

Scrooge

Key Themes

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Selfishness/ materialism
Social injustice/ poverty
Supernatural
Kindness/Family
Religion
Regret/Redemption

Key Words/Phrases

Stave 1 + Stave 2

- Parsimonious (stingy)
- Frugal (stingy)
- Miser (doesn't spend money - tight)
- Avaricious (greedy)
- Covetousness (desire for wealth)
- Apathetic (unemotional)
- Ostracised (isolated)
- Callous (cruel)
- Cold
- Misanthropic (anti-social)
- Archetypal villain
- Ignorant
- Malthusian views
- Irascible (easily angered)
- Unrepentant (no guilt)
- Intransigent (stubborn)
- Obdurate (stubborn)
- Entrenched (stuck) in his beliefs
- Perpetuates (continues) social injustice
- Insularity (ignorant)
- Moral transgression (go against)

Stave 3 + Stave 4

- Repentant (remorse)
- Remorseful
- Penitent (feels regret)
- Develops a collective social conscience (right from wrong in society)
- Compassion
- Salvation (save from harm)
- Redemption (save from sin)
- Submissive
- Receptive (open to new ideas)

Stave 5

- Virtuous (moral)
- Scrupulous (moral)
- Champion for social justice
- Benevolent (loving)
- Enlightened
- Undergone a rebirth
- Transmogrified (change in a surprising manner)
- Freed
- Rebirth
- Compassion
- Altruism (selfless)
- Philanthropic (charitable)
- Magnanimous (generous)
- Humanitarianism (loving towards others)

Dickens' intentions

- Dickens crafts an **allegorical** (story with moral message) novella with a **didactic** (to teach) purpose, aiming to convey a message about the **virulent** (harmful) consequences of **avariciousness (greed) and frugality (stinginess)** in society. He criticises the upper classes for their apathy (lack of concern) toward the poor and **their complicity in perpetuating dehumanising laws and social structures** through ignorance.
- Dickens communicates to his upper-class audience the important role of repentance (remorse) and compassion in creating both personal and societal **moral redemption**. **By holding up a mirror to his readership**, he prompts them to **introspect** (look in at themselves) and assess whether their attitudes **perpetuate social injustice or contribute to social reform**.
- In Stave 1, Dickens deliberately portrays Scrooge as deeply entrenched in his **misanthropic** (anti-social) attitudes, highlighting his transformative journey by Stave 5. By depicting Scrooge as a **microcosm** (something small representing something larger) of the upper class, Dickens demonstrates the potential for change and personal growth, even in individuals **with the most entrenched immorality**. Ultimately, Dickens emphasises that social reform can be achieved when society is guided by **principles of generosity and empathy**.

“Squeezing, wrenching, grasping, scraping, clutching, covetous old sinner” (Stave 1)

Link to main key themes:

- **Selfishness/materialism**
- **Social Injustice**
- **Religion**

Analysis

- **The asyndetic listing (a list that uses commas rather than the word ‘and’):** The asyndetic listing highlights selfish and avaricious character. It portrays Scrooge's immoral characteristics as ongoing, casting him as an unrepentant (no guilt) “sinner.”
- The use of **7 negative adjectives** mirrors how there are **7 deadly sins**, known as **cardinal sins**, which were seen in the bible as the root of all evil. As the **foundations of Victorian morality was religion**, the parallels between Scrooge and the sins are used by Dickens to highlight how the rich, symbolised by Scrooge, are more inclined towards **moral transgression** (go against morals) than the poor. Dickens implicitly critiques societal structures, such as the **1834 Poor Law**, which were ironically designed to address the perceived sin and laziness of the poor.
- **‘squeezing’ and ‘wrenching’ connotes a struggle:** The verbs “squeezing” and “wrenching” connote a struggle, this illustrates how Scrooge struggles to see the detrimental consequences of his **frugality** (stinginess) and thus, his role in **perpetuating social inequality**.
- Alternatively, the undertone of a struggle is used by Dickens to illustrate how the **avariciousness** (greed) of the upper classes directly causes a struggle for the **impoverished** (poor).

Links To Other Key Themes

- **Regret/redemption:** Dickens constructs Scrooge initially as a **quintessential** (perfect example) **Victorian miser**, embodying the archetype (typical example) of a villain. However, this depiction serves to emphasise his journey of growth and transformation into a regretful and **actively virtuous** (moral) member of society.

“He seized the extinguisher-cap, and by a sudden action pressed it down upon its head.” (Stave 2)

Links to main key themes:

- **Supernatural**
- **Redemption**

Analysis

- **Verb “pressed” and adverb “sudden”:** The aggressive verb “*pressed*,” combined with the rapid adverb “*sudden*,” delves into Scrooge's immersion in deeply **suppressed emotions**. He reacts irrationally out of sheer panic, anticipating the prospect of confronting these **stifled memories from his past**.
- This **ethereal (delicate)** figure serves as more than a symbol of Scrooge's past; it symbolises the supernatural intervention necessary for Scrooge's **spiritual awakening**. He wants to place the restrictive ‘*cap*’ upon its head in a futile (pointless) attempt to **evade (avoid) the necessity of confronting his own humanity** and the repercussions of his actions.
- **Symbolism of the ghost:** The ghost is presented with iridescent (sparkling bright) imagery as it has a “*bright clear jet of light*”. This symbolism suggests that the ghost aspires to illuminate both the **literal and metaphorical darkness in Scrooge's life through revelation** (revealing his past) and reflection.
- The ghosts illumination of the past and its **interconnected nature to the present**, offers Scrooge the chance to **embark on a pathway of redemption** (save from sin). However, his attempt to cover the ghost with the ‘*cap*’ signifies his reluctance to embrace this opportunity for redemption.

Links To Other Key Themes

- **Kindness:** The introduction to the supernatural eventually **catalyses** a change in Scrooge as he becomes to shatter his **insular** (ignorant) views and begins to see the **transformative power of empathy** and how this can break the relentless cycle of unjust poverty.

“Yellow” “wolfish” “scowling” (Stave 3 - ignorance and want shown by Ghost of Christmas Present)

Links to main key themes:

- **Social injustice**
- **Selfishness**
- **Regret/ redemption**

Analysis

- Ignorance and want are **allegorical (to teach) characters** aim to highlight the **unjustified abuse on innocent children as a result of the callous (cruel) and apathetic (un-emotional)** attitudes of the upper classes.
- **Image on yellow:** The colour 'yellow' serves as a stark reminder of the physical sickness and malnutrition endured by neglected children, a **consequence of societal neglect and individuals' obliviousness to social injustice.**
- The encounter between Scrooge and these **marginalised (insignificant)** children illuminates that their poverty and suffering are directly caused by the affluent members of society, epitomised by characters like Scrooge, whose **covetousness (desire for wealth) outweighs their compassion.**
- **Animalistic image:** 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, Dickens employs Scrooge, **an extension** of the ignorant wealthy, to encounter the dehumanised poor, illustrating that the **only remedy** to societal ills is for the rich to acknowledge their role in **perpetuating** (continuing) poverty and dehumanising the **impoverished** (poor).
- This notion is exemplified in Scrooge's **repentance (guilt)** in Stave 3, evident in his use of imperatives like "tell me if Tiny Tim will live," showcasing his desperate attempt to **reverse his ignorance towards the plight (struggles) of the destitute (poor),** recognising their humanity amidst a society that has treated them in an animalistic way.

Links To Other Key Themes

- **Religion:** As the ghost of Christmas present is presented in a God-like omniscient (all-knowing) way, it illustrates the **transformative power** of religion and how it is **inextricably** (closely) linked to morality. By bringing an individual back to the **foundational teachings of Christianity**, it **creates spiritual enlightenment** which allows individuals like Scrooge to become champions of social justice.
- **Supernatural+Kindness:** The introduction to the supernatural **catalyses** a change in Scrooge as he becomes to shatter his **insular** (ignorant) views and begins to see the **transformative power of empathy** and how this can break the relentless cycle of unjust poverty.

“I will live in the Past, the Present, and the Future. The Spirits of all Three shall strive within me” (stave 4)

Links to main key themes:

- **Supernatural**
- **Religion**
- **regret/redemption**
- **Selfishness**

Analysis

- **Religious allusions:** The concept of “*three*” could be a biblical allusion to the three different forms of God within the **holy trinity: the father, the son and the holy spirit**. This could emphasise how the three ghosts almost acted as **incarnations of God** himself- relaying a moral and religious message that penetrated deeply within Scrooge.
- When he speaks of them striving “*within me*,” it signifies his **internalisation** of their moral teachings and his desperation to be given the opportunity to embark on the path of **salvation and redemption (save from sins)**.
- **Juxtaposition between ‘past, present and future’:** The juxtaposing passages of time in “*Past, present and future*” serve as a symbolic reflection of the stark contrast between Scrooge’s former **avaricious** (greedy) self and his transformation into a person dedicated to **redemption, moral and spiritual enlightenment**.
- The passage of time also emphasises his realisation of how his attitude in the “*past*” and “*present*” was not only **perpetuating** his ‘*solitary*’ existence, but also contributed to the **systemic oppression and exploitation of the vulnerable in society**.

“Quite a baby” “merry as a schoolboy” stave 5

Links to main key themes:

- Selfishness
- Religion
- Regret/redemption
- Social justice

Analysis

- **Infantile language:** Scrooge's infantile self-descriptions indicates his rebirth as he brands himself as a "baby" and "schoolboy". As both a "baby" and "schoolboy" connote **innocence and youth**, Scrooge is showcasing how through him **repenting for his sins**, he has regained his youthful innocence and ability to see the world in an untainted light – he now views it through compassion, kindness and benevolence.
- As being a "baby" is the start of life, this signifies that Scrooge has been reborn as he has gone from a selfish "old sinner" back to the most innocent form of human life– he has had the ultimate rebirth.
- **Christian ideas of rebirth:** The concept of **rebirth holds significance in Christianity**, symbolising a **spiritual renewal and connection with God**. This is deeply intertwined with the belief in **Jesus Christ's rebirth**, which offered **salvation to humanity**.
- Similarly, Scrooge's own rebirth may hold the **promise of salvation and relief for the less fortunate**, as he assumes a **paternal** (fatherly) role akin to a "second father" to Tiny Tim, embodying compassion and generosity toward those in need.

Links To Other Key Themes

- **Kindness/family:** Through Scrooge's portrayal as a **microcosm (something small representing something larger)** of the upper class, Dickens illustrates the easy potential for personal transformation and **redemption**. By depicting Scrooge's transition from **avarice (greed) to altruism (selflessness)** and genuine compassion, Dickens showcases the possibility of **catalysing positive change** within society simply by replacing selfishness with empathy and kindness.