

# Scrooge (1951)

## About the film

*Scrooge* (1951) starring Alastair Sim as the eponymous miser is often considered the classic adaptation of Charles Dickens' festive fable. As in the source material Scrooge must face up to his own failings, and look at the different choices made by others around him, and to learn the true value of charity, kindness, and generosity, for himself and for others.

Often noted as both faithful and scary in places it is a faithful black and white adaptation, showing Scrooge's fateful encounter with ghosts on Christmas Eve. A lot of the imagery in the film is now iconic, including Marley's rattling chains and Scrooge's terror in his nightcap.

The distributors released *Scrooge* as *A Christmas Carol* in the US, with some controversy. For example, though slated as one of the Christmas attractions for New York City's Radio City Music Hall, the theatre's management team pulled it at the last minute. They felt the film was too grim and did not possess enough family entertainment value to warrant an engagement at the Music Hall. Instead, the film premiered at the Guild Theatre on 28 November 1951.

## The BBFC Age Rating

We gave *Scrooge* a U when we first classified it in the early 1950s. Back then the suite of BBFC symbols was very different – and films could be classified U, A, or X. It remains a U today

U stands for Universal. Nowadays U means anyone can watch, and that we think it is suitable for children aged four and up. But every child is different so it is always worth checking the ratings info for a specific film if you are considering showing it to your class.

U films should usually have a positive overall tone, especially if they are aimed at children. We think carefully about what very young children might already know what might scare, confuse or upset them, and the lasting impression the film might give. If there is any violence or threat in a U film it should be over quickly and reassure children that everything will be ok. U films should also make clear the difference between right and wrong.

Not all U films resonate strongly with the youngest audiences though, and some films with less appeal to much younger age groups stay at that category simply because none of the classification issues go beyond mild. Though a U, this film with its literary heritage may well have considerable appeal to older groups including Years 4, 5 and 6 at Primary, and those studying the source material in Key Stages 3 and 4.

More information about the U category, and the classification issues which you may find in a U film, is available on our website [bbfc.co.uk](http://bbfc.co.uk), our Parents Guide to Age Ratings and our children's website [cbbfc.co.uk](http://cbbfc.co.uk)



## **BBFC Ratings Info for *Scrooge* (1951)**

We provide information to accompany all our classification decisions. We gave *Scrooge* a U for mild scary scenes.

*Scrooge* contains very mild horror. These include the key sequences where Scrooge meets ghosts which show him his past, present and future, including scenes which upset him (for example when he is left alone by his parents, and when a family member dies). He also gets a glimpse of people discussing him behind his back unfavourably, and showing glee and relief at his death in a vision of the future where he passes away.

### *Some questions you could explore with your class*

- 1. Who would you say is the audience for this film? Did you enjoy it?*
- 2. Scrooge is an adaptation of a Charles Dickens novella from the Victorian Era. Can you tell the film is based on a book? How? What signs are there that tell you it is set in the past?*
- 3. Scrooge is a U. Do you agree with that age rating? What do you think the key classification issues are in this film? What should teachers, parents and older brothers and sisters be aware of when showing younger children this film?*
- 4. What did you think of the representations of the ghosts? Were they scary? Silly? Terrifying? Old-fashioned?*
- 5. There are some scary scenes in the film. How do the filmmakers make sure viewers are unlikely to be too scared?*
- 6. The film is in black and white – does it add to the realism and intensity or have a distancing effect?*
- 7. What social issues does the film raise? Does it tell us anything about issues in our own society today?*
- 8. What would you say are the most important themes in the film? Does the film seem to be telling us what Charles Dickens thinks about poverty, charity, caring for people, being kind and generous?*
- 9. How do you feel about the character of Scrooge? What do you learn about him? Do you feel sorry for him?*
- 10. How do you think the film handled class – how did it explore what being rich and being poor might mean?*
- 11. What type of film would you say this is? A comedy? An animation? A drama? A mixture?*
- 12. Have you seen any other films or TV series, or read any books, based on the same Charles Dickens story? How does this compare?*

