

Climbing social ladders, a characterization of pip assignment

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Climbing Social Ladders, a characterization of Pip Throughout our lives we meet people who go through many changes as they advance further in society; some changes are for the better of the individual, others not so much. These changes can be caused by monetary gain, advancements in their field of work, or a group of new friends. For example, in the novel *Great Expectations* by Charles Dickens, Pip goes through many changes in hopes of appeasing the heart and standards of the gorgeous yet cold-hearted Estella, changes such as being eager to self-improve, becoming snobby, and being shameful of his origins.

From very early in the novel you discover that Pip is ambitious to better himself. For example, after confronting Estella he wishes to become refined, “ I took the opportunity of being alone/ to look at my coarse hands and my common clothes. My opinion of those accessories was not favorable. They had never troubled me before, but they troubled me now, as vulgar appendages. I determined to ask Joe why he had ever taught me to call/ jacks/ to be called knaves” (71).

Here Pip is realizing that he himself, for example his clothing and knowledge, is not up to the standards of ‘ high society’ and Estella, especially Estella. He is also realizing that if he wishes to have any chance of anchoring Estella’s heart he must get acquainted with finer clothing and become more knowledgeable. Then, Pip wants Biddy to teach to him every ounce of knowledge she has: “ The felicitous idea occurred to me/ when I woke that the best step I could take towards making myself uncommon was to get out of Biddy everything she knew” (84).

Basically, Pip knows that he must become uncommon for Estella and figures that Biddy is very intelligent and can help him reach his goal of being more knowledgeable. By being taught by Biddy Pip is hoping that during his visits to Satis House that Estella will see that he is paving the way to becoming refined. Lastly, Pip strives for self-improvement when he arrives in London and is diligent in his studies, " After two or three days, when I had established myself in my room and had gone backwards and forwards to London several times and had ordered all I wanted of my tradesmen, Mr.

Pocket/ advised my attending certain places in London for the acquisition of such mere rudiments as I wanted, and my investing him with the functions of explainer and director of all my studies. " (214). Once Pip has made himself at home in his new living quarters he and Mr. Pocket have a conversation about how he will be doing things while in London so he can become more acquainted with ' high society'. Pip places Mr. Pocket in charge of his studies in order that he can reach his full potential in becoming a man of high class and ultimately be appealing to Estella.

For the most part, Pip only becomes eager for self-improvement due to the fact that he realizes by improving himself he will bring himself closer to getting into Estella's heart. It appears that once Pip becomes exposed to ' high society' at Miss Havisham's he starts to become snobby. From there his level of snobbery increases steadily throughout his journey. A shining example of Pip being snobby is when he and Joe confront each other in London, " As to his shirt, and his coat collar, they were perplexing to reflect upon ??? insoluble mysteries both.

Why should a man scrape himself to that extent before he could consider himself full dressed? Why should he suppose it necessary to be purified by suffering for his holiday clothes? ” (242). Here it seems that Pip is looking down upon the clothing that Joe is wearing as if it is inferior to his own. Also, the last portion of the quote seems that Pip is expressing that why did Joe even bother dressing in his nice clothes he would have looked better in his work clothes.

Another example would be when Pip and Estella are conversing and she brings up Pip’s new friendship with the Pale young gentlemen, “ Since your change of fortune and prospects, you have changed your companions,” said Estella. “ Naturally” said I. “ And necessarily,” she added, in a haughty tone; “ what was fit company for you once would be quite unfit company for you now. ” In my conscience, I doubt very much whether I had any lingering intention left of going to see Joe; but if I had, this observation put it to flight” (257).

In this quote Pip is being snobby when he states he is naturally changing his acquaintances. The funny thing is that he is even acknowledging that as he climbs the social ladder he must abandon his old friendships, such as his companionship with Joe, so those from his past do not make him look bad in front of his new high society acquaintances. After Estella tells Pip what is good and bad company for him he decides not to make the trips back home to see Joe. It seems he does this so he can show Estella how he is changing so he can be more appealing to her.

Once again, Pip gets a snobby attitude towards Trabb's boy when he is trying to embarrass him: " Casting my eyes along the street at a certain point of progress, I beheld Trabb's boy approaching. / I advanced with that expression of countenance, and was rather congratulating my self on my success. / as I passed him, his teeth loudly chattered in his head, and with every mark of extreme humiliation he prostrated himself in the dust" (266). When Pip gives Trabb's boy the look of countenance it is as if he is expressing to Trabb's boy do not even looking my direction you are not worth my precious time.

Yet, as he keeps making his way down the street he prides himself on being snobby; it is almost like he is playing a part and thinking I could get used to this. Basically, throughout Pip's journey to become part of Estella's ' high society' the degree and reoccurrence of his snobbery steadily increases. But as we already know he is only doing this to please Estella; this is not who he truly is or is it? As Pip comes closer and closer to becoming a man of high society you discover that he becomes ashamed of his origins.

For example, Pip gets embarrassed when he gets word that Joe is going to sojourn in London and is coming to visit him: " Let me confess exactly with what feeling I looked forward to Joe's coming. Not with pleasure, though I was bound to him by so many ties/ if I had could have kept him away by paying money. I certainly would have paid money" (237-238). Here Pip is panicking that that Joe is going to see him. Pip does not want this to happen because all of Pip's high-class acquaintances will see what Pip came from.

Pip believes if everyone knows of his origins then will all look down upon him and not accept him.

Pip is again ashamed of Joe when he arrives at his quarters for their visit, “As the time approached I should have liked to run away, but the Avenger pursuant to orders was in the hall, and presently I heard Joe on the staircase, I knew it was Joe by his clumsy manner / and by the time it took him to read the names of the floor in the course of his accent” (238-239). As Joe is coming to the door Pip is so nervous that those around, for example Jaggers, Herbert and Drummle, will make fun of Joe for not being up to their standards.

Also Pip is ashamed to have Joe around because he believes Joe will again get clumsy like he did when he and Pip visited Miss Havisham's, ultimately embarrassing him. Lastly, Pip is ashamed when he intends to go back home to apologize to Joe for their quarrel during Joes visit to London: “It was clear that I must repair to our town next day, and in the first flow of my repentance it was equally clear that I must stay at Joes. But when I secured my box-place by tomorrows coach / I / began to invent reasons and make excuses for putting up at the Blue Boar. ” (245).

It seems that Pip is being courteous enough to apologize to Joe for his behavior during his visit, and then goes off and ruins it all by making excuses for not staying at his old house. Pip does this because he is worried that if word gets to Estella that he was having confrontations with unfit company she may not accept him. Overall, it seems that Pip is ashamed of his origins due to the fact that they remind him of what he use to be and what he is

attempting to become. Throughout the novel, Dickens uses Pip as an example of how we humans will conform to fit in.

In Pip's case he evolves so he can capture the heart of Estella. The irony of it all is that Pip goes through all of these transformations to make himself a better person, but in the end all they did was bring him down as a human being. For example, many of us change ourselves so we can fit in and not feel alienated. These changes may include wearing the hottest clothes, hanging out with the 'in' crowd, having all of the best electronics, etcetera. However, as all of us change we can lose ourselves in all of this hype and become people we never imagined, nor desired, to become.