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SCROOGE'S CHARACTER DEVELOPMENT IN CHARLES DICKENS' *A CHRISTMAS CAROL*¹

Theresia Erwindriani²

Abstract: This paper deals with Scrooge's characterization in Dickens' A Christmas Carol, who is a rich, cold-hearted, miserly, misanthropy, and an anti Christmas old man. He experiences a gradual character development that comes from his awareness of his bad character and from the ghosts and other characters after seeing the visions of his past, present and future shown by the ghosts on Christmas Eve. Yet on Christmas Day, he becomes an altered old man, by being a kind, warm, generous old man to everyone, especially to the poor and a person who honors Christmas and has Christmas spirit in his heart. This study uses the formalistic approach to analyze Scrooge's character development, by focusing on A Christmas Carol's text. In studying about Scrooge's characterization, Charles Dickens' message, namely charity is also proven. With charity,

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Dickens shows that people can especially help the poor and make them happy.

Key words: *character, characterization, character development, Christmas, charity*

INTRODUCTION

This paper wants to discuss about one of Charles Dickens' works entitled *A Christmas Carol*. Charles Dickens, the author of this novel, is an English novelist in the Victorian Age. Kassman (1988:93) states that Dickens decided to publish his work, *A Christmas Carol*, in 1843 in order to celebrate Christmas. In his Christmas stories, including *A Christmas Carol*, Dickens emphasizes on the spirit of Christmas, thus the reader can understand the significance of Christmas.

In his novels, Dickens often tells about the neglected and ill-treated children, and also the poor who live in suffering because of injustice that oppresses them at that time. He shows his sympathy with human suffering as seen his novels, particularly in *A Christmas Carol*. Some writers say that Dickens always concerns himself with the social problems of his age and his concern for the poor can be seen in *A Christmas Carol*. It is the expression of his charity. According to Bowyer and Brooks (1954: 332), Dickens is always alive to the social problems, particularly the condition of the poor and his Christmas stories are really expositions of charity. Wilson has also the same opinion as Bowyer's:

....He also concentrated on the social conditions of his own day, as in *Oliver Twist* and *Hard Times* (an attack on the utilitarians), and presented in *A Christmas Carol*, his view of man's duty to man – Scrooge's miser, miraculously becomes a philanthropist, Christmas symbolizes the only way in which the word

can be improved – by the exercise of charity.
(1958:241)

This paper wants to discuss about Scrooge's characterization through Dickens use of the third person 'his' or how other characters have described and evaluated Scrooge. This paper also tries to see how Scrooge experiences his gradual conversion through the visions of his past, present, and future shown by the three spirits. Lastly, it will try to find out the message Dickens' wants to convey through his main character's development.

CHARACTERS IN A *CHRISTMAS CAROL*

Evans says that *A Christmas Carol* (1843) is Dickens' expression of his belief that basically everyone has kindness in himself.

Between 1843 and 1848 he wrote his Christmas books including *The Christmas Carol*. The most popular perhaps of all his works, this shows his belief in human kindness... (1940:158)

Whereas, Chesterton (1911:112) states that Dickens' work, *A Christmas Carol*, is a happy story because it tells about a sudden change.

The Christmas Carol is a happy story first, because it describes an abrupt and dramatic change. It is not only the story of a conversion, but of a sudden conversion.
(1911:112)

Chesterton (1946:128) also adds that Dickens' *A Christmas Carol* is the change of someone who rejects Christmas during his life.

In talking about characterization, Holman and Harmon (1986:83) say that a character can be either static or dynamic. A Static character is someone who doesn't experience a conversion in

himself. Something that happens to him does not influence on his character. The action describes his character. While a Dynamic character is someone who is influenced by the actions and experiences. He experiences a conversion himself as the result of the actions.

Meanwhile, Rohrberger and Woods (1971:20) in *Reading and Writing about Literature* define characterization as the process by which the author creates character. Meanwhile Gill (1995:125) also has a similar opinion to Rohrberger and Woods that chat characterization is the way in which a character is created. Further Rohberger and Woods (1971:20) say about the methods in characterizing the persons. They say that the author can use the direct method in order not only to describe his character's physical appearance, intellectual, and moral attributes, but also to clarify the degree of the character. The author can also use the dramatic method by placing the character in situations to describe what the character is by his speaking and acting.

In *A Christmas Carol* story, there are twelve characters. Ebenezer Scrooge is the major character, whereas the others are the minors. The characters are illustrated as follows:

1. Ebenezer Scrooge

Ebenezer Scrooge is a rich old man but stingy. He does not want to share his wealth with the needy. He is also a cold-hearted man. He does not care about anything and anyone. Besides, he is a cruel old man. He always treats everyone badly.

On Christmas Eve, however, he experiences a gradual character development when the Ghosts of Christmas Past, Present, and Future show him the visions of his past, present, and future. The visions have changed his bad character. At the end of the story,

he becomes a friendly and philanthropist old man to others, especially to the poor.

2. Bob Cratchit

Bob Cratchit is Scrooge's underpaid clerk. He is a good-hearted man to everyone. He is fully attentive to his poor family.

3. Tim Cratchit

Tim Cratchit, called Tiny Tim is the youngest son of Bob Cratchit. He is a cripple one. Though he is a terminally ill and weak child, he is tough in facing his poor life.

4. Ghost of Jacob Marley

Jacob Marley is Scrooge's late friend. He is also Scrooge's former partner at the firm, Scrooge and Marley. He died seven years ago. When he was still alive, his bad character was the same as Scrooge's. After his death, the Ghost of Marley visits Scrooge's on Christmas Eve in order to warn him not to do the bad deeds anymore as he had done in the past.

5. Ghost of Christmas Past

The Ghost of Christmas Past is the first spirit that visits Scrooge on Christmas Eve to show him the visions of his past. The Ghost has long white hair as an old man, its face look like a child and it has no wrinkles at all. From the crown of its head, there is a stream of bright light. It also holds a great extinguisher cap. The Ghost of Christmas Past is the representation of Scrooge's past.

6. Ghost of Christmas Present

The Ghost of Christmas Present is the second spirit that visits Scrooge to show him the visions of his present. Generally, it has a good appearance, cheerful voice, and energetic manner. The Ghost itself is the symbol of Scrooge's present.

7. Ghost of Christmas Future

The Ghost of Christmas Future is the last spirit that shows him the visions of his future. It has a frightening appearance. The long back tunic covers the form of its head, face, body, hands, and legs. It is representation of Scrooge's bad future.

8. Fred

Fred is Scrooge's nephew. He is good hearted, friendly, jolly, and a sympathetic young man. He always treats everyone well.

9. The Gentleman

They are charitable gentlemen. They come to Scrooge's house before Christmas Day to ask donations for the poor.

10. Fezziwig

Fezziwig is the head of the firm in which Scrooge works as an apprentice. Fezziwig is a kind-hearted, cheerful, and energetic old man.

11. Belle

Belle is Scrooge's old fiancée. She is a beautiful, patient and faithful girl. She loves Scrooge so much. She is very patient in waiting for their happy time, that is, their marriage. But unfortunately, Scrooge only pays attention to his wealth than their love relationship. Because of her disappointment, at last she breaks off her engagement.

12. Fan

Fan is Scrooge's little sister. She is nice and cheerful child. She visits Scrooge in order to bring him home.

SCROOGE'S UNIQUE CHARACTERIZATION

In relation to Jacob Marley, Scrooge is actually his surviving partner of a firm named Scrooge and Marley. Marley is dead because of certain accident. When Marley was still alive, Scrooge was described as a cruel, miser, and an avaricious old man (1948:3-5). This can be seen from the quotation as follows:

Oh! But he was a tight-fisted hand at the grindstone. Scrooge! A squeezing, wrenching, grasping, clutching, covetous old sinner! (Dickens 1948:6)

Other people's comments on Scrooge's bad character can also be seen below:

"...such an odious, stingy, hard, unfeeling man as Mr. Scrooge. You know he, is Robert! Nobody knows it better than you, poor fellow!" (Dickens 1948:87)

"If he wanted to keep 'em after he was dead, a wicked old screw," pursued the woman... (Dickens 1948:113)

Again, we can see Scrooge's miserliness through his other mean treatment to his clerk. It can be seen when his clerk asks permission to have Christmas holiday because he wants to celebrate Christmas with his family. Actually Scrooge is not willing to allow his clerk to have the holiday because he thinks that it is a disadvantage for him if he has to give his money as the clerk's salary on the holiday. At last he allows his clerk to have holiday in condition that he has to come earlier to work next morning (Dickens 1948:18).

Scrooge is also known as a hard-hearted, a misanthropic, and a harsh old man. His characterization is described by Dickens as follows:

...Hard and sharp as flint, from which no steel had ever struck out generous fire, secret, and self-contained, and solitary as an oyster. The cold within him froze his old feature, nipped his pointed nose, shriveled his cheek, stiffened his gait, his made his eyes red, his thin lips blue; and spoke out shrewdly in his grating voice (Dickens 1948:6).

Scrooge's misanthropy can be known from Dickens' comment on his manner towards other people.

...But what did Scrooge care! It was the very thing he liked. To edge his way along the crowded paths of life, warning all human sympathy to keep its distance, was what the knowing ones call "nuts" to Scrooge (Dickens 1948:7).

Scrooge is also an anti Christmas one. His character can be seen from his refusal of his nephew's Christmas greeting.

"A Merry Christmas, uncle!" God save you!" cried a cheerful voice It was the voice o Scrooge's nephew, who came upon him so quickly that this was the first intimation he had of his approach.

"Bah!" said Scrooge, "Humbug!"

"What else can I be, returned the uncle, when I live in such a world of fools as this? Merry Christmas! Out upon merry Christmas! ...If I could work my will," said Scrooge, indignantly, "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. He should!"

"Keep Christmas in your own way, and let me keep it in mine."

“Keep it!” repeated Scrooge's nephew. “But you don't keep it.” (Dickens 1948:9-10)

SCROOGE'S ANTI - CHRISTMAS CHARACTER

Scrooge's gradual anti-christmas character development begins when the Ghost of Christmas Past causes him to see the visions of his past. When the Ghost shows Scrooge the vision of his childhood, he was a solitary one who had been neglected by his friends and his father. When Fan, his little sister, comes to him to bring him home, at the first time he doesn't believe what she has said. But she convinces him that at last, his father permits him to come home. Scrooge doesn't believe the fact because he still regards himself as an isolated child (Dickens 1948:44-48).

Scrooge experiences a sudden change of heart when he sees the visions of his past. Suddenly he feels pity for himself because of his poor former self, as a misanthropy child and he cries. He regrets his previous experience because he should give something to the boy who sings a Christmas Carol at his door, but he doesn't do that. Scrooge begins to experience his conversion little by little by realizing that he should do a good deed for other people (Dickens 1948:46-47).

Then the Ghost of Christmas Past brings him to see the visions of his adulthood. One of the visions is when he works as an apprentice at Fezziwig's firm. Fezziwig asks Scrooge and Dick Wilkins to stop working and close the warehouse on Christmas Eve. Then he asks his workers to clean the room and change it into ballroom. Fezziwig is a good-hearted old man because he asks Scrooge and his other workers to stop working on Christmas Eve and to celebrate Christmas together with him and everyone with joyful heart (Dickens 1948:51-52).

Again, Scrooge experiences his gradual character change when the Ghost “examines” Scrooge in order to know further about Scrooge’s reaction in responding Fezziwig’s good manner toward his workers. In the vision, though he is a rich old man, his wealth doesn’t change him. He is very different from Scrooge. Scrooge’s good qualities are gradually losing because of his wealth. Fezziwig still has the virtues until his old age. Whatever he says and does, he has made the workers happy because of his pleasant manner towards them. Through the vision, Scrooge gradually realizes his bad attitudes towards others these days (Dickens 1948:56).

Then the Ghost brings Scrooge to see his other vision when he grows older. Here, he begins to appear his character development, becoming a covetous man (Dickens 1948:57).

In the next vision, Scrooge sees the vision of his ex-fiancee. The girl disappointed because Scrooge only thinks of his wealth and only pays attention to his wealth than their love relationship. Finally, the girl breaks off their engagement because of her disappointment (Dickens 1948:58). Scrooge begins to realize his old bad manner towards his old fiancee after seeing the vision of his old love. It is really painful for him. The vision of his old love is so frightening for him, thus he tries hard to refuse the ghost’s order to see another vision. But the ghost forces him to see it (Dickens 1948:60).

Then the second ghost, namely the Ghost of Christmas Present visits Scrooge to show him the visions of his present. Before it brings him to see the vision, suddenly he asks the ghost to show them. His own demand to the Ghost of Christmas Present to show him the visions of his present has shown his gradual conversion. He begins to realize the good effect of the previous visions because from the visions he learnt to find out his old self-identity.

"Spirit," said Scrooge submissively, "conduct me where you will. I went forth last night on compulsion, and I learnt a lesson which is working now. Tonight, if you have aught to teach me, let me profit by it". (Dickens 1948: 70).

The Ghost of Christmas Present brings Scrooge to the next scene. They visit Bob Cratchit's house. There Scrooge sees the Cratchits' poor condition. The Cratchits are a poor family. Though they are poor, they live in happiness.

...They were not a handsome family; they were not well dressed; their shoes were far from being waterproof; their clothes were scanty; ...But they were happy, grateful, pleased with one another, and contented with the time...(Dickens 1948:88).

When Scrooge sees the Cratchits, actually he has a greater attention to Tiny Tim, the youngest son of Bob Cratchits than the others because in his opinion, Tiny Tim is a terminally ill and he hopes the child can be saved from his poor condition. But the ghost says that it is hopeless to save him unless there is someone who helps him. It means that the child will die because his poor family cannot save him. The ghost really warns him not only to think of his own life, but also to think of other people's life especially Tiny Tim's. The child will die for lack of good food, medicine, and so on if nobody saves him. The ghost warns him that his coldness has made other people suffer. According to the ghost, he is a worthless man if he doesn't have a deep concern for the poor, especially for the poor cripple child, Tiny Tim. Actually the poor child represents Scrooge's indifference to the poor. The ghost criticizes his coldness to the poor, particularly to Tiny Tim by repeating his own words: "If he be like to die, he had better do it, and decrease the surplus population." After hearing the repetition of his own

words, suddenly he is aware of his bad treatment to the poor (Dickens 1948:85-86).

The third spirit that brings Scrooge to see the visions of his future is the Ghost of Christmas Future. Though, basically, he fears the Ghost's mysterious appearance, again, he experiences his self-awareness of its good intention for his own interest. Through his previous visions, he has learned from the Ghost's good lessons about his bad character. When Ghost of Christmas Future comes to him, he is willing to see the visions of his future. Even he asks the ghost to show him the visions as soon as possible because he wants to use the precious time in order to reflect on his bad life.

“Ghost of the Future!” he exclaimed, “ I fear you more than any spectre I have seen. But as I know your purpose is to do me good, and I hope to live to be another man from what I was, I am prepared to bear you company, and do it with thankful heart...

“Lead on!” said Scrooge. “Lead on! The night is waning fast, and it is precious time to me, I know. Lead on, Spirit!” (Dickens 1948:. 104-105).

The next scene Scrooge sees is about the Cratchits. He sees Bob Cratchit and his wife's sorrow because of Tiny Tim's poor condition. Tiny Tim has a terminal illness for lack of good food, medicine, and so on. They cannot do anything to save the poor child because they don't have enough money to buy the things they need. They only expect other people will help to save their poor child. The Ghost warns him that Tiny Tim's poor condition actually represents Scrooge's indifference to the poor suffering, especially the poor child suffering (Dickens 1948:122).

Then the Ghost shows Scrooge the last scene. It brings him to a grave yard. There the Ghost points to a grave that actually it is his own grave. Scrooge is really scared when he sees the terrible vision

of his own grave pointed by the Ghost. He spontaneously refuses it because actually he doesn't want to die as a neglected one. The grave is frightening him so much, thus he begs the Ghost's mercy to change his fate.

“Spirit!” he cried, tight clutching as its robe, ...
“Good spirit,” he pursued, as down upon the ground he fell before it: “Your nature intercedes for me, and pities me. Assure me that I yet may change these shadows you have shown me, by an altered life!”... “I will honour Christmas in my heart, and try to keep it all year. I will live in the Past, Present, and the Future. The Spirits of all Three shall strive within me. I will not shout out the lesson they teach. Oh, tell me I may sponge away the writing on this stone!” (Dickens 1948:127)

Scrooge really hopes that he can change his fate by his prayer and the Ghost hears his will. When he prays, the Ghost vanishes and he finally can come home again. The Ghost gives him an opportunity to change his bad life. After experiencing a new life, Scrooge sees everything with joy. He really gives thanks to his late friend, Marley's Ghost that directly has warned him about his bad character and the Three Spirits that has warned him about his bad treatment towards others through the visions of his past, present, and future (Dickens 1948:127-128).

Scrooge is really happy when he realizes his altered and new life. He regards himself as a re-born one, as the one who has a new life. His new life is an energetic and a joyful young man's life. Scrooge reacts as if as an energetic young man by his crying and laughing as an expression of his new life (Dickens 1948:129).

After seeing the whole visions, Scrooge experiences his totally conversion. It can be seen from his good point of view

towards anything he sees. Scrooge's conversion also can be seen from his good manner towards everyone.

“What's today, my fine fellow?” said Scrooge.
“Today!” replied the boy. “Why, CHRISTMAS DAY.” (Dickens 1948:130)

....Scrooge regarded everyone with a delighted smile. He looked so irresistibly pleasant, in a word, that three or four-humorous fellows said, “Good morning, sir! A merry Christmas to you! And Scrooge said often afterwards, that of all the blithe sounds he had ever heard, those were the blithest in his ears (Dickens 1948:132).

Everything and everyone he sees along the street make him happy. Finally he realizes that his new life makes him joy and happy through everything and everyone he sees (Dickens 1948:134).

Scrooge's first charity after his conversion is to send a big turkey to the Cratchits because he has sympathy with their poor condition. He wants to share joy by giving turkey to them on Christmas Day (p. 130-131). Besides, Scrooge's charity after his conversion can be seen from his good conversation with the charitable gentlemen. Scrooge's kindness appears when he treats the gentlemen well. In the conversation, he really intends to help the poor by giving his possessions through the charitable gentlemen. His intention can be proved when he asks them to come and see him in order to take his possessions (Dickens 1948:133-134).

Scrooge's other kindness through his willingness to come to his nephew's house in order to have dinner with the nephew's family. He is not an anti Christmas anymore. He wants to celebrate it together with his nephew's family because he wants to share joy and happiness with them (Dickens 1948:136). Scrooge's conversion

also can be seen from his good manner towards his clerk, Bob Cratchit. He regards his clerk as his good friend. Besides, he also rises Bob's salary and really intends to help his clerk's poor family

Scrooge becomes an altered old man after seeing the visions of his past, present, and future shown by the three spirits. He really fulfill his promise to change his bad character. He becomes an good hearted old man to everyone. His other charity is saving Tiny Tim's poor life. Finally, the poor child can be saved from his terminal illness because of Scrooge's kindness. Beside, Scrooge is not an anti Christmas any longer. He honors Christmas in his heart and celebrates Christmas together with everyone because he wants to share joy, love, and happiness with everyone. Now, Scrooge is very happy because he can make everybody happy by sharing what he has with them. He really becomes a friendly, warm, kind, and philanthropic old man to everyone (Dickens 1948:136-137).

CHARLES DICKENS' MESSAGE

Through Scrooge, Charles Dickens wants to convey his message, which is mainly about charity. Although Scrooge was illustrated as a stingy person, eventually his charity can be seen from his good deeds to the Cratchits when he gave them a turkey, raised Bob's salary, and saved Tiny Tim from his poor condition, and to the other poor people that is represented by the charitable gentlemen who asked donations for the poor by giving his money to them. He treated everyone well. Scrooge's kindness to others, especially to the poor, Dickens indirectly wants to teach us about the significance of charity. Dickens also conveys the message through other characters, that is, Scrooge's nephew, Fred by saying that Christmas is a good time to have a deep concern for others, especially for the poor.

...”Christmas among the rest. But I am sure I have always thought of Christmas time, when it has come round - ...as a good time: a kind, forgiving, charitable, pleasant time: the only time I know of, in the long calendar of year, when men and women seem by one consent to open their shut-up hearts freely, and to think of people below them as if they were fellow passenger to the grave, not another race of creatures bound on their journey” (Dickens 1948:11)

Marley’s Ghost also almost have the same opinion as Fred’s. He has a deep concern for human beings.

“Mankind was my business. The common welfare was my business: charity, mercy, forbearance, were all my business...” (Dickens 1948:31).

CONCLUSION

Through a formalistic analysis, it is found that Dickens describes Scrooge’s characterization in his novel, *A Christmas Carol*, as a cold-hearted, miserly, misanthropy, and an anti Christmas old man. However, Scrooge began to have a gradual character development when the ghost of Christmas Past, Present, and Future visited him on Christmas Eve in order to remind and warn him about his bad character by showing his visions of past, present, and future. After seeing the visions, he realized his wrong doings and intended to change it. So, on Christmas Day, he becomes an altered person. He became a good – hearted, friendly, kind, and generous old man, and he honors Christmas in his heart.

Through his novel, *A Christmas Carol*, Dickens manages to convey his message on charity, to his readers. Dickens wants us to have charity to others, especially to the poor because by having charity, we can make others happy and we will happy because of that.

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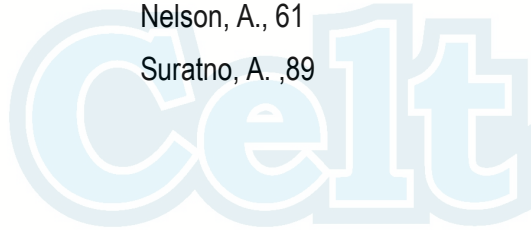
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