

A Christmas Carol Knowledge

Plot Summary:

Stave 1 – A mean-spirited, miserly old man named Ebenezer Scrooge sits in his counting-house on Christmas Eve, he

refuses to spend money on heating coals for a fire. Scrooge reacts to the holiday visitors with bitterness, spitting out

"Bah! Humbug!" in response to his nephew's "Merry Christmas!" Later that evening, Scrooge receives a chilling

visitation from the ghost of his dead partner, Jacob Marley., who relates his unfortunate story. Marley hopes to save

Scrooge from sharing the same fate.

Stave 2 – The Ghost of Christmas Past, a childlike phantom with a brightly glowing head, escorts Scrooge on a journey

to previous Christmases. He revisits his school days, his apprenticeship with a jolly merchant named Fezziwig and his

engagement to Belle, a woman who leaves Scrooge because of his lust for money. Scrooge is deeply moved.

Stave 3 – The Ghost of Christmas Present, a majestic giant in a green robe, takes Scrooge through London to unveil Christmas as it will happen that year. Scrooge watches the Cratchit family prepare a miniature feast in a meagre home

then to his nephew's to witness the Christmas party. Toward the end of the day, he shows Scrooge two starved children, Ignorance and Want, living under his coat.

Stave 4 – The Ghost of Christmas Yet to Come leads Scrooge through mysterious scenes relating to an unnamed man's

recent death. Scrooge sees businessmen discussing the dead man's riches, some homeless people trading his personal

possessions for cash, and a poor couple expressing relief at the death of their unforgiving moneylender. He then finds

himself in a churchyard, the spirit pointing to a grave. Scrooge is shocked to read his own name on the stone. He begs

the spirit to alter his fate, promising to change his cruel, insensitive, ways and to honour Christmas with all his heart.

Stave 5 – Overwhelmed with joy by the chance to redeem himself, Scrooge rushes out to send a giant Christmas

turkey to the Cratchit house and attends Fred's party. As the years go by, he holds true to his promise and honours Christmas

Context:

Dickens – Dickens' father was sent to jail for debt and Dickens was forced to give up his education until inheritance money could pay for private tuition. He was put to work in a warehouse, pasting labels on bottles and gaining first-hand experience of poverty. Dickens became a writer of fiction and journalism, reporting on court cases and working for radical newspapers on his disappointment with politics and the class system.

Victorian Literature – Victorian literature, written during Queen Victoria's reign, was largely characterised by the struggle of the poor and the triumph of right over wrong. The age saw a huge amount of self-improvement guides published, focusing on morals, manners and etiquette and household management. Having said that, the Victorians also advocated good humour, joviality and celebration (Queen Victoria had both a Golden and a Diamond jubilee in this era). Themes allude to industrialisation, social class, reform and Empire.

Workhouses – In 1834 the Poor Law Amendment Act was designed to reduce the cost of looking after the poor. If people wanted help they had to go into a workhouse to get it. Once admitted to the workhouse, people were known as inmates, and categorised according to their status. Men, women and children were segregated, some never to be reunited. Meals were cheap, filling food such as gruel (a thick porridge-like sludge). The workhouses were strictly run, with many rules which were to be adhered to at all times, with severe consequences for those who refused them.

Prisons – Victorians were worried about the rising crime rate: and were firm believers in punishment for criminals. They had clear ideas about what these prisons should be like: unpleasant places, of laborious work to deter people from committing crimes.

Children – For the poor, there often wasn't the time or energy for play. Starvation and cold were facts of life, and many children were expected to contribute to household income. Children worked in huge, unsafe factories for very small wages. Others worked in suffocating mines & smaller children swept chimneys

Key Characters:

Ebenezer Scrooge – A selfish business man.

Fred – Scrooge's nephew.

Jacob Marley – Scrooge's dead partner who returns as a ghost to warn Scrooge to change his ways.

Bob Cratchitt – Scrooge's clerk who doesn't have much money.

Mrs Cratchitt – Bob's wife.

Tiny Tim – Bob's ill son.

The Ghost of Christmas Past – A combination of young and old, wearing white robes and looking like a candle.

The Ghost of Christmas Present - A jovial gentleman surrounded by a warm glow. **The Ghost of Christmas Yet To Come** – A robed and hooded spirit.

Fezziwig – Scrooge's ex-employer.

Belle – A woman who Scrooge was in love with who left him.

Fan – Scrooge's sister.

Key Themes:

Greed

Generosity
Social Injustice
Poverty
Capitalism
Class
Family
Guilt
Redemption
Supernatural



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Key Quotes:

Scrooge – “Oh! But he was a tight-fisted hand at the grindstone.” “Hard and sharp as flint.”

“Secret, and self-contained, and solitary as an oyster.” “No warmth could warm, no wintry weather chill him.” “Are there no prisons?”

'Bah!' said Scrooge, 'Humbug!'

“Decrease the surplus population.”

“What right have you to be dismal? What reason have you to be morose? You're rich enough.” [Fred]

Marley – “I wear the chain I forged in life.”

“The spirit within him should walk abroad among his fellowmen, and travel far and wide; and if that spirit goes not forth in life, it is condemned to do so after death.”

Christmas Past – “It was a strange figure-like a child: yet not so like a child as like an old man.”

“A solitary child, neglected by his friends, is left there still.”

“The happiness he [Fezziwig] gives, is quite as great as if it cost a fortune.”

Christmas Present – “There sat a jolly Giant, glorious to see, who bore a glowing torch, in shape not unlike Plenty's horn.”

“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.”

“I see a vacant seat by the poor chimney corner, and a crutch without an owner...carefully preserved. If these shadows remain unaltered by the future, the child will die.”

“God bless us, every one!”

“Will you decide what men shall live, what men shall die?”

“This boy is Ignorance. This girl is Want. Beware them both.” **Christmas Yet to Come** – “The Phantom slowly, gravely, silently approached.”

“Scrooge crept towards it, trembling as he went; and following the finger, read upon the stone of the neglected grave his own name, Ebenezer Scrooge.”

Redemption – “I will honour Christmas in my heart, and try to keep it all the year. I will live in the Past, the Present, and the Future!”

“Scrooge was better than his word. He did it all, and infinitely more!”

“His own heart laughed: and that was quite enough for him.”

Methods:

Noun – A word for a person, place or thing.

Pronoun – A word used when referring to someone or something.

Verb – A word used to describe an action, state or occurrence.

Adjective – A word to describe a noun.

Adverb – A word used to describe a verb.

Simile – A phrase comparing one thing to another, using *as* or *like*.

Metaphor – A phrase comparing one thing to another, without using *as* or *like*.)

Personification – A phrase giving human characteristics to a non-human object.

Imagery – Words or phrases that create visual images.

Emotive language – Words that create feeling and emotion. **Colloquial language** – Words that are informal and slang. **Semantic field** – A group of words that follow the same theme.

Rhetorical question – A question that does not require an answer.

Alliteration – Words close together that begin with the same sounding letter. **Assonance** – Words close together that begin with a vowel sound.

Sibilance – Words close together that begin with an 's' sound.

Oxymoron – A phrase using contradictory words.

Onomatopoeia – Words that create a sound.

Symbolism – The representation of ideas in images or motifs.

Pathetic Fallacy – A technique where the weather reflects the mood of the story.

Punctuation – Marks used to separate or express meaning.

Repetition – A word or phrase that is repeated.

Dialogue – Words that are spoken by a character.

Perspective – A point of view. Text can be written from a first (I), second (you) or third person (he/she/they) perspective.

Sentence structures – The way that sentences are put together. Sentences can be simple (main clause), compound (main clauses joined with a conjunction, comma or semi colon) or complex (main and subordinate clauses).

Foreshadowing – A hint or a warning of something in the future. **Withholding** – A technique where the author holds back important information.

Juxtaposition – Two concepts, themes, ideas or characters that are contrasting or opposite.

Stave – A set of five parallel lines on which musical notes are written. **Bildungsroman** – A story which focuses on the psychological, moral or spiritual growth of a character.

Sentence Starters:

Dickens

presents... Quote

(embedded)

This suggests to the reader...

Dickens is revealing... (his ideas/context)

In particular, Dicken's use of (method) implies

...



Key Words:

Christmas – A Christian holiday to celebrate the birth of Christ. **Tradition** – customs, celebrations or beliefs passed down through generations.

Victorian – the era of Queen Victoria's reign.

Ignorance – a lack of knowledge. **Want** – a desire to have something.

Supernatural – a being or event beyond natural understanding. **Moral** – the standards of right or wrong.

Redemption – the act of being saved from sin.

Clerk – an office worker.

Debtors – people who owe money to a money-lender, such as Scrooge.

Grief – intense sadness.

Transformation – a change in personality or appearance.

Capitalism – an economic and political system in which a country is controlled by private owners for profit, rather than by the state.

Abundance – a large amount.

Poverty – being very poor.

Social criticism – comments on a society's problems and issues.

Novella – a short novel.