

The business of  
racism: techniques  
used by dickens and  
haggard to lead the  
reader...



**ASSIGN  
BUSTER**

Charles Dickens' essay *The Noble Savage* and H. Rider Haggard's *King Solomon's Mines* both communicate an agenda set forth by the author. In his essay, Dickens conveys his distaste for the sympathy he sees bestowed upon the native people of Africa by his countrymen in a very direct manner. His writing is blunt and accusatory and he does not mince words. Haggard is more vague in his approach to the Zulu people. He depicts them as being both beneath him and deserving of respect. This is a difference of writing style only and does not lend itself to a difference in attitude. Regarding matters of race, Haggard is in agreement with Dickens. Dickens and Haggard are writing for different audiences. *The Noble Savage* appeared in Dickens well-known journal *Household Words*. This journal was written for a burgeoning middle class and focused on social commentary regarding the poor. It served as a sounding board for social reform making it an ideal locus for Dickens to share his opinion on native African culture. The first line of the essay states " I beg to say that I have not the least belief in the Noble Savage" (Dickens 805). He states his argument early drawing from Rousseau's idea that indigenous people are more noble. The word noble evokes a sympathy and respect in the reader that Dickens quickly begins to tear down. He attacks Rousseau's ideas immediately by saying the noble savage should be " civilised off the face of the earth" (Dickens 805). His use of the word noble is intended to be ironic and to create a false sympathy for the native African. In his essay, Dickens is arguing against the humanizing of the African natives. He begins one paragraph by saying, " It is not the miserable nature of the noble savage that is the new thing; it is the whimpering over him with maudlin admiration" (Dickens 806). He is offended by the suggestion of implementing these eccentrics into British society in <https://assignbuster.com/the-business-of-racism-techniques-used-by-dickens-and-haggard-to-lead-the-reader/>

their current manner. His views are being shared with a middle class that is in the crux of climbing up Britain's social ladder. By contrast, Haggard romanticizes the Zulu people as an effort to appeal to a young boy's sense of adventure. His views are parallel to that of Dickens and he draws several distinctions between black and white throughout the novel. Haggard also creates native characters that are revered and respected. This is evident in the near romance between Captain Good and Foulata. She is depicted as being noble, even dying for the man she loves because " I know that he cannot cumber his life with such as me, for the sun cannot mate with the darkness, nor the white with the black" (Haggard 206). Haggard has given Foulata the power to see her own limitations, she is the one who leaves Good and it is this act that makes her noble. Haggard also creates a noble character in Umbopa. He is a Zulu but is often referred to as being different, more consumed by thought. Upon being accepted as a travel companion for Quatermain and company, Umbopa says to Sir Henry " we are men, you and I" (Haggard 40). He repeats this line again in the story showing that there is not only difference between the men, but a commonality as well. Haggard uses these characters in the same way he uses the desire to find a treasure. By developing characters that are relatable, interesting, and protecting he creates an environment that is exciting and one that will entice the male youth it is intended for. Had Haggard created a fictional environment that rivaled the ideas of his day; an ignorant, uncultured, and uncivilized one, he would not have gained the appeal of the young aristocracy that he desired. The depiction of the characters is done in a way that will lead to an excitement in traveling to Africa. . This difference is evident in his depiction of José da Silvestra, the Portuguese traveler that first tells Quatermain about <https://assignbuster.com/the-business-of-racism-techniques-used-by-dickens-and-haggard-to-lead-the-reader/>

the diamond treasure. The Portuguese are initially described as “ no greater devil unhung in a general way, battenning as he does upon human agony and flesh in the shape of slaves” (Haggard 21). He is later thrice associated with the color yellow, and his ancestor is also associated with the color yellow, once in reference to his body, and again when the narrator is referring to an ivory crucifix hanging around the ancestors corpse. The depiction of the Portuguese in the novel is vague at best. They are maybe not bad, but definitely not as good as the British or the Zulus who have gained respect. Dickens and Haggard are in agreement in regard to race. When depicting the natives they both display a racist attitude. Dickens’ attack is forthright and brash because he is writing for a middle-class adult audience. Haggard crafts a novel that will appeal to young British males. His method used to make noble some of the characters in his story is done with the intent of exciting the reader and creating an adventurous story that will draw the reader and romanticize the plot. Their underlying ideas are the same but they employ different techniques to gain the credibility of the reader.