A Christmas Carol

Charles Dickens
A Christmas Carol was written in 1843 after Dickens visited a Cornish Tin mine and was appalled at the conditions he saw.

- intended to draw readers' attention to difficulties faced by England's poor - they were seen as a separate class where the rich hardly spoke to them

- social criticism is a recurring theme in Dickens' work... most strongly seen in the novel 'Hard Times'

- ACC combines indirect description of hardship faced by the poor with a sentimental celebration of Christmas

Dickens - exaggerated Scrooge to represent the worst of the rich to teach them a lesson that people are more important than money

The industrial revolution - great change in working conditions... the introduction of machines & the growth of populations in cities from the countryside for work meant the housing for the poor became dreadful.

Poverty & education - what to do with the poor was a massive concern in Victorian England... to try and deal with the large number of poor people, the 1834 Poor Law was passed by the government - This meant any able-bodied unemployed person had to go and work in a work house in order to be supported... Scrooge didn't support these workhouses as they were deliberately made harsh environments to live & work in. As a result, families were separated & food was basic... it was hoped that many of the 'lazy poor' wouldn't choose to go there and get help.

Dickens had an insight to the conditions from the time he worked in the Blacking Factory when his family was in prison. Dickens believed that a basic education would help the poor (this is seen through Ignorance & Want in this novel) & in the 1840s, Dickens & a friend got involved in the Ragged Schools; something that gave the poor an education (the name came from the ragged clothes they wore)
Dickens is often credited with inventing Christmas as we know it today... the Ghost of Christmas Past resembles Father Christmas & the idea of sitting as a family eating a turkey dinner - the biggest aspect Dickens influenced was good will to all. - remember he wanted to 'awaken some loving and forbearing thoughts'.

Many employers in Victorian England were like Scrooge & didn't do anything special for Christmas... it is possible this novel helped change that as there are recorded examples of factory owners giving their workers a turkey at Christmas time after reading this novel.

Charles Dickens was born in Portsmouth in 1812 - he was the eldest of 8 children. His father, John, was a clerk in the Navy Pay Office. Charles Dickens moved to Chatham, Kent when he was 5.

His nurse aroused fascination with stories & storytelling by telling him blood-thirsty tales such as Sweeney Todd. Dickens spent a lot of time alone as a child, reading & acting out stories rather than playing out with other children. He was sent to school in 1821 & his excitement to learn is mentioned in his novel 'David Copperfield.'

Dickens' dad was transferred to London. Charles Dickens was left in Chatham with his teacher for a few months before travelling to London by himself. This was the start of a difficult period because he wasn't sent to school, he had to stay and help his family with jobs. One of his sisters got sent to The Royal Academy of Music even though his family couldn't afford to send her.

They moved again as his dad's ability to manage money got worse. His mum tried to start a school but it failed. Dickens had to start earning money to help the family & at aged 12 he started in a Blacking Factory. (Dying boots black)

His dad was put in prison for debt. All there family bar Dickens joined him in prison. Dickens had to lodge with a mean-spirited woman & had to manage his own money - something he found hard - this influenced a lot of Dickens' writing & his opinions about the poor & society.
His dad was released from prison & Dickens continued to work in the factory until his dad had an argument with the owner. Once the argument was sorted, his mum wanted Dickens to return to the factory - he never forgave her for this... however, he was eventually allowed to go back to school instead. It wasn't a good school & Dickens didn't enjoy his time there... he stayed until he was 15 when he left to become a solicitor's clerk.

Dickens taught himself shorthand, got a new job as a court reporter - was good, got a new job as a newspaper reporter in London... his interest in Literature surfaced now, he began to write stories about London; these were published in 1833 - this was the start of his life as an author.

He carried on writing & earned enough money to pay off his father's debts & move out the family home. In 1836 he got married & in the same year found fame and success with 'Pickwick Papers' which was published in monthly instalments at first and then later, in a book. Dickens' life changed rapidly from this point, his first child was born 1837. The death of his sister in law & he used her as an inspiration for his young beautiful female characters in more works.

In 1842, Dickens & his wife visited America & Canada meeting people... he was delighted with his fame but annoyed that he did not receive any money from his American book sales because of a copyright agreement. The trip provided him more material for writing.

Back in England, Dickens carried on touring the country & became more and more concerned about the inequality he saw around, especially in the cities - this prompted him to write 'A Christmas Carol' - this followed the Victorian tradition of ghost stories but also carried a serious social & moral message. This was so popular it kept getting re-printed & Dickens gave his first of many public readings in 1853. He read it on his farewell tour before he died in 1870.

It is thought that Dickens based Scrooge's sister, Fanny & Tiny Tim on his elder sister & her disabled son. Dickens' sister, Frances was also known as Fanny - although he was jealous of her going to the Academy as a child, he realised this was not her fault & as they got older, they became close & loving. Both Fanny & her son died in 1848 - this distressed Dickens greatly.
Fame & fortune continued for Dickens and he ended up buying a house that he had always wanted to live in when he was younger - this was a symbol of all he had achieved. However, it didn't mark a good retirement... Dickens & his wife were struggling, it was believed she had post natal depression but this wasn't really understood at this time.

Dickens became infatuated with an actress who was twenty seven years younger than him... Dickens declared his marriage over & started a secret relationship with the actress - it was secret so the scandal wouldn't ruin his reputation. Dickens didn't divorce his wife for that reason too.

Dickens remained to write and tour but his health deteriorated & he was warned to slow down - he did his final tour in 1869. He did his last reading on 15th March 1870... he died on 9th June... one of his works 'The Mystery of Edwin Drood' remained unfinished.
**AUTHOR — LIFE AND WORKS**

1812 Charles John Huffam Dickens is born on 7 February in Portsmouth
1817–23 The Dickens family moves to Chatham, Kent. Dickens goes to school in 1821, but the next autumn leaves to follow his family who have moved to London

1824 Dickens is sent to work at Warren's Blacking Factory. His father is put in prison for three months for debt
1825 Dickens is allowed to leave the Blacking Factory and go to school
1827–32 The family are evicted from their house. Dickens gets a job as a solicitor's clerk and learns shorthand

1833–6 First story, 'A Dinner at Poplar Walk', is published. Reporter for the *Morning Chronicle*. Dickens marries Catherine Hogarth

1837–42 Publishes stories including *Oliver Twist*. Visits America with Catherine
1843 *A Christmas Carol* is published on 19 December

**CONTEXT**

1820 Death of George III. George IV becomes king

1825 First passenger railway in UK opened

1830 George IV dies. William IV becomes king
1833 Slavery abolished in British Empire
1834 The New Poor Law requires harsh workhouses to be set up in every parish
1837 William IV dies. Victoria becomes queen
1840 Victoria marries Albert

1844 Ragged Schools for poor children founded
1848 Dickens' beloved sister, Fanny, dies

1852 "The Poor Relation's Story" is published at Christmas
1853 First public reading of A Christmas Carol
1856-8 Dickens and family move to Gad's Hill. Meets eighteen-year-old actress Ellen Ternan and starts relationship with her. Separates from Catherine
1859-65 Dickens goes on reading tours. Great Expectations is published. His health starts to decline. In 1865 he is involved in serious railway accident in Staplehurst, Kent
1866 "The Signalman" is published at Christmas
1866-8 Reading tours around England, Ireland and America. Health gets worse
1870 "Twelve Farewell Readings" given in London. He meets Queen Victoria (March). Dickens suffers a stroke on 8 June at Gad's Hill. Dies on 9 June. Buried in Westminster Abbey on 14 June.

1847 British Factory Act restricts the hours women and children can work to ten hours a day
1848 Outbreak of cholera in London
1851 Great Exhibition celebrating British industry and empire held in the Crystal Palace

1861 Death of Prince Albert
1861-5 American Civil War

1867 Dr Barnardo opens home for homeless children in London
1870 First Elementary Education Act for England and Wales makes it compulsory for children aged between five and thirteen to attend school
CHARACTERS

A Christmas Carol

Ebenezer Scrooge

One of Dickens’ most famous characters, the word ‘Scrooge’ has become part of the English language to describe anyone mean or miserly or showing disapproval at others enjoying themselves.

At the beginning of the novella, Scrooge is described with wonderful clarity, ‘a tight-fisted hand at the grindstone’, ‘a squeezing, wrenching, grasping, scraping, clutching, covetous old sinner!’ (Stave One, p. 12). The adjectives and similes mount up to create an overwhelming impression of this mean and fierce old man whose bitterness even influences the weather. He has no friends, no-one ever asks how he is; and, to underline his miserable nature, we are told that he prefers it this way.

Although this hard misanthropist revels in his own harsh opinions at the start of the novella – he has ‘an improved opinion of himself’ (Stave One, p. 18) after his exchange with the Charity Collectors – Scrooge reveals his humanity when he understands Tiny Tim might die due to his actions and opinions. At this point he becomes ‘overcome with penitence and grief’ (Stave Three, p. 63). This change is made permanent by the horrors Scrooge suffers in Stave Four – he is literally faced with his own death.

In the final Stave we see a joyous, happy man, completely transformed from the one we met at the beginning of the novella. He is happy to be alive, and in spreading this happiness creates yet more. His altered behaviour – ‘rubbing his hands and splitting with a laugh’ (Stave Five, p. 91) – combined with his generous actions to those around him, persuade us that he is a changed man.
BOB CRATCHIT

Bob is a passive, kind-hearted man who cannot object to the way he is treated by Scrooge. Representative of the lower classes, he has to accept the poor wages and working conditions because he has a family to support and a badly-paid job is better than no job. He is little more than a caricature with his long ‘white comforter dangling below his waist’ instead of a coat (Stave One, p. 19). His good nature is his dominant characteristic, as seen when he toasts Scrooge as ‘the Founder of the Feast’ (Stave Three, p. 63).

TINY TIM

Tiny Tim is one of Dickens’ most famous characters, although one that causes controversy today. A stock character of Victorian literature, the innocent disabled child often dies or is saved through no fault or action of their own. This character has caused offence and argument today, especially amongst readers who see this character as being insulting to disabled people. Today disabled people are not considered passive victims. Whatever the modern view however, it is important to understand the function Tiny Tim plays in the novella; he is the innocent vehicle for Scrooge’s redemption.
Fred

Fred is the antithesis of Scrooge. Jovial and good-natured he married for love without thinking about money and is not merely concerned with profit (Stave One, p. 14). He acts as a foil to the hardened Scrooge and provides a means of support and redemption once he is reformed. A supporting character, Fred is defined by his good humour and laughter whilst articulating many of Dickens’ beliefs about Christmas. To Fred (and Dickens) it is ‘a good time; a kind, forgiving, charitable, pleasant time ... when men and women seem by one consent to open their shut-up hearts freely, and to think of people below them as if they really were fellow-passengers to the grave, and not another race of creatures bound on other journeys’ (Stave One, p. 15).

Marley’s Ghost

Weighed down with chains and baggage symbolising the concerns he had in life, Marley’s Ghost appears as a warning to Scrooge on the anniversary of Marley’s death. His desperation to now help the poor and needy, awakens Scrooge to the seriousness of his own situation. He has echoes of Hamlet’s father’s ghost with his wanderings and restlessness and the ‘incessant torture of remorse’ he suffers (Stave One, p. 26).
THE GHOSTS OF CHRISTMAS PAST, PRESENT AND YET TO COME

These Ghosts act as metaphors for Scrooge's life. They represent what he has been, what he is and what he is going to be if he doesn't change. Although the first two Ghosts make Scrooge face up to the consequences of his actions they are jovial and sympathetic. The final Ghost is far harsher, refusing to provide comfort or support; Scrooge has to draw his own conclusions and change his life himself.

The Ghost of Christmas Past personifies what Scrooge has been, His appearance, ‘like a child; yet not so like a child as like an old man’ (Stave Two, p. 33), reminds us that Scrooge’s childhood is long gone. The white tunic represents the innocence that should be part of childhood, and it is decorated with summer flowers, a reminder that this Spirit represents Scrooge’s ‘summer’ years. Its cap, which Scrooge pushes down at the end of the Stave, represents the negative emotions, actions and ideas Scrooge adopted during his later years, and which hide and suppress his true nature.

The Ghost of Christmas Present personifies generosity; both spiritual and material. He wears a large green robe trimmed with white fur, reminding us there is still innocence in the world. Surrounded by plenty and sitting on a throne of food, this Ghost reminds us there is enough to go round in the world, contradicting the Malthusian economic Dickens so hated (see Setting and background). However, despite this Ghost’s appearance of compassion and plenty, it conceals the harsh realities of Victorian life in the shape of the children Ignorance and Want.
The Ghost of Christmas Yet to Come personifies death which is inevitable for all humans (as mentioned by Fred in Stave One). It is a terrifying figure, ‘shrouded in a deep black garment, which concealed its head, its face, its form’ (Stave Four, p. 74). We are unable to distinguish its features, reminding us that the exact details are unknown until it strikes. Just as time will not stop for anyone, so the Ghost will not wait for Scrooge; it just leads him from scene to scene, pointing out what he must see.
The three spirits of Christmas visit the stodgy bean-counter in hopes of reversing Scrooge's greedy, cold-hearted approach to life.

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

Tiny Tim - Bob Cratchit's young son, crippled from birth. Tiny Tim is a highly sentimentalized character who Dickens uses to highlight the tribulations of England's poor and to elicit sympathy from his middle and upper class readership.

Jacob Marley - In the living world, Ebenezer Scrooge's equally greedy partner. Marley died seven years before the narrative opens. He 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.

The 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. The spirit uses a cap to dampen the light emanating from his head.

The 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 his contemporaries' Holiday celebrations.
The 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 ominous view of his lonely death.

Fred - Scrooge's nephew, a genial man who loves Christmas. He invites Scrooge to his Christmas party each and every year, only to be refused by his grumpy uncle.

Fezziwig - The jovial merchant with whom the young Scrooge apprenticed. Fezziwig was renowned for his wonderful Christmas parties.

Belle - A beautiful woman who Scrooge loved deeply when he was a young man. Belle broke off their engagement after Scrooge became consumed with greed and the lust for wealth. She later married another man.

Peter Cratchit - Bob's oldest son, who inherits his father's stiff-collared shirt for Christmas.

Martha Cratchit - Bob's oldest daughter, who works in a milliner's shop. (A milliner is a person who designs, produces, and sells hats.)

Fan - Scrooge's sister; Fred's mother. In Scrooge's vision of Christmases past, he remembers Fan picking him up from school and walking him home.

The Portly Gentlemen - Two gentlemen who visit Scrooge at the beginning of the tale seeking charitable contributions. Scrooge promptly throws them out of his office. Upon meeting one of them on the street after his visitations, he promises to make lavish donations to help the poor.

Mrs. Cratchit - Bob's wife, a kind and loving woman.
1. It is Christmas Eve and the miser Ebenezer Scrooge is in a bad mood.

2. Scrooge sends his visitors away and is rude to his clerk, Bob Cratchit.

3. The ghost of Scrooge's former business partner, Jacob Marley appears.

4. Marley warns Scrooge that his way of life will lead to misery. He tells Scrooge that three more ghosts will visit him.

5. The Ghost of Christmas Past arrives and shows Scrooge scenes from Scrooge's past, including the moment when Scrooge's fiancée broke off her engagement with him.

6. The Ghost of Christmas Present takes Scrooge to see the Cratchits who are enjoying Christmas despite their poverty.
7 Scrooge is warned that Tiny Tim will die if nothing happens to change his situation.

8 The Ghost of Christmas Yet to Come shows Scrooge scenes from the future where no one mourns Scrooge's death.

9 Tiny Tim has died and the Crachits are distraught.

10 Scrooge wakes up at home again and he is delighted to find it is still Christmas morning.

11 He sends a turkey to the Crachits and joins his nephew, Fred, for Christmas.

12 Scrooge spends the rest of his life helping the poor, and Tiny Tim lives.
Plot Summary

The Preface

Dickens includes a note to his readers before the story begins. In it, he expresses his desire to raise a pleasant idea that will stay with the reader & not disturb them.

Stave One - Marley's Ghost

Jacob Marley, who was Ebenezer Scrooge's business partner, has been dead for seven years. Scrooge is so mean that rather than spend money painting out Marley's name above the door of the office, he prefers to leave it as it is. Making money is the only thing he cares about.

The story focuses on Christmas Eve. It is 3pm, cold and foggy. Scrooge is working hard and making sure his clerk, Bob Cratchit, is also working hard. Bob finds this difficult because he is so cold - Scrooge will only let him have one piece of coal for his fire.

Scrooge has four Christmas visitors: his nephew, Fred; two charity collectors; and a carol singer. Scrooge is rude to all of them and sends them away.

When Scrooge gets home, something strange happens; he looks at his door knocker and sees the face of the dead Jacob Marley. Scrooge refuses to believe it but later the ghost appears and tells Scrooge that his miserly way of life will lead to misery. Marley's ghost warns Scrooge that three ghosts will visit him to show him the error of his ways.
Stave Two - The First of the Three Spirits

Scrooge wakes up in the dark and hears the church bell ringing. At 1am the Ghost of Christmas Past appears. He shows Scrooge the time when, as a little boy, he had to stay at school by himself over Christmas. He also shows him another time when his sister came to collect him. She had persuaded their father to let him return home and spend Christmas with them.

The Ghost then takes Scrooge to the house of Old Fezziwig, where Scrooge had his first job. They watch a jolly Christmas party and Scrooge notices how much happiness can be obtained from very little money.

Next, Scrooge sees himself as a young man talking to Belle. Belle breaks off their engagement because she thinks Scrooge loves money more than he loves her.

Stave Three - The Second of the Three Spirits

The Ghost of Christmas Present visits next and is huge and jolly and is surrounded by Christmas food and decorations.

They visit the Cratchit's house and see the family preparing for their Christmas dinner with enthusiasm even though the goose they have to eat is very small. Bob has been to church with Tiny Tim and tells the family how good and thoughtful Tiny Tim is.

Scrooge learns that Tiny Tim will not live unless the future changes. This knowledge upsets Scrooge.

The Ghost takes Scrooge to see a different group of people enjoying themselves. Scrooge sees his nephew, Fred with his family. They are discussing Scrooge and they are full of pity for him.

At the end of the night, Scrooge is shown two children; a boy called Ignorance, and a girl called Want. The Ghost says they belong to Man and warns Scrooge to beware of them both, but especially Ignorance.
The Ghost of Christmas Yet to Come is completely covered in black and is mysterious.

Scrooge is shown different conversations about a dead man. None of the people care that this man is dead and the thieves have so little respect for him that they have stolen the clothes from his corpse.

In contrast, the Ghost then takes Scrooge to see the Cratchits who are deeply upset because Tiny Tim has died.

Finally, Scrooge is shown a gravestone with his own name on it. Scrooge realises he is the dead man the people were talking about. He at last promises to change his ways.

Stave Five - The End of It

Walking up in his own bed, Scrooge is delighted to be given a second chance and sets about making Christmas happy for everyone. He sends a turkey to the Cratchits, gives money to the charity collectors from Christmas Eve and joins Fred for Christmas.

The next day, he raises Bob's wages and promises to become a friend to Tiny Tim, who does not die.
Stave One:
The Preface
The First of the Three Spirits
- Dickens introduces the story & says it has specific ideas behind it.
- He hopes his readers won't be offended by his idea in the novel &
- he hopes the reader will take his idea on board.

- The preface is important as it tells us what Dickens is intending to do in his novel.

- Dickens refers to his novel as 'a ghostly little book' because it contains ghosts, and refers to his 'Ghost of an Idea' (preface) - makes the idea sound harmless and not threatening.

- Dickens wants his idea to 'haunt' the 'house' of the reader... = not just the readers home but also their body

- Dickens wants the reader to accept & embrace his ideas in the novel & not just dismiss them after reading the novel. He uses the term 'lay' which can mean 'put away / down'

- when used in relation to ghosts, 'lay' means to exorcise = stop one appearing

Dickens addresses the reader directly at the start to try and build a relationship with them so they warm to the narrator (omniscient - God like, knows all)
Stave One:

Marley's Ghost
The narrator goes to some lengths to tell us Marley is dead & has been for years.

The conversational tone helps the reader trust the narrator

The narrator addresses the reader directly like we are friends and therefore have no reason to question what we are being told...

Cliche simile (over used) 'dead as a doornail' examined in a humorous way
Personification that coffin nails must be 'deader' than door nails

It is made clear that Scrooge knows Marley is dead & that he was the only one affected by his death. 'Sole' is repeated to show Marley had no friends or family because he was so business focused. - Also makes us think of a spiritual 'soul' something the novel is concerned with.

Scrooge is described in a negative way. A long list of adjectives gives the sense that he is uncaring, cold and greedy.

Simile 'sharp as flint' shows his harshness 'oyster' helps show Scrooge's 'closed' state with emotions & the real world - this is before we meet him.

His physical description isn't favourable either - this relates to his character. ' miserable'

The 'miserable' Scrooge linked with bad weather - cold heart, blue lips, frosty rime. The narrator jokes the only difference between Scrooge & heavy rain, snow, sleet, hail is the weather covers the world generously whilst Scrooge is mean in his actions and not generous,
Once upon a time starts the novel & shows this is fiction (not real)

Scrooge introduced sitting counting money even though it's Christmas Eve.

It is cold & the fog is almost alive - **pathetic fallacy** (descriptions reflect character's emotions) - Scrooge's bad temper is made visible in the fog... with it getting everywhere, it shows how infectious negative emotions can be.

We meet Bob Cratchit in a smaller room 'a cell' that Scrooge always watches showing he doesn't trust his clerk (accountant) & he is like a prisoner.

Cratchit is cold because Scrooge's mean nature only allows him one coal on the fire per day.

The atmosphere is transformed to cheerful & jolly when Scrooge's nephew, Fred arrives. He wishes Scrooge a merry Christmas & represents everything Scrooge isn't. 'all in glow' because he has been walking fast & happy. - also about Fred's personality.

Fred doesn't become disheartened by Scrooge's negative responses - he stands up for himself even when Scrooge calls Fred a 'fool'.

Another contrast between Fred & Scrooge is Fred isn't as wealthy as Scrooge... Scrooge calls Fred a 'fool' as he got married for love rather than money.

The argument about the value of Christmas continues & shows us how Scrooge thinks (that financial profit is all that matters)

Fred provides the opposite argument & his belief that men and women should *open their shut up hearts freely* & think of others as well as themselves (which is the whole argument of the novel)
Fred leaves and he and Cratchit wish each other a merry Christmas. Scrooge doesn't know what Bob Cratchit has to be 'merry' about at this time of year when he has to support his wife & children on 15 shillings a week.

Scrooge thinks he should retire to 'bedlam' (a hospital for people with mental health problems) as he thinks the whole world is going mad & he would be saner there.

2 'portly gentlemen' arrive wanting to speak to Scrooge or Marley. We learn again Marley is dead. The men ask for a donation for the 'poor and destitute, who suffer greatly at the present time' as they are charity collectors.

Scrooge doesn't give any money but demands to know if the 'union workhouses' & the 'treadmill and the poor law' are still in operation (poor law = work houses set up for able-bodied poor to work for their keep... they were harsh environments)

Scrooge thinks these places are meant to provide for the poor so he shouldn't give anything as he has to pay taxes to keep the workhouses open.

Scrooge is told 'many can't go there; and many would rather die' (as they are so bad) Scrooge's harsh side is really shown when he thinks the poor should hurry up and die and 'decrease the surplus population' HERE DICKENS IS PRESENTING A COMMON IDEA AROUND AT THE TIME presented by Thomas Malthus - that food supplies & resources would never be enough meaning poverty & hunger was inevitable for some.

They charity collectors leave. The fog thickens and church bells ring; these are personifies to act as the face of God watching Scrooge and judging his actions.
Away from Scrooge's office, the atmosphere is totally different. We see snapshots of people getting ready for the festive season - labourers enjoying a fire, carol singers. (these are shown to show Scrooge is alone in his rejection of Christmas)

one carol singer knocks on Scrooge's door but is rudely chased away by him.

At the end of the working day, Scrooge reluctantly tells Bob Cratchit that it's time to go home to his family and start the festive celebrations that Bob is so keen to do.

Scrooge let's Bob have Christmas day off - paid even though he isn't happy about it as he feels he is being robbed by the yearly custom.

Scrooge demands Bob starts work early on Boxing day.

Bob leaves in his 'comforter' (scarf) showing he doesn't have a winter coat. Even though, he is full of the festive joys and runs home to play games with his family - even though he is poor.

Scrooge's journey home is different to Bob's. He goes his usual route showing he is not willing to make changes in his life even at Christmas. Scrooge's house is dark and dreary 'a gloomy suite of rooms'.

The fog is so thick that Scrooge has to find his way with his hands.
The narrator draws our attention to Scrooge's door knocker (builds up suspense & mystery). We learn it's big. Then it changes into Jacob Marley's face.

The narrator uses the first person narrator to ask if we can explain why the knocker has changed.

A whole paragraph describes the sight so the reader can visualise & understand that Scrooge isn't the sort of person to visualise things therefore this is making his Christmas different.

Similes 'like a bad lobster' suggests the image has a heavenly / out of this world glow.

The image disappears making Scrooge think he imagined it. We are told he doesn't react but does look behind the door before closing it, as if he expected to see Marley's head sticking out. The use of italics emphasises this.

Scrooge might be affected by the vision and feel the need to verbally reject it by 'pooh pooh' - this shows he isn't as toughened as he lets on

The description of the door closing, builds the spooky atmosphere further. The simile 'like thunder' reminds us of the weather outside.

The bottles remind us of the church bell - a sound throughout the novel when each ghost arrives.
When he's upstairs, Scrooge checks all his room - indicating that he has been unsettled... this is shown again when he double locks himself in; something that 'was not his custom' - this makes us unsettled as he is out of his comfort zone (his routine)

We are told of all the checks Scrooge makes - this list builds our knowledge of how Scrooge lives but also builds our nervousness & suspense as we know something is going to happen.

We learn Scrooge is too mean to have a large fire at home (just like work) as he has to sit close to his fire to get warm. The fire place has several images from the Bible around the fire. When Scrooge looks at them, all he can see is Marley's face.

Scrooge refuses to believe what he is seeing and has to walk to the other side of the room to get away from the sight; showing he is unnerved by the vision.

As Scrooge sits down, the bells in his house start ringing for half a minute (the bells broke up the house into apartments) - this is signal to Scrooge & the reader about events to come/

Dickens uses sound to set up expectations before we see the ghosts. 'a clanking noise deep down below' shows us that Scrooge remembers that ghosts drag chains.

Dickens is careful to set this up before we see Marley's ghost so we accept him as a ghost.

Marley's ghost is described in lots of detail so we can easily imagine what he looks like. He looks the same but is in chains with cash boxes & padlocks on the end - all of these items relate to money and business; things Marley cared more about than people... just like Scrooge.
Marley's ghost sits and asks Scrooge why he doesn't believe what he is seeing & hearing when they are his senses.

Scrooge suggests that the vision is a hallucination caused by indigestion - Scrooge makes a joke to pretend he isn't scared.

Marley's ghost uses shock tactics to make Scrooge listen (unties his bandage holding his lower jaw up)
The jaw dropping is a horrifying image & is intended to stun Scrooge & the reader into listening... the image of horror changes the tone from the 'joke one' so far so we realise that the message we are going to hear from Marley's ghost is an important one.

Marley's ghost tells Scrooge of his terrible situation / punishment - wandering the afterlife in chains with each link being something he did wrong in life that he never put right before death... words used like 'doomed & fettered' (restrained)are strong and reinforce the idea of weight so we take the message seriously

We are made to think of our own situation too... the key here is that happiness comes from helping others not from making as much money as possible.

Scrooge realises that his chain will be longer and heavier than Marley's as he has had 7 years more than Marley, being mean and uncaring (behaving in the same manner). Scrooge asks for comfort but Marley can't give him any - he also says he can't say all he wants = makes the reader use their imagination to think there is worse to come and it can't be put into words = making the warning stronger & more horrifying.

Marley's ghost tells Scrooge he has a chance to stop the punishment he is suffering. He tells Scrooge 3 ghosts will visit - Scrooge isn't happy about this
Marley's ghost opens the window. Scrooge sees the air full of tormented ghosts. The language used to describe this scene is full of misery & horror. All the ghosts are now suffering from not being to help people in need - this being something they didn't think of doing when alive but now understand this is the key to happiness.

The scene is returned to reality & made political as the narrator suggests that ghosts of 'guilty governments' are being made to suffer as a group for failing to help those in need - here Dickens is blaming the government for the law which passed the new Poor Law and made the bad workhouses.

Scrooge tries to reject the images and behave usual but can't verbalise this; showing he has been affected by the vision / warning.
The opening Stave of 'A Christmas Carol' sets the mood, describes the setting, and introduces many of the principal characters.

It also establishes the novel's allegorical structure. (Allegory, a type of narrative in which characters and events represent particular ideas or themes, relies heavily on symbolism. In this case, Scrooge represents greed, apathy, and all that stands in opposition to the Christmas spirit. Bob personifies those who suffer under the "Scrooges" of the world--the English poor. Fred serves to remind readers of the joy and good cheer of the Christmas holiday.)

The opening section also highlights the novel's narrative style--a peculiar and highly Dickensian blend of wild comedy (note the description of 'Hamlet' a passage that foreshadows the entrance of the ghosts) and atmospheric horror (the throng of spirits eerily drifting through the fog just outside Scrooge's window).

The 'tale' nature of 'A Christmas Carol' leads to relatively simplistic symbolism and a linear plot.

The plot is divided into five Staves, each containing a distinct episode in Scrooge's spiritual re-education. The first Stave centers on the visitation from Marley's ghost, the middle three present the tales of the three Christmas spirits, and the last concludes the story, showing how Scrooge has changed from an inflexible curmudgeon (kill joy) to a warm and joyful benefactor. Underlying the narrative and paralleling the more ostensible (perceived) theme of moral redemption, lies an incisive political diatribe (attack).

Dickens takes aim at the Poor Laws then governing the underclass of Victorian England. He exposes the flaws of the unfair system of government that essentially restricts the underclass to life in prison or in a workhouse. (Dickens' own father served time in debtor's prison.) Dickens' sympathetic portrayal of Bob Cratchit and his family puts a human face on the lower classes. Through Scrooge's implicit defence of the Poor Laws (his argument that prisons are the only "charity" he cares to support), Dickens dismisses the excuses of the indifferent upper class as an irresponsible, selfish, and cruel defence.
Stave Two:
The First of the Three Spirits
Scrooge awakes, it's so dark he can tell the difference between the wall & window even though the window is transparent. Scrooge listens for a clock bell to know what time it is - again the link to a church bell = God like watching & making judgements about Scrooge.

Scrooge is shocked when the bell rings 12 times to signal midnight when he knows he went to bed after midnight. He can't believe he has slept through a whole day so checks his own watch which tells him the same.

Scrooge looks out of the window, has to clear the frost off it - reminding us of the weather... it is also foggy – maybe a metaphor for Scrooge's cloudy judgement on the world. Not hearing or seeing anyone, Scrooge goes back to sleep.

Scrooge remembers that Marley said the first ghost would come after 1am. Scrooge stays awake so he doesn't dream of ghosts. - also we learn that Scrooge realises he couldn't sleep if he wanted to as he is actually anxious about what might happen; this is out of character for the 'hardened' Scrooge.

The 1am bell rings, Scrooge thinks he is triumphant but then lights start flashing and curtains start opening

The narrator emphasises the closeness of the ghost to Scrooge to draw in the reader by telling the reader that the ghost was as close to Scrooge as the narrator is to him - remember this story was meant to be read aloud so people would have been grouped together closely to the person reading the story.

Dickens describes the wait for the ghost in so much detail to build up tension & suspense - this is like the door knocker & walk upstairs

Dickens uses the church bell, the same one that 'peeped slyly' on Scrooge as he walked home from work - this reminds us Scrooge will be judged when he dies
The description of the ghost is contradictory because it is like a child but like an old man at the same time.
- long white hair but unwrinkled face with the skin having a youthful glow
- strong & muscular yet delicate
These contradictions are explained when we realise this is the Ghost of Scrooge's past... therefore having his physical properties from his youth 'tenderest bloom' but he is now old and it's been a long time since Scrooge was this child.

The physical properties of the ghost also resembles the childhood memories - the memories are old but made up of youthful moments. The clothes the ghost wears continues this idea as it holds a holly branch symbolising winter but the robe is trimmed with summer flowers.

Even though it's dark, Scrooge can see clearly because the ghost has a shining light from its head 'a bright jet of clear light'. The ghost itself is also a source of light, parts of the body glow then fade. - Scrooge can't stand the light and asks him to put his hat back on = Scrooge is uncomfortable with the ghost & the 'pure' truthful light (that usually relates to childhood) being exposed (is he scared??? does he recognise the difference in himself???) - Dickens uses the sunny light of Christmas morning to symbolise new hope for Scrooge later in the novel

The elaborate and fantastical description creates a clear image so the reader can visualise & somehow makes the ghost seem more real.

The ghost's voice is 'soft & gentle' = sounds distanced / far away (remember it is the past)

Scrooge tries to regain his security / get the upper hand by demanding why the ghost is there - we learn the ghost is there for Scrooge's welfare but Scrooge isn't convinced by this response and thinks a good night's sleep will be better. The ghost seems to mind read what Scrooge is thinking and responds with 'your reclamation' (to get something back) - this is stronger & reminds us of Scrooge's selfish path.

The ghost takes Scrooge by the hand to the window - Scrooge is frightened - but no point in him struggling - the grip is gentle but 'not to be resisted' - this reminds us of the power of the memory & perhaps of fate too.
The Ghost of Christmas past takes Scrooge to the countryside where he grew up. It's fields & clean air = contrast to city life Scrooge lives in now. - country = happiness, city = unhappiness (poverty)

Dickens presents this as an idyllic scene away from the dirt and pollution of London & the grief and greed that is found everywhere.

Scrooge responds immediately to seeing the countryside - his lips tremble, his voice has a catch to it - the ghost suggests maybe Scrooge is crying. - This is strange he can change so quickly & this is different behaviour to what we've seen so far... we could start to re-assess our response to him but have to remember what we already know about how he treats people etc. - this shows Scrooge still has emotions in him & has humanity.

Again personification & pathetic fallacy are used to create the atmosphere & emphasise the contrast between the countryside & city. Boys are laughing & having fun and these shouts echo in the field 'the crisp air laughed to hear it' - this suggests the air is so full of joy at the sound of laughter that it's like the air laughs too = a happy, joyful atmosphere in the country.

The boys are running home from the school they stay in during term time. One child has not gone home for Christmas... Scrooge. Scrooge reacts emotionally to this because he was that boy... - the narrator allows us to work that out ourselves = this makes us involved more & increase our sympathy for him.

The short statements 'Scrooge said he knew it. And he sobbed' are moving & the lack of detail shows Scrooge is too upset to talk about it - this shows a contrast of Scrooge's emotional state from Stave 1.

The lonely boy does have some comfort - the books he is reading, the characters from them - this emphasises the power of the imagination & shows the comfort fantasy can bring. Scrooge is animated as he comments on all the characters. Seeing his own childhood, makes Scrooge regret the way he treated the carol singer he chased away in Stave 1.
Stave Two: The first of the Three Spirits

- we learn... the ghost of Christmas past shows Scrooge how he spent Christmas at school when he was a child
Scrooge's sister, Fan, arrives to take Scrooge home after persuading their dad
the old Scrooge responds emotionally to these memories

The ghost takes Scrooge to see another Christmas, it's the same room but years later as the room is shabbier.

Scrooge's younger sister, Fan, darts in changing the atmosphere as she is excited & happy. She has come to collect Scrooge so he can join the family at Christmas... this is a touching scene & made even more so when we learn that the only reason that Scrooge was left at school at Christmas was because his dad didn't want him home.

Fan tells Scrooge that their father has changed and their home is described as 'heaven' - the idea that the father has changed suggests Scrooge can change too.

To top it all, we are told that Scrooge won't have to return to school... he is 'to be a man' suggesting he will be apprenticed and learn a trade.

Scrooge & Fan have some poor quality cake & wine with the school master before they go - it is a humorous scene as the cake is heavy & the wine is light when cake is meant to be light and wine is meant to have depth - the adverb 'curiously' used to describe this by the narrator reminds us that it is the narrator telling the events.

When the young children leave the scene, the ghost speaks of Fan. We see enthusiasm form Scrooge and we see real love for her. When the ghost reminds Scrooge that Fan is dead but she has a son, Fred, from Stave 1 (his nephew) Scrooge becomes uneasy... showing he is regretting how he treated Fred - just like the carol singer too. It is reconnecting with past feelings of sadness & happiness that allows Scrooge to begin to feel sympathy to others.

We learn Scrooge's childhood wasn't good and he was unhappy but loved his sister... This is the first time Dickens uses the symbol of a child to encourage good feelings in people - Tiny Tim is a later example.
Stave Two: The first of the Three Spirits - we learn... Scrooge was apprenticed by Fezziwig Fezziwig & his whole family through a Christmas party everyone has a good time but the ghost asks why everyone is so grateful when the party cost so little? Scrooge defends Fezziwig & explains how much happiness he has given

The contrast with Christmas at Fezziwig's and the Christmas in Scrooge's office is massive. Everyone is working hard at Fezziwig's but at 7 o'clock, Fezziwig declares that everyone must stop working so they can have their Christmas party. Fezziwig is an attractive character, his voice is 'comfortable, oily, rich, fat, jovial' which gives a sense of plenty... he could be made off putting but the description of his movements 'laughed all over himself' and 'wonderful agility' makes him lively & warm.

The family join the party & are described in the same way too... we learn they invite everyone to their party 'boy from over the way' 'girl from next door but one' = showing us that not everyone's boss is as kind & behaves in the same way... This shows Fezziwig only throws a party because he is kind and cares about others.

As the party ends, Mr & Mrs Fezziwig say bye to every guest showing that they are not too important to speak to people who don't work for them. 2 apprentices, Scrooge & Dick sleep in the back of the shop = reminding us what working conditions were like.

Fezziwig isn't a rich employer & has to run his business every day but he has thrown a party out of choice to show he cares & appreciates his employees. -Here we see Scrooge did have happy times & should treat Bob Cratchit and his family in this manner.

Scrooge has enjoyed every moment of seeing the party & temporarily forgets the ghost is there. To provoke Scrooge, the ghost dismisses what Fezziwig achieved as 'A small matter...to make these silly folks so full of gratitude' The ghost points out that the party didn't cost much but Scrooge & Dick spent all night praising Fezziwig.

Scrooge defends Fezziwig saying happiness doesn't have a monetary value, it's the fact Fezziwig chose to throw the party & spend time with his workers that makes the difference. The value of personal contribution over financial aid is emphasised here... the reader is guided to Scrooge's behaviour to Bob Cratchit... Scrooge is starting to regret it.
Stave Two: The first of the Three Spirits

- we learn... Scrooge had a fiancee, Belle
  Scrooge's face reveals his love for money
  Belle splits up with Scrooge as she says he loves money more than her
  Belle marries someone else & has a loving family & a happy life

The final memory is Scrooge meeting Belle, the woman he was engaged to. - we are given a clear description of Scrooge's appearance to highlight his cares and concerns. 'There was an eager, greedy, restless motion in the eye, which showed the passion that had taken root' the 'passion' is the love of money - this is responsible for turning Scrooge into the miserly old man we met at the start of the novel.

Belle breaks off their engagement saying Scrooge loves money more than her. She refers to money as his 'idol' (fake god / focus of worship) - here we see his totally different to how he was when being apprenticed at Fezziwig's... we are interested as to what has made him change so much.

We learn Scrooge had ambition to achieve success in the world & once he wanted to succeed for both him and Belle but now he is selfish when Belle states the 'nobler aspirations' have gone leaving only 'the master passion, Gain' We learn that Scrooge isn't the man Belle fell in love with anymore and we learn that Belle knows she is now not the sort of woman Scrooge values because she is still poor. - she leaves him wishing him happiness 'in the life you have chosen' - showing Scrooge had chances & a choice of path but greed got in the way of happiness, so he chose money.

This scene obviously affects Scrooge as he calls it 'torture' but the Ghost goes on to show Belle, older, with a daughter who is the age Belle was in the previous scene - she is at home & happy, she has a loving family & the room is full of energy & laughter.

This isn't Scrooge's memory but it is to show him what he could have had if he had chosen the other path... to make matters worse, Belle's husband said he saw Scrooge in his counting house all alone 'quite alone in the world' - the contrast is effective & the point is clear... love of money can destroy human love.

Scrooge can't bare this final scene & begs to be taken from it... he struggles with the ghost like people struggle with bad memories. Eventually, Scrooge seizes the Ghost's hat and pulls it down so the light from the Ghost's head can't be seen any more... the ghost vanishes & Scrooge falls asleep again. - The hat represents all the negative emotions Scrooge has collected since he was an innocent child... memories only go if you force it hence him forcing the hat over the ghost = making him go away.
In the allegory of 'A Christmas Carol,' the Ghost of Christmas Past represents memory.

The aged appearance of the childlike figure touches on the role of memory as a force that connects the different stages of a person's life. His glowing head suggests the illuminating power of the mind. The ghost initiates Scrooge's conversion from anti-Christmas grinch to a poster boy for the holiday season. Each episode in the montage of scenes shows a younger Scrooge who still possesses the ability to love, a person who is still in touch with his fellow human beings.

As the visions pass before him, Scrooge watches himself become ever more cold and greedy until the ultimate scenes. His all-consuming lust for money destroys his love for Belle and completes his reversion to a niggardly venomous recluse. The tour through his memories forces Scrooge to recall the emotional episodes of his past.

This dreamlike series of hallucinatory home movies brings the otherwise hardened man to tears. This breakdown and the reconnection with his feeling self initiates the process of melting away Scrooge's cold bah-humbug exterior.

An important aspect of 'A Christmas Carol' (which is probably today's most popular Christmas tale, save for the seminal holiday story of Christ's birth) is its modern view of Christmas as a joyous holiday rather than as a solemn holy day. Eschewing the religious ideals of asceticism and austerity, the story promotes the more earthly values of universal brotherhood, communal good spirit, and prosperous celebration. It is not immoral to possess riches or to throw lavish Christmas party or to enjoy a great feast, precisely because these things have the potential to spread joy and happiness--the purpose of the holiday season.

One violates the Christmas spirit of goodwill when his desire for material pleasure--money, luxuries, sex--prevents them him from sharing himself with others. Dickens first sketches this perspective on moral standards with the Christmas party at Fezziwig's shop, which includes an exhilarating dance that bears little relation to the Birth of Christ or the Christian tradition. The religious underpinnings of Christmas are always present in the story's backdrop--like the church clock that keeps time throughout the tale--but, in general, Dickens uses them to refine and reflect his more contemporary conception of the holiday and his commentary on the plight of the poor.
Stave Three:

The Second of the Three Spirits
Scrooge wakes up suddenly & knows another ghost is going to turn up so opens his bed curtains so he can see the ghost arrive... so it won't scare him. This behaviour is like Scrooge's earlier actions, he wants to be in control of everything that happens - this is the first time we learn that the visit from the Ghost of Christmas Past hasn't changed Scrooge very much at all. - he has not been shocked enough to change his ways permanently

Scrooge's true feelings are shown when the bell strikes one and he is 'taken with a violent fit of trembling'

Scrooge sees a light coming from the next room. When he goes into the room it is transformed, it has greenery from plants such as holly & mistletoe... there is a great fire in the fire place - bigger than any fire Scrooge has ever had. The descriptions of plenty are like others in the text. There is lots of food piled up acting as a throne for the ghost. The ghost has a torch of fire.

Scrooge's determination not to be afraid has gone... he enters the room 'timidly' and looks at the ghost 'reverently' these adverbs make us feel sorry for Scrooge & shows us that he is capable of being humble.

The Ghost speaks kindly and asks Scrooge if he has seen any of his brothers - we learn there are more than eighteen hundred (Christmases since the birth of Jesus)

Scrooge's mean side is shown when he responds by saying he wonders how much it costs to provide for so many people.

Scrooge knows the ghost is going to take him on a journey so asks the Ghost to do as he will.
Stave Three: The second of the Three Spirits
- we learn... The weather is bad outside but people are full of joy
  There is a sense of excess & celebration in the city
  People who can't afford their own ovens take their Christmas meals
to be cooked at the bakers
  The Ghost sprinkles incense on meals & people
  Scrooge questions the reason for closing everything on Sundays

Scrooge is taken to the city where the weather is still bad with snow everywhere. However, people get on clearing it... The narrator likens the sound of the work to music - suggesting when many people share work, it can be joyful.

In contrast with this impression, the houses & windows are black from the soot from chimneys & factories which covered London. - The pure and 'smooth white sheet of snow upon the roofs' is also contrasted with the soot & the dirty snow on the street from wagons & carts. - this could represent class too - white = rich, black = poor

The narrator goes on to highlight the problems of soot & smog even in the summer - this is a key concern at the time Dickens wrote this.

The people clearing the snow are jovial - they throw the occasional snowball & are laughing... the narrator creates a real sense of community (working together)

The detailed descriptions (long list of adjectives) of the shops being full of Christmas goods & foods still relate to Christmas time today.

We see the difference in living conditions when the church bell rings and the 'good people' are called to church. The term 'good' can only be applied to the people who have the means to go to church e.g people who employed others to cook & clean for them. - we learn those who can't cook Christmas dinner at home took them to the bakers.

The Ghost doesn't go to the church, he goes to the baker's instead. He sprinkles incense from his torch on them when they are angry & their dinners as he suggests the poor need support & intervention more than those who were in the church... this comment makes Scrooge question the call to stop all work on a Sunday as it would 'cramp those people's opportunities of innocent enjoyment' by depriving 'them of their means of dining every seventh day'
Stave Three: The second of the Three Spirits

- we learn... It is Christmas day & Mrs Cratchit & some Cratchit children are preparing for their Christmas meal with excitement

Bob returns from church with Tiny Tim on his shoulders

The family enjoy their meal even though it isn't really enough for them

Scrooge is told Tiny Tim will die if the future doesn't change.

The Ghost takes Scrooge to the Cratchit's house where they are making an effort to make Christmas special.

The house is a 'four-roomed house' & is based on Dickens' home as a child.

Mrs Cratchit's gown has been mended & patched up many times - she has added ribbons to try and make it look better. He and her daughter are described as 'brave' in the ribbons added to their clothes - showing us they know they are cheap and therefore not well dressed but are making the most of their situation and what they have got.

The family is described with a sense of positive energy with all members of the family helping with the preparations of Christmas 'two smaller Cratchits...tearing and screaming...' shows the excitement about the goose which they cooked on an open fire because they didn't have an oven like many people. The narrator gently mocks their enthusiasm - they have no way of distinguishing the smell of their goose from all the others being cooked.

Our impression of the Cratchits is favourable due to their energy & enthusiasm - shown again by the children 'dancing around the table'

The sense of family fun continues when Bob returns from church with Tiny Tim. Martha, one of the daughters, hides and Mrs Cratchit joins in with the joke that Martha can't join them - this promotes the closeness of the family unit; something Scrooge is lacking. - their is happiness despite their social & financial position.
Stave Three: The second of the Three Spirits

- we learn... It is Christmas day & Mrs Cratchit & some Cratchit children are preparing for their Christmas meal with excitement.
  Bob returns from church with Tiny Tim on his shoulders.
  The family enjoy their meal even though it isn't really enough for them.
  Scrooge is told Tiny Tim will die if the future doesn't change.

Tiny Tim (one of Dickens' most famous characters) is introduced as a figure deserving sympathy - the narrator comments on him not being able to walk unaided before describing his personality. Tim has been to church and 'hoped the people saw him in the church, because he was a cripple, and it might be pleasant to them to remember upon Christmas Day who made lame beggars walk and blind men see' (Jesus - religious element at Christmas / celebration of his Birthday) - this shows his purity and innocence.

Tiny Tim is offered as a role model for children and adults - maybe a metaphor for the condition of the poor in society - he is not able to survive without external support... the support for him is the 'iron frame' and 'little crutch' - suggesting he is trapped & acting as a metaphor showing the poor could only survive by working in poorly paid jobs like Bob's - which allowed them to maintained their standard of living but never improve.

The Cratchits treat their meal as a feast but it's clear to the reader that it isn't really enough for them - it is 'eked out' meaning it's stretched to go further with many ingredients being cheaper in value so they could have a bit more.

The tiny pudding is praised by the family - no-one acknowledges how small it is = this shows they appreciate all they have, they have a sense of pride that they are surviving & achieving despite their social situation (poor).

The reality of Tiny Tim's poor health underlines all the enjoyment though - the message is clear that things need to change if he is going to survive... the ghost uses Scrooge's harsh words from earlier - this is to shame Scrooge into realising the role he has played in the Cratchit's poverty... the ghost questions the power that some people have assumed to 'decide what men shall live, what men shall die' - this is a strong speech that affects Scrooge & also relates to the theories of Thomas Malthus.

Finally, Bob proposes a toast to Scrooge 'the founder of the feast' as it's Scrooge's money that paid for the feast. Mrs Cratchit isn't as charitable as Bob as she knows his conditions of work. She has to be stopped saying what she thinks because the children are present... her function is to ensure the reader knows the irony of the toast when the Cratchits have been so overwhelmed by such a small feast.
Scrooge sees three future scenes… all the scenes have people full of hope at Christmas. The miners family are a 'cheerful company' they have all got their best clothes on and join the oldest member singing a song.

Beyond the shoreline 'a dismal reef of sunken rocks' two light house keepers turn their standard meal into a Christmas dinner & wish each other all the best for the season.

Finally, at sea, Scrooge is shown a ship… we see the sailors get hope from the idea of Christmas and all 'had a kinder word for one another on that day than any other day in the year' - these 3 images capture / present what Dickens thinks Christmas should be about. None of these people have material possessions that Scrooge can afford but they all have comfort from a sense of shared humanity & companionship (something Scrooge doesn't have)... these images reinforce the message from the Cratchit's family - Christmas is about valuing people rather than anything money can buy.

We see Fred behaving how he did at the start of the novel… he is cheerful & merry and refuses to be negative about anything or anyone. The scene is full of laughter. Fred recounts his meeting with Scrooge but decides 'his offences carry their own punishment' (he is lonely)... the scene is made humorous by the pursuit of Fred's sister in law by Topper... this saves this scene from being serious and just preaching a message to the reader, it lightens the atmosphere.

Scrooge is softened when he hears a tune his sister used to play or sing… he forgets himself and watches the children playing games - this reminds us that fun can be had without hurting people or spending money.

The group drink a toast to Scrooge just like the Cratchits did - this time it's because Scrooge has given them cause to laugh because of how he is… at this point, Scrooge is trying to actively participate in the scene… obviously he can't… the ghosts show him more scenes.
The Ghost is now visibly older & says his time is almost finished... (dying) Scrooge spots strange objects sticking out the bottom of his robe, he asks the Ghost about these... what looks like a claw is actually a bony foot of a small child (clearly underfed) We are introduced to a boy child, Ignorance & a girl child, Want. They are near death.

Their 'stale and shrivelled' state makes us think of bread or fruit with all the goodness out of it. Dickens' disturbing description likens these to clawed devils when they should be angels. This scene contrasts from the jovial ones seen with this ghost so far. This makes us take notice as it is so forceful.

Scrooge is told that these children are the creation of 'man' (society) - this includes the reader of this novel not just Scrooge.

We are told to 'beware of...both' but especially 'ignorance' (don't ignore the problems) many think 'want' is the issue because of greed but Dickens believed their was a need for education to get rid of want through knowledge. - he believed only through education could the cycle of poverty be broken as the poor could get better paid jobs so this would decrease poverty & crime.

These children are an example of Dickens promoting a direct social message... maybe it could be said that Scrooge is going through his own education = learning to see the consequences of his actions - Scrooge's ignorance is a direct cause of the Cratchit's 'want' and he must learn from this knowledge.
The Ghost of Christmas Present serves as the central symbol of the Christmas ideal—generosity, goodwill, and celebration. Appearing on a throne made of food, the spirit evokes thoughts of prosperity, satiety, and merriment. Similarly, the moral outlook of *A Christmas Carol* has little to do with the solemnity of a religious occasion. Christmas, in Dickens' mind, should not bring about self-denial, renunciation, or emotional withdrawal. Christmas is a time of sharing one's riches—emotional, spiritual, monetary, etc.—with the community of man. A feast is a wonderful thing but only if one has loved ones with whom to share it. In this sense, the Ghost of Christmas Present also represents empathy enabling Scrooge to not only see the Cratchits but to feel the sorrow and hardships of their daily toil. In essence, the celebratory aspects of Christmas that Dickens promotes are grounded in this empathetic generosity. Christmas should stimulate within people a concern for the wants and needs of others and a euphoric joy in fulfilling these desires.

The scene at Bob Cratchit's unassuming little abode is pivotal to the development of the novella. Dickens uses the opportunity to put forth a poignant criticism of the unfeeling members of a disconnected upper class and to present a highly sentimentalized portrait of the lower classes. This picture is designed to address and undermine Victorian class prejudice and awaken Dickens' readers to the harsh realities of poverty. In 1843, when *A Christmas Carol* was written, England had particularly stringent laws in governing the payment of debts and the condition of penury. These draconian rules forced many poor people into prisons and provisional workhouses. At the same time, many prominent politicians and theorists were attempting to justify these conditions with arguments designed to de-legitimize the rights of the underclass, a move that further hindered the ability of the poor to affect the governing of their own society.

Dickens was particularly disgusted with the writings of an economist named Thomas Robert Malthus, a wealthy man, who argued in his *Essay on the Principle of Population* (1798) that population growth would always outpace food supply resulting in unavoidable and catastrophic poverty and starvation. (His equations, long since debunked, postulate that population growth will occur according to a geometric sequence, while food supply will grow according to an arithmetic sequence.) In his pamphlet "The Crisis," Malthus supported the Poor Laws and the workhouses, arguing that any man unable to sustain himself had no right to live, much less participate in the development of society. Dickens alludes to Malthus in Stave One, when Scrooge echoes the economist's views on overpopulation in his rebuke of the portly gentlemen. The Cratchits are Dickens' defense against this large-scale, purely economic, almost inhuman mode of thought—a reminder that England's poor are all individuals, living beings with families and lives who could not and should not be swept behind a math equation like some numerical discrepancy.
Stave Four:
The Last of the Spirits
This Ghost is more sinister than the others. He is described as a 'Phantom' - 3 adverbs are used to clarify its arrival; these adverbs slow down the pace & establishes more of a grave, solemn tone, it 'slowly, gravely, silently' approached.

This Ghost does not wear the festive robe its 2 procedure did but is 'shrouded' in black - this alluding to death by creating the image of the 'grim reaper'. It is surrounded in darkness & can hardly be seen - Scrooge feels the Ghost's presence rather than sees it. - we can't see it as it is the future = unknown

The Ghost doesn’t speak but points the way. Scrooge provides the commentary here... we learn that these images are what might be if events continue as they are.

We see a changed Scrooge before he even sees any of the sights. He is nervous and can hardly stand. He finds it unnerving that the Ghost can see him but he can't see the Ghost. However, he understand that he needs to learn the lessons he is about to receive. = this is a very different character from the one we met, he has already resolved to 'live to be another man from what I was' - this makes us wonder why he has to see what this Ghost is about to show him.

Scrooge is first taken to a group of businessmen in the City of London, by the Exchange, where Scrooge himself works. The Ghost stops so Scrooge can overhear their conversation about a colleague who has died. - the men wonder why this colleague died & what he did with his money; this showing their concern is for self-interest - asking if their will be a good lunch at the funeral; if there is, they will go - showing they aren't really bothered about the person.

A second group of men talk about the death of 'old Scratch' then go on to talk about the weather - this showing again that no-one is bothered that this person has died.
Scrooge verbally says what we are thinking about these conversations 'assured that they must have some hidden purpose' - he can't think who they are talking about - but is sure it will become clear. - Scrooge & the reader having a mystery in the form of clues to solve is a typical part of ghost stories & helps engage the reader.

We are faster than Scrooge and quicker to work out that the dead man they are talking about is Scrooge. - Scrooge doesn't realise and thinks he was absent from 'his accustomed corner' because he has changed his ways after seeing the ghosts. - we know that this is what will happen if Scrooge doesn't change his ways & if he wants to be remembered, he must act positively.

Scrooge & the Ghost move to a poorer part of London that has a bad reputation... The adjectives are piled up so it creates a shocking sense of despair & horror - the streets are 'foul and narrow; the shops and houses wretched; the people half naked, drunken, slipshod, ugly' the smells are bad & 'the whole quarter reeked with crime, with filth, with misery' - there is crime here too; something Dickens believes is related to poverty.

3 people enter a dark, dirty shop; they have brought items to sell to old Joe, the man who runs the shop. They recognise each other because they have all stolen their items from the dead man (that the rich men were talking about) - they justify the theft as taking care of themselves (remember no-one else does) as the dead man always took care of himself when alive. They don't see that anyone has suffered from their thefts because the man died with no-one caring for him, so no-one will miss him or his possessions.

On face value, these views seem logical but these attitudes shock the reader as they are so harsh & uncaring in the same way Scrooge's cruel sentiments about the poor could be seen in certain lights.
Stave Four: The Last of the Spirits

- we learn... The Ghost of Christmas Yet to Come appears... it does not speak but points the way
Businessmen in the City discuss a colleague who has died, they don't care about his death.
Thieves meet to sell items they have stolen from the dead man
A young couple are given hope that they will have longer to repay a loan because this man has died

Scrooge's reaction is horror; he shudders, identifying with the plight of the dead man who has lived his life similar to Scrooge. - Scrooge is still yet to realise that this is his future they are talking about.

The scene changes & Scrooge sees the corpse of the man. The Ghost points to the covered head & although Scrooge could draw back the sheet and see the face, Scrooge doesn't have the courage to do it. The Ghost points again to heighten the suspense but Scrooge still won't remove the sheet.

Scrooge is shaken by the uncaring way this man has been treated - he asks to see someone who cares about this man's passing - Scrooge is shown a young couple who are emotional, not in an upset way but thanks to relief from the news they have heard. The dead man had leant them money but they were struggling to pay it back - the man had refused extra time to pay the debt. The man had gone to ask the man for an extension to find he had died, even though the debt will be passed onto someone else, it will take time (something they wanted originally - to save more money) As a consequence, the news of the man's death is good for them... the couple are a good hearted couple because they are embarrassed by their response to the death but his death gives them hope.

The ghost is showing Scrooge how his money is no use to him when he dies... in fact, it is shown as a target for thieves who justify their actions because of his meanness & his ex colleagues want to know what's happened to the money and don't care for the man (Scrooge) at all.
This is a famous scene that provides a stark contrast with the death we have already seen in this stave. Tiny Tim's death is foreshadowed by the Ghost, for if things don't change, he will die. The energetic family from the previous stave are now 'Quiet. Very quiet' and the children are 'as still as statues' - Mrs Cratchit is trying not to cry - they are all trying to carry on but it's obvious that the loss of Tiny Tim has affected them greatly. - They discuss the change in Bob and how he now walks slow - indicating his sorrow

When Bob appears, the emotional nature of the scene is increased - we are made to suffer his loss too. Bob has been to the graveyard and found a spot for Tim. We learn that Bob has promised Tim that he will walk there every Sunday... He breaks down in tears & the narrator excuses this because it shows the bond between father and son. - Bob goes upstairs to sit with his son's body = seeking comfort from being close to him & thinking of their memories.

When Bob comes down stairs, he tells the family of Fred's kindness. Bob saw him in the street and Fred asked after him and his family  but Bob takes this as the greatest kindness - this reminds us of Dickens' message that it is important to look out for one another & provide emotional support.

Bob turns the family's grief into support & consolation by reminding them of Tiny Tim & promising that they should not forget him. He proposes using the qualities of Tiny Tim to help them become better people & we see them as a strong family unit.

This scene is typical of Victorian literature - making the reader feel the emotion too. - this is an important contrast to the end of the novel as it shows what could happen and not guaranteed to happen if Scrooge changes his ways.
Scrooge is filled with dread & finally faces up to what the reader has already worked out - Scrooge asks who the dead man is - the Ghost does not speak but shows him his office & a gravestone.

Scrooge hasn't worked out that the scenes are about what will happen if the present remains unchained. As Scrooge has already vowed to change, he thinks he will be able to see the new, improved Scrooge.

Scrooge recognises his office and asks to look in to 'behold what I shall be in days to come' This lack of understanding that he is the dead man, means that when he realises, the horror is even greater. Scrooge sees his office furniture is different & someone else is working there. The narrator doesn't comment on what this means, but the reader works it out before Scrooge does.

Scrooge is shown a graveyard and he realises he is about to learn the identity of the dead man. The grave is overgrown = no-one cares so no-one looks after it; this is in contrast to what Tiny Tim's grave would be like. Scrooge gets nervous and asks if these 'shadows' are certain to happen or can they be changed - he is starting to guess the truth at this point...

These questions and the silence from the Ghost, helps build up the tension & suspense and make the revelation of the name on the grave even more dramatic. When Scrooge reads the name, he falls to his knees horrified at what his future currently holds. This is the final jolt Scrooge needs to change his ways & transform his character.

Scrooge promises to change his ways so he may 'sponge away the writing on this stone' - the shock & horror has been so great for him that we believe he truly means what he says. Scrooge tries to grab the Ghost's hand, out of desperation he grasps it for a brief time but the Ghost is stronger. With both hands free, Scrooge puts them together in prayer & sees the Ghost's shape change until it vanishes & Scrooge is then looking at his bed sheets; he is home.
Within the tale, the silent, reaper-like figure of the Ghost of Christmas Yet to Come represents the fear of death, which refracts Scrooge's lessons about memory, empathy, and generosity, insuring his reversion to an open, loving human being.

In 'A Christmas Carol,' the fear of death connotes the anticipation of moral reckoning and the inevitable dispensation of punishment and reward--literally the split between heaven and hell.

In this way, the Ghost of Christmas Yet to Come briefly interjects a more somber, strictly Christian perspective into the secularized tale.

This serves to remind Scrooge of Jacob Marley's fate, the horrific consequences of greed and selfishness--a fate that will doom Scrooge, as well, unless he can change his ways.
Stave Five:
The End of it
Stave Five: The End of it
- we learn... Scrooge wakes & finds everything as he left it
  He is overwhelmed at having a chance to put things right & is delighted at everything he sees
  He arranges for a prize turkey to be sent to the Cratchits
  On his way to church, Scrooge makes a large donation to the church collectors he sent away the day before

The atmosphere & tone of this Stave is hugely different to Stave 4 = showing us the extent of Scrooge's changed character. The short exclamations that make up the narration & dialogue help to create a sense of joy & wonder and underpin Scrooge's happiness at being given a second chance. Scrooge can hardly speak because he is excited.

Scrooge delights in all he sees, from the bed curtains, which are not torn down, to the saucepans he cooked his gruel in. Humour is created in the description of him putting his clothes on inside out & by the language Scrooge uses. - he uses a string of similes 'light as a feather' 'as merry as a school boy' 'as giddy as a drunken man' - these light hearted images capture Scrooge's emotions vividly & emphasises the extent he has changed - hr now revels in the feelings he is having where he would have rejected them in the first Stave.

Scrooge starts laughing, this reminding us of Fred's good humour & we are told that this is the first of much laughter to come 'the father of a long, long line of brilliant laughs' - he is such a different person, he doesn't realise what day it is (Christmas Day) for Scrooge, this is the equivalent of a rebirth 'I'm quite a baby' - this relates to the Christian idea of being born again when the path of Christ is accepted & reminds the reader that in the Christian religion, all previous sins can be forgiven if you repent & try not to repeat them. - This means Scrooge's past wrong-doings are forgiven & he can start again... this religious significance is underlined by the church bell ringing again (remember this is like God watching his actions)

The contrast between the new Scrooge and the old one is highlighted more by the changed weather. - pathetic fallacy is used again to show us Scrooge's new 'sunny dispositions' (the fog & mist have gone)... now it is 'clear, bright, jovial, stirring; cold, piping for the blood to dance to; golden sunlight; heavenly sky; sweet fresh air; merry bells' - this list conveys a positive atmosphere - a contrast to the opening of the novel.
Stave Five: The End of it

- we learn... Scrooge wakes & finds everything as he left it
  He is overwhelmed at having a chance to put things right & is delighted at everything he sees
  He arranges for a prize turkey to be sent to the Cratchits
  On his way to church, Scrooge makes a large donation to the church collectors he sent away the day before

Scrooge has the chance to put right some of the wrongs he did on the previous day (Christmas Eve) - he first sees a young boy and Scrooge asks him what day it is... Scrooge is delighted to hear it is Christmas day, realising that all the Ghosts' visits took place in one night... this again relates to the supernatural events of the story.

Scrooge asks the boy to go and buy the big prize turkey that was hanging in the poulterer's window & offers to pay the boy. - the boy's response shows how generous this offer must be... he was 'off like a shot'

Scrooge intends to send the turkey to the Cratchits but doesn't want them to know it is from him - the fact he doesn't want the praise shows us he is doing it for the Cratchits rather than for himself = a big change in him.

Scrooge goes downstairs and waits for the turkey - he notices the door knocker & claims he shall 'love it as long as I live' - this shows he isn't acting in fear but welcomes his new way of life & is enjoying it. It is important that we, as the reader, see that acting this way is more satisfying & rewarding than being selfish... when this turkey arrives, Scrooge's generosity continues as he pays for a cab so the turkey can be delivered... he laughs as he spends his money.

Scrooge carries on getting ready to go out - he is excited & can't stop dancing... Scrooge goes out and sees people in the manner shown by the Ghost of Christmas Present... he smiles at everyone - some people wish him a 'merry Christmas' - Scrooge is so pleased by this, he starts saying this to others.

Scrooge sees one of the charity collectors that he was rude to the day before... he feels a 'pang across his heart' thinking what the man must think of him - Scrooge decides to put his wrongs right - he goes to the gentleman & offers him a large amount of money... he doesn't pay for one year but includes 'back-payments' to make up for his mean, selfish years... again Scrooge regrets thanks = showing he sees this charity as his duty.
Scrooge spends the morning at church & then walks around the city, gaining pleasure from all he sees.

In the afternoon, he walks to Fred's house, to accept the offer of spending Christmas with him that he so rudely rejected the day before... he is nervous about going in & walks up and down outside the house before having the courage to knock at the door. - this shows that part of the change in Scrooge is a new worry for what people think / feel about him (where as before he didn't care)

Scrooge is welcomed into the house with joy 'it's a mercy [Fred] didn't shake his arm off' - and we are told that he 'was at home in five minutes'

The other people that Scrooge saw with the Ghost of Christmas Present, joins them and they all have a 'wonderful' day. - 'wonderful' is repeated four times to emphasise this point.
Stave Five: The End of it

- we learn... Scrooge is at the office early on Boxing Day
  He raises Bob's salary & offers to help Tiny Tim & the family
  Scrooge gains a reputation for being a generous & good man
  Tiny Tim survives

The next day (Boxing day) Scrooge is desperate to see Bob Cratchit so he can help him & his family so he arrives early... Bob is late (a traditional thing for workers on Boxing day) - he is very nervous about being late because the Scrooge he knows (at this point) would have been extremely angry.

As a sign of how much Scrooge has changed, he plays a joke on Bob... he tries to act how he used to... growling in his accustomed voice as near as he could feign (pretend) it' - Scrooge can't speak how he used to because he is so full of laughter & happiness now... he can't keep the joke up for long & tells Bob he is going to raise his salary - as this is so unlike Scrooge, Bob can't understand this & thinks Scrooge has gone mad & will have to call for 'help and a strait-waistcoat'

The novel now races to an end (which is typical of this sort of fiction) - once it is established that Scrooge is now a transformed character, we are told of all the good deeds he does & time moves swiftly on... there's no need to give full details of his actions because by now we can tell Scrooge is going to change... we are just told that he 'was better than his word' - allowing us to imagine how he helps the Cratchits even more than he promised... The fact that Tiny Tim 'did not die' emphasises the change in Scrooge - Scrooge becomes a second father to him = a term reminiscent of God's position as 'holy father' in Christian belief.

We are left with a comforting & rounded picture of this changed man; the term 'good' is used to describe Scrooge several times - this emphasises his new character... Even though 'some people laughed to see the alteration in him' Scrooge didn't care - this showing his belief & commitment to his new life... Scrooge now values laughter that much, he prefers they laugh at him than not laughing at all.

We are left with the narrator's summary of him as a man who was regarded as knowing 'how to keep Christmas well' & who never saw the Ghosts again... This suggests that Scrooge didn't dwell on his past mistakes but embraced his new life... We are left with Tiny Tim's famous words 'God bless Us, Every One!' to remind us of the Christian message of this story... Tiny Tim having the last words reminds us that Scrooge saved him & Tiny Tim represents life & hope for us all.

The events proceed quicker at the end to show Scrooge is full of joy so life races by for him now (unlike the start when he was bored & everything dragged)
This short closing Stave provides an optimistic and upbeat conclusion to the story, showing the new Ebenezer Scrooge starting off his new life with a comic display of happiness and Christmas cheer. It also rounds out the symmetrical structure of the novella, as Scrooge encounters, in sequence, the same people he treated with cruelty in Stave One. Only this time, the newly reborn Scrooge sheds his grumpy bah humbugs in favor of warm holiday greetings. He sends a turkey to the Cratchits and gives Bob a raise, atoning for his previous bitterness toward his clerk in Stave One. Scrooge also asks Bob to order more heating coals where previously, in Stave One, he forced Bob to suffer in the cold. He apologizes to the portly gentleman he meets on the street and pledges lavish contributions for his charity, where in Stave One he threw him out of his counting-house. Scrooge also happily attends Fred's party, where, before the ghostly visits, he had told Fred that he would see him in hell before coming to the party.

The last comment holds a great deal of significance in Stave Five, as Scrooge has quite literally escaped hell by going to the party—or rather, by experiencing the moral conversion that compels him to look fondly on the holiday gathering. He is quite literally a saved man and the story of his redemptions ends with a note of extraordinary optimism. The famous last words of the novel—"God bless us, Every one!"—conveys perfectly the fellow feeling and good cheer to which Scrooge awakens as his story unfolds and that 'A Christmas Carol' so vehemently celebrates.