

GCSE Essential Quotes Booklet



Macbeth
A Christmas Carol

Macbeth



Quote	Who? When?	Ideas and themes
'Fair is foul and foul is fair'	Witches Act 1 Sc1	Shakespeare shows us that the Witches are frightening and speak in riddling incantations. The language here is paradoxical – both things cannot be true – but it also hints that they know Macbeth is seen as fair (good on the battlefield) but they know he can be corrupted and therefore is 'foul'.
'Carved out his passage... unseamed him from the nave to the chops'	The injured Captain talking about Macbeth Act 1 Sc 2	Shakespeare has the Captain from the battlefield report how brave a soldier Macbeth is to King Duncan. 'Carved' suggests that Macbeth is a skilled swordsman – he can slice his way through the battlefield with skill and precision. 'Unseamed' suggests he easily slices his enemy open – like a scissor blade through a thread of cotton. 'nave to the chops' tells us he stabbed his sword in at the person's naval (belly button) and sliced up to his chin (chops). This implies that Macbeth is very strong, skilled and brutal on the battlefield.
'My noble partner seems rapt withal...speak then to me who neither begs nor fears your favour nor your hate'	Banquo to the Witches Act 1 Sc3	Banquo describes that Macbeth is 'rapt' by the Witches predictions for him – meaning Macbeth is engrossed or lost in imagining what they have told him he will become. Banquo is not drawn in by the Witches in the same way and challenges them to 'speak then to me' stating that he neither 'begs' for favours from them nor 'fears' anything bad. Banquo is a dramatic foil to Macbeth – he is not scared or engrossed in what the Witches tell him compared to Macbeth.
'Stars hide your fires, let not light see my black and deep desires'	Macbeth ASIDE Act 1 Sc 4	Macbeth mutters to himself that he has 'black and deep desires' just after hearing Duncan announce that Malcolm will be the next King of Scotland. Shakespeare uses light and dark imagery throughout the play to show the fight between good and evil taking place within Macbeth. He wants to be King but knows how he and Lady Macbeth are going about it is wrong.
'I fear thy nature, it is too full of the milk of human kindness' 'Unsex me here.'	Lady Macbeth Act 1 Sc 5	Lady Macbeth has received Macbeth's letter about the Witches and doubts his ability to act brutally and kill King Duncan. She thinks he is too full of 'milk' – white, pure, innocent, childlike. She then summons up demons to 'unsex' her – to remove feminine aspects from her personality so that she can be the brutal one in her relationship with Macbeth and they can both attain more power.
'Look like the innocent flower, but be the serpent under it'	Lady Macbeth Act 1 Sc5	Lady Macbeth directs Macbeth to greet Duncan with an innocent and kind face but be prepared to kill him. 'Flower' would be stereotypically feminine so we can see how Lady Macbeth is taking the more masculine, commanding role in the relationship here and emasculating Macbeth. 'Serpent' has connotations or links to Adam and Eve – Eve following the snake's direction to bite the apple and thus humans being thrown out of paradise forever according to the Christian tale.
'Is this a dagger I see before me?'	Macbeth Soliloquy Act 2 Sc1	This is when Macbeth is hallucinating a dagger as he heads towards Duncan's room to murder him. The rhetorical question shows his confusion and his indecision about whether he should be murdering the King or not. He wonders whether the dagger is from his 'heat oppressed brain' or whether it is a signal from the supernatural leading him in the right direction. Shakespeare uses the soliloquys from Macbeth throughout the play so that we can see his struggle with his own conscience about the decisions he needs to make.
'Will all great Neptune's ocean wash this blood clean?' 'A little water clears us of this deed.'	Macbeth and Lady Macbeth Act 2 Sc2	Macbeth returns from murdering Duncan and is terrified by what he has done. He believes that not even all the water in the ocean will clear the blood from his hand and instead will turn the ocean red. Obviously, he could wash the blood away with some water, he is more focused on the idea that he can never wash the memory away from his mind. Lady Macbeth dismisses his fears and tells him only 'a little' water will clean it away. Notice how she says 'us' – she too wants the blood/guilt to be washed away even though she couldn't face the thought of actually murdering Duncan.

<p>'A falcon...by a mousing owl was killed'</p>	<p>Old Man Act 2 Sc4</p>	<p>Shakespeare uses animal imagery throughout the play to show us the effect on the rest of the kingdom of Macbeth breaking the Great Chain of Being by killing Duncan. The world has gone wild and the food chain has been turned upside down. A falcon has been hunted by an owl who would usually only prey on mice. This could also be a metaphor for Macbeth the Thane killing Duncan the King.</p>
<p>'O full of scorpions is my mind, dear wife!'</p>	<p>Macbeth Act 3 Sc2</p>	<p>Macbeth is deeply distressed with guilt and worry that he has killed the King and now as King someone may try and kill him. He cannot confide in Banquo, only his wife and she keeps telling him to behave more like a man. The 'O' and the exclamation mark show us that Shakespeare wanted us to see how upset and disturbed Macbeth has become.</p>
<p>'All my pretty ones?...I must also feel it as a man' 'Not in the legions of horrid hell can come a devil more damned'</p>	<p>Macduff Act 4 Sc3</p>	<p>Macduff reacts to the news of his murdered wife and children. The question showing his utter confusion and shock at the brutal murder of his defenceless family. He is encouraged to fight like a man by Malcolm and replies that he must 'feel it like a man' meaning he is a rounded figure of masculinity – he is a father and a soldier: he has emotions as well as the capacity to fight for revenge and he must experience his loss not just charge ahead with his sword. However, the next quote here shows he is ready to go and seek revenge on Macbeth – look at the alliteration of 'horrid hell' and 'devil more damned' – Shakespeare is using this to show the sheer fury and anger with which Macduff is ready to attack Macbeth with.</p>
<p>'Out damned spot' 'All the perfumes of Arabia will not sweeten this little hand'</p>	<p>Lady Macbeth Act 5 Sc1</p>	<p>Lady Macbeth after being isolated by Macbeth, who no longer confides in her and instead seeks out the Witches, starts to go mad with the guilt and sleepwalks confessing to their murderous actions. Ironically, after telling Macbeth earlier that a 'little water clears us of this deed' is now continually washing imaginary spots of blood from her hands. She also complains that the best perfumes in the world will not take away the smell of blood. Notice the words 'sweeten' and 'little' suggesting that she would now like to be feminine again and be protected and cleansed from her brutal actions earlier in the play.</p>
<p>'Out, out brief candle! Life's but a walking shadow...It is a tale told by an idiot, full of sound and fury, signifying nothing'</p>	<p>Macbeth Act 5 Sc5</p>	<p>Macbeth mourns the loss of Lady Macbeth and accepts that she would have died soon when the English army invaded the castle. Perhaps the use of 'candle' shows that he still had fond feelings for her – she was his only source of light. He then talks about life and discusses it as a metaphor. Firstly, depicting it as a 'walking shadow' – a darkness that follows you about and inevitably dies out when there is no more light. He then describes it as a tale – a story which is told by an idiot (perhaps meaning himself – he has carved out his own life choices) and ultimately though full of 'sound and fury' will lead to nothing. He realises he has wasted his life in pursuit of power and his ambition has led to his own disgraceful and inevitable death.</p>

A Christmas Carol



Quote	Who? When?	Ideas and themes
<p>“Secret, self-contained and solitary as an oyster”</p>	<p>Narrator in Stave 1 about Scrooge.</p>	<p>This simile occurs early in the novella, establishing Scrooge as a cold, closed-off character. It sets the stage for his transformation, emphasizing how distant he is from the warmth and generosity of the Christmas spirit. By the end of the story, Scrooge metaphorically “opens up,” allowing his inner goodness to emerge, much like the pearl inside an oyster. “self-contained” implies Scrooge relies only on himself and believes (incorrectly) that he has no need for others. “solitary” re-enforces his choice to isolate himself from society. Perhaps he is protecting himself from emotional pain (in Stave 2 we gain some understanding of WHY he became closed off). However, as we know that some oysters contain pearls, there is a hint that there is something precious and valuable within him.</p> <p><u>Authorial Intent</u> – Scrooge has no meaningful human connection, and Dickens implies that this is unnatural and harmful, not just for Scrooge, but for society as a whole.</p>
<p>“Are there no prisons?...And the Union workhouses?” demanded Scrooge. “Are they still in operation?”</p>	<p>Stave 1 Scrooge to the charity collectors.</p>	<p>When asked to make a charitable donation to help the poor, Dickens has Scrooge voice the opinions of wealthy Victorians towards the poor. It was commonly felt that the poor were lazy, drinkers, morally corrupt and trouble-makers and so it was their own fault they were poor (and it was God's will!)</p> <p>Dickens uses rhetorical questions here to highlight that as far as Scrooge and those like him are concerned, these institutions are the answer to poverty.</p> <p><u>Authorial Intent</u> - Dickens is directly criticising the Poor Law 1834, which offered workhouses as a deterrent to being poor. These institutions were seen as the only recourse for the needy—no charity, no compassion, just punishment.</p>
<p>“I wear the chains I forged in life”</p>	<p>Stave 1 Marley to Scrooge.</p>	<p>Jacob Marley's ghost (Scrooge's old business partner) has returned to warn Scrooge that he must change if he is to avoid Marley's fate. Marley's chain isn't literal—it's a metaphor for the burden (guilt) of his past actions. Each “link” represents a selfish decision, a missed act of kindness, or a sin of greed. Dickens turns this moral feeling (guilt) into a an image that the reader can imagine.</p> <p>The repetition of “I” emphasises that Marley accepts responsibility for these sins. The verb “forged” also acknowledges that Marley worked hard to create this chain during his lifetime (acting in a way that was unnatural). This quote is a turning point, as Dickens begins to offer the chance of redemption to Scrooge and the readers rather than just highlighting how badly he behaves.</p> <p><u>Authorial Intent</u> - Is Dickens trying to warn his reader that their actions have consequences but suggest everyone has the chance to change.</p>
<p>“Mankind was my Business”</p>	<p>Stave 1 Marley to Scrooge</p>	<p>Scrooge has been surprised by Marley's message and claims to not understand, describing Marley as “a good man of business”. Dickens flips the meaning of “business.”</p> <p>For Marley, “business” used to mean money, now, he realizes it <i>should have meant compassion, justice, and community (prioritising people not profit)</i>. Marley and Scrooge are not evil, they are indifferent. They do wrong by doing nothing to help and profiting of those who are in need.</p> <p><u>Authorial Intent</u> - This is a criticism of Capitalism, where people like Marley and Scrooge measure their worth by wealth, not by goodness.</p>

<p>“A solitary child neglected by his friends is left there still.”</p>	<p>Stave 2 the Ghost of Christmas Past to Scrooge.</p>	<p>The Ghost of Christmas Past takes Scrooge back to see himself as a child left alone in school over the Christmas holiday. “Solitary child” echoes the earlier phrase describing Scrooge as “solitary as an oyster.” It creates a parallel between who he was and who he became. “Neglected” is key—this isn’t just loneliness, it’s abandonment. The child (Scrooge) didn’t choose to be alone; he was left behind by his friends and his family. This suggests that Scrooge’s background has shaped who he is as an adult (he wasn’t born wanting to be alone). This moment is important, although it doesn’t excuse Scrooge’s later cruelty it explains it. Dickens invites us to empathise with Scrooge not just judge him. Authorial Intent - Dickens, who experienced poverty and neglect himself, is shining a light on how society fails its children—especially those from broken homes or poor families. He’s suggesting that emotional neglect can be just as damaging as poverty. He also highlights how important childhood is in shaping who a person becomes.</p>
<p>“Another idol has displaced me...A golden one.”</p>	<p>Stave 2 Belle to Scrooge</p>	<p>In this scene from his past, Scrooge is reminded of why his fiancée (Belle) broke off their engagement. The word “idol” is powerful—it carries a religious weight. Belle isn’t just saying Scrooge loves money—she’s accusing him of worshipping it, of treating gold as a god. This shows that Scrooge’s pursuit of wealth has corrupted his sense of morality (what he knows to be right and wrong). This moment shows the cost of Scrooge’s choices: Belle isn’t leaving because she no longer loves Scrooge but because he no longer values what is important. When she leaves he loses his chance at love and having a family. Authorial Intent - Dickens critiques the societal belief (especially strong in Victorian England) that success equals money and happiness comes from financial success. Belle proves otherwise.</p>
<p>“If these shadows remain unaltered by the future, the child will die.”</p>	<p>Stave 3 The Ghost of Christmas Present to Scrooge</p>	<p>Scrooge has been taken to the Cratchit’s Christmas ‘celebration’ and for the first time he sees Tiny Tim. Here Scrooge is shown what his “surplus population” actually looks like: an innocent child. The use of the word “shadows” is important. It suggests that these are not fixed events—they are possibilities. A Dickens is exploring the idea that the future is changeable, depending on our present actions. Tiny Tim isn’t just one character—he symbolises every vulnerable, innocent person suffering in silence. His fragile body and joyful spirit make his possible death heartbreaking. Dickens uses Tim to personify poverty. Authorial Intent - Tim’s potential death is the direct result of inequality in society. Dickens is highlighting how the most innocent suffer most in Capitalist societies. This is a challenge to wealthy Victorians who believed poverty was a moral failing and also a result of personal choices. He is showing how innocents like Tiny Tim can be saved if society changes.</p>
<p>“God bless us every one!” said Tiny Tim, the last of all.”</p>	<p>Stave 3 Tiny Tim to his family</p>	<p>Tiny Tim joins in making toasts to his family at Christmas time. Tiny Tim says it with warmth and sincerity—right in the heart of the Ghost of Christmas Present’s visit. It’s in that moment that we first truly understand Tim’s character: physically fragile, but spiritually strong. He is full of hope despite his hardships challenging Victorian views of the poor. Dickens’ repetition of this line at the end of the novella shows that Scrooge’s redemption has real-world consequences.</p>
<p>“This boy is ignorance. This girl is want. Beware them both.”</p>	<p>Stave 3 the Ghost of Christmas Present to Scrooge.</p>	<p>At the end of the stave, the Ghost reveals two children hidden under its robe. Dickens literally gives human form to two major problems in Victorian society: Ignorance = lack of education, understanding, and awareness, Want = poverty, deprivation, hunger, greed. They’re not abstract ideas here—they’re living, suffering children, hidden beneath the robes of the spirit. This personification makes them impossible for Scrooge to ignore. Dickens warns to beware Ignorance the most because ignorance leads to fear, prejudice, and injustice. Dickens is saying a society that keeps its people uneducated will doom itself. Authorial Intent - This moment is the moral core of the novella. It ties everything together: It summarises the root of society’s problems and shows the reader that this story isn’t just about Scrooge. It’s about us.</p>

<p>“bereft, unwatched, unwept, uncared for, was the body of this man.”</p> <p>Compared to,</p> <p>‘My little, little child!’ (Bob talking about Tiny Tim)</p>	<p>Stave 4 the narrator describes the dead man’s body (Scrooge’s body)</p>	<p>In this stave the Ghost of Christmas Yet to Come reveals Scrooge’s own death. It is cold and brutal. “Unwatched” — no one was there as he died, “Unwept” — no one mourned him, “Uncared for” — no one loved him, “Bereft” — empty of everything that gives life meaning. Each word strips away any human connection. This is a warning to rich Victorians like Scrooge that if they continue to only care for themselves this fate could be theirs.</p> <p><u>Authorial Intent</u> - Victorian society often equated wealth with success and status. But here, Dickens flips that: Scrooge dies rich—but utterly unloved. What kind of success is that? This contrasts with Tiny Tim’s death where we see grief and compassion.</p>
<p>“I am as light as a feather, I am as happy as an angel, I am as merry as a schoolboy.”</p>	<p>Stave 5 Scrooge to himself!</p>	<p>Having seen his future death, Scrooge awakes at the start of Stave 5 to find himself alive and well on Christmas morning. The three similes come one after another showing the extent of his relief. Each image is chosen for a reason:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Light as a feather → free from burden, guilt, and greed. • Happy as an angel → purity, grace, appreciation for faith. • Merry as a schoolboy → youthful joy, innocence, playfulness. <p>He’s gone from old and bitter to young in spirit.</p> <p>Here we see a complete contrast with his former self.</p> <p>It shows us that redemption isn’t just possible—it’s transformational.</p> <p><u>Authorial Intent</u> - Dickens is revealing that real joy is not found in money or possessions but in having a clear conscience and connections with others. Also, no matter how far gone you are, change is always possible!</p>
<p>“To Tiny Tim, who did NOT die, he was a second father.”</p>	<p>Stave 5 Narrator about Scrooge</p>	<p>Right at the end of the novella, we see the outcome of Scrooge’s redemption. The all-caps “NOT” is rare in Dickens’s style—it leaps off the page. Why? It shows that, by changing his ways Scrooge has changed the ‘shadows’ that the Ghost of Christmas Present warned about. It’s Dickens showing us that redemption has real-world consequences, not just good feelings.</p> <p>“second Father” = Calling Scrooge a second father is powerful as it implies not just affection, but active care and responsibility. It shows that Scrooge has embraced the idea of family and taken a moral responsibility to help someone (others) even if he has no obligation to do so. He is the exact opposite of how we met him.</p>