

The Plot

Stave One:

Scrooge walks the streets of London
Fred invites to Scrooge to Christmas dinner
Charity collectors ask Scrooge to help the poor
Scrooge makes a Christmas Caroler run away
Marley's face appears on Scrooge's door knocker
Marley's ghost says three spirits will visit him

Stave Two:

The ghost of Christmas Past shows Scrooge his childhood
His sister Little Fan invites him home
Scrooge goes to Fezziwig's Annual Christmas Ball
He sees Belle break off the engagement
He gets angry when he sees Belle's life with her family

Stave Three:

The Ghost of Christmas Present shows Scrooge people celebrating Christmas
Scrooge witnesses the Cratchit family dinner
The ghost shows people celebrating Christmas in dark parts of the world
He enjoys seeing Fred's Christmas Party
He meets Ignorance and Want

Stave Four:

The ghost of Christmas Yet to Come approaches
It shows him business men speaking carelessly about a dead man
He is shown thieves selling items stolen from the man
Scrooge sees the dead man's body but does not lift the sheet
A young couple are glad that the man is dead because they owed him money
Scrooge witnesses the Cratchit family mourn the death of Tiny Tim
Scrooge sees his name written on the gravestone
He vows to change and live in the past, present and future

Stave 5:

Scrooge wakes up joyful and relieved
He asks a boy to buy a turkey for the Cratchits
He attends Fred's party and raises Bob Cratchit's salary
He becomes a more generous man and a second father to Tiny Tim

Writer's Methods

Similes – Dickens uses similes at the start to describe Scrooge: 'as solitary as an Oyster.'

Foreshadowing – Dickens creates tension by foreshadowing the appearance of Marley in the door knocker.

Allegory – Dickens uses the characters of Ignorance and Want to symbolise society's problems and the effect it has on children in poverty

The Staves – the chapters are called staves which are the lines that music is written on, relating to the 'carol' that Dickens' is telling. Each stave focuses on a specific aspect of Scrooge's transformation.

Circular structure -The story comes full circle by ending where it begun in order to highlight Scrooge's transformation. Dickens shows us how he has changed by showing him interact with everyone he met in Stave One.

The senses – at many points in the text, Dickens focuses on senses to show the spirit of Christmas.

Symbolism – Fire symbolises the Christmas Spirit and is linked to characters like Fred, while ice is symbolic of Scrooge's selfishness. The spirits' appearances are also very symbolic such as the holly representing Christianity.

Juxtaposition – the contrast of Scrooge and Tiny Tim's deaths

Setting – the different settings show a lot about the characters

Tension -The highest point of tension is just before Scrooge redeems himself when he sees his own gravestone and is begging the Ghost of Christmas Present.

Mystery – Dickens uses the supernatural to create mystery through his repeated use of the adjective 'strange' as well as creating mystery around who the 'dead man' is.

Sympathy – by seeing Scrooge's past we begin to feel sympathy towards him and as readers we want him to change into a better person and have a happier life.

A Christmas Carol



Ebenezer Scrooge: a miserly, solitary old man who hates Christmas and thinks the poor are 'idle'.

'a tight-fisted hand at the grindstone' 'Bah humbug!' 'covetous old sinner'
'I am as light as a feather, I am as happy as an angel'
'he became as good a friend, as good a master, and as good a man, as the good old city knew'

Bob Cratchit: Scrooge's employee. A good person who loves his family but does not have much money.

'They were not a handsome family' 'they were not well dressed' 'they were happy, grateful'



Fred: Scrooge's Nephew: A cheerful, generous man who invites his uncle to Christmas very year in the hope that he will change his solitary ways.

A merry Christmas uncle! God save you!
I have always thought of Christmas time... as a kind forgiving charitable time...

The Ghost of Jacob Marley: the spirit of Scrooge's old business partner. He spent his life alone and wants Scrooge to redeem himself before it is too late.

'death-cold eyes' 'dreadful apparition' 'I wear the chain I forged in life'



Fezziwig: Scrooge's old boss. A jolly and generous man who treats his employees well by throwing them a Christmas Ball and shaking their hands at the end.

'comfortable, oily, rich, fat, jovial voice'
'[Fezziwig] has the power to render us happy or unhappy'



The Ghost of Christmas Past: is both child-like and old in its appearance. It shows Scrooge his past.

'Like a child, yet not so like a child as an old man' "Rise! And Walk with me!"
'from the crown of its head there sprung a bright clear jet of light'



The Ghost of Christmas Present: a giant, jolly spirit who shows Scrooge how other people spend Christmas.

'a jolly giant' 'a genial face' 'sparkling eye' 'cheery voice' 'kind, generous, hearty nature'



Tiny Tim: Bob's son. He's ill and walks with a crutch. He is selfless and well-loved by those around him.

'he bore a little crutch' 'the childish essence was from God' "God bless us! Everyone!"



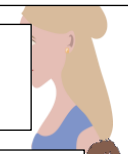
The Ghost of Christmas Yet to Come: A silent hooded figure. It shows Scrooge what happens after he dies.

'a solemn phantom' 'like a mist along the ground' 'it seemed to scatter gloom and mystery'
'the kind hand trembled'



Belle: Scrooge's beautiful fiancé who breaks off the engagement because he is too obsessed with money.

'a fair young girl in a mourning-dress: in whose eyes there were tears'
'Another idol has displaced me... a golden one'



Ignorance and Want: Two ragged, wretched children who hide under the Ghost of Christmas Present's robe, symbolising the extreme poverty in Victorian England.

'wretched, abject, frightful, hideous, miserable.'
'Wretched angels might have sat enthroned, devils lurked, and glared out menacing.'



Themes

Supernatural: Dickens uses the spirits to drive the plot adding a sense of mystery and surprise.

Transformation: The whole plot drives Scrooge's transformation from a bitter old miser, to a generous, joyful man.

Redemption: Scrooge eventually fulfils Marley's wish that he redeems himself before it is too late, so that he can help the poor like Tiny Tim.

Ignorance: not only are the rich like Scrooge ignorant of the struggles of the poor, it is also the children who are ignorant as they are in need of education.

Christmas Spirit: described by Fred as a time when people 'open their shut-up hearts freely'. It ultimately transforms Scrooge when he promises to 'honour Christmas' and 'try to keep it all the year'.

Time: Dickens use time to explore how Scrooge has become the way he has and to show him how to change his ways.

Family: Dickens shows through Fred, Belle and the Cratchit family how important family is.

Isolation: Scrooge is presented negatively as 'solitary as an oyster' to highlight the importance of spending time with those you love like Fred does.

Social responsibility: Dickens' ultimate purpose is to get wealthy people to understand that they need to share responsibility for the poor by supporting them.

Home: Scrooge's huge empty house juxtaposes with the Cratchit's small loving home.

Historical Context

Charles Dickens:

- Charles Dickens was born into a middle class family.
- His father was imprisoned for debt (owing money).
- Dickens had to give up his education and work in a factory at a young age.
- This helped him gain empathy for the poor and their living and working conditions.
- Many of his novels are about society and trying to make life better for the poor
- He wrote A Christmas Carol in 1843.

Poverty:

The population grew rapidly in the 1800s: 1 million to 6 million. Due to the industrial revolution, many people moved to London for work and had to live in cheap, overcrowded housing which led to hunger, disease and crime. Children suffered the most as they were used by factory owners to work in poor conditions for long hours. In 1798 Thomas Malthus wrote that population would always grow faster than food supplies which meant poor people would always die. On the contrary, Dickens believed that there was enough food to go around if the rich helped the poor. The Poor Law was designed to stop poor people from being lazy; it meant that people without a job had to go to a workhouse to receive food and shelter. However, the workhouses were purposefully made to be horrible, to force the poor to get jobs. Dickens believed that it was the rich who had a responsibility to help the poor and that they should not have to work and live in such awful conditions.

Education

In the 19th Century school was not free which meant only wealthy families sent their children to school. Dickens believed that poverty, crime and disease were caused by lack of education. Dickens supported projects like ragged schools, which offered children from poor families free education, clothing and food.

Christmas:

At the start of the 19th Century (1800s) Christmas was hardly celebrated at all. By the end of the 19th Century it has become the most important celebration of the year, largely to do with the popularity of A Christmas Carol. Christmas also became more secular which meant that it was not connected with religion as much; it became a time of togetherness and being charitable, values that Dickens was trying to promote in his novella.

Religion

Many of the middle and upper classes were Christians. Being a Christian meant going to church every Sunday (Sabbatarianism), avoiding alcohol and practicing sexual restraint. He was an anti-Sabbatarian because it meant that working class people were not able to enjoy their one day off because everything was shut. As they did not have ovens at home, they could not even get a hot meal because the baker would be at church too! Dickens believed that being a good Christian actually meant helping people who were less fortunate than you.