

Exam Task 1

Read the following extract from the final chapter of *A Christmas Carol* and then answer the question that follows.

In this extract, Scrooge is a better man.

"A merry Christmas, Bob," said Scrooge, with an earnestness that could not be mistaken, as he clapped him on the back. "A merrier Christmas, Bob, my good fellow, than I have given you for many a year. I'll raise your salary, and endeavour to assist your struggling family, and we will discuss your affairs this very afternoon, over a Christmas bowl of smoking bishop, Bob. Make up the fires, and buy another coal-scuttle before you dot another i, Bob Cratchit!"

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. Some people laughed to see the alteration in him, but he let them laugh, and little heeded them; for he was wise enough to know that nothing ever happened on this globe, for good, at which some people did not have their fill of laughter in the outset; and knowing that such as these would be blind anyway, he thought it quite as well that they should wrinkle up their eyes in grins, as have the malady in less attractive forms. His own heart laughed: and that was quite enough for him.

Starting with this extract, how does Dickens present Scrooge's transformation into a more admirable man?

Write about:

- * How Dickens presents Scrooge in this extract.
- * How Dickens presents Scrooge's transformation in the novel as a whole.

[30 marks]

Sample Answer

Dickens uses Scrooge to show the division between the rich and the poor in his time, and also as a clarion call to his readership: he wants them to see the value and power of change, and how it is essential for society to progress. Scrooge is presented initially as a greedy, self-centred, un-sharing individual with no care for others and their situations. But by the end Scrooge has become enlightened with understanding of the difficulties of the less fortunate people and their own suffering family. This knowledge makes a very generous and empathetic being. "I'll raise your salary." Scrooge wouldn't even give a shilling to charity, like when the "Portly fellow" gives Scrooge the opportunity to donate to which he replies "If they (the poor) are going to die they should just do it and decrease the surplus population," but now he is offering his very own charity and time by choice and will "endeavour to assist Bob's struggling family."

The Scrooge of chapter 1 is shown as a very emotionally cold, stunted person giving the reader the impression/knowledge that he is a very unpleasant and sour protagonist. But in the extract from the end of the story Scrooge becomes a very admirable man. Dickens uses a metaphor in Scrooge's dialogue "We'll discuss your affairs over a Christmas bowl of smoking bishop." This is used to show how Scrooge has metaphorically 'thawed out' and his icy, cold mental persona is now one of warmth and welcoming, shown by a hot bowl of something pleasurable.

As well as this, there is a transformation in Scrooge's dialogue. In the beginning of the novel Scrooge's reply to "Merry Christmas" or anything he dislikes would be "Bah Humbug", whereas in the extract taken from the end it is Scrooge saying "Merry Christmas!" to Bob and everyone else. The exclamation marks in Scrooge's speech represent his excitement rather than anger in the beginning of the story. He laughs, sings and cheers, and no longer grunts and groans.

Dickens uses repetition of words such as 'laughter, grin and good' all of these suggest Scrooge's feelings and how it now positively impacts those around him, rather than pushing them away. Dickens, in the extract, describes Scrooge as "a good friend as good a master and a good man, as the good old city knew, or any other good old city, town or borough in the good old world." This description is the complete opposite to how Scrooge was described in the opening of the novel, "cold, frosty, chilled, unpleasant." Everyone knows of his transformation.

The fact that Scrooge allowed people to laugh "on seeing the alteration in him" tells the reader he has become much less self-centred and conscious of what others think of him. Instead he puts his efforts into Tiny Tim becoming "a second father." He becomes very friendly and welcoming, "Scrooge was even better than his word," rather than reclusive and secretive at the beginning of the novel (especially with his money and feelings). Even words couldn't describe Scrooge's kindness.

Dickens shows Scrooge's 'thawing'/transformation stating "His own heart laughed." This use of personification shows Scrooge was happy from the inside out, no more emotionally stunted and frozen like he was. "This was quite enough for Scrooge," even without the presence of money and luxury, Scrooge believed there was more to happiness than wealth. There would be no more denying Bob of any warmth and coal for a fire. "Make up the fires, and buy another coal scuttle!"

During the course of the novel, his greed transforms into sharing which brings Scrooge more joy than ever before, keeping things for himself like his money and luxuries, e.g. coal and warmth, time and thoughts. Throughout the novel Scrooge has become increasingly empathetic and thoughtful. In the beginning he didn't care about charity and poor people in need, wishing that "if poor people are going to die, they should do it and decrease the surplus population." But by the end he has changed his ways so Tiny Tim doesn't die (as told by the Ghost of Christmas Present "If these shadows remain unaltered by the future, none other of my race will find him here, the child will die") and he ensures his actions impact people positively.

There are several factors influencing Scrooge's transformation: initially, it is a kind of nostalgia for the past. His admiration for Fezziwig's open celebration of Christmas and his employees makes Scrooge want to 'say a word to my clerk'. There is also some pity present to – his misery at seeing Belle's happiness and the love of her family saddens him, and crucially, the pity he feels for the Cratchits and Tiny Tim is a motivating factor. There is self-pity for his isolated childhood. The final strand in his transformation is fear of his own lonely and unrecognised death. Taken together, the visions he is shown have a transformative effect on the miser and underline the moral of the novel: that fairness and community are far more important to human happiness than money.

Overall, Scrooge's transformation is very dramatic. The contrast of coldness and warmth from the beginning to the end of the extract is very effective in representing the gradual transformation of Scrooge. The alteration in his dialogue and actions from grunting to cheering and "whoop-halloo!" shows his change in mood and actions very clearly, as does his transformation of greed into sharing and generosity in the end of the novel, making him a much more admirable man.

Sample Answer Commentary

This answer starts well, giving a thoughtful overview of Dickens' overall message which ties nicely with the focus of the question. The rest of the first paragraph uses effective examples to demonstrate the nature of Scrooge's transformation. The second paragraph sees how Dickens uses the heat/cold metaphor to exemplify Scrooge's journey, and links this to an effective reference.

The middle section is highly competent and offers some more useful examples to make the overall point – there is a good use of both the extract and the novel as a whole. The student does well to see aspects of Dickens’ method. Perhaps the most effective section is the penultimate paragraph, which gives a perceptive overview of the forces affecting Scrooge’s change, and makes some very thoughtful comments about Dickens’ intent.

This essay blossoms towards the end – enough to warrant a mark in Level 6.

Below is a student-friendly mark scheme.

- Level 1 (0-5 marks) – SIMPLE ANSWERS
These are brief answers which don’t really answer the question in any depth. They might be re-tellings of the stories. Often poorly phrased.
- Level 2 (6-10 marks) – RELEVANT ANSWERS
These are answers which do answer the question in a basic way. They are often ‘PE’ answers – ie, there are several POINTS made, followed by EXAMPLES, but not much in the way of discussion or detail.
- Level 3 (11-15 marks) – EXPLAINED ANSWERS
These are straightforward answers which make sense and have some detail. They are often a collection of PEE paragraphs (POINT-EVIDENCE-EXPLANATION).
- Level 4 (16-20 marks) – CLEAR ANSWERS
These are essays which have some detail where several sensible points are being made. There is a bit more depth in the explanation of points. The phrasing makes clear sense.
- Level 5 (21-25 marks) – THOUGHTFUL ANSWERS
These types of answer show the examiner that once or twice there are moments of genuine thought, where a really good point is being made. Phrasing is clear.
- Level 6 (26-30 marks) – DETAILED/PERCEPTIVE ANSWERS
These answers have one or two moments of impressive points. They are conceptual – they link to the wider ideas of the text and argue points convincingly. Phrasing is fluent.