
BBC LEARNING ENGLISH

A Christmas Carol

3: The Second of Three Spirits



NB: This is not a word-for-word transcript

Narrator

Ebenezer Scrooge woke up just before the clock struck one again. He was ready for the Spirit of Christmas Present. This time, he met his guide in the next room, which looked very different from usual. It was decorated with holly and other plants. On the table, there was a lot of delicious Christmas food like turkey, cake, fruit... Scrooge talked to the ghost.

Scrooge

Spirit, take me where you like. Last night I learnt a lesson. Tonight, if you want to teach me, let me profit by it.

Narrator

Oh, that's not the Scrooge we knew before. No longer arrogant?! Well, the Spirit took Scrooge to the edge of the city where his clerk Bob Cratchit lived. The man entered his humble home carrying a little boy who had a crutch and iron around his legs. His wife was preparing the meal.

AT BOB CRATCHIT'S HOUSE

Mrs Cratchit

How did Tiny Tim behave at church, Robert?

Bob Cratchit

As good as gold! He told me on our way home that he hoped that people noticed him in the church, because he's disabled. It might be good for them to remember on Christmas Day our Lord, who made lame people walk and blind men see.

Narrator

Tiny Tim was a sweet little boy who knew the meaning of Christmas. But he was very sick. Scrooge felt sorry for him and asked the Spirit what was going to happen.

Scrooge

Spirit, tell me if Tiny Tim will live.

Spirit of Christmas Present

I see an empty seat in the corner, and a crutch without an owner. If things don't change in the future, the child will die.

Scrooge

No, no. Oh, no, kind Spirit. Say he'll live!

Spirit of Christmas Present

If he's going to die, he should do it, and *decrease the surplus population*.

Narrator

These words caused a huge and sudden feeling of deep regret in Scrooge's heart. That was exactly what he had said earlier to the gentlemen who had asked for a donation to help the poor. If the poor died *it would be good to help decrease the surplus population*. Then, Scrooge heard Cratchit mention his name...

Bob Cratchit

After this wonderful dinner, let's raise our glasses. A Merry Christmas to us all, my dears! God bless us! And also Mr Scrooge, the Father of the Feast! Come on, dear wife!

Mrs Cratchit

I wish I had him here, Robert. I'd give him a piece of my mind! Such a horrible, hard, unfeeling man, Mr Scrooge. I'll drink to his health because it is Christmas, but not because of him.

Tiny Tim

God bless us every one!

Bob Cratchit

Thank you, Tim, my dear child.

Narrator

There was no doubt Scrooge was the monster of the family. But if the thought of her husband's selfish boss annoyed Mrs Cratchit, it caused laughter elsewhere. The Ghost of Christmas Present took Scrooge to his nephew's house – to the Christmas dinner the old man had refused to go to.

AT SCROOGE'S NEPHEW'S HOUSE**Scrooge's Nephew**

...and my uncle said that Christmas was a humbug! He's a funny man, that's the truth. And not as pleasant as he could be. However, his crimes carry their own price. His money is of no use to him. He doesn't do any good with it. He doesn't make himself comfortable with it.

Narrator

The house was full of people dancing, playing games. The Spirit noticed that Scrooge was enjoying himself. The night was coming to an end when Scrooge saw two figures at the ghost's feet. What were they? They looked like children, but they were old and frightening. Scrooge was shocked.

Scrooge

I'm sorry to ask but... are they yours?

Spirit of Christmas Present

They are Man's creatures. The boy is Ignorance. The girl is Want. Be afraid of them both, but most of all you should fear this boy for on his face I see a terrible destiny!

Scrooge

Don't they have a place to go?

Spirit of Christmas Present

Are there no prisons? Are there no workhouses?

Narrator

Yes, once more Scrooge had his own words repeated back to him. He had always thought the poor *had prisons and workhouses to go to*, hadn't he? Eat your words, Mr Scrooge! Well, the bell struck twelve and that was it for the Ghost of Christmas Present. He disappeared. But the third spirit was coming. You'll hear about it next time.

Vocabulary**holly**

a plant with green prickly leaves and bright red berries which is often associated with Christmas

arrogant

describes someone with a high opinion of their own importance or ability

humble

simple, not worth much money

crutch

support made of metal or wood which fits into the armpit and is used by people who walk with difficulty

disabled

has physical difficulties, for example, can't walk

lame

unable to walk

feast

big and tasty meal with different kinds of food

a piece of my mind

to tell someone in an angry way that they disapprove of their behaviour

ignorance

lack of knowledge or education

want

need of basic things