

## KEY WORDS

**Abundance, God-like, jovial, plentiful, anti-Malthusian views, jolly, provides moral enlightenment**

# The ghost of Christmas present

## SYMBOL OF ABUNDANCE & HOPE

## GOD-LIKE RELIGIOUS FIGURE

- The triple adjective **"kind, generous, hearty nature"** could be seen to have **biblical allusions to the holy trinity** in which is three parts of God: **the father, the son and the holy spirit**. The three adjectives could be an allusion to how the ghost is there to bring Scrooge back to his **religious moral foundations** and guide him away from sin.
- Biblically, **"ivy"** symbolises **'God's gift'**, thus as there was ivy surrounding the ghost it **compounds his God like portrayal**- he could be seen as a **recipient of God's message** as he is trying to enlighten Scrooge morally, spiritually and religiously.
- The ghost is presented in a jovial way, akin to the idea of **father Christmas**: he is a **"jolly Giant"** who wears a **"green robe"** which was **"bordered with fur"**. As Father Christmas is a symbol of festivity and giving- this is poignant as the ghost's function is to show Scrooge how there is enough of everything in **abundance** and giving is an important attribute to have in society.

- The **motif of light** is similarly explored with the ghost of Christmas present as it is the ghost of Christmas past: **"ivy reflected back the light"** an **"sparkling eye"**- **light symbolises hope** throughout the novella, thus the ghost is offering Scrooge another opportunity of hope and promise for the future.
- "glowing torch, in shape not unlike Plenty's horn"**  
**Plenty's horn in Latin is known as 'cornucopia', symbolic of nourishment and abundance.**
- As the ghost holds the **emblem** (symbol) of the torch, reinforcing the motif of light once again, it highlights how he is showing Scrooge that there is an **abundance of resources to be shared**- no malnourishment or neglect should commence in a society that has plenty. This is a direct criticism of **Malthusian views which has no regard for the poor and destitute.**
- The ghost **rejects Scrooge's accusation** that spirits **created sabbath closures** (closing of key essential shops such as bakeries etc on Sundays because of religion). He claims that **"and who do their deeds of passion, pride, ill-will, hatred, envy, bigotry, and selfishness in our name"**.
- The ghost highlights that mankind **commit injurious and immoral** acts yet try justifying it through religion- the ghost is scathing of this due to the **asyndetic list** of sins: **"passion, pride, ill-will..."**. This makes the list seem ongoing, reinforcing how there is an **ongoing abuse of religion from humans**: individuals claim to uphold religious values but do not practice them.
- The exchange between Scrooge and the ghost about the **Sabbatarians** highlights the idea of **Victorian hypocrisy**, a central idea in later Victorian literature, particularly focusing on how this hypocrisy has a **detrimental (bad) impact on the poor.**

## TOP TIP



Drawing parallels between the ghost and Father Christmas/ God is fantastic. However, make sure you fully develop your ideas and don't just state it e.g. The ghost of Christmas present is alike to Father Christmas (no further explanation). Use these quotes and analysis to further your point.

## DICKENS' ANTI-MALTHUSIAN TALE

- Dickens constructs the ghost to be sitting on **a plethora of enticing foods** such as ***"turkeys, geese, game, poultry, brawn"*** which formed ***"a kind of throne"***. Dickens directly uses the vast amounts of food as a criticism of the **Malthusian idea** that supplies are scarce, and the poor are the ones who are draining these resources.
- The ghost of Christmas present is a **pivotal tool in Dicken's social commentary** as the ghost, an extension of Dickens, is didactic to Scrooge about his contribution to **social ills and the mistreatment of the vulnerable**- especially children.
- Dickens said ***"Everything that happens shows that you can't shut out the world; that you are in it"***.
- He encapsulates this with the ghost as the ghost shows Scrooge that his actions are **inextricably linked to consequences**, such as his impact on the Cratchits, and he must accept in the present that he is "in it" and has to change.
- Through the ghost emulating Scrooge's heartless **Malthusian views**, ***"If he be like to die, he had better do it, and decrease the surplus population."***, he is allowing the readership to reflect on the words that Scrooge had previously said and the **detrimental** impact this has had on others.
- As Scrooge is a **microcosm (one small person representing a larger group)** for the Victorian upper class, Dickens ensures his readership is reflective on their contribution to social ills and if they enable the mistreatment of the poor to commence, most significantly the **victimisation of children**.

## SCROOGE'S SHAMEFUL REACTION

- Scrooge appears **submissive** to the ghost, open and **welcoming the idea of his moral and spiritual awakening**. He, for the first time, shows **remorse and obedience** to his teachings: ***"Scrooge entered timidly, and hung his head before this Spirit"***.
- This is a clear turning point for Scrooge as he is **displaying genuine emotions of remorse, compassion, and empathy**. His emotional change is clear with his use of imperatives: ***"tell me if Tiny Tim will live."***
- This is juxtaposing to his earlier use of impolite imperatives; he is now commanding to know about the well-being of others as he is **developing benevolence and solicitude**.



## IGNORANCE & WANT

- Ignorance and want are **allegorical characters** aim to highlight the unjustified abuse on **innocent children as a result of poverty**.
- Dickens **personifies** poverty through the boy and girl.
- Their skin colour does not resemble that of a young healthy child as it is **"yellow"**. The colour could imply that children are physically sick and **malnourished** because of the **neglect of society and the obliviousness of individuals to social injustice**.
- Alternatively, **"yellow"** connotes sickness mirroring how the upper class believed that poverty was almost alike to **a contagious illness or sickness**. Thus, the upper-class members like Scrooge in society, felt it was easier to distance themselves from this 'disease' of poverty oppose to helping them.
- There is a feral and animalistic portrayal of the children as they're described as **"scowling"** and **"wolfish"**. This animalistic image highlights how poverty **dehumanises individuals, stripping them of their humanity and reducing them to less than an animalistic state of being**.
- Alternatively, the **animalistic dehumanising portrayal** could be an attack on the rich's **dehumanising treatment** of the lower classes.
- Dickens makes Scrooge, an extension of the ignorant rich, to meet the dehumanised poor for a sense of **justice** for his readership- the rich are being forced to recognise how they are **perpetuating poverty and animalising the poor**.
- It is significant that Ghost of present shows him this, as Dickens uses the ghost of present as his **mouthpiece to criticise the socio-economic poverty that pervaded Victorian society**.
- Dickens warns to his readers that they must **"Beware them both"** as it is easy to be to the **plight** of others and only focus on your **"want"** for more. Dickens uses these **allegorical characters** to make his reader be reflective of their social conscience and if they are **"ignorant"** and **"want"**.

## COMPARISON

It could be seen that Tiny Tim holds an likeness to ignorance and want. Although his presentation is not as hyperbolically dehumanised, he is still subject to the victimisation that ignorance and want undergo.



**TOP TIP** It is important contextually to see the influence of where Dicken's got his ideas for Scrooge (Link between text and context A03). Dickens uses Malthusian influences to explore the links of socio-economic poverty and the people who held these oblivious views.

## TOPIC SENTENCES

The ghost of Christmas present is an emblem of abundance and hope. As it holds a torch and sits on a plethora of enticing food, both symbols of abundance, it indicts the Malthusian idea that supplies are scarce. Thus, the ghost is a pivotal tool in Dickens's social commentary as through the ghost, Dickens can be didactic about the upper classes contribution to social ills.

A religious portrayal of the ghost of the Christmas yet to come is salient. Dickens draws parallels between the ghost and Father Christmas and arguably God. It's omnipotent presentation could allude to how the ghost is a recipient of God's message of benevolence and agape.

Dickens' allegorical characters of ignorance and want are used to further his scathing criticism on the dehumanising and animalistic treatment of the poor. He makes Scrooge, a microcosm of the upper class, directly face the impoverished children to evoke a sense of justice- the ignorant rich are being forced to face the consequences of their obliviousness.