

Chapter One – Christmas Eve

Everyone knew old Ebenezer Scrooge was the most tight-fisted miser you could meet. Yes, Ebenezer Scrooge was as hard as flint. A squeezing, wrenching, grasping, scraping, clutching, covetous old sinner! The cold within him froze his old features and made his eyes red and his thin lips blue. Nobody ever stopped Scrooge in the street to say, “My dear Scrooge, how are you?” No beggars asked him for a penny, no children asked him what time it was. Even the blind man’s dog dragged his master away from Scrooge. Yet what did Scrooge care? It was just how he liked it. He was as solitary as an oyster. Scrooge ran a counting-house and had once had a business partner, Jacob Marley, who had also been a tight-fisted miser. Jacob had been dead for seven years. There was no doubt that he was dead. No doubt at all, and this must be clearly understood, or the story I am about to relate will hold no wonder. In life, Scrooge had been Marley’s only friend and his only mourner in death. There could be no doubt about it – Scrooge knew for certain that Jacob Marley was dead!

On a freezing Christmas Eve, Scrooge sat in his cold office counting the coals Bob Cratchit, his clerk, put on the fire. He grumbled that Christmas was all “humbug.”

Scrooge carried ice within his heart and it didn’t thaw one single degree at Christmas time, not even when his cheerful nephew, Fred, burst through the door.

“A Merry Christmas, Uncle!” he cried. “Come, dine with us tomorrow.”

“Nah!” said Scrooge. “Humbug.”

“Christmas a humbug, Uncle?” said Fred. “You don’t mean that, I’m sure?”

Scrooge crossly refused Fred’s invitation and saw him to the door without so much as a “Merry Christmas!” When two portly gentlemen came collecting money to buy meat, drink and coal for the poor, Scrooge sent them away empty-handed.

“Are there no prisons? No workhouses?” he demanded crossly.

“There are, but many can’t go there and many would rather die first,” replied the gentlemen.

“Well, if those that are badly off choose not to go to prisons and workhouses, they had better die and decrease the surplus population! I don’t make merry myself at Christmas and I can’t afford to make idle people merry.”

Meanwhile the fog thickened, darkness fell and lanterns were held high. Teeth chattered and limbs shivered as the chill became more intense. A little boy, as thin and cold as the bones gnawed by a dog, bent to sing a carol through Scrooge’s keyhole: “God bless you, merry gentleman! May nothing you dismay!”

“Bah, humbug!” shouted Scrooge, taking a ruler and shaking it at the singer with such energy that he fled in terror.

At length it was time to shut the counting-house for the day. Scrooge turned to poor Bob Cratchit. “You’ll want all day off tomorrow, I suppose?” he said.

“If convenient, sir,” replied Bob.

“It’s not convenient,” said Scrooge, “and it’s not fair. I should stop your wages for it.”

It was a cold and bitter night before Scrooge let Bob go home. He did not wish him a Merry Christmas, just warned him that he had better make up the lost house by coming in all the earlier the morning after Christmas.

You will not be surprised to hear that Scrooge’s melancholy tavern meal that night was meagre with only his banker’s book for company. Nor will it surprise you that the lodgings he made his way to afterwards were bleak and lonely.

What's in a name?

Learning objective:

- Can I select and retrieve information, events or ideas from texts?

What do you think these characters will be like based in their name?

Marley

Cratchit

Tiny Tim

Chapter 1

The main character _____, is a _____ and _____ man, who works as a _____. He is a very _____ man and doesn't like _____ very much. Scrooge _____ Christmas and would rather spend his time _____ instead.

His nephew _____ arrives to wish his Uncle a _____ and invite him to _____. Scrooge is that miserable that he says _____ and doesn't want to go.

Scrooge Fred Merry Christmas money lender no hates

selfish lonely unhappy Christmas working

Christmas dinner

Questions to read and answer

What does Scrooge dislike about Christmas? _____

Who is Bob Cratchit? _____

How is he different to Scrooge? _____

How many days off does he give Bob Cratchit? _____

Who is Jacob Marley? _____

What five questions would you like to ask Ebenezer Scrooge?

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

5. _____
