# **PLOT: Stave by Stave Overview**

## **English Literature Paper 1**

A Christmas Caro

#### Stave 1

'solitary as an

oyster'

'If they would rather die...they had better do it, and decrease the surplus population.'

'a squeezing, wrenching, grasping, scraping, clutching, covetous, old sinner!' '...the only time I know of, in the long calendar of the year, when men and women seem by one consent to open their shut-up hearts freely, and to think of people below them as if they really were fellowpassengers to the grave, and not another race of creatures bound on other journeys.'

'I wear the chain I forged in life...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.'

#### **An Introduction to Scrooge**



'a squeezing, wrenching, grasping, scraping, clutching, covetous, old sinner!'

- Scrooge is immediately introduced as an avaricious character whose main passion in life is monetary gain.
- Dickens uses an extensive list of adjectives within the semantic field of greed to symbolise Scrooge's selfish nature: he is a man who takes from others – usually those who have little already and need it most, but never gives. His focus is obtaining and retaining his wealth regardless of the expense to others.
- Scrooge's miserly nature is one of the most prominent reasons why he requires redemption, especially as it isn't limited to money alone.

#### Scrooge's misanthropy



'solitary as an oyster'

- Scrooge is also introduced as misanthropic he deliberately distances himself from humanity and isolates himself from others.
- This reinforces another aspect of Scrooge's miserly nature – his refusal to show any other form of emotion aside from disdain towards others: 'no warmth could warm him, no wintry weather chill him' / 'external heat and cold had little influence on Scrooge.'
- Dickens' comparison of Scrooge with an oyster could imply that over the years he has developed a 'hard shell' and closed himself off from society. However, an oyster contains a pearl which only develops after the oyster has experienced some form of trauma. It could therefore be implied that Scrooge's detachment from humanity isn't due solely to misanthropy, but actually a form of self-preservation – to protect himself from harm, forged through fear.
- The pearl within could foreshadow that there is goodness within Scrooge, his 'shell' simply needs to be broken open.

#### Fred – a juxtaposition to Scrooge



'...the only time I know of, in the long calendar of the year, when men and women seem by one consent to open their shutup hearts freely, and to think of people below them as if they really were fellow-passengers to the grave, and not another race of creatures bound on other journeys.'

- Fred is introduced as the complete antithesis of Scrooge in every way.
- When he enters Scrooge's counting house, Fred is described as 'ruddy' and 'handsome' as his eyes 'sparkled' and his breath 'smoked', implying that he has an inner warmth which radiates from him.
- This is a complete juxtaposition to Scrooge's harsh 'frozen' and 'nipped' features and innately cold nature.
- Fred not only embraces the Christmas spirit, he epitomises it, especially when he proclaims that it is the only time of the year where the different social classes may look upon one another as members of the human race and not as sub-species or representatives of wealth or poverty.
- Dickens highlights Fred's generous nature further when he shows Scrooge nothing but compassion, patience and kindness, despite Scrooge's contempt and scorn.
- Although Fred is a member of the middle class, he isn't as wealthy as his uncle. It is suggested that this is due to the fact that money and profit isn't something he values; rather he prioritises love, compassion and generosity. In some ways, Fred is richer than Scrooge ever could be (at this point in the novella).

#### Scrooge's attitudes towards the poor



'If they would rather die...they had better do it, and decrease the surplus population.'

- When two charity gentleman enter Scrooge's counting house seeking a donation for the poor (meat, drink, means of warmth), his antipathy towards the those in poverty is made abundantly clear.
- Not only does Scrooge convey a complete lack of sympathy, compassion and a disregard for their plight, he echoes the beliefs and claims of Thomas Malthus (a Victorian economist) through this infamous quote – something that many members of the higher classes would have also purported. Malthus claimed that population growth would outrun food supply and that therefore there needed to be strict limits on reproduction.
- The 'surplus population' refers to those in poverty who do not make any 'meaningful contribution' to society, such as those who have no option but to go to the workhouses or treadmill. The phrase completely dehumanises the poor by collectively reducing them to mere statistics as opposed to living, breathing human beings. It also emphasises the sheer ignorance of those in the higher classes (and especially those in power), as they view the poor as expendable and do not see that it is society that restricts them and ensures they remain in poverty.
- Although a disregard for the poor was common during this time, a Victorian reader may still be shocked by how brash and unequivocal Scrooge is when he states this. However, perhaps Dickens is implying that if you support the Poor Law and the inhumane treatment of the destitute in some of these establishments, it amounts to the same thing.
- The charity gentlemen are proof that there were some members of the upper class who sympathised with the struggles of the poor and sought to help them in some small way. However, if attitudes such as this remained prevalent, it wouldn't be enough.

#### **Marley's Ghost**



'I wear the chain I forged in life...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.'

- When Jacob Marley appears in Scrooge's lodgings, he is tethered by the long chain with contains 'cashboxes', 'ledgers' and 'purses' all 'wrought in steel'. Dickens emphasises how Marley's choice to value wealth over people was a conscious one which spanned many years and grew over time. This is reflected in the length and weight of his chain.
- This allusion to Dante's fourth circle of Hell implies that Marley has been condemned to carry the weight of his own greed for an eternity.
- Marley laments that he is doomed to wander the earth and witness the suffering of those he can no longer help which appears to be a heavier burden than the weight of the chain he bears.
- This could be a further allusion to Dante's Inferno. Whilst exploring the 4<sup>th</sup> circle of Hell, Dante and his guide Virgil do not interact with any of the condemned, perhaps implying that greed is a higher sin as it is a conscious choice which is detrimental for many – usually the vulnerable and needy, not just the sinner.
- Marley challenge's Scrooge's perception of 'business' when he states 'Mankind was my business.' He subverts the connotations of 'business' from 'profit' to responsibility, emphasising how it is Scrooge's duty to show kindness, compassion and generosity towards his fellow man.
- Marley is the instigator of Scrooge's redemption.

#### Stave 2

"A solitary child, neglected by his friends, is left there still."
Scrooge said he knew it. And he sobbed.'

"The happiness he gives, is quite as great as if it cost a fortune."

'...from the crown of its head there sprung a bright clear jet of light, by which all this was visible...'

'Scrooge looked at the Ghost, and with a mournful shaking of his head, glanced anxiously towards the door. It opened; and a little girl...came darting in, and putting her arms about his neck, and often kissing him, addressed him as her "Dear, dear brother."' "Another idol has displaced me... a golden one."'

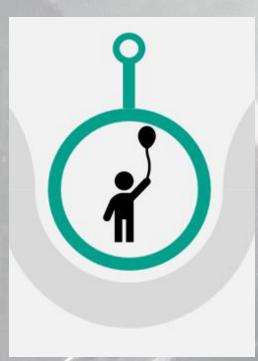
#### **The Ghost of Christmas Past**



'...from the crown of its head there sprung a bright clear jet of light, by which all this was visible...'

- The Ghost of Christmas Past is introduced through a series of contradictory phrases, symbolising how the past is ever growing and its clarity ever changing as it spans every season of a person's life.
- One of the most distinctive aspects of its character is the 'clear jet of light' that springs from the top of its head, implying that the spirit's purpose is to guide Scrooge through his past and lead him towards enlightenment in the hope that this will prompt him to reflect on how and why he became the man he is in order to change.
- When the Ghost of Christmas Past appears in Scrooge's chamber, he is immediately disturbed by its light and requests that it wear its extinguisher cap. This could symbolise Scrooge's desire to suppress his past and his reluctance to accept the spirit's help, perhaps because he doesn't yet accept that he needs to change and redeem himself.

## Scrooge's Childhood



"A solitary child, neglected by his friends, is left there still." Scrooge said he knew it. And he sobbed.'

- The first vision shown to Scrooge is that of his childhood. When he first arrives in the town where he was born, the spirit notices a tear upon Scrooge's cheek and that his lip is trembling. This is the first time Scrooge exhibits any form of sentimental or tender emotion.
- When Scrooge then sees his former self abandoned and left to spend the Christmas holidays alone, he sobs. Throughout this vision, Scrooge alternates between sobbing and jollity, perhaps reflecting how it has been so long since Scrooge has allowed himself to experience any feeling other than antipathy, he is unable to regulate his emotions.
- Once Scrooge has reconnected with his own emotions, he begins to reflect on his own behaviour and recalls how he chased away the poor boy singing at his door. Scrooge confesses that he would have liked to give him something which could suggest that Scrooge had to feel pity for himself before he could feel it for others.
- His reaction to his former self and desire to help the boy he turned away could imply that the 'shell' Scrooge built around himself is slowly but surely beginning to open.

#### **Little Fan**



'Scrooge looked at the Ghost, and with a mournful shaking of his head, glanced anxiously towards the door.

It opened; and a little girl...came darting in, and putting her arms about his neck, and often kissing him, addressed him as her "Dear, dear brother."

- Prior to Little Fan's entrance, Scrooge appears anxious, indicating that he remembers this moment well and is almost fearful of reliving it. It's through this vision that we learn that Scrooge's family life was tumultuous when Fan reveals that their father is finally allowing Scrooge to come home. When she states that their father is 'so much kinder' than he used to be, it may imply that there is still hope for Scrooge to change.
- The spirit's revelation that Little Fan had a 'large heart' and died young but was 'a woman' by then who had 'one child' may imply that she died during childbirth. This could explain Scrooge's antipathy towards his nephew as Fred parallels Little Fan in many ways. Perhaps her death is one of the reasons why Scrooge formed that 'protective shell' around himself as Fan appears to be the only other person Scrooge really loved (thus far). He fears loss. Wealth can be managed and maintained, people can not.
- Both young Scrooge and Little Fan evoke emotions from Scrooge that from the opening of the novella seem inconceivable: 'No warmth could warm him, no wintry weather chill him.' And yet he has been 'warmed' by these two characters: he has felt pity for his former self and experienced the love he felt for his sister and the grief he potentially still endures.

## Fezziwig – Mankind [is his] business!



"The happiness he gives, is quite as great as if it cost a fortune."

- When Scrooge sees Fezziwig (a former employer) in the second vision shown to him by the spirit, he is overjoyed: 'Bless his heart!'
- Although clearly wealthy and a member of the bourgeoisie, Fezziwig is the epitome of generosity. However, his munificence isn't purely monetary.
- His generous nature can be seen when Dickens lists the attendants of his Christmas party: they are all members of the working class who would be unable to afford a celebration of this magnitude with food, drink and entertainment.
- What's more, Fezziwig and his wife make a point of shaking the hands of all of the attendees as they leave the party, wishing them a 'Merry Christmas' as though they are 'fellow passengers to the grave.'
- When the spirit appears to criticise Fezziwig and claim that he doesn't deserve the praise he is being given as he has only spent a couple of pounds on this party, Scrooge passionately defends him and states that is isn't the money that matters, it is Fezziwig's benevolence: his compassion for others; the way he treats his workers (Scrooge and Dick) and how he simply makes their lives easier. Fezziwig has nothing monetary to gain from throwing this party, except the joy it brings and to share the happiness of others.
  Fezziwig is everything Scrooge should be. Proof that you can be wealthy but still magnanimous. This prompts Scrooge to reflect on his own behaviour towards Bob Cratchit another crack in his 'oyster shell'.

## **Belle – The Price of Greed**



"Another idol has displaced me… a golden one."

- This vision reveals how Scrooge sacrificed love for wealth when Belle breaks off their engagement. The verb 'displaced' emphasises how his affection for money surpassed his devotion for Belle.
- Belle explains that she has witnessed Scrooge's 'nobler aspirations fall off one by one until the master passion Gain' engrossed him. She comments on his 'changed nature' and how when they first met and began to plan their lives together, Scrooge was 'another man... poor and content to be so' until they could improve their situation together, highlighting the corruptive and destructive nature of greed. However, the reader is given an insight into a potential cause for Scrooge's greed his fear of poverty: 'There is nothing on which it is so hard as poverty'. This is ironic when you consider present-day Scrooge's lack of compassion towards the poor.
  When Belle questions whether Scrooge would seek her out now a 'dowerless girl', he cannot even bring himself to say he would.
- She refers to their relationship in business terms when she states that their 'contract' is an old one and that she wishes to 'release' him, implying that only language Scrooge now comprehends is that of business and as such, his engagement with Belle is now viewed as more of a transaction or arrangement than a relationship or commitment based on love.
- Scrooge is deeply disturbed by this vision and practically begs the spirit to show him 'no more.' However, the final vision of a more 'matronly' Belle surrounded by her children and husband is too much for Scrooge to bear. He sees the value of the life he could have had and how it would have brought light and warmth to his 'winter years.' This is the true price of his avarice and realising this, he forces the extinguisher cap down onto the spirit to escape the reality of his past.

#### Stave 3

'Heaped up on the floor, to form a kind of throne, were turkeys, geese, game, poultry, brawn, great joints of meat, sucking-pigs, long wreaths of sausages, mince-pies, plum-puddings, barrels of oysters, red-hot chestnuts, cherry-cheeked apples, juicy oranges, luscious pears, immense twelfth-cakes, and seething bowls of punch, that made the chamber dim with their delicious steam. In easy state upon this couch, there sat a jolly Giant, glorious to see; who bore a glowing torch, in shape not unlike Plenty's horn...'

Much they saw, and far they went, and many homes they visited, but always with a happy end. The Spirit stood beside sick beds, and they were cheerful; on foreign lands, and they were close at home; by struggling men, and they were patient in their greater hope; by poverty, and it was rich.



'...its capacious breast was bare...its genial face, its sparkling eye, its open hand, its cheery voice, its unconstrained demeanour, and its joyful air. Girded round its middle was an antique scabbard; but no sword was in it, and the ancient sheath was eaten up with rust.' 'They were not a handsome family; they were not well dressed; their shoes were far from being waterproof; 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.'

'They were a boy and girl. Yellow, meagre, ragged, scowling, wolfish; but prostrate, too, in their humility.'

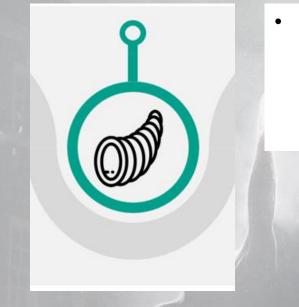
#### **The Ghost of Christmas Present**



'...its capacious breast
was bare...its genial face,
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voice, its unconstrained
demeanour, and its
joyful air. Girded round
its middle was an
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no sword was in it, and
the ancient sheath was
eaten up with rust.'

- The spirit is introduced as a jolly giant who seeks to educate Scrooge about the importance of mercy, benevolence and munificence, especially with regards to those less fortunate in society. He is all of these qualities combined with the Christmas spirit personified.
- The physical description is symbolic of its nature and the qualities it promotes: 'capacious breast' unhindered ability to show love and compassion towards all; 'genial face' and 'sparkling eye' kindness and warmth; 'open hand' generosity and understanding; 'unconstrained demeanour' affable, the opposite of misanthropic; 'no sword was in it...the ancient sheath was eaten up with rust' peace and goodwill.
- The spirit reinforces humanitarian values where the welfare of human beings – especially those who are suffering, is priority. This is emphasised later in the stave when Scrooge questions why the spirit sprinkles the incense from his torch on 'the poor one most': 'because it needs it most.' It's also no surprise that the spirit sprinkles to contents of his torch on the home of Bob Cratchit twice.
- Dickens creates parallelism between the the spirit and Fred another character who is synonymous with generosity and the power of the Christmas spirit.

#### Abundance



'Heaped up on the floor, to form a kind of throne, were turkeys, geese, game, poultry, brawn, great joints of meat, sucking-pigs, long wreaths of sausages, mince-pies, plum-puddings, barrels of oysters, red-hot chestnuts, cherrycheeked apples, juicy oranges, luscious pears, immense twelfth-cakes, and seething bowls of punch, that made the chamber dim with their delicious steam. In easy state upon this couch, there sat a jolly Giant, glorious to see; who bore a glowing torch, in shape not unlike Plenty's horn...'

- The Ghost of Christmas Present carries with him a torch which is described by Dickens as resembling the horn of plenty or cornucopia, a hollow horn-shaped container overflowing with fruits and vegetables. It is an emblem of abundance and nourishment.
  - When the spirit is first introduced, it is sat upon a throne of food which is described through an excessive list containing a range of meats, fish, fruits, nuts, some of which are pre-determined by adjectives connoting a large quantity. This, coupled with the extensive description of food given when Scrooge and the spirit venture into the city is a stark juxtaposition to Thomas Malthus' claims that population would outrun food supply. On the contrary, Dickens attempts to emphasise that there is an abundance of food available – more than enough for everyone. Rather, it is the cost that is the issue.
  - In many ways, it could be argued that the Ghost of Christmas Present is a direct criticism of Malthusian theory and attitudes purported by the Poor Law.

## The Cratchits and the 'surplus population'



'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.'

- Dickens uses the Cratchit family to subvert stereotypical Victorian attitudes to the poor and working class: they are idle, uneducated, ill-mannered, have few morals and are responsible for their own destitution.
- He presents Bob Cratchit as an amiable, honest, hard-working family man whose priority is providing for this family. Bob is respected and loved dearly by his children and his wife. The Cratchit family as a whole are tight-knit and unified in their poverty as opposed to divided. They are grateful for what they have, no matter how little.
- Like many working class families, they send their goose to be cooked at the local bakers. Despite this being viewed as a luxury not all working class families would be able to afford, goose was a cheaper meat and the Cratchits' meal is heavily subsidised by potatoes and stuffing filling yet cheaper ingredients.
- Although it is suggested that the pudding is rather small for a large family, Dickens emphasises how no member of the Cratchit family would think it, let alone say it; it would be 'flat heresy' to do so, reinforcing their appreciation for what they have.
- Interestingly, Bob Cratchit is paid 15 shillings a week which, according to scholars, is slightly more than the average wage for a clerk in the 1800s. However, Dickens reveals to Scrooge (and the reader) that this isn't enough to sustain an entire family; the cost of living was more often than not greater than a working class' family income. Perhaps this isn't necessarily a criticism of Scrooge's ignorance, but the ignorance of society and an attempt to highlight that those in the working class need higher wages if they are to live above the bread line and adequately support their families.

#### The Cratchits and the 'surplus population'



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- It is also through the Cratchits that Dickens gives the empty, dehumanising, numerical term 'surplus population' a face and a name through Tiny Tim.
- Many scholars believe that Tiny Tim suffered from rickets (a bone disorder caused by malnutrition) and potentially tuberculosis, both of which were rampant during the 19<sup>th</sup> century and could be improved (even cured) with a better diet and living conditions. By Malthusian standards, Tiny Tim offers nothing of value to society he doesn't contribute economically as he couldn't even be a child labourer due to his ill-health.
- However, Dickens deliberately emphasises how undeserving Tiny Tim is of this suffering. 'As good as gold' despite his poverty, he remains a positive influence to all and does not dwell on his misfortune which makes him an admirable character. Although he brings no monetary value to society or his family, the love he gives and brings to the world is invaluable.
- Dickens also frequently affiliates Tiny Tim with God and religion emphasising his purity. He is also wise beyond his years which extends the admiration the reader (and Scrooge) has for him.
- When Scrooge sees the 'surplus population' personified through Tiny Tim his ignorance is shattered. Through the spirit, Dickens' criticises people like Malthus for believing they have the right to calculate someone's worth based on their social status and wealth. He suggests that Scrooge (and possibly the reader) are less entitled to be alive than this 'poor man's child' and millions like him as they bring nothing of true value to the world with their greed and selfishness.
- It's at this stage in the novella where Scrooge experiences intense regret and remorse as he hangs his head in shame when the spirit echoes his words from Stave 1 back to him when he begs that the child be spared.

## The Power of the Christmas Spirit

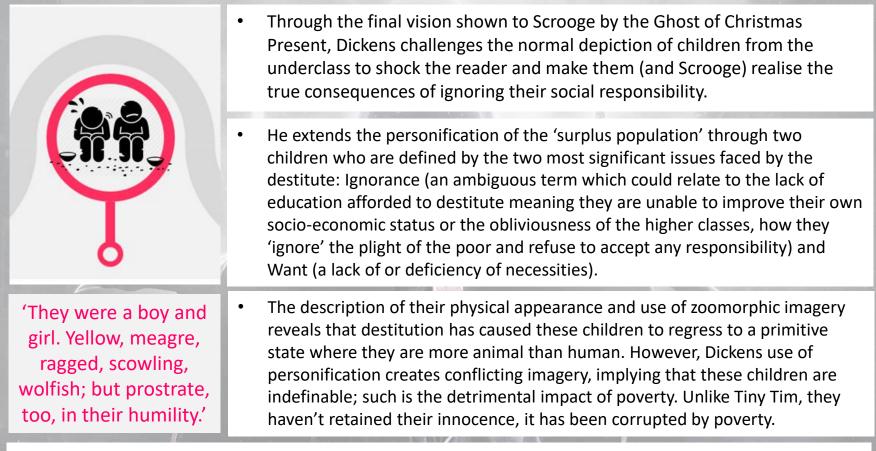


Much they saw, and far they went, and many homes they visited, but always with a happy end. The Spirit stood beside sick beds, and they were cheerful; on foreign lands, and they were close at home; by struggling men, and they were patient in their greater hope; by poverty, and it was rich.

- The Ghost of Christmas Present takes Scrooge on a journey across seas to see how those affected by poverty embrace the Christmas spirit, despite their difficult circumstances.
- Despite the hardships they face and no matter how close or far they are from their families, within each vision, the people are more patient, caring, happier and compassionate due to the power of the Christmas spirit.
- At this point, the spirit takes Scrooge to witness his nephew Fred celebrating Christmas with his new wife and friends.
- It's in this vision that Fred proclaims that he intends to visit Scrooge every year on Christmas Eve to invite him for Christmas dinner. Despite Scrooge's rejection and criticism of Fred, he remains determined to give his uncle another chance, every year, even if it only inclines Scrooge to 'leave his clerk something'.
- This selflessness epitomises the Christmas spirit and Fred's character: he demonstrates mercy and forbearance; he wants nothing from Scrooge except his company on Christmas Day in the hopes it will bring him some happiness.

 Scrooge becomes so immersed in this vision that he begs the spirit to allow him to remain for one more game after which the spirit takes him to those who are most disaffected in society. They too are made happier and comforted by the presence of the spirit.

#### **Ignorance and Want**



- The spirit reveals that these children are 'Man's' they are the responsibility of humanity as a whole, not just a certain class of people. He also warns Scrooge to fear 'Ignorance' the most as if this issue isn't tackled, 'doom' will inevitably follow, signifying how those in the higher classes need to accept their social responsibility and support the poor as these children could be the making or downfall of society. Ignoring the issue with lead to the destruction of society.
- Scrooge is horrified by the sight of these children and questions if they have 'refuge' or 'resource'. When the spirit echoes his own ignorant attitudes once more, Scrooge is ashamed.

#### Stave 4

"Well!" said the first. "Old Scratch has got his own at last, hey?""So I am told," returned the second. "Cold, isn't it?"

He looked about in that very place for his own image; but another man stood in his accustomed corner, '...the room above, which was lighted cheerfully, and hung with Christmas.
There was a chair set close beside the child, and there were signs of some one having been there, lately.'



'The Phantom slowly, gravely, silently, approached.' "He frightened every one away from him when he was alive, to profit us when he was dead! Ha, ha, ha!" "I will honour Christmas in my heart, and try to keep it all the year. I will live in the Past, the Present, and the Future. The Spirits of all Three shall strive within me. I will not shut out the lessons that they teach. Oh, tell me I may sponge away the writing on this stone!"

#### The Ghost of Christmas Yet to Come



'The Phantom slowly, gravely, silently, approached.'

- Unlike the previous spirits, the Ghost of Christmas Yet to Come has few distinguishable human features. It is the most supernatural of all the spirits.
- It is shrouded in a black hooded cloak and only communicates with Scrooge through hand gestures – point Scrooge towards the visions he needs to see.
- The spirit 'scatters gloom' and darkness wherever it goes and is similar in appearance to the Grim Reaper – the personification of death.
- This spirit therefore symbolises the deathly consequences Scrooge will face if he does not embrace the teachings of the spirits and change his ways.
- It is no surprise that it is this spirit whom Scrooge fears the most. Despite this, Scrooge asks the spirit to guide him, admitting that he learned much from the previous spirit and is keen to continue on his road to redemption.

## The True 'Surplus Population'



- The first vision shown to Scrooge is that of two separate groups of businessmen, the latter being from the upper class, in the financial district of London, symbolic of the capitalism.
- Both groups demonstrate a nonchalant and dismissive attitude towards an unnamed dead man.
- Although not explicitly stated, it is heavily suggest at this point that the unnamed dead man is in fact Scrooge as the men are familiar to him.
- Within the first group, one of the businessmen admits that they will attend the man's funeral if lunch is provided, implying that he will only attend if there is some benefit for him, something akin to what Scrooge may say.

"Well!" said the first. "Old Scratch has got his own at last, hey?" "So I am told," returned the second. "Cold, isn't it?"

'He looked about in that very place for his own image; but another man stood in his accustomed corner...'

- Within the second group, conversation surrounding the man's death is momentary before the subject is changed to the weather, indicating the insignificance of this man.
- When Scrooge tries to find his future self, not only is he unable to find him but another man is stood in his place.
- This could be Dickens' attempt to redefine the 'surplus population' by implying that men like Scrooge – those consumed by greed and unfeeling towards their fellow man, are in fact irrelevant and replaceable, even in the eyes of other members of the bourgeoise.
- This reinforces Dickens' message that wealth does not dictate a person's worth or value in this world, conveyed through the metaphor of the insect and the leaf in Stave 3. How much money they have is meaningless after death; what matters is how they impacted the people around them as it is this that dictates how they are remembered.

#### The Desperation of the Underclass



"He frightened every one away from him when he was alive, to profit us when he was dead! Ha, ha, ha!""

- The spirit takes Scrooge to the slums of London to expose him to the most destitute (and desperate) in society.
- Through detailed description of the setting, Dickens recreates the degradation that pervades the area.
- It is worth remembering the people like Scrooge (including the reader) may have never stepped foot in the slums – the most deprived areas of London. It is likely then that they would have been shocked and repulsed by what they saw (read), as is Scrooge.
- When Scrooge is shown the vision of Old Joe and the scavengers (members of the underclass), he is horrified to hear them discussing stealing items from a dead man. They have even gone so far as to remove the shirt that had been placed on his corpse for burial.
- What disturbs Scrooge (and most probably the reader) is the woman's attitudes towards this – she is completely devoid of regret and remorse. Instead, she ridicules the dead man and criticises him for being so selfish and greedy in life.
- However, if nothing else, this reveals their desperation and the extent they'll go to to survive. Had Scrooge (and others like him) been more generous in life, the destitute wouldn't need to resort to such extremes.

## The Death of the Dead Man and Tiny Tim



'...the room above, which was lighted cheerfully, and hung with Christmas. There was a chair set close beside the child, and there were signs of some one having been there, lately.'

- Dickens creates juxtaposition between the death of the unnamed man and Tiny Tim.
- The room in which the dead man lies is described as 'very dark' and cold. It's emphasised that he died alone with no man, woman or child to mourn him: 'plundered and bereft, unwatched, unwept, uncared for, was the body of this man.'
- The spirit then shows Scrooge a vision of a young couple who are relieved by the death of the unnamed man as it means they will have more time to pull together the money they owe him and their debt will be transferred to someone who is more understanding of their poverty.
- Whereas, the room where Tiny Tim lies is described as 'lighted cheerfully', 'hung with Christmas' and 'there was a chair set close beside the child, and there were signs of some one having been there, lately.'
- The two deaths are symbolic of the way the characters lived: Tiny Tim brought 'light' and love to all those around him. In his short life, he brought more value to the world than the unnamed dead man and this is reinforced by the narrator's sentiment where he is once again aligned with God: 'Spirit of Tiny Tim, thy childish essence was from God!' He will forever be remembered by his family, as stated by Bob Cratchit.
- Tiny Tim's death is essential in Stave 4 as it promotes Dickens' sense of urgency that things in society must change.
- The unnamed dead man's misanthropy in life means that his departing only brings value to those who can finally benefit from him monetarily. Then he will be forgotten.

#### **Scrooge Begs For A Second Chance**



"I will honour Christmas in my heart, and try to keep it all the year. I will live in the Past, the Present, and the Future. The Spirits of all Three shall strive within me. I will not shut out the lessons that they teach. Oh, tell me I may sponge away the writing on this stone!"

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- The final vision of this stave is the revealing of the identity of the unnamed dead man.
- Scrooge is taken to a graveyard which Dickens describes as 'a worthy place. Walled in by houses; overrun by grass and weeds, the growth of vegetation's death, not life; choked up with too much burying; fat with repleted appetite. A worthy place!'
- The repetition of 'a worthy place' with the use of an exclamatory sentence reinforces Marley's warning at the beginning of the novella: those who do not live 'naturally' in life and whose spirit 'goes not forth in life' will receive the afterlife they deserve.
- The unnamed dead man's grave is in a place of isolation, decay and corruption. The description is repugnant yet it is a fitting place for the body of this man.
- When the spirit points Scrooge towards the tombstone, Scrooge is reluctant and practically begs the spirit for reassurance that the stone only shows what 'might be' as there would be no point in showing him any of this if he was past all hope.
- The spirit gives no answer and when Scrooge finally sees his name upon the stone, he pledges to embody the Christmas spirit (mercy, generosity, benevolence, forbearance) all year through and promises that he won't forget the lessons the spirits have taught him.
- Scrooge is terrified but not necessarily of death itself but the lonely, insignificant death of the dead man.

#### Stave 5

"I'll send it to Bob Cratchit's!" whispered Scrooge, rubbing his hands, and splitting with a laugh. "He sha'n't know who sends it. It's twice the size of Tiny Tim.'

'A great many back-payments are included in it, I assure you.' 'He was at home in five minutes.'



'I'm quite a baby.'

'He went to church, and walked about the streets, and watched the people hurrying to and fro, and patted children on the head, and questioned beggars...' 'I'll raise your salary, and endeavour to assist your struggling family, and we will discuss your affairs this very afternoon.'

'Make up the fires, and buy another coal-scuttle before you dot another i, Bob Cratchit!"

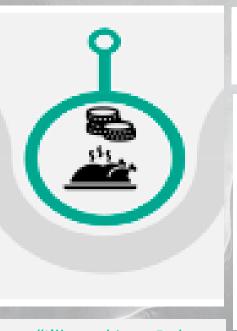
#### Scrooge Reborn



'l'm quite a baby.'

- When Scrooge finds himself back in the safety of his own bedroom on Christmas morning, he is beyond elated.
- He is almost manic as laughs and sobs simultaneously through sheer relief; he has been given a second chance.
- He thanks the spirits (Jacob Marley in particular), heaven and God.
- ""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." The list of similes highlights Scrooge's euphoria and his ability to experience a range of intense emotions which were once alien to him when 'no warmth could warm him', implying that Scrooge has already begun to change and redeem himself.
- This description of Scrooge is a stark juxtaposition to his introduction at the beginning of Stave 1.
- 'I'm quite a baby' connotes rebirth and foreshadows
   Scrooge's transformation. It's clear that he hasn't fully redeemed himself yet this is just the beginning.

#### **Acts of Atonement**



"I'll send it to Bob Cratchit's!" whispered Scrooge, rubbing his hands, and splitting with a laugh. "He sha'n't know who sends it. It's twice the size of Tiny Tim.'

'A great many backpayments are included in it, I assure you.'

- To redeem himself and achieve salvation, Scrooge needs to show more than intention, he needs to atone.
- Scrooge's first two acts of atonement indicate his new-found generosity.
- Scrooge sends a young boy to Bob Cratchit's house with the 'prize turkey.' In addition to paying for the turkey (a more expensive meat than goose), he pays the boy to retrieve and deliver it to the Cratchits but does so anonymously as he doesn't want Bob to know that it was he who sent it.
- This demonstrates Scrooge's true intentions: he doesn't require the thanks or acknowledgement for the act, he does so because he knows what a difference it will make to the Cratchits' Christmas dinner, having seen the vision with the Ghost of Christmas Present in Stave 3. Nor does he seem concerned by the cost, much like Fezziwig in Stave 2 – it's the 'happiness he gives' which matters most.
- This is reinforced when Scrooge encounters one of the charity gentlemen and not only apologises, but makes a generous donation with 'a great many back-payments' included.
- However, the exact amount isn't disclosed. Perhaps Dickens does this deliberately to emphasise that to some extent, the monetary value isn't as significant as the intention behind it: to support the poor.
- It also ensures that the reader isn't discouraged from donating as the idea is that Scrooge donated what he could afford as opposed to an untenable amount.
- Not only does Scrooge make a significant donation (which is implied by the charity gentleman's reaction) but he asks him to come and see him again soon, implying that this donation isn't an isolated contribution, Scrooge intends to continue supporting the poor beyond the end of the novella.

## Mankind is his business!



'He went to church, and walked about the streets, and watched the people hurrying to and fro, and patted children on the head, and questioned beggars...'

- In Stave 1, Dickens emphasised Scrooge's misanthropic nature; how he deliberately distanced himself from others.
- After his acts of generosity, Scrooge demonstrates benevolence when he walks the streets and engages with children and beggars alike – the same people who avoided him and maintained a safe distance in Stave 1.
- This further highlights Scrooge's determination to avoid the fate of the unnamed dead man in Stave 4. Scrooge does not want to die alone with no-one to mourn him; he doesn't want his death to bring joy or relief.
- The verb 'patted' connotes affection implying that Scrooge shows warmth and tenderness towards the children, a stark juxtaposition to earlier in the novella when he chased the poor boy away from his door with a ruler in hand.
- The verb 'questioned' connotes interest which implies that Scrooge is engaging with the poor in an attempt to understand and acknowledge their situation. Again, this is a stark juxtaposition to Stave 1 when Scrooge spouted Malthusian views and dehumanised the poor.
- Scrooge's spirit is finally wandering 'abroad among his fellow man', a clear sign that he is attempting to atone for his sins.

## The Importance of Family



'He was at home in five minutes.'

- Scrooge arrives at Fred's home to accept his invitation and join him for Christmas dinner.
  - When Fred sees him, the narrator states that it's a wonder that he didn't shake Scrooge's arm right off! Once again, this emphasises Fred's generous and forgiving nature; it matters not to him how Scrooge treated him in the past, only that he is there with him now.
  - The metaphor 'he was at home in five minutes' implies how comfortable Scrooge feels whilst with Fred and his family, much like the vision in Stave 3 when Scrooge didn't want to leave!
  - This further suggests that Scrooge's misanthropy at the beginning of the novella isn't his natural state but something he adopted through fear of poverty and loss, and avarice.

#### Scrooge: A Changed Man



'I'll raise your salary, and endeavour to assist your struggling family, and we will discuss your affairs this very afternoon.'

'Make up the fires, and buy another coalscuttle before you dot another i, Bob Cratchit!"

- Benevolence and Generosity: Scrooge not only raises Bob's salary, he vows to assist his 'struggling family', implying that Scrooge's munificence will go beyond money; he wants to understand Bob's difficulties and do whatever he can to help him.
- In juxtaposition to Stave 1 where Scrooge kept the coal under lock and key and Bob was forced to warm his hands on the flame of a candle, Scrooge now allows Bob to stoke the fires and buy additional coal so that the warmth and light is maintained. Darkness and the cold may be cheap, but they no longer serve Scrooge.
- Mercy: Scrooge wants to alleviate any suffering the Cratchits experience due to poverty and will devote his time in order to do this.
- 'He became as good a friend, as good a master, and as good a man, as the good old city knew, or any other good old city, town, or borough, in the good old world.'
- Dickens highlights the Scrooge's atonement in order to redeem himself was ongoing, even after the novella ended. Redemption is not a single act or a moment of kindness but a commitment to be a better person and in turn, alleviate the suffering of others.
- The above quote implies that Scrooge became the antithesis of everything he was at the beginning of the novella, he embraced that mankind as his 'business' and his oyster shell was no more; all that remained was the pearl.