

## Worksheet 4 – Scrooge

### Review: Lecture 3: Comedy

In the previous lecture of the unit, Prof. Mullan discussed the importance of comedy in A Christmas Carol

- ✓ Based on what you learnt in the last lecture, give as many examples as you can where Scrooge hears laughter

### Recall: Lecture 4: Scrooge

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

1. What are the boy and the girl from the end of Stave Three called?  
a) Anger and Sadness  
b) Ignorance and Want  
c) Misery and hunger  
d) Ignorant and starving
2. Where was Dickens forced to work?  
a) A workhouse  
b) A farm  
c) A blacking factory  
d) A blacksmiths
3. What caused Dickens to make less money from A Christmas Carol than he hoped?  
a) The Illustrations  
b) The font  
c) The binding of the book  
d) The number of pages

### Analysis

4. In the lecture (2.38 – 2.54), Prof Mullan quotes from Stave One of A Christmas Carol

"Are there no prisons?" asked Scrooge.  
"Plenty of prisons," said the gentleman, laying down the pen again.  
"And the Union workhouses?" demanded Scrooge. "Are they still in operation?"  
...  
"Many can't go there; and many would rather die."  
"If they would rather die," said Scrooge, "they had better do it, and decrease the surplus population. Besides -- excuse me -- I don't know that."

How does Dickens show Scrooge's ruthless and unfeeling attitude to the poor?

### Evaluation

5. In the lecture (6.07 – 6.49), Prof Mullan quotes from Stave One of A Christmas Carol

He carried his own low temperature always about with him; he iced his office in the dogdays; 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.

How does Dickens use language to portray Scrooge as heartless?

Challenge: [Watch Prof. Michael Slater on the origins of A Christmas Carol](#)

What is the purpose of Scrooge's character according to Prof. Slater?

Transcript:

In 1843, Dickens was horrified by reading a Government report. It was, in fact, the second parliamentary report – The Parliamentary Commission on the Employment of Women and Children, showing the horrific conditions under which very young children were made to work under ground or to work tremendously long hours in appalling conditions in factories. Dickens read this and he described himself as being “perfectly stricken down by it” and he determined that he would strike, as he said, “the heaviest blow in my power” on behalf of these victims of the Industrial Revolution and in October 1843, he was giving a talk in Manchester. It was in the course of giving this talk in this large industrial city, that the idea came to him that the best thing he could do by way of calling public attention to the horror of this report, would be by writing a story, rather than an article – “Something that would strike the heaviest blow in my power”, as he said, “something that would come down with sledgehammer force” – and this was the conception of the Christmas Carol, beginning, of course, with the conception of Scrooge – that wonderful name, Scrooge – a combination of screw and gouge.

The idea of Scrooge as the ultimate miser, the ultimate loner, who had no feelings for the rest of humanity, except just for how much money he would make out of them. Then he had the concept of the three spirits – the Spirit of Christmas Past, Christmas Present and Christmas Future – by which, in one night – the night of Christmas Eve, Scrooge was to be converted from his extreme misanthropy to great benevolence and love of humanity. Scrooge is visited by three ghosts – The Ghost of Christmas Past, takes him back into his childhood and his young manhood, shows him the suffering that he himself underwent as a child. There's a particularly poignant scene where he's left alone in this barren, horrible schoolroom, while all the other children have gone home for the Christmas holidays and Dickens writes, ‘Scrooge sat down and wept to see him his former self as he had used to be.’ He begins with pity for himself, then he's shown further visions which make him very uncomfortable about his past, his engagement to a beautiful young girl and then the girl breaking off the engagement and Scrooge, in the present, as it were, is horrified to see himself becoming in the past, more and more miserly. Then the second visitor is the Ghost of Christmas Present – this great, jolly giant sitting on a great mound of turkeys and Christmas puddings and so forth, and he shows Scrooge the home life of his own poor clerk, whom he pays starvation wages to – 15 shillings a week – and Bob Cratchit has to keep his family of several children – including, of course, the crippled child, Tiny Tim – and he has to keep them on this meagre wage. But the Ghost of Christmas Present, shows Scrooge the family happiness at Christmas and Scrooge is shown even Bob Cratchit, who is a very devoted and faithful employee, despite the terrible way Scrooge treats him, even raises a glass to toast Mr. Scrooge. Scrooge is particularly concerned with the crippled child, Tiny Tim, and he says to the Ghost of Christmas Present, tell me if Tiny Tim will live, and the Ghost of Christmas Present says, well, if things don't change, then he will not be here for another Christmas – he will die. And Scrooge is filled with pity. He has this nostalgia first of all

about his own past and before he became corrupt, as it were, then pity for the Cratchits in the present and then the third – and most, the most frightening, of course, of the ghosts of the one who doesn't speak – is the Ghost of Christmas Yet to Come – this dark shadow who shows Scrooge visions of the horrible, bleak, desolate death of an unnamed man, who has cut himself off from all humanity and dies in solitude and is buried in a very horrible grave in a London churchyard. And Scrooge is made to read the name on that tombstone which, of course, is Scrooge. So, the third great component is fear, so there's nostalgia, pity and fear and these things work on Scrooge to convert him so that when he wakes up the next morning, it hasn't been three different nights, as he thinks – it's all happened in one night. He has been converted, of course, from this horrible old miser to one of the most benevolent and loving and outgoing of all possible human beings. And this is the very well-known story of the Christmas Carol, which gives us this wonderful story about change – how we can all change and become something much better.

Dickens said that he composed it in a kind of frenzy, walking about the black streets of London night after night, composing this story in his mind, getting it written in time for publication just immediately after Christmas 1843. He wanted it to be a very attractive little book, so he wanted his publishers to spare no expense – this included coloured illustrations – hand painted illustrations, which was, of course, enormously expensive, so that there was a contradiction there – I mean, Dickens wanted the book to reach the poorest readers, but it would be impossible for the publishers to publish it at less than five shillings, which was an enormous sum, of course, for a working class family to afford.

The illustrator was the very distinguished and famous artist, John Leech, who was the leading illustrator on the great comic magazine, Punch, and a very very close friend of Dickens. One of the most powerful illustrations is the illustration of the terrible children – they're just called Ignorance and Want, with whom the Ghost of Christmas Present confronts Scrooge at the end of that section of the Carol – just before the Ghost of Christmas Present – having shown him the Cratchit's dinner, having shown him all the happiness and joy of his nephew's Christmas party, the Ghost of Christmas Present is about to leave him. When he notices these rather claw-like feet, skin and bone, as it were – sticking out from under the robes of the ghost, who then reveals these two terrible children – wolfish, scowling, desperate – the Ghost of Christmas Present tells Scrooge, beware of these children and all of their degree. He's hinting at some terrible outbreak of revolution and so on and this was very much a fear of the 1840s – the hungry 40s as they were known – that there might occur in England, some kind of revolution, as there had occurred in France in the previous century and what is very interesting is that Leech – this is not in the text – he adds this himself, the background to this scene, where Scrooge confronts these two children, is factory chimneys – factories. The scene's supposed to take place in London, not in Manchester, but Leech, mindful I suppose, or having talked to Dickens about the horror of the report of the exploitation of children in mines and manufacturers, does have these factory chimneys behind, which is in this scene – which is very telling, I think. Anyway, the thing was written in just a few weeks and it was published, sold out immediately and was a huge, huge success. It was reviewed everywhere and universally praised. Thackeray, Dickens's great rival as a novelist, said in his review of the Christmas Carol, "it seems to me a national benefit and to every man and woman who reads it, a personal kindness."

It sold one edition after another. Of course, was put on the stage, Dickens couldn't control this – I mean, there was no copyright protection in those days, so that dramatists were free to seize on the work of novelists and turn them into plays and put them on the stage and I think there were about five different versions of the Carol running at the – at different London theatres, within weeks of the publication. He had hoped that the Carol would earn him a great deal of money but, in fact, the costs of production were so enormous that his profit in the end was very little. He could do nothing to stop the pirates, who he tried – he went to law to stop the pirated versions of the Carol, but

because copyright laws were so weak in those days, he couldn't do anything about it and he lost the case and as I've said before, he couldn't do anything about all the dramatisations. So, he had the mortification of seeing lots and lots of people making lots and lots of money out of the Carol, but he himself not at all making as much as he thought. However, it did hugely increase the intensity of that love affair that was the most important in Dickens's life – that love affair between himself and his public, that relationship that he called personally affectionate and like no other man's – and the Carol contributed hugely, of course, to this.

**Glossary:**

- **Cynicism:** *an inclination to believe that people are motivated purely by self-interest: "Nothing could change her cynicism about politics."*
- **Dog-days:** *The hottest days of summer*
- **Entreaty:** *an earnest or humble request: "the king turned a deaf ear to his entreaties"*
- **Eponym:** *A name becoming a word for something: Scrooge is a miserly person.*
- **Fable:** *a short story, typically with animals as characters, conveying a moral: "the fable of the sick lion and the wary fox"*
- **Ignorance:** *lack of knowledge or information: "he acted in ignorance of basic procedures"*
- **Malthus:** *A thinker who explored the idea that human populations needed to be reduced*
- **Palpable:** *(of a feeling or atmosphere) so intense as to seem almost tangible: "a palpable sense of loss"*
- **Surplus:** *an amount of something left over when requirements have been met; an excess of production or supply: "exports of food surpluses"*