

A CHRISTMAS CAROL

ORIGINAL BY CHARLES DICKENS

RETOLD BY PAULINE FRANCIS



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Introduction

Charles Dickens was born in 1812, the second of eight children. When he was twelve years old, his father went to prison because he owed money. Charles went out to work to help his family. He never forgot this terrible time when he was poor, and later used his experiences in some of his stories.

In his twenties, Charles found work writing about London life for newspapers and magazines. Some of these articles were published as a book called *Pickwick Papers*. This is how Charles Dickens became famous at the age of twenty-four.

A Christmas Carol, published in 1843, was the first of his Christmas stories. It tells the story of a ghost called Marley who comes to haunt his old friend Scrooge on Christmas Eve. He does this to teach him a lesson – not to be so mean. The word ‘scrooge’ is still used by some people today to describe a mean person.

Charles Dickens wrote many famous novels, including *Nicholas Nickleby*, *David Copperfield*, *Oliver Twist* and *Great Expectations*. He died in 1870 at the age of fifty-eight and is buried in Westminster Abbey, London.

CHAPTER ONE

Humbug!

Marley was dead – to begin with. And when Marley died, Ebenezer Scrooge was the only friend at his funeral.

Scrooge was a mean man – a greedy, tight-fisted man. He was as hard and as sharp as flint and secretive and solitary. The cold inside him froze his old face, nipped his pointed nose and shrivelled his cheeks. It made his eyes red and his thin lips blue. Frost seemed to shine on his head and his eyebrows. He was as bitter as the coldest wind.

Nobody ever stopped Scrooge in the street to say a friendly word. No beggar ever begged from him. No child ever asked him what time it was. Did Scrooge care? No! He liked more than anything else to keep people at a distance. And at Christmas he did not thaw out, not even by one degree.

Once upon a time, on Christmas Eve, old Scrooge was busy counting money. It was cold, bleak, foggy weather. It was only just after three o'clock in the afternoon but it was dark already. The door of Scrooge's office was open so that he could keep an eye on his clerk, Bob Cratchit. He was in a cold dark room copying letters by hand. His fire was so small that it looked like a single coal, but he could not make it larger because Scrooge kept the coal in his room. The clerk