

How does dickens present childhood in 'great expectations'? essay sample

[Life](#), [Childhood](#)



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

This was Dickens' second-to-last complete novel. It was first published as a weekly series which made its first appearance in December 1860. Similar to Dickens' memories of his own childhood and his great use of complex dual perspective we experience in his early years the young Pip seemed powerless to stand against injustice or to ever realize his dreams for a better life. In this story Pip has "Great Expectations" of becoming a gentleman which he made true by the help of his secret benefactor which we discover in chapter 39.

In the beginning few chapters, we find out that he is in the graveyard reading tomb stones of family members he has never seen before. The childhood of Pip was very lonely because Pip's first memories are of him finding out that his family are all dead and buried, this is not a very nice memory and shows that Dickens feels that childhood was a very awful period of life.

Pip lives with his high-tempered elder sister and her gentle husband, Joe. Pip is satisfied with this unpleasant life until he is hired by a bitter but wealthy woman, Miss Havisham, as a companion to her and her beautiful but overconfident adopted daughter, Estella. From that time, Pip aspires to leave behind his simple life and become a gentleman. After years as companion to Miss Havisham and Estella, he spends more years as apprentice to Joe, so that he may grow up to have a livelihood working as a blacksmith. This life is suddenly turned upside down when he is visited by a London attorney, Mr. Jaggers, who informs Pip that he is to come into the 'Great Expectation' of a

handsome property and is to be trained to be a gentleman at the will of an anonymous benefactor.

Pip's childhood may seem unpleasant to the reader and not what children would enjoy today; "You young dog..." This shows how young lower class Victorian children were treated and spoken to. Adults had no sympathy or respect towards children, in fact if they shared their opinion they would get hit and treated like animals and this is what Pip's elder sister did. She carried a whip which she called "tickler" and a nasty liquid called "tar water" to punish misbehaviour and disobedience.

In the first chapter Pip is presented as a very imaginative person because of the way he puts his name together "My infant tongue could make both names nothing longer or more explicit than Pip". This shows Pip's creativity by the way he has used parts of the name 'Philip and Pirrip' to make Pip, which I think is very suitable in this text, because Pip will grow from a child to an adult and become sensible slowly through the novel. This creates intimacy between the reader and young Pip.

The way Dickens uses palindrome in the name 'Pirrip', is very useful, because it tells the reader that there will be two narrators. One is young Pip; the other is older Pip, which means that Pip will be looking backwards and forwards, and analysing the past in the present by older Pip. Great childish imagination, now we are seeing Pip's perspective of the world. We find that Pip thinks the world revolves around him which is another childish feature as children mainly think about themselves. The use of retrospective narrative

is useful as it gives the reader the immediate effect of being part of the story. He also uses childish vocabulary to make it sound as he was living today as a child. Further more the use of phonetically written words help his achievement of being a child, " drat that boy".

The novel begins with young orphaned Pip running in obedience of an escaped convict in a cemetery. This terrifying figure bullies Pip into stealing food and a file for him, threatening that if he tells a soul " your heart and your liver shall be tore out, roasted and ate. The boy does as he's asked, but the convict is captured anyway, and transported to the punishing colonies in Australia. Having started his novel in a cemetery and having been " turned upside down" to check his pockets also surrounds another meaning which symbolises Pip's life turning around.

Pip's treatment at the forge fits in with Victorian beliefs in up bringing of children, because of the way Pip is treated by Mrs Gargery. Children should be seen not heard". Shows that Victorians believed in well behaved children with strict disciplines and this is shown through Pip's action at the beginning when we see him to have been bought up to respect his elders and superiors. Even though he is treated badly we find that Pip is a kind hearted child as he helps people in need, such as the convict. In Victorian times Dickens shows that children were susceptible and naïve and this is shown when Pip obeys the convicts instructions although he looks very intimidating and we know this due to the way Dickens uses Pip's very descriptive imagination using very formal language of older Pip to describe the convict, producing a very dynamic and vivid image in our minds.

In chapter 8, Pip describes Satis house, " old bricks, and dismal, and had a great many iron bars to it. Some of the windows had been walled up; of those that remained, all the lower were rustily barred" Dickens portrays the atmosphere in Victorian times of darkness. He also creates the feeling of old age and this is shown when Dickens talks about the windows being " rustily barred" and the fact that the building was made from old bricks.

Mrs Joe, Pip's sister is very in command of discipline " Where have you been, you young monkey?" she was very worried where Pip would be, she was also angry on him as she took out her " tickler" the whip that she uses to punish him. From this we learn that Mrs Joe is very tempered although there are no other children to look after.

Dickens then increases chances for Pip's prospects and introduces his hero into the decaying household of Miss Havisham, a wealthy, half-mad woman who was jilted on her wedding day many years before and has never recovered. Pip is brought there to play with Miss Havisham's ward, Estella, a little girl who delights in tormenting Pip about his rough hands.

Miss Havisham invites Pip to play in the Mansion. In this meeting Dickens shows the difference between a common low class working boy and a rich girl which are similar in age, but have different attitudes. " She stopped him at the gate"- " if Miss Havisham wished to see me" - " but you see she don't". This shows that Estella is very haughty in the way she grimly dismisses Pumblechook. However, it is very hard to believe that Pip would dismiss Pumblechook so easily. I think that Estella's actions were not

because she dislikes Pumblechook but the way she has been brought up, she is very rich and therefore treats lower classes as inferior to her because they work for the rich. On the other hand, Pip is a poor child who has been taught manners and to respect the elders. I think this will compensate for his labour class so he is accepted by employers to be able to earn and survive in the poverty of England. This shows that in the Victorian times childhood wasn't spent at school getting education but working in hardship to be able to survive.

Generally, I think that this novel is based morality and the manipulation of the Victorian societies showing growing differences between the rich and poor which the rich would find a normal thing. However, this novel was made to show how it is actually like from dual perspective from poor to rich metaphorically child Pip at the forge and when he became a rich gentle man. It shows how children are badly treated by their elders and superiors. Charles Dickens successfully portrays childhood and examples of manipulation, and this affected the attitudes of people of the Victorian era because it was a new way of portraying the fact of pride and prejudice between the poor and rich.