

Great Expectations Study Guide

by Michael S. Gilleland For the novel by Charles Dickens



Chapters LIII–LIX

Vocabulary:

In each of the following groups of words, four of the five words have the same or nearly the same meaning. Cross out the one word in each group that does not share a common meaning, then pick a word from the Word Box to replace the crossed out word.

Word Box

indelible	goad	haggard	contrite
descried	interminable	querulous	sauntered
fervently	abstinence	pathetically	vestige
entreat	derived	scourge	

1. prod
provoke
stab
sting
tempt
-

2. refuse
implore
beg
plead
beseech
-

3. viewed
saw
commenced
distinguished
noticed
-

4. petulant
confused
peevish
complaining
fretful
-

5. obtained
gained
acquired
proceeded
procured
-

6. remorseful
regretful
penitent
unrepentant
sorry
-

7. tentative
permanent
lasting
enduring
unfading
-

8. affliction
servile
bane
curse
menace
-

9. strolled
ambled
walked
meandered
veered
-

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10. drawn
tired
exhilarated
exhausted
drained

11. passionately
intensely
calculatingly
vehemently
ardently

12. pitifully
hostility
poignantly
plaintively
wretchedly

13. intermittent
endless
nonstop
ceaseless
everlasting

14. remnant
fragment
trace
sign
farthing

15. avoidance
pretence
declining
shunning
forgoing

General:

1. Who does Pip meet in the sluice-house next to the lime-kiln? What are his intentions toward Pip?
2. Who is Orlick working for now?
3. How is Magwitch captured? What happens to Compeyson?
4. What surprising thing does Wemmick do in Chapter LV? What is unusual in the way he does this?
5. What does Pip tell Magwitch just before Magwitch dies?
6. What does Pip resolve to do at the end of Chapter LVII? What is the result of his plan?

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Analysis:

7. The first two paragraphs of Chapter LIII contain an example of two metaphors, anthropomorphism, and pathetic fallacy. Underline the words that make up these literary techniques, then write each phrase next to the appropriate technique.

It was a dark night, though the full moon rose as I left the enclosed lands and passed out upon the marshes. Beyond their dark line there was a ribbon of clear sky, hardly broad enough to hold the red large moon. In a few minutes she had ascended out of that clear field, in among the piled mountains of cloud.

There was a melancholy wind, and the marshes were dismal. A stranger would have found them insupportable, and even to me they were so oppressive that I hesitated, half inclined to go back.

Metaphors: _____

Anthropomorphism: _____

Pathetic Fallacy: _____

8. Dickens uses two cases of anaphora near the middle and near the end of Chapter LIV. What are they, and what is Dickens emphasizing with them?
9. At the end of Chapter LIV, Pip says that Magwitch “need never know how his hopes of enriching me had perished.” What does Pip mean that Magwitch’s hopes of making Pip wealthy had perished?

Do you think Pip was right to keep this information from Magwitch? Why?

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10. Chapter LV is very different from the chapters around it. Explain how it is different. Do you think it is juxtaposition or comic relief? Why do you think Dickens placed this chapter in the middle of chapters dealing with Magwitch's capture and imprisonment?
11. To what story is Pip alluding at the end of Chapter LVII when he mentions the two men who went to the Temple to pray? Where is that story found? How does that story affect the way in which you see Magwitch and his death?

Dig Deeper:

12. Who does Orlick blame for the bad things that have happened in his life? Who does Pip say is responsible for the problems in Orlick's life? Who do you think is responsible?
13. Orlick denies any responsibility for Mrs. Joe's attack, even though he also tells Pip how he attacked her. He instead claims someone else bears the blame because of the other person's, and his own, circumstances. Read Jeremiah 2:34–35; Ezekiel 18:20; Galatians 6:4–5, 6. What do these verses say about where responsibility lies for our actions? If we sin, who bears the responsibility for our sins?

How does this relate to Magwitch and his attitude at the end?

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14. In Chapter LIV, Magwitch tells Pip,

I was a-thinking through my smoke just then, that we can no more see to the bottom of the next few hours, than we can see to the bottom of this river what I catches hold of. Nor yet we can't no more hold their tide than I can hold this. And it's run through my fingers and gone, you see!

What is Magwitch saying here? Summarize his statement in your own words. What is the context of this statement?

15. Read Matthew 6:25–27, 31–34 and Psalm 139. How do Magwitch's statements compare with the verses in Matthew? According to both passages, where should we put our faith and trust for the future? Why?

16. In the last chapter of the novel, when Estella asks Pip, "And you do well, I am sure?" Pip answers, "I work hard for a sufficient living, and therefore—Yes, I do well!" What does Pip mean by this, and how is this a change from when he first knew Estella when they were children?

Read Ephesians 4:28; 1 Thessalonians 4:11–12; 2 Thessalonians 3:10–12; Titus 3:14. What do these verses say about work and what are the reasons for working? How does this reasoning correspond with Pip's attitude toward work?

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Expectations:

For the characters below, list the expectations they have in these chapters. Also, give a very brief description of how the expectations seem to affect them.

<i>Character</i>	<i>Expectation</i>	<i>Effect</i>
Orlick		
Compeyson		
Pip/Magwitch		
Magwitch (after his capture)		

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be satisfied with what God has provided for us. These teachings touch on what Pip contemplates—focusing on being satisfied and finding pleasure in his simple life. Unfortunately, he seems unable to do this.

14. Empathy is the ability to identify and understand the feelings of someone else; in essence, feel what they are feeling. After he learns he will be raised as a gentleman, Pip no longer seems to understand the motives and feelings of the people around him. He does not understand Joe and wishes Joe would show more “gratitude” for the nice things Pip says to him. He repeatedly misunderstands Bidley and berates her for her unappreciative, base, jealous attitudes. Bidley is none of these things; Pip is putting bad attitudes on her unjustly, then acting self-righteous when he forgives her for things she has not done. Pip no longer seems able to see how others around him are feeling or what they are thinking, and he certainly does not associate himself with them anymore.

15. Pip suddenly becomes very condescending toward everyone around him, particularly Bidley. He gets irritated when he finds Joe and Bidley looking at him, he assumes their friends will be “coarse and common” about his new clothes, he “forgives” Bidley, he puts up with her. Pip feels “a sublime compassion for the poor creatures who were destined” to live and die in their village. Etc. He suddenly acts as if he is better than everyone around him. Answers to why he changes in this way will vary. We have seen Pip change from a relatively innocent boy in the early chapters of the novel, to a rather tormented adolescent after meeting Miss Havisham and Estella, who remain his only real contacts among the gentleman and ladies, and he believes his “expectations” come from Miss Havisham. It seems quite likely that he is adopting their, or Estella’s, attitudes toward the common people. Personal answers regarding whether this was a surprise will vary. The change appears to be sudden, but it actually began taking place as soon as he met Estella and began adopting her attitudes toward himself and “common” people.

16. Answers may vary, but if Pip was actually expecting or planning to stay in touch, he would not have had to say he would never forget them. The fact that it occurs to him to say this means he is already putting them behind him and looking to move on in his life and expectations. As he tells the grazing cattle, “henceforth I was for London and greatness.”

17. Answers may vary. Pip objects to the clergyman reading the passage about the rich man and the kingdom of heaven because he is now rich, or considers himself so. He does not want to hear that his wealth may be or may become an impediment to heaven or that he might not be above reproach or that Jesus suggests he give his money away. The irony is that his very pride in his newly realized wealth is exactly what this passage is referring to; that pride in and reliance on riches can blind people to their need for God and his salvation. Because they can provide for all their own physical needs, it becomes easy to believe they can take care of their own spiritual needs as well. They also may fear the loss of their wealth and the uncertainty that comes with that or begin to rely on the comforts their wealth brings and then to focus on their wealth more than on God. This is the lesson that Pip should have learned from this passage, that worldly wealth does not provide spiritual salvation and nothing is more important than God, and therefore he needs to remain humble and reliant on God.

18. Answers may vary. Pip says that his sentiment—that it was a bad side of human nature—was correct, but that he was applying it to the wrong person. In other words, yes, a bad side of human nature was being shown in this exchange, but *he* was the one exhibiting it, not Bidley. The key phrase is “waiving its application,” by which he means changing the application from Bidley, as he intended it when he was young, to himself, as he now understands it looking back.

Expectations:

Pip: Expectation—We have now come to Pip’s “great expectations,” the promise of property and being raised as and becoming a gentleman. Effect—At this point, all is grand. Pip gets money, a tutor, a companion, lodgings in London. We do begin to see a sense of superiority creep in, however, along with a patronizing attitude.

Chapters XX–XXVI

Vocabulary:

Accept answers that are close in meaning. 1. harmful/good or benign; 2. generous/selfish; 3. fickle/consistent; 4. permeated/empty; 5. greedy/generous; 6. vulnerability & innocence/skeptical & hard; 7. necessary/optional; 8. embarrassment/not caring; 9. wise/foolish; 10. wild & promiscuous/well-behaved; 11. absurd/sensible; 12. matters, be of importance/unimportant, useless; 13. greed/generosity; 14. charm/repel; 15. roomy/small; 16. sullen/cheerful; 17. stupidity/cleverness

General:

1. Pip says, “while I was scared by the immensity of London, I think I might have had some faint doubts whether it was not rather ugly, crooked, narrow, and dirty.” He was not really very impressed.

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2. The clerk tells Pip to walk around the corner to Smithfield and he ends up at Newgate Prison, where the “partially drunk minister of justice” offers to take him to see a trial for a slight fee, and ends up showing him the gallows, where people are whipped, the Debtors’ Door, and other macabre places. The places and the minister’s clothing, which are mildewed and clearly come from hanged criminals, give Pip a “sickening idea of London.”
3. Barnard’s Inn is a complex of what we would call apartment buildings and is where Matthew Pocket lives. Pip calls it “the dingiest collection of shabby buildings ever squeezed together in a rank corner as a club for Tom-cats.” Then in the next paragraph he makes it sound worse.
4. Pip is surprised to find that Matthew Pocket is “the pale young gentleman” with whom he fought at Miss Havisham’s.
5. He asks Pip to call him by his “christian name, Herbert,” and he decides to call Pip Handel because the composer Handel “wrote a charming piece of music . . . called the Harmonious Blacksmith.”
6. Portable property is anything of value that can be easily moved, such as the jewelry Wemmick carries. All of Wemmick’s jewelry—rings, brooches, etc.—are tokens given to him by criminals represented by him and Mr. Jaggers.
7. Mr. Jaggers instructs his housekeeper to show them her wrists. Mr. Jaggers has them notice how powerful her wrists are and tells them that he has never seen anyone, man or woman, who has stronger wrists than she does. One of her wrists is deeply scarred.

Analysis:

8. Answers may vary. Dickens gives Jaggers’ office a sense or mood of foreboding, death, or oppression. The room is poorly lit, only by a patched and distorted skylight with twisted houses peering down on him. He sees old weapons and odd boxes and packages. The description of Jaggers’ chair is the most descriptive and directly mood-setting: “Mr. Jaggers’s own high-backed chair was of deadly black horse-hair, with rows of brass nails round it, like a coffin.” The room also holds “two dreadful casts on a shelf, of faces peculiarly swollen, and twitchy about the nose” with “blacks and flies” settling on them. He also uses words like “dismal,” “distorted,” “twisted,” “small,” “greasy,” “litter,” “dusty,” “oppressed,” and “hot exhausted” to describe the room and its contents. These descriptions are all negative and give the office a sense or mood of oppression, perhaps hopelessness or death.
9. Mr. Jaggers is looking for a witness for one of his trials, and he is trying to learn what kind of person Mike has brought him without Mike implying or outright stating that he tailored the witness to what Mr. Jaggers wants. When Mike walks the potential witness past Mr. Jaggers’ window, and he is a drunk, murderous-looking man with a black eye, Mr. Jaggers tell his clerk to send them away. The man is not someone who would invite trust from the judges.
10. Mr. Jaggers is trying to get Mike to provide him with a witness who will falsely swear for Mr. Jaggers’ client, but he wants Mike to do it in such a way that Mr. Jaggers has no direct, confirmed knowledge of the duplicity. This tells us that Mr. Jaggers is a stickler for the letter of the law, but he is willing to do anything to win his cases. In essence, Mr. Jaggers has little regard for truth or honesty, even compassion. He is willing to have people commit perjury to win a case as long as he himself can appear “honest.” He sticks to what is legal, but not what is ethical.
11. The author is anthropomorphizing Barnard’s Inn, “this forlorn creation of Barnard.” It is “attired,” clothed, in soot and smoke; the inn had “strewed ashes on its head,” and was “undergoing penance and humiliation.” Obviously, a building or collection of buildings cannot be clothed, has no head, cannot throw ashes on itself, cannot do penance or feel humiliation. These are human actions or traits given to Barnard’s Inn.
12. In the first half of Chapter XXII, Herbert relates to Pip the story of Miss Havisham’s romance, heartbreak, and how she and Satis House came to be in their present state. Herbert provides the exposition to Miss Havisham’s story.
13. Dickens weaves comic relief into the scene by having Herbert several times interrupt his account with instructions to Pip on how to properly eat or drink and use his utensils. The truly comic element is not Herbert’s instructions, but appealing to the reader’s imagination to picture what Pip is doing that leads to Herbert’s comments (“merely breaking off, my dear Handel, to remark that a dinner-napkin will not go into a tumbler.”)
14. The repeated word is “laughed.” Answers may vary, but one usually expects to feel happy, funny, glad, or something similar if there is so much laughter, but the repetition actually makes the laughter seem forced and empty. This may be because of the repetition and the short, bare sentences. The reader does not really see anything funny or anything to laugh about.
15. a. a number of dull blades . . . blades; students who needed tutoring are being compared to dull blades. Students may also underline Grindstone, which may refer to Mr. Pocket. b. those two non-commissioned officers; Flopson and Millers are being compared to military officers looking for recruits. c. little flabby terrier of a clerk . . . when he was a puppy; a clerk is being compared to a terrier.
16. Wemmick’s home is in Walworth, and his home is his refuge from work. Wemmick completely separates his work life