**2nd Quarter Outside Reading: The Ghost of Classics Past**

**Due:**

For this outside reading assignment, we will read Charles Dickens' classic work, A Christmas Carol. Dickens is famous for his unique literary voice, and as we read this classic tale we will be carefully studying the choices Dickens makes as an author. As you read, you will keep a "style journal" as well as a record of your own personal responses. On Friday, January 11th there will be an in-class assessment on the novel. The combined grades will count as a test grade for 2nd quarter.

**Reading Journal**

For each stave of A Christmas Carol, you will have three entries in your journal:

**Character** The first quote should show Dickens' approach to *characterization* (how Dickens portrays and develops characters). Next to this quote identify the techniques used by Dickens to create an image of the character in the mind of the reader. For example, is there anything distinctive about the name? What kind of details does Dickens use in describing physical appearance? What is the author's tone? Does he use *direct* or *indirect* characterization?

**Style** The second quote should highlight Dickens' distinctive *voice* as an author. Authors' make all kinds of stylistic decisions when writing; select a passage that you think is distinctly Dickensian. Next to the quote, identify the stylistic choices made by Dickens, and explain the overall effect of those choices. For example, you could look at sentence length, word choice, tone, point of view, use of dialog or narrative description, etc...

**Response** The third quote will be one that you think is particularly important or significant for the stave. Try to pick something that made you think, changed your view on some aspect of the book, made you realize something significant, etc... Next to the quote, identify what you think the importance of the passage is.

# Journal Schedule

Staves 1 and 2 read by Wednesday, January 2nd

Staves 3 and 4 read by Monday, January 7th

Stave 5 read by Friday, January 11th

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| **Reading Journal** Score: | Always (4 pts) | Usually (3 pts) | Rarely (2 pts) | Never (0 pts) |
| Format Entries are completed on time, written in complete sentences, and all entries for each stave are complete. Quotes are in quotations and accompanied by page numbers. |  |  |  |  |
| Quote Selection Selected quotes are relevant to the category they have been chosen for and are approximately one paragraph in length. The quotation is complex enough to provide enough material for a detailed analysis or response. |  |  |  |  |
| Analysis/Response The analysis and response sections refer directly to the selected quote and are approximately one paragraph in length. Analysis of “Character” and “Style” cites literary devices used, and forms a relevant observation on the author’s characterization and style. Responses show a direct connection to the selected passage, and show how the passage is important to the work as a whole. |  |  |  |  |
| Accuracy Literary devices are correctly identified and labeled; conclusions drawn from passages are supported and justified.  |  |  |  |  |

# Journal Examples

**Character (Chapters 1-3)**

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| “Mr. Bennet was so odd a mixture of quick parts, sarcastic humour, reserve, and caprice, that the experience of three and twenty years had been insufficient to make his wife understand his character. Her mind was less difficult to develope. She was a woman of mean understanding, little information, and uncertain temper. When she was discontented, she fancied herself nervous. The business of her life was to get her daughters married; its solace was visiting and news.” (6) | In this paragraph, Austen is able to very quickly portray Mr. and Mrs. Bennet using direct characterization. By describing them both in the same paragraph, Austen shows how very different they are, and draws the reader’s attention to their fundamental incompatibility. He is portrayed as very complex in a very bad way – an “odd mixture” of intelligence, sarcasm, reticence and changeable moods. Who would want to marry him? Whereas her only goal is “to get her daughters married” and her only hobby is gossip (“visiting and news”). |

# Style (Chapters 1-3)

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| “Not all that Mrs. Bennet, however, with the assistance of her five daughters, could ask on the subject was sufficient to draw from her husband any satisfactory description of Mr. Bingley. They attacked him in various ways; with barefaced questions, ingenious suppositions, and distant surmises; but he eluded the skill of them all; and they were at last obliged to accept the second-hand intelligence of their neighbour Lady Lucas. Her report was highly favourable. Sir William had been delighted with him. He was quite young, wonderfully handsome, extremely agreeable, and, to crown the whole, he meant to be at the next assembly with a large party. Nothing could be more delightful! To be fond of dancing was a certain step towards falling in love; and very lively hopes of Mr. Bingley's heart were entertained.” (14) | This passage shows how Austen handles conversations and events that are necessary to move along the plot, but do not bear directly on the development of the protagonist Elizabeth. Austen is able to establish Mr. Bingley as the most desirous bachelor in the neighborhood by briefly summarizing two separate conversations – that of the girls and Mr. Bennet, and then later when they appeal to Mrs. Lucas. Austen could easily have presented both conversations, but that would have added very little to the story or development of Elizabeth. She is not reluctant to use lots of words; some of these sentences are very long, and the use of repetition (“barefaced questions, ingenious suppositions, and distant surmises”) cleverly mirrors the persistence of the ladies in their assault on Mr. Bennet. Ultimately, Austen seems to delight in the details of conversation when it adds to the development of a character, but to avoid it for simple plot development. |

Response (Chapters 1-3)

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| “They found Mr. Bennet still up. With a book, he was regardless of time; and on the present occasion he had a good deal of curiosity as to the event of an evening which had raised such splendid expectations. He had rather hoped that all his wife's views on the stranger would be disappointed; but he soon found that he had a very different story to hear.“’Oh! my dear Mr. Bennet,’ as she entered the room, ‘we have had a most delightful evening, a most excellent ball. I wish you had been there. Jane was so admired, nothing could be like it. Every body said how well she looked; and Mr. Bingley thought her quite beautiful, and danced with her twice. Only think of that my dear; he actually danced with her twice …’” (20) | It is clear that Mr. Bennet knows how much the ball means to his wife; it is also quite clear that the only reason he asks her about it is in the hope to hear how disappointed she was! Of course, all she wants to do is describe her “triumphs” at the ball over and over in excruciating detail. It is difficult to know who to like, or who to blame here, and that is, I believe, Austen’s goal. Mr. and Mrs. Bennet clearly represent the type of marriage that Mrs. Bennet is so keen to secure for her children: a marriage based not on mutual compatibility of character, but on finances and appearance. In their youth, Mr. Bennet was relatively wealthy and Mrs. Bennet was very attractive. Now, Jane is beautiful, and Mrs. Bennet wants to find her a rich husband.  |