Baker Street Readers

Great reads for all ages

'Bah, humbug! Fools wishing me a Merry Christmas should be forced to sit on cushions stuffed with holly leaves or boiled with their own Christmas puddings.'

Miserable old miser Ebenezer Scrooge hates Christmas. Can somebody so selfish, so harsh and so horribly lonely ever change his ways?

In one terrifying night, poor Scrooge is haunted by four ghosts. Why do they show him visions of his past?

Why do they show him other people enjoying Christmas? Why do they show him the deaths of a young boy and of a miserable old miser?

Weep and laugh as you read this much-loved Christmas story. Will Scrooge always think that Christmas is 'Humbug', or will he learn to shout 'Merry Christmas, one and all'?

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A CHRISTMAS CAROL

CHARLES DICKENS

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Retold by Gill Tavner
Illustrated by Karen Donnelly

TEACHER'S EDITION ONLY

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THE CHARACTERS



Scrooge

A mean, miserable, lonely old miser. Can he learn the truth about Christmas and about himself before it is too late?



Bob Cratchit

Scrooge's poor office clerk and a loving father. Can he earn enough money to save his son's life?



Tiny Tim

Bob's gentle, frail son.
Will he live or will he die?



Jacob Marley's ghost

Scrooge's dead business partner.
Will his terrible warning come too late?



Ghost of Christmas Past

Why does this ghost make Scrooge weep with both joy and sorrow?



Ghost of Christmas Present

A cheerful spirit. Will Scrooge heed his warnings?



Ghost of Christmas Yet to Come

A frightening, silent ghost.
Can Scrooge change the dreadful future this spirit shows him?

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A CHRISTMAS CAROL

'Bah, humbug,' complained Scrooge. 'Fools wishing me a Merry Christmas should be forced to sit on cushions stuffed with holly leaves or boiled with their own Christmas puddings. Go away and take your "Merry Christmas" with you.'

'But Uncle, I'm wishing you a merry Christmas in spite of yourself. Remember,' shouted Scrooge's beaming, rosy-cheeked nephew, turning back as he left the office, 'you are welcome to join us for Christmas dinner.' As the nephew left, his warmth went with him. Now the office was cold. Cold is cheap, and Scrooge liked it that way.

In the dim light of his inadequate fire, Scrooge muttered 'Humbug' again, and went back to counting his money.

At another desk in the same room, Scrooge's office clerk, Bob Cratchit,

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sat scribbling furiously. He had wished Scrooge's nephew a Merry Christmas, and felt afraid of Scrooge's reaction.

'And you, Bob Cratchit, what right has someone as poor as you to be merry?'

'I'm sorry, Mr Scrooge.'

'I suppose you would like to stay at home tomorrow to spend Christmas with your children?'

'I would dearly love it, sir.'

'Why should I pay you for a day at home? Christmas is just an excuse for picking my pocket. I shall expect you in early the next day to make up for it.'

'Yes, certainly, Mr Scrooge.'

Poor Bob pulled his scarf more tightly around his neck and blew on his hands in a vain attempt to warm them. He returned to his work. The one coal that Scrooge allowed on the fire was dying, and with it the slight warmth that it brought.

But for Scrooge's clinking money and Bob's scratching pen the room was silent.

Clang! The bell above the door clanged its cheerless clang, announcing the arrival of another unwelcome visitor.

'Merry Christmas, sir,' said a portly smiling gentleman.

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revolution. This made it very difficult to find work. People like Bob Cratchit were therefore paid very low wages – barely enough to live on.

Many in London were living in great poverty. Whilst the wealthy made more and more money, the poor died of disease and starvation. Many people who were reasonably well off, like Scrooge, felt that poverty was a sign of weakness or laziness. The Poor Laws of 1834 stated that people could only receive assistance from the state if they lived and worked in workhouses. Debtors were put in prison. Remember Scrooge's comment to the man collecting for charity?

Charles Dickens experienced poverty at first hand – his father was imprisoned for debt and the young Charles made to work in a warehouse. These experiences affected him deeply.

Unlike Scrooge, some Victorians were concerned by this poverty and devoted themselves to helping others. Dr Barnardo set up his first school in 1870, twenty-seven years after the first publication of *A Christmas Carol*.

Ghost stories became very popular in

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Victorian times. New capabilities of the human mind were being explored and discovered. Many of these advances must have amazed people. They probably felt that if there was a lot about the natural world that was beyond their knowledge or understanding, the same could be true of the supernatural world.

Charles Dickens played a central role in exploring the idea of the supernatural in Victorian literature. Whilst it greatly interested him, he urged critical investigation rather than unthinking belief.

Finding out more

We recommend the following books and websites to gain a greater understanding of Charles Dickens' and Scrooge's London:

Books

- Terry Deary, *Loathsome London* (Horrible Histories), Scholastic, 2005.
- Terry Deary, *Vile Victorians* (Horrible Histories), Scholastic, 1994.

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