

Great Expectations: An analysis of moral emotions in Charles Dickens' and five other classic novels.

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### Abstract

The cognitive antecedents of Moral Observer Emotions (admiration, anger, contempt, envy, gratitude, indignation, jealousy, respect and sympathy) are analyzed in six novels of classic literature (Great Expectations, The Mill on the Floss, The Portrait of a Lady, Wuthering Heights, Uncle Toms Cabin and East of Eden). Thereby we refer to Heider's concepts of ought, trying, goal attainment and ability. All passages containing relevant situations causing a Moral Observer Emotion were presented to three coders and evaluated with regard to the mentioned concepts (serving as dependent variables). These variables were either coded with 1 (positive or present), .5 (not further specified) or .0 (negative or absent). Disagreements among coders were resolved by discussion. Results reveal that specific Moral Observer Emotions map into meaningful clusters. These clusters are characterized by certain combinations of ought, trying, goal attainment and ability. Furthermore, these characteristics appear to be stable and independent from novel (except for contempt), gender and nationality of author as well as gender of actor and observer, respectively.