

# Human nature and society presented through huckleberry finn

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Human Nature and Society presented through Huckleberry Finn. By Marina Brewer Mark Twain opposed many of the ideologies of his time. Through his novel Huckleberry Finn, he explored human nature and the society. He made apparent his dislike for them. The book focus's on the general treatment of black people during this time. Specifically, the author criticizes morality, slavery and racism. The characters encountered in Huckleberry Finn do not have very high moral standards. Many of them think and act very irrationally. In Chapter six, the newly appointed judge in town denied the widow and Judge Thatcher custody of Huck, despite Pap's abusive, alcohol dependent history. Here the author criticized the knowledge and decisions of society's authority figures. Throughout the book Twain attempts to portray the inhumane society he observed. People were treated very differently according to wealth, race or social stature. In Chapter eleven, Ms. Loftus sympathizes with Huck, a runaway and aids him in his travels, providing food and comfort. Ironically when the runaway was a black slave, her only concern was turning him in for a reward. As Huck travels further with Jim, their bond grows stronger. He realizes how Jim and others are being mistreated and taken advantage of. Despite this, Huck was still bombarded with the idealisms proposing slavery. When faced with the options of turning Jim in or not, it was a difficult choice for him to make. With his decision to assist Jim in his escape, he was overcome by guilt and remorse, when in fact, morally this was the honorable and right choice. Unfortunately Huck only came to this conclusion from his feelings of guilt towards Jim. " Dah you goes, de ole true Huck; de on'y white genleman dat ever kep 'his promises to ole Jim." (page 124). Jim's loyalty to Huck was infinite and he put so much

faith in Huck that he could not bear to betray Jim like that. In chapter seventeen, Huck encounters the Grangerford family. They are very hospitable towards a complete stranger and treat him like a son. The Grangerford's like most other families kept black slaves. While treating Huck with great respect, the families hatred and rivalries towards others were the cause of some very untimely deaths in their own family. Here Twain illustrates the underlying consequences of people's foolish actions and their disgraceful beliefs in oppression and discrimination against others.

Huckleberry Finn extensively travels the United States. In every town he visited, owning a slave or slaves was typical for most families. Slaves were not exclusive to the rich, most common households had them. Slaves were used to carry out menial and degrading tasks for their masters. They received absolutely no respect, with inhumane treatment. Slaves were traded, bought and sold like animals. Masters had no regard for their needs and without hesitation separated them from their families. Throughout the novel, Jim bitterly cried over the loss of his separated family. He longed to see his wife and children. The physical treatment the slaves endured was barbaric. Many were disciplined by whippings or would be starved to death by their masters. Twain recognized the unjust treatment of the blacks and depicted this by making Jim (a slave) one of the prominent characters in the book. He is surrounded by white inferiority. Jim, a black man, took the moral high ground and always made responsible, selfless resolutions. He risks his freedom to get medical attention for Tom. Who, in contrast had been playing a twisted game the whole time, pretending to free him. Tom new very well that Jim had been free for the past two months. Twain highlights society's

cruel treatment towards slaves using Tom's unwarranted actions. Racism was presented in many different ways throughout this novel. Most of the characters were openly aggressive and racist towards black people. Pap was appalled when he was confronted with the news that there was a black person who could vote. " but when they told me there was a state in this country where they'd let the nigger vote, I drawed out. I says I'd never vote again." (page 50) Pap's beliefs were quite typical of many white men and women of that time living in the United States. Twain purposely illustrated Pap as a horrible monstrous individual to have him represent the image of racist people. The least racist character in the book would be Huck. He befriends and puts his trust in a black person. Regardless of this, he made racist comments throughout the book numerous times. Either consciously or unconsciously Huck always made it evident that he and Jim were different. He never once forgets that Jim is black. " I do believe he cared just as much for his people as white folks does for their'n. It don't seem natural but I reckon its so." (page 201) In this quote the author attempted to portray his society's inaccurate beliefs that black people are so very different from white people, when really they are not. Huck was stunned when he discovered this. Mark Twain was a revolutionist. He was appalled by society's treatment of black people, and used his novel Huckleberry Finn as a vehicle to illustrate this. His use of characters with shameful morals and explanation of the consequences of slavery and racism were meant to educate the common man towards a better understanding of humanity.