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## A Christmas Carol

Charles Dickens

Retold by Sheila Lyne and Ken Methold

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## Humbug!

## Preview Questions

1. What is Christmas season like in your country?
2. Have you ever heard of Ebenezer Scrooge before?
3. Do you know anybody who is really mean?

Marley was dead. There is no doubt whatever about that. The statement of his burial was signed by the necessary people. Even Scrooge signed it, and Scrooge's name was good for anything he put his hand to. Scrooge and Marley were partners for I don't know how many years. Scrooge was his only heir, his only friend, and the only person who was sorry to see him dead. And even Scrooge was not very saddened by his death, for he was a good businessman, and Marley's death had not hurt his business in anyway.

It is important to remember that Marley was dead, completely dead. If you forget that, the story I am going to tell won't have anything interesting about it. Scrooge never painted out Marley's name over the door of their offices. It stayed there for years after his death. The business was known as Scrooge and Marley. Sometimes people called him Scrooge, and sometimes they called him Marley; he answered to both names. It was all the same to him.

Scrooge was a mean man who made his employees work harder than most employers. He was as hard as a stone. He loved money and only money. He could not get enough

of it. And he never gave any of it away. He was the least generous of men. He was so mean that he would not spend any money to heat the office. It was ice cold in winter. There was even ice on his hair. And as a man, he was as cold inside as he was outside. Wherever he went, he took this coldness with him. There was no wind colder than Scrooge.

Nobody liked him. Nobody stopped him in the street and said, "My dear Scrooge, how are you? Well, I hope? You must come and visit me soon." No one even asked him the time. He was too mean to give anyone the time. When children saw him coming, they ran away. Even the dogs of the blind men pulled their masters out of his way. Scrooge did not care. He liked people to keep out of his way. He did not care that no one wanted to speak to him and that he had no friends. He cared only about his money.

Once upon a time of all the good days in the year, on Christmas Eve, old Scrooge was busy in his office. It was cold, biting weather. There was fog, and it was difficult to see in the streets. The time was only a little after three in the afternoon, but it was already dark outside, and there were candles burning in all the nearby offices. People walking in the streets were finding it difficult to keep warm. Scrooge kept open the door of his own office so that he could see what his clerk was doing. Scrooge had only a small fire in his office, but the fire in his clerk's office was even smaller. His clerk could not put more coal on it because Scrooge kept all the coal in his own room. The clerk's office was so cold that he had to try to warm himself by putting his hands around the candle on his desk. He tried to imagine

that this made him warmer, but as he was a man of little imagination, he stayed cold.

"A happy Christmas, Uncle! God save you!" cried a happy voice. It was the voice of Scrooge's nephew, who came into the office so quickly he surprised Scrooge. "Bah!" said Scrooge, "Humbug!" Scrooge's nephew had been walking so quickly that he was not cold. He was a handsome, red-faced young man with happy eyes.

"How can you say that Christmas is humbug, Uncle?" Scrooge's nephew said. "You don't mean that, I am sure."

"I do," said Scrooge. "Happy Christmas! What reason have you to be happy? You're poor enough."

"But why are you not happy," replied the nephew gaily. "What reason have you to be sad? You're rich enough."

Scrooge, having no better answer ready, just said, "Bah!" again, and followed it up with "Humbug."

"Don't be angry, Uncle!" said the nephew.

"What else can I be," replied his uncle, "when I live in such a world of fools as this? Happy Christmas! What's Christmas time to you? It's just a time for paying bills without having any money to pay them; a time when you realise you are a year older, but not an hour richer. If I could have my way, every fool who goes about with 'Happy Christmas' on his lips should be cooked with his own pudding and buried with a piece of holly through his heart. He should!"

"But Uncle!" cried his nephew.

"Nephew!" Scrooge said angrily, "Keep Christmas in your own way, and let me keep it in mine. Christmas won't do you any good. It's never done me any good, either."



"I don't expect Christmas to do me any good," the nephew said. "It's a time for doing good for others. It's a sacred time when we remember what it means. It's the one time of the year when people open their hearts to wish one another happiness. Christmas has never put money into my pocket, but it has made me rich in other ways. In that way, it has done me good and will do me good, and I say, God bless it!"

The clerk clapped his hands; he was so pleased by what the nephew had said. Scrooge, turned to him. "If I hear another sound from you," said Scrooge, "you'll lose your job." He turned back to his nephew. "You're a strong speaker," he said. "I'm surprised you don't go into Parliament."

"Don't be angry, Uncle. Come and have dinner with us tomorrow."

"No!" Scrooge said. "I have no wish to visit you or eat your food."

"But why not?" asked Scrooge's nephew. "Why not?"

"Why did you get married?" was Scrooge's answer.

"Because I fell in love."

"What a foolish thing to do," Scrooge said. "Good afternoon!"

"But Uncle, you never gave that as a reason for not coming to visit me before I married. Why give it as a reason for not coming now?"

"Good afternoon," said Scrooge again.

"I want nothing from you," the nephew said. "Why can't we be friends?"

"Good afternoon," said Scrooge yet again.

"I am sorry to find you like this," the nephew said, "so





I will say no more except to wish you a happy Christmas, Uncle!”

“Good afternoon!” said Scrooge for the last time. His nephew left the room without an angry word but stopped to wish the clerk a happy Christmas. The clerk wished him one also.

“There’s another fool,” Scrooge said. “A clerk with fifteen shillings a week and a wife and family! How can he talk about a happy Christmas? They’re all fools.”

### Review Questions

1. Why did Scrooge think his nephew was a fool?
2. What did people think about Scrooge?
3. How much did Scrooge’s clerk earn a week?

## CHAPTER 2

### An Uncharitable Man

#### Preview Questions

1. Do you support or give money to any charities? Who or what do they help?
2. What do you think Scrooge will give to a charity?
3. Why do you think Scrooge will chase away carol singer?

Almost immediately after Scrooge’s nephew left, two other people came in. They were large, good-looking men who, with their hats off, went into Scrooge’s office. They had papers in their hands. “Scrooge and Marley’s, I believe,” said one of the men. “Am I speaking to Mr. Scrooge or Mr. Marley?”

“Mr. Marley died seven years ago, this very night,” Scrooge replied.

“Then we are sure you will be as generous as he was,” said one of the gentlemen, handing Scrooge his name card. “At this time of the year, it is usual for people to give generously to the poor. Thousands of people, Mr. Scrooge, do not have enough food or warm clothing. Many have no homes.”

“Are there no **prisons**?” asked Scrooge.

“Plenty of prisons,” said the man.

“And are there no **workhouses**?” demanded Scrooge. “Places where the poor can work for their bread?”

“Yes, there are,” replied the man, “I wish I could say they were not needed.”

“I was **afraid**, from what you said at first, that something

had happened to them," said Scrooge. "I'm very glad to hear that there are still such places."

"They are not happy places for the poor to be," the man said. "Some of us are collecting money to buy good food and clothes for these people. We are doing this now because it is at Christmas time that the poor are so unhappy. They see that they do not have what most other people have. How much will you give, Mr. Scrooge?"

"Nothing!" Scrooge replied.

"You wish to give secretly?"

"I wish to be left alone," said Scrooge. "That is my answer. I don't enjoy Christmas, and I can't afford to make other people happy. I give some money to pay for prisons and workhouses, and that is enough."

"Many would rather die than go to such places."

"If they would rather die," said Scrooge, "they had better do it. We have too many people already. Their problems are not my business. It's enough for a man to understand his own business and not have to spend time with other people's. Good afternoon, gentlemen!"

Knowing that it would be useless to argue, the men left, and Scrooge got on with his work.

Outside, the fog and darkness thickened. It became even colder. In the street, workmen had lit a great fire in a metal basket around which poor men and boys were warming their hands. The shops were full of holly and berries, and they were doing good business as people bought everything they needed for the Christmas holiday. A child came to the door of Scrooge's office and began to sing a Christmas carol, but at the first sound of "God bless you, merry gentleman!

May nothing you dismay!" Scrooge picked up a stick and shook it at the child who quickly ran off.

When the time came for Scrooge to close his office for the day, he said to his clerk, "You'll want a holiday all day tomorrow, I suppose?"

"If that is convenient, sir."

"It's not convenient," said Scrooge, "and it's not fair. If I were to take money from your wages for it, you'd think yourself ill-used. But you don't think me ill-used, when I pay a day's wages for no work."

The clerk said that Christmas Day was only once a year.

"A poor excuse," said Scrooge, "But I suppose you must have the whole day. Be here all the earlier the next morning." The clerk promised that he would, and Scrooge walked out. The clerk ran home as fast as he could to play with his son.

### Review Questions

1. Who was Jacob Marley? What happened to him?
2. Why were the old gentlemen collecting money?
3. What are carols?



## Marley's Ghost

## Preview Questions

1. Where do you think Scrooge will see his partner's face?
2. What sound do you think will frighten Scrooge?
3. Who do you think will visit Scrooge?

Scrooge ate his dinner alone in a nearby inn and then went to his home. This was a dark room above some offices. Even the entrance was dark, but Scrooge knew his way about in the fog without a light. On the door of the building, there was a large metal door knocker. To Scrooge's surprise, it now looked like Marley's face. It had never looked like this before, and Scrooge had not even thought about Marley since the man had died. Scrooge looked at the door knocker for several moments, and then it changed back to being an ordinary door knocker again. Scrooge told himself that what he had seen had been his imagination. He said, "Pooh! Pooh!" and closed the door behind him with a bang. Then he went up to his room where he lit a candle. The sound of his voice seemed to echo throughout the building. Then another strange thing happened as he climbed the wide stairs. In front of him, he thought he saw a hearse. He could not be sure, though, because the light from his candle was not very strong.

Scrooge was not worried about darkness. He liked it because it was cheap. However, he went into every room in the building just to make sure that there was no one

else in it. Then he locked himself into his room to make sure no one could come in and put on his night clothes.

Before going to bed, he lit a small fire and made himself some thin soup. The fireplace was an old one, and it was surrounded by tiles on which there were pictures of famous people from history. To Scrooge's surprise, as he looked at these tiles, the faces on them changed into the face of Marley. Again Scrooge thought this was his imagination at work. "Humbug!" he said.

Then he looked up at an old bell that hung from the ceiling. It was a bell that at one time had been used to send for a servant, but it had not been used for many years. Now, suddenly, it began to move and a few moments later it began to ring. Scrooge was now very afraid. He became even more afraid when a few minutes later he heard a loud noise coming from the rooms beneath the building. These were rooms where a wine merchant keeps all his wines.

The noise sounded as if someone were dragging some kind of chain across the floor. Scrooge remembered that this was what ghosts were believed to do. The noise grew louder, and it seemed to be moving up the stairs. "It's humbug still!" said Scrooge. "I won't believe it."

Then, he turned white as the noise came through the locked door into his room, and there, in front of him, stood Marley, who had been dead for seven years. There was no doubt about it. Not only was the face Marley's, but so were the clothes. There was also a long chain around him. Even stranger than this was that Scrooge could see through Marley as if he were transparent.

"What do you want with me?" Scrooge demanded coldly.



"Much!" This was Marley's voice.

Scrooge had no doubt about it, but he said, "Who are you?"

"Ask me who I was."

"Who were you, then?" said Scrooge, raising his voice.

"In life, I was your partner, Jacob Marley."

"Can you—can you sit down?" asked Scrooge, looking doubtfully at him.

"I can."

"Do it, then." Scrooge asked the question, because he didn't know whether a ghost so transparent could sit in a chair. The ghost sat down on the opposite side of the fireplace, as if he were quite used to it.

"You don't believe in me," said the ghost.

"I don't," said Scrooge.

"Why do you doubt your senses?"

"Because," said Scrooge, "little things affect them. Even something I may have eaten. You are humbug, that's what you are, I tell you! Humbug!"

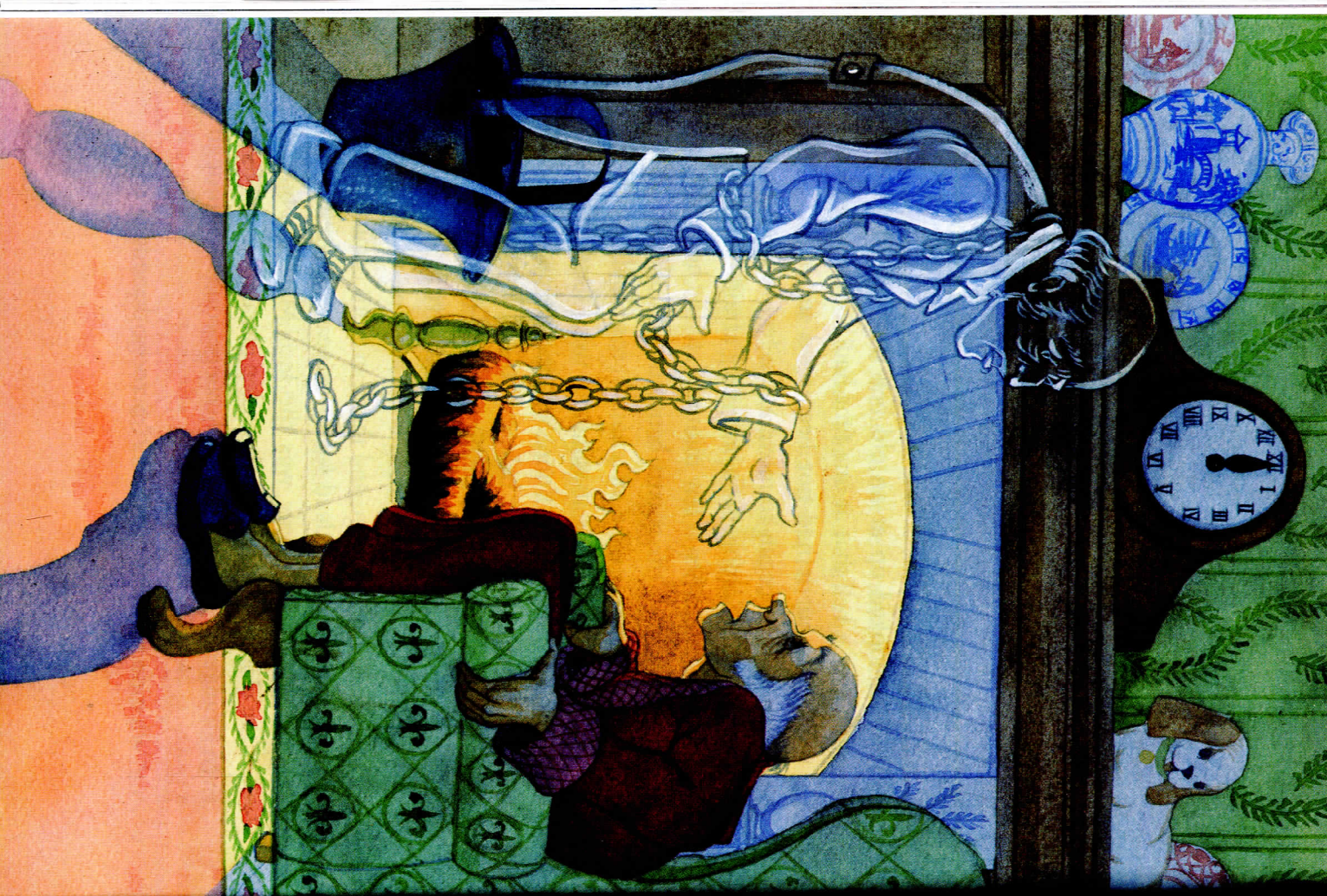
At this, the ghost cried out and shook its chain. It made such a frightening noise that Scrooge held on tightly to his chair to save himself from fainting. His fear was much greater when the ghost took off its hat. Scrooge fell upon his knees and held his hands before his face.

"Why are you here?" Scrooge asked.

"Do you believe in me or not?" the ghost demanded.

"I do now," said Scrooge. "I must. But why do ghosts walk the earth, and why do they come to me?"

"During the time when every man is alive," the ghost explained, "the spirit inside him must walk among his fellow





men. It must travel far and wide. If it does not do this, it will never be able to rest in peace."

"Why do you have a chain around you?" asked Scrooge, shaking. "Tell me why?"

"I wear the chain because of the bad things I did when I was alive," replied the ghost. "You, too, are making a chain for yourself by the things that you do and do not do." Scrooge was now even more afraid. He wondered how big and heavy the chain would be that he would have to carry around after he died.

"Jacob," he begged, "tell me more. Tell me that I need not worry about what will happen to me."

"There is very little more that I can say," the ghost said. "I can tell you only that I cannot rest; I cannot stay long anywhere. When I was alive, my spirit never left our office. Now I must go to other places."

"You must have been travelling very slowly, Jacob," Scrooge said. "You've been dead seven years." Hearing these words the ghost let out another cry and shook its chains.

"I wasted my life," it said. "I did nothing of any value."

"You were a clever businessman," Scrooge said. "You made a lot of money."

"That was of no value. I should have done many things to help my fellow men. But I did nothing. I thought only of making money. And this time of the year is the worst for me. This is when I should have helped others." Thinking about himself and how he had not helped anyone, Scrooge began to shake.

"Listen to me carefully," Marley's ghost said. "Although you can see me now, there have been many days in the

past when I have sat beside you and you have not been able to see me. I am here tonight to warn you that you still have a chance and hope of avoiding what has happened to me."

"You were always a good friend to me," said Scrooge.

"Thank you! You will be visited," continued the ghost, "by three spirits."

"Is that the chance you spoke about, Jacob?" Scrooge demanded.

"It is," said Marley.

"I—I think I'd rather not," said Scrooge.

"Without their visits," said the ghost, "you cannot hope to avoid my fate."

"Couldn't I be visited by them all at the same time, Jacob?" suggested Scrooge.

"Remember what I have said." The ghost then moved to the window which opened as he neared it. Then it raised a hand to Scrooge. "Come here," it said.

Scrooge moved to the window. He heard the sound of voices crying. Through the fog he could see figures moving, all pulling heavy chains behind them. He looked carefully at them. Some he had known when they had lived. He tried to say, "Humbug!" but the word would not come. Feeling very tired now, he returned to his chair, his eyes closed, and he fell asleep.

### Review Questions

1. Why did Jacob Marley have to carry a heavy chain?
2. Why did he have to travel now that he was dead?
3. Who did Marley say would visit Scrooge?



## The Spirit of Christmas Past

### Preview Questions

1. When will the Spirit of Christmas Past arrive?
2. Where will he take Scrooge?
3. What will make Scrooge feel sad?

When Scrooge awoke, it was so dark that looking out of bed he could not see where the wall ended and the window began. He was trying to see this when a church clock nearby began to strike the hours. To his surprise, it did not stop at four, the time by his watch, but continued until it struck twelve. He got out of bed and hurried to the window. It was still foggy outside and very cold. The streets were empty, which they should have been at four o'clock in the morning. He went back to bed. Scrooge now thought about Marley's ghost which had told him that a spirit would visit him tonight. He decided to stay awake for another hour, but he soon fell asleep. He was awakened by the church clock striking the quarters. Ding, dong! "A quarter past," said Scrooge, counting. Ding, dong! "Half-past!" said Scrooge. Ding, dong! "A quarter to," said Scrooge. Ding, dong! "The hour itself," said Scrooge, "and nothing else!" But he was wrong. The bell sounded a long, single "dong."

Suddenly, there was a face at the window. It was a strange figure, like a child, but also like an old man. Its hair, which hung about its neck and down its back, was





white as if with age, and yet, the face was smooth. The arms were very long and strong, as were the hands. It wore a kind of white dress and around its waist was a beautiful belt. It held a branch of green holly in its hand, and there were flowers along the edges of the dress. From the top of its head there came a bright, clear light.

"Are you the spirit, sir, about whom I have been told?" asked Scrooge.

"I am!"

"Who and what are you?" Scrooge demanded.

"I am the Spirit of Christmas Past."

"A long time past?" asked Scrooge.

"No, only of your past."

Scrooge did not know why, but he wanted the spirit to cover the light above its head.

"You have a cap in your hand," he said. "Please use it to cover your head."

"Why do you want to put out the light I give?" demanded the spirit. "Is it not enough that you are one of those whose behaviour made this cap and made me wear it for so many years?"

"I didn't mean to do you any harm," Scrooge said.

"Perhaps you will now tell me why you are here?"

"To help you," said the spirit.

It put out its strong hand as it spoke and took him gently by the arm. "Get out of bed and walk with me!" it said. The spirit walked towards the window.

"I am not a spirit like you," Scrooge said. "I will fall."

"Hold my hand," the spirit said. "And all will be well for you in more ways than one."

As the spirit spoke, they passed through the wall and stood on a country road with fields on either side. The city had disappeared, as had the darkness and fog. It was now day time, and there was snow on the ground.

"I know where we are!" Scrooge exclaimed. "I was born here and lived here as a boy." He began to have memories of his life as a boy. A tear came into his eye.

"If you remember this place," the spirit said, "you may now lead the way."

"I remember everything about it," Scrooge said.

"Then it is strange that for so many years you have never thought about it," the spirit said. They walked along the road, Scrooge recognising every gate and tree, until a little town could be seen ahead with its bridge, church, and river. Some small horses came towards them with boys upon their backs, who called to other boys in carts, driven by farmers. All these boys were happy and shouted to each other until the fields were full of their laughter.

"These are but shadows of the things that have been," said the spirit. "They do not know we are here."

The boys came nearer, and as they came, Scrooge knew and called out their names. He felt so happy to see them all again. He did not understand why it made him feel happy to hear them wish one another a merry Christmas. He knew that he hated Christmas. It had never given him anything.

"We are now at the school," said the spirit. "Only one child is there, left alone there by the others."

Scrooge knew who the child was, and he began to cry. They walked on and soon came to the school house. It seemed to be empty, and it needed to be repaired. They



walked through the house until they came to a room that was empty except for a small boy sitting at a desk, reading. The spirit touched Scrooge on the arm and pointed to the boy. It was Scrooge when he was young. Scrooge sat down and cried as he looked at himself as he used to be.

Suddenly, a man wearing strange clothes stood outside the window. He was leading a horse.

"It's Ali Baba!" Scrooge exclaimed excitedly "It's dear, old, honest Ali Baba! Yes, yes, I remember. One Christmas, I was left here all alone, and the other boys had all gone to their homes. He did come, for the first time, just like that. And characters from other books, they all came to me in my imagination as I read about them."

People who knew Scrooge as he is now would have been surprised if they had known him as a boy. Scrooge remembered how lonely he had been as a child. "Poor boy!" he said, and tears came into his eyes. "I wish," he said, putting his hand in his pocket, and looking about him after drying his eyes, "but it's too late now."

"What do you wish?" asked the spirit.

"There was a boy singing a Christmas carol at my door last night. I should have given him something. That's all."

The spirit smiled thoughtfully and waved its hand, saying as it did so, "Let us see another Christmas!"

Scrooge's former self grew larger at the words, and the room became a little darker and dirtier. The boy, a little older now, was not reading. He was walking up and down sadly. Scrooge looked at the spirit, and then looked towards the door. It opened, and a little girl, much younger than the boy, came running in, and putting her arms about his neck and

kissing him, she said, "Dear brother, I have come to take you home."

"Home, little Fan?" asked the boy.

"Yes!" said the girl happily. "Home for ever and ever. Father is so much kinder than he used to be. He sent me to bring you home. And you're never to come back here. We'll be together for Christmas and have the merriest time." She began to pull him towards the door.

As she did so, a hard, loud voice shouted, "Bring down Scrooge's box!" In the hall appeared the schoolmaster, a man of whom Scrooge lived in fear, but he said only, "You may go boy," and then walked away. Soon Scrooge and his young sister were in the coach.

"She was never very strong," the spirit said about the girl. "But she had a large heart!"

"Oh, yes," Scrooge said.

"She died when she was still a young woman," the spirit went on, "but she had children, I think."

"Only one child," Scrooge said.

"Your nephew!" said the spirit.

Scrooge did not like to be reminded of this. "Yes," was all he said.

### Review Questions

1. What kind of childhood did Scrooge have?
2. What happened to his sister?
3. Who was Scrooge's nephew?



## A Missed Opportunity

## Preview Questions

1. Where do you think the Spirit of Christmas Past will take Scrooge?
2. How do you think seeing his old friend will make Scrooge feel?
3. What do you think Scrooge and the girl will quarrel about?

Now the spirit took Scrooge into the town. It was Christmas time again, and the streets were full of people. The spirit stopped outside a warehouse. “Do you know where we are?”

“Yes, yes. This is where I had my first employment,” Scrooge said. They went inside. An old gentleman was sitting behind such a high desk that, if he had been two inches taller, he would have knocked his head against the ceiling. Scrooge cried in great amazement, “It’s old Fezziwig!” Old Fezziwig put down his pen and looked up at the clock which pointed to the hour of seven. He began to laugh and called, “Ebenezer! Dick!” Scrooge’s former self, now a young man, came in with Dick.

“It’s Dick Wilkin!” said Scrooge to the spirit. “We worked together and were very good friends.”

“No more work tonight. It’s Christmas Eve, Dick. Christmas, Ebenezer!” old Fezziwig said happily. “Let’s close up and have a party.”

The two young men closed up the warehouse.

Then a fiddler came in with his music book. Then in came Mrs. Fezziwig, the three Miss Fezziwigs, and the six

young men whose hearts they broke. In came all the young men and women employed in the business and all the servants from the house and everyone Mr. Fezziwig did business with.

Soon the dancing began, and then everyone stopped dancing to eat from the table on which there was every kind of food. Then there were more dances, and then there were games, and more dances, and more food. Everyone had the merriest time. When the clock struck eleven, this party came to an end. Mr. and Mrs. Fezziwig stood on either side of the door and, shaking hands with every person as he or she went out, wished him or her a merry Christmas.

When everybody had gone, the two boys went to their beds at the back of the warehouse. There, they talked about how generous Mr. Fezziwig was and what a good time everyone had. As Scrooge listened to them, he nodded his head in agreement. He remembered the party well and how much he and everyone had enjoyed it. “He did very little,” said the spirit, “to make these people so grateful.”

“It wasn’t little!” said Scrooge.

“He spent only a little money,” said the spirit.

“It isn’t that, Spirit. He had the power to make us happy or unhappy; to make our work light or hard. His power was in his words and the way he looked at us. The happiness he gave was as great as if it cost a fortune.” Now Scrooge was suddenly sad again.

“What is the matter?” asked the spirit.

“Nothing,” said Scrooge.

“Something, I think,” the spirit said.

“It’s just that I should like to be able to say a word or



two to my clerk, that's all," Scrooge said. Now Scrooge and the spirit stood side by side outside the warehouse.

"I have only a little time left," the spirit said. "We must be quick."

Immediately, Scrooge saw himself again. Now he was older but not old. He was a man at the best time of his life. He was not alone. By his side sat a beautiful young woman. She was crying.

"I know," she said, "that you do not love me."

"But I do," Scrooge replied.

"But you love gold more," the young woman said.

"There is nothing worse in this world than being poor,"

Scrooge told her.

"There is nothing wrong with wanting to be rich. We agreed to marry when we were both young and poor," the young woman said.

"My feelings for you have not changed."

"But you have changed. You are not as you were."

"I was just a boy. We change as we grow older and wiser."

"Your own feelings tell you that you were not what you were," she returned. "I am she who promised happiness when we both wanted the same things, but we are miserable now that we do not. I think you should marry someone else, a girl who will bring money to your marriage."

"Have I ever asked you to let me go? To marry someone else?" Scrooge demanded.

"In words? No. Never."

"How then?"

"By the way you have changed in yourself," she replied.





"I hope you will be happy in the kind of life you have chosen!" With these words she left him.

"Spirit!" said Scrooge, "Show me no more! Why are you torturing me?"

"I have one more time to show you," exclaimed the spirit.

"No more!" cried Scrooge. "No more. I don't wish to see it. Show me no more!" But the Spirit held his arms and made him look at what happened next. Immediately, they were in another place. It was not a large room, but it was comfortable. Near to the winter fire sat a beautiful young girl, so much like the last one that Scrooge believed it was the same, until he saw her, now a middle-aged woman, sitting opposite her daughter.

There was a lot of noise in this room because there seemed to be children everywhere. The mother and daughter laughed happily, enjoying the children's games. There was now a knocking on the door. It opened, and in came the father carrying boxes and boxes of Christmas presents for his family. The children ran towards him and climbed all over him as they looked for their presents.

The room was full of laughter and happiness. Scrooge looked on carefully as the father sat down with his wife and daughter and put his arms around them as he sat with them at his own fireside. When Scrooge thought that such a young woman would have called him father if he had married her mother, he was deeply sad.

"Belle," said the husband, turning to his wife with a smile, "I saw an old friend of yours this afternoon."

"Who was it?" asked Belle.

"Guess!" exclaimed her husband.

"How can I? I don't know?" she added in the same breath, laughing as he laughed. "Mr. Scrooge."

"Mr. Scrooge it was. I passed his office window, and as it was not shut up, and he had a candle inside, I could see him easily. His partner is very ill and near death, I hear. Scrooge sat there alone. Quite alone in the world, I do believe."

"Spirit!" said Scrooge in a broken voice, "remove me from this place."

"I told you these were the shadows of the things that have been," said the spirit. "Do not blame me for them."

"Take me away!" Scrooge exclaimed, "I cannot bear it! Stop torturing me." The spirit moved away until Scrooge was alone. He was back to his bed. Tired and saddened by what he had seen, he fell asleep.

### Review Questions

1. Where did Scrooge live when he worked for Mr. Fezziwig?
2. What kind of man was Mr. Fezziwig?
3. Why didn't Scrooge marry Belle?



## The Spirit of Christmas Present

## Preview Questions

1. What kind of spirit will visit Scrooge next?
2. Where will this spirit take Scrooge?
3. What will Scrooge want the spirit to explain?

Some time later, Scrooge woke up again. He felt cold. He knew that soon another spirit would visit him. He did not want to be taken by surprise. He wanted to be ready for his next visitor. He was surprised, however, because when the clock struck one, no spirit appeared. He got out of bed and went to the door and put his hand on the lock. The moment Scrooge's hand was on the lock, a strange voice called him by his name and told him to enter. He obeyed.

The room was his own. There was no doubt about that, but it looked different. The walls and ceiling were so covered with plants that the room looked like a garden. Hanging from the ceiling were holly and mistletoe. There was a huge fire burning, filling the room with warmth. Most surprising was all the food in the room. There were chickens and turkeys, fruits of many kinds, sausages, and puddings. Sitting on the couch, there was a different kind of spirit. This was a jolly giant who was holding up a torch so that Scrooge could see everything in the room.

"Come in!" exclaimed the spirit. "Come in and know me better, pal!" Scrooge entered slowly and stood before this spirit. "I am the Spirit of Christmas Present," said the





spirit. "Look upon me!" Scrooge did so. The spirit was wearing a simple green robe. Its feet were bare, and on its head, it wore only a branch of holly from which icicles hung. It had dark, brown curls and a happy face with bright eyes. Its voice was cheerful and friendly. "You have never seen anyone like me before!" exclaimed the spirit.

"Never," Scrooge replied.

"Have you never met any members of my family? Any of my brothers?" asked the spirit.

"I am afraid I have not," Scrooge said. "Have you many brothers, spirit?"

"More than eighteen hundred," said the spirit.

"A big family to feed and look after!" said Scrooge. The Spirit of Christmas Present stood up.

"Spirit," said Scrooge politely, "take me wherever you want me to go. Last night, I learned a lesson which I still remember. Tonight, if you have anything to teach me, let me learn it."

"Touch my robe!" Scrooge did as he was told, and held it tightly. The room suddenly disappeared, and Scrooge and the spirit were in a street which was covered with snow. The town was dirty, though, because of the thick, black smoke coming from the thousands of chimneys. In every house, a coal fire was burning to keep out the cold. There was nothing cheerful about the town itself, but the people seemed to be very cheerful as they hurried to and fro. The shops were all open and busy as people bought everything they needed for Christmas: every kind of food and drink, and presents of all kinds.

Soon, the church bells began to ring, and men, women,

and children hurried so as not to be late for the Christmas services. The shops all now closed as the shopkeepers and their assistants also wanted to go to church. Although everyone was in a hurry, no one was angry. There were no quarrels or hard words.

"Tell me, Spirit," Scrooge said, "why are you so unkind to people?"

"I? Unkind?" The spirit replied. "I don't understand you."

"You try to make people close all the shops on the seventh day of every week," Scrooge said. "This is the only day of the week when many people have time to go to the shops and buy food."

"I try to close the shops?!" exclaimed the spirit.

"Forgive me if I am wrong, but don't many people who believe in God say that He made the world in six days, and on the seventh day, he rested, and so must everyone on earth?"

"There are some upon this earth," replied the spirit, "who say they know and understand what God and the spirits want. For one reason or another, often not for good reasons, they say that some things must be done or not done because that's what God wants. They have little knowledge or understanding. Remember that. Blame them for what they do, not God or his family of spirits."

Scrooge promised that he would.

### Review Questions

1. To what part of the town did the spirit take Scrooge?
2. What was happening in this part of the town?
3. Why did Scrooge think that the spirits were unkind?



## The Cratchits

## Preview Questions

1. Do you like to spend special days with your family?
2. Why do you think Tiny Tim has this name?
3. What would you say about Scrooge?

Scrooge and the Spirit of Christmas Present went on, **S**invisible, as they had been before, into the suburbs of the town where Bob Cratchit, Scrooge's clerk, lived with his family in a small house. In the house, at this moment, were Bob's wife, his daughter, Belinda, his son, Peter, and a young boy and girl. Bob and his son, Tiny Tim, had not yet arrived home.

"What has happened to your father," said Mrs. Cratchit, "and your brother, Tiny Tim? And your sister, Martha? They weren't as late as this last Christmas Day."

"Here's Martha, mother!" said a girl who now appeared at the door.

"Why, bless your heart, my dear, how late you are!" said Mrs. Cratchit, kissing her.

"We had a lot of work to finish up last night," replied the girl, "and clear away this morning, mother!"

"Never mind, so long as you are here," said Mrs. Cratchit. "Now sit down before the fire, my dear, and get warm."

"No, Martha, don't sit down yet. Father's coming," cried the two young Cratchits. "Hide, Martha, hide!" So Martha hid herself, and in came Bob, their father, carrying





Tiny Tim upon his shoulder, for the boy could not walk without help, and he had to have his legs in an iron frame.

"Where's our Martha?" cried Bob Cratchit, looking around.

"Not coming," said Mrs. Cratchit.

"Not coming!" exclaimed Bob. "Not coming home to be with us on Christmas Day!" Martha didn't like to see him disappointed, even as a joke, so she came out of her hiding place and ran into her father's arms.

The other children now took Tiny Tim out to where the Christmas pudding was cooking.

"How did little Tim behave?" asked Mrs. Cratchit.

"Good as always," said Bob. "He gets thoughtful, though, sitting by himself so much. He thinks the strangest things you ever heard. But I think he is getting stronger as he grows older."

Tiny Tim now came back into the room, helped by his brother and sister. His stick made a noise on the floor, and everyone knew that he was coming. Bob Cratchit now went with Peter and the youngest children to fetch the goose to eat for their Christmas dinner. The family enjoyed the wonderful meal that Mrs. Cratchit had made. They ended it with a great Christmas pudding.

When everyone had finished eating, and all the dishes had been cleared away, Bob poured a hot fruit drink into everyone's mugs. He held up his own and said, "A merry Christmas to us all, my dears. God bless us!"

Everyone in the family repeated this and, "God bless us, everyone!" said Tiny Tim, the last of all. He sat very close to his father's side upon his little chair. Bob held his son's

little hand in his. He loved the child and wished to keep him by his side. It was as if he was afraid the boy might be taken from him.

"Spirit," said Scrooge, with an interest he had never felt before, "tell me if Tiny Tim will live."

"I see an empty seat," replied the spirit, "in the chimney corner and a stick without an owner. Unless these shadows are changed by the future, the child will die."

"No, no," said Scrooge. "Oh, no, kind Spirit! Say he will not die. He must not die," Scrooge said.

"What right have you to decide if he will die or not?" demanded the spirit. "And why should you live and he and millions of others die? Why do you think you are worth more than other lives?" The spirit spoke angrily to Scrooge who looked at the ground, feeling ashamed. Then he heard his name spoken.

"To Mr. Scrooge!" said Bob. "A merry Christmas to Mr. Scrooge who gave us our wonderful meal."

"Nonsense," cried Mrs. Cratchit, reddening. "I wish I had him here. I'd tell him what I think of him. He has given us nothing; you have worked all the hours of the day to earn the poor wage he pays you."

"My dear," said Bob, "think of the children! They must not hear you say angry words on Christmas Day."

"It could only be on Christmas Day, I am sure," said Mrs. Cratchit, "on which one drinks to the health of such a mean, hard-hearted, unfeeling man as Mr. Scrooge. You know he is all those things, Robert! And nobody knows it better than you do."

"My dear," was Bob's quiet answer, "please do not have



such thoughts on Christmas Day.”

“Oh, very well. I’ll drink to his health to please you and because it is Christmas Day.” She lifted her mug. “Long life to Mr. Scrooge. A merry Christmas and a happy new year! Though I am sure he won’t be very merry or very happy.”

Thinking about Scrooge made all the Cratchits feel unhappy. Even Tiny Tim stopped smiling. They all knew what a mean, unkind man he was.

The memory of the old man did not last long, and soon, they were all happy and cheerful again. Bob Cratchit told them that he thought he could get work for Peter which would bring in a little money each week. Martha, who worked in a shop that sold hats, then told them what kind of work she had to do, how many hours she worked every day, and how she meant to stay in bed tomorrow morning for a good long rest.

During all this talk, the hot nuts and the fruit drink went around and around, and they heard a song about a lost child travelling in the snow, from Tiny Tim, who had a pretty little voice and sang it very well indeed. They were not a handsome family; they were not well dressed, their shoes let in the rain, and their clothes were old. But, they were happy, grateful, and pleased with one another. Scrooge watched them, especially Tiny Tim, until it was time for him to leave.

### Review Questions

1. Where did Bob Cratchit go?
2. What did Tiny Tim do?
3. What kind of family were the Cratchits?

## CHAPTER 8

### Scrooge’s Nephew

#### Preview Questions

1. Where will the Spirit of Christmas Present take Scrooge next?
2. What do you think Scrooge’s nephew will say about him?
3. Why do you think Scrooge will want to stay at his nephew’s house?

It was getting dark by then and snowing heavily as Scrooge and the spirit went along the streets. As they were walking, people could be seen in the street houses they passed. They were busy enjoying their Christmas meals with their family. Most of them seemed to be very happy. Children from the houses were running out into the snow to meet their married sisters, brothers, cousins, uncles, aunts, to be the first to greet them. Then, without a word of warning from the spirit, Scrooge stood with him on a cold, wet, and lonely place.

“What place is this?” asked Scrooge.

“A place where miners who work underground live,” replied the spirit.

“But they know me. Look!”

A light shone from the window of a hut, and they hurried towards it. Passing through the wall of the hut, they found a cheerful family sitting round a bright fire. There were an old, old man and woman with their children and their children’s children, all wearing bright holiday clothes. The old man was singing them a Christmas song. It was a very old song from when he was a boy, and from time to time,



they all joined in the song.

The spirit did not stay here, though, but asked Scrooge to hold his robe, and soon they reached the sea. To Scrooge's horror, looking back, he saw the last of the land a long way behind them. They came to a rock on which there was a lighthouse. Wind, rain, and the sea beat against the building from which a light shone to tell ships that they were near rocks. Even here, the two men who looked after the light had made a fire, and joining their hands over the table at which they sat, they wished each other a merry Christmas.

Again, the spirit hurried on, above the rough, black sea - on and on - until, being far away from any land, they came to a ship. They stood beside the man at the wheel, the lookout at the front of the ship, and the officers who were on duty. Every man among them sang a Christmas tune, or had a Christmas thought, or spoke about a Christmas Day in the past. And every man on the ship had a kind word for each other on this Christmas Day. Then the spirit took Scrooge away from the ship, and to his surprise, Scrooge heard someone laughing. It was his nephew.

"Ha, ha!" laughed Scrooge's nephew. "Ha, ha, ha!" When Scrooge's nephew laughed, Scrooge's niece, by marriage, laughed as much as he did. And all their friends laughed with them.

"Ha, ha! Ha, ha, ha, ha!"

"He said that Christmas was a humbug!" cried Scrooge's nephew. "He believed it, too!"

"He's a sad, foolish man, Fred!" said Scrooge's pretty niece.

"He's a strange old fellow," said Scrooge's nephew, "that's

the truth, and not as pleasant as he should be. However, he makes himself unhappy, so that's his punishment. I have nothing to say against him."

"I'm sure he is very rich, Fred," hinted Scrooge's niece.

"At least you always tell me so."

"What of that, my dear!" said Scrooge's nephew. "His money is of no use to him. He doesn't do any good with it. He doesn't make himself comfortable with it. He hasn't the pleasure of thinking - ha, ha, ha! - that he is ever going to do anything for us with it."

"I have no patience with him," observed Scrooge's niece. Scrooge's niece's sisters and all the other ladies agreed with her.

"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 bad temper? He does. If he doesn't like us, and he won't come and eat with us, he loses a dinner. We don't lose anything."

"I think he loses a very good dinner," said Scrooge's niece. Everybody else said the same, and they knew what they were talking about because they had just had dinner.

"I will give him the same chance every year to dine with us on Christmas Day, whether he likes it or not, for I pity him," Scrooge's nephew said. "He may say that Christmas is humbug till he dies, but he can't help thinking better of it if I call on him year after year and say, 'Uncle Scrooge, how are you?' If it only makes him give his poor clerk fifty pounds, that's something, and I'm sure I made him think yesterday."

The others laughed at the idea of Scrooge's nephew



making his uncle think about his unhappy life. After tea, they had some music. Then they played a guessing game. Scrooge could not stop himself from making guesses, too. The spirit was greatly pleased by this, but when Scrooge asked if he could stay until the party was over, the spirit said that could not be done.

"But they are starting a new game," said Scrooge. "Let me stay for just half an hour more, Spirit. Just half an hour." It was a game called "Yes and No," where Scrooge's nephew had to think of something, and the rest must find out what it was by asking questions with only yes or no answers. The questions he was asked discovered that he was thinking of an animal, an angry animal, an unhappy animal, an animal that talked sometimes, and lived in London, and walked about the streets, and didn't live in a zoo, and was never killed in a market, and was not a horse, or a cow, or a tiger, or a dog, or a pig, or a cat, or a bear. At every question that was put to him, this nephew laughed.

At last the niece's sister called out, "I know what it is, Fred! I know what it is!"

"What is it?" cried Fred.

"It's your uncle Scro-o-o-o-ge!"

"A merry Christmas and a happy New Year to the old man, wherever he is!" said Scrooge's nephew.

Watching the fun and games at his nephew's house had begun to make Scrooge feel happier than he had felt for many years. He asked the spirit to let him stay, but the spirit made him continue on his travels. They visited many homes and saw people happy at this Christmas time. The spirit stood beside beds where people, though ill, were

cheerful. They visited foreign lands, and they saw the poorest of men. Wherever they went, the Spirit of Christmas Present left a blessing, and the people were happier because of it. It was a long night, and Scrooge thought perhaps it was more than one night because they saw so much. It was also strange to Scrooge that, although he stayed the same, the spirit grew older. Scrooge spoke of this to the spirit as they were leaving a children's party, and he saw that the spirit's hair had turned gray.

"Are spirits' lives so short?" asked Scrooge.

"My life upon this earth is very short," replied the spirit. "Tonight is the Twelfth Night after Christmas Day. My life on this earth ends tonight."

"Tonight!" cried Scrooge.

"Yes, tonight at midnight. Listen carefully, Scrooge. Can you hear it? Can you hear the church bells? The sound of those bells means that the time for me to leave will soon be here."

"Forgive me for asking this question," said Scrooge, looking at the spirit's robe, "but I can see under your robe. Is it a foot or a claw?"

"Look closely," the spirit said, and brought out from under his robe two children. They were so thin and ill, and dirty and afraid, that they could only try to hide. One was a boy, and one was a girl. Scrooge moved back. He did not know what to say.

Then he asked, "Spirit! Are these your children?"

"They are Man's," said the spirit, looking down upon them. "The boy is Ignorance. The girl is Want."

"Have they nowhere to stay?" cried Scrooge.



“Are there no prisons?” said the spirit, turning on him for the last time with his own words.

The bell struck twelve. Scrooge looked about him for the spirit, but it had gone. As the sound of the bell died away, another spirit appeared and came towards Scrooge.

### Review Questions

1. What did the Spirit of Christmas Present want Scrooge to see?
2. Why did the Spirit of Christmas Present have to hurry?
3. What did Scrooge want to do that the spirit would not let him do?

## CHAPTER 9

### The Spirit of Christmas Future

#### Preview Questions

1. What kind of Spirit do you think the third spirit will be?
2. Where do you think this Spirit will take Scrooge?
3. What do you think Scrooge will be afraid of?

When it came near him, Scrooge bent down upon his knee. The spirit was covered in a black robe that hid every part of him except for one hand. Scrooge felt afraid.

“Are you the spirit of Christmas Future?” asked Scrooge. The Spirit did not answer, but pointed onwards with its hand. “Are you going to show me things that have not happened, but will happen in the time before us?” Scrooge asked. “Spirit of the Future!” he exclaimed, “I am more afraid of you than of any spirit I have already seen. As I know your **purpose** is to do me good, and as I hope to live to be another man from what I was, I will go wherever you lead me. But, please speak to me.”

The spirit still said nothing. The hand was pointed straight before them. “Lead on!” said Scrooge. “Lead on! The night is nearly over, and I need to see everything before the morning.”

The spirit first moved away from Scrooge, then moved towards him. The shadow of the spirit covered Scrooge and seemed to hold and carry him along. Soon, they were in the centre of the city. Merchants were running up and down



the streets and making sounds with the coins in their pockets. The spirit stopped beside one small group of business men. Scrooge moved towards them to listen to their talk.

"No," said a great fat man, "I don't know much about it. I only know he's dead."

"When did he die?" inquired another.

"Last night, I believe."

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

"What has he done with his money?" asked a red-faced man.

"I haven't heard," said the first man.

"Left it to his business, perhaps. He hasn't left it to me. That's all I know." Everyone laughed at this.

"It'll be a very cheap funeral," said the same speaker. "I don't know of anybody who'll go to it. Shall we go?"

"I'll go if there is a free lunch," said one of the men.

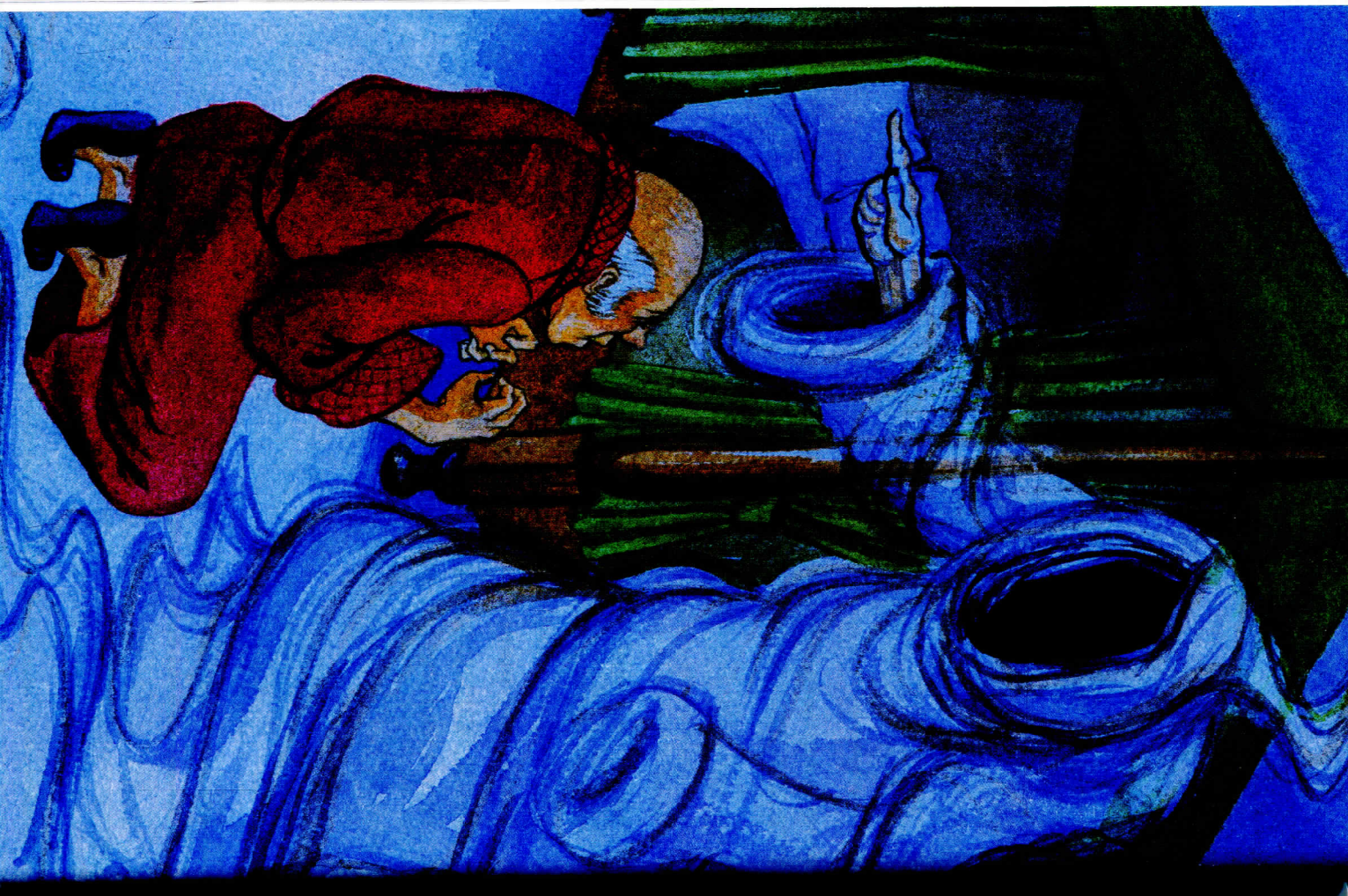
Again everyone laughed. Then another man said, "Perhaps I should go. I was his best friend."

"His friend!" the others exclaimed.

"Yes," the man said with a laugh. "I used to say 'good morning' to him when I passed him in the street."

Scrooge knew the men and looked towards the spirit for an explanation but the spirit just moved on.

Scrooge was at first surprised that the spirit thought these **conversations** were important. He did not think they had anything to do with the death of Jacob, his old partner, for that was the past, and this spirit's place was the future. But he decided to try to remember every word he heard. He thought it possible he might learn something from them.





Scrooge looked around, expecting to see himself as he had been in the past, but there was no one. The spirit continued to hold out his hand, showing Scrooge that he should follow him.

### Review Questions

1. In what way was the Spirit of Christmas Future different from the other spirits?
2. Why didn't the Spirit explain the men's conversation to Scrooge?
3. What did Scrooge learn from the conversations he heard?

## CHAPTER

10

### No One Mourns

#### Preview Questions

1. Why do you think the women take the clothing to the old man?
2. Where do you think the women took the clothing from?
3. What do you think the women will say about the dead man?

They left the busy streets and went to a part of the town Scrooge never visited. It was a terrible place. The streets were dirty, and the smell was very bad. The houses and shops were of the poorest kind. The people were all thin, dirty, and they looked very ill. Everything was ugly.

They came to where an old man sat. He was selling dirty pieces of cloth, smelly old bones, and all kinds of old and useless things. As they watched, two old women and an old man, equally dirty, smelly, and ugly came into the shop. They carried large bags.

"Come and sit by the fire," the shopkeeper said. "Tell me what you have to sell me."

"Nothing a dead man will miss," the first woman said with a nasty laugh.

"If he wanted to keep them after he was dead, why wasn't he a good man when he was alive? If he had been, he would have had someone to look after him. He would not have died alone."

"That's very true," said the second woman, putting a few clothes on the floor. "He got the death he deserved."



She pointed at the clothes. "What will you give me for those, Joe?" she asked the shopkeeper, adding, "I did no wrong taking them from the dead man's house."

The shopkeeper looked at everything the woman wanted to sell him and put a price on it. Then he added everything up. The final amount was very small.

"That's not much," the woman said.

"Take it or leave it," the shopkeeper said. "I won't pay a penny more."

The second woman now emptied the contents of her bag onto the floor. There were cups and plates, a few shoes, a sheet, and a towel. There were also some curtains.

"Those are bed curtains," Joe said. "Did you take them down before the old man died?"

"He was too ill to know," the second woman said. "I knew he would soon die. There was no point in waiting. I took these, too," and with these words she emptied blankets out of the sack.

"Were those his blankets?" Joe asked. "Did you take them from him while he was still alive?"

"If I had left them until he died, he would have been buried in them. Isn't that so?"

She turned to the man who had come in with her. He was the **undertaker**.

"That's true," he said.

"That would have been a waste of blankets," the woman said.

Joe said, "I hope he didn't die of cold because you took his blankets off him."

"He didn't care about me, or anybody," the woman

said. "Why should I have cared about him? Come now, Joe, tell me what you'll pay."

Joe added up what he was willing to pay for them in the same way.

"Don't ask for more," he said. "I always give too much to you ladies. It's a weakness of mine, and that's the way I hurt my business."

Scrooge listened to this conversation in horror.

"Ha, ha!" laughed the same woman when old Joe began counting out the money. "This is the end of him, you know. He frightened everyone away from him when he was alive to profit us when he was dead! Ha, ha, ha!"

"Spirit!" said Scrooge, shaking from head to foot. "I see, I see. The story of this unhappy man might be me."

### Review Questions

1. Where did the curtains come from?
2. Where did the blankets come from?
3. Who did Scrooge think the dead man probably was?



## A Sad Future

## Preview Questions

1. Why do you think Scrooge wants to look at the dead man's head?
2. Why do you think the spirit won't let him see who the dead man is?
3. What two things do you think will make Scrooge change his ways?

Suddenly, Scrooge was not in the shop, but in a dark room. In the room, there was the body of a man on a bed. Scrooge looked at the spirit. Its hand was pointed to the head of the body on the bed. The head was covered. Scrooge wanted to find out whose body it was, but he could not move his hand. Scrooge understood that the man had died because no one had loved him. He had been unloved because there was nothing to love about him. He had been mean and unkind, cold and hard-hearted to everyone. And now in death, no one cared.

"Spirit!" he said, "This is a fearful place. When we leave it, I will not forget its lesson, believe me. Let us go!" Still the spirit pointed to the head. "I understand you," Scrooge returned, "and I would look at it if I could but I cannot. If there is any person in the town who feels sad because of this man's death," he added, "show that person to me, Spirit, I beg you!"

The spirit opened its dark robe before him, and for a moment, a room could be seen where a mother and her children were. She was expecting someone, for she walked up and down the room, listening to every sound. She looked

out of the window and then at the clock. She tried, but she could not *sew* with success. She could hardly bear the voices of the children at play.

At last, the long-expected knock was heard. She hurried to the door and met her husband. He was a man whose face looked sad and old, though he was young.

"Is the news good?" she asked, "or is it bad? Do we have anything left?"

"No. But there is hope yet, Caroline."

"You think he might change his mind?" she asked.

"No. It is too late for that," said her husband. "He is dead."

"Thank God!" she said, but was immediately sorry for having such a thought.

"As you know," her husband said, "when I tried to see him last week and ask for more time to pay him what I owe, he would not see me. I now know why - he was so ill that he was dying."

"To whom will we owe the money now?"

"I don't know, but by the time that is decided, we will be ready with the money; and even if we are not, I cannot believe anyone will be as cruel and hard-hearted as he. We may sleep tonight with light hearts, Caroline!"

"Let me see someone who is sad because of the man's death," said Scrooge. "Or I will remember only that room we have just left."

The spirit took him to Bob Cratchit's house. The mother and the children were sitting around the fire. There was no noise. The young Cratchits sat without moving in one corner, looking up at Peter who had a book before him. The mother



and her daughters were quietly sewing.

"Your father should be here soon," the mother said.

"He's already late," Peter answered, shutting his book, "but I think he walks a little slower than he used to, mother."

"I have known him to walk with Tiny Tim upon his shoulder very fast indeed," the mother said.

"So have I," cried Peter. "Often."

"But he was very light to carry," she said. "His father loved him so much that it was no trouble to carry him."

There was a sound at the door. "And there is your father at the door!" she said, and hurried out to meet him. His meal was ready for him, and they all tried to carry it to him. Then the two young Cratchits sat on his knees and said, "Try not to be so sad, father."

Bob now told them of the extraordinary kindness of Mr. Scrooge's nephew. "I had met him only once, but when we met in the street today, he had asked what had happened to make me look so sad. When I told him, he said, 'I am so sorry to hear that, Mr. Cratchit.' Then he gave me his address and said, 'If there is anything I can do to be of help in any way come and ask me.' It really seemed as if he had known our Tiny Tim."

"I'm sure he's a good man!" said Mrs. Cratchit.

"I think he will help Peter to get better work," Bob said. "He knows that would help us all." Then he added, "Whatever happens, none of us will forget poor Tiny Tim."

"Never, father!" they all cried.

Mrs. Cratchit kissed him, his daughters kissed him, the two young Cratchits kissed him, and Peter shook hands with him.





## A Second Chance

“Spirit” said Scrooge, “I think you will soon leave me. Before you go, tell me who that dead man was that I saw.” The Spirit of Christmas Future did not answer. Instead, he moved on, and Scrooge followed him. Soon, they came to a graveyard. The spirit stood among the graves and pointed at one. “Before I look at that grave stone to which you point,” said Scrooge, “answer me one question. Have you shown me what will be, or what may be, only?”

Still the spirit did not speak. Scrooge moved slowly towards the grave, a grave that was **overgrown** with weeds. He moved his finger over the stone and read his own name, EBENEZER SCROOGE.

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

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

“No, Spirit! Oh, no, no! Spirit!” he cried. “Hear me! I am not the man I was. I will not be the man I must have been.

“Good Spirit,” Scrooge continued, “tell me that if I change my ways, then my future will be different. I will keep Christmas in my heart and try to keep it all year. I will live in the past, the present, and the future. Oh, tell me that I may clean away the writing on this stone!” As he spoke, the spirit changed its shape and soon had become one of the posts of his bed.

## Review Questions

1. Why was the man hopeful now that Scrooge was dead?
2. What happened to Tiny Tim?
3. How did Scrooge’s nephew behave towards the Cratchits?

## Preview Questions

1. Why do you think Scrooge will feel merry?
2. How do you think Scrooge will prevent the future, as he has seen it, from happening?
3. In what way will Scrooge change the most?

**Y**es, the **bedpost** was his. The bed was his, the room was his. Best and happiest of all, the time before him was his to make changes in!

“I don’t know what to do!” cried Scrooge, laughing and crying at the same time. “I feel as merry as a school boy. A merry Christmas to everybody! A happy New Year to the entire world.”

“There’s the saucepan that the soup was in!” cried Scrooge, going around the room. “There’s the door, through which the ghost of Jacob Marley came in. There’s the corner where the Spirit of Christmas Present sat! It’s all right; it’s all true, it all happened.” Then he said, “I don’t know what day of the month it is!” said Scrooge. “I don’t know how long I’ve been among the spirits. I don’t know anything. I’m quite a baby. Never mind. I don’t care. I’d rather be a baby.”

Suddenly, the church bells began to ring in the distance. Scrooge quickly ran over to the window and looked out. There was no heavy fog. It was a cold day, but it was a fine day.

“What’s today?” cried Scrooge, calling down to a boy in the street.



"Today?" replied the boy. "It's CHRISTMAS DAY!"

"It's Christmas Day!" said Scrooge 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. Of course, they can." He called again to the boy. "Do you know the shop that sells turkeys?" he asked him.

"Of course, I do," replied the boy.

"Do you know whether they've sold that really big turkey that was hanging up there?"

"The one as big as me?" replied the boy.

"What a clever boy you are," said Scrooge. "It's a pleasure talking to you. Yes, that's the one."

"It's hanging there now," replied the boy.

"Is it?" asked Scrooge. "Good. Tell the shopkeeper to bring it here so that I may buy it, and tell him where to take it. Come back with him in less than five minutes, and I'll give you a silver coin!" The boy ran off as fast as he could.

"I'll send the turkey to Bob Cratchit's!" Scrooge thought.

"But he won't know who's sent it. What a joke." He went to the door to wait for the man to bring the turkey. When he saw how big it was, he said to the man, "That's too big to carry all the way to where Bob Cratchit lives. You must take a cab. I'll pay for it and be happy to."

As soon as the man had left and he had given the boy a silver coin, Scrooge went back to his bedroom and put on his best clothes. Then he set out for a walk. He looked so happy and such a good man that everyone he passed said, "Good morning, Sir! A merry Christmas to you!" And Scrooge said often afterwards, that of all the beautiful sounds he had ever heard, those were the most beautiful to his ears.





He had not gone far, when coming on towards him he saw one of the men who had come to his office the day before and asked for money for the poor. "My dear sir," said Scrooge, taking the old gentleman by both his hands. "How do you do? I hope you succeeded yesterday. It was very kind of you. A merry Christmas to you, sir!"

"Mr. Scrooge?"

"Yes," said Scrooge. "That is my name. I am sorry about the way I spoke to you. Come and see me at my office tomorrow, and I will give you some money." Scrooge whispered a huge sum of money into the old gentleman's ear.

"My dear, Mr. Scrooge, are you serious?" cried the old gentleman, as if his breath were taken away. "Such generosity."

"Don't say anything, please," said Scrooge. "Come and see me."

Scrooge went to church and then walked about the streets, watched the people hurrying here and there, patted children on the head, questioned beggars, and looked down into the kitchens of houses and up to the windows and found that everything could give him pleasure. He had never dreamed that any walk - that anything - could give him so much happiness. In the afternoon, Scrooge walked towards his nephew's house. A servant girl answered the door.

"Is your master at home, my dear? asked Scrooge the servant girl.

"Yes, sir."

"Where is he, my dear?" said Scrooge.

"He's in the dining room, sir. Come this way, please."

When Scrooge entered the dining room, he said, "May I have dinner with you?"

His nephew and niece were very pleased to have him to dinner. With friends and other relatives, they had a happy dinner party.

The next morning, Scrooge was at the office early. He hoped to catch Bob Cratchit arriving late. And he did. The clock struck nine. No Bob. A quarter past. No Bob. He was eighteen minutes and a half late. Scrooge sat with his door wide open so that he would see him arrive. "Hello!" shouted Scrooge, trying to make his voice sound as angry as it usually was. "What do you mean by coming here at this time of day?"

"I am very sorry, sir," said Bob. "I woke up late."

"Come over here."

"It's only once a year, sir," said Bob. "I won't be late again."

"I will not allow you to be late again," said Scrooge, "Therefore, I will raise your salary!"

Bob did not know what to say or do. "Yes, Bob," Scrooge said. "I will raise your salary and try to help your family, and we will talk about your problems this afternoon. Now, make up the fires so that we can both be warm."

Scrooge kept his word. He did it all and more. And, to Tiny Tim, who did not die, he became a second father. He became as good a friend, as good an employer, and as good a man as this city, or any other city, knew. Some people laughed to see the change in him, but he let them laugh and did not pay attention to them, for he was wise enough to know that nothing ever happened on this earth at which



some people did not laugh. His own heart laughed, and that was quite enough for him. Ever afterwards, and it was always said of him, he knew how to keep Christmas better than any man alive. May that be truly said of all of us!

### Review Questions

1. What were the sounds that Scrooge thought were the most beautiful he had ever heard?
2. Why did Scrooge hope to catch Bob Cratchit arriving late for work?
3. In what way did Scrooge help Tiny Tim?