

Unit Overview: Parent Guide

Christmas Carol, Grade 7

What is the goal of this unit?

Your child will read fiction and nonfiction texts about meaning and redemption found through selflessness and valuing people over material possessions. Your child will understand how writers use stories to teach these lessons and explore how literature resonates with readers and has “staying power,” becoming a part of our language, culture, and moral code.

What topics and skills is your seventh grader learning in this unit?

- Human connection/humanity
- Problems with emphasizing material possessions
- Lessons through stories
- “Staying power” of literature
- Character choice and impact on plot
- Character choice and impact on theme
- Informational Writing
- Research

What tasks will your child engage in to help them consider the topics and skills of this unit?

- **Culminating Writing Task:** Your child will bring together all her learning near the end of the unit by writing an essay in response to the question: *What does Dickens want us to understand about the “business” of being human?*
- **Extension Task:** Your child will extend her learning by conducting research and writing a written report to answer the question: *How has Charles Dickens influenced modern society?*

Your child will read these texts, watch these videos, and listen to these audio clips:

Text Title	Author/Source	How it is used in the Unit
<i>A Christmas Carol</i>	Charles Dickens	Main text of the unit
<i>A Christmas Carol</i> (2012 release)	Brian Desmond Hurst	Read aloud
<i>“Do Experiences or Material</i>	ScienceDaily	Student text

<i>Goods Make Us Happier?"</i>		
"Study: Experiences Make Us Happier Than Possessions"	Elizabeth Landau (CNNHealth.com)	Student text
<i>"The Treasure of Lemon Brown"</i>	Walter Dean Myers	Student text
"The Gift of the Magi"	O. Henry	Student text
<i>"Charles Dickens: Six Things He Gave the Modern World"</i>	Alex Hudson (BBC News)	Student text
<i>A Christmas Carol (1971)</i>	Chuck Jones (Animator)	Read aloud
<i>A Christmas Carol (Audio)</i>	Lit2Go	Read aloud
"History of Christmas"	BBC	Student text
Original manuscript of A Christmas Carol with Dicken's revisions	<i>The New York Times</i>	Student text

Ideas for discussing human connection

- What does it mean to be selfless?
- Can you think of a time when you were selfish? How do you think the other person felt?
- Can you think of a time when someone behaved selfishly toward you? How did you feel?
- Can you think of a time when you were selfless? Why?
- When has someone been selfless toward you? What did you experience in that moment?
- What does it mean to you to value people and not things?
- What stories have you read that have taught you the importance of valuing people over things?

Want to deepen your and your child's knowledge on the topic being studied?

Here is a suggested book list:

Title	Author
The Secret Garden	Frances H. Burnett
The Warrior's Heart: Becoming a Man of	Eric Greitens

Compassion	
Where the Lilies Bloom	Vera Cleaver
Lizzie Bright and the Buckminster Boy	Gary D. Schmidt

What does independent reading look like at home?

Independent reading gives your child the opportunity to read and interact with books that are on her reading level and that address topics that she chooses. Supporting independent reading at home helps build your child's confidence with reading, her reading stamina and reading achievement, and will help her do better in school.

Here are some ways you can encourage independent reading at home:

- Let your child pick out books that she finds interesting
- Prioritize reading. Protect time every day for reading. Before bedtime is a great time to read!
- Read together
- Read aloud
- Discuss what you're reading. Ask questions like:
 - Tell me about what you read today.
 - What did you like about it?
 - What didn't you like about it?
 - What did you learn?
 - What questions do you have about what you read?
 - What didn't you understand about what you read?
 - What do you want to learn more about after reading?
 - How does what you've read connect to other things you've read?