



The Surprising Purpose Behind *A Christmas Carol*

LLCE December 2025



- Charles Dickens – an English novelist, journalist, short story writer and social critic (1812-1870)

- Started writing *A Christmas Carol* in 1843 after reading an official government report on the employment of women and children.

Deeply affected, Dickens wanted to use his writing to

“strike the heaviest blow”

he could against these injustices.

Dickens directly attacks the rich:



Ebenezer Scrooge, the tale's protagonist, represents the “hoarders of wealth” – cruel and very mean.

“Bah, humbug!”

e.g. when asked to donate to the poor, he sarcastically suggests they should go to prisons or workhouses instead.



1834 Poor Law

The Victorian sentiment that the poor were lazy and unworthy of direct help led to the creation of the Poor Law, which ensured that the poor were housed in workhouses, clothed and fed. Children who entered the workhouse would receive some schooling.

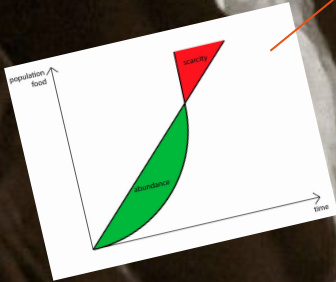


• **Thomas Malthus** – an English economist, best known for his theory on how human populations grow compared to their food supply (1766-1834).

• **Malthusianism** – as population growth is ahead of agricultural growth, there must be a stage at which the food supply is inadequate for feeding the population.

• Dickens challenges Malthus's claims in *A Christmas Carol*, mirroring his beliefs through Scrooge.

e.g charity, decreasing the surplus,



Dickens contradicts Malthus's claims:

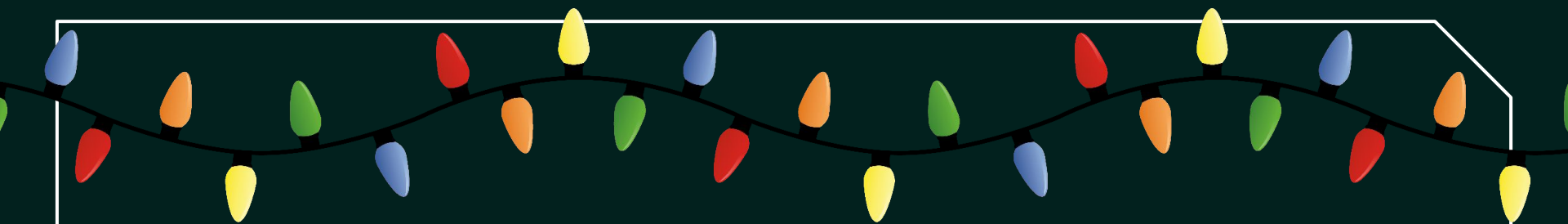
Malthus claims there isn't enough food for everyone ≠

Dickens, through “magic” and descriptions of luxury, shows there's more than enough if people choose to share. He describes the world as a place of **“natural abundance”**

Malthus uses cold maths ≠

Dickens uses magical descriptions of bright, crowded shops and giant feasts to show that the world is big enough for everyone.





Not all rich people are selfish and cruel!

- Some, like Fred – Scrooge's cousin – are kind and want to help others. They share what they have and treat everyone with respect.



- **Bob** works hard but barely gets paid to provide for his family;
- The older kids, **Martha and Peter**, also have to work just so the family doesn't end up in a workhouse;
- **Tiny Tim** struggles as his family can't afford proper food nor medicine, yet he teaches the reader to be kind; when he dies in a sad future, Scrooge changes for the better!



The Cratchits love each other and do their best, **but without help from others, they can't escape being poor.**



Now?

Kids are now prohibited to work in factories by law – however, poverty is still present and many can't afford food or proper schooling, while billionaires are casually flying to space.

Dickens's message is still important: we should notice people who are struggling and try to help them.





Thank
you!