

A Christmas Carol Knowledge Organiser

Very Brief Plot Summary

Stave 1: Scrooge is introduced; he refuses to make a charity donation; refuses to eat Christmas dinner with Fred; sees Marley's ghost who warns him he will be visited by three spirits to make him change his miserly ways.

Stave 2: The Ghost of Christmas Past takes Scrooge back in time to show him: his village; him alone at school; his sister collecting him from school; a party at Fezziwig's; Belle breaking off their engagement and Belle celebrating Christmas with her family.

Stave 3: The Ghost of Christmas Present shows Scrooge: Christmas morning in London; The Cratchit family celebrating Christmas; various celebrations around the country; Fred's Christmas party; Ignorance and Want.

Stave 4: The Ghost of Christmas yet to Come shows Scrooge: a group of businessmen discussing a dead man; a pawn shop where people are selling the possessions of a dead man; a couple expressing relief that the man they owe money to is dead; the Cratchit family grieving for Tiny Tim; a grave with the name Ebenezer Scrooge written on it.

Stave 5: Scrooge is transformed! He sends a turkey to the Cratchit family, makes a huge charity donation and attends Fred's Christmas party. He also gives Bob a raise and becomes a second father to Tiny Tim who does not die.

Characters

Ebenezer Scrooge: The main character. A mean old loner who hates Christmas.

Fred: Scrooge's patient, jovial nephew. The son of his beloved sister, Fan. Literally the complete opposite of Scrooge.

Bob Cratchit: Scrooge's hard-working and underpaid clerk.

Tiny Tim: Bob's ill and vulnerable son.

Belle: Scrooge's former fiancée who breaks off their engagement because he values money more than their relationship.

Fezziwig: Scrooge's generous former employer.

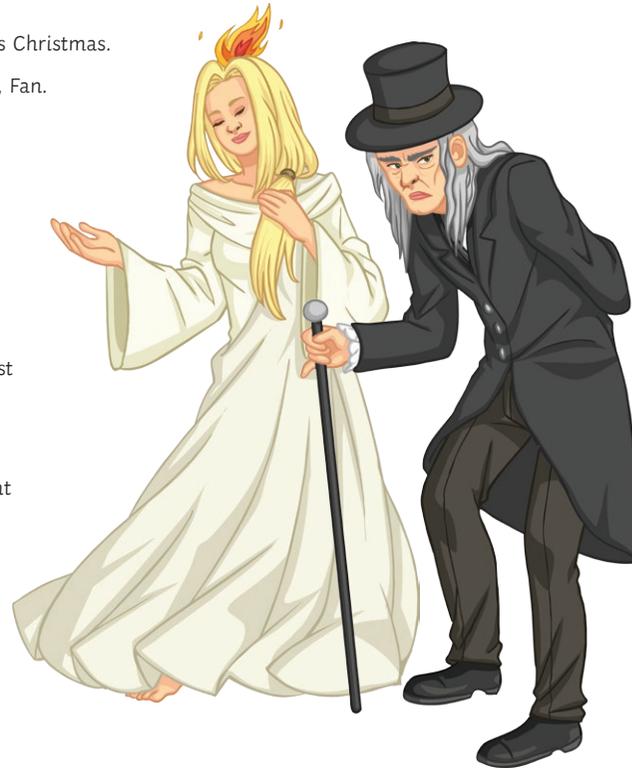
Marley: Scrooge's deceased business partner, who appears as a ghost warning Scrooge to change his ways.

Little Fan: Scrooge's deceased younger sister, the mother of Fred.

The Ghost of Christmas Past: a shape changing spirit who has light streaming from the top of its head. Represents memory.

The Ghost of Christmas Present: a jovial spirit (resembling a traditional 'Father Christmas') who represents generosity and Christmas spirit.

The Ghost of Christmas Yet to Come: a silent, sinister spirit in a black, hooded cloak who represents death.



Key Quotations

Stave 1:

'a squeezing, wrenching, grasping, scraping, clutching, covetous old sinner!'

'Hard and sharp as flint.'

'solitary as an oyster.'

"the cold within him froze his old features"

"`Bah!'" said Scrooge, 'Humbug!'"

'What reason have you to be merry? You're poor enough.'

'A kind, forgiving, charitable, pleasant time.'

'I can't afford to make idle people merry.'

'Are there no prisons?'

"And the Union workhouses?" demanded Scrooge. `Are they still in operation?'"

"`If they would rather die," said Scrooge, 'they had better do it, and decrease the surplus population'"

`I wear the chain I forged in life,'

Stave 2:

'A solitary child neglected by his friends.'

'Father is so much kinder than he used to be.'

'The happiness he gives, is quite as great as if it cost a fortune.'

'Another idol has displaced me'

Stave 3:

'I see a vacant seat.'

'I'll give you Mr Scrooge, the founder of the feast.'

'The whole quarter reeked with crime, with filth, with misery.'

'This boy is Ignorance. This girl is Want. Beware them both, and all of their degree,'

Stave 4:

'He frightened everyone away from us when he was alive, to profit us when he was dead.'

'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. The Spirits of all Three shall strive within me. I will not shut out the lessons that they teach.'

Stave 5:

'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.'

Wonderful party, wonderful games, wonderful unanimity, won-der-ful happiness!

'I'll raise your salary and endeavour to assist your struggling family.'

Themes

Christmas Spirit

- Scrooge learns the true meaning of Christmas is to spend time with your family and loved ones.
- He learns it's a time to be charitable and think about those less fortunate.
- Fezziwig's party shows him that small gestures at Christmas can make people feel valued and appreciated.

Family

- Scrooge is miserable and lonely because he refuses to socialise with his family.
- He is reminded of how much he loved his sister and how hurt he was by his father's behaviour.
- Fred never gives up on Scrooge and is loyal and forgiving towards his uncle.
- The closeness of the Cratchit family demonstrates how being together and supporting each other is more important to them than anything else.
- Seeing Belle reminds Scrooge that he is lonely in his old age due to his own actions. He chose money over a family with Belle.

Poverty and Social Injustice

- Scrooge learns that not all poor people are lazy.
- Scrooge learns that he can share some of his wealth to make other people's lives more comfortable.
- Tiny Tim shows how poverty can contribute to poor health.
- The Cratchits show how you can be poor but happy.
- Ignorance and Want remind Scrooge that turning a blind eye to the plight of the poor creates desperate people who turn to crime to support themselves.

Transformation

- Scrooge is cold, lonely and miserable at the start of the book.
- The spirits show him scenes that prompt his transformation.
- Memory reminds Scrooge of how he was once connected to other people.
- Empathy helps him to understand those less fortunate than himself.
- Being shown the reaction to the death frightens Scrooge into changing his personality to change his destiny.

Context

Poverty:

The 1834 Poor Law Amendment reduced the amount of help available the poor, forcing them to seek help at the workhouse if they couldn't support themselves. Conditions there were incredibly harsh and designed to humiliate people into not wanting to go there.

Ghosts and the supernatural:

Whilst the Victorians made many technological advances thanks to their interest in science and medicine, they were also fascinated in the supernatural and things that couldn't be easily explained by science. Ghost stories became extremely popular, as did trying to contact the dead via séances.

Christmas celebrations:

Christmas was a fairly low key celebration at the start of the 19th century, but Queen Victoria's German husband, Albert helped to introduce some European traditions, like a decorated tree, into the traditional British Christmas celebration during the 1840s. During Victoria's reign, workers started to be given two day's holiday to celebrate Christmas. The invention of the train enabled people to travel home to celebrate with family. The traditional figure of Father Christmas, dressed in green to symbolise the returning spring, was familiar at this time, but not the gift-distributing Santa Claus we know today. Rich people would give each other hand-made gifts and toys, but stockings did not become popular until the 1870s. Turkey was only eaten by rich families as it was expensive, goose was a cheaper option.

Key Vocabulary

- Dickens
- Dickensian
- Victorian
- poverty
- workhouse
- ignorance
- miserly
- redemption
- transformation
- ghost
- spirit
- Christmas
- injustice
- inequality
- allegory
- stave
- novella

Language and Techniques

- highly descriptive language
- simile
- metaphor
- personification
- pathetic fallacy
- imagery
- figurative language
- dialogue
- humour
- repetition
- symbolism
- allusion
- juxtaposition

Symbolism/Motifs

Light and dark; hot and cold; music, Scrooge's bed, Marley's chain; Ignorance and Want; Scrooge's gravestone; the three ghosts; fire;

