

Department of English  
College of Education for Women  
University of Baghdad

***Great Expectations***

By: Charles Dickens

A Lecture Presented and Designed for the  
Third Level Students on:

**Dickens's Dark Bildungsroman**

By

Instructor

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Course title: Victorian Novel

# Dickens's Dark Bildungsroman



Great Expectations, published in 1861, is considered to be one of his greatest works both overall and within the bildungsroman genre, due to its intricate narrative and character developments.



The scholar John H. Hagan points out that *Great Expectations* is divided into three distinct parts: boyhood, youth, and maturity . The first part he first meets the girl who enlarges his ambitions and the man who finances them. His time at Satis House causes him to feel inadequate within the social system of England; yet, he does not wish to improve his character but instead his circumstances.

This marks an important part of Pip's main problem of not being able to know the true value of things and people due to his continuous attempts to evaluate human relations according to material considerations.

CHARLES DICKENS

GREAT  
EXPECTATIONS

VINTAGE CLASSICS

The second part of the novel focuses on Pip's ill treatment toward the people in whom Pip finds value. It is in this section that the ideas that enveloped Pip in boyhood dominate his life and eventually have disastrous effects

Pip leaves his hometown, symbolic of him leaving his childhood, to go to London to become a gentleman with the help of his benefactor. Ironically, instead of becoming more genteel, Pip becomes a youthful spendthrift, neglects all in his past life that is worthy of his remembrance and gratitude.

Despite these actions, he is still unable to fully integrate himself into London society. He falls in debt and fails to win Estella's love. These are marked by suffering, both mentally and physically, that he must go through in order to reach maturity.

Pip's maturity does not come through gaining but instead through losing. He realizes the negative consequences of the mistakes he made while trying to establish his place in the world. However, this realization only comes when he loses everything. This marks Pip's coming of age with a wiser but sadder element. Although he is unable to become the man he wanted to be, he learns that his ambitions were folly from the beginning.

His experiences in the world cause him to redefine his values, understanding money, position, and success had proven less satisfying upon attainment. After he leaves his initial ambitions he is able to find happiness, acceptance, and freedom.