

A Christmas Carol quotes, in plain words

Every big quote from the book. Who says it, where, and what it means. Start with the twenty marked with a dot.

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Learn these twenty first

Short. Easy to remember. Between them they cover every theme and every main character.

- **Bah!" said Scrooge, "Humbug!"**

Scrooge · [Stave One](#) · [christmas](#) · [isolation](#)

Humbug means nonsense. Scrooge thinks Christmas is nonsense.

- **Marley was dead: to begin with.**

Narrator · [Stave One](#) · [the supernatural](#)

The first line. Dickens wants you sure of this, so the ghost later is a real shock.

- **solitary as an oyster**

Narrator · [Stave One](#) · [isolation](#)

Shut tight. Alone. But an oyster can hold a pearl. Dickens leaves that hope in.

- **Are there no prisons?**

Scrooge · [Stave One](#) · [poverty](#) · [responsibility](#)

Two men ask him for money for the poor. He asks if the prisons are still open. That is his answer.

- **Are there no prisons?" said the Spirit, turning on him for the last time with his own words.**

Ghost of Christmas Present · [Stave Three](#) · [poverty](#) · [responsibility](#)

Again the ghost uses Scrooge's words. Scrooge is ashamed.

- **If they would rather die," said Scrooge, "they had better do it, and decrease the surplus population.**

Scrooge · [Stave One](#) · [poverty](#) · [responsibility](#) · [greed](#)

Let the poor die. There are too many people anyway. The worst thing he says.

- **I wear the chain I forged in life**

Marley · [Stave One](#) · [greed](#) · [the supernatural](#) · [responsibility](#)

Marley made his own chain. Every greedy thing he did is a link in it.

- **Mankind was my business.**

Marley · [Stave One](#) · [responsibility](#) · [redemption](#)

Scrooge says Marley was a good man of business. Marley says people were his real business. He forgot.

- **There's more of gravy than of grave about you**

Scrooge · [Stave One](#) · [the supernatural](#)

Scrooge jokes that the ghost is just bad food. He is scared and pretending not to be.

- **I should like to be able to say a word or two to my clerk just now**

Scrooge · [Stave Two](#) · [redemption](#) · [responsibility](#)

After seeing Fezziwig's party, Scrooge thinks of Bob. The first crack in him.

- **Come in! and know me better, man!**

Ghost of Christmas Present · [Stave Three](#) · [christmas](#) · [family](#)

The second spirit is big, warm and loud. It invites Scrooge in.

- **This boy is Ignorance. This girl is Want.**

Ghost of Christmas Present · [Stave Three](#) · [poverty](#) · [responsibility](#)

Two thin children under the ghost's robe. Not knowing, and not having. Dickens says they are everyone's fault.

- **God bless us every one!**

Tiny Tim · [Stave Three](#) · [family](#) · [poverty](#) · [christmas](#)

Tiny Tim's line. The poorest child blesses everyone, including Scrooge.

- **If these shadows remain unaltered by the Future, the child will die.**

Ghost of Christmas Present · [Stave Three](#) · [poverty](#) · [responsibility](#) · [time](#)

Tiny Tim will die unless something changes. Scrooge is the something.

- Are these the shadows of the things that Will be, or are they shadows of things that May be, only?

Scrooge · [Stave Four](#) · [time](#) · [redemption](#)

Scrooge asks if the future is fixed. He is asking for a second chance.

- I will honour Christmas in my heart, and try to keep it all the year.

Scrooge · [Stave Four](#) · [redemption](#) · [christmas](#)

His promise. Christmas every day, in how he treats people.

- I am not the man I was.

Scrooge · [Stave Five](#) · [redemption](#)

Plain and simple. He has changed.

- I will live in the Past, the Present, and the Future.

Scrooge · [Stave Four](#) · [time](#) · [redemption](#)

He will learn from all three spirits. He will not cut himself off from time again.

Every quote, in order

All 45, in the order they happen.

Stave One 13 quotes

Stave Two 7 quotes

Stave Three 11 quotes

Stave Four 7 quotes

Stave One

- **Marley was dead: to begin with.**

Narrator · [Stave One](#) · [the supernatural](#)

The first line. Dickens wants you sure of this, so the ghost later is a real shock.

Oh! But he was a tight-fisted hand at the grind-stone, Scrooge!

Narrator · [Stave One](#) · [greed](#) · [isolation](#)

Scrooge holds on to money hard. He grinds people down.

Hard and sharp as flint

Narrator · [Stave One](#) · [isolation](#) · [greed](#)

Flint is a cold stone. It can make a spark, but Scrooge never lets one out.

- **solitary as an oyster**

Narrator · [Stave One](#) · [isolation](#)

Shut tight. Alone. But an oyster can hold a pearl. Dickens leaves that hope in.

- **"Bah!" said Scrooge, "Humbug!"**

Scrooge · [Stave One](#) · [christmas](#) · [isolation](#)

Humbug means nonsense. Scrooge thinks Christmas is nonsense.

If I could work my will

Scrooge · [Stave One](#) · [christmas](#) · [greed](#)

If he had his way, every fool who says merry Christmas would be boiled with his own pudding.

• Are there no prisons?

Scrooge · [Stave One](#) · [poverty](#) · [responsibility](#)

Two men ask him for money for the poor. He asks if the prisons are still open. That is his answer.

• If they would rather die," said Scrooge, "they had better do it, and decrease the surplus population.

Scrooge · [Stave One](#) · [poverty](#) · [responsibility](#) · [greed](#)

Let the poor die. There are too many people anyway. The worst thing he says.

• I wear the chain I forged in life

Marley · [Stave One](#) · [greed](#) · [the supernatural](#) · [responsibility](#)

Marley made his own chain. Every greedy thing he did is a link in it.

• Mankind was my business.

Marley · [Stave One](#) · [responsibility](#) · [redemption](#)

Scrooge says Marley was a good man of business. Marley says people were his real business. He forgot.

I am here to - night to warn you, that you have yet a chance and hope of escaping my fate

Marley · [Stave One](#) · [redemption](#) · [the supernatural](#)

Marley comes to give Scrooge a way out. Three spirits will come.

● **There's more of gravy than of grave about you**

Scrooge · [Stave One](#) · [the supernatural](#)

Scrooge jokes that the ghost is just bad food. He is scared and pretending not to be.

The air was filled with phantoms, wandering hither and thither in restless haste, and moaning as they went

Narrator · [Stave One](#) · [the supernatural](#) · [responsibility](#)

Scrooge sees hundreds of ghosts in chains. They want to help the poor but cannot. It is too late for them.

Stave Two

I am the Ghost of Christmas Past.

Ghost of Christmas Past · [Stave Two](#) · [time](#) · [the supernatural](#)

The first spirit. It shows Scrooge his own past.

A solitary child, neglected by his friends, is left there still.

Ghost of Christmas Past · [Stave Two](#) · [isolation](#) · [family](#)

Young Scrooge, alone at school at Christmas. We see why he became cold.

- I should like to be able to say a word or two to my clerk just now

Scrooge · [Stave Two](#) · [redemption](#) · [responsibility](#)

After seeing Fezziwig's party, Scrooge thinks of Bob. The first crack in him.

He has the power to render us happy or unhappy

Scrooge · [Stave Two](#) · [responsibility](#) · [family](#)

Scrooge sees that a boss can make his workers happy or miserable. It costs almost nothing.

Another idol has displaced me

Belle · [Stave Two](#) · [greed](#) · [isolation](#)

His young love leaves him. Money has taken her place.

a golden one

Belle · [Stave Two](#) · [greed](#)

The new idol is gold. Belle names it.

Show me no more!

Scrooge · [Stave Two](#) · [time](#) · [redemption](#)

The past hurts. Scrooge cannot bear to look. He is starting to feel.

Stave Three

- Come in! and know me better, man!

Ghost of Christmas Present · [Stave Three](#) · [christmas](#) · [family](#)

The second spirit is big, warm and loud. It invites Scrooge in.

a jolly Giant, glorious to see

Narrator · [Stave Three](#) · [christmas](#) · [the supernatural](#)

The Ghost of Christmas Present is joy itself, dressed in green.

● God bless us every one!

Tiny Tim · [Stave Three](#) · [family](#) · [poverty](#) · [christmas](#)

Tiny Tim's line. The poorest child blesses everyone, including Scrooge.

● If these shadows remain unaltered by the Future, the child will die.

Ghost of Christmas Present · [Stave Three](#) · [poverty](#) · [responsibility](#) · [time](#)

Tiny Tim will die unless something changes. Scrooge is the something.

If he be like to die, he had better do it, and decrease the surplus population.

Ghost of Christmas Present · [Stave Three](#) · [poverty](#) · [responsibility](#)

The ghost says Scrooge's own words back to him. Now they are about a child he knows.

I'll give you Mr. Scrooge, the Founder of the Feast!

Bob Cratchit · [Stave Three](#) · [family](#) · [responsibility](#)

Bob toasts Scrooge at Christmas dinner. Bob is kind even to his mean boss.

The Founder of the Feast indeed!

Mrs Cratchit · [Stave Three](#) · [poverty](#) · [responsibility](#)

Mrs Cratchit will not toast him. She knows how little he pays.

I am sorry for him; I couldn't be angry with him if I tried.

Fred · [Stave Three](#) · [family](#) · [redemption](#) · [christmas](#)

Fred feels sorry for his uncle, not angry. He keeps inviting him.

● **This boy is Ignorance. This girl is Want.**

Ghost of Christmas Present · [Stave Three](#) · [poverty](#) · [responsibility](#)

Two thin children under the ghost's robe. Not knowing, and not having.

Dickens says they are everyone's fault.

Beware them both, and all of their degree, but most of all beware this boy

Ghost of Christmas Present · [Stave Three](#) · [poverty](#) · [responsibility](#)

Fear the boy most. Ignorance is more dangerous than want.

● **"Are there no prisons?" said the Spirit, turning on him for the last time with his own words.**

Ghost of Christmas Present · [Stave Three](#) · [poverty](#) · [responsibility](#)

Again the ghost uses Scrooge's words. Scrooge is ashamed.

Stave Four

The Phantom slowly, gravely, silently, approached.

Narrator · [Stave Four](#) · [the supernatural](#) · [time](#)

The last spirit does not speak. It just points. That is scarier.

I fear you more than any spectre I have seen.

Scrooge · [Stave Four](#) · [time](#) · [the supernatural](#)

Scrooge is most afraid of the future. That is where he still has a chance.

Old Scratch has got his own at last, hey?

A businessman · [Stave Four](#) · [isolation](#) · [greed](#)

Men joke about a dead man. The devil has him now. It is Scrooge, but he does not know yet.

It's likely to be a very cheap funeral

A businessman · [Stave Four](#) · [isolation](#)

No one will go to the funeral unless lunch is free. That is what his life adds up to.

● **Are these the shadows of the things that Will be, or are they shadows of things that May be, only?**

Scrooge · [Stave Four](#) · [time](#) · [redemption](#)

Scrooge asks if the future is fixed. He is asking for a second chance.

● **I will honour Christmas in my heart, and try to keep it all the year.**

Scrooge · [Stave Four](#) · [redemption](#) · [christmas](#)

His promise. Christmas every day, in how he treats people.

● **I will live in the Past, the Present, and the Future.**

Scrooge · [Stave Four](#) · [time](#) · [redemption](#)

He will learn from all three spirits. He will not cut himself off from time again.

Stave Five

I am as light as a feather, I am as happy as an angel, I am as merry as a schoolboy.

Scrooge · [Stave Five](#) · [redemption](#) · [christmas](#)

He wakes up and he is a new man. He talks like a child.

I don't know what day of the month it is!

Scrooge · [Stave Five](#) · [redemption](#) · [time](#)

He does not know the date and does not care. Time has stopped being money.

● I am not the man I was.

Scrooge · [Stave Five](#) · [redemption](#)

Plain and simple. He has changed.

A merry Christmas, Bob!

Scrooge · [Stave Five](#) · [redemption](#) · [family](#) · [christmas](#)

He says it to his clerk with a real smile and raises his pay.

He became as good a friend, as good a master, and as good a man, as the good old city knew

Narrator · [Stave Five](#) · [redemption](#) · [responsibility](#)

How the story ends. Friend, boss, man. Good at all three.

to Tiny Tim, who did NOT die, he was a second father.

Narrator · [Stave Five](#) · [family](#) · [redemption](#) · [poverty](#)

Tiny Tim lives. Scrooge makes sure of it.

God bless Us, Every One!

Narrator · [Stave Five](#) · [christmas](#) · [family](#)

The last words of the book. Tiny Tim's line, for everyone.
