

TOP READERS

CHARLES DICKENS

A Christmas Carol

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level
2


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publications

Contents

Chapter 1.....	4
Chapter 2.....	7
Chapter 3.....	10
Chapter 4.....	13
Chapter 5.....	16
Chapter 6.....	19
Chapter 7.....	21
Chapter 8.....	24
Chapter 9.....	27
Chapter 10.....	30

Activity Section..... 35

Chapter 1.....	36
Chapter 2.....	38
Chapter 3.....	40
Chapter 4.....	42
Chapter 5.....	44
Chapter 6.....	46
Chapter 7.....	48
Chapter 8.....	50
Chapter 9.....	52
Chapter 10.....	54

CHAPTER 1

MARLEY WAS AS DEAD AS A DOORNAIL. THE OLD BUSINESS partner of Ebenezer Scrooge... was dead. However, his name was still on the office door – Scrooge didn't want to waste his money, so he left the name on the door.

Scrooge liked money, and did not like anything else. He had no friends, and never talked to anyone in the street. His heart was as hard as rock. He worked in an old and dark building, and inside, his office was cold and damp.

Bob Cratchit, the clerk, was sitting at his desk. The room was very cold, but Bob did not dare to ask for more coal, because he knew that Scrooge would not like that. So he worked hard and put on his long white scarf and tried to stay as warm as he could.

Suddenly the door opened and a young man came in. His face was red from the cold. It was Scrooge's nephew, Fred, and he wanted to invite his uncle to Christmas dinner.

'Uncle, merry Christmas!' he said.

'Bah, Humbug!' said Scrooge. He always said that when he thought that something was nonsense.

'Will you join us for dinner this year?' asked Fred.

'No. Christmas is useless, a waste of time and money,' answered Scrooge.

'I don't think so, not at all!' said his nephew. 'At Christmas we eat and drink together, share gifts and company, and sit around the fire with friends and family. Many things in our life are useful, not only money.'

Scrooge could not think of anything to say, so he repeated, 'Bah! Humbug!'

'Don't be angry, Uncle. Come to dinner tomorrow,' said Fred again.

'Good afternoon,' said Scrooge, but he really meant: 'Go away.'

'A Merry Christmas to you, Uncle,' said Fred, and he opened the door.

'Good afternoon! Goodbye!' said Scrooge, without looking up



from his desk.

At that moment, two men entered the office.

‘Is this Mr Scrooge or Mr Marley?’ asked one of them.

‘Marley has been dead for seven years,’ said Scrooge. ‘He died seven years ago on a night like this.’

‘Well, Mr Scrooge,’ continued the man, ‘Christmas is a time of giving, and there are many poor people with no food and no house. So, we ask for money for the poor, to help them. How much would you like to give?’

‘Nothing!’ said Scrooge. ‘I would like you to leave. I don’t have fun at Christmas, so why would I help others to have a good time?’

‘But how will the poor manage?’ asked the other man.

‘They can go to live in a prison, or work in a factory. And if some of them die, there will be less poor people. It isn’t my business anyway,’ said Scrooge. ‘I don’t care. Good afternoon, gentlemen!’

The two men understood that they wouldn’t take anything from him, so they turned and left.

It was getting dark, and soon it was time to close the office.

‘I suppose you want a holiday tomorrow?’ Scrooge asked his clerk.

‘Well, Christmas is a holiday,’ said Cratchit.

‘It’s a day of not working while getting paid! Be here early the next day!’ said Scrooge.

‘Yes, sir,’ answered Cratchit, and they left for their houses.





CHAPTER 2

SCROOGE WALKED THROUGH THE DARK STREETS, BACK TO his large, cold house. When he got there, a strange thing happened: as he reached for his keys and went to open the door, he saw the door knocker change into the face of his old business partner, Marley. Scrooge was afraid, but when he looked again, the face wasn't there and the door knocker was all he could see. Scrooge went inside slowly, lit a candle and looked around the house carefully; there was nothing there. So Scrooge went to his room and got ready for bed.

But as he was sitting sleepily by the fireplace, he heard the sound of heavy chains. The noise was just outside the room, and then suddenly through the closed door flew a ghost with heavy iron chains around him.

'Humbug!' said Scrooge. 'Who are you?'

'Who was I?' said the ghost. 'I was your old business partner, Jacob Marley. Can't you see that?'

'I don't believe in you. I must be sick from something I ate. You

come from the gravy, not from the grave!’ said Scrooge, trying to hide his fear.

The ghost said nothing and shook his chains. The noise was awful and Scrooge fell on his knees, terrified.

‘Mercy!’ he cried. ‘I believe in you! But tell me Marley, what are all these chains, and why did you come here?’

‘These chains... these chains, I made from my own greed. I did not help others, I only tried to make more money. Now I came to warn you, so that you don’t end up like me,’ said the ghost sadly.

‘But what must I do?’ asked Scrooge.

‘Three spirits will visit you after I leave,’ said Marley’s ghost.

‘More ghosts? Isn’t there any other way?’ asked Scrooge.

‘No. You must do this to save yourself,’ said the ghost.

‘The first spirit will come at one o’clock tonight. The second will come at the same time tomorrow. The last ghost will visit you when the clock strikes twelve on the night after that. I must go now; do not forget my words,’ said Marley’s ghost, and it slowly flew out of the window.

Scrooge stood alone in the room. ‘Was it all just a dream?’ he wondered. He walked to the door and checked it – it was locked.

‘Humbug!’ he tried to say, but the word didn’t come out.

So Scrooge, tired from the strange day he had, went straight to sleep.

