

# AQA English Literature GCSE

## A Christmas Carol Overview of Text

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## Overview of the Novella

### Brief Overview

Dickens' 'A Christmas Carol' follows the journey of Ebenezer Scrooge's redemption from a miserly, **misanthropic** (someone who dislikes other people) businessman to a man who truly appreciated the spirit of Christmas and the value of helping those around him.

Dickens achieves this **metamorphosis** (change) through the use of **supernatural phantom figures** which guide Scrooge towards the right path. He is first visited by his like-minded business partner Jacob Marley who warns him that three more ghosts will visit him, conveniently outlining the plot so the reader knows what to expect. He also acts as a warning to Scrooge, showing that if he doesn't change his ways he too will end up in "**chains**".

Scrooge is then visited by three Spirits in succession: the Ghost of Christmas Past; the Ghost of Christmas Present and the Ghost of Christmas Yet To Come. Each of the Ghosts show Scrooge scenes from his past; the present events on Christmas day and Scrooge's future respectively. In doing so, Scrooge is taught the value of reflecting on himself and impacting the lives of those around him, in order to live a fulfilled life and die with respect.

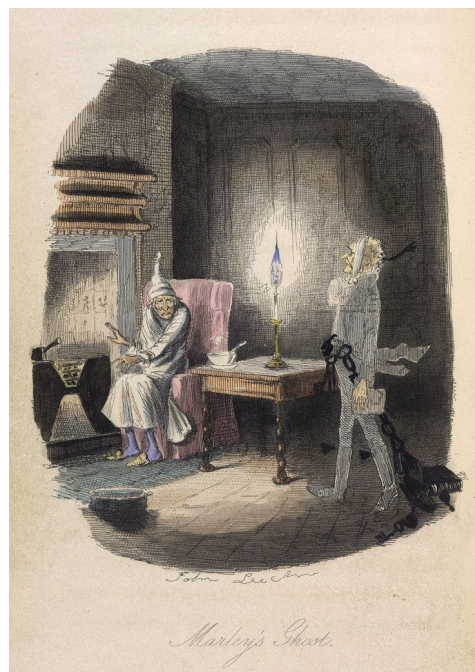
The novella ends on a positive note, describing the change in Scrooge's behaviour and offering a final **didactic message** (moral message intended to teach) - instead of focusing on wealth and worldly affairs readers should observe true Christmas spirit all year round by being compassionate towards those around them, ultimately leading to happiness and fulfilment.

### In-Depth Overview

A Christmas Carol is a **novella** by Charles Dickens which tells the story of Ebenezer Scrooge's journey of **redemption** from a miserly businessman who despises Christmas and is disliked by all those around him, even the "**blindmen's dogs**". We see his character develop from a "**covetous old sinner**" into an individual who was "**as good a man as the good old city knew**". This change is catalysed by the **supernatural elements** and **religious undertones** within the novella.

#### Stave one

Dickens first introduces the Ghost of Jacob Marley, Scrooge's old business partner, who warns a shocked and sceptical Scrooge that three more spirits will come to visit him. He reveals that this is a warning, so that Scrooge can escape the terrible suffering that Marley is facing in the afterlife.



### Stave two

A surprised and fearful Scrooge is then visited by the Ghost of Christmas Past who takes him to his old school. Here, he watches himself as a lonely schoolboy and becomes excited over fictional characters such as “**Ali Baba**” and “**Robin Crusoe**”. Scrooge begins to pity himself when he watches his sister Fan (Fanny) enter the room and kiss him, asking him to come home for Christmas. It is revealed that Fan had died some years later, leaving behind a child. This child, Fred, is seemingly Scrooge’s only surviving family member.

They then visit “**old Fezziwig**” Scrooge’s employer when he was an apprentice as a young man. Scrooge watches a Christmas party that Fezziwig has hosted which was celebratory but not expensive, exploring themes surrounding **materialism and wealth**.

The Spirit moves on, taking Scrooge to witness an exchange between himself and his once fiancée, Belle. Their relationship is breaking down as Belle complains that “**another idol has displaced**” her. She feels as though Scrooge is only interested in money and **prioritises this over their relationship**. As a result, she declares that Scrooge is released from their marriage contract and she leaves him.

Scrooge is evidently disturbed after witnessing this event but the Spirit continues by showing him another scene in which Belle is happily married to another man with a daughter and a number of other children. This causes Scrooge to cry and wonder what his life could have been like if he had married Belle. He becomes overcome with emotion and tells the Spectre to leave him alone, eventually having a physical struggle which ends with Scrooge falling asleep due to an “**irresistible drowsiness**”. This implies that the Spirit had won the power struggle through supernatural force, while also conveying to the reader that Scrooge has not changed enough as a character – his journey is far from complete.

### Stave three

He is then visited by the Ghost of Christmas Present, who begins by showing him scenes of Christmas spirit in the city streets on Christmas morning. Following this, Scrooge is taken to the Cratchit’s house, where he watches their family merrily celebrate Christmas together despite their financial situation. Bob Cratchit, Scrooge’s clerk, has a young, disabled son called Tiny Tim whose **endearing nature** causes Scrooge to begin caring for him. At the end of the meal, Bob proposes a toast to Scrooge despite his wife’s distaste as she makes it clear that she believes Scrooge is an “**odious, stingy, hard, unfeeling man**”.

The Ghost then takes Scrooge to his nephew’s house, where his family is gathering for Christmas. Scrooge enjoys the party and avidly takes part, causing him to realise that he is missing out by distancing himself from his family. The accumulation of these scenes cause him to be overwhelmed with feelings of



**regret.** After the party, he notices that the Spirit has started to age. Dickens reveals that the Spirit's life will end at midnight, perhaps to symbolise the **fleeting nature of the present**. This, in addition to Scrooge's regret, conveys the idea that people should use the time that they have while they still can.

Before the Spirit leaves, Scrooge notices two child-like creatures clinging at its feet. The Spirit reveals that the boy is **"Ignorance"** and the girl is **"Want"**, warning Scrooge to beware of them both as they will cause **"doom"** not just to himself but **also to the rest of society**.

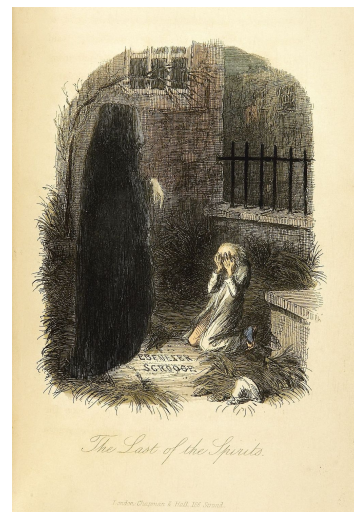
#### Stave four

As the bell outside struck twelve, the Spirit disappears and a **"solemn Phantom"** approaches Scrooge – the Ghost of Christmas Yet To Come. The new Spirit doesn't speak to Scrooge, unlike his predecessors, but shows Scrooge a number of related scenes in the future. First, Scrooge listens to a conversation amongst important businessmen. They discuss the death of an unnamed individual, although it seems as though they care very little.

He is then taken to an area of the city with **"bad repute"** where three people – a charwoman, laundress, and an undertaker's man - have stolen things from the dead man. It becomes apparent that they have brought these goods to a pawn shop in order to sell. Scrooge is disgusted to see their lack of remorse as they feel **justified** in stealing from the man because he was **"wicked"** and selfish.

The Spirit continues by taking him to see the eponymous man. His body lay on a bed, covered by a sheet but completely **isolated** and uncared for. Scrooge becomes restless and asks to leave so the Spirit takes him to another scene. Here, he sees a man and a woman secretly **rejoiced** by the death as they have more time to pay back their debts.

Scrooge tells the Spirit to show him some empathetic, more sensitive reactions to death. He says that if he does not see some **"tenderness connected with a death"** the abandoned corpse he saw will haunt him forever. The Spirit agrees and takes him to the Cratchit's house. Scrooge witnesses the family sorrowful but in good spirits following Tiny Tim's death. This juxtaposing attitude highlights that despite his significantly shorter life, Tiny Tim has a greater impact on the world around him – emphasising the importance of **social responsibility**. Finally, the Spirit takes him to the grave of the man. Scrooge realises that he was witnessing his own future when he sees his name on the gravestone. This causes him to **repent** and **lament his fate**, physically struggling with the Spirit until it collapses and **"dwindled down"** back into a bedpost.



#### Stave five

Scrooge wakes up in time for Christmas day and is **symbolically reborn** as a new individual who appreciates Christmas-time and the value of helping those around him. He vows to change his ways and the narrator reveals that he was **"better than his word"** leaving the reader with a



number of **didactic messages** – the most prominent being that materialism and wealth do not lead to happiness and instead we should focus on friends, family and helping the society around us.

## The Narrator

The narrator of 'A Christmas Carol' can be classified as an '**intrusive narrator**'. This is because in addition to relaying the events of the narrative he also interrupts and offers further commentary, often to add to the overall significance of Dickens' message.

### Conversational tone

The narrator adopts a **conversational tone** which is particularly apparent in the opening of the novella. He interrupts the introduction with the exclamation "**Mind!**" and tells the reader that he feels as though the phrase "**Marley was as dead as a door-nail**" was not fitting as he is "**inclined**" to "**regard a coffin-nail as the deadest piece of ironmongery in the trade**". This seemingly **unnecessary discourse** presents the narrator as witty and conversational, allowing him to put the reader at ease and **build a relationship of trust**. This causes them to accept and assume his opinions of the characters and events. If the reader had no trust in the narrator they would not accept the descriptions and events of the novella as true, preventing the narrative from benefiting them.

### Third person limited omniscient narrator

The narrator can equally be described as exhibiting a **third person limited omniscient** narrative voice. This means the novel is mostly written in **third person** (he said, she said etc.); the narrator knows everything (is **omniscient**); but is limited to knowing everything about only the protagonist – Scrooge (**limited**).

By choosing to use an omniscient narrator, Dickens allows the reader to truly understand and explore Scrooge's character as they are aware of his inner thoughts and feelings. This is a **common trope** used in fiction to allow the reader to build a relationship with the protagonist.

What is interesting about Dickens' narrator, however, is that he is **not sympathetic** in his narration about Scrooge. Often, the narrator will write positively about the protagonist so the reader is able to build this **relationship** with them but in the first stave of 'A Christmas Carol' the narration is **relentless** – describing Scrooge as a "**covetous old sinner**" who was as "**hard and sharp as flint**". This may be because Dickens is aiming to emphasise the negative aspects of Scrooge's personality to explore his character development, in some ways **alienating** the reader from his character until the plot develops.

### Direct Address

The narrator is also unusual in that he uses **direct address** which gives the reader the impression that he is talking directly to them. This type of narration makes the reader feel that they are involved in the story. For example, in Stave Two, the narrator says that Scrooge was as close to the Spirit "**as I am now to you, and I am standing in the Spirit at your elbow**". This draws the reader further into the narrative, heightening the effect of the Spirit's visit.



Furthermore, it increases the effect of the **moral message**, as the narrator suggests that he is in the spirit form and exists next to the reader. This may perhaps prompt the reader to think of their own weaknesses and draw parallels between themselves and Scrooge, causing them to benefit more from the lessons that the Spirits teach.

### Authorial voice

Finally, it could certainly be argued that the narrator represents the **authorial voice**. This means that he represents Dickens' own voice in order to **influence** and direct the novella.

- For example, by including the aside about the **“coffin-nail”** Dickens draws even more attention to the fact that Marley is dead, allowing him to firmly establish the theme of the supernatural.
- Furthermore, he makes comments about Fred's laugh, telling the reader to **“introduce”** him to anyone **“more blest in a laugh than Scrooge's nephew”**. This influences the way the reader perceives Fred's character and their ability to **empathise** with him – it makes Fred seem like a real person who is comparable to the people the reader is acquainted with. Once again, this immerses the reader further into the narrative.

## Breakdown of Each Stave

It is interesting to note that the chapters in 'A Christmas Carol' are referred to as 'staves' rather than chapters. In musical notation, a 'stave' is a set of five horizontal lines where music is written. Each line often represents a different musical pitch. It could be said that Dickens chose to do this to keep in line with the novella being a 'carol'. Others argue that it represents the fact that each stave contains its own **narrative arc** and therefore has its own tone and mood.

Having a good understanding of the events within each stave is essential to provide enough textual references within essays as well as relevantly linking the extract to the wider novella – all of which comes under AO1.

### Stave One: Marley's Ghost

- The novella opens with the blunt line **“Marley was dead: to begin with”**. The **clarifying clause ‘to begin with’** introduces the supernatural theme from the offset of the novella. This is because both this, and the title of the stave, cause the reader to anticipate that Marley will appear in the stave as a ghost. In addition to the blunt opener, the narrator **repeats** multiple times that **“Marley was dead”** perhaps to heighten the effect of him returning as a ghost and so clearly establish the theme of the supernatural.
- The plot begins on Christmas Eve in Scrooge's **“counting-house”**. Here, Dickens describes the cold conditions that Bob Cratchit, Scrooge's clerk, is forced to work in,



highlighting the **cruel** way Scrooge runs his business. This gives us insight into Scrooge's character by illustrating how **uncompassionate** he is, rather than simply telling the reader this fact.

- Fred, Scrooge's nephew, enters the shop to wish Scrooge a 'Merry Christmas' and invites him to come and spend Christmas with his family. Scrooge expresses his distaste towards the celebration and sternly refuses the invitation.
- Two "**portly gentlemen**" enter the shop after Fred leaves. They ask Scrooge to donate money for the "**poor and destitute**" but he rudely refuses. He first asks whether there are any "**prisons**" to house the poor (highlighting that he sees **no distinction** between criminals and the working class) and later dismisses them as "**the surplus population**", showing his true lack of care. His refusal to donate money characterises him as a selfish and uncaring person who the reader is unlikely to sympathise with.
- Later, a caroller arrives at Scrooge's door but he is scared away, again emphasising the extent of Scrooge's hatred towards Christmas.
- When it is time to close the shop, Scrooge complains to Bob Cratchit about Christmas being a paid holiday, as he believes it to be unfair. Bob timidly replies that it was "**only once a year**" but Scrooge seems uninterested. Instead, he simply instructs Bob to arrive to work extra early on Boxing day.
- Scrooge eats dinner alone in a "**melancholy tavern**" then leaves to go home. This lack of social interaction emphasises his **isolation**. When he arrives home, he is shocked to see that instead of his usual door knocker Marley's face has appeared on the door. The image suddenly disappears.
- Scrooge cautiously enters his house and thinks he saw a "**locomotive hearse**" go up the stairs. He checked through all the rooms to make sure they were empty before going to bed, highlighting his fear.
- Once satisfied, Scrooge double-locks his door which was "**not his custom**" (again alluding to his fear) and sits down by the low fire to "**take his gruel**". A bell in the room begins to ring, followed by every bell in the house. This is succeeded by the clanking noise of someone "**dragging a heavy chain**" on the ground causing Scrooge to link the strange events to **the supernatural phenomenon of ghosts**.
- Scrooge hears the cellar door open followed by the same clanking noise getting louder as it came up the stairs. Marley's ghost enters the room through the door causing Scrooge to look on in **disbelief**. He doubts the existence of the Ghost and so attempts to rationalise by suggesting that he must simply be hallucinating due to indigestion. Marley becomes angry at this suggestion and raises "**a frightful cry**", causing Scrooge to defensively question what the purpose of his visit is.



- Marley describes the suffering that he is experiencing in the afterlife. He tells Scrooge that this is due to the way he conducted himself during his life, showing him the length of his chains. He then reveals that Scrooge's own chains were just as long seven Christmas Eves ago - so must be even longer now.
- Marley's Ghost then reveals that he has visited Scrooge to warn him of the arrival of three more Ghosts who will give him the chance to avoid the same fate.
- The Spirit then moves backwards towards the window and beckons Scrooge to follow. Scrooge looked out to the scene below and was surprised to see that the air was **"full of phantoms"** who were **"moaning"** and **"wore chains like Marley's Ghost"**. Dickens reveals that Scrooge knew who many of them were and that all of the spirits were miserable, due to the fact that they were **unable to help others** – that is, **"they sought to interfere, for good, in human matters, and had lost the power forever."**
- The spirits fade away and Scrooge closes the window and goes **"straight to bed"**. He falls asleep instantly.

## Stave Two: The First of The Three Spirits

- Scrooge wakes up at midnight despite the fact that he went to bed just after two in the morning. This causes him to become **disoriented** and **confused** - he questions whether something had **"happened to the sun"** and he had actually slept until **"twelve at noon"**.
- Scrooge went to bed again, still confused, and waits for the bell to toll one. When the hour bell tolls a sudden light fills the room and a hand drew aside Scrooge's bed curtains causing him to be face to face with the Ghost of Christmas Past.
- The Ghost had a **"bright clear jet of light"** coming from its head which symbolises ideas of positivity, Christmas spirit and enlightenment. Scrooge **"begged"** the Spirit to cover his light with his **"cap"** causing the Spirit to respond in shock, questioning why Scrooge wanted to put out his light.
- Scrooge asks the Spirit why he has come to visit him, to which the Ghost exclaims **"Your welfare!"**. Scrooge challenges the Spirit, claiming that a good night's rest would have been much better for his 'welfare' than visits from spirits.
- The Spirit, arguably agitated, responds with **"Your reclamation then"** followed by the **imperative "take heed!"**. It is clearly trying to convey to Scrooge that these visits are for his benefit. The Spirit continues to assert his dominance over Scrooge by holding him, albeit **"gently"**, by the arm. It instructs Scrooge to **"Rise!"** and **"walk"** alongside it, again using **imperatives** in its speech to illustrate its authority.
- The Spirit moves towards the window with a worried Scrooge clutching at its robe. Scrooge protests that he is a **"mortal"** and will **"fall"**. The Spirit tells him to touch its hand, and while





it speaks to Scrooge they pass through the wall and end up on **“an open country road”**, illustrating the supernatural ability and power of the Spirit. Dickens reveals that the road was familiar to Scrooge, as it is the area where he grew up and went to school.

- His arrival in the place causes Scrooge to be flooded by emotion and memories he had **“forgotten”**. Dickens implies that Scrooge begins to cry due to his **“trembling”** lip and the **“unusual catching”** in his voice.



- Scrooge and the Spirit walk along the path until they reach the school where the Spirit says that although it is Christmas-time it is not **“quite deserted”**. The Spirit reveals that **“a solitary child, neglected by his friends, is left there still.”** This is not new information to Scrooge as he **“knew it”** and **“sobbed”** in response, implying that these memories are painful. It could be argued that Scrooge’s **release of emotion** suggests that he has been blocking his memories, emphasising the fact that **reflection** is an important part of **self-realisation** – a trait which Scrooge was lacking. This may perhaps have contributed to his **apathetic** and **misanthropic** personality.

- They go into one of the rooms where Scrooge sees his younger self **“intent upon his reading”**. The characters in the book are Scrooge’s only friends at Christmas time and he believes them to be real, telling the Ghost of Christmas Past that Ali Baba **“did come”** to visit him one Christmas time when he was all alone. This **uncharacteristic excitement** from Scrooge is **child-like** and **likable**, marking a change in his personality. This allows readers to begin **empathising** with him.
- These memories prompt Scrooge to start crying, leading to feelings of regret. He tells the Spirit about the boy that came to his door **“singing a Christmas Carol”** and that he regrets not giving him anything.
- The Spirit shows him another Christmas scene, a few years later, in the same place. This time Scrooge watches his younger sister, Fan, come running into the room. She tells him to come home for Christmas as their father is **“much kinder than he used to be”** and gave his permission to bring Scrooge home. Scrooge becomes excited, illustrating that he once loved the festive time.
- Dickens reveals to the reader that Fan has now died but left behind a child – Scrooge’s nephew Fred. We are told that Scrooge **“seemed uneasy in his mind”** highlighting that he has begun to **regret** the way he had dealt with Fred. This reveals that there is some **hope** that he will change his ways.
- Suddenly Scrooge realises that they were at the warehouse where he apprenticed after he had left school. He becomes excited to see his old boss, Fezziwig, who demands that his apprentices should stop working as it is Christmas Eve and they are hosting a party.




- People flood into the warehouse as Dickens describes the celebratory atmosphere of the party. The Ghost comments that the party **“was a small matter”** to make **“these silly folks so full of gratitude”**, prompting Scrooge to come to Fezziwig’s defence. He realises that **“a few pounds”** has the **power** to make people **“happy or unhappy”** and that happiness is **“quite as great as if it cost a fortune”**. This **starkly contrasts** Scrooge’s earlier attitudes towards money as he was described as a miserly and selfish man. Once again this highlights that Scrooge is beginning to change.
- Scrooge stops speaking and again begins to reflect. He wishes he could speak to his clerk – illustrating the beginnings of Scrooge’s regret which is essential if he is to eventually repent.
- The Spirit changes the scene again to a conversation Scrooge has with his fiancée at the time, Belle. She shares her concerns with him, saying that a **“golden” “idol”** has displaced her and that she is willing to **“release”** him from their marriage contract. She says that Scrooge will likely look back on their time together as an **“unprofitable dream”** and she leaves him, encapsulating the idea that Scrooge’s obsession with the material world and money has brought little good for him. This in line with the **biblical teaching: “What good is it for someone to gain the whole world, yet forfeit their soul?” - Mark 8:36**
- Scrooge begs the Spirit to **“show (him) no more”** and take him home, but the Ghost refuses, revealing that there is one final **“shadow”** he must show Scrooge.
- Scrooge and the Spirit see a young girl sitting by a winter fire who looked very similar to his wife, so much so he **“believed it was her”**. He then realises that Belle was in fact sitting *next* to the girl, now a **“comely matron”**. Scrooge first notes the noise of the other children and then their presence, describing their laughter and enjoyment.
- There was a knocking at the door and a man entered the room, presumably Belle’s new husband, **“laden with Christmas toys and presents”**. Scrooge looks on to the scene that followed, wondering what it would have been like if he too had children who **“might have called him father”**. Dickens describes that **“his sight grew very dim indeed”** implying that Scrooge had been brought to tears due to regret, building on the reader’s **sympathy** towards him.
- Belle’s husband tells her that he saw Scrooge earlier that day and comments that he **“sat alone”**. He reveals that he believes Scrooge to be **“quite alone in the world”** exemplifying his **isolation**
- Scrooge, in a **“broken”** voice, commands the Spirit to **“remove”** him from the place. The Spirit first tells him not to put the blame on him, as he is simply showing Scrooge his own past.



- Scrooge becomes more exasperated, again commanding the Spirit to **“remove”** him as he **“cannot bear it”**. He continues by telling the Ghost to **“leave”** him and **“haunt”** him **“no longer”**.
- Scrooge and the Spirit have a **“struggle”** of sorts in which Scrooge tries to push down the Spirit’s cap onto its head but finds it difficult despite no visible resistance. This symbolises the power of both the Spirit and the light it emits. It is important to remember that this light symbolises positivity, Christmas spirit and enlightenment. This suggests that these three things are so powerful that Scrooge cannot destroy them.
- He eventually becomes exhausted and falls asleep due to an **“irresistible drowsiness”**, ending his time with the Ghost of Christmas Past.

### Stave Three: The Second of The Three Spirits

- Scrooge wakes up feeling like he was **“restored to consciousness in the right nick of time”** in order to meet the second Spirit. He opens his own bed curtains and looks around the bed so that he would not be caught by surprise. Dickens reveals that he **“wished to challenge the Spirit”** once again implying a **power struggle** between Scrooge and the Phantoms. This power struggle may suggest that Scrooge still hasn’t changed enough as he does not fully **appreciate** the Spirits and **value** the lessons they will teach him.
 
- The bell strikes One but no spirit appears before Scrooge. He sits in bed waiting despite the fact that a **“ruddy light”** had filled his room, illustrating his **passive nature**. Finally, he realises that the light might have been coming from the next room so he **“shuffled”** towards it. The **reluctant verb “shuffled”** reinforces the idea that Scrooge is not actively pursuing his redemption
- When Scrooge’s hand touches the lock a voice calls his name and commands him to **“enter”**. Dickens writes that Scrooge **“obeyed”**. He enters his room and discovers that it had undergone a surprising **“transformation”**, as it had been elaborately decorated with Christmas decorations and food. This may represent the fact that if Scrooge accepts Christmas spirit into his heart he too will transform.
- The Spirit, a **“jolly giant”**, sits on his couch and tells Scrooge to come in. He uses **imperatives** in his speech which **mirror** the Ghost of Christmas Past. The Spirit tells Scrooge to **“touch”** his robe as he transports him to the Christmas scenes in the street outside. Here, Scrooge observes the general population happy and celebratory on Christmas day.
- Scrooge comments that it is in some ways unjust for shops to be closed on Sunday as it **“deprives”** poor people from their means of making money. The Spirit responds that some religious practices are carried out by people with **ulterior motives** and their actions should be attributed to **“themselves”** and not religion itself, driving forward the idea that religion in its true form is **morally superior**.



- The Ghost takes Scrooge to his Clerk's house and stops to bless the building. This action surprises Scrooge, he notes that Bob Cratchit made only fifteen pounds a week but it was his **"four-roomed"** house that the Spirit chose to bless. This highlights the **dismissive attitude** of the rich towards the poorer members of society. Furthermore, it also serves to convey the idea that the lower class are equal to the rich and are just as likely to receive blessings – religion does not discriminate.
- Scrooge watches the family prepare for Christmas dinner, continuing until Martha, Bob Cratchit's daughter, arrives home from work. The children spot that Bob is returning and so tell Martha to hide. When Bob arrives they pretend that Martha isn't coming home for Christmas, but she did not like to see her father **"disappointed"** so she runs out early to give him a hug.
- Mrs Cratchit asks Bob how Tiny Tim behaved at Church. Bob informs them that he was **"as good as gold"** and that he thinks **"the strangest things"**. He elaborates, saying that Tiny Tim told him that he hoped people would see him, **"a cripple"**, and be reminded of Jesus – the man who **"made lame beggars walk"**. Here Dickens continues his presentation of religious values as **ideal** and **synonymous with goodness**. This is perhaps to closely tie the novella to the religious aspects of Christmas-time.
- Peter and two of the younger Cratchits leave to go and fetch the goose for Christmas dinner. When they return, Scrooge notes that the family respond with such a **"bustle"** anyone would have thought it was an extravagant and expensive bird.



- After dinner Mrs Cratchit brings the pudding out. The narrator asserts that **"nobody said or thought it was a small pudding for a large family"** essentially stipulating that the Cratchits are not ungrateful and instead choose to be thankful rather than complain about their situation. It could be argued that Dickens is presenting the family as an **idealised representation of the lower classes** in order to challenge **widespread prejudice** against the poor.

- The family clear the table together, highlighting their **unity** and **work ethic**. They gather around the hearth so Bob Cratchit could propose a toast. Tiny Tim endearingly finishes Bob's speech with the line: **"God bless us every one!"**. This prompts Scrooge to question the Spirit about the boy's future, highlighting his **developing empathy**.
- The Spirit uses Scrooge's own words against him, saying that if Tiny Tim were to die he had better do it and **"decrease the surplus population"**. This causes Scrooge to become overcome with **"penitence and grief"**, once again furthering his regret and giving the reader the hope that he will change his ways.
- Scrooge **"cast his eyes upon the ground"**, perhaps in shame, but looks up suddenly when he hears his name. Bob Cratchit proposes a toast to Scrooge, referring to him as **"the Founder of the Feast"**. However, Mrs Cratchit does not adopt a similar attitude.



Instead, she **ironically** wishes that Scrooge were in the room so she could **“give him a piece”** of her **“mind”**. Eventually, she concedes to drink for Bob’s sake and for the sake of Christmas Day.

- Dickens details that the children drink the toast after her but it was **“the first of their proceedings which had no heartiness in it”**. He also notes that the mention of Scrooge’s name casts a **“dark shadow”** on the previously celebratory party. This is an effect he has likely caused before but has been unaware of. The fact that Scrooge is concerned about the effect he has had on the gathering also shows that he is beginning to change. It suggests that he is starting to understand why it is important to be an **amiable** person.
- Dickens also describes how the family was not **“handsome”** nor **“well dressed”** but nonetheless they were **“happy”**, **“grateful”** and **“pleased with one another”**, furthering the **idealist view** of the Cratchit family.
- Scrooge and the Spirit leave the Cratchit household and arrive at a **“bleak and deserted moor”**. Scrooge questions the Spirit and discovers that this is **“a place where miners live”**. He discovers that despite their **isolation** they still celebrate Christmas in a **“cheerful”** manner.
- The Spirit then takes Scrooge to sea in order to show him **“two men”** who sat at a **“rough table”** and **“wished each other a Merry Christmas”** despite their loneliness and remote location. This highlights the importance of Christmas and the lengths people go to celebrate it.
- Suddenly Scrooge recognises his nephew’s **“hearty laugh”** and realises that he has been transported from the sea into a room of people who were in the middle of a conversation. Fred tells his family how Scrooge had called Christmas a **“humbug”** prompting them to laugh more.
- The family continues to discuss Scrooge and Fred notes how while he may be very rich he doesn’t do **“any good”** with his money. The women in the family agree with Fred’s wife who follows by saying that she has **“no patience with him”**. However, Fred reveals that he feels **“sorry”** for Scrooge as it is he who is losing out. Therefore, Fred’s good character is highlighted through his ability to **sympathise** with Scrooge rather than simply **dismiss** him.
- After tea the family play some music, causing Scrooge to remember the scenes shown to him by the Ghost of Christmas Past. Dickens writes that this made him **“soften”** and wonder that maybe if he had heard the music earlier he might have **“cultivated the kindness of life”**. This essentially exemplifies his **desire to change**.
- After the music they decide to play some games. Dickens describes this in detail, specifying that Scrooge found himself joining in. They decide to play a game where the family has to guess the person Fred is thinking of. He describes the person as a **“savage animal”** and



one of the family members guesses correctly that he was talking about Scrooge. Instead of becoming angry Dickens writes that Scrooge became **“gay and light of heart”**, marking a change in his personality.

- Scrooge suddenly notices that the Spirit has been growing older as they spent time together. Dickens reveals that the Spirit’s life on Earth will end at midnight, perhaps to symbolise the **fleeting nature of the present**.
- Scrooge then notices two children, a boy and a girl, **“protruding”** from the Spirit’s robe. The Spirit informs Scrooge that the girl is **“Want”** and the boy is **“Ignorance”** - both owned by **“Man”**. The fact that these **“monsters”** cling to the Ghost of Christmas Present may perhaps symbolise how they are currently a great **threat** to man.
- The Spirit tells Scrooge to beware of both of the children. He warns him particularly of the boy, as on his forehead he can see the word **“doom”**. This may perhaps be a lesson for Scrooge as if he remains ignorant of the lessons that the Spirits are trying to teach him he will come to an untimely end. It may also act as a **commentary on society** as while **“want”** can sometimes bring goodness (e.g. if you *want* to help or if Scrooge *wants* to change) ignorance will cause the downfall of society. Therefore, mankind should be wary of it. When Scrooge questions whether there is no **“refuge”** for the children the Spirit uses his words against him, questioning if there are any **“prisons”** or **“workhouses”**.
- As the bell struck Twelve the Ghost disappeared, and a **“solemn Phantom”** approached - the Ghost of Christmas Yet to Come.

#### Stave Four: The Last of The Spirits

- The Phantom slowly approaches Scrooge and stops next to him but does not speak nor move. Instead, it fills Scrooge with a feeling of **“solemn dread”**. Scrooge questions the Spirit regarding its identity but rather than speaking it simply **“pointed onwards with its hand”**. It could be speculated that by choosing to have the final Spirit remain silent, Dickens ensures that Scrooge must come to his own conclusions which forces him to **reflect** on the scenes he witnesses alone. Perhaps this is because if he is to change the desire to do so must come from within himself. It also means that in some ways Scrooge must take control, perhaps to symbolise how it is only he who can control his future.
- Dickens reveals that while Scrooge was **“well used to ghostly company by this time”** he **“feared”** the Ghost of Christmas Yet to Come more than its predecessors. Despite this fear, he admits that he is willing to spend time with the Spirit as he knows he will learn a valuable lesson from their time together.



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- The Spirit first takes Scrooge to a group of businessmen who are discussing the death of an unnamed man. They seem to care **very little** as Dickens writes that one of the men let out a **“yawn”** while speaking. Furthermore, some of the men comment that they will only attend the funeral if **“lunch is provided”**. Scrooge was familiar with the men and looked to the Spirit for an explanation of the events but received none.
- The Phantom carried on moving forward and pointed to two more men having a conversation. Scrooge recognises these men as important and wealthy business people. He notes that he had always tried to make a good impression on them. The men also seemed to be discussing the man who had died but only briefly as they quickly move on to talking about the weather. Their **lack of care** is highlighted by the fact that Scrooge views the conversation as **“trivial”** and is surprised that the Spirit had shown it to him.
- Dickens uses **dramatic irony** here as Scrooge begins to wonder who the dead man could be, despite the fact that it is clear to the reader that the man must be Scrooge himself. In some ways this **draws parallels** between the Ghost of Christmas Yet to Come and the reader as they are both silent and unable to help Scrooge – he must come to the realisation of his own accord.
- The Spirit then takes Scrooge to an **“obscure”** part of the town which had a bad reputation. Here they watch two women and a man enter a pawn shop carrying heavy bundles. They enter one after each other and laugh at the coincidence as it is implied that the three people knew each other and had come from the same place. **“Old Joe”**, the owner of the shop, tells them to come into the parlour and show him what they had brought so he could pay them for their items.
- The three discuss the **morality** of their actions, deciding that they were completely **justified** as they had to find some way of taking care of themselves. They claim that the person that they had taken the items from was selfish and made sure to take care of *himself*, rationalising their actions. It becomes apparent that the items they had brought had been stolen from the same dead man and that the three people were individuals who worked for him.
- One of the women justifies her actions further, stating that if the man wanted to keep his things after he was dead he should have been nicer to people while he was alive. If he did so, someone would have looked after his body – highlighting that the way you treat people in life has long-lasting **consequences**.



- The man produces his bundle first and receives some money for the items he took: **“a seal, a pencil case some sleeve buttons and an inexpensive broach”**. One of the women went next and shows that she had taken **“sheets, towels, some spoons, a pair of sugar tongs and some boots”**. Finally, the last woman reveals that she had taken the man’s **“bed-curtains”** while his body still lay on the bed. She then goes




on to say that she had also stolen the “**blankets**” from his body as well as his “**shirt**”, which she had taken off from the corpse herself.

- Scrooge listens to this discussion **in horror** as he realises the disrespect with which they had treated the dead man’s body. He notes that the events could easily be his own future but has not realised the truth in his words: he still hasn’t recognised the dead man to be himself.
- The scene suddenly changes and Scrooge finds himself standing close to a “**bare, uncurtained bed**” on which the corpse lay, under a sheet. The Phantom points its hand to the man’s head which was only lightly covered by the sheet so could easily have been exposed. Dickens reveals that Scrooge wants to remove the sheet to discover the identity of the man but is **powerless** to do so.
- Scrooge starts to think about the isolation of the man and the fact that there was no one to look after him following his death. This allows him to come to an important conclusion about his own life, perhaps prompting him to change his ways of dealing with other people.
- Scrooge asks the Spirit if they can leave the place but the Ghost still pointed at the corpse’s head. Scrooge admits to the Spirit that he wants to remove the sheet but can’t. This may suggest that Scrooge should be able to remove the sheet, as the Ghost expects him to do so, but is **unwilling** or **not ready** to. Perhaps this is because he hasn’t fully connected himself with the dead man, or perhaps he still has more lessons to learn.
- Scrooge asks the Phantom to show him any person who feels some kind of emotion connected with the man’s death. The Spirit shows him a mother and her children waiting in a room. The woman’s husband arrives and informs her of the man’s death. This causes them both to become secretly thankful as they owed the man money and would now have longer to pay back their debt. Furthermore, the man asserts that no one who took over the business could be as “**merciless**” as the man who had died. Dickens stipulates that the only emotion the Spirit could show Scrooge was one of “**pleasure**”.
- Scrooge then asks the Spirit to show him a better scene connected with death or the image of the dead body alone in the room would haunt him forever. The Spirit takes him through the streets to Bob Cratchit’s house. During the journey Scrooge searches for a glimpse of his future self, heightening the **tension** of the stave through Dickens’ use of **dramatic irony**.
- When they arrived at the Cratchit house, Mrs Cratchit and the children were sitting around the fire, uncharacteristically quiet. Scrooge hears Peter reading from the Bible (presumably, as the narrator simply calls it “**a book**”) but he abruptly stops, perhaps due to the emotions associated with the verse: “**And He took a child, and set him in the midst of them**”.
- Mrs Cratchit is sewing clothes but puts her work down, claiming that the colour hurts her eyes. Although the text does not clarify, it can be assumed that they are sewing black mourning clothes as Scrooge suddenly realises that Tiny Tim has died.





- Bob Cratchit arrives home and tells them that Tiny Tim's grave was very green and that the work would be finished before Sunday. This is important to the family, as Bob promised his son that he would visit on Sundays.
  - Bob went upstairs to where Tiny Tim's body lay. This room **starkly contrasts** the previous one as it was "**lighted cheerfully**" and was filled with Christmas decorations. A chair was placed beside the bed which looked as though someone had just been sitting in it, implying that Tiny Tim was not left alone. Bob sits down and kisses his child's face, making peace with what has happened. After spending some time with his son, he returns downstairs in a better mood.
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- Bob tells his family about the kindness of Fred, who gave him his card in case the family needed any help following Tiny Tim's passing. Bob is touched by the offer rather than the prospect of any help in particular. Bob also reveals that he wouldn't be surprised if Fred managed to get Peter some better work, much to the families delight. This in some ways highlights how the smallest of actions can have an impressive effect on other people and so the value of being compassionate should not be dismissed.
  - Bob ends by telling the family that they will never forget Tiny Tim, and should not fight with each other in the memory of his patient and mild nature. The family kisses and shake hands with each other as Bob announces that he is "**happy**", despite the events which have passed. This happiness is different to the "**pleasure**" felt by the death of the previous man, as it connotes ideas of peace and love rather than relief.
  - Scrooge tells the Spirit that he can sense that their time is growing short. His curiosity is piqued, so he asks about the identity of the dead man. The Spirit leads him past his house, causing Scrooge to try and go inside to have a look at his future-self. However, the Spirit's hand points away. Scrooge quickly runs to the window of his office and looks inside, noticing that it was still an office but was not *his* office as the furniture had changed and someone else was working inside. The Phantom's hand remains unmoved, pointing in a different direction.
  - They carry on walking until they reached a churchyard where the man was buried. Scrooge notes that it was a "**worthy**" place as the area was walled by houses and overrun with grass and weeds. The fact that Scrooge recognises the **justice** of the situation is important as it highlights that he can accept the error of his ways and so ensures that he will be able to change himself for the better.
  - The Spirit stops by the graves and pointed down at one of them, causing Scrooge to re-evaluate his perception of the Spirit. This is because although its physical appearance hasn't changed Scrooge saw "**a new meaning in its solemn shape**", perhaps linking the Spirit with a bringer of death.



- Before coming closer to the gravestone Scrooge asks the Spirit whether the events which have occurred are definite or if they can be changed. This suggests that he knows the grave is his but is afraid to confirm his suspicions. The Ghost did not move nor respond - its hand remains pointing at the grave.
- Scrooge makes the statement that your actions foreshadow a certain ending, but if you change your actions the ending will change too. It is clear that he has finally accepted the idea that his **actions have consequences** – a recurrent theme within the novella. He begs the Spirit to tell him that these words apply to his current situation too, but the Spirit remains unmoved.
- Eventually, Scrooge reads his own name on the gravestone **“trembling as he went”**. This is because he realises that he had indeed been the man all along. Scrooge began to **repent** and **lament**, begging the Spirit to reassure him that he will be able to change these events if he alters his actions.
- Scrooge **resolves to change**, promising that he will honour Christmas and the lessons that the Spirits have taught him. He catches the hand of the Spirit which tries to free itself, but this time Dickens outlines that Scrooge was stronger and **“detained”** it. This highlights how, unlike with the previous two Ghosts, Scrooge has **more control** over the Ghost of Christmas Yet to Come. Perhaps this is to mirror the fact that Scrooge has control over his future and, if he changes, he will be able to alter the events which he has been shown.
- Scrooge held his hands up in one last prayer as the Spirit shrunk down and turned into his bedpost, marking the end of his time with the three Spirits.

### Stave Five: The End of It

- Scrooge looks around his room, happy that there is still time for him to amend his ways and prevent the future he saw from taking place.
- He runs to the window in his excitement and asks one of the boys on the street what day it is. The boy says it's **“Christmas Day** and Scrooge is surprised as the Spirits had somehow visited him all in one night. This alludes to the theme of time.
- Scrooge asks the boy to go and buy the prize turkey hanging up in the Poulters, and that if he did it fast enough he would give him a tip of half-a-crown. He decides to send the turkey to Bob Cratchit's house anonymously, highlighting his newly-found **altruistic attitude**.
- Scrooge shaves and puts on his best clothes to go out. While walking in the street he came across one of portly gentlemen who had come into his shop to ask for donations in Stave One. He whispers to the man the amount of money he would now like to donate, a figure which the narrator does not disclose to the reader (perhaps to highlight Scrooge's **humble attitude** or maybe because any figure Dickens could have quoted would not outweigh the



reader's own imagination). This was much to the man's shock and delight. Scrooge asks for nothing in return except that the man comes to visit him on occasion.

- Scrooge arrives at his destination, which remains unknown to the reader. He paces near the door before he built up the courage to knock. When he does it is revealed he has come to Fred's house, startling both the people inside and perhaps the reader too. Scrooge stays for the night and has a wonderful time, mending his relationship with his family.
- The next morning Scrooge makes sure to wake up early in order to get to the office before Bob Cratchit, hoping he would catch him walking in late. When Bob walks in, inevitably late, Scrooge reprimands him for it, causing Bob to apologise. In response, Scrooge says he won't stand for this behaviour and so will raise Bob's salary – catching him by surprise. Scrooge tells him that he will try his best to assist his family and that they can discuss Bob's affairs over lunch. He finishes by telling him to **“buy another coal-scuttle”** for the fire before he continues working. This attitude starkly contrasts Scrooge's behaviour in Stave One and so acts as a strong example of his **character development**. This exemplifies the effect the Spirits have had on his attitude.
- Dickens ends the novella by informing the reader that Scrooge lived up to his word and that Tiny Tim **“did not die”**, suggesting that the future Scrooge had seen will not come into effect. This leaves the reader with an ultimate sense of hope. Scrooge has no more interactions with the Spirits but lives according to the lessons that they had taught him. The final lines of the novella recall Tiny Tim's sentiment for God to bless them – **“God bless Us, Every One!”**.

