

MORAL EDUCATION AND SOCIAL REFORM IN GREAT EXPECTATIONS BY CHARLES DICKENS

Muqimova Ma'mura Xurshidbek qizi
Fergana State University 4th course
mamuraibrohimova26@gmail.com
+998916671885

<https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.20554648>

Abstract. This article examines moral education and social reform in *Great Expectations* by Charles Dickens. The study analyzes the moral development of the protagonist Pip and Dickens's criticism of Victorian social inequality, class division, and materialism. Through literary analysis, the article explores how Dickens uses characterization, symbolism, and narrative structure to promote ethical values such as honesty, loyalty, humility, and compassion. The research demonstrates that the novel reflects Dickens's humanitarian ideas and his desire for moral and social improvement in Victorian society.

Keywords: Moral education, social reform, Victorian society, class inequality, morality, Pip, Dickens, humanitarianism, social criticism, ethics.

Аннотация. В данной статье рассматриваются нравственное воспитание и социальные реформы в романе *Большие надежды* Чарльза Диккенса. Анализируется нравственное развитие главного героя Пипа, а также критика писателем социального неравенства, классового разделения и материализма викторианского общества. Особое внимание уделяется художественным средствам, с помощью которых Диккенс пропагандирует честность, гуманизм, скромность и сострадание. Исследование показывает, что роман отражает гуманистические идеи писателя и его стремление к нравственному и социальному обновлению общества.

Ключевые слова: Нравственное воспитание, социальная реформа, викторианское общество, классовое неравенство, мораль, Пип, Диккенс, гуманизм, социальная критика, этика.

Annotatsiya. Ushbu maqolada Charles Dickensning *Great Expectations* romanida axloqiy tarbiya va ijtimoiy islohot masalalari tahlil qilinadi. Asarda Pip obrazining ma'naviy rivojlanishi hamda Viktoriya davridagi tabaqalanish, tengsizlik va moddiy manfaatparastlik tanqidi o'rganiladi. Tadqiqot davomida yozuvchining halollik, kamtarlik, insonparvarlik va mehr-shafqat kabi qadriyatlarni targ'ib qilishi ko'rsatib beriladi. Maqola roman orqali Dickens jamiyatni axloqiy va ijtimoiy jihatdan isloh qilish g'oyasini ilgari surganini yoritadi.

Kalit so'zlar: Axloqiy tarbiya, ijtimoiy islohot, Viktoriya jamiyati, tabaqaviy tengsizlik, axloq, Pip, Dickens, insonparvarlik, ijtimoiy tanqid, etika.

Introduction

Great Expectations is one of the most important novels of Charles Dickens and a significant work of Victorian literature. Published in 1861, the novel reflects the social, moral, and economic realities of nineteenth-century England. Dickens was not only a novelist but also a social critic who used literature as a means of exposing injustice, poverty, and inequality in Victorian society. His works frequently focused on the lives of poor children, the weaknesses of the legal system, the cruelty of industrialization, and the moral corruption caused by wealth and ambition [1, p. 1342].

The novel follows the life of Pip, an orphan boy who dreams of becoming a gentleman and improving his social status. Through Pip's personal experiences, Dickens explores themes of moral education, personal growth, guilt, social mobility, and redemption. Pip's transformation from an innocent child into an ambitious young man demonstrates how materialism and class consciousness can negatively influence moral values. However, the novel also shows that true dignity comes not from wealth or social rank but from honesty, loyalty, kindness, and compassion [2, p. 18].

Victorian England was marked by strong class divisions and rapid industrial development. During this period, many writers criticized social injustice and called for reform. Dickens became one of the leading voices of social criticism because he represented the struggles of ordinary people and questioned the morality of social institutions. In *Great Expectations*, Dickens criticizes the obsession with social status and demonstrates the psychological and moral consequences of class inequality [3, p. 4].

The purpose of this article is to analyze how Dickens presents moral education and social reform in *Great Expectations*. The article examines Pip's moral development, Dickens's criticism of Victorian society, and the humanitarian values promoted in the novel. By studying the characters, themes, and social context of the work, the research highlights Dickens's role as a moral educator and advocate of social reform.

One of the central themes in *Great Expectations* is moral education. Dickens presents Pip's life as a process of learning moral lessons through suffering, mistakes, and self-realization. At the beginning of the novel, Pip is an innocent and humble child raised by his sister and Joe Gargery. Joe represents honesty, loyalty, and kindness, while Pip initially respects these qualities. However, after meeting Estella and Miss Havisham, Pip becomes ashamed of his low social status and begins to desire wealth and gentility. This change marks the beginning of his moral conflict.

Pip's desire to become a gentleman reflects the Victorian belief that social class determines personal value. Dickens criticizes this idea by showing how Pip's ambitions lead him to selfishness and ingratitude. Pip gradually distances himself from Joe, who truly cares for him, because he believes Joe is socially inferior. Through this transformation, Dickens demonstrates the negative influence of materialism and social ambition on human morality [4, p. 2].

The concept of moral education in the novel is closely connected with Pip's realization of his mistakes. After learning that his secret benefactor is the convict Magwitch rather than Miss Havisham, Pip experiences emotional shock and moral awakening. At this moment, Pip understands that his dreams of becoming a gentleman were based on false assumptions about wealth and class. He also realizes that true human worth is determined by moral character rather than social position [1, p. 1345].

Dickens uses several characters to represent moral values and social criticism. Joe Gargery symbolizes unconditional kindness, forgiveness, and honesty. Despite Pip's neglect and disrespect, Joe continues to support and forgive him. Joe's moral strength contrasts sharply with the selfishness and hypocrisy of upper-class society. Through Joe's character, Dickens suggests that moral goodness exists more often among ordinary working people than among wealthy individuals.

Magwitch is another important figure in the novel. Although society considers him a criminal, Dickens portrays him as a generous and compassionate person. Magwitch's life reflects the failures of the Victorian legal and social systems, which often punished poor people harshly while protecting the privileged classes. Dickens challenges social prejudice by presenting a convict as morally superior to many respectable gentlemen [5, p. 3].

Miss Havisham represents the destructive effects of emotional trauma and social isolation. After being betrayed on her wedding day, she dedicates her life to revenge and teaches Estella to break men’s hearts. Dickens uses her character to criticize emotional cruelty and the absence of moral education. Miss Havisham’s eventual regret demonstrates the importance of forgiveness and compassion in human life.

Another major aspect of the novel is Dickens’s criticism of class inequality and social injustice. Victorian society was deeply divided between the rich and the poor. In *Great Expectations*, social mobility appears attractive but morally dangerous. Pip believes that becoming wealthy will bring him happiness and respect, but instead it causes alienation and dissatisfaction. Dickens shows that the pursuit of status often destroys genuine human relationships [6, p. 1975].

The novel also criticizes the Victorian justice system. Criminals such as Magwitch suffer severe punishment and social rejection, while corrupt and immoral upper-class individuals maintain respectability. Dickens exposes the hypocrisy of a society that judges people by class rather than morality. This criticism reflects Dickens’s broader concern with social reform and humanitarian justice [7, p. 19].

Education is another important issue in the novel. Dickens believed that education should develop moral character rather than merely improve social status. Pip’s education in London gives him social manners but does not make him morally better. In contrast, Joe, who lacks formal education, possesses wisdom, honesty, and emotional intelligence. Through this contrast, Dickens emphasizes that true education must include ethical development [8, p. 2].

The novel’s ending reinforces Dickens’s moral message. Pip eventually recognizes his errors and seeks forgiveness from Joe and Biddy. His moral redemption suggests that self-awareness and compassion are more valuable than wealth or social prestige. Dickens ultimately presents moral growth as the most important form of personal success.

Furthermore, Dickens’s humanitarian vision is evident throughout the novel. He encourages readers to sympathize with the poor, the marginalized, and the oppressed. By portraying suffering realistically, Dickens aimed to inspire social awareness and reform. His criticism of Victorian society was not purely negative; he also believed in the possibility of moral improvement through empathy, kindness, and responsibility [1, p. 1347].

Thus, *Great Expectations* functions both as a literary masterpiece and as a moral and social critique. Dickens combines personal narrative with broader social commentary to reveal the ethical problems of Victorian England. The novel teaches readers that moral integrity, not social rank, determines true human value.

Conclusion

In conclusion, *Great Expectations* is a profound exploration of moral education and social reform in Victorian England. Through the experiences of Pip, Dickens examines the relationship between social ambition and moral development. The novel demonstrates how the desire for wealth and social status can lead individuals away from honesty, loyalty, and compassion. However, Dickens also shows that personal redemption is possible through self-awareness, forgiveness, and moral responsibility.

Dickens uses the novel to criticize many aspects of Victorian society, including class inequality, materialism, and the injustice of the legal system. Characters such as Joe Gargery and Magwitch challenge traditional assumptions about social class and morality. By portraying poor and marginalized individuals as morally superior to many wealthy characters, Dickens questions the values of a society based on status and privilege.

The article also highlights Dickens’s belief in the importance of humanitarian values. His representation of suffering encourages readers to develop sympathy and ethical awareness. Dickens believed that literature could influence society by promoting compassion and social responsibility. Therefore, *Great Expectations* serves not only as a story of personal growth but also as a call for moral and social reform.

Moreover, the novel remains relevant in modern society because issues such as inequality, social pressure, and moral identity continue to exist today. Dickens’s criticism of materialism and class prejudice still speaks to contemporary readers. His emphasis on kindness, humility, and human dignity reflects universal moral principles that remain important across different cultures and historical periods.

Overall, *Great Expectations* confirms Dickens’s role as both a literary artist and a social reformer. Through his realistic depiction of Victorian life and his deep understanding of human morality, Dickens created a novel that continues to educate readers about ethical values and social justice. The work remains an enduring example of how literature can contribute to moral education and inspire reflection on the need for a more humane and just society.

Adabiyotlar, References, Литературы:

1. Sabr, A. K., & Jubair, A. K. (2026). Charles Dickens’s “*Great Expectations*”: Analysis of didacticism and morality. *Wasit Journal for Human Sciences*, 22(2), 1328–1347.
2. Haque, F. (2018). Depiction of Victorian Era in the Novel *Great Expectations* by Charles Dickens. *International Linguistics Research*, 1(2), 17–22.
3. Xayitova, S. (2025). The depiction of class and social change in Charles Dickens’ novels *Oliver Twist* and *Great Expectations*. *Nordic International University Journal*.
4. Dupovac, I. (2022). Charles Dickens’ display of social space and class hierarchy in *Great Expectations*. *MAP Education and Humanities*, 2(2), 1–9.
5. Yang, H. (2025). Writing of personal hygiene in *Great Expectations* and its moral metaphor. *Frontiers in Humanities and Social Sciences*, 4(1), 1–7.
6. Taft, M. (2020). The work of love: *Great Expectations* and the English Bildungsroman. *Textual Practice*, 34(12), 1969–1988.
7. Janam, R. (2018). Social Issues in Charles Dickens’ *Great Expectations*. *The Creative Launcher*, 2(6), 17–21.
8. thecreativelauncher.com
9. Dickens, C. (2003). *Great Expectations*. London: Penguin Classics.