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## Scrooge

Marley was dead. That was certain because there were people at his funeral. Scrooge was there too. He and Marley were business partners, and he was Marley's only friend. But Scrooge looked very happy at the **funeral** because on that day he made some money. Scrooge was a clever **businessman**.

Yes, old Marley was certainly dead. But years later his name was still there above the office door. Scrooge and Marley. That was the company's name. Sometimes people called Scrooge 'Scrooge' and sometimes 'Marley'. He always answered. It was all the same to him.

Oh, but he was a **mean** man, Scrooge! He never spent any money and he never gave any away. He was an old **miser**. And he was a cold and **solitary** man. The cold was inside him. You could see it in his red eyes and on his blue nose and thin, white lips. You could hear it in his hard voice, and it made his **office** cold, especially at Christmas. Nobody ever stopped him in the street to say, 'My dear Scrooge, how are you? When will you come and see me?' Children never spoke to him, and even dogs ran away from him. But Scrooge didn't care. He liked it. That was what he wanted.



One Christmas Eve Scrooge was sitting in his office. It was only three o'clock in the afternoon but it was already dark. The weather was very cold and there was a lot of fog. It came into the office through the windows and doors. Bob Cratchit, Scrooge's **clerk**, was copying letters in a dark little room, and the old man watched him carefully. Bob had a very

very small fire in his room. It was even smaller than Scrooge's, and he tried to warm his hands at the candle but he couldn't do it.

'A merry Christmas, uncle!' said a happy voice. And Scrooge's nephew Fred came in.

'Bah!' answered Scrooge. 'Humbug!'

His nephew looked warm. His face was red and his eyes were bright.

'Christmas a humbug, uncle?' he cried, surprised. 'You don't mean that, I'm sure.'

'Yes, I do,' said Scrooge. 'Merry Christmas! Why are you merry? You're a poor man, aren't you?'

'Well, why are you so unhappy? You're rich.'

'Bah! Humbug!'

'Don't be angry, uncle,' said Fred.

'Why not? There are too many fools in this world. You say "Merry Christmas" when you're a year older and poorer. That's stupid!'

'Uncle - please!'

'Nephew! You have your own Christmas and I'll have mine. Leave me alone.'

'But you don't celebrate Christmas, uncle.'

'Because I never make any money at Christmas. I don't like it. Leave me alone.'

'But Christmas is a good time,' said the nephew. 'It's the only time in the year when people open their hearts and help each other. They become **kind** and **generous**. I like Christmas and I say God bless it!'



The clerk in his little room clapped his hands happily and said, 'Yes, that's right!'

'Another word from you and you'll lose your job,' Scrooge said to him.

'Don't be angry, uncle. Come and eat with us tomorrow,' said his nephew.

'No! Go away! I'm busy.'

'But why won't you come?'

'Why did you get married?' Scrooge asked.

'Because I fell in love.'

'Because you fell in love! Bah! That's more stupid than a merry Christmas. Good afternoon.'

'But why don't you ever come to see me, uncle?'

'Good afternoon,' said Scrooge.

'Can't we be friends?'

'Good afternoon,' said Scrooge.

'Well. I'm very sorry about this, but I wish you a merry Christmas with all my heart, uncle.'

'Good afternoon,' said Scrooge.

'And a happy new Year!'

'Good afternoon!' said Scrooge.

So his nephew went to the door and opened it. But before he left, he said 'Merry Christmas!' to the clerk, who answered with a warm ' Happy Christmas!'

'Are you stupid too?' Scrooge said.

At that moment two fat gentlemen came in.

'Excuse me, is this Scrooge and Marley's?' said one of them. 'May I ask if you are Mr Scrooge or Mr Marley?'

'Mr Marley is dead. He died on Christmas Eve seven years ago.'

'At this **festive** time of the year, Mr Scrooge,' said the man, taking a pen from his pocket, 'we ask people to give some money to help the poor. There are thousands of people with nothing to eat at Christmas.'

'Aren't there any prisons?' asked Scrooge.

'Yes, lots of them.'

'And what about the workhouses? Aren't there still lots of them?'

'Unfortunately, yes.'

'Good. I'm happy to hear it.'

'We don't think the people in the workhouses or prisons are happy about it. They don't have much to eat or drink, and they're always cold. How much can you give us, sir?'

'Nothing!' Scrooge replied. 'Leave me alone. I don't celebrate Christmas and I don't give money to lazy people. I help to pay for the workhouses and prisons. That's enough.'

'But many people can't go there and they'll die in this cold weather.'

'Well, there are too many people in the world already, so that's a good thing. Good afternoon, gentlemen!'

So the two men went out and Scrooge continued his work. It became colder and **foggier** and darker. When a boy came to sing a Christmas carol outside Scrooge's door, he stood up and shouted angrily, 'Go away!' The boy was frightened and ran away very quickly.

Finally, it was time to close the office and go home. Scrooge stopped his work and put down his pen. The clerk put on his hat to go.

'You want all day tomorrow, do you?' said Scrooge.

'If it's all right, sir - yes.'

'It's not all right,' Scrooge answered. 'I must pay you for a day's holiday.'

'It's only once a year, sir.'

'Bah! Every December 25th you get money for nothing! Well, arrive here extra early on the 26th - do you hear me?'

'Yes, sir,' said the clerk.

And when he left the office, he ran and danced all the way home because it was Christmas Eve.

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#### AFTER READING

**Explain the following words.**

What is "a miser"? \_\_\_\_\_

What does it mean to be "a solitary man"? \_\_\_\_\_

What is "a clerk"? \_\_\_\_\_

**What is the opposite word for....**

rich = \_\_\_\_\_

mean = \_\_\_\_\_

stupid = \_\_\_\_\_

Answer the following questions.

1. How was Marley related to Scrooge?

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2. Why was Scrooge happy at Marley's funeral?

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3. What did people think of Scrooge?

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4. What is the name of Scrooge's clerk?

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5. Why does Scrooge's nephew come to his office?

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6. Why doesn't Scrooge like Christmas?

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7. Why does his nephew like Christmas?

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8. What did the two fat men want of Scrooge?

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9. What does Scrooge ask the men?

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10. Why won't Scrooge help the men?

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11. How does Scrooge react to the boy singing Christmas carols outside his door?

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12. What must the clerk do to get a day off on Christmas?

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