



Great Expectation vs. Great Reality

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Abstract

The prime motive of this paper is to draw the reader's attention towards the major themes of the Dickens work, which primarily revolved around the societal problems. Also the work of Charles probes into the great Victorian era, which was diffusing towards a new century of modernity and industrialization. Despite any literary controversy over Dickens style, most of the critics agree that Great Expectations is his best book. G.K. Chesterton once observed that all of the Charles Dickens could be titled Great Expectations, for they are full of an unsubstantial yet ardent expectation of everything.

“ Suffering has been stronger than all other teaching, has taught me to understand what your heart used to be. I have bent and broken, but - I hope - into a better shape.”

- Charles Dickens, Great Expectations

‘ Great Expectations’ is a novel written by Charles Dickens, first serialized in 'All the year Round' ranging from the first of December 1860 to August 1861. It is regarded as one of his greatest and one of his most sophisticated novels and has been adapted for stage and screen over two hundred and fifty times. Written in the genre of ‘ Bildungsroman’, which deals with the protagonist’s formative years or spiritual education. The novel traces the story of a penurious young orphan named Pip, writing his life from his early days until his later life and trying to develop into a gentleman along the way. Charles Dickens was known as a ‘ social reformer’ and his ideas were very vocal in his works depicting the real Victorian era and the impact it had on society. When the book was written, history of England was being marked with industrial revolution. The revolution caused many social and economic changes. Virtues emphasized at that time included integrity, respectability, a sense of public duty, and maintaining a close-knit family. Whereas Dickens in his novels portray a world in which the expectations are contradicted with the reality.

“In a word, I was too cowardly to do what I knew to be right, as I had been too cowardly to avoid doing what I knew to be wrong”

- **Charles Dickens, Great Expectations**

Dickens ‘ Great Expectations’ themes explores many of universal and fundamental ideas. The identification of self, social standings, suffering, revenge and growing pains. The novel has one fundamental point stating that no matter what, a person cannot change who they are. Pip contradictory to this fights his identity and pursues a path that would make him more socially acceptable just to win the heart of Estella. Pip is very ambitious young man who tries to better himself at every opportunity he has for himself. After receiving expectations from an anonymous benefactor he leaves everything behind even the love of those people who were true to him in his adversities to London. Joe Gargery, his sister's husband took Pip has his own but after receiving the wealth he started to become ‘ ashamed’ of home and Joe. Pip narrates Joe as 'coarse and common’. This is the start of Pip's moral decline and detachment from reality. In fact, Pip 'dreaded’ the moment when Joe came to visit him in London. The protagonist of the novel who was innocent and accepting becomes an obnoxious and patronizing of those who love him. Through the life of Pip, Dickens demonstrates that one can find no happiness in changing who they are, and perhaps even the opposite.

Throughout the life of Pip, he came across different characters that vary greatly in both social class and depth. Magwitch, Joe and Bidley are the low end while Miss Havisham, Compeyson and Drummle represents the high class. In the end, however, Pip realizes that one's social standing has no correlation to their true characters. Despite being lower class they are symbol of honesty and loyalty whereas the upper class shows the most wrecking qualities for a human being. The upper class plays games and plots revenge but lower class teaches the less of forgiveness and humbleness.

“I must be taken as I have been made. The success is not mine, the failure is not mine, but the two together make me”

- **Charles Dickens, Great Expectations**

This is a story that everyone can relate to because everyone has gone through the struggles of growing up and finding one's self. Evolution of person that stages through childhood to adulthood and Dickens shows this by demonstrating the battles Pip fight to find his own values and morals. For Pip, he faced many difficulties in realizing who he was and one of the main ones were was to part from those he loved to achieve goals that he thought were important. Most of the characters in the novel face immense suffering in their lives at one point or another. The main fact depicted in the novel is Pip’s tribulations to win over Estella's love only to be rejected because of her pride and haughtiness. Estella's 'heartlessness’ towards Pip shakes his world and shows his true reality. Pip also causes Joe and himself to suffer when he leaves Joe to pursue materialistic things, which were center of his life. His detachment from reality for his great expectations draws his life force. From being a poor orphan to a rich young gentleman, to again losing his wealth only to find true meaning of riches of life. Rejection in love to acceptance of life Pip’s life is a daily tale of us people who suffers similarly because to have those expectations fulfilled that not only cost us our mind peace but also some valuable relations.

The novel ends with Pip not accomplishing his initial objectives but instead learning something much more valuable. Expectations may not be great but human morals may help getting that expectation fulfilled.

Works cited:

1. *Dickens, Charles. Great Expectations. London: Penguin Classics, 1996*
2. *<http://www.google.co.in/search?#q=great+expectations>*