

Decision Education Foundation English Curriculum

A Christmas Carol

by Charles Dickens

Unit Snapshot

<i>Designed For</i>	Middle and High School Students
<i>Essential Questions</i>	How are present decisions connected to the past and future? How does fiction reveal truth about humanity? How can art be literal and figurative? What influence do values have on happiness?
<i>Content and Skill Focus</i>	Decision Topics <ul style="list-style-type: none">• frames help define values• decisions end with action• influence of past and future on present decisions English Topics <ul style="list-style-type: none">• dynamic and static characters• symbolism in literature• role of audience in writing and speaking
<i>Expected Outcomes</i>	Ability to <ul style="list-style-type: none">• explain interaction of values, alternatives and commitment to action• demonstrate how framing influences values• use decision vocabulary to describe Scrooge's transformation
<i>Kinds of Assessment</i>	Performance Task: Television Talk Show Annotated Illustrations of the Ghosts Personal essay
<i>Time Required</i>	Two, three, or four weeks
<i>Comments</i>	In this lively ghost story Dickens describes the dramatic transformation of Ebenezer Scrooge, and provides a look at how various elements of decision making influence his change and actions.

(Version 7)



Overview

General Description: This unit is designed for students in grades 8-10, but it can be adapted for older or younger groups. Using Dickens's novel, *A Christmas Carol*, students will explore the connection among five parts of the decision process: [useful frame](#), [creative alternatives](#), [useful information](#), [clear values](#), and [commitment to follow through](#).

Duration: The complete plan requires at least two weeks. However, depending on how teachers decide to emphasize different parts of the unit, students can remain profitably engaged for three or four weeks.

Summary and Decision Perspective: *A Christmas Carol* is a lively ghost story that depicts the dramatic transformation of Ebenezer Scrooge from a mean-spirited miser who shuns his neighbors to a generous, open-hearted benefactor who seeks the company of others. The catalyst for his change of heart is a succession of visitations from four ghosts: that of Marley, Scrooge's former business partner, and the Ghosts of Christmas Past, Present, and Future.

Even though most of the characters are similar to one-dimensional types found in morality tales, the main character changes—he is dynamic, and the story includes intriguing psychological and moral dimensions for students to consider. The novel also provides a useful context for exploring the importance of [frames](#) and [information](#) in the decision process as well as the interaction between defining [values](#) and [alternatives](#). The ghosts in the story force the main character to look at his situation through a variety of frames which include the perspectives of a dead business partner, Scrooge's past, the circumstances of others in the present, and a grim look into a future where no change of habits have occurred. Dickens provides a clear picture of Scrooge's values before and after his transformation, and we see clearly how these values influence the choices he makes. And, finally, the story demonstrates that carefully defined frames and values provide a clear path for [commitment to follow through](#) with a decision.

Page references in this unit plan refer to the Washington Square Press edition (ISBN 0-671-47369-7) of *A Christmas Carol*.



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1. Learning Plan

First Class: Introduction

Materials

Class Activity on Meaning and Framing
Performance Task: TV Talk Show (page 26)

Procedures

- During the first meeting, use **Class Activity on Meaning and Framing** to introduce the unit.
- Give students an idea of the goals of the unit by sharing the various assessment exercises.

Next Steps

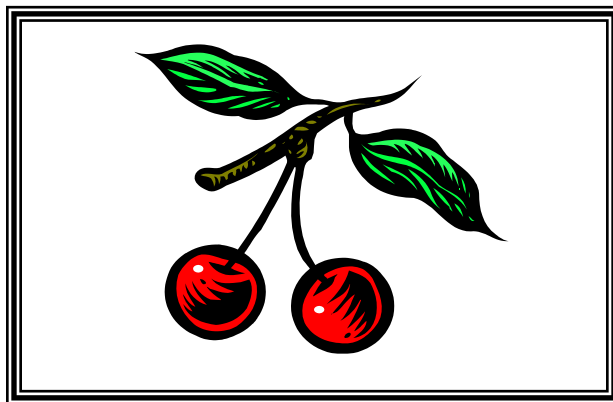
Assign groups for the TV Talk Show **Performance Task**.
Homework: Students read Stave 1.



Class Activity on Meaning and Framing

Introduce the unit with the following activity and discussion.¹

- **First Step:** Draw a picture on the board (or project the example below) of a frame with two connected cherries inside it.



Explain to the class that they should imagine that they are in a museum and that they have come across the painting above. Ask them to draw a quick sketch of the picture and then write a few sentences about their response or reaction to what they see. Five minutes. No help. No talking.

- **Second Step:** Then tell the group that they really only saw part of the picture and that the following frame includes the entire painting. Change the original picture so that it includes an ax.



Ask the class to do the same with this picture as they did the first: quick sketch followed by a few sentences of reaction to what they see. No talking. No help. Five minutes tops.

- **Third Step:** Ask members of the class to share their reactions to both paintings and to discuss the differences between the first and second pictures. What we hope is that

¹ Adapted from an exercise on cultural literacy by John Fleming, Chaucer Class, Bread Loaf School of English, Middlebury, VT, 1986.

students will recognize the second painting as a representation of the childhood story (American cultural myth) of George Washington: he cut down the cherry tree, and when asked about it, he did not lie. Points to make once students have understood the connection:

1. We can enjoy art (including literature) on both a literal and figurative level. For example, in the second picture the cherries and the ax could be painted so realistically that our mouths water when we see the fruit, and the ax looks so sharp we feel we would cut ourselves if we touched it. However, the painting also has an idea behind it that allows us to enjoy the piece on another (figurative) level as well. *A Christmas Carol* is a good ghost story on one level. At the same time, there is a figurative dimension to explore: certain characters and things represent ideas that help us understand Dickens's meaning. Explain to the class that they should enjoy the plot of this story, but that they should read with "figurative glasses" as well. Do the things or people in the novel suggest ideas? If so, how?
2. What we see in art (and in life and in decision making) often depends on what we know. For example, the ability to recognize the idea represented in the second painting above requires an American elementary education. The painting might not mean the same thing to a student from Africa or Russia.
3. Just as the different size frames on the two paintings above led to different reactions, the frame or perspective we take of any given problem or decision situation has a direct influence on the results. Let the class know that one important goal as they study the novel is to consider the importance of framing situations well.

Fourth Step: To give the class an idea of where they are headed, introduce the talk show **Performance Task** as well as the other components of assessment, and explain that they will explore how clear values, creative alternatives, helpful frames, and commitment to action are essential parts of good decision making.



Second Class: Values and Alternatives

Materials

Handout 1—Values Control Alternatives and Choices Reveal Values

Handout 2—Values Investigation: Stave 1

Procedures

- Once students have finished reading Stave 1, discuss the connection between defining clear values and finding creative alternatives in decision situations.

Important Note: The label, “Second Class” (and all of the following class labels) simply indicates the order of activities in this unit, not necessarily the actual meeting time. As students read teachers can add class periods and homework time as needed.

- Use **Handout 1** to facilitate discussion of values and alternatives.
- Give students copies of **Handout 2**. Review it with the class and answer any questions about the assignment.

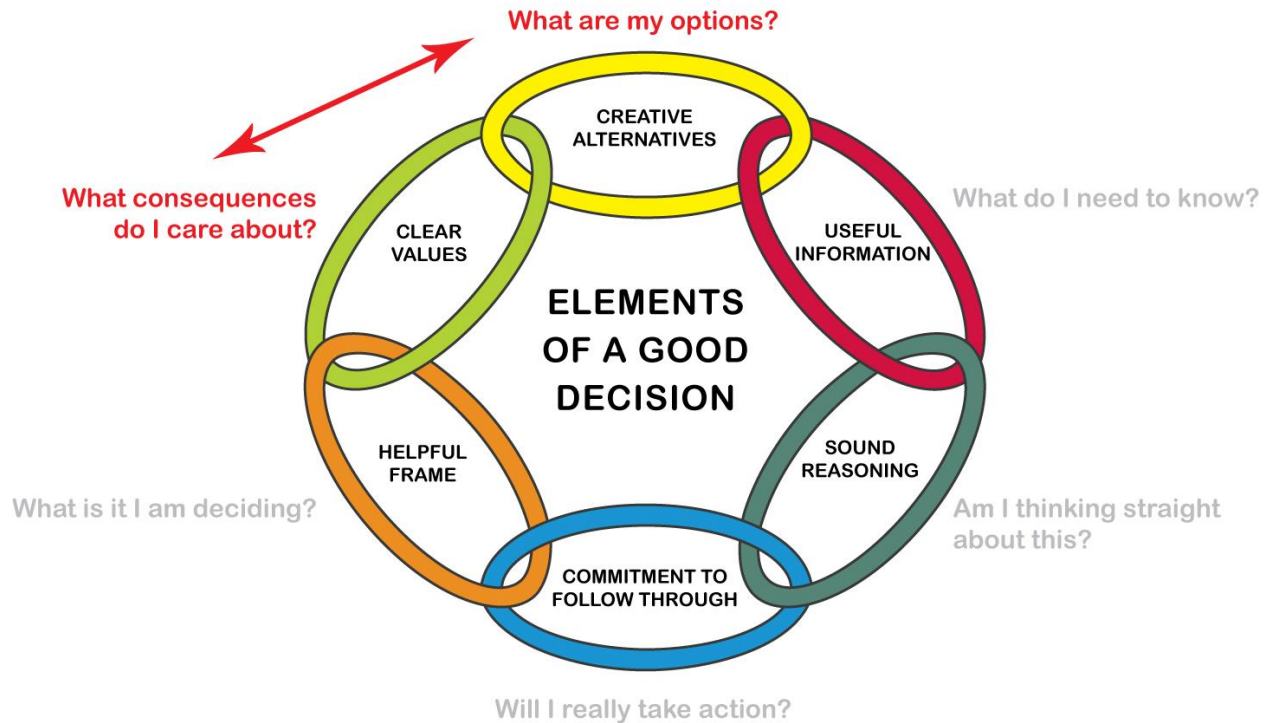
Next Steps

Homework: Students use **Handout 3** to examine Scrooge’s values in Stave 1.

Note: Alternative method--Use **Handout 3** as a class exercise. Students can work on it individually or in groups.



Handout 1. *Values Control Alternatives and Choices Reveal Values*



Values help us to...

- Identify important decisions to declare;
- Create/eliminate alternatives to consider;
- Build the motivation to follow through.

The kinds of *alternatives* I am willing to consider and *choices* I make reveal what I want or care about: they reveal my *values*. At the same time, careful consideration of the consequences I care about helps me to determine viable *alternatives* in a decision situation.

For example: Before his transformation, Scrooge cares about making and keeping as much money as possible. Therefore, when the two gentlemen ask him for a contribution to ease the suffering of the poor on Christmas eve, Scrooge's choice is clear: he responds to the question, "What shall I put you down for?" with an emphatic, "Nothing!" (page 26). *Looking ahead:* What new values drive Scrooge's choices at the end of the story?

Handout 2. Values: Stave 1

Directions: Following the example at the end of Handout 1, examine Scrooge’s values further by filling in the table below. Through each of the four encounters, what does Scrooge reveal about his *values* in “Stave 1”? Next to your comments, list page references of specific passages that demonstrates what Scrooge cares about at the beginning of the novel.

		Scrooge’s Values Revealed...
Scrooge’s Four Encounters in Stave 1	Scrooge and his nephew, Fred	
	Two gentlemen representing a charity	
	Bob Cratchit, the clerk	
	Marley’s ghost	



Third Class: Alternatives and Values Continued

Materials

Sample Responses to the Values Investigation: Stave 1
Handout 3—How Do Values Influence the Choices We Make?
Handout 4—Explore Your Values and Choices

Procedures

- Review students' responses to **Handout 1—Values Investigation: Stave 1**. For examples and discussion points, see **Sample Responses**.
- Give students **Handout 3**. Use the example of the coach to help students see the connection between values and alternatives.
- Ask students to work on the bottom half of the handout using examples from Scrooge's life.

Next Steps:

Homework: Give students **Handout 4** and ask them to fill it out as they finish reading the novel. Students should keep this handout for further use in the essay assignment.



Sample Responses to the Values Investigation: Stave 1

		Scrooge's Values Revealed...
Scrooge's Four Encounters in Stave 1	Scrooge and his nephew, Fred	<p>p. 17-18 "Bah...Humbug!" is Scrooge's response to Fred's, "Merry Christmas!" Scrooge does not care about the season or being merry. He values solitude.</p> <p>p. 19 If I could work my will...every idiot who goes about with 'Merry Christmas' on his lips, should be boiled with his own pudding, and buried with a stake of holly through his heart. He should!" Scrooge's strong reaction stems from caring about the expense of the holiday: he sees no value in celebrating because it only produces bills. He values holding on to his money.</p>
	Two gentlemen representing a charity	<p>p. 26-27 "I wish to be left alone," said Scrooge. "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. I help to support the establishments I have mentioned—they cost enough; and those who are badly off must go there."</p> <p>"Many can't go there; and many would rather die."</p> <p>"If they would rather die," said Scrooge, "they had better do it, and decrease the surplus population. Besides—excuse me—I don't know that."</p> <p>"But you might know it," observed the gentleman.</p> <p>"It's not my business," Scrooge returned. "It's enough for a man to understand his own business, and not to interfere with other people's. Mine occupies me constantly. Good afternoon, gentlemen!"</p> <p>The "establishments" Scrooge mentions here are prisons and Union workhouses. In his view people in need have reached that point because they are "idle." Scrooge values his own business and money above all else, even those in need. And, again, we see his desire to be left alone.</p>
	Bob Cratchit, the clerk	<p>p. 30-31 "You'll want all day tomorrow, I suppose?" said Scrooge.</p> <p>"If quite convenient, sir."</p> <p>"It's not convenient," said Scrooge, "and it's not fair. If I was to stop half-a-crown for it, you'd think yourself ill-used, I'll be bound?" The clerk smiled faintly. "And yet," said Scrooge, "you don't think me ill-used, when I pay a day's wages for no work." The clerk observed that it was only once a year.</p> <p>"A poor excuse for picking a man's pocket every twenty-fifth of December!" said Scrooge, buttoning his great-coat to the chin. "But I suppose you must have the whole day. Be here all the earlier next morning." The clerk promised that he would; and Scrooge walked out with a growl.</p> <p>Scrooge again reveals his preoccupation with money as he begrudgingly grants his clerk a holiday on Christmas day. Scrooge values his business, money, and hard work. It pains him to give Bob time off, and Scrooge requires an early start the following day to make up some of the time he considers paid for and lost.</p>
	Marley's ghost	<p>p.43 His initial reaction to Marley's ghost reveals that Scrooge trusts reason more than his senses and that he avoids humor. Marley asks, "Why do you doubt your senses?"</p> <p>"Because," said Scrooge, "a little thing affects them. A slight disorder of the stomach makes them cheats. You may be an undigested bit of beef, a blot of mustard, a crumb of cheese, a fragment of an underdone potato. There's more of gravy than of grave about you, whatever you are!" Scrooge was not much in the habit of cracking jokes, nor did he feel, in his heart, by any means waggish then.</p> <p>p.51 Marley explains why he is imprisoned by chains, and warns Scrooge that "no space of regret can make amends for one life's opportunities misused!" Scrooge responds,</p> <p>"But you were always a good man of business, Jacob," faltered Scrooge, who now began to apply this to himself.</p> <p>"Business!" cried the Ghost, wringing its hands again. "Mankind was my business. The common welfare was my business; charity, mercy, forbearance, and benevolence, were, all, my business. The dealings of my trade were but a drop of water in the comprehensive ocean of my business!" Although he is beginning to look beyond himself, Scrooge still values business, or the "dealings of [his] trade," above all else. (Another sign that he is changing occurs when Marley disappears and Scrooge tries but can't say "Humbug!" (p. 57).)</p>



Handout 3. How Do *Values* Influence the Choices We Make?

Explore further the connection between values and alternatives by adding information to the second table below.

Example

Values	Alternatives Chosen	Alternatives Rejected
Because the coach cares about...	...he chooses to...	...and he chooses not to...
<i>winning the game</i>	<i>practice every day scrimmage before game day</i>	<i>allow players to skip practice ignore the rules</i>
<i>safety of his players</i>	<i>consult with the trainer require health forms work on fitness</i>	<i>allow players to drive to games promote use of steroids</i>
<i>good character and sportsmanship</i>	<i>reward positive leadership bench players for intentional fouls</i>	<i>teach players to cheat curse at the referee</i>

Choose two of Scrooge's values, and use them to fill in the following table.

Values	Alternatives Chosen	Alternatives Rejected
Because SCROOGE cares about...	...he chooses to...	...and he chooses not to...



Handout 4. Explore Your Values and Choices

Directions: Choose two of your values (what you care about), and write down examples of how those values have influenced alternatives you have considered in particular decisions.

Values	Alternatives Chosen	Alternatives Rejected
Because I care about...	...I chose to...	...and I chose not to...

Classes Four through Seven: Values, Follow Through, and Illustrations

Materials

Handout 5—Clear Values Enable Commitment to Follow Through
Assessment Evidence: Annotated Illustrations of the Ghosts

Procedures

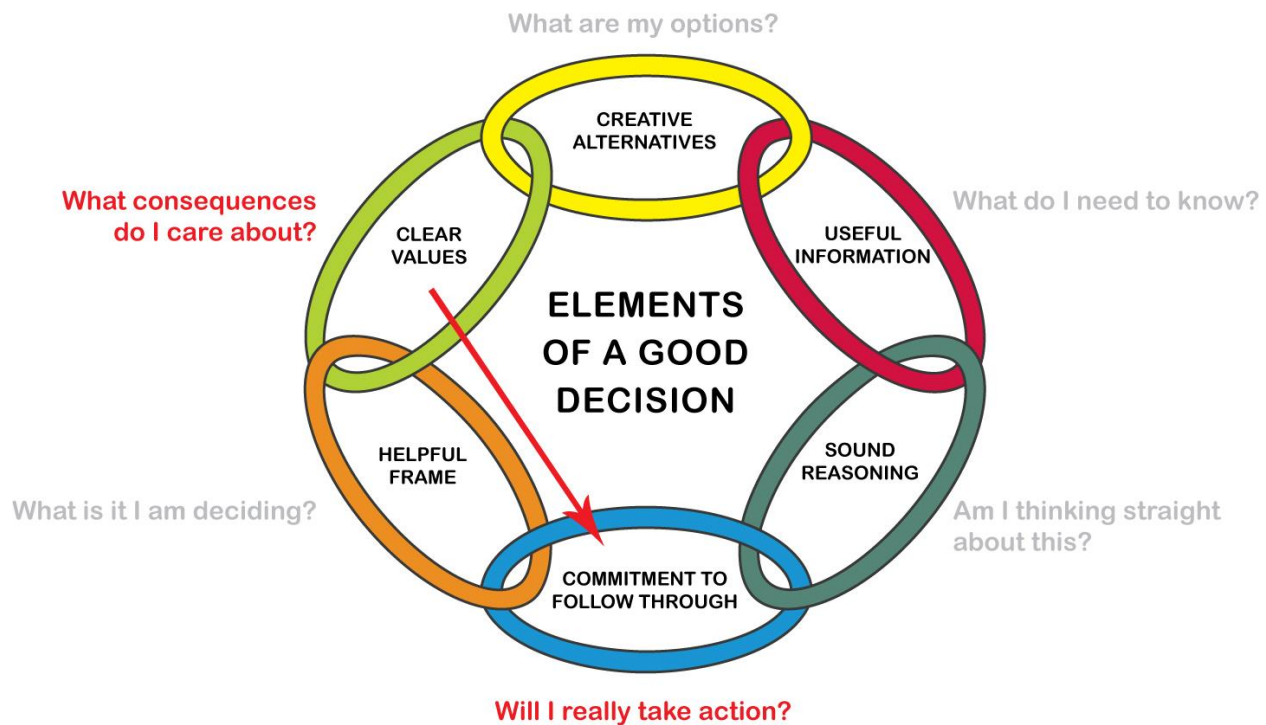
- Students finish reading the novel for homework. Recommendation: one Stave a night for a total of four assignments.
- Once students have read through Stave 3, use **Handout 5** to review and discuss further the connection between values and commitment to action.
- As students finish each stave, give them class or homework time to complete the illustration exercise. For detailed explanation see **Annotated Illustrations of the Ghosts** in *Assessment Evidence* (page 28).

Next Steps

Once students have finished the novel and the illustration exercise, allot time for them to meet with their TV Talk Show groups to work on the **Performance Task**. For more detailed directions, see *Assessment Evidence*, page 27. Total amount of time will vary depending on the expectations.



Handout 5. *Clear Values Enable Commitment to Follow Through*



- **By definition a decision includes commitment to action.**
- **If I have thought carefully about my values, *what I want*, I can confidently commit to an alternative and take action.**

Two Examples...

1. When the coach in the Handout 3 example took the time to list his three values in order of importance, he ended up with *safety* at the top, then *sportsmanship*, and finally *winning*. Because he had defined and ordered his values, when he saw his best player commit an intentional foul, the coach did not hesitate to take him out of the game. The coach viewed sportsmanship as more important than winning, and his clearly defined values gave him the confidence to act—to bench his best player even with the resulting possibility of losing the game.

2. Scrooge's nephew, Fred, values good cheer and family connection; therefore, he commits to inviting his grumpy uncle to Christmas dinner every year (See "Stave 3" page 147). However, in "Stave 1" we see that Scrooge has clearly defined his desire for solitude, and he takes confident (though sad) action: "Scrooge said that he would see [Fred] ____ Yes, indeed, he did. He went the whole length of the expression, and said he would see him in that extremity first" (p. 21)— Scrooge declines the invitation. *Looking ahead:* What causes Scrooge's values transformation by the end of the novel?

Eighth Class: The Size of a Frame

Materials



Class Activity on Meaning and Framing
Handout 6—Frames Influence Values, Alternatives, and Information
Thoughts on Frames for Teachers
Handout 7—Two Frames

Procedures

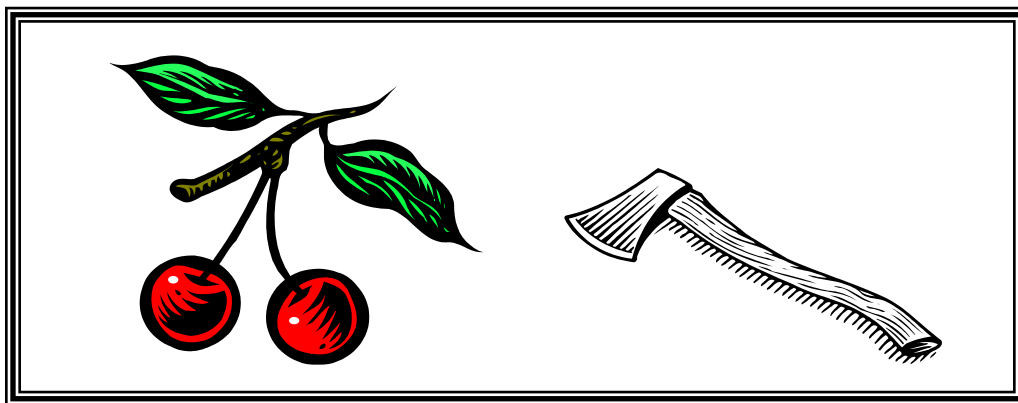
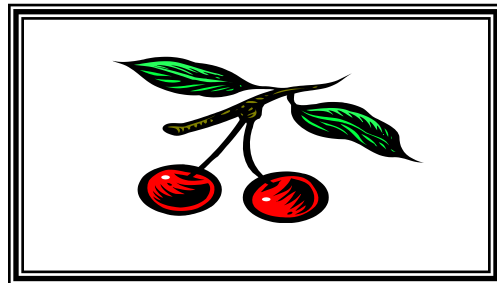
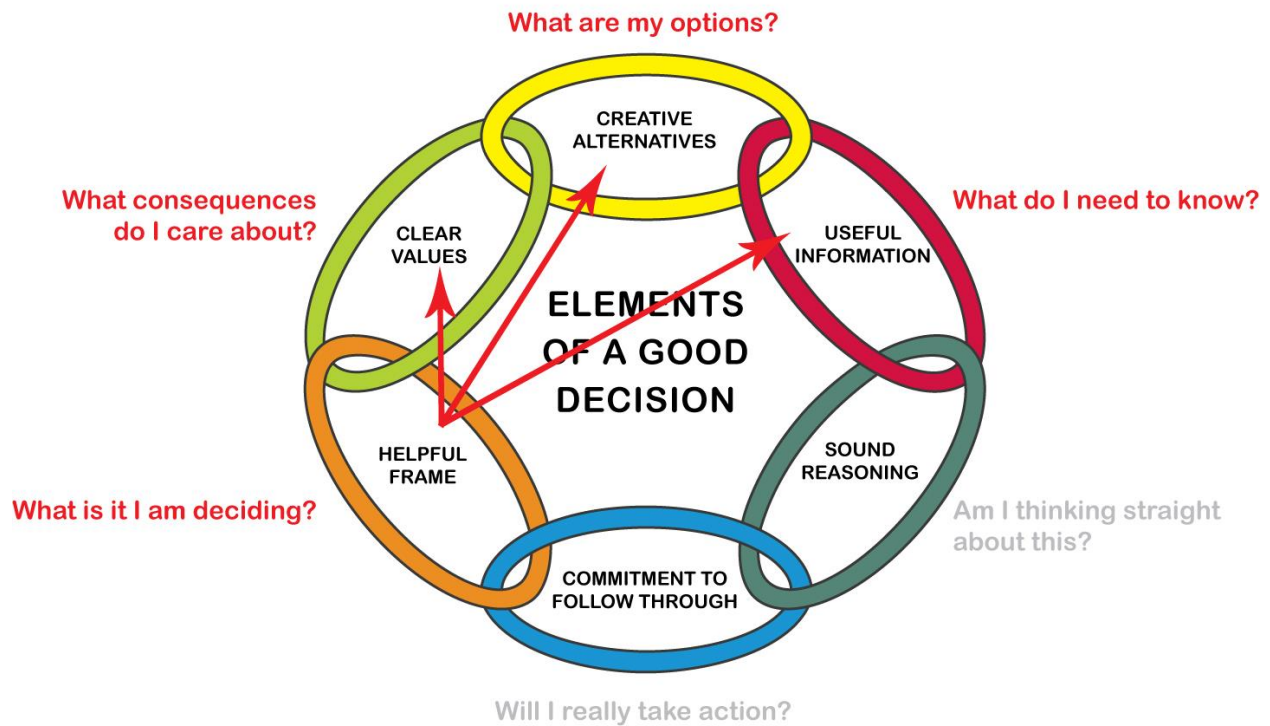
- Once students have finished the novel, introduce the concept of helpful frames by asking students to reflect on the two cherry pictures they sketched at the beginning of the unit. Ask volunteers to explain the point of that exercise. What do those pictures reveal about framing?
- Give students **Handout 6** and explore the topic further. Emphasize the question we ask when framing a decision.
- Use **Thoughts on Frames for Teachers** to create discussion questions tailored to your class.
- Give students **Handout 7** and explain the directions. For each of Scrooge's encounters with the ghosts, students should list in the appropriate quadrant two or three experiences that begin to enlarge the man's frame.

Next Steps

Homework: Students complete the framing exercise on perspective—**Handout 7**.



Handout 6. Frames Influence Values, Alternatives, and Information



Thoughts on Frames for Teachers

The frame defines the problem to be solved, and there are three components to a decision frame:

1. Purpose of the Decision. Why am I considering it, and what do I hope to accomplish?
2. Perspective on the Decision. How else might I and others affected view the decision?
3. Scope of the Decision. What decisions and issues will I address, and what will I exclude?

A Christmas Carol provides us with a striking illustration of number 2 above: “Perspective on the Decision.” When we compare Scrooge at the beginning of the novel to the Scrooge we find at the end, we see that the solitary miser has turned into a man with a generous spirit who craves the company of others—a man who is making strikingly different decisions than he did before his encounter with the ghosts. One reason for this transformation is that Marley and the three Christmas Ghosts have provided Scrooge with new frames through which he now views the world. Scrooge’s values evolve based on additional information he considers. These frames have a direct influence on his values and the resulting alternatives he chooses.

Two Challenges of Framing

Framing poses a special challenge because there are no hard and fast rules to determine whether one frame is more appropriate than another (other than: “It makes more sense.” or “It feels better.” or “It seems to capture more of what I am concerned about.”). The choice of frame usually comes down to a matter of judgment. For Scrooge there are two challenges:

1. Recognizing what constraints or assumptions should be challenged. Many times we make decisions without explicitly considering the decision frame. Often we allow ourselves to unconsciously constrain our thinking and miss good alternatives because we do not recognize that we have imposed unstated restrictions on the problem and solution. Marley’s chains represent a life-long habit of constricting the frame of his daily decisions to only what will make him the most money, and he warns Scrooge that he is forging the same kind of chain with his limited perspective. Notice also that each of the Christmas Ghosts help Scrooge challenge his assumptions. One of the most poignant examples occurs when Scrooge, with great feeling, asks the Ghost of Christmas Present about the two children, Ignorance and Want, that peek out from his robe, and the spirit reminds the man of his former limited view:

"Have they no refuge or resource?" cried Scrooge.

"Are there no prisons?" said the Spirit, turning on him for the last time with his own words. "Are there no workhouses?"

2. Considering all affected parties in the decision frame. A perspective on the problem can be so ingrained that we do not recognize our own biases. It is important to ask ourselves who else may be affected by the decision and to consider, through conversations, what they see as the problem and desired outcomes.

The Scrooge we first meet gives no consideration to the views of others. One of the major accomplishments of the three Ghosts is that they break open Scrooge’s narrow frame by making him consider the perspectives of a variety of people from his past, present, and future. Being able to consider the views of others is an essential ingredient of the transition from adolescence to adulthood, and helping teenagers break out of narrow biases and perspectives is one of the main purposes of education. Ironically, at the start of

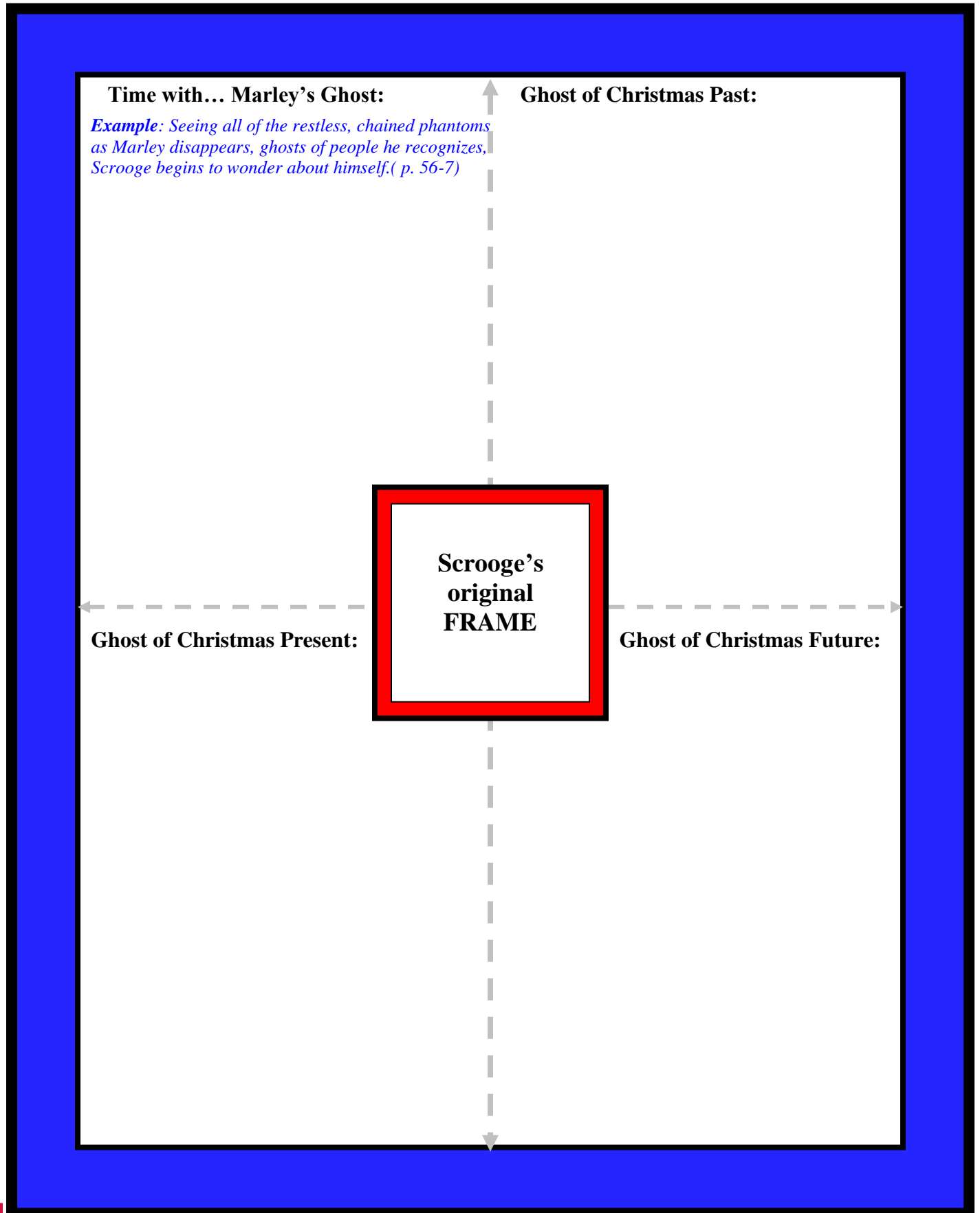


A Christmas Carol, the main character is an adult who seems to be stuck using the frame we usually associate with an adolescent: Scrooge lives mostly in present experience, he ignores the importance of events from his past, and he has no concerns about the future. However, by the end of the novel he reaches adulthood.² Scrooge embraces his past as a source of enlightenment; he recognizes the value of others in his life; and he faces the reality of his own death in the future. In other words, Scrooge breaks out of the limited frame typical of many adolescents, and takes on a larger, more adult perspective. The information he gathers from embracing these expanded frames has a direct influence on the evolution of his values. Social connection, generosity, and self-sacrifice govern his actions at the end of the story.

² O.B. Davis, Kent School English Department, Kent, CT



Handout 7. Two Frames: List important experiences that enlarge Scrooge's perspective.



Ninth Class: Values, Framing and Follow Through

Materials

Handout 8—Scrooge is a Dynamic Character

Sample Responses for Scrooge is a Dynamic Character

Handout 9—What is Commitment to Follow Through?

Procedures

- Review and discuss students responses to Handout 7 by asking a few volunteers to put their responses on the board (each person draws the frames and put examples in the quadrants).
- Use **Handout 8** to define *dynamic* and *static* and to explore further the connection between Scrooge's change in values and frame shifts. Complete the exercise as a class, in smaller groups, or individually. Follow with discussion.
- Give students **Handout 9**. Review for questions and assign as homework.

Next Steps

Homework: Students complete **Handout 9**.



Handout 8. Scrooge is a Dynamic Character

A *dynamic* character in literature is one that undergoes a fundamental change as a result of the plot. *Static* characters remain unchanged. While comparing Scrooge at the end of the story to the man we meet at the start demonstrates his dramatic development, a careful reading reveals that Scrooge's change is not sudden but is an ongoing, incremental process throughout Staves 1 through 5. **Use the following table to track Scrooge's growth:** List evidence (include page references) from Staves 1-4 that reveal a change in Scrooge's perspective. ***How do these examples reflect changes in his values?***

	Evidence of change in Scrooge (include page references)	New value reflected
Stave 1 Visit from Marley's Ghost		
Stave 2 Journey into Scrooge's Past		
Stave 3 A Tour of the Present		
Stave 4 A Look into the Future		

Sample Responses for Scrooge is a Dynamic Character

	Evidence of change in Scrooge (include page references)	New values reflected
Stave 1 Visit from Marley's Ghost	<p>p. 51 "But you were always a good man of business, Jacob," faltered Scrooge, who now began to apply this to himself. Marley's words are sinking in and Scrooge begins to compare his situation to his friend's.</p> <p>p. 52 Scrooge was very much dismayed to hear the spectre going on at this rate, and began to quake exceedingly. Even though it is fear, Scrooge begins to show emotion.</p> <p>p. 57 Scrooge closed the window, and examined the door by which the Ghost had entered. It was double locked, as he had locked it with his own hands, and the bolts were undisturbed. He tried to say "Humbug!" but stopped at the first syllable. After Marley leaves, Scrooge's inability to say "Humbug" reflects the first crack in his hard-hearted, cynical attitude.</p>	<p><i>interest in another</i></p> <p><i>feelings are more important than before</i></p>
Stave 2 Journey into Scrooge's Past	<p>Scrooge's senses, feelings, and imagination are stirred (see p. 68-72) by returning to the village where he was born: "Your lip is trembling," said the Ghost. "And what is that upon your cheek?" Scrooge muttered, with an unusual catching in his voice, that it was a pimple; and begged the Ghost to lead him where he would.... "Why, it's Ali Baba!" Scrooge exclaimed in ecstasy. "It's dear old honest Ali Baba!"</p> <p>After Scrooge sees himself as a child he wishes he could speak to the boy who showed up at his door (p. 74). When he sees his sister who died, he thinks uneasily about his nephew (p. 79). After visiting Fezziwig's party and being reminded of his apprenticeship, Scrooge wishes to speak to Bob Cratchit (p. 88). Finally Scrooge is tormented by his past decision to choose money over marrying Bell, and he must extinguish the Ghost's light because the truth is too much (p.100).</p>	<p><i>cares about the feelings past memories inspire</i></p> <p><i>human connection and kindness</i></p>
Stave 3 A Tour of the Present	<p>Scrooge admits the first Ghost's lesson is taking effect (p. 108). Scrooge shows concern for Tiny Tim's health (p. 131): "No, no," said Scrooge. "Oh, no, kind Spirit! say he will be spared."</p> <p>"If these shadows remain unaltered by the Future, none other of my race," returned the Ghost, "will find him here. What then? If he be like to die, he had better do it, and decrease the surplus population." Scrooge hung his head to hear his own words quoted by the Spirit, and was overcome with penitence and grief.</p> <p>Scrooge softened by music (p. 149). Begs for a half hour more to watch games and celebration in his nephew's home—no more "Bah! Humbug!" (p. 152)</p>	<p><i>welfare of a fellow human being</i></p> <p><i>enjoyment of a holiday celebration</i></p>
Stave 4 A Look into the Future	<p>Although he is afraid of this mysterious spirit, Scrooge admits that he has a "thankful heart" and wants to learn its lesson (p. 162)</p> <p>"I will honour Christmas in my heart, and try to keep it all the year. I will live in the Past, the Present, and the Future. The Spirits of all Three shall strive within me. I will not shut out the lessons that they teach. Oh, tell me I may sponge away the writing on this stone!" (p. 198) This passage is the most revealing evidence of Scrooge's transformation: he embraces and internalizes the memories of his past as well as the prospects of his future (especially the grave), and changes his course of present action.</p>	<p><i>joy, celebration, generosity, kindness, happiness and well-being of others</i></p>

Handout 9. What is Commitment to Follow Through?

- A decision without follow-through (action or purposeful non-action) is futile.
- Commitment to follow through means that we are set to act and have the ability to direct our action in a purposeful manner. If we are only halfhearted, our actions are usually less intense and may not achieve the best results.
- Commitment often involves sacrifices of time, effort, attention, money, or possessions.
- When we have committed the resources and accepted the consequences, we are living our decision and it is real.
- The appropriate course of action is clear, and it both feels right and stands up to logical scrutiny.
- A crucial part of commitment is recognizing and dealing with the obstacles to action.

Use the table below to explore Scrooge's commitment to follow through in Stave 5, "The End of It."

Old Values	List Scrooge's new values...	What actions are a direct result of these new values?
<i>accumulation of money</i>		
<i>long work hours</i>		
<i>solitude</i>		
<i>respect in the business world</i>		
Others?		

Tenth Class: Values and Action

Materials

Handout 9—What is Commitment to Follow Through? (completed)

Assessment Evidence: Essay

Handout 10—Final Note: Past, Present, and Future in Decision Making

Procedures

- Review and discuss student responses to **Handout 9**.
- Writing Workshop. Give the following essay assignment and allow students to begin in class. Assign a due date. (While groups present the TV Talk Shows during class, students can use homework time to continue work on the essay.)

Student Directions:

1. Pick ONE of the following topics as the focus of a short paper.
 - How my values—what I care about—influenced a decision I made
 - Why commitment to follow through with a decision was difficult
 - How enlarging the frame of a problem revealed more alternatives
2. Use personal examples or ones you have observed to illustrate your discussion.
3. Explain what you have learned about the topic from this unit of study.
Handout 4 might be a useful starting point.

Next Steps

- Assign dates for TV Talk Show performances.
- **Closure.** Either before or after the performance task presentations, use **Handout 10** to discuss the role past, present, and future in decision making.



Handout 10. A Final Note: **The Past, Present, and Future in Decision Making**

Below is a topic for a further discussion with students:

The three Christmas ghosts provide a useful representation of a fundamental reality of the decision process:

Making good decisions requires a careful look at past, present , and future experience.

The past gives us useful information that can have a direct bearing on helping us choose the best alternative in a given decision situation. We learn from past mistakes and successes. For example, Scrooge sees the unhappy—and unhealthy— results of his choosing financial security over life with Belle, who loves him.

We must look into the future to consider all of the possible outcomes of our choices as well as the likelihood of those outcomes happening. The gift that Scrooge receives from the Ghost of Christmas future is that the spirit makes him look at himself after his death through the eyes of others. He sees the sad outcomes of a lifetime of decisions narrowly framed by business activity and monetary gain.

The alternatives of a given decision situation exist in the present. We make choices in the present in order to influence our future. For example, considering, and being moved by, the future possible outcome of Tiny Tim’s death, Scrooge’s choice of alternatives in the present become clear: he sends the Cratchits an extremely large goose and he gives Bob a raise.

Scrooge’s statement at the end of the final ghostly visit is a powerful one that is both testimony to his transformation as well as good advice for healthy decision making: he says, “I will live in the Past, Present, and Future.” Before his experience with the spirits, Scrooge’s problem is that he lives only in a narrowly defined part of present time. Once he takes an honest, more complete look at the past, present, and future, Scrooge’s decisions begin to bring him fulfillment—and even joy.



2. Assessment Evidence

Performance Task: Television Talk Show

Goal: Inform and entertain your audience with a 15-20 minute talk show. The focus of this particular segment of the show is Scrooge's transformation.

Role: Groups create the talk show together and determine the roles of each of their five members. All talk show groups will need a host and someone to play Scrooge. The group must also decide which additional three characters from the story (ghosts can be considered as characters) to include as guests on this show about Scrooge.

Each group will also decide together what kind of show their host produces: human interest (i.e. The Oprah Winfrey Show); confrontational (i.e. Hardball with Chris Matthews); emotional (i.e. Barbara Walters); sensational (i.e. The Jerry Springer Show); humorous (i.e. John Stewart—The Daily Show); other?

Audience: Since the show is aired in the early evening, the audience (played by the rest of the class) includes teenagers and adults.

Situation: The network has decided that it needs a human interest story that will engage viewers and improve ratings, and the host has chosen Scrooge as the featured guest of the show. Scrooge's dramatic transformation has recently hit the news, and people want to know the details of how and why he changed.

Product: 1) A 15-20 minute TV interview with Scrooge and three of his associates and **2)** a written transcript of the interview for possible later publication in TV Guide.

Standards for Success: Successful talk shows will strike an even balance between entertainment and instruction. While an audience enjoys laughter, they also want to know more about Scrooge's decision making: what caused this notorious miser to choose to become so generous? Effective hosts will ask questions that will get Scrooge and the rest of the characters talking about Scrooge's frame (perspective) change, his values, and his commitment to follow through on his newly found generosity. While accurate details from the story are essential to successful interviews, it is also important to avoid simply retelling the story. As a part of giving groups feedback on their performances, the audience can give official TV ratings to each of the talk shows.

Notes and Procedures

1. To help groups decide what kind of show they will present, spend some class time showing excerpts from various current talk shows, and discuss the purpose, pros, and cons of each style. Teachers can limit the kinds of model shows as appropriate for individual classes and schools.
2. Teachers can adjust the scope and duration of this project by increasing the size of each group and adding more roles: larger groups could include a production crew (music, décor, etc.), advertising manager, sponsors, camera crew, etc.
3. If time does not allow for talk show presentations, teachers can assess understanding by having students work individually or in groups on writing an interview of Scrooge for a major magazine (Product 2 only).



2. Assessment Evidence (continued)

Other Evidence

Annotated Illustrations Of the Ghosts

Step 1: As they finish each section of the novel, ask students to take some time (either for homework or an in-class exercise) to illustrate as accurately as possible the ghost they have just encountered. Students should look closely at the details Dickens uses to describe the ghost and include those details in their drawings. Encourage students to use their artistic talents, but remind them that including accurate detail is most important here.

Step 2: Once they have finished reading the novel and have created illustrations of Marley and the three Christmas spirits, break the class into groups to share and discuss their drawings. Ask them to explore the figurative meanings Dickens suggests through his literal details. For example, what ideas do Marley's chains, the light emanating from the Ghost of Christmas Past's head, the Ghost of Christmas Present's torch, and the final ghost's silence represent?

Step 3: After everyone has had the chance to discuss the illustrations, the group chooses one example of each ghost for annotation. Make copies of the chosen illustrations, and ask each group to label the details they have discussed. Similar to an illustration of the human body labeled in an anatomy textbook, their final products will identify what the group believes to be the most significant details in the description of each ghost, and each labeled detail should have a brief explanation of the idea it represents (its significance).

Step 4: Display the final products of each group for whole class discussion of figurative language in literature.

Essay Assignment: Near the end of this unit, have students pick ONE of the following topics as the focus of a short paper. They should 1) use personal examples or ones they have observed to support their discussion and 2) explain what they have learned about the topic from this unit of study.

- How my values—what I care about—influenced a decision I made
- Why commitment to follow through with a decision was difficult
- How enlarging the frame of a problem revealed more alternatives



3. Resources on the Web

Biography, Background, and Electronic Texts

Bartleby.com: <http://www.bartleby.com/307/1000.html> Incisive overview of Dickens's life and influence.

Wikipedia: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/A_Christmas_Carol Helpful information on background and cultural context (poor laws, workhouses, etc.). Extensive chronological list of the various stage, TV, and film productions of the novel. Includes links to various online versions of the text.

