

Mr Bruff

ONLINE REVISION

MR Bruff's Guide To

A CHRISTMAS CAROL



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SAMPLE

PART 6 - Analysis of the Characters

Ebenezer Scrooge (see the sample essay exploring his transformation for more detailed analysis of this character)

Ebenezer Scrooge is the protagonist of the novella. We follow his journey from a miserable penny-pincher to a man who realises the error of his ways and transforms into a more caring and compassionate citizen. Dickens uses Scrooge to criticise the divide between those who have money and those who do not.

Scrooge is a lonely character at the start of the novella. Dickens's use of language reflects this when outlining Scrooge's relationship with his former clerk Marley, "Scrooge was the sole executor, his sole administrator, his sole assign, his sole residuary legatee, his sole friend, and sole mourner." The repetition of the word "sole" adds emphasis to the solitary nature of the lives led by Marley and now Scrooge. Dickens sums him up as, "a squeezing, wrenching, grasping, scraping, clutching, covetous old sinner!" The collection of verbs here define Scrooge as a character whose intention is to grab every last penny he can from anyone he encounters.

Scrooge is described as "hard and sharp as flint," Thanks to this simile he seems to have a hard exterior which could cause pain to others. Similarly, Scrooge is described as, "solitary as an oyster." This simile, unlike the first, does suggest that there may be more to be discovered where Scrooge is concerned. Just as, when forced open, an oyster may contain a pearl so Dickens suggests there may be something worthwhile to be found within Scrooge too. There is also a literal and metaphorical coldness associated with the early descriptions of Scrooge, "A frosty rime was on his head, and on his eyebrows, and his wiry chin. He carried his own low temperature always about with him..." Dickens's use of language again emphasises Scrooge's cold-hearted nature and attitude towards others.

Scrooge rejects his nephew Fred's best wishes with a "Bah! Humbug!" refuses to give any money to the two gentleman who are collecting for the poor and resists giving his clerk Bob Cratchit any time off for Christmas, "It's not convenient."

When faced with Marley's ghost we finally see a more vulnerable side to Scrooge. He implores the ghost to help him, despite having resisted opportunities to help others earlier in the day, "Speak comfort to me, Jacob." He has a taste of his own medicine when the ghost replies, "I have none to give." From early in the novella Dickens makes it clear that we reap what we sow in life and in order for people to care about us we must care for them and look out for them in return.

The Ghost of Christmas Past seems to care for Scrooge and Scrooge returns to an almost childlike state in his presence. When visiting his old school the ghost describes how Scrooge "A solitary child, neglected by his friends, is left there still." At this Scrooge shows some emotion and cries. He is similarly moved when reminded of his sister, his former employer Fezziwig and his love, Belle who broke up with him due to his obsession with money. It is apparent Scrooge is starting to realise that it is not only money which brings happiness.

Before the ghost leaves, Scrooge again makes it clear he is reflecting on his recent behaviour towards Bob Cratchit, "I should like to be able to say a word or two to my clerk just now!"

When the Ghost of Christmas Present appears, we are reminded that Scrooge's attitude is changing, "I went forth last night on compulsion, and I learnt a lesson which is working now. To-night, if you have aught to teach me, let me profit by it." He is prepared for the lessons which await him.

Scrooge is taken by the Ghost of Christmas Present and shown people celebrating Christmas, including the Cratchit household. Scrooge sees Tiny Tim struggling and sees how the family are able to celebrate despite not having much money. Scrooge implores the ghost to tell him of the future, "tell me if Tiny Tim will live." He genuinely seems to care about the little boy's fate, in contrast to his early comments about the poor and how if they die it would "decrease the surplus population." His attitude is certainly changing.

When visiting the house of his nephew Fred, Scrooge is again made to watch those appearing in the vision enjoying the festivities without him. He enjoys the party and "begged like a boy to stay." There is now hope for Scrooge's future as it is not too late for him to rejoin his family and celebrate Christmas for the first time in many years.

No sooner does the Ghost of Christmas Present disappear, than the final spirit, the Ghost of Christmas Yet to Come takes his place. The shrouded figure appears as a personification of Death to warn Scrooge that he is facing a lonely end and further torment if he does not start thinking of others and caring for those around him.

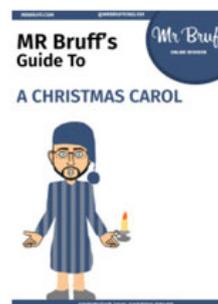
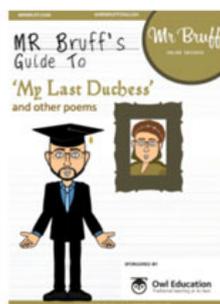
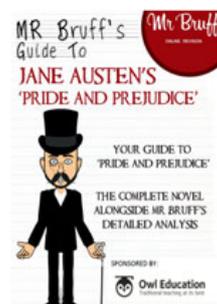
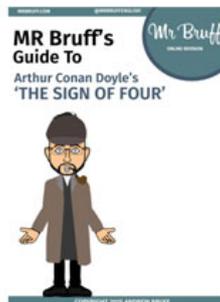
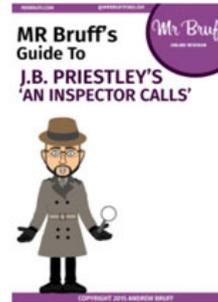
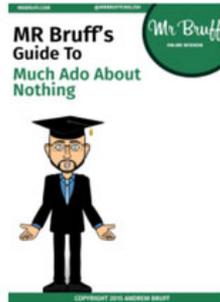
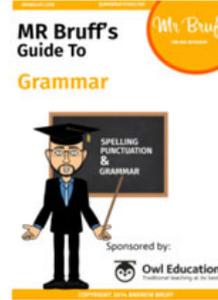
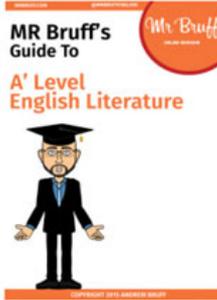
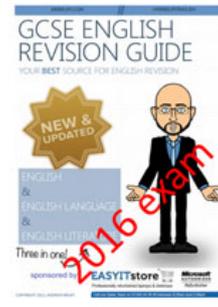
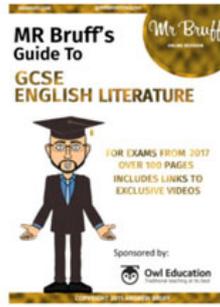
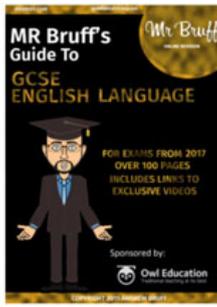
Initially, this spirit shows Scrooge a group of people who are talking about a man's death, "It's likely to be a very cheap funeral, for upon my life I don't know of anybody to go to it." At first Scrooge cannot work out which person has died. He is then taken to a group who are sorting through his belongings. The group again talk about the dead man in a very negative way, calling him "a wicked old screw." They have even stolen the blanket Scrooge was due to be buried in, in a similarly uncaring way to the way Scrooge has been acting towards others.

Scrooge does eventually realise that this is the aftermath of his own death that he's witnessing, "I see. The case of this unhappy man might be my own." After visiting a family who are pleased Scrooge has died because it meant they might have some relief from their debts, and the Cratchits who are mourning the death of Tiny Tim, the spirit takes Scrooge to a churchyard. It is here that Scrooge reads his own name on a gravestone and realises the sad future that lies in wait for him if he refuses to change his ways. He vows to "honour Christmas in my heart, and try to keep it all the year. I will live in the Past, the Present, and the Future. The Spirits of all Three shall strive within me. I will not shut out the lessons that they teach." At this point the ghost disappears and Scrooge is returned to bed.

In the final section of the novella, Scrooge describes himself using figurative language, "I am as light as a feather, I am as happy as an angel, I am as merry as a school-boy..." He even laughs, "it was a splendid laugh, a most illustrious laugh. The father of a long, long line of brilliant laughs!"

Scrooge arranges for a big turkey to be sent to the Cratchits, wishes others a "Merry Christmas" then goes to Fred's house for a "Wonderful party." Already Scrooge is reaping the rewards of making an effort and being friendly to others.

At the office the next morning Scrooge gives Bob Cratchit a rise in wages. The final paragraphs of the novella confirm that Scrooge is indeed a changed man, "Scrooge was better than his word. He did it all and infinitely more." His journey is complete and we, the readers, are left with the understanding that people can change and society is a better place if we all look out for one another.



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