

A Christmas Carol

A Reading A-Z Level Z2 Leveled Book
Word Count: 2,138

LEVELED BOOK • Z²

A Christmas Carol

Part 5

Connections

Writing

Write an essay describing how the setting shapes the tone of the story in Part 5. Use details from the text to explain.

Math

A *bob* is another name for an English coin called a *shilling*. Research currencies and conversions. Determine how much fifteen bob is worth today.



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Adapted from the Writings of Charles Dickens
Illustrated by Yevgenia Nayberg

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Glossary

demeanour (<i>n.</i>)	the way or manner in which a person behaves (<i>British Spelling</i>) (p. 7)
diffuse (<i>v.</i>)	to spread (p. 9)
dogged (<i>adj.</i>)	determined to achieve a goal; stubborn (p. 6)
facetious (<i>adj.</i>)	having or showing a humorous attitude toward serious issues, often inappropriately (p. 9)
genial (<i>adj.</i>)	cheerful and friendly; pleasant (p. 7)
jostled (<i>v.</i>)	knocked around; bumped into (p. 12)
opulence (<i>n.</i>)	great wealth, abundance, or luxury (p. 9)
petrification (<i>n.</i>)	the process by which something changes into rock or a rocklike material over a long time (p. 5)
prodigiously (<i>adv.</i>)	extremely (p. 3)
reverently (<i>adv.</i>)	respectfully (p. 6)
scabbard (<i>n.</i>)	a close-fitting cover for the blade of a dagger, sword, or bayonet (p. 7)
seething (<i>adj.</i>)	very hot (p. 6)

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

What does the Ghost of Christmas Present represent?

Words to Know

demeanour	opulence
diffuse	petrification
dogged	prodigiously
facetious	reverently
genial	scabbard
jostled	seething

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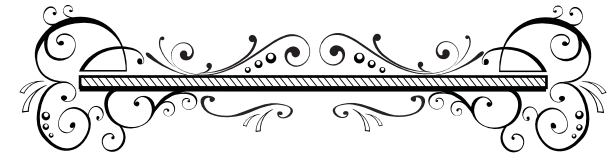
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Correlation

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

For there he went, and took Scrooge with him, holding to his robe; and on the threshold of the door the Spirit smiled, and stopped to bless Bob Cratchit's dwelling with the sprinkling of his torch. Think of that. Bob had but fifteen bob a week himself; he pocketed on Saturdays but fifteen copies of his Christian name; and yet the Ghost of Christmas Present blessed his four-roomed house.



“Forgive me if I am wrong. It has been done in your name, or at least in that of your family,” said Scrooge.

“There are some upon this earth of yours,” returned the Spirit, “who lay claim to know us, and who do their deeds of passion, pride, ill-will, hatred, envy, bigotry, and selfishness in our name. They are as strange to us and all our kith and kin, as if they had never lived. Remember that, and charge their doings on themselves, not us.”

Scrooge promised that he would; and they went on, invisible, as they had been before, into the suburbs of the town. It was a remarkable quality of the Ghost (which Scrooge had observed at the baker’s), that notwithstanding his gigantic size, he could accommodate himself to any place with ease. That he stood beneath a low roof quite as gracefully and like a supernatural creature, as it was possible he could have done in any lofty hall.

And perhaps it was the pleasure the good Spirit had in showing off this power of his, or else it was his own kind, generous, hearty nature, and his sympathy with all poor men, that led him straight to Scrooge’s clerk’s.



In Part 4 of A Christmas Carol, Scrooge’s journey with the Ghost of Christmas Past continues with a holiday party from his youth, and a reminder of how his greed led to a break-up with Belle, the love of his life. We get a glimpse of her happy life without Scrooge.

Awaking in the middle of a prodigiously tough snore, and sitting up in bed to get his thoughts together, Scrooge had no occasion to be told that the bell was again upon the stroke of One. He felt that he was restored to consciousness in the right nick of time, for the especial purpose of holding a conference with the second messenger dispatched to him through Jacob Marley’s intervention. But, he found that he turned uncomfortably cold when he began to wonder which of his curtains this new spectre would draw back.

So Scrooge put every one aside with his own hands, and lying down again, established a sharp look-out all round the bed. For he wished to challenge the Spirit on the moment of its appearance, and did not wish to be taken by surprise, and made nervous. Scrooge was ready for a good broad field of strange appearances, and nothing between a baby and rhinoceros would have astonished him very much.

Now, being prepared for almost anything, he was not by any means prepared for nothing; and, consequently, when the Bell struck One, and no shape appeared, he was taken with a violent fit of trembling. Five minutes, ten minutes, a quarter of an hour went by, yet nothing came.

All this time, he lay upon his bed, the very core and centre of a blaze of ruddy light, which streamed upon it when the clock proclaimed the hour; and which, being only light, was more alarming than a dozen ghosts. He was powerless to make out what it meant. At last, however, he began to think that the source and secret of this ghostly light might be in the adjoining room, from whence, on further tracing it, it seemed to shine.

"Is there a peculiar flavour in what you sprinkle from your torch?" asked Scrooge.

"There is. My own."

"Would it apply to any kind of dinner on this day?" asked Scrooge.

"To any kindly given. To a poor one most."

"Why to a poor one most?" asked Scrooge.

"Because it needs it most."

"Spirit," said Scrooge, after a moment's thought, "I wonder you, of all the beings in the many worlds about us, should desire to cramp these people's opportunities of innocent enjoyment."

"I!" cried the Spirit.

"You would deprive them of their means of dining every seventh day, often the only day on which they can be said to dine at all," said Scrooge. "Wouldn't you?"

"I!" cried the Spirit.

"You seek to close these places on the Seventh Day," said Scrooge. "And it comes to the same thing."

"I seek!" exclaimed the Spirit.

But soon the steeples called good people all, to church and chapel, and away they came, flocking through the streets in their best clothes, and with their gayest faces. And at the same time there emerged from scores of bystreets, lanes, and nameless turnings, innumerable people, carrying their dinners to the bakers' shops.

The sight of these poor revellers appeared to interest the Spirit very much, for he stood with Scrooge beside him in a baker's doorway, and taking off the covers as their bearers passed, sprinkled incense on their dinners from his torch.

And it was a very uncommon kind of torch, for once or twice when there were angry words between some dinner-carriers who had **jostled** each other, he shed a few drops of water on them from it, and their good humour was restored directly. For they said, it was a shame to quarrel upon Christmas Day. And so it was. God love it, so it was.

In time the bells ceased, and the bakers were shut up. Yet there was a genial shadowing forth of all these dinners and the progress of their cooking, in the thawed blotch of wet above each baker's oven; where the pavement smoked as if its stones were cooking too.

This idea taking full possession of his mind, he got up softly and shuffled in his slippers to the door.

The moment Scrooge's hand was on the lock, a strange voice called him by his name, and bade him enter. He obeyed.

It was his own room. There was no doubt about that. But it had undergone a surprising transformation. The walls and ceiling were so hung with living green, that it looked a perfect grove; from every part of which, bright gleaming berries glistened.

The crisp leaves of holly, mistletoe, and ivy reflected back the light, as if so many little mirrors had been scattered there. Such a mighty blaze went roaring up the chimney, as that dull **petrification** of a hearth had never known in Scrooge's time, or Marley's, or for many and many a winter season gone.

Heaped up on the floor, to form a kind of throne, were turkeys, geese, game, poultry, brawn, great joints of meat, sucking-pigs, and long wreaths of sausages.

There were mince-pies, plum-puddings, barrels of oysters, red-hot chestnuts, cherry-cheeked apples, juicy oranges, luscious pears, immense twelfth-cakes, and **seething** bowls of punch that made the chamber dim with their delicious steam.

Upon the couch, there sat a jolly Giant, glorious to see, who bore a glowing torch, and held it up to shed its light on Scrooge, as he came peeping round the door.

“Come in!” exclaimed the Ghost. “Come in, and know me better, man!”

Scrooge entered timidly, and hung his head before this Spirit. He was not the **dogged** Scrooge he had been; and though the Spirit’s eyes were clear and kind, he did not like to meet them.

“I am the Ghost of Christmas Present,” said the Spirit. “Look upon me.”

Scrooge **reverently** did so. It was clothed in one simple green robe, or mantle, bordered with white fur. This garment hung so loosely on the figure, that its capacious breast was bare, as if disdaining to be warded or concealed by any artifice.

Or that the canisters were rattled up and down like juggling tricks, or even that the blended scents of tea and coffee were so grateful to the nose. Or even that the raisins were so plentiful and rare, the almonds so extremely white, the sticks of cinnamon so long and straight, the other spices so delicious, the candied fruits so caked and spotted with molten sugar as to make the coldest lookers-on feel faint and then nauseous.

Nor was it that the figs were moist and pulpy, or that the French plums blushed in modest tartness from their highly-decorated boxes, or that everything was good to eat and in its Christmas dress. But the customers were all so hurried and so eager in the hopeful promise of the day, that they tumbled up against each other at the door, clashing their wicker baskets wildly.

They left their purchases upon the counter, and came running back to fetch them, and committed hundreds of the like mistakes, in the best humour possible. Meanwhile the Grocer and his people were so frank and fresh that the polished hearts with which they fastened their aprons behind might have been their own, worn outside for general inspection.

There were ruddy, brown-faced, broad-girthed Spanish Onions winking from their shelves in wanton slyness at the girls as they went by, and glanced demurely at the hung-up mistletoe.

There were pears and apples, clustered high in blooming pyramids; there were bunches of grapes, made, in the shopkeepers' benevolence to dangle from conspicuous hooks, that people's mouths might water gratis as they passed.

There were piles of filberts, mossy and brown, recalling, in their fragrance, ancient walks among the woods, and pleasant shufflings ankle deep through withered leaves. There were red apples setting off the yellow of the oranges and lemons, and, in the great compactness of their juicy persons, urgently entreating and beseeching to be carried home and eaten after dinner.

The Grocers'! Oh the Grocers'! Nearly closed, with perhaps two shutters down, or one; but through those gaps such glimpses. It was not alone that the scales descending on the counter made a merry sound, or that the twine and roller parted company so briskly.

Its feet, observable beneath the ample folds of the garment, were also bare; and on its head it wore no other covering than a holly wreath, set here and there with shining icicles. Its dark brown curls were long and free; free as its **genial** face, its sparkling eye, its open hand, its cheery voice, its unconstrained **demeanour**, and its joyful air.

Girded round its middle was an antique **scabbard**; but no sword was in it, and the ancient sheath was eaten up with rust.

"You have never seen the like of me before!" exclaimed the Spirit.

"Never," Scrooge made answer to it.

"Have never walked forth with the younger members of my family; meaning (for I am very young) my elder brothers born in these later years?" pursued the Phantom.

"I don't think I have," said Scrooge. "I am afraid I have not. Have you had many brothers, Spirit?"

"More than eighteen hundred," said the Ghost.

"A tremendous family to provide for," muttered Scrooge.

The Ghost of Christmas Present rose.

“Spirit,” said Scrooge submissively, “conduct me where you will. I went forth last night on compulsion, and I learnt a lesson which is working now. Tonight, if you have aught to teach me, let me profit by it.”

“Touch my robe.”

Scrooge did as he was told, and held it fast.

Holly, mistletoe, red berries, ivy, turkeys, geese, game, poultry, brawn, meat, pigs, sausages, oysters, pies, puddings, fruit, and punch, all vanished instantly. So did the room, the fire, the ruddy glow, and the hour of night.

They stood in the city streets on Christmas morning, where (for the weather was severe) the people made a rough, but brisk and not unpleasant kind of music, in scraping the snow from the pavement in front of their dwellings, and from the tops of their houses.

The house fronts looked black enough, and the windows blacker, contrasting with the smooth white sheet of snow upon the roofs, and with the dirtier snow upon the ground.

The sky was gloomy, and the shortest streets were choked up with a dingy mist, half thawed, half frozen, whose heavier particles descended in a shower of sooty atoms.

It was as if all the chimneys in Great Britain had, by one consent, caught fire, and were blazing away to their dear hearts’ content. There was nothing very cheerful in the climate or the town, and yet was there an air of cheerfulness abroad that the clearest summer air and brightest summer sun might have endeavoured to **diffuse** in vain.

For, the people who were shovelling away on the housetops were jovial and full of glee; calling out to one another from the parapets. Now and then they’d exchange a **facetious** snowball—laughing heartily if it went right and not less heartily if it went wrong.

The poulterers’ shops were still half open, and the fruiterers’ were radiant in their glory. There were great, round, pot-bellied baskets of chestnuts, shaped like the waistcoats of jolly old gentlemen, lolling at the doors, and tumbling out into the street in their apoplectic **opulence**.