

**A CHRISTMAS CAROL:  
BITESIZE ACADEMIC READING**

**CLARIFYING VOCABULARY**

**capital** – A valuable resource of a particular kind

**cultural** – Relating to the ideas, customs and social behaviour of a society

**cultivate** – Acquire or develop a particular quality or skill

**turbulent** – Not stable or kind

**domestic** – Relating to the running of a home or family relations

**vivifies** – To make lively or interesting

**economic** – Relating to the production and consumption of goods and services and the supply of money

**commerce** – Buying and selling on a large scale

**social** – Community; needing companionship

**utility** – The quality of being useful

**perpetuity** – The quality of lasting forever

1. What form of capital does Scrooge value at the beginning of the novella?

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2. What exactly does Scrooge need to learn in terms of cultural capital? Why?

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**THE GHOSTS AND CAPITAL**



A Christmas Carol rewrites the traditional story of Christmas, replacing the Nativity with Scrooge’s rebirth. The Ghosts of Christmas Past, Present, and Yet to Come each re-educate Scrooge in the value of a form of **capital**. The Ghost of Christmas Past animates **cultural** capital—that which takes the longest to **cultivate**, and draws the most heavily on the past—and we can see this in how the visions of Christmas Past investigate Scrooge’s childhood (his **turbulent** family home) and his ultimate turn away from the values of the **domestic** family (in his rejection of Belle).

The Ghost of Christmas Present **vivifies economic** capital—that form which is the most immediate, and easily created and spent; think, for example, of the [exaggerated] descriptions of the London shops in the visions of Christmas Present, which so intensely glorify **commerce**. The Ghost of Christmas Yet to Come emphasizes **social** capital—the form of capital that has the most **utility** in the future—and which can be more quickly acquired than cultural capital but also must be constantly kept up in **perpetuity**; the visions of future Christmases (his lonely grave; his body picked over by his servants; his debtors’ joy at his death because it releases them from his [grip]) show Scrooge to be the product of his unvested social capital. Through the three Ghosts, Scrooge comes to learn the importance of each form of capital, and in the process becomes... a good man.

3. As a businessman, what about economic capital does Scrooge need to learn?

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4. Why must social capital be ‘kept up in perpetuity’? What is Dickens saying about kindness?

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6. Which form of capital do you think plays the most important part in Scrooge’s redemption? Why?

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5. Where in the novella do we see Scrooge disregarding the importance of social capital?

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