

19th December

Charles Dickens' "A Christmas Carol" was published on this day in 1843, and thus was Christmas reinvented. Not only did the book revive the phrase 'Merry Christmas,' Dickens presented Christmas as a time for charity, forgiveness, family, and spooky door knockers, a message which had lost its way over the preceding centuries. The book was an instant success, selling out by Christmas Eve, and the tale has retained its popularity to this day; not least through the definitive cinematic version, The Muppet Christmas Carol, starring Michael Caine, Kermit the Frog and Miss Piggy.

Tense Christmas

"Days Like These"

By Brian Bilston

I. The Ghost of Christmas Past Perfect Progressive

Midnight. Awoken by a ghost.
I thought I must be raving.
But then he went and showed me
How badly *I'd been behaving*.

II The Ghost of Christmas Present Perfect Simple

The next night, a ghost again:
With a much more recent scene.
More evidence piling up
Of how unpleasant *I have been*.

III The Ghost of Christmas Future Unreal Conditional

A final late-night ghostly vision.
But this one lacked the pain and strife.
I saw if I could be a kinder man,
I would create a better life.