

# The Influence of Social Factors on Characterization: Comparison of Tom Sawyer and Huckleberry Finn

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Rogalo, Morena

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*Degree Grantor / Ustanova koja je dodijelila akademski / stručni stupanj:* **Josip Juraj Strossmayer University of Osijek, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences / Sveučilište Josipa Jurja Strossmayera u Osijeku, Filozofski fakultet**

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Sveučilište J. J. Strossmayera u Osijeku

Filozofski fakultet

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Morena Rogalo

**The Influence of Social Factors on Characterization:  
Comparison of Tom Sawyer and Huckleberry Finn**

Završni rad

Mentor: doc. dr. sc. Biljana Oklopčić

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## CONTENTS

Abstract.....	2
Introduction.....	3
I. Pre-Civil War American Society.....	4
II. The Influence of Social Factors on Mark Twain’s Literary Works.....	9
III. Comparison of Tom Sawyer and Huckleberry Finn in <i>The Adventures of</i>	
<i>Tom Sawyer</i> and <i>The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn</i> .....	14
Conclusion.....	22
Works Cited.....	23

## **Abstract**

Mark Twain wrote two most famous American novels, *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer* and *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, which is often called the Great American Novel. In his novels, Twain depicted American society of the antebellum period. The main characteristic of that time was the political division of the United States between abolitionists and pro-slavery supporters which strongly influenced American society both economically and socially. Since Twain was a humorist, he used complex social issues to mock social rules of that time. Some of the topics that Twain depicted in his novels are: violence against children, slavery, and religion. In addition, the main characters of Twain's novels, Huckleberry Finn and Tom Sawyer, are symbols of freedom and rebellion. Thus Tom and Huck are both rebellious, creative, and very brave when it comes to embarking on dangerous adventures. The biggest similarity between the two boys is their easy-going attitude towards life and adopted rules. The greatest difference between Huck and Tom is their family situation that strongly influenced their personalities. Domestic violence is the reason why Huck has lower self-esteem than Tom, and is often more passive. Tom is a romantic who likes other people's attention, and steals ideas from the books he once read. To sum it up, Tom is more childish than Huck who deals with serious life issues.

**Keywords:** the antebellum period, Mark Twain, Huckleberry Finn, Tom Sawyer, *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer*, social rules, social issues, rebellion, adventures

## Introduction

*The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* and *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer* by Mark Twain describe American society of the Pre-Civil War Era. Mark Twain's real name was Samuel Langhorne Clemens and he grew up in Missouri, which he used as a setting for his novels. *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* and *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer* both have autobiographical elements. Namely, Mark Twain used to embark on adventures just like Tom and Huck did. The interesting thing about the two novels is that the main characters are both children. Mark Twain used children characters to express his attitude about what was considered normal in the antebellum period. Thus, both his works are a great example of Twain's social criticism. Some of social issues that Twain decided to mock in his novels were domestic violence against children, and slavery. Next to that, Twain had no mercy when it came to religious and moral dilemmas as well. Both books contain great moral questions, and are a good reminder of social hypocrisy of the antebellum period. Since Mark Twain works were influenced by the Pre-Civil War Era, this work will elaborate on the main issues of that time, and explain things that were considered normal. In addition, the focus of this work will also be on the influence that various social factors of his time had on Mark Twain and which he covered in his novels, directly or indirectly. The last chapter will comprise of comparison between the two best friends, Tom Sawyer and Huckleberry Finn, who at first glance seem very similar but are, in fact very different.

## **I. Pre-Civil War American Society**

The Pre-Civil War Era is also known as the antebellum period which is the period before the civil war and after the War of 1812. The main characteristic of that time was the division of the United States between abolitionists and pro-slavery supporters:

During this same time, the country's economy began shifting in the north to manufacturing as the Industrial Revolution began, while in the south, a cotton boom made plantations the center of the economy. The annexation of new territory and western expansion saw the reinforcement of American individualism and of Manifest Destiny, the idea that Americans and the institutions of the U.S. are morally superior and Americans are morally obligated to spread these institutions.

(Historynet)

The South of the United States was mainly oriented on cotton economy and production of crops which depended on slave labor. For that reason, Southerners had no reason to abolish slavery and were strongly against democratic ideas that were coming from the North. Southern plantation owners were aware of the fact that a great number of slaves on their plantation would bring them political power, and make them look even more important and influential:

These plantations depended on a large force of slave labor to cultivate and harvest the crop—most white farmers in the 19th century wanted and were able to obtain their own farms as the U.S. expanded south and west, and slaves not only provided a labor source that couldn't resign or demand higher wages, their progeny insured that labor source would continue for generations. (Historynet)

Southern society was divided into three main classes: gentry, yeomen and slaves. Gentry belonged to the highest class of wealthy people that owned large farms. Ironically, gentry were a

small group of people; only two thousand and five hundred people belonged to that class. Yeomen were people that owned small farms, but they were poor and depended on gentry to do business with. Finally, slaves were the lowest class whose lives were completely controlled by the gentry. Slaves originally came from Africa; they were taken by white people to America and became personal property and labor force of the gentry. It is estimated that the number of slaves in the United States at the beginning of the century was one million and two hundred thousand.

The North and the South were different in a variety of ways. The North had bigger percentage of middleclass people, and it had small manufacturing industries and banks. Also, the North invested more in education than the South did. In the South, education tended to be private, so only rich people could have afforded it. That is the reason why the South had more illiterate people:

Reform struggles did not sweep through the American South as they did in the North. The institution of slavery militated against the emergence of manufacturing and urbanization, two critical factors that led to educational reform in the North. White southerners relied primarily on voluntary, parental, and church schooling. Wealthy planters sent their sons (and sometimes their daughters) to private academies in the North and South and to England. Education for poor white southerners was provided by charity schools and some religious institutions. Education for black slaves was forbidden, especially after Nat Turner's slave insurrection in 1831. (Gilderlerhman)

When it comes to women, the South and the North had a different perception of female gender. In the North women were doing business and some activities that were typically male, such as being a doctor, or a writer. Women in the South had slaves to do work for them, so they were not as active. Even though women from the North were more active, they still did not have

the right to vote. Most of women in antebellum America were thus raised in the patriarchal society:

Women and men had very clear, separate roles based on their gender, with the common belief that the differences between the male and the female were natural and essential. Women were expected to be religiously pious, morally pure and physically delicate. They were taught to obey their husband and had to adhere to the system of coverture, which stripped married women of all of their civil identities. A covert woman could not sue or be sued, seal contracts or participate in property transactions. (Questia)

On the other hand, men had complete freedom. A typical man from antebellum America was confident, honorable, protective of his property, sometimes violent, and mischievous. Men of that period were involved in violent actions if they believed their honor was hurt in any way. Mostly rich people were involved in duels, which sometimes resulted in blood feuds between families. The best example of that is the blood feud between the Grangerfords and the Shepherdsons in *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*:

Well, says Buck, a feud is this way: A man has a quarrel with another man, and kills him; then that other man's brother kills him; then the other brothers, on both sides, goes for one another; then the cousins chip in—and by and by everybody's killed off, and there ain't no more feud. But it's kind of slow, and takes a long time. Has this one been going on long, Buck? Well, I should reckon! It started thirty year ago, or som'ers along there. (Twain 111)

Religion played an important role in shaping American society in the antebellum period. Churches were opinion makers of that time, and their role was to influence gender and racial roles. In *Civil War, Religion, and Communications: The Case of Richmond*, Miller, Stout, and



Wilson describe religion as “part of a divine plan,” concluding that “the actors in the drama of the Civil War were working out, in their own minds, the meaning of God’s destiny for the American people” (7). Religion was also an important part of school’s curriculum. In *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer* there is a chapter which describes how children were motivated and forced to learn prayers, saint names and stories of the Bible. The grand reward for children’s knowledge was the Bible, but the winner also gained an enormous popularity among friends and family. It proves that American society of the Pre-Civil War Era was raising its children to believe that the Bible and the Church are the right sources of information and that religion is there to form one’s behavior and personal beliefs. It means that the Church had the power to manipulate people by serving them chapters from the Bible which justified some of the cruel acts of white people of that time. For example, Southerners believed that the Bible offered a justification and an answer to the question whether slavery is a right thing for the mankind by pointing out several passages from the Bible which narrate about descendants of Ham being destined for slavery. It was believed that God cursed Ham by turning his skin black and his descendants into slaves. Therefore, Southerners believed the descendants of Ham were predestined by the Bible to be slaves: “And he said, Cursed be Canaan; a servant of servants shall he be unto his brethren. And he said, Blessed be the Lord God of Shem; and Canaan shall be his servant. God shall enlarge Japheth, and he shall dwell in the tents of Shem; and Canaan shall be his servant” (Gen. 9.18-27).

Since black people were treated as white people’s property, and because killing a black was not considered a crime, it was normal for whites to mistreat, humiliate and molest black slaves. Slaves could not fight back or run away because the government gave local authorities the power to issue warrants for runaway slaves under the name *The Fugitive Slave Act*. In order to enforce the law, slave hunters were free to catch and punish any black slave they believed to be a runaway slave. Next to that, it was a federal crime to help a runaway slave, which means that a

slave who helped another slave to escape from a plantation was punished as well. In *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, it is explained that helping a runaway slave, as well, contradicts religious and moral laws of their society. Therefore, if Tom and Huckleberry had been caught while trying to set Jim free, it would have caused a great embarrassment for them and their family as well:

Here was a boy that was respectable and well brung up; and had a character to lose; and folks at home that had characters; and he was bright and not leather-headed; and knowing and not ignorant; and not mean, but kind; and yet here he was, without any more pride, or rightness, or feeling, than to stoop to this business, and make himself a shame, and his family a shame, before everybody. I couldn't understand it no way at all. (Twain *Finn* 235-236)

## II. The Influence of Social Factors on Mark Twain's Literary Works

According to Martin Zehr, Mark Twain had a reputation of “a sharp social critic”, and he was more than a “mere humorist” (28). Mark Twain was inspired by current social topics of the Pre-Civil War Era, such as slavery, domestic violence, honor, and quest. It could be said that Mark Twain was a historian who wanted to describe American society of the nineteenth century and, therefore, engaged in realistic narrating of his novels *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* and *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer*. Twain used his novels to question morality of American society and to criticize some of the laws and ways that were considered normal at that time. “One quality that characterizes much of Twain’s writing is his uncanny ability to see the world through the eyes of the ‘other,’ underscoring the empathy that infuses his works” (Zehr 28).

In his novels, Mark Twain decided to criticize violence against children by describing it in a humoristic way. As Myra C. Glenn says, it was normal for children to be physically punished for misbehavior in the antebellum period: “As long as parents did not administer clearly abusive punishment, they retained the legal right to chastise their children” (10), but sometimes, parents and school teachers who had legal right to punish children were exaggerating and exploiting their dominant position over a child. Many parents used their children as punching bags in order to express their anger or general discontent. One of examples of the clear child abuse can be noticed in *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* where Huck is being beaten by his father after he gets drunk and completely loses the sense of reality. Twain characterizes Huck’s father as a typical coon, drunkard, selfish and bad father who does everything to ruin Huck’s childhood. He wants Huck to quit school, stop acting fancy, and he shows up only when he needs some money for alcohol. He shows symptoms of a typical alcoholic, and that is the impossibility to care or think of anything else but how to get a new bottle of alcohol. Unfortunately, his problem leads to

violent behavior, which was, and still is, a huge social problem that can badly affect children's personality while growing up. Since punishing children was considered normal in the antebellum period, Twain uses satire while describing some tragic actions of Huck's father in order to mock social aspects of that time:

Then they tucked the old man into a beautiful room ... and in the night some time he got powerful thirsty and clumb out on to the porch-roof and traded his new coat for a jug of forty-rod ... and towards daylight he crawled out again, drunk as a fiddler, and rolled off the porch and broke his left arm in two places, and was most froze to death when somebody found him after sun-up. (...) The judge he felt kind of sore. He said he reckoned a body could reform the old man with a shotgun, maybe, but he didn't know no other way. (Twain *Finn* 23-24)

Another example of violence against children can be noticed in *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer* where Twain describes how children were beaten for small things by their teachers: "Tom took his whipping and went back to his seat ... for he thought it was possible that he had unknowingly upset the ink on the spelling-book himself ... he had denied it for form's sake and because it was custom, and had stuck to the denial from principle" (Twain *Sawyer and Finn* 107). Teachers had to look strict, powerful, and scary in order to keep their authority, and they were showing no mercy towards honest children's mistakes: "Meanwhile local school boards and judicial rulings invoked loco parentis arguments to justify teachers' correction of schoolchildren. In other words, teachers had the right to inflict moderate correction on their students since they allegedly acted as substitute parents" (Glenn 10).

Slavery was one of the most important social factors in antebellum and Civil War America because it affected American society economically, culturally and morally. In his novel *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, Twain used the relationship between Huck and Jim to point

out the corruption of American society. After Jim escaped from the plantation, Huck became Jim's accomplice which was punishable by law. But throughout the story, it can be noticed that Jim is the actual helper who follows Huck on his quest and, at the same time, tests Huck's moral and goodness. Jocelyn Chadwick-Joshua mentions that "Jim is one that signals a redeeming hope for the future health of society," and that Huck found "a father figure in the slave Jim" (7). Twain gave an excellent criticism of white people's society by making Huck's true father a molester and a bad father who cannot take care of his son, and by making a black slave Jim a great character that is warmhearted, loving, and a great substitute for Huck's real father. By indirectly putting Jim's character as a substitute for a white father, and describing Jim as a good person, Mark Twain mocked common prejudices against black people. Also, Jim's character is used to question moral dilemmas; Huck must disobey moral and judicial laws of his society in order to help his friend. In the beginning, Huck does not think of Jim as an equal human being, believing that Jim is not capable to care about his family as white people do:

He was saying how the first thing he would do when he got to a free State he would go to saving money ... and buy his wife ... and then they would both work to buy the two children, and if their master wouldn't sell them, they'd get an Abolitionist to go and steal them. It most froze me to hear such talk. (...) Just see what a difference it made in him the minute he judged he was about free. It was according to the old saying, "Give a nigger an inch, and he'll take an ell".

(Twain *Finn* 91-92)

Finally, Huck starts to realize that Jim is a human being, and they become friends. It proves that children's innocence does not care about implanted social rules which are, in this case, immoral. Contrary to Huck, Tom is very cruel to Jim. It is probably because Tom did not develop stronger relationships with slaves, and because he is from a stable home. At the end of

*The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* Tom tortures Jim with his silly ideas about the escape, while he knows that Jim was set free. Tom actually tried to use Jim as a tool to accomplish his adventurous but cruel dreams, because he did not respect slaves, nor he considered Jim to be a human being. As Tom had no respect or mercy for Jim, he suggested chopping Jim's leg off, and bringing snakes into his cottage in order to help him escape: "Why, Mars Tom, I doan' want no such glory. Snake take 'n bite Jim's chin off, den whah is de glory? No, sah, I doan' want no sich doin's" (Twain *Finn* 264). Twain hinted once again that rich family members treated slaves worse than poor people did. This was a great moral question of the Southern society: how is it possible for rich and influential families, who claim to be the role models, and who raise their children to be proper citizens and great Christians, to support and carry out great violence against people of lower class and slaves?

The question of social hypocrisy is linked to religion. Namely, Mark Twain believed that human race was damned and that this life is some kind of punishment: "Twain thus believed that both God and humanity were evil: God for first introducing evil into the world and condemning his creation, and humanity for behaving so damnably bad" (Berkove and Csicsila 12). Thus the whole racial issue noticed in *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* is Mark Twain's reflection on religion, pointing out its flaws and weaknesses. Except referring to the hypocrisy and flaws in religion, Twain both justifies and criticizes racism by believing that God is evil. Since God, who is considered the most powerful and greatest being, is evil, it means that God's creation – humans, and humans' creation – racism is justified. This can be identified with the fact that Pre-Civil War Era religion gave answers and justification for slavery which was introduced in the Bible. Mark Twain used religion as a mockery in his works.

In both of his books, *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* and *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer*, Twain used old women, more specifically Tom's and Huck's guardians as symbols of

credulity. Old aunts were described as gullible Christians who did not know any better but to blindly follow Christian rules: “Aunt Polly had family worship: it began with a prayer built from the ground up of solid courses of Scriptural quotations, welded together with a thin mortar of originality; and from the summit of this she delivered a grim chapter of Mosaic Law, as from Sinai” (Twain *Sawyer* 29). As Berkove and Csicsila assert: “It might also be claimed that Aunt Polly operates from a conventional mid-nineteenth-century cultural perspective in her reliance on selectively stern scriptural passages for guidance in dealing with her mischievous nephews” (68). Miss Watson and the widow Douglas are, too, examples of respectable Christian women who respected God’s laws but did not completely respect one’s wellbeing, namely Jim’s. Since Jim was considered Miss Watson’s property, she could have done with him whatever she wanted. Christian laws had no jurisdiction over black people, and were not merciful of their needs. Even though Miss Watson could have kept Jim as her property, she felt guilty for trying to sell him and finally gave him freedom.

Contrary to their aunts, Tom and Huck did not care much about religion or religious laws, and they did things against moral and religious codes of that time. Tom and Huck are symbols of rebellion who question their society’s moral. Ironically, Twain describes Tom and Huck as rebels who have to break most of society codes in order to do a good deed to prove that humans are indeed evil and cursed, and that one must commit a double sin and disobey already corrupted rules to do something moral: “This view of things conforms to the tricky double bind of the Calvinistic concept of double damnation: most human beings are damned to hell because of original sin, but even if they had not already been damned by predestination, their sinful natures would, inevitably damn them” (Berkove and Csicsila 41-42).

### III. Comparison of Tom Sawyer and Huckleberry Finn in *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer* and *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*

It is to assume that *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* is written for adults, while *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer* is more appropriate for children, but the main characters of both stories are interpreted in a similar way. Thus Tom and Huck are both rebellious, curious, and very brave when it comes to getting involved in dangerous adventures. The biggest similarity between the two boys is their free-spirited attitude towards life issues and adopted rules. Tom and Huck find breaking rules funny, so they sometimes break the law just for fun.

Tom lives with his younger brother Sid and aunt Polly who is described as a naive woman who tries to raise her nephews in Christian ways. Since Tom is very stubborn and does not believe in Christianity, it is almost impossible for aunt Polly to influence him. When Tom hears that God gives you whatever you want if you pray, he starts paying more attention to religion. Unfortunately Tom's materialistic nature prevails and he gives up on religion when he realizes the only gifts he can gain by prayers are spiritual gifts. Actually Tom hates prayers, going to Sunday-school, and is always trying to get out of religious amenities:

The boy whose history this book relates did not enjoy the prayer, he only endured it – if he even did that much. He was restive all through it; he kept tally of the details of the prayer, unconsciously – for he was not listening, but he knew the ground of old, and the clergyman's regular route over it – and when a little trifle of new matter was interlarded, his ear detected it and his whole nature resented it; he considered additions unfair, and scoundrelly. (Twain *Sawyer* 45)



Huck has a similar attitude towards religion. He does not take religion seriously enough, so when Miss Watson warns him not to misbehave else he would go to hell, Huck concludes that he would like to go to hell because heaven sounds boring:

Then she told me all about the bad place, and I said I wished I was there. She got mad then, but I didn't mean no harm. All I wanted was to go somewheres ... She said it was wicked to say what I said; said she wouldn't say it for the whole world ... Well, I couldn't see no advantage in going where she was going, so I made up my mind I wouldn't try for it. (...) I asked her if she reckoned Tom Sawyer would go there, and she said not by a considerable sight. I was glad about that, because I wanted him and me to be together. (Twain *Finn* 3)

Huck is not educated because his father does not want him to attend any classes. That is the main reason for Huck's ignorance. Even though the widow and Miss Watson are trying to teach Huck about religious people and history, Huck is not interested in learning: "After supper she got out her book and learned me about Moses and the Bulrushers, and I was in a sweat to find out all about him; but by and by she let it out that Moses had been dead a considerable long time; so then I didn't care no more about him, because I don't take no stock in dead people" (Twain *Finn* 2). The biggest problem in Huck's behavior is the lack of the male role model in his childhood, namely his father, who was supposed to raise Huck and take care of him, but instead he selfishly wanted him to stay ignorant:

And looky here—you drop that school, you hear? I'll learn people to bring up a boy to put on airs over his own father and let on to be better'n what HE is. You lemme catch you fooling around that school again, you hear? Your mother couldn't read, and she couldn't write, nuther, before she died. None of the family

couldn't before they died. I can't; and here you're a-swelling yourself up like this.

(Twain *Finn* 21)

Furthermore, Huck's father is very violent, and is using his son only to draw out some money for alcohol. This bad influence strongly shapes Huck's personality, but does not turn Huck into a bad person. It actually makes Huck more sensitive, and understanding of people's problems. In addition, Huck is homeless most of his childhood, and when he is not wandering around he is forced to spend time with his father who is molesting him. For that reason everyone thinks he is no good, and does not want to be seen with him. Adults find him a little eccentric, and other young boys admire his lifestyle. Huck likes freedom; he is better off without dress codes, Christian rules, and clean clothes. It is probably due to the fact that he is not used to normal lifestyle, since he has no home, nor normal parents who would take care of him. That is why it is so hard for him to adjust to Miss Watson's and widow Douglas's demands: "Miss Watson would say, 'Don't put your feet up there, Huckleberry;' and 'Don't scrunch up like that, Huckleberry—set up straight;' and pretty soon she would say, 'Don't gap and stretch like that, Huckleberry—why don't you try to behave?'" (Twain *Finn* 3).

Contrary to Huck, Tom lives with his aunt Polly and his younger brother Sid. He is from a good family and lives in good conditions with an aunt who is very caring and who does everything for Tom and his brother Sid. Since Tom is very clever, he always gets what he wants. Sometimes he is very manipulative, and uses lies in order to achieve his agenda: "Hang the boy, can't I never learn anything? Ain't he played me tricks enough like that for me to be looking out for him by this time? But old fools is the biggest fools there is. Can't learn an old dog new tricks, as the saying is" (Twain *Sawyer* 4). Aunt Polly provides Tom with home and education, but Tom is still mischievous and is often cutting school, sneaking out from the house during night, and even running away from home. Since Tom is educated and can read, he always comes up with

some new adventurous plans that he comes across in novels he has recently read. Huck admires him; he thinks Tom is more competent than him because Tom always finds a fancy way out of bad situation, and copies situations he read about in the books: “Well, if that ain’t just like you, Huck Finn. You can get up the infant-schooliest ways of going at a thing. Why, hain’t you ever read any books at all?—Baron Trenck, nor Casanova, nor Benvenuto Chelleeny, nor Henri IV., nor none of them heroes?” (Twain *Finn* 241). Tom’s vivid imagination is able to invent an adventurous plan, which is always complicated and silly in a way. In addition, Tom suggested forming a band that would pillage villages and take women for hostages who would eventually fall in love with their kidnappers – because the book says so. Also, he considered himself a Robin Hood, and made all other boys to play part in his game:

Then Tom became Robin Hood again, and was allowed by the treacherous nun to bleed his strength away through his neglected wound. And at last Joe, representing a whole tribe of weeping outlaws, dragged him saddly forth, gave his bow into his feeble hands, and Tom said, “ Where this arrow falls, there bury poor Robin Hood under the greenwood tree”. Then he shot the arrow and fell back and would have died, but he lit on a nettle and sprang up too gaily for a corpse. The boys dressed themselves, hid their accoutrements, and went off grieving that there were no outlaws any more, and wondering what modern civilization could claim to have done to compensate for their loss. They said they would rather be outlaws a year in Sherwood Forest than President of the United States forever.

(Twain *Sawyer* 78)

In both of Twain’s novels, Tom is the initiator and the leader, while Huck is the accomplice. Tom’s personality is stronger and more manipulative, while Huck listens and supports Tom. It is due to the fact that Huck’s personality was generally repressed in childhood,

so he was always the one who obeys. Thus Tom is accustomed to Huck's easy-going nature, and often makes fun of Huck's suggestions: "Huck Finn, did you ever hear of a prisoner having picks and showels, and all the modern conveniences in his wardrobe to dig himself out with? Now I want to ask you – if you got any reasonableness in you at all – what kind of a show would that give him to be a hero?" (Twain *Finn* 245).

Tom is described as a romantic who does things for fame. He is a rebel who dreams about glory, and likes being in the center of attention. He likes to be talked about, to be mentioned, admired; his personality reminds of Beowulf who kills Grendel for glory. Since Tom has his head in the clouds, his imagination is so productive that he sometimes sounds unrealistic. For instance, Tom could have set Jim free in a couple of days in a very simple way, but he chose to make situation more complex and invented illogical ways that would help Jim escape. Tom sawed the leg off the bed, put living animals in Jim's cottage, made Jim carve useless inscriptions into the wall before his escape, because that is how it is done in books and history: "It don't make no difference how foolish it is, it's the right way— and it's the regular way. And there ain't no other way, that ever I heard of, and I've read all the books that gives any information about these things" (Twain *Finn* 245). Tom also made Jim draw mournful inscriptions, such as "1. Here a captive heart busted" (Twain *Finn* 261). Moreover, Tom is socially insensitive. Sometimes he acts like a spoiled brat, not caring about other people and making fools of everyone, while expecting that everyone should hear him out and do what he says. While he was absent in the woods, he was day-dreaming that everyone missed him and admired him. His insensitivity is proven by the fact that Tom made everyone believe he was dead, and then finally he showed up at his own funeral. His immature thoughts and actions show the narcissistic and selfish side of his personality, together with impossibility of making reasonable decisions.

On the other hand, Huck is a more down to earth person who likes practical things. Huck does not have an opportunity to read fancy books; he rather spends time by the river or some place else in the nature. Similarly to Tom, Huck does things for fame as well, but there is a difference in how they make things done. Huck does not like to complicate things, he is rather rational and finds quick solutions for problems. Contrary to Tom, Huck has good reasons for whatever he is about to do. Thus the reason why Huck pretended to be dead was to save himself from his violent father, while Tom made everyone believe he was dead for fun. Huck decided to run away from his father when he realized there is no way that things would change between him and his dad: “Well, last I pulled out some of my hair, and blooded the axe good, and stuck it on the back side, and slung the axe in the corner. Then I took up the pig and held him to my breast with my jacket (so he couldn’t drip) till I got a good piece below the house and then dumped him into the river” (Twain *Finn* 35). Huck seems to be more mature and man-like than Tom because he deals with complex life issues. Actually, Tom is a mastermind of plans that cause problems, while Huck is the one who gets stricken by life difficulties and has to find his own way out.

Unlike Tom, Huck is socially sensitive. He seems to understand social problems much more than Tom, and is not making parades out of someone’s trouble. Jim is the best example of Huck’s social sensitivity. Huck decides to help a runaway slave even though he is breaking the law by doing that. There are moments when Huck was thinking twice about helping Jim, and even of turning Jim in to authorities, but finally friendship, and soft nature of Huck’s character make him change his mind. At first, Huck cannot understand the fact that Jim is a normal human being just like everyone else, and he is shocked when he hears Jim talking about buying or running away with his wife who is also a slave: “I was sorry to hear Jim say that, it was such a lowering of him. My conscience got to stirring me up hotter than ever, until at last I says to it, ‘Let up on me—it ain’t too late yet—I’ll paddle ashore at the first light and tell’” (Twain *Finn*

92). Luckily, Huck justifies breaking the law by concluding that he has never tried to respect the rules of society, so it has no sense to spoil the friendship between him and Jim: “Well, then, says I, what’s the use you learning to do right when it’s troublesome to do right and ain’t no trouble to do wrong, and the wages is just the same? I was stuck. I couldn’t answer that. So I reckoned I wouldn’t bother no more about it, but after this always do whichever come handiest at the time” (Twain *Finn* 95). Covering Jim up shows that Huck is a good-hearted, but immoral person; ironically as it sounds, Huck had to break the law several times in order to prove his kindness and honesty.

When it comes to Tom, he would probably help Jim only if he would find it useful. Since Tom is more opportunistic than Huck, he would think twice before helping Jim, and would probably give up on that idea since helping Jim would neither bring him fame nor personal satisfaction. Tom’s selfishness can be noticed in *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* where Tom is well-aware of the fact that Jim is a free man, and should no longer be kept as a captive, but he decides to keep that information for himself. What he did was using Jim’s sensitive position for his personal interest, and that is to have fun and to prove the world how capable, and clever he is when it comes to setting prisoners free. The methods of setting Jim free were rather brutal, so it can be concluded that Tom is not only socially insensitive towards others, but is also tolerant of physical discomfort of other people. For instance, Tom wants to chop Jim’s leg off just because it sounds more appropriate, which means that Tom does not care about Jim at all and does not treat him as a human being:

“Why, to saw Jim’s leg off,” he says. “Good land!” I says; “why, there ain’t no necessity for it. And what would you want to saw his leg off for, anyway?”

“Well, some of the best authorities has done it. They couldn’t get the chain off, so they just cut their hand off and shoved. And a leg would be better still.

... besides Jim's a nigger, and wouldn't understand the reasons for it, and how it's the custom in Europe. (Twain *Finn* 241-242)

Tom and Huck are both cunning as foxes, but Huck is less egotistic than Tom. It is to assume that due to his harsh childhood Huck should be a brutal, opportunistic, and selfish individual who would use other people for his own benefit, but that is not the case. Moreover, it is hard to imagine that Huck's family situation would turn Huck into a spoiled romantic like Tom. In addition, Tom is a good kid, but his adventurous spirit and his head in the clouds make him look frivolous. He is used to get forgiveness from his aunt for whatever he does, and that is one more reason for him to do silly things. Therefore, Huck is running away from home, cutting school, breaking law because he is forced to do so, while Tom is doing the same things only to spice up his life. Since Huck is ignorant and has low self-esteem, he accepts to be a part of Tom's ridiculous fads, which Tom finds very useful. Tom's strong character has a strong influence on Huck; Tom slightly helped Huck to become more sure of himself. Huck is more naive than Tom, and is a true friend to Tom. He also admires his intelligence, upbringing, and looks, probably because Tom is completely different from him:

Here was a boy that was respectable and well brung up; and had a character to lose; and folks at home that had characters; and he was bright and not leather-headed; and knowing and not ignorant; and not mean, but kind ...

(Twain *Finn* 235-236)

## Conclusion

Tom and Huck are tools that Twain uses to describe two different types of upbringing in the antebellum period. One type of upbringing (Tom's) created a romantic and an adventurer who is focused on the image of himself in other people's eyes, but who still has something to fall back upon. The other type of upbringing (Huck's) created a child that has not been taught to differentiate between right and wrong, or more accurately how to do the right thing. Since he has nothing to fall back upon, his every encounter with trouble will most likely end badly. In *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* Twain describes the main character Huck as a boy with no supervision from adults, who broke the law because he is not taught to respect the rules, and he also ignores moral lessons of the society. Unlike Huck, Tom is brought up in what can be called normal circumstances: his family takes great care of his upbringing, he is taught about the religion, the right and the wrong and the rules of the society. The reason why Twain decided to use children as the main characters in his stories is the children's view of the world which differs a lot from adults'. Children are usually blunt, honest, and do not care about implemented rules and regulations of the society. Therefore, Twain uses children in his novels to bluntly describe a different point of view on the whole racial issue in the antebellum period.



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