ON STAGE AT PARK SQUARE THEATRE

Based on the novel by CHARLES DICKENS
Adapted and Directed by JOEL SASS

Study Guide
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Plot Summary

As the play opens, adult Pip and Estella meet in the ruins of Satis House. They hear the haunting sounds and voices of their past, and Estella prompts Pip’s memories of their childhood. The scene gives way to Pip’s memory of a fearful encounter in a graveyard.

Pip recalls visiting the graves of his parents as a boy and being terrified by an escaped convict, Magwitch, who is hiding there. He forces Pip to help him by bringing him food and a file the next day. Pip is afraid of being caught and punished by his abusive sister who is raising him. He also does not want to steal from her gentle husband, Joe, a blacksmith. Although Pip successfully gets the file and food to the criminal, it does no good. Despite Pip’s help, Magwitch is recaptured and sent to Australia for his crimes.

Time passes, and Pip is invited to Satis House by Miss Havisham, a wealthy eccentric. She wants him to play with her adopted daughter, Estella. Estella harshly judges Pip and treats him cruelly because she says he is coarse and common. Miss Havisham encourages her unkindness. Estella’s contempt prompts Pip to aspire to be more than a blacksmith in order to become worthy of her love and admiration.

To Pip’s surprise, sometime later, a London lawyer visits the blacksmith shop to announce that a mysterious benefactor has provided Pip with the resources to become a proper gentleman. Pip must agree to always keep the nickname Pip for life and must never inquire as to the benefactor’s identity. Pip agrees, secretly convinced that the benefactor is Miss Havisham. He believes she is financing his transformation in hopes that Estella and he will someday marry.

In London, Pip, now a young man, begins his education as a gentleman. He develops a close bond with his roommate, Herbert Pocket. From him Pip learns of Miss Havisham’s broken heart, which explains her peculiar behavior at Satis House. His new life as a gentleman causes Pip to become increasingly embarrassed by his humble upbringing and to intentionally neglect his relationship with Joe. When Pip learns from Joe in a letter that Estella is to be married, he returns home to confront her. She coldly confirms the news, deliberately breaking Pip’s heart. Observing Pip’s devastation, Miss Havisham begs forgiveness from Pip for her role in Estella’s behavior, but before she can complete her apology, she suffers an accident and dies.

Pip’s benefactor is eventually revealed to be Magwitch, who has been successful in Australia and has remembered Pip’s kindness to him in the graveyard. Magwitch illegally returns to London to admire the young gentleman he has financed. Pip helps the aging convict escape the legal authorities one last time. However, when Magwitch dies, Pip realizes his own shortcomings. Pip has failed at his “great expectations” by living for pleasure, accumulating too much debt, and turning his back on Joe, the man who has always loved him.

As Pip’s memories come full circle, back in the ruins of Satis House, Estella asks Pip if they are friends after all that has transpired between them during their lives.

By Mari O’Meara
Eden Prairie High School
Meet the Characters

**ACTOR 1 – Pip**

Pip: The story’s protagonist. Born into the working class, Pip is transported into the upper class as a result of a mysterious benefactor. Despite his new-found wealth, Pip struggles to find his place in high society.

Ryan Colbert, actor

**ACTOR 2 – Estella / Biddy**

Estella: Self-interested orphan brought up surrounded by the wealth of Miss Havisham. Strings Pip along, despite knowing she does not, or cannot, love him.

Biddy: A close childhood friend of Pip’s who works for (and eventually marries) Joe Gargery after Mrs. Joe’s death.

Hope Cervantes, actor

**ACTOR 3 – Miss Havisham**

Miss Havisham: Estella’s neurotic, manipulative, and wealthy benefactor. Left at the altar as a young woman, she spends her remaining days wallowing in sorrow.

Barbra Berlovitz, actor

**ACTOR 4 – Herbert Pocket / Bentley Drummel/ Sarah Pocket/ A Sergeant**

Herbert Pocket: Son of Mrs. Pocket, a greedy relative of Miss Havisham. Later becomes Pip’s roommate and closest friend.

Bentley Drummel: A wealthy and abusive young man intent on winning Estella’s hand in marriage.

Sarah Pocket: Grasping daughter of Mrs. Pocket.

Adam Qualls, actor

CONTINUED...
Meet the Characters CONTINUED

**ACTOR 5 – Mr. Wopsle / Compeyson / Mr. Wemmick**

Mr. Wopsle: The very sanctimonious clerk of the village church.

Compeyson: Scar-faced fugitive who escaped with Magwitch. Blames recapture on Magwitch and holds a ruthless grudge against him. Jilted Miss Havisham at the altar.

Mr. Wemmick: An associate of Mr. Jaggers who is very familiar with London’s underworld.

**ACTOR 6 – Joe Gargery / Mr. Jaggers**


Mr. Jaggers: Miss Havisham’s lawyer. Dispenses Pip’s fortune.

**ACTOR 7 – Abel Magwitch / Uncle Pumblechook**

Abel Magwitch: Escaped convict who benefits from Pip’s kindness. Secretly provides Pip with a large fortune. Estella’s father.

Uncle Pumblechook: Joe’s uncle and Mrs. Joe’s best friend, who is a local merchant obsessed with money.

**ACTOR 8 – Mrs. Joe / Mrs. Pocket**

Mrs. Joe: Pip’s abusive sister. Brings up her brother “by hand” with guilt and violence.

Mrs. Pocket: A parasitic relative of Miss Havisham.

By Kate Schilling
Mound Westonka High School
Charles Dickens loved being a part of Victorian theater. He acted, directed, and participated in all aspects of productions. Although he never wrote plays for publication, he was intimately familiar with the melodrama popular during his day. He even reworked scenes from some of his novels into dramatic readings that he read aloud to audiences with great emotion and flourish. He was a wildly popular lecturer, and the public would often line up overnight to get tickets to hear him.

In his adaptation of *Great Expectations*, Joel Sass reflects Dickens’ connection to the theater by employing some of the same techniques used on the Victorian stage.

In the beginning of Act I Sass tells us:

> This adaptation will capitalize on the traditions and aesthetic of Victorian melodramatic theater that Dickens was so familiar with and which informed his own writing. Rather than depicting the events of the story as a series of realistic dioramas, the actors will re-enact the story in a way that invites the audience to conspire with their imaginations: the actors are almost always visible on stage, watching the unfolding story, playing musical instruments, providing foley sound effects by manipulating objects. Characters are conjured by the actors in full sight of the audience by swiftly altering physical posture, dialect, and manipulating simple costume elements. The setting is a bare slab of weathered wood containing a broken-down grand piano, a cobwebbed chandelier shrouded in rotten silk, and a rolling armoire that is an all-purpose prop cabinet, doorway, and rowboat. Various chairs, wooden planks, and trunks complete the ‘tool kit’ from which an entire world is evoked.

We are invited to use our imagination to enter the world of the play, to discover the multiple roles and characteristics portrayed by the different actors, and to explore the multiple ways various objects can be viewed or used. Few things on stage are fixed or permanent. Few characters play only one role.

Theater in this form is imagination and illusion, even when portraying the harsh realities of punishment, loss, and loneliness. The changeable nature of this theatrical world emphasizes the impermanence and uncertainties that Pip faces as he grows into his expectations. Pip’s great expectations are built upon illusion, as is the performance.
I walked away at a good pace, thinking it was easier to go than I had supposed it would be ....
I whistled and made nothing of going. But the village was very peaceful and quiet, and the light mists were solemnly rising, as if to show me the world, and I had been so innocent and little there, and all beyond was so unknown and great, that in a moment with a strong heave and sob I broke into tears.
....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.

Charles Dickens, *Great Expectations*, Chapter 19

**Early Years**

Reflecting on his own childhood, Charles Dickens described himself as “a very small and not over-particularly-taken-care-of boy”—a boy who would become, through incredibly hard work and creative genius, one of the best known and best loved authors in English literature.

Born to Elizabeth and John Dickens on Friday, February 7, 1812, in Portsmouth, England, Charles John Huffam Dickens joined what was to become a family of eight children. His father was a clerk in the Naval Pay Office and was known for his theatrical story-telling and his financial irresponsibility. Nevertheless, Dickens later wrote of him fondly as being “an optimist—he was like a cork—if he was pushed under water in one place, he always ‘bobbed up to time’ cheerfully in another and felt none the worse for the dip.” His mother, on the other hand, was gifted with “an extraordinary sense of the ludicrous,” and Dickens’ relationship with her was more problematic. Both parents would be featured prominently in the future novels of their son.

Dickens recalled his childhood as a mixture of pleasure and pain. When he was five, the family moved to Chatham, a busy seaport in southeast England, and little Charles was sent to school where he learned to read books whose characters kept him company and stayed with him the rest of his life—characters like Tom Jones, Don Quixote, the Vicar of Wakefield, and Robinson Crusoe. In the words of Dickens’ future protagonist, David Copperfield, “They kept alive my fancy and my hope of something beyond that place and time.”

However, in 1822, John Dickens was transferred to London and within two years, due to his continued mismanagement of the family finances, the creditors were at the door with increasing regularity, the household furniture had to be sold, and in February of 1824, Charles was sent to work 12 hours a day at a rat-infested boot-blacking factory wrapping shoe polish bottles for six shillings a week. Only twelve years old at the time, he later wrote that he was still amazed that he “could have been so easily cast away at such an age” by his parents. However, the worst was yet to come.

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A week later, his father was arrested and the entire family (except for Charles and his older sister Fanny) was moved to Marshalsea debtors’ prison. In an article for the New York Public Library website, Kenneth Benson writes,

Each evening, young Charles returned alone to his lodgings in Camden Town, a three-mile walk from Warren’s Blacking Factory. These cruel turns of fate—his humiliating enslavement to menial labor and his father’s imprisonment and disgrace—would haunt Dickens for the remainder of his life. Abandoned children and orphans...are everywhere in his work.

Dickens was to refer to this period of as one of “humiliation and neglect,” and even after he had achieved great success as a writer, he said he would, in his dreams, “wander desolately back to that time of my life.” These early experiences gave Dickens a heightened sensitivity to social inequalities and a fierce indignation that would fuel his writing throughout his career.

Writing Career

After four months, John Dickens was released from prison, and Charles was able to leave the blacking factory and go back to school until he finished his formal education at the age of fifteen. He found a position as a clerk at a law office, but found law “a very little world, and a very dull one” and entertained himself and his fellow employees by mimicking the passersby he saw on the street and by leaning out the window and dropping cherry pits on their heads.

His next idea was to become a court reporter, so he taught himself shorthand and wrote for the publication The Mirror of Parliament about the dealings of the House of Commons—which he described as being “strong on clowns” who spent most of the time speaking “sentences with no meaning in them.” He also wrote stories and sketches published under the name “Boz,” eventually assembled into two collections entitled Sketches by Boz in 1836, which were described by one reviewer as “a perfect picture of the morals, manners and habits of a great portion of English Society.” The Sketches were a hit with Londoners and led to a commission from Chapman and Hall for a series of stories about a sporting organization which became The Posthumous Papers of the Pickwick Club and catapulted Dickens into national renown.

His next effort, the first to be published under his own name instead of Boz, was Oliver Twist, a novel which
Charles Dickens: A Biography CONTINUED

drew heavily on the experiences of his childhood—the squalid conditions of the tenements, child labor and exploitation, abandonment, the struggles of the poor. He was an avid supporter of legislation to help the poor and needy, and starting with *Oliver Twist*, Dickens’ future work would retain the humor of *Pickwick*, but it would take on a different tone. Benson writes, “His vision certainly darkened as his artistry matured, the satire growing increasingly slashing and the critiques of social injustice more trenchant.”

The success of *Oliver Twist* established Dickens as a popular author, and he continued to write novels, fifteen in all, exploring the social inequities and absurdities of Victorian life. Many of his subsequent novels were published in serial form, much anticipated and wildly popular with the reading public. *Great Expectations*, written late in his life, reflected an increasingly dark world view and returned to some of the issues he had explored in his earlier novels—the helplessness of children, the abandonment and mistreatment of orphans, dysfunction in families, self awareness and self pity, and the loss of innocence.

**Dickens and the Theater**

Dickens also had a tremendous love for the theater, and he was very active in amateur theatricals as an actor, director, and producer. A friend of his, John Forster, who worked with him on a production of Ben Jonson’s *Everyman and His Humor*, described Dickens as not only a brilliant actor, but a “stage-director, very often stage-carpenter, scene arranger, property-man, prompter, and bandmaster...he assisted carpenters, invented costumes, devised playbills, wrote out calls...” And indeed, his secret daydream was to own and manage his own theater—having complete control over every aspect of every production.

In actuality, between 1853 and 1870, a good deal of his fortune was made reworking scenes from some of his novels into 90 minute dramatizations and touring England and the United States mesmerizing audiences with his engaging and emotional deliveries. People laughed, cried, shrieked, hissed (at the villains, not at Dickens), applauded, and shouted “Hear! Hear!” (That meant “Right on!”) He was the equivalent of a 19th century rock star, and theater-goers would line up the night before a performance to guarantee a ticket when the box office opened the following morning.
Last Years

Throughout the 1860s, Dickens’ health steadily declined, and he suffered increasingly from exhaustion; however, he would not give up his writing or his touring. Eventually, after stating many times that he wanted to “die in the harness,” he had a massive stroke on June 8, 1870 and died the following day, sending both England and America into mourning.

Even though he had wished to be buried in a small cemetery in Rochester, England, the British populace would not allow their favorite author to rest in obscurity. Dickens was buried in Poets’ Corner, Westminster Abbey, and flowers from literally thousands of mourners overflowed the open grave—beautifully arranged bouquets mingling with clusters of wildflowers tied with rags.

The “very small and not over-particularly-taken-care-of boy” had become beloved by rich and poor alike, “an artist of supreme poetic power who had captured the hearts and imaginations of the world as few writers had ever done” (Benson) and whose work continues to engage readers today, provoking, in the words of Neil Bartlett, “laughter, horror and ghoulish fascination” as well as “sincere concern for the plight of orphaned children and sincere belief in the survival of innocence.”

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By Marcia Aubineau
St Thomas University, retired

with additions By Jill Tammen
Hudson High School, retired
Tossing Lines  A PRE-PLAY ACTIVITY

Objective
To familiarize students with the play by working with lines spoken in the play and based on these excerpts to elicit predictions and discussion about the play’s conflict and characters. This activity helps students form questions, gain insight, and build excitement for seeing these lines spoken in the play. This activity is best if completed before students attend the play.

Time allotted
20-30 minutes

Materials
Tennis ball or hacky sack
Fourteen slips of paper, cut from Tossing Lines Resource on the next page

Procedure
Cut and distribute the slips of paper (see Tossing Lines Resource) to volunteers. Give students a few minutes to memorize (or prepare a dramatic reading of their line with no memorization). Have these ten students form a circle and give one student the ball. After he/she speaks the line, the student tosses the ball to another student who speaks his/her assigned line. Students toss ball throughout the circle until all lines have been heard a few times. Encourage students to speak lines with varying emotions, seeking out the best way to perform the lines.

Optional
Re-assign lines within the group (or other students in classroom) and continue for another round.

Freewriting/Discussion
Many of the quotes selected for this activity involve longings and expectations as well as shame and disappointment. Dreams and disappointment appear side by side. Have students consider how dreams may lead to either satisfaction and joy or dissatisfaction and longing. After lines have been tossed and in preparation for discussion, allow students five minutes to free write their ideas and questions about the content of the play. The following questions may be used to guide free writing and/or discussion.

1. What types of conflict do you expect to see? Why?
2. What can you guess about the characters? Age? Class? Other?
3. What different emotions are expressed in these lines?
4. What might be the reason for all the name-calling?
5. How often does the word expectation (or a variation of it) appear in these lines?
6. What might the characters be longing for? How is longing for something unlike expecting something?
7. What themes do you think this play will explore?

## Tossing Lines Resource

| It's bad enough to be a blacksmith's wife... without being your mother. |
| Hold your noise! Keep still, you little devil, or I'll cut your throat! |
| Why is it that the young are never grateful? |
| Broken! I am tired, and I want diversion. I sometimes have sick fancies. |
| Why don't you cry again, you little wretch? |
| *Expecting*?! Who told you to *expect* anything? |
| Break their hearts! Break their hearts my pride and hope, and have no mercy! |
| It was a kiss given to a coarse common boy... it was worth nothing. |
| It is a most miserable thing to feel ashamed of home. |
| I am not at all happy as I am...I’m coarse...and common. |
| Do you want to be a gentleman to spite her or to gain her over? |
| Come along, you great dunderheaded king of the noodles! |
| Were you expecting more, Pip? Were you? Were you expecting more? |
| This is what I’ve had always longed for! |

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*By Jill Tammen*

Hudson High School, retired
Scene to Read Aloud #1  A PRE-PLAY ACTIVITY

Act I, Scene 1

(excerpt from an early draft of the play)

When the play opens, we learn that the action of the play will stem from the memories of the now-grown main character, Pip. In this first scene Pip recalls a night in which he visited his parents’ graves and encountered the escaped convict, Magwitch.

MAGWITCH. Orphan, eh? Who d’ye live with - supposin' you're let to live, which I han’t made up my mind about?

PIP. With my sister, sir, Mrs. Joe Gargery, wife of Joe Gargery, the blacksmith, sir.

MAGWITCH. Blacksmith, eh? (he considers the clanking irons clamped to his leg) Now lookee here, Pip...You know what a file is?

PIP. Yes, sir.

MAGWITCH. And you know what wittles is?

PIP. Yes, sir, food, sir.

MAGWITCH. You get me a file. And you get me wittles. You bring 'em both to me, tomorrow morning, early. And you never dare say a word. Or I'll have your heart and liver out...and cooked...and ate!!

PIP. Yes, sir!

MAGWITCH. I’m not alone as you think I am. There's a young man hid with me on these marshes, in comparison with which I am a Angel. That young man has a secret way pecooliar to himself, of getting at a boy, and at his heart, and at his liver. A boy may lock his door, and be safe in bed, but that young man will softly creep and creep and tear him open. (pause) I am a-keeping that young man from harming of you at the present moment, but with great difficulty. I’m finding it wery hard to hold that young man off of your insides.

PIP. I’ll do it, sir, I promise!

MAGWITCH. (pulls a small worn Bible from his pocket) Say “Lord strike you
dead if you don't!"

COMPANY. Say it!!

PIP. Lord strike me dead if I don't!

MAGWITCH. Kiss the book!

(Pip does so.)

MAGWITCH. Now get yourself home. And remember—

COMPANY. Remember...

MAGWITCH. Remember that young man.... You remember what you've promised...!

PIP. I will!
And I never forgot....

COMPANY. The great iron on his leg, his broken shoes
How he vanished out of sight into the black marshes
As if the dead had reached up out of their graves, and pulled him in.

(Magwitch sinks down out of sight)

PIP. And I ran, fast as my feet could carry me, through the freezing mist...toward home.
Questions:

1. What lines support the sinister nature of Magwitch? What evidence can you cite that indicates that Magwitch has some redeeming qualities?

2. What inferences can you make in regards to the escaped convict’s social class and education level based on his style of speech? (For example, Magwitch uses the word “wittles” instead of vittles).

3. Based on the exchange between Pip and Magwitch, discuss how each character could hold the power in this scene.

4. The theme of remembrance is vital to this scene. Count how many times the word “remember” or variations of it occur.

5. If the scene is framed as the memory of the grown Pip, what is the significance of the Company’s lines throughout this scene?

6. How would this scene differ were it framed as Magwitch’s memory? How would the role of the Company in this scene differ?

Pip and Magwitch on the marshes, by John McLenan (1860)
Act 1, Scene 10 (excerpt from an early draft of the play)

As this scene opens, Pip enters Miss Havisham’s room, where she conducts a strange interview with Pip and confesses to having a “sick fancy” to want to see some play. She calls in Estella to play with Pip.

MISS HAVISHAM. So new to him, so old to me…. Estella!
(Estella enters)
Let me see you play cards with this boy.

ESTELLA. But, he is a common laboring boy!

MISS HAVISHAM. Well? You can break his heart.

ESTELLA. What do you play, boy?

PIP. Nothing but ‘Beggar my Neighbor’, miss.

MISS HAVISHAM. Beggar him.

(They play cards)

PIP. Four…seven…Jack!

ESTELLA. He calls the knaves Jacks, this boy! And what coarse hands he has! And what thick boots!

PIP. (to the audience) I had never thought of being ashamed before….But her contempt for me was so strong that it became infectious—and I caught it.

ESTELLA. (throwing her cards on the table) He can’t even play. He’s just a stupid, clumsy boy. A laboring-boy.

MISS HAVISHAM. (to Pip) She says many hard things of you, but you say nothing of her. What do you think of her?

PIP. I don’t like to say.

MISS HAVISHAM. Tell me in my ear.

PIP. I think she is very proud.

CONTINUED...
Scene to Read Aloud #2 CONTINUED

MISS HAVISHAM. Anything else?

PIP. I think she is very pretty.

MISS HAVISHAM. Anything else?

PIP. I think she is very insulting.

MISS HAVISHAM. Anything else?

PIP. I think I should like to go home.

MISS HAVISHAM. And never see her again, though she is so pretty?

PIP. I am not sure that I shouldn't like to see her again, but I should like to go home now.

QUESTIONS:

1. What can we learn about Pip’s character based on his reaction to Estella’s treatment of him?

2. When Miss Havisham tells Estella that she “can break his heart,” how does Estella proceed to do so?

3. What does Pip learn of his social position in life during this scene?

4. Why is Estella upset that Pip “calls the knaves Jacks?”

5. What are the behaviors about Pip that disgust Estella?

6. How is Miss Havisham’s “sick fancy” indulged in this scene?

7. What differences in social class are apparent in this scene through the language?

8. What feelings do you believe Pip is having based on his responses to Miss Havisham’s questions? How might the actor portray those emotions on stage?

9. At the end of the scene when Pip says, “I am not sure that I shouldn't like to see her again,” what can we learn about Pip’s first experience at Miss Havisham’s?
Notes for the Teacher

This activity is designed to expose students to a wide variety of examples of Victorian visual culture using online primary documents.

Areas of Study:
These activities are appropriate in the following curriculum areas:
- Language Arts
- Social Studies
- Studio Arts
- Theater

Time: 45-55 minutes

Preparation:
Print copies of the student worksheet on the following pages. Reserve the appropriate number of computers necessary for the type of procedure you’ve chosen.

Procedure:
This activity is designed as an independent student activity with each student having a computer in a computer lab setting; however, it could also be used in the following ways:

- As a paired activity with two students working as a team to complete the worksheet and sharing a computer in either a lab or a classroom
- As a group activity with each student group sharing a computer in either a lab or a classroom
- As a classroom activity using a teacher’s computer to project the images and students completing the worksheet independently

Sourced from Mark Bills’ edited *Dickens and the Artists*
Dickens and the Artists of His Day CONTINUED

Instructions


Click on Present.

Click on the hyperlink(s).

When you are finished with a hyperlinked page, close the window and move on to another section by clicking on the tab at the top to go back to the home page and then click on next.

1. Look at a portrait of Charles Dickens when he first became famous as an author in his twenties. Then look at two other portraits made before he wrote Great Expectations between 1861 and 1862. Age him in a sketch to look like he would have appeared after he wrote the novel.

Click on next.

2. Compare your sketch to a photograph of Dickens in September 1863. How did you do?

Click on next.

3. “Dickens’ daughter, Kate Perugini, says that David Wilkie was the first artist whom her father knew.” Look through a selection of paintings and determine which two paintings look like they could be an illustration for a Dickens novel.

The Old Curiosity Shop (1841):

Click on next.

4. Read Excerpt A from Dickens’ The Old Curiosity Shop (on the last page of this activity), and then view Robert Braithwaite’s Kit’s Writing Lesson, 1852. Discuss what the painter left out and added to the scene.

Click on next.

5. Do you think James Collinson’s painting of the same subject is also a reconstruction of the same scene in the novel? If not, what story does this painting tell?

Click on next.

6. Painters of Dickens’ day were inspired by the story of Little Nell and her Grandfather from The Old Curiosity Shop. Which painting do you find the most compelling? Explain.

CONTINUED...
7. Read Excerpt B from The Old Curiosity Shop and Excerpt C from Sketches by Boz (on the last page of this activity). Using Google Art’s zoom feature, discuss where each of the figures described in the excerpts is compositionally placed in William Powell Frith’s The Derby Day, 1858.

Grab Bag:

8. The English painter and printmaker William Hogarth influenced both Frith’s and Dickens’ work. Hogarth once wrote, “I therefore wished to compose pictures on canvas similar to representations on the stage....” View one of Hogarth’s prints and discuss how his statement is reflected there. Then explain how Hogarth likely influenced one of Frith’s first works, Ramsgate Sands (Life at the Seaside), 1851-4.

9. A group of artists working in England who were known as the Social Realists were heavily influenced by the novels of Dickens. After viewing one painting from each of the three artists, which artist was the most successful in incorporating Dickens’ literary themes? Why?

10. Hard Times (1854) and Great Expectations (1861-2) were the only two Dickens novels originally published with illustrations. Discuss your favorite illustration from Great Expectations by Frederick William Pailthorpe.
Dickens and the Artists of His Day CONTINUED

Excerpt A (see Question 4)

(T)he child came back directly, and soon occupied herself in preparations for giving Kit a writing lesson, of which it seemed he had a couple every week, and one regularly on that evening, to the great mirth and enjoyment both of himself and his instructress. To relate how it was a long time before his modesty could be so far prevailed upon to admit of his sitting down in the parlour in the presence of an unknown gentleman – how when he did sit down, he tucked up his sleeves and squared his elbows and put his face close to the copybook and squinted horribly at the lines – how, from the very moment of having the pen in his hand he began to wallow in blots, and to daub himself with ink up to the very roots of his hair – how if he did by accident form a letter properly, he immediately smeared it out again with his arm in his preparations to make another – how at every fresh mistake, there was a fresh burst of merriment from the child and a louder and not yet less hearty laugh from poor Kit himself and how there was all the way through, notwithstanding, a gentle wish on her part to teach, and an anxious desire on his to learn – to relate all these particulars would no doubt occupy more time and space than they deserve.

-From *The Old Curiosity Shop* (1841)

Excerpt B (see Question 7)

There was but one lady who seemed to understand the child, and she was one who sat alone in a handsome carriage .... She motioned away a gypsy woman urgent to tell her fortune, saying that it was told already, and had been for some years, but called the child towards her, and, taking her flowers, put money into her trembling hand, and bade her go home and keep at home for God's sake.

-From *The Old Curiosity Shop* (1841)

Excerpt C (see Question 7)

Pedestrians linger in groups at the roadside, unable to resist the allurements of the stout proprietress of the ‘Jack-in-the-box, three shies a penny,’ or the more splendid offers of the man with three thimbles and a pea on a little round board, who astonishes the bewildered crowd...

-From *Sketches by Boz* (1836)
Imagine you have been hired to cast the upcoming *Great Expectations* movie. In order to make the best casting decision, you must explore and analyze each character thoroughly.

You will be assigned or will select one of the following characters to cast in this movie:

- Young Pip
- Adult Pip
- Estella
- Miss Havisham

Using the following pages, complete an analysis for a character as indicated by the PEARS categories (physical, expectations, actions, reactions, speech).

Then choose someone from history, current events, a literary work, or a fictional work to cast as the character in the movie. Complete the PEARS analysis to clarify your casting choice.

Finally, write a brief paragraph explanation of why you made the casting decision.

An example of the assignment is provided on the next page.
Casting Call! - A Character Analysis CONTINUED

EXAMPLE (based on the novel)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Analysis Category (PEARS)</th>
<th>Identify Character: Joe Gargery</th>
<th>Identify your Casting Choice: Rubeus Hagrid (from the <em>Harry Potter</em> series)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Physical – describe the physical traits of the character/casting choice</td>
<td>Joe is a fair man, with curls of flaxen hair on each side of his smooth face. He has blue eyes and seems to have the physical strength of Hercules. His clothing is simple as it reflects his lower social standing in society.</td>
<td>Hagrid has curly hair, possesses immense physical strength, and wears simple clothing.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expectations – describe the expectations the character/casting choice has for him/herself</td>
<td>Joe expects to remain loyal, compassionate and kind to all those he encounters. This exemplifies his strong moral convictions and is a result of his contentment with his profession, educational level, and lower social class.</td>
<td>Hagrid is a friendly, loyal character who views himself as the protector of Hogwarts and its students.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Actions – describe the actions unique to the character/ casting choice</td>
<td>Joe attempts to protect Pip from Mrs. Joe’s abuse, and he learns to read and write to please Pip. Joe also pays off Pip’s debt and sneaks away as to not embarrass Pip.</td>
<td>Hagrid rescues Harry from an abusive home life, and later, at Hogwarts, serves as a confidant to Harry.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reactions – describe the reactions others have to the character/casting choice</td>
<td>Due to Joe’s gentle nature and lower social class, characters such as Mrs. Joe and Pip treat him harshly, while others fail to respect the hard-working blacksmith.</td>
<td>Due to Hagrid’s job as the groundskeeper at Hogwarts, students from pure magical families, like Draco Malfoy, look down upon him and treat him poorly.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Speech – describe the speech unique to the character/ casting choice</td>
<td>Joe’s lack of formal education is obvious in his informal grammatical and pronunciation of words. For example, when he says to Pip, “you and me was ever friends.”</td>
<td>Hagrid has a very unpolished dialect.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


CONTINUED...
### Casting Call! - A Character Analysis CONTINUED

Name: ______________________________________

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Analysis Category (PEARS)</th>
<th>Identify Character:</th>
<th>Identify your Casting Choice:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>P(ysical)-describe the physical traits of the character/casting choice</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E(xpectations)- describe the expectations the character/casting choice has for him/herself</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A(cions)-describe the actions unique to the character/ casting choice</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R(eactions)-describe the reactions others have to the character/casting choice</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S(peech)- describe the speech unique to the character/ casting choice</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Written Explanation: ____________________________________________________________
Examining Money and Social Class
A POST-PLAY ACTIVITY

Miss Havisham: Miss Havisham inherited extraordinary wealth and was jilted at the altar as a young woman. She then uses her fortune to fund her neuroses, wearing her rotting wedding dress in a room strewn with the decaying artifacts from her wedding day. Although she is the wealthiest character in the novel, she is abjectly miserable.

Pip: Pip is born into the working class, but he rises to the upper class as the result of receiving a fortune. Although he aspires to be a true gentleman, he spends his money recklessly and fails to assimilate into the upper class. Pip thinks that money will ultimately be the solution to his problems and ensure a relationship with Estella, but his fortune ultimately brings him unhappiness.

Magwitch: Magwitch is sent to prison in Australia, where he earns a significant fortune. He secretly bestows his fortune on Pip, who aided him as an escaped convict. Ironically, Pip squanders the fortune earned by Magwitch’s hard work.

Estella: Estella is the ward of Miss Havisham and grows up in a life of wealth and privilege. Although she has been given great economic advantage by Miss Havisham, she has been stripped of her ability to love.

Joe: Joe lives a simple, fulfilled life as a blacksmith. Although he is the least economically advantaged of any character, he is the happiest.

Discussion Questions

1. How does Dickens’ portrayal of money and class convey the author’s message regarding the relationship between wealth and happiness?

2. How does money affect and reflect the morality of each character?

3. Is it possible to successfully improve one’s economic status in modern day America? Why or why not? What are examples of successful or failed attempts to join the upper class?

4. Pip is ashamed of his working class background, even though he was treated with respect and dignity as Joe’s apprentice. What comparisons are there between the perception of “upper class” and “lower class” career paths in Victorian England and modern America?

5. Magwitch bequeathes his fortune to Pip. What might be his motivation for sharing his wealth? Identify individuals in today’s society who use money benevolently like Magwitch.

6. Dickens wrote his way from poverty to the upper class. How might his characters reflect Dickens’ own experience with money?

By Kate Schilling
Mound Westonka High School
Notes for the Teacher

This activity is designed to expose students to a wide variety of examples of Victorian visual culture using online primary documents.

Areas of Study:
These activities are appropriate in the following curriculum areas:
Language Arts
Social Studies
Studio Arts
Theater

Time: 45-55 minutes

Preparation:
Print copies of the student worksheet on the following pages. Reserve the appropriate number of computers necessary for the type of procedure you’ve chosen.

Procedure:
This activity is designed as an independent student activity with each student having a computer in a computer lab setting; however, it could also be used in the following ways:

- As a paired activity with two students working as a team to complete the worksheet and sharing a computer in either a lab or a classroom
- As a group activity with each student group sharing a computer in either a lab or a classroom
- As a classroom activity using a teacher’s computer to project the images and students completing the work sheet independently
Pip’s World Through Victorian Art CONTINUED

Instructions


Click on Present.

Click on the hyperlink(s).

When you are finished with a hyperlinked page, close the window and move on to another section by clicking on the tab at the top to go back to the home page and then click on next.

1. Dutch painter Vincent Van Gogh deeply admired the writings of Charles Dickens. Van Gogh wrote in March of 1883, “There is no writer in my opinion, who is so much painter and a black-and-white artist as Dickens.” View a selection of paintings from The Clark Institute of Art’s Van Gogh And Nature exhibition and discuss how the famous Dutch artist would have painted his own version of one scene in a more colorful painting that might have taken place in Pip’s rural hometown.

Click on next.

2. As a little girl Estella has nightmares of what Miss Havisham will look like when Estella is ready to move out of the house. Which likeness of Miss Havisham would have frightened her the most? Which one would have frightened her the least?

Click on next.

3. When Pip first arrives in London, he sees many women in a state of peril because of the economic changes wrought by the Second Industrial Revolution. In your opinion, which painting presents the most destitute woman? Explain.

Click on next and Play introduction with sound.

4. The stratified class system of Victorian England becomes more and more apparent the longer Pip lives in London. Listen to the interactive feature regarding Ford Maddox Brown’s Work, 1852 - 1865. Then click on Meet the people and click on each person in the painting. After listening to each monologue, click X to close.

CONTINUED...
4. Continued...

   Answer the following questions:
   a. Describe the monologue of the Chickweed seller.
   b. What is the subject of the pamphlet that the Campaigner is distributing?
   c. What does a Navvy do?
   d. How many children is the Urchin girl raising?
   e. Why did the Reverend Maurice found two colleges?
   f. Social class influences the language of each of the above characters. Which social class from Victorian England does each character represent?

   Click on next.

5. When Pip boards an omnibus (an early form of public transportation), he begins to notice certain societal rules. After you have looked at paintings by Alfred Morgan, William Maw Egley, and Charles Rossiter, determine what he concludes is a woman’s proper reaction to being looked at by a man in public?

   Click on next and enlarge image.

6. Toward the end of the story, Pip believes that an escaped convict named Compeyson is following him. Which person in George Elgar Hicks’ The General Post Office, One Minute to Six, 1860 would you guess is following Pip and why?

   Click on next.


   Click on next.

8. What do these Victorian advertisements tell us about the London culture of Pip’s day?
Character Questions

1. In the marshes, Magwitch scares Pip into promising to bring him wittles (food) and a file. The next morning Pip brings him “some bread, a rind of cheese, some brandy in a stone bottle, and a beautiful round compact pork pie” and a file. Why do you think Pip has brought him so much food when he could have gotten by with providing much less? What does this show about Pip?

2. How does Pip’s home life affect your response to him?

3. What is the double meaning of Mrs. Joe’s reminder that she is bringing Pip up “by hand”?

4. Magwitch is fearful and threatening, but we see a kinder side of him too. What details are provided about him that make him more than just a desperate criminal?

5. When Magwitch admits to eating the stolen food, Joe says, “God knows you’re welcome to it, —so far as it was ever mine. We don’t know what you’ve done, but we wouldn’t have you starved to death for it.” What does this statement show about Joe?

6. As soon as Pip is provided with new clothes by Mr. Jaggers, other characters (including his family) begin to treat him differently. How do clothes define us and how do they affect how we are treated today?

7. Dickens is known for creating memorable characters, some of whom are exaggerated into almost caricatures. Which characters in Great Expectations were realistic to you? Which ones were not? Do you prefer realistic or exaggerated characters? Why?

8. Why does Miss Havisham let Pip believe she might be his benefactress?

9. Is Pip a sympathetic character? Why or why not? Does he change significantly throughout the story or is he largely the same person at the end, simply surrounded by finer lodgings and more expensive tastes? What evidence can you point to that shows he has changed? In what ways does he appear unchanged?

10. Who is the most admirable character in Great Expectations? The most despicable? The happiest? The most tragic? Explain your choices.

Theme Questions

1. Instead of experiencing idealized childhoods, the children in Dickens’ stories often survive abusive environ-
Post-Play Discussion Questions CONTINUED

1. What types of abuse are portrayed in *Great Expectations*? Why might Dickens have chosen to put Pip into an abusive family when he could have put Pip in a poor but happy home at the beginning of the story?

2. After his first visit to Miss Havisham’s, Pip is suddenly self-conscious about his lower social status in contrast to Estella. How do people learn to be ashamed of their backgrounds or of their families? How does Pip’s shame change his relationship with Joe?

3. Miss Havisham’s rejection has turned her cruel, and she wants Estella to take revenge on men for her. Cruelty has thus bred cruelty. Is it possible to break the cycle? Where in the play do we see the cycle of cruelty continued? Where do we see the cycle broken?

4. In *Great Expectations* we see several transformations. Identify as many as you can. Which transformations are the most significant? Which transformations are for the good and which ones are not? Explain.

5. What is timeless about this story? What can contemporary audiences take home to ponder about modern life after viewing *Great Expectations* set during Victorian England?

Production Questions

1. Did the multiple roles played by the same actor affect the meaning of the story? How? What themes did this casting reinforce?

2. The adapter and director Joel Sass asked that a few objects be selected for the setting (an armoire, a chandelier and a gutted grand piano) and that each be object be transformed by the ensemble of actors into new objects; for example, they transform the armoire from a doorway into a boat and then into a carriage. Why do you think he did this? How do these choices reinforce the story, characters, or themes of *Great Expectations*?

3. The soundscape of the novel is important to the director. How were sounds created? How were they initiated? What did you like and dislike about this method of sound design?

4. If you read the novel, how did the play compare to it? Were you surprised or disappointed that any scenes were omitted in the play version? If so, which ones?

5. Did the actors portray the characters the way you envisioned them when you read the novel? Were the stage settings as vivid as Dickens’ descriptions?

6. How did the addition of lighting and sounds affect the story?

By Jill Tammen
Hudson High School, retired
Educational Programs at Park Square Theatre are Funded in Part by:


To Our Teachers,

Thank you for giving the gift of theatre to your students, and the gift of your students to our theatre.

Yours sincerely,

The Staff at Park Square Theatre