Great Expectations: Miss Havisham Character Analysis

Great Expectation by Charles Dickens tells the story of Pip, an orphan that lives with his aggressive sister, Mrs. Joe and her sweet husband, Joe in the marshes. One day, the main character decides to visit his parents grave and there he meets a convict, Magwitch, who Pip helps escape. He later gets sent to visit Miss Havisham at Satis House. Miss Havisham is a disaster. She was left at the altar on her wedding day and has been emotionally unstable since. During his visit to Satis House, Pip meets Estella whom he deeply falls in love and hopes he will someday become a gentleman to be worthy of her. One day an anonymous benefactor makes it possible for Pip to go to London. There he will have the chance to become a true gentleman and get the education he never had. In London, the main character makes new friends and learns about a whole new different life. On his 21st birthday, Pip receives all of his fortunes and meets his benefactor. Surprisingly, it was Magwitch, the convict he helped to escape in the marshes when he was a kid. Magwitch had just escaped from prison and needs Pip help. They devise a plan were Magwitch will flee London on a steamboat but they fail to do so. In the end, the main character realizes what life is truly about and what is really worth to him. The theme of revenge is present in this book. It can be seen through Miss Havisham and her revenge on her fiance who left her at the altar and all men. She adopts Estella and raises her up to be an ignorant and cold woman. Revenge can also be seen through Orlick, Joe's apprentice, who was always very jealous of Pip. He ends up sabotaging Magwatch final escape and killing Mrs. Joe. Lastly, revenge can be seen through Magwitch, who wanted Compeyson to go to jail.To begin with, in the book Miss Havisham is a character who is motivated by revenge. Since being left at the altar by Compeyson, her fiance, she has sought revenge on men. As a result, Miss Havisham's adopted Estella and raises her to be cold-hearted and ignorant woman that breaks men's hearts. In Great Expectation, Miss Havisham calls Pip to visit Satis House. When he arrives he is very surprised and confused as Miss Havisham is still wearing her wedding dress and the house looks like there is going to be a massive wedding. There, Pip meets Estella, Miss Havisham's adopted daughter. He falls deeply in love with her no matter how she treats him. Estella is very cruel, cold and uninterested in Pip, she evens offends him. In the next quote, Miss Havisham and Estella are having a conversation about Pip. " "With this boy? Why, he is a common labouring-boy!" I thought I overheard Miss Havisham answer-only it seemed so unlikely-"Well? You can break his heart." " (690) This quote shows Miss Havisham's revengeful motives, how she will use Estella to fulfill her duties. She views the human heart like a toy, which you can play with and tear it apart. This shows Miss Havisham's opinion in men, how women can also play with their feeling just like her fiance played with hers, you can easily "break" a heart like you would with a toy. Since being left at the altar, Miss Havisham has badly wanted revenge on men. Due to her mental instability and deep depression, she is not able to fulfill the duties herself, and she adopted Estella do them instead. The real reason why Pip is at Satis House, is to serve as practice for Estella. She has to learn how to act around men, making them fall in love with her to then break their heart. Miss Havisham adopting Estella and later inviting Pip to meet her, just for her to practice how to break a heart with him is a way she does revenge on men on this book. She wants to make men suffer through Estella and Pip is the first victim.

Secondly, another character in the book who seeks revenge is Orlick. Orlick is Joe's assistant in the forge that always held a grudge against Pip and Mrs.Joe . He saw Pip as a threat, he

thought he would take his job at the forge. Mrs. Joe was always very rude to him and impulsive. Later in the book, Orlick writes an anonymous letter to Pip, saying to meet him in the marshes. There he ties Pip up and accuses him of stealing “his girl” Biddy and preventing him from working at Miss Havisham’s. He also confesses, he was the one that badly injured Mrs. Joe, which later dies in the book, just to make Pip suffer. “You was favored, and I was bullied and beat. Old Orlick bullied and beat, eh? Now you pays for it. You done it; now you pays for it” (807) This quote shows Orlick’s emotions and revengeful motives. He wants to kill Pip, make him suffer for what he “did” to him. He blames Pip for his failures and the cause of his miserable life. Through Orlick perspectives, Pip was always favored by Joe at the forge and had everything he wished for. He is jealous and holds a strong grudge that he attempts to kill him. Also, Orlick was never able to marry his dream girl, Biddy and just when he had a decent job at Satis House, he was fired because of Pip. Orlick’s abhorrence of Pip and Mrs. is very evident in the book. He baldy injures Mrs., causing her to die and attempts to kill Pip, which shows his vengeful motives.

Lastly, another character who is motivated by revenge is Magwitch. He wants revenge on society and Compeyson. For this reason, he becomes Pip’s benefactor and gives him all of his fortune so Pip can become a worthy gentleman. As for his revenge on Compeyson, he gives up his freedom twice just to harm Compeyson. Magwitch got in business with a man called Compeyson. They committed felony by putting stolen notes in circulation and were arrested. At trial Compeyson betrayed him and made Magwitch face most of the blame. Additionally, because Compeyson acted and looked like a gentleman, he faced fewer years in prison, the jury was “nicer”. As a result, Magwitch was willing to do anything to get his revenge on Compeyson, even putting his freedom at risk. He could have escaped at the beginning of the story when Pip helps him out, but he saw Compeyson. Magwitch tackles him and they land in the water. This fight that alarmed the police. Due to this, the police arrested Magwitch, and he got sentenced for life. The following quote is a description of what happened at the trial. “When the prosecution opened, I noticed how heavy it all bore on me, and how light on him. When the evidence was given in the box, I noticed how always me that had come for’ard and could be swore to…. Compeyson was recommended to mercy on account of good character and bad company, and giving up all the information he could agen me and warn’t it me as got never a word but guilty? And when I says to Compeyson ‘ Once out of this court, I’ll smash the face of your’ ain’t it Compeyson as prays the judge to be protected and gets two turnkeys stood betwixt us?” (785). This quote demonstrates Magwitch’s feelings and thoughts that went through his head during the trial. He realized Compeyson had betrayed him and because of his appearance, he got fewer years of imprisonment. Magwitch had to sell all of his clothes to pay for a lawyer, Mr. Jaggers and was left with old clothes that made him look like he deserved more years in prison. For the second time, when he planned to escape in a steamboat, with Pip and Herbert’s help, he sees Compeyson again and decides to risk his freedom. He tackles him and they both sink into the water. Compeyson never comes back up and Magwitch is severely injured. At the end of the book he dies, as a result of his revenge on Compeyson. Magwitch chooses vengeance twice in the book instead of his freedom, which emphasizes his hate against Compeyson. He was willing to do anything just for the sake of watching Compeyson suffer just like he did.

In conclusion, Great Expectations has three characters who seek revenge against all. Miss Havisham, Orlick, and Magwitch go out of their way to seek revenge each in their own way. Miss Havisham uses Estella to watch men suffer after she was left at the altar by her fiance. Orlick has a grudge against both Mrs. Joe and Pip which lead him to attempt to kill both. Lastly,

Magwitch wants vengeance against Compeyson, who betrayed him in many ways. Charles Dickens, in this novel, interprets revenge in a way that the reader understands its causes and effects. He believes that nothing positive comes from revenge, and can lead you to make unfavorable decisions. None of the three characters who sought revenge got something advantageous. It just leads them to make more hatred decision until there was no turning back.