

## Charles Dickens's Audience in the Twenty-First Century: Service Learning and "Hunted Down"

**Megan Witzleben**  
*Hilbert College*

During Charles Dickens's lifetime, education publications such as *The Union Sixth Reader* already shared methods for teaching his works. They did so because Dickens's *Pickwick* inspired "such genial humor, such genuine wit, such graphic description, such felicity of expression, and, withal, such pathos," that students could begin mastering rhetoric rules and elocution (Sanders 349). *The Union Sixth Reader* gives evidence to educational concerns surrounding the best uses of language, as though Dickens's turns of phrase could empower students. Today, we may not teach Dickensian prose as superior. However, we do seek to empower students through verbal and cultural literacy to connect them with influential stories of the past and present. This paper demonstrates how teaching a little-known Dickens detective story, "Hunted Down," in its original serialized context, and then performing a dramatic reading of that story to a community partner, helps students understand Dickens in his own time and in ours. Students recognize his simultaneous urge to secure his own cultural status in America while advocating for the marginalized. By earning course credit and service learning credit as readers, editors, and marketers, class members better understood Dickens's logic that we can lift ourselves by lifting others.

Professors of British Literature have sought to bridge the apparent divide between nineteenth-century novels and twenty-first-century students, often noting the difficulty of teaching long works in the college semester. In his introduction to *Teaching Victorian Literature in the Twenty-First Century*, Laurence Mazzeno states: “Undergraduates in the twenty-first century are looking for *relevance*” (xxi). Before describing the method I used in British Literature, I will review how several other scholars have taken on this challenge.

Karen Bourrier argues that the “culture of re-printing and remediation on social networks such as Twitter closely mirror the circulation of scissors-and-paste journalism and the humorous miscellany in the Victorian press” (273). Her study encourages professors to question how might one “modernize” a story like “Hunted Down” into something as short as 140 characters. Would doing so help students to see how Dickens’s characters converse with the rest of the *New York Ledger*, in which it first appeared? Students can identify that the language is changing within the texts from the 1850s to now, but the drive for cultural credibility—making a name for oneself and one’s ethical views through media—has not changed. Through Bourrier’s study of tweets about Victorian literature, she concludes: “quotations from Victorian novels sound even more like maxims than in their original context” (278). Transcribed into 140 characters, a line from the past takes on urgency and perhaps an extreme tone that had been moderated by surrounding storylines. Students can learn how decontextualizing lines can add power, but can also alter meaning.

*Teaching Victorian Literature in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century* devotes several chapters to “Digital Victorians,” all of which work towards introducing students to the past via technology. Some

instructors have made Victorian novels feel more modern by reconceiving their serial structure as television series, creating classroom community in the process. Joe Bucolo's "'Survivor: Satis House': Creating Classroom Community while Teaching Dickens in a Reality-TV World" (2011) describes one such project. Many students connect well with these methods. Similarly to Bourrier and Bucolo, perhaps, Susan Cook and Elizabeth Henley noticed the need to create reading communities to teach literature. Their class designed functioning web pages to reach beyond the classroom, and they sought to return the story to its original serialized publication format. Students, now more like Victorian readers, would learn the pacing of the stories this way, taking week-long breaks in between parts to let the cliffhangers have their full effect. A class can also read the novel in the context of surrounding advertisements and columns (the paratext), engaging in several stories at once, as Victorian readers might have.

However, Cook and Henley note the difficulty of reproducing the weekly, serialized Victorian reading of Dickens's *Bleak House*, for example, in the modern college classroom. Serial novels can take a year to read, leading to trouble with pacing and accountability (336). While serials are valuable, the oral reading practices of Victorians are equally important, so Cook and Henley adapted a shorter work, *A Christmas Carol*, for oral presentation and performed it for local retirement home residents. Interestingly, they found that the oral, in-person community readings energized students more effectively than the digital project (347). Student responses "indicate that the oral reading project brought them together as a community of learners" (347). The community that students found by reading a Dickens text aloud mimics the Victorian experience of reading aloud. With only three installments, "Hunted Down" can give

students both full exposure to reading a short serial in its original publication context, and to Dickens's interest in fostering community in print and within a live community. Its focus on professionals helping in the domestic sphere dovetails with service learning focused on helping those in need.

## Why Service Learning?

Service learning meaningfully connects course instruction with a community need; it works best when the needs of both groups, in and outside the classroom, are met. It “enhances what is taught (learned) by extending the learning environment beyond what is considered to be its ‘normal limits’” (AmeriCorps Corporation for National and Community Service Resource Kit, qtd. in Wozniak). Before integrating service learning into my literature courses, I have assigned my students to work with digital technology to recreate characters' interactions. They have used Instagram and texting rather than Twitter in Victorian Literature and World Literature courses, completing creative projects wherein fictional characters such as Lady Audley and the Babylonian Goddess Ishtar present themselves as online personae. When students complete these, they have to think about how power and gender intersect with technology to create identity. In doing so, they have fun imagining how characters from the past would use language and visuals to manipulate those around them with carefully cultivated images and messages. Still, it is not always apparent whether the students fully understand the implications of their characters' choices. A detached cynicism about manipulation and ego creep into their work. In addition, the digital accounts they create are artificial; we have found it difficult to use them to

connect with real people and mimic the types of communities that Victorian authors reached through periodicals and speaking tours. Thus, while the digital projects have been illuminating to my students, they so far have not brought mid-Victorian writing, self-cultivation, and social responsibility together. Service learning fulfills this need.

Using language from Learn and Serve America, Hilbert College, where my students attend, defines service learning as “a teaching and learning strategy that integrates meaningful community service with instruction and reflection to enrich the learning experience, teach civic responsibility, and strengthen communities” (qtd. in Wozniak). The project must simultaneously meet an identified need in the community and a learning outcome in the classroom. For service learning to work, practitioners must not merely tack it onto the syllabus, but rather integrate it as a vehicle for teaching content (Archibald 255).

The service learning project undertaken in the following study enabled majors and non-majors alike to learn course material in a way that clearly impacts the community, helping them see why literature matters today. My student’s reflection on the project summarizes her learning process:

At first when I heard we were doing a service learning component I had no idea how it was going to tie in, but when we finally got to that part in the course and it was explained that this is what Charles Dickens would do, it made so much sense to me. We were going to be reading in a community where, based on different aspects of life, people weren’t necessarily able to read any more or were lonely and enjoyed the younger generation coming to visit to share in works that they were accustomed to when they were back in

school. At first, I was unsure of the project and how this was serving the community. I found that my day was a lot brighter even after just reading to a group of people who genuinely expressed happiness in seeing us present our version of ‘Hunted Down.’  
(Amelia, Forensic Science major, voice of “Mr. Sampson”)

Dickens’s texts are uniquely suitable to service learning projects because they “enable us to investigate common Victorian themes” such as “the plight of the poor and powerless...and social responsibility” (Archibald 247). Unfortunately for many instructors, his texts are often longer than non-majors in survey courses are apt to read. Again, “Hunted Down” fits the criteria in at least two ways: it highlights justice, and its brevity allows close reading in a short time.

## **The Details: Method, Content, and Outcomes**

My mission in the classroom emphasizes teaching students to read closely for textual detail and characterization and to effect change around them through their writing. My own education taught me that we are “men and women for others,” a Jesuit ideal that complements Hilbert’s Franciscan emphasis on serving marginalized communities. I bring these ideals into my choices of assignments, and I have embraced service learning as a tool to bring their readings to life. The approach described below unites close reading and community outreach. It responds to the problem of teaching the long serial while inviting the advantages that Cook and others see: teaching paratext and bringing both the story and the nuance from its context to a live audience as Dickens might have.

Students in Survey of British Literature II edited the text of “Hunted Down” as a script to be read by five students. We worked with our Office of Service Learning to bring Charles Dickens to People, Inc., an organization that operates residential facilities for older and/or disabled people. Students could better imagine the community that Dickens created with his American readers and his New York editor by attempting to replicate the experience in a much smaller setting. Students felt the pace of the story by reading it in installments, first privately and then aloud to a live audience. They learned about marketing Dickens in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, and they empathized with his desires to bring great art to the public while receiving credit. The community partner for the “Hunted Down” project, People Inc., stated that their residents needed interaction with another generation, company, listening, and group skills. British Literature II outcomes included the ability to detect ethical assumptions in works of literature, analyze any dissonance between cultural values and the social vehicles meant to convey those values (literature in context), combine analytical and experiential learning, and cultivate a critical level of close textual reading, leading to a richer response to literature. This last outcome also aligns with an institutional drive to foster core writing, speaking, listening, and reading skills. Pairing traditional classroom methods of close reading the text and its publishing context with service learning empowers students to bring deeper knowledge of the story’s ethical call for action to residents. They had to engage deeply in the language of the story in order to read it meaningfully.

“Hunted Down” provides students with Dickens’s language and focus on the city to tell a tale of love and justice, but for many, it is a confusing read at first. When preparing “Hunted

Down” for a nursing home audience, students realized that while elderly residents might recall Dickens’s works fondly, they were unlikely to know this short story. Students agreed to include in a program a summary written by former classmate Jennifer Robinson for a conference paper about bringing “Hunted Down” to Detective Fiction and Journalism courses.<sup>1</sup> I include it here in full to ground the descriptions that follow:

Charles Dickens wrote “Hunted Down” as a narrative mystery. It tells a story of insurance fraud and murder. Mr. Sampson, the narrator of “Hunted Down,” rambles and actively misleads the reader with the lack of information provided throughout the story, thus making you the listener-as-detective. Sampson tells the story as an employee at a life assurance office who holds our attention, yet he is deceptive until the conclusion when the mystery is solved. The story’s villainous Mr. Julius Slinkton tells the narrator: “You have not an easy adversary to play against when you play against me.” Mr. Sampson introduces Slinkton with great distrust as Slinkton walks in to his life assurance office. He can identify that something is amiss, a clue to the reader. After Sampson observes his face and gentlemanly appearance, we see a slight shift in typical Dickensian style, as Slinkton is not a comically repulsive character portraying the back streets of London. Slinkton looks to be a respectable person on the outside yet shows how deceiving appearances can be. A minor character in the beginning, Mr. Beckwith is introduced as a drunkard yet has his shining moment in the conclusion of the story. We learn that Slinkton murdered his niece to claim the insurance money, and decidedly

Beckwith followed Slinkton to make sure he did not kill his other niece, Miss Niner. Beckwith's true identity is revealed as Mr. Meltham, the love-struck clerk and "detective" who devoted his whole existence to catching Slinkton and looking for justice. Meltham's self-proclaimed purpose was over, and he "had no more work on earth to do." He hoped that in his death, he could meet Slinkton's victim, and right a wrong on the other side. (Witzleben and Robinson "Teaching Hunted Down")

During discussions and lectures of "Hunted Down," we emphasized the role of the professional in securing justice not only in the workplace that cannot allow insurance fraud, but also in the home, where a greedy uncle can kill his nieces and destroy hopes of marriage. "Hunted Down" fits into what critic Jennifer Ruth calls "a new professional ideology of 'service'" in the Victorian middle classes (285). We focused on the setting, characters, questions about narrative voice, and the editorials on the preceding page of the journal. Dickens drew from material gathered during his visits to Thomas Wainwright, a prisoner at Newgate convicted of poisoning people for their money, in the 1830s (Dickens, *Letters, Volume Nine*, 44).<sup>2</sup> He had been saving that experience for the perfect narrative. He also carried over themes from *A Tale of Two Cities*, which he was finishing, that memorably ends with the self-sacrificing Sydney Carton: "It is a far, far better thing that I do, than I have ever done; it is a far, far better rest that I go to than I have ever known" (386). The story combines real-life tales of murder with the themes of noble deceit in his recent novel. "Just as in *A Tale of Two Cities*," argues Ruth, "we

have in ‘Hunted Down’ a professional whose value is guaranteed only by his death” (287). We questioned the ethics of a society that financially rewards murder but seems not to value honor, requiring sacrifice instead. With Meltham, Dickens can appear to promote professional disinterest, and yet his payment agreement with the *New York Ledger* supports his rationale for just reward for artistic work. Students, too, often need motivation beyond artistic merit to read and write, and by pairing their work with Service Learning, they had the chance to develop appreciation for Dickens’s literary work and relationships with audiences while earning credit for building their own communities. In the end, they felt satisfaction with service in addition to “payment.”

## **A. Lecture**

Before reading the story, students needed to understand Dickens’s focus on speaking up for marginalized people and his financial needs in 1859. He presents a self-sacrificing professional, but he does not think we should have to kill ourselves for art. The concept that financial self-advocacy can align with community service seems foreign to many students, but Dickens combined the two ideas often. To make this clear, I briefly summarized the humanitarian themes of several Dickens novels. He consistently promotes the idea that when we raise others, we raise ourselves, that self-interest and community service need not be mutually exclusive. I outlined his business agreements for speaking tours and the publication of “Hunted Down,” emphasizing editor Robert Bonner’s similar emphasis on justly paying authors for art that helps bring communities together. I included *Oliver Twist*, *A Christmas Carol*, *Dombey and*

*Son, Bleak House, Hard Times, and A Tale of Two Cities* before introducing “Hunted Down.” I based the rest of my lecture on research on “Hunted Down” and its original periodical context.

Situated in the middle of the *New York Ledger*, “Hunted Down” shares space with editor Robert Bonner’s unsigned editorials, as though Bonner wanted his words to blend with those of Dickens. Why would Dickens be willing to appear in the middle of a family paper when his celebrity status was high, but somewhat distracting to him, in 1859?<sup>3</sup> After all, he was working through public marital and business disputes as well as the inception of *All the Year Round* that year (Patten 236). A combination of the large fee he commanded and his desire to get back to America helps answer this. By the late 1850’s when “Hunted Down” was published, pirated editions of his great reform novels such as *Bleak House* had been selling well in the United States, but he wanted to be both loved and fairly paid. His relationship with American publishers and his readers was still strained from his negative presentation of them in his *American Notes* and *Martin Chuzzlewit*. Dickens’s demands to raise money for himself as payment for his story brought him disdain from his American audience: “‘We are mortified and grieved that he should have been guilty of such great indelicacy and impropriety,’ said the *New York Courier and Enquirer*, then the country’s most popular paper” (“When Charles Dickens Fell Out with America”). However, Bonner, the *Ledger*’s editor, offered the perfect opportunity: Dickens could secure a fee for his writing, and he would have a new story to read to his American audiences on his next tour.<sup>4</sup> While my students appreciate literature on its own merit, they

connected to Dickens's demands for payment and need to reach out to his American audience. Yet they empathized with those Americans who were offended by his portrayal of them in 1842. Understanding this context—his need to assuage the feelings of his American audience while seeking payment for his art—helped students see the irony in his story of the self-sacrificing professional. Dickens presents Meltham, the ethical office worker who dies for justice, but neither Dickens nor Bonner (nor most students, for that matter) want to sacrifice their livelihood to help others.

Still, students needed to understand why reading Dickens aloud to a community partner made sense. We discussed his method of performing dramatic readings of his works to broaden his appeal and bring his stories to life. By the time Dickens agreed to publish “Hunted Down,” he had embarked on a secondary career, receiving payment for public readings in England (Dickens to Robert Bonner, March 29, 1859, in *Letters of Charles Dickens, Volume Nine*, 43-44). He was eager to return to America to do the same. Friend and biographer John Forster argues that Dickens commanded such a high fee for “Hunted Down” because “of the eager desire which his entry on the career of a public reader had aroused in America” (Forster 225). By August, 1859, when “Hunted Down” debuted, Dickens and Thomas Coke Evans of New York were working out a payment agreement for a series of 80 public readings that Dickens considered undertaking in the United States (Dickens, *Letters, Volume Nine*, 567, “Unsigned Conditional Agreement Between Charles Dickens and Thomas Coke Evans, August 1859”). Another offer by James Fields of Ticknor & Fields came separately, indicating just how in demand Dickens had

become.<sup>5</sup> According to Forster, Dickens considered going as early as September 1859. However, in spite of what Dickens had said (on July 9, 1859, from Gadshill) about “the golden prospect held before me,” he “yielded nevertheless to other persuasion, and for that time the visit was not to be” (qtd. in Forster 225). In 1861, the Civil War began, and “America was closed to any such enterprise for nearly five years” (Forster 225). Dickens’s next reading tour in America would not begin until 1867.

Dickens’s need to secure his reputation and expand it in the United States was pressing. Again, we noted the irony in his telling stories about helping those in need while he promoted sales benefitting himself, but students came to understand that he deserved to be paid for his labors. They were fascinated by the negotiations for payment that intersected with the U.S. Civil War. They could begin to see how macroeconomics—the effect of war on the economy and international travel—plays into contracts for literature and the fictional disputes about valuing money over life.

Charles Dickens eagerly took advantage of the opportunity the *New York Ledger* offered. He could earn money while promoting a story that demonstrates the need to act above pecuniary interests, a classic Dickensian move that students could see in the story and context. Ruth agrees: “What the invaluable *A Tale of Two Cities* and the mercenary ‘Hunted Down’ have in common is an argument for the professional’s indifference to ‘mere money’” (284). Yet Dickens himself knew that “mere money” enabled him to write. On 29 March, 1859, four months before “Hunted Down” was published, Dickens wrote to Bonner: “your proposal is so handsome that it changes

my resolution, and I cannot refuse it. I will endeavor to be at work upon the tale, while this note is on its way to you across the water” (*Letters, Volume Nine*, 43). Busy with *A Tale of Two Cities* and his new *All the Year Round*, Dickens had “resolved” not to take on extra work. This opportunity, however, was worth it. <sup>6</sup>

### ***B. Reading and Discussing the Facsimile Edition of “Hunted Down”***

Students in British Literature II read the first installment of “Hunted Down” in its original context on page 5, facing Bonner’s editorials, downloaded from the New York Public Library. In class, we viewed the paratext together by using *America’s Historical Newspapers*. They also had access to a transcribed e-book from *The University of Adelaide Library* for the sake of legibility.

Like the 1859 audience, each student encountered Dickens’s story described above “with Bonner’s editorial positions ringing, so to speak, in her ears” (Looby 186). The page 4 column entitled, “The Average Human Life,” which reads like an actuary’s account of risk-taking, especially calls attention to the confluence of money and life, ironically dramatized in Dickens’s tale of life insurance fraud. According to this column, lifespans of “litterateurs,” authors of literature, were short. The column begins, “It appears, from a paper recently read by Dr. Guy before the Royal Statistical Society of Great Britain, that of all professions and callings known among men, literature is the least favorable to longevity.” To write literature (especially in Great Britain) is to knowingly shorten one’s life, according to the column’s logic. The columnist implores, “May we venture delicately to suggest that they are using up the oil of life too fast,

while the light they give out is not appreciated by an ungrateful world.” Again and again, students learn of self-sacrificing professionals: by choosing literature, writers give of themselves more than they receive. Yet the editor glorifies the sacrifice while implying that it should not be necessary. Other editorials facing Dickens’s first installment reinforce the idea that people should be compensated for their work. “The Wages of Boys,” for example, argues, “The labor of boys is, as a general rule, shamefully underpaid” (4). Students in English fear that they, too, will be underpaid; they too seek to demonstrate their worth, and at the same time, they willingly pursue art and use it to uplift those in need through service.<sup>7</sup>

By reading “Hunted Down” in installments, students could also see the importance of serials: what were they, who read them, how they were important for a literate public. Using the *Dickens Journals Online* website, students noticed that when Dickens published the story in *All the Year Round* (vol. 67) beginning in August, 1860, he extended his serial over only two weeks. However, as part of the *New York Ledger*, it occupied three weeks. By stretching the story to an extra week, the *Ledger* editor, Robert Bonner, could sell extra papers and continue surrounding Dickens with his usual staff of writers and editorial positions.

Reading the story in thirds, as Bonner divided it, allowed students to see the intersections of narrative and business marketing more clearly. While the first installment of “Hunted Down” faced Bonner editorials about fair wages, the second installment of “Hunted Down” in the *Ledger* followed editorials on the “Progress of the American Press” in providing high quality articles to help educate the masses. The third portion appeared next to the Bonner claim that

“motive... more than anything else, renders an action good or bad...The principles are the gold on which is to be placed the stamp” (3 Sept. *Ledger*). It reinforces Bonner’s *ethos* as a “well-motivated” arts patron who paid “gold” to provide the best for his readers. It was good business, Bonner demonstrated, to provide for good authors, and in doing so, editor and author alike could enrich the lives of readers.

Yet Dickens’s organization did not call for a third installment: the *All the Year Round* version ends the first “portion” with the concluding line to chapter three: “the premium for one year was paid” (400), signaling a break in time within the story, and it begins the second installment with “IV. For six or seven months, I saw no more of Mr. Slinkton” (422), picking up after time lapse in the narrative. It makes sense. Bonner, however, cuts off the first installment mid chapter, and then begins the second installment *in media res*, with Chapter 4 beginning mid-page. It does not make narrative sense, and it serves only to stretch the story to more issues. Again, students noted that Bonner’s decision to stretch the story allowed him to profit more and promote himself, but it worked for Dickens.<sup>8</sup> Noting these differences in the publications led to discussions about artistic integrity and the “price” artists pay to have their work published.

### **C. Student Presentation**

With information on publication contexts in hand, students turned the discussion of parts I and II to the characters, plot, and thematic considerations during their presentation. I met with them beforehand and reviewed their discussion questions and ascertained whether they were

figuring out the story's central mystery about identities. They led the class in close reading exercises, linking the clues in the story to the contextual issues the class had been discussing. They distributed questions ranging from opinion-based reflections on the story's opening: "Do you agree with the notion that it is easy to judge a person solely based on one's looks?" to plot and character questions: "What do you think Mr. Slinkton's intentions are with Mr. Sampson?" They led the discussion of appearances and speech patterns, including those of the characters and in the story itself: who is revealing what and when, and why? We also considered the decision to include woodcuts focusing on Slinkton's hair and expression.<sup>9</sup> The student discussion leaders then pointed out clues about Meltham's whereabouts and identity, a close-reading exercise. By the story's third and final installment, students were excitedly claiming they knew the mystery from the start. They seemed to want others to know that they understood, a kind of "credit" beyond the usual points assigned for presentations. We began considering the script and speaking roles. Students needed to understand how genre affects narration and pacing and to consider how scripting could give away clues about identity. They earned credit for transcribing the story into a script, taking into account narration and the mystery surrounding Meltham/ Beckham's identity.

## ***D. Community Outreach***

Dickens described sharing "Hunted Down" with friends who approved: "I read the story to one or two friends here, at the time of its completion, and I found that it took strong

possession of them.”<sup>10</sup> Dickens not only promotes his story here, but he also promotes himself as a reader, as though he is preparing his audience for his speaking skills. We considered our own speaking skills and the readiness of our audience to understand a new story, and we determined that because our audience might not hear every narrative clue about Meltham, we could have one student voice Banks, Beckwith, and Meltham without ruining the story. We also needed to advertise the event to the People, Inc. residents, which forced students to think like Bonner and Fields: how to sell Dickens’s story and live reading. A student volunteered to create posters, choosing a scene appearing in a much later edition of “Hunted Down.” She evidently agreed with Philip Allingham, who writes, “The beach at Scarborough is visually more interesting as a setting than the glass-partitioned London insurance office, where the action opens, and Sampson's trying to warn Miss Niner of her imminent danger is one of the key moments in the plot” (Allingham, “*On the Beach at Scarborough* by Harry Furniss”). She chose not the pictures in the *New York Ledger*, but pictures published in a 1910 edition of *Christmas Stories*.<sup>11</sup> Her choice led to a discussion about audience appeal, marketing, and plot.

We then read through the entire script, upon which we decided after circulating various versions created by students. We read it aloud, timing it and listening to the narrator’s long passages. Ironically, one student (Yasmine, a Digital Communications and Media major) ended up writing both the best script and the best poster, along with voicing Slinkton’s lines, and she received no extra credit. Thus, artistic merit and pride took precedence over “payment” in the

form of grades. Still, her work dovetails with her professional goals of writing and editing media content. She later reflected, “if I could go back and rework the script, I would have tried to shorten the narrator’s lengthy and continuous lines. I would also try to do so with Beckwith’s lines towards the end of the story.” A bit like Dickens, she earned via artistic pride and a professional’s urge for perfectionism.

## ***E. Assessment***

I really enjoyed that. Thank you. I really did enjoy that. (One People, Inc., resident)

I had a great deal of fun with the service learning project. It was a complex yet interesting Dickens story that I thought most people enjoyed reading and listening to.  
(Abigail, English major)

Student testimony and exam feedback indicate that performing the story helped with comprehension of the text itself and with understanding Dickens’s relationship with his reading and listening public.<sup>12</sup> Students reported that the original context helped them slow down and consider the mystery more carefully. If they skimmed the first installment and came to class confused, they felt that they could pick it up again and read it meaningfully. However, we could not convey the serialized context to our audience because we could not guarantee that the same residents would return to hear the second and third installments. Thus, we had to present all of

the story at once, and we performed it on two separate occasions for different people. Before each reading, one student briefly summarized the context in the *New York Ledger* and Dickens's interest in a new American speaking tour, and she emphasized Dickens's ethical philosophy that society is better when we lift each other up when we can. After each reading, individual students explained a bit about their characters to the audience, thus demonstrating in-depth understanding of motive and personality.

At the end of the semester, the final exam included questions on Charles Dickens's relationship with his British and American audiences in 1859, close reading questions asking students to connect descriptions of the city with their symbolic significance, and thematic questions on potential conflicts between self-interest and justice within several texts. I found that students excelled on these questions, thereby demonstrating successful course outcomes. I credit the in-depth experience of discussing the serial context and service-learning oral reading experience for their success.

## Conclusion

Bianca Quilantan's article "Should Colleges Let Ailing Majors Die or Revamp Them" in *The Chronicle of Higher Education* (20 May, 2018) states: "Assumption College, in Worcester, Mass... is simply cutting some declining majors, especially in the humanities, and banking on entirely new programs, pre-professional in thrust, to buck worrisome New England enrollment trends." Professors answer back urging that the ethics and skilled literacy the humanities bring to any future job candidates are integral to education. Diana Archibald writes: "Many students

share stories about budget cuts affecting beloved arts and humanities programs, and we consider how university students can make a difference in their community right now and in their future careers” (246). One way to demonstrate how literature connects is through service learning.

The few critics who have paid attention to “Hunted Down” focus on the unreliable narrator and the emerging professional classes in the story. In each of these approaches, critics notice that individuals struggle to be truthful and may not even know where their interests lie (Ruth 288). Allingham notes: “‘Hunted Down’ explores the fact that, beneath the civilised veneer, always lurks the impulse towards violence... the world of romance lies just outside our own front doors, peopled by characters we pass daily in the street” (“Dickens’s ‘Hunted Down’ (1859)”). The violence beneath the story of “Hunted Down” points to the broad tendency to value money over life, hardly the “happiest vein” that Bonner had advertised. Yet it is there, and it helps us see Dickens’s relationship with American readers as he re-cultivated his image in 1859. There is the potential for violence everywhere, but there is also the countervailing potential to intervene meaningfully. By carefully considering the story within its historical context, one can read Slinkton and Meltham, respectively, as analogous to those in business who profit from others’ lives and those who die laboring as a result of that greed. Taught to read this context, we empower students to recognize how Dickens withstood financial machines of literary publishing while using them to advantage. “Hunted Down” tells a story of professional sacrifice for the sake of saving lives, written in part for the self-serving purpose of earning money and widening personal appeal, and read aloud today for serving learning credit, course credit, and a less

measurable benefit of uplifting those in need. Service learning brings the entire story and its context full circle.

## Appendix 1: Journals

Students' reflection journals speak for themselves. A selection of them follows:

Reading to the individuals at People Inc. made me feel as though I was not only bringing joy and excitement to the room in which we were reciting the story, but also gave me a sense of how Dickens created an atmosphere of knowledge and authenticity to his own travels, spreading his word through his works. The truth that lies within 'Hunted Down' about human life and how one cannot simply put on a price tag for one's own financial gain, also plays a huge role in identifying what Dickens was implying when it comes to humanity. Slinkton may have been a unique case when it comes to his savvy ways of killing off family members to receive money on their deadly behalf, but many individuals in society still today create unorthodox ways of financial gain at one's expense. It is no secret that this is not how a society of good minded and hearted men and women should be... The whole experience from rewriting the script and eventually performing to the individuals of People Inc. helped me understand the way Dickens had experienced his own system of work. I felt as though I was doing a great service to the men and women of People Inc., and it was a pleasure becoming the narrator of the story. It was very exciting to be able to put my own twist on what the narrator should possess when it came to voice and character. I would gladly do this project again and I am very happy I was able to be a part of carrying on the legacy that is Charles Dickens. (Kelsey, English major, Narrator)

Going and reading to the People Inc. groups in a fashion very similar to how Dickens would go on his tours and read made the story feel more real, and shed a bit of light on it. It made the story feel more personable than it had felt while reading it in my head. To me it helped emphasize this theme that words and stories bring people together, which we did by bringing us Hilbert students to People Inc. to tell a story. We brought together two different groups and connected them with a simple story. That's the beauty of what Dickens did with his speaking tours. It was a plain and simple thing that did a great deal to bring a community together... It felt even more impactful that we were doing the service to/with two communities that really do benefit by having face-to-face interactions. Both communities we "performed" to at People Inc. were in need of having some amiable people to come and entertain them and give them a break from the norm. Our partner in the community, People Inc., was in need of a "companion," a partner, almost, and we as a group were able to bring companions in ourselves and in the characters we represented in "Hunted Down." We gave them a change of pace from their usual daily lives by telling them a story that they may never have heard of or remembered from their past, which may have been nostalgic and happy for them.

I felt I had grown with this service learning project because I was able to actually do something. I spend so much time thinking of ways to help my community, show my support verbally for certain things, but I need act upon them for various reasons.

Through Hilbert, I was able to follow through in helping my community, and I felt fulfilled by what I did. It may have been the simple act of reading off a page, but words

are what I live and breathe by, and being able to share words with others felt like a big deal. I may not be the most vocal or loud spoken, but my (although minor) part of being Miss Niner gave me a brief purpose in this project and I felt like I had been able to do something with all the talk I've been building up about wanting to help others. (Abigail, English major, "Miss Niner")

In order to meet their needs, we hoped to perform a dialogue of Charles Dickens's renowned "Hunted Down." We had hoped some of the elder residents would recognize the author and might even have some background knowledge about our story as well. We also had an idea to print out copies of the reading for after so our audience would be able to revisit the experience and story later at their leisure. (Connor, Business Management major, "Meltham")

Reading the story to the elderly people, really helped with my own comprehension of the story and made me happy to inform others about Dickens's work...Reading to the elderly brought joy to many faces... I really like Dickens as an author and the story of "Hunted Down" very much now, because the goal of understanding was accomplished due to this reading. I personally feel as though we really embodied his work and made an impact on the community just like Dickens wanted to. This project for me has taught me that if I have the personal abilities to help another individual, why not? (Nautica, English major, Introduction)

## Appendix 2: Posters

[Poster](#) by Yasmine adapted for this paper:



*On The Beach at Scarborough* by Harry Furniss. 1910. Vignetted, 9 x 14 cm. Dickens's *Christmas Stories*, second half of volume 16, The Charles Dickens Library Edition, facing page 127. Scanned image and text by Philip V. Allingham.  
<http://www.victorianweb.org/art/illustration/furniss/89.html>

## A DRAMATIC READING OF CHARLES DICKENS'S "HUNTED DOWN"

as performed by

**HILBERT COLLEGE**

students

NOVEMBER 9<sup>TH</sup> 11:15 AM-12:00 PM

ELM COMMUNITY ROOM



Original [woodcut](#) of Julius Slinkton in first installment of “Hunted Down,” published in the August 20, 1859 edition of *The New York Ledger*, page 5.

General Research Division, The New York Public Library. "Hunted Down" *The New York Public Library Digital Collections*. 1859-08-20. <http://digitalcollections.nypl.org/items/e9c15710-bd51-0133-07fd-00505686a51c>

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Thanks to Jennifer Robinson for bringing this story in the *New York Ledger* to my attention in 2015. We first viewed it in hard copy from a folio she obtained from the Boston, New York Historical Society. She and I presented this summary as part of a conference paper delivered at the March 2017 meeting of the College English Association.

<sup>2</sup> Footnote to March 29, 1859 letter from Charles Dickens to Robert Bonner.

<sup>3</sup> Kathryn Ledbetter expresses surprise that in 1872, Robert Bonner made a similar decision to place Tennyson's "England and America in 1782" in the second column of page four in the 6 January, 1872 edition. Tennyson chose a poem that would reach the American audience and move towards reconciliation of the two countries after the American Civil War (Ledbetter 189).

<sup>4</sup> The *New York Ledger* was, in 1859, the largest family newspaper in the United States (Mott 359).

<sup>5</sup> The publication of *All the Year Round* in *The New York Ledger* did not materialize. For the apparent untrustworthiness of Thomas Coke Evans, with whom Dickens was also negotiating terms to republish *All the Year Round* in the United States, see footnote in *Letters of Charles Dickens Volume Nine*, 17.

<sup>6</sup> Bonner imagined his readers: "They come home from a prayer meeting, and not being sleepy, the mother takes up *The Ledger* and reads aloud to the girls." The quotation is found in *Current Literature* I, Sept. 1888, 196. Also qtd. in Ledbetter 188; qtd. in Mott 359.

<sup>7</sup> Fanny Fern's two contributions, also on page 4, facing Dickens's story, continue the theme of just payment for work. She implores leaders of boarding schools to provide children with

wholesome breakfasts before setting them to tasks; again, the theme is to “feed” those whom you want to perform and to reward students for their labor. Fern’s message is consistent with the other columns and with Dickens’s own argument for copyright: people need “payment,” of one sort or another, for their good work. And yet they cannot demand it themselves, as Dickens found when he fought the American press a decade earlier; others must recognize and fill the need. Without payment, they are akin to Meltham, the character who dies for justice and receives no earthly reward.

<sup>8</sup> Dickens implicitly gave Bonner permission to split his story into extra parts, trusting in the editor’s professionalism not to disrupt the narrative for the sake of selling more papers. On 7 July 1859, Charles Dickens delivered his proofs for the story to Robert Bonner enclosed with a letter telling the editor that he did not need to be sent a revision, “as it is printed with remarkable accuracy.” Dickens also explains: “I have divided it into five sections, feeling that the effect is heightened thereby.” (Dickens to Robert Bonner, 7 July 1859, in *Letters of Charles Dickens Volume Nine*, 89). “Hunted Down” has five chapters, which may be the “sections” described in the letter. But Dickens does not specify whether those five sections could appear over two or three editions of the paper. If Bonner determined the number of installments, it was with Dickens’s implicit, but not explicit, approval.

<sup>9</sup> See [Appendix](#) for picture of Slinkton woodcut.

<sup>10</sup> Charles Dickens to Robert Bonner, 7 July 1859, Charles Dickens Collection, Harry Ransom Center, University of Texas at Austin.

<sup>11</sup> See [Appendix](#) for poster featuring illustration: *On the Beach at Scarborough* by Harry Furniss. 1910. Vignetted, 9 x 14 cm. Dickens's *Christmas Stories*, second half of volume 16, The Charles Dickens Library Edition, facing page 127. Victorian Web:

<http://www.victorianweb.org/art/illustration/furniss/89.html>, accessed May 17, 2018. Scanned

for Victorian Web by Philip Allingham.

<sup>12</sup> According to Wozniak: “Based on [college-wide] student feedback (using Fall 2016 end of course SL evaluation): 98% of students reported to understand the connection between their service experience and course learning objectives; 94% of students reported that their service experience helped them better understand the course concepts; 92% of students reported their coursework strengthened their ability to serve their community partner.”

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