

AQA English Literature GCSE

A Christmas Carol: Themes *Isolation*

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Isolation

Scrooge is an **outsider** in society and is victim to his own, **self-inflicted loneliness**. No one necessarily pushed Scrooge away, instead he **ostracised** himself from society.

Scrooge's Isolation

In the beginning of the novel the narrator gives a describes Scrooge as **“secret and self contained and solitary as an oyster”**, the **sibilance** is similar to that of a snake which suggests something sinister. This is a **Biblical allusion** as it alludes to the snake in

the tree which tempted Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. Dickens may be trying to say that isolation can be deadly. The phrase used also creates a **semantic field** of isolation, through this instantly the reader understands the kind of person that Scrooge is. There is also **polysyndetic listing** which is used to make the adjectives used more powerful with each adjective the reader is given a deeper understanding of Scrooge and his character.



<https://www.pexels.com/photo/man-sitting-on-a-concrete-bench-373914/>

Scrooges' isolation is also shown through the social interactions within the novel. In the Victorian times people were extremely **cordial** with each other, greeting people was apart of the culture. In Scrooge's description it says that **“Nobody ever stopped him in the street to say...My dear Scrooge, how are you?”**, Scrooge purposefully isolated himself from society and this same behaviour is mirrored through the people around him. The fact that people no longer try to greet Scrooge shows the extent to which he has isolated himself. The people in Scrooge's neighbourhood were aware of the kind of person Scrooge was and so did not make an effort to try and involve him.

However, Fred his nephew never gives up on him, even after Scrooge insults him he invites Scrooge to **“Come! Dine with us to-morrow.”** Although Scrooge tries and is successful with isolating himself Fred is **persistent** with his uncle and in the end it pays off as Scrooge joins the dinner party which is a sign of his dramatic change. In Scrooge's change someone who was once as **“solitary as an oyster”** becomes a **social butterfly** attending Fred's dinner party saying **“It's I. Your uncle Scrooge. I have come to diner. Will you let me in, Fred?”**. The question holds a lot of tension as it contains in it all the insults Scrooge gave to Fred and the lifetime of exclusion but Scrooge is finally ready to come back.

Dickens illustrates that it is never too late to come back and that no one has to isolate themselves. This is apart of his **socialist ideology** which is based on inclusion and making sure that everyone in society is valued and treated equally.



Isolation as a Gateway

In Stave 2 through the Ghost of Christmas Past, Dickens shows us how a **misanthropic** person like Scrooge is made. The reader is taken to see Scrooge in his schoolboy days as Scrooge witnesses “**A solitary child, neglected by his friends, is left there still.**” Through this the reader is shown that since his childhood Scrooge was “**neglected**”. This clearly had a big impact on him as he “**sobbed**” and “**wept to see his poor forgotten self as he used to be.**” The **emotive language** gives the reader a chance to see Scrooge in a **vulnerable state** and see the **major impact that loneliness has had on Scrooge**. While at the start the narrator tries to paint Scrooge as unfeeling saying that “**External heat and cold had little influence on him**”. This is the first instance which shows that Scrooge does have feelings, it also **foreshadows** more changes.

While in his younger school boy days he did not necessarily isolate himself, later into his young adulthood the reader sees that his isolation is caused by greed. His fiancée at the time Belle says that an “**idol**” has displaced her a “**golden one**”, this means that his need for money has become a priority instead of nurturing the relationships he has in his life.

- Belle says that she hopes he “**happy in the life you have chosen!**”, this is the moment in which Scrooge finally chose money and greed over everything else. Through these scenes Dickens intends to show the readers how choosing **greed** can lead to isolation.

Capitalism

It can also be argued that Dickens is trying to show the isolation which capitalism can cause. In Stave 1 when the portly gentlemen arrive looking for money for charity Scrooge says that “**It’s enough for a man to understand his own business, and not to interfere with other people’s.**” This reflects the **capitalist ideology** which Dickens was highly critical of, instead he believed in charity and helping those in need. This capitalist ideology leads to isolation as it means that people should only focus on themselves and not take interest in others. Scrooge’s choice of words is also very interesting here as he uses the word “**business**” to talk of a person’s life. This suggests that Scrooge’s life was business he is noted as an “**excellent man of business**”, the **focal point** of Scrooge’s life was money and greed it is what motivated him and why he was never satisfied.

