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Unit 5

Great Expectations
by Charles Dickens (1860–61)

Background notes
(for dictation for Fill in the Gaps dictation exercise)
The underlined words are those missing from the students' version.

The author
Charles Dickens (1812–1870) was the most famous novelist in the Victorian period (1837– 1901), when the British Empire was at its height, and Britain was the most prosperous industrial nation in the world. However, the wealth and high standard of living of the upper classes were dependent on the hard work of the lower classes. Men, women and children worked long hours in the coal mines, cotton mills and factories, and families lived in squalid houses, crammed together in the industrial areas, with no proper sanitation. Some of these conditions are described by Dickens in Oliver Twist and Hard Times, and the course of wealth is a symbolic theme in his later novels, Great Expectations and Our Mutual Friend. Great Expectations is considered to be Dickens' most technically perfect novel.

The novel
After an introductory page, the novel opens in a churchyard on the Kent marshes by the River Thames. Pip, an orphan who is looked after by his married sister, is standing looking at his family's tombstones, when he is suddenly approached by an escaped prisoner.

Answers:
Understanding and Appreciating

- 1 He had obviously been running across the country to escape capture, and had been outdoors for some time.
- 2 He wants to see if there is anything in Pip's pocket.
- 3 It shows the situation from the child's point of view.
- 4 He is so hungry that he could almost eat Pip.
- 5 He thinks Pip's mother is still alive, and just behind them.
- 6 He realises that a blacksmith would be able to get the 'great iron' off his leg.
- 7 It allowed him to look down directly into Pip's eyes, and therefore made his words more threatening and frightening.
- 8 Pip speaks in a very polite manner in order not to offend the prisoner and cause him to keep his promise of cutting his throat.

Answers: Summary
The effect of being alone in a churchyard, looking onto lonely marshes, is emphasised by the sudden appearance of the prisoner. He looks wild and desperate, due to his time on the run; his clothes are wet, muddy and torn, and his teeth chatter from the cold. He speaks to Pip in an abrupt, threatening manner, and treats him very roughly, alternately turning him upside down and tilting him backwards. (71 words)

Answers:
Understanding and Appreciating
l g 2 h 3 a 4 e 5 f 6 d 7 b 8 c

Answers: Idioms
l d 2 g 3 a 4 f 5 b 6 h 7 e 8 c

Suggestions for role-play (pairwork)
You are a mother and father who need a regular babysitter two evenings a week to look after your children, aged two and five. What qualities would you look for in a babysitter, and how old should he/she be? Decide with your partner what kind of person would be suitable.

Composition
'Childhood is the happiest period of your life.'
Discuss. (About 350 words.)

Unit 6

Silas Marner by George Eliot (1861)

Background notes
(for dictation for Fill in the Gaps dictation exercise)
The underlined words are those missing from the students' version.

The author
George Eliot (1819–1880) was the pen-name of Mary Ann Evans, which she used in order that her work should be taken seriously. She spent her early years in the countryside in Warwickshire, and this gave her the knowledge of the everyday life of ordinary people, which plays a central part in her novels. In Silas Marner, in particular, she paints a vivid picture of what village life was like at the start of the nineteenth century (when this story takes place).

The novel
Silas Marner was forced to leave his circle of friends in Lantern Yard (in a northern town) when he was falsely accused of stealing money. He settled down in the village of Raveloe as a weaver, but his only interest was in hoarding the gold coins he earned. His world was shattered one night when they were stolen. Some time later, while Silas is having a kind of fit in which he loses consciousness, a small baby crawls into his cottage and lies down by the fire. (Her mother, Molly, a working-class woman, has just died in the snow outside, on her way to expose the fact that she is secretly married to the local squire's eldest son, Godfrey Cass.)

Answers: Understanding and Appreciating

- 1 It was because he had been told that sitting up to see the New Year in might bring his money back.
- 2 It made him feel even sadder and more alone.
- 3 He hadn't realised that he had been unconscious for a while.
- 4 He thought 'the gold' was his money.
- 5 The words are 'soft, warm curls'.
- 6 He wanted to check that it wasn't a dream.
- 7 The words are 'old quiverings of tenderness'.
- 8 He can't comprehend that there may be a natural cause to explain the arrival of the child.

Answers: Summary
The little girl reminds Silas of his sister, both in her physical shape and in the rather old and dirty clothes she is wearing. He used to carry his sister about in his arms until she died as a young child. Thinking of her revived the normal emotion of tenderness, which he had stifled in Raveloe, and also the feelings of respect and amazement that God was controlling his destiny. (70 words)

Answers: Vocabulary
(These answers are only examples)
a It was really senseless being rude to the boss; now you'll lose your job. (= a stupid action)
b That was sensible of you to do so much preparation for the exam: now you've got a grade A pass. (= a wise action)
c Be careful what you say; Mary is so sensitive she'll burst into tears if she thinks you're criticising her.
d I've got some sensational news! I've just heard that Prince Edward is getting married to a chorus girl!
e He couldn't explain why, but some kind of sixth sense warned him not to sail on the Titanic in 1912.
f Elizabeth was going to hitch-hike round the world by herself, but she finally came to her senses when her father explained the dangers involved.

Idioms
l e 2 f 3 b 4 c 5 a 6 d

Suggestions for role-play (pairwork)
Student A: You are a stockbroker who has lost a great deal of money in a recent financial crash. Try to break the news to your husband/wife.
Student B: You are the stockbroker's husband/wife. You have got used to your prosperous way of life. React to your husband's/wife's news, and ask about the future.

Composition
'The desire for money is the strongest factor that motivates human behaviour.' Discuss. (About 350 words)

poisons her husband’s mind against his relative? Yet that is now the character given to me. Will you not come and drag him out of my hands?’

Mrs Yeobright gave back heat for heat.

70 ‘Don’t rage at me, madam! It ill becomes your beauty, and I am not worth the injury you may do it on my account, I assure you. I am only a poor old woman who has lost a son.’

Glossary

lineage (line 39): ancestry, the families from which he is descended

heath (line 42): an area of flat land, sometimes covered with small plants but with very few trees



Unit 10

ACHIEVEMENT

Sons and Lovers
by D H Lawrence (1913)



Match the famous people above with the correct achievement below.

- 1

Hippocrates (460–370 BC)
- 2

Ferdinand de Lesseps (1805–1894)
- 3

Leo Tolstoy (1828–1910)
- 4

Sigmund Freud (1856–1939)
- 5

Robert Baden Powell (1857–1941)
- a

Austrian psychiatrist, founder of psychoanalysis
- b

English general, founder of the Boy Scouts
- c

Greek physician, considered to be 'the father of medicine'
- d

Russian novelist, author of *War and Peace*
- e

French engineer, builder of the Suez Canal

Discussion

Which of these achievements would you regard as the greatest, and why?

What do you regard as your greatest achievement when you were at school?

How did your parents react?

The extract

One morning the postman came just as he was washing in the scullery. Suddenly he heard a wild noise from his mother. Rushing into the kitchen, he found her standing on the hearthrug wildly waving a letter and crying 'Hurrah!' as if she had gone mad. He was shocked and frightened.

5 'Why, mother!' he exclaimed.

She flew to him, flung her arms round him for a moment, then waved the letter crying:

'Hurrah, my boy! I knew we should do it!'

10 He was afraid of her – the small, severe woman with greying hair suddenly bursting out in such frenzy. The postman came running back, afraid something had happened. They saw his tipped cap over the short curtain. Mrs Morel rushed to the door.

'His picture's got first prize, Fred,' she cried, 'and is sold for twenty guineas.'

15

'My word, that's something like!' said the young postman, whom they had known all his life.

'And Major Moreton has bought it!' she cried.

'It looks like meanin' something, that does, Mrs Morel,' said the postman, his blue eyes bright. He was glad to have brought such a lucky letter. Mrs Morel went indoors and sat down, trembling. Paul was afraid lest she might have misread the letter, and might be disappointed afterall. He scrutinized it once, twice. Yes, he became convinced it was true. Then he sat down, his heart beating with joy.

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