

Worksheet 5 – Stave One: ‘Marley was dead’

Review: Lecture 4

In the fourth lecture of the unit, Prof. John McRae explored Dickens’s use of language at the opening of Stave One, and how Ebenezer is presented to the reader as a character.

- ✓ Complete the blanks from the images that are used to describe Scrooge:

solitary as an _____

A frosty _____ was on his head

Recall: Lecture 5

Answer these questions after watching the video lecture to check how much you remember.

1. What did Dickens do with the phrase “Merry Christmas”?
 - a) Popularised it
 - b) Invented it
 - c) Coined it
 - d) Translated it from German
2. What exclamation did Scrooge’s character make famous?
 - a) Merry Christmas!
 - b) Bah humbug!
 - c) Go to hell!
 - d) God bless!
3. In the story, how long ago did Jacob Marley die?
 - a) 3 years
 - b) 5 years
 - c) 7 years
 - d) 9 years

Analysis

4. Prof. McRae states ‘Christmas is a time for Scrooge of reckoning; that’s a nice irony’.
 - a) What does Prof. McRae mean by this statement?
 - b) How does the idea of “irony” link to the quotation below from Scrooge?

What's Christmas time to you but a time for paying bills without money; a time for finding yourself a year older, but not an hour richer; a time for balancing your books and having every item in 'em through a round dozen of months presented dead against you?

5. In his lecture, Prof McRae says: ‘When you hear the authorial persona giving you a subjective adjective like [‘pleasant’] he means that you... have got to like them as well’.

They were portly gentlemen, pleasant to behold, and now stood, with their hats off, in Scrooge's office.

- a) Find two other examples of where the narrative voice influences your opinion of a character.
- b) How would it be different if the story was narrated in the first person by Scrooge?
- c) Why is it important that we have an omniscient narrator in the story?

Evaluation

6. In Stave One, Scrooge suggests that the poor should be sent to prison or the workhouse. Dickens had campaigned against workhouses with his novel *Oliver Twist*. Using the image below and your own online research, write a diary entry as a nineteenth-century workhouse inmate, describing a typical day at the workhouse.



Women at the St Pancras Workhouse eating dinner (1911), Wikipedia public domain image

* *Hint: For your online research, you can begin with this article from the British Library on Dickens's attitude to workhouses: <https://www.bl.uk/romantics-and-victorians/articles/oliver-twist-and-the-workhouse>*

Glossary

- **Humbug** – (*noun*) deceptive, or false, talk or behaviour.
- **Reckoning** – the action or process of calculating or estimating something; the avenging or punishing of past mistakes or misdeeds.
- **Culpable** – deserving blame.
- **Portly** – having a stout body; of a stately or dignified figure.
- **Omniscient** – all-knowing.
- **Workhouse** – (in the UK) a public institution in which the destitute of a parish received board and lodging in return for work.

- **Treadmill** – a large wheel turned by the weight of people or animals treading on steps fitted into its inner surface, formerly used to drive machinery.