How does Dickens present the theme of transformation in A Christmas Carol?

Dickens utilises Scrooge in order to illustrate how self-centred, insensitive people can be converted into liberal, compassionate and socially conscious individuals. Benevolence and generosity overcome Scrooge’s hostile apathy as he realises his responsibility to look after the less fortunate. At first, Scrooge is delineated as the worst man in London to show that even those with the most negative personas are capable of flourishing into better individuals. Dickens does this to show the bourgeoisie of his Victorian audience that they too need to seek redemption by supporting the proletariat and completing more charitable deeds as this simple change could have a rippling effect in society.

A very good introduction. Although you have flourishing, converting as synonyms for transformation, please also include the key word.

At the beginning of the novella, Scrooge is presented as a cold-hearted miser. This is evident when it says, “Oh! But he was a tight-fisted hand at the grindstone, Scrooge! A squeezing, wrenching, grasping, scraping, clutching, covetous, old sinner!” The narrative, “oh”, suggests that even the narrator is overwhelmed by how unpleasant he is. The adjectives are all linked semantically by a link with the hand - this shows how tightly he held onto things. In his single-minded focus on acquiring wealth, Scrooge represents the opposite of generosity in every way imaginable. In his business dealings, he constantly tries to squeeze money out of people, grasps and scrapes for more benefits for himself, and covets what he does not yet have. The negative verbs all have an onomatopoeic feel associated with lacking liberty; they have a guttural quality and are harsh and unpleasant in their sound - like Scrooge. The list emphasises Scrooge’s negative qualities to the point where he becomes a caricature of greed. In addition, the utilisation of exclamation marks could amplify our disgust at him. Alternatively, it is quite conspicuous that there are seven verbs listed. Perhaps, they could be symbolic of the seven deadly sins - avarice in particular. Dickens has done this to show the reader that Scrooge is in
desperate need for a transformation in order to stop him from being condemned in the afterlife. He may have presented Scrooge as such in order to shock readers out of their inertia - it isn’t enough to just read passively, but it’s important for Dickens to have an impact for change to occur in society.

Your exploration of one quote is thorough and has excellent depth – this is a top band essay so far, well done.

Towards the middle of the novella, Scrooge is starting to transform as he realises his wrongdoings. This is seen when it says, “Are there no prisons? Are there no workhouses?” The spirit reminds Scrooge of his own words at the start of the novella. Dickens is showing us that Scrooge has already begun to change as he is ashamed of having said it. This could also make the readers regret their stubborn views too. At first, Scrooge was seen as a supporter of Thomas Malthus - he was an economist who argued that poverty was the inevitable result of overpopulation. He believed that the increase in population would overtake the development of sufficient land for crops and diminish the ability of the world to feed itself. However, Dickens believed that these ideologies were wrong and that there was plenty of food to go around but only if the rich were more generous. He thought it was wrong that the poor should suffer because the rich were too selfish to share. Now, that Scrooge is able to see his mistakes, he will change his views and become more magnanimous. Dickens highlights the importance of generosity and charity as the Industrial Revolution created a society in which the gap between the rich and poor had significantly increased. In the 1840’s around 75% of people lived “hand to mouth” which means they earned just enough to survive. Those struggling to survive in extreme poverty relied on the liberty of those better off than themselves. Dickens aimed to reach out to the wealthy and teach them to accept their social responsibility to look after the less fortunate. Excellent incorporation of context, very relevant.

At the end of the novella, Scrooge has completely transformed into a philanthropic and altruistic individual rather than a misanthropist. This notion is made clear when it says, “I am as light as a feather, I am as happy as an angel, I’m quite a baby”. Scrooge has changed his outlook and his behaviour. This is
the denouement of the story as it reaches its end. The series of similes and
cliches show how light hearted Scrooge has become in his new attitude. On a
whole text level, there is a real contrast between the heavy, laden vocabulary
used in Stave One and the simplistic choices here. This contrast frees the reader
and could be a linguistic transformation as the novella progresses. WOW! The
anaphora of “I am” shows deep pleasure and excitement at feeling different.
The word “light” suggests that Scrooge feels free as a result of his encounters
with the ghosts. In Chapter One, Marley’s ghost told him he had a “heavy coil”
weighing him down. Now he feels light, which suggests he's relieved to have
avoided Marley’s fate. “Quite a baby” could be metaphorical and represent the
rebirth Scrooge has had. The noun “baby” symbolises the innocence and purity
that should always remain in the world. “Baby” could also be symbolic of Christ,
a baby who came to save the world in the same way the transformed Scrooge
can begin to change the world with his renewed presence and commitment.
Alternatively, it could be argued that Scrooge’s transformation is artificial as he
only changed due to the Ghost of Christmas Yet to Come and his sighting of his
grave. Additionally, it is particularly striking that Dickens paid his own illustrator
to portray the ghosts as pagan figures. Dickens is promoting beliefs which
predate Christianity. Perhaps he is suggesting that the need to be good to each
other is a human need. He has done this in order to show his audience that they
need to fulfil this need by being supportive to one another as well as the
impoverished.

In conclusion, Scrooge's change in persona could perhaps be representative of
what Dickens felt was the real Christianity, rather than using it to conceal and
hide ignorant views and behaviour. Perhaps, Dickens wanted his readers to
realise that Christian faith is not enough, and instead realise that we need
actions now, in the present, to look after the welfare of the poor, rather than
relying on a merciful God to welcome the poor dead into heaven.
Sanya, this is a critical and evaluative essay. It sequences well and you have a good understanding of writer’s purpose. I smiled throughout – was so lovely to read. 29/30