

PLAY GUIDE



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A Charlie Brown Christmas

By Charles M. Schulz. Based on the television special by Bill Melendez and Lee Mendelson. Stage Adaptation by Eric Schaeffer. By Special Arrangement with Arthur Whitelaw and Ruby Persson.

Major Contributors:



Dear Educator –

Lexington Children's Theatre is proud to be producing our 80th season of plays for young people and their families. As an organization that values the arts and education, we have created this Play Guide for teachers to utilize in conjunction with seeing a play at LCT.

Our Play Guides are designed to be a valuable tool in two ways: helping you prepare your students for the enriching performance given by LCT's performers, as well as serving as an educational tool for extending the production experience back into your classroom.

We designed each activity to assist in achieving the Kentucky Academic Standards (KAS), including the National Core Arts Standards for Theatre. Teachers have important voices at LCT, and we rely heavily on your input. If you have comments or suggestions about our Play Guides, show selections, or any of our programming, your thoughts are greatly appreciated. Please email Jeremy Kisling, our Associate Artistic Director in Charge of Education, at jkisling@lctonstage.org.

Please use the Teacher Response form following a performance. We are thrilled that you rely on LCT to provide your students a quality theatrical experience, and we hope this resource helps you in your classroom.

LCT's Education Department

The mission of our education programming



The mission of Lexington Children's Theatre's Education Department is to **provide students of all ages with the means to actively explore the beauty, diversity, complexity, and challenges of the world around them through the dramatic process.** We strive for young people to develop their own creative voice, their imagination, and their understanding of drama and its role in society.

Your role in the play

You may wish to have a discussion with your class about your upcoming LCT experience and their role as audience members. Remind your students that theatre can only exist with an audience. Your students' energy and response directly affects the actors onstage. The quality of the performance depends as much on the audience as it does on each of the theatre professionals behind the scenes and on stage.

Young audiences should know that watching live theatre is not like watching more familiar forms of entertainment; they cannot pause or rewind us like a DVD, there are no commercials for bathroom breaks, nor can they turn up the volume to hear us if someone else is talking. Your students are encouraged to listen and watch the play intently, so that they may laugh and cheer for their favorite characters when it is appropriate.

At the end of the play, applause is an opportunity for your students to thank the actors, while the actors are thanking you for the role you played as an audience.



Meet the Actors – A Charlie Brown Christmas

CATRON ARNOLD (*Lucy*) attends Lafayette High School. She is a proud member of the International Thespian Society and LCT's Companies. Catron is ecstatic to be part of *A Charlie Brown Christmas* for the second time. Patty will always hold a special place in her heart, but she cannot wait to bring Lucy to life!

NICK BAKER (*Schroeder*) is a sophomore at Steam Academy with a great interest in theatre production. Nick is a current member of Company B at LCT. Over the summer he was a spotlight operator for *Roald Dahl's Matilda the Musical* and last Christmas he played Charlie Bradley in *The Best Christmas Pageant Ever*.

KATE BROWN (*Sally*) is a seventh grader at Seton Catholic School. She is the oldest of three siblings and enjoys reading, acting, singing, and spending time with family and friends. Kate has performed in several plays, including *The Best Christmas Pageant Ever* (Gladys Herdman) at LCT. Kate is thankful for this opportunity!

WILL DARRAGH (*Pig Pen*), a seventh grader at Leestown Middle, is thrilled to be in his second performance with LCT! He is involved in several school activities, as well as performing with his rock band The Stereos. He recently performed in Stage Right's *Annie, Jr.* (Rooster), *Peter Pan, Jr.* (Peter), and LCT's *Peter Pan, Jr.* (Slightly) among many others.

JACK ELLIS (*Shermy*) is an eighth grade honor student at Sayre School. He performed with the Georgetown Community Theatre in *Elf Jr.* (Santa and Mr. Greenway). Jack enjoys watching movies and reading, currently *Ready Player One*. He wants to be a movie writer/director when he grows up.

DREW GOINS (*Pig Pen*) is a seventh grader at LCA, who has always had a big passion for drama. He loves attending LCT workshops and played Ollie Herdman in last year's *The Best Christmas Pageant Ever*. He is excited to play Pig Pen, a role he has prepared for since becoming a messy teenager.

RILEY GOSSAGE (*Eudora*) is a freshman at Lafayette High School. She is part of the SCAPA and pre-engineering program. Past roles at LCT include *The Best Christmas Pageant Ever* (Maxine), *Snow Queen* (River/ Wolf), and *Ms. Nelson is Missing* (Phoebe). She is thrilled to be onstage again and is extremely grateful for the opportunity!

AUBREY SLONE GRUNDY (*Frieda*) is excited to appear in her first production with LCT. Aubrey attends Jessie Clark Middle school where she is on the dance and track teams and sings with the school choir. While not acting Aubrey can be found competing with Lexington Dance Factory for the past five years.

RACHEL HAMILTON (*Patty*) is a freshman at West Jessamine High School. Although this is her LCT debut, last year she performed in West Jessamine Middle School's *High School Musical Jr.* (Ms. Darbus) where she found her passion for theatre. She advises everybody to take chances and not be afraid of failure.

MAKENNA HURST (*Sally*) A seventh grader at LCA, Makenna is proud to be in her debut production with LCT! She is also a Woodford Theatre Young Artist. Credits: *Peter Pan* (Wendy), *Mary Poppins* (Ensemble), *James and the Giant Peach* (Ladybug), and *The Sound of Music* (Louisa vonTrapp). Her dream is to be on Broadway!

JENNA JOHNSON (*Eudora*) is thrilled to appear as Eudora in her first LCT production! She is a member of LCT's Jr. Company, Blackbird Dance Theatre's Jr. Company, LCA's Chorus, and the local theatre and film community. Jenna would like to thank her family and friends for their support and LCT for this opportunity.

RACHAEL KELLY (*Violet*) is a sophomore at SCAPA Lafayette High School. She is excited to perform in *A Charlie Brown Christmas* at The Lexington Opera House. She would like to thank her family for their love and support.

LANDON LEPLEY (*Patty*) is an eighth grader at Morton Middle School. She recently performed in LCT's *Matilda the Musical*, *James and the Giant Peach Jr.*, and *The Adventures of Madeline* in addition to *Shrek Jr.* and *Ever After* outside of LCT. She enjoys guitar, dance, aerial silks, and making her family laugh.

ISABELLE LOGSDON (*Frieda*) is a tenth grader at Lafayette High School. She enjoys participating in extracurricular activities including Y-Club, Beta Club, teen court, orchestra, lacrosse team, and choir. She appeared in LCT's production of *Shrek! the Musical*. She hopes to be involved in United States politics. She enjoyed working with everyone on this show!

NOVALEE MCKEE (*Linus*) is extremely excited to be involved in her twelfth LCT production! Her most recent performance was *Afternoon of the Elves* (Sara-Kate). She also performed in LCT's 2014 production of *A Charlie Brown Christmas* as Woodstock. She wants to thank the entire LCT family for their support.

LIONEL MORTON (*Linus*) is a seventh grader at West Jessamine Middle. Lionel enjoys Broadway shows and international travel. Lionel has been involved in *Peter Pan Jr.* (Tootles), *The Best Christmas Pageant Ever* (Ollie Herdman) and *James and the Giant Peach Jr.* (James) at LCT. Lionel is excited to work with such talented actors!

SAMUEL MORTON (*Shermy*) caught the acting bug while playing Mufasa in Dixie Elementary's fifth grade musical production of *Disney's The Lion King Jr.* Samuel is excited to be a part of his fourth LCT production. In his free time, he enjoys drawing, singing, and playing video games.

GRACE OWEN (*Snoopy*) juggles Academic Team, sports, music, and theatre. She has gone to state in swimming and speech. At LCT she appeared in the Performance Workshops *Knights of the Kitchen Table*, *My Mother is a Neanderthal* (Fred), and *Gravity Falls* (Mabel), as well as productions at Leeds Theatre. She is excited to hone her acting skills as Snoopy.

TAYLOR RIORDAN (*Snoopy*) is a fifth grader at The Lexington School. She enjoys being part of Lexington's theatre community. Recently at LCT she appeared in *Peter Pan Jr.* as a Brave Girl and in *The Adventures of Madeline* as Madeline. She hopes her cast-mates break a leg!

CHARLIE STEPHENSON (*Charlie Brown*) is a tenth grade SCAPA Theatre major at Lafayette High school. This is Charlie's eleventh show with LCT. Recent roles include Grasshopper in *James and the Giant Peach Jr.*, Leroy Herdman in *The Best Christmas Pageant Ever*, and John Darling in *Peter Pan Jr.* He is a self-proclaimed cat whisperer.

RYLIE SUDDUTH (*Lucy*) is ecstatic to perform in this show! This will be her first LCT production and first time appearing on the Opera House stage! Rylie trains with Woodford Theatre's Young Artists. She thanks everyone who supports her, especially her cousin, Clay Zander, who was in this same production four years ago as Schroeder!

CHRISTOPHER COLE WEIKEL (*Charlie Brown*) is a freshman at the University of Kentucky. He has appeared in many shows at LCT and is excited to perform on the Opera House stage for the fifth time. He thanks his family for always supporting him along with LCT for the opportunity to play Charlie Brown.

HADLEY WHIPPLE (*Violet*) is a freshman at LCA. This is her fifth Main Stage production at LCT. A member of Woodford Theatre Young Artists, she loves singing in LCA's competition Treble Chamber Choir, and leading worship at Southland. When she grows up, she wants to be a physician. She thanks Ms. Viv for believing in her!

What to know – before the show!

Play Synopsis

Charlie Brown is having a hard time getting into the Christmas spirit. Even after sending Christmas cards and decorating trees, he doesn't feel the way he's supposed to feel. Try as he might, Charlie Brown cannot help but think that Christmas has been taken over by commercialism and spectacle as distractions for what it means to correctly celebrate the holiday season.

When he is unexpectedly asked to direct the Christmas play, it seems that he will have his opportunity to prove himself and find that certain something missing from his holiday experience. After a disastrous first rehearsal, and failing to pick out a properly not-so-grand Christmas tree, Charlie Brown resigns himself to never knowing what the holiday is all about. Watch Charlie Brown discover the true meaning of Christmas through exciting musical numbers, help from his friends, and simple truths from unexpected places.

Celebrating the Season

There are many ways to celebrate the Christmas season! Think about the special celebrations you have with your family and friends on and around the holiday season. Have each student draw a representation of their favorite seasonal tradition on the provided worksheet. Then present these pictures along with a description of the celebration to the rest of the class. Have each student tell what their role is in the celebration and how they help prepare for their holiday tradition.

VA:Pr6.1.3 VA:Cr2.1.4



What to know – before the show!

Schroeder's Merry Music

Play several short pieces of music and ask students to write down any change in beat, rhythm, style, or feeling they notice. Ask them to describe the pieces using words such as fast, medium, slow, sad, happy, energetic, etc. After, discuss the changes with the group with questions such as:

- How did the music change? (Refer back to the notes taken)
- What effect did the change have on you?
- Were you surprised when a change occurred?
- What do you think the change means?
- What do you think is happening in the story?
- What gave you clues to help you make decisions about this piece?

You will need:

Music from the Charlie Brown Christmas Special

MU: Cr1.1.13, MU:Cr1.1.2 MU:Cr2.1.3 TH:Pr4.1.2

Holiday Charades

Ask students to brainstorm locations in which winter activities may take place. These locations may include ice skating rinks, shopping malls, Christmas parties, Santa's Workshop, and more. One student will begin pantomiming an activity that could take place in one of the brainstormed locations (ex: building a snowman). Remind students to move slowly and deliberately as to make their actions as clear as possible. Once a student in the audience thinks they know where the scene is taking place, allow them to join the scene with a new action (ex: ice skating). Students continue to join the scene with their own actions (ice fishing, sledding, etc.) until all students have had a chance to participate. After all students have joined, the original location is revealed as students compare and contrast where they each thought they were.

MU: Cr1.1.13, MU:Cr1.1.2 MU:Cr2.1.3 TH:Pr4.1.2



How to grow – after the show!

Joy to the World

In *A Charlie Brown Christmas*, you saw many characters celebrating Christmas in their own unique way. Different countries and cultures celebrate the holidays with a variety of traditions.

As a class, make a list of winter holidays from around the world, such as Christmas, Kwanzaa, Hanukkah, Yule, Palo Voladare, Las Posasa, etc. Have each student pick one holiday to research and create a presentation. This presentation should include the reason for celebration, country of origin, special clothing worn, and various traditions involved with that holiday.

As a class, compare the holiday customs from different countries with those in the United States. Students will have the opportunity to create their own postcard representing the holiday they researched. These postcards can be used to decorate the classroom, or (just like Charlie Brown sends letters to his pen pal) students can send the postcard to a friend to tell them all about their festive research.

Social Studies 2.20, RI 4.2, W. 4. 1

Make a Commerical

In *A Charlie Brown Christmas*, all of the characters have their own idea of what Christmas is all about. In this activity, students will break up into groups and decide on one aspect of winter or the holiday season (building a snowman, singing Christmas carols, decorating for the holidays, baking, etc.) that captures what it means to celebrate the holidays. Each group will then create a short commercial persuading viewer that the best way to get into the holiday spirit is by participating in the activity that the group is advertising. Students will share their commercial by acting it out in front of the class.

TH: Pr6.1.3, TH:Cn10.1.3, TH:Cr2.1.3, TH: Cr1.1.3

Get up and Move!

Students create their own version of *A Charlie Brown Christmas* through movement. This could be a “day in the life” of a particular character or the whole Peanuts gang, a single scene, or an overview of the whole story using movement to tell the story. This activity can be done in small groups. Have students revisit the pieces of music from *A Charlie Brown Christmas* and create movement pieces based around the story with influence from the particular piece of music their group is given. Begin by having students move to the music. Refer back to the information in the “Schroeder’s Merry Music” pre-show activity to help guide your movement. Allow at least 8-12 minutes. After moving to one selection, ask about how the music made their bodies feel. Young people may respond differently than you expect.

You will need:

Music from the Charlie Brown Christmas Special

TH:Cr1.1.3., MU:Re7.1.3, MU: Cr2.1.3

How to grow – after the show!

Discussion Questions

1. Every family has holiday traditions. What are the ones you like to celebrate in your family? Ask your friend and neighbors about theirs and see if you can find a new tradition to begin this year.
2. Lots of people celebrate Christmas with family and friends. Why is this important to people? Why does family gather around the Holidays?
3. One of the traditions of Christmas is giving presents. What are some things that you can do to make sure everyone has a wonderful holiday? Is there something you can do to give to someone less fortunate than you?
4. What are your favorite foods associated with the holidays? See if you can make something special for someone else this holiday season.

Contextual Article

A teleplay is a screenplay used in the production of television plays, productions of comedies or dramas written or adapted specifically for television. The term surfaced during the 1950s with wide usage to distinguish teleplays from stage plays written for theater and screenplays written for films. All three have different formats, conventions, and constraints. On the hour-long TV anthology drama shows of the Golden Age of Television, such as *The United States Steel Hour*, *The Goodyear Television Playhouse*, *The Philco Television Playhouse*, *The Alcoa Hour*, *Armstrong Circle Theatre*, and *Studio One*, productions often were telecast live from studios with limited scenery and other constraints similar to theatrical presentations. These constraints made a teleplay quite different from a screenplay. However, television dramatists, such as Paddy Chayefsky, JP Miller and Tad Mosel, turned such limitations to their advantage by writing television plays with intimate situations and family conflicts characterized by naturalistic, “slice of life” dialogue. When seen live, such productions had a real-time quality not found in films, which are typically shot out of sequence, yet they employed tight close-ups, low-key acting and other elements not found in stage productions. For many viewers, this was equivalent to seeing live theater in their living rooms, an effect enhanced when television plays expanded from 60-minute time slots to a 90-minute series with the introduction of *Playhouse 90* in the late 1950s (*History of the Teleplay*, IMDB, Writers Guild of America).



How to grow – after the show!

What to Read Next

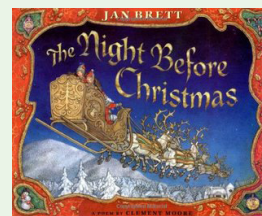
The Great Pumpkin by Charles Shultz

Every year, as the leaves start turning gold and the night air gets chilly, children all over the world begin dreaming of the Great Pumpkin... well, at least one faithful child does.



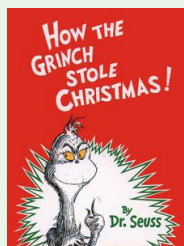
The Night Before Christmas by Clement C. Moore

'Twas the night before Christmas and all through the house, not a creature was stirring...



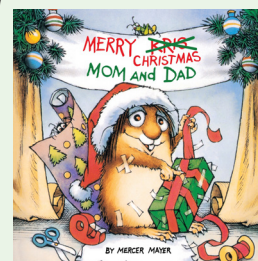
How The Grinch Stole Christmas by Dr. Seuss

The Grinch, whose heart is two sizes too small, hates Who-ville's holiday celebrations, and plans to steal all the presents to prevent Christmas from coming.



Merry Christmas Mom and Dad by Mercer Mayer

Little Critter approaches Christmas with the intention of being a good helper. When he makes a mistake, he has many a logical explanation.



LCT teaches in YOUR school!

Would you like to see some of these play guide activities modeled in your classroom?

Book a workshop for your class with one of LCT's teaching artists! In our pre-show workshops, our teaching artists will engage students in acting skills and themes from the play through drama activities. In our post-show workshops, students will extend their play-going experience by strengthening their personal connection to the play and deepening their understanding of the themes and characters.



Call us at 859-254-4546 x 226 to book a pre or post-show workshop for your class!

To learn more about Lexington Children's Theatre and our programming for your school visit:
www.lctonstage.org/for-educators/in-school-experiences/