

'A Christmas Carol' Poverty and the Poor Quotations Revision Sheet

Quotation	Context	Meaning
<p>“Are there no prisons?” asked Scrooge.</p> <p>“Plenty of prisons,” said the gentleman, laying down the pen again.</p> <p>“And the Union workhouses?” demanded Scrooge. “Are they still in operation?”</p> <p>“They are. Still,” returned the gentleman, “I wish I could say they were not.”</p> <p>“The Treadmill and the Poor Law are in full vigour, then?” said Scrooge.</p> <p>“Both very busy, sir.”</p> <p>“Oh! I was afraid, from what you said at first, that something had occurred to stop them in their useful course,” said Scrooge. “I’m very glad to hear it.”</p> <p>Stave One</p>		
<p>“I wish to be left alone,” said Scrooge.</p> <p>“Since you ask me what I wish, gentlemen, that is my answer. I don’t make merry myself at Christmas and I can’t afford to make idle people merry. I help to support the establishments I have mentioned—they cost enough; and those who are badly off must go there.”</p> <p>“Many can’t go there; and many would rather die.”</p> <p>“If they would rather die,” said Scrooge, “they had better do it, and decrease the surplus population. Besides—excuse me—I don’t know that.”</p> <p>Stave One</p>		

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<p>There never was such a goose. Bob said he didn't believe there ever was such a goose cooked. Its tenderness and flavour, size and cheapness, were the themes of universal admiration. Eked out by apple-sauce and mashed potatoes, it was a sufficient dinner for the whole family.</p> <p>Stave Three</p>		
<p>In half a minute Mrs. Cratchit entered—flushed, but smiling proudly—with the pudding, like a speckled cannon-ball, so hard and firm, blazing in half of half-a-quartern of ignited brandy, and bedight with Christmas holly stuck into the top.</p> <p>Stave Three</p>		
<p>They were a boy and girl. Yellow, meagre, ragged, scowling, wolfish; but prostrate, too, in their humility. Where graceful youth should have filled their features out, and touched them with its freshest tints, a stale and shrivelled hand, like that of age, had pinched, and twisted them, and pulled them into shreds. Where angels might have sat enthroned, devils lurked, and glared out menacing. No change, no degradation, no perversion of humanity, in any grade, through all the mysteries of wonderful creation, has monsters half so horrible and dread.</p> <p>Stave Three</p>		

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<p>“I wish to be left alone,” said Scrooge.</p> <p>“Since you ask me what I wish, gentlemen, that is my answer. I don't make merry myself at Christmas and I can't afford to make idle people merry. I help to support the establishments I have mentioned—they cost enough; and those who are badly off must go there.”</p> <p>“Many can't go there; and many would rather die.”</p> <p>“If they would rather die,” said Scrooge, “they had better do it, and decrease the surplus population. Besides—excuse me—I don't know that.”</p> <p>Stave One</p>	<p>The gentlemen persist in trying to get Scrooge to donate. But Scrooge furthers his original point.</p> <p>'idle people' – this was the concept that the poor were only poor because they were lazy. They were the 'undeserving poor'.</p> <p>'surplus population' – one of the worries in Victorian times was that if the poor were given 'too much' help, they would have lots of children and therefore there will just be more and more poor people.</p>	<p>In Scrooge's opinion, he has no responsibility for anyone except himself. He pays his taxes to the state and those taxes pay for prisons and workhouses, so Scrooge believes that's the limit of what society expects of him.</p> <p>It is ironic that he says he 'can't afford to make idle people merry' as he clearly can afford anything he wants – he is rich.</p> <p>Again Scrooge shows a shocking lack of empathy with other people saying people had 'better do it' i.e. die.</p> <p>Scrooge is a classic Christmas grinch!</p>

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<p>There never was such a goose. Bob said he didn't believe there ever was such a goose cooked. Its tenderness and flavour, size and cheapness, were the themes of universal admiration. Eked out by apple-sauce and mashed potatoes, it was a sufficient dinner for the whole family.</p> <p>Stave Three</p>	<p>Scrooge continues to observe the Cratchits enjoying their meagre Christmas lunch.</p>	<p>This extract echoes the voices of the family as they admire the goose they have and are grateful for it despite the fact that it is small and cheap. The way that it is 'Eked out' by cheaper foods like apple sauce and potatoes shows the reader that there is very little meat. Nevertheless, the fact that it is a 'sufficient dinner' gives much satisfaction and suggests that on a normal day this is not always the case and that perhaps their dinner is not always enough to satisfy them.</p>
<p>In half a minute Mrs. Cratchit entered—flushed, but smiling proudly—with the pudding, like a speckled cannon-ball, so hard and firm, blazing in half of half-a-quartern of ignited brandy, and bedight with Christmas holly stuck into the top.</p> <p>Stave Three</p>	<p>Scrooge now sees the finale of the feast – the Christmas pudding.</p>	<p>Mrs Cratchit has worked hard to make the perfect pudding for her family, hence she is proud when it turns out well. The poverty of the family is emphasised again with the 'half of half-a quartern' which is a tiny amount of brandy because brandy is expensive. Once again though, Mrs Cratchit is not bowed by her situation, she decorates the pudding with holly and uses the little brandy she has to set the pudding alight to make the occasion special.</p>
<p>They were a boy and girl. Yellow, meagre, ragged, scowling, wolfish; but prostrate, too, in their humility. Where graceful youth should have filled their features out, and touched them with its freshest tints, a stale and shrivelled hand, like that of age, had pinched, and twisted them, and pulled them into shreds. Where angels might have sat enthroned, devils lurked, and glared out menacing. No change, no degradation, no perversion of humanity, in any grade, through all the mysteries of wonderful creation, has monsters half so horrible and dread.</p> <p>Stave Three</p>	<p>Scrooge has spotted a hand (or claw) protruding from the spirit's robe and Christmas Present reveals two children, Ignorance and Want. The children are thin and neglected, they are shocking in their appearance and Scrooge is taken aback.</p> <p>Scrooge is being shown the effects of his attitudes from earlier where he dismissed the poor as unworthy of help and fit only for prisons and workhouses. He is shocked at the state of the children and is continuing to change his mind about the poor.</p>	<p>The quotation gives a description of two children who are abandoned, unloved and on the verge of death. The yellowness suggests illness. They are 'stale and shrivelled' because of lack of food perhaps. Dickens uses contrasts to show how different they are from what you would expect from children freshest/stale, angels/devils, filled their features/pinched and twisted.</p> <p>These children are a metaphor for ignorance and want. It's not clear whose ignorance is being referred to. Scrooge came across as very ignorant of the plight of the poor earlier, but ignorance could also be seen as the lack of education for poor people. Want in this sense is lacking, or being in need.</p>

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