

The signalman and a christmas carol paper essay sample



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A good friend of Charles Dickens named John Foster said that there was nothing Dickens liked more than to be told a good story. We have been given "The Signalman" and "A Christmas Carol". We are going to be looking especially closely at the creation of the characters and atmosphere in both books. "A Christmas Carol" was set in London. This story is about a businessman who is known for being very anti-social and bitter. He has no emotional connections with other people. Every night he returns from work to a small house. He lives in an apartment above storage areas, it is very cramped.

One night when he gets home the ghost of his very good friend Jacob Marley, that died years ago visits him. The ghost begs him to change his wicked ways and appreciate life more or threatens he will regret it. Scrooge refuses to change his lifestyle for anyone, so three ghosts come to visit him to continue to persuade him. The three ghosts show Scrooge scenes from past, present and future Christmases. Eventually after all three ghosts have left Scrooge is horrified and disgraced of what he has seen so he changes and becomes a better person. "The Signalman" is about a lonely man, who has no one to talk to or to keep him company.

One day he meets a man passing by and the Signalman tells him about his ghostly troubles, and begs him to come back the next day so he can tell him the rest of the story. The only problem is that the Signalman is the only one who can ever see the ghost. At the end of the story the Signalman dies by being hit by a train. This means that the ghostly images he kept seeing were a warning for his life. "A Christmas Carol" by Charles Dickens was written at

a time when Dickens was living in London and living a very happy and fulfilling life.

He was very optimistic and successful; he was young, well driven and deeply involved in his work life. When we look at the background of “ The Signalman” by Charles Dickens we found out that at the time he wrote this story, he was very pessimistic and feeling depressed. He had remained traumatised by the train crash, which had occurred, in 1865. Even though he was unhappy and a lot older he was still very involved in his work. The way Charles Dickens was feeling at the time he wrote both books was therefore reflected in the tone of his writing. In “ A Christmas Carol” the ghosts are identifiable and named.

There is evidence of this from “ I know him! Marleys ghost! ” In the story it describes the appearance of the ghost. In “ A Christmas Carol” Marley’s ghost was horrible. We get evidence of this from the description of the characters thoughts, feelings, speech and appearance “ His body was transparent” and we are also told of how when he untied a scarf that was tied around his head, his jaw falls and hangs down and started to sway back and forth. When the three ghosts are introduced in the story they say who they are and for what purpose they have come to Scrooge.

Unlike the Ghost in “ A Christmas Carol” the ghost in “ The Signalman” is not horrific or scary in anyway. Actually the ghost is vaguely described to the reader. It is not actually seen by the readers or the Narrator but it is only reported back to us as being there by the Signalman. The ghost looks like an everyday normal person, the only thing that is different is the fact, its face is

never seen and we do not actually know if the ghost has one. The only description of the ghost is “ it leaned against the shaft of the light, with both hands before the face. ” To us, the reader, he is recognisable.

The Narrator in “ A Christmas Carol” is cheerful and speaks in a friendly way. Throughout the book he is joking. By being this way he builds up a relationship with the reader. He talks to the reader as if they are good friends and have known each other for a long time. All of this creates enjoyment throughout the book and creates trust between the narrator and the audience. By doing this they believe everything that is said and it gets the reader wanting to know more. The Narrator in “ The Signalman” is the total opposite to the Narrator in “ A Christmas Carol”.

In this book the Narrator is a mysterious and shadowy figure. We want to find out more about him through reading the book. Instead of being happy and cheerful, he is serious and moody, but yet he is caring towards the character of “ The Signalman” and what happens to him in the book. “ A Christmas Carol” is set in old Victorian London. Some of the settings were indoors; they were the offices in which he worked and his house. We are not told much about the offices but only that they are “ cold, dark and inhospitable”.

His house is described in great detail in the story; it is set back away from everything else, and cannot be found. That is the way he likes it to be. Scrooge lives on the top floor in the building where people would normally store unwanted possessions. This is a metaphor for how people perceive him, like a useless and unwanted object that has been put away. He only rents one floor of the building even though he could afford to buy the

building itself. Scrooge could afford to do much better. His house is lonely, isolated and uncomfortable.

He has to sit close up to the small fire because he is too mean to heat the whole room. Scrooge likes it that way and does not care that he has no people around him to keep him company, so long as he has his money. In “The Signalman” the indoor setting is a shed and the outdoor is the railway cutting where everything is isolated at all times. The shed is dark, damp and cold and it is separate from any other human dwellings. However, inside the shed is pleasant and there are not any negative points described to us at all.

Outside, in the railway cutting, we have a metaphor for the Signalman’s situation. He is isolated and cut off from the rest of the world but inside the shed we see a metaphor for how the Signalman is inside, his personality. He does not want to be pushed away from the rest of the world, because he enjoys being in the company of other people. By him being like this it forces the narrator to come back the next day. What the Signalman wants is human contact. He did not choose to live his life this way. In “A Christmas Carol” the main character is Scrooge. He is a cold-hearted person.

We get this information from the part of the story, which tells us, he “wears a crown of frost”. This explains to us that he is a person without love or any emotions and because of this he is unable to enjoy human company.

Scrooge is a man who is bitter and negative towards everything in life. He says “Every idiot who goes around wearing Merry Christmas, on his lips, should be boiled in his own pudding, and buried with a stake of holly through his heart”. The character of Scrooge keeps lifestyle the same and imprisons

himself in his own little world; he does not want to improve his life in any way.

He has more money than anyone else, but he does not benefit from it at all by buying things or going places, he works long hours to earn yet more money so he can think he is superior to everyone else. The Signalman “taught himself a language there,” “but being at all times liable to be called by his electric bell, and at such times listening for it with redoubled anxiety, the relief was less than, I would suppose.” This proves to us that he is very intelligent, but yet there is something morally right about him because he takes his job seriously because it is important for people’s safety.

Overall he is a warm-hearted person that enjoys the company of others. This character is the total opposite to Scrooge. The Signalman has a more caring attitude towards humanity. Also he is very hard working and his main goal in life is to do his job perfectly otherwise as a consequence his ghostly images may become reality. He has a sense of duties and wishes to do his job properly to do well with his studies. I found “A Christmas Carol” was the most enjoyable and effective, because it was easier to understand, and also I found the way in which the narrator in “The Signalman” came across as uninteresting.