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Study Guide

for

**Great
Expectations**

by Charles Dickens



New York, New York Columbus, Ohio Woodland Hills, California Peoria, Illinois

Meet Charles Dickens



*If Columbus found a new world,
Dickens created one—and peopled it with
men and women.*

—Arthur Quiller-Couch, Dickens's
Fellowship Dinner, 1931

Charles Dickens is known as one of the most successful and inventive English novelists of all time. During the course of his career as a writer, Dickens wrote over 5 million words and created over 2,000 characters. His writing is distinct—rich with humor, drama, and satire—and his characters are some of the most well known in the history of literature. Dickens was drawn to creating strikingly eccentric, or odd, characters, often from the lower economic classes of nineteenth-century England. These characters and their worlds delighted and moved readers and helped to make Dickens the most popular writer of his time. According to critic G.K. Chesterton:

His books are full of baffled villains stalking out or cowardly bullies kicked downstairs. But the villains and the cowards are such delightful people that the reader always hopes the villain will put his head through a side window and make a last remark; or that the bully will say one more thing, even from the bottom of the stairs.

In addition to writing short stories and novels, Dickens wrote essays and journalistic pieces, and edited a weekly periodical filled with fiction, poetry, and essays. First titled *Household Words*, the magazine was later retitled *All the Year Round*. Dickens contributed to this publication several serialized novels, including *Great Expectations*, and writings on political and social issues.

Dickens was born on February 7, 1812, in Landport, Portsea, England. He was the second child and eldest son of eight children. Dickens's father, who worked as a clerk in the Navy Pay Office, was a spendthrift who often mismanaged the family money. In 1822 the family moved to London and soon found itself in financial crisis. The family was forced to live in poverty, and Dickens was no longer able to go to school.

One of the most traumatic periods of his life began in February 1824, when his father was sent to debtors prison. Young Dickens, only twelve years old, was forced to go to work for several months pasting labels on bottles. This experience was painful and socially humiliating to him, and images of the factory haunted him for the rest of his life. These images provided a backdrop to much of his fiction, which often focused on class issues; the plight of the poor and oppressed; and lost, suffering children. As an adult, he championed social and political causes designed to help the poor, prisoners, and children.

Dickens became a reporter in 1832, and in 1833 he began publishing short stories and essays. In 1836 he married Catherine Hogarth. The couple had ten children, but their marriage was unhappy and ended in 1858.

Dickens's successful career as a novelist began in 1837 with the publication of *The Pickwick Papers*. Other novels include *A Christmas Carol*, *Oliver Twist*, and *David Copperfield*. He made readers laugh, cry, and confront social evils and institutions of his day. On his death in 1870, a *London Times* article praised Dickens for displaying "an extraordinary combination of intellectual and moral qualities."

Introducing the Novel

I deliberated with an aching heart whether I would not get down when we changed horses and walk back, and have another evening at home, and a better parting. We changed, and I had not made up my mind . . . We changed again, and yet again, and it was now too late and too far to go back, and I went on. And the mists had all solemnly risen now, and the world lay spread before me.

—Pip (Chapter 19)

These words reveal the thoughts of one of Dickens's most famous characters as he starts a new life with great expectations as well as doubts. *Great Expectations* was Dickens's thirteenth novel, and he wrote it when he was at the height of his success as a novelist. It traces the life and experiences of Philip Pirrip, or Pip, as he comes of age in the early- to mid-nineteenth century.

In *Great Expectations*, Pip tells his own story as an adult looking back on his younger years. When the novel begins, Pip is a poor orphan who seems destined to become a blacksmith like his brother-in-law and live out his life in the marsh area of Kent, England. An unexpected chain of events, however, thrusts him into a completely different world and way of life. Over time, Pip's new life becomes much more complicated than he imagined it would be, and he is forced to reevaluate his values and the values of the society in which he finds himself. Critic Harold Bloom says:

Great Expectations is carefully organized so that at each new turn of events the main character and narrator, Philip Pirrip (Pip), learns more about himself by learning more about the complex social web in which he is enmeshed.

Pip's society is a complicated one indeed. The Industrial Revolution of the late 1700s and early 1800s helped England to become an especially powerful and prosperous country. During the Victorian Age (named after Queen Victoria, who reigned from 1832 to 1901), the British Empire included countries on every continent. English society as a whole benefited from advances and innovations in technology and science. Not everyone shared in the

nation's wealth, however, and British society, which had always been class conscious, became even more sharply divided along class lines.

In *Great Expectations*, as in his other novels, Dickens dramatizes the moral struggles and faults of the age. Bert Hornback, the author of a book about this Dickens classic, has called it "a brilliantly conceived attack on the vices that most threaten human society: selfishness and greed." Dickens implies that a society fascinated by wealth and power is too far removed from basic moral values. The characters that he holds up as examples of moral behavior are hardworking, simple, and compassionate.

While reading Dickens, it is useful to keep in mind that all his novels were published serially, or in weekly or monthly installments in magazines. To keep the reader coming back for more, Dickens ended each installment with a "cliffhanger." The chapters were then published in book form after the serial was completed. Although some novels had been published in installments before Dickens's time, he set the standard for serials in nineteenth-century Britain with his first novel, *The Pickwick Papers* (1837).

The serial form allowed Dickens to introduce a large number of characters and develop the reader's familiarity with them. It also allowed the author to respond to the likes and dislikes of his readers as he was writing the novel. People would write to Dickens or to the magazine in which the installments were published and give him their opinions.

Although his novel *David Copperfield*, published in 1850, was more autobiographical, Dickens drew on some of his own childhood perceptions of the world in his portrayal of Pip. The character of Pip was shaped by many of the personal details of Dickens's youth and young-adulthood, and *Great Expectations* reflects Dickens's world view. According to writer Paul Pickrel, the plot:

holds the reader's interest; it is full of surprises and odd turns; its complexities all come out neatly in the end. But more than that, it is a symbolic representation of Dickens's vision of the

moral universe . . . that good and evil, what we most desire and what we most loathe, are . . . intertwined. . . .

THE TIME AND PLACE

The story begins in the early 1800s, in the marsh area of Kent, England. Dickens was familiar with

this area, because he lived there as a child. Later in the novel, when Pip enters young adulthood, the scene shifts to busy, industrial London. The novel shifts back and forth between these two locations as events unfold. As you read the novel, think about the values that the people in each setting hold.

Did You Know?

The Industrial Revolution began in England in the late 1700s, when the invention of machines for weaving gave rise to a factory system. The emergence of factories changed the economy of England from one that was based on agriculture to one that was based on manufactured goods. Because of this shift, thousands of people left rural areas to take jobs in industrial cities.

Despite the prosperity and modern conveniences that resulted from the Industrial Revolution, it created many social problems. Cities grew too large too quickly, and overcrowding created filth and disease. Workers were often exploited and forced to work long hours for little pay. Even young children worked

long hours under dangerous conditions in factories and mines. Reform acts addressing the concerns of working people were not passed until the early 1800s. Although the acts provided workers with some protections, working conditions were still, by today's standards, very poor. Through his writings, Dickens drew attention to social and political problems in his country. Critic Bert Hornback writes that although the wealthy:

seemed to care absolutely nothing for the lives of the "hands" whom they employed, the nation still had a conscience—and it responded to voices like Dickens's.

Before You Read

Great Expectations Chapters 1–10

FOCUS ACTIVITY

Remember yourself as a young child. What kinds of people and situations made you feel happy and secure? frightened or insecure?

Journal

Freewrite about a person or incident that made a strong positive or negative impression on you when you were a child. Why were you so affected? What feelings did you experience?

Setting a Purpose

Read to learn about the people and events that make strong impressions on a child named Pip.

BACKGROUND

Did You Know?

Dickens described *Great Expectations* as a combination of comedy and tragedy, and many critics agree with his assessment. Pip, the narrator of the novel, encounters many characters who are humorous and often cartoon-like in their quirks and foibles. At the same time, they are tragic in their unhappiness or their lack of moral vision. There is also tragedy in the characters who live quietly moral lives, but who cannot earn respect and make their way in the world. Descriptions of Pip's childhood show the comic and tragic nature of the novel particularly well. Dickens, who himself was affected deeply by the difficult turn of events in his own childhood, tries to help readers understand the sensitive, thoughtful world of a child living under difficult circumstances. Pip's childish reactions to certain people and situations are humorous and endearing. As you read, however, look for the underlying tragic aspects of Pip's childhood.

Social Satire

Satire is literature that uses humor or sarcasm to ridicule human vices or follies. Dickens was interested in social reform, and passages of the novel often reflect his feelings toward people and institutions in nineteenth-century English society. Dickens's satire emerges in his colorful descriptions of characters, places, and events. Sometimes even the names of Dickens's characters are satirical. In this section and in the rest of the novel, you will encounter names that sound foolish, contain puns or plays on words, or suggest sounds.

VOCABULARY PREVIEW

capricious [kə prɪʃ'əs] *adj.* unpredictable; inconsistent

conciliatory [kən sil'ē ə tɔr'ē] *adj.* intended to restore harmony or goodwill

felicitous [fi lis'ə təs] *adj.* happy

imprecations [im'pri kə'shəns] *n.* curses

incomprehensible [in'kom pri hen'sə bəl] *adj.* incapable of being understood

penitent [pen'ə tənt] *n.* person who repents sin under the direction of a religious confessor

perspicuity [pur'spə kū ə tē] *n.* clearness

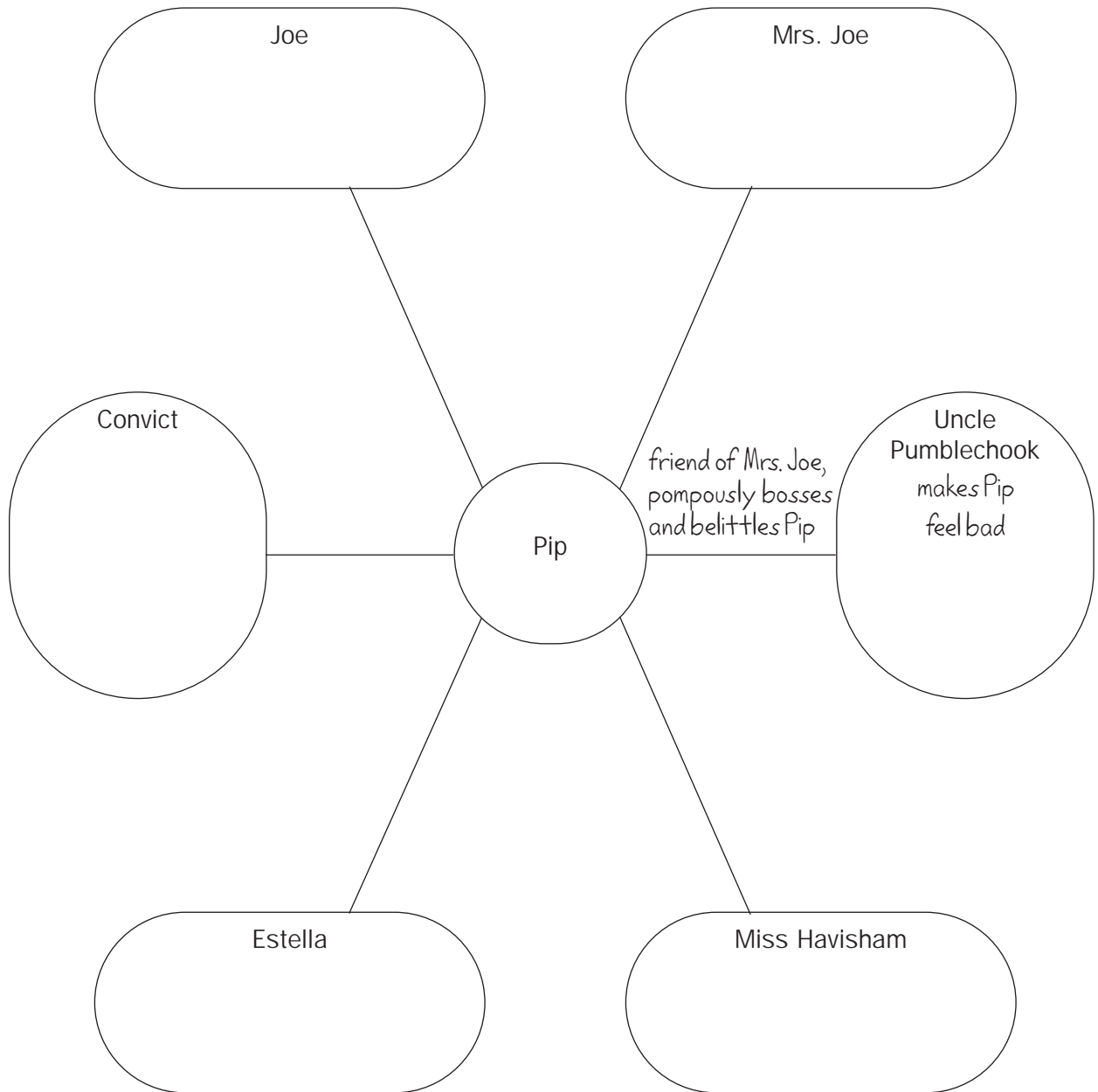
remonstrance [ri mon'strəns] *n.* criticism

trifle [tri'fəl] *n.* small amount

Active Reading

Great Expectations Chapters 1-10

The first ten chapters of the novel introduce you to a variety of characters who affect Pip's life. As you read, think about Pip's relationships with these people and their effect on him. Make notes in the cluster diagram below. On the lines, explain the relationship between Pip and each character. In the circles, describe how Pip is affected by each.



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Responding

Great Expectations Chapters 1–10

Personal Response

With which character do you most identify? Why? Do you have something in common with that character? Have you shared similar thoughts or reactions?

Analyzing Literature

Recall and Interpret

1. Where and how does Pip first encounter a convict? Why does Pip help him?

2. Describe Mrs. Joe's treatment of Pip. In what ways is Pip's relationship with Joe different from his relationship with his sister?

3. After the convict is caught, what does he say to protect Pip? How does Pip feel about his actions toward the convict? What do these feelings tell you about Pip?

4. Why is Pip sent to the home of Miss Havisham? How does Pip feel after he leaves, and why does he decide to lie about his experiences there?

Responding

Great Expectations Chapters 1–10

Analyzing Literature (*continued*)

Evaluate and Connect

5. Evaluate Dickens’s portrayal of Pip. In your opinion, is Pip a believable character? Does he behave in ways that a real child in similar circumstances might behave? Support your opinion with evidence from the novel.

6. Recalling your response to the **Focus Activity** on page 12, how do you think the people and incidents in this selection would have affected you when you were a child? Do you identify with Pip’s reactions? Why or why not?

Literature and Writing

Analyzing a Character

What is Joe Gargery like? Review the first ten chapters of the novel, taking notes on Pip’s descriptions of Joe; on Joe’s treatment of Mrs. Joe, Pip, and other people he encounters; and on the moral lessons Joe tries to teach Pip. Then use your notes to write a brief description of Joe’s character. Be sure to include a sentence or two about Joe’s values.

Extending Your Response

Literature Groups

In Chapter 8, Pip says:

In the little world in which children have their existence, whosoever brings them up, there is nothing so finely perceived and so finely felt as injustice. It may be only small injustice that the child can be exposed to; but the child is small, and its world is small, and its rocking horse stands as many hands high, according to scale, as a big-boned Irish hunter.

Discuss the significance of this quotation in your groups. What injustices does Pip suffer? How do you think Dickens wanted readers to feel about Pip?

Performing

With a partner, select a dramatic or humorous scene from *Great Expectations* that both of you find interesting. For example, you might consider the first meeting between Pip and the convict (Chapter 1); Pip’s writing a letter to Joe and Joe’s evaluation of it (Chapter 7); or Pip’s first meeting with Miss Havisham (Chapter 8). Discuss how the characters in the scene might look, feel, and sound; then choose roles and rehearse the scene. When you are ready, perform the scene for your class.



Save your work for your portfolio.

Before You Read

Great Expectations Chapters 11–19

FOCUS ACTIVITY

If you could sample a life completely different from your own, what kind of life would you choose? Why?

Quickwrite

Write about a life you have always wanted to experience. In what way is this life different from your own? Why does it interest you?

Setting a Purpose

Read to learn about Pip's new life and the ways in which it differs from his old one.

BACKGROUND

Did You Know?

Pip is to be an apprentice to Joe, which means he will work under his supervision for a specified amount of time in order to learn Joe's trade. In doing this, Pip will sign an indenture, which is a type of binding contract. In this period in history, it was common for someone as young as Pip, who is approaching fourteen, to be indentured as an apprentice. In fact, many poor families were forced to indenture their children as a means of support for the family. In Pip's case, the working relationship is an extension of the close partnership he and Joe have already been enjoying.

Dickens's Style

In his fiction, Dickens combines humor, sentimentality, and elements of the **grotesque**—a type of literature in which characters' outstanding physical or personality traits are exaggerated for comic or dramatic effect. This style has come to be known as **Dickensian**, and this term is today used to refer to any work that has characteristics of Dickens's writing. As Pip learns more and more about the Havisham household in this section, look for elements of Dickensian style in descriptions of Miss Havisham and the strange features of her home.

VOCABULARY PREVIEW

clemency [klem'ən sē] *n.* mercy; forgiveness

disconcerted [dis'kən sɜrt'əd] *adj.* confused

latent [lāt'ənt] *adj.* hidden; undeveloped

malignant [mə lig'nənt] *adj.* evil; bitter

manifest [mən'ə fest'] *v.* to display

ostentatiously [os'tən tã'shəs lē] *adv.* in a showy or gaudy manner

pervade [pər vād'] *v.* to spread throughout

retributive [ri trib'yə tiv] *adj.* done as a penalty or punishment

stipulations [stip'yə lã'shəns] *n.* terms or conditions of an agreement

trepidation [trep'ə dā'shən] *n.* uneasiness

Active Reading

Great Expectations Chapters 11–19

In Chapters 11 through 19, Pip lives in two different worlds: the world of the working class and the world of the gentleman. As you read, record the names of people and other details that, in Pip's mind, represent each station in life.

Life as a commoner	Life as a gentleman
working as a blacksmith's apprentice	Estella

Responding

Great Expectations Chapters 11–19

Personal Response

How do you feel about what happens to Pip at the end of this section? Do you think he will regret making this life change? Why or why not?

Analyzing Literature

Recall and Interpret

1. Briefly describe Camilla. Why is she so attentive to Miss Havisham? What aspects of upper-class society might Dickens be satirizing in his portrayal of Camilla?

2. Describe the incident involving Pip and the young gentleman in Miss Havisham's garden. What prompts Pip's actions, and how does he feel about himself later?

3. Why does Miss Havisham command Joe and Pip to meet with her? What does Pip's attitude toward her offer reveal about his changing sense of values?

4. Who is the mysterious stranger that visits Pip at the pub? What are Pip's expectations on learning about the reason for the man's visit?

Responding

Great Expectations Chapters 11–19

Analyzing Literature (*continued*)

Evaluate and Connect

5. What conflicting feelings does Pip have as he moves toward a new life? Why does he have such mixed feelings?

6. Recall your response to the **Focus Activity**. Do you think Pip’s actions and feelings toward Joe are selfish, or understandable?

Literature and Writing

Analyzing a Character

Analyze Dickens’s characterization of Pip in this section. Write a brief summary of the major events in Chapters 11 through 19 and a statement of how each event works to familiarize readers with the different sides of Pip’s personality.

Extending Your Response

Literature Groups

In Chapter 17, when Pip is walking with Bidley, he thinks to himself, “Bidley was never insulting, or capricious, or Bidley to-day and somebody else to-morrow; she would have derived only pain, and no pleasure; from giving me pain . . . How could it be, then, that I did not like her much better of the two?”

In your group, try to answer Pip’s question. What feelings does Pip seem to have for Bidley? What information does he share with her, and how does she react to this information? Compare and contrast Pip’s interactions with Bidley to his interactions with Estella. In what way are these two relationships different?

Learning for Life

Write a letter of resignation in which you explain Pip’s reasons for moving to London and leaving behind his old life. Your letter should be based on information presented in Chapters 11 through 19. Look for passages that reveal Pip’s internal struggles and hopes for his future. Address why Pip’s decision might be practical and wise, at least in his eyes.

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Save your work for your portfolio.

Before You Read

Great Expectations Chapters 20–31

FOCUS ACTIVITY

How do other people affect your behavior and your feelings about yourself?

Journal

In a journal entry, write about a person or situation that brought out the best in you. Then write about a person or situation that brought out your worst. Explain the reasons behind your different reactions.

Setting a Purpose

Read to find out how Pip's behavior is affected by his new surroundings.

BACKGROUND

Did You Know?

Dickens was an avid theatergoer who once had ambitions of becoming an actor. In a letter to a friend, Dickens described his boyhood “rehearsals” for the stage: “I practised immensely (even such things as walking in and out, and sitting down in a chair) often four, five, six hours a day, shut up in my room or walking about in the fields.” As an adult, Dickens took every opportunity to return to his first love. He acted in several amateur productions, including a production of Ben Jonson's popular play *Everyman in His Humor*, in which he played the role of Bobadil, a character given to shouting oaths. Dickens drew on his acting experience in his portrayal of Mr. Wopsle and the production of *Hamlet*.

Hamlet

Hamlet, William Shakespeare's most popular tragedy, is set in Denmark. As the play opens, Prince Hamlet is visited by the ghost of his father, King Hamlet, who was recently murdered and seeks revenge. Prince Hamlet agrees to carry out the ghost's wishes and kill the murderer, but when the opportunity presents itself the prince stops short of the act. Wracked by guilt, Prince Hamlet finally avenges his father's death but is himself killed in the process. As you read the scene in which Pip dreams about *Hamlet*, think about his own feelings of guilt and his descriptions of the ghostly Miss Havisham.

VOCABULARY PREVIEW

depreciation [di prē' shē ā' shən] *n.* ridicule; belittlement

dexterously [dɛks' trəs lē'] *adv.* skillfully

diffidence [dif' ə dəns] *n.* shyness

impetuosity [im pech' ōō os' ə tē] *n.* reckless enthusiasm

judicious [jōō dish' əs] *adj.* wise; discreet

pernicious [pər nish' əs] *adj.* harmful; deadly

prodigious [prə dij' əs] *adj.* gigantic

suppliant [sup' lə kənt] *n.* someone who begs

zealous [zel' əs] *adj.* eager

Active Reading

Great Expectations Chapters 20–31

In Chapters 20 through 31, Pip finds himself with new people in a variety of new settings. Dickens uses carefully chosen details to characterize Pip's new surroundings. In the chart below, describe each setting. Then explain the atmosphere, or mood, that the details create.

Place	Details	Atmosphere
London	large, dirty, crowded, rundown	forbidding, cold, lonely
Jaggers's office		
Bernard's Inn		
Pocket household		
Wemmick's home		
Jaggers's home		

Responding

Great Expectations Chapters 20–31

Personal Response

What feelings toward Pip did you experience while reading? In what ways do you think he has changed?

Analyzing Literature

Recall and Interpret

1. Describe Jaggers's work and home life. What is Pip implying about Jaggers's personality when he says that "he seemed to bully his very sandwich as he ate it"?

2. Briefly describe the incident that caused Miss Havisham to stop her clocks and become a recluse. What part might this incident have played in her desire to bring Estella and Pip together?

3. How does Pip feel when he hears that Joe is coming to visit? Why does Pip feel this way?

4. What plans does Pip believe Miss Havisham has for him? Why does he believe this?

Responding

Great Expectations Chapters 20–31

Analyzing Literature (*continued*)

Evaluate and Connect

5. When Pip returns to Satis House to visit Estella and Miss Havisham, he feels some guilt for not visiting Joe. Do you think Dickens wants readers to believe Pip is selfish, or that Pip is hopelessly distracted by his love for Estella? Explain your response.

6. As his visit with Pip is ending, Joe says, “Pip, dear old chap, life is made of ever so many partings welded together . . . Divisions among such must come, and must be met as they come.” What does he mean in terms of his and Pip’s relationship? In your opinion, whose behavior during the visit was more admirable, Joe’s or Pip’s? Explain.

Literature and Writing

Dickens’s Language

In these chapters, Pip visits the Pocket home. What words and phrases does Dickens use to describe the Pockets and their way of life? What is the mood of these passages, and how does Dickens achieve it? Write a brief essay on a separate sheet of paper, using examples from the novel to support your conclusions.

Extending Your Response

Literature Groups

In Chapter 30, Herbert Pocket describes Pip as “a good fellow, with impetuosity and hesitation, boldness and diffidence, action and dreaming, curiously mixed in him.” Pip does not agree. In your group, discuss whether Herbert’s description is accurate. Cite specific examples from the text to support your opinion. Do you know more about Pip’s inner character than Herbert does at this point? How do you feel about Pip?

Social Studies Connection

When Pip arrives in London, he is scared by its “immensity” and notices that it seems “rather ugly, crooked, narrow, dirty.” London at this time was a center of commercial activity. During the years of the Victorian empire, the city was the capital of the powerful British Empire. Conduct research to learn more about the conditions of London in the 1800s. Consult print or online resources to gather information about business and industry, living conditions, and daily activities. After you have completed your research, present your findings in a report to your class. Together, discuss whether Pip’s descriptions of the city are likely accurate or exaggerated.



Save your work for your portfolio.

Before You Read

Great Expectations Chapters 32–45

FOCUS ACTIVITY

What kinds of life experiences cause people to feel loss?

Quickwrite

Describe a time in your life when you lost someone or something close or important to you. What about that person or thing did you value most? What feelings do you remember having?

Setting a Purpose

Read to find out the losses that Pip suffers.

BACKGROUND

Did You Know?

In the early 1800s in England, many convicts were still placed on boats and sent out of the country. In 1597 Parliament passed “An Act for the Punishment of Rogues, Vagabonds, and Sturdy Beggars.” This act called for beggars to be sent to their birthplaces and jailed until they could be put to work. The act called for more serious criminals to be “conveyed unto such parts beyond the sea as shall at any time hereafter for that purpose be assigned . . .” This allowed the transportation of criminals to British colonies in what are now the United States and Australia. A penal colony for British convicts was established in 1788 in Australia.

Foreshadowing

Foreshadowing is the use of clues by the author to prepare readers for events that will happen later in the story. Dickens uses this technique throughout *Great Expectations*. For example, when Pip first sees Jaggers, he is a mysterious stranger who brushes by Pip at Miss Havisham’s home. Jaggers raises questions in Pip’s mind and the minds of readers, and his presence hints that something is about to happen to Pip. As the novel progresses, pay special attention to clues introduced by characters that indicate how mysteries in the novel will be resolved.

VOCABULARY PREVIEW

fidelity [fi del’ə tē] *n.* loyalty; faithfulness

larceny [lär’sə nē] *n.* theft

melancholy [mel’an kol’ē] *adj.* depressed; sad

meritorious [mer’ə tōr’ē əs] *adj.* noble; worthy

predecessors [pred’ə ses’ərs] *n.* someone or something that came before

spasmodic [spaz mod’ik] *adj.* irregular

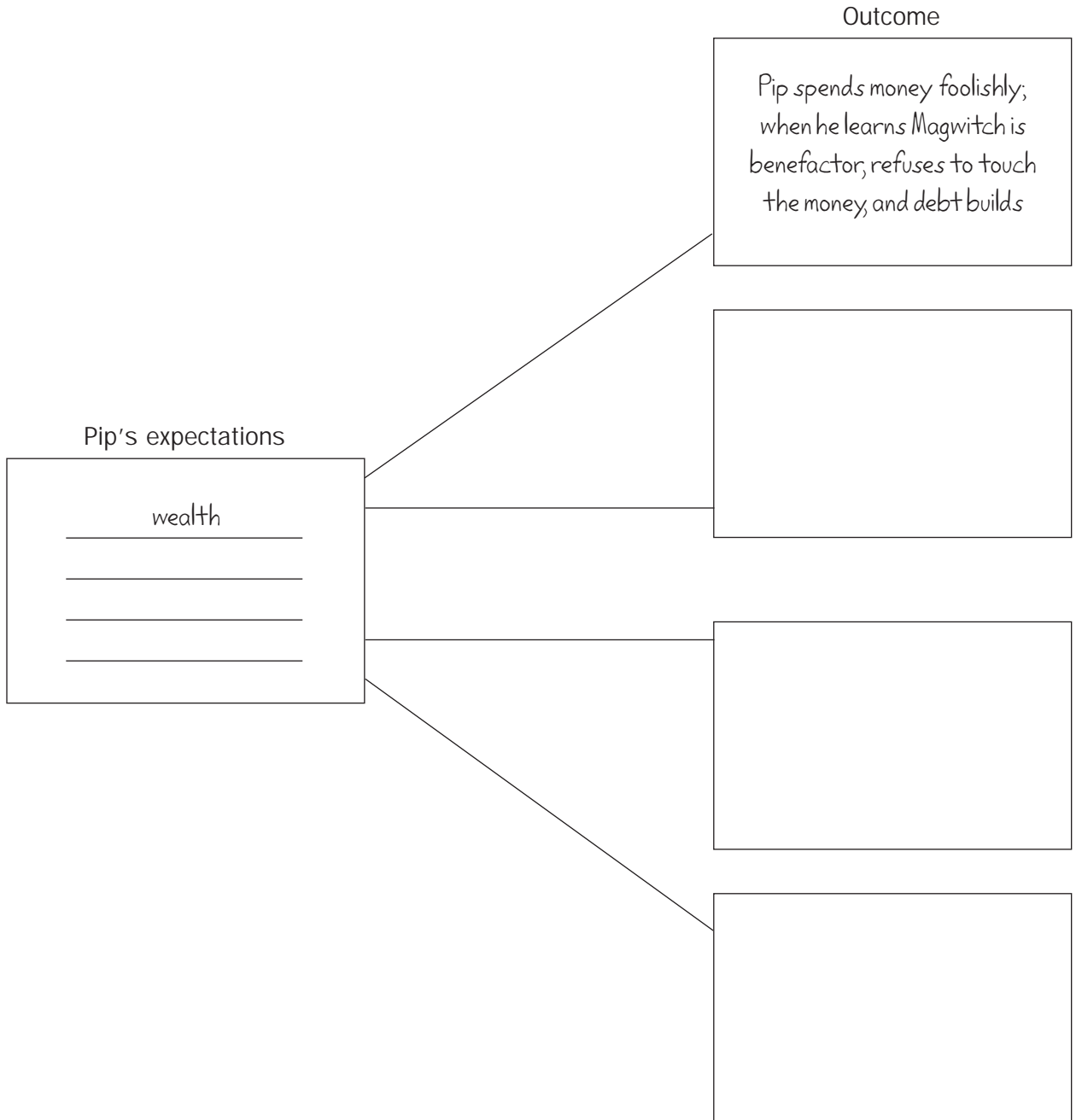
subordinate [sə bōr’də nit] *n.* assistant; of lower rank

superfluous [soo pur’flōō əs] *adj.* extra; excessive

Active Reading

Great Expectations Chapters 32–45

This section of the novel represents a turning point, when Pip's expectations are forced to change because of a series of devastating disappointments. In the graphic organizer below, list three expectations Pip held when he first learned about his anonymous benefactor. In the corresponding boxes, describe how each expectation was met or not met and why.



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Responding

Great Expectations Chapters 32–45

Personal Response

Which passages from this section did you find most moving and most effective in illustrating Pip's situation?

Analyzing Literature

Recall and Interpret

1. How does Pip react to driving by the prison with Estella? What does Pip's reaction indicate about his image of Estella as a person?

2. What news does Magwitch bring to Pip? How does Magwitch's information affect Pip?

3. What one financial request does Pip make of Miss Havisham? What does this request indicate about his character?

Responding

Great Expectations Chapters 32–45

Analyzing Literature (*continued*)

Evaluate and Connect

4. How does Pip feel about himself as a “gentleman” when he no longer has his money? What values of Pip’s society is Dickens criticizing by calling attention to Pip’s feelings?

5. Do you agree that Pip should no longer benefit from Magwitch’s money? Why or why not?

Literature and Writing

A Letter to Pip

Throughout the novel, Pip has been unable to see Estella objectively. His romanticized view of her prevents him from preparing for the inevitable pain that she causes him. Write a letter to Pip in which you characterize Estella in a more objective light. Explain how the circumstances of her upbringing affect her behavior and treatment of people.

Extending Your Response

Literature Groups

In Chapter 38, Pip witnesses for the first time an argument between Miss Havisham and Estella. In your group, discuss the possible reasons for Estella’s behavior. Then contrast Estella’s state of mind with Miss Havisham’s state of mind during the fight. Do you feel sorry for Miss Havisham, or do you believe she must take responsibility for Estella’s behavior? In what way might her plan for Estella have backfired?

Music Connection

At the end of Chapter 44, Pip expresses his feelings for Estella in a passage that begins “Out of my thoughts! You are part of my existence, part of myself . . .” Dickens uses poetic techniques such as repetition, parallel phrases, and imagery to make this speech musical and dramatic. Write lyrics for a song based on Pip’s speech. Try to express his feelings for Estella and his devastation on hearing news of her marriage to Drummle.



Save your work for your portfolio.

Before You Read

Great Expectations Chapters 46–59

FOCUS ACTIVITY

Have you ever struggled to find the answer to a difficult question? How did you feel when you finally found the answer you needed?

Think-Pair-Share

Think about a time in which you searched for the answer to a question about your life or about someone you know. Share your experience with a partner.

Setting a Purpose

Read to find out how Pip finds the answers to difficult questions that surround his life and the lives of people around him.

BACKGROUND

Did You Know?

A coming-of-age tale is a **bildungsroman**, a German word that refers to a class of novel in German literature that follows the life of a main character. This theme was popularized by German writers Wolfram von Eschenbach and Hans Grimmshausen, who wrote literary works based on a folktale about a foolish person who goes out into the world to find adventure and suffers mistakes and disappointments before gaining sense and understanding. The first novel based on this theme was written by J.W. von Goethe in the late 1700s. In a bildungsroman, the action usually ends positively, after one of the characters learns valuable lessons the hard way. Read to find out if *Great Expectations* is a true bildungsroman.

Abel Magwitch

In this section of the novel, the character of Abel Magwitch plays a central role. Magwitch has already changed Pip's life once with his anonymous donation of money. In the chapters that follow, his character begins to affect Pip's life in a different way. Significantly, Dickens gave Magwitch the name Abel, which refers to the second son of Adam and Eve in the Old Testament of the Bible. According to the biblical account, Abel was a shepherd who was killed in a jealous rage by his brother Cain. Abel's innocent blood put a curse on Cain, and he became a fugitive. As you read, think about why Dickens wanted readers to associate Magwitch with the innocent, slain brother, even though Magwitch is a convict. You might also think about which characters in the novel represent Cain, the evil, murdering brother.

VOCABULARY PREVIEW

acquiescence [ak'wē es'əns] *n.* agreement; consent

beguile [bi gīl'] *v.* to trick; to deceive

demeanor [di mē'nər] *n.* behavior

despondent [di spon'dənt] *adj.* depressed

eloquence [el'ə kwəns] *n.* expressiveness

entreat [en trēt'] *v.* to beg

obdurate [ob'dər it] *adj.* firm

repugnance [ri pug'nəns] *n.* distaste

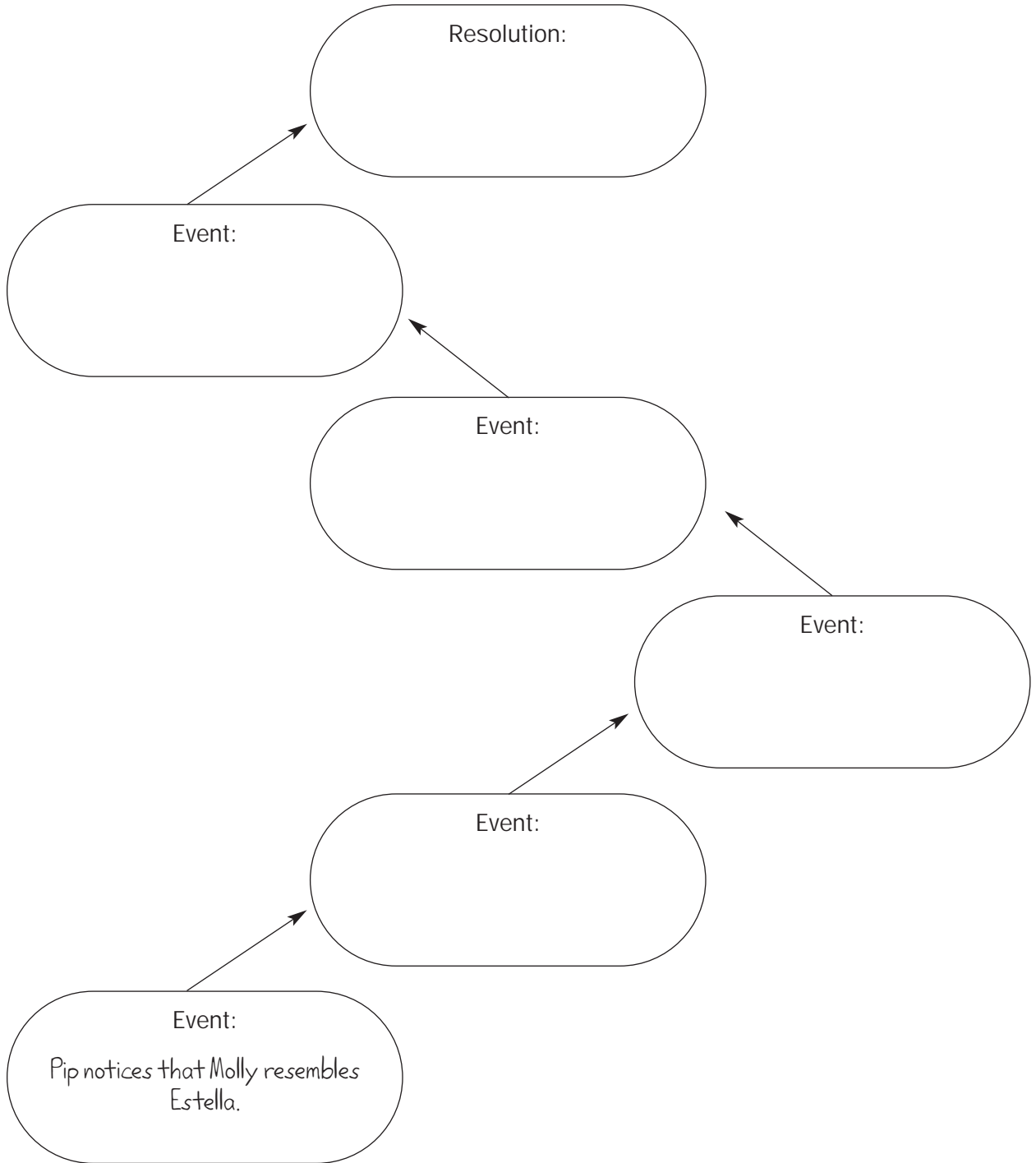
tremulous [trem'yə ləs] *adj.* timid; cowardly

truculent [truk'yə lənt] *adj.* fierce

Active Reading

Great Expectations Chapters 46–59

The last chapters of the novel solve many of the novel’s mysteries and lead readers to a resolution. Use the ovals to record the events leading to the resolution of the novel. Use as many ovals as you need.



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Responding

Great Expectations Chapters 46–59

Personal Response

Were you satisfied with the ending of the novel? Explain.

Although Pip eagerly entered his new life, he always experienced periods in which he questioned himself. Recalling your response to the **Focus Activity** on page 28, do you think Pip can finally stop questioning his life?

Analyzing Literature

Recall and Interpret

1. Describe Miss Havisham's behavior when Pip visits her. How has their relationship changed?

2. What happens to Magwitch? How does Pip begin to feel toward Magwitch?

3. What does Joe do for Pip? How does Pip feel about himself and his actions after Joe leaves?

Responding

Great Expectations Chapters 46–59

Analyzing Literature (*continued*)

Evaluate and Connect

4. Why does Dickens return Pip to the countryside of his youth? What theme does this turn of events emphasize?

5. What is your interpretation of the last line of the book, where Pip states “I saw no shadow of another parting from her.”

Literature and Writing

Theme

There are several themes in *Great Expectations*. Write a short essay on the theme that the character of Magwitch illustrates. How does Compeyson compare with Magwitch? How do you think Dickens wants readers to feel about Magwitch? Use examples from the novel to support your statements.

Extending Your Response

Literature Groups

Dickens originally wrote a different ending to *Great Expectations*, which he later discarded. In the original ending, Estella remarried after the death of her husband Drummle. As in the revised ending, Pip sees her after years have gone by and he notices that she seems to have learned from her suffering and become warmer and kinder. In this ending, however, there is no suggestion that the two will spend additional time together. Pip is satisfied to know that Estella finally has a heart that will allow her to perhaps know how Pip has suffered over her. In your group, compare the two endings. Which do you prefer? What is the basic difference between the two endings? Why do you think Dickens decided to discard the original ending?

Learning for Life

By the end of the novel, Pip has learned an important lesson about values and achieving goodness. He suddenly regrets being apart from Joe and Biddy. Compose a letter of apology that Pip might write to Joe. In the letter, Pip should express his regrets for having stayed away from Joe for so long and for getting caught up in a world that is unworthy of Joe’s values. The letter should reveal Pip’s new understanding of life and the importance of true friendships.



Save your work for your portfolio.

Responding

Great Expectations

Personal Response

What hopes did you harbor for Pip while reading about his life?

Writing About the Novel

When *Great Expectations* was first published as a novel, it was divided into three volumes—called the three stages of Pip’s expectations. On a separate sheet of paper, create a written outline that describes the three stages. Your outline should also indicate the factors that led to the changes in Pip’s expectations.



Save your work for your portfolio.

Working Life

Sally Mitchell

Before You Read

Focus Question

How would you define the term “work ethic”? Do you think the definition is the same today as it was a hundred years ago?

Background

Sally Mitchell is a professor of English and women’s studies. This passage from Mitchell’s book gives insight into the world in which Dickens’s characters live—Victorian England.

Responding to the Reading

1. According to Mitchell, what was the largest single area of employment at the beginning of the Victorian period? By the end of the 1800s, how had that changed?

2. How did the growth of unions help manual workers?

3. What protection for child workers did the Factory Acts provide?

4. **Making Connections** Pick a character from *Great Expectations* and describe how he or she is influenced by the economy of Victorian England.

Learning for Life

Do research to find out what laws protect young people in the work force in the United States. Create a pamphlet with useful information for young people who want to start looking for a job. Your pamphlet should include information about limits on hours worked, wages, age, and safety requirements. Share your pamphlet with the class.

from David Copperfield

Charles Dickens

Before You Read

Focus Question

How important is social status to you?

Background

As a boy, Charles Dickens had to work in a shoe-blackening warehouse after his father was imprisoned for debt. Dickens conveys the misery of his experience in this excerpt from *David Copperfield*, in which David recounts his experiences working in a wine warehouse. *David Copperfield* is often called the most autobiographical of Dickens's books. Before he wrote *Great Expectations*, Dickens reread *David Copperfield* to ensure that the two books would not be too similar.

Responding to the Reading

1. What were Mr. and Mrs. Micawber trying so desperately to hide?

2. Briefly describe David's experiences at work. What social problems is Dickens trying to expose?

3. **Making Connections** Compare David to Pip. In what ways are they similar?

Learning for Life

Imagine that you are a social worker living in Victorian times. Write a brief report outlining the working conditions at Murdstone and Grinby's and describing the changes that you think should be made.

Freedom's Plow

Langston Hughes

Before You Read

Focus Question

What expectations do you have for your adult life? Do you think they are realistic? What can you do to make sure your expectations are fulfilled?

Background

A well-known author of the Harlem Renaissance, Langston Hughes is often called the poet laureate of Harlem. His writing was not limited to poetry, but also included short stories, song lyrics, essays, and plays. In much of his writing, Hughes focuses on what it is like to be black in a nation dominated by whites.

Responding to the Reading

1. "Keep your hand on the plow! Hold On!" What is the expectation for those who are willing to heed this advice?

2. After reading this poem, are you left with feelings of hope and strength, or of despair and weakness? Give examples of lines and words from the poem that make you feel this way.

3. **Making Connections** Some expectations about life are realistic, while others are not. Do you think the expectations expressed in Hughes's poem are more realistic than Pip's expectations? Why or why not?

Math Connection

As a class, create a questionnaire to distribute to all students. The questionnaire should include at least ten questions that ask students about their expectations for the future. Divide the questionnaire into three sections. One section should ask questions about expectations for the student when she or he is 21, the second section should ask questions about expectations at the age of 40, and the third should ask questions about expectations at the age of 70. The questionnaires can be completed anonymously. Compile the responses in a chart, and then discuss the results.

'Round the Clock' in Victorian London

George Augustus Sala

Before You Read

Focus Question

What activities are part of your daily routine? How do you think people who lived a hundred years ago might view your routine?

Background

Author George Sala provides a lively description of London by day and by night. His account, written around 1860, gives a vivid impression of the world in which Pip is growing up.

Responding to the Reading

1. How does the atmosphere of "The morning rush hour" differ from the atmosphere in "Beer, glorious Beer"? Give examples to support your answer.

2. **Making Connections** How does the London described by Sala compare to the London of *Great Expectations*?

Creative Writing

Write a poem describing your town or city. Include details of your daily routine and of what you observe at different times of day.



Great Expectations

book review in *Atlantic Monthly*, September 1861

Before You Read

Focus Question

Would you recommend *Great Expectations* to other students? Why or why not?

Background

During his lifetime, Dickens had many avid readers both in England and the United States. This review of *Great Expectations* appeared in the American magazine *Atlantic Monthly*, which is still popular today.

Responding to the Reading

1. What aspects of the novel does the reviewer praise?

2. **Making Connections** How might the character of Magwitch illustrate the reviewer's opinion that Dickens "follows the maxim of the great master of characterization, and seeks 'the soul of goodness in things evil' "?

Literature and Writing

Write your own brief review of *Great Expectations*, giving your opinions of the work's strengths and weaknesses. Like the professional reviewer, support your opinions with specific evidence from the novel.
