**Choose a novel or short story which deals with the theme of power or greed or corruption or intolerance or mental instability.**

**With reference to appropriate techniques, explain how the writer presents the theme and discuss why it is important to your appreciation of the text as a whole.**

**Great Expectations by Charles Dickens deals with a theme of mental instability in the form of the character Miss Havisham. 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 why the theme of mental instability, as shown through Miss Havisham, is important to the plot and how it ties into Dicken’s wider theme of being a good person in the book.**

**The first time we meet Miss Havisham we realise she is someone with mental health issues. 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.**

**Miss Havisham continues to demonstrate her mental health issues by manipulating Estella’s behaviour. 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. By doing this, Miss Havisham shows little regard for Pip or Estella’s wellbeing, as she manipulates both of them for her own means. Her mental illness stops her being a good person.**

**Miss Havisham continues to act in a demented and off-putting way by continuing to manipulate Pip and Estella. She commands Pip to feel love for Estella telling him, “love her, love her, love her! If she favours you, love her. If she wounds you, love her. If she tears your heart to pieces – and as it gets older and stronger, it will tear deeper – love her, love her, love her!” The overall tone of this statement makes Miss Havisham sound bonkers. The words sound desperate and shouted. There is a lack of air in the sentences as if her thoughts are running into each other. The repetition of ‘love her’ shows that all Miss Havisham thinks about is making men fall in love with Estella so she can break them as Miss Havisham’s revenge. The list and word choice of ‘wounds’, ‘tears’ and ‘deeper’ shows that Miss Havisham associates pain with love. Here we see Miss Havisham at her most enthusiastic and crazy point. Her craziness here is important because it shows us her mental health issues control her and blind her from being a good person.**

**Miss Havisham’s mental illness gets worse when Pip tells her that he is in love with Estella and doesn’t understand why Miss Havisham encourages Estella to hurt him. We learn how Miss Havisham was jilted at the altar by her fiancé who was only marrying her for her money, she truly loved him though and tells Pip that real love is ‘blind devotion, unquestioning self-humiliation, utter submission, trust and belief against yourself’. Miss Havisham gives us a list of things she claims are to do with love. However her word choices here are odd, everything she lists goes against natural and safe love. It sounds like she is describing a broken and controlling relationship using words like submission and self-humiliation which suggest losing yourself and self-value. It reveals that Miss Havisham was utterly broken mentally by what Compeyson did to her and reveals the true extent of her mental breakdown from which she has clearly never fully recovered. At this point we realise that Miss Havisham really is unaware that what she is doing is bad or wrong because of her mental instability. She actually believes that what she is doing is right and justified. She will not be able to right things until she realises there is something to correct – just like Pip cannot correct his behaviour till he realises it is wrong. To do that she must see past her mental illness.**

**Miss Havisham finally realises that her mental instability has made her to do wrong when she realises she has created a type of monster in Estella. Estella decides to marry Drummel against Miss Havisham’s wishes and Miss Havisham finally acknowledges ‘I stole her heart away and put ice in its place”. The statement is simple and the tone is sad and horrified. Miss Havisham takes responsibility for her actions in raising Estella, the metaphor shows she acknowledges how unfeeling she has made Estella. She has replaced her ‘heart’ with ‘ice’ making her a cold person. It also suggests that had she not raised Estella in the manner she had, Estella would be a happy loving girl. Miss Havisham attempts to make up for her actions towards Estella in paying money to her nephew Herbert Pocket, so that he can live a fulfilled life with his sweetheart. This action shows that she has given up seeking revenge on love and instead supports it. Miss Havisham’s final actions in the book show an acknowledgement of her mental health issues and she moves from bad behaviour to good and so she supports the theme of the book as she realises she must do good to help people.**

**In conclusion, we can see that Miss Havisham’s mental health played an important role in the novel as it her mental instability that shapes a lot of her decisions and actions. Her craziness is what makes her manipulate Estella’s behaviour to the point where Estella turns against her, Miss Havisham’s manipulations also play a major role in shaping Pip as a character too and his infatuation with Estella. Ultimately, Miss Havisham must realise that her mental health rules her actions in order to control it. She finally does this and uses her wealth to help her family member Herbert near the end which makes up for her actions towards Estella. This final action shows Miss Havisham trying to redeem herself and finally acting as a good person. This was the point Dickens was trying to make, that ultimately we should do good if we can.**