

How does Charles Dickens portray the Cratchit family in "A Christmas Carol" essay...

[Sociology](#), [Poverty](#)



In Victorian times there was a big gap between middle and lower working class. The working day was 12-hours long, but during the winter the days were shorter because of the shorter daylight hours. They were disciplined a lot because if they were late for work then the gates would already be locked so they would lose their pay for that day. The life for the people that did work was better than the one of those who didn't. The conditions that they were working in were bad because there were children and women working long hours with dangerous equipment.

There were three different types of schools; Public schools, Charity schools, and Ragged schools. The ragged schools were for the children who lived on the streets and didn't have parents to run back to. A lot of the well-off people in Victorian times were concerned with the plight of the poor. There was a new law called The Poor Law, it meant that the out of work labourers were no longer able to get relief. Instead they were to go to the workhouse, they would be separated from their families and get fed the poorest food.

At thirteen years old Charles Dickens's father's business went bankrupt and he had to go and work in a blacking factory, he learnt of the terrible conditions that children were working in but by the time he was twenty-five he was a popular and successful writer. He then decided to let the rather wealthy people be aware of the conditions of the people who were not rich to raise money for them.

The Cratchit family play a big part in Dickens's Christmas carol. He mentions eight members of the family, Mrs Cratchit, Mr Cratchit (Bob), Martha, Belinda, Peter and the two little Cratchit's. Mrs Cratchit was dressed to look

nice in an old dress that she had brought some ribbons to put on it because it was Christmas and she is making the most of what she has got and can afford. Dickens wrote "Cratchit's wife, dressed out poorly in a twice-turned gown, but brave in ribbons", the readers because of this, admire her.

Bob Cratchit was a clerk for Scrooge. His office was a "Dismal little cell" with a "Very small fire, so very much smaller than it looked like one coal". This is showing that he has bad work conditions but he has to keep his job as a clerk to earn enough money to look after him and his family. He is a very cheerful man with six happy children, this is shown when on Christmas eve he was sliding "down the hill twenty times" with the children.

Martha is the Cratchit's eldest daughter and she is about seventeen years old. Her family loves and admires her. "Mrs Cratchit, kissing her a dozen times". She's probably got a job, and is probably underpaid. She is also a joker because she hides from her father only to jump out and surprise him.

Belinda is the second oldest child and is aged about fifteen. She was dressed like her mother because Dickens wrote "Assisted by Belinda Cratchit, second of her daughters, also brave in ribbons".

Peter, the next child is aged about thirteen years old. He was wearing his father's old shirt for the special occasion. "While Master Peter Cratchit plunged into a fork into the saucepan of potatoes, and getting the corners of his monstrous shirt-collar into his mouth". This shows he is proud to wear his father's shirt and is also willing to help his family cook the dinner.

Tiny Tim is the next child down and is probably aged about eleven. He is very ill and weak but is still a nice person. Dickens wrote "Small quiet voice" which shows he is a quiet child. Dickens has made the reader realise how the family have reacted to Tiny Tim's death. He wrote "quiet, very quiet". This emphasises the atmosphere in the house, it shows that they really loved him. Also because it was around the time of Christmas it was hard for the family. Mrs Cratchit tries to stay strong in front of her children but inside she is very upset.

The reason Dickens wrote this book was to let people know about the bad work conditions for the poor people. So he takes us through his journey of telling us of the troubles this family comes across and shows how a poor family can still be nice people and get on with their lives as well as they can. This makes us admire them and also feel sorry for them.

I think this book that Dickens wrote was very successful with the public because it shows how bad things were for the Cratchit family, and for any other poor family in the Victorian times because they used to have to do so much work to make money to look after themselves and their family. Often they did not earn enough money because they were underpaid, especially if they had a big family or a lot of children. I feel sorry for the Cratchit family because they are nice people that didn't really deserve to live the life they did. I think after people have read this book they would be more willing and likely to give to charity because maybe before they had read it they wouldn't have realised how bad some people lived their lives.