

“A CHRISTMAS CAROL”

MR. CRATCHIT

WORK PLACE

Scrooge and Marley’s counting house. A dismal place. A tiny fire burns in a tiny stove. A clerk, Bob Cratchit, sits on a tall, spindly stool at a tall, spindly drawing table. He has a pile of papers in front of him. He adds columns of number and writes their totals in a book with a quill pen. There is an overflowing waste-paper basket at his feet, into which he throws the papers when he is through with them. He wears fingerless gloves and works by the dim light of a short candle.

At his own desk, sits Scrooge. He is hunched over a ledger book before him. He pores over it as if it were the greatest, most engrossing novel of all time.

It is freezing in the counting house. Bob Cratchit pulls his thin suit-coat around him. He breathes on his fingers to warm them. He looks past his fingers at his frozen breath.

MR. CRATCHIT’S SALARY

FRED (Scrooge’s nephew)

So A Merry Christmas, Uncle! (Puts the wreath on Bob’s desk.)

And a Happy New Year, Bob! (Leaves leaving the door open)

BOB (*Calling after Fred.*)

Merry Christmas, Master Fred!

SCROOGE

You’re another fellow – with fifteen shilling a week and a wife and a family, talking about a Merry Christmas. I’ll retire to Bedlam.

CHRISTMAS DINNER AT CRATCHIT’S HOUSE

A simple room, in a simple four-room flat, appears. In the flat, Mrs. Cratchit, Peter Cratchit, and Belinda Cratchit, are preparing for Christmas dinner. Peter stirs a pot over the fire that is filled with potatoes. Belinda and Mrs. Cratchit lay the cloth on the table, then set out mismatched crockery.

Meg and Will (Cratchits) enter carrying the precious goose between them as if it were unearthed treasure.

The Cratchits set out their dinner. The young Cratchits pull up chairs and get cutlery. Martha (Cratchit) pours claret in the mismatched cups. Peter is in charge of the potatoes and Bob and Mrs. Cratchit put out the few side dishes.

Bob serves the goose and gravy... Mrs. Cratchits watches nervously as Bob puts goose on the last plate. Scrooge looks over her shoulder.

MRS. CRATCHIT:

Lovely, Bob! Only one tiny bone left. (They all laugh. They all eat.)

Finally, Mrs. Cratchit serves the pudding.

TINY TIM (at the end of the dinner):
God Bless us every one!

READINESS QUESTIONS:

1. In your own words, describe the office where Mr. Cratchit worked.
2. What did he do?
3. What was his salary?
4. What was his family like?
5. Describe the Cratchits' house.
6. What did they have for dinner?
7. Do you think the Cratchits' represented a happy family at the time? Why or why not?

Modern Mr. Cratchit

Goodman's *A Christmas Carol* is "a compelling blend of ghost story, romance, holiday cheer and redemption that grows increasingly relevant in a society prone to value economics and materialism instead of humanity" (Taylor, W., 2011). Charles Dickens wrote *A Christmas Carol* in 1843, describing the time after the Industrial Revolution, characterized by a huge amount of low-paying, low skill jobs within the cities, and a large number of children working for manufacturers. The unprotected workers would do the job for little pay that led to huge profits for the companies. Some parents forced their children into the factories before the age of seven, where they worked for more than 12 hours a day.

One of the characters in the story was Mr. Cratchit, a clerk in the Scrooge and Marley's counting house. According to the story, he earned 15 shillings a week, and with that money, he supported a family of eight. Your goal is to:

1. Figure out the annual salary of Mr. Cratchit in today's money, knowing that 5 shillings is about 25 pence in today's money, and 75 pence of today's money is approximately \$1.
2. Describe how your procedure can be used to solve similar problems to the one you solved in under 1.

Table below gives you information on monetary values and terms in Dickens time.

Basic Units	Value	Coin	Paper	Slang Term
	1,000 pounds 500 pounds 200 pounds 100 pounds 50 pounds 20 pounds 10 pounds 5 pounds		1,000-pound note 500-pound note 200-pound note 100-pound note 50-pound note 20-pound note 10-pound note 5-pound note	tenner fiver
One Pound	21 shillings 20 shillings 10 shillings 5 shillings 2½ shillings 2 shillings	guinea sovereign half sovereign crown half crown florin	1-pound note ½-pound note half a crown	quid bull
One Shilling	12 pence 6 pence 4 pence 3 pence 2 pence 1 pence ½ pence	shilling sixpence groat threepence twopence penny half penny		bob, hog tenner, bender thruppence tuppence copper ha'pence

Source: *Currency and Wealth*, by Jessica Hutchinson. Rough monetary values and terms in Dickens time. Courtesy of Education and Community Engagement.

3. In the previous part, you found the salary of the Mr. Cratchit from Dickens time in today's money. The following task asks you to figure out a salary of the modern Mr. Cratchit, a clerk today. The table below shows annual mean salary for a clerk from 1997 - 2008. Your goal is to estimate the salary of a clerk in 2011. In addition, describe the procedure you used so that it can be used with another set of data to predict future data.

Bookkeeping, accounting, and auditing clerks	Year	Hourly mean salary	Annual mean salary
	1997	11.34	23,580
	1998	11.71	24,350
	1999	12.14	25,250
	2000	12.96	26,950
	2001	13.38	27,820
	2002	13.77	28,650
	2003	13.93	28,980
	2004	14.34	29,830
	2005	14.76	30,700
	2006	15.28	31,780
	2007	15.76	32,780
	2008	16.25	33,800
	2009		
2010			

Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics, <http://data.bls.gov/cgi-bin>