

Macbeth KNOWLEDGE ORGANISER

Context – The play was written by William Shakespeare, and was first performed around 1606	
<p>Shakespeare's Time – Shakespeare wrote at the time of two monarchs: Queen Elizabeth I and James I. The plays that he wrote during the period of Queen Elizabeth are generally happy and joyful, reflecting the mood at the time. However, darker plays such as Macbeth were written in the era of James I, which was far more unstable. For example, the gunpowder plot was the year before.</p>	<p>James I – 1606 was early in the reign of James I, who was an admirer of Shakespeare's plays, and a patron of his acting company. It is doubtless, therefore, that Shakespeare had the king in mind when writing a play about Macbeth, a figure from Scottish ancestry. Furthermore, King James's family claimed to have descended from a historical figure named Banquo.</p>
<p>The Divine Right of Kings – Divine Right asserts that monarchs were appointed from God above, and that any attempt to question them was to question God himself. This was a widely-held view at the time. King James I often quoted divine right to cement his place on the throne. A play involving a good, 'God-given' king, and the demise of a king-slayer would no doubt have gone down well with King James at the time.</p>	<p>The Role of Women – Despite the strength of Elizabeth I's reign, society at the time was patriarchal – women were considered inferior to men. Women belonged to their fathers (or brothers if their fathers had died) and then their husbands. They were not permitted to own land or enter most professions. They were instead expected to bear children, and be gentle and womanly. Lady Macbeth would therefore be at odds with what was expected of women.</p>
<p>Witches and the Supernatural – At the time of Shakespeare, the belief in witches and the supernatural was extremely strong, and many so-called 'witches' were burnt at the stake. There is no doubt, therefore, that some of the ideas in the play would have been taken very seriously, such as the witches' prophecies, Macbeth being seemingly 'possessed' and his vivid hallucinations.</p>	<p>Healthcare and Medicine – Healthcare and medicine were not as advanced in Shakespeare's age as they are today – there were numerous ailments and diseases that were not yet understood. Furthermore, there were many wars in which scores of men were killed. Therefore, death was a much more frequent thought for people at the time. The high death count in the play would therefore seem slightly more ordinary!</p>

Main Characters – Consider what Shakespeare intended through his characterisation of each of the below...	
Macbeth – Macbeth is the lead protagonist of the play. He is introduced as a Scottish general who is thought to be a brave and strong soldier. However, he is easily persuaded to commit the murder of a king that he loves. He becomes a tyrannical and destructive king, who responds to all threats (including his own insecurities) through violence and murder.	Lady Macbeth – Macbeth's wife, an extremely ambitious woman who lusts for power. At the beginning of the play, she seems stronger than Macbeth, urging and aiding him to kill Duncan. Later in the play, however, she becomes racked with guilt and madness, proving unable to come to terms with what they have done. Her conscience affects her to such a degree that she eventually commits suicide.
First Scene: Act I Scene III Final Scene: Act V Scene VIII	First Scene: Act I Scene V Final Scene: Act V Scene V
Duncan – Duncan is the kind and loved King of Scotland who Macbeth murders in order to fulfil his ambition and the witches' prophecy. Duncan is a virtuous King, who is both compassionate and rational – he forms a stark contrast with Macbeth as king. When Duncan dies, order in Scotland is shattered. It is only restored when his son, Malcolm eventually takes the throne.	Macduff – A Scottish nobleman who is dubious and hostile towards Macbeth's reign from the beginning. His wife and young son are murdered by Macbeth. Macduff leads the battle against Macbeth's tyrannical reign, eventually becoming the man who kills Macbeth (in line with the witch's prophecy as he was not of 'woman born.') In doing so, he helps Malcolm to the throne.
First Scene: Act I Scene II Final Scene: Act II Scene I	First Scene: Act II Scene III Final Scene: Act V Scene VIII
The Three Witches – The witches represent trickery, manipulation and the supernatural. They use charms, spells and prophecies to prompt Macbeth into murdering Duncan. There is some ambivalence over how much of their power comes from supernatural abilities, as opposed to knowing the weaknesses of their victim. In any case, they take pleasure in toying with human lives and emotions.	Banquo – Banquo is a brave and noble gentleman who is a friend and fellow soldier to Macbeth. Banquo is also given prophecies by the witches, but unlike Macbeth, he chooses not to act on them. After being murdered, Banquo's ghost returns to haunt Macbeth, causing him a great deal of fright, and reminding him of the path he chose not to take. In accordance with the witches' prophecies, Banquo's descendants later take their place on the throne.
First Scene: Act I Scene I Final Scene: Act IV Scene I	First Scene: Act I Scene III Final Scene: Act III Scene IV

Themes – A theme is an idea or message that runs throughout a text.	
Unchecked Ambition – The tale of Macbeth ruthlessly exposes the dangers of ambition when it is not held by moral constraints. Ambition turns Macbeth from a brave and loyal Scottish general into a murderous tyrant. Lady Macbeth is another example of this theme, as she is unable to deal with the acts that she and Macbeth have committed to fuel their ambition, and so commits suicide.	
Fate vs Free Will – Throughout the play, the audience is frequently forced to question the notion of fate vs free will – does the story pan out the way that it does because it was pre-ordained, or because of the actions that Macbeth chose to take? Macbeth fervently attempts to fight the negative aspects of his fate, and yet it is these very actions (his free will) that cause the predetermined downfall (fate).	
Gender, Masculinity and Femininity – Lady Macbeth manipulates her husband by questioning his masculinity, as he originally declines to murder King Duncan for the throne. She states that she wishes she could be 'unsexed' so as to give her bravery to commit the deed. Masculinity is frequently associated with raw aggression, and femininity with weakness and kindness.	
Inversion of the Natural Order – Wherever the natural order is disturbed in Macbeth (the three supernatural witches, the murder of a king) disorder and chaos soon follow. There is only peace when the natural order is restored (Malcolm is seated on the throne). In line with the beliefs of King James, through Macbeth Shakespeare expresses that the inversion of the natural order is dangerous and destructive.	

Scene-by-Scene Summary – Take note of the key quotations from each scene.		
Act 1 Scene 1	Three witches meet on a heath. They plot to trick Macbeth at a later time.	<i>Fair is foul and foul is fair, Hover through the fog and filthy air.</i>
Act 1 Scene 2	King Duncan is told of Macbeth's bravery in battle. He tells a messenger to award him Thane of Cawdor.	<i>No more that thane of Cawdor shall deceive... ...And with his former title greet Macbeth.</i>
Act 1 Scene 3	The witches confront Macbeth and Banquo and deliver their prophecies. The messenger arrives to tell Macbeth that he is the Thane of Cawdor.	<i>All hail, Macbeth! hail to thee, thane of Glamis! All hail, Macbeth, hail to thee, thane of Cawdor! All hail, Macbeth, thou shalt be king hereafter!</i>
Act 1 Scene 4	At the King's Palace, Duncan names Malcolm (his eldest son) as his successor.	<i>The Prince of Cumberland! that is a step On which I must fall down, or else o'erleap,</i>
Act 1 Scene 5	At Macbeth's castle, Lady Macbeth receives a letter from Macbeth detailing the witches' prophecies. She plans Duncan's murder, but fears that Macbeth is too kind to fulfil his ambition.	<i>You spirits / That tend on mortal thoughts, unsex me here, / And fill me from the crown to the toe top-full / Of direst cruelty.</i>
Act 1 Scene 6	Duncan arrives at Macbeth's castle. He professes his love for Macbeth as a dear friend.	<i>Conduct me to mine host: we love him highly, And shall continue our graces towards him.</i>
Act 1 Scene 7	Macbeth has doubts about the assassination. Lady Macbeth tells him of the plot and he then agrees to it.	<i>If it were done when 'tis done, then 'twere well It were done quickly...</i>
Act 2 Scene 1	Banquo and Fleance arrive. When they depart to bed, Macbeth sees a vision of a dagger leading him towards Duncan's chamber.	<i>Is this a dagger which I see before me, The handle toward my hand? Come, let me clutch thee.</i>
Act 2 Scene 2	Macbeth emerges from the chamber, visibly shaken. He has forgotten to place the daggers with the chamberlains to absolve the blame. Lady Macbeth must return them.	<i>Will all great Neptune's ocean wash this blood Clean from my hand? Sleep no more, / Macbeth does murder sleep</i>
Act 2 Scene 3	Macduff arrives and finds Duncan dead. Macbeth explains that he killed the chamberlain in rage. Duncan's sons flee.	<i>O horror, horror, horror! Tongue nor heart Cannot conceive nor name thee!</i>
Act 2 Scene 4	Macduff tells Ross, a thane, that Macbeth has been named King.	<i>The sovereignty will fall upon Macbeth.</i>
Act 3 Scene 1	Macbeth, fearing the witches' prophecies about Banquo's descendants sitting on the throne, arranges to have Banquo and Fleance killed.	<i>It is concluded. Banquo, thy soul's flight, If it find heaven, must find it out to-night.</i>
Act 3 Scenes 2-3	Macbeth tells Lady Macbeth of his plan to kill Banquo. Elsewhere, the murderers kill Banquo, but Fleance escapes.	<i>O, treachery! Fly, good Fleance, fly, fly! Thou mayst revenge. O slave!</i>
Act 3 Scene 4	Macbeth holds a banquet. He sees the ghost of Banquo and becomes hysterical. The guests are eventually asked to leave by Lady Macbeth.	<i>I pray you, speak not; he grows worse and worse; Question enrages him. At once, good night:</i>
Act 3 Scenes 5-6	The witches are scolded by Hecate for their meddling. Elsewhere, Lennox tells of Macduff gathering an army to fight Macbeth.	<i>May soon return to this our suffering country Under a hand accursed!</i>
Act 4 Scene 1	Macbeth again visits the witches, and through terrible apparitions is given several new prophecies regarding his fate. The witches then vanish.	<i>beware Macduff;...none of woman born/Shall harm Macbeth...Great Birnam wood to high Dunsinane hill Shall come against him.</i>
Act 4 Scenes 2-3	Macduff's wife and children are murdered by Macbeth's assassins. Macduff and Malcolm unite in order to fight Macbeth.	<i>Macbeth/Is ripe for shaking, and the powers above Put on their instruments.</i>
Act 5 Scene 1	A doctor and gentlewoman watch Lady Macbeth sleepwalk. She talks of the murders of Duncan and Banquo, and imagines stubborn blood on her hands.	<i>Out, damned spot; out, I say... Yet who would have thought the old man to have had so much blood in him?</i>
Act 5 Scene 2	Lords discuss how the rebel army will gather at Birnam Wood.	<i>Make we our march towards Birnam.</i>
Act 5 Scenes 3-4	Inside, Macbeth boasts that none of woman born can harm him. Macduff and co gather at Birnam Wood.	<i>I will not be afraid of death and bane, Till Birnam forest come to Dunsinane.</i>
Act 5 Scene 5	A scream is heard at Macbeth's castle. It is announced that Lady Macbeth is dead (suicide). Macbeth reacts numbly. A messenger reveals that the trees of Birnam Wood are advancing.	<i>Life is "a tale / Told by an idiot, full of sound and fury, / Signifying nothing"</i>
Act 5 Scenes 6-7	The battle begins. Macbeth fights without fear, as he believes no man born of woman can harm him. The castle is breached.	<i>But swords I smile at, weapons laugh to scorn, Brandish'd by man that's of a woman born.</i>
Act 5 Scene 8	Macbeth and Macduff finally meet. Macduff reveals that he was born by caesarean section (not 'by woman born.') He kills Macbeth. Malcolm is proclaimed King.	<i>Tell thee, Macduff was from his mother's womb Untimely ripp'd. Hail, King of Scotland!</i>

Dramatic Devices in Macbeth	Features of a Tragedy in Macbeth
Dramatic Irony	<i>'t is a peerless kinsman.</i> Duncan trusts Macbeth. The audience knows that Macbeth is plotting Duncan's murder.
Soliloquy	<i>This supernatural soliciting cannot be ill, cannot be good.</i> Macbeth's soliloquy reveals his inner torment.
Aside	<i>The Prince of Cumberland, that is a step that I must fall down.</i> Macbeth reveals his ambition through an aside.
Rhyming Couplet	<i>Away and mock the time, with fairest show/ False face must hide what the heart doth know.</i>
	Tragic Hero - A main character cursed by fate and possessed of a tragic flaw (Macbeth). 
	Hamartia - The fatal character flaw of the tragic hero (ambition).
	Catharsis - The release of the audience's emotions through empathy with the characters. 
	Internal Conflict - The struggle the hero engages in with his/her fatal flaw.



AN INSPECTOR CALLS

KNOWLEDGE ORGANISER

Context – *An Inspector Calls* was written by J.B. Priestley, and was first performed in the UK in 1946. However, it is set in 1912.

J.B. Priestley – John Boynton Priestley was born in Yorkshire in 1894. He fought in the First World War and came very close to death on a couple of occasions. In the 1930s, Priestley became concerned with the effects of social inequality in Britain, and in 1942 set up a new political party, the Common Wealth Party. It merged with the Labour Party, and was integral in developing the welfare state.



Pre and Post-War – Before the First World War, there was deemed to be a general air of complacency regarding the prospect of any war taking place. There were strong distinctions between upper and lower classes, and women were subservient to men in society. After the Second World War ended in 1945, class distinctions had been greatly reduced by the two wars, and women had earned a more valued place in society (they had filled in for men whilst they were away at war). After 1945, there was a greater desire for social change.



Realism and Postmodernism – Many see *An Inspector Calls* as a play that combines contrasting styles. Certainly, it contains elements of both realism (popular early in the 20th Century) and postmodernism (which became popular later). The play features very real characters, speaking in common prose in a similar manner to dialogue in a novel. However, with the presence of the Inspector, Priestley introduces elements that are beyond rational reasoning and explanations.



Socialism – Socialism is an approach to economic and social systems that is characterised by social ownership, democratic control, and high levels of equity. Socialist regimes are generally concerned with ensuring that disparities between wealth and social status are erased across society. After the two World Wars, British society was far more open to socialist ideas. In *An Inspector Calls*, the Inspector harbours socialist attitudes.



Social and Moral Responsibility – Attitudes towards social and moral responsibility changed rapidly in the time between when the play was set (1912) and the time when the play was written (1946). In 1912, the general attitude of those with social and economic sway was towards looking after oneself and one's family. By the mid-1940s, however, Clement Attlee's Labour party won a landslide election, reflecting a wave of enthusiasm towards communal responsibility for everyone in society.



The Titanic – RMS Titanic was a British passenger liner that sank in the North Atlantic Ocean in the morning hours of 15th April 1912. As around 1,500 people died, it was one of the deadliest commercial maritime disasters in modern history. The Titanic was designed to be the pinnacle of both safety and comfort, and due to its enormous size and quality was frequently labelled 'unsinkable.' In *An Inspector Calls*, Birling claims this, thus immediately losing respect from the audience.



Main Characters

– Consider what Priestley intended through his characterisation of each of the below...

Arthur Birling – Arthur is the patriarch of the Birling family. He is described as a 'portentous man in his early fifties.' His success as a businessman in the manufacturing industry allows the Birlings to live in upper-middle class comfort. He believes in capitalist principles and rejects socialist ideas of responsibility for one another in society. He considers his daughters' engagement as good for business.

Quote: "You'll have a good laugh over it yet."

Sybil Birling – Sybil is the matriarch of the Birling family. She is often described as being a 'cold' character. It is suggested that Sybil comes from a family of higher social standing than Arthur, and at times she reminds him of proper social etiquette. She serves on a local committee to aid those in need, and seems primarily consumed with protecting the family's public image.

Quote: "They're over-tired. In the morning they'll be as amused as we are."

The Inspector – The Inspector is (apparently) a representative of the local police force, sent to investigate the events leading up to the suicide of a young woman, who went by the name of both Eva Smith and Daisy Renton. When speaking to the family, the Inspector seems to know the answers to each of the questions that he asks, and appears to offer them a socialist message. After he leaves, the family gather evidence that he does not actually serve on the force.

Quote: "We are members of one body. We are responsible for each other."

Sheila Birling – Sheila is the daughter of Arthur and Sybil. She is described as being 'in her early twenties' and is engaged to Gerald Croft. Sheila is a sensitive character, who shows a caring side, and thus she is devastated upon hearing about her family's role in the death of Eva Smith. She wonders how others in her family can simply go on as though nothing has happened.

Quote: "You're pretending everything's just as it was before."

Eric Birling – Eric is the son of Arthur and Sybil Birling, and the older brother of Sheila. Eric works part-time for the family business, and has a drinking problem that he attempts to hide from his family. When it is revealed that Eric has made a woman pregnant, outside of marriage, and has stolen from the family business, the family are finally forced to confront issues surrounding Eric.

Quote: "don't forget I'm ashamed of you as well – yes both of you."

Gerald Croft – Gerald is the fiancé of Sheila and the son of another prominent manufacturing family. Gerald's family have an elevated social status, and as a result Arthur worries that Gerald's family may feel that he is marrying beneath himself. Although the Inspector criticises Gerald's affair (and subsequent breakup) with Daisy, he seems to suggest that Gerald is the least morally culpable of the family for her death.

Quote: "I didn't feel about her as she felt about me."

Themes

– A theme is an idea or message that runs throughout a text.

Responsibility and Guilt – All of the family are forced to reflect upon their behaviour towards Eva Smith/ Daisy Renton, and consider how responsible they are for her death. Some characters admit responsibility and feel guilt more readily, such as Sheila and Eric. On the other hand, characters such as Arthur and Sybil are more unwilling to accept responsibility for the girl's demise.

Age – Priestley uses age to show the different prevailing attitudes in society at the time. The older characters represent an outdated way of thinking; characters such as Arthur and Sybil believe in only looking after themselves in their family. The younger characters (Sheila and Eric) represent new towards caring about others in society.



Class and Gender – Class and gender are also predominant themes in the novel. Eva Smith's position in society is severely weakened because she is from a lower class background and she is also a woman. Because of biases related to class and gender, Birling is dismissive of the hundreds of working class girls looking for a pay-rise, whilst Mrs Birling refers to her as 'a girl of that sort' in a derogatory manner.

The Supernatural – The presence of the Inspector weaves a supernatural element into the play. His surname (Goole) is certainly a play on the word 'ghoul' (a ghost). He is unheard of by other members of the police force, leading the characters to at first dismiss him as simply a hoaxter, yet he seems to have prior knowledge of the characters' actions, and foresees the suicide before it happens.



Scene-by-Scene Summary

– Alongside key quotations from each scene.

Beginning of Act I	The play begins in 1912, with a dinner at the Birling residence. Arthur leads a toast on the future marriage of his daughter, Sheila, to Gerald. Arthur is pleased that the marriage will bring his company closer together with Gerald's family's established company. Sheila lightly teases Gerald about his distant behaviour the summer before. Arthur explains that the world is in a good time, that talk of German aggression should be discounted, and that a new 'unsinkable' ship is being built. Privately after dinner, Arthur tells Gerald that he is up for a knighthood, which will nullify Gerald's mother's fears of him marrying down. Arthur then tells Eric and Gerald of his belief in looking after one's self and one's family – rejecting ideas of socialism. Edna enters and says that an Inspector wants to speak with them.	<i>"I've learnt in the good hard school of experience – that a man has to mind his own business and look after himself and his own"</i>
End of Act I	The Inspector introduces himself as Goole. Arthur declares that he has never heard of him before. The Inspector states that a girl named Eva Smith has committed suicide by drinking disinfectant. He shows Arthur alone a photograph of her. Arthur admits that he employed her two years before, but dismissed her for striking over wages. He then shows Sheila the photograph, who is shocked. She admits to getting the girl fired from her next job, at a clothes shop, out of jealousy. There she worked under the name Daisy Renton. Sheila is horrified. Gerald becomes aware that this is a girl that he had an affair with.	<i>"Two hours ago a young woman died on the infirmary. She'd been taken there this afternoon because she'd swallowed a lot of strong disinfectant."</i>
Beginning of Act II	As the Inspector speaks to Gerald and Sheila, Sybil enters and calls his questions 'impertinent.' Sheila warns Sybil not to fall into the trap of complacency with the Inspector, but Sybil warns her to be quiet. Sybil expresses that Eric has had too much to drink at dinner – to Sybil's embarrassment, Sheila and Gerald admit that this is a steady problem with Eric. The Inspector then questions Gerald, who reluctantly admits that he knows a Daisy Renton. He had protected her in a bar from a lecherous old man, and then put her up in a friend's lodgings. She became his mistress. Eventually it ended, and they lost contact. Sheila explains that she actually respects Gerald now, for telling the truth. However, she says they must start again in their relationship. Gerald is allowed to leave.	<i>"I don't dislike you as I did half an hour ago, Gerald. In fact, in some odd way, I rather respect you more than I've ever done before."</i>
End of Act II	The Inspector shows Sybil the photograph of the deceased woman – she lies and says that she does not know her. Sheila pleads with her to tell the truth. It emerges that Sybil refused to give the girl money in her role as a member of the Brumley Women's Charity Organisation, out of 'impudence.' She had pretended that she was called 'Mrs Birling.' The Inspector reveals that she was looking for money as she was pregnant (not Gerald's baby). The girl eventually admitted that she was not married, and couldn't take money off the father, as she knew it was stolen. Under pressure from the Inspector, Sybil contends that the man should bear the responsibility of the girl's subsequent death. It is at this point that the other characters realise that Eric must in fact be the father. Sybil pauses in shock, seemingly wishing to retract her past statements. Eric enters the room, with all staring at him.	<i>"If, as she said, he didn't belong to her class, and was some drunken young idler, then that's all the more reason why he shouldn't escape. He should be made an example of. If the girl's death is due to anybody, then it's due to him."</i>
Beginning of Act III	Eric confesses that he was very drunk the night that he met the girl, and that he followed her home and convinced her to let him stay over. He began a relationship with her, and she fell pregnant. As she needed financial support, Eric swindled Arthur's company out of money. Arthur is extremely angry when he hears this. With the family now in a state of complete anguish, the Inspector goes through each of them, explaining that they all had a significant part to play in the girl's death. Before leaving, the Inspector states that all people should look out for one another if society is to survive. He notes that the Birlings and Gerald must now live with the repercussions of their actions for the rest of their lives, as recompense for Eva Smith/ Daisy Renton, who lost hers.	<i>"We don't live alone. We are members of one body. We are responsible for each other. And I tell you that the time will soon come when, if men will not learn that lesson, then they well be taught it in fire and bloody and anguish."</i>
End of Act III	Arthur says that Eric is predominantly at fault for the death of the girl, and he worries about the public scandal that will be generated. Eric and Sheila criticise Arthur for worrying about his knighthood when someone has died. In light of what Arthur was discussing before the Inspector came, they begin to suspect that he was a hoax. To Sheila and Eric, this is not important (their actions were still terrible) but to Arthur, it means everything (no public scandal). These suspicions are confirmed, when Gerald returns, having bumped into a police officer on the street – there is no Inspector Goole. Arthur then phones the hospital, who confirm that there has been no suicide. Arthur and Sybil delight in this, whilst their children are horrified that they have forgotten their behaviour (despite no one having actually died) so quickly. Just as Arthur is reveling in the fact that the others were all 'bluffed', the phone rings. A girl has just been transported to hospital, dead. She has committed suicide. An inspector is on the way to the house.	<i>"Birling: (pointing to Eric and Sheila) Now look at the pair of them – the famous younger generation who know it all. And they can't even take a joke"</i> <i>The telephone rings sharply. There is a moment's complete silence. Birling goes to answer it.//</i>

Priestley's Dramatic Devices		Form
Dramatic Irony	Arthur Birling suggests that the <i>Titanic</i> is unsinkable, and yet the audience knows that it sank on its maiden voyage.	Well-Made Play -A popular type of drama from the 19th Century -The events build to a climax -Primarily concerned with events that happened before the play -Plot is intricate and complex.
Cliffhangers	At the end of Act One, the Inspector appears and says 'Well?' to Gerald, leaving the audience to wonder how Gerald is implicated.	Morality Play -These were most popular during the 15th and 16th centuries -They taught the audience lessons that focused on the seven deadly sins. -Characters who committed these sins were punished.
Stage Directions	The precise directions detailing Gerald 'gravely' stating his involvement with Daisy Renton adds more detail to aid the actor's delivery.	Crime Thriller -As the name suggests, this involves a gripping tale based around a crime -The audience receives clues and must guess what has happened before the end. -All is revealed by the climax.
Dramatic Tension	The audience feels an increase in tension as they await information regarding how each character is implicated in Eva Smith's death.	



A Christmas Carol

KNOWLEDGE ORGANISER

Context – *A Christmas Carol* was written by Charles Dickens in 1843

Charles Dickens – Charles Dickens was born in 1812 and spent the first years of his life in Kent, England. At 9, he moved to London. At 12, his father was sent to debtors' prison for racking up huge debts, and Charles was given a painful job labelling bottles near the prison. He found this period in his life hellish, and it doubtlessly led him to draw readers' attention to the plight of the poor when he later found success as an author. Many of his works are about social hardships and inequalities.



The Victorian Era – The Victorian era describes the period in which Queen Victoria sat on the English throne – between 1837 and 1901 (most of Dickens' life). Whilst this was a time of industrial revolution, it was also an extremely harsh time to live, and the differences between the lives of the richest and the poorest were exacerbated. The Victorian era was a period of great change. In this time, the population of England doubled – from 16.8 million in 1851 to over 30 million in 1901.



Workhouses – A workhouse was a place where a person went if they could not afford to financially support themselves and their families. Men, women and children (mostly orphans) lived and worked in the workhouses, which were very crowded – making living conditions unhealthy and unpleasant. People slept in dormitories, where disease was easily spread. In *A Christmas Carol*, Scrooge voices his support for workhouses.



Class Divides – Despite industrial changes altering the social landscape, there were still relatively distinct social classes in operation: the nobility upper class, the middle class, and the working class. Life was terrible for the poorest: Lack of money resulted in a negligible food supply. For some working families, money was so tight that they required their children to work in order to survive.



Health and Medicine – Healthcare was more of a luxury at the time, and medicine was nowhere near as advanced today. Many diseases were rife, and childbirth and poverty were very real dangers to people living in the era. As a result, a middle class person may expect to live to 45 at the time, whereas a working class person would have been lucky to have lived half that time. In *A Christmas Carol*, the restrictions in healthcare are evident in Tiny Tim's continued suffering.



Christmas – We now associate Christmas as being a time of seasonal goodwill, love and friendship. However, before the Victorian era, when writers such as Dickens spread these messages through their novels, there was no Santa Claus, Christmas cards, and no holidays from work! Christmas Day was a far more low-key affair. Writers such as Dickens encouraged middle-class families to share their wealth and act selflessly.



Main Characters – Consider what Dickens intended through his characterisation of each of the below...

Ebenezer Scrooge – Scrooge is the lead protagonist of the novella. He is a miserly owner of a counting house (what would now be called an accountant's office). Initially greedy, selfish and cold, Scrooge hates Christmas and lacks any form of Christmas spirit. He experiences a moral and psychological transformation through his visits from the Ghosts of Christmases Past, Present and Yet to Come.

Quote: "It's enough for a man to understand his own business"

Jacob Marley and Fred – Joseph Marley is Scrooge's late business partner, and Fred is Scrooge's nephew. They represent the two extremes of Christmas spirit. Joseph Marley symbolises the limitations of a life-lived focused on greed and selfishness, whilst Fred's life appears fulfilled through his perpetual joy, kindness and interactions with others. After his death, Joseph Marley has been condemned to wander the world as a miserable ghost.

Quote: "you have yet a chance and hope of escaping my fate."

The Ghost of Christmas Present – The Ghost of Christmas Present is the second of the three ghosts to visit Scrooge. He is a majestic jolly giant, who is dressed in a green robe. His lifespan is restricted to Christmas Day, and he has 'over 1800 brothers', representative of the other Christmas Days that were once in the present. He escorts Scrooge on a tour of how his contemporaries spend Christmas day, to force him to contemplate his own solitary existence. He also shows him the need to consider 'Want' and 'Ignorance.'

Old Major Quote: "Come in! and know me better, man!"

The Cratchits – Bob Cratchit is Scrooge's kind, mild-mannered clerk, who is treated terribly by his employer. He is a very poor man, with a large family, including Tiny Tim. Tiny Tim is a young boy who has been born with physical disabilities that his family are too poor to have treated. Despite these hardships, the family are cheery and determined to enjoy the few positives that they can get from life.

Quote: "I am sure we shall none of us forget poor Tiny Tim"

The Ghost of Christmas Past – This is the first spirit to visit Scrooge. He is a curious child-like figure that has an illuminated head, symbolising how shining a light on memories from the past can be used to illuminate one's thoughts and behaviours in the future. The Ghost of Christmas Past takes Scrooge to a number of places from his childhood and early adulthood, including his old school, hometown, and the scene of his engagement being broken off.

Quote: "Strange to have forgotten it for so many years!"

The Ghost of Christmas Yet to Come – The Ghost of Christmas Yet to Come is the third and final spirit to visit Scrooge. He is a silent phantom that is clad in robes (he rather resembles common characterisations of 'Death'). He presents Scrooge with an ominous view of his own death: the only people who his death remotely affects are those he owes money to (who are relieved), those who can make money from him (such as those dealing with his estate) and those who he could have saved (Tiny Tim).

Quote: "The Spirit answered not, but pointed onward with its hand."

Themes – A theme is an idea or message that runs throughout a text.

Greed and Selfishness – Characters such as Scrooge represent the selfish middle classes, who sought to amass, rather than share their wealth. Jacob Marley demonstrates the burden that such a selfish life will inevitably bring. Through these characters and the events of the novel, Dickens criticises how wealth had become associated with the root of happiness, at the expense of close relationships and goodwill.

Divisions – Divisions are evident throughout the novel, as those with power and money seek simply to exert and recycle their advantages over those without (rather than aiding them). The book shines a light on the plight faced by poor families such as the Cratchits, which demonises the negative attitudes towards the poor held by the rich.



Transformation – Physical transformations are evident throughout *A Christmas Carol*, as objects, settings, and characters appear and vanish under the manipulation of the ghosts. Spiritual transformations take place too, as the reader witnesses a lonely boy's transformation into an embittered old man, and the efforts made to transform his character to reconnect with those around him.

Time – Time is stretched by the ghosts – the events that Scrooge experiences appear to have taken days, and yet all takes place in the space of one night. A race against time is also taking place, as the spirits work to prevent Scrooge (and in turn, Tiny Tim) from experiencing their fateful demise. The reader is taught to value the time that we have, and use it to spread happiness to others.

Scene-by-Scene Summary – Alongside key quotations from each scene.

STAVE ONE	<p>It is a foggy Christmas Eve, and Scrooge is working in his counting house. He refuses to buy another lump of coal to heat Bob Cratchit's (his clerk's) office. Scrooge's cheerful nephew, Fred, enters, inviting Scrooge to Christmas party, but he declines. After he leaves, two gentlemen enter, asking if Scrooge is willing to make a charitable donation to the poor. Scrooge again declines. He begrudgingly gives Bob Cratchit the day off. Scrooge follows his usual routine on the way home. At home, he sees the ghost of his old business partner (Jacob Marley) in the knocker. Marley is in chains as punishment for his selfishness and greed when living. He says that he seeks to save Scrooge from the same fate, and hence Scrooge will be visited by 3 ghosts over the next 3 nights.</p>	<p>"Marley was dead: to begin with. There is no doubt whatever about that. The register of his burial was signed by the clergyman, the clerk, the undertaker, and the chief mourner. Scrooge signed it."</p>
STAVE TWO	<p>Scrooge is confused to wake at midnight, as it was after 2am when he went to sleep. At one o'clock, Scrooge is visited by a strange child-like figure that emanates wisdom – The Ghost of Christmas Past. The spirit touches Scrooge's heart, granting the power to fly. The ghost takes Scrooge back to where he was raised – Scrooge is touched by memories of his childhood. He sees himself as a schoolboy spending Christmas alone, being visited by his sister, being at a party held by Scrooge's old boss Fezziwig, and with his old partner Belle, who is breaking off their engagement on account of his greed. He sees Belle in a more modern time, with her husband, discussing how Scrooge is now 'quite alone in the world.' Scrooge is upset by the visions, and begs with the ghost to take him back home. Scrooge finds himself back in his bedroom, where he once again falls asleep almost instantly.</p>	<p>"But the strangest thing about it was, that from the crown of its head there sprung a bright clear jet of light, by which all this was visible; and which was doubtless the occasion of its using, in its duller moments, a great extinguisher for a cap, which it now held under its arm."</p>
STAVE THREE	<p>The bell strikes one, and Scrooge is awake once more. At fifteen minutes past one, he wanders into the next room, where he finds the Ghost of Christmas Present waiting for him. He is a majestic jolly giant, and sits atop of a mountain of food. The spirit takes Scrooge to the bustling streets on Christmas morning, where passers-by joyfully greet each other. The spirit then takes Scrooge to the home of Bob Cratchit, where the family savour the Christmas that they can afford. Their visibly-ill son, Tiny Tim, is cheering despite his ailments. Scrooge begs to know whether he will survive. They also visit Fred's Christmas party, which Scrooge enjoys (though no one can see him). Eventually, Scrooge is brought to a vast expanse, where two sickly children, 'Want' and 'Ignorance' emerge. When Scrooge asks if there is anything that can be done, the spirit mocks his prior selfishness.</p>	<p>"Its dark brown curls were long and free; free as its genial face, its sparkling eye, its open hand, its cheery voice, its unconstrained demeanour, and its joyful air."</p>
STAVE FOUR	<p>Scrooge is approached by a hooded phantom. The spirit is silent, and Scrooge is terrified by him. Scrooge pleads with him to provide his next lesson. The ghost takes him to the stock exchange, where men discuss the accounts of a rich man, a dingy pawn shop, where the rich man's stolen goods are being sold, and the Cratchit household, where the family struggles with the death of Tiny Tim. Scrooge is then taken to a freshly dug grave in a graveyard. The gravestone reveals that it is his own grave. Appalled, Scrooge begs with the spirit to give him another chance to show that he has learnt his lesson. The phantom begins to tremble and disappears, and once again Scrooge finds himself in the relative safety of his own bed.</p>	<p>I fear you more than any spectre I have seen. But as I know your purpose is to do me good, and as I hope to live to be another man from what I was, I am prepared to bear you company, and do it with a thankful heart"</p>
STAVE FIVE	<p>Scrooge realises that he has been returned to Christmas morning, and is utterly overjoyed. He pays the first boy that he meets a huge sum to deliver a great big turkey to Bob Cratchit's household. He bumps into the gentleman collecting for charity, apologises for his prior behaviour, and promises to donate lots of money to the poor. He attends Fred's party and is so happy and kind that the other guests can barely believe his behaviour. The next morning, he pretends to scold Bob Cratchit for arriving late, before promising to give him a large raise and to care for his family. As time passes by, he stays true to his word – he helps the Cratchits and becomes like a second father to Tiny Tim, who does not die. Scrooge brings Christmas cheer to every day, and shrugs off the doubts that others have about his changed behaviour. The narrator concludes by suggesting that Scrooge's changed attitude and behaviour should be shared by everyone.</p>	<p>"He had no further intercourse with Spirits, but lived upon the Total Abstinence Principle, ever afterwards; and it was always said of him, that he knew how to keep Christmas well, if any man alive possessed the knowledge....God bless us all, every one!"</p>

Dickens' Literary Devices	Structural Features
Simile	This gives the reader a better image of characters and places, e.g. Scrooge described as 'hard and sharp as a flint.'
Clear Narrative Viewpoint	The narrator gives views to tell the reader how to think – e.g. Scrooge was a 'tight-fisted hand at the grindstone.'
Metaphor	Used to represent deeper meanings and ideas. For example, the children 'Want' and 'Ignorance' represent the poor in society.
Personification	To emphasise the atmosphere of places and settings: e.g. 'the crisp air laughed to hear it.'
Five Staves	The story is set out in five Staves – a structure that mimics musical organization – the opening sets the scene, the middle is the turning point, and the last stave concludes.
Surface Level Story	A literal story that works on a surface level, e.g. The story of one cruel and harsh man being visited by ghosts who teach him a lesson, making him kind and compassionate.
Symbolic Level Story	A deeper, more hidden meaning to the story, e.g. There exists a selfish society, who needs to heed this warning, in order to become more caring.
The Number 3	Scrooge is visited by 3 ghosts: Past, Present, and Yet to Come. This is a common feature in magical fairy stories: e.g. 3 wishes, 3 choices etc. This adds to the mystical feel of the novella.