

Allusions in *Great Expectations*

Allusion	Details about the allusion:	How does this allusion connect to <i>Great Expectations</i> ? What is the significance to Pip's story/ bildungsroman/JILES?
Hercules	Hercules was a Roman hero who was later turned into a god. His Greek equivalent is Heracles. He is famous for his great strength and his adventures, which included his Twelve Labours – impossible tasks which were set for him as a punishment.	Pip calls Joe 'a sort of Hercules in strength, and also in weakness'. Obviously, the main connection here is physical size and strength, but what is Joe's weakness? Hercules is not supposed to be particularly unintelligent, so it can't be that. Hercules's main weakness was misfortune. He was cursed from birth by the goddess Hera, who hated Hercules because he was the son of her husband, Zeus, by another woman. For this, he was made to suffer throughout his life. In the end though, the gods take pity on him for his great suffering and reward him with a place on Mount Olympus and the status of a god. Perhaps this foreshadows Joe's eventual happy ending with Biddy after the suffering of his first marriage?
The Garden of Eden	In the Book of Genesis in the Bible, Adam and Eve live a blissful life of innocence in the Garden of Eden until they are tempted to eat an apple from the Tree of Knowledge, against the orders of God. As a punishment, they are expelled from Eden and forced to suffer and struggle and work to survive.	Dickens makes an allusion to the Garden of Eden at the end of Part 1 when Pip says 'the world lay spread before me.' This echoes a similar phrase which is used in the Bible at the point at which Adam and Eve are expelled from Eden. This allusion suggests that Pip is leaving his own Eden, the innocent world of his childhood, and that his fate is to suffer and struggle in a world of sin too. In the next chapter, when Pip arrives in London, it soon becomes clear that London is 'ugly, crooked, narrow and dirty' and 'decidedly overrated.'
Hamlet	<i>Hamlet</i> is Shakespeare's play about a prince of Denmark whose father has died and whose mother has immediately married his uncle. The ghost of his father reveals that his uncle murdered him and urges Hamlet to avenge his death, but Hamlet struggles to get the deed done.	Dickens makes the <i>Hamlet</i> connection when Pip sees Wopsle performing in the play at the theatre. Like Hamlet, Pip is haunted and pressured by powerful figures (Mrs Joe, Miss Havisham, Magwitch) whose expectations are forced upon him. He too is a pawn in a larger game. Like Hamlet, Pip is a thinker, not a do-er. He drifts through his life, meaning to get things done, but failing at the key moment. By procrastinating and letting his problems build up, he loses control of the situation; in Hamlet, this leads to chaos and tragedy, but Dickens gives his protagonist a chance to learn from his mistakes.
George Barnwell	The London Merchant (Or The History Of George Barnwell) is playwright George Lillo's most famous work and was first performed in 1731. It is a tragedy that follows the downfall of a young apprentice due to his association with a prostitute.	George Barnwell is mentioned in Chapter 15 of <i>Great Expectations</i> , when Pip encounters Wopsle, who has just bought a copy of the play. They then go over to Pumblechook's to read it out. Dickens satirises their moralising when they associate Pip with Barnwell, but Pip too sees some connections. Both Pip and George are naive and innocent and well intentioned, but are led astray by someone who wants to wreak revenge on men. They both rob and betray their masters and loved ones. Both feel unworthy and are consumed by guilt but are ultimately forgiven.
Frankenstein	<i>Frankenstein</i> is Mary Shelley's famous novel about a scientist who, in trying to push the boundaries of science, creates a monster. Of course, in the novel, we are left wondering who is the real monster, the creature or the creator who rejects and abandons him.	This is a brief allusion in chapter 40 of the novel, after the return of Magwitch: <i>'The imaginary student pursued by the misshapen creature he had impiously made, was not more wretched than I, pursued by the creature who had made me, and recoiling from him with a stronger repulsion, the more he admired me and the fonder he was of me.'</i> Pip is like both Frankenstein and the monster; Frankenstein because he feels like he is being pursued by a nightmare from his past, and the monster because his identity has been created for him. Perhaps Dickens is highlighting the monstrosity of Pip's behaviour in acting like the victim while failing to recognise the humanity of the so-called monster.

Cain and Abel	The sons of Adam and Eve, Cain and Abel were brothers in the Book of Genesis. Cain murders Abel in a fit of rage and jealousy and is banished by God, who put a mark on his head. Cain is forced to wander rather than remain in his homeland.	The first mention of Cain is in the initial description of Orlick. Like Cain, Orlick is a wanderer who slouches in and out. He is also jealous of Pip, who he thinks is unfairly favoured, just as Cain believes his brother was by God. Magwitch's name is Abel. In the Bible, Abel was a shepherd, just like Magwitch. Abel and Magwitch are both victims and are betrayed, both ultimately dying because of the actions of someone else. It is no accident that Compeyson's name begins with a C.
The Odyssey	<i>The Odyssey</i> is one of the two great ancient Greek epics of Homer. In it, Odysseus attempts to get back home from the Trojan War (which lasted 10 years), but the gods are against him and his journey lasts another 10 years. We use the word 'odyssey' to describe any long and arduous circular journey.	While staying at the Blue Boar in Part 2, Pip reads gossip in the newspaper describing him as a 'young Telemachus'. Telemachus was the young son of Odysseus who was guided during his father's absence by Athena, disguised as an old friend of his father's called Mentor. Pumblechook is claiming to be Pip's mentor. If Pip is Telemachus, then Magwitch is Odysseus himself, travelling back after years away from home. Pip's journey in the book is also a bit of an odyssey; he eventually makes an emotional return to where he started. The 1994 BBC adaptation (Welsh Pip) has even more allusions to The Odyssey than the book, including Pip reading about the reunion of Odysseus and his father as Magwitch dies.
The Pharisee and the Tax Collector	In this parable, a Pharisee and a tax collector went to the temple to pray. The Pharisee prayed about how good he was, but the tax collector asked for God's mercy as he was a sinner. Jesus said that it was the tax collector who went home justified before God. He concluded: "Everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted." (Exalts means praised or glorified or held up to be respected and revered).	Perhaps this is the most important allusion in the book, and it comes after Magwitch's death. Dickens seems to be concluding that people who think they are above sin, especially gentlemen, (and judges) are going to be judged harshly by God when the time comes. However, Magwitch, who knows he's a sinner, will go to heaven and be favoured by God because he's humble. The book is really about Pip's process of learning humility. The characters Dickens respects all have this quality of humility, especially Herbert, Biddy and Joe. Pip says, after Magwitch's death, 'O Lord be merciful to him, a sinner', whereas the tax collector begs mercy for himself. Does Pip recognise that he too is a sinner and needs to be humble?
The Prodigal Son	In this parable of the Bible, a younger son asks for his inheritance from his father, who grants his son's request. This son, however, is prodigal (i.e., wasteful and extravagant), squandering his fortune and eventually becoming penniless. As a consequence, he now must return home empty-handed and beg his father to accept him back as a servant. To the son's surprise, he is not scorned by his father but is welcomed back with celebration and a welcoming party. Envious, the older son refuses to participate in the festivities. The father tells the older son: "you are ever with me, and all that I have is yours, but thy younger brother was lost and now he is found."	The story of the prodigal son is alluded to (at least) twice, both times in conversations involving the pompous, moralising Pumblechook. Wopsle gives Pip a lecture on greed (while stuffing his face with Christmas dinner) and later Pumblechook indirectly mentions this story after the loss of Pip's fortunes. Pip is a prodigal son in many ways. He leaves home, determined to do things his own way. He wastes his money and opportunities and generally degrades himself. He is forgiven by the father-figure who he abandoned and let down. They both return home humbled and guilty, having learnt their lesson. Again, Dickens' message seems to be about humility, forgiveness and acceptance.