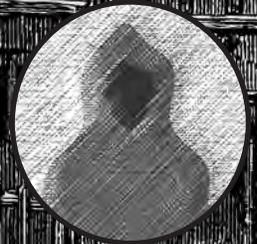


A Christmas Carol

Study Guide

by Rebecca Gilleland

For the novel by
Charles Dickens



CD Version



Progeny Press

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A Christmas Carol Study Guide
A Progeny Press Study Guide
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Table of Contents

Study Guide Author	3
Peer Review Panel	4
Note to Instructor	6
Synopsis	7
About the Novel's Author	8
Background Information	9
Ideas for Pre-reading Activities	13
Stave One	14
Stave Two	21
Stave Three	27
Stave Four	33
Stave Five	37
Overview	41
Suggestions for Essays	46
Ideas for Projects	48
Additional Resources	49
Answer Key	51

Synopsis

Ebenezer Scrooge is a hard-hearted, stingy, grouchy old man. He is unfriendly to his nephew, cruel to his employee, and verbally abusive to charity collectors.

On Christmas Eve, the ghost of his old partner, Jacob Marley, appears to Scrooge to warn him to change his ways. Bound in chains and tormented by his mistakes, Marley tells Scrooge that he will be visited by three Spirits. These Spirits offer Scrooge a chance to escape the same fate as Marley.

The Spirits take Scrooge on a journey through his past, his present, and his possible future. Scrooge suddenly sees what he is—and even more importantly, what he is not.

As Scrooge learns, our lives are guided by what we deem important, and all we choose to do affects those around us. We must choose with wisdom and love.

Stave Three

Vocabulary:

In the blank provided, write the letter of the word or phrase that comes closest to defining the vocabulary word.

- _____ 1. petrification
a. become dead/stony
b. example
c. softening

- _____ 2. compulsion
a. agreement
b. feeling
c. pressure

- _____ 3. genial
a. slow
b. general
c. good-natured

- _____ 4. demeanor
a. unfriendly
b. behavior
c. singing

A Christmas Carol Study Guide

- _____ 5. officious
 - a. meddling
 - b. awful
 - c. careful

- _____ 6. credulity
 - a. chair
 - b. gullibility
 - c. sadness

- _____ 7. ubiquitous
 - a. loud
 - b. everywhere at once
 - c. limited

- _____ 8. livid
 - a. pale, ashen
 - b. terrified
 - c. alive

- _____ 9. heresy
 - a. error, falseness
 - b. embarrassment
 - c. truth

- _____ 10. penitence
 - a. rebelliousness
 - b. illness
 - c. remorse

A Christmas Carol Study Guide

- _____ 11. adamant
a. lost
b. inflexible
c. admiring
- _____ 12. odious
a. hateful
b. ugly
c. smelly
- _____ 13. exulted
a. laughed
b. rejoiced
c. frowned
- _____ 14. execrable
a. clever
b. bad
c. silly

Questions:

1. How is Scrooge's room transformed by the arrival of the Ghost of Christmas Present?

2. What is a "twice-turned" gown? What does it mean that Mrs. Cratchit and her daughter are "brave" in ribbons? What do these details convey?

A Christmas Carol Study Guide

3. The Spirit reveals that Tiny Tim will die “[i]f these shadows remain unaltered by the Future.” Why is Scrooge “overcome with penitence and grief”?
4. According to Scrooge’s nephew, Fred, who always suffers from Scrooge’s “ill whims”?

Analysis:

5. *Humor* in writing taps into the human disposition to laugh at the ridiculous, the ludicrous, and the comical. *Hyperbole* is exaggeration used for humorous effect. How does Dickens use humor and hyperbole to help the reader understand how frightened Scrooge is of the second Spirit? Cite specific examples.
6. What does the incense from the Spirit’s torch seem to represent?
7. *Foreshadowing* is a hint or a clue an author gives to suggest something that may happen later in the story. What might Dickens be foreshadowing in this passage: “Bob’s voice . . . trembled more when he said that Tiny Tim was growing strong and hearty”?

A Christmas Carol Study Guide

8. *Juxtaposition* is the act of placing two things side by side. An author uses juxtaposition to underscore the distinctive characteristics of two people, things, or places. For example, Dickens juxtaposes the setting of black house fronts, furrowed streets, gloom, dingy mist, and soot with the cheerfulness of the people in the houses, emphasizing the contrast. Find another example of juxtaposition in Stave Three.

9. The Ghost of Christmas Present states that he lives only until Twelfth-Night. What is Twelfth-Night? Why does the Ghost only live that long?

10. *Personification* gives human form to abstractions. How does Dickens personify ignorance and want (poverty) in Stave Three? Why do you think he chooses to personify these abstractions as he does?

Dig Deeper:

11. Of the Cratchit's Christmas celebration, the narrator states:

There was nothing of high mark in this. . . . But they were happy, grateful, pleased with one another, and contented with the time. . . .”

A Christmas Carol Study Guide

Despite having barely enough to fill everyone at the meal, every Cratchit is thankful and refrains from even hinting that the pudding is small. Why?

Read Philippians 4:12–13. What does Paul say is the “secret” of being “content in any and every situation”?

12. The Spirit takes Scrooge from place to place and to many homes. What personal qualities or traits are demonstrated for Scrooge through these encounters?

Read Galatians 5:22–23. What are the fruits of the Spirit listed in this passage? Compare this list to the list you made in the previous question. What are their similarities and differences?

To what extent can we cultivate these qualities in ourselves, and to what extent are they gifts from God?

A Christmas Carol Study Guide

Stave Five

Vocabulary:

1. blithe: carefree and lighthearted
2. unanimity: sharing the same opinions or views; being in complete harmony or accord
3. dispelled: to rid one's mind of; to drive away or off; as if by scattering
4. malady: disease, a disorder, or an ailment; an unwholesome condition.
5. recompensed: to award compensation for; make a return for; recompensed their injuries.
6. amends: paid back for grievance or injury, restitution.
7. illustrious: well known and very distinguished; eminent.

Questions:

1. Answers will vary. Scrooge realizes that he now has time to make amends. The fate shown to him by the last Ghost may be avoided. "[T]he shadows of the things that would have been may be dispelled." He is a changed man.
2. Scrooge has a huge turkey "twice the size of Tiny Tim" sent to the Cratchit home.
3. Scrooge wants to trick Bob by pretending to be as mad and hard as he used to be, then surprising him with a raise in his salary and assistance for his family.
4. Scrooge rewards the young boy whom he sends to the butcher's shop (perhaps to atone for his treatment of the young caroler on Christmas Eve); he makes a generous donation to the charitable workers whom he had previously turned away; and he accepts Fred's invitation to dinner.

Analysis:

5. Laocoön is a character in Vergil's *Aeneid*. He was a Trojan priest who was strangled by sea snakes. Dickens is imagining Scrooge nearly strangled by his stockings.
6. Answers will vary. Perhaps, for the first time in many years, Scrooge is not preoccupied with thoughts of his business or his money. He is seeing everything as if it is new to him.
7. Scrooge knows most good is laughed at to begin with, and some people do not know good. He also knows that what he has gained is much more important than meeting some people's definition of "dignified." "His own heart laughed and that was enough for him." Answers to personal application question will vary.
8. Dickens is referring to the Spirits as though they are alcoholic "spirits." Someone abiding by the "Total Abstinence Principle" pledges never to drink any alcohol. Scrooge, in this case, gives up ghostly Spirits forever.

Dig Deeper:

9. Romans 12:13 links hospitality with sharing with "God's people who are in need." 1 Peter 4:9–10 instructs hospitality to be given "without grumbling," and links it to serving others. Fred and his wife are examples of true hospitality because their invitations to Scrooge were never dependent upon his merit; rather, Fred recognized that his uncle was "in need" of love and acceptance. They welcomed Scrooge when he finally changed his mind, and they did so gladly.
10. In 2 Corinthians 5:17 Paul states that life "in Christ" makes a believer "a new creation," forgiven and charged with "the ministry of reconciliation." Verses 18 and 19 make clear that this new life is a gift from God, who "was reconciling the world to himself in Christ." Students' opinions of how well these verses apply to Scrooge will vary. On the one hand, nowhere does Dickens indicate that Scrooge professes faith in Jesus Christ; on the other hand, Scrooge's new way of life, as will be seen in Stave Five, gives evidence of the "fruits of the Spirit" discussed earlier, and Scrooge does experience reconciliation with several people. Within at least the immediate narrative context, if not necessarily in an explicitly Christian sense, Scrooge certainly is a "new creation."

Overview

1. **Exposition:** Scrooge is introduced. Readers observe his treatment of his clerk, his nephew, his general attitude toward others, and Christmas in particular; **Rising Action:** Marley appears and warns Scrooge of his eternal fate. Marley offers Scrooge an opportunity to alter his course through the visits of three spirits. The Spirits appear to Scrooge, reminding him of the man he used to be and showing him his errors in the present. **Crisis:** The last Spirit shows Scrooge the future, particularly Scrooge's own death. Scrooge is resolved to change his ways. **Falling Action:** Scrooge awakens on Christmas morning, realizing that he has been given an opportunity to make amends. **Dénouement:** Scrooge demonstrates a change in attitude. He sends a turkey to his clerk, contributes to charities, spends Christmas day with his nephew and family, and rewards his clerk with a raise.