



A Christmas Carol

Charles Dickens was born on February 7, 1812, at Portsea (later part of Portsmouth)

Charles was the second born of eight children. His father was a pay clerk in the navy office.



Because of financial difficulties, the family moved about until they settled in Camden Town, a poor neighborhood in London, England.

At the age of twelve Charles worked with working-class men and boys in a factory that handled "blacking," or shoe polish.

While his father was in debtor's prison, the rest of the family moved to live near the prison, leaving Charles to live alone.

Charles returned to school when his father received an inheritance and was able to repay his debts. But in 1827, at age fifteen, he was again forced leave school and work as an office boy.

Themes: poverty, charity, work, money, social responsibility, power, family, redemption, childhood, Christmas and social injustice.

Form and Structure

A Christmas Carol is a novella which could be read aloud in one sitting. It was traditional to tell ghost stories at Christmas ghost stories at Christmas, and Dickens calls it a "Ghostly little book." in the preface.



The novella is divided into staves like a carol. The story is told chronologically from , but it does play with time as he travels into the past, present and future.

Dickens knew first hand what it was like to be poor. He used his skill as a writer to raise awareness of the plight of the poor. In A Christmas Carol Dickens is trying to encourage the Victorian readers to see the poor as their responsibility and to promote charity.

Plot

Stave 1: Scrooge the miser is compared to his generous nephew and the charitable gentlemen. He is shown his fate by Marley's ghost and offered the chance of redemption.



Stave 2: Scrooge is shown his childhood and youth and is reminded of better times, happiness, family and love.

Stave 3: Scrooge is shown the present needs of people like the Cratchits and the importance of Christmas to ordinary people like Fred and his wife.



Stave 4: Scrooge is shown the death of a man whose possessions are stolen and whose funeral is discussed as a joke. The only people who feel anything are a couple who owe him money. At the end of the stave Scrooge is shown his own name on the gravestone.

Stave 5: Scrooge is returned to his own bed on Christmas morning in time to make amends and put right the wrongs he has done to people. He raises Bob Cratchit's pay and gives to the poor.

Quotes

"Oh! but he was a tight-fisted hand at the grindstone, Scrooge! a squeezing, wrenching, grasping, scraping, clutching, covetous old sinner!" **Narrator**

"What's Christmas time to you but a time for paying bills without money; a time for finding yourself a year older, but not an hour richer; a time for balancing your books and having every item in 'em through a round dozen of months presented dead against you?" **Scrooge**

"It is required of every man," the Ghost returned, "that the spirit within him should walk abroad among his fellow-men, and travel far and wide; and if that spirit goes not forth in life, it is condemned to do so after death."

Marley's Ghost

"Are there no prisons?" **Scrooge**

"I have seen your nobler aspirations fall off one by one, until the master passion, Gain, engrosses you. Have I not?" **Belle**

"I am sorry for him; I couldn't be angry with him if I tried. Who suffers by his ill whims? Himself always." **Fred**

"I will live in the Past, the Present, and the Future!" Scrooge repeated, as he scrambled out of bed. "The Spirits of all Three shall strive within me." **Scrooge**

Symbols to explore.



Marley's chain represents the way that greed is linked to a lack of freedom.

The light emanating from the Spirit of Christmas Past's head - representing warmth, truth and love - and the extinguisher it carries.

The meagre fires in Scrooge's office and home contrast with the generous fire of the Spirit of Christmas Present.

The children under the spirit's cloak: Ignorance and Want which represent the effects of Man's greed.