



Enterprise Learning Alliance

**Knowledge Organiser
A Christmas Carol**

Tier 3 Vocabulary

Novella

A short novel

Ephemeral

Lasting for a short period. Not consistent or solid.

Prophetic

Offering a vision of the future

Stave

In music a stave is a set of five lines separated by four spaces. Dickens calls the chapters staves as each stave (chapter) is an individual story, Staves also reminds us of hymns which link to church and Christmas.

Social Conscience

If you have a social conscience, you worry about people who are poor, ill, old, etc and try to help them.

Tier 2 Vocabulary

Miserly, moral, spirit, charity, vision, apparition, ignorance, want, phantom, humility, redemption, tight-fisted, fear, regret, deluded, obedient, generous, selfless, positive, persistent, enthusiastic, kind, gentle, firm, silent, dark, ominous, disabled, past, present, future, transformation, carol, time, Victorians, workhouses

Skills and Knowledge

1. To know the context in which 'A Christmas Carol' was written
2. Identify key characters and their relationships to other characters
3. Identify/sequence key points in the plot
4. Link key themes in the novella to characters and plot.

Skills

1. Develop a personal response to events and characterisation
2. Analyse features of language.
3. Explain how writers' methods develop characterisation, plot development and link to themes.

Independence

Create a summary of the plot

Draw a mind map of everything you can remember about the key characters

Mind map the themes in A Christmas Carol linking plot and characters

<https://classroom.thenational.academy/units/a-christmas-carol-fa13>

Complete the revision and tests on GCSE Bitesize <https://www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize/topics/zcs8qbtv>

Attempt one of the sample questions.

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize/guides/zqdiq6f/revision/1>

Sing this catchy tune

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=C4b2_lntlyw

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=81p3-RvIZK4>



A Christmas Carol

Context – A Christmas Carol was written by Charles Dickens in 1843

Charles Dickens – Charles Dickens was born in 1812 and spent the first years of his life in Kent, England. At 9, he moved to London. At 12, his father was sent to debtors' prison for racking up huge debts, and Charles was given a painful job labelling bottles near the prison. He found this period in his life hellish, and it doubtlessly led him to draw readers' attention to the plight of the poor when he later found success as an author. Many of his works are about social hardships and inequalities.

The Victorian Era – The Victorian era describes the period in which Queen Victoria sat on the English throne – between 1837 and 1901 (most of Dickens' life). Whilst this was a time of industrial revolution, it was also an extremely harsh time to live, and the differences between the lives of the richest and the poorest were exacerbated. The Victorian era was a period of great change. In this time, the population of England doubled – from 16.8 million 1851 to over 30 million in 1901.

Workhouses – A workhouse was a place where a person went if they could not afford to financially support themselves and their families. Men, women and children (mostly orphans) lived and worked in the workhouses, which were very crowded – making living conditions unhealthily and unpleasant. People slept in dormitories, where disease was easily spread. In *A Christmas Carol*, Scrooge voices his support for workhouses.

Class Solidarity – Despite industrial changes altering the social landscape, there were still relatively distinct social classes in operation: the nobility/upper class, the middle class, and the working class. Life was terrible for the poorest. Lack of money resulted in a negligible food supply. For some working families, money was so tight that they required their children to work in order to survive.

Health and Medicine – Healthcare was more of a luxury at the time, and medicine was nowhere near as advanced today. Many diseases were rare, and childbirth and poverty were very real dangers to people living in the era. As a result, a middle class person may expect to live to 45 at the time, whereas a working class person would have been lucky to have lived half that time. In *A Christmas Carol*, the restrictions in healthcare are evident in Tiny Tim's continued suffering.

Christmas – We now associate Christmas as being a time of seasonal goodwill, love and friendship. However, before the Victorian era, when writers such as Dickens spread these messages through their novels, there was no Santa Claus, Christmas cards, and no holidays from work! Christmas Day was a far more low-key affair. Writers such as Dickens encouraged middle-class families to share their wealth and act selflessly.

Main Characters – Consider what Dickens intended through his characterisation of each of the below...

Ebenezer Scrooge – Scrooge is the lead protagonist of the novella. He is a miserly owner of a counting house (what would now be called an accountant's office). Initially greedy, selfish and cold, Scrooge hates Christmas and lacks any form of Christmas spirit. He experiences a moral and psychological transformation through his visits from the Ghosts of Christmas Past, Present and Yet to Come.

Quote: "It's enough for a man to understand his own business!"

Jacob Marley and Fred – Joseph Marley is Scrooge's late business partner, and Fred is Scrooge's nephew. They represent the two extremes of Christmas spirit. Joseph Marley symbolises the limitations of a life-lived focused on greed and selfishness, whilst Fred's life appears fulfilled through his perpetual joy, kindness and interactions with others. After his death, Joseph Marley has been condemned to wander the world as a miserable ghost.

Quote: "You have yet a chance and hope of escaping my fate."

The Ghost of Christmas Present – The Ghost of Christmas Present is the second of the three ghosts to visit Scrooge. He is a majestic, jolly giant, who is dressed in a green robe. His lifespan is restricted to Christmas Day, and he has 'over 1800 brothers', representative of the other Christmas Days that were once in the present. He escorts Scrooge on a tour of how his contemporaries spend Christmas day, to force him to contemplate his own solitary existence. He also shows him the need to consider 'Want' and 'Ignorance'.

Old Major Quotes: "Come in! and know me better, man!"

Themes – A theme is an idea or message that runs throughout a text.

Greed and selfishness – Characters such as Scrooge represent the selfish middle classes, who sought to amass, rather than share their wealth. Jacob Marley demonstrates the burden that such a selfish life will inevitably bring. Through these characters and the events of the novel, Dickens criticises how wealth had become associated with the root of happiness, at the expense of close relationships and goodwill.

Divisions – Divisions were evident throughout the novel, as those with power and money seek simply to exert and recycle their advantages over those without (rather than aiding them). The book shines a light on the plight faced by poor families such as the Cratchits, which demotivated the negative attitudes towards the poor held by the rich.

Transformation – Physical transformations are evident throughout *A Christmas Carol*, as objects, settings, and characters appear and vanish under the manipulation of the ghosts. Spiritual transformations take place too, as the reader witnesses a lonely boy's transformation into an embittered old man, and the efforts made to transform his character to reconnect with those around him.

Time – Time is stretched by the ghosts – the events that Scrooge experiences appear to have taken days, and yet all takes place in the space of one night. A race against time is also taking place, as the spirits work to prevent Scrooge (and in turn, Tiny Tim) from experiencing their fateful demise. The reader is taught to value the time that we have, and use it to spread happiness to others.

KNOWLEDGE ORGANISER

Scene-by-Scene Summary – Alongside key quotations from each scene.

| STAVE ONE | STAVE TWO | STAVE THREE | STAVE FOUR | STAVE FIVE |
|--|---|---|--|--|
| <p>It is a foggy Christmas Eve, and Scrooge is working in his counting house. He refuses to buy another lump of coal to heat Bob Cratchit's (his clerk's) office. Scrooge's cheerful nephew, Fred, enters, inviting Scrooge to Christmas party, but he declines. After he leaves, two gentlemen enter, asking if Scrooge is willing to make a charitable donation to the poor. Scrooge again declines. He begrudgingly gives Bob Cratchit the day off. Scrooge follows his usual routine on the way home. At home, he sees the ghost of his old business partner (Jacob Marley) in the knocker. Marley is in chains as punishment for his selfishness and greed when living. He says that he will be visited by 3 ghosts over the next 3 nights, and hence Scrooge will be visited by 3 ghosts over the next 3 nights.</p> <p>Scrooge is confused to wake at midnight, as it was after 2am when he went to sleep. At one o'clock, Scrooge is visited by a strange child-like figure that emanates wisdom – The Ghost of Christmas Past. The spirit touches Scrooge's heart, granting the power to fly. The ghost takes Scrooge back to where he was raised – Scrooge is touched by memories of his childhood. He sees himself as a schoolboy spending Christmas alone, being visited by his sister, being at a party held by Scrooge's old boss Fezziwig, and with his old partner Belle, who is breaking off their engagement on account of his greed. He sees Belle in a more modern time, with her husband, discussing how Scrooge is now 'quite alone in the world'. Scrooge is upset by the vision, and begs with the ghost to take him back home. Scrooge finds himself back in his bedroom, where he once again falls asleep almost instantly.</p> <p>The bell strikes one, and Scrooge is awake once more. At fifteen minutes past one, he wanders into the next room, where he finds the Ghost of Christmas Present waiting for him. He is a majestic jolly giant, and its atop of a mountain of food. The spirit takes Scrooge to the bustling streets on Christmas morning, where passers-by joyfully greet each other. The spirit then takes Scrooge to the home of Bob Cratchit, where the family savour the Christmas that they can afford. Their visibly-ill son, Tiny Tim, is cheering despite his ailments. Scrooge begs to know whether he will survive. They also visit Fred's Christmas party, which Scrooge enjoys (though no one can see him). Eventually, Scrooge is brought to a vast expanse, where two sickly children, 'Want' and 'Ignorance' emerge. The Spirit warns him if there is anything that can be done, the spirit moods his prior selfishness.</p> | <p>Scrooge is approached by a hooded phantom. The spirit is silent, and Scrooge is terrified by him. Scrooge pleads with him to provide his next lesson. The ghost takes him to the stock exchange, where he must discuss the accounts of a rich man, a clergyman, and a poor man, whose family's stolen goods are being sold, and a Cratchit he has helped, whose family struggles with the death of his young son. Scrooge is then taken to a freshly dug grave in a graveyard, where a grave-digger reveals that it is his own grave. Appalled, Scrooge begs with the spirit to grant him another chance to show that he has learnt his lesson. The phantom begins to tremble and disappear, and once again Scrooge finds himself in the relative safety of his own bed.</p> | <p>Scrooge realises that he has been returned to Christmas morning, and is utterly overjoyed. He pays the first boy that he meets a huge sum to deliver a great big turkey to Bob Cratchit's household. He bumps into the gentleman collecting for charity, apologises for his prior behaviour, and promises to donate lots of money to the poor. He attends Fred's party and is so happy and kind that the other guests can barely believe his behaviour. The next morning, he pretends to scold Bob Cratchit for arriving late, before promising to give him a large raise and to care for his family. As time passes by, he stays true to his word – he helps the Cratchits and becomes like a second father to Tiny Tim, who does not die. Scrooge brings Christmas cheer to every day, and shrugs off the doubts that other have about his changed behaviour. The narrator concludes by suggesting that Scrooge's changed attitude and behaviour should be shared by everyone.</p> | <p>"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."</p> | <p>"He had no further intercourse with Spirits, but lived upon the Total Abstinence Principle, ever afterwards; and it was always said of him, that he knew how to keep Christmas well, if any man alive possessed the knowledge.... God bless us all, every one!"</p> |
| <p>"Marley was dead: to begin with. There is no doubt whatever about that. The register of his burial was signed by the clergyman, the clerk, the undertaker, and the chief mourner. Scrooge signed it."</p> | <p>"But the strangest thing about it was, that from the crown of his head there sprang a bright clear jet of light, by which all this was visible; and which was doubtless the occasion of its using, in its stouter moments, a great extinguisher for a cap, which it now held under its arm."</p> | <p>"Its dark brown curls were long and free; free as its gentian face, its sparkling eye, its open hand, its cheery voice, its unconstrained demeanour, and its joyful air."</p> | <p>"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."</p> | <p>"He had no further intercourse with Spirits, but lived upon the Total Abstinence Principle, ever afterwards; and it was always said of him, that he knew how to keep Christmas well, if any man alive possessed the knowledge.... God bless us all, every one!"</p> |

| Structural Features |
|--|
| <p>Five Staves – The story is set out in five Staves – a structure that mimics musical organization – the opening sets the scene, the middle is the turning point, and the last stave concludes.</p> <p>Surface Level story – A literal story that works on a surface level, e.g. the story of one cruel and harsh man being visited by ghosts who teach him a lesson, making him kind and compassionate.</p> <p>Symbolic Level story – A deeper, more hidden meaning to the story, e.g. There exists a selfish society, who needs to heed this warning, in order to become more caring.</p> <p>The Number 3 – Scrooge is visited by 3 ghosts: Past, Present, and Yet to Come. This is a common feature in magical fairy stories, e.g. 3 wishes, 3 choices etc. This adds to the mystical feel of the novella.</p> |
| Dickens' Literary Devices |
| <p>Simile – This gives the reader a better image of characters and places, e.g. Scrooge described as 'hard and sharp as a flint'.</p> <p>Clear Narrative Viewpoint – The narrator gives views to tell the reader how to think – e.g. Scrooge was a 'tight-fisted hand at the grindstone'.</p> <p>Metaphor – Used to represent deeper meanings, and ideas. For example, the children 'Want' and 'Ignorance' represent the poor in society.</p> <p>Personification – To emphasise the atmosphere of places and settings: e.g. The crisp air laughed to hear it.</p> |

LEARN 50 'A CHRISTMAS CAROL' QUOTATIONS BY HEART

| Stave 1 | Stave 2 | Stave 3 | Stave 4 | Stave 5 |
|---|---|--|--|---|
| 1. 'Solitary as an oyster' | 11. 'The figure itself fluctuated in its distinctness.' | 21. 'Its dark brown curls were long and free; free as its genial face' | 31. The phantom slowly, gravely, silently approached.' | 41. 'I will live in the Past, the Present, and the Future!' |
| 2. 'Decrease the surplus population.' | 12. 'A lonely boy was reading near a feeble fire' | 22. 'bright gleaming berries glistened' | 32. 'Shrouded in a deep black garment' | 42. 'He looked so irresistibly pleasant' |
| 3. 'Bah! Humbug!' | 13. 'Why, it's All Baba.' Scrooge exclaimed in ecstasy. | 23. 'Exchanging a facetious snowball -- better-natured missile.' | 33. "It's likely to be a very cheap funeral." | 43. 'No fog, no mist; clear, bright' |
| 4. 'A squeezing, wrenching, grasping, scraping, clutching, covetous, old sinner!' | 14. 'Father is so much kinder than he used to be that home's like heaven!' | 24. Oh, a wonderful pudding! | 34. 'The whole quarter reeked with crime, with filth, and misery.' | 44. 'A great many back-payments are included' |
| 5. 'Hard and sharp as flint.' | 15. 'He [Fezziwig] has the power to render us happy or unhappy.' | 25. 'Tiny Tim upon his shoulder.' | 35. 'We may sleep tonight with light hearts.' | 45. 'Wake up the fires, and buy another coal-scuttle' |
| 6. 'Playing at hide-and-seek with the other houses' | 16. 'Another idol has displaced me...a golden one.' | 26. 'I see a vacant seat' | 36. "'My little, little child!" cried Bob.' | 46. 'I'll raise your salary' |
| 7. 'Scrooge took his melancholy dinner in his usual melancholy tavern.' | 17. 'I have seen your nobler aspirations fall off one by one, until the master-passion, Gain, engrosses you.' | 27. 'They were happy, grateful, pleased with one another.' | 37. 'Quiet. Very quiet. The noisy little Cratchits were as still as statues.' | 47. 'Everything could yield him pleasure.' |
| 8. 'Darkness is cheap, and Scrooge liked it.' | 18. I should like to be able to say a word or two to my clerk just now!' | 28. 'Every man among them hummed a Christmas tune.' | 38. 'Read upon the stone of the neglected grave his own name, Ebenezer Scrooge.' | 48. 'Bell, dong, ding; hammer, clang, clash! Oh, glorious, glorious!' |
| 9. 'The chain...was long, and wound about him like a tail.' | 19. 'Spring-time in the haggard winter of his life.' | 29. 'Yellow, meagre, ragged, scowling, wolfish.' | 39. 'The kind hand trembled.' | 49. 'Wonderful party, wonderful games, wonderful unanimity, won-der-ful happiness!' |
| 10. 'The fog came pouring in at every chink.' | 20. "Leave me! Take me back. Haunt me no longer!" | 30. 'This boy is ignorance. This girl is want.' | 40. 'Assure me that I yet may change these shadows' | 50. 'To Tiny Tim, who did not die, he was a second father.' |

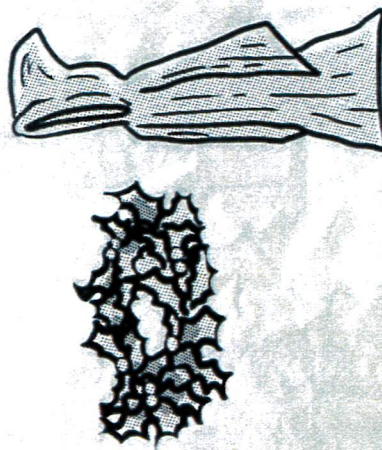
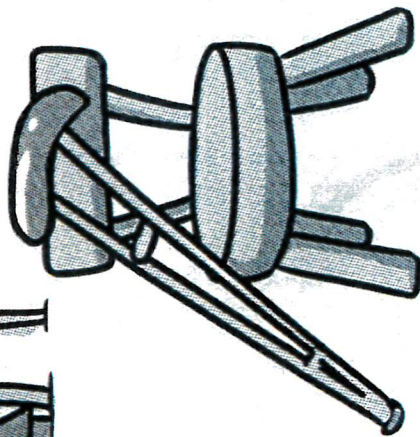
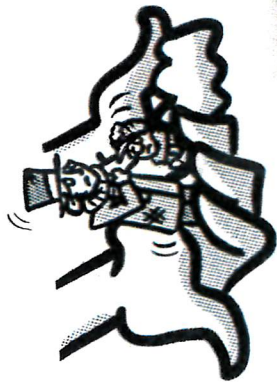
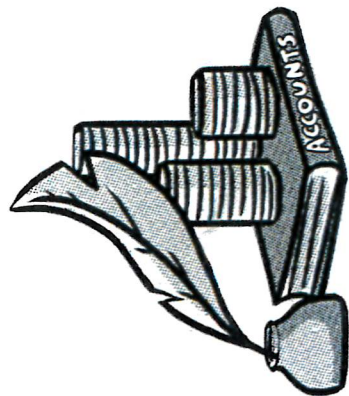
NOVICE: Explain what each quotation reveals.

DEVELOPING: Identify and label language features in each quotation using terminology.

SECURE: Look for deeper meanings. Link each quotation to Victorian context, wider themes or Dickens' purposes.

GCSE A Christmas Carol

Charles Dickens



KnowIT

Characters

- At the beginning of the story, what things does Scrooge value and think are important?
- What type of person is Bob Cratchit?
- How is Fezziwig shown to be a good character?
- Why is Fred a good nephew to Scrooge?
- Why does the Ghost of Christmas Yet to Come not talk and dress in black?
- How has Scrooge changed by the end of the story?

Genre

- What order do the spirits visit Scrooge in? Why?
- Who does Scrooge meet at the start and end of the story? Why might Dickens have done this?
- Why does the narrator of the story appear friendly at the start?
- Why does each ghost appear in their own stave?

Dickens' Methods

- The setting at the start of the story is always dark, cold and miserable. Why might Dickens have done this? How is it different at the end?
- Why does Scrooge often repeat 'Bah, humbug' when people talk to him?

What do the Quotes Tell Us About...?

- Scrooge – *'Are there no prisons? asked Scrooge.'*
- Scrooge – *'Hard and sharp as flint, from which no steel had ever struck out generous fire; secret and self-contained, and solitary as an oyster.'*
- Bob Cratchit – *'Oh, a wonderful pudding! Bob Cratchit said, and calmly too, that he regarded it as the greatest success achieved by Mrs Cratchit.'*
- Scrooge – *'A merrier Christmas, Bob, my good fellow... I'll raise your salary, and endeavour to assist your struggling family.'*

Plot

- What impression do we get of Scrooge in the first stave?
- Where does the Ghost of Christmas Past take Scrooge?
- Why does the Ghost of Christmas Present show Scrooge different people celebrating Christmas Day?
- Why is the Ghost of Christmas Yet to Come's visit so upsetting to Scrooge?
- Why does the story end with Scrooge caring for Tiny Tim?

Themes

- What does Dickens want the readers to learn from A Christmas Carol?
- Provide three examples of how social responsibility is shown in the story.
- Family is an important theme throughout the story. Find three examples of positive family relationships.

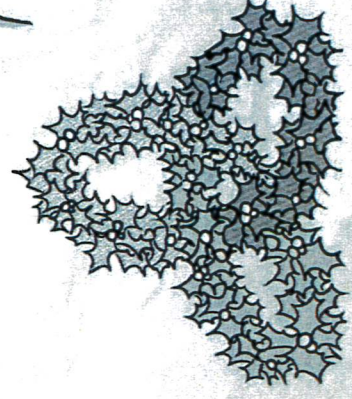
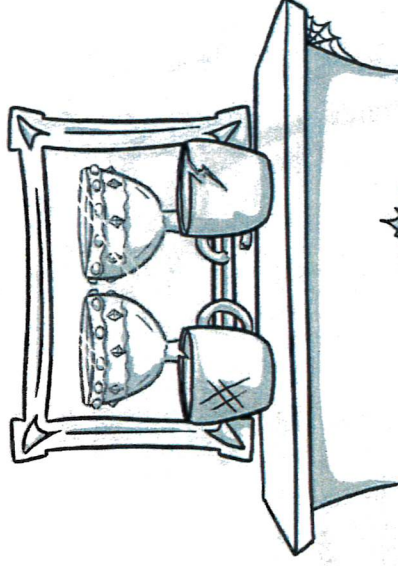
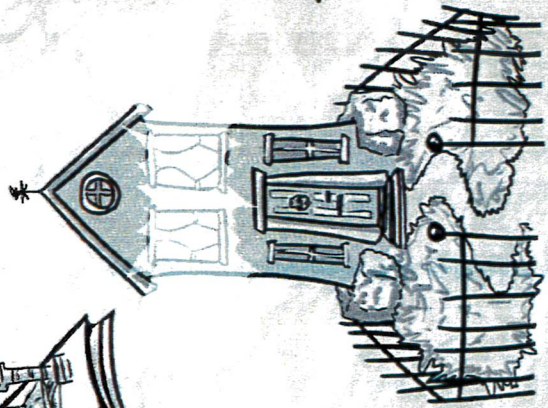
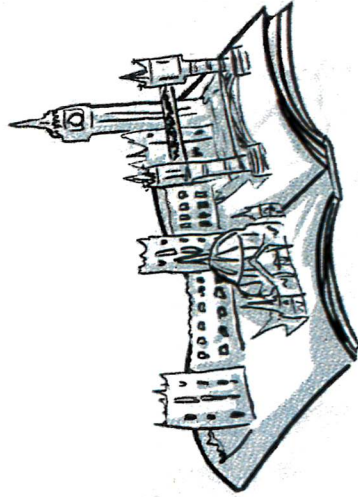
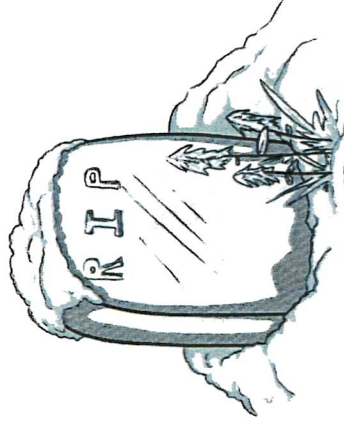
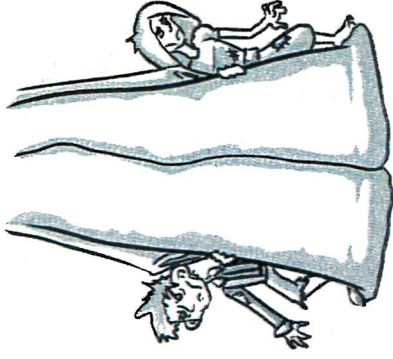
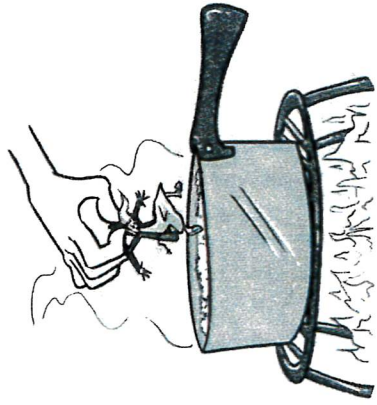
Character Relationships

- Describe Scrooge's relationship with his nephew, Fred
- What type of relationship did Scrooge have with his sister, Fan?
- What are the relationships like in the Cratchit family?
- Why does Scrooge take such an interest in Tiny Tim?
- Before he changes, does Scrooge have any good friends? Why?

GCSE A Christmas Carol

Charles Dickens

PIXL
Patterns in Excellence



ThinkIT

Genre

Consider the title: *A Christmas Carol*. What images and associations does the word 'carol' have (both contemporary and modern)? Why do you think Dickens chose this title, instead of 'story' or 'tale'? What genre(s) do you think *A Christmas Carol* belongs to? E.g. *Ghost story, moral tale, adventure story... Why?*

Narrative Voice

Who do you think the narrator is?

Are there clues to their identity? If not, how does an omniscient, anonymous narrator affect how you respond to the story? Is the way that a story is narrated important to you? Why/why not?

Can you make distinctions between the things the narrator shows you and the things that the narrator tells you? Do the narrator's personal opinions affect how you react to certain characters or episodes?

How does the narrator's tone shape how different readers could respond to the text? How well suited is the narrative voice to the audience?

And as close to it as I am now to you, and I am standing in the spirit at your elbow... How do you react to this? Is the narrator 'haunting' the reader?

Themes and Religion

In *A Letter to the Young Reader*, written by one editor of the story it states: "its story and its Christian teaching have passed far beyond the land of its birth".

Obviously *A Christmas Carol* is a Christian holiday – but do you think the themes of the story are specifically Christian? Why? Why not?

Do you think *A Christmas Carol* is a story about the importance of Christmas, or about the importance of social conscience and charity more generally? "But I am sure I have always thought of Christmas time, when it has come round – apart from the veneration due to its sacred name and origin, if anything belonging to it can ever be apart from that – as a good time; a kind, forgiving, charitable, pleasant time."

Consider the themes of the novel relating to sin and atonement: how does this support a religious/Christian reading?

Is the presentation of Innocence significant when reading *A Christmas Carol* as a religious text? "Spirit of Tiny Tim, they childish essence was from God!"

Can you find references to Christianity – or religion more generally – in the supernatural aspects of the story?

How does Dickens present ideas about life after death?

Marley: "I wear the chain I forged in life [...] I made it link by link, and yard by yard"

Description of Bob Cratchit after Tiny Tim's death: "He broke down all at once, he couldn't help it: he could have helped it, he and his child would have been farther apart perhaps than they were."

Head and Heart

Do you think there is a conflict – both in Scrooge's character and in the novel as a whole – between being emotional/empathetic and rational/pragmatic? How is this represented? Does the balance shift throughout the novel?

Consider how Scrooge seems to struggle with doubt and faith: with things that he can explain and things that he can't. "It isn't possible [...] that I can have slept through a whole day and far into another night, it isn't possible that anything has happened to the sun, and this is twelve noon!"

How does the resolution of the novel affect the balance between doubt and faith? "The Spirit stood beside sick beds and they were cheerful; on foreign lands, and they were close to home; by struggling men, and they were patient in their greater hopes; by poverty, and it was rich."

Dickens' Methods and his Audience

Who do you think Dickens' intended audience was? Do you feel like the audience has changed over time? Why/why not?

Is Dickens able to write an entertaining, accessible story for a young readership, that is also engaging for an adult audience? If yes, how? If no, why?

Things you might want to consider: use of humour, language, cliché, questions syntax, double-entendre, politics, inter-textual references (Shakespeare, the Bible)...

Setting and Location

Think about the different locations that feature in the narrative. How do they reflect the characters' experience at the time? "The water-pipe being left in solitude, its overflowing suddenly congealed, and turned to misanthropic ice."

What is the impact of the Ghost of Christmas Present taking Scrooge outside of London? "The city seemed to spring up about them."

How do the characters move between different locations? Do they all travel in the same way? Is their mode of travel significant? How does Dickens present this?

Social Responsibility and Conscience

How does Dickens present the importance of having a social conscience in the novel? "The misery with them all was, clearly, that they sought to interfere for good in human matters, and had lost the power forever."

How is charity presented in *A Christmas Carol*?

What significance can you find in the altercation between Scrooge and the Ghost of Christmas Present regarding charity?

"There are some upon this earth of your [...] who lay claim to know us, and who do their deeds of passion, pride, ill-will, hatred, envy, bigotry and selfishness in our name, who are as strange to us and all our folk and sin, as if they had never lived. Remember that, and change their doings on themselves, and not us."

How do you think this also relates to presentations of religion in the novel?

Charity

In what ways could you argue that *A Christmas Carol* has a socialist message?

What do you understand by the term socialist? "I support the establishments I have mentioned – they cost enough; and those who are badly off must go there."

Whose responsibility is it to care for the poor and vulnerable:

- In Scrooge's opinion
- In Dickens' opinion
- In your opinion?

How does Dickens bring these ideas to the fore in the conclusion of the narrative?

Socialism

Wealth

"There are many things from which I might have derived good, by which I have not profited." How is money presented in the novel? What effect does Dickens show money having on people?

Does Dickens present a relationship between goodness and wealth? How does this then relate to happiness and a sense of fulfilment? "What right have you to be merry? What reason have you to be merry? You're poor enough."

Do you find attitudes towards wealth and money in the novel problematic in any way? For example, how do you react to young Scrooge's words about society: "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." Do you think there are 'good' and 'bad' ways to move up the social ladder?

Time, Pace and Structure

Consider the importance of time in the novel. What is the dramatic effect of all of the events unfolding in a single night? "Lead on! The night is waning fast, and it is precious time to me, I know!"

Does your sense of time passing change throughout the novel? How does Dickens provide markers for how long things are taking? Consider how the structure affects the overall dramatic impact of key moments in the novel. E.g. the appearance of the Ghost of Christmas Yet to Come at the end of the third stave.

How does Dickens create suspense in *A Christmas Carol*? Consider as a starting point the speed and order of Scrooge's revelations.

Think about the relationship that each of the ghosts have with time and ageing – e.g. how the Ghost of Christmas Past is "like a child, yet not so like a child as an old man", the lifespan of the Ghost of Christmas Present etc.

The Ghosts

Think about the physical descriptions of the four spirits. How does their appearance reflect/contrast with the function they perform within the story? The Ghost of Christmas Yet to Come: "It was shrouded in a deep black garment, which concealed its head, its face, its form, and left no thing visible, save one outstretched hand. But for this it would have been difficult to detach it from the darkness by which it was surrounded." Is it significant that this ghost does not speak?

Do each of the ghosts have a particular gift? E.g. The Ghost of Christmas Present's incense and its ability to diffuse animosity between people. Consider in detail what Ignorance and Want represent. Why do you think Dickens chose these two? Why are they attached to the Ghost of Christmas Present and not the others? "But most of all beware this boy [Ignorance], for on his brow I see that written which is Doom, unless the writing be erased."

How does Scrooge's attitude towards the ghosts change as the narrative progresses? Is it a linear progression, or are there moments where he regresses? "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."

Characters and the Theme of Class

How are the working classes presented in *A Christmas Carol*? Are there specific locations that are the domain of the working classes? "He recognised its situation and its bad rapids. The ways were foul and narrow; the shops and houses wretched; the people half-naked, drunken, slipshod, ugly."

Do the different ghosts present the classes differently? Are there moments where Dickens attempts to idealise the working classes? How important is how the working classes are perceived to Dickens' wider messages? Do you think it is more of less important for a contemporary readership?

"It may be that in the sight of Heaven you are more worthless and less fit to live than millions like this poor man's child." Consider the character of Fezziwig. How does Dickens utilise him to show how the wealthier classes should behave?

"A small matter [...] to make these silly folks so full of gratitude."

"The happiness he gives is quite as great as if it had cost a fortune."

Family: 'Uncle' 'Nephew'!

How are family relationships presented in *A Christmas Carol*?

How do you react to Scrooge's interactions with Fan in the second stave? What function do the scenes with Bob Cratchit's family, and Scrooge's ex-fiancee's family, perform in the novel?

How is Scrooge affected by what he witnesses in these scenes?