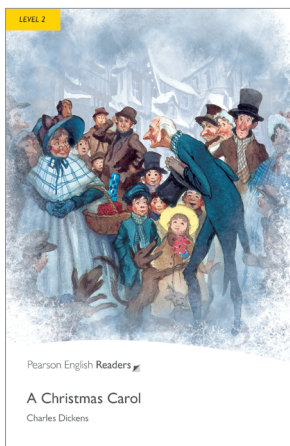


A Christmas Carol

Charles Dickens



About the author

Charles Dickens, the most popular writer of the Victorian age, was born near Portsmouth, England, in 1812 and died in Kent in 1870. When his father was thrown into debtors' prison, young Charles was taken out of school and forced to work in a shoe-polish factory, which may help explain the presence of so many abandoned and victimized children in his novels. As a young man he worked as a reporter before starting his career as a fiction writer in 1833. In his novels, short stories and essays, Dickens combined hilarious comedy with a scathing criticism of the inhuman features of Victorian industrial society. Many of his novels, such as *Great Expectations*, *David Copperfield* and *Oliver Twist*, have been made into films.

Summary

On Christmas Eve, four ghosts teach Scrooge, an elderly miser, that love and friendship are much more important than amassing a fortune. The first ghost is that of Marley, his former business partner, who warns him about the suffering awaiting him if he does not change. The three other ghosts reveal to Scrooge scenes from his past, present and future. After witnessing these scenes, Scrooge is a changed man.

Chapter summary

Chapter 1

Scrooge is a cold, hard man who loves money more than people. For him, the worst part of the year is Christmas, a time in which even the poor make merry. This Christmas Eve, after rejecting his nephew's invitation to Christmas

dinner, Scrooge is visited by two kind gentlemen who are collecting money for the poor. Not only does he refuse to give them any, he also suggests that poor people should be kept in prisons and workhouses. After dinner, he receives another visit, that of his long dead partner, Marley, who warns him that his miserly behaviour will make him suffer for eternity, unless he follows the advice of three ghosts that will come to see him very soon.

Chapter 2

The first ghost, that of Past Christmases, shows him scenes from his life as a schoolboy and a young man. We learn that he had a sad and lonely childhood, but that he won the heart of a lovely woman whom he lost through his greater love for money.

Chapter 3

The second ghost, the Ghost of Christmas Now, shows Scrooge that people can spend a happy Christmas day even without much money. He shows him Fred, his nephew, and Bob, his employee, enjoying Christmas with their families. However, the ghost also shows him two sad sights: that of Bob's ailing son and that of two other children who represent all the poor and ignorant children in the world.

Chapter 4

The third ghost, the Ghost of Future Christmases, shows Scrooge scenes after his death. Everybody is happy that he has died. Only the Cratchit family is very sad – their son Tiny Tim has passed away. It is then that Scrooge begs the ghost to let him change such a horrible future.

Chapter 5

When Scrooge wakes up after the visits have ended, he realizes it is only Christmas morning. He orders a large goose to be sent to the Cratchits, promises to help the poor and dines at his nephew's house. Scrooge, now a changed man, becomes a second father to Tiny Tim, who, fortunately, does not die young.

The original text

A Christmas Carol, first published in 1843, is the most popular of all his Christmas stories.

Its moral, which still applies today, is that a change of heart is needed among those who are well-off regarding the less fortunate, and that there is no better season for it to take place than Christmas.

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Background and themes

In *A Christmas Carol* Dickens wishes to raise awareness of social inequality in Victorian England. Among the many sources of suffering for the poor were the workhouses, public establishments that provided them with housing at the expense of brutal treatment.

Social inequality: Who is responsible for the well being of the less fortunate, the state or every one of us?

Childhood: Does an unhappy childhood necessarily lead to an unhappy adulthood?

A change of heart: Can human beings change their behaviour for the better as Scrooge does?

Christmas and communal festivities: To what extent do they foster social bonding?

Suffering: Does suffering make us mature?

Discussion activities

Chapter 1

Before reading

1 Discuss: Christmas time

Have students discuss the importance of Christmas in their country. If they celebrate other religious festivals, get them to talk about them.

Here are some suggested questions:

Is it cold or hot at Christmas time in your country? Do families meet to eat and drink? What do children like about Christmas?

While reading

2 Discuss: Celebrations

Have students compare what they do for their religious celebrations and what Scrooge does for Christmas.

Here are some suggested questions:

Do you invite the family or also some friends? What do you eat? Does Scrooge have any friends? Does he have a family? Why doesn't he go to his nephew's house for Christmas?

3 Discuss: Ghosts

Have students stop reading on page 7 and discuss whether they believe in ghosts.

Marley thinks that some people walk the streets of the world when they are dead. Why does he think they must do that? Do you think there are ghosts around us?

After reading

4 Write:

Have students write a short letter as if they were one of the men who visit Scrooge on pages 3–4.
Yesterday I went to ask Scrooge for some money for the poor people in the city ...

5 Read carefully:

Have students reread pages 7 and 8 to find out why Marley is so sad.

6 Read carefully:

Then have students reread Marley's description and ask them to draw him with his heavy chain.

Chapter 2

While reading

7 Discuss: The Ghost of Past Christmases

Have students discuss the ghost's appearance.

Why is this ghost old and young at the same time? Why does it have a light? Why doesn't Scrooge want to see the light?

8 Discuss: Scrooge, the child

Have students discuss Scrooge's childhood.

Was Scrooge happy as a child? What was his father like? Do you feel sorry for him?

After reading

9 Write:

Have students write a letter that little Scrooge sent his Dad when he was alone at school.

10 Research and Pair work:

Have students find out about the stories Scrooge loved as a child: *Ali Baba and the Forty Thieves* and *Robinson Crusoe*. Then, in pairs, have them make a list of their favourite children's stories.

11 Role play:

Have students role play the dialogue between Scrooge and his girlfriend on page 16.

Chapter 3

Before reading

12 Predict:

Have students predict what the chapter will be about.
What will the next ghost show Scrooge? Will Scrooge be a better man after this new visit?

While reading

13 Look carefully:

Have students look at the picture on page 19 and then answer the questions.

How is this ghost different from the Ghost of Past Christmases? What is there near him?

14 Discuss: Lessons

Have students discuss the lessons Scrooge learns at the Cratchits' and at Fred's house.

15 Discuss: Schools and food

Have students discuss what the two children next to the Ghost of Christmas Now represent.

Here are some suggested questions:

Why do the children look like animals? Why does the ghost show them to Scrooge? Why does the ghost tell Scrooge that they are everybody's children?

When Scrooge asks the ghost who can help the children the ghost answers: 'Aren't there any prisons? Aren't there any workhouses?' Why does he say so?

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After reading

16 Artwork:

Have students draw the two children described on page 25.

17 Read carefully and write:

Have the students reread pages 22–24. Then in pairs, they can write down what Mrs Cratchit and Fred's wife think of Scrooge.

18 Research:

Have students look for different illustrations of Scrooge's face on the Internet. Then they can choose the one they like best and explain why they have chosen it.

Chapter 4

While reading

19 Discuss: Facing facts

Have students discuss the following:

When does Scrooge understand that the dead man is he himself?

20 Discuss: Fear

Have students discuss the following:

How does this ghost make Scrooge afraid? Why does he do so? Which is the worst thing that he shows him? Can that make you afraid?

After reading

21 Write:

Have students write an obituary, a short newspaper note on somebody's death. Have the students write Scrooge's obituary.

22 Predict:

At the end of Chapter 4 Scrooge says: 'I'll change my future!' Have students predict the changes.

Chapter 5

While reading

23 Discuss: Sudden changes

Have students discuss Scrooge's change.

Do you like Scrooge's change? Does it make the story better or worse?

After reading

24 Write: Change Chapter 5

Have students suggest a different ending to the story and write two or three paragraphs as a new Chapter 5.

25 This traditional English Christmas carol is more than four hundred years old. To listen to it, download the music from the Internet. Have students sing it and then make a list of the Christmas carols or traditional songs that people sing in their country for religious festivals and celebrations.

*We wish you a merry Christmas,
We wish you a merry Christmas,
We wish you a merry Christmas,
And a happy New Year.*

Students may want to collect the words of all the songs on the list and build a webpage with them.

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Photocopiable

While Reading

Chapter 1

1 What happened first? Put these sentences in the right order. Number them 1–12.

- a He hears the noise of a heavy chain down below. ☐
- b Then he goes to his rooms in Marley's old house. ☐
- c Bob Cratchit shuts the office. ☐
- d Scrooge gives them nothing. ☐
- e After Fred leaves, two men come into Scrooge's office. ☐
- f Fred comes to visit him. ☐
- g He shuts the door and sits by the fire. ☐
- h Scrooge has dinner in a cheap eating-house. ☐
- i The two men leave the room. ☐
- j They ask him for some money for the poor. ☐
- k He invites Scrooge to dinner. ☐
- l Scrooge is in his office. ☐

2 Match A and B. Who says what?

A	B
Scrooge	'Christmas is a good time – a kind happy time.'
Fred	'It's only on Christmas day.'
The two men	'I made this chain in my life.'
Marley	'Humbug!'
Bob Cratchit	'Aren't there any workhouses for the poor?'
	'How much will you give us?'
	'I sat next to you many times in the days after I died.'
	'Why are you here? You're dead.'

Chapter 2

3 What's the right name, *Old Scrooge* or *Old Fezziwig*?

- a ... had three daughters.
- b ... told everybody at his office to stop work on Christmas Eve.
- c ... paid his clerk one pound a week.
- d ...'s party made everybody very happy.
- e ... spent Christmas at home without any friends.

4 Which ones are wrong?

In the story, Christmas time means:

- a working hard
- b being with your family
- c reading
- d eating and drinking
- e dancing
- f sleeping a lot
- g playing music

Chapter 3

5 Write the right words from the box.

wife	sees	wine	back	table	takes
dinner	kitchen	clothes	fruit		
fire	help	goose	son		

The Ghost of Christmas Now..... Scrooge to Bob Cratchit's house. There he his clerk's family for the first time. Mrs Cratchit is wearing her best She is making and her son is watching some food on the When Bob comes in he has Tiny Tim, his youngest, on his because the child cannot walk without Bob puts some in the, his brings the from the and they all sit round the Christmas

6 Write the answers:

- a Mrs Cratchit: 'How was Tiny Tim in church?'
Bob Cratchit:
- b Scrooge: 'Will Tiny Tim live?'
Ghost:
- c Scrooge: 'Are ghosts' lives very short?'
Ghost:
- d Scrooge: 'Ghost, are these children yours?'
Ghost:
- e Scrooge: 'Isn't there a place for these children somewhere?'
Ghost:

Chapter 4

7 Who says this?

- a 'I'll follow.'
- b 'He's dead. He can't use these things.'
- c 'There was nobody there when he died.'
- d 'We were all afraid of him before he was dead – but not after.'
- e 'Tiny Tim was very light.'
- f 'Fred never knew Tiny Tim, but he was unhappy too.'

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Photocopiable

8 Let's think that Marley comes to visit Scrooge after the Ghost of Future Christmases leaves. In pairs write down the talk between them and then read it to the other students.

9 At the end of Chapter 4 Scrooge is a changed man. You are Scrooge. Write a letter to the poor people who have to pay you a lot of money (page 29) to tell them that they can pay you next year.

Dear friends,

.....
.....

Best wishes,

Scrooge

Chapter 5

10 In Chapter 5 Scrooge does a lot of things for the first time. Mark the right (✓) ones and the wrong (X) ones.

- a Scrooge started singing Christmas carols. ☐
- b He visited Marley's ghost and thanked him for the lessons that he taught him. ☐
- c He laughed for the first time in many years. ☐
- d He bought a big chicken for the Cratchits. ☐
- e He told the two men to go to his office the next day because he was wanted to give them money for the poor. ☐
- f He went to church. ☐
- g He had dinner with the Cratchits. ☐
- h He said 'Humbug' again. ☐

11 At the end of the story Scrooge is a better person. He now knows that Christmas is a time to be kind. Make a list of the presents he can buy for the people that he knows.

Fred	
Fred's wife	
Bob Cratchit	
Tiny Tim	
The two men	

After reading

12 What does each ghost show Scrooge?

Marley's ghost	
The ghost of Christmas Past	
The ghost of Christmas Now	
The ghost of Christmas Future	

13 A fable is a story that teaches a lesson. The lesson in a fable comes at the end of the story. We call it a 'moral'.

A *Christmas Carol* is a fable. Choose the moral that you like best for the story:

- a Our friends and our family are more important than money.
- b Money doesn't make you happy.
- c It's important to help the poor.
- d Christmas teaches us to be better people.
- e We can all learn how to be better people.
- f Adults can change.
- g Good food and good schools are very important in a child's life.

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Chapter 1

1 Ten things are wrong. Find them and make them right.

It was seven o'clock on a warm winter afternoon but it was already dark. There was a thick smoke in the streets but Scrooge was in his office near a big fire. Then his uncle Fred came into the office. His face was yellow from the cold outside but it had a sad smile. Scrooge didn't understand how his nephew could be happy if he was rich. Fred answered that Christmas was a happy time for him. When he left, two women came into Scrooge's office. They asked Scrooge for money to buy the poor some clothes. But Scrooge gave them nothing.

Chapter 2

2 Are these sentences right (✓) or wrong (X)?

- a Little Fan was Scrooge's older sister. ☐
- b Mr Fezziwig was a kinder boss than Scrooge. ☐
- c Scrooge's girlfriend left him because he loved another woman. ☐
- d Scrooge's first name is Ebenezer. ☐
- e Scrooge wanted the Ghost of Past Christmases to show him more places from his past. ☐

Chapter 3

3 What happened first? Put these sentences in the right order. Number them 1–8.

- a Then he takes him to Fred's house. ☐
- b When he arrives, Scrooge sees that he's very different from the Ghost of Past Christmases. ☐
- c Scrooge gets ready for the visit of the Ghost of Christmas Now. ☐
- d He also takes Scrooge to hospitals and to prisons. ☐
- e First the ghost takes Scrooge to the Cratchits' house. ☐
- f After the visits, Scrooge sees that the ghost is getting older and older. ☐
- g At twelve, the Ghost of Christmas Now leaves and a new one arrives. ☐
- h Before leaving, the ghost shows him two children, a boy and a girl. ☐

Chapter 4

4 Who's who? Choose the right name from the box. You can use two names twice.

Old Joe Mrs Dilber the cleaner
the undertaker's man the washerwoman
Bob Cratchit Peter Fred Scrooge
the ghost the little Cratchits Tiny Tim

- a had some clothes and some books.
- b wanted to sell 's bed-curtains, bedclothes and shirt.
- c Very poor people brought things to 's shop when they wanted to sell them.
- d was in black.
- e was reading to very quietly.
- f walked very fast with on his back.
- g met in the street.
- h couldn't see 's face.

Chapter 5

5 Answer why:

- a Why is Scrooge so happy that it's Christmas day?
- b Why does Scrooge send the Cratchits a goose?
- c Why does Scrooge put on his best clothes?
- d Why does he talk to the two men?
- e Why is Scrooge afraid when he goes to Fred's house?
- f Why is Fred so happy when he sees his uncle?
- g Why doesn't Scrooge say 'Humbug' now?

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Book key

- 1 Open answers
- 2 a Merry b past, workhouse c candle d fog
e coal f ghost g Poor h clerk i prison
j chain
- 3 a poor people b Bob Cratchit c Fred
d Scrooge e Marley's ghost f Scrooge
- 4 a ✓ b X c X d ✓ e ✓ f X g ✓ h ✓
i ✓
- 5–6 Open answers
- 7 a The Ghost of Past Christmases b young Scrooge
c Scrooge's sister d Fred e Scrooge's first boss
f Dick Wilkins g the love of money h Scrooge
- 8 a hears b remembers c comes d wants
e takes f looks g shows h feels
- 9–10 Open answers
- 11 a 6 b Martha c Tiny Tim
d hot wine with fruit e goose f He is very ill.
g 'Humbug!' h Yes and No i Scrooge
j nothing
- 12 a red b green c grey d brown e grey
- 13–15 Open answers
- 16 a 8 b 3 c 5 d 1 e 4 f 2 g 10 h 6
i 7 j 9
- 17–18 Open answers
- 19 a 'What's today?' b for a goose.
c to Bob Cratchit's house. d 'Come to my office.'
e to Fred's house. f more money.
- 20 a before b after c after (+ Open answers)
- 21–29 Open answers

Discussion activities key

- 1 Open answers
- 2 Scrooge doesn't have any friends. He has a nephew, Fred, who invites him home for Christmas because he feels sorry for him. Scrooge doesn't go to Fred's party because he thinks that Christmas parties are 'humbug'.
- 3 Marley thinks they are the people who never helped others in life. Open answer.
- 4 Open answers
- 5 Marley is sad because a) he carries a heavy chain with him b) he can see happy people but he cannot laugh with them c) he can see sad people but he cannot cry with them, and d) he cannot stay in one place, he has to go to many sad places.
- 6 Open answers

- 7 Possible answers:
The ghost may be old because Scrooge is an old man, and he may be young because he may represent Scrooge as a child, or Scrooge's recent past. The light in the ghost may represent past events in Scrooge's life which Scrooge doesn't want to see or remember.
- 8 Possible answers:
He was very sad. His father wasn't kind to him and he had no friends at school.
- 9–11 Open answers
- 12 Open answers
Scrooge will be a better person because he is starting to understand that, in the past, he lived in the wrong way.
- 13 Possible answers:
This ghost is a fat, happy man. He is wearing green and white clothes and he has long brown hair. There are lots of bottles and plates with food near him. The other ghost was a child and an old man at the same time. He was wearing white clothes.
- 14 Open answers
- 15 Possible answers:
They look like animals because the children don't go to school and because they are very hungry. Scrooge has to learn about what happens in the world and start helping the poor children with his money. The ghost says these words because Scrooge used them with the two men who came to ask for money for the poor in Chapter 1.
- 16 Open answers
- 17 Possible answers:
They don't like Scrooge. They think he is a cold money-lover.
- 18 Open answers
- 19 Open answers
- 20 By showing Scrooge what will happen when he dies. Open answer.
- 21–22 Open answers
- 23 Open answers
- 24–25 Open answer

Activity worksheets key

- 1 a 12 b 10 c 8 d 6 e 4 f 2 g 11
h 9 i 7 k 5 k 3 l l
- 2 'Christmas is a good time – a kind happy time.' (Fred)
'It's only on Christmas day.' (Bob Cratchit)
'I made this chain in my life.' (Marley)
'Humbug.' (Scrooge)

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'Aren't there any workhouses for the poor?'

(Scrooge)

'How much will you give us?' (The two men)

'I sat next to you many times in the days after I died.'

(Marley)

'Why are you here? You're dead.' (Scrooge)

3 Old Fezziwig: a, b and d

Old Scrooge: c and e

4 a, c and f

5 The ghost of Christmas Now **takes** Scrooge to Bob Cratchit's house. There he **sees** his clerk's family for the first time. Mrs Cratchit is wearing her best **clothes**. She is making **dinner** and her son is watching some food on the **fire**. When Bob comes in, he has Tiny Tim, his youngest **son**, on his **back** because the child cannot walk without **help**. Bob puts some **fruit** in the **wine**, his **wife** brings the **goose** from the **kitchen** and they all sit round the Christmas **table**.

6 Possible answers:

a Bob Cratchit: 'He was very good. I think that he's a little stronger.'

b Ghost: 'I can see his chair and nobody is sitting on it.'

c Ghost: My life in this world is very short. It ends tonight.'

d Ghost: 'They are Everybody's.'

e Ghost: 'Aren't there any prisons? Aren't there any workhouses?'

7 a Scrooge b the washerwoman

c the undertaker's man d Mrs Dilber, the cleaner

e Mrs Cratchit f Mr Cratchit

8–9 Open answers

10 a **X** b **X** c **✓** d **X**, he bought a big goose

e **✓** f **✓** g **X**, he had dinner with his nephew Fred

h **X**, he never said 'Humbug' again.

11 Open answers

12	Marley's ghost	A chain made of money boxes
	The ghost of Christmas Past	His past life: when he was a child, when he worked for Mr Fezziwig, when his girlfriend left him.
	The ghost of Christmas Now	Christmas Now in Bob Cratchit's and Fred's house
	The ghost of Future Christmases	What will happen to him when he dies, if he doesn't change

13 Open answers

Progress test key

1 It was **three** o'clock on a **cold** winter afternoon but it was already dark. There was a thick **fog** in the streets but Scrooge was in his office near a **small** fire. Then his **nephew** Fred came into the office. His face was **red** from the cold outside but it had a **happy** smile. Scrooge didn't understand how his nephew could be happy if he was **poor**. Fred answered that Christmas was a happy time for him. When he left, two **men** came into Scrooge's office. They asked Scrooge for money to buy the poor some **food**. But Scrooge gave them nothing.

2 a **X**, Little Fan was his younger sister.

b **✓**

c **X**, his new love was money.

d **✓**

e **X**, it made him cry to remember his past.

3 a 4 b 2 c 1 d 5 e 3 f 6 g 8 h 7

4 a The washerwoman

b Mrs Dilber, the cleaner – Scrooge

c Old Joe

d the undertaker's man

e Peter – the little Cratchits

f Bob Cratchit – Tiny Tim

g Bob Cratchit – Fred

h Scrooge – the ghost

5 a Because he thought he was with the ghosts for three nights but it was only one night.

b Possible answers:

- Because he wants to help them
- Because he feels happy
- Because he's a changed man

c Possible answers:

- Because it's Christmas Day
- Because he's happy

d Possible answers:

- Because he wants to give them money for the poor
- Because he feels sorry for what he told them the day before

e Because he doesn't know if Fred will want to see him.

f Because he loves his uncle.

g Because he's a changed man and a happy man.