**Stave One**

1. **Introduction of Ebenezer Scrooge**

The reader is introduced to Ebenezer Scrooge: a miserly and cold-hearted old man who runs a counting house in London. He is particularly disdainful of Christmas.

1. **Scrooge’s Attitude Towards Christmas**

Scrooge is approached by his nephew, Fred, who invites him to Christmas dinner. Scrooge refuses the invitation and, in the process, criticises Fred for being poor.

1. **Encounter with the Charity Collectors**

Two gentlemen visit Scrooge’s office and ask him to donate money to the poor. Scrooge insists that the poor should go to prisons and workhouses instead of relying on charity.

1. **Bob Cratchit**

Scrooge's employee, Bob Cratchit, works in dismal conditions for low pay. Scrooge begrudgingly allows him to take Christmas Day off, but withholds his wages for the day.

1. **Ghostly Encounter**

Scrooge is visited by the ghost of Jacob Marley, who warns him of the consequences of his selfishness and greed. Marley tells Scrooge that he will be visited by three spirits.

**Which of Scrooge’s characteristics are particularly emphasised?**

**How is Scrooge different from those around him?**

**What messages about social reform do you think Dickens wanted to convey?**

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**Stave Two**

1. **Arrival of the Ghost of Christmas Past**

As promised, the Ghost of Christmas Past appears to Scrooge. It is described as an otherworldly figure, with a glowing light emanating from its head.

1. **Scrooge’s Childhood**

Scrooge is shown scenes from his childhood, including his time at school. He is reminded of his sister, Fan, and the difficult relationship with this father.

1. **Fezziwig's Christmas Party**

Scrooge is taken to a joyful Christmas party hosted by his former employer, Fezziwig. He is reminded of the warmth and generosity he once experienced as a young man.

1. **Engagement to Belle**

Scrooge is shown the moment when his engagement to Belle came to an end. Belle says he loves money more than her, and he doesn’t disagree.

1. **Belle’s Family**

Scrooge is shown a blissful domestic scene with Belle. She is surrounded by her loving husband and children, and Scrooge begs to be taken away.

**What past experiences show that love and friendship are more important than money?**

**What do the people from Scrooge’s past have in common?**

**What indications are we given that Scrooge is beginning to change?**

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**Stave Three**

1. **Arrival of the Ghost of Christmas Present**

Scrooge is visited by the Ghost of Christmas Present and is taken on a journey through the Christmas streets. The scenes that unfold are full of joy and celebration.

1. **The Cratchit Household**

Scrooge is taken to the home of Bob Cratchit where he witnesses the Cratchit family's modest Christmas celebrations. Scrooge is particularly moved by the sight of Tiny Tim.

1. **Fred’s Household**

Scrooge is taken to the home of Fred and his wife. They discuss Scrooge’s absence and roar with laughter as they make jokes about him.

1. **Other Gatherings**

Scrooge is shown more Christmas gatherings, including a group of miners and sailors out at sea. The conditions are tough, but hearty celebrations still take place.

1. **The Figures of Ignorance and Want**

Scrooge is shown two ragged children by the Ghost of Christmas Present. They are called Ignorance and Want, and Scrooge is deeply disturbed by the sight of them.

**What do the Christmas celebrations have in common?**

**How does Scrooge react to what he sees?**

**What messages about social reform do the figures of Ignorance and Want convey?**

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**Stave Four**

1. **Arrival of the Ghost of Christmas Yet to Come**

Scrooge is visited by the ominous and silent figure of Ghost of Christmas Yet to Come. His knees tremble and finds he can hardly stand.

1. **Group of Business Associates**

Scrooge is shown a group of business associates who have gathered in the street. He listens as they discuss the recent death of a man they used to know.

1. **Den of Thieves**

Scrooge is taken to a den of thieves where he witnesses them sort through a bag of stolen possessions whilst they speak unkindly about the man who used to own them.

1. **The Death of Tiny Tim**

Once again, Scrooge is taken to visit the Cratchit household. The atmosphere is sombre as the Cratchits remember Tiny Tim who is now dead.

1. **The Death of Scrooge**

Scrooge is shown the chilling sight of his own gravestone in the middle of a neglected graveyard. He sinks to his knees and promises to change.

**How is Scrooge remembered in death?**

**What are the consequences of Scrooge’s greed?**

**What is it about the sight of his own gravestone that makes Scrooge sink to his knees?**

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**Stave Five**

1. **Christmas Morning**

Scrooge wakes-up on Christmas morning with a completely different outlook on life. He quickly gets out of bed and rushes to shave and get dressed.

1. **The Prize Turkey**

Scrooge gets the attention of a passing boy and pays him to buy the prize turkey and deliver it the Cratchits. He also makes a generous donation to the two gentlemen.

1. **Fred’s Christmas Party**

Scrooge surprises Fred by arriving at his house. Much to the amazement of the guests, he enters and has a thoroughly good time.

1. **More Money for Bob**

The next day, Scrooge arrives early at his counting house. He greets Bob and gives him a pay rise. Scrooge promises to provide further help to his family.

1. **The Death of Scrooge**

The reader learns that Scrooge keeps his word and maintains the spirit of Christmas. Those around him find the change in his character strange, but Scrooge doesn’t care.

**How do those around Scrooge react to the sudden change in his character?**

**What message does the novel convey about redemption?**

**What does the novel show about the importance of Christmas?**

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**Notes on Context**

1. **Victorian London**

The novel was published in 1843. At the time, London was rapidly expanding and overcrowding was a serious problem. The majority of Londoners lived in poverty.

* *Bob Cratchit lives in cramped conditions and struggles to provide for his family.*

1. **Urbanisation**

There was widespread movement from the countryside to the city in the C19th. Living conditions were often cramped and unhygienic, and crime and disease were rife.

* *Scrooge visits a part of town where the streets are ‘foul’ and the houses are ‘wretched’.*

1. **Poverty**

The economist Thomas Malthus argued in 1798 that the population would grow too large to be sustained. He warned that this would lead to increased levels of poverty.

* *Scrooge talks coldly about the necessity of decreasing the ‘surplus population’.*

1. **The Poor Law Amendment Act**

An amendment to the Poor Law was introduced in 1834. It made the provision of support conditional on entry to a workhouse to discourage reliance on the state.

* *Scrooge flatly refuses to donate to charity and does not care about those in poverty.*

1. **Ghosts**

Ghosts have the capacity to be both frightening and comical in the novel. Dickens was interested by the literary possibilities they offered him.

* *Marley has ‘death-cold eyes’ and yet the buttons of his coat are visible through his body.*

1. **Christianity**

Tiny Tim embodies Christian values through his stoicism and generosity of spirit. His presence in the novel contradicts the fallacy that poverty was the result of moral failure.

* *Tiny Tim is one of the ‘poor and destitute’ who Scrooge casually dismisses and scorns.*

1. **Domestic Life**

The bustling central figure in Fred’s family is his wife. Along with Mrs Cratchit, she is the embodiment of domestic virtue and helps convey idealised Victorian middle-class values.

* *Fred’s wife is described as having ‘the sunniest pair of eyes you ever saw’.*