

Charles dickens, great expectations

[People](#), [Charles Dickens](#)



The text under consideration presents an excerpt from the novel “Great Expectations” by Charles Dickens who is one of the world’s greatest novelists of the 19th century famous for his criticism of the bourgeois society of his time with its evils and contrasts of wealth and poverty, his unique mastery of character drawing and optimistic point of view concerning life and the world around him.

The reader highly appreciates Dickens’s spirit of optimism, his love for common people and his strong belief in the final victory of good over evil as well as his humour which is to be found on every page and in characters and incidents of the greatest diversity. However, Dickens possesses a great dramatic instinct which can be proved by the following extract. On a stormy rainy night a young man named Pip is reading a book when a strange visitor interrupts him appearing unexpectedly.

Pip lets him in wondering what has brought the man to his flat. While talking to him Pip suddenly begins to recognize the guest whose strange behavior confuses the young man. The stranger turns out to be Pip’s mysterious benefactor whom he helped escape from pursuit when a child and this fact shocks Pip so much for he considers his present status to be his own achievement. The convict reveals secret after secret and does not conceal his pride of Pip’s being a real gentleman.

The extract under consideration presents a piece of 1st person narration which proves to be more objective from the point of view of the novel protagonist with elements of colorful description and vivid portrayal intercepted with a dialog and flashbacks deepening the reader’s penetration into the character thoughts. The prevalent mood of the excerpt is gloomy,

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nervous and disturbing, full of anxiety and tension maintained by the weather behind the window of the Pip's room with an air of approaching disaster.

With every coming word the author creates the atmosphere of a lonely stormy evening that brings not only disaster but also renders the character's thoughts, his state of mind and soul, his vague foreboding of radical but inevitable changes that are both captivating and dramatic. With the tonality of the narration gradually shifting along the scale of intensiveness the text under analysis can be split into four logical parts and the following names can be suggested for each of them.

The 1st part titled "An anticipatory fear" introduces the reader into the story and forms the background against which all the events take place. The 2nd one bears the name "The stranger in the room" acquainting the reader with the uninvited guest who is the embodiment of mystery and enigma. The 3rd part of the excerpt called "The present meets the past" provides the reader with some new information concerning the protagonist's early life and reasons his present behavior.

The final part which presents the climax of the extract can be named "The revelation" answering the questions aroused in the previous parts. Let us consider each part of the text separately. The 1st part of the extract serves as introduction into a stormy and dark evening provoking the whole chain of mysterious and striking events happening to the protagonist of the novel Pip reading a book late at night in his small London flat at the top floor of the building.

Every detail introduced by the author is called upon enhancing the gloominess of the atmosphere and preparing the reader for the events forthcoming. To intensify the wretchedness of the weather of the weather the writer resorts to the whole palette of stylistic devices – numerous repetitions (“ stormy and wet, stormy and wet”, “ mud, mud, mud”) to form the background against the events take place and gradually draw the reader into the story who comes across another SD – polysyndeton (and... and... and) that is another type of repetition which intensifies the increasing strain and growing nervousness.

Apart from that Dickens metaphorically compares the clouds with a heavy veil which being vast, heavy and all-embracing covers the whole city reinforcing the image of inevitable disaster by means of hyperbole (an eternity of cloud and wind, the worst day of all) lending an additional expressiveness to the narration. The wind is personified by the author and likened to a terrible monster, primeval beast which deals death and destruction and demolishes everything in its way (violent blasts, rages of the wind, the wind assails and tears the sound) in order to emphasize the implied feeling of the dramatic events coming. The lexical expressive means are strengthened by definite syntactic structures used by Dickens to contribute to a more colorful and probable presentation of the scene. The expressive intensive sentence “ So furious had been the gusts” brings additional vividness and luster to the description is accompanied by a SD of detachment which primary function is to add significance to the part of the sentence manifesting itself in the following phrase: and gloomy accounts had come in from the coast, of shipwreck and death.

The time is flowing carrying away the last moments of Pip's peaceful reading and the final one is burned out by the Saint Paul's and all the many church-clocks striking. In this paragraph the author's godsend is the use of SD of onomatopoeia (the sound of the clocks striking – leading, accompanying, following) that perfectly presents the idea of the clock chime as a sign of approaching danger or disaster.

The parallel construction of this sentence is backed up by anaphora accentuating the temporary state of affairs (some... some... some). The SD of parallelism is also used by the author in the next phrase “ The sound was curiously flowed by the wind and I was listening and thinking” which is gradually bringing the reader to the 2nd part of the excerpt “ The stranger in the room” further intensifying the tense atmosphere of the 1st one.

Gloomy prophesies turns out to be true – the strange uninvited guest is coming up the stairs to intrude into Pip's apartment and Pip's life. Dickens masterfully resorts to the SD of metonymy to maintain the air of mystery and growing suspense – Pip hears a footstep, not a man (I heard a footstep on the stair, the footstep stumbled), talks to a voice that seems to be the echo of his own words (There is nothing the reflected by matter? Nothing the matter...) presented by anadiplosis, sees a face – larding the image of the stranger with a special choice of words including epithets rendering not only the character's thoughts but also enhancing the general sense of anxiety the whole extract is permeated with (nervous folly, awfully connected, dead sister, blown out lights, incomprehensible air, mere instant, the darkness beneath, a shaded lamp etc.).

The author has a firm grip on reader's interest inserting an indefinite pronoun " whoever" which precedes the actual description of the night visitor built by the author with the help of antithesis (he was substantially dressed, but roughly), simile (like a voyager by the sea and the abundant use of various epithets (muscular man, strong on his legs, large brown veined hands, browned, hardened). His hair is metaphorically called iron-grey, and judging by his appearance one might say that this person is used to hard work.

The paragraph is practically built on parallel constructions backed up by anaphoric repetition (that... that) to make the description of the stranger more expressive. Pip gets involved in the conversation with his visitor and we cannot but notice that these principle characters are opposed to each other at different levels and in different ways – both in speech and their attitude towards each other.

All kinds of deviations from standard English – phonetic (arter, fur). Grammatical (you've grow'd up, I have never forgot it, you was a saying, wot) and lexical (nigh, alonger) are typical for Pip's guest speech as contrasted to Pip's highly educated phraseology that forms the huge gap between these two people that at first sight seems to be insuperable.

Besides with the dialog intercepted the reader should pay the closest attention to the politeness the visitor addresses with to Pip (by your live, Master) and Pip's inhospitable answers and nervous reactions finding their expression in such words as " resent the recognition of brightness, unwilling, ask as civilly as he can" revealing his inner shapeless fears and temporary mental state.

One must feel the constant intention of the stranger to reach to Pip, to express joy caused by the sight of him (bright and gratified recognition that shone in his face), holds out both his hands to Pip – the phrase which runs like a refrain through the whole text merging its parts to a single whole and totally enjoys the view of Pip's flat "looking about him as if he had some part in the things he admired".

Ascribing some positive intentions to the strange visitor on the one hand the author intensifies Pip's negative attitude towards him on the other, laying an emphasis on the fact that Pip suspects the stranger to be mad, recoils from him talking to the interlocutor even in somewhat humiliating way (Why do you, a stranger coming into my rooms at this time of the night, ask that question?) when the first hint at disappointment of the night visitor gradually realizing him being an uninvited guest appears expressed by the epithets (his coarse broken voice) and his moment hesitation presented by epiphoric repetition (I'll speak in half a minute.

Give me half a minute, please) although his strong belief in Pip and his admiration remain unshakable. The atmosphere of growing suspense and tension maintained in the previous part bursts into a well-considered moment of recognition causing a tsunami of thoughts and feelings that threatens to devour the principle character. Pip's night guest turns out to be the convict he helped escape from pursuit long time ago – and now this man so suddenly and unscrupulously interferes with Pip's life.

In order the reader forms a clear view of the situation, the author gives a flashback into the past events proceeding the present ones with a perfect use of causative-consecutive ties and connections. It is necessary to point <https://assignbuster.com/charles-dickens-great-expectations/>

out that repetition takes various forms in this paragraph. By means of anaphoric reiteration (For I knew him, but I new him, I knew him now!) the writer sets an unmistakable rhyme reinforcing with every beat of Pip's heart his feeling of realization and anxiety that is immediately communicated to the reader.

No need to take a file, no need to take the handkerchief, no need to hug himself – there is something sinister about the fact that the phrase “ no need to” is repeated so many times that the reader may find disturbing. As always when a repetition takes place, it results in a parallel arrangement of constructions (had driven away, had scattered, had swept us to the churchyard) which is meant to accentuate certain significant details of the past horrible for Pip.

The constant use of the verb “ to know” which is definitely a key word of the paragraph deserves special attention, as it is employed so as to emphasize the very fact of recognition. Moreover, the author resorts to a special choice of words aimed at lending an additional expressiveness to the moment described to produce the greatest possible effect achieved by the smallest possible means: to detect, to recall, feature, recognition, identity, suspect, consciousness, distinctly etc.

The dramatic opposition of the characters previously introduced by Dickens finds its further development in the course of narration when being under the influence of moment hesitation Pip finally gives his hands to the convict – reluctantly – who grasps them heartily, and kisses them, and holds them which forms a kind of antithesis in the attitude of the personages towards each other. While the convict interprets Pip's unconscious resignation as a

good sign even going to embrace him, the protagonist overcomes his shock and astonishment to keep the distance (I laid a hand upon his breast and put him away) raising his voice in a fit of anger and in his desperate desire to be as far from this man as possible. The author favors reiterations in great abundance expressing one and the same idea from different angles to reveal Pip's hesitation, lack of self-confidence with the help of root repetition (grateful, gratitude, to thank, to be thanked), anaphora (I am glad, I am glad) and chiasmus (I deserve to be thanked, you have come to thank me).

As the author puts it Pip loses his self-possession not knowing what to do and the SD of aposiopesis (But surely you must understand – I...) is an excellent proof of it. The last phrase of the sentence bringing up the paragraph may be regarded as a logical summing up of what was previously said presenting the reader with a magnificent metaphor “the words died away on my tongue” proving to be an apotheosis of Pip's temporary state of numbness and shock.

While analyzing the text we must take into account the fact that both characters are presented in evolution – but each of them in his own unique way. At the beginning of the excerpt Pip is self-confident, self-reliant, a bit arrogant considering himself to be a master of the situation although this state does not last long. Pip tries to keep at the same level of formality but he is confused, nervous, anxious. Pip recognizes him but he's unwilling to renew the chance intercourse with him (But our ways are different ways).

In the course of narration he suffers lack of words and numbness while concerning the convict Dickens makes a well-thought-out shift in the mood of the personage shifting from friendly tone to somewhat ironic and self-assured one. The convict also repeats himself but deliberately as it produces

quite a different, even opposite impression on the reader – his speech is now imbued with bitter disappointment and irony seems to be a perfect tool for its expression.

Apart from this he tries to sound poetic (many a thousand mile of stormy water, since you and me was out on them lone shivering marshes) and all the dialect and uneducated features of his speech prominent not only in phonetics, but also in vocabulary and syntax cannot prevent the reader from perception of his romantic nature. In the stream of consciousness Pip turns off to his past again remembering some significant details about his acquaintance with the convict.

Dickens resorts to anaphora (I was a poor boy, and to a poor boy they) to lay a special stress on the fact mentioned intensifying it with oxymoron (they were a little fortune) to lend probability and additional expressiveness to the description of Pip's joyless childhood full of hardship and privation. The fact that the convict gave some money to Pip finds its reflection in the present when Pip is trying to repay to him to split all the bonds between them and get rid of the feeling of obligation. The protagonist's actions insult the convict who does not care of money, burning them down.

It is necessary to point out that Pip's actions are connected polysyndetically to indicate Pip's hurriedness and nervousness whereas the convict's actions are joined asyndetically displaying perfectly his self-reliance. The contradictions of the convict's manifest themselves in the recurring SD of chiasmus (with a smile that was like a frown, and with a frown that was like a smile) employed by the author confuse Pip even more when the night guest puts a question trying to sound greatly and deeply ironically – May I make so
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bold as ask you how you have done well? laying a special stress on “ how” which is italicized. The question influences Pip in a strange and frightening way and the author reinforces his hidden fears using the emphatic it-structure in the following sentence – It was only now I began to tremble – in order to mark the moment when Pip’s numbness is ready to set him free giving way to much wilder feelings and emotions. To impart to the paragraph its own stylistic value Dickens resorts to the SD of metonymy (lips had parted and shaped some words that were without sound) to deepen Pip’s hesitation and feeling of uncertainty.

The question is piled on the question while the convict deliberately disparages himself (a mere warmint) to let Pip feel in full measure, keenly, acutely the convict’s ironic attitude towards him as a naive boy who thanks his lucky stars having no slightest idea of his real benefactor. Along with the epithet “ wildly” the author make use of a colorful simile – with my heart beating like a heavy hammer of disorder action – and the SD of suspension (as to the first figure now.

Five? As to the 1st letter of this layer’s name, now. Would it be J?) to introduce the reader into the final part of the extract under consideration containing the denouement of the whole text. The final part of the text presents the climax of the excerpt with Pip’s state of shock being underlined in a number of ways and exaggerated. The author’s chief weapon is hyperbole. The abundant use of hyperbolic plural orms (disappointments, dangers, disgraces, consequences) blended with metaphoric (all the truth of my position came flashing on me, rushed in in such multitude) and some other hyperbolic expressions (I was borne down, had to struggle for every

breath, could not have spoken one word though it had been to save my life, suffocating) give the reader a vivid sense of revelation befallen Pip who is about to faint which is proved metaphorically by the author (the room began to surge and turn) as well as metonymically (bringing the face that I now well remembered).

The final part is based on the SD of suspense which makes the idea of revelation more prominent and surely holds the reader's attention till the very last word. The use of emphatic it-construction (It's me wot has done it!) deepens the reader's understanding of it. The last paragraph is practically built up on parallel constructions backed up by anaphoric repetitions (as ever I earned a guinea, that guinea should go to you, as ever speculated and got rich, you should get rich) and the SD of antithesis (I lived rough, that you should live smooth, I worked hard that you should be above work).

Rhetorical questions that do not need any answers but stimulate some meditations upon the real state of affairs strengthen the crash of all Pip's great expectations. Disparaging himself deliberately the convict desires to sacrifice a lot for Pip's sake that emphasizes his magnanimity and Pip's pettiness. The young man's happiness is the only compensation he needs and exclaiming – I could make a gentleman – and, Pip, you are him! – he sounds proud and satisfied with what he has done.

In his novel Dickens touches upon some burning issues of his time in a life story of a young man whose being poor and lonely gets a chance to change all his life with the help of money and the power they give abandoning his friends and family, almost betraying the only people who ever loved him. With an ironic and satiric touch the author uncrowns all the great

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expectations of the young man who is subject to go through disappointments of his adult life much harder to overcome than childhood ones. For me the great value of the extract consists in my desire to read the whole story appeared while analyzing this text.

To tell you the truth I've experienced some controversially feelings reading this passage trying to understand it completely and utterly. As they say good deeds are those you are not telling of so no matter how proud you are of your success and your achievements concerning some other person's destiny you should not come to him to point out the connection between your actions and his fortune in order to avoid the annoying feeling of obligation, especially in case you do not know this person well enough to make him feel obliged.

From my personal experience I cannot but say that friends and family will realize themselves whether they should thank you or not, as regards some other people you've ever secretly helped – sometimes it's even a pleasure to watch them coping with their lives knowing that you've taken part in their success but keeping it to yourself to enjoy privately. Good deeds will be rewarded in any case – no need to force people thanking you or this gratitude will bring no good.