

# The Analysis of Pip's Characteristics in *Great Expectations*

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*Great Expectations* can be said to have broken Dickens' character which has always been the perfect. As a realistic writer, Charles Dickens is through the description of the ordinary people, reflecting the reality in his life time. No one is perfect, and everyone has its markers. Seeing from the novel the hero Pip, we still even have a lot to learn. Individual growth is a process of growing to be a perfect oneself. In order to achieve our goal in the future, whether big or small, success or failure, one should depend on himself/herself, relying on his or her own ability to realize the great expectations.

*Keywords:* *Great Expectations*, Pip, characteristics

## Introduction

Charles Dickens is said to be as central to the Victorian novel as Tennyson is to Victorian poetry. *Great Expectations* (1860–1861) is an important work in his late years and its story is not complicated. It tells how the poor country boy Philip Pirrip (shortened as Pip) grows up with false expectations to finally return to a rather cruel exposure of reality. Pip is an orphan, who lives in the lower class, and has been brought up by his sister. His sister is a rude woman, and is so easy to lose her temper that all the family members will be received by her bad languages. However, his brother-in-law Joe Gargery, who is an amiable loyal and kind man, it is him who really cares about Pip. At first, Pip decided to be an excellent carpenter, he works hard with his brother-in-law, but since the time he has met Estella he loved her deeply, and then he has a great expectation to be an educated man to match with his lover. Pip always has that dream until he has been the blacksmith. One day unexpectedly, a man appeared in front of him and announced that he can get a great property, and then has a great expectation all because of that when he was a child he had given the food to a criminal, Abel Magwitch. The criminal has given all his properties to Pip for the sake of being grateful to him. But Pip thinks that it is Havisham who gives him the chance to help him to be with Estella, but he does not know that it is just a lie and a trap to revenge. Then he cannot resist the temptation of environment, losing his original simple nature, and then becoming a forced, vulgar man and finally his future becomes disillusionment. After suffering vindications, he decides to turn back to his new life. This novel tells us that the true love, loyalty, and kindness are more important than wealth and social status. From the growth of the Pip and his personality changes, we can deduce the change of his destiny in the end which causes us deep thinking. Then we can get a deep conclusion of what this novel has given us from the analysis of Pip's characteristics, and explore the true value that our people need to own.

### **The Reasons for the Formation of Pip's Character**

Pip's parents died when he was very small. Now Pip is an orphan who lives in a poor country, and is brought up by his rude sister. And in the Victoria time of England, at the beginning of the novel, a lonely, nervous, scared, and frightened boy, the little hero Pip appeared in front of us readers: "looking at the scenery, shaking with fear and the sniveling little thing, is Pip" (LI, 2009, p. 4). The little poor orphan met an escaped criminal in the desolate countryside of a fugitive cemetery; we heard the cry of Pip: "'O! Don't cut my throat, sir', he pleaded in terror" (LI, 2009, p. 2). In the swamps of fog, Pip, a child, feels extremely fear. Although Pip is very afraid, still he feels sorry for the escaped prisoner, and then he shows his friendliness. For Pip, running home to ask Joe or the police for help is much easier than stealing food and file. However, he has fulfilled for the one who is under the suffering and the commitment. Pip is overjoyed when the police are searching for the escaped prisoner. He is even worried about the fugitive's security. It can be seen that Pip is an innocent and good boy in his childhood. Childhood Pip, of course, also has immature side, in a Christmas lunch, although Pip was afraid his secret being found and scolded by his sister, what he wants to do is using his hands to twist Wopsle's very big nose. "When sister writes that it is not I that is not talked, I notice to Wopsle's that Roman nose, I'm really very anxious to go up and twist it, do not twist the brotherhood of the Woplse never stop him" (LI, 2009, p. 32). Hiding from his guardians to do such thing, Pip feels very guilty; he is convinced that even people all over the world will discover his secret; he still firmly believe that "there are police waiting to catch me in the kitchen" (LI, 2009, p. 21). At this stage, "to become a blacksmith is Pip's great expectations" (WEN, 2011, p. 45).

When he has not met his lover before, Pip's goal is to be a man as his brother-in-law, doing things as an apprentice, a blacksmith when he grows up. But when he meets the beautiful and proud Estella, his goal later in life is going to change, which is getting into higher society, to get the fame, after all his struggle to endure hardship to the fame, all for the fame. With Pip's gradually growing up, he has become his brother-in-law's apprentice, doing blacksmith business. However, after having spent in Havisham house for years, while thinking Havisham has then sent Estella Della abroad, still, he is wishing to accept higher education, too. But one day more and more Pip was falling in love with Estella much more. There is a scene in the book, when Biddy, at the seaside gives Pip the learning books which he has expected so long, while pip is reading the book, biddy wants to kiss Pip, but he does not respond. He admits that he has been in love with Estella. It can be seen that Pip throughout is loyal to his loved one. Books and knowledge let him improve his self-cultivation, and become one of the way of a gentleman, yet he is not content to be an ordinary. Too much contact with Estella, after Joe and Pip has appeared in front of her, thus gradually making him alienated from Joe. Estella has pulled Pip's heart for he is a skivvy in front of Miss Havisham, trying, rough, heavy shoes, and the king which he called Jack in the CARDS. Pip's self-esteem is deeply hurt by these words; he even begins to complain about Joe "if that Joe has received some noble upbringing, I would not be so uncultivated" (LI, 2009, p. 73). Pip becomes more dissatisfied with Joe, after Joe's going to Miss Havisham's home. That is the Havisham, Pip together with Joe to accept her who will do arrangements for Pip. Whenever Miss Havisham asks the question, the honest Joe always dare not answer the question facing her, but in the face of Pip, his words are telling Pip all the time. Pip has long worried about Joe as a blacksmith would dare not talk face to face with the Miss Havisham's, such is a losing of face for him. Not long after, there is a lawyer once in Havisham family coming to visit a third, and looking for Pip and his brother-in-law. Saying that an unknown rich man commissioned to

make him famous one day, he can inherit a substantial property in the future, and even, to London to accept the education of being a gentleman. One day Pip thinks it is out of Havisham's idea that his fantasies can become reality; naturally Pip decides to accept this arrangement. After this, Pip changes from a lover of labor and the simple and honest farmer families of the working people into a person who despises labor, only being a pursuit of vanity of upper-class life parasites. Therefore, the choice is also a major turning point in his life; he finally can be closer to his great expectations, so "he chose to go far away from this poor country which he has hated so long, to become an educated person" (ZHANG, 2012, p. 33).

Since Pip has got the unexpected gift, which makes him keep away from his hometown and live in London school learning culture. The distance between him and Joe also becomes more and more alienated. This just geographic distance in the beginning, then as time goes on, as well as the social status of Pip's uplift and the expansion of the self-image, gradually evolves into psychological distance. If we are going to the time when pip has not got property, Pip to Joe was lack of gratitude because Joe belongs to the kind of person who was despised by Estella, just afraid that Joe would give him a fool. After having received the property, then, when he has been to London, and Joe is deliberately alienated with him, because Pip in many occasions looks down upon Joe's speech manner and he has a great expectations of the youth of the upper class status. Estella has pulled it into Pip's heart, of course, it continues working, but now is far more than those of Pip's thought about words. In novel Chapter 27, when Joe is going to London to see his news, not only not happy, but rather upset, "never forget each other's identity disparity" in particular. So, it is worried that Joe's arrival will be the defeat of Pip's rivals and lower his social status in the competition. When he learned that Joe just came to inform him Miss Havisham wanted to see him, thought again and said, if he had early known that Joe has brought the news about Estella, he would be much better to Joe. It fully shows that Pip now is not only a villain, but is also a person with heavy color sight to his friend. His morality and conscience have bottomed. But this time, the official Pip in society is the most happy during his lifetime. Pip's actions, the impression on the readers, just like a famous person, Xu Yong-hong (2011) says that "The higher social status one has owned, the level of morality may be lower" (p. 93). We can now say that in that time what controls the Pip's power of words and deeds and moral judge is vanity. Pip is not geared to the best of conscience, and utterly being a betrayer. Having become a so-called gentleman, he has many times, especially when he goes wrong he has always thought about Joe. Whenever thinking of Joe, Pip there will always have a sense of guilt and remorse. It is the concept of gentleman that just lets him many times with the words describe labor people and their living environment as cheap. In addition to the so-called gentleman's status, another thing which leads to Pip the main factors of infidelity is money. Going back to his hometown to visit Pip, Joe informed Pip that he could see Estella on the second day. With the confession, Pip thought that he should go back to live a night in the Jesters. But finally, he was deluding himself making up an excuse after another, decided not to go home to live, and decided to stay close to home blue boar hotel. While wandering the next morning, Pip went to Miss Havisham, who was living the other end of the walk, rather than Joe living the other end of the walk all the way. The reason is very simple: He thought "my female benefactor, mind depict her to arrange all kinds of bright prospects for me" (LI, 2009, p. 106). Pip was a slightly guilt, but when he heard the words Estella had given to him when walking with Estella, she said, "Once upon a time could match with you and make friend now you can't make friends with them" (LI, 2009, p. 83). So Pip with an envy and contradictory psychology gave up the family love and friendship, and chose money and beauty.

In the novel of Chapter 39, Pip in a stormy night received a visitor. That has been his benefactor for several years who turned out to be the person whom in his childhood he had helped, the escaped prisoner Magwitch. His great expectations suddenly burst into a bubble; his spiritual pillars were to collapse. His climbing ladder to the social of status turned out to be a disgusting criminal's building for him. The matter which has caused great attack to Pip's spirit, far more than the huge heritage lost which seemed of great expectations. It is from then on that his life path becomes such a situation; the more he walks, the more steep it becomes, and the more twists and turns. With the change of life, Pip's heart also experienced a gradual process. Fortunately, great changes of Pip's attitude to Magwitch in a short time have taken place. Extremely, he is in a feeling of being more sympathetic when putting himself in an attempt to help him flee. Yet after Magwitch went to prison, Pip still stayed with him, until the poor old man died. There was an important episode in his life. Pip was cheated by Mr. Aguilar to small kiln and was almost killed. Before Mr. Aguilar came to him, Pip had thought once or two times of Joe and Biddy. "Joe and Biddy all the lifetime won't know me at that night how much guilt I was for them" (LI, 2009, p. 116). Pip was heavily indebted and felt the exhaustion of body and mind, and later he had a bad illness in a coma for several weeks. Pip waked up from illusion, just knowing it was Joe that he once had alienated and even almost betrayed. Joe gave his meticulous care and love. Joe not only took him back from the disease, but also paid for him to return the luxuries of life caused by debt. In response, Pip showed his gratitude to Joe and Biddy, and his moral consciousness was now returning; conscience had defeated over the vanity of ingratitude. Although his identity has fallen from its perch, and became a penniless poor man, the world was still full of his spirit, and his heart rose out of hope—to marry Biddy, according to the arrangement of Biddy's hope for his future. If Biddy wants him to stay in the forge, he will also, do it at all. But then when Biddy has got married with Joe, he is also showing his best wishes to them. And feeling sincerely apologized for them, saying to Joe, he must have efforts to earn money back. After that, Pip has gradually returned to his human side. From this, we can see that Pip's personality change can explain the fate of his life, and that change is taken with the change of the environment. The human nature of the Pip himself is formed with his growth. We must have the confidence to believe in the beauty of human nature and the idea of trying to avoid all that does not conform to the actual, for every person in real life is very important.

His merits are his desire for knowledge, and his perseverance for dream. The reason why he will have that merits is all because of his love for Estella, who is a lady living in the upper class and is also an educated person. For the sake of being the same or matching with her, he is always trying his best to be an educated man; even when he has become a blacksmith, he is still insisting reading books, learning more. Although the childhood trauma deeply influences his life, his life is still filled with wonder and fantasy, which owes a great deal to his youthful absorption in fairy tales. So we can see his romantic nature, which is why he always insists on his love for Estella. And he still has his kindness nature, and good conscience. When he finally loses all of his property, he realizes his betray of Joe and Biddy; when he knows it is they who have paid all the debts for him, then Pip made his decision that he must start his new life and work hard to convey his sincere apology for them. From this, we can also know that he is a strong and optimistic man after suffering such a great attack.

His drawback is his over admiring for power and money, and his negative attitude to life. Maybe it is all because that he is an orphan, and growing up in a family who are too selfish and always beat and say bad words to him, thus causing him an lonely and vanity person. And growing in such an environment surrounded with his rude sister's insulting and others' making fool of him, which will always make him feel self-abased, then it will to some degree cause him to have negative attitude to life. Pip has certainly one of the guiltiest consciences in

literature, because of his ingratitude to Joe and Biddy during that time when he owns his great expectations, and then abandons his real helper in life.

But now whether good or not, it is still a person's characteristic. We should have a neutral sight to judge a person, to learn the good side and ignore the bad. There is no doubt that Pip's whole "great expectations" experience has made him a really good person. No matter what is happening before, not only Pip's fault but also the social environment and life make that.

### **The Reasons for the Development of Pip's Character**

Young Pip's specific natural environment of life made him have the kind, honest, and thankful characteristics. But to the person, social environment change is profound. It is because of the change of environment that Pip's personality has changed, changing from an innocent young man full of illusion for life to a luxurious and power controlled adult. "The novel is a satire upon the society and those people who dream to enter the higher society" (GUO, 2009, p. 198).

Pip's characteristic was really changing after he met Miss Estella. He knew that the gap between the upper class and lower class, and wanted to live a life of the gentleman. Coincidentally with the unknown benefactor's help, Pip gradually grew up into a young man with great expectations. With his help, Pip came to the dream in London. The changes of social environment are great changes happening inside of Pip, which also let him change from a kind of pure young man into a future benefit and the social status to give up the family's secular youth. Thus, a person without the ability of autoimmune is often only in front of the environment a slave to it, and even losing his human side.

The love recovery of Pip mainly comes from the love of two people. They are Magwitch and Joe, who could be called Pip's father. Pip's emotional change to Magwitch's is his moral conscience symbolic. Magwitch's suddenly coming back from abroad as a bolt from the blue crushed Pip's golden dream, like lightning, and has recovered from the morality, Pip made himself realize that he had rebelled against Joe and his good nature. Magwitch to Pip is very kind, because Pip is the only person who has shown the warmth and kindness. When Pip was a child, Magwitch, who was a hungry beggar, received food from Pip. So he gave Pip the great expectations, but when Pip realized that the one to fund him was a prisoner, he produced the disgust and hatred mood. But at the thought that he finally will be sentenced to death, Pip has become sympathetic for him. The time after Magwitch has went to prison, Pip has been waiting for him at his side until the poor old man died. From then on, it can be seen that Pip's charity has recovered. When Magwitch is about to die, the heart of Pip has gone to Joe and Biddy, yet the fire of his conscience is lit up. Later, Pip is in debt-ridden. When hearing the news that Joe and Biddy are married, he is heartfelt blessing for them, and apologizes for his selfishness and being an ungrateful person, swearing to make money back to Joe. "He becomes mature and at last locates his own right place in life" (LIU, 2008, p. 237).

There involves social injustice problems in Pip's great expectations, for Pip is fairly a specimen of a certain type of mentality so close to Dickens' satiric spirit, and it is still a great education novel for all of us to learn. At that time, the bourgeois society is the main force that causes people like Pip to search for power and money, and those are also oppressed by the upper class who are poor and innocent. And in the end, all the kind-hearted people will embrace the endowment of life, just like Pip, so in the end "he finds his true humanity, and then to be a man what he should be" (WANG, 2011, p. 280).

### Conclusion

*Great Expectations* is autobiographical. Dickens in real life and Pip in the novel experienced similar joys, sorrows, and frustrations in rising from humble beginnings to success and wealth. The novel can be said to have broken Dickens' character which has always been the perfect, the limitations of single character (such as the victim of David Copperfield, always doing things for others, never made a mistake) thus shaping Pip a flesh and blood, emotional man. And in this book, we have much to concern, especially from the characteristic description of the hero Pip.

There are disadvantages and advantages of ordinary people. As a realistic writer, Charles Dickens is through the description of the ordinary people, reflecting the reality in his life time. No one is perfect, and everyone has its markers. Seeing from the novel the hero Pip, we still even have a lot to learn, such as his kindness, his strength, and his optimistic attitude, etc. Individual growth is a process of growing to be a perfect oneself. Though Pip's great expectations disillusion, he finally still gets back to the good moral character, and begins a new life.

We are now in the information age, living a happy life in this world, but still we lack the spirit of self-reliance, and depend on our parents to reach our goals. In order to achieve our goal in the future, whether big or small, success or failure, one should depend on himself/herself, relying on his or her own ability to realize the great expectations. In this period "by experiencing defeats and setbacks, to achieve career through our own struggle is the most ambitious" (ZHAI, 2010, p. 237).

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