**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’.*