



A Christmas Carol

Lesson 2: The Ghost of Christmas Present

Lesson Plan and Resources

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Clip Resources

Scrooge and The Ghost of Christmas Present witness the Cratchit Family Christmas.

Clip 2: *A Christmas Carol: a Ghost Story (2022)*

Written by Mark Gatiss

[▶ Watch here](#) 

Clip 2: *A Christmas Carol (2019)*

Written by Steven Knight

[▶ Watch here](#) 

Health warning: aspects of the Knight adaptation are dark but the clips chosen for these resources are suitable for a Year 9 audience. However, please be aware, if planning to watch the adaptation as a whole that it includes a scene of suggested sexual humiliation, child abuse and occasional bad language.

Skills and Objectives

GCSE Literature Assessment Objectives

AO1	Read, understand and respond to texts
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

GCSE Language Assessment Objectives

Reading AO2	Explain, comment on and analyse how writers use language and structure to achieve effects and influence readers, using relevant subject terminology to support their views
Reading AO3	Compare writers' ideas and perspectives, as well as how these are conveyed, across two or more texts
Writing AO5	Communicate clearly, effectively and imaginatively, selecting and adapting tone, style and register for different forms, purposes and audiences
Spoken Language AO8	Listen and respond appropriately to spoken language, including to questions and feedback to presentations

Scene Setting

Where we are in the novel and television adaptation script:

Moving into the Present, Scrooge meets the Ghost of Christmas Presents and travels to the Cratchits' Christmas. Here, he witnesses how his employee and his family spend their impoverished but very happy Christmas. The Dickens' extract which could be read (from **Resource 2.1**) before the lesson is from Stave 3. It runs from 'Then up rose Mrs Cratchit...' to '...especially on Tiny Tim, until the last.'

Starting Points

Pre-reading

Using **Resource 2.2**, explore the image on the first British commercially produced Christmas card (released in the same year that Dickens' novella was published – 1843) To start the discussion, ask students: 'What does it tell us about a Victorian Christmas at the time?' and 'What are the similarities and differences to our modern Christmases?'

Post-reading option

Gather ideas from the class about what 'Christmas spirit' means. What ideas have already occurred in the novella? Create a collaborative definition and examples. For example, Christmas spirit means giving presents or Christmas spirit means cooking for each other and spending time with one another.

Revision

Return to the Victorian Christmas card. Which of the traditions did Dickens contribute to this idea of Christmas?

Accompanying context clip available at 16:12–18:44 in *Charles Dickens and the Invention of Christmas*.

Main Activities

Comparing the texts

Using a table, as below, students compare the novella to the Gatiss adaptation. What elements change? What does Gatiss omit?

Dickens' novella	Gatiss' adaptation	Knight's adaptation
Appearance of Ghost		
Sprinkling of torch		
Mrs Cratchit		
The Cratchit children		
Bob Cratchit		
Tiny Tim		
The food		

Once students have collated the information in the table, ask them to write the comparisons in full sentences. Supply the connective words and phrases to help them structure their comparisons from this list:

Similarly Alternatively Equally On the other hand
Likewise Conversely In contrast By comparison

Social context

Dickens was a social reformer. In 1839, almost half of all funerals in London were of children below the age of 10. Consider: 'What is Dickens' message by including Tiny Tim and what might he represent?'. Once the extract has been read and the clips have been watched, students consider the following statements:

Dickens includes Tiny Tim:

- as a symbol of all the impoverished children at the time.
- so the audience has a character to show sympathy towards.
- to make the audience think about poverty.
- to make his cast of characters more diverse.
- as a role model for the audience.

In groups, students discuss the statements and decide with which one they most agree.

The Cratchit family's Christmas

Discuss with the class how Dickens presents the Cratchit family. Students complete the table in **Resource 2.3** with quotations from the novella and the Gatiss adaptation to show how they present each aspect of the family.

Aspects of family	Quotation from novella	Gatiss' stage adaptation
Physical closeness	'Ran into his arms'	<i>The physicality and singing in the stage adaptation demonstrates the closeness of the family but also their Christmas spirit.</i>

Language

Positivity – Many readers love the Cratchits for their positivity. Ask students to find specific words or phrases in the novella extract which represent this and to analyse them. For example:

The noun 'bustle' describes the movement of the family in preparing the meal once everyone has arrived. It suggests there is an energy in the room now they are all together because they are excited about seeing each other.

Students could look at how their specific word or phrase is brought to life in either clip?

Hyperbole – Bob describes the pudding as 'the greatest success achieved by Mrs Cratchit since their marriage'. The superlative 'greatest' creates this hyperbolic phrase as well as the comparison to their marriage.

Ask students to describe the last evening meal they ate using hyperbole, particularly with superlatives and a comparison. They could read their descriptions aloud, using a similar tone and expression to Bob's in the novella and adaptations.

Writing Activities

Diary entry

Watch both clips. In pairs, each student writes a Christmas Day diary entry by Belinda, one based on Clip 1 and the other based on Clip 2. Once completed, pairs compare entries. What are the similarities? What the differences? Why?

Report

Students imagine they are visiting the Cratchits' home. Their focus will be on poverty in the mid-1800s. Ask them to write a report documenting what they see, smell, hear and feel whilst they are in the house. It could be structured in the following way:

- The outside of the house and street
- The living and kitchen area
- The wash-house and backyard
- The bedroom(s)

Students could go on to contrast with the earlier scene of Christmas at Fred's home.

Character and performance

What do we learn about Mrs Cratchit from the novella extract and how is she changed in the adaptations?

Students play Mrs Cratchit charades - freeze framing facial expressions and body language as the different versions of the character. Other class members guess which version of the character their peers are playing.

Students could go on to write up their impressions of Mrs Cratchit in this scene. They will need to make it clear how she is presented in the novella and how in the two adaptations. Using the discourse markers from the 'Comparing the texts' activity will help make this distinction.



Extensions

Who's invited? – In the two adaptations, the family line-up changes from the novella, e.g. only the youngest Cratchit children feature in the Knight scene. Students discuss why such choices have been made? For example, would Peter and Martha have questioned why their parents quarrel?

The ideal family – Are the Cratchits too perfect? Some readers think the Cratchit scenes are overly sentimental and idealised. Once students have read this scene, ask them to decide what they think. Take a vote around the class. You could return to this question once you have read whole novella and see if the views of the class have changed.

Setting – How does the Cratchits' house compare to Scrooge's in Stave 1? Consider the use of contrasting description, punctuation and narrative voice in the Stave 1. How is this shown in the adaptations of the Cratchits' home through lightning and other SFX? Student can use the Venn diagram in **Resource 2.5** to record their ideas. Are there any ideas in the intersection?

Tiny Tims – In small groups, students develop their impressions of Tiny Tim from the novella to consider what a casting director would be looking for in the actor playing Tiny Tim. For example, his personality, his charisma, humour, empathetic qualities, how to represent his disability. Having watched the clips, student groups are assigned different adaptations. Each small group discusses whether the Tiny Tim in their adaptation was what they expected? Why or why not? Groups then share ideas with the class about the interpretations of this character.

Staging Christmas dinner – Watch Clip 1. As this is a theatre production, the director has used choreography and props to represent the sharing of the meal. Using the table in **Resource 2.4**, students choose 4-5 adjectives to describe this scene in Stave 3. Then they decide how the adaptation interprets these adjectives and finally they evaluate how successful these stage craft interpretations are. The most illuminating examples could be shared as a class.

Glossary

From the novella

gallantly – in a brave or heroic manner

zeal – dedication or enthusiasm for something

declension – a condition of someone in decline

ubiquitous – existing or being everywhere at the same time

bedight – being dressed or decorated

penitence – sorrow for one's fault

A Christmas Carol

Resources for Lesson 2

2.1 Stave 3: Scrooge and Ghost of Christmas Present Watch the Cratchits' Christmas

Read Dickens' Cratchit family Christmas scene from the novella.

Then up rose Mrs. Cratchit, Cratchit's wife, dressed out but poorly in a twice-turned gown, but brave in ribbons, which are cheap and make a goodly show for sixpence; and she laid the cloth, assisted by Belinda Cratchit, second of her daughters, also brave in ribbons; while Master Peter Cratchit plunged a fork into the saucepan of potatoes, and getting the corners of his monstrous shirt collar (Bob's private property, conferred upon his son and heir in honour of the day) into his mouth, rejoiced to find himself so gallantly attired, and yearned to show his linen in the fashionable Parks. And now two smaller Cratchits, boy and girl, came tearing in, screaming that outside the baker's they had smelt the goose, and known it for their own; and basking in luxurious thoughts of sage and onion, these young Cratchits danced about the table, and exalted Master Peter Cratchit to the skies, while he (not proud, although his collars nearly choked him) blew the fire, until the slow potatoes bubbling up, knocked loudly at the saucepan-lid to be let out and peeled.

"What has ever got your precious father then?" said Mrs. Cratchit. "And your brother, Tiny Tim! And Martha warn't as late last Christmas Day by half-an-hour?"

"Here's Martha, mother!" said a girl, appearing as she spoke.

"Here's Martha, mother!" cried the two young Cratchits. "Hurrah! There's such a goose, Martha!"

"Why, bless your heart alive, my dear, how late you are!" said Mrs. Cratchit, kissing her a dozen times, and taking off her shawl and bonnet for her with officious zeal.

"We'd a deal of work to finish up last night," replied the girl, "and had to clear away this morning, mother!"

"Well! Never mind so long as you are come," said Mrs. Cratchit. "Sit ye down before the fire, my dear, and have a warm, Lord bless ye!"

"No, no! There's father coming," cried the two young Cratchits, who were everywhere at once. "Hide, Martha, hide!"

So Martha hid herself, and in came little Bob, the father, with at least three feet of comforter exclusive of the fringe, hanging down before him; and his threadbare clothes darned up and brushed, to look seasonable; and Tiny Tim upon his shoulder. Alas for Tiny Tim, he bore a little crutch, and had his limbs supported by an iron frame!

“Why, where’s our Martha?” cried Bob Cratchit, looking round.

“Not coming,” said Mrs. Cratchit.

“Not coming!” said Bob, with a sudden declension in his high spirits; for he had been Tim’s blood horse all the way from church, and had come home rampant. “Not coming upon Christmas Day!”

Martha didn’t like to see him disappointed, if it were only in joke; so she came out prematurely from behind the closet door, and ran into his arms, while the two young Cratchits hustled Tiny Tim, and bore him off into the wash-house, that he might hear the pudding singing in the copper.

“And how did little Tim behave?” asked Mrs. Cratchit, when she had rallied Bob on his credulity, and Bob had hugged his daughter to his heart’s content.

“As good as gold,” said Bob, “and better. Somehow he gets thoughtful, sitting by himself so much, and thinks the strangest things you ever heard. He told me, coming home, that he hoped the people saw him in the church, because he was a cripple, and it might be pleasant to them to remember upon Christmas Day, who made lame beggars walk, and blind men see.”

Bob’s voice was tremulous when he told them this, and trembled more when he said that Tiny Tim was growing strong and hearty.

His active little crutch was heard upon the floor, and back came Tiny Tim before another word was spoken, escorted by his brother and sister to his stool before the fire; and while Bob, turning up his cuffs—as if, poor fellow, they were capable of being made more shabby—compounded some hot mixture in a jug with gin and lemons, and stirred it round and round and put it on the hob to simmer; Master Peter, and the two ubiquitous young Cratchits went to fetch the goose, with which they soon returned in high procession.

Such a bustle ensued that you might have thought a goose the rarest of all birds; a feathered phenomenon, to which a black swan was a matter of course—and in truth it was something very like it in that house. Mrs. Cratchit made the gravy (ready beforehand in a little saucepan) hissing hot; Master Peter mashed the potatoes with incredible vigour; Miss Belinda sweetened up the apple-sauce; Martha dusted the hot plates; Bob took Tiny Tim beside him in a tiny corner at the table; the two young Cratchits set chairs for everybody, not forgetting themselves, and mounting guard upon their posts, crammed spoons into their mouths, lest they should shriek for goose before their turn came to be helped. At last the dishes were set on, and grace was said. It was succeeded by a breathless pause, as Mrs. Cratchit, looking slowly all along the carving-knife, prepared to plunge it in the breast; but when she did, and when the long expected gush of stuffing issued forth, one murmur of delight arose all round the board, and even Tiny Tim, excited by the two young Cratchits, beat on the table with the handle

of his knife, and feebly cried Hurrah!

There never was such a goose. Bob said he didn't believe there ever was such a goose cooked. Its tenderness and flavour, size and cheapness, were the themes of universal admiration. Eked out by apple-sauce and mashed potatoes, it was a sufficient dinner for the whole family; indeed, as Mrs. Cratchit said with great delight (surveying one small atom of a bone upon the dish), they hadn't ate it all at last! Yet every one had had enough, and the youngest Cratchits in particular, were steeped in sage and onion to the eyebrows! But now, the plates being changed by Miss Belinda, Mrs. Cratchit left the room alone—too nervous to bear witnesses—to take the pudding up and bring it in.

Suppose it should not be done enough! Suppose it should break in turning out! Suppose somebody should have got over the wall of the back-yard, and stolen it, while they were merry with the goose—a supposition at which the two young Cratchits became livid! All sorts of horrors were supposed.

Hallo! A great deal of steam! The pudding was out of the copper. A smell like a washing-day! That was the cloth. A smell like an eating-house and a pastry cook's next door to each other, with a laundress's next door to that! That was the pudding! In half a minute Mrs. Cratchit entered—flushed, but smiling proudly—with the pudding, like a speckled cannon-ball, so hard and firm, blazing in half of half-a-quartern of ignited brandy, and bedight with Christmas holly stuck into the top.

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 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 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 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 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.

“Spirit,” said Scrooge, with an interest he had never felt before, “tell me if Tiny Tim will live.”

“I see a vacant seat,” replied the Ghost, “in the poor chimney-corner, and a crutch without an owner, carefully preserved. If these shadows remain unaltered by the Future, the child will die.”

“No, no,” said Scrooge. “Oh, no, kind Spirit! say he will be spared.”

“If these shadows remain unaltered by the Future, none other of my race,” returned the Ghost, “will find him here. What then? If he be like to die, he had better do it, and decrease the surplus population.”

Scrooge hung his head to hear his own words quoted by the Spirit, and was overcome with penitence and grief.

“Man,” said the Ghost, “if man you be in heart, not adamant, forbear that wicked cant until you have discovered What the surplus is, and Where it is. Will you decide what men shall live, what men shall die? It may be, that in the sight of Heaven, you are more worthless and less fit to live than millions like this poor man’s child. Oh God! to hear the Insect on the leaf pronouncing on the too much life among his hungry brothers in the dust!”

Scrooge bent before the Ghost’s rebuke, and trembling cast his eyes upon the ground. But he raised them speedily, on hearing his own name.

“Mr. Scrooge!” said Bob; “I’ll give you Mr. Scrooge, the Founder of the Feast!”

“The Founder of the Feast indeed!” cried Mrs. Cratchit, reddening. “I wish I had him here. I’d give him a piece of my mind to feast upon, and I hope he’d have a good appetite for it.”

“My dear,” said Bob, “the children! Christmas Day.”

“It should be Christmas Day, I am sure,” said she, “on which one drinks the health of such an odious, stingy, hard, unfeeling man as Mr. Scrooge. You know he is, Robert! Nobody knows it better than you do, poor fellow!”

“My dear,” was Bob’s mild answer, “Christmas Day.”

“I’ll drink his health for your sake and the Day’s,” said Mrs. Cratchit, “not for his. Long life to him! A merry Christmas and a happy new year! He’ll be very merry and very happy, I have no doubt!”

The children drank the toast after her. It was the first of their proceedings which had no heartiness. Tiny Tim drank it last of all, but he didn’t care twopence for it. Scrooge was the Ogre of the family. The mention of his name cast a dark shadow on the party, which was not dispelled for full five minutes.

After it had passed away, they were ten times merrier than before, from the mere relief of Scrooge the Baleful being done with. Bob Cratchit told them how he had a situation in his eye for Master Peter, which would bring in, if obtained, full five-and-sixpence weekly. The two young Cratchits laughed tremendously at the idea of Peter’s being a man of business; and Peter himself looked thoughtfully at the fire from between his collars, as if he were deliberating what particular investments he should favour when he came into the receipt of that

bewildering income. Martha, who was a poor apprentice at a milliner's, then told them what kind of work she had to do, and how many hours she worked at a stretch, and how she meant to lie abed to-morrow morning for a good long rest; to-morrow being a holiday she passed at home. Also how she had seen a countess and a lord some days before, and how the lord "was much about as tall as Peter;" at which Peter pulled up his collars so high that you couldn't have seen his head if you had been there. All this time the chestnuts and the jug went round and round; and by-and-bye they had a song, about a lost child travelling in the snow, from Tiny Tim, who had a plaintive little voice, and sang it very well indeed.

There was nothing of high mark in this. They were not a handsome family; they were not well dressed; their shoes were far from being water-proof; their clothes were scanty; and Peter might have known, and very likely did, the inside of a pawnbroker's. But, they were happy, grateful, pleased with one another, and contented with the time; and when they faded, and looked happier yet in the bright sprinklings of the Spirit's torch at parting, Scrooge had his eye upon them, and especially on Tiny Tim, until the last.



2.2 The First Victorian Christmas Card (1843)

Collate your ideas around the Christmas card image.



2.3 The Cratchits at Christmas

Using this table, evaluate how key aspects of the scene from Stave 3 are interpreted in the Gatiss adaptation of the Cratchit's Christmas dinner.

Aspects of family	Quotation from novella	Gatiss stage adaptation
Physical closeness	<i>'Ran into his arms'</i>	<i>The physicality and singing in the stage adaptation demonstrates the closeness of the family but also their Christmas spirit.</i>
Supportive nature	<i>'incredible vigour'</i>	
Honesty		
Enjoyment		<i>The family are all taking part in organising the table and food, even banging their cutlery on the table.</i>

2.4 Staging Christmas Dinner

Using this table, evaluate how key aspects of the scene from Stave 3 are interpreted in the Gatiss adaptation of the Cratchit's Christmas dinner.

How would you describe the dinner from the novella?	How does the adaptation interpret these descriptions?	Do these interpretations match your chosen adjectives?
<i>Fast-paced</i>	<i>They are spinning round the table holding plates which makes it look fast</i>	<i>The interpretation matches well as the dance around the tables makes the scene hectic.</i>

2.5 Setting: Contrasting Homes

Add your ideas to the diagram to show how the description of Scrooge's house in Stave 1 and the sound and lighting in the stage adaptation of the Cratchits' home compare and contrast.

