

Huckleberry finn's impact on modern american literature



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Ernest Hemingway once said " all modern American literature began with Huckleberry Finn. " Huckleberry Finn, a remarkably well written novel by Mark Twain, has received almost excessive praise since it was written and first published in 1884. On the other hand, it has been condemned for vulgarity and accused of stealing Uncle Tom's Cabin's thunder. Uncle Tom's Cabin is a similar novel about slavery written about thirty-two years earlier. Huckleberry Finn's impact on modern American literature was so great that it could be compared to Shakespeare's impact on European theater.

To be the true basis of modern American literature, a novel would have to be centered on American concepts. One of the most prominent American concepts is " the American Dream". Huckleberry Finn is the first novel to encompass " the American Dream", chronically many different Americans' approach to their own American dream, and how they chase it. One instance of this in Huckleberry Finn is when Huck and Jim coincidentally become raft-mates with two swindlers, going about their dream of finding fortune in an illegal and morally wrong way, taking advantage of ladies, children, the elderly and even men.

Twain does a superb job of demonstrating " the American dream" and the consequences of chasing it ruthlessly. Intertwined with the stories of dream chasers is another American concept, a black slave's mistreatment and his search for his dream, freedom. Although Twain wrote the novel after slavery was abolished, he set it several decades earlier, when slavery was still a fact of life. But even by Twain's time, things had not necessarily gotten much better for blacks in the South.

In this light, one might read Twain's depiction of slavery as an allegorical representation of the condition of blacks in the United States, even after the abolition of slavery. This is shown prominently throughout the novel through the co-protagonist, a black slave named Jim, and his adventures and misadventures. A particular instance is when Jim and Huck have been nothing but accommodating to the two swindlers mentioned previously but the swindlers report Jim as a runaway slave and have him captured for monetary gain.

The white swindlers show the unjust, repulsive way that blacks are being treated. Modern American literature is used expertly as a propaganda tool and Huckleberry Finn is one of the first instances of using literature to enlighten the masses about the evils of slavery. Another important contribution that Huckleberry Finn has made to American literature is vernacular speech. This is a key characteristic of American literature and helps to show American regionalism from that time period. Dialogue in the book is directly affected by the race of the speaker and his or her region of origin.

Through Twain's sometimes inappropriate character speech, a reader feels as if they are truly listening to people talk because of the uncensored feel to the dialogue. Huckleberry Finn has also been under fire for its "straight-talk", particularly for using racial slurs involving Jim and other slaves. However, Twain's use of racial slurs ironically helps portray the anti-racist attitude of the book. Opponents to the statement that Huckleberry Finn is the basis for all modern American literature would venture to say that Uncle Tom's Cabin by Harriet Beecher Stowe is a more influential novel.

An argument for this is that Uncle Tom's Cabin came before Huckleberry Finn and showed a more detailed account of the horrors of slavery because the novel was based simply on slavery. While it is correct that Uncle Tom's Cabin came before Mark Twain's novel, Huckleberry Finn is the clear winner because of the way Mark Twain subliminally weaves in his view on slavery and is able to lead any reader to understand why slavery is morally wrong, without the reader even realizing it.

While Shakespeare is inarguably the best playwright of all time, Huckleberry Finn takes on a similar title for American literature, though somewhat less grand. Huckleberry Finn is such a prime American work because of its encompassment of American concepts, ability to persuade, subliminal anti-slavery morality, and vernacular language, of which no other American novel before it can also brag, including Uncle Tom's Cabin. Huckleberry Finn is a novel entirely worthy of the honorable title "basis for all modern American literature".