

**A CHRISTMAS CAROL:
BITESIZE ACADEMIC READING**

CLARIFYING VOCABULARY

incongruous – Out of place

resplendent – Attractive and impressive through being richly colourful; splendid, magnificent

abject – Experienced or present to the maximum degree

neglect – A state of being uncared for

degradation – Humiliation or shame; loss of dignity

1. How do Ignorance and Want contradict life and vitality?

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2. Why do Ignorance and Want cling to the Ghost of Christmas Present?

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**'THIS BOY IS
IGNORANCE. THIS
GIRL IS WANT.'**



The children are **incongruous** figures because the Ghost of Christmas Present is a **resplendent** figure clothed in green – the symbol of life – and carrying a burning torch shaped like 'Plenty's horn'. He is described as a 'jolly Giant, glorious to see', and his eyes are shown to be kind. For these children to be in his presence, clinging to him and hidden from view for the most part is unexpected. Their **abject** state is a notable contrast with the sense of plenty that is associated with this ghost.

The first element of the description of these children is of a hand that is claw like – it is a description that removes humanity from the children. The hand, we may assume, is indicative of a human hand that lacks flesh, as a result of poverty and the associated lack of food. The lack of food results in a physically wasted condition.

The terms 'pinched' and 'twisted' are similar to the terms mentioned in the initial description of Scrooge – 'squeezing', 'wrenching' and grasping' – suggesting, perhaps, that they are the consequences of similar trying circumstances. The fact that they are a boy and a girl suggests an ironic comment on ideal families. These children are not the product of happy homes. There is no sense of a joyful future about them, no sense of human potential. Instead, there is a sense of **neglect** and **degradation**.

3. Why does Dickens remove humanity from the children?

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4. What or who have Ignorance and Want been 'pinched' and 'twisted' by?

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6. There is not a sense of a 'joyful future' in the Cratchit household either, so what is the difference between Ignorance, Want and the Cratchits?

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5. Where do we see 'happy homes' in the novella?

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