

[The Write Place At the Write Time](#)

[Home](#)[About Us](#)[Announcements](#)[Interviews](#)[Fiction](#)[Poetry](#)["Our Stories" non-fiction](#)[Writers' Craft Box](#)[Writers' Contest!](#)[Book Reviews](#)[Exploration of Theme](#)[Submission Guidelines](#)[Feedback & Questions](#)[Professional Services](#)[Archives](#)[Commentary On Two Years](#)

Come in...and be captivated...

Exploration of Theme



"Winter Spectrum Nauset" by Jan Collins Selman; <http://jancollinsselman.com/home.html>

In this section, we aim to explore themes in popular literature, poetry, plays, art and music. In doing so, we gain new understandings and learn more through the words of the greats and the potent images of our collective histories. Write in, tell us your interpretations of your favorite works, and fee.

free to suggest the next piece of culture we research to divine its theme!
Contact us! themes@thewriteplaceatthewritetime.org

In the spirit of the winter season, we explore the transformative magic and meaning contained within Charles Dickens' novella, *A Christmas Carol*. Written and published in early-Victorian era Britain circa mid-1800s when England was experiencing a nostalgic interest in its forsaken Christmas traditions that had existed prior to the Cromwell period during the reign of King Henry VIII before his separation from the church of Rome. It was also a time when quaint new customs from across Europe such as the Christmas tree and greeting cards were being introduced.

The story is known to be a powerful, lasting commentary on the Industrial Revolution in England which drove families into the cities to look for work, resulting in overcrowded, unhealthy conditions and low paying employment. Deeply impacted by his observations when visiting the Cornish tin mines and Field Lane Ragged School, both places dire institutions to exploit the nation's destitute youth, and inspired by the Second Report of the Children's Employment Commission in response to the Poor Law put into effect, Dickens planned to publish a political pamphlet titled, "An Appeal to the People of England, on behalf of the Poor Man's Child". He then felt however, that a far more effective way to reach the masses with his social concerns about poverty, labor and injustice would be to write a moving Christmas parable as opposed to pamphlets and essays that would only appeal to a segment of the population.

In a letter to one of the four commissioners who had generated the Second Report, Dickens wrote: "[Y]ou will certainly feel that a sledge hammer has come down with twenty times the force – twenty thousand times the force – I could exert by following out my first idea." Dickens regarded fairy tales and fables as powerful mediums of transformation. The pamphlet became *A Christmas Carol*; the beloved tale that has never been out of print and is thought responsible for breathing new life into the Christmas holiday in Britain and North America after a period of solemnity.

Other influences for Dickens's tale stem from what he regarded as humiliating childhood years that involved his conflicted feelings for his

father who perhaps is a figure that molded the infamous Ebenezer Scrooge. At age twelve, Dickens was forced to take meager lodgings, sell his collection of books, leave school and acquire a position working in a blacking factory when his father was arrested in 1824. His upbringing and education clashed with his fellow factory workers who taunted him over his plight. Dickens developed a nervous condition. Even when his father was released after three months Dickens was still forced to continue his job at the factory. The resulting despair and grief inflicted wounds which would affect his work and mind for the remainder of his life. The two Scrooges in the tale – complete polar opposites- accounted for the love/hate feelings Dickens possessed for his father and a way to make peace with them.

The book was embraced by critics and readers alike. William Makepeace Thackeray dubbed it, "...a national benefit and to every man or woman who reads it, a personal kindness." It was also said to be "a tale to make the reader laugh and cry—to open his hands, and open his heart to charity even toward the uncharitable [...] a dainty dish to set before a King." Dickens himself, astounded at the far-reaching reactions commented, "by every post, all manner of strangers writing all manner of letters about their homes and hearths, and how the Carol is read aloud there, and kept on a very little shelf by itself."

Across the ocean in the United States, a gentleman attended a reading of *A Christmas Carol* on Christmas Eve in Boston, Massachusetts some years later. He was so moved by the tale that he closed his factory on Christmas Day and, as Scrooge did for his faithful employee, sent every worker a handsome turkey. The Queen of Norway would send gifts in the 1900s to London's crippled children signed "With Tiny Tim's Love", Sir Squire Bancroft would raise £20,000 for those in need by reading the tale aloud at a public gathering and during World War I, Captain Corbett-Smith would take up the book to read it to the troops in the cold trenches.

New adaptations in varied mediums still delight hearts across the globe today. The lessons and inspiration derived from Dickens' work never lose their importance or luster. Remember this winter season to be generous of heart and spirit to those you love and those in need and may, "God bless us... every one!"

© 2010 *The Write Place At the Write Time*
This on-line magazine and all the content contained therein is copyrighted.