

Back to Basics: Literary Elements and Devices

Identifying the basic elements of a literary work can help you understand it better. Use this activity to help you understand the play *A Christmas Carol*. See *Scope's* "Glossary of Literary Terms" for definitions of the words that appear in bold.

Section 1: Characters

1. For the characters of Scrooge and Bob Cratchit, and one character of your choice: (1) decide whether the character is **major** or **minor**; (2) briefly describe the character, including his or her appearance, personality, and background; and (3) decide whether the character is **static** or **dynamic** and explain why.

A. SCROOGE is a ☐ **major** ☐ **minor** (check one) character.

Description: _____

He is a ☐ **static** ☐ **dynamic** (check one) character. I think so because:

B. BOB CRATCHIT is a ☐ **major** ☐ **minor** (check one) character.

Description: _____

He is a ☐ **static** ☐ **dynamic** (check one) character. I think so because:

C. is a ☐ **major** ☐ **minor** (check one) character.

Description: _____

He/She is a ☐ **static** ☐ **dynamic** (check one) character. I think so because:

2. How many ghosts are in the play? Describe what each ghost tells or shows Scrooge.

3. Give two examples of **indirect characterization** of Scrooge.

Section 2: Setting

4. Where and during what time period does the play take place? _____

5. Describe what life was like for poor people at that time and place. Use information from “How Charles Dickens Changed the World.”

6. At what time of year does the story take place?

What emotions, attitudes, or moods are often associated with this time of year?

At the beginning of the play, which character or characters embody or express such attitudes? Which character or characters do not? Explain.

Section 3: Imagery

7. Give one example of **imagery** in the play. State which sense it appeals to and what you think the author was trying to communicate or accomplish through it.

Section 4: Tone and Mood

8. List at least two adjectives that describe the **tone** of the play.

Now explain how the author established that **tone**. Which words and details tell you how the author feels about the characters and the subject matter?

9. What is the **mood** of the play? Does it stay the same throughout the play, or does it change? Explain.

Now explain how the author established the **mood**. Which **imagery**, words, ideas, and aspects of the **setting** or **plot** caused you to feel the way you did?

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Section 5: Plot

10. Summarize Scrooge’s travels back and forth through time over the course of the play.

11. What role do supernatural elements play in Scrooge’s transformation? (*Supernatural* means relating to existence beyond the visible, observable universe, or being outside the laws of nature.)

12. What is the main **conflict** in the play? How does the **protagonist** overcome this struggle?

13. What is the **climax** of the play? How do you know?

14. What is the **resolution** of the play?

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