

A Christmas Carol



A CHRISTMAS CAROL



A Holiday Ghost Story by Charles Dickens with
Illustrations by John Leech

Timothy Krause



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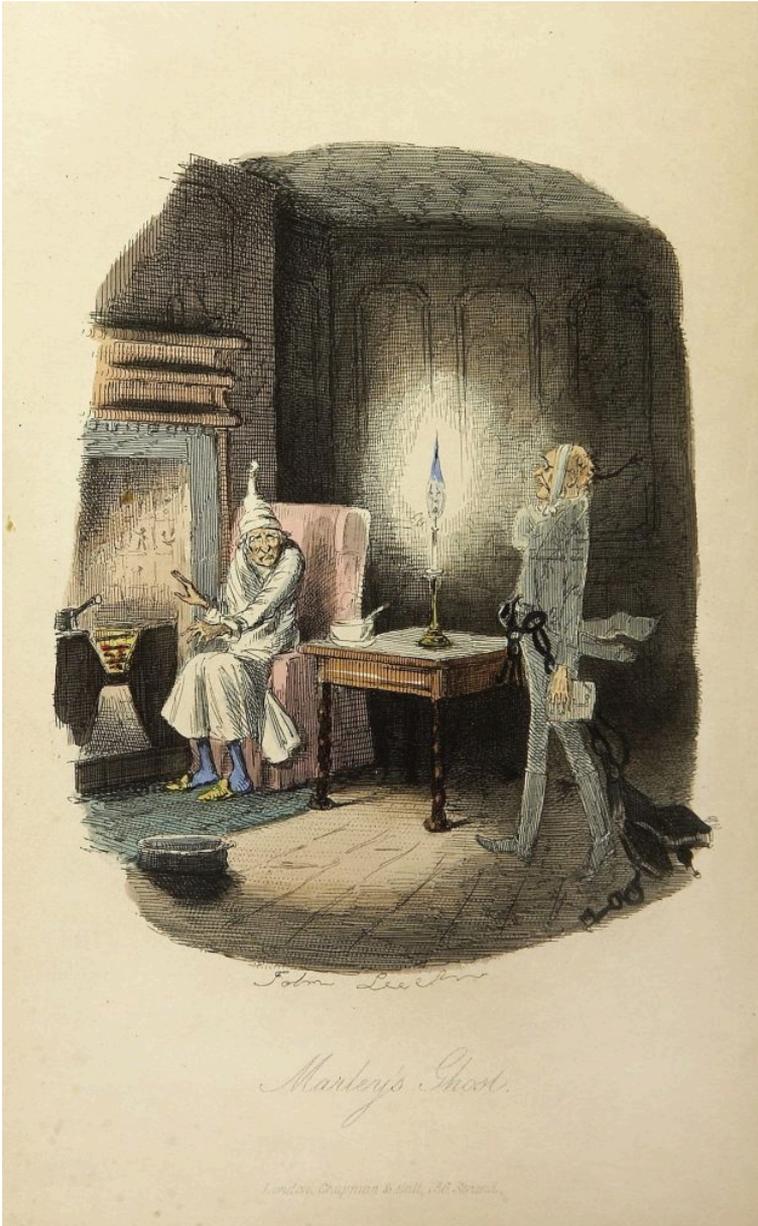
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PART I



Scrooge and Marley's ghost



Marley's Ghost

Marley was dead, to begin with. There is no doubt whatever about that. The register of his burial was signed by the church, the clerk, the undertaker, and the chief mourner.¹ Scrooge signed it. And Scrooge's name was good for anything he chose to put his hand to.

Old Marley was as dead as a door-nail.

Scrooge knew he was dead? Of course he did. How could it be otherwise? Scrooge and he were business partners for I don't know how many years. Scrooge was his only administrator, his only friend, his only mourner.

Scrooge never painted out old Marley's name, however. There it yet was, years afterwards, above the warehouse door — Scrooge and Marley. The firm was known as Scrooge and Marley. Sometimes people new to the business called him Scrooge, and sometimes they called him Marley. He answered to both names. It was all the same to him.

Oh! But he was a tight-fisted hand at the grindstone, that Scrooge! a squeezing, wrenching, grasping, scraping, clutching, covetous old sinner! External heat and cold had little influence on him. No warmth could warm him, and

1. someone who is at a funeral, especially a relative or close friend of the dead person

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no cold could cool him. No wind that blew was more bitter than he. Foul weather didn't know what to do with him. The heaviest rain and snow and hail and sleet could brag 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 friendly looks, “My dear Scrooge, how are you? When will you come to see me?” No beggars asked Scrooge for a few coins; no children asked him what time it was; no man or woman ever once in all his life inquired the way to such and such a place. But what did Scrooge care! It was the very thing he liked.

Stop and check

Scrooge and Marley were:

- spouses
- business partners
- the same person with two names
- brothers

Discuss

Describe Scrooge in your own words.

One Christmas eve, old Scrooge sat busy in his counting-house.² It was cold, bleak, biting, foggy weather; and the

2. the office of an accountant, someone who handles money for others

city clocks had only just gone three, but it was quite dark already.

The door of Scrooge's counting-house was open so that he might keep his eye upon his clerk, Bob Cratchit, who, in a sad little room, was copying letters. Scrooge had a very small fire, but the clerk's fire was so very much smaller that it looked like one piece of coal. But the clerk couldn't add to it, for Scrooge kept the coal-box in his own room; and if the clerk came in with the shovel, he feared Scrooge would simply dismiss him on the spot. That's why the clerk put on his white scarf, and tried to warm himself at the candle; in which effort, not being a man of a strong imagination, he failed.

"A merry Christmas, uncle!" It was the cheerful voice of Scrooge's nephew, Fred, who came into the office so quickly that this was the first hint Scrooge had of his approach.

"Bah!" said Scrooge; "humbug!"³

"Christmas a humbug, uncle! You don't mean that, I am sure!"

"I do. Forget merry Christmas! What's Christmas time to you but a time for paying bills without money; a time for finding yourself a year older, and not an hour richer? If I had my will, every idiot who goes about with 'Merry Christmas' on his lips should be boiled with his own pudding, and buried with a stake of holly⁴ through his heart!"

"Uncle!"

"Nephew, keep Christmas in your own way, and let me keep it in mine."

3. false talk or actions

4. a bush that stays green in winter; often used as a holiday decoration

“Keep it! But you don’t keep it.”

“Let me leave it alone, then. No good may it do you! No good it has ever done you!”

“There are many things from which I might have derived⁵ good, by which I have not profited, I dare say, Christmas among the rest. But I am sure I have always thought of Christmas time, when it has come round — not only its religious part, but everything else — as a good time; a kind, forgiving, charitable, pleasant time; 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 fellow travelers to the grave, and not another race of creatures bound on other journeys. And therefore, uncle, though it has never put a scrap of gold or silver in my pocket, I believe that it has done me good, and will do me good; and I say yes to Christmas!”

The clerk in the next room involuntarily applauded.⁶

“Let me hear another sound from you,” said Scrooge, “and you’ll keep your Christmas by losing your job! You’re quite a powerful speaker, sir,” he added, turning to his nephew.” I wonder why you don’t become a politician.”

“Don’t be angry, uncle. Come! Dine with us tomorrow.”

Scrooge refused, and not politely.

“But why?” cried Scrooge’s nephew. “Why?”

“Why did you get married?”

“Because I fell in love.”

“Because you fell in love!” growled Scrooge, as if that were the only one thing in the world more ridiculous than a merry Christmas. “Goodbye!”

5. obtained from someone or something else

6. clapped hands

“No, uncle, but you never came to see me before that happened. Why give it as a reason for not coming now?”

“Goodbye.”

“I want nothing from you; I ask nothing of you; why can’t we be friends?”

“Goodbye.”

“I am sorry, with all my heart, to find you like this. We have never fought before. I came, in honor of Christmas, and I will keep my Christmas spirit still. So a Merry Christmas, uncle!”

“Goodbye!”

“And a Happy New Year!”

“Goodbye!!”

Stop and Check

Scrooge and Fred are:

- co-workers
- family
- neighbors
- enemies

Discuss

Describe Fred in your own words.

The clerk, in letting Scrooge’s nephew out, had let two other people in. They were large gentlemen, and they now

stood, with their hats off, in Scrooge's office. They had books and papers in their hands, and bowed to him.

"Scrooge and Marley's, I believe," said one of the gentlemen, referring to his list. "Have I the pleasure of addressing Mr. Scrooge, or Mr. Marley?"

"Mr. Marley has been dead these seven years. He died seven years ago, this very night."

"At this festive season of the year, Mr. Scrooge," said the gentleman, taking up a pen, "it is more than usually desirable that we should make some small effort to help the poor who suffer greatly at the present time. Many thousands are in want of common necessities; hundreds of thousands are in want of common comforts, sir."

"Are there no prisons?"

"Plenty of prisons, but there are those in need who have committed no crime. A few of us are trying to raise funds to buy the poor some food and drink, and means of warmth. We choose this time because it is a time, of all others, when Want is keenly⁷ felt, and Abundance⁸ rejoices. What shall I put you down for?"

"Nothing!"

"You wish to be anonymous?"

"I wish to be left alone. Since you ask me what I wish, gentlemen, that is my answer. I don't make merry myself at Christmas, and I can't afford to make idle⁹ people merry. I help to support the prisons and the workhouses¹⁰ — they cost enough — and those who are badly off must go there."

"Many can't go there; and many would rather die."

7. strongly

8. a very large or sufficient amount of something; enough for all your needs

9. not active, not working

10. a place where poor people were offered work and a place to sleep

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

And with that, Scrooge dismissed the two men with another short “Goodbye.”

Stop and check

What were the two men doing? What was Scrooge’s reaction?

The time came for the counting-house to close for the day. With an ill-will Scrooge, got up from his stool, and his clerk instantly snuffed his candle out and put on his hat. “You’ll want all day off tomorrow, I suppose?”

“If quite convenient, sir.”

“It is not convenient, and it’s not fair. If I was to stop even half your pay for it, you’d think yourself mightily ill-used, I imagine?”

“Yes, sir.”

“And yet you don’t think me ill-used when I pay a day’s wages for no work.”

“It’s only once a year, sir.”

“A poor excuse for picking a man’s pocket every twenty-fifth of December! But I suppose you must have the whole day. Be here all the earlier next morning.”

The clerk promised that he would; and Scrooge walked out with a growl.

Scrooge took his melancholyⁱⁱ dinner in his usual melancholy tavern; and having read all the newspapers, and spent the rest of the evening with his banker’s book, went home to bed. He lived in an apartment which had

ii. a feeling of sadness and despair; without hope

once belonged to his dead partner. They were a gloomy¹² suite of rooms in a building that was old enough now, and dreary enough; for nobody lived in it but Scrooge, the other rooms being all rented as offices.

Now it is a fact that there was nothing at all particular about the knocker on the door of this house, except that it was very large; also, that Scrooge had seen it, night and morning, every day; also, that Scrooge did not believe in anything too fancy. And yet Scrooge, having his key in the lock of the door, suddenly saw in the knocker Marley's face.

Marley's face, with a dismal light about it, like a bad lobster in a dark cellar. It was not angry or ferocious,¹³ but it looked at Scrooge as Marley used to look — with ghostly glasses turned up upon its ghostly forehead.

As Scrooge looked fixedly at this phenomenon, it was a knocker again. He said, "Pooh, Pooh!" and closed the door with a bang. The sound echoed through the house like thunder. He was not a man to be frightened by echoes. He fastened the door, and walked across the hall and up the stairs slowly.

Up Scrooge went, not caring a button for its being very dark. Darkness is cheap, and Scrooge liked it. But before he shut his heavy door, he walked through his rooms to see that all was right. Sitting-room, bedroom, all as they should be. Nobody under the table, nobody under the sofa; a small fire in the grate; spoon and bowl ready; and the little saucepan of gruel.¹⁴ Nobody under the bed;

12. dark, sad, unhappy

13. violent and able to cause serious damage or injury

14. a food made with crushed grain and water, often eaten by poor people in the past

nobody in the closet; nobody in his dressing-gown, which was hanging up in a suspicious attitude against the wall.

Quite satisfied, he closed his door and locked himself in; double-locked himself in, which was not his custom. Thus secured against surprise, he put on his dressing-gown and slippers and his nightcap, and sat down before the very low fire to eat his gruel.

As he threw his head back in the chair, his glance happened to rest upon a bell — an unused bell that hung in the room, and communicated, for some purpose now forgotten, with a room in the highest

floor of the building. It was with great astonishment, and with a strange, inexplicable dread, that, as he looked, he saw this bell begin to swing. Soon it rang out loudly, and so did every bell in the house.

This was succeeded by a clanking noise, deep down below, as if some person were dragging a heavy chain over the casks in the wine-merchant's cellar.

Then he heard the noise much louder, on the floors below; then coming up the stairs; then coming straight towards his door.

It came on through the heavy door, and a spectre¹⁵ passed into the room before his eyes.

The same face, the very same — Marley. His body was transparent;¹⁶ so that Scrooge, observing him, and looking through his vest, could see the two buttons on his coat behind. Scrooge had often heard it said that Marley had no guts, but he had never believed it until now.

Though he looked the phantom through and through, and saw it standing before him — though he felt the

15. ghost or spirit

16. clear; able to see through

chilling influence of its death-cold eyes, and noticed the very texture of the folded handkerchief bound around its head and chin — he still could not believe what he saw.

“How now!” said Scrooge, mean and cold as ever. “What do you want with me?”

“Much!” — it was Marley’s voice, no doubt about it.

“Who are you?”

“Ask me who I was.”

“Who were you then?”

“In life I was your partner, Jacob Marley.” Receiving no reaction, the ghost continued: “You don’t believe in me.”

“I don’t.”

“Why do you doubt your senses?”

“Because a little thing affects them. A slight disorder of the stomach makes them cheats. You may be an undigested bit of beef, a blot of mustard, a crumb of cheese, a fragment of an underdone potato. There’s more of gravy than of grave about you, whatever you are! Dreadful apparition, why do you trouble me?”

“Man of the worldly mind!” replied the Ghost, “do you believe in me or not?”

“I do,” said Scrooge. “I must. But why do spirits walk the earth, and why do they come to me?”

“It is required of every person,” the Ghost returned, “that the spirit within them should walk abroad among other people, and travel far and wide; and if that spirit goes not forth in life, it is condemned to do so after death. It is doomed to wander through the world and witness what it cannot share, but might have shared on earth, and turned to happiness!”

Again the spectre raised a cry, and shook its chain and wrung its shadowy hands.

“You are fettered,”¹⁷ said Scrooge, trembling. “Tell me why?”

“I wear the chain I made in life,” replied the Ghost. “I made it link by link, and yard by yard of my own free will. Is its pattern strange to you?”

Scrooge trembled more and more.

“Or do you know,” continued the Ghost, “the weight and length of the strong chains you have yourself? They are as heavy and as long as this, seven Christmas Eves ago. You have labored on it since. It is a ponderous¹⁸ chain!”

Scrooge glanced about him on the floor with the expectation of finding himself surrounded by some fifty or sixty miles of iron cable, but he could see nothing.

“Jacob,” he said, imploringly. “Old Jacob Marley, tell me more. Speak comfort to me, Jacob!”

“I have none to give,” the Ghost replied. “That comes from other places, Ebenezer Scrooge, and is given by other messengers to other kinds of people. Nor can I tell you what I would like to say. A very little more is all that is permitted to me. I cannot rest, I cannot stay, I cannot linger anywhere. My spirit never walked beyond our counting-house in life; my spirit never traveled beyond the narrow limits of our money-changing hole; and weary journeys lie before me!”

“But you were always a good man of business, Jacob,” said Scrooge. He thought the same of himself.

“Business!” cried the Ghost, wringing its hands again. “Mankind ought to have been my business. The common welfare should have been my business; charity, mercy, forgiveness, and kindness were all to have been my

17. limited or controlled, not allowed to do what one wishes; tied up

18. big and heavy, and therefore slow

business. The dealings of our company were but a drop of water in the larger ocean of my business!”

It held up its chain at arm’s length, as if that were the cause of all its unending grief, and flung it heavily upon the ground again. Scrooge was very much dismayed to hear the spectre going on at this rate, and began to tremble exceedingly.

“Hear me! My time is nearly gone. I am here tonight to warn you that you have yet a chance and hope of escaping my fate. A chance and hope that I have made possible for you, Ebenezer.”

“You were always a good friend to me. Thank you!”

“You will be haunted by Three Spirits.”

“Is that the chance and hope you mentioned, Jacob? I — I think I’d rather not.”

“Without their visits, you cannot hope to shun the path I tread. Expect the first tomorrow night, when the bell tolls One. Expect the second on the next night at the same hour. The third, upon the next night, when the last stroke of Twelve has ceased to vibrate. Look to see me no more; and look that, for your own sake, you remember what has passed between us!”

It walked backward from him; and at every step it took, the window raised itself a little, so that, when the apparition reached it, it was wide open.

The air was filled with phantoms, wandering here and there in restless haste, and moaning as they went. Every one of them wore chains like Marley’s Ghost; a few (they might be guilty governments) were linked together; none were free. Scrooge knew many personally. He had been quite familiar with one old ghost with a monstrous iron safe attached to its ankle, who cried mournfully at being unable to assist a poor woman with an infant whom it saw

below upon a door-step. The misery with all the spirits was, clearly, that they sought to intervene for good — to help in human matters — but had lost the power forever.

Whether these creatures faded into a mist or the mist hid them, he could not tell. But they and their spirit voices faded together; and the night became as it had been when he walked home.

Scrooge closed the window and examined the door by which the Ghost had entered. It was double-locked, as he had locked it with his own hands, and the bolts were undisturbed. Scrooge tried to say, “Humbug!” but stopped at the first syllable. He went straight to bed without undressing, and fell asleep on the instant.

Stop and Check

Which words are synonyms?

- ghost
- partner
- spirit
- mourner
- apparition
- nephew
- spectre
- phantom
- neighbor
- clerk

Discuss

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What happened to Marley? What is his message to Scrooge?



Analyze What You Read

1. When do you think this story takes place?
2. Where do you think this story takes place?
3. What do the chains around Marley and the other spirits represent?
4. Do you think Scrooge is a successful businessman? Why or why not?
5. What does each person (Marley, Fred, the Clerk, and the Two Men) want from Scrooge?
6. Scrooge tells his clerk that Christmas is “A poor excuse for picking a man’s pocket every twenty-fifth of December.” What do you think pick a man’s pocket means?
7. Based on the first chapter, what is the pattern of organization of this text? What do you think will happen?
8. What is the tone of this first chapter? What words from the text help you to understand that?



Interpret What You Read — Scene 1

INSTRUCTIONS: *Work with a partner. Imagine you are actors. Choose roles. Read aloud.*

Scene 1 (Scrooge and Fred)

FRED: A merry Christmas, uncle!

SCROOGE: Bah! Humbug

FRED: Christmas a humbug, uncle! You don't mean that, I am sure?

SCROOGE: I do. Forget merry Christmas! What's Christmas time to you but a time for paying bills without money; a time for finding yourself a year older, and not an hour richer? If I had my will, every idiot who goes about with 'Merry Christmas' on his lips should be boiled with his own pudding, and buried with a stake of holly through his heart!

FRED: Uncle!

SCROOGE: Nephew, keep Christmas in your own way, and let me keep it in mine.

FRED: Keep it! But you don't keep it.

SCROOGE: Let me leave it alone, then. No good may it do you! No good it has ever done you!

FRED: There are many things from which I might have derived good, by which I have not profited, I dare say,

Christmas among the rest. But I am sure I have always thought of Christmas time, when it has come round, — not only its religious part, but everything else — as a good time; a kind, forgiving, charitable, pleasant time; 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 thank of people below them as if they really were fellow travelers to the grave, and not another race of creatures bound on other journeys. And therefore, uncle, though it has never put a scrap of gold or silver in my pocket, I believe that it has done me good, and will do me good; and I say yes to Christmas!

SCROOGE: I wonder why you don't become a politician.

FRED: Don't be angry, uncle. Come! Dine with us tomorrow.

SCROOGE: No.

FRED: But why? Why?

SCROOGE: Why did you get married?

FRED: Because I fell in love.

SCROOGE: Because you fell in love! Goodbye!

FRED: No, uncle, but you never came to see me before that happened. Why give it as a reason for not coming now?

SCROOGE: Goodbye!

FRED: I am sorry, with all my heart, to find you like this. We have never fought before. I came, in honor of Christmas, and I will keep my Christmas spirit still. So A Merry Christmas, uncle!

SCROOGE: Bah!

FRED: And A Happy New Year!

SCROOGE: Humbug!



Interpret What You Read — Scene 2

INSTRUCTIONS: *Work with two partners. Imagine you are actors. Choose roles. Read aloud.*

Scene 2 (Scrooge, Person One, and Person 2)

PERSON ONE: Scrooge and Marley's, I believe. Have I the pleasure of addressing Mr. Scrooge, or Mr. Marley?

SCROOGE: "Mr. Marley has been dead these seven years. He died seven years ago, this very night.

PERSON TWO: At this festive season of the year, Mr. Scrooge, "it is more than usually desirable that we should make some slight provision for the poor, who suffer greatly at the present time. Many thousands are in want of common necessities; hundreds of thousands are in want of common comforts, sir.

SCROOGE: Are there no prisons?

PERSON ONE: Plenty of prisons, but there are those in need who have committed no crime. A few of us are trying to raise funds to buy the poor some food and drink, and means of warmth. We choose this time, because it is a time, of all others, when Want is keenly felt, and Abundance rejoices. What shall I put you down for?

SCROOGE: Nothing!

PERSON TWO: You wish to be anonymous?

SCROOGE: I wish to be left alone. Since you ask me what I wish, gentlemen, that is my answer. I don't make merry myself at Christmas, and I can't afford to make idle people merry. I help to support the prisons and the workhouses — they cost enough — and those who are badly off must go there.

PERSON ONE: Many can't go there; and many would rather die.

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

PERSON TWO: But, Mister Scrooge!

SCROOGE: Goodbye!

PERSON ONE: Mister Scrooge!

SCROOGE: Goodbye!

PERSON ONE AND PERSON TWO TOGETHER:
Mister Scrooge!

SCROOGE: I said, goodbye!

PERSON ONE: Merry Christmas, Mister Scrooge.

SCROOGE: Bah!

PERSON TWO: And a Happy New Year, too, Mister Scrooge!

SCROOGE: Humbug!



Interpret What You Read — Scene 3

INSTRUCTIONS: *Work with a partner. Imagine you are actors. Choose roles. Read aloud.*

Scene 3 (Scrooge and Marley)

MARLEY: Scrooge!

SCROOGE: How now! What do you want with me?"

MARLEY: Much.

SCROOGE: Who are you?

MARLEY: Ask me who I was.

SCROOGE: Who were you then?

MARLEY: In life, I was your partner, Jacob Marley. But you don't believe in me, do you?

SCROOGE: I don't.

MARLEY: Why do you doubt your senses?

SCROOGE: Because a little thing affects them. A slight disorder of the stomach makes them cheats. You may be an undigested bit of beef, a blot of mustard, a crumb of cheese, a fragment of an underdone potato. There's more of gravy than of grave about you, whatever you are!

MARLEY: Hear me! My time is nearly gone.

SCROOGE: Yes, Jacob. Go on.

MARLEY: I am here tonight to warn you that you have

yet a chance and hope of escaping my fate. A chance and hope of my procuring, Ebenezer.

SCROOGE: You were always a good friend to me. Thank you!

MARLEY: You will be haunted by Three Spirits.

SCROOGE: Is that the chance and hope you mentioned, Jacob? I — I think I'd rather not.

MARLEY: Without their visits, you cannot hope to shun the path I tread. Expect the first to-morrow night, when the bell tolls One. Expect the second on the next night at the same hour. The third, upon the next night, when the last stroke of Twelve has ceased to vibrate.

SCROOGE: No, Jacob! No!

MARLEY: Look to see me no more; and look that, for your own sake, you remember what has passed between us!

SCROOGE: Bah!

MARLEY: Remember, Ebenezer. Remember!

SCROOGE: Humbug!

PART II



Scrooge Extinguishes the First of the Three Spirits



The First of the Three Spirits

When Scrooge awoke, it was so dark that he could scarcely distinguish the transparent window from the opaque¹ walls of his chamber, until suddenly the church clock tolled a deep, dull, hollow, melancholy ONE.

Light flashed, and the curtains of his bed were drawn aside by a strange figure — like a child: yet not so like a child as like an old man. Its hair, which hung about its neck and down its back, was white as if with age; and yet the face had not a wrinkle in it. It held a branch of fresh green holly in its hand. But the strangest thing about it was that from the crown of its head there was a bright clear jet of light by which all this was visible.

“Are you the Spirit, sir, whose coming was foretold to me?”

“I am!”

“Who and what are you?”

“I am the Ghost of Christmas Past.”

“Long past?”

“No. Your past.”

The grasp, though gentle as a woman’s hand, was not to be resisted. He rose; but finding that the Spirit moved

1. solid so that you cannot see through it

towards the window, Scrooge grabbed his robe and fell to his knees.

“I am a mortal,² and likely will fall.”

“Let me touch my hand there,” said the Spirit, laying it upon his heart, “and you shall be upheld in more than this!”

As the words were spoken, they passed through the wall, and stood upon an open country road with fields on either side. The city had entirely vanished. Not a hint of it was to be seen. The darkness and the mist had vanished with it, for it was a clear, cold, winter day, with snow upon the ground.

“Good Heaven!” said Scrooge, clasping his hands together, as he looked about him. “I was a boy here!”

The Spirit gazed upon him mildly. Its gentle touch, though it had been light and instantaneous, appeared still present to the old man’s sense of feeling. He was conscious of a thousand smells floating in the air, each one connected with a thousand thoughts, and hopes, and joys, and cares long, long, forgotten!

“Your lip is trembling,” said the Ghost. “And what is that upon your cheek?”

Scrooge muttered, with an unusual catching in his voice, that it was a pimple; and begged the Ghost to lead him where he would.

Discuss

What was on Scrooge’s cheek? Why?

2. human and not able to live forever

“Do you remember the way?” inquired the Spirit.

“Remember it!” cried Scrooge; “I could walk it blindfold.”

“Strange to have forgotten it for so many years!” observed the Ghost. “Let us go on.”

They walked along the road, Scrooge recognizing every gate, and post, and tree until a little town appeared in the distance, with its bridge, its church, and winding river. Some small horses now were coming towards them with boys upon their backs, who called to others that they passed. All these boys were in great spirits, and shouted to each other, until the broad fields were so full of merry music, that the crisp air laughed to hear it! They were leaving school for the jolly holidays. Scrooge wanted to wave to them.

“These are but shadows of the things that have been,” said the Ghost. “They have no consciousness of us.”

Scrooge knew and named them every one. Why was he so happy to see them? Why did his cold eye glisten, and his heart leap up as they went past? Why was he filled with gladness when he heard them give each other Merry Christmas, as they parted for their several homes? What was merry Christmas to Scrooge? What good had it ever done to him?

“The school is not quite empty,” said the Ghost. “A solitary³ child, neglected⁴ by his friends, is left there still.”

Scrooge said he knew it. And he cried. “Poor boy!” and cried again.

3. one and only one; alone

4. not care for, not paid attention to

Stop and check

Who was the boy left alone at school during Christmas?

“I wish,” Scrooge started to say, putting his hand in his pocket, and looking about him, after drying his eyes with his cuff, “but it’s too late now.”

“What is the matter?” asked the Spirit.

“Nothing,” said Scrooge. “Nothing. There was a boy singing a Christmas Carol at my door last night. I should like to have given him something; that’s all.”

The Ghost smiled thoughtfully, and waved its hand, saying as it did so, “Let us see another Christmas!”

Scrooge’s former self grew larger at the words, and the room became a little darker and more dirty. There he was, alone again. A little girl, much younger than the boy, came running in, and putting her arms around his neck, and often kissing him, addressed him as her “Dear, dear brother.”

“I have come to bring you home, dear brother!” said the child, clapping her tiny hands, and bending down to laugh. “To bring you home, home, home!”

“Home, little Fan?” returned the boy.

“Yes!” said the child, full of happiness. “Home, for good and all. Home, for ever and ever. Father is so much kinder than he used to be, that home’s like Heaven! He spoke so gently to me one dear night when I was going to bed that I was not afraid to ask him once more if you might come home; and he said, yes, you should; and sent me to bring you. And you’re never to come back here. But first,

we're to be together all the Christmas long, and have the merriest time in all the world."

At that moment, Scrooge and the Ghost left the school behind them. They were now in the busy streets of a city. It was Christmas time again; but it was evening, and the streets were lit up. The Ghost stopped at a certain warehouse door, and asked Scrooge if he knew it.

"Know it! I was apprenticed⁵ here!"

They went in. At the sight of an old gentleman, Scrooge cried in great excitement: "Why, it's old Fezziwig! Bless his heart, it's Fezziwig, alive again!"

Old Fezziwig laid down his pen and looked up at the clock, which pointed to the hour of seven. He rubbed his hands, laughed all over himself, and called out in a comfortable, oily, rich, fat, jolly voice: "Yo ho, there! Ebenezer! Dick!"

A living and moving picture of Scrooge's former self, a young man, came quickly in, accompanied by his co-worker.

"Dick Wilkins, to be sure!" said Scrooge to the Ghost. "My old co-worker, yes. There he is."

"Yo ho, my boys!" said Fezziwig. "No more work tonight. Christmas eve, Dick. Christmas, Ebenezer! Let's close the shop before a man can say Jack Robinson! Clear away, my lads, and let's have lots of room here!"

It was done in a minute.

In came a fiddler⁶ with a book of music. In came Mrs. Fezziwig, one vast⁷ substantial smile. In came the three Miss Fezziwigs, beaming and lovable. In came the six young followers whose hearts they broke. In came all the

5. an apprentice studies a job with a master, often without pay
6. a person who plays a fiddle, which is like a small violin
7. very large and enormous; giant

young men and women employed in the business. In came the housemaid, with her cousin the baker. In came the cook, with her brother's particular friend the milkman. In they all came one after another; some shyly, some boldly, some gracefully, some awkwardly, some pushing, some pulling; in they all came, anyhow and everyhow.

There were dances, and there were games, and more dances and much food.

When the clock struck eleven, this house party broke up. Mr. and Mrs. Fezziwig took their stations, one on either side of the door, and, shaking hands with every person individually as he or she went out, wished him or her a Merry Christmas.

"A small matter," said the Ghost, "to make these silly folks so full of gratitude.⁸ He has spent but a few pounds of your mortal money — three or four perhaps. Is that so much that he deserves this praise?"

"It isn't that," said Scrooge, heated by the remark, and speaking unconsciously like his former self — "it isn't that, Spirit. He has the power to make us happy or unhappy; to make our service light or burdensome;⁹ a pleasure or a toil.¹⁰ The happiness he gives is quite as great as if it cost a fortune."

He felt the Spirit's glance and stopped.

"What is the matter?" asked the Spirit.

"Nothing particular," said Scrooge.

"Something, I think?"

"No, no. I should like to be able to say a word or two to my clerk just now. That's all."

8. a feeling of being grateful to someone because they have given you something or have done something for you
9. creating or being a problem for others
10. difficult or exhausting work

Stop and check

Who was Mr. Fezziwig?

- Scrooge's father
- Scrooge's son
- Scrooge's former boss
- Scrooge's co-worker

Discuss

What do you think Scrooge wanted to say to his clerk?

“My time grows short,” observed the Spirit. “Quick!”

This was not addressed to Scrooge, or to any one whom he could see, but it produced an immediate effect. For again he saw himself. He was older now; a man in the prime of life. He was not alone, but sat by the side of a fair young girl in a black dress, in whose eyes there were tears.

“It matters little,” she said softly to Scrooge's former self. “To you, very little. Another idolⁱⁱ has displaced me; and if it can comfort you in time to come, then there is no reason for me to feel bad.”

“What Idol has displaced you?”

“A golden one. You fear the world too much. I have seen your more honorable goals fall off one by one, until the master passion, Gain, has taken over. Have I not?”

“What then? Even if I have grown so much wiser, what

ii. something that you worship or admire very much

then? I am not changed towards you. Have I ever sought release from our engagement?"

"In words, no, never. But in a changed nature. If you were free today, tomorrow, yesterday, can even I believe that you would choose a poor girl? If you did choose her, then I know your regret would surely follow. I know that, and I release you. And I release you with a full heart, for the love of him you once were."

Discuss

The young girl releases Scrooge from their engagement. What does that mean? Why does she do that?

"Spirit! Remove me from this place."

"I told you these were shadows of the things that have been," said the Ghost. "That they are what they are, do not blame me!"

"Remove me!" Scrooge exclaimed. "I cannot take it! Leave me! Take me back. Haunt me no longer!"

As he struggled with the Spirit, he was conscious of being exhausted, and overcome by an irresistible drowsiness;¹² and, further, of being in his own bedroom. He had barely time to reel to bed before he sank into a heavy sleep.ing

12. sleepiness



Analyze What You Read

1. What does the first spirit show Scrooge?
2. Who is Dick Wilkins?
3. Who is the young woman at the end of this chapter
4. When Scrooge sees himself with the young woman at the end of the chapter, he sees himself as “a man in the prime of life.” What do you think this means?
5. The young woman says another idol has displaced her in Scrooge’s life. What is it?
6. What do we learn about Scrooge from each of these memories? Explain.
7. The Ghost of Christmas Past helped Scrooge to change the things he did as a young man. True or False?
8. In your opinion, has the tone changed? Is the tone of this chapter different than the previous chapter? How? Explain your answer.



Connect to What You Read

If the Ghost of Christmas Past visited your dreams, what would it show you? Describe one scene. What would it remind you of? Then share your story in small groups and explain its lesson.

Example

This scene from my past reminds me of this lesson I learned ...
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The Ghost of Christmas Past shows me a scene from my school play. I was six years old. I was chosen to play a star in the sky. I was so scared. I was not always sure of what I was doing.	
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This was my first time on stage. I was amazed by the lights and scenery. It was exciting! It was my first play, but not my last. It taught me to love theater and the power of creativity in our lives.

PART III



The Ghost of Christmas Present



The Second of the Three Spirits

Awaking, Scrooge found himself in his bedroom. There was no doubt about that. He shuffled in his slippers to his sitting room, attracted by a great light there. It had undergone a surprising transformation. The walls and ceiling were so hung with living plants that it looked like a perfect forest. The leaves of holly, mistletoe, and ivy reflected back the light, as if many little mirrors had been scattered there; and a mighty fire went roaring up the chimney. Heaped upon the floor to form a kind of throne were turkeys, geese, great pieces of meat, pigs, long wreaths of sausages, barrels of oysters, red-hot chestnuts, cherry-cheeked apples, juicy oranges, luscious pears, immense cakes, and great bowls of punch. There a glorious Giant sat with a glowing torch. The Giant raised the torch high to shed its light on Scrooge, as he came peeping round the door.

“Come in, come in! and know me better, man! I am the Ghost of Christmas Present.”

“Spirit, take me where you will. I went last night because I had to, and I learned a lesson which is working now. Tonight, if you have ought to teach me, let me profit by it.”

“Touch my robe!”

Scrooge did as he was told, and held it tightly. The room

and its contents all vanished¹ instantly, and they stood in the city streets upon a snowy Christmas morning. Scrooge and the Ghost passed on, invisible, straight to the four-roomed house of Scrooge's clerk, Bob Cratchit.

Cratchit's wife laid the table cloth, assisted by Belinda Cratchit, second of her daughters, while Master Peter Cratchit plunged a fork into the saucepan of potatoes. And now two smaller Cratchits, boy and girl, came tearing in, screaming that they had smelled the goose.

"What has ever got your precious father then?" said Mrs. Cratchit. "And your brother Tiny Tim! And Martha wasn't this late last Christmas day!"

"Here's Martha, mother!" said a girl, appearing as she spoke.

"Here's Martha, mother!" cried the two young Cratchits. "Hurrah! There's such a goose, Martha!"

"Why, bless your heart alive, my dear, how late you are!" said Mrs. Cratchit, kissing her a dozen times.

"We had a great deal of work to finish up last night," replied the girl.

"Well! Never mind so long as you are here," said Mrs. Cratchit. "Sit by the fire, my dear, and warm up!"

"No! Father is coming," cried the two young Cratchits, who were everywhere at once. "Hide, Martha!"

So Martha hid herself, and in came Bob, the father, with Tiny Tim upon his shoulder. Alas for Tiny Tim, he carried a little crutch, and had his limbs supported by an iron frame!

"Why, where's our Martha?" cried Bob Cratchit, looking around.

"Not coming," said Mrs. Cratchit.

1. disappeared

“Not coming!” said Bob, suddenly sad, “not coming upon Christmas day!”

Martha didn’t like to see him disappointed, even if it were only in joke; so she came out prematurely from behind the closet door, and ran into his arms.

“And how did little Tim behave?” asked Mrs. Cratchit.

“As good as gold,” said Bob.

Mrs. Cratchit made the gravy; Master Peter mashed the potatoes with incredible vigor; Miss Belinda sweetened up the applesauce; Martha dusted the hot plates; Bob took Tiny Tim beside him in a tiny corner at the table; the two young Cratchits set chairs for everybody.

At last the dinner was all done, the cloth was cleared, the hearth² swept, and the fire made up. Then all the Cratchit family drew round the hearth and Bob made a toast —

“A Merry Christmas to us all. God bless us!” Which all the family re-echoed. “God bless us every one!” said Tiny Tim, the last of all.

Tiny Tim sat very close to his father’s side upon his little stool. Bob held his weak little hand in his. He loved the child, and wished to keep him by his side; he dreaded that he might be taken from him.

“Spirit,” said Scrooge, with an interest he had never felt before, “tell me if Tiny Tim will live.”

“I see an empty seat,” replied the Ghost, “and a crutch without an owner, carefully preserved. If these shadows remain unaltered by the Future, the child will die.”

“No, no,” said Scrooge. “Oh, no, kind Spirit! say he will be spared.”³

2. fireplace

3. to not harm someone or something

“If these shadows remain unaltered by the Future, none other of my race,” returned the Ghost, “will find him here. What then? If he is going to die, then he should, and decrease the surplus population.”

Scrooge hung his head to hear his own words quoted by the Spirit. He felt regret and grief.

“Man,” said the Ghost, “if you have a heart, stop saying those things until you understand better the great resources of the world and where they are. Who are you to decide who shall live and who shall die? To others, you are more worthless and less fit to live than millions like this poor man’s child.”

Scrooge lowered his eyes to look at the ground. But he raised them speedily when he heard his name.

“To Mr. Scrooge,” said Bob, “the Founder of the Feast!”

“The Founder of the Feast indeed!” cried Mrs. Cratchit, reddening. “I wish I had him here I’d give him a piece of my mind to feast upon and I hope he’d have a good appetite for it.”

“My dear,” said Bob, “the children! Christmas day.”

“It should be Christmas day,” said she, “on which one drinks to the health of such a hateful, stingy,⁴ hard, unfeeling man as Mr. Scrooge. You know he is, Robert! Nobody knows it better than you do!”

“My dear,” was Bob’s mild answer, “Christmas day.”

“I’ll drink to his health for your sake,” said Mrs. Cratchit, “not for his. Long life to him! A merry Christmas and a happy New Year! He’ll be very merry and very happy, I have no doubt!”

4. cheap, unwilling to spend money

Stop and check

Who is Bob Cratchit?

- Scrooge's nephew
- Scrooge's uncle
- Scrooge's clerk
- Scrooge's business partner

Discuss

Describe the Cratchit family in your own words.

In a blink of an eye, the scene changed, and Scrooge was surprised to hear a hearty laugh. It was a much greater surprise to Scrooge to recognize it as his own nephew's, and to find himself now in a bright, dry, gleaming room, with the Spirit standing smiling by his side, and looking at that same nephew.

When Scrooge's nephew laughed, Scrooge's niece by marriage laughed as heartily as he. And so did all their friends at the party.

"He said that Christmas was a humbug!" cried Scrooge's nephew. "He believed it, too!"

"More shame for him, Fred!" said Scrooge's niece, indignantly.⁵

"He's a comical old fellow," said Scrooge's nephew, "that's the truth; and not so pleasant as he might be.

5. with anger because of an unfair situation or someone's unfair behavior

However, his offenses carry their own punishment, and I have nothing to say against him. Who suffers by his ill whims?⁶ Himself, always. Here he takes it into his head to dislike us, and he won't come and dine with us. What's the consequence?"

After tea they had some music. But they didn't devote the whole evening to music. After a while they played games; for it is good to be children sometimes, and never better than at Christmas.

"Here is a new game," said Scrooge, watching carefully.

It was a game called Yes and No, where Scrooge's nephew had to think of something, and the rest must find out what; he could only answer yes or no. From the questioning, the others learned from Fred that he was thinking of an animal, a live animal, rather a disagreeable animal, a savage animal, an animal that growled and grunted sometimes, and talked sometimes, and lived in London, and walked about the streets, and wasn't made a show of, and wasn't led by anybody, and didn't live in a zoo, and was never killed in a market, and was not a horse, or a mule, or a cow, or a bull, or a tiger, or a dog, or a pig, or a cat, or a bear. At every new question put to him, this nephew burst into a fresh roar of laughter; and was so tickled,⁷ that he was obliged to jump off the sofa. At last one sister cried out:

"I have found it out! I know what it is, Fred! I know what it is!"

"What is it?" cried Fred.

6. a sudden feeling that you must have or must do something

7. amused, made happy

Discuss

What do you think was her response?

“It’s your uncle Scro-o-o-o-oge!”

The whole scene disappeared in the breath of the last word spoken by his nephew; and Scrooge and the Spirit were again upon their travels.

“Are spirits’ lives so short?” asked Scrooge.

“My life upon this globe, is very brief,” replied the Ghost. “It ends tonight.”

“Tonight!” cried Scrooge.

“Look here.”

From the folds of its robe, the Ghost brought two children; sad, frightful, hideous, miserable. They knelt down at its feet and clung to the outside of its garment. They were a poor boy and girl.

Scrooge started back, shocked. He tried to say they were fine children, but the words choked themselves, rather than be part of an enormous lie.

“Spirit! are they yours?” Scrooge could say no more.

“They are Humanity’s,” said the Spirit, looking down upon them. “This boy is Ignorance. This girl is Want. Beware⁸ of them both and everyone like them, but most of all beware of this boy, for he will lead you to Doom,⁹ unless he is changed.”

“Have they no refuge or resource?” cried Scrooge.

“Are there no prisons?” said the Spirit, turning on him

8. be careful, be alert

9. a bad event, usually death, destruction, or complete failure, that will happen in the future and cannot be avoided

for the last time with his own words. “Are there no workhouses?”

The bell struck twelve.

Scrooge looked about him for the Ghost and saw it no more. As the last stroke ceased to vibrate, he remembered the prediction of old Jacob Marley, and, lifting up his eyes, beheld a solemn Phantom, draped and hooded, coming like a mist along the ground towards him.



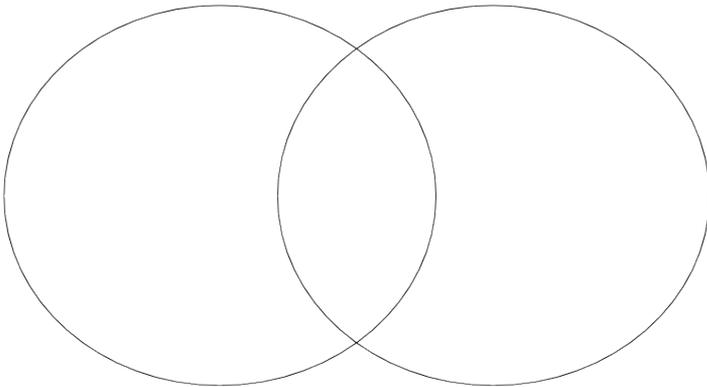
Analyze What You Read

1. How is the Ghost of Christmas Present different than the Ghost of Christmas Past? Explain.
2. The Cratchit family is rich and unhappy. True or False?
3. How many children are in the Cratchit family? (Can you name them all?)
4. Who in the Cratchit family is not well?
5. Bob makes a toast. In this case, what is a toast?
6. What does Scrooge observe at his nephew's house?
7. Why is the spirit of Christmas Present a stranger to Scrooge? Explain.
8. The two children that come from the Ghost's robes are Ignorance and Want. Explain this scene in your own words. What do they represent? Why does the Ghost show this to Scrooge?



Compare And Contrast What You Read

Think about the pattern of organization in this chapter. Then compare and contrast the two scenes — Bob’s house and Fred’s house. What is same? What is different?



In your opinion, why does the author choose this pattern of organization? Why does he want to share this information?

PART IV



The Ghost of Christmas Future



The Last of the Spirits

The Phantom slowly, gravely,¹ silently approached. When it came near him, Scrooge bent down upon his knee; for in the air through which this Spirit moved it seemed to scatter gloom² and mystery.

It was shrouded³ in a deep black garment, which concealed⁴ its head, its face, its form, and left nothing of it visible save one outstretched hand. He knew no more, for the Spirit neither spoke nor moved.

“I am in the presence of the Ghost of Christmas Yet To Come? Ghost of the Future! I fear you more than any spectre I have seen. But as I know your purpose is to do me good, and as I hope to live to be another man from what I was, I am prepared to go with you and do it with a thankful heart. Will you not speak to me?”

It gave him no reply. The hand was pointed straight before them.

“Lead on! Lead on! The night is waning⁵ fast, and it is precious time to me, I know. Lead on, Spirit!”

They were in the heart of the city. The Spirit stopped

1. seriously
2. the feeling of having no hope; darkness
3. covered by robes
4. hid
5. diminishing, fading

beside one little group of businessmen. Observing that the hand was pointed to them, Scrooge advanced to listen to their talk.

“No,” said a great fat man with a monstrous chin. “I don’t know much about it either way. I only know he’s dead.”

“When did he die?” inquired another.

“Last night, I believe.”

“Why, what was the matter with him? I thought he’d never die.”

“Who knows?” said the first, with a yawn.

“What has he done with his money?” asked a red-faced gentleman.

“I haven’t heard,” said the man with the large chin. “To his company, perhaps. He hasn’t left it to me. That’s all I know.”

They all laughed.

“It’s likely to be a very cheap funeral,” said the same speaker, “for upon my life I don’t know of anybody who would go to it.”

“I don’t mind going if a lunch is provided,” observed another gentleman. “But I must be fed.”

They all laughed again.

Scrooge was at first surprised that the Spirit should attach importance to conversation apparently so unimportant, but feeling assured that it must have some hidden purpose, he set himself to consider what it was likely to be. It could hardly be thought to have any importance to the death of Jacob, his old partner, for that was Past, and this Ghost’s specialty was the Future.

They left this busy scene, and went into a hidden part of the town, to a shop where iron, old rags, bottles, bones,

and greasy parts of an animal were bought. A gray-haired rascal⁶ of great age sat smoking his pipe.

Scrooge and the Phantom came into the presence of this man just as a woman with a heavy bundle slunk into the shop. But she had scarcely entered, when another woman came in with bundles, too; and she was closely followed by a man in faded black. They all three burst into a laugh.

“Every person has a right to take care of themselves. He always did!” said one woman. “Who’s the worse for the loss of a few things like these? Not a dead man, I suppose.”

“No, indeed, ma’am.”

“If he wanted to keep ’em after he was dead, why wasn’t he normal in his lifetime? If he had been, he’d have had somebody to look after him when he was struck with Death, instead of lying gasping out his last breath there, alone by himself.”

“It’s the truest word that ever was spoken; it’s a judgment on him.”

“I wish it was a little heavier judgment. Open that bundle, old Joe, and let me know the value of it. Speak out plain. I’m not afraid to be the first, nor afraid for them to see it.”

Joe went down on his knees for the greater convenience of opening the bundle, and dragged out a large and heavy roll of some dark stuff.

“What do you call this? Bed curtains!”

“Ah! Bed curtains! Don’t drop that oil upon the blankets, now.”

“His blankets?”

“Whose else’s do you think? He isn’t likely to be cold without them now. Ah! You may look through that shirt

6. a dishonest person

till your eyes ache; but you won't find a hole in it, nor a threadbare place. It's the best he had, and a fine one, too. They'd have wasted it by dressing him up in it, if it hadn't been for me."

Stop and check

What is Scrooge seeing?

- Three poor people are selling all that they own because they don't need it.
- Three rich people are selling a few extra things because they don't need them.
- Three servants are selling things for a man who is their employer.
- Three people are selling things they stole from a man after he died.

Stop and check

What do these three people think of the man who died?

- They thought he was an unhappy and mean man who didn't deserve the nice things that he had.
- They respected the man a great deal, and they wanted to sell his things in order to give the money to poor people.
- They didn't know the man who died; they simply took the things of a stranger.
- Although they were sad to see the man die, they

were happy to inherit his property.

Although Scrooge listened to this dialogue in horror, he was frightened more when the scene changed. Now he almost touched a bed: a bare, uncurtained bed: on which, beneath a ragged sheet, there lay a something covered up. The room was very dark. A pale light fell straight upon the bed; and on it, robbed and empty, unwatched, uncared for, was the body of this man.

“Spirit, let me see some tenderness connected with a death, or this dark chamber, Spirit, will be forever present to me.”

The Ghost conducted him to poor Bob Cratchit’s house — the home he had visited before — and found the mother and the children seated round the fire.

Quiet. Very quiet. The noisy little Cratchits were as still as statues in one corner and sat looking up at Peter, who was reading from a book before him. The mother laid her work upon the table and put her hand up to her face.

“The color hurts my eyes,” she said. “It makes them weak by candle light; and I wouldn’t show weak eyes to your father when he comes home, not for the world. It must be near his time.”

“Past it,” Peter answered, shutting up his book. “But these few last evenings, I think he has walked a little slower than he used to, Mother.”

“I have known him to walk with Tiny Tim upon his shoulder, very fast indeed.”

“And so have I,” cried Peter. “Often.”

“And so have I,” exclaimed another. So had all.

“But he was very light to carry, and his father loved him

so, that it was no trouble — no trouble. And there is your father at the door!”

She hurried out to meet him; and Bob in his scarf came in. His tea was ready for him, and then the two young Cratchits got upon his knees and each child laid a little cheek against his face, as if they said, “Don’t think about it, father. Don’t be sad!”

Bob was very cheerful with them and spoke pleasantly to all the family.

“You went today, then, Robert?”

“Yes, my dear,” returned Bob. “I wish you could have gone. It would have done you good to see how green a place it is. But you’ll see it often. I promised him that I would walk there on a Sunday. My little, little child! My little child!”

He broke down all at once. He couldn’t help it. If he could have helped it, he and his child would have been farther apart, perhaps, than they were.

Discuss

What are they talking about? Where had Bob gone today?
What does “broke down” mean?

“Spectre,” said Scrooge, “something informs me that our parting moment is at hand. I know it, but I know not how. Tell me what man that was who died.”

The Ghost of Christmas Yet To Come conveyed him to

a dismal,⁷ wretched⁸ churchyard. The Spirit stood among the graves, and pointed down to one.

“Before I draw nearer to that stone to which you point, answer me one question. Are these the shadows of the things that will be, or are they shadows of the things that may be only?”

Still the Ghost pointed downward to the grave⁹ by which it stood.

“People’s actions will predict their consequences, which will surely happen. But if people change their actions, then the consequences will change. Say this is true.”

The Spirit was immovable as ever.

Scrooge crept towards it, trembling as he went; and, following the finger, read upon the stone of the neglected grave his own name —

EBENEZER SCROOGE

“Am I that man who we know is now dead? No, Spirit! O no, no! Spirit! hear me! I am not the man I was. I will not be the same man I was, not after these visits from three spirits. Why show me this if I am past all hope? Assure me that I yet may change these shadows you have shown me by an altered life.”

For the first time, the kind hand hesitated.

“I will honor 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. O, tell me I may sponge away the writing on this stone!”

Holding up his hands in one last prayer to have his fate reversed, he saw an alteration in the Phantom’s hood and

7. making you feel unhappy and without hope or enthusiasm
8. very unpleasant, or in very bad condition
9. the place where a dead body is buried in a deep hole in the ground

dress. It shrunk, collapsed, and dwindled down into a bedpost.

Yes, and the bedpost was his own. The bed was his own, the room was his own. Best and happiest of all, the time before him was his own, to make amends¹⁰ in! He stopped when he heard bells ringing. Running to the window, he opened it, and put out his head. No fog, no mist, no night; clear, bright, stirring, golden day.

“What’s today?” cried Scrooge, calling downward to a boy on the street.

“Today! Why, Christmas day.”

“It’s Christmas day! I haven’t missed it. Hurrah, my fine fellow!”

“Hurrah!”

“Do you know the poulterer’s,¹¹ in the next street but one, at the corner? Do you know whether they’ve sold the prize turkey that was hanging up there? Not the little prize turkey — the big one?”

“What, the one as big as me? It’s hanging there now.”

“Is it? Go and buy it.”

“What?!” exclaimed the boy.

“No, no, I am serious. Go and buy it, and tell ’em to bring it here, that I may give them the direction where to take it. Come back with the man, and I’ll give you a shilling. Come back with him in less than five minutes, and I’ll give you half a crown!”

The boy was off like a shot.

“I’ll send it to Bob Cratchit’s! He shall not know who sends it.

The hand in which he wrote the address was not a

10. make amends means to try to make a situation better after you have done something wrong

11. a person who sells poultry, such as chickens, turkeys and geese

steady one; but write it he did, somehow, and went downstairs to open the street door, ready for the coming of the poulterer's man.

Discuss

How many nights have passed since the beginning of the story?

Scrooge dressed himself all in his best and at last got out into the streets. The people were by this time pouring forth, as he had seen them with the Ghost of Christmas Present; and, walking with his hands behind him, Scrooge regarded every one with a delighted smile. He looked so irresistibly pleasant, in a word, that three or four good-humored fellows said, "Good morning, sir! A merry Christmas to you!"

In the afternoon, he turned his steps towards his nephew's house. He passed the door a dozen times, before he had the courage to go up and knock. But he made a dash, and did it.

"Why, bless my soul!" cried Fred. "Who's that?"

"It's I. Your uncle Scrooge. I have come to dinner. Will you let me in, Fred?"

Let him in! It is a mercy he didn't shake his arm off. He felt at home in five minutes. Nothing could be heartier. His niece looked just the same. So did everyone when they came. And there was a wonderful party, wonderful games, wonderful unanimity,¹² won-der-ful happiness!

But he was early at the office next morning. Oh, he was

12. a feeling of togetherness with everyone in friendly agreement

early there. If he could only be there first, and catch Bob Cratchit coming late! That was the thing he had set his heart upon.

And he did it. The clock struck nine. No Bob. A quarter past. No Bob. Bob was full eighteen minutes and a half behind his time.

“Hello!” growled Scrooge, in his accustomed voice, as near as he could fake it. “What do you mean by coming here at this time of day?”

“I am very sorry, sir. I am behind my time.”

“You are? Yes. I think you are. Step this way, if you please.”

“It’s only once a year, sir. It shall not be repeated. I was making rather merry yesterday, sir.”

“Now, I’ll tell you what, my friend. I am not going to stand this sort of thing any longer. And therefore,” Scrooge continued, leaping from his stool. “And therefore ...”

Discuss

In your opinion, what does Bob expect to happen?

“I am going to raise your salary!”

Bob trembled.¹³

“A Merry Christmas, Bob!” said Scrooge, with an honesty that could not be mistaken. “A merrier Christmas, Bob, my good fellow, than I have given you for many a year! I’ll raise your salary, and try to assist your struggling family, and we will discuss your affairs this very

13. shaking, usually because you are nervous, afraid, or excited

afternoon over warm drink, Bob! Make up the fires, and buy more coal before you dot another i, Bob Cratchit!"

Scrooge was better than his word. He did it all, and infinitely more; and to Tiny Tim, who did not die, he was a second father. 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. Some people laughed to see the alteration in him; but his own heart laughed, and that was quite enough for him.

He had no further exchanges with Spirits, and it was always said of him that he knew how to keep Christmas well. May that be truly said of us, and all of us! And so, as Tiny Tim observed, God Bless Us, Every One!



Analyze What You Read

1. At the beginning of this chapter, the three people are selling things that belonged to someone else. Who did they belong to?
 2. Why is the Cratchit family sad?
 3. What was the purpose of the Ghost of Christmas Future?
 4. In the end, Scrooge becomes nicer and more generous to those around him. True or False
 5. Bob was “behind his time.” What does that mean?
 6. In your opinion, were the spirits of Christmas all a dream? Explain your answer.
 7. Imagine a different ending. If the spirits had never visited Scrooge, what would his life have been like?
 8. This is a holiday story. This is a ghost story. This is also a morality story. What is the moral¹ of the story? What does the author want his readers to learn?
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1. something that you can learn from a story or an experience, usually about the difference between right and wrong



Share What You Read

Work with a partner to create a mind map of the story:

1. Write the title in the middle of the mind map.
2. Identify 3 major themes of the story. Add these as branches from the title.
3. For each major theme, note three examples from the story that help to understand the theme. Use a quotation from the story for one of the parts.
4. Share your mind map with the class. Explain your ideas to the class.

Example

