

Teaching notes

Before students answer the practice question on page 6 (How Dickens presents the changes in Scrooge's character) you might like to discuss some of the questions on page 2 with your students.

Indicative content for exam question

Answers might include some of the following:

AO1

- What Scrooge's character is like in the extract and why
- What Scrooge's actions show about his character
- What Scrooge's words show about his character
- How and why Scrooge's character has changed from Stave 1

AO2

- The use and effect of speech
- Scrooge's use of emotional language and repetition and what this demonstrates about his character
- The use and effect of words such as 'light', 'happy', 'merry' and 'giddy' to describe his character and what this shows about Scrooge

AO3

- Ideas about how people can change for the better and how this is explored both in the extract and elsewhere
- Ideas about relationships with others
- Society's attitudes to changes in character and what Dickens might be saying about that
- The generic context of the text

Placement of the extract

- What has just happened in the narrative?
- What happens just after this extract?
- Why is this extract important?
- What has this extract got to do with the focus of the question, ‘the changes in Scrooge’s character’?

Details in the extract

- What is Scrooge’s character like in this extract and why?
- What do Scrooge’s actions show about his character?
- What do Scrooge’s words show about his character?
- How and why has Scrooge’s character changed from Stave 1?
- What is the effect of the use of speech?
- Why does Dickens use emotional language and repetition?
- What emotional language does Scrooge use?
- What is the effect?
- What does this emotional language demonstrate about his change in character?
- What is the effect of words such as ‘light’, ‘happy’, ‘merry’ and ‘giddy’ to describe his character and what does this show about Scrooge’s change in character?

The novel as a whole

- What ideas about how people can change for the better does it present and how is this explored both in the extract and elsewhere?
- What ideas about relationships with others does it present?
- What does the rest of the novel say about society’s attitudes to changes in character and what might Dickens be saying about that?
- What is the significance of the literary context of the text?

Teacher notes and possible answers

Placement of the extract

When faced with this style of question for Paper 1, it is a good idea for students to place the extract in the context of the whole novel, so that they have both a clear sense of its location in the narrative and the relevance of previous events, and events yet to come.

Questions you could ask of the extract, and possible answers include:

- What has just happened in the narrative?
The last of the spirits has just left Scrooge and he has begged it to show him that there is still hope for him, despite his flaws. He has promised to learn his lesson from all the spirits and to be a changed man.
- What happens just after this extract?
Scrooge goes into his sitting-room, laughs and exalts in being alive. He discovers that it is Christmas Day and sends the boy from whom he discovers this to get the prize turkey for the Cratchits.
- Why is this extract important?
This extract is the culmination of Scrooge's change in character, and the first occasion the reader has to see the impact the narrative has had on his character and actions.
- What has this extract got to do with the focus of the question, 'the changes in Scrooge's character'?
The reader can see how much Scrooge has changed for the better, and how he enacts what he has learned immediately, for the good of others.

Details in the extract

The first part of the question asks students to explore the detail of the extract in light of the question focus.

To guide your students, you could ask the following questions (possible answers also suggested):

- What is Scrooge's character like in this extract and why?
Scrooge is happy to be alive. He is exhilarated at his second chance of life, relieved that the terrifying spirits have left (especially the last of the spirits) and willing to change straight away.
- What do Scrooge's actions show about his character?
Scrooge's tears show his relief at his reprieve and show how emotionally affected he has been by the whole transformational experience. He doesn't know what to do with his clothes - an everyday item - because he is so happy and has to process what has happened to him now he is back in a familiar setting.
- What do Scrooge's words show about his character?
Scrooge's words show he is full of hope for the future. He sees that some of the events which were presented to him in the visions have not and may not come to pass if he changes his ways. He has gone from one extreme to the other and is going to grab life with both hands now. Exclamatives particularly show this intense emotion.

- How and why has Scrooge's character changed from Stave 1?
He opened the novel as the now universally-employed shorthand for miser Scrooge, driven by money, avarice and selfishness. He has changed because the spirits showed him the consequences of his actions on both him and others, something he hadn't previously considered. His moral compass has changed.
- What is the effect of the use of speech?
Arguably, using Scrooge's own words in an fictional context gives the reader a more intense insight into the profound emotional effect events have had on him, rather than reporting it through a perhaps more objective reported speech.
- Why does Dickens use emotional language and repetition?
It seems likely that these techniques are used to highlight Scrooge's changed and heightened emotions at such an important turning point in the narrative.
- What emotional language does Scrooge use?
He uses emotional language like 'praised', 'merry' and 'happy'.
- What is the effect?
The effect could be argued to be to cumulatively enhance the sense of positivity and hope at the end of the novel which began so darkly.
- What does this emotional language demonstrate about his change in character?
This language demonstrates that Scrooge is now allowing his emotions to reflect what he has learned: that being selfless, positive and outward-looking can reap far more precious rewards than money.
- What is the effect of words such as 'light', 'happy', 'merry' and 'giddy' to describe his character and what does this show about Scrooge's change in character?
These adjectives have a particular effect of contrasting Scrooge earlier in the novel with now. He feels unburdened by the spirits' revelations and the knowledge that he can now change and act for the good of others. They also suggest he is now more childlike and therefore perhaps more naturally generous and appreciative. The final word 'Hallo!' could further be metaphorically read as Scrooge greeting his brighter future.

The novel as a whole

The second part of the question asks students to explore the rest of the novel in light of the question focus.

To guide your students through the rest of the novel, you could ask the following questions:

- What ideas about how people can change for the better does it present and how is this explored both in the extract and elsewhere?
This extract presents the idea that people can change for the better if they are willing to change their perspective, and has someone or something to help them to do that. This is explored in Stave 1 (when Dickens establishes his selfish character and cruelty towards others), Stave 2 (where Scrooge initially cannot decipher the meaning of Marley's visitation in Stave 1, and his uneasiness grows) and Stave 4 (where his 'solemn dread' indicates how much he has changed as he anticipates what the last spirit will show him). These ideas are also explored in the contrasts throughout the novel between Scrooge and the Cratchits in particular, and other members of society, such as his nephew.

A Christmas Carol by Charles Dickens

- What ideas about relationships with others does it present?
It presents the idea that relationships with others should be nurtured and that human relationships are worth more than gold. For example, Scrooge has now realised that his relationship with his nephew is to be cherished, along with others who previously may have seemed inconsequential (such as the boy who gets the turkey in Stave 5) and beneath his notice (such as Tiny Tim and his family).
- What does the rest of the novel say about society's attitudes to changes in character and what might Dickens be saying about that?
The rest of the novel explores the idea that society would possibly hope collectively for people to learn and develop throughout their lives, in line with the predominant Christian ideology, and, in fact, in line with secular human morality. Dickens might be saying that actions without consideration of the consequences for oneself and others are to be avoided, and that miserliness leads to ruin for the one responsible, and those around them.
- What is the significance of the literary context of the text?
The literary context of the text is partly Gothic ghost story, partly morality tale, partly fairy tale. It draws on the universality of these genres, combining the aspects most closely associated with children (fairy tales, ghost stories, moral lessons) and adults (Gothic horror, self-reflection) in order to make Dickens's work timeless in its import. Changes in character are central to the human experience and these literary genres are ways in which humans can make sense of the world: by fictionalising the changes that they want to see. It also allows a consideration of socialism v capitalism, a particularly pertinent issues at a time of great social change and growth in urban poverty. The fact that the novel is difficult to categorise allows it to carry universal messages such as these, and is part of its timeless appeal.



Read the following extract from Stave 5 and then answer the question that follows.

In this extract the last of the spirits has left Scrooge and he is left alone in his room.

THE END OF IT.

Yes! and the bedpost was his own. The bed was his own, the room was his own. Best and happiest of all, the Time before him was his own, to make amends in!

‘I will live in the Past, the Present, and the Future!’ Scrooge repeated, as he scrambled out of bed. ‘The Spirits of all Three shall strive within me. Oh Jacob Marley! Heaven, and the Christmas Time be praised for this! I say it on my knees, old Jacob; on my knees!’

He was so fluttered and so glowing with his good intentions, that his broken voice would scarcely answer to his call. He had been sobbing violently in his conflict with the Spirit, and his face was wet with tears.

‘They are not torn down,’ cried Scrooge, folding one of his bed-curtains in his arms, ‘they are not torn down, rings and all. They are here—I am here—the shadows of the things that would have been, may be dispelled. They will be. I know they will!’

His hands were busy with his garments all this time; turning them inside out, putting them on upside down, tearing them, mislaying them, making them parties to every kind of extravagance.

‘I don’t know what to do!’ cried Scrooge, laughing and crying in the same breath; and making a perfect Laocoön of himself with his stockings. ‘I am as light as a feather, I am as happy as an angel, I am as merry as a schoolboy. I am as giddy as a drunken man. A merry Christmas to everybody! A happy New Year to all the world. Hallo here! Whoop! Hallo!’

Starting with this extract, write about how Dickens presents the changes in Scrooge’s character.

Write about:

- how Dickens presents the changes in Scrooge’s character in this extract
- how Dickens presents how and why Scrooge’s character changes in the novel as a whole.

[30 marks]