

Individual Learning Packet

Teaching Unit

**Great Expectations**

by Charles Dickens

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Item No. 200832

# Great Expectations

## Notes

Dickens originally wrote *Great Expectations* in thirty-six installments, to be published in a British weekly magazine. Despite the long sentences and difficult vocabulary, it is one of Dickens' most readable books. The story grips the reader from the beginning and masterfully maintains the reader's interest throughout its fifty-nine chapters. The novel's intertwined characters, complex plot line, and controversial ending make it a wonderful vehicle for lively classroom discussions.

All references come from the Prestwick House Literary Touchstone Classics edition of *Great Expectations*, published 2006.

# Great Expectations

## Objectives

*By the end of this Unit, the student will be able to:*

1. define style and point out Dickens' use of parallelism in the novel.
2. discuss the significance of the names Dickens assigns his characters and point out how the double meanings of the names often reveal character traits.
3. recognize how Dickens uses descriptions of nature, rooms, or other objects to reveal character traits.
4. identify examples of the following literary devices:
  - personification
  - coming of age
  - metaphor
  - narrator
  - hyperbole
  - symbol
  - theme
  - simile
5. point out how Dickens uses foreshadowing to keep the reader's interest.
6. define irony and point out the irony in the story, including the following:
  - Estella's relationship with Miss Havisham
  - the title of the story
7. define satire and discuss the ways satire is used to poke fun at someone, particularly businessmen.
8. find examples of puns in the story.
9. discuss the ways Dickens uses light and dark as symbols for good and evil in the story.
10. point out examples of stock phrases, which are often repeated when a character reappears in the novel, including "by hand" and "portable property."

# Great Expectations

## Questions for Essay and Discussion

Use the following passage from the novel to answer the first four questions:

“Whereas I now found Barnard to be a disembodied spirit, or a fiction, and his inn the dingiest collection of shabby buildings ever squeezed together in a rank corner as a club for Tom-cats....I thought it had the most dismal trees in it, and the most dismal sparrows, and the most dismal cats, and the most dismal houses....I thought the windows of the sets of chambers into which those houses were divided, were in every stage of dilapidated blind and curtain, crippled flower-pot, cracked glass, dusty decay, and miserable makeshift; while To Let To Let To Let, glared at me.... Thus far my sense of sight; while dryrot and wetrot and all the silent rots that rot in neglected roof and cellar—rot of rat and mouse and bug and coaching-stables near at hand besides—addressed themselves faintly to my sense of smell, and moaned, ‘Try Barnard’s Mixture.’ ”

1. Find two examples of parallelism in this passage.
2. Locate a sentence in the above passage which illustrates Dickens’ use of hyperbole.
3. Compare this description of London with the description of Miss Havisham’s decaying bridal feast. What do you think Dickens might be telling the reader about the quality of Pip’s life in London?
4. Discuss the rhythmical quality to Dickens’ writing. How does he include humor even in this “dismal” description?
5. Why does young Pip go back and help the convict instead of hiding in his house? Why does he feel guilty afterwards?
6. What indications are there that Pip is a kind, compassionate child?
7. Given the description of Satis House, why does Pip want to improve himself so he will better fit into that lifestyle?
8. List four coincidences in the novel which must be accepted by the reader for the story to be believed.
9. Write a brief character sketch of Estella. Do you think the character grows and changes by the end of the story? If so, what motivates this change?
10. Pip has many male influences or father figures in his life: Joe, Jaggers, Matthew Pocket, Abel Magwitch. Which of these do you think has the greatest influence over Pip’s development?

# Great Expectations

## Part I

### Chapter I

#### Vocabulary

**aforesaid** – previously mentioned  
**briars** – thorny plants  
**gibbet** – a device used to hang people, gallows  
**nettles** – prickly plants  
**weather-cock** – a weather vane  
**wittles** – [dialect] food

1. How does Pip get his name? Where is he at the beginning of the story?  
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2. Briefly describe the convict. What evidence is there that the convict has “human” qualities and is not merely a criminal?  
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3. Why do you think Pip believes the convict’s story about his accomplice?  
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4. Find an example of dialect in the convict’s dialogue which illustrates the way Dickens separates the upper from the lower classes by their speech patterns.  
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## Chapter VI

### Vocabulary

**circumstantial** – incidental, indirect  
**intercourse** – dealings with; communication  
**morbidly** – gloomily  
**pilfering** – stealing

1. Why does Pip love Joe? What reason does he give for keeping the truth of his crimes from Joe?

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**Chapter XV**

Vocabulary

**disconsolately** – gloomily, dejectedly  
**gridiron** – a framework of metal used to cook fish  
**gross** – one-hundred forty-four  
**how-be-it** – however  
**ill-requited** – poorly paid  
**monomania** – an obsession with one thing  
**sagacious** – wise  
**singular** – specific; unique  
**sluice** – a channel for water for irrigation  
**sprat** – a type of fish  
**swarthy** – dark

1. Why does Pip try to teach Joe the lessons he learns at school?

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2. Under what conditions does Joe agree to let Pip visit Satis House? Why does he think Pip should stay away?

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**Chapter XXXVII**

Vocabulary

**cestus** – something that encircles  
**ecod** – [slang] egad; “Oh God;” an exclamation  
**jorum** – a large bowl  
**rubicund** – a healthy rosy color

1. Briefly identify Miss Skiffins.

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2. Why do you think Pip is comfortable at Wemmick’s house? Why do you think Pip wishes at one point that Mr. Jaggers had an Aged at home?

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