

The End of It

by Charles Dickens *from A Christmas Carol*

The main character in A Christmas Carol is Ebenezer Scrooge. While he is quite wealthy, he is also greedy, selfish, unkind, and mean-spirited. He despises Christmas and all those who enjoy the kindness and generosity Christmas brings. Late one Christmas Eve, Scrooge is visited by the ghost of his business partner, Jacob Marley. Marley is a sad sight, cursed to be dragging heavy chains around because of his own greed and meanness. Marley tells that three spirits will visit Scrooge that night in a last attempt to make Scrooge change his ways. As each spirit visits, Scrooge sees more and more how wicked he has been. In the end, he promises to change his ways and keep Christmas in his heart all year long. The last spirit dissolves, and Scrooge faces the day with new energy.

He had frisked into the sitting-room, and was now standing there, perfectly winded.

'There's the saucepan that the gruel was in!' cried Scrooge, starting off again, and going round the fireplace. 'There's the door by which the Ghost of Jacob Marley entered! There's the corner where the Ghost of Christmas Present sat! There's the window where I saw the wandering Spirits! It's all right, it's all true, it all happened. Ha, ha, ha!'

Really, for a man who had been out of practice for so many years, it was a splendid laugh, a most illustrious laugh. The father of a long, long line of brilliant laughs!

'I don't know what day of the month it is,' said Scrooge. 'I don't know how long I have been among the Spirits. I don't know anything. I'm quite a baby. Never mind. I don't care. I'd rather be a baby. Hallo! Whoop! Hallo here!'

He was checked in his transports by the churches ringing out the lustiest peals he had ever heard. Clash, clash, hammer; ding, dong, bell! Bell, dong, ding; hammer, clash, clash! Oh, glorious, glorious!

Running to the window, he opened it, and put out his head. No fog, no mist; clear, bright, jovial, stirring, cold; cold, piping for the blood to dance to; golden sunlight; heavenly sky; sweet fresh air; merry bells. Oh, glorious! Glorious!

'What's today?' cried Scrooge, calling downward to a boy in Sunday clothes, who perhaps had loitered in to look about him.

'Eh?' returned the boy with all his might of wonder.

'What's today, my fine fellow?' said Scrooge.

'Today!' replied the boy. 'Why, Christmas Day.'

'It's Christmas Day!' said Scrooge to himself. 'I haven't missed it. The Spirits have done it all in one night. They can do anything they like. Of course they can. Of course they can. Hallo, my fine fellow!'

Questions

1. What does illustrious mean here: “a most illustrious laugh”?
2. What does Scrooge mean when he says, “I’m quite a baby”?
3. How would you describe Scrooge’s mood in this passage?
4. What is an example of onomatopoeia in this passage?