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Teaching Unit™

Sample

Prestwick House
Literature
Teaching Unit
Chapter-by-Chapter Study Guide



Great Expectations

by Charles Dickens

- Learning objectives
- Study Guide with short-answer questions
- Background information
- Vocabulary in context
- Multiple-choice test
- Essay questions
- Literary terms



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ISBN: 978-1-58049-177-8

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Item No: 300416

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?

2. Briefly describe the convict. What evidence is there that the convict has “human” qualities and is not merely a criminal?

3. Why do you think Pip believes the convict’s story about his accomplice?

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.

4. Why does Miss Havisham refuse to let anyone acknowledge her birthday? What does she do to make Estella more beautiful to Pip?

5. Briefly describe the young man Pip fights in the garden. Do you think that Miss Havisham has arranged the fight?

6. How does the young man “inspire” Pip with great respect?

7. One of the reoccurring symbols in this novel is Dickens’ use of light and dark. In the following passage, what is the significance of the light from Joe’s forge?

“...when I neared home the light on the spit of sand off the point on the marshes was gleaming against a black night-sky, and Joe’s furnace was flinging a path of fire across the road.”

Chapter XVII

Vocabulary

capricious – fanciful, impulsive
guinea – a coin with the worth of a British pound
patronised – treated in an inferior manner
supposititious – hypothetical
vexation – frustration; worry

1. Why does Pip confide in Bidley and confess his admiration for Estella?

2. What advice does Bidley give Pip when he tells her he wants to become a gentleman because Estella makes him feel common?

3. What evidence is there that Bidley might be hurt by Pip's confession that he wishes he could love her instead of Estella?

Chapter XXXV

Vocabulary

cogent – clear, convincing

mummery – ridiculous and unnecessary ceremony

obsequious – like a servant; fawning

ostentatiously – showily; extravagantly

sawpit – a pit over which wood is placed to be sawed

vainglorious – having vanity; boastfulness

1. Point out the way Dickens uses satire to poke fun at funerals.

2. What evidence is there that Bidley and Joe treat Pip differently since he is now a gentleman?

3. What does Pip mean when he says that the mists were “quite right too”?

“Once more, the mists were rising as I walked away. If they disclosed to me, as I suspect they did, that I should *not* come back, and that Bidley was quite right, all I can say is—they were quite right too.”
