

# Ghosts

## Key Themes

- -selfishness/ materialism
- -social injustice/ poverty
- -supernatural
- -kindness/family
- -religion
- -regret/redemption

## Dickens' intentions

- Dickens crafts the ghosts as **vehicles for conveying his condemnation (criticism)** of the ignorance and **callousness (cruelty)** prevalent among the materialistic upper classes. Thus, the ghosts serve as **Dickens' mouthpiece** (can't be in the novel so they speak his beliefs), delivering a powerful message advocating for compassion and societal reform.
- Each ghost introduces a comical and entertaining element, enabling Dickens to subtly yet effectively depict the corrosive impact of greed and **apathy**. (unemotional and distant) However, through Scrooge's transformation, Dickens utilises the ghosts to show the **potential for reversing this damage**. They serve as symbols of positive social change, highlighting the possibility of **societal transformation and social justice**.
- Time and change serve as important **motifs** (recurring symbol) introduced by Dickens in his **allegorical** (story with a moral message) **novella** through the ghosts. These **motifs** are used to illustrate the interconnection between the past, present, and future, and their influence on the trajectory of societal progress or decline

# Marley

“I wear the chain I forged in life...I made it link by link” (stave 1)

Link to main key themes:

- selfishness/materialism
- Supernatural
- Religion
- regret/redemption
- Social injustice

## Analysis

- **Symbolism of chains:** as chains are made of links, which are all interconnecting, this is alike to how Marley is warning Scrooge that his **coveoutness (desire for wealth) and abandonment of compassion** for others, are interconnected **to his anguish**. Marley is symbolic of the **eternal consequences of the pursuit of materialism**– in his life on earth he shunned poverty, indulging in his **avarice** (greed), thus in his afterlife he experiences **spiritual poverty**.
- Moreover, a chain symbolises **restriction and entrapment**. Through Marley “*dragging*” the chain, his chain is a **conceit** (extended metaphor) for the restricting and eternal consequences of being **parsimonious** (stingy) and perpetuating social injustice.
- **Personal pronoun:** The use of the personal pronoun “I” implies that Marley acknowledges with remorse the consequences of his own **personal and selfish pursuit of material wealth, leading to his eternal and spiritual damnation**.
- He serves as a **cautionary tale** (warning) not only to Scrooge but also to readers consumed by **avarice** (greed), highlighting that redemption is inaccessible for those who prioritise materialistic pursuits over **altruism** (selflessness).

## “Mankind was my business” (stave 1)

### Link to main key themes:

- selfishness/materialism
- Social injustice
- Regret
- Kindness/family

## Analysis

- **Economical language:** The **economical language** dominating both Scrooge's and Marley's dialogue serves as a **critique of society's obsession** with material wealth and the relentless pursuit of profit. Marley serves as Dickens' **first mouthpiece** (can't be in the novel himself so speaks through the characters), articulating the **priority of a collective social conscience** and compassion over materialistic concerns such as 'business' and money.
- This juxtaposition highlights the irony of individuals like Scrooge, who **conflate (blend) material wealth with societal value**. Moreover, it foreshadows the **grim fate** awaiting Scrooge if he fails to learn from the eternal punishment of Marley: being reduced to mere **economic terms upon his death** ("**cheap funereal**" "**marketing the corpse**").
- **Syntax:** In terms of syntax, "mankind" precedes "business," indicating the **hierarchical order of values** that Scrooge, and by extension society, should prioritise.
- Marley's spiritual and eternal punishment serves as a catalyst not only for the sole purpose of change but also for the realisation that compassion should always take **precedence (importance) over materialism**.

# Ghost of Christmas Past

**“It was a strange figure—like a child: yet not so like a child as like an old man” (stave 2)**

**Link to main key themes:**

- **Supernatural**
- **Kindness/family**
- **regret/redemption**

## Analysis

- **Juxtaposition between “child” and “old man”:** The **juxtaposition** of it being *“like a child”* and simultaneously *“like an old man”* is metaphorical for Scrooge. He appears physically alike to an *“old man”* as he is branded an *“old sinner”*, yet **is vulnerable and isolated** akin to how he was as a *“child”*.
- This contrast also underpins the **interconnectedness** of time, emphasising that the past inevitably shapes the present and influences the future. By revisiting Scrooge's childhood, the ghost aims to catalyse a **regression** (go backwards) in him, prompting a return to his **former compassionate** self and setting him on the **path to redemption**.
- **Context about age and time:** the mixture of **both youth and age was a fascination within the Victorian era**—their emphasis on the youth of children caused a parallel interest to those in their older age.
- By presenting the ghost as an **amalgamation of youthfulness and old age**, Dickens captures the fascination of his readership allowing him to use the juxtaposing depiction to emphasise **the motif of time** (recurring symbol or theme) throughout the novella. This motif, **personified through** the ghosts of past, present and future, is also used to illustrate the **timelessness of the message of moral growth, compassion and redemption**.

“Bright clear jet of light” “purest white” (stave 2)

Link to main key themes:

- Supernatural
- Religion
- regret/redemption

## Analysis

- **Motif of light:** The motif of light **permeates** (throughout) the novella, illuminating characters such as the Ghost of Christmas Past, the Ghost of Christmas Present, and Fred, all of whom play a role in encouraging Scrooge's transformation.
- "Light" evokes images of hope and radiance, symbolising how the ghost is a beacon of enlightenment, tasked with illuminating Scrooge's path towards moral awakening and personal transformation. The ghosts' purpose is to reveal to Scrooge the potential for a hopeful and joyous existence if he chooses the path of redemption.
- **"Purest" celestial image:** "purest white" creates a **celestial image of heaven and purity from sin**. As the ghost wears a "tunic" of this colour, it is suggestive that his aim is to **resurface Scrooge's repressed memories** and emotions in order to **purify him from his previous sins** so he is ready to access heaven.
- This **celestial symbolism** serves a dual purpose: it foreshadows Scrooge's **spiritual journey** towards **moral transformation and redemption** while also emphasising the theme of forgiveness. Dickens suggests that **nobody is beyond redemption**, regardless of their past sins, salvation and forgiveness can be found.

# Ghost of Christmas Present

“Glowing torch, in shape not unlike Plenty’s horn” (stave 3)

Link to main key themes:

- selfishness/materialism
- Social injustice
- Supernatural

## Analysis

- **Symbolism of ‘Plenty’s horn’:** The Latin term for Plenty's horn, '*cornucopia*,' symbolises **nourishment and abundance**. This highlights a message to Scrooge about the mindset that causes social inequality: there is an abundance of resources to be shared, and **societal neglect and malnourishment are unjustifiable in a world of plenty**.
- This serves as a direct critique of **Malthusian views (see context)**, which disregard the **plight (suffering) of the poor and destitute as inevitable**, yet the ghost shows that there is ample wealth to alleviate their suffering if shared equally.
- **Motif of light:** As the ghost holds the **emblem** (symbol) of the torch, intensifying the **recurring motif** (recurring symbol) of light, it signifies both the **physical and symbolic** illumination that Scrooge will undergo.
- This illumination reflects the ghost's supernatural **omnipotence** (all-powerful), intended to reveal and illuminate the **detrimental** (negative) impacts of social **neglect and avarice (greed)**. Through the Cratchits, symbolic of the exploited poor, the ghost aims to awaken Scrooge to the abundance of resources physically that should be shared in society, as well as the emotional **abundance of compassion and benevolence**.

**“If he be like to die, he had better do it, and decrease the surplus population.” (stave 3)**

**Link to main key themes:**

- selfishness/materialism
- Social injustice
- regret/redemption
- kindness/family

## Analysis

- **Repetition:** The ghost repeats Scrooge's earlier quote from Stave 1, emphasising his callous (cruel) **neglect and ignorance** towards the **plight** of the lower classes. Through Scrooge's adoption of **Malthusian ideology** (check context), poverty and starvation are heartlessly dismissed as inevitable outcomes of a "surplus population."
- The ghost, a symbol of **abundance and equality**, repeats it back to illustrate the inhumanity inherent in such **apathetic** (unemotional) and ignorant perspectives, compelling readers to confront the moral implications of societal indifference towards the suffering of the less fortunate.
- **Plosives:** Plosives litter the speech with "die", "better do" and "decrease", the harshness of the plosives accentuates the **harsh callousness** (cruelness) of upper class views towards the **destitute** (poor).
- This **belligerence** (harshness/aggressiveness), as the ghost later shows Scrooge, causes the **exploitation and victimisation** of the most innocent in society – children.

# Ghost of Christmas Present

“Glowing torch, in shape not unlike Plenty’s horn” (stave 3)

Link to main key themes:

- Selfishness
- Supernatural
- Religion
- regret/ redemption

## Analysis

- **Symbol of death:** As it is “*shrouded in a deep black garment*” this is reminiscent of the **Grim Reaper**, a symbol of death tasked with collecting souls – the Ghost creates an ambience (atmosphere) of **foreboding and finality**. The deathly undertones serve as a stark reminder of the consequences of Scrooge’s past immoralities and the urgency of his need for repentance (feeling remorse).
- This visual parallel suggests that Scrooge's prospects for **redemption have dwindled**, and he now faces an **unavoidable journey towards his ominous demise** (menacing downfall) by the “*inexorable*” (unstoppable) hand.
- Image on ‘*black*’: The dark ominous image created by black juxtaposes the motif of light seen with the ghost of Christmas past and present. This is suggestive that Scrooge’s bleak and ironically “*solitary*” death is imminent – Scrooge longed for a “*solitary*” existence and now the ghost **is solemnly showing** him the consequences of his selfish and isolated existence.
- The **archetype (perfect example)** of the **menacing, faceless ghost** haunting Scrooge serves to illuminate the **gravity (seriousness) of his misanthropy**. This dark and malevolent supernatural presence symbolises the **justly** forceful intervention needed to **catalyse his transformation**.



“It was a worthy place...overrun by grass and weeds”.

Link to main key themes:

- selfishness /materialism
- Social injustice
- Religion

### Analysis

- **Decaying semantic field:** The use of terms like "overrun" and "grass and weeds" creates a **semantic field (group of words linked by a topic)** of decay, serving as a **mocking commentary** on Scrooge's life. Ironically, the **vitality and life** of the surrounding plants highlight his own **insignificance**. This serves as a criticism of his materialistic existence, suggesting that he has become even more insignificant than the decaying plants surrounding his grave.
- Through the ghost's portrayal of Scrooge's **proleptic** (flash forward) **death**, Dickens emphasises the dire consequences of neglecting one's **moral and civic duties**, suggesting that such neglect will inevitably lead to **eternal neglect and oblivion in death**.
- **Exclamative sentence:** The exclamatory sentence of "a worthy place!" serves as a form of **karmic retribution** (gets what he deserves), where Scrooge's **frugal (stingy) and miserly existence** is met with just punishment. This message, delivered by the menacing ghost, imbues the scene with a hellish undertone, evoking a sense of **divine justice**.
- In the Victorian era, readers would find **solace** (comfort) in Scrooge's punishment due to their strong religious beliefs – **eternal damnation and divine judgement was a deeply ingrained fear in society**. Thus, Scrooge's rightful punishment reinforces the cautionary tale that excessive covetousness and materialism will ultimately lead to **divine condemnation**.

### Links To Other Key Themes

- **Regret/ Redemption:** The sight of his neglected and isolated grave intensifies Scrooge's urgent longing for redemption, serving as a stark reminder of his neglectful and dehumanising treatment of the lower classes.