

How is Scrooge presented in 'A Christmas Carol'?

In the novella 'A Christmas Carol', Dickens presents Scrooge as being representative of that of the wealthy upper class in Victorian Britain. This is evident as Scrooge is more concerned about his own financial gain than helping others in their time of need.

Scrooge is shown to be a man who puts money above all else in life. He lives in Marley's "chambers," and lets out most of the rooms "as offices." A home has connotations of safety, warmth, relaxation and comfort and is typically where people return to after a hard day's work. However, Scrooge's "home," is a place of business suggesting that it's devoid of the typical things a home gives its occupant. Furthermore, his home is described as being surrounded by a bleak, dark atmosphere as the narrator informs us that, "the Weather" sits in "mournful meditation," on the threshold of the property. Here, the use of pathetic fallacy emphasises the melancholic, negative attitude that Scrooge possesses and the way in which he is not metaphorically living at all, despite his wealth. His life purely revolves around work and financial gain, with no social aspect to it. The weather is described as being, "mournful" thus implying it is grieving the loss of life that the home he resides in has failed to possess and the impact that it could have had on the surrounding areas and community. It could therefore be implied that in order for a person to be happy and 'live' they need companionship and that the pursuit of just wealth, will only bring sadness and gloom, not only to your life but it will also affect those around you, as the weather is affected by Scrooge. During the Victorian era, many wealthy Victorians cared little for the plight of the poor and it was commonly believed that wealth equated to happiness and made you a better person. As a result, many suffered in work houses and factories across the country. The owners of such places often focused on personal wealth and gain instead of humanity, just as Scrooge does in Stave 1. Dickens believed that these selfish, ignorant people were having a greater impact on society than they realised. Generations of children lost their childhood innocence as a result of child labour and destitution. Dickens wanted to bring about social reform and alert readers that actions have consequences and that they should choose their actions wisely as they can have a greater impact on the world than they realise which is displayed in the novella through the character of Scrooge.

At the beginning of the novella, Scrooge lacks compassion and appears to have no care for others. He disregards the poor and believed that they should hurry up and die and, "decrease the surplus population." This attitude would have shocked Victorian readers who were more religious than the modern day audience, with around 50% of the population attending church. Scrooge's attitude here is distinctly un-Christian. During the Victorian era, the Church discouraged financial assistance to the poor, stating that their situation was a result of sin and their only chance of redemption was through prayer. This attitude was also seen by people like Dickens as being un-Christian and went against the teachings of Jesus. The Ghost of Christmas Present could be seen as representing Jesus and the Son, in the Holy Trinity, as he informs Scrooge that there are men on earth who "claim" to "know him" but are "strange" to him. This

speech echoes Jesus' warning of false prophets who claim to do God's work but "deceive many people" in the Bible and could be seen as being similar to the message the church were giving about the poor. Dickens could therefore have been suggesting the corruption of the Church and its failings in improving and caring for the vulnerable in society. The resemblance to Jesus/the Son is shown further through the use of symbolism as he wears a crown of "Holy" similar to that of Jesus' crown of thorns. Likewise, the other two spirits could be seen to represent the Father and the Holy Spirit, symbolising how God takes different forms and true enlightenment can occur when all are embraced, as shown in Stave 5 when Scrooge declares that he shall "live," with the spirit of "all three," and feels like a "baby". It is the visit and embracing of these three spirits and their teachings that allow Scrooge to therefore be metaphorically reborn. His mental and spiritual distance from his fellow man is fixed. Dickens also shows how quickly Scrooge is able to change indicating that change can occur over night. He perhaps does this to encourage his Victorian readers who might have been like Scrooge in Stave 1, that it is never too late to change in the hope that they just might and can thus have a positive impact on Victorian society, bringing about real reform.