

A Christmas Carol Revision Toolkit

The Information

- Literature Paper 1 Section B (19th Century Literature)
- 30 marks (no SPG for this question)
- 50 minutes approximately

The Process

- You have no choice of question.
- Read the question carefully, highlighting the key words. Then read the extract, annotating it with a focus on the question. You need to find two things to write about.
- You then need to think of two further points to make which come from different parts of the novella.
- Each point needs to be developed into a PEARL paragraph.
- Interleave your answer: Intro, write about the extract, focus on a different part of the novella, back to the extract, another different part, conclusion. That way, if you run out of time you will have covered the extract and something else.

Example Question

Read this extract from Stave 3 of A Christmas Carol and then answer the question that follows.

In this extract, Scrooge and The Ghost of Christmas Present are watching the Cratchit family on Christmas Day.

There was nothing of high mark in this. They were not a handsome family; they were not well dressed; their shoes were far from being waterproof; their clothes were scanty; and Peter might have known, and very likely did, the inside of a pawnbroker's. But, they were happy, grateful, pleased with one another, and contented with the time; and 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.

By this time it was getting dark, and snowing pretty heavily; and as Scrooge and the Spirit went along the streets, the brightness of the roaring fires in kitchens, parlours, and all sorts of rooms, was wonderful. Here, the flickering of the blaze showed preparations for a cosy dinner, with hot plates baking through and through before the fire, and deep red curtains, ready to be drawn to shut out cold and darkness. There all the children of the house were running out into the snow to meet their married sisters, brothers, cousins, uncles, aunts, and be the first to greet them. Here, again, were shadows on the window-blind of guests assembling; and there a group of handsome girls, all hooded and furbooted, and all chattering at once, tripped lightly off to some near neighbour's house; where, woe upon the single man who saw them enter – artful witches, well they knew it – in a glow!

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Starting with this extract, how does Dickens present the importance of family in A Christmas Carol?

Write about:

- how Dickens presents the Cratchits in this extract
- how Dickens presents the importance of family in the novel as a whole.

[30 marks]

Model Answer (part of)

Dickens presents the Cratchits as the ideal family unit and in stark contrast to Scrooge. A list is used to show their contentment within the family: 'they were happy, grateful, pleased with one another, and contented with the time'. Dickens' use of synonyms for happy serves to show the reader that family and togetherness is more important than wealth. Indeed, Dickens describes their appearance as 'not handsome' and 'scanty', suggesting they live in poverty. This is directly juxtaposed with the description of their happiness, revealing that wealth is not a necessity, but family is. The middle-class Victorian reader is encouraged to look beyond their poverty and to sympathise with the Cratchits. The family unit was under threat in the 19th century, particularly working-class families. Those in need of help at the workhouse were split apart from their families. Dickens is perhaps, not too subtly, suggesting that families are better off together than apart.

Tips / How to get the marks

- You need to know the text really well. There is no substitute for this.
- The examiner wants to know your response to the text.
- They want to see quotations (or references).
- They want you to discuss and analyse language and structure.
- They expect you to know something about the context of the text.
- Stick to PEARL and you will cover all these aspects.
- It is far better to do fewer paragraphs in detail than to try to cover everything in the novella.

Revision Resources

- Sites – BBC Bitesize: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/education/topics/zcs8qty>
- YouTube - Mr Bruff, A Christmas Carol Analysis:
<https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLqGFsWf-P-cBhNFIdX59nQmTodoDmDQsh>
Stave by Stave analysis:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5bP9rxKxxUU&list=PL729B02F87FA19875>
- Audiobook link – on YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pE-DitMajYg&list=PLIHYEj8d4mzn7fcYoNZniAs7Y9MG65EFF>