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## Role Of Settings In Great Expectations

Dickens effectively uses settings in *Great Expectations* to emphasise his characters' traits in order to make them come to life. This is an essential because thrilling characters meant further sales for Dickens. Houses appear to be a motif throughout the novel, and central to the effectiveness of Dickens' characterisation. Dickens undoubtedly makes settings memorable, due to the symbolic value given to each object. Wemmick's castle, Satis House and Graveyard are all significant examples of this and invite the reader to consider how each memorable setting depicts a character through a pattern of reflection and echo.

In the opening scene, Dickens builds a melodramatic and Gothic setting. Dickens has his protagonist Pip in the graveyard, establishing a recurring motif of impact of the past and foreshadowing the theme of mortality. The "dark flat wilderness" which is "intersected with dykes and mounds and gate", establishes a threatening tone for Pip. The polysyndetic listing creates a sense of hostility within the marshes-an ongoing and vast space. Furthermore, Dickens describes the marshes to be "a long horizontal line... the sky was just a row of long, angry, red and dense black lines intermixed". The colour symbolism of "red" and "black" connotes danger and death, accompanied by "angry" personification of marshes making them more threatening and reflects the intimidating character of Magwitch. Dickens' use of pathetic fallacy enables drama to happen, for instance the effective language used describes the weather as being ferocious, dark and sinister, paralleling Magwitch's presence. Proleptically, this may seem ironic, because in the opening scene Magwitch intimidates Pip, whereas in a turn of events, Magwitch helps Pip to achieve his true desires. Dickens' description of the colours as "intermixed" suggests confusion and mysteriousness, establishing a suspenseful atmosphere and paving the way for the moral complexity of the bildungsroman. When Pip encounters Magwitch a "fearful man, all in coarse grey", Magwitch's presence makes Pip a "small bundle of shivers". Dickens makes the convict appear dark and mysterious with a side of danger using the colour "coarse grey", while the "small bundle of shivers" figuratively reduces Pip to only vulnerable sensation. Dickens makes Magwitch's appearance more significantly disturbing, because of the setting both characters have been placed in. As the graveyard is "overgrown with nettles", and since nettles suggest pain, this arresting image is symbolic of Pip's emotional pain both now and to come. This is effective in Dickens' characterisation, as Pip is desolate in the graveyard. While the violence of Magwitch's predatory behaviour towards Pip appears gratuitous in fact it serves to convey the theme of vulnerability well, as the reader must feel sympathy for Pip as the protagonist of a bildungsroman novel, in which we are accompanying Pip on his journey. The moment at the outset that best exemplifies the novel to be a bildungsroman, is when Magwitch turns Pip up-side down on a gravestone, symbolising Pip's world being turned upside down; therefore, this scene is vital in portraying the transformative experience for Pip. This foreshadows the revolutionary fortunes of his life, as we begin to see him develop throughout the novel as his desire to become a gentleman. Therefore, it establishes Pip's vulnerability as a symbolic catalyst for his life ahead. The opening dramatic scene of the novel enables the reader to anticipate the tense relationship between the two key characters.

Another example is Dickens' use of the appearance of Satis House to convey the character of Miss Havisham effectively. Her house presents an extension of her psyche. Firstly, the name

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“Satis” meaning ‘enough’ is ironic because there is not much satisfaction amongst its residents. This purposefully highlights the underlying message that Miss Havisham is the least content and satisfied person; materially she can sustain anything she requires, yet spiritually she is clearly impoverished. Therefore, this sets up a contrast between appearance and reality which is one of the most important themes in the novel. The description of Satis House, is “of old brick and dismal, and had many great iron bars to it, some of the windows had been walled up.” Here, Dickens suggests a bold resemblance between Satis House and a prison, to symbolically reflect Miss Havisham’s heart, detached from the reality, isolating herself, and emotionally trapped. Further, the “iron bars” suggest that Miss Havisham has made herself a prisoner of the painful rejection that she cannot overcome, as a result of being jilted on her wedding day. This implies that Miss Havisham has willfully placed herself outside the natural cycles of life. This builds upon the values of the Victorian patriarchal society that Dickens lived in: Miss Havisham figuratively bereaved by being jilted allowing Dickens to explore the ideas of the unjust treatment of men and women, prior to the Married Women’s Property Act and change in divorce law, which was a matter of personal concern for Dickens. In addition, Pip describes the “passages were all dark” as there was “no glimpse of daylight”. The choice of image deliberately spotlights how the atmospheric passages of Satis House favour the depraved heart of Miss Havisham and her thirst for revenge by using Estella as a tool. Furthermore, it is important to note that Dickens uses the bridal dress of Miss Havisham effectively to convey her character, having “lost its lustre and was faded and yellow...the bride within the bridal dress had withered like the dress, and like the flowers, and had no brightness left but the brightness of her sunken eyes.” The imagery of the yellow clothing gives a perception of the room slowly deteriorating, similarly, mimicking the physical and mental state of Miss Havisham. In particular our attention is held by the analogy of withered flowers and the concept of missing sunshine often evokes the thought of nature and how plants can wither, turn yellow, and die when there is no daylight. Likewise, Miss Havisham declines like a sun-deprived flower by shutting herself inside and removing all sunshine. Furthermore, the withered flowers act as an analogy for her lost potential as a fertile bride. The setting of the garden is also powerful in the way it conveys the character of Miss Havisham.

At the end of the novel when Pip walks around the “ruined garden” as its “overgrown with tangled weeds” and it’s quite “a wilderness”, the ruined garden symbolises the life of Miss Havisham, as everything in the garden conveys the idea of ageing and decaying. Not only that but the garden also reflects the relationship with Estella in that, like the garden, Pip’s relationship with the woman he loves is failing to blossom. The vivid descriptions of the rotting garden help Dickens to symbolise the inherited wealth in society, which is decaying. Here, Dickens draws upon the theme of social class, of how the very rich were favoured more in society, a prejudice which Dickens himself was a victim of, for instance by not having been to university and for wearing garish ties. Dickens was also a victim of class prejudice, as he was mocked for not being brought up a gentleman.