

The ghost of Christmas past **has no gender**, in fact Dickens refers to the ghost as it. It has an ephemeral nature as if seen through a supernatural veil. Sometimes looking old, sometimes young, it has long white hair, but a smooth face with no wrinkles. It is mild, gentle in nature, almost meek, but is also strong and forceful. The ghost was calm and gentle in the way it communicated with Scrooge, but could be commanding. "Rise and walk with me," it said as it clasped him with a strong hand.

The ghost of Christmas past is lit by a **candle-like flame at its head** and holds a candle extinguisher in its hand. Scrooge is unsettled by the light, perhaps because it symbolises truth and purity, two qualities Scrooge no longer has. It may also be seen as a light that shines on his past life to let him know himself better. When Scrooge can bear it no more, seeing Belle so happily married and surrounded by her loving family at Christmas he struggles with the Ghost and manages to wrestle the extinguisher out of the ghost's hand and place it over the candle light at his head, extinguishing the memories and returning him immediately to his bed.

Scrooge spent a great deal of his childhood in a **boarding school**, and he is shown this by the ghost. He felt alone and isolated, unloved by all his family, especially his father, except for his sister Fan. When all the children went home to families at Christmas Scrooge was left alone at the school. Scrooge sobs when he sees himself sat alone at Christmas and we get some insight into his need to be alone and isolate himself from the pain of being unloved by others. We also begin to see why Scrooge has no love of Christmas.

The ghost of Christmas past shows how Scrooge became who he is and shows him what he may regret in his past, how it may have been different. **The ghost of Christmas past represents memory.** It stirs up old memories and feelings and begins the process of thawing Scrooge's cold heart. He begins to see that Christmas may represent love, friendship and laughter. We begin to sympathise with Scrooge and realise that there may be a chance of redemption.

THE GHOST OF CHRISTMAS PAST



He is shown a Christmas in his first job as apprentice to **Mr Fezziwig who makes a happy and jolly Christmas for all his friends and employees.** Scrooge defends Fezziwig when the ghost tells him it was a "small matter" to make so many people happy, only costing 3 or 4 pounds. "It's not just for money alone that one spends a lifetime building up a business." By saying this and by his actions Fezziwig shows that he is the exact opposite of Scrooge, especially in his attitude towards Christmas. Although we may have become sympathetic towards Scrooge due to his difficult childhood, we are shown there were good Christmas memories in his past; also Scrooge eventually betrays Fezziwig.

The ghost takes Scrooge to see his past relationship with his **girlfriend and fiancé Belle.** Belle realises that Scrooge loves money and business more than her and releases him from their contract to marry. Seeing this again Scrooge regrets his decision to let her go. As she says, "Another idol has replaced me." Money. He is also shown Belle later in her happy, fulfilling marriage; surrounded by children fun and happiness at Christmas. When as she remembers Scrooge her husband says Scrooge is now, "Quite alone in the world." Scrooge finds this all too much to bear.

We find out that Scrooge felt unloved by his father who blamed him for the death of his mother during his birth. The Ghost shows him when **his sister Fan** visits him at school at Christmas to take him home telling him that his father is kinder now. We also find out that Fan, a kindly sister and well loved by Scrooge, died later giving birth to Scrooge's nephew Fred. Scrooge finds it hard not to blame Fred for his sister's death, one of the very few people that brought joy to his life.

The ghost of Christmas past does not speak a great deal. When Scrooge complains about what he is shown the ghost says, "**These are the shadows of things that have been, do not blame me.**" When asked by Scrooge what its business is that evening the ghost replies, "Your welfare." It is a ghost of few words! Scrooge feels that staying in bed would help his welfare more and the ghost says, "Your reclamation, then. Take heed!" He shows Scrooge love, friendship and gratitude so paving the way for his redemption.

