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Introduction It is hard to believe that there is anyone on the planet who is not familiar with the story of A Christmas Carol. Written in a six-week period in October and November of 1843, the novel was the first of five short Christmas books published by Charles Dickens. Obviously, it was the most successful novel in the series. In fact, he was so certain that people would like his story that he refused to sell the rights to his publisher and instead paid to publish it himself. His instincts proved correct, and soon after its publication all of the copies were sold. In his later years, Dickens would read an abridged version of A Christmas Carol at public readings for which he charged a fee. Often, that fee went to the several charitable organizations that he was involved with throughout his lifetime. The book itself was instrumental in raising people's awareness of poverty. Since its publication, the story has been told many times in all imaginable forms. Despite the thousands of times that A Christmas Carol has been adapted to stage, radio, movies, and television, the novel remains the most popular and poignant telling of the tale.

Author Biography Dickens was born in Portsmouth, England on February 7, 1812. His family moved to London before he was two, but his father had trouble making enough money to feed his large family. In 1824 Dickens' father was sent to debtor's prison, along with most of his family. Charles, who was twelve years of age, did not have to go to prison because he was already working at Warren's Blacking Factory. In later life he remembered the factory bitterly and would only talk about it with a few close friends. The family was released from debtor's prison a few months later, thanks to an inheritance that Dickens' father, John, received when his

mother died. His mother wanted Charles to continue on at the factory, but his father made provisions for him to attend school. Dickens attended school until he was fifteen, and then worked as a clerk in a lawyer's office, studying Latin at night. Dickens became a freelance reporter at Doctors' Commons Courts in 1829. In 1834 he started publishing sketches of London life using the pseudonym "Boz." In 1836 these short pieces were collected in a book called *Sketches by Boz*. Soon after the publication of these sketches, William Hall, of the publishing firm Chapman and Hall, approached him to write humorous text to accompany a series of plates by the illustrator Robert Seymour. Immediately, Dickens conceived of Mr. Pickwick. When Seymour committed suicide, Dickens went on to turn his ideas into *The Pickwick Papers*. That was the start of his career as a novelist. By 1843 he had completed four books and was in the middle of the next, *Martin Chuzzlewit*, when he took time out in October and November to write *A Christmas Carol*. He continued to write novels, most of them being published in serial form before being bound as novels. The list of Dickens' books are familiar to any casual reader: *David Copperfield*, *A Tale of Two Cities*, *Oliver Twist*, and *Great Expectations*, to name just a few. Dickens also did charitable work, managed a theater company, and edited magazines. When he died in 1870, he was buried Poet's Corner in Westminster Abbey, an honor reserved for England's most notable literary figures.

Plot Summary Stave I: Marley's Ghost

As *A Christmas Carol* opens, readers are introduced to Ebenezer Scrooge, the epitome of a tight-fisted miser: he is too cheap to heat his office, too cheap to give his clerk Christmas Day off without demanding he come in early the next day, and too cheap to care about the suffering of the poor people all

around him. The tale begins on Christmas Eve, and Scrooge is visited by his nephew Fred, a good-natured man who tries to celebrate the holiday with his uncle, but is rebuked: " If I could work my will," said Scrooge, indignantly, " every idiot who goes about with 'Merry Christmas' on his lips, should be boiled with his own pudding, and buried with a stake of holly through his heart. He should!" Yet Fred is not discouraged by his uncle's crankiness and wishes him well. As he leaves, two men from a charitable organization enter and ask Scrooge for a donation to help the poor. He suggests that the poor should go to prisons and workhouses, and the man points out that many would rather die than live under those wretched conditions. " If they would rather die," said Scrooge, " they had better do it, and decrease the surplus population." When he goes home that evening, Scrooge sees the face of his long-dead business partner, Jacob Marley, in the knocker on his front door. Going upstairs to his flat, he thinks he sees a hearse riding up the stairs. Dozing in a chair by a dim fire, he hears chains in the cellar coining nearer, until Mar-ley's ghost enters the room. Marley's ghost explains that he is required in death to wander the earth, walking among humanity as he never did in life. The chain around him is " the chain I forged in life." He has come to warn Scrooge that he must change his ways, and he foretells that three spirits will come to Scrooge over the next three nights. When he leaves through the window, Scrooge sees hundreds of ghosts in chains wandering out in the street below his window.

Stave II: The First of the Three Spirits

The next morning, Scrooge is visited by the Ghost of Christmas Past. The ghost walks to the window and orders Scrooge to accompany him, but Scrooge asserts that he will fall. " Bear but a touch of my hand there" said the Spirit,

laying it upon his heart, " and you shall be upheld in more than this."

Scrooge finds himself at the school that he attended as a boy, watching all of the other children leaving for Christmas. He is shocked to see a young Scrooge, a lonely but imaginative boy that daydreams about characters out of Ali Baba and Robinson Crusoe. Suddenly it is the same scene a few years later, when Scrooge's little sister, Fan, excitedly tells him that their father said he can come home this year. The next stop is the shop where Scrooge was an apprentice as a young man. It was run by Fezzi-wig, a ruddy, jovial man who tells his clerks to put away their work to prepare for the holiday festivities. All of the business equipment is put away and food and musicians and guests come in, and Fezzi-wig and his wife lead the dancing. Scrooge starts to realize the benefit of kindness, telling the 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 In the next scene, a woman named Belle breaks off her engagement to young Ebenezer Scrooge. He has changed, she explains: he has become obsessed with money and fearful of poverty. Although heartbroken, he eventually he agrees. Scrooge is then taken to Belle's house several years later, where she is surrounded by a happy, laughing family. Her husband returns home and says that he heard that Marley was dying, and that Scrooge would then be left all alone in the world Distraught, Scrooge begs the Spirit to take him home. Stave III: The Second of the Three Spirits Back in his room, Scrooge is awakened by the Ghost of Christmas Present, a jolly giant carrying a torch.

His room is decorated with wreaths and holly and delicious-smelling foods. This spirit takes Scrooge through London, where shopkeepers are joyfully setting out baskets of food and happy people are doing last minute shopping. As people pass with their dinners, the Spirit sprinkles some kind of seasoning on it with his torch, and they become even happier. He takes Scrooge to the home of his clerk, Bob Cratchit. Mrs. Cratchit and some of the children are preparing the Christmas dinner Bob Cratchit comes in from church carrying their son, Tiny Tim, who has a crutch. There is little to eat, but it is prepared well, and the family is glad for what they have. Bob Cratchit raises a toast to Scrooge, but Mrs. Cratchit and the children cannot find it within herself to say anything nice about him: 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. Before leaving the Cratchit house, Scrooge asks the spirit if Tiny Tim will live. He is told that if things do not change, the young boy will die. Next, they visit an impoverished mining camp. There, they see cheerful people celebrating Christmas despite heart-wrenching poverty. They go to a ship out at sea to find the ship's crew also making the best of the holiday. They observe a party at the house of Scrooge's nephew and see Fred's family playing games, eating, and laughing. When Scrooge's name is brought up, Fred expresses his pity for him. Yet most of his guests think of Scrooge as a nasty, foolish old man. Before leaving, the Ghost of Christmas Present opens his gigantic robe to show Scrooge two pathetic-looking young children: Ignorance and Want. Scrooge asks if there isn't someone who could take care of them, and the spirit responds: " Are there no workhouses?" said the Spirit, turning on him

for the last time with his own words. " Are there no workhouses?" Stave IV: The Last of the Spirits Scrooge is visited by the Ghost of Christmas yet to Come, which is shrouded in black and does not speak. This mysterious apparition takes him out into the town. They pass a group of businessmen standing on a street corner, talking about a death and laughing about how cheap the funeral will be. Another group of people on the street mentions a death in passing and then go on to talk about the weather. In the cheap, dingy part of town they observe a pawnbroker buying things that two women have stolen from the room where a dead man was laid out. They have spoons and clothes and the curtains from his bed, complete with rings, and even the shirt that had been left on the body. Scrooge recognizes the things as his. When Scrooge asks to see anyone in town who felt emotions over this man's death, the Spirit takes him to a couple who owe the dead man money. They are relieved to hear of the death, hoping that their debt will pass to someone more understanding. When he begs to find someone grieving, he is taken to the Cratchit house, where the family is devastated by the loss of Tiny Tim. With a sinking feeling, Scrooge demands to know who the dead man is. The Spirit takes him to a churchyard and shows him a grave with his own name on it. Scrooge falls to his knees and begs for the chance to change, and when he grabs the Spirit's hand his cloak collapses into a pile of bed linen. Stave V: The End of It Elated that he is alive and has a second chance at life, Scrooge goes to the window and calls down to a boy in the street and asks what day it is. When he finds out that it is Christmas, he tells the boy to go to the poultry shop and have them bring the big prize-winning turkey, which he sends anonymously to the Cratchit house. He then dresses

in his best clothes and goes out. In the street he meets the man from the charitable organization that he chased from his office the day before. He gives him money and promises more. Then he visits Fred's house and recognizes all of the party guests who were there when he saw it with the Ghost of Christmas Present. The next morning, Bob Cratchit arrives for work eighteen minutes late; for a moment, Scrooge acts like his old self, but then he breaks into a smile and tells Cratchit that they will sit down with a bowl of warm punch that afternoon and talk about raising his salary. Eventually, Scrooge becomes like a second father to Tiny Tim, taking care of his medical bills so that he regains his health. In future years he is aware that people find his change of personality strange, but he realizes how fortunate he is to have a second chance.

Chapter 1 Summary Dickens begins his story by assuring his readers that Jacob Marley is, indeed, dead. He explains that without this assurance, the true miracle of the tale he is about to relate would not be fully understood. From there, he goes on to introduce Marley's former business partner Ebenezer Scrooge, a cold, bitter, miser; in the words of Dickens' narrator, Scrooge is a "squeezing, wrenching, grasping, scraping, clutching, covetous old sinner." It is quickly apparent that Scrooge has shown this miserly persona to the world for years, and he likes it that way. As the story begins, Scrooge is being assaulted by the Christmas season. First, to try to bring him some Christmas cheer is his nephew, whose invitation to Christmas dinner is met with a series of hearty "Bah Humbugs!" Next are two gentlemen soliciting charity for the poor-- again, a sound rejection. The last to experience Scrooge's overwhelming lack of holiday spirit is his long-suffering clerk, who must first plead his case for the favor of taking

Christmas as a day off of work and is then warned to be in even earlier on the day following Christmas. Upon returning home, Scrooge begins to experience several mysterious occurrences, such as seeing the long dead Marley's face in his doorknocker and bells that seem to ring themselves. The clanking of chains, however, announces the appearance of Jacob Marley's ghost. Marley's ghost informs Scrooge that his spirit has been doomed to walk the earth after death as punishment for his ways in life, and that it is his hope to save Scrooge from a similar afterlife. He warns Scrooge that three spirits will visit him, and that they alone hold the key for him to escape his torturous fate.

Chapter 1 Analysis When reading Dickens' classic tale, *A Christmas Carol*, it is easy to dismiss it as a pleasant little story of holiday cheer. Closer inspection, however, reveals Dickens' philosophies on the human condition; namely, that we as humans are all inter-connected and that our ultimate happiness is found in experiencing and sharing the pleasures of the soul. In this first chapter, Dickens describes in great detail the world that is our starting point. First, by establishing that Marley is dead, and that Marley was the same type of greedy old man as Scrooge, Dickens shows that all that will happen in the story is truly miraculous. In addition, he spares nothing in his descriptions of Scrooge; it is said of him: " External heat and cold had little influence on Scrooge. No warmth could warm, no wintry weather chill him. No wind that blew was bitterer than he; no falling snow was more intent upon its purpose, no pelting rain less open to entreaty. Foul weather didn't know where to have him. The heaviest rain, and snow, and hail, and sleet, could boast of the advantage over him in only one respect. They often came down handsomely, and Scrooge never did." This reputation,

this miserly, bitter way of Scrooge's, has been carefully cultivated through the years. As the narrator says, " But what did Scrooge care! It was the very thing he liked." We are told that he has spent his life shirking any warmth of humanity, and that, to him, those who do not follow the same path are worthy of derision. Scrooge is seen interacting with several people, each trying in some way to draw him in to the Christmas spirit and, as such, humanity as a whole. The first, his nephew Fred, attempts simply to force human company upon his uncle; he invites him to Christmas dinner. Scrooge does not understand his nephew's way of thinking — what is the point of such an invitation when it will yield no profit for either of them? Fred counters that it is the very generosity of spirit and joyful feelings of people during the holiday season that is its own reward, telling Scrooge, " And therefore, uncle, though it has never put a scrap of gold or silver in my pocket, I believe that it has done me good, and will do me good; and I say, God bless it!" Though he finishes by plainly asking why they can't be friends, Fred is dismissed by Scrooge. Scrooge's encounter with two men collecting for the poor illuminates another facet of his views on mankind. The poor are the responsibility of either prisons and workhouses, or of themselves, and he should be left out of the equation entirely. He tells the men that he doesn't make merry himself at Christmas and that he can't afford to make idle people merry. If any statement sums up Scrooge's outlook, it is this last pronouncement. It is only much later that night, in the throes of his visit from Marley's ghost, that Scrooge first begins to let his lack of connection, and its possible results, sink in. Chapter 2 Summary Having fallen asleep after his ghostly visit with Marley, Scrooge wakes to the sound of the clock chiming

twelve. He is perplexed — how could it be only twelve when he went to bed sometime after two? Then he recollects that Marley's ghost told him his first spirit would visit him when the clock struck one. He vows to stay awake until that time passes to disprove the silly notion of the ghost, and yet, as the clock chimes once, his bed curtains are parted. Scrooge's first spirit visitor identifies itself as the Ghost of Christmas Past. After much discussion, the Ghost takes Scrooge back in time to a holiday season long forgotten. Here, Scrooge sees himself as a very young boy, left alone at school during Christmas when all of his friends are joyfully going home to their families. Scrooge's only companions are those he reads about in books, and his imagination is so strong that even as the present day Scrooge watches from the shadows, the young Scrooge conjures characters such as Ali Baba and Robinson Crusoe to keep him company, at least in fantasy. Suddenly years pass and Scrooge sees himself again, a little older, in the exact same setting. This time, however, his sister Fan, whom he obviously adores, quickly joins him. She tells him that he is to come home forever, not just for Christmas, and that their father has softened and become much kinder. The two children leave the school and are carried home by a carriage. It is this sister, Fan, who is the mother of Scrooge's aforementioned nephew. With another sudden leap in time, Scrooge and the spirit find themselves standing outside of a warehouse. Scrooge recognizes it immediately as the place in which he was under the apprenticeship of a Mr. Fezziwig. Fezziwig is shown to be a kind and generous benefactor, hosting a holiday dance with his family and making sure that everyone has a joyous time. Seeing such a display of generosity even makes Scrooge wish, for a moment, to see his clerk,

perhaps to show a bit of the spirit he himself had learned from Fezziwig and seemingly forgotten. After this scene of holiday festivities, Scrooge is moved forward again in time. This time, he is said to be in the prime of life; however, it is also noted that there is a detection of greed and restlessness about him. He is with a girl, and it becomes evident that there was, at one time, a romantic pact between them. She is seen releasing him from this obligation, because while she still holds the same values as when they came together, his priorities have changed to reflect his growing greediness for gain. As the spirit quickly takes him from this scene to another, Scrooge sees the happy home of this young girl, now a woman surrounded by loving children and a husband. It is this husband's mention that he had seen an old friend of hers, Mr. Scrooge, and their discussion of him that causes Scrooge to plead to be removed. There is a struggle with the spirit, and Scrooge is finally home, exhausted from his first of three visitors.

Chapter 2 Analysis In Chapter 2, the introduction to the first of Scrooge's three ghostly visitors is there to show Scrooge visions of Christmas' past. Interestingly, the physical manifestation of the spirit is representative of the past. With this ghost, Dickens continues to explore his theme of connectivity — the actions of others affect not only our lives, but also our spirits, and vice versa. The young Scrooge, deserted at school, is given a brick by his family to help build the wall of abandonment that will forge his disconnect in later years; his summoning home by Fan is an example of the way others, in this case, his family, are able to plant seeds that will grow into the changes he will undergo. More of these seeds are planted by Scrooge's mentor Fezziwig, whose Christmas party and subsequent kindnesses are all done simply for

the sake of good, not for any profit or gain. Even Scrooge defends this way of thinking to the spirit. Scrooge's visit to his former love, and his look at the life she established after him, provides another illustration of Dickens' theme. When she is releasing him from his commitment, she already recognizes that he has started to change, becoming greedy and interested only in profit. By seeing her later family life, and how it contrasts with the life Scrooge had formerly deemed important, he and we as readers, are made to understand how each choice we take affects both others and ourselves.

Chapter 3 Summary After his encounter with the Ghost of Christmas Past, Scrooge is once again asleep. As Chapter 3 opens, Scrooge wakes himself up with a particularly loud snore. He's ready this time for a ghostly visitor, even opening his bed curtains so as to be prepared for whatever appears. His preparations, however, are all for nothing, because when the clock strikes one, no apparition appears. Instead, Scrooge finds himself bathed in a mysterious light. Once recovered from NOT seeing a spirit, Scrooge determines that the source of the strange light seems to reside in the room connected to his. He discovers in this adjoining room that the room itself has been transformed onto a holiday wonderland, and that it is indeed occupied by the second spirit, who identifies himself as the Ghost of Christmas Present. Soon, the two traveling companions are out amongst the holiday revelers, taking in all the sights and smells of the season. Their first stop is at the home of Bob Cratchit, Scrooge's clerk. The Cratchit home is poor but full of love, and every family member celebrates Christmas with excitement. Scrooge is particularly interested in the fate of Cratchit's youngest son, Tiny Tim. Tim walks with a crutch and, though he seems weakened from illness,

his heart and spirit seem strong. The ghost tells Scrooge that little Tim will not live. Hearing this, Scrooge is ashamed by his own earlier words to the gentlemen seeking charity for the Poor. Then, even more shame is heaped upon him as Bob Cratchit, despite Scrooge's ill treatment of him, and despite his own family's objections, offers up a Christmas toast in his name. Finally, ghost and man leave Cratchit's home and are once again taking in the sights of Christmas in the city streets. Quickly, however, they are whisked away to several non-traditional holiday celebrations. In the first, a large family of miners seems to be having a very merry Christmas together in their small but cheery hut, despite their bleak and desolate setting outside. Next, Scrooge is carried out to sea to witness the celebration between two gruff old lighthouse attendants, not much more than some grog and a song, but a celebration, nonetheless. Lastly, Scrooge is taken to a ship out on the sea, where crewmembers are humming Christmas tunes and recalling holiday memories despite being miles out to sea and away from their families. Upon leaving the ship, Scrooge is surprised to arrive at the home of his nephew. Even more surprising is that he himself is the topic of discussion. Amidst the protests of the other guests at his party, Scrooge's nephew Fred genuinely wishes Scrooge could have a merry Christmas. Fred, a very happy and generous man, believes that if he continues to try and draw his uncle into the spirit of the season, year after year, Scrooge will eventually begin to thaw. By disregarding good cheer, Fred contends, Scrooge injures none but himself. The party-goers go on to sing, dance, and play games; Scrooge, so enthralled by the fun, even begins to play along, though he is, of course, still invisible to the others. He has such a grand time, in fact, that he begs the

spirit to let him stay longer. Unfortunately, the Ghost cannot comply, and he and Scrooge depart from the scene as Fred is offering up a toast to his uncle. Soon they are once again visiting Christmas celebrations around the world, and even the most poor and miserable are made happy again by the silent presence of the spirit. At this time, Scrooge begins to notice that the spirit seems to be aging; he informs Scrooge that his life on earth is only for one night. Scrooge then notices two sickly, horrible children grasping at the Ghost from beneath his robe. When Scrooge inquires if these children belong to the Ghost, the following exchange takes place: " 'They are Man's," said the spirit, looking down upon them. " And they cling to me, appealing from their fathers. This boy is Ignorance. This girl is Want. Beware them both, and all of their degree, but most of all beware this boy, for on his brow I see that written which is Doom, unless the writing be erased. Deny it!" cried the spirit, stretching out its hand towards the city. " Slander those who tell it ye! Admit it for your factious purposes, and make it worse! And bide the end!" " Have they no refuge or resource?" cried Scrooge. " Are there no prisons?" said the spirit, turning on him for the last time with his own words. " Are there no workhouses?" As his own words are once again used against him, Scrooge hears the clock strike twelve, and he sees the third spirit, an ominous phantom-like hooded figure, making its way towards him. Chapter 3 Analysis The Ghost of Christmas Present, again, is a physical manifestation of the time it personifies; he is more real than his counterparts, and he interacts with the physical world, and he ages. This spirit is more of a participant in Scrooge's vision, as opposed to the former and last ghosts. Visiting the Cratchit home, his nephew's home, and the various desolate

locations to which he is carried that night, Scrooge observes time after time that the celebratory conditions one sees with one's eyes are of no importance; it is the celebration you hold in your heart, and share with the world, that is your legacy. There is no reason for it, no profit to be made, yet both Bob and Fred toast to Scrooge; here, again, Scrooge is shown that we are all parts of a whole. Chapter 4 Summary Unlike the two Ghosts that precede it, the Ghost of Christmas Yet to Come does not speak; in fact, it is Scrooge himself who says aloud who this spirit is. The spirit, for its part, does nothing but point one outstretched hand to lead the way, and yet, for some reason, this Ghost fills Scrooge with more fear and foreboding than any of the past spirits he has seen. The first stop for Scrooge and this third spirit is the city street. Here, they listen in on the conversation of a group of gentlemen who seem to be discussing the death of someone that they did not care for. As he moves on from this group, Scrooge overhears a group of wealthy businessmen whom he had always tried to make a favorable impression on mention, then quickly dismiss, the passing of someone they call " Old Scratch." Scrooge doesn't understand the importance of these conversations, but trusts they will prove to be important. Their next stop is at a seedy pawnshop in the bad part of town. Here, a charwoman, laundress and undertaker arrive, intent on pawning off the earthly possessions of their deceased employer. The laundress has even gone so far as to take the dead man's burial clothing, sheets and bed curtains; sadly, he had no one to care. Scrooge believes he is seeing these things to warn against what could befall him, should he not change his ways. Upon seeing the dead man, lying covered by a sheet in a bed, he cannot remove the cover and see his face.

When he asks the Ghost to show him at least one person who is feeling some emotion at the death of this man, the spirit takes him to the house of a family who are very happy at the news, as it means they will not be forced to leave their home by their creditor, the dead man. Scrooge pleads with the spirit for something more, " Let me see some tenderness connected with a death." With this request, Scrooge is conducted to the Cratchit household. The family, formerly boisterous and excited with Christmas cheer, now sit quietly. Bob himself soon joins them, and it becomes clear what has happened — Tiny Tim has died. All are solemn, and Bob is, at one point, overcome with grief. He goes on, however, to relate to the others that he had spoken to Scrooge's nephew Fred, and that he had been extremely kind and generous. The family vows to each other that the tragedy of Tiny Tim's passing will serve to remind them that they must always stay close to each other, so that even in their sorrow, there is hope. Scrooge, unable to bear much more, demands to know whom the man is that he had seen and heard spoken of so callously earlier. He then decides that he would like to see himself on this day in the future, to see what changes had occurred. He is puzzled when they pass by the courts, where he thought he should be at that time of day, and enter the cemetery. Reality finally begins to sink in, and he asks the spirit: if these are the shadows of the things " that Will be, or are they shadows of things that May be, only?" The silent figure still offers nothing but its outstretched finger, which points to a grave. The headstone, of course, reads Ebenezer Scrooge. Scrooge begins to plead that the ghostly visions have altered his life. With this, Scrooge attempts to grab the spirit and, failing this, sends up one last prayer to reverse his fate. He awakens to

find himself praying next to a bedpost. Chapter 4 Analysis The third and final Ghost is the perfect personification of the future: ominous, mysterious and silent. It can offer no commentary, only direct Scrooge on the path to which his behavior has led him. Also, in the same way that no one can know his future, Scrooge could not know this figure representing his future by seeing its face or speaking with it. Each of the scenes Scrooge overhears surrounding his passing all reinforce one theme; his life, and his behavior, have bore no good fruit. No one is saddened by his death; in fact, all who show any feeling at all show gladness at how they might profit. His death, in some ways, supports his assertions that all are looking for profit; however, he sees that in some cases, these reactions are his own doing. Others highlight that he does not want to be the kind of person who would profit from such things. On the other end of the spectrum, Scrooge sees how the death of one small boy whose spirit was good and kind affects many in a way that, though tragic, is also positive. The Cratchits take Tiny Tim's death, in all its sadness, and vow that it will bring them closer. They are also heartened by the generosity of Fred, a virtual stranger to them with nothing to gain who reaches out to them. Again, Scrooge sees the contrast that exists between the ripple effects of one's own behavior, but the finality of his lonely death prompts him to embrace the goodness in life. Chapter 5 Summary In this last chapter, Scrooge wholeheartedly joins the land of the living. He promises to "live in the Past, the Present, and the Future!" and begins his day by shocking a young boy outside his window with a request for him to take Scrooge's money and buy the prize turkey. He has this turkey sent anonymously to the Cratchits. Then, meeting one of the men he had refused a donation to on the

previous day, he makes a generous donation for both the present and the past. Finally, he arrives at the home of Fred and enjoys dinner with his nephew's family and friends. Throughout his day, Scrooge marvels at the joy he experiences by interacting with the world around him. The next day, he can scarcely wait for Bob Cratchit to arrive at work late. Pretending to be angry, Scrooge quickly tells him he is getting a raise, and that from that day on, he will help Bob's family in any way he can and he does. We are told that Scrooge becomes like a second father to Tiny Tim, and that " he became as good a friend, as good a master, and as good a man, as the good old city knew, or any other good old city, town, or borough, in the good old world."

Chapter 5 Analysis This chapter sums up Dickens' theme by showing the positive outcome of positive behavior. We see all the joy that Scrooge's generosity brings, not only to others, but also to himself. Not everything worth doing in this world is accompanied by some monetary or material gain; unselfish generosity affects the world in more ways than anyone can see in their own life. Characters Belle Belle is Scrooge's old girlfriend. Years ago, she broke her relationship off with him because she felt that he had changed for the worse. In a vision of Christmas past, Scrooge sees her married and surrounded with laughing, happy children who love her. Bob Cratchit Cratchit is Scrooge's assistant, a loyal and diligent employee. After leaving the gloom of the Scrooge and Marley office on Christmas eve, Cratchit " went down a slide on Cornhill, at the end of a lane of boys, twenty times, in honour of its being Christmas eve, and then ran home to Camden Town as hard as he could pelt, to play at blind-man's bluff." A child at heart, Cratchit truly enjoys carrying Tiny Tim around town, and is a loving family man. Martha Cratchit

Martha is the Cratchit family's oldest daughter. Peter Cratchit Peter is Bob Cratchit's oldest son. Tim Cratchit See Tiny Tim Mrs. Dilber In Scrooge's vision of his own death, he sees Mrs. Dilber sell some of his belongings: " sheets and towels, a little wearing apparel, two old-fashioned silver teaspoons, a pair of sugar tongs, and a few boots." Fred Fred is Scrooge's nephew and only living relative. A genial man, he stops by on Christmas Eve to wish Scrooge a Merry Christmas and ends up thoroughly rebuked. Yet the young man does not seem to let his uncle's nasty demeanor bother him or affect his relationship to his uncle. The Ghost of Christmas Past The first spirit to visit Scrooge is The Ghost of Christmas Past. Wearing a white tunic trimmed with summer flowers and carrying a sprig of holly, the ghost has rays of light emanating from its head and carries a candle extinguisher to wear as a cap and snuff the light. Scrooge is able to travel with him to long-ago times and places; in this way, Scrooge is able to see himself as a younger man and remember a time when he was more open and hopeful about life The Ghost of Christmas Present The second spirit is loud and boisterous, a large man who shows up with a mountain of food and drink. His purpose is to show Scrooge how his friends and family are celebrating Christmas without him. For example, Scrooge's nephew, Fred, is throwing a lavish party for a large group; and Bob Cratchit is enjoying his time with his family, even if the Christmas dinner is modest and the presents few. The Ghost of Christmas Yet to Come This ghost does not speak, but shows Scrooge a bleak future. Resembling the popular conception of the Grim Reaper, The Ghost of Christmas Yet to Come is enshrouded in a long black robe. From this future, Scrooge learns that Tiny Tim will not survive because

Cratchit could not afford adequate medical help. Also Scrooge learns that when he dies, no one really cares. His passing is a relief to some and ignored by others. Joe Joe is the disreputable fence who buys Scrooges old clothes and linens. He will eventually sell them for a big profit. Jacob Marley Marley is Scrooge's late business partner. Dead for seven years, he comes back to haunt Scrooge and warns him that he is wasting his life. Moreover, he tells him that if he doesn't change soon, he'll end up like Marley: a restless old ghost. Initially, Marley's face appears in the knocker of Scrooge's front door, but then the ghost appears in full. His appearance is shocking: his jaw is tied together with a rag, which drops when he takes the rag off; he is bound around the waist with a chain, " the chain I forged in life," made of " cashboxes, keys, padlocks, ledgers, deeds, and heavy purses wrought in steel." He informs Scrooge that he will be visited by three ghosts. Old Fezziwig Fezziwig is Scrooge's old employer. A large and genial man, he throws a huge Christmas party, with food and music and dancing and drinks and good cheer all around. He provides a contrast to the kind of employer Scrooge turns out to be: parsimonious and cold. Ebenezer Scrooge Scrooge is the protagonist of the story and is one of the best-known characters in all of literature. He is described as a miserly man; for example, he is so stingy that he won't pay to keep his own apartment heated It is never fully explained why he has become such a miserable old miser, but some clues are given in the scenes of past Christmases. The reader learns that Scrooge had a strict and distant father—he made him stay at school during Christmas break and only let him come home one year because his sister asked if he could come home. Maybe as a result of such childhood rejection, Scrooge

later withdraws from his friends and loved ones. As his girlfriend notes: " You fear the world too much.. . All your other hopes have merged into the hope of being beyond the chance of its sordid reproach." Throughout the course of the story, Scrooge learns to treasure humanity through the glimpses that the ghosts of Christmas Past, Present, and Future give him into his own life. Also he realizes the impact one person can have, as with Tiny Tim. After the spirits leave, Scrooge is relieved to find that he still has a chance to change the course of his life. This he promptly does: he becomes generous and good-humored, a positive force in the community, and good friends with Tiny Tim. Fan Scrooge Fan is Scrooge's deceased sister. She seems to have been a loving and supportive presence in his youth. Tim Cratchit Tim (also known as Tiny Tim) is Bob Cratchit's youngest son. He is physically challenged, as he must use a crutch to get around. As a result, he is often carried from place to place by his father. Tiny Tim never complains about his handicap, and his emotional strength and positive attitude impress everyone around him. After being shown a version of the future in which Tiny Tim is dead, Scrooge vows to help the boy. In fact, Scrooge does donate money for Tiny Tim's medical treatment. Themes Guilt and Innocence Often in ghost stories, the ghostly apparitions function to remind the main character of something evil he or she has done in the past. In other words, ghosts act as the character's conscience. Scrooge certainly has enough to feel guilty about: he is mean and tight-fisted with his assistant, Bob Cratchit; dismissive of his nephew, Fred; miserly and cold with the men from the local charity association; and nasty to the little caroler that he chases away from his keyhole with a ruler. Each of these people are associated with some form of

innocence, a reminder of the less fortunate or the love of family and friends. Marley's ghost raises the question of guilt directly, explaining that he himself is forced to walk the earth as a ghost because he was a heartless, self-involved man. The ghosts of Christmas Past, Present and Future make no accusations toward Scrooge about his behavior—but with the warning that Marley has given him, Scrooge interprets the visits to mean that unless he changes his life and learns to value the people around him, he will end up like Marley. Moreover, by revisiting events and people from his past, he realizes just how much he has missed by shutting himself off from family, friends, and coworkers. With the help of the ghosts, he resolves to change his life. Fear " You fear the world too much," Belle tells Scrooge as she is breaking off their engagement It is implied by his sister's visit to his school that the roots of these fears can be found in a problematic and dysfunctional relationship with his father. Although we don't know the details, it was an obviously unhappy relationship that impacted Scrooge's relationships with others the rest of his life. It figures that his withdrawal from Belle, his growing interest in financial dealings, his lack of companions, and his unhappiness is a result of this early trauma. The ghostly intervention makes him see that the loneliness and neglect he has brought upon himself is even worse than the general fear of the world that he developed from the neglect suffered during his childhood. Beside the fear of his own death, Scrooge is very affected by the realization of Tiny Tim's death, which he inquires about with " an interest he had never felt before." When he finds out that the boy's fate could be avoided, he finds an opportunity to reach out and help someone other than himself. His emotional and financial support saves Tiny

Tim's life and provides the true emotional connection that Scrooge desired all along. Wealth and Poverty A recurring theme in the work of Dickens is the tremendous gap between the rich and poor. In fact, he portrayed the gritty world of the working class and lower class of London at a time when most novelists—most of them educated and from the upper class—had no sense of what poverty or its victims were like. In this story, Bob Cratchit's meager earnings can barely feed his family. In spite of this, the members of the Cratchit household are a cheerful and happy bunch. When Scrooge looks in on them with the Ghost of Christmas Present, he hears about the tinnng jobs that the children work or will work, and he notes the little they have to eat, with the meager plum pudding being a great treat. As Scrooge observes, 'They were not a handsome family; they were not well dressed; their shoes were far from being waterproof; their clothes were scanty; and Peter might have known, and very likely did, the inside of pawnbroker's. But they were happy, grateful, pleased with one another's company, and contented with the time. " By contrast, the wealthy Scrooge lives in miserable circumstances in a cold abandoned building that is dark because he does not want to spend money on candles (" darkness was cheap, and Scrooge liked it"). His wealth is not bringing him any more happiness—it only perpetuates the fear that one day he will lose it. A Chnstmas Carol does not equate poverty with cheer and wealth with misery, however. The party at Fred's house shows people who are wealthy having a good time, while two children revealed to him by the Ghost of Christmas Present—Ignorance and Want—make it clear that even though people like the Cratchits can laugh in their poverty, it still a serious and life-threatening matter. Style Point of View Mainly, this novel is narrated

in the third person; that is, the story is usually told as " he said" or " she said" or " Scrooge watched them," etc. In the beginning, though, there is a little touch of a first-person narrator, as someone talking directly to the reader, referring to himself as " I." This narrator is the type of personality who will use a phrase and then mull over its appropriateness (" I might have been inclined, myself, to regard a coffin-nail the dearest piece of ironmongery ... ") and to make humorous satirical remarks. This first-person voice fades away once the characters in the book start interacting with one another, leaving the characters and the action of the novel to keep the readers' attention. The last time this first-person narrator is heard from is when it remarks on how strange it is that Scrooge, who had not thought of Marley since hours earlier, would see his face on the door knocker (" let any man explain to me, if he can, how it happened that... ") Setting London is the setting of this novel, as it is for many of Dickens' works. The character of the city does not come into play much except in the gloomy darkness on the afternoon of Christmas Eve, caused by London's legendary fog. It is also present during the scene on Christmas morning presented by the Ghost of Christmas Present, with the city coming alive. Dickens gives long lists of the objects associated with Christmas (baskets of chestnuts, Spanish onions, tea, coffee, raisins, mistletoe, etc.), a bounty and richness that Scrooge has rejected in favor of his lonely, solitary existence. The one other notable setting in the novel is the cold, dark house where Scrooge lives, which had been occupied by Jacob Marley before his death. Among its more individual characteristics are the wide staircase and the fireplace, which is decorated with carvings of scenes from the Bible. It is also symbolic of his isolation that

Scrooge would live in such spare, dark surroundings. Historical Context Victorian Christmas At the time when Dickens was writing, the Christmas tradition was not nearly as important as it is today. Celebrating Christmas started in the fourth century, incorporating many of the symbols of pagan holidays such as the Roman Saturnalia and the Saxon Yule holiday, such as holly and wreaths. The date of December 25th was borrowed from pagan cultures—it was the date of the Winter Solstice, the shortest day of the year. For centuries Christmas grew in importance slowly, but treating it as a celebration was looked upon suspiciously because of its pagan origins and because it made a festive celebration out of one of the most solemn days on the Christian calendar, the birth of Jesus. During the Protestant Reformation of the sixteenth century that sought to turn the church away from worldly and materialistic concerns, celebrating Christmas was actually outlawed for a short time. Yet it wasn't long before the symbolic, festive aspects of the holiday started showing up again as people carried on the traditions they had been taught. During the reign of Queen Victoria in England, the Christmas tradition gained popularity. One reason for this was that the monarchy supported it: Prince Albert, Queen Victoria's husband, brought the German tradition of decorating the Christmas tree when he came to England. Another reason was economic, as the Industrial Revolution was creating a population shift from rural areas to cities, where new manufacturing techniques required workers. This growing urban population found comfort in the Christmas traditions. As the city became more crowded and dirty, the citizens looked forward to celebrations, especially Christmas. Urban Life In the mid-nineteenth century. London was a crowded, dirty place, a fact that

no one did more to publicize than Dickens himself. Industries were not regulated, and widespread pollution and exploitation of the work force resulted. Laborers, many of them children, were required to work four-teen-hour days in order to help their families pay bills; if a family was unable to make ends meet, they might end up in Debtor's Prison—as Dickens' family did when he was twelve. Dickens described the squalid, dirty condition of London in vivid detail. Yet, some historians believe that the actual conditions of Victorian London might not have been as gruesome as described. Because the reign of Victoria was a time of increased social concern in England, there probably is much exaggeration in the reports of squalid poverty.

Critical Overview A Christmas Carol has never been considered Dickens' finest work by literary critics, but from its first publication it was a popular favorite. It sold an impressive six thousand copies at its first printing in 1843, and was quickly reprinted in numerous authorized and unauthorized editions. Today, critics seldom discuss A Christmas Carol, in part because of its universal popularity. Also this short novel is considered not emblematic of Dickens' work in general. Although critical reaction to his novels has been favorable, commentators tend to deride the length of the books he produced. David Cecil, for example, was critical of Dickens' novels when he commented in his book *The Victorian Novelists: Essays in Reevaluation*: "He cannot construct, for one thing. His books have no organic unity; they are full of detachable episodes, characters who serve no purpose in furthering the plot." It is a criticism that did not apply to the development of ideas in this short novel. Cecil went on to point to Dickens' finest quality: his ability to fill every scene he wrote with exact, convincing details. Famed novelist Anthony Trollope had

it wrong, according to Cecil, when he charged that Dickens' writing was "exaggerated." He emphasized that what might seem excessive was actually Dickens' strength; "Scott's imagination and Emily Bronte's were of a finer quality, Jane Austen's was more exactly articulated, but they none of them had an imagination at once so forceful, so varied and so self-dependent as Dickens." In addition, commentators often focus on the characters in Dickens' work. Some critics quickly dismiss them as being broadly written in order to play upon readers' emotions; moreover, it has been charged that they are designed more as sentimental caricatures than well-rounded psychological portraits. On the opposing side are those critics who concede that his characters are drawn broadly, but then go on to point out that even a character with one exaggerated trait can be real. On this point, Julian Symons asserts: "It would be nearer to the truth to say that they are pathological distortions of human egoism, in which a thwarted radical enacts forbidden scenes of violence through the mouths and bodies of characters labeled wicked." Scrooge is not violent, but that is only because he is old and decrepit. His attempts to threaten Bob Cratchit for wanting coal for warmth, or his harsh treatment of the little caroler at his door, are done with the spirit of evil that Symons says audiences identify with as "forbidden scenes." It is clear to any new reader of Dickens that he is trying to manipulate his audience's emotions, and the critical debate hovers around whether or not he has a right to do that. One of the great writers of the twentieth century, G. K. Chesterton, summed up the effectiveness of Dickens' manipulations this way: "A Dickens character hits you first on the nose and then in the waistcoat, and then in the eye and then in the waistcoat again, with the

blinding rapidity of some battering engine.... " While other critics consider Dickens' emotional manipulation as dishonest and even cheap, Chesterton believed that this was the business of the novelist. Dickens was often called a sentimentalist. In one sense he sometimes was a sentimentalist. But if sentimentalism be held to mean something artificial or theatrical, then in the core and reality of his character Dickens was the very reverse of a sentimentalist. He seriously and definitely loved goodness. To see sincerity and charity satisfied him like a meal. What some critics call his love of sweet stuff is really his love of plain beef and bread. It makes sense that critics are usually suspicious of a novel that the general public likes too much, especially one that uses such emotion-wringing devices as Christmas and a physically-challenged child. However, despite critical condemnation, the short novel has remained a well-loved Christmas classic for people around the world.

Critical Essay #1 Kelly is an instructor of Creative Writing and Literature at Oakton Community College and College of Lake County, in Illinois. In this essay, he examines the question of whether Charles Dickens' *A Christmas Carol* is effective because of its adept manipulation of readers' sentiments, or if it earns its popularity with powerful storytelling. I guess I would have to agree with Charles Dickens' detractors who say that he was too long-winded, that he should have learned to cut to the point of almost anything he was writing about a little quicker. I agree with them—but then, so would Dickens himself. There is a story about him, told by Kate Douglas Wiggin, the author who grew up to write *Rebecca of Sunnybrook Farm*. She was only twelve when she approached him on the train between Portland, Maine and Boston and started a discussion about his books, listing what she

liked and then mentioning that he should have cut " some of the very dull parts." In response, Dickens roared with laughter and pressed for further thoughts on the subject of what she might think dull. Now, it could be considered just common politeness for a grown man to give a twelve-year-old critic his full attention, patronizing to let her call him dull; on the other hand, when a child could see what was excessive, he would have no choice but to take heed. Fortunately, he was able to avoid the problem of wordiness in his novellas by working in a form so short that it never has time to be excessive. This is never truer than in *A Christmas Carol*, which lends itself to quick scene changes. Still, this book brings up the next most common charge levied against Charles Dickens: that of cold, manipulative sentimentality. He has been called the Norman Rockwell of literature, a technical stylist who says the things that he (rightly) thought his audience wanted him to say. For those like myself who think that critics have no business blaming a book for being popular, Dickens was a good, interesting, vivid writer first. Yet I can see the other side's point—that too much of what he did was driven by popular opinion and not by artistic standards. I think that what saves Dickens from the charge of excessive sentimentalism, in *A Christmas Carol* and in general, is the fact that he was always willing to balance life's joy against its misery. This would be an easier point to support with the life stories presented in the longer books, such as *David Copperfield* and *Great Expectations* or especially *Bleak House*, but it stands even with a commercial enterprise like the story of *Scrooge*. He took risks that were clearly not popular in order to round out his vision of the world. Considering the charge of sentimentality, the first thing to get out of the way is the simple, obvious

fact that nobody had or has any deeply held hatred for Charles Dickens. Not only are those who raise questions about his work too sensible to try to dismiss him as a fraud, but they probably don't even feel good about taking sides against him. As G. K. Chesterton, himself a powerful and interesting novelist, noted, " In everyone there is a certain thing that loves babies, that fears death and that likes sunlight: that thing enjoys Dickens." Ironically, A Christmas Carol happens to play off of all of the elements Chesterton mentioned. It has the baby-Tiny Tim-who, though able to verbalize his saintly philosophy in whole paragraphs, still has to be carried around on his father's shoulders like an infant. It teases readers' thirst for sunlight throughout from the foggy afternoon at the start to the beams shining from the head of the Spirit of Christmas Present to the sooty darkness of the coal mines to, at last, the " Golden sunlight" that pours down on the reformed Scrooge when he throws open his shutters on Christmas morning. Moreover, it clearly has death-other figures of death through the years have matched the frightening quietude of the Ghost of Christmas Future, but none has surpassed it as a representative of fate's no-nonsense certainty. There are certainly some grim moments presented in this story, the kinds of details that are avoided by true commercial sentimentalists who today cheapen our sense of the time by using phrases like " Victorian Christmas" or, worse, " Dickensian Christmas" to hawk their merchandise. For one thing, Scrooge is really pretty evil. Adaptations have made him a comical cranky grouch, characterized with the quaint, faintly Biblical epitaph " covetous old sinner"; his crabbing about Bob Cratchit's use of coal might remind readers of their own grandfather or father's battle to control the thermostat in order to hold

off poverty. The fact is, though, that the Scrooge of the book is nearly as mean and dangerous as he would like to think he is. Aside from his interactions with Cratchit- who, after all, toasts Scrooge's health on Christmas and so just may be a glutton for his abuse-the clearest view readers get of his business practices is from the young couple, Caroline and her unnamed husband. They find themselves on the verge of ruin at Scrooge's hand, and are only saved by his death; as a creditor, Scrooge was "merciless." In his personal life, too, Dickens paints Scrooge's heartlessness more sharply than is necessary to establish the idea of the cranky old miser who has a heart of gold deep within. The strength of his iciness comes through when Belle surprises him by breaking off their engagement on the grounds that he idolizes only money. He has no argument to raise, forced to admit in the face of her well-stated rationality that she is right. It could be argued that these disturbing aspects of Scrooge's personality cannot be considered true looks at life's dark side because they serve a function in the story: they are things to be overcome to make his final conversion truly triumphant. So they are not about reality, but about good storytelling. I think of it from the other perspective, though, considering how easily it would have been for Dickens to make Scrooge just nasty, not evil, leaving out the extreme details, which show human nature as being a little less disturbing as mass audiences would like to think of it. A book that was only playing off of popular sentiment could easily have done without the young couple celebrating Scrooge's death, or could have had a younger Scrooge snarl "good riddance" when his woman leaves him instead of having him stand awestruck. Scrooge is the story's protagonist; therefore, Dickens had to

necessarily keep him likable to some extent, positioning Scrooge close enough to the border of evil to make him redeemable in the end. With other aspects of *A Christmas Carol* he could be freer to show the world as he saw it, or to show a world that his readers wanted to believe in, if that was what he was trying to do. For every bad in the novel's world there is a good, and for every good a bad: the question becomes whether Dickens was sentimentalizing or manipulating emotions with these valleys and peaks, creating the proverbial "emotional roller coaster" that leaves readers drained but satisfied, or if this balance of extremes is just an honest way of presenting life. Among the grimmest sights presented is the back street that the final Ghost takes Scrooge to, a presentment of the only place where his life will matter after his death—the "obscure part of town." The people there are "half-naked, drunken, slipshod and ugly"; the whole area "reeked with crime, with filth, with misery." Unlike the poverty of the Cratchit house, or the dingy coal mine or the lonesome ship at sea, there is no joy in the misery here, and there is going to be no ray of sunshine coming into this quarter once Scrooge has lightened up and started loving his fellow human beings. The foul-smelling street populated by cretins has its reverse image in the joyful Christmas morning scene the Ghost of Christmas Present shows Scrooge, and it is meant to inspire Scrooge's (and, presumably, the reader's) fear of extreme poverty. Yet what it does not have is any comforting sense of hope. This sort of urban despair became Dickens' hallmark, his strength as a social activist, waking the public to the miseries that come from forcing uneducated, angry people into crowded, unsanitary conditions. This could only be considered manipulative if the author overstates the case to elicit

sympathy for a condition that doesn't really exist: historians may argue Dickens' accuracy in recording urban blight in other novels, but here, and throughout *A Christmas Carol*, the short form keeps him from going too far past the truth. The pawnshop that is located in this slum also has a reverse image—in that cheeriest of all workplaces, Fezziwig's warehouse. In the pawnshop, one encounters "old rags, bottles, bones and greasy offal"; the other has its floors swept and its lamps trimmed by eager employees, encouraged by their boss, so that "the warehouse was as snug, and warm, and dry, and bright a ballroom, as you would desire to see on a winter's night." It is in his portrayals of these two places that critics might be able to find the most fault in Dickens' characterizations, which tend to be on the broad side, so that no one could miss their significance to the story. The benevolent Fezziwig might have been a credible character if only he hadn't taken up the dance, or danced so well, or had a few more lines of dialogue so that readers could get to know him as something more than a contrast to the figure Scrooge cuts as he presides over his counting house. It makes its point too well, making too memorable in his larger-than-life gusto, straining our imaginations just a little too much by asking us to believe that Scrooge could ever forget what happened there. Old Joe, the pawnbroker, shows the similar defect of being given too little space within the text of the book to really act out the function he has been assigned. Dickens is not above taking the easy way out—that of having the character tell the audience exactly what conclusion they should reach themselves. "You couldn't have met in a better place," Joe tells the people who have picked the dead man clean of his possessions, reinforcing our impression of the people and the rotten location.

Later he actually says, " We're all suitable to our calling, we're well matched." Does Dickens have to tell us this? As obvious as it is, would Joe have been conscious of it? As with Fezziwig, this is not so much a case of populist sentimentality, because such people do exist and they do have their place within this story. It is more a case of underdevelopment, of having the characters acting too obviously for functional purposes, which is only slightly different than the unearned emotion that causes critics to charge him with sentimentalizing. A Christmas Carol has been adapted to the stage, radio, television, and movies thousands of times since it was first printed. Like many things associated with Christmas, these adaptations are meant for children. The weirdly Scrooge-like logic here, that Christmas is something to be put away as one gets older, poses an obvious irony. The result of these adaptations, though, is that many people in our non-reading world only know the story in its sanitized version, from scenes and lines that scriptwriters find acceptable for children. There is a difference between a well-crafted story that leaves readers feeling good and one molded to be a feel-good piece, and Dickens, with A Christmas Carol, stays well within his artistic bounds. There will always be questions about whether particular lines or characterizations or even certain books were made with no better purpose than to yank at the public's heartstrings, but