Read the poem and then answer the following questions.

1. The first verse sets the scene with layers of coldness and rigidity. Why do you think Rossetti opens the poem in this way?

2. The poem is set at the time of the Christian nativity. Why is it simply called ‘A Christmas Carol’?

3. The second verse introduces the power of God, and argues that he found a way to humanity - but that his way was humble (‘A stable-place sufficed’). Why does Rossetti do this?

4. Why might there be an internal rhyme (‘Him’ / ‘cherubim’) in line 17? Why are these concepts linked in this way?

5. Why might partial quantities (‘A breastful of milk / And a mangerful of hay’) be enough for God/Jesus?

6. Why do the ‘angels’ worship God/Jesus?

7. Why are the ‘ox and ass and camel’ presented as worshipping God/Jesus?

8. In the penultimate verse, all kinds of angels surround Jesus in worship, but Mary, Jesus’s mother, is the only one allowed to worship him ‘With a kiss’. Why might Rossetti have presented the virgin Mary (‘maiden’) in this way? Does it link in any way with the Victorian stereotype of the ideal woman?

9. This verse leads to the speaker’s commitment to God in the final verse. Why do you think Rossetti presents a personal story emerging from the narrative of Christ’s birth?

10. Why does the speaker pose questions in the final verse?

11. Why does the speaker choose to give God her ‘heart’? What might this represent?