



## Great Expectations

Charles Dickens (1812 - 1870)

Read by:	Mark F. Smith	Format:	MP3 CD in DVD case
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*Great Expectations* was Dickens' thirteenth and penultimate novel, written when he was at the height of his powers and deemed to be the voice of Victorian England. It was published in 1861, again after having been serialized in Dickens's literary periodical *All Year Round*. Despite Dickens' own assessment that it might very well be his best work, it did not meet with universal praise. Although Thomas Carlyle dismissed Pip and his book in an off the cuff comment, several critics of the time and later gave it the praise it so obviously deserves. It remains one of Dickens' most popular novels, and, as it is a *bildungsroman*, a "coming of age" novel, written in the first person of the protagonist, Pip, it is all but required reading for any student or young adult and more than suitable reading for any lover of good fiction. The Romantic who's lived long enough to learn the more painful lessons of life is, by nature, a lover

of beginnings – great beginnings with their promise and potential. Pip is an orphan who starts from a place of little comfort, but for the ministrations of good Joe, the blacksmith. And yet Pip is also a character, who through no conscious act or intent of his own, soon embarks on a great beginning with equal expectations. He lives fully experiencing the pain and joys of love, found, lost and, perhaps, found again. He travels a high road allowed very few in that time and place, and we are the beneficiaries of those travels having been invited along for the ride. (*Summary by Michael Hogan*)

**Charles John Huffam Dickens** (February 7, 1812 – June 9, 1870) was an English novelist in the mid-19th Century who was one of the most prolific, popular and politically radical in the English language. He worked as a journalist as a young man before turning to fiction. His first novel, *The Pickwick Papers*, was a great success and was followed by one blockbuster after another. He wrote at a torrid pace; most of his books first appeared as serialized chapters in weekly and monthly periodicals before being published as novels. He had a genius for uncanny caricatures of "personality types", which he tagged with catchy names and mannerisms that are still part of the cultural lexicon to this day.

He was born into a family of moderate means that went bankrupt during his early childhood, forcing Dickens to go to work at age twelve pasting labels on jars of bootblack for six schillings a week. His exposure to the lives of those oppressed by the cruelty and injustice of the industrializing world drove him to depict aspects of society that had been shunted aside with an unprecedented level of detail and candor. His insight into human nature was well-rounded, however, and his tales are equally beloved for their qualities of generosity, faith, compassion, and triumph of good over evil.

Dickens married Catherine Thompson Hogarth in 1838, who bore him ten children. He separated from her in 1858 but did not divorce, maintaining her in a separate residence until her death. He narrowly escaped death in a railroad crash in 1865 when all the first class carriages save Dickens' plunged off a bridge under repair. After the incident his writing trailed off, and he went on tour giving readings of his bestsellers, which were immensely popular and notable for their passion and for his ability to portray the characters in unique voices.