

Study & Revision Pack

GCSE English Literature

Name:

**CONTEXT**

Charles Dickens was born on February 7, 1812, and spent the first nine years of his life living in the coastal regions of Kent, a county in southeast England. Dickens' father, John, was a kind and likable man, but he was financially irresponsible, piling up tremendous debts throughout his life. When Dickens was nine, his family moved to London. At twelve, his father was arrested and sent to debtors' prison. Dickens' mother moved seven of their children into prison with their father but arranged for Charles to live alone outside the prison, working with other child laborers at a hellish job pasting labels on bottles in a blacking warehouse.

The three months Charles spent apart from his family were severely traumatic. He viewed his job as a miserable trap--he considered himself too good for it, stirring the contempt of his worker-companions. After his father was released from prison, Dickens returned to school, eventually becoming a law clerk. He went on to serve as a court reporter before taking his place as one of the most popular English novelists of his time. At age 25, Dickens completed his first novel, *The Pickwick Papers,* which met with great success. This started his career as an English literary celebrity, during which he produced such masterpieces as *Great Expectations, David Copperfield,* and *A Tale of Two Cities.*

Dickens' beloved novella *A Christmas Carol* was written in 1843, with the intention of drawing readers' attention to the plight of England's poor. (Social criticism, a recurring theme in Dickens' work, resounds most strongly in his novel *Hard Times.*) In the tale, Dickens stealthily combines a somewhat indirect description of hardships faced by the poor with a heart-rending, sentimental celebration of the Christmas season. The calloused character of the apathetic penny-pinching Ebenezer Scrooge, who opens his heart after being confronted by three spirits, remains one of Dickens' most widely recognized and popular creations.

*A Christmas Carol* takes the form of a relatively simplistic allegory--it is seldom considered one of Dickens' important literary contributions. The novella's emotional depth, brilliant narration, and endearing characters, however, offer plenty of rewards for literature students, Dickensian fans, and Grinches alike. Like *A Tale of Two Cities, A Christmas Carol* has won much appreciation among general readers despite being dismissed by scholarly critics of Dickens' work.

**Independent Research – find out more about CONTEXT at...**

**Websites**

[www.victorians.org.uk](http://www.victorians.org.uk)

www.victorian web.org.uk

[www.bbc.co.uk/schools/primaryhistory/victorian\_britain/](http://www.bbc.co.uk/schools/primaryhistory/victorian_britain/)

[www.bbc.co.uk/history/trail/victorian\_britain](http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/trail/victorian_britain)

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Victorian_era>

www.victorianweb.org/authors/dickens/dickensbio1.html

**Library Resources**

“Charles Dickens” – books by C Martin, Nicola Barber, Neil Champion & Peter Hicks

“Introducing Dickens” by J Kassman

“A Reader’s Guide to Dickens” by P Hobsbaum

“How to Study a Dickens Novel” by K Selby

“The World of Charles Dickens” by K Fido

'History of Britain: Victorian Britain 1837 to 1901' by Andrew Langley

'Eyewitness: Victorians' by Ann Kramer

'DK : Victorians' by Ann Kramer

'Looking back at Britain : Victoria's Final Decade' by Jeremy Harwood

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**MAKE YOUR FURTHER NOTES ON CONTEXT HERE**

(leave free for storyboard)

**PLOT SUMMARY & ACTIVITIES**

**Stave 1: Marley's Ghost**

Here the reader meets Ebenezer Scrooge, a miserable but wealthy old man. Scrooge works in his counting house with his clerk, Bob Cratchit.

Bob writes out records of accounts and Scrooge oversees the business but we don't know (it's not important) what it exactly does. (There may be a clue in the next chapter, where we see Scrooge as an apprentice with Mr. Fezziwig.) It is Christmas Eve, and Scrooge receives several visitors.

One is his nephew, Fred, who invites Scrooge to dine with him for Christmas. Then come two gentlemen who are collecting for charity. We learn here that Scrooge had a partner, Jacob Marley, who died on Christmas Eve seven years previously.

Scrooge refuses to give the gentlemen anything, saying he helps the poor already through supporting prisons and workhouses. Scrooge allows Bob to have Christmas Day as a holiday, but insists that he be back at work all the earlier next day. (Boxing Day was not usually a holiday in the 19th century, but was the day when tradesmen collected their Christmas "boxes" - gifts from their customers.)

When Scrooge returns to his lodging he is visited by the Ghost of Jacob Marley who is weighed down by a massive chain, made up of cashboxes, keys and padlocks. The ghost says that any spirit which does not mix with other people in life must travel among them after death. Marley tells Scrooge that he, too, wears a chain, larger than Marley's. Marley has often sat by him unseen. Now he warns him of three more spirits which will visit to help him change his ways.

**SETTING**

**Dickens uses the setting / weather to create atmosphere and convey his ideas of Scrooge as a character. This is sometimes called PATHETIC FALLACY. Fill in the table below:**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Quotation from the text** | **Effect on reader (atmosphere or ideas on Scrooge)** |
| ***“the cold within him froze his old features, nipped his pointed nose...thin lips blue...frosty rime was on his head”*** |  |
| ***“No wind that blew was bitterer than he”*** |  |
| ***“It was cold, bleak, biting weather: foggy...quite dark...fog came pouring in at every chink and keyhole”*** |  |

**FIRST IMPRESSIONS OF SCROOGE**

**This is the first description of Scrooge taken from the start of Stave One. Read and annotate this extract. Now, in your book, respond to the written task below using evidence from the text (you can use the space for planning):**

Oh! But he was a tight-fisted hand at the grindstone, Scrooge. a squeezing, wrenching, grasping, scraping, clutching, covetous old sinner! Hard and sharp as flint, from which no steel had ever struck out generous fire; secret, and self-contained, and solitary as an oyster. The cold within him froze his old features, nipped his pointed nose, shrivelled his cheek, stiffened his gait; made his eyes red, his thin lips blue; and spoke out shrewdly in his grating voice. A frosty rime was on his head, and on his eyebrows, and his wiry chin. He carried his own low temperature always about with him; he iced his office in the dog-days; and didn't thaw it one degree at Christmas.

External heat and cold had little influence on Scrooge. No warmth could warm, no wintry weather chill him. No wind that blew was bitterer than he, no falling snow was more intent upon its purpose, no pelting rain less open to entreaty. Foul weather didn't know where to have him. The heaviest rain, and snow, and hail, and sleet, could boast of the advantage over him in only one respect. They often came down handsomely, and Scrooge never did.

Nobody ever stopped him in the street to say, with gladsome looks, 'My dear Scrooge, how are you? When will you come to see me?' No beggars implored him to bestow a trifle, no children asked him what it was o'clock no man or woman ever once in all his life inquired the way to such and such a place, of Scrooge. Even the blind men's dogs appeared to know him; and when they saw him coming on, would tug their owners into doorways and up courts; and then would wag their tails as though they said, 'No eye at all is better than an evil eye, dark master!'

But what did Scrooge care? It was the very thing he liked. To edge his way along the crowded paths of life, warning all human sympathy to keep its distance, was what the knowing ones call 'nuts' to Scrooge.

**How is the character of Ebenezer Scrooge presented in this extract?**

**ATTITUDES OF SCROOGE**

**Add quotations and analyse Scrooge’s attitudes to the following:**

How does the Dickens (the narrator) suggest that Scrooge’s attitudes are the wrong ones?

**Money**

**The Poor**

**Business / Staff**

**Family**

**Christmas**



**THE GHOST OF JACOB MARLEY**

**From your reading of the section where Scrooge in confronted by Marley’s Ghost, complete this spray diagram using quotations and your own ideas / analysis:**

****

What the ghost looks like/effect on reader

What he tells Scrooge and his warning

What the chains represent

Scrooge’s reaction to the ghost

## Why do you think Dickens chose Marley to warn Scrooge of the error of his

## ways? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

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**Stave 2: The First of the Three Spirits**

This is the Ghost of Christmas Past - Scrooge's own past. The ghost has a strange changing form and gives out brilliant light. With it Scrooge revisits the scenes of his earlier life.

We see him as a boy at school (a boarding school)on two occasions. First, he sits alone in a cold schoolroom - but as the spirit touches the arm of the child we see the characters of whom he is reading: Ali Baba and the parrot in Robinson Crusoe. Later we see him with his (slightly) older sister, Fan, who has come to bring him home for the holidays. We learn that his father (who seems once to have been unkind) become "much kinder than he used to be". The ghost notes that (unlike Scrooge so far) his sister had a "large heart". She has died, but her son is Scrooge's nephew, Fred.

Next we see Scrooge as a young apprentice working for Mr. Fezziwig, in his warehouse. At seven o'clock on Christmas Eve, Mr. Fezziwig tells Scrooge and his other apprentice, Dick Wilkins, to make the warehouse ready for a party. Everyone is welcome at Mr. Fezziwig's ball, and the young Scrooge enjoys it immensely. The Ghost tells Scrooge that Mr. Fezziwig has done nothing special, only spent a little money he can easily afford. Scrooge replies that it is impossible to add up things like words and looks, but "the happiness" Mr. Fezziwig gives "is quite as great as if it cost a fortune".

The final scenes show us Belle, Scrooge's ex-fiancée. Scrooge is now in the prime of life. His (reasonable) fear, when younger, of being poor has now become an unreasonable love of money. Belle releases Scrooge from his engagement because she can see that he no longer loves her. He has not asked her to break the engagement but does not object to her decision. Another glimpse of Belle follows. Some years later - seven years before the present, she sits with her daughter. (At first Scrooge thinks the daughter **is** Belle, but she is now older. She has other children, too. Her husband tells her how he saw Scrooge that day, working alone in his office, while his partner, Marley, was lying "upon the point of death". Scrooge contrasts his life with hers and her husband's. While they have a happy Christmas together, he is working alone. They are not wealthy as he is but not poor financially. In other ways they are far richer than he. Scrooge thinks of how good it would be to have a daughter like Belle's to look up to him.

**THE GHOST OF CHRISTMAS PAST**

**Read and annotate the description of the Ghost of Christmas Past. Now, in your book, respond to the questions below using detailed reference to the text:**

'Ding, dong!' 'The hour itself,' said Scrooge triumphantly, 'and nothing else!'

He spoke before the hour bell sounded, which it now did with a deep, dull, hollow, melancholy One. Light flashed up in the room upon the instant, and the curtains of his bed were drawn.

The curtains of his bed were drawn aside, I tell you, by a hand. Not the curtains at his feet, nor the curtains at his back, but those to which his face was addressed. The curtains of his bed were drawn aside; and Scrooge, starting up into a half-recumbent attitude, found himself face to face with the unearthly visitor who drew them: as close to it as I am now to you, and I am standing in the spirit at your elbow.

It was a strange figure-like a child: yet not so like a child as like an old man, viewed through some supernatural medium, which gave him the appearance of having receded from the view, and being diminished to a child's proportions. Its hair, which hung about its neck and down its back, was white as if with age; and yet the face had not a wrinkle in it, and the tenderest bloom was on the skin. The arms were very long and muscular; the hands the same, as if its hold were of uncommon strength. Its legs and feet, most delicately formed, were, like those upper members, bare. It wore a tunic of the purest white; and round its waist was bound a lustrous belt, the sheen of which was beautiful. It held a branch of fresh green holly in its hand; and, in singular contradiction of that wintry emblem, had its dress trimmed with summer flowers. But the strangest thing about it was, that from the crown of its head there sprung a bright clear jet of light, by which all this was visible; and which was doubtless the occasion of its using, in its duller moments, a great extinguisher for a cap, which it now held under its arm.

Even this, though, when Scrooge looked at it with increasing steadiness, was not its strangest quality. For as its belt sparkled and glittered now in one part and now in another, and what was light one instant, at another time was dark, so the figure itself fluctuated in its distinctness: being now a thing with one arm, now with one leg, now with twenty legs, now a pair of legs without a head, now a head without a body: of which dissolving parts, no outline would be visible in the dense gloom wherein they melted away. And in the very wonder of this, it would be itself again; distinct and clear as ever.

'Are you the Spirit, sir, whose coming was foretold to me?' asked Scrooge.

'I am.' The voice was soft and gentle. Singularly low, as if instead of being so close beside him, it were at a distance.

'Who, and what are you?' Scrooge demanded.

'I am the Ghost of Christmas Past.'

'Long Past?' inquired Scrooge: observant of its dwarfish stature.

'No. Your past.'

Perhaps, Scrooge could not have told anybody why, if anybody could have asked him; but he had a special desire to see the Spirit in his cap; and begged him to be covered.

1. **List the contradictions in how the ghost is described, e.g. *“like a child/yet not so like a child”***
2. **How is the ghost’s physical description suitable for one who has come from the past?**
3. **How does the writer show the terror and disbelief of Scrooge in this extract?**

**FOUR SCENES FROM THE PAST**

**Fill in the table to show what four scenes Scrooge is shown by the Ghost of Christmas Past and what this reveals to us Scrooge’s past / what Dickens seeks to teach him (and us) about how to behave in the future...**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Scene** | **Quotations** | **Scrooge’s Past / Dickens lesson** |
| **Scrooge’s school life** | *“Your lip is trembling” said the Ghost “And what is that upon your cheek?”*  *“solitary child, neglected by his friends”*  *“long, dreary hall...chilly”*  *“I have come to bring you home, dear brother!” said the child, clapping her hands in glee”*  *“…a boy singing a carol at my door last night. I should have liked to give him something”* | Scrooge is obviously affected by memories of his childhood (hints he is crying) – the past seems to have had a big impact on him  The word “neglected” suggests that he has not known much love or attention – reason he spurns it now?  School seems a horrible place, but he was not welcome home (why he dislikes Christmas?)  Sister was only warmth in his life, now dead  Dickens teaches us to be more kind to each other |
| **Apprentice-ship at Fezziwig’s & Christmas Party** |  |  |
| **Broken**  **engagement to Belle** |  |  |
| **Belle’s happy marriage** |  |  |

**ESSAY QUESTION**

**Plan and respond to this question in your book, with clear reference to the text in Stave 1 & 2.**

Scrooge says, in ironic defence of Fezziwig, his kind old boss:

***“He has the power to render us happy or unhappy; to make our service light or burdensome; a pleasure or a toil. Say that his power lies in words and look; in things so slight and insignificant that it is impossible to count ‘em up: what then? The happiness he gives, is quite as great as if it cost a fortune.”***

What does Dickens believe about the responsibilities of those in power, and how does this compare to Scrooge’s actions at the beginning of the novella? Think about:

* His belief in money over people
* His conduct to his employee Bob Cratchitt
* His treatment of and attitudes to those in poverty/need

**Stave 3: The Second of the Three Spirits**

This spirit is the Ghost of Christmas Present. It is a great giant, dressed in a green robe (a little like a green version of our Father Christmas) and surrounded by piles of food.

This spirit shows Scrooge how Christmas is celebrated by his clerk's family, by strangers near and far, and by his nephew, Fred. The spirit carries a torch and everywhere it goes this torch sprinkles incense or water on people and makes them become kinder to each other.

Scrooge has never been to Bob Cratchit's house. Here he sees how the Cratchits, despite being very poor, can be happy at Christmas. Bob and Mrs. Cratchit struggle because their family is large: there are six children. (Martha, Belinda, Peter, two unnamed "young Cratchits", and Tiny Tim.) Scrooge sees how frail Tiny Tim is, and asks the Spirit if he will live. The ghost tells him that unless something changes in the future, the child will die. When Scrooge protests he is reminded of his words earlier (Stave 1): "If he be like to die he had better do it and decrease the surplus population".

The ghost takes Scrooge magically to places outside London: he sees a family of miners in a hut on a barren moor, two lighthouse keepers and sailors on a ship: all know what day it is and celebrate it as far as they can. All of them are made more aware of other people and feel more kindly towards them because it is Christmas.

Fred (Scrooge's nephew) is having a party, and Scrooge is brought by the spirit to see and hear it. Scrooge's nephew explains that Scrooge is to be pitied, not despised. He is rich but his money does him no good, and, as Fred says, "his offences carry their own punishment". The guests play a guessing game, to find the identity of a thing, in which questions can be answered only with Yes and No. Everyone is amused when Fred's wife's sister guesses that the mystery object is Scrooge.

The chapter has a strange ending. The spirit ages and shrinks as midnight draws near (because he lives for, and represents, one year only - he has had more than eighteen hundred brothers). Now Scrooge sees, under its robe, two horribly dirty and ugly children. The ghost tells him that they are not his but "man's" and that "This boy is Ignorance this girl is Want". Scrooge is told to beware of them both. When he asks if nothing can be done to help them the ghost again quotes his earlier words: "Are there no prisons? Are there no work-houses". He feels deep shame, as the ghost disappears, and he sees, coming towards him, the last of the spirits.

**STAVE THREE COMPREHENSION TASK**

**Answer the following questions in as much detail as you can, and using quotations from the text to support your ideas, if required.**

1. Name five items that appear with the spirit, or that he is wearing. Explain the symbolism used here.

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1. What does Fred mean when he says Scrooge’s “offences carry their own punishment”?

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1. Explain what the spirit is hiding under his cloak, and what this teaches us about the duties of mankind.

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1. Find at least one example of when the spirit uses Scrooge’s own words about the poor against him. Why is this a clever technique to make Scrooge see the error of his ways?

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**THE GHOST OF CHRISTMAS PRESENT**

**Read and annotate this extract. Then, in your book, respond to the written task below using evidence from the text (you can use the space below to plan, if you wish):**

The moment Scrooge's hand was on the lock, a strange voice called him by his name, and bade him enter. He obeyed.

It was his own room. There was no doubt about that. But it had undergone a surprising transformation. The walls and ceiling were so hung with living green, that it looked a perfect grove; from every part of which, bright gleaming berries glistened. The crisp leaves of holly, mistletoe, and ivy reflected back the light, as if so many little mirrors had been scattered there; and such a mighty blaze went roaring up the chimney, as that dull petrification of a hearth had never known in Scrooge's time, or Marley's, or for many and many a winter season gone. Heaped up on the floor, to form a kind of throne, were turkeys, geese, game, poultry, brawn, great joints of meat, sucking-pigs, long wreaths of sausages, mince-pies, plum-puddings, barrels of oysters, red-hot chestnuts, cherry-cheeked apples, juicy oranges, luscious pears, immense twelfth-cakes, and seething bowls of punch, that made the chamber dim with their delicious steam. In easy state upon this couch, there sat a jolly Giant, glorious to see, who bore a glowing torch, in shape not unlike Plenty's horn, and held it up, high up, to shed its light on Scrooge, as he came peeping round the door.

'Come in!' exclaimed the Ghost. 'Come in! and know me better, man.'

Scrooge entered timidly, and hung his head before this Spirit. He was not the dogged Scrooge he had been; and though the Spirit's eyes were clear and kind, he did not like to meet them.

'I am the Ghost of Christmas Present,' said the Spirit. 'Look upon me!'

Scrooge reverently did so. It was clothed in one simple green robe, or mantle, bordered with white fur. This garment hung so loosely on the figure, that its capacious breast was bare, as if disdaining to be warded or concealed by any artifice. Its feet, observable beneath the ample folds of the garment, were also bare; and on its head it wore no other covering than a holly wreath, set here and there with shining icicles. Its dark brown curls were long and free; free as its genial face, its sparkling eye, its open hand, its cheery voice, its unconstrained demeanour, and its joyful air. Girded round its middle was an antique scabbard; but no sword was in it, and the ancient sheath was eaten up with rust.

'You have never seen the like of me before!' exclaimed the Spirit.

'Never,' Scrooge made answer to it.

**How does Dickens use the Ghost of Christmas Present in this extract to show the meaning of true Christmas spirit?**

**DICKENS’ LESSON: HOW TO KEEP CHRISTMAS**

**The Ghost shows Scrooge a number of scenes from the present on how those less fortunate than himself celebrates Christmas. The lesson seems to be that you do not have to be rich to possess a richness of spirit and concern for your fellow man. Scrooge seems the loser here.**

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| **Christmas celebrations / tableaux shown to Scrooge** | **Quotations & analysis** | **Message** |
| **London streets** | *“The house fronts looked black enough... contrasting with the smooth white sheet of snow upon the roofs, and with the dirtier snow upon the ground”* – Dickens uses the weather here to hint at deprivation of community, contrast between black and white.  *“the people who were shovelling away on the housetops were jovial and full of glee; calling out to one another”-*  *“blended scents of tea and coffee were so grateful to the nose, or even that the raisins were so plentiful”* –grocers shops seem full and jolly | **This use of colour shows that not all is as it seems (e.g. black = evil) and that good can be found anywhere.**  **Dickens shows us that food is plentiful if you have means to pay for it. Seems harsh then that so many are starving?** |
| **The Cratchitts** |  |  |
| **Miners/Sailors** |  |  |
| **Fred’s Family** |  |  |

**IGNORANCE AND WANT**

**Read and annotate the following extract and respond to the tasks below:**

'Forgive me if I am not justified in what I ask,' said Scrooge, looking intently at the Spirit's robe, 'but I see something strange, and not belonging to yourself, protruding from your skirts. Is it a foot or a claw?'

'It might be a claw, for the flesh there is upon it,' was the Spirit's sorrowful reply. 'Look here.' From the foldings of its robe, it brought two children; wretched, abject, frightful, hideous, miserable. They knelt down at its feet, and clung upon the outside of its garment.

'Oh, Man! look here! Look, look, down here!' exclaimed the Ghost.

They were a boy and a girl. Yellow, meagre, ragged, scowling, wolfish; but prostrate, too, in their humility. Where graceful youth should have filled their features out, and touched them with its freshest tints, a stale and shrivelled hand, like that of age, had pinched, and twisted them, and pulled them into shreds. Where angels might have sat enthroned, devils lurked, and glared out menacing. No change, no degradation, no perversion of humanity, in any grade, through all the mysteries of wonderful creation, has monsters half so horrible and dread.

Scrooge started back, appalled. Having them shown to him in this way, he tried to say they were fine children, but the words choked themselves, rather than be parties to a lie of such enormous magnitude.

'Spirit, are they yours?' Scrooge could say no more.

'They are Man's,' said the Spirit, looking down upon them. 'And they cling to me, appealing from their fathers. This boy is Ignorance. This girl is Want. Beware them both, and all of their degree, but most of all beware this boy, for on his brow I see that written which is Doom, unless the writing be erased. Deny it!' cried the Spirit, stretching out its hand towards the city. 'Slander those who tell it ye! Admit it for your factious purposes, and make it worse! And abide the end!'

'Have they no refuge or resource?' cried Scrooge.

'Are there no prisons?' said the Spirit, turning on him for the last time with his own words. 'Are there no workhouses?'

The bell struck twelve.

Scrooge looked about him for the Ghost, and saw it not. As the last stroke ceased to vibrate, he remembered the prediction of old Jacob Marley, and lifting up his eyes, beheld a solemn Phantom, draped and hooded, coming, like a mist along the ground, towards him.

1. **In this extract the states of IGNORANCE and WANT are personified. Explain in less than 20 words what each term means and shows about society.**
2. **The figures of Ignorance and Want are intended to have a sickening and shocking affect on both Scrooge and the reader. How does Dickens achieve this?**
3. **What does this scene reveal about Dickens attitudes to education and charity?**
4. **How has the mood changed from the beginning of Stave 3?**

**Stave 4: The Last of the Spirits**

In this chapter Scrooge is again taken to places he does not know. The spirit is more like the kind of ghost we meet in conventional ghost stories. It is a hooded phantom, its face is unseen and it points at things but does not speak.

We are puzzled by a group of wealthy men, discussing someone who has died. This person seems very unpopular. In another poor and squalid part of London a pawn-broker, Old Joe, buys stolen property from three people: a laundrywoman (Mrs. Dilber), a charwoman (a cleaner) and the undertaker's assistant. All these poor people have taken things from the dead man - even the curtains from his bed and the shirt off his back.

Scrooge asks to see some "emotion caused by this man's death". He sees two scenes. First, a young couple who owed the man money. The wife (Caroline) fears they are ruined but her husband says there is hope now their creditor is dead. The debt will be transferred to someone else, but no-one else could be so merciless as the man who has died.

Next Scrooge returns with the ghost to the Cratchits' home. They, too are talking about death and preparing for a funeral. They all try hard to comfort and support each other. It becomes clear that they are grieving for Tiny Tim, who has died. He is to be buried in a beautiful green churchyard. Bob comes home from work and goes to sit with his son, who has obviously only just died.

Scrooge is horrified but still has to learn the identity of the mysterious dead man. He is shown to an ugly churchyard "overrun by grass and weeds" in the town, and here sees on the gravestone his own name. He realizes (the reader has already guessed) that he is the man about whom the others were talking.

Scrooge begs the spirit to tell him whether he has seen what **will** be or what **may** be only. He thinks the spirit is showing pity to him and promises he will change.

**THE GHOST OF CHRISTMAS YET TO COME**

**Read and annotate the following extract. Then, in your book, respond to the task below, using detailed reference to the text:**

The Phantom slowly, gravely, silently approached. When it came, Scrooge bent down upon his knee; for in the very air through which this Spirit moved it seemed to scatter gloom and mystery.

It was shrouded in a deep black garment, which concealed its head, its face, its form, and left nothing of it visible save one outstretched hand. But for this it would have been difficult to detach its figure from the night, and separate it from the darkness by which it was surrounded.

He felt that it was tall and stately when it came beside him, and that its mysterious presence filled him with a solemn dread. He knew no more, for the Spirit neither spoke nor moved.

'I am in the presence of the Ghost of Christmas Yet To Come?' said Scrooge.

The Spirit answered not, but pointed onward with its hand.

'You are about to show me shadows of the things that have not happened, but will happen in the time before us,' Scrooge pursued. 'Is that so, Spirit?'

The upper portion of the garment was contracted for an instant in its folds, as if the Spirit had inclined its head. That was the only answer he received.

Although well used to ghostly company by this time, Scrooge feared the silent shape so much that his legs trembled beneath him, and he found that he could hardly stand when he prepared to follow it. The Spirit pauses a moment, as observing his condition, and giving him time to recover.

But Scrooge was all the worse for this. It thrilled him with a vague uncertain horror, to know that behind the dusky shroud, there were ghostly eyes intently fixed upon him, while he, though he stretched his own to the utmost, could see nothing but a spectral hand and one great heap of black.

'Ghost of the Future!' he exclaimed, 'I fear you more than any spectre I have seen. But as I know your purpose is to do me good, and as I hope to live to be another man from what I was, I am prepared to bear you company, and do it with a thankful heart. Will you not speak to me?'

It gave him no reply. The hand was pointed straight before them.

'Lead on!' said Scrooge. 'Lead on! The night is waning fast, and it is precious time to me, I know. Lead on, Spirit!'

The Phantom moved away as it had come towards him. Scrooge followed in the shadow of its dress, which bore him up, he thought, and carried him along.

**How does Dickens create a sense of foreboding in this extract? You could consider:**

* **The physical description, and actions of, the ghost**
* **The feelings and reaction of Scrooge himself**
* **The references to death / graves**

**SCENES YET TO COME**

**Use this page to plot a mind map of all the scenes that Scrooge is shown that have not yet come to pass. Include a quotation for each, and also its effects on Scrooge (how it helps to change his behaviour and actions)**

SCENES YET TO PASS

**Stave 5: The End of It**

This chapter is very short. Scrooge wonders how much time has passed while he was with the spirits, and calls to a boy from his window, to ask what day it is. The boy is surprised by the questions as it is Christmas Day. Scrooge pays the boy to go to the poulterer (like a butcher but specializes in poultry) and order the prize turkey for Bob Cratchit. Out in the street he meets one of the gentlemen he earlier sent away. He whispers to him, but the reader guesses that he promises to give a lot of money to the charity, as the gentlemen doubts whether he is serious. Scrooge explains that his donation includes "a great many back-payments".

Scrooge goes to Fred's house and enjoys his party immensely. On Boxing Day he arrives early at work and ambushes Bob, pretending to be very angry with him for his being so late at work. He tells Bob that he will not "stand for this sort of thing any longer" as if he is about to sack him. Then he tells Bob, he is therefore going to raise his salary. Bob at first thinks Scrooge has gone mad, but is convinced when Scrooge tells him to put more coal on the fire rather than work, and that he will discuss his affairs over a drink that afternoon.

The story ends with an account of how Scrooge becomes a "second father" to Tiny Tim "who did NOT die" but receives no more visits from the ghosts. He changes his way of life entirely. Some people laugh at him, but he lets them laugh and is happy with his new outlook on life. Dickens ends by repeating Tiny Tim's Christmas blessing: "God bless Us, Every One!"

**SCROOGE’S CHANGING CHARACTER**

**In this table, compare the way Scrooge has changed from his attitudes in Stave One. Use quotations and your own words to describe how Dickens makes us aware he is really a changed man.**

|  |  |  |
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|  | **STAVE ONE** | **STAVE FIVE** |
| **In the way he speaks (to himself and others)** |  | *'I am as light as a feather, I am as happy as an angel, I am as merry as a schoolboy. I am as giddy as a drunken man. A merry Christmas to everybody! A happy New Year to all the world! Hallo here! Whoop! Hallo!'* |
| **The way he behaves / things he does** |  |  |
| **His attitudes to his fellow men** |  |  |
| **His attitudes to Christmas** |  |  |
|  |  |  |

***Analysis – what’s the point?***

*A Christmas Carol* is a fairly straightforward allegory\* built on an episodic\* narrative structure in which each of the main passages has a fixed, obvious symbolic\* meaning. The book is divided into five sections (Dickens labels them Staves in reference to the musical notation staff--a Christmas Carol, after all, is a song), with each of the middle three Staves revolving around a visitation by one of the three famous spirits. The three spirit-guides, along with each of their tales, carry out a thematic\* function--the Ghost of Christmas Past, with his glowing head, represents memory; the Ghost of Christmas Present represents charity, empathy, and the Christmas spirit; and the reaper-like Ghost of Christmas Yet to Come represents the fear of death. Scrooge, with his Bah! Humbug! attitude, embodies all that dampens Christmas spirit--greed, selfishness, indifference, and a lack of consideration for one's fellow man.

With *A Christmas Carol,* Dickens hopes to illustrate how self-serving, insensitive people can be converted into charitable, caring, and socially conscious members of society through the intercession of moralizing quasi-religious lessons. Warmth, generosity, and overall goodwill, overcome Scrooge's bitter apathy as he encounters and learns from his memory, the ability to empathize, and his fear of death. Memory serves to remind Scrooge of a time when he still felt emotionally connected to other people, before he closed himself off in an austere state of alienation. Empathy enables Scrooge to sympathize with and understand those less fortunate than himself, people like Tiny Tim and Bob Cratchit. The fear of death hints at imminent moral reckoning--the promise of punishment and reward.

With each Ghost's tale functioning as a parable, *A Christmas Carol* advances the Christian moral ideals associated with Christmas--generosity, kindness, and universal love for your community--and of Victorian England in general. The book also offers a distinctly modern view of Christmas, less concerned with solemn religious ceremony and defined by more joyous traditions--the sharing of gifts, festive celebrations, displays of prosperity. The book also contains a political edge, most evident in Dickens' development of the bustling, struggling Cratchit family, who are a compelling, if one-dimensional, representation of the plight of the poor. Dickens, with every intention of tugging on your heartstrings, paints the Cratchits as a destitute family that finds a way to express profound gratitude for its emotional riches. Dickens carries this sentiment even further with the tragic figure of the pure-hearted, crippled Cratchit son, Tiny Tim. Scrooge's emotive connection to Tiny Tim dramatically underscores his revelatory acceptance of the Christmas ideal. Scrooge begins to break through his emotional barricade in Stave Three as he expresses pity for Tiny Tim. The reader, upon hearing the usually uncaring miser inquire into Tim's fate, begins to believe Scrooge has a chance at salvation. Scrooge's path to redemption culminates with his figurative "adoption" of Tiny Tim, acting as "a second father" to the little boy.

**\* Find out what each of the terms below mean, to enhance your ability to discuss the novel with the correct terminology...**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| ALLEGORY |  |
| EPISODIC (in episodes) |  |
| SYMBOLIC |  |
| THEMATIC (concerning themes) |  |

**CHARACTERS**



**Ebenezer Scrooge** - The miserly owner of a London counting-

house, a nineteenth century term for an accountant's office.

The three spirits of Christmas visit the stodgy bean-counter in

hopes of reversing Scrooge's greedy, cold-hearted approach to life.



**Bob Cratchit** - Scrooge's clerk, a kind, mild, and very poor man with a large family. Though treated harshly by his boss, Cratchit remains a humble and dedicated employee.

**Tiny Tim** - Bob Cratchit's young son, crippled from birth. Tiny Tim is a highly sentimentalized character who Dickens uses to highlight the tribulations of England's poor and to elicit sympathy from his middle and upper class readership.



**Jacob Marley** - In the living world, Ebenezer Scrooge's

equally greedy partner. Marley died seven years before

the narrative opens. He appears to Scrooge as a ghost

condemned to wander the world bound in heavy chains.

Marley hopes to save his old partner from suffering a

similar fate.



**The Ghost of Christmas Past** - The first spirit to visit Scrooge, a curiously childlike apparition with a glowing head. He takes Scrooge on a tour of Christmases in his past. The spirit uses a cap to dampen the light emanating from his head.



**The Ghost of Christmas Present** - The second spirit to visit Scrooge, a majestic giant clad in a green robe. His lifespan is restricted to Christmas Day. He escorts Scrooge on a tour of his contemporaries' Holiday celebrations.

**The Ghost of Christmas Yet to Come** - The third and final spirit to visit Scrooge, a silent phantom clad in a hooded black robe. He presents Scrooge with an ominous view of his lonely death.



**Fred** - Scrooge's nephew, a genial man who loves Christmas. He invites Scrooge to his Christmas party each and every year, only to be refused by his grumpy uncle.

**Fezziwig** - The jovial merchant with whom the young Scrooge apprenticed. Fezziwig was renowned for his wonderful Christmas parties.

**Belle** - A beautiful woman who Scrooge loved deeply when he was a young man. Belle broke off their engagement after Scrooge became consumed with greed and the lust for wealth. She later married another man.

**Peter Cratchit** - Bob's oldest son, who inherits his father's stiff-collared shirt for Christmas.

**Martha Cratchit** - Bob's oldest daughter, who works in a milliner's shop. (A milliner is a person who designs, produces, and sells hats.)

**Fan** - Scrooge's sister; Fred's mother. In Scrooge's vision of Christmases past, he remembers Fan picking him up from school and walking him home.

**The Portly Gentlemen** - Two gentlemen who visit Scrooge at the beginning of the tale seeking charitable contributions. Scrooge promptly throws them out of his office. Upon meeting one of them on the street after his visitations, he promises to make lavish donations to help the poor.

**Mrs. Cratchit** - Bob's wife, a kind and loving woman.

**More on Characters....**

This novella is dominated by one character, Ebenezer Scrooge. The point of the story is to show how and why he changes. It is easy to overlook the change he has already experienced which is shown when he revisits his past in [Stave 2](http://www.teachit.co.uk/armoore/gcse/xmascarol.htm#stave2). As a child he enjoys the pleasures of the imagination, and he is close to his sister. As a young man working for Mr. Fezziwig he has not become greedy for gain. But a reasonable fear of poverty which drives him to work to gain security against hardship becomes his dominant passion. Fred is right in pitying Scrooge because he does not find any pleasure in his wealth: he does not spend on himself any more than on others. Either because of what he once was or because of what he can be or because he feels to blame for what Scrooge is, Marley comes to warn him that he must change.

Though the first two spirits tell Scrooge some things, he sees most for himself. His **own** statements and feelings are the biggest clue to his changing attitude. He also has the unusual experience of seeing himself as others see him. He repeatedly makes connections. Seeing himself as a small boy he thinks of the carol singer outside his door. When he sees his sister, Fan, he thinks of how harsh he has been to her son. But most of all he is affected by the sight of the person he is most able to help, Tiny Tim. Until the visit of the second spirit, Scrooge has not even known of the child's existence.

Dickens describes Scrooge by likening him to the winter weather, while noting that no weather has any effect on him. There is no hint that this sinister figure will become the comical Scrooge of the last chapter.

Finally in this brief sketch we should note that Scrooge is a caricature but represents very real tendencies. Dickens himself knew how harsh debt could be, working from childhood to assist his own "struggling family", his father having been sent to the Marshalsea, a debtors' prison. Why does Dickens choose to depict an old person? Perhaps to show that no-one is too set in his or her ways to change, and that change is possible even late in life. Scrooge has become one of Dickens' best-known creations. His name has become a byword for meanness - though it seems unfair that we recall him before his life-changing experience. His pet-phrase "Bah, humbug" has also taken on a life of its own, though it is worth remembering that in saying it Scrooge was complaining not generally but specifically about the "humbug" (or fraud) as he saw it of people being paid to take time off work.

There are many names in A Christmas Carol but few of these are characters in any sense. Often they come in groups, so we see a "knot of business men", three people selling Scrooge's goods to the pawn-broker or a husband and wife (Caroline) whom Scrooge does not know, but whose lives he has affected.

The three spirits and Marley are unusual in that Scrooge listens to them. At first he resists, but he rapidly learns not to oppose them. Where Marley is grotesquely comic, the first spirit is gentle and pitying, the second hearty and authoritative, and the third silently compelling.

We learn more of the members of Scrooge's family. His sister, Fan, though physically frail, tries to help her brother and works to improve his relations with their father. Fred has inherited her good nature and is as obstinate in his kindness as Scrooge is bad-tempered. Scrooge has no other family but his fiancée, Belle, is the first to see how money has changed him. She rejects money and finds happiness in her family.

Finally, there are those whom we see at work. Dick Wilkins is little more than a name, but Mr. Fezziwig is depicted very fully: a large kind man whose jollity is infectious. He is best judged by the company he keeps - almost every deserving poor person is welcome at his ball. Scrooge notes how Fezziwig has the power to make people happy or unhappy. Scrooge has the same power but he and Fezziwig use it in opposite ways. Best-known of all these characters are the Cratchits - two of them, anyway. Mrs. Cratchit and five of the children are sketched out but we see more of Bob and Tiny Tim. Bob is like a poor version of Fred in speaking up for Scrooge when his wife complains of him. In Scrooge's vision of Tiny Tim's death, Bob remarks on how kind Scrooge's nephew was to him. Tiny Tim is among the most famous disabled characters in literature. We do not know the cause of his lameness and today we would be uneasy about calling a child a "cripple", as Tiny Tim calls himself. In Stave 3 we are moved by Tiny Tim's courage and cheerfulness, in spite of his poverty and disability. In the next chapter we are moved again by the way the rest of the family comfort each other and remember the child. The scene is unashamedly sentimental but very moving. Happily, Dickens is able to reassure us that Tiny Tim does not die, and to give him the last word in the novella.

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**SETTINGS**

Like many of Dickens' novels this one is set mainly in London some time in the middle of the 19th century. Because the story is relatively short, the locations are only sketched. There are some sumptuous descriptions of interiors, especially the transformation of Scrooge's home by the Ghost of Christmas Present and the preparations (Stave 2) for Mr. Fezziwig's ball.

We also see into the homes of Fred, the Cratchits, Belle and Caroline. In Stave 3 Dickens leaves London for a barren moor, a lighthouse and a ship at sea, while Scrooge's boarding school (Stave 2) is in a "little market-town" complete with a "church and winding river".

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**THEMES**

The most important themes of the story are stated more or less clearly by characters in it. The first of these might be Marley's saying, "Business...Mankind was my business”. Where Scrooge sees business in the familiar sense of trade and finance, Marley now sees that one's "business" is what one should do in life, duty or obligation. Mankind is or was not just Marley's business of course, but Scrooge's business, your business and mine, in fact, **everyone's**.

Scrooge's unkind remark that poor people should die and "reduce the surplus population" brings us to another theme of the story. When Scrooge asks if Tiny Tim will die he is reminded of these words. Why? Because the "surplus population " is not an abstraction but real individuals. Scrooge is told by the Ghost of Christmas Present to find out "What the surplus is, and Where it is" before making such statements.

Another theme is that change is possible however set we are in our ways. Dickens imagines the most miserable and hard-hearted man he can, and shows how he can be reformed if he sees his responsibilities.

List of themes:

* SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY
* THE POWER OF EDUCATION
* THE SUPERNATURAL
* ISOLATION & POVERTY
* CHILDHOOD & THE POWER OF THE IMAGINATION

**TASK: You should aim to complete a mind map for each theme, which includes quotations and analysis for revision purposes.**

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**STYLISTIC TECHNIQUES**

Structure

The novella is structures in five STAVES (not chapters) – these are the five lined sheets upon which music is written on. It seems that Dickens might want to link the text to music – perhaps that of a Christmas carol. The structure of the story is determined by its content. In the middle are three chapters which relate the visits of the three spirits. These are framed by two chapters which serve as prologue and epilogue. Marley's Ghost introduces us to Scrooge and his moral failings while Stave 5 is a very brief account of how Scrooge reforms. Assuming that Dickens is in control of his story-telling you might consider why the final chapter is much the shortest.

The three central chapters correspond to times in Scrooge's life: his past; the present as it is for other people, many of whom are affected by Scrooge's unkindness; and his future as it may be or will be, if he does not change.

Dialogue

A very obvious technique in this story is the extensive use of dialogue (speech) to show what people think or feel. Dickens writes speech like a dramatist: it is interesting that so many film and television dramatizations of A Christmas Carol have been made. It is a convenient length and has an almost ready-made screenplay in the passages of conversation.

Irony and playing Devil's advocate

Another technique is what we might term playing Devil's advocate: in many situations the spirits do not tell Scrooge why he is in the wrong, but let him see it for himself. The first two spirits especially do this. The Ghost of Christmas Past argues (ironically, no doubt) that Mr. Fezziwig has done nothing special, causing Scrooge to praise his generosity. And the Ghost of Christmas Present quotes Scrooge's own earlier words so that Scrooge can see why they are wrong. Elsewhere, of course, this ghost and Marley's, **do** tell Scrooge why he is wrong.

Imagery and symbolism

Though Dickens writes prose narratives he is fond of comparisons of the kind we expect in poetry. There are far too many to mention here, but a few stand out. First, we should look at the passage in Stave 1 where Scrooge is described in a series of weather images. A memorable poetic image comes where the Ghost of Christmas Present compares people to insects, and the wealthy Scrooge is ridiculed for looking down on other "insects" who have less to live on: "Oh God! to hear the insect on the leaf pronouncing on the too much life among his hungry brothers in the dust!" This is written in the iambic metre, like Shakespearean verse. (For the technically-minded there is a pentameter ending at "leaf", followed by a tetrameter and another pentameter starting with "among".)

An important symbol in A Christmas Carol appears in Stave 1, where Marley is weighed down by a massive chain, and tells Scrooge he has an even longer chain: it was as long as Marley's seven years ago, and he has "laboured on it since" This chain, made up of cash-boxes, padlocks , purses and business documents, represents Scrooge's achievement in life - earning money which weighs down his spirit.

At the end of Stave 3, Scrooge sees under the robe of the Ghost of Christmas Present, two children, whose names show that they are symbols: Ignorance and Want. Dickens sees that a lack of education and extreme poverty make it impossible for anyone to have a good life. Of the two, the Ghost tells Scrooge to beware the boy " most of all" because ignorance allows poverty to continue.

One final technique to mention in this brief sketch is Dickens' descriptions of food. The modern reader may find this a little strange, although our ideas about eating and drinking at Christmas owe something to Dickens. Dickens' readers would not have homes so full of food as we do today. Because there were no freezers or tins most food would be bought when it was needed. And many people would not keep much food in the home, but, like Scrooge, would take their meals in public houses. (He has a hob with a pan of gruel on it.) Christmas is the one time in the year when the Cratchits can eat a filling meal. The description of Scrooge's room in Stave 3 becomes at one point a long list of foods heaped up "to form a kind of throne".

Other symbols or recurring motifs include:

* LIGHT
* TIME
* CHILDREN
* CRUTCH