

Life in america in 1830-1850

Countries



The novel *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer* by Mark Twain was written in 1870. This novel unveils many important themes such as adventures and Christian values, social relations and stereotypes. The analysis of the characters and themes makes it possible to say that the novel reflects changes faced by the American society during 1830-1850. Thesis Mark Twain`s storyline along with his descriptions of his characters portrays the life of the citizens of St. Petersburg, Missouri as being very easy, simple and uncomplicated, however life for many other people in America was much of an endeavor.

In the novel Mark Twain portrays the life of the citizens of St. Petersburg as being very simple and uncomplicated. “ A new-comer of any age or either sex was an impressive curiosity in the poor little shabby village of St. Petersburg” (Twain 1920, 4). The simplicity of life is shown through other minor themes and symbols which help to unveil the realities of town life. During this historical epoch, poverty was what traps people in their humble abode. In contrast to these themes, Mark Twain describes people in the town as: “ There was cheer in every face and a spring in every step.

The locust-trees were in bloom and the fragrance of the blossoms filled the air” (Twain 1920, 12). The main female characters of the novel, Aunt Polly and Tom`s cousin Marry, are depicted as simple ordinary women. In reality, women were guided and supported by their husbands and family members. It is possible to say that all women represented in the novel do not suffer greatly, because of male oppression. Most of them including Aunt Polly and his cousin Marry was stuck to values preached by the society. The other characters, Huck and Sam, Judge Thatcher and Alfred Temple are also

misrepresented. Most of the men are portrayed as ordinary citizens involved in town affairs only.

In contrast to St. Petersburg town life, life for many other people in America was much of an endeavor. For instance, in *The Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass* depicts another America influenced by racial inequalities and slavery. In his autobiography, Douglass describes the hardship that he was through and quite self-obsessed with the cruel realities. The slave owners exploited slaves per 12-14 hours a day. The spread of slavery was also connected with industrialization and urbanization processes, proposing unlimited opportunities for newly emerged industries and factories to obtain cheap labor (Douglass 1995).

Even the life of a free black man differed greatly from his white neighbors. In contrast to Twain's idealized image of minorities and their life, Douglass addresses a problem of racial inequality in the society and its impact on the life of an ordinary person. He unveils that racism caused grievances to all citizens in spite of their color of skin or persuasions.

According to Douglass interpretation, the direct victims of racism were black men and women. On the other hand, Mark Twain describes town people as moral persons free from social and racial prejudices. For instance, Mark Twain portrays the widow Douglass as: "the justice of the peace; the widow Douglass, fair, smart ... her hill mansion the only palace in the town, and the most hospitable and much the most lavish in the matter of festivities that St. Petersburg could boast" (Twain 1920, 43). In general, Mark Twain describes moral health of people and their imperfection through the lens of morality and

traditions rather than historical facts. All citizens of St. Petersburg become victims of their own prejudices and false values.

Taking into account *The Narrative of the Life by Douglass* and *Cherokee Trail of Tears* by Fitzgerald, it is evident that life of 'blacks' and Indians was marked by fight and rebellion. In big and small towns the problem was that American citizens, Indians and "blacks", were not equal in their rights and "blacks" were not equally treated by majority of white population. While "whites" members of the society were universally proud of their background, African-Americans and Indians were the target of discrimination and outright racism.

In *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer*, Mark Twain hides these problems portraying the happy life of all citizens. In the book *Cherokee Trail of Tears*, Fitzgerald describes events which took place in 1838 when Federal troops imprisoned 13,000 Cherokees in order to occupy their native lands. This was one of the most tragic events in American history unveiling policy of imperialism and segregation. Fitzgerald writes: "By 1835, nearly three dozens additional land cessions had been concluded, reducing the once vast Cherokee territory to nothing" (Fitzgerald 2006, 15). That created a demand for a substitute reality, which could only be found in the fictitious world.

Mark Twain does not give a detailed analysis of the epoch, but the spirit of the age runs through the novel. For instance, Mark Twain uses the theme of crime to create a story conflict and impress readers: "A gory knife had been found close to the murdered man, and it had been recognized by somebody as belonging to Muff Potter" (Twain 1920, 99). In contrast, conflicts between

Cherokees and the government depict the new social imperative of the society. These events unveil real history of American society and its attitude towards racial minorities. Fitzgerald describes that the Trail resulted in 5, 000 deaths and ruined lives of 22 000 Indians. Fitzgerald critiques the era and uncovers discrepancy between different historical interpretations of this period.

Taking into account the life of the pioneers going West and their fight with Indians, it is evident that the storyline of Mark Twain lacks the accuracy of narration and objective appraisal. For instance, many pioneers had to struggle with nature and native population. Struggle with nature probably was the only difficult battle in life. For the pioneers, rebellion meant absence of restrictions and compulsions, and in correlation with the idea of will, it is the opportunity to act as would be desirable.

“ To those who may be obliged to exchange a cultivated region for a howling wilderness," declared its resolution [the Third Annual Convention 1833], " we recommend, to retire into the western wilds, and fell the native forest of America, where the ploughshares of prejudice have as yet been unable to penetrate the soil" (Taylor 1998, 33). Rebellion was necessary because it opened freedom to all who were genuinely interested and met the criteria of a rioter. That was main principle on which rebellions were based in the United States. “ White western settlers rapidly constructed familiar racially based political and economic restrictions” (Taylor 1998, 33).

The events which took place in Texas and their fight for Independence with Mexico show that live of people in small towns was not easy, simple and

uncomplicated as depicted by Mark Twain. Texas War of Independence took place in 1835-1836. It was a war between American settlers and the Mexican government.

This Revolution was considered as a rational choice which included its aims, alternatives, consequences and choice. If American nation had taken such an action, it was based on the purposes to overcome oppression and created a set of new values and tasks. In general, the aim of rebellion was to fight for land, freedom and equal rights.

On the one hand, it helped to attract attention of masses to social problems such as injustice and oppression. Rebellion was necessary because it drove the national idea and the knowledge not only of the monumental significance of the actions to be undertaken, but also the impact of a free democracy. The main events were the Battle of Gonzales, La Bahia, San Antonio and the Battle of the Alamo.

Texas War of Independence was necessary because it showed a struggle for individual freedom which means much more than the absence of physical coercion. Every rebellion had a short term and long term goals which helped mutineers to reach their target. Desire of a nation to struggle as such did nothing, because only active operations led to rebellion. It was people who made claims or felt marginalized, and people who often disagreed, sometimes quite fundamentally, about how their identity should be interpreted or understood.

“ One reason for this was the desire of Mexican Revolutionaries to secure material aid from the United States. As a result there were several composite
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Mexican-American expenditures into the vast territory during the Revolutionary era” (Nofi 2001, 10). In many cases, fight for freedom and equal rights made use of racial differences. In this case, a necessity to rebel served as a causal explanation of it. Rebellion was a relational choice which allowed to start fighting and attract masses of people to rebel. It served like a signal for those who wanted to be free.

In sum, Mark Twain gives only general ideas of the historical epoch and morals of people, but does not include real historical facts and events into the novel. Mark Twain idealizes town life paying no attention to racial differences and inequalities which led to social rebellion and struggle. He does not describe that non-white population obtained a secondary role in the society and was deprived human rights and freedom. Due to industrialization and urbanization, the period under analysis (1830-1850) was a time of chaos and great change which left people with a sense of disillusionment.

The historical facts mentioned above show that Mark Twain idealizes a town life and social relations. His specific world view and interpretation of the American history has a great impact on his literary works where he ridicules St. Petersburg citizens, their way of thinking and style of life, their beliefs and prejudices, because for most of them nothing is sacred: neither love nor human relations. Historical events suggest that racial differences and oppression undoubtedly motivated people to acts of extreme violence against those whom they classify as “others.” Racial confrontations acting as an original cause of rebellion forced Americans to struggle.

References

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