



SPOILER

Charles Dickens, *Great Expectations*

After a few years, the escaped convict whom Pip helped as a boy—Abel Magwitch—surprises him and tells him that *he* is the benefactor! He had been so moved by Pip’s help that he made a fortune in Australia so that Pip could become a gentleman. Pip agrees to help Magwitch escape by boat, and in time actually befriends and comes to understand the man. Pip learns that Magwitch is actually Estella’s father. During a visit to Miss Havisham, the old lady repents of her past sins, admitting that she raised the orphan Estella to break men’s hearts in revenge for her own heartbreak. Almost as a eulogy, Pip delivers a discerning reflection on Miss Havisham’s spiritual state, and forgives her (ch.49). Later that day she falls into the fire and burns to death. Pip is crushed when he learns that Estella has married Bentley Drummle, a detestable man.

Pip helps Magwitch attempt to escape by rowboat down the Thames. The police catch them, however, and Pip’s “Great Expectations” dissolve as his fortune is confiscated. Pip has learned a lesson, however, and stops his futile hunt for a fantasy life (ch.57). He returns to his humble family, heals his relationship with Joe, and travels overseas to work with Herbert Pocket for several years. Upon his return, he wanders through Miss Havisham’s estate and finds Estella there, a changed woman after having been badly treated by her late husband. The two of them depart together, and Pip “saw no shadow of another parting from her”.



