As part of DCT’s mission to integrate the arts into classroom academics, the Behind the Curtain Resource Guide is intended to provide helpful information for the teacher and students to use before and after attending a performance. The activities presented in this guide are suggested to stimulate lively responses and multi-sensory explorations of concepts in order to use the theatrical event as a vehicle for cross-cultural and language arts learning.

Please use our suggestions as springboards to lead your students into meaningful, dynamic learning; extending the dramatic experience of the play.
DCT Executive Artistic Director .....................................Robyn Flatt
Resource Guide Editor ......................................................Jessica Colaw
Resource Guide Layout/Design ........................................Jamie Brizzolara

Play .............................................................................................................A GHOST TALE FOR MR. DICKENS
Book by ...................................................................................Will Osborne and Jenny Laird
Lyrics by .................................................................................Randy Courts and Will Osborne
Music by .................................................................................Randy Courts
Based on Magic Tree House Merlin Mission #16:
A Ghost Tale for Christmas Time by ......................................Mary Pope Osborne

MAGIC TREE HOUSE: A GHOST TALE FOR MR. DICKENS TYA is presented through special arrangement with Music Theatre International (MTI). All authorized performance materials are also supplied by MTI. www.MTIShows.com

DALLAS CHILDREN’S THEATER, one of the top five family theaters in the nation, serves over 250,000 young people and their families from 197 zip codes, 101 cities and 89 counties and 27 states each year through its main stage productions, touring, educational programming and outreach activities. Since its opening in 1984, this award-winning theater has existed to create challenging, inspiring and entertaining theater, which communicates vital messages to our youth and promotes an early appreciation for literature and the performing arts. As the only major organization in Dallas focusing on theater for youth and families, DCT produces literary classics, original scripts, folk tales, myths, fantasies and contemporary dramas that foster multicultural understanding, confront topical issues and celebrate the human spirit.

DCT is committed to the integration of creative arts into the teaching strategies of academic core curriculum and educating through the arts. Techniques utilized by DCT artists/teachers are based upon the approach developed in The Integration of Abilities and Making Sense with Five Senses by Paul Baker, Ph.D.

DCT Founder and Executive Artistic Director, Robyn Flatt defines the artistic mission and oversees the operations of the organization, consisting of 38 full time staff members and nearly 200 actors, designers, theater artists and educators.

TEKS that your field trip to Dallas Children’s Theater satisfies are listed at the back of this Resource Guide.
CURTAINS UP ON PUTTING A PERFORMANCE TOGETHER

Every DCT performance you see is the result of many people working together to create a play. You see the cast perform on stage, but there are people behind the scenes that you do not see who help before, during, and after every production.

The DIRECTOR
Determines the overall look of the performance.
Guides the actors in stage movement and character interpretation.
Works with designers to plan the lights and sounds, scenery, costumes and make-up, and stage actions.

The DESIGNERS
Plan the lights, sounds, scenery, costumes, make-up, and actions to help bring the director’s vision to life.
There are also designers who work to create the posters, advertisements, programs, and other media for the performance.

The STAGE MANAGER
Before the performance, they create a cue sheet to guide the crew in getting set pieces on and off the stage during the performances.
During the performance, the stage manager uses this cue sheet to direct people and things as they move on and off the stage.

The CREW
Build and operate the scenery, costumes, props, and light and sound during the performance.

The CAST
Includes all of the performers who present the story on stage.

The AUDIENCE
That’s right! There can be no performance without you—the audience. The role of the audience is unique because you experience the entertainment with the performers and backstage crew.
You are a collaborator in the performance and it is important to learn your role so you can join all the people who work to create this Dallas Children’s Theater production.
CURTAINS UP ON THE ROLE OF THE AUDIENCE

 Watching a play is different from watching television or a sporting event. When you watch T.V., you may leave the room or talk at any time. At a sporting event you might cheer and shout and discuss what you’re seeing. Your role as a member of the audience in a play means you must watch and listen carefully because:

- You need to concentrate on what the actors are saying.
- The actors are affected by your behavior because they share the room with you. Talking and moving around can make it difficult for them to concentrate on their roles.
- Extra noises and movement can distract other audience members.

Are you ready for your role in this performance?
Check the box next to the statements that describe proper etiquette for an audience member.

☐ Try your best to remain in your seat once the performance has begun.
☐ Share your thoughts out loud with those sitting near you.
☐ Wave and shout out to the actors on stage.
☐ Sit on your knees or stand near your seat.
☐ Bring snacks and chewing gum to enjoy during the show.
☐ Reward the cast and crew with applause when you like a song or dance, and at the end of the show.
☐ Arrive on time so that you do not miss anything or disturb other audience members when you are being seated.
☐ Keep all hands, feet, and other items out of the aisles during the performance.
1. Draw a picture of what the audience might look like from the stage. Consider your work from the viewpoint of the actors on stage. How might things look from where they stand?

2. Write a letter to an actor telling what you liked about his or her character.

3. Write how you think it might feel to be one of the actors. Are the actors aware of the audience? How might they feel about the reactions of the audience today? How would you feel before the play began? What about after the show ends?

4. Which job would you like to try? Acting, Directing, Lighting and Sounds, Stage Manager, Set designer, Costume designer, or another role? What skills might you need to complete your job?
## CURTAINS UP ON THEATER VOCABULARY

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Definition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ACTOR</td>
<td>any theatrical performer whose job it is to portray a character</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CAST</td>
<td>group of actors in a play</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CENTER STAGE</td>
<td>the middle of the stage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHARACTER</td>
<td>any person portrayed by an actor onstage. Characters may often be people, animals, and sometimes things.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHOREOGRAPHER</td>
<td>the designer and teacher of the dances in a production</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COSTUME DESIGNER</td>
<td>the person who creates what the actors wear in the performance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DIRECTOR</td>
<td>the person in charge of the actors' movements on stage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DOWNSTAGE</td>
<td>the area at the front of the stage; closest to the audience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HOUSE</td>
<td>where the audience sits in the theater</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LIGHTING DESIGNER</td>
<td>the person who creates the lighting for a play to simulate the time of day and the location</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ONSTAGE</td>
<td>the part of the stage the audience can see</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OFFSTAGE</td>
<td>the part of the stage the audience cannot see</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PLAYWRIGHT</td>
<td>the person who writes the script to be performed. Playwrights may write an original story or adapt a story by another author for performance.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PLOT</td>
<td>the story line</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PROSCENIUM</td>
<td>the opening framing the stage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PROJECT</td>
<td>to speak loudly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PROP</td>
<td>an object used by an actor in a scene</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SET</td>
<td>the background or scenery for a play</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SETTING</td>
<td>the time and place of the story</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SOUND DESIGNER</td>
<td>the person who provides special effects like thunder, a ringing phone, or crickets chirping</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>STAGE CREW</td>
<td>the people who change the scenery during a performance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>STAGE MANAGER</td>
<td>the person who helps the director during the rehearsal and coordinates all crew during the performance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UPSTAGE</td>
<td>the area at the back of the stage; farthest from the audience</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CURTAINS UP AFTER THE PERFORMANCE

Attending a play is an experience unlike any other entertainment experience. Because a play is presented live, it provides a unique opportunity to experience a story as it happens. Dallas Children’s Theater brings stories to life through its performances. Many people are involved in the process. Playwrights adapt the stories you read in order to bring them off the page and onto the stage. Designers and technicians create lighting effects so that you can feel the mood of a scene. Carpenters build the scenery and make the setting of the story become a real place, while costumers and make-up designers can turn actors into the characters you meet in the stories. Directors help actors bring the story to life and make it happen before your very eyes. All of these things make seeing a play very different from television, videos, computer games, or CDs of stories.

Hold a class discussion when you return from the performance. Ask students the following questions and allow them to write or draw pictures of their experience at DCT.

- What was the first thing you noticed when you entered the theater?
- What did you notice first on the stage?
- What about the set? Draw or tell about things you remember. Did the set change during the play? How was it moved or changed?
- Was there any space besides the stage where action took place?
- How did the lights set the mood of the play? How did they change throughout? What do you think the house lights are? How do they differ from the stage lights? Did you notice different areas of lighting?
- What did you think about the costumes? Do you think they fit the story? What things do you think the costume designers had to consider before creating the costumes?
- Was there music in the play? How did it add to the performance?
- What about the actors? Do you think they were able to bring the characters to life? Did you feel caught up in the story? What things do you think the actors had to work on in order to make you believe they were the characters?
CURTAINS UP ON ADAPTATION

An adaptation is a change made in something so that it can fit a new use. A GHOST TALE FOR MR. DICKENS is an adaptation of a book, which is meant to be read, into a play, which is meant to be performed and viewed. Will Osborne, Jenny Laird, and Randy Courts took the work of Mary Pope Osborne and adapted it so that it could be performed for an audience on stage.

Consider these questions for discussion before you attend the DCT production:

- What kinds of things did Will Osborne, Jenny Laird, and Randy Courts have to consider in writing a script, music and lyrics of the story?
- What kinds of things would Mary Pope Osborne be concerned about with an adaptation of her story?
- Do you think the performance will be shorter or longer than the book?
- What will the characters look like? How will they match the images described by Mary Pope Osborne? What differences can you expect?
- What about the story? What changes might you expect in adapting it for the stage? Why would these changes be necessary?

After the performance, consider these questions:

- Were there any characters or events that were in the book but not in the play? Why do you think these choices were made?
- Did the changes make the story stronger or was it weaker because of them?
- What do you think the set and costume designers need to consider when bringing the book to the stage?
- What things helped to tell the story on stage?

Use the following template to illustrate the similarities and differences between the book and DCT’s performance of A GHOST TALE FOR MR. DICKENS.
A GHOST TALE FOR MR. DICKENS
Compare and Contrast

How are the book and the play similar?

How are they different?

Book

Play
MARY POPE OSBORNE was born into adventure. Her dad was in the army, so every year or two her family would move to a different state, or even a different country! By the time she was 15, Mary had lived in 13 different houses and gone to eight different schools!

Writing children's books was a perfect career for Mary because she could still travel all over the world — but be back home in time for dinner. She has written almost a hundred books, including biographies, mysteries, picture books, novels and retellings of fairy tales and world mythology.

The books that have taken Mary to the most places are the Magic Tree House series. With Jack and Annie, she has traveled through time, from the prehistoric land of dinosaurs to the imaginary world of Camelot. But one of the greatest adventures of Mary's writing life is the creative journey she takes with her readers, meeting them in person in schools and bookstores and reading the wonderful stories and letters they send. This, Mary says, is true magic.

FUN FACTS:

**Childhood:** I lived in my imagination. I remember in first grade my two brothers (my twin brother and our brother one year younger) and I tried to fly by jumping off the top of the sliding board and flapping our arms. One summer we pretended our green picnic table was a ship and we sailed around the world. The next summer it was a stage where we put on shows. We pretended our bikes were horses. We built forts and made rafts and flags and maps. We pretended ghosts were after us. We pretended we were spies. My sister Natalie and I pretended we were in the circus or that we were a singing duo on a TV show or that we were in Peter Pan. Life was full of adventure, but it was all in our imaginations.

**Favorite books as a child:** The Little House on the Prairie books, Nancy Drew mysteries, The Little Princess, The Secret Garden, Uncle Wiggily books, and Ferdinand the Bull.

**Favorite Magic Tree House book:** I love Stage Fright on a Summer Night, in which Jack and Annie meet William Shakespeare. I love the theater—I acted in many plays when I was young and I later married a New York actor, and have spent my whole adult life in the world of the theater. I researched this book by going to the Globe Theater in London where Shakespeare's plays were performed. So today, I have this uncanny feeling that I actually know Shakespeare. That's the magic of using your imagination.

**Writing Process:** No two days are ever the same in my life. I might write at 6 a.m. or 10 p.m. I might write in my study, at a restaurant, on the porch, in bed, wherever. I jot down my ideas in little notebooks as I do my research. When writing Magic Tree House books, I might study 15 or 20 books on the subjects I'm thinking about. I look up lots of stuff on the Internet. I make an outline before I start working on a story. Then I rewrite, rewrite, and rewrite. I get good advice from my husband Will—and lots of help from my editor, Mallory Loehr. And eventually, about six months into the process, a Magic Tree House manuscript is complete. And a few months after that, the art by Sal Murdocca is done. (Sal's art is perfect! I always love seeing it for the first time!) Meanwhile, my sister, Natalie Pope Boyce, is working hard on the nonfiction companion books to the fiction books. Our big Magic Tree House team has been working well together for 25 years now.
CURTAINS UP ON THE AUTHOR (CONT'D)

Advice for young writers: Read, read, read. Write, write, write. Rewrite, rewrite, rewrite. And always love what you do. Also—if you get stuck, just take a break and then come back later and start fresh. And never, ever claim that you have “writer’s block.” In my opinion, there’s no such thing. You have good writing days and bad writing days. If you just keep at it, something worthwhile eventually happens.

Adapted from: https://www.magictreehouse.com/wp-content/uploads/MTH_Author_EG_WEB.pdf

CURTAINS UP ON THE PLAYWRIGHTS AND COMPOSER

When WILL OSBORNE (playwright and lyricist) was a boy, his imagination was full of characters from his favorite books. Pretending to be Robin Hood, Tarzan, and Peter Pan, Will and his friends had many incredible adventures in the woods behind his house. In those games, Will was usually the hero, swinging a stick and saying things like: “Take that, Captain Hook!”

Will’s love of pretending led him into his first career, as an actor. Traveling the country with theater companies and acting on television, Will sometimes had the chance to play villains. He says that this can actually be more fun than being the good guy!

Excerpted from: https://www.magictreehouse.com/about/

JENNY LAIRD (playwright) was a long-time Resident Playwright at Chicago Dramatists, where her first play BALLAD HUNTER premiered and earned a Joseph Jefferson Nomination for Outstanding New Work and won Chicago’s Cunningham Prize for Playwriting. Her play SKY GIRLS was originally commissioned and produced by Northlight Theatre, received Developmental and Production grants from the NEA and subsequently had its West Coast premiere at The Old Globe Theatre in San Diego. ONLY THE SOUND was the recipient of Mill Mountain Theatre’s New Play Award, an Illinois Arts Council Fellowship, as well as Chicago’s 2003 Jeff Award for Outstanding New Work. Jenny has had the good fortune to have her plays developed and produced at theatres all across the U.S. dedicated to new work; some of her favorites include: The Women’s Project, The Road Theatre, The Asylum, API, Stage 3, Rivendell Theatre, Horizon Theatre Company, The New Harmony Project and The Utah Shakespeare Festival.

During her decade in Chicago, Jenny had a strong presence in the theatre outreach and educational community. She was a professor of Playwriting at DePaul University and full time outreach educator for Northlight Theatre, where she created and developed The Open Door Ensemble - a writing and acting program for older adults. She was also a guest artist/teacher for numerous playwriting programs for underprivileged youth throughout the city and enjoyed every moment of nurturing young talent and helping kids to find their voice and tell their stories through her favorite medium.
CURTAINS UP ON THE PLAYWRIGHTS AND COMPOSER (CONT’D)

Jenny currently lives in Massachusetts with her husband, Randy Courts, and their wondrous eight-year old son, Quinn, and when she has time, blogs about her adventures raising a child with epilepsy and autism.

Excerpted from: https://www.mtishows.com/people/jenny-laird

RANDY COURTS (lyricist and composer) has collaborated with playwright/lyricist Mark St. Germain on the musicals THE GIFTS OF THE MAGI (ten consecutive seasons at the Lambs Theater; over three hundred productions worldwide, including two national tours); JOHNNY PYE AND THE FOOLKILLER (Lambs Theater; AT&T New Plays Award); JOSEPH AND MARY (Los Angeles, Dallas, Indianapolis and in concert in New York City; Pilgrims Progress Foundation Award); JACK’S HOLIDAY (Playwrights Horizons, nominated for three Outer Critics Circle Awards, including best musical); THE GINGERBREAD HOUSE (commission from Playwrights Horizons and Amblin Entertainment); THE BOOK OF THE DUN COW (New Harmony Project, Prospect Theater Company); and DOCTOR DOLITTLE (Theatreworks USA). With novelist/librettist Walter Wangerin Jr., Randy wrote the Christmas oratorio ANGELS AND ALL CHILDREN, and the operas POTTER and ELISABETH AND THE WATER TROLL (New Harmony Project). Most recently, Randy collaborated with writer/lyricist Will Osborne on MAGIC TREE HOUSE: THE MUSICAL, based on the bestselling children’s series by Mary Pope Osborne (national tour; c.d. on P.S. Classics). Randy is thrilled to be collaborating with his wife, playwright Jenny Laird, on a series of musicals based on the Magic Tree House books for Music Theater International’s Broadway Kids Collection.

Excerpted from: https://www.mtishows.com/people/randy-courts

CURTAINS UP ON DISCUSSION

Use the following questions to lead a discussion with students after attending DCT’s performance of A GHOST TALE FOR MR. DICKENS.

- How do Jack and Annie travel through time?
- What is Jack and Annie’s mission?
- What do Jack and Annie learn about Victorian England?
- Why does Annie have to pretend to be a boy?
- How are Jack and Annie treated by others when they are dressed as young gentlemen? What about when they switch clothes with the chimney sweeps?
- What happens with Mr. Dickens in the study?
- What happens when Olive steals Jack’s bag?
- Why does Mr. Dickens defend Jack?
- Compare how Mr. Dickens is treated at the restaurant to the way other characters (Jack, Annie, the child, and his mother) are treated. Why does Mr. Pinch mistreat those less fortunate?
CURTAINS UP ON DISCUSSION (CONT'D)

• Why does the plight of the poor have such an impact on Mr. Dickens?
• How do Jack and Annie convince Mr. Dickens that his writing is important?
• Why do you think it’s important to “give your gifts to the world”?

CURTAINS UP ON LANGUAGE ARTS

In A GHOST TALE FOR MR. DICKENS, it is Jack and Annie’s mission to persuade Mr. Dickens that his work writing novels is important and that he should continue to pursue it. Have you ever tried to persuade someone to do something? Perhaps you persuaded your friends to play the game you wanted to play at recess, or persuaded your parents to eat dinner at the restaurant of your choosing. Being able to persuade is an important skill and one that takes practice to use properly. In the following activity, students will write a letter from the perspective of one A GHOST TALE FOR MR. DICKENS character to persuade another character to do something.

The Art of Persuasion: A Letter Writing Activity

You will need:
• a pen or pencil
• The Art of Persuasion: A Letter Writing Activity handout

As a class, define and discuss the importance of persuasion (within the context of the play, but also in life). Brainstorm phrases or words that might be helpful when trying to persuade another person and record these on the board. Using The Art of Persuasion: A Letter Writing Activity handout as a guide, have each student select two characters from A GHOST TALE FOR MR. DICKENS (one to “write” the letter, the other to whom the letter is addressed). Allow time for the students to complete the handout thoroughly (clarifying the problem, the reasoning for their persuasive argument, persuasive words or phrases, and creating the letter). Encourage students to pass their letters to a peer for editing – where could they be more persuasive? Have volunteers read their letters to the class and discuss. Did students choose the same characters? Did they use similar arguments or did they take unique approaches? What made the letter “persuasive”? Don’t forget to remind the students to be respectful of each other’s work during discussion time.

Adapted from:
https://www.scholastic.com/teachers/lesson-plans/teaching-content/art-persuasion/
The Art of Persuasion: A Letter Writing Activity

__________ (character #1) is writing a letter to _______________ (character #2).

What is the problem?

Persuasive Phrases or Words

Why should character #2 help character #1?

Dear ____________________________________________________________.

________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________

Sincerely, ________________________________________________________
CURTAINS UP ON FUN WITH MATH

As Morgan Le Fay mentions in A GHOST TALE FOR MR. DICKENS, Victorian England is “a time when a Queen named Victoria was the ruler of the British Empire.”

Learn about Queen Victoria and her reign by solving the following the word problems:

- Victoria was 19 when she became Queen in 1837. When was she born?
- Queen Victoria reigned for 64 years (until her death). What age was she when she died? What year was this?
- 37 years before Victoria died, boys under the age of 10 were banned from becoming chimney sweeps. What year was this?
- Victoria married Albert in 1840. What age was she?
- In 1861, Prince Albert died from Cholera. He was born in 1819. What age was he when he died?
- Thomas Edison invented the light bulb 41 years after Victoria became Queen. What year was this?
- The first mailbox was built 28 years before the light bulb was invented. When was this?
- Victoria’s Diamond Jubilee was in 1897. How many years as Queen did it celebrate?
- Victoria became Empress of India in 1876 until she died. How long was she Empress of India?
- Victoria had 9 children, 40 grandchildren, and 37 great-grandchildren! How many children, grandchildren, and great grandchildren did she have all together? If she spent 5 pounds on each for Christmas, how much did she spend in all?
- 10 years before Victoria died, schools were made free for all children. What date was this?
- In 1863, the Factory Act made it illegal for children to work more than 63 hours per week in a factory. If a child worked the maximum number of hours allowed (63), how many minutes a week did he or she work?

Depending on the age of your students, you can do these problems as a whole group activity, divide the students into teams and have a competition, or give the problems out for the students to work on individually.

Adapted and excerpted from: https://www.tes.com/teaching-resource/math-investigation-7213048
CURTAINS UP ON VICTORIAN CULTURE

During the Victorian Era, parlor games were very popular for those who had the leisure time to enjoy them, like those in the middle and upper class. These games were played indoors, usually in the parlor (the sitting or reception room). As a class, try out some of these Victorian parlor games and see if they are as appealing now as they were in the 19th century.

Charades
The game of Charades was mentioned by Charles Dickens and was certainly a Victorian favorite.

This is a good game for older children and adults. Prepare by thinking up a list of phrases or words that can be acted out. For younger children, keep them to a topic such as children's TV characters or books. It is important that the phrases are likely to be known by all the participants. Write each phrase on a piece of paper and put them into a hat.

Divide the players into two or more groups. Each group will take a turn at acting out their phrase.

Phrases and words can be broken down into smaller parts, so for example, football, could start by pointing at the foot, and then the mime could indicate kicking the ball, or throwing and catching a ball. It is common to indicate with a show of fingers how many words are included. Syllables are indicated by tapping the correct number of fingers on the forearm.

No speaking is allowed by the actors, but clues can be given. A gesture of cranking a handle indicates a film, a square drawn in the air indicates a TV program, and down on one knee and flinging out the arms in a theatrical gesture indicates a play. Cupping the ear means the word needed sounds like the word being acted, while holding the fingers out and close together means the word is a short word such as “an” or “in.”

Pass the Slipper
In Victorian times a slipper would have been used for this game, but any small item may be used.

Pick a player who stands in the center of a circle formed by the other players. The player in the middle must close his eyes and as he does so the slipper is passed from player to player behind their backs. When the person in the middle opens his eyes, the passing of the slipper immediately stops and the player must guess who holds the slipper. If he is correct, they change places, otherwise the player closes his eyes again and play continues.

Kim’s Game
This is a simple memory game, named after Rudyard Kipling’s novel, Kim. It is a good way of quieting things down after more rowdy games.

A tray is prepared containing a selection of small articles, preferably unrelated items. The children are given a time to look at the tray and try to remember the contents. The tray is covered or removed, and the children then try to make a list of the articles. It is much harder than it sounds and the memory plays many tricks.

Excerpted from: http://www.victorianschool.co.uk/parlour%20games.html
CURTAINS UP ON HELPING OTHERS

“I will keep using my books to fight greed and cruelty. My pen is my sword! Except my books will never celebrate wars and fighting. They’ll always show the joys and sorrows of real people. They’ll show how good always triumphs over evil.”
– Charles Dickens in Magic Tree House Merlin Mission #16 A Ghost Tale for Christmas Time

In A GHOST TALE FOR MR. DICKENS, we learn that Charles Dickens was deeply impacted by the poverty prevalent around him and that his passion for societal change drove the stories in many of his most famous books.

Unfortunately, you don’t have to go back in time to see such suffering. People (including children) around the world face many hardships in our modern age, as well. As a class, brainstorm and list problems that exist in our world today. Ideas can range from modern day child labor or slavery across the globe, or something closer to home, like homelessness in your own community. Hold a class discussion about ways students can help make the different problems better (as Charles Dickens strived to bring awareness to the problem of child labor and poverty in his books). As a class, pick one problem to focus on and create a project that can positively impact the people affected by this particular problem. Perhaps the students will bring awareness to the problem by creating posters to hang around school, or organize a canned food drive to donate to a local food pantry. And, as the song proclaims at the end of A GHOST TALE FOR MR. DICKENS, it is important that “you give your gifts to the world.”

For information regarding the child labor problem today, check out the following sites:
https://humaneeducation.org/blog/2017/10-tips-for-helping-end-child-labor/
https://www.wikihow.com/Take-Action-to-End-Child-Labor
https://www.unicef.org/media/media_27328.html
https://theirworld.org/community/a-world-at-school

CURTAINS UP ON ART

“All About Me” Silhouette Portrait Art Activity
Silhouette portraits were common in England in the 18th and 19th centuries until the rise of photography, although they remained popular for those in the lower classes for much longer (until photography became more economical).

In this activity, students will create a silhouette portrait of themselves, except their versions will represent more than just their physical likeness.
CURTAINS UP ON ART (CONT'D)

You will need:
- white and black art paper
- scissors
- a light source (to create a shadow)
- tape
- drawing materials (crayons, colored pencils, markers, etc.)
- magazines
- glue

Discuss the concept of silhouette portraits with your students (show examples from the Internet, etc.). Divide the students into groups of two and give each student a white and black art paper. Explain that the white paper will be the paper they will decorate as “all about me” and that they need to decide if it will be the background paper or their silhouette paper (traditional silhouettes were black on a white background, but they can choose to create a non-traditional version).

Provide a space for the student groups to take turns tracing each other on their chosen paper (the easiest way to do this would be to tape the paper to the wall and set up a light source that creates a shadow on the paper for the students to trace). After their image is traced, have the students cut out their silhouette.

Now it's time to get creative! Encourage students to utilize drawing materials, magazine clippings, etc. to decorate their white paper with images or words that represent them (they could focus on their backgrounds, likes, accomplishments, goals or aspirations, for example). When they have completed their “all about me” work, glue the silhouette to the background and display around the classroom. Don't forget to take a gallery walk and see everyone's unique version of a silhouette portrait!

Learn more about silhouette portraits:
http://cool.conservation-us.org/coolaic/sq/bpg/annual/v18/bp18-07.html#fn14
http://www.silhouettesbyhand.com/history/

CURTAINS UP ON READING

A few other books by Mary Pope Osborne:
American Tall Tales  
Christmas in Camelot  
Hurricane Heroes in Texas  
Tonight on the Titanic  
Midnight on the Moon  
Revolutionary War on Wednesday  
A Big Day for Baseball  
plus many more!
CURTAINS UP ON READING (CONT'D)

More books by Charles Dickens:
A Christmas Carol
Oliver Twist
Nicholas Nickleby
David Copperfield
A Tale of Two Cities
The Magic Fishbone
Great Expectations

CURTAINS UP ON MORE

Want to learn more about the Magic Tree House series?
Check out the website:
https://www.magictreehouse.com

For more information about Victorian England, look at the following sites:
http://www.victorian-era.org
http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/british/victorians/

And, don’t forget - there are numerous different A Christmas Carol movies available to rent (including one starring The Muppets)!
T.E.K.S. SATISFIED BY A GHOST TALE FOR MR. DICKENS

110.4 – English Language Arts and Reading, Grade 2
   b.6 – Comprehension skills: listening, speaking, reading, writing, and thinking using multiple texts. The student uses metacognitive skills to both develop and deepen comprehension of increasingly complex texts.
   b.7 – Response skills: listening, speaking, reading, writing, and thinking using multiple texts. The student responds to an increasingly challenging variety of sources that are read, heard, or viewed.
   b.12 – Composition: listening, speaking, reading, writing, and thinking using multiple texts—genres. The student uses genre characteristics and craft to compose multiple texts that are meaningful.

110.5 – English Language Arts and Reading, Grade 3
   b.6 – Comprehension skills: listening, speaking, reading, writing, and thinking using multiple texts. The student uses metacognitive skills to both develop and deepen comprehension of increasingly complex texts.
   b.7 – Response skills: listening, speaking, reading, writing, and thinking using multiple texts. The student responds to an increasingly challenging variety of sources that are read, heard, or viewed.
   b.12 – Composition: listening, speaking, reading, writing, and thinking using multiple texts—genres. The student uses genre characteristics and craft to compose multiple texts that are meaningful.

110.6 – English Language Arts and Reading, Grade 4
   b.6 – Comprehension skills: listening, speaking, reading, writing, and thinking using multiple texts. The student uses metacognitive skills to both develop and deepen comprehension of increasingly complex texts.
   b.7 – Response skills: listening, speaking, reading, writing, and thinking using multiple texts. The student responds to an increasingly challenging variety of sources that are read, heard, or viewed.
   b.12 – Composition: listening, speaking, reading, writing, and thinking using multiple texts—genres. The student uses genre characteristics and craft to compose multiple texts that are meaningful.

110.7 – English Language Arts and Reading, Grade 5
   b.6 – Comprehension skills: listening, speaking, reading, writing, and thinking using multiple texts. The student uses metacognitive skills to both develop and deepen comprehension of increasingly complex texts.
   b.7 – Response skills: listening, speaking, reading, writing, and thinking using multiple texts. The student responds to an increasingly challenging variety of sources that are read, heard, or viewed.
   b.12 – Composition: listening, speaking, reading, writing, and thinking using multiple texts—genres. The student uses genre characteristics and craft to compose multiple texts that are meaningful.

111.4 – Mathematics, Grade 2
   b.4 – Number and operations. The student applies mathematical process standards to develop and use strategies and methods for whole number computations in order to solve addition and subtraction problems with efficiency and accuracy.

111.5 – Mathematics, Grade 3
   b.4 – Number and operations. The student applies mathematical process standards to develop and use strategies and methods for whole number computations in order to solve problems with efficiency and accuracy.
111.6 – Mathematics, Grade 4  
b.4 – Number and operations. The student applies mathematical process standards to develop and use strategies and methods for whole number computations and decimal sums and differences in order to solve problems with efficiency and accuracy.

11.7 – Mathematics, Grade 5  
b.3 – Number and operations. The student applies mathematical process standards to develop and use strategies and methods for positive rational number computations in order to solve problems with efficiency and accuracy.

117.108 – Art, Grade 2  
b.2 – Creative expression. The student communicates ideas through original artworks using a variety of media with appropriate skills. The student expresses thoughts and ideas creatively while challenging the imagination, fostering reflective thinking, and developing disciplined effort and progressive problem-solving skills.

117.111 – Art, Grade 3  
b.2 – Creative expression. The student communicates ideas through original artworks using a variety of media with appropriate skills. The student expresses thoughts and ideas creatively while challenging the imagination, fostering reflective thinking, and developing disciplined effort and progressive problem-solving skills.

117.114 – Art, Grade 4  
b.2 – Creative expression. The student communicates ideas through original artworks using a variety of media with appropriate skills. The student expresses thoughts and ideas creatively while challenging the imagination, fostering reflective thinking, and developing disciplined effort and progressive problem-solving skills.

117.117 – Art, Grade 5  
b.2 – Creative expression. The student communicates ideas through original artworks using a variety of media with appropriate skills. The student expresses thoughts and ideas creatively while challenging the imagination, fostering reflective thinking, and developing disciplined effort and progressive problem-solving skills.

117.109 – Music, Grade 2  
b.6 – Creative evaluation and response. The student listens to, responds to, and evaluates music and musical performances.

117.112 – Music, Grade 3  
b.6 – Creative evaluation and response. The student listens to, responds to, and evaluates music and musical performances.

117.115 – Music, Grade 4  
b.6 – Creative evaluation and response. The student listens to, responds to, and evaluates music and musical performances.

117.118 – Music, Grade 5  
b.6 – Creative evaluation and response. The student listens to, responds to, and evaluates music and musical performances.
117.110 – Theatre, Grade 2
  b.5 – Critical evaluation and response. The student responds to and evaluates theatre and theatrical performances.
    A – Discuss, practice, and display appropriate audience behavior.
    B – React to and discuss dramatic activities.

117.113 – Theatre, Grade 3
  b.5 – Critical evaluation and response. The student responds to and evaluates theatre and theatrical performances.
    A – Apply appropriate audience behavior consistently.
    C – Discuss the use of music, movement, and visual components in dramatic activities and performances

117.116 – Theatre, Grade 4
  b.5 – Critical evaluation and response. The student responds to and evaluates theatre and theatrical performances.
    A – Apply appropriate audience behavior at formal and informal performances.
    C – Discuss how movement, music, or visual elements enhance ideas and emotions depicted in theatre.

117.119 – Theatre, Grade 5
  b.5 – Critical evaluation and response. The student responds to and evaluates theatre and theatrical performances.
    A – Analyze and apply appropriate audience behavior at a variety of performances.
    C – Identify and discuss how movement, music, or visual elements enhance ideas and emotions depicted in theatre.