



A Christmas Carol Knowledge Organiser

English Literature, Paper 1

Plot

Stave 1 <i>Marley's Ghost</i>	Ebenezer Scrooge is at work in his counting house. Scrooge's turns down his nephew, Fred's, invitation to his Christmas party & the request of two men who want money for charity. Scrooge is visited by the ghost of his dead partner, Jacob Marley, who tells Scrooge that, due to his own greedy life, he has to wander the Earth wearing heavy chains. Marley tries to stop Scrooge from doing the same. He tells Scrooge that three spirits will visit him during the next three nights. Scrooge falls asleep.
Stave 2 <i>The First of the Three Spirits</i>	He wakes and the Ghost of Christmas Past soon appears to him - they embark on a journey into Scrooge's past. Invisible to those he watches, Scrooge revisits his childhood school days; his apprenticeship with a jolly merchant named Fezziwig, & his engagement to Belle, who leaves Scrooge as he loves money too much to love another human being. Scrooge sheds tears of regret before returning to his bed.
Stave 3 <i>The Second of The Three Spirits</i>	Scrooge anticipates the second ghost, sitting up in bed waiting. He is surprised when no spirit arrives. Instead, he follows a light & finds himself in a transformed version of his own room. The Ghost of Christmas Present shows Scrooge Christmas as it happens that year. Scrooge sees the Cratchit family eat a tiny meal in their little home; Bob Cratchit's crippled son, Tiny Tim, whose kindness & humility warm Scrooge's heart and Fred's Christmas party. Toward the end of the day the ghost shows Scrooge two starved child-like figures; Ignorance & Want. He vanishes as Scrooge notices a dark, hooded figure coming.
Stave 4 <i>The Last of the Spirits</i>	The Ghost of Christmas Yet to Come takes Scrooge through a sequence of scenes linked to an unnamed man's death. Scrooge is keen to learn the lesson. He begs to know the name of the dead man. He finds himself in a churchyard with the spirit pointing to a grave. Scrooge looks at the headstone & is shocked to read his own name. He is desperate to change his fate & promises to change his ways. He suddenly finds himself safely tucked in his bed.
Stave 5 <i>The End of It</i>	Scrooge rushes out onto the street hoping to share his newfound Christmas spirit. He sends a turkey to the Cratchit house & goes to Fred's party. As the years go by, he continues to celebrate Christmas with all his heart. He treats Tiny Tim as if he were his own child, gives gifts for the poor & is kind, generous & warm.

Key Vocab	Penitence	Avaricious	Isolated	Misanthropic
Enlightenment	Malthusian	Didactic	Adversity	Rapacious
Ignorant	Exploitation	Hierarchy	Responsibility	Redemption
Atonement	Catharsis	Allegory	Morals	Charity

Key Quotes

Stave 1	'Oh! But he was a tight-fisted hand at the grindstone, Scrooge! A squeezing, wrenching, grasping, scraping, clutching, covetous, old sinner!' 'Hard and sharp as flint' (Flint = hard rock used to make tools) 'Solitary as an oyster' 'I don't make myself merry at Christmas, and I can't afford to make idle people merry.' 'It's enough for a man to mind his own business, and not to interfere with other peoples.' 'Are there no prisons? Are there no workhouses?' 'I wear the chain I forged in life' Jacob Marley
Stave 2	'From the crown of its head there sprung a bright clear jet of light' 'Your lip is trembling," said the Ghost.' 'A solitary child, neglected by his friends' 'The happiness he gives is quite as much as if it cost a fortune.' 'Gain, engrosses you.' "Remove me!" Scrooge exclaimed. "I cannot bear it!"
Stave 3	'Scrooge entered timidly, and hung his head before this Spirit.' 'these young Cratchits danced about the table.' 'To hear the insect on the leaf pronouncing on the too much life amongst his hungry brothers in the dust!' 'No, no...Oh no, kind Spirit! Say he will be spared' 'If he die, he better do it, and decrease the surplus population' 'I am sorry for him [...] Who suffers by his ill whims? Himself, always.' 'This boy is Ignorance. This girl is Want. Beware them both ... They are Man's'
Stave 4	'plundered and bereft, unwatched, unwept, uncared for, was the body of this man' 'Avarice, hard dealing, griping cares? They have brought him to a rich end, truly!' 'Are these the shadows of the things that Will be, or are they the shadows of the things that May be only?' 'The kind hand trembled.'
Stave 5	'No fog, no mist; clear, bright, jovial...heavenly sky, sweet, fresh air' 'I am as light as a feather' / 'as happy as an angel' / 'as merry as a schoolboy' / 'as giddy as a drunken man' 'I don't know anything. I'm quite a baby.' 'His own heart laughed: and that was quite enough for him'

Characters

- **Ebenezer Scrooge** - Selfish business-man who transforms into a charitable philanthropist
- **Fred** - (Scrooge's nephew, complete contrast to Scrooge. Represents Christmas spirit in human form; warm, good-natured.
- **Jacob Marley** - Scrooge's dead business partner who returns as a ghost to warn Scrooge to change his ways
- **Bob Cratchit** - Scrooge's clerk who has little money. Loves his family & is shown to be happy & morally upright.
- **Tiny Tim** - Bob's poorly son whose story plays a part in inspiring Scrooge's transformation.
- **Ghost of Xmas Past** - A thing of contradictions; a combination of young & old, winter & summer, white haired & unwrinkled. The light shining from its head is symbolic; memory, enlightenment, guidance
- **Ghost of Xmas Present** - 'A Jolly giant who bore glowing torch' - personifies everything that is generous & giving about Christmas
- **Ghost of Xmas Yet to Come** - The most 'traditional' spook; robed & hooded- resembles the Grim Reaper. Accompanies Scrooge in darkest part of story.
- **Mrs Cratchit** - Bob's wife, an ideal wife & mother.
- Fezziwig - Scrooge's ex-employer. A role model for how employers should behave.
- **Belle** - A woman Scrooge was in love with who left him because of his greedy nature.
- **Fan** - Scrooge's sister whom he has great affection for when visiting his past

Themes

Attitudes to poverty	Family
Fate	Isolation and loneliness
Charity and Religion	Supernatural
Transformation and Freewill	Christmas
Redemption	Capitalism and Greed

Context

Dickens' biography

- * The second of 8 children
- * 1824 - Father sent to prison for bad debt. *Charles sent to work in a shoe blacking factory, a terrible time for him.
- * He used his childhood experiences in his writing & his sympathy for children in poverty & their families is prevalent.
- * Dickens travelled extensively in Europe & America & spoke out against the Slave Trade - he was a champion of what we would call 'human rights' & his works have a strong moral undertone.
- Ragged Schools** - set up by well-meaning people for the poor in cities, offering free education. For many children this was the only education they received. The need for proper education was a priority for Dickens. After he visited one of these schools he wrote that the pupils were 'abandoned of all help; speeding downwards towards destruction'
- The 1834 poor Law Amendment Act & The Work House** - Introduced to reduce the cost of looking after the poor. After this, if people in poverty wanted help they had to go to the workhouse to get it. The poor were terrified about the prospect of the workhouse as the conditions were appalling. Dickens describes them in 'Oliver Twist'
- Childhood** - The result of the expansion of manufacturing processes & the need for coal was child labour. Children as young as for worked 12-14 hours a day, many dying of disease or being killed or maimed in accidents.
- Class inequality** - In general Victorian Society was divided into classes; upper, middle, working class. The upper class were the ruling class & were afforded luxuries & everything you need to succeed in life, namely a good education & access to health care.
- Malthus (a respected academic & economist)** - Dickens shows his disgust with the Malthusian principle that population will always grow faster than food & should be controlled by diseases & starvation.
- Victorian London** - Throughout most of Dickens' adult life the monarch was Queen Victoria. The Victorian Era was a time of change in many ways, driven by the changing economy in which there was less of a reliance on agriculture & a move into the Industrial Revolution (when goods changed from being made by hand to being made by machines in factories). Britain became a super power & the population, particularly in London, grew rapidly.

Structure and Form

- The novella is narrated by a **didactic third-person narrator**, who manipulates our impression of Scrooge with scathing descriptions of him.
- We sometimes hear Dickens' voice when he adds a touch of comedy: this **authorial intrusion** is designed to win over the reader, making them more agreeable to Dickens' message.
- It is a parable: a **moral story** with a strong message; it is a simple didactic tale.
- It's arranged in **five staves (not chapters)** as a **metaphor** for an actual Christmas carol. It contains musical imagery throughout (eg. Church bells)
- Many of the characters are **allegorical figures**: characters who stand for ideas (Eg. Fred stands for tolerance and forgiveness)
- **Gothic imagery** creates feelings of suspense, fear and tension
- **Circular structure**: Scrooge's change is emphasised. In Stave 5 he makes amends with all those he rejected in Stave 1: charity collectors, caroller in first stave to boy in Sunday clothes, Bob Cratchit (haggling over coal to giving him a raise)