



# Dr. Seuss' HOW THE GRINCH STOLE CHRISTMAS



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An experience in theatre can be a gateway into a greater understanding of who we are; it can enhance our understanding of life. You may come to **HOW THE GRINCH STOLE CHRISTMAS** thinking that it is fun to break routine and get out of the school building, but you will walk away changed. You will have glimpsed a significant truth about the world and how each of us lives in it. So, as you take the time to process the experience by talking and exploring the excitement of the theatrical experience itself, also use it as a springboard into rich conversations and activities like those presented here.

## WHAT IS THE BIG IDEA?

Dr. Seuss gives us a chance to see our world again through fresh eyes and to realize that each one of us can work to make it better. Consider these possibilities:

- Sometimes as time passes, people can start to feel left out of holidays. You've heard people say, "It's just for the kids." Actually, the things that matter most have been around for a long long time. Your grandparents, for instance, or your parents. Ask the older people in your life what the holiday used to be like. **Listen** to them tell you about how they celebrated when they were little. **Take the time** to let them remember...especially the little things, the details that they have not forgotten over time. You'll probably find something they say that you'd like to keep as part of your celebration. You might even find a way to **give** them a special little surprise by bringing something out of their memories back to life.
- Do something that you've never done as part of your celebration, and **share** it with someone. Go to a museum and/or for a winter walk. See a holiday concert and/or drink hot chocolate on the outside porch. Plan it. Promise it. Do it.
- **Make** a present. At least one. Give somebody something you didn't BUY. One of the best gifts we can give is to let them someone know they matter to us. It feels silly, sometimes to say, "Did you know you're my hero?" or "Have I mentioned that I love you?" or "By the way, I wouldn't be me without you?" This is one time of year when you have a way to tell people: you can make it into a present. In whatever way you can, tell someone how much they mean to you. Say it in words, make a tape, embroider it, draw a cartoon, paint a picture, create a dance, or write a letter. Just say it. You might not even have to wrap it, it's ecological!



**Unless someone like you cares a whole awful lot, nothing is going to get better. It's not.**

**-The Lorax-**

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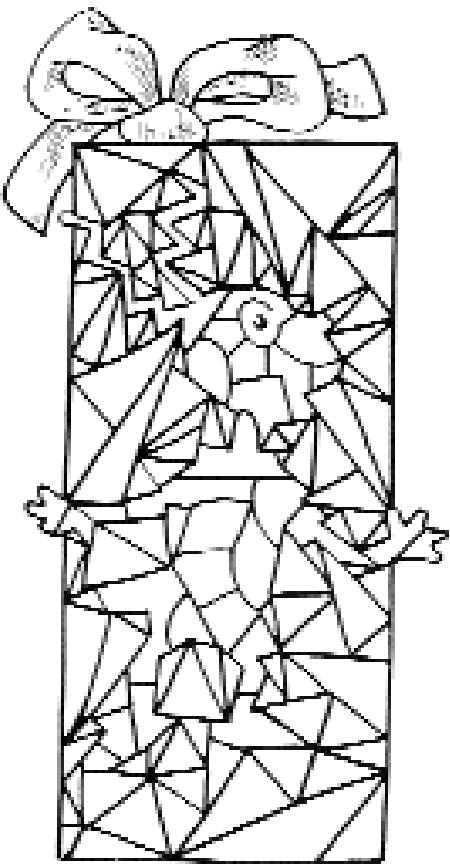
THE CHILDREN'S THEATRE COMPANY • 2400 3rd Ave. S. • Mpls, MN 55404 • TIX :612-874-0400 • 06-07 SEASON [www.childrenstheatre.org](http://www.childrenstheatre.org)

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### Soon you and your class...

will see DR. SEUSS'S HOW THE GRINCH STOLE CHRISTMAS at CTC, and we are hoping you have a wonderful time! We also want your experience in the theatre to support your curriculum and classroom life. This Study Guide is designed to cover a broad range of needs, so please choose what is most useful in your own classroom.

**QUESTIONS ABOUT PROCEDURE OR EXACT RUNNING TIME?  
 CALL THE BOX OFFICE AT 612-874-0400.**

Enlarge the game, left, and color in ALL the triangles to discover which Who gives the best gift of all.



## GRINCH • Table of Contents •



## A SYNOPSIS OF THE STORY

**“When they finished with me they tossed out the mold  
I’m the onliest Grinch that you’ll ever behold!”**

-Timothy Mason- Playwright of Dr. Seuss’  
HOW THE GRINCH STOLE CHRISTMAS

You might know the story. The grouchy old Grinch lives on top of Mount Crumpit far away from the Whos down in Whoville. That’s good, because who would want to live near him?! That old Grinch is so “grinchy.” He’s mean, and he’s grumpy, he’s sneaky, and sour. His heart is two sizes too small - at least. He is always annoyed by the sounds of happiness, and nothing annoys him more than Christmas.

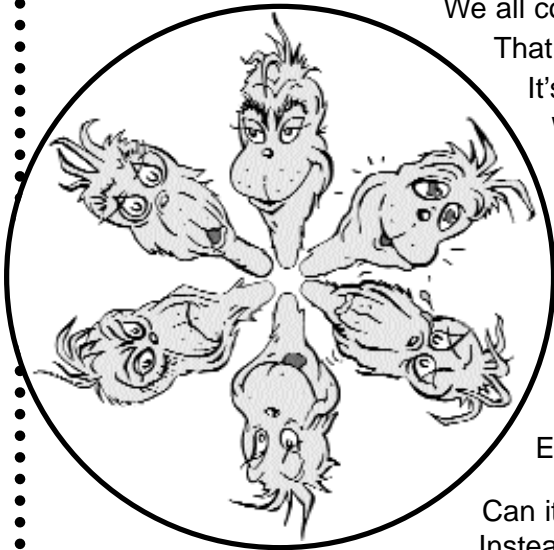
One year after 53 years of the stuff, the Grinch can not stand any more! He invents a plan to sabotage the holiday. He forces his faithful dog, Max, to assist him as he ruins everything for the unsuspecting Whos. His plan succeeds beautifully, except it fails miserably. For although he steals all the trappings of Christmas, he can not steal the heart of the holiday. He can steal the noise, but not the music. He can steal the feast, but not the family. He can’t steal hope, and he can’t steal joy. So there comes the moment we all wait for, when his heart outgrows its old moldy mold. The Grinch feels the holiday all the way down to his toes, and we know he’ll never be the same again.

Our play includes music and is narrated by Old Max, who was once the young dog that accompanied the Grinch. Old Max narrates the story as we get to know Cindy Lou’s family, as we watch Whos do some last minute shopping, and as we discover the secret behind the Grinch’s transformation.

*Write a poem about what makes the winter holiday important...*

**Every year when it’s winter** and gets dark and cold  
We all come together and stories are told  
That lighten our hearts and make us feel new.  
It’s something that humans - and Whos - need to do.  
We need to light candles, sing songs; be together,  
And snuggle up close – disregarding the weather.  
There are zillions of ways to make holidays happen:  
Traditions and games and gifts all made to tap in  
To glorious joy!  
But you know you can’t buy it.  
You CAN love each other and every year try it  
again. Look for ways to give your spirit wings;  
Escape all the static; hear what your heart sings.

Can it be it’s that simple? It’s not toys and trappings  
Instead it’s the stuff that’s tucked under the wrappings!



# WHO IS DR. SEUSS ?

Choose from the words in the box below and fill in the blanks

Once upon a time in New York City, there lived a cartoonist. This cartoonist was not under an evil spell, or in a deep dark dungeon, but he was under contract to a company that sold bug spray. Bug spray is a seasonal product, so for 4 months out of the year he was very busy. The other \_\_\_\_\_ months he doodled. During the doodling time in 1932, he decided to read his contract and realized that it did not prevent him from writing -- as long as he wrote children's books. "Aha!," said he, and wrote one, an ABC book filled with magical beasts from \_\_\_\_ to Z. Great! Except not a single publisher would buy it. He tried again and wrote "To Think That I Saw It On Mulberry \_\_\_\_\_." After 27 rejections, he finally found a publisher who was an old friend. "\_\_\_\_\_ Street" was published and sold for \$1.00. 10,000 copies went immediately! It was the beginning of a beautiful relationship - between Theodor Seuss Geisel and readers everywhere.

The man we know as Dr. Seuss loved to read. He read 4 or 5 books a week and a newspaper every \_\_\_\_\_. But if it was easy to read, it was not always easy to write. He said, "Children are a tough audience. You can fool an adult audience with persiflage or purple prose, but a \_\_\_\_\_ can tell if you're faking immediately." (Persiflage!! What's that, and what makes prose purple? One means taking things too lightly and the other too seriously.) He worked hard for 8 hours a day, sometimes more, sitting and drawing and writing and thinking and pacing and puzzling and sitting and writing, but he loved to look at things in a funny way, to make people \_\_\_\_\_. He believed it was the only way to change things.

He liked to look at a thing out of whack so he could see how it could be "in whack." He called it "looking through the back end of the telescope." For example, he didn't like to cook but his mother bought him a cookbook. He kept the book in his \_\_\_\_\_ instead of milk and eggs . When he quit smoking he planted radish seeds in his pipe, and on the bus would take out an eye dropper to water his \_\_\_\_\_. He had an imaginary child, Chrysanthemum-Pearl, "aged 89 months, going on 90." That makes her about \_\_\_\_\_ years old.

"THE GRINCH" is 41 this year. It was written in 19\_\_7 when Dr. Seuss had been outraged regarding Christmas for about 12 years. It seemed most people were spending time they didn't have, buying presents other people didn't need, and none of them enjoying any of it! When his publishers gave him a deadline for a Christmas book, he sat down and drew a picture - of the Grinch. "I just drew him and looked at him, and it was obvious to me who he was." Ted wrote the book in one week, except for the ending, which took 2 and a half months! He tried hundreds before he found just the \_\_\_\_\_ one. He must have come to like the book very much because....he had a silver Cadillac Seville, and his license plates said just one word: \_\_\_\_\_.

*...although there may be many creative variations,  
these answers are the basic truth.*



refrigerator, "A", laugh, 8, garden,  
5, right, GRINCH, day, Street,  
Mulberry, kid, 7 and a half



## BEFORE AND AFTER

There are several different holidays celebrated at this time of year. At first glance, it may seem that Dr. Seuss' HOW THE GRINCH STOLE CHRISTMAS is about the Christmas holiday alone. Actually though, the story is a fable that applies to any holiday. Its can start us thinking about what is important to us as we celebrate, and get us to reclaim our own rituals. It can help us remember that a lot of the "stuff" we do to celebrate, is only a way to express the heart of the holiday that matters to us. The "stuff" is not the heart itself.

**BEFORE** you go to see HOW THE GRINCH STOLE CHRISTMAS, think about the various ways in which you celebrate the holiday in your home or with the neighborhood or community - traditions, rituals, foods, etc., and finish this sentence. For younger students the teacher may record the answers.

- What I love about the holiday is: \_\_\_\_\_
- Next simply imagine what you chose very clearly and then describe it using as much detail as possible. Think about using each of your senses as you describe it.
- Save your answers, until after you've seen the play.

**AFTER** you've seen the play, complete the exercise. Before you saw the play you wrote explaining what you love about the holiday you celebrate.

- Now you are ready to ask yourself why it so very IMPORTANT to you. Explore that in writing or talking together.
- Share with your classmates and listen to their favorites. What kinds of things do you find that other traditions have in common with your own? What differences are there? Is there something you hear about that you would like to take home and experience with your family?



### THIS IS HOW IT WORKS:

**BEFORE:** Maybe you said that you love the gingerbread people your grandmother makes each year. You love the way she ALWAYS puts 3 raisins on for buttons, and the red-hot dots that make the eyes and mouth.

**AFTER:** Now, you add the reason that the gingerbread people are important is that your grandmother loves you when she makes them, and that you love her back when you eat them. It's something your whole family enjoys together every single year. It's a special ritual your family invented. You always think the three raisins stand for you and your brother and sister. The red-hots smell like grandma's kitchen.

Finally, you promise yourself to always remember - every time you eat the gingerbread - the reason it tastes so good is that it tastes like love.





## OWNING A STORY



First of all read the book! HOW THE GRINCH STOLE CHRISTMAS is an engaging story for a person of any age. It is hopeful. It is about transformation. To read it is to have an ownership of it, and to share that ownership with a group feels good. It will be exciting to see the story made into a play, brought to life by other people who feel that connection.

- Identify the beginning, middle, and end of THE GRINCH.
- Take time to wonder together about how the story may change, or what you believe must stay the same when the book becomes a play. (Some of you may have seen the animated version or the Jim Carrey movie on television or video, which are other variations altogether!)

### *Take it to another level...*

Part of the reason HOW THE GRINCH STOLE CHRISTMAS is such a great story is because it's made so well. Pull it all apart in discussion or as writing assignments, and examine some of the elements that combine to make the story powerful.

- Who is the protagonist in THE GRINCH, the "good guy," so to speak? It will be the one whose desires and actions from the very beginning lead toward the moment when everyone is singing together around a table full of roast beast.
- Who is the antagonist? This one tries to prevent the happy ending from coming, and is the enemy of the protagonist.
- What is the character flaw of the antagonist? If this one personality trait or quality were changed, the entire plot of the story would be changed also. Why does he seem to be who he is? In other words, what motivates him?
- What is the plot of the story? Tell what happens using 3 sentences or less.
- What is the conflict - the problem? If this nasty little knot were never tangled, we wouldn't have a story to tell.
- What is the resolution? This is the answer, the knot untied.
- Where is the turning point of the story? This is the moment the action stops moving away from a happy ending, and literally, goes racing toward the celebration. Is it the same thing as the climax, or high point in this story?
- Last but not least, what is the moral of this story? What is it that made Dr. Seuss write it in the first place? Put it in one sentence. Now, see if you can make it rhyme.

### *And yet another level...*

You can be the writer of yet another version of HOW THE GRINCH STOLE CHRISTMAS. Here are some ways to make your own mark on the story.

- Find a moment or a scene you'd like to enlarge upon or develop. FOR EXAMPLE: you could write a comment for Max about how tight the string is on his reindeer horn. Make it into a running gag, which means there are several similar comments made throughout the play.
- Maybe there's a scene you can imagine that doesn't even exist yet. FOR EXAMPLE: you could write a scene where Mama Who tells a bedtime story to her children before they fall asleep on Christmas Eve.
- Totally change the ending or simply add a different final moment.
- Create tableaux of existing scenes and then take turns changing them in imaginative ways. A tableaux is a scene in which everyone is entirely still – a freeze-frame or snapshot of a moment. It works best when it catches an important action in mid-move. FOR EXAMPLE: stage a tableaux of the feast at the very moment the Grinch is carving the roast beast – or taking his first bite of roast beast (or both – you can create series of tableaux!). To change it, make the feast pizza and notice how that changes the party!



## YOU ARE WHAT YOU BUY

The story of HOW THE GRINCH STOLE CHRISTMAS makes us remember that THINGS are not the important part of the holiday season. It might be easier to remember that if we lived in Whoville. Where we live, it's hard.

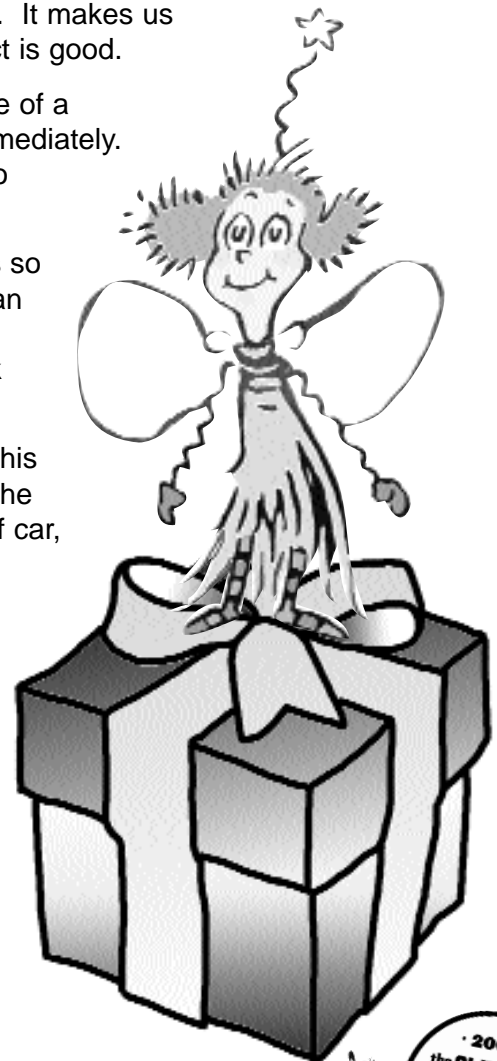
This is the time of year when most people who sell things make a lot of money selling us STUFF. In order to sell it, they have to make us want it, as if we won't have a holiday if we can't buy what they're selling.

There are five very basic methods advertisers use in their commercials and ads. You will recognize and remember examples of these:

- **THE BANDWAGON** is used when an advertiser tells you that "everybody" wants what they're selling. It comes from old time political campaigns where a candidate would actually have a wagon carrying a band roll down the street to get people excited about voting. People could jump on that wagon and ride along. The more people that were riding, the more powerful the message that "everybody" was choosing that candidate.
- **THE TESTIMONIAL** is used when a famous person talks about using a product. Recently, a lot of ads simply show the person using the product and he or she doesn't even bother to talk about it. This is really effective because it's so sneaky. It makes us feel like someone we trust or admire thinks this product is good.
- **REPETITION, REPETITION** makes us hear the name of a product or a company so often that we recognize it immediately. It creates an illusion of huge size. We are supposed to believe that just because it is so big, it must be good.
- **EMOTIONAL WORDS** are used to describe products so we associate them with feelings and senses, rather than factual information. Something is "fizzy, quenching, packed with pow, zippy," instead of something "to drink out of a can."
- **TRANSFER** would have you believe that if you own this product you will also get other totally unrelated things the advertiser puts into the picture. If you have this kind of car, fabulous men or women will ride in it with you. Sometimes this method is called "The Beautiful People." It tries to make you want to be one.

Bring magazine ads from home. Talk about TV commercials. As a class, figure out which one or ones of the above methods each advertiser is using. Once you begin to do this, what do you realize about what advertisers are selling you? How do they make it seem important? Is it really?

Divide into small groups and create ads for television or magazines. Apply marketing strategies like the ones above and use them as you try to persuade people to buy what you're selling.



## ● **FEEDBACK** your response is valuable as we seek to redesign our study materials. Thank you.

1. Did using this Study Guide add to your theater experience?

- Yes       Some       No

2. How much of the Study Guide did you read?

- Didn't have time       About a quarter       All

3. What do you think of what you read? Mark as many as apply.

- Useful                                       Enjoyable  
 Nothing new                               Not for my students because

4. Did you get the Study Guide in time to prepare to see the play?

- Yes                               No                              Comment

5. What sections of the Study Guide did you find most important?  
\_\_\_\_\_

6. How did the experience of preparing for and then seeing the play impact you students?  
\_\_\_\_\_

7. Did you spend more time working with the material BEFORE or AFTER the play?

- Before                               After                               About the Same

8. Which of the following best describes you?

- I teach:       middle school       high school  
 home school  
 other \_\_\_\_\_

Comments: \_\_\_\_\_

(continue on separate page if desired)

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The Children's Theatre Company, awarded the 2003 Regional Tony Award for sustained artistic excellence, is nationally and internationally acclaimed as America's flagship theatre for young people and families. Each year, CTC's public performances, school matinees, regional tour performances, and Theatre Arts Training Programs serve nearly 330,000 people.

Peter Brosius, Artistic Director

Teresa Eyring, Managing Director

Gregory Smith, Director of Education

This Study Guide written by Chris Kliesen Wehrman, November 2006.

Thanks to: Stacy Hawkins, and Gregory Smith.

