

AQA English Literature GCSE

A Christmas Carol: Character Profiles

Minor Characters

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Contents

Fred	...page 2
Fanny	...page 4
Ignorance and Want	...page 6
Belle	...page 8
Mrs Cratchit	...page 9
Martha Cratchit	...page 10
Peter Cratchit	...page 12
Old Joe	...page 13
The Charwoman, Laundress and Undertaker's man	...page 14
Caroline	...page 16
Mrs Fezziwig	...page 17
Portly Gentlemen	...page 18
Dick Wilkins	...page 19



Fred

Description

Fred, Scrooge's nephew, is introduced early in the novella and is described to be **“ruddy and handsome”**. This comes after the description of Scrooge's **“thin lips”** and **“old features”**, causing the reader to instantly warm to the **fresh** and **youthful** atmosphere that Fred introduces. Dickens builds on this by informing the reader that Fred's eyes **“sparkled”**, presenting him as cheerful and excited. This is reinforced by the fact that he arrived **“all in a glow”**, an interesting description as it is associated with the **motif** (repeated idea) of light within the novella. When Dickens uses descriptions of light, as seen here and with the **“jet of light”** emitted by the Ghost of Christmas Past, he is often **symbolising innocence and goodness**. This reflects onto Fred's character, causing the reader to understand that he embodies these traits. In doing so, he presents him as an exemplary character whom readers should look up to.



[https://muppet.fandom.com/wiki/Fred_\(Muppet_Christmas_Carol\)](https://muppet.fandom.com/wiki/Fred_(Muppet_Christmas_Carol))

Character Development

Fred maintains his **optimistic outlook** and **positive traits** throughout the novella, a quality which becomes the **defining feature** of his character. Despite Scrooge's ill-mannered behaviour with Fred, he vows to keep visiting his uncle **“year after year”** to try and change his attitude. It could be argued that this adds a sense of much-needed **stability** within the novella. This is because by choosing to have the minor characters remain constant, Dickens heightens and foregrounds Scrooge's transformation.

Purpose and Key Quotes

Fred is presented as a **foil** to Scrooge, which means that he contrasts his character in order to emphasise certain qualities. Therefore, by emphasising Fred's goodness, Dickens amplifies the negative qualities within Scrooge.

His character is first used to **juxtapose** the atmosphere in the opening stave. Dickens contrasts the bleak and miserable descriptions of the setting with the **“glow”** that Fred brings. This serves to both emphasise Fred's virtue and cause Scrooge's dismal attitude to appear worse. Consequently, Fred and Scrooge are presented as the **antithesis** (direct opposite) of each other in the opening stave.



Scrooge	<p>Apathetic <i>“No warmth could warm him no wintry weather chill him”</i> This illustrates how Scrooge had a cold and hostile attitude.</p>	<p>Selfish <i>“Tight-fisted”</i> Scrooge starts the novella off as a selfish man. The quote suggests that he always has a tight hold of money and didn't engage in philanthropy, which was a growing trend in Victorian times.</p>	<p>Grumpy <i>“Bah Humbug”</i> This is Scrooge's infamous catchphrase which symbolises his negative attitude.</p>	<p>Isolated <i>“solitary as an oyster”</i> The metaphor encapsulates the fact that Scrooge liked to keep to himself and isolated himself socially.</p>
Fred	<p>Empathetic <i>“I am sorry for him; I couldn't be angry with him if I tried.”</i> Despite Scrooge's nastiness, Fred is still forgiving of Scrooge. Fred believes that he couldn't be angry with Scrooge even if he “tried”, which demonstrates his good nature, showing his natural disposition.</p>	<p>Generous <i>“extraordinary kindness of Scrooge's nephew”</i> Fred is kind and giving. Dickens uses Fred as hope for what all of society should be.</p>	<p>Happy <i>“If you should happen, by any unlikely chance, to know a man more blest in a laugh than Scrooge's nephew”</i> Fred is the Christmas spirit - he represents joy and love.</p>	<p>Social We see this at his Christmas party which he throws, surrounded by all his friends, he even invites Scrooge*.</p>

*This is also used by Dickens to emphasise Scrooge's isolation. His seclusion is highlighted when he stands with the Ghost looking into Fred's party. The **proxemics** (the amount of space a person chooses to keep between themselves and others) here illustrates Scrooge's outsider status.



Fanny

Character Summary

Fanny, or Fan, is Scrooge's younger sister, a character that Dickens uses to **represent love, youth and optimism**. She is also used as an embodiment of Christmas spirit, a common theme amongst the favoured characters within the novella; she tells Scrooge that they will be **“together all Christmas long, and have the merriest time in all the world”**. Through this assertion, Dickens reveals to the reader that Scrooge was not always someone who hated Christmas, a characterisation which **starkly contrasts** his portrayal in the opening stave. Therefore, it follows that Fan's character is significant to the novella in what she reveals about Scrooge, as this allows the reader to learn more about the protagonist and his journey.

Relationships

Scrooge: Fan's character is used by Dickens to humanise Scrooge, as this is the first time readers see positive and genuine emotion from his character. From a **structural perspective** this is significant. The reader is introduced to Fan during Scrooge's first visit with the Spirits, the character who is portrayed in this contrasts to the negative and cold descriptions of the **unsympathetic narrator** at the start of the text.

By introducing Fan in the very next chapter the reader is given the opportunity to empathise with him, allowing them to build the connection that they were missing. The reader recognises that she is the **only source of love in his life**. Indeed, he is described as a **“solitary child”** who is suddenly showered with affection. Fan is described as putting **“her arms about his neck, and often kissing him”**, an excessive display of love which warms the reader to Scrooge's character. This is not solely for the readers benefit, however, as it also reminds Scrooge that there was a time in his life when he was **affectionate** and **carefree**. Ultimately, this gives him the hope that he can return to that state.

Key Themes

Family: Dickens uses Fan to further the idea that family should be an **important focus** within society, as an individual's family can have a profound effect on their character and well-being. Fan exclaims that she has come to bring Scrooge **“home, home, home!”**, using **repetition** to emphasise the value of family life. By including this as such a strong theme within a novella centred around Christmas, Dickens establishes a connection between the two ideas.

This theme introduces the notion that family should be **central** to the festive time. Dickens highlights this through Scrooge's household, as the revelation that his father is **“so much kinder than he used to be”** implies some form of **domestic turmoil**. This turmoil suggests that his father was cruel, which may have contributed to Scrooge's dismal attitude. Furthermore, this detail can be interpreted as **foreshadowing** the end of the novella as, by revealing that Scrooge's father was



able to change, Dickens may be implying that Scrooge too will transform. Ultimately this adds to the sense of optimistic hope brought by Fan's character.

It is interesting to note that Dickens is vague with his descriptions of Scrooge's family life, perhaps to prevent the reader from sympathising with him to the extent that they excuse his behaviour. One of the purposes of the novella is to emphasise the need to change by using the common **literary trope** (recurring theme or idea) of a cruel father and an absent mother. The reader sympathises with Scrooge enough to be able to develop empathy for his character, but they are accustomed to this type of suffering in fiction. Therefore, they do not sympathise too much and excuse his actions.

Key Quotes

- ***“And with a mournful shaking of his head, glanced anxiously towards the door”***
Here Dickens implies that Scrooge was expecting to see his sister, a **poignant** display of emotion. This likely causes the reader to sympathise with his character, particularly due to the **“mournful”** way in which he shakes his head. Through this, Dickens suggests that he truly did love Fan and is pained to think about her death. Prior to this Scrooge **“wept to see his poor forgotten self”**, a display of **self-pity** which is unlikely to appeal to readers. When he shows empathy and love towards another character the reader is able to support his character to a greater extent.
- ***“Home, for good and all. Home, for ever and ever”***
Dickens uses **anaphora** (repetition of a word or phrase at the start of successive clauses) in Fan's speech to highlight how important his return home is to the siblings. The **repetition** implies that Scrooge is in disbelief while the **lyrical quality** of the line creates a child-like and magical tone - as if the idea of returning home was inconceivable to both Fan and Scrooge. This ultimately causes the reader to sympathise with Scrooge while also feeling grateful for their own families, furthering the idea that family should be essential to the festive time.
- ***“A delicate creature, whom a breath might have withered... but she had a large heart”***
The Spirit adopts a **poetic quality** in its language while describing Fan, using **ethereal adjectives** such as **“delicate creature”** and likening Fan to a flower through the **verb “withered”**. This mirrors the tone of a **eulogy** (speech which praises someone highly, particularly someone who has died) which ultimately **elevates** Fan's character, as it is the God-like Spirits which hold this respect for her.
- ***“Scrooge seemed uneasy in his mind; and answered briefly”***
Here Dickens makes it clear that Scrooge has already begun to reflect on his actions in the present, pondering on his relationship with Fred after being reminded of the kindness of his sister, Fred's mother. By highlighting his regret so early on in the novella, the reader can already begin to see his change, causing them to remain **optimistic of a transformation** and consequently a happy ending to the novella.



Ignorance and Want

Character Summary

Ignorance and Want are the two childlike beings which cling **“upon the outside of (the Ghost of Christmas Present’s) garment.”** They are **symbolic of the issues that plague mankind**, and so it could be argued that they are portrayed as children because Dickens is trying to show that children are the ones that suffer the most from society’s issues. They are further described as **“monsters”**, perhaps because their existence is **dangerous to society**.

Purpose

The purpose of the children may be to show Scrooge the effects of poverty within society. Dickens tries to show that through education of both the poor and upper-class some of society’s problems, such as poverty, can be solved. The beings are not just a **warning** to Scrooge but also to all of mankind to change their ways.

Scrooge was a victim of ignorance as he willingly ignored the **plight of the working class**, and was also a victim of want, as we learn that the reason that Scrooge spent his life so focused on money because of his fear of poverty. He says to Belle that there is nothing which is as **“hard as poverty”**, highlighting his fixation with gaining money.

Key Themes:

Poverty/ Social Injustice - Ignorance and Want are **literal manifestations** of the disease of poverty. They represent two key factors which contribute to the issue.

- The ignorance that the upper-class have towards the plight of the poor causes the issue to be overlooked and so develop further.
- In addition, the want and greed that they display prevents them from assisting those who need it.

It is interesting to note that during the nineteenth century **philanthropy** (charity) was becoming more popular, and so it is significant that Dickens picked up on these two factors. He may have been pushing readers towards a **philanthropic mindset** to try and change attitudes towards the poor.

Supernatural - The children’s **allegorical** purpose is emphasised through their supernatural features. By describing them as **“hideous”** Dickens heightens the **dramatic impact** of their characters. This is emphasised further due to Dickens **structural choices**. By introducing the children after the happy Christmas celebrations, their appearance is more abrupt and disturbing which adds to the **tension** that they bring. Although, while the children may come through a supernatural medium, they are **grounded in reality** which makes them all the more terrifying.



Key Quotes

- **“wretched, abject, frightful, hideous, miserable”**

Dickens uses **listing** on multiple occasions to describe the children. This is interesting as he primarily uses **vague adjectives** - the reader is aware that the children are **“hideous”** but they do not know exactly what they look like. Consequently, the reader is left to imagine what these **“frightful”** children look like - heightening the fear that they bring. The lists could also be interpreted as being in reference to society. This is because the children are used to represent the issue of poverty and so Dickens’ descriptions of the children may reflect on his opinions about society as a whole.

- **“stale and shrivelled hand like that of age”**

This epitomises the impact that poverty had on children during the Victorian era, as children were forced to **grow up faster** than they should have. Children who grew up in poverty were made to work in factories from as early as **nine years old** in order to bring in some income for their families. This links to the concept of **‘present time orientation’** which is prevalent within the culture of poverty. Essentially this means that those in poverty focus only on the present rather than planning for the future, as they lack the resources to do so. Therefore, instead of receiving the long-term benefits of an education, children were made to join the workforce which allowed them to receive wages (see ‘Context: Education and Childhood’).

- **“Spirit! are they yours?” Scrooge could say no more. “They are Man’s,”**

This implies that due to the negligence of man, ignorance has been created. The question is **accusative** but it is flipped on its head as the Ghost not just accuses mankind but presents their guilt. The **possessive “Man’s”** demonstrates how they belong to all of society, which adds to the theme of **social responsibility** in the novella.

- **“This boy is ignorance...beware of this boy...on his brow I see that written which is doom”**

Dickens emphasises the impacts of ignorance over the consequences of want, presenting it as a more **urgent** and **pressing concern**. This may perhaps be because Scrooge has already learnt the consequences of want, as he felt **immense regret** when he was taken to see Belle. As a result, Dickens does not need to emphasise the impacts of greed as Scrooge had already learnt his lesson. Alternatively, it may be because if Scrooge was not so ignorant to the poverty which filled society, his greed and fixation with money would not have been so intense. Therefore, the problem of want can be solved by eliminating the ignorance within society. Furthermore, the **“doom”** which is written on the boy’s head may **foreshadow** the dark consequences of ignorance in society.



Belle

Character Summary

Belle, Scrooge's former fiancée, is introduced to the reader in Stave Two of the novella. The Ghost of Christmas Past takes Scrooge to see the final moments of his relationship with her. Her character is used to show the effects of Scrooge's **fixation with money**. She refers to their relationship as an **"unprofitable dream"**, illustrating Scrooge's obsession with the financial gain of his relationships. Dickens does, however, make it clear that Scrooge was not always like this. Belle says that their marriage contract was made when they were **"both poor and content to be so"** mirroring the change in Scrooge's attitude. This gives the reader **hope**, as it reveals that Scrooge was not always this way and so can hopefully return back to his former self. Furthermore, it emphasises that greed and **"gain"** detrimentally altered Scrooge's personality. This ties closely into the Ghost of Christmas Present's warning that Scrooge should **"beware"** of 'want'.



<https://muppet.fandom.com/wiki/Belle>

Dickens also explores the theme of **family** through Belle's character. When Scrooge sees her with her children he wonders what it would have been like to have children who **"might have called him father"**. This causes his sight to grow **"very dim indeed"**, suggesting that he has started to cry. This is a significant **display of emotion** as it highlights how deeply Scrooge is affected by **regret**. It could be said that this directly contributes to Scrooge's transformation as these powerful emotions illustrate the error of his ways.

Key Quotes

- **"Another idol has displaced me...A golden one".**
The word **"idol"** is an interesting choice from Dickens due to its **connotations**. An idol is often associated with a god-like figure that people worship, illustrating the extent of Scrooge's fixation with money.
- **"Can even I believe that you would choose a dowerless girl"**
Dickens uses a **lexical field** of money and gain during his descriptions of Scrooge and Belle, exemplified here by the adjective **"dowerless"**. This is significant as it shows Scrooge's **misanthropic** and **miserly** attitude. It shows the reader that Scrooge does not hold any meaningful relationships with people as he looks at things through a financial viewpoint.



- **“Show me no more! Conduct me home. Why do you delight to torture me?”**

This is significant as it epitomises Scrooge’s regret. Dickens uses **emotive language**, referring to the situation as **“torture”**, which effectively conveys the powerful emotions that Scrooge is feeling.

Mrs Cratchit

Character Summary

Mrs Cratchit, Bob Cratchit’s wife, is presented as a **model wife and mother** which continues with the notion that the Cratchit family are an **idealised representation of the poor**. When the reader is first introduced to her character, Dickens writes that she is **“dressed out but poorly in a twice-turned gown”** highlighting her poverty as she is unable to afford new clothes, this suggestion is reinforced by the **adverb “poorly”**. Despite this, she is **“brave in ribbons, which are cheap and make a goodly show for sixpence”**, suggesting that she is **optimistic** regardless of her financial state. This demonstrates her **Christmas spirit** and ultimately presents her character as **strong**.



<https://balmccollage.com/december-2018/muppet-christmas-carol-screening/>

Themes

Poverty: Following Christmas dinner, Mrs Cratchit notes that there is **“one small atom of bone”** remaining of the goose which makes her feel **“great delight”** as the family hadn’t eaten all of the food but **“every one had had enough”**. Her excitement at this occurrence implies to the reader that this was not a frequent event in the Cratchit household, showing the reader that they often struggle with feeding every member of the family properly. Despite this, Mrs Cratchit remains **optimistic** and **good-natured**, **“flushed but smiling proudly”** as she brought out the pudding. This attitude **dispels stereotypes** surrounding the lower-class, as Dickens presents those in poverty as grateful and content regardless of the amount of food they have. Furthermore, he uses this opportunity to somewhat **criticise members of the upper class**, as he highlights that the poor in society struggle with the most basic necessities of life. Here, Dickens is trying to awaken his readership to the harsh realities of poverty in Victorian society.



Key Quotes

- **“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.”**
Dickens mirrors the **asyndetic listing** (a list broken up by commas rather than conjunctions like ‘and’) he uses in the opening stave when he calls Scrooge a **“...scraping, clutching, covetous old sinner”**, allowing Mrs Cratchit to adopt the same **powerful tone of disapproval**. This presents her character as strong and opinionated while also highlighting just how cruel Scrooge acted towards Bob, as his wife feels as though she must defend her husband against him.
- **“I’ll drink to his health for your sake and the Day’s”**
Dickens foregrounds Mrs Cratchit's Christmas spirit as well as her love for Bob, encapsulating her loving personality through this assertion. This may act as a message to the reader as rather than create conflict on Christmas, Mrs Cratchit compromises and agrees to drink to Scrooge’s health. This conveys the idea that Christmas should be a time of love and compassion rather than conflict. It is also interesting to note that Dickens sets up **subtle contrasts** between the Cratchits and Scrooge as, while in Stave One Scrooge was unwilling to even hear out the charity collectors, Mrs Cratchit agrees to drink to his health for the sake of love.
- **“I wouldn’t show weak eyes to your father when he comes home, for the world.” She said in a “steady, cheerful voice, that only faltered once”**
This epitomises the strength in Mrs Cratchit's character as, despite her sadness, she chooses to keep her composure in front of Bob. By outlining that her voice **“faltered”**, Dickens highlights the true sadness of the situation following Tiny Tim’s death. This causes the reader to sympathise with her while also admiring her strength. Ultimately, this adds to the **overarching narrative** of the Cratchit family being an idealised representation of the poor, as Mrs. Cratchit contributes to the idea that a family should consist of **strength, compassion and love**.

Martha Cratchit

Character Summary

Martha is Bob Cratchit’s eldest child. She first appears in the novella when she arrives home late on Christmas Day as she had a great deal of **“work to finish up”** the night before and had to **“clear away”** in the morning. This instantly characterises her as hard-working which **challenges Scrooge’s misconception** that the poor in society are **“idle”**. Furthermore, some readers may feel sympathy for her character, particularly after she reveals that she needs a **“good long rest”**. This advances the idea that the novella aims to educate readers about the **plight of the poor** and so **instigate social change**.



Dickens explores her character further when he describes how she hid when Bob Cratchit came home but ran out early as she **“didn’t like to see him disappointed”**. This presents her as playful yet compassionate. Therefore, while she plays only a minor role within the novella, her character represents a much greater message. Through Martha, Dickens is able to challenge the **Malthusian perspective** (see ‘Context: Poverty’), which dismisses the lower class as the **“surplus population”**. Instead, he presents the Cratchit children with their own, individual personalities. This translates to Victorian society, as it seems as though Dickens is trying to make a statement about the **individualism** (a social outlook which emphasises the importance of each person) of the poor in society, highlighting that they cannot, or should not, be dismissed or ignored.

Context

Dickens informs the reader that Martha is a **“poor apprentice at a milliner’s”**, an interesting choice due to the **social stigma** that surrounded these places. In 1843, the year in which the novella was written, **millineries** (a place which made and sold hats) were one of the few places which would hire women, however, they were also one of the worst. Women were forced to work in dirty, unsafe conditions under cruel supervisors and were often underpaid. This forced many of them to turn to prostitution in order to survive. As a result, these women were assigned the same **low social status** as prostitutes and so were generally looked down on. Therefore, it can certainly be argued that it is significant that Dickens chose to have Martha apprentice at a milliner’s but still present her positively, as it is evident that he is trying to **challenge widespread prejudice** against the poor.



Peter Cratchit

Character Summary

When Peter Cratchit, Bob Cratchit's oldest son, is first introduced to the novella he is described as wearing his father's shirt "*in honour of the day*". The narrator notes that the collar was "*monstrous*", but Peter "*rejoiced*" irrespective of this, as he was happy to be so "*gallantly attired*". This heartbreaking description is likely to cause the reader to pity his character, particularly due to the **negative connotations** of the adjective "*monstrous*". This is because the reader is aware that his clothes are too big for him but see that he is delighted regardless. It could be argued that Dickens creates this **sympathetic portrayal** of his character so the reader understands the complexity of the challenges which arise from poverty. This may cause them to be more sensitive to the troubles which the lower-class face.



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

In a similar way to Martha Cratchit, Dickens explores the **individuality of Peter** by developing and exploring his characterisation. Dickens writes that he "*mashed the potatoes with incredible vigour*", presenting his character as energetic and spirited. Furthermore, when Bob reveals that he has a "*situation in his eye for Master Peter*", Dickens adopts a **light-hearted** and **humorous commentary**.

He describes how the two younger Cratchits "*laughed tremendously*" while Peter "*looked thoughtfully*" at the fire, as if he was contemplating which "*investments he would favour*". This tone further develops Peter's characterisation, as we are able to get a better understanding of his **comical personality**, despite his relatively minor role within the novella. Ultimately, it could be argued that this contributes to the theme of poverty in the novella, as Dickens uses his character to make the reader sympathise with the Cratchits due to their **deprivation**, while also **admiring their spirit and character**.



Old Joe

Character Summary

Old Joe is introduced in Stave Four of the novella, when the Ghost of Christmas Yet To Come takes Scrooge to witness the aftermath of his death. He is a **pawnbroker** who owns a shop in a **“foul”** area of the town. The three thieves bring Scrooge’s stolen belongings to his shop to try and make a profit. Dickens uses a **harsh** and **blunt tone** during his descriptions in this passage which heightens the **immorality** that occurs in ‘old Joe’s’ shop.



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

Setting

Dickens uses the setting to further the **immoral** and **perverse tone** of the stave. He unites his description of the people and the environment, portraying them both as filthy and disgusting. The people are described as **“half-naked, drunken, slipshod, ugly”**, an example of **asyndetic listing** (a list broken up by commas rather than conjunctions like ‘and’). This makes the **adjectives appear relentless** and the narration seem **unforgiving**. He continues by describing the **“whole quarter”** as a place which **“reeked with crime, with filth, and misery”**. By choosing the word **“whole”** he highlights that there were no exceptions, furthering the **intense criticism** of the place. This may perhaps be to portray the alarming consequences of Scrooge’s actions. By presenting this **realistically** and **descriptively**, Dickens is able to ensure that his message is accurately conveyed to the reader. It could also be said that he uses this opportunity to paint a picture in the reader’s mind of the **hideous extent of poverty**.

Appearance and Behaviour

Old Joe is described as a **“grey haired rascal”** who was **“nearly 70 years of age”**. His old age suggests that he has grown up in this horrific setting, an idea which is emphasised by the **“masses of corrupted fat”** and **“sepulchres (tombs) of bones”** which surround him. This **graphic description** further emphasises the filthy surroundings, while Old Joe is simply presented as a **product of this environment**. Through Joe, Dickens illustrates the **cycle of poverty** and informs the reader of how repulsive it can be.

Furthermore, he presents Joe as **oblivious** to his foul surroundings, writing that he **“smoked his pipe in all the luxury of calm retirement”** which demonstrates his comfort. This reveals the **urgency** of the problem of poverty as people are becoming **accustomed** to these appalling environments. Ultimately this emphasises how Dickens believes the issue of poverty needs immediate attention.



Joe's speech is **relaxed** and **detached**, illustrated through his interactions with the charwoman. When she presents him with Scrooge's blankets he responds with the witty: **"I hope he didn't die of anything catching? Eh?"**. His banter appears misplaced, however, as it **juxtaposes** the immorality and seriousness of his actions. As a result, the tone of the stave becomes **subverted** and twisted which reflects on Scrooge's death. It could be speculated that Scrooge's immoral behaviour during his life created a fittingly **amoral legacy** after his death.

The Charwoman, Laundress and Undertaker's man

Character Summary

Scrooge's laundress and charwoman, along with the undertaker's man, are introduced to the novella in Stave Four where they all unexpectedly enter **"old Joe's"** shop together. Their initial response is described as **"blank astonishment"**, highlighting the coincidence in the situation, but this causes **"all three to burst into a laugh"**. Their laughter **juxtaposes** the **dismal tone** of the stave, creating a **perverted** and **immoral** atmosphere.



<https://muppet.fandom.com/wiki/Laundress>



https://muppet.fandom.com/wiki/Mrs._Dilber

Dickens makes it clear that all three people have independently stolen things from Scrooge and that they intend to sell these things to old Joe. It is interesting that Dickens chose to have **three people** carry out this same action, perhaps to **reinforce the extent of Scrooge's corruption**. This eventually heightens the effect of his transformation, as the reader can appreciate how much he has changed. Alternatively, he may have used three people in order to reflect the extent of the **desperation of the lower-class**, as they have all been driven to theft in order to make money. In either case, Dickens uses their characters to explore the themes of **morality** and **poverty**, using chilling descriptions in order to heighten the effect this has on the reader.

Key Themes

Morality: Dickens spends a considerable portion of his description focused on how the three people try to justify their actions. This perhaps causes the reader to **question the ethics** of the situation, prompting them to reflect on the **theme of morality**. He first makes the assertion, through the charwoman, that **"every person has a right to take care of themselves"**. This is immediately followed with the bitter **"he always did"**, conveying a sense of resentment towards



the man. Dickens then uses the insult “**wicked old screw**” to highlight that one of the reasons the thieves feel justified in their actions is the way Scrooge behaved when he was alive.

Dickens also uses the characters to explore the concept that **actions have consequences**. This is emphasised by the charwoman’s assertion that “**if he** (Scrooge) **wanted to keep ‘em after he was dead**” then he should have been more “**natural in his lifetime**”. This establishes that their theft is a direct consequence of Scrooge’s **apathetic behaviour**. By allowing the three individuals to justify their actions, the reader is given the opportunity to empathise with them despite the harrowing descriptions.

In spite of this, Dickens still explores the **complex morality** of the situation, particularly through the charwoman’s character. Unlike the other two individuals who stole minor domestic items, it is revealed that she stole the man’s “**bed-curtains**” and even “**took off**” the shirt that the corpse was wearing. By choosing to have Joe respond with the question: “**you don’t mean to say you took ‘em down, rings and all, with him lying there?**” Dickens alludes to his disbelief. The question is arguably used for the reader’s benefit, as it shows the reader how the charwoman’s stole the things. This causes the reader to fully understand the **extremity of her actions**.

- Even Scrooge is horrified, viewing the situation with “**detestation and disgust**”. In this example, Dickens uses **plosive alliteration** (repetition of a sound which stops the airflow then releases it, in this case, ‘d’) to emphasise the magnitude of his horror.
- He continues by calling the three people “**obscene demons**” adding **religious weight** and **judgement** to their actions. This is significant because Scrooge is unaware that *he* is the man that they have stolen from, perhaps highlighting that he has developed empathy and a stronger sense of morality during his time with the Spirits. Alternatively, it might **foreground the extent of immorality** taking place, suggesting that it is essential for Scrooge to change in order to prevent such twisted consequences.

Poverty: It is interesting to note that Dickens uses **eye-dialect** (when non-standard English is used to draw attention to pronunciation, seen when Dickens uses ‘em’ rather than ‘them’) for the speech of the three thieves and Joe, a choice which emphasises their lower-class status. This arguably causes the events within the shop to act as a **class commentary**, implying that Dickens is aiming to convey a message to readers. While it may seem as though he is negatively presenting the poor, this is unlikely. This is because Dickens is widely regarded as one of the most successful authors at exposing the ills of poverty in Victorian society. Perhaps he was instead aiming to **outline the harsh realities of poverty** in a shocking way to provoke an emotive response from readers.

By using **complex phrases** such as “**the woman who had already spoken**”, Dickens makes it difficult for readers to follow and comprehend which of the three individuals are speaking or acting. In doing so he **merges the identities of the three together**. Furthermore, while he names the laundress as ‘Mrs Dilber’, the charwoman and the undertaker’s man remain unnamed. Instead, they are referred to as “**the woman**” and “**the man**”. It could be speculated that Dickens does this so that the characters appear generic, this allows them to be **symbolic of the wider population**. This means the events in the shop are used as a societal commentary. For example, it may be to **illustrate the anonymity of the working class** which highlights how they are often overlooked by society.



Caroline

Character Summary

In Stave Four, Scrooge asks the Ghost of Christmas Yet to Come to take him to someone who **“feels emotion”** due to the man’s death - the man, of course, being himself. It is revealed, however, that **“the only emotion that the Ghost could show him, caused by the event, was one of pleasure”**. Scrooge is taken to Caroline, a poverty-stricken woman who has young children and is in debt to Scrooge. This **sympathetic portrayal** of a family affected by **poor business ethics** raises **moral questions** about the correct way to carry out business. Dickens explores this idea through Caroline's conflicted feelings surrounding Scrooge’s death.

Key Themes

Poverty: Caroline’s husband is described to have a face which was **“careworn and depressed though he was young”** which emphasises the damaging effects of poverty in an **intimate and tense setting**. Dickens achieves this **tone** by using **long sentences** broken up by **short clauses**, he describes how Caroline **“was expecting someone, and with anxious eagerness; for she walked up and down the room; started at every sound; looked out of the window...”** highlighting her restless state. This causes the reader to become increasingly aware of the plight of the poor, coming to the realisation that Scrooge’s poor business ethics have **lasting** and **permanent** effects on other people in society.

Key Quotes

- **“She was thankful in her soul to hear it... (but) prayed forgiveness in the next moment, and was sorry; but the first was the emotion of her heart”**

Dickens ensures that he presents Caroline and her family as good people, stressing that although Caroline was **“thankful”** that Scrooge had died she was **“sorry”** for feeling that way. This emotion is mirrored in her husband as Dickens writes that he felt **“ashamed”** of the **“delight”** he felt at the news. This highlights just how **“merciless”** Scrooge was as, if people as **“mild and patient”** as Caroline felt happiness towards his death, he must indeed have been a horrible man. Furthermore, by including **juxtaposing** ideas such as delight and shame, Dickens **subverts the tone of narration**. This causes the reader to become aware of the moral questions that these events raise.



Mrs Fezziwig

Character Summary

Mrs. Fezziwig is described in a similar way to Fezziwig himself - a lady who was **“worthy to be his partner in every sense of the term”**. This assertion shows that she was his equal in terms of business and marriage, allowing the positive descriptions of Fezziwig's character to reflect on her (See Character Profile: Fezziwig'). In addition to this, Dickens presents her and Fezziwig's relationship as ideal which is a **structurally** interesting choice as he follows this passage with the breakdown of Scrooge and Belle's relationship. By setting up this **contrast** he **heightens the emotions of both situations**, causing the Fezziwig's relationship to appear perfect which makes the subsequent breakdown of Scrooge and Belle's relationship appear worse.

Key Quotes

- **“In came Mrs Fezziwig, one vast substantial smile”**
Dickens uses **parallel syntax** (repeated sentence structures) for Mrs Fezziwig's introduction, as the **opening phrase “in came”** is repeated throughout the paragraph. This emphasises her **unity** with the rest of the people at the party, presenting her as a lady who has assimilated into the crowd and is well-liked. He also uses a **synecdoche** (when one part is used to represent a whole), as he refers to her as **“one vast substantial smile”**. This shows how her smile characterises her, presenting her as an individual who embodies goodness.
- **“If that's not high praise, tell me higher, and I'll use it.”**
Dickens uses the narrator to **elevate Mrs Fezziwig's status** by interrupting the narrative with the above comment. The **conversational tone** and **direct address** causes the reader to fully appreciate her virtue, solidifying her position as a good character.
- **“Mr and Mrs Fezziwig took their stations, one on either side the door, and shaking hands with every person individually”**
The word **“station”** creates an **official tone** to Mrs. Fezziwig's actions, suggesting that she values those around her regardless of their social class. Perhaps this is because she views it as her **duty**, alluding to the idea of social responsibility which Dickens had a strong affinity to. Furthermore, Dickens sets up a contrast between Scrooge and the Fezziwigs, as he emphasises that Scrooge tried to stay **“well”** in the **“esteem”** of **“wealthy”** and **“important”** businessmen but largely ignored everyone else. Furthermore, Dickens repeats that this was **“strictly”** from a **“business point of view”** highlighting how unlike the Fezziwigs, he did not develop **personal relationships**, which are essential to good business ethics.



Portly Gentlemen

Character summary

These are the two men who approach Scrooge in the opening stave, asking for a donation to help the “**destitute**”. The men play an essential role in the **exposition** (beginning) of the novella as they expose the **apathetic** side of Scrooge’s character. His demand to be “**left alone**” immediately characterises him as an **archetypal villain**.



https://disney.fandom.com/wiki/Room_in_Your_Heart

Furthermore, the gentlemen are used as a tool to introduce the reader to the **socio-economic climate** of Victorian England. The men reveal that many people are in “**need**” and would “**rather die**” than go to the Union workhouses. It can therefore be argued that Dickens uses the men as **mouthpieces** (when a character is used as a spokesperson for the author’s own opinions and beliefs) for his own social outlook. The characters are used to inform the reader of the poverty in society that they may be ignorant to, establishing Dickens’ message of **social responsibility** from the very offset of the novella.

Key Themes

Social injustice: The portly gentlemen are the first example of **social responsibility** that we see in the novella. They act as the voice of Dickens’ **socialist ideals**. The men inform both Scrooge and the reader to plight of the less fortunate as they try to **initiate change**.

Dick Wilkins

Character summary

Dick Wilkins is introduced as Scrooge’s “**fellow apprentice**” in Stave Two of the Novella when Scrooge is with the Ghost of Christmas Past. His character is symbolic of a better and more forgiving time in Scrooge’s past. This is made clear through the differences in Scrooge’s relationship with Marley and with Dick. In the opening stave, Scrooge is described as Marley’s “**sole friend**” but Dickens makes clear that even he was “**not so dreadfully cut up by the sad event**”. This illustrates how Scrooge’s relationship with Marley was **superficial**, distancing the reader from his character.



His attitude towards Dick is more genuine and heartfelt. When Scrooge sees him at the warehouse he says “***Bless me, yes. There he is. He was very much attached to me, was Dick. Poor Dick! Dear, dear!***”. Dickens uses **short sentences** and **exclamation marks** to convey the **overflow of emotions** that Scrooge was experiencing. This is an interesting response as this is one of the first times the reader sees this response from his character which humanises him and gives the reader hope of his transformation. This is because it illustrates that Scrooge still has a **capacity for love** - the foundation of Christmas Spirit.

Mr. Topper (Tom)

Character summary

Topper is introduced to the reader in Stave 2 as a guest of Fred, who is interested in Fred’s niece’s sister. “***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***”.

