

A Christmas Carol Revision Booklet

Characters

Ebenezer Scrooge – protagonist

Jacob Marley – Scrooge's dead business partner

Fred – Scrooge's nephew

Bob Cratchit – Scrooge's poor, underpaid clerk

Cratchit family – Mrs Cratchit, Tiny Tim and other children

Ghost of Christmas Past – spirit who revisits Scrooge's past with him

Fanny – Scrooge's sister

Belle – Scrooge's fiancé as a young man

Fezziwig – Scrooge's first boss

Ghost of Christmas Present - spirit who visits a contemporary Christmas with Scrooge

Ignorance and Want – two children representing the hopeless poor

Ghost of Christmas Yet to Come - spirit who reveals Scrooge's future to him

Pawnbroker, cleaner and washer woman – minor characters who steal from Scrooge when he's dead

Characteristics (Clear Focus)

Ebenezer Scrooge – remorseless, unrepentant, miser, misanthropic, cold hearted, uncharitable, remorseful, joyful, charitable, repentant

Fred - generous, kind-hearted, charitable, altruistic, benevolent

Bob Cratchit – humble, moral, submissive, grateful, hardworking, affectionate

Jacob Marley – ominous, foreboding, regretful

Ghost of Christmas Past – symbolic of light, redemption, memory

Ghost of Christmas Present – jolly, jovial, welcoming, hospitable, peaceful

Ghost of Christmas Future - ominous, fearsome, intimidating, menacing, sinister, threatening

Key Words

Supernatural

Redemption

Regret

remorse

Victorian

Social Responsibility

Christmas Spirit

Misanthrope/Misanthropic

Benevolent

Antithesis

Transformation

Dickens

Poverty

Malthusian (Thomas Malthus)

Omniscient narrator

Avaricious

Miserly

Context/Writer's Intentions

Dickens' Life

- Dickens' childhood was spent in poverty. His father borrowed money and was unable to pay it back and therefore was sent to debtor's prison.
- Dickens' mother moved seven of their children inside the prison but arranged for Dickens to live alone and work in a blacking warehouse. This experience was traumatic for Dickens – both the isolation and the labour.

- When Dickens' father got out of prison, Dickens went back to school eventually becoming a law clerk, journalist and novelist.
- Dickens reveals the effects of poverty particularly on children through the Cratchit children

Industrial England

- Victorian England was characterised by the industrial revolution – the change from agriculture to industry.
- The industrial revolution gave rise to the economic system of capitalism. This meant it brought wealth to England but these were unevenly distributed.
- The industrial revolution led to the exploitation of the poor – they worked long hours for low wages in terrible conditions. Young children did not go to school; they worked in factories, usually doing the most dangerous jobs.
- Many moved to industrial cities for work but housing was inadequate and clean water and sanitation poor which led to disease and low life expectancy. Working and living conditions in large industrial towns and cities appalled Dickens.

Attitudes to Poverty

- The Victorian era was one of horrible poverty.
- Whilst some wealthy Victorians were charitable, there was the belief that people were poor because of laziness or bad character.
- The "deserving poor" - poor through circumstances beyond his or her control
- The "undeserving poor", poor because of bad character.
- In 1834, the Poor Law Amendment Act was passed. If people wanted help they had to go into a workhouse to get it. Families were split up inside the workhouse. Conditions were made so terrible that only those people who desperately needed help would go there. Many viewed workhouses as 'prisons for the poor.'
- Thomas Malthus, a Victorian economist, argued that the population would grow more quickly than the production of food and therefore there would be a surplus of people who would not be fed. According to Malthus, these are the poor. He suggested the poor should not be given aid and this will decrease life expectancy.
- Dickens also shows the poor as hardworking and 'deserving' through the Cratchits.

Key Messages/Themes

- Social Responsibility – class differences and the responsibility of the rich to aid the poor with charity and education
- Effects of poverty are detrimental for both the poor and the rich (Ignorance and Want)
- Christmas Spirit – charity, kindness, love, gratitude, family – needed all year round – fundamental to eradicate poverty

Key Quotations and Writer's Methods:

Tight fisted...old sinner. Hard and sharp as flint

- Metaphor – mean, grasping, avaricious
- Religious allusion to the idea that charity and giving to the poor is a Christian virtue and command – challenges the religious hypocrisy of the wealthy and exposes their greed
- Simile – reflects Scrooge's mean, cruel, callous persona – ironically flint is used to strike a spark that creates warmth and fire but Scrooge is personified as being cold like ice

'Squeezing, wrenching, grasping, scraping, clutching, covetous old sinner!'

- Dickens introduces the motif of hands to reveal Scrooge's miserly ways
- This listing of adjectives suggests Scrooge is avaricious as he is literally and metaphorically holding onto money

'He edged his way along the crowded paths of life'

- This metaphor reveals Scrooge is misanthropic and he deliberately isolates himself from others and instead 'edges his way' through life.

'His eye sparkled and his breath smoked'

- Dickens presents Fred as physically warm and charming to reflect his jovial character
- Fred is shown as the antithesis to the miserly and misanthropic Scrooge

'If they be like to die, they had better do and decrease the surplus population'

- Dickens uses Scrooge to reveal the popularity and callousness of Malthusian ideas about the poor

'I wear the chains I forged in life'

- Marley wears heavy chains which are emblematic of his sins in life as a result of his capitalist greed
- The verb 'forged' suggests they are his creation and his torturous fate is a consequence of his actions

If that spirit goes not forth in life, it is condemned to do so after death...to wander through the world

- Marley's ominous prediction of what will happen to Scrooge if he doesn't change
- Idea of eternal punishment for sins of miserliness, cruelty and exploitation of the poor.

'Mankind was my business...the dealings of my trade were but a drop of water in the comprehensive ocean of my business!'

- Marley is teaching Scrooge lessons about the inequality in society and provoking his change
- The metaphor comparing trade to a 'drop of water' suggests trade or business are insignificant in the 'ocean' of life – Christmas spirit of charity, love, generosity

'Bright clear jet of light'

- The light streaming of the ghost is symbolic of the illumination that will come when Scrooge learns from the mistakes of his past
- It is referred to as a jet to reveal the force and power of the ghost

'Feeble fire'

- The fire in the school house is 'feeble' to reveal Scrooge's loneliness and misery
- This links to the 'very much smaller' fire Scrooge allows for his clerk, Bob Cratchit
- Fire is a motif revealing a character's emotional warmth or lack thereof

'He laughed all over himself'

- This metaphor reveals Fezziwig's jovial personality with his happiness spilling out to others

'Fuel heaped on the fire'

- Unlike Scrooge who gives his employee a fire that 'looked like one coal', Fezziwig generously heaps the fire on revealing his benevolence

'He could not hide the light which streamed from under it in an unbroken flood upon the ground'

- The light streaming from the ghost is painful for Scrooge as it illuminates the mistakes of his past
- The metaphor compares light to a flood showing the force and power of the memories the ghost has shown to Scrooge
- Tone of reproach – accusing Scrooge of hiding from the truth of his cruel actions to the poor and vulnerable

He has the power to render us happy or unhappy

- Scrooge recognises Fezziwig's responsibility to care for his employers and this makes Scrooge feel guilty about his treatment of Bob.

Another idol has displaced me, a golden one

- Belle makes a biblical allusion to Scrooge valuing money above God and love for his family/friend
- The metaphor implies Scrooge has forgotten his Christian values and will suffer in misery

Would you so soon put out with worldly hands the light I give?

- Metaphor of light – motif throughout the novella – brings hope, truth, redemption – understanding his failings and seeing a new way of behaving enables Scrooge to change

- Rhetorical question – challenges the reader to accept Dickens' warning that Scrooge and Marley's fate could be theirs if they don't change.

'Its sparkling eye, its open hand'

- The ghost is vibrant to reveal its congeniality.
- Its open hand symbolises the ghost's generosity

Remember on Christmas Day who lame beggars walk and blind men see

- Tiny Tim makes a biblical allusion to Jesus and the Christmas message of forgiveness and charity
- Shows Tiny Tim as the archetypal perfect Victorian poor child who is accepting of his fate/illness making the reader feel guilt and empathy

'Horn of plenty'

- This, along with the marketplace, reveals the plentiful nature of food to dispel Malthusian ideas of food scarcity

'Withered little hand'

- The motif of hands is used to reveal the vulnerability of Tiny Tim

'Circled around the fire'

- The motif of fire is used to show the warmth and joviality of the Cratchit family despite their poverty
- Dickens uses Tiny Tim to reveal the inequality of Industrial Britain and to urge his Victorian readers to change their attitudes towards the poor

'The phantom slowly, gravely, silently approached'

- This spirit is referred to as a phantom to show the fear it instils in Scrooge and the reader
- The listing of adverbs builds an ominous atmosphere

'Oh tell me I sponge away the writing on this stone!'

- Scrooge pleads with the ghost for the chance of redemption
- He wants to metaphorically 'sponge away' the future that has been shown to him

'Neglected grave'

- Scrooge will face the consequences of his misanthropic lifestyle after death if he does not seek redemption

I will not be the man I must have been...I will honour Christmas in my heart

- Scrooge's declaration to change and be kind, joyful, generous and charitable to others

'As light as a feather, as merry as a school boy'

- These similes show Scrooge's redemption
- Scrooge is now 'light' and no longer faces the heavy burden of Marley's chains
- He is also compared to a school boy to show he is now reborn

'Make up the fires!'

- The motif of fire indicates Scrooge's redemption
- He no longer hoards coal and instead insists Bob should 'Make up the fires' he is now sharing both literal and emotional warmth

Good a friend, as good a master, as good a man

- Repetition of 'good' contrasts with Scrooge as a cruel miser at the beginning of the novella.
- He has repented and reformed so escaping Marley's fate.

Read the following extract from Chapter 2 of *A Christmas Carol* and then answer the question that follows.

In this extract, the Ghost of Christmas Past shows Scrooge his last meeting with Belle.

- This was not addressed to Scrooge, or to any one whom he could see, but it produced an immediate effect. For again Scrooge saw himself. He was older now; a man in the prime of life. His face had not the harsh and rigid lines of later years; but it had begun to wear the signs of care and avarice. There was an eager, greedy, restless motion in the eye, which showed the passion that had taken root, and where the shadow of the growing tree would fall.
- 5 He was not alone, but sat by the side of a fair young girl in a mourning-dress; in whose eyes there were tears, which sparkled in the light that shone out of the Ghost of Christmas Past.
- 10 "It matters little," she said, softly. "To you, very little. Another idol has displaced me; and if it can cheer and comfort you in time to come, as I would have tried to do, I have no just cause to grieve."
- "What idol has displaced you?" he rejoined.
- "A golden one."
- 15 "This is the even-handed dealing of the world!" he said. "There is nothing on which it is so hard as poverty; and there is nothing it professes to condemn with such severity as the pursuit of wealth!"
- "You fear the world too much," she answered, gently. "All your other hopes have merged into the hope of being beyond the chance of its sordid reproach. I have seen your nobler aspirations fall off one by one, until the master-passion, Gain, engrosses you. Have I not?"
- 20 "What then?" he retorted. "Even if I have grown so much wiser, what then? I am not changed towards you."
- She shook her head.
- 25 "Am I?"
- "Our contract is an old one. It was made when we were both poor and content to be so, until, in good season, we could improve our worldly fortune by our patient industry. You are changed. When it was made, you were another man."
- "I was a boy," he said impatiently.
- 30 "Your own feeling tells you that you were not what you are," she returned. "I am that which promised happiness when we were one in heart, is fraught with misery now that we are two. How often and how keenly I have thought of this, I will not say. It is enough that I have thought of it, and can release you."

Starting with this extract, explore how Dickens presents the effects of greed in *A Christmas Carol*.

Write about:

- how Dickens presents the effects of greed in this extract
- how Dickens presents the effects of greed in the novel as a whole.

[30 marks]

A Christmas Carol Stave 3 (Ghost of Christmas Present / Poverty)

Read the following extract from Stave 3 of A Christmas Carol and then answer the question that follows. In this extract, Scrooge's time with the Ghost of Christmas Present is coming to an end.

"Forgive me if I am not justified in what I ask," said Scrooge, looking intently at the Spirit's robe, "but I see something strange, and not belonging to yourself, protruding from your skirts. Is it a foot or a claw?"

"It might be a claw, for the flesh there is upon it," was the Spirit's sorrowful reply. "Look here."

From the foldings of its robe, it brought two children; wretched, abject, frightful, hideous, miserable. They knelt down at its feet, and clung upon the outside of its garment.

"Oh, Man, look here! Look, look, down here!" exclaimed the Ghost.

They were a boy and a girl. Yellow, meagre, ragged, scowling, wolfish; but prostrate, too, in their humility. Where graceful youth should have filled their features out, and touched them with its freshest tints, a stale and shrivelled hand, like that of age, had pinched, and twisted them, and pulled them into shreds. Where angels might have sat enthroned, devils lurked, and glared out menacing. No change, no degradation, no perversion of humanity, in any grade, through all the mysteries of wonderful creation, has monsters half so horrible and dread.

Scrooge started back, appalled. Having them shown to him in this way, he tried to say they were fine children, but the words choked themselves, rather than be parties to a lie of such enormous magnitude.

"Spirit, are they yours?" Scrooge could say no more.

"They are Man's," said the Spirit, looking down upon them. "And they cling to me, appealing from their fathers. This boy is Ignorance. This girl is Want. Beware them both, and all of their degree, but most of all beware this boy, for on his brow I see that written which is Doom, unless the writing be erased. Deny it!" cried the Spirit, stretching out its hand towards the city. "Slander those who tell it ye. Admit it for your factious purposes, and make it worse. And abide the end."

"Have they no refuge or resource?" cried Scrooge.

"Are there no prisons?" said the Spirit, turning on him for the last time with his own words. "Are there no workhouses?"

The bell struck twelve.

Scrooge looked about him for the Ghost, and saw it not. As the last stroke ceased to vibrate, he remembered the prediction of old Jacob Marley, and lifting up his eyes, beheld a solemn Phantom, draped and hooded, coming, like a mist along the ground, towards him.

Starting with this extract, how does Dickens present the theme of poverty in A Christmas Carol?

Write about:

- how Dickens presents the theme of poverty in this extract
- how Dickens presents the theme of poverty in the novel as a whole.

[30 marks]
AO4[4 marks]

A Christmas Carol Stave 3 (The Cratchits / Family)

Read the following extract from Stave 3 of A Christmas Carol and then answer the question that follows. In this part of the novella, the Ghost of Christmas Present takes Scrooge to visit Bob Cratchit's house.

Then up rose Mrs Cratchit, Cratchit's wife, dressed out but poorly in a twice-turned gown, but brave in ribbons, which are cheap and make a goodly show for sixpence; and she laid the cloth, assisted by Belinda Cratchit, second of her daughters, also brave in ribbons; while Master Peter Cratchit plunged a fork into the saucepan of potatoes, and getting the corners of his monstrous shirt collar (Bob's private property, conferred upon his son and heir in honour of the day) into his mouth, rejoiced to find himself so gallantly attired, and yearned to show his linen in the fashionable Parks.

And now two smaller Cratchits, boy and girl, came tearing in, screaming that outside the baker's they had smelt the goose, and known it for their own; and basking in luxurious thoughts of sage and onion, these young Cratchits danced about the table, and exalted Master Peter Cratchit to the skies, while he (not proud, although his collars nearly choked him) blew the fire, until the slow potatoes bubbling up, knocked loudly at the saucepan-lid to be let out and peeled.

"What has ever got your precious father then?" said Mrs Cratchit. "And your brother, Tiny Tim; And Martha warn't as late last Christmas Day by half-an-hour."

"Here's Martha, mother," said a girl, appearing as she spoke.

"Here's Martha, mother!" cried the two young Cratchits. "Hurrah! There's such a goose, Martha!"

"Why, bless your heart alive, my dear, how late you are!" said Mrs Cratchit, kissing her a dozen times, and taking off her shawl and bonnet for her with officious zeal.

"We'd a deal of work to finish up last night," replied the girl, "and had to clear away this morning, mother."

"Well. Never mind so long as you are come," said Mrs Cratchit. "Sit ye down before the fire, my dear, and have a warm, Lord bless ye."

Starting with this extract, how does Dickens present the importance of family?

Write about:

- how Dickens presents family in this extract
- how Dickens presents family in the novel as a whole.

[[30 marks]

AO4[4 marks]