

Excerpt from *A Christmas Carol*

By Charles Dickens

Once upon a time-of all the good days in the year, on Christmas Eve-old Scrooge sat busy in his counting-house. It was cold, bleak, biting weather: foggy withal: and he could hear the people in the court outside, go wheezing up and down, beating their hands upon their breasts, and stamping their feet upon the pavement stones to warm them. The city clocks had only just gone three, but it was quite dark already-it had not been light all day-and candles were flaring in the windows of the neighbouring offices, like ruddy smears upon the palpable brown air. The fog came pouring in at every chink and keyhole, and was so dense without, that although the court was of the narrowest, the houses opposite were mere phantoms. To see the dingy cloud come drooping down, obscuring everything, one might have thought that Nature lived hard by, and was brewing on a large scale.

The door of Scrooge's counting-house was open that he might keep his eye upon his clerk, who in a dismal little cell beyond, a sort of tank, was copying letters. Scrooge had a very small fire, but the clerk's fire was so very much smaller that it looked like one coal. But he couldn't replenish it, for Scrooge kept the coal-box in his own room; and so surely as the clerk came in with the shovel, the master predicted that it would be necessary for them to part. Wherefore the clerk put on his white comforter, and tried to warm himself at the candle; in which effort, not being a man of a strong imagination, he failed.

"A merry Christmas, uncle! God save you!" cried a cheerful voice. It was the voice of Scrooge's nephew, who came upon him so quickly that this was the first intimation he had of his approach.

"Bah!" said Scrooge, "Humbug!"

He had so heated himself with rapid walking in the fog and frost, this nephew of Scrooge's, that he was all in a glow; his face was ruddy and handsome; his eyes sparkled, and his breath smoked again.

"Christmas a humbug, uncle!" said Scrooge's nephew. "You don't mean that, I am sure?"

"I do," said Scrooge. "Merry Christmas! What right have you to be merry? What reason have you to be merry? You're poor enough."

"Come, then," returned the nephew gaily. "What right have you to be dismal? What reason have you to be morose? You're rich enough."

Scrooge having no better answer ready on the spur of the moment, said, "Bah!" again; and followed it up with "Humbug."

"Don't be cross, uncle!" said the nephew.

"What else can I be," returned the uncle, "when I live in such a world of fools as this? Merry Christmas! Out upon merry Christmas! What's Christmas time to you but a time for paying bills without money; a time for finding yourself a year older, but not an hour richer; a time for balancing your books and having every item in 'em through a round dozen of months presented dead against you? If I could work my will," said Scrooge indignantly, "every idiot who goes about with 'Merry Christmas' on his lips, should be boiled with his own pudding, and buried with a stake of holly through his heart. He should!"

"Uncle!" pleaded the nephew.

"Nephew!" returned the uncle sternly, "keep Christmas in your own way, and let me keep it in mine."

"Keep it!" repeated Scrooge's nephew. "But you don't keep it."

"Let me leave it alone, then," said Scrooge. "Much good may it do you! Much good it has ever done you!"

"There are many things from which I might have derived good, by which I have not profited, I dare say," returned the nephew. "Christmas among the

rest. But I am sure I have always thought of Christmas time, when it has come round—apart from the veneration due to its sacred name and origin, if anything belonging to it can be apart from that—as a good time; a kind, forgiving, charitable, pleasant time; the only time I know of, in the long calendar of the year, when men and women seem by one consent to open their shut-up hearts freely, and to think of people below them as if they really were fellow-passengers to the grave, and not another race of creatures bound on other journeys. And therefore, uncle, though it has never put a scrap of gold or silver in my pocket, I believe that it has done me good, and will do me good; and I say, God bless it!"

Name: _____ Date: _____

1. When does this story take place?

- A in the future
- B in the present
- C on Christmas Eve
- D on Christmas

2. Which of the following words is NOT a word Scrooge's nephew uses to describe Scrooge?

- A morose
- B rich
- C poor
- D dismal

3. How does the clerk feel about Scrooge?

- A He loves Scrooge.
- B He respects Scrooge.
- C He admires Scrooge.
- D He fears Scrooge.

4. Read the following sentences: "He had so heated himself with rapid walking in the fog and frost, this nephew of Scrooge's, that he was all in a glow; his face was ruddy and handsome...."

What does the word **ruddy** mean as used in the passage?

- A pleasant
- B good-looking
- C flushed
- D pale

5. What is this passage mostly about?

- A the weather on a winter day
- B how Scrooge treats his clerk
- C how people celebrate Christmas
- D how Scrooge feels about Christmas

6. According to the passage, why does Scrooge's nephew like Christmas? Use evidence from the story to support your answer.

7. Based on this passage, how might someone describe Scrooge? Use evidence from the story to support your answer.

8. The question below is an incomplete sentence. Choose the word that best completes the sentence.

Scrooge's nephew came to wish his uncle a Merry Christmas, _____ his uncle hates the holiday.

- A but
- B because
- C and
- D so

9. Answer the following questions based on the sentence below.

Once upon a time — of all the good days in the year, on Christmas Eve — old Scrooge sat busy in his counting-house.

Who? old Scrooge

What? _____

Where? _____

When? _____

10. **Vocabulary Word:** morose: miserable and bad-tempered.

Use the vocabulary word in a sentence: _____

Teacher Guide & Answers

Passage Reading Level: Lexile 1000

Featured Text Structure: N/A

Passage Summary: In this excerpt from Charles Dickens' classic novella, *A Christmas Carol*, Ebenezer Scrooge is visited at his office on Christmas Eve by his nephew Fred.

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- D **how Scrooge feels about Christmas**

6. According to the passage, why does Scrooge's nephew like Christmas? Use evidence from the story to support your answer.

Suggested answer: Scrooge's nephew sees Christmas as a time when people are kind, forgiving and charitable to other people. He describes Christmas time as "... A good time; a kind, forgiving, charitable, pleasant time...."

7. Based on this passage, how might someone describe Scrooge? Use evidence from the story to support your answer.

Suggested answer: Someone might describe Scrooge as unpleasant, grumpy, and mean. Scrooge's own nephew calls him cross, dismal and morose. Also, the author writes that Scrooge hates Christmas. Scrooge can also be described as cheap or stingy. Scrooge has a tiny fire to keep himself warm and will not give his clerk any more coal for his even smaller fire!

8. The question below is an incomplete sentence. Choose the word that best completes the sentence.

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Who? old Scrooge

What? **sat busy**

Where? **in his counting-house**

When? **once upon a time – of all the good days in the year, on Christmas Eve**

10. **Vocabulary Word:** morose: miserable and bad-tempered.

Use the vocabulary word in a sentence: answers may vary.