

How do you answer a question?

In the 'A Christmas Carol' section you will be given a source-based question. This means you will need to **write about your character or theme in relation to the whole story, but you will have an extract from the novel to help you form your response.**

It is essential to plan your essay - choose five key events from across the text (beginning, middle, end) and then link them to the ideas in the extract.

You can structure your response in two ways:

1. Write about the character/theme in the extract first, then write about the extract/theme in the rest of the text.
2. Write about the extract and the wider novel in each paragraph e.g. In this extract, family is presented as important to happiness. This is shown when... This idea of family importance is also raised in Stave 1 with Fred's persistent visits to his uncle. This suggests that family...

You are assessed on your **understanding of language** so use the quotes from the extract to pick up marks here e.g. Dickens uses the simile 'tightfisted as a grindstone' to suggest that Scrooge was...

You also need to make some **references to the context of the novel** - where it was set (Victorian London) and how this affects our understanding e.g. Just like many of the poor in Victorian London, the Cratchits struggle to find enough money to eat properly...

How to revise from this guide

You should be spending at least 30-60 minutes a week revising for English Literature from this point onwards, aiming to learn 5-7 key quotes for each character. There is no magic formula to revision but this three-point strategy has helped many Y11s succeed in the past:

- *Read the quote out three times*
- *Write it out three times*
- *Recite the quote three times with your eyes closed*

Remember - learning one word quotes is also useful e.g. 'tight-fisted' rather than 'He was as tight-fisted as a grindstone'

It is also helpful to write your key quotes on sticky notes and place them all over your bedroom wall. Or, use revision apps on your phone to make learning quotes more interactive e.g. make Quizlets. Or, use your family to test you - write them on revision cards and they can test you. Over time they *will* stick in your memory; just don't try and start learning them the night before the exam!



Ebenezer Scrooge

The miserly accountant living in Victorian London. The three spirits of Christmas visit him in hopes of reversing Scrooge's greedy, cold-hearted approach to life.

Key quotes:

Stave One

- **'He was as tight-fisted as a grindstone'** – Dickens uses this simile to show how tightly Scrooge ran his business
- **'Bah! Humbug!'** – Scrooge's famous quote demonstrating his dislike of Christmas
- **'Are there no prisons, no workhouses for the poor?'** – this suggests that Scrooge believed poverty was almost a crime
- **'Then the poor should die and decrease the surplus population'** – a shocking attitude demonstrating Scrooge's lack of compassion for those less fortunate

Stave Two

- **'A lonely boy was sat reading near a feeble fire'** – this is Scrooge as a young boy, left at his boarding school by his father over the Christmas holidays
- **'Scrooge seized the extinguisher-cap and pressed it down upon its head'** – here Scrooge covers the light coming from the Ghost of Christmas Past, suggesting Scrooge still finds his past too painful to look at.

Stave Three

- To the Ghost of Christmas Present: **'Tell me Tiny Tim will live...'** – this part shows Scrooge is feeling some compassion at last, he is changing...
- To the Ghost of Christmas Present: **'Here's a new game, one half hour Spirit, one more!'** – here Scrooge is actually enjoying himself as he watches Fred's Christmas party

Stave Four

- To the Ghost of Christmas Yet to Come: **'Tell me I may sponge away the writing on this stone!'** – Scrooge is now desperate to change his ways

- To the Ghost of Christmas Yet to Come: **‘I will honour Christmas in my heart, and try keep it the whole year round’** – Scrooge makes a promise to live differently if he is given another chance

Stave Five

- **‘I’ll raise your salary Bob and endeavour to assist your struggling family’** – this shows how much Scrooge has changed, raising Bob Cratchit’s wages and helping his family
- **‘It was always said of him that he knew how to keep Christmas well’** – Dickens finishes the story by telling us Scrooge was a changed man for the rest of his life – he embodied the Christmas spirit.



The Cratchit family

The Cratchits give us an insight into what life was like for poor in Victorian. Despite their poverty and ill-health (Tiny Tim) they embody the Christmas spirit with their optimistic outlook and strong sense of family.

Bob Cratchit

Scrooge's clerk, a kind, mild, and very poor man with a large family. Though treated harshly by his boss, Bob Cratchit remains a humble, dedicated and loyal employee.

Key quotes:

Stave One

- **‘the clerk’s fire was so much smaller that it looked like one coal’** – the feeble fire represents Scrooge’s cold attitude towards his clerk
- **‘he ran home to Camden Town as hard as he could pelt’** – this shows how excited Bob Cratchit is to be with his family for Christmas, clear love for his family

Stave Three (Ghost of Christmas Present visits the Cratchits)

- **‘Tiny Tim rode upon his shoulder’** – Bob carries Tiny Tim everywhere and is completely devoted to his children
- **‘Oh what a wonderful pudding! Bob Cratchit regarded it as her greatest success’** – There is clear love between Mr and Mrs Cratchit
- About Scrooge: **‘I’ll give you Mr Scrooge, the founder of the feast’** – this shows his loyalty and gratitude to Scrooge who he defends against Mrs Cratchit’s criticisms

Stave Four (the predicted death of Tiny Tim)

- Peter Cratchit says about his father: **“I think he’s walked a little slower than he used to”** – this shows Bob is mourning the death of his son Tiny Tim

Stave Five

Scrooge says to Bob Cratchit: **‘I’ll raise your salary and endeavour to assist your struggling family’** – this suggests the fortunes of the Cratchit family will improve significantly now Scrooge has changed

Tiny Tim

Bob Cratchit's young son, crippled from birth. Tiny Tim is an emotive character who represents the poor health but positive outlook of London’s poor

Stave Three

- **‘God bless us every one!’** – this demonstrates Tiny Tim’s positive attitude to life, a Christian belief in making the best of your situation
- **‘tell me Tiny Tim will live’** – the fact Scrooge asks this shows how much of an impact Tiny Tim has on him. Of all the visions that Scrooge sees, Tiny Tim has the biggest effect on him

Stave Four (the predicted death of Tiny Tim)

- **‘My little, little child! Cried Bob. “My little child!”** – this shows how much Bob loved Tiny Tim and how much he mourned his death

Stave Five

- **‘to Tiny Tim, who did NOT die, he [Scrooge] was a second father’** – Tiny Tim symbolizes the health and state of Victorian London’s poor. The fact he lives gives an optimistic ending to the novel – society can be a better place



Fred

Scrooge's nephew, the son of his sister, Fan. Fred is Scrooge’s only living relative and also the only person who makes an effort to bring Scrooge out of his isolated world.

Key quotes:

Stave One

- **‘A merry Christmas, uncle! God save you!’** – this shows Fred’s cheerful and festive spirit. He clearly loves his uncle and does his best to connect with him

- **'his face was ruddy and handsome; his eyes sparkled'** – Fred is the very opposite of his uncle, full of energy and optimism as a young man – perhaps what Scrooge was once like?
- **'Christmas time... is the only time I know of when men and women seem to open their shut-up hearts freely'** – Fred recognises the beauty of the Christmas spirit and is not afraid to challenge his uncle on his “humbug” attitude

Stave Three

- **'he's a comical fellow and not so pleasant as he might be'** – Fred recognises Scrooge's faults and understands why people dislike his uncle
- **'I am sorry for him; I couldn't be angry with him if I tried. Who suffers by his ill whims? Himself, always'** – this shows Fred pities his uncle and defends him loyally despite his wife and others criticising him

Stave Five

- [as Scrooge nervously enters Fred's Christmas party] **'Let him in! It is a mercy he didn't shake his arm off.'** – Dickens describes how delighted Fred was to see his uncle Scrooge. He embraces Scrooge so warmly and is finally rewarded for his persistent efforts in reaching out to Scrooge
- **'Wonderful party, wonderful games, wonderful unanimity, won-der-ful happiness!'** – Dickens' use of repetition emphasises just how wonderful the party was.



Jacob Marley / Marley's Ghost

In the living world, Jacob Marley was Ebenezer Scrooge's equally greedy partner. He died seven years before the narrative opens but appears to Scrooge as a ghost condemned to wander the world bound in heavy chains. Marley hopes to save his old partner from suffering a similar fate.

Key quotes (all from Stave One)

- **'Marley was dead... There was no doubt about that'** – the novel opens exactly seven years since Marley's funeral. Scrooge and Marley were obsessed with making money and Scrooge was the only mourner at his business partner's funeral.
- **'I wear the chain I forged in life'** – This shows a key Christian message of the novel that Dickens wanted to communicate – there will be consequences for our actions in life through punishment in the after-life
- **'I am doomed to wander the world... and witness what it cannot share'** – this shows the constant torture Marley faces every day, watching London's poor suffer yet he can no longer help them

- **'I made it link by link, and yard by yard'** – This shows Dickens' key message of self-responsibility. Marley's chain is long and heavy and he must now carry this great weight for eternity
- **'I am here tonight to warn you, that you have a chance of escaping my fate'** – this shows Marley must care for his old business partner Scrooge. He is there to help Scrooge even though Marley himself is doomed forever



Ghost of Christmas Past

The first spirit to visit Scrooge, a curiously childlike apparition with a glowing head. He takes Scrooge on a tour of Christmases in his past, viewing himself as a lonely schoolboy, a young apprentice to the generous Fezziwig and finally to see his former fiancée, Belle. The spirit uses a cap to dampen the pure light coming from his head.

Key quotes (all from Stave Two)

- **'It was a strange figure – like a child: yet not so like a child as like an old man'** – the ghost has a strange appearance, unclear like our early memories
- **'It wore a tunic of the purest white... From the crown of its head there sprang a bright clear jet of light'** – the white suggests a purity about the ghost and the light illuminates our past
- **'A lonely boy was sat reading near a feeble fire'** – the spirit first shows Scrooge himself as a young boy, left at his boarding school by his father over the Christmas holidays
- **'Your lip is trembling,' said the Ghost, 'And what is that upon your cheek?'** – this is the first sign of emotion within Scrooge as he becomes tearful looking at himself as a child
- **'The happiness he [Fezziwig] gives, is quite as great as if it cost a fortune.'** – the Ghost of Christmas Past makes a point of showing Scrooge how generous an employer Fezziwig was
- **'But the relentless Ghost pinioned him in both his arms, and forced him to observe what happened next'**. This shows the spirit forcing Scrooge to face up to his past – Scrooge must face his past if he is to move change his ways
- **'Spirit!' said Scrooge, 'show me no more!'** – Scrooge finds watching the end of his relationship with Belle very painful and begs to see no more.
- **'Scrooge seized the extinguisher-cap and pressed it down upon its head'** – in the final part of the stave Scrooge covers the light coming from the Ghost of Christmas Past suggesting he still finds his past too painful to look at



Ghost of Christmas Present

The second spirit to visit Scrooge, a majestic giant clad in a green robe. His lifespan is restricted to Christmas Day. He escorts Scrooge on a tour of the Christmas celebrations at Bob Cratchit's and his nephew's houses, as well as a tour of poor miners and sailors who all embrace the Christmas spirit.

Key quotes (all from Stave Three)

- **'There sat a jolly Giant, who bore a glowing torch... it was clothed in one simple deep green robe'** – the spirit's physical appearance represents a sense of vitality and abundance. His torch sprinkles goodwill as he passes people in the streets.
- **'More than eighteen hundred brothers I have'** – the spirit of Christmas was born on the very first Christmas, 1843 years ago. A new Christmas spirit is therefore 'born' again each year.
- **'Holly, mistletoe, red berries, ivy, turkeys, geese, game, poultry, oysters, pies, puddings'** – the ghost of Christmas Present brings with him much food and decorations. This suggests that Dickens felt Christmas was a time of celebration, for feasts and festivities.
- **'Are there no prisons, no workhouses?'** – The Ghost of Christmas Present repeats Scrooge's own words back to him when Scrooge asks what will happen to Tiny Tim. This makes Scrooge feel ashamed and shows we need to care for each other.
- **'A place where Miners live, who labour in the bowels of the earth. But they know me. See!'** – this shows the spirit takes Scrooge to all over England to show him how even the poorest of communities still make the best of their situations and celebrate Christmas.
- **'My life upon this globe, is very brief'** – The Ghost of Christmas Past lives for just one day every year. Here Dickens is emphasising how brief the spirit of Christmas lasts within society – as soon as Christmas is over people go back to their selfish ways.
- **'The boy is ignorance, the girl is want. Beware them both!'** – Ignorance and Want represent the starving and malnourished children of London. The spirit shows Scrooge the children to make him realise the consequence of his selfish lifestyle.



Ghost of Christmas Yet to Come

The third and final spirit to visit Scrooge, a silent phantom clad in a hooded black robe. He presents Scrooge with an frightening view of his death, taking him to see his fellow businessman in the City of London and a group of scavengers going through Scrooge's belongings. Scrooge then discovers Tiny Tim has died before he sees his own grave.

Key quotes (all from Stave Four)

'The phantom slowly, gravely, silently approached' – The Ghost of Christmas Yet to Come does not speak or make a sound which makes it even more terrifying for Scrooge.

'It was shrouded in a deep black garment, which concealed its head, its face, its form' – The fact its face is concealed suggests we can't truly see the future and that Scrooge's future must be a dark one.

Scrooge about the Ghost – **'I fear you more than any spectre I have seen'** – Scrooge is petrified by the presence of the Ghost of Christmas Yet to Come and fears what he will show him

'It was a worthy place. Walled in by houses; overrun by grass and weeds, the growth of vegetation's death, not life' – The phantom shows Scrooge his own grave, a lonely place that nobody cares – a fitting place for Scrooge to be buried

'Oh, tell me I may sponge away the writing on this stone.' – This part shows much Scrooge has been affected by the Ghost of Christmas Yet to Come. He is left begging the phantom for redemption

'It shrunk, collapsed, and dwindled down into a bedpost' – this part shows Scrooge that his visions he saw were indeed just visions, not reality, and so he now has the chance to change his ways