

Racism and Slavery in Mark Twain's classic *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*

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Abstracts

American literature offers a unique view on the world. When tracing the evolution of American literature, people look at themes like the American Dream, coming of age, justice and injustice, the pursuit of happiness and freedom and dignity. Mark Twain's literary contemporaries include William Dean Howells and Henry James. Both are prominent characters in American literary realism. Twain's classic *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* has long been regarded as one of the most essential adventure stories written for students and readers. The purpose of this paper is to describe American literature and highlight the problems faced by Twain's characters in *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*. *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* has controversial characters and plot. The study discusses characters, cultural issues and satire, which are prevalent throughout the novel.

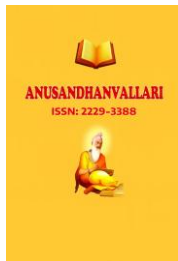
Keywords: Culture, Culture Conflicts, Satire, Racism and society

Introduction

Mark Twain was born in Missouri as Samuel Langhorne Clemens in November 1835. He resided in Hannibal, a small township, until he was eighteen years old. After his father died in 1847, Clemens quit school to become a printer's apprentice and work for the Missouri Courier. He abandoned his work in 1857 to become a riverboat pilot and his experience on the Mississippi River served as a major source for his writing. There, he encountered all the various sorts of human nature that can be found in fiction, biography or history. During the Civil War in 1861, Clemens worked as an army volunteer, a gold prospector in Nevada and a journalist before launching his writing career. Samuel Clemens adopted the pseudonym Mark Twain in 1863, when he used it as the signature on a satirical travel letter. In the 1870s and 1880s, he penned several of his most famous books, including *The Innocents Abroad* (1869), *Roughing It* (1872), *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer* (1876), *Life on the Mississippi* (1883) and his "masterpiece," *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* (1885). His writing is intertwined with a lot of travel and some of Clemens' most famous hilarious work may be found in the descriptions of his excursions. His daughter died when he was on a world-wide lecture tour to recover from bankruptcy in 1894, which greatly altered the tone of his subsequent writing.

Objective

The present study aims to describe the internal and external conflict faced by the main characters in *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, to find out the way of conflict is resolved in *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* and to identify the impact of racism and slavery in *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*.



Review of Literature

G.Menaka and G.Sankar observe that Despite the fact that Mark Twain is a comedic writer who frequently handles his subjects satirically, *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* discusses slavery and racial devastation from one character to another, as well as certain palaces. Racism in today's world is camouflaged and referred to as symbolic racism, modern racism, or aversive racism. But his most well-known work.

Fahmi Salim Hameed points out that Mark Twain's works have always been both amusing and witty, yet they have always demonstrated seriousness when dealing with issues such as racism and the slave trade. He has always done justice to African slaves who were treated as cattle while everyone else believed it was acceptable.

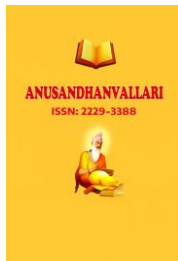
Discussion

Unpacking Mark Twain's Enduring Legacy in America-Costas Report Mark Twain played a pivotal role in establishing a distinctly American voice in literature by abandoning the formal English styles of the period and instead embracing the common, vernacular language of everyday Americans, a contribution so profound. In *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, Mark Twain has used humor and sarcasm to attack cultural conventions. He depicts the vibrant essence of American life and deliver a strong social commentary, particularly on themes like slavery and injustice, solidifying his reputation.

The story begins with Huckleberry recalling the events of the previous book, *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer* and explaining how he and Tom have discovered gold and become wealthy. They earned \$6,000 each, which Judge Thatcher held in trust for them. Given that his father is a drinker, the fourteen-year-old child is taken in by Widow Douglas and her sister, Miss Watson, who are determined to teach and "civilize" him. Huckleberry, on the other hand, has a difficult time adjusting to their way of life and enjoys sleeping in the woods, wearing rags, swearing and smoking, so he goes away. After Huckleberry returns home, Tom invites him to a gathering where they start a group named "Tom Sawyer's Gang".

Huckleberry eventually grows tired of the gang because no one is truly killed or robbed and he begins to adjust. One winter night, Huckleberry discovers and traces in the snow. He fears that his father has left them. He goes to Judge Thatcher to surrender the money. Back at Widow's house, the youngster is met by his father, who violently beats him after discovering he can read and write. Aside from trying to prevent Huckleberry from attending school, Pap demands Huck's money. After Widow's unsuccessful attempts to push him away from Huckleberry, Pap kidnaps him and brings him to a cabin on the river. Huckleberry flees the cottage by pretending to be dead due to Pap's continual drunken beatings and abuse. After exploring around Jackson's Island, Huckleberry meets Jim, Miss Watson's slave who has fled after learning she intends to sell him. The two become buddies and sail down the Mississippi River towards the states that have abolished slavery.

Despite his friendship with Jim, Huckleberry frequently questions the legality and morality of assisting a fugitive slave. Huckleberry and Jim meet people from various walks of life along the river. Two of the most important ones are the two scammers who pose as the Duke and the Dauphin and sell Jim to Tom Sawyer's aunt and uncle's property. After, the Aunt Sally mistakes Huckleberry for Tom. Tom for her other nephew, Sid, the boys devise a scheme to save Jim. Huck and Tom struggle to save him in a variety of seemingly futile methods and when they ultimately succeed, Tom is shot in the leg. Jim gives up his freedom to help the youngster, but he is quickly imprisoned. They soon discover that Jim is a free man, as Miss Watson, who died two months previously, specified in her bequest. Aunt Sally eventually offers to adopt Huck, but he declines, explaining that he has had enough of "civilizing" and wishes to embark on another adventure.



The controversy *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* is regarded as one of the greatest literary works of all time. Many historians see it as a modern classic, a work that is beyond its time and a must-read. However, as Johnson notes: “the novel has generated controversy in every year since it was published in 1884” (6) and it is often regarded as one of the most radical and darkest texts in the American canon. She characterizes the book as follows:

For one thing, it represents the breaking of federal law as moral. It recommends disobedience and defiance on the part of young people. It portrays churchgoers as hypocritical and their religion as silly; it shows respected community leaders to be cruel and immoral. The most admirable characters in the book habitually lie and steal and loaf. One is illiterate and the other is a barely literate truant from school. (7)

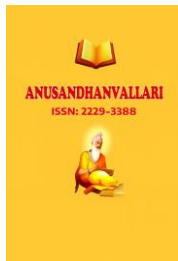
The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn was originally conceived and commonly perceived as a book for young boys, but it gradually expanded into a work about social standards, racism, mature themes and perplexing intellectual concerns. Shortly after it was published, reviewers criticized it as so immoral and vivid in terrible detail that it should be kept away from boys like poison.

The novel begins with a notification from G. G. Chief of Ordnance, which states: “PERSONS attempting to find a motive in this narrative will be prosecuted; persons attempting to find a moral in it will be banished; persons attempting to find a plot in it will be shot” (TAHF 5). This note serves as an introduction not just to the story itself, but also to the controversy, satire and harsh humor that the work contains. Chadwick-Joshua states as: “...debate has surrounded Mark Twain’s *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* since its publication, but none has been more pervasive, explosive and divisive than that surrounding the issue of race” (6).

Slavery had already been abolished when Twain wrote *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, but the subject is heavily explored in the novel, as one of the main characters, Jim is a slave. Furthermore, Jim is an illiterate African American, but Twain imbues his character with a deep feeling of selflessness and humanity. Johnson says about the novels thus: “inextricably tied to its frequent use of an obnoxious racial epithet” (42). The word nigger appears in the work over 200 times since it is regularly used by the characters.

Due to racism, the novel was not first included from classrooms in 1957 by the New York City Board of Education. It is evident from Wrobel words: “explaining that “black protesters, offended by the repetitions of “nigger” (...), Twain’s minstrel-like portrayal of the escaped slave Jim and black characters in general and the negative traits assigned to blacks, objected to the use of Huck Finn in English courses” (3). According to Levy reviews: “barely mentioned race at all; they talked about children and what message the book sent them” (quoted Nogowski 20). Furthermore, *Huckleberry’s* demeanor frequently causes unhappiness, particularly give his rebellious personality and deviant behavior. Numerous critics specifically criticize the manner in which Huck narrates the story. Railton argues against the “systematic use of bad grammar and an employment of inelegant expressions” (14).

Many experts agree on another crucial issue in the novel’s ending. While Marx “brings Western humor to perfection while transcending the narrow limits of its conventions” (423), he asserts that its finale is just the opposite. He backs up his assertion by arguing that the readers are compelled to set aside many of the emotions produced earlier, because the most significant motive of Jim’s independence, is made the object of nonsense at the end of the novel. Many analysts remain unsure whether the finale criticizes or praises the ideas of freedom and individualism that the characters’ work so hard to accomplish throughout the story. Nonetheless, modern readers see the novel as the story of a naughty young kid maturing into an adult and discovering his moral compass through his friendship with Jim.



Culture

There are three types of cultural motifs in *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*. First, they are embodied in the cultural imprints that are mirrored in the characters' behavior. The Widow Douglas, Miss Watson and Aunt Polly restraints on Huckleberry's behavior, habits and thoughts, Huckleberry and Jim's behavior under the slavery system, black people's superstitions and niggers would come miles to hear Jim tell about it. The black characters' stupidity is evident throughout the novel. The slaveholding system at the period has influenced the blacks, who lacks basic education and prefers superstitious methods of problem solving. Tom's rigid behavior is also a big sign. Second, they are reflected in the shackles left by culture in people's brains, such as Huckleberry's internal fight to help free the black slaves, Jim's fear of all kinds of customs and so on. Third, they are the imprints of the hidden culture in the social system, the influence of slavery on society of all kinds of explicit and implicit rules and regulations, the social customs along the Mississippi River, the family feuds that are minor but have accumulated over time and all kinds of lynching witnessed along the way. K. Saravanan points out "People believe strongly that culture is an ultimate identification. But our ancestors have taught us that culture is made for better and moral life except to disagree with others. Acceptance is the chief idea that is repeatedly taught in all religions and cultures" (6).

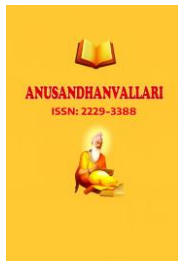
Culture conflicts

The Rousseauian conflict culture aims to promote development and evolution. Throughout his exploits, Huckleberry has crawled through civilized society, falling and rising again. Under the supervision of morality and the inhibition of reason, he gradually develops the scientific cultivation of the soul and then matures. This is precisely what Rousseau regards as the most reasonable evolutionary process: nature and culture clash in conflict and the natural man evolves into the new natural man. Huckleberry escapes from the chains of civilization and returns to nature, experiencing the boundless joys of nature and walks into the state of nature from civilized society, which is the first battle between nature and culture in the entire book. Later, he meets Jim, a black slave and becomes his companion, resulting in a strong revolutionary bond. Then he wants to help Jim break free from the bonds of servitude in civilized society, where he has suffered. This is the physical manifestation of his inner fight between nature and culture. Finally, he appears to have conquered the pressures of the slave environment and decides to assist Jim to in returning to nature for the second time.

When they meet two dregs of civilized society, the "Duke" and the "King," what they see appears to be the polar opposite of civilized culture; however, they are the two most obvious symbols of culture in the entire book and in the process of fighting them, nature and culture collide violently once more. Huckleberry grows for the third time. Negro Jim is imprisoned and Huckleberry returns to civilization in an attempt to rescue him. During the process, Huckleberry meets Tom Sawyer, another typical cultural representative. According to the text, he has a gut full of culture. However, throughout the rescue, Tom keeps adding to the complication by rejecting Huck and Jim's simple solution and instead going for the most convoluted rescue plan presented in the literature.

Satire

Satire is a kind of writing in which human flaws or weaknesses are highlighted and mocked, typically through irony or caricature. It is a complicated style of literature with political and social implications. Satire is usually comic, hence it is incompatible with tragedy. The Grangerfords and Shepardsons would be feuding in *Huckleberry Finn*. None of them understand how the feud began and they have no personal investment in it. Religion is satirized in *Huckleberry Finn* by having folks say one thing and then do another. For example, the



Grangerfords go to church to pray while also carrying guns in case they see a Shepardson and need to kill them. Huck Finn's social satire hits almost everyone who isn't the titular character. Huck Finn is an innocent youngster who enjoys nature, but the community regards him as a troublemaker and wanderer. This ostracisation doesn't affect Huck much, but it does mean he has an outsider's perspective on many of the events going on around him. As a child, he is also free of the adult world's assumptions. The novel is a social satire that comments on elements prevalent at the time of Twain's writing. He addresses how some people can be Christians and still support slavery. Social satire in literature is defined as pointing out a flaw and portraying it in a ludicrous manner. Satire is frequently social and political in tone. S. Sam Surya and M. Manimozh points out: "satire Twain shows the hypocrisy of white society and expresses his experience and attitude towards political happenings in the then United States" (169).

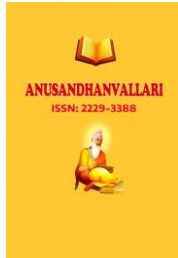
Literature is extremely important for both adults and children. Galda, Liang, & Cullinan say: "each reader builds an individual storehouse of language possibilities and draws on that wealth when speaking, writing, listening and reading" (25). This is especially true for children's books. Given their limited knowledge and experience, literature serves as a tool for learning about and comprehending the world around them, as well as coming to know themselves and other cultures. Children's novels are rapidly being produced and translated today, owing to the fact that children become independent readers from a young age. Furthermore, children represent the audience to whom authors and translators must pay the most care, particularly when translating works with reasons such as racism, slavery, or a satirical depiction of religion and death, all of which Twain used in *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*. As a result, during the translation process, they must carefully consider their techniques and be prepared for genuine criticism or praise.

Conclusion

Twain argues that practicing what is ethically decent can help individuals avoid society's cruel attitudes and views. Early childhood values and beliefs continue to influence modern culture, reminding us that being civilized is not always the best option. True principles rely on treating others with empathy and acknowledging their humanity, even in the face of societal racial discrimination. The story also has a steady stream of irony. These two facts demonstrate that going against society can be justified if it aligns with one's personal beliefs. The contrast between culture and environment is evident throughout the narrative. In fact, Mark Twain does not resolve the contradiction between society and environment. It is not a topic that can be solved fast, but rather one that allows for plenty of discussion. He just tells the readers about the state of modern humans following nature while being confined by culture.

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