

KEY WORDS

Paradoxical, amalgamation of youth and old age, childhood, compassion, ethereal (heavenly), pure, untainted, symbol of hope

The ghost of Christmas past

DICKENS EXPLORATION OF YOUTH

- Victorian literature often focused on the **angelic presentation of the youth**. Dickens incorporates this **trope** in a lot of his work. He uses the ghost to explore how all people, **even misanthropic individuals, have this angelic untainted youth that is deeply repressed**.
- He uses the ghost as a vehicle to carry the message that the **repression of a myriad** (a range) of emotions is detrimental and how all individuals, regardless of class, need to recognise that everybody has this innocent child within them that needs nurturing- nobody should be neglected.

SYMBOL OF HOPE

- Despite the ghosts **uncanny (eerie) presentation**, the ghost is depicted as having an ethereal (heavenly) quality as it **"wore a tunic of the purest white"**.
- "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**.
- This would allow Scrooge at a chance of **redemption to later enter heaven**.
- The ghost is presented as the **antithesis** to Scrooge as it was a **"contradiction of that wintry emblem, had its dress trimmed with summer flowers"**. The wintry emblem could be metaphorical for Scrooge as the **wintery conceit** (extended metaphor) used in act 1 highlighted his inner **cold miser**. As the ghost wears **"summer flowers"**, connoting beauty and growth, it reinforces how to ghost is there **to ignite the spiritual growth and awakening of Scrooge**- eradicating his **"wintry"** unapproachable persona.
- There is a **motif of light** throughout the novella, most clearly presented through the ghost of Christmas past. The ghost has a **"bright clear jet of light"** that emerges from it.
- "Light"** creates an image of hope and brightness, this symbolises how the ghost's function is to **brighten up Scrooge's life with his moral awakening**. The ghost's function is to show Scrooge how hopeful and joyous life he could lead if he embarks on a **pathway of redemption**.
- As the **ghost's light is emblematic of hope**, as Scrooge **"could not hide the light"** it foreshadows how Scrooge **cannot escape his redemption**. The ghost will help aid Scrooge to his **moral and spiritual awakening** and he cannot **"hide"** from this.

TOP TIP



Linking the ghost to the Victorian fascination of age shows a great link between text and context (A03). You're showing you understand how Dickens' writing was impacted by societal ideas.

AIDING HIS REDEMPTION

- As the **ghost's light is emblematic of hope**, as Scrooge **"could not hide the light"** it foreshadows how Scrooge **cannot escape his redemption**. The ghost will help aid Scrooge to his **moral and spiritual awakening** and he cannot **"hide"** from this.
- The ghost of Christmas past exchanges the most dialogue out of the 3 ghosts. As he is showing Scrooge his childhood, he is almost **"gently"** speaking and guiding Scrooge's inner **repressed childhood emotions and traumas**- Scrooge's **troubled psyche** is fully explored within his past.
- The ghosts can be seen to be physically reflections of Scrooge's anxieties- the ghosts of the past physically representing his childhood reflects this was a fear of Scrooge's.
- The ghosts can also be seen to be supernatural incarnations of Scrooge. Thus, when the ghost has **"one arm, now with one leg, now with twenty legs, now a pair of legs"**, its **metamorphosis (physical transformation) and transmogrification** (change in a surprising manner) could be **symbolic of how Scrooge's transmogrification is imminent**.

CHILDHOOD & YOUTH

- The ghost is presented as **paradoxical and conflicting**, not conforming to the physical ideas of the human world: **"It was a strange figure—like a child: yet not so like a child as like an 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"**.
- Dickens shows that **youth and age are inextricably (closely) linked**- the elderly and the young are alike; in older age, people appear more like their younger more vulnerable selves.
- 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.
- The ghost symbolises childhood and **draws parallels to how childhood memories directly impact adulthood**- as the ghost appears both alike to a "child" and "old man" it reinforces that childhood directly shapes adulthood.
- By showing Scrooge his childhood, the ghost aims to **catalyse a regression** in Scrooge so he can **regress into his former compassionate self**.
- Regression is negative connotations, however in Scrooge's case, **regression is positive** as his former self was more desirable than his present.



TOPIC SENTENCES

The celestial presentation of the ghost of Christmas past compounds that it is a symbol of hope and spiritual awakening for Scrooge. Its light is emblematic of hope, and as it burns so bright, it reinforces how Scrooge cannot escape this moral, spiritual awakening that will lead to his redemption.

The ghost of Christmas past is depicted in a paradoxical manner, not conforming to a physical idea of youth or old age. As it is an amalgamation of both, the ghost serves to bridge the experiences of Scrooge's youth and his adulthood. Thus displaying how youth and old age are inextricably linked.