CHAPTER TWO: A CHRISTMAS CAROL

OVERVIEW
Context and Social Background

*A Christmas Carol* was written in just six weeks at the end of 1843 when Dickens was in need of money. It was an instant success and it has remained popular for more than 160 years, with its portrayal of the meaning of Christmas. During his lifetime, it was also one of his most popular books for public reading – he wrote an abridged version for performance which he read in about 90 minutes. The book is structured in five sections, called stanzas; possibly a reference to the verses of a song or carol. Ghost stories were very popular with Victorian readers who were fascinated by supernatural powers; Wilkie Collins’ 1859 novel *Woman in White* enjoyed similar success to *A Christmas Carol.*

The debate about the Poor Law and provision of care for the poor was keenly pursued during the nineteenth century. The view of Scrooge is representative, in part, of the thinking of Thomas Malthus, who suggested that famine, poverty, war and disease were natural ways of controlling the population so that it did not grow beyond the available resources to sustain and feed it. He advocated welfare reform, disagreeing with an amendment to the Poor Law which provided more support, the more children a family produced. He argued that this encouraged the poor to have more children, when fear of starvation would be more likely to prohibit large families. Scrooge articulates this view when he refuses to donate to a collection for the poor who are unwilling to enter the workhouse saying, ‘If they would rather die, they had better do it, and decrease the surplus population.’

Until the seventeenth century, Christmas was celebrated as part of twelve days of feasting, dancing and drinking which also marked the change of year. Christmas day was defined as a holy day and the period often ended on Twelfth Night with performances of plays. Oliver Cromwell’s Puritan government legislated against all holy day celebrations so Christmas lost its significance until, during the reign of Queen Victoria, the foundations of a modern Christmas were laid. Holidays were taken, as the middle classes could now afford to take two days off of work. Thanks to the building of railways, families were able to get together more easily. In 1843 the first Christmas cards were sent, facilitated by the invention of the Penny Post three years earlier. This increased further in 1870 when the postage rate was halved. Also around this time, Santa Claus, stockings and the decorating of a tree became popular. Some of these traditions were introduced to England from Germany by Prince Albert and all were celebrated by the royal family. The carols which are still sung today were written in the nineteenth century and crackers were also invented. Charles Dickens is credited with further popularising Christmas with this novel.

Synopsis

Ebenezer Scrooge, a wealthy miser, hates Christmas and all that it represents. Between Christmas Eve and Christmas Day, he is visited by four ghosts. The first of these is the ghost of his former business partner, Jacob Marley, who urges him to listen to what the other spirits have to say. In turn they show him past Christmases, the coming Christmas and a future Christmas after his death. He is shown the legacy that his meanness will leave behind and he suddenly understands how his actions affect those around him. He is so moved by this that he reforms himself, celebrating expansively with his employees and family when he wakes up on Christmas morning.
Main Characters
- Ebenezer Scrooge, protagonist, surviving partner of Scrooge and Marley
- The ghost of Jacob Marley, deceased partner of Scrooge and Marley
- Bob Cratchit, clerk to Scrooge
- Fred, Scrooge’s nephew
- The Ghost of Christmas Past
- The Ghost of Christmas Present
- The Ghost of Christmas Yet to Come

Minor Characters
- The Cratchit family, Mrs Cratchit, Martha (a milliner’s apprentice), Belinda, Peter, two unnamed younger children and Tiny Tim
- Fanny, Scrooge’s sister
- Mr and Mrs Fezziwig
- Dick Wilkins, a fellow apprentice when Scrooge was working for Mr Fezziwig
- Belle, Scrooge’s former fiancée, now married to someone else
- Fred’s unnamed wife, family and friends
- A creditor and his wife, Caroline
- Mrs Dilber, Scrooge’s laundress, a charwoman and an undertaker’s man
- Joe, who purchases Scrooge’s possessions after his death

Settings
- The counting house of Scrooge and Marley, London
- Ebenezer Scrooge’s home
- The Cratchit family home in Camden Town
- The home of Scrooge’s nephew, Fred and his wife
- Scrooge’s boarding school
- A mine, a lighthouse and a ship at sea

Themes
- Christmas
- Meanness and greed
- Poverty
- Loneliness
- Family
- Change

Symbolism
- Fog and darkness
- Light
- Chains
ACTIVITIES

**Hooks, Starters and Pause Points**

*The Thinking Box*  * / **

Put a few coins in a box with a lid so that pupils cannot see what is inside. Pupils must ask questions to establish the contents of the box. Encourage the use of higher order questioning, for example, ‘What is it made from?’ rather than, ‘Is it paper?’

When the item has been guessed, discuss the power of money – how we get money, what we do with it, what it might be like not to have any money and how money affects all of our lives. When do we have enough money? Should we help people with nothing? Can pupils think of specific examples, maybe related to their school’s or community’s charity work? Use the outcomes from this discussion to introduce *A Christmas Carol*. Explain that even though the novel is set over 160 years ago, the themes of rich/poor and selfishness/generosity are still relevant today.

*I’m Still Here!*  * / **

Watch the clip from Robert Zemeckis’ 2009 version of *A Christmas Carol* when Scrooge, trapped in his own bed curtains, realises that he is still alive. [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=znL2wyOQss0&feature=relmfu](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=znL2wyOQss0&feature=relmfu)

Through shared discussion, predict the back story – what might have happened to make Scrooge so happy? Why might he be hanging upside down? Why does he feel as light as a feather?

*Chains*  * / **

Provide pupils with several strips of paper. On each strip, they should write one fact about themselves – this could be a characteristic, a description of appearance or something about a hobby or a friend. When this has been completed (and time is the only limit on the number of statements each pupil wants to write), make the strips of paper into a paper chain. Each chain is a personal snapshot of its creator’s life.

Watch a film version of the section of *A Christmas Carol* when Scrooge is visited by the ghost of Jacob Marley. Alternatively, read a suitable version aloud. What does Jacob Marley say about the chains that he and the other spirits are carrying? Why do they carry them? Can they remove them? Why not? Refer back to the pupils’ chains.

Explain that the book *A Christmas Carol* describes how Scrooge, a mean, old miser, changes the links in his chain whilst he is still alive, after learning some important lessons about caring for his family and people in need. As a reinforcement activity you could return to this at the completion of the novel to make a chain for Scrooge – facts about Scrooge the miser could be written on grey or dull links and facts after he has changed could be written on brightly coloured paper to emphasise the change.

*Knowledge Grab*  * / ** / ***

The purpose of this activity is to establish prior knowledge, both to inform the teacher of an appropriate starting point and for pupils to organise their own thinking about what they already know and what they want to find out. It can be used at the start of a unit, for example to establish what pupils know about a particular aspect of Victorian society or what they know about Charles Dickens. As an individual lesson starter this activity could help to establish what is known about a character, the plot so far, or a detailed aspect of Dickens’ choice and use of language.
As a plenary, it can be used to establish what has been learnt in a lesson, or at a pause point in a lesson to review what has been learnt so far. As such, it provides a means of formative assessment for the teacher in informing next steps in learning and for pupils in the process of self-evaluation of individual learning.

A Ghost of an Idea ***
In the Preface to A Christmas Carol, Dickens writes, ‘I have endeavoured in this Ghostly little book, to raise the Ghost of an Idea, which shall not put my readers out of humour with themselves, with each other, with the season, or with me. May it haunt their houses pleasantly, and no one wish to lay it.’

Through shared discussion, try to define what might Dickens have meant by the ‘Ghost of an Idea’. With whom is he trying to raise the Idea? What might he want his readers to think about? Remind pupils to note thoughts and return to this discussion at key points in the narrative to clarify, through further discussion, what the phrase might mean. Does its meaning become clearer as the novel progresses?

Word Associations  ** / ***
When someone says the word ‘Scrooge’ what do you think of? List some of the associations which are made, which will probably include words like ‘miser’ and ‘mean’. Review the word list - are all the words negative?

Then think about the Victorian readers of A Christmas Carol. They had no knowledge of the characteristics that Scrooge represented, so how would their expectations of the novel differ from a contemporary reader? Might they be familiar with a nineteenth century figure on whom Scrooge was based?

Face-Off  ** / ***
It is important when considering characterization to understand how interaction between characters gives the reader information. Use Face-Off as a lesson starter when considering interaction. Brainstorm different ways of communicating – people can be polite, abrupt, kind, warm, funny, etc. The way a person speaks often determines the reactions of those around them.

Pupils should work in pairs. The first person says something in a particular way, using one of the ideas from the brainstorm. How is the second person going to react? In particular, consider the choices which we have when faced with blunt comments such as Scrooge’s, ‘Bah, humbug!’ We can remain polite, we can answer in kind or we can be cheerful. Each different response says something about the respondent and also about the relationship between the people involved in the conversation.

A Face-Off can also be used as an improvisation at a pause point where you want pupils to analyze character interaction. It not only allows pupils to think in role, but also gives the teacher an insight into pupils’ understanding. As an additional challenge, ask pupils to use Dickens’ language when working in role.

What’s Going On?  ***
Us this as a lesson starter after a particular part of the text has been read. Group or pair pupils to prepare one statement based on the text. The class has to decide if this statement is true or false, using evidence from the text to explain their view.

Statements can involve basic fact retrieval, for example, ‘Bob Cratchit lives in Camden Town’ or a statement which requires the use of inference or deduction skills to decide if it is true or false. For example in Stave 1 a statement could read,
'Scrooge did not care what people thought of him.' This is true, as not only did he not care, but the text states that it was the way he preferred to live: 'It was the very thing he liked. To edge his way along the crowded path of life, warning all humanity to keep its distance'. Alternatively, a statement such as, 'Bob Cratchit was scared of his employer' cannot be clearly categorised – when Fred finished his speech, Bob applauded even though it annoyed Scrooge. However, he dared not collect more coal for his waning fire as, 'so surely as the clerk came in with the shovel, the master predicted that it would be necessary for them to part.'

This activity will also give insight into the depth at which each individual pupil is engaging with the text.

**Your Number's Up**

Ask a pupil to choose a number between one and ten. The pupil then has to give a corresponding number of facts about a topic which you suggest. This could be a character that has been studied, the plot or the social or historical context of the novel. This continues until all pupils have contributed or all known facts have been recalled. This can also be used as a plenary or by dividing the class into groups of ten, so that there are more opportunities to contribute. In this case, pupils should provide the facts to their group. As a further challenge when recalling facts from the narrative, ask for evidence from the text to be provided to support the given fact. At the completion of the activity, pupils can evaluate their own knowledge.

**States of Mind**

Use this to introduce a lesson which is considering the state of mind of a particular character. Challenge pupils to find as many ways as possible of silently communicating a given emotion. Facial expressions, hand gestures, posture, limb position and occupation of space and body proximity to other characters should all be considered.

Instead of portraying the state of mind of a given character, the activity could be reversed so that pupils communicate a state of mind and others in the class have to work out which character is being portrayed. Discuss how the answer was determined and what information from the text was being used both by the actors and the viewers.

States of Mind can also be used at key pause points in the course of a lesson, for example, when tracking changes in states of mind. Use digital images of each pose to compare how the character’s reactions have changed in the course of the section of the plot which is being studied.

**Just One Word**

Ask pupils to choose one word to summarize what the reader might feel about Scrooge at any given point in the story. The challenge is to find a quotation which reinforces the viewpoint. For example, after the visit of Marley's Ghost, the word ‘sceptical’ could be chosen in summary. The quotation to support that word choice would be, ‘You may be an undigested bit of beef, a blot of mustard, a crumb of cheese, a fragment of an underdone potato. There’s more of gravy than of grave about you, whatever you are!’ The arrival of the final spirit could be summarized as ‘contrition’ because Scrooge says, ‘I fear you more than any spectre I have seen. But as I know your purpose is to do me good . . . I am prepared to bear you company, and do it with a thankful heart.’
Literary Devices ***
Resource 1.1 (Literary Devices) contains a cloze exercise in order to secure pupils’ understanding of narrative techniques. These definitions should be revisited throughout the study of the novel. As an activity, pupils could find examples of different narrative techniques and discuss the effect of each example on the reader.

Just a Minute ***
This activity can be used to review knowledge at any point in a lesson. As a lesson starter, pupils can be invited to talk about a particular character, a setting or an aspect of plot or structure, for one minute. As an extra challenge, can this be done without the speaker pausing or repeating themselves? Are all comments relevant to the topic? This also offers the opportunity for formative, ongoing assessment.

Just a Minute can also be used in a debate format, when pupils need to consider opposing points of view. A pupil must talk about a given issue for one minute, (including the challenge rules where appropriate), and then their partner must rebut this viewpoint by presenting a different point of view. In both cases, evidence from the text should be provided to support each point of debate.

Understanding Character
Painting with Words: 1 * / **
Objectives:
- to explore how an author uses descriptive language to create images in the mind of the reader
- to understand how appearance is used to represent character

Dickens used words to paint pictures in the minds of his readers. But not only do these words paint pictures of appearances, they also represent the characteristics of the people being described. Using text extract 1.1 (The Three Christmas Spirits) read aloud Dickens’ description of the Ghost of Christmas Past, using the paraphrase if more appropriate to the age and experience of the class. Ask pupils to note key words as they listen. Display the text, and through shared discussion, mark key words. Discuss what this tells the reader about the appearance of the Ghost. Ask pupils to draw, then colour, the picture which the description creates in their own mind. To evaluate the completed images, compare similarities across the images. How powerful are Dickens’ words in painting the original picture in the readers’ mind? With older pupils, discuss how appearance represents an aspect of the story – Christmas Past represents memory, Christmas Present represents generosity and goodwill to all men, whilst Christmas Yet to Come represents fear of the future and the loneliness of death.

This can then be repeated with the Ghost of Christmas Present and the Ghost of Christmas Yet to Come. Alternatively, study the three extracts before creating the images and allow pupils to choose which ghost image they wish to reproduce, evaluating them against the text extracts when complete. These images could then be produced as models if a film option is to be pursued.

Whilst working, it can be inspiring to listen to music – the following suggestions are all readily available:

The Ghost of Christmas Past
- Impossible Opening from Finding Neverland: Jan A.P. Kaczmarek
- Le Onde: Ludovico Einaudi
- Ladies in Lavender: Teaching Andrea and Fantasy for Violin and Orchestra from Ladies in Lavender: Nigel Hess


The Ghost of Christmas Present
- Rondeau from Abdelazar: Henry Purcell
- Crown Imperial: William Walton

The Ghost of Christmas Yet to Come
- Symphony No. 3, Sorrowful Songs, 2nd movement: Henryk Gorecki
- Song for Athene: John Tavener

Painting with Words: 2 * / **
Objective:
- to respond to descriptive prose and images by writing poetry
This activity provides an opportunity to respond to the ghost images through writing poetry. Using a Fast Poem structure (Corbett, 2005 p. 25) select one noun, two adjectives, three adverbs and four verbs to make an effective poem. Resource 1.2 (How to write a Fast Poem) is a PowerPoint which models the steps taken in writing the following Fast Poems.

Ghost
Smooth and strong,
Softly, gently, invisibly,
Swirling, shining, sparkling, dissolving.

Giant
Radiant and enthroned.
Genially, gloriously, joyfully,
Gleaming, glistening, glowing, laughing.
Can pupils tell which ghost is being described? Can they repeat this with each other’s poems? This should be possible if effective word choices have been made. Encourage older pupils to think about words which represent the character of each ghost, not just the appearance. An example of this would be:

Death
Dark and abandoned.
Silently, slowly, solemnly,
Concealing, pointing, shrouding, approaching.

Families at Christmas * / **
Objective:
- to investigate how authors portray relationships within a context
Conveying relationships through dialogue is a key authorship skill. This activity explores how Dickens’ characters communicate within one family (the Cratchits) and attempts to analyze what the reader learns about the family from the narrative. Text extract 1.2 describes the Cratchit Family Christmas. For older pupils, this can be used to write and perform a play script of their own. A play script is available as resource 1.3 if you wish to limit this activity to performance or scaffold pupils’ writing using a sample text.

Before starting to read the play script, spend some time discussing how families communicate – consider body language, eye contact and style of language used. Are conversations between adults different from those between adults and children? How do siblings talk to each other? What does this tell an observer about how members of a family feel about each other?

Rehearse and perform the scene, conveying the family atmosphere. Either video and analyze the performances, or use the class as an audience to comment on how
effectively each performance has portrayed the warmth and humour of the Cratchit family. Complete the activity by discussing the following questions.

From watching and performing this scene, using words, phrases and evidence from the script to support your view:
- What sort of relationship did the family have?
- How does the author use dialogue to show that these people are close and know each other well?
- How do you think poverty affected the family?

Sculptor and Sculpted with Thought Tracking  * / **
Objective:
- to understand how a character’s behaviour and attitudes change over time in response to the actions of others

At the end of each section of the story, discuss what Scrooge was thinking and how we know. For example, when his nephew called in to wish him a merry Christmas, Scrooge responded with his famous phrase, ‘Bah! Humbug!’ What does this tell us about his view of Christmas?

Text extract 1.3 (Thought Tracking Scrooge) contains ten sections from the narrative which are key points in tracking Scrooge’s thinking. Read through the extracts and decide what Scrooge is thinking at each point. Then divide the class into ten groups, giving each group one card from resources 1.4 or 1.5 (differentiated Sculptor and Sculpted). With one person in each group representing Scrooge, others should sculpt Scrooge into a statue which shows his attitude at the point of the story that the card describes. Some key words are provided. Encourage pupils to think carefully about body language, including what is communicated by head (looking up, head hanging in shame), arm and hand position, posture (upright or slouching) and facial expression. Change the role of sculptor and statue until the group is satisfied with the sculpture. At this point, take a digital image. Use the information in the Cineliteracy section of Chapter One for details about enhancing the images.

Older pupils could Thought Track as an extension activity – when the statue is finished, ask the person to speak in role as Scrooge, saying what he is thinking. A video camera should be used if Thought Tracking is included.

When the activity is complete, review the images or video. What do we learn about Scrooge? How does his behaviour change? How do his actions change? What about his attitude to poverty and suffering? Is there any wider knowledge from the text which can be added to reinforce the views of pupils (for example, his change towards Tiny Tim and his possible death)? List and retain ideas and vocabulary for the writing activity.

Divide pupils into pairs. Working in role as Fred, one person must use the information gained from the above activity to persuade the other person, in role as Scrooge, to join him for Christmas Day. This can be repeated with roles reversed. Then, bringing everything together, ask pupils to write a letter in role as Fred, trying to persuade Scrooge to join him the next day. A sample text is provided (resource 1.6 Dear Uncle Scrooge) to model the task for pupils, or for shared reading. As an additional challenge, pupils could write a letter to Scrooge trying to persuade him to join them for their own family Christmas celebrations.
The Spirit of Christmas  *

Objective:
- to track and explain the changes in a character across a text

Read text extract 1.4 *The Spirit of Christmas* together. Through shared discussion, decide what Scrooge might have looked like. Pupils could look at images in Marcia Williams’ *Oliver Twist and other great Dickens Stories* to support this discussion. Then ask pupils to draw a small picture of Scrooge. To expand this activity for older children, create additional images for Fred and Bob Cratchit from Dickens’ descriptions of them.

As you read or tell the story, pause at key points to place Scrooge (and any other characters whom you wish to use) on *The Spirit of Christmas Spectrum* (resource 1.7). As the story progresses, listeners will create a visual picture of Scrooge’s journey from miser to benefactor – resources 1.4 and 1.5 show key points in the text. Will the initial image of Scrooge be appropriate for the end of the story? How will it need to change and what will effect this change? Where in the narrative do changes take place? You could put images of each ghost above the line to mark key points. Why do some characters remain in the same place throughout the narrative? Enlarge the tracking sheet onto A3 paper and track the journey as a whole class.

As a further response activity, storyboard and caption *A Christmas Carol* to show the gradual change with each ghostly visit. Two templates are provided as resource 1.8 (*The Spirit of Christmas Storyboard*). As a rehearsal for the storyboarding, ask pupils to re-tell a section of the story and then draw the picture, taking it in turns to recall each section. Finally, pupils can caption their images to create the story as a picture book. Stick each storyboard onto card and tape all the cards together in a concertina pattern. This will then create *A Zig-Zag Christmas Carol* to be shared with other classes and family members.

Near and Far  **

Objective:
- to consider how one character’s behaviour and attitudes affect those around him

The purpose of this activity is to understand how Scrooge’s relationships with those around him changed as his attitudes also changed. Start with everyone standing in a circle, with one person representing Scrooge in the centre of the circle. Choose one person to represent each of the characters in the novel and give them a card with their character’s name on. After shared discussion, decide where each character should stand in relation to Scrooge, depending on how close the character was to him emotionally. Repeat this for each stave, taking a digital image of each one.

Compare the five images – what do they show about the relationship of the characters to Scrooge? How do the relationships change during the course of the novel?

**Stave 1**
- Bob Cratchit
- Fred
- the two gentlemen collecting for the poor
- the boy who tried to sing a carol at his door
- people who lived in his neighbourhood

**Stave 2**
- Fanny, Scrooge’s sister
- Mr and Mrs Fezziwig
- Dick Wilkins
Belle

Stave 3
- Mrs Cratchit
- Tiny Tim and the Cratchit children
- Fred
- Fred’s wife, family and friends

Stave 4
- business gentlemen who are discussing Scrooge’s death
- Mrs Dilber, Scrooge’s laundress, a charwoman and an undertaker’s man
- Joe, who purchases Scrooge’s possessions after his death
- the Cratchit family after the death of Tiny Tim
- a creditor and his wife, Caroline

Stave 5
- one of the gentlemen collecting for the poor
- people in Scrooge’s neighbourhood
- Fred and his wife
- the guests at Fred’s party
- Bob Cratchit
- Mrs Cratchit
- Tiny Tim and the Cratchit children

Scrooge Spider Diagram

Objective:
- to track the development of Scrooge’s character through the course of the narrative

After reading the opening of the novel, create a spider diagram for Scrooge. Note on the diagram key characteristics about him which are revealed through his interaction with other characters. In Stave 1, for example, information can be collected from his interactions with Bob Cratchit, Fred, the charity collectors and the ghost of Jacob Marley. In later Staves, this should include each of the Ghosts in turn. Brief quotations to support each entry could also be included. Ask pupils to decide at the outset of this activity whether Scrooge is intriguing or abominable. What evidence in the text leads them to their conclusion? Repeat this discussion at key points in the study to explore how the readers’ views of Scrooge evolve as the narrative develops.

At the conclusion of the study, the spider diagram will give a complete overview of the development of Scrooge’s character through his interactions with those around him. How do the entries at the end of the narrative differ from those at the beginning, particularly in his interaction with Fred? What does this tell the reader about the development of the character of Scrooge?

Character Interaction

Objective:
- to examine how Dickens develops the character of Scrooge through his interactions with other people

Use this activity after reading Stave 1 to the point where the charity collectors leave and Scrooge is ‘in a more facetious temper than was usual with him’. Through shared discussion as a whole class, analyze Scrooge’s conversations with his clerk. Consider the tiny fire which the clerk is allowed and Scrooge’s reaction to Bob clapping when Fred finishes his speech. What do these interactions tell the reader about Scrooge’s character and his view of his clerk?

Next, divide the class into two groups. One group should consider Scrooge’s interaction with his nephew, Fred, and the other group should consider Scrooge’s
interaction with the charity collectors. Support views with quotations from the text. Then ask pupils to pair so that there is one person with information about Fred and one person with information about the charity collectors in each pair. Share ideas, challenging each other’s views and using evidence from the text to support conclusions.

Finally, write a paragraph explaining what Dickens shows the reader about Scrooge’s character through his interaction with others. Include quotations to support any statements which are made.

**In The Director’s Chair  ***

*Objective:*
- to interrogate a text in order to deepen understanding of how language is used to communicate character

Provide pupils with a copy of text extract 1.5 *The Director’s Chair*, which contains the discussion between Scrooge and Marley. This could be the whole conversation, or it could be split into sections, with each pair working on one section. Each pair of pupils should discuss how they would direct the scene if they were filming it. This would include where the characters stand in relation to each other, what kind of movements would be made or when a character is motionless. Scripts should be annotated to show all of the direction detail, as if the script was going to be given to an actor. Direction should include the narrator’s comments about Scrooge’s attitude, feelings and reaction.

Pupils should then form groups to discuss and share ideas. If the script has been split into sections, pupils should work with those who have studied the same section. Ask pupils to challenge each other’s decisions, using evidence and quotations from the text to justify the direction which they have marked on their scripts.

**Emotive Language  ***

*Objective:*
- to investigate the use of emotive language by an author when creating a fully rounded character

Using text extract 1.6 (Emotive Language) read the sample extract which is taken from one of the scenes which Scrooge is shown by the Ghost of Christmas Past. Using this sample, model how to interrogate the text to help the reader understand more about Scrooge’s character.

Then ask pupils to do the same using the four extracts. To what extent do these quotations help the reader to understand Scrooge as a more rounded character than the person shown in Stave 1? Why has Dickens chosen this point in his narrative to introduce these more sympathetic aspects of Scrooge’s character? In what ways is the reader supported in forming new conclusions? Annotate sheets with ideas and then, through shared class discussion, extend thinking further. Add any new ideas from the class discussion to resource sheets. Encourage pupils to use exploratory questions to challenge each other’s thinking, including requesting evidence from the text. Next, grouping pupils, ask them to interrogate the language that Dickens has used in these descriptions. What emotions have been conveyed in each scene and how has language been used to do this? Discuss this in two contexts – the effect of the emotion on Scrooge and its effect on the reader. Encourage pupils to use quotations and evidence from the text to explicate their thinking. Finally, ask pupils to make individual responses by writing a paragraph which explains how Dickens’ use of language allows the reader to understand Scrooge as a more rounded character.
Fatally Flawed  ***
Objective:
- to investigate how the structure of the novel helps the reader to see Scrooge as a fully-rounded character

The purpose of this activity is to consider how Dickens structures the narrative in such a way that a complete picture of the protagonist is created. Through shared discussion, define the concept of a character being fatally flawed. All characters possess flaws in order for them to be realistic and believable but a fatally flawed character cannot be redeemed and becomes the victim of his flaws.

Divide the class into five groups and assign one Stave to each group. Using the relevant section of the text and all available knowledge about Scrooge acquired in the course of the study, find evidence for Scrooge being a fatally flawed character. Is there a possibility that he was simply misunderstood?

Understanding Plot
Party Time!  * / **
Objective:
- to understand the role of the family in a Victorian Christmas

The Victorians created the family centred style of Christmas celebration which we still enjoy today. Dickens often read his books, or extracts from them, aloud. Start this activity by reading aloud the accounts of two Christmas parties in A Christmas Carol (text extract 1.7 Party Time). The first visit which Scrooge made was in the company of the Ghost of Christmas Past, when he was reminded of an exciting party thrown by Mr Fezziwig, with whom Scrooge was apprenticed. The second was with the Ghost of Christmas Present when he was a silent witness at the party of his nephew, Fred.

After reading these extracts aloud, discuss the dancing and games which everyone enjoyed. Learn and play some of the games listed below – some are mentioned in the text and some are favourite Victorian parlour games which would have been popular with families at Christmas.

- Blind Man’s Buff
  One person is blindfolded. Everyone moves around the room whilst the blindfolded person tries to catch someone. When a person is caught they must be identified by the Blind Man. The blindfold is then passed on and the game is repeated.

- Charades
  Divide the group into teams. Each team is given a word to act out, a book or a book character. Films, TV and DVDs didn’t exist!

- How, Why, When and Where
  One person thinks of an object and everyone else must guess what the object is. Four questions can be asked, ‘How do you like it?’ ‘Why do you like it?’ ‘When do you like it?’ or ‘Where do you like it?’ Each player may only ask one question. The winner is the person who correctly guesses the object.

- Pass the Slipper
  Everyone sits in a circle with one person in the middle. The central person closes their eyes while a slipper is passed around the circle behind each person’s back. The slipper stops when the person in the centre opens their eyes and tries to guess who is holding it. If the guess is correct, the person holding the slipper moves to the centre. If the guess is wrong, the game is repeated.

- Shadows, or Shadow Buff
  Darken the room, suspend a white sheet and place a light source such as a torch behind the sheet (the Victorians would have used a candle). One person sits in front of the sheet and has to identify each other person in turn as they walk between the
light source and the sheet, creating a shadow. The better the distortion created by bending, stretching or making an unusual shape, the harder it is to guess.

- **Spin the Trencher**
  A wooden plate or tray is placed on the floor in the centre of a circle of chairs. All but one person sit on a chair each. The person left standing must spin the trencher and call out the name of someone sitting on a chair. This person must catch the trencher before it falls. If they fail to do so, they pay a forfeit, their seat is taken and they become the next person in the middle. The trick is not to call a name until the trencher has almost stopped.

- **The Laughing Game**
  Everyone sits in a circle. The first person says, ‘Ha.’ The second person says, ‘Ha, ha,’ the third, ‘Ha,ha,ha,’ and so on, around the circle. Anyone who laughs or smiles is out. The winner is the person who can keep a straight face for the longest.

- **The Sculptor**
  One person is chosen to be a sculptor, moving around the room and shaping each person into an awkward or amusing pose which must be held. The first person to laugh becomes the next sculptor.

- **Yes and No**
  One person thinks of something and everyone else has to find out what it is by asking questions which can only be answered with the words, ‘Yes’ and ‘No.’ The winner is the first person to guess the item correctly.

Video the games being played or take digital images, concentrating on interaction. Look at and talk about the images before, and whilst using, resource 1.9 *Party Time Discussion* for a shared discussion. Divide the class into groups and allow five minutes to discuss the questions. In each group, a scribe notes answers and ideas. After five minutes, an envoy from each group should take their answers and visit each of other groups in turn. At each table, the envoy shares one key point from their own group and notes down one key point from the group that he or she is visiting. To encourage thinking skills, one exploratory question can also be asked of the envoy, for example, ‘Why did your group think . . .?’ When the rotation of envoys is complete, return to the original groups and share new ideas.

Through whole class discussion, fill in the Venn Diagram (resource 1.10 *Party Time Feedback*) to show the similarities and differences between Victorian and modern parties.

**Word Wall**

**Objective:**
- to demonstrate understanding of a character and the development of the character in the course of the narrative

Use a display board or cover part of a wall in paper to create a word or graffiti wall. Starting at one end of the wall, pupils can write on it any words or phrases which describe Scrooge. These can be words which they read or hear read to them from text samples, or any words or descriptions of their own about Scrooge at the point in the story which you have reached. As the narrative unfolds, move along the wall to add new words: the nature of the words being written will change. When the story is finished, compare the words at one end of the wall, which are words from the beginning of the story, with the words chosen at the end. What does this say about the changes in Scrooge? What message was Dickens trying to communicate in the book? How well does the word wall suggest that he achieved this? Can pupils then see, from analyzing the word wall, how and where the changes gradually happened and why the book was structured in the way that it was?
**Extra! Extra!**

**Objective:**
- to write a newspaper article in role as a Victorian journalist

Using all the information gathered in the course of studying *A Christmas Carol*, create a newspaper page about Scrooge's change of heart. The paper is to be published on Boxing Day, the morning after Scrooge shows that he is reformed. An understanding of the plot and Scrooge’s transformation are necessary. A sample text to use in modelled writing is available as resource 1.11 *Extra! Extra!*

**Whoosh** / ***

**Objective:**
- to familiarise pupils with events of a section of the narrative

This activity is useful for introducing pupils to the key events of a large section of a story prior to a more detailed study of the narrative, or to enable pupils to gain an overview of plot and events without reading the complete text individually. Everyone participates and it is a very active way of engaging with text and bringing it to life. It was named and is widely used in the education programmes of the Royal Shakespeare Company. Use resource 1.12 for this *Whoosh.*

Seat pupils in a circle and assign roles for the first section of the *Whoosh*. All of the text which is in bold requires some sort of action, so pupils might be representing a character (such as Scrooge) or an object (such as a door) in a pose in the centre of the circle. Sound effects can be made by everyone in chorus. Key dialogue is also included, with dialogue prompts to distribute to the pupils representing those characters. Read the *Whoosh*, with pupils adding poses, dialogue and actions to match. When you say, ‘Whoosh’ everyone has to return to their original place in the circle. This could be as marked at the end of a section, if the circle starts to become too crowded, or as a pause point.

**Tension Graph** ***

**Objective:**
- to examine narrative techniques

The control of tension in a novel is a narrative technique which affects the emotions of the reader. Introduce the definitions of rising and falling tension to pupils and examine resource 1.13 *Tension Graph*. Discuss how this can be used to create a tension graph for stave 1. How does Dickens control the rise and fall of tension in order to communicate the most important points of the narrative? Complete a graph for each stave.

**Ghost Comparison Table** ***

**Objective:**
- to compare the role of each ghost in the narrative

Resource 1.14 is a *Ghost Comparison Table* which can be completed as the book is studied. Consider the appearance and personality of each spirit, together with the events and tone of the visit. Quotations or evidence from the text should be used to support each point. At the completion of the study, analyze the comparison table. What does it say about Dickens use of the spirits to give the narrative direction and structure? How do the interactions of the ghosts with Scrooge effect the change which is the theme of the book?

**Understanding Setting**

**Family Meals at Christmas** * / **

**Objective:**
- to understand how a writer from a different time presents an experience
This activity is also used in *Great Expectations* so could be linked in a cross textual study of Dickens’ descriptions of Victorian Christmas meals. A theme plan entitled *Celebrating Christmas* is available on the accompanying CD.

The Cratchit family is an example of how poor people celebrated Christmas in Victorian times. It was a family celebration and the sort of food which we eat today was starting to become popular. Roast turkey was eaten by those who could afford it, or roast goose by those who could not. Mince pies and Christmas puddings were also eaten. Queen Victoria is attributed with popularising these foods.

Read text extract 1.8 *The Cratchit’s Christmas Dinner*, which describes the meal. What does the reader learn about what poor people ate at Christmas? What examples can pupils find of figurative language: a simile (*like a speckled cannon ball*), hyperbole, or exaggeration, (*The youngest Cratchits, in particular, were steeped in sage and onion to the eyebrows!*), alliteration (*hissing hot*) and onomatopoeia (*sputtered and cracked*)? What effect does this have on the reader? Using this information, create a menu card for the Cratchit Christmas Dinner. As an extension activity, pupils could write a descriptive paragraph about, or create their own menu card for, a celebration meal they have enjoyed, using figurative language.

Creating a Setting **

**Objectives:**
- to explore how writers use language to create effect
- to use imagination to create suspense

Read aloud text extract 1.9 *Creating a Setting* from the first Stave of the book. What are the first impressions? Which words created that impression? Explain to pupils that they are going to explore the text to find out how Dickens’ creates the setting for *A Christmas Carol* by the way pictures are painted in the reader’s mind to generate suspense. Provide each pupil with a copy of the text to mark, finding examples of the following figurative language:
- simile
- alliteration
- personification
- repetition
- noun and expanded noun phrases
- powerful verbs
- varied sentence lengths

The writing in these paragraphs is very rich – for example, the sentence ‘The owner of one young nose, gnawed by the hungry cold as bones are gnawed by dogs,’ contains personification of the cold (‘hungry cold’) as part of a simile, with repetition.

Through shared discussion, explore the richness of this writing. What is the writer trying to create in the reader’s or listener’s mind? How soon does the reader realise that this is going to be a ghost story? And how has the language prior to this point contributed to the building of suspense? How many references are there to the cold? Read the extract aloud once more, asking pupils to visualize what the passage is describing.

Finally, challenge pupils to write their own story opening, using rich language to create a picture in the minds of their readers. Read the story openings aloud and evaluate. There is a short story writing activity at the conclusion of the study of *A*
Christmas Carol, so pupils could retain their story opening to use as part of a complete story.

** Victorian London ** / ***

Objective:
- to explore the context and setting of Dickens’ London

Start by comparing a map of Victorian London such as [http://charlesdickenspage.com/dickens_london_map.html](http://charlesdickenspage.com/dickens_london_map.html) with a contemporary map [http://mapsof.net/uploads/static-maps/london_detailed_road_map.png](http://mapsof.net/uploads/static-maps/london_detailed_road_map.png) What do pupils notice? Brainstorm any differences which have been observed.

Working in pairs, make an internet search for images of Victorian London – Google Images is a rich resource for this activity. List all the information which you can find about living conditions, transport, housing, clothing, etc. From these images and the lists, discuss how life has changed since Victorian times. Has it changed for better or for worse? Then, considering Victorian living and working conditions, ask pupils to predict what themes might be included in a novel written in Victorian times by someone who wanted to comment on social conditions in his home city of London.

** Settings and Structure ***

Objective
- to examine how setting can be designed to structure a narrative and communicate viewpoint

List the settings of the novel, for example, Scrooge’s office, the street as people prepared for Christmas, Scrooge’s home, the Cratchit’s home, etc. Each different setting is crafted to create an atmosphere appropriate to a particular point. In each case, decide through shared group discussion, how Dickens used settings to make socio-cultural statements to his reader. For example, the coldness of the office is described in great detail. This reflects the coldness of Scrooge’s character but also creates an appropriate setting into which to deliver the Malthusian view held by a section of Victorian society that the poor should not be supported, as starvation offered a useful form of population and birth control. Scrooge articulates it in his comment to the charity collectors that if the poor ‘would rather die’ than enter the workhouse, then ‘they had better do it, and decrease the surplus population’.

Investigate the message which each of the other settings is designed to enhance.

** Whole Text Responses **

** Short Story Writing **

Objective:
- to write a short story using a known classic text as a model

Using the knowledge and understanding of characterization, plot and structure from studying A Christmas Carol, write a short ghost story using Dickens’ structure. The protagonist should move from one position to another with ghosts representing past, present and future to facilitate the change and the time shifts. Differentiated planning structures are suggested in resource 1.15 A Short Ghost Story. When the stories are complete, find an audience to read them to – remember, Dickens often read his stories aloud, too!

** Storysack® ** / ***

Objective:
- to show understanding of a complete text, using different techniques to make a text come alive

Make a Storysack® or a Story Box for A Christmas Carol. These are very popular with younger children; the purpose is to encourage people to share a book, bringing
it alive by exploring resources. A Storysack® is a large cloth bag or box, with the title of the book displayed on the front. Inside the bag or box, place a copy of the story in book and CD format and some other titles related to Christmas in Victorian times, or titles about the author. This could prompt a great deal of discussion about suitability of different versions of the story and film for different age groups as they are compared.

Props could also be included – what characters in the story might a younger child want to role play? How could this be facilitated? Could masks be made – one for each main character, or just two masks, one happy, one sad? How could children be encouraged to use them? If films have been made as an outcome, these could be included, as could models of the characters or their pictures pasted onto card, for the story to be retold in a child’s own words. Or make finger or stick puppets to create an instant cast. Could simple scene boards be made?

Put in some paper, crayons and art materials so that children can create their own responses, or maybe some old Christmas cards for collage. Make and appropriately decorate some activity cards, suggesting how the resources could be used. Finally, find some children to share the sacks with and evaluate how pupils’ learning about the novel has been reinforced through the creation of a Storysack®.

Film **
Objective:
• to demonstrate a multimodal response to a text

Because there are a limited number of characters in A Christmas Carol, making a film as a final outcome is easily achievable. The story is in five sections so five groups of pupils could opt to film one section each, or pupils could film the complete story. Pupils can choose how to create characters (card, modelling clay, Lego® or another medium) and how to create scenery or backdrops. Plan the film using a storyboard and use as much of Dickens’ dialogue as possible for the script. Watch the films and review what has been learnt from the experience about the settings and characters in A Christmas Carol. How has film deepened pupils’ understanding of the narrative?

Share a View * / **
Objectives:
• to reflect critically on the understanding of a narrative
• to make a personal response to a known text

A range of book review sheets is available as resource 1.16. Alternatively, using your VLE or a shared site such as primaryblogger.co.uk, write and post reviews of A Christmas Carol. A good review, whether written on paper or electronically, should say something about the aspects of plot, character and setting that the reader enjoyed most, whether the reader would recommend the book to someone else and if so, an indication of the age, and possibly the gender, of those who would also enjoy the book. Ways in which the book has come to life, or made the reader think, would also be interesting to others. Reviews can be negative, although reasons should always be given.

The Film Review ***
There are five film versions of A Christmas Carol. Each time a new Stave is studied, use a different film version to watch the Stave. The films can be used in any order.
• A Christmas Carol (2009) (PG) Jim Carrey
• A Christmas Carol (PG) Patrick Stewart, Hugh E Grant
• A Christmas Carol (2007) (PG) Kelsey Grammer
• A Christmas Carol (1951) Alastair Sim, Sir Michael Hordern, George Cole
• A Muppet Christmas Carol (2005) (U) Michael Caine

Whilst watching the films, pupils should analyze and make notes on the truthfulness of the film to Dickens’ original narrative. They should also consider the accuracy of interpretation. When one Stave has been viewed from each film and the study of A Christmas Carol is complete, decide, through shared class discussion, which film version is the most truthful interpretation of Dickens’ novel. Encourage pupils to look back through notes made at each stage to support their viewpoint. Check the criteria which the pupils are using to make their judgements, asking for justification of choices against each of the criteria.

Watch the complete film which is judged to be the best interpretation. What are the messages of the chosen film? How accurate are these to Dickens’ intentions in writing the novel? Can the phrase ‘Ghost of an Idea’ be finally defined?

After examining some samples of film reviews, ask pupils to review the preferred film of A Christmas Carol in a medium of their choice. Consideration of the truthfulness of interpretation should form a part of the review, together with some comment on the relevance of Victorian literature to a contemporary audience.

**Reader Reaction** ***

**Objective:**
- to consolidate understanding of the effect of narrative techniques on the reader

Resource 1.17 Reader Reaction is a table on which pupils can record their reactions to Scrooge as each Stave progresses. Feelings and viewpoint should be supported with quotations. When the table is complete, share ideas and feelings. In what ways are they similar? In what ways do viewpoints differ? What narrative techniques did Dickens use to provoke the reactions which have been noted?

**Linked reading**

- The Lighthouse Keeper’s Christmas: Ronda Armitage and David Armitage. *Scholastic*
- How the Grinch Stole Christmas: Dr Seuss. *Harper Collins Children’s Books*
- Horrible Christmas (Horrible Histories): Terry Deary and Martin Brown. *Scholastic*
- The Christmas Eve Ghost: Shirley Hughes. *Walker*
- Tim Burton’s Nightmare Before Christmas: adapted by Frank Thompson. *Disney*
- The Christmas Miracle of Jonathan Toomey: Susan Wojciechowski and Patrick Lynch. *Walker*
- The Death Defying Pepper Roux: Geraldine McCaughrean. *OUP.*