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## **Contents**

[Cover](#)

[About the Book](#)

[About the Author](#)

[Also by Charles Dickens](#)

[List of Great Expectations \(Vintage Childrens Classics\) Characters](#)

[Dedication](#)

[Title Great Expectations \(Vintage Childrens Classics\) Page](#)

The Great Expectations (Vintage Childrens Classics) First Stage of Pip's Expectations

[CHAPTER 1](#)

[CHAPTER 2](#)

[CHAPTER 3](#)

[CHAPTER 4](#)

[CHAPTER 5](#)

[CHAPTER 6](#)

[CHAPTER 7](#)

[CHAPTER 8](#)

[CHAPTER 9](#)

[CHAPTER 10](#)

[CHAPTER 11](#)

[CHAPTER 12](#)

---

[CHAPTER 13](#)

[CHAPTER 14](#)

[CHAPTER 15](#)

[CHAPTER 16](#)

[CHAPTER 17](#)

[CHAPTER 18](#)

[CHAPTER 19](#)

The Second Stage of Pip's Expectations

[CHAPTER 20](#)

[CHAPTER 21](#)

[CHAPTER 22](#)

[CHAPTER 23](#)

[CHAPTER 24](#)

[CHAPTER 25](#)

[CHAPTER 26](#)

[CHAPTER 27](#)

[CHAPTER 28](#)

[CHAPTER 29](#)

[CHAPTER 30](#)

[CHAPTER 31](#)

[CHAPTER 32](#)

[CHAPTER 33](#)

---

[CHAPTER 34](#)

[CHAPTER 35](#)

[CHAPTER 36](#)

[CHAPTER 37](#)

[CHAPTER 38](#)

[CHAPTER 39](#)

The Third Stage of Pip's Expectations

[CHAPTER 40](#)

[CHAPTER 41](#)

[CHAPTER 42](#)

[CHAPTER 43](#)

[CHAPTER 44](#)

[CHAPTER 45](#)

[CHAPTER 46](#)

[CHAPTER 47](#)

[CHAPTER 48](#)

[CHAPTER 49](#)

[CHAPTER 50](#)

[CHAPTER 51](#)

[CHAPTER 52](#)

[CHAPTER 53](#)

[CHAPTER 54](#)

---

[CHAPTER 55](#)

[CHAPTER 56](#)

[CHAPTER 57](#)

[CHAPTER 58](#)

[CHAPTER 59](#)

[Backstory](#)

[Copyright](#)

## **About the Book**

*'Hold your noise! Keep still, you little devil, or I'll cut your throat!'*

Little orphan Pip scarcely imagines how a terrifying encounter with a convict on the lonely marshes will later transform his life. Pip is more Great Expectations (Vintage Childrens Classics) troubled by his visits to strange old Miss Havisham – her decaying wedding dress and the house full of memories – and the beautiful girl Estella who makes him ashamed of his country manners and coarse hands. A blacksmith's apprentice could never hope to win Estella, but then, young Pip's future might not turn Great Expectations (Vintage Childrens Classics) out quite as expected ...

BACKSTORY: Learn about Victorian convicts and the alternative ending to *Great Expectations!*

## **About the Author**

Charles Dickens was a brilliant and prolific writer, probably the most famous nineteenth-century English novelist. He was very successful during his lifetime and his books have never been out of print. The exciting plots and fantastic characters in his books have meant they have all been adapted (in some cases, many times over) for television or the big screen.

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Charles Dickens was born on 7 February 1812 in Portsmouth. He was one of eight children, and at first his family enjoyed a happy life in the countryside of Kent. But Dickens' father was not very good at managing his money, and when the family fell into financial difficulties they had to move to London. In Dickens' time people who could not pay their debts were sent to a kind of prison, and Dickens' father eventually ended up in one of these debtor's prisons, called the Marshalsea. Charles was forced to leave school and go to work in a 'blacking factory' where he pasted labels on to pots for many hours a day. Even though Charles was only twelve at this time, he understood that without education he would never escape the poverty that had so entrapped his family. Charles often used his childhood experiences in his books. For instance, in *David Copperfield*, the hero Davy is taken out of school by his cruel stepfather and sent to work in a similar factory. Another novel, *Little Dorrit*, is set in and around the Marshalsea prison.

Fortunately Charles was eventually sent back to school. He went to work as a lawyer's clerk, and then as a political reporter. In 1833 he began to publish short stories and essays in newspapers and magazines. His first book, *The Pickwick Papers*, was published in instalments in a monthly magazine, and was a roaring success. Even before this book was finished, Charles began writing another novel, *Oliver Twist*. This is one of his most famous books – perhaps you've read it, or seen the musical or one of the film adaptations? Many other novels followed and Dickens became a celebrity in America as well as Britain. He also set up and edited the journals *Household Words* (1850-9) and *All the Year Round* (1859-70). Dickens used his books to highlight the suffering of the poor, the inadequate support provided to them, and the massive inequalities between the different ranks of society. This social and political commentary was very influential and it is believed Dickens' work did a great deal to reform workhouses, prisons, and most particularly public opinion of the working classes. Charles travelled all over Britain and America giving public readings from his books. He was a wonderful performer (at one point he had wanted to be an actor) and his readings were said to be electrifying – women in the audience would scream and faint when he read about the murder of Nancy from *Oliver Twist*. His readings were therefore extremely popular, and on some occasions Dickens only charged a penny for tickets so that poorer people could also attend. In later years, these energetic readings took a terrible toll on his failing health. Dickens died after stroke on 9 June 1870, leaving his last novel, *The Mystery of Edwin Drood*, unfinished. He is buried in Westminster Abbey.

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## OTHER BOOKS BY CHARLES DICKENS

*The Pickwick Papers*

*Oliver Twist*

*Nicholas Nickleby*

*The Old Curiosity Shop*

*Barnaby Rudge*

*Martin Great Expectations (Vintage Childrens Classics) Chuzzlewit*

*A Christmas Carol*

*Dombey and Son*

*David Copperfield*

*Bleak House*

*Hard Great Expectations (Vintage Childrens Classics) Times*

*Little Dorrit*

*A Tale of Two Cities*

*Our Mutual Friend*

*The Mystery of Edwin Drood*

Great Expectations (Vintage Childrens Classics)

## Great Expectations Vintage Childrens Classics

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