

# Year 7 English Knowledge Booklet

## Unit 4: A Christmas Carol



**Name:**

**Class:**

# Knowledge Organiser contents

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## Big Questions

Our study of *A Christmas Carol* by Charles Dickens will follow the structure below:

<b>Week 1</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How important is the historical context of <i>A Christmas Carol</i>?</li> <li>• What is Dickens' authorial intention when writing <i>A Christmas Carol</i>?</li> <li>• Who is Scrooge?</li> <li>• How was poverty viewed in Victorian London?</li> </ul>
<b>Week 2</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What is the impact of pathetic fallacy?</li> <li>• What is the importance of the supernatural in the novella?</li> <li>• How is Scrooge presented?</li> </ul>
<b>Week 3</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What is the importance of the supernatural in the novella?</li> <li>• How are human relationships presented in the novella?</li> </ul>
<b>Week 4</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How are human relationships presented in the novella?</li> <li>• How is poverty presented as a key element of life in Victorian London?</li> </ul>
<b>Week 5</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How is poverty presented as a key element of life in Victorian London?</li> <li>• How is Christmas explored by Dickens?</li> <li>• How is Dickens' authorial intention presented?</li> </ul>
<b>Week 6</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How does the Ghost of Christmas Yet to Come contrast with the Ghost of Christmas Present?</li> <li>• How is Dickens' authorial intention presented?</li> <li>• How is Scrooge's journey so far presented by Dickens?</li> </ul>
<b>Week 7</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How does Dickens present Scrooge's change? What is his intention?</li> <li>• How do other characters perceive Scrooge in the final Stave? What is Dickens' intention?</li> <li>• What was life like in Victorian London?</li> </ul>
<b>Week 8</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How does Scrooge's character develop throughout the novella? What is Dickens' authorial intention?</li> <li>• How far have I successfully remembered the knowledge from <i>A Christmas Carol</i>?</li> </ul>

# Year 7 – A Christmas Carol- Knowledge Organiser

Plot		Characters		Context	
Preface	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Dickens writes a note to his readers to explain that he wants to introduce an entertaining idea to them</li> </ul>	<p><b>Scrooge:</b> the protagonist who initially dismisses the goodwill and generosity associated with Christmas. After being forced to transform, he becomes a symbol for the Christmas spirit by the end of the novella; he is cheerful and generous. He is a dynamic character (one who evolves).</p>		<p><b>Dickens' message on poverty:</b> Dickens had a comfortable childhood until he was 12 when he father was sent to a debtors' prison and young Dickens had to work in a factory. The harsh conditions made a lasting impression; through his works of social criticism, he sought to draw attention to the plight of the poor.</p>	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The reader is introduced to Ebenezer Scrooge who only cares about making money.</li> <li>It is Christmas Eve and he won't pay to heat his office properly.</li> <li>This means that his clerk, Bob Cratchit is very cold.</li> <li>Scrooge has four Christmas visitors: his nephew, Fred; two charity collectors; and a carol singer. Scrooge is rude to all of them and sends each of them away.</li> <li>That night, the ghost of Jacob Marley (his ex-business partner) appears at Scrooge's house. He tells Scrooge that his mean way of life will lead to misery and that three Ghosts are going to visit him to show him the errors of his ways.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Bob Cratchit and family:</b> Bob is Scrooge's loyal employee. His family are a symbol of Victorian poverty, cheerfulness, diversity, teamwork and Christmas spirit. Bob shows pity for Scrooge, and provides a contrast to Scrooge's isolation.</p>		<p><b>The New Poor Law, 1834:</b> in order to deter poor people from claiming financial help, the government made claimants live in workhouses; essentially, prisons for the poor. Dickens hated this idea. He spent 1843 touring factories and mines in England and wished to highlight the situation facing the poor. <i>A Christmas Carol</i> was published soon after in December 1843.</p>	
Stave 1		<p><b>Fred:</b> is Scrooge's nephew. He serves as another contrast to Scrooge. He epitomises the Christmas spirit of goodwill and refuses to be discouraged by his uncle's misery. Other members of society speak highly of Fred and his generosity which is hugely contrasting to how others speak of Scrooge. Fred shows that Scrooge has specifically chosen his isolated lifestyle.</p>		<p><b>The Industrial Revolution:</b> from 1780, factory owners in Britain began to use coal-fired steam engines to power their factories. Previous to this, rural farming was the more obvious way to make money. The changes between rural work and the manufacturing industry was called the Industrial Revolution; this created many jobs, but also created overcrowding in cities. This overcrowding led to hunger, disease and crime.</p>	
Stave 2		<p><b>The Spirits:</b> The ghosts/spirits/spedres are the antagonists to Scrooge. They force him to see himself as selfish and greedy, and to admit how his behaviour will lead him to a lonely death: a metaphor for how the greed of the wealthy, middle class will lead to a disastrous future for society without change.</p>		<p><b>Dickens' construction of secular Christmas values:</b> until the mid 1800s, Christmas was solely a religious festival. Dickens helped to popularise many of the cultural elements that we now associate with Christmas. This imagery (food, decorations, music) is used throughout the novella. This has contributed to a more secular (non-religious) Christmas, based on goodwill, benevolence and forgiveness.</p>	
Stave 3		<p><b>Themes</b></p> <p><b>Family:</b> throughout the text, family is shown to be a source of comfort, strength and joy.</p> <p><b>Poverty:</b> The Cratchit family are regarded as Dickens' face of the poor in the novella. They are living on the edge and can only just afford the family's needs.</p> <p><b>Social responsibility:</b> Dickens exposes the unfair treatment of the poor and strongly suggests that the wealthy must take responsibility for the poor.</p> <p><b>Education:</b> Dickens emphasises the value of education through his presentation of the two children, Ignorance and Want. He makes us think about the role of education in the fight against poverty.</p>		<p><b>Vocabulary</b></p> <p><b>endeavour:</b> try hard to do or achieve something.</p> <p><b>spectre:</b> a ghost; something widely feared as a possible unpleasant or dangerous occurrence</p> <p><b>apparition:</b> a ghost, or ghostlike image of a person.</p> <p><b>perplexed:</b> completely baffled; very puzzled.</p> <p><b>onslaught:</b> a fierce or destructive attack</p> <p><b>irrepressible:</b> not able to be controlled or restrained.</p> <p><b>conspicuous:</b> attracting notice or attention.</p> <p><b>apprehensive:</b> anxious or fearful that something bad or unpleasant will happen.</p> <p><b>heresy:</b> belief or opinion contrary to orthodox religious (especially Christian) doctrine.</p> <p><b>exorcism:</b> a distinct outgrowth on a body or plant, resulting from disease or abnormality.</p> <p><b>extravagance:</b> excessive elaboration.</p> <p><b>illustrious:</b> well-known, respected and admired for past achievements.</p> <p><b>redemption:</b> the action of saving or being saved from sin, error or evil.</p>	
Stave 4		<p><b>The supernatural:</b> refers to events or beings that are unhuman. Dickens enjoyed writing in this genre as it allowed stories to go beyond normal human experience.</p> <p><b>Isolation:</b> Dickens demonstrates the need for companionship and company throughout the novella.</p> <p><b>Redemption:</b> Dickens argues that the very worst people in society can find redemption: they must choose to change their ways.</p>		<p><b>pendulous:</b> hanging down loosely.</p> <p><b>resolution:</b> the action of solving a problem or contentious matter.</p> <p><b>malady:</b> a disease or ailment.</p> <p><b>isolation:</b> to be without relation to other people or things; separately.</p>	
Stave 5		<p>The Ghost of Christmas Past shows Scrooge his unhappy childhood. They visit the house of Scrooge's first employer, Fezziwig, who is holding a Christmas party. Scrooge notices how much happiness can be obtained from very little money. Scrooge sees himself as a young man with Belle, the woman he was engaged to marry. Belle breaks off their engagement because she thinks Scrooge loves money more than he loves her.</p> <p>The Ghost of Christmas Present takes Scrooge to visit Christmas preparations at the Cratchit household. Scrooge learns that Tiny Tim will not survive unless the future changes. This realisation upsets Scrooge. The Ghost takes Scrooge to see different groups of people enjoying themselves at Christmas. Scrooge sees his nephew, Fred, with his family. They are discussing Scrooge and Fred is in full ploy for him. At the end of the night, the Ghost shows Scrooge two children: Ignorance and Want. The spectre says they belong to Man and warns Scrooge to beware of them both, but especially to beware of Ignorance.</p> <p>The mysterious Ghost of Christmas Yet to come takes Scrooge into the future to witness different conversations about a dead man. No one cares that this man has died, and the thieves have so little respect for him that they have stolen the clothes from his dead body. In contrast, the Ghost then takes Scrooge to see the Cratchits who are deeply upset because Tiny Tim has died. Finally, Scrooge is shown a gravestone with his own name on it. He realises that he is the dead man whom the people were talking about. He promises to change his ways.</p> <p>Waking up in his own bed, back in the present, Scrooge is delighted to be given a second chance and makes Christmas happy for everyone. He sends a turkey to the Cratchits, gives money to the charity collectors, and joins Fred for Christmas. The next day, he raises Bob's wages and promises to become a friend to Tiny Tim, who has not died.</p>			

## Additional terminology

	<b>Term</b>	<b>Definition</b>
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# Homework

The tasks below represent only part of what you can do to enhance and develop your understanding of the text. This is a challenging text and there is lots you can be doing to develop your understanding of it.

Knowledge is power, so the more you know, the more secure you will be in your learning.

Year 7 Unit 4 Homework: <i>A Christmas Carol</i>		
<b>Task 1:</b> Homework quiz will take place during Week 2, Lesson 3	Date:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Study the key vocabulary in the knowledge grid on p.3 of this Knowledge Organiser</li><li>• Learn the definitions for the key terms as well as the spellings</li><li>• You will be tested on 10 of these (of your teacher's choice) in W2, L3.</li></ul>
<b>Task 2:</b> Homework quiz will take place during Week 5, Lesson 3	Date:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Read the first Wider Reading text <i>Origins of A Christmas Carol</i> (pp.11-13 of this Knowledge Organiser)</li><li>• You will be tested on the content of the article<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>○ You might like to make some key notes or highlight key parts and annotate your thoughts to help your understanding of this article</li></ul></li></ul>
<b>Task 3:</b> Homework quiz will take place during Week 7, Lesson 1	Date:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Read the second Wider Reading text <i>Ghosts in A Christmas Carol</i> (pp.14-15 of this Knowledge Organiser)</li><li>• You will be tested on the content of the article</li><li>• You might like to make some key notes or highlight key parts and annotate your thoughts to help your understanding of this article</li></ul>

If you have 'no homework', or you have finished all of the above, try these tasks on a weekly basis to ensure your understanding of the story is secure.

1. Research *A Christmas Carol* and make some revision notes on the story that you have read so far. These notes could include characters (Scrooge, Marley, Bob Cratchit, Fred etc.), the content of each of the chapters including an analysis of the title of the chapter, themes in the novel (poverty, wealth, Christmas, family, memories etc.)
2. Research Charles Dickens and others works that he has produced. Are there any common themes?

# Reviews of the text

Ghosts and Goodwill in the ultimate Christmas story. It is Christmas Eve in Victorian London, and all around the snow-covered city people are rushing home to be with their families. All except one man, that is: Ebenezer Scrooge. A wealthy old miser whose only joy in life is money, Scrooge decides to spend the evening counting his cash, rejecting seasonal goodwill with well-practiced cries of 'Bah! Humbug!'

But this Christmas Eve there are some surprises in store for old Scrooge. While his poor and put-upon employee Bob Cratchit prepares the finest family feast his paltry wages can buy, Scrooge's sleep is disturbed by the Ghosts of Christmas Past, Present and Yet to Come. In one short night they reveal more to him about his true character than he has ever realised himself. As Christmas Day dawns, Scrooge is forced to confront the spectre of his own mean existence.

A Christmas Carol was published in December 1843, at a time when medieval Christmas traditions were in steady decline. Indeed, Dickens's heart-warming tale has been seen as a major turning point; the popularity of its lamp-lit setting and its diverse characters – from the wonderfully wicked Scrooge to the crippled but optimistic Tiny Tim – helped ensure that family unity and 'goodwill to all men' once more became the appropriate sentiments of the Christmas season. At the same time, Dickens used the poverty-stricken Cratchit family's dependence on hard-hearted Scrooge to highlight the Victorian working class's daily struggle against the indifference of the greedy.

The book's importance was cemented at Christmas 1852, when Dickens undertook public readings of it before both educated and working-class audiences. The success of these events led to public readings becoming a major part of his later career, usually featuring A Christmas Carol. The novella's short length and strong moral message have ensured that it has become one of Dickens's most well-known classics.

Charles Dickens was born in Portsmouth, England, in 1812, the second of eight children. His father, John Dickens, struggled financially and as a result the Dickens family found themselves almost constantly on the move. The dire situation culminated in John being sent to a debtors' prison and twelve-year-old Charles being sent to work at a London blacking factory, sticking labels onto jars of boot polish. Dickens's difficult childhood had an enormous influence on the subjects he later tackled and his experience of both poverty and prison would reappear throughout his novels, particularly in David Copperfield (1850) and Great Expectations (1861).

After eventually returning to his education, Dickens became a newspaper reporter. He indulged his passion for writing humorous sketches under the nickname 'Boz', and his first publication, Sketches by Boz, appeared in 1836. Its serialisation earned him acclaim and popularity, and led to further publishing commissions. Dickens' best loved books include Oliver Twist (1839), A Christmas Carol (1843) and A Tale of Two Cities (1859). Acutely observed characters and a witty but brutally satirical depiction of Victorian society remain his trademarks.

Dickens and his wife Catherine had ten children but their unfulfilling marriage ended in separation. He travelled widely and eventually moved to Kent, England, where he died in 1870, leaving his last novel, The Mystery of Edwin Drood, incomplete. He is buried in London's Westminster Abbey.

<https://www.fantasybookreview.co.uk/Charles-Dickens/A-Christmas-Carol.html>

There is not, in all literature, a book more thoroughly saturated with the spirit of its subject than Dickens's "Christmas Carol," and there is no book about Christmas that can be counted its peer. To follow old Scrooge through the ordeal of loving discipline whereby the ghosts arouse his heart is to be warmed in every fibre of mind and body with the gentle, bountiful, ardent, affectionate Christmas glow. Read at any season of the year, this genial story never fails to quicken the impulses of tender and thoughtful charity. Read at the season of the Christian festival, its pure, ennobling influence is felt to be stronger and sweeter than ever. As you turn its magical pages, you hear the midnight moaning of the winter wind, the soft rustle of the falling snow, the rattle of the hail on naked branch and window-pane and the far-off tumult of tempest-smitten seas; but also there comes a vision of snug and cosy rooms, close-curtained from night and storm, wherein the lights burn brightly, and the sound of merry music mingles with the sound of merrier laughter, and all is warmth and kindness and happy content, and, looking on these pictures, you feel the full reality of cold and want and sorrow as contrasted with warmth and comfort, and recognize anew the sacred duty of striving, by all possible means, to give to every human being a cheerful home and a happy fireside. The sanctity of that duty is the moral of Christmas, and of the "Christmas Carol." That such a book should find an enduring place in the affectionate admiration of mankind is an inevitable result of the highest moral and mental excellence. Conceived in a mood of large human sympathy, and expressed in a delicately fanciful yet admirably simple form of art, it addresses alike the unlettered and the cultivated, it touches the humblest as well as the highest order of mind, and it satisfies every rational standard of taste. So truly

is this work an inspiration, that the thought about its art is always an afterthought. So faithfully and entirely does it give voice to the universal Christmas sentiment, that it seems the perfect reflex of every reader's ideas and feelings thereupon. There are a few other books of this kind in the world, — in which Genius does, at once and forever, what ambling Talent had always been vainly trying to do, — and these make up the small body of literature which is "for all time."

In the embellishment of these literary treasures, therefore, there is a wise economy and an obvious beneficence; and the publishers of this edition have made a most sagacious and kindly choice of their principal Christmas book for the present season. Their "Illustrated Edition of Dickens's Christmas Carol" comes betimes with the first snow; and its beautiful pages will assuredly, and very speedily, be lit up by a ruddy glow from many a Christmas hearth throughout the land. The book is a royal octavo, containing one hundred and twelve pages, printed from large, neat, clear-faced type, on satin-surfaced paper, delicately tinted with the color of cream. It was printed at the University Press by Messrs. Welch, Bigelow, & Co., and is an enduring emblem of their skill and taste, affording as it does the best of proof that they have done their work with heart as well as hand. Its illustrations—thirty-six in number—are from the poetic pencil of Eytinge; and the engraving has been done by Anthony. These pictures, of course, constitute the novel feature of the book. A few of them are little head and tail pieces, which may briefly be dismissed as simple, neat, and appropriate. Twenty of them, however, are full-page drawings, while five smaller ones are captions for the five chapters of the story. Viewed altogether, they form the best effort and fullest expression that the public has yet seen of Eytinge's genius. They show the heartiest possible sympathy with the spirit of the "Christmas Carol," and a comprehensive and acute perception as well of its scenic ideals as of its character portraits. They have not only the merit of being true to the book, but the merit of representing the artist's individual thought and feeling in respect to its momentous themes, — love, happiness, charity, sorrow, bereavement, the shocking aspects of vice and squalor, the bitterness of death, and the solemn consolations of religion. He has put his nature into his work, and it therefore has an independent and abiding life. How deep and delicate are his perceptions of the melancholy side of things may be seen in such drawings as that which depicts the miserable Scrooge, crouching on his own grave, at the feet of the Spirit, and that which shows poor Bob Cratchit kneeling at the bedside, and mourning over Tiny Tim. The pictures of Scrooge, gazing with faltering terror on the covered corpse upon the despoiled bed, and of Want and Ignorance, typified by the wretched children that are seen to wallow in a city gutter, have a kindred significance. In striking contrast with these, and expressive of as quick a sympathy with common joys as with common sorrows, are the sketches of domestic scenes, as the humble home of Bob Cratchit, — a character, by the way, that the artist has intuitively realized and reproduced from a mere hint in the story. The sentiment, the family characteristics, and the minute elaboration of accurate detail, in these Cratchit pictures, are conspicuous and admirable. No intelligent observer can miss or fail to like them. The life of the drawings, too, is abundant. In looking on Bob's face you may hear his question, "Why, where's our Martha?" as clearly as if his living voice sounded in your ears. This quality is evident again in the character-portrait entitled "On 'Change,'" wherein three representative moneyed men are commenting, in a repulsive vein of hard, gross selfishness, on the death of their fellow money-grubber. This is one of the boldest and best of the illustrations. Kindred with it in force of character are the sketches of the philanthropists soliciting Scrooge's charity, and the foul old thieves haggling over their plunder from the miser's bed of death. Loathsome depravity of body and mind has seldom been so well denoted as in the faces in this latter drawing. Here, again, the artist has built upon a mere hint, except in the reproduction of the accessories of the dismal scene. The habit of close and constant observation of actual life, as well as of human nature, is evinced in such work as this, — a habit clearly natural to this artis, and as clearly strengthened by long, careful, and cherished communion with the works of Dickens. Perfect distinctness is one of the great virtues of those works, and that virtue reappears in these pictures. Every individual has been clearly conceived by the artist. There is but one Scrooge, even in the sketches which so hilariously illustrate his wonderful transformation. There is but one Bob Cratchit, whether carrying his little child along the wintry street, or sitting at his Christmas dinner, or bending beside the bare, cold, lonely bed of death, or staggering backward from the frisky presence of his regenerated employer. This vivid clearness of execution shows the essential control of intellect over fancy, — always a characteristic of the true artist. Fancy has none the less its full play in these drawings, and a genial heart beats under them, prompt alike to pity and to enjoy. The appreciative observer will also perceive, with cordial relish, their frequent poetic mood. One of them illustrates the single phrase, "They stood beside the helmsman at the wheel," and is a very vivid reproduction of the mystical, awesome presence of darkness on the waters. The moon looks dimly through the clouds. The light-house lamp is shining over the dark line of distant coast. On speeds the vessel, guided by the firm hand of the resolute helmsman, with whom, as you gaze, you seem to feel the rush of the night-wind and hear the sob and splash of the wintry waves. The artist who labors thus does not labor in vain. Mr. Eytinge is the best of the illustrators of Dickens, and it is his right that this fact should be distinctly stated. His work in this instance has received the heartiest co-operation of the best of American engravers; for Mr. Anthony is not a mere copyist of lines, but an engraver who, in a kindred mood with the artist, preserves the spirit no less than the form, and who has won his highest and amplest success in this beautiful Christmas book.

<https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/1868/12/classic-review-christmas-carol-charles-dickens/578461/>

# Example analytical writing

## How is the development of the character of Scrooge presented in *A Christmas Carol*?

At the beginning of the novella, Scrooge is presented as rude, selfish and abrupt with any other person. He is not a pleasant person. However, his experiences with Marley's ghost and the three spirits of Christmas allow Scrooge to reflect on his actions in the past, and with his future being played out in front of him, encourage him to change his ways to become a more likeable, joyful and life-affirming character by the end of Stave Five.

At the beginning of the text, Scrooge is described as being "secret, self-contained, and solitary as an oyster". This interesting simile used by Dickens presents Scrooge as being withdrawn and a character with hidden qualities. This is suggestive of Scrooge enjoying his own company and that he prefers to be by himself rather than having to interact with others. The noun "oyster" potentially shows that Scrooge has two sides to his character. The outside of an "oyster" is hard and uninviting, just like Scrooge, but the inside is soft, fascinating and engaging. This could perhaps be what Scrooge is like underneath his hard, shell-like exterior. Maybe Scrooge has two sides; the inside might need help to be unveiled. The Victorian reader could dislike Scrooge's initial character due to the harsh and isolating nature of his character. Dickens, however, wanted to show his reader that everyone has the ability to change given the opportunity, and Scrooge does just this by the end of the novella.

When interacting with the Ghost of Christmas Past, Scrooge demonstrates his demanding and selfish nature with a range of exclamatory, interrogative and imperative statements when he is speaking to the spirit. He shouts "Spirit! said Scrooge, 'show me no more! Conduct me home. Why do you delight to torture me?'" The fact that Scrooge uses exclamatory statements demonstrates Scrooge's ability to show emotion, which he has been unable to do previous to this point in the novella; Scrooge expresses his anxieties and distress through annoyance. The exclamatory statements illustrate Scrooge's discomfort, to the point where he has to raise his voice and use a stern tone: he is distressed by what he has seen in his own past, and it is making him feel uncomfortable with his own past. The imperative phrase "conduct me home" reinforces this too. The imperative verb "conduct" clearly shows that Scrooge is in the hands of the Spirit, as he is unsure how to get out of his own mind. The use of the noun "home" also demonstrates that Scrooge needs to be within a comfortable space, his "home", so that he is surrounded by all things that he knows and understands: he does not want to understand the situation that he is currently in.

Despite Scrooge's adamant and strong-willed personality at the beginning of the novella, he is changed by the spirits that visit him. By the end of Stave Five, Scrooge exclaims that he is "as light as a feather, [...] as happy as an angel, [...] as merry as a schoolboy, [...] as giddy as a drunken man." The successive use of similes proves that Scrooge is trying to validate his change to himself, and then others. He compares himself to other well-known nouns in order to do this. Scrooge compares himself to an "angel" in this, demonstrating the religious understanding that he has now gained about life: he understands that he needs to become more generous, happy and kind-hearted. The fact that the noun "angel" has been used exhibits Scrooge's eagerness to become the most pleasant of people, as he wants to become angelic. The Victorian and contemporary reader would see a huge change in Scrooge from the beginning to the end of the novella. Dickens truly wanted society to understand that people do have the ability to change, given the right guidance.

## Example analytical writing: commentary

- This is a strong response to the task
- There are well-selected quotations embedded in the response
- Subject terminology is used accurately
- The student carefully explores the effect of the quotations
- The character of Scrooge is consistently the focus

# Example analytical writing: the reading mark scheme

	Response	Language/Structure analysis
<b>Level 4</b> <b>16-20 marks</b> perceptive and detailed analysis	<b>Shows a perceptive understanding of the text, engaging fully, perhaps with some originality.</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Pertinent, direct references from across the text</li> <li>Sensitive and evaluative approach</li> <li>Critical analysis of text</li> </ul>	<b>Shows detailed and perceptive understanding of language and structure.</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Analyses the effects of the writer's choices of language</li> <li>Selects a judicious range of textual detail</li> <li>Makes sophisticated and accurate use of subject terminology</li> <li>Analyses the effects of the writer's choice of structural features</li> </ul>
<b>Level 3</b> <b>11-15 marks</b> clear, relevant explanation	<b>Shows a secure understanding of key aspects of a text, with considerable engagement.</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Supported and justified with well-chosen direct references</li> <li>Thoughtful approach to the task</li> </ul>	<b>Shows clear understanding of language and structure.</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Explains clearly the effects of the writer's choices of language</li> <li>Selects a range of relevant textual detail</li> <li>Makes clear and accurate use of subject terminology</li> <li>Explains clearly the effects of the writer's choice of structural features</li> </ul>
<b>Level 2</b> <b>6-10 marks</b> some understanding and comment	<b>Shows some understanding of key aspects of a text, perhaps with engagement.</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Support and justify with references to the text</li> <li>Straightforward approach to the task</li> </ul>	<b>Shows some understanding of language and structure.</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Attempts to comment on the effect of language</li> <li>Selects some appropriate textual detail</li> <li>Makes some use of subject terminology, mainly appropriately</li> <li>Attempts to comment on the effect of structural features</li> </ul>
<b>Level 1</b> <b>1-5 marks</b> Simple, limited comment	<b>Basic understanding of some key aspects of. Text, with emerging engagement.</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>May support ideas with references to the text</li> <li>Simple approach to the task</li> </ul>	<b>Shows simple awareness of language and structure.</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Offers simple comment on the effect of language</li> <li>Selects simple references or textual details</li> <li>Makes simple use of subject terminology, not always appropriately</li> <li>Offers simple comment on the effect of structure</li> </ul>
<b>0 marks</b>	<b>Nothing worthy of credit.</b>	<b>Nothing worthy of credit.</b>

# British Library: Charles Dickens

<https://www.bl.uk/people/charles-dickens>

Charles Dickens is perhaps as famous today as he was in his lifetime, the author of 15 novels, five novellas, and countless stories and essays, he also generously promoted the careers of other novelists in his weekly journals, and concerned himself with social issues. He excelled in writing about London settings and grotesque and comic characters (Uriah Heep and Fagin, Miss Havisham and Scrooge, the Artful Dodger and Sam Weller).

He was born in Portsmouth on 7 February 1812, son of John Dickens, a feckless and improvident navy clerk with a great love for literature, and his wife Elizabeth: Charles drew an ironically affectionate portrait of them in Mr and Mrs Micawber (*David Copperfield*). A happy childhood in Chatham, during which he read voraciously, ended with a move to London in 1822. Family poverty meant the young Charles had to earn money, and he spent a humiliating year labelling bottles in a blacking factory; during this period, his father was imprisoned for debt. Both experiences informed later novels.

After leaving school, he became a parliamentary journalist and sketch-writer. He first won fame in 1836 with the antics of the cockney sportsmen portrayed in *The Pickwick Papers*, which was issued in 20 monthly parts. In the same year he married Catherine Hogarth, daughter of *Evening Chronicle* editor, George Hogarth; they had 10 children.

Next, written in monthly instalments with prodigious speed, came *Oliver Twist* (1838) and the semi-comedic *Nicholas Nickleby* (1839). Dickens soon graduated to writing the complex and resonant masterpieces that have ensured his enduring fame, including *David Copperfield* (1850), *Bleak House* (1853), *Great Expectations* (1861) and *Our Mutual Friend* (1865).

An enthusiast for the theatre, he enjoyed performing his own works, and twice toured America lecturing. After the collapse of his marriage in 1858, he continued his liaison with the actress Nelly Ternan. He died of a stroke in 1870, leaving *The Mystery of Edwin Drood* unfinished.

Further information about the life of Charles Dickens can be found [here](https://www.oxforddnb.com/view/10.1093/ref:odnb/9780198614128.001.0001/odnb-9780198614128-e-7599) via the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*. (<https://www.oxforddnb.com/view/10.1093/ref:odnb/9780198614128.001.0001/odnb-9780198614128-e-7599>)

# Wider reading 1: Origins of *A Christmas Carol*

Sutherland, P. 2014. *The Origins of A Christmas Carol*. [Online]. British Library. [Accessed April 2020]. Accessed from: <https://www.bl.uk/romantics-and-victorians/articles/the-origins-of-a-christmas-carol>

## **Professor John Sutherland considers how Dickens's *A Christmas Carol* engages with Victorian attitudes towards poverty, labour and the Christmas spirit.**

Prince Albert – the newly installed husband of Queen Victoria – is popularly associated with institutionalising the British family Christmas, an institution which is still with us. It was Albert, for example, who brought from his native Germany the *tannenbaum*, or Christmas Tree. 1841 is the normally given as the date for this happy importation. The Christmas tree replaced the traditional British 'yule log' – wood designed to give winter warmth, not something to deck with pretty lights, fairies, favours and (round its base) presents. Both the *tannenbaum* and the Yule log (along with mistletoe) were incorporated into Christian festivity from pre-Christian pagan rituals associated with the seasonal turn of the year – the rebirth of the land and the green gods. There is no Biblical warrant for Christ's day of birth being 25 December.

Shortly after the arrival of the Christmas tree into the British parlour, Dickens, with *A Christmas Carol*, institutionalised what one could call the modern 'spirit of Christmas'. Dickens subtitled his story 'A Ghost Story for Christmas'. The ghosts are imported from folklore and legend, not the Christian gospels.

### Money lending, scratching pens and ghosts

*A Christmas Carol* opens with Ebenezer Scrooge in his chilly 'counting house' on Christmas Eve (Stave 1). Outside London, the 'great wen' is shrouded in filthy brown fog. It is the 'hungry forties'. The 1840s saw huge distress among the working classes and mass starvation in Ireland. 'Chartism' (a working-class reformist movement) raised the fearful possibility of revolution. It was a nervous time.

### How a society treats its children

How a society treats its children, Dickens believed, is the true test of that society's moral worth. His religious beliefs were complicated, as are most people's. But very simply, he favoured the New Testament over the Old. He wrote a version of the gospels for his own children, *The Life of our Lord*, four years after *A Christmas Carol*. Dickens, we can assume from the centrality of childish innocence in his fiction, was particularly moved by Christ's injunction: 'Except ye ... become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven'. Christmas celebrates the birth of a child. So does all Dickens's great fiction: not least *A Christmas Carol*.

The first stirrings of the tale can be found in a visit Dickens made to Manchester a month before he began writing. One of the great orators of his time (only fragments of his eloquence, alas, survive) he spoke at the city's Athenaeum on 5 October.

It was a memorable evening for those present, and those who read accounts of the speech in the next day's papers. As Dickens's biographer, Michael Slater, describes:

Dickens dwelt on the terrible sights he had seen among the juvenile population in London's jails and doss-houses and stressed the desperate need for educating the poor. This occasion seems to have put into his mind the idea for a [Christmas Eve tale] which should help to open the hearts of the prosperous and powerful towards the poor and powerless but which

should also bring centrally into play the theme of memory that, as we have seen, was always so strongly associated with Christmas for him.

The Athenaeum speech was also an opening shot in his campaign, which bore fruit eight years later, to get a public library for the adult working classes in the city. Nor were children forgotten. They too needed the printed word. In the early 1840s Dickens took a particular interest in 'ragged schools'. As he described them, in an article in 1846:

The name implies the purpose. They who are too ragged, wretched, filthy, and forlorn, to enter any other place: who could gain admission into no charity school, and who would be driven from any church door; are invited to come in here, and find some people not depraved, willing to teach them something, and show them some sympathy, and stretch a hand out, which is not the iron hand of Law, for their correction.

### Industry, poverty and utilitarianism

Manchester – the 'workshop of the world' – was famous not merely for its industry but the utilitarian philosophy that drove it. It may not be clear what Scrooge's line of business is. But his beliefs, before his change of heart, are crystal clear – pure Manchester.

'Are there no workhouses?' he asks, when the two gentleman ask for a charitable donation. If the poor die (like the poor woman outside his house) it will, he says, solve 'the surplus population' problem (Stave 3; Stave 1). Concern with over-population had been stimulated by the stern philosophy of Thomas Robert Malthus who foresaw catastrophe for England if its masses were not 'checked' by famine, war, or disease. For the more thoughtful, the anxiety was fostered by the census which, since 1821, had been counting how many inhabitants there were in the country. In 1841 the figure was approaching 29 million – there were serious doubts as to whether British agriculture could feed them, something which led to the repeal of the Corn Laws, in 1846, allowing cereals to be imported from the New World.

The 1840s were not merely 'hungry' but hard hearted. It was a philosophy embodied in Ebenezer Scrooge – not merely a solitary miser (like, for example, George Eliot's Silas Marner) but the 'spirit of the age' in human (and, arguably, inhuman) form. Hard heads, hard hearts, good business. Soft heads and soft hearts lead to the bankruptcy court, Scrooge would have said. Dickens disagreed.

Children worked, like slaves, in Manchester factories (as Michael Slater points out, the chimneys in the background of John Leech's illustration of the destitute children 'Ignorance and Want' are more reminiscent of Manchester's industrial landscape than of London streets). Six months after *A Christmas Carol* was published the 1844 Factories Act decreed, however, that 9–13 year olds could only work nine hours a day, six days a week. This was regarded as a humane reform.

Why were they wanted for this work? Children were cheap labour but, more importantly, their fingers were small and dexterous. But the machines were dangerous. There were crippled Tiny Tims by the hundred in Manchester.

The modern reader – of whatever age – is less sensitive to sentimentality than our Victorian forebears. At Dickens's readings from his novels, audiences would regularly be moved to open tears by, for example, the death of Little Nell in *The Old Curiosity Shop*, or the murder of Nancy in *Oliver Twist*. One suspects that many Victorian tears were shed over the foreseen (but happily forestalled) death of Tiny Tim.

Dickens designed the externals of his book with the meticulous care he applied to its contents. It would be, he instructed his publishers, a handsome five-shilling production: 'Brown-salmon fine-ribbed cloth, blocked

in blind and gold on front; in gold on the spine ... all edges gilt'. Dickens spared no expense. John Leech's half-dozen illustrations should be coloured, he instructed. The result was a book whose production costs, and relatively high price (five shillings), meant that this most popular of works returned, on its first 5,000-copy print run, small profit for Dickens.

The first edition shot off the bookshop shelves even before Christmas Day 1843. And *A Christmas Carol* has sold massively ever since. It is the most filmed, and TV-adapted of his works. And, one suspects, as long as there is Christmas, there will be Dickens's wonderful tale alongside it and Tiny Tim's benediction, 'God Bless Us, Everyone'.

## Wider reading 2: Ghosts in *A Christmas Carol*

Mullan, J. 2014. *Ghosts in A Christmas Carol*. [Online]. [Accessed April 2020]. Available from: <https://www.bl.uk/romantics-and-victorians/articles/ghosts-in-a-christmas-carol>

**The ghosts in *A Christmas Carol* are by turns comic, grotesque and allegorical. Professor John Mullan reflects on their essential role in developing the novel's meaning and structure.**

There had been ghosts in literature before the Victorians, but the ghost story as a distinct and popular genre was the invention of the Victorians. Charles Dickens was hugely influential in establishing the genre's popularity – not only as a writer but also as an editor: his journals *Household Words* and *All the Year Round* specialised in ghost stories, and other contemporary journals followed. Dickens's close friend and biographer John Forster said that the novelist had 'a hankering after ghosts'. Not that Dickens exactly believed in ghosts – but he was intrigued by our belief in them. In *A Christmas Carol* (1843), the first of his ghost stories, he harnesses that belief by making the supernatural a natural extension of the real world of Scrooge and his victims. This is a long way from the spectres of earlier Gothic fiction.

### The terrible and the comic

The first strictly supernatural sight in the story is the door knocker on the outside door of Scrooge's chambers that metamorphoses, as the miser looks at it, into the face of his former partner, Jacob Marley, dead for seven years. 'The hair curiously stirred, as if by breath or hot-air; and though the eyes were wide open, they were perfectly motionless'. Yet Dickens's sense of fantasy brings the horrible and comic together: in the surrounding gloom, the face has 'a dismal light about it, like a bad lobster in a dark cellar'. The weird mix of the terrible and the comic is kept up when Marley's ghost finally appears carrying its chain of cash-boxes, keys, padlocks and the like. Like a parody ghost, its body is transparent, as Scrooge observes. 'Scrooge had often heard it said that Marley had no bowels, but he had never believed it until now' (Stave 1).

### City of spectres and animated objects

On Christmas Eve the city is itself a place of spectres where 'it had not been light all day'. Outside Scrooge's counting house, the fog is so dense 'that although the court was of the narrowest, the houses opposite were mere phantoms'. The bell in a nearby church tower strikes the hours and quarters 'as if its teeth were chattering in its frozen head up there'. After Marley's Ghost has left him, Scrooge looks out of his window and sees 'the air filled with phantoms', many of them chained souls who had once been known to Scrooge (Stave 1). It is like a fantastic vision of the city that Scrooge already knows well. Like Macbeth, Scrooge, because of his sins, sees visions that are for him alone.

### Allegory and morality

The apparitions are inescapable. 'Show me no more!' Scrooge cries to the Ghost of Christmas Past. What he sees is a punishment to him. 'But the relentless Ghost pinioned him in both his arms, and forced him to observe what happened next' (Stave 2). The phantom as literary device enables Dickens to explore the social and moral issues central to his fiction: – poverty, miserliness, guilt, redemption.

The ghosts borrow in their appearance from a tradition of allegory. There is the strange child/old man that is Christmas Past, clutching a branch of holly yet trimmed with summer flowers. There is the large and avuncular Ghost of Christmas Present, tinged more and more with age as his visions draw to their close. And there is 'The Phantom' that is the Ghost of Christmas Yet to Come, shrouded and 'stately' and mysterious. Their shapes tell you about author's moral design.

### Structure and time-consciousness

The ghosts give the story its irresistibly logical structure, and make Scrooge think that he is prepared for each succeeding visitation. Preparing to meet the second of the three spirits, 'nothing between a baby and a rhinoceros would have astonished him very much' (Stave 3). But of course he is surprised. The Ghost of Christmas Present surprises him by showing him flashes of humour and happiness in the most unlikely of circumstances. And when Scrooge sees the visions revealed by the third of the spirits, he naturally fails to recognise what the reader knows from the first: that the dead man, abandoned after the scavengers have done with him, is himself.

Marley's Ghost announces them. 'You will be haunted ... by Three Spirits' (Stave 1). Scrooge is even told at what times they will appear. The ghosts bring fatality to the narrative: Scrooge cannot resist the visions they set before him. He must awake at the destined times to encounter the world that he has made for himself. Time-consciousness is built into the narrative (those bells). The ghosts have only their allotted spans. 'My time is nearly gone,' says Marley's Ghost. 'My time grows short,' observes the first of the three spirits, 'quick!' (Stave 1; Stave 2). Chronology is of the essence: Christmas is a special day made all the more significant by the unfolding of these visions at their hours. On Christmas Eve Marley's Ghost tells Scrooge of three visits in three consecutive nights, but he wakes to find that it is Christmas Day. 'The Spirits have done it all in one night' – which means that he still has the day to redeem himself (Stave 5).

*A Christmas Carol* is a brilliant narrative success, and was a huge commercial coup. It forged the association between Christmas and ghost stories, and led Dickens to write a series of such tales for Christmas. It also showed how the genre worked best within limitations of time and length, so that the short story and the novella were best suited to ghostly tales. Dickens had set a new literary fashion in motion.



## Wider reading list

### Other novels by Charles Dickens

***Oliver Twist*** (1839)

The story of an orphaned child born into a workhouse who is sold as an apprentice to an undertaker.

***The Old Curiosity Shop*** (1840)

The plot follows the life of Nell Trent and her grandfather, both residents of The Old Curiosity Shop in London. Queen Victoria read the novel in 1941 and found it "very interesting and cleverly written."

***Great Expectations*** (1861)

The development and life of an orphaned child called Pip.

### Other 19<sup>th</sup> Century Novels

***Frankenstein*** (1818) by Mary Shelley

This novel tells the story of Victor Frankenstein, a young scientist who creates a hideous sapient creature in an unorthodox scientific experiment.

***Pride and Prejudice*** (1813) by Jane Austen

The novel follows the character development of Elizabeth Bennet, the dynamic protagonist of the book who learns about the repercussions of hasty judgments and comes to appreciate the difference between superficial goodness and actual goodness.

***Jane Eyre*** (1847) by Charlotte Bronte

The story follows the experiences of its eponymous heroine, including her growth to adulthood and her love for Mr. Rochester, the brooding master of Thornfield Hall.

### Film Adaptations ...be careful of plot changes!

***A Christmas Carol*** (2009) directed by Robert Zemeckis

***The Muppet Christmas Carol*** (1992) directed by Brian Henson