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| **Choose a novel or short story that deals with a theme of moral or social significance. With reference to appropriate techniques, explain how the writer develops this theme and discuss why its development adds to your appreciation of the text as a whole.** |
| **Great Expectations by Charles Dickens deals with a central theme of social significance when it looks at how to be a good person. 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. By discussing moments in Pip’s life we can look at how Dicken’s shaped his story to teach his audience the wider lesson of being a good person.** |
| **At the start of Great Expectations Pip shows that he is growing up and developing good morals. 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. This ties in to Dicken’s theme of having good morals as he shows Pip growing up being a helpful and kind person.** |
| **In the following scene we see that Pip learned his good morals by following 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. Dickens makes clear in this scene that Joe is a good person and that he is teaching Pip to have the same strong moral centre.** |
| **Pip eventually goes to Satis House where he meets the manipulative 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. This ties in to Dicken’s theme as Pip experiences someone with bad morals for the first time and sees how to be manipulative.** |
| **Pip’s portrayal as a good person begins to shift when he moves to London to become a gentleman at the behest of his secret but very wealthy benefactor. 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 Pip is being stuck up and is forgetting to appreciate Joe, his behaviour makes us feel embarrassed for him and reminds us to be good people.** |
| **We see Pip start to become a good person again when Pip 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 see Pip re-learn how to be a good person as he learns to trust Magwitch and accept him as a father-figure on his death-bed.** |
| **The theme of being a good person is brought to a conclusion in the final scenes when we see Pip has become a good person. 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 we see the theme of being a good person emphasised as Pip’s journey of self-discovery comes to an end and he is in a position to live comfortably whilst supporting those he loves too.** |
| **In conclusion, Dickens uses his protagonist Pip to set an example to the audience as to how to be a good person. He does this by showing us Pip being both good and bad before settling on a good path. We see a young Pip help the convict before turning into a selfish youth who only wants Estella and approval from his peer group of spoilt young men. By the end of the novel Pip understands the worth of hard satisfying work and being in a financial position to support your loved ones through your own effort, thus showing us how to be good people.** |