

YORK NOTES for GCSE

AQA PRACTICE TESTS

New for GCSE (9–1)



A CHRISTMAS CAROL

AQA PRACTICE TESTS WITH ANSWERS



YORK NOTES



A CHRISTMAS CAROL

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PART ONE: INTRODUCTION

How to use these practice tests

This book contains seven GCSE English Literature exam-style questions for *A Christmas Carol*. All the York Notes questions have been modelled on the ones that you will sit in your AQA GCSE 9–1 English Literature exam.

There are lots of ways this book can support your study and revision for your AQA GCSE English Literature exam on *A Christmas Carol*. There is no 'right' way – choose the one (or ones) that suits your learning style best.

You could use the book:

1 Alongside the York Notes Study Guide or Workbook for *A Christmas Carol*

Do you have the York Notes Study Guide or Workbook for *A Christmas Carol*?

This Practice Test book will allow you to try out all the skills and techniques outlined in the Study Guide and Workbook. So you could:

- choose a question from this book
- read the sections of the Study Guide or Workbook relevant to the question, i.e. Plot and Action; Characters; Themes, Contexts and Setting; Structure, Form and Language
- use the Progress Booster exam section of the Study Guide or Workbook to remind yourself of key exam techniques
- complete the question.

2 As a stand-alone revision programme

Do you know the text inside out and have you already mastered the skills needed for your exam?

If so, you can keep your skills fresh by answering one or two questions from this book each day or week in the lead-up to the exam. You could make a revision diary and allocate particular questions to particular times.

3 As a form of mock exam

Would you like to test yourself under exam conditions?

You could put aside part of a day to work on a question in a quiet room. Set a stopwatch so that you can experience what it will be like in your real exam. If some of your friends have copies of this book then several of you could all do this together and discuss your answers afterwards.

Or, you could try working through Part Two of this book slowly, question by question, over a number of days as part of your revision, and save the further questions in Part Three to use as a mock nearer the exam!

How to use the answer sections

This book contains a mixture of annotated sample answers and short (indicative content) answers that will help you to:

- identify the difference between Mid, Good and Very High Level work
- understand how the Assessment Objectives are applied
- grade your own answers by the samples provided.

The answers can also give you additional ideas for your responses and help you to aim high.

QUESTION 1, MID LEVEL ANSWER

AO1
Paragraphs all open similarly

AO1
Relevant selection from elsewhere in the novel

AO3
Vague ending but some reference to writer's intentions and hint of context

At the end of the extract, the Ghost pushes Scrooge to take responsibility. Dickens uses the quote he 'insisted' Scrooge answer at the end when he's thinking about Bob to show how the Ghost is teaching Scrooge and making sure he admits what he is thinking.

In the rest of the novel Dickens shows ideas about responsibility when Marley says that 'Mankind was my business'. This is when he appears to Scrooge as a ghost at the beginning and it shows that people must take responsibility for each other, or they have to pay the price in torment after death.

At the very beginning of the novel, we see that Scrooge will not take any responsibility for others when the charity collectors visit and he says 'I can't afford to make idle people merry'. This shows that he believes poor people deserve to be poor because they are lazy, which many people thought in Victorian times. Challenging this idea is one of the reasons that Dickens wrote the story.

By the end of the novel, however, Scrooge learns to take responsibility for others and a main way this is shown is by him becoming like a 'second father' to Tiny Tim. This shows how Scrooge has changed completely and is able to feel sorry for others and to help them. This also shows Dickens's message that he wanted the reader to learn, that Christmas is a time for giving and that anyone can learn to be kind.

AO1
Inaccurate – Dickens writes, we quote him

AO1
Clear explanation of Marley's message to Scrooge

AO3
Clear reference to the novel's context, which could usefully have been further developed

MID LEVEL

Comment:
A clear answer which shows knowledge of the text and some interpretation of the theme in both the extract and the novel as a whole. The writing is largely fluent and quotations are generally embedded, although there are some issues with how they are introduced and there is one unnecessarily long quotation. Several points explain effects or make useful comments on Dickens's use of language in selected quotations, although there is straightforward telling of the story at times, which should be avoided.

For a Good Level:

- Comment more frequently on how Dickens has used language, structure, or aspects such as characters and symbols to convey ideas.
- Vary the openings of paragraphs.
- Check all ideas are genuinely supported by the text.
- Try connecting more points about the extract to elsewhere in the novel to achieve more depth through comparison.

15

Each annotated answer is awarded a level, with an examiner-style comment and points for improvement to show you the difference between Mid, Good and Very High Level work.

Sample answers show the key points and ideas you could have included with examiner-style annotations linked to the Assessment Objectives.

Assessment Objectives and weightings

Your work on *A Christmas Carol* will be examined through the three Assessment Objectives (AOs) listed below:

AO1	Read, understand and respond to texts. You should be able to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● maintain a critical style and develop an informed personal response ● use textual references, including quotations, to support and illustrate interpretations.
AO2	Analyse the language, form and structure used by a writer to create meanings and effects, using relevant subject terminology where appropriate.
AO3	Show understanding of the relationships between texts and the contexts in which they were written.

The marks allocated by AQA for each Assessment Objective are as follows:

AO1	12 marks
AO2	12 marks
AO3	6 marks
Total (per question)	30 marks

Knowing the number of marks allowed for each AO is important, as this will help you to achieve the right balance of key skills and techniques in your answer.



Mark scheme

The annotated sample answers that follow Questions 1 to 4 in this book have been given a Level based on the mark schemes below.* Turn to page 8 for the mark schemes for Good to High Level and Very High Level.

Lower Level

AO1	You give some relevant responses to the set task, and use some suitable references.
AO2	You identify some of the writer's methods, but do not always comment effectively on them.
AO3	You show some awareness of contextual factors but find it difficult to link them to the text.

Mid Level

AO1	You give a clear response, and select suitable references and quotations.
AO2	You make clear references to the writer's methods to support your points.
AO3	You make clear links between some aspects of context and the text.



* These are 'student-friendly' mark schemes and are a guide only.

Good to High Level

AO1	You demonstrate very effective understanding of the task and text, and choose references and quotations carefully.
AO2	You analyse carefully and comment consistently well on the writer's methods, interpreting ideas.
AO3	You make very effective links between context and the text.

Very High Level

AO1	You have a broad, conceptualised idea of the text, and make well-judged, and wide-ranging use of references and quotations.
AO2	You are analytical and explore the text precisely and convincingly. You comment in finely tuned detail on the writer's use of language, form and structure.
AO3	You write convincingly and relevantly about a wide range of contextual factors.

Now you know what you're aiming for you can begin the practice tests.

Turn to page 10 for Question 1.*

* *The Question extracts from A Christmas Carol are taken from the New Windmills edition, 1992.*

PART TWO: YORK NOTES PRACTICE TESTS WITH ANNOTATED SAMPLE ANSWERS

Question 1

Read the following extract from *A Christmas Carol* (Stave Two, pages 33–4).

In this extract, the Ghost of Christmas Past is discussing Fezziwig's party with Scrooge.

'A small matter,' said the Ghost, 'to make these silly folks so full of gratitude.'

'Small!' echoed Scrooge.

The Spirit signed to him to listen to the two apprentices, who were pouring out their hearts in praise of Fezziwig: and when he had done so, said,

5 'Why! Is it not? He has spent but a few pounds of your mortal money: three or four perhaps. Is that so much that he deserves this praise?'

10 'It isn't that,' said Scrooge, heated by the remark, and speaking unconsciously like his former, not his latter, self. 'It isn't that, Spirit. He has the power to render us happy or unhappy; to make our service light or burdensome; a pleasure or a toil. Say that his power lies in words and looks; in things so slight and insignificant that it is impossible to add and count 'em up: what then? The happiness he gives, is quite as great as if it cost a fortune.'

He felt the Spirit's glance, and stopped.

'What is the matter?' asked the Ghost.

15 'Nothing particular,' said Scrooge.

'Something, I think?' the Ghost insisted.

'No,' said Scrooge, 'No. I should like to be able to say a word or two to my clerk just now! That's all.'

Starting with this extract, explore how Dickens presents ideas about responsibility.

Write about:

- How Dickens uses Fezziwig to present ideas about responsibility in this extract
- How Dickens presents ideas about responsibility in the novel as a whole.

[30 marks]

[illegible]

[illegible]

Annotated sample answers

Now, read the three sample answers that follow and, based on what you have read, try to allocate a level to your own work. Which of the three responses is your answer closest to? Don't be discouraged if your work doesn't seem as strong as some of the responses here – the point is to use these samples to learn about what is needed and then put it into practice in your own work. Conversely, you may have mentioned relevant ideas or points which don't appear in these responses; if this is the case, give yourself a pat on the back – it shows you are considering lots of good ideas!

Sample answer A

A01

Uses words from the question but focuses on content not technique

Dickens uses Fezziwig to present ideas about responsibility because he reminds Scrooge how he was a good employer and took care of his employees and apprentices. The Ghost makes Scrooge react by pretending it's unimportant but really he wants Scrooge to know that Fezziwig was a better employer than Scrooge, so that he will learn and feel guilty.

In the extract the Ghost says 'A small matter' so that Scrooge will argue with him, and Scrooge does. We can see that Dickens makes Scrooge start to understand by the punctuation in "Small!" echoed Scrooge'. This shows that Scrooge is shocked that the Ghost would say that this is a small thing, because even Scrooge understands that Fezziwig has a big effect on his employees which he explains in his speech.

Also in the extract, the apprentices 'pouring out their hearts in praise' shows how much they love Fezziwig because he takes responsibility for them. It shows they are loyal to him in return, which means that Dickens wants to show that responsibility makes people have better relationships and be happier. Scrooge does not get any loyalty because he does not take responsibility for anyone.

In Scrooge's speech in the extract, Dickens uses a list to show all the things that Fezziwig has responsibility over: 'power to render us happy or unhappy; to make our service light or burdensome; a pleasure or a toil. Say that his power lies in words and looks; in things so slight and insignificant that it is impossible to add and count them up'. This shows the range of responsibility that Fezziwig has and how much respect Scrooge has for him. Scrooge is beginning to learn that it is good to take responsibility for others.

A02

Some focus on language here, zooming in on a detail and interpreting its effect

A01

Well-chosen and embedded quotation

A01

Not actually true – Bob and Fred show Scrooge loyalty even before his transformation

A01

Quotation is overlong

A02

Focus on language technique

A01 Paragraphs all open similarly

A01 Relevant selection from elsewhere in the novel

A03 Vague ending but some reference to writer's intentions and hint of context

At the end of the extract, the Ghost pushes Scrooge to take responsibility. Dickens uses the quote he 'insisted' Scrooge answer at the end when he's thinking about Bob to show how the Ghost is teaching Scrooge and making sure he admits what he is thinking.

In the rest of the novel Dickens shows ideas about responsibility when Marley says that 'Mankind was my business'. This is when he appears to Scrooge as a ghost at the beginning and it shows that people must take responsibility for each other, or they have to pay the price in torment after death.

At the very beginning of the novel, we see that Scrooge will not take any responsibility for others when the charity collectors visit and he says 'I can't afford to make idle people merry'. This shows that he believes poor people deserve to be poor because they are lazy, which many people thought in Victorian times. Challenging this idea is one of the reasons that Dickens wrote the story.

By the end of the novel, however, Scrooge learns to take responsibility for others and a main way this is shown is by him becoming like a 'second father' to Tiny Tim. This shows how Scrooge has changed completely and is able to feel sorry for others and to help them. This also shows Dickens's message that he wanted the reader to learn, that Christmas is a time for giving and that anyone can learn to be kind.

Inaccurate – Dickens writes, we quote him

Clear explanation of Marley's message to Scrooge

Clear reference to the novel's context, which could usefully have been further developed

MID LEVEL

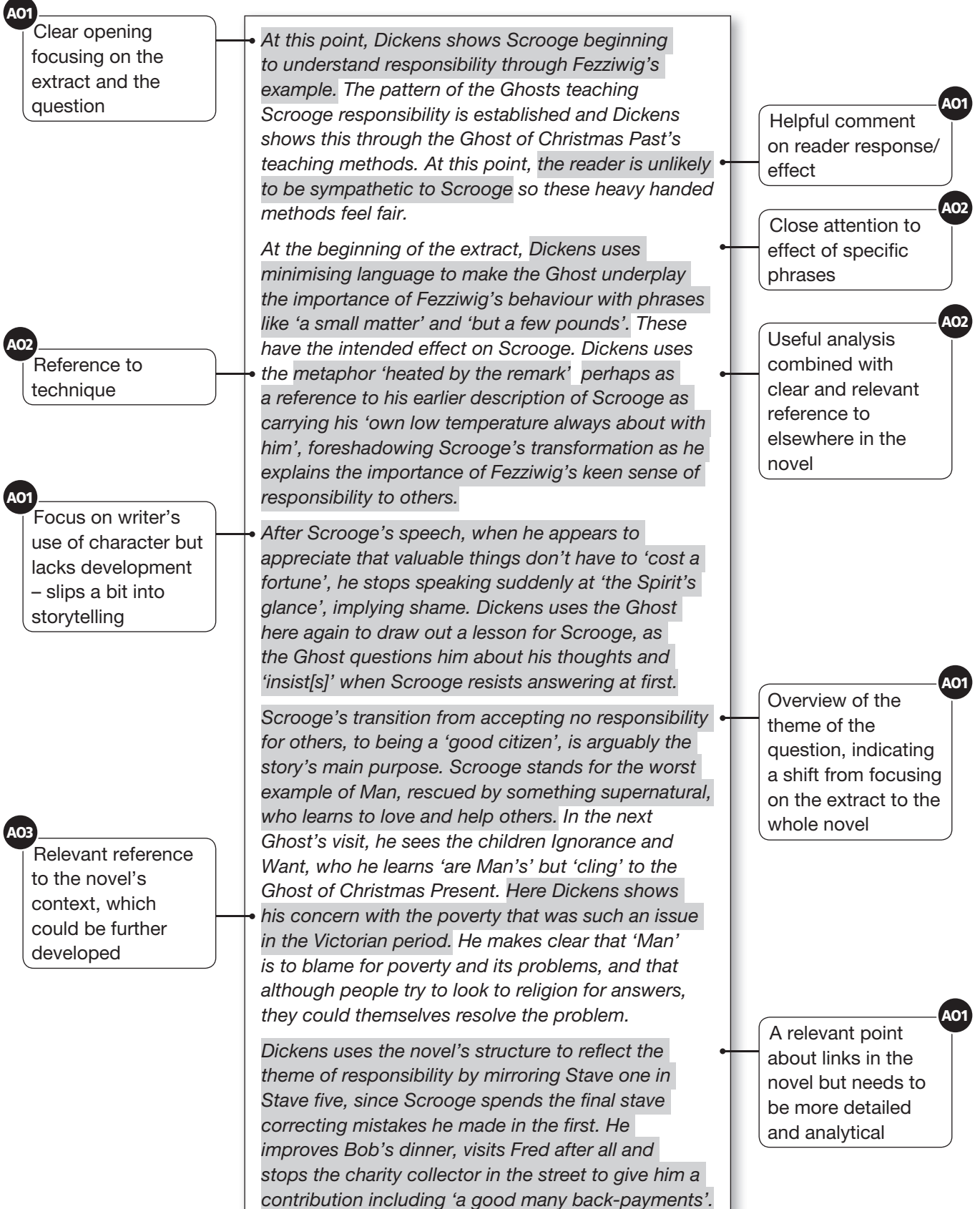
Comment:

A clear answer which shows knowledge of the text and some interpretation of the theme in both the extract and the novel as a whole. The writing is largely fluent and quotations are generally embedded, although there are some issues with how they are introduced and there is one unnecessarily long quotation. Several points explain effects or make useful comments on Dickens's use of language in selected quotations, although there is straightforward telling of the story at times, which should be avoided.

For a Good Level:

- Comment more frequently on how Dickens has used language, structure, or aspects such as characters and symbols to convey ideas.
- Vary the openings of paragraphs.
- Check all ideas are genuinely supported by the text.
- Try connecting more points about the extract to elsewhere in the novel to achieve more depth through comparison.

Sample answer B



AO1

Effective use of embedded quotations

A final way in which Scrooge's new sense of responsibility is shown is that he becomes like 'a second father' to Tiny Tim, after having gained so much sympathy and affection for him. Dickens uses the character of Tiny Tim throughout the novel to show Scrooge's developing sense of responsibility towards the less fortunate, and to represent the 'surplus population', which Scrooge was so keen on 'decreas[ing] at the start of the novel. When the Ghost of Christmas Present uses this phrase in reference to Tiny Tim, it is a shock to Scrooge because he had not applied the idea to actual people before. Scrooge is able to accept social responsibility only when he sees the poor not as 'idle people' but as real people, and that is the Cratchits' purpose in the novel.

AO1

Clear explanation of how this quotation relates to the theme of responsibility but a somewhat abrupt ending point

GOOD LEVEL
Comment:

This is generally a well-constructed answer which explores some aspects of the extract well and brings in relevant ideas from across the whole novel. In places, ideas are probed in some detail and expression is generally good, with quotations used particularly well. There is analysis of Dickens's use of language to develop the theme of responsibility.

For a High Level:

- Develop ideas more fully – avoid having any points which just describe what happens in the story with no real analysis.
- Link interpretative points to Dickens's use of language, form and structure throughout the answer – remember that AO2 is as important as AO1.
- Try to bring ideas about the social context more thoroughly into the argument.



Sample answer C

A01 Strongly analytical opening with clear focus on the question

A01 Well embedded quotation

A01 Helpful comparison between elsewhere in the novel and the extract, showing good overview of the text

A01 Linked paragraphs connecting ideas

A03 Relevant, brief reference to social context, linked to authorial intent

A01 Careful use of synonyms for 'responsibility' to remain focused on the question

This passage represents a turning point in Dickens's development of the theme of responsibility, as Dickens shows the spirit drawing out Scrooge's regret over his treatment of Bob Cratchit and therefore showing awareness of his duty to others.

The passage reveals some change in Scrooge, since he is open to the lesson from Fezziwig, in contrast with his earlier assessment of Marley as a 'good man of business', where Dickens shows that this is all Scrooge values. We now see a shift in emphasis in the phrase 'as if it cost a fortune', revealing a blossoming understanding that value is not only measured in cost. This contrasts with Scrooge's earlier conversation with Fred, where he complained about Christmas as a time that made people 'a year older, and not an hour richer', juxtaposing the two nouns of time, 'year' and 'hour', to make a grand comparison. Dickens showed that Scrooge could only measure anything by its monetary value but already by this point he begins showing an awareness of other values, including social responsibility.

Earlier in the text, Dickens uses Fred's character to link Christmas to the idea of social responsibility when he shows Fred arguing for the value of Christmas as a time when people 'think of people below them as if they really were fellow-passengers to the grave'. This establishes a clear connection between the season and ideas of fellowship and community, despite Fred's explicit reference to social hierarchy with the word 'below'. This suggests that people are able at Christmas to behave more charitably to those in a different social class from them. This idea of reaching out to one's fellow man is a key part of Dickens's message in this text; his sense is that the impact of industrialisation has widened the gap between the rich and poor in Victorian society.

In this extract, Dickens juxtaposes pairs of opposites such as 'happy' and 'unhappy' and 'light or burdensome' in Scrooge's description of Fezziwig's work. In this way, Dickens implies that Fezziwig has control over his apprentices' full range of emotions: 'he has the power to render us happy or unhappy', and can affect every aspect of their work, making their 'service light or burdensome'. This hyperbolic description utilising antonyms suggests that Fezziwig is completely responsible for the apprentices' experiences and welfare, and not just for their work.

This sense of moral duty is also seen just before this extract as the Ghost and Scrooge watch the party when Dickens lists all the guests. As the narrator describes local apprentices by their ill-treatment –

A01 Useful quotation from earlier in the novel

A02 Language feature explained with effect

A01 Focus on writer controlling text, not characters as real people

A01 Zooming in on effect of a specific word

A02 Focused analysis of language

AO2

Useful focus on the novel's structure

AO2

Analysis of form and structure techniques as well as language

AO1

Brief quotation from elsewhere in the novel

AO3

Clear contextualisation of the extract showing overall knowledge of the whole text to close

a boy 'suspected' of not being fed well, and a girl who has her 'ears pulled' – it is implied that Fezziwig invites other people's apprentices precisely because they are not so well treated as his, showing that he intends to improve lives in the whole community. The verb 'suspected' indicates that Fezziwig is keen to help others without needing proof of injustice, demonstrating his determination to fulfil his social responsibility by supporting others when those who are supposed to be responsible for them do not.

Fezziwig is a role model for social responsibility and this scene demonstrates the structure that Dickens sets up in this stave: Scrooge observes something, remarks on it and applies it to his own life. Here, it prompts him to wish to 'say a word or two to [his] clerk', realising that as an employer he falls short of Fezziwig's example. It is clear that Dickens intends the reader to learn from his text in a similar way. He uses the narrator and the Ghost's didactic prompting to ensure a clear message.

The repeated structure of short sentences at the end of the passage contrasts strongly with Scrooge's long speech immediately before, while also providing a shift in tone as the Ghost 'insist[s]' on Scrooge's admission. This shows that Scrooge still needs help to accept responsibility at this stage, just as he does at the end of the next Stave when the second spirit repeats his own Malthusian views back to him about the 'surplus population'.

Overall, Dickens presents the theme of responsibility chiefly through the Ghosts' teachings, and through Scrooge's gradual acceptance of his need to act in a more community-minded way. This passage is typical of Dickens's structural technique throughout the novel, demonstrating how Scrooge learns from observation, and how Dickens intends the reader to further extrapolate from Scrooge's education.

Continues to zoom in on individual words, using terminology effectively/ explaining effects

AO2

Brief and relevant contextual reference

AO3

Brief and relevant contextual reference

AO3

VERY HIGH LEVEL

Comment:

This is a convincing answer which shows clear understanding of the whole text and draws confidently from it throughout. Quotations are embedded, well selected and analysed effectively, with effective labelling of techniques combined with thoughtful explanation of effect and relation to the theme. There is sustained focus on the task, and the response is extremely well-structured, with the useful overview at both start and end revealing a rounded, complete answer.

Question 2

Read the following extract from *A Christmas Carol* (Stave Three, page 51).

In this extract, the Ghost of Christmas Present is showing Scrooge the Cratchit family's Christmas dinner.

Oh, a wonderful pudding! Bob Cratchit said, and calmly too, that he regarded it as the greatest success achieved by Mrs Cratchit since their marriage. Mrs Cratchit said that now the weight was off her mind, she would confess she had had her doubts about the quantity of flour. Everybody had something to say about it, but nobody said or
5 thought it was at all a small pudding for a large family. It would have been flat heresy to do so. Any Cratchit would have blushed to hint at such a thing.

At last the dinner was all done, the cloth was cleared, the hearth swept, and the fire made up. The compound in the jug being tasted, and considered perfect, apples and oranges were put upon the table, and a shovel-full of chestnuts on the fire. Then all
10 the Cratchit family drew round the hearth, in what Bob Cratchit called a circle, meaning half a one; and at Bob Cratchit's elbow stood the family display of glass; two tumblers, and a custard-cup without a handle.

These held the hot stuff from the jug, however, as well as golden goblets would have done; and Bob served it out with beaming looks, while the chestnuts on the fire
15 sputtered and cracked noisily. Then Bob proposed:

'A Merry Christmas to us all, my dears. God bless us!'

Which all the family re-echoed.

'God bless us every one!' said Tiny Tim, the last of all.

He sat very close to his father's side, upon his little stool. Bob held his withered little
20 hand in his, as if he loved the child, and wished to keep him by his side, and dreaded that he might be taken from him.

Starting with this extract, how does Dickens present Bob Cratchit as a sympathetic character?

Write about:

- How Dickens presents Bob Cratchit in this extract
- How Dickens presents Bob Cratchit in the novel as a whole.

[30 marks]

[illegible]

[illegible]

Annotated sample answers

Now, read the three sample answers that follow and, based on what you have read, try to allocate a level to your own work. Which of the three responses is your answer closest to? Don't be discouraged if your work doesn't seem as strong as some of the responses here – the point is to use these samples to learn about what is needed and then put it into practice in your own work. Conversely, you may have mentioned relevant ideas or points which don't appear in these responses; if this is the case, give yourself a pat on the back – it shows you are considering lots of good ideas!

Sample answer A

<p>A01 Weakly-worded opening which seems to interpret the question of a 'sympathetic character' in quite a narrow way</p>	<p><i>Bob is presented as a sympathetic character because the reader will feel sorry for Bob from the beginning of the novel and always sees him as a nice person. In this extract he is with his family on Christmas day and Scrooge is watching them with the Ghost of Christmas Present.</i></p> <p><i>The first thing that makes Bob sympathetic in this extract is that he is kind to his wife when he describes the pudding as 'the greatest success achieved by Mrs Cratchit since their marriage'. This shows that he is a thoughtful man as many men of that period would not bother to praise their wives' cooking but just take it for granted as their job to cook for the family. The phrase he uses, 'the greatest success', is quite exaggerated so that is also sympathetic as it adds humour to the scene.</i></p> <p><i>Also in the extract, the phrase 'with beaming looks' shows that Bob takes pride in his possessions and enjoys them even though he is poor and they reflect that. This makes him sympathetic, particularly as it is a contrast to Scrooge who takes no pleasure in anything despite his wealth.</i></p> <p><i>Later in the extract, Bob is shown as sympathetic through his love for Tiny Tim. This is shown in the list of 'he loved the child, and wished to keep him by his side, and dreaded that he might be taken from him', which explains Bob's detailed fatherly feelings to make him sympathetic for the reader.</i></p> <p><i>Elsewhere in the novel, Bob's love for Tiny Tim is shown in his emotion when he dies. Bob cries 'My little, little child!', which emphasises Tiny Tim's weakness as well as Bob's feelings of helplessness. This makes the reader feel sympathetic towards Bob. Also Bob describes how Tiny Tim would enjoy his grave site, showing how he tries to make his wife and other children feel better. Again, Dickens does this to show Bob's care for others above himself, which makes him a sympathetic character.</i></p>	<p>A01 Knowledge of text shown with contextualisation of extract</p>
<p>A02 Focus on a phrase with relevant comment</p>		<p>A03 Reference to context with some relevance</p>
<p>A01 Focus on the question and relevant brief reference to elsewhere in the novel, although not strictly to the terms of the question</p>		<p>A02 Comment on a specific phrase</p>
<p>A02 Explains effect</p>		<p>A02 Technique named</p>
<p>A02 Focus on effect of a phrase</p>		<p>A01 This wording is becoming a bit repetitive now</p>
		<p>A01 Some focus on Bob as a constructed character by using author's name</p>

A01

Useful brief reference to elsewhere – it does not always need to be a quotation

A01

This section is not really answering the question

In the end, Dickens uses Bob and Tiny Tim to show Scrooge's transformation. When we first see Bob, Dickens tells us that he is not trusted to get coal for himself and he tries to warm himself over a candle. This makes the reader feel sorry for him straight away as Scrooge mistreats him, and allows Dickens to make a point about how some employers mistreated employees in the Victorian period. He also makes clear that Scrooge does not want to give Bob the whole day off for Christmas Day.

Then in the scene that this extract comes from, Scrooge and the reader see Tiny Tim and learn more about Bob's home life. Dickens uses the Cratchits to show that Scrooge's assumptions about the poor being 'idle' are wrong and to give Scrooge someone specific to care about other than himself. Tiny Tim being disabled and born to a poor family means that he does not have much chance to survive. Dickens makes Bob and Tiny Tim sympathetic characters so that when Scrooge gets to know more about them, as his heart opens, he begins to care about them and in the end he shows his transformation by helping them.

Relevant reference to context

A03

A02

This phrase is used to steer writing back to the question, but the student is still really talking about Scrooge rather than Bob here

MID LEVEL

Comment:

A mostly clear answer which demonstrates knowledge of the text and some good understanding of the way Dickens uses the characters. Quotations are usually well-chosen, embedded and of appropriate lengths. Points are mostly focused on the question, although the use of the word 'sympathetic' becomes quite repetitive. Some points comment on effects of language, although there is considerable listing of events rather than explanation/analysis at times. There are some basic comments on social context and its effect on the text.

For a Good Level:

- Comment on language, form and structure more frequently, e.g. by labelling techniques used in quotations and showing their effect.
- Aim to vary vocabulary used.
- Focus on the question throughout – the focus shifts unhelpfully at the end of this answer.

Sample answer B

A01

Shows knowledge of the whole text by placing the extract in context

A03

Brief relevant reference to context – although this could be developed further in this paragraph

A01

Relevant link to elsewhere – again showing planning with a clear comparison – although there is no depth of analysis of this reference

A02

Close focus on language

Dickens uses various techniques to present Bob Cratchit as a sympathetic character. This extract, coming at the end of the Cratchits' family Christmas dinner, is a key scene in the development of his character and shows several of these methods. We see Bob being slightly comical and also see what a good and well-loved family man he is.

Before this section, we have also seen how he is badly treated by his employer, so we can feel sympathetic towards him, as well as adding to Dickens's themes of social class and how the poor were treated in Victorian society. In this earlier stave, Dickens does not name Bob, but just refers to him as Scrooge's 'clerk', presenting him only as an employee and as not really a full person but just filling in the role, which is more how Scrooge views him.

In the extract, Dickens presents Bob as having comic quirks and not always getting things right with the phrases 'in what Bob Cratchit called a circle, meaning half a one'. This helps the reader feel warm towards him, as it portrays him using a light-hearted tone, portraying him with his family, all gathering around the hearth.

Earlier in the novel, after finishing work for the day on Christmas Eve, he was also presented in a relaxed way travelling home 'as hard as he could pelt'. In this brief scene, he is shown to be playful and again slightly comic, which helps the reader to view him sympathetically.

The phrase 'the family's display of glass', which turns out to describe 'Two tumblers, and a custard-cup without a handle', presents Bob – and all the Cratchits – sympathetically because we can see that their possessions are not valuable, but that they treat them with respect, and consider them like a 'display'. This presentation of them contrasts with the lazy image of the poor shown by Scrooge in the first Stave.

However, perhaps the main way that the reader gains sympathy for Bob is in seeing him as a loving father to the disabled Tiny Tim. This extract comes towards the end of the scene where Tiny Tim is first introduced to the reader and here we see how Bob 'held his withered little hand in his'. This shows how Bob loves Tiny Tim, as he doesn't avoid the physical contact, even though Dickens uses the unpleasant adjective 'withered' to describe the boy's hand.

A01

Relevant brief reference to elsewhere creates a sensible chronological structure and shows planning

A02

Explanation of effect of language

A01

Clear focus on the question but could offer more depth

A01

Clear contrast set up with an earlier part of the novel but again the treatment of this idea is somewhat superficial

A01

Shows obvious knowledge of the text as a whole by placing the extract in context

A02

Analysis of language referring to Dickens's use of technique

A03

Valid link to social context but expressed in a rather long sentence

This sense of characterising Bob through Tiny Tim is continued in Stave Four, when Scrooge is taken to a scene where Tiny Tim has died and Bob cries 'My little, little child!' Dickens creates a sentimental depiction of Tiny Tim through the repetition of 'little', which emphasises the unfairness of his early death.

Bob's love for Tiny Tim shows how he is a sympathetic character as the reader would admire his fatherly love, especially in the Victorian period as disabled characters were often used to encourage pity in the reader, and the death of children was more common and less shocking than today.

Dickens's presentation of Bob as sympathetic is established through his relation to other characters, particularly Tiny Tim, through use of a comic tone and through establishing a sense of pride and gratitude in even poor possessions, which the reader is encouraged to see as morally superior to Scrooge's attitude.

A01

Relevant comment on reader response – focus on question

A01

Valid point but not the strongest to end with as it detracts from the question focus

GOOD LEVEL
Comment:

This is a competent answer which draws ideas from the whole text and makes links between the rest of the novel and the extract effectively, suggesting that the answer was planned before writing. It refers to the novel's context at times and begins to discuss the purpose of Bob's character. There is some analysis of Dickens's language choices and use of terminology to discuss these in some detail.

For a High Level:

- Comment on the novel's form and structure as well as language.
- Consider the balance of ideas in an answer – Tiny Tim takes up half the answer here, although he isn't the focus of the question.
- Consider making fewer different points to allow for more analytical depth to be drawn.
- Develop comments on context, and link them more explicitly to language, form or structure.

Sample answer C

A01 Strong opening focusing on the question and hinting at an answer with an overview of the novel

A01 Clearly linked paragraphs

A02 Close analysis of an individual word with relevant terminology

A02 Thorough analysis of effect of punctuation

A01 Here the focus remains on reader sympathy but a broader link is also made to show the student's strong understanding of the novel as a whole

Although we are yet to learn his name, Dickens establishes Bob Cratchit as a sympathetic character in *Stave One*. This effect is created when he introduces him as Scrooge's clerk who is denied coal, threatened with losing his situation for 'unintentionally applaud[ing]' Fred's speech on the value of Christmas and is metaphorically accused of 'picking a man's pocket' for taking a day off for Christmas.

At this earlier point in the novel, Dickens uses Bob to demonstrate Scrooge's behaviour as an employer, but the reader is also driven to develop sympathy for Bob himself. Comic touches help to round out his character, making him more human. One such moment in the first *Stave* occurs after his involuntary applause, when Bob pokes at the fire to distract attention and accidentally extinguishes it. Similarly, in the extract depicting the Cratchits' Christmas dinner, Dickens uses a comic style in places such as the narrator's comment 'what Bob Cratchit called a circle, meaning half a one', which gently mocks Bob. This comic tone is an important part of Bob's characterisation and a key means of increasing likeability for him amongst readers.

In this extract, the phrase 'flat heresy' demonstrates the close bond within the Cratchit family. Creating such a strong sense of solidarity shows the love that exists between these characters, thus making each of them more sympathetic. The noun 'heresy' implies that the feelings the Cratchits have for the family are akin to religious faith and cannot be easily shaken. At the same time, the hyperbolic nature of the language adds to the scene's humour and gives it a mock-epic quality.

Further, Dickens uses a grand style of description for poor things to carefully craft the reader's sympathy for Bob in the construction of the phrase 'the family's display of glass'. Using a sentence break before actually listing the objects here adds to the slightly comic effect by delaying the bathos of 'Two tumblers, and a custard-cup without a handle.'

Additionally, the reader's sympathy for Bob's ability to take pride and pleasure in the simplest of things is developed in the phrase 'with beaming looks'. This also serves as a contrast to Scrooge who at this point in the story takes no pleasure in anything despite being able to afford luxury. This shows how Dickens uses Bob to develop themes of poverty and social responsibility, through juxtaposing Bob's gratitude for his humble possessions with Scrooge's avarice.

Effective brief references to elsewhere with embedded quotes – although these are not analysed at this point

Cogent links between different parts of the novel

Careful explanation of effect of language

Broader link is developed slightly with some structural analysis

AO3

Relevant contextual reference

AO2

Detailed analysis of use of form: characterisation

AO3

Relevant reference to literary/artistic context

A further way in which Dickens develops Bob's character as a sympathetic one is in his role as a loving father. At the end of this extract, the triadic list details Bob's sentiments towards Tiny Tim: 'he loved the child, and wished to keep him by his side, and dreaded that he might be taken from him'. The repeated connective 'and' is used here to emphasise that Bob feels all these emotions simultaneously, underlining the complexity and depth of his feelings. Moreover, it establishes him as a complex character beyond the stock conventions of a poor man, typical perhaps of some Victorian depictions.

Just after this extract, Dickens presents Bob as generous in spirit when he proposes a toast to Scrooge, labelling him 'the Founder of the Feast'. Dickens highlights Bob's magnanimous attitude through Mrs Cratchit's reaction to Cratchit's toast, using her character to position the reader against Scrooge, but without harming Bob's 'mild' personality as he reminds his wife about Christmas and the presence of the children.

At the end of the novel, Bob again brings humour to the text in his reaction to Scrooge's transformation when he considers calling for the police and a 'strait-waistcoat'. This light, almost slapstick moment, shows Bob once more fulfilling the role of lifting the mood after the seriousness of Scrooge's journey. This enables the reader to feel warmth towards him, as well as being a traditional function for lower class characters to fulfil in art.

Overall, Dickens presents Bob sympathetically in a range of ways, through the structure and language of the text, as well as in the specifics of his role. He exists as a counterpoint to Scrooge in personality and attitude, allowing the reader to sympathise with him.

AO2

Detailed language analysis as two techniques referred to and effect explained

AO1

Excellent knowledge of text shown with very specific reference to elsewhere

AO2

Analysis of use of comic form/Bob's role

AO1

Excellent conclusion summarising and bringing the essay's argument together

VERY HIGH LEVEL

Comment:

A convincing and thorough answer which explores a range of very high-level ideas by combining language analysis with a clear focus on the question. The idea of how readers will respond to Bob Cratchit remains in focus throughout and various different techniques that Dickens uses to manipulate reader sympathy are considered and analysed in some depth, with relevant brief references to the novel's social context and literary tradition.

Question 3

Read the following extract from *A Christmas Carol* (Stave One, pages 15–16).

In this extract, the Ghost of Jacob Marley has just appeared to Scrooge.

Scrooge was not much in the habit of cracking jokes, nor did he feel, in his heart, by any means waggish then. The truth is, that he tried to be smart, as a means of distracting his own attention, and keeping down his terror; for the spectre's voice disturbed the very marrow in his bones.

- 5 To sit, staring at those fixed glazed eyes, in silence for a moment, would play, Scrooge felt, the very deuce with him. There was something very awful, too, in the spectre's being provided with an infernal atmosphere of its own. Scrooge could not feel it himself, but this was clearly the case; for though the Ghost sat perfectly motionless, its hair, and skirts, and tassels, were still agitated as by the hot vapour from an oven.

- 10 'You see this toothpick?' said Scrooge, returning quickly to the charge, for the reason just assigned; and wishing, though it were only for a second, to divert the vision's stony gaze from himself.

'I do,' replied the Ghost.

'You are not looking at it,' said Scrooge.

- 15 'But I see it,' said the Ghost, 'notwithstanding.'

'Well!' returned Scrooge, 'I have but to swallow this, and be for the rest of my days persecuted by a legion of goblins, all of my own creation. Humbug, I tell you – humbug!'

- 20 At this the spirit raised a frightful cry, and shook its chain with such a dismal and appalling noise, that Scrooge held on tight to his chair, to save himself from falling in a swoon. But how much greater was his horror, when the phantom taking off the bandage round its head, as if it were too warm to wear in-doors, its lower jaw dropped down upon its breast!

Scrooge fell upon his knees, and clasped his hands before his face.

Starting with this extract, explore how Dickens creates a frightening atmosphere.

Write about:

- How Dickens creates a frightening atmosphere in this extract
- How Dickens creates a frightening atmosphere in the novel as a whole.

[30 marks]