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This image, by Arthur Rackham, is part of the 1915 edition of "A Christmas Carol," published by J.B. Lippincott Company. It illustrates a section of "Stave One," entitled "Marley's Ghost," and depicts Scrooge as he searches for whatever might be amiss at his home: "Nobody under the bed; nobody in the closet; nobody in his dressing-gown, which was hanging up in a suspicious attitude against the wall."

Charles Dickens begins "A Christmas Carol," his story about Ebenezer Scrooge, by introducing us to someone who was an important part of Scrooge's earlier life: Jacob Marley, his deceased partner.

What's the business of Scrooge & Marley? Where is their office located? Why does Scrooge think Christmas is a "humbug?" Is there any hope for this incredibly selfish man to change his ways?

Hereafter is an abridged version of the first part of "Stave One," entitled "Marley's Ghost." You can hear a dramatization of the abridged story by clicking on this chapter's narration.

*Marley was dead. There is no doubt whatever about that. The register of his burial was signed by the clergyman, the clerk, the undertaker. Scrooge signed it. Old Marley was as dead as a door-nail.*

*Scrooge knew he was dead? Of course he did. Scrooge and he were partners for I don't know how many years. Scrooge was his sole executor, his sole administrator, his sole friend, his sole mourner. There is no doubt that Marley was dead.*

*Scrooge never painted out Old Marley's name, however. There it stood, years afterwards, above the warehouse door: Scrooge and Marley. The firm was known as Scrooge and Marley. Sometimes people new to the business called Scrooge Scrooge, and sometimes Marley, but he answered to both names. It was all the same to him.*

*Oh! But he was a tight-fisted hand at the grindstone, was Scrooge! A squeezing, wrenching, grasping, scraping, clutching, covetous, old sinner! The cold within him froze his old features, nipped his pointed nose, shriveled his cheek, stiffened his gait; made his eyes red, his thin lips blue*

*Nobody ever stopped him in the street to say, with gladsome looks, "My dear Scrooge, how are you? When will you come to see me?" No beggars implored him to bestow a trifle, no children asked him what it was o'clock, no man or woman ever once in all his life inquired the way to such and such a place, of Scrooge. Even the blind men's dogs appeared to know him; and when they saw him coming on, would tug their owners into doorways and up courts; and then would wag their tails as though they said, "No eye at all is better than an evil eye, dark master!" But what did Scrooge care!*

*Once upon a time—of all the good days in the year, upon Christmas Eve—old Scrooge sat busy in his counting-house. It was cold, bleak, biting foggy weather, and the city clocks had only just gone three, but it was quite dark already. The door of Scrooge's counting-house was open that he might keep his eye upon his clerk, who in a dismal little cell beyond was copying letters. Scrooge had a very small fire, but the clerk's fire was so very much smaller that it looked like one coal. But he couldn't replenish it, for Scrooge kept the coal-box in his own room; and so surely as the clerk came in with the shovel, the master predicted that it would be necessary for them to part. Wherefore the clerk put on his white comforter, and tried to warm himself at the candle*

*"A merry Christmas, uncle! God save you!" cried a cheerful voice. It was the voice of Scrooge's nephew.*

*"Bah!" said Scrooge, "Humbug!"*

*"Christmas a humbug, uncle!" said Scrooge's nephew. "You don't mean that, I am sure?"*

*"I do," said Scrooge. "Merry Christmas! Out upon merry Christmas! What's Christmas time to you but a time for paying bills without money; a time for finding yourself a year older, but not an hour richer. Let me leave it alone. Much good may it do you! Much good it has ever done you!"*

*"I am sure I have always thought of Christmas time," returned the nephew, "as a good time; a kind, forgiving, charitable, pleasant time; the only time I know of, when men and women seem by one consent to open their shut-up hearts freely. And therefore, uncle, though it has never put a scrap of gold or silver in my pocket, I believe that it has done me good, and will do me good; and I say, God bless it! Come! Dine with us to-morrow."*

*"Good afternoon," said Scrooge.*

*"I am sorry, with all my heart, to find you so resolute. A Merry Christmas, uncle!"*

*"Good afternoon!" said Scrooge.*

*"And A Happy New Year!"*

*"Good afternoon!" said Scrooge.*

*His nephew left the room without an angry word.*

*The clerk, in letting Scrooge's nephew out, had let two other people in. They had books and papers in their hands, and bowed to him.*

*"At this festive season of the year, Mr. Scrooge," said the gentleman, taking up a pen, "it is more than usually desirable that we should make some slight provision for the Poor and destitute, who suffer greatly at the present time. Many thousands are in want of common necessities; hundreds of thousands are in want of common comforts, sir."*

*"Are there no prisons?" asked Scrooge.*

*"Plenty of prisons," said the gentleman, laying down the pen again. But under the impression that they scarcely furnish Christian cheer of mind or body, a few of us are endeavouring to buy the Poor some meat and drink, and means of warmth. We choose this time, because it is a time, of all others, when Want is keenly felt, and Abundance rejoices. What shall I put you down for?"*

*"Nothing!" Scrooge replied. "I wish to be left alone. I don't make merry myself at Christmas and I can't afford to make idle people merry. I help to support the prisons and workhouses - they cost enough. Those who are badly off must go there."*

*"Many can't go there; and many would rather die."*

*"If they would rather die," said Scrooge, "they had better do it."*

*Seeing clearly that it would be useless to pursue their point, the gentlemen withdrew.*

*Foggier yet, and colder! Piercing, searching, biting cold. The owner of one scant young nose, gnawed by the hungry cold as bones are gnawed by dogs, stooped down at Scrooge's keyhole to regale him with a Christmas carol: but at the first sound of "God bless you, merry gentleman! May nothing you dismay!"*

*Scrooge seized the ruler with such energy of action, that the singer fled in terror, leaving the keyhole to the fog and frost.*

*At length the hour of shutting up the counting-house arrived.*

*With an ill-will Scrooge dismounted from his stool, and admitted the fact to the expectant clerk, who instantly snuffed his candle out, and put on his hat.*

*"You'll want all day to-morrow, I suppose?" said Scrooge.*

*"If quite convenient, sir."*

*"It's not convenient," said Scrooge, "and it's not fair. If I was to stop half-a-crown for it, you'd think yourself ill-used, I'll be bound?"*

*The clerk smiled faintly and observed that it was only once a year.*

*"A poor excuse! But I suppose you must have the whole day. Be here all the earlier next morning."*

*The clerk promised that he would; and Scrooge walked out with a growl.*

*Scrooge took his melancholy dinner in his usual melancholy tavern; and having read all the newspapers, and beguiled the rest of the evening with his banker's-book, went home to bed. He lived in chambers which had once belonged to his deceased partner. They were a gloomy suite of rooms, in that was old enough now, and dreary enough, for nobody lived in it but Scrooge, the other rooms being all let out as offices.*

*Now, it is a fact, that there was nothing at all particular about the knocker on the door, except that it was very large. Also, that Scrooge had seen it, night and morning, during his whole residence in that place. And yet Scrooge, having his key in the lock of the door, saw in the knocker, without its undergoing any process of change, not a knocker, but Marley's face.*

*Marley's face. It was not angry or ferocious, but it looked at Scrooge as Marley used to look: with ghostly spectacles turned up on its ghostly forehead.*

*As Scrooge looked fixedly at this phenomenon, it was a knocker again. He said "Pooh, pooh!" and closed the door with a bang.*

*The sound resounded through the house like thunder. Every room above, and every cask in the wine-merchant's cellars below, appeared to have a separate peal of echoes of its own. Scrooge was not a man to be frightened by echoes. He fastened the door, and walked across the hall, and up the stairs. Slowly, too, trimming his candle as he went.*

*You might have got a hearse up that staircase. There was plenty of width for that, and room to spare; which is perhaps the reason why Scrooge thought he saw a locomotive hearse going on before him in the gloom. Half-a-dozen gas-lamps out of the street wouldn't have lighted the entry too well, so you may suppose that it was pretty dark with Scrooge's dip.*

*Up Scrooge went, not caring a button for its being very dark: darkness is cheap, and Scrooge liked it. But before he shut his heavy door, he walked through his rooms to see that all was right.*

*Sitting-room, bedroom, lumber-room. All as they should be. Nobody under the table, nobody under the sofa, and a small fire in the grate. Nobody under the bed; nobody in the closet; nobody in his dressing-gown, which was hanging up in a suspicious attitude against the wall.*

*Quite satisfied, he closed his door, and locked himself in; double-locked himself in, which was not his custom. Thus secured against surprise, he put on his dressing-gown and slippers, and his nightcap; and sat down before the very low fire.*

*As he threw his head back in the chair, his glance happened to rest upon a bell, a disused bell, that hung in the room. It was with great astonishment, and with a strange, inexplicable dread, that as he looked, he saw this bell begin to swing. It swung so softly in the outset that it scarcely made a sound; but soon it rang out loudly, and so did every bell in the house.*

*This might have lasted half a minute, or a minute, but it seemed an hour. The bells ceased as they had begun, together. They were succeeded by a clanking noise, deep down below; as if some person were dragging a heavy chain over the casks in the wine-merchant's cellar. Scrooge then remembered to have heard that ghosts in haunted houses were described as dragging chains.*

Is Scrooge about to get a visit from a ghost?

See Alignments to State and Common Core standards for this story online at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicAlignment/SCROOGE-and-MARLEY-A-Christmas-Carol>

See Learning Tasks for this story online at:

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Media Stream



### Scrooge Sees Marley's Face in the Door Knocker

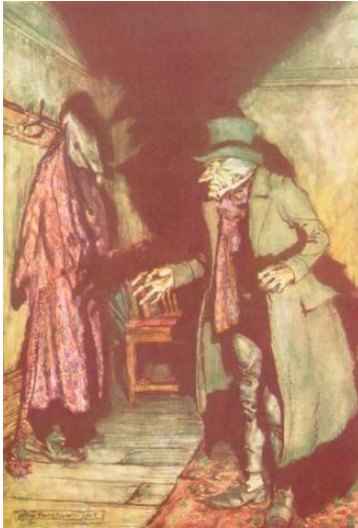
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### SCROOGE and MARLEY

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