





Great Expectations: (b) A father figure?

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- ❖ **Lesson focus:** To examine whether Pip has a father figure in the novel.
- ❖ **Opening exercise:** Students write a dictionary definition of the word 'father'.
 - Compare these, and look at some genuine dictionary definitions, too.
 - You could discuss fathers in stories that are known to the class, from folk-tales to films.
- ❖ **Textual examination:** Both Magwitch and Joe could be seen as father-figures for Pip.
 - Compare the two characters with your definitions from the opening exercise.
 - List the fatherly qualities which each has, and the factors which prevent Pip seeing them as father-like.
 - Look at the openings of Chapters 1 and 59. Is there any sense in which either Miss Havisham or Herbert Pocket is 'father-like'? If so, why?
- ❖ **Recreative task:** Imagine that Magwitch writes a letter to Pip, (which he never sends), at the same time that he first contacts Mr Jaggers.
 - Write the letter.
- ❖ **Critical task:** See  Texts in detail > *Great Expectations* > Themes > Parents and children. Pip's problems are largely caused by the fact that he has never known his parents, and he cannot settle until he has learned to accept fatherly advice and influence.
 - Analyse one or two passages in the light of this statement. (See  Texts in detail > *Great Expectations* > Critical approaches > Analysing a passage.)
- ❖ **Extension task:** Read to the students the story of the Prodigal Son from the Bible, in Luke chapter 15 (see  Famous stories from the Bible: the Prodigal Son).
 - What parallels are there between this story and *Great Expectations*, especially in the roles of the son in the Bible story and Pip?
 - Does this suggest that Dickens has a religious purpose? See  Texts in detail > *Great Expectations* > Religious / philosophical context > Dickens' religious views.