Charles Dickens: A Christmas Carol

Read the following extract from Stave 4. In this extract, the Ghost of Christmas Yet to Come is showing Scrooge what will happen if he does not change he ways.

‘You are about to show me shadows of the things that have not happened, but will happen in the time before us,’ Scrooge pursued. ‘Is that so, Spirit.’

The upper portion of the garment was contracted for an instant in its folds, as if the Spirit had inclined its head. That was the only answer he received.

Although well used to ghostly company by this time, Scrooge feared the silent shape so much that his legs trembled beneath him, and he found that he could hardly stand when he prepared to follow it. The Spirit paused a moment, as observing his condition, and giving him time to recover.

But Scrooge was all the worse for this. It thrilled him with a vague, uncertain horror, to know that behind the dusky shroud, there were ghostly eyes intently fixed upon him, while he, though he stretched his own to the utmost, could see nothing but a spectral hand and one great heap of black.

‘Ghost of the Future!’ he exclaimed, ‘I fear you more than any spectre I have seen. But as I know your purpose is to do me good, and as I hope to live to be another man from what I was, I am prepared to bear your company, and do it with a thankful heart. Will you not speak to me?’

It gave him no reply. The hand was pointed straight before them.

‘Lead on!’ said Scrooge. ‘Lead on. The night is waning fast, and it is precious time to me, I know. Lead on, Spirit.’

The Phantom moved away as it had come towards him. Scrooge followed in the shadow of its dress, which bore him up, he thought, and carried him along.

They scarcely seemed to enter the city; for the city rather seemed to spring up about them, and encompass them of its own act. But there they were, in the heart of it; on Change, amongst the merchants; who hurried up and down, and chinked the money in their pockets, and conversed in groups, and looked at their watches, and trifled thoughtfully with their great gold seals; and so forth, as Scrooge had seen them often.

The Spirit stopped beside one little knot of business men. Observing that the hand was pointed to them, Scrooge advanced to listen to their talk.

‘No,’ said a great fat man with a monstrous chin, ‘I don’t know much about it, either way. I only know he’s dead.’

Starting with this extract, examine how time is presented throughout A Christmas Carol.

Write about:

- how Dickens presents the importance of time in this extract
- how Dickens uses characters to present the importance of time in the novel as a whole

[30 marks]