

ACC Context

INDUSTRIAL REVOLUTION

- The industrial revolution was a time of immense change between 1760-1840. It was a change from farming to factories. An increasing number of factories were built, **changing London from a rural state to an industrial state of factories and machinery**. This was also known as the '**progressive era**' as **Britain was seen as the pinnacle of excellence and a symbol of progression**— Britain was gaining domestic and foreign power throughout the world. There were positive effects of the revolution: more job opportunity, increased production, efficiency and migration.
- However, the industrial revolution provided more benefits for the upper-class members of society than the lower. The industrial revolution meant that the class divide was **exacerbated with the lower classes being subject to dangerous and dehumanising conditions**. The hours were long and hard and even children as **young as 4 or 5 years old** were forced to work in this conditions.

Link to Novella: Dickens is critical of the industrial revolution and the **overzealousness** (obsessiveness) of money that was a by-product of the revolution— he was particularly **scathing** of the idea of Britain being the pinnacle of excellence when it neglected the most vulnerable. He makes Scrooge **personify the capitalist greedy mindset** towards money and the willingness to let the poor be exploited. He highlights how capitalism has replaced compassion in society leading it to be a place filled with misery.

CHARLES DICKENS AND THE POOR

- Dickens was extremely **empathetic** towards the poor and their suffering. As Dickens himself grew up in poverty, he first hand experienced the mistreatment and **exploitation of the poor**. He was passionate about **giving the poor a voice through his fictional novellas**. He was a social critic who understood that the poor were mistreated not because of laziness, but because of **the abuse of authoritarian powers** (such as the government). Critic G.K. Chesterton characterised Dickens as **"the spokesman of the poor"**.
- A Christmas Carol was written by Dickens in response to the **Report of Children's Employment Commission** which covered the **dehumanising and exploitative conditions** children were subject too in the Victorian era. Dickens was appalled by this report and wanted to share this message about the abusive and dehumanising treatment of the poor in his **allegorical tale**. Dickens first wrote a pamphlet to try and spread awareness about the plight of the poor. He then turned this into a novella as he was aware that his **fictional tales would galvanise more support for the poor as it would reach a larger readership**.

Link to Novella: The Cratchits and Tiny Tim's death are characters Dickens has constructed to carry this message about the exploitation of the poor. Bob was exploited by Scrooge, his superior in the workforce, whilst Tiny Tim was left to die due to the neglect he faced from society. Dickens **debunks** the commonly held stereotype that the poor were lazy through the Cratchits. He highlights how compassion towards the plight of the poor will solve poverty, not punishing the poor.

THOMAS MALTHUS

- Thomas Malthus (1766–1834) was an **influential British economist** who had strong beliefs about the impact the poor have in society. Malthus believed that poverty was an **inevitable consequence** to **the increasing population**. Famine and poverty, he saw, were **unavoidable**, as due to an increasing population, it meant an increase in food demand. As this food demand could not be met, it would mean that individuals would have to starve.
- He also makes Scrooge have **hyperbolic** (over-exaggerated) views towards Christmas and the poor through Scrooge referencing the poor as the **'surplus population'**. He shows throughout the novella, the **detrimental effect of having an ignorant Malthusian mindset** and vilifies it through the presentation of Scrooge at the beginning of the novella.

Link to Novella: Dickens' **political diatribe** (criticism of the politics at the time) can be seen as an **anti- Malthusian** tale. He directly indicts the Malthusian idea of the **scarcity of supplies** through the ghost of Christmas present who sits on a pile of food and **symbolises abundance**.

THE 1834 POOR LAW

- In **1834 'The New Poor Law'** was introduced which caused the introduction of the **workhouses**. The poor were sent to workhouses, which were intended to be there to provide shelter and food for the poor in exchange for work. In theory, this seemed like a reasonable solution to reduce poverty and give back to the economy. In practice, they were **hubs of squalor which exploited the poor**, splitting up families and making young children work in these **belligerent conditions**.
- It was estimated that **145,000 people died each year** working in the workhouses and around **10% of people admitted to the workhouses, would die**. This including young children as young as 4 or 5. Dickens himself was put into a workhouse when his father was sent to **debtors prison**, meaning he was put into a workhouse in which he was separated from his family.

Link to Novella: The social commentator Dickens condemned the dehumanising laws put in place for the poor such as 'The Poor Law'. He first hand experienced the **belligerent conditions** and aimed to **criticise the humanity of such laws**. He uses Scrooge's ignorance to replicate the ignorance of the upper class towards the poor: **"are there no prisons? Or the union workhouses?"**. He also uses the **allegorical characters of ignorance and want** to reinforce the plight of the poor, significantly the **plight of the poor that the rich make them subject too**.

RELIGION

- Victorian society was extremely religious, and its foundations were built on these very beliefs. **Redemption** is instrumental in Christianity, with the belief that God provides individuals with redemption when sin has been confessed.
- Another pivotal idea is **salvation**. The most poignant example of salvation being the salvation of mankind from Jesus due to his resurrection- Jesus returned to save mankind from its sins.
- The 7 deadly sins (also known as cardinal sins) were seen as the route of all evil. They are a group of vices intended to prevent sin in Christian teachings. These include: **pride** (ego) , **greed** (want for **materialism** or want for more), **lust** (strong sexual desire), **envy** (jealousy), **gluttony** (want for food), **wrath** (anger) , and **sloth** (laziness). Committing any one of these sins was **straying from God's will**, creating distance between a person and God, and creating room for the devil's influence.

Link to Novella: Redemption and salvation is pivotal in Scrooge's transformation. His redemption and salvation is seen in stave 5 when he is reborn into a "baby", showing how he has been redeemed from his sins and given another chance. Scrooge at the beginning of the novella embodies the 7 deadly sins of greed, wrath and pride. He is greedy for more materialism and is parsimonious when trying to preserve his already acquired wealth. He is wrathful and angry towards the generosity and jubilation of others, especially at Christmas. Lastly, he holds a lot of pride regarding his miserable persona- he does not want others to see him vulnerable and joyous, hence persists in up-keeping this image.

Summary

CONTEXT	SUMMARY
Industrial revolution	<p>It was a change from farming to factories where an increasing number of factories were built.</p> <p>Positives: more job opportunity, increased production, efficiency, and migration.</p> <p>Negatives: Poor were subject to dehumanising and dangerous work conditions, masses of pollution and children as young as 4 or 5 were forced to work in these conditions</p>
Dickens and the Poor	<p>Dickens was poor growing up so used his novellas to give a voice to the poor and highlight the exploitation of the poor.</p> <p>A Christmas Carol was written in response to the Report of Children's Employment Commission which covered the dehumanising and exploitative conditions children were subject too. He wrote a pamphlet on it first, then wrote the novella to reach a wider audience.</p>
Thomas Malthus	<p>Malthus was an influential British economist. He believed that poverty was an inevitable consequence to the increasing population. As there was an increasing population, this meant it meant an increase in food demand. As this food demand could not be met, it would mean that individuals would have to starve.</p>
The 1834 Poor Law	<p>In 1834 'The New Poor Law' was introduced which caused the introduction of the workhouses. The poor were sent to workhouses, which were intended to be there to provide shelter and food for the poor in exchange for work.</p> <p>They were hubs of squalor which exploited the poor, splitting up families and making young children work in these belligerent conditions. 10% of people admitted to the workhouses, would die.</p>
Religion	<p>Religion was the foundation of morality in the Victorian era. Redemption and salvation were key ideas as it was believed you would receive salvation, and therefore experience redemption, if you confessed your sins.</p> <p>The 7 deadly sins (known as cardinal sins) were seen as the route of all evil: pride, greed, lust, envy, gluttony, wrath and sloth.</p>