

# The Story Behind Charles Dickens' 'A Christmas Carol'

Charles Dickens was mad. He was angry at his father, who was sent to debtors' prison, forcing young Charles to pawn his belongings, drop out of school and work in a shoe-polish factory. He was also angered by the conditions in which England's poorest children lived and worked.

He was going to publish a political pamphlet called "An Appeal to the People of England, on Behalf of the Poor Man's Child," with the goal of drawing workers and employers together to address the plight of poor children. Instead, Dickens ending up writing *A Christmas Carol*. He figured an endearing Christmas story with a plot built around the struggles of the poor would have broader appeal.

What he could not have predicted was that his story of Ebenezer Scrooge (who symbolized the conflicting feelings Dickens had for his father), Tiny Tim (England's poor, suffering children) and spiritual redemption would become arguably the most popular Christmas story ever told.

*A Christmas Carol* was written in just six weeks and published on Dec. 17, 1843 was greeted with wide critical acclaim. Many have credited it with reviving the celebration of Christmas and introducing the phrase "Merry Christmas" into the English vernacular. The book's first run (6,000 copies) sold out before Christmas Day, and by the following May seven editions sold out. However, it did not produce a windfall for Dickens, who footed the original production costs due to a dispute with the publisher.

Today, *A Christmas Carol*, which has been adapted in numerous plays, operas, ballets and films, is in its 24th edition. The tale has never gone out of print.

[In Stations of the Sun: A History of the Ritual Year in Britain](#), historian Ronald Hutton states that the modern observance of Christmas stems from Victorian Era customs driven by *A Christmas Carol*.

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