# ***A Christmas Carol***

By Charles Dickens

Drama by I. Horovitz

**Charles Dickens** (1812-1870) was born in Portsmouth, England. He became responsible for the support of his mother and siblings when he was twelve years old.

Their family lived in severe poverty near the Royal Navy docks.

For the rest of his life, Dickens remembered what it was like to be poor.

His sympathy for his fellow human beings is powerfully expressed in his story,

“A Christmas Carol.”

The **plot** of a play usually begins by introducing a conflict. The conflict rises to a climax, or high point of excitement or emotion. Then, as the play comes to a close, the excitement dies down, any unanswered questions about the story are answered, and the curtain falls.

**Exposition** is the revealing (exposing) of information needed to understand the action shown on stage. It often explains events that occurred before the start of the onstage events.

This play tells the story of a man who comes to learn sympathy for his fellow human beings. As you read Act I, notice how the plot develops in a way that makes you wonder what will happen to Scrooge.

*Scrooge* has become a part of our everyday vocabulary. Brainstorm to list all the ideas that come to mind when you hear the word *Scrooge*.

Knowing the following words will help you as you read *A Christmas Carol:*

**implored** *v* : Asked or begged earnestly

**morose** *adj.*: Gloomy,ill-tempered.

**destitute**  *adj*.: Living in complete poverty.

**specter:** ghost or ghostlike being.

**trifle:** something of little value or importance

**misanthrope** n.: A person who hates or distrusts everyone.

**void** n.: Total emptiness

**ponderous** adj.: Very heavy, bulky.

**blemish** defect or scar.

**THE PEOPLE OF THE PLAY**

**Jacob Marley,** Scrooge’s business partner, now a ghost

**Ebenezer Scrooge,** An old man who loves money and hates people

**Bob Cratchit,** Scrooge’s office clerk.

**Fred,** Scrooge’s nephew.

**Thin Do-Gooder.** Collects money for the poor of London

**Portly Do-Gooder.** Same as Thin man

**Specters (ghosts), carrying money-boxes**

**The Ghost of Christmas past**

**Four Happy Travelers**

**Little Boy Scrooge**

**Young Man Scrooge**

**Fan, Scrooge’s little sister**

**The Schoolmaster**

**Schoolmates**

**Fezziwig, a fine and fair employer**

**Dick, Young Scrooge’s co-worker**

**Young Scrooge**

**Scrooge’s Lost Love**

**Scrooge’s Lost Love’s Daughter**

**Scrooge’s Lost Love’s Husband**

**The Ghost of Christmas present**

**Mrs.Cratchit, Bob Cratchit’s Wife**

**Belinda Cratchit, a daughter**

**Martha Cratchit, another daughter**

**Peter Cratchit, a son**

**Tiny Tim Cratchit, another son**

**Scrooge’s Niece, Fred’s wife**

**The Ghost of Christmas Future, a silent phantom**

**Three Men of Business**

**Mrs. Dilber (Scrooge’s housekeeper)**

**Old Joe, an old second-hand goods dealer (thief)**

**Adam, a young boy**

**A poulterer (seller of chickens and geese)**

**Some Men of Business**

**THE PLACE OF THE PLAY**

Various locations in and around the City of London. Including Scrooge’s chambers and offices; the Cratchit home; Fred’s home; Scrooge’s old school; Fezziwig’s offices; Old Joe’s hide-a-way.

**THE TIME OF THE PLAY**

The entire action of the play takes place on Christmas Eve, Christmas Day, and the morning after Christmas, 1843. Visions of the past and future occur around that date.

ACT I

**Scene 1**

[*Ghostly music in the auditorium. A single spotlight on JACOB MARLEY (ghostly white*). *He is ancient; awful, dead-eyed. He speaks straight out to the auditorium.]*

**Marley.** My name is Jacob Marley and I am dead. [*He laughs*.] Oh, no, there’s no doubt that I am dead.The register of my burial was signed by the clergyman, the undertaker . . . and by my only mourner . . . Ebenezer Scrooge . . . [*Pause; remembers*] I am dead as a doornail.

[*A spotlight comes up on Scrooge, in his counting-house, counting coins. There in lettering on the window behind Scrooge that reads: “SCROOGE AND MARLEY, LTD.“ The spotlight shines on Scrooge’s head and shoulders. Ghostly music continues to be heard. The ghost of Marley looks across at Scrooge.*

**Marley.** I present him to you (*audience*): Ebenezer Scrooge . . . England’s most greedy miser, Scrooge! There he is...A squeezing, scraping, clutching, old sinner ! He is as lonely as an oyster. Look at him. Look at him . . .

[*Scrooge counts money and mumbles.*]

**Scrooge**. They owe me money and I will collect! I will have them jailed, if I have to. They owe me money and I will collect what is due to me.

[*Ghost of Marley moves across the stage towards Scrooge]*

**Marley.** [*disgusted*] Scrooge and I were partners for many years. He was my only friend and my sole mourner. But Scrooge was not so cut up by the event of my death. He was an excellent man of business on the very day of my funeral. He finalized by burial with with a bargain! [pauses again in disgust] HE never removed my name from the window. There it stands on the window and above the warehouse door: Scrooge and Marley. People now wonder if he is Scrooge, or if he’s Marley, but to save three copper coins, he lets confusion continue. But what does Scrooge care? In confusion, no one asks him, “How was your day Mr. Scrooge? Or, could you spare a trifle for the poor, Mr. Marley?”

[*A single bell makes a slow gong*]

**Marley.** I must take my leave. You shall stay a while with Scrooge.

[*A second gong of the bell*]

See him in his counting house and see what the story of “once upon a time” can teach a withered old miser on Christmas eve. Quietly listen through the fog...listen….listen...listen.

[ *The clock outside strikes three in the afternoon*]

Only three ! and quite dark outside already : it has not been light all day this day.

[ *Marley looks about him. Music is heard. Marley flies away* .]

Act I

**Scene 2**

[*Christmas music is heard. At the conclusion of song, sound fades, lights come up on set: on the glass of a large door is seen: “Offices of Scrooge and Marley, Ltd.”*

*Scrooge sits at his desk. Near him is a coal stove. His door is open and in his line of vision, the audience see’s Scrooge’s office clerk, Bob Cratchit. Cratchit sits in a dismal tank of a cubicle, copying letters. Near cratchit is a tiny coal stove.*

*Cratchit rubs his hands together, and tries to heat his hands around his candle .*

*[Scrooge’s nephew, Fred enters the office through the large, outside door.]*

**Scrooge.** What are you doing,Cratchit? Acting cold, are you? Next, you’ll be asking to fill your coal from my coal box, won't you? Well, save your breath, Cratchit! Unless you’re prepared to find employment elsewhere!

**Nephew.** [*cheerfully; surprising Scrooge*] A merry Christmas to you uncle ! God bless you!

**Scrooge.** Bah! Humbug! 5

**NEPHEW**. Christmas, a “humbug” Uncle? I’m sure you don’t mean that.

**SCROOGE**. I do! Merry Christmas? What right do you have to be merry? What reason have you to be merry? You’re poor aren’t you?

**NEPHEW**. Come, then. What right have you to be sad? What reason have you to be morose? You’re rich enough.

**SCROOGE.** Bah! Humbug!

**NEPHEW.** Don’t be angry, Uncle.

**SCROOGE.** What else can I be? Eh? When I live in a world of fools such as you? Merry Christmas! What’s Christmas to you: a time for finding yourself a year older, but not a penny richer?

5. *Humbug*: to declare something is nonsense.

**NEPHEW.** Uncle!

**SCROOGE.** Nephew! You keep Christmas in your own way and let me keep in mine.

**NEPHEW**. Keep it! But you don’t keep it, Uncle.

**SCROOGE**. Let me leave it alone, then. Much good it has ever done you!

**NEPHEW**. I never make a penny from Christmas, but I profit from it still. I always thought of Christmas time, when it has come round as a good time. It is the only time I

know, when men and women seem to open their hearts to people below them and remember that we are all fellow passengers to the same end--the grave.

And therefore, Uncle, though it has never put a scrap of gold in my pocket, I believe that it has done me good, and that it will do me good: and I say of Christmas...God bless it !

[*The office clerk in the tank applauds NEPHEW’s speech, sees the furious Scrooge and returns his face closely to the page of work.*]

**SCROOGE.** [*To the clerk*] Let me hear another sound from you and you’ll keep your Christmas by losing your employment.

[*To the Nephew*] You’re quite a powerful speaker, sir. I wonder you don’t go to speak in Parliament 6.

**Nephew.** Don’t be angry, Uncle. Come! Dine with my wife and I tomorrow.

**Scrooge.** I’d rather see myself dead than see me with your family!

**Nephew.** But, why Uncle? Why?

**Scrooge.** Why did you get married?

**Nephew.** Because I fell in love.

6*. Parliament*: The national government of Great Britain, in some ways like the American congress.

**Scrooge.** That, nephew, is the most ridiculous thing you have said to me in your entire lifetime. Marriage is a chance for gain and profit. You wasted your chance on the only thing more ridiculous than your “Merry Christmas”! Love? A humbug!

[*Turns away from nephew*] Good afternoon!

**Nephew.** Now, Uncle, you never came to see me before I married. Why give it as a reason for not coming now?

**Scrooge.** Good afternoon, Nephew!

**Nephew.** I want nothing from you: I ask nothing of you: why cannot we be friends ?

**Scrooge.** Good afternoon!

**Nephew.** I am sorry with all my heart, to find you so determined. But I have made the trial in homage to Christmas , and I’ll keep my Christmas cheer to the last. So, a merry Christmas, Uncle!

**Scrooge**. Good afternoon!

**Nephew**. And a happy new year!

**Scrooge**. Good afternoon!

**Nephew**. [ *He stands facing Scrooge.*] Uncle, you are the most … No, I shan’t. My Christmas humor is intact … God bless you, Uncle … [*Nephew turns and starts for the door; he stops at Cratchits desk.]* Merry Christmas, Bob Cratchit …

**Cratchit**. Merry Christmas to you Master Fred, and a happy new year …

**Scrooge**. [*Calling across to them]* Oh, fine, a perfection, just fine …. To see the perfect pair of you, talking about a merry Christmas!... I’ll retire to Bedlam7.

**Nephew**. *[To Cratchit*] He’s impossible!

7. Bedlam**:** A hospital in London for the mentally ill.

**Cratchit**. Oh, mind him not, sir. He’s getting on in years, and he’s alone. He’s noticed your visit. I’m sure your visit has warmed him.

**Nephew**. Him? Uncle Ebenezer Scrooge? Warmed? You are a kinder person than I am, Bob Cratchit.

**Cratchit**. [*opening the door to let NEPHEW out; two do-gooders will enter as nephew exits*] Good day to you Master Fred, and God bless.

**Nephew.** God bless you Bob Cratchit.

[*One man who enters is portly, the other is thin. Both are pleasant.*]

**Cratchit.** Can I help you gentlemen?

**Thin man**. [Carrying papers and books; looks past Cratchit to Scrooge]

Scrooge and Marley’s, I believe. Have I the pleasure of addressing Mr. Scrooge, or Mr. Marley?

**Scrooge.** Mr. Marley has been dead these seven years. He died seven years ago this very night.

**Portly Man**. We have no doubts his generosity is well represented by his surviving partner…[*offers his business card*]

**Scooge**. [*Handing back the card; unlooked at*].. Good afternoon.

**Thin Man**. This will take but a moment, sir…

**Portly Man**. *[Says to Scrooge*] At this festive season of the year, Mr. Scrooge, it is desirable that we should make some slight consideration for the poor. They suffer greatly at this time. Many thousands of people are in want and need; sir.

**Scrooge.** Are there no prisons?

**Portly Man**. Plenty of prisons

**Scrooge**. And aren’t the workhouses still in operation?

**Thin Man.** They are. Still. I wish that I could say that they are not.

**Scrooge**. The Treadmill 8 and the Poor Law9 are still in full vigor, then?

**Thin Man**. Both laws are very busy, sir.

**Scrooge**. Ohh, I see. I was afraid, from what you said at first, that something had occurred to stop them from their useful purpose. [Pauses] I’m glad to hear it.

**Portly Man**. We see how many people, young and old, right here in London, have no ability to afford a little cheer at these holidays. A few of us are trying to raise some money to buy the poor some meat and drink. Maybe some coal for a little warmth.

[ *He has a pen in hand; as well as notepad*] What shall I put you down for, sir?

**Scrooge**. Nothing!

**Portly Man**. You wish to be left anonymous?

**Scrooge**. I wish to be left alone! [*pauses, turns away; then turns back to them*] since you ask me what I wish, gentlemen, that is my answer. I am forced by law to pay taxes that help the poor. These cost me more than enough. Poor people who are badly off can seek their aid from the treadmill and the workhouses.

**Thin man**. Many can't go there; and many would rather die.

**Scrooge**. If they would rather die, then let them do it, and decrease the surplus population.

**Thin man**. Please, sir, think of the families who have no business or way to make a living!

8. *The Treadmill*: A kind of mill wheel turned by the weight of persons treading steps arranged around it; this device was used to punish prisoners in jails.

9. *The Poor Law:* A series of laws were passed in England from the 17th century on to help the poor; changes to the law in 1834 gave responsibility for this relief to the government but did not provide much aid for the poor.

**Scrooge**. Their business in not my business. Its enough for a man to understand his own business, and not to interfere with other people's. Mine occupies me constantly. Good afternoon, gentlemen! [*Scrooge turns his back on the gentlemen and returns to his desk]*

**Portly man**. But, sir, Mr.Scrooge...think of the poor.

**Scrooge**. [*turns suddenly to them. Pauses*]

Leave my offices, sirs, while I am still smiling.

[*The Thin Man looks at the Portly man. They are undone. They shrug. They move to the door. Cratchit hops up for them.]*

**Thin man**. Good day, sir…*[To Cratchit*] A Merry Christmas to you, sir…

**Cratchit.** Yes. A Merry Christmas to both of you...

**Portly Man.** Merry Christmas… [*Cratchit silently squeezes a small coin into the hand of the Thin Man.*]

**Thin Man.** What's this?

**Cratchit.** Shhh… [*finger over his lips he looks to the desk of Scrooge*]

[*Cratchit opens the door; wind and snow whistle into the room.*]

**Thin Man.** Thank you, sir, thank you. [*Cratchit closes the door and returns to his own counting table. He talks to Cratchit without looking up.*]

**Scrooge.** It's less of a time of year for being merry, and more a time of year for being loony… if you ask me.

**Cratchit.** Well I don't know sir…

[*The clock’s bell strikes six o’clock*]

**Scrooge**. Saved by the six bells, are you?

**Cratchit.** I must be going home… [*He snuffs out his candle and puts on his hat.*] I hope you have a … very very lovely day tomorrow, sir…

**Scrooge.** Hmmm. Oh, you'll be wanting the whole day off tomorrow, I suppose?

**CRATCHIT**. If it’s quite convenient, sir.

**SCROOGE**. It's not convenient. And it's not fair. If I was to stop a day’s pay for it, you'd think yourself abused, I’m sure .

[Cratchit smiles faintly]

**Cratchit.** I don't know sir....

**SCROOGE**. And yet, you don't think me abused, when I pay a day's wages for no work...

**CRATCHIT**. It's only but once a year...

**SCROOGE.** A poor excuse for picking a man's pocket every 25th of December! But I suppose you must have the whole day off. Be here early the next morning!

**CRATCHIT.** Oh I will, sir. I will. I promise you. And, sir . . .

**SCROOGE**. Don't say it, Cratchit.

**CRATCHIT.** But let me wish you a . . .

**SCROOGE.** Don't say it, Cratchit, I warn you . . .

**CRATCHIT.** Sir!

**SCROOGE**. Cratchit!

[Cratchit opens the door to leave]

**CRATCHIT**. All right, then, sir . . . well [*suddenly*] Merry Christmas Mr.Scrooge!

[*And he runs out the door, shutting it behind him. Scrooge scowls at the remark. He moves to his desk; Gathering his coat, hat etc.*]

[*A boy appears at his window*]

**BOY.** [singing] “Away in a manger . . .”

[*Scrooge seizes his ruler and whacks against the glass at the boy outside. The boy leaves.]*

**Scrooge**. Bah! Humbug! Christmas bah! Humbug! [He snuffs out the light]

*A note on the cross over , following scene 2:*

[*Scrooge will walk alone to his rooms from his offices. As he makes a long, slow walk cross the stage, the background should change. Christmas carolers will cross by Scrooge, often smiling happily. There will be occasional pleasant greetings tossed at him .*

*Scrooge, In contrast, will grump and mumble. He will snap at passing boys, as might an old hound dog.*

*In short , Scrooge's sounds and movements will define him in contrast from all the other people who cross the stage: he is the misanthrope, the malcontent, the miser. He is Scrooge.*

*This showing of Scrooge’s character, should come off as comical to the audience.*]

*[During Scrooge’s crossover to his rooms, snow should begin to fall. All passers-by will hold their faces to the sky, smiling, allowing snow to shower them lightly. SCROOGE, by contrast, will bat at the flakes with his walking- stick, as one might a swarm of mosquitoes.*

*Finally, Scrooge arrives at his own door on a very darkened, lonely street.]*

Act I

Scene 3

**SCROOGE**. No light at all … no moon that is what is at the center of a Christmas Eve: dead black: void…

[*Scrooge puts his key in the door’s keyhole. He has reached his rooms now. The door knocker changes and is now MARLEY’S face. A musical sound: quickly: ghostly. MARLEY’s image is not at all angry, but looks at SCROOGE as did the old MARLEY look at SCROOGE. The hair is curiously stirred: his eyes are* wide open, dead: absent of focus. Scrooge stares wordlessly here. The face, before his very eyes, fades away. It is a knocker again. Scrooge opens the door and checks the back of it. Seeing nothing but screws and nuts, Scrooge shakes off the memory.]

**SCROOGE**. Pooh, pooh!

[ *The sound of the door closing resounds through the house like thunder. Every room echoes the sound. Scrooge locks the door and walks across the hall to the stairs, holding his candle as he goes; and then he goes slowly up the staircase.]*

**SCROOGE.** Bah still! Humbug still! This is not happening! I won’t believe it!

[*Marley’s ghost enters the room. He is horrible to look at: pigtail, vest, suit as usual, but he drags and enormous chain now, to which is fastened cash-boxes, keys, padlocks, record books, deeds, and heavy purses fashioned of steel. He is transparent. Marley stands opposite to stricken Scrooge.*]

**SCROOGE.** How now! What do you want of me?

**MARLEY.** Much!

**SCROOGE.** Who are you?

**MARLEY.** Don’t ask me who I am, ask me who I was.

**SCROOGE.** Who were you then?

**MARLEY.** In life, I was your business partner: Jacob Marley.

**SCROOGE**. I see...can you sit down?

**MARLEY**. I can

**SCROOGE.**  Do it then.

**MARLEY.** I shall [Marley sits] You don’t believe in me?

**SCROOGE.** I don't.

**MARLEY.** Why do you doubt your senses?

**SCROOGE**. Because every little thing can affect the senses. A stomach problem can make a man see ghosts. You might be the result of an undercooked bit of beef, or an over-ripe potato. There is more of gravy than grave to you, Spirit.

[*Marley opens his mouth and screams a ghostly, fearful scream. The scream echoes about each room of the house. Bats fly. Cats screech. Lightning flashes. Scrooge stands and walks backwards against the wall. Marley stands and screams again. This time, he takes his head and lifts it from his shoulders. His head continues to scream. Marley's face again appears on every picture in the room: all screaming “Scrooge”. ]*

**SCROOGE.** [*On his knees before Marley.*]

Mercy! Dreadful spirit. Mercy! Why. O! Why do you trouble me so?

**MARLEY**. Man of the worldly mind. Do you believe in me or not?

**SCROOGE**. I do. I must. But why do spirits like you walk the earth? And why do they come to me?

**MARLEY**. It is required of every man that the spirit within him should walk among his fellow men. Every man must travel travel far and wide. If that spirit goes not go forth in life, it must do so after death. Marley screams again: a tragic scream; from hits ghostly bones. I wear the chain I forged in life. I made it link by link, and yard by yard. These things you see are the only things I cared for in life. I clung to them when I walked the earth, and now they cling to me as I wander in spirit.

Is the pattern of these chains strange to you? Or would you know it Scrooge?The chain you have made for yourself is worse than this one I bear. When my life ended seven Christmas Eves ago, yours was more ponderous than mine. Now I can only imagine the burden that awaits you when you close your eyes in your final hour.

[*Terrified that a chain will appear about his body, Scrooge spins and waves the unwanted chain away. None, of course, appears. He sees Marley watching him dance about the room. Marley watches Scrooge : silently.]*

**Scrooge.** Jacob. Old Jacob Marley, tell me more. Speak comfort to me, Jacob…

**Marley**. I have no comfort to give. Comfort comes from other places than where I dwell. [*He moans again*.] my spirit never walked beyond our counting-house!- in life my spirit never roved beyond the narrow limits of our money-changing hole; so weary journeys lie before me now.

**Scrooge**. Oh, but Jacob, you weren’t so awful as all that. You were a good man of business, after all.

**Marley.**  [*SCREAMS*] Business??? [*a clap of thunder*] Mankind was my business! The common welfare was my business; charity, mercy, patience. These are the reasons a person has life, and I wasted mine on daily affairs that in the end showed no profit at all.

Hear me, Ebenezer Scrooge! My time is nearly gone.

I am here tonight to warn you that you still have a chance to avoid my fate.

**Scrooge.** You were always a good friend to me. Thank’ee!

Marley. You will be haunted by three spirits. Expect the first ghost tomorrow when the clock strikes one. Expect the second ghost to visit at the same time on the second night. The final spirit will come on the third night at the final stroke of midnight.

Remember what I have told you here tonight, and learn well the lessons these three spirits will teach you.

[*Marley puts his head back down upon his shoulders. He walks to the window. He looks from Scrooge out into the darkness beyond the window. With a long, mournful cry, Marley lifts up through the window and disappears into the night.]*

**Scrooge.** [*Rushing to the window*] Jacob! No, Jacob! Don’t leave me! I’m frightened!

[*Scrooge sees the darkness of the night. He opens, then closes the window. He goes to the door where Marley first appeared. He opens the door, looks and the other side, then closes it. Carolers are heard in the distance*.]

No one here at all. Did I imagine that? Humbug! I did imagine it. It was all in my foul dream-mind didn't it? He was a bit of undigested…

[*Thunderclap and lightning in the room*]

**Scrooge.** [*Looking up to the heavens*] Sorry. Sorry!

*[There is silence again. Lights fade out. Stage goes to black.]*

**ACT I**

**Scene 4**

[*Christmas music, choral voices sing ”Hark the Herald Angels”*]

[*Scrooge is seen in center of stage sleeping in his bed*]

**Marley.** [*directly to audience*] From this point forth…. I shall still be quite visible to you, but invisible to him [*smiles*] He will feel my presence, nevertheless, for unless my senses fail me completely we are- you and I, witness to the changing of the miser. That one, my partner in life, in business and in eternity: that one: scrooge [moves to staircase below SCROOGE] see him now, he endeavors to pierce the darkness with his ferret eyes. [*to audience*] see him now. He listens for the hour.

[*The bells begin to chime the hour. There is a large GONG for one o’clock. Scrooge sits up in bed. A hand draws back his bed curtains. He sees it.*]

**Scrooge.** A hand. Who owns it? Hello!

[*A strange figure stands before Scrooge.*

*It is like a child, yet at the same time like an old man: white hair, The figure wears a white tunic. A glowing belt cinches the waist. There is a branch of fresh, green holly in its hand. Clear jets of light spring from the crown of its head. This figure is clearly a ghost, but in no way frightening. This ghost is called PAST.* ]

Are you the spirit , sir, whose coming was foretold by my friend Jacob Marley?

**Past.** I am.

**Scrooge**. Who and what are you?

**Past**. I am the ghost of Christmas Past.

**Scrooge**. Times long past?

**Past**. Your past.

**Scrooge**. May I ask, sir, what is your business here with me?

**Past**. Your well being.

**Scrooge**. Not to sound ungrateful, Spirit, but couldn’t my well being have been better cared for if I could have had a full night’s sleep?

**Past**. I am here to turn a miser’s faith from money to men. Rise. Fly with me. [*He leads Scrooge to the window.]*

**Scrooge***.* Fly? I am but a mortal and cannot fly.!

**Past**. Bear my touch upon your heart. Keep me close and you shall always be upheld.

[*Scrooge reaches out a shaking, nervous hand to touch Past’s heart. At contact with the glowing robe, stage lights come down with the tinkle of chimes. Stage is dark. Curtain comes down.*]

Act I

Scene 5

*[Scrooge and the Ghost of Christmas Past walk together across an open stage. In the background, we see a field that is open and covered by a sown snow. Their walk across the stage becomes a country road.*]

**Scrooge**. Good heaven, Spirit! How did you find this place?

**Past**. You know these fields and this road, then?

**Scrooge**. Know it? I was born and bred here. These are the fields I smelled in spring, summer, fall and winter. I was a boy here.

**Past**. Your lip is trembling, Mr. Scrooge. And what is that upon your cheek?

**Scrooge**. Upon my cheek? N...Nothing...a blemish on the skin. The coldness brings a tear to these old eyes.

Kind Spirit, lead me where you will. Show me all there is to see in this place of fond memories.

**Past**. Do you know the way?

**Scrooge**. Know it? I would remember it blindfolded. There is my bridge, my winding river, my village church. *[He staggers about, trying to take it all in. He weeps again and wipes his tears to see the place of his birth*]

**Past.** These are but shadows of things that have been. They cannot see or hear us.

[Four happy travelers enter upon the road. They are singing a Christmas carol together--”God Rest Ye Merry Gentlemen”.]

**Scrooge:** Listen! I know these men! I know them! I remember the beauty of their song!

**Past ;** But why do you remember it so happily? It is merry Christmas that they say to one another! What is merry christmas to you Mr. Scrooge? Out! To anyone withing Merry Christmas, right? What good has Merry Christmas ever done to you. Mr. Scrooge?.....

**Scrooge;** [ After a long pause ] None! No good. None ….[He bows his head.]

**PAST ;** Look, sir, a school ahead. The schoolroom is not quite deserted . A solitary child, neglected by his friends, is left there alone.

[Scrooge falls to the ground ; sobbing as he sees and we see, a small boy. The young Scrooge, sitting and weeping. The boy sits alone at his desk; alone in a vast, empty void.]

**Scrooge;** I cannot look on him!

**PAST:** You must, Mr.Scrooge, you must.

**SCROOGE:** That boy is me. [pauses; weeps] Poor boy. He lived inside his head . . . alone . . .

[*Pauses: weeps]* Poor boy. *[pauses; stops his weeping]* I wish …*[dries his eyes on his cuff]* ah! It’s too late!

**PAST:**  What is the matter?

**SCROOGE:** There was a boy singing a Christmas carol outside my door last night. I wish I had given him something, that’s all.

**PAST:** [*Smiles: waves his hand to SCROOGE*] Come. Let us see another Christmas.

[*Lights out on the little school boy. A flash of light. A puff of smoke. Lights up on older boy*]

**SCROOGE:** Look! Me, again! Older now! [Realizes] Oh, yes . . . still alone.

[The boy-a slightly older SCROOGE-sits alone in a chair, reading. The door to the room opens and a young girl enters. She is younger than this slightly older Boy Scrooge. She is , say 10, and he is say, fourteen. Old man Scrooge and the GHOST OF CHRISTMAS PAST stand watching the scene.]

**FAN:** Dear, dear brother, I have come to bring you home.

**BOY Scrooge:** Home, little Fan?

**FAN:** Yes! Home, for good and forever. Father is so much kinder than he used to be. His temper is gone and home is like heaven! He spoke to me so gently one night, I had the courage to ask him again if you could come home. He said “yes”...and hired a coach and horses for me to bring you. Father says you will be treated as a man now. You will never come back to this place again. To welcome you home, father has prepared for the most wonderful Christmas. In the house, there’s greenery, and presents await us both! It will be the merriest time in the world.

**BOY Scrooge:** Such sweet news. You are quite a blessing, little Fan!

[*Laughing: she drags at BOY Scrooge, causing him to stumble to the door with her. Suddenly we hear a mean and terrible voice in the hallway. Off. It is the SCHOOLMASTER.*]

**SCHOOLMASTER:** Bring down the master Scrooge’s trunk at once! He is to travel!

**FAN:** Who is that , Ebenezer?

**BOY Scrooge:** O! Quiet, Fan. It is the Schoolmaster himself!

[*The door bursts open and into the room bursts the SCHOOLMASTER.*]

**SCHOOLMASTER:** Master Scrooge?

**Boy Scrooge:** Oh, yes, Schoolmaster. I’d like you to meet my little sister, Fan, sir…

[*Two boys struggle in with SCROOGE’S trunk.*]

**FAN:** Pleased to meet you, sir . . . [She curtsies.]

**Schoolmaster**. You are to travel, Master Scrooge.

**Boy Scrooge**. Yes, sir. I know sir…

[All start to exit, but Fan grabs the coattail of the mean old Schoolmaster.]

**Fan**. Pardon sir, but I believe that you’ve forgotten to say your goodbye to my brother, Ebenezer. He stands here still now awaiting your courtesy.

**Schoolmaster**. [*Amazed*] I...uh...harumph….uhh...well, then, [Outstretches his hand] Goodbye, Scrooge.

**Boy Scrooge**. Uh, well, goodbye Schoolmaster….

[Stage lights fade out except on the boy and Fan, and Old Scrooge and Past.

**Old Scrooge**. Oh, my dear, dear little sister. She rescued me from misery. How I loved her.

**Past.** She was always a delicate creature. She was delicate in health, but of a loving heart.

**Old Scrooge**. Yes, so she did.

**PAST**. She died as a young woman, I believe. And had but one child.

**Old SCROOGE.** Yes. My nephew Fred. His birth was her exit from this world.

[Scrooge lowers his head in sadness. As stage lights fade from Fan and boy, tears fall from Scrooge’s eyes.]

**Past**. I see. Fine then. We move on Scrooge. My time with you is not forever. Beyond the school, do you see that warehouse there? Do you know it?

**OLD SCROOGE**. Know it? It’s the business of old Fezziwig. I was an apprentice18 there.

**PAST**. Let us go. We’ll have a look.

[They enter the warehouse. They come upon an old man in old-fashioned Welsh wig and clothing.]

**OLD SCROOGE**. Why it’s old Fezziwig! Bless his heart; it’s my old master alive again!

[Fezziwig sits behind a large, high desk, counting and writing. He lays down his pen and looks at the clock: seven bells sound.] Quittin’ time…

**FEZZIWIG.** Quittin time! Our day is done, apprentices. No more work, Ebenezer! No more work, Dick!

[Ebenezer Scrooge (now as a young man) and Dick Wilkins enter toward Fezziwig’s desk.]

**OLD SCROOGE.**  Why, to be sure! There is my old friend and fellow apprentice,

Dick Wilkins. Bless his soul!

**FEZZIWIG**. Yo ho, my boys. It’s Christmas Eve tonight. No more work, and time for great cheer. Hilli-ho! Clear away. Chirrup, time for a party, Ebenezer and Dick.

*[The young men clear away the desks and in enters a fiddler (fiddling)]*

*While the fiddler plays, three young daughters of Fezziwig come in for dancing. Three men follow them and join the dance. All employees come in: workers, clerks, maids, cooks, etc.*

18 *Apprentice*: a person who receives training in a business or trade in exchange for work.

*[All dance. Throughout the dance food is brought in for a feast. It is “eaten” while people are dancing. YOUNG MAN EBENEZER dances with all three of the daughters. The men compete for the daughters happily. in the dance FEZZIWIG dances with his daughters. FEZZIWIG dances with Dick and Ebenezer. The music changes:*

*MRS. FEZZIWIG enters. She lovingly scolds her husband. They dance. She dances with YOUNG MAN EBENEZER. Lifting him and throwing him about. She is enormously fat. When the dance is ended, they all dance off, floating away, as does the music. OLD SCROOGE and the GHOST OF CHRISTMAS PAST stand alone now. The music is gone.]*

**PAST.** It was a small thing, that Fezziwig made those silly folks so full of gratitude.

**OLD SCROOGE**: Small!

**PAST.** Shhh, listen.

[Spotlight shines on DICK WILKINS and YOUNG MAN EBENEZER]

**DICK.** We are blessed, Ebenezer. Truly blessed to have a master such as Mr. Fezziwig.

**YOUNG MAN SCROOGE.** He is the best, best and very absolute best!

If ever I have my own business, I shall treat my employees with the same generosity. Of all he has taught us, he has taught us above all dignity and grace.

**DICK.**  Ah, that’s a fact. Ebenezer, That’s a fact!

**PAST.** [*to OLD MAN SCROOGE*] Was it not a smaller matter, really? He spent but a few coins of his money on your small party. Three or four pounds, 19 perhaps. Is that so much that he deserves such praise from you and Dick Wilkins?

**OLD SCROOGE.** It isn’t that! It isn’t that, Spirit. Fezziwig had the power to make us happy or unhappy. He could make our work light or burdensome; a pleasure or a toil. The happiness he gave was the same as if it cost him a fortune.

**PAST**. What is the matter?

19.*Pounds:* noun. A common type of money used in great Britain.

**OLD SCROOGE**. Nothing particular.

**PAST.** Something troubles you, I think.

**OLD SCROOGE.** I... I should like to say a word or two to my clerk, Bob Cratchit just now! That’s all!

**PAST**. What do you wish to say?

**OLD SCROOGE.** Perhaps I could keep the promise I made those years ago to Fezziwig and Dick. Perhaps Cratchit’s burden should be lifted a little on Christmas day.

[*YOUNG MAN EBENEZER enters the room and shuts down all the lamps in the warehouse. He stretches and yawns. He sits at a counting desk and closes his eyes with a smile. The GHOST OF CHRISTMAS past turns to OLD SCROOGE; all of a sudden.]*

**Past.** My time grows short! Quick!

[*In a flash of lights, YOUNG MAN EBENEZER is gone, and in his place sits a slightly older Scrooge. This one is MAN SCROOGE in the prime of his life. Man Scrooge sits at his desk lit dimly by a lamp. On the desk are ledger books and piles of coins. At the edge of his desk stands a young woman in a beautiful dress. She is crying. She speaks to the man, with hostility.]*

**Woman**. This matters little, Ebenezer. To you, very little. Something else has replaced me in your heart. You hold another idol that is not me.

**Man Scrooge**. What idol has displaced you?

**Woman.** A golden one.

**Man Scrooge**. You will judge me as the world judges? There is nothing in the world as hard as poverty. There is nothing the world judges as harshly as the pursuit of money!

**Woman**. You fear the world too much. I have seen all your higher ambitions fall away, one by one, until there is now only one. Your only love now is for gain. Home, wife, children, service. Have I not watched all of these fall away from your heart?

**Old Scrooge**. [watching, listening] No!

**Man Scrooge.** What then? I have grown in wealth to prepare a proper place for us in the community. Does this mean I have changed my love for you?

**Woman**. I am now, to you, one more thing to hold proudly before the town. If all was lost, would my love be the thing you held to above all?

**Man** **Scrooge**. If I…. We could...

**Woman**. Our contract for marriage is an old one. It was made when we were both poor. In those days we were content to be so, as long as we had each other. You are changed, Ebenezer. When we agreed to marry, you were another man.

**Man Scrooge**. I was not another man: I was a boy.

**Woman**. You admit your change in feelings. The marriage that promised happiness now appears as a house of misery. We were one, but now we are two.

**Old Scrooge**. [still watching] No!

**Woman**. I have thought of this often and keenly. I have thought of it enough to know I must release you…

**Old Scrooge**. [Quietly] Don’t release me, madame…

**Man Scrooge**. Have I ever asked for release?

**Woman**. In words, no. Never.

**Man Scrooge**. In what then?

**Woman**. In the way you have changed; in your altered spirit. Anything that made my love of any value to you. If we were not already engaged, tell me, would you seek me out and try to win my hand now? Ah, no!

**Old Scrooge**. Ah, yes!

**Man Scrooge**. You think I would not?

**Woman**. I wish I could think otherwise. Heaven knows! If you were free today, can even I believe that you would choose a dowerless girl**20** ? If you claim to choose me again today, I would not believe your words.

Your heart would soon turn again to the gain of money. I love the man you once were, Ebenezer, and so, I release you from our promise. With a full heart, I ask you to go.

**Old Scrooge**. Please, I … I…

**Man Scrooge**. Please I … I …

**Woman**. Good bye, Ebenezer. May you be happy in the life that you have chosen for yourself ...

**Old Scrooge**. No!

**Women**. Yourself … your money...alone…

**Old Scrooge**. No!

**Women**. Goodbye, Ebenezer …

**Old Scrooge**. Don’t let her go!

**Man Scrooge**. Goodbye.

**Old Scrooge**. No!

[*She exits. Old Scrooge goes to Man Scrooge (himself)*]

Don’t let her go. You fool! You mindless loon! You fool!

**Man Scrooge**. [*To excited woman*] Fool. Mindless Loon. Fool…

**OLD SCROOGE.** Don’t say that! Spirit, remove me from this place.

20. A dowerless girl: A girl without a dowry, the property or wealth a woman brought to her husband at marriage

**PAST**. I have told you these were shadows of the things that have been. They are what they are. Do not blame me, Mr.Scrooge

**OLD SCROOGE**. Remove me! I cannot bear it!

[*The faces of all who appeared in this scene are now projected for a moment around the stage: enormous. Flimsy. Silent.*]

Leave me! Take me back! Haunt me no longer!

[There is a sudden flash of light: a flare. The GHOST OF CHRISTMAS PAST is gone. SCROOGE is, for the moment, alone on the left side of stage. His bed and covers are on the far right of stage. The bed covers are turned down. SCROOGE holds a small, burning candle. In SCROOGE's other hand there is a small child’s cap. He slowly crosses the stage to his bed. Broken, tired, he climbs in to sleep. MARLEY appears behind Scrooge. Marley speaks directly to the audience.]

**MARLEY**. Scrooge must sleep now. He must surrender to the drowsiness caused by these memories. [pauses] The cap he carries is from many years now past: his boyhood cap. It was donned atop a hopeful, hair-filled head... doffed21 in shame and remorse.

*[Scrooge drops his boyhood cap. He lies atop his bed. He sleeps.]*

**MARLEY.** [*to audience*] He sleeps. For him there’s even more trouble ahead. Ghosts of Present and Future have still to rake his soul.

For you there is a snack and intermission. Hurry back to your seats. In Act II you will get to see if a miser can turn a raggedy coat of gray into a blazen, holiday coat of holly red.

[*A flash of lightning. A clap of thunder. Ghostly music. Marley is gone, stage is empty and dark.*]

21. *Donned*, to put on. *Doffed*, to take off.