

Great Expectations Dramaturg's Note

In Victorian society, when a life of poverty was seen as the fault of those in it, the literary norm was to depict those *out* of it: the elite. Imagine a time when it was radical to see children and the poor portrayed with dignity and humanity. Dickens changes this status quo in *Great Expectations* by depicting characters who were destined for more than their abject poverty. These were the blacksmiths, the orphans, the laborers, and all of those who slipped through the margins with their own hopes, dreams, and “graceful fancies.” Dickens was one of a few Victorian authors who tried to change his nation’s perspective on the poor.

Even though we regard *Great Expectations* with the reverence deserved of a literary classic, that alone does not merit its telling. Many of us might have heard the title *Great Expectations* and thought, “I know I should have read it, but I haven’t.” It’s a classic because its Victorian audience found entertainment, humor, and humanity in its story, but we aren’t Victorians. Our job was to find a common ground between today’s audience and the first one, so we adapted to highlight the faults we share and celebrate our collective humanity.

In physics, the ‘observer effect’ is the disturbance of an observed system by the mere act of observation. We’re doing just that. By observing and then translating this story through our minds and bodies, we filter it through our own perspectives on class, race, and gender. Our hope is to move past the stigma that surrounds this literary classic and present the story of Pip and his great expectations in a way that allows us to experience and enjoy it as much as those who lived in Dickens’s day did. With a few twists, of course.