

**GCSE ENGLISH
LITERATURE
SUPPORT PACK**

**Charles Dickens
A Christmas Carol**

SUPPORT PACK INCLUDES:

Plot summary

Key characters

Contexts and themes

Important quotes

Essay advice

Plot Summary

Stave one: Marley's Ghost

- The reader is introduced to Ebenezer Scrooge who only cares about making money. It is Christmas Eve and he won't pay to heat the office properly. This means that his clerk, Bob Cratchit, is very cold.
- Scrooge has four Christmas visitors: his nephew, Fred; two charity collectors; and a carol singer. Scrooge is rude to all of them and sends them away.
- That night the Ghost of Jacob Marley, his dead business partner, appears. He tells Scrooge that his mean way of life will lead to misery and that three Ghosts will visit him to show him the error of his ways.

Stave two: The first of the three spirits

- The Ghost of Christmas Past shows Scrooge his unhappy childhood.
- They visit the house of Scrooge's first employer, Fezziwig, who is holding a Christmas party. Scrooge notices how much happiness can be obtained from very little money.
- Scrooge sees himself as a young man with Belle, the woman he was engaged to marry. Belle breaks off the engagement because she thinks Scrooge loves money more than he loves her.

Stave three: The second of the three spirits

- The Ghost of Christmas Present takes Scrooge to visit Christmas preparations at the Cratchits' house. Scrooge learns that Tiny Tim will not survive unless the future changes. This knowledge upsets Scrooge.
- The Ghost takes Scrooge to see different groups of people enjoying themselves at Christmas. Scrooge sees his nephew,

Fred, with his family. They are discussing Scrooge and Fred is full of pity for him.

- At the end of the night, the Ghost shows Scrooge two children: a boy, called Ignorance, and a girl, called Want. The Ghost says they belong to Man and warns Scrooge to beware of them both, but especially beware of Ignorance.

Stave four: The last of the spirits

- The mysterious Ghost of Christmas Yet To Come takes Scrooge into the future to witness different conversations about a dead man. No one cares that this man has died, and the thieves have so little respect that they have stolen the clothes from his corpse.
- In contrast, the Ghost then takes Scrooge to see the Cratchits who are deeply upset because Tiny Tim has died.
- Finally, Scrooge is shown a gravestone with his own name on it. He realises he is the dead man whom the people were talking about. He promises to change his ways.

Stave five: The end of it

- Waking up in his own bed, back in the present, Scrooge is delighted to be given a second chance and makes Christmas happy for everyone. He sends a turkey to the Cratchits, gives money to the charity collectors, and joins Fred for Christmas. The next day he raises Bob's wages and promises to become a friend to Tiny Tim, who does not die.

Key characters

Marley's Ghost: Jacob Marley was Scrooge's business partner. His ghost appears to Scrooge on Christmas Eve with a warning for Scrooge about the need to change his focus in life from money to 'mankind'. In the story: he has been dead for seven years, visits Scrooge on Christmas Eve, is weighed down with chains and baggage that represent the concerns Marley had in life, is now desperate to help the poor and needy, but is unable to.

Ebenezer Scrooge: He is presented to us as a mean and miserable man who cares only about making money. He treats his clerk badly, making him work in the cold and fear for his job. He is antagonistic to his nephew who visits him at work. He tells the charity collectors that poor people should die rather than be given charity. The spirits make me realise he has made bad choices. He enjoys the present Christmas Day, especially the celebrations at the Cratchits' and Fred's houses. He is horrified to find if he continues to behave badly no one will care about him, and Tiny Tim will die. He changes his behaviour and supports the Cratchit family.

Fred: Scrooge's nephew, the only son of Scrooge's much loved sister, Fan. He is the antithesis of Scrooge, demonstrating how we should behave towards one another. He wishes Scrooge a merry Christmas, despite the constant rejection. He holds a jolly Christmas party where he refuses to be rude about Scrooge although he does laugh at his miserly ways. He is kind to Bob, expressing his sorrow for the death of Tiny Tim (as portrayed by the Ghost of Christmas Yet to Come). He welcomes Scrooge into the family Christmas without question.

Bob Cratchit: Scrooge's clerk and he represents the lower classes. He has to accept poor wages and working conditions because he has a family to support, and a badly-paid job is better than no job. He represents the loving father that Scrooge never had. He has fun with

his family and toasts Scrooge even though he is not paid enough. He is devoted to his son, Tiny Tim.

The Ghost of Christmas Past: This Ghost personifies what Scrooge has been. It takes Scrooge on a journey to see his past Christmas. It seems to be an old man and a child combined. The appearance reminds us that Scrooge's childhood is long gone. The white tunic represents the innocence that should be part of childhood, and it is decorated with summer flowers, a reminder that this ghost represents Scrooge's summer years. Its cap, which Scrooge pushes down at the end of the stave, represents the negative emotions, actions and ideas that Scrooge adopted during his later years, and which hide and suppress his true nature.

The Ghost of Christmas Present: This Ghost's function is to show us what life is like for different people in Victorian Britain at Christmas and to compare this with Scrooge's previously declared views. As well as showing Scrooge scenes of joy in London, the Cratchits' Christmas, a variety of other people celebration and Fred's Christmas, it also articulates Dickens' opposition to keeping Sunday free of work and provides Dickens a mouthpiece to show the importance of education, saying that ignorance is more dangerous than poverty. This Ghost personifies generosity, both spiritual and material. The white fur on its green robe reminds us that there is still innocence in the world. The throne of food shows there is enough to go around the world. It also conceals the harsh realities of Victorian life in the shape of the children, Ignorance and Want.

The Ghost of Christmas Yet To Come: This is the most mysterious of the Ghosts, reflecting the fact that the future is uncertain and depends on our present actions. It personifies death which is inevitable for all humans and its description reminds us of the Grim Reaper. We are unable to distinguish its features, reminding us that the exact details are unknown until it strikes.

Contexts

Charles Dickens' background

- Many events from Dickens' background are echoed in the novel. He was born in 1812, and had a happy childhood until his father was transferred to London for his job. Dickens was left behind with his teacher for a few months before joining the rest of the family. However, rather than being allowed to go to school, he was kept at home to work and, aged twelve, he had to earn money to help the family out, eventually having to work at a blacking factory. Times got worse as his father was put into prison for debt. Dickens had to lodge with a mean-spirited old woman, and never had enough money for food.
- Later, Dickens obtained a job as a court reporter; this allowed him to see the harsh justice system in action, and shaped his opinions about inequality in society. He wrote stories and the money he earned paid off his father's debts.
- Dickens toured England and witnessed many examples of inequality, especially in the cities. His concern prompted him to write A Christmas Carol.

Dickens and Christmas

- Dickens is often credited with inventing Christmas as we know it today. His descriptions of shared family meals, turkey and stuffing, games, holly and mistletoe have become key parts of the modern Christmas. The most important aspect Dickens has influenced is the idea of goodwill to all; remember, in Victorian England many people including employers like Scrooge, did not do anything special for Christmas at all.

Industrial Revolution

- The Industrial Revolution is the term used to describe changes in working and living conditions that began in the 1760s. The rapid pace of change from a rural and agricultural economy to being the world's first industrial giant, put great strain on all levels of society. Workers were needed in large numbers in the cities so there was a huge movement of people to the new cities. This meant the housing available was often dreadful.

- The Industrial Revolution was good for many people as it gave them more money and better living conditions, but for the poor life was difficult. Adults and children would often work for long hours in dangerous conditions and then go home to squalor, hunger and disease.

Poverty and education

- Poverty was a major concern as vast slums had built up where factory workers lived. The New Poor Law in 1834 meant that any able-bodied unemployed person would be supported only if they entered a workhouse, which was a deliberately harsh environment to live and work in. Families were separated and the food was basic to discourage the 'lazy poor' from choosing to go there.
- Dickens disapproved of this law as his time in the blacking factory when his family was in prison must have given him a real insight into the horrors of poverty. He thought that education was a route out of poverty and he provided financial backing for Ragged Schools.

Themes

Change: everyone can change.

Responsibility: everyone had a responsibility for those around him.
"Mankind was my business".

Education: emphasises the value of education through his presentation of the two children, Ignorance and Want.

Poverty: the Cratchits are regarded as Dickens' face of the poor, with glimpses even deeper.

Important quotes

'He was a tight-fisted hand at the grindstone.'

'a squeezing, wrenching, grasping, clutching, covetous old sinner.'

'Hard and sharp as flint.'

'solitary as an oyster.'

'No wind that blew was bitterer than he.'

'a kind, forgiving, charitable, pleasant time.' (Fred referring to Christmas)

'Bah Humbug.'

'Mankind was my business.' (Marley)

'Scrooge seemed uneasy in his mind.'

'Show me no more.' (Past)

'As good as gold and better.'

'Tell me if Tiny Tim will live.' (Present)

'I will honour Christmas in my heart, and try to keep it all the year.'
(future)

'I will live in the Past, the Present, and the Future' (future)

'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.'

'I'll raise your salary, and endeavour to assist your struggling family.'

'God bless Us, Every One!'

Essay advice

You should spend 55 minutes on this section.

You should aim to use the extract **and your knowledge of the wider text** to respond to the question.

What the examiner wants to see:

'A candidate's response is likely to be a critical, exploratory, well-structured argument. It takes a conceptualised approach to the full task supported by a range of judicious references. There will be a fine-grained and insightful analysis of language and form and structure supported by judicious use of subject terminology. Convincing exploration of one or more ideas/perspectives/contextual factors/interpretations.'

- A focused, detailed, cohesive evaluation of the interrelationship of language, form and structure and their effect on the reader.
- Relevant subject terminology is integrated and precise.
- An assured personal response
- High level of engagement with the text
- Critical style with perceptive understanding and interpretation
- Well-chosen reference integrated into the response
- Excellent understanding of context, and convincing understanding of the relationship between text and context is integrated into the response.

Subject terminology to use for AO2:

- **Metaphor** – describe one thing as something different, allowing you to make a comparison in your mind's eye.
- **Simile** – a comparison by using the words 'like' or 'as' to help you see it.
- **Imagery** –helps to paint a vivid picture in your mind to help you understand what a character is thinking about or feeling.
- **Oxymoron** – two words which seem to have opposite meanings or contradict each other are placed together to create particular effects.
- **Foreshadowing** – warning, hinting at events to come later in the play
- **Imperative verbs** – commanding or bossy verbs
- **Hyperbole** – exaggeration
- **Contrasts** – ideas that differ from each other
- **Antithesis** – a person or thing that is the direct opposite of someone or something else.
- **Personification** – giving human characteristics to something non-human.

- **Rhetorical question** – asking a question designed to encourage thinking.

Introductions

Should be brief, focussed and address a character or theme's role within the text (the narrative itself plus the themes Dickens is addressing).

Due to Dickens' social conscience, he constructed Bob Cratchit as an allegory for the working class and poverty-stricken people in his society. Dickens presentation of Bob Cratchit in key scenes with Scrooge at work, and with his family at Christmas and after the foreshadowed death of Tiny Tim develops this construction and exposes the plight of those living in poverty.

Example Questions

Charles Dickens: *A Christmas Carol*

Read this extract from *A Christmas Carol* and then answer the question that follows.

In this extract, Scrooge is being shown the vision of the future where the Cratchit family have lost Tiny Tim..

She hurried out to meet him; and little Bob in his comforter—he had need of it, poor fellow—came in. His tea was ready for him on the hob, and they all tried who should help him to it most. Then the two young Cratchits got upon his knees and laid, each child a little cheek, against his face, as if they said, “Don’t mind it, father. Don’t be grieved!”

Bob was very cheerful with them, and spoke pleasantly to all the family. He looked at the work upon the table, and praised the industry and speed of Mrs. Cratchit and the girls. They would be done long before Sunday, he said.

“Sunday! You went to-day, then, Robert?” said his wife.

“Yes, my dear,” returned Bob. “I wish you could have gone. It would have done you good to see how green a place it is. But you’ll see it often. I promised him that I would walk there on a Sunday. My little, little child!” cried Bob. “My little child!”

He broke down all at once. He couldn’t help it. If he could have helped it, he and his child would have been farther apart perhaps than they were.

08

Starting with this extract, how does Dickens present the Cratchit family in *A Christmas Carol*?

Write about:

- how Dickens presents the family and their thoughts/feelings in this extract
- how Dickens presents the family in the novel as a whole.

[30 marks]

Charles Dickens: *A Christmas Carol*

Read this extract from the start of *A Christmas Carol* and then answer the question that follows.

In this extract, Scrooge has been asked to donate some money to charity – he has refused..

“Nothing!” Scrooge replied.

“You wish to be anonymous?”

“I wish to be left alone,” said Scrooge. “Since you ask me what I wish, gentlemen, that is my answer. I don’t make merry myself at Christmas and I can’t afford to make idle people merry. I help to support the establishments I have mentioned—they cost enough; and those who are badly off must go there.”

“Many can’t go there; and many would rather die.”

“If they would rather die,” said Scrooge, “they had better do it, and decrease the surplus population. Besides—excuse me—I don’t know that.”

“But you might know it,” observed the gentleman.

“It’s not my business,” Scrooge returned. “It’s enough for a man to understand his own business, and not to interfere with other people’s. Mine occupies me constantly. Good afternoon, gentlemen!”

Seeing clearly that it would be useless to pursue their point, the gentlemen withdrew. Scrooge resumed his labours with an improved opinion of himself, and in a more facetious temper than was usual with him.

08

Starting with this extract, how does Dickens portray cruelty in *A Christmas Carol*?

Write about:

- how Dickens presents Scrooge in this extract
- how Dickens presents cruelty and meanness in the novel as a whole.

[30 marks]

Charles Dickens: *A Christmas Carol*

Read this extract from *A Christmas Carol* and then answer the question that follows.

In this extract, Scrooge is meeting the Ghost of Christmas Present.

Scrooge entered timidly, and hung his head before this Spirit. He was not the dogged Scrooge he had been; and though the Spirit's eyes were clear and kind, he did not like to meet them.

"I am the Ghost of Christmas Present," said the Spirit. "Look upon me!"

Scrooge reverently did so. It was clothed in one simple green robe, or mantle, bordered with white fur. This garment hung so loosely on the figure, that its capacious breast was bare, as if disdaining to be warded or concealed by any artifice. Its feet, observable beneath the ample folds of the garment, were also bare; and on its head it wore no other covering than a holly wreath, set here and there with shining icicles. Its dark brown curls were long and free; free as its genial face, its sparkling eye, its open hand, its cheery voice, its unconstrained demeanour, and its joyful air. Girded round its middle was an antique scabbard; but no sword was in it, and the ancient sheath was eaten up with rust.

08

Starting with this extract, how does Dickens present the ghosts in *A Christmas Carol*?

Write about:

- how Dickens presents this ghost.
- how Dickens presents any of the ghosts in the novel as a whole.

[30 marks]

Charles Dickens: *A Christmas Carol*

Read this extract from *A Christmas Carol* and then answer the question that follows.

In this extract, Scrooge is being shown the streets on Christmas morning by the Ghost of Christmas Present.

The house fronts looked black enough, and the windows blacker, contrasting with the smooth white sheet of snow upon the roofs, and with the dirtier snow upon the ground; which last deposit had been ploughed up in deep furrows by the heavy wheels of carts and waggons; furrows that crossed and re-crossed each other hundreds of times where the great streets branched off; and made intricate channels, hard to trace in the thick yellow mud and icy water. The sky was gloomy, and the shortest streets were choked up with a dingy mist, half thawed, half frozen, whose heavier particles descended in a shower of sooty atoms, as if all the chimneys in Great Britain had, by one consent, caught fire, and were blazing away to their dear hearts' content. There was nothing very cheerful in the climate or the town, and yet was there an air of cheerfulness abroad that the clearest summer air and brightest summer sun might have endeavoured to diffuse in vain.

08

Starting with this extract, how does Dickens present places in *A Christmas Carol*?

Write about:

- how Dickens presents a place in this extract
- how Dickens presents places in the novel as a whole.

[30 marks]

Charles Dickens: *A Christmas Carol*

Read this extract from *A Christmas Carol* and then answer the question that follows.

In this extract, Scrooge tries to get rid of the light shining from the Ghost of Christmas Past.

“Spirit!” said Scrooge in a broken voice, “remove me from this place.”

“I told you these were shadows of the things that have been,” said the Ghost. “That they are what they are, do not blame me!”

“Remove me!” Scrooge exclaimed, “I cannot bear it!”

He turned upon the Ghost, and seeing that it looked upon him with a face, in which in some strange way there were fragments of all the faces it had shown him, wrestled with it.

“Leave me! Take me back. Haunt me no longer!”

In the struggle, if that can be called a struggle in which the Ghost with no visible resistance on its own part was undisturbed by any effort of its adversary, Scrooge observed that its light was burning high and bright; and dimly connecting that with its influence over him, he seized the extinguisher-cap, and by a sudden action pressed it down upon its head.

The Spirit dropped beneath it, so that the extinguisher covered its whole form; but though Scrooge pressed it down with all his force, he could not hide the light: which streamed from under it, in an unbroken flood upon the ground.

He was conscious of being exhausted, and overcome by an irresistible drowsiness; and, further, of being in his own bedroom. He gave the cap a parting squeeze, in which his hand relaxed; and had barely time to reel to bed, before he sank into a heavy sleep.

08

Starting with this extract, how does Dickens present shock and anger in *A Christmas Carol*?

Write about:

- how Dickens presents Scrooge and his reactions in this extract
- how Dickens presents shock and/ or anger in the novel as a whole.

[30 marks]

Charles Dickens: *A Christmas Carol*

Read this extract from *A Christmas Carol* and then answer the question that follows.

In this extract, Scrooge is reaching the end of his journey and the Ghost of Christmas yet to Come is about to leave..

“Spirit!” he cried, tight clutching at its robe, “hear me! I am not the man I was. I will not be the man I must have been but for this intercourse. Why show me this, if I am past all hope!”

For the first time the hand appeared to shake.

“Good Spirit,” he pursued, as down upon the ground he fell before it: “Your nature intercedes for me, and pities me. Assure me that I yet may change these shadows you have shown me, by an altered life!”

The kind hand trembled.

“I will honour Christmas in my heart, and try to keep it all the year. I will live in the Past, the Present, and the Future. The Spirits of all Three shall strive within me. I will not shut out the lessons that they teach. Oh, tell me I may sponge away the writing on this stone!”

In his agony, he caught the spectral hand. It sought to free itself, but he was strong in his entreaty, and detained it. The Spirit, stronger yet, repulsed him.

Holding up his hands in a last prayer to have his fate reversed, he saw an alteration in the Phantom’s hood and dress. It shrunk, collapsed, and dwindled down into a bedpost.

08

Starting with this extract, how does Dickens show the attitudes of the characters?

Write about:

- how Dickens presents Scrooge’s changed attitude in this extract
- how Dickens presents the attitudes of any other characters in the novel.

[30 marks]

Example Questions 2 [Longer extracts than you are likely to get in an exam but good for practice of Language analysis]

Charles Dickens: *A Christmas Carol*

Read this extract from *A Christmas Carol* and then answer the question that follows.

Once upon a time—of all the good days in the year, on Christmas Eve—old Scrooge sat busy in his counting-house. It was cold, bleak, biting weather: foggy withal: and he could hear the people in the court outside, go wheezing up and down, beating their hands upon their breasts, and stamping their feet upon the pavement stones to warm them. The city clocks had only just gone three, but it was quite dark already—it had not been light all day—and candles were flaring in the windows of the neighbouring offices, like ruddy smears upon the palpable brown air. The fog came pouring in at every chink and keyhole, and was so dense without, that although the court was of the narrowest, the houses opposite were mere phantoms. To see the dingy cloud come drooping down, obscuring everything, one might have thought that Nature lived hard by, and was brewing on a large scale.

The door of Scrooge's counting-house was open that he might keep his eye upon his clerk, who in a dismal little cell beyond, a sort of tank, was copying letters. Scrooge had a very small fire, but the clerk's fire was so very much smaller that it looked like one coal. But he couldn't replenish it, for Scrooge kept the coal-box in his own room; and so surely as the clerk came in with the shovel, the master predicted that it would be necessary for them to part. 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.

"A merry Christmas, uncle! God save you!" cried a cheerful voice. It was the voice of Scrooge's nephew, who came upon him so quickly that this was the first intimation he had of his approach.

"Bah!" said Scrooge, "Humbug!"

He had so heated himself with rapid walking in the fog and frost, this nephew of Scrooge's, that he was all in a glow; his face was ruddy and handsome; his eyes sparkled, and his breath smoked again.

08

Starting with this extract, how does Dickens show Scrooge's unkindness to others?

Write about:

- how Dickens presents Scrooge's unkindness in this extract
- how Dickens presents the unkindness of Scrooge elsewhere in the novel.

[30 marks]

Charles Dickens: *A Christmas Carol*

Read this extract from *A Christmas Carol* and then answer the question that follows.

Then up rose Mrs Cratchit, Cratchit's wife, dressed out but poorly in a twice-turned gown, but brave in ribbons, which are cheap and make a goodly show for sixpence; and she laid the cloth, assisted by Belinda Cratchit, second of her daughters, also brave in ribbons; while Master Peter Cratchit plunged a fork into the saucepan of potatoes, and getting the corners of his monstrous shirt collar (Bob's private property, conferred upon his son and heir in honour of the day) into his mouth, rejoiced to find himself so gallantly attired, and yearned to show his linen in the fashionable Parks. And now two smaller Cratchits, boy and girl, came tearing in, screaming that outside the baker's they had smelt the goose, and known it for their own; and basking in luxurious thoughts of sage and onion, these young Cratchits danced about the table, and exalted Master Peter Cratchit to the skies, while he (not proud, although his collars nearly choked him) blew the fire, until the slow potatoes bubbling up, knocked loudly at the saucepan-lid to be let out and peeled.

"What has ever got your precious father then?" said Mrs Cratchit. "And your brother, Tiny Tim; And Martha warn't as late last Christmas Day by half-an-hour."

"Here's Martha, mother," said a girl, appearing as she spoke.

"Here's Martha, mother!" cried the two young Cratchits. "Hurrah! There's such a goose, Martha!"

"Why, bless your heart alive, my dear, how late you are!" said Mrs Cratchit, kissing her a dozen times, and taking off her shawl and bonnet for her with officious zeal.

"We'd a deal of work to finish up last night," replied the girl, "and had to clear away this morning, mother."

"Well. Never mind so long as you are come," said Mrs Cratchit. "Sit ye down before the fire, my dear, and have a warm, Lord bless ye."

"No, no. There's father coming," cried the two young Cratchits, who were everywhere at once.

"Hide, Martha, hide!" So Martha hid herself, and in came little Bob, the father, with at least three feet of comforter exclusive of the fringe, hanging down before him; and his threadbare clothes darned up and brushed, to look seasonable; and Tiny Tim upon his shoulder. Alas for Tiny Tim, he bore a little crutch, and had his limbs supported by an iron frame.

08

Starting with this extract, how does Dickens show family relationships in the novella?

Write about:

- how Dickens presents the Cratchit family relationship in this extract
- how Dickens presents the relationships of any other families in the novel.

[30 marks]

Charles Dickens: *A Christmas Carol*

Read this extract from the end of *A Christmas Carol* and then answer the question that follows.

In this extract, Scrooge has woken up a changed man on Christmas Day.

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!” He had frisked into the sitting-room, and was now standing there: perfectly winded.

“There’s the saucepan that the gruel was in!” cried Scrooge, starting off again, and going round the fireplace. “There’s the door, by which the Ghost of Jacob Marley entered! There’s the corner where the Ghost of Christmas Present, sat! There’s the window where I saw the wandering Spirits! It’s all right, it’s all true, it all happened. Ha ha ha!”

Really, for a man who had been out of practice for so many years, it was a splendid laugh, a most illustrious laugh. The father of a long, long line of brilliant laughs!

08

Starting with this extract, how does Dickens present positivity and happiness in *A Christmas Carol*?

Write about:

- how Dickens presents a changed Scrooge in this extract
- how Dickens presents happiness and happy times in the novel as a whole.

[30 marks]

Charles Dickens: *A Christmas Carol*

Read this extract from *A Christmas Carol* and then answer the question that follows.

They left the busy scene, and went into an obscure part of the town, where Scrooge had never penetrated before, although he recognised its situation, and its bad repute. The ways were foul and narrow; the shops and houses wretched; the people half-naked, drunken, slipshod, ugly. Alleys and archways, like so many cesspools, disgorged their offenses of smell, and dirt, and life, upon the straggling streets; and the whole quarter reeked with crime, with filth, and misery.

Far in this den of infamous resort, there was a low-browed, beetling shop, below a pent-house roof, where iron, old rags, bottles, bones, and greasy offal, were bought. Upon the floor within, were piled up heaps of rusty keys, nails, chains, hinges, files, scales, weights, and refuse iron of all kinds. Secrets that few would like to scrutinise were bred and hidden in mountains of unseemly rags, masses of corrupted fat, and sepulchres of bones. Sitting in among the wares he dealt in, by a charcoal stove, made of old bricks, was a grey-haired rascal, nearly seventy years of age; who had screened himself from the cold air without, by a frowsy curtaining of miscellaneous tatters, hung upon a line; and smoked his pipe in all the luxury of calm retirement.

Scrooge and the Phantom came into the presence of this man, just as a woman with a heavy bundle slunk into the shop. But she had scarcely entered, when another woman, similarly laden, came in too; and she was closely followed by a man in faded black, who was no less startled by the sight of them, than they had been upon the recognition of each other. After a short period of blank astonishment, in which the old man with the pipe had joined them, they all three burst into a laugh.

08

Starting with this extract, how does Dickens show the reality of poverty?

Write about:

- how Dickens presents poverty in this extract
- how Dickens presents the reality of poverty elsewhere in the novel.

[30 marks]

Charles Dickens: *A Christmas Carol*

Read this extract from *A Christmas Carol* and then answer the question that follows.

They walked along the road; Scrooge recognising every gate, and post, and tree; until a little market-town appeared in the distance, with its bridge, its church, and winding river. Some shaggy ponies now were seen trotting towards them with boys upon their backs, who called to other boys in country gigs and carts, driven by farmers. All these boys were in great spirits, and shouted to each other, until the broad fields were so full of merry music, that the crisp air laughed to hear it.

“These are but shadows of the things that have been,” said the Ghost. “They have no consciousness of us.”

The jocund travellers came on; and as they came, Scrooge knew and named them every one. Why was he rejoiced beyond all bounds to see them! Why did his cold eye glisten, and his heart leap up as they went past! Why was he filled with gladness when he heard them give each other Merry Christmas, as they parted at cross-roads and bye-ways, for their several homes! What was merry Christmas to Scrooge? Out upon merry Christmas! What good had it ever done to him?

“The school is not quite deserted,” said the Ghost. “A solitary child, neglected by his friends, is left there still.”

Scrooge said he knew it. And he sobbed.

They left the high-road, by a well-remembered lane, and soon approached a mansion of dull red brick, with a little weathercock-surmounted cupola, on the roof, and a bell hanging in it. It was a large house, but one of broken fortunes; for the spacious offices were little used, their walls were damp and mossy, their windows broken, and their gates decayed. Fowls clucked and strutted in the stables; and the coach-houses and sheds were over-run with grass. Nor was it more retentive of its ancient state, within; for entering the dreary hall, and glancing through the open doors of many rooms, they found them poorly furnished, cold, and vast. There was an earthy savour in the air, a chilly bareness in the place, which associated itself somehow with too much getting up by candle-light, and not too much to eat.

They went, the Ghost and Scrooge, across the hall, to a door at the back of the house. It opened before them, and disclosed a long, bare, melancholy room, made barer still by lines of plain deal forms and desks. At one of these a lonely boy was reading near a feeble fire; and Scrooge sat down upon a form, and wept to see his poor forgotten self as he used to be.

Not a latent echo in the house, not a squeak and scuffle from the mice behind the panelling, not a drip from the half-thawed water-spout in the dull yard behind, not a sigh among the leafless boughs of one despondent poplar, not the idle swinging of an empty store-house door, no, not a clicking in the fire, but fell upon the heart of Scrooge with a softening influence, and gave a freer passage to his tears.

08

Starting with this extract, how does Dickens show the isolation of characters?

Write about:

- how Dickens presents isolation in this extract
- how Dickens presents the isolation of any other characters in the novel.

[30 marks]