



# A Christmas Carol – Charles Dickens

## Knowledge Organiser

### Context Notes: Victorian era (1800s)

- **Capitalism** – a society which is founded on economic growth and profit, particularly for the upper classes and the wealthy.
- **Class Division and hierarchy** – there was a strong divide between the rich and poor.
- **Industrial Revolution** – a time where the steam engines were used to power huge factories that were often employing the poor and destitute, as well as young children too.
- **Poverty** – poverty was a huge problem due to poor wages, poor healthcare (practically non-existent!) and over population which often lead to disease in slum areas. Workhouses were created as a result of the Poor Law: a law to supposedly protect and provide shelter for the destitute.
- **Education** – Dickens supported education as he saw it as the platform out of poverty, yet it was often the upper classes and the wealthier families that sent their children to school.
- **Christmas and Religion** – Although many believed that being a good Christian was attending church and praying, Dickens believed that a good Christian was someone who was open hearted, kind and charitable. These are also the fundamental pillars of what the Christmas spirit is and Dickens reminds us, as readers, throughout the novel.

### Writer's methods in a novella

- **Any language devices/word classes** – e.g. 'hard and sharp as flint' is a simile to describe Scrooge's physical and emotional features. 'Hard' and 'sharp' = adjectives. 'Flint' = noun.
- **Connotations** – consider the idea or meaning behind a particular word/zoom e.g. Scrooge is described as 'frosty', connoting how he is emotionally cold.
- **Pathetic Fallacy** – Dickens uses the weather to set the scene at various points in the novel e.g. in the beginning when the weather is foggy and cold, representing Scrooge's attitude.
- **Foreshadowing** – where the writer hints at what could happen in the future.
- **Colloquial language** – this informal style of language is typically used by Dickens' lower class characters such as Mrs Cratchit or Old Joe who speaks with a strong London accent and using colloquial words. It is used to accentuate the characters' lack of education.
- **Symbolism** – References to chains to represent heavy burdens; fires to represent emotional warmth
- **Allusions** - A literary device employed to associate a character, place or object in a story with a character, place or object, often from another literary source (e.g. the reference to Shakespeare's Hamlet in the opening of the novel).
- **Cyclical structure** – where the events from the beginning are revisited in the end (Scrooge's meetings with the portly gentlemen).

### Themes

- Redemption
- Change
- Spirits and the Supernatural
- Family
- Love
- Poverty
- Social Responsibility
- Classes
- Christmas and Religion
- Charity, Greed and Generosity



*'hard and sharp as flint'*



*'No more work tonight, it's Christmas Eve.'*



*'solitary\* as an oyster'*



*The phantom slowly, gravely, silently approached.'*



*'Hundreds and thousands are in want of common comforts'*



*God bless us, everyone!'*



*'Decrease the surplus population'*



*'Another idol has displaced me; and if it can cheer and comfort you in years to come, as I would have done, I have no just cause to grieve.'*



*'I wear the chains I forged in life'*



*'I have come to bring you home dear brother! Father is so much kinder than he used to be!'*



*'The boy is ignorance. The girl is want. Beware of them both in all of their degree; but most of all beware this boy, for on his brow I see that written which is Doom, unless the writing be erased.'*



*'Don't be angry, Uncle. Come! Dine with us tomorrow.'*



*'Light as a feather'*



*'The school is not quite deserted....A solitary child, neglected by his friends, is left there still.'*



*'He was so fluttered and so glowing with his good intentions'*



*'But the clerk's fire was so very much smaller'*