

OCR English Literature GCSE

A Christmas Carol: Character Profile

Mr Fezziwig

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Mr Fezziwig

Character Summary

Mr Fezziwig is Scrooge's former employer and a key figure in Stave Two when the Ghost of Christmas Past transports Scrooge back to his youth. Through his characterisation, Dickens **contrasts warmth and generosity with greed and coldness**. Described as having a **"comfortable, oily, rich, fat, jovial voice,"** Fezziwig is immediately established as cheerful and full of life. The adjective "jovial" reinforces his open-hearted nature and positions him as the **embodiment of the Christmas spirit**- a man who takes delight in others' happiness rather than in personal wealth.



<https://ar.inspiredpencil.com/pictures-2023/fezziwig-christmas-carol>

Fezziwig's brief yet memorable appearance has a profound effect on Scrooge. The memory of his old master's kindness sparks the first signs of **emotional awakening**, causing Scrooge to reflect on how far he has strayed from his former self. When Scrooge defends Fezziwig to the Spirit, insisting that **"the happiness he gives is quite as great as if it cost a fortune,"** his words reveal the beginnings of **remorse and self-recognition**. The juxtaposition of "happiness" and "fortune" captures Dickens' moral message that generosity holds greater value than financial gain.

In this way, Fezziwig functions as **both a symbol of traditional benevolence and as an implicit critique of modern industrial capitalism**. Dickens idealises his character, portraying him as the model employer who values human happiness over profit. His jovial spirit and moral goodness create one of the novella's most heart-warming and enduring scenes, offering a glimpse of the humanity that Scrooge- and Victorian society- must strive to recover.

Context

Fezziwig represents a **pre-industrial** ideal of the workplace- one built on mutual respect and community. In early nineteenth-century Britain, many small businesses were being replaced by large factories where profit was prioritised over the well-being of workers. Dickens contrasts Fezziwig's humane approach with the inhuman efficiency of **industrial capitalism** that dominated Victorian society.

When A Christmas Carol was published in **1843**, the **Industrial Revolution** had caused widespread **social division**, with long hours, poor conditions and child labour common. Fezziwig stands as a nostalgic figure- a businessman who treats his employees as people rather than as means of production. Through him, Dickens expresses his belief in **moral capitalism**: that wealth should be used to spread happiness and promote **social harmony**. His Christmas celebration- full of music, dancing and generosity- reflects Dickens' wider campaign to restore warmth and compassion to a **rapidly industrialising society**.



Key Themes



Generosity and the Spirit of Christmas

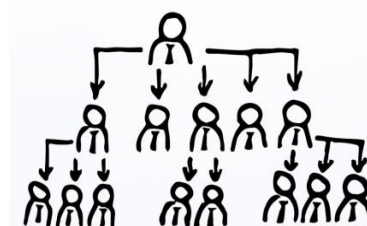
Fezziwig **epitomises the generous and joyful spirit** that Dickens sought to promote. He closes his warehouse on Christmas Eve, declaring, **“No more work to-night. Christmas Eve, Dick. Christmas, Ebenezer!”** The **asyndetic** structure of this command- quick and lively- mirrors his cheerful personality and sense of spontaneity. The repetition of “Christmas” reinforces his enthusiasm and celebration of community.

Fezziwig’s generosity does not stem from wealth but from warmth of heart.

Dickens reminds readers that happiness can be created through **compassion** rather than money. This message is captured in Scrooge’s later reflection that **“the happiness he gives is quite as great as if it cost a fortune.”** The comparative structure “as if it cost” emphasises that Fezziwig’s **emotional generosity outweighs financial generosity**, teaching both Scrooge and the reader that true wealth is measured in kindness, not currency.

Power and Responsibility

Fezziwig’s treatment of his employees reflects Dickens’ belief in **moral responsibility**. Scrooge acknowledges that **“Fezziwig had the power to render us happy or unhappy; to make our service light or burdensome; a pleasure or a toil.”** The use of **antithesis** (“happy or unhappy”, “light or burdensome”) highlights the moral choice faced by those in authority. Dickens uses this to remind readers that **social power carries ethical obligations**- employers hold the key to their workers’ happiness.



The noun “power” is especially significant: it reminds readers that authority does not have to be oppressive. Fezziwig’s leadership is rooted in respect, not fear. His kindness transforms labour into “pleasure”, offering a striking **contrast** to Scrooge’s later mistreatment of Bob Cratchit. Through this, Dickens promotes the idea that **business and benevolence need not be mutually exclusive**.

Contrast Between Fezziwig and Scrooge

As an employer, Fezziwig acts as a **foil** to Scrooge. His warmth, sociability, and compassion starkly contrast with Scrooge’s **miserliness** and isolation. While Fezziwig halts work on Christmas Eve to celebrate, Scrooge begrudges Bob Cratchit even **“a day’s wages for no work.”** The **juxtaposition** between these two attitudes underscores Dickens’ moral lesson: joy and kindness cost nothing but enrich everyone around them.



Fezziwig's party scene symbolises everything Scrooge has lost- laughter, friendship, and community. The description of Fezziwig “**skipping down from the high desk with wonderful agility**” evokes a sense of vitality that transcends age and wealth. Dickens personifies joy through Fezziwig's movement, presenting him as an emblem of life and energy. His physicality reflects his emotional openness, unlike Scrooge, who is repeatedly described through the imagery of cold and rigidity.

Community and Joy

Fezziwig's celebration unites people across social boundaries. Apprentices, servants, and tradespeople all dance together, **creating a microcosm of Dickens' ideal society**- one built on fellowship and inclusion. The repetition of collective actions (“**they danced**”, “**they cheered**”, “**they laughed**”) creates a rhythm of unity and shared happiness.

In this sense, Fezziwig's party is more than just a festive gathering; it is a moral vision. Dickens presents it as an image of **harmony between classes**, suggesting that true social progress lies in kindness and connection rather than hierarchy or wealth.

Relationships

- **Ebenezer Scrooge:** Fezziwig is a **paternal figure** to young Scrooge. Their relationship is built on mutual affection and respect, a dynamic that **contrasts** powerfully with Scrooge's later relationship with Bob Cratchit. Fezziwig's generosity provides Scrooge with a **moral blueprint**- one that he abandons as he grows obsessed with wealth. However, this memory becomes instrumental in rekindling his lost humanity.



<https://www.deviantart.com/danidraws>

The moment Scrooge defends Fezziwig's actions to the Ghost of Christmas Past (“**He has spent but a few pounds of your mortal money... the happiness he gives is quite as great as if it cost a fortune**”) shows his deep admiration. The respectful tone and evaluative language (“quite as great”) underline Scrooge's emotional response. Dickens uses this nostalgia to reveal that Scrooge was not always heartless- suggesting that **compassion, once lost, can be regained**.

- **Mrs Fezziwig:** Mrs Fezziwig **mirrors** her husband's generosity and warmth, described as “**one vast substantial smile**.” The hyperbolic phrase “one vast” transforms her smile into an almost tangible presence, symbolising the **boundless joy** of the Fezziwig household. Together, they embody Dickens' ideal of **marital harmony** and shared moral virtue.



- **Fezziwig's Employees:** Fezziwig treats his apprentices as family rather than subordinates. His respect for them fosters loyalty and affection, demonstrated by the collective joy at his Christmas party. The verb "called" in "called to them all by name" reflects personal connection — Fezziwig's care extends to individuals, not just his business. This reinforces Dickens' belief that emotional recognition and respect are central to human dignity.

Key Quotes

- ***"Yo ho, my boys! No more work tonight. Christmas Eve, Dick. Christmas, Ebenezer!"***

The **exuberant** tone and **repeated exclamations** convey Fezziwig's enthusiasm and inclusivity. The direct address ("my boys") emphasises his **paternal** affection, while the rapid rhythm of the sentence mirrors his lively spirit. Dickens uses the syntax to evoke Fezziwig's contagious joy and his genuine appreciation for his workers.

- ***"Fezziwig had the power to render us happy or unhappy; to make our service light or burdensome; a pleasure or a toil."***

The balanced oppositions and **rhythmic repetition** mimic a **moral lesson**. Dickens elevates Fezziwig's simple goodness into a universal truth about leadership and responsibility. The **anaphora** of "to" underscores the active choice involved in moral behaviour- reinforcing that kindness is a deliberate act, not an accident.

- ***"The happiness he gives is quite as great as if it cost a fortune."***

This quotation encapsulates Dickens' central moral message. The **juxtaposition** of "happiness" and "fortune" **contrasts emotional generosity with material wealth**. The modal verb "as if" implies that Fezziwig's emotional impact surpasses the value of money, suggesting that virtue carries its own intrinsic worth.

- ***"He has spent but a few pounds of your mortal money... the happiness he gives is quite as great as if it cost a fortune."***

The **ellipsis** slows the rhythm, inviting **reflection**. Dickens' deliberate **understatement** ("a few pounds") magnifies Fezziwig's generosity by showing how minimal financial effort can produce profound joy- a subtle challenge to Scrooge's obsession with profit.

