

*A Christmas Carol* is a novella by English author Charles Dickens, first published in 1843. The story tells of sour and stingy Ebenezer Scrooge's ideological, ethical, and emotional transformation after the supernatural visits of his deceased business partner Jacob Marley and the Ghosts of Christmas Past, Present, and Yet to Come. The novella met with instant success and critical acclaim. It is considered the most read piece of literature in the English-speaking world.

The tale has been viewed by critics as an indictment of 19th-century industrial capitalism. It has been credited with restoring the holiday to one of merriment and festivity in Britain and America after a period of sobriety and sombreness. *A Christmas Carol* remains popular, has never been out of print, and has been adapted to film, stage, opera, and other media multiple times.

The tale begins on a Christmas Eve exactly seven years after the death of Scrooge's business partner, Jacob Marley. Scrooge is established as "*a squeezing, wrenching, grasping, scraping, clutching, covetous, old sinner!*" who has no place in his life for kindness, compassion, charity or benevolence. He hates Christmas, calling it "humbug", refuses his nephew Fred's dinner invitation, and rudely turns away carollers and others who seek a donation from him to provide a Christmas dinner for the Poor. His only "Christmas gift" is allowing his overworked, underpaid clerk Bob Cratchit Christmas Day off with pay - which he does only to keep with social custom, Scrooge considering it "*a poor excuse for picking a man's pocket every twenty-fifth of December!*".

Returning home that evening, Scrooge is visited by Marley's ghost. Marley warns Scrooge to change his ways lest he undergo the same miserable afterlife as himself. Scrooge is then visited by three additional ghosts who accompany him to various scenes with the hope of achieving his transformation.

The first of the spirits, the Ghost of Christmas Past, takes Scrooge to Christmas scenes of his boyhood and youth, which stir the old miser's gentle and tender side by reminding him of a time when he was more innocent. They also show what made Scrooge the miser that he is, and why he dislikes Christmas.

The second spirit, the Ghost of Christmas Present, takes Scrooge to joy-filled people celebrating Christmas dinner. A major scene is the family feast of Scrooge's impoverished clerk Bob Cratchit, introducing his youngest son, Tiny Tim, who is seriously ill but cannot receive treatment due to Scrooge's unwillingness to pay Cratchit a decent wage.

The third spirit, the Ghost of Christmas Yet to Come, harrows Scrooge with dire visions of the future if he does not learn and act upon what he has witnessed - including Tiny Tim's death. Scrooge's own neglected and untended grave is revealed, prompting the miser to aver that he will change his ways in hopes of changing these "shadows of what may be".

In the final scene Scrooge awakens on Christmas morning with joy and love in his heart, then spends the day with his nephew's family after anonymously sending a prize turkey to the Cratchit home for Christmas dinner. Scrooge has become a different man overnight and now treats his fellow men with kindness, generosity and compassion, gaining a reputation as a man who embodies the spirit of Christmas. The story closes with the narrator confirming the validity, completeness and permanence of Scrooge's transformation. "And it was said of him that he knew how to keep Christmas well, if any man alive possessed the knowledge".