



## **The Christmas Books, Volume 1: A Christmas Carol/The Chimes**

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In October 1843, Dickens hit upon the idea of writing a story that would not only celebrate Christmas but alert people to the desperate needs of England's poor. "The Christmas Carol" was the result. "The Chimes" is a topical satire set on New Year's Eve.

## The Christmas Books, Volume 1: A Christmas Carol/The Chimes Details

Date : Published December 30th 1971 by Penguin Classics (first published 1844)

ISBN : 9780140430684

Author : Charles Dickens , Michael Slater (Editor, Introduction, Notes)

Format : Paperback 266 pages

Genre : Classics, Fiction, Holiday, Christmas, Short Stories, European Literature, British Literature, Fantasy, Historical, Victorian, Classic Literature, Literature, 19th Century

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# From Reader Review The Christmas Books, Volume 1: A Christmas Carol/The Chimes for online ebook

## Lawrence says

"A Christmas Carol" is a highly excellent and, actually, moving book.

The genius of "A Christmas Carol" is its narration how a very rich, miserly, and loveless man is also susceptible to personal reformation. Even though Dickens could be savage when portraying injustice, he can nonetheless see a man like Scrooge as a member of our human race. The task of "A Christmas Carol" is to describe Scrooge's breakdown and the humanity that emerges and transforms him. In sum, "A Christmas Carol" expresses a hope for personal reformation for the worst of us, and is Dickens' model of a reformed world or, if not model, the witness to its possibility. Because Scrooge is our hero, the story is a remarkable lesson in the writer's charity and generosity.

For me, the story's pivotal scene is Christmas Day at the home of the mild Bob Cratchit. This is the time in the story when Scrooge begins to change within as opposed to delighting in reminiscences, for example, of Mr. Fezziwig's party. On one level, the scene in the Cratchit home is sentimental. On another, it is marked by the harsh contrast between cohesive love and the poverty of making do. It is a great depiction of the modest, struggling poor.

The dramatic language of the spirits (including Marley's ghost) is always fresh for me. Take, for instance, the pronouncement of the Spirit of Christmas Present when Scrooge discovers the two wasted children under the Spirit's robe: "This boy is ignorance. This girl is want. Beware them both. But most of all beware this boy." Dickens the prophet holds us spellbound at this point. Also consider the way the spirits ironically parrot to Scrooge his own remarks about prisons and workhouses and decreasing the surplus population.

The story does not end with the visitations. Dickens carries us along to show the consequences. Thus, he describes the end result of Scrooge's reformation --- the silliness of a giddy man buying the prize turkey and capering about his threadbare home. Then, there is the beauty of the Christmas visit --- at last --- to his nephew's home.

I took the time out recently to read G.K. Chesterton on these Christmas stories. He helped me to understand why I think this story is so unsentimental and compelling. In this respect, Chesterton seems to be accurate when he says that stories of happiness and joy share the characteristics of surprise, contrast with the unhappy or rough, and the grotesque.

P.s. "The Chimes" (also in my holly covered book) is nice, but not a masterpiece. It's a little too wordy and contrived. My humble opinion is that: Alas, even Homer nods.

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## Rebecca Cartwright-Teakle says

### A Christmas Carol

#### Review

I've read A Christmas Carol before and it's obviously such a well known story that it's difficult to separate

the reading of the book from cultural idea of it, much the same way as it is with Sherlock Holmes. On re-reading the book I was surprised by how much of it was familiar. Usually when reading something that has been adapted there are odd occasions where famous scenes or quotes stand out but with this a huge amount of it was instantly familiar.

### **Favourite quote**

*"I wear the chain I forged in life....I made it link by link, and yard by yard; I girded it on of my own free will, and of my own free will I wore it."*

### The Chimes

### **Review**

I found this really hard to get into and didn't really relate to the characters or storyline at all.

The story is similar to A Christmas Carol in that the protagonist is shown what could happen if steps are/are not taken but it doesn't have the charm of A Christmas Carol.

In A Christmas Carol the protagonist is someone who is obviously not a good person and needs to be shown that he needs to change his ways, in this book the protagonist was already a good person and the only thing that seemed to need changing about him was that he was worried about his daughter getting married to someone who didn't have much money. It was therefore pretty hard to become invested in this journey he was being taken on.

### **Favourite quote**

*"A new heart for a New Year, always!"*

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### **Terence Manleigh says**

5 stars just on the basis of "A Christmas Carol," which is utter perfection and God bless us every one. One star for "The Chimes", I'm afraid. Dreary, preachy stuff.

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### **Carmo says**

Foram dois pelo preço de um. **O Natal do Avarento** já toda agente conhece. Quem é que nunca viu pelo menos um filme - nem que fosse de bonecos - e ficou a conhecer o famoso Mr. Scrooge; a coisinha mais avarenta e resmungona que Deus pôs na terra? Foi escrito em 1843 e não é que ainda hoje (se calhar cada vez mais) podemos encontrar por aí exemplares da personagem? É talvez a história de Natal, que melhor representa o verdadeiro espírito da época, e cuja mensagem nunca mais esquecemos.(se a pomos em prática já é outra conversa)

**Os Sinos do Ano Novo**, não conhecia. Apesar de ser por vezes um pouco confuso, é mais uma das típicas histórias de Dickens. A crítica social direcionada à hipocrisia das classes mais favorecidas, e à arrogância de quem se julga superior pela origem de berço.

Extraordinariamente bem escrito, numa linguagem que não sendo difícil é rica e bem humorada, traçando personagens pitorescas que têm permanecido na memória ao longo dos tempos.

Ler Charles Dickens tem para mim um significado especial, já que foi com este senhor que dei entrada no mundo das leituras. *Oliver Twist* foi o meu primeiro livro "sério" e continua a ser um dos meus favoritos.

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## Hugo says

"Que cada ano seja mais feliz do que o anterior e que nem o pior dos nossos irmãos se veja privado do seu justo quinhão, com direito ao qual o Senhor os criou."

Este *Os Sinos do Ano Novo (The Chimes)* é qualquer coisa de extraordinário. A estrutura não foge muito à de *Um Conto de Natal*, é no entanto mais lúgubre e satírico. Os espíritos dos Sinos afogam, consomem toda a esperança do pobre Sr. Trotty, mostrando-lhe uma negra realidade da qual já não faz parte, para logo em seguida o levar à tona com uma oportunidade para ser feliz junto dos que mais ama. Com este já não tive tanta certeza de que as coisas fossem acabar bem.

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## Queirosiana says

"Embrenhei-me neste assombrado livrinho para acordar o espírito de uma ideia. Que ele não ponha o leitor de mal consigo, com os outros, com o tempo ou comigo. Que ele invada agradavelmente a sua casa e que ninguém sinta o desejo de o pôr de lado."

O primeiro livro que li do autor. Embora já há muito ansiasse por ler Charles Dickens.

Foi uma boa estreia. Neste livro encontramos dois contos: O Natal do Sr. Scrooge e Sinos de Ano Novo.

Embora ainda estejamos longe do natal, faltam um dois meses, foi muito bom reviver o "espírito de natal", pois não se fala de outra coisa neste livro senão disso.

Divide-se em dois contos: O Natal do Sr. Scrooge e Sinos de Ano Novo.

O Natal do Sr. Scrooge está amplamente difundido por todo lado, a origem da história do "fantasma do futuro", "fantasma do presente" e "fantasma do passado" está aqui neste pequeno conto. Mr. Scrooge é um avarento, mesquinho e desprezível homem. Não gosta do Natal e tem ódio aos que gostam. Na véspera de Natal recebe a visita do espírito do seu antigo sócio que o avisa que nos dias seguintes receberá a visita do espírito do passado, presente e futuro e de cada um Mr. Scrooge retirará as devidas lições e no fim, será um homem novo.

Os Sinos de Ano Novo fez-me chorar, o que não é difícil, ainda para mais com Dickens. Toby Veck é um homem pobre, miserável e bom. E na noite de Ano Novo tem um sonho que lhe mostra o futuro, o seu e o da sua filha. Quando acorda, tem a esperança renovada, assim como nós, leitores.

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### **Bárbara Castro Lima says**

Não posso acreditar que depois de ter gostado tanto do “A Christmas Carol”, noutra edição, detestei tanto “The Chimes”. Tenho quase a certeza que o problema é a tradução. A edição é tão má que só pelos título do livro não atingi que eram os dois contos num livro só. Não vou, por isso, desistir de ler outros livros do autor.

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### **O Williams says**

Eerie, profound, and funny. I like how the message was Biblical without stuffing it down one's throat. Though Dickens never claimed Christianity, I have a sneaking suspicion that he was a low-key Christian (yes I just made that term up).

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### **Mith says**

I have this tradition - every year, on Christmas day I whip out my copy of "A Christmas Carol", read it cover to cover and follow it up with a Christmas special movie to wrap up the day.

So, this year, A Christmas Carol has been read, "Arthur Christmas" has been watched (ADORABLE MOVIE. MUST WATCH), and awesome cake has been had. Life is good.

Merry Christmas, everybody!

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### **Teri says**

This book has both *A Christmas Carol* and *The Chimes*. I've always read *A Christmas Carol* every December as a read-aloud to the family, but never got around to Dickens' New Year's story, *The Chimes*. But I finally read both over the holidays. *The Chimes* is similar in its message and delivery as *A Christmas Carol* (its structure is a little more vague however, and you have to keep on your toes for the transitions). There are haunted chimes, rung by goblins, to ring in the New Year. What's not to like? The cruel treatment of the poor, and the responsibility to help the poor, is even more dramatically on display in *The Chimes* than it was in *A Christmas Carol*. One scene in particular may be troubling to children. Dickens does a great job showing how we should not let others validate our worth, that wealth and station are not what determines worth.

Apparently Dickens wrote 5 Christmas stories, and after reading the two in this book, I think I'll have to track the rest down for next Christmas, to see what they're like. I love Dickens' descriptive writing!

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## Jeff Currie says

Actually - I've read *A Christmas Carol* but not *The Chimes* or Dickens' other Christmas stories. I think he set out to write one every Christmas for several years in a row.

I've listed this because of *A Christmas Carol* - the source of every stage and film retelling, of course, and amazingly, in my experience the source of all of what seems to be the embellishments in each retelling. The depth of detail in Dickens' book is incredible and Dickensian, of course. What a great idea for the end of a year and the beginning of the next and the Season of Light - to consider one's current life with a view to one's past and a look at what might lie ahead - all based on one's frame of mind.

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## Shaun Victor says

Two classics that are easy to read yet both contain such important insights into class inequality that still persists today.

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## K.D. Absolutely says

Book 1 of Charles Dickens' *The Christmas Books* is composed of two beautiful classic stories or short novels: *A Christmas Carol* (1843) and *The Chimes* (1844). They are old, old works but their messages still sound true even up to now. Also, they are still very readable. In fact, I know some friends who make it a point to read *A Christmas Carol* every year.

### **A Christmas Carol in Prose Being a Ghost Story of Christmas. 5 STARS**

The most popular among the 5 books included in this book, *The Christmas Books*. Why is my friend reading this yearly? It probably reminds her of the real meaning of Christmas. There is nothing wrong having merriment inside the house say with our loved ones. We give them gifts, we bring out our best recipes, we decorate the house, we play and sing Christmas carols. We celebrate Christmas and the coming of the babe in the manger. However, the activities should not stop there. The real meaning of Christmas is to reach out to the less fortunate people. Like **Ebenezer Scrooge**, we need to help the family of Little Tim and try to make their Christmas as happy and merry as ours. We should not wait for the three ghosts to come knocking at our doors to awake us and realize that Christmas is really about helping each other and not about material things. Please.

### **The Chimes: A Goblin Story. 4 STARS**

Quite similar to *A Christmas Carol* since this came after Dickens got so popular with it. If *Carol* is set on Christmas Eve, *Chimes* is set on New Year's Eve. If *Carol* has the cynical, bitter and indifferent Scrooge, *Chimes* has the pessimistic **Alderman Cute**. Cute's putting down attitude on things dampen the spirits of the people around him and so they become pessimists like him and view the world negatively. The Chimes here are the bells near the place where the main protagonist **Trotty** works and each ringing of the Chimes has some effects to him. Effects that could make him reminiscence of the past or wake him up of his stupor to

plan for the future. However, his future as well as his daughter **Meg's** are both bleak and that negativity is further dampened by Cute.

Like *Carol*, *Chimes* also ends up happily. Very appropriate holiday reads.

I am now looking forward to read Book 2 that includes the three other novellas or short stories in this seemingly beautiful classic *The Christmas Books*.

Merry Christmas, everyone! ho ho ho

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## **Susan Denney says**

Ever wonder why "A Christmas Carol" is the only one of Charles Dickens's Christmas stories to get a lot of attention? He wrote five of them after all.

The answer to this is that overwhelmingly, that story is his best. But if your Dickens holiday fix isn't filled by that wonderful story, here's my ranking of all five so you can decide if you want to pick them up this season. All except the last have a supernatural element which is satisfyingly mysterious.

1. A Christmas Carol. Hands down the winner of all the books. If you can read nothing else this season, this would be your book. It is more wonderful than any movie adaptation could ever be. One of my favorite lines is from the description of a grocery store during Scrooge's visit with Christmas Present. "There were ruddy, brown-faced, broad-girthed Spanish Onions, shining in the fatness of their growth like Spanish Friars, and winking from their shelves in wanton slyness at the girls as they went by, and glanced demurely at the hung-up mistletoe." No time to read it? I just discovered a new audio adaptation of the book. I haven't been able to listen to all of it but the beginning is marvelous.

2. Cricket on the Hearth--A Fairy Tale of Home. Easily the winner of the cheesiest movie adaptations. This is sad because it's a very good story. But I guess if you give a filmmaker a lovely blind girl who makes dolls and a poor father who creates a rich, imaginary world for her, said filmmaker can't resist the maudlin. But the center of the story is not Bertha and her father Caleb. The central characters, John and Dot Peerybingle, are mismatched in age and John begins to doubt Dot's love for him. A beautifully written story, all is happily tied up at the end but not before several of the characters have gone through depths of human despair. Ignore any sappy movies you've seen and read it. It's so worth it.

3. The Chimes. This story paints the bleakest picture of the poor in all the Christmas books. Instead of a miser, Dickens uses a man named Trotty for his main character. In a very "It's a Wonderful Life" way, he learns what the consequences of his actions might be. His daughter is in love, but he doesn't believe that the marriage should go forth because of their poverty. I find this story distressing. The main character is such a nice little man and the visions he receives so horrible, that at the happy end, I find my heart still broken.

4. The Haunted Man. In this story, a bitter professor named Redlaw is haunted by past grievances and hurt. When a ghost offers him the opportunity to forget all his wrongs, he accepts. But something unexpected happens. He is still angry but doesn't know why and he spreads his bitterness to others. It has a satisfying happy ending and there are some memorable characters to make the story go along. The book is very atmospheric but doesn't have the appeal of the top three.



5. The Battle of Life. No supernatural beings in this one. Just interesting folks who seem to be in love with the wrong people. Dr. Jedlar and his two daughters, Grace and Marion, live on a former battlefield. Dickens suggests that the memories of the battle haunt those who live on it. The character of Clemency Newcome, who is Dr. Jedlar's servant, is delightful and she gets her happy ending too. This one to me is the least Christmas-y and perhaps that's why I like it least.

All these stories are in the public domain. But if you want a hard copy, seek out the Oxford Illustrated Classics version has all the original illustrations! And it's small enough to stick in a tote bag or backpack for some reading while waiting in line at the dentist's office or grocery store.

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## **Michael says**

I think it's safe to say we all bring pre-formed views of this story to the reading of the book because we most likely have heard or seen it before we've read it. My family has a tradition of listening to a 25-minute version of this from an old record. It's actually kind of fun to see that some of the dialogue from the book was retained in the recording. In any case, I have seen and heard numerous versions of this story before I decided to sit down and read it.

I did like the books and I believe the versions I've seen generally do it justice (although I have a vague recollection of a musical version that haunts the fringe of my memories – not good!). The obvious weakness is that Ebenezer Scrooge does not require too much to shake him from his dour, crabby, miserly ways. A few hours spent with some ghosts who show him some human interaction, affection, and pain, and he converts pretty quickly. I think there is good evidence he is well on his way to being more humane and generous even after the first ghostly visit and likely does not need the final two. As characters go, where did his convictions and habits originally come from that got him to this place? - a long life with formative experiences led him to where he is. Why would he change so quickly? Has no one else told him of these things along the way? Did he lead such a sheltered life that he never saw or experienced the affection and horrors of life that would provide him a heart? Now you may say that is not the intention of the piece – that it is meant to be propaganda of sorts or supposed to be a fantasy reminder that we should put humans and love and caring for one another as more central elements in our lives, rather than cold logic that leads to money grubbing and suffering. Still given the conditioning I have for this story, I like it and recommend reading it. I don't think it will change your view of the other movies and recordings you've seen and heard, but it will provide the full story.

The Chimes is also part of this book and is one I had never heard of before. It was enjoyable enough, but mostly for the attitudes the different characters embody, informed by their class positions. Dickens makes fun of the upper classes in all cases. One upper class character sees the poor as having faults that need to be corrected before they can improve their position. Another decries this view and believes the poor should essentially be treated like children and taken care of by either the government or those who are superior to them. The main character accepts all of this readily and just tries to go about his life.

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