

A Christmas Carol

About the Selection

In Act 1 of *A Christmas Carol*, we meet the stingy Ebenezer Scrooge on Christmas Eve. Scrooge proclaims the holiday a “humbug.” That night, Ebenezer is visited by the ghost of his business partner, Jacob Marley, who warns of the coming of three spirits whose visits can save Scrooge from a terrible fate. As Marley predicts, the first of the spirits arrives to escort Scrooge on a journey to his past. Scrooge’s hard heart begins to soften as he sees himself as a lonely young boy and then as a young man at the end of Act 1, Ebenezer Scrooge has returned to his bed, where he will soon be visited by a second spirit.

Reading Comprehension Questions

1. Act 1 has five scenes, where do these scenes take place?
2. What is the time of the play?
3. Preview the text. Based on the images, title, and other information you can quickly preview, what is your purpose for reading this play?
4. Who is Jacob Marley? What is his relationship to Ebenezer Scrooge?
5. On page 666, as Marley talks about Scrooge, he repeats the word “sole” (from the word *solitude*). What does this tell us about Scrooge?
6. Interpret this line on page 666, Marley says, “*Scrooge was my sole executor, my sole administrator, my sole assign, my sole residuary legatee, my sole friend and my sole mourner. But Scrooge was not so cut up by the sad event of my death, but that he was an excellent man of business on the very day of my funeral...*” What does this mean?
7. According to Marley’s monologues in Scene 1, what does Marley think of his old partner, Ebenezer Scrooge?

8. Read the stage directions on page 667, what does the design of the Scrooge and Marley, Ltd show the differences between Scrooge and Bob Cratchit? Compare and Contrast their offices.
9. What is the atmosphere like outside on the town streets compared to inside Scrooge and Cratchit's offices?
10. Why is Cratchit's office so cold that he has to try and warm his hands by candlelight?
11. Summarize the dialogue between Scrooge and his nephew on page 669. What invitation does Scrooge's nephew offer?
12. On page 670, based on their short conversation, what can you infer (conclude based on evidence) about the nephew's character from his words to Cratchit? How would you have reacted toward Scrooge?
13. What do the thin man and the portly man want from Scrooge?
14. How does Scrooge feel about Christmas?
15. On page 674, Scrooge and Cratchit have a conversation, how do you think an actor might portray these characters?
16. What do you learn about Scrooge through his words as he shuts out the light and through the description of him as he walks home? (Make sure to read the stage directions)
17. Why is Cratchit taking the day off?