

# **A Christmas Carol Book Notes**

## **A Christmas Carol by Charles Dickens**

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## Author/Context

Charles Dickens was born in England on February 7, 1812. He was the second of eight children, and his father was a clerk in the Navy Pay Office. As a child, Dickens' health was frail and his education was random. His mother taught him his letters and Dickens read a great deal from his father's library of the classics of fiction. The boy was also interested in theater and his first written work was a tragedy. At the age of nine, he was schooled with a neighbor's child, and when his father was transferred to London, Dickens stayed behind for a while in Chatham for his schooling. But when he rejoined his family in London, dark days awaited him.

His father was in debt, and so the Dickens family resided with him in Marshalsea Prison. Charles found work at household tasks and took a room for himself on one of the poor streets of London at the age of twelve. He worked for a while labeling blacking-bottles until his father inherited a legacy that brought the family out of debt again. Dickens was sent to school for a few more years before he became a clerk. He moved up from there to become a stenographer at several newspapers.

In 1833 his first published piece appeared in the *Monthly Magazine* signed with his brother's nickname. He later published a few pieces in the *Evening Chronicle* before the *Pickwick Papers* made him famous. For the next thirty years Dickens churned out novels until he died. His other works include: *Life and Adventures of Nicholas Nickleby* (1839), *The Personal History of David Copperfield* (1850), *Little Dorrit* (1857), *A Tale of Two Cities* (1859), and *Great Expectations* (1861).

Dickens had a large family with his wife, Catherine Hogarth, and he became a wealthy man through his writing. Dickens wrote actively while acting in private theatricals as well as touring and performing readings of his works.

In 1865, Dickens had a slight stroke that left his legs useless, but even this break in his health did not deter him from his active lifestyle of travel and work. He was working on *The Mystery of Edwin Drood* the day before he died. He was stricken with apoplexy and died the next day. Dickens was buried in Westminster Abbey.

Although Dickens has been criticized for creating characters which seem more like caricatures than real people, Ebenezer Scrooge and other Dickens figures have become well known in literature. *A Christmas Carol* expresses the far-reaching impact of Dickens' work in its ability to transcend the boundaries of the time in which it was written and remain a popular piece of drama and literature more than a century after it was first published in 1836.

*"Dickens . . . [was] the greatest dramatic writer that the English had had since Shakespeare, and . . . we may find in Dickens' work today a complexity and . . . an intellectual and artistic interest which makes Dickens loom very large in the whole perspective of the literature of the West."*



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## Plot Summary

Ebenezer Scrooge is a miserly old man who believes that Christmas is just an excuse for people to miss work and for idle people to expect handouts. He doesn't believe in all of the good cheer and charity that the season promotes, and he makes sure everyone knows it.

That night, Scrooge is visited by the ghost of his former business associate, Jacob Marley -- a man who was as greedy and cold as Scrooge is. Marley warns Scrooge that if he continues to live so selfishly, he will spend eternity wearing the chains that his greed has built.

Three ghosts visit Scrooge successively: the Ghost of Christmas Past, the Ghost of Christmas Present, and the Ghost of Christmas Yet to Come. They show Scrooge his error in valuing money over people. Scrooge is frightened by the bleak picture of his life and promises to change his ways.

Scrooge awakes on Christmas morning a new man. He becomes jolly and charitable, and truly turns into the man he promised the ghosts he would become. He carries the spirit of Christmas with him all the year round.



## Major Characters

**Ebenezer Scrooge:** Scrooge is a hard, cold miser who spends his days counting his profits and wishing the world would leave him alone. He doesn't believe in charity, and he is certain that those who do are just lazy bums looking for a handout. Scrooge's entire life is his business and he shuts out his nephew who is the only relative he has. But Scrooge is visited by his old business partner, Jacob Marley, who warns him that if he continues to live his life in such an unchristian way, he will spend all eternity trying to make up for it. Three ghosts, who show him that the errors of his ways, visit Scrooge. Because of what he sees and learns, Scrooge opens his heart to the people around him and learns charity and love and saves himself from the doom of which Marley warned him.

**Bob Cratchit:** Cratchit is an accountant who works for Scrooge, and he is a kind and loving family man. Scrooge generally mistreats Cratchit, but the accountant bears his employer no ill will because he believes that Scrooge's life is lonely. The greatest sorrow in Cratchit's life is that his young son, Tiny Tim, is very ill. Because Bob's salary is so meager, the family cannot afford treatment for Tim. When Scrooge sees their situation during one of the ghostly visitations, he realizes that he must be more generous to his employee and help save Tiny Tim.

**Jacob Marley:** Marley was once Scrooge's business partner, but he died seven years ago and now he returns as a ghost to warn Scrooge of the horrors that await him unless he changes his ways. Marley appears to Scrooge on Christmas Eve to tell him of the cumbersome burden that he bears in death because he neglected his duty toward others in life. Marley must walk around and watch people and regret that he did not help anyone or touch anyone during his lifetime. His burden is incessant remorse for his own greed during life. He warns Scrooge that unless he becomes a more charitable person, he will also bear that weight. Marley tells Scrooge of the three ghosts who will visit him. They are Scrooge's only chance for salvation. After the warning, Marley flies out the window and joins the other ghosts who drag their chains of duty.

**Ghost of Christmas Past:** The Ghost of Christmas Past is the epitome of the contradictions of youth and age as well as winter and spring. The ghost has a beam of light jetting from his head and Scrooge extinguishes the light when he feels that he is unable to bear any of the other memories that the ghost is showing him. By showing Scrooge his past, the ghost has makes him realize that he has changed drastically from who he was when he was young and that his interests have turned from people to money.

**Ghost of Christmas Present:** The Ghost of Christmas Present is a friendly, generous giant who shows Scrooge the homes of Bob Cratchit as well as Scrooge's nephew, Fred. In both homes, good will is extended toward Scrooge although he has never shown the same good will to either his clerk, or his nephew. As the time passes the ghost, who was young when he first appeared to Scrooge, seems to age in the way that the present changes to the past with the passing of time. Then, just as he is



approaching his last moments, the ghost shows Scrooge that want and ignorance are two products of society that will destroy it if not combated against by those who can prevent both social ills.

**Ghost of Christmas Yet to Come:** The Ghost of Christmas Yet to Come is a dark phantom, and the only part of this ghost that Scrooge sees, beyond his black robe, is a hand with which he points at the things Scrooge is to take notice of. This ghost shows Scrooge how he will die, and it is a sad scene. Scrooge begs the ghost to tell him that this fate can be changed if he changes his ways, but the ghost doesn't answer him. Scrooge is left only with the knowledge that he must change and become a more charitable person if he is to alter the fate that the ghost revealed to him.

**Tiny Tim Cratchit:** Tiny Tim is Bob Cratchit's youngest son. He is a lame boy with a cheerful nature despite his ailments. At the Christmas church service, Tim hopes that people will look at his ailment and be reminded of how Christ healed the lame and blind. Tiny Tim's guileless nature impresses Scrooge, and when he learns from the Ghost of Christmas Present that Tiny Tim will die soon, Scrooge is saddened. The Ghost of Christmas Yet to Come also shows the Cratchit house without Tiny Tim, and the vision is a sad one. Scrooge is touched by the gentleness of the little boy and wishes to prevent this fate from occurring.

### Minor Characters

**Scrooge's Nephew:** Fred, Scrooge's nephew (his deceased sister's son), is a pauper, but a cheerful man nonetheless. He comes to the counting house to wish Scrooge a merry Christmas and invite his uncle to dine with himself and his wife on Christmas Day. Scrooge, however, refuses to associate with his nephew. Fred actually pities his miserly uncle because although he has all that money, he is still alone and unhappy. Fred insists that he will visit Scrooge at Christmas every year no matter whether or not Scrooge ever agrees to dine with Fred and his wife. After his visitation by the three ghosts of Christmas, Scrooge attends the Christmas dinner at Fred's home and enjoys himself immensely.

**Donations Collectors:** Two men collecting donations for charity come to Scrooge expecting that such a wealthy businessman will contribute to their cause, but Scrooge refuses. He insists that there are government-established forms of aid, and if more is needed to help the poor, it's the government's responsibility. Later when Scrooge is converted, he donates a large sum of money to one of the men. The collector is greatly surprised by Scrooge's generosity after facing such hostility when they approached him the first time.

**Fannie Scrooge:** Ebenezer's younger sister whom he loved dearly but who died young. She was the mother of Ebenezer's nephew, his only living relative.

**Fezziwig:** Fezziwig was Scrooge's kind and generous employer. He revisits the memory of his employment with Fezziwig when the Ghost of Christmas Past shows him



Fezziwig's great Christmas party. The memory of this kind employer makes Scrooge feel a twinge of regret at how poorly he treats Bob Cratchit, his own employee.

**Belle:** Belle is the young woman who once loved and was loved by Scrooge. Unfortunately, his love for her was replaced by his love for money, and she did not want to be second in favor to gold. She left him and went her own way after that and married. Scrooge remained alone. The Ghost of Christmas Past reminds him of why Belle left him and shows him where his life began going the wrong direction.

**The Thieves:** These are poor people who rob from Scrooge when he dies because he had no one in his life to whom he could leave his wealth. They took many of his valuable possessions to sell them, and they have no remorse for their thievery because he was such a cruel, cold man. Scrooge sees them without knowing that he is the man from whom they steal, and he is disgusted by their greed. But he also pities the man they have robbed because he sounds like a miserable wretch despite his wealth.

**The Debtors:** A young couple who is indebted to Scrooge for some amount of money that they cannot presently repay, rejoices in his death, because now they may find some leniency in the creditor who takes over Scrooge's business. Although the couple knows that it is wrong to rejoice in someone's death, they cannot help but feel relieved that they no longer owe Scrooge money.



## Objects/Places

**The Knocker:** The knocker of the front door is shaped like a lion, but on Christmas Eve, Scrooge notices that for an instant it looks like Marley's face. It startles him momentarily, but Scrooge doesn't believe in ghosts or any other such fanciful thing, so he tries to forget about it. This incident is a precursor to Marley's arrival as well as that of the three ghosts that haunt Scrooge.

**Ray of Light :** The Ghost of Christmas Past has a bright ray of light shining from his head as if he can illuminate the mistakes of the past so that they can be mended or at least so that they will not be repeated. Scrooge tries to squelch this light when he feels that the ghost has shown him more than he can bear. The weight of Scrooge's mistakes is so heavy that he extinguishes the light so that he can see no more.

**Cornucopia torch:** The Ghost of Christmas Present carries a torch in the shape of the Horn of Plenty and when he sprinkles the magic within the torch on the people he watches, they are filled with the kindness and cheer that is associated with Christmas.

**Want and Ignorance:** Want and Ignorance are personified in two hideous children that appear beneath the robes of the Ghost of Christmas Present. He explains to Scrooge that these are the children of mankind and that they should be avoided, especially Ignorance, or doom is imminent.

**Headstone:** The headstone is what reveals to Scrooge that the friendless man who died in the vision of the Ghost of Christmas Yet to Come was actually Scrooge himself. This headstone bearing his name was the greatest catalyst for Scrooge's repentance. Once he sees the way that his greedy, loveless life will end if he continues in his ways, Scrooge promises to be a more charitable, generous person to prevent such an end.



## Quotes

Quote 1: "Oh! but he was a tight-fisted hand at the grindstone, Scrooge! a squeezing, wrenching, grasping, scraping, clutching, covetous old sinner! Hard and sharp as flint, from which no steel had ever struck out generous fire; secret, and self-contained, and solitary as an oyster." Stave 1, pg. 59

Quote 2: "'Bah! Humbug!'" Stave 1, pg. 60

Quote 3: "'If they would rather die, . . . they had better do it, and decrease the surplus population.'" Stave 1, pg. 63

Quote 4: "'Mankind was my business. The common welfare was my business; charity, mercy, forbearance, and benevolence were, all, my business. The dealings of my trade were but a drop of water in the comprehensive ocean of my business!'" Stave 1, pg. 71

Quote 5: "'Say that his power lies in words and looks; in things so slight and insignificant that it is impossible to add and count 'em up: what then? The happiness [Fezziwig] gives is quite as great as if it cost a fortune.'" Stave 2, pg. 83

Quote 6: "'You may -- the memory of what is past half makes me hope you will -- have pain in this. A very, very brief time, and you will dismiss the recollection of it gladly, as an unprofitable dream from which it happened well that you awoke. May you be happy in the life you have chosen!'" Stave 2, pg. 85

Quote 7: "'he hoped the people saw him in the church, because he was a cripple, and it might be pleasant to them to remember upon Christmas Day who made lame beggars walk and blind men see.'" Stave 3, pg. 94

Quote 8: "'God bless us, every one!'" Stave 3, pg. 96

Quote 9: "'[h]e frightened everyone away from him when he was alive, to profit [the thieves] when he was dead!'" Stave 4, pg. 111

Quote 10: "'If there is any person in the town who feels emotion caused by this man's death, . . . show that person to me, Spirit, I beseech you!'" Stave 4, pg. 113

Quote 11: "'Are these the shadows of the things that Will be, or are they shadows of the things that May be only?'" Stave 4, pg. 117

Quote 12: "'I will honour Christmas in my heart, and try to keep it all the year. I will live in the Past, the Present, and the Future. The Spirits of all Three shall strive within me.'" Stave 4, pg. 117

Quote 13: "[Scrooge] went to church, and walked about the streets, and watched the people hurrying to and fro, and patted the children on the head, and questioned beggars, and looked down into the kitchens of houses, and up to the windows; and

found that everything could yield him pleasure. He had never dreamed that any walk -- that anything -- could give him so much happiness." Stave 5, pg. 121



# Topic Tracking: Charity

## Stave 1

Charity 1: When the donation collectors approach Scrooge expecting a donation to help the poor at Christmas, he insists that he's done his duty to the poor by supporting the government establishments that provide aid. He refuses to assist any further because he's done the necessary minimum, and that's all he must do. Scrooge is too greedy to be charitable, and Marley was the same way. Scrooge sees nothing wrong with refusing to donate to charity because he believes that people in need of charity are all idle, and if they would work, they would not be in need.

Charity 2: Marley warns Scrooge that he is living the wrong way. He pays too much attention to his money and not enough attention to the people around him. Scrooge's interest should be in fellow human beings -- in helping them and loving them -- not in counting his own wealth. Marley didn't learn until he became a ghost that charity and kindness were the important aspects of living, but by then it was too late.

Charity 3: Scrooge looks out the window and sees the other ghosts roaming the night and lamenting their inability to help the humans they see. These are the ghosts of people who did not help others in their lifetime, and now, when they want to help people, they are unable to do so.

## Stave 2

Charity 4: Scrooge remembers the young boy who sang a Christmas carol at his door earlier in the day. After reflecting on his own years as a miserable, lonely youth with the help of the Ghost of Christmas Past, Scrooge regrets not being more charitable to the young caroler.

Charity 5: Scrooge remembers the charity and kindness with which Fezziwig approached his neighbors and employees. That generosity was the most cherished aspect of Fezziwig's personality and it made him a hero with his employees and friends. Scrooge admired that about his former employer, but didn't show it with Bob Cratchit, his own clerk.

## Stave 3

Charity 6: Scrooge's nephew, Fred, believes that if he goes to see Scrooge every year at Christmas to spread a little good cheer and wish him a merry Christmas, perhaps it will inspire Scrooge to be more giving. If nothing else, he hopes that it might inspire his uncle to give Bob Cratchit some sort of Christmas bonus.

## Stave 4

Charity 7: Fred offers to assist Bob Cratchit and his family in any way that he can when he learns of Tiny Tim's death. Despite the stinginess of his uncle, Fred is generous and



giving, and although he is a poor man himself, he will do what he can to lend aid where it is needed.

Charity 8: Scrooge promises the Ghost of Christmas Yet to Come that he has learned the importance of the spirit of Christmas, the charity and kindness of the season, and that he will make them a part of his life every day if only his horrible fate can be reversed.

### **Stave 5**

Charity 9: Scrooge buys the largest turkey he can find and sends it to the Cratchit home without revealing who donated the gift. He wants the Cratchits to enjoy the day and he does what he can to help them out. He also pays a young boy to tell the poulterer to bring the turkey, as well as paying for a cab to take the poulterer to the Cratchit home to deliver the bird. Scrooge had never before exhibited such charity.

Charity 10: Scrooge sees one of the donations collectors who came to his office the previous day, and he promises to donate a great sum of money to the noble cause. The collector is astonished by the display because Scrooge was so callous the day before.

Charity 11: Scrooge pretends that he is angry with Cratchit for being late, and then he presents him with a raise. This generosity is so unlike Scrooge that Cratchit thinks perhaps he has gone mad. But Scrooge insists on helping Bob's family, and so Tiny Tim is saved, and Scrooge becomes like a second father to the young boy. Scrooge's charity helps the Cratchit family greatly.



# Topic Tracking: Greed

## Stave 1

Greed 1: Scrooge, although he is wealthy, is such a miser that he won't even allow his clerk to have enough coal to keep him warm. He insists on saving money by burning only enough coal to keep a small flame glowing whether the heat that it puts out is sufficient to keep the clerk warm. Scrooge's greed is his downfall because he is so consumed with his money that he neglects the people around him, and when all is said and done, the people are what matter most.

Greed 2: Marley's greed caused him to miss out on the most important part of living -- people. Because he was so focused on business and so money-driven (very much the way Scrooge is), Marley is forced to spend eternity wandering around wanting to help people and being unable to do so. He is being punished in death for his greed in life.

## Stave 2

Greed 3: Scrooge's greed drives away Belle, the young woman he loves. She cannot stay with him because he has made profit his main priority and she won't be second priority in his life. Scrooge really is so interested in his own profit that he doesn't make her stay with him because he realizes that she is right about his priorities. Because money is all that matters to him, money is all he is left with. Belle marries and has a family while Scrooge grows old, and rich, alone.

## Stave 3

Greed 4: Scrooge's greed keeps Bob Cratchit and his family poor. Scrooge can afford to pay Bob well, but instead he offers a meager salary that keeps Bob and his family barely fed and clothed. Despite the obvious injustice, Bob Cratchit drinks a Christmas toast to his employer's health.

Greed 5: Scrooge's nephew, his only living relative, is a poor man, and although Scrooge could help his nephew out financially, he doesn't because he can't bear to part with his wealth. Despite this, Fred wishes his uncle no ill will. In fact, he pities the old miser because he is alone and unloved.

Greed 6: Scrooge's greed prevented him from donating to the poor when the donation collectors came to his office, but the Ghost of Christmas Present shows him that Want and Ignorance are problems that must be fought against by every part of society so that the society doesn't deteriorate.

## Stave 4

Greed 7: The greed of the people who robbed a dead man astounds and unnerves Scrooge because the thieves feel no remorse for what they have done. They are profiting from a man's death, and they don't feel bad about it because they had no



feeling of good will or common decency toward the man at all. They act as if he deserved to be robbed because he was such a bad person, and all the while Scrooge watches the scene, he has no idea that he is the dead man who was robbed.

Greed 8: The man who died was obviously a threatening creditor, and that is why the young couple was worried about his reaction when they couldn't make their payment. The only relief they got from him was when he died and could intimidate them no more. The fact that this man was a creditor suggests that he had plenty of money, but judging by the young couple's reaction to his death, he had no mercy.

Greed 9: Scrooge repents of the wicked selfishness of his way of life when he sees the way he will end, alone and unloved by anyone. He repents of his greed and cruelty and promises to have a charitable heart from now on.

### **Stave 5**

Greed 10: Scrooge's greed was exhibited in the beginning of the story by his stinginess with coal in his office. He refused to burn large fires because it required too much fuel, so Cratchit had to try to warm himself with the candle on his desk. Now Scrooge insists on a great fire and purchasing more coal so that they can keep the office cozy. He has broken out of his greed and turned his interest back toward humanity rather than money.



# Topic Tracking: Regret

## Stave 1

Regret 1: Marley regrets the way he lived his life because he missed out on so many opportunities for happiness. He neglected the people around him and focused only on his own wealth, and for that he is doomed to spend eternity walking in chains and watching joy without being a part of it.

## Stave 2

Regret 2: When Scrooge sees himself as a small and miserable boy alone at Christmas, he regrets his harshness with the little boy who sang a Christmas carol at the counting house door on Christmas Eve. Remembering his own unhappiness and destitution as a child makes him wish he had given the caroler something to help him out.

Regret 3: When the Ghost of Christmas Past reminds Scrooge of his beloved sister, Fannie, he also mentions that Fannie is survived by her only son, Scrooge's nephew. Scrooge is made uneasy by this because he has no relationship with Fannie's son. He was harsh with the young man that afternoon, although the nephew only wanted to invite Scrooge to Christmas dinner and share the joy of the season.

Regret 4: The memory of Fezziwig's kindness and good spirit makes Scrooge wish that he could speak with Bob Cratchit. Scrooge remembers how much easier his employer's kindness made his work seem. It wasn't that Fezziwig paid so well, but rather that he made his employees happy. Scrooge feels a pang of regret that he hasn't been that kind of employer.

Regret 5: Scrooge watches the scene in which Belle leaves him and is overcome with sadness. He has been alone since then, while she moved on and married and raised a family after they parted ways. Belle left him because she knew that money had grown more important to him than his love for her, and Scrooge sees in this the point where his life got off track.

## Stave 3

Regret 6: When Scrooge learns that Tiny Tim will die if the future is unaltered, Scrooge is saddened. But when the Ghost of Christmas Present reminds him that when the collectors came to ask for a donation for the poor, Scrooge told them that those who were dying should go ahead and do it to decrease the population. Looking at Tiny Tim makes him realize that he was wrong to make such a statement and that those he might well consider an unnecessary surplus, could very well be those like Tim.

Regret 7: The Ghost of Christmas Present once again uses Scrooge's own words to make him regret his previous flippancy about the poor. The ghost warns Scrooge that Want and Ignorance must be fought against or else the world is doomed and it is part of



Scrooge's duty to help fight against these social ills. Seeing these hideous monsters personified makes Scrooge realize how important it is to rid society of these self-created problems.

#### **Stave 4**

Regret 8: Scrooge watches the Cratchit family after Tiny Tim has died and regrets that the sweet child's life has ended.

Regret 9: When Scrooge sees his end, he regrets the way of life that he has chosen. He regrets the greed that has driven him to be cruel and hard to people. He regrets that he has not been a more charitable person these past years and promises that he will change his ways so that he will not end the way the Ghost of Christmas Yet to Come showed him.

#### **Stave 5**

Regret 10: Scrooge regrets his rude behavior of the previous day when the donation collectors came to his office. He was horrible and cold, and when he sees one of the collectors on the following day, he apologizes and makes a large donation to the cause.

Regret 11: Scrooge regrets the way that he has treated his nephew, and so when he goes to Fred's home on Christmas Day, he is happy when his nephew welcomes him with open arms.

# Stave 1

Jacob Marley died seven years ago and left his home and his half of the business to his partner, Ebenezer Scrooge. Marley was a stingy old man, and Scrooge happily carries on that tradition.

*"Oh! but he was a tight-fisted hand at the grindstone, Scrooge! a squeezing, wrenching, grasping, scraping, clutching, covetous old sinner! Hard and sharp as flint, from which no steel had ever struck out generous fire; secret, and self-contained, and solitary as an oyster."* Stave 1, pg. 59

Scrooge is such a miser that even in the coldest days of winter, he insists on saving money by burning as little coal as possible. Even on Christmas Eve his clerk, Bob Cratchit suffers through the cold because he is afraid to ask Scrooge for more coal.

Topic Tracking: Greed 1

As Bob Cratchit sits at his desk trying to warm himself over the candle, Scrooge's nephew, the son of his deceased sister, comes in bidding his uncle a merry Christmas. Scrooge answers with his customary, "Bah! Humbug!" Stave 1, pg. 60. Scrooge's nephew, a cheerful pauper, invites the old man to join him and his wife for dinner on Christmas Day, but Scrooge refuses. He doesn't believe in Christmas and tells his nephew that anyone who considers Christmas a day different from any other should be boiled in their own juices and stabbed through the heart with a stake of holly. The young man leaves in good spirits despite Scrooge's grouchiness.

As Scrooge's nephew departs, two gentlemen come in. They are collecting donations to ease the comfort of the poor at Christmas this year. Scrooge asks if there are not prisons, workhouses, and government programs in place to aid the poor. Scrooge believes that he does his part by contributing to those institutions. The collectors insist that many of the poor do not have access to that form of aid and many others are so proud that they would rather die than receive help that way. Scrooge answers with, "If they would rather die, . . . they had better do it, and decrease the surplus population." Stave 1, pg. 63

Topic Tracking: Charity 1

As the cold, gray day is drawing to a close, a young boy suffering with cold and hunger begins to sing a carol at the counting house door, but Scrooge scares him away. Scrooge complains because Cratchit expects to have all of Christmas Day off of work with pay, but he agrees to it provided that Cratchit comes in even earlier than usual on the day after Christmas. Cratchit excitedly hurries home to his family.

As Scrooge is putting his key into the lock of his front door, he notices that the knocker seems to glow and he recognizes in it the shape of Marley's face. Briefly startled, he looks down again and the knocker has resumed its usual lion shape. Then, as he climbs



the dark, wide staircase to his bedroom, Scrooge believes he glimpsed a locomotive hearse steaming up the stairs in front of him. This, too, he brushes off as if it is nothing significant, but before retiring to his room for the night, he looks into each room to make sure nothing has been disturbed. Once he is satisfied that all is well, he locks himself into his room, fastening both door locks, although using only one was his custom.

Scrooge sits before the fire in his dressing gown and nightcap thinking of the way that the doorknocker changed form. While he sits there thinking of the disturbing change, the old servant's bell that hasn't been used for ages begins to clang on its own. All the bells in the house seem to scream and then stop suddenly. Then Scrooge hears the sound of heavy chains being dragged up the stairs toward his room. Scrooge refuses to believe that a ghost is in his house, but then Marley walks through the double-locked door and into Scrooge's room. Marley is weighed down with chains welded of cash boxes, keys, ledgers, deeds, and steel money purses. Marley rattles his chains and cries frightfully at Scrooge before unwrapping the cloth that hinges the ghost's jaw to its head and letting his mouth gape open. Scrooge falls to his knees before the ghost to beg for mercy.

Marley's ghost explains that he has come to warn Scrooge that his burden in death will be even greater than Marley's own chain unless he changes his miserly ways. Marley is condemned to walk the earth as a spirit and watch others' joy because he did nothing but count his money during his lifetime. Although Marley had been a good businessman, he learned in death that he had missed the point of living. He tells Scrooge: "Mankind was my business. The common welfare was my business; charity, mercy, forbearance, and benevolence were, all, my business. The dealings of my trade were but a drop of water in the comprehensive ocean of my business!" Stave 1, pg. 71

Topic Tracking: Regret 1

Topic Tracking: Charity 2

Topic Tracking: Greed 2

Marley's time is running out, so he explains to Scrooge that he has secured one last chance for Scrooge to redeem himself and avoid the same miserable fate Marley has found. Three ghosts will visit Scrooge to show him the error of his ways. Although Scrooge is reluctant to have any more ghostly visits, Marley tells him that it is the only way to save himself. Then Marley walks to the window as it opens for him. He beckons Scrooge closer, and as he stands near Marley's ghost, Scrooge hears wailing and moaning outside. Marley's voice joins the noise and then he floats out into the night. Scrooge looks out the window and sees apparitions much like Marley filling the night. Scrooge notices that they all seem to be mourning because they'd like to help the people they see, but because they are dead, the miserable shades are unable to interfere. With this realization, the specters fade into the fog, and Scrooge closes the window. He checks the locks on the door Marley walked through and sees that it is still double-locked. Then, exhausted, he crawls into bed and falls asleep instantly.

Topic Tracking: Charity 3



## Stave 2

Scrooge wakes in the darkness and hears the bells of a nearby church tolling twelve. He realizes that it is impossible for the hour to be midnight because it was almost two o'clock when he went to sleep, yet it is too dark for it to be noon. And the idea of sleeping through an entire day seems impossible as well, but his bedside clock also confirms the hour as twelve. Then he remembers that Marley said another ghost would come to him at one o'clock, so Scrooge lies awake, waiting for the hour.

At the stroke of one o'clock, a light flashes in his room and a hand draws back the curtains of his bed. The ghost is a strange figure with hair that is white with age, but a face that bears no wrinkles. The long, white tunic the ghost wears is girded by a belt with a sprig of holly symbolizing winter tucked in it, but spring flowers hem the bottom of the tunic. The ghost is a visualization of the contradictions of youth and age as well as the contradictions of winter and spring. From his head shines a radiant beam of light, and under his arm he carries a hat that resembles a candel snuffer. It is the Ghost of Christmas Past, and he takes Scrooge to the previous Christmases of his life.

Scrooge and the ghost revisit Scrooge's early childhood when Scrooge spent Christmas alone at his boarding school. Seeing his boyhood classmates brings Scrooge to tears. Looking at the boy spending his Christmas with only the characters in the stories he reads to keep him company, Scrooge regrets that he did not give anything to the boy who sang a carol at the counting house door earlier that evening.

Topic Tracking: Regret 2  
Topic Tracking: Charity 4

That vision fades to one of the following year when Scrooge's young sister, Fannie, came to get him from school and take him home for Christmas. Ebenezer sees her and is moved to tears again for her sweetness and her frailty because with the image of her when she was young is accompanied by the knowledge that she died as a young woman and left behind only a son, Scrooge's nephew. When the ghost reminds him of that, Scrooge seems uneasy for a moment and then the scene changes to a warehouse.

Topic Tracking: Regret 3

Scrooge sees his younger self, enjoying a Christmas party given by his employer, Fezziwig. Scrooge remembers with fondness how kind Fezziwig was to him and the other apprentice who worked with him. The ghost and Scrooge listen in on Scrooge's younger self and the other apprentice praising Fezziwig, and the ghost asks Scrooge if Fezziwig had spent so much money on the Christmas party to deserve such lofty praise. Scrooge tries to explain that it wasn't Fezziwig's willingness to spend money that made his employees happy, but rather it was more about the way he made his employees feel that made him a great man. Scrooge says, "Say that his power lies in words and looks; in things so slight and insignificant that it is impossible to add and count 'em up: what



then? The happiness [Fezziwig] gives is quite as great as if it cost a fortune." Stave 2, pg. 83 The memory of his kind employer makes Scrooge wish that he could say a few things to Bob Cratchit.

Topic Tracking: Regret 4

Topic Tracking: Charity 4

The scene quickly changes to a Christmas when Scrooge is a little older. A young woman sits beside him with tears in her eyes. Scrooge and the Ghost of Christmas Past listen as she tells the young Scrooge that she sees that money has become his primary concern and so she is leaving him. She tells him:

*"You may -- the memory of what is past half makes me hope you will -- have pain in this. A very, very brief time, and you will dismiss the recollection of it gladly, as an unprofitable dream from which it happened well that you awoke. May you be happy in the life you have chosen!"* Stave 2, pg. 85

When she leaves, Scrooge cries out to the ghost to take him home and stop torturing him with these memories, but the ghost insists on one more scene. So they see a room full of children, the most striking is a girl who looks like Belle, Scrooge's lost love. But he realizes that she is Belle's daughter and Belle is the older woman in a winged chair before the fire. The room is happy and festive and Belle's husband comes in. He mentions that he has seen her old friend, Scrooge, that day sitting in his counting house while his one friend in the world, Jacob Marley, lay on his deathbed. The man seemed to feel sorry for Scrooge, whom he considered quite alone in the world.

Topic Tracking: Regret 5

Topic Tracking: Greed 3

Scrooge, unable to take any more, insists that the ghost return him to his home. Scrooge takes the candel snuffer cap and pulls it over the Ghost of Christmas Past's head to extinguish its light and end its hold on him. Scrooge is in his bedroom and is exhausted, so he falls into bed and immediately goes to sleep.



## Stave 3

Scrooge wakes in mid-snore and realizes without surprise that the hour is approaching one o'clock. But at the stroke of the hour nothing happens, and Scrooge uncertainly lies in his bed awaiting the second ghost. Scrooge follows a stream of light from the next room and finds a giant surrounded by a feast of Christmas foods filling the room. The Ghost of Christmas Present is pleasant and young. He carries a torch shaped like a Cornucopia, and the ghost has an aura of good cheer and kindness about him. Scrooge is ready to see what the ghost has come to show him, so they take off. First the Ghost of Christmas Present shows Scrooge the people of the town in all their merriment on Christmas morning. As they watch the townspeople, the ghost sprinkles good cheer on them from his cornucopia to assure that the spirit of the holiday reaches everyone.

Then the ghost takes Scrooge to Bob Cratchit's house. Inside the small house Cratchit's wife and several children are joyfully preparing their meager Christmas feast. When Bob appears, he carries a small boy on his shoulders and the boy holds a crutch in his hand. Bob tells his wife that on the way home from church that morning, Tim said that, "he hoped the people saw him in the church, because he was a cripple, and it might be pleasant to them to remember upon Christmas Day who made lame beggars walk and blind men see." Stave 3, pg. 94. Bob, with tears in his eyes, insists that Tim is growing stronger every day, but his tears seem to suggest otherwise. As the family enjoys their small feast, Bob wishes them all a merry Christmas, and Tiny Tim echoes with, "God bless us, every one!" Stave 3, pg. 96 Then Bob proposes a toast in honor of his employer, Mr. Scrooge. Mrs. Cratchit raises quite a stir at such a preposterous toast, but because it is Christmas and her husband wishes her to do so, she drinks to Scrooge's health although she believes him a stingy, cold, and selfish man. Scrooge questions the ghost about whether or not Tiny Tim will live, and the ghost foretells of a vacant seat in the chimney corner where Tim's little stool rests and a crutch leaning against the wall there. When Scrooge protests sadly, the ghost answers with Scrooge's desire that those who are going to die go ahead and do it to decrease the surplus population. Scrooge is ashamed of having said that now that he sees Tiny Tim, and the ghost warns Scrooge that in the sight of God, Scrooge himself may be more fit to die, more readily considered part of the "surplus population," than young Tim. As Tim sings a Christmas carol, Scrooge and the ghost depart.

Topic Tracking: Regret 6

Topic Tracking: Greed 4

The next stop that Scrooge and the Ghost of Christmas Present make together is at the home of Scrooge's nephew where a Christmas party is underway. Fred and his young wife are hosting the party and they are talking with their guests about Scrooge. Although most of the party guests are satisfied to believe that Scrooge is a hard, mean, old miser, Fred pities him because his money does not make him happy. Fred insists that although Scrooge might turn him down, he will return to his uncle's office each year. He will invite Scrooge to enjoy Christmas with his family because he hopes that it will at least put enough good cheer into the old man that he might give his poor clerk, Bob Cratchit, a



Christmas bonus. The guests laugh at the idea and then move on to playing party games. Scrooge, forgetting that he is not there in person, plays along with them from his corner of the room beside the spirit. In one of their games, Fred guilelessly makes fun of his uncle and then toasts him because he has been such a source of entertainment for the evening. Scrooge is so caught up in the excitement and fun of the party that he almost talks back to the guests as if they can hear him, but the Ghost of Christmas Present takes him away from the party.

Topic Tracking: Charity 6

Topic Tracking: Greed 5

The ghost takes Scrooge to homes with sick and dying people who are still able to find some joy in the day. As they travel, Scrooge notices that the spirit seems to be aging. His hair has grayed and Scrooge notices a claw protruding from the ghost's robe. When Scrooge asks what is happening, the ghost explains that his life on earth is but twenty-four hours long and his time is almost over. Then he opens his robe to reveal to Scrooge two hideous and monstrous children that cling to the ghost's robe. He explains that the girl child is Want and the boy, Ignorance, and that they are the children of mankind. He warns Scrooge that he should beware them both, but Ignorance most of all, or else doom is imminent. Scrooge asks if these wretches have somewhere to go, some place to seek refuge, and the ghost's final words are a repetition of Scrooge's earlier mocking questions of whether or not there are workhouses or prisons for the poor. The clock strikes midnight and the giant Ghost of Christmas Present disappears.

Topic Tracking: Regret 7

Topic Tracking: Greed 6

Scrooge looks around and sees a hooded phantom approaching him.



## Stave 4

The Ghost of Christmas Yet to Come wears a long black robe with a hood that conceals its head. Within the darkness of the hood, Scrooge cannot even see a hint of the ghost's face. Scrooge speaks to the ghost explaining that he is ready to see what the ghost has to show him, but the ghost does not reply. Scrooge is frightened by the ghost's silence. The city appears before Scrooge as if it sprang up around him, and the ghost's hand directs Scrooge to listen to the conversation of several groups of men in the streets. Scrooge hears them talk of a man who died that morning and they say that no one will go to the funeral because he had no friends. In all the people on the street, Scrooge cannot find his own face. He doesn't understand how the snippets of overheard conversation relate to him, but he pays close attention because he knows that there is some lesson for him to learn from all of it.

Then the spirit shows him a poorer part of the city where three people gather with bundles of things that they have stolen from the dead man's house to sell. They claim to feel no remorse for their thievery because the man had been so selfish and cold in life that he didn't even have someone to look after him when he fell ill, so he died alone. One of the women laughs and says that, "[h]e frightened everyone away from him when he was alive, to profit [the thieves] when he was dead!" Stave 4, pg. 111 They had taken the dead man's nicest things, right down to the curtains that were around the bed he died in and the blanket that had covered him. Scrooge is horrified and he tells the spirit that he understands the warning that this could be how his life ends if he doesn't change his ways.

Topic Tracking: Greed 7

Then the spirit takes Scrooge to the dead man's room. The body still lies in its curtainless bed with the sheet concealing its face. The spirit points at the dead man as if Scrooge should pull back the sheet and know who it is, but Scrooge cannot do it. He is too frightened. He feels great pity for the poor man with no one to mourn him, and he assures the spirit that he will not forget the lesson he has learned by it. Then he asks the ghost, "If there is any person in the town who feels emotion caused by this man's death, . . . show that person to me, Spirit, I beseech you!" Stave 4, pg. 113

Scrooge sees before him a young wife nervously awaiting her husband. When he arrives he tells her that the cruel man they are indebted to has died. Although she knows it is wrong to rejoice in someone's death, she cannot help but feel happy that the unrelenting creditor will worry them no longer. Joy is the only emotion that the Ghost of Christmas Yet to Come can show Scrooge over the passing of that lonely man.

Topic Tracking: Greed 8

The ghost takes Scrooge to the Cratchit home, and it is quiet and sad. The family is sitting quietly waiting for Bob to come home. Tiny Tim is not among them. One of the Cratchit children remarks that their father is a little late coming home and that he seems



to walk a bit slower these past few evenings although he used to be able to walk very swiftly even with Tim on his shoulders. When Bob comes in, he tells them that he's found a very green place to bury Tim and then he bursts into tears. After he composes himself, he tells his family of meeting with Fred, Scrooge's nephew, who was quite sincere and generous in his condolences. Bob expects that Fred will help them out by finding a better job for the oldest Cratchit boy, and that cheers the family somewhat. Bob tells them that although there will soon be a second separation in their family, when the oldest boy goes to work, none of them must ever forget the goodness and patience of their poor, young brother, Tim.

Topic Tracking: Charity 7

Topic Tracking: Regret 8

Scrooge knows that his time with the last ghost is almost over, and he asks the ghost to tell him the identity of the dead man he saw earlier. The ghost leads him through the city to answer the question. When they pass Scrooge's office, he stops to look in the window but does not see his future self as he expected. Another man sits in his place. The ghost leads him into a cemetery and points to a grave. Scrooge begins to realize what the Ghost of Christmas Yet to Come is telling him, but he asks, "Are these the shadows of the things that Will be, or are they shadows of the things that May be only?" Stave 4, pg. 117. He fires more questions at the ghost, but the spirit only points at the grave in answer. Scrooge looks at the headstone with fear and reads his own name. Scrooge begs the spirit to assure him that if he changes his ways, this will not be his end, but the ghost does not answer. He throws himself at the spirit's feet and pleads saying, "I will honour Christmas in my heart, and try to keep it all the year. I will live in the Past, the Present, and the Future. The Spirits of all Three shall strive within me." Stave 4, pg. 117 Scrooge watches frightfully as the ghost begins to shrink until it has melted away into nothing more than a bedpost.

Topic Tracking: Regret 9

Topic Tracking: Greed 9

Topic Tracking: Charity 8



## Stave 5

Scrooge realizes that he is back in his room and that he now has a chance to make amends for the years of greed and cruelty he has spent. He is so excited at this second chance, that he doesn't know what to do first until he hears the church bells ringing. He is shouting merry Christmas and wishes for a happy New Year to his empty house and then he runs to the window and asks a small boy what day it is. The boy tells him that it's Christmas Day, and Scrooge sends him to the poultry shop around the corner to buy the biggest turkey the shopkeeper has with the promise of a large monetary reward when he returns. Scrooge awaits the poultry man to give him Cratchit's address. When he sees the size of the turkey he insists on hiring a cab for the poulterer to deliver the turkey to the Cratchit's home. He pays the young messenger handsomely all the while laughing as he hadn't in years.

Topic Tracking: Charity 9

Once Scrooge has taken care of his plans for the Cratchit's surprise, he dresses to visit his nephew. On his way, Scrooge is in such pleasant spirits that people greet him in the street. As he walks he sees one of the donations collectors from the previous day. He stops the man and insists on giving him a large donation. The collector is astounded by Scrooge's generosity, especially given the way he had behaved the previous day.

Topic Tracking: Regret 10

Topic Tracking: Charity 10

*"[Scrooge] went to church, and walked about the streets, and watched the people hurrying to and fro, and patted the children on the head, and questioned beggars, and looked down into the kitchens of houses, and up to the windows; and found that everything could yield him pleasure. He had never dreamed that any walk -- that anything -- could give him so much happiness." Stave 5, pg. 121*

Upon arriving at his nephew's home, Scrooge is almost afraid to knock on the door after he has been so cruel to Fred, but he does it anyway. When Fred realizes who has come to call, he is happy to see his uncle. Scrooge stays and enjoys the party just he did when he watched it with the Ghost of Christmas Present.

Topic Tracking: Regret 11

The next morning, Scrooge arrives early at work to wait for Cratchit who was supposed to be early as well. Bob comes in late and Scrooge pounces on his tardiness as if he is angry with him. Cratchit tries to apologize, but Scrooge cuts him off, insisting that he won't stand that sort of thing anymore and just to show Cratchit how serious he is, he is going to raise the man's salary. For a moment Bob believes that Scrooge has gone insane until Scrooge wishes him a merry Christmas. Scrooge tells his clerk that he will raise his salary and help his struggling family in any way that he can. They will discuss it



in the afternoon, but first he wants Cratchit to stoke the office fires and buy more coal before another moment passes.

Topic Tracking: Greed 10

Topic Tracking: Charity 11

Scrooge kept his word to the ghosts and continued his Christmas spirit of generosity and kindness year round after that. Tiny Tim did not die, and Scrooge became very close to the Cratchit family. People laughed at the marked alteration in his personality, but Scrooge was happy with the change in himself. He met no other ghosts after his visitation by Marley and the Ghosts of Christmas Past, Present, and Yet to Come, and it was decided that he knew how to celebrate Christmas better than anyone did.