AQA English Literature GCSE

A Christmas Carol: Character Profile
Tiny Tim

Character Summary

Tiny Tim, Bob Cratchit's disabled son, is a minor but significant character as he fulfills important roles within the novella.

Dickens uses his character to highlight the transformation of Scrooge, which is **central** to the narrative. When Bob proposes a toast to Scrooge on Christmas Day **"Tiny Tim drank it last of all"** and **"didn't care twopence for it"** which highlights his dislike towards his father's boss. However, following Scrooge's **reparations**, he becomes a **"second father"** to Tiny Tim, epitomising his character development (see 'Character profile: Ebenezer Scrooge').

It is also interesting to note that Dickens was a strong advocate for the poor in London and so it could be argued that he intended to create a **sympathetic embodiment** of the suffering of children through the character of Tiny Tim. His character allows Dickens' to engage with the reader's emotions and so **catalyse social change**. Dickens achieves this presentation by carefully constructing his descriptions of Tiny Tim: he

https://muppet.fandom.com/wiki/Tiny_Tim_Cratchit

presents him to be **"as good as gold"**, emphasising his **good nature** in order to appeal to the reader. This is built on by his heartbreaking description of Tim **"feebly"** crying **"Hurrah!"** on Christmas day in an attempt to join in with the festivities, establishing a sense of **pathos** (something which causes sadness or pity) about his character.

Key Themes

Poverty
Dicken's explores the **theme of poverty** through Tiny Tim by idealising his character, presenting him as hopeful and grateful despite the distressing situation he is in. He also presents this theme by exploring the relationship between Tiny Tim and Scrooge, highlighting to the reader in an **allegorical manner** (a metaphor where a character or event is used to convey a broader message about the real world) that the rich have a duty towards the lower classes.

Class tensions
The relationship between Scrooge and Tiny Tim could be interpreted as **symbolic of the connection between the upper and lower class**, a reading which is synonymous with Dickens' overarching narrative surrounding **social responsibility**. When Scrooge is ignorant of the plight of the lower class, dismissing them as simply **"the surplus population"**, Tiny Tim's tragic death follows. However, when Scrooge becomes aware of his greater social responsibility, he becomes a **"second father"** to Tim and this future is averted. It is interesting to note that Dickens presents

this relationship as **mutually beneficial**, as Scrooge regrets not having children. Indeed, he weeps as he wonders what it would have been like for a child who ***"might have called him father"*** . This longing is satisfied through his relationship with Tiny Tim.

Relationships

- **Bob Cratchit:** Tiny Tim's relationship with Bob is another example of the **pathos** which surrounds his character, particularly in the aftermath of Tim's death. The **poignant image** of Bob Cratchit walking ***"slower"*** than he used to due to the absence of ***"Tiny Tim upon his shoulder"*** evokes pity from the reader and establishes a sombre tone to the remainder of the stave. This may perhaps be because Tiny Tim **personifies innocence**, and so his death is perceived as a **loss of innocence** from the novella. Therefore, when it is revealed in the final stave that Tiny Tim ***"did not die"*** the reader most likely feels relief, as this acts as a **restoration of order** within the novella.

http://www.victorianweb.org/art/illustration/copping/26.html

Key Quotes

- ***"God bless us, Every one!"***
  The **religious focus** of Tiny Tim's statement presents him as an exemplary child who **embodies the spirit of Christmas**. This is heightened by the phrase ***"every one"*** which highlights that he is compassionate and caring, both of these are traits which further the endearing nature of his character. Dickens quotes this line for the final words of the novella, attributing a sense of importance to his character and leaving the reader with the image of Tiny Tim as a **symbol of hope** and the positive outcomes which can be achieved through both personal and social reform.

- ***"'My little, little child' cried Bob. 'My Little child!'"***
  Dickens uses **epimone** (the repetition of a word or phrase to emphasise a point) in order to further the **frail** and **weak characterisation** of Tiny Tim. This causes the reader to **sympathise** more with the situation as they realise the tragic nature of the death of a child. The reader understands the strong emotions Bob must be feeling, as he is at a loss for words and can describe Tim as nothing but ***"little"***. The term connotes ideas of innocence and helplessness, furthering the injustice of the situation.

- ***"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."***
  This allusion to Jesus highlights Tiny Tim's role as a **moral compass** within the text. He acts as a Dickens' **mouthpiece of goodness**, similar to how Jesus acted as God's messenger to impart the importance of morality to humanity. This phrase also emphasises the Christmas message of tolerance and hope.