

VICTORIAN PARLOUR GAMES



Scrooge's Third Visitor. Source: *A Christmas Carol* by Charles Dickens, reprinted from the First Edition in the Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University, 1975.

The Victorians certainly knew how to make the holiday season festive. Long before *Cards Against Humanity* and *Apples to Apples* there were Victorian parlour games. Parlour games required two things: a group of people and a sense of humor. Gather your chuckaboos* and try the parlour games below at your next holiday gathering!

THE MINISTER'S CAT

Each player takes a turn choosing an adjective describing the minister's cat, starting with the letter "A." For example, "The minister's cat is an agreeable cat." Once each player has chosen a word beginning with "A" the group moves on to "B," and so on through the alphabet. If a player is unable to think of an adjective or repeats an already-used word, they are out and must "pay a forfeit." **

THE COURTIERS

One guest is selected as the king or queen and sits in the center of the room. Any movement made by the monarch must be imitated by the rest of the guests (the courtiers) who must maintain a straight face. The monarch may do whatever odd motion he or she wishes, but if a courtier smiles or laughs he or she is out and must "pay a forfeit." The last guest to remain stoic becomes the new monarch.

*Victorian slang for "a close friend."

** At a Victorian Christmas party the loser of a game was often required to "pay a forfeit," meaning that he or she was required to do some difficult or silly task as punishment for losing. For example, a loser might be forced to imitate an animal, form a human statue or recite a Christmas carol backwards. Be creative and have fun!