

English Literature: 'A Christmas Carol'

Characters

Ebenezer Scrooge . Works in finance/ business/ loans

- "Hard and sharp as flint"
- "Solitary as an oyster"
- "Bah! Humbug"
- "Are there no prisons? Are there no workhouses?"
- "If they would rather die, they had better do it and decrease the surplus population"
- "It's not my business"
- "I should like to be able to say a word or two to my clerk."
- "I will honour Christmas in my heart. I will live in the Past, the Present, and the Future. I will not shut out the lessons that they teach."
- "Scrooge was better than his word. He did it all and became as good a friend, as good a master, and as good a man, as the good old city knew."
- see quotations from other characters about him too. (Belle/ fred/ Caroline's husband/ Mrs Cratchit/the Laundress/ bankers)

Bob Cratchit and family . Bob works for Scrooge as his low paid clerk.

- "I'll give you Mr Scrooge, the founder of the Feast."
- "A Merry Christmas to us all, my dears. God bless us!"
- "Mr Scrooge. I'd give him a piece of my mind. An odious, stingy, hard, unfeeling man" (Mrs Cratchit)"
- "God bless us every one"
- "My little, little child!" cried Bob. "My little child!"

Fred - Scrooge's Nephew

- "I have always thought of Christmas as a good time, a kind, forgiving, charitable, pleasant time"
- "I mean to give him the same chance every year, whether he likes it or not, for I pity him."
- when men and women... think of people below them as if they really were fellow-passengers to the grave, and not another race of creatures bound on other journeys.

Fezziwig - former employer

- "Scrooge's heart and soul were in the scene..he remembered everything, enjoyed everything."
- "A small matter to make these folks so full of gratitude"
- "He has the power to render us happy or unhappy; to make our service light or burdensome. The happiness he gives, is..as if it cost a fortune"

Belle - former fiance/ broke off the engagement

- "Another idol has displaced me.. a golden one"
- "I have seen your nobler aspirations fall off, until the master passion, Gain engrosses you"

Marley's Ghost and The Three Spirits

Marley's Ghost - Scrooge's former business partner. He is covered in chains made from things associated business. Sent as a warning to Scrooge about his way of life tells him to expect visits from the ghosts.

- ' I wear the chains I forged in life.'
- 'Mankind was my business..'

The Ghost of Christmas Past:

Comes as a changing form in light which represents the truth..Shows Scrooge his school life, his sister his life as an apprentice and how his ex-fiance. We see Scrooge wasn't a;ways as he was but came to value money over everything else.

- "A solitary child, neglected by his friends, is left there still – Scrooge sobbed."
- see Fezziwig/ Belle

The Ghost of Christmas Present:

shows scrooge The Christmas of others to show him the true meaning of Christmas. He sees his Bob Cratchit's family, especially Tiny Tim, his nephew and the Christmas of workers in many fields. He is also shown the impact of Victorian society's attitude to poverty ,

- "Will you decide what men shall live, what men shall die? It may be in the sight of heaven, you are more worthless and less fit to live than millions like this poor man's child"
- "They are Man's. This boy is Ignorance. This girl is Want. Beware for I see that written which is Doom."

The Ghost of Christmas Yet to Come:

This ghost is silent as the future is not definite and can be re-written. he takes Scrooge on his future if he does not change his life. It is bleak

- "Ghost of the Future. I fear you more than any spectre I have seen. But as I know your purpose is to do me good, I am prepared to bear you company with a thankful heart."
- "A churchyard, overrun by weeds, the growth of vegetation death not life –a worthy place!"
- "Scrooge crept towards it, trembling, and following the finger, read upon the stone of the neglected grave his own name, Ebenezer Scrooge."
- see the Laundress and the bankers

The Laundress - worked for Scrooge/ no care for him

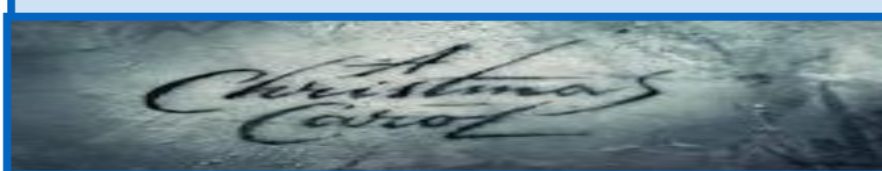
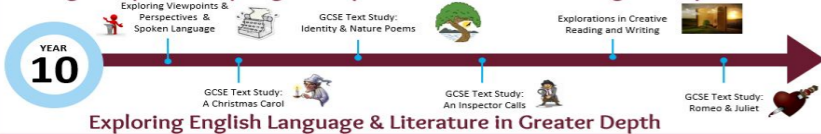
"...a wicked old screw. He'd have had somebody to look after him when he was struck by Death, instead of lying gasping out his last there, alone by himself"

The Bankers - worked in the financial sector with Scrooge/ no love for him

- "He frightened everyone away from him when he was alive, to profit us when he was dead, ha, ha!"

Person in debt to Scrooge before Scrooge's 'death' / relieved he is dead

- "It would be bad fortune to find so merciless a creditor. We may sleep tonight with light hearts, Caroline!"



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Themes

Family

- Scrooge has had a difficult relationship with his father. It was his sister who saved him
- Scrooge has given up a family for money. Belle is used to show him the life he could have had.
- The Cratchits work together as a family and love each other
- Scrooge gains 2 families at the end - his Nephew's and Bob's, and he's happy

Salvation and Redemption

- His sister saved him from loneliness
- Scrooge is given a chance to redeem himself by seeing his faults and changing his ways. He learns to treat others better. In turn, he is able to save Tiny Tim and the Cratchits.
- Fred remains open to his uncle's return to the family.

Poverty

- Bob is dependent on Scrooge's poor wage/ he can't save Tim/ his family struggle to survive/his family's clothes are threadbare
- the second spirit warns against the dangers of poverty and the 'doom it will cause.
- Dickens shows us the poverty of London and its effect on people
- Greed of a few has led to poverty for many
- Dickens believes in social responsibility - we are all on the same journey in life and should help and support each other (see Fred's speech/ Stave 1)

Christmas

- in the story, Christmas brings out the best in people - the charity workers/ Fred/ Fezziwig. it is a common celebration in the story uniting all, except initially Scrooge. Yet there is an important social message from Fred who sees that it is the only time that people see others as 'fellow - passengers'. is Dickens saying if people can do this at Christmas, why not all the time? in the story, it is the start for Scrooge to help others, and not just at Christmas time but always.

Quiz (+ [Sparknotes Quiz](#) Multiple Choice)

- *What is it like to work for Scrooge?*
- *Why does Fred always visit his uncle at Christmas?*
- *What are Marley's chains made of?*
- *What does he tell Scrooge to expect to visit him?*
- *What does The Ghost of Christmas Past look like? Why?*
- *What does he show Scrooge? What are Scrooge's reactions to these scenes?*
- *What do they tell us about Scrooge?*
- *What does Scrooge try to do to the spirit at the end of the stave and why?*
- *What does The Ghost of Christmas Present look like? Why?*
- *How is the Christmas season being celebrated by others?*
- *What are the names of the two children hiding with the spirit?*
- *What is the warning the spirit gives Scrooge, and Victorian society?*
- *What happens to the spirit at the end of the stave?*
- *What does The Ghost of Christmas Yet To Come look like? Why?*
- *Why does Scrooge fear it the most?*
- *Why do you think The Phantom is silent?*
- *What is the relevance of the dead man? How do others react to him?*
- *How does Dickens use Tiny Tim's death as a contrast to the man's death?*
- *How does Scrooge change his ways?*
- *What is the message of the final stave?*

How does Dickens explore the idea of redemption?

How does Dickens challenge Victorian society about the treatment of the poor?

What has the story to tell us about family?

Which do you think is the most important Spirit/ Ghost to visit Scrooge?

Why do you think 'A Christmas Carol' is so popular?

Context

1798 economist Thomas Malthus proposed that poor people should have children later to slow down the population and slow down poverty so there would be enough food. Dickens thought there was enough food for all.

1824 Dickens' father arrested for debt and sent to prison

1834 The Poor Law reduced financial help to the poor. All unemployed poor people would have to go to the workhouses. The Industrial Revolution meant people flocked to the city looking for work.

Plot Summary

Stave 1 - Scrooge is presented as unpleasant man who hates mankind and loves money, and treats all with disdain. The ghost of his former partner visits him to tell him to expect 3 spirits who will try to redeem him.

Stave 2 - The Ghost of Christmas Past takes Scrooge to visit his childhood/ sister/ early apprenticeship/ his fiance. Scrooge is visibly moved by what he sees.

Stave 3 - The Ghost of Christmas Present shows him Christmas in other households who celebrate the festivities. Tiny Tim's state particularly affects him.

Stave 4 - the Ghost of Christmas yet to come, shows him a dead unloved man who turns out to be him. Tiny Tim has also died but is loved and mourned.

Stave 5 - Scrooge changes and embraces Christmas and family, looks after others, including Tiny Tim, and becomes a good man.