The Cratchits at Christmas - from A *Christmas Carol* by Charles Dickens

In this part of the novel, the Ghost of Christmas Present takes Scrooge to visit the home of his clerk, Bob Cratchit, on Christmas Day.

Read the extract carefully, then answer the following questions:

1. And perhaps it was the pleasure the good Spirit had in showing off this power of his, or else it was his own kind, generous, hearty nature, and his sympathy with all poor men, that led him straight to Scrooge's clerk's; for there he went, and took Scrooge with him, holding to his robe; and on the threshold of the door the Spirit smiled, and stopped to bless Bob Cratchit's dwelling with the sprinkling of his torch. Think of that! Bob had but fifteen bob a-week himself; he pocketed on Saturdays but fifteen copies of his Christian name; and yet the Ghost of Christmas Present blessed his four-roomed house!

8. Then up rose Mrs Cratchit, Cratchit's wife, dressed out but poorly in a twice-turned gown, but brave in ribbons, which are cheap and make a goodly show for sixpence; and she laid the cloth, assisted by Belinda Cratchit, second of her daughters, also brave in ribbons; while Master Peter Cratchit plunged a fork into the saucepan of potatoes, and getting the corners of his monstrous shirt collar (Bob's private property, conferred upon his son and heir in honour of the day) into his mouth, rejoiced to find himself so gallantly attired, and yearned to show his linen in the fashionable Parks. And now two smaller Cratchits, boy and girl, came tearing in, screaming that outside the baker's they had smelt the goose, and known it for their own; and basking in luxurious thoughts of sage-and-onion, these young Cratchits danced about the table, and exalted Master Peter Cratchit to the skies, while he (not proud, although his collars nearly choked him) blew the fire, until the slow potatoes bubbling up, knocked loudly at the saucepan-lid to be let out and peeled.

20. ``What has ever got your precious father then.'' said Mrs Cratchit. ``And your brother, Tiny Tim! And Martha warn't as late last Christmas Day by half-an-hour!''

``Here's Martha, mother!'' said a girl, appearing as she spoke.

``Here's Martha, mother!'' cried the two young Cratchits. ``Hurrah! There's such a goose, Martha!''

``Why, bless your heart alive, my dear, how late you are!'' said Mrs Cratchit, kissing her a dozen times, and taking off her shawl and bonnet for her with officious zeal.

``We'd a deal of work to finish up last night,'' replied the girl, ``and had to clear away this morning, mother!''

``Well! Never mind so long as you are come,'' said Mrs Cratchit. ``Sit ye down before the fire, my dear, and have a warm, Lord bless ye!''

``No, no! There's father coming,'' cried the two young Cratchits, who were everywhere at 32 once. ``Hide, Martha, hide!''

So Martha hid herself, and in came little Bob, the father, with at least three feet of comforter exclusive of the fringe, hanging down before him; and his threadbare clothes darned up and brushed, to look seasonable; and Tiny Tim upon his shoulder. Alas for Tiny Tim, he bore a little crutch, and had his limbs supported by an iron frame!

`Why, where's our Martha?'' cried Bob Cratchit, looking round.

``Not coming,'' said Mrs Cratchit.

``Not coming!'' said Bob, with a sudden declension in his high spirits; for he had been Tim's blood horse all the way from church, and had come home rampant. ``Not coming upon Christmas Day!''

42. Martha didn't like to see him disappointed, if it were only in joke; so she came out prematurely from behind the closet door, and ran into his arms, while the two young Cratchits hustled Tiny Tim, and bore him off into the wash-house, that he might hear the pudding singing in the copper.