

## **Great Expectations Reading Journal and Reflection Essay**

Our ongoing project throughout the semester will be reading Charles Dickens's *Great Expectations* in serial form, as it was originally published in Dickens's own periodical *All the Year Round*. We will use the online resource "Reading Like a Victorian" (<https://victorianserialnovels.org>), which provides links to a digitized edition of the original text and includes an interactive timeline for other major works published at the time. This means we will be reading *Great Expectations* in short bursts, fits and starts, alongside other works, and with distractions – much as the Victorians would have read it in 1860-1. This is an entirely different – and often quite strange – way of reading – one that we will explore and discuss together. For this exercise, it is ok if you fall behind, adjust your reading schedule, get distracted, fall asleep, read two installments at once, or skim a few paragraphs. (The Victorians likely did the same!) The point of this exercise is to think meta-critically about how we read now – and how the Victorians would have read in 1860-1.

To help guide and focus your reading, you will complete a two-part assignment consisting of a reading journal and a reflection essay.

### **Part I: Reading Journal**

As you read *Great Expectations*, I will ask you to **keep a reading journal each time you read an installment**. For each installment, you will write **1-2 paragraphs** that do the following:

- 1) Reflect on something going on in your own life/the world (e.g. the weather, campus events, other classes, people in your life)
- 2) Ponder how this might relate to *Great Expectations* (however loosely), or vice-versa. Did Pip remind you of someone in your life? Did someone say something that reminded you of one of Joe's comments to Pip? Does the gloomy fall weather make you think of the marshes in the novel's opening? Did reading this serially remind you of listening to a true crime podcast?
- 3) Think about your reading process. Did you get bored? Check your phone? Check Instagram? What do you think invited this distraction/boredom? Or, were you completely engrossed? If so, what about the plot/narrative made you so?

The purpose of this assignment is to think about how a Victorian novel might resonate with your own life and how the experience of reading it shapes and is shaped by your own experiences. It will also invite you to ponder the ways you read and meditate on the specific (and likely unfamiliar) process of serial reading. A lot of literary analysis is somewhat impersonal; this exercise is a chance to make your academic work more personally relevant (and, hopefully, powerful).

I understand that you might not have time to complete a journal entry each week. You must complete **at least five** journal entries so that you have enough material for your essay (see below).

You may keep this journal electronically or on paper – whatever best helps you reflect.

**Part II: Reading Journal Reflection Essay**

For this assignment, you will **write a brief essay (2-3 pages)** reflecting on the following question:

*How did reading *Great Expectations* in serial form affect your experience of the novel?*

This essay is a little different than traditional works of literary analysis, as it invites you to reflect on your own personal experiences as you read the novel. The essay will still, however, have traditional components of an academic essay (a “claim” and “evidence”). Your claim will be a clear argument about how serial reading affected your encounter with *Great Expectations*; your evidence will be your own journal entries. Even though this is a personal reflection, you must aim to be as specific as possible.

**Details**

-You will hand in your journal and essay at the same time, on **Friday, 11/15**. However, I will ask to see your journals at several points throughout the semester, so be sure not to fall *more than one week behind*.

-This assignment is worth **75 total points**:

-Journal entries (25 points): 5 points for each of the 5 essays, graded for completion and answers to each of the above prompts (#1-3)

-Reflection essay (50 points):

-Claim (20 points): do you make a clear argument that answers the question above?

-Evidence (20 points): do you incorporate specific evidence from your reading journals that helps you to make your claim?

-Organization, style, and mechanics (10 points): does your essay follow a logical flow? Is your writing clear and direct, with few errors?

-Though the journal may be in any format you wish, please submit your **reflection essay** as an **MS Word Doc (.docx)**. Siena has a campus agreement with Microsoft for the Office Suite, which makes Office 365 available to our community for no cost.

Please see the following site to download Microsoft Office:

<https://itsfaq.siena.edu/display/XenFAQ/Microsoft+Office>