

# The Ethics and Values in ‘A Christmas Carol’ for Gen-Z

**Dr. Vaishnavi Pokuri<sup>1</sup>, Charan Srinivas<sup>2</sup>**

<sup>1</sup>Head of Skill Development, Peepal Woods, Global School

<sup>2</sup>8th Grade, Peepal Woods, Global School

## Abstract

Charles Dickens is one of the greatest novelists of his era as his works, echo the socio-political and economic scenario of his times, that witnessed Industrial Revolution, child labour, hazardous factory life, to name a few. His complex and vivid storytelling has left a significant and remarkable mark on literature. Some of his works include A Christmas Carol, David Copperfield, Bleak House, A Tale of Two Cities, and Our Mutual Friend. The novel A Christmas Carol deals with amelioration of Ebenezer Scrooge, a cold-hearted businessman into a man of values with the help of three phantoms during Christmas by taking him on a roller coaster ride of his past and his future if he were to change over a new leaf. The novella is didactic exhibiting valuable lessons for Gen-Z, walloped in technology and moving far from family and value systems.

**Keywords:** Gen-Z, didactic, value-system.

Charles Dickens, widely considered one of the greatest novelists of his era, was born on February 7, 1812, in Portsmouth, New Hampshire, England, and died on June 9, 1870 (1812-1870). His complex and vivid storytelling has left a significant and remarkable mark on literature. Some of his works include A Christmas Carol, David Copperfield, Bleak House, A Tale of Two Cities, and Our Mutual Friend.

As rightfully quoted by Virginia Woolf, every secret of a writer's soul, every experience of his life, and every quality of his mind is written largely in his works, many of Dickens' works reflect his childhood, where he experienced much sadness and emotional exhaustion which has influenced the way he writes. Dickens faced many hardships in his life. He and his family were of middle-class origins, but due to his father's poor financial management, he had to face many hurdles. On the other hand, despite his father's shortcomings, he had become an impeccable novelist who has written many iconic tales. There are many quotes that spark a sense of delight or sadness upon reading them. A Christmas Carol, in particular, has a wave of different emotions and morals within it.

He also had to go through the Industrial Revolution, which had brought many remarkable changes at that time. These were tough times for Dickens, and all of these emotions were reflected in his tenth novel, Hard Times. This novel went in depth of the socio-economic conditions of the Victorian era and the Industrial revolution. The constant suffering he went through had been an inspiration to write novels. One of his novels, David Copperfield, is one of the most unique novels he penned. It was also his personal favourites because many of the events that took place in the book had also occurred in Dickens own life, acting as biography of sorts.

The novel A Christmas Carol follows a storyline of a man named Ebenezer Scrooge, a cold-hearted businessman. Scrooge created his company with the aid of his late partner, Jacob Marley, who had died on Christmas eve. Scrooge is described to be especially harsh on Christmas eve because of his dear friend's death.

The story starts off with Scrooge sitting in his counting house, on a chilly Christmas eve. The clerk he employed, Bob Cratchit, is shivering because of the cold, but Scrooge didn't want to spend money on buying coal to warm up the place. "*External heat and cold had little influence on Scrooge.*" (pg.no 11). Scrooge, still sitting in his office, heard a cheerful and joyous cry from his nephew who wished Scrooge a merry Christmas. He yelled "*Humbug!*" annoyed, as his nephew entered the room. His nephew invited him out for dinner and he eventually accepted. After his nephew left, two well-mannered gentlemen entered the room and asked him if he would like to contribute to charity. Scrooge, being the cold and distant man he is, denied saying "*If they would rather die, they had better do it, and decrease the surplus population!*" (pg.no 17) Later that evening, Scrooge went back to his old house, and he felt the presence of his old colleague Marley's ghost. He sat near a fireplace and saw Jacob Marley's ghost. The ghost was shackled in chains and told him that these were the results of their miserliness and that he would suffer the same fate as if he were to continue his ways. Marley tells him that the three Christmas spirits will visit him on the following three nights. With this, the ghost had left him and Ebenezer all by himself and with nothing else to do, he slumbers off into a deep sleep.

Scrooge, wakes up before the first phantom's arrival, the Ghost of Christmas Past, a grotesque, child-like being who made Scrooge revisit his past where he once was a child and was disheartened at the fact that he was lonely and that his friends had abandoned him. Then the spirit takes him to the time where he once was employed by a generous, cheerful businessman who goes by the name of Fezziwig who had treated Scrooge as one of his own, showing compassion and kindness towards him. The phantom made Scrooge re-experience the time where his fiancé, Belle, is putting an end to their relationship as Ebenezer is getting more money-hungry day by day and stopped showing the love where he once showered her with but is now only locked on acquiring more wealth. The ghost had taken them a few years after this event, as Scrooge saw his fiancé happily married, and her husband told his wife that he saw Scrooge. Ebenezer, upset at the words he had heard, forced the ghost to remove him from the house of his former fiancé.

The next phantom, the ghost of Christmas Present arrived-a giant, friendly looking man with ginger hair and thick facial hair, who wore long, green robes and made Scrooge experience that year's Christmas as it will happen. It was a visit to the Cratchit family, the family of his clerk, Bob. Bob's house was humble, yet lively where they eat a comparatively smaller feast for Christmas. Scrooge has one eye out for a family member in particular, Tiny Tim, a joyous young boy who is crippled. Seeing the smile on his face, despite his condition, made Scrooge happy, but at the same time glum. Then, the giant took Ebenezer to his nephew's abode, the dinner Scrooge was invited to is ongoing, where his nephew is seen making a toast to Scrooge, saying that he wishes Ebenezer a merry Christmas and wishes him the best in life. All of the people at the party were joyous and merry as they should be. As the party goes by, the ghost, too, gets older and older. Scrooge notices two children under the giant's robe and asks the spirit about it; the phantom says that these children are living under his giant robe and shows Ebenezer the two children, Ignorance and Want, a metaphor for Scrooge's life. The ghost says that it is getting older and older and that its time is near, and in the blink of an eye, the spirit vanishes.

Then the Ghost of the Christmas Yet to come had arrived, a bony figure wearing a long cloak drooping over his body, takes Ebenezer to a young couple's house and he gets to know the couple owed a large sum

of money to a mysterious businessman, but he had died recently so they were relieved of the loan. Then the ghost takes him to his clerk, Bob, where he finds him in a hospital crying at the fact that his son Tiny Tim had died. Scrooge could not bear to witness his clerk sobbing, so he begged the ghost to take him elsewhere. The ghost then leads Ebenezer to a graveyard, and they arrive at a gravestone, Scrooge knowing what the name would be on the stone, cried loudly and begged the ghost to give him a second chance, a chance of redemption, the ghost, pitying Ebenezer hinted to him that there was a second chance for him, a chance to change. Scrooge, full of joy at getting a second chance at life treats others with kindness and compassion, understanding their situations and forgiving them. He goes to his nephew's dinner party and promises Bob that he would do anything within his power to get Tiny Tim to live.

There are several lessons that the selected work holds for every generation, especially Generation Z. The "Z" in Generation Z stands for Zoomer and it refers to the generation after millennials encompassing anyone born between 1995-2000. This generation, known as the iGeneration, Digital Natives, are not only pragmatic, individualistic, globally connected but are also smart, and tech savvy. On the flip side, this generation is prone to loneliness, fake relations and materialism, selfishness and adversely affected by social media. The novella 'A Christmas Carol' speaks of the importance of simplicity and humaneness, gratitude and satisfaction over selfishness and material wealth. Most of this generation is used to getting things that they want and most of them are dependent on their parents or guardian and are not used to doing things independently. "The whole novella of A Christmas Carol is a parable, ...a morale tale with a strong variety of themes...educational themes such as kindness, family, redemption...."

The predominant theme of the novella is generosity, a quality that is seen dwindling among the materialistic Gen-Z. The ghost of Marley appears with chains before the miserly Scrooge and warns him the after effects of leading a selfish and materialistic life. Dickens has used Marley's ghost to drive a didactic message to the readers especially Gen-Z. The character of Tiny Tim, a joyous child in spite of being physically challenged reveals another side of life to the miserly Scrooge, reverberating a feeling of gratitude and satisfaction to Gen Z, caught in the vicious cycle of brand addiction and possessiveness. The novella instils the significance of minimalism, a conscious use of essential things against consumerism which revolves around wanting more.

Dickens reiterates the importance of family- Scrooge initially is cold and reluctant to his nephew's invitation to the Christmas dinner but eventually understands the importance of family. He attends his nephew's Christmas dinner party towards the end of the novella, reinstating the importance of family togetherness in spite of the minor clashes and misunderstandings. It is through the spirit of Christmas Past that the protagonist revisits his childhood traumas, and also recalls benevolent people like Fezziwig who made his life better. Finally, We witness Scrooge transforming into a man running behind material prosperity putting his family and values at stake.

The novella reinstates that there is always room for redemption, as Scrooge is initially presented as a cold and iron hearted person but he is made to realize his mistakes thereby telling the world in general, and Gen Z in particular that it is better late than never. Dickens creates an atmosphere of introspection with the help of the Christmas phantoms, Scrooge realises his shortcomings and turns over a new leaf. The novella propagates Minimalism as a practice of intentional living and echoes Jushua Fields Milburn famous quote "Love People, Use Things: Because the Opposite Never Works." This generation can benefit a lot by reading this book, understanding the morals hidden within it and become a better version of themselves.

## References

1. Dickens, Charles. (2009). A Christmas Carol and Other Christmas Books, Robert Douglas Fairhurst (Ed.) United States: Oxford World's Classics, 2024.
2. Boyo, Obandja Ralph, A Christmas Carol by Charles Dickens: An Authentic Didactic Source for English Language Acquisition and Moral Value Teaching. IJCSRR vol.4, Issue 11, Nov 2021.
3. Britannica.com [Gen Z | Years, Age Range, Meaning, & Characteristics | Britannica](#)
4. Study.com [Gen Z | Overview, Meaning & Characteristics - Lesson | Study.com](#)
5. Goodreads.com <https://www.goodreads.com/work/quotes/8165068>