**LITERATURE A Christmas Carol Extract 1**

And now, without a word of warning from the Ghost, they stood upon a bleak and desert moor, where monstrous masses of rude stone were cast about, as though it were the burial-place of giants, and water spread itself wheresoever it listed, or would have done so, but for the frost that held it prisoner; and nothing grew but moss and furze, and coarse rank grass. Down in the west the setting sun had left a streak of fiery red, which glared upon the desolation for an instant, like a sullen eye, and frowning lower, lower, lower yet, was lost in the thick gloom of darkest night.

‘What place is this?’ asked Scrooge.

‘A place where Miners live, who labour in the bowels of the earth,’ returned the Spirit. ‘But they know me. See!’

A light shone from the window of a hut, and swiftly they advanced towards it. Passing through the wall of mud and stone, they found a cheerful company assembled round a glowing fire. An old, old man and woman, with their children and their children’s children, and another generation beyond that, all decked out gaily in their holiday attire. The old man, in a voice that seldom rose above the howling of the wind upon the barren waste, was singing them a Christmas song—it had been a very old song when he was a boy—and from time to time they all joined in the chorus. So surely as they raised their voices, the old man got quite blithe and loud; and so surely as they stopped, his vigour sank again.

The Spirit did not tarry here, but bade Scrooge hold his robe, and passing on above the moor, sped—whither? Not to sea? To sea. To Scrooge’s horror, looking back, he saw the last of the land, a frightful range of rocks, behind them; and his ears were deafened by the thundering of water, as it rolled and roared, and raged among the dreadful caverns it had worn, and fiercely tried to undermine the earth.

Built upon a dismal reef of sunken rocks, some league or so from shore, on which the waters chafed and dashed, the wild year through, there stood a solitary lighthouse. Great heaps of seaweed clung to its base, and storm-birds—born of the wind one might suppose, as sea-weed of the water—rose and fell about it, like the waves they skimmed.

But even here, two men who watched the light had made a fire, that through the loophole in the thick stone wall shed out a ray of brightness on the awful sea. Joining their horny hands over the rough table at which they sat, they wished each other Merry Christmas in their can of grog, and one of them: the elder, too, with his face all damaged and scarred with hard weather, as the figure-head of an old ship might be: struck up a sturdy song that was like a Gale in itself.

**You should use the extract above and your knowledge of the whole novel to answer this question.**

Write about Poverty in the novel and the way Dickens presents this throughout.

In your response you should:

 refer to the extract and the novel as a whole;

 show your understanding of characters and events in the novel;

 refer to the contexts of the novel. [40]

**Example Essay 1: The start of the essay**

Dickens explores poverty in A Christmas Carol by showing the reader the divide between the richer characters like Scrooge and the poorer characters like the Cratchitt family. Dickens wanted to show how the divide is bad and that poor and rich people should help each other out and not be selfish like Scrooge is.

In the extract the spirit tells Scrooge that the miners “labour in the bowels of the earth” suggesting the conditions they work in are so bad and shocking. This personification of the earth and the noun “bowels” shows the readers how this part of the earth is unpleasant and makes the reader feel sorry for the miners. Dickens continues to write about how the miners are “cheerful” and sat “round a glowing fire” this shows that even though their conditions are poor and bad they manage to have a nice time and celebrate Christmas because of the sense of community. Dickens juxtaposes this idea of joy and happiness with scrooge’s idea of Christmas. In Stave 1 when Scrooge is invited to enjoy Christmas with his nephew, Fred, he responds rudely with “Bah Humbug” and repetition of “Good Morning” to close the conversation. This gives the reader the impression that Scrooge is rude and that he will not be enjoying Christmas as he will be spending it alone. The two contrasting examples of Christmas shows the reader how you do not need to be rich or have lots of money to enjoy yourself but to surround yourself with friends and family instead. Dickens wanted to show Victorian London that the divide between the wealthy and poor was unfair and he personally disliked it because he was sent to workhouses to pay of his father’s debt instead of going to school. This meant he was poor himself.

**Example Essay 2: The whole essay**

Dickens explores poverty in A Christmas Carol (ACC) through a variety of characters who show is what Victorian Society was like. The allegorical meaning of the novel was to explain to wealthy businessmen that poverty was not a choice made by people, but rather a condition of the way a capitalist society works. This extract shows the Ghost of Christmas Present taking Scrooge to the depths and widths of civilisation in order to reinforce how love and laughter can be found even in the bleakest of conditions.

At the top of the extract pathetic fallacy and personification are used in the “setting sun had left a fiery red, which glared” showinlg us that the place is devoid of humour and could be considered threatening. Connotations of ‘fiery red’ are hell, death and menace and this imagery is reinforced by the darkness of the place “labour in the bowels of the earth” which is suggestive of hell again. However, this personifying of the place is contrasted or juxtaposed with “cheerful company” and “glowing fire” which suggests that even in these bleak, harsh and unfriendly conditions there is warmth from a homely and comforting fire and friendship from the conversations and demeanour of the miners themselves. So here poverty is shown as difficult and a test of endurance, however the human spirit can and does persists under this pressure and people can find joy and happiness in friendship and through sharing this hardship. This links to the scene in the same stave where the Cratchitt family gather for dinner and we are reminded that although they are poor they are thankful. Tiny Tim says “god bless us everyone” which reinforces Christian charity and the role of being thankful for what you have, as he is a cripple, but he still wants to share good blessings with others. Perhaps, Dickens is using religion to show the wealthy Victorians that actions speak louder than works. To be a good Christian you have to uphold the values of Christianity and with the upsurge of industry and the Industrial Revolution many wealthy people became selfish and forgot the values taught by the church. This is something that seems to be alluded to in Scrooge’s character, when Belle states in Stave 2 “ I have been replaced by a golden idol” the metaphor reinforces the importance Scrooge is placing on money and wealth and forgetting the importance of love, kindness and charity. Here we see change in society for the worse as a result of greed and ignorance and the way the Industrial Revolution demanded more from the workers for less.

Next in the extract we see the importance of family in the listing of “old, old man and woman and their children and their children’s children and another generation.” Using the connective and repetitively shows how many people or family members have gathered around the fire to celebrate Christmas together, showing us poverty is not a problem when they have each other. This idea of family is repeated which we see Belle with her children waiting for her husband to return home. Belle is significant, because she reminds him (Scrooge) of his past and what he could have had. Belle as a “comely matron” shows love, kindness and happiness, which is despite not marrying Scrooge and becoming wealthy like him. This affects the reader as Scrooge shows emotion and asks to be taken away. Contextually, this suggests along with the Cratchitt family that more people had larger families, despite poverty; this may be due to a lack of health care and contraception not being easily available. Family was incredibly important to Victorians and Dickens himself had 10 children. However, this may also link to Tiny Tim, who is cared for by the Cratchitt family and he is still happy and cheerful in spite of his crippled body, which the family cannot afford to have help from the doctor with as there was no NHS at the time. Poor families didn’t or couldn’t afford to see the doctor, as they would charge a lot of money for a call out at that time.

Finally, at the end we see a storm at sea which again uses pathetic fallacy and imagery to imply the harsh conditions “waters chapped and dashed” at the “solitary lighthouse” showing how violent and perilous the storm is and reinforcing how isolated the two men are. Solitary has connotations of being alone and lonely. This links to the first imagery we have of Scrooge and the simile “solitary as an oyster” which maybe Dickens emphasising how poverty or wealth makes no difference if you are alone. Perhaps, this scene is used to jolt Scrooge into recognising his failings as a member of the human race as the “two men in their can of grog” (using a metaphor for the alcohol they share) and they sing “like a Gale in itself” which is similar to the poor weather outside, but contrasts it too, as the singing is a sound of joy and togetherness. Dickens may be reflecting on Victorian Society and their inability to recognise when they are lucky. Wealthy families often had a nanny bringing up their children, therefore meaning the parents were distant and missed the majority of their children’s upbringing. Dickens may have shown poverty in the novel with the vast amount of children throughout to show how important family and community is and that we should all, wealthy or poor, be respectful and thankful for what we have.

Dickens creates huge contrasts in the presentation of wealthy and poor characters which could be symbolic of how the Industrial Revolution made child labour more prolific, more dangerous and didn’t help to raise working or living conditions for anyone. It proved instead to help make the wealthy more so and the poor become poorer. Allegorically Dickens sums this up with the repetition of the rhetorical questions at the start by Scrooge and again repeated by the Ghost of Christmas Past “Are there no workhouses? Are there no prisons?” which was a prevailing attitude in Victorian London.