
MAJOR CONFLICT OF “GREAT EXPECTATIONS” BY CHARLES DICKENS

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Abstract

This study examines the primary conflicts within the novel *Great Expectations*, each paragraph focusing on a distinct conflict present in the narrative. The analysis applies Lewis A. Coser's theory of social conflict (2002), which categorizes conflicts into three types: conflicts concerning social statuses, conflicts of interest, and conflicts of role. The objective of this research is to identify these social conflicts within the novel and explore their impact on readers. The study identifies a total of 13 instances of social conflict: 7 related to conflicts concerning social statuses, 3 involving conflicts of interest, and 3 concerning conflicts of role. Employing a descriptive qualitative method, the research analyzes textual data to uncover these conflicts, which are integral to the story of the main character. The novel adopts a mode that combines personal narrative with written and spoken dialogue. The influence of these social conflicts on readers is significant, as they resonate with real-life situations, helping readers to understand and navigate various types of conflicts encountered in everyday life.

Keyword: literature, conflict, character

INTRODUCTION

“*Great Expectations*” by Charles Dickens is a quintessential portrayal of Victorian society, replete with its complexities, contradictions, and class struggles. Through the protagonist Pip, Dickens delves into the intricate dynamics of ambition, identity, and social class, encapsulating the essence of an era defined by rapid industrialization and societal upheaval. It presents a vivid portrayal of Victorian society, intricately woven with themes of ambition, identity, and social class. At its core lies the major conflict that drives the narrative forward: the internal and external struggles faced by the protagonist, Pip. Set against the backdrop of 19th-century England, the novel follows Pip's journey from humble beginnings to unexpected fortune, a transformation triggered by his encounter with the enigmatic Miss Havisham and her ward, Estella. The central conflict revolves around Pip's aspirations for social advancement and the moral dilemmas he encounters along the way. As he navigates through the complexities of love, loyalty, and self-discovery, Pip is confronted with the stark realities of his choices, ultimately leading to a profound exploration of ambition, conscience, and the true meaning of happiness.

The author examines well-known books from the 19th century in this thesis. The novel is an essay that tells the story of a single person in great detail. Fiction and non-fiction novels make up most books; fiction typically centers on themes that beyond human comprehension, while non-fiction typically tells a true tale of a person that serves as inspiration for others. A rigorous concentration of life during a critical moment is expressed in the novel (Semi, 1988:32; and Menkel-Meadow, 2020). The researcher brings up a topic that comes up frequently in the community and among us in the novel: social strife. There must be social strife in every individual or community.



Something that goes against one's heart and mind is the cause of social conflict. Within this book, the author discloses the social turmoil that the protagonist goes through, which is brought on by pressure from multiple sources. In general, conflict refers to disagreements between two or more parties over concepts, beliefs, understandings, or interests. There will always be conflict in human life. Since almost all people have conflicts. It is built on interests that are distinct from one another. A conflict arises when there is animosity or disagreement between two or more individuals. This analysis that will be done is Charles Dickens, an English novelist and romance writer who was born on February 7, 1812, wrote *Great Expectations* during the reign of Queen Victoria. Today, a lot of his writings have been adapted into movies.

Charles Dickens, renowned as one of the most significant novelists of the Victorian era, demonstrated a deep interest in social issues throughout his career. His literary journey began in 1833 with contributions to various publications. Dickens' debut piece, "A Dinner at Popular Walk," was serialized in a newspaper for an entire year. "The Posthumous Papers of the Pickwick Club," serialized monthly from April 1836 to November 1837, marked his breakthrough into literary fame. The success of "Pickwick" led Dickens to embark on a prolific novel-writing career, producing works such as "Oliver Twist" (1837-1839), "Nicholas Nickleby" (1838-1839), "The Old Curiosity Shop," and "Barnaby Rudge" (1840-41). Dickens' exploration of the Bildungsroman genre in his fiction presents a compelling subject for in-depth analysis. This study delves into the enduring appeal and thematic richness of Dickens' novels, particularly examining the underlying conflicts that drive the narratives.

The problem of research lies in the multifaceted nature of the major conflict in the novel "Great Expectations." While each paragraph of this study touches upon various aspects of conflict, it is imperative for readers to delve deeper into the nuanced meanings embedded within the narrative. By examining the intricacies of Pip's internal and external struggles, readers can gain a richer understanding of the societal, moral, and existential dilemmas presented in the novel, thus illuminating the profound themes of ambition, conscience, and the pursuit of true happiness.

LITERATURE REVIEW

This comprises an inclusive and critical analysis of prior theory pertaining to the topic at hand, an inclusive and critical review of prior empirical research pertaining to the topic at hand, and a critical examination of the differences between the authors' interpretations of their data and the actual empirical evidence that they present. Use the 7th version of the APA citation style. It is advised that you use Mendeley to assist you in consistently citing sources.

People work together, communicate, and build institutions, marriages, and reputations through language. We also use it to ruin institutions, relationships, and reputations, as well as to deceive, profit, and harm others. Among the language studies is discourse. Many authors clarify the concept of discourse itself before moving on to discourse analysis. Discourse analysis, according to He (2017), is the study of language use science in connection to social and psychological variables that affect communication. There is a realization-based relationship between the two. Discourse identifies textual sex expression. This relationship is never simple, though, as any given work could be the manifestation or expression of several, occasionally conflicting, and contradictory discourses.

Discourse analysis, according to Johnstone & Andrus (2024), is an examination of the language that is utilized. As such, it is not restricted to characterizing linguistic forms apart from their intended use or role in advancing human affairs. Oral and written exchanges are studied as part of discourse analysis. Discourse analysis is the study of language use in relation to its surroundings. Text analysis allows us to understand not just the content of a text but also the structure of the words, phrases, and sentences that make up the message.

Major Conflict

Conflict is unavoidably reflected in literary works as a mirror of social reality. In his essay *Literature and Mass Culture* (2017), Lowenthal asserts that the history of literary conflict is as old as literature itself, dating back to the beginning of written communication. Literary works and conflict have a close and intimate link. Since the beginning of time, conflict has emerged in literary works. In literature, conflict plays a crucial role. Additionally, Budiman stated that literature must preach the truth about itself and is not required to disclose conflicts that occur anywhere at any time.

This does not mean, however, that there is never conflict in writing. Literature is full of conflict, but the fundamental issue is not so much with how conflict is conveyed in literature as it is with what kind of conflict exists in it. In fact, conflict has become an essential element in literary works. Literature demonstrates how to resolve these problems as well. In this sense, writers must focus more on the issue of presenting conflicts and their resolutions than only the issues of writing style and method. One manifestation of civilization that is impossible to isolate is conflict. Conflict is simply seen in this perspective as something that is innate and normal. This implies that conflict originates internally and cannot be isolated from a person's existence. In a dynamic society, structural conflict arises between the minimal structure and the dominant structure (Lee, 2020). The control of societal resources, such as those in politics and economics, is the driving force.

There are two important things in conflict theory according to Fravel (2010) namely: External conflict and Internal conflict, they are disturbance from without and internal disagreement. Disturbance from without is discovered when a character comes into contact with anything that is external to him, such as the environment or the human environment, external conflicts arise. A character and the environment have a dispute that leads to a physical conflict, also known as an elemental conflict. Conversely, social conflict results from human interaction or problems that arise as a result of human interaction. Internal disagreement occurs when a character experiences internal conflict, sometimes referred to as mental conflict, when it arises in their soul and heart. A story's internal and exterior conflicts can take many different shapes. The two conflicts may be a primary conflict, a secondary conflict, or what is usually referred to as a supporting conflict. A supporting conflict in a story needs to be connected to or helpful to the primary conflict.

From a general standpoint, a conflict is any disagreement that is synonymous with violence. The idea that all conflicts are violent stems from ideas that believe all conflicts are physical, such as national wars, revolutions, and uprisings. This presumption is accurate and valid as verbal confrontations are a type of conflict apart from physical ones. When disagreements or differences do not extend beyond the usage of tangible objects, verbal conflict arises. Oral confrontations can be arguments, polemics, disagreements, and soon they can be reduced to verbal attacks on one another. Within this framework, disagreement might be interpreted as an argument for social discourse rather than utilitarian goals. Not only can conflict arise violently in the field, but it also arises in the public sphere. Every group constantly interacts with and overlaps with one another about public power (Lee, 2020).

Kinds of Major Conflict

Aniccih, Nathanael, Halevy, and Galinsky (2015) categorize social conflict into three distinct types: conflict concerning social statuses, conflict of interest, and conflict of role. These classifications delineate differing sources of disagreement among individuals or groups.

Conflict Concerning Social Statuses

The phrase "social status" describes a person's standing in a certain group or culture. For example, there are many people with the title of priest but only one position. A grouping of social positions forms a social group and a social class. Social roles that

individuals can play include those in their family, profession (such as academic lecturer or doctor of medicine), and associations and organizations. A social dispute that arises from the interaction of social positions is known as a position conflict (Kristina, 2007) and Bengtsson, Hansson, Hakansson, & Ostman (2024).

Conflict of Interest

A conflict of interest arises when someone (an individual or a corporation) has a stake in one or more choices. A person may have to make decisions on behalf of another person if, for instance, (1) they are in a relationship with someone else and (2) they have a conflicting interest that prevents them from exercising sound judgment in that regard (Stead, 2017).

Conflict of Role

When two or more roles map to two or more statuses, a role conflict occurs. We experience role conflict being pushed in different ways when we are required to perform various tasks. As we attempt to reply to our varied statuses. Role conflict can have a brief duration, a longer duration, and a connection to specific situational circumstances. A circumstance where an individual must carry out two tasks that are incompatible. A manager will experience role conflict, for instance, if they are required to fire a coworker who also happens to be a personal friend (Beaton & Murphy: 2013).

Factors Affecting Major Conflict

Sociologists argue that the core of social, economic, and political relations is the battle over limited and unequally distributed sources of ownership, social status, and power (Setiadi 2013, p 361). The unequal distribution of social resources within a community is called inequality. Some parties struggle to gain it or to increase it for those who earn very little or no social assets because of this divisional discrepancy. The distribution of social assets is being attempted to be maintained and expanded upon by those who have acquired it. The status quo refers to the group that tends to preserve and grow it, and the status need refers to the group that tries to obtain it.

Basically, the causes of conflict are simply divided into two. The first is in terms of race, ethnicity, and religion, horizontal plurality refers to a culturally diverse community structure that is further compounded by differences in occupations and professions, including those of laborers, traders, employers, public servants, journalists, and intellectuals. Problems arise from horizontal-cultural pluralism since each of these cultural characteristics has unique attributes and each of those seeking to preserve those qualities. With this kind of organization, disagreements could spark a civil war if the guiding ideals aren't agreed upon. Second, several verticals are divided social structures according to power, wealth, and education. Vertical plurality can produce social unrest because a small percentage of people have wealth, a well-established education, significant power, and authority, whereas the majority have neither of these things. Social conflict is created from this rift in society (Setiadi, 2013: 361). Nonetheless, some sociologists list a variety of conflict-causing variables, including conflict between people, or individual and group. Conflicts between people have arisen as a result of differences in opinions and views. These kinds of confrontations involve establishment clashes and attempts by both sides to destroy their rivals. Here, destruction is not always understood to mean physical devastation; it can also mean the metaphorical eradication of opponents' unapproved ideas or beliefs. Conflicts between individuals and groups are not the only result of cultural variances and differences. A diverse range of personality traits and behavioral patterns will be observed among different ethnic groups. Ethnocentrism, or the belief that one's own group is superior to others, is another effect of cultural differences. Conflict between members of the same culture will arise if every group in social interactions has the same mindset.

Groups will fight and clash over the means and chance to pursue each other’s varied interests because of variations in interests. Situations of social transition frequently give rise to the disparities in instance, culture, hobbies, etc. that were previously described. As a result, social changes may also be indirectly attributed to a rise in social conflicts. The system of values that govern society will alter as a result of rapid social development. Additionally, there will be variations in the ways these communities were founded due to shifts in societal ideals.

There are several elements of novel: theme, plot, character, and setting. According to Keya (2018), a theme embodies the fundamental message or central idea conveyed in a literary work. It is through themes that stories gain coherence and depth, addressing various motifs that revolve around the central theme. Themes such as love, war, peace, isolation in contemporary society, interpersonal communication challenges, gender dynamics, and the contrast between nature and industry contribute to the thematic richness of literature. Plot refers to the structured sequence of events that unfold in a narrative, shaping the storyline and revealing character motivations and decisions (Abbot, 2021). Through its progression of events, the plot engages readers in the lives of characters and helps them comprehend the consequences of characters’ actions. Characterization is the element that imbues a narrative with humanity, eliciting empathy and emotional connection from readers (Abbot, 2021). Characters encompass the individuals portrayed within fiction, including protagonists, antagonists, and supporting figures. The setting of a literary work encompasses the specific location, time period, and contextual circumstances in which the narrative unfolds (Stanton, 2007: 35). It includes both tangible elements like geographical place and intangible factors such as historical era or societal conditions, all of which contribute to the overall atmosphere and context of the story.

METHODS

The research design is a crucial component of any study. The data for this investigation was derived from Charles Dickens’ novel, *Great Expectations*. There are two primary research methodologies: qualitative and quantitative. In this study, qualitative research methods were employed to facilitate a thorough collection and analysis of data. According to Elbardan and Kholeif (2017), qualitative research methods, also known as interpretative methods, are instrumental for interpreting field-collected data.

The author utilized both primary and secondary data sources. The novel *Great Expectations* served as the primary data source, while secondary data encompassed evidence gleaned from various papers and literary publications discussing the novel. Three specific data collection procedures were employed: (a) Repeatedly reading the novel to gain deeper comprehension; (b) Extracting sentences or paragraphs relevant to the analysis; and (c) Gathering and reviewing theses, journals, and articles that are pertinent and support the study’s objectives. The study employed a descriptive qualitative approach, particularly focusing on the structural characteristics of the main character in *Great Expectations*. Researchers utilized this descriptive method to examine and analyze how the novel portrays the societal tensions faced by the main character. Additionally, the study adopted Lewis A. Coser’s sociological framework to explore the treatment of societal conflicts within the narrative and how the main character navigates these challenges.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

In this study, the researchers analyzed data concerning various types of social conflict, identifies the factors contributing to significant conflicts, and examines their impact on the central characters in Charles Dickens’ novel.

Kinds of major Conflict

Conflict concerning social statuses

Extract1:

"I don't! said my sister. I'd never do it again! I know that. I may truly say I've never had this apron of mine off, since born you were. It's bad enough to be a black smith's wife (and him a Gargery) without being your mother." (page11)

Extract 1 exemplifies conflict related to social statuses, as Mrs. Joe delineates her roles and responsibilities within the household as a mother and wife. Her position significantly influences the lives of Mr. Joe and Pip. This observation aligns with Holder's (2018) assertion that roles such as motherhood and wifehood reflect internalized beliefs regarding responsibilities and status within familial contexts.

Extract2:

"Mr. Wopsle's great-aunt kept an evening school in the village; that is to say, she was a ridiculous old woman of limited means and unlimited infirmity"

Extract 2 illustrates Mr. Wopsle's status as an educated individual, evidenced by his ability to attend school, a privilege typically reserved for the wealthy during that period. Interestingly, Mr. Wopsle establishes a school for disadvantaged children. This scenario can be analyzed through the lens of realistic conflict theory (Agner, 2017), which explores conflicts of interest between characters stemming from competition over limited resources, such as opportunities for advancement, leading to heightened hostility and competitive interactions.

Conflict of Interest

Extract 8

"I live in a state of chronic uneasiness respecting my behavior to Joe." (p. 483)

The sentence of extract 8 is a conflict of interest, because the main character depends on someone to solve the problem. If someone responds, it indicates that there is a conflict of interest.

Extract10:

"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."(page 108)

Another conflict of interest is as above, someone tries to use the main character to forget his own problems. by always being beside the main character.

Conflict of Role

Extract 12

" If I could have kept him away by paying money, I certainly would have paid money." (page 313-314)

The sentence above depicts a role conflict characterized by internal turmoil. Previously a person of humble means, the main character has now encountered good fortune, leading to a dilemma. He is now unsure whether to align himself with the wealthy or continue identifying with his previous impoverished status.

Extract 13:

"For, the tenderness of Joe was so beautifully proportioned to my need, that I was like a child in his hands. He would sit and talk to me in the old confidence, and with the old simplicity, and in the old unassertive protecting way, so that I would half believe that all my life since the days of the old kitchen was one of the mental troubles of the fever that was gone. He did everything for me except the household work, for which he had engaged a very decent woman, after paying off the laundress on his first arrival."(page 660)

Another instance of role conflict arises where the main character finds himself torn between the expectations and needs of family and friends. This conflict is evident in his struggle to balance the demands and obligations placed on him by these different social circles.

The Ways the Main Characters Handle

Extract14

"As I had grown accustomed to my expectations, I had insensibly begun to notice their effect upon myself and those around me. Their influence on my own character, I disguised from my recognition as much as possible, but I knew very well that it was not all good." (page 483)

The sentence above explains that the conflict experienced can be resolved by itself because the conflict that comes actually comes from each of us.

Extract15:

"you and me was ever friends. And when you're well enough to go out for a ride -what larks!"

"O God bless him! O God bless this gentle Christian man! 'Joe's eyes were red when I next found him beside me; but, I was holding his hand, and we both felt happy."

The main character resolves the internal and external social conflicts within himself by achieving inner peace and reconciling with those around him.

The findings revealed various forms of social conflict in the novel, totaling 13 instances. Specifically, these conflicts include 7 instances of conflict concerning social status, 3 instances of conflict of interest, and 3 instances of conflict of role, all of which are pertinent to the research focus.

Conflict Concerning Social Statuses used in the novel Great Expectations

This type of social conflict underscores the significance of social status within society. This specific category of social conflict is evidenced by 7 instances throughout the novel (data 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, and 7). For instance, data 5 includes the description, "She was dressed in rich materials, satins, and lace and silks, all of white. her shoes were white." Meanwhile, data 6 states, "My name," he said, "is Jaggers, and I am a lawyer in London." These examples illustrate conflicts arising from social positions, as described by Kristina, where disputes arise due to the interactions between social roles. Therefore, these instances can be categorized under conflict concerning social status.

Conflict of Interest used in the novel Great Expectations

The second type of social conflict pertains to conflicts of interest within society, which are deeply rooted in human nature as social beings. These conflicts are observed in 3 instances within the novel Great Expectations (data 8, 9, and 10). For example, in data 8, the character states, "I live in a state of chronic uneasiness respecting my behavior to Joe." Additionally, in data 9, it is mentioned, "Who am I," cried Miss Havisham, striking her stick upon the floor and flashing into wrath so suddenly that Estella looked up at her in surprise, "who am I, for God's sake, that I should be kind?" These examples illustrate situations where characters' actions and behaviors are driven by personal interests and mutual benefits, reflecting conflicts of interest within the narrative.

Conflict of Role used in the novel Great Expectations

The final type of social conflict pertains to situations where individuals navigate multiple roles in their lives, a complexity evident in 3 instances within the novel (data 11, 12, and 13). For instance, in data 11, the dialogue reflects internal conflict and the struggle to reconcile personal knowledge with interpersonal dynamics: "Which I meant to say that there was not a question requiring an answer betwixt yourself and me, and which you know the answer to as well as I do. No. You know it to be No, Pip, and wherefore should I say it?" Data 13 portrays the nurturing role of Joe towards the main character, highlighting the impact of relationships on individual roles: "For the tenderness of Joe was so beautifully proportioned to my need, that I was like a child in his hands."

In addressing these conflicts, the main characters employ various strategies. The study

reveals that each character grapples with their internal conflicts and seeks personal resolution. For example, in data 14, the character reflects on the transformative effect of newfound expectations: "As I had grown accustomed to my expectations, I had insensibly begun to notice their effect upon myself and those around me." Data 16 illustrates how experiences of suffering have shaped the character's understanding and growth: "When suffering has been stronger than all other teaching, and has taught me to understand what your heart used to be...". Overall, the novel portrays how characters confront and reconcile social conflicts within themselves and with others, demonstrating the journey towards personal and relational peace.

CONCLUSIONS

In order to fully grasp the narrative, it is essential to analyze the social conflicts presented in each text, as these conflicts vary based on social status, conflicting interests, and the roles depicted in the narrative. This conclusion emerges from an examination of the principal conflicts within Charles Dickens' novel "Great Expectations." Furthermore, it underscores the importance of considering how individuals employ language, both in written texts and verbal communication.

The study's findings led the researchers to the following conclusions. There are various kinds of conflicts in the Great Expectation novel, including disputes inside families, between groups, and individual conflicts. Pip searches for his own identity in the midst of individual struggle. a disagreement in the home where Pip, Joe, and his elder sister frequently quarrel and treat Pip badly. A clash of social position whereby society is fascinated by Miss Havisham and is drawn to her in every way. Group strife arises when the public and many police personnel search for escaped prisoners.

The primary source of conflict in Charles Dickens' "Great Expectations" is internal struggle; the language and phrases are written in a way that makes sense to readers. Social status conflicts are disputes that we frequently see in the world around us. Typically, these disputes center on positions that someone holds that make us envious. A conflict of interest arises when someone prioritizes their own needs over those of others without taking into account or monitoring their environment. This leads to self-centeredness in the person. When a person holds multiple social statuses in society for the whole of their life, such as when children must have two jobs, they experience role conflict.

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