

"A Christmas Carol"

Read-Aloud

[Princeton Public Library](#)

Children

|

Tweens (10-12)

|

Teens

|

Young Adult

|

Adults

|

Intergenerational

"A Christmas Carol" Read-Aloud

Nov 3, 2021

\$1-50

\$

Byline

Janie Hermann, Public Programming Librarian, Princeton (N.J.) Public Library

Program participants read the Dickens masterpiece aloud from start to finish in a public reading using the original text of the 1843 novella. All are invited and encouraged to attend — individuals, families, book clubs and groups — and participate by reading a portion of the book.

All reading levels are welcomed and festive attire is encouraged. Cookies, hot cocoa and spiced apple cider are served as participants gather to read together.

This is an annual program, now entering its sixth year, done on the first weekend of December as a partnership between the library and McCarter Theatre Center. The date is chosen in anticipation of the season opening of McCarter Theatre Center's popular production of the beloved holiday tale that many people in our community consider a beloved seasonal tradition.

Advanced Planning

The program should be listed on your event calendar at least one month in advance in order to solicit and organize the volunteer readers. A form ([sample form from 2019](#)) needs to be created for volunteers to fill out that indicates what time slots they are available to read and how long they are willing to read. People are encouraged to list more than one slot to make sure that each time slot, which is 30 minutes in length, has three to five readers scheduled.

The final schedule of readers is finalized five days prior to the event, and each reader is sent an email confirming their time slot(s) and other instructions, such as when they should arrive and parking details.

The only other advance planning is to reserve the space where you plan to hold the event, set up comfortable chairs in concentric circles, and buy refreshments.

Marketing

The majority of the marketing is done through social media, with the library and McCarter Theatre having extensive outreach via their respective Facebook, Twitter and Instagram accounts. Both institutions have popular e-newsletters and online events calendars.

The library and theatre market this event together for maximum impact and start a month prior to the program. A flier is created and printed for distribution around the library, and a press release, as well as calendar listings, are sent to the local newspapers.

McCarter has a play reading group that meets monthly, and many of the members of this group attend and also help to spread the word.

We place out all the versions of "A Christmas Carol" that we have in the library, including picture books and movies, as a display, and by the end of the weekend, most (if not all) are checked out. We do not do a lot of holiday programs as a general rule, but this literature-based and local interest program allows us to give a nod to the season.

Budgeting

We purchased three paperback copies of the novella to share during the program (1 large-print and 2 regular-print). They are inexpensive and cost \$8 each on average. The moderator from the theatre and library staff member use digital versions of the text to follow along as do others who attend.

We spend approximately \$25 to \$30 on refreshments, but really these could be optional (they just add to the festive atmosphere). No money is spent on advertising other than printing some handbills to put out.

Day-of-event Activity

An email is scheduled early in the morning of the event to the readers that reminds them of their time slot. The room is set up about an hour before with comfortable seating (including bean bags), and the chairs are arranged in a semi-circle to make it feel inclusive. One chair is in the middle with a microphone on a table and a music stand that has both the large-print and regular-print versions of the novella. Refreshments are set up.

We have one staff member welcome people and check off when readers arrive and another staff member that acts as a timer. The timer reads along and makes sure each reader gets approximately 7 to 10 minutes of reading time and then rings a bell when it is time change. McCarter Theater provides a moderator who helps transition the readers, gives context to the event, and acts as the emcee.

We have done this event with one library staff member and one staff member from McCarter and it was fine, but it is better to have a third person on hand.

Program Execution

Program attendance has ranged over the years. The first year we attracted 30 attendees and had staff members on standby to read if we did not have someone ready to go up to the microphone. The following years we have averaged around 45 to 50 people over the course of three hours. The program was initially called "A Christmas Carol" Filibuster with a tagline about it being a read-aloud as we were reading the book start to finish in the style of a filibuster. We have since simplified the title and dropped the use of filibuster (we thought it was clever, but based on feedback it was confusing).

Our biggest attendance was when we did a virtual read-aloud in 2020, with over 75 people joining us online via Zoom. The feedback after the Zoom session was that those attending were grateful that we kept the tradition alive, but that they really hoped we would have this be in-person again as soon as it was safe to do so. We are planning to be in-person again in 2021 and hosting the event in our community room with the giant screen down, the faux fire blazing on the screen, and everyone socially distanced and masked.

We send out an email after the event asking for feedback from those who read so that we can improve each year, and we gather comments from those who attend on

the day of the event.

Advice

Always make sure you have someone who is willing to take the microphone and read in case there are no-shows.

Have a few good readers lined up and encourage costumes. Bring in any decor or elements that add ambiance to the time period.

This program can be done with any book and, in fact, we have "filibustered" many books over the years for different reasons. Our first, in 2011, was "Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone," leading up to a summer of Harry Potter events. Other filibusters have been done to kick off summer reading or tie in to local events.

[Did you try this program at your library? Share your experience using this form.](#)

Supporting Materials

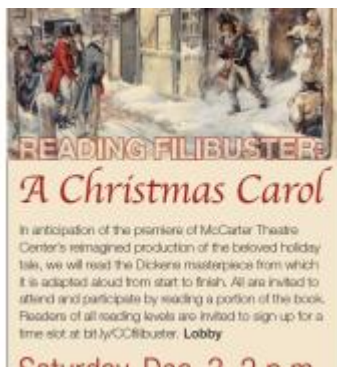
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Slideshow Images



Image



More Programs

Dec 11, 2019

Children (9 and under)+ |

[Image](#)



[Not Today, Santa](#)

Audiences:

Audience

Children (9 and under)

Adults (21 and up)

Jan 10, 2019

Teens (13-16)+ | \$

[Image](#)



[Nailed It / Failed It: Holiday Edition](#)

Audiences:

Teens (13-16)

Dec 18, 2020

+ | \$

[Image](#)



Holiday Gift Bag Decorating

Audiences: