

The adventures of huckleberry finn by mark twain

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Satire and Social Commentary in Huck Finn In *Huckleberry Finn* by Mark Twain, he uses the complex satire of several character groups to emphasize each group's effect on Huck and how it parallels the real world.

Huck Finn contains an array of character groups, from provincial rural town citizens and religious aristocrats to shady con artists. The rural citizens are characterized mostly as drunkards and imbeciles who are uncivilized. The aristocrats are satirized for their religious attitudes and snobbish tendencies and determination to civilize others. Con artists and general ne'er-do-wells are shown to be greed driven and lack morals. Each group of characters affects Huck in a unique way and these characterizations relate to problems of the real world. In *Huck Finn* rural people like Pap and the citizens of Colonel Sherburn's town are portrayed as drunkards and simpletons who reinforce Huck's tainted conscience that is being molded by the society around him.

In the novel, Pap, Huck's father, is characterized as a close minded drunkard who deforms Huck's conscience. Pap forces Huck to live with him early in the novel and Huck bears witness to a drunken spiel. When discussing his experience with hearing of a free black man who could vote, he says " when they told me there was a State in this country where they'd let that n***** vote, I drew out. I says I'll never vote again" (37). Pap represents the conservative and close minded citizens who believe blacks aren't human and shouldn't have rights. Unfortunately, his ideas are being passed down directly to Huck, who is then forced into an internal battle between what he believes is right and what he has been taught by those around him.

This is also evident in the real world as ideas of hatred and discrimination have been passed down through generations of children and take years to reform and dissipate. Another aspect of rural life is shown through the description of Colonel Sherburn's town. Twain uses dialogue and varied dialect to show the difference between aristocrats and these country dwellers. This is evident when Huck overhears a man say " gimme a chaw ' v tobacker, Hank" (151). Twain then furthers this characterization and readers are able to discern the tobacco fixation and other dull minded aspects of the citizens.

Exposure to this lifestyle encourages Huck to believe that this is the ideal way to live. This also conflicts with what he believes to be true, similar to the situation with Pap. His society is once again trying to assimilate him. This too is prevalent in the real world when people refuse to explore new ideas and sometimes tend to stick to what they know. The satire of this group of characters deforms Huck's conscience, yet manages to also make social commentary about the real world.

The aristocrats in Huck Finn also try to assimilate Huck into a more civilized society with eccentric norms and the satire of this group show how civilization pushed Huck away. The beginning of the novel describes Huck's background as a country boy, but he is then forced to live with Widow Douglas and Ms. Watson. While living with these two, Huck feels out of place. One reason was because the Widow Douglas " allowed she would sivilize me; but it was rough living in the house all the time" (9). In addition, Miss Watson tried to educate Huck and teach him manners.

Huck found this very disagreeable and later attempted to escape. The aristocrats attempt at civilization caused Huck to feel slightly offended and as if he didn't belong. He wasn't able to enjoy the activities he liked before he was forced to live with these two caretakers. These methods of civilization used against him drove him away from society and to the river. Another aristocratic group is the Shepherdsons and Grangerfords along with their feud. During his stay with the Grangerfords, Huck encountered a feud between two families that was accepted by society.

Huck experienced many mannerisms of this aristocratic family and was led to believe this way of life was ideal and perfectly normal. One mannerism that stands out to readers is that when the Grangerfords went to church, "the men took their guns along" (120). This shows that the feud and massive killing of each family's members was accepted by the community and perceived as normal. This experience confuses Huck's conscience at first, but when he experiences the violence and deaths firsthand, he is driven away from the community. The satire of these two character groups emphasizes the reasons for Huck's detachment from society. The shady characters and criminals in Huck Finn are satirized for their greed and lack of morals; this satire emphasizes everything wrong with the society around Huck.

In the novel, two con artists pose as a duke and a king to rip off towns for money. The two criminals take their work to a small town and stage a fake play. The fake play is called the Royal Nonesuch and is set up to be a comedy, but the con artists end up taking the citizens money by leaving

during the middle of the show (162-167). The two con artists only get worse as they travel to yet another town further down the river and learn of a rich family with a deceased sibling. The two con artists pretend to be brothers within the family and attempt to steal the family fortune from two sisters (173-176). These nefarious deeds are appalling to Huck and he desperately tries to right the wrongs of his evil acquaintances.

The con artists disgust Huck and he is able to realize the evils of society firsthand. These two characters are characterized as greed driven and lacking morals, which eventually leads to their downfall. Their satire emphasizes the darker side of society and helps readers understand why Huck wishes to escape this society. Mark Twain is able to effectively use satire to emphasize his social commentary in Huck Finn. His comedic approach to the characterization of aristocrats, rural citizens, and con artists allows him to show the effect of society on Huck and how each group molds his conscience.

These groups' actions shape Huck's view of society. This satire also reflects ideas in the real world and makes the book able to be applied generally to modern situations. Huck Finn is a book in which the satire and characterization used by Mark Twain reinforces his main social commentary.