YEAR 9

Reading 19th-Century Texts

Three parts that get harder: a warm-up, where you should be now, then a stretch. Write the letter of the right option, or a number where one is asked for. The extract is real Dickens, from 1843. Old words make sense from the sentence around them.

From A Christmas Carol by Charles Dickens, published in 1843. The narrator introduces Ebenezer Scrooge, a rich and miserly businessman.

Oh! But he was a tight-fisted hand at the grind-stone, Scrooge! a squeezing, wrenching, grasping, scraping, clutching, covetous, old sinner! Hard and sharp as flint, from which no steel had ever struck out generous fire; secret, and self-contained, and solitary as an oyster. The cold within him froze his old features, nipped his pointed nose, shrivelled his cheek, stiffened his gait; made his eyes red, his thin lips blue; and spoke out shrewdly in his grating voice. A frosty rime was on his head, and on his eyebrows, and his wiry chin. He carried his own low temperature always about with him; he iced his office in the dog-days; and didn't thaw it one degree at Christmas.

External heat and cold had little influence on Scrooge. No warmth could warm, no wintry weather chill him. No wind that blew was bitterer than he, no falling snow was more intent upon its purpose, no pelting rain less open to entreaty. Foul weather didn't know where to have him. The heaviest rain, and snow, and hail, and sleet, could boast of the advantage over him in only one respect. They often "came down" handsomely, and Scrooge never did.

Nobody ever stopped him in the street to say, with gladsome looks, "My dear Scrooge, how are you? When will

you come to see me?" No beggars implored him to bestow a trifle, no children asked him what it was o'clock, no man or woman ever once in all his life inquired the way to such and such a place, of Scrooge. Even the blind men's dogs appeared to know him; and when they saw him coming on, would tug their owners into doorways and up courts; and then would wag their tails as though they said, "No eye at all is better than an evil eye, dark master!"

Name: Date: Score:

A. Warm-up

Work out old words from their context, then check the options.

1. Paragraph 1: 'covetous' means
   (a) generous
   (b) frightened
   (c) greedy for what others have
   (d) old

2. Paragraph 1: 'solitary' means
   (a) wealthy
   (b) noisy
   (c) cheerful
   (d) alone

3. Paragraph 1: 'gait' means
   (a) way of walking
   (b) gate
   (c) voice
   (d) face

4. Paragraph 3: 'implored' means
   (a) ignored
   (b) begged
   (c) laughed at
   (d) paid

5 Paragraph 3: ‘bestow a trifle’ means
(a) bake a pudding
(b) make a long speech
(c) give a small amount of money
(d) lend a warm coat

B. Where you should be now

What do Dickens’s choices tell us about Scrooge?

6 ‘squeezing, wrenching, grasping, scraping, clutching’ suggests Scrooge
(a) works hard with his hands
(b) is strong and healthy
(c) cleans his office carefully
(d) holds on to money tightly and greedily

7 ‘solitary as an oyster’ is a
(a) simile
(b) metaphor
(c) rhetorical question
(d) statistic

8 What does the oyster comparison suggest?
(a) He is rich and valuable
(b) He is closed off and hard to reach
(c) He lives by the sea
(d) He is soft and gentle

9 ‘The cold within him froze his old features’. The cold stands for
(a) the winter weather
(b) an illness
(c) his unkind, unfeeling nature
(d) his love of snow

10 Paragraph 2: why is Scrooge compared with wind, snow and rain?
(a) To show he enjoys bad weather
(b) To explain why he stays indoors
(c) To show he is often ill
(d) To show he is harsher than any weather

11 Paragraph 3: what does the behaviour of the blind men's dogs show?
(a) Even animals avoid Scrooge
(b) Scrooge is kind to animals
(c) The dogs are badly trained
(d) Scrooge is blind

C. Stretch

Evaluate: how well does Dickens build this picture, and how?

12 'They often "came down" handsomely, and Scrooge never did.' The joke works because
(a) Scrooge never walks downstairs
(b) 'came down' means both falling and giving generously
(c) rain is handsome
(d) Scrooge lives on a hill

13 Why does Dickens list 'rain, and snow, and hail, and sleet' joined by 'and'?
(a) To teach the reader about weather
(b) Because he could not choose one
(c) To pile up harsh weather so that Scrooge seems even harsher
(d) To make the sentence shorter

14 What is the narrator's attitude to Scrooge in paragraph 1?
(a) Admiring
(b) Neutral
(c) Frightened
(d) Mocking and disapproving

15 Paragraph 3 lists things that never happen to Scrooge. The effect is to show

(a) how completely he is cut off from other people

(b) how busy the streets are

(c) that he is famous

(d) that people are scared of dogs

16 Which is the best evaluative comment?

(a) Dickens uses lots of techniques.

(b) Dickens succeeds in making Scrooge a figure of cold isolation: every image, from flint to oyster, shuts people out.

(c) The extract is about a man called Scrooge.

(d) I like this extract because it is old.