

Great expectations by
charles dickens, and
jane eyre by charlotte
bronte essay



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The purpose of this essay is to explore how in the novels 'Great Expectations' and 'Jane Eyre' by Charles Dickens and Charlotte Bronte, the authors use language to create suspense and tension and how this enhances the storyline for a reader.

Both these books were written and published during the 18th century and display many of the defining characteristics of a novel written during this time, the popular genre of the time being gothic style which both these books are. Novels back then would not have been written as one book but rather as several short chapter like stories which would have been published over a period of time serially possibly in a local newspaper or magazine, this often creates tension as the chapters would often end abruptly with a cliff-hanger to keep a reader interested. To understand where the initial ideas for the novels came from it would help to look at the author's backgrounds and childhoods as often the storyline centres around and event in the authors own history. Charles Dickens the author of great expectations was born at Portsmouth on the 7th February 1812 into Georgian Britain.

Dickens had a troubled childhood in many ways, having to work from a young age to keep his family out of the debtors prison where they had already been. Even in his later years these early events would have haunted Dickens and we can see influences of this in great expectations through Pip's desolate future. Charlotte Bronte also had an unfortunate childhood, born into Georgian England in 1817 she also witnessed many traumas and set backs. In her early years Charlotte's two sisters both died of illness causing an unsettlement within the family; Charlotte spent a short time at Roe Head School but soon left and set up her own school with her remaining sisters.

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Both these novels are the epitome of gothic literature displaying many of the defining traits such as a vulnerable main character and powerful adjectives to describe the setting which is often a mysterious and eerie place such as an abandoned mansion or castle which sets the tone of the story to come.

Often the story is told in a first person view style allowing the reader to connect more with the surroundings and feel more involved. Great expectations by Dickens tells the story of a young orphaned boy whom the reader knows as Pip, the story begins in a graveyard where Pip is visiting the grave of his family his mother, father and five brothers and sisters when suddenly an escaped convict who we learn to be called Magwitch surprises Pip by emerging from behind a headstone and threatening him demanding food and tools. The story then follows Pip as he grows up with the bleak prospect of becoming a blacksmith until one day his life takes a turn as he experiences Magwitch again. Jane Eyre by Charlotte Bronte begins a very sad tale, the story of a young girl named Jane who after being orphaned went to live with her mean aunt who begrudgingly took on Jane to fulfil an oath that she made to her husband, Jane's uncle whilst on his death bed.

Jane grows up for many years a very over mature yet sad and sallow child until she is sent away to Lowood school where she stays for many years. She later becomes governess at Thornfield hall where she meets her sweetheart and later marries Mr Rochester at which point the story ends a very happy ending one in which Jane says she is very happy and content with her life with Mr Rochester. These stories show many defining links both to the gothic genre of writing and each other, both the stories are set in a mysterious and intriguing place, in the case of great expectation' an old graveyard and in <https://assignbuster.com/great-expectations-by-charles-dickens-and-jane-eyre-by-charlotte-bronte-essay/>

Jane Eyre a big old mansion house. Both the stories begin by studying the life of a young unfortunate and vulnerable child Jane in Jane Eyre and Pip in Great expectations, at the beginning of both of the stories both the present and the future seems pretty bleak for both of the characters as does the current setting but again similarly in both novels the storyline reveals a dramatic twist and both the novels finish on a much more positive note one in which the main character that the reader has felt such sorry heartfelt feelings for is contented. The two authors are able to create such an effect using language effectively to control what a readers thoughts and opinions on a character or setting are.

I am going to study how the authors use emotive language to create suspense and tension thoroughly focusing mainly on one extract from each text. From great expectations I will be using a section of chapter1 and from Jane Eyre a section of chapter2, I have chosen these two particular extracts because I feel that many different suspense and tension creating techniques are applied here and sum up the novels mood well. At the beginning of great expectations the author Charles Dickens immediately sets the scene of what is to come and gives the reader some background information on this character who we know as Pip but does not give away to much information immediately giving a sense of mystery and tempting the reader to read on. 'Ours was the marsh country down by the river', ' this bleak place', these opening lines allow the reader to create a clear picture in their mind of this seemingly dull and dreary place. In the first two lines of this extract Dickens uses these four words, ' marsh' ' river' ' river' and ' sea', the reader very much sees this setting as a watery place so likely to be quite miserable and

depressing. This technique is called pathetic fallacy wherein the author uses the description of the setting to emphasize the mood of the character so in this case Pip is likely to be feeling quite fed up and bedraggled, it would all seem a bit overwhelming and a lost cause to him.

What could quite easily be any old graveyard is somewhat brought alive by Dickens and his use of very powerful adjectives 'bleak', 'overgrown' to create a sense of helplessness and despair. Repetition is also a technique that Dickens employs to create tension; by repeating words of the same syllable he can create an often onomatopoeic effect on the reader. All in the same few sentences he uses three very onomatopoeic sentences, 'dead and buried', 'dead and buried', 'dark flat wilderness', the effect this creates on a reader is remarkable, d d d d is what the reader over and over again hears picturing a dull and dingy situation which is the effect I think that Dickens was aiming for when writing it. We get a picture of this 'savage lair' to which he feels he can't escape in his insignificance as a 'small bundle of shivers' whilst he is battered by this wind that Dickens personifies to be not blowing but 'rushing' creating tension. By now the reader would have a fairly clear and vivid picture of this terrible place and situation and may feel for Pip which again adds to the enjoyment for the reader as they feel more involved and able to relate. And it is then nearing the end of the description of the surroundings that out of these terrible surroundings all dark and dingy and threatening arises this terrible man that the story then follows.

Magwitch an escaped convict from a nearby prison ship 'started up from among the graves' and threatens Pip this helpless wreck with death unless he steals for Magwitch. Again Dickens uses very strong adjectives to <https://assignbuster.com/great-expectations-by-charles-dickens-and-jane-eyre-by-charlotte-bronte-essay/>

describe Magwitch and his demands to make him come over as this terrible vicious and fierce convict which we later learn to be untrue of him.'Hold your noise cried a terrible voice' a terrible voice, to go with a terrible man the reader would think, as he makes frightening promises to 'cut your throat'. Similarly to great expectations in Jane Eyre Charlotte Bronte uses onomatopoeia to help create in the readers mind this scene in which Jane has been locked in the fearsome red room by her cruel aunt. Chapter 2 describes to us the red room as this frightening and tormenting place and much tension and suspense is created by Charlotte Bronte's use of onomatopoeia and strong adjectives.

Jane says how she felt that the 'daylight began to forsake the red room' using the word 'forsake' conjuring up images of Jane being spiritually lost as even the light of the sun has deserted her. Even the idea of the red room itself arouses feelings of anger just from the colour red. Bronte then uses pathetic fallacy to suggest Jane's mood through describing the weather that afternoon, the word 'beclouded' showing Jane's mood as depressed and sad, as does the onomatopoeic word 'drear' allowing the reader to almost hear Jane's spirits sinking. It is raining also, 'rain' being a word that connects with a certain part of the readers mind to create images of sadness and as in great expectations Bronte personifies the wind to be 'beating' and sound savage and formidable. Bronte as Dickens did uses repetition 'the staircase window' and 'the wind howling' to set the scene of this frightening place and personification of the wind to a howling wolf a scary and frightening image. She uses alliteration too 'I grew by degrees' to suggest growth creating

tension in itself, she uses similes likening one thing to another creating a frightening image ' cold as a stone'.

There are many similarities between the two author's styles of writing and they use many of the same tension and suspense creating techniques, both use pathetic fallacy to suggest the mood of the character and also a lot of personification to make the images of frightening scenes more real and relevant. The basic structure of the novels is also a contributor to the overall effects of suspense and tension that is created. Particularly at the beginning of both the novels the sentence length is very short creating a fast rhythm and fast moving snappy storyline, this creates tension as it always seems as if the storyline is on the brink of a big development or twist. This short line length is especially noticeable where there is a big a big storyline twist close to an action point such as in great expectations where Pip meets Magwitch in the graveyard for the first time. I found that as a reader this alone contributed to my enjoyment of the novels as the storyline seems more exciting as it moves along at a fast pace keeping the reader interested. To match the chapters are also fairly short allowing both the authors the ability to switch between different scenes to keep the reader always interested and from the very beginning a readers imagination is captured by the dramatic and exciting action packed introduction to the novel. I think that the answers to the questions suggested in the title are that both the authors use many language techniques to create suspense and tension, through the use of techniques such as personification and alliteration they are able to bring a scene alive making it more appealing to a reader, they use repetition to create images of no hope and despair and similes to emphasize a objects

qualities and relate it to the situation. Without the language techniques employed by both authors the novels would not be nearly as good at setting the scene and giving vivid descriptions of the settings in which the reader has to picture themselves.