



Rapid **Revision**

Cards

A Christmas Carol

AQA GCSE English Literature



YORK NOTES

York Notes Rapid Revision

A Christmas Carol

AQA GCSE English Literature
Revision Cards

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CONTENTS

PLOT AND STRUCTURE

1. Plot summary
2. Stave One
3. Stave Two
4. Stave Three
5. Stave Four
6. Stave Five
7. Form and structure
8. Quick test

SETTING AND CONTEXT

9. Charles Dickens
10. Victorian society
11. Christmas and morality
12. Settings
13. Quick test

CHARACTERS

14. Scrooge (Staves One to Three)
15. Scrooge (Staves Four and Five)
16. Marley's Ghost and the Ghost of Christmas Past
17. The Ghosts of Christmas Present and Yet to Come
18. The Cratchits
19. Fred and Fan
20. Mr Fezziwig and Belle
21. Quick test

THEMES

22. Christmas
23. Responsibility
24. Change and redemption
25. Money and avarice
26. Poverty and education
27. Family
28. Quick test

LANGUAGE

- 29. Imagery and vocabulary
- 30. Narrative style and voice
- 31. Mood and atmosphere
- 32. Quick test

EXAM PRACTICE

- 33. The exam
- 34. Character questions
- 35. Planning your character response
- 36. Grade 5 annotated sample answer (character)
- 37. Grade 7+ annotated sample answer (character)
- 38. Practice character questions 1
- 39. Practice character questions 2
- 40. Theme questions
- 41. Planning your theme response
- 42. Grade 5 annotated sample answer (theme)
- 43. Grade 7+ annotated sample answer (theme)
- 44. Practice theme questions 1
- 45. Practice theme questions 2

LAST-MINUTE REVISION**Key quotations**

- 46. Plot
- 47. Setting and context
- 48. Characters
- 49. Themes

Ideas maps

- 50. Plot
- 51. Setting and context
- 52. Characters 1
- 53. Characters 2
- 54. Themes 1
- 55. Themes 2

How to use your revision cards

These cards will make revising quick, easy and fun!

Boost your revision even further by organising your cards. Here's how:

1. Find the **three sorting cards** at the front of the box: **'Needs more work'**, **'Getting there'**, **'Sorted!'**.
2. Now read each card from **'Plot and structure'** through to **'Language'**. You might want to work through them **all in one go**, or take **one section at a time**.
3. **Read the text** on the first side of the card and **answer** the questions. Think carefully before you turn over.
4. If you got the answers **right** or **mostly right**, move the card to a new pile called **'Getting there'**.
5. If you got the answer **wrong** or **don't feel confident** about it, move the card to a pile called **'Needs more work'**.
6. Remember to use the **extra help** on the back of the card, i.e. **learn** the key quotations and **think** about how you could use them in **the exam**.
7. **Focus** on the cards in the **'Needs more work'** pile. When you feel more confident, move them to the **'Getting there'** pile.
8. Next, read over all the cards in the **'Getting there'** pile to make sure you still know your stuff! If you do, move the cards to a new pile called **'Sorted!'**.
9. If you don't, move them back to **'Needs more work'** and try again.
10. **The day before your exam**, read over **all the cards** for perfect preparation!

Group revision game

Play this revision game with a friend or in a small group.

1. Remove the exam practice and last-minute revision cards from the pack and shuffle the remainder (about 32 cards).
2. Deal the cards so that each player has approximately the same number (for two people it will be about 16 cards each, for a group of five players, six cards each or so).
3. Player A chooses a card from their set, keeping the contents hidden from the others.
4. They read out either a bullet point of information (e.g. from 'What happens?' or 'What do we learn about X?') or a key quotation, then they ask a question such as 'When in the play/novel did this happen?', 'Who is this describing?', 'Who said this?' or 'What theme does this relate to?' If the card they choose to use is a 'Quick quiz' card, they can ask one of the numbered questions.
5. Player B has to answer the question. If they get it right, then Player A passes the card to them. If they get it wrong, Player A gets to keep the card.
6. It is now Player B's turn to ask Player C a question based on the information on one of their own cards. The game continues, rotating around the group.

The winner is either the person who collects all the cards (very difficult!) or whoever has the most cards in their hands after a set time, such as 15 or 20 minutes.

How to use your exam practice cards

The exam practice cards show you:

- What an AQA exam question will look like
- What you need to do to get a good mark (the Assessment Objectives)
- How to decode the question and plan your answer
- What a Grade 5 answer looks like
- What a Grade 7+ answer looks like

Plus, you'll find lots of character and theme practice questions to boost your revision!

How can you use these cards to revise?

1. Read through **each card** and make sure you **understand** what it's telling you.
2. Complete the '**Identify**' and '**Think**' tasks to test your skills.
3. Read through the **Practice questions** and think of at least **five key points** for each. Or, on a separate piece of paper or in your exercise book, **make a plan** for each one.
4. Check your planned points against the **answers**.
5. Now get writing! On a separate piece of paper, or in your exercise book, **write a response** for each question. You could complete **one a week** leading up to your exam.
6. Check your answers against the **Assessment Objectives** and the **Grade 5** and **Grade 7+** extracts.
7. How did you do? Can you find **ways to improve**? If so, make notes in the margin or rewrite your answers.
8. Remember: **practice makes perfect**! Make some time the **week before your exam** to practise your **writing skills** as well as revising key quotations and ideas.

Good luck!

How to use your last-minute revision cards

Short on time and need a bit of **last-minute revision** before your exam? Here are some tips for using these handy cards.

1. If you have ONE HOUR ...

- Pick an **ideas map** card.
- What other **ideas**, **links** and **quotations** could you add to the map on side 1?
- Turn over to side 2. Using the ideas given, create **your own** visual revision aid on **one** of the **given subjects**.
- Complete the **'Think'** task below by planning **five to seven paragraphs**, either for the ideas map on side 1 or the visual revision aid you have made yourself.

2. If you have 30 MINUTES ...

- Pick an **ideas map** card.
- Create your own ideas map for a different part of the plot, or a new setting, character or theme.
- Include as many **quotations** as you can.

3. If you have 10 MINUTES ...

- Pick a **key quotations** card at random.
- Turn to **side 2**.
- Test yourself by **filling the gaps** in each quotation.

4. If you only have FIVE MINUTES ...

- Pick a **key quotations** card.
- Read the quotations on **side 1**.
- Choose the correct word to **fill the gaps** in each quotation.

Remember – whether you have five minutes or five hours, the extra bits of revision you do can make a BIG difference!

PLOT AND STRUCTURE Plot summary

1

What happens in *A Christmas Carol*?

Make sure you revise the main events of the novel and know the order in which they happen.

Stave One

- It's Christmas Eve, and miserly Scrooge is introduced at work.
- He is visited by his nephew Fred, a carol singer and charity collectors whom he rejects.
- Back at Scrooge's home, Marley's Ghost appears.
- Scrooge is told he'll be visited by Three Spirits to teach him to amend his ways.

Stave Two

- The first Christmas Ghost arrives at 1 a.m.
- The Ghost of Christmas Past changes shape, looking old and young.
- Scrooge is shown himself first as a child, then as a young man by the Ghost.
- Scrooge sees how his love of money began to develop.

Stave Three

- Scrooge is visited by the Ghost of Christmas Present.
- The Ghost shows Scrooge Christmas celebrations across the country.
- Scrooge learns that Tiny Tim will die if Scrooge does not change.
- The Ghost reveals the figures of Ignorance and Want beneath his robes.

Stave Four

- Scrooge is next visited by the Ghost of Christmas Yet to Come.
- It shows Scrooge people's reactions to an unnamed dead man.
- Scrooge is horrified to see that Tiny Tim has died.
- Scrooge sees his own grave and vows to change.

Stave Five

- Scrooge wakes up on a sunny Christmas Day morning.
- He realises that he now has a second chance and is delighted.
- Scrooge sends a huge turkey to the Cratchits and accepts Fred's invitation for Christmas.
- He raises Bob's salary.
- He becomes a 'second father' to Tiny Tim.
- He goes on to live a happy and generous life.



Think

Can you remember the main events from each Stave?
Cover each side of the card and make notes on what you can remember. Now check your answers.

PLOT AND STRUCTURE **Stave One**

2

What happens?

It is Christmas Eve, seven years to the day since the death of Marley, Scrooge's old partner.

- The Stave begins with a description of **Marley**, who was **dead 'to begin with'**, and his cheap **funeral**.
- **Scrooge**, a **money-lender** in London, is described as **'hard and sharp as flint'**.
- Scrooge **refuses** to spend Christmas with his nephew Fred, **threatens** to sack his employee Bob Cratchit, **will not donate money** to the charity collectors and **threatens** the carol singer.
- **Marley's Ghost** appears as a face in Scrooge's **doorknocker**, and then makes all the servants' bells ring before he enters the room.
- Marley explains that the **chains** he drags behind him were **'forged in life'**.
- Marley **warns** Scrooge that **Three Spirits** will visit him to teach him about **social responsibility**, so he can **avoid** the same **punishment**.

Q Three key questions

1. Who is Scrooge and why is he significant?
2. What do we learn about his attitude to Christmas and how is this important to the rest of the story?
3. What does Marley's Ghost explain to Scrooge?



Answers

1. Scrooge is the surviving partner of a money-lending business in London. From the beginning of Stave One, we understand that he is significant as the protagonist of the novel.
2. We learn that he dislikes Christmas. His mean character and hatred of everyone, both family, friends and society in general, are key elements of the story.
3. Marley's Ghost explains to Scrooge that he needs to learn about responsibility towards others and can learn how to be a better man.

Learn

Now learn these key quotations to enhance your skills.

1. Scrooge hates Christmas: **'a time for finding yourself a year older, and not an hour richer'**.
2. Marley's Ghost on responsibility: **'Mankind was my business'**.
3. The regret of the London ghosts: **'they sought to interfere, for good, in human matters, and had lost the power for ever'**.

Think

How could you use one of the quotations above to complete this paragraph?

Dickens conveys Scrooge's personality through his attitude towards Christmas

PLOT AND STRUCTURE **Stave Two**

What happens?

This Stave begins in Scrooge's bedroom as the clock strikes one, and Scrooge meets the first of the Ghosts.

- The **Ghost of Christmas Past** appears as a **changing human shape** often with '**no outline visible**'.
- The Ghost takes Scrooge back in time to his **school days**.
- It shows Scrooge his **sister, Fan**, who we learn was a '**delicate creature**' and who has since **died**.
- Scrooge sees himself as a **happy young man** working for **Fezziwig**, who is organising a Christmas **party**.
- He also sees his former **sweetheart, Belle**, who tells him he is too **obsessed with money** and breaks off their **relationship**.
- The Ghost returns Scrooge to his bed, where he falls **asleep**.

Q Three key questions

1. Which Ghost do we meet and how is it presented?
2. What does the Ghost show Scrooge?
3. What aspects of the plot and genre are developed in this Stave?



Answers

1. We meet the Ghost of Christmas Past, which appears to flicker and change shape, looking like both a child and an old man.
- 2a. Scrooge sees his old school and his sister, Fan. He also sees Fezziwig, his friendly first employer, and his first love, Belle.
- 2b. The Ghost shows Scrooge the first part of his lesson to understand who he is and why he needs to change, confronting all aspects of his life.
3. The ghost story genre is developed as we go on a supernatural journey to different times and places.

Learn

Now learn these key quotations to enhance your skills.

1. The Ghost is angry when Scrooge wants it to go away: **'would you so soon put out, with worldly hands, the light I give?'**
2. The theme of the supernatural: **'The city had entirely vanished.'**
3. Belle, on Scrooge's greed: **'the master-passion, Gain, engrosses you'.**

Think

How could you use one of the quotations above to complete this paragraph?

Dickens conveys the way that avarice dominates Scrooge's behaviour

PLOT AND STRUCTURE Stave Three

4

What happens?

Scrooge's sleep is interrupted by the Ghost of Christmas Present, who is surrounded by Christmas decorations and food.

- This Ghost shows Scrooge people happily **shopping** and **preparing** for Christmas.
- Scrooge watches how the Cratchits **enjoy Christmas**. The Ghost **warns** him that Tiny Tim may **die** if the Cratchits are not **helped**, and he sees how **hard** life is for them in their **four-roomed house**.
- The Ghost takes Scrooge to different places, such as a **mine and a lighthouse**, to remind him that the Christmas spirit can **exist anywhere**.
- They visit **Fred's house**, where his nephew and family are **celebrating** Christmas. Scrooge hears Fred's wife say '**I have no patience with him**', as they discuss Scrooge's **mean behaviour**.
- The Stave ends with the shocking image of the withered and monstrous children **Ignorance** and **Want**.



Q Three key questions

1. What does the Ghost of Christmas Present represent? What role does it play in the story?
2. What new emotion does Scrooge experience while watching the Cratchits?
3. What do the children Ignorance and Want symbolise?

Answers

- 1a. The Ghost of Christmas Present represents the wealth and generosity that can be found at Christmas, but it is also there to remind Scrooge that being kind to one another is more important than this.
- 1b. Its role is to make Scrooge understand the importance of Christmas for people both rich and poor, near and far, family and strangers.
2. The visit to the Cratchit house shows Scrooge beginning to feel empathy for the family's struggles.
3. The children Ignorance and Want symbolise Dickens's belief in educating and helping the poor.

Learn

Now learn these key quotations to enhance your skills.

1. The Victorian Christmas: '**Holly, mistletoe, red berries, ivy, turkeys, geese, game, poultry**'.
2. Scrooge showing empathy with Tiny Tim: '**Oh no, kind Spirit! say he will be spared!**'
3. The feelings of the Cratchit family about Scrooge: '**Scrooge was the Ogre of the family.**'

Think

How could you use one of the quotations above to complete this paragraph?

Dickens conveys the beauty of Christmas through the image of

PLOT AND STRUCTURE Stave Four

What happens?

The final Spirit, the Ghost of Christmas Yet to Come, appears and Scrooge drops to his knees in fear.

- The Spirit, who appears like the **Grim Reaper**, shows Scrooge **different people** talking about a man who has **died**.
- These include **business people** who knew '**Old Scratch**', **thieves** who stole from him and a young couple who **owed** the man rent. **None of them cares** that the man has died.
- Scrooge **refuses** to look at the face of the dead man.
- Scrooge watches the **Cratchits mourning** because **Tiny Tim has died**.
- The Ghost also shows Scrooge his **office** with someone he does not recognise working there.
- The Ghost takes Scrooge to a **graveyard** and shows him a gravestone that has Scrooge's name on it. It confirms that Scrooge was the man people were talking about.
- Shocked, Scrooge pleads for a **second chance** and agrees to **change** and become a better person.

Q Three key questions

1. How is the final Ghost presented?
2. What lessons does Scrooge learn from the Ghost of Christmas Yet to Come?
3. What is the climax of the Ghosts' visits and what happens by the end of the Stave as a result?

Answers

1. The Ghost of Christmas Yet to Come is presented as the most frightening of all the Spirits. Scrooge drops to his knees in fear and pays close attention to what he is shown.
2. Scrooge learns the effect of being greedy and unkind, as he sees that people who knew him either do not care that he has died or are actually happy. This contrasts with the grief the Cratchits show at the death of Tiny Tim.
3. The climax of the Ghosts' visits is when Scrooge is shown his own grave. After this, Scrooge determines to change and gain future happiness.

Learn

Now learn these key quotations to enhance your skills.

1. People joke about Scrooge's death: **'It's likely to be a very cheap funeral.'**
2. The theme of poverty and its link to crime: **'the whole quarter reeked with crime, with filth, and misery'.**
3. Scrooge's isolation: **'He frightened every one away from him when he was alive, to profit us when he was dead!'**

Think

How could you use one of the quotations above to complete this paragraph?

Dickens conveys conditions of poverty in London

PLOT AND STRUCTURE **Stave Five**

What happens?

Scrooge wakes up on a sunny Christmas Day, is delighted by the church bells, and determined to put things right.

- Scrooge anonymously sends a **'prize Turkey'** to the Cratchits and **donates a large amount of money** to charity.
- **Scrooge visits Fred.** Christmas Day with his family is filled with **'won-der-ful happiness!'**
- On **Boxing Day**, Scrooge pretends to tell Bob Cratchit off for arriving late at the office, but then quickly reveals he is **joking**.
- Scrooge **increases Bob's pay** and makes the office a much nicer place, crying **'Make up the fires'**.
- He acknowledges that some people may laugh to see **'the alteration in him'**, but he does not mind.
- We learn that Scrooge becomes a **'second father'** to Tiny Tim and a **good friend** to people across the city.



Q Three key questions

1. How does this Stave contrast with the rest of the novel?
2. How does Dickens show that Scrooge has changed?
3. What do you think Tiny Tim's words **'God bless us every one!'** remind us at the end of the novel?

Answers

1. This Stave contrasts with the rest of the novel because it is funny and full of sunlight and happiness; before this, the mood is one of fear and misery.
- 2a. Scrooge's first acts of kindness (the turkey and the charity donation) are anonymous – he has realised that generosity should not require thanks or praise.
- 2b. He is now realistic about people's attitudes towards him, accepting that people may mock the change in him.
3. Tiny Tim's words remind us of the novel's Christian message and that Dickens's London was a Christian society.

Learn

Now learn these key quotations to enhance your skills.

1. Scrooge is welcomed back to the family: **'He was at home in five minutes. Nothing could be heartier.'**
2. Scrooge's love for Tiny Tim: **'to Tiny Tim, who did NOT die, he was a second father'.**
3. The significance of Christmas to the reformed Scrooge: **'he knew how to keep Christmas well'.**

Think

How could you use one of the quotations above to complete this paragraph?

Dickens conveys Scrooge's changed personality in the way he now treats Tiny Tim

PLOT AND STRUCTURE **Form and structure** 7

How does Dickens use form and structure in the novel?

- The story is in the form of a **novella** – a short novel – divided into **five 'Staves'**. These remind the reader of lines of music, like a 'carol' to be shared at Christmas.
- Each **Ghost** contributes to a **new stage** in the plot and **builds tension** for the reader.
- The **climax** comes when Scrooge sees his **own grave**.
- The **resolution** (or ending) of the novel is Scrooge's **change in character**.
- The **ghost story genre** allows Dickens to make the story frightening, but also to use the **supernatural** to travel in time and place.
- The story, which has comic moments, is also **narrated** in the genre of a **morality tale** and **social commentary**, which asks readers to reflect on their own behaviour.



Q Three key questions

1. What form and structure does Dickens choose for the story? Why do you think he does this?
2. How do the form and structure convey the story through key plot points?
3. What genres does the story fall into?

Answers

- 1a. *A Christmas Carol* is a novella, which makes it quick to read and easy to share.
- 1b. It is divided into five 'Staves', which reflect the 'Christmas carol' nature of the story.
- 2a. The structure involves many changes in time and place, as the Ghosts take Scrooge on a journey to build plot and tension.
- 2b. The plot reaches its climax of Scrooge seeing his own grave, and the resolution, where he realises the error of his ways and he changes.
3. It is written in the form of a ghost story, but it is also a comedy and a morality tale with a narrator who makes social and political points.

Learn

Now learn these key quotations to enhance your skills.

1. Changes in place and time: **'The Spirit touched him on the arm, and pointed to his younger self'.**
2. The traditional structure of a morality tale: **'Once upon a time ...'.**
3. The novel's resolution: **'I will honour Christmas in my heart and try to keep it all the year.'**

Think

How could you use one of the quotations above to complete this paragraph?

Scrooge makes a firm promise to the Ghosts to change

PLOT AND STRUCTURE Quick test

Quick quiz

1. Who was dead 'to begin with'?
2. Which relative comes to visit Scrooge, and for what reason?
3. In Stave Two, where does the Spirit of Christmas Past first take Scrooge?
4. What has happened to Scrooge's sister, Fan, since she gave birth to Fred?
5. Why is Fezziwig throwing a party?
6. In Stave Three, what is the Ghost of Christmas Present surrounded by when it appears?
7. How many rooms does Bob Cratchit's house have?
8. In Stave Four, who are the Cratchit family mourning?
9. Who is 'Old Scratch'?
10. In Stave Five, what can Scrooge hear outside when he wakes up?

Think more deeply

Answer these questions. For each question, think of two or three points and use one quotation from this section.

1. How does the ghost story form help Dickens build tension for the reader?
2. In what ways is the story structured so that the final Stave links back to the first Stave?

A Answers Quick quiz

1. Jacob Marley.
2. Fred visits to invite Scrooge for Christmas dinner.
3. The Ghost takes Scrooge to his old school.
4. She has died.
5. Because it's Christmas.
6. Christmas food and decorations.
7. Four.
8. Tiny Tim.
9. Scrooge.
10. Bells.

A Answers Think more deeply

Question 1:

- The ghost story form enables Dickens to build suspense because the Ghosts look and behave in unpredictable ways, such as the strange way that the first Christmas Ghost has 'no outline visible' and changes shape.
- Events are presented supernaturally – from the past and the future – building up the tension for Scrooge: 'Oh no, kind Spirit! say he will be spared!'

Question 2:

- The final Stave focuses on Scrooge's new-found love for Christmas and his promise that he 'will honour Christmas in my heart', in direct contrast to the hatred he showed in Stave One.
- Dickens can then describe Scrooge's changed behaviour, including his use of polite language and letting Bob have a warm office, saying, 'Make up the fires'.

SETTING AND CONTEXT Charles Dickens

What were the main events of Dickens's life?

- Dickens was born in **1812** and had a **difficult early life** due to his father's **financial problems**.
- He was sent to school but left to work in a **factory** at the age of twelve to **support** his family.
- As an adult, Dickens first obtained a job as a **journalist**.
- In 1843, he read a government report about **child poverty** and addressed this in his writing.
- Dickens wrote over **twenty** books, including novels, short stories and non-fiction.
- Dickens **travelled** widely, giving readings of his books.

How was *A Christmas Carol* received?

- Most reviewers and readers **praised it highly** for its characters and Christian message.
- A fellow novelist suggested that people rush out '**and purchase five thousand more copies**'.
- Dickens was **criticised** for the **high cost** of the book, which was expensively bound and illustrated. Later editions were more affordable.

Q Three key questions

1. What early experience may have influenced Dickens's portrayal of Scrooge?
2. Which character in the novel reflects his experience of child employment?
3. Why was *A Christmas Carol* so popular when it was first published?

Answers

1. Dickens worked in a factory, which would have made him aware that employers, like Scrooge, should be held more responsible for their workers.
2. His description of Martha Cratchit working long hours for little pay was typical for young people, like himself at a young age.
3. The novel was entertaining but had an important moral message too.

Learn

Now learn these key quotations to enhance your skills.

1. Poverty: **'Many thousands are in want of common necessities'**.
2. The crowded city: **'the heavy wheels of carts and waggons; furrows that crossed and re-crossed each other hundreds of times'**.
3. Christian society: **'the steeples called good people all, to church and chapel, and away they came'**.

Think

How could you use one of the quotations above to complete this paragraph?

Dickens sets his story in a Christian context

SETTING AND CONTEXT Victorian society

10

What was Victorian society like?

- **Queen Victoria** reigned from 1837 to 1901. A *Christmas Carol* was published in **1843**.
- Victorian London was **growing quickly** in size and population, as people flocked from the countryside to find jobs in the city.
- Many people lived in **poor conditions** with little access to **health care** or **education**. Those who **could not work** were forced into **workhouses**.
- Some parts of the city were very **dangerous** due to crime and poor sanitation.
- There were also areas of great **wealth**, especially in the financial heart of the city, where people like Scrooge would deal in money.
- The **Industrial Revolution** began in the 1760s – **machines** could do the work of many people. This created great **wealth** for business owners.

Q Three key questions

1. When was *A Christmas Carol* published?
2. What aspects of Victorian society does Dickens describe?
3. What were Dickens's views on social conditions at the time?



Answers

1. The novel was published in 1843, during the reign of Queen Victoria.
- 2a. Dickens describes the overcrowding, danger, poverty and hardship that resulted from rapid industrialisation and issues such as the much-feared workhouses.
- 2b. He also describes the wealthier members of society, as represented by Scrooge.
3. Dickens was one of the many influential Victorians who saw that social conditions were unfair and led to poverty and crime. He tried hard to change this.

Learn

Now learn these key quotations to enhance your skills.

1. Scrooge, commenting on the provision for the poor: **'The Treadmill and the Poor Law are in full vigour, then?'**
2. Description of a part of London: **'The ways were foul and narrow ... the people half-naked, drunken, slipshod, ugly.'**
3. Poor living conditions: **'a wretched woman with an infant ... upon a door-step'.**

Think

How could you use one of the quotations above to complete this paragraph?

Dickens uses a list to convey the horrific conditions of Victorian London

SETTING AND CONTEXT Christmas and morality 11

How did Dickens shape ideas about Christmas?

- In Victorian times, Christmas was not as **widely celebrated** as it is today, and many worked on the day.
- Dickens popularised Christmas traditions, such as the **Christmas turkey**.
- The Ghost of Christmas Present is surrounded by '**holly, mistletoe, and ivy**'.
- Christmas is **celebrated in workplaces** such as Fezziwig's yard, a mine and lighthouse.
- Fred's family play '**wonderful games**' in **celebration**.

What was the importance of Christianity and morality?

- Victorian Britain was mainly **Christian** and many people believed that looking after the poor was a **moral duty**.
- Through Marley, Dickens shows the apparent effects of not looking to '**the blessed star**' that led the Wise Men to Jesus.
- Fred shows that **moral behaviour** comes from kindness, not just giving money.
- The Cratchits demonstrate that **family** is **more important** than **wealth**.

Q Three key questions

1. What ideas about Christmas did Dickens popularise?
2. How does Dickens use Marley and Scrooge to show the dangers of ignoring social responsibilities?
3. What moral lesson do the Cratchits teach us?