

Plot summary:		
<p>A Christmas Carol (Charles Dickens, 1843) is a novel about Scrooge, a selfish and wealthy man, who is changed by the visits of the ghost of his business partner Marley, then three more ghosts. The ghosts show him his past, present and finally, what the future holds if he doesn't change. When he awakes on Christmas morning, Scrooge understands why helping people less fortunate than himself is so important and becomes a generous and socially responsible man.</p>		
Key extract summary	Key quotes (pick the most relevant words and phrases)	Key themes
<p>First description of Scrooge Dickens describes Scrooge's personality, appearance and his attitudes towards others. In summary, he is greedy, selfish and is constantly associated with the cold.</p>	<p>'tight-fisted hand at the grindstone' 'solitary as an oyster' 'hard and sharp as flint, from which no steel had ever struck out generous fire'</p>	<p>Isolation Greed/wealth</p>
<p>Conversation between Scrooge and Fred Scrooge's nephew, Fred, comes to visit him at work. They talk about their differing attitudes to Christmas – Fred loves it, and sees it as a time for giving, sharing and family; Scrooge despises it and sees it as a waste of money.</p>	<p>'every idiot who goes about with Merry Christmas on his lips should be boiled with his own pudding and buried with a stake of holly through his heart' 'though it has never put a scrap of gold or silver in my pocket, I believe that [Christmas] has done me good, and will do me good; and I say, God bless it!'</p>	<p>Family Greed/wealth Poverty Generosity Christmas</p>
<p>Marley's Ghost The ghost of Scrooge's old business partner, Jacob Marley appears to Scrooge. Marley is dragging chains which represent his sins and warns Scrooge that he needs to change.</p>	<p>"Oh! captive, bound, and double-ironed" "Mankind was my business. The common welfare was my business; charity, mercy, forbearance, and benevolence, were, all, my business. The dealings of my trade were but a drop of water in the comprehensive ocean of my business!"</p>	<p>Greed/wealth Relationships Punishment Repentance Change/transformation</p>
<p>Little Fan collects Scrooge from school The Ghost of Christmas Past visits Scrooge and takes him to see his childhood. We see Scrooge as a lonely boy at boarding school. His sister comes to pick him up to take him home for Christmas.</p>	<p>'Home, for ever and ever. Father is so much kinder than he used to be, that home's like Heaven!' 'We're to be together all the Christmas long and have the merriest time in the whole world'</p>	<p>Christmas Isolation Family</p>
<p>Christmas Eve with Mr Fezziwig The Ghost shows Scrooge Fezziwig's party which he attended as an apprentice – Dickens uses lots of sensory imagery and creates a sense of joy and excitement. Scrooge sees himself acting very differently and begins to understand the power of kindness towards others.</p>	<p>"'A small matter", said the Ghost, "to make these silly folks so full of gratitude." 'The happiness he gives, is quite as great as if it cost a fortune.'</p>	<p>Change Christmas Generosity</p>
<p>Scrooge and Belle end their relationship The Ghost takes Scrooge back to the time when his fiancée Belle ended their 'contract'. We see money controlling Scrooge here and he begins to understand why he needs to change. Dickens uses language associated with business to describe their relationship.</p>	<p>"can even I believe that you would choose a dowerless girl" "I release you. With a full heart, for the love of him you once were." 'Show me no more!'</p>	<p>Change/transformation Greed/wealth Relationships Isolation</p>

<p>Scrooge sees the Cratchits The Ghost of Christmas Present shows Scrooge the Cratchits' Christmas. Whilst they are poor, they celebrate as a family and are grateful for what they have. It is clear that Tiny Tim is very ill; the Ghost tells Scrooge that he will not have long to live if Scrooge doesn't change.</p>	<p>'as good as gold, and better' 'Nobody said or thought it was at all a small pudding for a large family' 'I see a vacant seat...and a crutch without an owner'</p>	<p>Family Christmas Poverty Death</p>
<p>Ignorance and Want Scrooge sees two children underneath the Ghost's robes. They are Ignorance and Want – metaphors for mankind's (and Scrooge's) sins against the poor.</p>	<p>'Yellow, meagre, ragged, scowling, wolfish' 'They are Man's' "Are there no prisons?" said the Spirit, turning on him for the last time with his own words. "Are there no workhouses?"</p>	<p>Poverty Change/transformation Repentance</p>
<p>Scrooge sees his own death The Ghost of Christmas Yet to Come shows Scrooge a dead man; men are laughing and talking casually about his death and he is being robbed. Scrooge comes to the realisation that this man is himself in the future if he doesn't change.</p>	<p>"It's likely to be a very cheap funeral... I don't know of anybody to go to.' 'What has he done with his money?' 'You don't mean to say you took them down, rings and all, with him lying there?' 'He frightened every one away from him when he was alive, to profit us when he was dead'</p>	<p>Poverty Death</p>
<p>Tiny Tim's death The Ghost then shows Scrooge the Cratchits again – however, this time, Tiny Tim is not there. The family remember him and are still grateful for what they have.</p>	<p>'Let me see some tenderness connected with a death' 'we shall not quarrel easily among ourselves, and forget poor Tiny Tim'</p>	<p>Poverty Death Family</p>
<p>The change in Scrooge Scrooge wakes up on Christmas morning changed by what the Ghosts have shown him. He asks a boy to buy a turkey and goes to dinner at Fred's. He gives Bob Cratchit a pay rise and a day off.</p>	<p>'I will live in the Past, the Present, and the Future!' "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!" "A Merry Christmas, Bob" said Scrooge'</p>	<p>Change/transformation Repentance Family Relationships</p>

Context:

Dickens and his other works

Dickens grew up relatively well off, until his father got into debt and had to go to prison. This means he experienced both wealth and poverty. He wanted to see social change and highlight the need for a fair welfare system. Many of his novels highlight social injustice in Victorian Britain; Oliver Twist is another example. He was particularly interested in helping poor children. He believed that literature could fuel political and social change.

Politics, the monarchy and the law

Queen Victoria reigned in Britain from 1837 – 1901. In that time, the population in Britain almost doubled, causing extreme poverty; there were not enough resources or jobs for the amount of people and disease was rife due to living conditions and lack of healthcare and medicine. 1 in 5 children died due to poverty at this time. Poor children had to work rather than go to school in order to support their families; lack of education meant that the cycle of poverty was never broken. In 1833 the Government passed a Factory Act to improve conditions for children working in factories. Young children were working very long hours in workplaces where conditions were often terrible.

The Government's attempt to solve poverty was to humiliate and shame poor people into becoming self-sufficient. In 1834 a Poor Law was introduced. Some people welcomed it because they believed it would:

- reduce the cost of looking after the poor
- take beggars off the streets
- encourage poor people to work hard to support themselves

The new Poor Law ensured that the poor were housed in workhouses, clothed and fed. Children who entered the workhouse would receive some schooling. In return for this care, all workhouse paupers would have to work for several hours each day. However, 1 in 10 people died in the workhouse and their bodies were subject to the Anatomy Act – they must repay their debt to society by being dissected for medical research.

Christmas

Before Victoria's reign started in 1837 nobody in Britain had heard of Santa Claus or Christmas Crackers. No Christmas cards were sent and most people did not have holidays from work. The wealth and technologies generated by the industrial revolution of the Victorian era changed how Britain celebrated Christmas. Traditions like turkey, singing carols, a tree and time off work were all introduced in Victorian times.

Religion

At the start of the Victorian era, Britain was a religious country, with most people holding Christian beliefs and going to church. However, as the Industrial Revolution progressed, scientific knowledge expanded and people began to question religious beliefs – for example, Charles Darwin's Origin of the Species proposed the theory of evolution for the first time. As the era progressed, the church lost control and power over society.