Analyzing Character Development in *A Christmas Carol*, by Charles Dickens

**WRITING PRODUCT:** Three journal entries

**RECOMMENDED TIME:** Approximately 3 class sessions

**OVERVIEW**
This lesson guides students through activities that focus on analyzing the character of Ebenezer Scrooge in Charles Dickens’s *A Christmas Carol*. It culminates in the generation of three journal entries from Scrooge’s perspective revealing how his life and attitudes about wealth have changed.

**READING/WRITING CONNECTION**
Lesson activities integrate literary response and analysis reading standards with journal entry writing standards.

**OBJECTIVES**
Students will
- identify Ebenezer Scrooge’s character traits
- analyze how Scrooge changes based on his thoughts, words, and actions
- write three journal entries from Scrooge’s point of view reflecting on his life and describing his changed attitudes about wealth

**READING FOR WRITING**
Have students complete the following activities during and after reading to prepare for the writing assignment.

1. **Explore Scrooge’s Character**
As students read the selection, have them create cluster diagram listing the character traits Scrooge displays before the visits of the Christmas Spirits. To each trait, have them attach a statement or action that illustrates that characteristic. A sample cluster is presented below.
See page 5 for a copy master of a blank cluster diagram.

2. Analyze Character Development
To help students understand how Scrooge changes throughout the play, ask them to take notes on what he learns from the visits of the three Christmas Spirits. Have them list both the images that are revealed to Scrooge and his reactions to them. Examples are given below.

Spirit of Christmas Past
- Scrooge watches his sister Fan embrace him. (He remembers his deep affection for her.)
- Scrooge sees the woman he loves reject him. (He regrets that he valued money over love.)

Spirit of Christmas Present
- Scrooge watches the Cratchit family eating Christmas dinner. (He notices their poverty and Tiny Tim’s illness.)
- Cratchit urges his wife to toast Scrooge. (Scrooge wishes he had been more generous.)

Spirit of Christmas Yet-to-Come
- Servants dig through Scrooge’s belongings after his death. (Scrooge realizes that no one mourns him.)
- Tiny Tim dies. (Scrooge is filled with sadness and loss.)
READING THE PROMPT
Present the following writing prompt to students. Ask them to underline or highlight the writing type, the central question to be addressed, and the most important elements in the Key Traits.

WRITING PROMPT

Writing Situation
In Charles Dickens’s *A Christmas Carol*, adapted into play form by Frederick Gaines, the main character, Ebenezer Scrooge, undergoes a transformation. Initially, he is a miserly old man who cares only for the success of his business. By the end of the play, he is transformed by the Spirits of Christmas Past, Present, and Yet to Come.

Writing Directions
Imagine that you are Ebenezer Scrooge and write three journal entries from his point of view—1) on Christmas Eve before Scrooge leaves his office; 2) after the Spirit of Christmas Yet to Come visits him; and 3) after he wakes up on Christmas morning. For each entry, describe what happens, how Scrooge reacts to the events, and his feelings about himself and wealth. Your entries should reveal how Scrooge is transformed from a miser to a generous and charitable man.

Keep the following key traits in mind as you compose your journal entries:

Key Traits

Ideas
- Discusses the events in the text from Scrooge’s point of view
- Includes his reactions to and reflections on the events
- Reveals Scrooge’s changing attitudes towards himself and wealth

Organization
- Presents events chronologically
- Uses transitions to make the relationships of ideas and events clear
- Concludes with a summary of Scrooge’s view of himself and wealth

Voice
- Re-creates the voice of Scrooge
- Maintains a first-person point of view

Word Choice
- Uses precise, apt, and descriptive language that Scrooge would use

Sentence Fluency
- Varies sentence structure and length to help the paper flow

Conventions
- Correctly follows the conventions of written English

*See page 6 for a copy master of the prompt and Key Traits.*
RESPONDING TO THE PROMPT
After students have read the prompt, have them complete these activities to help them prepare their responses.

1. Gather Information
Have students review their cluster diagrams and notes on character development. They should use this information to write a summary for each journal entry. Each entry should include the events and Scrooge’s reactions to them. Remind students that they will write an entry for each of these time periods:
- on Christmas Eve before Scrooge leaves his office
- after the Spirit of Christmas Yet to Come visits him
- after he wakes up on Christmas morning

2. Capture Scrooge’s Voice
Tell students that to make their journal entries authentic and believable, they should reproduce Scrooge’s language as closely as possible. Have them work with a partner and read the following section from his monologue on page 410.

“Spirit, hear me. I am not the man I was. I will not be that man that I have been for so many years. Why show me all of this if I am past all hope? Assure me that I yet may change these shadows you have shown me. Let the boy live! I will honor Christmas in my heart and try to keep it all the year. I will live in the Past, the Present, and the Future. The spirits of all three shall strive within me. I will not shut out the lessons that they teach.”

Ask them to discuss the following elements that make Scrooge’s language unique and mimic them in their journal entries:
- word choice
- sentence structure
- sentence length

EVALUATION
Give students the criteria for an exemplary paper as shown in the “Key Traits” section below the writing prompt. They may use this guide when writing and revising their papers. You can also adapt these criteria into a scoring rubric.
CLUSTER DIAGRAM
WRITING PROMPT

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**Conventions**
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