

Reflections:

A Student Response Journal for...

A Christmas Carol

by Charles Dickens

Copyright © 2001 by Prestwick House, Inc., P.O. Box 658, Clayton, DE 19938.
1-800-932-4593. www.prestwickhouse.com Permission to copy this unit for
classroom use is extended to purchaser for his or her personal use. *This material,
in whole or part, may not be copied for resale.*

ISBN: 978-1-60389-522-4

Item No. 202289

A Christmas Carol

Stave I - Marley's Ghost

1. Complete the following dialogue between two students:

First Student: If Dickens is such a great writer, why does he use a trite phrase like “dead as a door-nail”? I get the idea that the man is dead in the first paragraph, but Dickens goes on and on about it.

Second Student: Of course, Dickens knows the phrase is trite. That is the whole point. That is why it is funny.

First Student: But he blabs endlessly about it.

You: Dickens is just trying to establish the mood of the book for the reader. The phrase helps the reader to...

2. “Sometimes people new to the business called Scrooge Scrooge, and sometimes Marley, but he answered to both names: it was all the same to him.” The name “Scrooge” in our modern world is used to describe anyone who is miserly. What other names from movies, books, or life can you think of that have a similar usage?

Response Journal

3. Dickens is famous for his memorable characters and for his vivid descriptions of those characters. In the following passage Dickens interestingly uses metaphors about the cold to describe Scrooge's features and his unfeeling character:

"The cold within him froze his old features, nipped his pointed nose, shrivelled his cheek, stiffened his gait; made his eyes red, his thin lips blue; and spoke out shrewdly in his grating voice. A frosty rime was on his head, and on his eyebrows, and his wiry chin. He carried his own low temperature always about with him; he iced his office in the dog days; and didn't thaw it one degree at Christmas."

Think of someone you know who has a very strong character trait such as warmth, generosity, beauty, friendliness, or unhappiness and write a short paragraph describing this person. Try to copy Dickens' style by selecting a series of metaphors, which follow a common thread, just as the descriptions in the example all revolve around the cold.

4. Scrooge's office is very cold because Scrooge is too cheap to burn coal for heat.
"Wherefore the clerk put on his white comforter, and tried to warm himself at the candle; in which effort, not being a man of a strong imagination, he failed."
What do you do to try and keep warm when you are forced to remain in a cold place? Write a letter to Scrooge's clerk giving him advice on different ways to keep warm.
5. Scrooge's nephew invites his uncle to Christmas dinner. Scrooge does not think Christmas does him any good, so he refuses the invitation. His nephew replies, "There are many things from which I might have derived good, by which I have not profited..." What other kind of profit is there besides money? What kinds of activities do you pursue that, on the surface, do not seem to profit you? Why do you do them?

A Christmas Carol

6. In the following passage, Scrooge's nephew gives his opinion on the meaning of Christmas. Some critics believe this passage also reflects Dickens' opinion. Select any holiday your family celebrates and in a short paragraph write what that celebration means to you.

“I have always thought of Christmas time, when it has come around—apart from the veneration due to its sacred name and origin, if anything belonging to it can be apart from that—as a good time: a kind, forgiving, charitable, pleasant time: the only time I know of, in the long calendar of the year, 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...”

7. Scrooge refuses to contribute to charity. He says that if people do not want to go to the Union workhouses or the Treadmill, then they may as well die and “decrease the surplus population.” He does not believe their problems are any of his business. Think of a person, such as Mother Teresa, who is famous for his or her charitable works. Write a letter from this person to Scrooge lecturing him on why the welfare of mankind is his business.
8. After Scrooge sees Marley's face in the door knocker, the old man is startled. “He *did* pause, with a moment's irresolution, before he shut the door; and he *did* look cautiously behind it first, as if he half-expected to be terrified with the sight of Marley's pigtail sticking out into the hall.” Write about a time in your life when you felt frightened for no apparent reason, so much so that you took extra precautions to protect yourself.

Response Journal

9. Marley's ghost is wearing a chain made up of "cashboxes, keys, padlocks, ledgers, deeds, and heavy purses wrought in steel." These are all symbols of the things he held dearest in life and which kept him from becoming involved in the business of mankind. Think of a villain you have read about, seen in the movies, or know in real life. If this villain were to be wrapped in a chain, like Marley, what items do you suppose might make up that chain?

10. Scrooge cracks a joke when he tells Marley's ghost that "there's more of gravy than of grave about you, whatever you are!" Dickens writes that Scrooge does this "as a means of distracting his own attention, and keeping down his terror; for the spectre's voice disturbed the very marrow in his bones." Write about a time you or someone you know cracked a joke to help relieve the tension of an uncomfortable situation.

11. Marley's ghost tells Scrooge that in order to help Scrooge escape Marley's fate, three spirits will visit. Scrooge replies "I—I think I'd rather not." Write a dialogue between Marley's ghost and yourself. How would you respond to the prospect of a visit from three spirits?

12. Scrooge looks out his window and sees many phantoms wandering and moaning. "The misery with them all was, clearly, that they sought to interfere, for good, in human matters, and had lost the power for ever." Write a letter to a friend, who does not understand, explaining how this statement embodies the overall theme of this *Stave*.

A Christmas Carol

Stave II - The First of the Three Spirits

13. The first spirit appears to Scrooge and tells him that he has come for Scrooge's welfare. "Scrooge expressed himself much obliged, but could not help thinking that a night of unbroken rest would have been more conducive to that end. The Spirit must have heard him thinking, for it said immediately: 'Your reclamation, then. Take heed!'"

14. Students are often in the position of being told what to do by teachers or parents. Write a dialogue between yourself and a person in authority. In this dialogue, the person in authority is trying to get you to do something which he or she believes is for your own good. In the middle of the discussion, you realize that the person in authority can actually read your thoughts. How might you respond?

15. When the Spirit returns Scrooge to his childhood, Scrooge is reminded of what it feels like to be a boy again. He then wishes that he had treated a boy who came to his door a little better. "There was a boy singing a Christmas Carol at my door last night. I should like to have given him something; that's all." Write about an incident in your past that you wish you could go back and change.