The main idea

These allegorical children turn social problems into vulnerable human figures. Dickens makes neglect frightening while directing blame towards the society that produces it.

Character development

Hidden beneath abundance

Revealed as neglected children

Accuse social neglect

Make the present urgent

The danger has human authors

“They are Man’s” — Ghost, Stave 3

“This boy is Ignorance. This girl is Want.” — Ghost, Stave 3

The possessive assigns responsibility to humanity. Naming makes lack of education and material deprivation visible as children requiring care, rather than abstract defects in the poor.

A warning answered by old excuses

“Beware them both” — Ghost, Stave 3

“Are there no workhouses?” — Ghost repeating Scrooge, Stave 3

The urgent imperative asks for prevention. Repeating Scrooge’s institutional answer makes its inadequacy audible at the moment their need is most exposed.

Develop the interpretation

Ignorance receives the stronger warning, but that does not make Want harmless. The revelation occurs in Stave 3, beneath the Ghost of Christmas Present’s robe.

Recall question

Why represent these social dangers as children rather than as the wealthy adults who ignore them?

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