

The Character of Scrooge - Transcript

Narrator: 'Oh! But he was a tight-fisted hand at the grindstone, Scrooge!

'a squeezing, wrenching, grasping, scraping, clutching, covetous, old sinner!'

'Secret, self contained, and solitary as an oyster.'

Presenter: In *A Christmas Carol*, Charles Dickens first describes Scrooge's miserly, callous character through a long list of adjectives all linked to the idea of tightly clasped hands - an image that suggests greed.

He goes on to use sibilance to set up an isolated figure that is hard to crack open - as seen in the quote, 'Secret, and self contained, and solitary as an oyster.'

But over the course of the text, a series of ghostly visits see his icy heart thaw.

Dickens uses the character of Scrooge to represent greed; he displays all the worst traits that the author saw in wealthy business owners...

...in an era when thousands of young children laboured in workhouses and there was no financial support for the poor.

Scrooge is heartless and ignorant of the lives of the poor, saying that 'if they would rather die, they had better do it and decrease the surplus population'.

This icy callousness is reinforced by the author's use of cold language -

Narrator: 'No warmth could warm, no wintry weather chill him.'

Presenter: But Scrooge's cold ignorance is shattered by his ghostly visitors.

The Ghost of Christmas Past highlights his early lost love.

The Ghost of Christmas Present shows him the reality of a life that he's missing, at the family home of his employee, Bob Cratchit...

Before the Ghost of Christmas Yet to Come shows a dismal vision of his death...

...and the hope of redemption brought on by the ghosts sees Scrooge finally change his ways.

The 'solitary oyster' becomes a well-loved, generous part of the community and 'a second father' to Tiny Tim, the Cratchits' son.

And in contrast to the cold imagery at the beginning of the text, Scrooge asks Bob to 'make up the fires'.

Ultimately, Scrooge's character arc - and his impact on those around him - is used to explore social injustice.

How do you think Dickens uses the character of Scrooge to explore the attitudes of the rich and powerful in Victorian London - and how those attitudes impacted the lives of the poor?