

# *A Christmas Carol*

*By Charles Dickens*

## Text Guide

**Harris** Federation 





## How to use this Text Guide

This text guide was created so that you can read the story with supporting information alongside the text. The guide includes the whole of *A Christmas Carol* for you to read. The guide is split into sections, allowing you to focus on one chapter, or 'stave', of the novella at a time. Each section is followed by a Key Quotations and Glossary page. Part of your GCSE study of *A Christmas Carol* will include learning key quotations. You will not be allowed to bring a copy of the text in with you to the exam so it is important that you regularly test yourself to ensure that you can remember them.

Throughout the guide, you will notice different boxes and symbols. Below is a brief guide on what these all mean.



A plain black box indicates important information that you need to know to help with your understanding of the novella.



A blue box with this symbol indicates where there is a question or an activity that you should complete.



A dark red box with this symbol indicates where AO3—contextual information—is included. Rather than learning this separately, you should aim to understand this additional information alongside the relevant part of the novella that you're reading.

Words underlined in red

Words underlined in red correspond to either key quotations or words that you can find definitions to in the glossary.

Words underlined in green

Words underlined in green correspond to words that you can find definitions to in the glossary.




# Stave One

## Marley's Ghost

In this stave, the reader is introduced to the character of Scrooge, and we see how miserly (mean) and unpleasant he is. Scrooge's business partner has died and Scrooge does not seem very close to his only family—his nephew Fred. Scrooge refuses to give money to charity, and Dickens describes Scrooge as cold and unfriendly. By the end of the stave, Scrooge has been visited by Marley's Ghost, who comes to him with a very important warning.

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: and Scrooge's name was good upon 'Change, for anything he chose to put his hand to. Old Marley was as dead as a door-nail.

 The narrator here is Dickens himself, and he interacts with the reader in this way throughout the novella. The technical term for this is "intrusive narrator" Why do you think he did this?


Mind! I don't mean to say that I know, of my own knowledge, what there is particularly dead about a door-nail. I might have been inclined, myself, to regard a coffin-nail as the deadest piece of ironmongery in the trade. But the wisdom of our ancestors is in the simile; and my unhallowed hands shall not disturb it, or the Country's done for. You will therefore permit me to repeat, emphatically, that Marley was as dead as a door-nail.

Because we know that Marley's Ghost appears later on in the novella, Dickens tries to ensure that there is no doubt that Marley was dead. It means that his spectral appearance is genuinely frightening for the readers and for Scrooge.

Scrooge knew he was dead? Of course he did. How could it be otherwise? Scrooge and he were partners for I don't know how many years. Scrooge was his sole executor, his sole administrator, his sole assign, his sole residuary legatee, his sole friend, and sole mourner. And even Scrooge was not so dreadfully cut up by the sad event, but that he was an excellent man of business on the very day of the funeral, and solemnised it with an undoubted bargain.

The mention of Marley's funeral brings me back to the point I started from. There is no doubt that Marley was dead. This must be distinctly understood, or nothing wonderful can come of the story I am going to relate. If we were not perfectly convinced that Hamlet's Father died before the play began, there would be nothing more remarkable in his taking a stroll at night, in an easterly wind, upon his own ramparts, than there would be in any other middle-aged gentleman rashly turning out after dark in a breezy spot—say Saint Paul's Churchyard for instance—literally to astonish his son's weak mind.

Dickens wrote this novel to show **redemption**—which means being saved from sin— and hope for the future, which is why he thinks something "wonderful" can come from it.

 In the Shakespearean play *Hamlet*, the ghost of Hamlet's dead father appears to him at the beginning of the play to reveal that he was murdered, not that he died naturally.

Scrooge never painted out Old Marley's name. There it stood, years afterwards, above the warehouse door: Scrooge and Marley. The firm was known as Scrooge and Marley. Sometimes people new to the business called Scrooge Scrooge, and sometimes Marley, but he answered to both names. It was all the same to him.

Dickens is signposting here that Marley and Scrooge were so similar, they were often confused for the same person. Think about how Scrooge is described in this stave and what that may also suggest about Marley.

Look at how Dickens has described Scrooge here. This list of all the negative aspects of Scrooge's personality highlight to the reader how mean-spirited and unpleasant he really is.



What are the connotations of these words? What is the impact of Dickens using these words to describe Scrooge?

**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.

Dickens wants the reader to know here that Scrooge has no friends. "Solitary" means that you are on your own.

Here, Dickens uses the weather—**pathetic fallacy**—to show the flaws in Scrooge's personality. He is not literally cold. This is a metaphor for his cold and unyielding nature.

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. They often "came down" handsomely, and Scrooge never did.

Nobody ever stopped him in the street to say, with gladsome looks, "My dear Scrooge, how are you? When will you come to see me?" 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. Even the blind men's dogs appeared to know him; and when they saw him coming on, would tug their owners into doorways and up courts; and then would wag their tails as though they said, "No eye at all is better than an evil eye, dark master!"



What impression do we have of Scrooge so far?

But what did Scrooge care! It was the very thing he liked. To edge his way along the crowded paths of life, warning all human sympathy to keep its distance, was what the knowing ones call "nuts" to Scrooge. Once upon a time—of all the good days in the year, on **Christmas Eve**—old Scrooge sat busy in his counting-house. 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.



Christmas is a Christian holiday, associated with joy, giving and goodwill to others.

Why do you think Dickens decided to set this story about redemption at Christmas time? What do you think his message was?

Another example of Dickens using pathetic fallacy. Fog is cold and miserable, like Scrooge, but it also obscures things (hides them away from sight). This could reflect Scrooge's attitude to society and the poor: he simply does not see them and he is metaphorically blind to their troubles.



Although Christmas was primarily a religious celebration, it was also a time for entertainment. This was one of the reasons Dickens wrote this novella, not just to teach a moral lesson. One tradition that many people upheld in the 1800s was telling ghost stories to each other on Christmas Eve.

A counting-house is Scrooge's business. He literally counted money as a job—what we know now as an accountant. This fits with his **covetous** (selfish and greedy) nature. He employs a **clerk**—someone who does most of the accounting and paperwork for the business

The door of Scrooge's **counting-house** was open that he might keep his eye upon his clerk, who in a **dismal** little cell beyond, a sort of tank, was copying letters. Scrooge had a very small fire, but the clerk's fire was so very much smaller that it looked like one coal. But he couldn't replenish it, for Scrooge kept the coal-box in his own room; and so surely as the clerk came in with the shovel, the master predicted that it would be necessary for them to part. Wherefore the clerk put on his white comforter, and tried to warm himself at the candle; in which effort, not being a man of a strong imagination, he failed.

**"A merry Christmas, uncle! God save you!"** cried a cheerful voice. It was the voice of Scrooge's nephew, who came upon him so quickly that this was the first intimation he had of his approach.

**"Bah!" said Scrooge, "Humbug!"**

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.

"Christmas a humbug, uncle!" said Scrooge's nephew. "You don't mean that, I am sure?"

"I do," said Scrooge. "Merry Christmas! What right have you to be merry? **What reason have you to be merry? You're poor enough.**"

"Come, then," returned the nephew gaily. "What right have you to be dismal? What reason have you to be morose? You're rich enough."

Scrooge having no better answer ready on the spur of the moment, said, "Bah!" again; and followed it up with "Humbug."

"Don't be cross, uncle!" said the nephew.

**"What else can I be," returned the uncle, "when I live in such a world of fools as this? Merry Christmas! Out upon merry Christmas! What's Christmas time to you but a time for paying bills without money; a time for finding yourself a year older, but not an hour richer; a time for balancing your books and having every item in 'em through a round dozen of months presented dead against you? If I could work my will," said Scrooge indignantly, "every idiot who goes about with 'Merry Christmas' on his lips, should be boiled with his own pudding, and buried with a stake of holly through his heart. He should!"**

"Uncle!" pleaded the nephew.

"Nephew!" returned the uncle sternly, "keep Christmas in your own way, and let me keep it in mine."

"Keep it!" repeated Scrooge's nephew. "But you don't keep it."


"Let me leave it alone, then," said Scrooge. "Much good may it do you! Much good it has ever done you!"

The exclamation marks here emphasise Fred's cheerful enthusiasm for Christmas. This is in direct contrast to Scrooge.

Scrooge's famous saying. It means that he thinks Christmas goodwill is fake. It symbolises his grumpiness and **cynicism** (disbelief) about anything happy or cheerful - like Christmas.

Scrooge equates wealth with happiness. Fred is not particularly wealthy but is happy. Scrooge does not understand this.

The exclamatory sentences used by Scrooge here indicates his anger and frustration at the notion of Christmas and highlights to the reader that he is not one to celebrate such a holiday. The key message of Christmas—love and goodwill to all men—is lost on Scrooge.

 Based on his insistence that Christmas is, in fact, a merry time of year, what do you think Fred represents in this novella? Why would Dickens present him in this way?

“There are many things from which I might have derived good, by which I have not profited, I dare say,” returned the nephew. “Christmas among the rest. 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 be apart from that—as a good time; a kind, forgiving, charitable, pleasant time; the only time I know of, in the long calendar of the year, when men and women seem by one consent to open their shut-up hearts freely, and to think of people below them as if they really were fellow-passengers to the grave, and not another race of creatures bound on other journeys. And therefore, uncle, though it has never put a scrap of gold or silver in my pocket, I believe that it *has* done me good, and *will* do me good; and I say, God bless it!”

Fred recognises the true meaning of Christmas here—that it is a time for all to come together, no matter who they are.

The clerk in the Tank involuntarily applauded. Becoming immediately sensible of the impropriety, he poked the fire, and extinguished the last frail spark for ever.

“Let me hear another sound from *you*,” said Scrooge, “and you’ll keep your Christmas by losing your situation! You’re quite a powerful speaker, sir,” he added, turning to his nephew. “I wonder you don’t go into Parliament.”

“Don’t be angry, uncle. Come! Dine with us to-morrow.”

Scrooge said that he would see him—yes, indeed he did. He went the whole length of the expression, and said that he would see him in that extremity first.

“But why?” cried Scrooge’s nephew. “Why?”

“Why did you get married?” said Scrooge.

“Because I fell in love.”

“Because you fell in love!” growled Scrooge, as if that were the only one thing in the world more ridiculous than a merry Christmas. “Good afternoon!”

“Nay, uncle, but you never came to see me before that happened. Why give it as a reason for not coming now?”

“Good afternoon,” said Scrooge.

“I want nothing from you; I ask nothing of you; why cannot we be friends?”

“Good afternoon,” said Scrooge.

“I am sorry, with all my heart, to find you so resolute. We have never had any quarrel, to which I have been a party. But I have made the trial in homage to Christmas, and I’ll keep my Christmas humour to the last. So A Merry Christmas, uncle!”

Scrooge scoffs at marrying for love, and finds it just as ridiculous as being merry at Christmas.

The clerk works for Scrooge. When Scrooge threatens his “situation”, he is saying that he will lose his job if he makes another noise.  
The clerk claps when Fred makes his speech about Christmas, and so the reader can assume that he believes in the goodwill of Christmas also.

Fred is not disheartened by his uncle’s words and insists on still wishing him a merry Christmas.





A recurring **Big Idea** in this novella is Dickens' wish to expose the widespread poverty in London during this time and the stark class and economic divide in society. Although charities existed to help the poor, those with money often did not want to contribute, believing that the poor were to blame for their situation and their poverty was the result of bad decisions.

Social reformers like Dickens knew, however, that poverty was caused by many things, including lack of healthcare and education. Vulnerable people, such as those with disabilities, had no social protection. Dickens wanted wealthy people to give more support to the poor, rather than just sending them to workhouses and prisons. He wanted to show the joy that could come from helping the poor to survive. We will revisit this message throughout the text guide.

His nephew left the room without an angry word, notwithstanding. He stopped at the outer door to bestow the greetings of the season on the clerk, who, cold as he was, was warmer than Scrooge; for he returned them cordially.

"There's another fellow," muttered Scrooge; who overheard him: "my clerk, with fifteen shillings a week, and a wife and family, talking about a merry Christmas. I'll retire to Bedlam."

This lunatic, in letting Scrooge's nephew out, had let two other people in. They were portly gentlemen, pleasant to behold, and now stood, with their hats off, in Scrooge's office. They had books and papers in their hands, and bowed to him.

"Scrooge and Marley's, I believe," said one of the gentlemen, referring to his list. "Have I the pleasure of addressing Mr. Scrooge, or Mr. Marley?"

"Mr. Marley has been dead these seven years," Scrooge replied. "He died seven years ago, this very night."

"We have no doubt his liberality is well represented by his surviving partner," said the gentleman, presenting his credentials.

It certainly was; for they had been two kindred spirits. At the ominous word "liberality," Scrooge frowned, and shook his head, and handed the credentials back.

"At this festive season of the year, Mr. Scrooge," said the gentleman, taking up a pen, "it is more than usually desirable that we should make some slight provision for the Poor and destitute, who suffer greatly at the present time. Many thousands are in want of common necessities; hundreds of thousands are in want of common comforts, sir."

"Are there no prisons?" asked Scrooge.

"Plenty of prisons," said the gentleman, laying down the pen again.

"And the Union workhouses?" demanded Scrooge. "Are they still in operation?"

"They are. Still," returned the gentleman, "I wish I could say they were not."

"The Treadmill and the Poor Law are in full vigour, then?" said Scrooge.

"Both very busy, sir."

"Oh! I was afraid, from what you said at first, that something had occurred to stop them in their useful course," said Scrooge. "I'm very glad to hear it."

"Under the impression that they scarcely furnish Christian cheer of mind or body to the multitude," returned the gentleman, "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.

"You wish to be anonymous?"

"Bedlam" was a psychiatric hospital during the 1800s.

Scrooge does not understand why his clerk would wish anyone a merry Christmas when he is so poor. This echoes what he said to Fred earlier in the stave.

15 shillings a week was not a lot of money. Dickens indicates here that Scrooge's clerk was poor.

During this time, there was no real benefits system for those that were poor. If you were unable to work due to illness or a disability, or if you were an orphan, you often got sent to a workhouse. These were cruel and dangerous places; many people died due to the conditions. It was often considered no better than living on the streets.



The Poor Law of 1834 was intended to improve the way that society supported the poor in Britain. Workhouses were introduced, where the poor could go rather than living on the streets. But with so many people in power blaming the poor and believing them to be lazy and immoral, workhouses were badly funded and ended up being places of punishment rather than shelters. Conditions were squalid and sometimes people were only given a bed in exchange for manual labour and beatings. People did their best to avoid the workhouse, often getting into so much debt as a result that they ended up in prison instead.



The reader knows at this point that Scrooge has money to help the poor. However, he chooses not to. His reason is because prisons and workhouses exist to help those people. Do you think he is right to think this way? Why/why not?

Emphasis again on Scrooge being "as solitary as an oyster."

Scrooge did not want to help those he deemed 'idle', suggesting that he believed it was their own fault that they were poor.

"I wish to be left alone," said Scrooge. "Since you ask me what I wish, gentlemen, that is my answer. I don't make merry myself at Christmas and I can't afford to make idle people merry. I help to support the establishments I have mentioned—they cost enough; and those who are badly off must go there."

Conditions were so bad that many chose not to use this provision

"Many can't go there; and many would rather die."  
"If they would rather die," said Scrooge, "they had better do it, and decrease the surplus population. Besides—excuse me—I don't know that."

Scrooge does not just believe that the poor are not his responsibility—he thinks there are too many poor people and if some of them die, it would help solve a problem. Here, we see his metaphorical cold nature in full force.

"But you might know it," observed the gentleman.

"It's not my business," Scrooge returned. "It's enough for a man to understand his own business, and not to interfere with other people's. Mine occupies me constantly. Good afternoon, gentlemen!"

Seeing clearly that it would be useless to pursue their point, the gentlemen withdrew. Scrooge resumed his labours with an improved opinion of himself, and in a more facetious temper than was usual with him.

After Scrooge's outburst and refusal to help the charity men, Dickens emphasises the bad weather again.

Meanwhile the fog and darkness thickened so, that people ran about with flaring links, proffering their services to go before horses in carriages, and conduct them on their way. 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. The cold became intense. In the main street, at the corner of the court, some labourers were repairing the gas-pipes, and had lighted a great fire in a brazier, round which a party of ragged men and boys were gathered: warming their hands and winking their eyes before the blaze in rapture. The water-plug being left in solitude, its overflowings sullenly congealed, and turned to misanthropic ice. The brightness of the shops where holly sprigs and berries crackled in the lamp heat of the windows, made pale faces ruddy as they passed. Poulterers' and grocers' trades became a splendid joke: a glorious pageant, with which it was next to impossible to believe that such dull principles as bargain and sale had anything to do. The Lord Mayor, in the stronghold of the mighty Mansion House, gave orders to his fifty cooks and butlers to keep Christmas as a Lord Mayor's household should; and even the little tailor, whom he had fined five shillings on the previous Monday for being drunk and bloodthirsty in the streets, stirred up to-morrow's pudding in his garret, while his lean wife and the baby sallied out to buy the beef.

Foggier yet, and colder. Piercing, searching, biting cold. If the good Saint Dunstan had but nipped the Evil Spirit's nose with a touch of such weather as that, instead of using his familiar weapons, then indeed he would have roared to lusty purpose. The owner of one scant young nose, gnawed and mumbled by the hungry cold as bones are gnawed by dogs, stooped down at Scrooge's keyhole to regale him with a Christmas carol: but at the first sound of

Even Christmas carols do not cheer Scrooge and on Christmas Eve, while everyone is getting ready for the celebrations the next day, Scrooge is still alone, still working.

"God bless you, merry gentlemen!

May nothing you dismay!"

Scrooge seized the ruler with such energy of action, that the singer fled in terror, leaving the keyhole to the fog and even more congenial frost.



Now that you have a greater understanding of how the poor were treated during the 1800s and the lack of provision put in place for them, how do you, as a reader, respond to Scrooge?

Think about what is in place nowadays for those who struggle financially. How is it different now to what it was then? Do you agree with Scrooge that prisons and workhouses are the best way to deal with poverty, or do you think there is another way?



What do you predict might happen to Scrooge in the rest of this stave? Let's look at what we know so far:

- Scrooge is an unpleasant, mean and uncharitable man who has no time for happiness, goodwill or love;
- His business partner, Jacob Marley, has been dead for seven years and was just like Scrooge;
- Scrooge is unwilling to help the poor even though he has enough money to do so, believing that it is their own fault;
- Dickens wrote this novella to entertain but also to criticise the way the rich treat the poor: he believed in more charity and goodwill to those who were less fortunate;
- It was common for ghost stories to be told on Christmas Eve.



Scrooge complains that giving his clerk the day off on Christmas day is costing him money. However, he begrudgingly allows him to go.

Does this show that there is hope for Scrooge and that he's not all bad?

At length the hour of shutting up the counting-house arrived. With an ill-will Scrooge dismounted from his stool, and tacitly admitted the fact to the expectant clerk in the Tank, who instantly snuffed his candle out, and put on his hat.

"You'll want all day to-morrow, I suppose?" said Scrooge.

"If quite convenient, sir."

"It's not convenient," said Scrooge, "and it's not fair. If I was to stop half-a-crown for it, you'd think yourself ill-used, I'll be bound?"

The clerk smiled faintly.

"And yet," said Scrooge, "you don't think *me* ill-used, when I pay a day's wages for no work."

The clerk observed that it was only once a year.

"A poor excuse for picking a man's pocket every twenty-fifth of December!" said Scrooge, buttoning his great-coat to the chin. "But I suppose you must have the whole day. Be here all the earlier next morning."

The clerk promised that he would; and Scrooge walked out with a growl. The office was closed in a twinkling, and the clerk, with the long ends of his white comforter dangling below his waist (for he boasted no great-coat), went down a slide on Cornhill, at the end of a lane of boys, twenty times, in honour of its being Christmas Eve, and then ran home to Camden Town as hard as he could pelt, to play at blindman's-buff.

Scrooge took his melancholy dinner in his usual melancholy tavern; and having read all the newspapers, and beguiled the rest of the evening with his banker's-book, went home to bed. He lived in chambers which had once belonged to his deceased partner. They were a gloomy suite of rooms, in a lowering pile of building up a yard, where it had so little business to be, that one could scarcely help fancying it must have run there when it was a young house, playing at hide-and-seek with other houses, and forgotten the way out again. It was old enough now, and dreary enough, for nobody lived in it but Scrooge, the other rooms being all let out as offices. The yard was so dark that even Scrooge, who knew its every stone, was fain to grope with his hands. 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.



Look at the language used to describe Scrooge's surroundings — melancholy, gloomy, dreary, dark, mournful.

These are all negative— what kind of mood do they create? What does this reflect?

The clerk didn't have a winter coat, just a scarf — Another indication of his poverty, But he is still full of Christmas cheer and plays at sliding on the ice on his way home.

Now, it is a fact, that there was nothing at all particular about the knocker on the door, except that it was very large. It is also a fact, that Scrooge had seen it, night and morning, during his whole residence in that place; also that Scrooge had as little of what is called fancy about him as any man in the city of London, even including—which is a bold word—the corporation, aldermen, and livery. Let it also be borne in mind that Scrooge had not bestowed one thought on Marley, since his last mention of his seven years' dead partner that afternoon. And then let any man explain to me, if he can, how it happened that Scrooge, having his key in the lock of the door, saw in the knocker, without its undergoing any intermediate process of change—not a knocker, but Marley's face.

Dickens here introduces the idea of the supernatural to his novella. He makes it clear that Scrooge does not have any kind of imagination. Nor does he have Marley on his mind, when his door knocker turned into the face of his dead colleague. This apparition is therefore not in his imagination—it is a real haunting

The repetition of "Marley's face" and the short sentence help build the tension for the reader here. Also, Dickens was very emphatic at the beginning that Marley was "dead as a doornail" so the reader knows that something odd is happening.

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.

Dickens is again creating a Gothic atmosphere in his novella. The ghostly description of the door knocker is used to shock and terrify the reader, and also to show that Scrooge is at last becoming frightened despite his suspicious and cynical nature

As Scrooge looked fixedly at this phenomenon, it was a knocker again.

To say that he was not startled, or that his blood was not conscious of a terrible sensation to which it had been a stranger from infancy, would be untrue. But he put his hand upon the key he had relinquished, turned it sturdily, walked in, and lighted his candle.

He *did* pause, with a moment's irresolution, before he shut the door; and he *did* look cautiously behind it first, as if he half expected to be terrified with the sight of Marley's pigtail sticking out into the hall. But there was nothing on the back of the door, except the screws and nuts that held the knocker on, so he said "Pooh, pooh!" and closed it with a bang.

What are the connotations of "thunder"? How is this different to the fog and cold that Dickens described before? What might the thunder **foreshadow**?

The sound resounded through the house like thunder. Every room above, and every cask in the wine-merchant's cellars below, appeared to have a separate peal of echoes of its own. Scrooge was not a man to be frightened by echoes. He fastened the door, and walked across the hall, and up the stairs; slowly too: trimming his candle as he went.

You may talk vaguely about driving a coach-and-six up a good old flight of stairs, or through a bad young Act of Parliament; but I mean to say you might have got a hearse up that staircase, and taken it broadwise, with the splinter-bar towards the wall and the door towards the balustrades; and done it easy. There was plenty of width for that, and room to spare; which is perhaps the reason why Scrooge thought he saw a locomotive hearse going on before him in the gloom. Half-a-dozen gas-lamps out of the street wouldn't have lighted the entry too well, so you may suppose that it was pretty dark with Scrooge's dip.

Another indication that Scrooge is mean with his money, - he doesn't want to spend it on lighting— as well as a metaphorical comment on his dark nature.

Up Scrooge went, not caring a button for that. Darkness is cheap, and Scrooge liked it. But before he shut his heavy door, he walked through his rooms to see that all was right. He had just enough recollection of the face to desire to do that.

Sitting-room, bedroom, lumber-room. All as they should be. Nobody under the table, nobody under the sofa; a small fire in the grate; spoon and basin ready; and the little saucepan of gruel (Scrooge had a cold in his head) upon the hob. Nobody under the bed; nobody in the closet; nobody in his dressing-gown, which was hanging up in a suspicious attitude against the wall. Lumber-room as usual. Old fire-guard, old shoes, two fish-baskets, washing-stand on three legs, and a poker.

Quite satisfied, he closed his door, and locked himself in; double-locked himself in, which was not his custom. Thus secured against surprise, he took off his cravat; put on his dressing-gown and slippers, and his nightcap; and sat down before the fire to take his gruel.

It was a very low fire indeed; nothing on such a bitter night. He was obliged to sit close to it, and brood over it, before he could extract the least sensation of warmth from such a handful of fuel. The fireplace was an old one, built by some Dutch merchant long ago, and paved all round with quaint Dutch tiles, designed to illustrate the Scriptures. There were Cains and Abels, Pharaoh's daughters; Queens of Sheba, Angelic messengers descending through the air on clouds like feather-beds, Abrahams, Belshazzars, Apostles putting off to sea in butter-boats, hundreds of figures to attract his thoughts; and yet that face of Marley, seven years dead, came like the ancient Prophet's rod, and swallowed up the whole. If each smooth tile had been a blank at first, with power to shape some picture on its surface from the disjointed fragments of his thoughts, there would have been a copy of old Marley's head on every one.

Dickens is setting the scene here: even when at home, Scrooge does not light a proper fire and sits in the cold and darkness "brooding" (thinking deeply about something).

"Humbug!" said Scrooge; and walked across the room.

After several turns, he sat down again. As he threw his head back in the chair, his glance happened to rest upon a bell, a disused bell, that hung in the room, and communicated for some purpose now forgotten with a chamber in the highest story of the building. It was with great astonishment, and with a strange, inexplicable dread, that as he looked, he saw this bell begin to swing. It swung so softly in the outset that it scarcely made a sound; but soon it rang out loudly, and so did every bell in the house.

We notice a build-up of tension here—the bell starts to ring without anyone touching it. Imagine how scared Scrooge would be at this point! How would you read this part of the story aloud to convey the tension?

This might have lasted half a minute, or a minute, but it seemed an hour. The bells ceased as they had begun, together. They were succeeded by a clanking noise, deep down below; as if some person were dragging a heavy chain over the casks in the wine-merchant's cellar. Scrooge then remembered to have heard that ghosts in haunted houses were described as dragging chains.

The cellar-door flew open with a booming sound, and then he heard the noise much louder, on the floors below; then coming up the stairs; then coming straight towards his door.

Scrooge double locks his door which he doesn't usually do—what does this indicate about his state of mind at this point in the novella?





Marley's Ghost appears to Scrooge on Christmas Eve in this scene. Before you read on, what do you think the ghost is there to do? Think about:

- What you think Marley will do/say;
- How Scrooge might react to seeing the ghost of his dead business partner;
- What you think Dickens' intention was in introducing a ghost at this point in the novella.

"It's humbug still!" said Scrooge. "I won't believe it."

His colour changed though, when, without a pause, it came on through the heavy door, and passed into the room before his eyes. Upon its coming in, the dying flame leaped up, as though it cried, "I know him; Marley's Ghost!" and fell again.

The same face: the very same. Marley in his pigtail, usual waistcoat, tights and boots; the tassels on the latter bristling, like his pigtail, and his coat-skirts, and the hair upon his head. 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. His body was transparent; so that Scrooge, observing him, and looking through his waistcoat, could see the two buttons on his coat behind.

Scrooge had often heard it said that Marley had no bowels, but he had never believed it until now.

No, nor did he believe it even now. Though he looked the phantom through and through, and saw it standing before him; though he felt the chilling influence of its death-cold eyes; and marked the very texture of the folded kerchief bound about its head and chin, which wrapper he had not observed before; he was still incredulous,

and fought against his senses.

"How now!" said Scrooge, caustic and cold as ever. "What do you want with me?"

"Much!"—Marley's voice, no doubt about it.

"Who are you?"

"Ask me who I was."

"Who were you then?" said Scrooge, raising his voice. "You're particular, for a shade." He was going to say "to a shade," but substituted this, as more appropriate.

"In life I was your partner, Jacob Marley."

"Can you—can you sit down?" asked Scrooge, looking doubtfully at him.

"I can."

"Do it, then."

Scrooge asked the question, because he didn't know whether a ghost so transparent might find himself in a condition to take a chair; and felt that in the event of its being impossible, it might involve the necessity of an embarrassing explanation. But the ghost sat down on the opposite side of the fireplace, as if he were quite used to it.

"You don't believe in me," observed the Ghost.

"I don't," said Scrooge.

"What evidence would you have of my reality beyond that of your senses?"

"I don't know," said Scrooge.

"Why do you doubt your senses?"

"Because," said Scrooge, "a little thing affects them. A slight disorder of the stomach makes them cheats. You may be an undigested bit of beef, a blot of mustard, a crumb of cheese, a fragment of an underdone potato. There's more of gravy than of grave about you, whatever you are!"

Scrooge was not much in the habit of cracking jokes, nor did he feel, in his heart, by any means waggish then. The truth is, that he tried to be smart, as a means of distracting his own attention, and keeping down his terror; for the spectre's voice disturbed the very marrow in his bones.

Although Marley is dressed in the same clothes he wore when alive, he now also wears a chain made up of all the things he thought were important when he was on earth.

Is the chain real? What do you think it symbolises? Why a "chain" and not something else?

The conversation between Scrooge and Marley's ghost could be considered quite comical— Scrooge asks the ghost to sit down as if he were a normal visitor. Dickens does this to alleviate some tension—remember the story was also written to entertain.

Scrooge thinks he is imagining the ghost: he wonders if it is the result of being unwell or having eaten something funny

To sit, staring at those fixed glazed eyes, in silence for a moment, would play, Scrooge felt, the very deuce with him. There was something very awful, too, in the spectre's being provided with an infernal atmosphere of its own. Scrooge could not feel it himself, but this was clearly the case; for though the Ghost sat perfectly motionless, its hair, and skirts, and tassels, were still agitated as by the hot vapour from an oven.

Scrooge's general attitude has not yet changed. He is still disbelieving, suspicious and grumpy.

"You see this toothpick?" said Scrooge, returning quickly to the charge, for the reason just assigned; and wishing, though it were only for a second, to divert the vision's stony gaze from himself.

"I do," replied the Ghost.

"You are not looking at it," said Scrooge.

"But I see it," said the Ghost, "notwithstanding."

"Well!" returned Scrooge, "I have but to swallow this, and be for the rest of my days persecuted by a legion of goblins, all of my own creation. Humbug, I tell you! humbug!"

At this the spirit raised a frightful cry, and shook its chain with such a dismal and appalling noise, that Scrooge held on tight to his chair, to save himself from falling in a swoon. But how much greater was his horror, when the phantom taking off the bandage round its head, as if it were too warm to wear indoors, its lower jaw dropped down upon its breast!

Scrooge fell upon his knees, and clasped his hands before his face.

"Mercy!" he said. "Dreadful apparition, why do you trouble me?"

"Man of the worldly mind!" replied the Ghost, "do you believe in me or not?"

"I do," said Scrooge. "I must. But why do spirits walk the earth, and why do they come to me?"

"It is required of every man," the Ghost returned, "that 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. It is doomed to wander through the world—oh, woe is me!—and witness what it cannot share, but might have shared on earth, and turned to happiness!"

Again the spectre raised a cry, and shook its chain and wrung its shadowy hands.

"You are fettered," said Scrooge, trembling. "Tell me why?"

"I wear the chain I forged in life," replied the Ghost. "I made it link by link, and yard by yard; I girded it on of my own free will, and of my own free will I wore it. Is its pattern strange to you?"

Scrooge trembled more and more.

"Or would you know," pursued the Ghost, "the weight and length of the strong coil you bear yourself? It was full as heavy and as long as this, seven Christmas Eves ago. You have laboured on it, since. It is a ponderous chain!"

Scrooge glanced about him on the floor, in the expectation of finding himself surrounded by some fifty or sixty fathoms of iron cable: but he could see nothing.

"Jacob," he said, imploringly. "Old Jacob Marley, tell me more. Speak comfort to me, Jacob!"



The mood takes a terrifying turn here, and Scrooge is at last truly frightened. Make note of the language Dickens uses here—appalling frightful, dismal, horror, phantom. Think about how these words add to the mood.

Marley explains to Scrooge why he is here: he has been condemned to roam the earth in death because he did not live his life well.

The chain is metaphorical. It is a metaphor for all the bad things that Marley did when he was alive. It is heavy and cumbersome and Marley must carry it around with him for eternity as a punishment. He tries to show Scrooge that Scrooge's actions are similar.



Remember, Dickens was trying to show that the wealthy can help the poor, and that Christmas, as a time for giving, is a perfect time to celebrate and "open your shut up hearts" to others. Marley's ghostly suffering with the chain highlights Scrooge's own wrongdoing.

Marley's Ghost is unable to give Scrooge a full explanation of how he was able to visit him. However, he clearly conveys that never being able to rest or be at peace in death is a terrifying prospect.

"I have none to give," the Ghost replied. "It comes from other regions, **Ebenezer Scrooge**, and is conveyed by other ministers, to other kinds of men. Nor can I tell you what I would. A very little more is all permitted to me. **I cannot rest, I cannot stay, I cannot linger anywhere.** My spirit never walked beyond our counting-house—mark me!—in life my spirit never roved beyond the narrow limits of our money-changing hole; and weary journeys lie before me!"

It was a habit with Scrooge, whenever he became thoughtful, to put his hands in his breeches pockets. Pondering on what the Ghost had said, he did so now, but without lifting up his eyes, or getting off his knees.

"You must have been very slow about it, Jacob," Scrooge observed, in a business-like manner, though with humility and deference.

"Slow!" the Ghost repeated.

"Seven years dead," mused Scrooge. "And travelling all the time!"

"The whole time," said the Ghost. **"No rest, no peace. Incessant torture of remorse."**

"You travel fast?" said Scrooge.

"On the wings of the wind," replied the Ghost.

"You might have got over a great quantity of ground in seven years," said Scrooge.

The Ghost, on hearing this, set up another cry, and clanked its chain so hideously in the dead silence of the night, that the Ward would have been justified in indicting it for a nuisance.

"Oh! captive, bound, and double-ironed," cried the phantom, "not to know, that ages of incessant labour by immortal creatures, for this earth must pass into eternity before the good of which it is susceptible is all developed. Not to know that any Christian spirit working kindly in its little sphere, whatever it may be, will find its mortal life too short for its vast means of usefulness. **Not to know that no space of regret can make amends for one life's opportunity misused! Yet such was I! Oh! such was I!"**

"But you were always a good man of business, Jacob," faltered Scrooge, who now began to apply this to himself.

**"Business!" cried the Ghost, wringing its hands again. "Mankind was my business. The common welfare was my business; charity, mercy, forbearance, and benevolence, were, all, my business. The dealings of my trade were but a drop of water in the comprehensive ocean of my business!"**

It held up its chain at arm's length, as if that were the cause of all its unavailing grief, and flung it heavily upon the ground again.

"At this time of the rolling year," the spectre said, "I suffer most. 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!"**

Scrooge was very much dismayed to hear the spectre going on at this rate, and began to quake exceedingly.

Again, Dickens is trying to add some comedy here. Scrooge accuses Marley of being slow to wander the earth for all eternity as he's been dead for seven years and has only just made it back to his place of work. The tone changes as the scene progresses, and we see Marley's ghost get frustrated with Scrooge for not taking his visit seriously.

Marley's existence in the afterlife is punishment for how he behaved when he was alive. He mentions **remorse** here, indicating that he is sorry for his actions but it is too late for him.



Why do we think Jacob Marley is here to see Scrooge?

Look up the words in bold. What is Jacob Marley saying here?

Scrooge tries to say that his punishment in the afterlife should not be too bad as he was a good man of business. How does Marley correct him? What does Scrooge still fail to understand?

Jacob Marley has realised too late that how you lived in life is how you will be treated in death. The exclamatory tone indicates his desperation and sadness about his situation and his sense of hopelessness that he cannot change it.



Marley references the poor that he refused to, "see" when he was alive. What does he wish he had done now?  
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The exclamation from Marley to "hear me!" forces Scrooge to listen to the message he is about to receive.

"Hear me!" cried the Ghost. "My time is nearly gone."

"I will," said Scrooge. "But don't be hard upon me! Don't be flowery, Jacob! Pray!"

"How it is that I appear before you in a shape that you can see, I may not tell. I have sat invisible beside you many and many a day."

It was not an agreeable idea. Scrooge shivered, and wiped the perspiration from his brow.

"That is no light part of my penance," pursued the Ghost. "I am here to-night to warn you, that you have yet a chance and hope of escaping my fate. A chance and hope of my procuring, Ebenezer."

"You were always a good friend to me," said Scrooge. "Thank'ee!"

"You will be haunted," resumed the Ghost, "by Three Spirits."

Scrooge's countenance fell almost as low as the Ghost's had done.

"Is that the chance and hope you mentioned, Jacob?" he demanded, in a faltering voice.

"It is."

"I—I think I'd rather not," said Scrooge.

"Without their visits," said the Ghost, "you cannot hope to shun the path I tread. Expect the first to-morrow, when the bell tolls One."

"Couldn't I take 'em all at once, and have it over, Jacob?" hinted Scrooge.

"Expect the second on the next night at the same hour. The third upon the next night when the last stroke of Twelve has ceased to vibrate. Look to see me no more; and look that, for your own sake, you remember what has passed between us!"

When it had said these words, the spectre took its wrapper from the table, and bound it round its head, as before. Scrooge knew this, by the smart sound its teeth made, when the jaws were brought together by the bandage. He ventured to raise his eyes again, and found his supernatural visitor confronting him in an erect attitude, with its chain wound over and about its arm.

The apparition walked backward from him; and at every step it took, the window raised itself a little, so that when the spectre reached it, it was wide open.

It beckoned Scrooge to approach, which he did. When they were within two paces of each other, Marley's Ghost held up its hand, warning him to come no nearer. Scrooge stopped.

Not so much in obedience, as in surprise and fear: for on the raising of the hand, he became sensible of confused noises in the air; incoherent sounds of lamentation and regret; wailings inexpressibly sorrowful and self-accusatory. The spectre, after listening for a moment, joined in the mournful dirge; and floated out upon the bleak, dark night.

Did you predict correctly? Marley is there to warn Scrooge and to give him a second chance to ensure that he does not end up suffering the same fate.

Dickens shows that Scrooge is still not taking this chance seriously, and instead tries to bargain with the ghost. He seems to think he can re-write what awaits him in the afterlife.

The supernatural theme continues, with reference to three more ghosts that will appear in the story.



What do you think is going through Scrooge's mind at this point? Do you think he has taken this visitation seriously enough?

As Marley's Ghost departs, he shows Scrooge the other restless souls that roam the earth after death, all with similar chains. Scrooge recognises some people that he knew when they were alive. Dickens is showing that this story is not just applicable to Marley and Scrooge, but to all selfish, greedy individuals who fail to show goodwill to others.

Scrooge followed to the window: desperate in his curiosity. He looked out.

The air was filled with phantoms, wandering hither and thither in restless haste, and moaning as they went. Every one of them wore chains like Marley's Ghost; some few (they might be guilty governments) were linked together; none were free. Many had been personally known to Scrooge in their lives. He had been quite familiar with one old ghost, in a white waistcoat, with a monstrous iron safe attached to its ankle, who cried piteously at being unable to assist a wretched woman with an infant, whom it saw below, upon a door-step. The misery with them all was, clearly, that they sought to interfere, for good, in human matters, and had lost the power for ever.

They learnt their lesson too late—they no longer have the ability to help the living, no matter how hard they try.

Whether these creatures faded into mist, or mist enshrouded them, he could not tell. But they and their spirit voices faded together; and the night became as it had been when he walked home.

Scrooge closed the window, and examined the door by which the Ghost had entered. It was double-locked, as he had locked it with his own hands, and the bolts were undisturbed. He tried to say "Humbug!" but stopped at the first syllable. And being, from the emotion he had undergone, or the fatigues of the day, or his glimpse of the Invisible World, or the dull conversation of the Ghost, or the lateness of the hour, much in need of repose; went straight to bed, without undressing, and fell asleep upon the instant.

Indication of the first small change in Scrooge?



What is the significance of referring to these characters as "creatures"? Why not "ghosts"? What do you think Dickens is trying to say here?

## Questions to consider at the end of Stave One

1. What do you think is the significance of the weather in the story at this point? Why does Dickens emphasise this as much as he does?
2. Why do you think Dickens includes the scene with Fred? He doesn't change Scrooge's mind or attitude —so what is the purpose of the interaction?
3. Why do you think Scrooge's clerk tolerates a boss that is so hor-rible and cruel to him?
4. In this stave, we see Scrooge refuse to give money to charity—he argues that his taxes pay for prisons and workhouses to house the poor. Do you think he was right to do this? How does Scrooge's actions here link to what you know about how the poor were treated in the 1800s?
5. When Marley's Ghost appeared, Scrooge did not seem to take his warning very seriously. Why do you think this is? What does this tell you about Scrooge's character?
6. Who/what do you think the three ghosts will be when they ap-pear to Scrooge in the rest of the novella? Why do you think this?
7. Why does Dickens show all the other lost souls that roam the earth in the afterlife, as Marley was leaving? How do you think this affected Scrooge?
8. Why do you think Dickens chose to set his novella about redemp-tion at Christmas time?
9. Is there any point in Stave One where the reader feels sorry for Scrooge or he becomes more likeable? Why/why not?
10. Do you think that Scrooge will learn his lesson? Will he change his ways? Why do you think this?

## Key Quotations from Stave One

1. [to describe Scrooge] "...a squeezing, wrenching, grasping, scrap-ing, clutching, covetous, old sinner!"
2. [to describe Scrooge] "solitary as an oyster"
3. [Scrooge talking to Fred] "What reason have you to be merry? You're poor enough."
4. "Bah!" said Scrooge, "Humbug!"
5. [Scrooge talking to the charity men] "Are there no prisons?" asked Scrooge.
6. "I can't afford to make idle people merry. "
7. "Many can't go there; and many would rather die."
8. "'If they would rather die,' said Scrooge, 'they had better do it, and decrease the surplus population.' "
9. "Darkness is cheap, and Scrooge liked it. "
10. "Scrooge then remembered to have heard that ghosts in haunt-ed houses were described as dragging chains."
11. "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 ob-served it closely) of cash-boxes, keys, padlocks, ledgers, deeds, and heavy purses wrought in steel. "
12. "'Business!' cried the Ghost, wringing its hands again. 'Mankind was my business. The common welfare was my business; charity, mercy, forbearance, and benevolence, were, all, my business. The dealings of my trade were but a drop of water in the comprehen-sive ocean of my business!'"

Top Tip: Experiment with ways you could regularly revise these quotations, and see what method works best for you. Some ideas you could try:

- Write out the quotations over and over again;
- Write each quote on a flashcard and get someone to test you;
- Draw a picture that you think represents each quotation and revise the pictures—this is called dual coding;
- Record yourself reciting the quotations and listen to them repeatedly.

## Glossary for Stave One

1. **Apparition**—a supernatural appearance of a person or thing
2. **Balustrades**—a type of railing
3. **Bedlam**—an insane asylum or madhouse
4. **Benevolence**—generosity, kindness
5. **Counting-house**—a building or office used for accounting and book-keeping. It is implied that the Scrooge and Marley counting-house was also a money-lending business
6. **Covetous**—inordinately or wrongly desirous of wealth or possessions; greedy
7. **Dismal**—gloomy; dreary
8. **Ebenezer Scrooge**—the full name of the main character
9. **Forbearance**—patient endurance; self-control
10. **Foreshadow**—to show or indicate beforehand
11. **Hearse**—a vehicle for conveying a dead person to the place of burial
12. **Irresolution**—lack of decision or purpose
13. **Lamentation**—expressing grief
14. **Melancholy**—a gloomy state of mind
15. **Penance**—a punishment undergone in token of penitence for sin
16. **Piteously**—evoking or deserving pity

Top Tip: It is useful to learn new vocabulary regularly. Not only will it help you understand the novella, it also gives you more tools to use when it comes to your own writing. A good way to learn new words is to try and put them in a sentence of your own.

## Stave Two

### The First of the Three Spirits

*In this stave, Scrooge is visited by the Ghost of Christmas Past. The ghost takes him to visit many of his memories, and the reader experiences Scrooge's reactions to these memories of his past life. Dickens begins to develop Scrooge's character in this stave, and readers are able to infer how and why Scrooge became so mean-spirited and miserable— particularly at Christmas time.*

WHEN Scrooge awoke, it was so dark, that looking out of bed, he could scarcely distinguish the transparent window from the opaque walls of his chamber. He was endeavouring to pierce the darkness with his ferret eyes, when the chimes of a neighbouring church struck the four quarters. So he listened for the hour.

To his great astonishment the heavy bell went on from six to seven, and from seven to eight, and regularly up to twelve; then stopped. Twelve! It was past two when he went to bed. The clock was wrong. An icicle must have got into the works. Twelve!

He touched the spring of his repeater, to correct this most preposterous clock. Its rapid little pulse beat twelve: and stopped.

"Why, it isn't possible," said Scrooge, "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 at noon!"

The idea being an alarming one, he scrambled out of bed, and groped his way to the window. He was obliged to rub the frost off with the sleeve of his dressing-gown before he could see anything; and could see very little then. All he could make out was, that it was still very foggy and extremely cold, and that there was no noise of people running to and fro, and making a great stir, as there unquestionably would have been if night had beaten off bright day, and taken possession of the world. This was a great relief, because "three days after sight of this First of Exchange pay to Mr. Ebenezer Scrooge or his order," and so forth, would have become a mere United States' security if there were no days to count by.

Scrooge went to bed again, and thought, and thought, and thought it over and over and over, and could make nothing of it. The more he thought, the more perplexed he was; and the more he endeavoured not to think, the more he thought.

Marley's Ghost bothered him exceedingly. Every time he resolved within himself, after mature inquiry, that it was all a dream, his mind flew back again, like a strong spring released, to its first position, and presented the same problem to be worked all through, "Was it a dream or not?"

Scrooge lay in this state until the chime had gone three quarters more, when he remembered, on a sudden, that the Ghost had warned him of a visitation when the bell tolled one. He resolved to lie awake until the hour was passed; and, considering that he could no more go to sleep than go to Heaven, this was perhaps the wisest resolution in his power.

The quarter was so long, that he was more than once convinced he must have sunk into a doze unconsciously, and missed the clock. At length it broke upon his listening ear.

Time here is not set, and it is unclear to the reader whether Scrooge has indeed slept an entire day or if he is mistaken. Marley's Ghost warned that he would be visited at midnight, implying that this experience would take place in one evening.



Another example of pathetic fallacy — what might the fog represent? Think about what Scrooge is supposed to gain from these visits...



If Scrooge doesn't believe in the ghost or its warning, why do you think he decides to stay awake until 1am?

This means 45 minutes



How is the reader feeling at this point in the novella? Think about what we have learnt about context—what do you think Dickens was trying to achieve by making his readers feel this way?

“Ding, dong!”

“A quarter past,” said Scrooge, counting.

“Ding, dong!”

“Half-past!” said Scrooge.

“Ding, dong!”

“A quarter to it,” said Scrooge.

“Ding, dong!”

“The hour itself,” said Scrooge, triumphantly, “and nothing else!”

He spoke before the hour bell sounded, which it now did with a deep, dull, hollow, [melancholy](#) ONE. Light flashed up in the room upon the instant, and the curtains of his bed were drawn.

The curtains of his bed were drawn aside, I tell you, by a hand. Not the curtains at his feet, nor the curtains at his back, but those to which his face was addressed. The curtains of his bed were drawn aside; and Scrooge, starting up into a [half-recumbent](#) attitude, found himself face to face with the unearthly visitor who drew them: as close to it as I am now to you, and I am standing in the spirit at your elbow.

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. Its hair, which hung about its neck and down its back, was white as if with age; and yet the face had not a wrinkle in it, and the tenderest bloom was on the skin. The arms were very long and muscular; the hands the same, as if its hold were of uncommon strength. Its legs and feet, most delicately formed, were, like those upper members, bare.

It wore a tunic of the purest white; and round its waist was bound a lustrous belt, the sheen of which was beautiful. It held a branch of fresh green holly in its hand; and, in singular contradiction of that wintry emblem, had its dress trimmed with summer flowers. But the strangest thing about it was, that from the crown of its head there sprung a bright clear jet of light, by which all this was visible; and which was doubtless the occasion of its using, in its duller moments, a great extinguisher for a cap, which it now held under its arm.



How does Dickens help to build the tension here?

Think about the language used, as well as the punctuation.



This is a “strange figure” and what follows is a very unusual description with lots of contradicting ideas. Try and draw what you think the ghost looks like

is a very unusual description with lots of contradicting ideas. Try and draw what you think the ghost looks like



What do you think the white tunic and the jet of light might symbolise? Does that help you predict what purpose this figure has?



Do you think it is significant that this figure changes from light to dark?

Even this, though, when Scrooge looked at it with increasing steadiness, was *not* its strangest quality. For as its belt sparkled and glittered now in one part and now in another, and what was light one instant, at another time was dark, so the figure itself fluctuated in its distinctness: being now a thing with one arm, now with one leg, now with twenty legs, now a pair of legs without a head, now a head without a body: of which dissolving parts, no outline would be visible in the dense gloom wherein they melted away. And in the very wonder of this, it would be itself again; distinct and clear as ever.

“Are you the Spirit, sir, whose coming was foretold to me?” asked Scrooge.

“I am!”

The voice was soft and gentle. Singularly low, as if instead of being so close beside him, it were at a distance.

“Who, and what are you?” Scrooge demanded.

“I am the Ghost of Christmas Past.”

“Long Past?” inquired Scrooge: observant of its dwarfish stature.

“No. Your past.”

Perhaps, Scrooge could not have told anybody why, if anybody could have asked him; but he had a special desire to see the Spirit in his cap; and begged him to be covered.

“What!” exclaimed the Ghost, “would you so soon put out, with worldly hands, the light I give? Is it not enough that you are one of those whose passions made this cap, and force me through whole trains of years to wear it low upon my brow!”

Scrooge reverently disclaimed all intention to offend or any knowledge of having wilfully “bonneted” the Spirit at any period of his life. He then made bold to inquire what business brought him there.

“Your welfare!” said the Ghost.

Scrooge expressed himself much obliged, but could not help thinking that a night of unbroken rest would have been more conducive to that end. The Spirit must have heard him thinking, for it said immediately:

“Your reclamation, then. Take heed!”

It put out its strong hand as it spoke, and clasped him gently by the arm.

“Rise! and walk with me!”

Scrooge is still not taking this haunting seriously; he seems unconcerned when the ghost says he is there for his ‘welfare’. This means he is there for his well-being.

Scrooge finds the light on this figure too bright and wants to put it out. However, this light is metaphorical, symbolising the knowledge that Scrooge needs. Scrooge doesn’t want to ‘see’, which fits with his previous reaction to the message of Marley’s Ghost.



Scrooge feels that it is too cold to go outside when he's only wearing his pajamas. He also realises that the ghost is going to take him out of the window; he is afraid because he cannot fly.

It would have been in vain for Scrooge to plead that the weather and the hour were not adapted to pedestrian purposes; that bed was warm, and the thermometer a long way below freezing; that he was clad but lightly in his slippers, dressing-gown, and nightcap; and that he had a cold upon him at that time. The grasp, though gentle as a woman's hand, was not to be resisted. He rose: but finding that the Spirit made towards the window, clasped his robe in supplication.

"I am a mortal," Scrooge remonstrated, "and liable to fall."

"Bear but a touch of my hand *there*," said the Spirit, laying it upon his heart, "and you shall be upheld in more than this!"

As the words were spoken, they passed through the wall, and stood upon an open country road, with fields on either hand. The city had entirely vanished. Not a vestige of it was to be seen. The darkness and the mist had vanished with it, for it was a clear, cold, winter day, with snow upon the ground.

"Good Heaven!" said Scrooge, clasping his hands together, as he looked about him. "I was bred in this place. I was a boy here!"

The Spirit gazed upon him mildly. Its gentle touch, though it had been light and instantaneous, appeared still present to the old man's sense of feeling. He was conscious of a thousand odours floating in the air, each one connected with a thousand thoughts, and hopes, and joys, and cares long, long, forgotten!

"Your lip is trembling," said the Ghost. "And what is that upon your cheek?"

Scrooge muttered, with an unusual catching in his voice, that it was a pimple; and begged the Ghost to lead him where he would.

"You recollect the way?" inquired the Spirit.

"Remember it!" cried Scrooge with fervour; "I could walk it blindfold."

"Strange to have forgotten it for so many years!" observed the Ghost. "Let us go on."

They walked along the road, Scrooge recognising every gate, and post, and tree; until a little market-town appeared in the distance, with its bridge, its church, and winding river. Some shaggy ponies now were seen trotting towards them with boys upon their backs, who called to other boys in country gigs and carts, driven by farmers. All these boys were in great spirits, and shouted to each other, until the broad fields were so full of merry music, that the crisp air laughed to hear it!

"These are but shadows of the things that have been," said the Ghost. "They have no consciousness of us."

The jocund travellers came on; and as they came, Scrooge knew and named them every one. Why was he rejoiced beyond all bounds to see them! Why did his cold eye glisten, and his heart leap up as they went past! Why was he filled with gladness when he heard them give each other Merry Christmas, as they parted at cross-roads and bye-ways, for their several homes! What was merry Christmas to Scrooge? Out upon merry Christmas! What good had it ever done to him?

"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.

The ghost has taken Scrooge back to his childhood. Scrooge is surprised, but not at first upset, and the exclamation marks indicate the joy he feels at these memories. However the mood then changes and the ghost draws attention to Scrooge crying.

Even though Scrooge can see his old friends, they cannot see him.

This is the first time we see Scrooge offer an emotional response to something. What do you think this signifies about his character?

Dickens echoes Scrooge's earlier words here, reminding the reader that although this is how Scrooge feels about Christmas now, it wasn't always this way. The reader may consider what might have happened to Scrooge in his past that made him so miserable and unfriendly

Who might you predict this child is? Why do you think Scrooge is crying here? What might he be remembering?

They left the high-road, by a well-remembered lane, and soon approached a mansion of dull red brick, with a little weathercock-surmounted cupola, on the roof, and a bell hanging in it. It was a large house, but one of broken fortunes; for the spacious offices were little used, their walls were damp and mossy, their windows broken, and their gates decayed. Fowls clucked and strutted in the stables; and the coach-houses and sheds were over-run with grass. Nor was it more retentive of its ancient state, within; for entering the dreary hall, and glancing through the open doors of many rooms, they found them poorly furnished, cold, and vast. There was an earthy savour in the air, a chilly bareness in the place, which associated itself somehow with too much getting up by candle-light, and not too much to eat.

Here, Dickens is describing Scrooge's old school building. It is really run-down and cold: a miserable and uninviting place.



Considering what we have learnt about pathetic fallacy so far, what does the reference to temperature and surroundings tell you about Scrooge's experience at school?

They went, the Ghost and Scrooge, across the hall, to a door at the back of the house. It opened before them, and disclosed a long, bare, melancholy room, made barer still by lines of plain deal forms and desks. At one of these a lonely boy was reading near a feeble fire; and Scrooge sat down upon a form, and wept to see his poor forgotten self as he used to be.

Not a latent echo in the house, not a squeak and scuffle from the mice behind the panelling, not a drip from the half-thawed waterspout in the dull yard behind, not a sigh among the leafless boughs of one despondent poplar, not the idle swinging of an empty storehouse door, no, not a clicking in the fire, but fell upon the heart of Scrooge with a softening influence, and gave a freer passage to his tears.

The Spirit touched him on the arm, and pointed to his younger self, intent upon his reading. Suddenly a man, in foreign garments: wonderfully real and distinct to look at: stood outside the window, with an axe stuck in his belt, and leading by the bridle an ass laden with wood.

"Why, it's Ali Baba!" Scrooge exclaimed in ecstasy. "It's dear old honest Ali Baba! Yes, yes, I know! One Christmas time, when yonder solitary child was left here all alone, he *did* come, for the first time, just like that. Poor boy! And Valentine," said Scrooge, "and his wild brother, Orson; there they go! And what's his name, who was put down in his drawers, asleep, at the Gate of Damascus; don't you see him! And the Sultan's Groom turned upside down by the Genii; there he is upon his head! Serve him right. I'm glad of it. What business had *he* to be married to the Princess!"

To hear Scrooge expending all the earnestness of his nature on such subjects, in a most extraordinary voice between laughing and crying; and to see his heightened and excited face; would have been a surprise to his business friends in the city, indeed.

Suddenly the memory changes. Scrooge is looking back at a particular Christmas when he had been left at school for the holidays. However, as a lonely child, he created imaginary friends from the characters in the books that he read, and meeting these friends again makes him happy.

Scrooge's whole demeanour has changed, and he suddenly is happy and excited, which is completely different to how he was presented initially in the novella.

Scrooge has been reminded of a time when he still valued Christmas, and he feels sorry for the lonely young boy that he once was. This has also made him regret his treatment of a carol singer the night before. This is the first indication that Scrooge may be changing in character.

"There's the Parrot!" cried Scrooge. "Green body and yellow tail, with a thing like a lettuce growing out of the top of his head; there he is! Poor Robin Crusoe, he called him, when he came home again after sailing round the island. 'Poor Robin Crusoe, where have you been, Robin Crusoe?' The man thought he was dreaming, but he wasn't. It was the Parrot, you know. There goes Friday, running for his life to the little creek! Halloa! Hoop! Halloo!"

Then, with a rapidity of transition very foreign to his usual character, he said, in pity for his former self, "Poor boy!" and cried again.

"I wish," Scrooge muttered, putting his hand in his pocket, and looking about him, after drying his eyes with his cuff: "but it's too late now."

"What is the matter?" asked the Spirit.

"Nothing," said Scrooge. "Nothing. There was a boy singing a Christmas Carol at my door last night. I should like to have given him something: that's all."

The Ghost smiled thoughtfully, and waved its hand: saying as it did so, "Let us see another Christmas!"

Scrooge's former self grew larger at the words, and the room became a little darker and more dirty. The panels shrunk, the windows cracked; fragments of plaster fell out of the ceiling, and the naked laths were shown instead; but how all this was brought about, Scrooge knew no more than you do. He only knew that it was quite correct; that everything had happened so; that there he was, alone again, when all the other boys had gone home for the jolly holidays.

He was not reading now, but walking up and down despairingly. Scrooge looked at the Ghost, and with a mournful shaking of his head, glanced anxiously towards the door.


It opened; and a little girl, much younger than the boy, came darting in, and putting her arms about his neck, and often kissing him, addressed him as her "Dear, dear brother."

"I have come to bring you home, dear brother!" said the child, clapping her tiny hands, and bending down to laugh. "To bring you home, home, home!"

"Home, little Fan?" returned the boy.

"Yes!" said the child, brimful of glee. "Home, for good and all. Home, for ever and ever. Father is so much kinder than he used to be, that home's like Heaven! He spoke so gently to me one dear night when I was going to bed, that I was not afraid to ask him once more if you might come home; and he said Yes, you should; and sent me in a coach to bring you. And you're to be a man!" said the child, opening her eyes, "and are never to come back here; but first, we're to be together all the Christmas long, and have the merriest time in all

Apart from Fred who we meet very briefly in Stave One, this is the first indication of Scrooge having a family. The way Fan talks to him implies they are very close. What happened to Scrooge to make him so unloving in his old age, when he was so close to his sister when he was younger?

 What does this quote imply about Scrooge's childhood?

"You are quite a woman, little Fan!" exclaimed the boy.

She clapped her hands and laughed, and tried to touch his head; but being too little, laughed again, and stood on tiptoe to embrace him. Then she began to drag him, in her childish eagerness, towards the door; and he, nothing loth to go, accompanied her.

A terrible voice in the hall cried, "Bring down Master Scrooge's box, there!" and in the hall appeared the schoolmaster himself, who glared on Master Scrooge with a ferocious condescension, and threw him into a dreadful state of mind by shaking hands with him. He then conveyed him and his sister into the veriest old well of a shivering best-parlour that ever was seen, where the maps upon the wall, and the celestial and terrestrial globes in the windows, were waxy with cold. Here he produced a decanter of curiously light wine, and a block of curiously heavy cake, and administered instalments of those dainties to the young people: at the same time, sending out a meagre servant to offer a glass of "something" to the postboy, who answered that he thanked the gentleman, but if it was the same tap as he had tasted before, he had rather not. Master Scrooge's trunk being by this time tied on to the top of the chaise, the children bade the schoolmaster good-bye right willingly; and getting into it, drove gaily down the garden-sweep: the quick wheels dashing the hoar-frost and snow from off the dark leaves of the evergreens like spray.

"Always a delicate creature, whom a breath might have withered," said the Ghost. "But she had a large heart!"

"So she had," cried Scrooge. "You're right. I will not gainsay it, Spirit. God forbid!"

"She died a woman," said the Ghost, "and had, as I think, children."

"One child," Scrooge returned.

"True," said the Ghost. "Your nephew!"

Scrooge seemed uneasy in his mind; and answered briefly, "Yes."

Although they had but that moment left the school behind them, they were now 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. It was made plain enough, by the dressing of the shops, that here too it was Christmas time again; but it was evening, and the streets were lighted up.

The Ghost stopped at a certain warehouse door, and asked Scrooge if he knew it.

"Know it!" said Scrooge. "Was I apprenticed here!"

They went in. At sight of an old gentleman in a Welsh wig, sitting behind such a high desk, that if he had been two inches taller he must have knocked his head against the ceiling, Scrooge cried in great excitement:

Dickens highlights how happy Scrooge is here at the thought of spending the whole Christmas with his family. This shows that he did once appreciate the meaning of Christmas.

Fan, Scrooge's sister, has now died. We can see from this scene that Scrooge was very fond of her. The "one child" that she had that Scrooge refers to, is in fact Fred.



Why might Scrooge be uneasy here?

How is he feeling when he remembers that his nephew is the son of the sister he loved so much?

Scrooge is reminded of a time where he worked for man called Fezziwig. The exclamation marks indicate that this is another happy memory, and that Scrooge remembers this time in his life fondly. Fezziwig, as you read on, is revealed as a character who loves to celebrate Christmas.

“Why, it’s old Fezziwig! Bless his heart; it’s Fezziwig alive again!”

Old Fezziwig laid down his pen, and looked up at the clock, which pointed to the hour of seven. He 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:

“Yo ho, there! Ebenezer! Dick!”

Scrooge’s former self, now grown a young man, came briskly in, accompanied by his fellow-’prentice.

“Dick Wilkins, to be sure!” said Scrooge to the Ghost. “Bless me, yes. There he is. He was very much attached to me, was Dick. Poor Dick! Dear, dear!”


“Yo ho, my boys!” said Fezziwig. “No more work to-night. Christmas Eve, Dick. Christmas, Ebenezer!” Let’s have the shutters up,” cried old Fezziwig, with a sharp clap of his hands, “before a man can say Jack Robinson!”


You wouldn’t believe how those two fellows went at it! They charged into the street with the shutters—one, two, three—had ’em up in their places—four, five, six—barred ’em and pinned ’em—seven, eight, nine—and came back before you could have got to twelve, panting like race-horses.


“Hilli-ho!” cried old Fezziwig, skipping down from the high desk, with wonderful agility. “Clear away, my lads, and let’s have lots of room here! Hilli-ho, Dick! Chirrup, Ebenezer!”

Clear away! There was nothing they wouldn’t have cleared away, or couldn’t have cleared away, with old Fezziwig looking on. It was done in a minute. Every movable was packed off, as if it were dismissed from public life for evermore; the floor was swept and watered, the lamps were trimmed, fuel was heaped upon the fire; and the warehouse was as snug, and warm, and dry, and bright a ball-room, as you would desire to see upon a winter’s night.

This memory shows Scrooge as a young man who is excited about Christmas preparations. This cannot be explained as childhood innocence, as in the previous memory, as this Scrooge is a working adult

 What does this description tell you about the relationship between Scrooge and his boss Fezziwig?

 How does this description of young Scrooge’s working environment compare to the current working environment of his counting house, and the way he treats his clerk?

 Why do you think Dickens repeats the phrase "in came" to introduce the Christmas party hosted by Fezziwig?

In came a fiddler with a music-book, and went up to the lofty desk, and made an orchestra of it, and tuned like fifty stomach-aches. In came Mrs. Fezziwig, one vast substantial smile. In came the three Miss Fezziwigs, beaming and lovable. In came the six young followers whose hearts they broke. In came all the young men and women employed in the business. In came the housemaid, with her cousin, the baker. In came the cook, with her brother's particular friend, the milkman. In came the boy from over the way, who was suspected of not having board enough from his master; trying to hide himself behind the girl from next door but one, who was proved to have had her ears pulled by her mistress. In they all came, one after another; some shyly, some boldly, some gracefully, some awkwardly, some pushing, some pulling; in they all came, anyhow and everyhow. Away they all went, twenty couple at once; hands half round and back again the other way; down the middle and up again; round and round in various stages of affectionate grouping; old top couple always turning up in the wrong place; new top couple starting off again, as soon as they got there; all top couples at last, and not a bottom one to help them! When this result was brought about, old Fezziwig, clapping his hands to stop the dance, cried out, "Well done!" and the fiddler plunged his hot face into a pot of porter, especially provided for that purpose. But scorning rest, upon his reappearance, he instantly began again, though there were no dancers yet, as if the other fiddler had been carried home, exhausted, on a shutter, and he were a bran-new man resolved to beat him out of sight, or perish.

There were more dances, and there were forfeits, and more dances, and there was cake, and there was negus, and there was a great piece of Cold Roast, and there was a great piece of Cold Boiled, and there were mince-pies, and plenty of beer. But the great effect of the evening came after the Roast and Boiled, when the fiddler (an artful dog, mind! The sort of man who knew his business better than you or I could have told it him!) struck up "Sir Roger de Coverley." Then old Fezziwig stood out to dance with Mrs. Fezziwig. Top couple, too; with a good stiff piece of work cut out for them; three or four and twenty pair of partners; people who were not to be trifled with; people who *would* dance, and had no notion of walking.

This is type of dance that couples did at parties. Find an example of the dance here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iye3JoD5LUo&safe=active>





What might the light coming from Fezziwig symbolise here? Think about the way Dickens has used pathetic fallacy and light symbolism so far.

But if they had been twice as many—ah, four times—old Fezziwig would have been a match for them, and so would Mrs. Fezziwig. As to *her*, she was worthy to be his partner in every sense of the term. If that's not high praise, tell me higher, and I'll use it. A positive light appeared to issue from Fezziwig's calves. They shone in every part of the dance like moons. You couldn't have predicted, at any given time, what would have become of them next. And when old Fezziwig and Mrs. Fezziwig had gone all through the dance; advance and retire, both hands to your partner, bow and curtsy, corkscrew, thread-the-needle, and back again to your place; Fezziwig "cut"—cut so deftly, that he appeared to wink with his legs, and came upon his feet again without a stagger.

When the clock struck eleven, this domestic ball broke up. Mr. and Mrs. Fezziwig took their stations, one on either side of the door, and shaking hands with every person individually as he or she went out, wished him or her a Merry Christmas. When everybody had retired but the two 'prentices, they did the same to them; and thus the cheerful voices died away, and the lads were left to their beds; which were under a counter in the back-shop.

During the whole of this time, Scrooge had acted like a man out of his wits. His heart and soul were in the scene, and with his former self. He corroborated everything, remembered everything, enjoyed everything, and underwent the strangest agitation. It was not until now, when the bright faces of his former self and Dick were turned from them, that he remembered the Ghost, and became conscious that it was looking full upon him, while the light upon its head burnt very clear.

"A small matter," said the Ghost, "to make these silly folks so full of gratitude."

"Small!" echoed Scrooge.

The Spirit signed to him to listen to the two apprentices, who were pouring out their hearts in praise of Fezziwig: and when he had done so, said,

"Why! Is it not? He has spent but a few pounds of your mortal money: three or four perhaps. Is that so much that he deserves this praise?"

"It isn't that," said Scrooge, heated by the remark, and speaking unconsciously like his former, not his latter, self. "It isn't that, Spirit. He has the power to render us happy or unhappy; to make our service light or burdensome; a pleasure or a toil. Say that his power lies in words and looks; in things so slight and insignificant that it is impossible to add and count 'em up: what then? The happiness he gives, is quite as great as if it cost a fortune."

He felt the Spirit's glance, and stopped.

Fezziwig and his wife wish everyone a 'merry Christmas'. Contrast this with the start of the novella, when Scrooge refuses to acknowledge Fred's festive greeting.

Scrooge is really happy to be reliving this memory and gets so involved with his past he forgets about the ghost. Do you think Scrooge is learning anything—about Christmas or himself?

The apprentices are marvelling at Fezziwig spending his own money to give his staff a Christmas party. The ghost mocks him by saying that it was only a small thing to make 'silly folk' so happy.

Scrooge recognises here that his boss chose to use his power to make life more pleasant for him and his co-workers, and that is not a small thing at all to do for someone. Scrooge recognises that the happiness Fezziwig creates is priceless.



Scrooge's treatment of his clerk contrasts strongly with the way Fezziwig treated him when he was an employee. What emotion is Scrooge feeling here? Do you think this is a good thing?

"What is the matter?" asked the Ghost.

"Nothing particular," said Scrooge.

"Something, I think?" the Ghost insisted.

"No," said Scrooge, "No. I should like to be able to say a word or two to my clerk just now. That's all."

His former self turned down the lamps as he gave utterance to the wish; and Scrooge and the Ghost again stood side by side in the open air.

"My time grows short," observed the Spirit. "Quick!"

This was not addressed to Scrooge, or to any one whom he could see, but it produced an immediate effect. For again Scrooge saw himself. He was older now; a man in the prime of life. His face had not the harsh and rigid lines of later years; but it had begun to wear the signs of care and avarice. 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.

He was not alone, but sat by the side of a fair young girl in a mourning-dress: in whose eyes there were tears, which sparkled in the light that shone out of the Ghost of Christmas Past.

"It matters little," she said, softly. "To you, very little. Another idol has displaced me; and if it can cheer and comfort you in time to come, as I would have tried to do, I have no just cause to grieve."

"What Idol has displaced you?" he rejoined.

"A golden one."

"This is the even-handed dealing of the world!" he said. "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!"

"You fear the world too much," she answered, gently. "All your other hopes have merged into the hope of being beyond the chance of its sordid reproach. I have seen your nobler aspirations fall off one by one, until the master-passion, Gain, engrosses you. Have I not?"

"What then?" he retorted. "Even if I have grown so much wiser, what then? I am not changed towards you."

She shook her head.

"Am I?"

"Our contract is an old one. It was made when we were both poor and content to be so, until, in good season, we could improve our worldly fortune by our patient industry. You *are* changed. When it was made, you were another man."

His nobler aspirations are those that did not involve money and now his main priority is "gain", - greed could be another way of saying this. This is starting to sound more like the Scrooge we met in Stave One.

Their "contract" is a promise—in other words their engagement. However, she feels that when they made their promises to each other they were both poor and happy to be so. Scrooge has changed and she doesn't like it.

We don't know who this girl is yet. But here, she is telling Scrooge that she feels money—a "golden idol" = has replaced her in Scrooge's affections. She feels he loves money more than her.



Scrooge's fiancée challenges his love for her—she says that if he had his chance again, he wouldn't choose someone as poor as her. He doesn't disagree with her. Imagine how insulting this would be!

"I was a boy," he said impatiently.

"Your own feeling tells you that you were not what you are," she returned. "I am. That which promised happiness when we were one in heart, is fraught with misery now that we are two. How often and how keenly I have thought of this, I will not say. It is enough that I *have* thought of it, and can release you."

"Have I ever sought release?"

"In words. No. Never."

"In what, then?"

"In a changed nature; in an altered spirit; in another atmosphere of life; another Hope as its great end. In everything that made my love of any worth or value in your sight. If this had never been between us," said the girl, looking mildly, but with steadiness, upon him; "tell me, would you seek me out and try to win me now? Ah, no!"

He seemed to yield to the justice of this supposition, in spite of himself. But he said with a struggle, "You think not."

"I would gladly think otherwise if I could," she answered, "Heaven knows! When I have learned a Truth like this, I know how strong and irresistible it must be. But if you were free today, to-morrow, yesterday, can even I believe that you would choose a dowerless girl—you who, in your very confidence with her, weigh everything by Gain: or, choosing her, if for a moment you were false enough to your one guiding principle to do so, do I not know that your repentance and regret would surely follow? I do; and I release you. With a full heart, for the love of him you once were."

He was about to speak; but with her head turned from him, she resumed.

"You may—the memory of what is past half makes me hope you will—have pain in this. A very, very brief time, and you will dismiss the recollection of it, gladly, as an unprofitable dream, from which it happened well that you awoke. May you be happy in the life you have chosen!"

She left him, and they parted.


"Spirit!" said Scrooge, "show me no more! Conduct me home. Why do you delight to torture me?"

"One shadow more!" exclaimed the Ghost.

"No more!" cried Scrooge. "No more. I don't wish to see it. Show me no more!"

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

Ultimately, she breaks off her engagement with Scrooge, and says he will soon forget her. He does not seem to object.


 Why do you think Scrooge is so distressed here? Why does he liken this memory to torture? Does this explain anything about Scrooge's character to the reader?

The Ghost now shows him is his former fiancée Belle as an older woman, now married to someone else and with a daughter of her own.

They were in another scene and place; a room, not very large or handsome, but full of comfort. Near to the winter fire sat a beautiful young girl, so like that last that Scrooge believed it was the same, until he saw *her*, now a comely matron, sitting opposite her daughter. The noise in this room was perfectly tumultuous, for there were more children there, than Scrooge in his agitated state of mind could count; and, unlike the celebrated herd in the poem, they were not forty children conducting themselves like one, but every child was conducting itself like forty. The consequences were uproarious beyond belief; but no one seemed to care; on the contrary, the mother and daughter laughed heartily, and enjoyed it very much; and the latter, soon beginning to mingle in the sports, got pillaged by the young brigands most ruthlessly. What would I not have given to be one of them! Though I never could have been so rude, no, no! I wouldn't for the wealth of all the world have crushed that braided hair, and torn it down; and for the precious little shoe, I wouldn't have plucked it off, God bless my soul! to save my life. As to measuring her waist in sport, as they did, bold young brood, I couldn't have done it; I should have expected my arm to have grown round it for a punishment, and never come straight again. And yet I should have dearly liked, I own, to have touched her lips; to have questioned her, that she might have opened them; to have looked upon the lashes of her downcast eyes, and never raised a blush; to have let loose waves of hair, an inch of which would be a keepsake beyond price: in short, I should have liked, I do confess, to have had the lightest licence of a child, and yet to have been man enough to know its value.

Dickens makes a point of demonstrating the happy environment that surrounds Belle in her family life. All the young children running around indicates that she has a large and happy family.

Dickens is the narrator at this point in the novella. He is telling the reader that watching this jolly family scene makes him want to join in the fun, and flirt with Belle's pretty daughter.

 Make a prediction about what you think Scrooge's reaction to this happy family scene will be.

But now a knocking at the door was heard, and such a rush immediately ensued that she with laughing face and plundered dress was borne towards it the centre of a flushed and boisterous group, just in time to greet the father, who came home attended by a man laden with Christmas toys and presents. Then the shouting and the struggling, and the onslaught that was made on the defenceless porter! The scaling him with chairs for ladders to dive into his pockets, despoil him of brown-paper parcels, hold on tight by his cravat, hug him round his neck, pommel his back, and kick his legs in irrepressible affection! The shouts of wonder and delight with which the development of every package was received! The terrible announcement that the baby had been taken in the act of putting a doll's frying-pan into his mouth, and was more than suspected of having swallowed a fictitious turkey, glued on a wooden platter! The immense relief of finding this a false alarm! The joy, and gratitude, and ecstasy! They are all indescribable alike. It is enough that by degrees the children and their emotions got out of the parlour, and by one stair at a time, up to the top of the house; where they went to bed, and so subsided.

And now Scrooge looked on more attentively than ever, when the master of the house, having his daughter leaning fondly on him, sat down with her and her mother at his own fireside; and when he thought that such another creature, quite as graceful and as full of promise, might have called him father, and been a spring-time in the haggard winter of his life, his sight grew very dim indeed.

"Belle," said the husband, turning to his wife with a smile, "I saw an old friend of yours this afternoon."

"Who was it?"

"Guess!"

"How can I? Tut, don't I know?" she added in the same breath, laughing as he laughed. "Mr. Scrooge."

"Mr. Scrooge it was. I passed his office window; and as it was not shut up, and he had a candle inside, I could scarcely help seeing him. His partner lies upon the point of death, I hear; and there he sat alone. Quite alone in the world, I do believe."

"Spirit!" said Scrooge in a broken voice, "remove me from this place."

Scrooge looks back and realises that he could have had the opportunity for a beautiful daughter to call him father and his "sight grew dim" he felt sad and regretful.

Scrooge now hears Belle's husband referencing him as an "old friend" of his wife's. At this point, Marley is dying but Scrooge is still at work—and all alone.

Scrooge is upset here. This is not a memory of his own, it is a scene from someone else's life, but it highlights Scrooge's loneliness and isolation. Dickens shows that Scrooge might have had a very different life if he had made different choices in the past.

The ghost does not sympathise with Scrooge's distress, and instead tells him that he can't help what is being shown: these are all things that have already happened and he can't change the past.

"I told you these were shadows of the things that have been," said the Ghost. "That they are what they are, do not blame me!"

"Remove me!" Scrooge exclaimed, "I cannot bear it!"

He turned upon the Ghost, and seeing that it looked upon him with a face, in which in some strange way there were fragments of all the faces it had shown him, wrestled with it.

"Leave me! Take me back. Haunt me no longer!"


In the struggle, if that can be called a struggle in which the Ghost with no visible resistance on its own part was undisturbed by any effort of its adversary, Scrooge observed that its light was burning high and bright; and dimly connecting that with its influence over him, he seized the extinguisher-cap, and by a sudden action pressed it down upon its head.

The Spirit dropped beneath it, so that the extinguisher covered its whole form; but 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.

He was conscious of being exhausted, and overcome by an irresistible drowsiness; and, further, of being in his own bedroom. He gave the cap a parting squeeze, in which his hand relaxed; and had barely time to reel to bed, before he sank into a heavy sleep.

Think about the word "haunt" here. Although the ghost is itself a haunting, Scrooge is haunted by the memories of his past. He looks to blame the ghost for showing him these scenes, rather than reflecting on his own behaviour and how his decisions have led him to his current state.

Scrooge tries to extinguish the ghost's light. Remember we previously looked at what this light symbolises. Scrooge no longer wants to 'see' or confront his past as it is too painful for him. This may indicate that he is now ashamed of himself and his behaviour.

 The timing of this is ambiguous. It implies that it is still night time and Scrooge is going back to bed. However, we need to think of all the scenes he has just seen. What time do you think it is? What day?

## Questions to consider at the end of Stave Two

1. What do you think the Ghost of Christmas Past was trying to teach Scrooge in this stave?
2. Scrooge did not initially take the ghost seriously. What do you think was the turning point for him?
3. Do Scrooge's schooldays reveal anything about his upbringing—and about the man he later be-came? If so, what?
4. Why do you think the Christmas scene with Scrooge's old boss, Fezziwig, was included?
5. What do you think is the significance of the character Belle? Her scene was brief—why do you think Dickens included it?
6. Why do you think Scrooge did not want to continue with memories from his past Christmases? How do you think he was feeling at this point, in comparison to the very beginning of the stave?
7. Do you think Scrooge wanting to turn out the ghost's light at the end of the stave, is a sign that he is refusing to learn? Or was this desire to make the ghost go away, caused by something else?
8. How do you think the reader feels about Scrooge now that we know more about his past?

## Key Quotations from Stave Two

1. "...it was still very foggy and extremely cold..."
2. "The Spirit gazed upon him mildly. Its gentle touch, though it had been light and instantaneous, appeared still present to the old man's sense of feeling."
3. "What was merry Christmas to Scrooge? Out upon merry Christmas! What good had it ever done to him?"
4. "A solitary child, neglected by his friends"
5. "At one of these a lonely boy was reading near a feeble fire; and Scrooge sat down upon a form, and wept to see his poor forgotten self as he used to be."
6. [Scrooge]: "There was a boy singing a Christmas Carol at my door last night. I should like to have given him something; that's all."
7. [Fan to Scrooge]: "Father is so much kinder than he used to be."
8. [Fezziwig]: "No more work to-night. Christmas Eve, Dick. Christmas, Ebenezer!"
9. "A positive light appeared to issue from Fezziwig's calves. They shone in every part of the dance like moons."
10. [Scrooge about Fezziwig]: "He has the power to render us happy or unhappy; to make our service light or burdensome; a pleasure or a toil. The happiness he gives, is quite as great as if it cost a fortune."
11. [Scrooge]: "No. I should like to be able to say a word or two to my clerk just now. That's all."
12. [Belle to Scrooge]: "Another idol has displaced me; and if it can cheer and comfort you in time to come, as I would have tried to do, I have no just cause to grieve." "What Idol has displaced you?" he rejoined. "A golden one."
13. [Belle to Scrooge]: "I release you. With a full heart, for the love of him you once were."
14. "'Spirit!' said Scrooge in a broken voice, 'remove me from this place'."
15. "He could not hide the light: which streamed from under it, in an unbroken flood upon the ground."

Top Tip: Experiment with ways you could regularly revise these quotations, and see what method works best for you. Some ideas you could try:

- Write out the quotations over and over again;
- Write each quote on a flashcard and get someone to test you;
- Draw a picture that you think represents each quotation and revise the pictures—this is called dual coding;
- Record yourself reciting the quotations and listen to them repeatedly.

## Glossary for Stave Two

1. **Apprentice**—a person who is learning a trade from a skilled employer, having agreed to work for a fixed period at low wages;
2. **Avarice**—extreme greed for wealth or material gain;
3. **Coach-houses**—buildings where carriages are kept;
4. **Condescension**—an attitude of patronising superiority;
5. **Despondent**—in low spirits from loss of hope or courage;
6. **Dowerless**—having no money (dowry) to bring to a husband when entering into marriage;
7. **Endeavoured**—to try hard to do or achieve something;
8. **Half-recumbent**—half lying down/sitting;
9. **Jocund**—cheerful and light-hearted;
10. **Latent**—hidden or concealed;
11. **Melancholy**—a feeling of sadness, typically with no obvious cause;
12. **Mortal**—being living human being;
13. **Negus**—a hot drink of port, sugar, lemon and spice;
14. **Pinioned**—to restrain someone by tying up or holding their arms and legs;
15. **Poplar**—a tall, fast-growing tree;
16. **Reclamation**—the process of claiming something back;
17. **Cupola**—a rounded dome on a roof or a ceiling.

Top Tip: It is useful to learn new vocabulary regularly. Not only will it help you understand the novella, it also gives you more tools to use when it comes to your own writing. A good way to learn new words is to try and put them in a sentence of your own.

## Stave Three

### The Second of the Three Spirits

In this stave, Scrooge is introduced to the Ghost of Christmas Present. He witnesses how Christmas is celebrated by lots of different people, including the impoverished Cratchits and his nephew Fred. Scrooge begins to feel guilty about his past behaviour. Before the end of the stave, the ghost issues Scrooge a stark warning about the future of mankind.

It is now 1am again; time is not following the usual rules and so the reader and Scrooge are left feeling a little confused. Is all of this happening in one night?

AWAKING in the middle of a prodigiously tough snore, and sitting up in bed to get his thoughts together, Scrooge had no occasion to be told that the bell was again upon the stroke of One. He felt that he was restored to consciousness in the right nick of time, for the especial purpose of holding a conference with the second messenger despatched to him through Jacob Marley's intervention. But finding that he turned uncomfortably cold when he began to wonder which of his curtains this new spectre would draw back, he put them every one aside with his own hands; and lying down again, established a sharp look-out all round the bed. For he wished to challenge the Spirit on the moment of its appearance, and did not wish to be taken by surprise, and made nervous.

Scrooge is taking a different approach to the second spirit. This time, he wants to be ready for the ghost. He is no longer doubting whether they are coming or not.

Gentlemen of the free-and-easy sort, who plume themselves on being acquainted with a move or two, and being usually equal to the time-of-day, express the wide range of their capacity for adventure by observing that they are good for anything from pitch-and-toss to manslaughter; between which opposite extremes, no doubt, there lies a tolerably wide and comprehensive range of subjects. Without venturing for Scrooge quite as hardily as this, I don't mind calling on you to believe that he was ready for a good broad field of strange appearances, and that nothing between a baby and rhinoceros would have astonished him very much.

Now, being prepared for almost anything, he was not by any means prepared for nothing; and, consequently, when the Bell struck One, and no shape appeared, he was taken with a violent fit of trembling. Five minutes, ten minutes, a quarter of an hour went by, yet nothing came. All this time, he lay upon his bed, the very core and centre of a blaze of ruddy light, which streamed upon it when the clock proclaimed the hour; and which, being only light, was more alarming than a dozen ghosts, as he was powerless to make out what it meant, or would be at; and was sometimes apprehensive that he might be at that very moment an interesting case of spontaneous combustion, without having the consolation of knowing it. At last, however, he began to think—as you or I would have thought at first; for it is always the person not in the predicament who knows what ought to have been done in it, and would unquestionably have done it too—at last, I say, he began to think that the source and secret of this ghostly light might be in the adjoining room, from whence, on further tracing it, it seemed to shine. This idea taking full possession of his mind, he got up softly and shuffled in his slippers to the door.

Dickens is talking to the reader in a humorous tone to reveal more about how Scrooge is changing—he was not going to be surprised at whatever appeared.

Scrooge is worried that no one or nothing is coming, but then sees a light in the room next door. He goes towards it on his own, rather than the ghost appearing to him.





How is this different to the Scrooge we meet in the first stave and at the beginning of the second stave? What do you think is the reason for this change?

The moment Scrooge's hand was on the lock, a strange voice called him by his name, and bade him enter. He obeyed.

It was his own room. There was no doubt about that. But it had undergone a surprising transformation. The walls and ceiling were so hung with living green, that it looked a perfect grove; from every part of which, bright gleaming berries glistened. The crisp leaves of holly, mistletoe, and ivy reflected back the light, as if so many little mirrors had been scattered there; and such a mighty blaze went roaring up the chimney, as that dull petrification of a hearth had never known in Scrooge's time, or Marley's, or for many and many a winter season gone. Heaped up on the floor, to form a kind of throne, were turkeys, geese, game, poultry, brawn, great joints of meat, sucking-pigs, long wreaths of sausages, mince-pies, plum-puddings, barrels of oysters, red-hot chestnuts, cherry-cheeked apples, juicy oranges, luscious pears, immense twelfth-cakes, and seething bowls of punch, that made the chamber dim with their delicious steam. 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.

"Come in!" exclaimed the Ghost. "Come in! and know me better, man!"

Scrooge entered timidly, and hung his head before this Spirit. He was not the dogged Scrooge he had been; and though the Spirit's eyes were clear and kind, he did not like to meet them.

"I am the Ghost of Christmas Present," said the Spirit. "Look upon me!"

Scrooge reverently did so. It was clothed in one simple green robe, or mantle, bordered with white fur. This garment hung so loosely on the figure, that its capacious breast was bare, as if disdaining to be warded or concealed by any artifice. Its feet, observable beneath the ample folds of the garment, were also bare; and on its head it wore no other covering than a holly wreath, set here and there with shining icicles. Its dark brown curls were long and free; free as its genial face, its sparkling eye, its open hand, its cheery voice, its unconstrained demeanour, and its joyful air. Girded round its middle was an antique scabbard; but no sword was in it, and the ancient sheath was eaten up with rust.

The spirit is surrounded by all things associated with Christmas.



Think about how the spirit is presented here. What do you think he represents?

Scrooge is shy and humble before the ghost—think how much he has changed!



Dickens goes to a lot of trouble to describe the spirit here. How does it differ to the first spirit's description? Does it change the tone of the novella? How/why?



This novella is written in 1843. Why does this spirit have more than eighteen hundred brothers?

"You have never seen the like of me before!" exclaimed the Spirit.

"Never," Scrooge made answer to it.

"Have never walked forth with the younger members of my family; meaning (for I am very young) my elder brothers born in these later years?" pursued the Phantom.

"I don't think I have," said Scrooge. "I am afraid I have not. Have you had many brothers, Spirit?"

"More than eighteen hundred," said the Ghost.

"A tremendous family to provide for!" muttered Scrooge.

The Ghost of Christmas Present rose.

"Spirit," said Scrooge submissively, "conduct me where you will. I went forth last night on compulsion, and I learnt a lesson which is working now. To-night, if you have aught to teach me, let me profit by it."

"Touch my robe!"

Scrooge did as he was told, and held it fast.

Holly, mistletoe, red berries, ivy, turkeys, geese, game, poultry, brawn, meat, pigs, sausages, oysters, pies, puddings, fruit, and punch, all vanished instantly. So did the room, the fire, the ruddy glow, the hour of night, and they stood in the city streets on Christmas morning, where (for the weather was severe) the people made a rough, but brisk and not unpleasant kind of music, in scraping the snow from the pavement in front of their dwellings, and from the tops of their houses, whence it was mad delight to the boys to see it come plumping down into the road below, and splitting into artificial little snow-storms.

The house fronts looked black enough, and the windows blacker, contrasting with the smooth white sheet of snow upon the roofs, and with the dirtier snow upon the ground; which last deposit had been ploughed up in deep furrows by the heavy wheels of carts and waggons; furrows that crossed and re-crossed each other hundreds of times where the great streets branched off; and made intricate channels, hard to trace in the thick yellow mud and icy water. The sky was gloomy, and the shortest streets were choked up with a dingy mist, half thawed, half frozen, whose heavier particles descended in a shower of sooty atoms, as if all the chimneys in Great Britain had, by one consent, caught fire, and were blazing away to their dear hearts' content. There was nothing very cheerful in the climate or the town, and yet was there an air of cheerfulness abroad that the clearest summer air and brightest summer sun might have endeavoured to diffuse in vain.

Look at how Scrooge acts here. He wants to learn, and he speaks "submissively" which means he is happy to do as he's told.

More positive references to Christmas. This makes this Ghost appear jolly and friendly.

The cheer is not created by the weather or the setting, but by the mood of the people on Christmas morning.



Why do you think Dickens goes into

so much detail about the behaviour of people on Christmas morning? What is the point of this very long description?

For, the people who were shovelling away on the housetops were jovial and full of glee; calling out to one another from the parapets, and now and then exchanging a facetious snowball—better-natured missile far than many a wordy jest—laughing heartily if it went right and not less heartily if it went wrong. The poulterers' shops were still half open, and the fruiterers' were radiant in their glory. There were great, round, pot-bellied baskets of chestnuts, shaped like the waistcoats of jolly old gentlemen, lolling at the doors, and tumbling out into the street in their apoplectic opulence. There were ruddy, brown-faced, broad-girthed Spanish Onions, shining in the fatness of their growth like Spanish Friars, and winking from their shelves in wanton slyness at the girls as they went by, and glanced demurely at the hung-up mistletoe. There were pears and apples, clustered high in blooming pyramids; there were bunches of grapes, made, in the shopkeepers' benevolence to dangle from conspicuous hooks, that people's mouths might water gratis as they passed; there were piles of filberts, mossy and brown, recalling, in their fragrance, ancient walks among the woods, and pleasant shufflings ankle deep through withered leaves; there were Norfolk Biffins, squat and swarthy, setting off the yellow of the oranges and lemons, and, in the great compactness of their juicy persons, urgently entreating and beseeching to be carried home in paper bags and eaten after dinner. The very gold and silver fish, set forth among these choice fruits in a bowl, though members of a dull and stagnant-blooded race, appeared to know that there was something going on; and, to a fish, went gasping round and round their little world in slow and passionless excitement.

The Grocers'! oh, the Grocers'! nearly closed, with perhaps two shutters down, or one; but through those gaps such glimpses! It was not alone that the scales descending on the counter made a merry sound, or that the twine and roller parted company so briskly, or that the canisters were rattled up and down like juggling tricks, or even that the blended scents of tea and coffee were so grateful to the nose, or even that the raisins were so plentiful and rare, the almonds so extremely white, the sticks of cinnamon so long and straight, the other spices so delicious, the candied fruits so caked and spotted with molten sugar as to make the coldest lookers-on feel faint and subsequently bilious. Nor was it that the figs were moist and pulpy, or that the French plums blushed in modest tartness from their highly-decorated boxes, or that everything was good to eat and in its Christmas dress; but the customers were all so hurried and so eager in the hopeful promise of the day, that they tumbled up against each other at the door, crashing their wicker baskets wildly, and left their purchases upon the counter, and came running back to fetch them, and committed hundreds of the like mistakes, in the best humour possible; while the Grocer and his people were so frank and fresh that the polished hearts with which they fastened their aprons behind might have been their own, worn outside for general inspection, and for Christmas daws to peck at if they chose.



What impression do you get of

how ordinary people celebrate Christmas, in comparison to Scrooge? What do you think he's learning here?

But soon the steeples called good people all, to church and chapel, and away they came, flocking through the streets in their best clothes, and with their gayest faces. And at the same time there emerged from scores of bye-streets, lanes, and nameless turnings, innumerable people, carrying their dinners to the bakers' shops. The sight of these poor revellers appeared to interest the Spirit very much, for he stood with Scrooge beside him in a baker's doorway, and taking off the covers as their bearers passed, sprinkled incense on their dinners from his torch. And it was a very uncommon kind of torch, for once or twice when there were angry words between some dinner-carriers who had jostled each other, he shed a few drops of water on them from it, and their good humour was restored directly. For they said, it was a shame to quarrel upon Christmas Day. And so it was! God love it, so it was!

In time the bells ceased, and the bakers were shut up; and yet there was a genial shadowing forth of all these dinners and the progress of their cooking, in the thawed blotch of wet above each baker's oven; where the pavement smoked as if its stones were cooking too.

"Is there a peculiar flavour in what you sprinkle from your torch?" asked Scrooge.

"There is. My own."

"Would it apply to any kind of dinner on this day?" asked Scrooge.

"To any kindly given. To a poor one most."

"Why to a poor one most?" asked Scrooge.

"Because it needs it most."

"Spirit," said Scrooge, after a moment's thought, "I wonder you, of all the beings in the many worlds about us, should desire to cramp these people's opportunities of innocent enjoyment."

"I!" cried the Spirit.

"You would deprive them of their means of dining every seventh day, often the only day on which they can be said to dine at all," said Scrooge. "Wouldn't you?"

"I!" cried the Spirit.

"You seek to close these places on the Seventh Day?" said Scrooge. "And it comes to the same thing."

"I seek!" exclaimed the Spirit.

"Forgive me if I am wrong. It has been done in your name, or at least in that of your family," said Scrooge.

"There are some upon this earth of yours," returned the Spirit, "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 kith and kin, as if they had never lived. Remember that, and charge their doings on themselves, not us."

What do you think this torch is a metaphor for? What is this Spirit sprinkling on people on Christmas Day? Why does this 'water' stop people arguing and make them cheerful again?



The ghost here says that it is a poor dinner that benefits most from what he brings. Why do you think this is?



Scrooge accuses the Ghost of being the reason the poor can't eat well on Sundays—in Victorian times religious restrictions closed cooking shops and bakeries on the Sabbath day, even though poor people relied on them for hot food. The italics and exclamation mark show that the Spirit is outraged—like other bad things he lists that have been done in name of Christianity, he does not approve of these Sunday closures.

The ghost continues to explain that bad deeds done in the name of religion are the fault of the wicked people who do those deeds and they should take responsibility for them

Scrooge promised that he would; and they went on, invisible, as they had been before, into the suburbs of the town. It was a remarkable quality of the Ghost (which Scrooge had observed at the baker's), that notwithstanding his gigantic size, he could accommodate himself to any place with ease; and that he stood beneath a low roof quite as gracefully and like a supernatural creature, as it was possible he could have done in any lofty hall.

And perhaps it was the pleasure the good Spirit had in showing off this power of his, or else it was his own kind, generous, hearty nature, and his sympathy with all poor men, that led him straight to Scrooge's clerk's; for there he went, and took Scrooge with him, holding to his robe; and on the threshold of the door the Spirit smiled, and stopped to bless Bob Cratchit's dwelling with the sprinkling of his torch. Think of that! Bob had but fifteen "Bob" a-week himself; he pocketed on Saturdays but fifteen copies of his Christian name; and yet the Ghost of Christmas Present blessed his four-roomed house!

Then up rose Mrs. Cratchit, Cratchit's wife, dressed out but poorly in a twice-turned gown, but brave in ribbons, which are cheap and make a goodly show for sixpence; and she laid the cloth, assisted by Belinda Cratchit, second of her daughters, also brave in ribbons; while Master Peter Cratchit plunged a fork into the saucepan of potatoes, and getting the corners of his monstrous shirt collar (Bob's private property, conferred upon his son and heir in honour of the day) into his mouth, rejoiced to find himself so gallantly attired, and yearned to show his linen in the fashionable Parks. And now two smaller Cratchits, boy and girl, came tearing in, screaming that outside the baker's they had smelt the goose, and known it for their own; and basking in luxurious thoughts of sage and onion, these young Cratchits danced about the table, and exalted Master Peter Cratchit to the skies, while he (not proud, although his collars nearly choked him) blew the fire, until the slow potatoes bubbling up, knocked loudly at the saucepan-lid to be let out and peeled.

"What has ever got your precious father then?" said Mrs. Cratchit. "And your brother, Tiny Tim! And Martha warn't as late last Christmas Day by half-an-hour?"

"Here's Martha, mother!" said a girl, appearing as she spoke.

"Here's Martha, mother!" cried the two young Cratchits. "Hurrah! There's such a goose, Martha!"

"Why, bless your heart alive, my dear, how late you are!" said Mrs. Cratchit, kissing her a dozen times, and taking off her shawl and bonnet for her with officious zeal.

"We'd a deal of work to finish up last night," replied the girl, "and had to clear away this morning, mother!"

"Well! Never mind so long as you are come," said Mrs. Cratchit. "Sit ye down before the fire, my dear, and have a warm, Lord bless ye!"

"No, no! There's father coming," cried the two young Cratchits, who were everywhere at once. "Hide, Martha, hide!"

So Martha hid herself, and in came little Bob, the father, with at least three feet of comforter exclusive of the fringe, hanging down before him; and his threadbare clothes darned up and brushed, to look seasonable; and Tiny Tim upon his shoulder. Alas for Tiny Tim, he bore a little crutch, and had his limbs supported by an iron frame!

Bob Cratchit is the name of Scrooge's clerk that we met in *Stave One*. We saw Scrooge treat him really badly and resent giving him time off for Christmas Day.

This means that Bob's salary is 15 shillings. This was not a lot of money to earn weekly, and so Dickens is signposting to the reader that the Cratchit family are poor.

What does this description of how Mrs Cratchit is dressed tell you about their family?

Dickens signals here the fun and frivolity the Cratchits are having here on Christmas Day despite their poverty.

In the time that Dickens was writing, a goose was not as expensive as a turkey on Christmas Day and so is another sign of the poverty of the Cratchits.



Remember, there was no NHS or free healthcare in those days. The Cratchits are poor and clearly Tiny Tim is seriously ill. There would not have been much support for the Cratchit family to help him get better.

Our first introduction to the youngest child Tiny Tim: he is disabled and his nickname shows how vulnerable he is.

Bob Cratchit is a family man. He doesn't have much but he is happy when he is surrounded by his family. He has been given just one day off by Scrooge and so he is making the most of it with the people he loves.

"Why, where's our Martha?" cried Bob Cratchit, looking round.

"Not coming," said Mrs. Cratchit.

"Not coming!" said Bob, with a sudden **declension** in his high spirits; for he had been Tim's blood horse all the way from church, and had come home rampant. "Not coming upon Christmas Day!"

Martha didn't like to see him disappointed, if it were only in joke; so she came out prematurely from behind the closet door, and ran into his arms, while the two young Cratchits hustled Tiny Tim, and bore him off into the wash-house, that he might hear the pudding singing in the copper.

"And how did little Tim behave?" asked Mrs. Cratchit, when she had rallied Bob on his credulity, and Bob had hugged his daughter to his heart's content.


"As good as gold," said Bob, "and better. Somehow he gets thoughtful, sitting by himself so much, and thinks the strangest things you ever heard. He told me, coming home, that he hoped the people saw him in the church, because he was a cripple, and it might be pleasant to them to remember upon Christmas Day, who made lame beggars walk, and blind men see."


Bob's voice was **tremulous** when he told them this, and trembled more when he said that Tiny Tim was growing strong and hearty.

His active little crutch was heard upon the floor, and back came Tiny Tim before another word was spoken, escorted by his brother and sister to his stool before the fire; and while Bob, turning up his cuffs—as if, poor fellow, they were capable of being made more shabby—compounded some hot mixture in a jug with gin and lemons, and stirred it round and round and put it on the hob to simmer; Master Peter, and the two **ubiquitous** young Cratchits went to fetch the goose, with which they soon returned in high procession.

Such a bustle ensued that you might have thought a goose the rarest of all birds; a feathered phenomenon, to which a black swan was a matter of course—and in truth it was something very like it in that house. Mrs. Cratchit made the gravy (ready beforehand in a little saucepan) hissing hot; Master Peter mashed the potatoes with incredible vigour; Miss Belinda sweetened up the apple-sauce; Martha dusted the hot plates; Bob took Tiny Tim beside him in a tiny corner at the table; the two young Cratchits set chairs for everybody, not forgetting themselves, and mounting guard upon their posts, crammed spoons into their mouths, lest they should shriek for goose before their turn came to be helped. At last the dishes were set on, and grace was said. It was succeeded by a breathless pause, as Mrs. Cratchit, looking slowly all along the carving-knife, prepared to plunge it in the breast; but when she did, and when the long expected gush of stuffing issued forth, one murmur of delight arose all round the board, and even Tiny Tim, excited by the two young Cratchits, beat on the table with the handle of his knife, and feebly cried Hurrah!

Another indication that Dickens creates Tiny Tim as a saintly invalid. He hopes that his illness will make people remember the grace of God on Christmas Day.

 How is the Cratchit Christmas described at this point in the novella?

 What do you think Scrooge is thinking while he's watching this?

The Cratchits are poor and don't have much, but they are happy in this scene. What is Dickens trying to tell us about Christmas?



The Cratchits try to make their Christmas dinner as special as possible, padding out the expensive meat with lots of side dishes.

There never was such a goose. Bob said he didn't believe there ever was such a goose cooked. Its tenderness and flavour, size and cheapness, were the themes of universal admiration. Eked out by apple-sauce and mashed potatoes, it was a sufficient dinner for the whole family; indeed, as Mrs. Cratchit said with great delight (surveying one small atom of a bone upon the dish), they hadn't ate it all at last! Yet every one had had enough, and the youngest Cratchits in particular, were steeped in sage and onion to the eyebrows! But now, the plates being changed by Miss Belinda, Mrs. Cratchit left the room alone—too nervous to bear witnesses—to take the pudding up and bring it in.

Suppose it should not be done enough! Suppose it should break in turning out! Suppose somebody should have got over the wall of the back-yard, and stolen it, while they were merry with the goose—a supposition at which the two young Cratchits became livid! All sorts of horrors were supposed.

Hallo! A great deal of steam! The pudding was out of the copper. A smell like a washing-day! That was the cloth. A smell like an eating-house and a pastry-cook's next door to each other, with a laundress's next door to that! That was the pudding! In half a minute Mrs. Cratchit entered—flushed, but smiling proudly—with the pudding, like a speckled cannon-ball, so hard and firm, blazing in half of half-a-quarter of ignited brandy, and bedight with Christmas holly stuck into the top.

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. Mrs. Cratchit said that now the weight was off her mind, she would confess she had had her doubts about the quantity of flour. Everybody had something to say about it, but nobody said or thought it was at all a small pudding for a large family. It would have been flat heresy to do so. Any Cratchit would have blushed to hint at such a thing.

At last the dinner was all done, the cloth was cleared, the hearth swept, and the fire made up. The compound in the jug being tasted, and considered perfect, apples and oranges were put upon the table, and a shovel-full of chestnuts on the fire. Then all the Cratchit family drew round the hearth, in what Bob Cratchit called a circle, meaning half a one; and at Bob Cratchit's elbow stood the family display of glass. Two tumblers, and a custard-cup without a handle.

These held the hot stuff from the jug, however, as well as golden goblets would have done; and Bob served it out with beaming looks, while the chestnuts on the fire sputtered and cracked noisily. Then Bob proposed:

The Christmas pudding was the most important part of the festive meal for the Cratchits. Mrs Cratchit was nervous to check on it as it cooked just in case it hadn't turned out right

The family are aware that their pudding is small but none of them publicly acknowledge or draw attention to their poverty. Instead, they make the best of their situation and still have a joyous Christmas Day.

Mrs Cratchit's pudding turns out wonderfully. She decorates it with holly, soaks it in brandy and sets it alight—an old Christmas tradition.



Dickens foreshadows a possible tragic future for Tiny Tim and his family. An empty seat in future years indicates that Tiny Tim has died.

"A Merry Christmas to us all, my dears. God bless us!"

Which all the family re-echoed.

"God bless us every one!" said Tiny Tim, the last of all.

He sat very close to his father's side upon his little stool. Bob held his withered little hand in his, as if he loved the child, and wished to keep him by his side, and dreaded that he might be taken from him.

"Spirit," said Scrooge, with an interest he had never felt before, "tell me if Tiny Tim will live."

"I see a vacant seat," replied the Ghost, "in the poor chimney-corner, and a crutch without an owner, carefully preserved. If these shadows remain unaltered by the Future, the child will die."

"No, no," said Scrooge. "Oh, no, kind Spirit! say he will be spared."

"If these shadows remain unaltered by the Future," none other of my race," returned the Ghost, "will find him here. What then? If he be like to die, he had better do it, and decrease the surplus population."

Scrooge hung his head to hear his own words quoted by the Spirit, and was overcome with penitence and grief.

"Man," said the Ghost, "if man you be in heart, not adamant, forbear that wicked cant until you have discovered What the surplus is, and Where it is. Will you decide what men shall live, what men shall die? 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. Oh God! to hear the Insect on the leaf pronouncing on the too much life among his hungry brothers in the dust!"

Scrooge bent before the Ghost's rebuke, and trembling cast his eyes upon the ground. But he raised them speedily, on hearing his own name.

"Mr. Scrooge!" said Bob; "I'll give you Mr. Scrooge, the Founder of the Feast!"

"The Founder of the Feast indeed!" cried Mrs. Cratchit, reddening. "I wish I had him here. I'd give him a piece of my mind to feast upon, and I hope he'd have a good appetite for it."

"My dear," said Bob, "the children! Christmas Day."

"It should be Christmas Day, I am sure," said she, "on which one drinks the health of such an odious, stingy, hard, unfeeling man as Mr. Scrooge. You know he is, Robert! Nobody knows it better than you do, poor fellow!"

"My dear," was Bob's mild answer, "Christmas Day."

"I'll drink his health for your sake and the Day's," said Mrs. Cratchit, "not for his. Long life to him! A merry Christmas and a happy new year! He'll be very merry and very happy, I have no doubt!"

The ghost echoes Scrooge's earlier, callous words. Why do you think he does this? How do you think it would make Scrooge feel?

Mrs Cratchit does not like Scrooge, andresents wishing someone so miserly a 'merry Christmas'. Bob however, feels that in the spirit of Christmas they should wish no ill-will on anyone.

The ghost warns Scrooge that if things don't change in the present, the future looks bleak for the Cratchits, and Tiny Tim in particular.

Scrooge feels ashamed here, as he realises that the ghost is telling him off for his previous behaviour. This again shows that Scrooge is changing and learning a lesson.

What does Bob's response to his wife's criticism of Scrooge tell us about him?



It would have been quite common for young children to be sent out to work to help their families earn ore money. Only the very privileged went to school. Tiny Tim would not have been able to contribute to the family income, so it would make sense that 'Young Peter' would help his father.

The children drank the toast after her. It was the first of their proceedings which had no heartiness. Tiny Tim drank it last of all, but he didn't care twopence for it. Scrooge was the Ogre of the family. The mention of his name cast a dark shadow on the party, which was not dispelled for full five minutes.

The 'situation' that Dickens refers to means a job. Bob is discussing how much money Peter would make.

After it had passed away, they were ten times merrier than before, from the mere relief of Scrooge the Baleful being done with. Bob Cratchit told them how he had a situation in his eye for Master Peter, which would bring in, if obtained, full five-and-sixpence weekly. The two young Cratchits laughed tremendously at the idea of Peter's being a man of business; and Peter himself looked thoughtfully at the fire from between his collars, as if he were deliberating what particular investments he should favour when he came into the receipt of that bewildering income. Martha, who was a poor apprentice at a milliner's, then told them what kind of work she had to do, and how many hours she worked at a stretch, and how she meant to lie abed to-morrow morning for a good long rest; to-morrow being a holiday she passed at home. Also how she had seen a countess and a lord some days before, and how the lord "was much about as tall as Peter;" at which Peter pulled up his collars so high that you couldn't have seen his head if you had been there. All this time the chestnuts and the jug went round and round; and by-and-bye they had a song, about a lost child travelling in the snow, from Tiny Tim, who had a plaintive little voice, and sang it very well indeed.

A milliner is a hat maker. This is where Martha works but she wouldn't have earned much money.

There was nothing of high mark in this. They were not a handsome family; they were not well dressed; their shoes were far from being water-proof; their clothes were scanty; and Peter might have known, and very likely did, the inside of a pawnbroker's. But, they were happy, grateful, pleased with one another, and contented with the time; and when they faded, and looked happier yet in the bright sprinklings of the Spirit's torch at parting, Scrooge had his eye upon them, and especially on Tiny Tim, until the last.

Dickens is again making the point that even though the Cratchits do not have material wealth, they have each other and they are happy.

What message is Dickens trying to convey here through the Cratchits?

By this time it was getting dark, and snowing pretty heavily; and as Scrooge and the Spirit went along the streets, the brightness of the roaring fires in kitchens, parlours, and all sorts of rooms, was wonderful. Here, the flickering of the blaze showed preparations for a cosy dinner, with hot plates baking through and through before the fire, and deep red curtains, ready to be drawn to shut out cold and darkness. There all the children of the house were running out into the snow to meet their married sisters, brothers, cousins, uncles, aunts, and be the first to greet them. Here, again, were shadows on the window-blind of guests assembling; and there a group of handsome girls, all hooded and fur-booted, and all chattering at once, tripped lightly off to some near neighbour's house; where, woe upon the single man who saw them enter—artful witches, well they knew it—in a glow!

But, if you had judged from the numbers of people on their way to friendly gatherings, you might have thought that no one was at home to give them welcome when they got there, instead of every house expecting company, and piling up its fires half-chimney high. Blessings on it, how the Ghost exulted! How it bared its breadth of breast, and opened its capacious palm, and floated on, outpouring, with a generous hand, its bright and harmless mirth on everything within its reach! The very lamp lighter, who ran on before, dotting the dusky street with specks of light, and who was dressed to spend the evening somewhere, laughed out loudly as the Spirit passed, though little kened the lamplighter that he had any company but Christmas!

Dickens is describing the joy of Christmas: the Spirit is happy about the festive mood he sees already and spreads even further joy as he takes Scrooge on a tour of the land.

There is a complete change of setting here, from bright and cheerful urban homes and families at Christmas time, to bleak moorland mines and wild seas. Dickens highlights that the joy of Christmas can spread everywhere - even the miners that work in the "bowels of the earth" still find a way to celebrate the day.

And now, without a word of warning from the Ghost, they stood upon a bleak and desert moor, where monstrous masses of rude stone were cast about, as though it were the burial-place of giants; and water spread itself wheresoever it listed, or would have done so, but for the frost that held it prisoner; and nothing grew but moss and furze, and coarse rank grass. Down in the west the setting sun had left a streak of fiery red, which glared upon the desolation for an instant, like a sullen eye, and frowning lower, lower, lower yet, was lost in the thick gloom of darkest night.

"What place is this?" asked Scrooge.

"A place where Miners live, who labour in the bowels of the earth," returned the Spirit. "But they know me. See!"

Dickens uses the motif of light to indicate happiness and hope at Christmas time. Think about how Scrooge lives in almost darkness.

A light shone from the window of a hut, and swiftly they advanced towards it. Passing through the wall of mud and stone, they found a cheerful company assembled round a glowing fire. An old, old man and woman, with their children and their children's children, and another generation beyond that, all decked out gaily in their holiday attire. The old man, in a voice that seldom rose above the howling of the wind upon the barren waste, was singing them a Christmas song—it had been a very old song when he was a boy—and from time to time they all joined in the chorus. So surely as they raised their voices, the old man got quite blithe and loud; and so surely as they stopped, his vigour sank again.

The Spirit did not tarry here, but bade Scrooge hold his robe, and passing on above the moor, sped—whither? Not to sea? To sea. To Scrooge's horror, looking back, he saw the last of the land, a frightful range of rocks, behind them; and his ears were deafened by the thundering of water, as it rolled and roared, and raged among the dreadful caverns it had worn, and fiercely tried to undermine the earth.

Built upon a dismal reef of sunken rocks, some league or so from shore, on which the waters chafed and dashed, the wild year through, there stood a solitary lighthouse. Great heaps of sea-weed clung to its base, and storm-birds—born of the wind one might suppose, as sea-weed of the water—rose and fell about it, like the waves they skimmed.

But even here, two men who watched the light had made a fire, that through the loophole in the thick stone wall shed out a ray of brightness on the awful sea. Joining their horny hands over the rough table at which they sat, they wished each other Merry Christmas in their can of grog; and one of them: the elder, too, with his face all damaged and scarred with hard weather, as the figure-head of an old ship might be: struck up a sturdy song that was like a Gale in itself.

Again the Ghost sped on, above the black and heaving sea—on, on—until, being far away, as he told Scrooge, from any shore, they lighted on a ship. They stood beside the helmsman at the wheel, the look-out in the bow, the officers who had the watch; dark, ghostly figures in their several stations; but every man among them hummed a Christmas tune, or had a Christmas thought, or spoke below his breath to his companion of some bygone Christmas Day, with homeward hopes belonging to it. And every man on board, waking or sleeping, good or bad, had had a kinder word for another on that day than on any day in the year; and had shared to some extent in its festivities; and had remembered those he cared for at a distance, and had known that they delighted to remember him.



Dickens makes a point of telling the reader that the ghost doesn't stay very long watching the miners. If they're only there briefly, what do you think is the reason Dickens included the scene?

Scrooge is shown a Christmas celebration in another remote, barren, hostile environment with no luxuries, and again witnesses happiness, joy and the celebration of the Christmas spirit. Dickens contrasts the dark gloomy setting with the festive mood of the people in it, to show Scrooge that Christmas joy comes from within the human heart rather than outside environment.



Dickens is perhaps referencing the literal setting of the lighthouse and the miners, but what else could he be metaphorically referencing when he talks about the “lonely darkness” or the “unknown abyss”? Why might it be ironic that it is Scrooge who questions this?

It was a great surprise to Scrooge, while listening to the moaning of the wind, and thinking what a solemn thing it was to move on through the lonely darkness over an unknown abyss, whose depths were secrets as profound as Death: it was a great surprise to Scrooge, while thus engaged, to hear a hearty laugh. It was a much greater surprise to Scrooge to recognise it as his own nephew’s and to find himself in a bright, dry, gleaming room, with the Spirit standing smiling by his side, and looking at that same nephew with approving affability!

“Ha, ha!” laughed Scrooge’s nephew. “Ha, ha, ha!”

If you should happen, by any unlikely chance, to know a man more blest in a laugh than Scrooge’s nephew, all I can say is, I should like to know him too. Introduce him to me, and I’ll cultivate his acquaintance.

It is a fair, even-handed, noble adjustment of things, that while there is infection in disease and sorrow, there is nothing in the world so irresistibly contagious as laughter and good-humour. When Scrooge’s nephew laughed in this way: holding his sides, rolling his head, and twisting his face into the most extravagant contortions: Scrooge’s niece, by marriage, laughed as heartily as he. And their assembled friends being not a bit behindhand, roared out lustily.

“Ha, ha! Ha, ha, ha, ha!”

“He said that Christmas was a humbug, as I live!” cried Scrooge’s nephew. “He believed it too!”

“More shame for him, Fred!” said Scrooge’s niece, indignantly. Bless those women; they never do anything by halves. They are always in earnest.

She was very pretty: exceedingly pretty. With a dimpled, surprised-looking, capital face; a ripe little mouth, that seemed made to be kissed—as no doubt it was; all kinds of good little dots about her chin, that melted into one another when she laughed; and the sunniest pair of eyes you ever saw in any little creature’s head. Altogether she was what you would have called provoking, you know; but satisfactory, too. Oh, perfectly satisfactory.

“He’s a comical old fellow,” said Scrooge’s nephew, “that’s the truth: and not so pleasant as he might be. However, his offences carry their own punishment, and I have nothing to say against him.”

“I’m sure he is very rich, Fred,” hinted Scrooge’s niece. “At least you always tell me so.”

“What of that, my dear!” said Scrooge’s nephew. “His wealth is of no use to him. He don’t do any good with it. He don’t make himself comfortable with it. He hasn’t the satisfaction of thinking—ha, ha, ha!—that he is ever going to benefit US with it.”

Dickens addresses the reader to tell them what an infectious laugh Fred has. He is again set up as a complete contrast to his uncle Scrooge.

Fred and his friends are laughing at Scrooge’s response of “bah humbug!” when he was wished a Merry Christmas. Fred however speaks quite kindly of his uncle and feels sorry for him—he believes he is unhappy despite his wealth.



What is the repeated message Dickens is trying to convey here about material wealth? How do you predict Scrooge will react to hearing how Fred speaks about him?

"I have no patience with him," observed Scrooge's niece. Scrooge's niece's sisters, and all the other ladies, expressed the same opinion.

"Oh, I have!" said Scrooge's nephew. "I am sorry for him; I couldn't be angry with him if I tried. Who suffers by his ill whims! Himself, always. Here, he takes it into his head to dislike us, and he won't come and dine with us. What's the consequence? He don't lose much of a dinner."

"Indeed, I think he loses a very good dinner," interrupted Scrooge's niece. Everybody else said the same, and they must be allowed to have been competent judges, because they had just had dinner; and, with the dessert upon the table, were clustered round the fire, by lamplight.

"Well! I'm very glad to hear it," said Scrooge's nephew, "because I haven't great faith in these young housekeepers. What do you say, Topper?"

Topper had clearly got his eye upon one of Scrooge's niece's sisters, for he answered that a bachelor was a wretched outcast, who had no right to express an opinion on the subject. Whereat Scrooge's niece's sister—the plump one with the lace tucker: not the one with the roses—blushed.

"Do go on, Fred," said Scrooge's niece, clapping her hands. "He never finishes what he begins to say! He is such a ridiculous fellow!"

Scrooge's nephew revelled in another laugh, and as it was impossible to keep the infection off; though the plump sister tried hard to do it with aromatic vinegar; his example was unanimously followed.

"I was only going to say," said Scrooge's nephew, "that the consequence of his taking a dislike to us, and not making merry with us, is, as I think, that he loses some pleasant moments, which could do him no harm. I am sure he loses pleasanter companions than he can find in his own thoughts, either in his mouldy old office, or his dusty chambers. I mean to give him the same chance every year, whether he likes it or not, for I pity him. He may rail at Christmas till he dies, but he can't help thinking better of it—I defy him—if he finds me going there, in good temper, year after year, and saying Uncle Scrooge, how are you? If it only puts him in the vein to leave his poor clerk fifty pounds, that's something; and I think I shook him yesterday."

It was their turn to laugh now at the notion of his shaking Scrooge. But being thoroughly good-natured, and not much caring what they laughed at, so that they laughed at any rate, he encouraged them in their merriment, and passed the bottle joyously.

After tea, they had some music. For they were a musical family, and knew what they were about, when they sung a Glee or Catch, I can assure you: especially Topper, who could growl away in the bass like a good one, and never swell the large veins in his forehead, or get red in the face over it. Scrooge's niece played well upon the harp; and played among other tunes a simple little air (a mere nothing: you might learn to whistle it in two minutes), which had been familiar to the child who fetched Scrooge from the boarding-school, as he had been reminded by the Ghost of Christmas Past. When this strain of music sounded, all the things that Ghost had shown him, came upon his mind; he softened more and more; and thought that if he could have listened to it often, years ago, he might have cultivated the kindnesses of life for his own happiness

Throughout the novella, Dickens uses light and music to represent happiness and Christmas spirit. Fred's home is filled with warmth, friendship and merriment, in direct contrast to the environment around Scrooge at the beginning of the novella.

Fred is kind-hearted and generous—he says he will keep inviting Scrooge for Christmas dinner every year. He hopes that his uncle will have a change of heart—not because he hopes to profit from Scrooge's wealth himself, but because Scrooge might leave some money to poor Bob Cratchit.




Fred's forgiving and generous nature highlights Scrooge's selfishness and unkindness towards other people, especially Bob Cratchit. Considering Scrooge has just seen Bob's family living in poverty at Christmas, how do you think he feels about Fred's comments?



Jolly Christmas games like Blind Man's Buff are being played; Fred is helping his friend Topper get to know his sister-in-law, the "plump sister in the lace tucker". This is another scene of merriment that does not include Scrooge.

But they didn't devote the whole evening to music. After a while they played at forfeits; for it is good to be children sometimes, and never better than at Christmas, when its mighty Founder was a child himself. Stop! There was first a game at blind-man's buff. Of course there was. And I no more believe Topper was really blind than I believe he had eyes in his boots. My opinion is, that it was a done thing between him and Scrooge's nephew; and that the Ghost of Christmas Present knew it. The way he went after that plump sister in the lace tucker, was an outrage on the credulity of human nature. Knocking down the fire-irons, tumbling over the chairs, bumping against the piano, smothering himself among the curtains, wherever she went, there went he! He always knew where the plump sister was. He wouldn't catch anybody else. If you had fallen up against him (as some of them did), on purpose, he would have made a feint of endeavouring to seize you, which would have been an affront to your understanding, and would instantly have sidled off in the direction of the plump sister. She often cried out that it wasn't fair; and it really was not. But when at last, he caught her; when, in spite of all her silken rustlings, and her rapid flutterings past him, he got her into a corner whence there was no escape; then his conduct was the most execrable. For his pretending not to know her; his pretending that it was necessary to touch her head-dress, and further to assure himself of her identity by pressing a certain ring upon her finger, and a certain chain about her neck; was vile, monstrous! No doubt she told him her opinion of it, when, another blind-man being in office, they were so very confidential together, behind the curtains.

 Why do you think Dickens spends so much time describing Christmas at Fred's house?

Scrooge's niece was not one of the blind-man's buff party, but was made comfortable with a large chair and a footstool, in a snug corner, where the Ghost and Scrooge were close behind her. But she joined in the forfeits, and loved her love to admiration with all the letters of the alphabet. Likewise at the game of How, When, and Where, she was very great, and to the secret joy of Scrooge's nephew, beat her sisters hollow: though they were sharp girls too, as Topper could have told you. There might have been twenty people there, young and old, but they all played, and so did Scrooge; for wholly forgetting in the interest he had in what was going on, that his voice made no sound in their ears, he sometimes came out with his guess quite loud, and very often guessed quite right, too; for the sharpest needle, best Whitechapel, warranted not to cut in the eye, was not sharper than Scrooge; blunt as he took it in his head to be.

The Ghost was greatly pleased to find him in this mood, and looked upon him with such favour, that he begged like a boy to be allowed to stay until the guests departed. But this the Spirit said could not be done.

"Here is a new game," said Scrooge. "One half hour, Spirit, only one!"



Scrooge begins to enjoy his time at Fred's house so much that he starts trying to join in with the games, even though no one can see or hear him. What do you think has changed about Scrooge by this point? Do you think there is hope for him to learn his lesson - as Marley's ghost told him to?



By the time it is revealed that the guests are mocking Scrooge during the party game, the reader knows that Scrooge has started to change and wants to be involved. Do you feel sympathy for Scrooge at this point, or do you think he deserves what is being said about him?

It was a Game called Yes and No, where Scrooge's nephew had to think of something, and the rest must find out what; he only answering to their questions yes or no, as the case was. The brisk fire of questioning to which he was exposed, elicited from him that he was thinking of an animal, a live animal, rather a disagreeable animal, a savage animal, an animal that growled and grunted sometimes, and talked sometimes, and lived in London, and walked about the streets, and wasn't made a show of, and wasn't led by anybody, and didn't live in a menagerie, and was never killed in a market, and was not a horse, or an ass, or a cow, or a bull, or a tiger, or a dog, or a pig, or a cat, or a bear. At every fresh question that was put to him, this nephew burst into a fresh roar of laughter; and was so inexpressibly tickled, that he was obliged to get up off the sofa and stamp. At last the plump sister, falling into a similar state, cried out:

"I have found it out! I know what it is, Fred! I know what it is!"

"What is it?" cried Fred.

"It's your Uncle Scro-o-o-o-oge!"

Which it certainly was. Admiration was the universal sentiment, though some objected that the reply to "Is it a bear?" ought to have been "Yes;" inasmuch as an answer in the negative was sufficient to have diverted their thoughts from Mr. Scrooge, supposing they had ever had any tendency that way.

"He has given us plenty of merriment, I am sure," said Fred, "and it would be ungrateful not to drink his health. Here is a glass of mulled wine ready to our hand at the moment; and I say, 'Uncle Scrooge!'"

"Well! Uncle Scrooge!" they cried.

"A Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year to the old man, whatever he is!" said Scrooge's nephew. "He wouldn't take it from me, but may he have it, nevertheless. Uncle Scrooge!"

Fred acknowledges the joke against his uncle Scrooge but his toast to wish him a merry Christmas is nonetheless friendly.

The ghost continues to show Scrooge other joyous Christmas festivities, even with people who may have a reason to be unhappy. Dickens chooses not to develop these descriptions beyond this paragraph, indicating that Scrooge may now have learnt the lesson the ghost of Christmas present is trying to teach him.

Uncle Scrooge had imperceptibly become so gay and light of heart, that he would have pledged the unconscious company in return, and thanked them in an inaudible speech, if the Ghost had given him time. But the whole scene passed off in the breath of the last word spoken by his nephew; and he and the Spirit were again upon their travels.

Much they saw, and far they went, and many homes they visited, but always with a happy end. The Spirit stood beside sick beds, and they were cheerful; on foreign lands, and they were close at home; by struggling men, and they were patient in their greater hope; by poverty, and it was rich. In almshouse, hospital, and jail, in misery's every refuge, where vain man in his little brief authority had not made fast the door, and barred the Spirit out, he left his blessing, and taught Scrooge his precepts.



Again, sense of time, or **temporality**, is unclear here. This fits with the idea of the supernatural and a magical Christmas story.

It was a long night, if it were only a night; but Scrooge

had his doubts of this, because the Christmas Holidays appeared to be condensed into the space of time they passed together. It was strange, too, that while Scrooge remained unaltered in his outward form, the Ghost grew older, clearly older. Scrooge had observed this change, but never spoke of it, until they left a children's Twelfth Night party, when, looking at the Spirit as they stood together in an open place, he noticed that its hair was grey.

"Are spirits' lives so short?" asked Scrooge.

"My life upon this globe, is very brief," replied the Ghost. "It ends to-night."

"To-night!" cried Scrooge.

"To-night at midnight. Hark! The time is drawing near."

The chimes were ringing the three quarters past eleven at that moment.

"Forgive me if I am not justified in what I ask," said Scrooge, looking intently at the Spirit's robe, "but I see something strange, and not belonging to yourself, protruding from your skirts. Is it a foot or a claw?"

"It might be a claw, for the flesh there is upon it," was the Spirit's sorrowful reply. "Look here."

From the foldings of its robe, it brought two children; wretched, abject, frightful, hideous, miserable. They knelt down at its feet, and clung upon the outside of its garment.

"Oh, Man! look here. Look, look, down here!" exclaimed the Ghost.

They were a boy and girl. Yellow, meagre, ragged, scowling, wolfish; but prostrate, too, in their humility. Where graceful youth should have filled their features out, and touched them with its freshest tints, a stale and shrivelled hand, like that of age, had pinched, and twisted them, and pulled them into shreds. Where angels might have sat enthroned, devils lurked, and glared out menacing. No change, no degradation, no perversion of humanity, in any grade, through all the mysteries of wonderful creation, has monsters half so horrible and dread.

If the ghost represents Christmas Present, why do you think he gets older in the space of one evening? What does he symbolise?

Look how Scrooge speaks to the ghost here. How is his attitude towards this Ghost different to when he first met the Ghost of Christmas Past?

Make a note of the adjectives used to describe these children.

Do you think these 'children' that are under the ghost's robes are real? If not, what could they represent? Why are they there? Can you predict what Scrooge's reaction will be towards their appearance?

The ghost reveals that these "children" belong to the human race; they are our creation and thus our responsibility.

Scrooge started back, appalled. Having them shown to him in this way, he tried to say they were fine children, but the words choked themselves, rather than be parties to a lie of such enormous magnitude.

"Spirit! are they yours?" Scrooge could say no more.

"They are Man's," said the Spirit, looking down upon them. "And they cling to me, appealing from their fathers. This boy is Ignorance. This girl is Want. Beware them both, and all of their degree, but most of all beware this boy, for on his brow I see that written which is Doom, unless the writing be erased.

Deny it!" cried the Spirit, stretching out its hand towards the city. "Slander those who tell it ye! Admit it for your factious purposes, and make it worse. And bide the end!"

"Have they no refuge or resource?" cried Scrooge.

"Are there no prisons?" said the Spirit, turning on him for the last time with his own words. "Are there no workhouses?"

The bell struck twelve.

Scrooge looked about him for the Ghost, and saw it not. As the last stroke ceased to vibrate, he remembered the prediction of old Jacob Marley, and lifting up his eyes, beheld a solemn Phantom, draped and hooded, coming, like a mist along the ground, towards him.



Why do you think the Spirit says Ignorance is more dangerous than Want?.

The Ghost in particular warns against ignorance, claiming that he will bring "doom" to the human race should certain actions not be erased.

The Ghost echoes Scrooge's thoughtless and unsympathetic words from Stave One.



The inclusion of Ignorance and Want is Dickens' way of emphasising the social commentary within his novella. They are metaphorical representations of all that is wrong with society. This highlights Dickens' own view that despite the joys of Christmas we must not forget that there is still much to mend in society and we need to remember to help each other at other times than just Christmas

## Questions to consider at the end of Stave Three

1. What do you think the Ghost of Christmas Present is trying to teach Scrooge in this stave?
2. Scrooge seems to be more receptive to this message than previously. What do you think was the turning point for him in this stave?
3. Do you think the Cratchits' situation will change Scrooge for the better? If so, why?
4. Why do you think Dickens included all the Christmas scenes among the miners, sailors and light-house keepers, even though Scrooge didn't stop and watch them in detail?
5. What do you think is the significance of the children 'Ignorance' and 'Want'?
6. How do you think Scrooge is feeling by the end of this stave?
7. Why do you think Dickens chose to end this stave on a cliff-hanger, moving straight on to the third ghost?
8. Even if Scrooge is starting to learn his lesson by the end of this stave, do you think he will be able to change? Why do you think this?

### Key Quotations from Stave Three

1. "Scrooge entered timidly, and hung his head before this Spirit"
2. [About the Ghost of Christmas present] "...its genial face, its sparkling eye, its open hand, its cheery voice, its unconstrained demeanour, and its joyful air"
3. [Scrooge to the ghost] "To-night, if you have aught to teach me, let me profit by it."
4. "...his threadbare clothes darned up and brushed, to look seasonable;"
5. "Alas for Tiny Tim, he bore a little crutch, and had his limbs supported by an iron frame!"
6. "I see a vacant seat,"
7. "...of such an odious, stingy, hard, unfeeling man as Mr. Scrooge."
8. "The mention of his name cast a dark shadow on the party,"
9. "But, they were happy, grateful, pleased with one another, and contented with the time; and when they faded, and looked happier yet in the bright sprinklings of the Spirit's torch at parting, Scrooge had his eye upon them, and especially on Tiny Tim, until the last."
10. "And every man on board, waking or sleeping, good or bad, had had a kinder word for another on that day than on any day in the year"
11. [Dickens about Fred] "If you should happen, by any unlikely chance, to know a man more blest in a laugh than Scrooge's nephew, all I can say is, I should like to know him too."
12. "From the foldings of its robe, it brought two children; wretched, abject, frightful, hideous, miserable."

Top Tip: Experiment with ways you could regularly revise these quotations, and see what method works best for you. Some ideas you could try:

- Write out the quotations over and over again;
- Write each quote on a flashcard and get someone to test you;
- Draw a picture that you think represents each quotation and revise the pictures—this is called *dual coding*;
- Record yourself reciting the quotations and listen to them repeatedly.

## Glossary for Stave Three


1. **Apoplectic**—overcome with anger;
2. **Artifice**—clever devices to trick or deceive others;
3. **Benevolence**—kindness;
4. **Bilious**—spiteful;
5. **Capacious**—having a lot of space;
6. **Conspicuous**—clearly visible;
7. **Declension**—moral deterioration;
8. **Demurely**—modestly and shyly;
9. **Eked**—make something last longer;
10. **Execrable**—extremely bad or unpleasant;
11. **Facetious**—treating serious issues with deliberately inappropriate humour;
12. **Forbear**—refrain from doing or using something;
13. **Genial**—friendly and cheerful;
14. **Girded**—secure something on the body with a belt or a band;
15. **Hearth**—the part of the fireplace where the fire burns;
16. **Heresy**—belief or opinion that contradicts religious doctrine;
17. **Imperceptibly**—doing something so gradually you almost cannot notice it;
18. **Jovial**—cheerful and friendly;
19. **Mantle**—a loose, sleeveless cloak or shawl;
20. **Opulence**—great wealth or luxuriousness;
21. **Parapet**—a long protective wall along the edge of a roof, bridge or balcony;
22. **Rebuke**—express disapproval due to behaviour or actions;
23. **Scabbard**—a sheath for the blade of a sword or dagger, typically made of leather or metal;
24. **Submissive**—ready to conform to the authority of others;
25. **Tarry**—to delay or linger;
26. **Threshold**— a step across a doorway that you cross to enter the house
27. **Tremulous**—shaking or quivering slightly;
28. **Ubiquitous**—found everywhere.

Top Tip: It is useful to learn new vocabulary regularly. Not only will it help you understand the novella, it also gives you ~~more tools~~ to use when it comes to your own writing. A good way to learn new words is to try and put them in a sentence of your own.

## Stave Four

### The Last of the Spirits

In this stave, Scrooge is visited by the final Spirit, the Ghost of Christmas Yet to Come. By this point, Scrooge has indicated that he has learnt some lessons and knows that his behaviour is cruel and wrong. This particular ghost scares him, as he reveals what Scrooge's future will be should he choose to ignore the lessons he has learnt this night.

 Why do you think this Spirit is called a 'Phantom' rather than a ghost? What connotations does this have?

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

It was shrouded in a deep black garment, which concealed its head, its face, its form, and left nothing of it visible save one outstretched hand. But for this it would have been difficult to detach its figure from the night, and separate it from the darkness by which it was surrounded.

He felt that it was tall and stately when it came beside him, and that its mysterious presence filled him with a solemn dread. He knew no more, for the Spirit neither spoke nor moved.

"I am in the presence of the Ghost of Christmas Yet To Come?" said Scrooge.

The Spirit answered not, but pointed onward with its hand.

"You are about to show me shadows of the things that have not happened, but will happen in the time before us," Scrooge pursued. "Is that so, Spirit?"

The upper portion of the garment was contracted for an instant in its folds, as if the Spirit had inclined its head. That was the only answer he received.

Although well used to ghostly company by this time, Scrooge feared the silent shape so much that his legs trembled beneath him, and he found that he could hardly stand when he prepared to follow it. The Spirit paused a moment, as observing his condition, and giving him time to recover.

But Scrooge was all the worse for this. It thrilled him with a vague uncertain horror, to know that behind the dusky shroud, there were ghostly eyes intently fixed upon him, while he, though he stretched his own to the utmost, could see nothing but a spectral hand and one great heap of black.


"Ghost of the Future!" he exclaimed, "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. Will you not speak to me?"


It gave him no reply. The hand was pointed straight before them.

"Lead on!" said Scrooge. "Lead on! The night is waning fast, and it is precious time to me, I know. Lead on, Spirit!"

The Phantom moved away as it had come towards him. Scrooge followed in the shadow of its dress, which bore him up, he thought, and carried him along.

They scarcely seemed to enter the city; for the city rather seemed to spring up about them, and encompass them of its own act. But there they were, in the heart of it; on 'Change, amongst the merchants; who hurried up and down, and chinked the money in their pockets, and conversed in groups, and looked at their watches, and trifled thoughtfully with their great gold seals; and so forth, as Scrooge had seen them often.

 What is the effect of Dickens' use of adverbs to indicate the movement of the Phantom?

 Why might Scrooge be most scared by the Ghost of Christmas Yet to Come?

Notice here the attitude of Scrooge. He pre-emptively the ghost's lesson and appears eager to learn it. The fact that he is filled with a "solemn dread" shows that he is afraid.

Scrooge says explicitly that he wants to change and be a better man. He has clearly been changed by his experience.

Notice how these men discuss the death of someone they know. There is no sadness or regret in their tone. They are mainly focused on talking about the dead man's money. Who do you think they are talking about?

The Spirit stopped beside one little knot of business men. Observing that the hand was pointed to them, Scrooge advanced to listen to their talk.

"No," said a great fat man with a monstrous chin, "I don't know much about it, either way. I only know he's dead."

"When did he die?" inquired another.

"Last night, I believe."

"Why, what was the matter with him?" asked a third, taking a vast quantity of snuff out of a very large snuff-box. "I thought he'd never die."

"God knows," said the first, with a yawn.

"What has he done with his money?" asked a red-faced gentleman with a pendulous excrescence on the end of his nose, that shook like the gills of a turkey-cock.

"I haven't heard," said the man with the large chin, yawning again. "Left it to his company, perhaps. He hasn't left it to *me*. That's all I know."

This pleasantry was received with a general laugh.

"It's likely to be a very cheap funeral," said the same speaker; "for upon my life I don't know of anybody to go to it. Suppose we make up a party and volunteer?"

"I don't mind going if a lunch is provided," observed the gentleman with the excrescence on his nose. "But I must be fed, if I make one."

Another laugh.

"Well, I am the most disinterested among you, after all," said the first speaker, "for I never wear black gloves, and I never eat lunch. But I'll offer to go, if anybody else will. When I come to think of it, I'm not at all sure that I wasn't his most particular friend; for we used to stop and speak whenever we met. Bye, bye!"

Speakers and listeners strolled away, and mixed with other groups. Scrooge knew the men, and looked towards the Spirit for an explanation.

The Phantom glided on into a street. Its finger pointed to two persons meeting. Scrooge listened again, thinking that the explanation might lie here.

He knew these men, also, perfectly. They were men of business: very wealthy, and of great importance. He had made a point always of standing well in their esteem: in a business point of view, that is; strictly in a business point of view.

The men are **cal-**  
**lous**—they are laughing at the thought of this man dying. Clearly they did not like him very much. They don't really want to go to the funeral unless they get a free lunch.

Scrooge is confused about this scene, and is unsure what the lesson is. Dickens is drawing the reader's attention to the type of people Scrooge tried to impress and the motivation behind him making this effort. "The implication is that he did this because these men were wealthy and important. This fits with what we know about Scrooge from the beginning of the novella.



These men are presumably talking about the death of the same man. They spend very little time on the subject of the dead man and instead move on quickly to talk about the weather. Like the previous characters, they do not appear to be particularly upset.

"How are you?" said one.

"How are you?" returned the other.

"Well!" said the first. "Old Scratch has got his own at last, hey?"

"So I am told," returned the second. "Cold, isn't it?"

"Seasonable for Christmas time. You're not a skater, I suppose?"

"No. No. Something else to think of. Good morning!"

Not another word. That was their meeting, their conversation, and their parting.

Scrooge was at first inclined to be surprised that the Spirit should attach importance to conversations apparently so trivial; but feeling assured that they must have some hidden purpose, he set himself to consider what it was likely to be. They could scarcely be supposed to have any bearing on the death of Jacob, his old partner, for that was Past, and this Ghost's province was the Future. Nor could he think of any one immediately connected with himself, to whom he could apply them. But nothing doubting that to whomsoever they applied they had some latent moral for his own improvement, he resolved to treasure up every word he heard, and everything he saw; and especially to observe the shadow of himself when it appeared. For he had an expectation that the conduct of his future self would give him the clue he missed, and would render the solution of these riddles easy.

He looked about in that very place for his own image; but another man stood in his accustomed corner, and though the clock pointed to his usual time of day for being there, he saw no likeness of himself among the multitudes that poured in through the Porch. It gave him little surprise, however; for he had been revolving in his mind a change of life, and thought and hoped he saw his new-born resolutions carried out in this.

Quiet and dark, beside him stood the Phantom, with its outstretched hand. When he roused himself from his thoughtful quest, he fancied from the turn of the hand, and its situation in reference to himself, that the Unseen Eyes were looking at him keenly. It made him shudder, and feel very cold.

They left the busy scene, and went into an obscure part of the town, where Scrooge had never penetrated before, although he recognised its situation, and its bad repute. The ways were foul and narrow; the shops and houses wretched; the people half-naked, drunken, slipshod, ugly. Alleys and archways, like so many cesspools, disgorged their offences of smell, and dirt, and life, upon the straggling streets; and the whole quarter reeked with crime, with filth, and misery.

Scrooge still cannot work out who they are talking about.

Scrooge is expecting to see himself in the future, with a new life and a new attitude, so he is confused when he realises that he does not seem to be present in this scene.

Scrooge has been moved by the phantom to a poor and disreputable part of London. This would explain why Scrooge had never been there before.



The ghost is called a "Phantom", is covered in a black cloak where you cannot see a face, and it is dark and cold when he is nearby. What do you think the phantom represents?

This setting is a 'rag and bones' shop—a dirty and disreputable establishment that probably deals in stolen goods alongside. Three people—a 'charwoman' or house-cleaner, a laundress (who cleans clothes) and an undertaker, all arrive with goods they have stolen from a corpse they were meant to be attending. Who could this dead man be?

Far in this den of infamous resort, there was a low-browed, beetling shop, below a pent-house roof, where iron, old rags, bottles, bones, and greasy offal, were bought. Upon the floor within, were piled up heaps of rusty keys, nails, chains, hinges, files, scales, weights, and refuse iron of all kinds. Secrets that few would like to scrutinise were bred and hidden in mountains of unseemly rags, masses of corrupted fat, and sepulchres of bones. Sitting in among the wares he dealt in, by a charcoal stove, made of old bricks, was a grey-haired rascal, nearly seventy years of age; who had screened himself from the cold air without, by a frousy curtaining of miscellaneous tatters, hung upon a line; and smoked his pipe in all the luxury of calm retirement.

Scrooge and the Phantom came into the presence of this man, just as a woman with a heavy bundle slunk into the shop. But she had scarcely entered, when another woman, similarly laden, came in too; and she was closely followed by a man in faded black, who was no less startled by the sight of them, than they had been upon the recognition of each other. After a short period of blank astonishment, in which the old man with the pipe had joined them, they all three burst into a laugh.

"Let the charwoman alone to be the first!" cried she who had entered first. "Let the laundress alone to be the second; and let the undertaker's man alone to be the third. Look here, old Joe, here's a chance! If we haven't all three met here without meaning it!"

"You couldn't have met in a better place," said old Joe, removing his pipe from his mouth. "Come into the parlour. You were made free of it long ago, you know; and the other two an't strangers. Stop till I shut the door of the shop. Ah! How it skreeks! There an't such a rusty bit of metal in the place as its own hinges, I believe; and I'm sure there's no such old bones here, as mine. Ha, ha! We're all suitable to our calling, we're well matched. Come into the parlour. Come into the parlour."

The parlour was the space behind the screen of rags. The old man raked the fire together with an old stair-rod, and having trimmed his smoky lamp (for it was night), with the stem of his pipe, put it in his mouth again.

While he did this, the woman who had already spoken threw her bundle on the floor, and sat down in a flaunting manner on a stool; crossing her elbows on her knees, and looking with a bold defiance at the other two.

"What odds then! What odds, Mrs. Dilber?" said the woman. "Every person has a right to take care of themselves. *He* always did."

"That's true, indeed!" said the laundress. "No man more so."

"Why then, don't stand staring as if you was afraid, woman; who's the wiser? We're not going to pick holes in each other's coats, I suppose?"

"No, indeed!" said Mrs. Dilber and the man together. "We should hope not."

"Very well, then!" cried the woman. "That's enough. Who's the worse for the loss of a few things like these? Not a dead man, I suppose."

"No, indeed," said Mrs. Dilber, laughing.

"If he wanted to keep 'em 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."

If the dead man had been kinder in life, he would not have died alone with no one to look after him.

They appear to be picking over pieces of cloth and other possessions. When Mrs Dilber mentions that a "dead man" won't miss them, the reader can presume that she has stolen them from a corpse.

The three thieves and the shop-owner are all very amused that they know each other.

The three people knew that they were looting the dead man's belongings but they do not feel guilty about it, nor do they think they have done anything wrong. It indicates that they had very little respect for the man that has died. So far, no one seems sorry or upset that this person has passed away.

"It's the truest word that ever was spoke," said Mrs. Dilber. "It's a judgment on him."

"I wish it was a little heavier judgment," replied the woman; "and it should have been, you may depend upon it, if I could have laid my hands on anything else. Open that bundle, old Joe, and let me know the value of it. Speak out plain. I'm not afraid to be the first, nor afraid for them to see it. We know pretty well that we were helping ourselves, before we met here, I believe. It's no sin. Open the bundle, Joe."

But the gallantry of her friends would not allow of this; and the man in faded black, mounting the breach first, produced *his* plunder. It was not extensive. A seal or two, a pencil-case, a pair of sleeve-buttons, and a brooch of no great value, were all. They were severally examined and appraised by old Joe, who chalked the sums he was disposed to give for each, upon the wall, and added them up into a total when he found there was nothing more to come.

"That's your account," said Joe, "and I wouldn't give another sixpence, if I was to be boiled for not doing it. Who's next?"

Mrs. Dilber was next. Sheets and towels, a little wearing apparel, two old-fashioned silver teaspoons, a pair of sugar-tongs, and a few boots. Her account was stated on the wall in the same manner.

"I always give too much to ladies. It's a weakness of mine, and that's the way I ruin myself," said old Joe. "That's your account. If you asked me for another penny, and made it an open question, I'd repent of being so liberal and knock off half-a-crown."

"And now undo *my* bundle, Joe," said the first woman.

Joe went down on his knees for the greater convenience of opening it, and having unfastened a great many knots, dragged out a large and heavy roll of some dark stuff.

"What do you call this?" said Joe. "Bed-curtains!"

"Ah!" returned the woman, laughing and leaning forward on her crossed arms. "Bed-curtains!"

"You don't mean to say you took 'em down, rings and all, with him lying there?" said Joe.

"Yes I do," replied the woman. "Why not?"

"You were born to make your fortune," said Joe, "and you'll certainly do it."

"I certainly shan't hold my hand, when I can get anything in it by reaching it out, for the sake of such a man as He was, I promise you, Joe," returned the woman coolly. "Don't drop that oil upon the blankets, now."

"His blankets?" asked Joe.

"Whose else's do you think?" replied the woman. "He isn't likely to take cold without 'em, I dare say."

"I hope he didn't die of anything catching? Eh?" said old Joe, stopping in his work, and looking up.

The only thing that seems to worry the thieves is if the man died of something infectious. Dickens is creating a macabre (meaning unpleasant and associated with death) atmosphere here: *Stave Four and the Spirit of Christmas Yet to Come* can be seen as the climax of the novella, full of horror and tension.

Mrs Dilber has stripped the bed clothes off the bed that the dead man was lying in, and has also taken all clothes the corpse was wearing? None of the characters are shocked by this. Do you think the reader is?

"Don't you be afraid of that," returned the woman. "I an't so fond of his company that I'd loiter about him for such things, if he did. Ah! you may look through that shirt till your eyes ache; but you won't find a hole in it, nor a threadbare place. It's the best he had, and a fine one too. They'd have wasted it, if it hadn't been for me."

"What do you call wasting of it?" asked old Joe.

"Putting it on him to be buried in, to be sure," replied the woman with a laugh. "Somebody was fool enough to do it, but I took it off again. If calico an't good enough for such a purpose, it isn't good enough for anything. It's quite as becoming to the body. He can't look uglier than he did in that one."

Scrooge listened to this dialogue in horror. As they sat grouped about their spoil, in the scanty light afforded by the old man's lamp, he viewed them with a detestation and disgust, which could hardly have been greater, though they had been obscene demons, marketing the corpse itself.

"Ha, ha!" laughed the same woman, when old Joe, producing a flannel bag with money in it, told out their several gains upon the ground. "This is the end of it, you see! He frightened every one away from him when he was alive, to profit us when he was dead! Ha, ha, ha!"

"Spirit!" said Scrooge, shuddering from head to foot. "I see, I see. The case of this unhappy man might be my own. My life tends that way, now. Merciful Heaven, what is this!"

He recoiled in terror, for the scene had changed, and now he almost touched a bed: a bare, uncurtained bed: on which, beneath a ragged sheet, there lay a something covered up, which, though it was dumb, announced itself in awful language.

The room was very dark, too dark to be observed with any accuracy, though Scrooge glanced round it in obedience to a secret impulse, anxious to know what kind of room it was. A pale light, rising in the outer air, fell straight upon the bed; and on it, plundered and bereft, unwatched, unwept, uncared for, was the body of this man.

Scrooge glanced towards the Phantom. Its steady hand was pointed to the head. The cover was so carelessly adjusted that the slightest raising of it, the motion of a finger upon Scrooge's part, would have disclosed the face. He thought of it, felt how easy it would be to do, and longed to do it; but had no more power to withdraw the veil than to dismiss the spectre at his side.

Oh cold, cold, rigid, dreadful Death, set up thine altar here, and dress it with such terrors as thou hast at thy command: for this is thy dominion! But of the loved, revered, and honoured head, thou canst not turn one hair to thy dread purposes, or make one feature odious. It is not that the hand is heavy and will fall down when released; it is not that the heart and pulse are still; but that the hand was open, generous, and true; the heart brave, warm, and tender; and the pulse a man's. Strike, Shadow, strike! And see his good deeds springing from the wound, to sow the world with life immortal!

Might Scrooge have worked out who they are talking about yet?

At first Scrooge thinks these visions are of another isolated miser, and are just warnings to him. But then the Phantom reveals the dead body which is lying under a sheet. Scrooge is unable to lift the sheet up and look, but he knows that it is he himself.

Scrooge's future has him dying alone while his possessions are looted and no one mourns him. Considering that Scrooge feels that he has now changed, this would come as a shock to him.

How else do you think Scrooge is feeling at this point?

Scrooge recognises his own flaws and failings here, acknowledging that his greed and obsession with wealth has brought him no joy.

No voice pronounced these words in Scrooge's ears, and yet he heard them when he looked upon the bed. He thought, if this man could be raised up now, what would be his foremost thoughts? Avarice, hard-dealing, griping cares? They have brought him to a rich end, truly!

He lay in the dark empty house, with not a man, a woman, or a child, to say that he was kind to me in this or that, and for the memory of one kind word I will be kind to him. A cat was tearing at the door, and there was a sound of gnawing rats beneath the hearth-stone. What *they* wanted in the room of death, and why they were so restless and disturbed, Scrooge did not dare to think.

"Spirit!" he said, "this is a fearful place. In leaving it, I shall not leave its lesson, trust me. Let us go!"

Still the Ghost pointed with an unmoved finger to the head.

"I understand you," Scrooge returned, "and I would do it, if I could. But I have not the power, Spirit. I have not the power."

Again it seemed to look upon him.

"If there is any person in the town, who feels emotion caused by this man's death," said Scrooge quite agonised, "show that person to me, Spirit, I beseech you!"

The Phantom spread its dark robe before him for a moment, like a wing; and withdrawing it, revealed a room by daylight, where a mother and her children were.

She was expecting some one, and with anxious eagerness; for she walked up and down the room; started at every sound; looked out from the window; glanced at the clock; tried, but in vain, to work with her needle; and could hardly bear the voices of the children in their play.

At length the long-expected knock was heard. She hurried to the door, and met her husband; a man whose face was careworn and depressed, though he was young. There was a remarkable expression in it now; a kind of serious delight of which he felt ashamed, and which he struggled to repress.

He sat down to the dinner that had been hoarding for him by the fire; and when she asked him faintly what news (which was not until after a long silence), he appeared embarrassed how to answer.

"Is it good?" she said, "or bad?"—to help him.

"Bad," he answered.

"We are quite ruined?"

"No. There is hope yet, Caroline."

"If *he* relents," she said, amazed, "there is! Nothing is past hope, if such a miracle has happened."

"He is past relenting," said her husband. "He is dead."

She was a mild and patient creature if her face spoke truth; but she was thankful in her soul to hear it, and she said so, with clasped hands. She prayed forgiveness the next moment, and was sorry; but the first was the emotion of her heart.

Scrooge cannot bear to look any more but reassures the ghost that he won't forget this scene. He then begs to be shown someone who has some "emotion" over his death.

The reader can assume that the "he" Caroline refers to is Scrooge.

This woman, who Dickens describes positively—shows emotion at Scrooge's death. However these emotions are relief and gratitude

A creditor is someone you owe money to. This couple owed Scrooge money, and he was 'merciless' to them. Now that Scrooge is dead, the debt is either cancelled or moved to another creditor, who will hopefully be more humane.

"What the half-drunken woman whom I told you of last night, said to me, when I tried to see him and obtain a week's delay; and what I thought was a mere excuse to avoid me; turns out to have been quite true. He was not only very ill, but dying, then."

"To whom will our debt be transferred?"

"I don't know. But before that time we shall be ready with the money; and even though we were not, it would be a bad fortune indeed to find so merciless a creditor in his successor. We may sleep to-night with light hearts, Caroline!"

Yes. Soften it as they would, their hearts were lighter. The children's faces, hushed and clustered round to hear what they so little understood, were brighter; and it was a happier house for this man's death! The only emotion that the Ghost could show him, caused by the event, was one of pleasure.

"Let me see some tenderness connected with a death," said Scrooge; "or that dark chamber, Spirit, which we left just now, will be for ever present to me."

The Ghost conducted him through several streets familiar to his feet; and as they went along, Scrooge looked here and there to find himself, but nowhere was he to be seen. They entered poor Bob Cratchit's house; the dwelling he had visited before; and found the mother and the children seated round the fire.

Quiet. Very quiet. The noisy little Cratchits were as still as statues in one corner, and sat looking up at Peter, who had a book before him. The mother and her daughters were engaged in sewing. But surely they were very quiet!

"'And He took a child, and set him in the midst of them.'"

Where had Scrooge heard those words? He had not dreamed them. The boy must have read them out, as he and the Spirit crossed the threshold. Why did he not go on?

The mother laid her work upon the table, and put her hand up to her face.

"The colour hurts my eyes," she said.

The colour? Ah, poor Tiny Tim!

"They're better now again," said Cratchit's wife. "It makes them weak by candle-light; and I wouldn't show weak eyes to your father when he comes home, for the world. It must be near his time."

"Past it rather," Peter answered, shutting up his book. "But I think he has walked a little slower than he used, these few last evenings, mother."

They were very quiet again. At last she said, and in a steady, cheerful voice, that only faltered once:

"I have known him walk with—I have known him walk with Tiny Tim upon his shoulder, very fast indeed."

"And so have I," cried Peter. "Often."

"And so have I," exclaimed another. So had all.

Scrooge asked to be shown emotion over his death. What he meant was sadness, but clearly the ghost cannot show him that, as no one in the future will be sad that he died.

Women from poor families often took in sewing as a job to try to make a bit more money. The reader can see that in the future, the Cratchits are still struggling financially.



Before reading on, what do you think has happened to Bob Cratchit and Tiny Tim in the future?



“But he was very light to carry,” she resumed, intent upon her work, “and his father loved him so, that it was no trouble: no trouble. And there is your father at the door!”

She hurried out to meet him; and little Bob in his comforter—he had need of it, poor fellow—came in. His tea was ready for him on the hob, and they all tried who should help him to it most. Then the two young Cratchits got upon his knees and laid, each child a little cheek, against his face, as if they said, “Don’t mind it, father. Don’t be grieved!”

Bob was very cheerful with them, and spoke pleasantly to all the family. He looked at the work upon the table, and praised the industry and speed of Mrs. Cratchit and the girls. They would be done long before Sunday, he said.

“Sunday! You went to-day, then, Robert?” said his wife.

“Yes, my dear,” returned Bob. “I wish you could have gone. It would have done you good to see how green a place it is. But you’ll see it often. I promised him that I would walk there on a Sunday. My little, little child!” cried Bob. “My little child!”

He broke down all at once. He couldn’t help it. If he could have helped it, he and his child would have been farther apart perhaps than they were.

He left the room, and went up-stairs into the room above, which was lighted cheerfully, and hung with Christmas. There was a chair set close beside the child, and there were signs of some one having been there, lately. Poor Bob sat down in it, and when he had thought a little and composed himself, he kissed the little face. He was reconciled to what had happened, and went down again quite happy.

They drew about the fire, and talked; the girls and mother working still. Bob told them of the extraordinary kindness of Mr. Scrooge’s nephew, whom he had scarcely seen but once, and who, meeting him in the street that day, and seeing that he looked a little—“just a little down you know,” said Bob, inquired what had happened to distress him. “On which,” said Bob, “for he is the pleasantest-spoken gentleman you ever heard, I told him. ‘I am heartily sorry for it, Mr. Cratchit,’ he said, ‘and heartily sorry for your good wife.’ By the bye, how he ever knew *that*, I don’t know.”

“Knew what, my dear?”

“Why, that you were a good wife,” replied Bob.

“Everybody knows that!” said Peter.

“Very well observed, my boy!” cried Bob. “I hope they do. ‘Heartily sorry,’ he said, ‘for your good wife. If I can be of service to you in any way,’ he said, giving me his card, ‘that’s where I live. Pray come to me.’ Now, it wasn’t,” cried Bob, “for the sake of anything he might be able to do for us, so much as for his kind way, that this was quite delightful. It really seemed as if he had known our Tiny Tim, and felt with us.”

“I’m sure he’s a good soul!” said Mrs. Cratchit.

“You would be surer of it, my dear,” returned Bob, “if you saw and spoke to him. I shouldn’t be at all surprised—mark what I say!—if he got Peter a better situation.”

“Only hear that, Peter,” said Mrs. Cratchit.

“And then,” cried one of the girls, “Peter will be keeping company with some one, and setting up for himself.”

“Get along with you!” retorted Peter, grinning.

“It’s just as likely as not,” said Bob, “one of these days; though there’s plenty of time for that, my dear. But however and whenever we part from one another, I am sure we shall none of us forget poor Tiny Tim—shall we—or this first parting that there was among us?”

“Never, father!” cried they all.

“And I know,” said Bob, “I know, my dears, that when we recollect how patient and how mild he was; although he was a little, little child; we shall not quarrel easily among ourselves, and forget poor Tiny Tim in doing it.”

It is implied here that Tiny Tim has died. Bob Cratchit has just walked back from the cemetery.

Dickens once again draws attention to the contrast between Fred and Scrooge, by showing how kind Fred will be to the Cratchit family in the future.



Even in times of deep sorrow, the family find happiness and comfort in each other, and remember Tiny Tim fondly.

"No, never, father!" they all cried again.

"I am very happy," said little Bob, "I am very happy!"

Mrs. Cratchit kissed him, his daughters kissed him, the two young Cratchits kissed him, and Peter and himself shook hands. Spirit of Tiny Tim, thy childish essence was from God!

"Spectre," said Scrooge, "something informs me that our parting moment is at hand. I know it, but I know not how. Tell me what man that was whom we saw lying dead?"

The Ghost of Christmas Yet To Come conveyed him, as before—though at a different time, he thought: indeed, there seemed no order in these latter visions, save that they were in the Future—into the resorts of business men, but showed him not himself. Indeed, the Spirit did not stay for anything, but went straight on, as to the end just now desired, until besought by Scrooge to tarry for a moment.

"This court," said Scrooge, "through which we hurry now, is where my place of occupation is, and has been for a length of time. I see the house. Let me behold what I shall be, in days to come!"

The Spirit stopped; the hand was pointed elsewhere.

"The house is yonder," Scrooge exclaimed. "Why do you point away?"

The **inexorable** finger underwent no change.

Scrooge hastened to the window of his office, and looked in. It was an office still, but not his. The furniture was not the same, and the figure in the chair was not himself. The Phantom pointed as before.

He joined it once again, and wondering why and **whither** he had gone, accompanied it until they reached an iron gate. He paused to look round before entering.

A churchyard. Here, then; the wretched man whose name he had now to learn, lay underneath the ground. It was a worthy place. Walled in by houses; overrun by grass and weeds, the growth of vegetation's death, not life; choked up with too much burying; fat with **repleted** appetite. A worthy place!

The Spirit stood among the graves, and pointed down to One. He advanced towards it trembling. The Phantom was exactly as it had been, but he dreaded that he saw new meaning in its solemn shape.

"Before I draw nearer to that stone to which you point," said Scrooge, "answer me one question. **Are these the shadows of the things that Will be, or are they shadows of things that May be, only?**"

Still the Ghost pointed downward to the grave by which it stood.

"Men's courses will foreshadow certain ends, to which, if **persevered** in, they must lead," said Scrooge. "But if the courses be departed from, the ends will change. Say it is thus with what you show me!"

The Spirit was immovable as ever.

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.

Scrooge wants to know if the future is definitely set, or if it can be changed. The Ghost is silent as he has been throughout the chapter, but the reader knows that Scrooge desperately wants the opportunity to change the future, if he is allowed.

Scrooge knows that he is the man who is dead, but wants the ghost to confirm it for him.



What mood/ atmosphere is created by Dickens here? What is the significance of the Phantom moving the scene to a graveyard? Why do you think Dickens made this Spirit be silent?

Scrooge admits that he has changed, that he will be different from now on if he is given another chance.

"Am I that man who lay upon the bed?" he cried, upon his knees.

The finger pointed from the grave to him, and back again.

"No, Spirit! Oh no, no!"

The finger still was there.

"Spirit!" he cried, tight clutching at its robe, "hear me! I am not the man I was. I will not be the man I must have been but for this intercourse. Why show me this, if I am past all hope!"

For the first time the hand appeared to shake.

"Good Spirit," he pursued, as down upon the ground he fell before it: "Your nature intercedes for me, and pities me. Assure me that I yet may change these shadows you have shown me, by an altered life!"

The kind hand trembled.

"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. The Spirits of all Three shall strive within me. I will not shut out the lessons that they teach. Oh, tell me I may sponge away the writing on this stone!"

Scrooge reiterates that he has learnt his lesson from all three Spirits and that he will carry these lessons in his heart if he is allowed to make amends.

In his agony, he caught the spectral hand. It sought to free itself, but he was strong in his entreaty, and detained it. The Spirit, stronger yet, repulsed him.

Holding up his hands in a last prayer to have his fate reversed, he saw an alteration in the Phantom's hood and dress. It shrunk, collapsed, and dwindled down into a bed-post.



Do you think Scrooge's change is genuine, or do you think he just said all of this because he was scared when confronted with death?

## Questions to consider at the end of Stave Four

1. Do you feel sorry for Scrooge at any point in this stave, or do you think he deserves the responses people have to his future death?
2. Which of the scenes that Scrooge witnesses do you think teaches him the greatest lesson? Which do you think scares him the most?
3. Why do you think this Phantom doesn't speak?
4. Do you think Scrooge's desperation for a second chance is genuine? Why/why not?
5. Why do you think Scrooge was unable to pull back the sheet to see his own corpse?
6. Why do you think Dickens chose to include the ghost of Christmas Yet To Come? Scrooge had already changed so why was it included in the novella?
7. What do you think Scrooge will now do to change his ways, if he is given a second chance?
8. Which of the Spirits do you think has had the biggest impact on him?

### Key Quotations from Stave Four

1. "The Phantom slowly, gravely, silently, approached."
2. [Scrooge to the ghost] "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."
3. [about the setting with Mrs Dilber] "...the whole quarter reeked with crime, with filth, and misery."
4. [Scrooge] "I see, I see. The case of this unhappy man might be my own."
5. "...it was a happier house for this man's death! The only emotion that the Ghost could show him, caused by the event, was one of pleasure."
6. "I am not the man I was. I will not be the man I must have been."
7. "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. The Spirits of all Three shall strive within me. I will not shut out the lessons that they teach."

Top Tip: Experiment with ways you could regularly revise these quotations, and see what method works best for you. Some ideas you could try:

- write out the quotations over and over again;
- write each quote on a flashcard and get someone to test you;
- Draw a picture that you think represents each quotation and revise the pictures—this is called dual coding;
- Record yourself reciting the quotations and listen to them repeatedly.

## Glossary for Stave Four

1. **Apparel**—clothing;
2. **Avarice**—extreme greed for wealth or material gain;
3. **Bereft**—sad and lonely; especially through someone's death or departure;
4. **Cesspool**—a disgusting or corrupt place—literally, an open sewer;
5. **Charwoman**—a woman employed as a cleaner;
6. **Detestation**—intense dislike;
7. **Disgorged**—pour something out;
8. **Gallantry**—courageous behaviour;
9. **Inexorable**—impossible to stop or persuade;
10. **Infamous**—well known for some bad quality or deed;
11. **Intercedes**—intervene on behalf of another;
12. **Latent**—existing but not yet developed;
13. **Miscellaneous**—various types of items, people or groups;
14. **Odious**—extremely unpleasant;
15. **Offal**—the entrails and internal organs of an animal used as food;
16. **Persevered**—continue in a course of action even in the face of difficulty;
17. **Plundered**—steal goods, typically using force;
18. **Reconciled**—to restore friendly relations;
19. **Repleted**—abundantly supplied or provided;
20. **Repute**—reputation;
21. **Sepulchres**—small rooms or monuments in which dead people are laid or buried;
22. **Spectre**—a ghost;
23. **Whither**—to what place.

Top Tip: It is useful to learn new vocabulary regularly. Not only will it help you understand the novella, it also gives you more tools to use when it comes to your own writing. A good way to learn new words is to try and put them in a sentence

# Stave Five

## The End of It

In this stave, Scrooge is presented as a changed man after his encounters with the Ghosts. Readers are shown him interacting with characters he previously treated badly to highlight the changes Scrooge has made. Dickens uses this stave to reiterate his message about social responsibility.

Scrooge is now back in his own bed, although at this point the reader is unclear exactly what time of day or night it is.

'Time' is capitalised to show that Scrooge now 'has' the time to be a different person.

Yes! and the bedpost was his own. The bed was his own, the room was his own. Best and happiest of all, the Time before him was his own, to make amends in!

"I will live in the Past, the Present, and the Future!" Scrooge repeated, as he scrambled out of bed. "The Spirits of all Three shall strive within me. Oh Jacob Marley! Heaven, and the Christmas Time be praised for this! I say it on my knees, old Jacob; on my knees!"

He was so fluttered and so glowing with his good intentions, that his broken voice would scarcely answer to his call. He had been sobbing violently in his conflict with the Spirit, and his face was wet with tears.

"They are not torn down," cried Scrooge, folding one of his bed-curtains in his arms, "they are not torn down, rings and all. They are here—I am here—the shadows of the things that would have been, may be dispelled. They will be. I know they will!"

His hands were busy with his garments all this time; turning them inside out, putting them on upside down, tearing them, mislaying them, making them parties to every kind of extravagance.

"I don't know what to do!" cried Scrooge, laughing and crying in the same breath; and making a perfect [laocoon](#) of himself with his stockings. "I am as light as a feather, I am as happy as an angel, I am as merry as a schoolboy. I am as giddy as a drunken man. A merry Christmas to everybody! A happy New Year to all the world. Hallo here! Whoop! Hallo!"

He had frisked into the sitting-room, and was now standing there: perfectly winded.

"There's the saucepan that the gruel was in!" cried Scrooge, starting off again, and going round the fireplace. "There's the door, by which the Ghost of Jacob Marley entered! There's the corner where the Ghost of Christmas Present, sat! There's the window where I saw the wandering Spirits! It's all right, it's all true, it all happened. Ha ha ha!"

Really, for a man who had been out of practice for so many years, it was a splendid laugh, a most [illustrious](#) laugh. The father of a long, long line of brilliant laughs!

"I don't know what day of the month it is!" said Scrooge. "I don't know how long I've been among the Spirits. I don't know anything. I'm quite a baby. Never mind. I don't care. I'd rather be a baby. Hallo! Whoop! Hallo here!"

He was checked in his transports by the churches ringing out the lustiest peals he had ever heard. Clash, clang, hammer; ding, dong, bell. Bell, dong, ding; hammer, clang, clash! Oh, glorious, glorious!

Running to the window, he opened it, and put out his head. No fog, no mist; clear, bright, jovial, stirring, cold; cold, piping for the blood to dance to; Golden sunlight; Heavenly sky; sweet fresh air; merry bells. Oh, glorious! Glorious!

"What's to-day!" cried Scrooge, calling downward to a boy in Sunday clothes, who perhaps had loitered in to look about him.

Scrooge remembers Marley's warning and references this in this stave to show that he has learnt his lesson.



Why do you think Dickens includes these similes of how Scrooge is feeling at this point? What is the effect?

Scrooge starts recognising his surroundings being occupied by the Ghosts, indicating that they are still very much on his mind.

The reader can see how much Scrooge has changed, as he is so happy and joyful.

What do you think the ringing of the bells signifies here?

Scrooge is confused about the time so needs to check what day it is. It seems the visits from the Ghosts happened all in one night.

The fact that it is still Christmas Day confirms that all of the lessons that Scrooge learnt from the ghosts happened in one night—which gives Scrooge a chance to celebrate Christmas properly. It also affirms Dickens' work as a supernatural novella.

"EH?" returned the boy, with all his might of wonder.

"What's to-day, my fine fellow?" said Scrooge.

"To-day!" replied the boy. "Why, CHRISTMAS DAY."

"It's Christmas Day!" said Scrooge to himself. "I haven't missed it. The Spirits have done it all in one night. They can do anything they like. Of course they can. Of course they can. Hallo, my fine fellow!"

"Hallo!" returned the boy.

"Do you know the Poulterer's, in the next street but one, at the corner?" Scrooge inquired.

"I should hope I did," replied the lad.

"An intelligent boy!" said Scrooge. "A remarkable boy! Do you know whether they've sold the prize Turkey that was hanging up there?—Not the little prize Turkey: the big one?"

"What, the one as big as me?" returned the boy.

"What a delightful boy!" said Scrooge. "It's a pleasure to talk to him. Yes, my buck!"

"It's hanging there now," replied the boy.

"Is it?" said Scrooge. "Go and buy it."

"Walk-ER!" exclaimed the boy.

"No, no," said Scrooge, "I am in earnest. Go and buy it, and tell 'em to bring it here, that I may give them the direction where to take it. Come back with the man, and I'll give you a shilling. Come back with him in less than five minutes and I'll give you half-a-crown!"

The boy was off like a shot. He must have had a steady hand at a trigger who could have got a shot off half so fast.

"I'll send it to Bob Cratchit's!" whispered Scrooge, rubbing his hands, and splitting with a laugh. "He sha'n't know who sends it. It's twice the size of Tiny Tim. Joe Miller never made such a joke as sending it to Bob's will be!"

The hand in which he wrote the address was not a steady one, but write it he did, somehow, and went down-stairs to open the street door, ready for the coming of the poulterer's man. As he stood there, waiting his arrival, the knocker caught his eye.



A turkey was considered a luxury that only wealthy people could afford. It was much more expensive than goose, which is why the Cratchits hope that their children will taste a turkey one day.

Scrooge is spending his money freely, and handing out tips, which would have been unthinkable at the beginning of the novella.



Why do you think Scrooge doesn't want the Cratchits to know who the turkey was from?



Scrooge is grateful for the lessons he has learnt, and vows to never forget them.

"I shall love it, as long as I live!" cried Scrooge, patting it with his hand. "I scarcely ever looked at it before. What an honest expression it has in its face! It's a wonderful knocker!—Here's the Turkey! Hallo! Whoop! How are you! Merry Christmas!"

It was a Turkey! He never could have stood upon his legs, that bird. He would have snapped 'em short off in a minute, like sticks of sealing-wax.

Scrooge's hand is shaking from excitement and anticipation about the changes he wants to make.

"Why, it's impossible to carry that to Camden Town," said Scrooge. "You must have a cab."

The chuckle with which he said this, and the chuckle with which he paid for the Turkey, and the chuckle with which he paid for the cab, and the chuckle with which he recompensed the boy, were only to be exceeded by the chuckle with which he sat down breathless in his chair again, and chuckled till he cried.

Shaving was not an easy task, for his hand continued to shake very much; and shaving requires attention, even when you don't dance while you are at it. But if he had cut the end of his nose off, he would have put a piece of sticking-plaister over it, and been quite satisfied.

He dressed himself "all in his best," and at last got out into the streets. The people were by this time pouring forth, as he had seen them with the Ghost of Christmas Present; and walking with his hands behind him, Scrooge regarded every one with a delighted smile. He looked so irresistibly pleasant, in a word, that three or four good-humoured fellows said, "Good morning, sir! A merry Christmas to you!" And Scrooge said often afterwards, that of all the blithe sounds he had ever heard, those were the blithest in his ears.

He had not gone far, when coming on towards him he beheld the portly gentleman, who had walked into his counting-house the day before, and said, "Scrooge and Marley's, I believe?" It sent a pang across his heart to think how this old gentleman would look upon him when they met; but he knew what path lay straight before him, and he took it.

"My dear sir," said Scrooge, quickening his pace, and taking the old gentleman by both his hands. "How do you do? I hope you succeeded yesterday. It was very kind of you. A merry Christmas to you, sir!"

"Mr. Scrooge?"

"Yes," said Scrooge. "That is my name, and I fear it may not be pleasant to you. Allow me to ask your pardon." And will you have the goodness"—here Scrooge whispered in his ear.

"Lord bless me!" cried the gentleman, as if his breath were taken away. "My dear Mr. Scrooge, are you serious?"

"If you please," said Scrooge. "Not a farthing less. A great many back-payments are included in it, I assure you. Will you do me that favour?"

"My dear sir," said the other, shaking hands with him. "I don't know what to say to such munifi—"

"Don't say anything, please," retorted Scrooge. "Come and see me. Will you come and see me?"

"I will!" cried the old gentleman. And it was clear he meant to do it.

"Thank'ee," said Scrooge. "I am much obliged to you. I thank you fifty times. Bless you!"

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. In the afternoon he turned his steps towards his nephew's house.



Find a quotation from a different part of the novel that shows Scrooge in direct contrast to this man we see in Stave 5.

He passed the door a dozen times, before he had the courage to go up and knock. But he made a dash, and did it:

"Is your master at home, my dear?" said Scrooge to the girl. Nice girl! Very.

"Yes, sir."

"Where is he, my love?" said Scrooge.

"He's in the dining-room, sir, along with mistress. I'll show you up-stairs, if you please."

"Thank'ee. He knows me," said Scrooge, with his hand already on the dining-room lock. "I'll go in here, my dear."

He turned it gently, and sidled his face in, round the door. They were looking at the table (which was spread out in great array); for these young housekeepers are always nervous on such points, and like to see that everything is right.

"Fred!" said Scrooge.

Dear heart alive, how his niece by marriage started! Scrooge had forgotten, for the moment, about her sitting in the corner with the footstool, or he wouldn't have done it, on any account.

"Why bless my soul!" cried Fred, "who's that?"

"It's I. Your uncle Scrooge. I have come to dinner. Will you let me in, Fred?"

Let him in! It is a mercy he didn't shake his arm off. He was at home in five minutes. Nothing could be heartier. His niece looked just the same. So did Topper when *he* came. So did the plump sister when *she* came. So did every one when *they* came. Wonderful party, wonderful games, wonderful unanimity, won-der-ful happiness!

But he was early at the office next morning. Oh, he was early there. If he could only be there first, and catch Bob Cratchit coming late! That was the thing he had set his heart upon.

And he did it; yes, he did! The clock struck nine. No Bob. A quarter past. No Bob. He was full eighteen minutes and a half behind his time. Scrooge sat with his door wide open, that he might see him come into the Tank.

His hat was off, before he opened the door; his comforter too. He was on his stool in a jiffy; driving away with his pen, as if he were trying to overtake nine o'clock.

"Hallo!" growled Scrooge, in his accustomed voice, as near as he could feign it. "What do you mean by coming here at this time of day?"

"I am very sorry, sir," said Bob. "I *am* behind my time."

"You are?" repeated Scrooge. "Yes. I think you are. Step this way, sir, if you please."

"It's only once a year, sir," pleaded Bob, appearing from the Tank. "It shall not be repeated. I was making rather merry yesterday, sir."

"Now, I'll tell you what, my friend," said Scrooge, "I am not going to stand this sort of thing any longer. And therefore," he continued, leaping from his stool, and giving Bob such a dig in the waistcoat that he staggered back into the Tank again; "and therefore I am about to raise your salary!"

Scrooge hopes to enjoy Christmas Day with his nephew Fred—the same jolly party he saw with the Spirit of Christmas Present.

On the day after Christmas Day, Bob Cratchit returns to work. Scrooge at first pretends to have returned to his old ways and is angry with Bob for turning up to work late. He then astonishes his employee by giving a pay rise and very much enjoys having played this prank on Bob!

Bob thinks he is hearing things and that Scrooge has gone mad. This adds to the mood of comedy and celebration in the final stave; a contrast to stave four which was full of horror, tension and moral lessons.

Bob trembled, and got a little nearer to the ruler. He had a momentary idea of knocking Scrooge down with it, holding him, and calling to the people in the court for help and a strait-waistcoat.

"A merry Christmas, Bob!" said Scrooge, with an earnestness that could not be mistaken, as he clapped him on the back. "A merrier Christmas, Bob, my good fellow, than I have given you, for many a year!" I'll raise your salary, and endeavour to assist your struggling family, and we will discuss your affairs this very afternoon, over a Christmas bowl of smoking bishop, Bob! Make up the fires, and buy another coal-scuttle before you dot another i, Bob Cratchit!"

This is a huge contrast to Scrooge's former Christmas catchphrase of "Bah humbug!"

Scrooge encouraging Bob to put more coal on the fire to keep him warm is significant; at the beginning of the novella, the reader is told that Scrooge rarely allowed Bob to have a fire in the office, even when it was freezing cold.

Scrooge was better than his word. He did it all, and infinitely more; and to Tiny Tim, who did NOT die, he was a second father. He became as good a friend, as good a master, and as good a man, as the good old city knew, or any other good old city, town, or borough, in the good old world. Some people laughed to see the alteration in him, but he let them laugh, and little heeded them; for he was wise enough to know that nothing ever happened on this globe, for good, at which some people did not have their fill of laughter in the outset; and knowing that such as these would be blind anyway, he thought it quite as well that they should wrinkle up their eyes in grins, as have the malady in less attractive forms. His own heart laughed: and that was quite enough for him.

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. May that be truly said of us, and all of us! And so, as Tiny Tim observed, God bless Us, Every One!

Dickens ends his novella by emphasising that Scrooge genuinely made a change and became a better, happier, more thoughtful man after his encounter with the Spirits. He wanted to give his readers a message of hope—that such transformations are possible.

## Questions to consider at the end of Stave Five

1. At the start of Stave 5, why do you think Scrooge is so happy?
2. What lesson(s) does Scrooge learn?
3. What lesson(s) do you think impacted Scrooge the most? Why do you think this?
4. Scrooge visits Fred on Christmas Day. Were you surprised that Fred welcomed him? Why/why not?
5. Do you think Dickens' message about social responsibility is clear by the end of the novella?
6. Do you believe Scrooge could really change his fate by becoming a better person, or has the damage already been done through his years of greed, selfishness and cruelty?
7. The story is narrated by Charles Dickens, talking about his characters in third person. Do you think this is an effective way to tell a story with a moral? Why/why not?
8. If you could re-write *A Christmas Carol* from a first person perspective, what character would you choose and why?

## Key Quotations from Stave Five

1. [Scrooge to the charity man] "That is my name, and I fear it may not be pleasant to you. Allow me to ask your pardon."
2. "...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."
3. [Scrooge to Bob Cratchit] "...and therefore I am about to raise your salary!"
4. "A merry Christmas, Bob!" said Scrooge, with an earnestness that could not be mistaken, as he clapped him on the back. 'A merrier Christmas, Bob, my good fellow, than I have given you, for many a year!'"
5. "Scrooge was better than his word. He did it all, and infinitely more;"
6. "He became as good a friend, as good a master, and as good a man, as the good old city knew."



Top Tip: Experiment with ways you could regularly revise these quotations, and see what method works best for you. Some ideas you could try:

- Write out the quotations over and over again;
- Write each quote on a flashcard and get someone to test you;
- Draw a picture that you think represents each quotation and revise the pictures—this is called dual coding;
- Record yourself reciting the quotations and listen to them repeatedly.

## Glossary for Stave Five

1. **Abstinence**—the practice of restraining oneself from indulg-ing in something;
2. **Coal-scuttle**—a metal container with a sloping lid used to carry coal;
3. **Endeavour**—try hard to do or achieve something;
4. **Illustrious**—well known, respected and admired for past achievements;
5. **In a jiffy**—an informal term for doing something quickly;
6. **Laocoon**—a figure from Greek mythology who is portrayed in art as being attacked by serpents—here it means that Scrooge was struggling to put on his stockings;
7. **Malady**—a disease or ailment;
8. **Poulterer**—a person who sells poultry (for example chickens, turkey, geese);
9. **Smoking bishop**—mulled wine;
10. **Strait-waistcoat**—a garment with long sleeves which can be tied together - once used to confine the arms of violent or mentally disturbed prisoners and patients;
11. **Unanimity**—agreement by all people involved.

Top Tip: It is useful to learn new vocabulary regularly. Not only will it help you understand the novella, it also gives you more tools to use when it comes to your own writing. A good way to learn new words is to try and put them in a sentence