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| **Choose a novel or short story in which there is an important incident involving one of the following: an act of kindness, an unwise decision, an act of violence, a chance encounter, a heated argument. With reference to appropriate techniques, explain how the incident is presented and discuss its importance to your understanding of the text as a whole.** |
| **Great Expectations by Charles Dickens involves an important incident near the start when Miss Havisham decides to use Pip as a plaything for Estella to train her skills on. In the novel Pip begins his life in poverty before living a life as a gentleman after receiving money from a mysterious benefactor who he believes is Miss Havisham. We can look at how Dickens used this incident to shape the events in the rest of the novel and how it ultimately linked to his wider exploration of how to be a good person.** |
| **The first time we meet Miss Havisham we realise she is someone with mental health issues which sets up the important incident. Her appearance suggests this straight away as we are told she is ‘withered’, still wears her wedding dress from years before and ‘had no brightness but the brightness of her sunken eyes’. The word choice of ‘withered’ suggests something that is dying. The continued wearing of the wedding dress shows an inability to move on with her life in a positive way and the ‘sunken eyes’ suggest a lack of sleep. There is still some mental capacity left as we are told there is a ‘brightness’. Altogether this is quite a frightening image to behold. On this first meeting with her she is frightening to behold but we don’t learn about her character yet to know if she is good or bad.** |
| **This scene leads into an important incident, as this is where Estella first learns to be cruel to men, which later impacts on Pip and his actions. Miss Havisham whispers to Estella as she watches her adopted daughter play with Pip, telling her, “break their hearts my pride and hope, break their hearts and have no mercy.” Here repetition is used to emphasise that Miss Havisham wants Estella to emotionally and mentally damage the men she encounters in her life. Her word choice of ‘have no mercy’ also emphasises that she doesn’t want Estella to have an emotional involvement in her actions. Also, the fact that Pip reports this to us shows that Miss Havisham has said it in front of him suggesting that she doesn’t care for Pip. This scene is important because it shows Pip becoming infatuated with this rich and wealthy world and with Estella, but by the same token it shows him being rejected from it by Estella and Miss Havisham. This shows Miss Havisham and Estella being bad and Pip starting to turn away from his good morals.** |
| **WE can see that Miss Havisham and Estella have had a negative impact on Pip as his behaviour and attitude starts to change drastically towards his family. This is best exemplified in his behaviour towards Joe who visits him in London, Pip behaves towards Joe with ‘impatience’ and shows he is ‘out of temper’. The word choice of impatient’ suggests he can’t be bothered with Joe and having to explain who he is to his new circle of peers. He is also ‘out of temper’ because Joe’s presence in London has thrown him, he doesn’t know how to explain that this mere blacksmith from the countryside who is dressed strangely is actually his father-figure. Pip feels embarrassed by Joe simply because Joe is working class and reminds Pip of his past life that he is trying to hide from his new peer group. Joe is sensible enough to realise Pip is becoming uncomfortable with his presence in London and says to Pip “ you wouldn’t find half so much fault in me… if you stuck your head in at the forge window”. Basically Joe is subtly telling Pip that his behaviour has become inappropriate since moving to London, he wants him to come home to remember who he really is and how he should behave and act. This scene really shows the impact Pip’s time at Satis House and the impact his desire for Estella has had on his character development. He is so convinced that Miss Havisham is his secret benefactor and that she has designs for him to marry Estella that he is even willing to turn his back on his own ‘father’ Joe in order to get what he wants and behave how he thinks he should to get those things.** |
| **We can see Pip actually begin to realise that his actions and behaviour have become negatively impacted by his childhood experience at Satis House and his love for Estellla. When he finally meets Magwitch he learns that this is his benefactor. He is initially revolted that a past convict is his benefactor but eventually he learns to love Magwitch realising he is a victim of a broken upbringing and when Magwitch is dying in prison we are told Pip ‘took my place by his side’ and showed ‘affection’, ‘gratitude’ and ‘generosity’. The list of emotions and traits show that Pip feels loyal to Magwitch and that he understands what Magwitch gave up so Pip could live a comfortable life. The ‘taking of his place’ shows that Pip understands he has a duty to Magwitch but also that he wants to fulfil that duty. By this point, Pip has told Miss Havisham that his heart has been broken by Estella who has agreed to marry Drummel. With the appearance of Magwitch, Pip no longer focuses on this but instead devotes his attention to Magwitch who is more important. We see Pip start to make things right for himself and fix his own future without the influence of Miss Havisham.** |
| **The book ending shows things drawn to a reasonably happy conclusion, despite the incident at the start of the book where Miss Havisham tried to influence Pip and Estella’s behaviour. Pip runs into Estella after moving on with his life and working hard at Herbert’s company and he tells Estella this saying “ I work hard for a sufficient living and therefore, yes, I do well”. The word choice here is importatnt. Pip speaks of ‘working hard’ which shows he understands that there is merit in putting in effort to achieve something. He also tells us that he makes a ‘sufficient living’ meaning he can live comfortably and we know that he also supports Herbert’s family and Joe’s from his living. The simple statement at the end of ‘yes I do well’ shows through its tone that Pip feels satisfied with his life. When Pip and Estella leave Satis House for the last time we are told that Pip saw ‘no shadow of a parting’ from Estella. This leads us to believe that Pip and Estella end up together. After all those years of Miss Havisham and others manipulating their behaviours or trying to influence their lifes the actually find each other by themselves and end up together. This closing scene shows us that despite everything Pip learns how to be a good person for himself in spite of Miss Havisham’s influence and the same thing happens to Estella as she drops the cold-hearted front and learns to have and show emotions.** |
| **In conclusion, we can see how Miss Havisham’s input at the start of the novel had a detrimental impact on the main character Pip and Estella. Miss Havisham’s appearance in Pip’s life led to him meeting Estella and falling in love with her. This then impacted on Pip’s behaviour as a young man, and the money he received from Magwitch (whilst believing his benefactor was Miss Havisham) meant that he changed his behaviour into that of a snob. Fortunately, when Pip met Magwitch he realised that he was behaving ignorantly, and he returned to being a hard-working and caring person. Likewise, under Miss Havisham’s influence Estella became a cold-hearted snob. It is only after Miss Havisham’s death, and the death of her husband, that Estella is also free to learn how to be a good person. When both characters have realised their true selves they are free to be together.** |