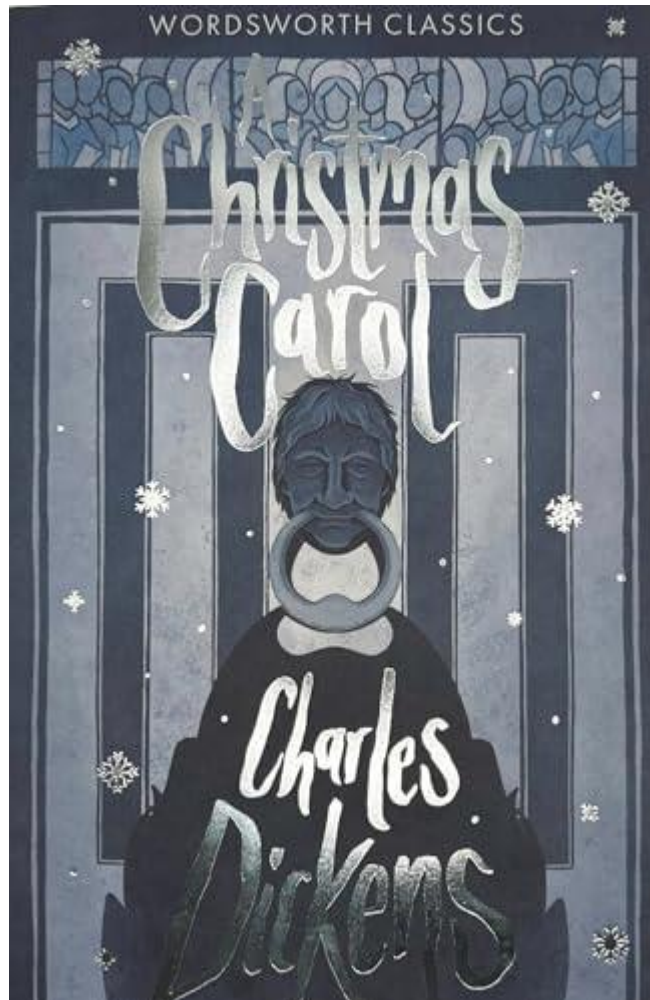


GCSE English Literature

‘A Christmas Carol’



Home Learning Booklet
Summer 2026

NAME: _____

The following activities are designed around academic reading. This means you will be given an article to read and answer questions on. These articles have been selected because they will aid your understanding of Dickens' novel and the big ideas he explores. There are no answers at the back of the booklet for this section so do your best. If you need any assistance, email your teacher and if you have no access to email, do what you can and then move on to the next activity.

Activity 1: Pre-Reading Activities



This section of the booklet will focus on extracts from 'Ghosts in 'A Christmas Carol'', an article that can be found on the British Library website. Before you read the article, complete the following pre-reading activities to help you understand what it is saying. Answer in full sentences. If you would like to access the full article, you can find it here: <https://www.bl.uk/romantics-and-victorians/articles/ghosts-in-a-christmas-carol>

Pre-Reading questions

- 1) The British Library have filed this article under the following categories. Make notes around each category which explain how they link to 'A Christmas Carol'.

THE GOTHIC

LONDON

- 2) The summary for the article reads as:

The ghosts in *A Christmas Carol* are by turns **comic**, **grotesque** and **allegorical**. Professor John Mullan **reflects** on their essential role in developing the novel's meaning and structure.

What does the word 'comic' mean?

What does the word 'grotesque' mean?

What does the word 'allegorical' mean?

What does the word 'reflects' mean?

- 3) Using the information above, predict what ideas you think the article is going to explore:

I think this article _____

Read the article. Highlight two sentences in each paragraph which you deem to be the most important. Down the left-hand side, add a title for each paragraph. On the right-hand side, summarise what each paragraph is saying in two or three bullet points. This follows the guided reading strategy we have used in class. One has been done for you so you can see what your work should look like.

Paragraph Title

Summary

Victorian ghost story

There had been ghosts in literature before the Victorians, but the ghost story as a distinct and popular genre was the invention of the Victorians. Charles Dickens was hugely influential in establishing the genre's popularity - not only as a writer but also as an editor: his journals *Household Words* and *All the Year Round* specialised in ghost stories, and other contemporary journals followed. Dickens's close friend and biographer John Forster said that the novelist had 'a hankering after ghosts'. Not that Dickens exactly believed in ghosts - but he was intrigued by our belief in them. In *A Christmas Carol* (1843), the first of his ghost stories, he harnesses that belief by making the supernatural a natural extension of the real world of Scrooge and his victims. This is a long way from the spectres of earlier Gothic fiction.

The first strictly supernatural sight in the story is the door knocker on the outside door of Scrooge's chambers that metamorphoses, as the miser looks at it, into the face of his former partner, Jacob Marley, dead for seven years. 'The hair curiously stirred, as if by breath or hot-air; and though the eyes were wide open, they were perfectly motionless'. Yet Dickens's sense of fantasy brings the horrible and comic together: in the surrounding gloom, the face has 'a dismal light about it, like a bad lobster in a dark cellar'. The weird mix of the terrible and the comic is kept up when Marley's ghost finally appears carrying its chain of cash-boxes, keys, padlocks and the like. Like a parody ghost, its body is transparent, as Scrooge observes. 'Scrooge had often heard it said that Marley had no bowels, but he had never believed it until now' (Stave 1).

On Christmas Eve the city is itself a place of spectres where 'it had not been light all day'. Outside Scrooge's counting house, the fog is so dense 'that although the court was of the narrowest, the houses opposite were mere phantoms'. The bell in a nearby church tower strikes the hours and quarters 'as if its teeth were chattering in its frozen head up there'. After Marley's Ghost has left him, Scrooge looks out of his window and sees 'the air filled with phantoms', many of them chained souls who had once been known to Scrooge (Stave 1). It is like a fantastic vision of the city that Scrooge already knows well. Like Macbeth, Scrooge, because of his sins, sees visions that are for him alone.

The apparitions are inescapable. 'Show me no more!' Scrooge cries to the Ghost of Christmas Past. What he sees is a punishment to him. 'But the relentless Ghost pinioned him in both his arms, and forced him to observe what happened next' (Stave 2). The phantom as literary device enables Dickens to explore the social and moral issues central to his fiction: - poverty, miserliness, guilt, redemption.

The ghosts borrow in their appearance from a tradition of allegory. There is the strange child/old man that is Christmas Past, clutching a branch of holly yet trimmed with summer flowers. There is the large and avuncular Ghost of Christmas Present, tinged more and more with age as his visions draw to their close. And there is 'The Phantom' that is the Ghost of Christmas Yet to Come, shrouded and 'stately' and mysterious. Their shapes tell you about author's moral design.

Dickens was interested in why people believed in ghosts.
Dickens made ghost stories part of the real world in his novel unlike other writers in earlier stories.

The ghosts give the story its irresistibly logical structure, and make Scrooge think that he is prepared for each succeeding visitation. Preparing to meet the second of the three spirits, 'nothing between a baby and a rhinoceros would have astonished him very much' (Stave 3). But of course he is surprised. The Ghost of Christmas Present surprises him by showing him flashes of humour and happiness in the most unlikely of circumstances. And when Scrooge sees the visions revealed by the third of the spirits, he naturally fails to recognise what the reader knows from the first: that the dead man, abandoned after the scavengers have done with him, is himself.

Marley's Ghost announces them. 'You will be haunted ... by Three Spirits' (Stave 1). Scrooge is even told at what times they will appear. The ghosts bring fatality to the narrative: Scrooge cannot resist the visions they set before him. He must awake at the destined times to encounter the world that he has made for himself. Time-consciousness is built into the narrative (those bells). The ghosts have only their allotted spans. 'My time is nearly gone,' says Marley's Ghost. 'My time grows short,' observes the first of the three spirits, 'quick!' (Stave 1; Stave 2). Chronology is of the essence: Christmas is a special day made all the more significant by the unfolding of these visions at their hours. On Christmas Eve Marley's Ghost tells Scrooge of three visits in three consecutive nights, but he wakes to find that it is Christmas Day. 'The Spirits have done it all in one night' - which means that he still has the day to redeem himself (Stave 5).

A Christmas Carol is a brilliant narrative success, and was a huge commercial coup. It forged the association between Christmas and ghost stories, and led Dickens to write a series of such tales for Christmas. It also showed how the genre worked best within limitations of time and length, so that the short story and the novella were best suited to ghostly tales.

Dickens had set a new literary fashion in motion.

Activity 2: Post-Reading Questions

Answer the following questions on the article above. Remember to answer in full sentences. If there is a question you are not sure about, email your teacher or miss it out and come back to it when you have finished the rest of the activities. If you need extra space, write on a different piece of paper and attach it to this booklet once you have finished.

1. The article says that Marley's face appearing in the door knocker is a strange mix of 'the terrible and the comic.' What do you think this means and why do you think Dickens includes a mixture of both when describing Marley?
2. Scrooge 'sees visions which are for him alone'. Why do you think only Scrooge can see these visions?
3. The article states that the apparitions are 'inescapable'. Why do you think this is the case? What might happen if Scrooge was able to run from them?
4. The article says the 'Phantom, as a literary device enables Dickens to explore... poverty, miserliness, guilt [and] redemption.' Why does Dickens use ghosts to help him explore these issues?
5. Why do you think Scrooge fails to recognise that he is the dead man everyone is talking about in Stave Four?
6. Read the following line from the article: *'The Spirits have done it all in one night' - which means that he still has the day to redeem himself.* Why do you think it is important that Scrooge redeems himself on Christmas day of all days?
7. The article ends by saying 'A Christmas Carol' was a 'commercial coup'. Why do you think it was so successful?

Activity 3: Further Questions

Answer the following questions on the article. These questions require shorter answers and can be answered as notes and brief annotations. If you need extra space, write on a different piece of paper and attach it to this booklet. If you need a copy of the text, you can find one online. Check your answers at the back of the booklet when you have finished.



A Christmas Carol full text



On Christmas Eve the city is itself a place of spectres where 'it had not been light all day'. Outside Scrooge's counting house, the fog is so dense 'that although the court was of the narrowest, the houses opposite were mere phantoms'. The bell in a nearby church tower strikes the hours and quarters 'as if its teeth were chattering in its frozen head up there'.

1. What does the cold represent at the beginning of the novella?
2. What could the fog be symbolic of?
3. What kind of character is Scrooge at the beginning of the novella? Retrieve a short quotation.

After Marley's Ghost has left him, Scrooge looks out of his window and sees 'the air filled with phantoms', many of them chained souls who had once been known to Scrooge (Stave 1). It is like a fantastic vision of the city that Scrooge already knows well. Like Macbeth, Scrooge, because of his sins, sees visions that are for him alone.

1. Who are the other phantoms that Scrooge sees in the air when Marley's ghost leaves him?
2. What do the chains that are wrapped around each Phantom represent?
3. If these other phantoms were known to Scrooge, what does this tell us about him?

The apparitions are inescapable. 'Show me no more!' Scrooge cries to the Ghost of Christmas Past. What he sees is a punishment to him. 'But the relentless Ghost pinioned him in both his arms, and forced him to observe what happened next' (Stave 2). The phantom as literary device enables Dickens to explore the social and moral issues central to his fiction: - poverty, miserliness, guilt, redemption.

1. How does Scrooge try to escape the Ghost of Christmas Past? Retrieve a short quotation.
2. What is miserliness?

There is the strange child/old man that is Christmas Past, clutching a branch of holly yet trimmed with summer flowers. There is the large and avuncular Ghost of Christmas Present, tinged more and more with age as his visions draw to their close. And there is 'The Phantom' that is the Ghost of Christmas Yet to Come, shrouded and 'stately' and mysterious. Their shapes tell you about author's moral design.

1. Why does the Ghost of Christmas Present age quickly?
2. What is hiding under the robe of the Ghost of Christmas Present?

3. Why is the last ghost described as a 'Phantom'?

The Ghost of Christmas Present surprises him by showing him flashes of humour and happiness in the most unlikely of circumstances. And when Scrooge sees the visions revealed by the third of the spirits, he naturally fails to recognise what the reader knows from the first: that the dead man, abandoned after the scavengers have done with him, is himself.

- 1. Why is it important that the Ghost of Christmas Present shows Scrooge humour and happiness?**
- 2. What do the scavengers take from Scrooge once he has died?**

The following activities are designed around exam questions. This means you will complete a series of small activities to help you answer an essay question like the one you will receive in your GCSE Literature paper. Use the notes from this booklet and a copy of the text to help you prepare.

Activity 4: Essay Preparation

You will be answering the following question:

Read the following extract from Chapter 1 and then answer the question that follows.

External heat and cold had little influence on Scrooge. No warmth could warm, no wintry weather chill him. No wind that blew was bitterer than he, no falling snow was more intent upon its purpose, no pelting rain less open to entreaty. Foul weather didn't know where to have him. The heaviest rain, and snow, and hail, and sleet, could boast of the advantage over him in only one respect. They often "came down" handsomely, and Scrooge never did.

Nobody ever stopped him in the street to say, with gladsome looks, "My dear Scrooge, how are you? When will you come to see me?" No beggars implored him to bestow a trifle, no children asked him what it was o'clock, no man or woman ever once in all his life inquired the way to such and such a place, of Scrooge. Even the blind men's dogs appeared to know him; and when they saw him coming on, would tug their owners into doorways and up courts; and then would wag their tails as though they said, "No eye at all is better than an evil eye, dark master!"

But what did Scrooge care? It was the very thing he liked. To edge his way along the crowded paths of life, warning all human sympathy to keep its distance, was what the knowing ones call "nuts" to Scrooge.

Q: In this extract Scrooge is being introduced to the reader. Starting with this extract, how does Dickens present Scrooge as an outsider to society?

Write about:

- how Dickens presents Scrooge in this extract
- how Dickens presents Scrooge as an outsider to society in the novel as a whole.

Complete the following analytical verbs to help you explore Dickens' authorial intent with Scrooge's character. Authorial intent is when you explain **what** an author is doing and **why** they are doing it. The 'why' is extremely important and often missed out by students in their exams so that is what we are going to start with today. One has been done for you.

Dickens may be presenting Scrooge as an outsider to society ...

- to warn readers of what their future could hold if they segregate themselves from others.
- to teach
- to reveal the importance of
- to criticise
- to advocate

Pick three of your sentences from above and rewrite them below. This time, extend your sentences with the connectives 'because', 'but' or 'so'. Look at the example below to help you.

Dickens may be presenting Scrooge as an outsider to society to warn readers of what their future could hold if they segregate themselves from others so he shows the consequences of leading a life without love and family to exaggerate the errors of this miserly old man's ways.

1.

2.

3.

Pick one of the sentences above. Copy it out again. Extend it by using one analytical verb to lead in to a second analytical verb in order to explore more of Dickens' authorial intent. Look at the example below to help you.

Dickens may be presenting Scrooge as an outsider to society to warn readers of what their future could hold if they segregate themselves from others so he shows the consequences of leading a life without love and family to exaggerate the errors of this miserly old man's ways. Through warning readers about this, Dickens may also be teaching us about the value of family. Money cannot buy what Scrooge so desperately needs to help him on his path to redemption: love and friendship.

1.

Write down five quotations you could use in your essay. One has been done for you to give you a sixth quotation.

'Secret and self-contained and solitary as an oyster.'

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

Use your analytical verbs to quickly explain what Dickens is doing with each quotation. You do not need to write in full sentences as this is just a plan. Look at the example to help you.

Eg. 'Secret and self-contained and solitary as an oyster.' - Criticising Scrooge for cutting himself off from society and therefore remaining ignorant to the true suffering of the poor.

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

Activity 5: I Do

Identify how the following example response I have pre-prepared meets the requirements for an effective WHAT/HOW/WHY paragraph.



WHAT is the writer trying to say?
WHAT is the writer's intention?
WHAT is the writer implying?
WHAT has the writer achieved?



HOW has the writer presented this?
HOW does the text support this?
HOW do methods present this idea?
HOW do keywords present this idea?



WHY might an audience/reader react a certain way?
WHY has this been included and what is the writer's message?

You are looking for:

- Clear points at the beginning of each paragraph which relate to the question
- Embedded quotations
- Single word analysis
- Analytical verbs
- Authorial intent (what the writer is doing and why they are doing it.) - Social/historical context

Pay close attention to how I am writing. You should aim to replicate this style of writing in your own answer.

Dickens presents Scrooge as an outsider to society by highlighting, almost exaggerating, his negative characteristics. He becomes synonymous with the cold weather that grips London, with Dickens revealing 'no wind that blew was bitterer than he.' The adjective 'bitterer' could have been used by Dickens to expose Scrooge, a microcosm for the ignorant rich, as a man who lacks emotion, love and empathy. It makes him sound uncaring and callous; he clearly disregards his social responsibility but maybe he is described in this way because readers will see that if the worst man in Victorian London can change, then anyone can. Dickens is teaching us that it is not too late to change our ways because he wants society to recognise it has a duty to help those less fortunate. Through teaching readers this, he is revealing the importance of love, family and the ability to recognise basic human value, regardless of class and status.

Activity 6: Exam Question

Answer the following exam question. Use everything in this booklet to help you. If you need your copy of the text with you to help, you may use it but remember you will not have a copy in your real exam. Don't forget to include the following:

- Clear points at the beginning of each paragraph which relate to the question
- Quotations
- Single word analysis
- Authorial intent (what the writer is doing and why they are doing it.) - Social/historical context

The following resource may help you:

 WHAT  <u>IS YOUR POINT?</u>	 HOW  <u>DO YOU KNOW?</u>	 WHY  <u>HAS THIS BEEN DONE?</u>
WHAT is the writer trying to say? WHAT is the writer's intention? WHAT is the writer implying? WHAT has the writer achieved?	HOW has the writer presented this? HOW does the text support this? HOW do methods present this idea? HOW do keywords present this idea?	WHY might an audience/reader react a certain way? WHY has this been included and what is the writer's message?
SENTENCE STARTERS Shakespeare presents Juliet as... Dickens highlights Scrooge to be... Priestley <u>emphasises</u> Mr Birling to be... The writer conveys the idea that... The writer successfully presents the character as...	SENTENCE STARTERS The use of the metaphor "_____" suggests this because... The repeated reference to "_____" illustrates this idea by... By using the motif of "_____", the writer implies... The adjective "_____" has connotations of...	SENTENCE STARTERS Perhaps the writer wants to create an impression of... Dickens wanted to make his reader consider... It is important to learn this now because later... Shakespeare may have wanted his Elizabethan audience to <u>realise</u> ...

If you are unsure how to structure your essay, start with what Scrooge is like at the beginning of the novel and explain how he develops. Don't forget you need to discuss the extract and events outside it as well. Use the paragraph above to help you start if needed.

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This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

This image shows a full page of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and extend across the width of the page. There is no text or other markings on the paper.