

Adventures of huckleberry finn

Literature



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Adventures of Huckleberry Finn Mark Twain is a renowned American novelist, who is known for incorporating humor, realism and good dose of satirical elements in his works, and his novel, The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn, is no exception to that trend. The novel is about the adventurous journey taken by Huck and Jim along the Mississippi River in an episodic form, with many new characters entering and going out of the story. However, the novel cannot be just tagged as an adventure story, as it takes a stereoscopic look at some of the skewed perspectives of the American society and its various long standing institutions. Thus, Mark Twain takes a satirical stance and “scornfully unveils the true nature of Southern decadence, slavery, racism, and humanity through his picaresque American satire.” (Burnett). So, this paper will analyze how Twain in the work, The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn satirizes the Southern antebellum society, by explaining the various satirical elements that are incorporated throughout the novel. A convincing example of satire can be seen in the first chapter itself, when Huck satirically pokes fun at Miss Watson for practicing slavery, even while trying to be a god fearing good person. Huck say “[b]y and by they fetched the niggers in and had prayers, and then everybody was off to bed” (Twain 9). This clearly implies that although Miss Watson prays daily to become a good Christian and importantly become a better person, she still holds slaves in tough conditions and treats them inferiorly. The other example is when Pap, the drunkard father of Huck, express outrage at the prospect of African Americans getting the opportunity to vote in the elections. He even refuses to cast his vote because of that. “...but when they told me there was a state in this country where they'd let that nigger vote, I drawed out. I says I'll never vote agin” (Twain 55). The satirical element is that African Americans

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are no way less than the White American, and actually many African Americans are more educated than Pap. Thus, Pap's feeling of 'outrage' is viewed satirically. Through these two examples, Twain exhibits his anti-racism stance and it is clear to him that racism and the resultant slavery exhibits the superior and dominating attitude of the White Americans in then Southern American society. They viewed slavery as a 'normal' labor and restricted the growth of African Americans, thus pushing Twain to make satirical comments about them. Twain also satirizes how certain families in Southern American society even after going to places of worship and praying there together in peace, can still take arms against each other. Twain brings out this satirical element by focusing on the longstanding family feud between the Grangerfords and the Shephertons. The families of Grangerfords and Shephertons have been fighting each other from the earlier times, and could not stand the presence of each other. However, on Sundays, members from both families will attend church service together, in well dressed attires and in a very civilized manner. After they vacate the church premises, they will be back to their normal selves exhibiting angst and violence against each others' family members, thus nullifying the "brotherly love, and such-like tiresomeness", which is preached in the church. (Twain 215). "Grangerfords and the Shephertons bring guns to the service and listen to the sermon, which is on brotherly love, and then go back, discussing the sermon, but obviously not letting it penetrate their hearts at all!" ("Twain's satire of American society"). Through this, Twain makes a satirical look at how people even while following religions' peaceful teachings exhibit violence against fellow humans beings, and importantly how places of worship and the religions has a whole, may not be able to have positive

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impacts on individuals' moral conduct. Another example of satire, which also had an ironical interpretation is the Huck's statement of equating the society to a bad place, while his raft as the peaceful place. When family feud between the Shepherdsons and the Grangerfords erupts into violence with Huck being the witness, he becomes so threatened by it that he does not want to discuss about it. He even feels regretful for leaving the raft and coming to that place on the shore. " We said there warn't no home like a raft, after all. Other places do seem so cramped up" (Twain 229). Although, they had struggling times in the raft, even drowning once, Huck still feels raft is a safer and better place. Thus, " Twain reminds us of the lurid and confined nature of society in contrast to the security of the raft through Huck's ironic observation" (Burnett). Another example of satire comes in the form of tearful confessional poems written by Emmaline Grangerford. By portraying her as someone who writes those kinds of poems, Twain wants to satirically use her as a caricature of individuals who mainly want to hold on to the earliest Romantic tradition of literatures, instead of moving with times. From the above analysis of various satirical elements found in The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn, it is clear that Mark Twain wanted to make satirical comments on various skewed and negative issues, traditions and institutions that was prevailing in the Southern American society in those times Works Cited Burnett, Brandon. " Huckleberry Finn as a Picaresque American Satire." Association of Young Journalists And Writers Universal Journal, 17 April 2006. Web. 15 Nov 2011. Twain, Mark. The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn. Echo Library, 2007 " Twain's satire of American society." E Notes, 10 Nov 2010. Web. 15 Nov 2011.