

ENGLISH LITERATURE Y10 - A CHRISTMAS CAROL

A CONTEXT


1	Dickens	Dickens' father was sent to jail for debt and Dickens was forced to give up his education until inheritance money could pay for private tuition. He was put to work in a warehouse, pasting labels on bottles and gaining first-hand experience of poverty. Dickens became a writer of fiction and journalism, reporting on court cases and working for radical newspapers on his disappointment with politics and the class system.
2	Victorian Literature	Victorian literature, written during Queen Victoria's reign, was largely characterised by the struggle of the poor and the triumph of right over wrong. The age saw a huge amount of self-improvement guides published, focusing on morals, manners and etiquette and household management. Having said that, the Victorians also advocated good humour, joviality and celebration (Queen Victoria had both a Golden and a Diamond jubilee in this era). Themes allude to industrialisation, social class, reform and Empire.
3	Thomas Malthus	Thomas Malthus, who cautioned against intervening when people were hungry because it would only lead to an untenable population size. Better that the poor should starve and thus "decrease the surplus population."
4	Workhouses/ The Poor Law	In 1834 the Poor Law Amendment Act was designed to reduce the cost of looking after the poor. If people wanted help they had to go into a workhouse to get it. Once admitted to the workhouse, people were known as inmates, and categorised according to their status. Men, women and children were segregated, some never to be reunited. Meals were cheap, filling food such as gruel (a thick porridge-like sludge). The workhouses were strictly run, with many rules which were to be adhered to at all times, with severe consequences for those who refused them.
5	Prisons	Victorians were worried about the rising crime rate: and were firm believers in punishment for criminals. They had clear ideas about what these prisons should be like: unpleasant places, of laborious work to deter people from committing crimes.
6	Children	For the poor, there often wasn't the time or energy for play. Starvation and cold were facts of life, and many children were expected to contribute to household income. Children worked in huge, unsafe factories for very small wages. Others worked in suffocating mines and smaller children were chimney sweeps

B KEY CHARACTERS

1	Ebenezer Scrooge	A selfish business man.
2	Fred	Scrooge's nephew.
3	Jacob Marley	Scrooge's dead partner who returns as a ghost to warn Scrooge to change his ways.
4	Bob Cratchit	Scrooge's clerk who doesn't have much money.
5	Mrs Cratchit	Bob's wife
6	Tiny Tim	Bob's ill son who represents the surplus population
7	The Ghost of Christmas Past	A combination of young and old, wearing white robes and looking like a candle.
8	The Ghost of Christmas Present	A jovial gentleman surrounded by a warm glow.
9	The Ghost of Christmas Yet to Come	A robed and hooded spirit.
10	Fezziwig	Scrooge's ex-employer
11	Belle	A woman who Scrooge was in love with and who left him
12	Fan	Scrooge's sister

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C		KEY QUOTES
1	Scrooge	<p>"Oh! But he was a tight-fisted hand at the grindstone." "Hard and sharp as flint." "Secret, and self-contained, and solitary as an oyster." "No warmth could warm, no wintry weather chill him." "Are there no prisons?" 'Bah!' said Scrooge, 'Humbug!' "Decrease the surplus population." "What right have you to be dismal? What reason have you to be morose? You're rich enough." [Fred]</p>
2	Marley	<p>"I wear the chain I forged in life." "The spirit within him should walk abroad among his fellowmen, and travel far and wide; and if that spirit goes not forth in life, it is condemned to do so after death."</p>
3	Ghost of Christmas Past	<p>"It was a strange figure-like a child: yet not so like a child as like an old man." "A solitary child, neglected by his friends, is left there still." "The happiness he [Fezziwig] gives, is quite as great as if it cost a fortune."</p>
4	Ghost of Christmas Present	<p>"There sat a jolly Giant, glorious to see, who bore a glowing torch, in shape not unlike Plenty's horn." "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." "I see a vacant seat by the poor chimney corner, and a crutch without an owner...carefully preserved. If these shadows remain unaltered by the future, the child will die." "God bless us, every one!" "Will you decide what men shall live, what men shall die?" "This boy is Ignorance. This girl is Want. Beware them both."</p>
5	Ghost of Christmas Yet to Come	<p>"The Phantom slowly, gravely, silently approached." "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."</p>
6	Redemption	<p>"I will honour Christmas in my heart, and try to keep it all the year. I will live in the Past, the Present, and the Future!" "Scrooge was better than his word. He did it all, and infinitely more!" "His own heart laughed: and that was quite enough for him."</p>

D		KEY THEMES
Class	Greed	Generosity
The Ghost Story	Social injustice	Poverty
Time	Capitalism	Redemption
Family	Transformation	
Guilt	Supernatural	

E		KEY WORDS
1	Christmas	A Christian holiday to celebrate the birth of Christ.
2	Redemption	The act of being saved from sin.
3	Ignorance	A lack of knowledge.
4	Want	Desire to have something.
5	Victorian	The era of Queen Victoria's reign.
6	Social Criticism	Comments on a society's problems and issues.

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F PLOT SUMMARY

1	Stave 1	A mean-spirited, miserly old man named Ebenezer Scrooge sits in his counting-house on Christmas Eve, he refuses to spend money on heating coals for a fire. Scrooge reacts to the holiday visitors with bitterness, spitting out "Bah! Humbug!" in response to his nephew's "Merry Christmas!" Later that evening, Scrooge receives a chilling visitation from the ghost of his dead partner, Jacob Marley., who relates his unfortunate story. Marley hopes to save Scrooge from sharing the same fate.
2	Stave 2	The Ghost of Christmas Past, a childlike phantom with a brightly glowing head, escorts Scrooge on a journey to previous Christmases. He revisits his school days, his apprenticeship with a jolly merchant named Fezziwig and his engagement to Belle, a woman who leaves Scrooge because of his lust for money. Scrooge is deeply moved.
3	Stave 3	The Ghost of Christmas Present, a majestic giant in a green robe, takes Scrooge through London to unveil Christmas as it will happen that year. Scrooge watches the Cratchit family prepare a miniature feast in a meagre home, then to his nephew's to witness the Christmas party. Toward the end of the day, he shows Scrooge two starved children, Ignorance and Want, living under his coat.
4	Stave 4	The Ghost of Christmas Yet to Come leads Scrooge through mysterious scenes relating to an unnamed man's recent death. Scrooge sees businessmen discussing the dead man's riches, some homeless people trading his personal possessions for cash, and a poor couple expressing relief at the death of their unforgiving moneylender. He then finds himself in a churchyard, the spirit pointing to a grave. Scrooge is shocked to read his own name on the stone. He begs the spirit to alter his fate, promising to change his cruel, insensitive, ways and to honour Christmas with all his heart.
5	Stave 5	Overwhelmed with joy by the chance to redeem himself, Scrooge rushes out to send a giant Christmas turkey to the Cratchit house and attends Fred's party. As the years go by, he holds true to his promise and honours Christmas with all his heart: he treats Tiny Tim as if he were his own child, provides lavish gifts for the poor, and treats his fellow human beings with kindness, generosity, and warmth.

G METHODS

1	Perspective	A point of view. Text can be written form a first (I), second (you) or third person (he/she/they) perspective.
2	Bildungsroman	A story which focuses on the psychological, moral or spiritual growth of a character.
3	Personification	phrase giving human characteristics to a non-human object.
4	Emotive language	Words that create feeling and emotion.
5	Semantic Field	group of words that follow the same theme.
6	Pathetic fallacy	technique where the weather reflects the mood of the story
7	Colloquial language	Words that are informal and slang
8	Stave	A set of five parallel lines on which musical notes are written.
9	Foreshadowing	hint or a warning of something in the future.
10	Withholding	A technique where the author to holds back important information
11	Juxtaposition	Two concepts, themes, ideas or characters that are contrasting or opposite.