After Reading Strategy  
for Charles Dickens’ *Great Expectations*  

Problematic Situation

**Context**
This strategy would most effectively be used after the reading process in order to help students decide how they would act in difficult situations presented in *Great Expectations* and what choices they would make.

**Purpose of the Strategy**
Problematic situations allow students the opportunity to explore different perspectives or problematic situations in a novel by coming up with their own solutions to the problems and deciding how they would act if put in those positions. This strategy uses critical thinking, problem solving, and decision making skills as students are forced to evaluate their own priorities and values in order to decide how they would respond if they encountered the problematic situation(s) presented in *Great Expectations*.

**Rationale**
This assignment will help students relate more to the conflicts in the novel as they are forced to come up with solutions to them. They will need to analyze the pros and cons of different reactions or responses to problematic situations presented in the novel and decide which course of action is most appropriate for them. This process will help students develop their skills of analysis and reasoning.

**Materials Needed**
*Great Expectations* Problematic Situation Worksheet (included below)

**Directions**

**Step One: Introduce the Strategy**
Explain to the class that today they will be playing some games connected to situations they have just finished reading in *Great Expectations*. They will be making group and individual ethical decisions about what we would do if we were in similar problematic or
difficult situations as the characters in the novel. Before we begin, we must review and commit to the following rules about group discussion and decision making:

1. Avoid arguing for your own rankings. Present your position as lucidly and logically as possible, but listen to the other members’ reactions, and consider them carefully before you press your point.

2. Do not assume that someone must win and someone must lose when discussion reaches a stalemate. Instead, look for the next-most-acceptable alternative for all parties.

3. Differences of opinion are natural and expected. Seek them out, and try to involve everyone in the decision process. Disagreements can help the group’s decision because with a wide range of information and opinions, there is a greater chance that the group will hit upon more adequate solutions.


**Step Two: Model and Monitor Appropriate Group Problem Solving**

Practice group problem solving with the entire class by solving the problematic situation Pip faces in Volume Two, Chapter Eight of *Great Expectations* when Joe comes to visit him in the city, against his wishes. Should Pip welcome Joe openly and warmly even though Pip and Joe belong to different social classes now and Joe doesn't know how to act like a gentleman? Should Pip have more earnestly and sincerely invited Joe to stay for dinner? Should Pip have dismissed and argued against Joe’s assertions that the two of them are so different in social status now that they should not be seen together in London? Having already finished reading the novel, the students will know that Pip was ashamed and reluctant to see Joe and did not sincerely ask him to stay longer with him in the city. However, ask the entire class what they would do in Pip’s shoes. First give the students ten minutes to individually reflect and write in their journals about the situation. Distribute handouts to teach student that have the aforementioned questions typed out so they can remember what things they are supposed to be considering and thinking about and instruct them to answer at least two of the questions on the sheet. Then guide them in respectfully discussing both sides of the issue as an entire class. Write their ideas on the board, perhaps in a T-chart and have students make their own T-charts of their own ideas (to help students who are less vocal get involved). Help them reach some sort of class-wide consensus.

*Austin, BYU, 2009 (adapted from Burnett, BYU, 2008)*
consensus – backed with a rationale charted out on the board. Make sure to monitor classroom discussion so that it does not get out of hand and so that a few louder, more confident students do not dominate the discussion.

**Step Three: Individual problem Solving**

Next, pass out the worksheet included in this document, and present the class with a second problematic situation from the novel relating to Pip. Ask each student to think individually about what they would do if they were in Pip’s situation and consider the following questions: Should Pip turn in Magwitch, the convict, to the authorities for his past life of crime and his escape from prison? Should Pip betray the man who has made him a gentleman and elevated his social status because he is ashamed that his benefactor is a convict? Should Pip allow Magwitch to stay with him for the remainder of his life in order to pay him back for his generosity? Should Pip accept more money from Magwitch now that he knows where and from whom the money is coming from? What would you do if you were in Pip’s situations? Give students fifteen minutes to think and write individually about this situation. Have students write rationales for their decision in the individual section on their worksheets. The teacher should circulate around the room, assisting students as necessary and making sure all students are on task.

**Step Four: Group Problem Solving**

Once students have completed the individual section on their worksheets, divide them into groups, with about four students in each group. Make sure that each group member feels accountable for his or her contributions to the group discussion and problem solving. Now have each group discuss the same problematic situation – whether Pip should turn Magwitch into the authorities or give him room and board and continue to benefit from his generosity – and try to have groups come to a unified collaborative decision. Groups should observe the guidelines reviewed and modeled at the beginning of class and should review that consensus is difficult to reach, so not every ranking will meet with everyone’s complete approval. Remind students that complete unanimity is not the goal, as it is rarely achieved, and consensus should instead be reached by each individual’s accepting the group rankings on the basis of logic and feasibility. Have groups take rationale notes for their group decisions in the group section of their worksheets. Give groups about fifteen
minutes to complete this portion of the game. Once again, the teacher should circulate from group to group.

Assessment
The problematic situation strategy allows you to assess student participation in group activities, thinking/reasoning skills, ability to negotiate decisions, and general ability to make choices based upon priorities and values. It gives students opportunities to analyze various perspectives and clarify their moral judgment. Finally, it serves as a great after reading strategy because it allows students to synthesize all that they know about different characters and situations and reach a decision as to how a character should act or respond in a given problematic situation.
Great Expectations
PROBLEMATIC SITUATION WORKSHEET

Directions: In Volume Two, Chapter Twenty of Great Expectations, Pip is faced with a difficult situation when the identity of his mysterious benefactor is revealed. In the end he decides to help Magwitch try to evade the authorities instead of turning him in and making his life less complicated. What would you have done in his situation? Should Pip have turned Magwitch in for his life in crime? Did he make the right decision by trying to protect Magwitch from the authorities? Record rationales for your individual decision and for the decision your group reaches in the sections below. Make sure that you have at least four reasons in each column for answering the way you do (complete sentences!). Also, include page numbers from the book to back you up.

My decision: __________________________________________________________

My group’s decision: __________________________________________________

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pip Should Turn Magwitch In</th>
<th>Pip Should Help Magwitch</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>My Rational</td>
<td>Group’s Rationale</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Austin, BYU, 2009 (adapted from Burnett, BYU, 2008)
Problematic Situation: What Should Pip Do?

Think about the following questions for a few minutes and then respond in two or three sentences to two of them at the bottom of this worksheet.

1. Should Pip welcome Joe openly and warmly even though Pip and Joe belong to different social classes now and Joe doesn’t know how to act like a gentleman?

2. Should Pip have more earnestly and sincerely invited Joe to stay for dinner?

3. Should Pip have dismissed and argued against Joe’s assertions that the two of them are so different in social status now that they should not be seen together in London?