A CHRISTMAS CAROL · YEAR 10 · LESSON 2

Dickens and Victorian society

Poverty, the Poor Law, Malthus and Dickens’s own childhood

- Explain the main features of Victorian poverty
- Link Dickens’s childhood to Scrooge’s
- Use context (AO3) to support an idea

AO1 · AO2 · AO3

STARTER · 5 MINUTES · RETRIEVAL

Quick-fire recall

1. How long is Paper 1 and how many marks is Section B?
2. Which AO is context?
3. What did the Preface call the story?
4. In what year was the novella published?
5. What is an allegory?

Type each answer in the chat on “send”, or write them in your book. Score out of 5.

CHECK YOUR ANSWERS

Did you get them?

1. How long is Paper 1 and how many marks is Section B? **1 hr 45 · 30 marks**
2. Which AO is context? **AO3**
3. What did the Preface call the story? **A “Ghostly little book” / “Ghost of an Idea”**
4. In what year was the novella published? **1843**
5. What is an allegory? **A story with a hidden, usually moral, meaning**

Tally your score. Anything missed becomes a revision target.

THE BIG QUESTION

Which elements of Victorian society did Dickens draw on in A Christmas Carol?

Aim

Explain the main features of Victorian poverty

Aim

Link Dickens’s childhood to Scrooge’s

Aim

Use context (AO3) to support an idea

Success: I can support a clear argument with short quotations, analyse word choices and link to context.

CONTEXT

Four pieces of context

Industrial Revolution

Cities grew quickly. Many workers lived in overcrowded, dirty, dangerous conditions.

The Poor Law (1834)

The poor were pushed towards **workhouses**, made harsh on purpose so people would work instead.

Malthus

Believed population growth would outrun food, so poverty and early death were “natural”. Dickens opposed this.

Dickens’s childhood

In 1824 his father went to debtors’ prison. Aged 12, Charles worked in a blacking factory.

EXTRACT · DICKENS, IN A LATER LETTER

Dickens remembers his childhood

No words can describe the secret agony of my soul as I sank into this companionship […] The sense I had of being utterly neglected and hopeless, fired with grief and humiliation, my lonely vulnerability, my hungry misery, and the knowledge they had willingly put me in this situation. I could not bear to think of myself beyond reach of any honourable success.

TASK 1 · ANNOTATE

Read again and annotate

1. Highlight words that describe **his feelings**.
2. Find a phrase that links to a line you know from **Stave 2**.
3. What does “**willingly** put me” suggest about who he blames?
4. Which words show he feels **cut off** from other people?

Post your best quotation and one word of analysis in the chat.

TASK 2 · ZOOM IN

Key quotation

> “utterly neglected and hopeless”
>
> Dickens on his childhood

1. **Link:** which description of young Scrooge does this echo?
2. **Word:** what does “utterly” add?
3. **Interpretation:** does this explain Scrooge, excuse him, or both?
4. **Context:** how might this shape Dickens’s sympathy for the poor?

TASK 3 · MODEL

Model: context built into analysis

Point	Dickens presents Scrooge’s isolation sympathetically because he drew on his own childhood.
Evidence	Dickens once felt “utterly neglected and hopeless”, and Scrooge is “a solitary child, neglected by his friends”.
Analysis	The repeated idea of neglect suggests that loneliness in childhood can shape an adult’s coldness.
Context	Dickens’s time in the blacking factory taught him how poverty could damage a child’s future.
Link	He invites readers to see Scrooge as a product of hardship, not just a villain.

TASK 4 · WRITE (10 MINUTES)

Context in a paragraph

Write **one paragraph** explaining how ONE piece of context helps us understand Scrooge in Stave 1. Weave it in; do not bolt it on.

Check yourself, then paste your paragraph into the chat

- Names the context accurately
- Links it to a quotation or event
- Explains **why Dickens** might have done this
- Uses “perhaps” or “could suggest”

TASK 5 · WHOLE NOVEL · ONE LINKING SENTENCE FOR EACH

Link it to the rest of the novella

“Are there no prisons?”
Stave 1 · Scrooge on the Poor Law

“Are there no workhouses?”
Stave 3 · the Spirit quotes Scrooge back at himself

“hundreds of thousands are in want of common comforts”
Stave 1 · the charity gentleman on Victorian poverty

“A solitary child, neglected by his friends, is left there still.”
Stave 2 · Scrooge at school

EXIT TICKET

3-2-1

1. **3** features of Victorian society in the novella
2. **2** links between Dickens’s life and Scrooge
3. **1** reason Dickens wanted to reach rich readers

Type your 3-2-1 in the chat.