**Lesson 1: Introducing Great Expectations**

**Lesson Objective:** This lesson aims to introduce *Great Expectations* to the students and consider the central themes and motifs used in the text. By the end of the lesson the students should:

1. Understand the context of *Great Expectations* and the effect it has on the book
2. Be able to talk about the genre of ‘bildungsroman’ and what that genre entails
3. Be able to critically examine the ways in which Dickens plays on unconscious biases in the novel, considering how he shapes and contradicts our views and preconceptions of the characters in the story

**Plan:**

* Begin the class with a general discussion of the book. What did the students enjoy about the book? What did they not enjoy? What was interesting about the way the book was written? Ask the students to note down three things they liked and three things they did not and discuss this as a class
* Discuss the context of *Great Expectations.* Ask the class to evaluate the impact of the Industrial Revolution of the late 18th/ early 19th century on the novel. Introduce ideas about social class in Victorian England, particularly focusing on the rise of the middle classes, inequality and the growth of capitalism in this period.
* Introduce some information about Charles Dickens. Knowing all this, why do they think he might have chosen to write a story like *Great Expectations?* What do they think he might be trying to say about Victorian society?
* Now introduce the genre of ‘bildungsroman’. Can the class name any other novels or films that fit within this genre? Why might Dickens have chosen this genre for his novel? How does this fit in with the theme of class mobility and social status?
* Complete the exercise on social class, where students have to make assumptions about the class of a particular character based on background information. Make sure to point out that we all have unconscious bias, using a riddle on gender bias to illustrate this. Think about how Dickens challenges that in the novel; how does he use our own unconscious (or conscious) biases against us in order to build tension? Can the class identify any particular characters who surprise us?
* Why do the class think the novel is called *Great Expectations?* What might the phrase ‘great expectations’ refer to in the novel? Ask the students to come up with three alternative titles that Dickens could have named this book.

**Homework:** Choose between question A, question B and question C, remembering to use examples in the text and the context of the novel to back up your answers.

Question A: **In what ways does *Great Expectations* challenge our prejudices about people?**

Question B: Which character challenges our preconceptions and prejudices about them the most throughout the novel?

Question C: What is the moral of the story in *Great Expectations?*

**Lesson 2: Exploring Themes and Narrative**

**Lesson Objective:** This lesson aims to enable to students to think more broadly about the way in which *Great Expectations* is written. By the end of the lesson the students should:

1. Be able to think thematically, explaining the way in which themes are explored and developed in *Great Expectations* and debating the role of the themes within the novel, using P.E.E. to write a mini essay paragraph based on this analysis
2. Be able to confidently identify the effect of narrative voice in the novel
3. Be able to engage with the way Dickens uses foreshadowing in the novel, thinking about how this literary technique fits with the overall tone and perspective of the book

**Plan:**

* **Start the lesson by compiling a list as a class of all the themes they can find in *Great Expectations.* Each student should select the three themes they think are the most important in the novel and share their ideas**
* **Each student should pick one theme (i.e. social class, crime, justice, love etc.) and find two instances where that theme is explored in the book**
* **Ask each student to come up with a one-line answer to the question ‘how does Dickens present the theme of […] in *Great Expectations?’* in relation to their chosen theme, using Point, Evidence, Explain to write a mini essay paragraph on it**
* **Put the quote “***I often wondered how I conceived the old idea of his ineptitude, until I was one day enlightened by the reflection, that perhaps the ineptitude had never been in him at all, but had been in me*” on the board. Analyse this quote as a class. How does this quote illustrate the theme of reflection?
* **Ask the class to consider the narrative voice in *Great Expectations.* What do we mean by narrative voice? Whose voice is the story told through? Is it written in the past or present tense? Is it written in first or third person? What effect does that have on the tone of the novel? How does this relate to the quote they just analysed?**
* **Discuss the literary technique of foreshadowing. As a class, identify key points in the novel where foreshadowing is used (i.e. the pathetic fallacy of the mist on the moors, Miss Havisham’s wedding dress etc.)**
* **As a finishing activity, introduce a debate. The students should have five minutes to prepare their response. The debate should be centred around the question ‘is Pip destined to suffer or does he create his own unhappiness?’. Separate the students in half, with one half arguing for and one half arguing against. Facilitate and engage with this debate, ensuring students respond to each other’s points and are evidencing their ideas.**

**Homework:** Choose between question A, question B and question C, remembering to use examples in the text and the context of the novel to back up your answers.

Question A: **Is Pip ultimately a success or a failure? Why?**

Question B: How might *Great Expectations* be different if it was written in the present tense?

Question C: Why do you think Dickens chose to tell this story from Pip’s perspective?

**Lesson 3: Close Textual Analysis**

**Lesson Objective:** This lesson will aim to make students more comfortable with close textual analysis and how to incorporate it into their essays. By the end of the lesson the students should:

1. Be able to describe the effect of Dickens’ style, language and structure
2. Be able to use close textual analysis when analysing excerpts from *Great Expectations,* linking their analysis to wider themes within the book
3. Be able to make inferences about characters based on excerpts from the text, thinking about the way Dickens uses symbolism in his descriptions

**Plan:**

* Open the lesson with a discussion on the concept of inference. Are the class familiar with this term? Why is it an important concept? What does it entail?
* Open a conversation about the central characters of *Great Expectations.* The students should compile a list of three adjectives to describe each character/. How have they come to these conclusions? What evidence can they offer to support these opinions?
* Using the text, ask the class to make inferences about each central character. Consider the initial descriptions we have of each central character. Pick out the most powerful words and phrases that cut to the heart of how the character is constructed. How does Dickens use imagery and description to paint the scene?
* Open a discussion on how to analyse Dickens’ use of description and scenery. How important are these factors in his style of writing?
* Introduce the concept of parallelism in *Great Expectations.* How is this developed through the characters? Why might Dickens have used this technique? How does this connect to the themes of good and evil that he challenges within the novel? Consider the ways in which Dickens uses characters as symbols.
* Each student should pick a key character within the text. How would this character describe Pip upon first meeting him? How could they convey this through their language, literary techniques and word choice? They should spend five minutes writing a short description of Pip from this character’s perspective, considering the context of their first meeting and what we know about the relationship Pip develops with that character.
* As a finishing ending, discuss the alternative ending to *Great Expectations.* Which do they prefer? Why? Each student should share their thoughts with the class.

**Homework:** Choose between question A, question B and question C, remembering to use examples in the text and the context of the novel to back up your answers.

Question A: How might Mrs Joe tell the story of her life and Pip’s and how would her story be different from the original novel?

Question B: In what ways is Herbert Pocket the parallel of Pip?

Question C: What does Miss Havisham symbolise in the novel?

**Lesson 4: Mock Exam Paper**

**Lesson Objective:** This lesson will consolidate the class’s knowledge of *Great Expectations,* through studying the Aldenham School entrance exam questions. By the end of the lesson the students should:

1. Understand the format in which literary analysis arises in entrance exam papers
2. Be able to self-evaluate their own work, using the mark scheme for the exam papers to evaluate what went well and what they could improve on in their literary analysis
3. Be able to analyse a contemporary book review of *Great Expectations* and draw final conclusions on the purpose of the book from it

**Plan:**

* Begin the lesson by introducing the exam paper, reading through the key extract as a class.
* The students should go through and underline any powerful, telling or revealing words and phrases from the text. Each student should then pick three important words or phrases and write a sentence on the literary effect of each of these
* Now consider any literary techniques within the extract, or any structural features. Go over these as a class, using P.E.E. to analyse the particularly powerful lines in the text
* What questions do they think the examiner might ask about this extract? They should write down three questions that they would ask if they had written this exam.
* Now introduce the questions on the exam paper. Go through each comprehension question one by one, thinking carefully about the places where the examiner asks for inferences to be made or the effect of language to be analysed
* Go through some model examples of answers. Ask the students to evaluate which is the best answer from a selection ranging from low to high ability.
* Now the students should self-evaluate their work, writing two what went wells and two even better ifs, referring to the mark scheme from the exam
* Discuss the layout of the exam, explaining the directed writing section and how this relates to the comprehension and language analysis section of the exam
* Introduce the contemporary book review of *Great Expectations* from 1861*.* How do the author’s opinions on the book differ from our own opinions today? Do the students agree or disagree with the author’s review? Why, or why not?
* Finish the class with a discussion tying up all our thoughts on the novel. Ask the class “is it important to still read *Great Expectations* today? Can we learn anything from this novel that we can apply to our lives today?”.

**Homework:** Complete Question B (2) on the Aldenham exam paper under timed conditions of thirty minutes, making sure to follow the instructions on the exam paper carefully. The prompt is *“Imagine you are Pip. Write a diary entry which covers the events of this day.”* Remember to use your inference skills and knowledge of the style and language used by Dickens in the original.