

What does mark twain want to say in essay "advice to youth"

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Mark Twain's essay "Advice to Youth" written in 1882 mainly discusses valuable lessons Twain himself learned from his childhood that he then passes down to the audience, whether they be parents or children alike. His satirical essay delves deep into the fact that children, referred to as the 'youth', are being sculpted, and shaped, into the idea of society's standards. Twain expresses his opinions on how he believes that a child's uniqueness is becoming camouflaged and concealed by the expectations of others.

Being requested to write something pertaining to America's youth, Twain uses this opportunity to address society's standards and to criticize authoritative figures that allow the youth to become shaped by these measures. Mark then decides to create an essay where his sarcasm is targeted at these 'authorities'. This resembles Juvenalian satire. "Juvenalian satire, in literature, is any bitter and ironic criticism of contemporary persons and institutions that are filled with personal invective, angry moral indignation, and pessimism."

After reading the first few lines, many could potentially be anticipating the primary goal of this essay to be just another boring life lesson for children and adolescents. Twain then twists this assumption by using satire and humor. For example, his first piece of guidance is to "always obey your parents, when they are present." In other words, Twain is implying to create the illusion of living up to the expectations of parents because it makes everything simpler. He then goes on to say, that you should do as said above because they "think they know better than you." This implies that parents do not necessarily know more than a child in certain aspects. The example stated above is quite unexpected in a sense, as the audience was surely <https://assignbuster.com/what-does-mark-twain-want-to-say-in-essay-advice-to-youth/>

anticipating a simple “ do as they say, but not as they do” when instead, they were given a twist.

Twain also uses many rhetorical devices which then appeal to the audience. One example of one of these devices is logos as Twain says, “ You want to be very careful about lying; otherwise you are nearly sure to get caught. Once caught, you can never again be, in the eyes of good and pure, what you were before.” Twain is appealing to the logic of the audience, using this device to reason with them, using facts. Mark also uses a paradox when he states, “ If a person offend you, and you are in doubt as to whether it was intentional or not, do not resort to extreme measures; simply watch your chance and hit him with a brick. That will be sufficient. If you shall find that he had not intended any offense ... Yes, always avoid violence; in this age of charity and kindness, the time has gone by for such things.” This is a paradox because of the fact that it is a statement that, despite valid reasoning, leads to a conclusion that seems contradictory to itself.