

Theme of childhood in great expectations



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Discuss how Dickens presents the theme of childhood in the first volume of Great Expectations. From the very start of the novel we see a strong theme of childhood presented. Dickens himself had a tough life having to go out and work at the age of eight and his father being imprisoned. Not only was the job itself miserable, but he considered himself too good for it. This represents the title 'Great Expectations' as Dickens had always wanted to go far in life. He didn't want to be labeled in the 'working class'. Dickens was an ambitious child who during his childhood experienced great disappointment and also neglect.

Great Expectations is set in early Victorian England, a time when great social changes were sweeping the nation. In these Victorian times children worked hard to satisfy the needs of their parents because families were very poor and they didn't have enough money. This too was experienced by Pip, the novel's protagonist. He lives in the marsh country, works at a job he hates, considers himself too good for his surroundings, and experiences material success in London at a very early age, exactly as Dickens himself did. The first chapters of the novel introduce Pip as both child and protagonist. Pip is a young child who Dickens masterfully uses as narrator looking back on his own story as an adult to evoke the feelings and problems of childhood. Pip portrays children's innocence as well as giving us an insight as to how children were treated and how they understood things in those times.

I give Pirrip as my father's name on the authority of his tombstone. We discover immediately that Pip is an orphan and one with whom we sympathize. In this first chapter of the novel Pip is looking at his parents

gravestones, a scene where Dickens makes comical by having Pip ponder the exact inscriptions on the tombstone. This shows that Pip was uneducated as he couldn't properly read the inscriptions and it also reminds us of Pip's tough life growing up without his parents.

Pip describes the landscape as a, dark flat wilderness beyond the church yard...

the distant savage lair from which the wind was rushing which creates a extremely eerie threatening image and is Dickens way of preparing the audience for the bad situation Pip faces with meeting the convict this also prepares us for what the novel will entail. When the intimidating convict questioned Pip about his parents names, Pip recites them as they were on the tombstone. This indicates Pips youthful innocence yet still having a dramatic insight to what the book has in store. Pip is terrified of the convict but despite this Pip treats him with kindness. This shows how Pip does not clearly understand that this man could be dangerous and it also reflects the character of Pip.

Pip was a kind, friendly young boy who tried not to get into trouble. The man threatens pip to bring him food the next day. This is where we see Pips immature approach to things.

He was so afraid that he did exactly as the prisoner had told him to instead of telling his sister Mrs Joe. Because Pip is so young and innocent he does not understand that the escaped prisoner doesn't really have a companion, therefore he does what he is told. When pip steals the pie we see his childish innocence.

The pathetic fallacy of the heavy mist and damp cold refers to how Pip is feeling? as he becomes very frightened. He does not realise that the convict is not really going to find him if he does not go. Throughout great expectations Dickens uses setting to create a dramatic atmosphere at different points. These points mostly being when Mrs. Joes outbursts of anger occur.

Mrs Joe is Pips older sister. When their parents died, Mrs Joe took it upon herself to raise Joe herself. The community admired her for doing this and she was also proud of herself for doing this. From the moment she began to raise Pip she never let him forget that.

Mrs. Joe is a controlling, overbearing person who beats both her husband and brother.? She doesnt think Pip appreciates everything shes done for him, and she makes his life miserable.? Mrs Joe says, ??? I may truly say i??™ve never had this apron of mine off, since born you were. Its bad enough to be a blacksmiths wife without being your mother.??? This gives us an indication of how Pip was treated by his sister.

She never showed care or kindness towards Pip nor Mr joe. She considers her parents deaths an event that made her life as she felt as though Pip was forced upon her. Mrs. Joe thinks Pip is a nuisance and she thinks that it is all his fault she married a blacksmith.

Pip nor joe can ever please her. She gives both of them brutal beatings to make them pay for what she thinks shes suffered because of them. Pip was the destroyer of her dreams and she seeks revenge for this. Money and social status are always on the mind of Mrs. Joe.

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? Wealth drives Mrs. Joe to send Pip to Miss Havisham in the first place.?

She believes Miss Havisham will generously reward Pip for his services, and the family will make a lot of money. Mrs. Joe assumes that if she receives wealth and social status, she will be more than just the wife of a blacksmith.

This is an example of her mistreating Pip. Pip is clearly uncomfortable about visiting Miss Havisham however he has no choice but to go. Mrs. Joe forces Pip to go for her own selfish reasons. Mrs. Joe often says to Pip, "I brought you up by hand."

From this quotation we can tell that Pip can draw only one childish conclusion as to what this means, he was brought up by hand and by stick known as the "tickler". This phrase reflects the cruel beating young Pip took from his rootless sister. Pip certainly tried not to step out of line, but when he did he knew the consequences would be serious. Through these phrases we get a clear insight of what Pip had to go through everyday and there was nothing he could do about it.

Mrs. Joe had been so angry that she had been left with Pip and therefore the only way she dealt with it was by beating him. In Victorian times these child beatings were not looked down upon, in fact they were quite normal. So there was nothing Pip could do that would make a difference, he had no choice but to take the beatings. Pip did not fully understand the whole situation between his parents' deaths and social class. He never thought that his sister marrying a blacksmith would put them in the working class. This reminds us of just how young Pip is at this time. It represents the theme of childhood

well as Pip as a young boy did not fully understand what this meant or who looked down upon this.

But little did he know he would be criticized for it later in the book when he meets Estella, adopted daughter of Miss Havisham. Regarding the death of Pip's parents Pip never experienced or understood just how dramatic the deaths of his parents were. Mrs. Joe went through a lot more than Pip because she was much older which may be why she beats Pip as she is traumatised by this. Pip was so young when his parents died and now as a child he does not have as much to deal with, which also reflects the theme of childhood. Although Pip faced some very difficult events throughout his childhood, between the deaths of his parents and the beatings from his sister he had Joe by his side. The novel describes Joe as "a mild, good natured, sweet-tempered, easy going, foolish dear fellow, - a sort of Hercules in strength and also in weakness." This is the complete of his wife Mrs. Joe.

This sentence makes Joe seem like a child or angel. It shows that he too is innocent and it reflects how Joe and Pip's personalities are quite similar which reflects their close loving relationship. Joe is like a father figure to Pip as he offers him love and comfort at different points.

They both get on because they have something in common; they are both "sufferers" at the hands of Mrs. Joe. She pounced on Joe taking him by the whiskers and knocked his head for a while against the wall behind him! This was one of the many times Mrs. Joe's outburst of anger occurred. Joe can relate to Pip as they both went through the same thing

therefore they have a very unique relationship. Joe tries to protect pip from Mrs Joe.

I believe that Joe only stayed with his wife for Pip's sake. In chapter two we see an example of this where Joe takes the beating for Pip. When Pip writes the letter to Joe in chapter seven of the novel, it shows us the narrator Pip now looking back at his old childishness and innocence. It also showed us that Pip did want to be educated which is an important part of childhood for everyone.

Joe makes Pip feel good about himself by telling him the letter is great. This expresses their close relationship. At this point we truly see just how proud Joe is of Pip and just how much he loves Pip. This is a touching part of the novel and it gives us a clear indication of Joe's care for Pip. During this chapter Pip discovers that Joe is illiterate and why.

Here we see how social class in these times were very important and how you were looked down upon if you were uneducated. Although Joe had a desire for reading he knows that his place in society is simply just as a blacksmith. Here we learn a lot about childhood as in those Victorian times it was not something that all children did. Some were sent out to work in factories and fields, whereas others may have been sent to the top schools in the country, of course again depending on class. This shows us that childhood was unfair and frightening for some. Despite that fact that Joe was a blacksmith in the working class, Joe showed great pride in his work and we see this when he is asked for assistance by Sergeant in chapter five.

Joe too faced a tough childhood with his mother running away from his father and his father beating his mother. Joe went through many dramatic times as a child the same as Pip did. But again we see similarities between pip and joes childish innocence when he says ??? my father were that good in his hart that he couldn??™ t abear to be without us.??? Joe believes his father to be a good man even though he put joes family through a very hard time. During this chapter we see that pip admires joe which symbolised childhood in a beautiful way, like a child looking up to his father hoping that someday he too could turn out to be just as good of person.

During the novel Pip is used for the selfish desires of Mr pumblechook and Mrs. Joe. They send the young boy off to Miss havishams house in the hopes of getting money. They don??™ t take into consideration what pip wants or how he feels about the whole situation, he is given no choice but to go. He knows to be on his best behaviour for if he doesn??™ t then the consequences will be serious. Pip being so young didn??™ t understand what was going on of course. He just simply went along with it as he had to. He is frightened and afraid of going yet this is not what it on the minds of mr pumblechook and mrs joe.

Mr. Pumblechook is ashamed of Pip. He does not think that Pip is grateful enough to Mrs.

Joe for all she has done; “ bringing him up by hand.” He constantly treats Pip inferiorly and insists that he is good-for-nothing. When mr pumblechook speaks to pip, he always speaks rudely. In chapter four we see how guilty pip feels for stealing the pie.

??? I fully expected to find a constable in the kitchen, waiting to take me up.??™ This demonstrates Pip??™s anticipation on receiving the worst punishment thinkable. Mr pumblechook asked pip lots of questions at their Christmas dinner.

??? They seemed to think the opportunity lost, if they failed to point the conversation at me, every now and then, and stick the point into me??™ this conveys Pip??™s paranoia. Again Pip is made to feel guilty in a different way, when Mr. Wopsle cause Pip to feel a burden to Mrs. Joe. It is clear from this chapter that Joe is the only character at this point who feels compassion towards Pip, as he pities him.

Mr pumblechook enjoys making pip feel inferior and doesn??™t take pips thoughts or feelings into consideration. This particular chapter, introduces a satirical technique, a way in which Dickens??™ can express Pip??™s true feelings towards the other characters sarcastically. Pip knows that he cannot trust mr pumblechook as we see in chapter nine when Pip tells lies about his visit to miss havishams.? Pip is exaggerating about what happened at Miss Havisham??™s. It could be what he wanted to have happened and the opposite did instead or it could simply just be because he wanted to protect miss havisham.

Pip feels he is unable to tell the others the truth. The uses of the colour from flags are reflecting Pip??™s attitudes towards them. Estella??™s is ??? blue??™ referring to the coldness that Pip has received from her.

Pip??™s is ??? red??™ showing passion and love for Estella. Pip was sent to miss havishams house purely because of his sister and uncles greed for

wealth and power. When he gets there he meets Estella. Estella is cold and insulting towards Pip and she criticizes Pip's low social class and his unrefined manners, "Why, he is a common labouring-boy!" and she also criticizes Pip's dialect, "He calls the knaves Jacks, this boy!" The fact that Estella refers to Pip as boy gives us the idea that she thinks she is much older than him and also she has more power than him. It is during this chapter that Pip is made feel bad about himself due to his class in society and he is made realise this all because of Estella. Estella also speaks rudely to pip although it is clear that Pip admired her from the moment they met. Miss Havisham treats Pip like a circus animal which is meant to entertain her. She has cut herself off from all human contact and lives in total darkness and is bored with herself.

She takes sadistic pleasure at bullying and terrifying and humiliating Pip along with Estella to revenge her humiliation at the hands of Compeyson. She tells Estella to break his heart and "beggar" him. Pip as a young child does not understand why miss havisham is doing this, however he does not ask questions. He simply does what he is told so he can leave as soon as possible. Some say that childhood is the best days of your life. Childhood has its good times and its bad, unfortunately for Pip these times for him were mostly bad.

He experienced a series of dramatic events throughout his childhood. He had been an orphan for most of his life. His sister brought him up by hand with brutal beatings and abuse. He was treated cruelly by people throughout the novel such as Mr Pumblechook and Estella. Pip is a lost and confused

character , during the childhood chapters it seems as though pips place in the world has not yet been defined.

Throughout all the bad times pip had joe, the blacksmith who is always there for him. Pip and joe had such a unique loving relationship where they both helped eachother get by. Pip faced bad times in childhood but as he grew up things began to get better and Pip became a gentleman.