

## Discuss the effect the Ghost of Christmas Present has on Scrooge. [40]

### Model Answer

In the extract the Ghost of Christmas Present sits upon a large mound of food traditionally associated with Christmas '*to form a kind of throne*'. This symbolises the generosity, revelry and celebratory spirit that Christmas brings, all of which Scrooge refrains from. The ghost is described as a '*jolly Giant*' highlighting his light-hearted and '*jolly*' nature – the very opposite of Scrooge's temperament. This use of positive adjectives is then continued with phrases such as '*cheery voice*' and '*joyful air*' to reinforce the compassionate nature Dickens was keen for society to see. The extract also describes the ghost as wearing '*one simple green robe*' highlighting that the ghost is the symbol of the traditional view of Father Christmas. He therefore embodies generosity, compassion and joyfulness in an exaggerated form, hence his giant stature. It is no doubt hoped that such a larger than life character, in appearance and behaviour, will have a significant effect on Scrooge and start to open the tightly closed '*oyster*' shell.

The Ghost of Christmas Present then shows Scrooge a number of scenes which have a profound effect upon him. Firstly, he shows Scrooge the people of London celebrating Christmas, '*people were jovial and full of glee*'. Such positive description '*jovial*', '*full of glee*' is the complete opposite of Scrooge's attitudes and temperament. The ghost is highlighting the joy and '*glee*' that Scrooge is missing out on and that would no doubt warm his cold heart.

The next image afforded to Scrooge is the Cratchit family celebrating Christmas. The Cratchits may have a simple, sparse and humble existence, but they still enjoy Christmas and appreciate what they do have, '*these young Cratchits danced about the table*'. The verb '*danced*' reinforces the notion of joy and happiness – once again what Scrooge lacks from his own existence.

Bob Cratchit's arrival is symbolic as he is carrying his crippled son Tiny Tim. Dickens uses this image to highlight the caring and hard-working nature of the poor in the 1840s. Bob is not only supportive of his son, but acts as a crutch towards the whole family. When Bob Cratchit toasts the '*founder of the feast*', Scrooge, for allowing them to enjoy their humble Christmas dinner, this stirs a surprised reaction from Scrooge. Dickens once more is trying to disprove Scrooge's initial attitude towards the poor as being '*idle*' and easily dismissed or forgotten.

The use of Tiny Tim causes a heartfelt reaction in both the reader and Scrooge as he embodies the plight of the poor and is used as pathos. Upon seeing this, we witness the first emotional change in Scrooge: he begins to feel guilty, sad and remorseful '*tell me if Tiny Tim will live*'. The Ghost of Christmas then uses Scrooge's words against him to try to and denounce and dismiss his emotional reaction to the suffering of the poor, as Scrooge had repeatedly done for so long (mirroring his reaction to the charity workers in Stave One)

*'then he had better do it and decrease the surplus population'* Scrooge is starting to realise how cold-hearted and cruel his initial view of society was.

Scrooge is then taken to witness first hand his nephew's celebration of Christmas. Whilst his nephew's guests are playing games, Scrooge begins to participate – hinting at his earlier child-like self, as well as the eventual change to being as *'merry as a school boy'* at the end of the novel. However, his nephew soon plays a game of 'yes' or 'no' which includes many critical comparisons to Scrooge. When realising that the joke is on him, Dickens presents his reaction ambiguously rather than his determined dismissal of criticism earlier in the novel, showing a possibly break in his hard, tough exterior, as well as linking to the soft, fragile inside of the earlier comparison to an *'oyster'*.

Finally, the Ghost of Christmas Present begins to age dramatically as he only lives for one day. This symbolises the fact that you can't just live for today, you must consider your future at some point. Dickens suggests that to only focus on the present is eventually self-destructive. Scrooge must therefore consider his future with the third of three ghosts.

The ghost's final demand is for Scrooge to bear witness to 'Want' and 'Ignorance'. Dickens alters the tone from initially 'jolly' and jovial, to dark and serious. The ghost's once light hearted language also alters to become harsh and commanding, *'look down here!'* Dickens uses 'Want' and 'Ignorance' to convey the problems within society caused by Scrooge's avarice and callousness. 'Want' symbolises the greed of the rich in the 1840s and 'Ignorance' symbolises the lack of care and ignorance that the likes of Scrooge had towards others. This acts as a stark and dark warning to Scrooge about the errors of his ways. Dickens change of tone suitably leads into the nature of the Ghost of Christmas Yet to Come's approach.