

Teacher Guide

Grades 7–8

A Christmas Carol

Charles Dickens

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A CHRISTMAS CAROL

by
Charles Dickens

Teacher Guide

Written by
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Note

The Bantam Skylark paperback edition of the book was used to prepare this guide. It was first published in England in 1843. The page references may differ in other editions.

Please note: Please assess the appropriateness of this book for the age level and maturity of your students prior to reading and discussing it with your class.

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Skills and Strategies

Writing

Journaling, narrative,
expansion on a stated idea/
scene, paraphrase,
juxtaposition, creative
writing, poetry

Listening/Speaking

Discussion, drama

Thinking

Visualization

Literary Elements

Story elements, character
development, personification,
pathos, conflict, parables

Vocabulary

Simile-cliché, origins of
words and songs

Comprehension

Comparison/contrast

Stave Four:

The Last of the Spirits

Vocabulary

shrouded (65)	stately (65)	headlong (66)	trifled (66)
snuff (66)	pendulous (67)	effluence (67)	disgorged (68)
sepulchres (69)	plunder (70)	reconciled (72)	bereft (72)
avarice (73)	reconciled (76)	inexorable (78)	intercedes (79)

Discussion Questions

- How is this Spirit different than the others you've seen so far? (This one is shrouded and mysterious, doesn't say anything. Scrooge is much more afraid of him than he is of the others.)
What is this Spirit's "official name"? (The Ghost of Christmas Yet to Come)
- How do you know that Scrooge has already made the resolution to become a different kind of person? (page 66: "...and as I hope to live to be a better man from what I was, I am prepared to leave you company, and do it with a thankful heart.")
- Did you know who the two groups of businessmen were discussing? Did Scrooge know? (Scrooge did not seem to know they were discussing him.) Would the Scrooge we meet in the first stave be glad to know his funeral would be a "cheap" one?
- Which group of businessmen do you think Scrooge has been the most interested in impressing? (probably the second group, since these are the wealthiest men.) Which group seems the most concerned about Scrooge? (The first group, probably merely middle-class businessmen, are at least concerned that no one may attend the funeral.)
- Into what part of town does this spirit take Scrooge? (They go to the most wretched and depressed part of town.) What smells do you imagine as you read the description of the shop on page 69? (rancid fat, raty rats, the smell of the charcoal stove, the garbage in the streets, the owner's pipe, etc.)
- How does Dickens' description of the shop add to the element of horror which prevails in this stave? (Bones, of iron, and other things that bring thoughts of death, such as metal, chains, files, iron are all cold and hard and make one think of prisons.) The "skreeky" hinge adds auditory spookiness. The owner's air of calm amidst all this makes him seem all the more horrid.)
- Why does it turn out to be strange that the three servants arrive at the shop at the same time? (They all have items to sell, which they have stolen from dead Scrooge.) What seems to be the attitude of the three? (At first they are a bit embarrassed, but soon talk themselves into believing that what they did was no sin since Scrooge was "a wicked old screw" anyway.)

9. One of the women produces a shirt in which someone had dressed Scrooge for burial. Who do you think it was? (most likely Fred)
10. Dickens, the characters in the story, and we the readers all know whose possessions are being sold at the pawn shop. What do we know that Scrooge doesn't? (Scrooge realizes the same sort of thing could happen to him, but he doesn't understand that the dead man IS him.)
11. Why is Scrooge's death good news for Cratchit and her husband? (He has been their creditor, and has been pressing them to pay their debt. Now their debt will be transferred to someone else, allowing some delay, and there is little chance the new creditor could be as merciless as Scrooge.)
12. Why are things so quiet in Cratchit's house? (Tiny Tim has just died.) Why do you suppose Dickens included this mild, patient, loving child in *A Christmas Carol*? (Possibly Tiny Tim is in the story to remind the reader of the reason for Christmas, to celebrate the birth of another mild, loving child, Jesus.)
13. How does Scrooge finally realize who the dead man is? (The spirit takes him to his own neglected grave.)
14. Scrooge begs the spirit to confirm what he has learned. What is a statement of the main theme of the story, and can be found on page 7? What is it? ("Men's courses will never run that way, unless they turn, to which, if they turn, they must lead...but if the courses be departed from, the ends will change.")
15. What resolutions does Scrooge make on page 79: "I will honour Christmas in my heart, and try to keep it all the year. I will live in the Past, the Present, and the Future. The Spirits of all Three shall strive within me. I will not shut out the lessons that they teach.")
16. How would you show on film the end of *Stave Four*?

Writing Idea

Paraphrase Scrooge's resolution to change. Then give several specific examples of how his everyday behavior will have to change if he is going to convince the powers that be that he is sincere about making amends. What actions might he take right away to change things?