



## *A Christmas Carol* by Charles Dickens

Charles Dickens published *A Christmas Carol* in 1843 and since that time it has never been out of print. It has been adapted in all kinds of ways, from theatre to film, from radio to musicals, from opera to cartoons. Dickens read it himself to huge audiences during his many lecture tours. One of the most popular adaptations among children is *The Muppet Christmas Carol*, an American musical film, which features both puppets and real actors.

Although the story has a happy ending, it is not by any means a happy story for the most part. Ebenezer Scrooge, who was probably based on a real person, is not at all sympathetic until almost the very end, Tiny Tim is very sick and it seems will probably die young, while the ghosts may well be an inspiration for Harry Potter's enemies, the Dementors!

It is often amusing, but at the same time it carries a very serious moral message, to keep in mind even after Christmas. Dickens tells us to be good and generous to others who are less fortunate than ourselves. Scrooge, the story's main character, learns this lesson the hard way. He is first visited in his cold house by the ghost of his former partner, Jacob Marley. Marley warns Scrooge he will have three more ghostly visitors who will give him one last chance to save himself. Scrooge dismisses him with the famous word 'humbug' – nonsense – which he also uses to describe Christmas and all it stands for.

However, the three Ghosts of Christmas Past, Christmas Present and Christmas Yet To Come duly arrive and gradually set about Scrooge's conversion, though it is not until the horrifying visions that the Ghost of Christmas Yet To Come shows Scrooge that the old miser finally sees the light.

The ghost, 'shrouded in a deep black garment, which concealed its head, its face, its form, and left nothing of it visible save one outstretched hand', represents what the future holds for Scrooge if he does not change his ways. This is a powerful image that goes far beyond the pages of a story and forces us to take note: Christmas is a time of joy, but also a time for reflection, which is what Dickens wants us to realise.

So, let's spare a thought for those less fortunate than ourselves at this time and try to do something, however small, to help them. And in the words of Tiny Tim, the little boy whose life is eventually saved by Scrooge's generosity and love, 'God bless us, every one!'



Scene from the 3-D film *A Christmas Carol* directed by Robert Zemeckis in 2009. (© Walt Disney Pictures)