

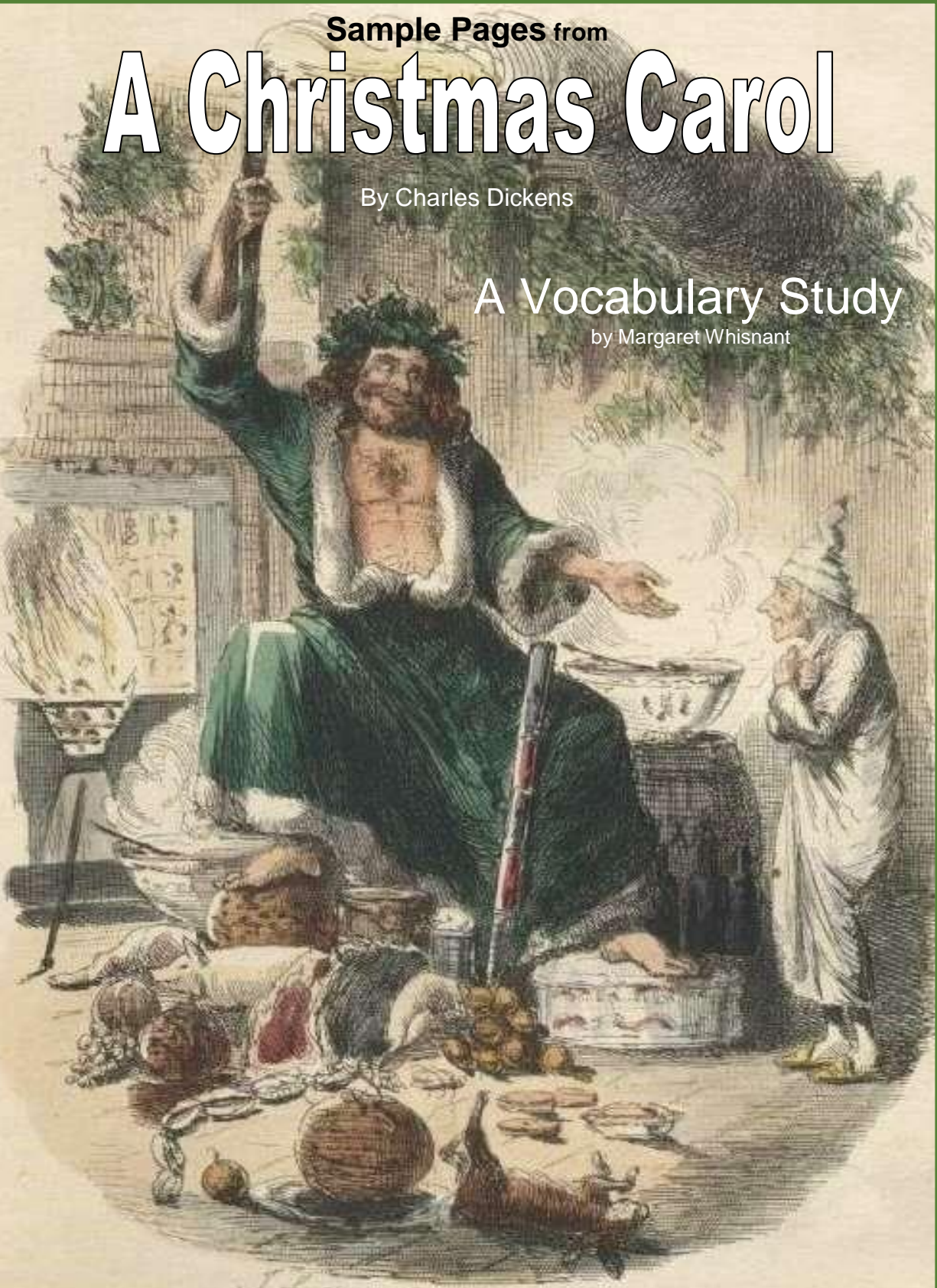
Sample Pages from

# A Christmas Carol

By Charles Dickens

## A Vocabulary Study

by Margaret Whisnant



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## Preface

Charles Dickens's *A Christmas Carol* is loaded with perplexing vocabulary. *There is no doubt whatsoever about that.* To further complicate the matter, it is woven into the stiff writing style of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, typically without clues for unlocking meaning. Even when Dickens provides some contextual clarity, the unfamiliar customs and language patterns that were the norm in his day often leave young readers scratching their heads.

Nevertheless, *A Christmas Carol* has a core collection of terms that continue to show up in modern writing. Furthermore, the story itself is timeless. There are so many reasons why it's required reading in countless middle and high school classrooms. My goal in creating this vocabulary study is to support students and teachers with a resource that will bring a degree of clarity to at least part of the complicated language.

## Components and Strategies

- **Word Choices**

Words likely to be encountered in middle and high school literature were prime candidates for the master list. *A Christmas Carol* also boast about 100 terms known to have appeared as SAT vocabulary. This fact was another important consideration.

- **Word Lists with Definitions and Page Numbers**

Words in this study are presented exactly as they appear in the story— adjectives, adverbs, past tense verbs, etc.—rather than as dictionary entries. *Indignantly*, for example, rather than *indignant*.

A whole book list of the 135 target words in alphabetical order and page numbers is provided for teacher convenience.

For student use (at the teacher's discretion), stave-by-stave word lists, organized in book order, with text-applicable definitions and page locations are included.

- **Dictionary Digs**

This series of six, two-page printables is structured in book order and follows the stave-by-stave word lists and definitions. Requiring the interpretive use of a dictionary (or the materials provided), the multiple choice questions feature all of the 135 target words in modern context.

This material is designed to be used **before reading**—stave by stave—to give students an initial sense of a word's meaning before it is encountered in the text.

- **Vocabulary in Context**

In this four-part resource, twenty words from each stave are placed back into story context but with their modern meaning as guides. Using a word list and definition clues, students must place the correct term in a story fact, a story quote, or a combination of the two. These pages are suitable as reviews or as tests.

- **Vocabulary Application**

The goal for this group of three activities is to give students practice applying Dickens's vocabulary in updated context. *Sentence Sense* and *Sentence Sense Challenge* are modeled after SAT formatting.

Teachers may choose to use these activities as reviews or as tests.

Together, the activities in this resource highlight each of the 135 target words at least twice.



Margaret Whisnant, Author

# Vocabulary Study

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## Word Lists with Definitions

### Stave One: *Marley's Ghost*

Part One: Pages 1-20  
(22 words)

- implored** Begged urgently or piteously for help or mercy; beseeched; plead; entreated. (p. 9)
- ruddy** Having a healthy, reddish color, usually resulting from outdoor activities; a red or pink hue. (pp. 10, 11, 18, 62, 65, 67)
- palpable** Readily or plainly seen, heard, or perceived; obvious; evident. (p. 10)
- obscuring** Making unclear or difficult to see; making difficult to understand; not expressing the meaning or purpose of clearly; blurring; blocking out; confusing; disguising; covering up. (p. 10)
- dismal** Gloomy; dreary; depressing; abysmal; of poor quality or low standard. (p.11, 14)
- morose** Sullenly or gloomily ill-humored; in a really bad mood; sour; surly; sulky. (p. 11)
- indignantly** In a manner that expresses strong displeasure, especially for something considered offensive, insulting, or unjust; fiercely; irritably; furiously. (p. 12, 85)
- veneration** A feeling of reverence, awe, or deep respect; admiration; esteem; reverence.(p.13)
- impropriety** An inappropriate or improper act or comment; not suitable; a blunder, especially one that is rude. (p. 13)
- resolute** Stubborn; firmly set in opinion or purpose; determined; unyielding. (p. 14)
- portly** Overweight; stout (p. 15. 124)
- ominous** Threatening; indicating the arrival of evil or harm; sinister. (p. 15)
- destitute** Poor; lacking food, shelter, and clothing; impoverished; needy; devoid of or lacking, such as an area *destitute* of rain. (p. 15)
- facetious** Humorous or amusing, especially when inappropriate; not meant to be taken literally or seriously. (p. 17, 66)
- congealed** Changed from a soft or fluid state into a rigid or solid state, as if by freezing; curdled; solidified; jelled; hardened. (p. 18)
- misanthropic** Descriptive of a person who hates or mistrusts other people or mankind in general; cynical; hateful. (p. 19)
- scant** Small; limited; meager; Barely sufficient in amount or quantity. (p. 18)
- regale** To entertain, delight, or amuse, especially lavishly. (*regalia: rich, fancy, or dressy clothing*) (p. 19)
- congenial** Agreeable, pleasing, or suitable in nature or character; pleasant; cordial. (p. 19)
- tacitly** In a manner that brings understanding without words; silently; inaudibly. (p. 19)
- melancholy** Gloomy; a prolonged state of sadness or depression; dismal; glum; somber; woeful. (p. 20. 37, 43)
- beguiled** (1) Passed time pleasantly; amused; entertained; (2) mislead by trickery, flattery, etc.; charmed; cheated; deceived. (p. 20)

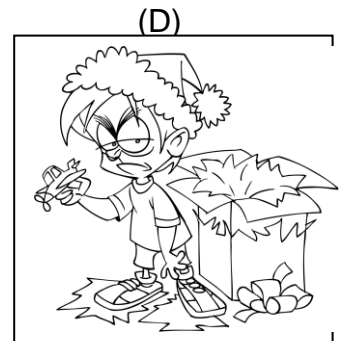
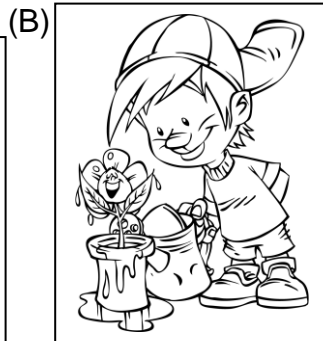
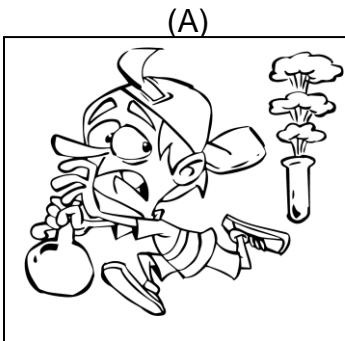


## Dictionary Digs

### Stave One: *Marley's Ghost* Part One—Pages 1-20

Use a dictionary to answer the following questions about some important words from the story. Write the letter of the correct answer in the blank provided.

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1. Which of the following characteristics *best* describes ***misanthropic*** behavior?  
(A) naive, (B) mischievous, (C) hateful, (D) paranoid
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2. *Morgan's downcast eyes and the conflicting details in his story revealed it as a palpable lie.*  
In the sentence above, what kind of lie was Morgan telling?  
(A) one based on ignorance, (B) an unintentional one, (C) a well disguised one,  
(C) an obvious one.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3. An *antonym* for the word ***destitute*** is  
(A) affluent, (B) impoverished, (C) devoid, (D) acclimated.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 4. During family dinner, Dad likes to ***regale*** us with stories from his childhood.  
The word *regale* in the above sentence, implies that Dad's stories are  
(A) confusing, (B) entertaining, (C) boring, (D) made up.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 5. If Mrs. Reilly's suggestion received ***scant*** attention from the committee, then the committee  
(A) thought Mrs. Reilly's idea was excellent.  
(B) discussed Mrs. Reilly's proposal for a long time.  
(C) paid very little attention to Mrs. Reilly's idea.  
(D) didn't quite understand what Mrs. Reilly was proposing.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 6. Which of the following cartoons *best* illustrates the meaning of ***morose***?



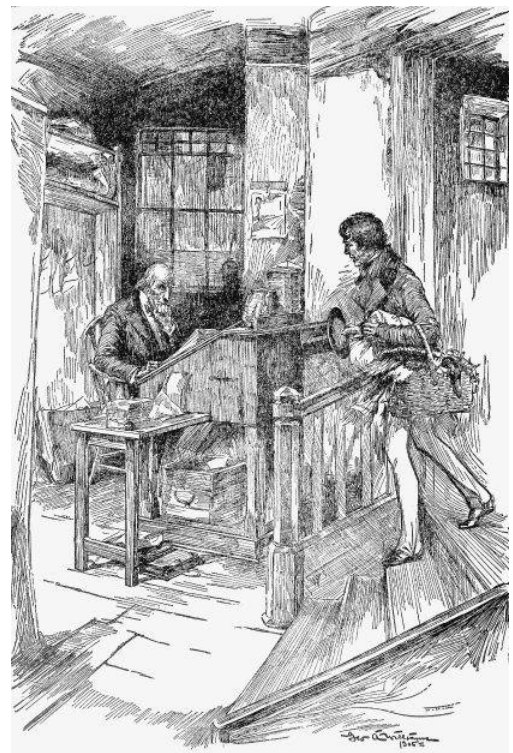
- \_\_\_\_\_ 7. Which word is **not** a synonym of ***veneration***?  
(A) salutation, (B) reverence, (C) adoration, (D) admiration
- \_\_\_\_\_ 8. *Machala was resolute in her decision to apply for a week-end job at the mall.*  
The word that can replace *resolute* and give the above sentence an opposite meaning is  
(A) stubborn, (B) uncertain, (C) congenial, (D) unyielding.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 9. What color is a ***ruddy*** complexion? (A) red, (B) pale, (C) ashen, (D) olive
- \_\_\_\_\_ 10. A ***facetious*** remark (A) must be taken seriously, (B) is intended to create confusion,  
(C) is not meant to be taken seriously, (D) is filled with great admiration.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 11. An *antonym* of ***congenial*** is (A) pleasant, (B) unfriendly, (C) unpredictable,  
(D) affable.

## Vocabulary in Context : *Stave One: Marley's Ghost*

The following sentences are composed from a story fact, a direct quote (in italics), or a combination of the two. Use the vocabulary list and the clues in parenthesis to fill in the blanks with the correct words.

**ruddy**      **ominous**      **resolute**      **congenial**      **melancholy**  
**morose**      **impropriety**      **indignantly**      **palpable**      **facetious**

1. When Scrooge left his office that fateful Christmas Eve, he *took his* \_\_\_\_\_ (without pleasure or joy) *dinner in his usual* \_\_\_\_\_ (gloomy) *tavern*. (same word in both blanks)
2. To Scrooge, the word “liberality” was \_\_\_\_\_ (an indication that something unpleasant was coming), for he knew it meant the gentlemen visiting his office intended to ask him to make a charitable donation.
3. Scrooge was being \_\_\_\_\_ (using humor inappropriately) when he suggested the poor who would rather die than go to a workhouse should just go ahead and do it and decrease the surplus population.
4. Scrooge’s nephew asked his rich uncle why he was so \_\_\_\_\_ (ill-humored) with the idea of being merry at Christmas.
5. Outside Scrooge’s counting house, a cold fog came rolling in, creating \_\_\_\_\_ (clearly visible) brown air that obscured vision and made buildings appear as phantoms.
6. His handsome face \_\_\_\_\_ (having a reddish color) from *rapid walking in the fog and frost*, Scrooge’s nephew entered his uncle’s counting house and wished him a merry Christmas.
7. When Scrooge’s nephew insisted that keeping Christmas had done him good, thought he had not profited from it, Bob Cratchit applauded involuntarily but immediately realized his \_\_\_\_\_ (blunder), poked his fire, *and extinguished the last frail spark*.
8. Scrooge’s nephew was sorry that his uncle was so \_\_\_\_\_ (stubborn and unyielding) in his refusal to join him and his family for Christmas dinner.
9. “. . . *If I could work my will, “said Scrooge \_\_\_\_\_ (fiercely), “every idiot who goes about with ‘Merry Christmas’ on his lips should be boiled with his own pudding, and buried with a stake of holly through his heart. . . !”*
10. The young caroler who tried to serenade Scrooge, fled into the fog and frost, which was more \_\_\_\_\_ (pleasant) than Scrooge and his threatening ruler.



Scrooge's Nephew Arrives  
(Public Domain Image 1905)

## Sentence Sense

From the list of four possible answers, choose the word that correctly completes the sentence and write it in the blank to the left.

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1. Mother planned my birthday party down to the most \_\_\_\_\_ detail.  
*sordid      opaque      intricate      infernal      congenial*
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2. At first, Randy was \_\_\_\_\_ about learning to snow ski, but now he thinks it's the most fun ever.  
*conductive      apprehensive      ferocious      incessant      incredulous*
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3. Amber performed her piano solo so \_\_\_\_\_, she received a standing ovation.  
*prodigiously      demurely      indignantly      tacitly      portly*
- \_\_\_\_\_ 4. Mr. Bauer's students spent the first five minutes of class \_\_\_\_\_ him pick up his guitar and sing another Beatles' tune.  
*seething      disdainful      flaunting      obscuring      entreating*
- \_\_\_\_\_ 5. The New-Years-Eve \_\_\_\_\_ didn't seem to mind that the clock had struck midnight three hours before.  
*boisterous      specters      revelers      menagerie      refuse*
- \_\_\_\_\_ 6. Three small dogs ran \_\_\_\_\_ down the sidewalk while their owner shouted and sprinted not far behind.  
*diverted      ominous      latent      rampant      profound*
- \_\_\_\_\_ 7. Janell was \_\_\_\_\_ that she had studied and passed the test and no cheating had been involved.  
*latent      adamant      gratis      odious      caustic*
- \_\_\_\_\_ 8. To free up some shelf space, Mrs. Lipton decided to box all her \_\_\_\_\_ books and donate them to a local charity.  
*surplus      waning      morose      celestial      dismal*
- \_\_\_\_\_ 9. Because Franklin was already upset over losing his phone, his mom decided not to \_\_\_\_\_ him for misplacing his favorite jacket.  
*loath      obscure      repose      rebuke      quake*
- \_\_\_\_\_ 10. Everyone tried not to laugh when Carlson fell out of his chair, but the students just could not control their \_\_\_\_\_.  
*demeanor      mirth      feign      malady      opulence*
- \_\_\_\_\_ 11. It isn't wise to \_\_\_\_\_ on your way to math class, as Mrs. Coulter insists on punctuality.  
*tarry      comely      jovial      swoon      peal*
- \_\_\_\_\_ 12. Cutting trees not only robs the atmosphere of oxygen, their removal can have a \_\_\_\_\_ effect upon local eco systems  
*opaque      ruddy      profound      hideous      inexorable*