In the middle 19th century, a nostalgic interest in pre-Cromwell Christmas traditions swept Victorian England. Dickens’ *A Christmas Carol* was one of the greatest influences in rejuvenating the old Christmas traditions of England. Can you match the following Christmas traditions with their country?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Christmas Traditions</th>
<th>Countries</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Children traditionally set bowls of rice pudding in the attic on Christmas Eve to pacify the Nisse, a mischievous old man who dresses in grey pants, wooden shoes, and a red pixie hat. Children who want their presents to be delivered and their decorations to remain intact give the Nisse pudding every year to keep his usual pranks under control!</td>
<td>A. Hawaii</td>
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<td>2. Residents attend a daily early morning church service between December 16th and 24th called Misa de Aguinaldo. In the capital city, it is customary to roller-skate to this service and many neighborhoods close the streets to cars until 8 a.m. Before bedtime children tie one end of a piece of string to their big toe and hang the other out the window. The next morning, roller skaters gave a tug to any string they see hanging. After Mass everyone enjoys tostadas and coffee.</td>
<td>B. Venezuela</td>
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<td>3. The holiday celebrations, called Junkanoo, take place on December 26th and January 1st. Between 2 am and dawn, an enormous parade presents hundreds of people along with dancing, music, and vibrant costumes. Participants are organized into troupes that can have up to 1,000 members, each with its own special theme and decorations competing for cash prizes. Costumes are prepared in absolute secrecy, and participants often spend all year arranging their big and colorful creations of feathers, crepe paper, fabric, wood and tissue. Music accompanies the groups as they dance through the streets in their carefully practiced formations.</td>
<td>C. The United Kingdom</td>
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<td>4. Public parks and buildings across this country are traditionally lit for the holidays at the same moment: 6:55 on the first Thursday in December. This tradition began in 1986 and is one uniting aspect of the country’s many Christmas celebrations.</td>
<td>D. India</td>
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<td>5. The primary decoration of this country’s tree is mistletoe. In ancient times, the Druid Celts considered mistletoe to be a magical plant. The Celts believed that mistletoe held the soul of the tree it was attached to. Hanging a branch over the doorway protected the house from storms. Hung over a cradle, it would protect the child within. Mistletoe was associated with childbirth. Love would be brought to anyone who entered a house where there was the scent of mistletoe. Mistletoe is also a plant of peace, it was decreed that enemies who met under a mistletoe could not fight but rather embrace one another. It was in the British Isles that kissing under the mistletoe originated. A “Kissing Bow” made up of evergreens and mistletoe was hung from the rafters. Candles illuminated it. After Christmas, the “Kissing Bow” is buried, those that kissed under it would marry in the coming year.</td>
<td>E. The Netherlands</td>
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<td>6. Most Christmas traditions practiced here come from the traditions brought to the islands by the missionaries of the 19th century. One unique tradition is the Christmas luau, which features the Kalua pig as its main course. The poinsettia, which grows on the islands, is considered the Christmas flower.</td>
<td>F. Wales</td>
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<td>7. On Christmas Eve, Christians go for Christmas shopping and buy new clothes and shoes. It's a tradition to attend midnight mass with a new appearance to bring the Christmas spirit to families and communities. Once they reach home, they celebrate Christmas by lighting fire crackers.</td>
<td>G. The Bahamas</td>
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<td>8. The Christmas season begins on December 16th. Households are decorated with flowers, evergreens and colored paper lanterns. A nativity set (Pesebre) is also set up in the house. The pesebre or El Nacimiento is the focal point of the household’s Christmas celebration. Pesebre can be as simple as three figures making up the holy family or as complex as the entire city of Bethlehem. Each night a procession (La Posada) commemorates the journey of Mary and Joseph and their search for lodging for the Night. In some areas, groups of villagers (Santos Peregrinos) or Holy pilgrims assemble each night. Carrying candles and chanting songs, they go from house to house looking for lodging. At every house the pilgrims are refused. When they have finished the procession they return home to kneel at the Pesebre.</td>
<td>H. Mexico</td>
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<td>9. On the Christmas dinner table are noisemakers called crackers. Tom Smith invented these traditional favors in 1850, as a way of selling more of his confections. Crackers are wrapped in fancy paper and at each end there are pull-tabs. When the tabs are pulled a loud noise or crack with some sparks is produced. Inside the cracker there may be a paper hat, a toy and some candy. In most homes when the crackers are open, you must put on the hat and enjoy the contents of the cracker.</td>
<td>I. Canada</td>
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<td>10. St. Nicholas (Sinterklaas), who is dressed in red Bishop’s robes, arrives either on a white horse or in some areas in a boat from Spain and gives gifts to children on December 6th. Black Peter (Zwarte Piet) accompanies him. Black Peter carries a birch rod to punish those children who have been bad in the past year. The children leave their wooden shoes filled with hay and a carrot in anticipation of St. Nicholas. If they have been good they will find small toys, nuts and candy in their shoes. Sometimes St. Nicholas will visit the house and will question the children on how they behaved in the past year.</td>
<td>J. Denmark</td>
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What traditions do you have in your household?

Research Christmas traditions in other countries and maybe you and your family will find a new tradition to enjoy!
In this production of *A Christmas Carol*, the actor Anthony Rodriguez uses a myriad of voices and mannerisms to bring to life Ebenezer Scrooge, Bob Cratchit, Jacob Marley and all of the remarkable ghosts found in the greatest Christmas story of all time. Playing one character is quite a task for any actor, but for one man to play so many roles is incredible.

Using the character outline below, choose one character from *A Christmas Carol* and compile all of the information that you know about this character. Your diagram can include:
1. How the character feels about him/herself.
2. How the character feels about other characters.
3. What the character thinks about his/her life and/or events.
4. What other people think about the character.
5. His/her likes and dislikes.
6. His/her history.
7. His/her dreams.

Use the inside of the outline to list details that the character knows/feels himself or herself. Use the outside of the outline to list details other characters might think/know about this character.

**CHARACTER:**

**A DICKENS TIMELINE**

1812, February 7
Charles Dickens is born in Portsmouth, Hampshire, on the south coast of England.

1821
Charles and his family move to Camden Town, a district in London. He begins school.

1824
Dickens’ father, John, was sent to the debtors prison Marshalsea. A 12 year-old Charles was forced to find housing nearby, pawn his collection of books, leave school and work in a shoe polish factory. His father and family were released after three months, but Charles was forced to continue working in the factory.

1827
At age 15, Charles began work as a junior clerk at a law office; after a year, with the help of a relative, he became an apprentice reporter in a court of law.

1833
By age 21, Dickens had become a journalist of a newspaper covering election campaigns and political matters. This soon led to his creation of a series of short stores and sketches and then a novel, *The Pickwick Papers*. He often wrote under the pen name of Boz.
Charles married Catherine Hogarth, daughter of a newspaper editor. They eventually had 10 children.

1840
Dickens, at age 28, had already written five successful novels, including *Oliver Twist*. All of them had first been published as monthly installments in literary magazines.

1842
Dickens made his first visit to the United States and Canada. He gave lectures to adoring audiences and raised support for copyright laws and the abolition of slavery.

1843, October 3
In a fundraising speech at the Manchester Athenaeum—a charitable institution serving the poor—Charles urged workers and employers to join together to combat ignorance with educational reform. He realized in the following days that the best way to reach the broadest part of the population with his concerns was to write a Christmas narrative rather than politically-based pamphlets and essays. During these three days in Manchester, Dickens conceived the plot of *A Christmas Carol*.

1843, December
Charles Dickens wrote *A Christmas Carol* in 6 weeks. Due to a dispute with his publisher over previous earnings, Dickens chose to publish *Carol* at his own expense in the hopes of making more money.
Today, it is not uncommon for some children and teenagers to work. They may earn extra money by baby-sitting, doing yard work or maybe even walking dogs. However, in the Victorian Age, it wouldn't seem at all strange to see children as young as five or six go to work full-time. Charles Dickens was deeply touched by seeing such young children working and *A Christmas Carol* was written in response to some of the horrible conditions that the poor of the Victorian era, including children, faced. Fill in the talk bubbles below with what you think happened ten minutes before each image, or what happened two days afterward.

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**A Dickens Timeline**

1843, December 17
*A Christmas Carol* is published and released in London by Chapman and Hall. The first run of 6,000 copies sold out by Christmas Eve.

1844, May
A seventh edition of *A Christmas Carol* had sold out. In all, twenty-four editions ran in its original form.

1858
Charles and his wife separate. While his separation was very public, many did not know that Dickens had a mistress. Her name was Ellen Ternan and she was an actress who was much younger than Dickens.

1865, June
Charles Dickens has a brush with death during the Staplehurst Railway accident. While he survived, ten people died and forty were injured. The train track was being repaired near Staplehurst. Workmen did not signal to oncoming trains that there was a gap, 42 feet long, in the tracks over a bridge. The train's engineer spotted the problem at the last minute, but it was too late. Momentum carried the engine and the first part of the train across the breach. However, the coaches in the center and the rear of the train fell into the river bed below. All but one of the first-class coaches went into the ravine. That was the coach that carried Dickens.

1870, June 9
Charles Dickens died of a cerebral hemorrhage at his country home, Gad’s Hill, in Kent, England. He is buried in Poets’ Corner of Westminster Abbey, London, with the inscription on his tomb reading: “He was a sympathizer to the poor, the suffering, and the oppressed; and by his death, one of England’s greatest writers is lost to the world.”

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**Create Your Own Comic Strip**

Choose your favorite scene from *A Christmas Carol* and create a comic strip to show the events.