



A CHRISTMAS CAROL BY CHARLES DICKENS

REDEMPTION

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DICKENS' INSTRUMENTS OF REDEMPTION

- Rebirth/redemption plot structure
- Marley's ghost
- The Ghost of Christmas Past
- The Ghost of Christmas Present
- The Ghost of Christmas Yet to Come
- Tiny Tim
- Seeing his grave
 - The Spirit stood among the graves, and pointed down to One. He advanced towards it trembling. The Phantom was exactly as it had been, but he dreaded that he saw new meaning in its solemn shape. "Before I draw nearer to that stone to which you point," said Scrooge, "answer me one question. Are these the shadows of the things that Will be, or are they shadows of things that May be, only?" Still the Ghost pointed downward to the grave by which it stood. "Men's courses will foreshadow certain ends, to which, if persevered in, they must lead," said Scrooge. "But if the courses be departed from, the ends will change. Say it is thus with what you show me!" The Spirit was immovable as ever. Scrooge crept towards it, trembling as he went; and following the finger, read upon the stone of the neglected grave his own name, EBENEZER SCROOGE.

OVERVIEW

The theme of redemption is the whole point of Dickens' A Christmas Carol.

- Ebenezer Scrooge -- a name that has become synonymous with an angry temperant and excessive thriftiness during the holiday season -- is man desperately indeed of redeeming qualities.
 - He is an aging businessman who has lost all sense of humanity with regard to his treatment of others,
 - especially those less fortunate than himself.
 - Christmas, a time of spiritual redemption and festive atmosphere, is anathema to Scrooge.
 - The premature of death of his friend and business partner Jacob Marley has left him friendless and lacking in any kind of personal connection.

REDEMPTION/REBIRTH PLOT STRUCTURE





- Rebirth stories tell of change, renewal and transformation after spiraling deeper into villainy but then meeting a redemption figure. They start with the hero under the shadow of a corrupting influence that may make the hero seem evil or at least misguided.
- Redemption figures usually come in the form of a child or the protagonist's other half, and they serve to remind the villain-hero what compassion or love feels like. They also help the villain-hero see what the world alignment is actually like, instead of the warped perception that the protagonist has that has given them the proclivity towards villainy.
- In this plot structure, the reader/audience discovers the protagonist as a lost soul, someone who has become disconnected from the rest of humanity and / or from his purpose in life; therefore, this plot structure is about reconnecting with humanity and rediscovering life's purpose
- Forms of rebirth include:
 - Traumatic experience and awakening to a new beginning.
 - Low self-esteem being increased following discovery of one's potential.
 - Inner conflict as the kinder side of one's character wins over the selfish self.
- The plots of Rebirth stories can be very compelling, because they are often about unlikeable protagonists coming good in the end. Classic examples include the six Star Wars films (in relation to Anakin Skywalker/Darth Vader's story arc), *Beauty and the Beast*, *A Christmas Carol* and *The Secret Garden*.
- The reason why they are so compelling is because the main character is damaged in some way and have allowed that damage to consume everything that is good about them. They are not meant to be liked or sympathised with by the audience at first, but something, usually in the form of another character, helps them have a revelation which allows them to go through their rebirth.
- Another interesting aspect of the rebirth plot structure is that because they start off by encouraging us to dislike the protagonist, they can often force us to become aware of our own prejudices; they are also effective in training our empathy because the author sets up the protagonist to be disliked, but then reveals the trauma they went through, which caused them to become hardened characters, thus evoking our empathy by calling us put ourselves in their shoes. In a way, we see how anyone, including ourselves could end up just like them.

CONTEXTUAL OVERVIEW

Scrooge's initial penny-pinching reflects the values taking hold during the Industrial Revolution.

- Dickens illustrates what happens when individuals view relationships and other people through the prism of money.

Dickens proposes that connecting individuals to one another is what ultimately corrects the social injustice created by capitalism.

Marley's ghost serves as a reminder of Scrooge's guilt in casting away his family and friends

- Many of the people Scrooge mistreats are innocent, less fortunate, and/ or loving.

Scrooge's dysfunctional relationship with his father left him with a fear of connecting to others.





HOPE FOR REDEMPTION

Scrooge appears beyond hope.

- He treats his employee, Bob Cratchit, and Cratchit's family with contempt, making Bob work long hours without breaks and for minimal wages.
 - Scrooge's antipathy toward the Christmas season, when families assemble, exchange gifts, and enjoy each other's company, sets the stage for the life-altering experience that lies ahead.
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INDIVIDUAL REDEMPTION

On the other hand, the solution to social injustice in "A Christmas Carol" is not a social movement but individual redemption

- The world becomes a better place almost immediately following Scrooge's conversion
 - In fact, the story implies that a renewed connection to humanity is, in fact, the very essence of redemption
 - Though the Christmas setting invites a traditional Christian interpretation of Scrooge's redemption, his change is rooted not in a commitment to deeper spirituality or orthodoxy but in an authentic connection to and investment in the lives of other human beings
 - This "conversion" is not introspective and personal; it is outward-looking and social
 - While the results seem to change nothing about the social structure itself, the compassion shown by individual people changes the social relationships they share.
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GUILT AND INNOCENCE

Often in ghost stories, the ghostly apparitions function to remind the main character of something evil he or she has done in the past

- In other words, ghosts act as the character's conscience
 - Scrooge certainly has enough to feel guilty about:
 - he is mean and tight-fisted with his assistant, Bob Cratchit;
 - dismissive of his nephew, Fred;
 - miserly and cold with the men from the local charity association;
 - and nasty to the little caroler that he chases away from his keyhole with a ruler
 - Each of these people are associated with some form of innocence, a reminder of the less fortunate or the love of family and friends.
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Marley's ghost raises the question of guilt directly, explaining that he himself is forced to walk the earth as a ghost because he was a heartless, self-involved man





- The ghosts of Christmas Past, Present and Future make no accusations toward Scrooge about his behavior—but with the warning that Marley has given him, Scrooge interprets the visits to mean that unless he changes his life and learns to value the people around him, he will end up like Marley
 - Moreover, by revisiting events and people from his past, he realizes just how much he has missed by shutting himself off from family, friends, and coworkers
 - With the help of the ghosts, he resolves to change his life.

MARLEY AND REDEMPTION

Marley, Scrooge's former partner, is the instrument of Scrooge's redemption.

- When Scrooge is visited by the ghost of Jacob Marley, he is shocked by the chains his deceased friends has been condemned to drag around interminably.
 - Jacob Marley has died deep in the sin of indifference to the needs of others.
 - It is a fate that is illustrated as one of aimless wandering, heavily burdened with the chains "he forged in life, link by link" through his callous, stingy, materialistic behavior.
 - Marley plays a central role in convincing Scrooge that he must change his life or face an eternity of suffering.
 - It is Marley who visits Scrooge as a ghost and acts as his conscience, reminding him of all the indifference they, as business partners, showed in their efforts to grow wealthy.
 - Marley must convince Scrooge that there are consequences to his behavior. He tells Scrooge to expect three spirits.
 - Marley warns Scrooge that such a fate awaits him unless he changes his ways.

THE GHOSTS AND REDEMPTION

During the night, Scrooge is visited by three ghosts, one who shows him his past, including the happy times when he was a young, up-and-coming businessman, but also the beginnings of the transition toward the man he would become.

THE GHOST OF CHRISTMAS PRESENT AND REDEMPTION

The Ghost of Christmas Present shows Scrooge the happiness he is missing out on by virtue of his anti-social behavior and hatred of the holiday spirit that brings out the best in others.

- Most importantly, he is shown the Cratchit family, in all its poverty, with the youngest child, Tim, crippled by disease, basking in the warm glow of each other.





- o These people are happy despite their position in life.
 - Scrooge is deeply affected by what he has witnessed, especially the death of Tim and of the isolation he faces in the afterlife.
 - “Spirit,” said Scrooge, with an interest he had never felt before, “tell me if Tiny Tim will live.”

“I see a vacant seat,” replied the Ghost, “in the poor chimney- corner, and a crutch without an owner, carefully preserved. If these shadows remain unaltered by the Future, the child will die.”

“No, no,” said Scrooge. “Oh, no, kind Spirit! say he will be spared.”

“If these shadows remain unaltered by the Future, none other of my race,” returned the Ghost, “will find him here. What then? If he be like to die, he had better do it, and decrease the surplus population.”

Scrooge hung his head to hear his own words quoted by the Spirit, and was overcome with penitence and grief.

THE GHOST OF CHRISTMAS YET TO COME AND REDEMPTION

The final apparition to visit Scrooge that night, the Ghost of Christmas Yet to Come, shows Scrooge what awaits him, and the Cratchit family, to which he is related, lest he change his ways.

- Tiny Tim dies from the disease that has crippled him, followed by his own death and funeral, during which his old business associates demonstrate a marked ambivalence about his passing.
 - o Scrooge is then given the exceedingly rare opportunity to see his grave, untended and lonely in a dark cemetery.
 - The frightening apparition that is the Ghost of Christmas Yet to Come standing over him in the desolate graveyard convinces Scrooge to mend his ways.

SELF-REFLECTION AND SCROOGE’S REDEMPTION

Upon waking from the night's restless slumber, the visions of what transpired still in his head, Scrooge is an entirely different man,

- no longer miserly and angry,
- no longer without regard for those less fortunate for himself,
- and with a new-found sense of family toward the Cratchits.
 - o He redeems himself immediately with demonstrations of largess and a radically transformed demeanor.
 - He has found redemption.
 - The story ends with Ebenezer Scrooge redressing wrongs, the "shadows of what may be."
 - o Scrooge finds personal redemption through a tortuous night of self-reflection.



