

Edexcel English Literature GCSE

A Christmas Carol: Themes

Regret

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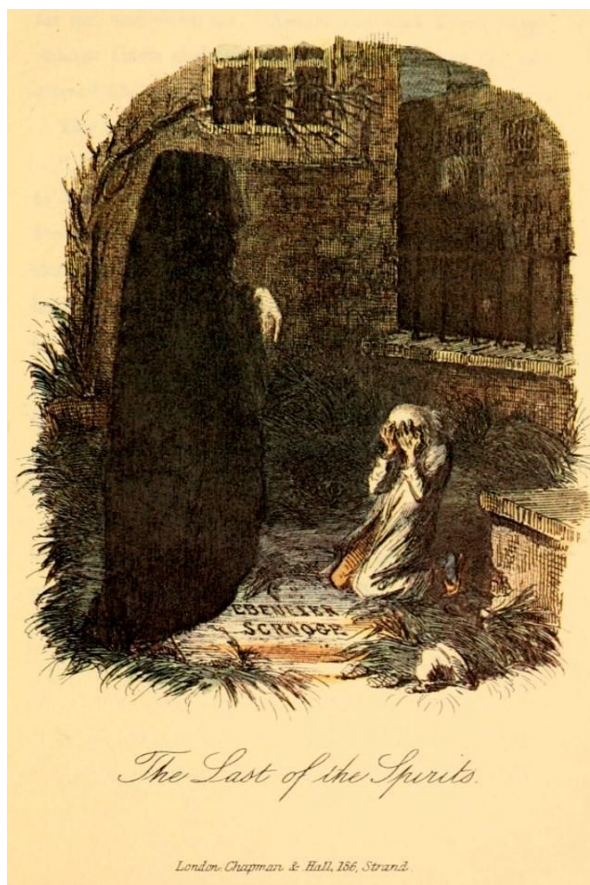
Regret

Regret is instrumental in 'A Christmas Carol' as it plays **a crucial role in Scrooge's transformation**. The three Ghosts all show Scrooge various past actions which enable him to gain hindsight. Through seeing his actions from the perspective of the Ghosts he is shown his cruel and unforgiving actions in a different light, this allows Scrooge to see the error of his ways and gives him motivation to change.

Regret as a tool

Dickens uses regret as a **tool to move the plot along to its final denouement** which is Scrooge's eventual transformation. While **regret is a negative emotion**, Dickens manages to make it something that is used to **initiate a positive transformation**.

There are many **emotions** which are used to push Scrooge to his transformation, regret is a key element to this. The **emotion is a thematic tool** used to drive the plot line forward, an example of this is when Scrooge is taken to his past fiancée Belle and sees the family that he could have had. Scrooge becomes overwhelmed with emotion screaming "**Leave me! Take me back. Haunt me no longer!**" the short sentences express his anger, frustration and maybe even fear. Due to his emotions he takes action he seizes "**the extinguisher-cap, and by a sudden action pressed it down upon its head. The Spirit dropped beneath it**" thus, his emotions lead him to end his time with the Ghost.



Theme Development

Regret is an emotion which is littered throughout the novel as Scrooge has many things in his life which he regrets. Dickens exhibits to the reader through these experiences that while regret may be a powerless emotion, we are able to use it and create actions to change our ways.

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- **The Ghost of Old Marley** - Old Marley demonstrates the extremity of regret as, unlike Scrooge, he is unable to change his ways and is therefore cursed to an eternity of regret. ***“It is doomed to wander through the world—oh, woe is me!—and witness what it cannot share, but might have shared on earth, and turned to happiness!”*** Old Marley expresses his regret for his sinful actions in his life. Marley states that there is ***“no space of regret can make amends for one's life of opportunity misused”*** this is to say that life is an opportunity for everyone to do good and when this is not done it leads to regret which is futile unless we use it to fuel our change.
- **Fanny** - The Ghost of Christmas Past shows Scrooge his younger self with his little sister Fanny. While Scrooge is happy to see her at first he becomes sad as he reveals that she ***“died a woman”*** leaving behind Scrooge's last surviving relative Fred. When Scrooge remembers the way he treated his nephew earlier Scrooge becomes ***“uneasy in his mind”***, meaning he feels guilty for the way that he talked to him.
- **Belle** - In Stave 2 The Ghost of Christmas Past communicates to Scrooge the moment where he started to become the man that he is at the start of the Novella. Belle expressed her disapproval of the man that Scrooge is becoming, one who is only concerned with money and wealth.
- **The Caroller** - As Scrooge reminisces about his childhood years, watching his younger ***“neglected”*** self, he begins to feel regret for the way he behaved towards the little boy who came to sing a carol at his door. Scrooge realises that he should have ***“liked to give him something”***. This a big step for Scrooge as he is a man of business and due to this was very ***“tight-fisted”*** with his money.
- **The Portly Gentlemen** - In Stave 5 it is evident that Scrooge regretted his interaction with the Portly Gentleman as ***“It sent a pang across his heart to think how this old gentleman would look upon him when they met”***.
- **A Christmas present Ignorance and Want** - ***“Scrooge hung his head to hear his own words quoted by the Spirit, and was overcome with penitence and grief.”*** The verb ***“overcome”*** typifies the wave of emotion that has come upon Scrooge as he is able to see his words from another perspective and he is ashamed of them.
- **Ghost of yet to come** - This is the climax of Scrooge's regret where it all comes together and Scrooge acknowledges his mistakes and finally commits to making a change. Scrooge regrets the way he lived his life pleading and asking the Phantom how he ***“may sponge away the writing on this stone!”***, this is the last remark before the Phantom disappears. The exclamation mark in the sentence reflects the conviction which Scrooge, which is why finally after this statement the work of the Ghosts are done.

