

Biddy's role in great expectations

[Literature](#), [Novel](#)



Biddy is introduced early in *Great Expectations* and is mentioned regularly throughout, though she is not one of the major characters. She does, however, serve as a constant reminder to Pip of what he is leaving behind and, as she is more of a peer of Pips because of her intellect and age, she allows Pip an opportunity to articulate his thoughts more candidly and thoroughly at key points in the story. Dickens uses Biddy as a vehicle for many points made throughout the book and she largely represents the opposite of Estella and Pip in different ways. Biddy has a very aware tone when she is talking with Pip as though she understands and accepts all that will and has transpired (depending on which point of the novel is being examined) with an air of fatalism. Biddy is the sensible contrast to Pip's immature idealism that is brought about by his infatuation with Estella and the upper class in general. Pip represents a very Romantic standpoint throughout much of the novel (until he comes to his ultimately Victorian realizations) and Biddy represents the pragmatic Victorianism. Ultimately, Dickens would not have been able to make as poignant of a point at the end of the novel if he did not have a character like Biddy—one who Pip recognized as intelligent, pretty, moral, and loving—slip through Pip's fingers. Pip's realization that being a part of the upper class had no inherent value finally came after many years of neglecting the people who cared about him. Though Pip was a naturally kind hearted individual he was driven by an intense infatuation that began at an early age and was nurtured by false presumptions and convenient and misleading circumstances throughout the novel. There is no lack of evidence of Pip's good nature, he helps Herbert Pocket by secretly buying him into a business, he ends up

seeing the good in Magwitch and tries to help him as much as he can, and he seems to love everyone who loves him, but his Romantic ideals prevent him from being good to the people who love him and cause him to fall into a lifestyle in which he is not productive and enjoys wanton excess. It is strange to watch him change thus from his modest and moral beginnings and Biddy is a constant symbol of how Pip could have turned out had he not been influenced by Miss Havisham and Estella at such a young age. Pip's kindhearted nature would never have been distorted with foolish dreams and fruitless infatuations if he had never left the forge to play at Satis House. He would have been happy to grow up among Joe and Biddy as a blacksmith, but in his first meeting with Estella he was made to judge himself through his comparison to her. John Stuart Mill could have written this allegorical scene as Pip for the first time in his life begins to question his own worth and the worth of his class because he was for the first time presented with something different. As Biddy and Pip come to know each other more as they get older Biddy is obviously Pip's antithesis in many ways. She remains humble because she was never introduced to the upper class and never proposed any "great expectations." She seems to have been in love with Pip before he goes off to London, though she accepts the fact that Pip does not love her with a stoic calm. On a more reasonable level than Pip's infatuation will allow him to fully realize he knows that he loves Biddy in a very sincere and rational way. He recognizes her worth and her virtues and he compares them to Estella's meanness and coldness. He knows that Biddy is the better choice of the two, but she is also a choice he can not allow himself to make. Pip thinks this very thing to himself while talking with Biddy out on the

marshes as she prophetically watches ships sail by them. Biddy, being wise, knows that Pip is lost to her and that their figurative ship has sailed. By having the comparison between Biddy and Estella available Dickens has his protagonist not simply make a bad choice, but make a bad choice in the face of a perfect choice. He chooses infatuation over what could have been a deep and sincere loving relationship with Biddy. Dickens uses Biddy to make Pip's realizations upon his failure in and disillusionment of the upper class all the more powerful. Biddy is the salt in Pip's wound, she is the ship that sailed from him. She plays a huge role in advancing the power of Dickens' message against foolish idealistic dreams and impractical hopes. She is so admirably simple and honest and pure while the high society that Pip chooses over her is so disappointing and, at times, cruel that when Pip realizes he has lost her and that he is not even worthy of her it amplifies the loneliness and sorrow experienced by the protagonist at the end of the novel. Biddy may not have taken up many pages in Great Expectations, but the story certainly would not have been the same without her.