

## Example answers to past *A Christmas Carol* questions

Reading good answers is an excellent way to develop a stronger sense of what a good essay is like and how to write one. Each time you read one, think about *how* and *where* it achieves marks. The examiners' comments after each answer will help to point out the answer's strengths and possible areas for improvement.

Most of the examples given are extremely good and would earn grades of 7, 8 or 9 (often 9). Don't be put off by them: whatever your target grade, you can use these examples to support your revision. If an essay uses a word or concept you don't understand, take this as a learning opportunity and look it up. It has never been easier to find definitions and explanations, thanks to the internet. Similarly, if an essay makes a reference to the text that you don't understand, look that part of the novella up and think about it afresh. (As well as your paper copy, the full text can be found online or as a PDF, making it searchable for specific words and phrases, by using 'Search' or CONTROL F.)

(There are some slightly less strong answers to the 2019 (especially) and 2020 questions. If you're targeting a higher grade, you might find it useful to try improving on these yourself.)

As well as using these answers to developing your own essay-writing style, use them to help you to revise. Take note of good points, references and analysis given about characters and themes, which can become part of your own revision notes and understanding.

You can use the highlighting below to select essays on **characters and themes** you wish to concentrate on. You might then like to consider themes of *A Christmas Carol* that have *not* appeared in past exams (such as redemption, Christmas spirit, charity, regret, repentance, social injustice, family, moral responsibility, inequality, gratitude) and ensure you have secure notes on these. Remember that revising each theme or character will support your wider revision of the text as a whole, as you note ways in which particular examples can be used to explore various possible themes.

Contents	Pages
One <b>excellent</b> (Level 5, around high Grade 8) and one <b>outstanding</b> (Level 6, Grade 9) answer to the 2023 question on <b>the effects of greed.</b>	2-4
One <b>excellent</b> (Level 5, around Grade 8) and one <b>outstanding</b> (Level 6, Grade 9) answer to the 2022 question on <b>the effects of loneliness and isolation.</b>	5-7
One <b>excellent</b> (Level 5, around low Grade 9) and one <b>outstanding</b> (Level 6, Grade 9) answer to the 2021 question on <b>joy and happiness.</b>	8-11
One <b>good</b> (Level 4, around Grade 6-7) and one <b>excellent</b> (Level 5, around high Grade 8) answer to the 2020 question on <b>the suffering of the poor.</b>	12-14
One <b>good</b> (Level 4, around Grade 6-7) and one <b>fair</b> (Level 4, around Grade 5) answer to the 2019 question on <b>the ways in which the ghosts change Scrooge.</b>	15-16
One <b>excellent</b> (Level 5, around Grade 8) and one <b>outstanding</b> (Level 6, Grade 9) answer to the 2018 question on <b>Scrooge's fears.</b>	17-19
One <b>outstanding</b> (Level 6, Grade 9) answer to the 2017 question on <b>the Cratchits and the suffering of the poor.</b>	20-21

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]

### Response 3

Charles Dickens uses the story of A Christmas Carol to teach a capitalist society the effects of greed; while the rich get richer, they lose sight of what's actually important and others are made to suffer.

In the extract, Scrooge reflects on prioritising money over love and the hurt that has come from it. Belle declares 'another idol has displaced me (...) a golden one' – by using the noun 'idol' it becomes clear that while Scrooge once believed Belle and his love for her to be important, there is not enough room left in his heart for both. They are both of value, both are idols, but only one can be prioritised. Dickens ensures that the audience knows Scrooge has made the wrong choice by depicting the hurt this causes

Belle – ‘in whose eyes were tears’. She has emotion and feelings, unlike Scrooge’s new idol, and both a contemporary and a modern reader can sympathise with that. Being able to connect with other humans through emotion is one of mankind’s greatest skills. We begin to consider our own actions – has our greed taken over? Have we hurt anyone through greedy actions?

Later in the novella, Scrooge is shown two children, almost animalistic, by the Ghost of Christmas present. ‘The boy is ignorance, the girl is want, beware them both (...) but especially the boy’. ‘Ignorance’ is supposed to symbolise the upper class of society, such as Scrooge or Dickens’s contemporary readers. Want symbolises those in poverty who receive no help from the rich. Despite representing different parts of society, they are described in the same way – ‘wolf like’, ‘yellow’ as a couple of examples. This illustrates the idea that while the rich and poor are opposites, the foundation of these two evils are the same. Both are wrong and inhumane. You cannot have one without the other and both are as bad as the other. Being in poverty in the 19th century was seen as grotesque and so many adopted a Malthusian view (based on Thomas Malthus) where, as Scrooge puts it, society should ‘decrease the surplus population’. Those who are represented by Want are simply a burden and should be wiped out. The Poor Laws of 1834 are also referenced by Scrooge (the novella’s example of Ignorance) when he says ‘Are there no prisons?’ When a contemporary audience would have read that they may have agreed – but, like Scrooge, further in to the novella they may have a change of heart. When Scrooge asks about the two children, the Ghost of Christmas Present repeats ‘Are there no prisons? Are there no workhouses?’ back to him and he rethinks things. Dickens may have done this to encourage his readers to rethink their own mindsets. After being shown both sides of society perhaps a reader will reflect on their own actions – have they also been too full of greed?

In the extract the message that greed does not lead to happiness is reiterated, ‘which promised happiness when we were one in heart, is fraught with misery now that’s we are two’. This line from Belle refers to Scrooge’s greed tearing them apart – the verb ‘promised’ really stresses just how damaging this has been for her as a promise is not meant to be broken and yet greed has found a way. Dickens may have depicted this to show the power greed possesses and the power it has to break what is good in the world. Scrooge does not find another partner and Belle is left shattered – love is the most natural, human force there is and yet greed has broken it. I think this message is especially impactful to a modern audience as relationships arise now, more often than not, for love rather than material gain. The idea you cannot have both is something that sticks with a reader.

Dickens has one main message for his audience about the effects of greed: it can only hurt those around you. Whether that is the effect it has on society or the effect on the individual reading the novella, Dickens’s message still challenges a person to reflect on their own actions and consider what is truly important in their life.

This response uses the extract very effectively as a springboard for a discussion of the novella as a whole. The student moves between the extract and the wider text, illustrating their consideration of ideas with the selection of increasingly-apt references to moments both from the extract and elsewhere. The discussion of methods moves into Level 5 in the treatment of the effects of the word ‘promised’ in the penultimate paragraph, which is a good illustration of the student really starting to consider particular methods in detail. In order to move into the next level, it might be useful for this student to take this further into a deeper analysis of particular choices linked to meanings. **Level 5 = 24 marks (Approx. high Grade 8)**

#### Response 4

The motif of fire in “A Christmas Carol” symbolises the greed of some characters and the generosity of others, in an attempt by Dickens to prove that money does not equal happiness. Added to the setting of Christmas-time this message is particularly impactful as the Christian values of giving and not taking are coming into play not only with the characters, but the selfish, aristocratic audience too.

One of the first fires in the novella is that of Scrooge’s clerk, Bob Cratchitt, and it is described to be “so much smaller that it looked like one coal”, the hyperbolic language emphasising the coldness of his greedy, ungenerous boss, Scrooge. Further into the novella, the most symbolic appearance of fire is the “light like a candle”, on the head of the Ghost of Christmas past. Being “a strange figure: Like a child, yet not so like a child” suggests its wisdom without age, perhaps a re-incarnation of Bob Cratchitt’s child, Tiny Tim, who is also wise due to his illness despite still being so young. This insightful ghost shows

Scrooge the full effect that his greed can have on his own self, when it takes him to see his past love Belle. The immense pain this puts Scrooge in causes him to “press down with all his force” in an attempt to physically “hide the light” and therefore all of its metaphorical meanings and Christian connotations. Scrooge here realises that he cannot hide from the blinding loneliness his greedy actions cause to him and others, including Bob Cratchitt, so makes a positive and symbolic change in “buy[ing] another coal scuttle”.

To again push the message that money doesn't equal happiness, Dickens uses his own experience of his family living in a single room to explore the importance of a family being together, much like the Cratchitts on Christmas day gathered in a “half-circle” around the hearth. “A small room, not very large or handsome, but full of comfort” uses a subordinate clause for emphasis on the fact that Dickens's audience shouldn't judge their happiness by the size of their aristocratic houses, but instead by the comfort within them. Scrooge cannot relate to this, though, as his money has bought him an enormous house that he couldn't fill with a family or its comforts. Belle's insight was perfectly correct, which hits Scrooge hard when he comes to realise his money cannot “cheer and comfort you in time to come”, and that ultimately, Belle could have, sparking regret that will go on to fuel his change from greedy to generous in the latter parts of the novella.

The “golden” “idol” that Belle is displaced by could parallel that sprinkled by the Ghost of Christmas Present, the only difference between the two being that one is given to the poor and one to the rich. In excess this “golden” money is an obsessive burden to Scrooge, but if only he “sprinkled” it over the poor like the Ghost of Christmas Present, he would help those in need whilst simultaneously freeing himself of “Gain”, “the master-passion”. By capitalising “Gain”, Dickens brings this greedy quality to life, as he similarly does to “Ignorance and Want”. Dickens sets Scrooge parallel to his “Girl and a boy. Yellow, meagre, scowling wolfish” by syntactically paralleling their structures: “Scrooge. A squeezing, wrenching, grasping, scraping...”. Dickens ultimately describes how Scrooge, and those who, like him, are greedy, become “engrossed” and taken over by Gain, Ignorance, and Want, the three personified demons of the novella; the counterparts to the guide-like ghosts (the “nobler aspirations”), and warns his readers of the true isolation these demons can cause if change is not made from greed to generosity soon.

This is an extremely focused, exploratory response to the question. The student begins with a clear thesis that drives their approach to the question and provides the direction and focus of their argument. The use of the extract is light-touch which is entirely appropriate as what this student is doing is using the ideas inherent in that section as one illustration of their wider concept – there is no requirement to deal with the extract and the wider text in a similar way. Because this is a conceptualised approach, the student is able to illustrate their argument through both references to the text and references to writer's methods linked precisely to meanings and ideas. Overall therefore, this response achieves the maximum mark available for this question.

**Level 6 = 30 marks (Grade 9)**



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 takes Scrooge back to his school.

“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  
 5 mansion of dull red brick, with a little weathercock-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  
 10 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.  
 15 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 upon a form, and wept to see his poor forgotten self as he used to be.  
 20 Not a latent echo in the house, not a squeak and scuffle from the mice behind the panelling, not a drip from the half-thawed water-spout in the dull yard behind, not a sigh among the leafless boughs of one despondent poplar, not the idle swinging of an empty store-house door, no, not a clicking in the fire, but fell upon the heart of Scrooge with a softening influence, and gave a freer passage to his  
 25 tears.

Starting with the extract, explore how Dickens presents the effects of loneliness and isolation in *A Christmas Carol*.

Write about:

- how Dickens presents the effects of loneliness and isolation in this extract
- how Dickens presents the effects of loneliness and isolation in the novel as a whole.

[30]

### Response 10

In the extract, Dickens presents the effects of loneliness through Scrooge’s childhood and his encounter with the Ghost of Christmas Past. The Ghost takes Scrooge back to his old school, stating “a solitary child, neglected by his friends, is left there still”. The use of the verb “neglected” implies that Scrooge’s loneliness is not initially self-inflicted, but he has instead been left behind by himself. The loneliness Scrooge’s younger self experiences effectively supplies an explanation as to why he isolates himself as he grows older. In doing so, an emphasis is placed on the importance of connections between people and on relationships. As Christmas is such a significant holiday, especially due to the strong religious element during the Victorian era, readers would be shocked to see a child abandoned at what is usually a cheerful time of year.

In the novel as a whole, Scrooge's isolation and loneliness is explored through his interactions with others and how it effects them. In Stave 1, Fred goes to visit Scrooge at the counting house and wishes him a Merry Christmas. Scrooge quickly retorts with "Bah Humbug!", displaying his desire to be left alone and separate himself from the merriment. As Scrooge's antithesis, Fred is used to portray the effects of Scrooge's isolation as his desire to be left alone greatly contrasts Fred's attitude. This demonstrates the effects of isolation as it illustrates that by rejecting Fred's offer and choosing to remain alone, Scrooge is distancing himself and his relationship with Fred is deteriorating. This suggests that the consequences of being isolated are that Scrooge has turned bitter and hateful and his insistence to stay alone will only bring him sadness.

Throughout the novel, Scrooge's willingness to be kept isolated from everyone has been a prominent character trait. However, in Stave 5, Scrooge goes to Fred's house on Christmas Day and asks "will you let me in?". This effectively portrays how Scrooge desires connection and that his self-inflicted isolation has left him miserable. Therefore, this simple question demonstrates how, upon being confronted with loneliness and isolation, Scrooge has now finally rejected it and he is ready to repair his relationship with his nephew. This implies that the effects of loneliness and isolation are not completely negative as it helped Scrooge to realise the importance of friendship, family and relationships with others.

In the extract, Scrooge, accompanied by the Ghost of Christmas Past, enters his old school. There in a lonely, sad room is "a lonely boy was reading near a feeble fire". Dickens emphasises Scrooge's loneliness and ensures that it is a prominent theme that is woven throughout the novel. Scrooge's former self was "near a feeble fire". This echoes the small fire of one coal in Scrooge's counting house, suggesting that the effects of isolation are long lasting. This repeated image illustrates how his loneliness is on a cycle, and that in the present, Scrooge chooses to separate himself as a way of protecting himself from others. This allows the effects of loneliness and isolation to be explored in a more long-term context and further emphasises the significance of people and relationships.

The opening paragraph of this response is focused clearly on the question and demonstrates solid knowledge of the ideas in the novella overall. The candidate uses the text very effectively to respond to the task, in particular in the third paragraph where these become particularly well-selected and apt illustrations of the overall points being made. The decision to move between the extract and the wider novella is very effectively-managed by this candidate, showing a development of their ideas. The thoughtful comments about the image of 'fire' in the final paragraph are an example of Level 5 AO2, and overall this candidate achieves a mark in the Level 5 range for task and references as well as some AO2. In order to secure the whole of Level 5, more focus on wider ideas and themes linked to text would be useful. **Level 5 = 23 marks (Approx. Grade 8)**

## Response 11

Through his allegorical novella, Dickens seeks to explore the effects of loneliness and isolation. Through the characterisation of Scrooge and the Cratchit family, he aims to establish how loneliness in childhood can effect the morals you hold in adulthood. He seeks to encourage his audience to accept social responsibility and kindness into their hearts in an attempt to expose them to the plight of the proletariat.

Through the characterisation of Scrooge as a young boy, Dickens seeks to explore how the experiences you have as a child reflect your personality as an adult. Young Scrooge is described as "solitary", this is repeated in the exposition of the novella when Scrooge is first described, the repetition of the word conveys how his loneliness as a child has built his way of living as an adult. He doesn't want to be sociable with anyone as he has never had a proper experience with it, he doesn't know how to socialise or be friendly. The use of the lexis "solitary" and "neglected" convey the message that although he is materialistically wealthy, he is emotionally impoverished; this is Dickens way of giving reasoning as to why Scrooge is the way he is.

The effects of loneliness are also explored through the experiences of the Cratchits. When the ghost of Christmas past takes Scrooge to view the Cratchit family Christmas the audience sees the juxtaposition between the two. While Scrooge is wealthy in money, he is poor of emotions; while the Cratchits are poor of money, they are wealthy with joy and family. This idea is presented through the Cratchits home and the characterisation of Tiny Tim. The family home is small and they hold very little valuables; their glass cupboard has "a custard cup without a handle", this represents the fact that they are deprived of

essential things just as the cup is deprived of its handle. The cup demonstrates how even though they don't have much they are still happy, joy is their money. Tiny Tim is a construct designed to elicit sympathy from the reader, the repetition of words such as "little" and "withered" convey to the reader how this "little" innocent boy who can't have done any wrong is still suffering as a result of the fallacy created by Maltheus. Dickens uses Tiny Tim to convey the message that this boy who has had a hard and terrible life is kept happy and strong by the company and help of his family, further reinforcing how the company of others during childhood effects the person you will grow up to be. Contrasted to Scrooge who pushes his family away and is a "solitary" and "cold" man as a result of that.

Finally, Dickens explores how the embrace of charity and social responsibility can invite people into your life that will destroy that loneliness and isolation. Scrooge's redemption presents this. As he embraces change his loneliness begins to vanish, he begins to spend Christmas with his nephew and becomes "a second father" to Tiny Tim, this demonstrates how it is never too late to change and accept responsibility and doing so will abolish the hardships of constant isolation. However, critical theorist Wilson argues that Scrooge's redemption is short lived, this is labelled as the Scrooge Problem. He states that after a short while Scrooge will go back to being an old misanthropic "sinner" after he thinks his fate has changed its course and he has worn down "the chain (he) forged in life". Although it can be argued that he never changed at all. His redemption was fuelled by egotism rather than altruism, the change only occurred after he saw his own grace prompting the idea that he changed to save himself rather than the millions suffering.

In conclusion, Dickens explores loneliness through the juxtaposition of Scrooge and the Cratchits, conveying that money does not equal happiness and kindness. He also demonstrates to his audience of educated bourgeoisie.

The candidate begins with a clear thesis statement that engages with the question and demonstrates very clear understanding of the ideas in A Christmas Carol, linking these effectively to wider concepts. This opening paragraph also offers a clear introduction to the focus the essay will take. By the third paragraph, the analysis of methods has moved into Level 6 for the way the presentation of Tiny Tim is used to explore ideas and themes. The overall focus on the juxtaposition of Scrooge and the Cratchitts enables the response to also move into Level 6 for AO1 task by the end. This is a response that is very focused on the question overall, and in order to secure a mark at the top of Level 6, might need to focus more on developing a use of precise references linked to ideas. **Level 6 = 27 marks (Grade 9)**



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 the Christmas party he attended at Mr Fezziwig's warehouse when he was a young man.

But if they had been twice as many—ah, four times—old Fezziwig would have been a match for them, and so would Mrs. Fezziwig. As to her, she was worthy to be his partner in every sense of the term. If that's not high praise, tell me higher, and I'll use it. A positive light appeared to issue from Fezziwig's calves.

5 They shone in every part of the dance like moons. You couldn't have predicted, at any given time, what would have become of them next. And when old Fezziwig and Mrs. Fezziwig had gone all through the dance; advance and retire, both hands to your partner, bow and curtsey, corkscrew, thread-the-needle, and back again to your place; Fezziwig "cut"—cut so deftly, that he appeared to wink

10 with his legs, and came upon his feet again without a stagger. When the clock struck eleven, this domestic ball broke up. Mr. and Mrs. Fezziwig took their stations, one on either side of the door, and shaking hands with every person individually as he or she went out, wished him or her a Merry Christmas. When everybody had retired but the two 'prentices, they did the

15 same to them; and thus the cheerful voices died away, and the lads were left to their beds; which were under a counter in the back-shop. During the whole of this time, Scrooge had acted like a man out of his wits. His heart and soul were in the scene, and with his former self. He corroborated everything, remembered everything, enjoyed everything, and underwent the

20 strangest agitation. It was not until now, when the bright faces of his former self and Dick were turned from them, that he remembered the Ghost, and became conscious that it was looking full upon him, while the light upon its head burnt very clear.

"A small matter," said the Ghost, "to make these silly folks so full of gratitude."

25 "Small!" echoed Scrooge.

The Spirit signed to him to listen to the two apprentices, who were pouring out their hearts in praise of Fezziwig: and when he had done so, said,

"Why! Is it not? He has spent but a few pounds of your mortal money: three or four perhaps. Is that so much that he deserves this praise?"

30 "It isn't that," said Scrooge, heated by the remark, and speaking unconsciously like his former, not his latter, self. "It isn't that, Spirit. He has the power to render us happy or unhappy; to make our service light or burdensome; a pleasure or a toil. Say that his power lies in words and looks; in things so slight and insignificant that it is impossible to add and count 'em up: what then? The

35 happiness he gives, is quite as great as if it cost a fortune."

Starting with the extract, explore how Dickens presents ideas about joy and happiness in *A Christmas Carol*.

Write about:

- how Dickens presents joy and happiness in this extract
- how Dickens presents ideas about joy and happiness in the novel as a whole.

[30]

### Response 7

In the extract Dickens presents happiness and joy as something highly unusual for Scrooge. During the scene where Scrooge watched his younger self he had 'acted like a man out of his wits' emphasising



how unusual and strange it is for men as cold as Scrooge to be feeling anything other than indifference or annoyance. This particular description of Scrooge highlights how even men like Scrooge are capable of feeling joy and Dickens' message to honour Christmas in the correct way by rejoicing in your family and friends and not obsessing about materialistic things really shines through as the event is so simple yet so full of utmost happiness. Scrooge undergoing the "strongest agitation" while watching his former self connote to the hopeful reader that Scrooge could be breaking out of the solitary life he is living. The adjective strongest implies something very out of the ordinary which is fitting for Scrooge who probably hasn't felt any sort of emotion for a long while.

Happiness and joy is presented in the wider extract through the Cratchit family. Despite them living in poverty they still enjoy Christmas with the most gratitude and thankfulness. Their happiness is juxtaposed with the fact that they had to fill out their meal with "smashed potatoes" and that their pudding was extra small however the pure contentment they are feeling overshadows their evident poverty. Dickens could have done this to portray how even something as heartbreaking and tough as poverty cannot put down the Cratchits will to be happy. Dickens could be implying that happiness is subjective and just like the Cratchits chose to be happy despite their condition, the audience should be optimistic and enjoy their Christmas to the best of their abilities. This message was especially relevant to those who were poor at the time the novella was being written as a common belief was that the poor were poor because they were lazy and they therefore deserved to be miserable. By presenting the Cratchits in this way, Dickens provides hope for the lower class and contradicts the trending belief at the time as he believes that anyone despite their situation deserves to be happy.

In the extract, the ghost of Christmas past states how a "small matter" can make "these silly folks so full of gratitude." The party held by the Fezziwigs was not extravagant yet it was the atmosphere and the sense of collective joy and community which really elevated its impact on Scrooge. With this quote, the ghost can be seen as a mouthpiece for Dickens as having grown up in poverty himself because of his father's debt, we can clearly see Dickens' critical opinion of the higher class at the time who spent an abnoxious amount of money on Christmas parties. Dickens strongly believed that Christmas should be a time of charity and honest happiness and joy which wasn't what the higher class at the time did. They treated Christmastime as a competition to see who had the most money and we can see Dickens use the Ghost of Christmas past to emphasise how all of it is wasteful and useless.

In this extract as a whole, happiness is presented through Scrooge's redemption. In the beginning of the play, Scrooge is described a despicable and cold character who is as "solitary as an oyster." This simile is extremely interesting because the same way an oyster is tightly shut and closed off from the world is the same way Scrooge behaves, however, when you open up an oyster it might contain a pearl. This could symbolise the fact that maybe hidden inside Scrooge is a man worthy enough to be saved. This metaphor foreshadows the redemption of Scrooge and the reader feels intense happiness and euphoria when he finally reaches that stage. This highly drastic almost pantomime live change is significant because not only does it bring happiness to the reader as the protagonist is finally living a respectable life but it also implies to the reader that everyone has a chance to live a joyful and happy life. Dickens' message that redemption is always possible even in the worst people is highlighted by Scrooge's dramatic change in character. He exclaims that he will always "honour Christmas in my heart" which emphasises the change as at the beginning he believed that anyone who was merry at Christmas should be buried "with a stake of holly through his heart."

This candidate begins their response with a clear consideration of ideas and a focus on how the extract exemplifies these ideas about the dangers of materialism. This is then developed by focusing on the Cratchit family and what they represent, showing some thoughtful consideration of ideas in the treatment of representation of the poor and how this could be viewed contextually. These AO3 ideas are further developed by thoughtful consideration of the meaning of Christmas, showing clear appreciation of authorial purpose here. Throughout the response there are well-selected references used to support the candidate's interpretation of the question and the ideas in the text, and the symbolism of 'solitary as an oyster' is closely linked to ideas and examined very carefully. In order to move into Level 6 it might be useful to develop some of these ideas in a more critical way, or to analyse the effects of methods in more detail. **All Level 5 = 25 marks (Approx. Grade 9)**

## Response 10

Despite the festive theme, *A Christmas Carol* is a novella in which Charles Dickens uses the grotesque often borders on gothic extremes. Much of the narrative is defined by the omnipresence of existential dread and veiled polemic. Nevertheless, Dickens' depictions of joy and happiness in the novella are many and they serve to prevent the tale from becoming steeped in pathos and righteous rage. In both the chosen extract and the novella as a whole joy and happiness are presented as independent of financial matters and yet entirely dependent upon community. The themes are closely linked to the symbol of music and the emerging popularity of urban Christmases, specifically to the involvement of family in festive celebrations. It is with this inclusion of these themes that Dickens manages to imbue his novella with a powerful sense of hope for social reformation.

In the chosen extract, family is presented as a vital source of happiness. The "positive light" emitting from "old Fezziwig" and his beloved wife as they dance has a palpable effect on all other partygoers taking the "excellent man of business" Ebenezer Scrooge "out of his wits". The inclusive atmosphere created in the Fezziwigs' workplace – representative of the moral values held by employers before the birth of modern industry in the last 1700s – creates the impression that every person in attendance is a member of the Fezziwig family, from "the cook" to "the milkman". Indeed, it is only with Scrooge's reintegration into a unified family structure in the form of the Cratchits and his nephew Fred that he finally experiences joy so profound his "heart laugh[s]". This emphasis upon family in relation to joy is reflective of contemporary Victorian attitudes. Queen Victoria and her husband Albert served as the template for familial bliss at the time and as they shared nine children, large families became synonymous with spiritual and emotional wealth – i.e. joy.

The theme of joy and happiness is also repeatedly linked to the symbol of music. Dickens titled his novella as a "carol", indicating the high value placed upon music within and makes reference to music in each stave, allowing the word to become an umbrella term including the chants of "Merry Christmas!" and the "laughter" shared by so many characters. The importance of music is also referenced in the decision to title chapters staves. In the case of the Fezziwigs, music is used as an external expression of the effervescent joy they share. It is this emotional connection with music that appears to invite Scrooge to involve his "heart and soul" in his experience of the scene. Earlier in the novella, a young caroller serves to represent the role of music in the communication of seasonal joy and the Christian message – a message Scrooge initially rejects quite violently, seizing a "ruler". Dickens' purpose in including music in the novella in such an explicit way likely relates to contemporary Christmas tradition – that of sharing texts orally at family gatherings during the festive season. In likening his joyous tale to a carol, Dickens implies that he wishes for it to be shared as such – becoming associated with togetherness and entertainment so as to decrease the potential for the concealed political diatribe to put his readers "out of good humour". For Dickens' message of social reformation to be shared, he must associate it with joyous experiences and there are few festive experiences so joyous as the sharing of music.

Characters possessing every level of wealth are presented by Dickens as experiencing joy and happiness – from the "scarred" and destitute to the magnanimous Fezziwigs. Dickens therefore presents joy and happiness as entirely unrelated to material wealth. As observed by Scrooge at the end of the extract, the "power" to "render [human beings] happy or unhappy lies in "words and looks" – the behaviours of a surrounding community. This is further reinforced by the juxtaposition between depictions of Bob Cratchit's self-expression in both his role as the "poor clerk" of Scrooge and immensely involved father of the young Cratchits. When cowed by Scrooge's misanthropic ice" and condemned to exist in a "dismal little cell", Cratchit finds himself restricted in his expressions of joy. As soon as he exits the counting house, however, he rushes home to "play" and express his love for his family. Despite their poverty, the Cratchits are unfailingly joyous, Bob Cratchit able to declare himself "very happy" even after the death of his "little, little boy." Where Fezziwig's wealth is used to bring joy to many, Scrooge's brings only pain and restriction to himself and others. His damning discussion with Belle in the second stave echoes the fable of King Midas, a Grecian King whose dedication to wealth became so extreme that he was granted the ability to turn all he touched to gold. In using his newfound ability, he tragically freezes his daughter in molten gold. In the context of *A Christmas Carol*, Scrooge's relationship with Belle and, therein, his ability to feel love are frozen by his "master-passion, Gain", hindering his ability for joy. Dickens appears to suggest that his bourgeois audience must be judicious in their pursuit of wealth lest they too fall victim to worship of a "golden [idol]."

Dickens also appears to offer advice on how his audience can best pursue wealth without depriving themselves or others of previous joy. A Christmas Carol has often been critiqued as an ode to consumerism yet, as historian Ronald Hatton noted, Dickens combines 'worship and feast' in the interest of 'social reconciliation'. In persuading his wealthy readers to indulge in joyous spending, Dickens is facilitating the outflow of money from bourgeois consumers to working class traders, aiding economic flow. It is miserable "sinners" like Scrooge hoarding and "grasping" of wealth whose actions both prevent the sharing of joy and healthy economic flow. To Dickens, appropriate use of wealth and happiness are very much interlinked.

Throughout this somewhat hedonistic yet often sombre novella, Dickens presents joy and happiness as closely linked to judicious spending of wealth and the presence of a unified family support system. He also presents music as a conduit through which the joyous can express their passion of feeling. These links are never more clear than in the chosen extract where Dickens introduces the roles of finance, music and family all within several lines. All of these representations serve to contribute to Dickens' overarching message that Victorian society should reappraise its capitalist value system and learn to truly appreciate the value of joy and happiness. That which is "quite as great as if it cost a fortune."

This response begins with an articulation of some high-level ideas, using a well-articulated thesis to provide a foundation for the direction of their response. It takes a thematic view of the text, showing insightful conceptualisation of the ideas from the start. Details from the extract are used to illustrate and support this thesis, with a clear view of the overall purpose of this moment from the text as a means of exemplifying wider ideas. The candidate moves effortlessly around the text, referencing moments and ideas in it to illustrate their points about family and social reformation. Overall this is a highly conceptualised, critical and analytical response that achieves the maximum mark available for this paper. **All Level 6 = 30 marks (Grade 9)**



Read the following extract from Chapter 3 of *A Christmas Carol* and then answer the question that follows.

In this extract, the Ghost of Christmas Present is about to leave Scrooge.

The chimes were ringing the three quarters past eleven at that moment.  
 "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?"  
 5 "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.  
 10 "Oh, Man! look here. Look, look, down here!" exclaimed the Ghost.  
 They were a boy and 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.  
 15 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  
 20 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  
 25 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 bide 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  
 30 own words. "Are there no workhouses?"  
 The bell struck twelve.

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

Write about:

- how Dickens presents the suffering of the poor in this extract
- how Dickens presents the suffering of the poor in the novel as a whole.

[30 marks]

### Response 3

*A Christmas Carol* is a novella written in 1843 by Charles Dickens. The main themes it explores is transformation, greed, evil and poverty. In this essay, I will be writing how Dickens presents the suffering of the poor in *A Christmas Carol*.

In Stave 3, the Ghost of Christmas present presents to Scrooge two children. the Ghost calls the boy 'Ignorance' and the girl 'Want'. Dickens gives a very detailed description of both of the children 'yellow, meagre, ragged, scowling, wolfish'. This asyndetic listing uses deep imagery for the reader to visualise in his mind. The adjective 'wolfish' connotes animalistic characteristics by both the appearance and perhaps the behaviour. This description of the animal-like child is what many believed the poor were like

during the mid-1800's. The spirit then says that 'they are man's'. This has a double meaning. As religion was very strong during the Victorian era, 'Man's' may have been an alias to God, and the Ghost may be pointing out that everyone is human in God's eyes, and that someone who is in poverty is nothing less of a human to Him. On the other hand, 'Man's' can refer to humanity as a whole, and Dickens may be wanting to say that it is humanities child, therefore humanities responsibility, and them being unwanted is wrong.

Moreover, as the Ghost of Christmas Present is about to leave Scrooge, Scrooge cries 'Have they no refuge or resource?', then, the spirit turns on Scrooge using his own words 'Are there no prisons? [...] Are there no workhouses?' This line is very ironic to Scrooge, as he asked that same exact question to the charity men who asked from Scrooge money to help the poor during the Christmas period. Scrooge asked if there were no workhouses, implying that the workhouses were a viable solution rather than spending money on those in poverty, where in reality, the workhouses in the 1800's were a nightmare to be sent to as the people there were treated very badly, and had very little food or comfort. Combined with the Poor Law, those in poverty had no escape from going there.

In Stave 1, the charity men went to Scrooge's business and asked him to donate money to those in poverty during the Christmas period. The charity men said that the poor 'would rather die' than go to the workhouses which is what Scrooge suggested. Scrooge replied back saying that 'If they would rather die, they'd better do it and decrease the surplus population'. This shows how heartless Scrooge can be sometimes. Scrooge's selfishness is a catalyst for all evil in the world. Scrooge is described as being 'solitary' as an oyster. The noun 'oyster' connotes loneliness hard on the outside, which is what Scrooge is currently acting as.

Additionally, the Ghost of Christmas Yet to Come shows Scrooge Tiny Tim and his family, and then leading to Tiny Tim's death because his family could not afford the healthcare or the medication provided to save his life. Therefore, we can see that the poor suffer greatly, especially when they cannot afford necessities such as medicine, else, it can lead to death like what happened to Tiny Tim.

In conclusion, the poor and those in poverty suffered greatly during the Victorian era. It was very hard to find a job, and even worse, it was illegal to beg on the streets for money, meaning that the poor could not ask for money from strangers, else, they could be sent to the workhouses which many said that are worse than not going there at all. 'The workhouses were those things of nightmares when you were a child. Working all day and only given enough to survive'. (Graham Jones)

This response begins with a generalised introduction but then starts to focus on details from the passage, linking these to the question. There is some identification of asyndetic listing which begins to demonstrate some possible level 4 features as the candidate starts to link the effects of word choices to meaning and ideas with the comment about the effect of 'wolfish'. The identification of parts of speech is not helpful, as it is the effect of word choices on meanings that receives credit here. The comments on humanity are clear evidence of level 4 achievement for AO3, demonstrating a sound demonstration of understanding of ideas. AO2 becomes much stronger with the impact of the ironic repetition of Scrooge's question about workhouses, and overall this response achieves all level 4 criteria. There is a clear focus on task throughout and the candidate might benefit from starting to develop their focus on methods in order to move into the next level. **All Level 4 = 20 marks (Around Grade 6-7)**

#### Response 4

Dickens portrays the suffering of the poor in this extract through children Ignorance and Want. Dickens uses asyndetic listing "yellow, meagre, ragged, scowling, wolfish". The adjective "yellow" refers to an illness that they perhaps contain, "meagre" suggests the lack of quantity or quality they possess, the adjective "ragged" implies that they are underdressed and lack the comfort needed in winter, the phrase "scowling, wolfish" perhaps highlights that Dickens is dehumanizing them, as they possess a lack of education, due to the selfish aristocrats in society. By portraying Ignorance and Want, Dickens is teaching a lesson to the readers to help the unfortunate and to help those who need it the most.

Dickens further emphasises the suffering of the poor and destitute in society through the repetition of asyndetic listing "wretched, abject, frightful, hideous, miserable". Dickens use of the semantic field of horror portrays how the poor were unfairly treated in the Victorian society. The use of the adjectives "frightful" and "hideous" reflects the appearance of these children. they are treated as if they have no

value. When Scrooge asks to uncover the foldings of the Ghost's robes, he is particularly curious. When the Ghost of Christmas Present mysteriously tells him that these children are "Man's", Dickens implies that as a society we should all be collectively responsible for our actions, and treat those who are less unfortunate to use fairly, and help them with these struggles. By providing education this blocks out the need of Ignorance and further interrupts the need of Want.

Dickens also presents the suffering of the poor in this extract through the writing on the boy's brow "DOOM". If society does not help those unfortunate and come together to be collectively responsible for each other, then they will be "erased". This creates a sense of tension, overwhelming the reader, by now being curious in Scrooge's redemption. At the end of the extract, the Ghost turns on Scrooge by repeating his own questions "Are there no prisons?" "Are there no workhouses?" This further emphasises the point and need to be collectively responsible, creating suspense.

Throughout the novella, Dickens emphasises the suffering of the poor and destitute, by describing Bob Cratchit's economic situation. Scrooge willingly underpays his clerk and when in need of "coal" to heat himself, Scrooge hoards all of it to himself, further reflecting the actions of the aristocrats in society. They take advantage of the poor, even whilst realising that they can help them. This is evident through Fezziwig, when he throws a party. Dickens uses Fezziwig as a role model to those who are rich and prestigious. Scrooge even reacts merrily as if this party "cost a fortune". Through Fezziwig Dickens suggests that those who are rich and wealthy, can help the poor.

Dickens also portrays the suffering of the poor when the "portly gentlemen" asked for a charitable donation. Scrooge refuses to help them by asking "Are there no prisons?" "Are there no workhouses?" The Poor Law in Victorian society stated that those who cannot help themselves must attend these "prisons", "workhouses" and "Treadmills" where they are forced to work endless hours, and are also underpaid. The "portly gentlemen" state "Many can't go there and many would rather die". Dickens use of the repetition "many" suggests the increase of the vulnerable in society, and how they are overwhelmingly mistreated.

Dickens further emphasises the sufferings of the poor through Scrooge's arrogance "If they would rather die, they better had to it and decrease the surplus population". The verb "decrease" implies the dramatic increase of the poor and destitute. The adjective "surplus" connotes that these poor are just extra and of no value. However, Dickens clearly depicts that this is not the case and that the poor should always be helped as each life is a gift from "God".

Dickens presents the sufferings of the poor through the Cratchit Family, particularly Tiny Tim. The Cratchit's clothes are "scanty" "double" knotted and "second hand". Dickens use of the rule of three suggest that the clothes are undersized, teared and hideous.

By reflecting the poor in Victorian society, Dickens portrays how we as a society should be collectively responsible for each other, by providing education to those who need it the most, so society is balanced and help is given.

The opening paragraph focuses on the description of the children and links some of the word choices very clearly to ideas and meanings, linking back to the question. The use of references is a particular strength of this response overall, as the candidate uses them precisely and effectively to illustrate and help to develop their response to the task. In several places the candidate mentions a technique but doesn't particularly deal with this technique: the mention of 'rule of three' and 'adjective' are examples of this. Perhaps more focus on developing more of an interpretation or analysis of word choices, plot development or characterisation would have been more useful for this candidate. **Mainly Level 5 = 24 marks (Approx. high Grade 8)**



Read the following extract from Chapter 1 of *A Christmas Carol* and then answer the question that follows.

In this extract Scrooge is visited by Marley's Ghost.

Again the spectre raised a cry, and shook its chain and wrung its shadowy hands. "You are fettered," said Scrooge, trembling. "Tell me why?"

"I wear the chain I forged in life," replied the Ghost. "I made it link by link, and yard by yard; I girded it on of my own free will, and of my own free will I wore it. Is its pattern strange to you?"

5 Scrooge trembled more and more.

"Or would you know," pursued the Ghost, "the weight and length of the strong coil you bear yourself? It was full as heavy and as long as this, seven Christmas Eves ago. You have laboured on it, since. It is a ponderous chain!"

10 Scrooge glanced about him on the floor, in the expectation of finding himself surrounded by some fifty or sixty fathoms of iron cable: but he could see nothing.

"Jacob," he said, imploringly. "Old Jacob Marley, tell me more. Speak comfort to me, Jacob!"

"I have none to give," the Ghost replied. "It comes from other regions, Ebenezer Scrooge, and is conveyed by other ministers, to other kinds of men. Nor can I tell you what I would. A very little more is all permitted to me. I cannot rest, I cannot stay, I cannot linger anywhere. My spirit never walked beyond our counting-house—mark me!—in life my spirit never roved beyond the narrow limits of our money-changing hole; and weary journeys lie before me!"

15 Scrooge, and is conveyed by other ministers, to other kinds of men. Nor can I tell you what I would. A very little more is all permitted to me. I cannot rest, I cannot stay, I cannot linger anywhere. My spirit never walked beyond our counting-house—mark me!—in life my spirit never roved beyond the narrow limits of our money-changing hole; and weary journeys lie before me!"

20 It was a habit with Scrooge, whenever he became thoughtful, to put his hands in his breeches pockets. Pondering on what the Ghost had said, he did so now, but without lifting up his eyes, or getting off his knees.

Starting with this extract, explore how Dickens uses the ghosts to help Scrooge change his attitudes and behaviour.

Write about:

- how Dickens uses Marley's Ghost in this extract
- how Dickens uses the ghosts to help Scrooge change his attitudes and behaviour in the novel as a whole.

[30 marks]

### Response 3

In this extract from *A Christmas Carol*, Dickens uses Marley's faults in life, to make Scrooge aware of what consequences will happen if he doesn't begin to change his selfish ways. Marley says that he "[wore] the chain [he] forged in life" and this happened on his "own free will". The verb 'forged' highlights the fact that Marley himself made this happen for him, no-body got the chance to tell him that if he doesn't change something bad will happen, but Scrooge does. He has that savour to help him to fix his attitude and behaviour. It also shows that Marley did that all by himself, no one told him to be mean and selfish, it was his own negative characteristic. At the beginning of the novel, Dickens describes Scrooge as 'Hard and sharp as flint' the use of this simile successfully shows us that he is cold-hearted and has no emotions. Just like a rock. But on the other hand the noun 'flint' could foreshadow a personality change. This is because flint is used to make a spark, that spark could be the first hint that Scrooge will change his attitudes. The Ghost of Christmas Present is a jolly man who reminds us of Christmas. Christmas was the happiest time of year for Victorians from the rich to even the poor. It was spent with family, and love, which is the opposite of what Scrooge was used to. Scrooge was always seen as an outsider to society. In *A Christmas Carol*, while everyone was enjoying Christmas, he would be in his counting house or at home alone. When the spirit takes Scrooge to see the Cratchit family, Scrooge

instantly feels guilty. He can see their joy, of feasting on a small turkey. He can't believe that a family could be that excited about a small turkey. This makes Scrooge feel guilty, as earlier on in the novel Scrooge was reminded the fact that Fezziwig was a great and outstanding boss. This could have been the reason why at the end of the novel, Scrooge gives Bob Cratchit a pay rise. Scrooge is also shown that Tiny Tim is ill and Scrooge therefore asks if he will die. The answer to this question was one of the first things that made Scrooge feel guilty. The answer is that if Scrooge doesn't change then that is a possibility. Just before the ghost of Christmas Present leaves, Scrooge is introduced to two Victorian children. Children in the Victorian times were very mistreated. They would work from an early age which meant their life expectancy would be shorter. This could link to the guilt about Tiny Tim and this could be one of the reasons why Scrooge ended up being a "second father" to Tiny Tim.

In a Christmas Carol, we notice the most change when the ghost of Christmas yet to come takes Scrooge to a gravestone with his name written on it. Scrooge asks in fear if he can 'sponge the writing off the stone'. This shows that he wants to redeem himself and make things right again. He wants a second chance at a happy, un sinful life. He promises the ghost of Christmas yet to come that he will 'live in the past, present and future'. This promise shows us that the fearful journeys he had been through, that one night, made him want to make up for his past self.

This response is a good example of all level 4 for the way it is clear, consistent and sustained. The understanding of the ideas in the text are clear throughout, and references are used consistently to support the clear explanation of ideas related to the task. The treatment of 'hard and sharp as flint' is a clear explanation of writer's methods, and the ideas about guilt in the penultimate paragraph move into level 4 for AO3. Overall this is a borderline response in terms of the way the candidate deals with responding to the task, and their next steps might be to think about how they might be able to develop and sustain their focus on particular methods or ideas in order to move into level 5. **All Level 4 = 20 marks (Approx Grade 6-7)**

## Response 5

A Christmas Carol by Charles Dickens is a novel intended to change the minds of the wealthy and the government towards their treatment of the poor. Through the characterisation of Scrooge Dickens showed how embracing smaller things and opening your heart up could change a person's life for the better.

Upon meeting the Ghost of Jacob Marley, Scrooge didn't know what was happening and was helpless. The ghost "raised a cry" causing Scrooge to tremble more and more. The fact that the spectre caused a fright in Scrooge hints at him possibly having a weak spot. On a daily basis he is often the reason why people tremble of fear upon his arrival. He cracks under pressure in the presence of the spirit of Jacob Marley, deep down he knows he will probably end up in the same circumstance as him.

Once Scrooge finds out why Marley carries the chains he begins to look around in despair. He "glanced about him on the floor, in the expectation of finding himself surrounded by some fifty or sixty fathoms of iron cable". At this point something in him is ordering him to change. His "expectation of finding himself surrounded" hints at redemption being in the mist of things. There's a chance.

In the first stave Scrooge being the tightfisted miser and cold hearted person he tells at the two charity workers for coming to him. Once they tell him that it's for the poor he asks "Are there no workhouse to decrease the surplus population". To Scrooge they are 'surplus' and merely take up too much space. He refers to them as they are nothing similar to the way in which employers during the Victorian era saw their employees. The poor law was introduced after that because of situations like this.

At the end Scrooge changes completely. The last spirit shows him his future and is enough information for him to better himself. Being put at unease by the fact that Tiny Tim will die in less than a year's time if his conditions remain the same. As a result Scrooge becomes "a second father" to him and raises and cares for him like his own.

This is an explained response to the task and to the text for the most part, with use of references lifting into level 4 as well as the focus on task, by the end of the response, justifying a mark in level 4 for the way its attention to the ideas in the question is sustained. In order to move higher, this candidate might want to focus their attention a bit more on the 'how' in the wording of the task; a bit more treatment of the methods used by Dickens would secure the level 4 mark. **Some Level 4 = 17 marks (Approx. Grade 5-6)**



Read the following extract from Chapter 4 of *A Christmas Carol* and then answer the question that follows. In this extract, Scrooge meets the Ghost of Christmas Yet To Come.

The Phantom slowly, gravely, silently, approached. When it came near him, Scrooge bent down upon his knee; for in the very air through which this Spirit moved it seemed to scatter gloom and mystery.

5 It was shrouded in a deep black garment, which concealed its head, its face, its form, and left nothing of it visible save one outstretched hand. But for this it would have been difficult to detach its figure from the night, and separate it from the darkness by which it was surrounded.

He felt that it was tall and stately when it came beside him, and that its mysterious presence filled him with a solemn dread. He knew no more, for the

10 Spirit neither spoke nor moved.

"I am in the presence of the Ghost of Christmas Yet To Come?" said Scrooge. The Spirit answered not, but pointed onward with its hand.

"You are about to show me shadows of the things that have not happened, but will happen in the time before us," Scrooge pursued. "Is that so, Spirit?" The

15 upper portion of the garment was contracted for an instant in its folds, as if the Spirit had inclined its head. That was the only answer he received.

Although well used to ghostly company by this time, Scrooge feared the silent shape so much that his legs trembled beneath him, and he found that he could hardly stand when he prepared to follow it. The Spirit paused a moment, as

20 observing his condition, and giving him time to recover.

But Scrooge was all the worse for this. It thrilled him with a vague uncertain horror, to know that behind the dusky shroud, there were ghostly eyes intently fixed upon him, while he, though he stretched his own to the utmost, could see nothing but a spectral hand and one great heap of black.

25 "Ghost of the Future!" he exclaimed, "I fear you more than any spectre I have seen. But as I know your purpose is to do me good, and as I hope to live to be another man from what I was, I am prepared to bear you company, and do it with a thankful heart. Will you not speak to me?"

Starting with this extract, explore how Dickens presents Scrooge's fears in *A Christmas Carol*. Write about:

- how Dickens presents what Scrooge is frightened of in this extract
- how Dickens presents Scrooge's fears in the novel as a whole.

[30 marks]

#### Response 4

Dickens presents the fears of Scrooge in the extract and the novella as a whole by using the spirits to enlighten him and show him what he's done. We begin by seeing Scrooge's fear when Jacob Marley, his old business partner returns as a phantom cover in chains that gone on the miles which are as he states 'the chains he forged in life' Scrooge instantly doubts his sense's and doesn't believe Jacobs actually there as he believes 'the slightest thing and effect them, a undigested bit of beef... There's more of a gravey than a gave about you'. Scrooge is a sensible man, he doesn't think about more than money and the fact that a spirit who's an old friend can instantly turn a 'hard and sharp as flint' man into questioning scared man.

When the first Ghost arrives, the Ghost of Christmas past, he revisits him as a child, a apprentice and his old girlfriend Belle. When Scrooge see's Belle his face instantly drops because he knows what he's about to see, how he treated her when she told him 'I've been replaced by a golden ideal' he realises how much he did love her and how he regrets the treatment he gave to her which scared him seeing that as he tries to shut out the spirit "Torment me no longer". We see as you read on that the thing Scrooge is scared of the most, apart from death; are the choices he made through is life and the feeling of enormous regret which in turn helps him eventually change for good. As when he see's how he was



treated as Mr Fezzwig's apprentice and the joy he had, he reflects on how he treats Bob Cratchit, his clerk, and the feeling of regret overwhelms him again.

Though, as you read on through the novella the Ghost that frightens Scrooge the most is, the Ghost of Christmas yet to come. The grooling hooded phantom towers over Scrooge and only shows his the unpleasant things due to come his way. As the extract shows the line 'it came near him, Scrooge bent down upon his knee' This quote in itself highlights the obvious fact that before he would never ever begged for mercy to anyone or anything, he was 'hard' and 'sharp'. But just the pure presence of the spirit sends Scrooges 'legs trembling beneath him'. We soon gather that Scrooge fears many things his past mainly but you never see him react the way he does when he witnesses the dead corpse in front of him, the corse unknown. The loneliness he feels when he see's the corpse knowing its very likely to be him beneath makes him beg, beg for forgiveness. With the spirit not even replying and the solitary silence fills Scrooges mind and leaves him blank.

Seeing peoples reaction to the death of someone, Scrooge can't put his finger on at the time, leaves him feeling isolated when the lawyers talk about the funeral and state 'I'll go if lunch is provided' leaves him thinking who cared for this man and begs the Ghost to show him the slightest bit of saddness for the mans death, but the spirit can only show happiness for his death. Which scares him the most, the fact that throughout his life he's only ever shut out people who care and love form him, e.g. Belle and Fred. And now its all over he's had nothing to show for it.

In conclusion, Dickens has presented the idea of Scrooge's in depth fear through not just the obvious things but in the feeling of knowing if thats when he dies he will have no one to care and the feeling of regret with many things, to have it being showed very clearly is enough to frighten a man into changing into a better caring man and a 'second father to Tiny Tim' so when the time came people would actually care and miss him.

This response is clear and explanatory throughout, and moves into level 5 for the use of references in the third paragraph as well as the consideration of ideas and perspectives that enable the response to task to also move into level 5. This candidate therefore is stronger on AO1 and AO3 than on AO2, and would find it useful to develop their focus on aspects of writer's methods. **Some Level 5 = 23 marks (Approx. Grade 8)**

## Response 6

Throughout the novel, Scrooge fluctuates between being fearless and fearful and Dickens portrays his fears in different ways, whether it be fear of the ghosts, fear of the future, or fear of himself.

In the extract, Dickens describes the Phantom 'slowly, gravely, silently' approaching. Dickens uses this list of adverbs to create the impression that just as the Phantom is approaching, Scrooge's fears are also approaching which frightens Scrooge and the reader because it parallels our own fears coming closer to us. Furthermore, through the use of these adverbs, Dickens is also trying to highlight to the reader how fear comes for us all and is inescapable but if you are good and kind then fear cannot destroy you but strengthen you. Dickens wanted to persuade Victorian people to relenquish their own meanness and selfishness because people who are mean and selfish have more to fear than those who are good. He believed in embodying the Christmas spirit and expressing it in our everyday lives because in doing so you will have less to fear and be able to cope better with fear – his wanted to convey this allegorical message to his Victorian readers because Dickens saw and experienced a lot of selfish and horrible behaviour, especially towards the poor in Victorian times and was determined to change this through writing 'A Christmas Carol'.

The extract also depicts Scrooge's fear of the future and the future the ghost is about to show him, so much so that Scrooge's 'legs trembled beneath him'. The verb trembled highlights to the reader how Scrooge has lost control and has succumbed to the fear and also contrasts his manner at the start of the play when he had a 'stiffened... gait' – and is described as 'cold', which gives the impression that he is unmoving and like stone. However in this extract he can 'hardly stand' – showing how his fears have overpowered him and are controlling him. Dickens is making clear to his reader that the future is only something to be afraid of if your past is one of sin, like Scrooge's. In Victorian times, people had a very capitalist attitude and the poor were uncared for and treated as vermin and even blamed for being poor. They were forced into workhouses by the poor law which was supported by Victorian scholars like

Malthus who believed that the poor should die to 'decrease the surplus population' (as Scrooge said). Dickens strongly opposed this idea, believing that it was a disgusting and inhumane attitude. Dickens' purpose for writing a 'A Christmas Carol' was to remind people of the forgotten message of Christmas – to be kind, forgiving and charitable and so that people would learn to rid themselves of this sinful, ignorant behaviour. This would in turn mean that their future would be nothing to fear because they would have atoned and made peace with God (as many people followed the Christian faith in Victorian times so would have believed in God). Dickens' message would force the reader (both in Victorian times and now) to re-examine their behaviour and actions and perhaps make them feel empathy – which was Dickens' intention.

In the novel as a whole, Dickens highlights Scrooge's fear of being a good and happy person. Fred, Scrooge's nephew, indicates this when he says 'I am sorry with all my heart, to find you so resolute' and also in Stave III when he talks about Scrooge losing out on 'pleasant times' by not coming to Christmas dinner. Dickens is depicting how people can be afraid of themselves and afraid of the good inside them, just like Scrooge; many people are afraid of being good because they are afraid of being perceived as weak. Dickens believed that being good and kind in an evil world is what makes you strong. Dickens uses Fred to contrast Scrooge in terms of fear; Fred is unafraid of showing compassion but Scrooge is and Dickens thought that if everyone was more compassionate then the world would be a better place.

To conclude, Dickens presents Scrooge's fears to be both obvious and subtle; he is afraid of the future, of himself and of fear itself. By the end of the novel he becomes content and therefore deals with fear in a better way and is happy because of it which is what Dickens wanted to get across to the reader – if you are good you will be able to deal with fear so will be happy.

This is a confident, exploratory response to the task as a whole. The candidate has an extremely strong understanding of the ideas behind the text and uses these to develop their argument and illustrate with some very apt references. Ideas and organisation drive the strength of this essay, in particular the treatment of ideas in the third paragraph, and in order to secure the whole of level 6 it would be great to see some analysis of aspects of writer's craft. **Some Level 6 = 27 marks (Grade 9)**

Read the following extract from Chapter 3 of *A Christmas Carol* and then answer the question that follows.

In this extract, the Ghost of Christmas Present shows Scrooge the Cratchit family's Christmas celebrations.

Oh, a wonderful pudding! Bob Cratchit said, and calmly too, that he regarded it as the greatest success achieved by Mrs. Cratchit since their marriage. Mrs. Cratchit said that now the weight was off her mind, she would confess she had had her doubts about the quantity of flour.

5 Everybody had something to say about it, but nobody said or thought it was at all a small pudding for a large family. It would have been flat heresy to do so. Any Cratchit would have blushed to hint at such a thing. At last the dinner was all done, the cloth was cleared, the hearth swept, and the fire made up. The compound in the jug being tasted, and

10 considered perfect, apples and oranges were put upon the table, and a shovel-full of chestnuts on the fire. Then all the Cratchit family drew round the hearth, in what Bob Cratchit called a circle, meaning half a one; and at Bob Cratchit's elbow stood the family display of glass. Two tumblers, and a custard-cup without a handle.

15 These held the hot stuff from the jug, however, as well as golden goblets would have done; and Bob served it out with beaming looks, while the chestnuts on the fire sputtered and cracked noisily. Then Bob proposed: "A Merry Christmas to us all, my dears. God bless us!" Which all the family re-echoed.

20 "God bless us every one!" said Tiny Tim, the last of all. He sat very close to his father's side upon his little stool. Bob held his withered little hand in his, as if he loved the child, and wished to keep him by his side, and dreaded that he might be taken from him.

Starting with this extract, explore how Dickens uses the Cratchit family to show the struggles of the poor.

Write about:

- how Dickens presents the Cratchit family in this extract
- how Dickens uses the Cratchit family to show the struggles of the poor in the novel as a whole.

[30 marks]

### Response 3

In this extract we see how the Cratchit family are happy despite their poverty. The novella was published in 1843, which was in the middle of the industrial revolution, so many people were moving into cities, leading them to become overcrowded and therefore poverty-stricken. This poverty is evident there in the quote "the family display of glass", which we then learn consists of "two tumblers" and a "custard-cup without a handle". The word "display" shows just how little they own, as they seem proud to showcase these small, dilapidated objects off, as this is all they have. However, they seem content as such trivial matters don't change how they feel towards each other. Dickens compares the cups to "golden goblets", which to me suggests that the Cratchits feel enriched simply by each others' company, which is worth more to them than anything materialistic.

Earlier in the same scene, we learn just how vibrant the scene is among this family when Dickens personifies even the potatoes, saying they were "knocking" to get out of their pan, as if the joyous atmosphere was so desirable to be amongst that even inanimate objects wanted to be part of the festivities. In the extract we are told that the chestnuts cracked "noisily", which conveys the same idea, building a feeling of community despite the poverty in the scene.



The Ghost of Christmas Present first takes Scrooge to see the Cratchits' Christmas, which makes him realise the importance of family at this time, then continues this theme of company by showing him other scenes brought to life by Christmas spirit. For example, when the ghost takes him to a lighthouse, the poor workers there are described as having "horny hands". This suggests that they have struggled through great hardships and have suffered more in their lives than Scrooge ever would, and yet their show of unison when they all sing together at Christmas let them disregard their struggles for a time. By comparing the Cratchits and these workers, Dickens shows how the poor could overcome their lack of materialistic value and settle for things of emotional value.

One member of the Cratchit family who strongly highlights the struggles of the poor is Tiny Tim. In this extract, his hand is described as a "withered little hand", suggesting it has prematurely withered like a flower with no light. As the word "withered" has connotations of a flower, to me, this could perhaps be seen as a metaphor for how something beautiful has been hindered and killed by the tight-fistedness of the rich in society, which is something that Dickens was strongly trying to convey in this novella. Light is often a symbol of hope, so this flower could be shrivelled due to a lack of light, which is the lack of generosity from the upper classes. Dickens may have intended "withered little" as a juxtaposition, as we would normally associate "withered" with old age and "little" with childhood. This contrast highlights how wrong it is that an innocent child should be so shunned by society due to his wealth and status, and this demonstrates Dickens' frustration over the inequality.

Dickens uses a similar adjective to describe the hands of the children Ignorance and Want. The word "shrivelled" is used here, which compares these children, who are also victims of the struggles of poverty, to Tiny Tim. It creates a similar image of premature decay to highlight the neglect of lower classes in society. The boy in this scene represents ignorance, and the Ghost of Christmas Present tells Scrooge to "most of all beware the boy". This strongly conveys Dickens' message about poverty and the poor, as he is trying to tell society that ignoring the struggles and problems of the poor will be their downfall.

This is demonstrated in stave 4 when Tiny Tim dies, and the Cratchits say that when Bob had Tiny Tim on his shoulders he walked "very fast indeed". When we have a weight on our shoulders, the phrase normally implies a burden and a worry, however here I think that Tiny Tim represents the burden that the rich think the poor impose upon society. Here, Dickens could be saying that if we only realised the potential of the poor, they may actually prove helpful and contribute to society, however they are seen only as a dead weight on the shoulders of society due to the ignorance of the rich.

This response focuses in detail on an analysis of the extract, and uses the ideas suggested there to move around within the text as a whole and use it to develop an exploratory response to the task by the end. The contextual ideas are very much integrated into the analysis of methods, showing the candidate's ability to build an analysis of the ways the writer has crafted the text to present their ideas. **All L6 = 30 marks (Grade 9)**