

## Time for a Classic with Mr Marshman

### Great Expectations by Charles Dickens

**Task 1 – Context** What do you know about Charles Dickens or the Victorian Period? Find out five interesting facts about Charles Dickens.

**Task 2 – Great Expectations** We are going to look in detail at an extract from Dickens' novel Great Expectations. Does the title of the novel give anything away? What do you think are meant by Great Expectations? What are your ambitions and hopes for the future? Think about where you want to be in 1 years' time, 5 years' time, 10 years' time.

**Task 3 – Reading** Read through the following extract from Chapter 8 of Great Expectations. In the extract the main character of the novel Pip is meeting the strange character of Miss Havisham a local rich lady.

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I entered and found myself in a pretty large room, well lighted with wax candles. No glimpse of daylight was to be seen in it. It was a dressing-room, as I gathered from the furniture, though much of it was old-fashioned. But prominent in it was a draped table with a gilded looking-glass, and that I made out at first sight to be a fine lady's dressing-table.

Whether I should have made out this object so soon, if there had been no fine lady sitting at it, I cannot say. In an arm-chair, with an elbow resting on the table and her head leaning on that hand, sat the strangest lady I have ever seen, or shall ever see.

She was dressed in rich materials - satins, and lace, and silks - all of white. Her shoes were white. And she had a long white veil dependent from 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. Dresses, less splendid than the dress she wore, and half-packed trunks, were scattered about. She had not quite finished dressing, for she had but one shoe on - the other was on the table near her hand - her veil was but half arranged, her watch and chain were not put on, and some lace for her shoulders lay with those trinkets, and with her handkerchief, and gloves, and some flowers, and a prayer-book, all confusedly heaped about the dressing table mirror.

I saw that everything within my view which ought to be white, had been white long ago, and had lost its brightness, and was faded and yellow. I saw that the bride within the bridal dress had withered like the dress she wore, and like the flowers, and had no brightness left but the brightness of her sunken eyes. I saw that the dress had been put upon the rounded figure of a young woman, and that the figure upon which it now hung loose, had shrunk to skin and bone. Once, I had been taken to one of our old marsh churches to see a skeleton in the ashes of a rich dress, that had been dug out of a vault under the church pavement. Now, that skeleton seemed to have dark eyes that moved and looked at me. I should have cried out, if I could.

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**Task 4 – Comprehension** Part of the description talks about the items Pip can see on the dressing table. List four items Pip can see when he walks in the room.

**Task 5 – Analysis** How does the writer make the reader feel sorry for Miss Havisham?

In this task I want you to think about the language (words) that Dickens uses to describe Miss Havisham, her clothes and her surroundings. You must use quotations from the text to support your views. This is tricky and will take some time to think about an answer. It might be that you end up needing to write two or three paragraphs to fully explain your point. If you find it really tricky just pick one part of the text that makes you feel sorry for Miss Havisham and explain why you think this.