

Knowledge Organiser— A CHRISTMAS CAROL GCSE



Main Characters

Ebenezer Scrooge	Elderly miser forced to see the errors of his selfish ways.	<i>mean cantankerous antisocial bitter miserly parsimonious avaricious curmudgeonly misanthropic redeemed contrite remorseful</i>
Fred	Scrooge's nephew, son to Scrooge's beloved sister Fan. Tries to reconcile himself with Scrooge.	<i>open-hearted hopeful optimistic buoyant positive thoughtful considerate affable</i>
Bob Cratchit	Scrooge's impoverished and much put-upon clerk.	<i>brow-beaten impoverished oppressed bullied timid long-suffering deferential</i>
Tiny Tim	Bob Cratchit's sickly son, victim of poverty and illness.	<i>humble positive thoughtful sickly chronically ill frail innocent</i>
Fezziwig	Scrooge's first boss, a model of how positive a benevolent boss can be.	<i>benevolent jovial joyful exuberant ebullient considerate vivacious genial</i>
Ghost of Christmas Past	Forces Scrooge to see the errors of his past choices, and shows the reader the losses of Scrooge's earlier life.	<i>ethereal melancholic illuminating challenging</i>
Ghost of Christmas Present	Forces Scrooge to see the positives of Christmas but also the miseries of poverty and social want.	<i>benevolent affable kind jovial</i>
Ghost of Christmas Yet to Come	Forces Scrooge to acknowledge how his wasted life will end.	<i>shadowy sinister intimidating menacing ghastly ghostly ghostlike</i>
Jacob Marley	Scrooge's old partner, seven years dead at the time of the novel.	<i>foreboding foreshadowing cautionary remonstrative portentous admonishing</i>

Some Themes

greed	Scrooges is clearly greedy—and he represents the world of finance and business, unattached to humanity and consideration. Fezziwig shows a different kind of approach to business.
regret	Scrooge's moral journey is one of regret—a regret which leads him to seek redemption.
forgiveness	Scrooge seeks forgiveness from those he has wronged: Fred (and, in a way, his sister, Fran) and the Cratchit family.
poverty	The Cratchits are an obvious example of urban poverty, with Tiny Tim's health linked to lack of money. Ignorance and Want also link to poverty, as well as the mother shivering in the doorway at the end of Stanza 1.
responsibility & community	Scrooge denies any social responsibility at the start: his "business" does not include charity, his worker's family or even his own nephew. His sense of responsibility grows thanks to the ghosts.
isolation	Scrooge is clearly an isolated figure: he eats and lives alone, lacks contact with his family and is ignorant of the difficult life Bob lives. He becomes a "second father" by the end.

Plot

Stave 1	Scrooge sits in his counting-house on a bitterly cold and foggy Christmas Eve. His clerk, Bob Cratchit, shivers because Scrooge refuses to spend money on heating coals for a fire. Scrooge's nephew, Fred, pays his uncle a visit and invites him to his annual Christmas party. Two gentlemen also drop by and ask Scrooge for a contribution to their charity. Scrooge reacts to the holiday visitors with bitterness and venom, spitting out an angry "Bah! Humbug!" Later that evening, Scrooge receives a chilling visit from the ghost of his dead partner, Jacob Marley. Marley tells Scrooge that, as punishment for his greedy and self-serving life, his spirit has been condemned to wander the Earth weighted down with heavy chains. Marley hopes to save Scrooge from sharing the same fate. Marley informs Scrooge that three spirits will visit him during each of the next three nights. Scrooge collapses into a deep sleep.
Stave 2	Scrooge wakes and meets the Ghost of Christmas Past, a strange childlike phantom with a brightly glowing head. The spirit takes Scrooge on a journey into his past. Invisible to those he watches, Scrooge revisits his lonely childhood school days, his lovely little sister, his apprenticeship with a jolly merchant named Fezziwig and his engagement to Belle — a woman who leaves Scrooge because his lust for money takes away his ability to love another. Scrooge, deeply upset, sheds tears of regret before the phantom returns him to his bed.
Stave 3	The Ghost of Christmas Present takes Scrooge through London to show him Christmas as it will happen that year. Scrooge watches the large, bustling Cratchit family prepare a miniature feast in its meagre home. He discovers Bob Cratchit's crippled son, Tiny Tim, a courageous boy whose kindness and humility warms Scrooge's heart.; however, Scrooge is told that Tiny Tim will likely die. The spectre then takes Scrooge to Fred's to witness the Christmas party — which Scrooge thoroughly enjoys. As the day passes, the spirit ages, becoming noticeably older. Toward the end of the day, he shows Scrooge two starved children, Ignorance and Want, living under his coat. He vanishes instantly as Scrooge notices a dark, hooded figure...
Stave 4	The Ghost of Christmas Yet to Come leads Scrooge through a sequence of mysterious scenes relating to an unnamed man's recent death. Scrooge sees businessmen discussing the dead man's riches, some people trading his personal effects for cash and a poor couple expressing relief at the death of their unforgiving creditor. Scrooge begs to know the name of the dead man. After pleading with the ghost, Scrooge finds himself in a churchyard, the spirit pointing to a grave. Scrooge looks at the headstone and is shocked to read his own name. He desperately begs the spirit to alter his fate, promising to renounce his insensitive, mean ways and to honour Christmas with all his heart. He suddenly finds himself safely tucked in his bed.
Stave 5	Overwhelmed with joy by the chance to redeem himself and grateful that he has been returned to Christmas Day, Scrooge rushes out onto the street hoping to share his newfound Christmas spirit. He sends a giant Christmas turkey to the Cratchit house and attends Fred's party. As the years go by, he holds true to his promise and honours Christmas with all his heart: he treats Tiny Tim as if he were his own child, provides lavish gifts for the poor, and treats his fellow human beings with kindness, generosity, and warmth.

Some Context

- first published 1843
- urban poverty in the 19th century
- The Poor Law and the use of workhouses
- poverty treated as a crime, with debtors' prisons
- Thomas Malthus and the surplus population
- Ragged Schools and childhood deprivation
- the "Hungry Forties" and economic depression
- Christian faith and the Victorian Christmas
- Dickens' own experience of poverty



Some Narrative Techniques

- **foreshadowing:** events and statements at the start of the novella link to later events/dialogue; for instance, Scrooge's comment on "the surplus population" is repeated to him by the Ghost of Christmas Present.
- **symbolism:** Marley's chains; the cold and fog that surrounds Scrooge in Stave 1; the clear skies in Stave 5; the symbolic meaning of each ghost.
- **dialogue:** Scrooge debates Christmas with charitable collectors and Fred; he debates his life decisions with Marley and the first two spirits.
- **narrative voice:** the narrator is third person but seems to know Scrooge's thoughts and emotions (this is called *internal heterodiegetic narrator*); however, what is the narrator's opinion of Scrooge? Sympathetic? Critical? Disgusted? Neutral?
- **genre:** the novella (short novel) is in many ways of ghost story, a gothic tale and also a moral tale. The use of "Once upon a time..." in Stave 1 signals a fantasy, fairy tale or fable.
- **Contrasting characters:** for instance, Scrooge and Fezziwig as bosses; Scrooge and Fred in attitudes to Christmas; Scrooge and Tiny Tim in attitudes to charity.

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Plot Questions

Stave 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="radio"/> Which family member visits Scrooge to offer him an invite? <input type="radio"/> With whom does Scrooge dine each evening? ⊕ Who tells Scrooge he should see other humans as “fellow passengers to the grave”? ⊕ To whom is Scrooge speaking when he makes his heartless comment about the poor dying to “decrease the surplus population”?
Stave 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="radio"/> What is the name of Scrooge's sister? <input type="radio"/> Who organises the party at the work place where Scrooge is a young apprentice? ⊕ What is strange about the Ghost of Christmas Past's arms? ⊕ What is Scrooge's relationship with Ali Baba and Robinson Crusoe?
Stave 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="radio"/> What magical object does the Ghost of Christmas Present carry to spread Yuletide cheer? <input type="radio"/> Who does Mrs Cratchit <i>not</i> want mentioned during their Christmas dinner? ⊕ Who behaves “good as gold” when he is in church? ⊕ Which of the two symbolic children hidden in the ghost's robe as “Doom” written in the forehead?
Stave 4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="radio"/> Unlike the other ghosts, the Ghost of Christmas Yet to Come is only one colour: which? <input type="radio"/> Apart from Scrooge, the death of which character is shown in this Stave? ⊕ Who says they can “sleep tonight, with light hearts” when they find out that Scrooge has died? ⊕ Whose “childish essence was from God”?
Stave 5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="radio"/> What relationship does Scrooge develop with Tiny Tim? <input type="radio"/> What does Scrooge buy the Cratchits? ⊕ Though it is still cold, what changes in the weather/sky are there from Stave 1? ⊕ What is the <i>noise</i> the changed Scrooge becomes famous for in London?

Character Questions

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="radio"/> What is the name of Scrooge's clerk? <input type="radio"/> What is the name of Scrooge's nephew? <input type="radio"/> What is the name of Scrooge's partner in the business, who died exactly seven years previously? <input type="radio"/> What is the name of the fiancé who releases the young Scrooge from his engagement to be married? <input type="radio"/> What is the name of Scrooge's boss when he was a young man? <input type="radio"/> Which ghost is covered in the chains they forged in life? <input type="radio"/> Which ghost shows Scrooge his own tombstone?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ⊕ Which character is “like a child; yet no so like a child as like an old man”? ⊕ Complete the Scrooge quotation: “I can't afford to make _____ people merry.” ⊕ Which ghost fills Scrooge with a “solemn dread”? ⊕ Who describes Scrooge as “a comical old fellow”? ⊕ Who is Mrs Dilber? ⊕ Who says this of Scrooge: “His wealth is of no use to him. he don't do any good with it”? ⊕ Who “releases” Scrooge, “With a full heart, for the love of him you once were”? ⊕ Who suffers “Incessant torture of remorse”? ⊕ Complete this quotation from Stave 1, on the weather which surrounds mean Scrooge: “It was cold, bleak, _____ weather”.

Ideas Questions

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="radio"/> Which word best describes Scrooge in Stave 1? <table style="width: 100%; border: none;"> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;">mistermagoo</td> <td style="text-align: center;">misanthropic</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;">mysterio</td> <td style="text-align: center;">mis-selfridge</td> </tr> </table> 	mistermagoo	misanthropic	mysterio	mis-selfridge
mistermagoo	misanthropic			
mysterio	mis-selfridge			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="radio"/> Which word best describes Bob Cratchit? <table style="width: 100%; border: none;"> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;">opinionated</td> <td style="text-align: center;">operational</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;">oppressed</td> <td style="text-align: center;">opportunist</td> </tr> </table> 	opinionated	operational	oppressed	opportunist
opinionated	operational			
oppressed	opportunist			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="radio"/> Which word best describes Fezziwig? <table style="width: 100%; border: none;"> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;">tight-fisted</td> <td style="text-align: center;">benevolent</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;">mercenary</td> <td style="text-align: center;">niggardly</td> </tr> </table> 	tight-fisted	benevolent	mercenary	niggardly
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mercenary	niggardly			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ⊕ Which word best describes Tiny Tim's quality? <table style="width: 100%; border: none;"> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;">humility</td> <td style="text-align: center;">humidify</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;">haughty</td> <td style="text-align: center;">conceited</td> </tr> </table> 	humility	humidify	haughty	conceited
humility	humidify			
haughty	conceited			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ⊕ Which word describes the process Scrooge undergoes? <table style="width: 100%; border: none;"> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;">remission</td> <td style="text-align: center;">redelivery</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;">regimentation</td> <td style="text-align: center;">redemption</td> </tr> </table> 	remission	redelivery	regimentation	redemption
remission	redelivery			
regimentation	redemption			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ⊕ Which word best describes what Marley's Ghost attempts to do to Scrooge? <table style="width: 100%; border: none;"> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;">remonstrate</td> <td style="text-align: center;">exonerate</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;">emulate</td> <td style="text-align: center;">dissimulate</td> </tr> </table> 	remonstrate	exonerate	emulate	dissimulate
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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ⊕ Which word best describes the ending? <table style="width: 100%; border: none;"> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;">redemptive</td> <td style="text-align: center;">demonstrative</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;">pessimistic</td> <td style="text-align: center;">discouraged</td> </tr> </table> 	redemptive	demonstrative	pessimistic	discouraged
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GETTING IT WRONG IS ABSOLUTELY OKAY.
NOT EVEN HAVING A GO IS JUST A BIT PATHETIC.