

A CHRISTMAS CAROL

A03 SOCIAL AND HISTORICAL CONTEXT

STAVE	QUOTATION	CONTEXT
1	'Marley was dead: to begin with.'	This is a captivating first line and links into the Victorian tradition of telling ghost stories around the fire at night. Dickens would have been acutely aware that his readers were fascinated by the supernatural. As a result, creating an allegorical message using ghosts is a perfect way to introduce the reader to their own shortcomings.
1	"If we were not perfectly convinced that Hamlet's Father died before the play began..."	This is an example of intertextuality (a relationship between texts). It shows Dickens is aware that upper/middle class audiences would know of the story of Shakespeare's 'Hamlet' and helps set up and reinforce the gothic conventions of the novel.
1	"dismal little cell" "one small coal" "tried to warm himself at the candle"	These quotations reinforce the poor working conditions for men, women and children in the Victorian era. Despite being educated, Cratchit has to endure confined spaces (similar to the factories of the Industrial Revolution) and cold conditions that make work unbearable and uncomfortable. Furthermore, Scrooge represents the supercilious, uncaring nature of many wealthy businessmen and employers of the time, showing little care for the conditions that he makes his clerk work in. Although the plight of Bob is less miserable and dangerous than many occupations at the time, Scrooge allegorically represents the hard-hearted, callous nature of the ruling class.
1	"a good time: a kind, forgiving, charitable, pleasant time"	Fred's speech highlights the importance of Christianity and the list he uses emphasises these altruistic values. Christianity and religion are tied up in the name of the novella and Fred reinforces the idea that at Christmas in particular, we should be looking out for others and not be selfish and miserable towards humanity in general.
1	"two portly gentlemen"	These men represent the wealthy class who do want to change society and do want to help the poor and destitute and may closely mirror the thoughts and feelings of Dickens himself who thought it was unfair to ignore the poor as wealth was often built as a result of the poorest in society's hard work.
1	"Are there no workhouses?"	Workhouses were terrible places that even the poorest of the poor tried to avoid. Children were sent there when their families could not feed or clothe them and the prevailing attitude in society was that the people inhabiting the workhouses were there through laziness and poor attitudes to work,

		<p>as opposed to the cycle of poverty that meant they could not find employment. Within the workhouses the conditions were similar to a prison and abuse and starvation were common-place. This rhetorical question from Scrooge in relation to workhouses highlights the ignorance of the wealthy or middle classes and reinforces Dickens' fear that ignorance (by the rich) of poverty in society was as dangerous as the poverty itself.</p>
1	"Are there no prisons?"	<p>The second part of the rhetorical question has roots in Dickens' own experiences. This quotation links to his own father being incarcerated in debtor's prison when Dickens was a boy. This had a long lasting psychological effect on him: he was sent to work at Warren's Blacking factory, where he was employed to fix labels on to bottles of boot blacking for 11 hours a day meaning that he also had to give up his education at this time. Dickens was only 12. His father may have suffered the indignity of being treated like a common criminal and in prison, meaningless tasks were created by those who ran them (such as walking the treadmill – a cylinder step machine that spun for hours powered by the prisoners).</p>
1	"I can't afford to make idle people merry"	<p>This quotation, said by Scrooge, reiterates the stereotypical view of the poor as lazy and his callous, condescending tone reinforces the disgust with which he views the poor.</p>
1	"The Lord Mayor, in the stronghold of the mighty Mansion House, gave orders to his fifty cooks and butlers to keep Christmas as a Lord Mayor's household should"	<p>This highlights the contrast in the way the wealthy behaved at Christmas and the vast difference between the wealthy, ruling classes and the poor. It appears gluttonous and sinful (both references to the seven deadly sins in Christianity) to be eating like a Lord while the poor suffer.</p>
1	"Half a dozen gas-lamps out of the street"	<p>Night-time would have been a much gloomier and dim affair in Victorian England. The lack of electric lighting meant that the light emitting from gas lamps would have been meagre, creating emphasis for the audience on the gothic conventions.</p>
1	"The air was filled with phantoms"	<p>Marley links to the idea of purgatory as a 'waiting room' for the dead. Purgatory is a place that is neither heaven nor hell and Christians believe that if you have unfinished business or have need to repent for sins you commit in life that you will be bound to purgatory until you have made amends. Scrooge is shown the likelihood of him suffering the same fate as a warning to change his ways at the end of Stave One.</p>

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2	“The school is not quite deserted”	This memory emphasises the importance Dickens placed on education with Scrooge being shown his school days. The fact Scrooge attended a boarding school reinforces the class divide in education as only the wealthy would be able to send their children to be educated there and although there were ‘ragged schools’ in existence, the children were educated in evening school at these and those who attended suffered neglect and misery. Education for all was not commonplace and meant that only the fortunate were educated.
2	“Mr and Mrs Fezziwig took their stations, one on either side of the door, and shaking hands with every person individually as he or she went out, wished him or her a Merry Christmas.”	Dickens highlights the difference that having a benevolent and kind employer could make. Scrooge recognises that it hasn’t cost much to make the workforce happy and Dickens emphasises the role humanity plays in being an employer through the party. It highlights the poor conditions endured by many due to the Industrial Revolution.
2	“A golden one.”	This highlights the changing demographic of class at the time. The Great Reform Bill of 1832 gave middle class property owners the vote for the first time, so these people became influential in society and this can be seen through the value placed on money by Scrooge (to the detriment of all other relationships).

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3	“eked out with apple sauce”	This shows how little food some families had to go around and how grateful they were for what they had. The Cratchit Christmas dinner educates us about how little some families had.
3	“ “tell me if Tiny Tim will live.”	This part of 'A Christmas Carol' explores how difficult it was to get health care for the poor. Although Dickens doesn't state the problem with Tim's health, we can assume malnourishment plays a part in his inability to be strong and hearty. Due to the lack of universal health care and lack of understanding of conditions, the childhood mortality rate was extremely high, as well as the lack of contraception leading to a higher birth rate. While commenting on Tiny Tim, Dickens is highlighting these factors in society and showing a modern reader what it was like before the NHS was embedded into the fabric of society.
3	“We'd a deal of work to finish up last night,” replied the girl, “and had to clear away this morning, mother.”	This is another way in which Dickens highlights the plight of the poor. Children such as Martha and Peter would be expected to get a job in order to contribute to the family purse at a young age. This would have been out of necessity, rather than a desire for the parents to get their children working at a young age. As such, Peter and Martha represent a generation of lost youth. They have had to mature and grow up quickly for survival.
3	“The biggest turkey”	This would have been a grand gesture to make as goose would have been the common choice of meat at the time. Turkey was incredibly expensive.
3	“God bless us, everyone”	These final lines repeated by Tiny Tim reinforce the Christian values of society and shows that even the young can be wise. It also enforces the idea that this is Christmas time and a time to be together. Dickens gives Tiny Tim the final lines to show that what he suffered from was potentially curable with the right health care and the fact that he now lives shows there is hope in society that the wealthy can change.