



GCSE AQA English Literature: *A Christmas Carol*



Paper 1 – Section B (19th-century novel)



EXAM & TIMING

- Question type: extract + whole-novella essay
- Marks: 30
- Paper 1 total time: 1 hour 45 minutes
- Suggested timing for *A Christmas Carol*: 50 minutes
- Suggested 25% extra-time timing: 62 minutes

- Suggested breakdown: 5 mins plan, 40 mins write, 5 mins check
- With 25% extra time: 6 mins plan, 50 mins write, 6 mins check



1 BIG IDEAS

- redemption and transformation
- social responsibility
- poverty and inequality
- family and isolation
- Christmas spirit and generosity
- memory and the supernatural
- greed vs compassion

2 KEY CHARACTERS

- Scrooge** – miserly and isolated; transformed by the end.
- Marley** – warning figure; chained by his choices.
- Ghost of Christmas Past** – revisits memory and regret.
- Ghost of Christmas Present** – generosity, joy and social criticism.
- Ghost of Yet to Come** – fear, mortality and consequences.
- Bob Cratchit** – kindness, hard work and family love.
- Tiny Tim** – innocence and social injustice.
- Fred** – warmth, forgiveness and festive spirit.
- Fezziwig** – generous employer and positive model.

3 PLOT JOURNEY

- Scrooge the miser** – cold, isolated, dismisses the poor.
- Marley's warning** – the supernatural begins.
- The Past** – childhood, Fezziwig, Belle, lost opportunities.
- The Present and Future** – Cratchits, Ignorance and Want, death and fear.
- Redemption** – Scrooge changes and embraces generosity.

4 CONTEXT

- Victorian poverty and inequality.
- The Poor Law and workhouses.
- Malthusian attitudes vs Dickens' compassion.
- Christian morality, charity and redemption.
- Industrial London and social responsibility.
- Dickens' aim to encourage reform.

5 WRITER'S METHODS

- Allegory** – Spiritual and moral journey shown through symbolic characters and events.
- Symbolism** – Objects like the chains, the Spirit's torch and the grave carry deeper meanings.
- Contrast** – Rich vs poor; light vs dark; joy vs misery highlights social injustice and change.
- Setting and weather** – Cold, dark London mirrors Scrooge's heart; warmer settings show hope and change.
- Motifs of light and warmth** – Light, fire and warmth symbolise hope, kindness and redemption.
- Dialogue and exclamations** – Shows emotion, urgency and Dickens' moral voice.
- Structure across the five staves** – Five-part structure builds the journey from darkness to light and renewal.

6 WHAT A STRONG ANSWER DOES

- Focus sharply on the wording of the question.
- Use the extract and link to elsewhere in the novella.
- Track Scrooge's change or a key idea across the text.
- Analyse Dickens' methods and effects.
- Use context to deepen interpretation.
- Conceptualise ideas such as Christmas, poverty and redemption.

7 MUST-KNOW MOMENTS

	Marley's ghost appears	Marley warns Scrooge of the consequences of his greed.	Stave 1
	Fezziwig's party	Scrooge remembers joy, generosity and kindness.	Stave 2
	Belle leaves Scrooge	Scrooge chooses wealth over love and happiness.	Stave 2
	The Cratchit family	Shows love, sacrifice and the reality of poverty.	Stave 3
	Ignorance and Want	The spirits reveal the worst of society's neglect.	Stave 3
	Scrooge sees his own grave	A terrifying vision shows his lonely, unmissed death.	Stave 4
	The prize turkey and redemption	Scrooge wakes transformed and embraces generosity.	Stave 5



AQA LITERATURE SUCCESS REMINDERS: know the text well • answer the question asked • analyse meaning, not just techniques

