

A Christmas Carol – Knowledge Organiser

Stave	Key Quotations	How does this quote convey ideas about...	Key Themes
1 Marley's Ghost	Marley was dead, to begin with.	Intrigue and the unexpected	<p>Attitudes to the Poor Dickens wanted to highlight the plight of the poor in Victorian England and how they were exploited by the wealthy. He uses Scrooge as a vehicle to show that financial wealth does not mean contentment. Scrooge is impoverished in other ways. Dickens created a wealthy man who doesn't allow himself to enjoy any benefits of wealth versus the Cratchits: a family who are happy despite their poverty.</p> <p>Greed and Miserliness Dickens shows us that Scrooge is motivated by greed (his love of money is why his engagement is ended). However, we also see that he is a miser in Stave One, as he lives, by choice, with very little money spent on himself. Dickens shows us that by refusing to help others, when Scrooge refuses to give to the Charity collectors, Scrooge is able to give pleasure to others and to himself, but chooses not to. He hoards his money, but in Stave Four he sees how pointless that was. Dickens' message was to consider what we covet money for, and what use we put it to. He was suggesting to the wealthy in society that they should use their position to help others.</p> <p>Isolation versus Family We quickly learn that Scrooge ('solitary as an oyster') and Marley are isolated, and unhappy, characters. The warmth and emotion richness of families (Bob Cratchit's, Fred's, his ex-fiancee's) serve as a contrast to Scrooge's determined isolation. Scrooge's unhappy childhood started a pattern of isolation both forced and chosen. The message may be that's the family is the cornerstone of a happy society.</p> <p>Redemption Dickens uses different characters to demonstrate compassion and forgiveness (Fred and Bob who feel pity for Scrooge, and then forgive him) and how these people lead happy lives. In contrast, he shows the selfish nature of mankind in the dark and sinister Stave four. Scrooge's reform is result of his newfound capacity for compassion and kindness</p> <p>Social responsibility and reform Dickens is remembered as a great social reformer. We can be fairly certain that he wrote A Christmas Carol in the spirit of this lifetime interest. The novel suggests very powerfully that society has a responsibility to look after the poor and disadvantages, as Marley points out to Scrooge. Dickens also uses the wealthy characters to show that they have an important role in society and that individuals start social reform by taking responsibility for their own actions.</p> <p>The Malthusian Catastrophe Robert Malthus was a controversial economist who warned that the industrial revolution would lead to population growth; this popular growth could then lead only to starvation and disease, he argued, as there would not be enough resources for everyone. This concept was named the 'Malthusian Catastrophe'. Malthus therefore opposed the poor laws as they aimed to get people into factories to increase productivity. Dickens highlights the Malthusian Catastrophe when Scrooge refers to the workhouses as a logical solution for the poor.</p> <p>Transformation The novella contains many examples of transformation: the transformation of young Scrooge into an embittered old man; his transformation to a benevolent man; transformation of Marley from selfish human to eternally-suffering ghost; the transformation of the future; Tiny Tim from the doomed crippled child to the healthy boy. Dickens' basic message may have been that it is never too late to change; people can take control of their own destiny.</p>
	Oh! But he was a tight-fisted hand at the grindstone, Scrooge! A squeezing, wrenching, grasping, scraping, clutching, covetous, old sinner!	A biased narrator	
	Hard and sharp as flint	Scrooge	
	solitary as an oyster	Isolation	
	External head 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 on its purpose...	Scrooge	
	'I don't make myself merry at Christmas, and I can't afford to make idle people merry.'	Attitudes to the poor	
	'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'	Christmas, attitudes and symbols	
	'It's enough for a man to mind his own business, and not to interfere with other people's.'	Greed and benevolence	
	'Are there no prisons? Are there no workhouses?'	Cold logic	
	'I wear the chain I forged in life.'	Consequences and fate	
'If they would rather die,'... 'they had better do it, and decrease the surplus population.'			
2 Ghost of Christmas Past	'There is no light part of my penance.'	Punishment	
	From the crown of its head there sprung a bright clear jet of light	Symbols	
	'Your reclamation, then. Take heed!'	Transformation	
	'Your lip is trembling,' said the Ghost. 'And what is that upon your cheek?'	Transformation and emotions	
	A solitary child, neglected by his friends, is left there still	Childhood and determinism	
	'He has the power to render us happy or unhappy...the happiness he gives is quite as much as if it cost a fortune.'	Generosity and leadership	
	'I have seen your nobler aspirations fall off one by one, until the master passion, Gain, engrosses you.'	Obsession and avarice	
	'Remove me!' Scrooge exclaimed. 'I cannot bear it!'	Truth and reflection	
	Scrooge entered timidly, and hung his head before this Spirit	Transformation	
	They had smelled the goose and known if for their own; and basking in luxurious thoughts of sage and onion, these young Cratchits danced about the table.	Poverty and family	
3 Ghost of Christmas Present	'To hear the insect on the leaf pronouncing on the too much life amongst his hungry brothers in the dust!'	Attitudes to the poor	
	With an interest he had never felt before...'No, no, no, kind Spirit! Say he will be spared.'	Transformation and empathy	
	'If he die, he had better do it, and decrease the surplus population.'	Attitudes to the poor (and the Malthusian Catastrophe)	
	'I am sorry for him...Who suffers by his ill whims? Himself, always.'	Forgiveness and isolation	
	Uncle Scrooge had imperceptibly become so gay and light of heart.	Family and isolation	
	'This boy is ignorance. This girl is Want. Beware of them both...They are Man's'	Responsibility	
	plundered and bereft, unwatched, unwept, uncared for, was the body of this man	Isolation	
	'Avarice, hard dealing, gripping cares? They have brought him to a rich end, truly!'	Wealth versus poverty	
	'Are these the shadows of the things that Will be, or are they the shadows of the things that May be only?'	Transformation	
	The kind hand trembled	Forgiveness	
4 Ghost of Christmas Yet to Come	'No fog, no mist; clear, bright, jovial...heavenly sky, sweet, fresh air'	Transformation	
	'I am as light as a feather, I am as happy as an angel, I am as merry as a schoolboy...I am as giddy as a drunken man.'	Transformation and childhood	
	'I don't know how long I have been among the spirits. I don't know anything. I am quite a baby.'	Logic	
	Scrooge regarded everyone with a delighted smile.	Transformation	
	His own hear laughed; and that was quite enough for him.	Wealth	
5 Scrooge's Transformation	Remember, each character is constructed by the writer for a purpose		
	<p>Nominative determinism is a phrase used to describe the idea of a link between someone's name and what they do in life. For example, the famous Lake District poet William Wordsworth would seem to have had the perfect name for his calling in life! Writers can actively choose to make strong links between the names of their characters and what they do or what they are like. Perhaps no one did this more than Dickens' who is renowned for the memorable names that feature throughout his work.</p> <p>Ebenezer Scrooge Scrooge represents avarice (greed), cold logic and the negative effects of isolation. As a protagonist, the character initially dismisses the goodwill and generosity associated with Christmas, before becoming a symbol of Christmas spirit in Stave Fiv3e. he is a dynamic character (one who changes). A man who seems to embody, at the start, everything that Dickens criticises about the capitalist spirit of his times.</p> <p>The Christmas Spirits These are supernatural mechanisms, used by the author to direct events.</p> <p>The Ghost of Christmas Past is a symbol of childhood, truth and enlightenment. The spirit forces Scrooge to reflect on painful memories of childhood and his youth in order to properly understand himself. The bright light which emanates from his head represents truth. The cap which Scrooge uses to try to extinguish the light is a symbol of ignoble human desires and ignorance. The metaphor also links to Christianity, when Christ called himself the light of the world.</p> <p>The Ghost of Christmas Present represents goodwill, plenty and the festival of Christmas. He is the symbol of abundance. He holds a cornucopia (a horn of plenty). While he wears a scabbard, it does not contain a sword and is neglect, thus symbolising peace. He says that he has 'more than 1,800' brothers (each Christmas since Christ). When Scrooge declares that this is a 'tremendous family to provide for,' the Ghost becomes angry because Scrooge's only concern is the cost of the festival of goodwill. This Ghost has with him the children, Ignorance and Want, and warns Scrooge of the damage in wait for society if it continues to treat the weaker members of it so badly.</p> <p>The Ghost of Christmas Yet to Come symbolises a catastrophic future for mankind. The spirit echoes the figure of the 'grim reaper', or death, in the way he is described. His silent characterisation and ominous atmosphere create the idea of an unknowable and threatening future. He makes the final decision to show mercy towards Scrooge and complete his 'reclamation'. There is a sense that the future is not cruel, but simply caused by our present actions.</p> <p>The two portly gentlemen. These two charity collectors represent the common practice beginning in Dickens time. In different interpretations they may symbolise the caring nature of Christmas, the chance to give charity and to help others at a holy time. Dickens may have intended them as role models for the behaviour of the middle and wealthy classes. Alternatively, they are men who are doing the bare minimum to help their own consciousness, and not helping those they know or who might expect direct help.</p> <p>Fred represents compassion, forgiveness and the power of family. He serves as a contrast to Scrooge. Fred epitomises the concept of goodwill and forgiveness, refusing to be discouraged by his uncle's misery. People such as the Cratchits speak highly of Fred and his generosity. Fred shows that Scrooge has chosen isolation, and that he makes himself suffer just as much as he refuses to help others. Fred's patience with Scrooge for his mother's sake, and his forgiveness at the end, show the importance of belonging in a family.</p> <p>Bob Cratchit is Scrooge's downtrodden but loyal employee. Bob shows pity for Scrooge, and provides a contrast for his meanness and isolation. Bob's determination to speak in defence of Scrooge to his family shows the importance of maintaining your own moral code despite how others may treat you.</p> <p>Mrs Cratchit and the family are a symbol of Victorian poverty, cheerfulness in adversity, togetherness and Christmas spirit.</p> <p>Tiny Tim is an emblem for noble poverty, showing an idealised child who is able to understand the meaning of Christmas despite his social and physical circumstances. Tiny Tim is a famous example of pathos in Dicken's writing.</p> <p>The Fezziwig family are employers in contrast to Scrooge and the way he treats the Cratchit family. Dickens uses him to show how goodwill is worth more than actual cost: Scrooge points out that Fezziwig did not spend much on the Christmas party, but that the value to his employees in terms of happiness was immeasurable. The happy closeness of the family and their willingness to put fun above personal vanity shows the value of family and the damaging nature of pride, such as Scrooge's pride in being a 'good businessman'</p>		
	Key Terminology		
	Language		
	Semantic field	Simile	Repetition
	Personification	Metaphor	Dialogue
	Symbolism	Tricolon	Lists
	Form		
	Novella	Allegory	Ghost story
	Structure		
Authorial Intrusion	Cyclical	Musical Staves	
Assessment Objectives			
English Literature Paper 2 40 marks 55 minutes			
(a) Extract question. AO2 20 marks (Analyse the language, form and structure used by a writer to create meanings and effects, using relevant subject terminology where appropriate)			
(b) Whole text question. AO1 20 marks (Read, understand and respond to texts • maintain critical style for an informed personal response • use textual references, including quotations)			