

## Charles Dickens A CHRISTMAS CAROL

Ebenezer Scrooge loves only one thing – money. He has no friends, doesn't like his family and never helps anyone. But when Jacob Marley, who's been dead for seven years, arrives at his house one night, Scrooge learns that a good life is about much more than money. Dickens' favourite Christmas story shows us the true face of London in 1843 and the difficult lives of the poor, but it's also a story of hope, where the future can be better.

### In this reader you will find:

- Information about Charles Dickens' life
- Focus on sections: England in the 1800s, Christmas traditions and Scrooge on film
- Glossary of difficult words
- Activities including B1 Preliminary style exercises

### Tag

Society Friendship

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Charles Dickens

## A CHRISTMAS CAROL



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# Book brief

- 1 *A Christmas Carol* is a novel written by Charles Dickens and first published in 1843.
- 2 Set in Victorian London, the story starts on a cold Christmas Eve.
- 3 It tells the story of Ebenezer Scrooge, a horrible man whose only love is money.
- 4 Scrooge receives a visit from the ghost of his business partner, Jacob Marley and the Spirits of Christmas Past, Present and Yet to Come.
- 5 Main themes include the suffering of poor people and how a selfish man can change.

For Review Only

*Charles Dickens*

# A Christmas Carol

*Retold and Activities by*  
**Elizabeth Ferretti**

*Illustrated by*  
**Veronica Ruffato**

For Review Only

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## MAIN CHARACTERS



### *Ebenezer Scrooge*

A horrible businessman who thinks only about money and never helps poor people.



### *Fred and his wife*

Fred is Scrooge's nephew and loves Christmas. His wife is kind and loving.



### *Bob Cratchit*

A kind, poor man with a large family, he works for Scrooge.



### *Tiny Tim*

Bob Cratchit's son, a poor little boy who can't walk very well.



*Jacob Marley*

Scrooge's dead  
business partner.



*The Ghost  
of Christmas Past*

He shows Scrooge  
Christmases from his past.



*The Ghost  
of Christmas Present*

He shows Scrooge what people are  
doing for Christmas that year.

*The Ghost  
of Christmas Yet to Come*

He shows Scrooge what people  
will say about him after he dies.

## Before you Read

### Vocabulary

1 A Read the letter.

Marley & Scrooge  
Financial Services  
Finch Lane  
City of London

Mr Arthur Mackie  
23, Bayham Street  
Camden Town  
North London

23rd December, 1843

Dear Sir,

I write to remind you that on 26th December you must pay me the money you borrowed, and 50% extra for my costs. I have an office to pay for and a clerk who expects to have a fire to keep him warm. I can't give you money for nothing! I don't want to hear excuses – I've heard them all before. 'I broke my leg and can't work', 'I don't have a job', 'My wife is dying'. People take too long to die in my opinion. I'm an old man, but I'm not stupid. Jacob Marley and I didn't start this business to help lazy people. There's always room for people like you in the prisons of London.

Yours,  
Ebenezer Scrooge

**1 B** Now answer the questions.

- Which words best describe Ebenezer Scrooge?  
**A**  As hard as stone.  
**B**  Warm and caring.  
**C**  A good businessman.
- In England in 1843, what can happen to people if they can't pay back money they've borrowed?  
**A**  They can ask for help.  
**B**  Businesses wait until they can pay.  
**C**  They could go to prison.
- Which sentence best describes what Ebenezer Scrooge thinks about poor people?  
**A**  They're bad people.  
**B**  They don't try hard enough.  
**C**  They've been unlucky.

## Internet Research

### 21st Century Skills

**2 A** *A Christmas Carol* is set in London in 1843. Search on the Internet with a partner and write your answers to these questions.

1 What were poor people's homes like? And homes belonging to the rich?

.....  
.....

2 How did people heat their homes and offices?

.....  
.....

3 How did most people travel about London?

.....  
.....



## Speaking

**2 B** Now discuss the following questions with your partner about life in the 21st century.

- How do people travel about your town or city?
- Do you think it's better to avoid using the car too much? Why / Why not?
- When you go on a long journey, do you prefer travelling by car, train or plane? Why?



# Jacob Marley

- ▶ 2 Jacob Marley was dead. He was definitely dead. The priest and the man who had prepared the body, the church clerk and Scrooge had all signed the official document to say he was dead. Scrooge's name was worth a lot on a document – the men who worked in the businesses and banks of the City of London respected that name.

Did Scrooge know for sure that he was dead? Of course he did. How could he not know? Ebenezer Scrooge and Jacob Marley had been business partners for many years. He organised everything after Marley died and Scrooge was the only person who went to the church when he was buried. But even Scrooge wasn't upset by the death of his friend, and carried on working after he got back from church.

So, we can be absolutely sure that Marley was dead. You must understand this fact or nothing wonderful will come from this story I'm going to tell you.

Years passed, but Scrooge didn't take Marley's name from his office door. People called him Scrooge or Marley but he didn't correct them, he answered to both names.

People borrowed money from Scrooge but he always got every bit back, and more – they paid him extra so that they could borrow money from him. He was as hard as a stone, as sharp as a knife. He didn't care if it was hard for people to pay him back. He loved money so much that he never let go of it.

## A Christmas Carol

His hair and eyebrows\* were white like ice. The cold within\* him froze his old nose, took the life out of his cheeks, made his legs feel like wood, made his eyes red and his thin lips blue and you could hear it in his high, cold voice.

He carried his own low temperature around with him – during the hottest days of summer, his office was icy.

Nobody stopped him in the street with a smile to say ‘My dear Scrooge, how are you?’ No homeless man or woman ever asked him for money, no children asked him what the time was, no one asked for directions, even the dogs of blind men took their owners out of Scrooge’s path. Scrooge didn’t care! He liked to be alone.


Once upon a time, then, on that good day of the year, Christmas Eve, Scrooge sat in his office adding up money in a large book. It was cold and foggy. Although it was only three o’clock in the afternoon, it was already dark. The door of Scrooge’s room was open so that he could keep an eye on his clerk, who sat in a tiny little room copying letters. Scrooge had a very small fire, but his clerk’s fire was even smaller. Every time the clerk wanted to make his fire bigger, Scrooge said he thought he’d look for another clerk. So, the clerk put on his long white scarf and tried to warm himself by his candle, but he didn’t have much imagination and he stayed as cold as before.

‘A Merry\* Christmas Uncle! God bless you\*!’ said a happy voice. It was Scrooge’s nephew.

‘Bah!’ said Scrooge, ‘Humbug\*!’

Scrooge’s nephew had walked so fast through the fog and freezing air that his handsome face was red and warm.

‘Merry Christmas’ was first heard of in 1534, but it became popular with Victorians after Dickens used it in this story.

**eyebrows**   
**within** inside  
**merry** (mainly used in ‘Merry Christmas’)  
happy

**God bless (you)** ask God to take care of someone  
**humbug** (not often used in modern English)  
false, not honest or real

## Charles Dickens

Scrooge's nephew invites his Uncle Scrooge to have dinner on Christmas Day but he refuses.

'Christmas a humbug, Uncle?' said Scrooge's nephew. 'You don't mean that!'

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

'Come then,' his nephew answered happily, 'what reason do you have to be so cross? You're rich enough.'

'Of course I'm cross, when I live in a world filled with fools. What's Christmas but a time for paying bills without money, a time for finding yourself a year older and not an hour richer? If I had my way, I'd boil every fool who says Merry Christmas with his own Christmas pudding\* and I'd bury him with a branch of holly\* through his heart!'

'Uncle! But Christmas is a time when people are kind, we forgive each other, we help those who have less than us *and* we enjoy ourselves. It's the only time in the whole year when men and women open their closed hearts to those around them. And so, while Christmas has never put any money in my pocket, it *has* done me good and *will* do me good!'

The clerk stood and clapped when he heard these words. Then he remembered this wasn't a good thing to do in front of Scrooge.

'If I hear another sound from you,' said Scrooge, 'you'll celebrate Christmas by losing your job!' Then he turned to his nephew, 'You're quite a powerful speaker, sir. I'm surprised you don't become a politician!'

'Don't be cross, Uncle. Will you have dinner with us tomorrow?'

Scrooge said something very rude at that.

'But why, Uncle? I want nothing from you, I ask nothing of you, why can't we be friends?'

**Christmas pudding** sweet food made with sugar, flour, dried fruit and fat, which is often boiled to cook it

**holly** small tree which has dark green leaves all year and red berries in winter



## Charles Dickens

‘Good afternoon,’ Scrooge said, to tell his nephew the conversation was finished.

‘I’m sorry with all my heart to find you so difficult. But I won’t let you make me unhappy, so a Merry Christmas, Uncle!’

‘Good afternoon!’ said Scrooge.

‘And a Happy New Year!’

‘Good afternoon!’ said Scrooge.

His nephew left the room without an angry word, but before the clerk could close the door, two large and pleasant gentlemen came in.

‘Do we have the pleasure of speaking with Mr Marley or Mr Scrooge?’ one of them asked with a smile.

‘Mr Marley has been dead these seven years,’ Scrooge replied. ‘He died exactly seven years ago tonight.’

‘This is the time of year when we think about people who have less than us,’ the man continued, not worried by Scrooge’s face.

‘Are there no prisons for them to go to?’ interrupted Scrooge. ‘And the poorhouses\*? Do they still exist?’

‘Unfortunately, these bad places still exist,’ the man said sadly.

‘I’m very glad to hear it,’ said Scrooge. ‘I’ll give you nothing. Now, gentlemen, I wish to be left alone. I don’t celebrate Christmas and I don’t have enough money to make lazy people merry.’

‘But the poorhouses are terrible,’ said the first man, ‘people would rather die than end their lives there!’

‘If they’d rather die, why don’t they? And they should die quickly, then we wouldn’t have so many people to feed! Good afternoon, gentlemen!’

**poorhouse** place where poor people could live in Victorian England

## A Christmas Carol

After they had gone, there was the sound of singing from the street. A boy was singing a Christmas carol\* outside the door. Scrooge took a book from his desk and threw it at the door and the singing immediately stopped. The boy was singing for money and Scrooge certainly didn't want to give him any!

When the end of the day arrived, Scrooge stood up.

'I suppose you'll want all of tomorrow off\*?' Scrooge asked.

'If that isn't a problem for you, sir?'

'Of course it's a problem,' said Scrooge, 'and it's not fair. I have to pay you for a day when you're not working!'

The clerk said that it was only once a year.

'But you're still taking money from my pocket! Be here extra early the next day.'

The clerk ran out into the streets and played in the snow with some children, before running home to Camden Town to his young family.

Scrooge went to the small restaurant where every night he ate his dinner. He read the papers and then walked home.

When he arrived at his front door, he saw something strange. The door seemed to have a face on it which looked like his old partner Marley, a strange, dead face. Scrooge shook his head and the face disappeared.

Scrooge was not easily frightened but when he went inside, he checked behind the door. There was no one. He checked everywhere but there was no one in the house. Most of the rooms were used as offices and they were shut now. Scrooge went up the stairs to his rooms. He closed the door and locked it twice, which he never did normally.

The word 'scrooge', meaning 'miser' was added to the Oxford English Dictionary in 1982.

**carol** special Christmas song

**off** if you have a 'day off', you don't work that day

Scrooge sat close to a small fire which had pictures round it to make it pretty. Scrooge thought he saw Marley's face in these pictures, but when he looked again, there was nothing strange about them.

'Humbug!' he said, but then his eyes were attracted to a large bell\* that hung on the wall. He watched with growing fear as the bell began to move, softly at first and then more and more until it began to ring. Soon all the bells in the house were ringing.

This maybe only lasted for half a minute or a minute, but it seemed like an hour. Then, as suddenly as they had started, the bells stopped ringing. Then, from the bottom of the house he heard the noise of metal, like a chain pulled along the floor. The noise moved across the hall and up the stairs, getting closer and closer.

'It's humbug!' said Scrooge, 'I won't believe it!'

His colour changed though when it came through the locked door and into the room.

The same face, the very same. Marley with his hair tied back, Marley's shirt and coat. He was pulling a chain that was wrapped around his middle. The chain was made (Scrooge looked at it closely) of money boxes, keys, locks and metal purses.

Scrooge still didn't believe what he saw. Although the ghost stood before him, although he felt its death-cold eyes and saw the cloth wrapped round its head, he still didn't believe his eyes.

'What do you want with me?' asked Scrooge, cold and angry, 'Who are you?'

'Ask me who I *was*,' the ghost said.

'Who *were* you then?'

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







## Comprehension

1 Complete these sentences with one or more details from the text.

- 1 People borrow money from Ebenezer Scrooge and he always gets  
.....  
.....
- 2 Ebenezer Scrooge is a cold, old man with white hair and  
.....  
.....
- 3 When Scrooge walks through the streets, no one  
.....  
.....
- 4 When Scrooge's clerk tries to make his fire bigger, Scrooge says  
.....  
.....
- 5 ...so the clerk .....
- 6 Scrooge's nephew comes into Scrooge's office to  
.....  
.....
- 7 Scrooge doesn't want to have dinner with his nephew and says that  
anyone who says 'Merry Christmas'  
.....  
.....
- 8 When two gentlemen come to ask for money to help the poor, Scrooge  
doesn't give them any because  
.....  
.....

## Grammar

2 Make these sentences into questions.

- 1 Scrooge knew that Marley was dead. .... ?
- 2 You don't mean that, Uncle! .... ?
- 3 I think you should become a politician!  
(Be careful!) ..... ?
- 4 I came to ask you to have dinner with us. .... ?

**3 A** Work with a partner and take turns at describing this picture from Chapter 1. Answer these questions to help you.

- Who are the people in the picture?
- Where are they?
- What are they doing?
- What other things can you see in the room?

**3 B** Discuss the following questions giving reasons for your answers.

- 1 If you were Scrooge's nephew, would you visit your uncle?
- 2 If you were Scrooge's clerk, would you start looking for another job?



### Pre-Reading Activity • Chapter Two

## 3 Listening B1 Preliminary

**4** Choose the correct answer, A, B or C.

- 1** Scrooge asks the ghost
- A to sit down.
  - B if it's embarrassed.
  - C if ghosts can sit on chairs.

- 2** The ghost
- A sits in the fire.
  - B speaks to Scrooge.
  - C does the opposite of what Scrooge asks him.

- 3** Scrooge says he can see the ghost because
- A he ate too much at dinnertime.
  - B his dinner wasn't cooked well.
  - C he doesn't usually eat meat and potatoes.

- 4** Scrooge thinks
- A the ghost is funny.
  - B the room is as hot as an oven.
  - C the ghost's voice is very frightening.

- 5** Scrooge asks the ghost if
- A it wants some supper.
  - B it likes dry biscuits.
  - C it can see what he's holding.

- 6** Scrooge says
- A it's all humbug.
  - B he can see a crowd of ghosts.
  - C he can't eat because he's ill.