

PORTLANDCENTERSTAGE

The Guide

A Theatergoer's Resource

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Great Expectations

By Murray Horwitz and Richard Maltby, Jr.

Class and Fortune

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Coming Of Age: A Character Study

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The Costumes

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Great Expectations on the Silver Screen

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Cast and Creative Team

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Charles Dickens

Born on February 7, 1812 to a Naval Pay Office clerk, Dickens spent his early years in London, a period of his life he would later describe as idyllic. His childhood came to an abrupt end when his family found themselves in debtor's prison in 1824. At the age of 12, Dickens was sent to work twelve-hour days at a shoe polish factory to earn extra money for this family. The harsh working conditions made a lasting impression on the young Dickens, undoubtedly shaping his convictions on social reform, status and the corruption of innocence — prevalent themes in his writing.

In 1829, Dickens first tried his hand at writing as a freelance reporter at Doctor's Commons Courts, eventually finding steady work at a newspaper. Dickens' first published collection, *Sketches by Boz*, was a set of periodical sketches, the success of which led to the serialization of his first novel, *The Pickwick Papers*. Released in monthly, two-chapter installments, *The Pickwick Papers* was unprecedentedly popular, a publishing phenomenon, launching Dickens' literary career.

Most of Dickens' works, including *Oliver Twist*, *David Copperfield*, *Hard Times*, *Little Dorrit*, *A Tale of Two Cities* and *Great Expectations*, were published serially, explaining Dickens' tendency towards cliff-hanger chapter endings. Sudden plot twists and suspenseful foreshadowing ensured his audience would continue to subscribe. *Great Expectations*, Dickens' thirteenth novel, was published weekly in the magazine *All the Year Round* from 1860-1861.

At the age of 24, he married Catherine Hogarth and together they had ten children, but separated in 1858 due to, as Dickens himself described, being "temperamentally unsuited" for one another. Although charismatic and successful, Dickens is believed to have had an insecure and difficult personality.

Over the course of his life, Dickens boasted a highly prolific career, writing more than 25 books, managing a theatrical company, traveling internationally, and attending scores of public readings, a demanding schedule that eventually took a toll on his physical well-being. As his health deteriorated, and against his doctor's advice, Dickens maintained his productive fervor until he died from a stroke on June 9, 1870.

About Great Expectations

A terrifying graveyard encounter with an escaped convict; a summons to meet the bitter, decaying Miss Havisham and her beautiful, cold-hearted ward Estella; the sudden generosity of an unknown benefactor-this series of events changes the orphaned Pip's life forever, and he eagerly flees his humble origins in favor of a new life as a gentleman in London. Dicken's haunting late novel depicts Pip's education and development through adversity as he discovers that having "expectations" is a double edged sword.

ex·pec·ta·tion
ekspek'tāSH(ə)n/

noun

- a strong belief that something will happen or be the case in the future.

"reality had not lived up to expectations"

synonyms: supposition, assumption, presumption, conjecture, surmise, calculation, prediction, hope

- a belief that someone will or should achieve something.

"students had high expectations for their future"

synonyms: supposition, assumption, presumption, conjecture, surmise, calculation, prediction, hope

- *archaic* one's prospects of inheritance.

Book-It Repertory Theatre

Book-It creates world-premiere adaptations of classic and contemporary literature for the stage, preserving the narrative text as it is spoken, not by a single "narrator" but as dialogue by the characters in the production. This technique was developed over the last 20 years and continues to be developed by Book-It artists led by Founding Co-Artistic Directors, Jane Jones and Myra Platt. Performing books instead of plays allows the Book-It theatre experience to spark the audience's interest in reading and to challenge the audience to participate by using their imaginations. Book-It's unique style of acting and adapting books is trademarked, known as the Book-It Style™. Book-It has produced more than 90 world-premiere adaptations of literature. All adaptations are copyrighted.

Characters



Philip Pirrip (a.k.a. “Pip”)

Our hero
(played by Stephen Stocking)



Magwitch/Jaggers

A mysterious escaped prisoner/
An immensely successful London
trial lawyer
(played by John Hutton)



Joe Gargery

Pip’s brother-in-law
(played by Gavin Hoffman)



Miss Havisham/Mrs. Joe

A wealthy, reclusive spinster
(played by Dana Green)



Compeyson/
Orlick and others

Magwitch’s fellow prison escapee/
Another of Joe’s blacksmithing apprentices.
(played by Isaac Lamb)



Estella/Biddy

Miss Havisham’s adopted daughter/
An intelligent orphan from Pip’s village.
(played by Maya Sugarman)



Pumblechook/
Wemmick and others

Joe’s pompous, self-important uncle/
The chief clerk for Jaggers
(played by Damon Kupper)



Herbert Pocket
and others

Pip’s friend and fellow student
of the gentlemanly arts
(played by Chris Murray)



Drummle
and others

A young aristocrat
(played by Sean McGrath)



Theater Etiquette

Seeing a play is very different than seeing a movie. During live theatre, the audience is as equally important as the actors on stage. Please share the following points with your students, and encourage them to practice good theater etiquette throughout the workshop.

- **Live response is good!** If you tell a story to a friend and notice they aren't responding, it makes you want to tell the story better. A live audience is as critical a component of the theatergoing experience as the actors on stage. The more the audience listens, laughs and responds, the more the actors want to tell the story.
- **The actors can hear you talking.** Have you ever had a conversation with someone and felt that they'd rather be someplace else? This is the exact feeling actors get when people in the audience are talking. If an audience member is not paying attention, the actors know it.

- **The actors can see you.** Imagine telling something to a group of fellow students who are slouching, pretending to be bored, or sitting with their eyes closed in attempt to seem disinterested or "too cool" for what you had to say. Think about it: Even though the actors are pretending to be other characters, it is as much their job to "check in" with the audience as it is to remember their lines. Since stage actors only get one chance to tell the story to each audience, they want to make sure to communicate clearly each and every performance.
- **Cell phones, beepers, candy wrappers, loud gum smacking.** Please turn off all cell phones and do not eat or chew gum inside the theater. These things disturb the people around you as well as the actors. As much as you might be tempted to text a friend how cool the play is that you're watching, please wait until after it is over.

Many thanks to our colleagues at Montana Shakespeare in the Parks, from whom these excellent etiquette suggestions have been adapted.

Education Programs: Stage Door

Our Education Programs provide young people with opportunities to experience the art of theatre, to directly participate in its process, and to apply its collaborative principles elsewhere in their daily lives. Stage Door is an unforgettable opportunity for students to experience professional theatre in a context that supports their education.

The following activities have been constructed by our Teaching Artist to help students explore themes found in our production of Great Expectations. We encourage you to adapt these activities for your group as needed.

GOALS:

- Encourage personal connections between students and the major themes of the play.
- Excite students about the story and theatrical elements in the production.
- Engage students using the actors' tools: body, voice, and imagination.

KEY CONCEPTS:

- The Stations of Dickensian Life
- Language of Persuasion
- Break with Reality

Performance Warm-Up: Rock Paper Scissors Nirvana

The goal of this activity is to bridge independent-group perspectives, and to engage participants physically. Social groupings and game-play connect this simple game to Dickens' themes of class structure and inherent competition.

HOW IT WORKS:

- Everyone starts as a group of “eggs,” sitting/crouching on the floor.
- Turning to the nearest student, participants will play a quick round of Rock/Paper/Scissors. The winner transforms from “egg” to “animal” and can now crawl on hands and knees. The loser, remains an “egg” until they can win a round and transform.
- The only way to transform is to win a round. Participants can only challenge participants of the same class (“eggs” can only challenge other “eggs”, “animals” other “animals” etc.).
- Each round, each participant should transform: downward (unless they’re already eggs), or upward (until someone reaches Nirvana)
- Egg – Animal – Human – Alien – Nirvana
- Crouch – Hands/Knees – Upright Walking – Tiptoes with hands over head – End of game

SAMPLE FOLLOW UP QUESTIONS:

What did it feel like to only be able to challenge the people who were like you? Did the odds seem fair? What’s an example of a game wherein the odds are not even, not rigged, just biased?



Activity #1: Status Cards

Students will improvise the characterizations of community members with varying statuses, interacting. Students build communication skills as they convey subtext, viewpoints and realistic reactions.

HOW IT WORKS:

- Each participant selects a playing card from a standard deck, and does not look at it.
- When the game begins, each player holds the back of their card to their chest or forehead, in such a way that the holder of the card cannot see the face of the card. The value of a card should be a secret to the holder throughout the game.
- Then, as if at a party, players should mingle and respond/react to each person as the value of their held card. “2’s” should be treated poorly, and “Face Cards” should be treated like royalty.
- Continue the activity until the majority of participants feel confident that they “know their place in the deck.”
- The game ends with everyone lining themselves up, shoulder-to-shoulder, in ascending order of their value.

TIPS:

Name the reason for the party so as to allow people to fall into familiar behavior. Call for silence during the game to emphasize physical and relational communication (and/or if dialogue gets aggressive). For added challenge, change the context of the scenario (e.g., birthday party, Royal funeral), participants will need to adjust without dropping their statuses.

REFLECTION/DISCUSSION:

Which was your favorite (number) group to be around? If you had a card in real life, would it be of greater or lesser value than the one you drew? If you had a “real life” number, what would make it change? Would it stay the same regardless of context?

Activity #2: Work For It

This activity focuses on the persuasive power of language. Participants will have to improvise, assess value, and portray emotions convincingly.

HOW IT WORKS:

- Three students participate at a time. One “Needs,” one “Gets,” and one “Has.”
- Standing on the same line, the person who “Needs” must convince the person who “Gets” to retrieve [something] for them, from the person who “Has.”
- “Needs” must convince, sway, threaten, bewitch “Gets” to do their bidding. With each failed retrieval, the stakes must go up.
- “Gets” will be bouncing back and forth, trying to negotiate, swindle, cajole and convince the person who “Has” to give up the goods.
- “Has” must have specific reasons why the [something] is more needed by “Has.” “Has” will out-plead, and overwhelm “Gets,” and with each attempt, “Has” must raise the stakes.
- Ultimately, “Has” holds out for as long as possible and perhaps never gives in. The exercise is in the tactics of persuasion.
- Each player will need to use their most convincing language to persuade each other. All language is improvised.

TIPS:

Push the urgency forward - allow for a rapport to establish, and coach players to become more desperate/dire. Always encourage honest reactions and authentic responses.

REFLECTION/DISCUSSION:

Which role felt most like your life? When/Where do you feel the highest status? If you’re part of a family, the role you play may be due to age or birth-order. Away from family, amongst peers, how do we agree upon the roles in the activity?

Activity #3: Montage in Time

This activity highlights themes of idea-fixation and the eroding effects time has on relevance and perspective. Participants will utilize value statements, characterization skills and collaborative storytelling.

HOW IT WORKS:

- Create a stadium-style audience, with a runway walk down the middle.
- One volunteer starts at one end of the runway (storyline); they are going to mime/act as an improvised character. Crowd source information about a character e.g., name, nickname, favorite [book], currently wearing, best day in their life.
- While gathering information, allow the volunteer to begin walking the runway in character, allowing the character to change to new information.
- Stop the character walk, and ask/name/gather “what the character wants most in their life right now”.
- Using the pathway as a timeline, “How close are they to getting it?” “How long will it take?” “What could get in the way?” “What will be overlooked in pursuit?”
- Participants from the audience should join in from the audience to run alongside the scene, “being passed by.”
- Allow for a few characters to be created, portrayed and discussed.

TIPS:

Facilitate discussion toward major life events for these characters, pivotal. Encourage flashes of moments/memories to be acted out and named, a la movie montage.

REFLECTION/DISCUSSION:

When was a time when you were so focused on a goal, that you missed out something else? When has the hope of a goal pulled you through the process?

