

A Christmas Carol

One Extract Question

- You will be given an extract with a question about a **theme** or **character**.
- You must write about this extract and **other parts of the novella**.
- The question is worth **40 marks**
- You should spend **45 minutes** on it

A01: Understanding, focus on task, use of quotations

A02: Analysis of language, structure and form and use of terminology

A04: Links to context

Charles Dickens' Life

1. What do you know about Charles Dickens' life?
2. How is this reflected in *A Christmas Carol*?
3. Can you think of any quotations that link to this?



Context: Charles Dickens' Life

- When Dickens was a child, his financially irresponsible father was sent to **debtors' prison**. The family moved in with him but Charles was made to work as a **child labourer**. This meant Dickens **understood the struggles of being poor** and the problems money can cause.
- Dickens wrote *A Christmas Carol* in 1843, with the intention of **drawing attention to the plight and misery of England's poor**.
- Dickens was well known for his **social criticism against the rich and powerful**. He cared deeply about the poor and the injustices they faced.

Dickens' Life: How are these ideas reflected in the novel?

- Dickens presents the poor, hard working Cratchit family in a very positive light. **“They were not a handsome family... but they were happy, grateful, pleased with one another”**
- On the other hand, Dickens presents the greedy, miser Ebenezer Scrooge in a negative light. **“The cold within him froze his old features.”**
- Dickens shows the joy that arises from helping others and being charitable. **“Lord bless me!” Cried the gentleman, as if his breath were gone.**

A Victorian Christmas

1. What do you know about a Victorian Christmas?
2. How is this reflected in *A Christmas Carol*?
3. Can you think of any quotations that link to this?



Context: A Victorian Christmas

- Christmas was considered a very **important family time** in the Victorian era. The use of Christmas cards and the traditional Christmas dinner all began at this time.
- Dickens' novel highlights the message of the tradition of Christmas – it should be a time of **peace and goodwill to everyone, regardless of their social status**.
- Christmas celebrations were starting to become more **secular** (non-religious) with a focus on **helping others, giving to charity, spending time with family** and **reflecting on your life**. The lesson Scrooge learns in the novel reflects this idea.

Victorian Christmas: How are these ideas reflected in the novel?

- The importance of celebrating Christmas with family and eating Christmas dinner is shown through the joyful atmosphere at both Fred's house and the Cratchit household on Christmas day. **"Bob hugged his daughter to his heart's content."**
- The fact the Cratchits celebrate and enjoy Christmas despite being poor reflects Dickens belief that Christmas should be a time of joy and goodwill regardless of social status **"Oh a wonderful pudding... nobody said or thought it was at all a small pudding for a large family."**
- Scrooge's happiness and love of Christmas and family in Stave 5 highlights the importance of secular Christmas celebrations to Dickens. **"Wonderful party, wonderful games, wonderful unanimity, wonderful happiness!"**

19th Century Poverty

1. What do you know about 19th Century poverty?
2. How is this reflected in *A Christmas Carol*?
3. Can you think of any quotations that link to this?



Context: Poverty in 19th Century England

- Due to the **Industrial Revolution**, cities became very cramped and overpopulated. This led to a rise in **homelessness, crime, disease and poor living conditions**.
- Lots of people worked in factories. **Factories** were owned by rich people who often **exploited** the people that worked for them; factory work consisted of working long hours in terrible, **unsafe** conditions for very **low pay**.
- In *A Christmas Carol*, Ebenezer **Scrooge** (the hard-hearted businessman) represents the rich **factory owners**. The **exploited workers** are represented by the **hard working Cratchit** family.

Context: Poverty in 19th Century England

- There was a common misconception that the poor were just **'lazy'**. This meant many people **lacked sympathy** for them and **didn't help** them.
- In 1834, the government introduced the **New Poor Law**. This meant that in order to receive financial help, the unemployed had to go into a **workhouse**. People earned their keep by doing manual jobs in the workhouses which were **like prisons** with **awful conditions**.

19th C. Poverty: How is this reflected in the novel?

- The desperation of the charity collectors in Stave One shows the great need of the poor **“Many would rather die.”**
- Scrooge’s reaction to the charity collectors reflects the common misconception that the poor were just lazy and don’t deserve help. **“If they would rather die, they had better do it and decrease the surplus population”**
- The suffering of Tiny Tim reflects the lack of help given to those in need **“If these shadows remain unaltered by the Future, the child will die.”**
- The horrifying children Ignorance and Want represent society’s greed and the dire consequences of not helping those in need. **“They are man’s... on his brow I see that written which is Doom.”**

Victorian Ghost Stories

1. What do you know about Victorian ghost stories?
2. How is this reflected in *A Christmas Carol*?
3. Can you think of any quotations that link to this?



Context: Victorian Ghost Stories

- Telling ghost stories was a common Victorian pastime, they typically found them **fascinating**.
- Many Victorians also believed that ghosts actually **existed**; perhaps *A Christmas Carol* would have had a more profound impact on a Victorian reader compared to a modern day reader.
- **Christmas eve** was traditionally the time to tell ghost stories around a fire.

Ghost Stories: How is this reflected in the novel?

- Marley's ghost and the ghosts of Christmas past, present and future would have fascinated the Victorian reader. **"You have never seen the like of me before!"**
- The novella would have been read around the fire on Christmas Eve to teach readers about the importance of redemption, charity, family and celebrating Christmas. **"I learnt a lesson which is working now. Tonight if you have aught to teach me, let me profit by it."**
- The ghosts add a mystical and exciting tone to the novel. Whether we believe in them or not, their dramatic, eerie presence has a huge influence on Scrooge. **"Its mysterious presence filled him with a solemn dread."**

How to answer the question

Structuring your answer:

- **Intro:** define the topic of the question and the ideas Dickens is exploring



- **PEA** paragraphs with links to **context**



- **Conclusion:** Summarise your main ideas and finish with a powerful point

You must:

- Identify the **focus** of the question. All of your ideas need to be **related** to this
- Write about the extract **AND** other parts of the novel
- Work through the novella **chronologically** (deal with the extract in its correct place)
- Cover ideas from across the **whole** novella
- Look at how characters or themes **develop** or **change** across the novella

How does Scrooge change throughout the novel?

Write an **introduction** to this answer:

- Briefly introduce the character of Scrooge
 - Briefly explain how he changes
- Briefly explain what Dickens shows through this

How does Scrooge change throughout the novel?

Introduction:

Throughout the novel, Dickens shows a huge transformation in the character of Scrooge. At the beginning of the novel, he is presented as a cold-hearted miser who doesn't care about anybody else. However, thanks to the intervention of the wise spirits, Scrooge realises he must change. After learning lessons on the importance of charity, family and caring for others, Scrooge decides to become a better person. In stave five, Dickens presents him in a positive light which completely contrasts with the negative way he was presented at the beginning of the novel, teaching readers the importance of redemption.

Writing PEA paragraphs

Point: an idea that directly **answers** the question.

Evidence: a quotation that **supports** your point.

Analysis:

- What does the quote **show/suggest**?
- Pick out **key words/techniques/tones** and explain **why** they are **effective**.
- Explain **why** the writer has used this quote, you could also link to **context** here.

Use **relevant subject terminology** throughout:
e.g. exaggeration, metaphor, adjective...

What is effective about this PEA?

At the beginning of the novel, Dickens presents Scrooge as a mean spirited, cruel character who dislikes Christmas. When his nephew Fred asks him to join him for Christmas, he rejects the offer and is very rude. He states 'Every idiot who goes about with Merry Christmas on his lips should be boiled with his own pudding.' This highlights his negativity towards joy and celebration. The insult 'idiot' shows that Scrooge is not afraid to ridicule those he disagrees with which also indicates his contempt for celebrating Christmas. This is emphasised by the aggression in the verb 'boiled' which highlights his contempt for these people, reiterating his misery towards Christmas even further. By presenting Scrooge so negatively, Dickens criticises this attitude towards Christmas. Dickens believed that Christmas should be a time of peace and goodwill which is something Scrooge later realises.

How does Scrooge change throughout the novel?

- **Stave One** = Miser, cold-hearted, self-righteous, nasty, rejects his nephew's offer to celebrate Christmas with him, refuses to donate money to the poor, scares the carol singer away, treats Bob badly.
- **Stave Two** =
- **Stave Three** =
- **Stave Four** =
- **Stave Five** =

Write a few **bullet points** on how Scrooge is presented in each stave

How does Scrooge change throughout the novel?

- **Stave One** = Miser, cold-hearted, self-righteous, hates Christmas, rejects his nephew's offer to celebrate Christmas with him, refuses to donate money to the poor, scares the carol singer away, treats Bob badly, at first refuses to believe but is then terrified of Marley's ghost.
- **Stave Two** = Intrigued and more open to the ghosts, begins to soften and feels nostalgic and sad to see his former child self and sister Fan, feels delight at seeing Fezziwig and remembers how he used to be, he feels heartbroken when he sees Belle again and remembers what he could have had. He begins to realise he needs to change.

- **Stave Three** = Realises how much the poor suffer, feels guilty when he sees the Cratchits, (especially Tiny Tim) He learns that people can still be happy despite being poor, he realises what his family really think of him. He knows he must become a better person.
- **Stave Four** = Terrified of the Ghost of Christmas Yet To Come, desperate, pleads with the ghost for another chance, shocked and saddened to see how others react to his death (the thieves, the young couple, the businessmen etc.), weeps to see his own grave.
- **Stave Five** = Becomes kind, friendly and charitable, loves Christmas. Buys a turkey for the Cratchits, donates money to the charity collectors, spends Christmas with his family, raises Bob's salary and becomes a 'second father' to Tiny Tim

How does Scrooge change throughout the novel?

- Write the next part of the answer
- You could write about how Scrooge starts to change in Stave 2 when he meets the Ghost of Christmas Past and learns some life-changing lessons when he sees his past self.

- Remember to use evidence
- Remember to analyse your quote in detail
 - Link to context where appropriate

How are family relationships presented in A Christmas Carol?

- What are the main family relationships in the novel?
- Briefly write how each family relationship is presented.

How are family relationships presented in A Christmas Carol?

Main family relationships =

- **Fred and Scrooge** – Strained relationship at first, one-sided, argumentative. Later they reconcile.
- **Fred's family** – Close family, joyful, enjoy spending time together.
- **The Cratchits** – Poor yet appreciative, loving, caring, supportive, work together.
- **Scrooge and Belle** – Lost relationship, the possibility of family that Scrooge turned his back on and grew apart from. He later regrets this.
- **Family of the ghosts** – Supernatural, work together to achieve the greater good, all have the same purpose/goal

Family Relationships

- Choose **one** of the family relationships to write about.
- Write a **PEA paragraph** on how Dickens presents this relationship.
- Link to **context** where possible.