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A Christmas Carol

By Charles Dickens



Abridged for young readers

Illustrated by: _____



There once was a grumpy old man named Ebenezer Scrooge. He was the coldest man who ever lived. He could not feel warmth. His chin and nose hung like icicles below two coal black eyes. He was a very rich man, but he never spent any of his money. He only liked to sit alone in his cold, dark house counting his gold coins.



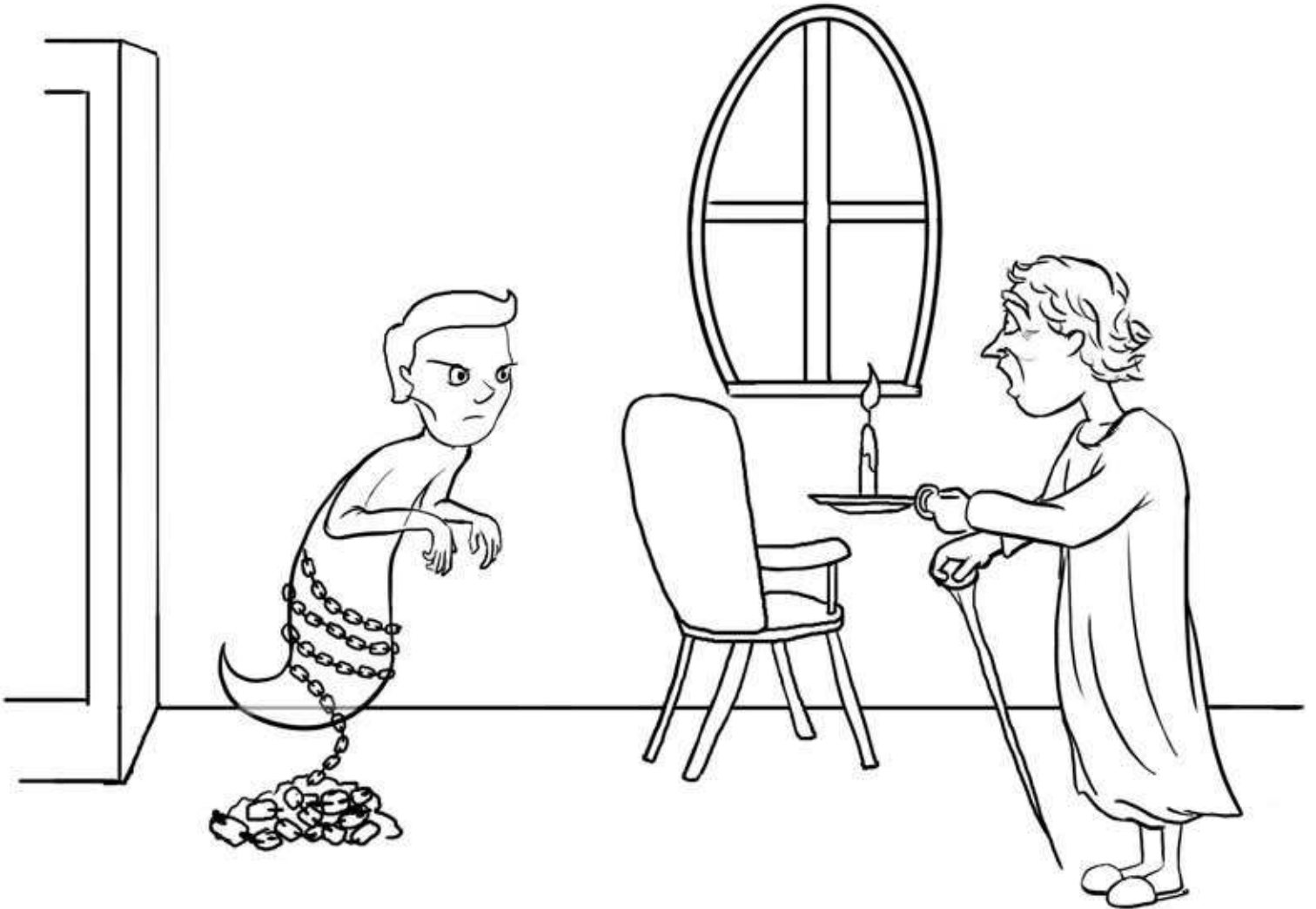
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Every Christmas, old Scrooge became even grumpier than normal. He hated Christmas. When people in the streets cried out, "Merry Christmas Mr. Scrooge!" he would just growl, "BAH, humbug!" There was nothing more ridiculous to Scrooge than a "merry" Christmas.



When Scrooge's young nephew invited him to Christmas dinner, Scrooge said, "Bah, humbug." When his poor clerk Bob Cratchit kindly asked to leave work early for Christmas dinner with his family, Scrooge just laughed and said, "BAH, humbug!" When two gentlemen asked Scrooge to donate money to the poor, he promptly kicked them out with a great, "BAH HUMBUG!"

One chilly night, Scrooge was about to tuck himself into bed, when suddenly he heard bells begin to ring in his bedroom. "Humbug!" Scrooge grumbled as he shuffled out of bed. Then, his face turned white with fear. There in front of him stood a ghost!



"Humbug," said Scrooge, "I don't believe it..." This wasn't just any old ghost. It was the ghost of Jacob Marley, Scrooge's old business partner.

"Hello Scrooge," said Jacob.

"What is it you want?" asked Scrooge, trembling.

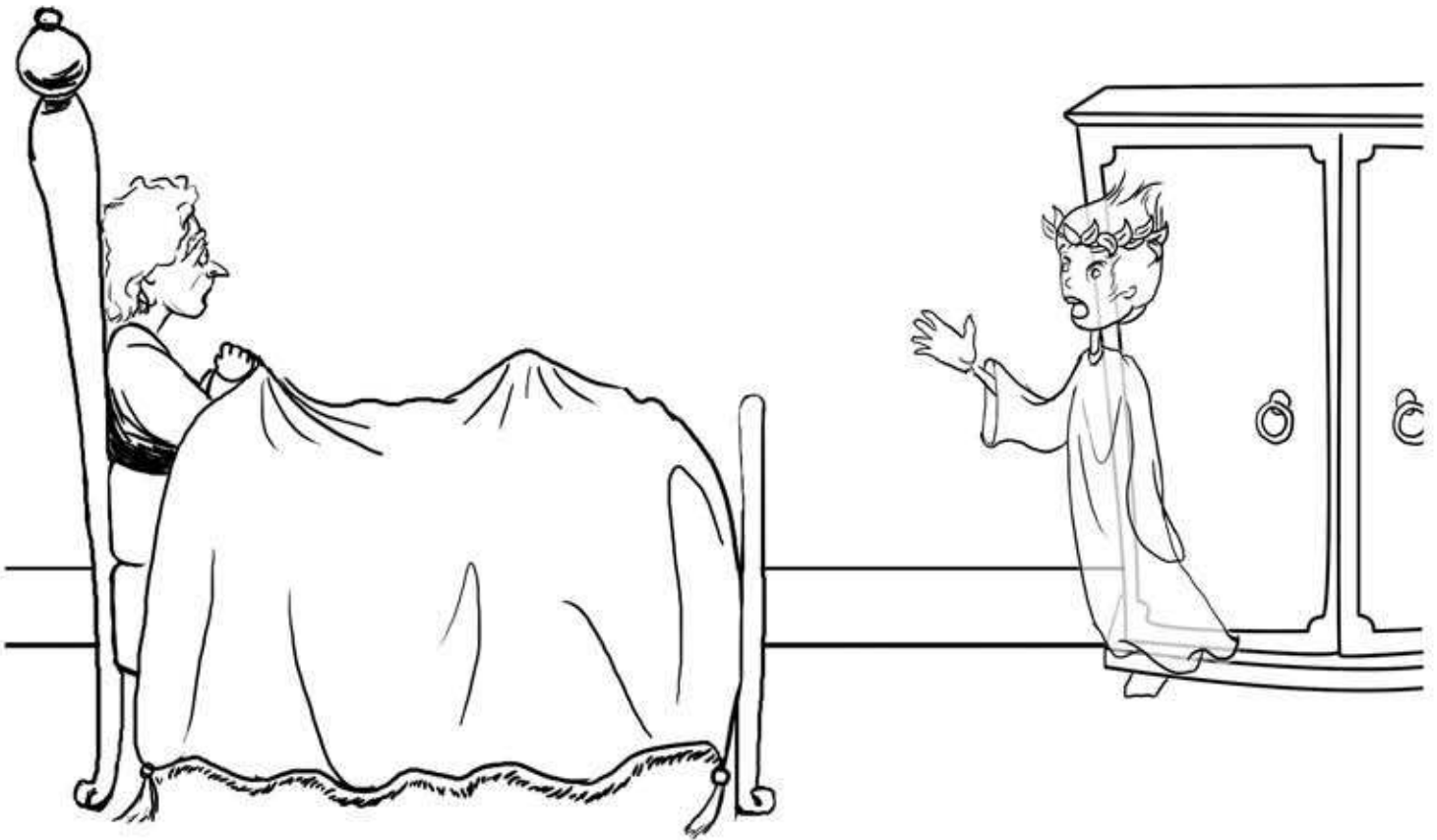
"Do you see this chain I'm wearing?" said Jacob. Scrooge noticed he was wearing a long heavy chain of iron that seemed to go on forever. "I made this chain during my life, with every bad thing I did. And now in death I must wear it forever. All men must carry their sins with them. I came to warn you Scrooge, your chain has grown even longer than mine!"

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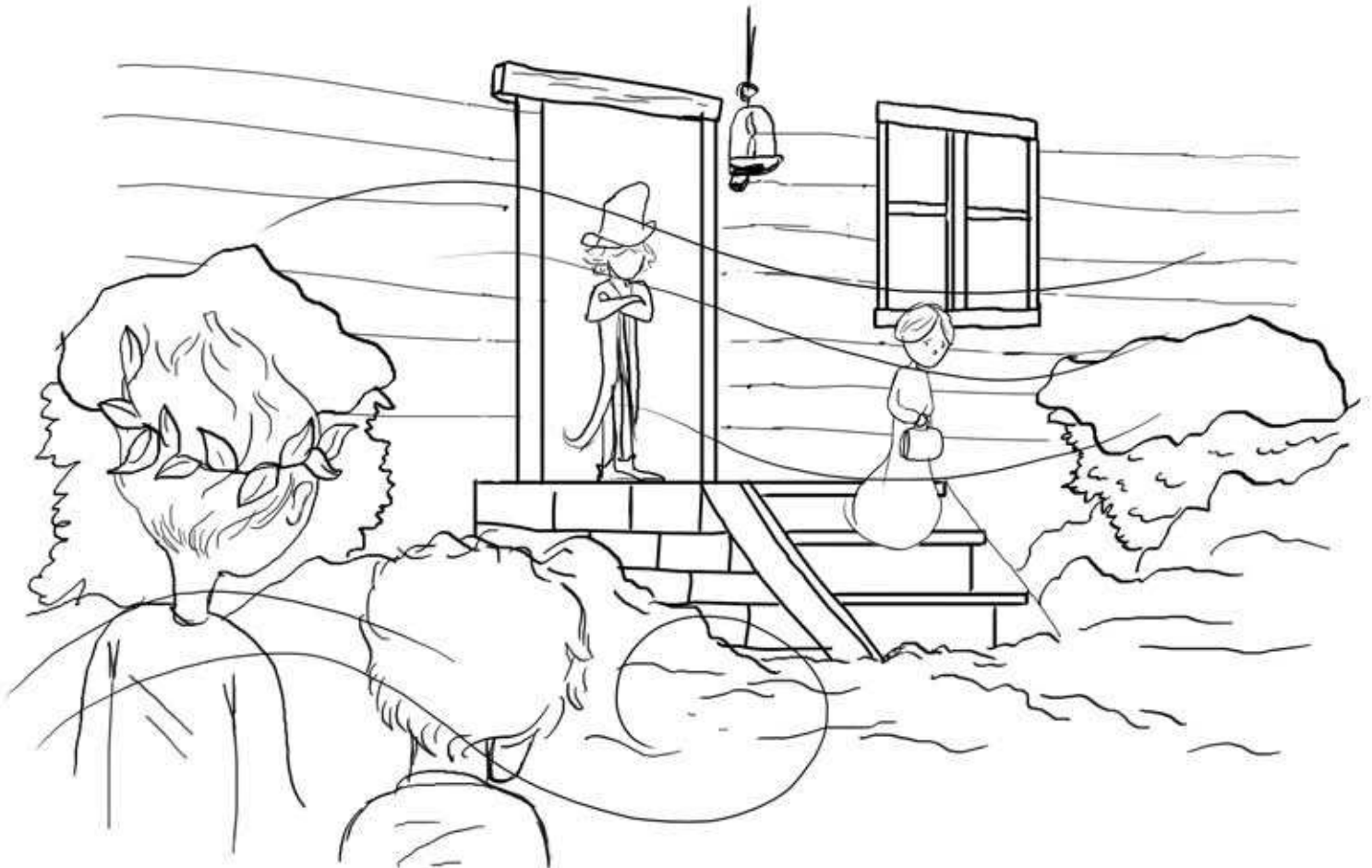


That night, Scrooge could hardly sleep. Jacob's ghost warned him about three visitors who would come to him in the night, but Scrooge was still surprised when the first visitor appeared in front of him. The visitor was strange looking. He was small and strong like a young boy, but his face was wise like an old man. He wore all white, with a holly wreath. "Who are you?" demanded Scrooge. "I am the Ghost of Christmas Past." "Long ago past?" Scrooge asked. "No," said the ghost, "your past. I want to show you something."



When Scrooge stood up to walk with the Ghost of Christmas Past, his dark bedroom melted away, and suddenly they were standing in front of a familiar place. "Good heavens!" he cried. It was Scrooge's childhood home. He was seeing his own Christmas morning in the past! With delight, Scrooge watched the people of his childhood town walk past, but they could not see as he waved at them.

The Ghost of Christmas Past explained that he'd be taking Scrooge on a journey through each Christmas that he had experienced in the past.



Scrooge saw himself at his parents' old house, hugging his little sister. She had passed away a few years after that Christmas. Next, he saw himself dancing and singing with an old boss who always gave him Christmas Eve off work. Then, he saw himself with a beautiful girl. She was the girl he almost married. He watched, and remembered too, as she walked out the door forever on that cold Christmas night. "You're so greedy," she had said, "you love your gold even more than you love me." And she had been right.

"Take me away from this place!" howled poor Scrooge with tears in his eyes. "I cannot bear it any longer!"

Scrooge was so sad, he hardly realized that he was back in his bed. But he was not alone. This time it was a different spirit standing in front of him. It was a tall ghost, with a long robe and a crown of icicles on his head.

“I am the Ghost of Christmas Present,” said the spirit. “Come with me, and see how others are celebrating Christmas this year.”



This time, the spirit took Scrooge around town in the present day. Everywhere they went Scrooge saw merriment. Even the poorest of people were laughing and smiling. Then, they came upon the house of Bob Cratchit, his clerk. The family was very poor, but still they were very happy as they ate Christmas supper. Scrooge saw that Mr. Cratchit's youngest son, Tiny Tim, looked very sick. He was just ten years old, but he had bad legs and walked with a cane. Even so, Tiny Tim was in very good spirits tonight. Scrooge suddenly felt sad again.

“Will that little boy be okay?” asked Scrooge. The spirit shook his head. “No. The family is too poor to afford his medical bills. The child will not live to see another Christmas.”

Next, the Ghost of Christmas Present took Scrooge to his nephew's house, the very place that Scrooge had been invited to earlier. A beautiful Christmas feast was laid out for the family. When Scrooge and the spirit arrived, everyone was laughing.

“Ha ha ha... He said that Christmas was a humbug!” cried Scrooge's nephew. “He believed it too!”



Everyone at the table laughed and made fun of mean old Scrooge for a while. Still, he stood outside and watched them for a long time as they played games and laughed for hours. Scrooge felt so warm just watching his family smiling and having fun. He begged the spirit to let him stay longer, but sadly his time was already up.

The last spirit to visit Mr. Scrooge was very scary indeed. He wore a long black cloak and his face was covered in darkness. "Are you the Ghost of Christmas Future?" asked Scrooge when he appeared. But the spirit said nothing. He just nodded and began to walk. Scrooge followed, but was so scared of the spirit, he was trembling! They traveled forward in time, and Scrooge saw two businessmen he knew. The spirit pointed at them. Scrooge went closer to listen to them talking.



"When did he die?" said one businessman.

"Yesterday, I think" said the other.

"Hmm. Miserable old fellow. I thought it'd never die."

"I wonder what he did with all that money of his."

"I don't know..."

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Scrooge was confused. The cloaked spirit took him to watch many other conversations just like that one. Scrooge saw many people he knew, though they all looked much older - his nephew, Bob Cratchit... They all seemed much happier that this awful old man had passed away. Slowly, Scrooge began to understand... "Please spirit," Scrooge said sadly, "Don't show me any more. I cannot take it!" But the spirit kept going. Scrooge followed him into a graveyard, and watched with dread as the spirit pointed a bony finger at one of the gravestones. "No, no, no!" cried Scrooge as he fell to his knees. The gravestone read EBENEZER SCROOGE.

"Spirit," begged Scrooge, "please, I do not want this! You have my word, I will forever be a changed man. Please take me back!"



The next day, Scrooge awoke in his own bed. Happier than he'd ever been, he leapt up and shouted "YES! I will live in the Past, the Present and the Future! Thank you to the spirits and Jacob Marley for giving me a second chance!"

It was Christmas day. The first thing Scrooge did was buy a giant turkey and deliver it to the Cratchit family. On his way, he ran into the two gentlemen who were collecting money for the poor. Happy as a clam, Scrooge hugged both of the gentlemen and gave them all the gold in his pockets. "Merry Christmas!" he shouted to all the people he passed. Lastly, Scrooge went to his nephew's house. He shook his nephew's hand, and even stayed for dinner.



After Christmas was over, Scrooge continued to keep his promise to the spirits. He raised Bob Cratchit's salary so the family would be able to afford care for Tiny Tim. Scrooge smiled and laughed all the time. He became a good man. And every Christmas, he remembered his journey with the three spirits, and he felt at peace.

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Reading Comprehension - Character Identification

Use the following chart to organize all the main characters of *A Christmas Carol* by Charles Dickens. Be sure to include a description of each character including key words to describe the way the character looks, the way they act, and what key items in the story are important to the character.

The chart consists of seven character cards arranged on a background of diagonal pink and white stripes. Each card is a light beige rectangle with a white banner at the top and a curled bottom-right corner. The cards are arranged in three rows: one large card at the top center, two smaller cards below it, and four smaller cards in the bottom row. The cards are intended for students to write character names and descriptions.

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Reading Comprehension - Settings

The setting of a story is the time, place and environment where the story happened. Some stories have many different settings. Think of four different settings that you remember from *A Christmas Carol* by Charles Dickens. Describe them each in detail. Then draw a picture of your favorite setting from the story.

Setting 1

Setting 2

Setting 3

Setting 4

Draw a picture of a setting from the story.

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Reading Comprehension - Plot Organizer

The *plot* is what happens in a story. Use the following chart to organize a summary of the plot for *A Christmas Carol* by Charles Dickens.

Beginning

Middle (1)

Middle (2)

Middle (3)

End

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Reading Comprehension - Story Map

Use the following chart to create a story map for *A Christmas Carol*.

The story map consists of six interconnected sections arranged in a circular pattern around a central circle. The sections are:

- Main Character**: Top-left section, connected to Setting by a right-pointing arrow.
- Setting**: Top-right section, connected to Problem by a downward-pointing arrow.
- Problem**: Bottom-right section, connected to Solution by a left-pointing arrow.
- Solution**: Bottom-left section, connected to Supporting Characters by an upward-pointing arrow.
- Supporting Characters**: Middle-left section, connected to Main Character by a downward-pointing arrow.
- Title and Author**: Central circle, connected to all other sections.

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Reading Comprehension - Symbolism

Symbolism occurs when a person, place or thing comes to represent an abstract idea or concept. (Example: The eagle is a symbol of The United States.)

What symbols can you identify in the story of *A Christmas Carol*? Fill the chart below with the different symbols found in the story. One example has been identified for you.

Symbol	Literal Meaning	Symbolic Meaning
The chain on Jacob's ghost's leg		

Great job!

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