

# The expectations of dickenss readers english literature essay

[Literature](#), [British Literature](#)



The first of Pip's great expectations arrives when he receives his fortune, and also, the gaining of property. We are informed of this situation when in chapter 18, Jagger announces: "... that he will come into a handsome property. Further, that it is the desire of the present possessor of that property, that he be immediately removed from his present sphere of life and from this place, and be brought up as a gentleman - in a word, as a young fellow of great expectations." (p. 130) However, Pip mistakenly believes that it is Miss Havisham who aims to transform him into a gentleman, for then he will be able to marry Estella. This is arguably the source of Pip's problems and when he then later realises who is real benefactor is he is too stunned to react; " I could not have spoken one word, though it had been to save my life. I stood, with a hand on the chair-back and a hand on my breast, where I seemed to be suffocating -- I stood so, looking wildly at him, until I grasped at the chair, when the room began to surge and turn." (p. 304) The title of Dickens' novel is rather ironic in that when Pip's " expectations" are revealed as being rather empty and disappointing, and when he realises the truth regarding his income – that it is in fact a convict that has been providing for him in order for him to pass as a gentleman, he is without a doubt upset and rather angry at this harsh reality. The question is raised as to whether this was Dickens' intention when writing the novel in that by him doing this we as an audience are able to sympathise with Pip and his expectations not being fulfilled. Tredell further suggests that " the only book to which he [Dickens] gave the name of Great Expectations was the only book in which the expectation was never realized." [iii] (p49) which is inevitably the point that is trying to be made, in

that the use of irony here is considerably high. In order to reinforce the general feeling of unfulfillment that is presented throughout the novel there are other characters that too have " great expectations" which are not met. Miss Havisham is an example of another character whose expectations are not satisfied. She expects to marry Compeyson; in her bitterness in chapter 11 she tells Pip that she expects to die on her birthday and hopes that by doing so an eternal curse will be laid upon Compeyson: "'When the ruin is complete,' said she, with a ghastly look, `and when they lay me dead, in my bride's dress on the bride's table -- which shall be done, and which will be the finished curse upon him -- so much the better if it is done on this day!'" (p. 83) But as the theme of the novel suggests, inevitably her expectations are not met. In addition to this, Magwitch too had great expectations, but instead he was put in jail as a result of his dreams. Also, Estella had great expectations for herself in that she did not want to associate herself with someone like Pip who was below her in regards to social status. It can be suggested that Great Expectations is rather symbolic towards Pip in that as he changes into an educated, wealthy man it becomes apparent that the expectations he had were based on the idea of social mobility. One may argue as to whether the title also refers to the readers' great expectations in which Dickens builds upon with his use of plot twists. Readers may ultimately expect a rather delightful read, but like the characters within the novel, we are too disappointed. From the very beginning of the novel Pip's expectations of life are constantly unmet. From the moment in which Pip was introduced to higher society, he expects to one day gain the wealth that the society arguably represents. When he does come into fortune, he expects to

become a gentleman and ultimately marry Estella. After meeting his true benefactor his hopes for love and money are lost, but he then aims to help Magwitch leave the country. When this expectation is inevitably not met, it is suggested that Pip doesn't know what to do in regards to this and as a result becomes very ill. When he recovers, Pip then does not have any more expectations as he has learnt that they are always unfulfilled. By obtaining Biddy and Joe's forgiveness, he comes to realise that true love and friendship, is indeed, above any expectation. This is arguably the main message behind Great Expectations.