

## A Christmas Carol - Aim Higher Instructions

The aim of this booklet is to support and extend your learning and understanding of A Christmas Carol whilst studying it in class. Each week, you will be set a task to complete. It will be in relation to an event, character and/or theme you have recently covered in class. It is your responsibility to use your notes in your exercise books and your copies of the novella to complete each task in as much detail as possible and to the best of your ability. There will also be an AIM HIGHER task that will allow you to explore literary criticism and psychological theories surrounding the text in order to extend and develop your responses.

After completing each task, you must ensure that a parent or carer signs their name in the table below. This must be completed before the due date.

Once you have completed this booklet, you will have an invaluable revision source that you can use to prepare for your English Literature Paper 1 exam in May.

Week / Task:	Date Due:	AIM HIGHER completed? Y/N	Parent/Carer Signature:	Teacher Signature:
Week 1: Scrooge as an outsider				
Week 2: The theme of the Christmas spirit				
Week 3: Attitudes towards social responsibility				
Week 4: The theme of religion				
Week 5: The significance and impact of the past.				
Week 6: Wealth and greed				
Week 7: Generosity				
Week 8: The importance of family				
Week 9: Effects of poverty				



## GCSE English Literature CHECKPOINT Home Learning Booklet

NAME:

ENGLISH CLASS/SET:

TEACHER:

Week 10: Supernatural as a predominant theme				
Week 11: Reality of living in destitution				
Week 12: Feelings of sympathy				
Week 13: Regret and Remorse				
Week 14: The theme of redemption				

### Week 1

Starting with the extract below from Stave 1, explore how Dickens presents Scrooge as an outsider in society.

Oh! But he was a tight-fisted hand at the grind- stone, 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. The cold within him froze his old features, nipped his pointed nose, shrivelled his cheek, stiffened his gait; made his eyes red, his thin lips blue and spoke out shrewdly in his grating voice. A frosty rime was on his head, and on his eyebrows, and his wiry chin. He carried his own low temperature always about with him; he iced his office in the dogdays; and didn't thaw it one degree at Christmas.

External heat and cold had little influence on Scrooge. No warmth could warm, no wintry weather chill him. No wind that blew was bitterer than he, no falling snow was more intent upon its purpose, no pelting rain less open to entreaty. Foul weather didn't know where to have him. The heaviest rain, and snow, and hail, and sleet, could boast of the advantage over him in only one respect. They often "came down" handsomely, and Scrooge never did.

You should consider:

- How Scrooge is presented as an outsider
- Dickens' use of the cold and the weather
- How his physical description reflects his personality

**Task 1:** Annotate the above extract by highlighting key words/phrases and noting down how Scrooge is presented as an outsider in society. Don't forget to identify language and structural features.

**Task 2:** The question asks you to 'explore' which means that you can (and should) consider how Dickens' presentation of Scrooge may have more than one purpose or effect. Go back to the quotes you've already annotated. Can you offer an alternative or additional interpretation for any of them?























one of the world's economic superpowers. And Dickens was fascinated by the technological change...But he was less enchanted by a darker, crueller potential of this social and economic transformation — the inequality it entrenched in society. Britain, a nation whose wealth was growing exponentially, had the power to (and later would) put measures in place to redistribute money fairly, ensuring that the poorest members of society were looked after, and had better chances of making a living, even flourishing. But instead, draconian laws about debt repayment and penury (the very state of being poor) forced many into workhouses and debtors' prisons. After death, criminals' bodies were treated as fair game for anatomists to dissect in the name of medical science — the misfortune of dying in debtors' prison could result in this final, horrid indignity.

Though it might at first seem anachronistic to assign egalitarian views to a Victorian writer, social justice was, increasingly, becoming a theme in the period. Thomas Malthus, the economist Scrooge so irresistibly evokes in his enquiry 'Are there no prisons? Are there no workhouses?' authored a series of now-notorious works, including an *Essay on the Principle of Population* in 1798, that argued that catastrophic poverty and starvation were a necessary, irrefutable result of the fact that population grown would always outpace food supply. Population would always expand to the limit of subsistence, and be held there by famine, war and disease. In another, unpublished pamphlet, 'The Crisis', of 1796, Malthus, among other things, supported newly proposed 'poor laws' to install workhouses, arguing that men who were unable to sustain themselves did not have the right to live.











The Christian explanation for ghosts clashes with the scientific one; the ghosts cannot possibly be the soul of a deceased person as well as the manifestation of the protagonist's psychological tension at the same time. These contradicting ideas were what people had to deal with in the nineteenth century and what Dickens appears to carefully balance in these ghost stories.

By reinforcing certain Christian beliefs Dickens was able to give the Victorian readers the spiritual reassurance they needed (Gavin 20). Concerning Dickens' Christmas books, Briggs writes that they are "inspired by their authors sense of Christianity as ideally an active and integrative force in society, the profound link between man and his fellowmen" (210). According to Oulton "[Dickens'] aim was always not to revamp Christ's message, but to present it as clearly as possible to a modern reader in a way that would be universally accessible" (197-8). *A Christmas Carol* and *The Haunted Man and the Ghost's Bargain* confirm the Christian convictions that there is an afterlife, that the soul is immortal, and that people, after death, will be judged for the way they have lived their life. These stories further reassure Christian readers that Christmas is sacred and that to condemn Christmas is blasphemous. There is also a prominent theme of repentance in both of these books.

In *A Christmas Carol* the Christian explanation for the ghosts' appearances would be that the soul is immortal and that there is an afterlife. The question whether there is a life that awaits us after our death is a precondition for the whole story. Already on the first page Dickens assures the reader that Jacob Marley is dead, but that he will appear just like Hamlet's father (33). Therefore, with his emergence Jacob Marley proves that there is an afterlife, even if he himself is condemned to walk the earth among other sinners to repent (44, 47-49). In this story, there is clear evidence for the Christian faith regarding the immortality of the soul.

The Christian notion that people who have lived a wrongful life will be punished after their death is most evident in *A Christmas Carol*, but it is also an important theme in *The Haunted Man and the Ghost's Bargain*. According to Oulton, Dickens believed in the Judgement and she writes that "*A Christmas Carol* works towards a comic resolution, but significantly the spirits who visit Scrooge are sent to save him from damnation; if he fails to repent he will suffer the consequences after death, as Marley does" (129). When Jacob Marley first appears before Scrooge, Scrooge observes that he is wearing a heavy chain around his waist made of "cash-boxes, keys, padlocks, ledgers, deeds, and heavy purses wrought in steel" (44). When Scrooge asks Marley about the chain he answers that he forged the chain when he was alive and that Scrooge's own chain is even longer and heavier (47). Marley confirms the Christian belief that the way you live your life has an impact on your life after death. He explains to Scrooge that "[i]t is required of every man ... that the spirit within him should walk abroad among his fellow-men, and travel far and wide; and if that spirit goes not forth in life, it is condemned to do so after death. It is doomed to wander through the world ... and witness what it cannot share, but might have shared on earth, and turned to happiness!" (47).









The Ghost of Christmas Past embodies the gothic child by deliberately using gothic elements to assist Scrooge’s transformation. For example, when Scrooge asks the Ghost of Christmas Past why it has come to him, the spirit answers, “[y]our welfare” and “[y]our reclamation” (Dickens 63). The character again represents a gothic child as it knowingly guides Scrooge to change through a regression to his past self—a reclamation of his better state. Cadwallader also argues that Scrooge’s traversal through space and time help him to grow morally and spiritually (57-58). The spirit’s own goals are to reclaim Scrooge’s past self by traversing time, which will then morally reform him. The spirit, however, must employ elements of the gothic and a childlike appearance in order to reach the goal within this text—the moral reawakening of Scrooge. Its uncanny familiarity and abhuman body allow it to embody Scrooge’s repressed childhood and traverse the time and space necessary to reveal to Scrooge the parts of himself he must reclaim.

**Week 5 – AIM HIGHER (In your own words)**

1. According to Roberts, how is the Ghost of Christmas Past related to Freud’s ‘the Uncanny’?

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2. In relation to Cadwallader, how is the spirits ‘physical’ appearance reflective of Scrooge and his past?

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3. To what extent does the Ghost of Christmas Past emphasise the significance and impact of the past?

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### Week 6

Starting with the extract below from Stave 2, consider how far you think Dickens presents money and wealth as a corruptive force.

"It matters little," she said, softly. "To you, very little. Another idol has displaced me; and if it can cheer and comfort you in time to come, as I would have tried to do, I have no just cause to grieve."  
"What Idol has displaced you?" he rejoined.  
"A golden one."  
"This is the even-handed dealing of the world!" he said. "There is nothing on which it is so hard as poverty; and there is nothing it professes to condemn with such severity as the pursuit of wealth!"  
"You fear the world too much," she answered, gently. "All your other hopes have merged into the hope of being beyond the chance of its sordid reproach. I have seen your nobler aspirations fall off one by one, until the master-passion, Gain, engrosses you. Have I not?"  
"What then?" he retorted. "Even if I have grown so much wiser, what then? I am not changed towards you."  
She shook her head.  
"Am I?"  
"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."

You should consider:

- How money and wealth are presented as a corruptive force.
- The impact they have had on Scrooge's character (bot past and present).
- The juxtaposition created between wealth and love.

**Task 1:** Annotate the above extract by highlighting key words/phrases and noting down how money and wealth are presented as a corruptive force. Don't forget to identify language and structural features.

**Task 2:** The question asks you 'how far you think' which means that you can also consider how money and wealth isn't presented as a corruptive force. Go back to the quotes you've already annotated. Can you offer an alternative interpretation for any of them or juxtapose them with a quote from elsewhere in the novella where money and wealth are presented more positively?

**Task 3:** Identify 3 quotations from elsewhere in the novella where money and wealth is presented as a corruptive force.

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This is, in a sense, an autobiographical element of the story. Dickens himself was very successful through his writings and journalism, and he used this success to sponsor many philanthropic causes throughout his life including founding a women's home.

Secondly, Dickens seems to go out of his way to point out the inadequacies of government anti-poverty programs.

When Ebenezer Scrooge is approached by two gentlemen and asked to make a donation to the "poor and destitute," his response was that the poor and destitute should go to the prisons and workhouses because his tax dollars already support those.

This demonstrates the fallacy of taxations superseding generosity. In his book, *Who Really Cares*, AEI president Arthur Brooks shows quantitatively that liberals who support large government anti-poverty programs are in their own lives the least generous. To them, their taxation has taken the place of personal generosity.

David Henderson, a research fellow at the Hoover Institute, wrote in *The Freeman* magazine a few Christmases ago: *The modern Scrooge, instead of asking, "Are there no prisons?" would ask, "Is there no Medicaid? Are there no food stamps?" The modern Scrooges, in short, are those who advocate government programs for the poor rather than charity for the poor.*

The lesson of Brooks, Henderson and Dickens is that the government cannot be generous. **If the government takes over the responsibility of caring for the poor, then we will all be Scrooges.**

What benefits our soul, and what led to the redemption of Ebenezer Scrooge, is the personal responsibility to take care of the poor. The New Scrooge took responsibility for caring for the poor in his community. He identified the needs and made the decisions and sacrifices necessary to fill those needs.

Furthermore, Dickens backhandedly makes the point that the government programs are insufficient. People in need were falling through the cracks, or else the gentlemen would not have been fundraising on their behalf in the first place.

Lastly, Dickens takes a relatively narrow view of community. The New Ebenezer did not set forth to save all of England, but he took care of those needy people whom he encountered everyday. Biblically speaking, he loved his neighbor.

Socialism and communism take very large views of community. They require large numbers of people to participate in the system so that the more productive members of society can fully support the less productive.

Capitalism is the only system that takes a small view of community. Due to principles such as Adam Smith's "invisible hand" and F. A. Hayek's "knowledge problem," capitalism accepts that it cannot foresee nor understand all of the demands of a large community. Capitalism asks only that people take care of their own needs and allows for them to take care of the needs in their immediate community.

In conclusion, *A Christmas Carol* cannot be a story that promotes socialism because it is a story that depends upon capitalism.

The warnings we should heed from Charles Dickens and the reclaimed Ebenezer Scrooge, are not that we need more government, but that we ought to strive to be successful and use our success to care for our families and contribute to our community.

**Week 6 – AIM HIGHER (In your own words)**

1. What 3 main reasons does Isaac's offer as justification of her view that the novella is a story about Capitalism?

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2. How does Isaac's create positive links between Capitalism and wealth in the article?

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3. Bowyer seems to suggest that Dickens uses the Ghost of Christmas Present to promote free trade that would benefit the many as opposed to the few as abundance leads to generosity. To what extent do you agree?

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### Week 8

Starting with the extract below from Stave 3, explore how Dickens presents the importance of family throughout the novella.

Martha, who was a poor apprentice at a milliner's, then told them what kind of work she had to do, and how many hours she worked at a stretch, and how she meant to lie abed to-morrow morning for a good long rest; to-morrow being a holiday she passed at home. Also how she had seen a countess and a lord some days before, and how the lord was much about as tall as Peter; at which Peter pulled up his collars so high that you couldn't have seen his head if you had been there. All this time the chestnuts and the jug went round and round; and by-and-bye they had a song, about a lost child travelling in the snow, from Tiny Tim, who had a plaintive little voice, and sang it very well indeed.

There was nothing of high mark in this. They were not a handsome family; they were not well dressed; their shoes were far from being water-proof; their clothes were scanty; and Peter might have known, and very likely did, the inside of a pawnbroker's. But, they were happy, grateful, pleased with one another, and contented with the time; and when they faded, and looked happier yet in the bright sprinklings of the Spirit's torch at parting, Scrooge had his eye upon them, and especially on Tiny Tim, until the last.

You should consider:

- How the Cratchit family are presented.
- Why Dickens emphasises their poverty.
- How this presentation of them would dispel middle/upper class misconceptions of typical working class families.

**Task 1:** Annotate the above extract by highlighting key words/phrases and noting down how Dickens presents the importance of family. Don't forget to identify language and structural features.





get to have discussions about what's going on in life, and children feel more valued, more heard, and they understand their parents more as well."

"Repeated daily good connections between parent and child foster what is known as secure attachment, or resilience," says Dr Sunderland. "Research shows that it leads to better functioning, a stronger immune system, better physiology, higher academic marks, a sense of wellbeing and contentment – and it prevents mental and physical ill-health in later life." That's quite a legacy you're making there for your children, simply by exchanging passive pursuits for active play, with or without a digital signal.

"It's all about moderation," adds Dr Sunderland. "A good guide is to ensure that you have at least one hour a day built up of real moments of connection between you and your child." Like Dr Gummer, she doesn't believe in digital bans. "It's not so much the impact of the device," she says, "more the issue is what are you not doing because of the device – playing together, running in the woods together, laughing together, talking together."

### **Week 8 – AIM HIGHER (In your own words)**

1. According to Cummings, a barrier to quality family time in the 21<sup>st</sup> century is digital devices and media. However, with regards to the Cratchits, what prevents them from regular family time in 19<sup>th</sup> century Britain?

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2. Dr Gummer states that family time is 'about sharing things together and creating bonds and attachments so that children feel they belong in the family and have routines and traditions.' How does Dickens reinforce this belief through his representation of the Cratchits in Stave 3?

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3. 'The Cratchits highlight the importance of family when they defy the restrictions of poverty and the pressures of living in the Victorian working class and unite on Christmas Day.' To what extent do you agree?

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### Week 9

Starting with the extract below from Stave 3, consider how Dickens explores the effects of poverty.

Scrooge started back, appalled. Having them shown to him in this way, he tried to say they were fine children, but the words choked themselves, rather than be parties to a lie of such enormous magnitude.

"Spirit, are they yours?" Scrooge could say no more.

"They are Man's," said the Spirit, looking down upon them. "And they cling to me, appealing from their fathers. This boy is Ignorance. This girl is Want. Beware them both, and all of their degree, but most of all beware this boy, for on his brow I see that written which is Doom, unless the writing be erased. Deny it!" cried the Spirit, stretching out its hand towards the city.

"Slander those who tell it ye. Admit it for your factious purposes, and make it worse. And abide the end."

"Have they no refuge or resource?" cried Scrooge.

"Are there no prisons?" said the Spirit, turning on him for the last time with his own words. "Are there no workhouses?"

The bell struck twelve.

You should consider:

- The personification of Ignorance and Want.
- What they each represent and suggest about society.
- Scrooge's changing attitudes towards poverty and those who suffer because of it.

**Task 1:** Annotate the above extract by highlighting key words/phrases and noting down how Dickens explores the effects of poverty. Don't forget to identify language and structural features.

**Task 2:** The question asks you to 'explore' which means that you can (and should) consider how Dickens' exploration of the effects of poverty may have more than one purpose or effect. Go back to the quotes you've already annotated. Can you offer an alternative or additional interpretation for any of them?

**Task 3:** Identify 3 quotations from elsewhere in the novella that convey the effects of poverty.









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3. 'The element of the gothic child becomes important because its manifestation as a helpless child seems to evoke more sympathy from both Scrooge and the reader, thereby creating a more resounding impact.' To what extent do you agree?

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### Week 10

Starting with the extract below from Stave 4, explore how Dickens presents the supernatural as a predominant theme throughout the novella.

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. It was shrouded in a deep black garment, which concealed its head, its face, its form, and left nothing of it visible save one outstretched hand. But for this it would have been difficult to detach its figure from the night, and separate it from the darkness by which it was surrounded. He felt that it was tall and stately when it came beside him, and that its mysterious presence filled him with a solemn dread. He knew no more, for the Spirit neither spoke nor moved. "I am in the presence of the Ghost of Christmas Yet To Come?" said Scrooge. The Spirit answered not, but pointed downward with its hand.

You should consider:

- How the Ghost of Christmas Yet to Come is described and what it represents.
- How Dickens' use of language creates a sense of foreboding.
- How and why this spirit differs from the previous ghosts.

**Task 1:** Annotate the above extract by highlighting key words/phrases and noting down how Dickens presents the supernatural as a predominant theme. Don't forget to identify language and structural features.

**Task 2:** The question asks you 'explore' which means that you can (and should) consider how Dickens' presentation of the supernatural may have more than one purpose or effect. Go back to the quotes you've already annotated. Can you offer an alternative or additional interpretation for any of them?





Scrooge's heart too has become palsied, paralyzed and frozen. The visitations of the phantoms are a necessary condition for Scrooge to change as he has become so hard of heart that he "cannot hope to shun the path" he is following (Dickens 1843 25). So both the spectre and the spirits are needed for Scrooge to change.

Scrooge needs to be shaken, to be frightened into a new awareness which both the spectre and the spirits do for him. As Scrooge looks out of the window of his "dusty chambers" he sees "phantoms, wandering hither and thither in restless haste and moaning" (Dickens, 1843 72, 26-27). The phantoms generate regret, surprise and fear at what he has missed, is missing and will miss after his death. The phantoms Scrooge sees outside his window are powerless creatures wanting to do good, "in human matters" but have "lost the power for ever" (Dickens 1843 27).

Visiting the past is undoubtedly a strange experience and the Ghost of Christmas Past is indeed a "strange figure." Its hair is white but its skin is wrinkle free. It is no general ghost of mankind's amorphous past but a specific ghost of Scrooge's past. It is on a special mission to remind Scrooge of the sights and the sounds and the smells of his long-forgotten past when he was happy and concerned about others. He remembers himself as poor lonely boy, his generous sister Fan with a "large heart," the happy employer Mr. Fezziwig and the indictment of Belle— "You fear the world too much" (ACC "strangest agitation" (ACC, p. 45). These sights leave him in a state of , p. 43). Even though Scrooge realizes that these are but "shadows of things that have been" and people in it "have no consciousness of us" he is so moved by the haunting that he begs the Ghost to remove him from the past—"Haunt me no longer!" (ACC, p. 49).

The second Ghost is a "jolly Giant" with "a glowing torch" wearing a green robe lined with fur with a holly wreath on his head. Scrooge has "never seen the like of [him] before" but is willing to learn a lesson— "teach me, let me profit by it" (ACC, p. 53-55). The prose that follows is at times evocative and poetic and at times dull and boring. But nevertheless Dickens has made a point—the genial Ghost has "sympathy with all poor men" (ACC, p. 59). Scrooge heart warms up to the Cratchits and his concern about Tiny Tim's well being grows (ACC, pp. 55-64).

The third Ghost is totally concealed in black garment with one "out-stretched hand" (ACC, p. 79). Scrooge is terribly frightened of the "spectral hand" and symbolically of his hidden but dark future. The Ghost of Christmas Future takes him to the underbelly of the town. Here Scrooge recoils but continues to watch with dawning comprehension that they are exchanging stolen goods of "a wretched old screw" who has recently died is no other than him (ACC, pp. 86-96). Scrooge is now ready to change and he inquires eagerly from the third Ghost: "Are these the shadows of the things that Will be, or are they shadows of things that May be, only?" (ACC, p. 96). And once he gets the assurance from the spirit that these events are forebodings of "May be" he decides to change. As soon he transforms the Ghost of the Future collapses into a bedpost. He then he gets into the act of dispelling the "shadows of the things that would have been" with renewed gusto (ACC, p. 100). And he looks at the knocker that starts his journey of spiritual awakening and exclaims: "'I shall love it, as long as I live!'"

The supernatural exerted a powerful influence on the Victorian mind. It shaped their world view and became a subject of literary inquiry. Though Freud's work on psychoanalysis, paranormal and the uncanny created a "whole climate of opinion" to use W. H. Auden's phrase, the world continued to be a mysterious place. Žižek believes that the "traumatic fantasies" of history are transmitted through a vibrant "symbolic tradition to "haunt the living" (Žižek, 2003 128). All major religious traditions have their ghosts and our self-discovery is always haunted by these ghosts whether they are suppressed or released. Luke Thurston suggests that the literary ghost carries with him "a spark of life" and attempts to find ways to write "life itself" (Thurston, 2012 6). However that may be too ambitious a task for the literary ghost to accomplish. In Dickens the ghosts jolt the protagonist and the reader into a new awareness of themselves. It is they who write on the tabula rasa, not the ghosts.



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3. 'In Dickens the ghosts jolt the protagonist and the reader into a new awareness of themselves. It is they who write on the tabula rasa, not the ghosts.' To what extent do you agree?

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### Week 11

Starting with the extract below from Stave 4, explore how Dickens presents the reality of living in destitution.

They left the busy scene, and went into an obscure part of the town, where Scrooge had never penetrated before, although he recognised its situation, and its bad repute. The ways were foul and narrow; the shops and houses wretched; the people half-naked, drunken, slipshod, ugly. Alleys and archways, like so many cesspools, disgorged their offenses of smell, and dirt, and life, upon the stragglng streets; and the whole quarter reeked with crime, with filth, and misery.

Far in this den of infamous resort, there was a low-browed, beetling shop, below a pent-house roof, where iron, old rags, bottles, bones, and greasy offal, were bought. Upon the floor within, were piled up heaps of rusty keys, nails, chains, hinges, files, scales, weights, and refuse iron of all kinds. Secrets that few would like to scrutinise were bred and hidden in mountains of unseemly rags, masses of corrupted fat, and sepulchres of bones. Sitting in among the wares he dealt in, by a charcoal stove, made of old bricks, was a grey-haired rascal, nearly seventy years of age; who had screened himself from the cold air without, by a frowsy curtaining of miscellaneous tatters, hung upon a line; and smoked his pipe in all the luxury of calm retirement.

You should consider:

- Dickens' description of the living conditions
- The atmosphere this creates
- How the destitute are presented

**Task 1:** Annotate the above extract by highlighting key words/phrases and noting down how Dickens presents the reality of living in destitution. Don't forget to identify language and structural features.







To the young Arthur, this humble home was comfortable compared to many in the area. Renting at three shillings a week, it measured 12ft by 10ft and accommodated a table, two armchairs, a chest of drawers, straw mattress and small stove. Over the mantelpiece was a portrait of Queen Victoria, looking down on Arthur's cot which was made out of an old orange box.

Arthur's maternal grandparents were agricultural labourers who had come to London thinking they could better themselves. They were mistaken: both died in the Shoreditch workhouse. Arthur's mother, Mary Ann, found work in a factory, sorting old rags for pulping into paper, one of the most hazardous of East End jobs as employees risked infection from lice and fleas. Thankfully, she was rescued by Arthur's father, 'Flash' Harry, who met her one night at a Bishopsgate pub. But about the time Arthur was born in Keeve's Buildings, his parents fell on hard times.

Mary Ann had a crippled hip, which confined her to making matchboxes, while Flash Harry was reduced to casual pub shifts and cadging food from restaurants. What kept them going, however, was Aunt Liza's generosity. An unmarried woman (rare in those days), she owned her own grocery store and sold stolen goods from it - she even kept the back door open so visiting thieves could escape if the police called. She also ran the Jack Simmons pub where, on Sunday mornings, the East End elite - prize-fighters, racetrack celebrities and music hall artists - would mingle with the Swell Mob, prosperous villains who dressed flamboyantly in brown, double-breasted overcoats and wide, black satin ties.

Prince Arthur swore that he would never become like his father, who eventually abandoned Mary Ann and died in the Mile End Workhouse aged 85. Instead, he would follow his mother's example. She was crippled by her hip and deserted by a feckless husband, but was a loving mother nevertheless and kept her humble home spotless. She was also a favourite among local philanthropists. Showered with charity clothing, she would take it straight round to a dealer who paid as much as five shillings for a good pair of trousers. But she wasn't an ideal role model. She graduated to stealing from church jumble sales, with the help of Arthur who, from an early age, decided self-employment was for him.

The Old Nichol was made for the light-fingered and if you knew your way through the labyrinth, you could easily evade the police. Before long, Arthur resembled Oliver Twist's Artful Dodger. After all, the smaller you were, the more nimbly you could dodge between the stalls which lined one side of Shoreditch High Street, which he dubbed the area's Champs Elysees.

In winter, a free breakfast of bread and milk was supplied at the Ragged School Mission Hall. But after that, residents were on their own. Arthur would hang around a corner shop which sold bags of broken biscuits for a halfpenny and, along with his friends, most of whom would die at the Somme, he became a proficient pickpocket.

When he was nine, Arthur and his mother were evicted from their home and spent a freezing night under a railway arch. And after they were rehoused, Arthur's criminal career began in earnest. He joined a local gang, stealing and menacing shopkeepers and spent much of his time in prison, which, ironically, saved him from a worse fate in the trenches.

He was not alone. Mugging was commonplace in the Old Nichol - although perhaps no more so than in London today. The magistrate Montagu Williams, for example, warned a victim: 'It is as certain as the day is long that if you go out to get drunk, and have money in your pocket, you will, in this neighbourhood, get robbed.'

More violent crimes, however, were rare. According to the Old Bailey archives, between 1885 and 1895 only one murder occurred within the Old Nichol, when a middle-aged shoemaker stabbed his wife to death.



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3. To what extent does Dickens offer the reader a realistic insight into living in destitution and what are his reasons for doing so?

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**Week 12**

Starting with the extract below from Stave 4, explore how Dickens evokes feelings of sympathy throughout the novella.

She hurried out to meet him; and little Bob in his comforter -- he had need of it, poor fellow -- came in. His tea was ready for him on the hob, and they all tried who should help him to it most. Then the two young Cratchits got upon his knees and laid, each child a little cheek, against his face, as if they said, "Don't mind it, father. Don't be grieved." Bob was very cheerful with them, and spoke pleasantly to all the family. He looked at the work upon the table, and praised the industry and speed of Mrs Cratchit and the girls. They would be done long before Sunday, he said.

"Sunday. You went to-day, then, Robert?" said his wife.

"Yes, my dear," returned Bob. "I wish you could have gone. It would have done you good to see how green a place it is. But you'll see it often. I promised him that I would walk there on a Sunday. My little, little child!" cried Bob. "My little child!"

He broke down all at once. He couldn't help it. If he could have helped it, he and his child would have been farther apart perhaps than they were. He left the room, and went up-stairs into the room above, which was lighted cheerfully, and hung with Christmas. There was a chair set close beside the child, and there were signs of some one having been there, lately. Poor Bob sat down in it, and when he had thought a little and composed himself, he kissed the little face.

You should consider:

- How Bob Cratchit is presented.
- How his speech, actions and behaviour evoke sympathy.
- How the death of Tiny Tim is conveyed.















wandering hither and thither in restless haste, and moaning as they went." Scrooge recognizes a great deal many of them as his acquaintances. He sees the misery and desperation of one old ghost in a white waistcoat who tries to help a destitute woman holding an infant. Returning to the theme of personal responsibility, Scrooge managed to shirk by appealing to governmental solutions of The Poor Law, Workhouses and The Treadmill, Dickens mentions the several ghosts as being linked together, and insinuates that they might be a government. Scrooge, being one of most prosperous and prominent businessmen with influential connections in all likelihood recognized at least some of the ghosts of politicians he knew during their lifetime.

As Fairhurst points out, the whole episode bears striking resemblance to the description of hell from Dante's *Inferno*, and the similarity is bigger yet if we consider that Scrooge subsequently obtains guidance from supernatural entities, similarly to Virgil guiding Dante through the circles of hell (8). The character of Scrooge, raised in a private school, would no doubt be acquainted and recognize the resemblance, similarly to many Victorian times readers. It could be therefore argued that the purpose of the scene is not by any means to show how kindness and charity are important, but rather to simply highlight the importance of the decision Scrooge has ahead of him and to scare him into acceptance of what the Ghost are about to reveal to him. In short, after the revelation of afterlife, highly akin to hell, Scrooge cannot longer hide behind his own ignorance. In Marley, and the other ghosts, he is shown that ignorance won't protect him from his doom. The revelation that turning a blind eye to government's failed solutions and being indifference to well-known fact that "the poor who were deemed deserving of government care were placed in conditions which were, remarkably, lower than the typically attainable standard of living for the lower class," won't save him causes him to heed Marley's advice. Thus Marley effectively destroys any hope of retaining his current lifestyle while not being punished in the life that follows Scrooge once held, forcing him to re-evaluate his priorities not for the sake of others but for his own.

At the beginning of *A Christmas Carol* we are introduced to heartless, cruel and selfish Ebenezer Scrooge, who speaks ill of the poor, rejects any form of personal responsibility or care, and claims that society would be better off if they were dead. As the story progresses, and he is reminded of his humanity and childhood innocence, he begins to see the faults of his behaviour and feel regret, remorse and need to atone for them. There are several such instances, which can be used to track Scrooge's progression towards a more empathetic, charitable and selfless individual worthy of redemption.

Following the visit of his childhood school and his regrets about telling off the caroller, who sang at his office door in Stave I, Scrooge is conducted to an old warehouse where he had been formerly apprenticed. He observes a merry ball with everyone laughing and dancing, and is so touched by generosity of his old employer that he stands up to the Ghost, who belittles Fezziwig's importance and responds that "The happiness he[Fezziwig] gives, is quite as great as if it cost a fortune." Shortly after the statement which is reflective of Scrooge's sudden realization that certain things can be more of more importance than money, Scrooge regrets his behaviour towards Bob Cratchit and desires to have a word with him.

A second profound show of empathy and shame comes at the beginning of the III Stave when Scrooge accompanied by the Ghost of Christmas Present visit Bob Cratchit and his family at their home. After a rich Christmas dinner, Cratchit's family sits round the hearth and Scrooge notices Bob's troubled expression as he looks at Tiny Tim and holds his hand. Worried about the ill child, Scrooge pleads with the Ghost and begs him to say that Tim will be spared. The Ghost retorts that if the Future remains unaltered Tim will die and echoes a comment Scrooge made in the first Stave "If he be like to die, he had better do it, and decrease the surplus population." This time Scrooge's response to being faced with the plight of poverty is diametrically different from the one he gave at the very beginning of the story. He hangs his head down in shame, and is "overcome with penitence and grief", revealing a distinct change in his attitude and progress on his way towards being corrected and redeemed.



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3. With reference to Kučera's ideas, to what extent is Scrooge compelled to repent due to feelings of regret and remorse?

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#### Week 14

Starting with the extract below from Stave 5, explore how Dickens presents ideas surrounding the theme of redemption throughout the novella.

"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. A merry Christmas to everybody! A happy New Year to all the world! Hallo here! Whoop! Hallo!"

He had frisked into the sitting-room, and was now standing there: perfectly winded.

"There's the saucepan that the gruel was in!" cried Scrooge, starting off again, and frisking round the fireplace. "There's the door, by which the Ghost of Jacob Marley entered. There's the corner where the Ghost of Christmas Present, sat. There's the window where I saw the wandering Spirits. It's all right, it's all true, it all happened. Ha ha ha!"

Really, for a man who had been out of practice for so many years, it was a splendid laugh, a most illustrious laugh. The father of a long, long line of brilliant laughs.

"I don't know what day of the month it is," said Scrooge. "I don't know how long I've been among the Spirits. I don't know anything. I'm quite a baby. Never mind. I don't care. I'd rather be a baby. Hallo! Whoop! Hallo here!"

You should consider:

- Scrooge's speech and behaviour.
- How the way he is presented here is juxtaposed with his introduction in Stave 1.
- How Dickens uses a semantic field of innocence and purity for effect.

**Task 1:** Annotate the above extract by highlighting key words/phrases and noting down how Dickens presents ideas surrounding the theme of redemption. Don't forget to identify language and structural features.







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3. 'Dickens's A Christmas Carol suggests that it is never too late for reform — both personal and social — and that if each individual makes a similar kind of leap of faith as Scrooge, there is hope in life and hope of a better world.' To what extent do you agree?

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For each quotation:

1. Identify the speaker
2. Highlight and annotate any AO2 techniques
3. Prepare your analysis. Analysing language could be:
  - Choosing verbs, adverbs or adjectives to 'explore.' How does the word create a particular image that could link to the character or setting?
  - Considering the language that the character uses in their speech – is it timid, authoritative, aggressive, something else. What does the language suggest about their character?
  - Identifying particular techniques that have been used within the text. How do they create a specific effect?
  - Looking out for words that have more than one meaning – what further ideas or images could they have?
  - Identifying specific emotions that you feel as a result of the writer's word choice.
4. Memorise the quotations
5. Test yourself/get friends and family to test you too
6. Produce mind maps for each character and theme using the quotations



### Prose/narrative Techniques:

A Christmas Carol
adjectives, alliteration, atmosphere, biblical connotations, characterisation, characteronym, contrast, empathy, imagery, intrusive narrator, juxtaposition, light and dark imagery, listing, novella, onomatopoeia, pathetic fallacy, personification repetition, resolution, simile, staves, symbolism, verbs

### A02 Techniques:

adjective, adverb, alliteration, atmosphere, character, characterisation, chronological order, context, dialogue, dramatic irony, exclamation, first person, image, narrator, onomatopoeia, past tense, pause, present tense, pronouns, punctuation, repetition, rhetorical questions, rhyme, simile, simple sentence, setting, stanza, speaker, sonnet, stage directions, theme, third person, verb

antagonist, aside, assonance, contrast, collective pronoun, colloquial, direct address, emotive, empathy enjambment, ellipsis, figurative language, free verse foreshadowing, hyperbole, humour, iambic pentameter, imagery, imperative, inclusive pronoun, listing, metaphor, modal verb, monologue, parenthesis, pathetic fallacy, persona, personification, present participle, protagonist, resolution, rhyme pattern, sibilance, soliloquy, symbol, symbolism, tone

abstract noun, alliteration- plosive and fricative, ambiguity, anaphora, antithesis, collective noun, definite article, dichotomy, duality, embedded clause, fronted conjunction, hypophora, indefinite article, intensifier, intrusive narrative, inverted syntax, irony, juxtaposition, litotes, motif, omniscient narrator, oxymoron, pathos, pivot, pun, register, semantic field, syntax, triad, triadic structure, unreliable narrator

“But he was a tight-fisted hand at the grind-stone”

“clutching, covetous, old sinner!”

“Hard and sharp as flint”

“solitary as an oyster”

“No warmth could warm, no wintry weather chill him.”

“I don’t make merry myself at Christmas and I can’t afford to make idle people merry.”

“If they would rather die,’ said Scrooge, ‘they had better do it, and decrease the surplus population.”

“I will live in the Past, the Present, and the Future.”

“I will not shut out the lessons that they teach.”

“I wear the chain I forged in life,”

“Mankind was my business.”

“I see a vacant seat”

“If these shadows remain unaltered by the Future, the child will die.”

“A solitary child, neglected by his friends, is left there still.”

“Scrooge sat down upon a form, and wept to see his poor forgotten self as he used to be.”

“He became as good a friend, as good a master, and as good a man”

“Then up rose Mrs Cratchit”

“brave in ribbons”

“I’ll give you Mr Scrooge, the Founder of the Feast!”

“Are there no prisons?”

“Scrooge had a very small fire”

“darkness is cheap, and Scrooge like it”

“a lonely boy was reading by a feeble fire”

“Why, it’s old Fezziwig!”

“He has the power to render us happy or unhappy”

“Another idol has displace me”

“Why do you delight to torture me?”

“Quite alone in the world”

“Eked out by apple-sauce and mashed potatoes”

“This boy is Ignorance. This girl is want. Beware the both”

“I am not the man I was”

“I will honour Christmas in my heart”

“I’m quite a baby.”

“No fog, no mist”

“I have come to bring you home, dear brother!”

“Lead on, Spirit!”

“I am as light as a feather”

“The father of a long, long line of brilliant laughs!”

“Make up the fires”

### **Practice Questions**

**Use these questions to help you with your revision. You can either answer the questions as they are or find an appropriate extract to use with them.**

1. Write about Scrooge and the way he changes throughout the novel
2. How does Dickens present the redeemed character of Scrooge?
3. How does Dickens present Scrooge as an outsider to society?
4. How does Dickens present Scrooge’s attitude to money?
5. How does Dickens present the Cratchit family in the novella?
6. How does Dickens present society’s attitude to poverty?
7. How is the character of Bob Cratchit important to the novel as a whole?
8. How does Dickens present Scrooge’s growing self-awareness?
9. How does Dickens present reactions to Scrooge in A Christmas Carol?
10. How does Dickens present attitudes to Christmas in A Christmas Carol?
11. How does Dickens present the importance of family in A Christmas Carol.
12. How are children important to the novel as a whole?
13. Write about the character of Fred, Scrooge’s nephew, and his importance in A Christmas Carol.
14. Which of the three spirits has the most powerful impact on Scrooge?
15. Which character or characters have the greatest impact on Scrooge?
16. “A Christmas Carol shows goodness and love defeating self-interest.” How does Charles Dickens present this in his novel?
17. How does Charles Dickens create sympathy for the character of Ebenezer Scrooge in A Christmas Carol?

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