



Saddleback's
Illustrated Classics

A Christmas Carol

CHARLES
DICKENS



Ebenezer Scrooge and Jacob Marley had been business partners for years. However, when our story opens on this cold Christmas Eve in eighteenth-century London, Jacob Marley had been dead for the last seven. Since money had always been the most important thing in the world to them, the sign outside the office still read Scrooge and Marley. It would have cost Scrooge money to have Marley's name painted out!

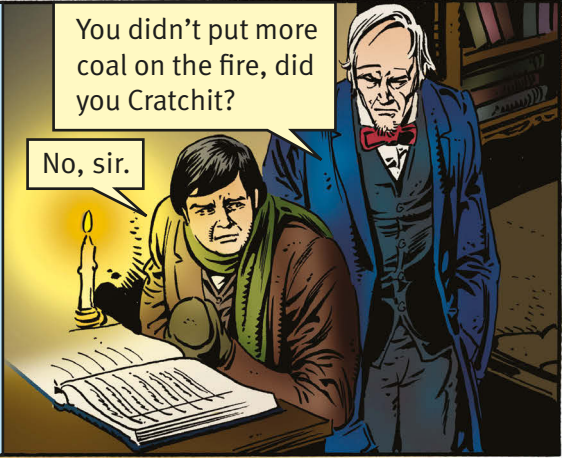


In the story, the ghost of Scrooge's dead partner, Jacob Marley visits him. Marley's ghost promises Scrooge that, for his own good, he will have three other ghostly visitors. They help Scrooge to see what he has become: a man without love or friends. But most important of all, Scrooge is left with the chance to change his future.

Although the hour was late, Scrooge and his clerk, Bob Cratchit, were still at work in the chilly, dark office. Outside, people rushed by on last-minute Christmas errands. None of them were too cold or too hurried to wish the others a merry Christmas! It seemed warmer outside than it was in Scrooge's office.

You didn't put more coal on the fire, did you Cratchit?

No, sir.

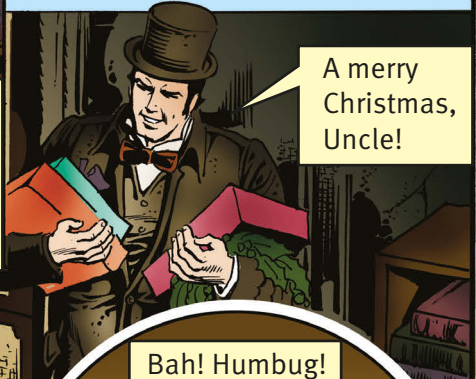


Good! And keep your eye off that clock, too!

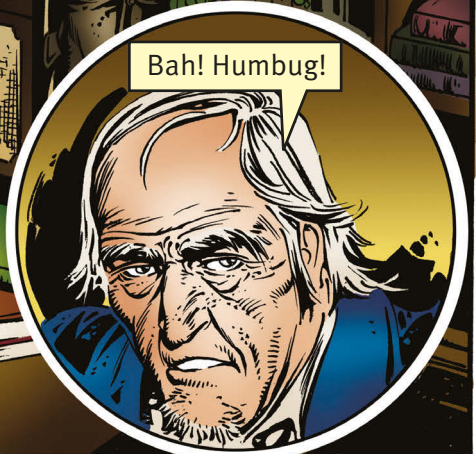
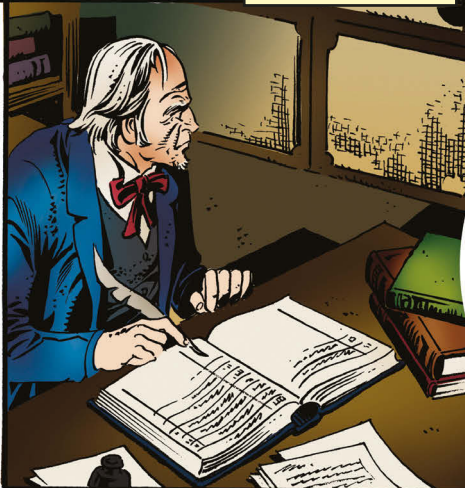
A little later, as Scrooge sat at his desk, counting coins, a young man appeared in the doorway. It was his nephew, Fred.

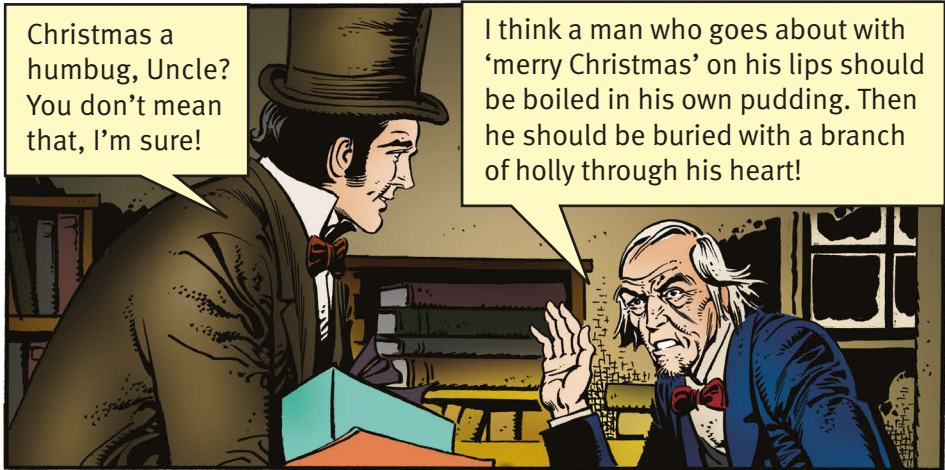
Will this day never end? There's so much I have to do tonight!

A merry Christmas, Uncle!



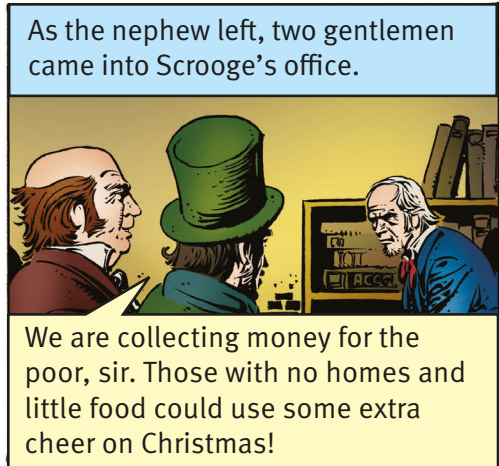
Bah! Humbug!





But I know that Christmas is the only day of the year when people truly open their hearts to each other with kindness and love. Though Christmas has never put a penny in my pocket, I believe it has done me good! So I say God bless it!





If they would rather die, then let them do so. I say there are too many people in the world as it is!

A merry Christmas to you anyway, sir!

Since there was nothing more they could say, the two gentlemen left.

At last it was time for Bob Cratchit to blow out his candle and put on his hat. It was time to close the office.

I suppose you'll be wanting the whole day off tomorrow!

Y-yes, sir.

It's a bad reason to rob a man's pocket every twenty-fifth of December! Be here that much earlier the next day!

Yes, sir, indeed I will, sir. A merry Christmas to you, Mr. Scrooge.

Bah!
Humbug!

After a lonely supper at a nearby shop, Scrooge started home. He lived alone in the same rooms that had once been the home of his partner, Jacob Marley.



He made his way through the dark streets until he reached the front door of an old building. As he reached to unlock it, the door knocker before him seemed to glow. Then it changed, and Marley's face appeared in its place!



As Scrooge stood watching, the face faded. Soon only the heavy iron knocker remained.

I couldn't have seen Marley's face. My mind must be playing tricks on me tonight!



Once inside, he lighted a candle, locked the door, and started up the stairs.

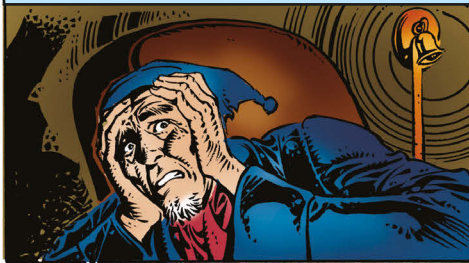
It was nothing!



When he reached his rooms, Scrooge put on his robe and nightcap and sat by his fireplace to sip a warm drink.



As he sat there, a small bell in the room began to ring. It started softly, then grew louder and louder. Other bells in the house began to ring as well.

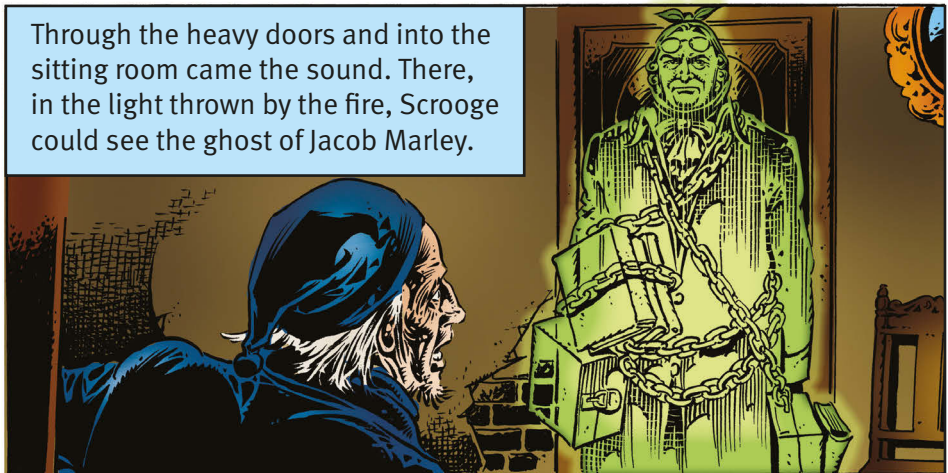


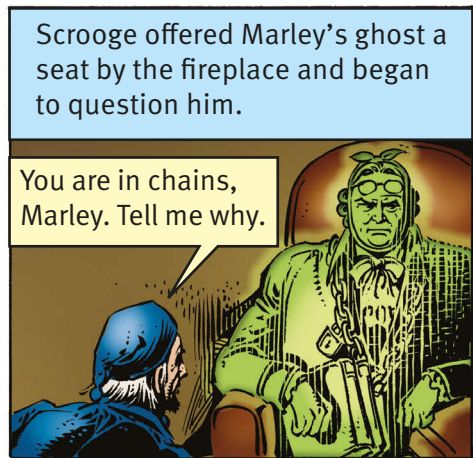
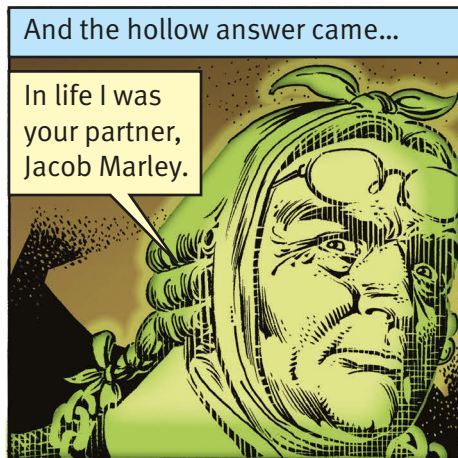
Suddenly the bells stopped, and a new sound began.



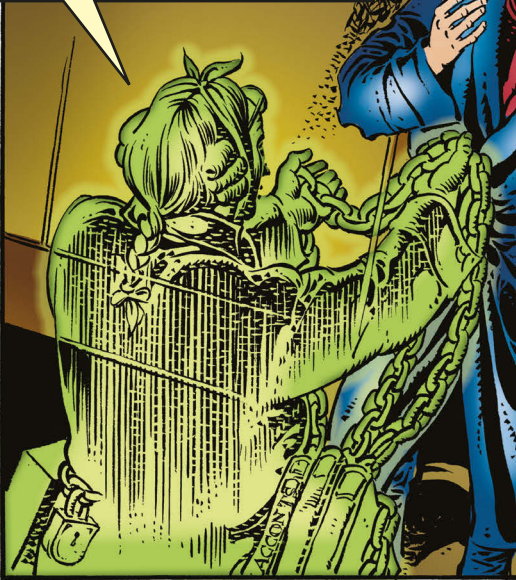
But he had heard the clanking of chains! They were coming up the stairs and toward his room!

Through the heavy doors and into the sitting room came the sound. There, in the light thrown by the fire, Scrooge could see the ghost of Jacob Marley.





You have such a chain yourself...yours is far heavier than mine by now.



I don't understand. You were always a good man of business, Jacob.



At those words the spirit let out a fearful cry and shook his chains.



Now I must walk the earth and see the things I might have done while I was alive. And the same thing will happen to you, Ebenezer!

Business! I never knew what my business truly was. People were my business! Charity and kindness were my business! But I thought only of money!



At this, Scrooge grew very much afraid, and he fell on his knees.



Is there no hope for me, Jacob?

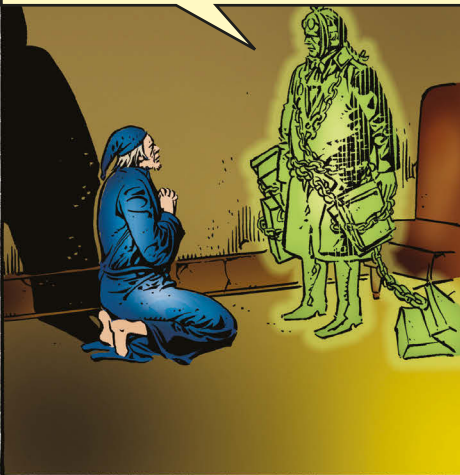
There is! That is why I am here. Listen closely! My time is almost gone.



I'm listening, Jacob. But don't be too hard on me.



I don't know how I stand before you now in a shape that you can see. I have spent many days sitting beside you, and you have not seen me. But tonight I am here to warn you that you do not have to follow the way that I have gone.



You will be visited by three spirits. The first will come tomorrow when the clock strikes one. The second will come the next night at the same hour. The third will arrive the next night after the last stroke of twelve. You will see me no more, but remember what has passed between us.



A Christmas Carol

A wonderful, intriguing, joyful, mystery about Christmas...one of the most heartwarming stories ever written!

A Christmas Carol is without question one of Charles Dickens' greatest works. This extremely popular story introduces some of the most timeless, internationally known characters such as Scrooge, the unforgettable miser; Bob Cratchit, the underpaid clerk; and Tiny Tim, Cratchit's frail, loving son.

This story is synonymous with the festive and giving spirit of Christmas and is one of the most widely read classics of all time.



LEXILE HL580L

ISBN: 978-1-56254-890-2

