



A West Yorkshire Playhouse production

Great Expectations

By Charles Dickens

In a new adaptation by Michael Eaton

4 March - 2 April

Teacher Resource

Activity Pack by A. L. Burnett

A terrifying chance encounter propels young orphan Pip from the life of a humble blacksmith's apprentice to that of a wealthy gentleman.

Determined to prove himself worthy of the 'heart-broken' Miss Havisham and her beautiful but icy ward Estella, Pip eagerly embraces his new position. But his past is not so easily abandoned and when the nature of his great expectations are discovered, Pip must decide on his true identity.

Director **Lucy Bailey** returns to the Playhouse for the first time since her acclaimed productions of *Dial M For Murder* and *The Postman Always Rings Twice* with a visually stunning, brand new adaptation of **Dickens'** best-loved novel.

Funny, chilling and tender, *Great Expectations* remains a masterpiece of self-discovery told through some of literature's most iconic characters.

Activity One

Below is the list of characters, and images of the actors who will play them (some actors are playing more than one part), in this production of *Great Expectations*. You will notice that there are far fewer characters in the play than there are in the novel.





1. For each character, write a brief statement explaining why you think that Michael Eaton, the writer responsible for adapting the novel, chose to include these particular characters in his script.











Charles Dickens was a social critic. He often explored injustices within society in his writing – particularly the unfair treatment of the poor at the hands of the wealthy and powerful.

2. Cut out each character to create a set of cards. Using your knowledge of the context of the novel, try to organise them into a hierarchy. Place the characters that you consider to be the most powerful at the top. Be prepared to justify your ideas.

The plot of *Great Expectations* is highly complex. Many of the characters are connected to one another in surprising and unexpected ways.

3. Using the character map that you have just created, draw arrows to show connections between the characters based on your knowledge of the plot.

 <p>Rose Wardlaw as Bidley</p>	 <p>Shanaya Rafaat as Estella</p>
 <p>Shaun Prendergast as Jaggers</p>	 <p>Bill Nash as Joe Gargery</p>

 <p>Patrick Walshe McBride as Herbert Pocket</p>	 <p>Ian Burfield as Magwitch</p>
 <p>Antony Bunsee as Wopsle</p>	 <p>Daniel Boyd as Pip</p>
 <p>Oliver Boot as Drummle</p>	 <p>James Barrett as Orlick</p>
 <p>Jane Asher as Miss Havisham</p>	 <p>Antony Bunsee as Wemmick</p>
 <p>Oliver Boot as Compeyson</p>	 <p>Shaun Prendergast as Pumblechook</p>



Shanaya Rafaat as Molly

CHALLENGE:

If you were staging your own production of 'great Expectations', which other character would you add to your cast list? Create an additional card for them and add them to your map.

HELP BOX:

When attempting to organise these characters into some sort of hierarchy, consider:

- Social status
- Personal history
- Gender

Activity Two

Read this extract from the script. It is the opening scene of the play:

1. THE CHURCHYARD IN THE MARSHES – LATE WINTER AFTERNOON.

A raw afternoon in late December – Christmas Eve. Wind whistles through the marshes. Anchored on the estuary, where land merges imperceptibly into sea, is a prison Hulk – a de-commissioned, de-masted, rotting war ship. A rusted gibbet sways on the path to the isolated churchyard. A Boy enters carrying a sprig of holly – PIP. He stops in front of a grave, clearing away leaves and moss from the inscription, spelling out from memory the names on the headstone:

PIP: Philip Pirrip... Also Georgiana, Wife of the Above... Alexander, Bartholomew, Abraham, Tobias, and Roger, infant children of the aforesaid...

Suddenly... The figure of an all-too-real bogeyman in convict garb looms up terrifyingly from among the headstones. A fearful man with a great iron on his leg and an old rag tied round his head; soaked in water, smothered in mud, lamed by stones, cut by flints, stung by nettles, torn by briars. Not yet graced with a name, this CONVICT roughly grabs hold of Pip. The boy screams. The man growls:

CONVICT: Hold your noise! Keep still, you little devil, or I'll cut your throat!

PIP: Don't cut my throat, sir. Pray don't do it.

CONVICT: Tell us your name!

PIP: Pip, sir.

CONVICT: Pip, eh? Show us where you live. Point out the place!

Pip points to the distant marshland village. The Convict turns him upside down and shakes him. An apple falls out of Pip's pocket and the shivering man greedily devours it as he plonks the boy down on a tombstone.

CONVICT: Where's your mother?

PIP: There, sir!
(the Convict looks around fearfully; the Boy points to the gravestone) 'Also Georgiana.'

CONVICT: And is that your father along of her?

PIP: Him too... 'Philip Pirrip, Late of this Parish'.

CONVICT: Who do you live with? Supposin' you're let to live... which I ain't made up my mind about.

PIP: My sister, sir... Missis Joe Gargery... wife of Joe Gargery, the blacksmith.

The Convict looks down at the chains on his legs and grabs hold of Pip.

CONVICT: Blacksmith, eh? Now lookee here, you know what a file is? *(Pip nods, too scared to speak)* And you know what wittles is? *(Pip nods again)* You get me a file, boy. And you get me wittles. You bring 'em both to me... Tomorrow morning early. You do it, and you never say a word or dare to make a sign concerning your having seen such a person as me and you shall be let to live. You go from my words in any particular... no matter how small it is... and your heart and your liver shall be tore out, roasted and ate. *(Pip quakes in fear)* Now, I ain't alone. There's a Young Man hid with me, in comparison with which young man I am a Angel. That Young Man has a secret way of getting at a boy and at his heart and at his liver. It is in vain for a boy to attempt to hide himself from that Young Man. A boy may lock his door, may be warm in bed, may tuck himself up, may draw the clothes over his head, may think himself comfortable and safe, but that Young Man will softly creep his way to him and tear him open. I am a-keeping that Young Man from harming of you with great difficulty. I find it very hard to hold that Young Man off of your insides. Now, do as I say! Say: 'Lord strike you dead if you don't!'

PIP: Lord strike me dead if I don't.

CONVICT: You remember what you've undertook? Now you get home!

PIP: Goo... good night, sir.

CONVICT: Enough of that! *(to himself)* I wish I was a frog... or a eel!

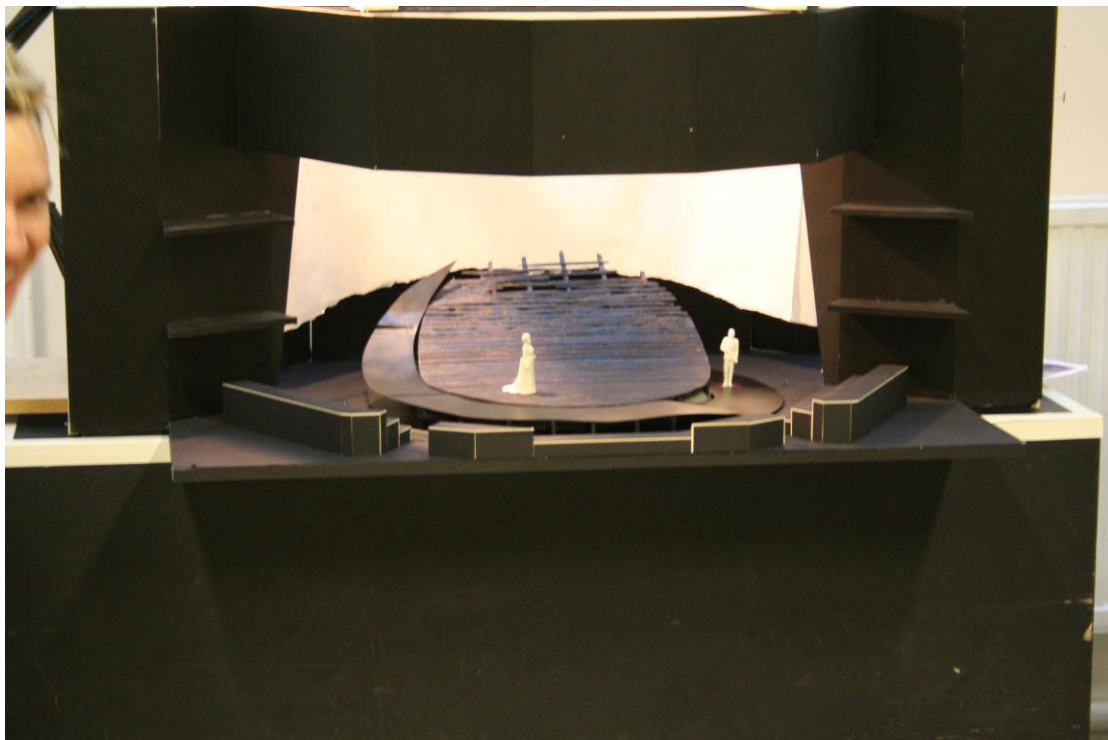
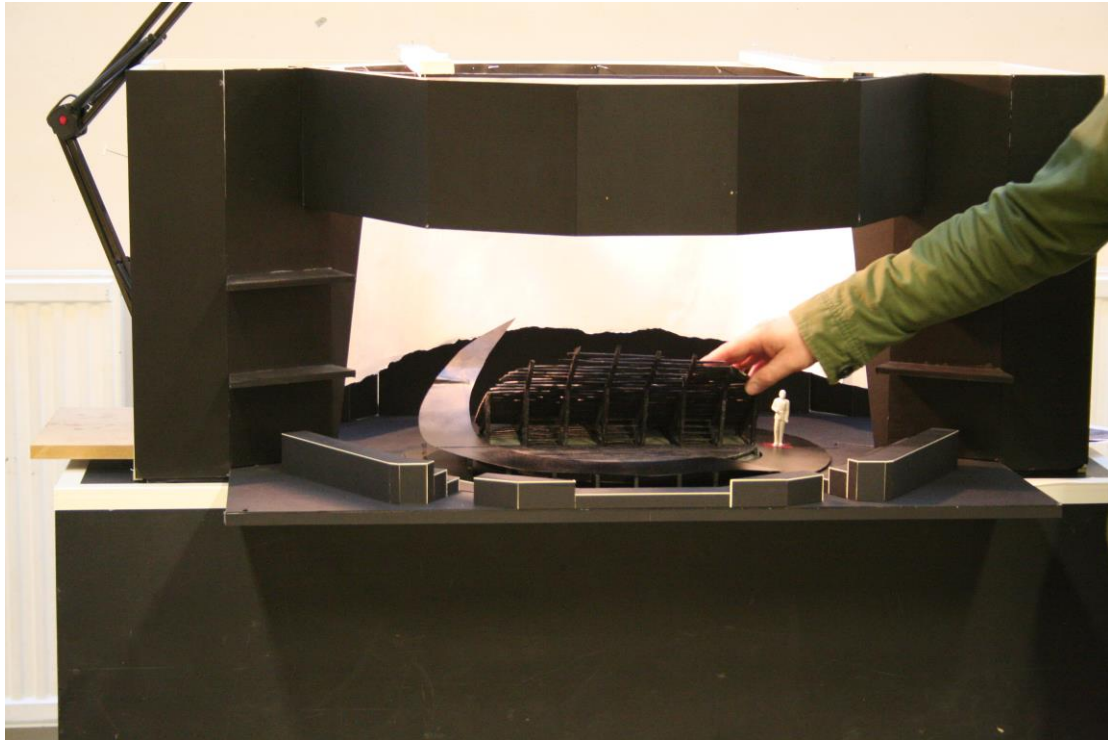
His figure melts into the marshes. Pip runs away as fast as he can.

Answer these questions below. Support your answers with quotations/details from the text:

1. What are the similarities between this script and the original novel?
2. The original novel has a first person narrative, told from Pip's perspective, which has been omitted from this production. How has Eaton adapted the text in order to accommodate this different narrative style?
3. Two significant additions have been made to this script: a 'prison hulk' is in the background, and the opening of the play is set on 'Christmas Eve'. Why do you think that these creative choices have been made?

Activity Three

Below are images of two set models, designed by **Mike Britton**:



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The set of *Great Expectations* is purposefully dark and minimalistic. The white space at the back of the stage represents a screen onto which video images will be projected throughout the production.

1. In your opinion, why has the designer made these creative choices?
2. What could some of the structures rising out of the stage represent?

Choose a key event from the novel.

3. Imagine that you have to collate a series of images/video clips to be projected onto the white screen during this scene of the play. What would you choose? Be prepared to justify your choices.

HELP BOX:

Many critics have commented upon the 'universal appeal' of Dickens' work – that is, the issues and themes highlighted in his novels are as relevant and conspicuous today as they were during the Victorian era. How might this view have influenced the designer?

Activity Four

Below is an extract from the script. It is Scene 15 of the production and takes place after Pip's fight with Herbert Pocket, when Estella allows him to kiss her:

15. MONTAGE – PIP'S VISITS TO SATIS HOUSE.

A kaleidoscope of memories from Pip's weekly visits to Satis House. As he holds Miss Havisham's arm and they parade around her decaying room, sounds swirl around:

VOICES: What name?
 Come in, boy!
 Play, play, play!
 He calls 'Knaves' 'Jacks' this boy.
 Beggar him!
 Escort me! Escort me!
 Come and fight.
 You may kiss me if you like.
 Sing, sing, sing!

Complete the tasks below:

1. Why do you think that the writer has chosen to summarise the key events at Satis House through a montage?
2. Which characters speak each of the lines above?

Choose one of the lines of dialogue above.

3. Create a spider diagram around your chosen line , analyzing its significance. Be prepared to justify your ideas.

HELP BOX:

When analysing your chosen line of dialogue, consider the following points:

- What does the line show about the character who is speaking it?
- What does the line tell us about the relationships between the characters?
- The lines have both literal and implied meanings. What are the hidden/additional meanings behind this particular line?
- How might this particular line foreshadow future significant events within the play? Use your knowledge of the novel to help you.
- How does this line link to key themes within the text?

Activity Five

Although the costumes are traditional, they are largely monochromatic. The designer intends to add some coloured accents to certain characters' clothing. These details will have some symbolic meaning.



Look at the images above.

1. Which costume belongs to which character? Be prepared to justify your choices.

Choose one of the costumes.

2. What coloured accents would you add to this costume? Mark it onto the image above. Be prepared to justify your choices.

HELP BOX:

When completing the activities above, consider the following:

- Clothing can often be a sign of status. Which particular parts of the costume show the status of this character?
- Think about the connotations associated with certain colours – for example, what does the colour red signify? Which colours might you associate with this character and why?

Activity Six

Read the extracts from the script below. In both extracts, Magwitch is telling Pip about his life experiences.

Scene 38:

MAGWITCH: *(interrupting)* To Newgate and the Bailey? I have no intention ever to frequent such haunts again.

In Pip's Imagination: Childhood memories return to haunt him: a boy guiltily stealing a file is forever scarred with the taint of with criminality; Convict hands from the Hulks attempting to drag him down into their domain; the threatened Young Convict grasping to tear out his heart and eat his liver.

PIP: You have had much experience of places of confinement?

MAGWITCH: In jail and out of jail, in jail and out of jail, in jail and out of jail. I've been done pretty well everything to, except hanged. I've been locked up as much as a silver tea-kettle. I've been carted here and carted there, and put out of this town and put out of that town, and stuck in the stocks, and whipped and worried and drove up hill and down dale ever since I was a ragged little creature more to be pitied than punished....

PIP: It's strange to me that I know so little about you. Is this not as good a time as another to tell me? I don't even know your name.

As Magwitch tells his story Pip begins to lose his horror and find pity for this revenant.

MAGWITCH: Wery well, dear boy, I'll give it you short and handy and put it into a mouthful of English. I knowed my name to be Magwitch, christened Abel. How did I know? Much as I knowed the birds' names in the hedges to be chaffinch, sparrer, thrush. I got the name of being hardened. I first become aware of myself down in Essex, a-thieving turnips for my living. In Bridewells and Lock-Ups they gave me tracts what I couldn't read and made me sermons what I couldn't understand and went on again me about the Devil. But what the Devil was I to do? I must put something into my stomach, mustn't I? Tramping, begging, thieving, working sometimes when I could – though that weren't as often as you may think – a bit of a poacher, a bit of a labourer, a bit of a waggoner, a bit of a haymaker, a bit of a hawker, a bit of most things that don't pay and lead to trouble. That was my life pretty much... *(suddenly sentimental)* I had a wife once... well our marriage was over the broomstick...

I believe she had some gypsy blood in her... anyway it was hot enough when it was up. And a darling little girl... so tragically lost. She would be about your age... had she lived...

Scene 42. Magwitch is talking about Compeyson, the man responsible for his conviction:

MAGWITCH: Aye. The wery willain what you seen me pounding away at in that ditch all those years ago. It was at Epsom races, a matter of over twenty years ago, when I got acquainted with that gentleman. He'd been to a public boarding-school, this Compeyson, and he was a smooth one to talk and a dab hand at the ways of the gentry. But he'd no more heart than a iron file. He was as cold as death. He took me on to be his business pardner. And what was his business? Swindling, forging, stolen bank-note passing... All sorts of traps as that gentleman could keep his own legs out of and get the profits from and let another man be done for. At last, me and Compeyson was both committed on a charge of putting stolen notes in circulation. Compeyson says to me: 'Separate defences, no communication.' When we was put in the dock, I noticed first of all what a good-looking gentleman Compeyson appeared, with his curly hair and his black clothes and his white pocket-handkerchief. And what a common sort of a wretch I looked. When the prosecution opened and the evidence was put, it all bore heavy on me and light on him. Shall I ever forget the words of his defence?

'My lord, here you has afore you, side by side, two persons. One, the younger, well brought up, never before seen in a courtroom. The other, the elder, a precious rascal ill brought up and often in the dock and always with his guilt brought home. Can you doubt which is the worse of them?'

Torn from my gypsy wife and from my daughter what I would never see again. Put in irons. Shipped off as a Transport for the Term of my Natural Life. *(after a pause)* I didn't stop for Life though, dear boy, did I?

Complete the tasks below:

In the stage directions, it says that '*As Magwitch tells his story Pip begins to lose his horror and find pity for this revenant.*'

1. What is a 'revenant'? Why has the writer chosen to use this word to describe Magwitch?
2. How might the actor playing Pip show this change in attitude towards his benefactor?

As mentioned before, Charles Dickens often sought to highlight the plight of the poor through his novels.

3. Which details from the original novel has Eaton included in these extracts?
How do these details emphasise how unfairly Magwitch has been treated throughout his life?
4. How have both writers evoked a sense of pity and lack of justice for Magwitch? Focus upon the use of language.

HELP BOX:

Charles Dickens often employs a number of specific techniques in his writing. These include:

- Recording events in an exceptional amount of detail. Dickens was once a newspaper reporter, and he used this same skill in his novels.
- Repetition. This is so that an audience can recall key ideas or messages.
- Long lists. This was another of Dickens' techniques for creating vivid and detailed passages.
- Powerful adjectives.
- Similes and metaphors.
- Reinforcement of ideas through presenting people, their surroundings and the weather in similar ways in order to build up a particular impression or atmosphere as the passage/chapter progresses.
- Rhythm.
- Exaggeration.
- Use of 'substandard speech' or dialect in order to create a particular impression of a character.

How many of these techniques have been used in the passages above?

Writing About the Text

Remember that there are some differences between the play script and Dickens' novel. Make sure that you focus your essay upon the original text, but use your experience of watching the production and reading the play to explore new and alternative interpretations.

Read your assignment question carefully. Decode it by underlining any key words so that you don't miss any important pieces of information. Make sure that you fully understand what the focus of the question is before you begin planning or writing your answer.

Decide what the most relevant parts of the text are in relation to your question. Be selective, and only choose sections that will help you to construct a strong argument.

Plan your answer before you begin to write it. This only needs to be a spider diagram or a brief paragraph plan.

Remember to leave enough time to thoroughly check and proof read your answer once you have finished writing.

Selecting Evidence

The golden rule is 'say a lot about a little'. This means you should be selecting short, relevant quotations that will provide you with plenty of opportunities to analyse the text in detail

Look for quotations which contain language devices or techniques. This will allow you to show off your knowledge of the writer's craft.

Try to use quotations which will allow you to talk about wider themes and context.

Avoid using quotations to simply explain what is happening in the text.