

# GREAT EXPECTATIONS

by Charles Dickens



## THE AUTHOR

Charles Dickens (1812-1870) was the second of eight children in a family plagued by debt. When he was twelve, his father was thrown into debtors' prison, and Charles was forced to quit school and work in a shoe-dye factory. These early experiences gave him a sympathy for the poor and downtrodden, along with an acute sense of social justice. At the age of fifteen, he became a clerk in a law firm, and later worked as a newspaper reporter. He published his first fiction in 1836 - a series of character sketches called *Sketches by Boz*. The work was well-received, but its reception was nothing compared to the international acclaim he received with the publication of *The Pickwick Papers* in the following year.

After this early blush of success, Dickens took on the job as editor of *Bentley's Miscellany*, a literary magazine in which a number of his early works were serialized, including *Oliver Twist* (1837-9) and *Nicholas Nickleby* (1838-9). He left to begin his own literary magazine, *Master Humphrey's Clock*, in 1840, and over the next ten years published many of his most famous novels in serial form, including *The Old Curiosity Shop* (1840-1), *A Christmas Carol* (1844), and *David Copperfield* (1849-50), perhaps the most autobiographical of all his novels. Other works were serialized in *Household Words* between 1850 and 1859, which was then succeeded by *All the Year Round*, which he edited until his death in 1870, publishing such novels as *A Tale of Two Cities* (1859), *Great Expectations* (1860-1), and *Our Mutual Friend* (1864-5). A workaholic to the end, Dickens died of a stroke in 1870 after having penned a chapter of *The Mystery of Edwin Drood*, his final (and unfinished) novel, the previous day.

As far as his personal life was concerned, Dickens was a tireless writer and speaker, but his own personal insecurities made him very difficult to live with. He married Catherine Hogarth in 1836 and, though they had ten children together, their relationship grew increasingly strained until they finally divorced in 1859. He traveled extensively, including making several trips to America (he never much liked the country or its people), and was frequently called upon to read from his own writings, drawing large and enthusiastic crowds. Dickens also spoke out on a variety of social issues, including American slavery and the lack of copyright laws that made it far too easy for unscrupulous people to steal his writings, as well as the abuses of industrial society that play such a prominent role in his novels.

Though not as autobiographical as *David Copperfield*, *Great Expectations* contains a few autobiographical elements, including the protagonist's rise from a working-class background, his struggle with class consciousness, and his difficulties with love. Like the former novel, it is a coming-of-age story. The latter book, written a decade later, shows a more mature grasp of issues of love and forgiveness than the earlier work. The famously altered ending - Dickens' original ending did not hint at a reconciliation between Pip and Estella - thus incorporates a great theme of the novel rather than being tacked on merely to please the reading public, though it is true that Dickens did little to prepare his readers for the reunion of the leading pair.

## **PLOT SUMMARY**

The story begins with young Philip Pirrip, known as Pip, on the marshes staring at the tombstones of his parents. He is seized by a convict, Abel Magwitch, who demands that the boy fetch him food and a file. Pip, frightened for his life, goes home to the house of his sister and brother-in-law, Joe Gargery and Mrs. Joe. There he steals some food and a file and takes it back to the convict. While on the marsh, he meets another convict (Compeyson), who is clearly Magwitch's enemy. The next day, Christmas Day, Pip feels very guilty for what he has done. Matters do not improve when policemen show up at the house - not to arrest Pip, but to get Joe to fix their handcuffs and help in the search for the escaped convicts. When they go to the marshes, they find the two convicts fighting and arrest them both, though Magwitch protects Pip by confessing to having stolen the food and file himself.

In the years that follow, Pip begins to go to school, where he learns to read, largely with the help of Biddy, the schoolmistress' granddaughter. One day, Joe's Uncle Pumblechook announces that Pip has been invited to play at the home of a rich woman in the nearby town, Miss Havisham. The next day, Pip arrives at Miss Havisham's home and is ushered into a Gothic horror. He is met at the gate by a beautiful young girl named Estella, who is very rude to him. He enters Miss Havisham's house, only to find that it is dilapidated and dusty. The owner is dressed in a decrepit wedding gown, the house looks just as it did for a wedding decades earlier, complete with rotting wedding cake, and all the clocks are stopped at 8:40. He plays with Estella at Miss Havisham's command, but she criticizes his manners, speech, and dress. Pip is obviously taken with her, however. When he gets home, he lies about his experience, but later tells Joe the truth. Smarting from Estella's insults, he determines to redouble his efforts at his studies. On his next visit to Miss Havisham, Pip meets a group of the old woman's relatives, who are visiting her on her birthday, not out of love, but hoping to make a good impression and receive something when she dies. Pip fights with a boy in the garden and gives him a bloody nose, and Estella lets him kiss her. He visits often in the succeeding weeks, and comes to hope that Miss Havisham has plans to make a gentleman of him and bring him and Estella together. He is much disappointed when Miss Havisham offers to finance his apprenticeship to Joe in the blacksmith shop - this was not the sort of beneficence he had in mind. During his days at the blacksmith shop, Pip is bored and dissatisfied, longing for Estella. He is treated badly by Joe's journeyman assistant Orlick, a rough and cruel man who hates Pip because he believes he gets preferential treatment. Orlick insults Mrs. Joe and Joe comes to her defense, knocking Orlick down with a single punch and firing him. One day Pip visits Miss Havisham, only to learn that Estella has gone abroad to study. When he returns home, he finds that Mrs. Joe has been attacked and is seriously brain-damaged as a result. Though everyone suspects Orlick, he has an alibi, and Mrs. Joe, strangely, summons

him to see her often. Biddy then comes to keep house and care for the stricken Mrs. Joe. Some time later, a lawyer named Jaggers appears and asks to speak to Joe and Pip. He announces that Pip now has “great expectations” - that he will receive a fortune, and is to be educated as a gentleman, but that his benefactor wishes to remain anonymous. Pip, however, assumes that the source of his newfound wealth is Miss Havisham, and that she intends him become a gentleman so he can marry Estella. The incidents that follow betray the fact that Pip, ignorant though he be, is becoming a snob. He acts in a condescending way toward Biddy and Joe - an attitude he later comes to regret. He then heads for London, where he is to be educated by Matthew Pocket, Miss Havisham’s cousin.

In London, Pip meets Herbert Pocket, the son of his tutor, and the two soon discover that they have met before; Herbert was the boy who had challenged Pip to a fight at Miss Havisham’s many years before. They soon become fast friends, though Herbert is an impoverished member of the upper class while Pip is from a lower-class background, but now has money. Herbert tells Pip Miss Havisham’s story - how she had been jilted on her wedding day and had never been the same. Pip asks him about Estella, but he knows little about her other than that Miss Havisham had adopted her. He then meets Wemmick, Jaggers’ clerk, and his fellow students, Bentley Drummle and Startop. The former is an aristocratic oaf, rude and boorish, while the latter is soft and quiet. In the days that follow, Pip dines with both Wemmick and Jaggers. He finds that Wemmick is cheerful and pleasant at home, where he lives in his little “castle” with his Aged Parent - his nearly-deaf father. Jaggers’ home is dark and unpleasant, and he is attended there by a menacing housekeeper, Molly. Later, Joe visits Pip, but Pip is embarrassed by Joe’s low-class appearance and speech. Joe tells him that Estella has returned and wants him to see her. Pip goes home immediately, and finds Estella to be a beautiful young woman, but as cold to him as ever. Pip also finds that Orlick has become Miss Havisham’s gatekeeper, but when he tells Jaggers about Orlick’s past, he fires him. Later Estella comes to London, and Pip meets her and escorts her to the home in which she will be staying, though she hardly speaks to him. Soon after, Pip gets a message that his sister has died, and he returns home for the funeral. He tries to apologize for his treatment of Joe and Biddy, but his heart isn’t in it. When Pip reaches his twenty-first birthday, Jaggers tells him he will now receive 500 pounds per year as part of his inheritance. Despite Pip’s hopes to the contrary, Jaggers does not reveal the identity of his benefactor. Pip decides that he wants to use his newly-acquired wealth to help Herbert, and he secretly arranges with Wemmick to buy a position in a merchant enterprise for him - without his knowledge, of course. Over the course of the next few years, Pip sees Estella often, but is dismayed to watch her flirt with everyone in the room but him. She tells him that she does this because she does not want to break his heart as she is doing to the others. When he finds out that Bentley Drummle is courting her, however, he confronts her, but she brushes him off.

One night, Pip is surprised by the appearance in his rooms of the long-lost convict from the marshes, Abel Magwitch. Magwitch reveals that he has earned a fortune running a sheep ranch in Australia and is in fact Pip’s benefactor. Pip is distraught, since this ends any hope he has of Estella being intended for him, but realizes that he has a responsibility to the old man, who has risked his life to return to England to see him. Pip soon discovers that he is being followed, though he has no idea of the identity of the man shadowing him (it turns out to be Compeyson). Pip and Herbert plan to smuggle the convict out of the country. Magwitch then tells his story - he was drawn into crime by a gentleman criminal named Compeyson, who had just swindled a young woman and left her at the altar (Herbert later tells Pip that the woman was Miss Havisham).

When the two are caught, Compeyson gets off lightly because he is a gentleman, while Magwitch gets a heavier sentence. He continues to seek revenge against his tormentor. Pip, despairing of ever marrying Estella now, goes to see Miss Havisham. The old woman admits to deceiving Pip. He then tells Estella that he loves her, but she admits to having no heart at all, and therefore of being incapable of returning his affection, and tells him she intends to marry Drummle. Upon returning to London, Pip discovers that Compeyson has been pursuing Magwitch, and he and Herbert decide to smuggle the convict onto a boat leaving the country. Shortly thereafter, Pip goes to dinner at Jaggers' home and realizes the resemblance between Molly and Estella. Convinced that Estella is Molly's daughter, he is determined to seek the full truth, and discovers that not only is Molly Estella's mother, but Magwitch is her father, though he doesn't know it. When Pip visits Miss Havisham, she begs his forgiveness for what she made Estella, and offers to pay for the rest of Herbert's partnership, since Pip refuses to spend any more of Magwitch's money. As he leaves the house, he looks back and sees her decrepit wedding dress go up in flames. He rescues her, but she is badly injured, and never fully recovers. Pip too is seriously burned, and spends many days recuperating. After he recovers, he receives a note threatening Magwitch and is told to come alone to the marshes. Pip goes, and is attacked and subdued by Orlick, who attempts to kill him, but is prevented by the entrance of Herbert and others who secretly followed Pip to the marshes. Orlick escapes, and Pip and his friends turn to the problem of getting Magwitch out of the country. Just before they put him on a ship on the river, another boat approaches, containing Compeyson and several policemen. Magwitch leaps from the boat and attacks Compeyson; both sink below the surface, but only Magwitch resurfaces, after which he is arrested. He is soon condemned to death, but dies from the ordeal on the river before he is to be executed. Because Magwitch is a convicted felon, the state confiscates all his property. Before his death, Pip tells Magwitch about Estella - that she is a beautiful young lady, and that Pip loves her. Meanwhile, Herbert prepares to marry his fiancée Clara and Wemmick marries Miss Skiffins (in a delightful bit of comic relief). Pip, however, falls seriously ill, hallucinating and hovering near death. He is nursed back to health by Joe, who tells him that Miss Havisham has died and Orlick has been arrested. Joe also pays Pip's debts before returning home. Pip decides to leave London and return home as well, indicating that he has given up on Estella once and for all by expressing his determination to propose to Biddy. Much to his surprise, he finds when he gets there that Biddy has married Joe. Pip is disappointed once again, and decides to take a job with Herbert in Egypt. He lives there for eleven years and becomes financially stable. Upon returning for a visit home, he finds that Joe and Biddy have two children. He walks over to the ruins of Miss Havisham's house where he meets Estella, who is much changed after a decade of unhappy marriage. Drummle abused her, and finally died in a drunken stupor. They talk, and as they leave the garden hand in hand, Pip is convinced that they will never part again.

## **MAJOR CHARACTERS**

- Philip Pirrip (Pip) - The protagonist, we first meet him as a young boy and follow his life from poverty in the country to wealth, disappointment, and final joy in his long-awaited reunion with Estella at the end of the book.
- Joe Gargery - Pip's brother-in-law, a blacksmith who is as kind-hearted as his wife is hard. He sustains his love for Pip even when Pip becomes a snob and is embarrassed by his presence in London.

- Mrs. Joe - Pip's sister, she raises him after the deaths of their parents. She is hard and angry, and eventually dies from injuries sustained when she is beaten and their home is robbed by Orlick.
- Biddy - A young girl who first teaches Pip to read, then comes to keep house when Mrs. Joe is incapacitated. She later becomes a schoolteacher, and eventually marries Joe after Mrs. Joe dies. Pip, disappointed in his love for Estella, proposes to Biddy only to learn that she has already committed herself to Joe.
- Miss Havisham - An elderly woman who was left at the altar by her fiancé, and has been angry with men ever since. She takes Estella as her ward and trains her to wreak vengeance on men, then chooses young Pip as her victim. Her house has remained unchanged since the day of her disappointment, and she dies when her wedding gown catches on fire and burns the house down on top of her. Pip mistakenly believes her to be the source of his mysterious inheritance.
- Estella - Miss Havisham's ward, she is raised to have no heart, and does her job of tormenting men masterfully. As she comes to realize what she is, she detests herself, avoids Pip to keep from hurting him, and gives herself to the boorish Bentley Drummle, who abuses her and eventually dies. At the end of the story, she meets Pip once again, and Dickens gives hope for their union.
- Herbert Pocket - Miss Havisham's nephew, a cheerful but self-deceived young man who first meets Pip when he challenges him to a fight, and eventually becomes his roommate in London and his dearest friend.
- Jaggers - A lawyer for both Miss Havisham and Abel Magwitch, he manages Pip's "great expectations."
- Wemmick - Jaggers' clerk, he is a gentle man who strictly separates his private life from his work. He supports his elderly father, and gives Pip some key information in his search for the truth about Miss Havisham and Estella.
- Miss Skiffins - Wemmick's beloved; they eventually marry in a very unusual ceremony.
- Abel Magwitch - A convict who meets Pip on the moors and demands food; when Pip feeds him and doesn't betray him, Magwitch never forgets this kindness. When he becomes rich in Australia, he provides for Pip - he is the source of Pip's "great expectations." Later in the story, we also find that he is Estella's father, a truth he finally discovers from Pip on his deathbed.
- Arthur Compeyson - Magwitch's fellow-convict and hated enemy, he is the man who deceived Miss Havisham and eventually betrays Magwitch. He is killed in a death struggle with Magwitch on the Thames.

- Molly - A murderess defended, then hired, by Jaggers, she is Estella's mother.
- Orlick - A journeyman who works for a while in Joe's blacksmith shop, he is cruel and brutal. He fatally injures Mrs. Joe when robbing the house. He hates Pip, and tries to kill him in a dramatic scene at a limekiln on the moors.
- Pumblechook - Joe's pompous uncle, he is obsessed with money and status.
- Bentley Drummle - An oaf who comes from a noble family, he courts Estella and eventually marries her, but treats her badly.
- Startop - A friend of Pip and Herbert who helps them engineer Magwitch's attempted escape from England.

### NOTABLE QUOTATIONS

"My father's family name being Pirrip, and my Christian name Philip, my infant tongue could make of both names nothing longer or more explicit than Pip. So, I called myself Pip, and came to be called Pip." (ch.1, p.1)

"My sister, Mrs. Joe Gargery, was more than twenty years older than I, and had established a great reputation with herself and the neighbors because she had brought me up 'by hand.'" (ch.2, p.5)

"This was very disagreeable to a guilty mind. The gates and dykes and banks came bursting at me through the mist, as if they cried as plainly as could be, 'A boy with Somebody-else's pork pie! Stop him!'" (ch.3, p.14)

"My state of mind regarding the pilfering from which I had been so unexpectedly exonerated, did not impel me to fresh disclosure; but I hope it had some dregs of good at the bottom of it." (ch.6, p.38)

"She seemed much older than I, of course, being a girl, and beautiful and self-possessed; and she was as scornful of me as if she had been one-and-twenty, and a queen." (ch.8, p.53)

"Well? You can break his heart." (Miss Havisham, ch.8, p.56)

"That was a memorable day for me, for it made great changes in me." (ch.9, p.68)

"I kissed her cheek as she turned it to me. I think I would have gone through a great deal to kiss her cheek. But, I felt that the kiss was given to a coarse common boy as a piece of money might have been, and that it was worth nothing." (ch.11, p.88)

"And the communication I have got to make is, that he has Great Expectations." (Jaggers, ch.18, p.133)

“My dream was out; my wild fancy was surpassed by sober reality; Miss Havisham was going to make my fortune on a grand scale.” (ch.18, p.133)

“I had neither the good sense nor the good feeling to know that this was all my fault, and that if I had been easier with Joe, Joe would have been easier with me. I felt impatient of him and out of temper with him; in which condition he heaped coals of fire on my head.” (ch.27, p.213)

“The unqualified truth is, that when I loved Estella with the love of a man, I loved her simply because I found her irresistible. Once for all, I knew to my sorrow, often and often, if not always, that I loved her against reason, against promise, against peace, against hope, against happiness, against all discouragement that could be.” (ch.29, p.222)

“Oh! I have a heart to be stabbed in or shot in, I have no doubt, and, of course, if it ceased to beat I should cease to be. But you know what I mean. I have no softness there, no - sympathy - sentiment - nonsense.” (Estella, ch.29, p.228)

“We have no choice, you and I, but to obey our instructions. We are not free to follow our own devices, you and I.” (Estella, ch.33, p.254)

“I stood looking at the house, thinking how happy I should be if I lived there with her, and knowing that I never was happy with her, but always miserable.” (ch.33, p.260)

“Pip, Pip, will you never take warning?”

“Of what?”

“Of me.” (Estella and Pip, ch.38, p.289)

“But to be proud and hard to *me!* Estella, Estella, Estella, to be proud and hard to *me!*” (Miss Havisham, ch.38, p.294)

“Look’ee here, Pip. I’m your second father. You’re my son - more to me nor any son. I’ve put away money, only for you to spend.” (Magwitch, ch.39, p.307)

“Oh, that he had never come! That he had left me at the forge - far from contented, yet, by comparison, happy!” (ch.39, p.309)

“Estella, you know I love you. You know that I have loved you long and dearly.” (ch.44, p.346)

“It seems that there are sentiments, fancies - I don’t know how to call them - which I am not able to comprehend. When you say you love me, I know what you mean, as a form of words; but nothing more. You address nothing in my breast, you touch nothing there. I don’t care for what you say at all. I have tried to warn you of this; now, have I not?” (Estella, ch.44, p.347)

“My name is on the first leaf. If you can ever write under my name, ‘I forgive her,’ though ever so long after my broken heart is dust - pray do it!” (Miss Havisham, ch.49, p.381)

“I will never stir from your side when I am suffered to be near you. Please God, I will be as true to you as you have been to me!” (ch.54, p.430)

“Halloa! Here’s Miss Skiffins! Let’s have a wedding.” (Wemmick, ch.55, p.436)

“You had a child once, whom you loved and lost.... She lived and found powerful friends. She is living now. She is a lady and very beautiful. And I love her!” (ch.56, p.443)

“Ever the best of friends.” (Joe, ch.57, p.454)

“I took her hand in mine, and we went out of the ruined place; and, as the morning mists had risen long ago when I first left the forge, so, the evening mists were rising now, and in all the broad expanse of tranquil light they showed to me, I saw no shadow of another parting from her.” (ch.59, p.466)

## ESSAY QUESTIONS

Discuss the following in a five-paragraph essay:

1. Compare and contrast the protagonists in Charles Dickens’ *Great Expectations* and *David Copperfield*. Which do you think does a more effective job of character development? Which character do you find more attractive, and why?
2. As a coming-of-age novel, Charles Dickens’ *Great Expectations* focuses on the changes that occur in the life of the protagonist. In examining the character of Pip, in what ways does he show the most change? In what ways does he stay the same? Is he a more admirable figure at the beginning of the story or at the end? Support your conclusions with specifics from the novel.
3. Discuss the persistent love Pip displays for Estella in Charles Dickens’ *Great Expectations*. Is his unchanging love a mark of steadfastness and faithfulness or a mark of foolishness, since he is clearly not deceived concerning Estella’s character? Support your conclusion with specifics from the book.
4. In Charles Dickens’ *Great Expectations*, the author makes extensive use of foils - characters who bring out one another’s traits by mutual contrast. Choose a pair of characters who fit this pattern and discuss how Dickens uses their differences to bring out the themes of the story.
5. The ending of Charles Dickens’ *Great Expectations* was altered by the author at the request of his readers. Originally, Pip and Estella did not get together at the end. Discuss the alternative endings. Which do you find the most satisfactory? Which best fits the rest of the story? Why do you think so?

6. Discuss Pip's dealings with the convict Abel Magwitch in Charles Dickens' *Great Expectations*. Evaluate the ethical dimensions of such incidents as stealing food for the convict, hiding him when he comes to London and trying to help him escape, and refusing to take Magwitch's money once he discovered its source. Use Scripture to support your conclusions.
7. Discuss the lessons about forgiveness taught in Charles Dickens' *Great Expectations*. Choose three characters or incidents, either positive or negative, and show what they teach about the importance of forgiveness. Do these lessons correspond with the Bible's teaching on the subject?
8. Charles Dickens' *Great Expectations* contains social criticism directed toward the injustices of his era. What aspects of his society does Dickens judge harshly? Discuss the effectiveness with which he critiques the England in which he lived.
9. Discuss the role of money in Charles Dickens' *Great Expectations*. To what extent does the novel support the biblical truth that "the love of money is the root of all kinds of evil"? Be specific in answering the question.
10. Hebrews 12:15 talks about the importance of avoiding a "root of bitterness" in one's life. How is this warning illustrated in Charles Dickens' *Great Expectations*? Choose three different characters or incidents that illuminate this biblical teaching.
11. The Bible has much to say about the ways in which God uses suffering constructively in people's lives. God literature often illustrates the same point - that suffering is ultimately redemptive in character. Discuss this idea in the context of Charles Dickens' *Great Expectations*. How do characters in the novel grow through and benefit from suffering?
12. What does Charles Dickens' *Great Expectations* teach about the source of real value in a person? What false ideas of value are illustrated in the novel, and what characteristics are shown to be of true value? Be sure to use specifics from the story in answering the question.
13. Discuss the difference between legality and morality as presented in Charles Dickens' *Great Expectations*. What does Dickens believe is the relationship between the two? Do you agree? Support your arguments from the novel and from Scripture.
14. Like the author's *David Copperfield*, Charles Dickens' *Great Expectations* is set forth as a first-person narrative. What are the advantages and disadvantages of this approach? Discuss Dickens' choice of narrative voice in the novel, paying particular attention to its consequences for the reader of the story.
15. The first-person narrative of Charles Dickens' *Great Expectations* provides a subtle contrast between the older, more mature Pip who is telling the story and the boy and young man about whom the story is being told. How are the two characters different? In what ways has the story-teller matured since the events described in the narrative?

16. Evaluate the effectiveness with which Charles Dickens presents the experiences of childhood in his *Great Expectations*. When Pip the narrator describes his experiences as a child, does he do so in a way that is convincing? Use specific examples from Pip's childhood to support your analysis of the effectiveness of Dickens' narrative voice in the early part of the novel.
17. The title of Charles Dickens' *Great Expectations* can be understood in a variety of ways. The phrase is used in the story to speak of the inheritance Pip receives from his benefactor, but the narrative contains many other sets of expectations as well, some realized and some not. Discuss the appropriateness of the title in light of different expectations experienced by Pip, and connect them to the major themes of the novel.
18. Compare and contrast the three father-figures in Pip's life in Charles Dickens' *Great Expectations* - Joe, Jaggers, and Magwitch. How do the radical personality differences among the three men both reflect and contribute to the changes Pip experiences as he matures from boyhood to manhood?
19. Pip, the protagonist and narrator of Charles Dickens' *Great Expectations*, is a fundamentally good but nevertheless flawed character. Discuss the weaknesses in Pip's character and evaluate their impact on the reader. Do these flaws make Pip more or less realistic, more or less admirable? How do they contribute to the themes of the novel?
20. Discuss the relationship between Pip and Estella in Charles Dickens' *Great Expectations*. The novel clearly demonstrates Pip's love for Estella, but how does she feel about him? Is she as heartless as she proclaims herself to be, or does she really, deep down in her heart, love Pip? Support your conclusions with specific incidents and quotations from the novel.
21. Discuss the relationship between Estella and Bentley Drummle in Charles Dickens' *Great Expectations*. When critics examine their sad courtship and miserable marriage, they wonder who deserved whom more. What do you think? Does Estella marry Drummle because only such a boor deserves to be treated the way she has been taught to treat men, or does Dickens bring Drummle into Estella's life to soften her hardness through suffering and make her a fit companion for Pip at the end?
22. Charles Dickens' *Great Expectations* contains a number of evil characters - Miss Havisham, Compeyson, Orlick, and the pompous Pumblechook among others. If you had to choose one character as the true villain of the story, whom would you choose? Defend your choice with specifics from the novel, being sure to indicate why your choice fits the role of chief villain better than the other candidates.
23. Charles Dickens' *Great Expectations* contains two bizarre houses - Miss Havisham's Satis House and Wemmick's Castle. Compare and contrast the two domiciles. What do they say about the characters who inhabit them? about the themes of the novel? How do they contribute to the plot? Be specific.

24. The two major settings of Charles Dickens' *Great Expectations* are the coastal marshes of Kent and the teeming streets of London. Discuss the role of these settings in elucidating the stages of Pip's life. Is he a different person in these two places? Do the places themselves contribute to his growth and change throughout the story? How do the locales determine the tone of Dickens' writing?
25. In Charles Dickens' *Great Expectations*, the young boy Pip is pictured as inhabiting a very simple moral universe - people are either good or evil with little shading in between. One sign of Pip's growing maturity is his ability to see shades of gray in others as well as in himself. Would you agree that moral uncertainty is a sign of maturity? Discuss Pip's moral maturation in the novel, giving specific examples and supporting your conclusions from Scripture.
26. Some novelists possess rare gifts of description - the ability to make the reader not only see a particular location, but also to hear its sounds and smell its smells. Such a gift is clearly seen in Charles Dickens' *Great Expectations*. Choose three specific descriptive passages from the novel and discuss how Dickens brings the reader into the scene through the use of sensory images.
27. Discuss the role of revenge in Charles Dickens' *Great Expectations*. Choose three characters who seek revenge and consider the consequences of their actions, both for themselves and for others. What would you conclude is Dickens' attitude toward revenge? Does it coincide with what the Bible teaches on the subject?
28. The theme of parenthood is an important one in Charles Dickens' *Great Expectations*. Three of the central characters in the story are orphans - Pip, Estella, and Biddy. How does their parentless status affect their lives? Are they influenced similarly or differently? What is Dickens saying about the role of parents in a person's life?
29. Speaking of Charles Dickens, George Orwell once said, "He is always preaching a sermon, and that is the final secret of his inventiveness. For you can only create if you can care." Evaluate Orwell's statement using Dickens' *Great Expectations*. What evidence do you find that Dickens is "preaching a sermon"? How do you know that he really cares about his characters? Be sure to use specifics from the novel to support your arguments.
30. What important lessons does Pip learn about money and social class as he matures in Charles Dickens' *Great Expectations*? What does he think is important as a child and a young man? How do his ideas change as he approaches middle age? How do these changes cohere with the major themes of the novel?
31. In Charles Dickens' *Great Expectations*, suppose Pip had really given up on Estella, returned to Kent and married Biddy. Would he have been happy? Would she have been happier with Pip than with Joe? Why do you think so? Defend your conclusions with details from the novel.

32. In Philippians 4:11, Paul says, “I have learned the secret of being content whatever the circumstances.” Discuss the role of contentment in Charles Dickens’ *Great Expectations*. How would the story have been different had certain characters learned Paul’s secret? Choose three characters in the story whose lives were harmed by their inability to be content with their circumstances in life. How were they harmed by their discontent?
33. In Charles Dickens’ *Great Expectations*, Wemmick’s personality and behavior change drastically depending on his location. He is a different man at work from what he is at home. Do these changes indicate a bizarre schizophrenia - a split personality that is unhealthy for anyone - or do they indicate a defense mechanism that allows him happiness at home in the context of an essentially dirty job under a boss he does not admire? Should we admire Wemmick for the way he manages his life, or view him as an eccentric who is not to be imitated?
34. In Charles Dickens’ *Great Expectations*, Pip’s love for Estella has little to do with reason. In chapter 29, he says, “The unqualified truth is, that when I loved Estella with the love of a man, I loved her simply because I found her irresistible. Once for all, I knew to my sorrow, often and often, if not always, that I loved her against reason, against promise, against peace, against hope, against happiness, against all discouragement that could be.” He loves her blindly, against all evidence from her and from others. Is this a good thing? Should love be above reason, or should it be controlled by reason? Discuss the relationship between love and reason, using the central relationship as well as others in the story to support your arguments.
35. The great tragedies of Shakespeare are usually leavened with scenes of comic relief, such as the gravedigger scene in *Hamlet*. Shakespeare was not the only writer to realize the value of comedy in the midst of serious, even tragic, writing. Discuss the use of comic relief in Charles Dickens’ *Great Expectations*. How does Dickens spice up what is really a very serious, and in many ways tragic, story, with moments of comedy? Do these bits of comic relief simply give the reader a breather, or do they contribute significantly to the plot and themes of the book?
36. Charles Dickens’ *Great Expectations* was originally published in serial form in thirty-six installments in Dickens’ magazine. How does the structure of the novel demonstrate this? How did Dickens accommodate himself to the format in which the story was being published? Be sure to use specific examples to support your arguments.
37. In chapter 33 of Charles Dickens’ *Great Expectations*, Estella says, “We have no choice, you and I, but to obey our instructions. We are not free to follow our own devices, you and I.” Discuss Dickens’ understanding of personal freedom in the novel. To what extent are people restricted in their actions by their circumstances and the demands and control of others, and to what extent are they truly free? Support your arguments with specifics from the novel.