

'A Christmas Carol' Key Information Sheets



1. Context (AO3)

- Dickens criticises the **social injustice** and **inequalities** of Victorian England.
- Dickens wanted richer members of society to recognise their **social responsibility**.
- Dickens presents **Christmas** as a festival of celebration; perfect as a vehicle for promoting kindness and the importance of families/friends
- The Victorians were beginning to recognise the importance of **education** for all.
- Dickens criticises the **Malthusian** idea of the poor being surplus to society.
- Dickens warns the readers of the risks of Capitalism on the more vulnerable in society.

2. Themes (AO1 and AO3)

- Dickens uses the **supernatural** as **catalysts for redemption**: the Ghosts reveal the potential for change in Scrooge and Victorian Capitalist society.
- Dickens promotes the values of **redemption** and **forgiveness**.
- **Social reform**: The impact of **poverty** and **social injustice** is explored through the Cratchit family, in particular Tiny Tim, and also Belle's reaction to Scrooge's fear of poverty.
- The spirit of **Christmas** and the impact of **nostalgia**, family bonds and **agape** is explored through the different depictions of Christmas scenes past, present and future.
- Dickens presents the idea of **redemption** as critical for society: **Scrooge's redemption arc** forms the main plot device of the novella.



3. Key events (AO1)

- Stave 1: Scrooge presented as miserly. Fred's greetings are rejected and the charity collectors sent away. Jacob Marley's ghost warns him of his fate if he doesn't change and sets up the idea of the three ghosts visiting him to teach him a lesson.
- Stave 2: Ghost of Christmas Past. We see a few years of Scrooge as a miserable schoolboy, eventually rescued by his sister. Fezziwig's ball shows us Scrooge as a happy apprentice. Belle breaking off the engagement concludes his lesson about money taking him over.
- Stave 3: Ghost of Christmas Present – he shows him the possibilities of a happy gathering regardless of wealth. We see the Cratchits, some miners, lighthouse keepers, people on a ship and also Fred's party.
- Stave 4: Ghost of Christmas Yet to Come – this is the predicted future for Scrooge. Tiny Tim has died in this alternate reality and Scrooge has died a lonely and unmissed man.
- Stave 5: Redemption – Scrooge reveals his capacity for change.

4. Literary features (AO2)

- The novella is structure with **five staves**: these are split into the four ghosts and the resolution
- The novella has a **cyclical structure**: it begins and ends with Scrooge, but with direct contrasts of character, weather.
- The novella is presented as a **ghost story** – the ghosts structure the novella with their moral lessons.
- **Lists** are often used to create the atmosphere of merry chaos.
- The **motifs** of light and darkness and heat and cold are used to emphasize the characters' personalities and reflect key themes.
- **Pathetic fallacy** is used to mirror Scrooge's character changes: it is cold and foggy at the start to represent Scrooge's unfeeling nature and myopic idea of poverty in society.



5. Prepared introduction to adapt for the exam question:

Dickens presents **[key focus]** to demonstrate the importance of a kinder and more charitable society. Inequality in Victorian London is shown by Scrooge whose avarice is contrasted against the plight of the poor presented by the tragic situation of characters such as Tiny Tim. Dickens' intentions were to use the novella as an allegory to demonstrate the potential for progress shown by Scrooge's redemption arc from a "covetous, old sinner" to becoming "quite a baby" at the end symbolising his – and Victorian London's – rebirth.

6. Key Vocabulary:

Agape: (noun)	Unconditional love, charity. Christians believe this is the highest form of love and is the type of love Jesus has for humans.
Austere: (adjective)	Very severe and unfriendly.
Avarice: (noun)	<i>extreme greed for wealth and the desire to hoard it</i>
Benevolence: (noun)	The quality of being kind and helpful.
Callous: (adjective)	Cruel and insensitive; not thinking about other people's feelings
Catalyst: (noun)	A condition, event, or person that is the cause of an important change
Charity: (noun)	The act of choosing to give help, especially money, to those who need it
Compassion: (noun)	Concern towards other people
Condemnation: (noun)	The Christian concept of being destined for divine punishment (hell) due to terrible sin.
Deprived: (adjective)	Suffering from a damaging lack of basic needs e.g. food, water, shelter, love
Ephemeral: (adjective)	Lasting only a short time.
Generous: (adjective)	happy to share or give away something, especially more than expected
Idol: (noun)	A picture or object that people pray to as part of their religion. Someone / something admired very much.
Ignorance: (noun)	Lack of knowledge, understanding, or information - often through a deliberate desire not to want to know
Insidious: (adjective):	Something unpleasant or dangerous; gradually and secretly causing serious harm.
Mammon: (noun)	The Christian concept of money as an evil force that turns people against God and makes them selfish.
Metamorphosis: (noun)	A complete change.
Misanthropic: (adjective)	having or showing a dislike of other people; unsociable.
Miser: (noun)	A mean person who is unwilling to spend or share money.
Nostalgia: (noun)	A feeling of pleasure, and also slight sadness, when thinking about things that happened in the past.
Philanthropy: (noun)	Helping the poor, especially by giving them money.

Pity (noun)	The feeling of sorrow and compassion caused by the suffering and misfortunes of others.
Redemption (noun)	The action of saving or being saved from sin, error, or evil.
Repentance: (noun)	Feeling sorry for past sins, accompanied by commitment to and actual actions that show and prove a change for the better
Shrouded: (verb)	Hidden by covering or surrounding
Surplus: (adjective)	More than is needed.

7. Key Quotations:

1. The simile exemplifies Scrooge's misanthropy, his self imposed isolation and disassociation from society as a whole.
2. However, the simile also foreshadows Scrooge's redemption: the pearl contained within the hard outer shell symbolises his inner worth and potential for good.
3. Furthermore, the implied image of something having to be forced open suggests a metamorphosis whilst also alluding to the ghosts' role in facilitating transformation in Scrooge's character.

'Solitary as an oyster'

Stave 1



Grade 9 analysis:
Dickens uses this simile to reveal Scrooge's misanthropic character but also to represent and foreshadow his metamorphosis. In this way, the symbol of the oyster represents Dickens' optimism and faith in the potential of the Victorian elite to embrace social reform and Christian values.

1. The repetitive, simple sentence structures emphasises Scrooge's sense of elation, his pure bliss at redemption
2. The similes lend Scrooge a renewed youthfulness and joy, as well as a revived moral authority.
3. The use of a semantic field of joy and sentiment demonstrates Scrooge's restored emotional vigour.

'I am as light as a feather, I am as happy as an angel, I am as merry as a schoolboy. I am as giddy as a drunken man.'

Stave 5



Grade 9 analysis:
Scrooge is imagined by Dickens here as a redeemed and newly ideal figure; he represents a restored goodness that is associated with youthfulness, psychological contentment, and Christian redemption. He presents such an ideal to Dickens' readership

1. The verb 'forged' draws on connotations of hell and damnation, associating mammon with sin and the fall.
2. The use of active verbs 'forged' and 'made' highlights how Marley's fate is the direct consequence of his actions.
3. The use of repetition here emphasises the slow, cumulative effect of Marley's greed and isolation. He has lived a whole life of sin - not made one single, large mistake.

MARLEY:

'I wear the chains I forged in life... I made it link by link and yard by yard'

Stave 1



Grade 9 analysis:
The juxtaposition of the small links and much larger yard emphasises Dickens' message that every choice, however small, shapes our soul and our fate. Small kindnesses and acts of empathy are more powerful than we realise.

1. The use of the infantile image, 'baby', reveals that Scrooge has undergone a process of metamorphosis, has been reborn and redeemed in Christian terms.
2. The use of the personal pronoun 'I' demonstrates that Scrooge is coming to know himself, engaging in a process of introspection.
3. The euphoric tone reveals the psychological catharsis and contentment that Scrooge has achieved through his engagement with the ghosts and his repressed memories.

SCROOGE:

'I don't know anything. I am quite a baby'

Stave 5



Grade 9 analysis:
Here Dickens uses Scrooge to dramatise the process of psychological introspection that he wishes his contemporary audience to endure; like Scrooge they must confront their repressed sins to achieve redemption.

1. Dickens uses the allegorical figures of Ignorance and Want as a means of personifying the sins and corruption of Victorian, industrialised society.
2. The declarative, almost biblical cadence and parallelism of the spirit's words identifies the ghost as a figure of revelation who must uncover traumatic truths to facilitate Scrooge's transformation.
3. The use of the imperative verb 'beware' serves as a direct warning to Victorian elite about the insidious corruption of industrialisation.

GHOST OF CHRISTMAS PRESENT:

'This Boy is Ignorance. This girl is want. Beware them both'

Stave 3



Grade 9 analysis:
Dickens intends here to borrow the allegorical form of morality plays and later religious allegorical texts in order to demonstrate the sins of Victorian society and declare the immediate need for social reform through education and philanthropy.

1. Here Dickens criticizes Scrooge's alignment with the Malthusian theory of Victorian overpopulation as he appears happy at the thought of the working class dying.
2. However, that Scrooge uses the pronoun 'it' rather than the verb to die demonstrates that he cannot bring himself to picture their deaths so explicitly and has some good in him.
3. His use of the economic lexis 'surplus' imagines workers as a disposable resource who can be struck off like assets on a balance sheet; Dickens presents Scrooge as seeing life through the prism of monetary gain.

SCROOGE:

'They had better do it and decrease the surplus population.'

Stave 1



Grade 9 analysis:
Scrooge's metaphorical presentation of workers as economic 'surplus' to be destroyed reflects Dickens' core opposition to the objectification of individuals that occurred under capitalism and through industrialisation in the nineteenth-century.

1. Dickens uses the language of heresy with the 'idol' to demonstrate the immoral and anti-Christian nature of Scrooge's love of mammon.
2. The verb 'displaced' demonstrates how Scrooge has exchanged, almost unconsciously, the moral for the selfish.
3. The image of the 'golden idol' implies that Scrooge's new desires are superficial, without real purpose or worth.

BELLE:

'another idol has displaced me [...] a golden one'

Stave 2



Grade 9 analysis:
The image of the 'golden idol' is used to exemplify the superficial, baseless, heretical, and immoral character of Scrooge's love of mammon and serves to warn Dickens' Victorian readership against the 'displacement' of true, Christian morals and desire.

1. The simile draws on connotations of wealth revealing the precious nature of Tiny Tim's Christian goodness while also emphasising the value of family and agape over mammon.
2. The comparative adjective 'better' idealises Tim as a figure of absolute moral earnestness.
3. Bob's sentimental tone transforms Tim into an object of worship, a model for the Victorian elite to aspire to.

CRATCHIT (ABOUT TINY TIM):

'as good as gold [...] and better'

Stave 3



Grade 9 analysis:
Although gold has connotations of wealth - such as the monetary wealth Scrooge pursues, here Dickens is contrasting the 'wealth' of the Cratchits with Scrooge's wealth. Through Tiny Tim, we see that real wealth comes from within. It comes from love, acceptance and kindness.

1. The image of the light is used to metaphorically represent the self-knowledge Scrooge has repressed.
2. The verb 'sprung' emphasises the inevitable power of truth to emerge and become known to Scrooge, the impossibility of repression.
3. The clarity, and brightness of the light draws on biblical language of revelation, emphasising the moral importance of the truth revealed.

GHOST OF CHRISTMAS PAST:

'from the crown of its head there sprung a bright clear jet of light'

Stave 2



Grade 9 analysis:
Dickens uses Scrooge's later struggle with the Ghost's light to dramatise Scrooge's internal psychological struggle to repress his own self-knowledge. Ultimately, Dickens demonstrates the inevitability of truth's revelation and Scrooge's redemption; Dickens is optimistic for his readers.

1. The allusion to the mythical 'horn of plenty' associates Christmas with abundance, health and happiness.
2. The use of the adjective 'jolly' associates the spirit of Christmas with psychological contentment and euphoria.
3. Once again, the image of the light demonstrates that the ghost is a source of truth and revelation for Scrooge.

GHOST OF CHRISTMAS PRESENT:

'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'

Stave 3



Grade 9 analysis:
Dickens presents the Ghost of Christmas Present as jovial, a manifestation of everyone's Christmas celebrations. The motif of light links directly with the previous two ghosts, both of whom had an integral light source. The fact that this ghost carries the light and sprinkles it on society suggests that the purpose of Christmas is to bring light into the darkness of winter.

1. The darkness of the imagery represents the unknown element of Scrooge's future, the fearful reality that he must make the correct choice.
2. The verb 'shrouded' alludes to the hidden or concealed nature of Scrooge's coming redemption, a redemption he will uncover.
3. The nothingness of the ghost contrasts with the revelatory, declarative character of the others; Scrooge must look inside himself for truth.

GHOST OF CHRISTMAS YET TO COME:

'shrouded in a deep black garment, which concealed its head, its face, its form, and left nothing of it visible'

Stave 4



Grade 9 analysis:
The nothingness, the void that characterises the Ghost evokes Christ's death on the cross and his asking for God's comfort and voice. As with Christ, Scrooge must commit to change himself in order to bring redemption. The ghost will not do it for him. Dickens presents the final stage of the ritual of redemption for his readers and Victorian society as a whole.

1. Pathetic fallacy is used to associate the melancholy atmosphere that lingers with Scrooge and his house.
2. Dickens is presented as a caricature of isolation and greed to further highlight his miraculous transformation in stave five.
3. The fog adds a supernatural element to prepare the reader for Marley's arrival.

WEATHER:

'The fog and frost so hung about the black old gateway of the house'

Stave 1



Grade 9 analysis:
The alliteration of 'fog' and 'frost' creates an eerie and sinister atmosphere, reinforced by the use of the adjective 'black' to describe the gate. Dickens implies that Scrooge's misanthropy is isolating and creates a metaphorical fog causing him (and Victorian society) to be unable to see redemption clearly.

1. The clear weather in Stave 5 mirrors Scrooge's rediscovered ability to perceive and help humanity.
2. The adjectives 'clear' and 'bright' reflects Scrooge's ability to view life optimistically.
3. The repetition and paralleled structure of the asyndetic list of 'no fog, no mist' marks the end of the supernatural involvement in the novella, as it has achieved its objective of transforming Scrooge.

WEATHER:

'no fog, no mist; clear, bright'

Stave 5



Grade 9 analysis:
Dickens' use of the mirroring of the pathetic fallacy implies that the structure of the novella is partially cyclical: the setting and attitudes are direct opposites. The weather of the final stave symbolises all the changes made by Scrooge and that his redemption is complete, leaving his Victorian readers with a clear message for how to improve society's inequalities.