**Choose a novel or short story in which there is a central character to whom you react with mixed feelings.**

**With reference to appropriate techniques, briefly explain why you react to the character in this way and discuss how this reaction adds to your understanding of the text as a whole.**

Great Expectations by Charles Dickens has a central character called Pip whom we react to with mixed feelings of sympathy, dislike and support. Pip is born into a humble working class family but is gifted money by a secret benefactor which allows him to become a gentleman, a position he quickly mucks up. Through analysing the way Pip reacts to situations throughout his life we can discuss how we react to Pip with feelings of sympathy or dislike and go on to show how this teaches us the wider lesson of how to be a good person.

At the start of the novel we see Pip as a young boy who is kind. We see this when Pip helps an escaped convict to survive by bringing him a file and “some bread, a rind of cheese, about a half-jar of mince meat, a meatbone, some brandy and a beautiful round compact pork pie”. This is a list of items and it shows us the sheer volume of food he brings the convict. Some would say he did this out of fear, but it is more likely that he did it from kindness as he bring so much. The inclusion of brandy also shows kindness as brandy would be used as medicine and it shows Pip recognises the convict is ill. The word choice of ‘beautiful round compact’ also shows how precious the pie was and Pip lifts it even though he knows he will be in trouble with his sister for stealing it. At this point in the story we admire Pip’s kindness and Dicken’s uses this moment to show us the importance of human kindness.

We also start to realise that Pip’s kindness has been learned from his father-figure Joe. When the convict is arrested in front of Joe and the convict admits to stealing the goods from the forge Joe says “We don’t know what you’ve done, but we wouldn’t have you starved to death, poor miserable fellow creature - would us Pip?” The pitiful word choice of ‘poor miserable creature’ shows that Joe feels sorry for the convict. The use of a question aimed at Pip shows he is using this moment as a teaching one. We continue to admire Pip at this point as we can see him continuing to be a kind person and we again see the effect of human kindness on a person.

We begin to feel sorry for Pip when he starts going to Satis House and trying to make friends with Estella. Estella has been belittling Pip all day, saying his hands are horrible and remarking negatively on how he calls the cards Jacks before finally slapping him to which Pip recalls “I was so humiliated, hurt, spurned, offended, - sorry I can’t hit upon the right word for the smart. God knows what its name was – tears started from my eyes”. The list suggests that even as an adult Pip is struggling to name what he felt because it was such an alien feeling to him. The dashes also suggest the frustration this memory still rakes up for Pip. The word choice of ‘tears started’ also suggests that Pip has hit an end-point with his day of abuse from Estella. At this moment we feel sorry for Pip as he cannot understand that Estella is being a bad person.

Pip’s story continues and we see him become a gentleman in London as he is sponsored by a secret but very wealthy benefactor and we see him change as a person. Joe comes to visit Pip to celebrate his new life but Pip treats him “out of temper” and with “impatience”. The word choice here shows how snobbish Pip is becoming as he is embarrassed by Joe’s behaviour even though Joe’s behaviour is normal. Joe recognises Pip’s embarrassment and says “you would not find half so much at fault with me if you stuck your head in at the forge.” Joe’s word choice ‘fault’ suggests he knows Pip is uncomfortable and the reference to the ‘forge’ shows he knows Pip would feel more comfortable at home. At this point we feel annoyed at Pip because he is behaving like a snob, reacting to his new wealthy surroundings instead of appreciating everything Joe has done for him and forgetting to be good.

We feel sympathy for Pip as he discovers Magwitch, the convict, is his benefactor and he is about to die. Initially Pip disliked Magwitch because he saw him as a ‘criminal’ but he learns to love him and takes his place at his side and finally shows Magwitch ‘generosity’ and ‘acceptance’. The word choice of generosity and acceptance show us that Pip is finally realising he should be grateful for all Magwitch has given him. The tone in the phrase ’took my place at his side’ is loving and caring as Pip understands the effort Magwitch put in to give Pip this high life. At this point we feel proud of Pip but also pity as he has learned how to be a good person towards those around him but it has come at the cost of losing Magwitch.

At the end of the novel we are happy for Pip because we see he has developed into a functioning and successful, happy adult. Pip is in his thirties, has seen the world and has a management position and so when he runs into Estella at Satis House he tells her “I work pretty hard for a sufficient living therefore - yes I do well”. The word choice of ‘sufficient’ shows that Pip knows he is not making a ton of money but it is enough to live on comfortably. His word choice of ‘well’ to describe his life shows that he is satisfied with his lot and we know this is because he gets to see Herbert Pocket’s family, Joe’s new family and Wemmick’s family. In this final scene then we see a Pip who is benefiting other people through his work and income and someone who feels fulfilled by their life and so we feel happy for him.

In conclusion we can see that Dickens’ created a protagonist who we constantly react to with mixed feelings as we see how he reacts to different events throughout his life. At times Pip’s behaviour was admirable because he behaved with a moral centre. As a young man though his behaviour was deplorable as he put himself first in his desperation to get Estella and approval from his new peer group. Ultimately though, Pip understands that being a good person does not come from money and status but from actions and he chooses a good path. Thus, through Pip, Dickens teaches his audience how to be good people.