

# Study Guide



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THEATRE

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## TWAS THE NIGHT BEFORE CHRISTMAS

Written by Kelsey Hopkins | Based on the poem by Clement C. Moore



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## A Note for Teachers

Experiencing a Columbus Children’s Theatre Production is an engaging, fun, and educational way for students to experience the performing arts! This simple, informative study guide is designed to prepare students for the show and expand their learning after the performance.

Though this is a virtual production, we ask that you please share the information on the following page, **“Theatre Etiquette,”** prior to the show to help your students learn about audience behavior.

Within this guide you will find worksheets, activities, and thought-provoking discussion questions for before the performance and after the credits roll. We are excited to share **'Twas the Night Before Christmas** with you and your students – enjoy the film!





# Theatre Etiquette

***Etiquette: the formal manners and rules that are followed in social settings, for ceremony or for any occasion.***

Just as the actors onstage or in a film have roles and a job to perform, the audience has a role of its own. It is important to learn and understand how to be a good audience member, and the difference between a live performance and a movie, so that everyone has the best possible experience!



## CHALLENGE YOURSELF:

- What are the differences between a live performance and a movie?
- Have you ever seen a live performance before? What was it?
- What are some Dos and Don'ts of a good audience member?



## Live Theatre

One of the key elements of a live performance is that the actors onstage can see and hear the you at the same time that you can see and hear them. It is important to be respectful to the actors and other audience members by having theatre etiquette, or following a polite code of Do's and Don'ts.

### Do:

- Be seated on time!
- Use the restroom before the performance.
- Clap and laugh if you see something that you like!

### Don't:

- Get up during the performance.
- Use electronic devices (phones, music players, games)
- Talk to the person sitting next to you. You might miss something important happening onstage!



## Film

The most obvious difference between the movies and live theatre is that live theatre has more immediacy. In the movies the events aren't really happening before your eyes but are projected onto the screen. What you are seeing has been filmed on separate days and edited together until perfection, or reworked until the director is happy with it.

As an audience member for a film, you are able to pause the movie whenever you want if you need to get up! You can eat or make comments, however, be mindful when watching movies with others as they might not enjoy talking while watching a movie.



# Roles in a Theatre Production

Usually, the only people the audience sees are the actors onstage, but performances are the result of many people working behind-the-scenes.

Let's see how many roles are needed to bring a performance to life:

## CHALLENGE YOURSELF:



Think about all the different jobs involved in creating a play or film. Which job would you most enjoy doing? Which would be the hardest?

**The Director:** The director is the leader of the show. They guide how the show will look and sound, and work with the actors to help them perform their characters. A director is like a painter: the actors and behind-the-scenes crew are the different colors they use to make a painting - a performance.

**The Cast:** The actors in a show. They memorize a script and listen to the director in order to tell the audience a story, using their imagination to show how their characters move and speak.

**The Stage or Production Manager:** The director's most trusted partner. They make sure that everything happens on-schedule, and take notes on everything that happens in rehearsals so that nothing is forgotten. For live theatre performances, stage managers run the tech of the show. Every sound effect, light change, and more take place because the stage manager makes sure that they happen on-time.

**The Designers:** The designers follow the guidance of the director and use their creativity to create the world of the show. There are many types of theatrical designers!

**Set Designer/Technical Director:** The set designer decides what the environment should look like. Then, the technical director takes their design and works with a team to build the set.

**Costume Designer:** Chooses everything an actor wears onstage, paying attention to when the show takes place and what the actor needs to be able to do in costume.

**Props Master:** Creates every handheld object that actors use, and makes sure they are durable enough to be used over and over again.

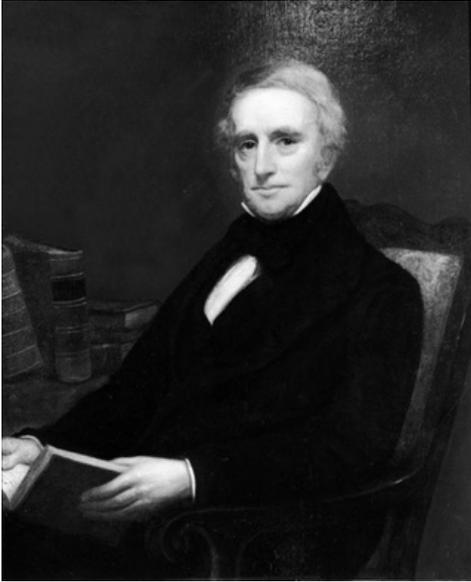
**Lighting Designer:** Decides how the show is lit. Lights can show what time of day or season it is, how the characters are feeling, and most importantly, makes sure the actors can be seen.

**Sound Designer:** Creates all of the sound effects, and sometimes even music for the show. If the actors are using microphones, the sound designer makes sure that they are working correctly.

# About the Show



## 'Twas the Night Before Christmas



Our film *'Twas the Night Before Christmas* is an **adaptation** of the poem written by Clement C. Moore. An adaptation is when an existing story is transformed into a new idea, like a book becoming a movie or a play.

**Clement C. Moore** (July 15, 1779 – July 10, 1863) was a writer and American Professor of Oriental and Greek Literature, as well as Divinity and Biblical Learning in New York City. This poem, originally titled *A Visit From St. Nicholas*, was first published anonymously in the Troy Sentinel Paper on December 23, 1823. It was sent to the paper by a friend of Moore. It was reprinted frequently thereafter and published as a small book in illustrated versions. It was not until 1837, in *The New-York Book of Poetry*, that the poem was first attributed in print to Moore. For decades, Moore refused to deny or confirm authorship of the poem, but he did take credit for it years later, in 1844, in his book "Poems", an anthology of his works. His children, for whom he had originally written the piece, encouraged this publication. At first Moore had not wished to be connected with the popular verse, given his public reputation as a professor of ancient languages. By then, the original publisher and at least seven others had already acknowledged him as author.



# About the Show



**Kelsey Hopkins** wrote and directed this version of *'Twas the Night Before Christmas*, in 2020. Kelsey has been involved with Columbus Children's Theatre since she was 13 years old when she started taking academy classes. She graduated Wright State University with a BFA in Acting with Emphasis in Musical Theatre. After years of traveling the country as an actor and arts educator; she is now an Artistic and Educational Resident Staff Member at CCT. Kelsey has directed and performed in many shows with CCT, and has written many short plays for their academy classes. This, however, is her first full length play she has written. and has been produced as a film.

## Special Effects

Because of the pandemic, we had to get creative in filming our movie. We filmed different groups of actors on different days. For example, the actors playing the family are a real family off camera quarantined together; so we made sure they filmed separately from the other actors. With the help of a Green Screen and Blue Screen painted studio, we were able to make it look like everyone was in the same place at the same time as well as add all the other magical special effects.

Green screen is a visual effects technique where two images or video streams are layered together. Green screen lets you drop in whatever background images you want behind the actors and/or foreground. In a film editing software, the chroma key singles out the selected color (usually green or blue) and digitally removes it by making it transparent. This lets the other image to show through. The key is to not wear any green (or blue if on a Blue Screen) or else it will disappear!



# The Characters



**Dad/Eric:** An overworked and stressed out father. He is feeling a lot of pressure from work on Christmas Eve and is not getting into the Christmas Spirit.

**Mom/Meredith:** Eric's wife. She is a warm and positive one of the family trying to keep everything together. She can use a little support from the rest of the family.

**Henry:** Eric and Meredith's son. He is high energy and excited, but doesn't do a very good job at doing his chores and minding his parents.

**Carolers:** The neighbor kids of the family going door to door to help get donations for charity by singing Christmas carols.

**Sugar Plum Fairy:** A magical fairy doll that comes to life. She dances ballet and spreads magic throughout the home.

**Santa Claus:** Jolly old St. Nicholas himself. While delivering presents around the world, he stops in to have a very serious chat with Dad and Henry.

**Jingle:** One of Santa's elves. He is a the goofy one.

**Jangle:** One of Santa's elves. He is a smart and intelligent elf.

**Holly:** One of Santa's elves. She is sweet like southern ice tea.

**Jolly:** One of Santa's elves. She is the cheerleader of the group and always has something to be happy about.

**Tinsel:** One of Santa's elves. She is the smallest and has a shiny personality.





# Themes in the Show



## Kindness and Compassion

Small acts of kindness can make a big impact. We see kindness and compassion from Mom when she gives money to donate to charity, and later after the house is cleaned how happy Mom was. The elves helped the family realize small good deeds everyday make the world a little more magical. When Dad and Henry gather boxes of donations to help those in need, afterwards Henry exclaims "I feel really good inside!" When we are kind and compassionate, we create happiness in others and ourselves.



## Getting Through Changes

It is clear the film is set in the present time, and it is no secret thanks to the internet that a lot of families have had their own struggles this year adapting through all the changes. We see in the family that the changes have been hard, and it has brought stress and tension into the home. In the end we learn that despite the obstacles, we can get through it together.



## What is the "spirit of Christmas?"

The Christmas holiday is not celebrated by everyone, but the "spirit of Christmas" is something that is talked about and felt every December. Many films about Christmas, like *'Twas the Night...*, try to explain the meaning of the holiday. In the story, we see that these characters believe Christmas is about enjoying the moments we have with those closest to us. It is a time of year about giving: showing people that you care by giving them whatever you can, whether it is a present, a handmade gift, acts of service and charity, or even just a friendly smile.



# Discussion Questions



## About the Story...

1. The family is struggling with all the changes that have happened in the past year. Has there been a time in your life you went through a big change, like moving to a new home? How did you handle the changes?
2. Santa gives Dad and Henry the tasks of completing 3 good deeds to get off the Naughty list. What are some good deeds that you would do if you were in their situation?
3. Henry has a Christmas tradition of reading the book "'Twas the Night Before Christmas" with his Dad on Christmas Eve. What are some holiday traditions that you have with your loved ones?
4. In the film Mom gives money to charity with the carolers, and Dad and Henry donate boxes to those in need. Have you ever helped someone in need or less fortunate than you? How did that make you feel?
5. When Dad falls asleep the Sugar Plum Fairy works her magic to bring his dream to life. Have you ever had a dream that you woke up and thought was real? What are your favorite kinds of dreams?
6. Santa calls on some of his elves to help out the family complete their 3 good deeds. Are there any friends you would call that would help you out in an instant?



## About the Show...

1. This was the first film production by Columbus Children's Theatre. Do you prefer going to see plays in person or watching them on video?
2. If you could work on a movie, what would be your job? Director, actor, videographer, writer and why?
3. The film was written during the present time. The time period of a show can affect the story based on what was going on in the world of that time. If you were to write your own movie, when would it be set and what would it be about?



## *Further Learning Activities*

### **Create your own elf!**

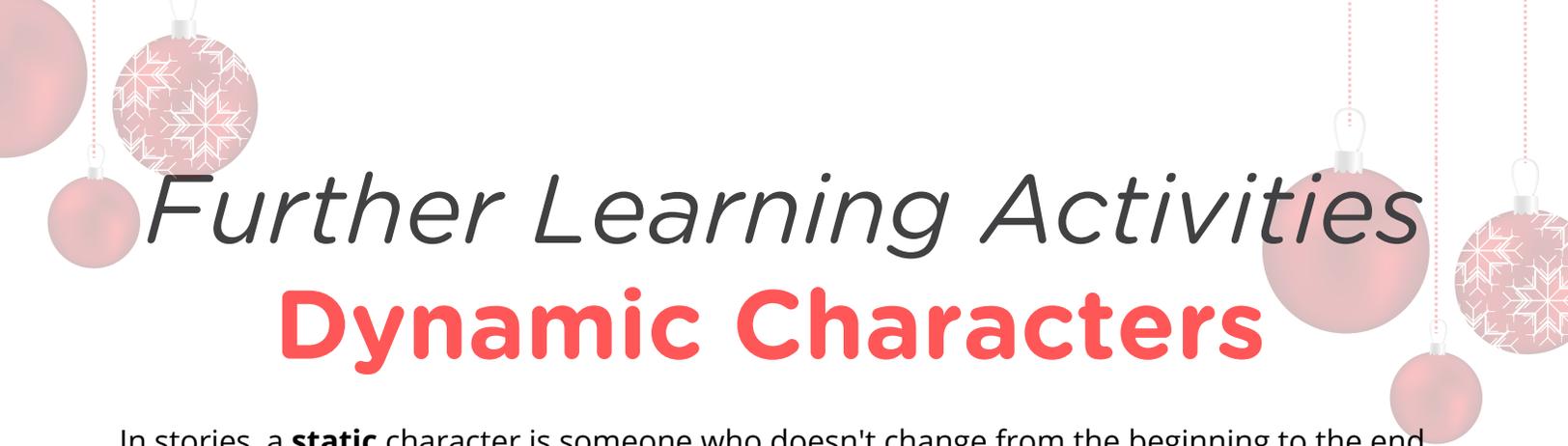
Santa has his little helpers, help out the family. If you had an elf to help you, what would they look like? Does their outfit reflect their personality like in the movie?

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

My elf helps me with... \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_



# Further Learning Activities

## Dynamic Characters

In stories, a **static** character is someone who doesn't change from the beginning to the end. A **dynamic** character is one who is a lot different by the end of a story. Which is Dad?

Look at the chart below. In each box write down something that Dad **thinks, says, and does** at the beginning of the show. Then, write something that Dad thinks, says, and does at the end of the show. Can you see a dynamic change?

In the beginning, Dad...

Thinks	Says	Does

By the ending, Dad....

Thinks	Says	Does



# Further Learning Activities

## Pay it forward...

One of the most important lessons in *'Twas the Night Before Christmas* is that a small act of kindness can affect someone's life in a big way. In this activity, challenge yourself to do something good for another person, and see the results!

**The person I would like to do an act of kindness for is...**

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**They deserve an act of kindness because...**

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**The act of kindness I will do is...**

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**Come back to this later: How did your act of kindness help the other person?  
How do you feel about it?**

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