



# The Man Who Invented Christmas: How Charles Dickens's A Christmas Carol Rescued His Career and Revived Our Holiday Spirits

*Les Standiford*

[Download now](#)

[Read Online](#) 

# The Man Who Invented Christmas: How Charles Dickens's A Christmas Carol Rescued His Career and Revived Our Holiday Spirits

*Les Standiford*

## **The Man Who Invented Christmas: How Charles Dickens's A Christmas Carol Rescued His Career and Revived Our Holiday Spirits** Les Standiford

As uplifting as the tale of Scrooge itself, this is the story of how one writer and one book revived the signal holiday of the Western world.

Just before Christmas in 1843, a debt-ridden and dispirited Charles Dickens wrote a small book he hoped would keep his creditors at bay. His publisher turned it down, so Dickens used what little money he had to put out *A Christmas Carol* himself. He worried it might be the end of his career as a novelist.

The book immediately caused a sensation. And it breathed new life into a holiday that had fallen into disfavor, undermined by lingering Puritanism and the cold modernity of the Industrial Revolution. It was a harsh and dreary age, in desperate need of spiritual renewal, ready to embrace a book that ended with blessings for one and all.

With warmth, wit, and an infusion of Christmas cheer, Les Standiford whisks us back to Victorian England, its most beloved storyteller, and the birth of the Christmas we know best. *The Man Who Invented Christmas* is a rich and satisfying read for Scrooges and sentimentalists alike.

## **The Man Who Invented Christmas: How Charles Dickens's A Christmas Carol Rescued His Career and Revived Our Holiday Spirits Details**

Date : Published November 4th 2008 by Crown (first published January 1st 2008)

ISBN : 9780307405784

Author : Les Standiford

Format : Hardcover 241 pages

Genre : Nonfiction, Holiday, Christmas, Biography, History, Writing, Books About Books

 [Download The Man Who Invented Christmas: How Charles Dickens's A Christmas Carol Rescued His Career and Revived Our Holiday Spirits Les Standiford.pdf](#)

 [Read Online The Man Who Invented Christmas: How Charles Dickens's A Christmas Carol Rescued His Career and Revived Our Holiday Spirits Les Standiford.pdf](#)

## **Download and Read Free Online The Man Who Invented Christmas: How Charles Dickens's A Christmas Carol Rescued His Career and Revived Our Holiday Spirits Les Standiford**

---

## From Reader Review The Man Who Invented Christmas: How Charles Dickens's A Christmas Carol Rescued His Career and Revived Our Holiday Spirits for online ebook

**Matt says**

*A Christmas Carol* is almost a perfect work of art. Unlike Dickens' serials – sprawling, digressive epics like *Bleak House*, *Great Expectations*, and *David Copperfield* – *Carol* is short and succinct. It is neatly separated into acts, has only one major character, and heads confidently towards its conclusion from the very first page (a thing that can't be said for Dickens' longer novels, which grow ever wider and shaggier with each passing page).

I love *A Christmas Carol*. I read it every year, always reminded how lean and sharp and memorable it is. The dialogue crackles with wit. The set pieces are sublime. And the names! Oh, the names! Scrooge and Cratchit and Tiny Tim. You read this once and it stays with you forever.

Dickens' *A Christmas Carol* did not literally create Christmas. It existed long, long before, a pastiche of religious, pagan, and commercial traditions. What Dickens did help invent, however, was the Christmas spirit.

The story behind this remarkable story is the focus of Les Standiford's *The Man Who Invented Christmas: How Charles Dickens' A Christmas Carol Rescued His Career and Revived Our Holiday Spirits*.

In this brisk, pleasant little book, Standiford introduces us to Dickens as a child, working his little butt off to help pay the debts accrued by his irresponsible parents. This childhood experience helped shape Dickens mindset, and gave him a very intimate knowledge of need and want.

Indeed, Dickens struggled with his finances throughout his entire life, despite being an incredibly successful and internationally famous author. In 1843, with creditors beating a path to his door, Dickens pinned his hopes to a Christmas book. Using his own meager resources, Dickens did the 19th century version of self-publishing. He wrote the story. He supervised the illustrations. He designed the cover.

It turned out to be a lasting hit. And though it did not secure Dickens the wealth he desired, it changed the locus and tenor of the holiday. It forsook the anti-fun, anti-celebration ethos of the Puritans, as well as the drunks-on-the-street-and-in-your-face shenanigans of the wassailing era. *A Christmas Carol* celebrated the bonds of family, strengthened each year on this one day, when the dreary world recedes for a moment, and all things seem possible. It also promoted charity, community, and social consciousness. Its hero was a man rich beyond measure, yet poor in spirit and bereft of love and family. Its most potent symbol was a crippled boy.

Standiford's book, which is just over 200 pages, gives you a mini-biography of Dickens, the circumstances of *A Christmas Carol*'s writing, and the lasting impact of his novella. It is history given with a light touch. There are no great insights, and most of the research comes from secondary sources (of note, Stephen Nissenbaum's *The Battle for Christmas* and Michael Patrick Hearn's *The Annotated Christmas Carol*). Frankly – and unlike the Dickens original – I have no lasting impression of Standiford's book. Mostly, it's an inoffensive way to while away a couple hours during the holiday season. Maybe while drinking some nog. Maybe with spiked nog. It's okay – you won't miss anything if you're a little drunk.

I read this because I love *A Christmas Carol*. And I read *A Christmas Carol* because I love Christmas. I'm cynical and pessimistic about most things, but I'm a shameless sap when it comes to Christmas. I listen to all

the carols. I watch all the television specials and all the movies. Every year I try to get my wife to love *It's a Wonderful Life* as much as I do. Every year I fail, but try again.

If you choose to be cynical, you can say that Christmas is – at best – a bit on the hypocritical side. It's the *one* time of year when people give a little money to the poor. It's the *one* time of year people consider lending a few hours time to the soup kitchen or food pantry. It's the *one* time of year when you smile and say nice things to strangers. Meanwhile, the other 364 days we're all a bunch of indifferent, self-centered jerks.

There's a bit of truth to that. But there's also a flip side. Maybe Christmas *is* the one time we do all these things. When we force ourselves to take stock of what we have, what others have, and decide whether there's something we can do to balance the scales a bit. But if we didn't have Christmas, then we wouldn't even have that one day. Every year, from roughly the end of November till December 25, Christmas helps us forget all the sham and drudgery and feel a little lighter, if only for awhile.

*A Christmas Carol* precisely captures that. *The Man Who Invented Christmas* gives us a little idea of how.

---

### **Nate says**

This was a fascinating look at the history behind much of Dickens's writing, in particularly a Christmas Carol. Also as a bonus, the historical recounting of Christmas celebrations and how they have evolved over the centuries in both Europe and North America was fascinating.

---

### **Jessi says**

First line: "In London, in 1824, it was the custom to treat a debtor little differently from a man who had reached into a purse and stolen a similar sum."

Being the rose-colored-glasses-Christmas-fanatic that I am, I very much enjoyed this look into the life of Charles Dickens and the creation of, arguably, his most beloved book. I was thrilled to discover that perhaps his drive to create this book was partially due to monetary needs, but that he did in fact cherish this holiday close to his heart. I was surprised to learn that due to Puritanical resistance against a pagan-related holiday, Christmas was barely celebrated. In fact, Easter was the time for the great Christian celebration. However, Dickens identified the holiday as a time for charitable giving and general good will towards your fellow man and through his excellent literary style and his already popular name, the publication of *A Christmas Carol*, as well as his other Christmas titles, he very much revitalized the celebration of this holiday. This book is small and very tightly written and is easy to read. It is also full of fun facts about Dickens, Victorian culture, publishing history, and the Christmas holiday. It's a good read and one that will make you want to whip out your copy of *A Christmas Carol* and thrill in the warm feelings it invokes.

---

### **TL says**

This portion of the book: 3.5 stars

This came to my attention after seeing the trailer for movie with Dan Stevens. (The book came recommended after the movie was added to my wishlist).

For the most part, it kept my interest. I hadn't realized that there was such an interesting story behind the creation of the story. One of the things that surprised me was that Dickens was in such debt at the time and that he'd had three flops in a row before his mega-success with *his little Carol*.

The background info of the times before/after was interesting but some of it had me skimming a bit.. it wasn't boring, just didn't keep my interest and felt unnecessary too.

Also the summary of Christmas Carol in one part felt like padding that particular section.

Would still recommend, not a bad start to reading about Dickens.

---

*A Christmas Carol* : (review when I finish it.. not in the mood for it right now)

---

## **Tony says**

THE MAN WHO INVENTED CHRISTMAS. (2011). Les Standiford. \*\*\*\*\*.

The full title includes: "How Charles Dickens's 'A Christmas Carol' Rescued His Career and Revived out Holiday Spirits." That's a real mouthful, and can probably be used as the total review of this book by that skillful writer, Mr. Standiford. His last several books have all been non-fiction, where he has seemed to have found his metier. His first writings were all crime fiction featuring a series hero, John Deal, a real estate developer in Florida. In this book – which cleverly came out right before Christmas – he explores the life of Charles Dickens and his writing of "A Christmas Carol." Dickens had a poor and depressing early on in life, and most of his novels address social issues. The same is true of this novelette, but this one had a great impact on its readers in Victorian England and a subsequent effect on its millions of readers who came after. We all know the story, either from reading the book or from one of the adaptations made for stage or screen. What led Dickens to writing this and the events occurring before and after are the subject of Standiford's study. As is usual, the author manages to sprinkle facts throughout his narrative that many of us might have known, but chances are we forgot. For example, that famous line, "It was a dark and stormy night," first appeared in the novel "Paul Clifford, by Edward Bulwer-Lytton. Then we learn, "For the first several hundred years of Christianity's practice, and while the death and rebirth of Jesus were venerated upon the highest holy day of Easter, the birth of the Savior was not celebrated. It was Pope Julius I who, during the 4th century, designated December 25 as the official date for the birth of Jesus...". Further on we learn, "One researcher suggests that Tiny Tim suffered from a kidney disease known today as renal tubular acidosis, a condition that can retard growth and weaken bones...Most likely however, Tiny Tim...suffered from rickets, a common affliction of that time in cities where smog frequently blocked sunlight, the natural source of vitamin D." The treats go on in this book, which ultimately becomes a mini-biography of the writer. The book is a treat to read. Highly recommended.

---

## **Katie Ziegler (Life Between Words) says**

Hooo! Just under the wire. I thought I'd finish this book a week ago, but life. Loved reading this right after Mr. Dickens and His Carol. It was a wonderful real-life/non-fiction counterpart to that fictional story. Informative and festive this book was a short and sweet little book about Dickens writing his Carol and how it shaped Christmas as we know it. Lovely.

---

## Tarissa says

***“Celebrating Christmas without some reference to A Christmas Carol seems impossible, a remarkable fact given that the book was published more than 150 years ago. Indeed, the resonance of the story has remained so strong through the generations that commentators have referred to Dickens as the man who invented Christmas.”***

So, this book needs a change in its cover art. If you, like me, judged this book by its Christmasy cover, all red, green, and candy canes... and randomly thought it was a story with a plot featuring Dickens (and true-to-life facts about him), well, that's not accurate. To be clear, it's a biography, albeit, an interesting one that kept me turning the pages.

***“No individual can claim credit for the creation of Christmas, of course – except, perhaps, the figure that the day is named for.... If Dickens did not invent Christmas, he certainly reinvented it.”***

Dickens' childhood was cut short, as he had to work for his family. His parents spent more than they could earn. His father was held in court for his debts, and eventually the rest of the family too, even Charles and his siblings. As Dickens grew into adulthood, those days of debt and poverty always stayed with him, and is illustrated in many, if not most, of his writings. As the writer of this biography states, ***“It was as if, in writing this book [A Christmas Carol], he could will into existence a world of universal charity, empathy, and family harmony that he had not experienced in his life.”***

Concerning A Christmas Carol, his publishers actually didn't believe in the success of the story, and they wouldn't take on the project to publish it themselves. So Dickens had it published, paying for all the costs, etc. He had to go to more extraordinary lengths than his other writings to get it published. In other words, it was the novel that almost wasn't. And this was all for a story that was about the Christmas holiday, which at the time, ***“ranked far below Easter, causing little more stir than Memorial Day.”***

There are 4 main parts to the book. But it is part 3 that piques my interest the most, and has the information I was waiting to read. Things like how traditions may not be the same without his little book entering the world. Or how we might not so easily recognize a Victorian Christmas as a quintessential time if we didn't have A Christmas Carol. In fact, Christmas was quite different in the 1840s than it is now. The biography writer brings this about to tell what the holiday was all about back then – and it usually was not gift-giving. Other notes of interest: People ate a Christmas goose – not a turkey or a ham. Christmas cards hadn't even appeared on the scene before. Christmas trees weren't commercially sold. There's quite a bit of interesting history to learn in part 3, and I loved reading all about it.

I found out much about Charles Dickens that I just didn't expect. Some of it is about his family life, some about his celebrity, some about his books. For example, Oliver Twist may just be the first novel to have a child as protagonist; it may also be the first Victorian novel. It was neat to hear about how Dickens kept writing more “Christmas” novels each year, and the annual history behind each. Something else I was quite surprised to hear about was that copyright almost didn't exist in Dickens' day. Publishers could pirate off their own versions of popular novels and make good money doing it. Authors usually didn't get paid (or paid well) when plays (dozens of them) were put together, based on an author's novel. It was one of Dickens' fights in life to see about copyright issues for every author. He was certainly a man who had many tricks (and creative ideas) up his sleeve.

Reading The Man Who Invented Christmas definitely will get you in the mood not only for A Christmas Carol, but many of Dickens' other works. Charles Dickens will remain in our hearts because of his use of goodwill, the pleasures of good friends, family, and charity in his stories. Because the topics he used in A

Christmas Carol and his other works really get us our the heartstrings, that's why people still want to read his books. I know I can't wait to read more from him.

I'd recommend this as an adult read – teens could enjoy it too, but there is some minor alluding to some mature topics.

---

### **High Plains Library District says**

Not only do we learn about Charles Dickens and the creation of 'A Christmas Carol' but also a brief history of (1) publishing/marketing during the mid 1800s, (2) the horrendous condition of workhouses and the poor of London, and (3) the Christmas holiday. All of this in a small, non-intimidating book. Happy Holidays!

~Victoria

---

### **Alvaro Zinos-Amaro says**

Concise biographical insight into Dickens & the impulses and context for his creation of the beloved literary classic A CHRISTMAS CAROL. Smooth, highly readable prose but plenty of facts too. I particularly enjoyed learning about the Christmas writings of authors prior to Dickens--such as Washington Irving's non-fiction on the subject--as well as writers mostly forgotten today who were greatly influenced by Dicken's "little carol," such as Benjamin Farjeon. If you're a writer, or interested in the world of publishing, you'll find some fascinating tidbits about Dickens' relationships with his publishers, business model experiments, and so on.

---

### **Bam says**

After reading Mr. Dickens and His Carol: A Novel, a fictionalized account of how Dickens came to write his famous Christmas Carol, I was hungry for more information and found it in this nonfiction book which was published in 2008 and made into a movie this year.

Les Standiford's book is very engaging as well as informational and covers most of Dickens' life, not just the few weeks it took to write his most famous Christmas story. Why was it so popular at the time it was published and remains so to this day? It touches a deep chord within most of us and brings out the desire to be generous and open-hearted towards our fellow man, in this holy season especially. It also holds out the hope of spiritual redemption along with the ability to change.

Dickens wrote several more Christmas stories but none were ever as popular as his A Christmas Carol.

---

### **Shannon says**

All I have to say is that FINALLY I am done with this book. And, in a nick of time too since our book club meeting is tomorrow evening. I have to say that I really did not like this book. I found it extremely hard to

read, not engaging, and did not put me in the holiday spirit at all. I basically had to make a deal with myself these last couple of days to read 25 pages of night to finish. Unfortunately, I kept falling asleep which meant that I just slammed through the last 50 pages during naptime today! For some reason, I found the timeline of this book hard to follow as well as difficult to keep track of the different people involved. I also did not find Dickens to be a likable man; he was completely full of himself, his capability, and his self-worth. I wonder what the child Dickens would have thought of the man Dickens. I surmise that he wouldn't like him very much at all. Oh well, at least I kept my promise (for the most part, as I couldn't stay with Kingsolver's Animal Vegetable Miracle either) to read all of the book club selections. I made it through this year...on to next year!

---

### Jon says

Received the book for Christmas (!) and saw the movie a few days later. The movie is thoroughly enjoyable and entertaining, accurately portraying Dickens's limitless energy; it makes allusive reference to his financial dealings with his publishers and with his despair at his father's improvident mooching; it is typically (for the movies) misleading about how writers write, and particularly about how Dickens wrote *A Christmas Carol*. The book is far more accurate than the movie, and in fact it is a fine overall biography more than a description of part of his life. I'm a Dickens fan, so I enjoyed every page. Some Goodreads readers found it tedious. They should try Peter Ackroyd's 1200 page door-stop. (I enjoyed that one too.) Standiford not only takes us through the subsequent career, he is refreshingly agnostic about Dickens's alleged affair with the young actress Ellen Ternan, and he briefly describes Dickens's reputation over the last 150 years. He describes what Christmas was like in England and America before Dickens got hold of it (this part *was* a little tedious) and how it had been treated in literature up to 1843. And it ends on the welcome hopeful note that most people who see some adaptation on stage or screen, or who may actually read the original really do resolve to do better, although perhaps not with Scrooge's success.

---

### Stephanie says

Mostly fascinating book about Charles Dickens' composition of his famous CHRISTMAS CAROL. Very interesting parts about the publication world of his time, so very very different than ours...and that Dickens was not always a success and wrote fast and sometimes angrily against the ghost of bankruptcy which had thrown his father in jail and changed Charles at the age of ten from a middle class young scholar to a penniless factory boy, first awakening Dickens to the misery of the poor. The story of an unusual and driven man. It goes on a bit to cover the last of his career and the end of his life, but it is fascinating to see how this beloved book came to be and the sort of man who was compelled to write it.

---

### Dennis says

Anyone who loves Dickens' *A Christmas Carol* should read this book; *The Man Who Invented Christmas* will help its reader understand Dickens' condition at the time he wrote the story, and the challenges he faced in getting it written at all, let alone in the few weeks he had to finish the project before the Christmas season passed him by.

But *The Man Who Invented Christmas* is much more than a book about a book. Instead, it is best understood as an excellent short biography of Dickens and an explanation of his times and the impact of his work, with a

special focus on *A Christmas Carol*. There is also a good deal of information about the history of Christmas, which Mr. Standiford provides to show how Dickens' book revived its celebration.

As I wrote my own Christmas story, *Back to Christmas*, I read and listened to *A Christmas Carol* more than a dozen times. But after listening to Mr. Standiford's excellent book, I feel like I understand Dickens' story better than ever before.

---

### **Matt says**

Standiford's examination of the financial/business side of how Charles Dickens' classic was published (he was near broke, considered washed-up, and later faced a major copyright piracy court case where he was "Scrooged" out of his fair share of monetary gain for unauthorized U.S. publications) is at times very dry and reads like a doctoral thesis. Yet, the number of anecdotes and cool little factoids about the Christmas holiday is fascinating. However, I have a sneaking feeling that Peter Ackroyd's definitive Dickens biography has more fascinating tidbits about Boz and his career since Standiford alludes to that classic biography several times in his book.

---

### **Niki Estes says**

After reading and enjoying *A Christmas Carol* and *Mr. Dickens and His Carol* by Samantha Silva last month, I wanted to read a biography about Charles Dickens, specifically what his life was like at the time he wrote *A Christmas Carol*. This book was perfect for what I was looking to learn about Dickens. We get a brief history of what his life was like as a child and where he drew much of his inspiration for his writing. It was also interesting to learn what it was like publishing books back in the early to mid-1800s. It was a completely different process than it is now and writers were not well protected from plagiaristic "re-originations" and outright theft of their works. Even as copyright laws were being set up, they only protected authors that resided in said country and publishers were free to steal work from authors in other countries. (US publishers stole a lot of work from Dickens and other English writers and English publishers stole a lot of work from US authors.) As an advocate for the poor, Dickens' writing had a far reach. It is estimated that in 1844, his work had up to 500,000 readers with "between one-fifth and one-quarter of the literate public of the nation" reading his work. By comparison, an author today can get on the New York bestsellers list with sales of 75,000 to 100,000, a mere one-twentieth of one percent of what is considered the literate, book buying public. His reach was amazing! So, it comes as no surprise that when *A Christmas Carol* was published and subsequently flew off the shelves (all 6,000 copies selling the first day and reprints ordered immediately), its reach and influence was huge. Oddly enough, however, the book was not his most popular during his lifetime. But it has gained in popularity and is now his most well known book. The author talks about why the book has had such a lasting impression and influence over the modern day Christmas season and Scrooge has become synonymous with the true meaning of the season. This was a very interesting book and I definitely recommend it for anyone who is curious about the behind the scenes of the writing of *A Christmas Carol*.

---

### **Jenn "JR" says**

This book is more about the professional and creative development of Dickens' work. There is a tremendous amount of context provided in the way that authorship transformed during the Victorian period.

---

There's a large amount of history of Dickens' relationship with different publishers and the way they did business. These are all things that are fairly factual and can be examined based on extensive documentation. It may or may not be as interesting to some readers as the original title suggests that Dickens invented Christmas.

This book has a lot more support for Dickens' role in the nascent book publishing, distribution and sales business. It is interesting how Dickens was able to create opportunities for income as an author, including touts for speaking engagements and officially sanctioning certain interpretations of his work for other mediums such as stage.

The chief influences of "A Christmas Carol" attributed in this book seem to include Christmas the ubiquity of the story, the dominance of a turkey for dinner, Christmas cards and trees.

Although the author mentions in a later chapter that Dickens' life was fairly public until his separation from his wife of 22 years, he does not really include very much context about Dickens' family life relative to his professional life except to mention that he invested in soundproofing a study so he could write without disruption after the birth of his fifth child.

Although factually accurate, this book feels like it is lacking in other dimensions. Other books I have read about Dickens' personal life and professional achievements have been more interesting (and are in fact referenced by the author of this book).

Parallel Lives: Five Victorian Marriages offers an excellent biography of Dickens' as an individual and family man (and philanderer).

The Battle for Christmas is cited by the author of this book and offers a more complete story about Dickens' hand in creating the commercial holiday of Christmas as we know it now.

Christmas: A Candid History is a bit more optimistic, describing mid-winter holidays throughout human history and giving a bit of cheer to readers about participating.

---

## **Donna Hines says**

A fabulous insight into the past, present, and future of what made Dickens' Classic works so relevant to today and how we as Americans celebrate current traditions related to Christmas with everything that entails. This is a classic tale 'ghostly' if you will about a man and his struggles to not only support his family ( wife and 5 kids) but to also do so with dignity and class.

During the 1800's it was not easy to make a name for oneself and Dickens didn't initially set out to become a famous writer in fact he simply wanted to be a provider.

It took 6 weeks of grind to get A Christmas Carol written with plenty of revisions along the way and many knock offs which he sued to prohibit and get royalties from the sale of his work.

Many copycats rushed to take credit yet the true credit belongs to one man Charles Dickens.

He has brought Christ to Christmas, he has allowed compassion to enter our vocabulary, he has provided us with all the trimmings from the tree to the turkey (by the way goose was now a thing of the past thanks to him).

"It was as if, in writing the book, he could will into existence a world of universal charity, empathy, and family harmony that he had not experienced in his life."

This parable brought to life the emotions first before the actual words were written onto paper. His writing could be seen and heard across the oceans, across the vast lands, across miles and miles of civilizations.

Goodwill, charity and gift giving, family unity and cohesion in celebrating with good food and drink is what his work brought to light.

We could all relate to this classic. To the poor man struggling to get by with a family that depended upon his skills to be the sole provider. To have constraints of Tiny Tim who was ill and the family time that demanded his attention. The beggars and the hoodlums who were so poor they didn't know how to make a living so they stole.

To make it worse publisher were violating copyright laws and using his work to cash in. He was treated as the robber not the robbed and was constantly trying to correct the wrongs thrust upon him. "It was an illustration of what befalls a man who sues a beggar."

Which while it was not pretty I think too much of the book focused upon this one aspect ad nauseum. Less is often more.

The author, Les Standiford, talked in full detail from the early onset of the meaning behind the coming of Christmas to the times when this novel was brought to life, to those who became wealthy off of it all, and the meaning behind his work and his life.

It was truly a fascinating read that I very much enjoyed in its entirety.

This is obviously not something I normally read however, this is timeless, a classic, a must read for the ages and beyond.

The countless adaptations are continuing today sadly without Dickens seeing a dime of what he rightfully deserved. Unfortunately, he passed quite young at 58 yo but his legacy lives on as he was not only , 'The man who invented Christmas but in many ways the man who re-invented it as well.'

I hope you enjoy as much as I did as I'd love to hear back on your reading experience with it.

\*\*I thank the author and publisher for providing me this copy in exchange for this honest review.\*\*

---

## **Mahlon says**

Have you ever wondered how some of your favorite books came to be written? Les Standiford gives us a fascinating glimpse into the mind of Charles Dickens, and details the circumstances that led him to produce the world's most beloved and well-known Christmas story A Christmas Carol, while at the same time helping change the way the holiday is celebrated. This book is filled with enough fun facts to delight Dickens fans, trivia buffs, or folks who are just plain crazy about Christmas, there is something here for everyone.

The book is not without it's flaws however, at 256 pages, it still feels padded, the author uses long block quotes from Dickens works, the writing is repetitive at times, and at one point he actually spends 3 or 4 pages summarizing the Carol for the reader, when he says at several points throughout the book that the story is so well known that if all the copies were destroyed, everyone would still know it by heart. Well, which is it? One gets the feeling that when all the padding is stripped away that this material was probably better suited for a magazine article than a full-length book.

Still, Christmas is the season of forgiveness and good cheer, in that spirit, I urge readers to embrace this book as they have the original Carol.

God bless us, every one.

---

## **Mary Lou says**

This book is actually pretty good. The reason for my 3 star rating, and lower ratings from several other readers as well, I presume, is that we judged the book by its cover and had different expectations. What I

anticipated was a warm look at *A Christmas Carol*, how Dickens came to write it, how it became ingrained in our cultural consciousness (perhaps more so than any other book except the Bible), and in what way it's defined Christmas since its writing. We get some of that (e.g. an interesting mention of the near ruin of England's goose industry, when Dickens' readers started having turkey for their Christmas dinner). But we also get a lot of biographical information about Dickens, an overview of his other novels and short stories (including the income Dickens derived from them, and contemporary reviews), and a fairly detailed discussion of 19th century publishing laws and Dickens' legal battles over plagiarism and royalties.

As an avid Dickens reader and someone who's just beginning to study the author, I enjoyed Standiford's book. Casual fans of *A Christmas Carol*, though, may feel deceived by the red, green and gold book jacket (complete with small touches of holly and candy canes) and the vague, if not misleading, title.

---