
Great Expectations: Stylistic Devices In A Novel

Dickens is a master at using imagery to bring alive the characters and to help the reader form a vivid image of scenes; in the novel *Great Expectations*. He uses metaphors and other forms of comparison that help the reader associate and feel that they can touch, smell, hear and see the images that he writes about. Some scenes function brilliantly on analogies. He also incorporates the use of doubles throughout the novel – characters have challenging, complexly connected worlds and Dickens accomplished a balance of symmetry by the usage of Doubles, these allow Dickens to highlight the sense of the interconnectedness of characters and events in the novel.

An example that shows imagery in such a clear form is the following scene that opens chapter 3:

It was a rimy morning, and very damp. I had seen the damp lying on the outside of my little window, as if some goblin had been crying there all night, and using the window as a pocket-handkerchief. Now, I saw the damp lying on the bare hedges and spare grass, like a coarser sort of spider's webs; hanging itself from twig to twig and blade to blade. On every rail and gate, wet lay clammy; and the marsh-mist was so thick, that the wooden finger on the post directing people to our village — a direction which they never accepted, for they never came there — was invisible to me until I was quite close under it. Then, as I looked up at it, while it dripped, it seemed to my oppressed conscience like a phantom devoting me to the Hulks.

The scene embodies how Pip is feeling, his mood is dark and lost, a great analogy, shaped by figurative language – Pip stole from Joe and the scene portrays his guilt of helping a fugitive. The scene also reflects Pip's hyper imaginativeness – he talks of folklore comparisons to describe the scene and how he is feeling – that he has a burden that he is weighing heavily on his mind. The use of personification when describing the signpost also enhances the image so that it comes to life for the reader. In chapter two, Pip describes his sister. Mrs. Joe, Dickens once again captivates the reader by depicting a crystal-clear image of her;

'My sister, Mrs. Joe, with black hair and eyes, has such a prevailing redness of skin that I sometimes used to wonder whether it was possible she washed with a nutmeg-grater instead of soap. She was tall and bony, and almost always wore a coarse apron, fastened over her figure with two loops, and having a square impregnable bib in front, that was stuck full of pins and needles. She made it a powerful merit in herself, and a strong reproach against Joe, that she wore this apron so much. Though I really see no reason why she should have worn it at all; or why, if she did wear it at all, she should not have taken it off, every day of her life'.

The extract also brings out the comical side of Pip, when he describes the color of her skin and saying that she washed with a nutmeg-grater. Describing her apron as impregnable might refer to Mrs. Joe not having her own children, even though she is ironically capable of being impregnated and it can also affect her emotional nature, 'incapable of being overcome, challenged or refuted'. The description also helps the reader infer that Mrs. Joe is a stern and overbearing figure to both Pip and Joe. One of the focal themes of the novel is that of social class. Dickens uses imagery to emphasize the variances between the lower and upper classes. For example, in his descriptions of Mrs. Joe's clothing, in the above passage; Mrs. Joe is a

member of the lower class, a blacksmith's wife, and she wears an ugly and thick apron. It is stuck through with pins and needles, and she never takes it off, contrasts this to the description of Miss Havisham's clothing;

She was dressed in rich materials – satins, and lace, and silks – all of the white. Her shoes were white. And she had a long white veil dependent on her hair, and she had bridal flowers in her hair, but her hair was white. Some bright jewels sparkled on her neck and on her hands, and some other jewels lay sparkling on the table form a prominent impression for the reader. Miss Havisham symbolizes the upper-class, and her clothes are made of luxurious materials such as lace, silk, and satin. Instead of useful pins and needles for sewing, she wears extravagant rings and necklaces. These portrayals help the reader not only perceive the difference between the two women but also feel it when considering the solidity of the apron and the elegant silkiness of Miss Havisham's dress. The description of Miss Havisham's attire also gives the impression of a ghost, something she convinced herself to be and on her disintegrating body, Miss Havisham's wedding dress becomes an ironic symbol of death and deterioration. The description of her, in her bedroom, also links to the imagery that helps the reader understand her extreme heartbreak and also her idea that she is a walking corpse; also, how deeply depressed and unstable she is; even the darkness of the house and using images of death and decay;

'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 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'.

Furthermore, Dicken makes use of doubles – A clear example of Doubles is the two beneficiaries, Pip has a beneficiary that wants him to become a gentleman and in turn, Pip becomes Hermit's secret beneficiary so that Hermit can achieve success. There is also the example of Miss Havisham that aims to shape Estella to her desired idea of what a woman should be, cruel and hurtful towards men – because of her own bitterness for being stood up at the altar and in symmetry Magwitch uses Pip so that he can prove that he is capable of producing gentlemen, Magwitch secretly wanted to be from the upper class and get back at Compeyson.

Finally, by the end of the novel, the reader realizes that Estella and Pip are in fact, also doubles. It is particularly noticeable when we learn the truth about where Estella comes from – born to a gypsy mother, accused of murder, and her father also a convict - Magwitch. Estella's own mother wanted to dispose of her as a baby, and Estella was sent to live with Miss Havisham. The double is that Estella is an orphan, just like Pip who was raised by his sister and her husband, Joe. Pip and Estella share similar stories and have both been molded to fulfill revenge fantasies for both Magwitch and Miss Havisham.

In conclusion, the use of imagery and double are successfully used throughout the book and there are so many examples of both literary devices. Doubles play a fundamental part in the plot of this novel and imagery brings the novel to life.