

Writing a Response to Literature / Character Analysis for *A Christmas Carol*





What is the purpose of a Response to Literature essay?

- **The purpose of a response to literature essay is to demonstrate your understanding of a story's theme and how the theme is expressed through its characters.**



What do you need to do in a response to literature essay?

- **show your understanding of the main character and the plot of the story**
- **show your understanding of the overall meaning or message of the story**
- **support what you say about the character and theme with examples and evidence from the story**
- **use transitional words and phrases to connect ideas**



Overview of the Steps:

- 1. Read and understand the prompt or writing directions.**
- 2. Read, think about, and understand the text.**
- 3. Organize and outline paragraph ideas.**
- 4. Write a thesis statement.**
- 5. Write your essay.**
- 6. Revise.**
- 7. Proofread and edit.**
- 8. Write your final draft.**
- 9. Reread it one last time before you turn it in.**



Step #1 – Read and understand the prompt or writing directions.

Here is the prompt you might receive on the state writing test:

Prompt



Step #2: Read, think about, and understand the text.

- **When you analyze something, you look at its parts in order to understand the whole.**
- **When you analyze a story character, you examine what the character says, does, and thinks to gain an overall understanding or insight into him/her.**
- **As you read the story, think about how the character grows and changes and how this fits into the overall message of the story.**



Step #2: Read, think about, and understand the text.

- **Who is the main character of the story?**
- **What is the conflict or problem the main character faces?**
- **How does he/she resolve the problem?**
- **What lessons does he/she learn by the end of the story?**



Step #3: Organize and Outline

Paragraph Ideas

- **Think about how the main character changes during the course of the story.**
- **Describe what the character is like in the beginning of the story.**
- **Gather evidence from the text to support your opinion.**

chart



Step #3: Organize and Outline **Paragraph Ideas**

- **Make a list of key events from the story that teach the character something about life (the theme.)**
- **Choose events that change the character in some way.**
- **Write your ideas in a chart:**

chart



Step #3: Organize and Outline **Paragraph Ideas**

- **Think about how the character has developed throughout the story.**
- **Describe what the character is like in the end of the story.**
- **Gather evidence from the text to support your opinion.**

chart



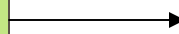
Step #4: Write a Thesis Statement

- **Now that you've gathered your evidence, you will write the thesis statement.**
- **The thesis statement gives the main idea of your essay in a single sentence.**
- **The thesis should introduce the major character traits you're going to discuss and how those traits shape the story.**
- **The thesis should mention what the character learns (theme.)**

Step #4: Write a Thesis Statement

- Example:

Beginning



Learns



End

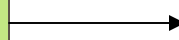


At first, Scrooge is a selfish man, but by the end of the story he learns the importance of being part of humanity and becomes more thoughtful and charitable.

Step #4: Write a Thesis Statement

- Example:

Beginning



Learns



End




In the beginning, Scrooge is selfish and mean, but by the end of the story he learns the importance of being compassionate towards others and becomes more charitable and kind.



Thesis Statement

In the beginning, Scrooge is selfish and mean, but by the end of the story he learns the importance of being compassionate towards others and becomes more charitable and kind.

At first, Scrooge is a selfish man, but by the end of the story he learns the importance of being part of humanity and becomes more thoughtful and charitable.



**THE PARTS
OF AN
ESSAY**

**INTRODUCTORY
PARAGRAPH**

**BODY
PARAGRAPHS**

**CONCLUDING
PARAGRAPH**




Step #5: Write Your Essay - *Overview*

- **Introductory paragraph:**
 - provide background information about your story
 - state the thesis
- **Body paragraphs:**
 - one paragraph describes the character at the beginning
 - one to three paragraphs describe the key events that cause the character to learn something and change
 - one paragraph describes what the character is like at the end of the story
- **Concluding paragraph:**
 - Restate the character traits discussed in the essay
 - explain and summarize the theme



Step #5: Write Your Essay – *The Introduction*

- **Introduce your audience to the story by writing a brief summary.**
- **This summary should be three to four sentences that give the reader the background information needed to understand your thesis and your essay.**



Step #5: Write Your Essay – *The Introduction*

- **This summary should include the following information:**
 - **author's name**
 - **title of the story**
 - **name of the main character**
 - **the story's setting**
 - **the conflict the main character faces**
- **Finish up your introductory paragraph with your thesis statement.**

author

title

main
character

setting

problem /
conflict

additional
information

thesis
statement

The main character in Charles Dickens' novel A Christmas Carol is Ebenezer Scrooge, who lives in London during the 1800's. The problem he faces is that if he doesn't change his personality and become a nicer man, then he will become a tortured ghost wrapped with chains after he dies. During the course of the story, he's visited by three ghosts who persuade him to become a better man by showing him his past, present, and future. At first, Scrooge is self-centered and selfish, but by the end of the story he learns the importance of being part of humanity and is more charitable and kind.

sample



Step #5: Write Your Essay – *The Body*

- **Each body paragraph must begin with a topic sentence about the key event in the paragraph.**
- **Add details that support the topic sentence. Refer to your prewriting charts.**
- **Be sure to organize your ideas chronologically.**
- **Connect your ideas with transitional words and phrases.**



Step #5: Write Your Essay – *The Body*

- **The first body paragraph should describe what the character is like at the beginning of the story.**
- **There needs to be a topic sentence which includes the character trait you're discussing.**
- **You need to provide specific examples from the book to support your topic sentence.**




Step #5: Write Your Essay – *The Body*

Body Paragraph #1: What is Scrooge like at the beginning of the story? (NB# 33)


TS: At the beginning of the story, Scrooge is a _____ man.

Evidence:



In the beginning of the novel, Scrooge is a mean-spirited man who lacks compassion.

First of all, Scrooge doesn't believe in celebrating Christmas. When his nephew invites him to Christmas dinner, he refuses the invitation and says "Bah, humbug." Scrooge thinks that "... 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." *Secondly*,



he doesn't treat Bob Cratchit very well. He doesn't pay him enough money, and he expects Bob to work on Christmas Day. Scrooge *also* refuses to give a donation to the poor. He thinks they should go to the prisons and workhouses, and if they don't want to, they should "die and decrease the surplus population."



Step #5: Write Your Essay – *The Body*

- **The middle body paragraph(s) tell about the key events in your interpretation of the theme.**
- **You may have one to four body paragraphs depending on the number of events you're discussing and how you organize them.**



Step #5: Write Your Essay – *The Body*

Body Paragraph #2: What does Scrooge learn during the story, and how does he learn it?

(NB's #36, 38, & 39)

TS: During the story, the three spirits show Scrooge many important things about his life.


Evidence:

- 1. The spirit of Christmas past . . .**
- 2. The ghost of Christmas present . . .**
- 3. The ghost of Christmas yet to come . . .**



During the story, the three spirits show Scrooge many important things about his life.

First, The Spirit of Christmas Past reminds Scrooge of the hardships he faced when he was a boy alone in the boarding school during Christmas. **But** the spirit also shows him the love that he found with his sister and Belle. **In addition**, the ghost of Christmas Present shows Scrooge the coal miners, sailors, and the Cratchits, and teaches Scrooge that no matter



how poor a person is, or how difficult his or her situation, the Christmas spirit can still be shared. *And finally*, the Ghost of Christmas Yet to Come shows Tiny Tim to Scrooge, and lets him see what happens when people remain uninvolved in the lives of others. *In addition*, Scrooge also discovers that he will die alone, unloved and uncared for if he doesn't change his ways.





Step #5: Write Your Essay – *The Body*

- **The last body paragraph should describe what the character is like at the end of the story. (NB #40)**
- **Be sure to start with a topic sentence.**
- **Present evidence from the book to support your opinion.**




Step #5: Write Your Essay – *The Body*


Body Paragraph #3: What is Scrooge like at the end of the story? (NB #40)

TS: By the end of the story, Scrooge has become a _____ man.

Evidence:



By the end of the story, Scrooge is a
changed man. He has become more friendly
and charitable. He says "Merry Christmas" to
the people he passes on the street. He goes to
church and pats children on the head. He
also treats Bob Cratchit better. Scrooge gives
Bob a raise and lets him buy some more coal
to heat the office. **In addition,** Scrooge
endeavors to help the poor. He makes a
surprisingly large donation to charity and



gives handouts to the beggars on the street. To top it off, he buys a huge turkey for the Cratchits' Christmas dinner.




Step #5: Write Your Essay – *The Conclusion*

- **Write a summary statement that restates the character traits you have examined in your analysis and how they relate to the theme of the story.**
- **Use the thesaurus to find synonyms so you don't repeat key words from your introduction or your topic sentences.**
- **Your summary statement should be similar, but not identical, to your thesis statement.**
- **It's a way to re-emphasize the main points of your essay.**



Step #5: Write Your Essay – *The Conclusion*


- **Show your understanding of the theme of the story. Focus on what the main character learns. Remember the theme is a general statement about life. As you interpret the theme, remember to relate what the character learns about life in general.**
- **Avoid using “I”, “I think . . .”, or “In my opinion . . .” Be confident in your opinions.**
- **The conclusion should pull all your ideas together and make the essay sound finished.**



**Restate
the thesis
in a
different
way.**

**Summarize
what the
character
learns
about life.
(Theme)**

Through the ghosts' lessons, Scrooge changes from a self-absorbed grouch, to a man who values the people around him and treats them with kindness and consideration. He discovers that it's important to keep the spirit of Christmas in your heart all through the year. He learns to celebrate Christmas well, and he becomes "as good a man as the good old city knew."



**Restate
the thesis
in a
different
way.**

**Summarize
what the
character
learns
about life.
(Theme)**

During the story, Scrooge changes from a cold, heartless man to someone who cares about others. Through Scrooge, Dickens shows us that the most important thing in life is not the amount of money or power we have. What really matters is how we treat our family and friends, and take care of the people around us who may be less fortunate than ourselves.



Step #6: Revise: Introductory Paragraph

- Look at the author's name. Did you capitalize the **C** on Charles and the **D** on Dickens? If necessary, did you put an apostrophe after Dickens?
- Look at the main character's name. Did you spell **Ebenezer** correctly? Did you capitalize the **E** on *Ebenezer* and the **S** on *Scrooge*?
- Did you mention the setting? Did you capitalize the **L** on *London*, the **E** on *England*? Did you put an apostrophe between the zero and s on 1800's?



Step #6: Revise: Introductory Paragraph

- **Look at the title of the book. Did you underline the title? Did you capitalize the **A** on *A*, the **C** on *Christmas* and the **C** on *Carol*?**
- **Put a big **C** in the margin next to where you wrote what the conflict or problem of the story is.**
- **Put a wavy line under the place where you described what the story is about.**



Step #6: Revise: Introductory Paragraph

- **Highlight your thesis statement.**
- **Circle the character trait word that describes what Scrooge is like in the beginning of the story.**
- **Circle the character trait word that describes what Scrooge is like at the end of the story.**
- **Underline the part that tells what he learns.**



Step #6: Revise: Body Paragraph #1

- **Did you indent?**
- **Highlight your topic sentence. Does it mention what Scrooge is like at the beginning of the story?**
- **Did you spell **BEGINNING** correctly?**
- **Did you capitalize the **S** in Scrooge?**
- **Highlight the transitional words and phrases that you used.**
- **Is verb tense consistent throughout?**



Step #6: Revise: Body Paragraph #2

- Did you indent?
- Highlight/underline the topic sentence.
- Circle the words **learn**, **show**, or **teach**.
- Highlight the TW's you used.
- Check your spelling of *Cratchit*, *Fezziwig*, *Belle*, *nephew*, and *ghost*.
- Did you say, "The spirit shows him . . ."?
Who is *him*? Say his name. Be specific.



Step #6: Revise: Body Paragraph #2

- **Did you capitalize the **S** in Scrooge?**
- **Did you spell **Christmas** correctly and with a capital **C**?**
- **Are you consistent with the way you wrote the spirits' names?**
- **Is verb tense consistent throughout?**
- **Do you say what Scrooge sees *and* learns from each spirit?**



Step #6: Revise: Body Paragraph #3

- **Did you indent?**
- **Highlight your topic sentence. Does it mention what Scrooge is like at the end of the story?**
- **Did you capitalize the **S** in Scrooge?**
- **Are you presenting your evidence in the order that it occurred in the story?**
- **Is verb tense consistent throughout?**



Step #6: Revise: Concluding Paragraph

- Draw a wavy line underneath the summary statement.
- Look at the main character's name. Did you spell **Ebenezer** correctly? Did you capitalize the **E** on *Ebenezer* and the **S** on *Scrooge*?
- Circle the character trait words/phrases that tells what Scrooge was like at the beginning and end.
- Did you spell **BEGINNING** correctly?



Step #6: Revise: Concluding Paragraph

- **Put brackets [] around where you wrote about your understanding of the theme of the story.**
- **Did you use the pronoun “I”? If so take it out and fix the sentence.**
- **Does the ending make your essay sound finished?**



Write Your Essay – *Things to Consider*

As you write your paragraphs consider the following:

- **Use transitional words and phrases to help your ideas connect and flow smoothly.**
- **Make sure that your evidence is accurate.**
Use your charts!
- **Make sure every detail relates back to your thesis statement – the main idea of your essay.**



Write Your Essay – *Things to Consider*

- **Make sure that you capitalize and spell *all* the characters' names correctly.**
- **Make sure that you are consistent in the way you mentions the spirits.**
 - Spirit of Christmas Past
 - ghost of the future
 - spirit of Christmas present
- **Make sure that you use consistent verb tense—past or present.**



Write Your Essay – *Things to Consider*

- **Use proper writing format:**
 - **Blue or black ink only**
 - **1” margins**
 - **Write on one side of the paper only.**
 - **Skip lines.**
- **Paragraph 1 = Introduction**
- **Paragraph 2 = Scrooge in the beginning**
- **Paragraph 3 = Scrooge w/ the spirits**
- **Paragraph 4 = Scrooge at the end**
- **Paragraph 5 = Concluding paragraph**



Step #5: Write Your Essay – *Things to Consider*

- **Only use quotes if you are quoting the text exactly as it is stated in the book.**
- **There's only one worker – Bob Cratchit.**
- **Use “for example” instead of “like.”**
 - *Like when they went to the party.*
= fragment
 - *For example, they went to the party.*
= complete sentence