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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.

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.

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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