**Part II**

**About A Christmas Carol**

After celebrating the joy and charity of Christmas, [A Christmas Carol](http://www.gradesaver.com/a-christmas-carol/) is foremost a condemnation of 19th-century Victorian England's division between the rich and poor, the Haves and Have-Nots. London was a great world power, rich from industry and colonial influence, yet poverty ran amok through its streets and factories.

The Poor Laws were England's response to poverty. However, the Poor Laws barely kept the poor alive while trampling their dignity; arduous labor in workhouses or humiliating stays in debtors' prisons … were the two welfare options for the poor. Even worse, poverty was profoundly cyclical. Poor children, afflicted by rickets from working long hours in polluted factories, had little chance to survive into healthy, let alone wealthy, adults.

Dickens's family was sent to debtor's prison when he was twelve (He was able to work in a shoe-polish factory), and the experience clearly marked his later work. In A Christmas Carol, he lashes out against the greed and corruption of the Victorian rich, symbolized by Scrooge prior to his redemption and celebrates the selflessness and virtue of the poor, represented by the Cratchit family. He even examines the seamier underbelly of London, showing us a scene in the bowels of London as workers divvy up Scrooge's plundered possessions.

Fittingly, Dickens wrote the novella while somewhat impoverished in the fall of 1843. To ensure the book's affordability when published the week before Christmas 1843, he paid for the production costs himself and set the price at a low five shillings. These expenses, coupled with rabid piracy, financially offset the wild success of A Christmas Carol, and Dickens earned much less than expected. Nevertheless, his most popular work, and perhaps the most popular artistic work associated with Christmas, continues to dominate our idea of Christmas through numerous film and theater reincarnations and ritual readings.

**Think About It: Read the Part II article, “About A Christmas Carol” and be able to explain: What was Dickens speaking out against when he wrote A Christmas Carol? Why was this topic “close to home” or why did it matter so much to him?**