

A Christmas Carol

Key Terms

ABUNDANCE

- **Meaning:** A large amount of something.

Example:

*The ghost of Christmas present is a symbol of **abundance**. His throne, made of an immense amount of food, directly indicts the Malthusian view of the scarcity of supply.*

ARCHETYPAL VILLAIN

- **Meaning:** A main character who is presented as evil and unlikeable.

Example:

*In stave 1, Scrooge is presented as an **archetypal villain** as he is disgusted at the idea of giving to the poor whilst simultaneously ostracises himself from society.*

ANTI-MALTHUSIAN

- **Meaning:** The novel was written against Malthusian beliefs (see context sheet).

Example:

*Dickens creates an **anti-Malthusian tale** to highlight the detrimental impact of holding these ignorant beliefs. He explores how the suffering and plight of the poor is synonymous with these unjustifiably prejudice beliefs.*

APATHETIC

- **Meaning:** Showing no interest.

Example:

*Scrooge's **apathetic** nature towards the poor is clear in stave 1. He holds Malthusian views by branding them as the '**surplus population**' and sees them as an inconvenience in society.*

ALLEGORY

- **Meaning:** A story, poem, or art used to explore a deeper meaning (normally a social, moral, or political one).

Example:

*Dickens constructs an **allegorical tale** in which he aims to be didactic about the need for a collective social conscience to abolish poverty. He creates his **allegorical** characters to highlight that neglect from society is synonymous with the suffering of the destitute.*

CATHARSIS

- **Meaning:** Relief from strong emotions.

Example:

*Scrooge's plead for redemption and salvation from the ghost of Christmas yet to come, results in him experiencing **catharsis** in stave 5- he realises he is no longer subject to this irreversible doom, instead can become an altruistic and philanthropic member of society.*

CATALYST

- **Meaning:** Something that spurs on/ encourages something else.

Example:

*The ghosts **catalyse** a change within Scrooge. He becomes the epitome of a model citizen: compassionate and benevolent.*

COVETOUSNESS

- **Meaning:** Wishing to have something and/or being envious if somebody else acquires this.

Example:

*Scrooge's **covetousness** is explored as he is described as a 'covetous sinner', signifying that he lacks gratitude and wilfully embodies sin.*

DESTITUTE

- **Meaning:** Extreme poverty.

Example:

*The Cratchits are emblematic of the **destitute** families that worked hard during the Victorian era but were ceaselessly oppressed and exploited. They help carry Dickens message about the injustice that pervaded Victorian society, particularly the victimisation of the poor and children.*

DEHUMANISING

- **Meaning:** Treating a person as if they are not a human being.

Example:

*The dehumanising treatment of the poor is explored through the allegorical characters of ignorance and want. The animalistic presentation of the children highlights that the **dehumanising** treatment of them from the upper classes, has resulted in them having closer resemblance to animals than humans.*

DIDATIC

- **Meaning:** Intended for teaching purposes. Normally teaching a moral message or prompting people to take action.

Example:

*Dickens' **didactic** novella intends to critique the vast amounts of social injustice that plagued Victorian society. Most significantly, the injustice towards innocent children who lived in poverty.*

EXPLOITATIVE

- **Meaning:** To unfairly take advantage of a person, especially those who are vulnerable.

Example:

*Dickens shuns the **exploitative** nature of the upper class through creating Marley as a symbol of the consequences of exploiting others and idolising money. This is also exemplary through Scrooge who **exploits** Bob Cratchit- he underpays him and makes him work in horrific conditions.*

EMBLEMATIC

- **Meaning:** Means being symbolic.

Example:

*Scrooge is **emblematic** of the upper-class misers who value money over the collective well-being of others in society.*

ENLIGHTENMENT

- **Meaning:** Deeper understanding of something that gives a new insight into life.

Example:

*Scrooge becomes **enlightened** by stave 5. His old frugal and pessimistic view on the world has been completely shattered and replaced with benevolence.*

FRUGAL

- **Meaning:** Stingy and tight with their money or supplies.

Example:

*Marley and Scrooge are **frugal** as they are reluctant to use their wealth to help anybody but themselves. Dickens shows this is a punishable offense and will be eternally punished in hell. Being frugal in life on earth will lead to eternal damnation.*

FOIL

- **Meaning:** A character who is the opposite to another in order to highlight the others characteristics.

Example:

*Fred is a **foil** to Scrooge as his benevolence and jubilation juxtaposes Scrooge's misanthropic and apathetic nature. This is further shown through the motif of light as Fred's description is filled with imagery of light, yet Scrooge's is surrounded with darkness.*

HUMANITARIANISM

- **Meaning:** To promote human well-being and reduce suffering of others.

Example:

*The ghosts help Scrooge transform by seeing the immense positive value of **humanitarianism**. By stave 5, Scrooge can be seen as a **humanitarian** as he practices benevolence and aims to reduce the suffering of others.*

HYPOCRISY

- **Meaning:** Claiming to have a certain belief than going against that belief. It is appearing to be one thing/ or believe one thing, then doing the opposite.

Example:

*Dickens exposes the **hypocrisy** within Victorian society. They are condemning of the poor, putting laws in place to vilify the poor, yet the poverty is perpetuated by the same individuals who are putting these inhumane laws in place. The 1834 poor law being exemplary of this (see context sheet)*

MAGNANIMOUS

- **Meaning:** Being generous, kind and giving.

Example:

*Fred is the epitome of a **magnanimous** individual. He allows the reader to measure Scrooge's redemption by how alike he is to the compassionate and magnanimous character of Fred- Scrooge's redemption is confirmed for the reader when he appears akin to Fred in his nature.*

MISANTHROPIC

- **Meaning:** A person who dislikes human interaction and aims to avoid society.

Example:

*Scrooge epitomises **misanthropy** as he wilfully ostracises himself from society to avoid any human sentiment and emotion.*

MISER

- **Meaning:** Somebody who does not like to spend their wealth and wants to spend as little money as they can.

Example:

*Scrooge is presented as a Victorian **miser**. He refuses to heat up his office, leaving Bob Cratchit to freeze, despite having the financial means too. He also loves darkness as it is "cheap", reinforcing how he prefers to be miserable then to spend money.*

MICROCOSM

- **Meaning:** A person or place showing the characteristics of something larger.

Example:

*The Cratchits are a **microcosm** of the plight of the poor and the endless struggles they endure. Alternatively, Scrooge is **microcosmic** of the ignorant upper class that remain in a state of oblivion just so they can escape their moral duties in society.*

OSTRACISED

- **Meaning:** Exclusion from society.

Example:

*Scrooge wilfully **ostracises** himself from society so he can isolate himself in his own protected bubble of misery- he refuses to interact with individuals in society. His **ostracisation** is so successful, even the weather refuses to be associated with him.*

OPPRESSION

- **Meaning:** Continuous horrible treatment and abuse- particularly one that makes a person feel inferior.

Example:

*Scrooge's relationship with Bob at the beginning of the novella could be emblematic of the **oppression** the poor faced from the upper class. Scrooge relentlessly mistreats Bob, the only reason being because he was poor, thus showing how the upper class continually oppressed the lower class. This being reinforced through Bob's lack of speech in Stave 1, showing how he has been silenced in his oppression.*

PHILANTHROPIC

- **Meaning:** Charitable and giving.

Example:

*Fred demonstrates his **philanthropic** attitude in stave 1, he condemns his uncle's lack of benevolence and **philanthropy** when Scrooge is so anti Christmas and giving. Bob is also an exemplary **philanthropist** as he and his family, despite having very little, are benevolent and generous regardless of this.*

POLITICAL DIATRIBE

- **Meaning:** A speech/ writing that aims to condemn and criticize politics at the time.

Example:

*Dickens creates his **political diatribe** to openly condemn the biased politics within the Victorian era. The rich were favoured in society, through the laws they put in place and their treatment. Yet, the destitute were left to suffer and experience the gruelling effects of socio-economic poverty.*

PROLEPSIS

- **Meaning:** Hinting at something in the future that hasn't actually happened yet but soon will.

Example:

*The ghost of Christmas yet to come shows Scrooge his **proleptic tragic death**. He taunts Scrooge with his bleak future filled with abandonment and sorrow.*

PARSIMONIOUS

- **Meaning:** Stingy and tight with their money.

Example:

*Scrooge's **parsimonious** nature is salient in stave 1. He is repulsed at the idea of being charitable and is baffled at why others would be compassionate and giving- this is clear within his interaction with Fred when he questions why one could be happy if they are poor and give to others.*

REBIRTH

- **Meaning:** To be reborn.

Example:

*Scrooge's enlightenment about life and his uncompassionate nature leads to his **rebirth**. He is reborn from an old miser to a jubilant and benevolent man who seizes life.*

REDEMPTION

- **Meaning:** Being saved from sin or evil.

Example:

*Scrooge pleads for **redemption** in stave 4 during his interaction with the ghost of Christmas yet to come. He understands that if he is not permitted redemption, he will be subject to his inevitable bleak and lonesome death.*

SALVATION

- **Meaning:** In Christian terms, it is being saved by the faith in Christ and God.

Example:

*When Scrooge understands his embodiment of the 7 deadly sins, paired with his general dismissal of religion, will mean he will be eternally punished, he wishes for **Salvation**. He promises the ghost, and also God, that he will change and no longer embody these sins.*

SABBATARIAN

- **Meaning:** A Christian who sees Sunday as the holy sabbath day. This meant no work on Sundays.

Example:

*Dickens was scathing of blue laws (laws that meant you weren't allowed to work on Sundays) as this meant that the poor and destitute couldn't make money on this day when they desperately needed it- this was known as **Sabbatarianism**. His criticisms are clear in the exchange between the ghost of Christmas present and Scrooge (see ghost of Christmas present sheet for more info).*

SOCIAL COMMENTATOR

- **Meaning:** Providing commentary on social situations or issues.

Example:

*Dickens, a **social commentator**, uses his allegorical novella to emphasise the need to social justice and the abolition of socio-economic poverty.*

SOCIO-ECONOMIC POVERTY

- **Meaning:** poverty that has come from economic and societal factors.

Example:

*Dickens indicts the stereotype that the poor were lazy and created their own poverty. He highlights through the character of Scrooge that it was **socio-economic poverty** that led to the deprivation of millions- not the choice of the poor themselves. He shows this through making Scrooge, a microcosm for the upper class, deprive the lower class (Bob) despite his immense work efforts.*

SOCIAL CONSCIENCE

- **Meaning:** Feeling responsible for others in society. Using your innate sense of morals to understand that we must look after others in society.

Example:

*Dickens expresses that the reduction of poverty and thus making society a more desirable place is synonymous with the development of a **social conscience**.*

SQUALOR

- **Meaning:** Living in conditions of extreme dirt and filth (normally as a result of being in a poverty-stricken state of existence).

Example:

*Although the inhumane living conditions people endured in London is not an explicit key topic in his novella, he subtly indicts the mass **squalor** seen on the streets of London when describing the setting. (look at the ghost of Christmas yet to come sheet under Dickens's warning for more on this)*

TRANSMOGRIFICATION

- **Meaning:** Transformation in a surprising or unexpected way.

Example:

Scrooge goes from an archetypal Victorian miser to an elated joyous member of society.

*His **transmogrification** sets an example to Dickens readership that change is possible in any individual, regardless of how ingrained their worldwide views are.*

VICTIMISATION

- **Meaning:** Singling someone out to abuse and mistreat them.

Example:

*Dickens passionately aims to expose the **victimisation** of children which is because of the negligence from the upper classes. He uses Tiny Tim to evoke sympathy from the reader and make them feel they must take a stand against the victimisation of children.*