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# Contents

## Part 1

1. <i>A Christmas Carol</i> , Charles Dickens	P.4
2. Drills	P. 80
3. Critical Analysis	P. 98
4. Character Analysis	P.109
5. Comprehension Questions	P.118
6. Short Stories	P.125
7. Drills: Short Stories	P.151

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## CONTENTS

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1	Scrooge's Office .....	5
2	The Day Gets Colder .....	12
3	Marley's Ghost .....	17
4	The First of the Three Spirits .....	23
5	Another Christmas Past.....	30
6	The Second of the Three Spirits .	39
7	More Christmas Presents.....	48
8	The Third of the Three Spirits.....	57
9	A Christmas Future? .....	65
10	The End of It.....	73

# **S** A CHRISTMAS CAROL **FACTS ABOUT THE CHARACTERS**

## **JACOB MARLEY**

Former business partner of Ebenezer Scrooge; as the story begins, Marley has been dead for seven years.

## **EBENEZER SCROOGE**

Unloved and unloving old businessman known for his bad temper and stinginess

## **BOB CRATCHIT**

Kind-hearted, poorly paid clerk in Scrooge's office; a family man with several children

## **FRED**

Scrooge's good-natured nephew, son of Scrooge's deceased sister, Fan

## **MARLEY'S GHOST**

Spirit who returns to earth to warn Scrooge about the consequences of a selfish, money-obsessed life

## **THE GHOST OF CHRISTMAS PAST**

Childlike spirit who shows Scrooge scenes from his boyhood and young manhood

## **FAN**

Scrooge's deceased sister

## **FEZZIWIG**

Scrooge's kindly, light-hearted, and generous former employer

## **DICK WILKINS**

A fellow apprentice with Scrooge in Fezziwig's shop

## **BELLE**

Scrooge's long-ago sweetheart

## **THE GHOST OF CHRISTMAS PRESENT**

A spirit in the form of a jolly giant who shows Scrooge many different people, including Bob Cratchit's family, who enjoy the festive season in spite of difficult circumstances

## **MRS. CRATCHIT**

Bob's wife; a kindly wife and mother

## **MARTHA, BELINDA, and PETER**

The Cratchit family's eldest children

## **TINY TIM**

The Cratchits' youngest child, a very small crippled boy

## **THE GHOST OF CHRISTMAS YET TO COME**

A darkly draped and hooded phantom who shows Scrooge images of likely future events including Scrooge's own sad, unlamented death, the selling off of his belongings by ragpickers, and the death of Tiny Tim



## Scrooge's Office

Marley was dead, to begin with. There is no doubt whatever about that. Old Marley was as dead as a doornail.

Of course Scrooge knew he was dead. How could it be otherwise? Scrooge and he were partners for I don't know how many years. Scrooge was his only friend and his only mourner. And even Scrooge was not so dreadfully cut up by the sad event.

The mention of Marley's funeral brings me back to the point I started from. There is *no doubt* that Marley was dead. This must be distinctly understood—or nothing wonderful can come of the story I am about to tell you.

Scrooge had never painted out Marley's name on the sign. Years afterward it still hung above the door: *Scrooge and Marley*.

Sometimes people called Scrooge “Scrooge,” and sometimes “Marley.” He answered to both names. It was all the same to him.

Scrooge was a very tightfisted man! He was secret, and self-contained, and solitary as an oyster. The cold within him froze his old features and nipped his pointed nose. It shriveled his cheeks and stiffened his walk. It made his eyes red and his thin lips blue. The hair on his head, eyebrows, and chin was frosty white. He seemed to carry his own low temperature with him. He iced his coffee in the summer, and didn't thaw it one degree at Christmas.

Outside heat and cold had little influence on Scrooge. No sun could warm him; no winter weather could chill him. No wind that blew was more bitter than he. No falling snow was colder. No pelting rain was less open to mercy. The heaviest rain, snow, hail, and sleet had only one advantage over him. They often “came down” handsomely—but Scrooge never did.

Nobody ever stopped him in the street to say, “My dear Scrooge, how are you? When

will you come to see me?" No beggars asked him for anything. No children asked him what time it was. No man or woman ever asked him directions. Even the blind men's dogs seemed to know him. When they saw him coming, they would tug their owners into doorways. Then they would wag their tails as if to say, "No eye at all is better than an evil eye, master!"

But what did Scrooge care! This was the very thing he liked.

One Christmas Eve, old Scrooge was busy in his counting house. It was cold, dark, biting weather. He could hear the people outside, stamping their feet upon the pavement stones to warm them. The city clocks said it was 3:00 P.M., but it was quite dark already. It had not been light all day. Candles were flaring in the windows of the nearby offices. The fog came pouring in at every chink and keyhole. It was so dense outside that, even though the street was very narrow, the houses on the other side were hard to see.

The door of Scrooge's office was open



so he could keep an eye on his clerk. In a dismal little cell beyond, the clerk was copying letters. Scrooge had a small fire in his own fireplace. The clerk's tiny fire was so much smaller that it looked like one coal. But he couldn't add to it, for Scrooge kept the coal box in his own room. The clerk had put on his white comforter and tried to warm himself at the candle. Not being a man of a strong imagination, he failed.

"A merry Christmas, Uncle! God save you!" cried a cheerful voice. It was Scrooge's nephew, who had just come in.

"Bah!" said Scrooge. "Humbug!"

Fred, Scrooge's nephew, was all in a glow from walking in the fog and frost. His face was ruddy and handsome. His eyes sparkled.

"Christmas a humbug, Uncle?" said the nephew. "You don't mean that, I am sure!"

"I *do*," said Scrooge. "Merry Christmas? Why be so merry? You're poor enough."

"Come, then," laughed the nephew. "Why be so dismal? You're rich enough."

Scrooge had no better answer than to say, "Bah!" again and then "Humbug!"

“Don’t be cross, Uncle!”

“What else can I be,” returned the uncle, “when I live in such a world of fools? Merry Christmas! What’s Christmas to you but a time for paying bills without money? You find yourself a year older, but not an hour richer. If I had my way, every idiot who goes about with ‘Merry Christmas’ on his lips would be boiled with his own pudding. Then he ought to be buried with a stake of holly through his heart!”

“Uncle!” pleaded the nephew.

“Fred! Keep Christmas in your own way. Let me keep it in mine.”

“But you *don’t* keep it.”

“Allow me to leave it alone, then,” said Scrooge. “Much good it may do *you!*”

“I have gotten some good from many things by which I have not made money,” said the nephew. “Christmas is one of those. It is always a good time—a kind, forgiving, pleasant time. It is the only time I know that men and women seem to open their hearts freely. Maybe it has never put any gold or silver in my pocket. But Christmas has



always done me good, and *will* do me good. So I say, God bless it! Please don't be so glum, Uncle. Come! Dine with us tomorrow."

"Yes, you have a wife now, don't you?" Scrooge asked in a grumpy voice. "Why did you get married?"

"Because I fell in love."

"Because you fell in love!" growled Scrooge. He spoke as if that were the only thing in the world more ridiculous than a merry Christmas.

"You never visited before I got married.

Why use it as a reason for not coming now?"

"Good afternoon," said Scrooge.

"I am sorry, with all my heart, that you won't join us. But I have come in honor of Christmas—and I'll keep my Christmas humor to the last. A Merry Christmas to you, Uncle!"

*"Good afternoon!"* barked Scrooge.

At that, his nephew left the room. He stopped to say Merry Christmas to the clerk. Cold as he was, the clerk was warmer than Scrooge, for he said Merry Christmas back.

"There's another one," muttered Scrooge to himself. "My clerk, with 15 shillings a week, and a large family. Even *he* is talking about a merry Christmas. They're all crazy!"

# 2

## The Day Gets Colder

After Scrooge's nephew left, two other men came in. 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, looking at his list. "Tell me, sir—am I addressing Mr. Scrooge or Mr. Marley?"

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

"Ah, well, Mr. Scrooge, then," said the gentleman, taking up a pen. "It is good to help the poor. They suffer greatly in this festive season. Many cannot meet their needs. Hundreds of thousands do not have common comforts, sir."

"Are there no prisons?" asked Scrooge.

“Plenty of prisons,” said the gentleman, his eyebrows raised in surprise.

“And the workhouses? I trust they are still open?”

“They’re very busy,” said the gentleman. “I wish I could say they were not.”

“Oh! From what you said at first, I was afraid that something had happened to close them,” snapped Scrooge. “I’m glad to hear they’re still open.”

“Well, they do not supply Christmas cheer of mind or body to the poor,” returned the gentleman. “That is why a few of us are trying to raise money. We want to buy the poor some meat and drink, and means of warmth. Christmas is a time, of all others, when Want is keenly felt, and Plenty rejoices. What shall I put you down for?”

“*Nothing!*” Scrooge replied.

“You wish to be anonymous?”

“I wish to be left alone,” said Scrooge. “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 workhouses—they cost enough. Those who are hungry and cold can go there.”

“But sir—many *can't* go there. And many would rather die!”

“If they would rather die,” said Scrooge, “they had better do it! It would decrease the surplus population. Besides, it’s none of my business. It’s quite enough for a man to understand his own business and not to interfere with other people’s. Mine occupies me constantly. Good afternoon, gentlemen!”

Seeing that it would be useless to argue, the gentlemen left. Scrooge got back to work. He now had an improved opinion of himself and was in a better mood than usual.

Meanwhile, the fog thickened. The ancient church tower became invisible. Striking the hours and quarter-hours in the clouds, its bell vibrated afterward as if its teeth were chattering in its frozen head. The cold became intense. In the main street, men working on the gas pipes had lighted a great fire. A party of ragged men and boys had gathered around it to warm their hands. In

bright shop windows, holly sprigs and berries crackled in the fire's heat.

The whole town was getting ready for Christmas. The Lord Mayor gave orders to his 50 cooks and butlers to keep Christmas as a Lord Mayor's household should. Even the little tailor stirred up tomorrow's pudding in his attic room, while his lean wife and the baby went out to buy the beef.

It got foggier yet, and colder. Yet cold as it was, one boy stooped down at Scrooge's keyhole to sing a Christmas carol. At the first note, Scrooge seized a ruler and struck the door. The young singer fled in terror, leaving the keyhole to the fog and frost.

At last the hour of shutting up the counting house arrived. With ill will, Scrooge got off his stool and nodded to his clerk. Right away, the clerk snuffed out his candle and put on his hat.

"You'll want all day tomorrow, I suppose?" barked Scrooge.

"If that's all right, sir."

"It's *not* all right—and it's not fair," said Scrooge. "If I were to pay no wages for the



time, you'd feel ill used, wouldn't you?"

The clerk smiled faintly.

"And yet," said Scrooge, "you don't think *me* ill used, when I pay a day's wages for no work."

The clerk said it was only once a year.

"A poor excuse for picking a man's pocket every 25th of December!" said Scrooge. "But I suppose you must have the whole day. Be here early the next morning."

As the clerk promised that he would, Scrooge walked out with a growl. The office was closed in a twinkling, and the clerk headed home to be with his family.

Scrooge had a lonely dinner at a nearby tavern and read the newspapers. Then he went home to go to bed.

# S 3

## Marley's Ghost

Scrooge lived in a gloomy suite of rooms in an old and dreary building. Nobody lived there but Scrooge. The other rooms had all been rented out as offices.

Now there was nothing unusual about the knocker on the door, except that it was very large. Let any man explain to me, if he can, how this happened: Scrooge, putting his key in the lock of the door, saw in the knocker— not a knocker, but Marley's face.

*Marley's face.* It was not angry or frightening. It looked at Scrooge as Marley used to look—with ghostly glasses turned up on its ghostly forehead. As Scrooge stared at it, it became a knocker again.

To say that he was not startled would be untrue. But Scrooge put his hand on the key, turned it, and walked in.

He did pause before he shut the door. He *did* look behind it first—as if he half expected to see Marley's pigtail sticking out into the hall. But there was nothing on the back of the door, so he closed it with a bang.

Scrooge climbed the dark stairs without a candle. Darkness is cheap, and Scrooge liked it. But before he closed the door, he walked through his rooms to see that all was as it should be. Nobody under the table, nobody under the sofa. He made a small fire and checked again. Nobody under the bed, nobody in the closet.

Quite satisfied, he closed the door and locked himself in. Thus safe against surprise, Scrooge took off his tie. Then he put on his robe, slippers, and nightcap and sat down before the fire.

It was a very low fire indeed. Scrooge had to sit close to it before he could feel any warmth. Suddenly, he heard a clanking noise, deep down below. It sounded as if someone were dragging a heavy chain along the floor of the rooms below.

The noise became louder and then

seemed to come up the stairs—straight toward his rooms! Scrooge’s color changed when the noise came through the heavy door and passed before his eyes. As it stopped at the hearth, the fire leaped up, as if to say, “*Marley’s Ghost!*”

The same face, the very same! Marley in his pigtail, and his usual vest, tights, and boots. The chain he drew behind him was long—winding about him like a tail. It was made of cash boxes, keys, padlocks, ledgers, deeds, and heavy steel purses. Yet Marley’s own body was transparent. Looking through his partner’s vest, Scrooge could see the two back buttons on his coat.

Cold as ever, Scrooge said, “What do you want with me?”

“Much!” It was Marley’s own voice!

“Who are you?”

“Ask me who I *was*.”

“Who *were* you, then?” said Scrooge.

“In life I was your partner, Jacob Marley.”

“Why are you here?”

“It is required of every man that the spirit

within him should walk among his fellow men. If that spirit does not do so in life, it must do so after death. It is doomed to wander through the world. It must witness what it cannot share now, but might have shared while on earth!" The Ghost raised a frightful cry and shook its chain.

"You are chained. Tell me why."

"I wear the chain I forged in life," replied the Ghost. "I made it link by link, and yard by yard. I made it of my own free will, and of my own free will I wore it. Is the pattern of this chain strange to *you*?"

Scrooge shrank back in his chair.

"Do you know the weight and length of the heavy chain you bear *yourself*? Seven Christmas Eves ago, it was as heavy and as long as this. You have worked on it since. Yes, yours is a heavy chain!"

"Tell me more. Comfort me, Jacob!"

"I have no comfort to give," the Ghost said. "In life, my spirit never went beyond our counting house. Now I cannot linger anywhere. Weary journeys lie before me!"

"You must be very slow, Jacob."

“Slow!” the Ghost repeated.

“Seven years, and traveling all the time!”

“The whole time,” cried the Ghost in a dismal voice. “No rest, no peace!”

“But you were always a good man of business, Jacob,” said Scrooge.

“*Business?*” cried the Ghost. “Humankind was my business. The common good was my business. Charity, mercy, and kindness were all my business. My trade was but a drop of water in the ocean of my business. At this time of the year, I suffer most. Why did I walk through crowds of fellow beings with my eyes turned down? Why only you can see me now, I do not know. I have sat invisible beside you many and many a day.”

It was not a happy thought. Scrooge shivered, and wiped his brow.

“I am here tonight to warn you. You may yet have a chance and hope of escaping my fate. A chance and hope that *I* got for you, Ebenezer.”

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

“You will be haunted by Three Spirits.

Without their visits, you cannot hope to avoid the path I walk. Expect the first tomorrow, when the clock strikes one. Expect the second on the next night at the same hour. The third will come on the third night. Look to see me no more. Remember what has passed between us!”

With that, the Ghost walked backward from Scrooge. With each step it took, the window raised itself a little. When the Ghost reached it, it was wide open. In a moment, the Ghost floated out into the dark night.

Scrooge closed the window and checked the door. It was locked, as he had locked it with his own hands. He tried to say “Humbug!” but stopped at the first syllable. Then, being much in need of rest, he went directly to bed and fell asleep.

# **4** **The First of the Three Spirits**

Scrooge awoke to the sound of a church bell counting out the time. To his great surprise, the heavy bell sounded 12 times. Then it stopped. It was past two when he went to bed. The clock was wrong. An icicle must have gotten into the works. *Twelve!*

“It isn’t possible,” said Scrooge, “that I can have slept through a whole day and far into another night.” He got out of bed and went to the window. To see anything, he had to rub the frost off with the sleeve of his robe. All he could tell was that it was the middle of the night.

Scrooge went back to bed again and started to think. But the more he thought, the more perplexed he was. Had it all been a dream?

Marley’s Ghost had upset him.



Scrooge lay in this state until the bells told him it was 12:45. Then he remembered that the Ghost had warned him of a visit when the bell tolled one. The next 15 minutes passed slowly. Finally, the bell sounded, with a deep, dull, hollow, sad *one*. Light flashed in the room, and the curtains of the bed were drawn aside.

Scrooge found himself face to face with an unearthly visitor. It was a strange figure—like a child. Yet, it was not so much like a child as like an old man reduced to a child’s size. Its hair was white with age, yet the face had not a wrinkle on it. It wore clothes of the purest white. Around its waist was a shining belt that sparkled and glittered. The visitor held a branch of fresh green holly in its hand. Its dress was trimmed with summer flowers. A bright clear glow came from the crown of its head, lighting the room.

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

“I am!” The voice was soft and gentle.

“Who—and what—*are* you?”



“I am the Ghost of Christmas Past.”

“Long past?” asked Scrooge.

“No. Your past. I am here to save you.”

Putting out its strong hand as it spoke, the Spirit clasped Scrooge gently by the arm.

“Rise, and walk with me!”

The grasp, though gentle, was not to be resisted. Scrooge rose. Then, seeing the Spirit moving toward the window, Scrooge said, “I am but a mortal! I will fall.”

The Spirit laid its hand upon Scrooge’s heart. Then he said, “Now you shall be

upheld in more than this!” As the words were spoken, Scrooge and the Spirit passed through the wall. On the other side, they stood upon an open country road, bounded by fields. The city had vanished. The darkness and the mist had vanished with it. Now it was a clear, cold winter day. A blanket of snow was on the ground.

“Good heaven! Why, I was a boy here!” Scrooge cried.

The Spirit looked at him. Scrooge was aware of a thousand odors floating in the air. Each one was connected with a thousand thoughts, and hopes, and joys, and cares—all long, long forgotten!

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

With a catch in his voice, Scrooge said it was a pimple. He begged the Ghost to lead him where he would.

“Do you remember the way?”

“Remember it?” cried Scrooge. “I could walk it blindfolded.”

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

They walked along the road until they came to a little town. Some ponies came trotting toward them with boys upon their backs. These boys called to other boys in carts driven by farmers. All the boys were in great spirits, laughing and shouting. The fields were so full of merry music that the crisp air laughed to hear it!

“These are but shadows of things that used to be,” the Ghost explained to Scrooge. “They cannot see us.”

As the boys rode by, 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 as they went past? Why was he filled with gladness when he heard them say “Merry Christmas!” as they parted for their different homes? What was merry about Christmas to Scrooge? What good had it ever done him?

“The school is not quite deserted,” said the Ghost. “One child, neglected by his friends, is left there still.”

Scrooge said he knew it. And he sobbed. They left the main road and went down a

well-remembered lane. Soon they got to a mansion of dull red brick. It was a large house, but one of broken fortunes. The walls were damp and mossy. Many of the windows were broken, and the gates were decayed. Chickens clucked and strutted in the stables. The carriage houses and sheds were overrun with grass. The inside was just as run-down. The rooms were poorly furnished, cold, and vast. There was a harshness in the place. It spoke of too much getting up by candlelight, and too little to eat.

The Ghost led Scrooge across the hall to a room at the back of the house. It was a long, bare, sad room. A lonely boy was reading at a desk near a feeble fire. Scrooge sat down and wept to see the poor forgotten self of his boyhood.

The Spirit touched him on the arm and pointed to Scrooge's younger former self. Suddenly a man stood outside the window. He had an axe stuck in his belt and was leading a donkey laden with wood.

“Why, it's Ali Baba!” Scrooge exclaimed happily. “It's dear, old, honest Ali Baba!

Yes, I remember! One Christmas when I was left here all alone, he came right out of the storybook to visit me! And look! There's the Sultan's Groom turned upside down by the Genie. Ha! I'm glad of it. He deserved it! What business had *he* to be married to the Princess!"

Scrooge's happy, excited face would have been a surprising sight indeed to his business friends in the city.

"There's the Parrot!" cried Scrooge as he remembered yet another character from his books. For the only company Scrooge had in those days were the characters he read about. Then, feeling a stab of pity for his former self, he said, "*Poor boy!*"

"I wish . . ." Scrooge muttered, drying his eyes, "but it's too late now."

"What is the matter?" asked the Spirit.

"Nothing," said Scrooge. "There was a boy singing a carol at my door last night. I wish I had given him something, that's all."

The Ghost smiled thoughtfully. Then, waving its hand, it said, "Let us see another Christmas!"

# **5** **Another Christmas Past**

As the Ghost and Scrooge looked on, Scrooge's former self grew older. The room became a little darker and dirtier. But there he was—alone again—when all the other boys had gone home for the jolly holidays.

Instead of reading, this time he was walking up and down in despair. Then the door opened. A little girl, much younger than the boy, ran in and put her arms about his neck. Kissing him, she called him her “dear, dear brother.”

“I have come to bring you home, dear brother!” she said.

“Home, little Fan?” asked the boy.

“Yes!” said the girl, joyfully. “Home, for good and all. Home, for ever and ever. Father is so much kinder than he used to be. He sent me in a coach to bring you. And you

are never to come back to this school again. But first, we'll have the merriest Christmas in all the world."

Scrooge turned to the Spirit and said, "She was always a delicate little thing. But she had a big heart!"

"She died a young woman," said the Ghost. "She had, I think, children."

"One child," said Scrooge.

"True," said the Ghost. "Your nephew!"

Feeling uneasy, Scrooge said, "Yes."

By now they had left the school behind them and were in a busy city. It was clear that it was Christmas time. It was evening, and the streets were lit up.

The Ghost stopped at a warehouse door, asking Scrooge if he knew the place.

"*Know it!*" cried Scrooge. "Why, I had my first job here!"

They went in the door. Upon seeing an old gentleman in a wig, Scrooge cried, "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. It pointed to the hour



of seven. He rubbed his hands, laughed, and called out in a rich, jolly voice: “Yo ho, there! Ebenezer! Dick!”

Scrooge’s former self, now grown into a young man, came into the room. With him was his fellow apprentice.

“Dick Wilkins, to be sure!” said Scrooge to the Ghost. “Bless me, yes. There he is. He was very much attached to me, was Dick. Poor Dick! Dear, dear!”

“Yo ho, my boys!” said Fezziwig. “No more work tonight. It’s Christmas Eve, Dick! Christmas, Ebenezer! Let’s clear the floor and make lots of room here!”

In a minute, Dick and Ebenezer had cleared away every movable thing. The floor was swept, the lamps were trimmed, and coal was heaped upon the fire. The warehouse was soon as warm and dry and bright as any ballroom on Christmas Eve.

In came a fiddler, ready to play. In came Mrs. Fezziwig, one big substantial smile. In came the three Miss Fezziwigs, beaming and lovable. In came the six young men whose hearts they broke. In came all the young men



and women working in the business. In came the housemaid, with her cousin, the baker. In came the cook, the milkman, and the boy across the street. In they all came, one after another. The Fezziwigs made them all feel welcome, and everyone started dancing.

Finally old Fezziwig, clapping his hands to stop the music, cried out, "Well done!" At last the fiddler could take a break. But as soon as he had taken a drink, he began again. It was as if the old fiddler had been carried home, exhausted, and a new man had

come to take his place at the fiddle.

There were more dances, and there was cake, and roast beef, and mince pies, and plenty to drink. At last old Fezziwig began to dance with Mrs. Fezziwig. As for her, she was worthy of being his partner in every sense of the term. If that's not high praise, tell me higher, and I'll use it.

When the clock struck 11, the party broke up. Mr. and Mrs. Fezziwig took their places, one on each side of the door. They shook hands with each person, wishing a Merry Christmas to all. Thus the cheerful voices died away, and the lads were left to their beds, which were in the back shop.

During all this time, Scrooge had acted like a man out of his wits. His heart and soul were in the scene—with his former self. He remembered everything, enjoyed everything, and was quite excited. It was not until now, when the bright faces of his former self and Dick had turned away, that he remembered the Ghost. He became aware that the Ghost was looking straight at him.

“A small matter,” said the Ghost, “to

make these silly folks so full of gratitude.”

“*Small?*” echoed Scrooge.

The Spirit told Scrooge to listen to the two apprentices talking. Dick and Ebenezer were pouring out their hearts in praise of Fezziwig. Then the Spirit said, “Why such praise? Fezziwig spent but a small amount of your mortal money. Is it so much that he deserves this praise?”

“It isn’t that,” said Scrooge. He seemed now to be speaking like his former, not his present, self. “It isn’t that, Spirit. He has the power to make us happy or unhappy, to make our jobs light or heavy, a pleasure or a toil. You could say that his power lies in words and looks, in things you can’t add or count up. But the happiness he gives is quite as great as if it had cost a fortune.”

He felt the Spirit’s glance, and stopped.

“What is the matter?” asked the Ghost.

“Nothing,” said Scrooge.

“Something, I think?” the Ghost insisted.

“No,” said Scrooge. “I should like to be able to say a word or two to my clerk just now. That’s all.”

“My time grows short,” said the Spirit. “Quick!” Again, Scrooge saw himself. He was grown now, a man in the prime of life. His face had begun to wear the signs of care and greed. He was not alone this time, but sat by the side of a fair young girl. Tears were in her eyes.

“It matters little,” she said, softly. “To you, very little. Another idol has replaced me. If it can cheer and comfort you in times to come, as I would have tried to do, I have no reason to be sad.”

“What idol has replaced you?” he asked.

“Money,” she said.

“This is the way of the world!” he said. “There is nothing so hard as poverty.”

“You fear the world too much,” she answered, gently. “All your other hopes have merged into the hope of avoiding poverty. That is all you care about.”

“What, then? Perhaps I have grown that much wiser. My feelings toward you have not changed.”

“Yes, they have. *You* are changed. You seem like another man. I now release you

from your promise to marry me. I do this with a full heart—for love of the man you once were. You may feel pain over this. But in a brief time, you will get over it. May you be happy in the life you have chosen!”

She left him, and they parted.

“Spirit!” Scrooge cried out sadly. “Show me no more. Take me home now. Why do you torture me?”

“One more thing!” exclaimed the Ghost.

“No more!” cried Scrooge. “*No more*. I don’t wish to see it!”

But the Ghost forced him to watch what happened next. They were in another scene and place. It was a room, not very large, but full of comfort. Next to the winter fire sat a beautiful young girl. She looked so much like the last one that Scrooge thought it was the same. Then he saw *her*—now a wife, sitting by her daughter. There was a lot of noise in the room, for there were more children there.

Then the father came home, carrying Christmas toys and presents. There were shouts of wonder and delight as each gift was received!

Finally, the father sat down at the fireside with his oldest daughter and her mother. “Belle,” he said, turning to his wife with a smile. “I saw an old friend of yours this afternoon.”

“Who was it?”

“Guess!”

“How can I? Oh, I know,” she added in the same breath, laughing as he laughed. “Mr. Scrooge.”

“Mr. Scrooge it was. I passed his office window. As it was not shut up, and he had a candle inside, I couldn’t help seeing him. His partner lies upon the point of death, I hear. And there Scrooge sat alone. He’s quite alone in the world, I do believe.”

“Spirit!” said Scrooge in a broken voice. “Take me from this place. I cannot bear it!”

Suddenly Scrooge was overwhelmed with drowsiness. Then, finding himself in his own bed, he sank into a heavy sleep.

## **6** **The Second of the Three Spirits**

Scrooge awakened in the middle of a loud snore. He did not have to be told that it was almost 1:00. Pulling aside the bed curtains, he looked all around the bed. He did not wish to be taken by surprise.

Now, being ready for anything, he was not by any means ready for nothing. So, when the bell struck one, and no shape appeared, he began to tremble. Fifteen minutes went by, and still nothing came. All this time he lay on his bed, which was in a blaze of bright light. The light had been there since 1:00. Strangely, the light was more alarming than a dozen ghosts—for he did not know what it meant. At last, he began to think that the light might be coming from the next room. He got up and shuffled to the door in his slippers.



The moment Scrooge's hand was on the lock, a strange voice called him by name. It commanded him to enter, and he obeyed.

There was no doubt that it was Scrooge's own room. But it was decorated beautifully. The walls and ceiling were hung with living green, so it looked like a grove. From every part of it, bright berries glistened. The holly, mistletoe, and ivy reflected back the light, like so many mirrors. A mighty blaze roared up the chimney. Heaped on the floor—in a shape much like a throne—were piles of food. There were turkeys, geese, game, poultry, and strings of sausages. There were also pies, puddings, oysters, chestnuts, apples, oranges, pears, cakes, and bowls of punch. On this couch of food sat a jolly giant, glorious to see! He held a glowing torch up high. Its light shone down on Scrooge as he peeped around the door.

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

Scrooge did so. The Spirit wore a simple green robe, bordered with white fur. Its feet

were bare. On its head it wore a holly wreath, set here and there with shining icicles. Its dark brown curls were long and free. It had a joyful look.

The Ghost of Christmas Present rose.

“Spirit,” said Scrooge, “conduct me where you will. Last night, I learned a lesson that is working now. Tonight, if you have something to teach me, let me profit by it.”

“Touch my robe!”

Scrooge did so. As he held it fast, all the food and decorations in the room vanished instantly. So did the room. Now they stood in the city streets on Christmas morning.

The people who were shoveling away the snow were joyful. They called out to one another now and then and threw a friendly snowball. The shops were still half open, and baskets of chestnuts tumbled out into the street. There were Spanish onions, and pears and apples piled high. There were bunches of grapes and piles of nuts begging to be carried home in paper bags and eaten after dinner.

There were heaps of raisins, almonds, and

cinnamon sticks. Candied fruits, moist figs, and French plums waited in their highly decorated boxes. Customers tumbled up against each other at the doors. Everyone seemed in the best mood possible.

Church bells then called the good people to the chapel. They flocked through the streets wearing their best clothes and happiest faces. All the while, the Spirit stood with Scrooge in a baker's doorway. As people passed, he sprinkled something from his torch on the dinners they carried. It was a very uncommon kind of torch. Once or twice, angry words were spoken by people who had bumped into each other. When the Spirit shed a few drops of water on them from the torch, their good humor was restored right away.

“Is there a special flavor in what you sprinkle from your torch?” asked Scrooge.

“There is. My own.”

“Would it apply to any kind of dinner on this day?” asked Scrooge.

“Yes, but to a poor one most of all.”

“Why to a poor one most?”

“Because it needs it most.”

They went on, invisible as before, into the suburbs of the town. Scrooge had noticed that the Ghost, in spite of his gigantic size, could fit in the smallest place with ease. Perhaps it was the pleasure the good Spirit had in showing off this power of his that led him straight to the home of Scrooge’s clerk. Or perhaps it was his own kind, generous, hearty nature, and his sympathy with all poor men. In any case, there he went, and took Scrooge with him. Outside the door the Spirit smiled. Then he stopped to bless Bob Cratchit’s dwelling with the sprinkling of his torch.

Mrs. Cratchit was setting the table with Belinda Cratchit, second of her daughters. Master Peter Cratchit plunged a fork into a big pot of potatoes. The two smaller Cratchits, boy and girl, came tearing in. They screamed that outside the baker’s they had smelled a roasting goose—and had known it for their own. Thinking lovely thoughts about sage and onion, these young Cratchits danced about the table.

“Where is your precious father?” said Mrs. Cratchit. “And your brother, Tiny Tim! And Martha—she wasn’t this late last year.”

“Here’s Martha, Mother!” said a girl, rushing in the door.

“Why, bless your heart, my dear. How late you are!” said Mrs. Cratchit.

“We had a lot of work to finish up last night,” replied the girl. “And we couldn’t leave until this morning, Mother!”

“Well, never mind, so long as you are here,” said Mrs. Cratchit. “Sit down before the fire, my dear, and get warm.”

“No, no! There’s Father coming,” cried the two young Cratchits. “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. His legs were supported by an iron frame!

“Why, where’s our Martha?” cried Bob Cratchit, looking around.

“Not coming,” said Mrs. Cratchit sadly.

“*Not coming!*” cried Bob. “Not coming on Christmas Day?”

Martha couldn’t bear to see her father

disappointed, even as a joke. So she popped out from behind the closet door and ran into his arms.

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

“Why, as good as gold,” said Bob, “and better!” As Tiny Tim sat by the fire, the rest of the family finished making the dinner. Mrs. Cratchit heated the gravy. Master Peter mashed the potatoes while Miss Belinda sweetened the applesauce. Martha dusted the hot plates. The two youngest Cratchits set chairs for everybody.

“There never was such a goose!” Bob said. Its tenderness and flavor, size and crisp skin, were all wonderful. After dinner, the pudding was brought out. Oh, a wonderful pudding! At last the dinner was all done, the table cleared, the hearth swept, and the fire made up. Then all the Cratchit family drew together around the hearth.

Bob served hot cider from a jug. The chestnuts on the fire sputtered and cracked noisily. Then Bob said, “A Merry Christmas to us all, my dears. God bless us!”

“God bless us every one!” said Tiny Tim.

“Spirit,” said Scrooge, “Tiny Tim is sick. Tell me if he will live.”

“I see a vacant seat,” said the Ghost, “in the corner—and a crutch without an owner. If these shadows are unchanged by the future, the child will die.”

“No, no!” cried Scrooge. “Oh, no, kind Spirit! Say he will be spared.”

*“If he is going to die, he had better do it, to decrease the surplus population.”*

Scrooge hung his head to hear his own words quoted by the Spirit. But, on hearing his own name, he looked up.

“Mr. Scrooge!” said Bob. “Let’s drink to Mr. Scrooge, the Founder of the Feast!”

“The Founder of the Feast indeed!” cried Mrs. Cratchit. “I wish I had him here. I’d give him a piece of my mind.”

“My dear,” scolded Bob, “the children! It’s Christmas Day.”

“Only on Christmas Day would anyone drink to the health of such a stingy, hard, unfeeling man as Mr. Scrooge.”

“My dear,” was Bob’s mild answer.

“Remember—Christmas Day!”

“I’ll drink to his health for *your* sake, Bob, but not for his. Long life to him!”

The children drank the toast after her. It was the first gloomy moment of the day. Scrooge was the ogre of the family. Just the mention of his name cast a dark shadow on the happy party.

But a few moments later, they were even merrier than before. They laughed and told stories about what they’d been doing lately.

By now it was getting dark and snowing heavily. As Scrooge and the Spirit went through the town, they saw how Christmas was being celebrated in every household. When they received the bright sprinklings of the Spirit’s torch, the happy people became happier still.



# **7** More Christmas Presents

And now, without a word of warning from the Ghost, they stood upon a bleak moor. Huge stones were all around, as if it were the burial place of giants. Nothing grew there but moss and coarse grass.

“What place is this?” asked Scrooge.

“A place where miners live, those who work below the earth. They know me. See!”

A light shone from the window of a hut. Looking in, Scrooge and the Spirit saw a cheerful family dressed in holiday clothes. An old, old man and woman, with their children and their children’s children and grandchildren, all gathered around a glowing fire. Led by the old man, they were singing Christmas songs.

The Spirit did not stay here. He told Scrooge to hold onto his robe, and they sped

out to sea. To Scrooge's horror, looking back, he saw the last of the land disappear behind them. They soon came to a lonely lighthouse, some three miles from shore. Great heaps of seaweed clung to its base. Storm birds rose and fell about it.

But even here, two lighthouse tenders had made a fire. It shed a golden ray on the dark sea. Joining hands over their table, they wished each other Merry Christmas. The older one sang a Christmas song.

Again the Ghost sped on, high above the sea. Far from shore they saw a ship. They stood beside the helmsman at the wheel, the lookout in the bow, the officers on watch. Every man hummed a Christmas tune or had a Christmas thought. Every man had a kind word for another. Every man remembered those he cared for, and knew that they delighted to remember him.

It was a great surprise to Scrooge to hear a hearty laugh just then. It was an even greater surprise to find that the voice was his own nephew's. Now Scrooge was in a bright, dry, gleaming room. The Spirit stood,

silent and smiling, by Scrooge's side.

“Ha, ha!” laughed Scrooge's nephew, merrily. “Ha, ha, ha!”

There is nothing in the world so contagious as laughter and good feeling. When Scrooge's nephew laughed, holding his sides and rolling his head, his wife laughed as merrily as he. Their friends roared with laughter, too.

“Ha, ha! Ha, ha, ha, ha!”

“He said that Christmas was a humbug, as sure as I live!” cried Scrooge's nephew. “He believed it, too!”

“More shame for him, Fred!” said his wife. She was a very pretty young woman. She had the sunniest pair of eyes you ever saw in anyone's head.

“He's a funny old fellow,” said Scrooge's nephew. “That's the truth. And he certainly isn't as pleasant as he might be. However, I'm sure Uncle Scrooge's offenses carry their own punishment. It's not for me to say anything against him.”

“I'm sure he is very rich, Fred,” hinted his wife with a smile.

“What of that, my dear?” asked Scrooge’s nephew. “His wealth is of no use to him. He doesn’t do any good with it. He doesn’t make himself comfortable with it. Why, he doesn’t even have the satisfaction of knowing he is going to help *us* with it!”

“Well, I have no patience for him,” said his wife. All the other ladies quickly said the same thing.

“Oh, I have!” said Scrooge’s nephew. “I am sorry for him. I couldn’t be angry with him if I tried. Who suffers by his ill whims? *Himself*, always. Here, he takes it into his head to dislike us. He won’t come and dine at our house. What’s the result? He loses some pleasant moments—which certainly could do him no harm.

“I mean to give him the same chance every year, whether he likes it or not—for I *pity* him! He may rail at Christmas ’til he dies. But if I go there, in good temper, year after year, he can’t help thinking better of it. Maybe he’d even think to leave his poor clerk 50 pounds. That would be something.”

After tea, the friends enjoyed some

music. As Scrooge listened, all the things that the Ghost of Christmas Past had shown him came to his mind. He thought that if he had listened to more music, years ago, he might be a happier man.

But they didn't spend the whole evening on music. After a while, there were games. They played blind man's bluff and then a game of How, When, and Where. Scrooge found himself joining in, even though nobody at the party could see him. The Ghost was very pleased to see Scrooge having so much fun. He begged like a boy to be allowed to stay until the guests left. But this the Spirit said could not be done.

"Here is a new game," said Scrooge. "Let me stay just one half-hour, Spirit!"

It was a game called Yes and No. Scrooge's nephew had to think of something, and the others had to guess what. They started to ask questions that could be answered yes or no. Soon the line of questioning revealed that Fred was thinking of an animal. It was a live animal, a disagreeable animal, a savage animal. It was

an animal that growled and grunted sometimes, and talked sometimes, and lived in London. It walked about the streets. It wasn't led by anybody. It was not a horse, or a donkey, or a cow, or a bull. Nor was it a tiger, or a dog, or a pig, or a cat, or a bear.

At every question, Scrooge's nephew burst into a fresh roar of laughter. At last one guest, laughing loudly, cried out: "I know, Fred! I know what it is!"

"What is it?" cried Fred.

"It's your Uncle Scro-o-o-o-oge!"

Which it certainly was. Everyone laughed, but some objected that the answer to "Is it a bear?" should have been "Yes."

"Well, he has given us plenty of fun, I am sure," said Fred. "It would be ungrateful not to drink to his health. Here is a glass of hot cider. I say, 'To Uncle Scrooge!'"

"Well! Uncle Scrooge!" they cried.

"A Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year to the old man, whatever he is!" said Scrooge's nephew. "He wouldn't take it from me, but may he have it, nevertheless. Here's to Uncle Scrooge!"

Scrooge had become very light of heart. He might have thanked the company in a speech they couldn't hear. But the Ghost did not give him time. The whole scene passed away, and he and the Spirit were again upon their travels.

Much they saw, and far they went. Many homes they visited, and always with a happy end. The Spirit stood beside sick beds, and the people were cheerful. He stood on foreign lands, and they were close at home. He stood by struggling men, and they had hope. He stood by poverty, and it was rich. He left his blessing wherever he saw misery—and taught Scrooge his lessons.

It was a long night. It was strange, too, that while Scrooge stayed the same in appearance, the Ghost grew older. Looking at the Spirit, Scrooge noticed that its hair was turning gray.

“Are spirits' lives so short, then?” asked Scrooge.

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

“*Tonight!*” cried Scrooge in alarm.

“Tonight at midnight. Hark! The time is drawing near.” The bells were ringing 11:45.

“Forgive me if I am rude in what I ask,” said Scrooge. “But I see something strange coming from under your skirts. Is it a foot or a claw?”

“Look here,” said the Spirit sadly.

From the folds of its robe came two small children. They were wretched, hideous, and miserable. Kneeling at the Spirit’s feet, they clung to the outside of its robe.

They were a small boy and girl—yellow, ragged, scowling, wolfish, but also humble. Where graceful youth should have filled out their features, age had pinched and twisted them. Scrooge stared at them, horrified.

“Spirit! Whose children are these? Are they yours?” Scrooge could say no more.

“They are Humankind’s,” said the Spirit, looking down upon them. “And they cling to me. This boy is Ignorance. The girl is Want. Beware them both, and all like them. But most of all beware this boy. For on his brow I see Doom written, unless the writing



be erased. Can you deny it?” cried the Spirit, stretching out its hand toward the city.

“Have they no refuge or hope?” cried Scrooge unhappily.

“*Are there no prisons?*” asked the Spirit, turning on Scrooge for the last time with his own words. “*Are there no workhouses?*”

The bell struck 12.

Scrooge looked about for the Ghost, and saw it not. As the last stroke faded, he remembered what Jacob Marley had said. Lifting his eyes, Scrooge saw a solemn Phantom, draped and hooded. It was coming, like a mist creeping along the ground, directly toward him.

## **8** The Third of the Three Spirits

The ghostly Phantom slowly and silently approached. It was covered in a deep black garment that left nothing visible but one outstretched hand. Except for this, it would have been difficult to separate the figure from the darkness around it.

“Am I in the presence of the Ghost of Christmas Yet to Come?” said Scrooge.

The Spirit answered not, but pointed ahead with its hand.

Although well used to ghostly company by this time, Scrooge feared this silent shape. His legs trembled beneath him. “Ghost of the Future!” he exclaimed. “I fear you more than any other spirit I have seen. But I know you are here to do me good. Because I hope to be another man from what I was, I will go with you. I do it with a

thankful heart. Will you not speak to me?"

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

"Lead on!" said Scrooge. "Lead on!"

The Phantom moved away as it had come toward him. Scrooge followed in the shadow of its flowing gown.

They scarcely seemed to enter the city. Rather, the city seemed to spring up about them. There they were, in the heart of it, among the merchants.

The Spirit stopped near one little knot of businessmen. Scrooge listened to their talk.

"I don't know much about it," said a fat man with a big chin. I only know he's dead."

"When did he die?" asked another.

"Last night, I believe."

"Why, what was the matter with him?" asked a third. "I thought he'd never die."

"God knows," said the first, yawning.

"What has he done with his money?"

"He hasn't left it to *me*—that's all I know!" The three men shared a laugh.

"It's likely to be a very cheap funeral," said the same speaker. "I don't know of

anybody to go to it. Suppose we make up a party and volunteer?"

"I don't mind going—that is, if lunch is provided," said another. Another laugh.

The men strolled away and mixed with other groups. Scrooge knew the men. He looked toward the Spirit for an explanation.

The Phantom glided down the street. Its finger pointed to two persons who had stopped to talk. Scrooge knew these men also. They were men of business, very wealthy and important. Scrooge listened to what they were saying.

"Well!" said the first. "Old Scratch has got his own at last, hey?"

"So I hear. Cold, isn't it?"

"Just fine for Christmas time. Good morning!"

Not another word. Scrooge was at first surprised that the Spirit should listen in on such trivial conversations. Guessing there must be a hidden purpose, Scrooge thought about what it might be. It could not have anything to do with the death of Jacob, his former partner. That was Past—and this

Ghost's only concern was the Future. He could not think of anyone to whom the conversations would apply.

Scrooge looked about for his own image, but another man stood in his usual place. Although the clock pointed to his usual time of day for being there, he saw no likeness of himself. Scrooge was not surprised, though. He had been thinking about changing his life. Perhaps this meant that he actually would!

Then the Phantom pointed ahead. They left the busy scene and went to a run-down area. Scrooge had never been there before. The shops and houses were wretched. The people were miserable and ugly.

In one dirty shop were piled heaps of rusty keys, nails, chains, files, scales, and bits of scrap iron. Sitting among these things, by a charcoal stove, was a gray-haired man, about 70 years of age.

As Scrooge and the Phantom came closer, a woman with a heavy bundle entered the shop. Then another woman and a man came in, each with similar bundles. They looked

surprised to see one another. After a moment, all three burst into a loud laugh.

“Let the cleaning woman be first!” cried one woman. “Let the laundress be second, and let the undertaker’s man be third. Look, Joe. See what we have.”

“Come into the parlor,” said the old man who was sitting by the stove. The parlor was the space behind a screen of ragged cloth. The first woman threw her bundle on the floor and sat on a stool. She looked boldly into the faces of the other two.

“What’s wrong, then, Mrs. Dilber?” said the first woman. “Poor people have a right to take care of themselves. *He* always did.”

“That’s true! No man more so!” agreed the laundress.

“Very well, then!” cried the first woman. “Who’s the worse for the loss of a few things like these? Not a dead man, I suppose?”

“No, indeed,” said Mrs. Dilber, laughing.

“If he wanted to keep them after he was dead, why wasn’t he natural in his lifetime? If he had been, somebody might have been there to look after him when Death came.

Instead, he had to lie gasping out his last breath—alone by himself.”

“The truest words that ever were said,” agreed Mrs. Dilber. “It serves him right.”

“Open that bundle, old Joe, and tell me the value of it. Speak out plain. I’m not afraid to be the first—nor afraid for the others to see it. We knew that we were helping ourselves. It’s no sin. Open the bundle, Joe.”

But the man produced *his* bundle first. In it was a pencil case, a pair of sleeve buttons, and a pin of no great value. Joe added up the value and said, “Who’s next?”

Mrs. Dilber was next. There were sheets, a few towels, some clothes, two small silver teaspoons, and a few boots. Joe added up the value in the same way.

“Now undo *my* bundle, Joe,” said the first woman.

Joe untied a great many knots, and then dragged out a large and heavy roll of some dark stuff. “What do you call this?” said Joe. “Is it bed curtains?”

“Ah!” said the woman, laughing. “Bed curtains!”



“You don’t mean to say you took them down with him lying there?” asked Joe.

“Yes, I do,” said the woman. “Why not? I won’t hold my hand back when I can get something in it by reaching out. Think about the kind of man he was, anyway! Don’t drop that lamp oil on the blankets, now.”

“*His* blankets?” asked Joe.

“Whose do you think? He isn’t likely to get cold without them, I dare say.”

“Well, I hope he didn’t die of anything catching, eh?” said old Joe.



“Don’t you be afraid of that,” said the woman. “You may look through that shirt ’til your eyes ache, but you won’t find a hole in it. It’s the best he had, and a fine one, too. They’d have wasted it, if not for me.”

“What do you call *wasting* it?” asked old Joe with a sly look.

“Putting it on him to be buried in, to be sure,” replied the woman with a laugh. “Somebody was fool enough to do it, but I took it off again. Cheap calico is just as good for the purpose. He can’t look uglier than he did in that one.”

Scrooge listened to this talk in horror. He viewed the people with hate and disgust.

“Ha! Ha!” laughed the same woman, when Joe paid them. “This is the end of it, you see! He frightened everyone away from him when he was alive. He didn’t know he would profit *us* when he was dead! Ha, ha, ha!”

“Spirit!” said Scrooge, shuddering. “I see, I see. The case of this unhappy man might be my own. My life tends that way, now. But look! Good heaven, what is *this*?”

# S 9

## A Christmas Future?

The scene had suddenly changed. Now Scrooge stood beside a bed. It was a bare bed with no curtains. Beneath a thin sheet there lay a body, covered up from head to toe.

The room was dark, except for a pale light coming in from outside. This light fell straight upon the covered figure. Lying there, unwatched, unwept, uncared for, was the body of a dead man.

Scrooge looked at the Phantom. Its hand was pointing to the head. One motion of Scrooge's finger would have lifted the cover and revealed the face. Scrooge thought of it, knowing how easy it would be to do. He longed to lift the sheet, but he seemed to have no power to do so.

Scrooge wondered—if this man could be brought back to life now, what would be his

thoughts? The dead man lay in the dark, empty house, with not a man, woman, or child to say a kind word about him. A cat was tearing at the door. The sound of gnawing rats could be heard beneath the fireplace. What rats wanted in the room of death, Scrooge did not dare to think.

“Spirit!” he said. “This is a fearful place. In leaving it, I shall not leave its lesson—trust me. Let us go!”

Still the Ghost pointed with an unmoved finger to the dead man’s head.

“I understand you,” Scrooge said, “and I would do it if I could. But I have not the power, Spirit. I have not the power.”

Again it seemed to look upon him.

“Is there any person in the town who feels emotion caused by this man’s death?” asked Scrooge. “If so, show that person to me, I beg you!”

For a moment, the Phantom spread its dark robe out to the side like a wing. Then, as it lowered its arm and the sleeve fell away, a room was revealed. A young mother and her small children were there.

The woman seemed to be expecting someone—for she walked up and down the room impatiently. She started at every sound. She looked out the window, glanced at the clock, and tried to sew.

At last, a knock was heard. The woman hurried to the door and met her husband. Although his face was very young, it was sad and worn with care.

The man sat down to the dinner that had been waiting for him. When the wife asked about the news, he seemed too embarrassed and uneasy to answer.

“Is it good?” she said. “Or bad?”

“Bad,” he answered.

“We are quite ruined?”

“No. There is hope yet, Caroline.”

“If only he gives in,” she said, “there is! Nothing is past hope—if such a miracle has happened!”

“He is past giving in,” said her husband. “He is dead.”

She was a good woman, but she was thankful in her soul to hear it. Clasp- ing her hands, she said so. The next moment, she

prayed for forgiveness and was sorry. But the first emotion spoke the truth in her heart.

“To whom will our debt be transferred?”

“I don’t know. But before that time we shall be ready with the money. We may sleep tonight with light hearts, Caroline!”

Yes, their hearts did grow lighter. The children’s faces were brighter. It was a happier house for this man’s death! It seemed the only emotion the Ghost could show Scrooge was one of pleasure.

“Let me see someone who is *sorry* about the death. Otherwise, Spirit, that dark chamber will be forever present to me.”

Next the Ghost brought Scrooge to poor Bob Cratchit’s house. They found the mother and the children seated around the fire.

It was quiet. Very quiet. The noisy little Cratchits were as still as statues in one corner. The mother laid her sewing upon the table, and put her hand up to her face.

“The color hurts my eyes,” she said. “But for all the world I wouldn’t show weak eyes to your father when he comes home. It must be near his time.”

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

They were quiet again. At last she said, “He used to walk very fast indeed, with— with Tiny Tim upon his shoulder. But the little fellow was very light to carry. And your father loved him so, it was no trouble. *No* trouble! Ah, there is your father at the door!”

She hurried out to meet him. His tea was ready for him, and they all tried to serve it to him first. Then the two young Cratchits climbed on his knees and said, “Don’t mind it, Father. Don’t be sad!”

“I went to the cemetery today, my dears,” said 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 Tim that I would walk there on Sundays. My poor little child!” he cried. “My dear child!”

He broke down all at once. He couldn’t help it. When he composed himself, he said, “I am sure that none of us shall ever forget our dear Tiny Tim— shall we?— or this first

parting there was among us?”

“*Never, Father!*” they all cried.

“Spirit,” said Scrooge. “Our parting moment is at hand. I am sad about Tiny Tim’s death. But tell me who that man was we saw lying dead?”

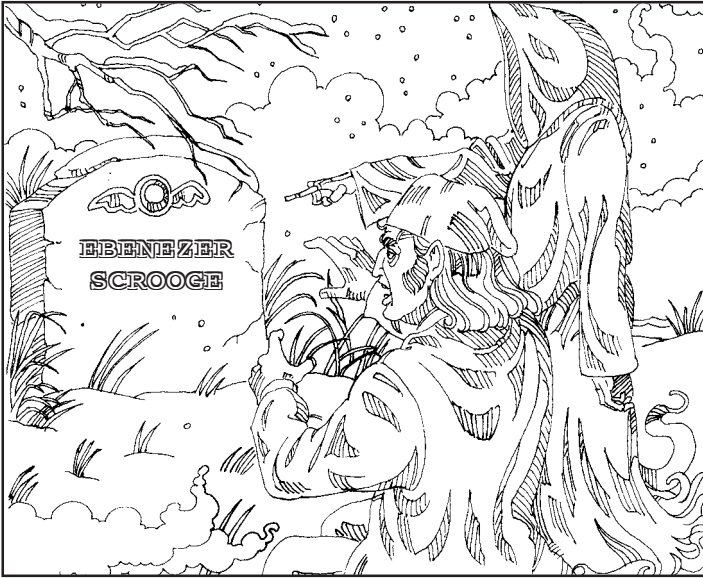
The Ghost of Christmas Yet to Come pointed straight ahead. They began to move forward. As they passed his own office, Scrooge looked in. It was an office still, but not *his*. The furniture was not the same, and the figure in the chair was not himself. The Phantom pointed as before.

Moving on again they soon reached an iron gate. Scrooge looked around before entering.

A churchyard. Here, then, the wretched man whose name he had now to learn, lay underneath the ground. The Spirit stood among the graves, and pointed down to one. Scrooge went toward it, trembling.

“Before I go on,” said Scrooge, “answer just one question. Are these the shadows of the things that will be, or of the things that only *may* be?”

Still the Ghost pointed to the grave.



Scrooge crept toward it, trembling as he went. Following the finger, he read his own name upon the stone of the neglected grave: EBENEZER SCROOGE.

“Am *I* that man who lay upon the bed?” Scrooge cried, falling to his knees.

The finger pointed from the grave to Scrooge, and back again.

“No, Spirit! Oh, *no, no!*”

Still the finger pointed.

“Spirit!” Scrooge cried. “Hear me! I am not the man I was. I will not be the man I



would have been but for these visits. Why show me this, if I am past all hope?”

For the first time the hand appeared to shake a little.

“Good Spirit, I can see that you have pity on me. Tell me that I may yet change these shadows you have shown me. *Tell me I can change my life!*”

The uplifted hand trembled.

“I will honor Christmas in my heart, and try to keep it all the year,” Scrooge cried out. “I will live in the Past, the Present, and the Future. The Spirits of all Three shall strive within me. From now on I will not shut out the lessons they teach. Oh, tell me that I may wash away the writing on this stone!”

In his agony, Scrooge caught the Spirit’s hand. It tried to free itself, but Scrooge was strong. At last the Spirit, stronger yet, freed its hand and pulled it away.

Reaching up in a last prayer to change his fate, Scrooge saw the Phantom’s hood and gown begin to flutter. In a moment it collapsed, dwindling down into a bedpost.

# **S**10 **The End of It**

Yes! And the bedpost was his own. The bed was his own, the room was his own. Best of all—the time before him was his own.

“I will live in the Past, the Present, and the Future!” Scrooge repeated as he jumped out of bed. His face was wet with grateful tears.

“They are not torn down,” cried Scrooge, touching his bed curtains. “They are here! I am here! The things that would have been, may yet be changed. They *will* be!”

Now Scrooge was laughing and crying in the same breath. “I don’t know what to do! I am as light as a feather. I am as happy as an angel. I am as merry as a schoolboy. A merry Christmas to everybody! A happy New Year to all the world!”

Really, for a man who had been out of practice for so many years, Scrooge’s laugh

was wonderful. Perhaps it was the father of a long, long line of brilliant laughs!

Running to the window, he opened it and put out his head. No fog, no mist. Bright, happy cold. Golden sunlight. Heavenly sky. Sweet fresh air. Merry bells. Oh, glorious! *Glorious!* “What’s today?” cried Scrooge, waving his arm at a boy in the street.

“Why, it’s Christmas Day,” said the boy.

“Christmas Day!” Scrooge exclaimed to himself. “I haven’t missed it! The Spirits have done it all in one night. They can do anything they like. Of course they can.” Then, to the boy, he said, “Do you know the poultry shop at the corner?”

“I should hope so,” replied the lad.

“An intelligent boy!” said Scrooge. “A remarkable boy! Do you know if they’ve sold the prize turkey that was hanging in the window? Not the little one—the big one?”

“What, the one as big as me?”

“What a delightful boy!” said Scrooge. “Yes, lad! The big one!”

“It’s hanging there now,” said the boy.

“Is it?” said Scrooge. “Go and buy it.”



Come back with the man, and I'll give you a shilling. Come back in less than five minutes, and I'll give you half a crown!"

The boy was off like a shot.

"I'll send the turkey to Bob Cratchit's!" whispered Scrooge. He rubbed his hands, laughing. "He won't know who sent it. Why, that bird is twice the size of Tiny Tim!"

Scrooge quickly wrote the address and went downstairs to open the door and wait for the poultry man. As he stood there, the door knocker caught his eye. "I shall love it

as long as I live!” cried Scrooge, patting it with his hand. “It’s a wonderful knocker! Here’s the turkey! Hello! Merry Christmas!”

And what a turkey! It never could have stood upon its legs, that bird, it was so fat!

“Why, you can’t *carry* that, boy!” said Scrooge. “You must have a cab.”

He chuckled as he said this. He chuckled as he paid for the turkey and for the cab. And he chuckled when he paid the boy. Then he chuckled when he sat down in his chair. He went on chuckling until he cried.

He dressed himself “all in his best,” and went out into the streets. By this time many people were pouring forth, just as he had seen them with the Ghost of Christmas Present. Walking with his hands behind him, Scrooge greeted each face with a delighted smile. He looked so pleasant that three amazed-looking men sputtered, “Good morning, sir! A Merry Christmas to you!”

He had not gone far when he saw one of the men who had come to his office the day before. Now he hurried up to him and said, “How do you do? I hope you did well in your

collections yesterday. It was very kind of you. A Merry Christmas to you, sir!”

“Mr. Scrooge?” the man gasped.

“Yes,” said Scrooge. “That is my name, although I fear it may not be pleasant to you. Allow me to ask your pardon. And would you kindly have the goodness to accept—” Here Scrooge whispered in his ear.

“Lord bless me!” cried the gentleman. “My dear Mr. Scrooge, are you serious?”

“Oh, a great many back payments are included in that amount, I assure you.”

“My dear sir!” the man cried. “I don’t know how to thank you.”

“Don’t say another word, please,” said Scrooge. “Come and see me, will you?”

“I *will!*” cried the beaming gentleman.

“Thank you,” said Scrooge. “I thank you 50 times. Bless you!”

Scrooge went to church and then walked about the streets. He watched the happy faces of the people and patted children on the head. In the afternoon, he headed toward his nephew’s house.

He passed the door a dozen times before

he had the courage to go up and knock. Finally, he did it. When he was let in, he marched toward the dining room and opened the door. “Fred!” he called out.

“Why, bless my soul!” Fred cried in amazement. “Who’s that?”

“It’s I—your Uncle Scrooge. I have come to dinner. Will you still welcome me, Fred?”

*Welcome?* It was a wonder Fred didn’t shake his arm off! Scrooge was made to feel at home in five minutes. Wonderful party, wonderful games, wonderful happiness!

The next morning, Scrooge went to the office early. If he could only be there first, and catch Bob Cratchit coming late! That was the thing he had his heart set upon.

And he did it. Yes, he did! Bob came hurrying in a full 18 minutes late.

“Hello!” growled Scrooge, in his old voice, as near as he could pretend it. “What do you mean by coming in late?”

“I am very sorry, sir,” said Bob. “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,” said

Scrooge. “I am not going to stand for this sort of thing any longer. And therefore. . . *I am about to raise your salary!* A Merry Christmas, Bob! I’ll raise your salary, and try to help your struggling family. We will discuss it this very afternoon, over a cup of Christmas punch. Make up the fires now. And buy some more coal before you dot another i, Bob Cratchit!”

Scrooge was better than his word. He did all that he had promised, and much more. To Tiny Tim, who did *not* die, he became a second father. As time went on, Scrooge became as good a man as the good old city ever knew. Some people laughed to see such a change in him—and he let them laugh. Scrooge’s own heart could now laugh, too—and that was quite enough for him.

Scrooge had no more meetings with the Spirits. But it was always said of him that he knew how to keep Christmas well—if any man alive ever could. May that be truly said of all of us! And so, as Tiny Tim observed, God bless us, every one!





NAME \_\_\_\_\_ DATE \_\_\_\_\_

**A.** Circle the hidden words. They may go across, backward, up, down, or diagonally. Check off each word as you find it.

- |                      |                        |
|----------------------|------------------------|
| _____ <b>CHINK</b>   | _____ <b>SOLITARY</b>  |
| _____ <b>RUDDY</b>   | _____ <b>SHILLINGS</b> |
| _____ <b>MOURNER</b> | _____ <b>PELTING</b>   |
| _____ <b>DENSE</b>   | _____ <b>HUMBUG</b>    |
| _____ <b>GLUM</b>    | _____ <b>INFLUENCE</b> |
| _____ <b>BITTER</b>  | _____ <b>OYSTER</b>    |

W	D	N	E	P	I	W	S	A	J	U	W
Y	E	C	N	E	U	L	F	N	I	S	H
R	N	A	L	L	I	T	T	E	L	G	E
E	S	D	A	T	S	R	U	D	D	Y	T
T	E	E	E	I	E	D	M	Y	M	O	S
S	C	H	I	N	K	R	T	H	E	R	I
Y	M	W	R	G	S	E	H	T	A	W	O
O	I	U	Y	R	A	T	I	L	O	S	W
S	O	L	L	I	B	T	E	W	I	L	N
M	S	I	S	G	N	I	L	L	I	H	S
B	E	P	H	U	M	B	U	G	R	E	Z

**B.** Write a word from the puzzle to complete each sentence.

1. Scrooge was Marley’s only \_\_\_\_\_ .
2. Fog poured in every \_\_\_\_\_ and keyhole.
3. “Bah!” cried Scrooge, “ \_\_\_\_\_ !”
4. Fred’s face was \_\_\_\_\_ and handsome.

**C.** Write a puzzle word under the definition it matches.

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| 1. soft-bodied shellfish<br>_____          | 5. British coins of small value<br>_____ |
| 2. living or being alone<br>_____          | 6. beating down hard<br>_____            |
| 3. unhappy, downhearted<br>_____           | 7. extremely cold<br>_____               |
| 4. the power to make a difference<br>_____ | 8. very thick<br>_____                   |



NAME \_\_\_\_\_ DATE \_\_\_\_\_

**A.** Write a letter to show how each sentence should be completed.

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| 1. _____ As he turned the key in the lock,<br>Scrooge saw  | a. do so in death.                         |
| 2. _____ Scrooge liked darkness because                    | b. floating out the<br>window.             |
| 3. _____ Scrooge heard a clanking noise<br>below that      | c. escape the same fate.                   |
| 4. _____ The fire leaped up as if to say                   | d. traveled without rest<br>or peace.      |
| 5. _____ A living person must walk among<br>his fellows or | e. sounded like heavy<br>chains dragging.  |
| 6. _____ In the past seven years, Marley’s<br>spirit had   | f. Marley’s face looking<br>at him.        |
| 7. _____ Marley said that his trade was only               | g. charity, mercy, and<br>kindness.        |
| 8. _____ Marley said that Scrooge still had a<br>chance to | h. it was cheap.                           |
| 9. _____ Marley’s Ghost left the room by                   | i. “Marley’s Ghost!”                       |
| 10. _____ Marley said his real business on<br>earth was    | j. a drop in the ocean<br>of his business. |

**B.** Unscramble the words. Then use the words to complete the sentences.

<b>SKLAPCOD</b> _____	<b>SNITSEW</b> _____
<b>LAIGTIP</b> _____	<b>PRISTIS</b> _____

1. Marley’s hair was done up in a \_\_\_\_\_ .
2. Marley’s chain was made of ledgers, cash boxes, and \_\_\_\_\_ .
3. Marley’s fate was to \_\_\_\_\_ what he had not shared on earth.
4. Marley tells Scrooge that three \_\_\_\_\_ will come to haunt him.



NAME \_\_\_\_\_ DATE \_\_\_\_\_

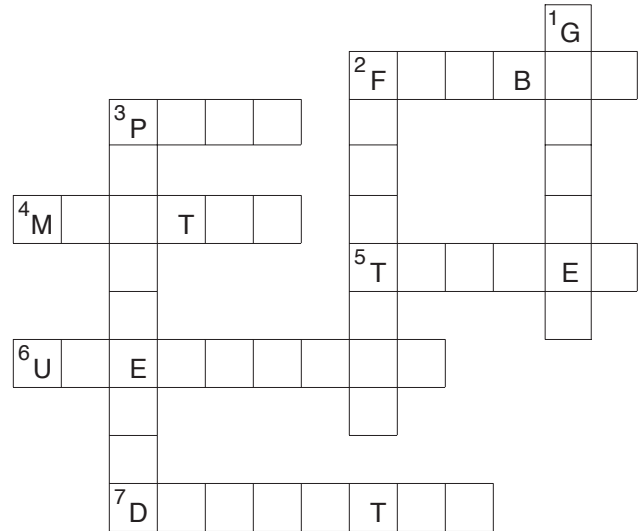
**A.** Use the clues to complete the crossword puzzle.

**ACROSS**

2. weak; having little strength or power
3. to feel sorry for; sympathize
4. being subject to death
5. rang out
6. supernatural; not of this world
7. empty; no one there

**DOWN**

1. glitter in the light
2. predicted; prophesied
3. undecided; confused



**B.** Use words from the puzzle to complete the sentences.

1. The church bell \_\_\_\_\_ 12 o'clock.
2. Feeling \_\_\_\_\_, Scrooge wondered if he had seen Marley's Ghost in a dream.
3. Scrooge was face to face with an \_\_\_\_\_ visitor.
4. Why did Scrooge's eye \_\_\_\_\_ as he watched the boys walk by?
5. "The school is not quite \_\_\_\_\_," said the Ghost.
6. Scrooge looked in \_\_\_\_\_ at his former self.
7. He saw a lonely boy reading by a \_\_\_\_\_ fire.
8. "Are you the Spirit whose coming was \_\_\_\_\_ to me?" Scrooge asked.
9. "I will fall," cried Scrooge, "for I am but a \_\_\_\_\_."



NAME \_\_\_\_\_ DATE \_\_\_\_\_

**A.** Read the list of **causes** on the left. Then write a letter to show the **effect** of each **cause**.

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| 1. _____ Thick frost covers Scrooge's window.         | a. Scrooge passes through the wall.              |
| 2. _____ The clock strikes one.                       | b. He weeps to see his former self.              |
| 3. _____ Scrooge's bed curtains are drawn aside.      | c. Scrooge is afraid that he will fall.          |
| 4. _____ The Spirit leads Scrooge toward the window.  | d. Lights flash in Scrooge's room.               |
| 5. _____ The Spirit lays his hand on Scrooge's heart. | e. He wipes it with the sleeve of his robe.      |
| 6. _____ Scrooge sees a lonely boy at his desk.       | f. He is face to face with an unearthly visitor. |

**B.** Answer the questions in your own words.

1. When the clock struck 12, Scrooge thought "an icicle must have gotten into the works." What **caused** him to think that?

---

---

2. What **caused** Scrooge's uneasiness as he waited for the clock to strike one?

---

---

3. What probably **caused** the storybook characters to come alive for the boy Scrooge used to be?

---

---

4. What **caused** "something" to appear on Scrooge's cheek and his lips to tremble?

---

---



NAME \_\_\_\_\_

DATE \_\_\_\_\_

**A.** Circle the hidden words. They may go across, backward, up, down, or diagonally. Check off each word as you find it.

- |                 |              |
|-----------------|--------------|
| ___ WAREHOUSE   | ___ MERGED   |
| ___ SUBSTANTIAL | ___ WITS     |
| ___ POVERTY     | ___ IDOL     |
| ___ DROWSINESS  | ___ DESPAIR  |
| ___ APPRENTICE  | ___ DELICATE |
| ___ GRATITUDE   | ___ NEPHEW   |

A	P	P	R	E	N	T	I	C	E	O	N	G	E
T	O	W	T	H	D	E	G	R	E	M	L	R	R
P	W	I	T	S	E	O	C	L	O	A	O	A	K
W	O	R	O	C	S	K	W	E	I	R	D	T	E
A	G	V	O	N	I	E	G	T	T	O	I	I	R
R	O	C	E	K	A	R	N	O	U	N	D	T	R
E	T	E	H	R	H	A	E	I	O	U	S	U	I
H	E	T	O	N	T	I	P	G	S	H	T	D	A
O	S	P	L	S	H	Y	H	S	P	W	L	E	P
U	A	S	B	H	I	W	E	A	S	T	O	K	S
S	I	U	N	G	A	B	W	A	T	H	L	R	E
E	S	O	N	G	A	E	T	A	C	I	L	E	D

**B.** Write a word from the puzzle to match each definition.

1. frail, dainty, easily damaged

\_\_\_\_\_

7. person who is learning a trade

\_\_\_\_\_

2. state of being very poor

\_\_\_\_\_

8. the power to think and reason

\_\_\_\_\_

3. sleepiness, weariness

\_\_\_\_\_

9. real, firm, having substance

\_\_\_\_\_

4. your brother or sister's son

\_\_\_\_\_

10. came together; joined as one

\_\_\_\_\_

5. sense of thankfulness

\_\_\_\_\_

11. feeling of hopelessness

\_\_\_\_\_

6. building where goods are stored

\_\_\_\_\_

12. something worshipped as a god

\_\_\_\_\_



NAME \_\_\_\_\_ DATE \_\_\_\_\_

**A.** Notice the boldfaced word as you read each sentence. Then look in the box for an **antonym** (word that means the opposite) for the boldfaced word. Write the antonym on the line.

<b>relaxed</b>	<b>murky</b>	<b>hopefulness</b>	<b>bustling</b>	<b>stationary</b>
<b>saddest</b>	<b>worry</b>	<b>insignificant</b>	<b>repulsive</b>	<b>concluded</b>

1. Alone at school for the holidays, young Ebenezer walked up and down in **despair**. \_\_\_\_\_
2. “We’ll have the **merriest** \_\_\_\_\_ Christmas in all the world!” cried little Fan.
3. To make room for dancing, every **movable** \_\_\_\_\_ thing was cleared away.
4. Soon the warehouse was as **bright** \_\_\_\_\_ as any ballroom.
5. In came Fezziwig’s daughters, beaming and **lovable**. \_\_\_\_\_ .

**B.** Find a **synonym** (word with the same meaning) in the box above for each boldfaced word. Write the synonym on the line.

1. The Spirit led Scrooge from the school into the **busy** \_\_\_\_\_ city.
2. The Fezziwigs made everyone feel **welcome** \_\_\_\_\_ .
3. When the clock struck 11, the Christmas party **broke up** \_\_\_\_\_ .
4. Fezziwig had spent but a **small** \_\_\_\_\_ amount of money on the party.
5. As a young man, Scrooge’s face had begun to wear the signs of **care** \_\_\_\_\_ and greed.



NAME \_\_\_\_\_ DATE \_\_\_\_\_

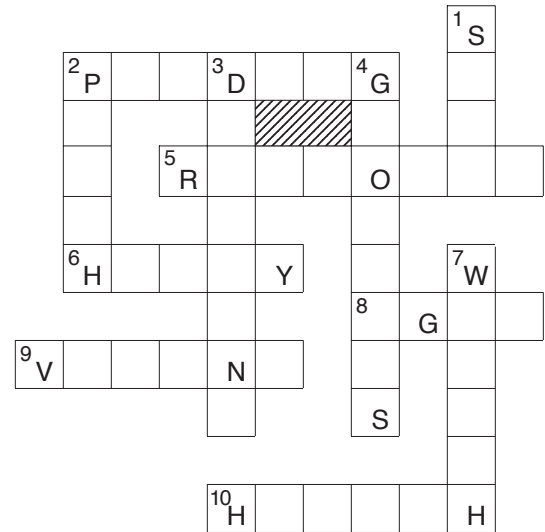
**A.** Use the clues to solve the crossword puzzle.

**ACROSS**

2. creamy, soft dessert
5. renewed, reconditioned
6. plant with shiny green pointed leaves
8. a cruel or evil person
9. empty; nothing there
10. stone or brick floor of a fireplace

**DOWN**

1. a tasty, leafy spice
2. a sweet fruit drink
3. place where people live
4. beautiful, splendid, magnificent
7. ring of leaves or flowers, twisted together



**B.** Complete each sentence with a word from the puzzle.

1. The Ghost wore a holly \_\_\_\_\_ on its head.
2. A few drops of water from the torch \_\_\_\_\_ the good humor of the tired people.
3. The Ghost stopped to bless Bob Cratchit's \_\_\_\_\_ .
4. The Cratchits' Christmas goose was seasoned with \_\_\_\_\_ and onion.
5. After dinner, the \_\_\_\_\_ was brought out.
6. Later, all the Cratchits gathered around the \_\_\_\_\_ .
7. The Ghost saw a \_\_\_\_\_ seat in the corner.
8. Scrooge was the \_\_\_\_\_ of the Cratchit family.



NAME \_\_\_\_\_ DATE \_\_\_\_\_

**A.** Unscramble the adjective on the left that was used to describe the person or object on the right. Write the unscrambled word on the line.

- |                          |                              |
|--------------------------|------------------------------|
| 1. DOUL _____ SNORE      | 12. PALCISE _____ FLAVOR     |
| 2. GRIBTH _____ LIGHTS   | 13. ARTHEY _____ NATURE      |
| 3. TIMHGY _____ BLAZE    | 14. ROSECUPI _____ FATHER    |
| 4. NOGWIGL _____ TORCH   | 15. TITELL _____ CRUTCH      |
| 5. SINGHIN _____ ICICLES | 16. RONI _____ FRAME         |
| 6. WRONB _____ CURLS     | 17. REDNET _____ GOOSE       |
| 7. THO _____ CIDER       | 18. RIEDFLYN _____ SNOWBALL  |
| 8. SHIPNAS _____ ONIONS  | 19. TAVANC _____ SEAT        |
| 9. STIOM _____ FIGS      | 20. USPURLS _____ POPULATION |
| 10. CHERFN _____ PLUMS   | 21. STYGIN _____ MAN         |
| 11. PAYPH _____ PEOPLE   | 22. DEARDOCET _____ BOXES    |

**B.** Complete each sentence with one or more adjectives from the box.

joyful	green	poor	strange	white	jolly	dozen
--------	-------	------	---------	-------	-------	-------

- The light was more alarming than a \_\_\_\_\_ ghosts.
- A \_\_\_\_\_ voice called Scrooge by name.
- On the couch of food sat a \_\_\_\_\_ giant.
- The Spirit wore a \_\_\_\_\_ robe bordered with \_\_\_\_\_ fur.
- The people shoveling the snow were \_\_\_\_\_ .
- A \_\_\_\_\_ dinner most needed a sprinkle from the Spirit's torch.





NAME \_\_\_\_\_

DATE \_\_\_\_\_

**A.** Circle the hidden words. They may go across, backward, up, down, or diagonally. Check off each word as you find it.

- |                |              |
|----------------|--------------|
| ___ CONTAGIOUS | ___ HELMSMAN |
| ___ PHANTOM    | ___ MOOR     |
| ___ OFFENSES   | ___ BLEAK    |
| ___ MISERY     | ___ HARK     |
| ___ WHIMS      | ___ REFUGE   |
| ___ SAVAGE     | ___ SOLEMN   |

R	O	B	W	Y	O	R	U	B	O
H	E	L	M	S	M	A	N	A	T
G	E	E	N	T	Y	L	O	D	S
M	O	A	W	N	T	F	H	U	O
I	O	K	E	S	F	T	O	R	L
S	E	T	A	E	M	I	M	K	E
E	R	R	N	I	G	L	R	L	M
R	I	S	F	A	F	A	E	S	N
Y	E	B	T	W	H	I	M	S	U
S	T	N	A	D	R	P	A	M	Y
M	O	O	R	E	G	U	F	E	R
C	E	G	A	V	A	S	E	T	H

**B.** Use words from the puzzle to complete the sentences.

1. On the ship a \_\_\_\_\_ stood at the wheel.
2. Huge stones were all around the \_\_\_\_\_ .
3. Nothing but moss and grass grew in this \_\_\_\_\_ place.
4. There is nothing so \_\_\_\_\_ as laughter and good feeling.
5. Fred said that Scrooge’s \_\_\_\_\_ carry their own punishment.
6. In the game Fred was thinking of a live, disagreeable, \_\_\_\_\_ animal.
7. In the mist, a hooded \_\_\_\_\_ was coming toward Scrooge.
8. The Ghost left his blessings wherever he saw \_\_\_\_\_ .



NAME \_\_\_\_\_ DATE \_\_\_\_\_

Circle a letter to show how each sentence should be completed.

1. **Scrooge saw Christmas being celebrated in a humble miner’s hut and in a lonely lighthouse. By taking Scrooge there, what point was the Spirit making?**
  - a. that Christmas isn’t happy for poor people
  - b. that Christmas spirit doesn’t depend on money
  
2. **What did Fred mean when he said that Scrooge’s “offenses carry their own punishment”?**
  - a. Meanness to others hurts the mean person most.
  - b. Scrooge should sentence himself to a prison term.
  
3. **Why does Fred say he is sorry for his uncle?**
  - a. because he has no loving wife or children
  - b. because he misses out on many good times
  
4. **Why did Scrooge beg the Spirit to let him stay at Fred’s until the party was over?**
  - a. Scrooge wanted to hear what they said about him.
  - b. Scrooge was enjoying the music and the games.
  
5. **Why did Fred insist that his guests “drink to Scrooge’s health”?**
  - a. Scrooge had given them a lot of laughs.
  - b. Scrooge was old and in poor health.
  
6. **Two ragged scowling children appeared from the folds of the Spirit’s robe. What did these children represent?**
  - a. All the children of the world who suffer from poverty and lack of education.
  - b. The kind of tiresome people who should be sent to prisons and workhouses.



NAME \_\_\_\_\_ DATE \_\_\_\_\_

**A.** Circle a word or words to correctly complete each sentence.

1. The ghostly phantom ( spoke / pointed ) to guide Scrooge into the heart of the city.
2. Scrooge and the phantom overheard some merchants talking about ( Marley's / Scrooge's ) death.
3. In his office Scrooge was surprised to see ( himself / another man ) sitting in his usual corner.
4. Scrooge had ( often / never ) visited the rundown area of the city.
5. Carrying bundles, three people entered a dirty shop to ( buy / sell ) stolen goods.
6. Old Joe added up the ( value / weight ) of things like a pin and two sleeve buttons.
7. The woman who took Scrooge's blankets said he wasn't likely to get ( arrested / cold ) without them.

**B.** Write a letter to show which ending on the right completes each sentence beginning on the left.

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| 1. _____ Because Scrooge hoped to start a new life, | a. as long as lunch was provided.                  |
| 2. _____ The merchants would go to the funeral      | b. was the dead man's bed curtains.                |
| 3. _____ A gray-haired man about 70 years old       | c. he followed the Ghost of Christmas Yet to Come. |
| 4. _____ The heavy roll of dark material            | d. sat by a charcoal stove.                        |



NAME \_\_\_\_\_

DATE \_\_\_\_\_

**A.** Circle the hidden words in the puzzle. They may go across, backward, up, down, or diagonally. Check off each word as you find it.

- |              |                 |
|--------------|-----------------|
| ___ CEMETERY | ___ CHURCHYARD  |
| ___ STRIVE   | ___ HONOR       |
| ___ FATE     | ___ EMBARRASSED |
| ___ CHAMBER  | ___ DEBT        |
| ___ EMOTION  | ___ COMPOSED    |
| ___ MIRACLE  | ___ DWINDLED    |



**B.** Write a letter to match each word with its definition.

- |                    |   |
|--------------------|---|
| 1. ___ debt        | a. burial place   |
| 2. ___ embarrassed | b. one's outcome; the way things will turn out in the end |
| 3. ___ cemetery    | c. money owed   |
| 4. ___ fate        | d. felt uncomfortable, self-conscious                     |

**C.** Complete each sentence with a word from the puzzle.

- “Does no person feel \_\_\_\_\_ about this man’s death?” asked Scrooge.
- “I will \_\_\_\_\_ Christmas in my heart,” Scrooge promised.
- “The Spirits shall \_\_\_\_\_ within me from now on,” Scrooge said.
- Fluttering, the Spirit collapsed and \_\_\_\_\_ down into a bedpost.
- A body lay in a dark \_\_\_\_\_ beneath a thin sheet.



NAME \_\_\_\_\_ DATE \_\_\_\_\_

First complete each sentence with a word from the box. Then number the events to show which happened first, second, and so on.

<b>fireplace</b>	<b>fate</b>	<b>husband</b>	<b>gate</b>	<b>glanced</b>	<b>unwept</b>
<b>neglected</b>	<b>pity</b>	<b>cemetery</b>	<b>debt</b>	<b>hearts</b>	<b>walked</b>

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1. Bob says that he visited the \_\_\_\_\_ .
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2. Scrooge read his own name on the \_\_\_\_\_ tombstone.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3. The young husband and wife talked worriedly about their \_\_\_\_\_ .
- \_\_\_\_\_ 4. Scrooge and the Spirit enter an iron \_\_\_\_\_ .
- \_\_\_\_\_ 5. The body of a dead man, \_\_\_\_\_ and uncared for, was lying on the bed.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 6. Scrooge said a last prayer to change his \_\_\_\_\_ .
- \_\_\_\_\_ 7. A man's death had made their \_\_\_\_\_ lighter.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 8. Gnawing rats were heard beneath the \_\_\_\_\_ .
- \_\_\_\_\_ 9. Scrooge begged the Spirit to have \_\_\_\_\_ .
- \_\_\_\_\_ 10. The young \_\_\_\_\_ 's face was sad and worn with care.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 11. Peter Cratchit said his father now \_\_\_\_\_ slower than he used to.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 12. Walking up and down the room, the woman \_\_\_\_\_ at the clock.



NAME \_\_\_\_\_ DATE \_\_\_\_\_

Read the lines from Chapter 10. Then circle a letter to show what is **implied** (suggested but not stated) by each statement.

- 1. The things that would have been may yet be changed.**
  - a. Scrooge still had a chance to alter his future.
  - b. He could set the clock to any hour he liked.
  
- 2. For a man who had been out of practice for so many years, Scrooge's laugh was wonderful.**
  - a. Scrooge found it boring to practice laughing.
  - b. Scrooge had been grumpy for a very long time.
  
- 3. "I shall love this door knocker as long as I live!"**
  - a. Scrooge was grateful for the events that began with seeing Marley's face on the door knocker.
  - b. Scrooge's door knocker was made of solid brass, and it was very valuable.
  
- 4. Bob Cratchit wouldn't know who sent the turkey.**
  - a. Scrooge was trying to make Bob feel embarrassed.
  - b. Scrooge wanted Bob to have a nice surprise.
  
- 5. "I fear my name may not be pleasant to you."**
  - a. Scrooge was used to people making fun of his name.
  - b. Scrooge was afraid he'd be remembered as stingy and hardhearted.
  
- 6. It was a wonder Fred didn't shake his arm off!**
  - a. Fred was so surprised and pleased that he couldn't stop shaking his Uncle Scrooge's hand.
  - b. Still angry about Scrooge's grumpiness, Fred gave his uncle a hard shake.



NAME \_\_\_\_\_ DATE \_\_\_\_\_

First complete each sentence with words from the box. Then number the events to show which happened first, second, and so on.

<b>pudding</b>	<b>prisons</b>	<b>married</b>	<b>remember</b>	<b>closet</b>
<b>business</b>	<b>office</b>	<b>caroler</b>	<b>Ghost of Christmas Present</b>	
<b>Ghost of Christmas Yet to Come</b>			<b>Ghost of Christmas Past</b>	

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1. Scrooge checked to see that nobody was in the \_\_\_\_\_ .
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2. Bob promised to be in the \_\_\_\_\_ early the next morning.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3. After dinner Mrs. Cratchit brought out the Christmas \_\_\_\_\_ .
- \_\_\_\_\_ 4. Scrooge said that Marley was always a good man of \_\_\_\_\_ .
- \_\_\_\_\_ 5. Scrooge asked Fred why he got \_\_\_\_\_ .
- \_\_\_\_\_ 6. The \_\_\_\_\_ was a jolly giant in a fur-trimmed green robe.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 7. Scrooge said he helped to support workhouses and \_\_\_\_\_ .
- \_\_\_\_\_ 8. The \_\_\_\_\_ looked like a child-sized old man.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 9. Scrooge promised to \_\_\_\_\_ the lessons taught by the Spirits.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 10. The \_\_\_\_\_ wore a hooded black gown.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 11. To chase the \_\_\_\_\_ away, Scrooge struck the door with a ruler.

# Critical Analysis



Dickens, of course, did not invent Christmas, but he successfully reintegrated earlier traditions and memories of traditions and, in effect, repurposed the Christmas season. Three unrelated historical circumstances overlapped to bring about this cultural phenomenon. In 1843, the year *A Christmas Carol* was written and published, Dickens was at a low point of his personal history. His popularity as a writer and his income—both recently quite substantial—had fallen with the disappointing sales of *Martin Chuzzlewit*. Dickens was ready to leave fiction and rely instead on travel writing, which, following his trip to the United States, had brought him some success. Had other factors not been present, *A Christmas Carol* and most



of the author's other best-loved stories might never have been written.

Social and economic conditions of this period of English history also played a part. The Industrial Revolution had changed both the English landscape and the relationships among laborers and landowners. The decade before *A Christmas Carol* appeared was full of political and social tension, culminating in often violent strikes by miners and spinners, the hanging of nine agricultural workers, and the destruction of farm fields and equipment. Pam Morris, in her discussion of the influence of this period on Dickens (*Dickens's Class Consciousness*, 1991), reminds readers that political tensions were exacerbated by the specter of the French Revolution a century earlier, which raised

fears in the English upper classes about strikes and rebellions fomented by the lower classes.

As a writer known for his sympathies for people of all classes and, in particular, for children in downtrodden and abusive circumstances, Dickens felt himself under personal and public pressure to promote efforts to educate homeless and neglected children and to support the legislative proposals of the Factory Movement—a contemporary political effort to ameliorate or eliminate child labor and other practices that added misery to the already disadvantaged working classes. Dickens’s eventual involvement was not the direct action his reputation for compassion for these issues would have suggested. He certainly knew the radical writings of Karl Marx and Friedrich Engel about the mistreatment of the working classes but

would have resisted a complete overthrow of capitalism.

There is persuasive evidence to support some scholarly speculation that instead of direct political involvement, Dickens put his compassion (and perhaps guilt) concerning unjust and inhumane treatment of the lower social classes into writing his story about a miser and a desperately poor family. We can see in *A Christmas Carol* how Christmas struggles against competing views of social responsibility that are likewise attempting to resolve the contradictions of the Victorian everyday in the 1840s. [It takes up] the issue of the poor, the other nation, and the increasing gap between the lower and upper classes. In *A Christmas Carol* we are told explicitly that it is the job of Christmas to heal, at least temporarily, the breach

between humans that has come about as a result of modern modes of producing and modern ways of doing business. It is not surprising—given Dickens’s gift for storytelling, his current financial predicament, and the contentious social and political issues pressing on him—that the idea of writing something like *A Christmas Carol* would come to him.

Coming onto the market just before Christmas 1843 and designed with a red-and-gold cover to appear enticingly festive, the book was an instant success, selling out its first run of 6,000 copies in a few days. Its social message was a plea to its English readers to develop a social conscience through opening their hearts to the plight of others and sharing the collective wealth. Its promise was that such a gesture would connect readers to the real source of human

**happiness that comes from leading less selfish lives. The message reconnected with the biblical Christian teachings and together became the foundation for a revival of the English celebration of Christmas. So successfully was this message conveyed that it became part of the English national identity.**

**In response to a Parliamentary report on the exploitation of child laborers in the mines and factories, Dickens decided early in 1843 to take a stand. That turned out to be *A Christmas Carol*. In September, while visiting Manchester, Dickens conceived the specific idea for the story, and by the middle of December it was on the booksellers' shelves and it has been his first public reading.<sup>1</sup>**

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<sup>1</sup> Collins, Philip. *Charles Dickens: The Critical Heritage*. London: Taylor & Francis, 2005. Print.

At the heart of *Carol*, Dickens had an economic message: it's not acceptable that masters be concerned only with the bottom line and take no responsibility for the general welfare of the poor. Scrooge knows nothing about Bob Cratchit and his family; he knows only that Bob makes 15 shillings a week and would cheat his employer by demanding a paid holiday on Christmas day. By taking no interest or responsibility for his clerk's situation, Scrooge becomes morally responsible for Bob's inability to afford medical treatment for Tiny Tim. Scrooge's obsession with money has chained him to cash boxes and caged Tim's legs in steel. Unless he changes, Scrooge and Tiny Tim will both die; their fates are linked. The condition of the poor is the responsibility of the rich<sup>2</sup>.

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<sup>2</sup> Davis, Paul. *Critical Companion to Charles Dickens: A*

The original readers of the novel cared more for the celebrations depicted in it; few were influenced by the novel's economic message at first. Readers were very impressed by the wonderful catalogs of the fruits and delicacies in the markets, the descriptions of Fred's Christmas party and the Cratchits' Christmas dinner. These were the striking passages in the story for the Victorian audience. The novel proved that one did not need a luxurious country house and a deluxe feast to have Christmas. The holiday could be just as festive in Fezziwig's city warehouse, and the modest meal shared by the urban Cratchit family could have its moments of celebration.<sup>3</sup>

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*Literary Reference to his Life and Work*. New York: Facts on File, 2007. Print.

<sup>3</sup> Davis, Paul. *Critical Companion to Charles Dickens: A Literary Reference to his Life and Work*. New York: Facts on File, 2007. Print.

The simplicity of the story, with its neat three-part structure, and Scrooge's overnight conversion, have bothered some critics who wanted a more realistic tale. Critics suggest that in the real world Tiny Tim would die. But Dickens's purpose was to take an old nursery tale and give it "a higher form." He uses fantasy in the manner of the fairy tale, giving the story a timelessness that makes it like Cinderella or Snow-white, a folk story that seems to have been in the culture forever. The narrator increases this effect by telling the story as if it is an oral tale passed down from a time before the invention of writing<sup>4</sup>.

As a young man, Scrooge seeks opportunity in the city and, like many other uprooted migrants of his generation, he is cut off from family and home.

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<sup>4</sup> Ibid.



Scrooge rejects family and withdraws into lonely bachelorhood. The character of Scrooge has two personalities. Pre-conversion, he is the literary embodiment of miserliness, portrayed as bony and rigid, humorless, and utterly selfish. His mean-spirited instincts repel most of his acquaintances. Dickens describes him as being as “solitary as an oyster.” As a miser, he causes suffering to others, but he is also miserable. The post-conversion Scrooge is a mirror image of his former self: He is compassionate and generous; he seeks rather than repels company. His rigidity gives way to a lively and harmless loss of self-control<sup>5</sup>.

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<sup>5</sup> Bloom, Harold, ed. *Charles Dickens's: A Christmas Carol*. New York: Infobase, 2011, Print.

**Scrooge sees his own image literally by moving back in time and confronting himself at different stages in his process of deterioration .... As the ghosts of Christmas Past and of Christmas Present appear, Scrooge's reclamation begins. He remembers little deeds of kindness that he might have done. As he remembers these, we become aware of the complete happiness which will be his once he has become thoroughly charitable. One may say that in *A Christmas Carol* Dickens makes it very obvious that he equates a morally awakened soul with complete happiness.**



## CHARACTER ANALYSIS

1] The character of Ebenezer Scrooge has two personalities. Preconversion, he is the literary embodiment of miserliness, portrayed as bony and rigid, humorless, and utterly self-absorbed. His mean-spirited instincts repel most of his acquaintances. Dickens describes him as being as “solitary as an oyster.” As a miser, he brings suffering to others, but he is also miserable just being himself. The post-conversion Scrooge is a mirror image of his former self: He is capable of compassion and generosity, he seeks rather than repels company, his rigidity gives way to a lively and harmless loss of self-control, and he expels peals of laughter instead of growls.

2] Jacob Marley was Scrooge's business partner who died seven years before the story begins. His living presence takes a ghostly and ghastly form on Christmas Eve as Scrooge is retiring for the night. As he lived in life, so does he live in death; he was as miserly as Scrooge and as self-absorbed, and he finds himself imprisoned after death, held by the chains that represent his spiritual blindness. Marley's conversion from being dead in life to being alive in death enables Scrooge to realize the error of his ways and carries an implicit belief in the power of free will to change one's life while there is still time. One wonders if Dickens thought of Marley as the Old Testament Jacob providing a ladder to his old partner to help him escape from his spiritual prison.

3] **Fred** is Scrooge's too merry nephew; his insistence on celebrating Christmas elicits his uncle's first utterance of "Bah! Humbug!" Fred's mother was Scrooge's sister; Fred has some of her sweetness, which is evident at the end of the story in his offer of comfort and assistance to the Cratchit family. Fred's good-spirited insistence on keeping faith in his uncle's ability to change his mind turns out to be an important factor in Scrooge's conversion.

4] **Bob Cratchit**, Scrooge's clerk, is forced to warm himself on a cold day with a single piece of coal begrudgingly given by Scrooge. Cratchit is the father of a large family that includes his physically impaired son, Tiny Tim. Cratchit exemplifies paternal devotion

under trying circumstances. He is given a well-deserved raise by post-conversion Scrooge.

5] The Ghost of Christmas Past has the appearance of both a child and an old man, suggesting the arc of memory one must travel to activate the insights necessary for transformation. During the “trips” back to his past, the ghost appears to mock Scrooge by taking on some of the miser’s old attitudes and using his very words in an effort to stimulate him toward a different way of thinking. At the scene of Fezziwig’s grand party, for example, the ghost pretends to ridicule the host for spending too much money just to allow others to enjoy themselves.

6] Mr. Fezziwig, the good-natured owner of the warehouse where Scrooge is apprenticed, is (along with his wife and daughters) the embodiment of English merriment and Christmas festivity. Unlike Scrooge, Fezziwig is ready to cast aside all signs of work to make room for Christmas festivity.

7] Little Fan is Scrooge's sweet-natured sister, who comforts him when they both are children. She grows up, marries, and dies young, leaving Fred, Scrooge's nephew.

8] Belle is Scrooge's fiancée, who breaks off the engagement because Scrooge has become unrecognizable to her by choosing to put more value on money than on love. Belle makes another important

appearance later in her life, when, as a woman happily married with a lively family, she is a reminder to Scrooge of the abundant life he has missed out on.

9] The Ghost of Christmas Present guides Scrooge to several scenes of Christmas merrymaking. When Scrooge challenges the spirit about certain church policies, the ghost rebukes him with a reminder that the Christian verities that are supposed to govern the celebration of Christmas are often misunderstood and rerouted by ignorant and self-serving people to a different purpose. This ghost vigorously interacts with Scrooge. Like the first ghost, it is intent on compelling him to rethink his hardhearted positions. In the presence of Tiny Tim, for example, the specter reminds Scrooge of his callous disregard of the poor



and disabled, referring to them dismissively as the “undeserving surplus.”

10] The Cratchit family is emblematic of human warmth and nurturing— the family that Ebenezer Scrooge did not have. Anticipating the death of Tiny Tim, the family members pledge to balance their grief with the inspiration they have been given by the child’s spirit of grace and gratitude.

11] Tiny Tim is the young, physically impaired son in the Cratchit family. It is impossible to lay eyes on him without being jolted into an awareness of the apparent injustice in the world: Why should the innocent suffer? And why, by contrast, should the miserly prosper? It is an ancient question, and Dickens does

not have an answer, but with Tiny Tim (surrounded by his nurturing family), the author is able to dramatize the human capacity for selfless love. Most powerfully, Tiny Tim is an unnamed member of the population Scrooge dismisses as “surplus,” the undeserving masses who cannot support themselves and therefore would be better off dead. Dickens uses the figure of Tiny Tim to give face and name to this group of dismissed and disparaged individuals.

12] Ignorance and Want are personified by two desperately poor and feral-appearing children, inspired by Dickens’s visits to the so-called ragged schools in London, which were trying to get lost children off the streets and educate them. Dickens believed poverty and ignorance to be destructive and

oppressive forces acting on these children who, without public intervention would become dangerous to society.

13] The Ghost of Christmas Yet to Come is more phantomlike than the other two spirits, more ephemeral and inaccessible. Perhaps—given its already ephemeral nature—this ghost is missing the experience that would lend it substance and gravity. Perhaps as well its function is less to lead than to gently indicate the direction Scrooge already knows he must follow. The ghost makes its will known cryptically, using a pointed finger extended from an unearthly hand to indicate a general direction for Scrooge.

# A CHRISTMAS CAROL



## DRILLS

### **A. Comprehension Questions:**

- 1. Why did Scrooge have such a small fire in his office?**
- 2. Who came to visit Scrooge at work?**
- 3. How did Scrooge meet his visitor?**
- 4. What did Fred want Scrooge to do?**
- 5. What did Scrooge say about poor people?**
- 6. Why was Scrooge scared when he looked at his door?**
- 7. Do you agree with Scrooge? Or with Fred? Why?**
- 8. Whose ghost came to visit Scrooge at home?**
- 9. Why was Marley's ghost chained?**

- 10. Who else was going to visit Scrooge that same night?**
- 11. Why did Scrooge have curtains around his bed?**
- 12. Why do you think Scrooge was still working on Christmas day while Marley was dying?**
- 13. What did Marley mean when he told Scrooge: "you still have a chance"?**
- 14. Who was the first ghost that visited Scrooge?**
- 15. Who was the young boy that Scrooge and the ghost saw at school?**
- 16. Why did the ghost want Scrooge to see all these painful things from the past?**
- 17. What does it mean to say that Scrooge is "solitary as an oyster"?**
- 18. Why did Scrooge keep the coal box in his own room?**

- 19. Why was Scrooge so unpleasant to his nephew Fred?**
- 20. Why did Scrooge think it was foolish for Bob Cratchit to celebrate Christmas?**
- 21. What did the two men who visited Scrooge in his office want?**
- 22. Why was Scrooge angry with the ghosts?**
- 23. Whose house did Scrooge and the ghost visit?**
- 24. Scrooge and his visitors had different opinions about prisons and workhouses. Explain those two very different viewpoints.**
- 25. What caused Scrooge's uneasiness as he waited for the clock to strike one?**
- 26. Scrooge saw Christmas being celebrated in a humble miner's hut and in a lonely lighthouse. By**

taking Scrooge there, what point was the Spirit making?

27. Why does Fred say he is sorry for his uncle?
28. On what day did Marley die seven years ago?
29. What did Marley regret most about his life?
30. How was Scrooge's nephew like Fan, his mother?
31. Throughout the story, what do the Cratchits represent?
32. Why did Bob have to carry Tiny Tim?

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33. Why was Mrs Cratchit angry with Scrooge?
34. What sad event would happen if the future didn't change?
35. Why does Scrooge think that Christmas is "ridiculous"? Explain at least two of his reasons?

- 36. Compare Scrooge and Fezziwig as employers.**
- 37. Describe two of Scrooge's good deeds at the end of the story.**
- 38. Whose house did Scrooge and the Ghost of Christmas Present go to?**
- 39. What is the setting (time and place) of the novel?**
- 40. What conflict or conflicts do the main characters face?**
- 41. Explain the climax of these conflicts (how they are resolved).**
- 42. Is the outcome of the plot surprising? Why or why not?**
- 43. What point was the author trying to make about that theme? What message was delivered?**
- 44. Which of the following characters belong to Scrooge's past life, and which to his present life?**





*Dick Wilkins – Belle – Jacob Marley – Tiny Tim –  
Scrooge's sister – Fred – Bob Cratchit – Mr. and Mrs.  
Fezziwig*

*B. Look At These Ten Events From The Story.  
Read The Story Again, And Put Them Into The  
Correct Chronological Order.*

- 1. The Ghost of Christmas Present visited Scrooge**
- 2. Fred visited Scrooge and invited him to have Christmas dinner with him.**
- 3. Scrooge and the Ghost of Christmas Past watched Mr Fezziwig's Christmas party.**
- 4. Scrooge was visited by Jacob Marley's ghost.**
- 5. We find out that Fred's mother, Scrooge's sister, died when she was very young.**
- 6. Scrooge and the Ghost of Christmas Present watched Fred and his friends play games.**
- 7. Scrooge's door knocker changed into Jacob Marley's face.**
- 8. Scrooge was visited by the Ghost of Christmas Past.**

**9. Scrooge and the Ghost of Christmas Present visited Bob Cratchit's house.**

**10. Scrooge watched the end of his relationship with Belle when he was a young man.**



### **C. SHORT-TERM PROJECTS:**

**1. Write brief captions for any four illustrations in the book.**

**2. Draw a picture of your favorite character. Be sure the clothing and hairstyles are appropriate to the times.**

**3. Write a short paragraph explaining why you think the author chose to write about the particular time and place of the novel's setting.**

# Short Stories



## The Landlady

BILLY WEAVER HAD TRAVELLED down from London on the slow afternoon train, with a change at Swindon on the way, and by the time he got to Bath it was about nine o'clock in the evening and the moon was coming up out of a clear starry sky over the houses opposite the station entrance. But the air was deadly cold and the wind was like a flat blade of ice on his cheeks.

"Excuse me" he said "but is there a fairly cheap hotel not too far away from here?"

"Try The Bell and Dragon" the porter answered pointing down the road. "They might take you in. It's about a quarter of a mile along on the other side."

Billy thanked him and picked up his suitcase and set out to walk the quarter-mile to The Bell and Dragon. He had never been to Bath before. He didn't know anyone who lived there. But Mr Greenslade at the Head Office in London had told him it was a splendid city.

"Find your own lodgings," he had said "and then go along and report to the Branch Manager as soon as you've got yourself settled".

Billy was seventeen years old. He was wearing a new navy-blue overcoat, a new brown trilby hat, and a new brown suit, and he was feeling fine. He walked briskly down the street. He was trying to do everything briskly these days. Briskness, he had decided was the one common characteristic of all successful businessmen. The big shots up at Head Office were absolutely fantastically brisk all the time. They were amazing.

There were no shops on this wide street that he was walking along, only a line of tall houses on each side, all of them identical. They had porches and pillars and four or five steps going up to their front doors, and it was obvious that once upon a time they had been very swanky residence. But now, even in the darkness, he could see that the paint was peeling from the woodwork on their doors and windows, and that the handsome white facades were cracked and blotchy from neglect.

Suddenly, in a downstairs window that was brilliantly illuminated by a street-lamp not six yards away, Billy caught sight of a printed notice propped up against the glass in one of the upper panes. It said BED AND BREAKFAST. There was a vase of pussywillows, tall and beautiful, standing just underneath the notice. He stopped walking. He moved a bit closer. Green curtains (some sort of velvety material) were hanging down on either

side of the window. The pussywillows looked wonderful beside them. He went right up and peered through the glass into the room, and the first thing he saw was a bright fire burning in the hearth. On the carpet in front of the fire, a pretty little dachshund was curled up asleep with its nose tucked into its belly. The room itself, so far as he could see in the half-darkness, was filled with pleasant furniture. There was a baby-grand piano and a big sofa and several plump armchairs and in one corner he spotted a large parrot in a cage. Animals were usually a good sign in a place like this, Billy told himself; and all in all, it looked to him as though it would be a pretty decent house to stay in. Certainly it would be more comfortable than The Bell and Dragon. On the other hand, a pub would be more congenial than a boarding-house. There would be beer and darts in the evenings, and lots of people to talk to, and it would probably be a good bit cheaper, too. He had stayed a couple of nights in a pub once before and he had liked it. He had never stayed in any boarding houses, and, to be perfectly honest, he was a tiny bit frightened of them. The name itself conjured up images of watery cabbage, rapacious landladies, and a powerful smell of kippers in the living-room. After dithering about like this in the cold for two or three minutes, Billy decided that he would walk on and take a look at The Bell and Dragon before making up his mind. He turned to go. And now a queer thing happened to him. He was in the act of stepping back and turning away from the window when all at once his eye was caught and held in the most peculiar manner by the small notice that was there. BED AND BREAKFAST, it said. BED AND BREAKFAST, BED AND BREAKFAST, BED AND BREAKFAST. Each word was like a large black eye staring at him through the glass, holding him compelling him. forcing him to stay where he was and not to walk away from that house, and the next thing he knew, he was actually moving across from the window to the front door of the house, climbing the steps that led up to it, and reaching for the bell. He pressed the bell. Far away in a back room he heard it ringing, and then at once - it must have been at once because he hadn't even had time to take his finger from the bell-button - the door swung open and a woman was standing there. Normally you ring the bell and you have at least a half minute's wait before the door opens. But this dame was like a jack-in-the-box. He pressed the bell - and out she popped! It made him jump. She was about forty-five or fifty years old and the moment she saw him, she gave him a warm welcoming smile. "Please come in," she said pleasantly. She stepped aside, holding the door wide open and Billy found himself automatically starting forward into the house. The compulsion or, more accurately, the desire to follow after her into that house was extraordinarily strong. "I saw the notice in the window," he said holding himself back.

"Yes, I know."

"I was wondering about a room."

"It's all ready for you, my dear," she said. She had a round pink face and very gentle blue eyes.

"I was on my way to The Bell and Dragon" Billy told her. "But the notice in your window just happened to catch my eye."

"My dear boy," she said, "why don't you come in out of the cold?"

"How much do you charge?"

"Five and sixpence a night, including breakfast." It was fantastically cheap. It was less than half of what he had been willing to pay.

"If that is too much" she added "then perhaps I can reduce it just a tiny bit. Do you desire an egg for breakfast? Eggs are expensive at the moment. It would be sixpence less without the egg"

"Five and sixpence is fine," he answered. "I should like very much to stay here."

"I knew you would. Do come in." She seemed terribly nice. She looked exactly like the mother of one's best school-friend welcoming one into the house to stay for the Christmas holidays. Billy took off his hat, and stepped over the threshold.

"Just hang it there," she said, "and let me help you with your coat."

There were no other hats or coats in the hall. There were no umbrellas, no walking-sticks - nothing. "We have it all to ourselves," she said, smiling at him over her shoulder as she led the way upstairs. "You see, it isn't very often I have the pleasure of taking a visitor into my little nest."

The old girl is slightly dotty, Billy told himself. But at five and sixpence a night, who gives a damn about that?

"I should've thought you'd be simply swamped with applicants," he said politely.

"Oh, I am, my dear, I am, of course I am. But the trouble is that I'm inclined to be just a teeny weeny bit choosy and particular; if you see what I mean".

"Ah, yes."

"But I'm always ready. Everything is always ready day and night in this house just on the off-chance that an acceptable young gentleman will come along. And it is such a pleasure, my dear, such a very great pleasure when now and again I open the door and I see someone standing there who is just

exactly right." She was half-way up the stairs, and she paused with one hand on the stair-rail, turning her head and smiling down at him with pale lips. "Like you," she added, and her blue eyes travelled slowly all the way down the length of Billy's body, to his feet, and then up again. On the first-floor landing she said to him, "This floor is mine." They climbed up a second flight. "And this one is all yours," she said. "Here's your room. I do hope you'll like it." She took him into a small but charming front bedroom switching on the light as she went in.

"The morning sun comes right in the window, Mr Perkins. It is Mr Perkins, isn't it?"

"No," he said. "It's Weaver."

"Mr Weaver. How nice. I've put a water-bottle between the sheets to air them out, Mr Weaver. It's such a comfort to have a hot water-bottle in a strange bed with clean sheets, don't you agree? And you may light the gas fire at any time if you feel chilly."

"Thank you," Billy said. "Thank you ever so much" He noticed that the bedspread had been taken off the bed, and that the bedclothes had been neatly turned back on one side, all ready for someone to get in.

"I'm so glad you appeared," she said, looking earnestly into his face. "I was beginning to get worried."

"That's all right," Billy answered brightly. "You mustn't worry about me." He put his suitcase on the chair and started to open it.

"And what about supper, my dear? Did you manage to get anything to eat before you came here?" "I'm not a bit hungry, thank you," he said. "I think I'll just go to bed as soon as possible because tomorrow I've got to get up rather early and report to the office."

"Very well, then. I'll leave you now so that you can unpack. But before you go to bed would you be kind enough to pop into the sitting-room on the ground floor and sign the book? Everyone has to do that because it's the law of the land and we don't want to go breaking any laws at this stage in the proceedings, do we?"

She gave him a little wave of the hand and went quickly out of the room and closed the door. Now, the fact that his landlady appeared to be slightly off her rocker didn't worry Billy in the least. After all, she was not only harmless - there was no question about that - but she was also quite obviously a kind and generous soul. He guessed that she had probably lost a son in the war, or something like that, and had never got over it.

So a few minute later, after unpacking his suitcase and washing his hands, he trotted downstairs to the ground floor and entered the living-room. His landlady wasn't there, but the fire was glowing in the hearth and the little dachshund was still sleeping in front of it. The room was wonderfully warm and cosy. I'm a lucky fellow, he thought, rubbing his hands. This is a bit of all right. He found the guest-book lying open on the piano, so he took out his pen and wrote down his name and address. There were only two other entries above his on the page, and, as one always does with guest-books, he started to read them. One was a Christopher Mulholland from Cardiff. The other was Gregory W. Temple from Bristol. That's funny, he thought suddenly. Christopher Mulholland. It rings a bell. Now where on earth had he heard that rather unusual name before? Was he a boy at school? No. Was it one of his sister's numerous young men, perhaps, or a friend of his father's No, no, it wasn't any of those. He glanced down again at the book.

Christopher Mulholland

231 Cathedral Road,

Cardiff

Gregory W. Temple

27 Sycamore Drive,

Bristol

As a matter of fact, now he came to think of it, he wasn't at all sure that the second name didn't have almost as much of a familiar ring about it as the first. "Gregory Temple?" he said aloud searching his memory. "Christopher Mulholland? ..."

"Such charming boys," a voice behind him answered, and he turned and saw his landlady sailing into the room with a large silver tea-tray in her hands. She was holding it well out in front of her, and rather high up, as though the tray were a pair of reins on a frisky horse.

"They sound somehow familiar," he said.

"They do? How interesting."

"I'm almost positive I've heard those names before somewhere. Isn't that queer? Maybe it was in the newspapers. They weren't famous in any way, were they? I mean famous cricketers or footballers or something like that?"

"Famous," she said setting the tea-tray down on the low table in front of the sofa. "Oh no, I don't think they were famous. But they were extraordinarily



handsome, both of them, I can promise you that. They were tall and young and handsome, my dear, just exactly like you." Once more Billy glanced down at the book. "Look here," he said, noticing the date. "This last entry is over two years old."

"It is?"

"Yes, indeed. And Christopher Mulholland's is nearly a year before that - more than three years ago."

"Dear me," she said, shaking her head and heaving a dainty little sigh. "I would never have thought it. How time does fly away from us all, doesn't it Mr Wilkins?" "It's Weaver," Billy said. "W-e-a-v-e-r."

"Oh, of course it is !" she cried, sitting down on the sofa. "How silly of me. I do apologize. In one ear and out the other, that's me, Mr Weaver."

"You know something?" Billy said "Something that's really quite extraordinary about all this?"

"No, dear, I don't."

"Well, you see - both of these names, Mulholland and Temple, I not only seem to remember each one of them separately, so to speak, but somehow or other, in some peculiar way, they both appear to be sort of connected together as well. As though they were both famous for the same sort of thing, if you see what I mean - like . . . well . . . like Dempsey and Tunney, for example, or Churchill and Roosevelt." "How amusing," she said. "But come over here now, dear, and sit down beside me on the sofa and I'll give you a nice cup of tea and a ginger biscuit before you go to bed."

"You really shouldn't bother," Billy said. "I didn't mean you to do anything like that." He stood by the piano, watching her as she fussed about with the cups and saucers. He noticed that she had small, white, quickly moving hands, and red finger-nails. "I'm almost positive it was in the newspapers I saw them," Billy said. "I'll think of it in a second. I'm sure I will." There is nothing more tantalizing than a thing like this which lingers just outside the borders of one's memory. He hated to give up. "Now wait a minute," he said. "Wait just a minute. Mulholland . . . Christopher Mulholland . . . wasn't that the name of the Eton schoolboy who was on a walking tour through the West Country, and then all of a sudden . . ."

"Milk?" she said. "And sugar?"

"Yes, please. And then all of a sudden ..."

"Eton! schoolboy?" she said. "Oh no, my dear, that can't possibly be right because my Mr Mulholland was certainly not an Eton schoolboy when he came to me. He was a Cambridge undergraduate. Come over here now and sit next to me and warm yourself in front of this lovely fire. Come on. Your tea's all ready for you." She patted the empty place beside her on the sofa, and she sat there smiling at Billy and waiting for him to come over. He crossed the room slowly, and sat down on the edge of the sofa. She placed his teacup on the table in front of him. "come over here," she said. "How nice and cosy this is, isn't it?" Billy started sipping his tea. She did the same. For half a minute or so. neither of them spoke. But Billy knew that she was looking at him. Her body was half-turned towards him, and he could feel her eyes resting on his face, watching him over the rim of her teacup. Now and again, he caught a whiff of a peculiar smell that seemed to emanate directly from her person. It was not in the least unpleasant, and it reminded him - well, he wasn't quite sure what it reminded him of. Pickled walnuts? New leather? Or was it the corridors of a hospital?

"Mr Mulholland was a great one for his tea," she said at length. "Never in my life have I seen anyone drink as much tea as dear, sweet Mr Mulholland."

"I suppose he left fairly recently," Billy said. He was still puzzling his head about the two names. He was positive now that he had seen them in the newspapers - in the headlines.

"Left?" she said arching her brows.

"But my dear boy, he never left. He's still here. Mr Temple is also here. They're on the third floor, both of them together."

Billy set down his cup slowly on the table, and stared at his landlady. She stared back at him, and then she put out one of her white hands and patted him comfortingly on the knee. "How old are you, my dear?" she asked. "Seventeen."

"Seventeen!" she cried. "Oh, it's the perfect age! Mr Mulholland was also seventeen. But I think he was a trifle shorter than you are, in fact I'm sure he was, and his teeth weren't quite so white. You have the most beautiful teeth Mr Weaver, did you know that?"

"They're not as good as they look" Billy said. "They've got simply masses of fillings in them at the back."

"Mr Temple, of course, was a little older," she said ignoring his remark. "He was actually twenty-eight. And yet I never would have guessed it if he hadn't told me, never in my whole life. There wasn't a blemish on his body."

"A what?" Billy said.

"His skin was just like a baby's."

There was a pause. Billy picked up his teacup and took another sip of his tea, then he set it down again gently in its saucer. He waited for her to say something else, but she seemed to have lapsed into another of her silences. He sat there staring straight ahead of him into the far corner of the room, biting his lower lip.

"That parrot," he said at last. "You know something? It had me completely fooled when I first saw it through the window from the street. I could have sworn it was alive."

"Alas, no longer."

"It's most terribly clever the way it's been done," he said "It doesn't look in the least bit dead. Who did it?"

"I did."

"You did?" "Of course," she said "And have you met my little Basil as well? She nodded towards the dachshund curled up so comfortably in front of the fire. Billy looked at it. And suddenly, he realized that this animal had all the time been just as silent and motionless as the parrot. He put out a hand and touched it gently on the top of its back. The back was hard and cold, and when he pushed the hair to one side with his fingers, he could see the skin underneath it greyish-black and dry and perfectly preserved.

"Good gracious me," he said. "How absolutely fascinating. "He turned away from the dog and stared with deep admiration at the little woman beside him on the sofa. "It must be most awfully difficult to do a thing like that."

"Not in the least," she said. "I stuff all my little pets myself when they pass away. Will you have another cup of tea?" "No, thank you," Billy said. The tea tasted faintly of bitter almonds, and he didn't much care for it. "You did sign the book, didn't you?" "Oh, yes." "That's good. Because later on, if I happen to forget what you were called then I can always come down here and look it up. I still do that almost every day with Mr Mulholland and Mr...Mr."

"Temple," Billy said. "Gregory Temple. Excuse my asking, but haven't there been any other guests here accept them in the last two or three years?"

Holding her teacup high in one hand, inclining her head slightly to the left, she looked up at him out of the corners of her eyes and gave him another gentle little smile "No, my dear," she said. "Only you."

## Lamb to the Slaughter

Roald Dahl

The room was warm and clean, the curtains drawn, the two table lamps alight- hers and the one by the empty chair opposite. On the sideboard behind her, two tall glasses, soda water, whiskey. Fresh ice cubes in the Thermos bucket.

Mary Maloney was waiting for her husband to come him from work.

5 Now and again she would glance up at the clock, but without anxiety, merely to please herself with the thought that each minute gone by made it nearer the time when he would come. There was a slow smiling air about her, and about everything she did. The drop of a head as she bent over her sewing was curiously tranquil. Her skin -for this was her sixth month with child-had acquired a wonderful translucent quality, the mouth  
10 was soft, and the eyes, with their new placid look, seemed larger darker than before. When the clock said ten minutes to five, she began to listen, and a few moments later, punctually as always, she heard the tires on the gravel outside, and the car door slamming, the footsteps passing the window, the key turning in the lock. She laid aside her sewing, stood up, and went forward to kiss him as he came in.

15 "Hullo darling," she said.

"Hullo darling," he answered.

She took his coat and hung it in the closer. Then she walked over and made the drinks, a strongish one for him, a weak one for herself; and soon she was back again in her chair with the sewing, and he in the other, opposite, holding the tall glass with both  
20 hands, rocking it so the ice cubes tinkled against the side.

For her, this was always a blissful time of day. She knew he didn't want to speak much until the first drink was finished, and she, on her side, was content to sit quietly, enjoying his company after the long hours alone in the house. She loved to luxuriate in the presence of this man, and to feel-almost as a sunbather feels the sun-that warm  
25 male glow that came out of him to her when they were alone together. She loved him for the way he sat loosely in a chair, for the way he came in a door, or moved slowly across the room with long strides. She loved intent, far look in his eyes when they rested in her, the funny shape of the mouth, and especially the way he remained silent about his tiredness, sitting still with himself until the whiskey had taken some of it away.

30 "Tired darling?"

"Yes," he said. "I'm tired," And as he spoke, he did an unusual thing. He lifted his glass and drained it in one swallow although there was still half of it, at least half of it left.. She wasn't really watching him, but she knew what he had done because she heard the ice cubes falling back against the bottom of the empty glass when he lowered his  
35 arm. He paused a moment, leaning forward in the chair, then he got up and went slowly over to fetch himself another.

"I'll get it!" she cried, jumping up.

"Sit down," he said.

40 When he came back, she noticed that the new drink was dark amber with the quantity of whiskey in it.

"Darling, shall I get your slippers?"

"No."

She watched him as he began to sip the dark yellow drink, and she could see little oily swirls in the liquid because it was so strong.

45 "I think it's a shame," she said, "that when a policeman gets to be as senior as you, they keep him walking about on his feet all day long."

He didn't answer, so she bent her head again and went on with her sewing; bet each time he lifted the drink to his lips, she heard the ice cubes clinking against the side of the glass.

50 "Darling," she said. "Would you like me to get you some cheese? I haven't made any supper because it's Thursday."

"No," he said.

55 "If you're too tired to eat out," she went on, "it's still not too late. There's plenty of meat and stuff in the freezer, and you can have it right here and not even move out of the chair."

Her eyes waited on him for an answer, a smile, a little nod, but he made no sign.

"Anyway," she went on, "I'll get you some cheese and crackers first."

"I don't want it," he said.

60 She moved uneasily in her chair, the large eyes still watching his face. "But you must eat! I'll fix it anyway, and then you can have it or not, as you like."

She stood up and placed her sewing on the table by the lamp.

"Sit down," he said. "Just for a minute, sit down."

It wasn't till then that she began to get frightened.

"Go on," he said. "Sit down."

65 She lowered herself back slowly into the chair, watching him all the time with those large, bewildered eyes. He had finished the second drink and was staring down into the glass, frowning.

"Listen," he said. "I've got something to tell you."

"What is it, darling? What's the matter?"

70 He had now become absolutely motionless, and he kept his head down so that the light from the lamp beside him fell across the upper part of his face, leaving the chin and mouth in shadow. She noticed there was a little muscle moving near the corner of his left eye.

75 "This is going to be a bit of a shock to you, I'm afraid," he said. "But I've thought about it a good deal and I've decided the only thing to do is tell you right away. I hope you won't blame me too much."

And he told her. It didn't take long, four or five minutes at most, and she say very still through it all, watching him with a kind of dazed horror as he went further and further away from her with each word.

80 "So there it is," he added. "And I know it's kind of a bad time to be telling you, bet there simply wasn't any other way. Of course I'll give you money and see you're looked after. But there needn't really be any fuss. I hope not anyway. It wouldn't be very good for my job."

85 Her first instinct was not to believe any of it, to reject it all. It occurred to her that perhaps he hadn't even spoken, that she herself had imagined the whole thing. Maybe, if she went about her business and acted as though she hadn't been listening, then later, when she sort of woke up again, she might find none of it had ever happened.

"I'll get the supper," she managed to whisper, and this time he didn't stop her.

90 When she walked across the room she couldn't feel her feet touching the floor. She couldn't feel anything at all- except a slight nausea and a desire to vomit. Everything was automatic now-down the steps to the cellar, the light switch, the deep freeze, the hand inside the cabinet taking hold of the first object it met. She lifted it out, and looked at it. It was wrapped in paper, so she took off the paper and looked at it again.

95 A leg of lamb.

All right then, they would have lamb for supper. She carried it upstairs, holding the thin bone-end of it with both her hands, and as she went through the living-room, she saw him standing over by the window with his back to her, and she stopped.

100 "For God's sake," he said, hearing her, but not turning round. "Don't make supper for me. I'm going out."

At that point, Mary Maloney simply walked up behind him and without any pause she swung the big frozen leg of lamb high in the air and brought it down as hard as she could on the back of his head.

She might just as well have hit him with a steel club.

105 She stepped back a pace, waiting, and the funny thing was that he remained standing there for at least four or five seconds, gently swaying. Then he crashed to the carpet.

The violence of the crash, the noise, the small table overturning, helped bring her out of the shock. She came out slowly, feeling cold and surprised, and she stood for a while blinking at the body, still holding the ridiculous piece of meat tight with both hands.

All right, she told herself. So I've killed him.

It was extraordinary, now, how clear her mind became all of a sudden. She began thinking very fast. As the wife of a detective, she knew quite well what the penalty would be. That was fine. It made no difference to her. In fact, it would be a relief. On the other hand, what about the child? What were the laws about murderers with unborn children? Did they kill then both-mother and child? Or did they wait until the tenth month? What did they do?

Mary Maloney didn't know. And she certainly wasn't prepared to take a chance.

She carried the meat into the kitchen, placed it in a pan, turned the oven on high, and shoved it inside. Then she washed her hands and ran upstairs to the bedroom. She sat down before the mirror, tidied her hair, touched up her lips and face. She tried a smile. It came out rather peculiar. She tried again.

"Hullo Sam," she said brightly, aloud.

The voice sounded peculiar too.

"I want some potatoes please, Sam. Yes, and I think a can of peas."

That was better. Both the smile and the voice were coming out better now. She rehearsed it several times more. Then she ran downstairs, took her coat, went out the back door, down the garden, into the street.

It wasn't six o'clock yet and the lights were still on in the grocery shop.

"Hullo Sam," she said brightly, smiling at the man behind the counter.

"Why, good evening, Mrs. Maloney. How're you?"

"I want some potatoes please, Sam. Yes, and I think a can of peas."

The man turned and reached up behind him on the shelf for the peas.

"Patrick's decided he's tired and doesn't want to eat out tonight," she told him.

"We usually go out Thursdays, you know, and now he's caught me without any vegetables in the house."

"Then how about meat, Mrs. Maloney?"

"No, I've got meat, thanks. I got a nice leg of lamb from the freezer."

"Oh."

"I don't know much like cooking it frozen, Sam, but I'm taking a chance on it this time. You think it'll be all right?"

"Personally," the grocer said, "I don't believe it makes any difference. You want these Idaho potatoes?"

"Oh yes, that'll be fine. Two of those."

"Anything else?" The grocer cocked his head on one side, looking at her pleasantly. "How about afterwards? What you going to give him for afterwards?"

"Well-what would you suggest, Sam?"

The man glanced around his shop. "How about a nice big slice of cheesecake? I know he likes that."

"Perfect," she said. "He loves it."

And when it was all wrapped and she had paid, she put on her brightest smile and said, "Thank you, Sam. Goodnight."

"Goodnight, Mrs. Maloney. And thank you."

And now, she told herself as she hurried back, all she was doing now, she was returning home to her husband and he was waiting for his supper; and she must cook it good, and make it as tasty as possible because the poor man was tired; and if, when she entered the house, she happened to find anything unusual, or tragic, or terrible, then naturally it would be a shock and she'd become frantic with grief and horror. Mind you, she wasn't expecting to find anything. She was just going home with the vegetables. Mrs. Patrick Maloney going home with the vegetables on Thursday evening to cook supper for her husband.

That's the way, she told herself. Do everything right and natural. Keep things absolutely natural and there'll be no need for any acting at all.



165 Therefore, when she entered the kitchen by the back door, she was humming a little tune to herself and smiling.

"Patrick!" she called. "How are you, darling?"

170 She put the parcel down on the table and went through into the living room; and when she saw him lying there on the floor with his legs doubled up and one arm twisted back underneath his body, it really was rather a shock. All the old love and longing for him welled up inside her, and she ran over to him, knelt down beside him, and began to cry her heart out. It was easy. No acting was necessary.

A few minutes later she got up and went to the phone. She knew the number of the police station, and when the man at the other end answered, she cried to him,

175 "Quick! Come quick! Patrick's dead!"

"Who's speaking?"

"Mrs. Maloney. Mrs. Patrick Maloney."

"You mean Patrick Maloney's dead?"

"I think so," she sobbed. "He's lying on the floor and I think he's dead."

180 "Be right over," the man said.

The car came very quickly, and when she opened the front door, two policeman walked in. She knew them both-she knew nearly all the men at that precinct-and she fell right into a chair, then went over to join the other one, who was called O'Malley, kneeling by the body.

185 "Is he dead?" she cried.

"I'm afraid he is. What happened?"

Briefly, she told her story about going out to the grocer and coming back to find him on the floor. While she was talking, crying and talking, Noonan discovered a small patch of congealed blood on the dead man's head. He showed it to O'Malley who got up at once and hurried to the phone.

190 Soon, other men began to come into the house. First a doctor, then two detectives, one of whom she knew by name. Later, a police photographer arrived and took pictures, and a man who knew about fingerprints. There was a great deal of whispering and muttering beside the corpse, and the detectives kept asking her a lot of questions. But they always treated her kindly. She told her story again, this time right from the beginning, when Patrick had come in, and she was sewing, and he was tired, so tired he hadn't wanted to go out for supper. She told how she'd put the meat in the oven-"it's there now, cooking"- and how she'd slopped out to the grocer for vegetables, and come back to find him lying on the floor.

200 "Which grocer?" one of the detectives asked.

She told him, and he turned and whispered something to the other detective who immediately went outside into the street.

205 In fifteen minutes he was back with a page of notes, and there was more whispering, and through her sobbing she heard a few of the whispered phrases-"...acted quite normal...very cheerful...wanted to give him a good supper... peas...cheesecake...impossible that she..."

210 After a while, the photographer and the doctor departed and two other men came in and took the corpse away on a stretcher. Then the fingerprint man went away. The two detectives remained, and so did the two policeman. They were exceptionally nice to her, and Jack Noonan asked if she wouldn't rather go somewhere else, to her sister's house perhaps, or to his own wife who would take care of her and put her up for the night.

215 No, she said. She didn't feel she could move even a yard at the moment. Would they mind awfully if she stayed just where she was until she felt better. She didn't feel too good at the moment, she really didn't.

Then hadn't she better lie down on the bed? Jack Noonan asked.

No, she said. She'd like to stay right where she was, in this chair. A little later, perhaps, when she felt better, she would move.

220 So they left her there while they went about their business, searching the house. Occasionally one of the detectives asked her another question. Sometimes Jack Noonan spoke at her gently as he passed by. Her husband, he told her, had been killed by a

blow on the back of the head administered with a heavy blunt instrument, almost certainly a large piece of metal. They were looking for the weapon. The murderer may have taken it with him, but on the other hand he may have thrown it away or hidden it somewhere on the premises.

225 "It's the old story," he said. "Get the weapon, and you've got the man."

Later, one of the detectives came up and sat beside her. Did she know, he asked, of anything in the house that could've been used as the weapon? Would she mind having a look around to see if anything was missing—a very big spanner, for example, or a heavy metal vase.

230 They didn't have any heavy metal vases, she said.

"Or a big spanner?"

She didn't think they had a big spanner. But there might be some things like that in the garage.

235 The search went on. She knew that there were other policemen in the garden all around the house. She could hear their footsteps on the gravel outside, and sometimes she saw a flash of a torch through a chink in the curtains. It began to get late, nearly nine she noticed by the clock on the mantle. The four men searching the rooms seemed to be growing weary, a trifle exasperated.

240 "Jack," she said, the next time Sergeant Noonan went by. "Would you mind giving me a drink?"

"Sure I'll give you a drink. You mean this whiskey?"

"Yes please. But just a small one. It might make me feel better."

He handed her the glass.

245 "Why don't you have one yourself," she said. "You must be awfully tired. Please do. You've been very good to me."

"Well," he answered. "It's not strictly allowed, but I might take just a drop to keep me going."

250 One by one the others came in and were persuaded to take a little nip of whiskey. They stood around rather awkwardly with the drinks in their hands, uncomfortable in her presence, trying to say consoling things to her. Sergeant Noonan wandered into the kitchen, come out quickly and said, "Look, Mrs. Maloney. You know that oven of yours is still on, and the meat still inside."

"Oh dear me!" she cried. "So it is!"

255 "I better turn it off for you, hadn't I?"

"Will you do that, Jack. Thank you so much."

When the sergeant returned the second time, she looked at him with her large, dark tearful eyes. "Jack Noonan," she said.

"Yes?"

260 "Would you do me a small favor—you and these others?"

"We can try, Mrs. Maloney."

265 "Well," she said. "Here you all are, and good friends of dear Patrick's too, and helping to catch the man who killed him. You must be terrible hungry by now because it's long past your suppertime, and I know Patrick would never forgive me, God bless his soul, if I allowed you to remain in his house without offering you decent hospitality. Why don't you eat up that lamb that's in the oven. It'll be cooked just right by now."

"Wouldn't dream of it," Sergeant Noonan said.

270 "Please," she begged. "Please eat it. Personally I couldn't tough a thing, certainly not what's been in the house when he was here. But it's all right for you. It'd be a favor to me if you'd eat it up. Then you can go on with your work again afterwards."

There was a good deal of hesitating among the four policemen, but they were clearly hungry, and in the end they were persuaded to go into the kitchen and help themselves. The woman stayed where she was, listening to them speaking among themselves, their voices thick and sloppy because their mouths were full of meat.

275 "Have some more, Charlie?"

"No. Better not finish it."

"She wants us to finish it. She said so. Be doing her a favor."

"Okay then. Give me some more."



280 "That's the hell of a big club the gut must've used to hit poor Patrick," one of them was saying. "The doc says his skull was smashed all to pieces just like from a sledgehammer."

"That's why it ought to be easy to find."

"Exactly what I say."

285 "Whoever done it, they're not going to be carrying a thing like that around with them longer than they need."

One of them belched.

"Personally, I think it's right here on the premises."

"Probably right under our very noses. What you think, Jack?"

And in the other room, Mary Maloney began to giggle.

## The Monkey's Paw (1902) by W. W. Jacobs

I.

WITHOUT, the night was cold and wet, but in the small parlour of Laburnam Villa the blinds were drawn and the fire burned brightly. Father and son were at chess, the former, who possessed ideas about the game involving radical changes, putting his king into such sharp and unnecessary perils that it even provoked comment from the white-haired old lady knitting placidly by the fire.

"Hark at the wind," said Mr. White, who, having seen a fatal mistake after it was too late, was amiably desirous of preventing his son from seeing it.

"I'm listening," said the latter, grimly surveying the board as he stretched out his hand. "Check."

"I should hardly think that he'd come to-night," said his father, with his hand poised over the board.

"Mate," replied the son.

"That's the worst of living so far out," bawled Mr. White, with sudden and unlooked-for violence; "of all the beastly, slushy, out-of-the-way places to live in, this is the worst. Pathway's a bog, and the road's a torrent. I don't know what people are thinking about. I suppose because only two houses on the road are let, they think it doesn't matter."

"Never mind, dear," said his wife soothingly; "perhaps you'll win the next one."

Mr. White looked up sharply, just in time to intercept a knowing glance between mother and son. The words died away on his lips, and he hid a guilty grin in his thin grey beard.

"There he is," said Herbert White, as the gate banged to loudly and heavy footsteps came toward the door.

The old man rose with hospitable haste, and opening the door, was heard condoling with the new arrival. The new arrival also condoled with himself, so that Mrs. White said, "Tut, tut!" and coughed gently as her husband entered the room, followed by a tall burly man, beady of eye and rubicund of visage.

"Sergeant-Major Morris," he said, introducing him.

The sergeant-major shook hands, and taking the proffered seat by the fire, watched contentedly while his host got out whisky and tumblers and stood a small copper kettle on the fire.

At the third glass his eyes got brighter, and he began to talk, the little family circle regarding with eager interest this visitor from distant parts, as he squared his broad shoulders in the chair and spoke of strange scenes and doughty deeds; of wars and plagues and strange peoples.

"Twenty-one years of it," said Mr. White, nodding at his wife and son. "When he went away he was a slip of a youth in the warehouse. Now look at him."

"He don't look to have taken much harm," said Mrs. White, politely.

"I'd like to go to India myself," said the old man, "just to look round a bit, you know."

"Better where you are," said the sergeant-major, shaking his head. He put down the empty glass, and sighing softly, shook it again.

"I should like to see those old temples and fakirs and jugglers," said the old man. "What was that you started telling me the other day about a monkey's paw or something, Morris?"

"Nothing," said the soldier hastily. "Leastways, nothing worth hearing."

"Monkey's paw?" said Mrs. White curiously.

"Well, it's just a bit of what you might call magic, perhaps," said the sergeant-major off-handedly.

His three listeners leaned forward eagerly. The visitor absentmindedly put his empty glass to his lips and then set it down again. His host filled it for him.

"To look at," said the sergeant-major, fumbling in his pocket, "it's just an ordinary little paw, dried to a mummy."

He took something out of his pocket and proffered it. Mrs. White drew back with a grimace, but her son, taking it, examined it curiously.

"And what is there special about it?" inquired Mr. White, as he took it from his son and, having examined it, placed it upon the table.

"It had a spell put on it by an old fakir," said the sergeant-major, "a very holy man. He wanted to show that fate ruled people's lives, and that those who interfered with it did so to their sorrow. He put a spell on it so that three separate men could each have three wishes from it."

His manner was so impressive that his hearers were conscious that their light laughter jarred somewhat.

"Well, why don't you have three, sir?" said Herbert White cleverly.

The soldier regarded him in the way that middle age is wont to regard presumptuous youth. "I have," he said quietly, and his blotchy face whitened.

"And did you really have the three wishes granted?" asked Mrs. White.

"I did," said the sergeant-major, and his glass tapped against his strong teeth.

"And has anybody else wished?" inquired the old lady.

"The first man had his three wishes, yes," was the reply. "I don't know what the first two were, but the third was for death. That's how I got the paw."

His tones were so grave that a hush fell upon the group.

"If you've had your three wishes, it's no good to you now, then, Morris," said the old man at last. "What do you keep it for?"

The soldier shook his head. "Fancy, I suppose," he said slowly.

"If you could have another three wishes," said the old man, eyeing him keenly, "would you have them?"

"I don't know," said the other. "I don't know."

He took the paw, and dangling it between his front finger and thumb, suddenly threw it upon the fire. White, with a slight cry, stooped down and snatched it off.

"Better let it burn," said the soldier solemnly.

"If you don't want it, Morris," said the old man, "give it to me."

"I won't," said his friend doggedly. "I threw it on the fire. If you keep it, don't blame me for what happens. Pitch it on the fire again, like a sensible man."

The other shook his head and examined his new possession closely. "How do you do it?" he inquired.

"Hold it up in your right hand and wish aloud," said the sergeant-major, "but I warn you of the consequences."

"Sounds like the Arabian Nights," said Mrs White, as she rose and began to set the supper. "Don't you think you might wish for four pairs of hands for me?"

Her husband drew the talisman from his pocket and then all three burst into laughter as the sergeant-major, with a look of alarm on his face, caught him by the arm.

"If you must wish," he said gruffly, "wish for something sensible."

Mr. White dropped it back into his pocket, and placing chairs, motioned his friend to the table. In the business of supper the talisman was partly forgotten, and afterward the three sat listening in an enthralled fashion to a second instalment of the soldier's adventures in India.

"If the tale about the monkey paw is not more truthful than those he has been telling us," said Herbert, as the door closed behind their guest, just in time for him to catch

the last train, "we shan't make much out of it."

"Did you give him anything for it, father?" inquired Mrs. White, regarding her husband closely.

"A trifle," said he, colouring slightly. "He didn't want it, but I made him take it. And he pressed me again to throw it away."

"Likely," said Herbert, with pretended horror. "Why, we're going to be rich, and famous, and happy. Wish to be an emperor, father, to begin with; then you can't be henpecked."

He darted round the table, pursued by the maligned Mrs. White armed with an antimacassar.

Mr. White took the paw from his pocket and eyed it dubiously. "I don't know what to wish for, and that's a fact," he said slowly. "It seems to me I've got all I want."

"If you only cleared the house, you'd be quite happy, wouldn't you?" said Herbert, with his hand on his shoulder. "Well, wish for two hundred pounds, then; that'll just do it."

His father, smiling shamefacedly at his own credulity, held up the talisman, as his son, with a solemn face somewhat marred by a wink at his mother, sat down at the piano and struck a few impressive chords.

"I wish for two hundred pounds," said the old man distinctly.

A fine crash from the piano greeted the words, interrupted by a shuddering cry from the old man. His wife and son ran toward him.

"It moved, he cried, with a glance of disgust at the object as it lay on the floor. "As I wished it twisted in my hands like a snake."

"Well, I don't see the money," said his son, as he picked it up and placed it on the table, "and I bet I never shall."

"It must have been your fancy, father," said his wife, regarding him anxiously.

He shook his head. "Never mind, though; there's no harm done, but it gave me a shock all the same."

They sat down by the fire again while the two men finished their pipes. Outside, the wind was higher than ever, and the old man started nervously at the sound of a door banging upstairs. A silence unusual and depressing settled upon all three, which lasted until the old couple rose to retire for the night.

"I expect you'll find the cash tied up in a big bag in the middle of your bed," said Herbert, as he bade them good-night, "and something horrible squatting up on top of the wardrobe watching you as you pocket your ill-gotten gains."

He sat alone in the darkness, gazing at the dying fire, and seeing faces in it. The last face was so horrible and so simian that he gazed at it in amazement. It got so vivid that, with a little uneasy laugh, he felt on the table for a glass containing a little water to throw over it. His hand grasped the monkey's paw, and with a little shiver he wiped his hand on his coat and went up to bed.

II.

IN the brightness of the wintry sun next morning as it streamed over the breakfast table Herbert laughed at his fears. There was an air of prosaic wholesomeness about the room which it had lacked on the previous night, and the dirty, shrivelled little paw was pitched on the sideboard with a carelessness which betokened no great belief in its virtues.

"I suppose all old soldiers are the same," said Mrs White. "The idea of our listening to such nonsense! How could wishes be granted in these days? And if they could, how could two hundred pounds hurt you, father?"

"Might drop on his head from the sky," said the frivolous Herbert.

"Morris said the things happened so naturally," said his father, "that you might if you so wished attribute it to coincidence."

"Well, don't break into the money before I come back," said Herbert, as he rose from the table. "I'm afraid it'll turn you into a mean, avaricious man, and we shall have to disown you."

His mother laughed, and following him to the door, watched him down the road, and returning to the breakfast table, was very happy at the expense of her husband's credulity. All of which did not prevent her from scurrying to the door at the postman's knock, nor prevent her from referring somewhat shortly to retired sergeant-majors of bibulous habits when she found that the post brought a tailor's bill.

"Herbert will have some more of his funny remarks, I expect, when he comes home," she said, as they sat at dinner.

"I dare say," said Mr. White, pouring himself out some beer; "but for all that, the thing moved in my hand; that I'll swear to."

"You thought it did," said the old lady soothingly.

"I say it did," replied the other. "There was no thought about it; I had just----What's the matter?"

His wife made no reply. She was watching the mysterious movements of a man outside, who, peering in an undecided fashion at the house, appeared to be trying to make up his mind to enter. In mental connection with the two hundred pounds, she noticed that the stranger was well dressed and wore a silk hat of glossy newness. Three times he paused at the gate, and then walked on again. The fourth time he stood with his hand upon it, and then with sudden resolution flung it open and walked up

the path. Mrs. White at the same moment placed her hands behind her, and hurriedly unfastening the strings of her apron, put that useful article of apparel beneath the cushion of her chair.

She brought the stranger, who seemed ill at ease, into the room. He gazed at her furtively, and listened in a preoccupied fashion as the old lady apologized for the appearance of the room, and her husband's coat, a garment which he usually reserved for the garden. She then waited as patiently as her sex would permit, for him to broach his business, but he was at first strangely silent.

"I--was asked to call," he said at last, and stooped and picked a piece of cotton from his trousers. "I come from Maw and Meggins."

The old lady started. "Is anything the matter?" she asked breathlessly. "Has anything happened to Herbert? What is it? What is it?"

Her husband interposed. "There, there, mother," he said hastily. "Sit down, and don't jump to conclusions. You've not brought bad news, I'm sure, sir" and he eyed the other wistfully.

"I'm sorry----" began the visitor.

"Is he hurt?" demanded the mother.

The visitor bowed in assent. "Badly hurt," he said quietly, "but he is not in any pain."

"Oh, thank God!" said the old woman, clasping her hands. "Thank God for that! Thank----"

She broke off suddenly as the sinister meaning of the assurance dawned upon her and she saw the awful confirmation of her fears in the other's averted face. She caught her breath, and turning to her slower-witted husband, laid her trembling old hand upon his. There was a long silence.

"He was caught in the machinery," said the visitor at length, in a low voice.

"Caught in the machinery," repeated Mr. White, in a dazed fashion, "yes."

He sat staring blankly out at the window, and taking his wife's hand between his own, pressed it as he had been wont to do in their old courting days nearly forty years before.

"He was the only one left to us," he said, turning gently to the visitor. "It is hard."

The other coughed, and rising, walked slowly to the window. "The firm wished me to convey their sincere sympathy with you in your great loss," he said, without looking round. "I beg that you will understand I am only their servant and merely obeying orders."

There was no reply; the old woman's face was white, her eyes staring, and her breath inaudible; on the husband's face was a look such as his friend the sergeant might have carried into his first action.

"I was to say that Maw and Meggins disclaim all responsibility," continued the other. "They admit no liability at all, but in consideration of your son's services they wish to present you with a certain sum as compensation."

Mr. White dropped his wife's hand, and rising to his feet, gazed with a look of horror at his visitor. His dry lips shaped the words, "How much?"

"Two hundred pounds," was the answer.

Unconscious of his wife's shriek, the old man smiled faintly, put out his hands like a sightless man, and dropped, a senseless heap, to the floor.

### III.

IN the huge new cemetery, some two miles distant, the old people buried their dead, and came back to a house steeped in shadow and silence. It was all over so quickly that at first they could hardly realize it, and remained in a state of expectation as though of something else to happen--something else which was to lighten this load, too heavy for old hearts to bear.

But the days passed, and expectation gave place to resignation--the hopeless resignation of the old, sometimes miscalled, apathy. Sometimes they hardly exchanged a word, for now they had nothing to talk about, and their days were long to weariness.

It was about a week after that that the old man, waking suddenly in the night, stretched out his hand and found himself alone. The room was in darkness, and the sound of subdued weeping came from the window. He raised himself in bed and listened.

"Come back," he said tenderly. "You will be cold."

"It is colder for my son," said the old woman, and wept afresh.

The sound of her sobs died away on his ears. The bed was warm, and his eyes heavy with sleep. He dozed fitfully, and then slept until a sudden wild cry from his wife awoke him with a start.

"The paw!" she cried wildly. "The monkey's paw!"

He started up in alarm. "Where? Where is it? What's the matter?"

She came stumbling across the room toward him. "I want it," she said quietly. "You've not destroyed it?"

"It's in the parlour, on the bracket," he replied, marvelling. "Why?"



She cried and laughed together, and bending over, kissed his cheek.

"I only just thought of it," she said hysterically. "Why didn't I think of it before? Why didn't you think of it?"

"Think of what?" he questioned.

"The other two wishes," she replied rapidly. "We've only had one."

"Was not that enough?" he demanded fiercely.

"No," she cried, triumphantly; "we'll have one more. Go down and get it quickly, and wish our boy alive again."

The man sat up in bed and flung the bedclothes from his quaking limbs. "Good God, you are mad!" he cried aghast.

"Get it," she panted; "get it quickly, and wish---- Oh, my boy, my boy!"

Her husband struck a match and lit the candle. "Get back to bed," he said, unsteadily. "You don't know what you are saying."

"We had the first wish granted," said the old woman, feverishly; "why not the second."

"A coincidence," stammered the old man.

"Go and get it and wish," cried the old woman, quivering with excitement.

The old man turned and regarded her, and his voice shook. "He has been dead ten days, and besides he--I would not tell you else, but--I could only recognize him by his clothing. If he was too terrible for you to see then, how now?"

"Bring him back," cried the old woman, and dragged him toward the door. "Do you think I fear the child I have nursed?"

He went down in the darkness, and felt his way to the parlour, and then to the mantelpiece. The talisman was in its place, and a horrible fear that the unspoken wish might bring his mutilated son before him ere he could escape from the room seized upon him, and he caught his breath as he found that he had lost the direction of the door. His brow cold with sweat, he felt his way round the table, and groped along the wall until he found himself in the small passage with the unwholesome thing in his hand.

Even his wife's face seemed changed as he entered the room. It was white and expectant, and to his fears seemed to have an unnatural look upon it. He was afraid of her.

"Wish!" she cried, in a strong voice.

"It is foolish and wicked," he faltered.

"Wish!" repeated his wife.

He raised his hand. "I wish my son alive again."

The talisman fell to the floor, and he regarded it fearfully. Then he sank trembling into a chair as the old woman, with burning eyes, walked to the window and raised the blind.

He sat until he was chilled with the cold, glancing occasionally at the figure of the old woman peering through the window. The candle end, which had burnt below the rim of the china candlestick, was throwing pulsating shadows on the ceiling and walls, until, with a flicker larger than the rest, it expired. The old man, with an unspeakable sense of relief at the failure of the talisman, crept back to his bed, and a minute or two afterward the old woman came silently and apathetically beside him.

Neither spoke, but both lay silently listening to the ticking of the clock. A stair creaked, and a squeaky mouse scurried noisily through the wall. The darkness was oppressive, and after lying for some time screwing up his courage, the husband took the box of matches, and striking one, went downstairs for a candle.

At the foot of the stairs the match went out, and he paused to strike another, and at the same moment a knock, so quiet and stealthy as to be scarcely audible, sounded on the front door.

The matches fell from his hand. He stood motionless, his breath suspended until the knock was repeated. Then he turned and fled swiftly back to his room, and closed the door behind him. A third knock sounded through the house.

"What's that?" cried the old woman, starting up.

"A rat," said the old man, in shaking tones--"a rat. It passed me on the stairs."

His wife sat up in bed listening. A loud knock resounded through the house.

"It's Herbert!" she screamed. "It's Herbert!"

She ran to the door, but her husband was before her, and catching her by the arm, held her tightly.

"What are you going to do?" he whispered hoarsely.

"It's my boy; it's Herbert!" she cried, struggling mechanically. "I forgot it was two miles away. What are you holding me for? Let go. I must open the door."

"For God's sake, don't let it in," cried the old man trembling.

"You're afraid of your own son," she cried, struggling. "Let me go. I'm coming, Herbert; I'm coming."

There was another knock, and another. The old woman with a sudden wrench broke free and ran from the room. Her husband followed to the landing, and called after her appealingly as she hurried downstairs. He heard the chain rattle back and the bottom bolt drawn slowly and stiffly from the socket. Then the old woman's voice, strained and panting.

"The bolt," she cried loudly. "Come down. I can't reach it."

But her husband was on his hands and knees groping wildly on the floor in search of the paw. If he could only find it before the thing outside got in. A perfect fusillade of knocks reverberated through the house, and he heard the scraping of a chair as his wife put it down in the passage against the door. He heard the creaking of the bolt as it came slowly back, and at the same moment he found the monkey's paw, and frantically breathed his third and last wish.

The knocking ceased suddenly, although the echoes of it were still in the house. He heard the chair drawn back and the door opened. A cold wind rushed up the staircase, and a long loud wail of disappointment and misery from his wife gave him courage to run down to her side, and then to the gate beyond. The street lamp flickering opposite shone on a quiet and deserted road.

(End.)

# The Story of an Hour

Kate Chopin (1894)

Knowing that Mrs. Mallard was afflicted with a heart trouble, great care was taken to break to her as gently as possible the news of her husband's death.

It was her sister Josephine who told her, in broken sentences; veiled hints that revealed in half concealing. Her husband's friend Richards was there, too, near her. It was he who had been in the newspaper office when intelligence of the railroad disaster was received, with Brently Mallard's name leading the list of "killed." He had only taken the time to assure himself of its truth by a second telegram, and had hastened to forestall any less careful, less tender friend in bearing the sad message.

She did not hear the story as many women have heard the same, with a paralyzed inability to accept its significance. She wept at once, with sudden, wild abandonment, in her sister's arms. When the storm of grief had spent itself she went away to her room alone. She would have no one follow her.

There stood, facing the open window, a comfortable, roomy armchair. Into this she sank, pressed down by a physical

exhaustion that haunted her body and seemed to reach into her soul.

She could see in the open square before her house the tops of trees that were all aquiver with the new spring life. The delicious breath of rain was in the air. In the street below a peddler was crying his wares. The notes of a distant song which some one was singing reached her faintly, and countless sparrows were twittering in the eaves.

There were patches of blue sky showing here and there through the clouds that had met and piled one above the other in the west facing her window.

She sat with her head thrown back upon the cushion of the chair, quite motionless, except when a sob came up into her throat and shook her, as a child who has cried itself to sleep continues to sob in its dreams.

She was young, with a fair, calm face, whose lines bespoke repression and even a certain strength. But now there was a dull stare in her eyes, whose gaze was fixed away off yonder on one of those patches of blue sky. It was not a glance of reflection, but rather indicated a suspension of intelligent thought.

**There was something coming to her and she was waiting for it, fearfully. What was it? She did not know; it was too subtle and elusive to name. But she felt it, creeping out of the sky, reaching toward her through the sounds, the scents, the color that filled the air.**

**Now her bosom rose and fell tumultuously. She was beginning to recognize this thing that was approaching to possess her, and she was striving to beat it back with her will--as powerless as her two white slender hands would have been.**

**When she abandoned herself a little whispered word escaped her slightly parted lips. She said it over and over under her breath: "free, free, free!" The vacant stare and the look of terror that had followed it went from her eyes. They stayed keen and bright. Her pulses beat fast, and the coursing blood warmed and relaxed every inch of her body.**

**She did not stop to ask if it were or were not a monstrous joy that held her. A clear and exalted perception enabled her to dismiss the suggestion as trivial.**

**She knew that she would weep again when she saw the kind, tender hands folded in death; the face that had never looked save with love upon her, fixed and gray and dead. But she saw beyond that bitter moment a long procession of years to come**

**that would belong to her absolutely. And she opened and spread her arms out to them in welcome.**

**There would be no one to live for during those coming years; she would live for herself. There would be no powerful will bending hers in that blind persistence with which men and women believe they have a right to impose a private will upon a fellow-creature. A kind intention or a cruel intention made the act seem no less a crime as she looked upon it in that brief moment of illumination.**

**And yet she had loved him--sometimes. Often she had not. What did it matter! What could love, the unsolved mystery, count for in face of this possession of self-assertion which she suddenly recognized as the strongest impulse of her being!**

**"Free! Body and soul free!" she kept whispering.**

**Josephine was kneeling before the closed door with her lips to the keyhole, imploring for admission. "Louise, open the door! I beg, open the door--you will make yourself ill. What are you doing Louise? For heaven's sake open the door."**

**"Go away. I am not making myself ill." No; she was drinking in a very elixir of life through that open window.**

Her fancy was running riot along those days ahead of her. Spring days, and summer days, and all sorts of days that would be her own. She breathed a quick prayer that life might be long. It was only yesterday she had thought with a shudder that life might be long.

She arose at length and opened the door to her sister's importunities. There was a feverish triumph in her eyes, and she carried herself unwittingly like a goddess of Victory. She clasped her sister's waist, and together they descended the stairs. Richards stood waiting for them at the bottom.

Some one was opening the front door with a latchkey. It was Brently Mallard who entered, a little travel-stained, composedly carrying his grip-sack and umbrella. He had been far from the scene of accident, and did not even know there had been one. He stood amazed at Josephine's piercing cry; at Richards' quick motion to screen him from the view of his wife.

But Richards was too late.

When the doctors came they said she had died of heart disease-- of joy that kills.



## The Landlady

1. Underline details in the story that build suspense.
2. When Billy is in the living room, what first alerts the reader that something may be wrong?
3. According to the story, what are the benefits of staying at the pub? Compare them to the benefits of staying in a boardinghouse?
4. There are no other guests at the boardinghouse, what does this foreshadow?
5. Underline the things the landlady says and does that seem unusual?
6. How would you describe the landlady's personality?
7. What odd thing has Billy discovered in the guestbook?
8. Why does Billy resemble the other guests?



## Creative Projects

1. Choose either “The Crane Maiden” or “Aunty Misery” and, with a group of classmates, write it as a play.
2. While reading the text, have students fill in a story map to help summarize what has happened.
3. The old couple in “The Crane Maiden” and main character in “Aunty Misery” face situations in which they have to let go of something. Write three paragraphs in which you compare and contrast the conflicts and resolutions in “Aunty Misery” and “The Crane Maiden.”
4. “The Landlady” is fun to read because it is full of foreshadowing clues that build suspense. Create a "Prediction Chart" that has two columns: In one column you state the clue, on the other you write down your prediction based on each clue.

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