



Exploring Junior Cycle Texts

A Christmas Carol (radio play) by Charles Dickens

A Christmas Carol (radio play) by Charles Dickens is a text included as part of the Prescribed Material for Junior Cycle English (For the student cohorts commencing Junior Cycle in 2023, 2024, 2025, 2026 and 2027 and presenting for examination in 2026, 2027 and 2028, 2029 and 2030).



Image courtesy of
Wordsworth Editions

Please note:

- The following tasks might be completed over a series of lessons.
- You may like to adapt and adjust the tasks to suit your context.
- *A Christmas Carol (radio play)* covers themes which could be considered sensitive and controversial. You may wish to consult with our READY Framework to support you in your study.



Scan the QR code or click here to
access a Getting Started with Guide
for this Text

Before you read... (Teacher Guidance)

1. A Good Christmas

In small groups, task students to list what makes Christmas (or a holiday) special. Discuss findings as a class, then pose the question *what might it be like if someone hated all these things?* Discuss as a class.

2. What's in a Name?

Have pupils research the origins of the name 'Ebenezer'. In pairs, they should then discuss what relevance this might have on the story.

3. Vocabulary Prediction

Give pupils examples of the contrasting vocabulary found in the extract such as *cashboxes*, *padlocks*, *ledgers*, *purses* and *charity*, *mercy*, and *benevolence*. Ask pupils to choose one word from each group. Around each word, have them create a word web, jotting down associations, images, or feelings linked to that word. Using at least one word from each group, have pupils write a short sentence predicting what Marley might say to Scrooge.

Click [here](#) to watch a clip from an
animated version of this scene. Clip
courtesy of Youtube.





Extract

Background: Ebenezer Scrooge is a rich but mean man who hates Christmas. On Christmas Eve, the ghost of his old business partner, Jacob Marley, appears. Marley is being punished for his greed and warns Scrooge that he will suffer the same fate unless he changes. He tells Scrooge that three spirits will visit him that night.

(MUSIC ... EERIE ... UNDER)

SOUND: (CLOCK STRIKES)

SCROOGE: Who – who are you?

MARLEY: Ask me who I was.

SCROOGE: Oh ho. You're very particular, for a ghost. All right then. Who were ya?

MARLEY: In life, I was your partner, Jacob Marley.

SCROOGE: (SKEPTICAL) Jacob Marley! But you're dead. You died seven years ago.

MARLEY: Seven years ago this very night.

SCROOGE: You are a ghost then?

MARLEY: What's wrong, Ebenezer? Don't you believe in me?

SCROOGE: I do not.

MARLEY: You doubt your senses, Ebenezer?

SCROOGE: Yes. Yes. Because a little thing affects them. A slight disorder of the stomach makes them cheats. You – you can't be a ghost. You may be an undigested bit of beef, or a blot of mustard, or a crumb of cheese, a fragment of an underdone potato. (CHUCKLES) There may be more gravy than grave about you, whatever you are! Ah, humbug, I tell ya. Humbug!

MARLEY: (RAISES A FRIGHTFUL CRY)

(MUSIC ... MATCHES THE CRY, THEN SUBSIDES AND CONTINUES UNDER EERILY)

SCROOGE: (SHIVERS AND SHUDDERS IN FEAR) I do believe in you. You ARE a ghost, Jacob.

MARLEY: Thank you.

SCROOGE: But why – why do you walk the earth, Jacob? Why do you come to me?

MARLEY: It is required of every man that the spirit within him should walk abroad among his fellowmen, and travel far and wide, to witness what it cannot share, but might have shared on earth, and turned to happiness.

SCROOGE: But tell me, Jacob, what is that chain you wear around you?

MARLEY: I wear the chain I forged in life. I made it link by link, and yard by yard; by my own free will. Is its pattern strange to you, Ebenezer?

SCROOGE: Cashboxes? Keys and padlocks? Ledgers and purses?

MARLEY: Yours was as heavy and as long as this, seven years ago. You have laboured on it since, Ebenezer.

SCROOGE: Old Jacob, speak comfort to me, Jacob!

MARLEY: Comfort I have none to give. I cannot rest, I cannot stay, I cannot linger. Weary journeys lie before me.

SCROOGE: You travel fast?

MARLEY: Yes, Ebenezer. On the wings of the wind.

SCROOGE: Ah, seven years dead and traveling all the time.

MARLEY: Seven years, Ebenezer. Seven years of remorse. Ebenezer, do you know that no space of regret can make amends for one life's opportunities misused?

SCROOGE: But you were always a good man of business, Jacob.

MARLEY: Business! Mankind was my business! Charity, mercy, benevolence — they were all my business. The dealings of my trade were but a drop of water in the comprehensive ocean of my business!

SCROOGE: Jacob, Jacob, don't take on so, now. Jacob—

MARLEY: Listen to me, Ebenezer.

SCROOGE: I'll listen to you, Jacob. Go on, Jacob, now. Speak to me but don't be so flowery.

MARLEY: Ebenezer, I am here to warn you that you have yet a chance of hope of escaping my fate. Do you hear that, Ebenezer?

SCROOGE: Yes, Jacob. Yes, you always were a good friend to me, Jacob. Thanks, Jacob. But – but go on, go on, go on, go on. How shall I escape? Oh, I'm afraid, Jacob.

MARLEY: You will be haunted by Three Spirits.

SCROOGE: Is that the only chance and hope, Jacob?

MARLEY: It is your only chance and hope.



Activities Based on Extract (Teacher Guidelines)

These prompts are designed to support close reading and personal response. They may be used orally or in writing, individually or in groups.

1. Chain Symbolism

Pose the question: *What does Marley's chain stand for?* Ask pupils to draw a simple chain, writing on each link a word or phrase that represents the things Marley or Scrooge valued too much. In a different colour, perhaps, have them add words that could break the chain.

2. Modern Message

Marley says, "*Mankind was my business!*" Ask pupils to explain orally what that means in their own words. Then have them write one or two sentences about what our "business" should be in today's modern world.

3. Interview

In pairs, have pupils create the script for an interview with Marley about his life. They should use the extract to help them but encourage them to use their imagination to fill in the gaps.

Reflect and Respond (Teacher Guidance)

These activities extend engagement with the extract and invite creative and personal responses. Use individually, in pairs, or in groups.

1. Letter

Encourage pupils to imagine Marley can send one final letter to Scrooge before disappearing forever. Give them some details such as in the letter, he reflects on the mistakes he made in life, explains what the chain really means and pleads with Scrooge to change before it's too late. Instruct them to format it as a real letter or as a dramatic monologue.

2. Personal Response

Ask pupils to consider which part of this extract made the strongest impression on them, and why. Encourage them to write a personal response using evidence from the text.

3. Discursive Response

Give pupils the prompt *Marley's visit teaches that money cannot buy happiness*, and guide them to write a short essay or paragraph responding to this statement, using examples from the extract.

4. Atmosphere

In pairs, have pupils write an analytical paragraph explaining how language is used in this extract to create fear and atmosphere.

5. Fourth Spirit

Tell pupils to imagine there was a fourth spirit who arrives later that night. Have students write a new scene or short script where this fourth spirit visits Scrooge. They should give the spirit a name and describe its appearance, show what lesson it teaches Scrooge, and include dialogue and sound effects if they're keeping the "radio play" style.