Charles Dickens: *A Christmas Carol*
Read this extract from the start of *A Christmas Carol* and then answer the question that follows.
In this extract, Scrooge has been asked to donate some money to charity – he has refused..

"Nothing!" Scrooge replied.

"You wish to be anonymous?"

"I wish to be left alone," said Scrooge. "Since you ask me what I wish, gentlemen, that is my answer. I don't make merry myself at Christmas and I can't afford to make idle people merry. I help to support the establishments I have mentioned—they cost enough; and those who are badly off must go there."

"Many can't go there; and many would rather die."

"If they would rather die," said Scrooge, "they had better do it, and decrease the surplus population. Besides—excuse me—I don't know that."

"But you might know it," observed the gentleman.

"It's not my business," Scrooge returned. "It's enough for a man to understand his own business, and not to interfere with other people's. Mine occupies me constantly. Good afternoon, gentlemen!"

Seeing clearly that it would be useless to pursue their point, the gentlemen withdrew. Scrooge resumed his labours with an improved opinion of himself, and in a more facetious temper than was usual with him.

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Starting with this extract, how does Dickens portray cruelty in *A Christmas Carol*?
Write about:
• how Dickens presents Scrooge in this extract
• how Dickens presents cruelty and meanness in the novel as a whole.

[30 marks]