Literature Paper 1: Section B

‘A Christmas Carol’ – Charles Dickens

1: Stave 1 Summary

Scrooge is shown as a **misanthropic** and **parsimonious** man who treats others coldly. He keeps Bob Cratchit working in a freezing “cell” and rejects his nephew Fred’s cheerful Christmas invitation. Although he complains, he finally allows Bob to have Christmas Day off. Later at home, Scrooge is confronted by Marley’s Ghost, whose warning becomes the **catalyst** for Scrooge’s possible change. Marley tells him that three spirits will visit, and without their lessons, Scrooge will share Marley’s hopeless fate.

2: Stave 2 Summary

The Ghost of Christmas Past forces Scrooge to confront **memories** that explain his need for redemption and loss of Christian values. He sees his lonely childhood, which highlights the isolation that shaped his character. At Fezziwig’s workshop, generosity and joy contrast with the man Scrooge has become. The ending of his engagement to Belle reveals how his desire for wealth replaced love. Finally, Belle’s happy family life emphasises what Scrooge has lost. Overcome with guilt and regret, Scrooge tries to escape the visions, showing his growing awareness of his need for change and **salvation.**

3: Stave 3 Summary

Scrooge meets The Ghost of Christmas Present, a joyful figure who represents generosity and celebration. The spirit shows Scrooge different homes across London, revealing how people find unity and happiness despite poverty. At the Cratchits’, Scrooge sees a family who, though financially struggling, are emotionally rich. He also witnesses the warmth and laughter at Fred’s home, highlighting the joy Scrooge shuts himself out of. Finally, the spirit reveals Ignorance and Want, two symbolic children who expose society’s failure to care for the vulnerable.

4: Stave 4 Summary

The Ghost of Christmas Yet to Come shows Scrooge a dark future caused by his lack of compassion and rejection of Christian values. People respond to a rich man’s death with indifference and greed, while thieves exploit it and a poor couple feel relieved, suggesting he inspired fear rather than kindness. In contrast, the Cratchit family mourn Tiny Tim, showing the importance of love, charity, and family. When Scrooge sees his own neglected grave, he is horrified at the idea of dying without **redemption or salvation**. He desperately begs for change, promising to embrace generosity, compassion, and the true spirit of Christmas.

5 : Stave 5 Summary

Scrooge embraces redemption and **transforms** into a man guided by Christian values. He shows generosity by sending a large turkey to the Cratchit family and making a charitable donation. He also reconnects with Fred, valuing family and kindness. The next day, he raises Bob Cratchit’s salary and treats him with compassion. By the end, Scrooge is described as “better than his word” and becomes a “second father” to Tiny Tim, proving his **salvation** and commitment to a life of generosity and goodwill.

6: Key Context (AO3)

Written in 1843 during industrialisation, when poverty and inequality were rapidly increasing; Dickens uses the novella as an allegory to criticise Victorian society’s moral failures.

Dickens’ experiences: his father’s imprisonment and his own child labour exposed him to hardship, shaping his critique of social injustice and call for empathy. The novella acts as a vehicle for moral teaching, promoting Christian values such as charity, compassion, forgiveness, and redemption.

Poor Law Amendment Act (1834): forced the poor into harsh, dehumanising workhouses, reflecting cruel societal attitudes.

Malthusian Theory: Thomas Malthus claimed poverty was inevitable due to overpopulation, often used to justify neglect of the poor.

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7: Stave 1 Key Quotations

- **Scrooge:** “Oh! But he was a tight-fisted hand at the grindstone, Scrooge!”
- “darkness was cheap and Scrooge liked it”
- “secret and self-contained and as solitary as an oyster”
- “are there no prisons?”
- “If they would rather die…they had better do it and decrease the surplus population”
- “a dismal little cell”
- Fred: “Christmas time….a good time: a kind, forgiving, charitable, pleasant time”
- **Marley’s ghost:** “I wear the chain I forged in life”
- “mankind was my business."

8: Stave 2 Key Quotations

- **The Ghost of Christmas Past:** “unearthly visitor”
- “it was a strange figure -- like a child: yet not so like a child as like an old man”
- “It wore a tunic of the purest white”
- “a bright clear jet of light”
- “Rise! And walk with me!”
- “a solitary child, neglected by his friends, is left there still”
- **Fezziwig:** “Yo ho, my boys! No more work tonight”
- **Belle:** “another idol has displaced me…a golden one”
- **after seeing Belle’s family** “Spirit!” said Scrooge in a broken voice “Remove me from this place”

9: Stave 3 Key Quotations

- **The Ghost of Christmas Present: “**jolly giant”
- “clothed in one simple deep green robe”
- “on its head it wore no other covering than a holly wreath”
- “To-night if you have aught to teach me, let me profit by it”
- “Mrs Cratchit…dressed out but poorly in a twice-turned gown”
- “They were not a handsome family; they were not well dressed; their shoes were far from being waterproof; their clothes were scanty…but they were happy, grateful, pleased with one another, and contented with the time”
- “This boy is Ignorance. This girl is Want. Beware them both”

10: Stave 4 Key Quotations

- **The Ghost of Christmas Yet to Come:**“a solemn phantom, draped and hooded, coming like a mist”
- “slowly, gravely, silently approached”
- “it was shrouded in a deep black garment”
- “It’s likely to be a very cheap funeral…I don’t mind going if lunch is provided” (isolation, loneliness, irony)
- “I fear you more than any spectre I have seen.”
- I am not the man I was. I will not be the man I must have been”
- “I will honour Christmas in my heart and try to keep it all the year. I will live in the Past, the Present, and the Future!”

11: Stave 5 Key Quotations

- “I am as light as a feather, I am as happy as an angel, I am as merry as a school-boy. I am as giddy as a drunken man”,
- “I am quite a baby”
- “A Merry Christmas to everybody! A Happy New Year to all the world “
- “I’ll raise your salary and endeavour to assist your struggling family”
- “to Tiny Tim…he was a second father”
- “Scrooge was better than his word”

12: Key Vocabulary

- **allegory:** a story that uses characters or events to represent a deeper message or lesson
- **avaricious:** extremely greedy for money or possessions
- **catalyst:** something or someone that causes a change or makes something happen
- **miser:** someone who has money but hates spending it
- **misanthropic:** disliking or avoiding other people
- **philanthropic:** wanting to help other people, especially through charity
- **redemption:** becoming a better person after making mistakes.
- **salvation:** being rescued or saved from danger, harm, or sin
- **parsimonious:** unwilling to spend money or use resources