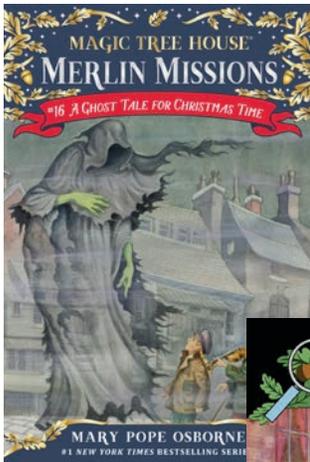


EDUCATORS' GUIDE

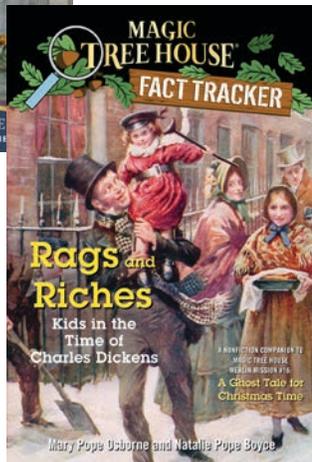
MAGIC TREE HOUSE®

MERLIN MISSIONS

A Ghost Tale for Christmas Time and ***Rags and Riches: Kids in the Time of Charles Dickens***



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ABOUT *A Ghost Tale for Christmas Time*

Jack and Annie's mission from Merlin the Magician? To help the famous writer Charles Dickens! In a magical whirl, the brother and sister are whisked back in time to Victorian England and the foggy streets of London. In *A Ghost Tale for Christmas Time* Jack and Annie discover that Charles Dickens has everything he could possibly want. How can they help him? It is not until Mr. Dickens rescues them from being thrown in jail that they discover his secret past and the sad memories that haunt him. They will need all their magic—and help from three ghosts—to keep the great writer from ruining his life!

ABOUT *Rags and Riches:*

Kids in the Time of Charles Dickens

A Nonfiction Companion to A Ghost Tale for Christmas Time

How did Charles Dickens get the idea to write *A Christmas Carol*? What was life like for kids in the orphanages and workhouses of Victorian England? How did children from wealthy families spend their time? Why do many people say that the concept of childhood came from the Victorians? Find out the answers to these questions and more in *Rags and Riches: Kids in the Time of Charles Dickens*, Jack and Annie's guide to the lives of children in Charles Dickens's time.

CLASSROOM CONNECTIONS

ACTIVITIES FOR *A Ghost Tale for Christmas Time*

Adding up the Shillings

When Jack and Annie arrive at the home of Charles Dickens, Jack asks the carriage driver how much he owes him. The driver replies, "One shilling if you please, sir." Neither Jack nor Annie know the value of a shilling, so Jack reaches into his pocket and takes out a large coin which he promptly gives

to the driver. The driver is surprised and very pleased! Obviously, Jack overpaid for the ride! The English shilling no longer has an exchange rate with any other currency, but a shilling was worth a little over 10 pence (a pence is the British equivalent of a penny). Challenge your students to do some Old English arithmetic and add up the shillings by playing a fun math game: Make up two sets of ten math problems (20 in all) and write them on index cards. (If you have more than twenty students in your class, make additional problem cards.) Place one set in a bag labeled “Team One”, and the other set in a bag labeled “Team Two”. Make sure the problems are one-digit problems. (example: $5 + 4$, or $7 - 4$). Divide your class into two teams and line the teams up in front of their respective bags. When you say “GO!” each team must take turns taking a card from their bag, adding or subtracting as they convert the problems into shillings in their heads! The answer to $5 + 4$ would be 90. The answer to $7 - 4$ would be 30 and so on. Players walk up to their team’s bag, take a card, and answer the problem. If the answer is correct, the problem card is placed in a stack next to the team’s bag. If the answer is incorrect, the card must be placed back in the bag. The teacher should stand close by to determine accuracy. Players return to the end of the line until it is his or her turn again. The team that empties their bag first and answers all of the problems correctly is the winner of the round! Play several rounds and see which team can add up the shillings first! This is a great way to practice adding tens!

CURRICULUM: *Math • History*

Hidden Causes

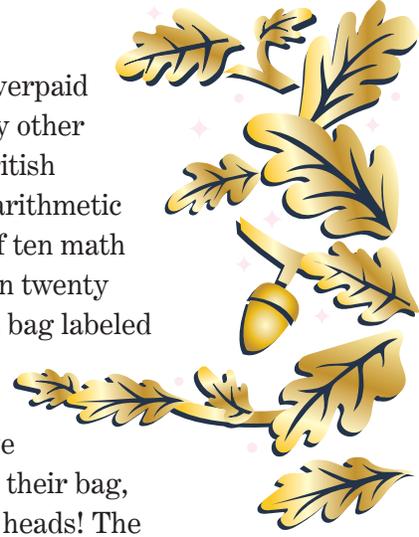
Cause and effect activities can sometimes be difficult for children to grasp. Make it easy and fun with this whole group activity. After reading *A Ghost Tale for Christmas Time*, make an equal number of cause and effect cards for your class. Each child should have a card. Apply magnetic tape to the back of each card. (Laminating the cards before applying the magnetic tape will protect them for future use.) In sequential order, call on the children who have an “effect” card to place their card on the board (Most chalkboards are metallic and will attract magnets.). After the child reads the “effect” card, the child who has the card that caused that event to happen should place it next to the effect card. After all of the cards have the correct match, challenge your class by mixing up a few of the matches when the children have their eyes closed. The first one to see the mistake and unscramble the cards gets to scramble the cards once again for the next round! The following examples will help you with the cause and effect cards. This activity can be adapted for use with a pocket chart.

CURRICULUM: *Language Arts*

A Convincing Story

As we introduce upper elementary students to the skills necessary to write a persuasive essay, we must encourage them to rely on facts, not opinions. They must research their topic thoroughly in order for their arguments to be convincing. The writing process must be utilized as they engage in prewriting, drafting, revising, editing, and publishing. Allow your students to write a persuasive essay as they try to help Jack and Annie convince Charles Dickens to continue giving his gifts to the world. Students will find supporting evidence in both *A Ghost Tale for Christmas Time* and *Rags and Riches* to help them. Allow them to use other sources for their research such as nonfiction books about Victorian England and the Internet. They should produce three reasons to support their opinion and provide three examples or facts for each reason. Use the activity sheet below to help students organize and plan their essays.

CURRICULUM: *Writing*



ACTIVITIES FOR *Rags and Riches: Kids in the Time of Charles Dickens* *A Nonfiction Companion to A Ghost Tale for Christmas Time*



Pre-Reading Activities

Ask students how they think the title, *Rags and Riches: Kids in the Time of Charles Dickens*, is related to the fiction companion book, *A Ghost Tale for Christmas Time*.

What clues does the title reveal?

Ask questions to find out what children know about poverty and its effects on families and children.

Find out what students know about Victorian times. Use the link below to show pictures of the way people dressed and traveled during that period in history. What did the homes of the rich look like?

Where did the poor people live? Did Victorian children go to school? What were their schools like? How was their way of life different from ours today?

CLASSROOM CONNECTIONS

Rags and Riches contains a large volume of new vocabulary that describes life in Victorian England. Explain to students that during the Victorian era there were distinctive class differences between the rich and the poor. Even the words that related to their different ways of life were often recognizable. Some of the new terms related to both the rich and the poor. Supply each child with the activity sheet below to help them categorize these new terms into words associated with the wealthy, the poor, or both classes of people living in England during the Victorian age. Use *Rags and Riches* to define and organize the new vocabulary on the Venn diagram.

New terms: ragged school, workhouse, mudlark, nanny, The Season, match girl, boarding school, bathing machine, The Big Stink, epidemic, chimney sweep, trapper, debtor's prison, climbing boy, rookeries, drawer, governess, mourning bracelet, cholera, typhoid, costermonger, blacking factory

CURRICULUM: *History • Language Arts*

The Show Must Go On!

As a child, Charles Dickens loved to read books, make up stories, and write plays. In *Rags and Riches* we learn that he and his sister act out plays using the toy theater he made. Allow your students to design and build a toy theater for the classroom. They may make up their own plays and use handmade finger puppets to act them out. They may also participate in reader's theater and perform for each other. Toy theaters can be made to fit in a doorway. You can also use old wardrobe boxes. You may also want your class to act out the events in *A Ghost Tale for Christmas Time*.

CURRICULUM: *Dramatic Play • Language Arts*

You Can Count On It!

In *Rags and Riches* we discover that Charles Dickens was allowed to go to school when his family had enough money. School was not free to children until much later in the Victorian age. Children learned through different methods than they do today. Arithmetic was performed with the help of an abacus, the Victorian era's version of a calculator. Those who practice with the abacus can sometimes perform calculations faster than their electronic equivalent! Your students will enjoy making their own abacus by following the simple directions given on one of the Web sites below. You can count on it! <http://www.ee.ryerson.ca/~elf/abacus/popsicle/> <http://www.galaxy.net/~k12/math/abacus.shtml>

CURRICULUM: *Math • History*

Fact or Fiction?

Much of the information in *A Ghost Tale for Christmas Time* is based on true facts found in *Rags and Riches*, while parts of *A Ghost Tale for Christmas Time* are fictional. Distinguishing between fantasy and fact is an important skill for young children to master. Provide practice by playing the following fact or fiction game:

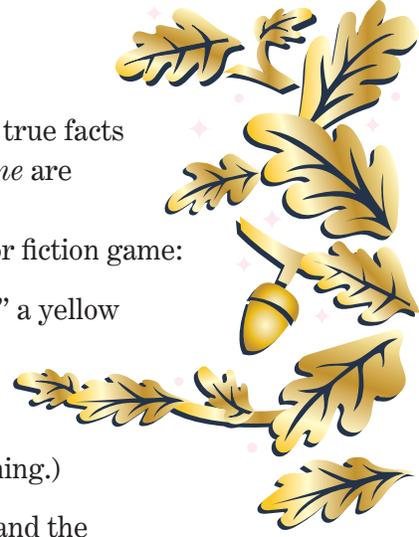
Divide your class into two teams. Give each member of the “Yellow Team” a yellow tennis ball, and each member of the “Green Team” a green tennis ball. (You should find that tennis clubs in your area are eager to donate old tennis balls. Tennis balls have many uses in the classroom. Having two different colors provide students with fun ways to resprealityond to learning.)

Each team should form a line in front of two baskets, one labeled “Fact” and the other labeled “Fiction”. Each member of the “Yellow Team” should have a yellow tennis ball. Each member of the “Green Team” should have a green tennis ball.

As you read one of the following statements (or a statement of your choosing) from the books, team members at the front of the line in turn will call out either “Fact!” or “Fiction!” and toss their ball into the appropriate basket. If a wrong response is given, the tennis ball is removed from the basket. If the correct response is given, a new fact or fiction statement is read to the next players in line. After all fact or fiction statements have been read count the number of yellow and green tennis balls in the basket. The team with the greatest number wins that round. Several rounds can be played depending on the number of fact or fiction statements you have.

FACT OR FICTION STATEMENTS:

- Jack and Annie arrived in Victorian England in the *Magic Tree House*.
- Charles Dickens lived during the Victorian age.
- Three ghosts appeared to help Charles Dickens see that he must continue giving his gifts to the world.
- Victoria was the Queen of England during the 19th century.
- Many children were forced to be chimney sweeps in Victorian age.
- Many people became very wealthy during the Industrial Revolution.
- A red carriage took Jack and Annie to the home of Charles Dickens.
- Two boys traded places with Jack and Annie.
- Charles Dickens had a housekeeper.
- Charles Dickens’ housekeeper let Jack and Annie in the house because she thought they were chimney sweeps.
- Charles Dickens worked in a blacking factory as a child.
- A magic violin made the three ghosts appear.
- Charles Dickens wrote *A Christmas Carol* because he wanted to help change the lives of poor children in Victorian England.
- Charles Dickens wrote *A Christmas Carol* after Jack and Annie helped him see that he could change the lives of poor children by writing the book.
- Charles Dickens’ father was sent to debtor’s prison because he couldn’t pay his bills.
- Charles Dickens gave Jack and Annie his wallet so they could buy new boots and a week’s worth of food.
- Schools set up for poor children in the 1840s were called ragged schools because the students usually wore rags.



- At the end of the book, a string quartet could be heard rehearsing for a Mozart concert in Frog Creek.
- Charles Dickens created many great works including *A Christmas Carol* that helped inspire Britain to make reforms to improve conditions for the poor.
- Merlin said that the missions had been completed which helped four artists give their gifts to the world.
- Beatrix Potter wrote *The Tale of Peter Rabbit* and other stories about animals to entertain Victorian children.
- At the end of the book, Kathleen plucked “*The Wand of Dianthus*” from the air and handed it to Merlin.
- People were pulled out into the ocean by horses in small huts on wheels called bathing machines, which were used as changing rooms.
- The innkeeper, Mr. Pinch, was angry because Annie gave some of her food to a poor man leaning on a crutch and a small boy staring through the window.

CURRICULUM: *History • Language Arts*

Spend a Day the Victorian Way!

As a culminating activity for the study of the Victorian age, host a Victorian Day at school! Plan a day in which children and teachers dress in period clothing and children write on slates; use an abacus to compute arithmetic problems (see “You Can Count On It! activity”); recite their lessons; play Victorian-period games like hopscotch, croquet, and blind man’s bluff; and play with toys that Victorian children enjoyed such as toy soldiers, toy theaters (see “*The Show Must Go On!* activity”), wooden hoops, and marbles. Serve a Victorian snack (see “*We All Cry for Meat Pies!* activity”). Set up “stations” in your classroom for different Victorian activities. Search online for additional information on the Victorian era to use for your activities.

CURRICULUM: *Math • History*

Teaching ideas provided by Paula Henson, the 2007 MTH Educator of the Year who is a teacher at the Christian Academy of Knoxville in Knoxville, TN.

