

# A Christmas Carol

A Reading A-Z Level Z2 Leveled Book

Word Count: 2,460

LEVELED BOOK • Z<sup>2</sup>

# A Christmas Carol

Part 3

## Connections

### Writing and Art

Write a journal entry from Scrooge's point of view. Describe what he might be thinking and feeling at this point in the story.

### Social Studies

Research what a child's life might have been like in London during the early 1800s. Write a description comparing his or her life then to your life now.

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Adapted from the Writings of Charles Dickens  
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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 a person's childhood affect his or her life as an adult?

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## Words to Know

condescension	neglected
conveyed	preposterous
diminished	reclamation
emanating	resolved
endeavouring	supplication
lustrous	welfare

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### Correlation

#### LEVEL Z2

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



*In Part 2 of A Christmas Carol, Scrooge is visited by the chained ghost of Jacob Marley. Marley warns Scrooge that he will be visited by three spirits who may help him avoid a similar fate—if he is willing to listen.*

**W**hen Scrooge awoke, it was so dark, that looking out of bed, he could scarcely distinguish the transparent window from the opaque walls of his chamber. He was **endeavouring** to pierce the darkness with his ferret eyes, when the chimes of a neighbouring church struck the four quarters. So he listened for the hour.

To his great astonishment the heavy bell went on from six to seven, and from seven to eight, and regularly up to twelve; then stopped. Twelve. It was past two when he went to bed. The clock was wrong. An icicle must have got into the works. Twelve!



He touched the spring of his pocket watch, to correct this most **preposterous** clock. Its rapid little pulse beat twelve: and stopped.

“Why, it isn’t possible,” said Scrooge, “that I can have slept through a whole day and far into another night. It isn’t possible that anything has happened to the sun, and this is twelve at noon!”

The idea being an alarming one, he scrambled out of bed, and groped his way to the window. He was obliged to rub the frost off with the sleeve of his dressing-gown before he could see anything; and could see very little then. All he could make out was, that it was still very foggy and extremely cold. There was no noise of people running to and fro, as there unquestionably would have been if night had beaten off bright day.

Scrooge went to bed again, and thought, and thought, and thought it over and over and over, and could make nothing of it. The more he thought, the more perplexed he was; and the more he endeavoured not to think, the more he thought. Marley’s Ghost bothered him exceedingly. Every time he **resolved** that it was all a dream, his mind flew back again to its first position, and presented the same problem, “Was it a dream or not?”

Scrooge lay in this state until the chimes had gone three quarters more, when he remembered that the Ghost had warned him of a visitation when the bell tolled one. He resolved to lie awake until the hour was past. Considering that he could no more go to sleep than go to Heaven, this was perhaps the wisest resolution in his power.

The quarter was so long, that he was more than once convinced he must have sunk into a doze unconsciously, and missed the clock. At length it broke upon his listening ear.

“Ding, dong!”

“A quarter past,” said Scrooge, counting.

“Ding, dong!”

“Half past!” said Scrooge.

“Ding, dong!”

“A quarter to it,” said Scrooge.

“Ding, dong!”

“The hour itself,” said Scrooge, triumphantly, “and nothing else!”

He spoke before the hour bell sounded, which it now did with a deep, dull, hollow, melancholy One.

Light flashed up in the room upon the instant, and the curtains of his bed were drawn.

The curtains of his bed were drawn aside, I tell you, by a hand. Not the curtains at his feet, nor the curtains at his back, but those to which his face was addressed. The curtains of his bed were drawn aside; and Scrooge found himself face to face with the unearthly visitor who drew them. It was a strange figure—like a child: yet not so like a child as like an old man, viewed through some supernatural medium.

This gave him the appearance of having receded from the view, and being **diminished** to a child’s proportions. Its hair, which hung about its neck and down its back, was white as if with age; and yet the face had not a wrinkle in it. The arms were very long and muscular; the hands the same, as if its hold were of uncommon strength. Its legs and feet, most delicately formed, were, like those upper members, bare.

It wore a tunic of the purest white, and round its waist was bound a **lustrous** belt, the sheen of which was beautiful. It held a branch of fresh green holly in its hand; and, in singular contradiction of that wintry emblem, had its dress trimmed with summer flowers. But the strangest thing about it was, that from the crown of its head there sprung

a bright clear jet of light, by which all this was visible. It held under its arm a cap, its purpose being to extinguish the light **emanating** from its head.

Even this, though, when Scrooge looked at it with increasing steadiness, was not its strangest quality. For as its belt sparkled and glittered now in one part and now in another, and what was light one instant, at another time was dark. The figure itself fluctuated in its distinctness: being now a thing with one arm, now with one leg, now with twenty legs, now a pair of legs without a head, now a head without a body. And in the very wonder of this, it would be itself again; distinct and clear as ever.

“Are you the Spirit, sir, whose coming was foretold to me?” asked Scrooge.

“I am.”

The voice was soft and gentle. Singularly low, as if instead of being so close beside him, it were at a distance.

“Who, and what are you?” Scrooge demanded.

“I am the Ghost of Christmas Past.”

“Long Past?” inquired Scrooge: observant of its dwarfish stature.

“No. Your past.”

Scrooge had a special desire to see the Spirit in his cap; and begged him to be covered.

“What!” exclaimed the Ghost. “Would you so soon put out, with worldly hands, the light I give? Is it not enough that you are one of those whose passions made this cap, and force me through whole trains of years to wear it low upon my brow!”

Scrooge reverently disclaimed all intention to offend the Spirit at any period of his life. He then made bold to inquire what business brought him there.

“Your **welfare**,” said the Ghost.

Scrooge expressed himself much obliged, but could not help thinking that a night of unbroken rest would have been more conducive to that end. The Spirit must have heard him thinking, for it said immediately:

“Your **reclamation**, then. Take heed.”

It put out its strong hand as it spoke, and clasped him gently by the arm.

“Rise. And walk with me.”

It would have been in vain for Scrooge to plead that the weather and the hour were not adapted to pedestrian purposes. Or that the bed was warm and the thermometer a long way below freezing. Or that he was clad but lightly in his slippers, dressing-gown, and nightcap; and that he had a cold upon him at that time. The grasp, though gentle as a woman's hand, was not to be resisted. He rose: but finding that the Spirit made towards the window, clasped his robe in **supplication**.

"I am mortal," Scrooge remonstrated, "and liable to fall."

"Bear but a touch of my hand there," said the Spirit, laying it upon his heart, "and you shall be upheld in more than this."

As the words were spoken, they passed through the wall, and stood upon an open country road, with fields on either hand. The city had entirely vanished. Not a vestige of it was to be seen. The darkness and the mist had vanished with it, for it was a clear, cold, winter day, with snow upon the ground.

"Good Heaven!" said Scrooge, clasping his hands together, as he looked about him. "I was bred in this place. I was a boy here."

The Spirit gazed upon him mildly. Its gentle touch, though it had been light and instantaneous, appeared still present to the old man's sense of feeling. He was conscious of a thousand odours floating in the air, each one connected with a thousand thoughts, and hopes, and joys, and cares long, long, forgotten.

"Your lip is trembling," said the Ghost. "And what is that upon your cheek?"

Scrooge muttered, with an unusual catching in his voice, that it was a pimple; and begged the Ghost to lead him where he would.

"You recollect the way?" inquired the Spirit.

"Remember it!" cried Scrooge with fervour. "I could walk it blindfold."

"Strange to have forgotten it for so many years," observed the Ghost. "Let us go on."

They walked along the road, Scrooge recognising every gate, and post, and tree; until a little market-town appeared in the distance, with its bridge, its church, and winding river. Some shaggy ponies now were seen trotting towards them with boys upon their backs, who called to other boys in country gigs and carts, driven by farmers. All these boys were in great spirits, and shouted to each

other, until the broad fields were so full of merry music, that the crisp air laughed to hear it.

“These are but shadows of the things that have been,” said the Ghost. “They have no consciousness of us.”

The jolly travellers came on; and as they came, Scrooge knew and named them every one. Why was he rejoiced beyond all bounds to see them! Why did his cold eye glisten, and his heart leap up as they went past? Why was he filled with gladness when he heard them give each other Merry Christmas, as they parted at crossroads and byways, for their several homes? What was merry Christmas to Scrooge? Out upon merry Christmas! What good had it ever done to him?

“The school is not quite deserted,” said the Ghost. “A solitary child, **neglected** by his friends, is left there still.”

Scrooge said he knew it. And he sobbed.

They left the high-road, by a well-remembered lane, and soon approached a mansion of dull red brick, with a little weather-vane-surmounted cupola, on the roof, and a bell hanging in it. It was a large house, but one of broken fortunes; for the spacious offices were little used. Their walls were

damp and mossy, their windows broken, and their gates decayed. Fowls clucked and strutted in the stables; and the coach-houses and sheds were over-run with grass. Nor was it more retentive of its ancient state, within; for entering the dreary hall, and glancing through the open doors of many rooms, they found them poorly furnished, cold, and vast. There was an earthy savour in the air, a chilly bareness in the place, which associated itself somehow with too much getting up by candle-light, and not too much to eat.

They went, the Ghost and Scrooge, across the hall, to a door at the back of the house. It opened before them, and disclosed a long, bare, melancholy room, made barer still by lines of plain deal forms and desks. At one of these a lonely boy was reading near a feeble fire; and Scrooge sat down and wept to see his poor forgotten self as he used to be.

Then, with a rapidity of transition very foreign to his usual character, he said, in pity for his former self, “Poor boy!” and cried again.

“I wish,” Scrooge muttered, putting his hand in his pocket, and looking about him, after drying his eyes with his cuff: “but it’s too late now.”

“What is the matter?” asked the Spirit.

“Nothing,” said Scrooge. “Nothing. There was a

boy singing a Christmas Carol at my door last night. I should like to have given him something: that's all."

The Ghost smiled thoughtfully, and waved its hand: saying as it did so, "Let us see another Christmas!"

Scrooge's former self grew larger at the words, and the room became a little darker and more dirty. The panels shrunk, the windows cracked; fragments of plaster fell out of the ceiling, and the naked laths were shown instead. How all this was brought about, Scrooge knew no more than you do. He only knew that it was quite correct; that everything had happened so; that there he was, alone again, when all the other boys had gone home for the jolly holidays.

He was not reading now, but walking up and down despairingly. Scrooge looked at the Ghost, and with a mournful shaking of his head, glanced anxiously towards the door.

It opened; and a little girl, much younger than the boy, came darting in, and put her arms about his neck. She kissed him often, and addressed him as her "Dear, dear brother."

"I have come to bring you home, dear brother!" said the child, clapping her tiny hands, and

bending down to laugh. "To bring you home, home, home!"

"Home, little Fan?" returned the boy.

"Yes!" said the child, brimful of glee. "Home, for good and all. Home, for ever and ever. Father is so much kinder than he used to be, that home's like Heaven! He spoke so gently to me one dear night when I was going to bed, that I was not afraid to ask him once more if you might come home. He said Yes, you should; and sent me in a coach to bring you. And you're to be a man!" said the child, opening her eyes, "and are never to come back here. But first, we're to be together all the Christmas long, and have the merriest time in all the world."

"You are quite a woman, little Fan!" exclaimed the boy.

She clapped her hands and laughed, and tried to touch his head; but being too little, laughed again, and stood on tiptoe to embrace him. Then she began to drag him, in her childish eagerness, towards the door; and he, nothing loth to go, accompanied her.

A terrible voice in the hall cried, "Bring down Master Scrooge's box, there!" And in the hall appeared the schoolmaster himself, who glared



on Master Scrooge with a ferocious **condescension**, and threw him into a dreadful state of mind by shaking hands with him. He then **conveyed** him and his sister into a shivering parlour, where the maps upon the wall, and the celestial and terrestrial globes in the windows, were waxy with cold. Here he produced a decanter of curiously light wine, and a block of curiously heavy cake. Master Scrooge's trunk being by this time tied on to the top of the carriage, the children bade the schoolmaster good-bye right willingly. They drove gaily down the garden-sweep: the quick wheels dashing the hoar-frost and snow from off the dark leaves of the evergreens like spray.

"Always a delicate creature, whom a breath might have withered," said the Ghost. "But she had a large heart!"

"So she had," cried Scrooge. "You're right. I'll not deny it, Spirit. God forbid!"

"She died a woman," said the Ghost, "and had, as I think, children."

"One child," Scrooge returned.

"True," said the Ghost. "Your nephew!"

Scrooge seemed uneasy in his mind; and answered briefly, "Yes."

## Glossary

<b>condescension</b> (n.)	the behavior or attitude of one who thinks he or she is better than others (p. 15)
<b>conveyed</b> (v.)	to accompany (take) or carry something to a new location (p. 15)
<b>diminished</b> (v.)	got smaller or became less (p. 6)
<b>emanating</b> (v.)	coming out of or being released from something (p. 7)
<b>endeavouring</b> (v.)	making an effort to achieve something ( <i>British spelling</i> ) (p. 3)
<b>lustrous</b> (adj.)	having a glossy shine especially from the reflection of light (p. 6)
<b>neglected</b> (v.)	failed to care for someone or something properly (p. 11)
<b>preposterous</b> (adj.)	extremely foolish or ridiculous; going against common sense (p. 4)
<b>reclamation</b> (n.)	the act of recovering or restoring (p. 8)
<b>resolved</b> (v.)	decided; settled a disagreement or found a solution to a problem (p. 4)
<b>supplication</b> (n.)	a respectful request; the act of asking for something (p. 9)
<b>welfare</b> (n.)	the state of health, happiness, and good fortune of a person (p. 8)