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Best of luck in your exams,

Edward Mooney – MA Cantab, PGCE.

*Qualified and experienced teacher, tutor and
examiner.*



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Introduction

(Please note: this is the concise version of this revision guide. An extended version is also available from [GCSEEnglish.uk](https://www.gcseenglish.uk).)

This last-minute revision guide is designed to help you prepare for the *A Christmas Carol* question in your AQA GCSE English Literature Paper 1 exam (8702/1).

A Christmas Carol is assessed in Section B of the exam, and you will have 52.5 minutes to complete your answer. If you have 25% extra time, your total time for this section will be 65 minutes and 37.5 seconds (rounded to 66 minutes for practical purposes).

The exam question will present you with an extract from the novel followed by a question asking you to explore a theme or character. You must analyse both the extract and the novel as a whole.

Since this is a last-minute revision guide, it does not contain every possible piece of information about *A Christmas Carol* or the exam. However, it covers the key elements needed for success, helping you focus on what truly matters in the final days before your exam.

How Many Marks Are Available?

Your *A Christmas Carol* essay is worth 30 marks for content and analysis. To maximise your marks, make sure to write clearly and accurately, using a formal academic style and correct punctuation.

The Four Key Revision Tasks

If you are feeling overwhelmed, focus on these four essential revision tasks:

1. **Read the text** – Even if you have studied *A Christmas Carol* in class, take time to re-read key chapters. Understanding the plot, characters, and themes will allow you to engage confidently with any question.
2. **Memorise key quotations** – You need to reference the novel accurately in your response. Aim to memorise at least 10 key quotations, ensuring they cover characters, themes, and key moments. Shorter quotes are easier to remember and can be used flexibly in different essays.



3. **Read model answers** – Studying high-quality example essays, such as those available from [GCSEEnglish.uk](https://www.gcseenglish.uk), will help you understand how to structure your response, use evidence effectively, make links to relevant context and develop your analysis.
4. **Complete timed essay practice** – The best way to prepare for the exam is to practise writing full answers under timed conditions. Use a stopwatch and stick to the allotted time to simulate exam conditions. Practising within time limits will improve your confidence, speed, and ability to structure your ideas clearly.

***Note:** you should hand write your practise essays on lined A4 paper unless you know that you (or your school) will be typing your exams. If this is the case, practise typing in a blank document with spelling and grammar checking tools turned off.*

About the Author

This revision guide was written by Edward Mooney, an experienced teacher, tutor and examiner. He has also written a series of high-quality Grade 9 model answers for the GCSE English exams, which are available for purchase on Amazon and [GCSEEnglish.uk](https://www.gcseenglish.uk).

Final Thoughts




This guide is here to simplify your revision and boost your confidence. While it may not cover every detail, it provides the essential knowledge and skills you need to approach the exam with clarity and focus.

Stay calm, use your revision time wisely, and remember: preparation is the key to success.

Best of luck in your exam!



Revision Checklist

<input type="checkbox"/>	Re-read the text in full.	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Watch a good film/theatre adaptation.	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Read and remember the plot summary.	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Read and remember the character summaries.	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Read and remember information about the text's main themes.	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Read and remember information about the text's form, structure and language.	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Read and remember information about the text's historical context.	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Read and memorise key vocabulary.	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Read and memorise key quotes.	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Read model answers.	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Write timed essays using past questions.	



Plot summary

A Christmas Carol by Charles Dickens tells the story of Ebenezer Scrooge, a miserly businessman, and his journey toward redemption, framed by Christian themes of sin, punishment, and salvation. Set in Victorian London, the novel critiques selfishness and greed while promoting generosity, compassion, and spiritual renewal.

On Christmas Eve, Scrooge rejects the festive spirit, turning away offers of goodwill from his nephew Fred and two men seeking donations for the poor. His only companion is Bob Cratchit, whom he underpays and mistreats. Scrooge's materialism and self-interest embody a life of sin.

That night, Scrooge is visited by the ghost of his former business partner, Jacob Marley, who warns him of his fate if he doesn't change. Marley's suffering in chains serves as a forewarning of eternal punishment. Marley tells Scrooge that three spirits will visit him, offering him a chance at redemption.

The first spirit, the Ghost of Christmas Past, shows Scrooge scenes from his earlier life, including his lost love, Belle. Scrooge regrets prioritising wealth over relationships, realising the choices that led him to his current, soulless existence.

Next, the Ghost of Christmas Present reveals the lives of others, especially the Cratchit family. Scrooge is moved by Tiny Tim's illness and the Cratchits' humble joy despite their poverty. He also witnesses the warmth and happiness that his nephew Fred enjoys, despite Scrooge's rejection. Scrooge begins to understand the moral consequences of his actions.

The final spirit, the Ghost of Christmas Yet to Come, shows Scrooge a vision of his future death – unmourned and met with indifference. This vision symbolises the Christian idea of eternal damnation for those who live without love or charity. Scrooge is deeply moved by the death of Tiny Tim, directly resulting from his failure to help.

In despair, Scrooge begs for a second chance, pledging to embrace Christmas and live a life of generosity. He wakes on Christmas morning, overjoyed to have been granted this opportunity for change, reflecting the Christian doctrine of redemption.

Scrooge immediately begins to right his wrongs, donating money, providing a feast for Fred, and becoming a second father to Tiny Tim. Over time, he



transforms into a beloved figure known for compassion and generosity, completing his redemption.

In the end, Scrooge's transformation underscores the Christian belief in redemption and forgiveness, showing that through selflessness and love, one can be saved from eternal punishment and become a force for good.



Character summaries

Ebenezer Scrooge

Scrooge is a miserly businessman consumed by greed and indifference, rejecting the spirit of Christmas. His transformation from selfishness to generosity is the story's focus. After being visited by three spirits, Scrooge repents, embracing love, compassion, and community, becoming a beloved figure.

Jacob Marley

Marley, Scrooge's former business partner, is condemned to wander in chains as punishment for his greed. He warns Scrooge of the same fate, setting him on the path to redemption. Marley's brief but pivotal role highlights themes of sin and salvation.

Bob Cratchit

Bob is Scrooge's kind-hearted and overworked clerk. Despite his hardships, he maintains optimism and love for his family, especially his ill son, Tiny Tim. His generosity contrasts with Scrooge's greed, highlighting the themes of social justice and compassion.

Tiny Tim

Tiny Tim, Bob's youngest son, suffers from illness, symbolising innocence and vulnerability. His death, foreshadowed by the Ghost of Christmas Yet to Come, motivates Scrooge to change, reflecting the hardships faced by the poor and the need for compassion.

Fred

Fred is Scrooge's cheerful nephew, embodying the Christmas spirit with his kindness and generosity. Despite Scrooge's disdain, Fred continues to invite him to Christmas dinner, showing the Christian virtues of forgiveness and the importance of family.



The Ghost of Christmas Past

The first spirit, the Ghost of Christmas Past, is a figure of both youth and age, symbolising the passage of time. It shows Scrooge key moments from his early life, including his lost love, Belle, awakening his regret and prompting reflection on his past choices.

The Ghost of Christmas Present

The second spirit, a jolly figure in a green robe, embodies abundance and generosity. It shows Scrooge the joy of people celebrating Christmas, especially the Cratchit family, teaching him that true happiness comes from love and togetherness, not wealth.

The Ghost of Christmas Yet to Come

The final spirit, cloaked in black and silent, shows Scrooge a grim future, including his lonely death and Tiny Tim's death. This stark vision serves as a final wake-up call for Scrooge to change before it's too late.

Belle

Belle, Scrooge's former fiancée, represents the love he lost due to his obsession with wealth. Her marriage and family highlight the life Scrooge could have had if he had chosen love over greed, making her memory key to his realisation of his selfishness.

Fezziwig

Fezziwig, Scrooge's former employer, is a generous and warm-hearted man who contrasts with Scrooge's current attitudes. His festive parties, full of joy and goodwill, represent the generosity and kindness Scrooge has lost, underscoring the Christian values of hospitality and giving.



Themes

Christmas

In *A Christmas Carol*, Christmas represents a time for reflection, generosity, and spiritual renewal. Through Scrooge's transformation, Dickens conveys that Christmas is not just a secular holiday but a time to embrace compassion, forgiveness, and love. The three spirits guide Scrooge towards understanding the true meaning of Christmas: selflessness, joy, and community. The text critiques Scrooge's disregard for the season's Christian principles, showing that Christmas should inspire kindness and generosity, leading to both personal and communal redemption.

Redemption

Redemption is the central theme, symbolising salvation through personal transformation. Scrooge's journey reflects the Christian belief that no one is beyond redemption, regardless of past sins. The three spirits urge him to repent for his selfishness and greed. His eventual change of heart embodies repentance, where one seeks forgiveness and strives to amend wrongs. Scrooge's redemption shows that spiritual renewal is possible for anyone embracing love, generosity, and faith.

Poverty

Poverty in *A Christmas Carol* is shown as a harsh condition, worsened by the indifference of the wealthy during the Industrial Revolution. Characters like Bob Cratchit and Tiny Tim highlight the struggles of the poor. Dickens critiques Scrooge's neglect of the less fortunate, offering a Christian perspective that caring for the poor is a moral duty. The Cratchits represent both the dignity and suffering of the poor, urging readers to show compassion.

Charity

Charity in the novel is depicted as a key Christian virtue leading to salvation. Scrooge initially rejects requests for donations, ignoring the suffering of others. The spirits demonstrate that true wealth lies not in money but in generosity, giving time, resources, and love. Scrooge's eventual embrace of charity – through



donations and acts of kindness – represents his spiritual awakening and the redemptive power of selflessness.

Happiness

Happiness in *A Christmas Carol* comes not from wealth but from love, family, and community. Scrooge's pursuit of wealth leads to isolation and misery, lacking the joy of human connection. The spirits show him that kindness, generosity, and shared celebration bring true happiness. The Cratchit family, despite their poverty, radiate happiness through their love and togetherness, teaching Scrooge that happiness comes from living harmoniously with others, embracing compassion, humility, and joy in giving.



Form and structure

The form of *A Christmas Carol* is carefully structured to deliver its moral and thematic content. Divided into five 'staves,' a term associated with music, it mirrors a Christmas carol and highlights themes of joy, moral lessons, and social values. The staves emphasise Scrooge's journey of transformation and redemption, evolving as his story becomes more harmonious.

The Five Staves

Each staff represents a stage in Scrooge's transformation from miser to generous man. This five-part division builds tension and suspense, creating a clear progression in his character development while illuminating broader social and moral themes.

Episodic Structure and Supernatural Intervention

The episodic nature of the novel revolves around the visits of three spirits, each representing a different aspect of time. These visits guide Scrooge through his past, present, and future, helping him confront the consequences of his selfishness and leading him to repentance and redemption.

Gothic Elements and the Christmas Ghost Story Tradition

The novel incorporates Gothic elements, particularly through the supernatural plot devices of Marley's ghost and the three spirits. This draws on the Victorian tradition of reading ghost stories at Christmas and reinforces the Christian themes of judgment, divine intervention, and salvation, all unfolding during the season of reflection.

Descriptive Language and Social Commentary

Dickens uses vivid, sensory language to create atmosphere and contrast Scrooge's cold existence with the warmth and generosity of the Cratchit family. This contrast also reinforces Dickens' social commentary on the inequalities of the poor during



the Industrial Revolution, using Scrooge's transformation to highlight the moral responsibility of the wealthy.



Language

Time

Time is a central motif in *A Christmas Carol*, highlighting Scrooge's limited time for redemption. Marley's ghost warns Scrooge, "I wear the chain I forged in life" (Stave 1), symbolising the consequences of wasted time. The Ghost of Christmas Yet to Come shows Scrooge his future, stating, "The time before him was his own" (Stave 4), emphasising the urgency of change. Time reflects redemption and the need for moral transformation.

Cold and Warmth

Cold and warmth reflect Scrooge's emotional state. Scrooge is described as "hard and sharp as flint" (Stave 1), symbolising his coldness, while the Cratchit family's warmth is shown in their joyful, humble Christmas despite poverty. Bob's home is "so full of the joy of Christmas" (Stave 3), symbolising love and family. These motifs highlight the Christian message of kindness and the power of generosity, with warmth symbolising redemption and coldness selfishness.

Light and Darkness

Light and darkness contrast throughout the novel, symbolising ignorance versus enlightenment. The Ghost of Christmas Past is "a clear light" (Stave 2), illuminating Scrooge's past. Scrooge's dark office reflects his moral blindness. The Ghost of Christmas Yet to Come is "shrouded in a deep black garment" (Stave 4), foreshadowing a bleak future. These motifs symbolise Scrooge's journey from ignorance to enlightenment.

Chains

Chains symbolise guilt, sin, and the consequences of a selfish life. Marley's ghost is "fettered with a chain like a strong steel band" (Stave 1), representing his past greed. Scrooge is warned he will suffer the same fate unless he changes. Chains also represent Scrooge's spiritual imprisonment, with the Ghost of Christmas Yet to Come showing a chain around his life, emphasising the eternal consequences of his greed.



Weather

Weather mirrors Scrooge's emotional state and the novel's tone. In Stave 1, the weather is "fog and darkness," symbolising Scrooge's blindness and cold heart. After his transformation in Stave 5, the weather becomes "clear and bright," symbolising his renewal and emotional warmth. The weather motif highlights the contrast between Scrooge's miserable state and his eventual change.

Poverty

Poverty highlights social injustices during the Industrial Revolution. Scrooge learns of Tiny Tim's suffering, with the ghost saying, "God bless us, every one!" (Stave 3), contrasting poverty with warmth and unity. Scrooge's disregard for the poor is shown when he dismisses charity workers, asking, "Are there no prisons?" (Stave 1). This motif critiques the wealthy's indifference and urges compassion towards social inequality.

Christianity

Scrooge's journey mirrors Christian salvation, as he confronts his sins and seeks redemption. Belle's words, "Another idol has displaced me... a golden one" (Stave 2), refer to the biblical story of Genesis, where the worship of false idols leads to downfall. Scrooge's obsession with wealth replaces love, reflecting the Christian warning against materialism. Tiny Tim's prayer, "God bless us, every one!" (Stave 3), echoes Christian values of compassion and selflessness.



Historical context

A Christmas Carol was published in 1843, during the Victorian era, a time of industrialisation, urbanisation, and harsh poverty for the working class. The novel critiques social injustices and advocates for compassion, generosity, and reform, reflecting the era's significant social and economic changes.

The Industrial Revolution and Economic Change

The Industrial Revolution transformed Britain, leading to urbanisation and a divide between the wealthy and the poor. Dickens critiques industrial capitalism through Scrooge, who embodies the greed of the newly rich. Scrooge's refusal to pay fair wages and his dismissal of charity reflect the attitudes of many industrialists. Dickens contrasts Scrooge's coldness with the Cratchit family's warmth, promoting the values of human connection over material gain.

The Plight of the Poor and Workhouses

The poor faced severe hardships in industrial cities, often working in dangerous conditions for low pay. The 1834 New Poor Law created workhouses, which Dickens criticised for their harsh conditions. Scrooge's dismissive attitude towards charity and his suggestion that the poor should be sent to workhouses mirrors Victorian elites' view that poverty was a personal failing. Dickens argues for a compassionate society that cares for the vulnerable.

The Role of Religion and Christian Values

Christian values of charity, compassion, and redemption shape the novel. Scrooge's transformation reflects the Christian belief in repentance and forgiveness. Marley's warning about the consequences of a selfish life echoes Christian teachings on sin and punishment. Tiny Tim's blessing, "God bless us, every one!" (Stave 3), embodies the Christian values of love and goodwill, central to the novel's message. Scrooge's spiritual awakening mirrors the Christian concept of salvation.



Social Reform and Victorian Philanthropy

The Victorian era saw a growing interest in social reform as industrialisation highlighted poverty and inequality. Dickens used his writing to advocate for social change, portraying Scrooge's transformation as a call for a more compassionate society. The novel critiques Victorian capitalism and urges wealthier individuals to take responsibility for the poor, promoting the Christian ideals of charity and compassion.

Conclusion: The Legacy of *A Christmas Carol*

A Christmas Carol critiques the greed of industrial capitalism, exposes the hardships of the poor, and advocates for social responsibility. Through Christian themes of sin, repentance, and redemption, the novel urges readers to reflect on their responsibilities. Dickens' call for social reform and emphasis on charity and love make the novel a timeless message about kindness and generosity, relevant to both its time and today.



Vocabulary list

Allegory – A story with a hidden moral or political meaning.

Avarice – Extreme greed for wealth or material gain.

Compassion – Sympathy and concern for the suffering of others.

Critique – A detailed analysis and assessment.

Empathy – The ability to understand and share another's feelings.

Exploitation – Taking advantage of others for personal gain.

Guilt – A feeling of responsibility for wrongdoing.

Ignorance – Lack of knowledge, understanding, or awareness.

Inequality – The state of being unequal in terms of wealth or status.

Jovial – Cheerful and full of good humour.

Misanthropic – Disliking or hating humankind.

Moral – A lesson concerning right or wrong behaviour.

Opulence – Great wealth or luxuriousness.

Poverty – The state of being extremely poor.

Prejudice – Judging without sufficient knowledge or understanding.

Redemption – The process of being saved from sin or error.

Selfishness – Concern only for one's own welfare, disregarding others.

Sin – A moral wrongdoing or transgression against divine law.

Supernatural – Events or phenomena beyond normal human understanding.

Want – A state of lacking basic necessities or desires, poverty.

Workhouse – An institution where the poor were given work in exchange for food and shelter.



Quote list

1. "Are there no prisons? Are there no workhouses?" (Scrooge, Stave 1)

This repetition of rhetorical questions emphasises Scrooge's indifference to the poor. A workhouse was an institution for the poor where they worked in exchange for food and shelter.

2. "If they would rather die... they had better do it, and decrease the surplus population." (Scrooge, Stave 1)

Scrooge's cruel and utilitarian mindset is conveyed through direct speech, using harsh, dismissive language to depict his lack of empathy.

3. "I wear the chain I forged in life." (Marley's Ghost, Stave 1)

Metaphor for the consequences of a life lived in greed, representing the spiritual burden of selfishness that Marley, and potentially Scrooge, carries.

4. "Scrooge... wept to see his poor forgotten self as he used to be." (Narrator, Stave 2)

This moment shows Scrooge's emotional reaction to seeing his past self, highlighting his lost innocence and potential for change.

5. "Another idol has displaced me... A golden one." (Belle, Stave 2)

Belle's words allude to a Bible story with which the original readers would have been very familiar. In Exodus 32, the Israelites worship a Golden Calf in place of God, thereby breaking the Second Commandment ("Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image"). The implication is that Scrooge's avarice is not just immoral and hurtful but also sinful.

6. "I see a vacant seat," replied the Ghost, "in the poor chimney-corner, and a crutch without an owner, carefully preserved. If these shadows remain unaltered by the Future, the child will die." (Ghost of Christmas Present, Stave 3)

The foreshadowing and symbolism of Tiny Tim's potential death intensifies Scrooge's guilt and motivates his desire to change his actions.

7. "Yellow, meagre, ragged, scowling, wolfish." (Narrator, Stave 3)

This animalistic imagery depicts the children "Ignorance" and "Want" suggesting they are feral and inhuman. The failure of the rich to educate away the ignorance, by providing money for schools, and to give their own money to solve want (i.e. poverty) is personified in these grotesque children.



8. "“Are there no prisons?” said the Spirit, turning on him for the last time with his own words. “Are there no workhouses?” (Ghost of Christmas Present, Stave 3)

The irony of the Ghost turning Scrooge’s earlier words back on him forces Scrooge to confront his lack of compassion for the poor.

9. “Spirit! ... hear me! I am not the man I was. I will not be the man I must have been.” (Scrooge, Stave 4)

Scrooge’s desperate plea for change marks his epiphany, realising his potential for transformation and expressing his desire to avoid a grim fate.

10. “I will honour Christmas in my heart, and try to keep it all the year. Oh, tell me I may sponge away the writing on this stone!” (Scrooge, Stave 4)

Scrooge’s resolve to embrace Christmas year-round is paired with his plea to change his fate, symbolised by his desire to “sponge away the writing” on his tombstone. This marks his desperation to avoid a grim, lonely end, and his newfound commitment to redemption.

11. “Wonderful party, wonderful games, wonderful unanimity, won-der-ful happiness!” (Scrooge, Stave 5)

Scrooge’s excitement and joy in the festive celebration with his family underscore his complete transformation from miser to generous benefactor.

12. “And to Tiny Tim, who did not die, he was a second father.” (Narrator, Stave 5)

The symbolism of Scrooge’s role as a second father to Tiny Tim illustrates the theme of compassion and the impact of generosity.

13. “And so, as Tiny Tim observed, God bless Us, Every One!” (Narrator, Stave 5)

Tiny Tim’s final blessing encapsulates the novel’s theme of generosity, goodwill, and the Christian ideal of charity, marking the culmination of Scrooge’s transformation.



Past questions

Below are all of the past questions since the first examination of the renewed AQA GCSE English Literature syllabus (8702/1) in 2017. You will also find three sample questions published by the exam board for training purposes but never used as real exams.

In the interests of brevity, mark schemes, examiner reports and grade boundaries are not included in this revision guide. They are readily available to download from AQA.



2017

Read the following extract from Chapter 3 of *A Christmas Carol* and then answer the question that follows.

In this extract, the Ghost of Christmas Present shows Scrooge the Cratchit family's Christmas celebrations.

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. Mrs. Cratchit said that now the weight was off her mind, she would confess she had had her doubts about the quantity of flour. 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. Any Cratchit would have blushed to hint at such a thing.

At last the dinner was all done, the cloth was cleared, the hearth swept, and the fire made up. The compound in the jug being tasted, and considered perfect, apples and oranges were put upon the table, and a shovel-full of chestnuts on the fire. Then all the Cratchit family drew round the hearth, in what Bob Cratchit called a circle, meaning half a one; and at Bob Cratchit's elbow stood the family display of glass. Two tumblers, and a custard-cup without a handle.

These held the hot stuff from the jug, however, as well as golden goblets would have done; and Bob served it out with beaming looks, while the chestnuts on the fire sputtered and cracked noisily. Then Bob proposed:

"A Merry Christmas to us all, my dears. God bless us!"

Which all the family re-echoed.

"God bless us every one!" said Tiny Tim, the last of all.

He sat very close to his father's side upon his little stool. Bob held his withered little hand in his, as if he loved the child, and wished to keep him by his side, and dreaded that he might be taken from him.

Starting with this extract, explore how Dickens uses the Cratchit family to show the struggles of the poor.

Write about:

- how Dickens presents the Cratchit family in this extract



- how Dickens uses the Cratchit family to show the struggles of the poor in the novel as a whole.

[30 marks]



2018

Read the following extract from Chapter 4 of *A Christmas Carol* and then answer the question that follows.

In this extract, Scrooge meets the Ghost of Christmas Yet To Come.

The Phantom slowly, gravely, silently, approached. When it came near him, 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 onward with its hand.

"You are about to show me shadows of the things that have not happened, but will happen in the time before us," Scrooge pursued. "Is that so, Spirit?" The upper portion of the garment was contracted for an instant in its folds, as if the Spirit had inclined its head. That was the only answer he received.

Although well used to ghostly company by this time, Scrooge feared the silent shape so much that his legs trembled beneath him, and he found that he could hardly stand when he prepared to follow it. The Spirit paused a moment, as observing his condition, and giving him time to recover.

But Scrooge was all the worse for this. It thrilled him with a vague uncertain horror, to know that behind the dusky shroud, there were ghostly eyes intently fixed upon him, while he, though he stretched his own to the utmost, could see nothing but a spectral hand and one great heap of black.

"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?"



Starting with this extract, explore how Dickens presents Scrooge's fears in *A Christmas Carol*.

Write about:

- how Dickens presents what Scrooge is frightened of in this extract
- how Dickens presents Scrooge's fears in the novel as a whole.

[30 marks]



2019

Read the following extract from Chapter 1 of *A Christmas Carol* and then answer the question that follows.

In this extract, Scrooge is visited by Marley's Ghost.

Again the spectre raised a cry, and shook its chain and wrung its shadowy hands.

"You are fettered," said Scrooge, trembling. "Tell me why?"

"I wear the chain I forged in life," replied the Ghost. "I made it link by link, and yard by yard; I girded it on of my own free will, and of my own free will I wore it. Is its pattern strange to you?"

Scrooge trembled more and more.

"Or would you know," pursued the Ghost, "the weight and length of the strong coil you bear yourself? It was full as heavy and as long as this, seven Christmas Eves ago. You have laboured on it, since. It is a ponderous chain!"

Scrooge glanced about him on the floor, in the expectation of finding himself surrounded by some fifty or sixty fathoms of iron cable: but he could see nothing.

"Jacob," he said, imploringly. "Old Jacob Marley, tell me more. Speak comfort to me, Jacob!"

"I have none to give," the Ghost replied. "It comes from other regions, Ebenezer Scrooge, and is conveyed by other ministers, to other kinds of men. Nor can I tell you what I would. A very little more is all permitted to me. I cannot rest, I cannot stay, I cannot linger anywhere. My spirit never walked beyond our counting-house—mark me!—in life my spirit never roved beyond the narrow limits of our money-changing hole; and weary journeys lie before me!"

It was a habit with Scrooge, whenever he became thoughtful, to put his hands in his breeches pockets. Pondering on what the Ghost had said, he did so now, but without lifting up his eyes, or getting off his knees.

Starting with this extract, explore how Dickens uses the ghosts to help Scrooge change his attitudes and behaviour.

Write about:



- how Dickens uses Marley's Ghost in this extract
- how Dickens uses the ghosts to help Scrooge change his attitudes and behaviour in the novel as a whole.

[30 marks]



2020

Read the following extract from Chapter 3 of *A Christmas Carol* and then answer the question that follows.

In this extract, the Ghost of Christmas Present is about to leave Scrooge.

The chimes were ringing the three quarters past eleven at that moment.

"Forgive me if I am not justified in what I ask," said Scrooge, looking intently at the Spirit's robe, "but I see something strange, and not belonging to yourself, protruding from your skirts. Is it a foot or a claw?"

"It might be a claw, for the flesh there is upon it," was the Spirit's sorrowful reply. "Look here."

From the foldings of its robe, it brought two children; wretched, abject, frightful, hideous, miserable. They knelt down at its feet, and clung upon the outside of its garment.

"Oh, Man! look here. Look, look, down here!" exclaimed the Ghost.

They were a boy and girl. Yellow, meagre, ragged, scowling, wolfish; but prostrate, too, in their humility. Where graceful youth should have filled their features out, and touched them with its freshest tints, a stale and shrivelled hand, like that of age, had pinched, and twisted them, and pulled them into shreds. Where angels might have sat enthroned, devils lurked, and glared out menacing. No change, no degradation, no perversion of humanity, in any grade, through all the mysteries of wonderful creation, has monsters half so horrible and dread.

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 bide 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.

Starting with this extract, explore how Dickens presents the suffering of the poor in *A Christmas Carol*.

Write about:

- how Dickens presents the suffering of the poor in this extract
- how Dickens presents the suffering of the poor in the novel as a whole.

[30 marks]



2021

Read the following extract from Chapter 2 of *A Christmas Carol* and then answer the question that follows.

In this extract, the Ghost of Christmas Past shows Scrooge the Christmas party he attended at Mr Fezziwig's warehouse when he was a young man.

But if they had been twice as many—ah, four times—old Fezziwig would have been a match for them, and so would Mrs. Fezziwig. As to her, she was worthy to be his partner in every sense of the term. If that's not high praise, tell me higher, and I'll use it. A positive light appeared to issue from Fezziwig's calves. They shone in every part of the dance like moons. You couldn't have predicted, at any given time, what would have become of them next. And when old Fezziwig and Mrs. Fezziwig had gone all through the dance; advance and retire, both hands to your partner, bow and curtsy, corkscrew, thread-the-needle, and back again to your place; Fezziwig "cut"—cut so deftly, that he appeared to wink with his legs, and came upon his feet again without a stagger.

When the clock struck eleven, this domestic ball broke up. Mr. and Mrs. Fezziwig took their stations, one on either side of the door, and shaking hands with every person individually as he or she went out, wished him or her a Merry Christmas. When everybody had retired but the two 'prentices, they did the same to them; and thus the cheerful voices died away, and the lads were left to their beds; which were under a counter in the back-shop.

During the whole of this time, Scrooge had acted like a man out of his wits. His heart and soul were in the scene, and with his former self. He corroborated everything, remembered everything, enjoyed everything, and underwent the strangest agitation. It was not until now, when the bright faces of his former self and Dick were turned from them, that he remembered the Ghost, and became conscious that it was looking full upon him, while the light upon its head burnt very clear.

"A small matter," said the Ghost, "to make these silly folks so full of gratitude."

"Small!" echoed Scrooge.

The Spirit signed to him to listen to the two apprentices, who were pouring out their hearts in praise of Fezziwig: and when he had done so, said,



"Why! Is it not? He has spent but a few pounds of your mortal money: three or four perhaps. Is that so much that he deserves this praise?"

"It isn't that," said Scrooge, heated by the remark, and speaking unconsciously like his former, not his latter, self. "It isn't that, Spirit. He has the power to render us happy or unhappy; to make our service light or burdensome; a pleasure or a toil. Say that his power lies in words and looks; in things so slight and insignificant that it is impossible to add and count 'em up: what then? The happiness he gives, is quite as great as if it cost a fortune."

Starting with this extract, explore how Dickens presents ideas about joy and happiness in *A Christmas Carol*.

Write about:

- how Dickens presents joy and happiness in this extract
- how Dickens presents ideas about joy and happiness in the novel as a whole.

[30 marks]



2022

Read the following extract from Chapter 2 of *A Christmas Carol* and then answer the question that follows.

In this extract, the Ghost of Christmas Past takes Scrooge back to his school.

"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.

They left the high-road, by a well-remembered lane, and soon approached a mansion of dull red brick, with a little weathercock-surmounted cupola, on the roof, and a bell hanging in it. It was a large house, but one of broken fortunes; for the spacious offices were little used, their walls were damp and mossy, their windows broken, and their gates decayed. Fowls clucked and strutted in the stables; and the coach-houses and sheds were over-run with grass. Nor was it more retentive of its ancient state, within; for entering the dreary hall, and glancing through the open doors of many rooms, they found them poorly furnished, cold, and vast. There was an earthy savour in the air, a chilly bareness in the place, which associated itself somehow with too much getting up by candle-light, and not too much to eat.

They went, the Ghost and Scrooge, across the hall, to a door at the back of the house. It opened before them, and disclosed a long, bare, melancholy room, made barer still by lines of plain deal forms and desks. At one of these a lonely boy was reading near a feeble fire; and Scrooge sat down upon a form, and wept to see his poor forgotten self as he used to be.

Not a latent echo in the house, not a squeak and scuffle from the mice behind the panelling, not a drip from the half-thawed water-spout in the dull yard behind, not a sigh among the leafless boughs of one despondent poplar, not the idle swinging of an empty store-house door, no, not a clicking in the fire, but fell upon the heart of Scrooge with a softening influence, and gave a freer passage to his tears.

Starting with this extract, explore how Dickens presents the effects of loneliness and isolation in *A Christmas Carol*.

Write about:

- how Dickens presents the effects of loneliness and isolation in this extract



- how Dickens presents the effects of loneliness and isolation in the novel as a whole.

[30 marks]



2023

Read the following extract from Chapter 2 of *A Christmas Carol* and then answer the question that follows.

In this extract, the Ghost of Christmas Past shows Scrooge his last meeting with Belle.

This was not addressed to Scrooge, or to any one whom he could see, but it produced an immediate effect. For again Scrooge saw himself. He was older now; a man in the prime of life. His face had not the harsh and rigid lines of later years; but it had begun to wear the signs of care and avarice. There was an eager, greedy, restless motion in the eye, which showed the passion that had taken root, and where the shadow of the growing tree would fall.

He was not alone, but sat by the side of a fair young girl in a mourning-dress: in whose eyes there were tears, which sparkled in the light that shone out of the Ghost of Christmas Past.

"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."

"I was a boy," he said impatiently.

"Your own feeling tells you that you were not what you are," she returned. "I am. That which promised happiness when we were one in heart, is fraught with misery now that we are two. How often and how keenly I have thought of this, I will not say. It is enough that I have thought of it, and can release you."

Starting with this extract, explore how Dickens presents the effects of greed in *A Christmas Carol*.

Write about:

- how Dickens presents the effects of greed in this extract
- how Dickens presents the effects of greed in the novel as a whole.

[30 marks]



2024

Read the following extract from Chapter 4 of *A Christmas Carol* and then answer the question that follows.

In this extract, the Ghost of Christmas Yet to Come shows Scrooge the scene at a deathbed.

"Ha, ha!" laughed the same woman, when old Joe, producing a flannel bag with money in it, told out their several gains upon the ground. "This is the end of it, you see! He frightened every one away from him when he was alive, to profit us when he was dead! Ha, ha, ha!"

"Spirit!" said Scrooge, shuddering from head to foot. "I see, I see. The case of this unhappy man might be my own. My life tends that way, now. Merciful Heaven, what is this!"

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.

The room was very dark, too dark to be observed with any accuracy, though Scrooge glanced round it in obedience to a secret impulse, anxious to know what kind of room it was. A pale light, rising in the outer air, fell straight upon the bed; and on it, plundered and bereft, unwatched, unwept, uncared for, was the body of this man.

Scrooge glanced towards the Phantom. Its steady hand was pointed to the head. The cover was so carelessly adjusted that the slightest raising of it, the motion of a finger upon Scrooge's part, would have disclosed the face. He thought of it, felt how easy it would be to do, and longed to do it; but had no more power to withdraw the veil than to dismiss the spectre at his side.

Oh cold, cold, rigid, dreadful Death, set up thine altar here, and dress it with such terrors as thou hast at thy command: for this is thy dominion! But of the loved, revered, and honoured head, thou canst not turn one hair to thy dread purposes, or make one feature odious. It is not that the hand is heavy and will fall down when released; it is not that the heart and pulse are still; but that the hand was open, generous, and true; the heart brave, warm, and tender; and the pulse a man's. Strike, Shadow, strike! And see his good deeds springing from the wound, to sow the world with life immortal!



No voice pronounced these words in Scrooge's ears, and yet he heard them when he looked upon the bed. He thought, if this man could be raised up now, what would be his foremost thoughts? Avarice, hard-dealing, griping cares? They have brought him to a rich end, truly!

He lay, in the dark empty house, with not a man, a woman, or a child, to say that he was kind to me in this or that, and for the memory of one kind word I will be kind to him. A cat was tearing at the door, and there was a sound of gnawing rats beneath the hearth-stone. What they wanted in the room of death, and why they were so restless and disturbed, Scrooge did not dare to think.

Starting with this extract, explore how Dickens presents the lessons Scrooge learns about life in *A Christmas Carol*.

Write about:

- how Dickens presents Scrooge in this extract
- how Dickens presents the lessons Scrooge learns about life in the novel as a whole.

[30 marks]



Sample 1

Read the following extract from Chapter 1 of *A Christmas Carol* and then answer the question that follows.

In this extract, Scrooge is being introduced to the reader.

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.

Nobody ever stopped him in the street to say, with gladsome looks, "My dear Scrooge, how are you? When will you come to see me?" No beggars implored him to bestow a trifle, no children asked him what it was o'clock, no man or woman ever once in all his life inquired the way to such and such a place, of Scrooge. Even the blind men's dogs appeared to know him; and when they saw him coming on, would tug their owners into doorways and up courts; and then would wag their tails as though they said, "No eye at all is better than an evil eye, dark master!"

But what did Scrooge care! It was the very thing he liked. To edge his way along the crowded paths of life, warning all human sympathy to keep its distance, was what the knowing ones call "nuts" to Scrooge.

Starting with this extract, how does Dickens present Scrooge as an outsider to society?

Write about:

- how Dickens presents Scrooge in this extract
- how Dickens presents Scrooge as an outsider to society in the novel as a whole.

[30 marks]



Sample 2

Read this extract from Chapter 3 of *A Christmas Carol* and then answer the question that follows.

In this extract, Scrooge and the Ghost of Christmas Present are watching the Cratchit family on Christmas Day.

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.

By this time it was getting dark, and snowing pretty heavily; and as Scrooge and the Spirit went along the streets, the brightness of the roaring fires in kitchens, parlours, and all sorts of rooms, was wonderful. Here, the flickering of the blaze showed preparations for a cosy dinner, with hot plates baking through and through before the fire, and deep red curtains, ready to be drawn to shut out cold and darkness. There all the children of the house were running out into the snow to meet their married sisters, brothers, cousins, uncles, aunts, and be the first to greet them. Here, again, were shadows on the window-blind of guests assembling; and there a group of handsome girls, all hooded and fur-booted, and all chattering at once, tripped lightly off to some near neighbour's house; where, woe upon the single man who saw them enter in a glow!

Starting with this extract, how does Dickens present the importance of family in *A Christmas Carol*?

Write about:

- how Dickens presents the Cratchits in this extract
- how Dickens presents the importance of family in the novel as a whole.

[30 marks]



Sample 3

Read the following extract from Chapter 2 of *A Christmas Carol* and then answer the question that follows.

In this extract, the Ghost of Christmas Past has taken Scrooge to the place where he used to work.

Old Fezziwig laid down his pen, and looked up at the clock, which pointed to the hour of seven. He rubbed his hands; adjusted his capacious waistcoat; laughed all over himself, from his shoes to his organ of benevolence; and called out in a comfortable, oily, rich, fat, jovial voice:

"Yo ho, there! Ebenezer! Dick!"

Scrooge's former self, now grown a young man, came briskly in, accompanied by his fellow-'prentice.

"Dick Wilkins, to be sure!" said Scrooge to the Ghost. "Bless me, yes. There he is. He was very much attached to me, was Dick. Poor Dick! Dear, dear!"

"Yo ho, my boys!" said Fezziwig. "No more work to-night. Christmas Eve, Dick. Christmas, Ebenezer! Let's have the shutters up," cried old Fezziwig, with a sharp clap of his hands, "before a man can say Jack Robinson!"

You wouldn't believe how those two fellows went at it! They charged into the street with the shutters—one, two, three—had 'em up in their places—four, five, six—barred 'em and pinned 'em—seven, eight, nine—and came back before you could have got to twelve, panting like race-horses.

"Hilli-ho!" cried old Fezziwig, skipping down from the high desk, with wonderful agility. "Clear away, my lads, and let's have lots of room here! Hilli-ho, Dick! Chirrup, Ebenezer!"

Clear away! There was nothing they wouldn't have cleared away, or couldn't have cleared away, with old Fezziwig looking on. It was done in a minute. Every movable was packed off, as if it were dismissed from public life for evermore; the floor was swept and watered, the lamps were trimmed, fuel was heaped upon the fire; and the warehouse was as snug, and warm, and dry, and bright a ball-room, as you would desire to see upon a winter's night.

Starting with this extract, explore how far Dickens presents Christmas as a joyful and special time.



Write about:

- how Dickens presents Christmas as a joyful and special time in this extract
- how far Dickens presents Christmas as a joyful and special time in the novel as a whole.

[30 marks]



Appendix 1: recommended further resources

Model Answers



Flashcards



CGP Resources



AQA Resources





Appendix 2: privacy notice

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