

# A Christmas Carol

Charles Dickens

## Introduction

*This ungraded summary is for the teacher's use only and should not be given to students.*

### The story

Scrooge is a mean old man who lives a secretive and lonely life. The only thing that matters to him is making money and he takes no interest at all in other people. For the last seven years Scrooge has run his business alone since the death of his partner Jacob Marley. Scrooge works in a dark, cold office with his clerk, Bob Cratchit, who is treated badly and paid very little.

One cold foggy Christmas Eve, Scrooge has several visitors at his office. His nephew comes to wish him 'Merry Christmas' and invite him to dinner. Scrooge angrily rejects the invitation and says that Christmas is 'humbug' - a complete nonsense. Two gentlemen then arrive collecting money for the poor. Scrooge refuses to give money, sends the visitors away and shuts the office. On arriving home Scrooge is visited by the ghost of Jacob Marley. Jacob explains that because he did not help others in life he has to travel endlessly through the world without peace or rest. The same will happen to Scrooge if he does not change. Jacob says that three spirits will visit Scrooge over the following days.

The first spirit is the ghost of Christmas Past. The ghost is half child, half man, with long white hair and a light that shines from the top of his head. Scrooge travels with the ghost back into his past. At first he sees himself as a lonely schoolboy with a cruel father, then there is his loving sister who dies, leaving behind his nephew. Next there is a lively Christmas party given by Scrooge's former boss, the kind Mr Fezziwig. Finally, Scrooge sees his former fiancée, Belle, who left him because he was only interested in money. These scenes make him cry. He cannot bear more of these memories and suddenly finds himself back in bed again.



The second visitor is the ghost of Christmas Present. This friendly spirit takes Scrooge to see Christmas dinner at Bob Cratchit's house. Although the Cratchit family are poor, they are grateful and loving. The spirit tells Scrooge that Tiny Tim, Bob's disabled son, will soon die if his life does not change. Scrooge is horrified. Scrooge then visits the house of his nephew, Fred, where everybody is playing games and laughing cheerfully about Uncle Scrooge.

Finally, Scrooge meets the spirit of Christmas Yet to Come. This ghost is tall and silent with a long black robe which hides its head and body. Scrooge is most afraid of this spirit but he is keen to learn how to change his life. They travel to the future and see people talking about a mean old man who has died alone. Scrooge discovers that this sad, lonely, old man is himself and that Tiny Tim is dead. Scrooge promises to change and to keep Christmas forever in his heart.

The next day Scrooge jumps out of bed a changed man. It is still Christmas day. He is so excited at the thought of changing his future that he rushes around wishing people 'Merry Christmas'. He sends a large turkey to Bob Cratchit's house, gives money to the poor and spends all afternoon with his nephew playing party games. After Christmas Scrooge pays Bob twice as much and he becomes a second father to Tiny Tim, who doesn't die. Scrooge lives a happy, generous life and the spirits never visit him again.

### Background to the story

Charles Dickens (1812–70) was a major English writer of novels, many of which are set against the harsh conditions of Victorian England. His other novels in the Oxford Bookworms Series include: *A Tale of Two Cities*, *David Copperfield*, *Great Expectations* and *Oliver Twist*.

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## Pre-reading activity

## Match the words with the pictures



- a The knocker had become the face of Jacob Marley!
- b 'Do you, Ebenezer Scrooge, recognize my chain?'
- c 'He hasn't left his money to me,' said the fat man.
- d 'A merry Christmas, Bob!' said Scrooge.
- e Scrooge kept his door open to check that Bob Cratchit was working.
- f Scrooge stared at his ghostly visitor.
- g Both names still stood above the office door.
- h The spirit pointed down at one of the graves.

**To the teacher**

**Aim:** To introduce students to the story and its principal characters

**Time:** 25 minutes

**Organization:** Give one copy of the worksheet to each student, or to each group of students. Ask the students to match the picture with the correct caption.

**Key:** 1b, 2e, 3h, 4d, 5a, 6g, 7f, 8c. When they have done this ask them the following questions:

1 Which character in the pictures is Scrooge? What

adjectives could they use to describe him? (old, ugly ...) Which character is Bob Cratchit? What is his relationship with Scrooge?

2 What is the date of this story? What type of story is it?

3 What do the ghosts say to Scrooge?

4 Which illustration comes at the end of the book? Why?

It is not important for students to get the right answers to these questions.

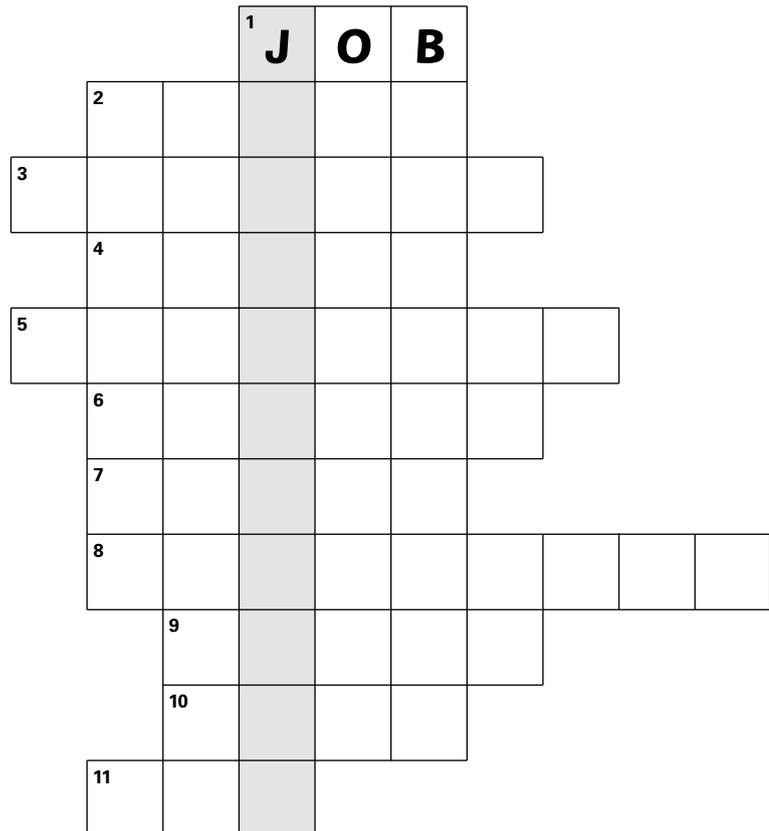
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## While reading activity

### Word grid

Find the answers to the clues below and fill in the word grid. When you have finished you will find the name of a person, which runs through the middle of all the words. The first has been done for you.

- 1 'If I hear another sound from *you*,' said Scrooge, 'you'll lose your \_\_\_\_\_!'
- 2 The ghost wears this around its middle.
- 3 Scrooge sees the face of a ghost on this thing.
- 4 Scrooge has white \_\_\_\_\_ on his head, his eyebrows and his chin.
- 5 The small office where Bob Cratchit works.
- 6 Scrooge's favourite expression.
- 7 Bob Cratchit wears this to keep himself warm.
- 8 Every tile on the \_\_\_\_\_ has a picture of a ghost's face.
- 9 Bob Cratchit's job.
- 10 Scrooge isn't generous but very \_\_\_\_\_.
- 11 Scrooge doesn't \_\_\_\_\_ Bob very much.



### To the teacher

**Where:** At the end of Chapter 1

**Aim:** To help revise vocabulary and key events

**Time:** 20 minutes

**Organization:** Give each student, or pair of students a copy of the grid and look at the first example together as a class. Ask the students to read the clues and find the other missing words. When they

have done all the questions they will find the name of a person (Jacob Marley) which runs through the words. When everyone has finished, go through the answers as a class.

**Key:** 1 job, 2 chain, 3 knocker, 4 frost, 5 cupboard, 6 humbug, 7 scarf, 8 fireplace, 9 clerk, 10 mean, 11 pay.

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## After reading activity

### Complete the grid

NAME	DESCRIPTION	SAYS	TAKES SCROOGE TO
Jacob Marley's Ghost			
The Ghost of Christmas Past			
The Ghost of Christmas Present			
The Ghost of Christmas Future			

#### Description

- 1 A tall, silent figure with a long black robe which hides its head and body.
- 2 A friendly, smiling spirit with long brown hair and a torch in its hand.
- 3 A ghost with death-cold eyes and a long chain with money-boxes around its middle.
- 4 A figure which is half child, half man with long white hair, soft skin and a bright light shining from the top of its head.

#### Says

- 5 'In the future I see an empty chair by the fire, with a crutch beside it.  
If these shadows do not change, the child will die.'

- 6 'No peace, no rest for me in death, because I was never kind or good in life.'
- 7 'Not everyone has left the school ... There is one lonely child there still ...'
- 8 Nothing.

#### Takes Scrooge to

- 9 A shop which sells old furniture and clothes.
- 10 Mr Fezziwig's Christmas party.
- 11 A lively Christmas party at his nephew's house.
- 12 His own grave.
- 13 The town where he was born.
- 14 A lighthouse.

#### To the teacher

**Aim:** To focus students' attention back on the different ghosts

**Time:** 30 minutes

**Organization:** As a class, ask students how many ghosts there were in the story and how much they can remember about each one. Then give each student, or group of students a copy of the chart. Ask them to identify which answers at the bottom go with which ghost or spirit. Go through the answers as a class.

**Key:** Jacob Marley's ghost: 3, 6. The ghost of Christmas Past: 4, 7, 10, 13. The ghost of Christmas

Present: 2, 5, 11, 14. The ghost of Christmas Future: 1, 8, 9, 12.

Then ask the students the following questions:

- 1 How does Scrooge's attitude change as he meets each of the ghosts? Why? Possible answer: At first he has a very negative attitude towards the ghosts but then he realises he can learn how to change his life from them.
- 2 Which ghost is he most afraid of? Why? Possible answer: The ghost of Christmas Future. Because he is afraid of what the future might hold for him.