

CHARACTERS

Narrators 1-6

Fred, Scrooge's nephew
Ebenezer Scrooge, a miser
Bob Cratchit, Scrooge's employee
Ghost of Jacob Marley,
Scrooge's former business partner
Ghost of Christmas Past
Belle, a woman Scrooge once loved
Ghost of Christmas Present
Mrs. Cratchit
Tiny Tim, the Cratchits' son
Wife
Husband
Boy

Scene 1

Narrator 1: It's Christmas Eve in London, England, in the 1800s. A miser named Ebenezer Scrooge counts his money in his office.

Narrator 2: Bob Cratchit, a clerk who works for Scrooge, sits in a small office to the side of Scrooge's. He shivers in the cold because his boss is too cheap to give him more than a single piece of coal to light the fire.

Narrator 3: Scrooge's nephew, Fred, bursts through the door.

Fred: Merry Christmas, Uncle!

Ebenezer Scrooge (angrily): Bah! Humbug!

Fred: You don't mean that!

Scrooge: I do. What reason do you have to be merry? You're not wealthy.

Fred: There are many things that do us good without making us rich, Uncle.

Words to Know

miser *noun.* a stingy person who spends as little as possible in order to save money

melancholy *adjective.* having a feeling of sadness; depressing

Bob Cratchit (applauding): Hear! Hear!

Scrooge (to Cratchit): If I hear another sound from you, you'll be spending Christmas looking for a new job!

Fred: Don't be angry, Uncle. Come have Christmas dinner with my wife and our friends tomorrow.

Scrooge: Humbug! I wish to be left alone. Now, good day to you!

Narrator 4: Fred leaves. Soon, it is time to close up the office for the evening.

Scrooge (to Cratchit): You'll want the day off tomorrow, I suppose?

Cratchit: If that's convenient, sir.

Scrooge: It's not convenient, and it's not fair! I have to pay you a day's wages for no work.

Christmas is just an excuse to pick a man's pocket! But I suppose you must have the whole day. Be here all the earlier the next morning!

Cratchit: I will, sir.

Scene 2

Narrator 5: Scrooge leaves his office and soon arrives at his melancholy home.

Narrator 6: He stares at the knocker on his front door. He sees the face of Jacob Marley, his dead business partner who was his only friend. Marley died seven years earlier, on this very night.

Scrooge: Marley? It couldn't be.

Narrator 1: The vision of Marley vanishes. Scrooge tries to shake off his fear as he goes inside. He locks the door to his bedroom and then puts on his nightshirt, nightcap, and slippers.

Narrator 2: Suddenly, he hears a loud clanking noise, as if a person were dragging a heavy chain. The sound gets closer and closer.

Narrator 3: The ghost of Marley enters the bedroom, straight through the locked door. He wears a heavy chain that wraps around his body like a long tail.

Marley: Scrooooooge!

Scrooge (shakily): Who . . . who are you?

Marley: In life, I was your business partner, Jacob Marley. But in death, I drag these chains as punishment.

Scrooge: Why? You were always a good man of business, Jacob.

Marley: I was more concerned with money than with my fellow man. *Your* chain will be even longer than mine!

Narrator 4: Scrooge trembles violently.

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Marley: I am here to warn you. Tonight you will be haunted by three ghosts. Without their visits, you have no hope of escaping my fate.

Narrator 5: Marley disappears. Scrooge, exhausted, collapses onto his bed and falls asleep.

Scene 3

Narrator 6: Scrooge awakens in the middle of the night. He finds himself face-to-face with a strange-looking being. It looks like a child but, at the same time, a very old man. It's dressed in a long white gown.

Ghost of Christmas Past: I am the Ghost of Christmas Past. Rise and walk with me!

Narrator 1: The ghost takes Scrooge by the hand. Together, they fly out the window.

Narrator 2: Suddenly, Scrooge and the ghost are at a Christmas party at an old warehouse.

Scrooge: I used to work here!

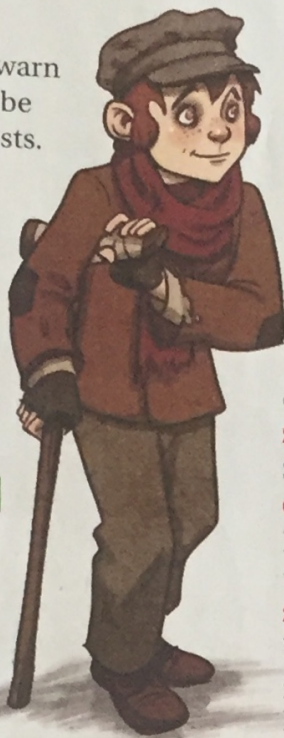
Narrator 3: Scrooge watches as the people dance and sing. He sees himself as a young man. He is dancing with a pretty young woman named Belle.

Scrooge: These were happy times, Spirit!

Ghost of Christmas Past: It appears so, but let us visit another Christmas.

Narrator 4: The joyful scene fades away. Scrooge then sees another version of himself a few years after the party.

Narrator 5: He is hunched over a desk, counting money. Belle is weeping at young Scrooge's side.



Belle: You've changed, Ebenezer.

Narrator 6: Scrooge ignores her and keeps counting his money.

Belle: I hope you are happy in the life you have chosen!

Narrator 1: Belle walks out the door in tears.

Scrooge (sadly): Spirit! Show me no more!

Ghost of Christmas Past: I only show you things that have occurred.

Scrooge: She loved me, but I grew cold and greedy. Money was all that I loved. Spirit, take me from this place!

Ghost of Christmas Past: Very well. I have done my part.

Narrator 2: Scrooge finds himself back in his bed. He sighs with relief and sinks into a deep sleep.

Scene 4

Narrator 3: Scrooge awakens to see a bright light coming from outside his bedroom door. He walks to the door and opens it.

Narrator 4: Scrooge sees a jolly giant wearing a green robe trimmed with white fur.

Ghost of Christmas Present: I am the Ghost of Christmas Present! Please, come closer and touch my robe.

Narrator 5: Scrooge does as he is told, and the room disappears.

Narrator 6: They are now standing in Bob Cratchit's house.

Narrator 1: Scrooge sees Cratchit's wife and their children dressed in shabby clothing as they prepare dinner.

Narrator 2: Bob enters with his youngest child, Tiny Tim. The boy is sick and weak. He hobbles to the table using a wooden crutch.

Mrs. Cratchit: How did little Tim behave?

Cratchit: As good as gold. Our Tim is growing strong and hearty.

Narrator 3: Scrooge can see from Cratchit's expression that this isn't true. Cratchit is worried about his son's health. Scrooge watches as the family sits down to eat their Christmas dinner.

Cratchit (to his family): A merry Christmas to us all!

Tiny Tim: God bless us every one!

Scrooge: Spirit, tell me if Tiny Tim will live.

Ghost of Christmas Present: I see an empty seat and a crutch without an owner. If things continue as they are now, the child will die.

Scrooge: Oh, no, kind Spirit! Say he will be spared.

Ghost of Christmas Present: I cannot tell you that. I cannot alter the future.

Narrator 4: The scene fades. Scrooge finds himself back in his bed, alone again.

Scene 5

Narrator 5: As the clock strikes midnight, Scrooge sees a phantom crossing the floor toward him. It wears a black hood that hides its face.

Scrooge: Are you the Ghost of Christmas Yet to Come?

Narrator 6: The spirit doesn't answer. It points toward the window with its bony hand. Scrooge shakes with fear.

Scrooge: Ghost of the Future, I fear you most. Will you please speak to me?

Narrator 1: The ghost does not give an answer.

Scrooge: Well, lead the way, then.

Narrator 2: The ghost sweeps up Scrooge. Suddenly, they are in another bedroom. A husband

and wife Scrooge has not seen before are talking.

Wife: What's the news?

Husband: He is dead.

Wife: Dead? What does that mean for us?

Husband: I don't know. I suppose we'll end up paying our debt to somebody else. I just hope that person isn't as cold and heartless.

Scrooge: Spirit, tell me who they are talking about. Who died?

Narrator 3: The ghost does not answer Scrooge.

Narrator 4: The scene fades. Scrooge and the ghost are now standing in a lonely graveyard.

Narrator 5: The spirit points toward a grave covered in weeds. It is clear no one has visited in weeks. Scrooge takes a step toward the grave and then stops.

Scrooge: Before I get any closer to that stone, answer one question: Are these visions of the things that *will* be, or are they visions of things that *may* be?

Narrator 6: The silent ghost continues to point at the grave.

Scrooge: Please tell me the course of lives can be changed!

Narrator 1: Following the spirit's

finger, he reads the name on the gravestone: Ebenezer Scrooge.

Narrator 2: Scrooge falls to his knees.

Scrooge: No, Spirit! Tell me that I can change what you've shown me! I promise that I will honor Christmas in my heart all year long. Tell me I may erase the writing on this stone!

Narrator 3: Scrooge reaches to grab the ghost's hand. The ghost shakes Scrooge off and suddenly disappears.

Scene 6

Narrator 4: Scrooge wakes up back in his own bed.

Scrooge (joyfully): This bed is my own! This house is my own! Best of all, the future is my own! There's still time to make amends for all I have and have not done!

Narrator 5: Scrooge dances across his bedroom. He then runs to a window and throws it open. He spots a boy walking along the street.

Scrooge: What day is it, my fine young fellow?

Boy: Today? Why, it's Christmas Day, of course!

Scrooge: Then I haven't missed it! The spirits have done all their work in one night.

Narrator 6: Scrooge throws some money down to the boy.

Scrooge: I want you to go to the store and buy the biggest turkey! Have the shop owner send it to the home of Bob Cratchit.

Boy: Yes, sir!

Narrator 1: The boy runs off in the direction of the store.

Scrooge: I'd better get ready. I have a Christmas dinner to attend! Oh, won't my nephew be surprised!

Narrator 2: Scrooge has a merry Christmas with Fred and his wife. The next morning, Scrooge gives Bob Cratchit a huge raise.

Narrator 3: And he does much more, becoming like a second father to Tiny Tim, who soon gets better. The people around town don't know what to make of the new Scrooge. Some even laugh at him, but he doesn't care. He simply laughs right back.

Narrator 4: Scrooge sees no more ghosts. But he never forgets the lessons he learned from them.

—by Bryon Cahill



The Women of NASA

Last month, LEGO released a new set honoring some of the many important women of NASA, the U.S. space agency. The 231-piece set was so popular that it sold out on Amazon.com in less than 24 hours. Here's a look at the four real-life space pioneers who are highlighted in the new LEGO set.



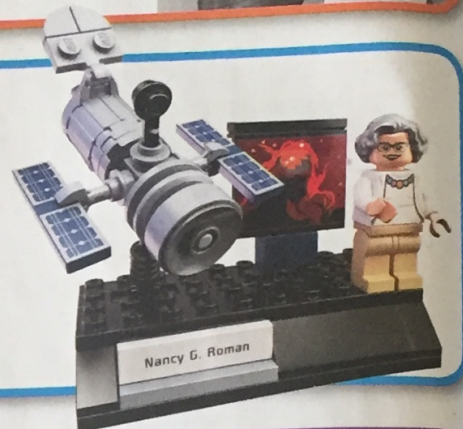
Margaret Hamilton

On July 20, 1969, the first astronauts set foot on the moon. They had Hamilton to thank for helping them get there. She led the team of engineers who created the software that the astronauts used to control their spacecraft. Hamilton's LEGO figure shows her standing next to a stack of books filled with computer codes she and her team wrote.



Nancy G. Roman

Roman was named the chief of astronomy at NASA in 1959. She was the first woman to hold such a high position at the agency. She later led the effort to develop the Hubble Space Telescope. Launched in 1990, the telescope gave scientists the first clear images of distant galaxies. It's still in use today.



Mae Jemison

In 1987, Jemison became the first African-American woman selected for NASA's astronaut training program. In 1992, she became the first African-American woman in space, as a crew member aboard the space shuttle *Endeavour*.

Sally Ride

Ride blasted off aboard the space shuttle *Challenger* in 1983, becoming the first American woman in space.

"I think now it really is true that women can be anything they want to be," Ride told *Scholastic News* in 2008. "They can **aspire** to any career—on the planet or off!"



Word to Know

aspire verb. to want very much to accomplish a particular goal



Should Schools Give Homework Over Breaks?

Kids in Ridgewood, New Jersey, have an extra reason to celebrate during the holiday season. Public schools in their district have a homework-free policy over school breaks. Daniel Fishbein is the superintendent for Ridgewood Public Schools. He says a break from school should also be a break from homework.

“There are some times when kids need to disconnect and focus on family,” he says. “There are plenty of nights of homework.”

Many other people agree. They argue that kids need time to relax over breaks so they’re refreshed when

they return to school. They also point out that many families travel during the holidays, and having homework can prevent kids from enjoying those trips.

But not everyone thinks schools should ditch homework over the holidays. Some people argue that it’s important for kids to practice what they learned in class so they don’t forget it over breaks. They worry that teachers who don’t give homework over breaks will end up wasting too much time reviewing lessons when school starts again.

Here’s what two of our readers think.

Yes! Homework during breaks keeps the learning going.

Just because students are on break doesn’t mean they should stop learning. Homework serves as a good review. Kids need homework over breaks so they don’t forget what they learned when school was in session.

Having homework over breaks also keeps kids busy and leaves less time for bad habits. I know that when I’m on breaks, I often spend too much time watching TV and playing on my phone. My school doesn’t give homework over breaks, but I think it should because it would give me and my classmates something to help keep our brains active.



Iness Zumazuma, Indiana

No! School breaks should be about fun and rest, not homework.

Kids need a break from homework so they can enjoy the holidays with their families. Also, breaks are a good time for kids to pursue interests outside of the classroom. Over spring break last year, I attended a basketball camp. I didn’t have homework, so I was able to focus more on improving my basketball skills.

Kids who go on trips for the holidays might not enjoy themselves if they have to worry about homework. Over a recent break, I went to New Orleans, Louisiana, where I visited the zoo and the National World War II Museum. I wasn’t assigned homework, but I still learned a lot!



Will O’Halloran, New York

What’s Your OPINION? Go online to cast your vote and download an opinion-writing skills sheet: www.scholastic.com/sn56

POSTAL INFORMATION: SCHOLASTIC NEWS Edition 5/6 (ISSN 1554-2440) is published weekly during the school year except holidays and mid-term. 22 issues, by Scholastic Inc. 2931 East McCarty St., P.O. Box 3710, Jefferson City, MO 65102-3710. Periodical postage paid at Jefferson City, MO 65102 and at additional mailing offices. POSTMASTERS: Send notice of address changes to SCHOLASTIC NEWS Edition 5/6, 2931 East McCarty St., P.O. Box 3710, Jefferson City, MO 65102-3710. Copyright ©2017 by Scholastic Inc. Scholastic News and associated designs are trademarks/registered trademarks of Scholastic Inc. All Rights Reserved. Materials in this issue may not be reproduced in whole or in part in any form or format without special permission from the publisher. Printed in the USA.

News Chart



Star Wars: The Last Jedi is expected to be a hit, but will it become one of the biggest movies ever? Here's a list of the top 10 money-making movies of all time in the U.S.



Title	Year Released	U.S. Box Office Sales
<i>Star Wars: The Force Awakens</i>	2015	\$937 million
<i>Avatar</i>	2009	\$761 million
<i>Titanic</i>	1997	\$659 million
<i>Jurassic World</i>	2015	\$652 million
<i>Marvel's The Avengers</i>	2012	\$623 million
<i>The Dark Knight</i>	2008	\$535 million
<i>Rogue One: A Star Wars Story</i>	2016	\$532 million
<i>Beauty and the Beast</i>	2017	\$504 million
<i>Finding Dory</i>	2016	\$486 million
<i>Star Wars: Episode I — The Phantom Menace</i>	1999	\$475 million

Note: Figures include re-releases of movies and are rounded to the nearest million. They are not adjusted for inflation. Source: Box Office Mojo

1. To become the top money-making movie of all time, *Star Wars: The Last Jedi* would need to earn more than \$ _____.
2. How much more money did *Beauty and the Beast* make than *Finding Dory*?

3. True or false? The second-biggest film released in 2015 made more money than the biggest film released in 2016. Explain.

News Review

Speaking Up pages 4-5

4. Why was standing out "the last thing" George Springer wanted to do as a kid?
 - Ⓐ He didn't think he was a good baseball player.
 - Ⓑ He didn't have many friends.
 - Ⓒ He was embarrassed by the way he talked.
 - Ⓓ He didn't want to speak up in class.
5. How did Springer embrace his stutter?
 - Ⓐ He accepted it as something that's a part of him.
 - Ⓑ He learned to slow down his speech.
 - Ⓒ He started using his hands when he talks.
 - Ⓓ He wanted to talk only around his family and close friends.
6. The section "An All-Star Voice" is mainly about _____.
 - Ⓐ why Springer does a lot of interviews
 - Ⓑ Springer's childhood experiences
 - Ⓒ how Springer is helping kids who stutter
 - Ⓓ Springer's role in winning the World Series
7. What is the main message Springer shares with kids who stutter?
 - Ⓐ Actions speak louder than words.
 - Ⓑ Be proud of who you are.
 - Ⓒ Hard work pays off.
 - Ⓓ Friends help you through tough times.

The Women of NASA page 14

8. Which detail would be most important to include in a summary of the article?
 - Ⓐ A new NASA LEGO set has 231 pieces.
 - Ⓑ The LEGO set sold out on Amazon.com in less than a day.
 - Ⓒ The set honors female space pioneers.
 - Ⓓ The Hubble Space Telescope is still in use today.
9. Which event happened first?
 - Ⓐ The first astronauts set foot on the moon.
 - Ⓑ Nancy Roman was named the chief of astronomy at NASA.
 - Ⓒ Sally Ride flew aboard the space shuttle *Challenger*.
 - Ⓓ Mae Jemison was selected for NASA's astronaut training program.
10. Which word is a synonym for *aspire*?
 - Ⓐ strive
 - Ⓑ study
 - Ⓒ ignore
 - Ⓓ learn

