Huck Finn Essay, Research Paper

Huck FinnBen Goo In the novel Huck Finn, the 3 subjects of slavery, racism, and superstition all play an important role in the personality traits, expectations and actions of almost all of the characters in the book. The book relied on these subjects as not only as a base for satire in the book but also as a great source of conflict within the entire text. The guilt that Huck felt, as expressed here “says I ‘I won’t let no run away niggers get by me if I can help it.’ I got aboard the raft feeling bad and low, because I knowed very well I done wrong”(pg.106) shows how society impressed their own beliefs about slavery on Huck. This also shows how slavery was a very important factor in most of the actions and guilt for those actions that Huck experienced during his journeys. Racism also played a major role in the opinions as well as the morals of the charters in the book. Superstition as shown here, ” Jim, had a hair-ball as big as your fist, which had been took out of the fourth stomach of an ox, and he used to do magic with it. He said there was a spirit inside of it, and it knowed everything.”(Pg. 21) shows perfectly the attitudes towards non-religious beliefs in the book. Superstitious beliefs not only acted in the book as a guide toward a charter behavior but also as a foreshadowing of problems to come. In Huck Finn it is easy to see that Mark Twain meant slavery to be a large part of the book. This is brought out by the constant conflict that Huck had to deal with on a regular basis, what to do with Jim when he couldn’t be seen with a runaway slave. Many times he has simply lied “Pa was pretty poor and had some debts there weren’t nothing left but sixteen dollars and our nigger, Jim so we reckoned we’d go down to Orleans”(pg.148). He did this to avoid arousing too much suspicion. However it is clear throughout the book that this solution cannot always work. From Huck’s own writing it is easy to see his view of slaves; “Here was this nigger which I had as good helped runaway, coming right out flat footed and saying he would steal his children – children that belonged to a man I didn’t even know”(pg.105). Although Huck feels guilty about helping set Jim free, he knows that it would somehow be a worse sin to turn him in. In Huck’s case, he sees Jim as an almost sub-human, who is meant to serve white people his entire life. However Jim has no idea that this conflict is going on in Huck’s head “I’s a free man, en I couldn’t ever ben free ef it hadn’ ben for Huck Jim won’t ever forgit you, Huck”(pg.106). The view that expresses the general population of the south, although expressed in an extreme, was done so by Huck’s father, “They call that a government that can’t sell a free nigger till he’s been in the state six months to set stock-still for six whole months.”(pg.33). In summation, the topic of slavery from the view of the time period was very well expressed from more than two viewpoints and I feel was expressed in a very accurate, and fair way. Racism, an ever-present topic within the book, is expressed by almost all of the characters, and is done fairly well. Huck although racist, knows no better and is even by many characters’ standards in the book, regarded as a slave sympathizer. Although the racism in the character of Huck is small, there is clearly a small expression of it here “I see it warn’t no use wasting words – you can’t learn a nigger to argue. So I quit.”(pg.95). The most extreme racist character portrayed in the book is definitely Huck’s father “but when they told me there was a state in the country that would let a nigger vote I says I’ll never vote again”(pg.33). This quote not only perfectly expresses Pap’s opinion of blacks but also gives a very good general impression of his character. All characters in the book have a racist attitude within them, (as everyone else in the world does). Even if the characters don’t show this attitude in the book. I feel, however, that the racism in some other characters is magnified by the situation in which the book places them. The south, in particular, had strong social pressures to cast all the hate, or problems with society, on someone else. And who else is better than the slaves to blame in such a society, which ties us to the previous topic.

The reliance on superstition of the era is well represented here “Ef you’s got hairy arms en hairy breas’, it’s a sign dat you’s agwyne to be rich.”(pg.54). A very definite line can easily be drawn between the characters in the book, dividing them into two groups, those that follow religion as the all seeing path, and those that full heartedly believe that touching a snakeskin will bring horrible luck. Although it can also be argued that there was a fuzzy gray area between them where people looked to both for signs of the future, but it is easiest to think of them as two distinct groups. Miss Watson’s view on beliefs is perfectly contrasted with Hucks in this quote, “One morning I happened to turn over the salt-cellar at breakfast. I reached for some to throw over my left shoulder to keep off the bad luck, but Miss Watson says ‘Take your hands away Huckleberry- what a mess you always make’”(pg.19). This not only tells us the widow’s view on the subject, but also shows a funny relation ship between The Widow and Huck. The Widow finds superstition a waste of time and Huck finds religion a waste of time. Jim is represented in the book as the ‘Miss Watson’ of superstition, not only relying on superstition to predict major events but also to predict small things such as rain. All in all, superstition contributes a major part to the book, giving us a great contrast to relate to ourselves when we look at our own beliefs and adding a large sense of foreshadowing to the book. In Huck Finn, all three of the subjects tied together to reflect different viewpoints and social circumstances of the time period. Superstition added a contrast of culture to religion, showing how the beliefs of the educated differed from the superstitious masses. Racism showed how the social pressures of the time period encouraged the discrimination of the blacks. It also showed how even those who are brought up in a racist society could make judgments on what they personally believed to be right (example, Huck helping Jim escape). Slavery affected the story by providing a constant conflict on how to avoid detection during their escape/travels. This also contrasted how Huck was brought up and society telling him constantly that setting blacks free was wrong, yet for some reason that he could not explain, Huck continued to help Jim escape. So in conclusion the racism, superstitions and slavery not only played a major role within the book but also were interwoven together and helped greatly to improve the plot and general overall story of Huck Finn.Submitted By the Sad\_Clown”There is a theory which states that if ever anyone discovers exactly what the universe is for and why it is here, it will instantly disappear and be replaced by something even more bizarre and inexplicable.There is another which states that this has already happened.”