

Introduction for Teaching *A Christmas Carol* by Charles Dickens



familiar.

A *carol* is a hymn of joy sung at Christmas. A *stave* is a verse or stanza of poetry or a song. As you read this classic holiday tale, try to determine the reason for using "carol" as part of the title and "stave" instead of chapter to indicate the divisions in this story.

Learn to identify ways that Dickens employs the following elements of fiction:

Allusion - reference to other pieces of literature, events, people or places with which the writer believes the audience is

Plot - a series of events that includes a conflict (the struggle between opposing forces), of some kind. A conflict with another person or group of persons, with an animal or some force of nature or the supernatural is called external conflict. A character's struggles within, in a moral or ethical battle, trying to determine what is the right thing to do is called internal conflict. This series of events includes and exposition - learn the main characters, point of view, setting, and problem to be solved - the rising action, climax - point at which we learn whether main character will solve or give up on problem, falling action and resolution.

Characterization - the author's method of revealing personality, motivation, and special skills of a person in a story. The writer can create a character by indirect characterization by (1) giving a physical description (2) showing the character's actions and letting the character speak (3) revealing the character's thoughts and feelings (4) revealing what others think of the character; and by direct characterization (5) commenting directly on the character.

Mood is the emotional situation that a piece of literature tries to establish. Ask yourself "How does this piece of literature make me feel? What has the writer done to create this emotional response? Look at the words and phrases used in description.

Setting - the time and place of action. The time may be a specific historical period, a time of year, or a time in ones life. The place may be real or imaginary.

Symbol - a concrete or real object that is used to represent an idea. A symbol stands for itself and something else. i.e. bird = freedom; flag = nation; valentine = love; water = purity.

Theme - the main idea or basic meaning of a literary work that reveals something about human nature that would be true regardless of time or place. It is more than just what happens in a story; it is not the lesson or moral of the story; it is what we learn about people in general as we observe, in our minds, the characters in the story deal with conflict that confront them. Using the theme may be revealed indirectly through a series of events or may be stated directly by one of the characters. One can test a theory about a theme by noticing what happens in the beginning, middle and end of the story. Are the actions of the main character consistent with ones theory of the theme?

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