

He adventures or huckleberry finn and master harold and the boys essay sample



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Mark Twain and Athol Fugard wrote the novel, *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, and the play, *Master Harold and the Boys*, which are parallel stories. Twain's *Huckleberry Finn*, is set in the United State during the time before the Civil War while Fugard's *Master Harold* is set during the nineteen fifties in South Africa. Both plots reveal the affects of poverty and the ability to make a living through the protagonist's lives. They illustrate that life is hard for the poor and it is hard to get ahead when you are at the bottom of the economic ladder.

Huckleberry Finn, Twain's protagonist, is a young preteen boy who is from a poverty stricken family. His mother has recently died and his father, a penniless alcoholic, has ignored the boy except to beat him. Huck is living with his foster mother, Widow Douglas. She tries to provide a good home for Huck, but many times does not understand the lack of societal values in him.

The Widow Douglas she took me for her son, and allowed she would sivilize me; but it was rough living in the house all the time, considering how dismal regular and decent the widow was in all her ways; and so when I couldn't stand it no longer I lit out. I got into my old rags and my sugar-hogshead again, and was free and satisfied. (Twain)

She simply cannot comprehend the lack of time and ability for this kind of teaching in a home where poverty abounds. It is not a priority to teach manners when survival is the prominent thought on each member of the family's minds. Huck must also face the same prejudice while in school and he does not like the institution of public school because it is for middle class children with middle class values. Someone like Huck cannot fit into their

mold. Hally, the protagonist in Fugard's play, also has trouble with school. He has drawn an irreverent picture of a teacher and has been spanked six times for the offense. He has not had the kind of attention that a middle class child would have because his mother is a poor working woman and his father is a crippled man who likes to drink. Hally has had to take on the role of an adult early in life instead of getting the training that he needs for his later years. He has come to the conclusion that " It's a bloody awful world when you come to think of it. People can be real bastards." (Fugard)

Both Huck and Hally have a black man who is older as a friend and father figure. They have learned most of the important lessons in life from these men and yet seen these men not accepted by society as an equal because of their race. When Hally tells Sam, his black friend, about his punishment at school, Sam relates how humiliating it is for a person to endure the canings from the justice system. It is obvious that these are endured by the poor because the middle and upper classes would have lawyers and are rarely suspected in the crimes that would warrant such a punishment. Sam must work hard and will never get ahead because he is black in South Africa during apartheid. He is even told by the boy who he has befriended " Don't be clever, Sam. It doesn't suit you." (Fugard) Jim, Huck's black friend, is in the same situation except that he is a slave. Jim must work hard, but sees no end to his slavery and will never be able to get ahead in a system that allows an individual to be owned by another. His only hope is to run away even though he knows that the odds are against him. Huck realizes that Jim is more than a penniless runaway slave and he is willing to sacrifice his life to prove it.

I was a-trembling, because I'd got to decide, forever, betwixt two things, and I knowed it. I studied a minute, sort of holding my breath, and then says to myself, " All right, then, I'll GO to hell." (Twain)

The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn ends with the element of hope. Pap Finn is dead and Huckleberry no longer has to endure his evil. Jim's owner, Miss Watson, has also died and she has set him free in her will. Jim will remain poor because of the way his race is viewed during that time in history, but he will be able to earn enough to survive on his own. *Master Harold and the Boys* ends less optimistic yet there is still a bit of hope. Hally leaves the scene angry, but Willie, another character in the play, reminds Sam that tomorrow will be a better day. Since Hally calmed down when he talked to his father, Sam can realize that he will calm down with him as well. It is important for his job that Sam not anger the white people in his town.

Twain and Fugard's stories are written about narratives a century apart. However, they both show the indifference of society to those who are poor. Society is the same whether it is in the United States in the eighteen fifties or South Africa in the nineteen fifties. One can only hope that there will come a day when those who are impoverished will have an equal chance along with everyone else.

Works Cited

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