A Christmas Carol

INTRO

BRIEF BIOGRAPHY OF CHARLES DICKENS

Born to a naval clerk, Dickens moved with his family to London at age 10. When his father was briefly imprisoned for debt, Charles worked long days at a warehouse. His experience of financial hardship and impoverishment greatly influenced the content of his stories, and his ambition. He left school at age 15, but read voraciously and acquired extensive knowledge through jobs as a law clerk, court reporter, and journalist. As a novelist, Dickens was successful from the start, with the publication of *The Pickwick Papers* in 1836, and quickly became the most famous writer in Victorian England for his unforgettable characters, comic ingenuity, and biting social critique. He also enjoyed huge popularity in America where he made several reading tours. He worked tirelessly, producing a magazine *Household Words* (later *All the Year Round*) and cranking out still-famous novels including *Oliver Twist*, *Bleak House*, *Great Expectations*, *David Copperfield* and *A Christmas Carol*. Dickens had ten children with his wife Catherine Hogarth, but their marriage was never happy and Catherine left him after Dickens had an affair with the actress Ellen Ternan. Dickens died in 1870 and is buried in Poets' Corner of Westminster Abbey.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

The impoverished state of London in Dickens' lifetime is a big influence of the story. The British Government introduced the Poor Law Amendment Act in the year 1834, known as the New Poor Law, which led to the establishment of workhouses, one of Dickens' most detested social constructions. Dickens was highly sympathetic to the effects of Industrial Capitalism on children especially. The story actually began as an idea for a political pamphlet, to draw attention to the plight of the poor.

RELATED LITERARY WORKS

Other works that use Christmas and seasonal spirit to tell their moral message include the Middle English classic *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* and William Irving's *Sketch Book*. Dickens also wrote several other Christmas-themed novellas including one called *The Chimes*, which uses a similar structure of song-like chapters. Many other works by Dickens employ the same themes and concerns of *A Christmas Carol*, including *Little Dorrit* and *Hard Times*. And many well-known writers have been highly influenced by *A Christmas Carol*'s social commentary including George Orwell and Thomas Hardy.

KEY FACTS

- **Full Title:** *A Christmas Carol. In Prose. Being a Ghost Story of Christmas.*
- **When Written:** September to December, 1843
- **Where Written:** Manchester and London
- **When Published:** 19 December 1843
- **Literary Period:** Victorian Era
- **Genre:** Social Commentary, Ghost Story
- **Setting:** London
- **Climax:** Scrooge realizes that he will die alone and unloved if he carries on treating people the way he does. The sight of Christmas Yet to Come awakens his sense of remorse and he is desperate to change his fate.
- **Antagonist:** Scrooge is the antagonist of his social circle but the villain of the story is the immoral qualities that he represents, meanness and greed.
- **Point of View:** A third-person, omniscient narrator

EXTRA CREDIT

Dickens' One Man Show. Dickens was not only famous for his written words, he also gave performances of his stories to rave reviews and standing ovations. He stood behind a reading desk and delivered all the voices of his characters himself.

Piracy Problems. Shortly after its publication, *A Christmas Carol* was illegally reproduced by Parley's Illuminated Library and Dickens sued the company. But the Library went bankrupt, and Dickens unfortunately had to stump up a small fortune in legal fees.

PLOT SUMMARY

It is Christmas Eve, seven years since the death of **Jacob Marley**, the business partner and only friend of **Ebenezer Scrooge**. Scrooge is in his counting house, keeping a cruel monopoly on the coal supply and keeping his clerk **Bob Cratchit** in the cold. Scrooge's nephew, **Fred**, makes a visit, but his incessant seasonal merriness aggravates Scrooge, and he says "Humbug!" to Fred's idea that he spend Christmas dinner at Fred's house. The next visit is from two gentlemen collecting for the poor, but Scrooge believes in keeping the poor in the workhouses and sends them away.

When Scrooge arrives home, he is greeted by a series of spooky apparitions. First, his door knocker turns into Jacob Marley's face. Scrooge refuses to believe his senses and hurries upstairs. But he is visited again, this time by the full-length spirit of

Marley, bound in a huge, clanking chain. Marley's ghost tells Scrooge that he has been wandering the earth trying to undo the wrongs that he neglected in his lifetime. He warns that Scrooge is headed for the same fate, an even worse one considering his horrible spirit. Marley tells Scrooge that he will be visited by three spirits on the next three nights. Marley then disappears, and Scrooge falls into a deep sleep.

When Scrooge wakes up, it is still dark, as if no time has passed. He is greeted by the first spirit, the **Ghost of Christmas Past**, a candle-like apparition that is brightly glowing and reminds Scrooge of youth and age at the same time. He flies Scrooge through the window and they pass over the scenes of Scrooge's youth, firstly witnessing his lonely days in the schoolroom until his sister **Fan** comes to bring him home. Then, they see Scrooge as an apprentice with the **Fezziwigs** – it is a joyous time of parties and music. Then, Scrooge sees the moment that his fiancée Belle broke off their engagement because of Scrooge's single-minded focus on making money. Scrooge is upset by this vision. The spirit is extinguished and Scrooge falls asleep.

The next time Scrooge wakes, there is a warm light coming into the room and he finds the **Ghost of Christmas Present**, a gentle giant in a fur robe, sitting atop a feast of Christmas food. This spirit takes Scrooge through the town, invisibly visiting the merry townspeople and sprinkling the spirit's magic incense on their dinners to make them filled with joy. They visit Bob Cratchit's house, where Bob's large, hard-working family are happily preparing for Christmas. Bob brings his crippled son **Tiny Tim** home and tells his **wife** that the poor lad is doing better. Tim's bravery touches Scrooge, but the spirit cannot promise Scrooge that Tim will be alive much longer. Then, they go to Scrooge's nephew's house and watch the party sing and play games, often making fun of Uncle Scrooge. Scrooge starts having fun invisibly playing along with the games but the spirit's time is running out. He reveals two impoverished children sheltering under his robe, called Ignorance and Want and tells Scrooge to beware of Ignorance most of all.

The next night, **the third and final spirit** comes towards Scrooge, enrobed in a black cloak, so that all Scrooge can see is his eerily pointing bony hand. Scrooge is terrified but eager to learn the lessons of this ghost. He is led to the trading district, where businessmen are casually discussing the death of a miserly man. Then they witness **a** group of scavengers, trading in the dead man's possessions for money. Scrooge is transported to a dark room, where he sees the corpse itself, covered with a cloth. He begs to see some tender emotions or tears shed for this man's death, but all the ghost can show him is a family who are relieved at his death because it lifts their debt, and the house of Bob Cratchit, which is overcome with grief at the loss of poor Tiny Tim. Lastly, the spirit points Scrooge to a grave in a churchyard—the grave of the mysterious dead man—and Scrooge sees his own name engraved. He is beside himself with fear and sadness, and desperately promises the spirit that he will keep Christmas in his heart from now on. But the spirit vanishes, leaving Scrooge in tears.

Scrooge wakes up and is overjoyed that he has the chance to change the future. He laughs and shakes uncontrollably, and, upon discovering that it is Christmas morning, he joyfully sends a prize turkey to Bob Cratchit's house. He says Merry Christmas to everyone he meets on the street, and goes to his nephew's to celebrate and play games. The next day he gives Cratchit a raise, and over the ensuing years helps ensure that Tiny Tim not only survives but thrives and becomes known for his Christmas spirit.

CHARACTERS

Ebenezer Scrooge – The quintessential miser, he is cruel-hearted, underpays his clerk **Bob Cratchit**, and says "Humbug!" to the Christmas festivities that bring joy to everyone around him. But when he is visited by the ghost of his old partner **Jacob Marley**, he begins to see the error of his ways. Scrooge is shown his own past, and the sight of his neglected childhood Christmasses begins to explain why he began his downward spiral into misery. Scrooge is scared and regretful when he sees the vivid images of the Christmas Yet to Come, which predictably leaves him dying alone. His reversal, from the anti-Christmas figure to the spirit of Christmas shows clearly the message of hope and forgiveness Dickens intended for his readers.

The Ghost of Christmas Past – A strange combination of young and old, he has the innocence of an infant, but is seen as if through a veil of time, as if he is very elderly. He wears white robes and glows bright like a candle. At the end of his tour with **Scrooge**, this light is extinguished with a cap, making it clear that he is "reborn" and dies again every Christmas. He shows Scrooge the scenes of Christmas past.

The Ghost of Christmas Present – A portly, jovial gentleman. When **Scrooge** sees him, he is surrounded by a warm glow, and feast-like piles of foods. He carries a cornucopia, a kind of horn with special powers to bestow seasonal joy on the most needy townsfolk.

The Ghost of Christmas Yet to Come – The most ominous of all the spirits, he is a robed, silent figure and **Scrooge** fears his message most of all. The spirit points his bony hand towards the visions he has in store, and eventually leads Scrooge to his own lonely grave stone, a prediction of his fate if his lifestyle remains the same. This spirit seals the moral lesson of the story.

Bob Cratchit – **Scrooge**'s loyal clerk, he is very poorly treated by his boss and his large family live in cold and poverty. The eldest children work hard and Bob is always looking to find them better situations. His youngest son, **Tiny Tim**, is the light of Bob's life but is very ill and needs medical attention that Bob

can't afford. Bob is a prime example of the virtues of Christmas and provides the antidote to Scrooge. He is also a symbol of forgiveness – he toasts to Scrooge, despite his horrible work conditions, and in the face of Scrooge's eventual remorse, is open and accepting rather than bitter.

Tiny Tim – The crippled son of **Bob Cratchit**, he can be seen sitting on his father's shoulder or struggling along with his crutch. But far from being a symbol of suffering, Tim is the merriest, bravest character of all, always reminding others of the spirit of Christmas. The thought of Tiny Tim's death, and its confirmation in the vision of the **Ghost of Christmas Yet to Come**, fills Scrooge with regret.

Fred Scrooge – **Scrooge**'s nephew, a jolly fellow who loves Christmas and never gives up trying to share his merriment with his uncle, though he is also able to laugh at Scrooge's unrelenting miserliness. When Scrooge does repent, Fred accepts him immediately. He has an infectious, musical laugh.

Jacob Marley – **Scrooge**'s former business partner. Despite not being particularly missed by Scrooge, he was nevertheless the miser's only friend, and is the figure that haunts and protects him by appearing in place of Scrooge's door knocker and introducing the three **Christmas ghosts**. He makes manifest the horror of regret with his burdensome chain and describes how he is doomed to wander the earth for eternity, a fate that Scrooge too will face unless he changes his ways.

Belle – **Scrooge**'s young love, who breaks off their engagement because of his altered values—when they met, he was happy to be poor and in love, but money fuels his thoughts now.

Fan – **Scrooge**'s sister and Fred's mother. She is deceased at the time of the story, but in the vision of the **Ghost of Christmas Past** she comes to visit Scrooge in the deserted schoolroom when he is a boy and brings him the happy news that she is taking him home. She is a symbol of the loving kindness of Christmas time and her relationship to Scrooge hasn't always been a miser.

THEMES

In LitCharts each theme gets its own color and number. Our color-coded theme boxes make it easy to track where the themes occur throughout the work. If you don't have a color printer, use the numbers instead.

1 PAST, PRESENT AND FUTURE – THE THREAT OF TIME

Three ghosts appear to **Scrooge** to show him how he is living sinfully and what the consequences will be if he doesn't choose to live a better life. The three-part ghost story shows the reader a clear path – sins in Scrooge's past leading to his present misery and the continuation of that sin leading in the future to death, symbolized by the hooded figure. Each ghost shows Scrooge a vision of life gone wrong, set in a chronological path to destruction. At the same time, the ghosts' appearance threaten ultimately the *absence* of time, what will happen *after* Scrooge's death if he continues down this path: the purgatory of endlessly wandering the earth that **Marley's ghost** warned him was his fate.

Time in the story is distinguished by several motifs. First, bells tolling and chiming fit into the story's song-like structure and also recur at key moments, reminding Scrooge of the time and of time passing. Second the chains that Marley shakes at Scrooge to scare him are a visual reminder of the endless prison sentence of purgatory awaiting Scrooge in the afterlife.

Time in the story is also threatening because of the changes its passing will enact in traditional society. Tradition is important for all of these characters – be it Scrooge with his obsessive money counting and nightly rituals or **Cratchit** with his love of Christmas – and the changing of the city during these industrial times threatens to break down all of these traditions through its transformation of economic conditions and the grinding poverty it inflicts.

2 FAMILY

The entrance of **Scrooge**'s nephew **Fred** at the beginning of the story introduces another side to the miser. Scrooge is not unfortunate in the way of relatives – he has a family awaiting his presence, asking him to dinner, wanting to celebrate the season with him, yet he refuses. This is one of the important moral moments in the story that helps predict Scrooge's coming downfall. It shows how Scrooge makes choices to prolong his own misery. He chooses to live alone and in darkness while even poor **Cratchit** is rich in family. Scrooge's distaste for Fred's happiness is not just annoyance at the sight of merriness and excess, it is also motivated by bitterness towards marriage based on Scrooge's own lost love Belle, who left him long ago.

In the story, cold and loneliness are set up in opposition to the warmth of family. Symbols of coldness such as Scrooge's empty hearth, refusal to provide heat for Cratchit, and keeping his own house dark to save money show Scrooge's cruelty and lack of connection. But family provides the antidote to this coldness. When Fred enters, the counting house suddenly warms up. Further, Cratchit's warmth, despite his lack of coal, and the togetherness and energy of his large family, show him to be one of the most fortunate men in the story.

Scrooge does have a kind of family in his partner **Marley**, who is described at the beginning of the novella as fulfilling many roles for Scrooge before his death. The inseparability of their names above the firm's entrance shows how close they are—at least in business terms—and though they are bachelors they share their lives, and the suite of rooms is passed down like a family

legacy from Marley to Scrooge. Ultimately, from Marley's warning and the visions provided by the ghosts, Scrooge does learn to appreciate and connect with Fred and the rest of his family, and to even extend that family to include the Cratchits.

3 GREED, GENEROSITY AND FORGIVENESS

Scrooge is a caricature of a miser, greedy and mean in every way. He spends all day in his counting house looking after his money but is so cheap that he keeps his house in darkness, his fire small and allows no extravagance even on Christmas day. But we soon learn that he is the most impoverished character – he is lacking love, warmth and the spirit of Christmas, all of which make lives like **Bob Cratchit**'s so worth living despite their hardships.

The story's structure and Scrooge's character development are engineered so that as Scrooge becomes aware of his own poverty and learns to forgive and listen to his buried conscience, he is able to see virtue and goodness in the other characters and rediscovers his own generosity – he even becomes a symbol of Christmas in the final stave.

Scrooge is remedied in the novella by the Christmas-conscious characters that surround him, including his own **nephew** and Bob Cratchit and his family, who show Scrooge in the **Ghost of Christmas Present**'s tour the true meaning of goodness. All of the generous characters in the story are financially downtrodden but succeed in being good and happy despite their lot, whereas Scrooge needs to go through a traumatic awakening in order to find happiness. But the virtue that really ensures Scrooge's transformation is forgiveness – it is this key of Christian morality that saves him when the characters that he has always put down—Fred, Bob Cratchit—welcome him into their homes when he undergoes his transformation, giving Dickens' tale the shape of a true religious redemption.

4 CHRISTMAS AND TRADITION

A Christmas Carol was published as a Christmas story, and takes the form of a Christian morality tale containing a moral lesson that the highly religious and traditional English population of Dickens' time would enjoy. Its structure, with five "staves" instead of chapters, is a metaphor for a simple song, with a beginning, middle and end. Dickens uses the idea of singing to connect the story to the joyful Christian traditions of the season, such as caroling, while at the same filling it with more serious, politically-minded themes.

This theme has two aspects: Firstly, the festive, jolly Christmas atmosphere flourishes in the streets surrounding **Scrooge**'s company office, and the ethos of the nativity story is embodied in characters like **Tiny Tim**, **Bob Cratchit**, and Scrooge's **nephew** – these characters are examples of goodness and charity, and show Scrooge the way to kindness. The love and strength of the Cratchit family despite their poverty shows the reader that the spirit of Christmas can defeat Scrooge's spirit of misery. At the same time, Dickens uses the seasonal period around Christmas to highlight the sort of unfair and crushing poverty that the Cratchit's face. The cold, bleak winter weather exacerbates the terrible privations poor families of the era had to face, and in presenting the poor in such extremes *A Christmas Carol* profoundly criticizes the laws, policies, and economic system that promote such poverty. In this way, by allowing Dickens to use the harshness of winter to portray the terrible difficulty of the life of the poor, Christmas served Dickens as a vehicle not just for showing Scrooge's transformation but to appeal to readers' Christianity as well in an effort to change a society that was organized in some ways that Dickens saw as being profoundly un-Christian.

5 SOCIAL DISSATISFACTION AND THE POOR LAWS

A Christmas Carol has attracted generations of readers with its clear parable-like structure and compelling ghost story. It's a moral tale that has proven timeless, but Dickens also wrote the story with a very present problem in mind, and his structure was designed to make the real issues of Victorian London stand out and provide greater awareness in the reading masses. For instance, **the two gentlemen** that ask for **Scrooge**'s charity are kindly but unable to inspire Scrooge's sympathies. In Scrooge's easy assurance that the poor not only belong in but actually deserve to live in the poor house, the story conveys a message about the visibility and effectiveness of charity being swamped by common misconceptions that the poor house is a functional institution keeping poor people usefully employed. In fact, the poor house was an institution that did nothing to help the poor. Rather, it was a terrible place that served primarily to keep the poor out of view of those who were better off. Scrooge's repetition of his dismissive phrase "Humbug!" is a symbol of the insensitivity and ignorance of the middle class looking down on and dismissing the poor.

The **Ghost of Christmas Yet to Come** shows us not only Scrooge's miserable future but also the future of his contemporaries, the traders and bankers that are discussing his funeral lunch and not caring at all that he has died. Dickens shows us that meanness is often connected to the pursuit of wealth. Further, he shows how such meanness is a cycle, almost catching. Scrooge, then, transforms a larger fate than his own when he discovers charity.

In fact, *A Christmas Carol* has had a tangible effect on poverty, at least on a small, individual scale – stories abound of factory owners and merchants being so affected by readings of *A Christmas Carol* that they sent their workers gifts and changed harsh conditions.

SYMBOLS

Symbols appear in red text throughout the Summary & Analysis sections of this LitChart.

MUSIC

A Christmas Carol was written as a metaphor for a traditional Christmas hymn. The title conjures the familiar Christmas tradition of singing round the fireplace or through the streets from door to door, a seasonal activity that joins rich and poor together and echoes the political theme of the story. Many features of the story also reinforce its musical quality. The virtuous characters, **Fred Scrooge** and his family, **the Fezziwigs**, and many other unnamed townspeople that **Scrooge** initially despises, all bring music into Scrooge's life, be it through laughter, dancing or the joyful chanting of "Merry Christmas!".

IMAGES OF AGE AND YOUTH

Dickens was especially aware of the plight of poor children in the 19th century, and children appear in the story as symbols of the ruined youth of Industrial Capitalism. **The youths of Ignorance and Want** are especially clear representations of these problems. And **Tiny Tim** is a lasting symbol of the power of goodness and generosity to overcome adversity. Putting these large themes in the figures of children emphasizes the tragedy of the premature suffering of the Victorian youth, affected by the grinding poverty created by the Industrial Revolution and England's poverty laws which made being in debt a crime punishable by forcing debtors into working houses. The story is also populated with images of age, which taunt **Scrooge** with the idea of the past and of his approaching death. **The Ghost of Christmas Past** is a strange mixture of the two, both elderly and childlike.

QUOTES

The color-coded boxes under each quote below make it easy to track the themes related to each quote. Each color corresponds to one of the themes explained in the Themes section of this LitChart.

STAVE 1

Old Marley was as dead as a door-nail.

- **Mentioned or related characters:** Jacob Marley
- **Related themes:** Past, Present and Future – The Threat of Time, Family
- Theme Tracker code:



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, from which no steel had ever struck out generous fire; secret, and self-contained, and solitary as an oyster.

- **Mentioned or related characters:** Ebenezer Scrooge
- **Related themes:** Greed, Generosity and Forgiveness, Social Dissatisfaction and the Poor Laws
- Theme Tracker code:



'A merry Christmas, uncle! God save you!' cried a cheerful voice. It was the voice of Scrooge's nephew, who came upon him so quickly that this was the first intimation he had of his approach.
'Bah!' said Scrooge, 'Humbug!'

- **Speaker:** Ebenezer Scrooge, Fred Scrooge
- **Related themes:** Family, Greed, Generosity and Forgiveness, Christmas and Tradition
- Theme Tracker code:



'Business!' cried the Ghost, wringing its hands again. 'Mankind was my business. The common welfare was my business; charity, mercy, forbearance, and benevolence, were, all, my business. The dealings of my trade were but a drop of water in the comprehensive ocean of my business!'

- **Speaker:** Jacob Marley
- **Mentioned or related characters:** Ebenezer Scrooge
- **Related themes:** Past, Present and Future – The Threat of Time, Family, Greed, Generosity and Forgiveness, Social Dissatisfaction and the Poor Laws
- Theme Tracker code:



STAVE 2

It was a strange figure-like a child: yet not so like a child as like an old man, viewed through some supernatural medium, which

gave him the appearance of having receded from the view, and being diminished to a child's proportions.

- Mentioned or related characters: The Ghost of Christmas Past
- Related themes: Past, Present and Future – The Threat of Time, Christmas and Tradition
- Theme Tracker code:



'The school is not quite deserted,' said the Ghost. 'A solitary child, neglected by his friends, is left there still.'
Scrooge said he knew it. And he sobbed.

- Speaker: The Ghost of Christmas Past
- Mentioned or related characters: Ebenezer Scrooge
- Related themes: Past, Present and Future – The Threat of Time, Family, Christmas and Tradition
- Theme Tracker code:



'Our contract is an old one. It was made when we were both poor and content to be so, until, in good season, we could improve our worldly fortune by our patient industry. You are changed. When it was made, you were another man.'

- Speaker: Belle
- Mentioned or related characters: Ebenezer Scrooge
- Related themes: Past, Present and Future – The Threat of Time, Greed, Generosity and Forgiveness
- Theme Tracker code:



STAVE 3

In easy state upon this couch, there sat a jolly Giant, glorious to see, who bore a glowing torch, in shape not unlike Plenty's horn, and held it up, high up, to shed its light on Scrooge, as he came peeping round the door.

- Mentioned or related characters: Ebenezer Scrooge, The Ghost of Christmas Present
- Related themes: Past, Present and Future – The Threat of Time, Christmas and Tradition
- Theme Tracker code:



The sight of these poor revellers appeared to interest the Spirit very much, for he stood with Scrooge beside him in a baker's doorway, and taking off the covers as their bearers passed, sprinkled incense on their dinners from his torch.

- Mentioned or related characters: Ebenezer Scrooge, The Ghost of Christmas Present
- Related themes: Family, Greed, Generosity and Forgiveness, Christmas and Tradition, Social Dissatisfaction and the Poor Laws
- Theme Tracker code:



Oh, a wonderful pudding! Bob Cratchit said, and calmly too, that he regarded it as the greatest success achieved by Mrs Cratchit since their marriage. [...]Everybody had something to say about it, but nobody said or thought it
was at all a small pudding for a large family. It would have been flat heresy to do so.

- Mentioned or related characters: Bob Cratchit
- Related themes: Family, Greed, Generosity and Forgiveness, Christmas and Tradition
- Theme Tracker code:



'God bless us every one!'

- Speaker: Tiny Tim
- Related themes: Family, Greed, Generosity and Forgiveness, Christmas and Tradition
- Theme Tracker code:



STAVE 4

The Phantom slowly, gravely, silently approached. When it came, Scrooge bent down upon his knee; for in the very air through which this Spirit moved it seemed to scatter gloom and mystery.

- Mentioned or related characters: Ebenezer Scrooge, The Ghost of Christmas Yet to Come
- Related themes: Past, Present and Future – The Threat of Time, Christmas and Tradition
- Theme Tracker code:



'Ghost of the Future!' he exclaimed, 'I fear you more than any spectre I have seen. But as I know your purpose is to do me good, and as I hope to live to be another man from what I was, I am prepared to bear you company, and do it with a thankful heart. Will you not speak to me?'

- Speaker: Ebenezer Scrooge
- Mentioned or related characters: The Ghost of Christmas Yet to Come
- Related themes: Greed, Generosity and Forgiveness, Christmas and Tradition
- Theme Tracker code:



'If he wanted to keep them after he was dead, a wicked old screw,' pursued the woman, 'why wasn't he natural in his lifetime? If he had been, he'd have had somebody to look after him when he was struck with Death, instead of lying gasping out his last there, alone by himself.'

- Mentioned or related characters: Ebenezer Scrooge
- Related themes: Past, Present and Future – The Threat of Time, Greed, Generosity and Forgiveness, Social Dissatisfaction and the Poor Laws
- Theme Tracker code:



He recoiled in terror, for the scene had changed, and now he almost touched a bed: a bare, uncurtained bed: on which, beneath a ragged sheet, there lay a something covered up, which, though it was dumb, announced itself in awful language.

- Mentioned or related characters: Ebenezer Scrooge
- Related themes: Past, Present and Future – The Threat of Time, Greed, Generosity and Forgiveness
- Theme Tracker code:



Scrooge crept towards it, trembling as he went; and following the finger, read upon the stone of the neglected grave his own name, Ebenezer Scrooge.

- Mentioned or related characters: Ebenezer Scrooge
- Related themes: Past, Present and Future – The Threat of Time, Greed, Generosity and Forgiveness
- Theme Tracker code:



STAVE 5

'I will live in the Past, the Present, and the Future!' Scrooge repeated, as he scrambled out of bed. 'The Spirits of all Three shall strive within me. Oh, Jacob Marley! Heaven, and the Christmas Time be praised for this! I say it on my knees, old Jacob, on my knees!'

- Speaker: Ebenezer Scrooge
- Mentioned or related characters: Jacob Marley
- Related themes: Past, Present and Future – The Threat of Time, Greed, Generosity and Forgiveness, Christmas and Tradition
- Theme Tracker code:



He went to church, and walked about the streets, and watched the people hurrying to and fro, and patted children on the head, and questioned beggars, and looked down into the kitchens of houses, and up to the windows, and found that everything could yield him pleasure. He had never dreamed that any walk – that anything – could give him so much happiness.

- Mentioned or related characters: Ebenezer Scrooge
- Related themes: Greed, Generosity and Forgiveness, Christmas and Tradition, Social Dissatisfaction and the Poor Laws
- Theme Tracker code:



'Now, I'll tell you what, my friend,' said Scrooge, 'I am not going to stand this sort of thing any longer. And therefore,' he continued, leaping from his stool, and giving Bob such a dig in the waistcoat that he staggered back into the Tank again; 'and therefore I am about to raise your salary!'

- Speaker: Ebenezer Scrooge
- Mentioned or related characters: Bob Cratchit
- Related themes: Family, Greed, Generosity and Forgiveness, Christmas and Tradition
- Theme Tracker code:



SUMMARY & ANALYSIS

The color-coded boxes under "Analysis & Themes" below make it easy to track the themes throughout the work. Each color

corresponds to one of the themes explained in the Themes section of this LitChart.

STAVE 1

The narrator states that there was no doubt about **Marley**'s death. **Scrooge**, Marley's business partner, signed the register of his burial. The narrator considers that the phrase "dead as a doornail" doesn't even describe Marley's lifelessness well enough. He adds that Scrooge very much knew that Marley was dead, having been his partner and only friend. The narrator adds that he's focused on this point because it is vital to what follows, as the death of Hamlet's father is vital to Hamlet.

The opening establishes not just the friendship between Marley and Scrooge but also Scrooge's fundamental aloneness—it's not just that they are friends; they are each other's only *friends. The insistence on Marley's dead-ness and reference to Hamlet, one of the most well-known ghost stories of the time, hints that Marley is about to be un-dead and in so doing significantly change Scrooge's life, just as Old Hamlet's appearance changed Hamlet's.*



Scrooge did not seem to grieve much (apart from the loss of business), and got a bargain price for **Marley**'s funeral. Since the firm's name has always been Scrooge and Marley, Scrooge has taken to answering to both names. **The narrator** describes Scrooge as "Hard and sharp as flint." His appearance matches his character, with cold-looking, pointy features. He keeps his office cold, not even heating it at Christmas time. Consequently, everybody who comes into contact with Scrooge avoids him. Even the beggars in the street are silent when he passes. But this is exactly the way Scrooge likes it, says the narrator.

Scrooge is not just a grumpy old man – he is a "squeezing, wrenching, grasping, scraping, clutching, covetous old sinner". Dickens fills this first Stave with superlative and vivid descriptions of Scrooge's miserly character and in so doing sets him up for quite a transformation. Already, the poor townsfolk are elevated above Scrooge in moral standing – he is a caricature of a lonely miser. He chooses *being alone.*



On Christmas Eve, **Scrooge** is in his counting house. It is a freezing, foggy day and is quite dark even though it's only three o'clock. Scrooge has a small fire, but his clerk, **Bob Cratchit**, who works in a little cell attached to Scrooge's office, barely has a coal to warm him. Scrooge keeps the coal bucket and will not allow Cratchit to take any.

The dark, wintry night, and the approach of Christmas Day, should provide the conditions for some seasonal camaraderie between Scrooge and his clerk, but Scrooge's misery wins out over all. His greed is so extreme that he will not even spend the money to allow Cratchit to be warm in the office.



Scrooge's nephew, Fred, enters the office, wishing a merry Christmas. Unlike **Scrooge**, he is a picture of health and happiness. Scrooge replies with "Bah! Humbug!" He says he doesn't understand how his nephew can be merry when he is so poor. Fred wittily responds that Scrooge has no right to meanness when he is so rich. Scrooge protests that he is living in a world of fools, and anyone who wastes their time being merry when they should be paying their bills should be "buried with a stake of holly through his heart".

Fred is the opposite of Scrooge in appearance and spirit. Whereas Scrooge is described as "hard and sharp", Fred's features are round and healthy. Though Fred is poor (though not as poor as Cratchit), his attire is colorful and he is generous and sociable with his Christmas provisions. But Scrooge sees any such human sentiment—anything that interferes with the accumulation of money—as foolishness. Note how Scrooge here condemns such fools to death, when over the next few nights it will be he who learns that he is condemned to a terrible death.



Scrooge tells **Fred** to leave him alone, that Christmas has never done any good. Fred responds that though it hasn't brought him any profit, Christmas has done him good. Apart from its sacred meaning, it is a time for goodness and charity. **Bob Cratchit** applauds from his cell and Scrooge threatens to fire him if he makes another sound.

Scrooge sees "good" as referring solely to profits. Fred knows this, and counters that "good" means something else entirely. For characters like Fred and Bob Cratchit, Christmas represents the Christian ideal of goodness and moral prosperity, but Scrooge is at his most *miserly when Christmas is mentioned. As we will later learn, his bitterness originates at Christmas time and has warped his perspective of it.*



Finally, **Fred** asks **Scrooge** if he will dine with him and **his wife** for Christmas dinner. Scrooge objects to Fred having married at all. He especially objects to Fred's reason for marrying: that he fell in love. Scrooge refuses to hear anymore. He drowns out Fred's questions with an angry "good afternoon!" Fred leaves kindly and on his way out wishes **Cratchit** a Merry Christmas. Scrooge mutters that Cratchit, with a wife and family and nothing to live on, can't possibly be merry.

Despite Scrooge's ill temper Fred generously and authentically invites him over. Scrooge could have family, if only he would allow himself to. But he does not. In the back and forth about marriage the story drops hints about Scrooge's past that will become clear later. Scrooge is especially disgruntled when Fred mentions his wife, for example.



Two gentlemen call next, asking **Scrooge** which one of the two partners listed above the door he is. Scrooge informs them that **Marley** died seven years ago this very night. The two gentlemen hope that Scrooge will be as generous to their cause as Marley was. They say the poor are especially in need at Christmas time.

Through the two gentlemen, we get a glimpse into Scrooge's past as half of the business duo Scrooge and Marley. From this exchange, it sounds like Marley was at least somewhat generous. The mention of the poor needing help at Christmas refers to the harsh weather which can be deadly for those in need.



Scrooge inquires about the prisons and workhouses, and, hearing that they still exist, doesn't see any reason why anyone should be worried about the poor. **The gentlemen** reply that the workhouse hardly encourages Christian seasonal merriment, and that some would rather die than be put there. Scrooge responds that the poor deserve to die and relieve the surplus population. The gentlemen leave and Scrooge goes back to work in even more of a temper.

Scrooge represents the ignorant attitude of the wealthy classes that Dickens despised in his own society. Scrooge sees the workhouses as a solution to a problem, and shuts out the idea that their inhabitants are real feeling human beings. He is smug and condescending about the poor, and refuses to listen to the gentlemen's reasoning. Scrooge's logic is somewhat consistent—he sees money as being the sole important thing in the world, and therefore sees anyone lacking money as being unimportant. He does not see the basic human value in all people.



As the day passes, the fog and cold become more severe. The clock tower that looks down on **Scrooge**'s office chimes. The shops, decorated with seasonal regalia, are strangely bright in the gloom. Meanwhile the Lord Mayor gives orders to his servants to enjoy Christmas. The cold deepens. A youth out in the street crouches to Scrooge's keyhole and sings "God bless you, merry gentlemen". Scrooge, now in a miserable mood, throws a ruler at the door, scaring the poor boy off.

The power of light and music to shine through the winter gloom is a visual way of showing the moral of this story. It suggests that even though cruelty seems to reign, the goodness embodied by the Christmas message can always find a way through, through the fog, through the keyhole. Scrooge, however, aggressively fights it off.



At closing time, **Scrooge** turns to **Bob Cratchit** and taunts him for wanting the day off for Christmas day. He doesn't understand why he should pay a day's wages for no work, but he lets Cratchit leave on the condition that he will arrive early on Boxing Day. Scrooge goes to have dinner at his usual miserable tavern and Cratchit performs a Christmas eve tradition of going down a slide twenty times, before going home to his family. Scrooge, meanwhile, goes home to a suite of gloomy rooms that used to be **Marley**'s. The narrator describes the building as completely out of place, as if it was once playing hide and seek and got stuck in its hiding place. It was dark and deserted and surrounded by a dark yard.

Scrooge and Cratchit both live on routine. Cratchit, despite his poverty, celebrates Christmas with a childlike ritual of sliding down a hill with the street boys. In contrast, Scrooge's routine is deliberately isolated and miserable. His stash of money could afford him a rich, luxurious Christmas but he avoids these traditions. Dickens sets up Cratchit and Scrooge as opposite figures, Cratchit symbolizing joy despite poverty and hardship and Scrooge symbolizing the grave-like sobriety of greed.



Before telling us the incident with the door knocker, **the narrator** makes a point of telling us that **Scrooge**'s door knocker had always been a very ordinary door knocker, and Scrooge himself a very somber, sane man. He also mentions that Scrooge had not been thinking about his late partner **Marley**. The narrator then explains what a surprise it is to Scrooge when he looks at his door knocker that night and beholds Marley's face. It isn't a trick of the shadows but a real ghost in the shape of Scrooge's old partner, as if alive but motionless.

In order to make this night stand out as a unique milestone in Scrooge's routine existence, the narrator focuses first on Scrooge's sanity and the usual normality of his world. The narrator wants to make it clear that what is to come are not *the imaginings of a tired, eccentric man, but rather the appearance of real ghosts. It is, in a sense, a Christmas miracle.*



But as **Scrooge** looks, the ghost turns into a knocker again, and Scrooge hurries indoors, annoyed by the apparition. He stops briefly to check that the back of **Marley**'s head is not similarly behind the door. Again scorning his fear, Scrooge goes upstairs to bed. The narrator describes the staircase as wide enough for a carriage to pass through sideways, and this may explain why Scrooge has a vision of a funeral hearse leading him up the stairs. He is not afraid of the dark, though. In fact, he likes its cheapness. Scrooge checks that his rooms are in order. Everything is as it should be, everything simply furnished and a saucepan of gruel on the stove.

Just as Scrooge seems unaffected by the cold and darkness, he also shuns his feelings of fear and refuses to trust his senses or give in to them. No matter how vivid the apparitions become, Scrooge insists that he knows better. Marley is a figure of both terror and kindness – it will become clear that instead of wanting revenge on Scrooge, he has come to protect him. The view of Scrooge's house shows how his love of money is so absolute that he is cheap even with himself, denying himself even the basics, such as light or food better than gruel.



Scrooge bends over his weak fire. The fireplace is adorned with tiles that illustrate stories from scripture but over all of these famous figures comes **Marley**'s ghostly face again. Scrooge dismisses the vision with a "Humbug!" but suddenly a bell in the room, which has been out of order for some time, starts to toll, and is followed by the chiming of all the other bells in the house. After a long minute of this cacophony, the bells stop and are replaced by a clanking noise, coming closer and closer. Scrooge remembers hearing ghost stories of spirits dragging chains. He refuses to believe it until the door actually opens before him and he sees with his own eyes: "Marley's ghost!"

The ghost appears just as **Scrooge** remembers **Jacob Marley**, except that he is totally transparent and carries a huge chain about him. But even as he perceives the very texture of Marley's hair and handkerchief, Scrooge cannot bring himself to believe it. He demands to know who the ghost is and the ghost answers that he *was* Jacob Marley when he was living.

Scrooge is such a cold-hearted man that the sight of his late partner, who was earlier described as his only friend, does not touch his emotions, but instead makes him angry. By showing Marley's face among the faces of legends and saints from scripture, Dickens puts him in a saint-like position, showing Scrooge the light like a religious leader. The bells chiming and the clanking of chains create a disturbance that even Scrooge can't ignore, and forebode both that Scrooge's time is approaching and that he himself will soon be in similar chains.



Scrooge refuses to believe in Marley, just as he refuses to believe in Christmas. Marley represents a kind of family for Scrooge, even though they are not blood-related. Christmas is a time of family, and despite his scary appearance, we get the feeling that Marley is here to help.



Scrooge asks **Marley** to sit. He wonders, because of his transparency, if he is able to sit, but Marley takes the seat with ease and confronts Scrooge about his disbelief, asking him why he doubts his senses. Scrooge responds that he can't trust a thing that is affected so easily, by indigestion for example. He then makes a joke that Marley is more "gravy" than "grave". He feels the "infernal" power of the ghost's eyes on him, and tells the ghost to look at a nearby toothpick, which Scrooge says would cause no end of specters if swallowed.

At this, **Marley** shakes his chain and makes a terrifying sound. **Scrooge** admits that he believes now but questions why a ghost should come to pursue him. Marley explains that he is destined to walk the earth to change the wrongs he failed to change in life – the chain represents this self-made trail of regrets. Marley warns Scrooge that he is making a terrible chain for himself. Scrooge asks for comfort, but Marley cannot give any. He says it is not his job to bring comfort.

Marley's questions and Scrooge's answers about the senses are important. Scrooge doesn't live by his senses in any aspect of his life. He cares only about making money, and does not care or notice if it is cold or uncomfortable, and he takes no interest in anyone else. Scrooge sees the senses as pointless, as easily fooled or manipulated. He believes solely in money. And yet the way he denies the truth with joke-making, shows his fear. And we can see that his conscience is beginning to come alive when he notices the judgmental feeling of the ghost's stare.



Marley's ghost is a terrifying figure - his huge clanking chain makes him look like an exaggeration of a typical Victorian prisoner. Yet we have heard that Marley was at least somewhat generous in his lifetime. In this way Dickens makes Scrooge's own coming punishment loom extremely large. Marley brings only warnings; he cannot himself help Scrooge.



Marley cannot stay long, with many journeys ahead of him. **Scrooge** jokes that he must have been wandering slowly, having taken seven years to get here, but Marley says he has travelled incredible lengths – there is much remorse in the world. Scrooge doesn't understand, because Marley was a "good man of business". Marley is affronted at this phrase. He says business is nothing in comparison to the trade of human woes that he deals in. He says it's even worse at Christmas, seeing all the poor folks that he did not help when he was alive.

Scrooge is now terrified and vows to listen. **Marley** tells Scrooge that he will soon be visited by three spirits, and he has the chance to avoid Marley's fate of purgatory. But if Scrooge chooses not to listen to these visitors, there is no hope for him. Marley tells Scrooge that the first spirit will appear at one o'clock that night, the next at the same time the following night and the third the night after that. Lastly, he implores Scrooge to remember what he has said, and, with his eyes fixed on Scrooge, walks backwards as the window behind him slowly opens.

Marley's purgatorial afterlife is described as a wasteland of endless journeying. Part of the lesson that Scrooge must learn is that life is short but regrets are long and haunting, and have an affect even after death. Note also Marley's disgust at the connection of the words "good" and "business", which Scrooge also used earlier in his conversation with Fred. Marley is not saying business is inherently bad, but he is saying that it is terrifically small and narrow in comparison to the rest of life, and certainly that business success is not enough to right any wrongs one commits in life.



Marley really makes things clear for Scrooge. Though it seems threatening, he is offering Scrooge a very tangible way to improve his fate. The fact that there are three spirits and that they will arrive at the same time for the next three nights creates a definite, easy structure for Scrooge, and the story, to follow.



Then, **Marley's ghost** beckons **Scrooge** over. Scrooge begins to hear a chorus of wailing sounds, which Marley's ghost joins. Then Marley floats out through the window. Scrooge looks out and sees the air filled with chained spirits, including many that he recognizes as figures from his past who had not regretted their actions in time. Then somehow the spirits fade and the night is as it was. Scrooge begins to utter his "Humbug!" but stops and goes directly to bed.

The narrator sets Scrooge up as the quintessential sinner, the most miserable man in the whole city. But alongside this caricature of Scrooge, through the wailings of the multitude he also paints a picture of a spirit realm that's full to bursting with chained-up repentors. In other words, Scrooge is not alone; many people, while perhaps less obviously awful than Scrooge, share his sinful failings. In this way, Dickens universalizes his message. This is not just a tale of one man's redemption; it is a kind of call to arms for all people to take to heart. Scrooge has already



STAVE 2

Scrooge awakes and finds his room as dark as when he fell asleep at two o'clock. He listens for the church bell but when it comes, it strikes twelve. He must have slept through a whole day and half a night. He doesn't believe it, but when he goes to the window, the street is deserted and dark as nighttime. He is glad of this, because it means that night and day have not entirely merged – he fears the disruption to trade.

Clocks are always striking in A Christmas Carol, emphasizing the passage of time now that Scrooge knows how little time he has let to change his ways. Yet Scrooge's three days of ghostly visits also have an odd timelessness, with Scrooge seeming to sleep from night to night, perhaps implying the sort of endless purgatory he might end up in.



Scrooge goes back to bed and thinks, but the more he thinks that the episode with Marley was all in his head, the more the visions spring up in his mind and convince him otherwise. Then he remembers that **Marley's ghost** had said one o'clock was the hour to expect the first spirit. Scrooge listens for the chime of the quarters and is relieved when he hears the single note marking the hour and sees no ghost. But he rejoices too soon – the curtains at his window are drawn by the hand of a strange **new ghost**.

Dickens again goes to great lengths to insist that what is happening to Scrooge is not a dream or anything imagined, that it is real. Scrooge again listens in agitation to the passing of time and hopes for the best, just as all men must as they face eventual death.



This **new ghost** appears as if through "some supernatural medium", giving his aged features child-like proportions. He has white hair, but smooth skin. He wears a glowing white robe, decorated with summer flowers that contrast with the holly branch he carries. From the top of his head a stream of light shines forth, but the figure's robe comes in and out of shadow, makings its limbs seem to dissolve and reappear in many different combinations. He carries an extinguisher cap like a candle-snuffer for putting out his own flame.

This ghost has a beautiful aura, and makes the past seem like a shining beacon compared to Scrooge's dark, cold present. Childhood is connected to light and nature, but there is also something unnatural about this ghost – his aged, faraway look and his angelic presence tell us how distant and different the past is.



The ghost introduces itself, in a low, faraway voice, as **the Ghost of Christmas Past**. **Scrooge**'s past, in particular. Scrooge gets an urge to shy away from the ghost's light and begs him to disappear, but the ghost insists that it is Scrooge's own fault that he is here. Scrooge apologizes for offending the ghost and asks what he wants. The ghost says he has come to help him. Scrooge can't help thinking he'd rather do without this kind of help, but the ghost hears his thought and takes him by the arm.

That Scrooge does not want to face his past suggests that there is sadness in that past he finds painful, which has the effect of humanizing Scrooge a bit . Scrooge tries to avoid this past by begging or apologizing, but the ghost—not in an unfriendly way—ensures that he cannot avoid what he must see. Scrooge must face his past choices and experiences and assess what he has become.

1 3 4

The ghost of Christmas Past leads **Scrooge** to the window. Scrooge tries to resist, thinking he will fall out of the window, but the ghost tells him to merely touch his hand and he won't fall. They fly through the wall and are suddenly passing over the scenes of Scrooge's boyhood. The ghost is wise and motherly, and Scrooge becomes childlike in his care. He feels like he is surrounded by ghostly "odours", full of hopes and memories just like he is.

The sight of the spirit world, full of mournful spirits, has already begun to affect Scrooge. Unlike his frosty, bitter persona, he now looks like a vulnerable child, being taken through the air by this motherly ghost.

3 4

Scrooge recognizes everything he sees, and names the members of a crowd of passing youths excitedly, but he can tell that he is invisible to these apparitions. He can't explain why he is so pleased to hear their shouts of "Merry Christmas!", and remembers his own present miserliness. They pass by a deserted, overgrown school room and see a lonely **boy** neglected for the holidays, with a tiny fire and not much to eat. Scrooge recognizes the boy as his young self and cries. Every sensation and detail of the scene softens and saddens Scrooge further.

Taking Scrooge to the Christmases of the past unlocks a side of the old miser that he seems to have forgotten. It takes him back to his younger self, who had an excitement for Christmas and its traditions. Because Scrooge has changed so much and buried his younger self so deeply, the feeling of excitement seems very foreign to him. At the same time, note how he "feels" these scenes of the past, how he gives in to sensation and emotion.

1 2 3 4

As **the boy** is reading, a man in a funny costume appears outside the window with a donkey loaded with wood. **Scrooge** recognizes the man as **Ali Baba**. He rejoices to remember all the fictional adventure characters of his boyhood, but then catches himself and mourns his poor childhood self again. The thought of his own loneliness reminds him of the boy singing a carol he'd sent away from his own office door the previous night.

The adult Scrooge sits in his counting house day after day, only really interacting with money, but when he was a boy, he filled his mind with imaginative fantasies to try to forget his loneliness. As he watches his young self, all these fictional characters come back to him and we witness the joy they used to bring him.

1 3 4

The ghost of Christmas Past brings forth other visions. **Scrooge** is now older, alone for another Christmas holiday, but this time a young girl comes into the schoolroom. She is Scrooge's sister, **Fan**, and she announces that she is taking him home. Home, for good, she says happily. She says that their father is kinder now and has asked for his son to be brought home to become a man and never return to the schoolroom. Then a man's voice is heard booming down the hall – it is the fierce **schoolmaster** who shakes Scrooge's hand and gives them wine and cake before their journey. The ghost reminds Scrooge that Fan died as a woman, with one child, Scrooge's nephew, **Fred**.

Fan is an important character in Scrooge's past – she represents the best of youth, innocence and goodness, and makes Scrooge's childhood gleam compared to his cold, dark present. She shows that Scrooge has experienced both neglect and goodness in his young life, both cruelty and generosity. Also note that Scrooge's present existence is not so different from that miserable world of his school—except that now, as an adult, he chooses to be alone.

1 2 3 4 ☐

They go to another Christmas, where **Young Scrooge** is apprenticed at a warehouse. He sees his old boss **Fezziwig**, a fat, jovial man, whom Scrooge is very fond of. Fezziwig calls to his apprentices. Young Scrooge and another apprentice called **Dick** answer and Fezziwig tells them it's time to shut up shop for Christmas. The two young men hurriedly closed the shutters and cleared everything away. The warehouse is a cozy place, warmed by a large fire.

The Fezziwigs are portrayed as the perfect happy family, larger than life, jolly and musical. By connecting them to the sensations of warmth and color and music, Dickens makes them synonymous with Christmas itself, meaning that they also represent the values of goodness and generosity that Scrooge has lost.

1 2 3 4 ☐

Mrs. Fezziwig enters followed by many townsfolk, all kinds of couples and friends from the town, and the place is turned into a ballroom and they all dance to the sound of a very determined fiddler. Mr. and Mrs. Fezziwig take to the floor and are a wonderful dancing pair, with energy and lightness defying their ages. After the dancing they see their guests to the door, and **Scrooge** and **Dick** go to their beds. Scrooge has been watching this display in a frenzy of excitement. **The ghost of Christmas Past** makes a comment that it is a small thing to be so grateful about, and Scrooge answers that the Fezziwigs' effect on his happiness was huge. The ghost then notices a change in Scrooge's mood and Scrooge says he wishes he could see his clerk.

The Fezziwigs' party has a long description in the story, showing how important it was in Scrooge's young life. The image of the Fezziwigs' ball is a joyful, colorful and musical one, almost overwhelming in its affect on the senses. It is working on Scrooge, and we see that he is beginning to think with remorse about the way he has treated his employee Cratchit. Seeing how beautifully he was treated by his employers has illuminated his own wretched behavior toward his employee.

1 2 3 4 ☐

The ghost of Christmas Past announces that he is running out of time and the vision changes again – now **Scrooge** is "in the prime of life" next to a weeping **girl**, who believes she has been displaced by money, Scrooge's golden idol. She says the hope of being beyond poverty has taken over all his other ambitions. She says they were young, poor, and content when they got engaged. She is grateful to know his feelings so that she can release him from the engagement. Scrooge claims he has not asked for release, but the girl tells him that his changed nature has asked for release without words. She says goodbye and wishes his new self luck in the life of profit he has chosen. Hearing this conversation torments Scrooge but the ghost has one more vision to impart.

Again, we see another side of Scrooge. The old miser seemed dedicated to a life of loneliness, but as a young man, Scrooge was deeply loved. This is the first sign of his personality changing and his love of money driving goodness away. Remember how Scrooge got angry when Fred mentioned his wife and how Scrooge seemed to disagree with the idea of marriage altogether. This view has come from his buried regrets about his fiancée and the happiness they could have enjoyed. Also note how Scrooge responded to losing his fiancée because of his single-minded devotion to money not by changing but instead by devoting himself even further to money alone.



They are now in a cozy room. The same girl, **Belle**, now a mother, with her **daughter** and a herd of other children, boisterously running around. The mother and daughter laugh. **Scrooge** looks with envy at how the young boys play with their sister, without getting punished. He wishes he could have the carelessness of childhood, with the wisdom that he brings to the scene now.

This is the image of the life Scrooge has missed out on but could have had with Belle. The liveliness of this household makes Scrooge's house, with its darkness, single portion of gruel, and simple furnishings, look like a joyless hovel. He is beginning to realize what he has missed.



Then there is a knock at the door and **Belle's husband** enters with his arms full of Christmas presents. Happy chaos ensues as the children affectionately wrestle the presents from him and all laugh until bedtime. Then the man sits down with his wife and remembers meeting an old friend of hers earlier. **Belle** guesses that it was **Mr. Scrooge**. Her husband tells her how he seemed "quite alone in the world". At hearing this, **Scrooge** demands to be removed from the scene. He tries to seize **the ghost of Christmas Past**. The ghost puts up little resistance so he takes the extinguisher cap and tries to push it onto the ghost's head, but he becomes drowsy as he does so and falls asleep.

If the sight of Belle's family didn't make it clear enough to Scrooge what he missed out on, the arrival of the husband-figure and the gossip about the old flame Scrooge really drives the message home. Scrooge's reaction is to shut it out and try to extinguish the ghost's light. This light has shown him the truth and it disturbs him – he prefers his old darkness to this painful light.



STAVE 3

Scrooge wakes up the following night, ready to be greeted by **the second spirit**. He does not wish to be taken by surprise this time and opens the curtains. He is prepared for the ghost to take any shape. But when the clock strikes one and he is still alone, he becomes nervous. But soon a reddish light appears. At first the light scares Scrooge more than any ghost could have, but he realizes the obvious, that the light must be coming from elsewhere—and as it turns out it is coming from the adjoining room. As he approaches it, he hears the booming voice of the second spirit calling for him.

Scrooge, as a man of business, a man who is cold and relies solely on his mind (not feelings) to be prepared for all business situations, tries to be prepared again. But the ghosts do not follow a protocol, and when things don't go as planned Scrooge becomes nervous.



The room next-door has been transformed into a festive cavern, full to the brim with food and greenery. Amid all this sits **the second spirit**, who lifts up a glowing torch as **Scrooge** enters and introduces himself as the Ghost of Christmas Present. His eyes are kind, but Scrooge is scared to look in them. The ghost is dressed in a green robe with a wreath of holly round his head – he is the personification of Christmas.

The Ghost of Christmas Present is the archetypal Father Christmas figure. He sits amid a festive scene like a Christmas card, full of plenty. Yet there is a kind of sadness in the richness of the scene—this is the sort of amazing feast Scrooge could afford with his wealth, and yet Scrooge chooses darkness instead.



The Ghost of Christmas Present is surprised that **Scrooge** has not met a spirit like him before, because he has more than eighteen hundred brothers. Scrooge apologizes. He tells the ghost that he learned a valuable lesson from the previous spirit and to show him whatever he needs to. The ghost asks Scrooge to touch his robe. The instant Scrooge does, they are transported out of the room into the cold Christmas street, where many neighbors are scraping and shoveling the snow from their roofs, and talking to each other merrily, despite the gloomy weather.

The ghost's comment about his brothers refers to each of the Christmases that has occurred since the birth of Christ—essentially the ghost is commenting on how Scrooge seems never to have really encountered a true Christmas.Scrooge, meanwhile, has stopped resisting the lessons of the spirits and now invites the spirit to teach him what he wants. He is polite and apologetic to the spirit and tells him that the previous spirit's lesson is "working now", which suggests that he is finding some value to these visions, even though they are painful. His definition of "profit" is beginning to change.



The street and shop fronts are a glorious display of foods, towering, brightly colored. Smells of figs and spices fill the air. Everybody is rushing about buying things for the season and the shopkeepers are too busy making merry to worry about getting the right prices. Then the church bells ring and the flocks of people go off to church. As the people pass, **the Ghost of Christmas Present** is entranced by them, and sprinkles incense from his torch on their food, which has a magical effect of making any disagreements vanish. He tells **Scrooge** that the incense is a particular flavor, and is best given to a poor dinner.

This street is the stereotypical image of Christmas, full of treats and spices and happy, musical voices. The church bells join in and remind us that Christmas is also a time for Christian reflection and prayer. The kindness of the spirit and the way he favors the poor with his incense shows both how strong the virtues of Christmastime are in the poor population but also how those poor are neglected by the charity of the living.



They travel on, toward the outskirts of the city. **the Ghost of Christmas Present** has a magic ability to fit into any space, despite his giant size, and as they enter **Bob Cratchit**'s tiny lodgings, this is especially wondrous. The ghost sprinkles some of his incense. They see **Mrs. Cratchit**, in an old dress but making it merry with ribbons, and the many Cratchit children, all helping to ready the house for Christmas dinner.

The ghost's special power to fit into any room symbolizes how Christmas can be found in any situation—rich or poor, big room or small. Though Cratchit's means are small, he manages to fill his home with the spirit of Christmas, making it seem large and glorious, compared to Scrooge's bleak, dark rooms. Compare how Mrs. Cratchit decorates her old dress with ribbons, while Scrooge leaves his house bare.



Martha, a daughter, arrives home late—she has been working and has brought the goose. **Mrs. Cratchit** is ecstatic to see her. But just as Martha has greeted them, they see **Mr. Cratchit** arrive, carrying the youngest of their children, **Tiny Tim**, and Martha goes to hide to surprise him. She doesn't let the joke go on long, seeing her father's upset face, and comes out to surprise him and is tightly hugged in return. Bob tells his wife, while Tim is being shown the pudding by his siblings, how much better their son's health is becoming. Bob is tearful when he relates Tim's wish that passers-by should see his crippled state and be reminded of the miracles of Jesus, who helped the sick.

It is not just the bread-winning father that supports this family – the eldest children are expected to work just as hard. The exploitation and premature growing-up of Victorian children was a real concern for Dickens, and something he focused on in his work. Yet, even so, this is clearly a family full of love and joy. Dickens makes Tiny Tim smaller and more fragile than the typical child to emphasize the disparity between his small means and his tremendous spirit.

☐ 2 3 4 5

Then **Tim** comes back into the room and the goose is brought out. All the trimmings are readied and placed around it, a prayer is said and then they carve the bird and are full of joy at the lovely smell and how lucky they are. When they have eaten every morsel, **Mrs. Cratchit** goes nervously to get the pudding. She brings back the flaming round pudding and they all agree it is her greatest success yet. Nobody mentions how small it is.

The Cratchits really appreciate their food. Even though it is by no means a feast, they all marvel at the sight of the goose and pudding, and congratulate Mrs. Cratchit as if it were the biggest they'd ever seen. We can see the moral of the story here, that you can be happy with nothing, if you are grateful and generous.

☐ 2 3 4 ☐

After dinner they have hot drinks by the fire and toast to Christmas. **Tiny Tim** sits next to his father and says heartily, "God bless us every one". **Scrooge** eagerly asks the **the Ghost of Christmas Present** if Tim will survive. The spirit responds that if the future is unaltered, the boy will die. He condemns Scrooge, saying that he is less fit to live than poor children like Tim – he compares Scrooge to an insect on a leaf complaining about his brothers in the dust.

Tim really is a symbol of Jesus. Even though he is poor, he shows courage and huge generosity of spirit – he asks God to bless everybody, *not just him and his family, showing that he is the opposite to the selfish Scrooge. Yet, at the same time, he is powerless to improve his situation and will die, because those that* do *have the power to change his fate, like Scrooge, choose not to do so.*

1 2 3 4 5

Just then, **Scrooge** jumps—**Bob Cratchit** has said Scrooge's name, in a toast. **Mrs. Cratchit** says she doesn't understand how her husband can act so grateful to that miser. She says that it's only on Christmas that someone so cruel can be toasted. But Bob responds that he forgives everything on Christmas and gently scolds her for talking negatively on Christmas day. She drinks the toast for her husband's sake, and, after the thought of Scrooge has died away, the family is even merrier.

Bob Cratchit represents the ideal Christmas character. He has been mistreated by Scrooge for many years and has Scrooge to blame for his poverty and his constant state of cold, and yet he forgives his master and will not allow anyone to be blamed or talked badly about on Christmas.

☐ 2 3 4 ☐

They talk about employment, and **Mr. Cratchit** says that **Scrooge** might have work for **Peter**, the eldest. **Martha Cratchit** tells them about her hard work at the milliners, from which she is so tired that she might sleep all day tomorrow. Then they listen to **Tiny Tim** sing a song. And though they don't have much, they seem contented, as if they don't even need **the Ghost of Christmas Present**'s incense.

Dickens shows how the city's poverty has caused a generation of lost childhoods – Peter and Martha work as hard as their father does, but though they've lost their innocence, Christmas makes them innocent again and music soothes their woes.

☐ 2 3 4 5

As **Scrooge** and the spirit wander on through the city, they see wonderful sights like this all over town. So many people are on their way to see family that Scrooge wonders if there is anybody inside at all. **The Ghost of Christmas Present** rejoices in this display. They are suddenly transported to a far different place, a deserted moor where the **miners** live—the ghost shows Scrooge where they sit beside a fire singing a song with their women and children. Next the ghost takes Scrooge even further afield, over the sea, wild and unfriendly, and finds **two men** celebrating Christmas in a lighthouse on a remote shore. Then, even further into the wild, they find the **crew** of a ship, humming together a Christmas tune. Scrooge is astonished at the kindness he finds in such a lonely place.

One of the things that the spirits are determined to teach Scrooge is the value of knowledge and conscience over ignorance. Scrooge has been living a closed-minded life, only really seeing his own troubles, but now the scope of his vision is widened rapidly and he is able to see the importance of Christmas spirit and its affect on the world. In turn he also sees how many poor, honest people surround him. These people are brought together by singing Christmas songs—on Christmas people always come together, even in the loneliest places—making Scrooge stand out as someone who has chosen to be alone.



Scrooge is interrupted in his vision by a hearty laugh. All of a sudden they are transported to his **nephew**'s house. There are few things better than a good laugh, says the narrator, and Fred's is contagious. As Scrooge listens to the party, laughing together, he realizes that they are laughing at him. They are laughing at his saying "Humbug!" to Christmas. **Fred's wife**, who is described as exceedingly pleasant-looking, thinks he should be ashamed of himself. Fred says that he doesn't get anything from his wealth anyway, because he doesn't do any good with it. Fred feels sorry for his Uncle, because he is missing many pleasant moments, and he decides to keep pestering him every year in the hope that one day, he'll get to him. They all laugh again at this notion.

Fred's home stands out from the cold and darkness of the winter streets. Inside, it is warm and filled with the warm sound of laughter. This is a foreign sound to Scrooge – it jars and surprises him. But all is not lost. This vision shows us that Scrooge does *belong in the world of goodness and Christmas excitement. Even though Fred's jokes are at Scrooge's expense, the act of making those jokes still brings Scrooge as a presence into the party and show that he is considered to be part of the family, albeit an outside, quite comical part.*



Scrooge's niece plays a tune on the harp that **Scrooge** remembers fondly. It makes him feel sentimental, and he thinks that perhaps if he had heard it more often in his young life, things would have turned out differently. Then, the family plays games. First, is blind-man's buff, which one of the guests uses as an opportunity to hug again and again the woman at the party whom he has a thing for.

Just as the story's title and structure mimics a traditional hymn, this music hides a serious message. It sways Scrooge's emotions and reminds him what it feels like to be sentimental and nostalgic. In addition to the transporting effect of the music, the game-playing creates an atmosphere of childhood, transporting Scrooge back to better times.



As **Scrooge** watches, he joins in the games, making unheard guesses and contributions. He begs **the Ghost of Christmas Present** to let him stay for one more game. It is called "Yes and No". **Fred** thinks of something and the players have to guess what it is. After a barrage of questions, they find out that the thing is an animal, who grunts and gowls. It turns out to be Uncle Scrooge. They all laugh hysterically, and say a toast to Scrooge for giving them so much fun.

Scrooge is part of the fun and joins in excitedly like a child. It reminds us of the poor young boy stuck in the school room with only his imagination to entertain him at Christmas time and brings out the long-hidden sympathetic side of miserable Uncle Scrooge.

2 3 4

Scrooge has been so enlivened by the evening that he is very sorry to go, but the spirit tells him they must journey on, and they visit many more Christmas scenes with the same happy endings, no matter what conditions the revelers are in. But as they travel, the **Ghost of Christmas Present** is noticeably aging. He says his brief life will be over at midnight.

Scrooge has forgotten his grumpy ways and has found himself happy and excited but he is reminded that this is not the reality, that he has not been joining in with Christmas, and that this happy vision cannot continue because time is running out.

1 3 4

As the bells chime and time passes, **Scrooge** notices something strange under **the Ghost of Christmas Present**'s robe. **Two** children creep out. They are miserable animals, so sick and shriveled that they look old instead of young. Scrooge asks the spirit if they are his. The spirit replies that they are Man's. They represent Ignorance and Want. He tells Scrooge to beware them both, but mostly the boy, Ignorance. Scrooge asks if there is no refuge for these poor children, but the spirit answers with Scrooge's own words, "Are there no workhouses?" As the bell strikes midnight, the ghost disappears and Scrooge sees **another ghost** coming towards him, a "solemn Phantom."

This image is probably the most symbolic and dramatic of the whole story. The vices of ignorance and want are personified by these two cowering children. The children are poor and ragged, showing how the vice that Scrooge has indulged in—Ignorance-- has a real effect on the children in the workhouses and on the streets.

1 3 5

STAVE 4

The last ghost approaches, but is shrouded in a black garment so that all **Scrooge** can see of it is an outstretched hand and a mass of black. This figure fills him with greater dread than the other ghosts. It does not speak to him and beckons mysteriously with its hand. Scrooge guesses aloud that it is the Ghost of Christmas Yet to Come and the ghost replies with a slight movement of its head. Though he fears the ghost, Scrooge urges it desperately to show him what it has for him.

The spirits have so far been quite benevolent – glowing, ruddy, childlike and gentle, they have guided Scrooge through their visions firmly but somewhat sympathetically. But this last spirit brings the moral lesson home. Reminiscent of the Grim Reaper, he shows Scrooge that the unknown, unseen fate that he is heading for is really something to fear deeply.

1 3

Scrooge follows the **Ghost of Christmas Yet to Come** and suddenly they are in the midst of a street, busy with trade. Scrooge stops by a group of **businessmen** and hears them gossip about the long-awaited death of one of their contemporaries, whom they say is bound to have a cheap funeral. One gentleman comments that he will only go to the funeral if lunch is provided.

Christmas Yet to Come is a sad, immoral place, full of people who have the same miserly values as Scrooge has shown in his life—they don't care about the man who has died; they care only about they can profit from it. And that they think this way says a great deal about the dead man, as well, of course.

1 3 4

Scrooge looks questioningly to the **Ghost of Christmas Yet to Come**, but it just moves on to another group. Scrooge recognizes these men. This time the men merely mention the death of the mysterious man, and don't seem to care at all. Scrooge puzzles through what he has heard. He knows that he is hearing these comments for a reason, but he can't figure out whose death they are discussing. He waits to see himself appear in the vision, as he did in the scenes of Christmas past, but when they arrive at the corner where Scrooge usually stands, another man has taken his place. Scrooge hopes that this is because his future self has taken a new turn in life.

Scrooge has been in such a small, selfish world that he doesn't even realize that these businessmen are talking about him. He is disturbed by their callous lack of care for the dead man, but doesn't realize that they are echoing his own cruel phrases and opinions. This might remind you of the little child Ignorance that stepped out from under the Ghost of Christmas Present's robe – Scrooge is, in a sense, protecting himself with his ignorance. But he is also hurting both himself and the world.



Scrooge realizes the **Ghost of Christmas Yet to Come** is looking at him again, and feels a new surge of terror. The ghost leads him to an infamous part of town, full of misery and crime. Here, in a grimy rag-and-bone den, they find an **old man** trying to keep warm in his meager lodgings. He is soon joined by **three others** and the group start to laugh together. The old man, Joe, invites his friends into the parlor and the three men offer to trade him bundles of things they have come into possession of after a rich man's death. They agree that it is no sin to take these things without permission, since their owner was so unkind in life.

The dead man was wealthy, a man who might of thought of himself as commanding respect throughout the town and especially over the poor whom he considered his inferiors. Yet here Scrooge sees that for all his wealth the man died alone, with no one to stand up for him, and that in fact he is afforded no respect at all by even the scavengers and dealers that he used to dismiss.



The first opens the first bundle and finds a few small items of not much worth. **Joe** totals up the value for its owner. **The next woman** opens her bundle and reveals some silver and fabrics. The next reveals a pair of bed curtains and blankets, which the woman says she unwrapped from the dead corpse. It would have been wasted, she adds, by wrapping him in it. Scrooge listens, appalled.

The three bundles that the scavengers produce for Joe increase in magnitude. The final bundle has been taken from the corpse itself, leaving it to be buried like a pauper. But far from feeling guilty for this sin, the scavengers laugh uproariously. Christmas spirit is completely absent here.



The room changes, and now in dim light, there is a bed and on top, **a body**, covered in a sheet. **The Ghost of Christmas Yet to Come** points ominously towards the head but **Scrooge** finds he can't make himself remove the cloth. The narrator recites a lesson about death—that the good-natured body cannot suffer from death and will instead "sow the world with life immortal." This lesson is what Scrooge hears in his mind when he looks at the body, and imagines the wicked thoughts that have led him to being rich and not good. He considers the awful prospect of dying alone.

Through the story of this dead man, Scrooge finally realizes how his own lifestyle has set him up for a fate worse than death. There is a mere thin cloth between him and the sight of the dead body, and it causes him to remember the moral lesson that he has been denying for so long. But he is still thinking of himself, feeling sorry for himself, instead of feeling remorse for his cruelty to others.



Scrooge assures **the Ghost of Christmas Yet to Come** that he is aware of the lesson he is being taught and begs to leave, but the spirit will not rest and seems to be staring at him. Scrooge begs him to show one person who is sorry for this dead man. They are instantly transported to the home of a young family. **The husband** comes home, burdened by bad news, but he says there is hope. He tells his wife that the man they are indebted to is dead. **His wife** can't help but be thankful. They don't know who will take over their debt but it's very unlikely that he should be such an incredible miser as the last. The house becomes a little lighter and happier for the man's death.

This vision goes from bad to worse. Scrooge seems to have a sense that the fate he is witnessing is his own—though as of yet he still hides behind a veneer of Ignorance—and becomes more and more distraught, but with the spirit's lack of sympathy, there is nothing he can do but watch as his worst fears regarding the dead man are confirmed. Even the omnipotent ghost is unable to find a single scene that shows any sadness for the loss of this man. In fact, the world seems to be better off for him being gone



But **Scrooge** wishes to see some scrap of tenderness to dim even slightly the terrible image of the body lying alone in that house. **The Ghost of Christmas Yet to Come** takes him to **Bob Cratchit**'s house, where the Cratchits are unusually silent, waiting for Bob to come home. **Mrs. Cratchit** is sewing but stops because the color is making her eyes tired. As Scrooge enters with the spirit he hears a phrase as if in a dream, "And he took a child, and set him in the midst of them." Scrooge realizes that **Tiny Tim** has died. Bob is due home but one of the children says he's been walking slower recently, and they all agree that he used to go more quickly with Tiny Tim on his shoulders.

There is a huge difference between the body lying alone in the dark house and the body of Tiny Tim, kissed and adored in the Cratchit house. The Cratchits have picked a green, fragrant plot for the boy, and have promised to visit him every Sunday. The child is given religious significance, as a kind of savior. But the body of the miserly man is left alone, in a godless place. At the same time, Cratchit is crushed by Tiny Tim's death, and of course had someone just had some charity Tiny Tim wouldn't have had to die.



At that moment, **Bob** enters, wrapped in his blanket. His family help him to tea and his children gather around him to comfort him. Bob is pleasant with everybody. He has been to see the place where **Tim** will be buried – he is pleased to find it green. He promised Tim he would walk there every Sunday. At the thought of his promise, he breaks down into tears. He goes upstairs to the room where Tim has been laid down on a bed. He composes himself, kisses Tim's little face, then goes downstairs again.

Mr. Cratchit shows bravery and cheerfulness even in the face of grief, but the loss of Tiny Tim leaves a huge gap in the Cratchit household. Tim was the unlikely leader of the holiday cheer and without him, the household has a different, solemn atmosphere. Fitting in with the story's use of extremes and caricatures to make its point, it is the purest, kindest, smallest character that suffers most.



Bob then tells his family of the beautiful kindness of **Scrooge's nephew**, whom he met in the street. Fred noticed that Bob looked sad and gave him sincere condolences, and sent his love to his family and gave him his address, so that they could be in touch if they need anything. Bob thinks he might even be able to get **Peter**, the eldest, a job. One of the other children says that Peter will soon leave them and set up with a family of his own. Bob admits that this may be so, but that they will never forget this time together, and their first loss, of **Tiny Tim**, and how very good he was.

The effect of Tiny Tim's life and loving nature is far reaching. It has left its mark on everybody. Even those who didn't really know him have positive thoughts about him and have been left better off because of him, even though he offered nothing but his goodness. This shows how the best things are not affected by money or even death, they outlast us.



Scrooge can tell that **the Ghost of Christmas Yet to Come** is about to leave him. He wants to know finally who the dead man is. The ghost takes Scrooge to his office, but they seem to be passing through it. Scrooge asks to see himself inside his house, but the spirit points in another direction. He joins the spirit again at the iron gate of a churchyard, a wretched, lifeless place.

Scrooge seems to know deep down that he is the dead man that has been the subject of this vision but he clings onto his ignorance until the last moment.



The Ghost of Christmas Yet to Come keeps pointing, now it is clear that he is directing **Scrooge** to one grave in particular. Scrooge desperately asks whether the things the spirit has shown him can be changed or whether they are set in stone, but the spirit only points with more determination. Scrooge goes to the gravestone indicated by the spirit. It is neglected, and Scrooge's own name is inscribed on it. Scrooge cries out, knowing that he is the dead man on the bed, alone and unloved. He gets down on his knees before the spirit and begs him to reassure him that an altered life will produce an altered fate. He vows to honor Christmas and learn all his lessons. He catches the spirit's hand, and squeezes, and the spirit floats down into the ground and disappears.

This is the climax of the story –finally, Scrooge is forced to discard his ignorance and fully face that the dead man is him. That this story he was seeing was not symbolic; it was his *life, and he must now grapple with the certain understanding that his greed has led him inexorably to the horrible loneliness that he has witnessed in this vision of the future, to a death uncared about by anyone. Face with this vision, with this understanding, Scrooge begins to suddenly and dramatically repent.*

1 2 3 4 5

STAVE 5

Scrooge wakes to find himself back in bed, in his rooms, his face wet with tears. He is so grateful to see everything, and to know that he has time ahead of him to make things right. He jumps out of bed and puts on his clothes and declares that he is "happy as an angel." He laughs like he hasn't laughed in years. He doesn't even know how long he has been asleep or what has occurred here, but he feels like a baby.

Scrooge's awakening from this deep, strange sleep is a moment of enlightenment, a complete transformation, a bit like a baptism or birth itself. Scrooge cries like a baby, and is purified like a newly baptized disciple.

1 2 3 4 5

The church bells start chiming. **Scrooge** runs to the window and sees a beautifully clear, cold day. He shouts out to a **young boy** on the street what day it is. The boy replies that it is Christmas Day. Scrooge is ecstatic not to have missed it. He asks the boy to go to the nearby shop with the huge prize turkey in the window and to buy it, and offers him half a crown if he comes back quickly. The grateful boy dashes off. As he waits for the turkey, he sees his door knocker again, and exclaims how thankful he is to it for showing him **Jacob Marley**'s face.

The turkey arrives and **Scrooge** delights in sending it to the Cratchit house, paying everyone handsomely for the job. He can't stop chuckling, so much so that he has trouble shaving and dressing. He goes into the street and greets everybody warmly. Some even greet him back. He meets **one of the gentlemen** who had come to see him the day before and wishes him Merry Christmas. He tells the man that he knows that his name is not pleasant to him, but asks to be forgiven and gives him a large donation for the poor. He says he won't accept the man's surprised offer of thanks, but asks the gentleman to come and visit him.

The fog has lifted and the cacophonous sound of the bells at the arrival of Marley's ghost has turned into a beautiful chime. Though Scrooge spent three nights with the Ghosts he nonetheless wakes up on Christmas Day, and he is reminded of how wonderful waking up on Christmas Day was as a child. He turns this knowledge into action, and passes his joy on, to a poor boy, whose grateful face repays him immediately. Scrooge is so full of Christmas spirit that he even thanks his door knocker!

1 2 3 4 5

In Stave One, Marley's ghost described his awful fate to walk the earth, enchained, for eternity, and Scrooge's fate loomed ahead of him. Now, Scrooge has the chance to make amends for all his bad deeds – one by one he apologizes to the virtuous characters he has met and scorned. This structure allows Dickens to show Scrooge's complete transformation from evil to good

1 2 3 4 5

All morning, **Scrooge** walks through the town, greeting and talking to people. Then he goes to his **nephew**'s house and summons up the courage to knock. He is met by the **housekeeper** and asks kindly to come upstairs. He stuns everyone when he arrives and announces he has come to dinner, but they rapidly make him feel at home, and he enjoys an evening that is just as wonderful as it was in **the spirit**'s vision.

Here is where the true lesson of the story lies. Not only is Scrooge using his new lease of life to make amends, he is also forgiven *by those characters who had been most personally affected by his cruelty. The transformation of Scrooge's life hinges on forgiveness, which is at the heart of Christian doctrine. Scrooge was so far down the path toward damnation, but all he needs to do is transform himself, to accept and internalize the spirit of Christmas, and forgiveness will be given.*

☐ 2 3 4 ☐

The next day, **Scrooge** goes to the office, in the hope of catching **Bob Cratchit** coming in late. Sure enough, Cratchit arrives late, and Scrooge pretends to be his old self and growls at him. He starts as if to punish Bob, but then shocks Cratchit by telling him that he is going to raise his salary. He laughs with joy and promises to help Cratchit and his family.

Scrooge now takes pleasure in being able to shed his old character in front of Bob. And, just as the other characters throughout the story have laughed and made jokes, so does Scrooge. Through the years, Bob has been loyal to him and is finally rewarded. This scene also shows how forgiving and good Bob is.

☐ 2 3 4 ☐

The narrator ends by saying that **Scrooge** does all that he promises, and more. **Tiny Tim** survives and thrives. Scrooge is popular with many, and it doesn't bother him that some still remember and mistrust him because he was once such an old miser. He becomes known for his Christmas spirit, and the story ends with Tiny Tim's words, "God bless us, every one!"

The story's end reminds us of the forgiveness and tolerance shown by Tiny Tim and learned by Scrooge. And Scrooge's transformation actually saves Tiny Tim's life. This the lasting message of the story, that goodness and its attendant charity can overcome suffering and poverty and bad will, both spiritually and in life.

☐ ☐ 3 4 5

HOW TO CITE

It's easy to cite LitCharts for use in academic papers and reports.

MLA CITATION

Parfitt, Georgina. "*A Christmas Carol*." *LitCharts*. LitCharts LLC, 8 Nov 2013. Web. 24 Aug 2016.

CHICAGO MANUAL CITATION

Parfitt, Georgina. "*A Christmas Carol*." LitCharts LLC, November 8, 2013. Retrieved August 24, 2016. http://www.litcharts.com/lit/a-christmas-carol.