

## Great Expectations

### Literary Response Journal Prompts

Each response should be thoughtful and well-developed. 2-3 pages in your LRJ per response is the proper range. Remember: Your LRJ will be collected and graded on exam day – for completeness, thoughtfulness, and effort. To receive full credit, you must include a **header** for each entry: title (e.g., *Dickensian*) and the **due date** of the entry; your entry must be legible; and it must be a minimum of two full pages, single-spaced.

#### 1. Dickensian

Charles Dickens' work continues to be so influential that the adjective "Dickensian" is used today to describe something "of or like the novels of Charles Dickens (especially with regard to poor social and economic conditions)," according to WordNet. Search for current usages of the word in [The New York Times](#) archive at nytimes.com (put the term "Dickensian" in the search bar) or other newspapers in order to understand how "Dickensian" is used in different contexts. For example, a [2008 article](#) in *The New York Times* describes Mumbai, India this way: "For the writer, the Dickensian lens offers an easy view of Mumbai: wealthy and poor, apartment-dwelling and slumdwelling, bulbous and malnourished." What contemporary work—novel, film, television series, blog, Web site—do you consider "Dickensian" in tone and/or content? What specific traits of the work do you find especially Dickensian? In what way does it resemble Pip's world in *Great Expectations*? Remember, you are expected to write a "thoughtful" response.

#### 2. Your Great Expectations

Consider this scenario for a moment: An attorney, like Mr. Jaggers in *Great Expectations*, contacts you "out of the blue" one day, saying he has important news for you. You meet with him in the Pastoral Ministry conference room at school – alone with the doors closed – where he informs you that a secret benefactor (whom he cannot name) is willing you a property worth approximately \$50 million. You may not take possession of that property until your 21<sup>st</sup> birthday, but you have access to unlimited funds up to \$50 million until then. In order that you have access to the money and inherit the property on your 21<sup>st</sup> birthday, there is one condition that you will need to fulfill: You will have to transfer out of Archbishop Moeller High School and attend [Philips Academy](#), an affluent boarding school in Andover, Massachusetts (Presidents George Bush, George W. Bush, and John F. Kennedy went there), for your final two years of high school. This means that during the school year you will live on campus in Massachusetts. Now, let's assume that you decide to accept the condition and the money and the property. How might you change in your outlook toward the world, your friends, your family, your church, etc.? What would you do with the money you have unlimited access to? Who (or what) would you make sure it benefited – aside from yourself? Given these new circumstances, where do you see yourself in ten years: Where are you working (if at all), where did you go to college, do you have a family or are you planning one, and what do you do with your time and money? Having read *Great Expectations*, what might you try to avoid?

#### 3. The Killer Serial

A common misconception about Charles Dickens is that he was paid by the word. In fact, he was paid by the serial installment. Dickens was one of the first authors to popularize the serial; instead of turning out a massive novel affordable only to the upper classes, Dickens wrote his books in affordable serial installments that were available every month or week in popular periodicals such as *Bentley's Miscellany* and *All the Year Round*. Read Howard Cutler's essay "[Stay Tuned: The Rise of the Killer Serial](#)" to learn more about how Dickens' innovations in serial literature were related to Victorian literacy rates, the economy, and his popularity. Then, think about how you could transform *Great Expectations* back into a television series that would run for one full season. Where in this particular work are the "cliffhanging chapter stops" that Cutler describes? Which of these chapter endings would be most dramatic or visually exciting in a television or film format? Write a synopsis of the first episode of the season. Where would it begin? Where would it end?