



Teaching Three Great Books

with Dr. Flora Armetta

Lesson 10: Great Expectations – Part 1

Outline:

Charles Dicken's Life

- Charles Dicken's was born in 1812 in Portsmouth, England.
- His father was a clerk in a navy pay office.
- His father tended to live beyond his means
- He was the second child of eight children. Two children of the family died.
- Charles Dickens was sent to school at age nine.
- His father was sent to debtor's prison for three months.
- Dicken's went to work during the time when his father was in debtor's prison.
- By age fifteen Dicken's went to work.
- By age twenty, Dickens began publishing short stories.
- There was quiet but urgent social change during Dicken's life in England.
- Dicken's met and married his wife in his 20s. They had ten children. Dicken's and his wife eventually separated.
- Oliver Twist was his first novel. It shows themes that will carry throughout some of his other work.
- He became emblematic of Victorian times.
- He is widely considered one of the greatest novelist of modern times.

Engaging Charles Dicken's *Great Expectations* writing with students

- Allow students room as they read for how they record their impressions and take notes.
- Plots in Dickens are complicated because he brings in so many fascinating characters, whose influence are difficult to determine. You can lose track of what is taking place in the story.
- It is important that students understand each turn in the story.
- Ask students as they read to focus on character only or to focus on events only (and leave characters more in the background).
- Student's answers to written assignments can prepare students for in class discussions and assessments.
 - As you read, write down the names of each character you encounter and begin a running list of phrases and adjectives for each one. Work towards having ten words of phrases for each major character and at least five for each minor character. For some characters, you must note, it will be up to you do decide if the character is major or minor. In addition choose at least two quotations that work as evidence for your descriptions character. Make sure that you note the page



- numbers for your quotations so that you can find them again later if you need them.
- Show students an example in order to model how to answer for them.
 - You can ask students to begin a discussion based upon their observations.
- As you read, write down in order the important events of the story and note down one or two phrases or adjectives to describe each one. You should work toward having at least four events per chapter. In addition, choose at least two quotations of one to two sentences each from the novel that serve as evidence for the mood or feeling the narration creates as it moves forward. Make sure that you note the page numbers for your quotations so that you find them again later if you need them.
- Which character are major and which characters are minor?
 - How does the presence of minor characters help us identify with the value and humanity of major characters?
 - How do Dicken's descriptions of the landscape and the weather help to set the mood of the novel? What do these suggest about the natural world and human nature?
 - How does Dicken's connect characters to their environment?
 - What biblical passages can you locate that might help shed light on any of these ideas?
- The goal is to spur thoughtfulness and depth of reading.
 - It is helpful to ask students to come up with their own guiding questions as they read to start a discussion themselves or turn their questions into you.
 - Ask students about principal differences between country life and city life.