

Lion king: an allegory of huckleberry finn

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“ Oh yes, the past can hurt, you can run from it or you can learn from it”.

Rafiki’s famous words from Disney’s “ The Lion King” are not only words of motivation but are part of the allegoric complex that is “ The Lion King”.

Disney’s beloved classic is a direct allegory of the timeless American novel, “ The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn”, by Mark Twain.

Some of the most obvious evidence that “ The Lion King” (TLK) is an allegory of “ The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn” (TAHF) is the memorable characters. The antagonist of TAHF is a young boy, Huckleberry Finn. Huck is childish and adventurous throughout the novel. Though he does “ grow up”, even at the end you can see his “ wild side”: “ But I reckon I got to light out for the territory ahead of the rest, because Aunt Sally she’s going to adopt me and sivilize me, and I can’t stand it. I been there before.

” Huck may have grown up morally but he will never outgrow his need for adventure. The main character of TLK, Simba has an almost identical personality: “ Danger? Ha! I walk on the wild side. I laugh in the face of danger!” Simba’s confidence and love of adventure matches that of Huck. Tom Sawyer, Huck’s boyhood friend in the novel is presented in “ The Lion King” as Nala. Both characters think highly of themselves and like to overdo things.

Huck shows this is true when he says, “ Tom told me what his plan was, and I see in a minute it was worth fifteen of mine for style”. In TLK, Nala tells Simba that the watering hole is “ dumb” and that she wants to go somewhere better. The afore mentioned statements show the distinct characteristics of Nala were modeled after Tom. Another pair of

complementary characters are Widow Douglas and Mufasa. Both are care takers of mischievous little boys, and both have a strong sense of the way things should be.

Widow Douglas and Mufasa enforce their rules, whether or not the children are happy with it. The two antagonists are permanently affected by their kind yet firm care givers, several instances in both stories show them returning to their upbringings to aide them in making moral decisions. Pap is a prominent character in Huck's life. His corresponding character is Simba's Uncle Scar. Both insist mocking tradition (religion and succession policies, respectively) and are sarcastic and deceiving. In the film, Uncle Scar states that he will be sure to "practice his curtsy" for Simba.

One of the other major pairs of characters is Jim and Rafiki. They are both a little bit crazy, help their respective antagonists "discover" themselves, and they both teach lessons, sometimes playful sometimes painful. The minor characters in the stories also have "twins". Timon and Pumbaa represent the King and Duke respectively, Judge Thatcher is represented by Zazu, and the Hyenas are reminiscent of the "Southern People". The Hyenas are shown as dumb, obnoxious, "idiots" who are scavengers.

This characterization is equivalent to Twain's portrayal of the different types of "southerners"; the Grangerfords, Boggs and Sherburn, and Mary Jane's family. Each character in "The Lion King" was modeled after one of the timeless personalities in "The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn". The events in The Lion King were made to mirror those in Huck Finn. A minor event in the film, when Zazu was captured by the hyenas and "played with", mirrors

a significant part of the beginning of TAHF. In this instance the hyenas represent Pap and his playing with the judge to get his drinking money.

Another event that mirrors Twain's novel is the river-dance like song "Be prepared". The lyrics: "But we're talking kings and successions/Even you can't be caught unawares/So prepare for a chance of a lifetime/Be prepared for sensational news/A shining new era/Is tiptoeing nearer" are reminiscent of the Duke and King's planning to scam the sleepy southern towns. Both the song and the planning are full of high hopes and empty promises. One of the most important parallels is formed when Tom returns to the story (HF) and his "twin" Nala finds grown up Simba. In "The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn", Tom returns to the story as a foil character to Huck. The two are glad to see each other but it is very evident that Huck has grown up.

Huck is telling Tom about his plan to "steal" Jim. Note that he is very serious and does not sound like he is going to change his mind: "I know what you'll say. You'll say it's dirty, low-down business; but what if it is? I'm low down; and I'm a-going to steal him, and I want you keep mum and not let on. Will you?" Huck's seriousness about the matter makes him shine against Tom's immaturity. Towards the end of "The Lion King", Nala ventures out into the jungle and happens upon grown up Simba; she is disappointed in him, "What's happened to you? You're not the Simba I remember".

Simba shows his feelings of distress in her disappointment, "Listen, you think you can just show up and tell me how to live my life? You don't even know what I've been through!" Their conversation shows that despite the fact that they were just frolicking around the jungle, accompanied by "Can

you feel the love tonight”, their personalities are no longer as compatible. This parallel not only compares the stories’s plot lines but shows the antagonist’s development by comparing them with their foil. There is one event that occurs almost identically in the two stories, looking at and discussing the stars. In TAHF, Huck and Jim spent their nights on the raft, living life. Huck says that, “ It’s lovely to live on a raft.

We had the sky up there, all speckled with stars, and we used to lay on our backs and look up at them, and discuss about whether they was made or only just happened.” In “ The Lion King, Timon, Pumbaa, and Simba are lying on their backs looking up at the sky wondering what the stars were, “ They’re fireflies, that got stuck up in that big, bluish-black thing” and “ Oh. I always thought they were balls of gas burning billions of miles away”. This parallel shows that the writer of “ The Lion King” desired to capture the classic image of friends stargazing, as seen in “ The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn”. Each of examples illustrates the intentional reflection of “ The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn” in “ The Lion King”. One of the major themes in both works is that of moral development.

Both of the antagonists are faced with challenges and both work to overcome them, on their physical journeys they also embark on an odyssey that rearranges their moral systems. Each character is initially raised by a person with a strong moral system, intent of passing it on to their child. Huck’s mother figure, Widow Douglas, makes Huck go to school and church and use his manners, “ The widow rung a bell for supper, and you had to come to time. When you got to the table you couldn’t go right to eating, but you had to wait for the widow to tuck down her head and grumble a little

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over the victuals". In "The Lion King", Mufasa, Simba's father, explains to Simba that what he had done was very wrong; "You could have been killed! You deliberately disobeyed me! And what's worse: you put Nala in danger!" and "I'm only brave when I have to be.

Simba, being brave doesn't mean you go looking for trouble". Each of these instances show that the main characters had similar moral upbringings. The next step in the moral journey of the two is when the characters are considered "alive", physically and/or morally. Huck advances his moral process when he brings himself to apologize to Jim, despite him being a black man, "It was fifteen minutes before I could work myself up to go and humble myself to a n*****; but I done it, and I warn't ever sorry for it afterwards, neither". In "The Lion King", the "winds of change" told Rafiki that Simba was indeed alive and a changed Lion. Simba realized that the pride needed him and he had to sacrifice his simple life in order to do the right thing.

Both personalities change in a way that results in them giving up their habit of taking the easy way out, and doing what is right. Time passes and Huck and Simba's morals are re-examined and put to the test. Huck is faced with the challenge of turning Jim in or keeping him safe. Both possibilities were wrong and right at the same time. Huck stuck to his guns, "Well, I just felt sick.

But I says, I GOT to do it - I can't get OUT of it. Right then along comes a skiff with two men in it with guns, and they stopped and I stopped". Simba, faced with a similar challenge, returns to Pride Rock. He gives up his "no

worries" philosophy to fight for his old family, with the help of his new one. He is putting himself and his new friends in danger, but realizes that sitting around will get nothing done.

Both Huck and Simba passed these "moral tests", in similar situations and ways. Finally, at the ends of the works, the beloved characters overcome deceit and realize what their place is and what is truly good. The allegoric complex, "The Lion King" perfectly illustrates "The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn". The memorable personalities in the great American classic by Mark Twain match up with the beloved characters of Disney's "The Lion King". Almost every event in the film is a mirror image of one of those in the novel. While many of the themes between the two are similar, that of moral development is spot on.

Each antagonist develops his moral compass in the same way, through upbringing, awakening their moral systems, putting their morals to the test and finally realizing what is truly good. As beautifully said by Rascal Flatts, sometimes things happen but, "If one door opens to another door closed, keep on walking till you find a window"