**Name** Student Name  **Date** September 2012

**Class** None  **Period** 2

**MAJOR WORKS DATA SHEET**

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| **Title** A Christmas Carol  **Author** Charles Dickens  **Date of Publication** 1843 | | **Genre**  romance with social criticism element  **Characteristics of the Genre**  *“A short story of social commentary based in Romanticism coming out of his own autobiography.”*  Critical of human vice, highly symbolic (allegorical), conflicted human beings, elements of magic, emotionally satisfying ending |
| **Historical Information**  In 1843, London, England had huge divides in social class. It also had harsh laws governing the payment of debts and the condition of poverty, laws which forced many poor into prisons and workhouses.  Dickens was disgusted with the work of wealthy economist Thomas Robert Malthus, who argued that population growth would always outpace food supply resulting poverty and starvation. Malthus supported the Poor Laws and the workhouses, arguing that any man unable to sustain himself had no right to live, or participate in the development of society. Dickens wants to remind readers that the poor are individuals. (social criticism) | |
| **Author’s Biography**  Dickens’ father piled up much debt, and when Dickens was twelve, his father was sent to debtors’ prison, and his mother moved with seven of their children into prison with him. Charles lived alone outside the prison, working with other children at a job pasting labels on bottles in a warehouse. The time (3 months) Charles spent away from his family were traumatic. |
| **Plot Summary**  **Be brief. Bulleted events are acceptable.**  Ebenezer Scrooge is visited by the ghost of his dead business partner, Jacob Marley, who tells him that as punishment for his greed his spirit will spend eternity weighted down by heavy chains. He offers Scrooge a chance at redemption, a way to avoid the same fate: visits by three spirits who will show him the error of his ways. After the final visit, Scrooge finds himself safely tucked in his bed. Overwhelmed by the chance to redeem himself and grateful that he has been returned to Christmas Day, Scrooge shares his newfound Christmas spirit.   * “Stave I” –includes nephew Fred, two men collecting for the poor, Bob Cratchit, Marley’s ghost (exposition) * “Stave II” – with Christmas Past, Scrooge sees his sister Fan, his fiancée, Belle, and his former employer, Fezziwig * “Stave III” – with Christmas Present, Scrooge sees the Cratchits, Fred and his wife, and Ignorance and Want * “Stave IV” – with Christmas Yet to Come, Scrooge sees the London Stock Exchange, a pawn shop, the table of a couple in debt, the Cratchits, and the cemetery (climax) * “Stave V” – sends turkey to Cratchits, donates to the poor, visits Fred, and helps the Cratchit family(resolution) | | |
| **Describe the Author’s Style…………………………..**  Uses a narrator’s voice  Includes a lot of detail  Includes lots of repetition and long lists  Includes lots of strong adjectives  Includes metaphors and similes.  Includes descriptions of people and their surroundings (including the weather)which reinforce each other.  Reads rhythmically and flows when read aloud.  Creates characters that are extremes (comic or sentimental). | | **…..and provide an example to demonstrate the style**  “Oh!  But he was a tight-fisted hand at the grind-stone, Scrooge! a squeezing, wrenching, grasping, scraping, clutching, covetous, old sinner!  Hard and sharp as flint, from which no steel had ever struck out generous fire; secret, and self-contained, and solitary as an oyster.  The cold within him froze his old features, nipped his pointed nose, shriveled his cheek, stiffened his gait; made his eyes red, his thin lips blue and spoke out shrewdly in his grating voice.  A frosty rime was on his head, and on his eyebrows, and his wiry chin.  He carried his own low temperature always about with him; he iced his office in the dogdays; and didn't thaw it one degree at Christmas.”*(detail, repetition, long lists, strong adjectives, description of people and surrounding as reinforcement, rhythmic, flowing, extreme characterization and a metaphor)*  “Old Marley was as dead as a door-nail.” AND “The same face: the very same. Marley in his pigtail, usual waistcoat, tights and boots; the tassels on the latter bristling, like his pigtail…The chain he drew was clasped about his middle. It was long, and wound about him like a tail…” (similes)    Mind! I don’t mean to say that I know, of my own knowledge…*(narrator’s voice)* |
| **Memorable Quotes**  **(at least 10)** | | |
| **Number and write each quote…...**  1. Oh! but he was a tight-fisted hand at the grindstone, Scrooge! a squeezing, wrenching, grasping, scraping, clutching, covetous old sinner! (Stave I)  2. "If I could work my will," said Scrooge indignantly, "every idiot who goes about with 'Merry Christmas' on his lips should be boiled with his own pudding, and buried with a stake of holly through his heart. He should!" (Scrooge, Stave I)  3. “I have always thought of Christmas-time…as a good time; a kind, forgiving, charitable, pleasant time; the only time I know of, in the long calendar of the year, when men and women seem by one consent to open their shut-up hearts freely, and to think of people below them as if they really were fellow-passengers to the grave, and not another race of creatures bound on other journeys." (Fred, Stave I)  4. "It is required of every man that the spirit within him should walk abroad among his fellow-men, and travel far and wide; and if that spirit goes not forth in life, it is condemned to do so after death." (Marley, Stave I)  5. "Business! Mankind was my business. The common welfare was my business; charity, mercy, forbearance, and benevolence were all my business. The dealings of my trade were but a drop of water in the comprehensive ocean of my business!" (Marley, Stave I)  6. "What! [W]ould you so soon put out, with worldly hands, the light I give?" (First Ghost, Stave II)  7. "God bless us, every one!"(Tiny Tim, Stave II).  8. "Man, if man you be in heart,…forbear that wicked cant until you have discovered what the surplus is, and where it is. Will you decide what men shall live, what men shall die? It may be that in the sight of Heaven you are more worthless and less fit to live than millions like this poor man's child." (Second Ghost, Stave 3)  9. It is a fair, even-handed, noble adjustment of things, that, while there is infection in disease and sorrow, there is nothing in the world so irresistibly contagious as laughter and good humor. (Stave 3)  10. Scrooge was better than his word . . . . He became as good a friend, as good a master, as good a man as the good old City knew, or any other good old city, town, or borough in the good old world. (Stave 5) | **……..………………….……..and explain the significance of the quote**  1. Characterization through the narrator’s eye; introduces us to the severity of Scrooge immediately  2. Characterization through Scrooge’s own words; confirms his severity  3. Sets up Fred as a sharp contrast to Scrooge’s disdain for the holiday; emphasizes the connectedness of humanity  4. Confirms the peril one’s soul is in if life is not well lived  5. Says that we lose our perspective regarding what is truly important because we get caught up in the immediacy of what we need to do to benefit ourselves, such a small part of the bigger picture  6. Point blank asking of whether we can open our minds to something spiritual; faith over reason  7. A generosity of spirit even when facing adversity  8. Again, keep our self-importance at bay because we will be judged ourselves just as we have judged others, a moral reckoning  9. Shows that while the bad in the world is counterbalanced with the good; they are equally contagious  10. Shows the degree to which the change has occurred | |

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| **Characters**  **(all major and at least one or two significant minor characters)** | | | |
| **Name** | **Role in Story** | **Significance** | **Adjectives** |
| Ebenezer Scrooge    Bob Cratchit  Tiny Tim    Jacob Marley    The Ghost of Christmas Past    The Ghost of Christmas Present    The Ghost of Christmas Yet to Come    Fred    Fezziwig    Belle    Fan | protagonist, owner of a London counting-house  Scrooge’s clerk with a large family  Bob Cratchit's  youngest child  Scrooge’s deceased business partner  first spirit to visit Scrooge  second spirit to visit Scrooge  third and final spirit to visit Scrooge  Scrooge’s nephew from whom he is estranged  merchant with whom Scrooge apprenticed  Scrooge’s fiancée who breaks off their engagement  Scrooge’s sister; Fred’s mother | symbolizes greed, selfishness, indifference, and a lack of care for one's fellow man  symbolizes the common man  is sentimentalized to gain sympathy from readers; he is tied to Scrooge’s redemption  offers Scrooge a shot at redemption  represents memory and shows Scrooge his past  represents empathy, generosity and merriment and shows Scrooge the holiday celebrations of the people he knows  represents the fear of death and presents Scrooge with his own demise  Scrooge’s sister, Fan, dies giving birth to Fred, stirring resentment in Scrooge  the model employer who provides a contrast for Scrooge’s lack of ethics  the victim of Scrooge’s lust for wealth and status  representative of a mother figure | old, greedy, cold-hearted, apathetic, emotionally dead  mild, kind, poor, humble, dedicated  small, crippled, idealistic,  greedy, tortured and remorseful  defies age, childlike with a cap, glowing head  merry giant dressed in green robe, hides Ignorance and Want beneath the robe  voiceless phantom clad in black hooded robe  young, friendly, loves Christmas  kind, principled, generous  beautiful, kind and  humble  caring, kind, looks like her mother |

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| **Setting**  *A Christmas Carol* takes place in London during the early 1840s. The story begins at 3 p.m., December 24, in the counting house of Ebenezer Scrooge and Jacob Marley. It is bitterly cold outside, and in the counting house as well because Scrooge does not want to spend money for heat.  After his visit from Marley, Scrooge’s journeys. He is spirited away from his gloomy home to the places of his past, present, and future (e.g., school, Fezziwig’s, the Cratchit home, etc.). | **Significance of the Opening Scene**  The opening of 'A Christmas Carol' is vital to getting the attention of the reader, particularly the mention of Marley.  The opening set the scene of the streets of Victorian London. It gives the reader an immediate sense of the world into which Dickens brings us. There’s an ugliness here, a darkness.  Starts large and then zeroes in on Scrooge’s counting house. The lens is narrowed |
| **Significance of the Ending Scene**  The closing is optimistic and highlights the changes in Scrooge so that the reader knows the change in Scrooge is real and permanent, that his soul has been redeemed.  Ever notice that he meets the same people from Stave I in reverse order? |
| **Symbols**  **(at least 2 with what they symbolize)**  The story is an allegory, so characters represent abstract concepts.  Scrooge……………………………………………………………………………… greed, apathy, selfishness, indifference  Bob Cratchit……………………………………………………………… England’s poor who suffer  Fred……………………………………………………………………………………. good cheer  The Ghost of Christmas Past………………………. memory  The Ghost of Christmas Present……………… generosity, goodwill, celebration,  prosperity, Christmas spirit, charity  The Ghost of Christmas Yet to Come……… fear of death | |
| **Possible Themes and Other Topics for Discussion**   * poverty and hardship * the idea of social injustice * capitalism * redemption * what was Dickens’ England like? * what problems in Dickens’ England still exist today? * how did Dickens try to bring these problems to light? * how do characters in A Christmas Carol reflect the problems of the time? * does literature reflect the cultural challenges of the time period in which it is set? | |

## Ornate, Grandiose, Verbose, Specific, Detailed, Surprising, Peanut-packed, Oyster-y

Dickens's likes to create little rooms with his sentences, rooms that are so inviting and interesting that you feel that if you don’t go inside and explore right away, you will be missing out on something big. And when you do go inside and look around for a while, you then suddenly realize that you are TWENTY MILES AWAY from where you should be. You’ve wandered too far, and you have to somehow find your way back to your car. And it’s getting dark. And the gas station is closed.  
  
What do we mean by all this? We mean simply that Dickens loves detail, and he loves spinning elegant language, and sometimes those two loves meet to create new worlds within the belly of his overarching story. Stories within stories are found everywhere in *Great Expectations*. Take a look at the excerpt below:  
  
*The Queen of Denmark, a very buxom lady, though no doubt historically brazen, was considered by the public to have too much brass about her; her chin being attached to her diadem by a broad band of that metal (as if she had a gorgeous toothache), her waist being encircled by another, and each of her arms by another, so that she was openly mentioned as "the kettledrum."*(2.31.2)  
  
That’s one WHOLE sentence, friends. Did you see the punctuation that lives in there? And how amazing is the phrase, "gorgeous toothache"? We say that the tone is oyster-y, because reading a Dickensian novel is like wading through miles of language and then suddenly stumbling upon a pearl: a piece of juicy gossip, a beautiful speech, a revelation of truth. And the fact that you waded through that language and hiked through the foliage of words makes your discovery all the sweeter and more profound. We say that the tone is peanut-packed because sometimes it feels like Dickens dropped some packing peanuts into his language to pad the juicy parts and to protect the novel’s architecture.

*A Christmas Carol* is a fairly straightforward allegory

The book is divided into five sections (Dickens labels them Staves in reference to the musical notation staff--a Christmas carol, after all, is a song)