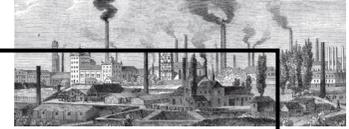


A Christmas Carol Context



Charles Dickens

- **Dickens worked in a blacking factory at age 12 while his father was in Marshalsea prison (1824).** → Gave him first-hand experience of child poverty and humiliation → empathy for the poor (the **Cratchits**) and warning against neglect (**Ignorance & Want**, Stave 3).
- **Dickens saw his family split and shamed by debtors' prison.** → Fueled his attack on punitive systems → Scrooge's "**Are there no prisons?**" / "**decrease the surplus population**" exposes harsh **workhouse** thinking.
- **Dickens reported on urban poverty as a journalist/editor in the 1830s–40s.** → He used story to expose social injustice → the **charity collectors** vs. Scrooge's refusal; **Fezziwig** as a humane employer.
- **After speaking in Manchester (Oct 1843), Dickens chose a Christmas ghost story instead of a social pamphlet.** → Fiction for maximum public impact → the **three spirits** create moral urgency; **Stave 5** models practical charity and changed behaviour.
- **Dickens actively supported Ragged Schools and philanthropic causes.** → Belief in education and kindness → poverty shown with dignity (the **Cratchit home**), and **Fred** champions fellowship and inclusion.
- **Dickens championed Christmas as a season of generosity and community.** → Christmas becomes the vehicle for social healing and personal reform → festive scenes, games, and food model inclusive values; Scrooge's reintegration.
- **Dickens rejected cold utilitarian/Malthusian thinking about the poor.** → Elevates mercy and empathy over numbers → **Tiny Tim** as moral centre; the warning of **Ignorance & Want** urges social responsibility.



The Industrial Revolution

- **Urbanisation & Poverty (19th-century Britain; New Poor Law 1834)** Rapid industrial growth drove overcrowded cities, slums, and hardship; the **workhouse** became the state's harsh "solution" to poverty.
- **Industrial Capitalism & Work Conditions** Factories and offices demanded long hours, low pay, and strict discipline; profit often outweighed people.
- **Reform Movements, Philanthropy & Christmas as Moral Remedy** Public concern grew over industrial misery (education, charity, health; Christmas was revived as a season of **generosity and community**).

Childhood

- Formal, compulsory schooling for the poor didn't exist until later in the century; many children received **no education**. Education is framed as a **moral necessity**; ignorance is society's most dangerous failure. **AO3** → **Text: Ignorance and Want** (Stave 3): "**Beware this boy**" (Ignorance) warns that denying children education breeds social catastrophe; **charity collectors** highlight the need for practical support.
- Dickens believed character is shaped by **family warmth and good mentorship**. Models humane "education" through example and community. **AO3** → **Text: Fezziwig** teaches by generosity and joy (ethical employer); the **Cratchit** home teaches love, patience, and resilience; **Fred's** kindness offers moral guidance → Scrooge learns and reforms through these living lessons.