A CHRISTMAS CAROL · YEAR 10 · LESSON 19

Example essay: Scrooge’s fears

A model answer to the final assessment question

- Read a high-level response
- Trace how the argument develops across the novel
- Use it to improve your own writing

AO1 · AO2 · AO3

STARTER · 5 MINUTES · RETRIEVAL

Quick-fire recall

1. Which AO is “context”?
2. How many paragraphs are in the frame (body)?
3. What is the job of a conclusion?
4. What does “embed” a quotation mean?
5. Name one pivot phrase.

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. Which AO is “context”? **AO3**
2. How many paragraphs are in the frame (body)? **Four (2 extract, 2 novel)**
3. What is the job of a conclusion? **Answer the question and state Dickens’s message**
4. What does “embed” a quotation mean? **Weave it into your own sentence**
5. Name one pivot phrase. **“This idea is developed later when…”**

Tally your score. Anything missed becomes a revision target.

THE TASK

Today’s example essay

> Starting with this extract (Stave 4), explore how Dickens presents Scrooge’s fears.

This is a model written to show the **frame** in action. As you read each paragraph:

1. Find the **point**, the **quotation** and the **analysis**.
2. Underline one **word** that is analysed.
3. Find the context and the writer’s purpose.

EXAMPLE ESSAY · INTRODUCTION

Dickens presents Scrooge’s fears as the engine of his redemption: a man who once feared only poverty comes to fear loneliness, death and being forgotten. In this extract from Stave 4, the silent Ghost of Christmas Yet to Come appears as the final and most terrifying spirit, just before Scrooge sees his own fate. Writing for Victorian readers who believed in judgement after death, Dickens uses fear to persuade them that it is not too late to change.

Why it works

AO1
Big idea: fear drives change. It answers “presents Scrooge’s fears”.

EXTRACT
Places the extract: final spirit, just before the grave.

AO3
Links fear to Victorian belief in judgement.

EXAMPLE ESSAY · PARAGRAPH 1 · THE EXTRACT (THE PHANTOM)

Dickens creates fear through the phantom’s appearance. It is “shrouded in a deep black garment, which concealed its head, its face, its form”, and the tripling of concealed features leaves it faceless and anonymous. The verb “shrouded” evokes a burial cloth, so Scrooge’s fear is linked to death itself. Moreover, the narrator says that its “mysterious presence filled him with a solemn dread”; the abstract noun “dread” suggests an anxiety that is not about what he can see but what he cannot. This encourages the reader to share his fear of the unknown.

Why it works

AO2
Tripling and word choice (“shrouded”, “dread”) analysed together.

LAYERS
“Not what he can see but what he cannot”: a layered inference.

READER
Explains how the reader is positioned to feel fear.

EXAMPLE ESSAY · PARAGRAPH 2 · THE EXTRACT (SCROOGE'S BODY AND SPEECH)

Scrooge's physical reaction shows how deep his fear is. "His legs trembled beneath him", and the verb "trembled", repeated in the grave scene, suggests a man losing control of his body. His admission, "I fear you more than any spectre I have seen", uses the superlative to place this ghost above the others. Yet he adds, "I know your purpose is to do me good", which implies that his fear is now mixed with trust. Dickens may be showing that fear, when it is guided by conscience, can lead to wisdom rather than denial.

Why it works

AO1
Selects precise, brief quotations from both action and speech.

AO2
Superlative and the conjunction "Yet" as a turn in meaning.

WRITER
Tentative language: "may be showing".

EXAMPLE ESSAY · PARAGRAPH 3 · THE NOVEL (EARLIER FEARS)

This fear contrasts with Scrooge’s earlier reaction to Marley. In Stave 1 he “double-locked himself in, which was not his custom” and he feels “a strange, inexplicable dread”, but he tries to deny it by saying “Pooh, pooh!”. His fear then is defensive and rooted in self-protection. Belle also tells him in Stave 2, “You fear the world too much”, suggesting that his greed grew from a fear of poverty. The reader sees that Scrooge’s deepest fear was always insecurity, and that his selfishness was a form of armour.

Why it works

WHOLE TEXT
Draws on Stave 1 and Stave 2 to show how fear has developed.

AO1
Sustains an argument: earlier fear was defensive.

AO3
Links fear to the Victorian anxiety about poverty.

EXAMPLE ESSAY · PARAGRAPH 4 · THE NOVEL (THE GRAVE AND CHANGE)

By the grave scene, Scrooge’s fear becomes a catalyst for change. Dickens shows him “upon his knees”, asking “Am I that man who lay upon the bed?”, and the rhetorical question reveals panic at the prospect of dying unloved. He is “tight clutching” the phantom’s robe, which shows desperation, before his fear turns into a promise: “I will honour Christmas in my heart.” By Stave 5, the same man is “as light as a feather”, implying that the weight of fear has gone. Dickens suggests that confronting fear is the first step to redemption.

Why it works

WHOLE TEXT
Uses Stave 4 and Stave 5 to show the end point of the fear.

AO2
Rhetorical question, verbs of desperation, and a simile for relief.

AO1
Clear line: panic → promise → relief.

EXAMPLE ESSAY · CONCLUSION

In conclusion, Dickens presents Scrooge’s fears as moving from the defensive terror of Stave 1 to the deep dread of death and loneliness in Stave 4. By making his fear lead to compassion, Dickens warns readers that selfishness leads to isolation, but that it is never too late to change.

Why it works

AO1
Summarises the journey of Scrooge’s fears.

WRITER
Final focus on Dickens’s message.

EXAMINER’S VIEW

Why this is a high-level response

AO1

A clear, developing argument. Quotations are short, exact and embedded.

AO2

Single words, devices and structure are analysed. Layers of meaning are explored.

AO3

Context is woven in to explain Dickens’s purpose, not tacked on.

Level guide (paraphrased; check against the official AQA mark scheme): Level 6 convincing, critical exploration · Level 5 thoughtful, developed · Level 4 clear, consistent · Level 3 explained, structured · Level 2 some awareness · Level 1 simple.

TASK · SPOT IT

Find the features

1. Find one **topic sentence** that answers the question directly.
2. Find a place where the writer moves from the extract to the **whole novel**.
3. Find a **layered** interpretation using “not only… but also…” or “perhaps”.
4. Find one sentence of **context** that explains **why** Dickens wrote this.
5. Which paragraph is **weakest**? How could you improve it?

Post your answers in the chat. We will compare them.

TASK · YOUR TURN

Write your own paragraph

Choose a **different** quotation from the same extract. Write one paragraph in the same structure: **Point · Evidence · Analysis · Context · Link**.

Check yourself

- Point answers the question
- Short, embedded quotation
- Word-level analysis
- Effect on the reader
- Context and Dickens’s purpose

EXIT TICKET

3-2-1

1. **3** features of a high-level paragraph
2. **2** ways the essay links extract to novel
3. **1** target for your own writing

Type your 3-2-1 in the chat.