

KS4 English Literature — 'A Christmas Carol' by Charles Dickens

Context:

- ✓ Dickens wrote 'A Christmas Carol' in 1843 focusing on how many of society's ills can be blamed on greed.
- ✓ Dickens' early life gave him first-hand experience of poverty.
- ✓ 1834 – Poor Law Amendment Act – Led to a cut in aid given to the poor.
- ✓ Workhouses were created which poor people would have to live and work in, if they were unable to pay for their own housing.
- ✓ In 1843, Dickens read a government report on child labour in England.
- ✓ Dickens wanted to use his popularity to bring the problem of child poverty to the attention of a wider public.
- ✓ Victorian London was a place of great wealth and great poverty.

PLOT STRUCTURE

The Preface

Dickens introduces his 'Ghostly Little Book' and his 'ghost on an idea'. He talks to his reader telling them that he wants if to 'haunt' their memories, so they don't forget why we need to live by Christian values.

Stave One

Scrooge is at work in his counting house. Despite the Christmas Eve cold, he refuses to spend money on coals for the fire. Scrooge's turns down his nephew, Fred's, invitation to his Christmas party and the request of two men who want money for charity. Scrooge is visited by the ghost of his dead partner, Jacob Marley, who tells Scrooge that, due to his greedy life, he has to wander the Earth wearing heavy chains. He tells Scrooge that three spirits will visit him during the next three nights.

Stave Two

He wakes and the Ghost of Christmas Past takes Scrooge into the past. Invisible to those he watches, Scrooge revisits his childhood school days, his apprenticeship with a jolly merchant named Fezziwig, and his engagement to Belle, who leaves Scrooge as he loves money too much to love another human being. Scrooge sheds tears of regret before being returned to his bed.

Stave Three

The Ghost of Christmas Present shows Scrooge Christmas as it will happen that year. Scrooge watches the Cratchit family eat a tiny meal in their little home. He sees Bob Cratchit's son, Tiny Tim, whose kindness and humility warm Scrooge's heart. The spectre shows Scrooge his nephew's Christmas party. Toward the end of the day the ghost shows Scrooge two starved children, Ignorance and Want. He vanishes as Scrooge notices a dark, hooded figure coming.



Stave Four

The Ghost of Christmas Yet to Come takes Scrooge through a sequence of scenes linked to an unnamed man's death. Scrooge, is eager to learn the lesson. He begs to know the name of the dead man. He finds himself in a churchyard with the spirit pointing to a grave. Scrooge looks at the headstone and is shocked to read his own name. He is desperate to change his fate and promises to change his ways. He suddenly finds himself safely tucked in his bed.

Stave Five

Scrooge rushes out onto the street hoping to share his newfound Christmas spirit. He sends a turkey to the Cratchit house and goes to Fred's party. As the years go by, he continues to celebrate Christmas with all his heart. He treats Tiny Tim as if he were his own child, gives gifts for the poor and is kind, generous and warm.

Key Terms and ideas:

- ✓ Novella
- ✓ Supernatural
- ✓ Bildungsroman
- ✓ Transformation
- ✓ Redemption
- ✓ Christian Values
- ✓ 1 st person narrative voice
- ✓ 3 rd person omniscient narrator
- ✓ Stave
- ✓ Metaphor, simile, imagery
- ✓ Allegorical message
- ✓ Metaphorical journey
- ✓ Shifts in time, place, person

Key Concepts and Themes:

- ✓ Greed
- ✓ Avarice (an excessive desire for wealth – one of the 7 deadly sins)
- ✓ Ignorance & Want (lack of knowledge/education & need/poverty)
- ✓ Redemption (being saved from sin or evil)
- ✓ Predestination
- ✓ Free Will
- ✓ Poverty
- ✓ Class
- ✓ Isolation
- ✓ Transformation
- ✓ The passage of time
- ✓ Family
- ✓ Guilt
- ✓ Generosity
- ✓ Social Responsibility
- ✓ Justice
- ✓ Christmas
- ✓ Death

<u>Characterisation</u>	<u>Key Quotes</u>
Scrooge A selfish businessman who transforms into a charitable philanthropist. Our protagonist.	"Hard and sharp as flint... As solitary as an oyster" "Are there no prisons...are there no workhouses..." "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."
Fred Scrooge's nephew whose party invitation he declines. Represents forgiveness and family.	"I have always thought of Christmas as a good time, a kind, forgiving, charitable, pleasant time" "Scrooge's offences carry their own punishment. Who suffers? Himself!"
Jacob Marley Scrooge's dead partner who returns to warn Scrooge to change his ways.	"I wear the chain I forged in life" "The chain was made up of cash boxes.. ledgers.. heavy purses" "My spirit never roved beyond the narrow limits of our money changing hole"
Bob Cratchit Scrooge's clerk. He loves his family and is shown to be happy and morally upright. He has love but not wealth.	The clerk's fire was so very much smaller that it looked like only one coal" "Tiny Time rode upon his shoulder" "I'll give you Mr Scrooge, the founder of the feast" "I think he's walked a little slower than he used to"
Tiny Tim Bob's son whose story plays a part in inspiring Scrooge's transformation. Represents the victims of poverty and the 'surplus population'.	"He bore a little crutch, and had his limbs supported by an iron frame!" "Tiny Tim hoped the people saw him in the church, because he was a cripple, and remember upon Christmas day, who made lame beggars walk, and blind men see." "God bless us everyone"
The Ghost of Christmas Past A strange combination of young and old, wearing white robes and looking like a candle.	"Would you (Scrooge) so soon put out the light I give?" "A solitary child, neglected by his friends, is left there still – Scrooge sobbed." "Scrooge's heart and soul were in the scene.. he remembered everything, enjoyed everything."
The Ghost of Christmas Present A portly, jovial gentleman surrounded by a warm glow. He brings joy to the neediest.	"A jolly giant who bore a glowing torch with a cheery voice and a joyful air" "I see a vacant seat. The child will die" "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 A robed and hooded spirit who confronts Scrooge with his own tombstone.	"It was shrouded in a deep black garment which concealed its head, its face, its form and left nothing visible except one outstretched hand" "Scrooge crept towards it, trembling, and following the finger, read upon the stone of the neglected grave his own name, Ebenezer Scrooge."
Fezziwig Scrooge's ex-employer. A representation of a good employer and generosity of spirit.	"Bless his heart; it's Fezziwig alive again!" "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 Scrooge's fiancé as a young man.	"Another idol has displaced me.. a golden one"
Fan Scrooge's sister. Fred's mother.	"I have come to bring you home dear brother.. home, home, home!"