

‘guilty but innocent’ is
a reference used by
critics to describe pip
essay sample...



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

In my opinion I would agree and say that this observation is highly accurate of the young protagonist in volume one. Pip has been presented to us as a vulnerable character from the very opening chapter; Dickens describes him using the imagery of 'a little bundle of shivers' at the resting place of his parents and siblings, which makes Pips defenceless and innocent nature very much apparent. We are also informed of Pips early trials where he is threatened by the cannibalistic convict Magwitch, he is 'rampaged' by Tickler and his cruel sister, taunted by Estella, his first love, and he let down by his first real friend, Joe.

As a result, I believe Pip internalises each of these sufferings and as such they have led to him slipping into the role of a passive victim. He is described as 'morally timid and very sensitive.' It can be assumed that these qualities have a direct connection to these childhood hardships. David Trotter also has an interesting view point on this theory and says that Pip 'associates guilt, not with particular events but with a general unease he has felt as long as he can remember' which is an opinion I feel to be true.

Throughout volume one there are various examples of Pip feeling guilty. The first being when Pip steals food and a file from his sister to feed and free Magwitch, the convict who threatened him. However, his guilt does not stem from the stealing of the food, for that he feels no remorse, his guilt is derived from having to deceive Joe and keeping both the murderous convict and his own theft as a secret from him. This guilt is emphasised during the Christmas meal when soldiers turn up bearing handcuffs and Pip quite genuinely believes they are there to arrest him, which of course they are not.

Another example of Pips guilt is found after the brutal attack on Mrs Joe. Pip somehow feels responsible for this yet he had no part in the attack. When a leg iron is found out to be the weapon, Pips guilt doubles. This is because he believes the leg iron to be the one filed from the leg of the convict Magwitch. As such he feels a guilty responsibility that he has unwillingly provided the weapon that hurt his sister, and also feels guilty as despite many years having passed, he has still kept the convict and theft a secret from Joe. His struggle for status is always shadowed by his feelings of guilt like this, and by his taints of criminality.

An interesting theory is that Orlick is an imperative character to be taken into consideration when discussing Pips guilt complex. T. S Elliot argues for this point and quoted ' Orlick and his activities represent Pips guilt.'

However, critic Dorothy Van Ghent argues that " what brings the convict Magwitch to the child Pip, in the graveyard, is more than the convict's hunger; Pip . . . carries the convict inside him, as the negative potential of his great expectations" meaning that Magwitch is the concretion of Pip's potential guilt. I feel both interpretations are very valid, but I am more inclined to agree with Ghents' point of view. Magwitch seems to embody Pips fears for his own future, status-less and a branded criminal.

The marshes, which surround Pips home, can also be seen as symbolic and carry the taint of uncertainty, criminality and of course, guilt. As Pip became older and his feelings grew they became entwined in the tangles of the marshes and they kept a hold upon him even when he moved away.

Perhaps one thing Pip can be seen as being guilty of at times, is being ungrateful. This feeling emerges after his visits to Satis house and his meeting of Estella whom he wishes to impress and to seek the status of a gentleman as a means to be worth of being with her. This realisation takes place when he is made aware that as the apprentice blacksmith he would have become, this dream would have been rendered impossible. However as David Trotter explains “ At times Pip demonstrates ingratitude, however the level of guilt he feels seems constantly in excess of the actual wrong he has done.”

In conclusion, Pip is not without some fault, he does indeed act in ways which would naturally lead to a certain level of guilt for example the stealing of food and his ingratitude to Joe for his apprenticeship, but as Trotter says, these feelings are always exaggerated by Pip into more than they need be, leaving him innocent, but feeling guilty.