

A Christian Carol©

Overall theme: This drama is an adaptation of “Dickens’s Christmas Carol”. The setting is a small Midwest American town in the 1800’s. Could easily be used as multi-act drama or dinner theatre.

Although offering humour, the script has a very distinct Christian message, ending in Scrooge, fighting and screaming all the way, finally accepting the Lord.

Run time is approximately 120 minutes

Cast Although the main character is Ebenezer Scrooge, the most crucial character is the Narrator, who serves to tie the entire script together.
In total there are 22 speaking roles, plus 5 non-speaking roles, as well as any number of extras for crowd scenes. However, with the individual sequences as they are, actors could easily perform two or more roles, meaning that this could easily be brought down to 18 or less speaking actors. Note that Angel #1 and Frank Read roles are written to use the same actor.
Rather than ghosts, angels are used as messengers.

Narrator Stage

- Narrator – the outgoing, “dumb-like-a-fox” type character

Scrim Stage #1

- Ebenezer Scrooge (will also perform from Scrim Set #2 in Sequence #1)
- Marley
- Angel #1 (also is Frank Read)
- Angel #2
- Angel #3

Scrim Set #2

- Fred (Ebenezer’s nephew)
- Bob Cratchit
- Gentleman #1 (may be female)
 - Gentleman #2 (may be female)
 - Scrooge #1 (8 years)
 - Scrooge #2 (10 years)
 - Scrooge #3 (18 – 20)
 - Scrooge #4 (22 – 25)
 - crowd scene in Sequence #4 – any number
 - Sister in Sequence #5 (6 – 8)
 - Schoolmaster in Sequence 5 (any age, may be female)
 - Andy Barnes Sequence 6 (mid age or older)
 - Richard Sequence 6 (late teen to early 20)
 - crowd for Sequence #6 – any number
 - Belle Sequence 7 (late teen to early 20’s)
 - Husband Sequence 8 (middle age)
 - Mrs. Cratchit Sequence 10 (middle age)

- Martha Cratchit Sequence 10 (teen)
- Peter Cratchit Sequence 10 (6 - 12)
- Belinda Cratchit Sequence 10 (4 - 10)
- Tiny Tim Sequence 10 (4 – 10)
- Fred's wife Sequence 11 (20's)
- Ruth Sequence 13 (8 – late teen)
- Frank Read Sequence 13 (also Angel #1)

Sets

Stage is set up with two Scrim areas plus the area to the extreme downstage left side where narrator performs.

Scrim Set #1 is toward stage left, and this is where Scrooge, Marley and the angels perform. when “watching” action in Scrim Set #2, the actors in Scrim Set #1 will go the most downstage right position in their acting area, to make it look as though they are watching what is going on

Scrim Set #2 is at the right hand side of the stage, and this is where all other actors perform

NOTE – through use of lighting, it is possible to have the same effect without the use of scrim, however, scene changes are easier using scrim. Also, the use of scrim will give an impression of a “dream-like” atmosphere, which is useful.

Sets may be as simple or elaborate as desired, only a bed and two chairs in Scrim Set #1, and a table and chairs in Scrim Set #2, area are all that is really required. There should be a storefront building constructed, or painted, over the Scrim Area #1, with the lettering:

First National Bank of Topeka
Scrooge & Marley Props.

If it is possible, for the final narrator sequence this sign could be changed to:

First National Bank of Topeka
Cratchit & Son Props.

Sound

Lapel mics are particularly useful for Narrator, Scrooge, Marley and the angels. Regular amplification is adequate for the others. It might be easier to tape Tim Tim's line rather than perform it live (depending on actual age of actor).

Costumes

Angels are dressed in period costume, not the usual angelic costuming. All others are dressed in early American period costuming

Lighting

If scrim sets used, the lighting is very important. For suggestions on scrim lighting, contact DramaShare.

A spot is needed for narrator.

Language By design, this script was written using the early American dialect at the outset, followed up by more traditional language as the script progresses. This was done to ensure that language did not interfere with the more meaty part of the message.

Script:

Narrator: See, old Jake Marley was dead: stone cold dead. Ain't no doubt about that, no siree. Josh Lymon, him, the clerk down to the courthouse, he had the death certificate filed away neat, and Doc Sanderson and Preacher Jones, and Frank Thompson, the undertaker and part-time barber, all their names was on that certificate. Even Scrooge, Marley's partner in First National Bank of Topeka here all these years past, why he signed it as well. And Scrooge's name on anything was known to be proof positive that what was said was true; see old Scrooge, he didn't put his John Henry on nothin' were it not a lead pipe cinch. Stake your life on it, Old Marley, he's a dead man.

Scrooge know old Jake Marley was dead, ya say? Of course he did, had to! How could it be otherwise? Scrooge and Marley were partners for, I don't know how long, in the First National Bank of Topeka, bank before I come to this territory. Marley, he died and Scrooge, he turned around and took care of all the details: old Doc Sanderson to come over that Christmas day morning to check, say, "yep, old Jake Marley, he's dead all right!" and sign the death certificate. And Scrooge, he personal saw to gettin' the plot out to the Baptist cemetery, arrangin' that Preacher Jones, circuit rider in these parts be available to say the few words at the cemetery, no church funeral bein' needed in old Scrooge's mind, waste of time, 'sides likely if he'd used it the Baptists would expect some payment and some donation to their building fund. And if that wasn't proof positive of old Marley's death, why Scrooge was Marley's one and only administrator of his will, his one and only friend, and the only soul bothered to show up at the cemetery that cold December day. And with he told, old Scrooge, soon as the Preacher said his last words, "ashes to ashes . . .", why old Scrooge was headed back, at the trot, to open up the bank, hopin' that old Marley's funeral hadn't lost him any business in the meanwhile. Which, First National Bank of Topeka bein' the only bank for miles around, most probably had not.

The mention of Marley's funeral brings me back to the point I started from. There can be no doubt in anyone's mind, old Jake Marley was dead. Don't get this fact through your noggin, then my tale's goin' nowheres see. Just one more time then: Marley's a dead goner!

See Scrooge never even painted out Old Marley's name, there on the gray unpainted clapboard storefront of the bank. There it stood, years afterwards, for all to see: "First National Bank of Topeka, Scrooge and Marley, Props.". The firm was known throughout the territory as "First National Bank of Topeka, Scrooge and Marley, Props.". Why? Never asked, truth to tell. Guess it was the first bank here in

Topeka, although why “national” not sure, wasn’t no national thing, bein’s how this was the one and only “First National Bank of Topeka, Scrooge and Marley, Props.” bank anywhere in these parts, likely in the whole wide world is my best guess. Small matters like this never had great impact on folks here in Topeka, more important stuff like corn prices, drought and grasshoppers, seems like, capturing the minds and hearts of us locals.

Folks wandered into town, why, they’d go to the “First National Bank of Topeka, Scrooge and Marley, Props.”, and they’d do their business. No choice, like I said before, only bank in these parts. And although they’d more likely than not be the poorer for their time spent as customers of the bank, not many choices open to them, less’n they’re prepared to spend the three days going to Morristown, way out yonder. And when they entered the bank, not knowin’ who they was talkin’ to, sometimes they’d called Scrooge Scrooge, and sometimes Marley, but, no matter, he answered to both names. All the same to him, so long’s they was coming to line his greedy pockets!

Maybe get the idea we’re talking about a man who’d skin a louse fer it’s hide? Such was old Ebenezer Scrooge! Was said round here that you ever shake hands with old Scrooge, best count yer fingers, likely as not you’re short one or two. Not that I can say I ever knew a man to actually lose fingers, this more a kinda talk in these parts, likely not a shred of truth is my guess. Say it all just so’s you’d know the facts bout this miserable old sidewinder, Ebenezer Scrooge!

And, no more would any man ever lay claim to Scrooge as a fount of generosity. Whenever there was someone in need, there’d be Ebenezer, right in the middle, foreclosing on the fella’s farm like as not! Ebenezer Scrooge! Tightest old skinflint good Lord ever allowed the breath of life!

Some might say Scrooge’s looks didn’t help dispute his image of a mean, cantankerous, old miser man. The feel of a freezing nor-west wind in January maybe must have permanent froze his old features, nipped his pointed nose, shrivelled his cheeks, stiffened his gait; made his eyes red, his thin lips blue; and solid froze the diction in his grating voice. The hair on his head put you in mind of frost on yonder Wolmer’s Mountain mid-February, not to mention his wild eyebrows, and his sparse stringy beard on his wiry chin. Could be a hot day in July but the sight of old Scrooge comin’ down the road, his willow branch cane tick-tickin’ on the wood sidewalk, why, still that’s plenty to cause icicles to form on the insides of your heart! And, one day’s same as the next, never did the local county fair’ or even Christmas itself’ serve to brighten old Scrooge’s way lookin’ at life, not so much as one iota.

The manner of the day had no effect on Scrooge, seems like. No warmth could warm his disposition, no wintry weather chill him. No wind that blew was more bitter than he, no falling snow more icy than old Scrooge’s stare, no pounding rain more unforgiving. A foul weather man was Ebenezer Scrooge! The Kansas rain,

and snow, and hail, and sleet, could boast of the advantage over Ebenezer in only one respect. The coming of these happenin's on occasion were seen as welcome; Scrooge never was.

Nobody ever stopped old Scrooge on the street, say, ``Scrooge, old man, how's things with you? How's the business, your family?'’ Well, truth be told, Scrooge had no family, save one, his nephew, Fred. Scrooge had no wife, no kids. And, thinkin' on it, who ever in all Kansas territory, man, woman or child, would long for the opportunity of calling Scrooge kin? Folks around here shared few thoughts unanimous, only one thing they all held firm: Ebenezer Scrooge was a sad, miserable example of a man! Even mangy coyotes on the bald prairie would turn about and hightail it for the hills over yonder, the shadow of that reprobate man came into view.

But, tell me then, did Scrooge care so much as *(snaps fingers)* that, what folks thought of him? Sometimes wondered, maybe it's the way that cantankerous old sidewinder wanted it all to be! Seems like he set up this here barbed wire fence, round about hisself, keepin' all folks out; whether they be friend or foe. *(pause)* Come to recollect on it, wouldn't take much a fence to keep out old Scrooge's friends, seein's how they ain't none. Got a speculatin' one time, I did, maybe old Scrooge wanted it thata way. Stranger, seems like, but then not every fella was born ta be a Philadelphia lawyer is my way a thinkin'.

'member back, long time ago, me, I'd just come to these parts. Christmas Eve, it was. Old Scrooge he sat on his old high back chair in his office at the First National Bank of Topeka, Scrooge & Marley, Props. Memory serves me, it was cold, bleak, biting weather, cold winter wind blowin' down from Canada, not fit for man or beast, it wasn't. There as you'd was home, fires burning, fighting the chill that penetrated every nook and cranny. Those as had to be out and about, why they was bundled up near a point of bein' hobbled. Shufflin' up and down the street they was, hands in pockets, big winter hats pulled over their ears, stompin' feet to keep the blood from freezing.

Miserable kinda day it was, and though only mid afternoon, lanterns were already burnin' in Tom Dunham's General Store, Miz Thompson makin' herself busy findin' just the right material to make the wedding dress for her spinster daughter, Flossie. I do declare, never expected Flossie to marry, musta been 20, maybe 21 even. In Johnson's Livery Stable the steam came pouring out every chink and crack in the roughcut boards, and was so dense that the horses in their stalls appeared as apparitions.

*Lights gradually down 50% on narrator, and to off on stage front, gradually up to 50% behind scrim, office set **Sequence #1***

Narrator: Old Scrooge, he kept his office door wide open, but don't go get the notion it was so's to have people think ol' Ebenezer to be approachable. Oh no, his aim was to

keep his eye on his clerk, Bob Cratchit, who in a mean excuse for an office, was recording the day's receipts in a big black ledger. Scrooge had a small wood stove in his office which scarce kept the frost off, but the clerk's area was heated only by the stove pipes which wound their crooked path across the outer office. So many times Bob Cratchit, he wanted to waltz into old Ebenezer's office, load down that old stove with all the wood it could hold, and sit back and soak up the heat. But soon's Cratchit got to thinkin' those thoughts, old Scrooge he'd put padlock to the wood-box; and just casually remind Cratchit just how bad Cratchit needed the job which Scrooge provided. At which Cratchit would hitch up his lambskin coat, don scarf and mittens and dutifully return to his sums.

Lights full up behind scrim, nephew Fred enters

Fred: Howdy, Merry Christmas, uncle! God bless you!

Scrooge: Bah!, Humbug!

Fred: Christmas a humbug, uncle? You don't mean that if I'm sure.

Scrooge: Take it to the bank, I do! Merry Christmas? What reason have you got to be merry, Fred? You don't have three plugged nickels to your name.

Fred: Fine, Uncle Scrooge, then what right have you to be feelin' outta sorts? What reason have you to have a burr under your saddle blanket? You've got more money than a dog's got ticks.

Scrooge: Bah! Humbug.

Fred: C'mon, uncle, why glum?

Scrooge: What d'ya expect? People everywhere losing their fool heads over Christmas! All's I hear is "Merry Christmas", or "Season's Greetings", some tom-foolery like that! Bah, humbug, that's all I can say! Tell me will ya, what's Christmas time mean? Time for buying stuff you don't need with money you don't have, that's what! Ending up a year older, but not a stick richer. If I had my way, next fella comes in here spoutin' off on "Merry Christmas", gonna be tarred and feathered, run outta town on a rail!

Fred: Uncle Scrooge!

Scrooge: Nephew Fred! See, here young whipper-snapper, tell you what! You go ahead, keep Christmas way you want, and let me be to keep it in mine.

Fred: Keep it? Beggin' your pardon, you don't keep it.

Scrooge: Let me be to not keep Christmas, then! Lotta good keeping Christmas is gonna do you! Lotta good it has ever done you! Ever!

Fred: With respect, uncle, I gotta say, there's lottsa things we oughta do with no aim for food in our bellies at the end of the day, not all things work out with four bits back for every penny invested. That's simply the way it is, not a problem I see it.

Scrooge: Oh, and I see, Mr. Moneybags of the new frontier! Next penny you invest, folks will roll over in their graves all over the West! And, maybe you should get to thinking about putting food in your belly, save the cockamamie sentiment and tomfoolery ideas alone. Listen to me, your not wet behind the ears no more, wake up boy! Just what's this ridiculous fascination with Christmas, never will figure that one, I tell you!

Fred: Fascination with Christmas? Well, apart from the fact that Christmas is, as you know, uncle, the time we celebrate the birth of our Lord and saviour, Jesus Christ, . . .

Scrooge: What's with this mumbo-jumbo churchy talk nonsense. You know, ever since you've come down with this religion thing . . . Nothing gets my blood to boiling more than group of supposed sane people get in their mind some fantasy about . . . Well, I'll just never get what you hope to get out of that mumbo-jumbo! Mumbo-jumbo churchy talk nonsense, that's all it is!

Fred: Well, uncle, fact is I'm praying you will get out of it what I have, a relationship with the Lord God Jesus Christ Himself.

Scrooge: Will you keep it down, man! Not good for business that, rantin' and ravin', talkin' like a fool idiot is that.

Fred: Uncle, since when have you cared a snippet for what anyone thinks?

Scrooge: Well, lookee here, be that as it may, I will not tolerate that kinda behaviour in First National Bank of Topeka! Understand me! As if any sane man is gonna get benefit from a cockamamie holiday, waste of time that's what, I say! Mumbo-jumbo churchy talk nonsense!

Fred: Surely do feel sorry you take to it that way, uncle. But as well as the birth of Jesus, (*Scrooge gives Fred a look of total disgust, Fred continues on*), like I say, Christmas strikes me, time when there's well, just more loving kindness, seems like.

Scrooge: Well, I gotta tell you, with the problems of drought and frost and grasshoppers, . . . one thing this town needs bad is a strong shot of loving kindness, I do declare!

Fred: Razz me if you like, but this town, with all the problems it has, why, Topeka bad needs loving kindness, uncle. Christmas means a kind, forgiving, charitable,

pleasant time: the only time I know, throughout the year, when folks just seem to open their shut-up hearts freely, and to think of others as important and special and needed, not just another fella going his own way, somewhere. And so you're right uncle, though it's never put a peso in my pocket, I know Christmas has done me good, and will do me good; and I'm saying, God bless Christmas!

Bob Cratchit starts to agree, then, realizing his comment was unwanted, returns to his books.

Scrooge, *pointing at Cratchit*: One more peep from you, Cratchit, and you'll celebrate your Christmas looking for work, and remember jobs don't grow on trees in Topeka. *(turns to Fred)* And as for you young man, you've got such a gift of the gab, your highness, maybe oughta run for state legislature, do you suppose?

Fred: Don't be upset, uncle. But, please, come and have Christmas dinner with us tomorrow.

Scrooge: I think not!

Fred: But why? Why?

Scrooge: Why did you get married?

Fred: Because I fell in love.

Scrooge: "Because you fell in love!" I've heard enough, goodbye to you! you and your mumbo-jumbo churchy talk nonsense!

Fred: But, see, uncle, you never came to see me before I got married. So, doesn't make a lotta sense, using my marriage as the reason to stay away from visiting me now.

Scrooge: Good afternoon!

Fred: Uncle, you know I want nothing from you; I ask nothing of you or your money; but we are related and we should be friends.

Scrooge: Good afternoon!

Fred: Breaks my heart, that you wont be friendly. We have never quarreled, yet seems as though we oughta be friends. Christmas is important to me and my family, I look forward to celebrating Christ's birth, and to sharing the joy of Christmas and the love of Jesus with everyone I meet. So Merry Christmas Uncle, and if you change your mind, please come for dinner tomorrow!

Scrooge: Good afternoon!

Fred: And A Happy New Year!

Scrooge: Good afternoon!

Fred turns, walks away, waves to Bob Cratchit, who waves back

Scrooge: You, Cratchit, and just why are you so anxious about celebrating Christmas? Make \$3.00 a week, support a wife and family. You guys and your talk about a merry Christmas! You are all plumb outta you're minds, that's what. And your mumbo-jumbo churchy talk nonsense!

As Fred leaves, two men, enter, books and papers in hand, bow to Scrooge

Gentleman #1: First National Bank of Topeka, Scrooge and Marley Props., I believe. Might you, sir, be Mr. Scrooge, or Mr. Marley?

Scrooge: Seeing as how Mr. Marley has been dead these seven years, I'll leave it to you to decide. *(pause)* Come to recollect, Marley, he died seven years ago, this very night.

Gentleman #1: I have no doubt his surviving partner will be generous to the needs of others. *(hands papers to Scrooge)*.

Cratchit, *under his breath*: I can see you're new to these parts. Mr. Scrooge has been accused of many things, never of being generous!

Scrooge: Well, now! Mr. Cratchit! Perhaps you have something you wish to say to me, something about being independently wealthy and no longer requiring employment here at First National Bank of Topeka? Is that what you wished to tell me, Mr. Cratchit, sir?

Cratchit: Well, no, Mr. Scrooge. I was simply pointing out to these gentlemen that . . . sorry, excuse me, sir, I'll get back to my books then.

Scrooge: An absolutely outstanding idea, Mr. Cratchit! Why not just do that? Quickly! Before I turn you and your Christmas plans out to pasture! *(looks down at the papers he has been handed)* And what's this here, now?

Scrooge frowns, shakes his head, hands papers back

Gentleman #2: This being Christmas and all, Mr. Scrooge, we try to do a little something extra for those more unfortunate. All around us are people who need a little assistance to get them over a rough time in their lives, and we like to do what we can, warm clothing, food, maybe a toy for a little one.

Scrooge: Do tell! **We** like to do this do **we**? Well, **we**, are so pleased **you** do! And, why, may **we** ask, are **you** telling all this to **us** if **you** are the ones doing this wonderful thing??

Gentleman #2: Well, Mr. Scrooge, what my friend meant was, by all of us joining hands together, and all of us putting a few dollars toward this, why all the folks in need will have a merry Christmas.

Scrooge: Oh, so we are now joining hands, are we? Together? How nice! And as our hands are joined together, you plan to pluck money out of my pocket, to give to some ne'r-do-well, who doesn't care to work, for a free ride at my expense! Is that our plan, then, good sirs?

Gentleman #1: These are not ne'r-do-well sir, they are simply down on their luck right now . . .

Scrooge: Oh, how tragic! Down on their luck you say? Down on their luck indeed! Lazy drifters, that's what!

Gentleman #2: Sir, we need to show Christian kindness at this season, especially.

Scrooge: What is it with you people? Has this whole town gone loco? Christian kindness! Folks giving their lives to Jesus! Am I the only one left that is sane? Mumbo-jumbo churchy talk nonsense!

Gentleman #1: Well, sir, it is the season of Christian love.

Scrooge: And now, it's Christian love! And all this Christianity straight outta my pocket.

Gentleman #1: So, you wish to contribute then, Mr. Scrooge?

Scrooge: I wish to be left alone. Since you ask me what I wish, gentlemen, that is my answer. I don't make merry myself at Christmas and I can't afford to make idle people merry. Every time I turn around I'm supporting this or helping that! And, I don't care whether it's Christmas or the 12th of May, **we** will be giving **you** nothing, other than a good day to you as you kindly leave my bank! Am I understood?

Gentleman #2: Sir, without help, some folks will die. Remember, sir, it's winter!

Scrooge: If they would rather die than find work, that's what they had better do, not my worry. Besides, excuse me, gentlemen, I have no personal knowledge of that. Nor concern!

Gentleman #1: But you should know it. You see poverty all around you.

Scrooge: That's not none of my business. I look after my own business, and don't interfere with other people's. The worries of other's are not my worry! Good afternoon, gentlemen!