

The Legend of Decimus Croome: A Halloween Carol

Teacher Guide Overview

Suggested Grade Levels: Grades 5–8

Grades 5 – 8 are such a critical time to reinforce the joy of reading as well as the critical reading skills students will need for the rest of their lives. *The Legend of Decimus Croome* is the perfect September/October novel unit to capture students' enthusiasm for Halloween and the magic of autumn. This teacher guide is meant to accompany the book and the student reading guide for *A Halloween Carol*. This guide is available in both PDF and Word versions. Feel free to modify the Word version to suit your classroom needs and teaching style. The guide includes teacher tips and discussion topics as well as answer keys for some of the student activities found in the student reading guide. At the back of this teacher guide, you will find reference pages with topics such as literary elements used in the book and the story structure of *A Halloween Carol*.

Suggested Uses:

- Classroom novel study
- Independent reading project
- Seasonal classroom unit for October / Halloween
- Literature comparison with *A Christmas Carol*

Pre-Reading Anticipatory Set for The Legend of Decimus Croome: A Halloween Carol

This short activity helps students begin thinking about the themes of the story before they start reading. It works well as a **5–10 minute class discussion or quick writing activity**.

Activity 1 – Holiday Memories

Ask students to think about a holiday they enjoy celebrating.

Have them answer the following questions in writing or through class discussion:

1. What is your favorite holiday tradition?
2. Who do you usually celebrate that holiday with?
3. Why do holidays sometimes bring strong memories or emotions?

Teacher Purpose

This discussion helps students understand how holidays can become connected to **family, memories, and emotions**, which are important themes in the story.

Activity 2 – Changing Feelings

Explain that sometimes people begin to dislike things they once loved.

Ask students: **Why might someone stop enjoying a holiday they once liked?**

Possible responses:

- a sad memory connected to the holiday
- losing someone important
- growing older and becoming busier
- family traditions changing

Teacher Purpose

This prepares students to understand **why Decimus Croome dislikes Halloween at the beginning of the story.**

Activity 3 – Predictions

Tell students the story will involve **supernatural visitors** who show Croome important moments from his life.

Ask students: **If a spirit could show you three important moments from your life, what might they be?**

Examples students might give:

- a happy childhood memory
- an important decision
- a moment they would like to change

Teacher Purpose

This prepares students to understand the structure of the story and the role of the **three spirits.**

Teacher Discussion Answers

Chapter 1 – The Legend Lives

Reading Comprehension

1. Why does Tommy stand on his toes at the beginning of the chapter?

Tommy stands on his toes because he is trying to **see what is happening around him and understand the frightening scene he finds himself in.**

2. What strange discovery does Tommy make on the ground around him?

Tommy notices **bones scattered across the floor**, which makes the situation seem terrifying at first.

3. Why does Tommy believe something terrible has happened to his sister Kate?

Tommy assumes the bones belong to Kate and fears that **something horrible has happened to her.**

4. What object is Decimus Croome holding when Tommy finally looks up at him?

Croome is holding a **hammer**, which makes him appear even more frightening in the moment.

5. Where are Tommy and Kate actually located when the frightening scene is revealed?

They are actually **inside Croome’s hardware store**, where Halloween decorations and displays have created the scary situation.

Literary Elements

Simile

“A gargantuan pair of legs stretched skyward like two gnarly old tree trunks.”

Answer:

The simile compares **Croome’s legs** to **gnarly old tree trunks**.

Alliteration

“The murmurings and mutterings grew even more freakish.”

Answer:

The repeated beginning sound is “**m.**”

Figurative Description

“The legend of Decimus Croome expanded like a parasitic beast feeding off the lifeblood of the town’s children.”

Answer:

This is a **simile** because it uses the word “**like**” to compare the legend to a parasitic beast.

Short Response (Teacher Guidance)

Why do you think the author begins the story with such a frightening scene before revealing that the children are actually in a hardware store?

Possible answers may include:

- to **create suspense and curiosity**
- to immediately grab the reader’s attention
- to show how **Croome’s reputation frightens children**
- to introduce the **legend of Croome** in a dramatic way

Accept any thoughtful explanation that refers to **suspense, tone, or character reputation**.

Teacher Discussion Tip

You may want to point out the **clear parallel to Ebenezer Scrooge in *A Christmas Carol***. Both characters begin their stories as **lonely, bitter men who reject the spirit of a holiday**.

This helps students recognize that the story is a **Halloween-themed adaptation of Dickens’s classic structure**.

Chapter 1 Word Search — Answer Key

Find the words hidden in the grid. Words may appear across or down.

Y	M	U	M	E	E	C	E	M	E	T	E	R	Y	E
B	E	U	X	C	F	G	U	O	D	T	C	O	N	L
C	R	O	O	M	E	F	U	T	P	M	Q	N	K	B
T	O	M	M	Y	P	W	S	K	E	L	E	T	O	N
B	M	M	G	A	O	N	V	W	V	H	V	G	D	F
A	X	E	X	N	V	G	I	X	A	M	H	U	T	U
P	V	O	H	A	L	L	O	W	E	E	N	E	G	S
H	T	I	M	B	E	R	T	O	N	D	F	X	E	K
V	S	A	S	P	I	D	E	R	S	B	U	B	Y	A
O	I	G	R	A	U	T	U	M	N	Z	T	F	G	L
Z	B	O	Y	T	O	M	B	S	T	O	N	E	S	X
Q	O	B	T	Y	M	I	M	K	A	T	E	G	R	I
T	N	S	J	A	X	A	D	A	R	K	N	E	S	S
Z	E	N	O	G	U	L	E	A	V	E	S	C	Q	R
Q	S	L	E	G	E	N	D	B	S	J	W	F	C	K

Word List

AUTUMN
AXE
BONES
CEMETERY
CROOME

DARKNESS
HALLOWEEN
KATE
LEAVES
LEGEND

SKELETON
SPIDERS
TIMBERTON
TOMBSTONES
TOMMY

Chapter 2 – Decimus Croome

Reading Comprehension

1. Why does Decimus Croome dislike Halloween more than other holidays?

Croome dislikes Halloween because it reminds him of **painful memories from his past**, especially connected to his family and the loss of his wife.

2. What type of business does Decimus Croome own?

Croome owns a **hardware store**.

3. What problem is threatening Croome's hardware store?

The store is struggling financially because **large chain stores are competing with his small business**.

4. What happens when the mechanical troll decoration pops out at Croome?

The troll startles Croome and **causes him to react angrily**, showing how little patience he has for Halloween decorations.

5. Why does Sam Bobbich want to leave work early the next day?

Sam wants to leave early so he can **attend his son Tommy's Halloween party**.

Literary Elements

Simile

"The troll head bobbed like a drunken cobra."

Answer:

The simile compares the **movement of the troll's head** to a **drunken cobra**.

Characterization

Possible traits of Croome:

- | | |
|-------------------|--------------------------|
| • grumpy / bitter | • lonely |
| • impatient | • resentful of Halloween |

Short Response (Teacher Guidance)

The author introduces Croome as unpleasant so readers can **see how much he changes later in the story**.

Halloween Carol Chapter 2 Vocabulary Match — Answer Key

Wreath	b
Autumn	d
approbation	k
Derelict	g
Spider	f
Halloween	i
curmudgeon	a
Scarecrow	c
maudlin	j
visage	e
beleaguered	h

Chapter 3 – Black Magic

Reading Comprehension

1. How do Croome’s neighbors describe the condition of his house?

They describe it as **dark, gloomy, and poorly maintained**.

2. What decoration does Croome notice hanging on his door?

He notices a **Halloween wreath**.

3. What meal does Croome eat every night?

He eats the same **simple, repetitive dinner each night**, showing his lonely routine.

4. Who is Black Magic?

Black Magic is **Croome’s cat**.

5. What frightening sight does Croome think he sees on the stairs?

He thinks he sees a **scarecrow figure** standing on the stairs.

Literary Elements – Imagery

Answer:

The sentence mainly describes the **sense of sound**, with the scratching noise of the wreath against the door.

Characterization

Possible traits:

- **lonely, suspicious, isolated**

Short Response

Croome begins doubting his sanity because the scarecrow **appears where it should not be**, making him question whether the strange events are real or imagined.

Chapter 3 Word Search — Teacher Answer Key

This grid shows only the correct answer words. Blank squares are not part of any answer.

														S
				A	P	P	A	R	I	T	I	O	N	C
									C			E		A
H								I			L		D	R
A	A						G			B	C		E	E
L	U					L			I		R		R	C
L	T				A			T			O		E	R
O	U			T			P	S			O		L	O
W	M		S			E	S	S			M		I	W
E	N	O			C	E			P		E		C	
E	N			R	N					I			T	
N			E	K							D			
		P	R									E		
G	R	A	N	D	F	A	T	H	E	R			R	
	D								W	R	E	A	T	H

Word	Starts	Direction
Apparition	R2, C5	Across
Autumn	R5, C2	Down
Croome	R5, C12	Down
Darkness	R15, C2	Diagonal ■
Derelict	R4, C14	Down
Grandfather	R14, C1	Across
Halloween	R4, C1	Down
Nostalgic	R11, C2	Diagonal ■
Perceptible	R13, C3	Diagonal ■

Chapter 4 – Patricia Appears

Reading Comprehension

1. Why does Croome initially believe the strange events might have an ordinary explanation?

He assumes the noises and strange sights might be caused by **his imagination, dreams, or ordinary household noises**.

2. What object reminds Croome of Patricia before the ghost appears?

A **photograph (or personal reminder) of Patricia** causes him to think about her.

3. How does Croome react when Patricia’s spirit first appears?

He is **shocked, frightened, and confused**.

4. What important message does Patricia give Croome about life and choices?

She tells him that **people must choose how they live their lives and how they treat others**.

5. What warning does Patricia give Croome before she disappears?

She warns him that **other spirits will visit him**.

Reflection (Teacher Guidance)

The author modeled the story after *A Christmas Carol* to create a **Halloween version of Dickens’ redemption story**.

Chapter 5 – The Spirit of Halloween Past

Reading Comprehension

1. What unusual things does Croome notice when he wakes up?

He notices **strange sounds, movements, and the presence of a mysterious spirit.**

2. What object first alerts Croome that he may not be alone?

He notices **movement or sound in the room**, which leads him to realize something is present.

3. What mistake does Croome make with Black Magic?

He mistakenly believes **the cat caused the strange events.**

4. What surprising things do we learn about the spirit?

The spirit is **strange, mysterious, and capable of showing Croome memories from his past.**

5. What does the Spirit of Halloween Past say it will show Croome?

The spirit says it will show Croome **memories from his earlier life.**

Visual Activity – Identify the Spirit

Teacher Guidance

Students should describe the **Spirit of Halloween Past** using details from the chapter.

Possible observations may include:

- the spirit appears **strange or unusual**
- it has **mysterious or magical qualities**
- it seems connected to **Croome's memories**

Students may also notice similarities to the **Ghost of Christmas Past** from *A Christmas Carol*.

Encourage students to focus on:

- appearance
- behavior
- the spirit's purpose (showing Croome memories)

There is **no single correct answer** as long as students support their description with details from the chapter.

Make a Prediction

Teacher Guidance

Students should predict what Croome might see when the spirit takes him into the past.

Reasonable predictions may include:

- memories from Croome's **childhood**
- moments involving **Patricia**
- events from Croome's **family life**
- early Halloween traditions

Encourage students to explain **why they made their prediction** using clues from the chapter.

Literary Element – Tone and Mood

Teacher Guidance

Students should recognize that the mood changes throughout the chapter.

Possible mood descriptions include:

- mysterious
- suspenseful
- eerie
- curious
- reflective

When explaining a moment from the chapter, students might refer to:

- Croome’s confusion when the spirit appears
- the strange atmosphere in the room
- Croome’s growing curiosity about the spirit’s purpose

Accept answers that correctly identify **how the mood shifts and what details create that feeling**.

Chapter 6 – Memory Lane

1. What kinds of traditions did Croome’s family enjoy?

Croome, Patricia, and their family celebrated Halloween with **decorations, parties, and time spent together**.

2. Why might these memories later become painful for Croome?

Because they remind him of **the happiness he lost** after Patricia’s death.

3. How does this chapter show the theme of memory?

Literary Elements – Flashback

Question:

How does seeing these memories begin to change Croome’s thinking?

Teacher Guidance / Suggested Answer

Seeing these memories reminds Croome that his life once contained **joy, kindness, and strong family traditions**. Watching his father treat employees generously also makes Croome realize that **he has not treated his own employee, Sam Bobbich, as well as his father treated Jake Talmidge**.

These memories begin to make Croome **question his own behavior and recognize how much he has changed over time**.

Accept answers that mention:

- Croome remembering happier times
 - Croome comparing himself to his father
 - Croome beginning to regret his current behavior.
-

Author's Craft – Autumn Visualization

Find Two Examples from the Chapter

Possible examples students may identify include:

Example 1:

Descriptions of **cool autumn breezes moving through the forest.**

Example 2:

Scenes showing **families preparing for Halloween or children trick-or-treating.**

Other acceptable examples may include references to:

- autumn leaves
 - Halloween decorations
 - seasonal outdoor settings.
-

Why do you think the author uses so many autumn details?

Teacher Guidance / Suggested Answer

The author uses autumn imagery to **create a strong seasonal atmosphere and reinforce the Halloween setting.** Fall imagery also symbolizes **change and the passing of time**, which reflects Croome's journey as he begins to reflect on his past and consider changing his life.

Accept answers mentioning:

- creating a Halloween mood
 - helping readers picture the setting
 - symbolizing change or time passing.
-

Active Reading

These responses will vary. Encourage thoughtful answers supported by the chapter.

Ask a Question

Possible student questions might include:

- What other memories will Croome see next?
- Will Croome realize how unfairly he treated Sam Bobbich?
- How did Croome become so different from his father?
- What will the spirit show him about Patricia?

Any thoughtful question about Croome's past or the spirit's next visit is acceptable.

Make a Prediction

Reasonable predictions may include:

- Croome may see memories involving **Patricia**.
- He may see moments involving **his daughter Eve**.
- The spirit may show a memory explaining **why he began to hate Halloween**.
- Croome may see more examples of how he used to enjoy the holiday.

Accept predictions that logically connect to the spirit showing **important events from Croome's past**.

Chapter 7 – The Best of Times

Reading Comprehension

1. Who does Croome see first in the next memory?

He sees **Patricia**.

2. What costume is Croome wearing when he first meets Patricia?

He is wearing a **knight costume**.

3. Why did Croome's friends encourage him to wear the knight costume?

They thought it would **impress Patricia**.

4. Where does Croome propose to Patricia?

He proposes **in a romantic setting connected to their memories together**.

5. What important event happens in the final memory?

The **birth of their daughter Eve**.

Character Question

How does Croome feel while watching these moments from his past?

Croome feels **happy but also sad**, realizing how wonderful those moments were and how much he lost.

Activity Guidance – Croome’s Memory Timeline (PDF)

Purpose of the Activity

This activity helps students:

- Understand **sequence of events in Croome’s life**
 - Recognize how **important moments shape a character**
 - See the contrast between **past happiness and present regret**
-

Teacher Instructions / Implementation Tips

Before students begin:

- Briefly review the three key moments:
 - Meeting Patricia
 - Proposal
 - Birth of Eve
 - Remind students that timelines should show **change over time**, not just events.
-

What to Look For in Student Responses

Strong timelines should include:

- Events placed in correct chronological order
- Short descriptions of each moment
- Emotional insight (how Croome felt at each stage)

Encourage students to go beyond listing events by adding:

- words like *joyful, hopeful, proud, in love*
- or small notes about how each moment shaped Croome

The **Reflection Question** is asking for students’ opinions, so there are no right or wrong answers. You may encourage students to share their answers with partners, small groups or voluntary sharing with the class.

Chapter 8 – The Worst of Times

Reading Comprehension

1. What serious condition is Patricia suffering from?

She is suffering from a **terminal illness**.

2. Why does Patricia want to remain at home?

She wants to spend her final moments **with family in the comfort of her home**.

3. How does Decimus react after Patricia dies?

He becomes **devastated and overwhelmed with grief**.

4. Why does Decimus forbid Eve from trick-or-treating?

Because Halloween reminds him of **painful memories connected to Patricia**.

5. What does Decimus insist Eve give out instead of candy?

He insists she give out **carrots or vegetables**.

Character Insight

Patricia's **death** causes Croome's dramatic change.

Why Croome begins to hate Halloween

The holiday reminds him of **his happiest memories with Patricia**, which now bring pain.



Vocabulary (Chapter 8)

Match the word to the correct meaning

1. **bereavement** — B. overwhelmed with grief after a loss

2. **inconsolable** — C. completely unable to be comforted
3. **rampage** — A. acting violently and out of control
4. **eclipsed** — D. hidden or overshadowed by something else
5. **comatose** — E. almost lifeless or emotionally numb

Teacher Tip

Students should understand that these words help describe **Croome's grief and emotional collapse** after Patricia's death.

Active Reading

Ask a Question — acceptable responses may include:

- Why does Croome take his grief out on Halloween?
- Does Croome realize how much he is hurting Eve?
- Will Croome ever become close to his daughter again?
- Can grief change a person this much?

Any thoughtful, text-based question about Croome, Eve, or the effect of Patricia's death is acceptable.

Make a Prediction — acceptable responses may include:

- Croome may start feeling regret for the way he treated Eve.
- The next spirit may show him the consequences of his bitterness.
- He may realize that Patricia's death affected not only him, but also his daughter.
- Croome may begin to change after seeing the damage his grief caused.

Any logical prediction based on the chapter is acceptable.

Reflection / Main idea – The Best of Times vs The Worst of Times

The event with the **biggest impact on Croome's personality** is **Patricia's death**.

It changes him by:

- making him bitter
- causing him to reject Halloween
- pushing him away from Eve and others
- replacing joyful memories with pain

Teacher Insight

This chapter is the emotional turning point of the story. Students should understand that **Croome's cruelty grows out of grief**, even though it still harms the people around him.

Chapter 9 – Witch in the Kitchen

Reading Comprehension

1. Why does Croome go to the kitchen at night?

He hears **strange noises** and investigates.

2. What surprising things can the spirit do?

The spirit can **change appearance, perform magical actions, and behave unpredictably**.

3. What does Croome learn from watching the Bobbich family?

He sees **how much joy and excitement Halloween brings to families and children**.

Character Spotlight

Possible answers:

- constantly changing appearance
 - playful sarcasm
 - magical abilities
-

Follow-Up

The author makes the spirit humorous to **balance the darker parts of the story and keep the tone entertaining**.

Theme Connection

Tommy's happiness teaches Croome that **Halloween can bring joy, imagination, and family togetherness**.

Vocabulary Builder

Suggested Meanings (based on context)

solace — comfort or relief from sadness

stygian — extremely dark, gloomy, or hellish

glissading — sliding smoothly, often playfully or quickly

spectral — ghostlike or eerie in appearance

ruminations — deep thoughts or reflections

👉 *Teacher Tip:*

Encourage students to use **context** + **tone** (especially the spooky but humorous tone of the chapter) to determine meaning.

Use Two Words in Sentences (Sample Answers)

(Students underline the vocabulary word)

1. The child found **solace** in the laughter of his friends on Halloween night.
2. The cave was so **stygian** that nothing could be seen inside.
3. The witch came floating across the room in a **spectral** form.

👉 Accept any grammatically correct sentence showing understanding of the word.

Imagery & Humor in the Chapter

Example Response

Your example:

The witch pretending to melt when Croome threatens her.

Why it is funny or surprising:

It is funny because the witch exaggerates her reaction in a dramatic and theatrical way, even though she is not actually in danger. The scene plays on familiar Halloween tropes (like melting witches) but turns them into humor instead of fear.

Other Acceptable Examples

- The magic cattle prod shocking Croome
- The flying carpet crashing into the sink
- The witch's over-the-top behavior

👉 Look for answers that recognize **absurdity, exaggeration, or unexpected outcomes**.



Theme Connection – The Magic of Halloween

Suggested Answer

Tommy's happiness shows Croome that Halloween is about **joy, imagination, and sharing fun with others**, not something to avoid or resent.

👉 Accept answers that include:

- joy or excitement
- childhood happiness
- togetherness or family
- rediscovering the fun of Halloween

Chapter 10 – Halloween Presence

Reading Comprehension

1. What lesson does the spirit try to teach Croome?

That **Halloween can bring happiness and connection to people in many different situations.**

2. How do both rich and poor families show the spirit of Halloween?

Both groups celebrate through **costumes, parties, decorations, and shared fun.**

3. What hurts Croome most about Eve's party?

Seeing that **she has created joyful traditions without him.**



Character Focus: The Ghost of Halloween Present

Chart Answers

Changes costumes and plays jokes

→ Shows she is **playful, humorous, and engaging**, helping Croome feel comfortable and open to learning

Shows Croome many different neighborhoods

→ Shows she is **fair-minded and observant**, wanting Croome to see the full picture of Halloween across different lives

Brings Croome to his daughter's party

→ Shows she is **purposeful and compassionate**, guiding him toward personal understanding and emotional growth

Reveals Apathy and Greed at the end

→ Shows she is **serious and truthful**, willing to confront Croome with harsh realities

Follow-Up Question

Why does the spirit use humor before becoming serious?

Suggested Answer:

The spirit uses humor to **ease Croome into the experience and make him more receptive**. Once Croome is engaged and paying attention, she becomes more serious to **deliver important lessons that he cannot ignore**.

👉 Accept answers mentioning:

- gaining Croome's attention
 - building trust
 - preparing him for deeper truths
-

Active Reading

Ask a Question – Sample Answers

- What will happen to Apathy and Greed in the future?
 - Are Apathy and Greed meant to represent real problems in society?
 - Will Croome change after seeing them?
 - Why does the spirit reveal them at the end?
-

Make a Prediction – Sample Answers

- Croome will face a final spirit or final lesson
 - The next chapter will show the consequences of his actions
 - Croome may feel fear or urgency to change
 - Apathy and Greed may symbolize what Croome could become if he doesn't change
-



Author's Craft: Contrast

Why show many different places?

Suggested Answer:

The author shows multiple settings to demonstrate that Halloween is experienced **in many different ways by different people**, regardless of wealth or location.

How does this help Croome?

Suggested Answer:

It helps Croome understand that Halloween is about **joy, community, and connection**, not just his own painful memories. He sees that people from all backgrounds can find happiness in the holiday.

👉 Accept answers mentioning:

- broader perspective
 - empathy
 - seeing beyond himself
-



Halloween Presence Snapshot

Suggested Answers

Home of the frightened boys

What Croome Sees: kids scared but excited by Halloween fun

What Croome Learns: fear can be playful and part of enjoyment

Rural Halloween party

What Croome Sees: community celebration with games and laughter

What Croome Learns: Halloween brings people together

Wealthy neighborhood

What Croome Sees: elaborate decorations and large celebrations

What Croome Learns: wealth can enhance celebration, but it's not required for joy

Poor neighborhood

What Croome Sees: simpler celebrations but still happiness and sharing

What Croome Learns: joy doesn't depend on money

Eve's Halloween party

What Croome Sees: his daughter hosting a lively, joyful gathering

What Croome Learns: he has missed important moments in her life and still has a chance to reconnect



Vocabulary

Matching Answers

apprehension — d. fear or worry about what may happen

opulence — a. great wealth or luxury

downtrodden — f. poor, struggling, or treated unfairly

symbiotic — c. a relationship in which both sides benefit

apathy — b. not caring very much

greed — e. always wanting more for yourself

Use Two Words in Sentences (Sample Answers)

1. She felt **apprehension** before walking into the dark house.
2. The king lived in great **opulence**, surrounded by gold and riches.

👉 Accept any correct usage that shows understanding.

Chapter 11 – The Spirit of Halloween Future

Reading Comprehension

1. What does Croome first notice about the Spirit of Halloween Future that makes it more frightening than the earlier spirits?

Suggested Answer: Croome notices that the Spirit is **silent, shadowy, and mysterious**, unlike the earlier spirits who spoke and interacted with him. Its lack of expression and refusal to speak makes it more **ominous and frightening**, creating a sense of dread and uncertainty.

2. What shocks Croome when he sees the future of Croome’s Hardware and later visits the Bobbich home?

Suggested Answer: Croome is shocked to see that **his hardware store is empty and lifeless**, suggesting failure or abandonment. At the Bobbich home, he is even more disturbed to realize that **people seem unaffected—or even better off—without him**, showing that he has not made a meaningful or positive impact on others.

👉 Accept answers that mention:

- the empty store
 - lack of connection or legacy
 - people not mourning him
-

3. What final lesson does Croome begin to understand when he studies the single autumn leaf in the cemetery?

Suggested Answer: Croome begins to understand that **life is short and constantly changing**, like the falling leaf. He realizes that if he continues on his current path, his life will end in **loneliness and insignificance**, but he still has time to change and make his life meaningful.

Quick Teacher Insight

This set of questions reinforces the core realization:

👉 Croome is no longer just afraid—he **understands the consequences of his choices** and recognizes the urgency to change.



Character Focus: Croome Faces Himself

Chart Answers

He welcomes the Spirit and says he is ready to learn.

→ Shows he is **more humble and open to change**, no longer resisting the lessons

He begs Sam Bobbich for forgiveness, even though Sam cannot hear him.

→ Shows he feels **genuine regret and guilt** for how he treated others

He is horrified by his own plain gravestone.

→ Shows he fears being **forgotten and realizing his life lacked meaning and connection**

He notices that even Black Magic does not mourn him.

→ Shows he understands how **isolated and unloved he has become**

Follow-Up Question

How is Croome different from the beginning of the book?

Suggested Answer:

At the beginning, Croome was **angry, stubborn, and dismissive of others**. In this chapter, he is **thoughtful, regretful, and willing to accept responsibility**. He no longer blames others and instead recognizes that **his own choices shaped his life**.

👉 Accept answers mentioning:

- growth or change
 - increased empathy
 - acceptance of responsibility
-



Active Reading

Ask a Question – Sample Answers

- Will Croome be able to change his future?
 - Is this future guaranteed or just a warning?
 - What will Croome do differently if given another chance?
 - Why does no one seem to care about his death?
-

Make a Prediction – Sample Answers

- Croome will change his behavior immediately
- He will try to repair relationships, especially with Eve
- He will embrace Halloween again
- The future shown is a warning, not a fixed outcome

👉 Accept predictions that show understanding of **cause and effect** and character growth.



Author's Craft: Writing Style

What mood does the author create?

Suggested Answer:

The author creates a **dark, eerie, and somber mood**, with feelings of loneliness, regret, and fear.

Powerful Description – Sample Answer

Example:

The image of the **plain gravestone** or the **single autumn leaf falling**

Why it stands out

Suggested Answer:

It stands out because it symbolizes **Croome's empty life and the passage of time**, making the consequences of his actions feel real and final.

👉 Accept answers that mention:

- symbolism
 - emotional impact
 - vivid imagery
-



Past, Present, Future Chart

Suggested Answers

Halloween Past

What the Spirit Shows: Croome's childhood, family, and happy memories

Main Lesson: He once had joy and love in his life

Halloween Present

What the Spirit Shows: How others celebrate Halloween now, including Eve

Main Lesson: Halloween brings joy to people everywhere, and he has been missing out

Halloween Future

What the Spirit Shows: A lonely future and his forgotten death

Main Lesson: His current path leads to isolation unless he changes

Quick Reflection

Which spirit is most effective? (Sample Answer)

The Halloween Future spirit is most effective because it shows the **serious consequences** of Croome's actions and creates urgency for change.

👉 Accept other answers if well supported.



Vocabulary

Matching Answers

1. **cantankerous** — f. bad-tempered and quarrelsome
 2. **apparition** — b. a ghostly figure or appearance
 3. **epitaph** — c. a short message written on a gravestone
 4. **austerity** — d. harsh seriousness or severe self-denial
 5. **melancholy** — a. a feeling of deep sadness
 6. **squandered** — e. wasted or used carelessly
-

Use Two Words in Sentences (Sample Answers)

1. The old man was known for his **cantankerous** attitude toward everyone.
2. The **melancholy** music made her think about the past.

👉 Accept any correct usage that demonstrates understanding.



Key Teaching Insight for Chapter 11

This chapter represents Croome's **turning point**:

👉 He moves from **understanding** → **accepting** → **wanting to change**

This is where students should clearly see:

Croome is no longer just learning—he is ready to act.

Chapter 11 Word Search – Teacher Answer Key

Correct letters only. Blank squares are not part of answer words.

C	A	N	T	A	N	K	E	R	O	U	S			
				M	E	L	A	N	C	H	O	L	Y	
	H	A	L	L	O	W	E	E	N					
								P	U	M	P	K	I	N
		S	Q	U	A	N	D	E	R	E	D			
E	P	I	T	A	P	H								

Chapter 12 Discussion Answers



Reading Comprehension

1. What object does Croome find after the Spirit disappears?

Croome finds a **crumbled autumn leaf**. The leaf symbolizes the passing of time and reminds Croome that his life can still change.

2. How does Croome show excitement for Halloween again?

Students may mention:

- buying Halloween decorations
 - purchasing large amounts of candy
 - closing the store early so Sam Bobbich can go home
 - decorating his house
 - enthusiastically greeting trick-or-treaters
-

3. How does Croome treat Sam Bobbich differently?

Croome becomes **kind and generous** toward Sam.

He promotes him to manager, gives him a raise, and encourages him to go home and spend Halloween with his family.



Mood and Tone Shift

Another example from the chapter:

Croome eagerly **rushes around his house preparing for Halloween**, excited and full of energy.

(Other acceptable answers: talking cheerfully to Black Magic, joyfully planning his day, looking forward to seeing others, etc.)

How does this moment change the overall mood?

Suggested Answer:

This moment shifts the mood from **dark and sorrowful to joyful and hopeful**. Instead of being bitter and withdrawn, Croome is now **excited, energetic, and full of life**, showing that he has truly changed.

👉 Accept answers mentioning:

- happiness replacing sadness
 - excitement
 - renewed energy or hope
-



Character Change

Two actions that show Croome has changed:

1. He treats Black Magic with **kindness and affection** instead of annoyance
2. He becomes **excited about Halloween and plans to celebrate it**

(Other acceptable answers: speaking kindly, acting cheerfully, embracing the day, moving quickly with purpose, etc.)



Autumn Imagery

Example from the chapter:

Descriptions of **crisp air, falling leaves, or the fresh autumn morning**

(Accept any accurate student-selected line from the text.)

What image does it create?

Suggested Answer:

It creates a picture of a **bright, cool autumn day filled with colorful leaves and seasonal change**, helping the reader feel the freshness and energy of the moment.

👉 Accept answers mentioning:

- fall colors
 - cool weather
 - movement (leaves, breeze)
 - seasonal atmosphere
-



Vocabulary in Context

Sample Answers

1. Croome felt **bewildered** when he first woke up and realized everything had changed.
2. The children were **frolicking** through the yard as they prepared for Halloween.

(Other acceptable combinations using cauldron, conspiratorial, abundance are fine as long as meaning is correct.)



Key Teaching Insight for Chapter 12

This chapter represents Croome's **transformation in action**:

👉 He doesn't just understand anymore—he **acts differently**, showing students the difference between:

learning a lesson vs. living a lesson

Chapter 13- Frankencroome



Reading Comprehension

1. Why does Croome wear the monster mask?

He wears the mask partly for fun and partly because he is still a little nervous about revealing how much he has changed.

2. How does Eve react when she recognizes her father?

She is surprised and emotional. She realizes that the father she once hoped for has finally returned.

3. What promise does Croome make to Kellen?

Croome promises **never to miss another Halloween** and to be the best grandfather he can be.

Black Magic (Character Insight)

Possible interpretations teachers may accept:

- Black Magic represents **Croome's loneliness** during his bitter years.
- The cat acts as a **silent companion** who remains with him even when he pushes others away.
- The cat may symbolize Croome's **conscience** or emotional connection to the past.
- The cat's reaction to Croome often reflects Croome's emotional state.

On their short paragraphs, encourage students to support their interpretation with examples from the story. Teacher can decide whether to grade paragraphs on spelling, grammar, etc.



Mood and Theme

Two ways the tone becomes happier or more hopeful:

1. Croome **reconnects with his daughter and family**, sharing joyful moments and showing love and affection.
2. Croome **embraces Halloween with excitement and generosity**, spreading happiness to others and looking forward to the future.

(Other acceptable answers: laughing, playing games, helping others, making promises for the future, etc.)



Vocabulary Development

Sample Sentences

1. The house was **festooned** with colorful Halloween decorations that made it look both spooky and fun.
2. The party had a slightly **macabre** theme, but everyone was laughing and enjoying themselves.
3. Croome wore a **flamboyant** costume that made him stand out in the crowd.

👉 Accept any correct sentences that show clear understanding of the vocabulary.



Quick Teacher Note

Students should recognize that the story ends with:

👉 **renewal, connection, and celebration**, completing Croome's transformation.

Extension Activities

Comparing A Christmas Carol and A Halloween Carol

Students can write a short essay comparing the two stories.

Possible discussion topics:

Element	A Christmas Carol	A Halloween Carol
Main Character	Ebenezer Scrooge	Decimus Croome
Spirits	Christmas Past, Present, Future	Halloween Past, Present, Future
Theme	Redemption and generosity	Redemption and appreciation of life
Holiday Setting	Christmas	Halloween

Students may write either:

- a **comparison essay**

or

- a **contrast essay**.
-

Movie Adaptation Project

Ask students:

Would this story make a good Halloween movie?

Students should explain:

- what scenes would be exciting on screen
- which characters would be memorable
- what type of actors might play the roles.

Optional creative projects:

- design a **movie poster**
 - create a **cast list**
 - write a **movie trailer script**
-

Writing a Movie Pitch

Students can write a short letter explaining why the story should become a movie.

They could address it to:

- a movie studio
- a director
- a favorite actor

Students might even try sending their idea online to:

- movie studios
- actors
- directors
- animation companies.

This helps students see how stories move from books to films.

Classroom Suggestions

Group Discussion

Have students discuss:

- how Croome changes throughout the story
 - why holidays often remind people of memories
 - how kindness can change people.
-

Seasonal Classroom Activities

Teachers may:

- decorate the classroom for Halloween
 - allow students to wear costumes during discussions
 - hold a classroom “Dracademy Awards” activity.
-

Final Reflection

Ask students:

What lesson do you think Decimus Croome learns by the end of the story?

Encourage students to connect the lesson to:

- kindness
 - forgiveness
 - appreciating family and friends.
-

Optional Classroom Projects

Students may choose one:

 Design a **Halloween movie poster**

 Write a **movie trailer script**

 Perform a **short scene from the book**

 Write a **new scene showing Croome celebrating Halloween the following year**

Teacher Reference Page

Literary Elements in The Legend of Decimus Croome: A Halloween Carol

This story uses a variety of literary techniques that help develop character, build atmosphere, and deepen the themes of memory and redemption. The student study guide highlights several of these elements throughout the chapters.

Simile

Definition:

A simile compares two things using the words **like** or **as**.

Purpose in the Story:

Similes help create vivid descriptions and make scenes easier for readers to imagine.

Example:

“A gargantuan pair of legs stretched skyward **like two gnarly old tree trunks**.”

Teaching Tip:

Ask students what two things are being compared and what the comparison helps them picture.

Alliteration

Definition:

Alliteration occurs when nearby words begin with the **same beginning sound**.

Purpose in the Story:

Alliteration creates rhythm and adds emphasis to descriptive passages. (Each of Kevin Purdy’s novels lean heavily into a particular literary element in a playful sort of way. The Legend of Decimus Croome contains an abundance of alliteration. Some teachers choose to teach a special alliteration unit with this book.)

Example:

“The **murmurings and mutterings** grew even more freakish.”

Teaching Tip:

Students should identify the repeated sound (in this case, the “**m**” sound).

Imagery

Definition:

Imagery uses descriptive language that appeals to the **five senses**.

Purpose in the Story:

Imagery helps readers picture Croome’s world and feel the atmosphere of autumn and Halloween.

Examples from the Story:

- rustling autumn leaves
- cool breezes
- glowing jack-o-lanterns
- eerie nighttime sounds

Teaching Tip:

Ask students which sense is being described:

sight, sound, smell, taste, or touch.

Tone and Mood

Tone: the author’s attitude toward the story.

Mood: the emotional feeling experienced by the reader.

Examples in the Story:

Early chapters:

- eerie
- mysterious
- suspenseful

Later chapters:

- emotional
- hopeful
- joyful

Teaching Tip:

Have students explain **what details in the scene create the mood.**

Flashback

Definition:

A flashback interrupts the present story to show events that happened earlier.

Purpose in the Story:

The Spirit of Halloween Past uses flashbacks to show Croome:

- childhood memories
- meeting Patricia
- family celebrations
- the tragic events that changed his life

Teaching Tip:

Flashbacks help readers understand **why Croome behaves the way he does in the present.**

Characterization

Definition:

Characterization is the way an author reveals a character's personality.

Methods used in the story:

- dialogue
- actions
- reactions of other characters
- memories from Croome's past

Example:

Croome's treatment of his employee Sam Bobbich shows his bitterness early in the story.

Symbolism (Teacher Insight)

Several elements act as symbols throughout the story:

Autumn leaves

Represent the passage of time and the changing seasons of life.

Halloween costumes

Suggest that people sometimes hide their true selves or rediscover who they really are.

Black Magic the cat

Represents Croome's isolation but also his quiet companionship.

Theme Connections

Major themes teachers may discuss include:

- grief and healing
- the importance of family
- second chances
- rediscovering joy in life

Symbols & Hidden Meanings in *The Legend of Decimus Croome: A Halloween Carol*

This story contains several symbols that deepen the meaning of the narrative. Teachers may wish to highlight these elements during discussion to help students recognize how authors use objects, imagery, and characters to represent larger ideas.

Black Magic the Cat

Symbolic Meaning

Black Magic represents Croome's **loneliness and isolation** during the years when he pushes others away.

While Croome avoids friendships and family connections, the cat remains his only consistent companion.

Teaching Insight

Black Magic also provided comic relief. Much like the first two spirits provided humorous moments, Black Magic helped set a more light-hearted tone compared to Croome's gloominess. The cat was more than just a pet. It served to provide a contrast between the main character's dour outlook on life and the comical nature of his feline companion.

As Croome begins changing, the reader can also view Black Magic as a subtle sign that **connection and warmth are still possible**, even for an old sour-puss like Decimus.

Autumn Leaves

Throughout the story the author frequently describes **autumn imagery**:

- falling leaves
- cool breezes
- fading daylight
- harvest imagery

Symbolic Meaning

Autumn reflects the **later season of Croome's life**.

Just as leaves change color before falling, Croome is at a point where his life could either:

- fade away in bitterness
- or
- transform into something meaningful again.

Halloween Costumes

Costumes appear repeatedly in the story.

Children wear costumes while celebrating Halloween, but Croome himself eventually wears a **Frankenstein mask**.

Symbolic Meaning

Costumes represent **identity and transformation**.

For Croome, the costume becomes a symbol of rediscovering who he once was — a joyful and caring person.

In the final chapter, Croome realizes that sometimes **wearing a costume allows people to reveal their true selves**.

Halloween Itself

Halloween is not just a setting; it acts as a symbol.

The holiday celebrates:

- imagination
- transformation
- facing fears
- community celebration

These ideas mirror Croome's journey as he confronts painful memories and learns to embrace life again.

Comparing A Christmas Carol and A Halloween Carol

The Legend of Decimus Croome: A Halloween Carol was inspired by Charles Dickens’ classic story *A Christmas Carol*. Both stories follow a similar structure in which a bitter man learns important lessons through visits from supernatural spirits.

Understanding these similarities can help students see how authors adapt classic stories for new audiences.

Main Character Comparison

A Christmas Carol	A Halloween Carol
Ebenezer Scrooge	Decimus Croome
Miserly and bitter	Bitter and withdrawn
Rejects Christmas	Rejects Halloween
Learns to value kindness and generosity	Learns to value family, celebration, and community

Both characters begin the story **lonely and unhappy**, but the experiences shown by the visiting spirits help them change.

Supporting Character Parallels

Dickens’ Character	Halloween Carol Character	Role in the Story
Bob Cratchit	Sam Bobbich	Loyal employee who represents kindness and family values
Tiny Tim	Tommy Bobbich	Child whose happiness and innocence influence the main character
The Cratchit family	The Bobbich family	A loving family that celebrates the holiday despite challeng

Both families help the main character understand the importance of **family, compassion, and joy**.

Visiting Spirits

Dickens’ Story	Halloween Carol
Ghost of Christmas Past	Spirit of Halloween Past
Ghost of Christmas Present	Witch/Ghost of Halloween Present
Ghost of Christmas Yet to Come	Spirit of Halloween Future

Each spirit shows the main character important moments from **past, present, and possible future events**.

Key Differences Between the Stories

Although the stories share a similar structure, they also have important differences.

Holiday Setting

Christmas Carol focuses on **Christmas traditions**, generosity, and charity.

Halloween Carol focuses on **Halloween traditions**, imagination, costumes, and community celebration.

Time and Place

A Christmas Carol

Victorian England (1800s)

London business world

A Halloween Carol

Modern American town

Local hardware store and neighborhoods

Tone

A Christmas Carol often has a **serious moral tone**.

A Halloween Carol mixes **humor, mystery, and spooky fun** with emotional moments.

Teaching Tip

Ask students:

Why do you think the author chose Halloween instead of Christmas for this story?

Possible ideas:

- Halloween allows for **ghosts and supernatural events**
 - costumes symbolize **change and transformation**
 - the holiday connects **children, families, and community traditions**
-

Post-Reading Activities for *The Legend of Decimus Croome: A Halloween Carol*

After finishing the novel, students can deepen their understanding of the story's themes through discussion, writing, and creative projects. The following activities work well as **final assignments, small group projects, or enrichment activities**.

Activity 1 – Compare the Two Carol Stories

Charles Dickens' *A Christmas Carol* inspired the structure of *A Halloween Carol*. Students can explore how the two stories are similar and different.

Writing Prompt

Compare *A Christmas Carol* and *A Halloween Carol*. Explain at least **two similarities and two differences** between the stories.

Possible topics to discuss:

- Scrooge vs. Croome
- the visiting spirits
- the importance of family
- the holidays (Christmas vs. Halloween)
- the story settings

Teacher Tip

Encourage students to notice how both stories focus on **personal transformation and second chances**.

Activity 2 – Would This Make a Good Movie?

Ask students to imagine that a movie studio is considering making *A Halloween Carol* into a film.

Writing Prompt

Would this story make a good Halloween movie? Why or why not?

Students might consider:

- exciting scenes from the story
- interesting characters
- how the spirits could appear on screen

Students may also write a **letter to a movie producer, director, or actor** explaining why the story should become a movie.

Activity 3 – Design a Movie Poster

Students create a **movie poster** for *The Legend of Decimus Croome*.

The poster should include:

- the title of the movie
- an illustration of Croome or one of the spirits

- a short slogan or tagline
- Halloween imagery

Teacher Tip

Encourage students to include elements such as:

- jack-o-lanterns
 - autumn leaves
 - ghosts or spirits
 - Croome's Frankenstein mask
-

Activity 4 – Croome's Next Halloween

Ask students to imagine what Croome's life might be like **one year later**.

Creative Writing Prompt

Write a short scene describing how Croome celebrates Halloween the following year.

Students might include:

- a party with family and friends
- Croome decorating his house
- Croome helping children enjoy Halloween

Final Reflection Discussion

Ask the class:

What lesson does Decimus Croome learn by the end of the story?

Possible answers may include:

- the importance of family
 - appreciating traditions and memories
 - treating others with kindness
 - making the most of the time we have.
-

Teacher Closing Idea

Some teachers like to end the unit with a fun activity:

Hold a classroom “Dracademy Awards” ceremony inspired by the book.

Students can vote for categories such as:

- best costume
- funniest character
- most surprising moment in the story.