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Literature, American Literature



Ellie Ng 7. 1. 2013 English Ms. Mark Response to Literature: The Prince and the Pauper In the literary work, The Prince and the Pauper by Mark Twain. The reader is introduced to a plot that is simple yet carefully crafted. Many themes and concepts were incorporated within this story. The central theme that would appeal to most would be how their clothing could change their status in a flash. They had dreamt of each others lives, fantasizing of the freedom that they would possess. The author had placed a great emphasis upon the contrasting between the prince, Edward Tudor and the pauper, Tom Canty. Edward was the long-awaited male heir to the throne. The story takes place on an autumn day in London. That day, two boys were born. The prince, Edward was born into the wealthy yet powerful Tudor household. The celebrations for the long awaited child included feasting, dancing, parades, throughout the day. On the other hand, Tom Canty was an unwanted child within the Canty household. He was unfortunately born into a family of thieves and beggars. "Edward Tudor, Prince of Wales, who lay lapped in silks and satins " then compared to Tom Canty, lapped in his poor rags (pg1). By examining the characters, the reader learns about the early fates of these two boys and the differences between them. Early in the story, readers are made aware of the vast differences that were apparent since the beginning. It pictures Tom wandering aimlessly, this time wandering farther from his home ever. Then he spots The Prince of Wales dressed beautifully. He spots Tom as the guard pulls him away from the fence. Thus, he invites Tom to tour the palace, serving him with delicious treats. Later proceeding asking him about his life out in the city. The prince was intrigued by the races and sports held at Offal Court. They switched their clothing and found out how

much they actually resembled each other. This part of the story is important because, it is of this moment that that they are beginning their ephemeral dream. From this quote " Thou hast the same hair, the same eyes, the same voice and manner, the same form and stature, the same face and countenance that I bear. Fared we forth naked, there is none could say which was you and which the Prince of Wales." one will come to understand that clothing does enhance nor deprive a person's character. When Edward came to notice of the bruise upon Tom's arm. He stormed in fury, paying no heed towards his apparel went and protested to the guard. The guard proceeded in throwing the prince out, assuming that he was a civilian. The two boys had switched lives with each other, currently living out their 'dream'. However, each met their own set of challenges that allowed them to understand each others lives with extended clarity. The later half of the narrative was dedicated to presenting a contrast between their current and previous lives. For Tom Canty, he was previously living in a poverty stricken area. Now currently living in the position of Prince of Wales, was a sure challenge. As for Edward Tudor, he was reduced from his highly dignified position of Prince of Wales into a nobody. For Tom, he was living his lifetime dream of being Prince. By contrary, he came to discover that the life that he was living was not as pleasant as he had expected it to be. He has to learn the royal etiquette and cope with how everyone had pronounced him as mad. The king had ordered for the Duke of Norfolk be killed so that Tom would be the immediate heir to the throne. However, when he became King his first act was to free the Duke of Norfolk. This shows Tom's true nature of his good heartedness. He had met his whipping-boy and learnt many things from him.

Appearing to others as if that he recovered from his memory loss and temporary loss of sanity. As for Edward, he had the utter misfortune of having to switch lives with Tom out of the multitudes of people. He had no idea that he had to beg for money, or else the consequences that he would have to bear was to get hit by Tom's father. Miles Hendon was introduced into this story attracted to the nobility of his character, however he had not once believed that Edward was the real prince. He also attempts to cure him of his 'delusions' by treating as if he was king. Edward is thus introduced to the society of his country that he had been shielded from previously. A sounding similarity between these two boys as they were living in their separate lives was that they were both considered mad. By the society, family, servants etc. We can assume that their dream lives was nowhere as pleasant as they had expected it to be. After closely analyzing the plot, the reader tends to discover a pattern that repeats itself. Hendon would lose the Edward but then later finding him again. You will also notice how Mark Twain had provided historical facts and history to certain monuments as to create the seeming reality within the story. He also had clearly understood the mannerism of stae affairs, dining etc. We also realise the different manners that both boys were contrasted in. Their separate enviroments had quite a different way of dealing with their apparent madness. Tom's mistakes were constantly overlooked. However, being used to living out in the streets, he had strong adaptation skills that Edward did not possess. Edward on the other hand was scorned and beaten for his ridiculous theories of him being Prince of Wales. He had weaker adaptation skills when compared to Tom, however his manner had his own way of making people obey him. A section

from the book, where Tom gains confidence from his decisions. While he was sentencing prisoners, he was fair and stern yet radiated kindness and compassion. He made certain that he had properly understood the crime committed and that the evidence was substantial before doing anything. This is a strange anomaly when contrasted with his father John Canty. His father would be described as a rather demonic and unreasonable person. However, his son had the strange qualities of a saint. He can also be compared to Huckleberry Finn as both of them responds to the innate goodness of the prisoners and is offended by the harsh injustice of the country's laws. Tom was making a wonderful reputation as the current leader. Meanwhile, Edward was also learning. Nevertheless, he was learning a different lesson than Tom. He gradually learned to hide his fears and be cautious of his actions. He had escaped from John Canty twice with pure wit and courage. The middle portion of the book is also when Edward is exposed to the society and the impact that the laws his father created was having on the people of his country. A once wealthy farmer was now being sold as a slave with his wife and children dead and his ears chooped off. When finally switched to the back to their normal roles. Edward was returned to his rightful position as the king. He had received the proper training adequate for a king. He had received an education fit for royals. Learning math, literature, history etc. Then he was disguised as a pauper roaming in the normal world. Learning of his countries economy and state. This had molded him to become a great leader. This story allows a person to laugh when first understanding that the boy's fates when you find out that they had switched without anyone knowing. Although I never had a personal experience that would allow me to

understand that feeling firsthand, it is amazing for me as a young reader to have this opportunity to be able to read this book. The focus of the literary work *The Prince and The Pauper* is an amazing work. Throughout the novel, we are able to witness the boys learning of different customs, adapting to different situations and having lessons taught to them in a wholly different way. The book left me thinking, what would I have done if I was placed in their position?