

 **AQA GCSE English Literature**

Your notes

A Christmas Carol

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Your notes

A Christmas Carol: Overview

As part of Paper 1, Section B you will study one 19th-century novel and write one response to one set question in your paper. The question will include an extract from your studied text but it is a closed-book exam, which means you will not have access to a copy of the text in your exam. There are two Dickens novels that you could study for the exam:

- **A Christmas Carol**
- **Great Expectations**

This page contains some helpful information, and links to more detailed revision note pages, that will enable you to aim for the highest grade when studying A Christmas Carol. This page includes:

- **Who was Charles Dickens?**
- **A Christmas Carol summary**
- **A brief overview of what is required in the exam**
- **A Christmas Carol characters**
- **A Christmas Carol context**
- **A Christmas Carol themes**
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Who was Charles Dickens?

Charles Dickens was a 19th-century novelist and he is regarded as one of the most famous British authors of all time. Dickens was born in Portsmouth, England on February 7, 1812 and died on June 9, 1870. He is buried in the Poets' Corner of Westminster Abbey despite his request to be buried in Rochester Cathedral.

Dickens was the author of 15 novels, 5 novellas and hundreds of stories and essays. He also edited a weekly journal for 20 years. He is particularly renowned for his stark portraits of poverty and the suffering of the masses in Victorian London during the Industrial Revolution. His work clearly demonstrates his consciousness of and commitment to social justice and his writing mixed social criticism with animated representations of characters using both humour and satire. While many of his works can be seen to contain idealised characters, Dickens uses them to underscore the terrible living and working conditions endured by so much of the population during this period.

A Christmas Carol summary



Your notes

A Christmas Carol is a novella written by Charles Dickens and first published on 19th December, 1843. The novella's full title is: 'A Christmas Carol. In Prose. Being a Ghost Story of Christmas'. In the Preface, Dickens declares: 'I have endeavoured in this Ghostly little book, to raise the Ghost of an Idea, which shall not put my readers out of humour with themselves, with each other, with the season, or with me. May it haunt their houses pleasantly, and no one wish to lay it'.

A Christmas Carol is a novella composed of five staves (chapters) and it is set in mid-19th-century London. It narrates the story of Ebenezer Scrooge, an elderly miser, who is visited by the ghost of his former business partner Jacob Marley and three spirits: the spirit of Christmas Past, Christmas Present and Christmas Yet to Come. Through their valuable lessons, the spirits enable Scrooge to be transformed into a charitable philanthropist. His journey of transformation from a cruel miser to a benevolent and kind man conveys Dickens's message that everyone has the ability to show compassion and kindness to others, regardless of their social position.

Like many of Dickens's other works, A Christmas Carol was written as a piece of social commentary. It is an allegorical tale of redemption written in response to the appalling social conditions of Victorian England. It is an exploration of the themes of poverty, family, transformation and redemption. For a more detailed summary, please see [A Christmas Carol: Plot Summary](#) page.

How is A Christmas Carol assessed in the exam?

- Your GCSE Paper 1 requires you to answer two questions in 1hr 45min. That means you have approximately 52 minutes to plan, write and check your essay
- Paper 1 is worth 64 marks and accounts for 40% of your overall GCSE grade
- Your essay is worth 30 marks in total
- Section B of Paper 1 contains the question and you are required to answer the one available question on the novella
- Your question will also include a printed extract of about 35 lines from the novella
- It is a closed-book exam, which means you will not have access to a copy of the text (other than the printed extract) in your exam
- You will be asked a question that asks you to analyse and write in detail about an aspect of A Christmas Carol
- Your answer will need to address both the extract from the novella that you will be given, and the novella as a whole

For a much more detailed guide on answering the A Christmas Carol question, please see our revision notes on [How to Answer the 19th-Century Novel Essay Question](#).

A Christmas Carol characters

The characters you should focus on when revising A Christmas Carol are:



Your notes

- Jacob Marley
- Ebenezer Scrooge
- Bob Cratchit
- Ghost of Christmas Past
- Ghost of Christmas Present
- Ghost of Christmas Yet to Come

There are also other minor characters in A Christmas Carol who contribute to Scrooge's transformation and it is important to understand their role in the novella. For example: Tiny Tim, Fred, Fan, Fezziwig, Belle, Ignorance and Want.

It is always vital to remember - when considering a Dickens novella, or any text - that characters are deliberate constructions created by a writer for a purpose. These characters often represent ideas, or belief systems, and a writer, like Dickens, uses these characters to explore these ideas and beliefs through them. For more details on how Dickens uses his characters in A Christmas Carol, please see the [A Christmas Carol: Characters](#) revision notes page.

A Christmas Carol context

There are a maximum of six marks available in the 19th-century novel question for context. It is important that you understand what context means as examiners understand context not as historical information, or biographical facts about a writer, but as the ideas and perspectives explored by a writer through their text. Therefore, for the context of A Christmas Carol you should not write about random, irrelevant information about London in the 1840s, or biographical information about Dickens, but ideas about:

- Poverty
- Family and Relationships
- Transformation and Redemption
- Death and Loss

Crucially, context is about how the above ideas and perspectives give us a better understanding of the author's intentions, or messages. Many of these ideas and perspectives are universal, so your own opinions of them are valid, and will be rewarded in an exam. For a detailed breakdown of the contextual topics listed above, see the [A Christmas Carol: Context](#) page.

A Christmas Carol themes

Exam responses that are led by ideas are more likely to reach the highest levels of the mark scheme. Exploring the ideas of A Christmas Carol, specifically in relation to the question being asked, will help to increase your fluency and assurance in writing about the text.

Understanding the themes that Dickens explores in A Christmas Carol is one of the best approaches any student can take when revising the novella. This is because to get the highest mark on your exam, you need to take what examiners call a “conceptualised approach”: a detailed and perceptive exploration of Dickens’s ideas and intentions. The main themes explored by Dickens in A Christmas Carol are:

- Poverty
- Family and Relationships
- Transformation and Redemption
- Death and Loss

There are many more themes than just those listed above that are explored by Dickens in A Christmas Carol, and you are encouraged to consider these too. However, the above list makes a great place to start, and detailed breakdowns of each of these themes can be found on our [A Christmas Carol: Themes](#) page.

A Christmas Carol quotes

The assessment objectives state that you should be able to “use textual references, *including* quotations”. This means summarising, paraphrasing, referencing single words and referencing plot events are all as valid as quotations in demonstrating that you understand the text. It is important that you remember that you can evidence your knowledge of the text in these two equally valid ways: both through references to it and direct quotations from it. If you are going to revise quotations, the best way is to group them by character, or theme. We have already identified some quotations that you may wish to review in preparation for your exam. For a detailed analysis of each of these quotations, see our [A Christmas Carol: Key Quotations](#) page.

Top tips for the highest grade

Please see our revision pages on the 19th-century texts for guides on:

- [Structuring A Christmas Carol essay](#)
- [A Christmas Carol methods and techniques](#)
- [How to include context in A Christmas Carol essay](#)
- [Understanding A Christmas Carol mark scheme](#)
- [A Christmas Carol model answer](#)



Your notes

A Christmas Carol: Plot Summary



Your notes

Plot Summary

One of the most vital and helpful things you can do in preparation for the exam is to ‘know’ the plot of A Christmas Carol thoroughly. Once you know the text well, you should be comfortable and familiar with key events that you can then link to larger ideas. Having an in-depth knowledge and understanding of the text will help you to gain confidence to find the most relevant references to support your response.



Your notes



Scrooge's nephew Fred invites him to Christmas dinner but the invitation is declined

A CHRISTMAS CAROL PLOT STORYBOARD



Scrooge is told by the ghost of Jacob Marley that he will be visited by three ghosts



Scrooge is visited by the Ghost of Christmas Past who shows Scrooge visions from his past



The Ghost of Christmas Present shows Scrooge joyous scenes of celebration at the Cratchit house



The Ghost of Christmas Yet to Come shows Scrooge a tombstone engraved with his own name



Scrooge is transformed into a good man and friend to everyone he knows, including Tiny Tim

Overview

A Christmas Carol is a **novella** composed of five **staves** and is set in mid-19th Century England, in the city of London.



Your notes

The **novella** opens with a declaration that a man called Jacob Marley is dead. It is Christmas Eve and Ebeneezer Scrooge, a money-lender, is at work. Scrooge's nephew, Fred, arrives and invites his uncle to Christmas dinner but the invitation is declined. Scrooge also refuses a request to donate to a charity.

Scrooge is visited by the ghost of his former business partner, Marley. He warns Scrooge that he will be visited by three spirits over the next three nights. Marley disappears into the night and Scrooge falls into a deep sleep. Scrooge awakens and is confronted by the Ghost of Christmas Past. The spirit accompanies Scrooge into the past, where Scrooge is forced to witness several events. Failing to extinguish the light of the spirit, he returns to his bedroom and falls into a deep sleep.

Scrooge is next visited by the Ghost of Christmas Present. The spirit takes Scrooge to the house of Bob Cratchit. Bob arrives with their youngest son, Tiny Tim, who is in poor health. The spirit states that Tiny Tim will die if nothing occurs to alter his future. Upon Bob's insistence, the family drinks a toast to Scrooge. They both depart and the spirit takes Scrooge to several places where people are **revelling** in the festive season. They arrive at Fred's house where the guests are playing a game; after which they all raise a toast to Scrooge. Scrooge and the spirit depart and they visit homes, hospitals and jails. Two starving children emerge from under the spirit's cloak. When the clock strikes midnight, the spirit disappears.

Scrooge is confronted by another spirit: the Ghost of Christmas Yet to Come. The spirit takes Scrooge through various scenes associated with the death of an unnamed man. They both journey to the Cratchit's house, where Tiny Tim has died. Scrooge is taken to a graveyard where he is shown a tomb with his name written upon it. Scrooge pleads with the spirit for a chance to alter his future. The spirit disappears.

Elated that he has been given a chance to redeem himself, Scrooge promises to change for the better. Upon realising it is Christmas Day, he sends a turkey to the Cratchits, gives money to charity and attends Fred's Christmas dinner. The next morning, Scrooge informs Bob that he will assist his family. Scrooge has been transformed into a good man and the novella ends with Tiny Tim's call for God to bless everyone.

Stave I

- The opening lines declare that a man called Jacob Marley is dead
- Marley had been a former business partner and only friend of Ebeneezer Scrooge
- The scene shifts to Scrooge in his **counting house** on Christmas Eve
- Scrooge refuses to spend money to sufficiently heat the building and his clerk, Bob Cratchit, shivers in an adjacent room
- Scrooge's nephew, Fred, arrives and invites his uncle to Christmas dinner but Scrooge responds "Bah! Humbug!" and declines the invitation
- Disappointed, Fred departs and two gentlemen arrive seeking a contribution to their charity



Your notes

- Scrooge refuses and declares that the poor can seek shelter in the workhouse or prison
- Later that evening, Scrooge is visited by the ghost of Jacob Marley
- Marley informs Scrooge that he has been condemned to wander the Earth, weighed down by heavy chains, due to his selfish deeds
- He warns Scrooge that he will be visited by three spirits over the next three nights
- Marley disappears into the night and Scrooge falls into a deep sleep

Stave II

- Scrooge awakens in the darkness and a clock chimes
- A spirit appears (the Ghost of Christmas Past) described as a strange childlike phantom with a brightly glowing head
- The spirit takes Scrooge's hand and they fly through the air
- The spirit shows several visions from Scrooge's past:
 - His school days as a child
 - His going home for Christmas with his sister, Fan
 - His apprenticeship with an employer called Fezziwig
 - His engagement to a young woman called Belle
- Scrooge becomes **distraught** by the visions and implores the spirit to take him home
- The spirit brings Scrooge to Belle's home where her husband informs her that Marley is dying and Scrooge will be alone in the world
- **Incensed** by these visions, Scrooge attempts to extinguish the spirit's light but fails
- He returns to his bed and falls into a deep sleep

Stave III

- Scrooge awakens, the clock chimes and a voice beckons him into the next room
- He is confronted by another spirit in a green robe: it is the Ghost of Christmas Present
- The spirit brings Scrooge into the London streets and to the house of Bob Cratchit, where Bob's wife and several of their children are preparing Christmas dinner
- Bob arrives with their youngest son, Tiny Tim, who is evidently in poor health
- **Perturbed** by Tiny Tim's appearance, Scrooge inquires if the boy will live
- The spirit responds that Tiny Tim will die if nothing occurs to alter his future



Your notes

- Upon Bob's insistence, the rest of the family reluctantly drinks a toast to Scrooge
- The spirit brings Scrooge to numerous places where people are **revelling** in the festive season
- They arrive at Fred's house where the guests are playing a game and they raise a toast to Scrooge
- Scrooge and the spirit depart and visit other homes, hospitals and jails
- As Scrooge observes the spirit beginning to age, two starving children emerge from under its cloak
- When the clock strikes midnight, the spirit disappears and a **solemn** figure moves toward him

Stave IV

- Scrooge is confronted by another spirit: the Ghost of Christmas Yet to Come
- Despite some **trepidation**, Scrooge agrees to follow the spirit
- The spirit shows Scrooge various scenes related to the death of an unnamed man:
 - He hears city merchants **conversing**, unpleasantly, about the man
 - He witnesses the man's belongings being sent to a **rag-and-bone shop**
 - He sees the corpse of the man lying on a bed under a sheet
- Scrooge demands that the spirit show him someone who has feelings about the man's death
- They journey to a house where a couple is rejoicing about the man's death, as they owed him a debt
- Scrooge demands that the spirit shows him an example of people displaying sensitivity towards someone else's death
- He is taken to the Cratchit's house, who are grieving the death of Tiny Tim
- Scrooge demands to know the identity of the dead man and is taken to a graveyard, where he sees a tomb with his name written upon it
- Scrooge pleads with the spirit for an opportunity to change his future but the spirit vanishes

Stave V

- Scrooge is **elated** as he realises he has been given the chance of **redemption**
- Upon finding out it is Christmas Day, he orders an enormous turkey and sends it to the Cratchits' house
- He dresses in all of his fineries and walks amongst the streets, acknowledging everyone with a smile and a Christmas wish
- He sees the gentleman who had previously requested a charitable donation from him and gives him a large amount of money
- Scrooge visits Fred's house for Christmas dinner and he has a joyous evening

- The next morning, Scrooge returns to his counting-house and offers to raise Bob's salary and to help his struggling family
- Scrooge changes his ways and becomes a second father to Tiny Tim, who does not die
- The novella ends with Tiny Tim's expression for God to bless everyone.



Your notes



Your notes

A Christmas Carol: Themes

Themes

Exam responses that are led by ideas are more likely to reach the highest levels of the mark scheme. Exploring the ideas of the text, specifically in relation to the question being asked, will help to increase your fluency and assurance in writing about the text.

Below are some ideas which could be explored in A Christmas Carol. This list is not exhaustive and you are encouraged to identify other ideas within the text.

- Poverty
- Family and Relationships
- Transformation and Redemption
- Death and Loss

Poverty

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The theme of poverty is one of the most **prevalent** themes within the text. Dickens makes the reader fully aware of the “poor and destitute” from the outset and this is continued throughout the **novella**.

Knowledge and evidence:

- Dickens presents many examples of poverty and suffering throughout the **novella** which demonstrates the contrasts between the rich and poor:
 - Their appearance is contrasted with scenes of abundance and by doing so, Dickens alludes to the idea that there is enough for everyone if it is shared equally
 - The Cratchits' dwelling is small and humble compared with Scrooge's home



Your notes

- Dickens uses Ignorance and Want as an **allegory** as they are representative of children who are forced to live in terrible conditions
- Dickens subverts the Victorian misconception of the poor as **indolent** and ungrateful by presenting the Cratchit family in an extremely positive light:
 - Bob and his daughter Martha both work and Bob is hoping to obtain work for his son, Peter
 - Bob is presented as a devoted father and loving husband which is in sharp contrast to Scrooge
 - The Cratchit family is presented as **industrious**
- The Cratchit family conveys an impression of Christmas as a time of generosity and goodwill and despite the fact that the family struggles financially, they are deeply appreciative of what they have
- Furthermore, Dickens uses the Cratchit family as a reminder of the humanity of the lower classes:
 - Despite Scrooge's cruelty towards Bob and his wife's anger towards Scrooge, the family still display their compassion in raising a toast to Scrooge
- Dickens makes poverty a serious concern within the **novella** and demonstrates how it can destroy lives:
 - Images of disease and illness are depicted among the poor due to their lack of food and dreadful living conditions
 - Through the Ghost of Christmas Yet to Come, Dickens depicts the devastating consequences of a system in which Tiny Tim could potentially die:
 - Bob's insufficient wages mean that he cannot provide adequate care for his son
- Dickens highlights the importance of charity and benevolence, but he also illustrates how the poor are not provided with the resources to help themselves and instead are reliant on the charity of others:
 - By being a better employer, Scrooge could help to the Cratchit family out of poverty
 - Although the charity collectors in Stave I represent goodness at Christmas, arguably the poor should be helped at all times of the year
- Scrooge displays an uncaring attitude towards the poor and his ruthlessness makes others suffer hardships:
 - Scrooge is depicted as a **miser** who refuses to make a charitable donation to help those less fortunate than himself:
 - Scrooge reveals his ignorance of the poor as he makes no distinction between the lower classes and criminals, declaring: "Are there no prisons? Are there no workhouses?"
 - Scrooge's support for prisons and workhouses illustrates his flawed views on how to solve the issues of poverty
- By the end of the **novella**, Scrooge demonstrates a change of heart toward those less fortunate than himself:



Your notes

- Scrooge's first stage in his changed attitude to the poor is when he regrets not having given money to a carol singer: "I should like to have given him something, that's all"
- Scrooge eventually uses his wealth to improve the lives of others and to make society a better place
- The plight of the poor is highlighted through Bob's character and he is used to underscore Scrooge's cruel and **exploitative** behaviour:
 - Bob works in a "dismal little cell", a metaphorical prison, which conveys the impression that he is trapped and confined and cannot escape from deprivation and poverty
 - Bob is in constant fear of losing his job and he is symbolic of the lower classes and their dependence on their employer:
 - His situation depends on wealthy businessmen like Scrooge and so subsequently does the fate of his family

What is Dickens's intention?

- Dickens attempts to ensure Scrooge becomes aware of his own poverty — his lack of kindness and **benevolence** — to recognise his responsibility to those who are less fortunate than him
- Dickens highlights the importance of charity and benevolence but he also illustrates how the poor are not provided with the resources to help themselves. Instead they are reliant on the charity of others

Family and Relationships

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Dickens explores many ideas relating to family and relationships within A Christmas Carol. Dickens presents this concept in very positive terms through many characters, including the Cratchits and Fred, and emphasises the fundamental importance of family to people's lives.

Knowledge and evidence:

- Marley and Scrooge's relationship is established from the very beginning:



Your notes

- Although Dickens states they were partners for “many years”, the relationship that is presented is one merely associated with business, rather than an affectionate friendship
- This is further highlighted when Dickens declares that Scrooge “was not so dreadfully cut up by the sad event”, which illustrates the **shallow** nature of their relationship and Scrooge’s lack of affection for anyone:
 - Scrooge’s lack of emotion makes the reader initially view him as **callous** and hard-hearted
- Scrooge’s initial character is revealed through his relationship (or lack of) with the rest of society:
 - Similar to his former partner Marley, Scrooge is entirely isolated and **ostracised** from those around him: “Nobody ever stopped him in the street to say, with gladsome looks, “My dear Scrooge, how are you?”
 - Scrooge’s isolation from society enables him to remain ignorant of the plight of the poor and the social problems which surround him
- Fred is Scrooge’s only nephew, yet Scrooge displays an **aloofness** and hostility towards him and refuses to celebrate Christmas with Fred’s family:
 - Fred is in complete contrast to Scrooge in both spirit and appearance, yet despite his uncle’s disdain for him, he remains loyal and charitable towards Scrooge
 - He is a foil to Scrooge’s character
 - Dickens uses the character of Fred, with his optimism and cheerfulness, to make Scrooge’s miserly and **pessimistic** behaviour appear even worse
 - Scrooge does eventually reconnect with his family through Fred and establishes a ‘new’ family through the Cratchits
- Dickens demonstrates how Scrooge’s relationship and engagement with Belle were destroyed by Scrooge’s fixation with money:
 - She represents the contented life that Scrooge could have had and underscores the corrosive consequences of greed and the terrible consequences it can have on a loving relationship
- Bob is presented as the ideal family figure; he is a devoted father and husband who is loved and respected by his family:
 - Through Bob, Dickens underscores his message about the importance of family and its centrality to people’s lives
 - His relationship with his children is continually shown to be loving and affectionate: “Tiny Tim upon his shoulder”/“Why, where’s our Martha?”
 - Bob’s change in character due to Tiny Tim’s predicted death demonstrates his affection for his son and shows how the loss of a loved one can impact someone’s life

- The Cratchits are presented as a united family and they all join in with the preparation of their Christmas meal: "Mrs Cratchit made the gravy... Master Peter mashed the potatoes... Miss Belinda sweetened up the apple-sauce..."

What is Dickens's intention?

- Dickens underscores his message about the importance of family and its centrality to people's lives
- Dickens demonstrates how an obsession with greed and material possessions can destroy relationships



Transformation and Redemption



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Ideas relating to **transformation** and **redemption** are recurrent themes throughout the **novella**. Scrooge undergoes a journey of **redemption** and his change in character is instrumental to the plot of the text.

- Dickens depicts Scrooge's journey of **transformation** from a cruel **miser** to a **benevolent** and kind man:
 - Scrooge is used as a signal to the upper classes to change their dangerous and harsh attitudes toward the lower classes
- Scrooge's preoccupation with materialism is **detrimental** to his happiness:
 - His former fiancée Belle ends their engagement because he has replaced her with a "golden idol"
 - This is also echoed by Fred when he declares that his uncle's wealth is of no use if he "doesn't do any good with it"
- Dickens conveys the message that everyone has the ability to show compassion and kindness to others, regardless of their social position:
 - Dickens presents those who show kindness as contented and fulfilled, while those who do not are depicted as bitter and unhappy



Your notes

- Dickens uses each spirit to teach Scrooge a vital moral lesson and the regret which Scrooge exhibits is necessary for his redemption:
 - Scrooge's heightened emotions endear him to the reader and illustrate the change in his character: "And he sobbed"
 - Through the Ghost of Christmas Past, Scrooge's memories become a catalyst for his **transformation**
 - Scrooge becomes highly emotional and he demonstrates the ability to change early in the novella:
 - In Stave II, his first stage of remorse is revealed when he regrets not having given money to a carol singer
- Through the character of Tiny Tim, Scrooge develops his ability to empathise with those who are less fortunate:
 - Tiny Tim plays an important part in inspiring Scrooge's **transformation** which is central to the narrative
- Dickens clearly presents Scrooge's **transformation** from avarice to benevolence:
 - By the end of the novella, Scrooge has been transformed into a charitable **philanthropist**: "I am light as a feather, I am as happy as an angel, I am as merry as a schoolboy, I am giddy as a drunken man" and "I am not the man I was"

What is Dickens's intention?

- Through the character of Scrooge, Dickens conveys a universal message that everyone is capable of change, regardless of how impossible it may seem
- Dickens conveys the message that everyone has the ability to show compassion and kindness to others, regardless of their social position

Death and Loss

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Death and loss are recurring ideas within A Christmas Carol. Dickens uses these ideas to underscore the permanency of death and to signal to the reader that it is never too late to change.



- The opening lines of the novella state: "Marley was dead, to begin with":
 - As death normally signifies the ending of things, Dickens inverts this and instead begins the novella with a death and ends it with the rebirth of Scrooge:
 - It is Marley's death which makes Scrooge's **transformation** possible
 - Dickens presents the death of Marley but there is no sense of loss conveyed:
 - His death is described in a clinical and detached manner which alludes to Scrooge's cold character
 - Marley's ghost serves as a warning to Scrooge and to the reader that everyone is responsible for their actions and will be held accountable
- While Scrooge is very much alive in the novella, Dickens uses images associated with death to describe him:
 - "The cold within him froze his old features...his thin lips blue" suggests that something within Scrooge is also dead
- Dickens uses the Ghost of Christmas Yet to Come as a foreboding symbol of death, bringing punishment or reward:
 - While the previous two spirits were associated with light, this spirit is linked to darkness, death and concealment and is an **ominous** and **sombre** figure
- Dickens presents images of death to signify the consequences of the unfair **capitalist** system in which the characters exist:
 - For example, the green of Tiny Tim's burial ground is contrasted with the darkness of Scrooge's grave
 - Dickens uses Tiny Tim to highlight the high levels of child mortality in Victorian England, especially for those who were poor
 - Dickens juxtaposes two contrasting images of death: Scrooge's death and Tiny Tim's death:
 - Tiny Tim's death highlights the poor living conditions and malnourishment experienced by many poor children:
- Scrooge's behaviour towards Fred signifies his bitterness towards the loss of his former fiancée:
 - Scrooge's annoyance at Fred's merriment could be seen to be motivated, in part, by his resentment towards his happy marriage

What is Dickens's intention?

- Dickens is critical of the unjust **capitalist** system in which individuals are forced to exist
- Dickens aims to encourage others to look after one another and to work towards a society where all members are treated more equally and fairly



Your notes

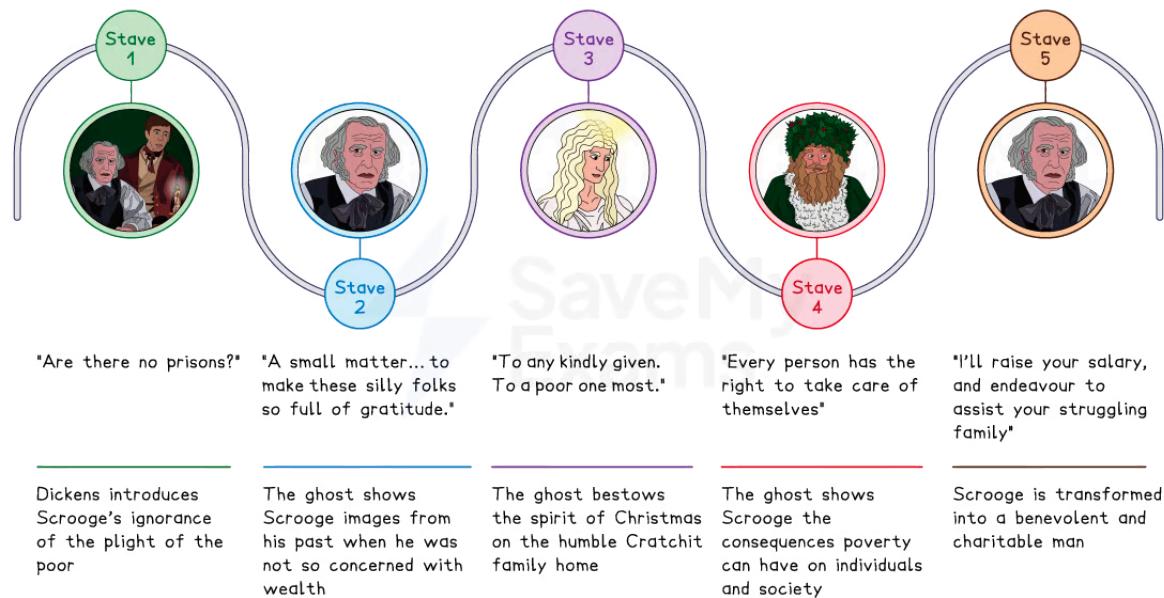


Your notes

A Christmas Carol Key Theme: Poverty

Poverty timeline

The theme of poverty in each stave of A Christmas Carol:



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A Christmas Carol poverty timeline

How is poverty presented in A Christmas Carol?

Poverty is presented in A Christmas Carol throughout the novella:

- **Charity collectors (Stave 1):** In his interaction with the charity collectors, Scrooge's ignorance of the plight of the poor is revealed:
 - Dickens highlights the importance of charity and **benevolence** to support those most in need, but also suggests that the poor are not provided with the resources they need to help themselves
- **The Cratchit family:** Dickens uses his presentation of the Cratchit family to offer an insight into the lives of the working poor in 19th-century England:
 - The Cratchit family's welfare and financial security are dependent on Scrooge, who pays pitiful wages
 - The Cratchits are presented by Dickens entirely positively, to challenge the idea of the 'idle poor' and to contrast with Scrooge's miserly and misanthropic nature

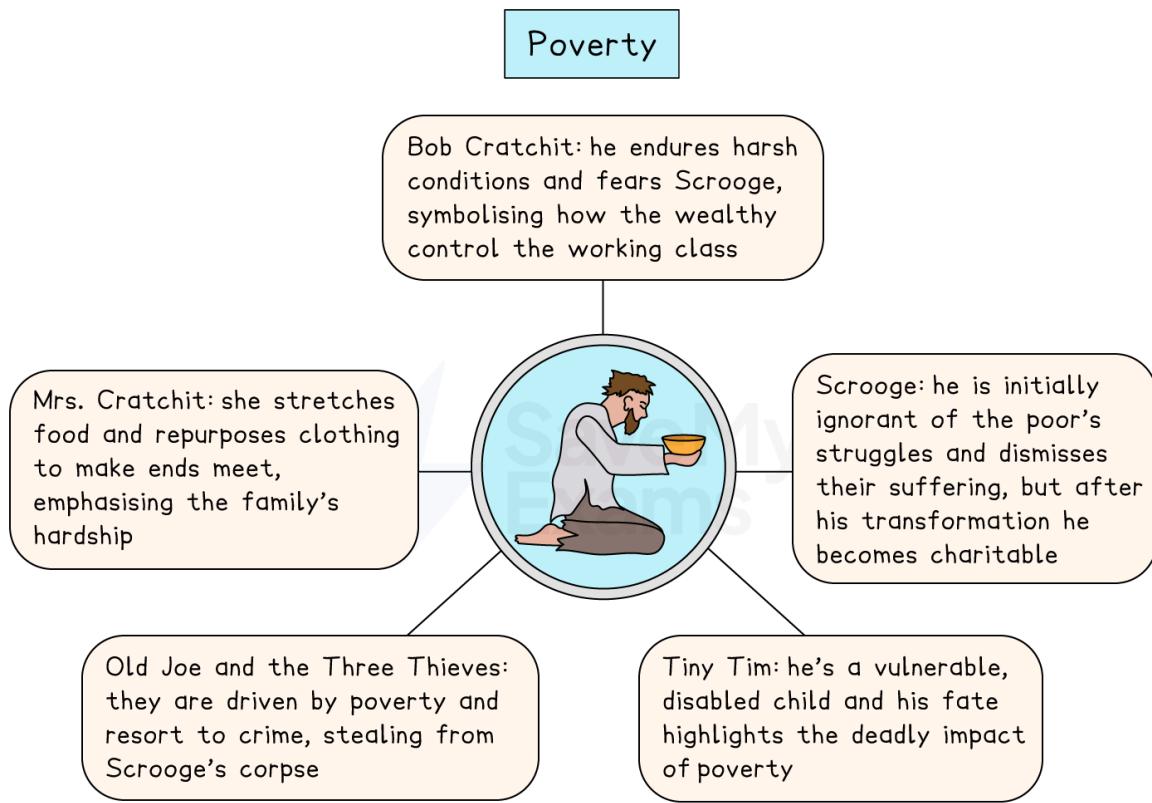


Your notes

- **Allegorical figures** (Ignorance and Want, Stave 3): Dickens uses these figures to symbolise the suffering of the poor and the ignorance of society:
 - The figures are hidden under the Ghost of Christmas Present's robe, symbolically suggesting that poverty and its consequences are also largely hidden and ignored
- **Minor characters** (Old Joe, the charwoman, the laundress and the undertaker's man, Stave 4): Dickens uses these characters and their exchange to highlight the harsh realities of being poor in Victorian Britain:
 - Poverty has a far-reaching social impact, as these characters are depicted as being involved in criminal activity to subsist

The impact of poverty on characters

The theme of poverty is prevalent throughout the novella and has a significant impact on a range of characters.


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Poverty in a Christmas Carol



Your notes

Character	Impact
Bob Cratchit	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Bob, as an example of the working poor, has to work long hours in terrible conditions to provide for his family:<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ He works in fear of Scrooge, symbolising how the rich could dominate and control the working classes
Scrooge	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Scrooge is symbolic of the ignorance of the rich towards the struggles of the poor at the start of the novella:<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Scrooge believes that the poor are not his concern, suggesting that they are well cared for by the "workhouses" and "prisons"▪ However, following his transformation, he becomes socially conscious, giving to the charity collector and raising Bob's salary to "assist" his "struggling family"
Tiny Tim	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ As a poor child living with a disability, Tiny Tim represents the most vulnerable members of society:<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Dickens shows there is no money for medical treatment and Tiny Tim's possible death would be a direct result of his poverty
Old Joe and the three thieves	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Old Joe and the three thieves represent the negative impact of poverty on society:<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Their situation means they turn to crime to make a profit, stealing from Scrooge's dead body▪ They are described as filthy and immoral to suggest they are a product of their surroundings
Mrs Cratchit	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Dickens shows the family's poverty and vulnerability through Mrs Cratchit's frugal choices:<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ She makes their Christmas dinner go further by adding "apple-sauce and mashed potatoes"▪ She also turns her gown inside out and freshens it up with ribbons as she cannot afford to buy a new one



Your notes

Why does Dickens use the theme of poverty in A Christmas Carol?

1. Exposing social injustice

- As a social reformer, Dickens wanted to expose the social injustices of the time and how the poor had no way to improve their situation
- Dickens shares his message of social responsibility leading to a fairer, more equitable society through Scrooge's transformation (from a miserly and materialistic employer to a socially-conscious benefactor)

2. Symbolism

- By presenting Christmas as a symbol of hope and generosity, Dickens wanted to encourage more generosity towards the poor, at a time for charity and **benevolence**
- He suggests that society will be doomed unless it becomes more generous and equal; by linking poverty and the threat of death through the character of Tiny Tim, he underscores the need for action for readers

3. Setting and atmosphere

- Dickens establishes poverty as a central theme from the start of the novella, through gloomy and deprived descriptions of London and its inhabitants
- He creates a dichotomy between the Cratchit's poverty and Scrooge's wealth through descriptions of their homes

Exam-style questions on the theme of poverty in A Christmas Carol

Try planning a response to the following essay questions as part of your revision of the theme of poverty:

- Explore how Dickens uses the Cratchit family to show the suffering of the poor.
- Explore how Dickens presents the effects of greed in A Christmas Carol.



Your notes

A Christmas Carol Key Theme: Family and Relationships

Family and relationships timeline

The theme of family and relationships in A Christmas Carol:

Stave	Quote	Summary
1	"I want nothing from you; I ask nothing of you; why cannot we be friends?" – Fred	Scrooge is isolated and solitary, rejecting his nephew's offer of spending Christmas day with him and his family
2	"Father is so much kinder than he used to be, that home's like Heaven!" – Fan	Scrooge is shown images from his past, including his sister Fanny and his former fiancee, Belle
3	"They were not a handsome family ... But they were happy, grateful, pleased with one another..." – The narrator	Scrooge is shown the Cratchit family's Christmas celebrations, making the most of what they have
4	"My little, little child!...My little child!" – Bob	The ghost shows Scrooge the impact Tiny Tim's possible death will have on the Cratchit family
5	"It's I. Your uncle Scrooge. I have come to dinner. Will you let me in, Fred?" – Scrooge	Scrooge is transformed and realises the importance of family and relationships

How are family and relationships presented in A Christmas Carol?



Your notes

Family and relationships

Fred: his warmth and familial connection contrast with Scrooge's self-imposed isolation, highlighting Dickens' belief in family



The Cratchit family: despite their poverty, they demonstrate love and unity, emphasising the value of family over material wealth

Scrooge's past: the Ghost of Christmas Past reveals Scrooge's lost opportunities for love and family relationships

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Family and relationships in A Christmas Carol

Family and relationships are presented throughout A Christmas Carol:

- **Fred, Scrooge's nephew** (Stave 1): Dickens presents Fred as a **foil** to Scrooge to emphasise the detrimental effect of social isolation and the importance of family:
 - In his interaction with his nephew, Scrooge demonstrates his self-imposed isolation from family and relationships by refusing Fred's Christmas day invitation: "keep Christmas in your own way, and let me keep it in mine"
- **The Cratchit family**: Dickens constructs a relatable and positive presentation of a large, working-class family in the 19th century:
 - He focuses on their unity, strength in adversity and optimistic outlook on life; their poverty is not an obstacle to joy, love and happiness
 - Their tenderness and grief in Stave 4 following Tiny Tim's death emphasises Dickens' message that family and connection are more important than wealth or material possessions



Your notes

- **Scrooge's past** (Stave 2): Dickens presents family images from Scrooge's childhood and former life to remind readers of the importance of family and connection:

- Scrooge recalls his affection and sorrow for his sister, Fanny, and his guilt at his subsequent rejection of her son, Fred
- Through his relationship with Belle, his former fiancee, Dickens shows both his miserly transformation and his regret at not having a family of his own

Why is family and relationships a key theme in A Christmas Carol?

1. Victorian society

- Family life was both idealised in Victorian society and essential for comfort and support, due to the lack of welfare
- Throughout the novella, there are constant references to the importance of family and connection as Dickens underlines the importance of prioritising love and family over wealth and possessions

2. Christian values

- Through his portrayal of families, Dickens embodies the Christian values of charity, forgiveness, caring for one another and kindness
 - Bob Cratchit represents forgiveness and humility
 - Tiny Tim is a symbol of hope and serves to remind readers of Christian **redemption**; he hopes that people "saw him in the church, because he was a cripple", a reminder of Jesus who made "lame beggars walk, and blind men see"
 - By setting the novella at Christmas, Dickens juxtaposes these Christian values with Scrooge's behaviour and greed, offering a reminder to wealthy Victorian society of what these values really mean

Exam-style questions on the theme of family and relationships in A Christmas Carol

Try planning a response to the following essay questions as part of your revision of the theme of family and relationships:

- Explore how Dickens presents Scrooge as an outsider to society.
- Explore how Dickens presents ideas about joy and happiness in A Christmas Carol.
- Explore how Dickens presents the effects of loneliness and isolation in A Christmas Carol.

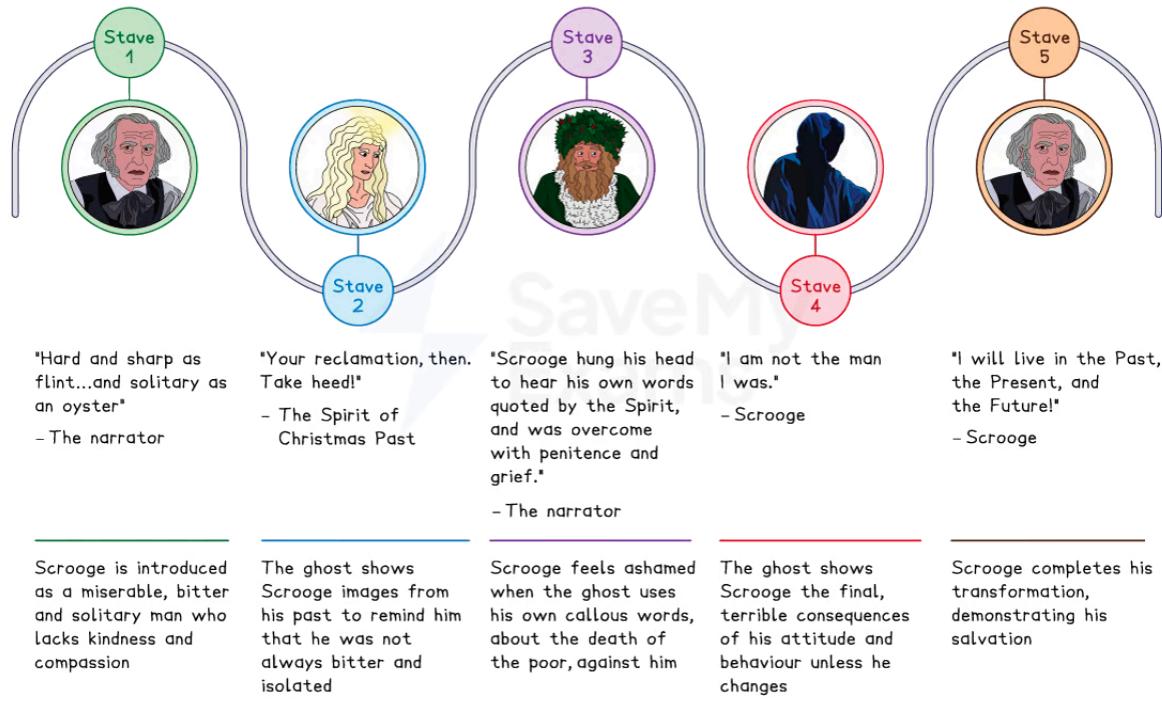


Your notes

A Christmas Carol Key Theme: Transformation and Redemption

Transformation and redemption timeline

The theme of transformation and redemption in A Christmas Carol:



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A Christmas Carol transformation and redemption timeline

How is transformation and redemption presented in A Christmas Carol?

Transformation and **redemption** are presented in A Christmas Carol through the structure of the novella, as well as through the ghosts, other characters and descriptions of the setting:

- **The novella's structure:** Dickens structures the novella into five staves, like the traditional form of a Christmas carol, suggesting the ultimate message will be **redemptive**:
 - Each stave highlights an aspect of Scrooge's journey to redemption and salvation, building tension and suspense
- **The ghosts:** Starting with the ghost of Jacob Marley, the **catalyst** for Scrooge's transformative journey, Dickens uses each of the 3 spirits for a specific purpose:



Your notes

- The Ghost of Christmas Past represents memory, truth and the hope for change
- The Ghost of Christmas Present conveys the message of generosity and goodwill
- The Ghost of Christmas Yet to Come represents fear of death and the moral reckoning that awaits Scrooge unless he changes his ways
- **Scrooge's changed interactions:** Dickens uses a cyclical structure to show how Scrooge's relationships with other characters change from Stave 1 to Stave 5 to reflect his transformation:
 - In Stave 1, Scrooge dismisses the charity collectors, but in Stave 5 he runs after the charity collector to make his payment, including "many back-payments"
 - After rejecting Fred's Christmas invitation in Stave 1, he eventually does spend Christmas day with his family in Stave 5
 - Scrooge also goes from being a cause of misery to Bob and his family to being their **benefactor** and saviour at the end of the novella
- **Descriptions of the weather:** Dickens also uses pathetic fallacy to symbolise Scrooge's transformation:
 - In Stave 1, Dickens conveys the cold and gloomy atmosphere of Victorian London, describing the weather as "cold, bleak, biting..."
 - But in Stave 5, there is "no fog, no mist" and the sky is "clear, bright, jovial" and filled with "golden sunlight"
 - The descriptions of the weather reflect Scrooge's transformed character, from having "cold within him" which "froze his features" to being described as "fluttered and so glowing with his good intentions"

Why is transformation and redemption a key theme in A Christmas Carol?

1. The importance of change

- Dickens presents the importance of change as part of his wider social message to inspire his readers to work for a more equitable and fair society:
 - Despite being unsympathetic and resistant to change, if change is possible even for Scrooge, it is possible for anyone
- The novella is deliberately didactic (intended to teach) and **allegorical** (containing a moral or hidden meaning)

2. Christian and pagan values

- To emphasise the universality of the themes in the novella, Dickens alludes to Christian ideals of charity and redemption throughout:



Your notes

- Scrooge is a “sinner” to be saved; the ghosts work to redeem from his vice of greed
- Jacob Marley is described as being doomed to wander the earth in his chains, which indicates he exists in a state of **purgatory**
- Dickens also draws on **pagan** ideas, such as the torch held by the Ghost of Christmas Present, symbolic of the Horn of Plenty from classical mythology
 - His views on redemption go beyond the Christian church, as he criticised some religious practices (such as the keeping of Sunday as a strict day of rest) which affected the poor the most

Exam-style questions on the theme of transformation and redemption in A Christmas Carol

Try planning a response to the following essay questions as part of your revision of the theme of transformation and redemption:

- Explore how Dickens uses the ghost to help Scrooge change his attitudes and behaviour in A Christmas Carol.
- Explore how Dickens presents the effects of greed in A Christmas Carol.
- Explore how Dickens presents Scrooge's fears in A Christmas Carol.

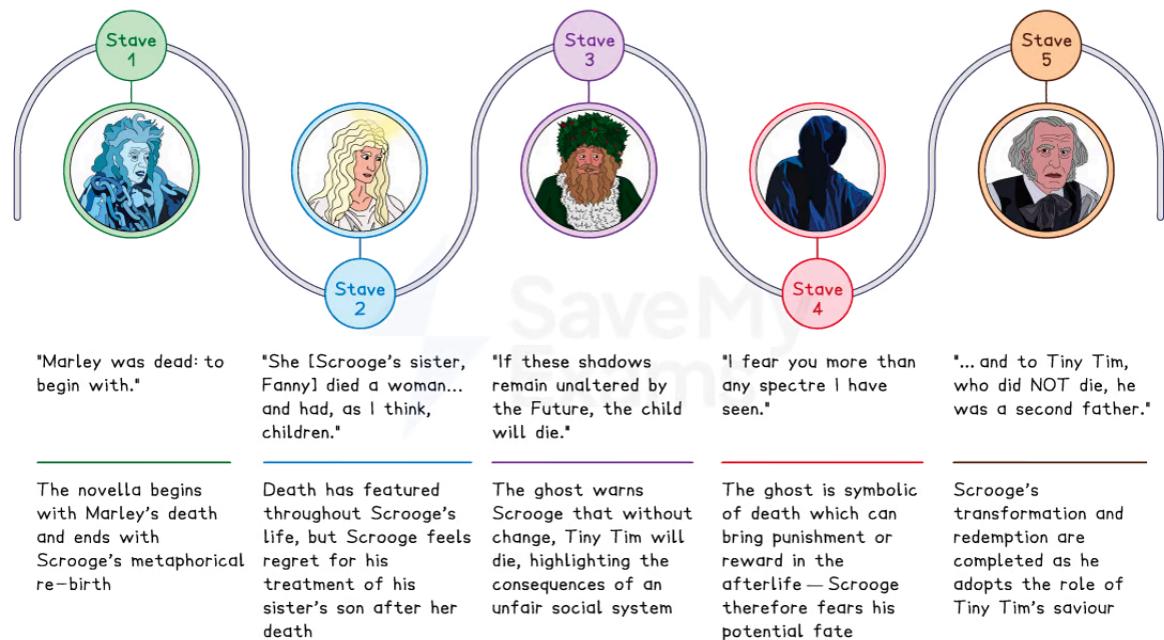


Your notes

A Christmas Carol Key Theme: Death and Loss

Death and loss timeline

The theme of death and loss in each stave of A Christmas Carol:



How are death and loss presented in A Christmas Carol?

Death and loss are recurring ideas within the novella:

- **Marley's ghost (Stave 1):** The novella begins with establishing Marley's death through his ghost, bound by the chains, money boxes and padlocks he so coveted in life:
 - This is the first catalyst for Scrooge's transformation and serves as both a warning to Scrooge and a reminder to Dickens' readers that our actions in life have consequences beyond the grave
- **The Ghost of Christmas Yet to Come (Stave 4):** This terrifying ghost personifies death, heightened by Dickens' descriptions of darkness and use of solemn language:
 - Scrooge's marked fear of this phantom suggests his potential fate is something to be afraid of



Your notes

- **Scrooge's death** (Stave 4): The Ghost of Christmas Yet to Come shows Scrooge the treatment of an unknown corpse, unloved and uncared for:
 - The characters dealing with the corpse are concerned only by how they might profit from it, mirroring Scrooge's own attitudes towards money
 - In a moment of dramatic irony, the spirit reveals Scrooge's own name is on the gravestone; despite his wealth he will die alone, uncared for and this leads ultimately to his **repentance**
- **Tiny Tim** (Stave 4): In a possible future shown to Scrooge, Tiny Tim's imagined death is contrasted with Scrooge's, and the child is mourned while Scrooge is not:
 - Scrooge understands that Tiny Tim's death was avoidable and accepts his responsibility towards the Cratchit family
 - Through Tiny Tim, Dickens also highlights the poor health, living conditions and malnourishment experienced by many poor children in Victorian Britain

Why is death and loss a key theme in A Christmas Carol?

Dickens uses death and loss to highlight the permanency of death and to indicate that it is never too late to change.

1. Personal and social change

- Scrooge's encounters with death serve as a catalyst for his character's transformation and redemption, emphasising both the value of and ephemerality of life
- The presentation of death serves to remind Scrooge — and the reader — that we have a social responsibility to others or we will share fate the fate of Marley and Scrooge (as presented in Stave 4)

2. A critique of social and class systems

- Dickens uses A Christmas Carol to criticise the unjust social systems and institutions of Victorian Britain which negatively affected the most vulnerable in society
- He wanted to highlight the high mortality rate of poorer children and the need for the poor working class to have the means to help themselves

Exam-style questions on the theme of death and loss in A Christmas Carol

Try planning a response to the following essay questions as part of your revision of the theme of death and loss:

- Explore how Dickens presents loss and a fear of mortality in A Christmas Carol.
- Explore how Dickens presents death in A Christmas Carol.



Your notes

A Christmas Carol: Characters

It is vital that you understand that characters are often used symbolically to express ideas. Dickens uses all of his characters to symbolise various ideas prevalent in his society, and the differences between characters reflect contemporary debates. Therefore it is very useful not only to learn about each character individually but how they compare and contrast to other characters in the novel.

It is important to consider the range of strategies Dickens uses to create and develop characters within A Christmas Carol. This includes:

- how characters are established
- how characters are presented:
 - physical appearance or suggestions about this
 - actions and motives for them
 - what they say and think
 - how they interact with others
 - what others say and think about them
- how far do the characters conform to or subvert stereotypes
- their relationships with other characters

Below you will find character profiles of:

- [Ebenezer Scrooge](#)
- [Jacob Marley](#)
- [Bob Cratchit](#)
- [Ghost of Christmas Past](#)
- [Ghost of Christmas Present](#)
- [Ghost of Christmas Yet to Come](#)
- [Minor characters](#)

Ebenezer Scrooge



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- Scrooge is the **protagonist** of the **novella** and is first presented as a **misanthropic** businessman who is miserly, **callous**, materialistic and unsympathetic
- He is first described as: "Hard and sharp as flint, from which no steel had ever struck out a generous fire":
 - Dickens's description conveys Scrooge's mean and bitter **demeanour** and he is firmly established as a symbol of cruelty and selfishness
- Dickens uses the simile "as solitary as an oyster" to depict Scrooge as an isolated character and this could be interpreted in numerous ways by the reader:
 - It could suggest that, like an oyster, Scrooge also has a hard exterior though, within his interior, there is a more vulnerable entity, shielding itself from the outside world
 - In the same way that oysters must be prised open, so too must the spirits force Scrooge to reveal his inner humanity:
 - Further, as only some oysters produce pearls (which are viewed as very precious), Scrooge is also finally revealed to the reader as a precious and valuable individual within his society
- Scrooge's attitude is **typified** by his continual expression "humbug":
 - The word is used to signify Scrooge's attitude towards Christmas, which he views as a **sham** and a fraud



Your notes

- It demonstrates his strong **aversion** to Christmas and the society around him in general
- Scrooge's cruel and condescending treatment and ignorance of the poor are depicted as typical of the attitude of many of the wealthy classes:
 - He makes Bob work in dreadful conditions and makes him live in constant fear of losing his job
 - In Stave I, he refuses to make a charitable donation to the poor and instead declares: "Are there no prisons? Are there no workhouses?"
- Despite Scrooge's initial presentation, in Stave II the reader is presented with details about his younger self which create empathy for his character:
 - Dickens depicts Scrooge's childhood as lonely and isolated and this invokes sympathy for him as a young boy: "A solitary child, neglected by his friends, is left there still"
 - Further, Scrooge's sensitivity is revealed to the reader by his emotional reaction to this scene: "And he sobbed"
- Through Scrooge's sister Fan, the reader learns that his father is less harsh than before, which could hint that his home life was once difficult and perhaps devoid of love
 - His engagement to Belle, a beautiful young woman, illustrates the contented life that Scrooge could have had and underscores the corrosive consequences of greed
- His past suggests his character is not completely depraved and Dickens uses this to hint at the possibility of his future **redemption**:
 - It suggests that past events may have corrupted his once-good nature and this creates sympathy for him as well as provides an element of hope
- For Dickens, it is vital that Scrooge revisits his younger self and through the Ghost of Christmas Past, Scrooge's memories become another catalyst for his transformation
- Scrooge's emotions develop quickly as the plot progresses and he demonstrates the ability to change very early on in the novella:
 - In Stave II, his first stage of remorse is revealed when he regrets not having given money to a carol singer: "There was a boy singing a Christmas Carol at my door last night. I should like to have given him something, that's all"
 - Similarly, in this chapter, Dickens also hints that he regrets his behaviour towards Fred and Bob
- Through the character of Tiny Tim, Scrooge develops his ability to empathise with those who are less fortunate:
 - Tiny Tim plays an important part in inspiring Scrooge's **transformation**, which is central to the narrative
- Dickens presents Scrooge's transformation from avarice to benevolence:

- By the end of the novella, Scrooge has been transformed into a charitable **philanthropist**: “I am light as a feather, I am as happy as an angel, I am as merry as a schoolboy, I am giddy as a drunken man” and “I am not the man I was”



Jacob Marley



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- Jacob Marley is first referenced in the opening lines of the **novella**: “Marley was dead, to begin with” and his character only appears in Stave I:
 - Dickens conveys a sense of finality by informing the reader that one of the characters is dead
 - By declaring Marley has been dead seven years before the narrative opens, it sets up the scene for the shock and anguish which Scrooge experiences when he appears to him
- Marley and Scrooge’s relationship is established from the very beginning:
 - “Scrooge was his sole executor, his sole administrator, his sole assign, his sole residuary legatee, his sole friend, and sole mourner”
 - Although both were partners for “many years”, the relationship that Dickens presents is one merely associated with business, rather than an affectionate friendship
 - This is further highlighted when Dickens declares that Scrooge “was not so dreadfully cut up by the sad event”, which illustrates their **shallow** relationship and Scrooge’s lack of affection for anyone



Your notes

- Marley is described as a terrifying figure and is condemned to wander in heavy chains “made of cash boxes, keys, padlocks, ledgers, deeds”:
 - These items are all symbols linked to his occupation and are used to signify the obsession he had with business and money while he was alive
- Marley is a haunted figure and similar to Scrooge, he was once materialistic and self-centered. However, he is now remorseful for his actions:
 - He acknowledges that “charity, mercy, forbearance, and benevolence” should have been his business
- Dickens uses Marley’s ghost as an allegorical warning against greed and avarice:
 - Marley declares: “I wear the chain I forged in life” which indicates to the reader that Marley’s **predicament** is due to his own actions
 - His warning to Scrooge (and to the reader) is that everyone is responsible for their actions and will be held accountable for them
- Marley is the first spirit to appear to Scrooge and his character introduces a supernatural and religious element to the plot:
 - Marley could be seen as symbolic of Christian beliefs in Heaven, Hell, and repentance, as he is presented in a **purgatory state** and is forced to remain there until he has repented for his deeds
- One of his purposes in the **novella** is to save Scrooge from a similar fate:
 - Marley is used only to warn Scrooge; he cannot force him to alter his ways as Scrooge must do this himself
 - While Marley could be viewed in an unsympathetic light (as he has caused his own suffering), he could appear to be quite selfless in his motive to help his former partner
- Marley acts as a **catalyst** for the transformation of Scrooge:
 - Dickens indicates that Scrooge had a “terrible sensation” after Marley’s visit and it is this fear which first prompts his desire to change

Bob Cratchit



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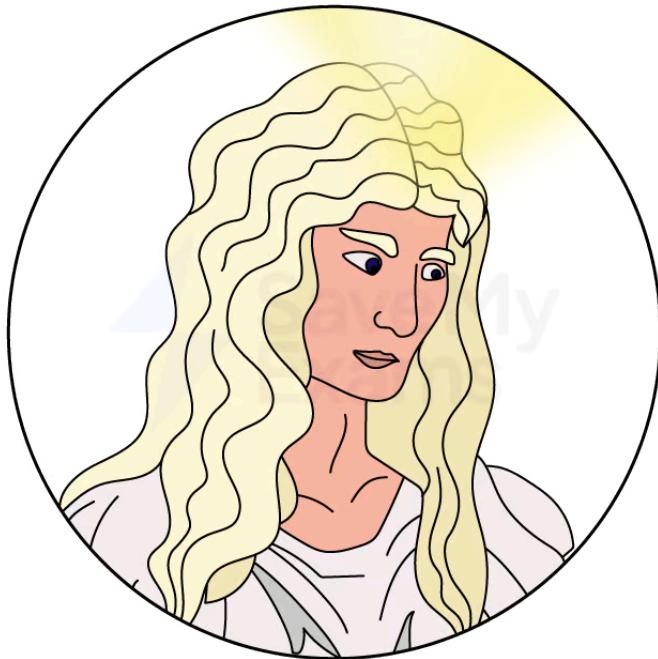
- Bob Cratchit is first introduced in Stave I, though his character remains unnamed and silent in this chapter and he is simply referred to as “the clerk”:
 - By omitting Bob’s name and referring to him by his occupation, Dickens conveys Scrooge’s **myopic** perception of Bob in terms of labour, rather than as a human being
 - Bob’s silence also signifies his irrelevance and insignificance as a lower-class person in the eyes of the wealthier classes such as Scrooge
- Further, by titling the character “Bob” (a Victorian **colloquial** term for a **Shilling**) Dickens may be suggesting how he and the lower classes are viewed merely in terms of **capital**
- Scrooge’s ruthlessness towards Bob is evident in Stave I and his character is used to underscore Scrooge’s cruel and **exploitative** behaviour:
 - Bob works in a “dismal little cell” suggesting a gloomy **confinement** from which he cannot escape, which could be viewed as a wider symbol of his poverty
 - He is too fearful to ask Scrooge for more coal to **replenish** his fire and instead tries “to warm himself at the candle”, which highlights the dreadful conditions that employers could make employees accept
- In Stave II, Dickens presents Bob as a devoted father and husband:



Your notes

- His relationship with his children is shown as loving and affectionate, for example, when he carries "Tiny Tim upon his shoulder"; and when he shows concern for the whereabouts of his daughter "Why, where's our Martha?"
- Dickens also uses different settings to contrast Bob and Scrooge: Scrooge's character is first depicted in his place of work; whereas Bob's character is depicted in the intimate setting of his home:
 - This symbolises what each character views as most important to them: Scrooge values money, while Bob values family
- Despite being treated cruelly by his employer, Bob proposes a toast to Scrooge and encourages his reluctant family to do so as well:
 - This demonstrates Bob's kind-spirited and forgiving nature and he is presented as a virtuous and righteous character
 - Dickens' depiction of Bob invokes sympathy from the reader:
 - He is **deferential**, patient, courteous and civil to Scrooge, despite Scrooge's poor treatment
- Bob is symbolic of the lower classes and their dependence on their employer:
 - Bob's situation depends on businessmen like Scrooge and so subsequently does the fate of his family:
 - This symbolises the power of the higher classes over the poor
- As a character, Bob remains unchanged throughout the **novella**:
 - He remains compassionate, generous and forgiving

Ghost of Christmas Past



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Your notes

- The Ghost of Christmas Past, representing memory, is introduced in Stave II and declares it has come for Scrooge's welfare and **reclamation**:
 - In part, its role is to begin Scrooge's **transformation**
 - The spirit is presented as: wise, gentle, forceful and **enigmatic**
 - It is described in great depth and through a range of dualities and paradoxes:
 - It is described: "like a child: yet not so like a child as like an old man"
 - "Its hair... was white as if with age; and yet the face had not a wrinkle in it"
 - "It held a branch of fresh green holly in its hand... of that wintry emblem, had its dress trimmed with summer flowers"
 - These **dualities** and **paradoxes** could be used to illustrate Scrooge's contradictory qualities, as the spirit shows a younger Scrooge who was once capable of having feelings for others
 - Dickens further describes the spirit as having "a bright clear jet of light" springing from its head:
 - The light could be seen as symbolic of **illumination**, memory, and guidance:
 - The light could be viewed to highlight and expose Scrooge's past and present behaviour



Your notes

- At first, Scrooge is defiant and challenges the authority of the spirit though he begins to accept its guidance
- Light is also symbolic of goodness and it is in contrast to Scrooge's dreary existence
- The spirit confronts Scrooge with a series of memories and visions from his past and Scrooge's response conveys how distressing they are for him:
 - Vision 1: Scrooge sees himself as a young boy at school and when the other children abandon him, Scrooge weeps for his former self left alone:
 - This vision forces Scrooge to display emotion and it begins to create empathy for his character
 - Vision 2: Scrooge sees his sister Fan, who comes to bring him home from school, having been given their father's permission to do so:
 - This vision forces Scrooge to consider his behaviour towards Fan's son, Fred, who is affectionate to Scrooge in the same way Fan once was
 - Vision 3: Scrooge sees the Christmas ball held by his former employer, Mr Fezziwig, where he had acquired his work apprenticeship:
 - In this vision, Scrooge is forced to see how Mr Fezziwig is a much kinder employer than he is, which makes him reflect on his conduct towards Bob
 - Vision 4: Scrooge sees himself with his fiancée, Belle, who abandoned him due to his obsession with wealth:
 - In this vision, Scrooge is confronted with a lost love
 - Vision 5: Scrooge sees Belle as a happy, older married woman with children:
 - This vision makes Scrooge reflect on how his life could have been much different with a wife and family
- Scrooge attempts to extinguish the spirit's light but fails to do so as he "could not hide the light":
 - His inability to extinguish the light depicts the power of reflection and self-discovery
- Although Scrooge is reluctant to confront his past as it exposes him to pain and regret, it is necessary for his **redemption**

Ghost of Christmas Present



Your notes

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- The Ghost of Christmas Present is introduced in Stave III and is referred to as a “jolly Giant”
- The spirit is described in positive terms: “its genial face, its sparkling eye, its open hand, its cheery voice, its unconstrained demeanor, and its joyful air”:
 - The spirit could be viewed as the personification of the Christmas spirit in that it represents everything that is positive about Christmas: cheerful, giving and jovial
 - The spirit’s description is in sharp contrast to how Scrooge has first described at the beginning of the novella: “a squeezing, wrenching, grasping, scraping, clutching, covetous, old sinner!”
- The spirit “bore a glowing torch” which is in the shape of the **Horn of Plenty** and, as it sprinkles the torch over the people in these scenes, they are filled with kindness and cheer associated with Christmas:
 - Taken from Greek and Roman mythology, the **Horn of Plenty** is associated with harvest time and an abundance of food
 - The motif of light is used to represent the joy surrounding Christmas
- The spirit carries an “antique scabbard, but no sword was in it”:
 - Dickens depicts how Christmas is a time associated with peace and goodwill, where conflict and differences are put aside
- The spirit does not refer to Scrooge by his name, but instead by the word “man”:



Your notes

- This suggests that the spirit's message is not just directed toward Scrooge but to all of mankind
- The spirit is authoritative and commanding, evident through its repeated use of imperative and exclamatory statements: "Look upon me!"
- Scrooge begins to "obey" the spirit and his submissiveness illustrates his ongoing transformation:
 - Dickens further illustrates this by stating: "He was not the dogged Scrooge he had been"
- The spirit highlights the importance of Christmas spirit by taking Scrooge to numerous places where people are **revelling** in the festive season:
 - The ghost builds on the concept of change by showing Scrooge the Cratchit household
- The spirit delivers scathing moral discourses about social reform:
 - The spirit is a mouthpiece for Dickens's views on poverty and social injustice which was evident in Victorian England
 - Through the spirit, Dickens highlights the selfishness of the rich and their heartlessness towards the plight of the poor
- Two starving children emerge from under the spirit's cloak called Ignorance and Want:
 - Dickens uses Ignorance and Want as a symbol of society's cruelty as they are subjected to torment and distress

Ghost of Christmas Yet to Come

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- The Ghost of Christmas Yet to Come is introduced in Stave IV and is a **harrowing** and sinister character
- The spirit is described as "shrouded in a deep black garment, which concealed its head, its face, its form... save one outstretched hand":
 - While the previous two spirits were associated with light, this spirit is linked with darkness, death and concealment
- While the previous two spirits have helped to guide Scrooge through their discourses with him, Dickens purposely does not enable this spirit to speak:
 - This suggests Scrooge must finally come to a realisation all by himself and without any help from the spirit
- The spirit is an **ominous** and **sombre** figure and is in contrast to the youthful Ghost of Christmas Past and the jolly Ghost of Christmas Present:
 - Scrooge declares: "I fear you more than any spectre I have seen" and the spirit depicts Scrooge's future as one of misery and despair if he does not change

Minor characters

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Fred

- Fred is introduced in Stave I and is presented as a **jovial**, spirited and **benevolent** character:



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- He is described as “kind, forgiving, charitable, pleasant” and he embodies Dickens’s belief that people should show compassion and kindness to each other
- As the nephew of Scrooge, he is a complete contrast to him in both spirit and appearance:
 - Fred represents the Christmas ideal as he is warm-hearted, cheerful, generous and **empathetic**, though Scrooge possesses all of these qualities by the end of the novella

Tiny Tim

- Tiny Tim is presented as frail, ill, vulnerable, joyful and hopeful:
 - Dickens uses the character to highlight the misfortunes of children and to elicit sympathy from the reader
 - The character is also used to illustrate the affectionate qualities of Bob’s character
- Tiny Tim is a minor but very significant character and he is used to highlight Scrooge’s developing empathy:
 - He plays an important part in inspiring Scrooge’s **transformation**, which is central to the narrative

Fan

- Fan is presented as a loving and caring sister and she is also a catalyst for Scrooge’s change:
 - She is an important memory for Scrooge and is a reminder of the importance of family

Fezziwig

- Fezziwig is represented as a jovial and high-spirited character:
 - His character is used to convey the celebratory nature of Christmas
- Dickens juxtaposes Fezziwig’s heartfelt treatment of his employees with Scrooge’s callous conduct towards Bob and Fred
 - He is described as having “the power to render us happy or unhappy; to make our service light or burdensome; a pleasure or a toil”

Belle

- Belle is presented as a virtuous and earnest character and is contrasted to Scrooge:
 - She represents the contented life that Scrooge could have had and underscores the corrosive consequences of greed

Ignorance and Want

- Ignorance and Want are used as symbols of society’s cruelty:
 - Dickens uses these two characters to expose the consequences of society’s greed and avarice

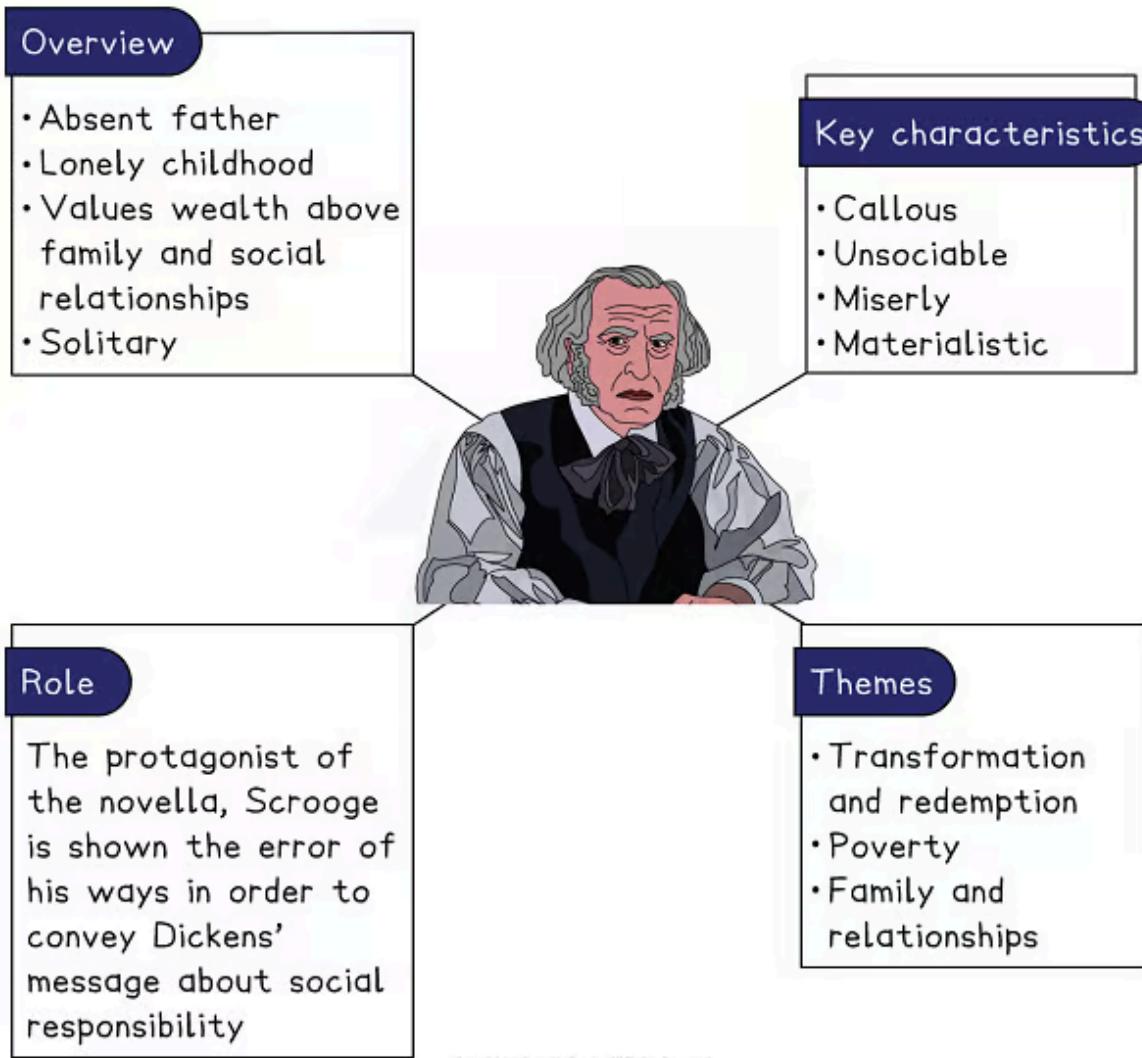


Your notes

Scrooge Character Analysis

Scrooge's transformation from a solitary, miserly and hard-hearted character to a generous, compassionate and benevolent one is the central driver of the narrative in A Christmas Carol.

Scrooge character summary

Copyright © Save My Exams. All Rights Reserved**Scrooge character summary**

Why is Scrooge important?

Dickens uses Scrooge to convey the key messages in the novella about social inequality, social responsibility and the importance of repentance in order to achieve redemption.



Your notes

Scrooge's journey through the novella is a transformative one. Initially, Dickens presents Scrooge as:

- **Callous:** he displays ignorance towards the realities of those in his society less fortunate than himself, and values wealth over family, kindness, benevolence and social connection.
- **Sceptical:** when he is visited by Marley's ghost, Scrooge at first does not believe his own eyes. Unlike Marley's ghost, who in death has come to realise the error of his ways, Scrooge cannot see his own metaphorical chains, suggesting that he has yet to realise the potential negative consequences of his behaviour.
- **Materialistic:** Scrooge's preoccupation with money and wealth is detrimental to his happiness.

By the end of the novella, Scrooge has transformed from a cruel miser to a **benevolent and kind man**. Through the character of Scrooge, Dickens reveals to his readers that everyone has the potential to show compassion and kindness towards others, regardless of their social position.

Scrooge language analysis

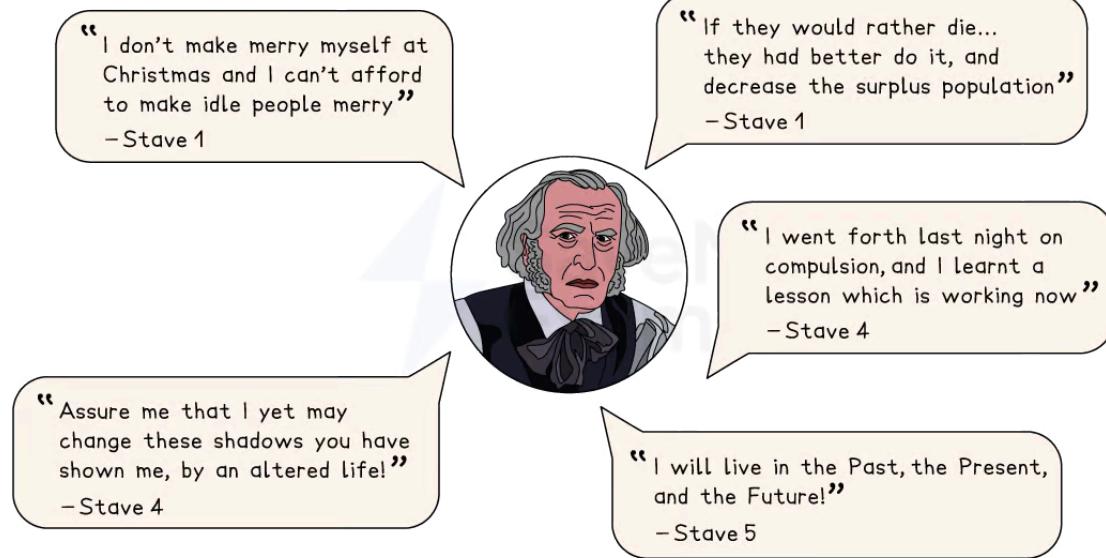
Dickens presents aspects of Scrooge's character through his dialogue with other characters in the novella.

- **Dismissive comments:** Scrooge's speech to other characters is often ill-mannered and rude. In the first part of the novella, Scrooge often speaks rudely to those he should be kind to, such as Bob Crachit, his employee, and Fred, his nephew, for example when he says to Fred that "every idiot who goes about with 'Merry Christmas' on his lips, should be boiled with his own pudding, and buried with a stake of holly through his heart"
- **Exclamatory statements:** His curt and dismissive responses are emphasised through the use of exclamations such as "Bah!" and "Humbug!" which highlight his brusque nature
- **Rhetorical questions:** Scrooge often asks rhetorical questions, which are used by Dickens to show his ignorance of the plight of the poor. They are also used to demonstrate that his ability to change his and others' outcomes rests with himself, such as with his unanswered questions to the Ghost of Christmas Yet to Come

Scrooge key quotes



Your notes


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Scrooge key quotes

Scrooge character development

Stave 1	Stave 3	Stave 5
<p>Scrooge as an isolated miser: Scrooge is presented as a callous and mean-spirited employer, who shuns and is shunned by Victorian society, both rich and poor. His stubbornness and sense of righteous indignation are displayed his reaction to the visitation by Marley's ghost, who comes to warn him that, unless he changes his ways, his fate will be the same.</p>	<p>Scrooge's transformation begins: Scrooge has already explored his past with the first of the spirits, and is starting to understand the true nature of Christmas through the Ghost of Christmas Present. He begins to understand the role he plays in perpetuating an unfair social system.</p>	<p>Transformation complete: Scrooge has realised the error of his ways and that he has the opportunity to change his fate, and the fate of others, by acting kindly and in consideration of others' needs. The novella ends with Scrooge reconciled with his family and acting as a mentor and friend to the Cratchit family.</p>

Scrooge character interpretations

Social inequality

Dickens' novella still resonates with people today due to its central theme of transformation, and its belief that we all hold the power to change and redeem ourselves. Scrooge's actions are not necessarily to be viewed through a religious lens, but rather as a social contract, in which the inequality between those who "have" and those who "have not" can be evened out. A Christmas Carol could therefore be argued to convey an over-simplified and sentimental message which does not fully explore the underlying reasons for social inequality.



Your notes

Scrooge as philanthropist

During the mid-19th century, a weakening economy in England meant many middle-class Victorians saved their money for the prospect of poorer times ahead. This then means less money is spent by everyone in society. Scrooge's initial materialism and money-hoarding can be contextualised against this backdrop, but rather than advocating charity and benevolence, one interpretation is that Dickens was encouraging higher consumer spending as a way back to health (exemplified by Tiny Tim) and prosperity. Scrooge then is seen not as a miserly sinner, but as a reflection of his times: a wealthy man who has learned to spend what money he has in order to bolster the economy for everyone.



Your notes

Bob Cratchit Character Analysis

Bob Cratchit acts as a foil to Scrooge as he is everything that Scrooge is not: poor, yet benevolent, kind and humble.

Bob Cratchit character summary

Overview

- Represents the working classes
- Works for Scrooge
- Works to provide for his family
- Father to Tiny Tim

Key characteristics

- Kind
- Family orientated
- Positive
- Compassionate

Role

Bob represents kindness and compassion in the face of adversity and cruelty. He puts a human face to a group of people Scrooge treats as less than human

Themes

- Poverty
- Family and relationships
- Death and loss





Your notes

Why is Bob Cratchit important?

Dickens uses Bob in the novella to demonstrate that, despite being poor, he is rich in all of the things that truly matter. As he is generous, sensitive, polite, kind and loving, he acts as a foil to Scrooge who is none of these things.

Bob remains largely unchanged in terms of character traits throughout the novella:

- He is **generous**: he is given a pitiful wage by Scrooge, but despite this he is generous enough to propose a toast to his boss on Christmas Day.
- He is **obedient** and **hard-working**: Bob compliantly takes orders from his rude and bad-tempered boss without complaining. He does not challenge Scrooge and is worried about losing his position if Scrooge is displeased.
- He is **kind** and **loving**: Bob demonstrates willingness to forgive, is openly emotional about his family and is kind and polite to everyone he encounters.

By the end of the novella, Bob's situation is improved due to Scrooge's transformation, and he therefore becomes a more rounded character than the nameless "clerk" at the beginning of the story. He is presented **positively** by Dickens throughout, challenging a belief held by some members of the Victorian upper classes that the poor were in their situation because they were lazy and idle.

Bob Cratchit language analysis

Dickens presents aspects of Bob's character through his dialogue with other characters in the novella.

- **Polite and deferential diction**: despite Scrooge's appalling behaviour towards him as his employer, Bob is always polite and calls him "sir".
- **Positive tone**: Bob believes in speaking positively and with gratitude about everyone, for example when he gently reminds his wife that she should not be critical as it is Christmas Day or when Bob raises a toast to Scrooge as his employer in Stave 3, even though this sentiment is not shared by the rest of his family.
- **Exclamatory statements**: Bob is sensitive and emotional, but also displays a zest for life. This is demonstrated by the frequent use of exclamation marks at the end of his statements.

Bob Cratchit key quotes



Your notes

**“I'll give you Mr. Scrooge,
the Founder of the Feast!”**

– Stave 3

“If quite convenient, sir”

– Stave 1

**“It shall not be repeated. I was
making rather merry yesterday, sir”**

– Stave 5

“My little, little child!”

– Stave 3



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Bob Cratchit key quotes

Bob Cratchit's character development

Stave 1	Stave 3	Stave 4
<p>Bob as a deferential employee: Bob is introduced as an unnamed timid man who is referred to as the “clerk”. He is described as working in a “dismal little cell”, trying to warm himself at a candle. He submissively interacts with Scrooge at the end of the stave, who reluctantly agrees to give him Christmas Day off as long as he comes in earlier the following day.</p>	<p>Bob as a loving family man: The Ghost of Christmas Present takes Scrooge to the Cratchits' home to show him how a poor family could still celebrate Christmas with kindness and love. Bob's spirits are high and they make the most of what they have, and Bob even generously toasts Scrooge as the “Founder of the Feast”.</p>	<p>Potential family tragedy: Scrooge is taken to visit the Cratchits' dwelling again, only this time to witness the grief and sadness at the loss of Tiny Tim. Bob tries his best to stay cheerful for the sake of his family, but is overcome with emotion. This fate is averted by Scrooge's transformation by Stave 5.</p>

Bob Cratchit character interpretations

Plight of the working classes

Bob's character represents the working poor in Victorian times. Even though he works hard over long hours, he still struggles to support his family and provide adequately to improve Tiny Tim's health. By presenting the working poor as trapped in a system from which they have no means of escape, Dickens highlights the need for social change and challenges the negative and prevalent attitudes of the upper class towards the

working class and the poor. Bob's fate, and that of his family, is completely dependent on his employer, and by referring to Bob only as the "clerk" in Stave 1, Dickens may have been suggesting that the poor were viewed merely in terms of labour rather than as human beings.



Your notes

Bob's Christianity

Bob is also presented as morally righteous. He has a deep emotional connection with religion, which he passes onto his son, Tiny Tim. By honouring Christian values and traditions, Victorian readers were likely to associate his character with someone of strong moral standing, making him a more sympathetic character to Dickens' readers.

Bob as a symbol

Bob is, however, a deliberate caricature of a poor, working class and religious man. He can be perceived as too good to be true, and Dickens has done this deliberately in order for Bob and the Cratchit family to become symbolic of a wider social issue, rather than wholly convincing characters in their own rights.



Your notes

The Three Spirits Character Analysis

The three ghosts who visit Scrooge on Christmas Eve each represent a different idea or aspect of humanity to help show Scrooge the errors of his ways and shape his journey to redemption.

The Ghost of Christmas Past character summary

Overview

- Appears in Stave 2
- Scrooge is resistant to this ghost at first
- Shows Scrooge his past

Key characteristics

- Surreal
- Strange
- Gentle
- Ambiguous
- Firm

Role

This ghost represents memory. It takes Scrooge to visit important moments from his past, prompting him to begin reflecting on his actions

Themes

- Gothic
- Supernatural
- Family and relationships

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The Ghost of Christmas Past character summary

The Ghost of Christmas Present character summary



Your notes

Overview

- Appears in Stave 3
- Scrooge is more receptive to this ghost
- Shows Scrooge various characters' Christmases

Key characteristics

- Jolly
- Generous
- Critical
- Observant



Role

This ghost represents generosity and goodwill. It shows Scrooge the different ways Christmas is celebrated in order to highlight human kindness and generosity, even among those who have the least.

Themes

- Poverty
- Family and relationships
- Social inequality

The Ghost of Christmas Yet To Come character summary



Your notes



Overview

- Appears in Stave 4
- Scrooge is fearful of this ghost
- Shows Scrooge his death

Key characteristics

- Silent
- Ominous
- Mysterious

Role

This ghost is a personification of death, and shows Scrooge his own possible death, as well as that of Tiny Tim's, if he does not change his ways

Themes

- Social responsibility
- Family and relationships
- Death and loss

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The Ghost of Christmas Yet To Come character summary

Why are the Three Spirits important?

Dickens uses each of the ghosts as a guiding force behind Scrooge's eventual transformation and redemption. In a literal sense, they represent Scrooge's **past**, **present** and **future**. However, Dickens also uses them to convey key messages:



Your notes

- The Ghost of Christmas Past represents **memory, truth and hope**:
 - It shows Scrooge images from his past to remind him that he was not always miserly and bitter
 - This ghost offers the **hope for change**, and that the **past is a truth** that cannot be extinguished
 - By showing Scrooge images of celebration, Dickens suggests that it is not immoral to enjoy yourself, but essential to promote community and kindness
- The Ghost of Christmas Present represents **generosity and goodwill**:
 - Dickens conveys the message that a religious occasion should not be marked with self-denial; rather, it is a time to share whatever one has
 - This reflects the central idea in the novella of a **shared social responsibility** to lessen the divisions between rich and poor, and refutes one Victorian way of thinking that any man unable to sustain himself had no right to live
 - By showing Scrooge the metaphorical children Ignorance and Want after scenes of abundance, Dickens illustrates the idea that there is enough for everyone if it is shared equally
- The Ghost of Christmas Yet To Come represents the **fear of death**:
 - Scrooge is especially fearful of what would await him in the afterlife given his attitudes and behaviour so far in his life
 - This spirit is symbolic of **moral reckoning**, prompting Scrooge to alter his ways in order to avoid the same fate as Jacob Marley
 - By drawing on **gothic** and **supernatural** symbolism, Dickens ensures that his message of the unfair consequences of a capitalist society is heard by Victorian readers who would have been familiar with this narrative device

The Ghost of Christmas Past language analysis

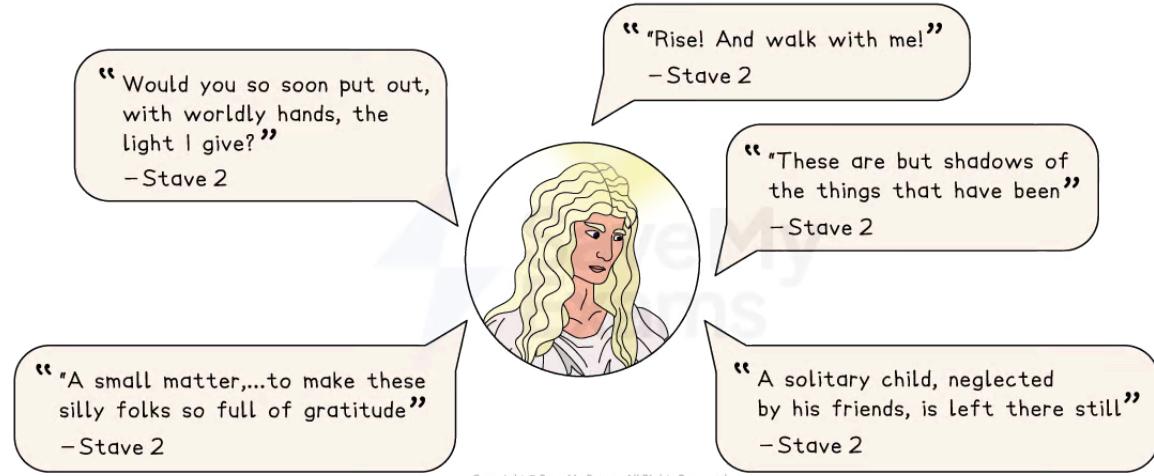
The Ghost of Christmas Past speaks briefly, but its style of speech includes:

- **Imperatives**: the ghost uses commands, such as "rise" and "walk", to show that it is in control and to emphasise the importance of its message.
- **Short and simple sentences**: the ghost conveys only what is necessary in a very straightforward way. This highlights the significance of what it does say to Scrooge.

The Ghost of Christmas Past key quotes



Your notes



“Would you so soon put out,
with worldly hands, the
light I give?”
—Stave 2

“Rise! And walk with me!”
—Stave 2

“These are but shadows of
the things that have been”
—Stave 2

“A small matter,...to make these
silly folks so full of gratitude”
—Stave 2

“A solitary child, neglected
by his friends, is left there still”
—Stave 2

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The Ghost of Christmas Past key quotes

The Ghost of Christmas Present language analysis

The language used by the Ghost of Christmas Present is characterised by:

- **An intimate tone:** the ghost uses welcoming and generous language, and invites Scrooge to “know him better” since it wants Scrooge to learn and change.
- **Repetition of Scrooge’s language:** the ghost uses Scrooge’s previous words against him (for example his negative attitudes towards the poor) to hold a mirror up to Scrooge and his behaviour.
- **Prophetic language:** the ghost predicts that, unless things change, Tiny Tim will die. This prophecy extends to all mankind; that everyone will suffer unless the lessons of generosity, benevolence and tolerance are learned.

The Ghost of Christmas Present key quotes



Your notes

“ To any kindly given.
To a poor one most.
Because it needs it most ”
– Stave 3

“ Come in! And know me better, man! ”
– Stave 3

“ Will you decide what men
shall live, what men shall die? ”
– Stave 3

“ If these shadows remain unaltered
by the Future, the child will die ”
– Stave 3



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The Ghost of Christmas Present key quotes

“ For in the very air through
which this Spirit moved it
seemed to scatter gloom
and mystery ”
– Stave 4

“ 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 ”
– Stave 4



“ The Spirit stood among the
graves, and pointed down to One ”
– Stave 4

“ ...its mysterious presence filled
him with a solemn dread ”
– Stave 4

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The Ghost of Christmas Yet to Come Key Quotes

The Three Spirits: character symbolism

The Ghost of Christmas Past symbolism

Dickens borrows from traditions and mythology in his descriptions of the ghosts' appearances. The Ghost of Christmas Past is a mix of a strange child and old man of ambiguous gender, giving it an other-worldly appearance. This reflects the nature of memory, which can be unreliable and difficult to solidify. The light symbolism reflects both enlightenment and hope, and the fact that it wears a tunic of "purest white" emphasises its moral superiority, again reflecting the religious context of the novella.



Your notes

The Ghost of Christmas Present symbolism

The larger than life and jovial Ghost of Christmas Present draws on traditional ideas of Father Christmas as a representation of the Christmas spirit, and the details of his appearance are heavily symbolic. For example, it holds "Plenty's horn", a symbol of abundance in Greek and Roman mythology, and its "antique scabbard" had "no sword in it", showing the reader that there is no place for conflict during the festive season.

The Ghost of Christmas Yet to Come symbolism

Reflecting the Victorian interest in the supernatural and the gothic, the Ghost of Christmas Yet to Come borrows heavily from the images of death, especially the Grim Reaper, who collects human souls. As a personification of death, it is silent but terrifying, reminding Scrooge that while his death is inevitable, what happens to him after death is a result of the choices he makes in life.

Jacob Marley Character Analysis

Jacob Marley visits Scrooge as a ghost and serves as a warning for him to change his ways or else suffer the same fate: to die isolated and full of regret.



Your notes

Jacob Marley character summary



Your notes

Overview

- Was Scrooge's business partner
- Dead for seven years
- Returns as a ghost
- Obsessed with wealth when alive

Key characteristics

- Greedy
- Frightening
- Trapped
- Tormented

Role

Marley introduces the supernatural element of the novella, as well as outlining the structure via the visitations of the three ghosts. He establishes the concept of religious justice and acts as a catalyst for Scrooge's change.



Themes

- Greed
- Transformation and redemption
- Death and loss

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Jacob Marley character summary

Why is Jacob Marley important?

Marley's role as a character is to warn Scrooge that, if he does not change his ways, he too will be doomed to endless wandering torment in purgatory, an in-between state between heaven and hell in the Christian

belief system. He therefore serves to highlight the importance of remorse, repentance and redemption.

Marley only appears in Stave 1:

- He is **unsympathetic**: he is presented as the sole cause of his own suffering, which he acknowledges in the line “I wear the chain I forged in life”. This makes him undeserving of the reader’s sympathy.
- He is **restless** and **tormented**: Marley reveals that, because of his obsession with material gains above all else in life, he is now doomed to wander the earth for eternity, weighed down by padlocks and chains.
- He is **remorseful**: in life, Marley was materialistic and self-centred, but in death he acknowledges that “charity, mercy, forbearance and benevolence” should have been his focus.

Dickens uses Marley’s ghost as an **allegorical warning** against greed and avarice, and his character emphasises that everyone is responsible for their own actions and will be held accountable for them. He is used only to warn Scrooge, but he cannot force Scrooge to alter his ways; Scrooge must do this for himself.



Your notes

Jacob Marley language analysis

Dickens presents aspects of Marley’s character through his use of language. Marley’s speech includes:

- **Imperatives**: Marley’s ghost commands Scrooge to “mark” him and “hear” him to emphasise the importance of his message.
- **Asyndetons**: Marley uses asyndetons in his dialogue with Scrooge to increase the sense of pace and urgency. For example: “No rest, no peace” and “I cannot rest, I cannot stay, I cannot linger anywhere”.
- **Biblical allusions**: Marley tells Scrooge that, when he walked through crowds of his fellow human beings, he never raised his eyes “to that blessed Star which led the Wise Men to a poor abode”. This allusion is to the birth of Jesus in the Christian Bible, where the Wise Men use the North Star to find Jesus’ birthplace. Marley wishes he had taken guidance from Biblical teachings of goodness, kindness and charity, rather than focusing solely on his own gain.

Jacob Marley key quotes



Your notes

“I wear the chain I forged in life,... I made it link by link, and yard by yard”
– Stave 1

“You don't believe in me”
– Stave 1

“I girded it on my own free will, and of my own free will I wore it”
– Stave 1

“Not to know that no space of regret can make amends for one life's opportunity misused!”
– Stave 1

“In life my spirit never roved beyond the narrow limits of our money-changing hole”
– Stave 1



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Jacob Marley key quotes

Jacob Marley character interpretations

The symbolism of Jacob Marley's chains

Marley's ghost can be seen as a reflection of the darker aspects of human nature, also represented at the start of the novella by Scrooge. The chains he drags in his afterlife are not only symbolic of his greed, but also the weight of the choices he made, reinforcing Dickens' message of individual and social responsibility.

Marley and Christian beliefs

His character can also be seen as symbolic of the Christian belief systems prevalent at the time, and the fear Victorian readers would have had of ending up in purgatory, a place of suffering and limbo. Despite Marley expressing regret towards his behaviour in life, there is no suggestion that his magnanimous warning to Scrooge will lead to freedom from his chains. It could be interpreted that Marley wears his chains willingly, as he will never truly be free of his own sin and regret.



Your notes

A Christmas Carol: Context

The **Industrial Revolution** brought significant changes, often worsening living and working conditions.

A Christmas Carol historical context

The Industrial Revolution and the Poor Law

- The **Industrial Revolution** ushered in huge economic and social changes and had a detrimental impact on many people's lives:
 - For many, it was increasingly difficult to live and work during this period as it involved the conversion from traditional, manual labour to machine-driven intensive labour which was often highly dangerous
 - The increase in the production of factories (with a lower cost for manufacturers) expanded the gap between the upper and lower classes
 - Industrialisation also meant that child labour became commonplace in factories
- The **Poor Law Amendment Act** was passed by Parliament in 1834 which largely prevented money from going directly to the poor:
 - It established the workhouse system which rather than being a refuge for the poor, sick or elderly, was more similar to a prison system
- Workhouses were harsh institutions: families were separated, belongings were sold and hard labour was enforced:
 - They were deliberately designed to be cruel so that only the most desperate would enter
 - Prevailing Victorian attitudes towards the poor meant they viewed their predicament as entirely of their own making

How this links to the novel A Christmas Carol

Working conditions

Scrooge is symbolic of the **Capitalist system** which Dickens believed denied others access to wealth and opportunity. He represents the self-centred businessman, unconcerned about the conditions in which their employees were forced to work. In Stave I, Bob is too fearful to ask Scrooge for more coal to replenish his fire and instead tries "to warm himself at the candle", which highlights the dreadful conditions that employers could make employees accept. Dickens contrasts Scrooge's conduct with that of Mr Fezziwig's, and he illustrates the difference than a **benevolent** and kind employer can have.



Your notes

Attitudes towards the poor	Scrooge also demonstrates his support for the workhouse system when he refuses to give a charitable donation towards the poor, instead declaring: "Are there no prisons? Are there no workhouses?" Scrooge reveals his – and Victorian society's – ignorance since the inhabitants of workhouses were generally there through no fault of their own. Dickens depicts the cycle of poverty which meant the poor could not easily escape destitution.
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A Christmas Carol social context

Victorians shaped modern Christmas celebrations and embedded Christian values of charity, goodwill and family into its traditions. Victorian families were characterised by **patriarchal** structures and were often large in size. However, Victorian England also experienced high child mortality rates due to malnourishment, poverty and disease.

Christianity and redemption

- The Victorians are associated with how people celebrate Christmas in modern times:
 - The general population only began to celebrate the Christian belief in the birth of Jesus in the 19th century
 - Dickens uses this newly found celebration as a major element of his novella and consequently A Christmas Carol helped to popularise the traditions associated with Christmas
- While some may view A Christmas Carol as a **secular** text, the influence of Christianity in 19th-century England can be seen to be interwoven throughout the novella
- Dickens attempts to convey to the reader that the principles of Christmas (charity, goodwill, **benevolence** and family) should be followed throughout their lives:
 - He underscores the importance of these virtues in fostering a more compassionate and just society

How this links to the novel A Christmas Carol

Personal redemption	Ideas relating to redemption and salvation are concepts that Dickens explores throughout the novel. The central narrative purpose of Marley's ghost and the three Spirits is to help Scrooge save himself, and by the end of the novel Dickens clearly presents Scrooge's transformation from avarice to benevolence.
Christian attitudes to the afterlife	Marley could also be seen as symbolic of Christian beliefs in Heaven, Hell and repentance, as he is presented in a purgatory state and is forced to remain there until he has repented for the sins he committed when alive.



Your notes

Christmas spirit

The Ghost of Christmas Present could be viewed as the personification of Christmas spirit in that it represents everything that is positive about Christmas: it is cheerful, giving and jovial.

Mortality

- Victorian England experienced high rates of child mortality, especially in cities:
 - Malnourishment, disease and poverty were significant issues which contributed to the high death rate among children
 - Overcrowded and unsanitary living conditions in cities facilitated the spread of illnesses such as cholera, typhus and tuberculosis
 - The lack of access to clean water and adequate medical care further compounded these issues
- Many families, driven by necessity, sent their children to work in factories and mines at a very early age:
 - These workplaces were often extremely dangerous with people expected to work long hours, poor ventilation and frequent accidents
 - Child labour was not only a symptom of poverty but also a contributor to it, as it perpetuated a cycle of limited education and poor health
- Dickens considered **Capitalism** as destructive and harmful to humanity:
 - In his view, this system led to the exploitation of workers, including children, and the neglect of their well-being

How this links to the novel A Christmas Carol

Child mortality

Dickens presents images of death to signify the consequences of the unfair **Capitalist** system in which the characters exist: Dickens depicts the devastating consequences of a system in which Tiny Tim could potentially die: Bob's insufficient wages mean that he cannot provide adequate care for his son. Tiny Tim's potential death highlights the poor living conditions and malnourishment experienced by many poor children and Dickens uses Tiny Tim to highlight the high levels of child mortality in Victorian England, especially for those who were poor.

Relationships and family

- Family was an important aspect of Victorian England:
 - Family life, as **epitomised** by Queen Victoria and her nine children, would have been idealised



Your notes

- Victorians generally had large families (with an average of five or six children) and they were organised along **patriarchal** lines:
 - This is evident through the character of Bob who is the head of the Cratchit family
- Family provided a retreat from the stress and turmoil of the industrial world and it was idealised as a stabilising force:
 - The household would have been viewed as completely separate from the world of work
- By the 19th century, the concept of marriage had changed and matches could be made for personal fulfilment as much as for status and power
- **Companionate marriage** had become common and many people were largely able to exercise free choice based on mutual love

How this links to the novel A Christmas Carol

Centrality of family	Dickens conveys the importance of family and its centrality to people's lives through the Cratchit family and Fred's family: these are depicted as loving and supportive, while Scrooge initially is depicted as alone. However, by the end of the novella, Scrooge does eventually reconnect with family through Fred and establishes a "new" family through the Cratchits.
Love and marriage	When Scrooge queries Fred as to why he got married, he declares it was because he fell in love to which Scrooge responds: "Because you fell in love! ... as if that were the only one thing in the world more ridiculous than a merry Christmas". Scrooge's attitude towards marrying for love links to his former engagement to Belle, with Dickens perhaps suggesting that earlier generations were less likely to be able to have companionate marriages .

A Christmas Carol literary context

The novel emerged as the dominant literary form during the 19th century.

- The Victorian era saw the novel become the dominant literary form, although serialised publication was also common:
 - A Christmas Carol was published as a novella but its themes and techniques are closely related to Dickens' longer serialised works
- The novella is an **allegorical** tale of redemption with the message that everyone is capable of change and highlights the importance of charity and kindness in society
- A Christmas Carol incorporates elements of the Gothic tradition, which was popular in Victorian literature:

- It follows the conventions of a typical ghost story which was traditionally designed to bring about a crisis in which a character is confronted by spirits from the dead
- The novella is also influenced by **Romanticism**, particularly in its emphasis on individual transformation



Your notes

How this links to the novel A Christmas Carol

Features of the Gothic genre	The Gothic elements within the novel are central to the plot. The ghosts guide Scrooge to redemption by confronting him with his actions and their consequences. Dickens depicts Scrooge's journey of transformation from a cruel miser to a benevolent and kind man. The ghosts are used to deliver a moral message.
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Your notes

A Christmas Carol: Writer's Methods & Techniques

Writer's Methods and Techniques

'Methods' is an umbrella term for anything the writer does on purpose to create meaning. Using the writer's name in your response will help you to think about the text as a conscious construct and will keep reminding you that Dickens purposely put the text together.

Form and Structure

- A Christmas Carol is written in the form of a **novella**
- It is an **allegorical** tale of **redemption** with the message that everyone is capable of change and highlights the importance of charity and kindness in society
- It follows the conventions of a typical ghost story which was traditionally designed to bring about a crisis in which a character is confronted by spirits from the dead
- The narrative is divided into five 'staves' or chapters:
 - The use of 'staves' and the title help to link the theme of Christmas by reflecting the traditional form of a carol and that its message is meant to be listened to
 - Dickens may also have used it to indicate that the novella will be a joyful and uplifting affair
- The narrative also reflects a classic five-act structure and each section has a clear and separate purpose
- Dickens employs a **cyclical structure** within the **novella** to illustrate the transformation in Scrooge's character:
 - Scrooge is first presented as a **misanthropic** businessman who is miserly, **callous** and unsympathetic
 - By the end of the novella, Scrooge has been transformed into a charitable **philanthropist**: "I am not the man I was"
 - This is further evidenced when Scrooge instructs Bob to "make up the fires again" which contrasts with Bob's nervousness to get more coals in Stave 1

Time

- Dickens introduces the element of time through several **motifs**
- The novella does not follow a chronological structure:



Your notes

- Although it is set in Scrooge's present, the visions are set in different periods of time: the past, the present and the future
- Similarly, Dickens plays around with the concept of time which adds to the element of confusion that Scrooge experiences:
 - Scrooge is continually falling asleep and awakening at different periods which do not follow conventional periods of time:
 - Scrooge falls asleep in Stave 1 after 2 a.m. though he is awakened by the Ghost of Christmas Past at 1 a.m. that same night
- Dickens further heightens this confusion by continually describing the tolling of a bell:
 - The bells indicate the passage of time, yet the three spirits all appear on the same night
- Further, dramatic tension is also created through the use of time as Scrooge and the reader are repeatedly reminded that the spirits have a limited time to convey their message to Scrooge:
 - Ghost of Christmas Past: "My time grows short... Quick!"
 - Ghost of Christmas Present: "My life upon this globe, is very brief"
 - Scrooge to the Ghost of Christmas Yet to Come: "The night is waning fast, and it is precious time to me, I know":
 - Dickens's continual references to time allude to Scrooge's limited time in which to redeem himself
 - They may also be used to denote the endless state of purgatory which awaits Scrooge if he does not change

Narrative

- Dickens uses different types of narrative within A Christmas Carol: **first-person narrative** and **third-person narrative**
 - By using a **first-person narrative** at certain points, Dickens is able to create a strong, **authorial** voice to influence the reader and create an intimacy with them:
 - Dickens directly addresses the reader at different points
 - Most of the **novella** is written using a **third-person** point of view:
 - Dickens is able to present the inner thoughts and feelings of Scrooge which makes the reader feel sympathy for him
 - The tone of the narrator is conversational and humorous which puts the reader at ease and creates an element of trust



Your notes

- The narrator addresses the reader directly and also makes judgements about the characters in order to influence the reader's opinions of them:
 - He describes Scrooge in very negative terms ("covetous old sinner") which makes the reader despise his character
- Dickens uses a significant amount of dialogue in order to add an element of **realism** to the characters and settings:
 - This enables the reader to be fully immersed in the character's feelings and thoughts



Your notes

A Christmas Carol: Key Quotations

Remember the assessment objectives explicitly state that you should be able to “use textual references, *including* quotations”. This means summarising, paraphrasing, referencing single words and referencing plot events are all as valid as quotations in demonstrating that you understand the text. It is important that you remember that you can evidence your knowledge of the text in these two equally valid ways: both through references to it and direct quotations from it.

Overall, you should aim to secure a strong knowledge of the text, rather than rehearsed quotations, as this will enable you to respond to the question. It is the quality of your knowledge of the text which will enable you to select references effectively.

If you are going to revise quotations, the best way is to group them by character, or theme. Below you will find definitions and analysis of the best quotations, arranged by the following themes:

- Poverty
- Family and Relationships
- Transformation and Redemption
- Death and Loss

Poverty

The theme of poverty is one of the most **prevalent** themes within the text. Dickens makes the reader fully aware of the “poor and destitute” from the outset and this is continued throughout the **novella**.



“Are there no prisons? ... And the Union workhouses?”



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"Are there no prisons? ... And the Union workhouses?" – Scrooge, Stave I



Your notes

Meaning and context

- In Stave I, Scrooge is approached by two gentlemen collecting money for the poor, though Scrooge refuses to make a donation

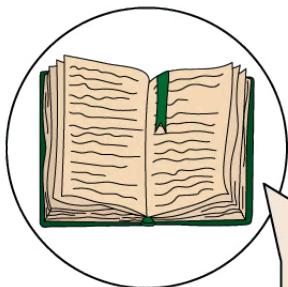
Analysis

- Scrooge displays an uncaring attitude towards the poor and he is depicted as a **miser** who refuses to make a charitable donation to help those less fortunate than himself
- Scrooge reveals his ignorance of the poor and he makes no distinction between the lower classes and criminals
- Dickens uses Scrooge's support for prisons and workhouses to illustrate his flawed views on how to solve the issues of poverty

Paired Quotation:

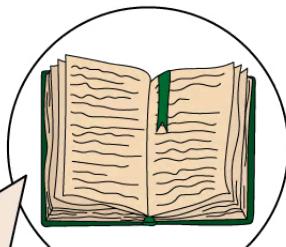


Your notes



Narrator

“a dismal little cell”



Narrator

“the clerk put on his white comforter,
and tried to warm himself at the candle”

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“a dismal little cell” – Narrator, Stave I

“the clerk put on his white comforter, and tried to warm himself at the candle” – Narrator, Stave I

Meaning and context

- In Stave I, Bob Cratchit is introduced to the reader as “the clerk” in Scrooge’s office

Analysis

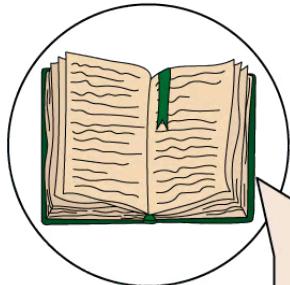
- The plight of the poor is highlighted through Bob’s character and he is used to underscoring Scrooge’s cruel and **exploitative** behaviour
- Bob works in a “dismal little cell” suggesting a gloomy **confinement** from which he cannot escape, which could be viewed as a wider symbol of his poverty

- Bob is in constant fear of losing his job and he is symbolic of the lower classes and their dependence on their employer
- His situation depends on businessmen like Scrooge and so subsequently does the fate of his family



Family and Relationships

Dickens explores many ideas relating to family and relationships within A Christmas Carol. Dickens presents this concept in very positive terms through many characters, for example, the Cratchits and Fred, and emphasises the fundamental importance of family to people's lives.



Narrator



“Scrooge was his sole executor, his sole administrator, his sole assign, his sole residuary legatee, his sole friend, and sole mourner”



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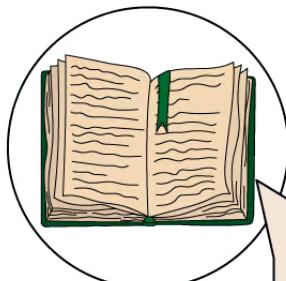
“Scrooge was his sole executor, his sole administrator, his sole assign, his sole residuary legatee, his sole friend, and sole mourner” – Narrator, Stave I

Meaning and context

- In Stave I, Dickens describes Marley and Scrooge's relationship as business partners

Analysis

- Dickens states they were partners for “many years” but the relationship that is presented is one merely associated with business, rather than an affectionate friendship
- It is revealed that Scrooge answers both his and Marley’s name which illustrates their **shallow** relationship



Narrator



“ Mrs Cratchit made the gravy...
Master Peter mashed the potatoes...
Miss Belinda sweetened up the
apple-sauce...”


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“Mrs Cratchit made the gravy... Master Peter mashed the potatoes... Miss Belinda sweetened up the apple-sauce...” – Narrator, Stave III

Meaning and context

- The Ghost of Christmas Present takes Scrooge to the Cratchit family where they are preparing Christmas dinner

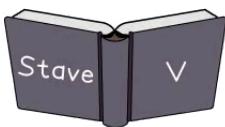
Analysis

- The Cratchits are presented as a united family and they all join in with the preparation of their Christmas meal
- Through Bob, Dickens underscores his message about the importance of family and its centrality to people's lives



Tiny Tim

“God bless us every one!”



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“God bless us every one!” – Tiny Tim, Stave V

Meaning and context

- This quote is revealed in the final lines of the **novella** and is in reference to Tiny Tim

Analysis

- Dickens uses this quote to underscore his message of equal opportunity for “everyone”
- It also is used to convey the message everyone should look after one another and work towards a society where all members are treated more fairly
- The Christian message of joy, peace and goodwill is also alluded to

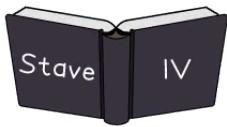
Transformation and Redemption

Ideas relating to **transformation** and **redemption** are recurrent themes throughout the **novella**. Scrooge undergoes a journey of **redemption** and his change in character is instrumental to the plot of the text.

Paired Quotation



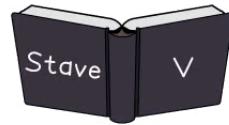
Scrooge



“I am not the man I was”



Scrooge



“I am light as a feather, I am as happy as an angel, I am as merry as a schoolboy. I am giddy as a drunken man”

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“I am not the man I was” - Scrooge, Stave IV

“I am light as a feather, I am as happy as an angel, I am as merry as a schoolboy. I am giddy as a drunken man” - Scrooge, Stave V

Meaning and context

- These quotes are uttered by Scrooge towards the end of the **novella** when he has finally redeemed himself

Analysis

- Dickens presents Scrooge's transformation from avarice to benevolence and by the end of the novella, Scrooge has been transformed into a charitable **philanthropist**
- Through the character of Scrooge, Dickens conveys a universal message that everyone is capable of change, regardless of how impossible it may seem



Your notes

- His references to both the innocent ("angel", "schoolboy"), alongside the outwardly depraved ("drunken man") suggest he has found a connection to all people, despite their differences



Your notes



Scrooge



“every idiot who goes about with ‘Merry Christmas’ on his lips, should be boiled with his own pudding, and buried with a stake of holly through his heart”

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“every idiot who goes about with ‘Merry Christmas’ on his lips, should be boiled with his own pudding, and buried with a stake of holly through his heart” – Scrooge, Stave I

Meaning and context

- This quote is made by Scrooge when he discusses Christmas with his nephew Fred

Analysis

- Dickens illustrates Scrooge's contempt and aversion towards Christmas at the beginning of the novella:
 - Dickens has Scrooge use the imagery of Christmas, but subverts it to something grotesque:
 - “boiled with his own pudding”
 - “stake of holly through his heart”
- This contrasts with Scrooge's character embracing Christmas at the end of the novella
- His violent and hyperbolic language here is in sharp contrast to his language at the end of the novella, which demonstrates his transformation as a character

Death and Loss

Death and loss are recurring ideas within A Christmas Carol. Dickens uses these ideas to underscore the permanency of death and to signal to the reader that it is never too late to change.



Bob Cratchit



“ “My little, little child!” cried Bob.
“My little child! ”


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“My little, little child!” cried Bob. “My little child!” – Bob Cratchit, Stave IV

Meaning and context

- In Stave III, Bob is filled with grief due to the death of his son

Analysis

- Dickens presents Bob as a devoted father and husband and his relationship with his children is shown as loving and affectionate:
 - The repeated use of the personal pronoun “my” suggests a close bond
- Bob’s change in character due to Tiny Tim’s predicted death, demonstrates his affection for his son and shows how the loss of a loved one can impact someone’s life



Your notes

A Christmas Carol: Character Quotations

GCSE English Literature exam questions usually focus on a theme, a character or a relationship between two or more characters. Examiners reward responses that track the development of characters or themes through the play.

When revising, try to consider quotes in terms of their dramatic effects — how the words are spoken, what attitudes or relationships are presented and why these ideas have been shown to the audience.

The best way to revise quotations is according to theme or character. We've included 12 quotes from A Christmas Carol on this page, and organised them by the following characters:

- Ebenezer Scrooge
- Bob Cratchit
- The Ghost of Christmas Past
- The Ghost of Christmas Present



Examiner Tips and Tricks

Examiners look for answers that use quotes to comment on larger ideas. For example, you could discuss the imagery of darkness and light in the context of A Christmas Carol as a gothic novella. Examiners have also said that the most successful answers recognise things like Scrooge's responses to the ghosts as he makes his journey to enlightenment. Or, you could discuss Scrooge's turning point, or how Dickens contrasts his character with other characters, as well as his characterisation as the story unfolds.

Making sure that your references or quotes are precisely analysed will help you do this. Here, we've included a "key word or phrase" from every one of our longer quotations to help you keep your focus on the most important part.

Ebenezer Scrooge

”

“What's Christmas time to you but a time for paying bills without money; a time for finding yourself a year older, but not an hour richer” — Ebenezer Scrooge, Stave 1

 Ebenezer Scrooge	Key word or phrase to memorise: “paying bills without money”	What the quotation means: Scrooge tells his nephew that Christmas is not a happy time for him as it is costly and leaves him poorer each year, mainly because he has to pay wages without any return	Theme: Poverty
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- Dickens immediately introduces Scrooge as mean and miserable:
 - This is highlighted by contrasting Scrooge's response to Fred's cheerful and charitable characteristics
- Scrooge's list highlights his focus on money at a time that is meant to celebrate kindness:
 - He therefore places ultimate importance on money and wealth
- Dickens illustrates the irony that Scrooge does not recognise his affluent position:
 - His presentation of a greedy employer draws attention to inequalities in Victorian England through his treatment of his employee, Bob Cratchit

”

“No more. I don't wish to see it. Show me no more!” — Ebenezer Scrooge, Stave 2

 Ebenezer Scrooge	Key word or phrase to memorise: “no more”	What the quotation means: Scrooge instructs The Ghost of Christmas Past to take him away from the vision of Belle and to not show him any more visions of the past because they remind him of what he has lost	Theme: Transformation and redemption
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Dickens builds sympathy for his protagonist by showing Scrooge's sensitive side when he returns to his past 			

- However, Scrooge is still resistant to facing his “shadows”, and the spirit has to force him to observe further
- Scrooge’s repeated exclamatory commands show that he still believes he is the one in control, and that he can command others to do his bidding



Your notes

“

“‘Spirit,’ said Scrooge submissively, ‘conduct me where you will. I went forth last night on compulsion, and I learnt a lesson which is working now.’” — Ebenezer Scrooge, Stave 3

 Ebenezer Scrooge	Key word or phrase to memorise: “conduct me where you will”	What the quotation means: Where before Scrooge instructed The Ghost of Christmas Past to “conduct” him home, he asks The Ghost of Christmas Present to “conduct” him anywhere that he wants him to go, suggesting that he is more willing to continue his journey	Theme: Transformation and redemption
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- By the arrival of The Ghost of Christmas Present, Scrooge has changed significantly:
 - His tone is more submissive, suggesting humility and respect for the spirits
- His willingness to hand himself over to the spirit depicts a dramatic change:
 - The **juxtaposition** of “compulsion” and “conduct me where you will” highlights the change from his being forced to go, to his compliance

Bob Cratchit

“

“I'll give you Mr Scrooge, the Founder of the Feast!” — Bob Cratchit, Stave 3

 Bob Cratchit	<p>Key word or phrase to memorise: “Founder of the Feast!”</p>	<p>What the quotation means: The Ghost of Christmas Present takes Scrooge to the Cratchit family’s Christmas dinner, where Bob raises a toast to him and thanks him for providing their meal</p>	<p>Theme: Family and relationships</p>
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- Dickens presents a positive portrayal of Bob, Scrooge’s poorly-treated clerk:
 - Although he works hard to provide for his family for hardly any wages, he credits Scrooge as the provider of the family’s income
 - Bob’s characterisation as charitable and forgiving contradicts Scrooge’s view of the “idle” poor
- Bob’s magnanimous nature is further highlighted by Mrs Cratchit, who is less keen to toast the “stingy” Scrooge
- Dickens’ character, Bob, represents the impoverished families of Victorian England:
 - His loving family is one of the reasons Scrooge alters his course
 - Dickens is suggesting that family and connection are more important than wealth

“ ”

“I know, my dears, that when we recollect how patient and how mild he was, although he was a little, little child, we shall not quarrel easily among ourselves, and forget poor Tiny Tim in doing it”
— Bob Cratchit, Stave 4

 Bob Cratchit	<p>Key word or phrase to memorise: “patient” and “mild”</p>	<p>What the quotation means: Bob Cratchit reminds his family that the death of the kind and stoic Tiny Tim offers them a reminder to be kind to one another, as a tribute to him</p>	<p>Theme: Death and loss</p>
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Your notes

- Dickens depicts Bob's family coming together after Tiny Tim's death
- Here, Dickens alludes to religious representations of Tiny Tim:
 - His character represents innocence and purity, such as in "little child"
 - The adjectives "patient" and "mild" allude to biblical references about gentleness
 - This implies that Tiny Tim is like a saint sent to earth to teach moral lessons

“

“He broke down all at once. He couldn't help it. ‘I am very sorry, sir. I am behind my time.’” – Bob Cratchit, Stave 5



Bob Cratchit

Key word or phrase to memorise: “very sorry”

What the quotation means: Bob pleads with Scrooge to forgive him for being late for work the day after Christmas Day

Theme:
Poverty

- Dickens illustrates the importance of family, and the circumstances of the impoverished:
 - Bob apologises that “making rather merry” with his family made him late
 - Still, Bob’s desperate plea implies he is aware of and scared of the potential repercussions
 - It also portrays Bob as honest and remorseful when he is wrong
- Nevertheless, this is a scene in which Dickens has created **dramatic irony**:
 - Readers know Scrooge is a changed man, and this lightens the scene

The Ghost of Christmas Past

“

“‘What!’ exclaimed the Ghost, ‘would you so soon put out, with worldly hands, the light I give?’”

— The Ghost of Christmas Past, Stave 2



Your notes

 <p>The Ghost of Christmas Past</p>	<p>Key word or phrase to memorise: “the light I give”</p>	<p>What the quotation means: The Ghost of Christmas Present impatiently asks Scrooge why he, a human, wants to extinguish the flame of enlightenment that appears from its head</p>	<p>Theme: Transformation and redemption</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The first spirit explains that the visit is for Scrooge's “reclamation” and “welfare” ▪ Dickens uses light imagery in connection with this spirit: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The spirit refers to the “light” that glows from his head, representing Scrooge's enlightenment, and it is also associated with hope 			

”

“‘Your lip is trembling,’ said the Ghost. ‘And what is that upon your cheek?’” —The Ghost of Christmas Past, Stave 2

 <p>The Ghost of Christmas Past</p>	<p>Key word or phrase to memorise: “Your lip is trembling”</p>	<p>What the quotation means: The Ghost of Christmas Past notices that Scrooge becomes emotional when he sees visions from his childhood and asks him if he is crying</p>	<p>Theme: Transformation and redemption</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Dickens portrays the first step of Scrooge's transformation: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The journey to his past stirs his emotions, showing his hidden vulnerability and humanity ▪ The spirit identifies his reaction to help Scrooge in his self-reflection: 			

- The first spirit is a forceful reminder to Scrooge to face his choices and take responsibility for his actions



Your notes

“

“I told you these were shadows of the things that have been,’ said the Ghost. ‘That they are what they are, do not blame me!” — The Ghost of Christmas Past, Stave 2

 The Ghost of Christmas Past	Key word or phrase to memorise: “do not blame me!”	What the quotation means: The Ghost of Christmas Past becomes frustrated with Scrooge’s requests to leave the visions he is shown of Belle, and tells him it is not his fault what Scrooge sees in the “shadows” of the past	Theme: Family and relationships
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- Dickens presents the idea of personal responsibility:
 - The spirit is forcing Scrooge to face up to his past and the decisions he made
- The Ghost of Christmas Past tries to make Scrooge reflect, but he attempts to avoid it:
 - When he sees the outcome of past relationships he is told it is his fault
 - The spirit makes him accountable by refusing to take the “blame”

The Ghost of Christmas Present

“

“I see a vacant seat,’ replied the Ghost, ‘in the poor chimney-corner, and a crutch without an owner, carefully preserved. If these shadows remain unaltered by the Future, the child will die.’”

— The Ghost of Christmas Present, Stave 3

 <p>The Ghost of Christmas Present</p>	<p>Key word or phrase to memorise: “unaltered by the Future”</p>	<p>What the quotation means: The Ghost of Christmas Present takes Scrooge to see the warmth of the Cratchit family Christmas, but warns him that Tiny Tim is unlikely to be there next year as he is too frail to live unless something changes</p>	<p>Theme: Poverty</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Dickens paints a sympathetic portrait of Tiny Tim to criticise a society without a social care system ▪ When the ghost humanises Tiny Tim, Scrooge is upset to hear of his potential death ▪ Here, the ghost makes Scrooge face the consequences of his selfish greed: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ He warns that the only hope for Tiny Tim is to change the “Future” 			



“ ”

“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” — The Ghost of Christmas Present, Stave 3

 <p>The Ghost of Christmas Present</p>	<p>Key word or phrase to memorise: “Beware” and “Doom”</p>	<p>What the quotation means: The spirit’s sinister children, “Ignorance” and “Want”, serve as a warning to Scrooge that, unless he and others like him do not pay heed, the future will consist of similar children dying due to their poverty and society’s ignorance</p>	<p>Theme: Poverty</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The novella advises Victorian society to invest in children as they represent the future ▪ The children, “Ignorance” and “Want”, represent Dickens’ ideas that poverty leads to an endless cycle of crime and suffering: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The urgency of Dickens’ warning is conveyed by the imperative “Beware” and the capitalisation of “Doom” 			

“



Your notes

“There are some upon this earth of yours,’ returned the Spirit, ‘who lay claim to know us, and who do their deeds of passion, pride, ill-will, hatred, envy, bigotry, and selfishness in our name.’”
—The Ghost of Christmas Present, Stave 3

 The Ghost of Christmas Present	Key word or phrase to memorise: “in our name”	What the quotation means: The Ghost of Christmas Present refers to a group of symbolic spirits and says that they see human beings justifying their immoral, uncharitable or unkind behaviour by saying it is in the “name” of religion or spirituality	Theme: Transformation and redemption
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- Dickens’ novella makes several references to the principles of Christianity
- The spirit tells Scrooge that he belongs to a group who observe humans:
 - The ghost’s **rhetoric** is a severe judgement on those who behave poorly in the name of spirituality or religion
- This line may allude to Dickens’ concerns about Victorian perceptions of morality:
 - He criticises individuals who say they are religious without behaving that way, especially regarding charity