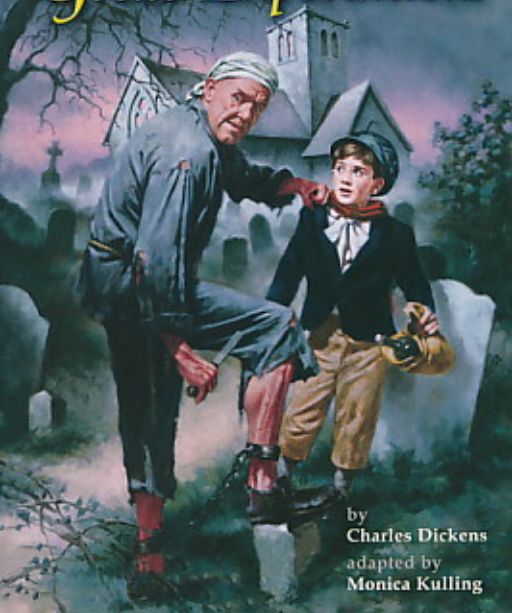


STEPPING STONES™

a chapter book

CLASSIC

Great Expectations



by
Charles Dickens
adapted by
Monica Kulling

My first memory is of a churchyard. I was only seven years old, and I was frightened of the graves that were all around me. My father and mother were buried there. I began to cry. My sobs filled the churchyard.

"What's that noise?" cried a terrible voice.

A man was hiding behind one of the gravestones!

"Keep still, you little devil, or I'll cut your throat!"

The man came toward me. He was wet and muddy. Leg irons bound his ankles. He limped and shivered and glared and growled. He was an escaped prisoner.

All at once, the stranger grabbed me by the chin.

"Don't cut my throat, sir," I pleaded.

"Tell me your name! Quick!"

"Pip," I said. "Pip, sir."

"Show me where you live," said the man. "Point out the place."

I pointed to our village. It was about a mile from the church and twenty miles from the sea.

Suddenly the man picked me up and turned me upside down! My pockets were empty except for one piece of bread, which fell to the ground.

Then the prisoner sat me on a gravestone. He tore into the bread like a starving animal.

"Boy," he said between bites, "where's your mother?"

"There, sir!" I said, pointing to the gravestone over the man's shoulder.

The man was terrified. He thought my mother was standing behind him!

He started to run past me. Then he

stopped and quickly looked over his shoulder.

"There, sir," I explained, timidly.

I pointed at the gravestone. "That's my mother. And that's my father lying beside her."

"Ha!" he muttered. "Who do you live with, then?"

"My sister, sir—Mrs. Joe Gargery—wife of Joe Gargery, the blacksmith, sir."

"Blacksmith, eh?" he said. He looked down at his leg irons. Then he limped over to me, grabbed my arms, and tilted me backward. He looked powerfully down into my eyes. I looked helplessly up into his.

"Know what a file is?" he demanded.

"Yes, sir."

"You know what wittles is?"

"It's food, sir," I said.

"You get me a file," he said, tilting me farther backward. "And you get me wittles. And I'll let you live."

I was so weak and scared that I clung

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Seven-year-old Pip is an orphan. He lives with his nasty older sister and works as a blacksmith's apprentice. Pip dreams of a better life but has no idea how to turn his luck around. Then a mysterious stranger decides to make all of Pip's dreams come true. Pip's lonely life is about to change forever. Will his great expectations be realized? Or will he learn that money and power are worthless without love and friendship?