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A CHRISTMAS CAROL PROSE

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A Christmas Carol remains highly relevant in the modern world that is still divided into the poor and the rich. With its themes of importance of the moral values rather than obsession with money, importance of family, the power of a man's free will and social poverty, and hardships faced by workers during the Industrial Age, it offers a fictional a story of an old stingy man who finally learns to appreciate life and act generously. Set in the mid-nineteenth century, the novella focuses on mystical experience of Ebenezer Scrooge, its protagonist. Scrooge, which is an undeniably dynamic character, undergoes a series of changes within his personality and evolves a man completely different from what he used to be. The goal in this paper is to analyze how exactly Scrooge changes throughout the text and provide accurate evidence of these changes. In addition, one will focus on the effectiveness of the use of language, tone and images in conveying these changes, as well as describe the social and cultural settings of the novella. One will conclude the paper with the summary of the ideas discussed and evaluation of relevance of the issues raised by Dickens to the problems found in the modern society.

Before identifying actual changes within the character of Ebenezer Scrooge throughout the text of "A Christmas Carol", one should focus on the main message of the novella. It is certainly moral. No money and no work can replace humane attitude, happy family life and morality. No financial success will lead a person to happiness if it is rooted in making other people unhappy and penniless. Besides, it seems that Dickens wanted to show that any person who lives unjustly will be "rewarded" accordingly, be it in afterlife or in the earthly existence. Respectively, the author's intention was to show that the person who is burdened by his or her stinginess and obsession with material wellbeing may and should change his or her lifestyle so that financial success is not achieved at the

expense of relations with the people around.

Driven by this intention, Dickens makes Scrooge, the novella's protagonist, a truly dynamic character. At the beginning of the story, Scrooge is described as a person devoid of compassion, a businessman who achieves success thanks to penny pinching and ruthlessly exploiting other people (for example, his poor clerk Bob Cratchit). Yet, by the end of the story Scrooge has already turned into a virtually exemplary man through experiencing a set of feelings and emotions that may be referred to as catharsis. In other words, Scrooge manages to reinvent himself through moral renewal brought by visits of three dreadful apparitions and a prophetic insight into Scrooge's grim future.

One should follow Scrooge in his moral reinvention and explore how he becomes an exemplary man. At the beginning of the story, Scrooge is a miser. This is evident from the following description by Dickens found in Stave I:

> "But he was a tight-fisted hand at the grindstone, 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" (Dickens 1868: 2).

The foregoing passage contains an expressive use of language and imagery. For instance, Dickens uses a simile to provide an insight into the nature of his protagonist and compares him with an oyster, as well as with a flint. This effective comparison of two unlike objects works well and constructs a vivid image of the miser in readers' mind. Besides, such

epithets as clutching, covetous and self-contained, etc. make the narrator's language highly descriptive, which helps to grasp the extent to which Scrooge was ruthless and miserly.

Throughout the novella, Scrooge's character undergoes a series of changes and eventually comes to his final decision to completely change his lifestyle and starts doing good things to other people. While the author's tone is jovial and even jocular at the beginning, as well as quite relaxing at the end, the middle part of the novella is imbued with stern messages and the author's tone is quite different. It is wry and ironic, and evokes certain displeasure which is probably simultaneous to Scrooge's own terror and shock. When the protagonist finally reinvents his personality and opts for a new mode of life, the tone gets sentimental and quite light again. To illustrate it, at the beginning, the author narrates rather humorously in Stave I,

> "Marley was dead, to begin with. There is no doubt whatever about that. The register of his burial was signed by the clergyman, the clerk, the undertaker, and the chief mourner. Scrooge signed it. And Scrooge's name was good upon. 'Change' for anything he chose to put his hand to. Old Marley was dead as a door nail" (Dickens 1868: 1).

After the protagonist has been visited by three dreadful ghosts and has been shown his gloomy future perspectives, he purifies his soul by recognition of his own greediness, lack of compassion and vanity. What follows after this revelation is described in a tone that may be called rather sentimental. To illustrate, at the beginning of Stave V, Scrooge wakes after the last ghost's visitation and this is what he feels:

“Running to the window, he opened it, and put out his head. No fog, no mist; clear, bright, jovial, stirring, cold; cold piping for the blood to dance to; Golden sunlight; Heavenly sky; Sweet fresh air, merry bells. Oh Glorious. Glorious” (Dickens 1868: 93).