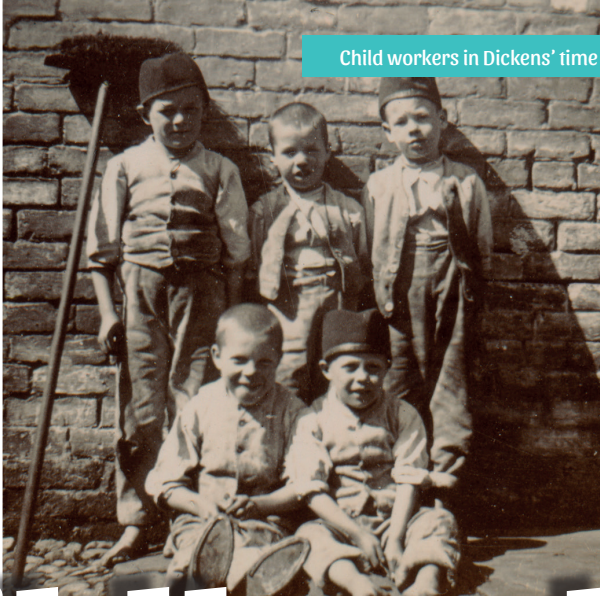


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# Childhood in DICKENS

In *A Christmas Carol*, we meet Tiny Tim, one of Dickens's best-loved characters. Tiny Tim is a suffering child, and he represents all the innocent, abused, abandoned, or simply neglected children that populate Dickens's novels. Many of them are orphans in a seemingly indifferent society.

The creation of characters such as Tiny Tim, Oliver Twist, David Copperfield and Pip (in *Great Expectations*), shows Dickens's concern with children and their fate in Victorian England. He clearly wanted to encourage deeper social awareness about children's problems. He thought that they deserved special care to protect them from hardship, hunger and separation from their families. His concern reflected the growing attention given to children in the nineteenth century, especially in Britain. This century was characterized, among other things, by the development of a new idea of the child. Before this, society considered children to be uninteresting, or incomplete adults. By Dickens's time, however, this idea was changing, and children were seen more objectively, and even as being closer to mankind's original, natural state.

## Children in factories

Factory owners employed children because they were cheap, had lots of energy and they did not complain<sup>•</sup>. Because they were small, they could do very detailed work and also crawl<sup>•</sup> under machines to fix broken parts. In 1874, a law called *The Factory Act* said that children under 10 could not work in factories.

## Dickens and factories

Dickens's idea of children reflected his own terrible experiences as a child: his father was arrested for bankruptcy when he was twelve, and Dickens had to leave school and work at a factory making shoe polish<sup>•</sup>. These experiences returned again and again in his fiction. Dickens himself writes in an autobiographical fragment<sup>•</sup>, "all these things have worked together to make me what I am."

### Did you know?

Dickens was a very affectionate parent when his ten children were very little, but then he gradually became harder and more distant when they grew up.

### GLOSSARY

- **awareness:** knowledge
- **complain:** say what made them unhappy
- **concern:** worry
- **crawl:** move on their hands and knees
- **fate:** destiny; future
- **fragment:** small piece (here, of writing)
- **hardship:** difficult situations
- **mankind:** people; everybody
- **neglected:** not given enough care or attention
- **seemingly:** that seems
- **shoe polish:** cream for cleaning shoes



The young Dickens in the shoe polish factory by Fred Barnard

# A Christmas Carol



The Ghost  
of Christmas  
Yet To Come



Ebenezer  
Scrooge



Marley's Ghost



Scrooge  
as a boy

The Ghost  
of Christmas  
Past



The Ghost  
of Christmas  
Present



Belle

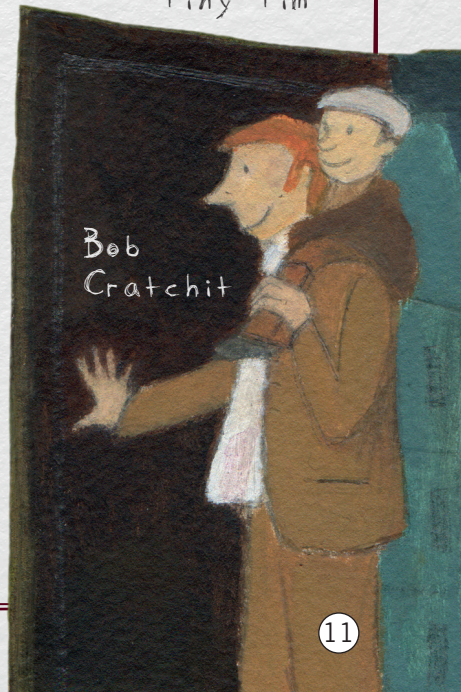
Scrooge  
as a young man



Tiny Tim



Scrooge's  
nephew



Bob  
Cratchit

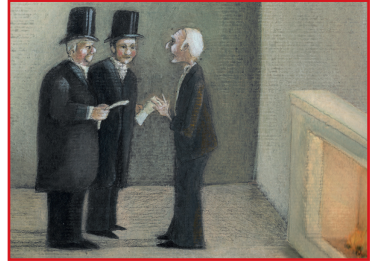
# BEFORE READING

1 What does the title tell you about the book?

2 Look at these pictures from the book and guess the answers to complete the statements.

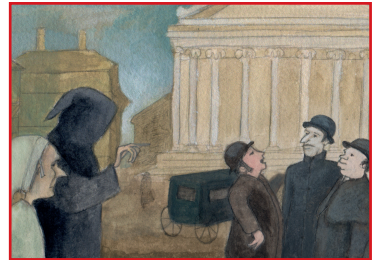
a The story takes place in

- 1  the past.
- 2  the present.
- 3  the future.



b The story takes place in

- 1  Paris.
- 2  London.
- 3  New York.



3 Describe the city in the picture. Would you like to live there?





**4 Match the words to the photos. Find the words in the story.**

**a** candle

**b** torch

**c** coal scuttle

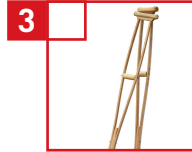
**d** door knocker

**e** keyhole

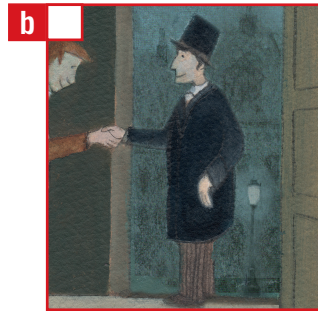
**f** bedpost

**g** crutches

**h** gravestone




**5 Listen and number.**



*I have tried to write a ghost story that won't make you unhappy with yourselves, with each other, with the season, or with me. I hope it haunts• your houses pleasantly•.*

Charles Dickens

## PART I: MARLEY'S GHOST

 MARLEY was dead. There is no doubt• about that. The clergyman•, the clerk•, the undertaker•, and the chief mourner• signed the register at his funeral. Scrooge signed it. Old Marley was as dead as a door-nail•.

Did Scrooge know he was dead? Of course he did. Scrooge and he were business partners for years. Scrooge was his only friend, and his only mourner.

Scrooge was a cold, greedy, mean old man! The cold within him froze• his old face. It made his eyes red, and his thin lips blue. And it spoke out in his unkind voice. A frost• covered his head, his eyebrows, and his pointed chin. He iced his office, and he didn't thaw• it one degree at Christmas.

### GLOSSARY

---

- **chief mourner:** friend or relative of the dead person
- **clergyman:** religious leader
- **clerk:** person who works in an office
- **dead as a door-nail:** expression meaning definitely dead
- **doubt:** uncertainty
- **frost:** covering of ice
- **froze:** stopped it from moving
- **haunts:** visits (of a ghost)
- **pleasantly:** in a friendly, nice way
- **thaw:** make ice melt
- **undertaker:** person who organises funerals



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 is it?’ No man or woman ever asked Scrooge for directions. And dogs ran away from him.

Once upon a time, on Christmas Eve, old Scrooge sat in his office. It was a cold foggy day. He could hear the people outside, stamping their feet on the pavement to warm them. It was only three o’clock, but it was already quite dark. The candles were flickering in the windows of the neighbouring offices. The fog poured in through every keyhole. It was so thick that the houses opposite were merely ghosts.

The door of Scrooge’s office was open. He wanted to keep his eye on his clerk, Bob Cratchit. Bob sat in a cold gloomy little cell. He was writing letters. Scrooge had a very small fire, but Bob’s fire was even smaller. Bob couldn’t add any more coal, because Scrooge kept the coal scuttle in his room. So Bob put on his white woollen scarf and tried to warm himself by the candle.

## GLOSSARY

---

- **beggars:** poor people asking for money or food
- **cell:** very small room, like a prison
- **coal:** black mineral used in fires
- **coal scuttle:** object to keep coal
- **flickering:** (of light) moving
- **gloomy:** dark and unwelcoming
- **keyhole:** place to put keys in a door
- **merely:** no more than
- **neighbouring:** next door
- **poured in:** a lot came in quickly
- **stamping:** putting down heavily

# BOB CRATCHIT

Imagine you are Bob Cratchit.  
Describe your feelings.



‘A Merry Christmas, Uncle!’ cried a happy voice. It was Scrooge’s nephew.

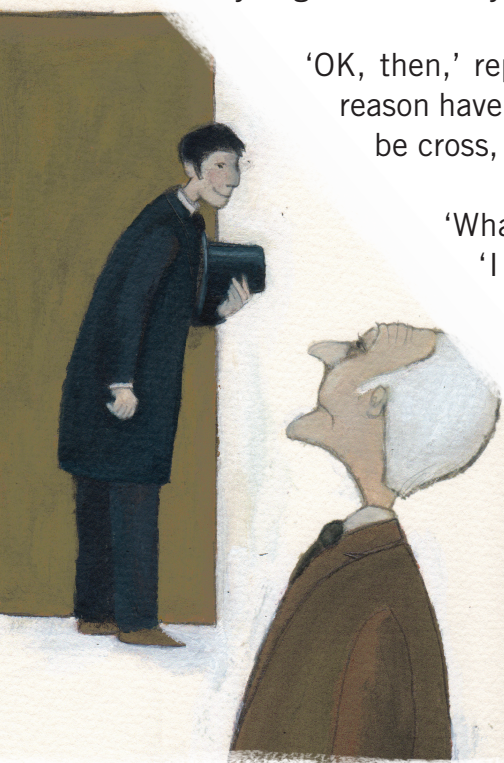
‘Bah!’ said Scrooge. ‘Humbug!’

‘Christmas a humbug, Uncle!’ said Scrooge’s nephew. ‘You don’t mean that, I’m sure.’

‘I do,’ said Scrooge. ‘Merry Christmas! What reason have you got to be merry? You’re poor.’

‘OK, then,’ replied his nephew, cheerfully. ‘What reason have you got to be sad? You’re rich. Don’t be cross, Uncle!’ said his nephew.

‘What else can I be?’ replied Scrooge. ‘I live in a world of fools. Merry Christmas! What’s Christmas time to you? It’s a time for paying bills without money. It’s a time for finding yourself a year older, but no richer. Every fool who says “Merry Christmas”,’ said Scrooge, ‘should be boiled with his own Christmas



## GLOSSARY

---

- **bills:** letters asking for money you must pay
- **boiled:** cooked in water
- **fools:** stupid people
- **humbug:** (here) hypocrite (empty words)

pudding. Then, he should be buried• with a stake• of holly• through his heart!

‘Uncle!’ begged• the nephew.

‘Nephew!’ replied Scrooge. ‘Celebrate Christmas in your own way, and let me celebrate it in mine.’

‘Celebrate it!’ repeated Scrooge’s nephew. ‘But you don’t celebrate it.’

‘Let me leave it alone, then,’ said Scrooge. ‘What good has it ever done you?’

‘Uncle,’ said Scrooge’s nephew, ‘I have always thought of Christmas time as a good time, a kind, charitable•, happy time. And so, Uncle, although Christmas has never put any gold or silver in my pocket, I think it has done me good. And it will do me good. And I say, God bless it!’

## CHRISTMAS

What is Christmas time to you?  
What do Scrooge and his nephew think of Christmas?  
Do you agree with Scrooge or with his nephew?  
Give reasons.

- 
- **begged:** (here) said with emphasis
  - **buried:** put under the ground
  - **charitable:** helpful and generous

- **holly:** 
- **stake:** wooden stick with a sharp end like a knife (used to kill Dracula)

The clerk in the cell applauded. Then realising his mistake, he poked the fire. And he put out the last little spark forever.

‘One more sound from you, Bob Cratchit,’ said Scrooge, ‘and you’ll celebrate Christmas by losing your job!’ Then, he turned to his nephew and said, ‘You’re quite a powerful speaker, sir. I’m surprised you don’t become a politician.’

‘Don’t be angry, Uncle. Come and have dinner with us tomorrow.’

‘No,’ said Scrooge.

‘I’m sorry you don’t want to celebrate Christmas. But, I do. So, a Merry Christmas, Uncle!’

‘Good afternoon!’ said Scrooge.

‘And a Happy New Year!’ said his nephew.

‘Good afternoon!’ said Scrooge again.

His nephew left the room. He stopped to wish Bob a Merry Christmas. And Bob replied, ‘A Merry Christmas to you, too.’

## GLOSSARY

---

- **applauded:** clapped his hands
- **poked the fire:** moved the coals to make the fire burn better
- **politician:** person whose job is politics, governing a country
- **powerful:** strong; good
- **put out:** stopped burning
- **spark:** (here) very small flame or light

‘There’s another fool,’ muttered • Scrooge. ‘My clerk, with only fifteen shillings • a week, and a wife and family, is talking about a Merry Christmas!’



- 
- **muttered:** talked quietly (usually when angry or complaining)
  - **shillings:** old British money

As Scrooge's nephew left, two kind old gentlemen came in. They stood in Scrooge's office.

'Scrooge and Marley's, I believe,' said one of the gentlemen, looking at his list. 'Have I the pleasure of talking to Mr Scrooge or Mr Marley?'

'Mr Marley died seven years ago, this very night,' Scrooge replied.

'We are sure that you will be just as generous• as he was,' said the gentleman.

Scrooge certainly was. Scrooge and Marley were as mean as each other. At the word "generous", Scrooge frowned• and shook his head.

'At Christmas time, Mr Scrooge,' said the gentleman, picking up a pen, 'we should give to the poor. They really suffer• at this time of year. They have no shelter• or food, sir.'

'Are there no prisons•?' asked Scrooge.

'There are plenty of prisons,' said the gentleman, putting the pen down again.

'And the workhouses?' continued Scrooge. 'Are they still in operation•?'

## GLOSSARY

---

- **frowned:** looked angry
- **generous:** kind; giving a lot of money or help
- **in operation:** working; in use
- **prisons:** buildings for criminals
- **shelter:** place to stay
- **suffer:** feel pain or unhappiness

‘They are,’ replied the gentleman, ‘but I wish they were not.’

‘Good,’ said Scrooge. ‘I’m very glad to hear it.’

‘We don’t think that workhouses do enough for people,’ replied the gentleman. ‘So we are trying to raise money to buy the poor some clothes and some food at this special time of year. What shall I put you down for?’



- 
- **I'm very glad to hear it:** that is good news
  - **raise money:** collect money for a person or thing
  - **What shall I put you down for?:** How much do you want to give?



‘Nothing!’ Scrooge replied. ‘I give some money to the prisons and the workhouses. That’s enough. The poor must go there.’

‘Many people can’t go there. And many people prefer to die than to go there.’

‘Then let them die,’ said Scrooge. ‘There are too many people in the world anyway. Good afternoon, gentlemen!’

The gentlemen left. And Scrooge felt very pleased with himself•.

## WORKHOUSES

Workhouses in Victorian England were places that people with no house or money could stay in. The conditions in the workhouses were very bad. Husbands and wives had to live separately• and parents couldn’t see their children. Many people preferred death• to these places. Charles Dickens describes them in many of his novels. Find out more about them online.

### GLOSSARY

---

- **death:** end of life
- **decorated:** made nicer
- **felt very pleased with himself:** was happy with his actions
- **grew thicker:** there was more fog
- **separately:** apart; not together
- **shivering:** moving quickly with cold

Meanwhile, the fog grew thicker•, and it grew colder and darker. But the shops were brightly lit and decorated• with holly. Everybody was preparing for Christmas.

A boy, shivering• with cold, began to sing a Christmas carol at Scrooge's keyhole. But when Scrooge heard the boy sing, 'God bless you, merry gentleman!', he picked up his ruler and banged the door. And the boy ran away, leaving the keyhole to the fog and frost.





At long last<sup>•</sup>, it was time to shut the office. Scrooge got down from his stool and told his clerk to leave the gloomy cell. The clerk immediately blew out his candle and put on his hat.

'You'll want the whole<sup>•</sup> day off tomorrow, I suppose<sup>•</sup>?' said Scrooge.

'Um, if it's all right, sir.'

'It's not all right,' said Scrooge, 'and it's not fair<sup>•</sup>. I have to pay you a day's wages<sup>•</sup> for no work.'

'It's only once a year!' said the clerk.

'Well, make sure you get here early the next morning,' muttered Scrooge.

The clerk promised to be early, and Scrooge walked out with a growl<sup>•</sup>. Quickly, the clerk closed the office. Then he ran home to Camden Town.

Scrooge lived in Jacob Marley's old apartment. It was very rundown<sup>•</sup>. And it was so gloomy that nobody else wanted to live there. The rest of the rooms were offices.

## GLOSSARY

---

- **at long last:** finally
- **fair:** right
- **growl:** angry sound (usually made by dogs)
- **rundown:** old and in bad condition
- **suppose:** guess; think
- **wages:** money given for working; salary
- **whole:** all; complete

That evening, the fog and frost hung over the black gateway to the house. And the yard was so dark that Scrooge had to feel his way along with his hands.

Now, there was nothing strange about the knocker on the door of the house. Scrooge saw it every night and every morning. But tonight, when Scrooge put his key in the lock, he saw Marley's face instead of the knocker.

It was definitely Marley's face. Scrooge stared at the face. And it became a knocker again.

Scrooge was scared, but he put his hand on the key again. He quickly turned it. Then he walked inside and lit a candle. After that, he closed the door with a bang.



- 
- **feel his way:** touch in order to be sure of the way
  - **knocker:** metal object on a door (see picture)



The sound echoed through the house like thunder. But Scrooge was not frightened by echoes. He locked the door and walked across the hall and slowly up the stairs.

It was very dark because Scrooge only had a candle. But darkness didn't worry Scrooge. Darkness is cheap, and Scrooge liked cheap things. But before he shut the heavy door of his apartment, he looked in every room.

There was nobody in the sitting room or the bedroom. Scrooge closed his door, and then locked it. Then he took off his cravat and put on his dressing-gown and slippers. Finally, he sat down in front of the fire to eat his gruel.

## GLOSSARY

---

- **cheap:** not expensive
- **cravat:** neck tie men wore in the past
- **dressing-gown:** long piece of clothing worn over night clothes
- **echoed:** was heard again and again
- **gruel:** food which poor people ate (made by boiling oats in water or milk)
- **slippers:** soft indoor shoes
- **thunder:** very loud sound heard in a storm



Suddenly, he heard a loud clanking sound. It came from downstairs. Somebody was pulling a heavy chain over the barrels in the wine merchant's cellar.

The cellar door flew open with a bang. Then the clanking sound became much louder. It came up the stairs. It was coming straight towards his door.

'Humbug!' said Scrooge. 'I don't believe it.'

- 
- **barrels:** large round containers for food or liquid
  - **cellar:** room below ground
  - **chain:** rope made of metal rings
  - **clanking:** when two metal objects hit each other
  - **Humbug!:** (here) nonsense!
  - **wine merchant:** man who buys and sells wine



But then, to his horror•, it came straight through the heavy door. And it passed into the room. The face was the same. It was Marley. He was dragging• a chain. It was long, and moved behind like a tail. Steel• cash-boxes, keys, padlocks and heavy purses hung from the chain. Scrooge stared at the Ghost of Marley as it stood there before him. He felt a chill• from its death-cold eyes. He saw the bandage around its head and chin. But still he didn't believe it was really there.

'Who are you?' asked Scrooge, calmly.

'Ask me who I was.'

'Who were you then?' said Scrooge.

'In life, I was your partner, Jacob Marley.'

Scrooge was trying very hard not to be scared. The Ghost's voice scared him, and its cold eyes frightened him. Then the Ghost took off the bandage from its head. And its lower jaw• dropped down onto its chest! Scrooge was horrified•.

Scrooge fell to his knees. 'Mercy•!' he said. 'Why have you come?'

'Do you believe in me or not?' asked the Ghost.

'I do!' said Scrooge. 'I must!'

## GLOSSARY

---

- **chill:** cold fearful feeling
- **dragging:** pulling with difficulty
- **horrified:** very shocked
- **horror:** shock
- **jaw:** bones around the mouth
- **mercy:** be kind and understanding
- **steel:** hard metal



The Ghost cried out. It shook• its chain. And it wrung• its shadowy• hands.

‘Why are you carrying that chain?’ asked Scrooge, trembling•.

‘I wear the chain that I made in life,’ replied the Ghost. ‘I made it link by link, and metre by metre. I wound it around myself. Does it look strange to you?’

Scrooge trembled more and more.

‘Would you like to feel the weight of the chain you are carrying?’ continued the Ghost. ‘It was as heavy and as long as this, seven Christmas Eves ago. You have worked very hard on it, since. It is a huge• chain now!’

Scrooge looked at the floor around him. But there was no chain. ‘Jacob,’ he cried. ‘Old Jacob Marley, explain everything to me!’

## THE CHAIN

Marley’s chain is symbolic. What is it a symbol of?

- a  The things that are important in life.
- b  The things that were important to Marley when he was alive.
- c  The things that Marley forgot when he was alive.

### GLOSSARY

---

- **huge:** very big
- **shadowy:** like a ghost
- **shook:** moved quickly from side to side
- **trembling:** shaking/moving with fear and shame
- **wrung its hands:** twisted its hands round and round in unhappiness

‘I can’t,’ the Ghost replied. ‘I can’t stay long. I have to travel all the time! I can’t rest. I can’t stay anywhere.’

‘You have been dead for seven years,’ said Scrooge, ‘Have you been travelling the whole time?’

‘Yes, the whole time,’ said the Ghost. ‘No rest, no peace!’ The Ghost of Marley cried again. And it clanked its chain. ‘I had the opportunity to be kind and do good in life. But I did nothing. And now I’m dead, I regret that!’ cried the Ghost.

‘But you were always a good businessman, Jacob,’ said Scrooge.

‘Business!’ cried the Ghost, wringing its hands again. ‘The welfare of mankind was my business. Charity, kindness, and generosity were all my business. My job was only a drop of water in the huge ocean of my business!’



- 
- **mankind:** people; everybody
  - **regret:** feel sorry that he did/didn't do something

- **welfare:** good health and happiness

## MARLEY

The Ghost of Marley says his job was “a drop of water in a huge ocean”. What does he mean here? It is a metaphor. Can you find any more metaphors in the story? Look for them while you are reading.

The Ghost held up its chain. Then it flung• the chain heavily on the ground again.

‘At this time of year,’ the Ghost said, ‘I suffer most. Why did I ignore• the suffering and poverty• around me, when I was alive•?’

Scrooge was very upset• to hear the Ghost talking like this.

‘Listen to me!’ cried the Ghost.

‘I will,’ said Scrooge. ‘But please don’t be hard on me, Jacob!’

‘I don’t know why I am visible• to you now. I have sat invisible beside you many times.’

It was not a nice idea. Scrooge trembled at the thought of it.

### GLOSSARY

---

- **alive:** living
- **flung:** threw
- **ignore:** take no notice of
- **poverty:** state of being poor
- **upset:** unhappy
- **visible:** something you can see

'I'm here tonight to warn• you. You can still escape my fate•. I'm giving you a chance, Ebenezer,' continued the Ghost.

'You were always a good friend to me,' said Scrooge. 'Thank you!'

'Three ghosts will come and haunt you,' continued the Ghost.

Scrooge's jaw fell almost as low as the Ghost's. 'I – I don't want them to come,' he said.

'Without their visits,' said the Ghost, 'you can't avoid• my fate. The first will come later, when the clock strikes• one.'

'Can't I see them all at once, Jacob?' pleaded• Scrooge.

'The second will come on the next night at the same time. The third ghost will come just after the second one. You won't see me again, but remember my words!'

The Ghost took its bandage from the table, and wound• it around its head again. Then the Ghost walked backwards away from Scrooge. And at every step it took, the window opened a little. When the Ghost finally reached the window, it was wide open•.

Scrooge heard voices crying outside. After listening for a moment, Marley's Ghost started crying, too. Then it floated• out into the dark night.

- 
- **avoid:** do something to stop another thing from happening
  - **fate:** destiny; future
  - **floated:** moved slowly through air
  - **pleaded:** asked in a strong and serious way
  - **strikes:** (here) rings
  - **warn:** tell a person about a danger before it happens
  - **wide open:** completely open
  - **wound:** wrapped/put around



Curious<sup>•</sup>, Scrooge followed the Ghost to the window and looked out. The sky was full of ghosts. All of them wore chains like Marley's Ghost. Scrooge recognised many of them. There was one old ghost in a white waistcoat<sup>•</sup>. Scrooge knew it quite well. It had a huge metal safe<sup>•</sup> attached to its ankle. And it cried because it couldn't help a poor woman and her child, sitting in the street below. The ghosts were all miserable<sup>•</sup> because they wanted to help the people below. But now they were dead, they couldn't help them.

Then the spirit<sup>•</sup> voices faded<sup>•</sup>. Scrooge closed the window. He felt very tired so he went straight to bed.

## GLOSSARY

---

- **curious:** interested; wanting to know
- **faded:** became quieter and quieter
- **miserable:** unhappy
- **safe:** strong box for money and jewellery
- **spirit:** ghost
- **waiscoat:** jacket without sleeves

## AFTER READING VOCABULARY

### 1 Use five of the words in the box to complete the sentences.

waistcoat    yawn    beggar    lame  
wide    nod    shame    sheet

- a** If you ..... your head, it means you move it as if to say 'yes'.
- b** ..... open means completely open.
- c** A jacket without sleeves is called a .....
- d** A ..... is a poor person who asks for money or food.
- e** '..... on you! You should be very sorry for what you have done!'

### 2 Complete the word formation table below.

ADJECTIVE	NOUN
SAD	SADNESS
.....	GREED
COLD	.....
.....	WOOL
CHARITABLE	.....
.....	GLOOM
GLOWING	.....
.....	WOOD
BLIND	.....
.....	POWER
DIRTY	.....

- 3**  Make sentences with a partner with the words you find in Exercise 2.

### **K** A2 Key English Test Reading and Writing Part 4

#### **1** For each sentence, choose the correct answer (A, B, or C).

**1** She looked so like Belle that Scrooge thought ..... was her.

- A** it                      **B** is                      **C** that

**2** Scrooge felt very ashamed when he heard the ghost use his ..... words.

- A** own                      **B** only                      **C** last

**3** – ‘Do you believe in me or not?’ asked the Ghost.  
– ‘I do!’ said Scrooge. ‘I .....!’

- A** had                      **B** must                      **C** need

**4** The cold within Scrooge ..... his eyes red, and his thin lips blue.

- A** made                      **B** had                      **C** did

**5** Scrooge wanted to ..... his eye on his clerk, Bob Cratchit.

- A** put                      **B** have                      **C** keep

**6** ‘At Christmas time,’ said the gentleman, ‘we ..... give to the poor.’

- A** should                      **B** do                      **C** won’t

**7** ‘We don’t think that workhouses do ..... for people.’

- A** lot                      **B** enough                      **C** something

**8** ‘Now all you are interested ..... is making money.’

- A** in                      **B** to                      **C** at

**9** Poor Tiny Tim! He ..... walk without crutches.

- A** couldn’t                      **B** must                      **C** should