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|  | | **Mohamed Kheider University of Biskra** |  | |
| **Module: Literature (British)** | | **Faculty of Letters and Languages** | **Level: Third Year (L 3)** | |
| **Lecturer: Mr A. Boulegroune** | | **Dept. of English Language & Literature** | **Semester: One** | |
| **Tutorial № 06: Critical Analysis of an Extract from Charles Dickens’s *Great Expectations*** | | |

**Synopsis of the Author’s Biography:**

Charles Dickens was born on February 7, 1812, in Portsmouth, England. His family moved to London in 1822. The Dickens family often had money problems. For a while, Charles had to leave school to work in a factory. He later wrote about the difficult working conditions he experienced. Dickens finished school for good at age 15 and went to work. He wrote stories and articles for magazines and newspapers. His first novel, The Pickwick Papers, was published in 1837. He wrote many famous books. Oliver Twist (1838) tells the story of an orphan boy in London. A Christmas Carol (1843) became one of the most popular Christmas stories of all time. Another novel, called David Copperfield (1850), was based partly on Dickens’ childhood. In many of his later books, Dickens wrote about social problems that worried him. For example, his book Hard Times (1854) is about problems faced by factory workers.

In his later years, Dickens wrote less. He had grown tired. He published A Tale of Two Cities in 1859. It is a novel about the French Revolution. Great Expectations was published from 1860 to 1861. Dickens died on June 9, 1870.

Charles Dickens died at home on June 9, 1870. The inscription on his tomb reads: "He was a sympathiser to the poor, the suffering, and the oppressed; and by his death, one of England's greatest writers is lost to the world."

**Read the Text carefully. Then, answer the questions below.**

*Pip is a poor young orphan boy who lives with his bad-tempered sister and her gentle husband. He visits Miss Havisham, an upper-class old woman, in her manor. She lives with a beautiful young orphan girl named Estella. Miss Havisham has already sent for him in order to entertain her*.

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| “I am tired,” said Miss Havisham. “I want diversion, and I have done with men and women. Play.”  I think it will be conceded by my most disputatious reader that she could hardly have directed an unfortunate boy to do anything in the wide world more difficult to be done under the circumstances.  “I sometimes have sick fancies,” she went on, “and I have a sick fancy that I want to see some play. There there!” with an impatient movement of the fingers of her right hand; “play, play, play!”  For a moment, with the fear of my sister’s working me before my eyes, I had a desperate idea of starting round the room in the assumed character of Mr. Pumblechook’s chaise-cart. But I felt myself so unequal to the performance that I gave it up, and stood looking at Miss Havisham in what I suppose she took for a dogged manner, inasmuch as she said, when we had taken a good look at each other:  “Are you sullen and obstinate?”  “No, ma’am, I am very sorry for you, and very sorry I can’t play just now. If you complain of me I shall get into trouble with my sister, so I would do it if I could; but it’s so new here, and so strange, and so fine—and melancholy—” I stopped, fearing I might say too much, or had already said it, and we took another look at each other.  Before she spoke again, she turned her eyes from me, and looked at the dress she wore, and at the dressing table, and finally at herself in the looking glass.  “So new to him,” she muttered, “so old to me; so strange to him, so familiar to me; so melancholy to both of us! Call Estella.”  As she was still looking at the reflection of herself, I thought she was still talking to herself, and kept quiet.  “Call Estella,” she repeated, flashing a look at me. “You can do that. Call Estella. At the door.”  To stand in the dark in a mysterious passage of an unknown house, bawling Estella to a scornful young lady neither visible nor responsive, and feeling it a dreadful liberty so to roar out her name, was almost as bad as playing to order. But she answered at last, and her light came along the dark passage like a star.  Miss Havisham beckoned her to come close, and took up a jewel from the table, and tried its effect upon her fair young bosom and against her pretty brown hair. “Your own, one day, my dear, and you will use it well. Let me see you play cards with this boy.”  “With this boy? Why, he is a common laboring-boy!” I thought I overheard Miss Havisham answer—only seemed so unlikely, “Well? You can break his heart.”  “What do you play, boy?” asked Estella of myself, with the greatest disdain.  “Nothing but Beggar my Neighbor, miss.”  “Beggar him,” said Miss Havisham to Estella. So we sat down to cards.  It was then I began to understand that everything in the room had stopped, like the watch and the clock, a long time ago. I noticed that Miss Havisham put down the jewel exactly on the spot from which she had taken it up. As Estella dealt the cards, I glanced at the dressing table again, and saw that the shoe upon it, once white, now yellow, had never been worn. I glanced down at the foot from which the shoe was absent, and saw that the silk stocking on it, once white, now yellow, had been trodden ragged. Without this arrest of everything, this standing still of all the pale decayed objects, not even the withered bridal dress on the collapsed form could have looked so like grave-clothes, or the long veil so like a shroud.  So she [Miss Havisham] sat, corpse-like, as we played at cards; the frillings and trimmings on her bridal dress looking like earthy paper. I knew nothing then of the discoveries that are occasionally made of bodies buried in ancient times, which fall to powder in the moment of being distinctly seen; but I have often thought since that she must have looked as if the admission of the natural light of day would have struck her to dust.  “He calls the knaves jacks, this boy!” said Estella with disdain, before our first game was out. “And what coarse hands he has! And what thick boots!”  I had never thought of being ashamed of my hands before; but I began to consider them a very indifferent pair. Her contempt for me was so strong that it became infectious, and I caught it.  She won the game, and I dealt. I misdealt, as was only natural, when I knew she was lying in wait for me to do wrong; and she denounced me for a stupid, clumsy laboring-boy.  [...] I played the game to an end with Estella, and she beggared me. She threw the cards down on the table when she had won them all, as if she despised them for having been won of me.  “When shall I have you here again?” said Miss Havisham. “Let me think.”  I was beginning to remind her that today was Wednesday when she checked me with her former impatient movement of the fingers of her right hand.  “There, there! I know nothing of days of the week; I know nothing of weeks of the year. Come again after six days. You hear?”  “Yes, ma’am.”  “Estella, take him down. Let him have something to eat, and let him roam and look about him while he eats. Go, Pip.”  I followed the candle down, as I had followed the candle up, and she stood it in the place where we had found it. Until she opened the side entrance, I had fancied, without thinking about it, that it must necessarily be nighttime. The rush of the daylight quite confounded me, and made me feel as if I had been in the candlelight of the strange room many hours.  “You are to wait here, you boy,” said Estella, and disappeared and closed the door.  I took the opportunity of being alone in the courtyard to look at my coarse hands and my common boots. My opinion of those accessories was not favorable. They had never troubled me before, but they troubled me now, as vulgar appendages. I determined to ask Joe why he had ever taught me to call those picture-cards jacks which ought to be called knaves. I wished Joe had been rather more genteelly brought up, and then I should have been so, too.  She came back, with some bread and meat and a little mug of beer. She put the mug down on the stones of the yard, and gave me the bread and meat without looking at me, as insolently as if I were a dog in disgrace. I was so humiliated, hurt, spurned, offended, angry, sorry—I cannot hit upon the right name for the smart—God knows what its name was—that tears started to my eyes. The moment they sprang there, the girl looked at me with a quick delight in having been the cause of them. This gave me power to keep them back and to look at her: so, she gave a contemptuous toss—but with a sense, I thought, of having made too sure that I was so wounded—and left me.  But, when she was gone, I looked about me for a place to hide my face in, and got behind one of the gates in the brewery-lane, and leaned my sleeve against the wall there, and leaned my forehead on it and cried. As I cried, I kicked the wall, and took a hard twist at my hair; so bitter were my feelings, and so sharp was the smart without a name, that it needed counteraction.  My sister’s bringing up had made me sensitive. In the little world in which children have their existence, whosoever brings them up, there is nothing so finely perceived and so finely felt as injustice. It may be only small injustice that the child can be exposed to; but the child is small, and its world is small, and its rocking-horse stands as many hands high, according to scale, as a big-boned Irish hunter. Within myself, I had sustained, from my babyhood, a perpetual conflict with injustice. I had known, from the time when I could speak, that my sister, in her capricious and violent coercion, was unjust to me. I had cherished a profound conviction that her bringing me up by hand gave her no right to bring me up by jerks. Through all my punishments, disgraces, fasts and vigils, and other penitential performances, I had nursed this assurance; and to my communing so much with it, in a solitary and unprotected way, I in great part refer the fact that I was morally timid and very sensitive.  **(Quoted from Charles Dickens, *Great Expectations*, Chapter 8, 1861)** | |
| **Glossary:**  **Mr. Pumblechook:** the uncle of Pip’s brother-in-law  **chaise-cart:** a light horse-drawn vehicle  **dogged:** Stubborn  **sullen:** an angry mood  **muttered:** talk in a low voice  **bawling:** shout loudly  **disdain:** lack of respect  **frillings and trimmings:** extra things that complete or improve the appearance of her bridal dress  **knave:** a card with a picture of a young man on it, normally worth more than a ten and less than a queen  **Jack:** applied contemptuously to anybody, especially a young man of the lower classes  **coarse:** rough to the touch  **dealt:**distributed cards | **Joe:** Pip’s brother-in-law  **insolently:** disrespectfully; arrogantly  **spurned:** rejected impolitely  **toss:** care  **rocking-horse:** a toy horse that a child sits on and goes backward and forward  **confound:** confuse  **vulgar:** common; crude  **appendage:** something that is attached  **contemptuous:** scornful  **sustain:** undergo; suffer  **capricious:** changing without apparent reason  **coercion:** using force to oblige someone to do something  **jerks:** corporal punishment |

**Discussion Questions**

1. Where is it suggested in the text that Miss Havisham derives sadistic pleasure from tormenting Pip?
2. How does Pip feel about Estella? What does his reaction to her criticism tell us about Pip?
3. Why does Pip feel humiliated? How does Estella react to his humiliation?
4. What does Pip do when he is finally alone?
5. The passage gives the reader some insights into the relationship between children and adults in nineteenth-century Britain. How would you define this relationship?
6. How does class-consciousness manifest itself in the extract?