Objectives

1. Engage students in the story and the themes of Charles Dickens’s *A Christmas Carol* so that they are prepared to discuss and write in-depth responses about the following excerpt.

2. Practice and reinforce the following Grade 7 ELA Common Core Standards for reading literature, writing, and speaking and listening:

   - **READING: LITERATURE** – RL.7.1-4, 6-7, 10
   - **WRITING** – W.7.1-10
   - **SPEAKING AND LISTENING** – SL.7.1-6

Time

130 minutes (with up to an additional 220 minutes of extension possibilities)

Materials

SyncTV Premium Lesson on Charles Dickens’s *A Christmas Carol*

Overview

Charles Dickens is one of the most influential authors in English literature, and *A Christmas Carol* is one of his most widely beloved works. Many students will find this timeless tale of Ebenezer Scrooge and his spiritual transformation on a frigid Christmas Eve to be innately familiar. This is a measure of the influence of Dickens’s classic novella, which has carved itself a place not only in literature but Christmas tradition and iconography as well. Terms like “Scrooge,” “Merry Christmas,” and “Bah Humbug!” will be familiar to many, but not all students will know that these Christmas staples were popularized by *A Christmas Carol*. Close examination of this excerpt will offer students the opportunity to read and analyze a classic piece of English literature, to consider its impact, and to write thoughtful and textually-rooted responses consistent with the ELA Common Core Standards for Grade 7.
Background (10 minutes)

1. **Watch the Preview** (*SL.7.1-2*). As a group, watch the video preview of the premium lesson. After viewing, use the following questions to spur a discussion:
   
a. Ebenezer Scrooge is a character in the excerpt you’re about to read, but where else have you heard the term “scrooge” before? If you call someone a scrooge, what are you saying? Based on his name, what predictions can you make about Ebenezer Scrooge’s character?
   
b. The preview states that Scrooge is “tortured by his own cynical view of the world.” What does it mean to be “cynical”? How might someone be tortured not by an external force but by his own world view?
   
c. What feelings and emotions are normally associated with the holiday of Christmas? What sorts of things are people expected to do around Christmastime? What are some examples of Christmas traditions?

Extension (additional 60 minutes)

d. **Background** (*W.7.7-8*). Learn about the life and work of Charles Dickens by visiting [http://www.victorianweb.org/authors/dickens/index.html](http://www.victorianweb.org/authors/dickens/index.html) and exploring the wealth of information about this famous author.

  e. **Context** (*W.7.7-9*). Go to [http://www.victorianweb.org/authors/dickens/xmas/pva63.html](http://www.victorianweb.org/authors/dickens/xmas/pva63.html) and read an essay about Charles Dickens’s contributions to the understanding and celebration of the Christmas holiday.

  f. **Blast!** (*W.7.1-3, 9*). Does literature have the power to shape our understanding of the world? After reading the above essay, assign students a Blast! topic asking them to think about how reading books can influence the way we think. Consider how *A Christmas Carol* has influenced many of the modern practices and traditions surrounding Christmas. Ask if students can think of any other books or movies that have had such a profound effect on the world.

Engaging the Text (120 minutes)

1. **Read the Text** (30 minutes)
   
a. **Read and Make Connections** (*RL.7.1-4, 6*). Have students read the excerpt, making textual connections as they go along. If your classroom has a projector, you might want to model the three kinds of textual connections using the first two paragraphs:

   i. **Text-to-self**: Example, paragraph one: “I don’t like how it gets dark so early in the wintertime.”

   ii. **Text-to-world**: Example, paragraph one: “This sounds like it takes place in a lower-class neighborhood.”

   iii. **Text-to-text**: Example, paragraph one: “In Miss Stanfield’s class we learned about how people used candles before the invention of electricity.”
If students are completing as a homework assignment, ask them to write any questions they have into the annotation tool (e.g., “What is a counting-house?”). These questions are visible to you after the students submit their writing assignments or beforehand if you use the “Mimic” function to access the students’ accounts.

b. **Discuss (SL.7.1, 3).** Have students get into small groups or pairs and briefly discuss the questions and inferences they had while reading. As a class, discuss the following: *What are the contrasting world views of Mr. Scrooge and his nephew? In what variety of ways are these two characters different?* Create a two-column chart comparing Scrooge and his nephew side-by-side and solicit students’ responses to help fill in the chart.

**Extension (additional 20 minutes)**

c. **Listen and Discuss (SL.7.1-2).** As a class, listen to the audio reading of the text. Ask students to share how their understanding of the text changed after listening. What additional images came to mind? What words did the author use to develop the setting?

d. **Comprehend (RL.7.1-4, 6).** Have students complete the multiple-choice questions. Collect papers or discuss answers as a class.

2. **Watch SyncTV (30 minutes)**

a. **Watch.** Either watch the SyncTV discussion as a class or ask students to watch it on their individual computers.

b. **Focus (SL.7.1-2 and RL.7.3).** Have students consider the portion of the episode from 1:50 – 3:02 as the StudySync students discuss how the story’s external setting mirrors Scrooge’s internal state, using examples from the text.

c. **Focus (SL.7.1-2 and RL.7.6).** Now, from 3:30 – 4:40, have students discuss how Dickens develops the different points of view of Scrooge and his nephew, making comparisons between the two.

d. **Focus (SL.7.1-2 and RL.7.2-3).** Finally, consider 6:10 – 7:02 as students draw deeper conclusions about Scrooge and his state of mind, based on his actions in the excerpt. Consider their analysis of Scrooge’s behavior and the inferences they make.

e. **Discuss (SL.7.1-4 and RL.7.1-4, 6, 10).** After watching the model discussion, have a conversation with the class about the ideas discussed in the SyncTV episode. What new thoughts do they have after hearing the students’ discussion? Next, divide students into small groups (3-4 students). Move around the room monitoring groups as students follow the SyncTV episode as a model to discuss some of the following questions:

   i. How does Dickens use the setting to shape the character of Scrooge? Consider how the author describes the season, the counting-house, etc. How might we come to a deeper understanding of Scrooge by looking at his surroundings?

   ii. How does Dickens use dialogue to shape the character of Scrooge? Point to quotes in the text that provide valuable insight into the kind of person
Scrooge is based on what he says or how he says it.

iii. What is the major point of contrast between Scrooge and his nephew? How is this difference tied to the message of the story?

iv. What is “irony”? (Use a dictionary or web tools to first familiarize students with this term.) How is the difference between Scrooge and his nephew ironic? Why is this so?

v. Does Scrooge make any valid points, or is he irrationally bitter and “wrong” about the world? Conversely, is his nephew the one who is “right” and reasonable? What factors do you think brought the two characters to look at the world the way they do?

vi. What lesson or lessons do you think Scrooge will learn in the coming chapters? How might he learn these lessons? Make inferences about what might happen next.

Extension (additional 60 minutes)

f. Teach (W.7.2-3, 9 and SL.7.5-6). Based on this excerpt, it is apparent that Scrooge has a lesson or two to learn. Ask students: What do you think that lesson is? And how would you teach this lesson to him? Have students create a detailed lesson plan involving a series of readings or activities they would give to Scrooge to help him learn his lesson. Have them share lesson plans with the class. (If students are reluctant to share, consider writing and sharing your own.)

g. Write Creatively (W.7.3, 9). Note that experience is often said to be the most important teacher of all. In light of this, have students write their own Christmas or other holiday story in which a character experiences something that teaches a valuable lesson. The character can be the author or another person, as long as there is an instructive experience and a valuable lesson learned.

3. Think (10 minutes)

a. Respond (W.7.1, 4). Ask students to read the “Think” questions, watch the corresponding video clips, and respond to the questions, either in class or for homework.

4. Write (50 minutes)

a. Discuss (SL.7.1). Read the prompt you have chosen for students and then solicit questions regarding the prompt or the assignment expectations. Whichever prompt you have chosen, make sure you are clear about the assignment expectations and the rubric which you and the other students will be using for evaluation.

b. Organize (RL.7.1-4, 6, 10 and W.7.1-2, 5). Ask students to go back and annotate the text with the prompt in mind. They should be organizing their thoughts and the points they’ll address in their writing as they make annotations. If you’ve worked on outlining or other organizational tools for writing, this is a good place to apply them.

c. Write (W.7.1-2, 4-6, 8-10). Have students go through the writing process of
planning, revising, editing, and publishing their writing responses.

d. **Review (W.7.4-6).** Use the StudySync “Review” feature to have students complete one to two evaluations of their peers' work based on your chosen review rubric. Have the students look at and reflect upon the peer evaluations of their own writing. What might you do differently in a revision? How might you strengthen the writing and the ideas?

**Extension (additional 80 minutes)**

e. **Write (W.7.1-2, 4-6, 8-10).** For homework, have students answer one of the other prompts you did not choose to do in class. Students should publish their responses online.

f. **Write Persuasively (W.7.1, 4-6, 8-10).** More than just a storyteller, Charles Dickens is widely known as a social critic; the author often acknowledged his concern for the struggle of the working classes and the cruel inequity of society. Have students write an essay of at least 250 words addressing how *A Christmas Carol* can be interpreted as social criticism. What realities or ideas is Dickens criticizing? Have students cite multiple examples from the excerpt.
SUPPLEMENTARY MATERIALS

Key Vocabulary
1. withal (adv.) – Furthermore; in addition
2. palpable (adj.) – Able to be felt or touched; obviously apparent
3. dingy (adj.) – Dirty, dark, not in good condition
4. replenish (v.) – To fill up something was once full
5. intimation (n.) – An indirect hint or suggestion
6. ruddy (adj.) – Of a reddish color or appearance
7. humbug (n.) – (old-fashioned) Something or someone that is dishonest or untrue
8. veneration (n.) – Deep respect or admiration for something
9. impropriety (n.) – Bad, improper or immoral behavior
10. resolute (adj.) – Determined or steadfast in adherence to a desire or feeling
11. indignant (adj.) – Angry as a result of feeling wronged
12. cordial (adj.) – Friendly, kind, polite

Reading Comprehension Questions
1. The excerpt takes place in Scrooge’s _________________.
   a. living room
   b. office
   c. bedroom
   d. attic
2. Based on the description of the setting in the first two paragraphs, we can infer that Scrooge probably _________________.
   a. is a wealthy, influential man
   b. works for the government but lately has grown bitter
   c. wants desperately to hold on to his money
   d. is struggling financially and desperate to stay off the street
3. Based on the description of the clerk in paragraph two, we can infer that Scrooge probably _________________.
   a. is a good man to work for
   b. is abusive and violent as a boss
   c. feels unsatisfied with the work that the clerk does for him
   d. is stingy and does not pay the clerk very well
4. Scrooge’s nephew pays him a visit on Christmas Eve to _________________.
   a. berate him for being penny-pinching and bitter
   b. invite him to a Christmas dinner
   c. borrow money from Scrooge so he can feed his family
   d. bring him a present to help cheer him up
5. Scrooge despises the holiday of Christmas and the surrounding season because ____________________.
   a. he dislikes Christmas songs and decorations
   b. he does not have any family to celebrate with
   c. he does not like the cold, foggy winter weather
   d. it reminds him of the negative things about life

6. Scrooge’s nephew enjoys the season of Christmas because ____________________.
   a. he feels it brings people together and opens up their hearts
   b. he is poor so he is generally happy to receive gifts from others
   c. he enjoys how it annoys his uncle to see other people happy
   d. he met and became engaged to his wife around Christmastime

7. We can infer that the clerk in the other room is probably ____________________.
   a. another relative of Scrooge’s
   b. not as negative and pessimistic as his boss
   c. a good friend of Scrooge’s
   d. going to be fired by Scrooge

8. Based on this excerpt, what do you think will happen in the next chapter?
   a. Scrooge will go Christmas shopping before the stores close.
   b. Scrooge will call his nephew and apologize for getting angry.
   c. Something will happen to cause Scrooge to question his world view.
   d. Scrooge will spend Christmas Eve with the clerk instead.

9. Which of the following words best describes Scrooge? (Use a dictionary if necessary!)
   a. miserly
   b. vengeful
   c. suspicious
   d. impulsive

10. Which of the following words best describes Scrooge’s nephew? (Use a dictionary if necessary!)
    a. venerable
    b. optimistic
    c. arrogant
    d. gullible

Answer Key

1. B
2. C
3. D
4. B
5. D
6. A
7. B
8. C
9. A
10. B
Further Assignments

1. Read the entirety of Charles Dickens’s *A Christmas Carol*, analyzing how Scrooge undergoes his transformation and what lessons the story imparts to its readers. The full text is easily available online. *(RL.7.1-4, 6, 10)*

2. Dickens wrote a series of Christmas books including *The Chimes* and *The Cricket on the Hearth*. Assign students another one of these texts to read (they are all fairly short), then have them compare and contrast the selected text with *A Christmas Carol*. *(RL.7.1-4, 6, 10 and W.7.9)*


4. Dickens is given credit for popularizing a “secular vision” of Christmas that endures to this day. What does the word secular mean? Do you believe that Christmas is truly a secular holiday in the United States? Why or why not? Answer in a short written response. *(W.7.1, 7-9)*

5. Split the class into groups of three. Have each group re-write this excerpt from *A Christmas Carol* as a stage play, with each of the group members playing a different character (Scrooge, nephew, clerk). Film the performances and publish them on the Internet, if desired. *(W.7.3 and SL.7.6)*

6. Have students underline every verb in the excerpt and change them into different tenses – simple present, present continuous, etc. Discuss as a class how this shift in tense affects the overall story and its meaning. How do stories in past and present tense have a different effect on their readers? *(ELL)*