

LEVELED BOOK • z²

A Christmas Carol

Part 9



Adapted from the Writings of Charles Dickens
Illustrated by Yevgenia Nayberg

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A Christmas Carol



"I have endeavoured in this Ghostly little book, to raise the Ghost of an Idea, which shall not put my readers out of humour with themselves, with each other, with the season, or with me. May it haunt their houses pleasantly, and no one wish to lay it."

Their faithful Friend and Servant, C. D.

December, 1843

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Focus Question

How does the author use foreshadowing to build suspense?

Words to Know

avarice
bereft
beseech
composed
dwelling
essence
foreshadow
grieved
gripping
industry
inexorable
intercedes

merciless
obedience
odious
persevered
reconciled
relents
repleted
repress
revered
strive
successor
tarry

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Level Z2 Leveled Book
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of Charles Dickens
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Correlation

LEVEL Z2	
Fountas & Pinnell	Y-Z
Reading Recovery	N/A
DRA	70+

In Part 8 of A Christmas Carol, Scrooge is visited by the Ghost of Christmas Yet To Come, who brings him to a run-down shop where goods are resold. Scrooge watches as a man's few earthly possessions, which have been stolen from his deathbed by strangers, are sold with no remorse.

T²²he room was very dark, too dark to be observed with any accuracy, though Scrooge glanced round it in **obedience** to a secret impulse, anxious to know what kind of room it was. A pale light, rising in the outer air, fell straight upon the bed; and on it, plundered and **bereft**, unwatched, unwept, uncared for, was the body of this man.



Scrooge glanced towards the Phantom. Its steady hand was pointed to the head. The cover was so carelessly adjusted that the slightest raising of it, the motion of a finger upon Scrooge's part, would have disclosed the face.

He thought of it, felt how easy it would be to do, and longed to do it; but had no more power to withdraw the veil than to dismiss the spectre at his side.

Oh cold, cold, rigid, dreadful Death, set up thine altar here, and dress it with such terrors as thou hast at thy command: for this is thy dominion.

But of the loved, **revered**, and honoured head, thou canst not turn one hair to thy dread purposes, or make one feature **odious**.

It is not that the hand is heavy and will fall down when released; it is not that the heart and pulse are still; but that the hand was open, generous, and true; the heart brave, warm, and tender; and the pulse a man's.

Strike, Shadow, strike. And see his good deeds springing from the wound, to sow the world with life immortal!

No voice pronounced these words in Scrooge's ears, and yet he heard them when he looked upon the bed. He thought, if this man could be raised up now, what would be his foremost thoughts. **Avarice**, hard-dealing, **griping** cares. They have brought him to a rich end, truly.

He lay, in the dark empty house, with not a man, a woman, or a child, to say that he was kind to me in this or that, and for the memory of one kind word I will be kind to him. A cat was tearing at the door, and there was a sound of gnawing rats beneath the hearth-stone. What they wanted in the room of death, and why they were so restless and disturbed, Scrooge did not dare to think.

"Spirit," he said, "this is a fearful place. In leaving it, I shall not leave its lesson, trust me. Let us go."

Still the Ghost pointed with an unmoved finger to the head.

"I understand you," Scrooge returned, "and I would do it, if I could. But I have not the power, Spirit. I have not the power."

Again it seemed to look upon him.

"If there is any person in the town, who feels emotion caused by this man's death," said Scrooge quite agonised, "show that person to me, Spirit, I beseech you."

The Phantom spread its dark robe before him for a moment, like a wing; and withdrawing it, revealed a room by daylight, where a mother and her children were.

She was expecting some one, and with anxious eagerness; for she walked up and down the room; started at every sound; looked out from the window and glanced at the clock.

She tried, but in vain, to work with her needle; and could hardly bear the voices of the children in their play.

At length the long-expected knock was heard. She hurried to the door, and met her husband; a man whose face was careworn and depressed, though he was young.

There was a remarkable expression in it now; a kind of serious delight of which he felt ashamed, and which he struggled to **repress**.

He sat down to the dinner that had been boarding for him by the fire. She asked him faintly what news (which was not until after a long silence), and he appeared embarrassed how to answer.

“Is it good?” she said, “or bad?”—to help him.

“Bad,” he answered.

“We are quite ruined.”

“No. There is hope yet, Caroline.”

“If he **relents**,” she said, amazed, “there is. Nothing is past hope, if such a miracle has happened.”

“He is past relenting,” said her husband.
“He is dead.”

She was a mild and patient creature if her face spoke truth; but she was thankful in her soul to hear it, and she said so, with clasped hands.

She prayed forgiveness the next moment, and was sorry; but the first was the emotion of her heart.

“What the woman whom I told you of last night said to me, when I tried to see him and obtain a week’s delay; and what I thought was a mere excuse to avoid me; turns out to have been quite true. He was not only very ill, but dying, then.”

“To whom will our debt be transferred?”

“I don’t know. But before that time we shall be ready with the money; and even though we were not, it would be a bad fortune indeed to find so **merciless** a creditor in his **successor**. We may sleep tonight with light hearts, Caroline.”

Yes. Soften it as they would, their hearts were lighter. The children’s faces, hushed and clustered round to hear what they so little understood, were brighter; and it was a happier house for this man’s death.

The only emotion that the Ghost could show him, caused by the event, was one of pleasure.

“Let me see some tenderness connected with a death,” said Scrooge; “or that dark chamber, Spirit, which we left just now, will be for ever present to me.”

The Ghost conducted him through several streets familiar to his feet; and as they went along, Scrooge looked here and there to find himself, but nowhere was he to be seen.

They entered poor Bob Cratchit's house; the dwelling he had visited before; and found the mother and the children seated round the fire.

Quiet. Very quiet. The noisy little Cratchits were as still as statues in one corner, and sat looking up at Peter, who had a book before him.

The mother and her daughters were engaged in sewing. But surely they were very quiet.

"And he took a child, and set him in the midst of them."

Where had Scrooge heard those words? He had not dreamed them. The boy must have read them out, as he and the Spirit crossed the threshold. Why did he not go on?

The mother laid her work upon the table, and put her hand up to her face.

“The colour hurts my eyes,” she said.

The colour? Ah, poor Tiny Tim.

“They’re better now again,” said Cratchit’s wife. “It makes them weak by candle-light; and I wouldn’t show weak eyes to your father when he comes home, for the world. It must be near his time.”

“Past it rather,” Peter answered, shutting up his book. “But I think he’s walked a little slower than he used, these few last evenings, mother.”

They were very quiet again. At last she said, and in a steady, cheerful voice, that only faltered once:

“I have known him walk with—I have known him walk with Tiny Tim upon his shoulder, very fast indeed.”

“And so have I,” cried Peter. “Often.”

“And so have I,” exclaimed another. So had all.

“But he was very light to carry,” she resumed, intent upon her work, “and his father loved him so, that it was no trouble—no trouble. And there is your father at the door!”

She hurried out to meet him; and little Bob in his comforter—he had need of it, poor fellow—came in. His tea was ready for him on the hob, and they all tried who should help him to it most.

Then the two young Cratchits got upon his knees and laid, each child a little cheek, against his face, as if they said, “Don’t mind it, father. Don’t be **grieved**.”

Bob was very cheerful with them, and spoke pleasantly to all the family. He looked at the work upon the table, and praised the **industry** and speed of Mrs Cratchit and the girls. They would be done long before Sunday, he said.

“Sunday. You went today, then, Robert?” said his wife.

“Yes, my dear,” returned Bob. “I wish you could have gone. It would have done you good to see how green a place it is. But you’ll see it often. I promised him that I would walk there on a Sunday. My little, little child!” cried Bob. “My little child!”

He broke down all at once. He couldn’t help it. If he could have helped it, he and his child would have been farther apart perhaps than they were.

He left the room, and went upstairs into the room above, which was lighted cheerfully, and hung with Christmas. There was a chair set close beside the child, and there were signs of someone having been there, lately.

Poor Bob sat down in it, and when he had thought a little and **composed** himself, he kissed the little face. He was **reconciled** to what had happened, and went down again quite happy.

They drew about the fire, and talked; the girls and mother working still. Bob told them of the extraordinary kindness of Mr Scrooge's nephew, whom he had scarcely seen but once.

Upon meeting him in the street that day, and seeing that he looked—"just a little down you know," said Bob, inquired what had happened to distress him.

"On which," said Bob, "for he is the pleasantest-spoken gentleman you ever heard, I told him. 'I am heartily sorry for it, Mr Cratchit,' he said, 'and heartily sorry for your good wife.' By the bye, how he ever knew that, I don't know."

"Knew what, my dear?"

"Why, that you were a good wife," replied Bob.

“Everybody knows that,” said Peter.

“Very well observed, my boy!” cried Bob. “I hope they do. ‘Heartily sorry,’ he said, ‘for your good wife. If I can be of service to you in any way,’ he said, giving me his card, ‘that’s where I live. Pray come to me.’ Now, it wasn’t,” cried Bob, “for the sake of anything he might be able to do for us, so much as for his kind way, that this was quite delightful. It really seemed as if he had known our Tiny Tim, and felt with us.”

“I’m sure he’s a good soul,” said Mrs Cratchit.

“You would be surer of it, my dear,” returned Bob, “if you saw and spoke to him. I shouldn’t be at all surprised, mark what I say, if he got Peter a better situation.”

“Only hear that, Peter,” said Mrs Cratchit.

“And then,” cried one of the girls, “Peter will be keeping company with someone, and setting up for himself.”

“Get along with you!” retorted Peter, grinning.

“It’s just as likely as not,” said Bob, “one of these days; though there’s plenty of time for that, my dear. But however and whenever we part

from one another, I am sure we shall none of us forget poor Tiny Tim—shall we—or this first parting that there was among us."

"Never, father!" cried they all.

"And," said Bob, "I know, my dears, that when we recollect how patient and mild he was; although he was a little child; we shall not quarrel easily among ourselves, and forget poor Tiny Tim in doing it."

"No, never, father!" they all cried again.

"I am very happy," said little Bob, "I am very happy!"

Mrs Cratchit kissed him, his daughters kissed him, the two young Cratchits kissed him, and Peter and himself shook hands. Spirit of Tiny Tim, thy childish **essence** was from God.

"Spectre," said Scrooge, "something informs me that our parting moment is at hand. I know it, but I know not how. Tell me what man that was whom we saw lying dead."

The Ghost of Christmas Yet To Come conveyed him, as before—though at a different time, he thought: indeed, there seemed no order in these latter visions, save that they were in the Future—

into the resorts of business men, but showed him not himself. Indeed, the Spirit did not stay for anything, but went straight on, as to the end just now desired, until besought by Scrooge to **tarry** for a moment.

“This court,” said Scrooge, “through which we hurry now, is where my place of occupation is, and has been for a length of time. I see the house. Let me behold what I shall be, in days to come.”

The Spirit stopped; the hand was pointed elsewhere.

“The house is yonder,” Scrooge exclaimed.
“Why do you point away?”

The **inexorable** finger underwent no change.

Scrooge hastened to the window of his office, and looked in. It was an office still, but not his. The furniture was not the same, and the figure in the chair was not himself. The Phantom pointed as before.

He joined it once again, and wondering why and whither he had gone, accompanied it until they reached an iron gate. He paused to look round before entering.

A churchyard. Here, then, the wretched man whose name he had now to learn, lay underneath the ground. It was a worthy place. Walled in by houses; overrun by grass and weeds, the growth of vegetation's death, not life; choked up with too much burying; fat with **repleted** appetite. A worthy place!

The Spirit stood among the graves, and pointed down to One. He advanced towards it trembling. The Phantom was exactly as it had been, but he dreaded that he saw new meaning in its solemn shape.

"Before I draw nearer to that stone to which you point," said Scrooge, "answer me one question. Are these the shadows of the things that Will be, or are they shadows of things that May be, only?"

Still the Ghost pointed downward to the grave by which it stood.

"Men's courses will **foreshadow** certain ends, to which, if **persevered** in, they must lead," said Scrooge. "But if the courses be departed from, the ends will change. Say it is thus with what you show me."

The Spirit was immovable as ever.

Scrooge crept towards it, trembling as he went; and following the finger, read upon the stone of the neglected grave his own name,
EBENEZER SCROOGE.

“Am I that man who lay upon the bed?”
he cried, upon his knees.

The finger pointed from the grave to him, and back again.

“No, Spirit! Oh no, no!”

The finger still was there.

“Spirit!” he cried, tight clutching at its robe, “hear me. I am not the man I was. I will not be the man I must have been but for this intercourse. Why show me this, if I am past all hope?”

For the first time the hand appeared to shake.

“Good Spirit,” he pursued, as down upon the ground he fell before it: “Your nature **intercedes** for me, and pities me. Assure me that I yet may change these shadows you have shown me, by an altered life.”

The kind hand trembled.

“I will honour Christmas in my heart, and try to keep it all the year. I will live in the Past, the Present, and the Future. The Spirits of all Three shall **strive** within me. I will not shut out the lessons that they teach. Oh, tell me I may sponge away the writing on this stone!”

In his agony, he caught the spectral hand. It sought to free itself, but he was strong in his entreaty, and detained it. The Spirit, stronger yet, repulsed him.

Holding up his hands in a last prayer to have his fate aye reversed, he saw an alteration in the Phantom’s hood and dress. It shrunk, collapsed, and dwindled down into a bedpost.



Glossary

avarice (<i>n.</i>)	intense desire for money or things; greed (p. 5)
bereft (<i>adj.</i>)	sad and lonely, often because of loss (p. 3)
beseech (<i>v.</i>)	to beg or plead for something (p. 6)
composed (<i>v.</i>)	got one's emotions under control; calmed oneself (p. 12)
dwelling (<i>n.</i>)	a building or shelter in which people live; a residence (p. 9)
essence (<i>n.</i>)	a basic characteristic or feature of something (p. 14)
foreshadow (<i>v.</i>)	to suggest or be a sign of something that will happen in the future (p. 16)
grieved (<i>v.</i>)	showed great suffering or sadness (p. 11)
gripping (<i>adj.</i>)	pinching or holding tightly (p. 5)
industry (<i>n.</i>)	steady hard work (p. 11)
inexorable (<i>adj.</i>)	unable to be altered or stopped (p. 15)
intercedes (<i>v.</i>)	comes between two or more people or groups to help settle a disagreement or prevent problems; speaks or acts in the defense of someone else (p. 17)

merciless (<i>adj.</i>)	without kindness, forgiveness, or sympathy; pitiless (p. 8)
obedience (<i>n.</i>)	the act of following rules or doing what one is told (p. 3)
odious (<i>adj.</i>)	extremely unpleasant or hateful (p. 4)
persevered (<i>v.</i>)	continued doing something despite challenges or obstacles (p. 16)
reconciled (<i>v.</i>)	caused to accept an unpleasant situation (p. 12)
relents (<i>v.</i>)	agrees to something one has resisted or refused before; becomes less severe (p. 7)
repleted (<i>adj.</i>)	full of food (p. 16)
repress (<i>v.</i>)	to not allow oneself to think, feel, or express something (p. 6)
revered (<i>adj.</i>)	deeply respected or held in high esteem (p. 4)
strive (<i>v.</i>)	to make a serious effort to achieve something (p. 18)
successor (<i>n.</i>)	something that comes after or replaces something else (p. 8)
tarry (<i>v.</i>)	move slowly or delay (p. 15)

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A Reading A-Z Level Z2 Leveled Book

Word Count: 2,631

Connections

Writing

What changes can Scrooge make in his life to avoid the future he has observed? Write your own ending to the story that presents an alternate future.

Social Studies

Research Debtors' Prisons in nineteenth-century London. Write a persuasive letter stating your opinion about these institutions.

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