English, year 9 and upper secondary
Two lessons, about 40 minutes each

Merry Christmas? Bah!

Humbug!

In 1843 Charles Dickens wrote *A Christmas Carol*. Old Ebenezer Scrooge hates Christmas. But one night changes everything.



John Leech, Scrooge's third Visitor, 1843.

Name _____ Class _____

Step 1 Christmas Eve

Whole class, then on your own, 20 min

Listen as your teacher reads part 1 aloud. Follow the text on page 2.

a His nephew says "A merry Christmas, uncle!" What does Scrooge answer? **Circle.**

Thank you! | Bah! Humbug! | God save you! | Good morning!

b What kind of time is Christmas, says the nephew? **Circle.**

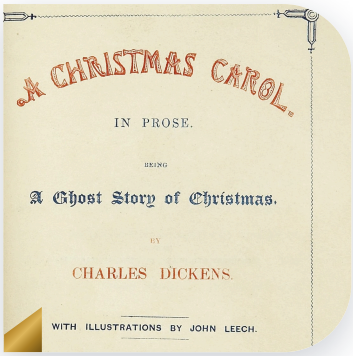
A boring time | A kind time | An expensive time | A lonely time

c Why is the clerk so cold?

_____

1 CHRISTMAS EVE

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The text, part 1

Christmas Eve

Charles Dickens, *A Christmas Carol*, 1843. The beginning of the story. […] shows where words have been left out.

1 Oh! But he was a tight-fisted hand at the grindstone, Scrooge! a squeezing, wrenching, grasping, scraping, clutching, covetous old sinner! Hard and sharp as flint […]; secret, and self-contained, and solitary as an oyster. […] He carried his own low temperature always about with him; he iced his office in the dog-days; and didn't thaw it one degree at Christmas.

2 Once upon a time—of all the good days in the year, on Christmas Eve—old Scrooge sat busy in his counting-house. It was cold, bleak, biting weather […]. The city clocks had only just gone three, but it was quite dark already […].

3 The door of Scrooge's counting-house was open that he might keep his eye upon his clerk, who in a dismal little cell beyond, a sort of tank, was copying letters. Scrooge had a very small fire, but the clerk's fire was so very much smaller that it looked like one coal. But he couldn't replenish it, for Scrooge kept the coal-box in his own room […].

4 "A merry Christmas, uncle! God save you!" cried a cheerful voice. It was the voice of Scrooge's nephew […].

5 "Bah!" said Scrooge, "Humbug!"

6 "Christmas a humbug, uncle!" said Scrooge's nephew. "You don't mean that, I am sure."

7 "I do," said Scrooge. "Merry Christmas! what right have you to be merry? what reason have you to be merry? You're poor enough."

8 "Come, then," returned the nephew gaily. "What right have you to be dismal? what reason have you to be morose? You're rich enough."

9 "What else can I be" returned the uncle, "when I live in such a world of fools as this? Merry Christmas! Out upon merry Christmas! […] If I could work my will," said Scrooge, indignantly, "every idiot who goes about with 'Merry Christmas,' on his lips, should be boiled with his own pudding, and buried with a stake of holly through his heart. He should!"

10 "Nephew!" returned the uncle, sternly, "keep Christmas in your own way, and let me keep it in mine."

11 […] "I have always thought of Christmas time […] as a good time: a kind, forgiving, charitable, pleasant time […]. And therefore, uncle, though it has never put a scrap of gold or silver in my pocket, I believe that it has done me good, and will do me good; and I say, God bless it!"

12 The clerk in the tank involuntarily applauded […].

13 "Let me hear another sound from you" said Scrooge, "and you'll keep your Christmas by losing your situation." […]

14 "Don't be angry, uncle. Come! Dine with us to-morrow." […]

15 "Good afternoon," said Scrooge.

Difficult words

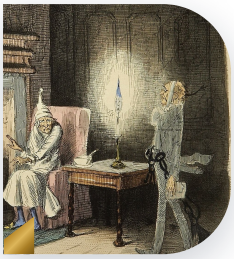
tight-fisted mean with money
counting-house office
humbug nonsense
pudding a rich Christmas cake
covetous wanting what others have
clerk office worker
dismal sad and gloomy
holly a plant with red berries
solitary alone
replenish fill up again
morose bad-tempered
situation here: job

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Step 2 That night

On your own, 20 min

Read what happens that night. Scrooge goes to bed alone, and four ghosts visit him, one after the other.



1 Marley's Ghost

That night Scrooge is alone at home. The ghost of Jacob Marley, his old business partner, comes in. Marley wears a long, heavy chain. He was greedy when he lived, and now he must wander forever. "Three spirits will visit you," he says. "They are your last chance."



2 The Ghost of Christmas Past

The first spirit takes Scrooge back in time. He sees himself as a lonely boy at school, and as a happy young man at his kind old boss Mr Fezziwig's Christmas party. He also sees the young woman who left him because he loved money more than her.



3 The Ghost of Christmas Present

The second spirit shows Scrooge Christmas Day in London. His clerk, Bob Cratchit, is poor, but his family is happy together. Bob's little son, Tiny Tim, is very ill. If nothing changes, the spirit says, the child will die. At Fred's house, the guests laugh at Scrooge.



4 The Ghost of Christmas Yet to Come

The last spirit never speaks. It shows Scrooge a Christmas in the future. A rich old man has died, and nobody is sad. People sell his things. Tiny Tim has died too. Then Scrooge sees the name on the grave. It is his own.

Scrooge falls on his knees and promises to change. Then he wakes up in his own bed. It is morning.

a At the grave

How does Scrooge feel when he sees his own name on the grave? **Circle.**

Happy | Afraid | Bored | Angry

b Christmas morning

What will Scrooge do when he wakes up? **Guess** and write.

I think Scrooge will ...

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The text, part 2

Christmas morning

Charles Dickens, *A Christmas Carol*, 1843. The end of the story. […] shows where words have been left out.

1 "I don't know what to do!" cried Scrooge, laughing and crying in the same breath […]. "I am as light as a feather, I am as happy as an angel, I am as merry as a school-boy. […] A merry Christmas to everybody! A happy New Year to all the world. Hallo here! Whoop! Hallo!"

2 Running to the window, he opened it, and put out his head. No fog, no mist; clear, bright, jovial, stirring, cold […]; Golden sunlight; Heavenly sky; sweet fresh air; merry bells. Oh, glorious. Glorious!

3 "What's to-day?" cried Scrooge, calling downward to a boy in Sunday clothes […].

4 "To-day!" replied the boy. "Why, Christmas Day."

5 "It's Christmas Day!" said Scrooge to himself. "I haven't missed it. The Spirits have done it all in one night." […] "Do you know whether they've sold the prize Turkey that was hanging up there? Not the little prize Turkey: the big one?"

6 "What, the one as big as me?" returned the boy. […]

7 "I'll send it to Bob Cratchit's!" whispered Scrooge, rubbing his hands, and splitting with a laugh. "He sha'n't know who sends it. It's twice the size of Tiny Tim."

8 […] In the afternoon, he turned his steps towards his nephew's house. […]

9 "Fred!" said Scrooge. […] "It's I. Your uncle Scrooge. I have come to dinner. Will you let me in, Fred?"

10 Let him in! It is a mercy he didn't shake his arm off. He was at home in five minutes. […]

11 But he was early at the office next morning. […] The clock struck nine. No Bob. A quarter past. No Bob. […]

12 "Now, I'll tell you what, my friend," said Scrooge, "I am not going to stand this sort of thing any longer. And therefore," he continued, leaping from his stool […]: "and therefore I am about to raise your salary!"

13 "A merry Christmas, Bob!" said Scrooge […]. "I'll raise your salary, and endeavour to assist your struggling family […]! Make up the fires, and buy another coal-scuttle before you dot another i, Bob Cratchit!"

14 Scrooge was better than his word. He did it all, and infinitely more; and to Tiny Tim, who did not die, he was a second father. […] and it was always said of him, that he knew how to keep Christmas well, if any man alive possessed the knowledge. […] And so, as Tiny Tim observed, God Bless Us, Every One!

Difficult words

jovial cheerful
salary pay for work
dot an i write one more letter
Sunday clothes your best clothes
endeavour try
Tiny Tim Bob Cratchit's little son
prize Turkey the best turkey
coal-scuttle a bucket for coal
infinitely much, much

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Step 3 Before and after

Whole class, then on your own, 15 min

Listen as your teacher reads part 2 aloud. Follow the text on page 4. Then do tasks a, b and c.

a Before or after the ghosts?

Scrooge says all of this. Did he say it **before** or **after** the night with the ghosts? **Circle.**

"A merry Christmas to everybody!"	Before	After
"Keep Christmas in your own way, and let me keep it in mine."	Before	After
"Bah! Humbug!"	Before	After
"I have come to dinner. Will you let me in, Fred?"	Before	After
"You'll keep your Christmas by losing your situation."	Before	After
"I am about to raise your salary!"	Before	After

b The fire in the office

Read paragraph 3 on page 2 and paragraph 13 on page 4. What does Scrooge do about the clerk's fire?

Before _____

After _____

c What changed Scrooge?

Which ghost do you think changed Scrooge the most? Why? **Write** two or three sentences.

I think it was ...

_____

_____

_____

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Step 4 Scrooge today

On your own, 25 min

Now **tell the whole story again, but today**. Scrooge is the same man, and he gets the same chance. He just lives in our time. Write about him as Dickens does: *Scrooge*, *he*, *Fred*.

In the story

"A merry Christmas, uncle! God save you!" cried a cheerful voice. [...] "Bah!" said Scrooge, "Humbug!"

Today

Scrooge's phone buzzes. A message from his nephew Fred: "Merry Christmas, Uncle! Dinner tomorrow?" Scrooge types two words and presses send: "Bah! Humbug!"

Write your story in three parts. Start with the grey words.

1 Scrooge today

Where is he on Christmas Eve? What does he say about Christmas?

It is Christmas Eve, and Scrooge is ...

2 That night

Who or what visits him? What does he see?

That night, ...

3 The morning after

What does Scrooge do now? Who is surprised?

On Christmas morning, Scrooge ...



Read your story to a classmate. Scrooge learned that some things matter more than money. What do you think matters most at Christmas today?

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