# Collins

# AQA GCSE English Language and Literature



# A Christmas Carol

Student Guide

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# Introduction

### How to use this book

This Student Book is designed to support your classroom study of *A Christmas Carol*.

It offers an integrated approach to studying English Literature and English Language, to help you prepare for your AQA GCSE exams.

The book can be used as a 10-week programme, if desired, or dipped into throughout your course or for revision.

### **English Literature**

The book includes a pre-reading chapter to introduce some of the novel's key contexts and concerns.

Six chapters then guide you through the novel in depth, with activities to build your understanding of the plot, themes, characters, language and structure of the novel.

At the end of your reading, two whole-text revision chapters revisit key themes, characters and contexts to help you form your own interpretations of the whole novel.



Finally, Chapter 10 focuses on your Paper 1 English Literature exam. Two practice questions are provided, with guidance to help you plan and write effectively. Sample responses with commentaries show you the difference between a clear and wellexplained and a convincing, analytical answer.



Each chapter opener page clearly shows you what you will read and explore for English Literature and for English Language.

Literature lessons help you to \_engage with key scenes from the novel, building your analysis skills.



Practice questions and sample responses help you to prepare for assessment.

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### **English Language**

Each chapter also includes one or more lessons focused on building your English Language skills.

You will read fiction and non-fiction texts from the 19th, 20th and 21st centuries. These have been chosen to enhance your understanding of the themes and contexts of *A Christmas Carol*.

You will be given the opportunity to explore these texts and respond to them by answering questions in the style of the AQA Paper 1 and Paper 2 exams. Across the book, you will practise each of the AQA question types, including narrative, descriptive and discursive writing. The closing page of each chapter offers a longer task on the text so far, to build your writing stamina for the final exam.

Chapter 2 • Lesson 4	English Language
Understanding a Assessment objective	<ul> <li>It is onomatopoeic – it sounds like the thing it describes – the 'o' sound is a sort of echo.</li> </ul>
writer's use of language	<ul> <li>It suggests something shallow or unconvincing, such as 'a hollow excuse'.</li> </ul>
for Paper 1 Question 2	What is the effect of describing someone as having a 'hollow cheek'?
	2 Now consider the next part of the description: 'his sunken brilliant eye; his black-attired figure'.
How can I explain the different language techniques a writer uses?	What is the effect of the vocabulary choices here? (What are the word connotations?)
Charles Dickens uses a range of language techniques to convey ideas about people and places, including:	The writer's use of language features and techniques
use of words or phrases with particular connotations     use of striking 'word pictures', or imagery, such as similes and     metaphors     connotations: images or ideas	Equally important is the use of striking 'word pictures' – or imagery. Consider this example from The Haunted Man extract: 'his grizzed hair hanging. Ike tangled sea-weed'.
varying sentence lengths     phrase     repetition of key words and phrases.	What does this simile convey about the person or thing described?
The following extract from another ghost story by Dickens, The Haunted Man, shows his use of some of these language techniques.	The writer's use of sentence forms
wanted man, moves his use of some of chese language vectoringues.	Writers use a range of sentence forms for effect. They may:
Who could have seen his hollow cheek; his sunken brilliant eye; his black-attired figure, indefinably grim, although well-knit and well-proportioned; his grizzled hair hanging, like tangled sea-weed, about	<ul> <li>vary sentence length (for example, using a short sentence for dramatic impact)</li> </ul>
his face,-as if he had been, through his whole life, a lonely mark for the chafing and beating of the	<ul> <li>use sentences with recurring features (such as beginning in the same way or repeating phrases)</li> </ul>
great deep of humanity,but might have said he looked like a haunted man? [] Who that had seen him in his inner chamber, part library and part laboratory,for he was, as the	<ul> <li>use different sentence types (questions, exclamations, and so on)</li> </ul>
world knew, far and wide, a learned man in chemistry, and a teacher on whose lips and hands a crowd of aspiring ears and eyes hung daily.	What do you notice about Dickens's use of different
Who that had seen him there, upon a winter night, alone, surrounded by his drugs and instruments and books; the shadow of his shaded lamp a monstrous beetle on the wall, motionless among a crowd	sentence forms in The Haunted Man extract?
of spectral shapes raised there by the flickering of the fire upon the quaint objects around him; some of	a How long are the sentences? What effect, if any, does this create?
these phantoms (the reflection of glass vessels that held hquids), trembling at heart like things that knew his power to uncombine them, and to give back their component parts to fire and vapour; —who that had seen him then, his work done, and he pondering in his chair before the rusted grate and red flame,	b What word begins all three of the sentences here? How does this add to the mystery?
moving his thin mouth as if in speech, but silent as the dead, would not have said that the man seemed haunted and the chamber too?	Final task
From The Haunted Mary, by Charles Dickens (1848)	Now complete this exam-style task.
The writer's use of words and phrases	In this extract, how does Dickens use language to describe the
When explaining the effect of the writer's choice of words or phrases, consider the connotations of the words used. For example,	'haunted man' at work in his laboratory?  You could include Dickens' choice of:  Haunting and ghosts will
ake the adjective 'hollow':	<ul> <li>words and phrases</li> <li>play a key role in A Christmas</li> </ul>
<ul> <li>It means 'empty', but it also suggests the image of a something that has been 'hollowed' out.</li> </ul>	language features and techniques     Carol. You could consider to     what extent Dickens' style in
that has been individed' OUL	sentence forms.     [8 marks]     The Haunted Man extract is     mirrored in the novel.
Chamber & Steve One Catting things on	Lesson 4: Understanding a writer's use of language for Paper 1 Question 2 25
4 Chapter 2: Stave One: Setting things up	Lesson 4: Understanding a writer's use of language for Paper 1 Question 2 25

Language lessons will focus on one AQA question type. The text extracts have been chosen to deepen your understanding of the events, themes and contexts in this chapter of the novel. Literature link boxes make the connection to the novel clear.

# **Stave Four: Death** and the city

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# **English Literature**

### You will read:

Chapter

the first half of Stave Four of A Christmas Carol.

### You will explore:

- ideas about the function of the Ghost of Christmas Yet to Come
- alternative depictions of the city of London and its poor.

### **English Language**

### You will read:

- Dickens's non-fiction accounts of his visit to a workhouse and a walk in London
- a student's descriptive account based on an image of Victorian London.

### You will explore:

- how creative language features can be used in non-fiction texts
- how you can make your descriptive writing memorable.

Assessment objective • AO2

# How writers use language for effect for Paper 2 Question 3

### How do writers achieve effects in non-fiction texts?

### Writing about language in non-fiction texts

Remember that non-fiction writers often use many of the same language devices in their writing as you would find in fiction.



Read the following descriptions by Dickens. Can you tell which one is from *A Christmas Carol* and which is from a non-fiction account of walking in London?

...streets of dirty, straggling houses... composed of buildings as ill-proportioned and deformed as the half-naked children that wallow in the kennels. The ways were foul and narrow; the shops and houses wretched; the people half-naked, drunken, slipshod, ugly.

- Notice how both texts use a literary device **personification** to describe the buildings.
  - **a** Find the words or phrases in each description that use personification.
  - b What is the effect of this, in both cases?

To explore further, look closely at the particular words and phrases and their **connotations**. For example, what does describing the buildings as 'deformed' suggest about them? One student has made these notes:

'deformed' – unwell, misshapen, broken, diseased

Write down any connotations that come to mind from the following words:

• wretched • straggling • foul.

### Other language features and devices in non-fiction texts

Look out for other language features in non-fiction texts that you might associate with creative writing. Consider these examples from *A Christmas Carol*.

### Key terms

**personification:** describing a natural feature (for example, a mountain) or an inanimate object (for example, a building) as though it has human characteristics

**connotations:** ideas, pictures or associations brought to mind

### **English Language**

Type of language feature	Description/definition	Example
simile	comparing one thing to another	'Marley's face…like a bad lobster in a dark cellar' (Stave One)
metaphor	describing one thing as though it really is something else	'the houses opposite were mere phantoms' (Stave One)
assonance	repeating similar vowel sounds in a phrase or sentence OR: using identical consonants with different vowels	'Fowls cl <u>u</u> cked and str <u>u</u> tted' (Stave Two) 'anyhow and everyhow' (Stave Two)
alliteration	repeating the same sounds at the start of words in a phrase or sentence	'the <u>s</u> etting <u>s</u> un had left a <u>s</u> treak of fiery red' (Stave Three)
onomatopoeia	when the sound of a word matches the action or thing it describes	'shaggy poniestrotting'; 'a squeak and scuffle from the mice' (Stave Two)

Which of these language features can you identify in this extract from a non-fiction account of Dickens's visit to a workhouse?

In another room, were several ugly old women crouching, witch-like, round a hearth, and chattering and nodding, after the manner of the monkeys. 'All well here? And enough to eat?' A general chattering and chuckling; at last an answer from a volunteer. 'Oh yes, gentleman! Bless you, gentleman! Lord bless the Parish of St So-and-So!'

From an article titled 'A Walk in a Workhouse', published in Household Words (1850)

Choose one of the language devices you have identified and explain its effect. What does it make you feel or think?

### **Combining language effects**

When exploring the language in non-fiction texts, it is also important to

explain how different word choices and language features combine to create an overall mood, or sense of a place or person.



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Look again at the extract from Dickens's account of his visit to a workhouse. What is the overall effect Dickens wishes to convey about the women? Try to:

- pick out the specific words, phrases, sounds or patterns you notice
- consider their connotations what they bring to mind.



### Putting what you have learned into practice

Now you are ready to use what you have learned to analyse language choices in an unfamiliar non-fiction text.

The first writing that Dickens published professionally was a series of 'sketches' based on his walks around London and his observations of the characters he met there. In the following text, he describes a traveller entering the area known as 'Seven Dials' in London.

He traverses streets of dirty, straggling houses, with now and then an unexpected court composed of buildings as ill-proportioned and deformed as the half-naked children that wallow in the kennels. Here and there, a little dark chandler's shop, with a cracked bell hung up behind the door to announce the entrance of a customer, or betray the presence of some young gentleman in whom a passion for shop tills has developed itself at an early age: others, as if for support, against some handsome lofty building, which **usurps** the place of a low dingy public-house; long rows of broken and patched windows expose plants that may have flourished when 'the Dials' were built, in vessels as dirty as 'the Dials' themselves; and shops for the purchase of rags, bones, old iron, and kitchen-stuff, vie in cleanliness with the birdfanciers and rabbit-dealers, which one might fancy so many arks, but for the irresistible conviction that no bird in its proper senses, who was permitted to leave one of them, would ever come back again.

Brokers' shops, which would seem to have been established by humane individuals, as refuges for destitute bugs, interspersed with announcements of day-schools, penny theatres, petition-writers, **mangles**, and music for balls or routs, complete the 'still life' of the subject; and dirty men, filthy women, squalid children, fluttering shuttlecocks, noisy **battledores**, reeking pipes, bad fruit, more than doubtful oysters, **attenuated** cats, depressed dogs, and anatomical fowls, are its cheerful accompaniments.

From Dickens's Sketches by Boz, published between 1833 and 1836

At the end of this unit, you will complete an exam-style task on how Dickens uses language to describe the people and places around Seven Dials.



To prepare for the final task, start by focusing on *specific words* or phrases in the extract that tell the reader about the people and places in Seven Dials.

- Look for references to: men, women, children, shops, buildings, streets.
- 'Zoom in' on particular words and analyse their connotations and effects. For example, 'reeking' does not just mean 'slightly smelly'.

### Glossary

**usurps:** aggressively takes the place of

**mangles:** laundry machines with rollers for pressing or drying linen

**battledore:** a game similar to badminton

**attenuated:** weakened or extremely thin



SEVEN DIALS. (From an Original Sketch.)

Copy and complete a table like the one below.

<i>How</i> they are described – particular words or phrases chosen	Language form or device	The effect: what it suggests about the people or places
'dirty men' and 'filthy women' 'refuges for destitute bugs'	noun phrases	Suggest grimy people and places – it's a safe place for fleas and other insects to thrive!

For higher marks, you need to explain the overall tone or mood of the extract. For example, look at the phrase:

Brokers' shops, which would seem to have been established by humane individuals, as refuges for destitute bugs...

Taken at face value, this means 'shops set up by kind individuals as places of safety for homeless bugs'. However, it is likely Dickens is being **ironic** or slightly humorous. So, a suitable analysis would be: Key terms

**ironic:** creating a comic or knowing tone at odds with the apparent meaning of a statement

comment on the tone

Dickens's comical mention of the 'humane individuals' who opened their doors for 'bugs' implies that the shops are especially filthy and a perfect environment for fleas and other similar creatures. apt quotation supporting the comment

explanation of the effect and meaning

Is this slightly comical, 'tongue-in-cheek' tone in evidence in any of the other examples from the Seven Dials text? If so, add this to your table.

Final task

9

Now complete this exam-style task.

Refer to Dickens's account of Seven Dials.

How does Dickens use language to describe the people and places?

# Checklist for success

- Select no more than 3 or 4 language choices or features.
- Comment on the connotations of individual words and phrases and the effects created.
- Comment on the overall tone or mood created.

[12 marks]

# Introducing the Ghost of Christmas Yet to Come

Assessment objectives • AO1, AO2, AO3

### How does Dickens present the Ghost of Christmas Yet to Come?

### **Death in Victorian England**

1

3

Death and **mortality** are central concerns of *A Christmas Carol*. Given the mortality rates in Victorian England, this is hardly surprising.

- Look at the graph of English life expectancy, 1840–1935.
  - a What was the average life expectancy in 1843 (when A Christmas Carol was published)?
  - **b** As this is an average, what do you think life expectancy was for poorer working-class people?
- 2 In the poorer quarters of Britain's larger cities, a child born in the 1830s and 1840s had a one in five (20 per cent) chance of dying by their fifth birthday.

How do you think this childhood mortality rate would have affected readers of *A Christmas Carol* in Dickens's day?

# Analysing the Third Ghost more closely

Dickens introduces the final Ghost at the end of Stave Three:

Scrooge...beheld a solemn Phantom, draped and hooded, coming, like a mist along the ground, towards him.

What are your immediate impressions of the Third Ghost? Make notes.

Most readers in both Dickens's time and today would immediately link the appearance of the Third Ghost with that of the **Grim Reaper**. It raises the question about who the Reaper's scythe will fall on: will it be Scrooge, to punish him for his past behaviour, or, as predicted, Tiny Tim – vulnerable as so many poor or sick Victorian children were?



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Kev terms



### Key terms

### Grim Reaper:

personification of death; a tall skeletal figure, shrouded in black and carrying a scythe, who collects the souls of the recently dead and takes them to the afterlife a Create a 'quotation board' about the Third Ghost, like the one below, based on the section of Stave Four you have read so far.



how the Ghost looks and behaves

- now the Ghost looks and behaves
- how Scrooge reacts to the Ghost.
- **b** Look carefully at the quotations you have selected. What does each one reveal about the Ghost? How do the quotations tie in with the idea of mortality or impending death?

One student has turned his thoughts into an explanatory paragraph:

Dickens describes the ghost <mark>'coming, like a mist along the ground,'</mark> towards Scrooge. The simil<u>e</u> 'like a mist' creates a gothic and sinister mood, and also suggests the Ghost is going to overpower him in the way that death can come at any time and any moment.

- c Choose a quotation of your own about the Third Ghost and write an analysis of it in a similar way.
- 5

How does the final Ghost compare with the previous one? You could make parallel 'quotation boards' for them and/or create a simple table like the one below.

Feature	Ghost of Christmas Present	Ghost of Christmas Yet to Come
physical appearance	'jolly Giant'; 'genial face'	
actions	Takes Scrooge through streets at Christmas Takes Scrooge to	
speech		
symbolic impact	Life, kindness and	



6 Write a paragraph about your overall impressions of the Ghost of Christmas Yet to Come.

- Comment on: • the Ghost's
- the Ghost's appearance, speech and behaviour
- the effect it has on Scrooge
- what it seems to represent or symbolise.

# **Corruption and poverty in the City**

Assessment objectives • AO1, AO3

**Text references** You will have read from:

• 'They scarcely seemed to enter the city...' To 'My life tends that way, now.'

### Why does the Ghost show Scrooge these final scenes?

In the first few pages of Stave Four, Scrooge meets the final Ghost and is horrified by its deathly presence. Next, the Ghost takes Scrooge to two locations in the city – first to the business district and then to the slums.

### **City business**

In the first location, the ghost shows Scrooge's three men of business in conversation. Bearing in mind that Scrooge knows these men, anything Dickens says about them should be examined carefully. For example, Dickens describes the businessmen in the following ways:

- a man 'taking a vast quantity of snuff out of a very large snuff-box'
- 'a great fat man with a monstrous chin'
- a 'red-faced gentleman with a pendulous excrescence on the end of his nose'.
- 1 What is the overall impression of these three men from each description? Think about the adjectives 'vast', 'very large', 'great fat' and 'monstrous', and the noun 'excrescence' (growth). If you were to associate these men with one of the seven deadly sins, which one would it be?
- 2 It is clear to the reader (if not to Scrooge) who and what their subject is.
  - a Why do you think Dickens does not allow Scrooge to guess they are discussing his own death? For example, what does it tell us about Scrooge and his readiness to change?
  - **b** What is the dramatic effect of revealing Scrooge's death to the reader in this way?

### **Old Joe's**

3

From here, Scrooge is surprised to find himself in another, poorer part of the city.

- Look at the picture (right) by Gustave Doré. What can you see?
  - a Who is in it? What (if anything) are they doing?
  - **b** How would you describe their appearance?
- What impression is given by the image of this part of London?



Now read the following extract from Stave Four, about the 'obscure part of the town' where Scrooge is taken.

The ways were foul and narrow; the shops and houses wretched; the people half-naked, drunken, slipshod, ugly. Alleys and archways, like so many cesspools, disgorged their offences of smell, and dirt, and life, upon the straggling streets; and the whole quarter reeked with crime, with filth, and misery.

Far in this den of infamous resort, there was a low-browed, beetling shop, below a pent-house roof, where iron, old rags, bottles, bones, and greasy offal, were bought. Upon the floor within, were piled up heaps of rusty keys, nails, chains, hinges, files, scales, weights, and refuse iron of all kinds. Secrets that few would like to scrutinise were bred and hidden in mountains of unseemly rags, masses of corrupted fat, and sepulchres of bones. Sitting in among the wares he dealt in, by a charcoal stove, made of old bricks, was a grey-haired rascal, nearly seventy years of age; who had screened himself from the cold air without, by a frousy curtaining of miscellaneous tatters, hung upon a line; and smoked his pipe in all the luxury of calm retirement.

- 5 How does Dickens represent the poor and this part of the city here? Look at the highlighted sections.
  - **a** How are the people described? What attitude does Dickens seem to have towards them?
  - **b** How is the shop personified?
  - **c** How does the 'mountains' of items here contrast with the mountain of food in Stave Three?
- 6 What symbolic child-figures from Stave Three are you reminded of in the first paragraph above? How are they similar?
  - In what way does the description of Old Joe's contrast with that of the Cratchits' home?
- 8 Shortly after this, we find out why the three people at Old Joe's have met.
  - a What are they discussing?
  - b Why does Scrooge find it particularly repellent and shocking?

### **Final task**

Make sure you have read up until the point when Scrooge leaves the slums ('My life tends that way, now').

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Write two paragraphs about why the Ghost chooses to show Scrooge these final visions of the city – both the corrupted rich and poor. Consider:

- how the descriptions of the City businessmen convey ideas about corruption and moral decay
- how the depiction of the area around Old Joe's contrasts or links with earlier portrayals of poverty and its effects.

# Descriptive writing: dark places for Paper 1 Question 5

Assessment objectives • AO5, AO6

### How can you make your descriptive writing memorable?

When writing to describe, it is worth taking a few lessons from Dickens himself. He is a master of creating vivid, powerful pictures that convey a particular tone or mood.

For example, imagine Dickens had been asked to write a description to accompany the engraving below, by Gustave Doré. How would he have approached it?



Engraving of the slums of London by Gustave Doré.

### **Being specific**

What is lacking in this descriptive sentence? Would Dickens have been happy with it?

The smoke covered the building.

The above description leaves the reader with an imprecise picture of a scene. Lots of questions remain unanswered:

- What sort of building?
- How was it 'covered'?
- What was the smoke like?

A better description might be:

### The house was cloaked by the smoke.

This specifies the type of building, and the metaphorical use of the verb 'cloak' creates an interesting picture of the shape of the smoke. However, the description could still be better.



### Using the senses

To improve the description, you could draw on the five senses to convey the atmosphere of the picture. You could add appropriate adjectives to convey:

• the shape or style of the house

detached
grand
airy
looming
narrow

- the colour of the smoke
- the smell, or even the taste, of the smoke.
- 2 Copy and complete this sentence:

The ..... house was cloaked by the

..... smoke.

### **Controlling the focus**

You also need to structure your description so that you control what the reader sees. Think about:

- the order of view (what is seen first, then next, and so on)
- the choice of focus (will you start with a small detail and zoom outwards?).

As a descriptive writer, it can be useful to think of yourself as operating a video camera, with the ability to zoom in, out, pan up and down across a scene – even stop, and select a new shot.

For example, consider this student's description of the Doré engraving.

A pale waxy light pervaded the curving tail of the backyards that stretched away into the gloomy distance. Behind a washing line strung limply across a courtyard, a gaunt man sat slumped forward, staring into the dregs of an empty mug with a chipped edge. The brim of his hat cast a thin, dark line over his forehead, like a trickle of dirt.



- Trace the focus here:
- **a** Which sentence establishes the general, long-shot of the scene?



b What – or who – is the focus at the start of the second sentence? How does the focus change after the comma?



**c** How does the focus shift again after the second comma in the second sentence?



**d** Which final detail in the last sentence makes the reader 'zoom in'?



### **Inventive imagery**

Imagery features strongly in the descriptions above. It can be one way to make your writing inventive and engaging. For example, **personification** is used in the example of the 'curving tail of the backyards'. **Simile** and **metaphor** are also key ways of reimagining scenes or people.



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How is simile used at the end of the final sentence? Why is this an apt comparison, given the scene?

### **Final task**

Now complete this exam-style task.

Write your own description based on the sketch by Gustave Doré on the page opposite.

(24 marks for content and organisation

16 marks for technical accuracy)

[40 marks]

### **Checklist for success**

- Begin by generating as much specific vocabulary about the scene as possible. Start with what can be seen – but also use your imagination to consider what could be there, even if not actually visible.
- ✓ Start with a description of the whole scene and then 'zoom in' on specific items, details or movements.
- Try to convey an overall idea or mood through the description and your use of imagery.

### Key terms

### personification: a

personification of something abstract is its representation in the form of a person

**simile:** an expression which describes a person or thing as being similar to someone or something else

**metaphor:** an imaginative way of describing something by referring to something else which is the same in a particular way

# **End of chapter task**

Read this extract from Stave Four. In it, Scrooge listens to Mrs Dilber talk about how she stole a good-quality calico shirt from a corpse.

'What do you call wasting of it?' asked old Joe.

'Putting it on him to be buried in, to be sure,' replied the woman with a laugh. 'Somebody was fool enough to do it, but I took it off again. If calico an't good enough for such a purpose, it isn't good enough for anything. It's quite as becoming to the body. He can't look uglier than he did in that one.'

Scrooge listened to this dialogue in horror. As they sat grouped about their spoil, in the scanty light afforded by the old man's lamp, he viewed them with a detestation and disgust, which could hardly have been greater, though they had been obscene demons, marketing the corpse itself.

Write two paragraphs.

- In the first, explain what this scene has to say about the theme of money/business.
- In the second, explain how Dickens presents the people in the slums through Scrooge's eyes.



## Check your progress

- I can explain my ideas clearly about the functions of characters and settings.
- I understand the main methods Dickens used to present ideas.
- I can explain and develop my ideas thoughtfully about the functions of characters and settings.
- I can analyse a wide range of methods that Dickens used to present ideas.