

A Christmas Carol – Knowledge Organiser

Plot summary:

1. Ebenezer Scrooge is at work in his counting house. Despite the Christmas Eve cold, he refuses to spend money on coals for the fire. Scrooge turns down his nephew, Fred's, invitation to his Christmas party and the request of two men who want money for charity.
2. 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. Marley tries to stop Scrooge from doing the same. He tells Scrooge that three spirits will visit him during the next three nights. Scrooge falls asleep.
3. 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.
4. 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 crippled son, Tiny Tim, whose kindness and humility warm Scrooge's heart. The spectre shows Scrooge his nephew's Christmas party. Scrooge asks the spirit to stay until the very end. 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.
5. The Ghost of Christmas Yet to Come takes Scrooge through a sequence of scenes linked to an unnamed man's death. Scrooge is keen 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.
6. 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 characters	Key themes	Historical context	Stylistic features and relevant terms
<p>Ebenezer Scrooge – A selfish business man who transforms into a charitable philanthropist.</p> <p>Fred – Scrooge's nephew whose party invitation he declines</p> <p>Jacob Marley – Scrooge's dead partner who returns as a ghost to warn Scrooge to change his ways.</p> <p>Bob Cratchitt – Scrooge's clerk who doesn't have much money. He loves his family and is shown to be happy and morally upright.</p> <p>Tiny Tim – Bob's ill son whose story plays a part in inspiring Scrooge's transformation.</p> <p>Mrs Cratchitt – Bob's wife</p> <p>The Ghost of Christmas Past – A strange combination of young and old, wearing white robes and looking like a candle.</p> <p>The Ghost of Christmas Present - A portly, jovial gentleman surrounded by a warm glow. He brings joy on the most needy townfolk.</p> <p>The Ghost of Christmas Yet To Come – A robed and hooded spirit who confronts Scrooge with his own tombstone.</p> <p>Fezziwig – Scrooge's ex-employer</p> <p>Belle – A woman who Scrooge was in love with who left him due to his greed.</p> <p>Fan – Scrooge's sister</p>	<p>Greed</p> <p>Predestination</p> <p>Free Will</p> <p>Poverty</p> <p>Class</p> <p>Stratification</p> <p>Isolation</p> <p>Transformation</p> <p>The passage of time</p> <p>Family</p> <p>Guilt</p> <p>Generosity</p> <p>Redemption</p> <p>Capitalism</p> <p>Social</p> <p>Responsibility</p> <p>Justice</p> <p>The supernatural</p>	1824 – Dickens' father is sent to jail for debt and Dickens has to give up his education until his father inherits some money and he goes to a private school	Allegory
		Dickens was put to work in a warehouse, pasting labels on bottles. He had experience of poverty.	Analepsis
		Dickens became a writer of fiction and journalism, reporting on court cases and working for radical newspapers on his disillusionment with politics and the class system.	Benthamism
		1832 – The Great Reform Bill gave many middle class property owners the right to vote for the first time. Large sections of the middle classes, the working classes and women still didn't have the right to vote.	Gothic
		1834 – Poor Law Amendment Act – Led to a cut in aid given to paupers to help them stay in their own homes. Workhouses were created which poor people would have to live and work in, if they were unable to pay for their own housing.	Grotesque
		December 1840 and February 1843 – Children's Employment Commission reports.	Morality tale
		September 1843 – Dickens visits a "Ragged School."	Malthusian economics
		October 1843 – Dickens speaks at an event for Manchester Athenaeum, an organisation bringing education and culture to the working masses.	Metaphor
		December 1843 Dickens writes A Christmas Carol focusing on how many of society's ills can be blamed on greed for money and status.	Motif
		December 1843 Dickens writes A Christmas Carol focusing on how many of society's ills can be blamed on greed for money and status.	Non-chronological narrative

Key Quotations

"Oh! But he was a tight-fisted hand at the grindstone, Scrooge...a squeezing, wrenching, grasping, scraping, clutching, covetous old sinner! Hard and sharp as flint, from which no steel had ever struck out generous fire; secret, and self-contained, and solitary as an oyster."

"The cold within him froze his old features, nipped his pointed nose, shrivelled his cheek, stiffened his gait; made his eyes red, his thin lips blue; and spoke out shrewdly in his grating voice. A frosty rime was on his head, and on his eyebrows, and his wiry chin. He carried his own low temperature always about with him; he iced his office in the dog-days; and didn't thaw it one degree at Christmas. External heat and cold had little influence on Scrooge. No warmth could warm, no wintry weather chill him. No wind that blew was bitterer than he, no falling snow was more intent upon its purpose, no pelting rain less open to entreaty. Foul weather didn't know where to have him. The heaviest rain, and snow, and hail, and sleet, could boast of the advantage over him in only one respect."

"No beggars implored him to bestow a trifle, no children asked him what it was o'clock, no man or woman ever once in all his life inquired the way to such and such a place, of Scrooge."

"It was cold, bleak, biting weather: foggy withal: and he could hear the people in the court outside, go wheezing up and down, beating their hands upon their breasts, and stamping their feet upon the pavement stones to warm them. The city clocks had only just gone three, but it was quite dark already-- it had not been light all day--and candles were flaring in the windows of the neighbouring offices, like ruddy smears upon the palpable brown air. The fog came pouring in at every chink and keyhole, and was so dense without, that although the court was of the narrowest, the houses opposite were mere phantoms. To see the dingy cloud come drooping down, obscuring everything, one might have thought that Nature lived hard by, and was brewing on a large scale."

"He had so heated himself with rapid walking in the fog and frost, this nephew of Scrooge's, that he was all in a glow; his face was ruddy and handsome; his eyes sparkled, and his breath smoked again."

"...a few of us are endeavouring to raise a fund to buy the Poor some meat and drink, and means of warmth. We choose this time, because it is a time, of all others, when Want is keenly felt, and Abundance rejoices. What shall I put you down for?' 'Nothing!' Scrooge replied."

"The ancient tower of a church, whose gruff old bell was always peeping slyly down at Scrooge out of a Gothic window in the wall, became invisible, and struck the hours and quarters in the clouds, with tremulous vibrations afterwards as if its teeth were chattering in its frozen head up there."

"Foggier yet, and colder. Piercing, searching, biting cold."

The fog and frost so hung about the black old gateway of the house, that it seemed as if the Genius of the Weather sat in mournful meditation on the threshold.

'If he wanted to keep them after he was dead, a wicked old screw,' pursued the woman, 'why wasn't he natural in his lifetime? If he had been, he'd have had somebody to look after him when he was struck with Death, instead of lying gasping out his last there, alone by himself.'

"...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."

"He went to church, and walked about the streets, and watched the people hurrying to and fro, and patted children on the head, and questioned beggars, and looked down into the kitchens of houses, and up to the windows, and found that everything could yield him pleasure. He had never dreamed that any walk – that anything – could give him so much happiness."

"Old Marley was as dead as a door-nail."

"Marley's face. It was not in impenetrable shadow as the other objects in the yard were, but had a dismal light about it, like a bad lobster in a dark cellar. It was not angry or ferocious, but looked at Scrooge as Marley used to look: with ghostly spectacles turned up on its ghostly forehead. The hair was curiously stirred, as if by breath or hot air; and, though the eyes were wide open, they were perfectly motionless. That, and its livid colour, made it horrible; but its horror seemed to be in spite of the face and beyond its control, rather than a part of its own expression."

"Darkness is cheap, and Scrooge liked it."

"The chain he drew was clasped about his middle. It was long, and wound about him like a tail; and it was made (for Scrooge observed it closely) of cash-boxes, keys, padlocks, ledgers, deeds, and heavy purses wrought in steel."

"Old Fezziwig...rubbed his hands; adjusted his capacious waistcoat; laughed all over himself, from his shoes to his organ of benevolence; and called out in a comfortable, oily, rich, fat, jovial voice:"

"It was a strange figure-like a child: yet not so like a child as like an old man, viewed through some supernatural medium, which gave him the appearance of having receded from the view, and being diminished to a child's proportions."

"'Why did I walk through crowds of fellow-beings with my eyes turned down, and never raise them to that blessed Star which led the Wise Men to a poor abode! Were there no poor homes to which its light would have conducted me!'"

"'The school is not quite deserted,' said the Ghost. 'A solitary child, neglected by his friends, is left there still.' Scrooge said he knew it. And he sobbed"

"In easy state upon this couch, there sat a jolly Giant, glorious to see, who bore a glowing torch, in shape not unlike Plenty's horn, and held it up, high up, to shed its light on Scrooge, as he came peeping round the door."

"The Phantom slowly, gravely, silently approached. When it came, Scrooge bent down upon his knee; for in the very air through which this Spirit moved it seemed to scatter gloom and mystery."

"in the busy thoroughfares of a city, where shadowy passengers passed and repassed; where shadowy carts and coaches battled for the way, and all the strife and tumult of a real city were."

"There was an eager, greedy, restless motion in the eye, which showed the passion that had taken root, and where the shadow of the growing tree would fall."

"the relentless Ghost pinioned him in both his arms, and forced him to observe what happened next."

"...though Scrooge pressed it down with all his force, he could not hide the light: which streamed from under it, in an unbroken flood upon the ground."