

*Comment on and analyse how Dickens uses setting to create meaning.*

To create meaning throughout the chapter Dickens uses the setting to give meaning to the passage, some of the meaning is directly dependant on the setting whilst some of the meaning is emphasised by the setting.

The wider setting of marshes give the reader a broader context to the whole chapter. The description of the marsh as a “dark flat wilderness” which immediately sets the scene as very bleak and depressed. This also could be seen as an allegory for Pip's life as it is bleak and empty like his life is depressed and he is alone as his parents and most of his siblings are dead. The marsh also creates meaning as it has implicit connotations of bleak evil as marshes tend to have very stunted growth and so offer very little shelter. This idea on unprotected stunted growth can also be seen to reflect the condition of Pip as he is “undersized for [his] years” this effectively creates meaning as the setting is subtly reinforcing all the negative description in the chapter. The barren conditions of the marsh also show how Pip feels neglected by life, to such an extent that he describes life as a “universal struggle”. This bleak nihilistic outlook of life is rather apt considering that if he looks out over the marsh all he sees is an a marsh filled with nothing. This expanse of marsh is only broken up by dykes and beyond it is a “low leaden line” of the river, which gives a sense of utter disconnect as this small world is separated from the rest of the world. The precise words used also have a depressing connotations as the river is a “leaden line” which very subtly creates the image of Pip's world as the inside of a lead lined coffin. Then past the river is “the distant savage lair” of the sea which makes the marshes have a supernatural feel and makes the reader think what beings roam the expanses of the mire. This is especially effective at creating a supernatural idea as the word “lair” is normally used to describe the home of some malevolent monstrous being, this also seems to link with a general idea of human culture in which monsters often dwell beyond the urban areas, particularly coming from the dark and invariably misty marsh. An example of this idea which is used throughout English literature is in Beowulf where Grendel and his mother dwell in the wild boggy moors and only leave the untameable sprawl to prey on people during the night. As the convict staggers out of the marsh Dickens is implying that he can be seen in a way to be monstrous and is going to do something evil which would link in with a contemporary Victorian view of convicts.

Dickens also uses the setting of the graveyard to create meaning as he has Pip meeting the convict in a graveyard which at first implies that maybe Pip will be killed, indeed it seems for a moment that the convict will carry out his threat and “cut [Pip's] throat”. This, however, is soon seen to not be the case and so the use of the graveyard might not be seen as very effective. However, it is rather effective in creating meaning by showing to the reader very early in the chapter that Pip is an orphan and most of his siblings are dead. In doing so Dickens, without directly describing the character of Pip, gives the reader a rather detailed description of his character as it shows his feelings of lose and also as he is in the graveyard alone it shows he is rather alone. Also the way in which Pip calls his mother “Also Georgiana” shows how he is not very educated as he seems to think that she was called “also Georgiana”. The graveyard also serves another purpose which is too further develop the idea of superstitious evil as grave yards are often associated with death and supernatural entities. This is very effective as graveyards tend to be the be the setting for many stories regarding the supernatural and makes the reader, who knows nothing of the Book's plot, think that perhaps the story will have supernatural themes. The graveyard also links to the nihilistic world view which Pip has as it remind the reader of their own mortality and of the fragile nature of life.