”: is Bob’s wife and the mother of the Cratchit children.

“**Miss Wainwright**”: is a community activist who goes around asking for donations to help the poor, especially around Christmas time.

“**Mrs. Dilber**”: is a city beggar who is accused of stealing articles of clothing and jewelry from Mr. Scrooge. She claims that all is fair game when a person is deceased.
What is a Sequel?

No matter how interesting a playwright attempts to be, the topic of their play has usually been covered on some small or large level in the centuries that plays have been recorded. As the saying goes: “There is nothing new under the sun.” In line with that, The Trial of Ebenezer Scrooge by Mark Brown is a sequel to “A Christmas Carol”, by famed English playwright Charles Dickens. In modern times we see the sequel concept in films such as Batman, Superman, various Disney films and the like.

Name of a few movies that you like: ________________________________________________
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Do the movies have a sequel? If not, take a minute to briefly describe what that sequel might be for one of those movies (What characters would remain and which ones will be written out or added to the story)?
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Can You Place the Accent?

“The Trial of Ebenezer Scrooge” has a number of characters that speak with accents spanning the United Kingdom. The British accent most imitated is Queen’s English; this is not the only way that people speak in that area of the world. The United Kingdom consists of four countries: England, Northern Ireland, Scotland, and Wales, and they all have representation in Britain’s Parliament in London. Identify those four countries on this map. As you watch the production, take a mental note of where a character’s accent is from. After the show, take a few minutes to reflect, label the country and then write the character’s name with a line pointing to the country where you think they are from.
Themes for Thought

Justice for All: In this sequel, we see that Justice is blind and is administered to those who we the spectators may see as innocent. As a lesson from seeing the ghosts on trial, in real life we must remember never to take matters into our own hands as it pertains to physical confrontation of a callous individual. **Think of why it is not wise to surpass authorities and take justice into your own hands and write it below.**

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Love: This four letter word has so many different interpretations that a whole class period dedicated to discussing it would not suffice. One major example of love in this story is when Fred is called to the witness stand. When Fred is interviewed by Mr. Rothschild, it is shown that he has an unconditional love for his Uncle Scrooge because he invites Scrooge to his Christmas dinner every year, and every year his invitation is rejected. It takes true kindness and confidence to constantly ask someone the same question with the hope of acceptance one day.

With this example in place, think of another example of love that you witnessed in the story:

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Mercy/Compassion:
At the end of the ghosts are found guilty and it seems as though their career and lives are over. In an instant, Mr. Rothschild pleads for the judge to have mercy on his clients, but to no avail. Then unexpectedly, Mr. Scrooge has mercy on his assailants by offering a deal to spread the Christmas spirit everyday or cease to exist; reluctantly the ghosts take the first option.

Write of a time where someone showed mercy toward you:

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