Horror with a Twist: Analyzing Dickens' *A Christmas Carol*

A witty, humorous remark in the face of horror. A set of words, that, when strung together, evoke an image of terror and ghosts in the reader's mind. Charles Dickens, the renowned author, uses all of these tactics in his novel, *A Christmas Carol.* The story revolves around Scrooge, a stingy old man who, with the help of four ghost of his dead partner Jacob Marley, Christmas Past, Christmas Present and Christmas Yet to Come, reinvents himself to be a more charitable person. Using word choice and vivid descriptions, Dickens establishes many terrifying scenes throughout the novel, but he also weaves in many comic aspects the same way. This helps the story overall by setting up a lighter tone for the positive moral and also helps provide relief from the more dramatic and horrific aspects of the novel.

With a very melancholy mood and the ubiquitous appearance of ghosts, the happy ending doesn't really fit in, on its own. The use of comedy, however, perfectly sets up the reader for the pleasant moral, which is that, given the chance, anybody can learn to be generous and lead a merrier life. The occasional comedic comeback can make all the difference. For instance, on pg 28, Stave 1, Scrooge exclaims in response to seeing Marley's ghost "You may be an undigested bit of beef, a blot of mustard, a crumb of cheese, a fragment of an underdone potato. There's more of gravy than grave about you, whatever you are!" Just by this small joke, the gravity of the situation decreases. These small bits of comedy, often uttered by Scrooge and the Narrator, make these characters more endearing. Since Scrooge is not generally a very likable character, these casual wisecracks make you like him more, and thus makes you care more about Scrooge's morality and his compassion as it unfolds.

For most people, if a story is too gruesome of frightening, they will not want to partake in reading it. Even stories that are meant to be horrifying and grotesque have one thing in common: a sense of relief. In some way or another, the author balances out eerie moments with something that keeps readers reading, In this case for Dickens, it is the occasional use of humor that provides relief to his audience, Since the visions the ghosts show Scrooge can be disturbing and macabre at times, he uses the strategy of comic relief, such as on pg 106, Stave 4, which states "His blankets?' asked Joe. 'Whose else's do you think?' replied the woman.' He isn't likely to take cold without 'em I dare say". In this part of the story, the Ghost of Christmas Yet to Come is showing

Scrooge a scene of thieves looking over their loot of stolen goods, ones they had stolen from his dead body. For some this may be a repulsive thought, but this small bit of humor ensures the reader will not be inclined to dislike the book because it was too gory or dark.

Through his writings, clever choice of words and comedy, Dickens creates and unforgettable and timeless story. With the help of humor, he leads the readers on to a uplifting moral and balances out the horror and drama aspects of the story. Comedy definitely contributes to this ultimate tale of horror, benevolence and cheer that will forever live on in literary history.

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