[**Mister Pip (Writing Portfolio)**](http://peech.mtaspiring.edutronic.net/mister-pip-writing-portfolio/)

In the novel, “Mister Pip,” written by Lloyd Jones, the main character we get to know is Matilda. She is retelling the story of her adolescence, growing up on the island during a period of war, and blockade. She lives with her mother, Dolores, who is a strict Christian, her father, however, lives in Australia, working for the mining company which had previously exploited the island of Bougainville, causing the civil war. During the civil war, all the teachers escape the island, and as a result, the only school in the village has to shut down. After a long period of living day by day, Mr Watts, the only white man on the island, becomes a teacher for the children. He begins reading , “Great Expectations,” and introduces “Pip,” the main character in the novel to the children, including Matilda.

The author’s purpose in writing this book is to show how books can be a great tool for escaping stress and threats in life. When Matilda is listening to Mr Watts reading “Great Expectations”, she can escape into the world that Dolores cannot be in. All her worries are gone, she is happy and relieved, despite the fact that her life can be in danger anytime. Also, the author wrote this book to explain how a character in the book can inspire someone’s life, like Pip, he has inspired Matilda to become educated, accept who she is and the terrible situations around her. “Some stories will help you find happiness, and truth. Some stories teach you not to make the same mistake twice. These ones offer instruction. Look here to the good book.” – this is referring to the Bible, which is Dolores’s method of escapism.

As Mr Watts reads the book, Matilda develops a very close bond with Pip because she draws parallels with his life, and hers. Pip is an orphan, and Matilda loses her father to the white man, they both have passion to become educated. Matilda lives in a rural area, she learns a lot from the elders in the village about survival, and old traditions that will be passed down from one generation to another, whereas, Pip learns through textbooks. Because of these similarities, Matilda becomes attached to Pip very quickly, she finds out over the course of the story that through the power of escapism, she can achieve anything, she can experience things that she would never be able to experience due to her physical entrapment  on the island under the ongoing war. She is also able to experience the western world without actually being there. The author wants to highlight that reading a book isn’t about just assimilating the story, and afterward continuing with your life like normal, he illustrates that books are much more than that, and that characters in the real world can connect to the characters in the novel, and assimilate not just a story, but rather messages will remain with them forever. This is shown in the quote, “Some stories will help you find happiness, and truth. Some stories teach you not to make the same mistake twice. These ones offer instruction. Look here to the good book.”

Matilda, at one point, writes  the main character’s name, “Pip” in the sand on the beach. Dolores (her mother) is angry, and thinks she should be writing the ancestor’s names on the sand rather than the name of someone that doesn’t exist. She however, feels detached from these ancestors she know nothing about, whereas she has been inside Pip’s head, and heard his thoughts. This is shown when Matilda reflects on her connections with Pip, “I felt closer to him than the names of those strangers she made me write in the sand.” This shows the power of escapism, and that Matilda feels connected to Pip more than her own family. Her mother does not understand this, and disapproves of her daughter reading this book. She is not very book smart, but rather street smart, and very religious. She values these over any book her daughter, reads, and does not understand how she escapes into it. The power of the words on the page scare her, and she fears she’s losing her daughter to Pip. She starts to confront Mr Watts, criticizes him, and eventually steals the book. Dolores believes that this is the right thing as she is trying to save her daughter. The white world has already taken her husband, and therefore, she does not want to lose her daughter again to Pip of Victorian England.

Dolores and Matilda begin having conflicts about their conviction, and what is seen as right in the white man’s world but is wrong in the Christian’s world. Matilda believes in the power of books, and words, whereas Dolores believes in her religion. Subsequently, this leads to a conflict between Matilda, and Dolores as they are lying down on the floor, Matilda claims that she can hear the voice of Pip, and that she has faith in him. “You can’t hear the devil’s voice, but you can hear Pip’s,” this shows that Matilda is so influenced by the character in text, she believes in a fictional character more than the teaching taught by her mother.

Matilda is influenced by Pip again when the redskin soldiers come to the village, and burn all their possessions as a result of a misconception between the two groups: the redskins, and the rebels. Great Expectations is lost, and Matilda is highly discouraged with this outcome.. Mr Watts helps her on though as he says to her “these losses severe though, they may seem, remind us of what no man can take, our minds and our imaginations.”, this inspires Matilda to recreate the fragments of Great Expectations that she concealed in her mind to write down on paper. Matilda is still able to regain the cherished memories because the redskins cannot physically remove those memories from her. This instance is excellent in showing that you don’t need to read a novel for yourself to be inspired by the story that it tells. In the way that Jones has illustrated this book, he has built a way for the readers to understand the power of books, and how escapism is an influential force. After the redskins burn all their possessions, they then kill Mr Watts, and Dolores. Matilda runs off to the river, and is caught up in a flood. At this point, Matilda could easily have given up, lost hope or thought it was worthless to continue in the absence of his family, and the dangerous company of the redskin soldiers. However, it is Pip that influences her, gives her strength, and encourages her to fight tor remain alive. She begins to think about Mr Jaggers who is Pip’s guardian in Great Expectations, he is always there for Pip, and protects him like his own child. “Now I knew fear as Pip had known it when Magwitch threatened to eat his heart, and liver. I felt singled out by this darkness that had descended over our lives.” This quote shows that the power of books can navigate you through times of adversity and hardships. Instead of just being depressed, and giving up the will to live, Matilda can turn into something more soothing such as Great Expectations, and Pip.

What Matilda had to go through was an utterly shocking event, and it is sad to see that an event like this is still happening in the today’s world. There are a lot of people today who have to flee from their homes due to daily bombing, murder, and continuous threats from terrorist groups, such as ISIS. The book is written by a thirteen year old girl’s perspective so it makes me realise how difficult it must have been for her, and other children around the world to have their parents taken away. In this novel, I am able to relate to Matilda because my grandfather also lost his parents to the Chinese Civil War in the 1940s. He was very young and had to flee to Thailand without a company of his parents. I have also been connected to Matilda on Pip’s influence on her. When I’m sad, I sometimes read a book to help me relax and this helps me to go through the times of hardships in my life.

Matilda has grown into a confident woman,and this is largely due to the influence Pip, and Mr Watt’s introduction to Great Expectations. Matilda is, in spite of fighting, very close to her mother. She tells us that she has to carry complex feelings of guilt, and shame because her mother did not confess to stealing “Great Expectations” in time to save the village possessions from the redskins fire. As Matilda writes at the end of the novel, expressing her ownership of both the original text, and her own, “Pip was my story, even if I was once a girl and my face black as the shining light. Pip is my story and in the next day I would try where Pip had failed.” The changing of tense from “was” to “is”, from past to present demonstrates the parallel journey of the character, “Pip” to Matilda’s.