

A Christmas Carol is more than a seasonal entertainment. It is one of the greatest examples of transformation of character in Western literature. Ebenezer Scrooge starts as a selfish and mean “killjoy” and ends up as a kind, generous and selfless human being. He also learns to enjoy himself and the company of others. The story achieves this transformation on a single night, with the help of three spirits and a ghost. Our version treats the play as a serious journey through the horrors of Victorian London but also aims to create the sense of fun and happiness that Scrooge so badly needs. The musical score, by noted composer Thomas Johnson, is particularly effective in charting the different moods and atmospheres of this rich and varied tale.

Scene 1: Carol singers on Christmas Eve in London. Scrooge enters and abuses the Carol singers. He walks to his office through the graveyard. His office is cold and dark, his clerk - Bob Cratchet enters. Bob is badly paid by Scrooge who works him hard and refuses his coal for the fire. Three Ladies arrive at the office to collect money for the London Poor. Scrooge abuses them and gives them nothing. When told that the poor may die, he says “Let hem die!”. Bob is shocked and gives them a penny of his meagre wages. Scrooge’s nephew, Fred, arrives to invite his Uncle for Christmas dinner. Scrooge refuses to go as he hates Christmas. Fred tries to cheer his miserable Uncle up without success. Bob has to beg for Christmas day off to be with his family.

Scene 2.: Scrooge leaves the office and walks home with his bank books for company. He arrives at his cold and dark lodgings. He is happy they are so cheap. Suddenly he notices the face of his dead partner, Jacob Marley, where the doorknocker should be. He dismissed the vision. Once in his house he senses the ghostly atmosphere but rejects it as a fantasy. Marley appears with a safe on his head and in chains. He terrifies Scrooge and warns him that he will be visited by three spirits that night. Marley explains that he is cursed to wander the night weighed down by chains as he dedicated his life to making money and forgot the human virtues that are the essence of life. He wants to save Scrooge from his fate. Scrooge tries to resist and to deny he has any sins but Marley will not release him, and the haunting begins.

Scene 3: The Ghost of Christmas Past appears to Scrooge. She leads him through his past to his childhood. Scrooge starts to have human feelings (very slowly!). He feels nostalgia for lost innocence and even learns to play a game – blind man’s buff. He recalls Mr Fezziwig, his first employer, and the wonderful dances and parties he held. He remembers fun, especially at Christmas. But just as he is getting carried away, his blindfold is taken off to reveal his lost fiancée, Belle. Scrooge is shocked. He becomes sad for what he has lost – he is forced to relive the day that she left him because he cared only for money and treated his tenants badly. She returns his engagement ring and the gold weighs him down. He is married to gold. He starts to see his folly. He sleeps.

Scene 4: He is woken by the Ghost of Christmas Present. This figure is almost like Santa Claus. The Ghost is happy, jolly and well fed. The Ghost takes Scrooge on a journey around London that Christmas Day. Scrooge flies across London in a bouncing sack (of presents!). He sees everyone having a good time, poor and rich alike. He is tricked into a snowball fight by the Ghost and enjoys it. He is shown his nephew Fred’s Christmas Party, what fun they have! They play kissing under the mistletoe and Blind Man’s Buff. They play a guessing game and Scrooge tries to join in, but they cannot see him. The game is to guess an animal and it turns out to be Scrooge. He realises how people see him – as a bad tempered and mean old man. He wishes he could change.

Scene 5: The Ghost shows him the Cratchet family, trying to enjoy Christmas dinner on the low wages that Scrooge pays. Scrooge sees the love in the family that no money can buy. He sees their tenderness towards Bob’s crippled child, Tiny Tim. He worries that the child might not live as he is so weak. The Ghost gives Scrooge a Christmas present – a sack. Inside the sack is a demon, the spirit of despair and poverty that will end in violence and ruin. The Ghost is fading as the day ends and warns Scrooge that the whole city will sink in flames if the rich take no care of the poor.

Scene 6: The Ghost of Christmas Yet To Come appears. It is a hazy shadow, a blue light and a cold wind. The Spirit leads Scrooge through a bleak future Christmas where no one cares for anyone else. He watches businessmen discuss a funeral of a despised miser. He watches two tenants visit the house of their hated Landlord and discover to their joy that he is dead (and they don’t have to pay rent). He watches as rough thieves strip the body of valuables and even the clothes it is wearing. Scrooge begins to understand that the life of the man he is watching causes this appalling scene to happen.

Scene 7: Scrooge sees into the future and watches Bob Cratchet and his wife at Tiny Tim’s grave. He vows to prevent the child’s death. He realises with horror that it is his own grave next to Tiny Tim’s. It was always he who was left to die, robbed and unmourned. Scrooge learns a terrible lesson and falls into his bed.

Scene 8: He wakes, it is Christmas morning. He is a changed man. He meets his tenant and wishes him “Happy Christmas” – much to his amazement. He lowers his rent and gets him to buy a huge turkey for himself and another one for the Cratchet family. He meets the charity ladies and gives them money for the London poor and a smile. He meets Fred and happily accepts his invitation to a family Christmas. He gives the Cratchets the turkey and raises his clerk’s wages and offers to be a second father to Tiny Tim. He is a deeply changed man. Everyone is amazed and happy at the transformation. He throws a big party and wishes everyone a merry Christmas!