A Christmas Carol Revision
Charles Dickens
Plot Summary:

A mean-spirited, miserly old man named Ebenezer Scrooge sits in his counting-house on a frigid Christmas Eve. His clerk, Bob Cratchit, shivers in the anteroom because Scrooge refuses to spend money on heating coals for a fire. Scrooge's nephew, Fred, pays his uncle a visit and invites him to his annual Christmas party. Two portly gentlemen also drop by and ask Scrooge for a contribution to their charity. Scrooge reacts to the holiday visitors with bitterness and venom, spitting out an angry "Bah! Humbug!" in response to his nephew's "Merry Christmas!"

Later that evening, after returning to his dark, cold apartment, Scrooge receives a chilling visitation from the ghost of his dead partner, Jacob Marley. Marley, looking haggard and pallid, relates his unfortunate story. As punishment for his greedy and self-serving life his spirit has been condemned to wander the Earth weighted down with heavy chains. Marley hopes to save Scrooge from sharing the same fate. Marley informs Scrooge that three spirits will visit him during each of the next three nights. After the wraith disappears, Scrooge collapses into a deep sleep.

He wakes moments before the arrival of the Ghost of Christmas Past, a strange childlike phantom with a brightly glowing head. The spirit escorts Scrooge on a journey into the past to previous Christmases from the curmudgeon's earlier years. Invisible to those he watches, Scrooge revisits his childhood school days, his apprenticeship with a jolly merchant named Fezziwig, and his engagement to Belle, a woman who leaves Scrooge because his lust for money eclipses his ability to love another. Scrooge, deeply moved, sheds tears of regret before the phantom returns him to his bed.

The Ghost of Christmas Present, a majestic giant clad in a green fur robe, takes Scrooge through London to unveil Christmas as it will happen that year. Scrooge watches the large, bustling Cratchit family prepare a miniature feast in its meager home. He discovers Bob Cratchit's crippled son, Tiny Tim, a courageous boy whose kindness and humility warms Scrooge's heart. The specter then zips Scrooge to his nephew's to witness the Christmas party. Scrooge finds the jovial gathering delightful and pleads with the spirit to stay until the very end of the festivities. As the day passes, the spirit ages, becoming noticeably older. Toward the end of the day, he shows Scrooge two starved children, Ignorance and Want, living under his coat. He vanishes instantly as Scrooge notices a dark, hooded figure coming toward him.

The Ghost of Christmas Yet to Come leads Scrooge through a sequence of mysterious scenes relating to an unnamed man's recent death. Scrooge sees businessmen discussing the dead man's riches, some vagabonds trading his personal effects for cash, and a poor couple expressing relief at the death of their unforgiving creditor. Scrooge, anxious to learn the lesson of his latest visitor, begs to know the name of the dead man. After pleading with the ghost, Scrooge finds himself in a churchyard, the spirit pointing to a grave. Scrooge looks at the headstone and is shocked to read his own name. He desperately implores the spirit to alter his fate, promising to renounce his insensitive, avaricious ways and to honor Christmas with all his heart. Whoosh! He suddenly finds himself safely tucked in his bed.

Overwhelmed with joy by the chance to redeem himself and grateful that he has been returned to Christmas Day, Scrooge rushes out onto the street hoping to share his newfound
Christmas spirit. He sends a giant Christmas turkey to the Cratchit house and attends Fred's party, to the stifled surprise of the other guests. As the years go by, he holds true to his promise and honors Christmas with all his heart: he treats Tiny Tim as if he were his own child, provides lavish gifts for the poor, and treats his fellow human beings with kindness, generosity, and warmth.

**Context:**

In Victorian times, when Dickens was writing, poor children would often be sent to live in workhouses.

In 1861, 35,000 children under 12 lived and worked in workhouses in Britain. Living conditions there were unpleasant and the work was tough such as 'picking out' old ropes. Discipline was harsh and punishments included whipping. Food was basic and barely enough to sustain the children.

The 'portly gentlemen' who visit Scrooge ask for a Christmas donation to help the destitute orphans.

**Characters:**

**Ebenezer Scrooge** - The miserly owner of a London counting-house, a nineteenth century term for an accountant's office. The three spirits of Christmas visit the stodgy bean-counter in hopes of reversing Scrooge's greedy, cold-hearted approach to life.

**Bob Cratchit** - Scrooge's clerk, a kind, mild, and very poor man with a large family. Though treated harshly by his boss, Cratchit remains a humble and dedicated employee.

**Tiny Tim** - Bob Cratchit's young son, crippled from birth. Tiny Tim is a highly sentimentalized character who Dickens uses to highlight the tribulations of England's poor and to elicit sympathy from his middle and upper class readership.

**Jacob Marley** - In the living world, Ebenezer Scrooge's equally greedy partner. Marley died seven years before the narrative opens. He appears to Scrooge as a ghost condemned to wander the world bound in heavy chains. Marley hopes to save his old partner from suffering a similar fate.

**The Ghost of Christmas Past** - The first spirit to visit Scrooge, a curiously childlike apparition with a glowing head. He takes Scrooge on a tour of Christmases in his past. The spirit uses a cap to dampen the light emanating from his head.

**The Ghost of Christmas Present** - The second spirit to visit Scrooge, a majestic giant clad in a green robe. His lifespan is restricted to Christmas Day. He escorts Scrooge on a tour of his contemporaries' Holiday celebrations.
The Ghost of Christmas Yet to Come - The third and final spirit to visit Scrooge, a silent phantom clad in a hooded black robe. He presents Scrooge with an ominous view of his lonely death.

Fred - Scrooge's nephew, a genial man who loves Christmas. He invites Scrooge to his Christmas party each and every year, only to be refused by his grumpy uncle.

Fezziwig - The jovial merchant with whom the young Scrooge apprenticed. Fezziwig was renowned for his wonderful Christmas parties.

Belle - A beautiful woman who Scrooge loved deeply when he was a young man. Belle broke off their engagement after Scrooge became consumed with greed and the lust for wealth. She later married another man.

Peter Cratchit - Bob's oldest son, who inherits his father's stiff-collared shirt for Christmas.

Martha Cratchit - Bob's oldest daughter, who works in a milliner's shop. (A milliner is a person who designs, produces, and sells hats.)

Fan - Scrooge's sister; Fred's mother. In Scrooge's vision of Christmases past, he remembers Fan picking him up from school and walking him home.

The Portly Gentlemen - Two gentlemen who visit Scrooge at the beginning of the tale seeking charitable contributions. Scrooge promptly throws them out of his office. Upon meeting one of them on the street after his visitations, he promises to make lavish donations to help the poor.

Mrs. Cratchit - Bob's wife, a kind and loving woman.

Scrooge:

- Oh! but he was a tight-fisted hand at the grindstone, Scrooge! a squeezing, wrenching, grasping, scraping, clutching, covetous old sinner!

- "... 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!"

- "If they would rather die," said Scrooge, "they had better do it, and decrease the surplus population.

- "Bah! Humbug!"

- "I will live in the Past, the Present, and the Future!" Scrooge repeated, as he scrambled out of bed. "The Spirits of all Three shall strive within me."
• He lay, in the dark empty house, with not a man, a woman, or a child, to say that he was kind to me in this or that, and for the memory of one kind word I will be kind to him.

• “Really, for a man who had been out of practice for so many years it was a splendid laugh!“

• “Scrooge was better than his word. He did it all, and infinitely more; and to Tiny Tim, who did not die, he was a second father. 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.”

**Cratchits**

• (about Bob) ‘he tried to warm himself at the candle’
• ‘I’ll give you Mr Scrooge, the founder of the feast!’
• ‘My little, little child!’ cried Bob
• “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.”

• And so, as Tiny Tim observed, God bless Us, Every One!”

**Marley**

• Marley was dead: to begin with.

• "I wear the chain I forged in life," replied the Ghost. "I made it link by link, and yard by yard; I girded it on of my own free will, and of my own free will I wore it. Is its pattern strange to you?"

• “Old Marley was as dead as a doornail.

**Ghosts**

• [Past] "The school is not quite deserted," said the Ghost. "A solitary child, neglected by his friends, is left there still."

• [Past] “There was a boy singing a Christmas Carol at my door last night. I should like to have given him something: that's all."
[Present] “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.”

[Present] “They are Man's and they cling to me, appealing from their fathers. This boy is Ignorance and this girl is Want.

[Future] “The Phantom slowly, gravely, silently approached. When it came, Scrooge bent down upon his knee; for in the very air through which this Spirit moved it seemed to scatter gloom and mystery.”

[Future] "I fear you more than any spectre I have seen. But as I know your purpose is to do me good, and as I hope to live to be another man from what I was, I am prepared to bear you company, and do it with a thankful heart. Will you not speak to me?"

Fred

"Good afternoon," said Scrooge.  
"I want nothing from you; I ask nothing of you; why cannot we be friends?"
"Good afternoon," said Scrooge.

"Always a delicate creature, whom a breath might have withered," said the Ghost.  
"But she had a large heart! […] She died a woman," said the Ghost, "and had, as I think, children. […] Your nephew!"

Key Themes within the text:

- Change
- Poverty and Injustice
- Greed
- Life and Death
- Memory and Regret
- Family

_The quotations listed within this revision guide will fit within a number of these themes_
**Exam skills and Example Questions**

*Question provides an extract from the novel and students are asked to base their answer on the extract and the novel as a whole.*

**AO1:**
- Respond to texts critically and imaginatively; select and evaluate relevant textual detail to illustrate and support interpretations

**AO2:**
- Explain how language, structure and form contribute to writers’ presentation of ideas, themes and settings

**AO3:**
- Make comparisons and explain links between texts, evaluating writers’ different ways of expressing meaning and achieving effects

**Demonstrate the ways in which Dickens presents the Scrooge within the novel, ‘A Christmas Carol’**

*In your response you should:*
  - Refer to the extract and the novel as a whole;
  - Show your understanding of characters and events in the novel;
  - Refer to the contexts of the novel

Oh! But he was a tight-fisted hand at the grindstone, Scrooge! a squeezing, wrenching, grasping, scraping, clutching, covetous, old sinner! Hard and sharp as flint, from which no steel had ever struck out generous fire; secret, and self-contained, and solitary as an oyster. The cold within him froze his old features, nipped his pointed nose, shrivelled his cheek, stiffened his gait; made his eyes red, his thin lips blue; and spoke out shrewdly in his grating voice. A frosty rime was on his head, and on his eyebrows, and his wiry chin. He carried his own low temperature always about with him; he iced his office in the dog-days; and didn’t thaw it one degree at Christmas.

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.

Nobody ever stopped him in the street to say, with gladsome looks, “My dear Scrooge, how are you? When will you come to see me?” No beggars implored him to bestow a trifle, no children asked him what it was o’clock, no man or woman ever once in all his life inquired the way to such and such a place, of Scrooge. Even the blind men’s dogs appeared to know him; and when they saw him coming on, would tug their owners into doorways and up courts; and then would wag their tails as though they said, “No eye at all is better than an evil eye, dark master!”
Demonstrate the ways in which Dickens presents the theme of transformation within the novel, ‘A Christmas Carol’

In your response you should:

- Refer to the extract and the novel as a whole;
- Show your understanding of characters and events in the novel;
- Refer to the contexts of the novel

"I will live in the Past, the Present, and the Future!" Scrooge repeated, as he scrambled out of bed. "The Spirits of all Three shall strive within me. Oh Jacob Marley! Heaven, and the Christmas Time be praised for this! I say it on my knees, old Jacob; on my knees!"

He was so fluttered and so glowing with his good intentions, that his broken voice would scarcely answer to his call. He had been sobbing violently in his conflict with the Spirit, and his face was wet with tears.

"They are not torn down," cried Scrooge, folding one of his bed-curtains in his arms, "they are not torn down, rings and all. They are here--I am here--the shadows of the things that would have been, may be dispelled. They will be. I know they will!"

His hands were busy with his garments all this time; turning them inside out, putting them on upside down, tearing them, mislaying them, making them parties to every kind of extravagance. "I don't know what to do!" cried Scrooge, laughing and crying in the same breath; and making a perfect Laocoön of himself with his stockings. "I am as light as a feather, I am as happy as an angel, I am as merry as a schoolboy. A merry Christmas to everybody! A happy New Year to all the world. Hallo here! Whoop! Hallo!"

He had frisked into the sitting-room, and was now standing there: perfectly winded.

"There's the saucepan that the gruel was in!" cried Scrooge, starting off again, and going round the fireplace. "There's the door, by which the Ghost of Jacob Marley entered! There's the corner where the Ghost of Christmas Present, sat! There's the window where I saw the wandering Spirits! It's all right, it's all true, it all happened. Ha ha ha!"

Really, for a man who had been out of practice for so many years, it was a splendid laugh, a most illustrious laugh. The father of a long, long line of brilliant laughs!
Demonstrate the ways in which Dickens presents the Ghost of Christmas Past within the novel, ‘A Christmas Carol’

In your response you should:

• Refer to the extract and the novel as a whole;
• Show your understanding of characters and events in the novel;
• Refer to the contexts of the novel

It was a strange figure--like a child: yet not so like a child as like an old man, viewed through some supernatural medium, which gave him the appearance of having receded from the view, and being diminished to a child's proportions. Its hair, which hung about its neck and down its back, was white as if with age; and yet the face had not a wrinkle in it, and the tenderest bloom was on the skin. The arms were very long and muscular; the hands the same, as if its hold were of uncommon strength. Its legs and feet, most delicately formed, were, like those upper members, bare. It wore a tunic of the purest white; and round its waist was bound a lustrous belt, the sheen of which was beautiful. It held a branch of fresh green holly in its hand; and, in singular contradiction of that wintry emblem, had its dress trimmed with summer flowers. But the strangest thing about it was, that from the crown of its head there sprung a bright clear jet of light, by which all this was visible; and which was doubtless the occasion of its using, in its duller moments, a great extinguisher for a cap, which it now held under its arm.

Even this, though, when Scrooge looked at it with increasing steadiness, was not its strangest quality. For as its belt sparkled and glittered now in one part and now in another, and what was light one instant, at another time was dark, so the figure itself fluctuated in its distinctness: being now a thing with one arm, now with one leg, now with twenty legs, now a pair of legs without a head, now a head without a body: of which dissolving parts, no outline would be visible in the dense gloom wherein they melted away. And in the very wonder of this, it would be itself again; distinct and clear as ever.

"Are you the Spirit, sir, whose coming was foretold to me?" asked Scrooge.

"I am!"

The voice was soft and gentle. Singularly low, as if instead of being so close beside him, it were at a distance.
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A Christmas Carol - example 4

In the novel "A Christmas Carol", Dickens tries to show that Scrooge changes his attitude towards Christmas and life in itself. This happens after the events in the book shock him into becoming a better man. The extract provided demonstrates that Scrooge has "a cold within him," which makes the people around him believe he is cruel and coldhearted. Also the extract refers to him as being a "tight-fisted" man, this gives the reader the impression that Scrooge values money over people's opinions of him. It may also lead the reader to think Scrooge chooses to live in isolation, where money is his only companion. Throughout this extract the word "nobody" is repeated frequently, Dickens may have done this to emphasise that nobody could relate to Scrooge and nobody chose to associate with him because of his actions. It suggests that because of the way he is society has now outcast him.

In Stave 1 Dickens shows the reader Scrooge's attitude towards Christmas, charity and family; how he detests all of them. When Fred turns up at Scrooge's counting house to invite his uncle to Christmas dinner, Scrooge coldly turns him away. Scrooge plans to keep Christmas in his own way, this demonstrates he does not believe it is worthy of celebration. Fred is Scrooge's only member of family and he disregards him very easily, showing how Scrooge values his work above family. Towards the end of the first stave Marley's ghost visits Scrooge to warn him of his ways however, in response to this Scrooge only chooses to focus on how Marley was always a good man of business. Giving the reader the impression that in Scrooge's opinion the aim of life is to be successful no matter what the sacrifice is. Marley shows regret for his actions, this starts the ongoing theme of redemption. The ghost of Christmas past appears in Stave 2. She shows Scrooge why Belle could not marry him. Showing all throughout his life his obsession for money has always stopped him from being happy. Here Scrooge believes he
was stupid for letting money shadow his relationship showing he can see the error that he has made. This section highlights greed and Scrooge's passion for wealth. The ghost then shows him Belle with her new family enjoying Christmas, this highlights to him that if greed had not got in the way Scrooge could have been happy. In the present time Scrooge is shown Fred's Christmas party and the many guests enjoying themselves. This highlights the theme of how an everyday man can celebrate Christmas, also that Christmas is a time for coming together with people. During the games, to Scrooge's horror, the local people make fun of him and the way he acts. This is the first time in the novel Scrooge is made fully aware what people think of him. He learns that people do not admire his mind of business and instead people despise him. I believe this is the first thing that triggers Scrooge to change his ways. Also in Stave 3 the Cratchit family manage to enjoy Christmas with what little they have. Demonstrating that happiness can be achieved even for the poor, a concept Scrooge doesn't understand. This shows Scrooge that even though he has lots of money he has still not achieved happiness, despite Bob having almost no wealth he has still enjoyed life more than Scrooge. In Stave 4 Tiny Tim dies because nothing has been done about his condition because of the poor wages Bob receives. This is a key turning point for Scrooge as he, with all of his money, would have prolonged Tiny Tim's life. The ghost of Christmas yet to come makes Scrooge feel responsible and guilty for innocent Tiny Tim's death. This links to greed, his actions of greed have caused this to happen. Also it links to redemption as this event happening causes Scrooge to change his attitude and beliefs about money and charity. In the final stave Scrooge tries to amend all of his wrongdoings over the years. Firstly he is overcome by a new enthusiasm for Christmas and even life. He becomes consumed by this new happiness and filled with energy to fully enjoy his first Christmas. When dressing himself...
Scrooge is so giddy he tears the clothes, this demonstrates his change in attitude to money. Previously he has been protective and tight with his money, now however, he does not care that he has ripped garments that will cost money to replace. Scrooge visits Fred on Christmas, demonstrating he now values family and Christmas spirit. Dickens insinuates Scrooge asking for forgiveness off Fred for the neglect and dismissal he has faced all these years, when Scrooge asks permission to come in. This highlights the regret Scrooge is now feeling. Dickens, throughout the novel, shows that family and Christmas Spirit are key to enjoying life, however money is irrelevant to happiness. The novel shows the story of how Scrooge has to be shown the error of his ways before he can fully appreciate life by changing his ways.

This is a purposeful and assured answer with a clear sense of overview and evaluation throughout. It would receive a mark just into the bottom of Band 5. Closer reference to AO2 would make this a more secure Band 5 response.