A Christmas Carol by, Charles Dickens

Study Guide Answers

Stave One (Marley’s Ghost):

1. Who was Marley? What was his condition at the beginning of the story?

Jacob Marley was Scrooge’s business partner. He was “dead as a doornail.”

1. What is the setting of the story?

The setting is Victorian England (London, England) in 1843 (19th Century)

1. One of Scrooge’s relatives visited him at his warehouse. Who was it and what did he want? What was Scrooge’s reply?

Fred, Scrooge’s nephew (Scrooge’s sister’ son) visited him. He invites Scrooge to Christmas dinner with his wife and friends. Scrooge replies, “Good afternoon!”; “Bah! Humbug!”; “I live in a world of fools.”; What reason have you to be merry? You’re poor enough.”

1. What did the other men who came to the warehouse want? What was Scrooge’s reply to them?

They were looking for a donation for the poor and destitute, who suffer all year BUT especially at Christmas time. Scrooge replies, “Are there no prisons? Are there no workhouses?”; “I wish to be left alone.” ; “I don’t make myself merry at Christmas, and I can’t afford to make idle people merry.” ; “They should just die then to decrease the surplus population.”

1. What did Scrooge say about giving his clerk a day off to celebrate Christmas?

He said, “It’s not convenient.”; “It’s not fair.” ; “Be here all the earlier next morning.”

1. What happened to the door knocker when Scrooge was opening his door?

It looked like/became the FACE of Jacob Marley (Marley died 7 years ago, on Christmas Eve).

1. Who appeared to Scrooge? What did he tell Scrooge?

The ghost of Jacob Marley appeared to Scrooge. He told Scrooge that he better change his ways or else he will be doomed to walk the earth bearing the chains that symbolize the choices he made in life (he valued money more than people) and your chain was as long as mine 7 years ago and has been growing longer and heavier ever since. You have a chance tonight to escape my fate.

1. The visitor told Scrooge about some other visitors who would be coming. Who were they? When would they come?

Marley tells Scrooge that three more spirits will visit him and that he MUST heed their warnings. Marley also tells Scrooge that he CANNOT change his fate without these visits.

1. What did Scrooge do after his visitor left?

He fell asleep. BUT before that, he looked out his window and saw the sky filled with other phantoms, like Marley, wearing chains and looking miserable.

Stave Two (The First of the Three Spirits):

1. What did Scrooge notice about the church chimes when he woke up? What did he think happened?

He heard the chimes strike the hour of twelve and believed that the clock was wrong because he couldn’t have slept that long (Marley left him at 2 o’clock in the morning and he can’t believe that he slept all night, all day, and well into the next night). \*Keep in mind this is the supernatural element operating here. Time in the supernatural world is different than time in the mortal world.

1. Describe what the spirit looks like.

The first spirit is a strange figure: it looks like a child, yet it also resembles an old man. It is very small, with childlike facial features, but has white hair (from age) that hangs down its back.

1. Who was the first spirit?

The first spirit was the Ghost of Christmas Past.

1. What is the business that brings the Spirit to Scrooge?

It has come for Scrooge’s “welfare and reclamation.” (Welfare= for your own good; Reclamation= return to a former, better person or state)

1. Describe the first scene to which the spirit brings Scrooge. How does Scrooge feel about this place?

(see pages 36-38) The Spirit brings Scrooge to the boarding school he attended when he was a boy. Scrooge is deeply saddened by this scene because he sees his “poor, forgotten self.” Scrooge is alone and abandoned (on Christmas). He “sobbed.”

1. Who was Fan? Describe her importance. How does Scrooge feel about her? How do you know?

Fan is Scrooge’s little sister. He loved her very much. When the Spirit said she was “a delicate creature who had a large heart,” Scrooge replied, “So she had. You’re right.”

1. Describe the scene at Fezziwig’s. How does Scrooge feel about the scene? What does the Spirit say about the party? What does Scrooge reply?

The scene is happy and festive. Fezziwig went above and beyond to make his family, friends, AND employees feel welcome. The Spirit criticizes (he doesn’t mean it) Fezziwig for spending money on such a small matter. Scrooge replies, “The happiness he gives is quite as great as if it cost a fortune.” This is a stark contrast to Scrooge as an employer. He sees how Fezziwig treated him and says, “I would like to say a word or two to my clerk just now.” Scrooge may actually feel badly about the way he has treated Bob Cratchit all these years-especially on Christmas.

1. Describe the scene with Belle. Why is this important?

Belle is Scrooge’s fiancé); they met and fell in love when they were both poor. She is crying and tells Scrooge that she “releases” him from their “contract” (engagement). She tells Scrooge that he has changed, and that all he cares about is money (she is still poor, but Scrooge is building up his business and trying to gain as much wealth as he can). This is the turning point in Scrooge’s life because we see the moment where he literally chooses money over love. Then, the Spirit takes Scrooge to Belle’s home years later, where she is still poor, but happily married and with children. Her husband tells her that he saw Scrooge and he looked “quite alone in the world.”

This was too much (too painful) for Scrooge and he demanded the Spirit take him away from this vision.

1. How did Scrooge get rid of the Spirit?

Scrooge pressed the burning light on the top of the Spirit’s head, extinguishing the light and its power.

Stave Three (The Second of the Three Spirits):

1. How did Scrooge find the second Spirit?

He followed a bright light coming from the room next door.

1. Describe the scene when Scrooge found the second Spirit.

(See page 57) It was filled with everything symbolizing the holiday: holly plants, seasonal fruits, and food as far as the eye can see- a true feast.

1. Who was the second Spirit. Describe it.

He was a giant (see page 58). He wore a robe with a fur collar, he had long, curly brown hair, bare chest and feel, a wreath around his head and an empty scabbard (sheath). He is supposed to embody and symbolize the Christmas ideal: generosity, good will, celebration, and sharing.

1. Describe the first place they went.

They first went to the bakery where all of the poor families warm their dinner.

1. What was the second place they visited.

They second place they visited was the Cratchit’s home. They are a very poor, but very happy family.

1. Who is Tiny Tim? What did Scrooge ask the Spirit about Tiny Tim? What was the Spirit’s reply?

Tiny Tim is Bob’s youngest child. He is crippled (he walks with a crutch). Scrooge asks if Tiny Tim will die and the Spirit says if Scrooge does not change, then YES. Ultimately, Tiny Tim’s life is in Scrooge’s hands.

1. Describe the Cratchit family toast to Scrooge.

(See the bottom of page 71- top of page 72) Mr. Cratchit wanted toast to Scrooge. He wanted his boss to have a merry Christmas and for him to be happy. Mrs. Cratchit, however, did not want to toast to the man who made her husband’s life (and her family’s) miserable. Reluctantly, she agreed and they all made a toast to Scrooge, “the founder of the feast.”

\*the word “feast” is ironic, because the goose they were eating was far from big enough to feed a family of 8 (it was very little goose and a whole lot of potatoes and apple sauce).

1. What were some of the other places the Spirit took Scrooge? What did Scrooge find at each place?

The Spirit took Scrooge to hospitals, poor houses, debtor’s prisons, and foreign lands to show him that in spite of their poor, hard lives, they were still celebrating with good cheer.

1. What did Scrooge’s nephew say about him?

(See pages 78-80) He wants to give his uncle a “chance” every year; “I have nothing to say against him.” ; “I am sorry for him.” ; “I couldn’t be angry with him if I tried.” ; “He is the only one who suffers from his poor decisions.”

1. What did Scrooge think about when he heard the harp music?

(See pages 80-81) Scrooge thinks of his sister, Fan, and also feels if he had heard more music in his life, he would have turned out differently (he would be kind and compassionate).

1. What did Scrooge do while his nephew and the others were playing games?

Scrooge joined in the games.

1. Describe the Yes and No game.

(See page 83)

1. How did Scrooge feel by the time he and the Spirit left his nephew’s house?

Scrooge felt loved, happy and joyful.

1. What happened to the Spirit’s appearance as the night went on?

The Ghost of Christmas Present aged considerably. His hair was gray and his time with Scrooge was coming to an end. He tells Scrooge, “My life upon this globe is very brief. It ends tonight.”

1. Who were the two children the Spirit had under his robe? What did the Spirit tell Scrooge about them?

The two children were a boy and a girl. They belong to Man. The boy is Ignorance and the girl is Want (Poverty). The Spirit said to beware them both, especially the boy because the word “Doom” is written across his brow. Furthermore, the boy is more dangerous because ignorance leads to fear which leads to violence. Whereas, want/poverty can be controlled.

\*This is Dickens’ commentary about society; the children represent society’s abandonment of the poor and destitute and the consequences of that abandonment.

1. What was the Spirit’s reply when Scrooge asked, “Have they no refuge or resource?”

The Spirit throws Scrooge’s own words back in his face. He says, “Are there no prisons? Are there no workhouses?”

Stave Four (The Last of the Spirits):

1. How did Scrooge feel about the Ghost of Christmas Yet to Come?

Scrooge feared the final Spirit, but he knew he had to go with him to become a better man.

1. Describe the Spirit.

The last Spirit wore a black cloak; it is covered head to toe; it does not speak; it only points with its skeletal fingers; it looks like the Grim Reaper (the symbol of death).

1. Where did the Spirit and Scrooge go first?

The Spirit takes Scrooge to a street in London.

1. What were the businessmen talking about?

There were two men talking about someone’s recent death (they never say Scrooge’s name). They comment on how cheap this man was in life and how cheap his funeral will probably be. They also add that they will only pay their respect at the funeral if lunch is served.

1. Where did they go next? What did they see?

Next, the Spirit takes Scrooge to an empty bedroom (his own), where there is a dead body, covered with a sheet, laying on the bed.

1. What was Scrooge’s reaction to the scene?

Seeing the body under the sheet frightened Scrooge. The body was unattended (i.e. no one is there to mourn the loss of this man). Scrooge still doesn’t realize, however, that HE is the man under the sheet.

1. What did Scrooge think when he saw the dead man?

When Scrooge saw the dead man he thinks the Spirit is trying to teach him a lesson. In other words, this man (on the bed) died unloved and alone and YOU will die the same way if you continue to live the way you do.

1. Scrooge asks the Spirit to show him someone who felt emotion associated with this man’s death. Where did they go and what did they see?  
   The Spirit takes Scrooge to the home of a young, poor family. The husband tells his wife that “he is dead.” They are both happy and relieved with this news. The husband adds that if they need to find a new creditor, he will surely be “less merciless than him.” Therefore, the only emotion associated with the man’s death is pleasure.
2. Who was kind to Bob Cratchit and what did this person do?

Fred, Scrooge’s nephew, was kind to Bob Cratchit and even offered his son, Peter, a job.

1. Who was the dead man? How did Scrooge discover this?

The dead man was Scrooge. He discovered this when the Spirit took Scrooge to a cemetery and pointed to a headstone with EBENEZER SCROOGE written on it.

1. What questions did Scrooge ask the Spirit as they stood among the graves?

“Am I the man that lay upon the bed”; “Are these the shadows of things that will be or are they the shadows of things that may be?”; “Why show me this if I am past all hope?”

1. What did Scrooge tell the Spirit he would do?

“I will honor Christmas in my heart and try to keep it all the year. I will live in the Past, the Present, and the Future. The Spirits of all three shall strive within me. I will not shut out the lessons that they teach.”

1. Does Scrooge fulfill his promise?

We don’t know yet (See Stave Five)

Stave Five (The End of It):

1. Describe Scrooge’s behavior when he woke up.

Scrooge woke up happy; he was overwhelmed with emotion; he was laughing and crying, all at the same time. “I am as light as a feather, I am as happy as an angel, I am as merry as a schoolboy. I am as giddy as a drunken man. A Merry Christmas to everybody!”

1. What day was it when Scrooge woke up?

When Scrooge woke up it was Christmas Day (morning).

1. What did Scrooge ask the boy under his window to do, and why?

Scrooge asked the boy to go to the poulterer’s and buy the biggest turkey. He was going to have it delivered to the Cratchit’s house. “I’ll send it to Bob Cratchit’s. He shan’t know who sends it.”

1. How did Scrooge act when he went outside?

When Scrooge went outside (after he almost cut his nose off because he was dancing while he shaved, LOL, he “dressed himself all in his best”) he regarded everyone with a delighted smile. He looked so “irresistibly pleasant” that people said to him, “Good morning, sir! A Merry Christmas to you!”

1. What did Scrooge do when he met the man who had asked for a donation the day before?

When Scrooge met the man who had asked for a donation the day before, he said, “I fear I may not be pleasant to you (yesterday). Allow me to as your pardon. And will you have the goodness…Thankee. I am much obliged to you. I thank you fifty times. Bless you!” Scrooge promises to give the man a VERY large donation for the poor, including “a great many back payments.”

1. Whom did Scrooge visit? What was the reaction?

Scrooge went to Fred’s house and Fred was thrilled and welcomed his uncle with open arms. Scrooge “was at home in five minutes.” It was “wonderful happiness.”

1. What happened at the office the next morning?  
   The next morning, Bob Cratchit was late getting to work and apologized to Scrooge as soon as he walked in. Scrooge told him, “Yes, I think you are…I am not going to stand this sort of thing any longer. And therefore…I am about to raise your salary!” Bob was in shock and began shaking. Scrooge said, “A merry Christmas, Bob! I’ll raise your salary and endeavor to assist your struggling family…make up the fires and buy another coal scuttle…”
2. How did Scrooge spend the rest of his life?

“Scrooge was better than his word. He did it all, and infinitely more; and to Tiny Tim, who did not die, he was a second father. He became as good a friend, as good a master, and as good a man as the good old city knew.” He knew how to keep Christmas spirit alive and well every single day for the rest of his life.