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Sample: Every Trip is a Quest in Charles Dickens’ *Great Expectations*

When a reader thinks of a quest, they may think of a knight in shining armor going through a perilous journey to rescue a princess from a tower. However, this is not always the case. In Thomas Foster’s guide *How to Read Like a Professor for Kids*, a quest need only have a quest, a destination, a stated reason for going there, challenges along the way, and the real reason to go there (7). In Charles Dickens novel *Great Expectations*, the main protagonist Pip finds himself working as a serving boy for Mr. Pumblechook. During his time working for Pumblechook, Pip eventually travels to Miss Havisham’s decrepit mansion where he sent to amuse her and meets the beautiful Estella. But is this a quest? Yes!

Pip is the quester in this scenario. It is his duty to travel to Miss Havisham’s abode to amuse her and play for her. That is his reason for the journey. The quest in of itself is one of peril and torment for Pip as he is forced to suffer Mr. Pumblechook’s pompous attitude and incessant math riddles. He eventually comes to the princess’s castle, Miss Havisham’s decrepit mansion, where he meets Estella. In his meeting with Estella is where the reader can finally find out the real reason for his quest.

Pip’s journey of self-discovery, Foster states that the real reason for a quest is “*always* self-knowledge” (8). In Pip’s first meeting with Estella and Miss Havisham, the two of them torment him because of his social class. Estella establishes a sense of identify crisis in Pip by pointing out his faults as a member of the lower class. She makes fun of his calloused hands and work boots, both of which are parts of him that he had never felt a reason to be ashamed of before. During his time with Miss Havisham and Estella, Pip becomes awfully aware of his position in life and begins to see, for the first time, what it means to be working class.

With Foster’s idea of what a quest is in mind, a reader can assume that Charles Dickens’ novel Great Expectations is, indeed, a quest for Pip. The novel contains a quester, Pip. It includes various destinations, but the most important one being Miss Havisham’s mansion. It includes a stated reason for Pip to quest there; to entertain Miss Havisham. Pip’s journey does indeed include challenges (math! Yuck!). Finally, the reader is made privy to the real reason for Pip’s journey, self-discovery.