Discovery Essay

Discovery is a vehicle for curiosity and has the potential for individuals to affirm or challenge their values on the human experience and consequently allows for the establishment of broader perceptions of the world. Discoveries are significant due to the process being able to question both the characters and the audience’s’ upheld values in their present context as well as creating the possibility of greater worlds in the future. These notions are evident throughout William Shakespeare’s ‘The Tempest’ as he challenges some aspects of the ‘Age of Discovery’. It is further evident in Charles Dicken’s Great Expectations” which enquires into the social structures of Industrial Britain in the 19th century. These two texts use a multitude of character discoveries to lead the audience into understanding new values through challenging their imaginative world and questioning their current world.

Discovery allows individuals to rethink and evaluate the value of empathy to establish broader perceptions of the world. It could be argued that it is the physical discovery of the island which spurs emotional discoveries, intellectual discoveries and spiritual discoveries. Through discovering the value of empathy, the way in which individuals subsequently view the world aligns to their changed values. This self discovery is depicted in The Tempest, as Ariel instigates the value of empathy in Prospero leading him to state “a feeling of their afflictions, and shall not myself, one of their kind”. The use of asyndeton slows down the reader emphasising Prospero's discovery of empathy for others as he realises the similarities of the other characters on the island and is “one of their kind”. Prospero’s self-discovery of the value of empathy causes him to shift from his former isolationist vengeful views following his usurpation, to having the capacity for forgiveness. Correspondingly the new value of empathy is additionally rediscovered through the protagonist Pip, in the conclusion of the novel when after treating his friend Joe the blacksmith badly he exclaims that “I have been bent and broken, but - I hope - into a better shape.” The tone of the metaphor in “bending and breaking shapes” personifies the motif relating to blacksmithing which metaphorically demonstrate Pips understanding for the feelings that Joe has through the imagery of the language.

Discoveries enable new understandings and renewed perceptions on the audience’s current context. As a result of provocative discoveries, individuals are forced to reassess their previous perspectives and evaluate new perceptions on the world and are thus significant. Both texts affirm how discovery can change the characters and the reader’s preconceived views on the author’s current world. This is firstly seen through the tempest in the contrast between Prospero and Caliban's preconceived notion on the ownership of the island. Prospero's quote “Be not afraid. The isle is full of noises, Sounds, and sweet airs, that give delight and hurt not illuminates this through the use of, conjunctive sentences and the sinister emotion conceived as a result of the sibilance of “sweet and sour”. This is contrastingly shown when Caliban undergoes a discovery of the land he has lost to Prospero depicting the omnipresent Chain of Being present in both Shakespeare's world and on the island. The use of parallelism in "This island's mine, Which thou tak'est from me," emphasises the distinction between Caliban's past ‘was’ and what ‘is’ as well as the use of repetition of personal pronouns being "mine" showing how the ownership of the island taken from him by Prospero. Through a postcolonial lens we can discover that Shakespeare is challenging the values and worldview of Elizabethan England by using the island and its power structure to allude to the ethical issues associated with the colonisation and subsequent exploitation that was commonplace during the Age of
Discovery. As a consequence, the reader may discover a renewed empathic response to the land seizures committed against indigenous people. Similarly Dickens’s depiction of the discoveries made by Pip critiques the plutocracy and elitist upper class during Britain’s second industrial revolution. This is seen when Pip exclaims that “no varnish can hide the grain of the wood; the more varnish you put on, the more the grain will express itself.” The metaphor of the grain in wood is a symbol of the class inequalities present in Dickens’ world and the imagery of varnish is the little effort made by the rich to address this. This illustrates Pip’s and the readers discovery of the Victorian upper classes lack of sympathy for the poor in London. Overall the discovery of empathy in characters allows the audience to self reflect on the greater inequalities present in their current world.

Discoveries additionally have the power to visualize the possibility of future worlds where the the values held by the characters in the text and audience can be challenged and reformed. This is significant as illusion can prompt discovery by distorting reality into the metaphysical imagine leading for in some cases, for individuals to change their world in accordance to this. In the play the Tempest, this is firstly illustrated through Gonzalo’s has a differing imaginative perspective to Alonso, evident in his speech of “the all encompassing vision for an ideal world”, stimulated by his current reality on the island. Throughout the speech Gonzalo emphasizes the allusion of a ideal world, through the repetition of the high connotative words of “no”and “none” in the quote “No kind of traffic, no name of magistrate, riches, poverty..none” alluding to possibilities of a equitable Utopian society without poverty or riches, far from the island and potentially Elizabethan England. Though Shakespeare’s portrayal of Gonzalo may seem to be a relatively insignificant, his purpose to impart his optimism and philosophical ideologies of a utopia into the other characters of the play therefore shows that, unlike Prospero, is the instigator of self discovery in the audience through alluding to future worlds. This is additionally seen through Ferdinand through his biblical allusion to an imaginative world “So they are; My spirits, as in a dream, are all bound up”. Henceforth our understanding of the imagined world is central to Shakespeare’s purpose, as it describes exploration of what it is to be asleep to what is around us or being awakened to reality. This is also present in Charles Dicken’s novel when Pip like Gonzalo alludes to the expectation of a equitable, utopic world separated from his current reality when he states “Pause you who read this, and think for a moment of the long chain of iron or gold, of thorns or flowers, that would never have bound you”. Where the presence of oxymoron between “thorns and flowers”, punctuates the class divide in Victorian society. As well as this rhetorical criticism, effectively emphasizes the communication between Dickens and the reader as he directly positions the audience to “Pause and think” about artificial social structures. From this he alludes to a hypothetical world where this chain would not exist where a future world free of the restrictions of class that was so deeply rooted in Victorian society is no more. Overall via the discovery of new worlds, self-reflection within the audience’s beliefs can occur along with the possible allusion transformation of a more equitable future world through texts.

In summation discoveries have the potential to instigate individuals into reconsidering their pre-existing values and worldview and progress to new and improved understandings and perspectives. This is illustrated through Shakespeare's the tempest and Charles Dickens great expectations which reveal to both the characters and to the audience a greater understanding on the values and worldview of individuals. Total word count- 1230