

Novel assignment

[Literature](#), [Novel](#)



Novel Assignment 1 H Mrs. Cox Great Expectations, Charles Dickens

Commentary Dickens is probably the most famous, and he is surely the most beloved, author of those you will read in this class for your novel assignments. *Great Expectations* is filled with autobiographical elements. Even though almost every chapter reflects some affinity with Dickens's own life story, *Great Expectations* is indeed a highly wrought work of art. It is to that, the literature (art), that we address our reading. However, if you are interested in Dickens's life and in how it enters into his craft, you will want to read Edgar Johnson's *Charles Dickens: His Tragedy and Triumph*, two volumes (London: Gollancz, 1953), and Christopher Hibbert's *The Making of Charles Dickens* (London: Penguin, 1983). *Great Expectations*, like many of Dickens's novels, was first published in a magazine, in weekly installments over an eight-month period. Thus, readers might influence the direction of the plot by writing to Dickens, or by not buying some of the installments when their interest diminished. Again, while a study of such forces of readership and publishing mode might provide insight into the creative process, the plot, or other aspects of the novel, for our purposes it is sufficient to base our analysis on our experience of reading it as a complete novel. Yet, if you are interested in studying the effects of serialization on the creative process, read J. A. Bull's *The Framework of Fiction* (London: MacMillan, 1988). Not until the 1950s was Charles Dickens widely considered by university faculties as material for serious literary study. But if one is to judge by the quantity of scholarly attention to Dickens's novels and their prominence in the university curricula around the world today, Charles Dickens's greatness as an artist of the English language is assured. One of

the main faults found in Dickens's art has been the abundance of sentimentality, defined as false emotion or emotion that is excessive to the situation at hand, forced or exaggerated. Dickens is the master of the sentimental, especially in the contexts of women and children, the poor, love, and family ties. Pathos, too, plays a large role in the sentimental. The pathetic we look down upon in the sense of feeling sorry for, as opposed to feeling with, or empathetic. *Great Expectations* eludes definition. It is neither truly comic nor tragic. It has elements of the romance, and it can be seen as a fairy tale. Indeed, it seems to be a fairy tale wherein a bad wish is fulfilled and then the wisher hopes for a reversal of that fulfillment. It is certainly a novel about the pitfalls of growing up. It is an expression of psychological realism as it describes the transformative journey toward shedding the lingering guilt and shame of childhood. Of what is young Pip guilty? Perhaps he is just guilty of being a boy. He is an orphan who is taught that he is a burden to his sister; he is therefore guilty of being orphaned, guilty of his parents' deaths. Pip's quest for money and gentility, too, caused by the materialistic society in which he lives, can be a source of guilt. Dickens's broad humor is always employed in the service of social criticism. It is the individual that Dickens loved; he detested oppressive and corrupt institutions. With humor, namely in the form of satire, he ferociously took on the growing materialism of the state and therefore the citizenry of nineteenth century England. He is looked to as one of the greatest reformers of his day. Even cherished and sacred institutions such as marriage did not escape his critical scrutiny. Whatever and however much is written about Dickens, it is the experience of reading his works that endears him to us. His

prose explodes with an engulfing vigor that carries us into his world and sustains us there with kaleidoscopic images. We envision a panorama of the animate and the inanimate; we indulge in a connection between reader and character, between reader and place, between reader and action that arises before us, around us, as a palpable atmosphere that we retain forever. "Dickens's England" suggests a specific historic period and culture almost as strongly as the phrase "the Victorian period." *Great Expectations* was begun in 1860, at the height of Victorian optimism. England was flaunting its wealth and expanding its dominion around the world. Its "expectations" were not merely "great," they were boundless. Thus *Great Expectations*, with its moral pattern demonstrating the futility of ignorant worldly ambitions and its classical and biblical equation of sorrow with wisdom, constitutes an oblique but dark sermon to a people who thought they could climb to heaven by building a tower of gold.

Suggested Further Readings
Leavis, F. R. and Q. D. Dickens the Novelist. London: Chatto and Windus, 1970.
Schwarzbach, F. S. Dickens and the City. London: The Athlone, 1979.
Smith, Grahame. Dickens, Money, and Society. Berkeley: University of California, 1968.

Written Assignment Choose one of the following topics and write a 2 to 3 page essay.

1. Discuss Dickens's use of symbolism in the novel.
2. Compare and contrast two characters in the novel.
3. Discuss an important theme in the novel.
4. Discuss the importance of a minor character in the novel.
5. Pip as an adult tells us about the significance of the way he was brought up. Comment on his reliability. You might focus, for example, on Pip's remembrances of his love for Estella.
6. Analyze the "pathetic" in the novel as opposed to the "empathetic."
7. One critic says that *Great*

Expectations is Dickens's penance for subservience to false values. Explain that. 8. Some say that the Victorian novel's purpose was to reinforce readers' acceptance of the status quo. Refute that, showing how Great Expectations is subversive sociologically. English 1 H 2010-2011

Journal/Reading Log As you read Charles Dickens's Great Expectations, you should keep a journal/reading log. This will build your vocabulary and will help you to review quickly for exams and discussions. You may use the same journal you used for your first novel journal if you like. Please use a spiral notebook or one that is bound for your journal. Use blue or black ink only.

Your journal will be due the same day the paper is due, Tuesday, June 1. Your journal should be divided into the following sections: Comments/Questions

As you read each set of chapters, write any thoughts or ideas you may have.

Make sure you have many comments and questions, not just one or two.

Summary Briefly summarize each set of chapters: Chapters 1-10 Chapters 11-20 Chapters 21-30 Chapters 31-40 Chapters 41-50 Chapters 51-59

Characters Jot down the names and a brief description of any new characters that are introduced in the set of chapters. Also comment on any changes former characters experience. Vocabulary Finally, for each set of chapters, jot down any words with which you are not familiar. Later look up the definitions to these words, and write them in your journal—a minimum of five words per set of chapters; you need to include the parts of speech.

(Remember a good vocabulary is a key to success.) There were quite a few themes associated with the story Great Expectations. One of the most delightful themes dealt with "infatuation and how it compares to and relates to love. Infatuation is basically an obsession of a person. There is really no

specific reason behind their infatuation, therefore this feeling is often a short period of time. The person doesn't know what these feelings are, this is normally why they mistake it for love. Love, on the other hand, is an strong affectionate apprehension for another person. You can evaluate the difference between love and infatuation with the saying " All that glitters is not gold", the glitter delusion being infatuation and the gold being love, the real thing. As a person grows up and experiences their thoughts with many other people, the difference between love and infatuation becomes clearer. This is because the person can compare feelings they have felt in the past, with their present feelings. In Great Expectations we notice how Pip's fascination for Estella is " short in duration", as most infatuations are. Even though Estella is arrogant and rude, Pip is not only infatuated with her good looks and riches, but also almost envies it. In fact the embarrassment Estella puts Pip through, causes Pip to feel very lowly of himself and the way he has been brought up. It makes Pip's expectations to change from expecting to be Joe's blacksmith novice, to studying to develop into a gentleman noticed and accepted by Estella. As years pass, Estella continues to play with Pip's heart, and Pip continues to completely still have feelings for her. Later, Estella marries a man named Bently Drummle, only making Pip to, yet again, confess his love to Estella. Estella tells Pip " I know what you mean as form of words, but nothing more." (Dickens, 892) She knows what Pip is trying to tell her, but she doesn't see how he could love her. Apart from of that, and the fact that Estella is to be married, Pip still continues to daydream about Estella. Soon, Pip starts to gain knowledge about her, and her past, from Miss Havisham. These talks with Pip helps

make Miss Havisham into a kinder and happier individual. He feels that he cannot win Estella, and that the world around him has changed, Pip decides to propose to Biddy. He doesn't even have a reason to marry Biddy, except for the fact that he feels a failure and misplaced, and weak. However, in his search to look her, he finds another thing. He is shocked that Biddy is already married, to Joe! Pip leaves not yet accepting with neither Biddy nor Joe. Several years after that, Pip pays a visit to see Joe and Biddy. He finally settles everything with them and meets their son, little Pip. This shows that Pip has matured, and is prepared to begin a fresh, happier start with the people from his past. Soon after, Pip goes to the Satis House and sees Estella after so many years. For the first time, he saw the disappointed, softened light of once proud eyes, and felt the friendly touch of then once insensible hand (Dickens 935). Of course this means Estella has changed too. Her experience with her unsuccessful marriage with Drummle has taught her how it feels to be hurt. Being tormented so many years was a stronger consequence than Miss Havisham's teachings. These experiences have given her the heart to recognize what Pip's heart once was. Even though it is not sure whether the two characters do ultimately fall in love, in the end they both have found a state of contentment. Another good example of a character's experience distinguishing love and infatuation is with Dickens' character, Biddy. Though Pip has always seen his relationship with Biddy as brother and sister like, Biddy has seen it in a whole different way. She has always had a tremendous crush on Pip, but she doesn't really know why she feels this way about him. Maybe it's because they grew up with one another, and spent time with one another, but she really has no

definite answer. These factors allow this crush to apparently fall under the category of infatuation. Throughout most of *Great Expectations* she tries to pursue Pip, but he never falls for her. The reason being that he's not only not interested in Biddy, but also because he is continually trying to be the kind of gentlemen that will make Estella notice him. To add to that he leaves for London. These actions made by Pip eventually become factors that make Biddy realize that the "strong" feelings that Pip has for Estella will always be a part of his character. She will always hold a place in his heart. This also makes Biddy realize she really has no definite reason why she likes Pip so much. Meanwhile, with Pip gone, Biddy and Joe find that they have more time to spend with one another. Biddy teaches Joe to read and write. With their relationship at a higher level, they realize they share many of the same values and morals. This causes the two characters to begin to become closer. Biddy's experiences with Pip and Joe has made her realize what love and happiness really is, and she finds those feelings in Joe. In conclusion, love and infatuation have both their positive and negative effects. Infatuation may mislead you to believe that's you're in love. But most importantly it provides "experience for people to grow and learn about what kind of qualities they cherish and what kind of people they like to spend time with" ("Infatuation"). Infatuation also teaches us that it is truly what is in the inside that counts. In the long run, it is what is skin deep keeps that keeps old feelings seem so new. As both of the relationships analyzed above show, infatuation helps you realize that passion without reason is just a waste of time. So, why settle for all that glitters, when you can have gold?