

**A Christmas Carol Aiming Higher Pack**

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**Reminder of the Highest Marks:**

AO1

* Critical, exploratory, conceptualised response to task and whole text
* Judicious use of precise references to support interpretation(s)
* At the top of the level, a candidate’s response is likely to be a critical, exploratory, well-structured argument. It takes a conceptualised approach to the full task supported by a range of judicious references. There will be a fine-grained and insightful analysis of language and form and structure supported by judicious use of subject terminology. Convincing exploration of one or more ideas/perspectives/contextual factors/interpretations.

AO2

* Analysis of writer’s methods with subject terminology used judiciously
* Exploration of effects of writer’s methods on reader

AO3

* • Exploration of ideas/perspectives/contextual factors shown by specific, detailed links between context/text/task

**What this means:**

* Detailed effects of methods
* Range of judicious textual detail(doesn’t need to be quotes)
* Argument
* Subject terminology
* Analysis
* Language, structure, form
* Critical – needs an argument – Purpose & point
* Exploration

What this pack contains:

A selection of articles and supplementary research on context to enhance your understanding of the novella and develop your ability to be more conceptual in your approach and to explore the ideas raised in the text and your own interpretation of it.

**Please do not feel like you have to read all of the links etc. or to read it all in one go.**

**(Teacher Note:** I have taken several ideas, excerpts and essays from various places and blogs but have not credited accordingly as I worked through as this started as an activity in researching for my own benfit. Several essays are from the British library but may have extra information dotted in where I thought it logically fit.)

**Themes and Motifs**

**Motifs**

Fire/light vs cold/dark:

Christmas Spirit

Time (and the threat of time running out)

Ignorance, Want and Abundance

Music

**Key Themes**

Greed

Loneliness / Isolation

Family

Power

Suffering

Responsibility

Use this page to make notes and find quotations.

**Useful Vocabulary**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Misanthropist**  (noun)  A person who dislikes humankind and avoids human society | **Miser**  (Noun)  A person who hoards wealth and spends as little money as possible. | **Cynicism**  (Noun)  an inclination to believe that people are motivated purely by self-interest |
| **Avarice**  (Noun)  extreme greed for wealth or material gain | **Penury**  (Noun)  the state of being very poor; extreme poverty | **Draconian**  (adj)  (of laws or their application) excessively harsh and severe |
| **Allegory**  (noun)  a story, poem, or picture that can be interpreted to reveal a hidden meaning, typically a moral or political one | **Egalitarian**  (adj)  believing in or based on the principle that all people are equal and deserve equal rights and opportunities | **Didactic**  (adj)  intended to teach, particularly in having moral instruction as an ulterior motive |
| **Repression**  (noun)  the action of subduing someone or something by force | **Diatribe**  (noun)  a forceful and bitter verbal attack against someone or something | **Uncanny**  (adj)  strange or mysterious, especially in an unsettling way |
| **Grotesque**  (adj)  comically or repulsively ugly or distorted | **Utilitarian**  (adj)  designed to be useful or practical rather than attractive | **Penitent**  (adj)  feeling or showing sorrow and regret for having done wrong; repentant |
| **Purgatory**  (noun)  A place or state of suffering inhabited by the souls of sinners who are expiating their sins before going to heaven. | **Repentance**  (noun)  the action of repenting; sincere regret or remorse | **Redemption**  (noun)  the action of saving or being saved from sin, error, or evil |
| **Revelation**  (noun)  a surprising and previously unknown fact that has been disclosed to others. | **Liberality**  (noun)  the quality of giving or spending freely. | **Prodigal**  (adj)  spending money or using resources freely and recklessly; wastefully extravagant. |
| **Secular**  (adj)  not connected with religious or spiritual matters. | **Usury**  (noun)  the action or practice of lending money at unreasonably high rates of interest. | **Benevolence**  (noun)  the quality of being well meaning; kindness |
| **Covetous**  (adj)  having or showing a great desire to possess something belonging to someone else | **Phantasmagoria**  (noun)  a sequence of real or imaginary images like that seen in a dream. | **Parable**  (noun)  a simple story used to illustrate a moral or spiritual lesson |

Nomenclature

*Ebenezer Scrooge*

Dickens’ diaries record the name ‘Ebenezer Scroggie’ from Canongate Kirkyard graveyard, where Dickens mistakenly read Scroggie as a “mean man” and not a ‘meal man’ as it truly stated.

Ebenezer: 'The stone of help' (I Samuel vii. 12); used as a name of a particular Methodist or Baptist chapel, and afterwards contemptuously to mean “dissenting chapel" (1856).

Scrooge is a hard, cold individual, “hard and sharp as steel, from which no flint had ever struck out generous fire.”

Scrooge: From Scroudge: 'a crush, squeeze, or crowd' (1839), from such dialects as those spoken in Kent and Cornwall. Alternate spellings are scrowdge, scrowge and skrowge.

Scrooge is, after all, “A squeezing, wrenching, grasping, scraping, clutching, covetous old sinner.”

19th Century slang: Screw - a mean or miserly person.

*Bob Cratchitt*

Bob: London slang for a coin worth 1.5 pence in the 14th c., and by 1837 a shilling. He represents Scrooge's stinginess, but also, in toasting the “Founder of our feast," he represents the generosity of pure-hearted people in the face of ill treatment. He has one day’s holiday a year, and earns 15 shillings (75p) per six-day week. On it he supports a large, happy, but chronically hard-up family.

Cratchit:

Cratchit – his name evokes a scratching pen – is a ‘scrivener’ (a clerk, scribe, or notary.) Before typewriters and photocopying machines, the necessary copying of business and legal documents was done long hand.

Also a dilemma, a tool used by thatchers, or the stomach

Also, Crotchit: a whimsical fancy, a peculiar notion held by an individual in opposition to popular opinion

Jacob Marley

In 1662 a Jacobus was a gold coin; otherwise, the name alludes to the biblical patriarch who in Genesis 30: 40 made the inferior sheep he had been given breed faster.

Marley: From marl (soil); in Yorkshire, sleet.

Belle: a beautiful girl or woman, especially the most beautiful at a particular event.

"the belle of the ball". (For more information, consider your notes on ‘The Angel in the House.)

**Plot**

Christmas Carol opens with Ebenezer Scrooge in his chilly ‘counting house’ on Christmas Eve (Stave 1). Outside London, the ‘great wen’ is shrouded in filthy brown fog. It is the ‘hungry forties’. The 1840s saw huge distress among the working classes and mass starvation in Ireland. ‘Chartism (a working-class reformist movement; see extra notes) raised the fearful possibility of revolution. It was a nervous time.

Opposite Scrooge’s door a dying woman is sitting in the gutter – ghosts of rich businessmen dancing around her. It is they who have brought her to this sad pass.

Since his partner Marley’s death, seven years previously, Scrooge is the sole proprietor Scrooge & Marley. He lends money, but he is not inclined to part with it. Two gentlemen, soliciting charitable donations, are dismissed with an angry ‘Bah! Humbug!’. Another visitor, his nephew, injudiciously wishes his uncle a merry Christmas: ‘Merry Christmas!’, explodes Scrooge, ‘every idiot who goes about with “Merry Christmas” on his lips should be boiled with his own pudding!’ The nephew, like the two gentlemen, is ‘humbugged’ off (Stave 1).At the end of his 12-hour day Scrooge dismisses his clerk, Bob Cratchit.

That Christmas Eve Scrooge, alone in his cold empty house is destined to be haunted. First by his partner, Marley, doomed to wander forever as penance for his hard-heartedness. Then, overnight, the miser is visited by three spirits of Christmas Past, Present, and Future. In the last visitation, Scrooge is shown his own gravestone and realises the worthlessness of a life devoted to money-grubbing. Scrooge wakes up – it is Christmas morning and he is a changed man. From now on he will be good-hearted: good-hearted most of all to the Cratchit family and Tiny Tim, to whom he will be a year-round Father Christmas.

**The Origins of the Novel**

The first stirrings of the tale can be found in a visit Dickens made to Manchester a month before he began writing. One of the great orators of his time (only fragments of his eloquence survive) he spoke at the city’s Athenaeum on 5 October.

It was a memorable evening for those present, and those who read accounts of the speech in the next day’s papers. As Dickens’s biographer, Michael Slater, describes:

Dickens dwelt on the terrible sights he had seen among the juvenile population in London's jails and doss-houses and stressed the desperate need for educating the poor. This occasion seems to have put into his mind the idea for a [Christmas Eve tale] which should help to open the hearts of the prosperous and powerful towards the poor and powerless but which should also bring centrally into play the theme of memory that, as we have seen, was always so strongly associated with Christmas for him.

The Athenaeum speech was also an opening shot in his campaign, which bore fruit eight years later, to get a public library for the adult working classes in the city. Nor were children forgotten. They too needed the printed word. In the early 1840s Dickens took a particular interest in ‘ragged schools’. As he described them, in an article in 1846:

The name implies the purpose. They who are too ragged, wretched, filthy, and forlorn, to enter any other place: who could gain admission into no charity school, and who would be driven from any church door; are invited to come in here, and find some people not depraved, willing to teach them something, and show them some sympathy, and stretch a hand out, which is not the iron hand of Law, for their correction. (see more on Ragged Schools below)

Manchester – the ‘workshop of the world’ – was famous not merely for its industry but the utilitarian philosophy that drove it. It may not be clear what Scrooge’s line of business is.

‘Are there no workhouses?’ he asks, when the two gentleman ask for a charitable donation. If the poor die (like the poor woman outside his house) it will, he says, solve ‘the surplus population’ problem (Stave 3; Stave 1). Concern with over-population had been stimulated by the stern philosophy of Thomas Robert Malthus who foresaw catastrophe for England if its masses were not ‘checked’ by famine, war, or disease. For the more thoughtful, the anxiety was fostered by the census which, since 1821, had been counting how many inhabitants there were in the country. In 1841 the figure was approaching 29 million – there were serious doubts as to whether British agriculture could feed them, something which led to the repeal of the Corn Laws, in 1846, allowing cereals to be imported from the New World. (See below on Thomas Malthus)

The 1840s were not merely ‘hungry’ but hard hearted. It was a philosophy embodied in Ebenezer Scrooge - not merely a solitary miser (like, for example, George Eliot’s Silas Marner) but the ‘spirit of the age’ in human (and, arguably, inhuman) form. Hard heads, hard hearts, good business. Soft heads and soft hearts lead to the bankruptcy court, Scrooge would have said. Dickens disagreed.

Children worked, like slaves, in Manchester factories (as Michael Slater points out, the chimneys in the background of John Leech’s illustration of the destitute children ‘Ignorance and Want’ are more reminiscent of Manchester’s industrial landscape than of London streets). Six months after A Christmas Carol was published the 1844 Factories Act decreed, however, that 9–13 year olds could only work nine hours a day, six days a week. This was regarded as a humane reform.

Why were they wanted for this work? Children were cheap labour but, more importantly, their fingers were small and dexterous. But the machines were dangerous. There were crippled Tiny Tims by the hundred in Manchester.

Some interesting ideas on the origins of the novel here: <https://www.bl.uk/romantics-and-victorians/videos/dickens-a-christmas-carol>

https://www.bl.uk/romantics-and-victorians/articles/the-origins-of-a-christmas-carol

**The Christmas Link**

**Dickens and Christmas:**

The Full Title of the novella was *A Christmas Carol in Prose: Being a Ghost Story of Christmas.* (First published 1843) A favourite anecdote of Dickens’ biographers is one first recorded by Theodore Watts-Dunston about a London barrow-girl whom he overheard exclaim on 9 June 1870, “Dickens dead? Then will Father Christmas die too?” such is how synonymous the author is with Christmas after the publication of the novella.

Prince Albert – the newly installed husband of Queen Victoria – is popularly associated with institutionalising the British family Christmas, an institution which is still with us. It was Albert, for example, who brought from his native Germany the *tannenbaum*, or Christmas Tree. 1841 is the normally given as the date for this happy importation. The Christmas tree replaced the traditional British ‘yule log’ – wood designed to give winter warmth, not something to deck with pretty lights or presents. Both the *tannenbaum* and the Yule log (along with mistletoe) were incorporated into Christian festivity from pre-Christian pagan rituals associated with the seasonal turn of the year – the rebirth of the land and the green gods.

(Consider how the Ghost of Christmas Present borrows ideas from the Pagan tradition and how little reference we get of the institutionalized idea of Christmas as introduced by Prince Albert.)

Shortly after the arrival of the Christmas tree into the British parlour, Dickens institutionalised what one could call the modern 'spirit of Christmas’. Dickens subtitled his story ‘A Ghost Story for Christmas’. The ghosts are imported from folklore and legend, not the Christian gospels.

A Christmas Carol celebrates Christmas as though it were an immutable cornerstone of civilised society, as though the customs of the Cratchit household were eternal and universal, but this was far from the case. "Christ's Mass", a medieval church service associated with feasting, was long lost, suppressed by religious hardliners throughout the 16th and 17th centuries. (In a splendidly Scrooge-like gesture, Oliver Cromwell actually abolished Christmas by an act of Parliament.) The festival adapted to survive, but industrial capitalism eventually achieved what religious suppression hadn't: the erosion of rural tradition. Urban wage slaves (like Scrooge's hapless clerk) did not have the leisure to feast on partridges and pheasants for 12 days of feudal Solstice. By 1843, English-speaking people were ripe for a reinvented Christmas, a neat one-day holiday infused with sentimental philanthropic values, sold to them by their favourite author

Dickens’ conception of Christmas is fundamentally connected to the idea of feasting (consider how food is described throughout) which is profoundly expressive of the human happiness that he believed the festival should promote. It plugs directly into the medieval and pagan idea of defying the evil forces apparently overtaking nature, as well as a storing-up of resources to face the wintery fight ahead.

For Dickens, it is the coming together of people around a table, the celebration of their humanity, the sharing of their bounty, the reward of indulgence (even if that is only once a year) that is the essence of the meal. The valiant struggle of the Cratchits to make their meagre ingredients feel like a feast is triumphantly successful, and one of the most affecting sections of the novel. Bob and Martha Cratchit have somehow ensured that on the pitiful wages he has squeezed out of Scrooge, they have on their table – in reduced form, but still there – what every family in England expected to have on a Christmas Day.

Dickens had great faith in the humanising power of the Christmas feast. He was thinking, as always, principally of the poor, and in his next Christmas book he positively attacks the rich, not so much for their wealth as for their indifference to the suffering of others. But the idea of marking Christmas with abundance runs through his writings. Thomas Carlyle said of his friend – for whose political and intellectual views he had little time, though he acknowledged his literary genius – ‘his theory of life was entirely wrong. He believed that men should be buttered up, and the world made soft and accommodating for them, and all sorts of fellows should have turkey for Christmas dinner’.

For more information watch this BBC programme: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZASwR1FXwQ0&app=desktop>

For more on the introduction of Christmas traditions see <https://www.bl.uk/romantics-and-victorians/articles/victorian-christmas>

**Social and Historical Context**

Dickens was not only the first great urban novelist in England, but also one of the most important social commentators who used fiction effectively to criticize economic, social, and moral abuses in the Victorian era. Dickens showed compassion and empathy towards the vulnerable and disadvantaged segments of English society, and contributed to several important social reforms. Dickens’s deep social commitment and awareness of social ills are derived from his traumatic childhood experiences when his father was imprisoned in the Marshalsea Debtors’ Prison under the Insolvent Debtors Act of 1813, and he at the age of twelve worked in a [shoe-blacking factory](http://victorianweb.org/authors/dickens/dickensbio3.html). In his adult life Dickens developed a strong social conscience, an ability to empathise with the victims of social and economic injustices. In a letter to his friend [Wilkie Collins](http://victorianweb.org/authors/collins/dickens1.html) dated September 6, 1858, Dickens writes of the importance of social commitment: “Everything that happens […] shows beyond mistake that you can’t shut out the world; that you are in it, to be of it; that you get yourself into a false position the moment you try to sever yourself from it; that you must mingle with it, and make the best of it, and make the best of yourself into the bargain” (Marlow, 132).

Dickens believed in the ethical and political potential of literature, and the novel in particular, and he treated his fiction as a springboard for debates about moral and social reform. In his novels of social analysis Dickens became an outspoken critic of unjust economic and social conditions. His deeply-felt social commentaries helped raise the collective awareness of the reading public. Dickens contributed significantly to the emergence of public opinion which was gaining an increasing influence on the decisions of the authorities. Indirectly, he contributed to a series of legal reforms, including the abolition of the inhumane imprisonment for debts, purification of the Magistrates’ courts, a better management of criminal prisons, and the restriction of the capital punishment.

Dickens was a great moralist and a perceptive social commentator. He was by no means completely under the influence of Carlyle, but he followed his teaching when he exposed the ills of Victorian society. Although his fiction was not politically subversive, he called to remedy acute social abuses. After Dickens’s death his social theory was long regarded as oversimplified, but as Jane Smiley pointed out in *The Guardian*, in recent years it has been reassessed:

For example, in the 1960s and 70s, the era of the new left, Dickens was considered well-meaning but naive; his “programme” was thought to be poorly worked out and inconsistent — not Marxist enough (though Marx was a great fan of Dickens). After Marxism went out of fashion, Dickens’s amorphous social critique came to seem more universally true because it was not programmatic but based on feelings of generosity and brotherhood combined with specific criticisms of practices common in England during his lifetime. [June 24, 2006]

Dickens was not the first novelist to draw attention of the reading public to the deprivation of the lower classes in England, but he was much more successful than his predecessors in exposing the ills of the industrial society including class division, poverty, bad sanitation, privilege and meritocracy and the experience of the metropolis. In common with many nineteenth-century authors, Dickens used the novel as a repository of social conscience. However, as Louis James argues:

Dickens is at once central and untypical in the ‘social novel’. A novelist universally associated with social issues, he was attacked for allowing his imagination to come between his writing and his subject, and his underlying attitudes can be evasive. In his fiction, most characters have a job; but Dickens rarely shows them at work. His novels are centrally about social relationships, yet his model for this would seem, as Cazamian noted, a perpetual Christmas of warm feelings, and the benevolent paternalism of Fezziwig in A Christmas Carol (1843). Even his explicit working-out of class and industrial issues in *Hard Times* (1854), based on a hasty visit to a factory strike in Preston, identified the factory problem not with economics but with the Utilitarian denial of human imagination.

However much radicals admired him, Dickens was never a radical author, but he was much more sensitive to social abuse than William Makepeace Thackeray, and responded readily to the concerns of the Condition of England Question. (See notes on Chartism and Carlyle below)

A side note on class:

The high society of these times would, every afternoon, ride up and down Rotten Row, which was the main path in Hyde Park, to show off their finery. While someone of the Cratchit's social class would never presume to join then, it is this that is referred to when Peter yearns to show his linen in the fashionable Parks.



From *The Dickens World* by Humphry House:

A great deal has been written and said about Dickens as a writer for "the people." Yet his chief public was among the middle and lower-middle classes, rather than among the proletarian mass. His mood and idiom were those of the class from which he came, and his morality throve upon class distinctions even when it claimed to supersede them. He belonged to the generation which first used the phrase "the great unwashed". His character was well described by *Blackwood* in June 1855:

We cannot but express our conviction that it is to the fact that he represents a class that he owes the speedy elevation to the top of the wave of popular favour. He is a man of very liberal sentiments — and an assailer of constituted wrongs and authorities — one of the advocates in the plea of Poor versus Rich, to the progress of which he lent no small aid in his day. But he is, notwithstanding, more distinctly than any other author of the time, a class writer, the historian and representative of one circle in the many ranks of our social scale. Despite their descents into the lowest class, and their occasional flights into the less familiar ground of fashion, it is the air and breadth of middle-class respectability which fills the books of Mr. Dickens.

**Thomas Malthus**

In his book [**An Essay on the Principle of Population**](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/An_Essay_on_the_Principle_of_Population)*,* The Reverend **Thomas Robert Malthus** (13 February 1766 – 23 December 1834) observed that an increase in a nation's food production improved the well-being of the nation’s people, but the improvement was temporary because it led to population growth, which in turn restored the original per capita production level.

In other words, when mankind is doing well and producing lots of food and goods it does not use them to improve their own quality of life. Instead, they use that abundance of goods to have more children and increase the population. This meant there was no longer an abundance, but there was often a shortage instead.

In the past, populations grew until the lower classes suffered hardship and want. At this point, they became vulnerable to famine and disease – and often died.

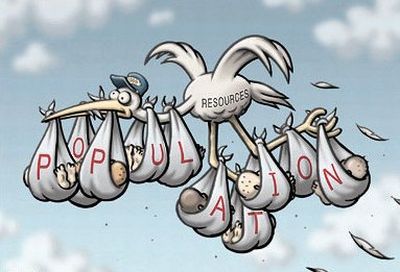
Malthus thought we would never have a truly perfect (or utopian) society, because every time we came close to providing a great standard of life for everyone, the population grew and the process had to start again.

This idea became known as the Malthusian controversy and it was influential across economic, political, social and scientific thought. For our purposes, it’s important to see the big influence it had on Charles Dickens.

Mr. Filer, a student of Malthus appearing in Dickens' book \The Chimes" puts it this way:

“The poor have no earthly right or business to be born. And that we know they haven't. We reduced it to a mathematical certainty long ago!"

You can read the full essay here: <https://www.bl.uk/collection-items/malthus-principle-of-population>

**How does the cartoon on the left illustrate Malthus’ ideas about population?**

**Further reading on Dickens and Poverty in 19th century:** <http://victorianweb.org/authors/dickens/poorlaw.html>

For how Dickens explores this theme in his other works, see here: <http://victorianweb.org/authors/dickens/diniejko.html>

**Ragged Schools**Here is a letter from **Charles Dickens on “ragged schooling” that**first appeared in The Daily News on Feb 4th 1846. In it Charles Dickens reflects on his visit to Field Lane Ragged School. Ragged schools were set up to provide free education to children in poverty and formed part of the drive towards a fairer system of education in the 1800s. A really detailed description of the schools and their origins can be found here: <https://www.bl.uk/romantics-and-victorians/articles/ragged-schools#sthash.KFyKlpnN.dpuf>

Dickens begins his letter with a warning that unless something is done about children’s poverty, then ‘the capital city of the world,’ would become, ‘a vast hopeless nursery of ignorance, misery and vice; a breeding place for the hulks and jails’.

This attempt is being made in certain of the most obscure and squalid parts of the Metropolis, where rooms are opened, at night, for the gratuitous instruction of all comers, children or adults, under the title of RAGGED SCHOOLS. The name implies the purpose. They who are too ragged, wretched, filthy, and forlorn, to enter any other place: who could gain admission into no charity school, and who would be driven from any church door; are invited to come in here, and find some people not depraved, willing to teach them something, and show them some sympathy, and stretch a hand out, which is not the iron hand of Law, for their correction.

Before I describe a visit of my own to a Ragged School, and urge the readers of this letter for God’s sake to visit one themselves, and think of it (which is my main object), let me say, that I know the prisons of London well; that I have visited the largest of them more times than I could count; and that the children in them are enough to break the heart and hope of any man. I have never taken a foreigner or a stranger of any kind to one of these establishments but I have seen him so moved at sight of the child offenders, and so affected by the contemplation of their utter renouncement and desolation outside the prison walls, that he has been as little able to disguise his emotion, as if some great grief had suddenly burst upon him.

[We] know perfectly well that these children pass and repass through the prisons all their lives; that they are never taught; that the first distinctions between right and wrong are, from their cradles, perfectly confounded and perverted in their minds; that they come of untaught parents, and will give birth to another untaught generation; that in exact proportion to their natural abilities, is the extent and scope of their depravity; and that there is no escape or chance for them in any ordinary revolution of human affairs. Happily, there are schools in these prisons now. If any readers doubt how ignorant the children are, let them visit those schools and see them at their tasks, and hear how much they knew when they were sent there. If they would know the produce of this seed, let them see a class of men and boys together, at their books (as I have seen them in the House of Correction for this county of Middlesex), and mark how painfully the full grown felons toil at the very shape and form of letters; their ignorance being so confirmed and solid. The contrast of this labour in the men, with the less blunted quickness of the boys; the latent shame and sense of degradation struggling through their dull attempts at infant lessons; and the universal eagerness to learn, impress me, in this passing retrospect, more painfully than I can tell.

*(He goes on to describe the ragged school) …*

It consisted at that time of either two or three–I forget which-miserable rooms, upstairs in a miserable house. In the best of these, the pupils in the female school were being taught to read and write; and though there were among the number, many wretched creatures steeped in degradation to the lips, they were tolerably quiet, and listened with apparent earnestness and patience to their instructors. The appearance of this room was sad and melancholy, of course–how could it be otherwise!–but, on the whole, encouraging.

The close, low chamber at the back, in which the boys were crowded, was so foul and stifling as to be, at first, almost insupportable. But its moral aspect was so far worse than its physical, that this was soon forgotten. Huddled together on a bench about the room, and shown out by some flaring candles stuck against the walls, were a crowd of boys, varying from mere infants to young men; sellers of fruit, herbs, lucifer-matches, flints; sleepers under the dry arches of bridges; young thieves and beggars–with nothing natural to youth about them: with nothing frank, ingenuous, or pleasant in their faces; low-browed, vicious, cunning, wicked; abandoned of all help but this; speeding downward to destruction; and UNUTTERABLY IGNORANT.

This, Reader, was one room as full as it could hold; but these were only grains in sample of a Multitude that are perpetually sifting through these schools; in sample of a Multitude who had within them once, and perhaps have now, the elements of men as good as you or I, and maybe infinitely better; in sample of a Multitude among whose doomed and sinful ranks (oh, think of this, and think of them!) the child of any man upon this earth, however lofty his degree, must, as by Destiny and Fate, be found, if, at its birth, it were consigned to such an infancy and nurture, as these fallen creatures had!

This was the Class I saw at the Ragged School. They could not be trusted with books; they could only be instructed orally; they were difficult of reduction to anything like attention, obedience, or decent behaviour; their benighted ignorance in reference to the Deity, or to any social duty (how could they guess at any social duty, being so discarded by all social teachers but the gaoler and the hangman!) was terrible to see. Yet, even here, and among these, something had been done already. The Ragged School was of recent date and very poor; but he had inculcated some association with the name of the Almighty, which was not an oath, and had taught them to look forward in a hymn (they sang it) to another life, which would correct the miseries and woes of this.

First published February 4, 1846, *The Daily News*

**Child Labour**

Child labour was not an invention of the Industrial Revolution. Poor children have always started work as soon as their parents could find employment for them. But in much of pre-industrial Britain, there simply was not very much work available for children. This changed with industrialisation. The new factories and mines were hungry for workers and required the execution of simple tasks that could easily be performed by children. The result was a surge in child labour – presenting a new kind of problem that Victorian society had to tackle.

Research has shown that the average age at which children started work in early 19th-century Britain was 10 years old, but that this varied widely between regions. In industrial areas, children started work on average at eight and a half years old. Most of these young workers entered the factories as piecers, standing at the spinning machines repairing breaks in the thread. A few started as scavengers, crawling beneath the machinery to clear it of dirt, dust or anything else that might disturb the mechanism. In the mines, children usually started by minding the trap doors, picking out coals at the pit mouth, or by carrying picks for the miners.

The widespread employment of very young children in factories and mines marked a break with traditional practice, and was something that some contemporaries found distasteful. It triggered a series of Parliamentary enquiries into the working conditions of children in mines and factories. Their reports famously shocked Elizabeth Barrett Browning and Charles Dickens – inspiring ‘The Cry of the Children’ and A Christmas Carol. (1843)

The campaign against child labour culminated in two important pieces of legislation – the Factory Act (1833) and the Mines Act (1842). The Factory Act prohibited the employment of children younger than nine years of age and limited the hours that children between nine and 13 could work. The Mines Act raised the starting age of colliery workers to 10 years. In effect, these two Acts brought the industrial districts into line with the rest of the country and brought an end to the systematic employment of young children.

**The Call for Reform**

English pigs and English poor



This illustrated front-page of *The Poor Man’s Guardian* uses the advent of Christmas as an opportunity to compare the living conditions of prize pigs with those of the poor. The pigs, it would seem, come off much the better. Making reference to the famine then raging in Ireland, the author writes: ‘[The prize pigs] have been fed on “middlings, barley, meal, and milk,” and do no discredit to such a generous diet, the mere recapitulation of which would, no doubt, make many mouths water in Skibbereen’. By contrast, in Charles Cochrane’s dispatch from the workhouses of London, he finds ‘nineteen persons lying on the pavement, in the street, unable to obtain shelter within the establishment. They consisted of one man, fifteen women, and three children’.

This article appeared in *The Poor Man’s Guardian*, the weekly newspaper of The Poor Man’s Guardian Society, a campaigning organisation dedicated to exposing examples of neglect and cruelty towards the poor. The Society was founded in response to the Poor Law Amendment Act of 1834, which restricted the freedom of charities and local governments to aid the poor of their districts as they saw fit. The Act was fundamental in the construction of new workhouses throughout Britain: giant labour factories with attached dormitories, in which the poorest were obliged to live and work rather than remain illegally in the streets. Being moved to a workhouse meant long hours of menial labour in poor and unsanitary conditions, very often miles from home and family.

Dickens agreed to be listed as an 'officer' of the Poor Man’s Guardian Society. He was also a staunch opponent of the new Poor Law. In *Oliver Twist* (1838), he writes of ‘the deep, philosophical men’ who established the new workhouses, dedicated to ‘the rule, that all poor people should have the alternative (for they would compel nobody, not they) of being starved by a gradual process in the [work]house, or by a quick one out of it.’

**Chartism**

In the 1830s, Britain entered a period of depression, with the already suffering working classes hit by further unemployment and with only meagre poor relief to sustain them. The atmosphere was ripe for the emergence of a new type of working-class radicalism, one that sought to gain political representation for poorer members of society. Enter the Chartist movement.

Chartist ideas were by no means anything new – the Great Reform Act of 1832 had already failed to extend the vote to workers – but the movement emerged at a time of general unrest in Britain, as well as across Europe. By appealing to people’s discontent, the Chartists were able to gain momentum. The People’s Charter, from which the movement got its name, was drafted in 1838 by William Lovett of the London Working Men’s Association.

It made six demands of Parliament: a vote for all men over 21; a secret ballot; payment for MPs; the abolition of property qualifications for MPs; equal electoral districts; and annual parliamentary elections.

The charter was announced to a public audience on 21 May 1838, to an estimated 150,000 people gathered on Glasgow Green. There were other massive meetings in Birmingham and on Kersal Moor in Lancashire, and Chartism continued to grow rapidly from there.

The division of society and the poverty of the majority began to dominate the minds of the most intelligent and imaginative people outside politics following the 1832 Reform Act. They called this the "Condition of England Question." This was closely linked to a growing sense of anger at the culture of amateurism in official circles which produced this misery.

The phrase “Condition of England Question” was first used by Carlyle in *Chartism* (1839), which significantly contributed to the emergence of a series of debates about the spiritual and material foundations of England and the described the conditions of the English working class during the Industrial Revolution. It had a great effect on a number of writers of fiction in the Victorian era and after. Carlyle was concerned with the “two nations theme," the rich and the poor. Likewise, a number of Victorian condition-of England novelists

In *Chartism*, we read these sarcastic words:

*Do we not pass what Acts of Parliament are needful; as many as thirty nine for the shooting of partridges alone? Are there not treadmills, gibbets; even hospitals, poor-rates, New-Poor Laws? So answers Aristocracy, astonishment in every feature.*

For more on Chartism, see here: <http://www.victorianweb.org/history/chartism/1.html>

Note that this is also useful for William Blake’s *London* from the Poetry Anthology

Marxist Literary Criticism:

For a detailed overview see the chapter in Peter Barry’s Beginning Theory here: <https://cuadernosdepostumo.files.wordpress.com/2014/01/peter-barry-marxismo.pdf>

**Religion**

In 1678, Josiah King wrote in *The Examination and Tryal of Old Father Christmas* that Father Christmas “of the Town of Superstition, in the Country of Idolatry," now stood accused of having “from time to time, abused the people of this Common-wealth, drawing and inticing them to Drunkenness, Gluttony, and unlawful Gambling, Wantonness, Uncleanness, Lasciviousness, Cursing, Swearing, abuse of the Creatures, some to one Vice, and some to another; all to Idleness."

In the same way, Scrooge denounces Christmas as a merely “a poor excuse for picking a man's pocket every twenty-fifth of December."

Dickens was criticized for this work by many puritans, because he painted Christmas as a time for merrymaking, and because he mentioned The Demon Liquor just a few too many times in the story. He was criticized for his blasphemy and flippant references to God, sprinkled throughout the text. With a modern ear, we are hard pressed to hear a single one.

In a letter to one offended lady (March 25, 1847) Dickens assures her that if he were at Fezziwig's ball, “I should have taken a little Negus, and possibly not a little beer." He goes on to remind her “of a certain marriage in Galilee, and of a certain supper where a cup was filled with Wine and not with water."

*God Bless Us!:*

Up until 1968, every word spoken on a stage in London had to be approved by the Lord Chamberlain's Examiner of plays, who determined if it was appropriate. “God save you" was not appropriate, due to possibly being blasphemous. Thus, the phrase “Heaven save you!" was substituted in theatrical renderings. The same was true of the final line, “God bless us every one."

For Dickens’ own approach to religion, we must look to the book he wrote exclusively for his own children's Christian education, The Life of Our Lord (1846):

Remember! — It is Christianity To Do Good always — even to those who do evil to us. It is Christianity to love our neighbour as ourself, and to do to all men as we would have them Do to us. It is Christianity to be gentle, merciful, and forgiving, and to keep those qualities quiet in our own hearts, and never make a boast of them, or of our prayers or of our love of God, but always to shew that we love Him by humbly trying to do right in everything. If we do this, and remember the life and lessons of Our Lord Jesus Christ, and try to act up to them, we may confidently hope that God will forgive us our sins and mistakes, and enable us to live and die in Peace. [The Life of Our Lord, Ch. 11, p. 474 of The Everyman Edition]

Broadly Protestant in his upbringing and his personal convictions, Charles Dickens was probably affected as much by Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress* as the Bible, and equally disliked radical forms of religion, especially Evangelicalism and [Roman Catholicism](http://victorianweb.org/religion/rcov.html), that inhibited the individual's ability to realise his dreams and reach his potential. The above passage which concludes his account of the tenets of the Christian faith, *The Life of Our Lord*, was never published in Dickens's lifetime, so intensely personal and private was the book's message of charity; clearly he regards the sympathy and classlessness of the new religion (despite its many misrepresentations by those who would manipulate it for their own selfish ends) as the reason that this particular Religion gradually became the great religion of the World.

In the pamphlet "Sunday Under Three Heads" (1836) he attacked he attacked the Church of England on its Sunday closing policy and vigorously opposed sabbatarianism as denying the labouring classes much deserved recreational relief from the daily grind. In *The Life of Our Lord*, although he refers consistently to Jesus as "Our Saviour" (a Protestant idiom), Dickens seems almost Unitarian in his conception of Christ as a teacher, healer, ethical leader, a New Testament Christ who preached forgiveness and forbearance. Perhaps, then, Dickens should be described as "Liberal" first, then sentimental and rationalist who, as in *A Christmas Carol* (1843) regarded the social mission of the Christian religion as its chief function since it offered comfort and consolation to the suffering and united a diverse community under common humanitarian and altruistic principles, and excluded none ("God bless us, every one!"). Going to church for Bob Cratchit and his son enables them to participate in a great festival and affords other celebrants as they regard the afflicted boy to remember He who made blind men see and cripples walk; thus, Tiny Tim becomes an artifact of faith and an objective correlative for the essential Christian message of hope.

As an 1840s "Radical" sympathiser Dickens makes the twelve apostles specifically "poor" (Ch. 3) and suggests that Christ was a sort of "pre-[Chartist](http://victorianweb.org/history/chartistov.html)" in that he chose such disciples so "that the Poor might know — always after that; in all years to come — that Heaven was made for them as well as for the rich, and that God makes no difference between those who wear good clothes and those who go barefoot and in rags".

There was a period in the Hungry Forties when Dickens conceived a violent dislike of the Established Church, and flirted with Unitarianism. Consequently, although like the scientists and engineers whose work was transforming English society Dickens was a "fellow traveller" on the road of Christian principle and material progress, he did not live his faith in the way that mid-nineteenth-century Nonconformists would have since, as Paul Davis notes,

He described himself as a New Testament Christian, rejecting the rigid and negative doctrines of Protestant sects that stressed the Old Testament, as the Calvinistic Mrs. Clennam did. In *his retelling of the Gospels for his children, he stressed his moral teachings and parables in the New Testament. [327]*

**Marley and the Concept of Purgatory**

**Purgatory:**

(in Catholic doctrine) a place or state of suffering inhabited by the souls of sinners who are expiating their sins before going to heaven.

(Origin: purge – means of cleansing)

A famous literary example of purgatory: Hamlet is visited by his father’s Ghost:

‘I am your father’s spirit,

doomed for a certain term to walk the night

And for the day confined to fast in fires

Till the foul crimes done in my days of nature

Are burnt and purged away’

We are reminded of this on the first page of the novella when the narrator links Hamlet’s ghost to that of Marley.

* Purgatory is implied with the use of Marley’s ghost
* Metaphor “These are chains I forged in life” - sense of judgement.
* Marley has been judged, as a result of his actions in life, but he can’t move forward he has to repent his sins in some way.
* Christians believe in this three tier system: heaven – a place for the righteous, hell – a place for the sinners and purgatory – a place for the cleansing of sin.
* Purgatory, in ‘A Christmas Carol’ is presented as an unpleasant, woeful and depressing state, where the ghosts are doomed to wander aimlessly, feeling unhappy, abandoned and impotent. As a damned soul, Marley cannot speak the name of Christ, nor can he speak of Heaven. This is consistent with the spirit of Virgil in the fourth canto of Dante's Inferno.There are many other parallels between Dante's work and this one. Marley plays Virgil to Scrooge's Dante. And, as Scrooge would have been sent to the fourth circle of Hell, where he would be forced to roll great weights, Marley assures him that he will drag great chains for all eternity.

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| **Punishment for Avarice**  **In Dante’s Inferno** the fourth circle of hell was reserved for Avarice and Prodigality. | | |
| 1st Circle | Limbo | The unbaptised and virtuous pagans were kept between heaven and hell. |
| 2nd Circle | Lust | Souls are blown about in a violent storm without hope of rest. |
| 3rd Circle | Gluttony | Gluttons are forced to lie in vile, freezing slush forever. |
| **4th Circle** | **Avarice and Prodigality** | The miserly and spendthrifts push great weights together, crashing them time and again. |
| 5th Circle | Wrath and Sullenness | The wrathful fight each on the surface of the river Styx while the sullen gurgle beneath it. |
| 6th Circle | Heresy | Heretics are trapped in flaming tombs for eternity. |
| 7th Circle | Violence | The violent against people and property, the suicides and the blasphemers. |
| 8th Circle | Fraud | Liars, thieves, flatterers, false prophets, sorcerers and seducers. |
| 9th Circle | Treachery/Treason | Betrayers of special relationships are frozen in a lake of ice. |
| **Which crimes had Marley and Scrooge committed? Find evidence to show this.**  **(In a separate note: Consider how these are shown in An Inspector Calls & Macbeth too)** | | |

For more on Dickens’ religion see here:[**https://dickens.ucsc.edu/resources/faq/religion.html**](https://dickens.ucsc.edu/resources/faq/religion.html)

**Genre of Gothic**

For Further reading and ideas on the Gothic genre, see:

[**https://www.bl.uk/romantics-and-victorians/articles/gothic-motifs**](https://www.bl.uk/romantics-and-victorians/articles/gothic-motifs)

**https://www.bl.uk/romantics-and-victorians/videos/the-gothic**

**Structure and time-consciousness**

The novella's famous first line, "Marley was dead, to begin with", establishes many things at once. It avoids the grandiloquent rhetoric many people might expect of the opening paragraph of a Victorian novel, in favour of a terse, muscular address. It allows Dickens to indulge his love of topsy-turvyness, insisting that what sounds like a story's end is in fact the beginning. It delivers a gentle shock to those readers who might have expected a Christmas story to begin in a festive spirit. It promises supernatural fun, because it comes straight after the chapter title "Marley's Ghost", a tip-off that Marley can't be quite as dead as the narrator claims. And, although Ebenezer Scrooge has not yet spoken, it chimes in with what we'll soon recognise as the miser's characteristic tone: over-emphatic insistence that he's right about everything, when we know that he's lamentably mistaken. So, in that one line - six short words! - Dickens encapsulates the philosophical tension of the entire story: the tension between blinkered certitude and open-eyed humility.

Most of all, though, the opening line allows Dickens to put death prominently on the menu. Despite his status - in his own time, and in ours - as the ultimate family entertainer, Dickens was energised by all things grim and gruesome.

The ghosts give the story its irresistibly logical structure, and make Scrooge think that he is prepared for each succeeding visitation. Preparing to meet the second of the three spirits, ‘nothing between a baby and a rhinoceros would have astonished him very much’ (Stave 3). But of course he is surprised. The Ghost of Christmas Present surprises him by showing him flashes of humour and happiness in the most unlikely of circumstances. And when Scrooge sees the visions revealed by the third of the spirits, he naturally fails to recognise what the reader knows from the first: that the dead man, abandoned after the scavengers have done with him, is himself.  
  
Marley's Ghost announces them. ‘You will be haunted … by Three Spirits’ (Stave 1). Scrooge is even told at what times they will appear. The ghosts bring fatality to the narrative: Scrooge cannot resist the visions they set before him. He must awake at the destined times to encounter the world that he has made for himself. Time-consciousness is built into the narrative (those bells). The ghosts have only their allotted spans. ‘My time is nearly gone,’ says Marley's Ghost. ‘My time grows short,’ observes the first of the three spirits, ‘quick!’ (Stave 1; Stave 2). Chronology is of the essence: Christmas is a special day made all the more significant by the unfolding of these visions at their hours. On Christmas Eve Marley's Ghost tells Scrooge of three visits in three consecutive nights, but he wakes to find that it is Christmas Day. ‘The Spirits have done it all in one night’ – which means that he still has the day to redeem himself (Stave 5).

**Theatricality**

In *Albion: The Origins of the English Imagination,* Peter Ackroyd tells us:

Dickens was influenced by the conventions of 19th century theatre and in one speech declared that ‘every writer of fiction, though he may not adopt the dramatic form, writes in effect for the stage.’ The ‘stage’ of his period was characterised by extravagant plots and exaggerated performances, where tragedy and melodrama jostled each other for attention; he had as a child read the great works of 18th century fiction, with their strange mixture of formality and farce, elegance and violence. The ‘tragicall comedie’ of urban life was compounded by his own personal experience; he suffered violent changes in his own childhood, particularly when he was set to work in an old blacking factory.

[Dickens talks about] ‘the tragic and the comic scenes…sudden shiftings of the scene, and rapid changes in time and place.’ His works are often characterised by the violent transition of moods and themes, so that even in the description of wretchedness and despair he will find a detail which is inimitably comic.

There is another element here which is less easy of definition. Many contemporaries noticed a certain ‘hardness’ in Dickens’s temperament and demeanour, and it may be that the heterogeneity of his style came from an unwillingness or incapacity to express wholly genuine feeling; every sentiment must be extravagant, and every emotion contrived. A mixed style, after all, was theatrical in origin. Yet it may also be aligned to a national character which, in previous centuries, was known for its violence and insensitivity to suffering.

**Ghosts and the Supernatural**

The 19th century is routinely thought about as the era of secularisation, a period when the disciplines and institutions of modern science were founded and cultural authority shifted from traditional authority of religion to explanation through the scientific exposition of natural laws. The sociologist Max Weber spoke about this process as the disenchantment of the world.

The emblematic figure in this narrative is Charles Darwin, the anxious amateur biologist who held off publishing his theory of evolution by natural selection for years for fear of the religious and social disturbance it might produce. Darwin’s *Origin of Species* (1859) did indeed result in a crisis of faith for many in the 1860s, before his ideas became embedded in British intellectual life in the last decades of the century.

While we might still accept the broad brush strokes of this story, the Victorian period is also of course a period of deep and sustained religious revival. There was an evangelical revival in the Christian church but also a host of dissenting, heterodox and millenarian cults. It was a golden age of belief in supernatural forces and energies, ghost stories, weird transmissions and spooky phenomena. For a long time historians ignored these beliefs as embarrassing errors or eccentricities, signs of the perturbations produced by the speed of cultural change.

Particularly significant is how little the supernatural entities in the story have to do with the change in Scrooge; there is no force used, magical or otherwise. Scrooge is humbled not by goblins, (as was Gabriel Grubb, Dickens's first attempt at a Scrooge-like figure in Pickwick Papers), but by the pathos of his own lost chances.

**Setting**

I liked this to visualise some of the landmarks mentioned: [**https://www.timeout.com/london/blog/seven-places-in-london-linked-to-a-christmas-carol-122215**](https://www.timeout.com/london/blog/seven-places-in-london-linked-to-a-christmas-carol-122215)

**London**

Peter Ackroyd:

Dickens knew that the city was not necessarily random or inscrutable; rather, that the mystery of London lay in at interconnectedness. His own novels represent by means of image and symbol such an interpenetration of lives and destinies that London itself is packed to blackness with accumulations of suffered or shared experience. ‘Draw but a little circle,’ he wrote, ‘above the clustering housetops, and you should have within its space everything, with this opposite extreme and contradiction close by.’ Here ‘life and death went hand in hand; wealth and poverty stood side-by-side; repletion and starvation laid themselves down together’ and here also ‘wealth and beggary, vice and virtue, guilt and innocence… all treading on each other and crowding together.’ He described ‘the restlessness of a great city, and the way in which it tumbles and tosses before it can get to sleep’, as if it had somehow to encompass its multitude before it rests; if it ever can rest, that is, with the streams of people apparently without end…jostling each other in the crowd and hurrying forward.’

**The Exchange**

The 'Change, or the Exchange, was (and is) the equivalent of Wall Street.

Financial business in London is conducted on The Strand, and has been for several hundred years. The original buildings of the Royal Exchange burnt down in 1839, and A Christmas Carol was written in 1843, so the new Exchange would have been completed very recently.

A 'change is also, colloquially, a money changer's office, which is probably why Scrooge is typically pictured as a money lender, in addition to the scene in Stave Four when the young couple is unexpectedly released from their mortgage by Scrooge's death.

For a man's name to be ‘good upon 'Change’ meant that his word was as good as a contract, or as good as a banknote. In other words, if he said it, it was true.

**The Sea**

In Anglo-Saxon poetry a ship it often used as a metaphor for the frail form of human beings tossed on the ocean of life, with faith and hope and charity as its three anchors. This imagery created in the eighth or ninth century has cast a shadow for many hundreds of years in English literature. It is often a place of margin and mystery. Dickens lived by a huge tidal river, and became entranced by the waters. Many of his novels have settings by the sea, and only a few of them are not haunted by its presence.

Other details within the text

**The wisdom of our ancestors** (Stave 1)

A sarcastic reference to Edmund Burke's speech in March of 1775, in which he appealed to the wisdom of our ancestors as being the primary reason that the American Colonies should remain part of the Empire. In his home at Gad Hill, Dickens had an extensive library of fake books, which was a particular joke of his. One series of these books were titled “The Wisdom of Our Ancestors," with individual volumes titled “Ignorance”, “Superstition," “The Block”, "The Stake”, "The Rack”, "Dirt” and “Disease”.

**Closed on the seventh day:**

Andrew Agnew (1793-1849), Sabbatarian promoter, took charge in 1832 of abortive parliamentary movement to protect the Lord's Day. Basically, the law stated that everyone was required to abstain from work, abstain from strong drink, and go to church, on Sunday.

Since Sunday was the only day off from work for most people, requiring church attendance on Sunday had the effect of removing their one day of leisure.

Intertextual Links

1. Valentine and Orson

Twin brothers and heroes of an ancient romance. They were born in a forest, Orson was suckled and reared by a bear, while Valentine was brought up in a king's palace. Orson was eventually reclaimed from a life of savagery by his polished brother

1. “They went, the Ghost and Scrooge, across the hall…

And gave a freer passage to his tears.”

Links to Tennyson’s Mariana (Themes of loss, isolation etc)

1. And what's his name, who was put down in his drawers, asleep, at the Gate of Damascus; don't you see him! And the Sultan's Groom turned upside-down by the Genii; there he is upon his head! Serve him right. I'm glad of it. What business had he to be married to the Princess!

In the Arabian Nights story Nur-ed-Din and his Son and Shems-ed-Din and his Daughter, the daughter is forced to marry an ugly hunchback, the Sultan's Groom. But through the magic of the Genii, Nur-ed-Din's son replaces the Groom at the wedding, and the Groom is held upside-down all night. The son is then carried away by the Genii, but left in his night clothes at the gates to Damascus.

1. Robinson Crusoe by Daniel Defoe is about (in a very small nutshell) **an adventurer who is shipwrecked on a desert island. However,** Crusoe’s experiences constitute not simply an adventure story but also a moral tale illustrating the right and wrong ways to live one’s life. This moral and religious dimension of the tale is indicated in the Preface, which states that Crusoe’s story is being published to instruct others in God’s wisdom, and one vital part of this wisdom is the importance of repenting one’s sins. While it is important to be grateful for God’s miracles, as Crusoe is when his grain sprouts, it is not enough simply to express gratitude or even to pray to God, as Crusoe does several times with few results. Crusoe needs repentance most, as he learns from the fiery angelic figure that comes to him during a feverish hallucination and says, “Seeing all these things have not brought thee to repentance, now thou shalt die.” Crusoe believes that his major sin is his rebellious behavior toward his father, which he refers to as his “original sin,” akin to Adam and Eve’s first disobedience of God. This biblical reference also suggests that Crusoe’s exile from civilization represents Adam and Eve’s expulsion from Eden.

For Crusoe, repentance consists of acknowledging his wretchedness and his absolute dependence on the Lord. This admission marks a turning point in Crusoe’s spiritual consciousness, and is almost a born-again experience for him. After repentance, he complains much less about his sad fate and views the island more positively. Later, when Crusoe is rescued and his fortune restored, he compares himself to Job, who also regained divine favor. Ironically, this view of the necessity of repentance ends up justifying sin: Crusoe may never have learned to repent if he had never sinfully disobeyed his father in the first place. Thus, as powerful as the theme of repentance is in the novel, it is nevertheless complex and ambiguous.

... for Christmas daws to peck at. This is a reference to Othello:

But I will wear my heart upon my sleeve

For daws to peck at: I am not what I am.

Daws, aka Jackdaws, are a kind of bird, related to crows.

The line in Othello, and here, refers to honesty and openness - the wearing of one's true character in the open for everyone to see.

1. Tennyson’s Mariana
2. Here is an interesting article on the concept of Time Travel and how it relates to ACC (also considering John Bunyan’s Pilgrim’s Progress) <http://www.bbc.com/culture/story/20150728-did-dickens-invent-time-travel>
3. Ghosts in Dante’s Diving Comedy – also see Marley and Purgatory

See in this pack for further notes on Hamlet and Dante’s Inferno

**Further Study:**

Radio 4 Podcast: Beyond belief: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b09jrtbb>