

Squeers and Scrooge – two objectionable characters

1. Read these brief summaries of two of Dickens' characters:
 - **Mr Squeers** – a man who is a bully and is particularly cruel to young children. Everything about his appearance is ugly, grotesque and menacing.
 - **Mr Scrooge** – a man who is as mean as they come. He hates his fellow human beings and has nothing to do with any of them. Dickens focuses more on his behaviour than on his physical appearance (though there are a couple of *chilly* comments that relate to his outward appearance).
2. Look at the sentences below and decide which of the two characters they describe. Record your decisions in a table, as below:

Mr Squeers	Mr Scrooge
<i>Statement numbers: 1</i>	<i>Statement numbers: 3</i>

1. ... appearance was not prepossessing.
2. He had but one eye, and the popular prejudice runs in favour of two. The eye he had, was unquestionably useful, but decidedly not ornamental: being of a greenish grey, and in shape resembling the fan-light of a street-door.
3. Oh! But he was a tight-fisted hand at the grindstone,
4. The blank side of his face was much wrinkled and puckered up, which gave him a very sinister appearance, especially when he smiled, at which times his expression bordered closely on the villainous.
5. A squeezing, wrenching, grasping, scraping, clutching, covetous old sinner!
6. Hard and sharp as flint, from which no steel had ever struck out generous fire;
7. His hair was very flat and shiny, save at the ends, where it was brushed stiffly up from a low protruding forehead,
8. Secret, and self-contained, and solitary as an oyster.
9. The cold within him froze his old features, nipped his pointed nose, shrivelled his cheek, stiffened his gait; made his eyes red, his thin lips blue; and spoke out shrewdly in his grating voice.
10. A frosty rime was on his head, and on his eyebrows, and his wiry chin.
11. He iced his office in the dog-days; and didn't thaw it one degree at Christmas.
12. He was about two or three and fifty, and a trifle below the middle size;
13. External heat and cold had little influence on [him].
14. No warmth could warm, no wintry weather chill him.
15. No wind that blew was bitterer than he; no falling snow was more intent upon its purpose, no pelting rain less open to entreaty.
16. He wore a white neckerchief with long ends, and a suit of scholastic black; but his coat sleeves being a great deal too long, and his trousers a great deal too short, he appeared ill at ease in his clothes, and as if he were in a perpetual state of astonishment at finding himself so respectable
17. The heaviest rain, and snow, and hail, and sleet, could boast of the advantage over him in only one respect. They often came down handsomely, and [he] never did.

1. What kind of ideas and images does Dickens use in association with Scrooge? Make a note of some of these down and comment on how effective you think these are and why.
2. What do you think Scrooge looks like? Describe him in your own words.
3. Extension: Try to describe Scrooge's appearance fully, using some of the elements Dickens uses. (For example, simile(s) and lists of adjectives.)