

Reaction paper sample

Literature, American Literature



Reaction Paper #4: The Prince and the Pauper Monica Sharma I read The Prince and the Pauper by Mark Twain and enjoyed reading about a wealthy prince name Edward Tudor and a pauper name Tom Canty trading lives with each other and experiencing how it is like to live a life that is totally opposite from what they are used to. It really made me depressed to read the part, “ Drunkenness, riot and brawling were the order, there, every night and nearly all night long. Broken heads were as common as hunger in that place. Yet little Tom was not unhappy. He had a hard time of it, but did not know it.

It was the sort of time that all the Offal Court boys had, therefore he supposed it was the correct and comfortable thing. When he came home empty-handed at night, he knew his father would curse him and thrash him first, and that when he was done the awful grandmother would do it all over again and improve on it; and that away in the night his starving mother would slip to him stealthily with any miserable scrap or crust she had been able to save for him by going hungry herself, notwithstanding she was often caught in that sort of treason and soundly beaten for it by her husband. No child should have to go through that sort of violence and abuse, and most children who do usually ends up becoming traumatized and disturbed. After reading that part, it made me want to jump into the book and take Tom away from that horrid place. However, it was interesting to read about how despite the environment Tom was brought up in, Tom was still happy with his life. This made me think, “ How could you be happy with a life where your family abuses you and you’re forced to beg on the streets all day?! Tom even managed to obtain a proper education in his hometown since Father Andrew would always teach Tom “ the right ways” and how to read and write

in Latin. The part, “ His head grew to be full of these wonderful things, and many a night as he lay in the dark on his scant and offensive straw, tired, hungry, smarting from a thrashing, he unleashed his imagination and soon forgot his aches and pains in delicious picturings to himself of the charmed life of a petted prince in a regal palace.

One desire came in time to haunt him day and night: it was to see a real prince, with his own eyes,” showed me how Tom’s imagination served as an escape from the harsh reality he lives in. Not only that, but Tom’s imagination on becoming a prince makes Tom try to possess the qualities that a prince must always have, such as intelligence and etiquette. Because of this, it makes it easy for Tom to become mistaken as the real prince and blend in gradually.

Tom’s daydreaming also causes him to wander through the streets which leads him to his encounter with the prince and their exchange of clothes. I found it funny that just because the prince and the pauper changes clothes, they are treated based on the type of clothes they are wearing. For example, Tom is treated like a prince because he is wearing royal clothing and Edward, who is the real prince, becomes the pauper and gets treated like one when the guard of the palace sees Edward wearing Tom's rags and throws him out of the palace harshly and into the midst of a rowdy crowd. ... the soldier fetched him a sounding box on the ear that sent him whirling to the roadway, and said: “ Take that, thou beggars’ spawn, for what thou got’st me from his Highness! ” The crowd roared with laughter. The prince picked himself out of the mud, and made fiercely at the sentry, shouting: “ I am the Prince of Wales, my person is sacred; and thou shalt hang for laying

thy hand upon me! ” The soldier brought his halberd to a present-arms and said mockingly: “ I salute your gracious Highness. Then angrily, “ Be off, thou crazy rubbish! ” I realized that this brought exaggeration to Mark Twain’s quote who stated that “ Clothes make the man. Naked people have little or no influence on society,” since when the two boys exchange clothes, the prince quickly became the pauper and was treated like one because of the rags he was wearing and the pauper became the prince and was treated like royalty because of the wealthy clothes he was wearing.

This also symbolizes the fact that a person from a wealthy background is no different from a person that comes from a poor background since the two boys are easily mistaken to be each other despite their differences. I thought this was weird at first but the more I thought about it, the more it made sense to me. Tom and Edward both have the same height, weight, skin color and similar facial features, and even though they are two different people with two different backgrounds, they were able to easily switch places with each other.

If they hadn’t had similar appearances, or if Tom wasn’t intelligent and able to learn how to become a real king, the plot of the story would have been completely different. This meant that the characters in the book had to have certain characteristics in order to fit the plot Twain created. I loved reading the ending of the novel since it was a happy ending (and who doesn’t like a good happy ending?). In the end, when Edward returns to his rightful place in the throne, you can tell that his experience of living as a pauper affected him greatly.

He becomes a great king who is merciful with his people and makes it a priority to get rid of injustice laws. Also, Edward finds all the people who helped when he was a pauper, such as the lawyer from prison and the judge who was nice to him even though he was wrongfully accused of stealing, and rewards them to show his appreciation of their kindness. However, to all the people who mistreated him and their power, he gives them harsh punishment. Everyone finally gets what they truly deserve in the end, yay! :)