

Why This New Film May Soon Be a Christmas Classic

“You learn more at a funeral than at a feast—After all, that’s where we’ll end up. We might discover something from it” (Eccl. 7:2, The Message).

Standing as one of a very few who observed a lonely rich man’s funeral, a young Charles Dickens’ mind laid the foundation for what would be one of the world’s greatest Christmas stories, a backstory revealed in the new film *The Man Who Invented Christmas*.

For anyone who might have wondered where the inspiration for Ebenezer Scrooge, Tiny Tim and the ghosts of Christmas past, present and future might have originated, the new Bleeker Street film, directed by Bharat Nalluri, written by Susan Coyne and based on the novel by Les Standiford, attempts to answer this question. Releasing this week, it stars Dan Stevens as Dickens, Christopher Plummer as Scrooge and Jonathan Pryce as Dickens’ father.

Under the gun for another literary hit after a career lull and balancing a hectic home life, including a visit from his father, Dickens frantically decides on a Christmas tale after being inspired by observing a cemetery burial with no one present. He draws from many areas in his life, including a chance encounter with a waiter and stories from his children’s nanny, to put together the morality tale about the most important things in life.

Plummer, who hams it up as Scrooge, accompanies Dickens through his travels, often encouraging him to get back to work fleshing the story out. This literary device was more real than one might realize, based on the revelation that Dickens was reported to have spoken to his characters while penning

his novels.

Stevens, who gained international acclaim as Matthew Crawley on *Downton Abbey* and most recently starred as the Beast in Disney's *Beauty and the Beast*, fits nicely as the 31-year-old Dickens, bringing a youthful energy and accessibility to the role. The young novelist, unable to attract publishing-house attention, gathered his own funds to print the novella, which in turn helped inspire and mainstream Christmas traditions such as Christmas cards and mistletoe.

Like recent author biopics such as *Finding Neverland* and *Goodbye, Christopher Robin*, *The Man Who Invented Christmas* nicely celebrates some classic literary characters and their creator. It also underscores the main lesson of *A Christmas Carol*, that generosity and benevolence are more desirable than wealth and greed.

The Man Who Invented Christmas is rated PG for thematic material and mild language.

,