**Lesson 1: Introducing A Christmas Carol**

**Lesson Objective:** This lesson aims to introduce *A Christmas Carol* to the students and consider the central themes and motifs used in the text. By the end of the lesson the students should:

1. Understand the context of *A Christmas Carol* and the effect it has on the book
2. Be able to talk about the concept of a morality drama, and analyse the extent to which this genre accurately describes *A Christmas Carol*
3. Be able to critically engage with the reasons why books like *A Christmas Carol* are still important to read today

**Plan:**

* Begin the class with a general discussion of the book. What did the students enjoy about the book? What did they not enjoy? What was interesting about the way the book was written? Ask the students to note down three things they liked and three things they did not and discuss this as a class
* Discuss the context of *A Christmas Carol.* Introduce some information on Victorian England, particularly thinking about the role of poverty, charity and Christianity in this period- how does this inform their opinion on the novel? Watch the short video on social injustice in the 1800s, thinking about how these ideas may have shaped Dickens’ writing.
* Introduce some information about Charles Dickens. Knowing all this, why do they think he might have chosen to write a story like *A Christmas Carol?* What do they think he might be trying to say about 1800s English society?
* Now introduce the role of ghosts in the story. How does knowing the context of the book add to our understanding of what these ghosts symbolise? Would the students describe this book as a ghost story? Why, or why not? What other genre might it be?
* Introduce the idea of a morality drama, using some other famous examples to illustrate the history of this genre of writing. How important is the moral of the story in this book?
* Discuss whether *A Christmas Carol* can be described as a morality drama. Why, or why not? Can the students find some examples to back up their answers? What connection could this have to the context of the novel (thinking particularly about religion in Victorian society)
* Ask the class if they can identify any modern parallels with Victorian English society and our modern society today*.* Introduce some facts about poverty and inequality, focusing on the recent parliamentary scandal over free school meals. What could we learn today from the message in *A Christmas Carol?*
* As a finishing activity, each student should write a short paragraph answering the question “why is *A Christmas Carol* still important to read today?”. These paragraphs should be shared and discussed, thinking about the ways in which *A Christmas Carol* is still relevant, and the ways in which inequality has reverted to almost Victorian standards.

**Homework:** Choose between question A and question B, remembering to use examples in the text and the context of the novel to back up your answers.

Question A:Is it important to know about Victorian England in order to understand *A Christmas Carol?*

Question B: What is the moral of the story in *A Christmas Carol?*

**Lesson 2: Exploring and Conceptualising Themes**

**Lesson Objective:** This lesson aims to enable to students to think more broadly about the way in which *A Christmas Carol* is written. By the end of the lesson the students should:

1. Be able to think thematically, explaining the way in which themes are explored and developed in *A Christmas Carol* and debating the role of the themes within the novel
2. Be able to structure an essay around a thematic analysis of *A Christmas Carol*
3. Be able to think about how characters are used symbolically within the book, exploring the notion of character arcs and redemption

**Plan:**

* **Start the lesson by compiling a list as a class of all the themes they can find in *A Christmas Carol.* Each student should select the three themes they think are the most important in the novel and share their ideas**
* **Each student should pick one theme (i.e. poverty, kindness, the Christmas message etc.) and find two instances where that theme is explored in the book**
* **Ask each student to come up with a one-line answer to the question ‘how does Dickens present the theme of […] in *A Christmas Carol?’* in relation to their chosen theme**
* **Go over essay structure, thinking in particular about how to write essays thematically. Pick three central points as a class and ask each student to illustrate how they would evidence each of these points. Write an essay plan on the theme of the Christmas message as a class**
* **Now, consider how characters can be used as vessels through which themes as explored. Introduce the idea of change and redemption in *A Christmas Carol.* Which character embodies that theme the most?**
* **Consider the concept of characters as symbols in *A Christmas Carol.* Explain that this is in keeping with the morality drama tradition. The class should identify what theme each character represents**
* **Introduce the idea of character arcs. What do the students think Scrooge’s character arc looks like? Can they find evidence for this, comparing and contrasting how Scrooge is described at the beginning of the book vs at the end?**
* **Analyse the Christmas day scene from the book, paying attention to the language Dickens uses in order to outline Scrooge’s transformation and thinking about the concept of Christian redemption and the influence that has on Dickens’ writing**
* **As a finishing activity, introduce a debate. The students should have ten minutes to prepare their response. The debate should be centred around the question ‘the fact that *A Christmas Carol* is set at Christmas time is irrelevant to the plot of the novel’. Separate the students in half, with one half arguing that it *is* irrelevant, and one half arguing it *isn’t.* Facilitate and engage with this debate, ensuring students respond to each other’s points and are evidencing their ideas.**

**Homework: Which ghost has the biggest influence on Scrooge and why?** Explain your answer with reference to the text (quotations) and the wider context of the book, thinking about Scrooge’s character arc and the wider themes of the book.

**Lesson 3: Close Textual Analysis and Mock Exam**

**Lesson Objective:** This lesson will aim to make students more comfortable with close textual analysis and how to apply this to the 11+ exam. By the end of the lesson the students should:

1. Be able to describe the effect of Dicken’s style, language and structure, linking close textual analysis to wider themes within the book
2. Understand the format in which literary analysis arises in 11+ exam papers through studying the Haberdashers’ Aske’s 11+ exam paper
3. Be able to self-evaluate their own work, using the mark scheme for 11+ papers to evaluate what went well and even better if in their literary analysis

**Plan:**

* Open the lesson by watching the scene where Jacob Marley first appears. Ask the class to note down ideas on how a scary atmosphere is created in this scene
* Now introduce the excerpt of this scene and ask the students to add to their ideas on how a scary atmosphere is created using quotations from the book.
* Discuss the idea of how atmosphere is created in a book. What features do the class think are most important? How do we analyse literature?
* Now read the extract from the exam paper. Without looking at the questions, the students should go through and underline any powerful, telling or revealing words and phrases.
* Draw up a list of powerful words used in the extract. Ask the students to find synonyms for each of these words. Why did Dickens choose the words he did instead of their synonyms? What is particular about the words he chose? Explain the concept of word choice to the class and demonstrate how to analyse it
* Now consider any literary techniques within the extract, or any structural features. Go over these as a class, using P.E.E. to analyse the particularly powerful lines in the text
* Discuss how they would fit themes into their analysis, introducing the idea of how symbols and motifs function as a vessel for themes
* Each student should pick the three most powerful or interesting word or phrases in the extract and write a sentence for each of these answering the question ‘what is the effect of the language Dickens has chosen?’
* Go through a mark scheme for the language analysis question and ask students to evaluate their own work based on these criteria. They should give their answer a mark and then write two ‘what went wells’ and three ‘even better ifs’.
* Discuss the format of the exam paper, giving the students time to ask any questions they have about how the exam works
* Finish the lesson with a general conversation of what we have learnt from *A Christmas Carol.* What are the most powerful messages to take home from the book?

**Homework:** Complete Questions 4-8 on the Haberdashers’ Aske’s 11+ exam paper under timed conditions, considering all the ideas raised and discussed in the lesson and ensuring to meet the standards of literary analysis laid out in the exam.