

A Christmas Carol

Revision for OCR GCSE Literature



EMC

Publications

Acknowledgements

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Teachers' Notes

These revision materials have been designed to use with students sitting the OCR GCSE English Literature paper. They have all been written with the assessment objectives that apply to the study of a 19th-century novel in mind. These are as follows:

Assessment Objective	Marks awarded
AO1 <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ Read, understand and respond to texts. Students should be able to:<ul style="list-style-type: none">– maintain a critical style and develop an informed personal response– use textual references, including quotations, to support and illustrate interpretations.	14 (8.75% total exam)
AO2 <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ Analyse the language, form and structure used by a writer to create meanings and effects, using relevant subject terminology where appropriate.	14 (8.75% total exam)
AO3 <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ Show understanding of the relationships between texts and the contexts in which they were written.	8 (5% total exam)
AO4 <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ Use a range of vocabulary and sentence structures for clarity, purpose and effect, with accurate spelling and punctuation.	4 (2.5% total exam)

While we recognise the importance of students understanding the assessment objectives, we also believe that separating them out too systematically into their constituent parts can hinder a proper understanding of the text – and so a coherent response in the final examination. With this in mind, several of the activities encompass all four assessment objectives at once. Consequently, you will find within the material activities that model and encourage the exploration of all of the following in different ways and at different times:

- writing in a critical style
- developing a personal response
- using textual references and quotations
- developing interpretations
- analysing language, form and structure
- using subject terminology
- exploring context

Teachers are free to photocopy and distribute the resources among students within their own institution, or to simply use them in the classroom. In the latter instance, we have designed several of the activities in ways that encourage detailed discussion about the novel. We believe this will help students extend their long-term memory of particular details and ideas, develop their understanding of personal response and recognise different possibilities available to them.

WHAT CAN YOU REMEMBER ABOUT *A CHRISTMAS CAROL?*

Total Recall: Factual Questions

There are lots of ways that you can use the questions on pages 6 and 7 to test your factual knowledge of *A Christmas Carol*. Here are some suggestions:

What I know, sort of know and don't know

1. Read a stave that you need to revise.
2. Read through the questions about this stave.
3. Divide the questions into ones you are sure you know the answer to, ones you sort of know and ones you do not know.
4. Join with a partner and together see if you can work out the answers to all the questions.
5. Finally identify the ones you are still not sure about and ask your teacher for the answer sheet.

Testing a partner

1. In pairs, choose a stave that you want to revise. (You can also do this activity for the whole book all at once.)
2. Look at the questions for your stave, or staves, and, in your head, place them in order of difficulty.
3. Take it in turns to ask your partner what you think is the hardest question available, until you have run out of questions to ask.
4. Keep a score and see who gets the most correct answers.

Which facts are most important?

1. With a partner, work through questions for a stave.
2. When you are confident that you know all of the answers, decide which five facts in that stave are the most significant to remember.

Generating Knowledge

Discussing *A Christmas Carol*

These questions have been designed for you to discuss in a number of different ways. It is important that you compare your ideas with others in order to generate as much knowledge as possible around each one.

Make sure that your teacher sometimes joins in too as they will have a particular expertise in studying literature that will add to the knowledge and understanding in the room.

■ Here are some of the ways you might use these questions:

- Have a go at answering all of the questions, focus on a few that you select yourself, or answer ones set by your teacher.
- Try to think of 3-5 things to say in response to each question that you tackle.
- In a small group, take a question each and take it in turns to try to talk non-stop about it for one minute.
- Take the same question as other members of your group and spend a few minutes writing a response. Read your different responses to each other and see how you have each approached it differently or in similar ways.
- In small groups, pick a question at random. See who can be the first to come up with five things to say about it.

Stave One

1. What do you notice about the narrative voice in the first few pages? You might like to comment on how it is established – tone, variation, and so on.
2. What examples of repetition can you find in the first few pages? Why do you think Dickens uses so much repetition here? What is its effect?
3. What do you notice about the way that the weather is described in this stave? What effect do these descriptions have on the reader?
4. What different ideas about Christmas do Scrooge and his nephew have? What is the effect of placing these side-by-side at the start of the novel?
5. The first stave establishes this as a ghost story. But is it scary? If so, how? If not, why not? And what kind of story is it exactly?
6. Why do you think Dickens chooses to have ‘two portly gentlemen’ come to Scrooge to ask him to contribute to charity? What is their effect on the reader?
7. How is Marley’s ghost presented? What emotions might readers feel about this ghost?
8. What does this first stave have to say about human nature?
9. How does Dickens show his skill as a storyteller in this opening stave, particularly in terms of building expectations?

Stave Two

1. What does the Ghost of Christmas Past look like? How does it match with your idea about what a ghost should look like?
2. Come up with ideas about why this stave might be criticised as being too sentimental.
3. How is young Scrooge presented? What emotions might readers feel about him?
4. How are the Fezziwigs portrayed and what is their significance in the novel?

KEY ASPECTS OF A *CHRISTMAS CAROL*

Character: Scrooge

‘Oh! But he was a tight-fisted hand at the grindstone, Scrooge!’

This quotation comes from a long, descriptive passage at the start of the novel that leaves the reader in no doubt about Scrooge’s mean character. Most of the rest of the novel, however is about his *redemption*: how he comes to be saved from his own miserly and miserable life.

There are two lists on page 11, one giving examples of Scrooge’s miserliness and how he was perceived at that time in his life, the other showing moments on his path to redemption.

- Choose three from each list that make you feel sympathy for Scrooge.
- Choose three from the first list that you think make him sound the meanest.
- Choose three from the second list that you think most make him sound like a reformed character.
- Choose points from both lists that make him sound like a man psychologically scarred by various events in his life.
- Choose points from both lists that make his portrayal seem like a caricature rather than realistic.
- Choose what you consider to be the five most important points from each list.