

GRADED READERS

Great Expectations

CHARLES DICKENS

Teacher's Book



LEVEL 4

SUGGESTED PRE-READING ACTIVITIES

It is advisable to get the students interested in the story and arouse their curiosity about the characters, places and themes involved before they actually start reading it. For this purpose, you should supply them with some of the information given below about Charles Dickens, the industrial revolution, convicts, and the social class distinction that existed at that time.

Background Information on Great Expectations

Great Expectations was first published in 1861. It first appeared in weekly parts in a periodical called 'All the year Round.' It ran from December 1860 until June 1861.

The Industrial Revolution and Convicts

The industrial revolution began in Britain during the 18th century and subsequently initiated a period of massive change. The industrial revolution altered the way in which people worked and lived. An overwhelming amount of people moved from the countryside to the cities in search of employment. Towns grew rapidly and country areas were abandoned. The growth of towns raised many serious problems: inadequate, overcrowded housing, health and unemployment were just a few. Crime, both petty and serious, increased rapidly.

This posed a problem for the authorities as the existing jails became overcrowded. A short term solution was to convert old ships and hulks to prisons, however, these too, became overcrowded.

In Britain at that time laws were so severe that the penalty for stealing goods or food could be death. Many judges, however, instead of

ordering that a convicted person be hanged, sentenced him or her to transportation to a penal colony.

Convicts that were sent to Australia were a mixture of hardened criminals as well as victims of the industrial revolution.

Social Class Distinctions

At the time when Great Expectations was set there was a clear distinction between classes. The distinction was evident not only in wealth and forms of dress, but in speech also. For example, 'Knaves' and 'Jacks'.

Estella, who was raised in higher social circumstances than Pip, would use the term, 'knaves'. Pip, on the other hand, would use the more 'common' term 'Jacks'.

It is also advisable to spend one lesson doing some pre-reading activities. You can select from the ideas presented below the ones that suit you best.

- Write the title of the story on the board. Ask the students some general questions about the title and encourage them to make hypotheses about it, e.g.
 - What sort of expectations could a person have?
 - Which of these expectations could be described as 'great'?
- Have the students look at the cover of the Reader and ask them some general questions about it, e.g.
 - Who do you think the people on the cover are?
 - Where are they?
 - What is the relationship between them?
 - What are they doing?

- Photocopy some of the illustrations in the Reader and remove the text and page numbers. Ask the students to describe them, guess what is happening and put them in the correct order. You can ask the students questions about each picture similar to the ones presented in the previous activity in order to help them.

It would be more effective to have students do these activities in pairs or small groups. It is important to remember that at this stage you should not confirm or reject any of the students' hypotheses nor reveal what actually happens in the story.

SUGGESTED LESSON PLAN

If you decide to deal with one chapter in each lesson, you can follow the procedure described below. In this case, it is estimated that you will need about ninety minutes for each lesson. If classroom time is scarce, you can have students do most of the reading and activities at home.

Before reading each chapter

- 1 At the beginning of each lesson revise the previous chapter and check the exercises which you have assigned for homework, except for the prediction exercise. If you feel that certain points have not been sufficiently covered, ask the students additional questions. Then, ask them to give you a summary of the chapter and/or act it out.
- 2 Ask the students to guess what will happen in the chapter they are about to read. Select from the ideas presented below the ones that suit you best.
 - Have the students give you their answers to the questions in the prediction exercise in the previous chapter.

- Ask the students to look at the illustrations of the chapter they are going to read and describe them. You may also ask them questions in order to help them, e.g.
 - Who are the people in this picture?
 - Where are they?
 - What are they doing?
 Afterwards, they should be encouraged to guess what will happen in the chapter.
- Give the students a few key words found in the chapter and the names of the characters that appear in it and ask them to predict what will happen.

Remember that all the students' answers and predictions should be accepted at this stage and make sure you don't reveal what actually happens in the chapter.

- 3 Ask the students to have their books closed and listen carefully to the cassette. Play the corresponding chapter on the cassette. Then ask the students a few general questions about the chapter that they have just listened to, e.g.
 - Which characters appear in this chapter?
 - Where are they?
 - What are they talking about?

While reading each chapter

- Ask the students to open their books. Play the cassette again and ask them to read silently as they listen to it. Stop the tape whenever you feel it is necessary and ask the students some questions to make sure that they have understood the main points. Explain new vocabulary and clarify any points which they have not understood.