

Great Expectations **List of Significant Characters**

English I Honors/IB

Fill in information as you read about these characters:

1. Pip - narrator; orphaned since infancy; lives with sister and brother-in-law; goal to be a gentleman
2. Joe Gargery – Pip’s brother-in-law; blacksmith; kind; hardworking; abused by wife
3. Mrs. Joe Gargery – Pip’s sister; treats Pip and Joe harshly; brought up Pip “by hand”
4. Uncle Pumblechook – pompous corn and seed dealer; Joe’s uncle
5. Mr. Wopsle – parish clerk who becomes an actor
6. Miss Havisham – eccentric, rich lady; left at altar on wedding day; seeks revenge for past rejections
7. Estella Havisham – Miss Havisham’s adopted daughter; haughty, cruel girl; Pip loves her
8. Mr. Jaggers – London lawyer for several of novel’s characters (Miss Havisham, Abel Magwitch, Molly, & Pip)
9. Dolge Orlick – journey (works in blacksmith shop) for Joe and one of Pip’s lifelong enemies
10. Biddy – kind village girl; teacher Pip; eventually becomes housekeeper for Gargery’s
11. Herbert Pocket – pale, young gentleman; in London becomes Pip’s best friend and instructs Pip in the ways to become a gentleman

12. John Wemick – Jagger’s chief clerk; lives two lives; in office he is impractical but at home he is creative and sympathetic
13. Molly – Jagger’s housekeeper; acquitted murderess and true mother of _____
14. Bentley Drummle – cruel student of Matthew Pocket; rival for Estella’s hand in marriage
15. Startop – student of Matthew Pocket; helps Pip & Herbert w/ attempt to save Magwitch from capture
16. Compeyson – unscrupulous former fiancé of Miss Havisham; also double-crosses Magwitch
17. Abel Magwitch – escaped convict; Pip’s benefactor; and true father of _____

18. Mr. Hubble – a wheelwright; friend of Joe’s
19. Mr. Wopsle’s Great-Aunt – elderly, incompetent teacher and storekeeper
20. Mr. Trabb – a local tailor
21. Trabb’s boy – village boy who mocks Pip’s pretentious manners
22. Sarah Pocket, Georgianna Pocket, Mr. Raymond, and Mrs. Camilla – the “toadies and humbugs” who are related to Miss Havisham; want to be included in Havisham’s will but she recognizes their greed
23. Matthew Pocket – scholarly relative of Miss Havisham; refuses to cater to Miss Havisham’s whims and therefore she _____
24. Clara Barley – Herbert’s fiancé and eventual wife; cares for her invalid father, Bill Barley

25. The Aged Parent – Wemmick’s father; deaf; his chief pleasure is listening to night cannon blasts

26. Miss Skiffins – Wemmick’s bride; she and her brother help Pip arrange for Herbert’s partnership with successful importer, Mr. Clarriker.

- Young people find the world to be mysterious and complicated. They try to fit their expectations to their conscience and compare or contrast them to the harsh realities as they grow up and realize what life is.
- Reading Pip's story is like solving a good mystery.

List the characters who appear in these settings:

Forge

Marsh

Satis House

Little Britain

Hammersmith

Barnard's Inn

Wemmick's Castle

Mr. Jagger's House

SoHo

Richmond

Garden Court in Temple

Mill Pond Bank

THEMES: (fundamental & often universal ideas explored in a work)

1. **AMBITION and SELF-IMPROVEMENT** (moral and social)
(affection, loyalty, & conscience are more important than social advancement, wealth, & class [status])
 - Pip has a desire to improve his lot in life (his status)
 - He believes in the possibility of advancement, thus he has “*great expectations*”
 - moral self-improvement
 - social self-improvement
 - educational improvement
 - Bildungsroman genre – means self-development that comes about by trying to find one’s place in society includes the following aspects:
 - discontent with society and a person’s place in it by birth
 - long & difficult maturation period where those who are discontented lash out against the world
 - resolution – where the discontented person is returned to the world renewed and invigorated with his place in the world

2. **SOCIAL CLASS** – class system of Victorian England
(ranges from criminals *to* poor peasants *to* middle class *to* very rich)
 - However, social status has no connection to a person’s real character (morality).
 - Dickens ignores the nobility and hereditary aristocracy
 - He favors those whose fortunes have been earned through business, thus furthering the theme of AMBITION and SELF-IMPROVEMENT

3. **CRIME, GUILT, and INNOCENCE**
 - Symbols of Pip’s inner struggle to reconcile his own inner moral conscience with justice system.
 - Pip must look beyond the superficial standards of laws to trust his inner conscience (his own morals).

MOTIFS: (recurring structures, contrasts, or literary devices that can develop & inform the novel’s major themes)

1. **DOUBLES (or SETS of TWO)**- all things are intricately connected, providing symmetry
 - 2 convicts
 - 2 invalids
 - 2 young women
 - 2 secret benefactors
 - 2 adults who try to mold a child for their own purposes

2. **COMPARING CHARACTERS to INANIMATE OBJECTS**
 - uses inanimate objects to describe physical appearance
 - possibly Dickens’ social commentary on justice system and how it dehumanizes people

SYMBOLS – objects, characters, figures, or colors used to represent abstract ideas or concepts

1. **Satis House**
 - wedding dress ironic because it’s a symbol of death and degeneration
 - stopped clocks – freeze time
 - brewery – commerce is connected to wealth (how those people made their money)
 - crumbling stones on house – general decadence of those who live in house & upper class as a whole
2. **Mists on Marshes** – mists symbolize danger & uncertainty
 - whenever Pip goes into mists something dangerous is likely to happen
 - convict(s)
 - travels to London through mist (may have dangerous consequences)
3. **Bentley Drummle** – minor character
 - contrasts Pip and represents arbitrary nature of class distinction
 - Drummle is upper-class but coarse and cruel
 - This proves to Pip that social advancement has no real connection to moral worth or intelligence
 - contrast Joe and Magwitch as examples

Great Expectations

Symbols, Imagery, Allegory

Darkness/Light

You will need a flashlight when visiting the world of *Great Expectations*. The novel is pretty much glued together by darkness. Even Pip's apartment in London looks like it is weeping soot whenever it rains. Count Dracula would feel right at home nestled on the marshes or winding his way through the gloomy London streets.

Dickens creates a universe of darkness, such that whenever there is any light (whether from the sun or from some other artificial source), we sit up right away and pay attention. On the marshes, Joe's forge is like a beacon of warmth and light that bleeds out onto the marshes. It almost reminds us of a lighthouse, serving to guide Pip along. Similarly, Miss Havisham's house is completely dark inside, and the only way Pip gets around is by following the candle-bearing Estella. There are other moments when little points of light feature largely. The night Magwitch comes to town, Pip sees little twinkly lights outside of his window that are the city's lamps being shaken by the storm, as though foreshadowing trouble.

Estella, whose name means "star," is often described as bright and radiant. This confuses us, because we usually associate light with the good and darkness with the bad, and Estella isn't always the most positive influence Pip's life. Something tells us that this novel seeks to shake up those notions and associations that we instantly think of when we see images of darkness and light. The constant contrast between the two also emphasizes the Gothic quality of the novel and helps create a visual imprint on our brains. Gothic works and gothic images always create a (brace yourself for this ten million dollar word) chiaroscuro (we rule), setting the mood and creating an atmosphere of truth-seeking.

Mist on the Marshes

Mists, mists, mists. There is a lot of mist in this novel, namely on the marshes of Pip's hometown. Mists are good for 1) getting things wet and 2) making it very difficult to see things. The mists are around when Pip meets the convict in the cemetery, they show up when Pip leaves town, they are

present the night that Orlick tries to kill Pip, and they rise when Pip and Estella reunite again at the (rewritten) end of the novel. After Mrs. Joe's funeral, Pip promises Biddy that he will return, but she doesn't believe him. This cuts Pip deep, and he looks to the mists for help and direction, "once more, the mists were rising as I walked away. If they disclosed to me, as I suspect they did, that I should never come back, and that Biddy was quite right, all I can say is—they were quite right, too" (2.35.61). In this moment, Pip uses the mist as he would an eight ball or a fortune teller; they reveal truths rather than obscure them. So the mists are pretty dang multi-dimensional. They can obstruct, and they can reveal. No matter what, they are everywhere in the novel.

Locks and Keys

So, we know that there is a lot of criminality in our novel (Check out the "Themes" section), and wherever there are crimes, there are criminals; and wherever there are criminals, there are jails; and wherever there are jails, there are locks. Wherever there are locks, there are keys.

We get a tour of Newgate prison in London and we see where the prisoners are kept. Immediately following this encounter, Estella arrives in town and Pip wonders at the sharp contrast she forms against the base world of the jail. But we kind of think of Estella as a prison guard herself, or at least a gatekeeper. Remember when Pip was little and Estella would always let him in and out of Miss Havisham's front gate? She kept the keys then too. As they grow up, Estella keeps the keys to her heart (though she would argue she didn't have such a thing) from everyone.

Locks and keys make us think of things that are secret and hidden as well as things that are inaccessible. And what luck – we are exposed to a ton of mysteries in this novel and "high society" (as Pip perceives it) is wholly inaccessible to him. Locks and keys emphasize both social immobility (check out "Themes: Society and Class") and the secrets that lie at the heart of this novel.

Miss Havisham's garden

How to describe Miss Havisham's garden in ten words or less? How about DEAD? Everything in it is either dead or deformed. The trees, vegetables, flowers, and pathways are all decaying.

Whenever there's garden in literature, however, we put on our biblical sunglasses, because gardens feature largely in the Bible. Specifically, the Garden of Eden features largely in the Bible. The fact that this particular garden is ruined suggests that innocence has been lost, that Pip has

eaten the apple, and that knowledge and corruption have ensued. Miss Havisham's garden and mansion are both symbols of the wealth and privilege of high society. But if they are decaying and rotten, what does that say about high society?

Bugs (and other Creepy Crawlies)

There are lots of creepy crawlies throughout *Great Expectations*. You may have noticed the spider community that lives in the twenty-five year old wedding cake in Miss Havisham's dining room. Oh yes indeed. There are also beetles by the fire, and mice behind the walls. If Miss Havisham has transformed her house into a tomb, with its boarded up windows and lack of sunlight, then we can only guess (oh, yes) that these creatures are indicative of the decomposition that accompanies death. Yummy! Pay attention to other moments where bugs feature largely. Remember the night Pip spends at the motel in Covent Garden? Need we say more?

Statues

Whenever Pip kisses Estella's cheek (and there are two occasions by our calculations), said cheek feels like that of statue. What are statues? They are representations of humans, animals, or events, and they are usually made out of stone or other cold materials. When we hear the word "statue," we think of kings, queens, smoothness, quiet, and rigidity. Estella, though human, tells Pip that she doesn't have a heart, and in this way, her statue-ness is emphasized. Her statue-y ways are complicated by the presence of two other statues in the novel – the casts in Jagger's office.

Jagger's casts (more bust-like than statue, but you catch our drift) were created on the faces of two men after they had been publicly executed. Their agony and raw, human emotion are captured and preserved in the casts. So one kind of statue indicates the lack of humanness within, and the other indicates the humanness within. In any case, there seems to be a theme of inaccessibility or imprisonment embodied by these statue/bust references. And we know all about prison. Estella's statue-y way is complicated when, at the very end of the book, we find she has melted into a warm, emotional woman.

Weather

Great Expectations Forecast: Monday – rainy and dark. Tuesday – rainy and windy. Wednesday – rainy and rainy. Thursday – stormy. Friday – misty (thick fog warning). Saturday – heavy mist with light showers. Sunday – windy. The weather in *Great Expectations* does wonders in the

realm of creating a certain mood, mainly a gloomy one. We *rarely* see the sun, and when we do, we don't quite know what to do with ourselves. What's more, whenever there happens to be severe weather, something always happens. For example, the night Magwitch arrives on Pip's doorstep, there's a HUGE storm outside that only gets worse in the morning. When Pip first meets the convict in the graveyard, the mists are so thick that Pip can barely see his hands. It seems to us that weather is very closely tied to plot, and that it has something to do with big moments in Pip's life.

Shadows

Shadows always abound when Estella is around. Whoa. We're poets, and we didn't know it. Pip often notices a shadow passing across Estella's face. When she arrives in London for the first time, Pip asks, "what was the nameless shadow which again in that one instant had passed?" (2.32.47), and when Pip and Estella are reunited in the (rewritten) end of the novel, Pip sees "no shadow of another parting from her" (3.59.46), which is a good thing, right? The negative nature of the sentence ("I saw no shadow"), while telling us that Pip and Estella live happily ever after, serves to emphasize the shadow part more than the happily ever after part. In this way, Estella remains kind of shadowy to us. Shadows also remind us of things like the Wicked Witch of the East and other evil things. Pip does not protect us from the shadows in his story, but he exposes them in full. Pip understands humans to be composed of darkness and light, shadows and sun. He realizes that Miss Havisham did not intend to hurt those around her, but that she was too overwhelmed with pain. Miss Havisham finances Herbert's career, and, thus, Pip's career. In this way, she is both good and bad. Shadows in this remind us of the truths that are hidden and of the incredibly complex nature of humans.