An Analysis of Mark Twain's Concepts of the Child and Education

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AN ANALYSIS OF MARK TWAIN'S CONCEPTS
OF THE CHILD AND EDUCATION

By

Theresia Erb Psihalos

A Dissertation Submitted to the Faculty of the Graduate School
of Loyola University of Chicago in Partial Fulfillment
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VITA

The author, Theresia Erb Psihalos, is the daughter of John Erb and Anna (Hartung) Erb. She is the wife of Paul John Psihalos. She was born June 13, 1943, in the small village of Musci, Hungary. She came to the United States in 1950 and settled with her family in Milwaukee, Wisconsin.

She was educated in the Catholic elementary schools in Milwaukee and attended Pius XI High School, from which she was graduated in 1961.

In September, 1961, she entered Marquette University in Milwaukee and in June, 1965, received the degree of Bachelor of Arts with a major in Speech. After graduation she attended the Sorbonne in Paris, France, for one year and received a Certificate of French in 1966.

In September, 1967, she began work towards a Master of Arts degree in the School of Education at Loyola University. She was awarded the degree in 1969.
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INTRODUCTION

Mark Twain left school at the age of twelve and went on to become one of America's best known and loved nationalistic authors. In spite of the shortness of his tenure, he reveals in his writings a unique insight into mid-nineteenth century "schooling." Most of his remarks and descriptions about education, people, and life in general, are satirical and humorous. His novels, short stories and addresses reflect his society and cast shadows upon our own. Since education is an integral part of society, his views also reflect the educational ideas of the time. This dissertation will examine the ideas of Mark Twain concerning the child and education.

For Twain, education has myriads of faces. In Chapter Three we will probe Twain's theories and ideas about education as they are revealed in his writings. Education is "schooling" in the formal sense, confined to the classroom. In its informal sense, it is also a river, playing pirates, graveyards, superstitions and "making do for yourself" on an island. Twain feels that formal schooling is necessary to learn reading, writing and figuring; but the more important aspects of it is what one learns from nature, the Aunt Pollys and society in general.

Twain's writings are very involved with the concept of the child. His literature consists mainly of "boy-books" such as Tom Sawyer and Huckleberry Finn. He dwelt most of his literary life in the wonderful time of childhood. His Tom Sawyer and Huckleberry Finn are studies of youth
maturin through romantic exploits and finally being initiated into a society. His children are universal composites of all children, both past and present. They contain the qualities, mischievousness and shortcomings of all children.

Twain traveled frequently, kept voluminous journals about each trip, and eventually recorded his impressions in book form. He wrote kind and unkind things about each place he visited. He wrote on an international level so he has world fame. The children in his books incorporate all the children he met with a few embellishments. This dissertation will analyze his "boy-books" in order to formulate Twain's concept of the child as revealed in his literature.

Twain's books were often cynical and written in tongue-in-cheek style, so special care must be taken not to misinterpret or misrepresent his ideas. Twain also claimed to be a first class liar and many of his stories are exaggerated tall tales. He seems to tell his most outrageous lies when he is trying to make his satire as biting as possible.

Twain's books are written mainly about the little man in society or else they are autobiographical. Whichever way Twain chooses to write, his ideas and opinions are firmly reflected and elaborated upon. He sets himself up as an expert on almost everything, so of course he has an opinion on just about everything, usually biased. He writes with a "pen warmed up in hell."

We look at schooling in the mid-and-late nineteenth century America and see how the common school movement began and progressed. The teachers and their teaching methods are mentioned and commented on. Twain's own
view of nineteenth century schooling is studied to see how indicative it is of the times.

And lastly, we synthesize Twain's concept of the child and his views on education and see what implications we can draw for present styles and methods of education.
CHAPTER I

LIFE AND WORKS OF MARK TWAIN, 1835-1910

Two exciting events happened in the year 1835, the birth of Mark Twain and the discovery of Halley’s Comet. One event shook the literary world with meteoric force and the other shook the astronomical world. The comet and Mark Twain came in together and Twain died, as he had predicted, when the comet reappeared in 1910.

Mark Twain was born Samuel Langhorn Clemens in Florida, Missouri, a small hamlet that showed promise of becoming a boom town if the Salt River could be navigated. When Twain’s father, John Marshall Clemens, realized that this would not happen he moved four-year old Mark and the rest of the family to Hannibal, Missouri in 1839.

Hannibal was to become the background scenery for the Mississippi River novels of Mark Twain. Hannibal might have remained an obscure town in Missouri if Twain had not immortalized it in The Adventures of Tom Sawyer and The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn.

To sketch a brief biography of a famous person such as Mark Twain, it is always best to consult the subject’s own works. To some degree, Twain scholars are very fortunate since he wrote his own autobiography. Twain’s Autobiography, a classic piece of American literature and history, is the product of the most popular American author of the late nineteenth century.
The Autobiography is not just a chronological progression from birth to death, but rather a complex character analysis of the emotional and psychological make-up of Twain. Twain himself admits that, "this Autobiography of mine is a mirror and I am looking at myself in it all the time."¹

After a long, rich life, Twain died at the age of seventy-five. His life proved to be an inexhaustible mine of recollection. Most of his works are based on these recollections and can therefore be said to be autobiographical to some degree. His Autobiography was to capture these memories and dispense them with irony and humor in his inimitable way.

Twain did not want his Autobiography published until one hundred years after his death but finally relented and allowed a few chapters to be printed while he was still alive and the complete collection after his death. Twain was always a volatile personality and interspersed his life with periodic eruptions against persons, places and events which he felt called for his judgment. Therefore, when he started his Autobiography, he warns the reader that he is speaking from the grave and can therefore speak more freely. Twain states in the Preface that "when a man is writing a book dealing with the privacies of his life—a book which is to be read while he is still alive—he shrinks from speaking his whole frank mind; all his attempts to do it fail."² He then proceeded to write whatever was on his rambling mind.


²Neider, Autobiography, Preface.
Twain's premature birth left him a sickly and troublesome baby. His parents did not expect him to survive but he surprised them by becoming a rambunctious, precocious child. He never seemed to tire in his mischievousness and his mother had to discipline him constantly. Twain recollected in his Autobiography:

"You gave me more uneasiness than any child I had," she said to him once, in her old age.
"I suppose you were afraid I wouldn't live," he suggested, in his tranquil fashion.
She looked at him with that keen humor that had not dulled in eighty years. "No; afraid you would," she said.  

His inborn mischievousness was a source of his many childhood escapades which usually found him in trouble with either his parents or other people in town. Some of his escapades resulted in his nearly drowning several times, smoking behind the barn and getting caught, rolling rocks down a hill at sanctimonious carriages headed for church services, bouncing watermelons off his brother Henry's head and finally, in an effort to find more romantic adventures, he ran away from home several times, only to be promptly apprehended and punished.

Hannibal was ideally located on the banks of the mighty Mississippi River. The river and Twain's impish nature gave birth to two of his most renowned novels, Tom Sawyer and Huckleberry Finn. Tom and Huck, the two central characters, are a composite blend of boys that Twain grew up with in Hannibal. The rest of Hannibal provided Twain with the other panorama of characters. In creating these great books, Twain turned to himself and his own experiences.

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As Twain grew up, he developed neurotic and exaggerated feelings of guilt. A reason for these feelings can probably be traced to the impressions the sensitive young boy received from the Calvinistic Sunday school that he was made to endure. The fearful superstitions of Negro slaves that were a part of his Hannibal boyhood also helped to nurture and instill fears in the little boy who both feared and loved the Negro tales of magic and voodoo.

As a boy, Twain loved to go to the Negro quarters behind his father's house and beg them to tell him exciting and mysterious stories. Minnie Brashear, a noted Twain scholar, noted: "It was the Negroes that most delighted Samuel Clemens-Aunt Hannah with her charms against witches and Uncle Dan'l, faithful and affectionate good friend, ally, and adviser to the boy. He was the original of Jim in Huck Finn and Tom Sawyer Abroad." Brashear quotes Twain:

'It was on the farm that I got my strong liking for this race and my appreciation of certain of its fine qualities.... I know the look of Uncle Dan'l's kitchen as it was on the privileged nights, when I was a child, and I can see the white and black children grouped on the hearth,...and I can hear Uncle Dan'l telling the immortal tales which Uncle Remus Harris was to gather into his book.... I can feel again the creepy joy which quivered through me when the time for the ghost story was reached...the last story of the evening and there was nothing between it and the unwelcome bed."

Besides religious and magical influences, Twain as a boy had a variety of other disturbing experiences which probably augmented his already neurotic fears. As a young boy he witnessed slave beatings and

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5 Ibid., p. 58.
saw other cruelties inflicted upon this gentle race, a murder in cold
blood and various corpses littered his young, inexperienced life. It has
even been rumored that he crept into a room where they were performing an
autopsy on his deceased father. All of these seeds were planted early in
childhood and erupted with stormy force into his memory in his later
literary years. Throughout his literary career, these memories came back
repeatedly to haunt Twain and inculcate guilt feelings.

For young Sam, however, the move to Hannibal was a joyful occasion.
For the young boy, Hannibal and its environs, proved to be an Elysium
consisting of the river, bluffs, hills, caves, large tracts of prairies and
wide expanses of virgin forests. Hannibal grew right up to the forest. He
could watch the mighty and romantic river boat queens lumber under their
load to the delta at New Orleans and pretend and wish that he were the
daring pilot navigating the boat. On the river flowed the mainstream of
American life, whether it was a working cargo ship or a luxury delta queen,
to stop briefly at Hannibal and offer dreams of adventure and glory to the
envious young boys.

The beauty and fun that Hannibal offered was often interlaced with
tragedy. The young boys had big caves to explore and sometimes to get lost
in like Tom and Becky did. The forests and river teemed with game and
expeditions were launched to provide food and adventure. On these
expeditions the boys absorbed and learned much Indian lore and survival in
the wilderness. In the wintertime the river froze and the boys were able
to skate, most of the time against parental permission. It was on one of
these adventures that tragedy struck when Sam and Tom Nash, a friend, were
out on the river late at night. The ice was breaking and they tried to
reach shore, but Tom missed a floe and was flung into the frigid water. As a result, Tom became ill and eventually came down with scarlet fever which left him stone-deaf. Many years later, this was one of the reminiscences on which Twain based his novelette, The Mysterious Stranger.

In the summer the boys swam and romped in the muddy waters. In the process of learning to swim, Sam came close to death on more than one occasion and had to be hauled out of the water in a limp sputtering condition by his cohorts. Two of his best friends were drowned and it was a rare time without a fatality. This of course did not deter Sam in the least bit; after all, he considered himself the hero and leader of the gang of boys and he could not let them down or surpass him in any of their adventures. In this sense we can compare the young Twain to Tom Sawyer. As Delancey Ferguson stated: "The greater part of the education that would matter most when he became a writer, he acquired outside school," and that "the first seven years in Hannibal, Sam Clemens was probably blissfully unconscious that he was getting any education at all."7

However, there was school to contend with and rebel against. After the family reached Hannibal, Sam, aged four and a half, was sent to a school kept by a stern disciplined New Engander, Mrs. Horr. According to Twain, he distinguished himself the very first day when he repeatedly broke her rules, and she insisted on disciplining him. She ordered him to go outside and cut down a sturdy rod with which to inculcate the rules. Sam, always the precocious child, came in with:

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7 Ibid., p. 28.
...a cooper's shaving...two inches broad, a quarter of an inch thick, and rising in a shallow curve at one end.... I stood before her in an attitude of meekness and resignation which seemed to me calculated to win favor and sympathy, but it did not happen. She divided a long look of strong disapprobation equally between me and the shaving; then she called me by my entire name...and said she was ashamed of me.... She said she would try and appoint a boy with better judgment in the matter of switches, and it saddens me yet to remember how many faces lighted up with hope of getting the appointment.  

This is a typical example of his school days. Because of his impish nature, he was constantly in disfavor with his teachers. He was a chronic day dreamer, bored by the more conventional subjects such as arithmetic and geography. He enjoyed reading and it came easy for him. He also proved to be a remarkable speller.

Twain's mother was a devoted Presbyterian while his father professed no religion. Jane Clemens forced her children to attend Sunday school and as they got older they had to endure the service. The preaching was dull and bombastic with strong emphasis on Calvinistic damnation. As Ferguson details:

Sam heard long expositions of pre-destination and hell-fire, which began by scaring and ended by boring him.... But the preaching and teaching bit deeply all his life; he thought of theology and philosophy in terms of the Hannibal Presbyterian church,...and based his own explanation of human life upon a mechanistic theory which was Calvinism minus God.  

His mother was constantly pressuring him to become an intimate acquaintance of the Bible. No matter how reluctantly the boy learned the Bible, enough managed to stay with him to affect his writing. Twain never developed a scriptural style but he often resorted to the Bible to flavor or color his writings.  

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8 Neider, Autobiography, p. 32.
9 Ferguson, Mark Twain: Man and Legend, p. 25.
Besides the Bible, Twain also absorbed other literature found in his home. His father owned a copy of Don Quixote which Twain read vigorously many times. This is evident in his later works such as *Tom Sawyer* and *Huck Finn* as they emulate the Don and Sancho Panza. There were books in the better homes of Hannibal and the town even boasted a book store and a library. John Clemens had some education and firmly believed in education for his children. He had an ample library which Twain sporadically and unmethodically put to good use. He devoured the classics and history books.

In all his early reading, Twain was mainly passing the time; but all the books remained in his mind and memory, storing up information towards the day when he would draw upon it for his own book. Brashear says about Twain's reading habits:

> The most notable thing about his earliest Wanderjahre is that in his first taking stock of the world, he went habitually to books, partly because his nature craved a larger experience than his trade put him in the way of getting, but partly also because of his desire to correct and broaden his own impressions.10

Everything that Twain later recalled from his childhood was not based on books. There was the anecdote and the tall tale of the shifting American frontier. The anecdote served many purposes, to teach, to humor or to sermonize. Above all, the tall tale was one of the most beloved devices to make one forget the hardships of the frontier and be reminded of the humor of the West. The tall tale became a pièce de résistance in the mouth of an expert narrator such as Twain. The tall tale began with a believable premise and gradually led the unsuspecting listener on a road of absurdity until the listener realized too late that he had been had. Twain successfully incorporated the tall tale into his lectures and after dinner speeches.

10 Brashear, Mark Twain: Son of Missouri, p. 213.
When Sam Clemens left Hannibal, he had a fair comprehension of the world of books and had made a good many excursions into it. His family's library, the town library, and the local bookstores had aroused his interest in books. The literary seed that had been planted in Hannibal would flower in the works of Mark Twain and draw an international audience.

The death of his father in 1847 ended Twain's childhood. Remorsefully, he remembered all his sins of disobedience and wanted either to repent or erase them from his troubled conscience. His nervous anxiety rested on the brink of hysteria and the only calming influence was his mother. In comforting him, his mother asked him to strive to be as good a man as his father was. Sam promised her this and then begged her not to make him go to school anymore. Though Sam was only twelve years old, his mother relented since even the small sum Mr. Cross demanded was a burden on the fatherless family. According to Paine: "Mrs. Clemens and her son Samuel now had a sober talk, and, realizing that the printing trade offered opportunity for acquiring further education as well as a livelihood, they agreed that he should be apprenticed."\(^{11}\) And so the fledgling boy took his first step leading to a distinguished literary career.

At the time, the printing trade seemed to be the only logical craft in which he could continue his education. When his brother Orion returned to Hannibal in 1849, he bought the Hannibal Journal and Sam went to work for him. Twain remained in his brother's office until 1853, when he decided he was ready for greater challenges and left to find his trade in more exciting places such as St. Louis, New York and Philadelphia. He

\(^{11}\) Paine, Mark Twain: A Biography, Vol. I, p. 76.
wrote to his brother, Orion, about the big cities and his impressions of them. Orion found the letters to be more interesting than the local small town gossip and so he printed them in the **Journal**. Twain's career was starting, although not on a large scale, and his words were being printed.

Meanwhile Orion's **Journal** in Hannibal was forced to close down due to mismanagement and lack of funds. Orion bought a paper in Muscatine, Iowa, and invited Sam, after his Eastern experiences, to come and help him print it. Twain remained with him for a short time during 1854 and then decided that he wanted to go earn more money in St. Louis. He returned to his old place on the St. Louis **Evening News** where he remained until the spring of 1855. When Orion bought the Ben Franklin Book and Job Printing Office in Keokuk, Iowa, he elicited the help of his two younger brothers, Sam and Henry, to help him run it.

It was here, in Keokuk, that one of Twain's most important events occurred: a fifty dollar bill was fortuitously blown into his hands and he immediately made plans to sail for the Amazon—an area he read about and was determined to see. He had grown tired of the sleepy little town and the grim printing shop and his appetite for travel had already been aroused by his trip to the East.

He decided to take a steamer down the Mississippi to New Orleans and catch a ship to take him to the head of the Amazon. In 1857, he boarded the ship the **Paul Jones** and set out on his journey. It was while he was traveling down the Mississippi River that he became acquainted with the pilot, Horace Bixby. When Twain reached New Orleans he found out that there was no ship to the Amazon; he then pleaded with Captain Bixby to take him on as a cub pilot and teach him to navigate the 1,200 miles of
river. The energetic pilot agreed, and Twain was able to fulfill his childhood dream of becoming a river boat pilot. The river absorbed his energies from 1857 until 1861 when the Civil War broke out and river boat travel and shipping came to a virtual standstill. However short this tenure was, it provided him with some rich material for his future books. One of his greatest books, *Life on the Mississippi* (1883) is a nostalgic memoir of his exciting pilot days.

When the War broke out, Twain went to Hannibal and with a group of friends formed a battalion to rid Missouri of Union soldiers. Missouri was a slave state and voted to stay with the Union; but sentiment was torn in two between the Confederacy and the Union. Union soldiers took over St. Louis and other points. The Governor, Claib Jackson, called for fifty thousand volunteers to repel the Union soldiers. Twain and his "battalion" rallied behind the Governor and were committed to the Southern Cause. Though Twain was violently anti-slavery, Paine says: "That by this time, (Twain) like Lee, decided that he would go with his State and lead battalions to victory." Twain was infuriated with the take-over by the Union soldiers of Missouri; he fought to get rid of them. He did not fight to keep slavery; for he firmly opposed it. The battalion, the Marion Rangers, did not see any real fighting and spent most of their time retreating from the front. Therefore they decided they had had enough of war and dispersed. Twain later recounts this episode in his short story, "The Private History of a Campaign that Failed." He humorously relates: "I could have become a soldier myself, if I had

waited. I had got part of it learned; I knew more about retreating than the man that invented retreating. Twain felt so unsuited for military life that he "retired" after a few months.

At the same time his brother Orion's newspaper and printing career was collapsing, and he had to abandon the trade. Because Orion had supported Abraham Lincoln's election by printing favorable accounts, he was appointed Secretary of the Territory of Nevada. When Twain heard this, he promptly joined his brother and the two of them "lit out for the territory" to conquer the West. The journey to and in the West is described with amazing accuracy in his rollicking book, Roughing It, published in 1872.

Once in the Nevada Territory, Twain attacked silver mining with youthful exuberance. He dreamed of making millions but lost his shirt instead. He did not remain undaunted by his misfortune long and when the Virginia City Enterprise offered him a reporter's job, he gleefully accepted. Up to this time Twain had been writing letters and editorials under many pseudonyms such as "Thomas Jefferson Snodgrass" or "Rambler" or "Josh." When he reported serious assignments he signed them Clemens; but when his humor and fantasy surfaced, he used the Mississippi leadsman's call, "Mark Twain," meaning two fathoms-twelve feet, safe water. Again he reverted to those exciting days on the river and preserved some of those moments in his own alias. He was gaining notoriety for his primitive, wild, uncouth tall tales and his literary career was blossoming.

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His career on the Enterprise ended suddenly when Twain refused to fight a duel; a duel he had instigated by baiting the other paper with insulting editorials. He never could hold his tongue and felt it healthier to leave the state than to fight the duel or go to jail.

Near the end of May, 1864, Twain went to San Francisco and took a position with the San Francisco Morning Call. His job with the Morning Call troubled him. He was irate over the injustices he witnessed but was told not to report them. He became inflamed over the mistreatment of the migrant Chinese workers who were being exploited by the people of San Francisco. He disregarded his orders and wrote scathing exposes about the corrupt police department and politicians. He was soon dismissed and found himself looking for other employment.

For three months, from December to March, 1864, Twain lived in Calaveras County, California, pocket mining with his friend Jim Gillis. They never did strike it rich but the corner-stone for his literary reputation was laid here. Twain's friend and author Artemus Ward on the East coast, wrote and asked Twain to write a story that he could print in a new book of humor. Twain had heard in a tavern the celebrated jumping frog tale and decided to write it and submit it to Ward. This marked another turning point in the diverse life of Mark Twain; this was the real beginning of his reputation as an author on the East Coast. "The Celebrated Jumping Frog of Calaveras County" yarn proved to be his greatest personal and literary triumph of this period, for this piece introduced him to national fame. The story incorporates all the best in Twain's colloquial style, his gentle wisdom of human nature, and elaborate and complex comic effects. It is a jewel of Southwestern humor.
In 1886, the Sacramento Union sent him to the Sandwich Islands as Hawaii was then called, as a travel correspondent. He furnished impressive accounts to his employers. In Roughing It, he incorporated his Hawaiian adventures into the book. This was only the beginning of his career as a travel correspondent, an occupation which would take him to Europe several times and even around the world. When he returned from the Islands in 1866, he began his successful lecture tours. Once his literary reputation was established, it did not take long for his reputation as an outstanding lecturer to become known. When he needed money, which was quite often, he would resort to lecturing until he earned enough money to overcome his financial difficulties. He occasionally received as much as $1,600 for one lecture.

After his successful lecture tour in California and Nevada, he sailed for New York in December of 1866. He had agreed to furnish the Alta California newspaper with articles and sketches from both New York and his proposed excursion on the Quaker City to Europe and the Holy Land. In June of 1867, the Quaker City sailed with one of America's most famous and best loved humorists as a passenger. The results of the correspondence was later published in a book entitled, The Innocents Abroad (1869).

While the boat was docked in the Bay of Smyrna, Twain happened to see a small miniature of Olivia Langdon in her brother Charles' cabin. He fell in love with the picture and was determined to meet the girl. When the pilgrims arrived back in New York, Charles Langdon invited Twain to the Langdon home to meet Olivia. Twain later lovingly reminisced about her: "It was forty years ago; from that day to this the sister has never been out of my mind or heart."\(^{14}\)

After a two year courtship, Twain married his Livvy in February of 1870 amid the splendor of wealth in his father-in-law's mansion. The first months of marriage were uneasy due to Olivia's illness. She had been an invalid when she was younger and never fully recovered from her affliction. Their son, Langdon, was born in 1871 but succumbed to pneumonia in 1872. From 1872 until 1873 the Clemens' spent most of their time abroad in England where Twain was lecturing and being entertained by an adoring public. He was laying the basis for a later world-wide fame. His first lecture trips abroad were wildly triumphant and remained so with every future trip.

When they returned to the United States, they settled in Hartford, Connecticut. Here Twain collaborated with his neighbor and friend, Charles Dudley Warner on his first novel, The Gilded Age (1873). This novel was Twain's first attempt at pure fiction. Other interesting books soon followed, namely, Tom Sawyer in 1876, A Tramp Abroad in 1880, and The Prince and the Pauper in 1881. In 1883, Life on the Mississippi was extended from "Old Times on the Mississippi" into novel form. This book eventually led to the birth of his most famous novel in 1884, Huckleberry Finn. After his business failures, he penned the bitter satire A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court to recoup some of his losses.

The winters were spent by the Clemens' in their house in Hartford; but the summers were enjoyed at Olivia's sister's farm in Elmira, New York. Here at Quarry Farm, in a cheerful airy study specially built for him, Twain's best works first saw the light of day. Here we was able to relax

15 Charles Dudley Warner was editor of the Hartford Courrant and noted for his essays and travel articles.
and become the dedicated father to his three girls--Susie, Clara and Jean. However, this ideal life did not stop him from becoming enchanted with any new fangled device and sinking money into wild schemes which eventually led to his business collapse.

Before the collapse of his business, he managed to build an incredible house at Nook Farm, an exclusive literary area of Hartford. He worked closely with the architect and together they finally produced what could mildly be termed a white elephant. Twain had always had eccentric taste, and this house appeared to be the culmination.

Twain mingled with the literary crowd and became a devoted friend and admirer of William Dean Howells. Here he was able to enjoy the best of both worlds--his family and friends. Olivia and Howells\textsuperscript{16} were his first critics and proofreaders, and Twain allowed them to red pencil all his manuscripts. Twain loved to tease Olivia by writing something objectionable only to watch her frustratingly strike it out. He never lost his zest for playing practical jokes and pranks. Olivia lovingly referred to him as "Youth," and he reciprocated by living up to it. As his best friend Howells said:

> He was a youth to the end of his days, and had the heart of a boy with the head of a sage; the heart of a good boy, or a bad boy, but always a wilful boy, and wilfulest to show himself out at every time for just the boy he was.\textsuperscript{17}

Twain received immense pleasure at repeating to his family and friends remarks of praise for his books. He delighted in reporting his

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\textsuperscript{16} William Dean Howells--novelist and critic; also wrote travel books; Rise of Silas Lapham and Venetian Affair; editor of The Atlantic Monthly.

\textsuperscript{17} William Dean Howells, My Mark Twain (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1967), p. 7.
achievements but became violently upset when the praise turned to criticism. Twain had a lifelong habit of profanity. Since he was considerate of his family, he tried not to curse in their presence. When he became irate and felt the need for venting his anger, he locked himself into the bathroom and "cussed" until he felt the anger leave him and be replaced by his normal sweetness.

Twain became obsessed with the Paige Typesetter and thought it would revolutionize the printing world. Until now, all type was hand set; the Paige would set the type automatically and accelerate the printing process. Twain sunk enormous sums of his own money and also some of Olivia's inheritance into this failure. He firmly believed until his total business collapse that the Paige would bring him untold wealth. After the failure of the typesetter, Twain's partnership with his nephew Charles Webster's Publishing House also collapsed. Both ventures failed and Twain was in debt for $100,000, an exorbitant sum in those days.

H. H. Rogers, a Standard Oil executive, agreed to untangle and straighten out Twain's finances. He managed to save the copyrights of Twain's books by transferring them to Olivia, and helped to pay off the debt through wise and shrewd budgeting and bookkeeping. Because some of Olivia's money was involved, Twain was stubbornly determined to clear himself of the debt so they would not have to suffer moral disgrace.

In 1891, Twain closed his house in Hartford and settled his family in Europe. Since they were almost completely broke, they found it cheaper to reside in Europe, where Twain could give financially successful lectures. They spent a great part of their lives in transit. Traveling first began for Twain as a means for producing interesting letters for newspapers and
material for travel books. Travel was second nature to the restless Twain and eventually it led to his international fame and prestige.

Since Twain was determined to pay off his debts, he set out on a world-wide lecture tour in 1895. The family had come back to America for a brief period in 1895 to plan the around the world tour. They decided to leave Susie and Jean in America and took their middle daughter Clara with them to act as secretary and nurse to Olivia.

This tour, as others before, was an enormous success. They visited India, Ceylon, New Zealand, Australia and South Africa, with other stops in between. The results of this tour is the impressive double-volume, _Following the Equator_, published in 1897. Tragedy struck them on the last leg of the journey. They had planned to have Susie and Jean join the rest of the family in England when they received a telegram that their beloved daughter Susie was ill. Mrs. Clemens and Clara sailed for America immediately, while a grieving Twain, all alone, received the telegram saying his beloved and favorite Susie had died of meningitis. She died at the tender age of twenty-four and took all the sunshine and joy out of the family's life with her. From Susie's death in 1896 until 1900 the family resided at various places in Europe. They did not return until all the debts had been paid.

There was little literary output in Twain's later years. In 1894, _Pudd'nhead Wilson_ was published and two years later in 1896, Twain's favorite novel, _The Personal Recollections of Joan of Arc_ was published. He pressed one of his favorite characters, Tom Sawyer into service by writing _Tom Sawyer Abroad_ in 1896. Aside from his book on Christian Science in 1907, he mainly wrote short philosophic pieces such as
"What is Man?", "The Man That Corrupted Hadleyburg," and the culmination of his despair and pessimism, "The Mysterious Stranger."

Though he ceased to publish, Twain did not cease to write and he began many manuscripts but was unable to finish them. Bernard DeVoto as literary executor of Twain's estate, remarks about these unpublished pieces:

"...as a series of efforts by Mark Twain to free himself from responsibility for the misfortunes he believed he had brought upon his family."\(^1\)\(^8\) DeVoto admired "The Mysterious Stranger" as the most important of the unfinished pieces because:

...largely he saw in it an act of self-healing. He found the meaning of the book in the fact that it gathered all the unbearable scenes of man's meanness and cowardice and cruelty, the whole bloodstained panorama of history, into a single vision which then is declared to be but a dream.\(^1\)\(^9\)

In 1904, Twain took his beloved Olivia to Florence, Italy, to revive her failing health. After her long illness, she died leaving a despondent Twain. With her death, his pessimism and fatalism became even more bitter and denouncing than it was in his earlier works. He wrote very little during this time and spent most of his days playing billiards with his friend and official biographer, A. B. Paine. Paine was a close friend of Twain. He was also an author of juvenile stories and the editor of the children's magazine, St. Nicholas, from 1899-1909. Twain trusted him and his judgment and allowed him to publish his Autobiography after his death. For Twain scholars, this three volume tome is indispensible.


\(^1\)\(^9\) Ibid.
In 1909, Christmas Eve, tragedy touched his life again with the death of his youngest daughter Jean. His last living daughter Clara had married and was living with her husband in Europe. The highlight of these unhappy, sorrowful years was an honorary degree from Oxford University which he received in 1907. He had received other awards and acclimations but cherished this one as the most honorable. And indeed it was for a self-educated man who had left school at the age of twelve. He was so proud of his scarlet Oxford robes that he even donned them for his daughter Clara's wedding.

In 1910, "The Wild Humorist from the Pacific Slope" succumbed to angina. Again Haley's Comet streaked across the sky. He had always insisted that he and the Comet's life were intertwined, and that he would go out when the Comet reappeared. This time he was not spinning one of his outrageous tall tales.

As Twain reminisced about his life, he often gave forth with inaccurate statements, either due to faulty memory or he just decided certain incidents needed added coloring or flavoring to be appealing. Twain's predilection for determinism can be seen in his own reflections on his career. He asserted that he had always done the thing his temperament had ordained him to do. For example, he became an author because his nature prescribed him to be an author. As he stated in his last literary piece of work, "The Turning-Point of my Life": "Circumstance, working in harness with my temperament, created them all and compelled them all. I often offered help...but it was rejected." 20

This determinism will be explored in subsequent chapters.

This, then, is the general outline of Twain's life. In this dissertation, we are also interested in probing his inner life since it shaped his concept of childhood. What was the source of Twain's creative impulse? What drove him to his literary achievement? To answer these questions, we must examine how Twain reacted to his own experiences. This will aid us in understanding his characters. Just about every word Twain wrote is derived from personal experience. In this sense, most of his books are to some extent autobiographical. Besides the Autobiography of his personal recollections, his novels such as Roughing It and Life on the Mississippi are a mixture of fiction and autobiography.

His novels such as Huck Finn and Tom Sawyer are also autobiographical to some extent in that they are based on actual personal relationships, places and events as Twain remembered them from his own childhood experiences. They are not entirely autobiographical because Twain's imagination and pen used considerable poetic license to make them more readable and enjoyable. Through his use of poetic license, Twain was able to project his genial and humorous personality into his works.

Twain's works are an artistic blend of reality and fantasy. The seed of reality reflects Twain's own reality of life and experience. He was a morally staunch member of society in spite of his bombastic effusions against the "damned human race." His satirical pen became his soap-box for venting his irate feelings against the corruption and deceit he encountered. Twain fervently believed that literature of any real value had to emanate from an author who was willing to contribute his whole being to his works. The author's works must reflect the author's life. "There is nothing," he wrote Mrs. Fairbanks, whom he met on the Quaker
City excursion ship:

that makes me prouder than to be regarded by intelligent people as 'authentic.' A name I have coveted so long--& secured at last! I don't care anything about being humorous, or poetical, or eloquent, or anything of that kind--the end & aim of my ambition is to be authentic--is to be considered authentic.21

Books which allowed him to draw freely on the memories of his youthful days were his best. He was strongly attracted to the past and more idyllic times. He spent hours and days brooding over it. As he grew older, he dwelt more and more in the past and the wonderful Missouri world which appeared so different than the cruel present one. In his vivid memory, the old world tended to take on colors and qualities which helped to ease the pains of his present bitter world. He turned that past world into the material that art is made of.

His ancestors were men and women who settled the Middle Border states and the fertile Mississippi valley, arriving from the East and South. In the wilderness they hoped to carve out images of the older more civil homes that they had left. Politically they believed in the Declaration of Independence and economically in the Puritan work ethic. Their narrow view of the Bill of Rights excluded Indians and Negroes.

Mark Twain was born during this time of simple unmechanical expansion of the Republic and the westward migration. DeLancey Ferguson analyzes: "It formed his spirit and background; in his darkest moments his thoughts still expressed themselves in the patterns he had learned in Missouri and on the River before the Civil War."22

22 Ferguson, Mark Twain: Man and Legend, p. 15.
Mark Twain was also a son of the South. But as his friend Howells was later to state:

He was the most desouthernized Southerner I ever knew. No man more perfectly sensed and more entirely abhorred slavery, and no one has ever poured such scorn upon the second-hand Walter-Scotticized, pseudo-chivalry of the Southern ideal. He held himself responsible for the wrong which the white race had done the black race in slavery, and he explained, in paying the way of a Negro student through Yale, that he was doing it as his part of the reparation due from every white to every black man. He said he had never seen this student, nor ever wished to see him or know his name; it was quite enough that he was a negro. 23

Twain grew up with Negroes for his father had a few slaves, but he never lost respect for this innocent race. He became infuriated at slave beatings and the threats of selling a slave down the river by white owners galled him. To Twain, the worst treatment of a slave was to break up his family unit and send him down the river into the deep South where animals were treated more humanely than the slaves. He felt that the South would always be stigmatized with the blot of slavery.

The immediate American environment played a role in Twain’s increasing concern for social and political issues. The later 1880’s were a violent and turbulent period. The press was filled with the varied demands of dissident groups who demanded regulation of railroads, break-up of monopolies and imprisonment for political crooks to save the nation from ruin. Labor was being organized into unions and the Chicago Haymarket Riot in 1886 exposed the anxieties underlying these movements.

After the Civil War ended, capitalism and industrialism became firmly entrenched in American society. The westward migration was waning and American society was becoming urbanized and mechanized. Twain

23 Howells, My Mark Twain, p. 30.
himself became a conspicuous worshipper of the new industrialism, for not many adored the machine as he did. His adulation entered his literature and he praised the machine age in his novel, *A Connecticut Yankee*. He was drawn to the business scions such as Andrew Carnegie and Henry Ford but yet at the same time he hated the new way of life in the industrial age and wrote bitter reports about the men who were shaping and directing the national destiny.

For with the Civil War, Twain saw the death of the vital Mississippi as the central living artery of the nation; it was replaced by the vast railroad network. And as Lionel Trilling has ruefully noted: "The war that brought the end of the rich Mississippi days also marked a change in the quality of life in America which, to many men, consisted of a deterioration of American moral values." 24 Twain often commented on the despair he felt over the quality of life, the low morality and the bad taste of the populace. In the first part of his book, *Life on the Mississippi*, we find a glowing report of the turbulent energy of the river, only to be confronted in the second part with the melancholy reminiscence of the rich Mississippi days. Twain mourned the passing of the river trade.

Twain reflected on a past which seemed particularly charming. He lovingly re-created those details from memory with the astuteness of a local colorist. He wanted to accurately give the right flavor and aura to those idyllic days. Walter Blair writes: "His accuracy, typical in the 1880's, extended, so far as he could make it extend, to even the recording

of the dialects of the section. And in his depictions there were elements of tenderness far more characteristic of the later author than of the earlier humorist." Twain wanted to make sure that his readers would experience his feelings for the river as he had experienced it. It is an aspect of the human condition to reminisce and to find the past a better and more innocent time than the present.

Twain, fundamentally, was a humorist. His humor made him a popular lecturer and after-dinner speaker. It gave his works endearing qualities. His folksy wisdom, subtle, complex and moral, found expression in humor. He helped restore the Southwestern humor which had been lost in the Civil War. The culmination of this humor is seen in Tom Sawyer and Huck Finn.

Through his characterization, best in anecdotal pieces of narration, Twain created laughable figures who breathed the breath of life. He could make them come to life, as he did with Huck, Tom, Jim, Colonel Sellers and Pudd'nhead Wilson. He depicted them, according to Blair: "Quickly in a framework, and then let them talk so revealingly that their mere way of telling a story made them intimate acquaintances of the reader. Mark Twain accomplished a wide range of character portrayal visioned but not achieved by earlier humorists." Twain, in short, could not help but be a humorist. His works are, in a sense, a summary of nineteenth-century native American humor. Blair summarizes: "They are a climax, as well, to


its development. They had, to be sure, its faults; but more important, in their best passages, they revealed the development of its artistry in the works of a genius."  

Wherever Twain went, he became interested in the educational system. He became especially happy when he found prosperous and successful schools. He was easily impressed by the vast scope and variety of learning that was going on in the schools. He was deeply flattered whenever he found himself in the company of learned men on an equal footing. He never stopped learning and in his later years surrounded himself with academic books to help him improve his mind. These books were usually scientific or historical. His most absorbed reading was done in history, and history first awakened his intellectual curiosity. He found history dramatic and romantic; the haunting past charmed him. But because he was not systematically trained, he sometimes generalized from insufficient data in his historical novels. What he lost to inaccuracy he made up for with emotion. He delighted in using his mind. Edward Wagenknecht describes Twain's mind as: "It was not a great mind; the minds of creative artists seldom are. But it was a thoroughly good mind and an interesting mind and an eager one. Within the limitation that circumscribed him, he loved to think things through." Whenever Twain departed from fact, he usually explained to the reader with a preface, the reasons for his departure. At least it gave the readers an inkling of his prevarication. Jane Clemens, his mother, had probably already learned the truth when she enunciated:

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28 Wagenknecht, Mark Twain: The Man and His Work, p. 103.
"All Sam's pronouncements must be discounted 90 per cent, the remaining 10 per cent being pure gold."29

William Dean Howells, Twain's friend of forty years, knew the enigmatic author best. His book, My Mark Twain, an intimate eulogy of their friendship, states:

Among the half-dozen, or half-hundred, personalities that each of us becomes, I should say that Clemens' central and final personality was something exquisite. His casual acquaintance might know him, perhaps, from his fierce intensity, his wild pleasure in shocking people with his ribaldries and profanities or from the mere need of loosing his rebellious spirit in that way, as anything but exquisite, and yet that was what in the last analysis he was. They might come away loathing or hating him, but one could not know him well without realizing him the most serious, the most humane, the most conscientious of men.... You could offer Clemens offences that would anger other men and he did not mind; he would account for them from human nature; but if he thought you had in any way played him false you were anathema and maranatha forever.... He went farther than Heine, who said that he forgave his enemies, but not till they were dead. Clemens did not forgive his dead enemies; their death seemed to deepen their crimes, like a base evation, or a cowardly attempt to escape.... He was generous without stint; he trusted without measure, but where his generosity was abused, or his trust betrayed, he was fire of vengeance, a consuming flame of suspicion...that had to burn itself out.... He would not, and doubtless could not, listen to reason.... As Clemens grew older he grew more merciful, not to the wrong, but to the men who were in it. They were often the source of his wildest drolling.... He considered it in such hopelessness of ever doing it justice that his despair broke into laughter.30

Howells' summary is probably the best available and most reliable. Howells was not only a friend but also a trusted critic of the Twain manuscripts. Twain relied heavily on Howells' suggestions and was willing to delete most items that Howells found objectionable. Their friendship was rather

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29 Ibid., p. 93.

30 William Dean Howells in Ferguson, Mark Twain: Man and Legend, p. 237.
strange, for critic and author usually are not that cordial.

Twain's miscellaneous writings include a variety of material. His works consisted mainly of novels, short stories, and essays. In his essays and short stories, his moral and philosophical beliefs predominate. Some of his most moralistic and controversial essays include: "Extracts from Adam's Diary," 1904; "King Leopold's Soliloquy," 1905; "What is Man?" 1906; "Eve's Diary," 1906; "Captain Stormfield's Visit to Heaven," 1909, and published posthumously, "The Mysterious Stranger," 1916.

His principal novels and the works he is most noted for consist of: The Gilded Age, 1873; The Adventures of Tom Sawyer, 1876; The Prince and the Pauper, 1882; The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn, 1884; A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court, 1889; The American Claimant, 1892; Tom Sawyer Abroad, 1894; The Tragedy of Pudd'nhead Wilson, 1894; and Personal Recollections of Joan of Arc, 1896. Besides novels based on fiction, Twain was also famous for his travel books and reminiscences. His travel books such as: The Innocents Abroad, 1869; Roughing It, 1872; A Tramp Abroad, 1880; and Following the Equator, 1897, are based on his many foreign excursions. His personal recollections, blended with biography, can be found in Roughing It, 1872; Life on the Mississippi, 1883; and Autobiography, 1924.

With his sketch, "The Celebrated Jumping Frog of Calaveras County," Mark Twain gained the recognition which inspired him to produce other works. His first full-length novel was a travel book relating his trip to Europe and the Holy Land. He titled it, The Innocents Abroad and published it in 1869, just two years after the Jumping Frog. The Innocents was immediately recognized as being a new type of travel book that even the
conservatively staid Atlantic Monthly deigned to review it. This review alerted discriminating readers to the "Wild Humorist from the Pacific Slope."

The Innocents Abroad was Twain's first full-length literary venture. Before he wrote it, he had created a reputation as being a wild, uncouth author who could only produce exaggerated tall tales. After its publication, it was realized by the public that he was more than just an ordinary yarn-spinner, but an author of some magnitude who was worthwhile to read. He had recorded his European travels with the innocent eyes of a Midwesterner. Twain was no longer operating under the cloud of the primitive man of the West after he became accepted in more sophisticated Eastern circles. James Cox notes:

One of the chief distinctions of The Innocents Abroad, is that it established an American point of view toward Europe as opposed to a Southern, Western, or New England point of view. Following hard upon the Civil War, it represented an attitude of national assurance and confidence which neither the nation nor its travelers had had before the war.31

Most American literature at this time was gazing deeply at American life and values. Twain did the opposite; he looked to Europe through American eyes.

For a first attempt the book is very clear and readable. His other attempts had been grounded in the vernacular and with the Innocents he proved to be a master of English prose. In it he parodies guidebooks while writing his own travel book built around the impressions he acquired.

His other novel, *Roughing It*, published in 1872, at first glance seems to be a travel book also because of his detailed description of his overland journey, the West and his trip to the Islands. In *Roughing It*, Twain takes the reader into the geography of their own country and into the frontier. There is a freshness here that was not found in the revered past of Europe. To some degree it is a travel book, but more important it is also autobiographical because it envelops Twain's personal life, flavored with picturesque speech and colorful recollections.

*Roughing It* covers the period of Twain's life from his "retirement" as a confederate soldier in 1861 through his experiences as a miner and reporter in Nevada and California and the Hawaiian Islands until 1866. *Roughing It* is written closer to his actual experiences, so for its autobiographical content it is more accurate than the later *Autobiography*. For the first time, Twain loosened his descriptive pen. It took him out of the realm of pure, straight journalistic reporting of the passing scene and put him in the picture of humorous writer. He recounts tall tales, invents anecdotes and dramatizes episodes out of all proportion to what really happened.

With his next novel, *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer*, Twain crossed into the area of childhood, where he made some of his greatest discoveries and contributions. Twain's triumphs of boy-literature invariably inspire readers to conjure vivid memories of their own childhood which have been either forgotten or discarded. Twain kept alive the climate of boyhood and transferred to his books the deepest feelings and pulsations of that time. Twain, himself, called *Tom Sawyer* a "hymn" to boyhood and most readers experience the warmth and naturalness of this account of growing up
in a Missouri river town in the mid-nineteenth century.

Tom Sawyer was Twain's fifth full-length volume, but the "first of his books," as Ferguson says, "which has stood the test of time as a coherent and appealing whole. He had reached full growth at last, thanks to Sam Clemens' boyhood in Hannibal." Twain finished Tom Sawyer at the beginning of July of 1875, and was anxious for Howells' opinion. After completing the book, he had serious doubts if it would be successful and was not aware of the fact that he had written a boy's book at all. He wrote Howells: "It will only be read by adults. It is only written for adults." Howells obliged and read the manuscript but differed with Twain's impressions of the reading audience. Howells informed Twain that he should: "...treat it explicitly as a boy's story. Grown-ups will enjoy it just as much if you do; and if you should put it forth as a study of boy character from the grown-up point of view, you'd give the wrong key to it." Twain agreed, as he always did with his friend's criticisms, and accepted his revisions without question. Fortunately for the English language, Tom Sawyer was printed as it stood and became so successful that it encouraged and prodded Twain into enriching the language with more literary works.

Tom Sawyer is autobiographical in many details, spirits and personalities. Aunt Polly is Jane Clemens with no embellishments beyond a dialectal crudity of speech which Mrs. Clemens did not possess. Sid is a

32 Ferguson, Mark Twain: Man and Legend, p. 182.


34 Ibid., p. 61.
parody of Twain's gentle brother Henry and the demanding cousin Mary is based on his sister Pamela. And the main character, Tom, with his reckless escapades and remorseful penitence, is Sam Clemens in childhood. Though Tom is loosely based on Sam Clemens, Tom is also a composite of all the young boys living in mid-nineteenth century America.

Even though the book deals with morbid subjects such as graverobbers, murder, and death, Frank Baldanza feels: "It ultimately exonerates the values of the small town in which Twain's generation grew up, and, by extension, the small town that each of us carries in his memory if only as a kind of historic heritage." 35

The wonderful achievement that Twain reached with _Tom Sawyer_ becomes more distinct when viewed against the dull failure of _The Prince and the Pauper_. The failure of this book is universally acknowledged and the reasons given for it are as diverse and conflicting as the characters in the book. One of the most common accounts for the book's failure is that Twain was off his home ground, the Mississippi, and did not really know English life as he knew river life. James Cox noted: "Since he was unable to assimilate the texture of the alien history into his book, he surrendered the marvellous realism of _Tom Sawyer_ to the strained sentiment of _The Prince and the Pauper._" 36 Another often heard argument is that since _Tom Sawyer_ had been met so well by a juvenile audience, Twain merely produced nothing more than a juvenile book meeting the demands of his


36 Cox, _Mark Twain: Fate of Humor_, p. 149.
junior audience. With its publication in 1881, audiences wanted Twain to turn back to his previous broad western humor rather than struggle with archaic quaintness and antiquarian cuteness.

Though Twain had meant to write the book solely for a juvenile audience, nevertheless he wrote a book for adults. The Prince and the Pauper is a valuable guide for anyone interested in Twain's social thought and criticism. Cox further asserts: "His democratic impulses and broadly liberal humanitarianism are evident here in a way they had never been in his earlier work."\(^{37}\) In it he reveals his disgust for monarchies and proves through careful manipulation of his characters that Prince and commoner are one; only their training makes them act differently.

Again he deals with one of his favorite devices, switched identities. Tom Canty, a poor boy, resembles the Prince to the last facial detail. The Prince, bored with court life, decides that he wants to trade places with Tom. The change takes place, and the rest of the novel tells how the Prince suffers through many injustices and is made aware of the evils in his kingdom. Tom, meanwhile, in the role of the Prince, is enjoying himself. The Prince, on coronation day, finally returns and is crowned. He forgives Tom and starts a bloodless rule lasting until his death a few years later. The Prince and the Pauper was a labor of love for Twain. He wrote it under the guidance of his daughters and the Saturday Morning Club. Because of this, it remained one of his favorites.

The two books following The Prince and the Pauper stand at the climax of Twain's purely literary achievement. Life on the Mississippi, published

\(^{37}\)Cox, Mark Twain: Fate of Humor, p. 150.
in 1883, and Huckleberry Finn, in 1884, are to be considered together not only for their importance in the development of Twain as a writer, but also for the contemporary recognition and success. Both books were forming themselves in the author's mind simultaneously; the writing of both extended over a period of almost ten years; and both had the vigor to persist in spite of many personal and business reverses of the author.

Life on the Mississippi began as a series of articles for the Atlantic Monthly under the title "Old Times on the Mississippi," in 1883. The book exposes the rich legacy of river lore inherited by Twain. The book opens with a mixture of personal, historical and personal material about the river and its geography. The opening chapters also include Twain's experiences as a cub and pilot. Here Twain is at his best both factually and humorously.

Reviewers, such as the Atlantic Monthly, who had hesitated to review any of Twain's work, reviewed his river book, and found it to be a wealth of information concerning the history and geography of the Middle Border. With Life on the Mississippi, Twain had earned the recognition as something more than just a humorist and yarn-spinner. He was beginning to be recognized both at home and abroad as a great literary figure. Twain decided to return to his old Mississippi haunts and collect material and refresh his memory. "Life on the Mississippi resulted from this trip," as DeVoto noted, "but it had a greater importance in that it turned him back to Huckleberry Finn." About half-way through, Twain had thought of burning the manuscript of Huck Finn; with refreshed vigor from his

38 Bernard DeVoto, "Mark Twain at Work," in Barry Mark's Mark Twain's Huckleberry Finn, p. 31.
recent trip, he finally published his greatest work, *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* in 1884.

Twain worked on *Huck Finn* at intervals over a period of seven years, from 1876 to 1883. During this time he managed to complete *A Tramp Abroad* and *The Prince and the Pauper*, and expanded "Old Times on the Mississippi" into the book *Life on the Mississippi*, and gathered various shorter sketches into three other volumes. He was continuing with his prolific writing, but when he hit a snag in *Huck Finn* and did not know where the story was going, he pigeon-holed the manuscript and concentrated on other matters. With encouragement from his wife and friends he was persuaded to finish his masterpiece.

*Huck Finn* is a sequel to *Tom Sawyer*. It retains most of the characters from the earlier work. *Huck Finn* has been the source of extravagant praise and the most critical analysis of any of Twain's works. Every aspect of Huck's character has been probed. Baldanza writes: "It is superior to *Tom Sawyer* because it is a more serious and disturbing view of the same small town; by now the violence and brutality that served a melodramatic purpose in the earlier books have been refracted through the profound moral issues of slavery and human dignity."

The theme of *Huck Finn* is the same as that of *Tom Sawyer*. It is the growth of a young adventurous boy to adulthood and the final acceptance of his adult moral responsibilities. As the title indicates, it is an adventure, and Twain takes us down the river in the eyes of the vagabond Huck. The prose is in the vernacular because Huck tells us his own story.

in his own words without the intrusion of a narrator. The scenery comes alive as the reader sees it for the first time with his own eyes. The dialect is that of the river country.

At the end of *Tom Sawyer*, Huck and Tom are heroes and get to keep the money recovered from the robbers. Huck, deciding to run away from his father, builds a raft and starts down the Mississippi. On Jackson's Island he meets Jim, a run-away slave from Miss Watson, the sister of the Widow Douglas who was trying to civilize Huck. Huck and Jim join forces and with an iron determination decide to reach free territory. Their journey together has a destination; it is an escape from slavery into freedom. They want to sail down the river to Cairo, Illinois, to find passage for Jim up the Ohio River and to freedom.

Huck, who floats down the river on his raft with Jim, serves as a conscience for an entire era and culture. Never reconciled to what he sees in town after town, he undergoes traumatic revelations of human depravity that sicken him. Huck is a shrewd boy traveling through the mainstream of America. DeVoto remarks:

> It is only because the world he passes through is real and only because it is American that his journey escapes into universals and is immortal. His book is American life formed into great fiction.... Somewhere in the person of Mark Twain, who wrote it, must have been an artist-as American.40

Socially, moralistically and historically, the book was an unblemished triumph for Twain. Besides its many messages, it is readable and appealing. The success of the book lies in the fact that it has

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miraculously managed to transcend most of its limitations. As Claude Simpson accurately summarized:

Its language is vernacular, raised to an uncommon power of effectiveness; its milieu is heavy with local color...its hero is a poor-white isolate whose simplicity of vision never blinds him to innate truths; its dedication to adventure assures us surface excitement which cannot obscure an underlying critique of human nature. Twain built better than he knew. He could never quite duplicate the triumph.41

Bernard DeVoto praises it further and attributes its success to the fact that:

It is an adventure story, but beneath the adventure story are stratified layers of recognition and response, national, and personal, of memory and of desire. Many voices are speaking, from our past, from our reverie, and from our dream. It is best to accept that harmony without trying to analyze it further. No book has more of America in it, or more delight. Like all great works of art it is unique. All the world reads it for the first time.42

Huck Finn exposes both sides of human nature; all the good in man along with all his failings. These are the qualities that endeared the book to a world audience and made it a great world novel. The book is a deep and thorough study of civilized man, his fears, dreams and foibles. The lessons the book teaches are timeless and simple.

Huck Finn represents the eternally mischievous young boy; he stands as a figure of irreverent and boyish fun who pricks the false moral pretensions and sham of the river town society. It is a true representation of the heart and soul of our nation. Lauriade Lane feels that Huckleberry Finn is a great world novel because:

41 Simpson, Twentieth Century Interpretations of the Adventures of Huckleberry Finn, p. 6.
42 DeVoto, "Mark Twain at Work," in Marks' Mark Twain's Huckleberry Finn, p. 43.
At the heart of Huckleberry Finn lies a story about real human figures with genuine moral and ethical problems and decisions, figures placed in a society which we recognize as having everywhere in it the flavor of authenticity—the whole combination treated, for the most part, as directly and realistically as possible.43

There are also brutal moments in Huck Finn, as there were in Tom Sawyer, but yet both books remain a humorous narrative. Twain discovered the epitome of his humor in Huck Finn. He was to try many times to repeat this success but failed miserably. He was never able to duplicate the humor, satire and empathy of Huck Finn. "That is why," James Cox maintains, "Huckleberry Finn stands not only chronologically but critically at the center of Mark Twain's career, and why any study of Mark Twain is irrevocably anchored to it."44

The world of Huck and Tom is a boy's world and in his satiric book, A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court, Twain is reaching into an adult world. The world of the leading character, Hank Morgan, an efficient superintendent in a Hartford machine shop, is the world of adults. Hank Morgan is transported into a sixth-century feudal world, where he assumes the role of a superman inventor in an effort to industrialize the Arthurian world by speeding up history by several centuries. He does somehow manage to revolutionize by bringing the printing press, electricity, dynamite and other nineteenth century technology to the people.

When Twain was ruined by the Paige typesetter, he penned A Connecticut Yankee to help pay off some of the debts. Because of this

43 Lauriat Lane, Jr., "Why Huckleberry Finn is a Great World Novel," in Marks' Mark Twain's Huckleberry Finn, p. 95.
44 Cox, Mark Twain: Fate of Humor, p. 156.
financial set-back, Minnie Brashear contends: "It is possible that the
importance the machine had assumed in his mind stimulated his imagination
... to the grotesque, retroactive exercise of projecting a Yankee mechanic
into sixth-century England." 45

A Connecticut Yankee was written after almost five years of silence.
It was written after Twain reached his climax with Huck Finn. It was his
last futile attempt at fiction and everything that followed was anti-
climactic. It marked the end of his masterful creative years and precedes
his disillusionment with life, deaths in his family, and business failures.
Twain said this to Howells about the book after he completed it:

Well, my book is written—let it go, but if it were only to
write over again there wouldn't be so many things left out.
They burn in me; they keep multiplying, but now they can't
ever be said; and besides they would require a library—and
a pen warmed up in hell. 46

In Hank Morgan we can see the young Twain. One of the Yankee's
principal components is the image of the self-made man—an image that
Twain greatly admired and identified with. Upon closer study, one can
see what Twain is really saying. He is looking at the deplorable
conditions that mankind has been laboring under and what that venerable
institution, the church, has done to propagate these evils. Many pages of
the book relate neither to humor or comedy but are simply illustrations of
the injustices and cruelties inflicted upon the people through a corrupt
church and despotic monarchs as Twain felt they existed in the Middle Ages.
The book exposes the evils of man and the training he received from the

45 Brashear, Mark Twain: Son of Missouri, p. 20.
corrupt institutions he had created. In *A Connecticut Yankee*, Twain, speaking through the Yankee, is seen by Henry Nash Smith as:

He (the Yankee) is voicing the author's disillusionment with the glittering promise for man's continuous moral improvement held out by the doctrine of progress.... Just as Mark Twain had poured all the capital...into the type-setter, he had invested all his political enthusiasm, his humanitarian emotion, and his hope for the future of his country in the idea that the common man was the prime creative force in history.47

When Hank Morgan claims that the populace of Arthur's kingdom is a mass of human muck, it is a judgment by the author about the population of America. This is a turning point for Twain's idealism.

Most things Twain wrote and published after *A Connecticut Yankee* were pale compared to his previous successes. At a loss, he attempted to revive his old friend Tom Sawyer once more in an effort to recapture those golden days. This resulted in *Tom Sawyer Abroad* and *Tom Sawyer Detective*. Neither attempt could duplicate the freshness and vigor of the original.

*Pudd'nhead Wilson* belongs to the decade of the 1890's during which Twain suffered a series of personal disasters: the bankruptcy of his publishing company, the failure of the typesetter, and the final blow, the death of his most cherished daughter Susie. Most of his works during this period are his poorest accomplishments. *Pudd'nhead Wilson* was written in Europe but its setting was a mythical Dawson's Landing on the Mississippi and can rightly be called the last of his Mississippi books. Its place belongs right after *Tom Sawyer* and *Huck Finn*, not that it approaches their excellence. "The plot," Cox surmises, "of

Pudd'nhead Wilson greatly inhibits the possibilities of episodic freedom which the other two books so amply embody."\(^{48}\)

In Pudd'nhead, Twain takes us back to the old slave-holding South which he knew so well. "In Pudd'nhead Wilson," Cox noted, "he came to grips with the animating issue of slavery in a sustained effort which, challenging him more deeply as he wrote, called upon the deepest resources of his imagination."\(^{49}\) Again, Twain deals with the subject of switched identities as he did in The Prince and the Pauper. This time a black child and a white child are involved. The white child, Tom Driscoll's mother dies in childbirth and the black slave, nurse to the boy, Roxy, switches him with her own boy who also happens to be the son of Tom's father. Roxy is a light skinned Negro with only a drop of Negro blood, but still that drop makes her all Negro in the eyes of Dawson's Landing. The story deals with the growth of the two diverse boys and their involvement with Roxy. Tom murders his father and in a final trial scene, Pudd'nhead Wilson exposes him as the murderer through the use of fingerprints, a new method of crime detection that was just coming into vogue.

Personal Recollections of Joan of Arc was another serious attempt at history. Twain considered this his favorite book, but the reviewers did not share his enthusiasm. He felt that the only way to put out a serious book would be for him to write it anonymously. He said to his family: "I shall never be accepted seriously over my own signature.

\(^{48}\) Cox, Mark Twain: Fate of Humor, p. 226.

\(^{49}\) Ibid.
people always want to laugh over what I write and are disappointed if they don't find a joke in it.... It means more to me than anything I have ever undertaken. I shall write it anonymously." 50 However, when the publication date arrived, he relented and signed the book, Mark Twain. American reviewers objected and the English critics according to Brashear: "...distrustful still of the author's irreverence, but always much interested in his personality and sturdy character, referred to him at this time as 'a charming writer of whimsical historical romance.' " 51 And that is all Joan of Arc turned out to be, a sentimented tribute brimming with kindness for the young virgin that Twain had fallen in love with and idolized. As Maxwell Geismer ruefully concluded: "(Joan)... was Sam Clemens' worst book. This was perhaps the single exception to the Mark Twain rule that there is always something of value in even his worst work. It is difficult to find anything of interest in Joan of Arc except its badness." 52

From 1895 to 1896, Twain made a lecture tour of the southern hemisphere. The result of this trip was Following the Equator, his last travel book. Twain was sixty years old when he started the trip and the book reflects his age. It does not have the freshness and vigor of Innocents Abroad or A Tramp Abroad. The Equator book relies too heavily on quoted matter and factual material; Twain was reliving his experiences vicariously. He was using the dull, useless information as

51 Brashear, Mark Twain: Son of Missouri, p. 23.
"fat" to fill out his flimsy tale more quickly so he could get it published and make some money. The book is useful for the educator because Twain unleashes tirades against school systems both at home and abroad. Ferguson regards it as: "...full of bitter wisdom.... The journey had shown Mark among many other things the seamy side of empire-building; he had few illusions about white civilization before he started; he had none when he ended."53

A short commentary should be offered on some of Twain's short stories and sketches because they reveal to us the man as much as his novels do, if not more in the philosophic essays. In "Is Shakespeare Dead?" Twain pursues the old problem of the authenticity of the author of the literature of the man called William Shakespeare. Twain rests his whole argument on the one fact, that Shakespeare as a country bumpkin actor, could not have such a thorough understanding of the law as the author of that great body of literature possessed. His argument is exaggerated and bombastic; it has all the pitch of a wild-eyed traveling medicine man of the early West. In short, the Twain library would not suffer too harshly if this piece were omitted.

Because Twain did not consider the Bible to be divinely inspired, we find him whiling away many an hour, throughout his entire career, at humorous diaries of Biblical figures. Not all of this material has reached print, but some of his more humorous pieces have, such as "Adam's Diary" and "Eve's Diary." Adam is portrayed in a typical domestic setting who is constantly being pestered by the unwanted busy-body Eve.

53 Ferguson, Mark Twain: Man and Legend, p. 274.
Adam views the arrival of Cain and Abel as one of Eve's inexplicable tricks. The diary of Eve is more serious; it presents Eve as a typical housewife put on the earth to irritate man. Her love of beauty leads her to experiment with the laws of nature; she insists on naming the animals, flowers and other natural phenomena. What saves the piece from overwhelming bitterness is the blind devotion that Eve shows towards an indifferent Adam. It has been suggested that Eve was the embodiment of Olivia catering to Twain's Adam.

Olivia's irrevocable disapproval suppressed the publication of his philosophic piece "What is Man?"; but after her death he published it in 1906. "What is Man?" is the major document in Twain's philosophic cache. The plot is a dialogue between an Old Man, representing Twain, and a Young Man, perhaps representing the youthful Twain. They discourse and argue about the nature of man and his place in society. It is a very deterministic piece of work written by an embittered old man groping for answers to deep moral questions. The plan for this book had haunted Twain for many years and he finally gave vent to his feelings by setting his emotions down on paper. Twain considers "What is Man?" to be a large part of his philosophy of life. To the question of What is Man?, the Old Man answers:

Man the machine-man the impersonal engine. Whatsoever a man is, is due to his make, and to the influences brought to bear upon it by his heredities, his habitat, his associations. He is moved, directed, ORDERED, by exterior influences-solely. He originates nothing, not even a thought. 54

These exterior influences are directed by training. However, this training must not be indiscriminate; it must be: "Training in right directions over training in wrong ones. Inestimably valuable is training, influence, education, in right directions—training one's self-approbation to elevate its ideals." These interesting points will be further probed in the dissertation, especially on the chapters on education. For Twain firmly believed in the powers of training—it was man's only means to better himself. In it he saw the hope for mankind's salvation.

Thus concludes a brief biography and analysis of the enigma we call Mark Twain. He rose from the obscure beginnings of the West to world fame through his literature. He survived many business and personal tragedies only to triumph in his books. He had a special fondness and exquisite devotion to childhood. He splendidly recreates those colorful days of the frontier. He did not limit himself to a certain area; he traveled widely and reported painstakingly his experiences and impressions then shared them with the reading public. From him we receive unlimited information about the country and the state of the world from 1835 to his death in 1910. But most important, he has left a legacy for educators about the schooling during this time. In the following chapters we will probe some of Twain's theories and views of education and his views of childhood. In Chapter II we will discuss childhood and what it was like to grow up during those turbulent times as they are expressed in Twain's literature.

55 Twain, "What is Man?", in Neider, p. 340.
CHAPTER II

CHILDHOOD IN MARK TWAIN'S LITERATURE

Before we attempt to analyze Twain's theories of education, it will be helpful to first study his views of childhood as they are expressed in his Autobiography and other works. His views of children and their capacities greatly influenced his educational ideas. He used children as his source for formulating objectives and describing the learning process. Through his natural love for children he was able to arrive at a more natural form of education than was being expressed in the schools during the nineteenth century.

Mark Twain's love for children was legendary. His daughter Clara later reminisced: "Father took very strong likes and dislikes, but he loved almost all children and had a charming way with them that quickly won their affections." ¹ Twain's rapport with children was an obvious feature of his writing on childhood themes that has been unequaled in literature. A large part of his world-wide literary reputation was based largely on his books about children, mainly boys.

Twain not only wrote about children, but lived their lives through his own three girls. He never hesitated to join into their games. He

often frolicked and played with them and helped them to stage amateur theatraicals based on his own works. He enjoyed their tyrannizing affection and "dusting off of Papa" whenever he had blundered against some precept of good etiquette. He amused and consoled them with his many improvisational stories spun by his creative mind.

As a man, Twain valued freedom in human beings and extended this virtue over to his own children. They were allowed all the freedom they could handle; the children were even encouraged to express their opinions in their charming girlish ways. Because he was so renowned in his day, the Clemens' household entertained many important and famous guests. The girls were permitted to visit with them and could partake of the festivities at the dinner table—a custom unheard of in Victorian times. Twain felt that these experiences could be only beneficial and educational for his girls.

Twain did not savor the role of disciplinarian; he happily relegated that role to his gentle wife. His temper was too volatile to be just. Twain himself conceded this: "The children have been taught to conceal nothing from their mother. They have been taught to come to her and confess their misdeed, ... and trust the matter of punishment to her, knowing that her perfect fairness can always be relied on."²

Though he did not have the heart to punish them, Twain did not hesitate to play tricks on them. He persuaded Clara that her calf would grow up to be a pony even after the "pony" had begun to sprout horns and began mooing. He enjoyed the forbidden as any youngster would; he secretly let Clara keep her pet squirrels even after they had chewed

up the woodwork. When he heard his youngest, Jean, praying for a goat, he rushed out to buy her one to see the smile break out on her face.

If any of the girls were ill, Twain played the role of nurse with gusto. After Clara hurt her leg in a tobaggon accident, the Clemens' cancelled an invitation with the following declination: "The rest of us will have to stay home and keep her company."³ It would have been unthinkable to leave their ill daughter without the companionship of her parents and sisters. Twain spent the whole time entertaining her with amusing stories and surprised her by having one hundred valentines sent to her.

The house at Nook Farm rocked with happiness and joy with this close-knit family. Twain's love for his wife spanned forty years; his dedication to his children was unlimited. He showered the affection on them that he had been deprived of in Hannibal. His Hannibal days were considered idyllic for a growing boy; but emotionally they were empty. His mother was a warmhearted, kind woman; but it was the tyrannical and cold father whose personality pervaded over the household. Kenneth Lynn remarks of this strange household: "Thanks to this strange, austere, loveless man, the Clemenses were reserved and formal with one another at all times; at night they shook hands before going to bed—a warmer gesture would have been unthinkable."⁴ Because of the strained relationship Twain had with his father, most fathers in his works are depicted as cruel and tyrannical.

³Harnsberger, Mark Twain Family Man, p. 24.

But in spite of his tortured relationship with his father, the Missouri world remained a world of innocence and freedom. It was a world where a naked boy could indulge in such hedonistic impulses as swimming in the river, fishing for supper, steal a smoke or retire to a cave to meditate. The entertainment was mostly of the home-made variety. The amusements in Hannibal run almost parallel to those in *Tom Sawyer*: picnics, yarn spinning, candy pulling parties, wild berry hunts, circuses, "hell-fire" revivalists, medicine shows, mesmerists and sometimes even "cultural" events such as stage plays.

It was these idyllic moments that haunted Twain when he was discoursing or writing. These were the moments that were immortalized in his boy literature. His "hymns" to boyhood, as he liked to call them, were totally child-centered; a rarity in American fiction until Twain. The early and mid-nineteenth century was still too steeped in the Calvinistic doctrine of child damnation to allow children to be recognized as members of society. Twain became a true pioneer in this wilderness; his boy-books carved the path for future authors. He presents a liberated version of child nature. He took young boys and cast them in roles previously only held by adults. He let his boys be vagabonds, heroes, detectives and political rulers. Since most of the adults playing these roles were merely grown up children, Twain observed that it was logical to put these children into these central roles. Twain was repulsed by the dogma of child-damnation and even became irritated with the Bible and God when "he (God) slaughtered...his harmless little children."5 Twain attacked the

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Calvinist doctrine which held that children by birth and nature were totally depraved and stood outside the church and society. He freed his own children and his characters from these constricting beliefs. He believed in the natural goodness of the young. His boy characters were the antithesis of the Calvinistic miniature adult. They were allowed to indulge in frivolous escapades, mock the conventions and disobey the rules of society. Twain's children characters are allowed to be children and revel in the joys, games and mischievousness that make up such a large part of childhood.

By the time Twain had settled his family in Connecticut, most of the traditional puritan beliefs of child deprivation had been brushed aside. Children were being recognized as good human beings who deserved their full place in society. Twain was overjoyed to see these beliefs disappear for he had grown up and suffered under their strict and loathsome burden.

The Presbyterian Sunday School in Hannibal was the prime force in indoctrinating little Sam. As a result of this indoctrination, Twain grew up with a devastating conscience that tormented him to his death. He was constantly being threatened by a God-like figure and eventually became a disbeliever in religion. Twain felt that God had done a poor job with creation; he further maintains that if creation were left up to him he would have done a better job. To him, God's idea of the supreme joke was the creation of the "damned human race." This eventually led to Twain's peculiar pessimism that grew stronger as the years progressed. Darrel Able has given a succinct view of this pessimism:

His pessimism was the effect of his view of the world's absurdity; Mark believed that all of his actions were strictly determined, yet he felt responsible; he believed that men were
generally kindly, yet they murdered and used each other mercilessly; he knew that he was a happiness-machine, yet he knew it only because he was also a suffering-machine.\textsuperscript{6}

Twain spent his life, either in his works or private moments, monotoring his conscience. His short story, "Carnival of Crime" is a reconciliation of his conscience with his nature. Through his conscience, he spent many agonizing moments suffering neurotic guilt pangs over incidents he felt he could have controlled. He blamed himself for his brother Henry's death, his son's death and for all the miseries he inflicted on his family with his naive business sense. His life was a battleground between his conscience and his actions; he always strove to do the right things, but was never certain if he did. This same struggle becomes one of the high points of \textit{Huck Finn}.

Twain not only became disgusted with himself but also with the rest of the human race. With a satiric and sarcastic pen, his legacy of humorous writings depicted the horrors of humanity. Twain did not only write to amuse; his deeper purpose was to show the sham and foibles of human nature. Janet Smith has noticed that: "...just to stay sane, it was necessary for him constantly to unpack his heart, either in his art or to his long-suffering family and friends, of the poisonous stuff- within him."\textsuperscript{7} He released his venom not only in adult books but also in his children's literature.


It is the innocence of inexperience that make Twain's boy heroes so likeable; any blame for moral ineptitude falls on the adults that the child imitates. It is the decadent society which causes the child's moral decay and indecision. Surrounded by evil, the child cannot help but be influenced. Albert Stone states: "His (Twain) childish figures not only are comments on adult hypocrisy, sentimentality, and cruelty, but stand for a moral norm by which the false values of a Sunday School society are being judged."^8

Twain's heroes, possessing perfect innocence, progress from low-down outcasts as Huck to realms of splendor, as Tom Canty the pauper. Keeping his heroes young and innocent, Twain was able to make them grow without compromising their integrity—something usually not possible with adults. In the novel, *The Gilded Age*, Washington Hawkins, one of the main characters, grows from childhood to adulthood. Twain, however, never lets Hawkins lose that innocent naivité that makes him morally laudable. Twain would not allow Hawkins to be a true grown man; he was no more grown than Tom Sawyer. The only good and pure characters in his works are those that possess the attributes usually associated with children—no matter how ludicrous this might appear in print.

Twain believed that the child is intrinsically good and all his childhood literature flows from this important point. Any evil that is present in the books comes from the evil influence and training that a child receives from its society and its institutions. If society is evil and reflecting bad influences, the child will be affected. Society

conditions the child. In a decadent society as in the slave-holding South, a child grew up thinking that slavery was just and good. He had been molded to accept these views. The child looks to the adult world for guidance and inspiration. He learns by imitating the ways and habits of his elders. If the examples are corrupt they can only have a detrimental effect on the child. The adult is set up as a model for the child to imitate and learn from.

Twain did not have the same easy aplomb in the adult world that he had in the childhood world. Just as he never let Washington Hawkins grow up, so he never let his other characters reach adult maturity. For to reach that level, Twain would have to deal with countless new problems that confront adults, such as sexuality, hypocrisy, greed, and violence. In the adult world, Twain sees lies as the core of the decadence—be it lies to society or lies to oneself. In his youthful world he does not have to contend with these fixations. For children put a high premium on truth; this is what they demand from a hypocritical world. It is fairness that children defend most; and when this sense of fairness has been betrayed by adults the children are forced to become the liars that they so despise. Though they are forced to lie to compete in an unjust world in their defense, they refrain from lying to themselves as adults often do. Self-honesty is one of the sterling qualities of childhood. That is why Mark Twain felt that it was impossible to carry Tom Sawyer or his other boys beyond boyhood for if he did, Tom Sawyer "...would lie just like all the other one-horse men of literature and the reader would conceive a hearty
contempt for him," as he wrote to Howells.

Adulthood for Twain carried connotations of corruption, disappointments and sorrows. The process of maturation will endow children with these same pitfalls. Twain's jaundiced view of adults prohibited him from carrying his characters into the adult world. For to let them mature would be to sacrifice their integrity and honesty to their struggle for survival in a competitive world. Growing up for Twain implied accepting all the characteristics of society. Twain saw dishonesty and hypocrisy in most societies so that children by their proximity to a society would accept these characteristics and become liars and hypocrites like the rest of the populace. It is inevitable. However, adulthood is not always regarded as evil by Twain. He feels that if a child is surrounded by the right influences exerted by the good institutions, he does have a chance of escaping the evil and corruption. Twain thinks that the right education will offset these evils. If the child grows up in an honest atmosphere, his chances to turn out as a noble adult will be highly improved. For Twain feels that the environment is all-important in the complicated maturation process.

Twain's obsession with childhood resulted in five novels concerning boys, seven novelettes and countless short stories and sketches depicting various phases of childhood. His two most famous, of course, are *Tom Sawyer* and *Huck Finn*. These two are his greatest triumphs; both literally, intellectually and financially. They both involve recapturing

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a lost childhood and the painful initiation into society. *Tom Sawyer* should not be read merely as an adventure story concerning the antics of a mischievous young boy; rather, it and *Huck Finn* should be read for the truth that is found in their pages. Twain, in the Preface to *Tom Sawyer*, gives his reasons for the book:

Most of the adventures recorded in this book really occurred; one or two were experiences of my own, the rest those of boys who were schoolmates of mine. *Huck Finn* is drawn from life; *Tom Sawyer* also, but not from an individual—he is a combination of the characteristics of three boys whom I knew, and therefore belongs to the composite order of architecture.

The odd superstitions touched upon were all prevalent among children and slaves in the West at the period of this story—that is to say, thirty or forty years ago.

Although my book is intended mainly for the entertainment of boys and girls, I hope it will not be shunned by men and women on that account, for part of my plan has been to try to pleasantly remind adults of what they once were themselves, and of how they felt and thought and talked, and what queer enterprises they sometimes engaged in.\(^\text{10}\)

As Twain has stated in the above Preface, much of the action was true to life as he remembered it. The St. Petersburg of Tom and Huck was the transposed Hannibal; the high-jinx of the two adventurers were those of Twain and his gang. The hero, *Tom Sawyer*, can just as easily read Mark Twain. Tom’s most endearing quality is his romantic nature emanating from the stories he has read and believes in acting out in his imaginary world. Through Tom, Twain is able to act out his own make-believe world with his pen.

Tom is possessed by the chivalry of Arthurian times; he revels in the fellowship of Robin Hood; and the bravado of pirates and robbers cause him to organize his own treasure hunts. These were not the same values.

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that the Sunday School was straining to instill in the small boy. The desired modes of conduct in the Calvinistic atmosphere of the town were those of: sobriety, meekness, virtue, reverence and honesty.

Tom is not so much the rebel of the town as we suppose him to be. He is actually a child struggling to accommodate his imagination to the standards of his society as they are laid down by his Aunt Polly, the Sunday School and Mr. Dobbins, his teacher. Tom is the universal boy. Like countless boys before and after him, he is confronted by alien and hostile institutions. When the pressures of society become too strong, Tom takes off for Cardiff Hill or Jackson's Island to enjoy the redemptive powers of nature and his cohorts. Here they can play out their fantasies; but always manage to return to the town that they are a part of. They are fully integrated into that river town society and cannot shed its shackles completely.

Twain does not depict his boys as evil; only high-spirited and playful. They are not the antagonists of the novel. That role is relegated to the half-breed Injun Joe. Injun Joe is not a part of that society, he is different from those pious people, which makes him the outsider and the cause for the conflict in Tom Sawyer. To avoid a confrontation between good and evil, Injun Joe must be destroyed before he destroys the hero, Tom Sawyer.

In the first chapter of the book it is stated that Tom was "not the Model Boy of the village. He knew the model boy very well though and loathed him."¹¹ When Tom does meet the model boy, he immediately licks

¹¹Twain, Tom Sawyer, p. 6.
him because his citified airs "ate into Tom's vitals." This was Tom's way of asserting his place in the community's hierarchy. As the new boy retreats, Tom calls after him: "Now that'll learn you. Better look out who you're fooling with next time." Tom, as usual, was not allowed to go unpunished for this incident and Aunt Polly had the perfect punishment for him—to whitewash the fence on a beautiful Saturday morning.

Twain hated the model boy as much as Tom did. Twain saw the model boy as an eternal prude, the darling of the Puritan Sunday School by his good manners and behavior. The model boy did not engage in pranks, was not disobedient, or told lies. Twain describes him in Tom Sawyer:

...the Model Boy, Willie Mufferson, taking as heedful care of his mother as if she were cut glass. He always brought his mother to church, and was the pride of all the matrons. The boys all hated him, he was so good. And besides, he had been "thrown up to them" so much. His white handkerchief was hanging out of his pocket behind, as usual on Sundays—accidentally. Tom had no handkerchief, and he looked upon boys who had as snobs.

For Twain, the model boy never got dirty, went barefoot or tore his clothes. He occupied his time with genteel things rather than rough-housing. A model boy dresses like the one in Tom Sawyer: "This boy was well-dressed...on a week-day.... His cap was a dainty thing, his close-buttoned blue cloth roundabout was new and natty, and so were his pantaloons. He had shoes on—and it was only Friday. He even wore a necktie." In this outfit, the boy's movements were constricted and

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12 Ibid., p. 7.
13 Ibid., p. 9.
14 Ibid., pp. 30-31.
15 Ibid., p. 7.
forced him to be good.

Tom was the exact opposite of the model boy. Tom breaks all the rules, commits every minor indiscretion which the model boy would diligently avoid. He steals, lies, threatens his brother Sid, fights the new boy in the village, shows off outrageously in Sunday School by conniving to win a Bible he did not earn and disrupts a church service with the release of a pinch-bug on a dog. Tom plays hookey without thinking about the consequences, his attempts at learning to smoke and his running away to Jackson's Island only to turn up at his own funeral service are mockeries of the accepted behavior of the model children of the day.

For Twain, Tom's behavior is the more natural and realistic behavior of young boys. The model boy behavior is stilted and artificial—he is a true representation of the Puritan's miniature adults. The Calvinistic town sees Tom's behavior as evil and wicked. Twain sees it as a perfectly spontaneous reaction by a child to a wonderful natural world and a rebellion against the stuffiness of a boring village life. Twain applauds Tom's behavior loudly.

Tom manages to turn the boring whitewashing chore into a profitable adventure. He made a game of it and soon became the envy of the other boys who paid him with marbles, a kite, a dead rat, a key, a piece of chalk and other objects of wealth only dear to a young boy. Through his cleverness he was able to persuade the boys to paint the fence while he loafed and counted his rewards. After the job was done, Tom mused:

"...it was not such a hollow world, after all. He had discovered a great law of human action without knowing it—namely, that in order to make a man or a boy covet a thing, it is only necessary to make the thing
difficult to attain."16

Tom is the All-American boy. All his actions are carefully directed toward success. When he is bored he acts out fantasies or manages to get involved in some prank to relieve the monotony. He is fresh-faced and sassy. He teases animals, not maliciously but only for fun. He loves girls but is shy and tongue-twisted around them. He shows off his athletic prowess and agility at every opportunity. He dislikes school and plays hookey when the climate is nicer outside than in the classroom. He exaggerates his accomplishments and brags about his feats of valor. He fanatically indulges in games such as marbles, tag and hoops. He remembers to say his prayers even when he runs away to Jackson's Island. All in all he is a natural boy reacting in a natural fashion to events, people and places. For Twain this is the natural boy. A boy totally at ease in his environment and ready to change at a moments notice. He is a complete child enjoying the brief sparkling moment of childhood.

In this sense, Twain agrees with Rousseau about the make-up of the natural child. Rousseau sees the natural child as:

...bright, eager, vigorous, care-free, completely absorbed in the present, rejoicing in abounding vitality. I see him in the years ahead using sense, mind and power as they develop from day to day. I view him as a child and he pleases me.... I feel as if I were living in his life and am rejuvenated by his vivacity.... His person, his bearing, his countenance reveal assurance and contentment. Health glows in his face. His firm step gives him an air of vigor. His complexion is refined without being effeminate; sun and wind have put on it the honourable imprint of his sex.... His manner is open and free without the least insolence or vanity.... Habit, routine and custom mean nothing to him.... His games are his occupations.... He goes into everything he does with a pleasing interest and freedom.17

16Twain, Tom Sawyer, p. 14.
Both are in agreement on the fact that a child is good and must be directed in only positive directions. Both enjoy the freshness and vigor of youth and accept the child as an embodiment of those qualities. The pranks are seen as an extension of the child's nature; he is not malicious. He is only involved in the exquisite process of becoming aware of his world and learning to live in it.

The mischievous incidents are not the only issues evident in Tom Sawyer; there are also deeper moral questions and values investigated. Tom is not so much an imp when he takes the physical punishment due to Becky after she tears the page in the teacher's anatomy book; nor is he an imp when he runs the risk of exposing Injun Joe as a murderer; and it is not the impishness in him that languishes over Injun Joe's death in the cave. Rather, these are the moral values and judgments inherent in the "good" "bad" boy. He is "bad" according to Sunday School criteria, but in Twain's standards, he is "good." If Twain had allowed Tom to remain the town imp, his character would not have any humanity or depth and he would soon cease to grow as a good person. It is Tom's impish nature that endears him so avidly to his author and readers.

Tom shows off during the entire novel for the entertainment of the audience; he must be stage center at all times or his personality gets lost from us in the shuffle. To maintain his inflated ego, Tom very carefully manipulated the actions and responses of the town to his escapades. Every movement is staged to electrify the audience and thrust him into the limelight; such as the time he and Huck and Joe returned for their own funeral; or the time Tom proudly displays the gold he has found to the astonished townspeople; and lastly, his heroic saving of Becky in
the cave. Tom basks in the admiration and glory.

In any other world, these practical jokes would have perpetrated hostility and hatred, but here in the calm, idyllic St. Petersburg, the people are tolerant of Tom's pranks and are willing to forgive him. The town expects Tom to misbehave; and they love him all the more for it—not because they condone his behavior but because he makes them see the world as a less serious place, a place where there is time for make-believe and play. They become collaborators with Tom in this burlesque; he helps them create this illusion of play. James Cox said: "The truth the dream invariably comes to is play—a play which converts all serious projects in the town to pleasure and at the same time subjects all the adult rituals by revealing that actually they are nothing but dull play to begin with."\textsuperscript{18} Tom's playful make-believe emerges as the real reality of the book, exposing the false pompousness and piety of the dull pleasure of the adult society. The sham and false values of the community on the Mississippi spring from the narrow-minded customs and religion. Religion is merely a form of exercises aided by memory; and children are forced to recite and memorize two thousand verses of the Bible. There is no freedom or spontaneity. The claws of restriction smother the free spirit until it too is absorbed by the sham pervading all of life.

Tom is a direct outgrowth, an appendage, of his community; his nature is conditioned by the superstitions and modes of the village. All his actions flow from this conditioning; even though he may break the rules once in a while—his behavior is still relegated and controlled by Aunt

Polly and his neighbors. Aunt Polly and the town have tried to cut his freedom and force him into that shabby mold referred to as respectability.

Tom and his pranks are so closely associated with the community that a study of Tom Sawyer is not only a study of the All-American Boy but also a study of the mid-American, mid-nineteenth century All-American small town. Tom is a mirror of that society; this is how Twain saw life as it was passing then. Just as society molded Tom, so it molded Twain's perception of it. Harry Warfel describes this society in his introduction to Tom Sawyer:

Among the villagers are poseurs, proud of their little moments of glory, whether at the school commencement or in church. In general there, people whine when they are hurt and cuss when they are kept from following a whim. They do not like to take their medicine, no matter how good it may be for them; they dodge and hide from as many of the raw facts of life as they can. Tom seems to be all of them wrapped in a single body.19

Like many of the town elders, Tom had aspirations to leadership. It was this aspiration which kept Tom from lighting out for the territory as Huck was always threatening. The whitewashing incident inspired him to managerial dreams in typical All-American Boy fashion. His ideal was to play while others did his work. Tom had dreams of power and wealth which could only be realized for the moment in sleepy St. Petersburg. His greed, when all is said and done, is just as avaricious as the adults'. He did not remain passive as most of the townspeople; he acted and managed to find some buried treasure—for he knew the key to escape was money. By the end of the novel, Tom has become the success he so strongly strove for: he had money, power, and in Becky a companionable future wife.

If we look at the novel realistically, it can be said that in its pure form it is a novel about success—a "how-to" book. Tom's success story is the closest parallel to Twain's own success story. Twain loves Tom; and through Tom he meant to cling to his own youth and innocence.

In every sense of the word, Tom is a normal boy—he may misbehave but he is not intrinsically evil. Even his surrogate mother, Aunt Polly, readily admits to Tom's goodness: "He warn't bad so to say—only mischeevous. Only just giddy, and harum-scarum, you know. He warn't any more responsible than a colt. He never meant any harm, and he was the best-hearted boy that ever was."²⁰ Tom, of course, plays this giddy role to the hilt. Throughout the pages of the book, in spite of his mischievous conduct, Tom does nothing intentionally evil for which he can be held morally responsible. His behavior is the behavior of any normal, sensitive, inquisitive child.

Since Tom Sawyer is a novel of a young boy's initiation into society, there are often unpleasant aspects to deal with, such as violence, murder and death. Death, in some form, is evident in almost every chapter—be it physical or symbolic. The physical death of Injun Joe and Doc Robinson permeate the pages while the symbolic deaths and rebirths of Tom accent the morbidity of the idyll. Twice Tom is presumed dead; once when he ran away to Jackson's Island only to be "reborn" at his own funeral and later to be "reborn" after he leads Becky from the cave. What starts out as an innocent prank, soon solidifies the relationship between the boy and the town. If Tom were really evil, the town would have been glad to be rid of

²⁰Twain, Tom Sawyer, p. 93.
him; instead, when he reappears, he is welcomed back with love instead of ostracization.

Twain could not leave violence out of his stories just as he could not stop breathing. As Leslie Fiedler so aptly described it: "He is not only a creator of childhood idylls but a great poet of violence; and, indeed, his very humor depends upon a world in which there is neither a stable order nor civil peace." All his books exhibit violence in some form; be it a brutal murder, a feud, a slave-beating or torture. Twain did not grow up in a sedate, genteel environment; he grew up in the lawless Southwest which exposed him to every conceivable violence a man is capable of committing. He was raised in an atmosphere where freedom was a precious commodity usually preyed upon by stronger and more lawless men. He watched as his society took freedom away from thousands of innocent blacks and forced them into bondage. He spent a lifetime railing against these evils.

These scenes of violence cause Tom to mature rapidly; they help him realize what it means to be an adult. Tom's full personality unfolds as each new social experience acts on him. Because violence is part of the adult world, Tom cannot remain independent from it.

Social experience and initiation imply some form of understanding by the boy. Once he reaches this understanding, his conscience begins to develop. There are many examples of Tom's struggles with his conscience. He suffers under the dreadful secret of the murder of Doc Robinson that he and Huck witnessed; he is unhappy when the revival brings religion

21 Leslie Fiedler, "Duplicitous Mark Twain," Commentary, XXIX, No. 3 (March, 1960), 243.
to everyone except to him; and even God seems to be playing out the thunderstorms solely for Tom's discomfort. His moral dilemmas are the causes for his nightmares; they cause him to wrestle with his conscience as Twain did as a boy. Tom eases part of his troubles when he makes a midnight call on the lawyer and confesses that Muff Potter is innocent and Injun Joe guilty.

At the trial, Tom declares bravely that he was witness to the murder by Injun Joe. Before he can be taken into custody, Injun Joe manages to escape through an open window. Now Tom knows what real fear is and lives in constant dread that Injun Joe will seek him out and murder him also. Here was a real adventure—not something out of Tom's books. Because of his part in the trial, Tom became "a glittering hero...the pet of the old, the envy of the young."22 But no matter how much admired he was during the day, he dreaded the nights when he would dream about Injun Joe and his revenge. He wished a thousand times that his conscience would have left him in peace and he would not have confessed. "He felt sure he never could draw a safe breath again until that man was dead and he had seen the corpse."23

Judge Thatcher orders the cave sealed up so no more children will be tempted to play in it. When Tom heard this his sympathies for the dead half-breed became aroused for he "knew by his own experience how this wretch had suffered. His pity was moved, but nevertheless, he felt an abounding sense of relief and security."24 Never before had Tom felt pity

22 Twain, Tom Sawyer, p. 141.
23 Ibid., p. 142.
24 Ibid., p. 191.
for anyone; this was a sure sign of his moral and social maturity. This is one of the instigators of change that Tom undergoes in the novel.

Albert Stone analyzes this:

What begins as a "play adventure" for the boy in the graveyard mushrooms into melodrama and turns, finally, into a moral crisis. For the insignificant event here is not Tom's witnessing of a murder, nor even his brush with death in the haunted house, but his decision to testify at Muff Potter's trial. The torment Tom undergoes before he brings himself to risk death issues is a triumphant vindication of Aunt Polly's belief in Tom's essential goodness.25

Tom's slowly emerging social conscience is also evident in the cave where he and Becky have gotten lost. When Becky has a total break-down and becomes convinced that they will never be found, Tom's streak of maturity exhibits itself in the masterful style, the way he comforts Becky. In the cave, they both become aware of new emotions: mutual loyalty, trust, and consideration; they have left the world of childhood to enter the realm of adulthood. They have learned how to behave in an adult world.

The love Tom and Becky share with each other is not a sexual love. Twain and other writers of the nineteenth century shied away from this topic. Sexual curiosity was for the older more mature adolescents that Twain did not write about, which was one other reason why Twain kept his youths in pre-puberty. Sexual maturity implies adulthood to Twain, and all the complex problems which that subject entails. So instead, he chose to write about a more congenial age; and we are never revealed the true ages of Huck or Tom or the other boys. Twain stated his reasons for this succinctly in the conclusion of Tom Sawyer:

So endeth this chronicle. It being strictly a history of a boy, it must stop here; the story could not go on much further.

25Stone, The Innocent Eye, p. 86.
without becoming the history of a man. When one writes a novel about grown people, he knows exactly where to stop—that is, with a marriage; but when he writes of juveniles, he must stop where he best can.  

The only hint of childhood sexual curiosity is when Tom catches Becky reading the teacher's anatomy book. In her haste to hide the book from Tom's curious eyes, she tears a page. What started out as a sexual encounter becomes mellowed into an heroic scene with Tom taking Becky's whipping from Mr. Dobbins. Twain, if he would not have been such a prude, could have turned this into a charming natural childhood event. Albert Stone has noted that: "Sex as a motive for human conduct in children, adolescents, or adults is almost entirely absent from his (Twain's) fiction;...he exhibited unusual myopia in regard to the sexual impulse."  

Twain's boys operate in a sexual vacuum; they exist in a sexually passionless world. Any act of violence will be condoned as long as concupiscence is not involved. His boys lack the human emotion of passion; if they had it, the real flesh and blood of childhood would be complete. 

A world without passion is an unrealistic world. The world Twain created for us in this respect is a myth; for how can real children unfold in a sexless and sterile world. Twain leads us to believe that superstitions are more real than true human passion; and that children are devoid of sexual curiosity. He creates an environment encompassing all human emotions: greed, jealousy, hate, anger, sloth, and even love, but neglects passion. 

26 Twain, *Tom Sawyer*, p. 208. 

27 Stone, *The Innocent Eye*, pp. 73-74.
Tom was not totally alienated from his environment. At the conclusion, it is evident that Tom was completely initiated into St. Petersburg's rigid conservative society. He has left the play world of children and approached the adult world of love, death, justice and success. We have thus, a book that gives a warm and loving backward glance at childhood in the mid-nineteenth century small town. A book that relates the exploits of typical children's moral dilemma such as: sneaking a cigarette behind the barn, swimming when forbidden, misbehaving in church and school, and playing hookey. It also takes in all the dramatic violence of murder, theft, mutilation and slow starvation. The violence makes the book sensational and exciting reading. It ends with Tom as the town hero, rich and admired, while Huck is suffering under the "sivilizing" burdens of the Widow Douglas and Miss Watson.

The personality of Huck is not fully developed in Tom Sawyer and it is not until his own book that we can fully understand this enigmatic boy. Huck enters the scene in Chapter VI of Tom Sawyer under the label of the "town pariah." The description of Huck can best be seen in the passage where Tom meets Huck on his way to school:

Huckleberry was cordially hated and dreaded by all the mothers of the town, because he was idle and lawless and vulgar and bad—and all their children admired him so, and delighted in his forbidden society, and wished they dared to be like him.... Huckleberry was always dressed in the cast-off clothes of full-grown men, and they were in perennial bloom and fluttering with rags.... Huckleberry came and went, at his own free will. He slept on doorsteps in fine weather and in empty hogsheads in wet; he did not have to go to school or to church, or call any being master or obey anybody; he could go fishing or swimming when and where he chose, and stay as long as it suited him; nobody forbade him to fight; he could sit up as late as he pleased; he was always the first boy that went barefoot in the spring and the last to resume leather in the fall; he never had to wash, nor put on clean clothes; he could swear wonderfully.
In a word, everything that goes to make life precious, that boy had. So thought every harassed, hampered, respectable boy in St. Petersburg.28

Since Tom was one of those "harassed, hampered, respectable boys," he idolized Huck. He cultivated Huck's companionship much to Aunt Polly's chagrin. The two of them paired up to create most of the havoc in the novel; Tom has the courage—Huck the freedom; Tom has the education—Huck has the loyalty and admiration. They make a wonderful duo for Twain's river idyll.

Twain, under the influence of other children's stories authors, decided to try his hand at pure fiction with a genteel audience of cultured children in mind. This resulted in The Prince and the Pauper. He left Tom and Huck in St. Petersburg and presented us with two new characters, supposedly out of history, Prince Edward of England and Tom Canty of London's Offal Court, a slum.

Twain abandoned the frontier social conditions of America and concentrated on the shabby social conditions of sixteenth century England. He traded in the vernacular beauty of Tom Sawyer for the innocuous language of Elizabethan England—a sphere in which he was not as relaxed. The Prince and the Pauper was mainly written as a protest against the cheap dime novels of Beadle and Adams29 which were exerting wide influence in children's literature. No matter how much protesting was done by parents and educators, children were still seeking escape in the pages of these

28 Twain, Tom Sawyer, p. 38.

29 Adams and Beadle published dime novels with lurid covers and appealed to semiliterate adults and children. They emphasized violence and murder, and bad men. They made toughness and violence a virtue in the 1870's. They were not stories about good boys and had a disparaging effect on children's imagination.
novels. These novels were filled with violence and gore; they made heroes out of bad men, replaced romantic knights with detectives and portrayed women as less than the genteel ladies they were.

One reason attributed for the failure of *The Prince and the Pauper* was that it was too closely modeled after *Tom Sawyer*. Both boys are poor and are named Tom; Tom Canty, like Tom Sawyer, is nurtured on romantic literature and both dream about the princely life, and both acted out royal fantasies. These are a few of the parallels we can draw from the books. Tom Canty eventually becomes a cousin to Tom Sawyer with enough Huck Finn in him to become disillusioned with the civilizing aspect of a corrupt society.

After Tom Canty switched roles with the Prince, it did not take him long to adjust to court life; for he had absorbed well the courtly romantic tales of his reading. Edward's adjustment was more precarious; he was dealing with the riff-raff of London, something wholly unfamiliar to him. He spent most of his time trying to avoid the clutches of Tom's evil thieving father.

When King Henry VIII dies, Tom's first function as the supposed heir apparent proclaims that: "The king's law shall be a law of mercy from this day and never more be a law of blood." Because Tom was inherently good and knew from his own experience the evils and hardships of life, he kept his brief false reign as good as the wisest monarch.

Again, as in *Tom Sawyer*, what starts out as an innocent youthful prank soon takes on darker overtones of justice and morality. Tom,

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through his royal experiences, is developing a social conscience. He showed his wisdom by forgiving most prisoners who had committed minor crimes; for he knew what drove them to this life. He knew what utter misery and poverty existed outside the palace walls. While Tom is receiving an education at court, Edward is receiving an education in the sordid London life made up of thieves, beggars and other miscreants.

The Prince is not a sissy; he is an athletic agile boy who can hold his own in the fist-fights, ball games and cudgel games. He is sensitive and easily horrified at the squalor and crime around him; he resolves to do something about it when he is rightfully restored to power. He, like the usurper Tom, is both older and wiser than the years indicate.

Unlike Tom Sawyer who was an orphan, both Edward and Tom have fathers at the opening of the story. Edward soon loses his father, with whom he had a good relationship; Tom would like to lose the father that makes his life intolerable. It has always been difficult for Twain to compose a picture of an ideal family, with a kind laughing mother and a gentle loving father. He suffered so under his own father's coldness that he was incapable of expressing a normal relationship between father and son. One of the few passages in any of Twain's books that comes close to demonstrating a near normal relationship can be found in The Prince and the Pauper, in the passage where King Henry dies and Prince Edward sadly remarks:

His name brought only sensations of pleasure, the figure it evoked wore a countenance that was all gentleness and affection. He called to mind a long succession of loving passages between his father and himself and dwelt fondly upon them, his unstinted tears attesting how deep and real was the grief that possessed his heart.

Twain, The Prince and the Pauper, p. 108.
Fortunately, Edward does not remain fatherless for long; he acquires a surrogate father in the image of Miles Hendon. Hendon shields him from the harsh realities of the precarious life that surrounds him. When Edward claims he is the true prince, Miles merely assumes that the boy is weak in the brain. This only causes Miles to be more protecting and caring for the little lost soul.

Tom also had a surrogate father in the figure of the kind old Father Andrew who is the refuge that Tom flies to when his real father's cruelties become unbearable. Father Andrew, in his patience, teaches Tom to read and write; he instructs him in Latin and lets him read his novels.

Mothers usually fare better in Twain's stories than fathers. Twain idolized womanhood; his women are usually pictured as genteel and sentimental ladies, misunderstood or misused by society. Tom's mother would: "...in the night slip to him stealthily with any miserable scrap or crust she had been able to save for him by going hungry herself...she was often caught...and soundly beaten for it by her husband." The mothers or surrogates were always described as self-sacrificing and noble.

Tom Canty's mother plays a more complex role since she has the specific function of recognizing the usurper as her son. When she calls out to him from the crowd, he denies knowing her. With this specific act, Tom suddenly becomes aware of his own callousness and evil: "It smote him to the heart to see her treated so; and as she turned...she seemed so wounded, so broken-hearted, that a shame fell upon him which consumed his pride to ashes and withered his stolen royalty. His

32 Twain, The Prince and the Pauper, p. 17.
grandeur were stricken valueless." From now on he suffered under his false role; his conscience forbade him to be worthy of his ideal mother. This was Tom's moral dilemma in the book.

Edward's moral dilemma is different. He, too, realizes he is not a genuine person but is living a sham. Although he does not belong in Offal Court, he gradually assimilates the virtues and courage of the rabble. This environment conditions Edward for his future reign; he will be a just and wise ruler. He will free England from tyranny and despotism.

No study of childhood in Twain is complete without discussing his greatest masterpiece: Huck Finn. Again, Twain makes a young boy his hero and shows the maturation process and his eventual initiation into society. Huck's fresh supple speech invokes fond memories of one's own youth; we become eavesdroppers on Huck's private world. With Huck as our pilot we become fellow passengers on the raft and become participants to his moral and social awakening.

Huck is not a member of any of the societies we meet along the river. He has tried being "sivilized" at the Widow Douglas' but rejected it for its artificiality. He is not a member of the world of social convention to which Tom belongs; instead he belongs to the world of simple nature. Living on the fringe of society, Huck plays around the edge but refuses to be drawn into that restricting circle. For Huck, life is not romantic and illusionary, but is arbitrary and difficult. Through his own form of natural liberalism, he manages to resist the impulse to join a group.

33 Twain, The Prince and the Pauper, p. 182.
The journey down the river is one of escape. Jim is fleeing the bondage of slavery while Huck is fleeing his cruel father and the amneties of the Widow Douglas' constraints. Miss Watson, in a greedy moment, sold Jim, and he plans his escape. He wants to leave the raft at Cairo and head for the free states so he can earn money to buy his family out of slavery.

The climate of the raft is one of mutual affection. Jim gives the affection to Huck that he cannot give to his absent family. Huck receives the love he never got from his own drunken shiftless father.

At first, Huck is amused by Jim's seeming ignorance. However, he soon realizes that Jim knows more than what is learned in school. In school, Huck has picked up the rudimentary skills of education such as reading, writing and arithmetic. But Jim has not been to school, and knows more about real life from personal experience, nature and social habits. He has learned unconsciously and in an informal learning situation the fundamental skills of learning to survive in nature and society. Jim is laden with superstitions which only impress Huck that much more. For example, Jim knows that certain flight patterns of birds predict a storm, and the habits of snakes, and can even interpret Huck's complex dreams for him.

Jim does not lie to Huck; he tells truths about nature and the world. Huck learns things from Jim that he never learned from his shiftless father. Huck's "Pap" plays a limited role in the book in that his presence is used to characterize the conditions of Huck's childhood. He represents all the evil that lines the river.
The journey of Huck and Jim begins with a crime. Huck knows he is committing a legal wrong by helping Jim to escape. His brief social conditioning in St. Petersburg points out to him his moral misbehavior. The reader is fully aware of this wrong, but sends him on his way with a blessing because slavery is repulsive to us.

This brings us to the dilemma of the South. The law of the South made slavery a good and legal matter. The South needed the slave labor to pick the cotton. The slaves would have perished had not the plantation owners taken care of them by feeding, clothing and nursing them. They did not regard the slaves as human beings. Even though the church sanctioned slavery, it did not make it right. For the higher law states that all men are created equal in the eyes of God. But if you do not count the slaves as human then they are not created equal and should not be treated as equals, reasoned the average slaveholder. According to the moral law, slavery is wrong but the enacted law condoned slavery. It was a vicious circle that based its main premise on fallacious reasoning about the nature of man. The South was a firm believer in the doctrine of servants should obey their masters. Since the slaves happened to be the servants, they had to obey their white masters. The simple-minded Negroes looked to their masters for wisdom and guidance. They accepted their humble role meekly for the masters kept reminding them of their servitude. With this belief the Southerner was able to rationalize and delude himself with a morally wrong situation.

Once Huck escaped from the Widow and Pap, he becomes a much happier boy. He can spend his days fishing, swimming and loafing, as opposed to the much more constricting and methodical life at the Widow's. He no
longer had to put "on airs" for the townspeople or be confined to a classroom and learn about life from a book. The woods, the river, and his own simple nature teach him all he needs to know to survive. Huck had to leave the status of the Widow's to find his own identity.

Huck loves the world of nature, which is to him a benevolent society and truly real society. The river gives him the consolation he cannot find elsewhere. The stars in their twinkling majesty promise him happiness and companionship. Nature makes him aware of life and its unlimited riches. His sensitivity is brought out early in the book when he says: "Well, when Tom and me got to the edge of the hilltop we looked away down into the village and could see three or four lights twinkling, where there was sick folks, maybe."34 At another point he says about the rascally Duke and Dauphin who have mistreated and exploited him: "Well, it made me sick to see it; and I was sorry for them poor pitiful rascals, it seemed like I couldn't ever feel any hardness against them any more in the world. It was a dreadful thing to see. Human beings can be awful cruel to one another."35

Henry Nash Smith sees three main elements in the book: "The story of Huck and Jim's adventures in their flight for freedom.... The social satire of the towns along the river.... (and) the developing characterization of Huck."36 The last one is the most important. The


35 Ibid., p. 201.

moral crisis that Huck encounters when he has to decide whether to be
good and return Jim or whether he will be "bad" and help him escape.

In a profound and moving section of the book, aptly titled, "You
can't Pray a Lie" Huck exposes his vulnerability while reasoning his way
out of his moral dilemma. He decides finally to write Miss Watson and
tell her where to find Jim. But the more he thinks about it the worse he
feels. He says:

The more I studied about this the more my conscience went to
grinding me, and the more wicked and low-down ornery I got to
feeling.... And at last, ... it hit me ... here was the hand
of Providence ... letting me know my wickedness was being
watched all the time ... and ain't a-going to allow no such
miserable doings.... And I about made up my mind to pray, an
see if I couldn't try to quit being the kind of boy I was and
be better.... So I kneeled down. But the words wouldn't come.
It was because my heart warn't right; ... I warn't square; ...
I was playing double. I was letting on to give up sin, but
away inside of me I was holding on to the biggest one of all.
I was trying to make my mouth say I would do the right thing
... but deep down in me I knewed it was a lie, and He knewed
it. You can't pray a lie—I found that out.37

Huck then proceeds to write the letter and see if he can pray after that.
Instead of falling on his knees and praying, Huck mulled over the good
times he had with Jim. He remembered Jim's affection and kindness. He
 glanced at the letter and fell to trembling: "Because I'd got to decide,
forever, betwixt two things, and I knewed it. I studied a minute, sort of
holding my breath, and then says to myself: 'All right, then, I'll go to
hell'-and tore it up."38 Thus with this last sentence, Huck decided not
to reform and stay the "wicked" boy he thought he was. The only moral

37 Twain, Huck Finn, pp. 185-86.
38 Ibid., p. 187.
thing for him to do now is to go to the Phelps' farm and rescue Jim after the Duke and Dauphin sold him to Uncle Silas.

But before we delve into this final adventure which closes the book, some comments should be made about Huck's social encounters in the river towns which make up the bulk of the book. After the raft is damaged by the steamboat, Huck and Jim dive into the water and lose each other. Huck swims to shore, not knowing if Jim is dead or alive, and has his first experience in the social milieu of the antebellum South.

He ventures into the Grangerford home, a typical aristocratic planter class. Huck's description in elaborate detail provides an accurate representation of the typical houses of that era. The "aristocratic" Grangerfords are involved in a feud with the Shepherdsons. Neither family knows the cause of the conflict but are feuding mainly out of tradition and to preserve their perverted sense of honor.

At the close of this episode, Huck witnesses a bloody battle between the two families. After the blood-bath, Huck comments on the foolishness and gore he witnessed: "It made me so sick I almost fell out of the tree. I ain't a-going to tell all that happened-it would make me sick again.... I wished I hadn't ever come ashore.... I ain't ever going to get shut of them-lots of times I dream about them." 39 He has just seen what the evils of pride can do to people. The Grangerfords' and Shepherdsons' pretensions of culture are perverted and their stupidity is evident to the young boy. After Huck returns to the damaged raft, he is reunited with Jim and both agree: "...there is no home like a raft, after all." 40

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39 Twain, Huck Finn, p. 102.
40 Ibid., p. 103.
Next they take two fugitive con men onto the raft who insist they are royalty and prefer to be addressed as the Duke and Dauphin. They mistreat Huck and force him to become part of their "con" games; their ultimate slap is to sell Jim back into slavery. The only reason Huck tolerated them was because he did not want the tranquility of the raft upset and there was no other way of getting rid of them. Besides Huck said: "I hadn't no objections, 'long as it would keep peace in the family; ... If I never learnt nothing else out of pap, I learnt that the best way to get along with his kind of people is to let them have their own way." Huck has become wise to the vagaries of human nature and conduct.

With every step on shore by Huck, his social initiation develops; he gains maturity and knowledge. The foibles of the river communities make him appreciate and understand the goodness he finds in nature. He is wise in his river lore; but his intercourse with the societies are a new experience. These new experiences prepare him for the later arousing of his moral emotions.

Huck's initiation is even more violent than that of Tom Sawyer or Prince Edward. Huck soon realizes that all the greed, pride and violence of the "cultured" river folks spring from one evil institution—slavery. Slavery casts a suspicious shadow over the world—it even extends to the raft.

Huck is of the river, not of the towns. His is a Rousseauistic child of nature in the sense that as long as he stays on the river he will remain good. Once he goes ashore he will be corrupted by the society he

\[41\text{Ibid., p. 110.}\]
finds there. As Rousseau stated in the Emile: "Everything is good as it comes from the hands of the Maker of the world but degenerates once it gets into the hands of man." 42 Huck is not the complete Rousseauistic child, however, because his ancestry generating from Pap removes him from the garden of innocence. Rousseau claims: "... the right teacher is the father. A child will be better brought up by a wise father.... The man who cannot fulfill a father's duties has no right to become a father." 43 Everything Pap has taught Huck has been bad; he instigated Huck to steal food, lie, and break the laws of society. He was a bad father so he was even a worse teacher.

The churning river is not the same as the innocent and gentle garden of Rousseau. Here one finds evidence of violence, terror, and even death—subjects not found in Rousseau's idyll. Emile grows up in the country, for Rousseau wanted to keep him: "... far from the filthy morals of the towns. The glitter of town life is seductive and corrupting." 44 Huck meets this corruption all along the river front; he cannot escape it the way Rousseau let Emile escape it by putting him into an innocent garden free from social influences. For Rousseau feels that if he exposed Emile to these evils he would become corrupt; but Huck manages to transcend that corruption with his intrinsic goodness. James Cox writes: "Huck is, after all, incorruptible and though his body is finally captured by the society which "wants" him so, it has not got his name affixed to it; as the novel ends, the real Huck who cannot die is

42 Rousseau, Emile, p. 11.
43 Ibid., p. 18.
44 Ibid., p. 42.
ready to light out for the territory, to continue his restless flight from "sivilization."  

Huck is a natural creature who instinctively knows right from wrong no matter what is ascribed by the social code. Huck prizes above all else the virtues of honesty, loyalty, candor and love. These same virtues mocked and undermined by the river folks, the mock Duke and Dauphin, Colonel Sherburn and his Pap. The only real and feeling human beings are Huck and Jim for they possess the sensitivity to remain untainted. Only the young and innocent remain pure. This is why Huck wants no part of this civilization. For unlike the townspeople, Huck and Jim know the real meaning of truth. As Lionel Trilling noted: "... Huck Finn has also the truth of moral passion; it deals directly with the virtue and depravity of man's heart."

In the opening passages of the book, Huck and Tom raid a "mob" of "Spaniards and A-rabs" who turn out to be school children on a picnic. Tom is totally caught up in this fantasy. Huck, with his childlike curiosity, goes along with the game because he wants to see the camels and elephants that Tom promises. Huck becomes disgusted with Tom's romantic imagination when he realizes that there were no camels, elephants or diamonds.

In retrospect, the significance of these harmless ambushes have a greater moral significance by the time Huck encounters real robbers and

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false aristocrats. He experiences real depravity and murder on the sunken steamboat and experiences a bloody feud. Tom dreams his adventures while Huck actually lived them.

Huck finally finds his way to the Phelps' farm where he is mistaken for Tom Sawyer. The Phelps' are related to Tom and are expecting him. When the real Tom shows up he passes himself off as his brother Sid. Huck relates his rescue plot for Jim to him. True to his romantic nature, Tom devises an elaborate plot based on the escapes of Henry IV, Casanova, and "Benvenuto Chelleeny." This is one of the weakest and most foolish parts of the story. It is also the cruelest for Tom knows that Jim has been released by Miss Watson and the moral thing would be to tell Huck and Jim. But Tom insists on doing it by the books, so they plot Jim's intricate escape.

Huck cannot understand why Tom wants to complicate matters when all they had to do was take the key off the hook and let Jim walk out of the cabin. Huck is so overawed by Tom's plot and personality that he sacrifices his practicality to Tom's nonsense. He is surprised that the respectable Tom would incriminate himself by stealing a slave. Huck relates:

... Tom was in earnest.... Here was a boy that was respectable and will brung up; and he 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. It was outrageous, and I known I ought to just up and tell him so; and so be his friend, and let him quit the thing right where he was and save himself.47

The irony of this passage is that Huck is attributing to Tom all the characteristics of which only Huck is worthy. Tom is the opposite of these virtues but bedazzles Huck enough to earn his respect. This passage also shows that Huck was more a part of St. Petersburg society than he thought. He admires the respectable codes of behavior prescribed by the adults. The paradox in *Huck Finn* is seen here. Huck yearns to be a respectable member but feels himself unworthy, yet, he also wants to escape the same constraints that make that society respectable.

Huck's ultimate conclusions at the end, after witnessing the depravity of the towns, is to "light out for the territory." He has totally rejected society by this point and the territory is the only salve that will heal his wounds. He did not find the freedom he was seeking on the journey. But his last statement in the book is a final universal grasp for that freedom; it expresses his fear of being "sivilized" once again: "But I reckon I got to light out for the territory ahead of the rest, because Aunt Sally she's going to adopt me and sivilize me, and I can't stand it. I been there before." 48

In 1893, Twain once again decided to return to his favorite theme: childhood. He presented the three heroes of his two most popular books: Huck, Jim, and Tom. This resulted in *Tom Sawyer Abroad*. Again, Tom Sawyer's imagination lands them in an adventure. This time they become captives of a mad balloonist who takes them out over the Atlantic. The balloonist falls overboard and the trio heads for Africa. In the middle of the Sahara, they meet lions, caravans and marauding "A-rabs."

48 Twain, *Huck Finn*, p. 214.
The main theme of the book consists of dialogues and squabbles about the time changes caused by the longitudes, prowess of fleas, mirages, and even creation itself. Tom insists on displaying his superior intelligence over Huck and Jim's practical common sense.

Instead of a raft, the balloon becomes the telescope for scanning human life. As on the raft, there are also dangers to overcome which the boys do heroically. This adventure turns into another escape exhibiting Twain's own symbolic desire to escape from civilization. The book is a saga of the trio's reactions to adult experience. Albert Stone has penetrated the meaning of this book very succinctly:

The rising and falling of the balloon in response to the adult activities down on the ground represents the way childhood can (and must) adjust to grown-ups. The balloon's perspective constantly shifts, and the boys themselves make the adjustments; but it is the threatening presence of adults—the mad Professor, brigands, soldiers—which make Tom, Huck and Jim hop.49

The book is not only pure adventure; it is also a philosophic adventure. The three debate philosophic questions about the difference between knowledge and "instink" and the reality of a mirage. Bernard DeVoto sees the book as: "The exploitation of the provincial mind and its prejudices, ignorances, assumptions, wisdom, cunning. It memorably differentiates three stages of that mind, by way of the familiar Tom, Huck, and Nigger Jim."50 In their dialogues between knowledge and "instink," Tom represents the literary imagination while Huck and Jim represent the provincial mind. When Huck and Jim rebel against Tom's "truths," Tom


becomes disgusted with them and asserts: "I'm lost in the sky with no company but a passel of low-down animals, that don't know more than the head boss of a university did three or four hundred years ago." In spite of Tom's bragging and manoeuvring, he never is allowed to win a victory over Huck and Jim's practicality and common sense.

This book, in a sense, is Twain's swan song; it is the last definite statement he makes about childhood in a novel. For as Stone said:

Placing the innocent eye of boyhood in the aerial perspective of the high-soaring airship gave Twain a double filter, as it were, against the barbarities of adult life below. As a consequence death became a form of sand sleep, epistemologically problems grew less perplexing as the three "erronorts" demonstrated how much more bearable life could be in a balloon even than on a raft. To be sure, Tom Sawyer Abroad offers no real solution to the questions it raises.

No problems have been solved; no conclusions reached. The debates in the balloon have been left to flounder in the desert, soon to be forgotten and hidden by the sands.

Jim gets sent back to St. Petersburg in the balloon to pick up a pipe, leaving Huck and Tom situated on Mount Sinai. Aunt Polly catches Jim and tells him to inform the boys to come home. The ending is rather abrupt and Twain seemed to be running out of further adventures for the boys.

Once home, Tom exploits his glory and Huck "takes a back seat" to his idol. When the village's interest in Tom wanes, Huck is disturbed by Tom's sad behavior. Huck asks him:


"... what was he in such a state about, he said it'most broke his heart to think how time was slipping away, and him getting older and older, and no wars breaking out and no way of making a name for himself that he could see. Now that is the way boys is always thinking, but he was the first one I ever heard come out and say it."

The wise Huck, through Twain's pen, again sees the core of a young heart yearning for adventure and glory.

Tom Sawyer is Twain's favorite literary character. He is not only the hero in the books in which he appears, but Twain also incarnates his personality in other characters such as: Hank Morgan, the Connecticut Yankee, Tom Canty, and Pudd'nhead Wilson. Twain identifies most with Tom, who is the author's alter ego. Tom is the spirited boy and also the town "show-off" which Twain remained till his dying day. Tom also achieved the notoriety that Twain reached. Tom's imagination, self-dramatization, and personality were an integral part of Twain's whole composition. He could not shake Tom loose from his imagination, for he was the representation of the cantankerous old man's vision of a lost youth.

In Pudd'nhead Wilson, the main characters are not children but are instead the innocent victims of the social system that nurtured slavery. Again, identities are switched. This time Roxy, a mulatto slave, exchanges her white-skinned baby with her master's baby. The mother of the white baby died giving birth and the father is too preoccupied with business to notice the switch. Roxy did not want her son to be the slave victim of a cruel society. Hence, the true white baby is raised as a slave and the slave is raised as an aristocrat.

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53 Twain, Tom Sawyer Abroad, p. 1004.
Tom Driscoll, the assumed white baby, is one of Twain's most despicable characters. In him are all the evil traits Twain so hated in society. Meanwhile, the true white boy grows into a humble, courageous, kind hero while enslaved to the wicked Tom. Most of Twain's children do not change radically but grow and mature by a slow process. Though Twain did not believe in child depravity, he still maintained that if a child is born to be bad he will usually remain so in spite of the outside influences. He feels if a child has bad heredity, environment will usually not alter the predetermined actions. He was too enraptured with childhood to seriously believe this concept; but in his literature he often strained his basic beliefs to conform to the action and conflict of the plot. So the character of Tom had to be made evil to provide a true antagonist and introduce conflict into the theme of Pudd'nhead. Tom was seen as a bad baby by Twain and nothing could be altered to change that concept. He wrote: "Tom was a bad baby from his usurpation.... He would burst into storms of devilish temper without notice....he would claw anybody who came within reach of his nails, and pound anybody with his rattle." He was a demanding spoiled baby and became even worse as he reached maturity. All his evil finally culminated in his murder of his guardian.

As the two boys grow up, Tom mistreats and belittles the gentle and courageous Chambers whenever he can. One day Chambers turned on Tom and hit him. The Judge gave him a sound beating for it and Chambers thereafter "took Tom's cruelties in all humility...and made no more

experiments." Chambers has just learned his first rule for survival in society. Tom keeps on mistreating Chambers and playing cruel pranks on him. Tom's pranks are not innocent and teasing, but they are performed out of maliciousness. When one of his pranks misfires, he becomes so enraged that he tries to stab Chambers to death.

The boys of Dawson's Landing are like boys everywhere; and summertime is the best time of all for boys:

In summer the pet pastimes of the boys of Dawson's Landing was to steal apples, peaches, and melons from the farmer's fruit wagons-mainly on account of the risk they ran of getting their heads laid open with the butt of the farmer's whip. Tom was a distinguished adept at these thefts-by proxy. Chambers did his stealing, and got peach stones, apple cores, and melon rinds for his share.

The climax of the story is a trial and Pudd'nhead Wilson reveals the real identities through fingerprints. Tom is accused as the murderer and Chambers is restored to his rightful place in society; but it is too late. For the:

...real heir suddenly found himself rich and free, but in a most embarrassing situation. He could neither read nor write, and his speech was the basest dialect of the Negro quarter. His gait, his attitudes, his bearing, his laugh-all were vulgar and uncouth; his manners were the manners of a slave. Money and fine clothes could not mend these defects or cofer them up; they only made them the more glaring and the more pathetic. The poor fellow could not endure the terrors of the white man's parlor, and felt at home and at peace nowhere but in the kitchen.

55Ibid., p. 42.
56Ibid., pp. 42-43.
57Ibid., p. 167.
Society had conditioned the real Tom to be a slave; he cannot change that or break out of the mold. That is the real tragedy of the novel.

Twain's one child heroine was Joan of Arc. With the exception of Joan, all his main characters had been boys, for he could deal easier with them because they came from his memory. Joan of Arc was written with loving adoration. She was Twain's vision of the ideal child. In Joan of Arc, Twain saw a young girl pitted against his two most hated institutions: the church and the crown. Stone writes that: "...the unique instance in history of the young girl whose innocence not merely existed but acted in the gross world of adult affairs. She was the peerless human being, and it was of the utmost importance that she remain eternally a young girl."

Twain had always had a partiality for young girls. He doted on his own three young girls. He enjoyed observing young girls mature emotionally and intellectually and was happiest when surrounded by them. He helped form The Saturday Morning Club whereby young neighboring girls joined him and his daughters in discussing literature. In his later years after he had lost most of his family, he formed the Angel Fish Club, a group of young girls that kept a despairing old man company through his darkest hours.

Joan does not tell her own story. Instead, it is narrated by her personal friend, Sieur Louis de Conte. For Sieur Louis, one can read Mark Twain. In Joan, the historical perspective is lost since Twain used his poetic license in embellishing it to make it palatable. Even though he had done considerable research, the descriptive scenes, especially

58 Stone, The Innocent Eye, p. 207.
those of Joan's childhood, are manufactured entirely from Twain's imagination. This embellishment causes the characters to appear in a more realistic light and not merely as actors in a history book.

Again, the nature scenes are the most loving and gentle times in the young girl's life. In the fields, joy and play prevail. In the village scenes, violence blots out the innocent moments of the fields. Twain, again, puts his children into the naturally good garden of nature; and the corrupting villain is society. Violence also permeated the pages of Joan—even the innocent maid must be confronted by the blood and gore always lurking in the background. For Twain, the blood and gore that children are exposed to is a necessary ingredient of everyday life—for it in the sixteenth or nineteenth century. They cannot flee for it is part of their initiation into a violent society. Joan's own violent death at the stake was a necessary stage in the growth cycle of the girl's goodness.

The culmination of grief and despair over the human race resulted in Twain's last complete major work: "The Mysterious Stranger." On the surface it looks simple: Satan's nephew visits a small town in medieval Austria (Assville) to teach three young boys about the rigors of life. He demonstrates his divine powers to Theodor (the narrator), Seppi and Nickolaus. He builds miniature worlds for them only to destroy them laughingly. When the boys protest this brutal act, Satan explains:

No, it was a human thing. You should not insult the brutes by misuse of that word; they have not deserved it.... It is like your paltry race—always lying, always claiming virtues which it hasn't got, always denying them to the higher animals, which alone possess them. No brute ever does a cruel thing—that is the monopoly of those with the Moral Sense. When a brute inflicts pain he does it innocently; it is not wrong; for him there is no such thing as wrong. And he does not inflict pain for the pleasure of inflicting it—only man does that. Inspired
by that mongrel Moral Sense of his!... A sense whose function is to distinguish between right and wrong, with liberty to choose which of them he will do. Now what advantage can he get out of that? He is always choosing, and in nine cases out of ten he prefers the wrong. There shouldn't be any wrong; and without the Moral Sense there couldn't be any.59

Here, as no other work, is Twain's "pen warmed-up in hell" at its most biting and devastating.

At first, the three boys are portrayed as innocent caricatures of medieval piety and ignorance; at the end they are aware of the meanness and vulgarity of the world which is destroying their innocence. Twain sees only good things emanating from childhood; all evil emanates from adults.

In another scene, Nickolaus' mother is condemned to burn at the stake after the townspeople find her guilty of witchcraft. Before she dies, she turns to the crowd with these words: "We played together once, in long-ago days when we were innocent little creatures. For the sake of that, I forgive you."60 In the name of childhood, she forgives the mob. She is content to die because she is tired of their society; she has left the comfort of childhood and death is better than adulthood for her. Like Twain, who was yearning for the blessed relief of death, she is also tired of man's inhumanity to man. Only in her long-past childhood could she find the refuge that Twain had been seeking in his children's literature. It is in the adult world that the ultimate illusion is apparent.

60 Ibid., p. 231.
The ultimate illusion is life itself. At the close of the story, Satan callously states the aging author's "Gospel" of disillusionment:

Life itself is only a vision, dreams.... Nothing exists; all is a dream. God-man—the world—the sun, the moon, the wilderness of stars—a dream, all a dream; they have no existence. Nothing exists save empty space—and you!... And you are not you—you have no body, no blood, no bones, you are but a thought.... You will remain a thought, the only existent thought, and by your nature inextinguishable, indestructible.... Strange, indeed, that you should not have suspected that your universe and its contents were only dreams, visions, fiction!...there is no God, no universe, no human race, no earthly life, no heaven, no hell. It is all a dream—a grotesque and foolish dream. Nothing exists but you. And you are but a thought—a vagrant thought, a useless thought, a homeless thought, wandering forlorn among the empty eternities.61

After Satan finishes this provocative speech, Theodor is left stunned and appalled; for then he realizes the tragedy of it all: "...that all he (Satan) had said was true."62

For the last time, Twain is using children as vehicles for the rationalization of man's existence. Through the three boys, Twain conveys his aging determinism and pessimism. Here he finally realizes that boys will be boys and eventually grow up into lying adults. It cannot be helped. They are predetermined to do so. As far as Twain is concerned, everything is predetermined: behavior, goodness and evil; and society merely conditions and reinforces the predetermined pattern.

It is almost unbelievable that the same man who gave us the beauty and simplicity of Huck Finn and Tom Sawyer was able to bitterly pen "The Mysterious Stranger." Twain's works are a reflection of his life. His early works are bright and fresh, written by the optimistic "Wild Man of

61 Ibid., pp. 252-53.
the Pacific Slope." His later works reveal a tired, beaten man, disillusioned by deaths of his loves ones and personal ills and failures. Beauty has been covered with an ugly facade and satire has been replaced with despair. In other words, the child has left the garden and grown into a man. In the following chapters we see how Twain's view of childhood created his views on education and schooling.
CHAPTER III

MARK TWAIN'S VIEWS ON EDUCATION

As with everything else, Mark Twain also had opinions and viewpoints on education. He was concerned about the educational problems of his day and the future of the nation. He did not follow the educational theorists of his day such as Henry Barnard and Horace Mann; instead, after contemplation, he arrived at some startling views, applicable then and also today. He was in every sense of the word, an educational prophet. While he did not write his educational views in any one source, Mark Twain's ideas on education are found in his liberal insights and progressive innovations, as well as his condemnations, throughout his works, especially in his earlier ones as opposed to the deterministic and pessimistic later ones.

Even though he himself had a very limited formal school education, he always recognized the power of education. According to Twain, education is just another word for training. In his deterministic essay, "What is Man?", he firmly states: "Training is potent. Training toward higher and higher, and even higher ideals is worth any man's thought and labor and diligence." Training was man's salvation. It was the most powerful tool

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in uplifting him to greater ideals. Twain did not distinguish between training and education. He used these terms as synonyms.

For Twain, places other than the four walls of a classroom were capable of educating a man. Conscious teaching is a marvelous tool if utilized correctly by the educator; but unconscious training is just as important a tool in the educational process for Twain. Active participation in life and the persistence and endurance to strive to better oneself is an acceptable system for attaining one's goals. Twain was to a large extent a self-made man and extremely proud of his accomplishments. He ruefully said: "The self-made man is without the aristocratic graces conferred by a college education." In his novel, A Connecticut Yankee, the Yankee boasts: "Self-made man....they know how to talk. They do deserve more credit than any other breed of men, yes, that is true; and they are among the very first to find it out, too."  

Justin Kaplan has commented on Twain's informal training: "His high school was a village printing-office, and....he made the world his university." His training as a pilot was as grueling an experience as working for a degree at any university. Twain's training delivered him from the cultural stereotypes prevalent among the academics. He had the unique freshness and élan that one does not usually learn in a formal educational setting; his genius remained free of conventions.

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At the age of twenty-three, Twain was a professional pilot and according to his biographer, Paine: "...it is not likely that any boy ever finished college with the mass of practical information and training that was stored away in Samuel Clemens' head, or with his knowledge of human nature, his preparation for battle with the world." While piloting, Twain continued with his self-education that he had started in the printing office. He was mainly remembered by his pilot friends as a great reader and yarn spinner. He read incessantly books about history, travel, literature and science. Always fond of foreign languages, he taught himself French and a little German while on the river and continued with these languages until he was an old man. He became so fluent in both languages that he was able to write stories in them, such as his translation of "The Jumping Frog" into French. He accomplished the enormity of this task brilliantly and later remarked: "Knowledge has to be acquired by hard work; none of it is flung at our heads gratis."6

Because he had to work so hard to achieve his own knowledge, Twain admired the diligence needed for an education. The Yankee, speaking through Twain, exclaims: "My land, the power of training! of influence! of education! It can bring a body up to believe anything."7 But the humorist could not be suppressed for long. In a laconic moment he mocked education by saying that: "Training is everything. The peach, was once

7 Mark Twain, A Connecticut Yankee, p. 132.
a bitter almond; cauliflower is nothing but cabbage with a college education."8 But beneath the humor was a troubled mind groping for answers to more profound educational problems.

Training and education are interchangeable for Twain. Through education or training we initiate people into society. Training is the all important key to success or failure, good or evil, growth or stagnation. "Training," Twain said, "does wonderful things. There is nothing training cannot do. Nothing is above its reach or below it...it can destroy principles, it can recreate them; it can debase angels to men and lift men to angelship."9

Twain's total belief and involvement with training is best exemplified by Hank Morgan, the Connecticut Yankee:

Training-training is everything; training is all there is to a person. We speak of nature; it is folly; there is no such thing as nature; what we call by that misleading name is mere opinions of our own; they are transmitted to us, trained into us. All that is original in us, and therefore credible of discreeetable to us, can be covered up and hidden by the point of a cambric needle, all the rest being atoms contributed by, and inherited from, a procession of ancestors that stretches back a billion years to the Adam-clam or grasshopper or monkey from whom our race has been developed. And as for me, all that I think about in this plodding sad pilgrimage, this pathetic drift between the eternities, is to look out and humbly live a pure and high and blameless life, and save that one microscopic atom in me that is truly me: the rest may land in Sheol and welcome for all I care.10

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10Twain, A Connecticut Yankee, p. 114.
This quote may be seen as a dire and pessimistic statement made by a bitter disillusioned man. However, still Twain believed, in spite of all, that education was the great arbitrator, the great savior and salve to mend the wound of "the damned human race." Twain was always contradictory; both in his life and his writing. In spite of the pessimism expressed in Connecticut Yankee and "What is Man?", he still adheres to the idea that: "Inestimably valuable is training, influence, education in (the) right directions." On one hand he condemns the human race to Sheol and on the other hand he firmly believes that there is hope for man's bettenment through training. Pessimism and optimism were an integral part of this enigmatic man.

However, his optimism extends only so far as to acknowledge that it is only good training that will elevate and that bad training reduces man to evil. Bad training is a direct result of bad institutions and influences. The only way to change the situation is to take man out of that evil environment or change the institutions radically. Man is like a chameleon who blends in with his background; once removed, he can become whatever his heredity and training allow him.

Twain substitutes the word temperament for heredity. Training can only lead a man as far as his temperament determines him to be led. "Temperament," Train insisted, "is the disposition you were born with. You can't eradicate your disposition nor any rag of it-you can only put pressure on it and keep it down and quiet." His most pessimistic thoughts culminated in the bitter conclusion that man is merely a machine, as previously cited:

11 Twain, "What is Man?", Neider, p. 340.
12 Ibid., p. 365.
Man the machine-man the impersonal engine. WHATSOEVER man is, is due to his make, and to the influences brought to bear upon it by his hereditities, his habitat, his associations. He is moved, directed, COMMANDED, by exterior influences—solely. He originates nothing, not even a thought.  

Fortunately, this pessimism was counter-balanced with Twain's belief in progress. Roger Salomon neatly points out Twain's simple theory of progress: "Man is shaped solely by heredity and institutions; his heredity is a constant and his institutions are getting better; therefore man must be getting better."  

Therefore, according to Twain's theory of progress, if we improve the training institutions we will develop a better quality of man. Since the school is one of the more important institutions, along with society and the church, the school must be made adaptable to the man. Twain found many faults with the American public schools. He accused them of progressing too rapidly for most students; and held that they should progress according to the child's capabilities and readiness. He deplored the practice of over-educating students for a limited job market. He championed vocational training over academic training. And lastly, he thought the schools were working the children too hard and not emphasizing enough play.  

His rules for education were very pragmatic for the time. He urged teachers to accept the students as partners in the educational experience. As he comprehended it, students learn best by doing—not ruminating over dry rules and facts. This dry and impersonal form of education made mere...  

13 Ibid., p. 337.  
fact-recitation machines out of students. It squashed their independence and freedom to think for themselves. The end result of this was an improbable set of stupid answers on exams. These answers, Twain contends, show:

That the person uttering it was pushed ahead of where he belonged ...and...proof that he had been put to the task of acquiring before he had had a single lesson in the art of acquiring it, which is the equivalent of dumping a pupil into geometry before he has learned the progressive steps which lead up to it and make its acquirement possible.¹⁵

He greatly admired Helen Keller for her triumphs over her multiple handicaps. He glowingly says of her: "She doesn't know merely things, she is splendidly familiar with meanings of them. When she writes an essay on Shakespearean character, the English is fine and strong, her grasp of the subject is the grasp of one who knows, and her page is electric with light."¹⁶ Twain further postulates that if her tutor, Miss Sullivan, had taught her in the methods of American public schools, then Helen Keller: "Would be deafer and dumber and blinder then she was before."¹⁷ He blamed the schools in their irrational way of teaching as the cause for the educational problems. He said of these methods:

In the public school, apparently, they teach the child to spell cat, then ask it to calculate an eclipse; when it can read words of two syllables, they require it to explain the circulation of the blood; when it reaches the head of the infant class they bully it with conundrums that cover the domain of the universal knowledge.¹⁸

¹⁶ Ibid.
¹⁷ Ibid.
¹⁸ Ibid., pp. 1021-22.
He further railed against the emphasis of the professions being stressed in academic circles. Twain was living in a scientific and mechanical age of discovery, and often wondered where the men would receive an education to operate these magnificent machines. He knew they were not coming from the public school, for he commented:

I once made a speech deploiring the injuries inflicted by the high school in making handicrafts distasteful to boys who would have been willing to make a living at trades and agriculture if they had but had the good luck to stop with the common school. But I made no converts. Not one, in a community overrun with educated idlers who were above following their father's mechanical trades, yet could find no market for their book knowledge.19

Twain did not agree that the present school systems were adept at gathering and disseminating knowledge. The schools were approaching the problems incorrectly with their over-emphasis on book learning and neglecting vocational training. Twain felt that those students who do not show an aptitude for scholastic training should be allowed to pursue trades. Again Twain realizes that not everyone's heredity or temperament allows for academic training. Those with a conflicting temperament, but still wishing to be educated, should have an alternative. Some are determined to exercise their talents in other areas. Only when the schools become aware of this duality can real progress be made to equalize education.

Twain had a strong distaste for the rote learning methods employed by educators and strongly advocated learning by association and doing. He satirically emphasized his point in The Gilded Age, describing

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19 Mark Twain quoted in Robert T. Oliver, "Mark Twain's Views on Education," Education, LXI (October, 1940), 114.
rote-memorization:

The children were put to school at least it was what passed for a school in those days: a place where tender young humanity devoted itself for eight or ten hours a day to learning incomprehensible rubbish by heart out of books and reciting it by rote, like parrots; so that a finished education consisted simply of a permanent headache and the ability to read without stopping to spell the words or take a breath.\textsuperscript{20}

This type of learning is not meaningful to children's lives. They parrot the facts but do not know the meaning behind the facts. Rote-learning eventually becomes a hodge-podge of irrelevant facts crowding young minds.

Twain felt that childhood was a pleasurable time and since education is such an integral large part of childhood, it should also be a pleasurable experience. He was totally against learning by threats or punishment since he had experienced this type of learning himself and despised it. He remembered many instances in his short tenure at Hannibal's school, of the whippings and thrashings he received from his teachers to make him learn his lessons. Twain realized very early that this was not an acceptable way to teach or learn anything. Whatever a pupil acquired under this duress was soon forgotten on the first fine day of summer vacation. Since there was no retention, nor transfer of learning, whatever gains were made the previous years were usually not carried over to the next year. For Twain, there had to be something else besides the school to educate the populace. Training is, according to Twain: "Study, instruction, lectures, sermons."\textsuperscript{21} But that is not the whole thing:


\textsuperscript{21}Twain, "What is Man?", Neider, p. 360.
That is a part of it—but not a large part. I mean all the outside influences. There are a million of them. From the cradle to the grave, during all his waking hours, the human being is under training. In the very first rank of his trainers stands association. It is his human environment which influences his mind and his feelings, furnishes him his ideals, and sets him on this road and keeps him in it. If he leaves that road he will find himself shunned by the people whom he most loves and esteems, and whose approval he most values. The influences about him create his preferences, his aversions, his politics, his tastes, his morals, his religion. He creates none of these things for himself. He thinks he does, but that is because he has not examined the matter.

It seemed to Twain that the things that remained most with a person were the more valuable experiences he learns from outside influences and not the school. Much learning goes on unconsciously outside the classroom. A student can learn from personal experience, nature, customs, superstitions, and encounters with society. The book of life can be as helpful as any schoolbook. Twain's characters Tom Sawyer and Huck Finn epitomize the diverse areas of learning. The romantic Tom who relived his dull life in the pages of books did not change a great deal and his personal growth was slight. Whereas Huck Finn, the natural child, learned his most valuable lessons outside the classroom. Nature, society and the River were Huck's classrooms and his books. Who is the wiser?

Twain is convinced it is Huck for he reveals Tom to be a romanticizer and dreamer. Tom is a stereotyped figure of public education. In contrast, Huck is the Noble Savage, wise in the corrupt world. Huck has learned well; Tom assumed that he has learned. For like Huck, Maxwell Geismer asserts Twain: "Had no use for this kind of schooling and learning, and would rather put in his time loafing and playing, searching

22Ibid.
his soul, and thinking his own private thoughts." Twain had experienced both types, and strongly asserted that it was the world of experience that made him the wiser man, not the schoolroom.

The building blocks of experience that shaped the young boy, Sam Clemens, were almost fully formed by the age of nine. Sam was grown up at that age, as perceived by Paine:

and was full of knowledge for his years...he had acquired a great number of things, mostly of a kind not acquired at school.... They were not always of a pleasant kind; they were likely to be of a kind startling to a boy, even terrifying.... Once (he) saw an old man shot down...he saw two young men try to kill their uncle...he saw a slave struck down and killed for a trifling offense... He saw an abolitionist attacked by a mob.... It is not surprising that a boy would gather a store of human knowledge amid such happenings as these.... He did not then regard them as an education.

In his later literary career, Twain remembered these impressionable incidents and incorporated them into his writing. Children matured rapidly on the lawless frontier. They had to learn young that life is not just made up of play but other aspects, such as violence and murder.

Twain detested school as much as Tom Sawyer did. His daughter Susie later commented: "Grandma couldn't make papa go to school, so she let him go into a printing-office to learn the trade. He did so, and gradually picked up enough education to enable him to do about as well as those who were more studious in early life." Twain was in complete agreement with her when he stated: "I was educated not only in the


common school of Hannibal but also in my brother Orion's newspaper office."^26 For Twain, one of the brightest moments of his life was when his mother gave her permission for him to quit school. He became, in every sense of the word, a successful drop-out!

Besides the practical learning he acquired in school, the printing office and the society of Hannibal, the Mississippi River became a great teacher to Sam and the other children of Hannibal. Paine reveals that the river for Sam:

Was the path of adventure, the gateway to the world....its marvelous steamboats.... He would sit by it for hours and dream. ... He felt its kinship....its shifting shores, its depths, its shadows, its gorgeous sunset hues, its solemn and tranquil entrance to the sea.... These were all educational things.^27

The river carrying the steamboats introduced the children to a wide variety of people they would not have met had Hannibal been more isolated. The country's grandeur and shame passed slowly on the river. The children were exposed to gamblers, drunks, wicked women and all that that encompasses. They met and admired the pilots, and deckhands and the many other travelers found on a steamboat. All the children dreamed of someday traveling on a steamboat; and especially the boys had ambitious plans to be pilots.

The river became another extension of Twain's education after he left the printing trade. He became a cub pilot and earned a "degree" in steamboat piloting. "Undoubtedly," Paine asserts, "the river was a great school for the study of life's broader philosophies and humors:

26Ibid., p. 83.

Philosophies that avoid vague circumlocution and aim at direct and sure results." In a short time, Twain learned to read the river like a book. He knew every danger and current between St. Louis and New Orleans; and in his head he carried all these statistics to give him the confidence needed for his majestic role.

Besides the statistical aspects of the river education, he also acquired a vast knowledge of human character. Twain boasted one time: "I got personally and familiarly acquainted with all the different types of human nature that are to be found in fiction, biography, or history. When I find a well-drawn character...I generally take a warm personal interest in him for the reason that I have known him before—met him on the river." Huck gained this same knowledge about human nature as he floated down the river on his raft. What started out as an escape from society, eventually turned out to be an educational experience.

Like Twain, Huck became familiar with the geography of the river; for example, as Huck's vernacular enlightens us on river lore: "I noticed some pieces of limbs and such things floating down...so I knew the river had begun to rise;...of course I was where the current set in closest to the shore;...and I knew when night was over by the cool breezes." While the river revealed its geography to Huck, Jim educated Huck in the superstitions of the day.

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28 _Ibid._, p. 128.


Everyone, Twain included, was knowledgeable in the superstitions that directed the lives of the people. Through Jim, Huck was also made aware of the spooky superstitions of the Negroes. Huck, before the journey, was aware that a dead spider meant it would "fetch me some bad luck"\textsuperscript{31} and that a dead cat could cure warts and it was foolish to look over your left shoulder at the new moon. One time he turned over the salt-shaker and attempted to throw some of the salt over his shoulder for good luck, but the pious Miss Watson discouraged him and Huck "just poked along low spirited and on the watchout"\textsuperscript{32} for the bad luck that would surely come. These and many more superstitions nurtured the impressionable boy.

On the river, Jim and Huck's conduct was based solely on superstitions that followed them to the raft. Every false move shrouded them in fear and anxiety. The code of superstition had to be followed at all cost if they were to reach their destination. For example, Jim warns Huck "not to count the things you are going to cook for dinner, because it would bring bad luck. The same if you shook a tablecloth after sundown."\textsuperscript{33} With all of these negative superstitions, Huck in a perplexing moment asked Jim if there were any good luck signs. Jim impatiently replied: "dey ain't no use to a body. What you want to know when good luck's a-comin' for? Want to keep it off?"\textsuperscript{34}

\textsuperscript{31}\textit{Ibid.}, p. 5.
\textsuperscript{32}\textit{Ibid.}, p. 16.
\textsuperscript{33}\textit{Ibid.}, p. 41.
\textsuperscript{34}\textit{Ibid.}. 
Huck is constantly being admonished by Jim to do everything according to the rules of the superstitions: to waver would be tragedy. Huck learned a valuable lesson when he did not heed Jim's warnings and played a prank on the big black. Huck meant the prank to be harmless; he killed a rattlesnake and put the dead snake under Jim's blanket. When Jim laid down, the dead snake's mate had found him and bit Jim in the heel. Jim recovered from the bite in a few days but warned Huck to listen to his warnings. Huck conceded that it would have been wise of him to ignore the snake and avoid a tragedy and he would "druther see the new moon over his left shoulder as much as a thousand times than take up a snakeskin in his hands." 35 Huck, in a mischievous moment, had also forgotten his previous training, that a dead snake's mate would always come looking for its mate.

Huck's belief in superstitions is both an activity to forestall evil and an attitude to explain it. As Edgar Branch has noted:

To both Huck and Jim the reality of the supernatural has less to do with Christian orthodoxy than with the portents, luck, and magic formulas of a spirit realm. Jim...is Huck's mentor in the slippery discipline of superstitious ritual.... He is habitually absorbed in fantasies shaped by his position in a society that values slaves as mere commodities or objects of wrath. To Huck, also, the spirit world is a vast panorama upon which is enacted the drama of his personal conflict....the main force of superstition in the novel is to keep alive a sense of the malevolence at the heart of things. In the supernatural realm the thematic conflict apparent in Huck's moral dilemma is re-created on a mythical, fatalistic level. 36


Huck soon realizes that nature is as unpredictable as the social world of St. Petersburg. His moral decisions, shaped by superstitions, are even more profound on the river than in town. These same superstitions also are his standard for coping with the violence and decadence of the primitive life. Through them he rationalizes the goodness and badness that darts across his path. There always seems to be a superstition on hand to explain everything.

Huck and Jim have grandiose conversations on the raft. They encompass everything from the creation of stars to the value of monarchs. Huck shows off some of his book learning to Jim. When Jim does not accept all of the statements based on white man's schooling, he argues with Huck and with his own naive beliefs. Huck thinks he is teaching Jim; but actually Jim is teaching him much more about nature, life, and human relations than Huck is aware of. And Jim is doing all of this without a single book, ruler, and trained teacher. Jim's book is the book of nature and man; his ruler is compassion rather than fear, and his teachers are his own personal experiences culled from life instead of a classroom.

Huck "takes no stock in dead people" and "no stock in mathematics." What rudiments of education he picked up in his short stay at Mr. Dobbins' school, serve as only a backbone for the body of knowledge he acquires through nature and social confrontations along the river. To use Huck's own words:

At first I hated the school, but by and by I got so I could stand it. Whenever I got uncommon tired I played hookey, and the hiding I got the next day done me good and cheered me up.

37 Twain, Huckleberry Finn, p. 5.
38 Ibid., p. 15.
So the longer I went to school the easier it got to be.... but before the cold weather I used to slide out and sleep in the woods sometimes and so that was a rest for me. I like the old ways best, but I was getting to like the new ones, too, a little bit.39

At least Huck is trying hard to adapt to being educated; but as a child of nature he cannot be confined too long to the strict society that he is only enduring in order to establish his own identity.

When Huck is troubled, he responds to the longing in his heart and finds a quiet spot and contemplates things in the serenity of the forest. "He learns from experience," according to Gladeys Bellamy, "but his environment determined him only as his experiences develop what is within. Moral intuition is the basis on which his character rests."40 He knows he must put up with some discomfort because his conscience dictates to him and holds him morally responsible for his actions. If fate meant for him to attend school, then Huck will attend.

At the beginning of the novel there are a few episodes where Huck flaunts his white "supremacy" over the black. For Gilbert Rubenstein that is: "Huck's one fault... but... quite understandable in any Southern white boy of that day but one which—to his everlasting credit—he forces himself to reject."41 Fortunately this prejudice does no harm to the

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39 Ibid.


Negro for Huck soon realizes the humanity of the man and cannot do anything that would hurt him. The society conditioned Huck's prejudices; and since he is an appendage of that society he could not help his feelings.

This behavior exhibited by Huck is a good example of Twain's theory of training a person for a higher ideal. Huck has the potential for goodness and his training should cultivate and emphasize it. Once he changes his slave-holding environment, proper training will make him an exceptionally fine adult. Even though he does not understand the perplexing world, he instinctively knows how one should behave in it. Charles Kaplan says: "He has somehow acquired a code of ethics and a standard of values against which he measures mankind-including, mercilessly, himself." 42

Just as Huck was predetermined by his temperament to be good, Tom Driscoll, the true black baby posing as the white baby in Pudd'nhead Wilson, was predetermined to be bad. In spite of Roxy, the black boy's mother, switching the two babies' environment, she cannot change the characters they were born with. No matter what outside influences work on Tom, he does not change his temperament in the least bit. He developed into a scoundrel in spite of all his "aristocratic" advantages; while Chambers, the true white boy, grew up into an upright and dignified human being. Tom's meanness is not necessarily inherited from his Negro ancestors. Twain makes it clear that Tom's evil nature was the result of his white father's genes.

All of Tom's outside influences were good: "Tom was petted and indulged and spoiled to his entire content—or nearly that." But this was all in vain. The society that did the petting and indulging molded his personality in a certain direction. Twain saw Tom's badness as a result of the slave-holding environment's training and conditioning. A bad temperament combined with a bad environment conclude in a bad human being as far as Twain had reasoned.

Similarly, Chambers turns out good, but not because he has achieved this goodness. Rather Chambers is merely exhibiting the humility, strength and obedience that his temperament ascribed to him. He did not set out in a quest to possess these sterling qualities. He came by them through his reactions as an inferior person upon whom these qualities were enacted and bestowed. The social conventions determine his reactions. He has learned humility and obedience from the beatings Tom and his father inflicted upon him. For Twain it is training and environmental factors that determine a man's life and character.

A white boy raised as a slave like Chambers would prove to possess the characteristics and traits of a slave. A black child raised free would behave as a free man. *Pudd'rnhead Wilson* epitomizes this deterministic doctrine prevalent in the nineteenth century. "Twain, ironically shows," according to Henry Nash Smith, that:

Training corrupts both: the slave by destroying his human dignity, by educating him to consider himself inferior, by building up in him a ferocious hatred of himself as well as of his rulers; the master by encouraging cruelty toward the

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43 Twain, *Pudd'rnhead Wilson*, p. 47.
human beings he is taught to regard as animals, and thus by
blinding his sensibilities and fostering an unwarranted pride
of place. 44

The boys' heredity (temperament) and their environment (circumstances)
gave Twain another chance to express his deterministic philosophy and his
disgust for slavery. Temperament gave the boys their dispositions while
circumstances caused them to act them out. Twain maintains that:

Circumstance is powerful, but it cannot work alone; it has to
have a partner. Its partner is man's temperament-his natural
disposition. His temperament is not invented, it is born in
him, and he has no authority over it, neither is he respon-
sible for its acts. He cannot change it, nothing can change
it, nothing can modify it-except temporarily. But it won't
stay modified. It is permanent, like the color of the man's
eyes and the shape of his ears. 45

Circumstance caused the switched identities, but it was the work of the
temperament which made Tom evil and Chambers good. When Chambers finally
resumed his place in the white world, he found that he could not cope with
freedom since he was untrained in the white man's ways. Circumstance had
influenced his training as a slave and had determined that he would remain
a slave.

In "The Mysterious Stranger," the three boys ask Satan if God
determines man's life and career. Satan answers:

No. The man's circumstances and environment order it. His
first act determines the second and all that follows after....
He will never drop a link in his chain. He cannot...(for) it
is made certain by the first act of his babyhood...he cannot get
away from the consequences of his first childish act. 46

44 Henry Nash Smith, Mark Twain: The Development of a Writer (Cambridge:
45 Twain, "The Turning-Point of my Life," Neider, p. 481.
46 Mark Twain, The Mysterious Stranger and Other Stories (New York:
When one of the boys throws a rock at a woman, Satan points out to him that that act like all others are absolutely predetermined and inevitable. In "The Mysterious Stranger," Twain conveys clearly his growing determinism and fatalism. Again he is using children as vehicles for rationalizing man's existence. Twain's fatalism is best seen in Satan's allegory of the bricks:

Among you boys you have a game: you stand a row of bricks on end a few inches apart; you push a brick, it knocks its neighbor over, the neighbor knocks over the next brick-and so on till all the row is prostrate. That is human life. A child's first act knocks over the initial brick, and the rest will follow inexorably. If you could see into the future, as I can, you would see everything that was going to happen to that creature; for nothing can change the order of its life after the first event had determined it. That is, nothing will change it, because each act unfailingly begets an act, that act begets another, and so on to the end, and the seer can look forward down the line and see just when each act is to have birth, from cradle to grave.47

If Twain's determinism and pessimism are applied to education as strictly as he wrote about them, educators would have an impossible task. For education implies growth and growth is not possible in the confine of a deterministic society. Society would be educating an elite group of geniuses such as Newton, Einstein or Edison. It would ignore the large part of society who would benefit the most from the training of a good education. Twain, contrary as always, remained too democratic and progressive to be beguiled by the sectarian role of elitist education. In an optimistic moment, he stated: "Education is a great thing"48 and only through a good educational system will the nation be able to adapt and cope with the myriads of problems which were being ushered in by the

47 Ibid., p. 213.
48 Twain, A Connecticut Yankee, p. 176.
industrial age. A new curriculum, based on progress, would have to be instituted into the American schools. Twain wanted the schools to stop teaching students with ancient methods and subjects. Instead, the schools should recognize that a new world of science, mechanics and discovery was waiting. The traditional Renaissance man must bow to the new scientific-mechanical man. Henry Nash Smith remarked of this phenomenon:

The pace and scope of industrialization placed unprecedented strains on American society and American culture. The traditional system of values, the beliefs about men, institutions, and the universe that had guided the lives of earlier generations, were coming to seem irrelevant. New conceptions of value, new ethics, a new philosophy had to be created. 49

No one was more aware or more admired these new concepts than Mark Twain. In his satire, A Connecticut Yankee, he biting points out the changes that have to be made and how the populace will have to drift with the changes. Hank Morgan, the Yankee, undertakes the task of educating Arthur's kingdom for the new industrialism. The Yankee is determined to put down superstitions, the church, the crown and the feudal tyranny and raise the impoverished common people of Britain to the standard enjoyed by the American people in the late nineteenth century. The Yankee proposes to accomplish this by establishing a system of factories that will:

"turn groping and grubbing automata into men." 50

The Yankee, like Twain, knew the importance of a good education. One of the Yankee's first creations was to:


50 Twain, A Connecticut Yankee, p. 112.
start a teacher factory and a lot of Sunday schools...as a result, I now had an admirable system of graded schools in full blast in those places, and also a complete variety of Protestant congregations all in a prosperous and growing condition. Everybody could be any kind of Christian he wanted to; there was perfect freedom in that matter. But I confined public religious teaching to the churches and the Sunday schools, permitting nothing of it in my other educational buildings.51

The Yankee made sure that there would be separation of church and school in his domain because he had witnessed the church's role in debasing Arthur's serfs. It is clear, that Twain is venting his emotions through the Yankee's dialogues. Twain who highly disapproved of church interference had seen the results in Hannibal.

When the Yankee asked his teen-age protege, Clarence, why he had selected only young boys for the role of defending the Sand Belt against the knights, Clarence replied:

Because all the others were born in an atmosphere of superstition and reared in it. It is in their blood and bones.... With boys it was different. Such as have been under our training from seven to ten years have had no acquaintance with the Church's terrors, and it was among these that I found my fifty-two.52

In other words, Twain is stating that it was the inadequate training that the populace had received from the church in superstition and supremacy that reduced them to the idiotic mush that the Yankee encountered. Since Twain felt that organized religion was a dismal failure, he thought it best to keep young minds clear from its more traditional beliefs. For in recollecting his youth, Twain was aware that even slavery was condoned by the church and therefore instilled in him no aversion to it. About this,

51 Ibid., p. 64.
52 Ibid., pp. 100-101.
he wrote:

I was not aware there was anything wrong about it (slavery). No one arraigned it in my hearing...the local pulpit taught us that God approved it, that it was a holy thing and that the doubter need only look in the Bible if he wished to settle his mind—and then the texts were read aloud to us to make the matter sure; if the slaves themselves had an aversion to slavery they were wise and said nothing.

For Twain then, if the church could err on slavery, it could err just as grossly in other facets of life, especially in the training of the young. Twain's vengeance for the church is further illustrated through the Yankee's remark:

In two or three little centuries it had converted a nation of men to a nation of worms. Before the day of the Church's supremacy in the world, men were men, and held their heads up, and had a man's pride and spirit and independence; and what of greatness and position a person got, he got mainly by achievement, not by birth...she invented 'divine right of kings,' and propped it all around...with the Beatitudes—wrenching them from their good purpose to make them fortify an evil one; she preached (to the commoner) humility, obedience to superiors, the beauty of self-sacrifice;...and she introduced heritable ranks and aristocracies and taught all the Christian populations of the earth to bow down to them and worship them.

As a result, these were the traits the serfs had inherited, were indoctrinated with, and clung to and obeyed like meek sheep. The Yankee immediately perceived the problem and decided that he would have to retrain them, for:

Inherited ideas are a curious thing, and interesting to observe and examine. I had mine, the king and his people had theirs. In both cases they flowed in ruts worn deep by time and habit, and the man who should have proposed to divert them by reason and argument would have had a long contract on his hands.


54 Twain, A Connecticut Yankee, pp. 55-56.

55 Ibid., p. 54.
Nevertheless, he did try to reform them; he wanted to free them from the sham of the Catholic Church, the divine right of kings, and the derelict laws that regulated their training. Twain and the Yankee both agreed that the only way to change the behavior was through sound education.

Twain received a large part of his training from his printing trade. And according to Bernard DeVoto:

It was a surprisingly extensive education. By twenty he knew the English classics thoroughly, was an inveterate reader of history, and had begun to cultivate his linguistic bent. The trade eventually led him to newspaper reporting but first it took him on a series of Wanderjahre toward which heredity may have impelled him.  

These Wanderjahre provided the circumstances leading up to his literary career. These were all links in an intricate chain. Life is like a chain made up of links, according to Twain, and we have no control over these links. Every link that led up to Twain's career was an appointed and foreordained object. Or as he put it:

Circumstance is man's master—and when Circumstance commands, he must obey; he may argue the matter—that is his privilege, just as it is the honorable privilege of a falling body to argue with the attraction of gravitation—but it won't do any good, he must obey.  

Twain reasons that he became a printer because he hated school; his printing job led to his reading a book about the Amazon. Although he made elaborate plans to journey to the Amazon, it was useless and he remained in Keokuk in his brother's shop. "A person may plan as much as he wants to," he reasoned, "but nothing of consequence is likely to come of it


57 Twain, "The Turning-Point of my Life," Neider, p. 480.
until the magician *Circumstance* steps in and takes the matter in his hands."58 Fortunately for the young printer, circumstance blew a fifty dollar bill into his hands and he immediately started out for the Amazon via the Mississippi. "Very well," he argued, "Circumstance furnished the capital, and my temperament told me what to do with it."59

When the novice arrived at New Orleans, there was no ship and never was one. On the trip down the river, Twain had made the acquaintance of a captain and being temporarily out of money, begged the pilot to teach him navigation. He became a successful pilot but not for long, because the next link, the Civil War, forced him out of his job. Luckily, a new link appeared soon on the horizon—a job with his brother in Nevada. There circumstance furnished him with the silver fever which resulted in failure but introduced him to the Virginia City *Enterprise* and a reporting job. Circumstance forced him to California where he became a journalist and was sent to the Sandwich Islands. This trip made him "notorious" and eventually led to his lecturing and traveling to Europe. When he came back from Europe, the last link was cemented in place: he wrote a book and became a member of the literary guild.

As far as Twain could see, his literary career was not the result of his own actions; circumstance did all the planning for him. "That was more than fifty years ago," Twain reminisced, "in all that time my temperament has not changed, by even a shade. I have been punished many ...a time...for doing things and reflecting afterward, but these tortures have been of no value to me: I still do the thing commanded by

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58 Ibid., p. 481.
59 Ibid., pp. 481-82.
Circumstance and Temperament, and reflect afterward."60 And so he claims to not admire people anymore for their greatness that he so admired in his youth. For now he realizes that if someone did a great thing, he was not responsible for it. It was the work of Circumstance abetted by Temperament that caused the person to act in that prescribed way. Twain further claims that if Adam and Eve would have been blessed with a better temperament, they would not have been misled by the serpent and: "The apple would be intact to-day; there would be no human race; there would be no you; there would be no me. And the old, old creation-dawn scheme of ultimately launching me into the literary guild would have been defeated."61

For the millions of people who have enjoyed Twain's works, it was fortuitous that Adam and Eve did eat of the apple. The world would not have enjoyed the antics of a Tom Sawyer or the humanity of a Huck Finn.

Twain, like Huck and Tom, became initiated into a society. Huck's initiation was through the river as was Twain's. The river soon suppressed the childish ignorance of the young pilot cub; the river trials educated him in the knowledge of the world and wisdom of adulthood. His struggles in learning the navigation of the river can be compared to his struggles in learning about the real life of the adult world. The young Twain soon learned that the river was not all it appeared to be; just as in life we are often disillusioned by appearances. Barriss Mills accurately perceived the problems confronting the cub: "The river (and the world) are...in fact almost deliberately deceptive at times, and that only an

60 Ibid., p. 482.

61 Ibid., p. 485.
inner sense of reality, based on knowledge and experience, can carry one safely along.  

Mills further maintains that: "The cub pilot does eventually learn to read the river's most subtle signs. But the knowledge has changed him. He no longer sees things the same way."  

Twain himself admitted this in his novel Life on the Mississippi:

Now when I had mastered the language of this water and had come to know every trifling feature that bordered the great river as familiarly as I knew the letters of the alphabet, I had made a valuable acquisition. But I had lost something, too. I had lost something which could never be restored to me while I lived. All the grace, the beauty, the poetry had gone out of the majestic river.

His education had come at a dear price; beauty and enjoyment were sacrificed for knowledge. The man had replaced the boy and the river of the outside world had been learned. He reflects at the end of his training whether he had: "...gained most or lost most by learning his trade?"

In spite of these questions that haunted him for answers, he still firmly believed that training was the better of the two choices. Twain believed both in the benefits of conscious training and unconscious training. He exposed his daughters to world-famous visitors, because he believed: "...the children unconsciously gathered something, little or much, and it went to the sum of their training, for all impressions leave effects, none go wholly to be wasted." He theorizes further:

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63 Ibid.
64 Twain, Life on the Mississippi, p. 67.
65 Ibid., p. 69.
Mrs. Clemens and I, and Miss Foote the governess, were in our respective degrees of efficiency and opportunity trainers of the children-conscious and intentional ones—and we were reinforced in our work by the usual and formidable multitude of unconscious and unintentional trainers, such as servants, friends, visitors, books, dogs, cats, horses, cows, accidents, travel, joys, sorrows, lies, slanders, oppositions, persuasions, good and evil beguilements, treacheries, fidelities, the tireless and everlasting impact of character-forming exterior influence which begin with the strenuous assault at the cradle and only end it at the grave. Books, home, the school and the pulpit may and must do the directing—it is their limited but lofty and powerful office—but the countless outside unconscious and unintentional trainers do the real work, and over them the responsible superintendents have no considerable supervision or authority.67

Twain was correct in asserting that it is the myriads of outside influences working with heredity that eventually shape the child. He knew the advantages of a good environment and was determined his own children should have one. He deliberately created a climate conducive to both learning and playing for he was convinced that children enjoy learning more if it is a game. Many of the games were educational; he put stakes into the yard representing the years of the British monarch's reigns; he drew silly pictures of historical events; he acted out the classics in amateur theatricals and memorized specific dates through guessing games.

When his daughter Clara made an exceptionally bright remark, Twain proudly commented:

I take pride in Clara's remark because it shows that...her fireside teachings were already making her a thinker—a thinker and also an observer of proportions....I furnished to the children worldly knowledge and wisdom, but was not competent to go higher and so I left their spiritual education in the hands of the mother.68

67 Ibid., p. 37.
68 Ibid., p. 41.
He implanted the seed for learning when the girls were still very young, and watched it grow and mature. He created a warm learning environment; he did not hinder them as he felt according to Dixon Wecter: "that his family sometimes cramped his style."69

Twain let his girls acquire their education in a free-wheeling manner, for he explains:

As I have suggested before, mamma and papa and the governess do their share—such as it is—in molding a child, and the servants and other unconcerned circumstances do their share; and a potent share it is. George (the butler) had unwittingly helped to train our little people, and now it appeared that, in the mean time, they had been as unwittingly helping to train him. We—one and all—are merely what our training makes us; and in it all our world takes a hand. 70

So for Twain, education is not an isolated experience. It is a social one. Education becomes a reciprocal process; we learn from sharing our experiences.

As we can see, Twain placed greater emphasis on unconscious learning than on conscious. To him:

Conscious teaching is good and necessary, and in a hundred instances it effects its purpose, while in a hundred it fails and the purpose, if accomplished at all, is accomplished by some other agent or influence. I suppose that in most cases change takes place in us without our being aware of it at the time, and in later life we give the credit of it—if it be of a creditable nature—to mamma, or the school or the pulpit. But I know of one case where a change was wrought in me by an outside influence—where teaching had failed,—and was profoundly aware of the change when it happened. And so I know that the fact that for more than fifty-five years I have not wantonly injured a dumb creature is not to be credited to home, school or pulpit, but to a momentary outside influence. 71

70 Harmsberger, Mark Twain Family Man, pp. 113-14.
71 Ibid., pp. 37-38.
He reveals that instance to us that took place on his uncle's farm when he was a young boy:

My mother pleaded for the fishes and the birds and tried to persuade me to spare them, but I went on taking their lives unmoved, until at last I shot a bird.... It toppled from its perch...and fell at my feet.... I had not needed that harmless creature, I had destroyed it wantonly, and I felt all that an assassin feels.... One department of my education, therefore long and diligently and fruitlessly labored upon, was closed by that single application of an outside and unsalaried influence, and could take down its signs and put away its books and its admonitions permanently.72

Twain was cured of the hunting fever forever due to this one careless act. It also instilled a love of animals in him and he came to loath all forms of violence and cruelty—be they directed at animals or humans.

Twain's biting short story, "The Man That Corrupted Hadleyburg," reveals that the townspeople, in spite of their naivety, knew the value of good training. The town had prided itself on its reputation as being the most honest town in the vicinity. To perpetuate that honor, the townspeople:

...began to teach the principles of honest dealing to its babies in the cradle, and made the teachings the staple of their culture thenceforward through all the years devoted to their education. Also, through the formative years temptations were kept out of the way of the young people, so that their honesty could have every chance to harden and solidify, and become a part of their very bone.73

Twain believed that if these children were not so protected, another society could easily corrupt them, just as the river towns in Huck Finn had the potential to corrupt him. Twain maintained that if you keep the

72 Ibid., p. 38.
children in an honest and pure environment, they will grow up to be honest. The elders only think that they themselves are incorruptable; when in fact, a stranger exposes their shallowness and greed. The children have inherited these temperaments from their ancestors so they cannot possibly turn out better, according to Twain's thinking. No matter what type of protective training they receive—their heredity will discourage it.

It is by accident of birth where we are born—in Hadleyburg, in Hannibal, or in the royal palace of London. As Twain illustrated in The Prince and the Pauper, one boy born into the slums of London and the other born into a palace, was the entire result of an accident of birth which determined how each boy would grow up. The boys are identical in appearance and presumably intellect, except for Edward's advantage of having had a better education. The Prince who received his education solely from books was shielded from real life. In contrast, the pauper, Tom Canty, received his education from the diverse humanity that groveled in the London slums.

After they change identities, it becomes apparent that social classes are but accidental and superficial. Tom, because of his intense reading of romantic novels, adapts quickly and easily to the princely role. Edward has a harder time but eventually, by his proximity to the slums, becomes aware of the human suffering and squalor. Through his dismal experiences, he develops into a fine monarch. He avers:

When I am king, they shall not have bread and shelter only. But also teachings out of books, for a full belly is little worth where the mind is starved, and the heart. I will keep this diligently in my remembrance, that this day's lesson be
not lost upon me, and my people suffer thereby; for learning softeneth the heart and breedeth gentleness and charity. 74

Now that the Prince is wise in the ways of the world, he has stumbled upon the realization of what his reign can do to dispell poverty, vice and suffering. Education is the salient solution to these pressing problems. The Prince had learned his lessons well and as Robert Regan says:

"...his long educational journey has brought him to its destination." 75

Meanwhile, back in rural America, there are also pressing problems. During the 1880's, Maxine Greene states:

the farmers spoke about teaching that would be relevant to farming and to rural community life... They asked, through their organizations and newspapers, for 'useful' knowledge, curricula geared to the understanding of farming, teachers equipped to initiate children into the lives they would actually live. 76

Like Twain, the farmers were disgusted and weary of all the book-oriented courses at school; they were searching for a more meaningful type of education. Twain saw their arguments clearly and could understand the uselessness of knowing the classics when one did not know how to work the soil. It was up to the schools "to keep the boys down on the farm" instead of striking out for the territory like Huck. Schools must develop the capacity to change the curriculum and flavor it with scientific-mechanical courses instead of just humanities. The training must be more practically...

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74 Mark Twain, The Prince and the Pauper, p. 29.

75 Robert Regan, Unpromising Heroes: Mark Twain and his Characters (Berkeley, California: University of California Press, 1966), pp. 149-50.

oriented. While theory is fine in the books, practical know-how is even more important. Because of these factors, Maxine Greene feels that: "Educators neglected the plight of those on the 'middle border' and on the far frontiers; their continuing lack of interest in the rural schools made their dedication to industrial development appear altogether single-minded."77 She further maintains that: "Given the lack of encouragement and the long-time rural suspicion of 'book-larnin', country schooling developed on an abysmally low-level, and gains in literacy lagged far behind the East's."78

Education then for Twain, is made up of more than just book learning in a classroom. Education is unconscious learning we absorb from our environment, nature and social confrontations. The latter is the more meaningful and wisest. He feels that mankind can be saved through the process of training in the right direction, with the right influences and associations. Through training we can achieve anything we want to as long as we do not aim past our hereditary capabilities. Education should be a social process and a pleasurable experience. The right learning environment is all important for Twain. We are constantly surrounded by stimulating experiences and we should take advantage of these in the educational process. For him, education is everything.

In the following chapter we will discuss the schooling during the 1880's in more depth to arrive at a deeper understanding of this turbulent time in our country's history and of Twain's reaction to it.

77 Ibid., p. 131.
78 Ibid., p. 132.
CHAPTER IV

SCHOOLING IN MID-NINETEENTH CENTURY AMERICA

AS REFLECTED IN MARK TWAIN

Mark Twain has often been referred to as the chronicler of the Middle Border, a distinguishing mantle he wears well. Twain's writings provide an accurate picture of the social, political, and educational environment of the mid and later nineteenth century. Twain accurately portrayed education and schooling in his writings. His juvenile novels such as Tom Sawyer and Huckleberry Finn are true representations of mid-nineteenth century American schools. Not only are these descriptions present in his works but they are also found in his personal recollections of his own schoolboy days.

The common school in America had its beginnings in the early nineteenth century. The whole period from 1830 to 1860 was one of rapid educational advancement as the country moved away from the inherited colonial type of education. The common school movement was formed to extend and improve facilities for popular education. Under the aegis of Horace Mann, Henry Barnard and others, the public school systems were being revitalized and given an effectiveness they did not possess in the past. The common school movement originated in New England, which was traditionally the seat of educational progress in the early days of the Republic. In other areas of the country, the emphasis was shifting from private to
public support of education. Teacher training was being improved, curricula were being expanded and enriched, and most important of all, educational institutions were receiving more financial support to insure their progress.

To help win popular support, the educational reformers and innovators, Greene believes:

linked them (the common schools) to the ancestral Promise and to the images of the American Dream. Not only would the schools, they said, provide a common experience and common heritage for the diverse children of the nation, they would also equip the young for the responsibilities of freedom, insure universal equality, and guarantee prosperity through the years to come. In sum, the reformers were telling the world, free schools would provide the bricks and mortar for the Heavenly City on earth.¹

The schools, therefore, became the vehicles for the Puritan society to attain eternal salvation, with knowledge of more earthly things as an added benefit. The appeal to the religious conscience was very effective, especially in the Bible-belt states of the Southwest and along the frontier. Much of American life at that time was culturally interwoven with the religious life. Religion was a seven day cycle that permeated the entire life style of the settlers. If the schools hoped to reach a level of success, they must first succeed as disseminators of morals and then worry about rudimentary skills.

Up to and even into the early part of the nineteenth century, education was based on the strict and limited colonial curriculum. Colonial schools were direct descendants of European schools. The types

of schools established in the colonies were the dame school, writing schools, and the Latin grammar school. Textbooks and teaching methods were also imported from England. Class status directed the people to the schools they would attend. Democratic education was not instituted until the common public school movement. The basic colonial schools were primarily concerned with teaching of reading and writing to the masses. Schools were not always conveniently located so attendance was not compulsory and at most times sporadic. Where the schools did exist, they were designed to teach the children of the common people to read, to grasp the principles of some religious sect, and to conform to the existing principles of social organization.

Once people became aware of the limitations of this two-class system of education, steps were taken to improve this dreary situation. Spelling was one of the first subjects to enter the curriculum of the common school with the publication of Noah Webster's textbook in 1783, *The First Part of a Grammatical Institute of the English Language*. It soon proved to be a popular book and it became even more obvious how poor the schools were in educational resources. Textbooks began to be published in great quantity in America suited for American education. Webster's book, in revised editions, became a durable backbone for spelling lessons for more than a century. It was still around when Twain was impressing his teachers with his prodigious spelling.

But the most influential of all the educational paraphernalia being introduced was the McGuffey Reader. Twain and his fellow classmates were nourished on these moralistic little books. When McGuffey published them: "He could not have foreseen...the extent to which they would become
symbolic of the ideals of a particular society—the American Midwest of the nineteenth century."² Rebecca Shankland theorizes. The books presented everyday moral fables to inculcate the children with religious sentiment along with reading skills. Since moral conventions were the style of the day, McGuffey prospered with the popularity of these miniature "Bibles." His Readers dominated the educational scene from their first publication in 1837 until 1900. They dominated the entire Middle Border section schools. Though they reached a wide group of pupils, their end result may have been self-defeating. The pupils remembered the characters quite well, but often failed to connect the character with the moral lesson the McGuffey was trying to teach.

The Readers were perpetuating the artificiality and narrowness of the cultural life of the Southwest. Twain satirized this false gentility emanating from the Readers in such works as Huck Finn in the character of Emmeline Grangerford and in Tom Sawyer as the prissy Model Boy. These two insipid characters epitomized the vapidity presented in the Readers.

In Hannibal and other such small Southwestern towns, the pious umbrella of the Protestant Church covered a schoolboy's days and nights. Dixon Wecter observed: "Book learning and piety, day school and Sunday school, went hand in hand through the weeks.... The Puritan Sabbath held Hannibal tightly in its grips."³ Twain as a young boy resented this spiritual attitude that permeated the very air of Hannibal. It made every

³Dixon Wecter; Sam Clemens of Hannibal (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1952], p. 85.
act, gesture and emotion a moral one; in everything there was a moral lesson to be learned and remembered. The common school provided a moral framework which the Sunday school completed.

The schoolrooms were not architectural wonders in Twain's schooldays. Today, some of them would probably be condemned as uninhabitable. The teacher, often times, was as unfitted as the physical setting for the educational process. "The teacher," Greene describes:

might be the local sexton or bellringer, or the wastrel son of some local family. Or there might be a school mistress selected from among the spinsters in a town or from the young girls with poor prospects of marriage, in need of nothing more than pittances to keep themselves respectable and alive....or...the teachers were university graduates, very often filling in the days until they found the openings they sought; or they were young theologians awaiting ordination, no more concerned than the would-be businessmen about the children they taught. Teaching was not a respectable occupation for adult men: and in any case it seemed to demand only disciplinary skills.4

In the pages of Tom Sawyer, Twain describes Mr. Dobbins, a person for whom teaching was merely a secondary interest. In the book he is described as:

The master, Mr. Dobbins, had reached middle age with an unsatisfied ambition. The darling of his desires was to be a doctor, but poverty had decreed that he should be nothing higher than a village schoolmaster. Everyday he took a mysterious book out of his desk and absorbed himself in it at times when no classes were reciting.5

Dobbins felt that his only real job as teacher was to be on the receiving end of a long and boring recitation by a pupil. He would rather be absorbed in his anatomy book than in a lesson book. Punishment seemed to be the only enjoyment and relief for his frustrations. Dobbins braced and

insured himself by establishing a multitude of rules begging to be broken by mischievous pupils like Tom Sawyer. Any minor infraction of these rules called for an immediate reprimand with a switch.

One of Tom's more memorable whippings was received when Tom saw Becky tear a page of the anatomy book and took her punishment for her because he was in "love" with her and did not want Dobbins to shame her in front of the others. The incident is described in *Tom Sawyer* thusly:

A whole hour drifted by, the master sat nodding in his throne, the air was drowsy with the hum of study. By and by, Mr. Dobbins straightened himself up, yawned, then unlocked his desk, and reached for his book... Then took it out and settled himself in his chair to read. The next moment the master faced the school. Every eye sank under his gaze. There was that in it which smote even the innocent with fear.... Then he spoke: Who tore the book...the master searched face after face for signs of guilt.... Tom shouted, I done it. He took without an outcry the most merciless flaying that even Mr. Dobbins had ever administered; and also received with indifference the added cruelty of a command to remain two hours after school should be dismissed.6

Not only does this passage describe the whipping, but it also gives a perfect example of the average school in the mid-nineteenth century. It conveys the attitude of the teacher who is bored by the students and by the classroom situation. It also portrays the fearful feelings of the students towards such a teacher. Twain has described the whole educational environment in a glimpse.

Twain depicts Dobbins as "sitting on a throne." The use of the word "throne" was not a figment of Twain's imagination. In the classroom, the teacher was the ruler and the students were his subjects. Schoolmasters were to be exalted and adored figures to the students and the most imposing object in the classroom was a raised platform or teacher's "throne."

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Every time an impish eye looked up they were confronted with this spectacular authoritarian figure. The "throne" also served a practical purpose from the teacher's point of view; it gave him a perisopic view of the classroom and enabled him to entrap the culprits as they planned mischief.

Examination Day or Commencement was the shining moment of glory for the teacher. He could now show-off his students before the adulating town and parents. To remind the students that he demanded almost perfect perfection from them, he became rather handy with his switches. For Dobbins:

As the great day approached all the tyranny that was in him also came to the surface; he seemed to take a vindictive pleasure in punishing the least shortcomings. The consequences was, that the smaller boys spent their days in terror and suffering and their nights in plotting revenge. They threw away no opportunity to do the master mischief. But he kept ahead all the time.7

The children finally did achieve justice on Examination night when they lowered a protesting cat onto his head; the cat frantically clutched at Dobbins' head and yanked off his toupee, revealing a shiny dome. The sign-painter's son, in whose home Dobbins lived, had gilded the dome while the master was sleeping soundly. One can almost hear Twain audibly sighing: Ah, the sweetness of revenge!

But before this coup by the boys, let us return to what transpired at the Examination Night Ceremonies. The master had taken up his place on the throne surrounded by his outstanding students and adoring parents. The girls giggled and the boys fidgeted as they waited for their turn on the dais to dazzle the eager parents with their "schooling." Child after child

7Twain, Tom Sawyer, p. 126.
gave his little speech or reading and bowed or curtsied cutely and mechanically after it was executed. Some of the more "exciting" pieces were recitations of "Mary had a Little Lamb," "Give me Liberty or Give me Death," "The Boy Stood on the Burning Deck," followed by "The Assyrian Came Down," "and other declamatory gems." 8

With tongue in cheek, Twain puckishly describes the other "gems" heard that evening, especially the "original" compositions presented by the blushing young girls:

Each in her turn stepped forward to the edge of the platform, cleared her throat, held up her manuscript and proceeded to read, with labored attention to "Expression" and punctuation. The themes were the same that had been illuminated upon similar occasions by their mothers before them, their grandmothers and doubtless all their ancestors in the female line clear back to the Crusades. "Friendship" was one; "Memoirs of Other Days"; "Religion in History"; "Dream Land"; "The Advantages of Culture"; ... "Melancholy"; "Filial Love", etc., etc. 9

Quite clearly these were vapid compositions and Twain had a right to mock them for the girls were not showing anything new. They were merely regurgitating prose as old as the hills and as senile.

Actually, the girls should not be blamed for their triteness. They were products of the school system of the day. They were trained and educated by the Bible and the McGuffey Readers and nothing is older than the Bible and more rehashed and rephrased. For as Twain irately observed about these compositions:

...a peculiarity that conspicuously marked and marred them was the inveterate and intolerable sermon that wagged its crippled tail at the end of each and every one of them. No matter what

8Ibid., p. 128.
9Ibid.
the subject might be, a brainracking effort was made to squirm it into some aspect or other that the moral and religious mind could contemplate with edification. The glaring insincerity of the sermons was not sufficient to compass the banishment of the fashion from the schools, and it is not sufficient today; it never will be sufficient while the world stands, perhaps. There is no school in our land where young ladies do not feel obliged to close their compositions with a sermon; and you will find that the sermon of the more frivolous and the least religious girls in the school is always the longest and the most relentlessly pious. But enough of this. Homely truth is unpalatable.10

It is easy to picture the discomfiture of a talented sensitive boy like Twain enduring these amateur theatricals in the name of education. With these remembered moments, Twain became aware of the inferior education he and the children after him had received in these small country schools. The schools were not promoting and nurturing original minds but were reducing them to mediocrity. The scholars came out as stereotypes of the children in the McGuffey Readers. The "original" compositions needed more than Daniel Webster's eloquence and Noah Webster's spelling lists. They needed a whole new anthology of compositions, preferably penned by them.

It can be seen that creative expression was discouraged in such schools. Conformity to prescribed procedures was the desired outcome. Later in the nineteenth century, reformers such as Colonel Francis Parker would challenge the routine of the conventional school.

Tom Sawyer and Huck Finn are resplendent with many anecdotes of "schooling" on the fringes of the frontier. The Middle Border chronicler had done a masterful job. His writings have preserved some of those golden and not so long ago moments. In Tom Sawyer, Twain provides a picture of the common school, and also one of his favorite scapegoats, the Sunday

10Ibid.
school. For example, the children of the Sunday school received a Bible as a prize if they memorized two thousand verses of the Bible. It does not matter that the children cannot interpret their mechanics; the main emphasis is that they have memorized and can parrot back. Knowing two thousand verses will not make them better children or adults. It will only establish that they have a good memory and can be used as tools to show-off the "learning" of the Sunday school. This points out that the early nineteenth century concept of education was based on the memorization of bodies of literature. It did not seek to develop problem-solving or creative skills.

Tom did not want to learn these verses but he did want the distinction and glory of receiving the Bible as a prize. He connived to get the correct number of tickets from his friends and when the big day came, Tom received the Bible and the adulation. The pompous judge made the following hollow speech as he bestowed the "wonderful" Bible on Tom:

Two thousand verses is a great many, very many, very great many. And you never can be sorry for the trouble you took to learn them; for knowledge is worth more than anything there is in the world; it's what makes great men and good men; you'll be a great man and a good man yourself, some day, Thomas Sawyer, and then you'll look back and say, It's all owing to the precious Sunday-school privileges of my boyhood—it's all owing to my dear teachers that taught me to learn—it's all owing to the good superintendent who encouraged me, and watched over me, and gave me a beautiful Bible...it's all owing to right bringing up!\(^{11}\)

For all its eloquence, we can detect Twain writing these lines with a wide grin or smirk on his face for he knew the hypocrisy of the Sunday school. In the next paragraph, he quickly shatters the illusion with Tom's remark to a question.

\(^{11}\)ibid., p. 29.
The judge asked Tom to show him some "of the things he has learned" in the Sunday school by naming Jesus' first two disciples. Since Tom had not actually memorized the verses, he had no idea of the answer; he popped the first thought that entered his roving mind--DAVID AND GOLIATH! This answer is not as funny as it may appear; actually, it shows how easily deceived the teachers could be by a creative, ingenious child like Tom. The answer was meaningless and was indicative of the sham and stupidity of the whole process. The children did not learn the verses in the true sense of the word; they learned facts and events but could not associate them. They only knew these things to the point where they would win a Bible and prestige for them. This contest only exhibited the shallowness of the Sunday school and day school education. When some child does actually memorize the verses, Twain tells how: "...the strain upon his mental faculties was too great, and he was little better than an idiot from that day forth."13

Tom had the same distaste for school that Twain did. "Monday mornings found Tom Sawyer miserable. Monday mornings always found him so—because it began another week's slow suffering in school. He generally began that day with wishing he had no intervening holiday, it made the going into captivity and fetters again so much more odious."14 Tom, Twain, and all boys of that age alleviated their worry by playing hookey or begging their mothers to stay home because of some pretended illness. The river and the

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12 Ibid.
13 Ibid., p. 24.
14 Ibid., p. 35.
woods were too much of a temptation to young boys to be confined to the classroom. For their day of freedom came a dear price: a whipping from the sanctimonious school teacher. It was considered immoral to play hookey, not because you missed a day's lessons, but because the community frowned on it. In this case, the community's conception of morality and not education was the central issue.

Children then, as today, anxiously await recess time for respite from the rigors of school. In Hannibal, Dixon Wecter observed: "...recess brought...games like fox, three-cornered cat, hide-'n'-whoop, spinning of tops and shooting marbles, and playing catch, as well as the swapping and eating of apples, gingerbread, and molasses candy."¹⁵ The girls preferred to be on one side of the schoolyard away from the rowdy boys. If a fight was challenged, it was usually reserved for after school, for the master would whip both boys if he caught them.

However, fights were not the only distractions for the children; there were other exciting happenings to revel in and plan for. One of events in Twain's time was the May Day ceremony, described by Wecter:

All the school resplendent in clean shirts and starched pinafores, preceded by the municipal brass band, led by the May Queen, and shepherded by their teachers, marched in solemn gaiety to a grove north of the old graveyard. They gathered round a May pole...singing songs in praise of spring, their God, and their country.¹⁶

Only the noisy Fourth of July was anticipated more anxiously by the children for the excitement and dazzle it always brought.

Many of the pages of Tom Sawyer and Huck Finn are dramatizations of schools Twain attended in Hannibal. The scrapes that Tom gets into at

¹⁵ Wecter, Sam Clemens of Hannibal, p. 135. ¹⁶ Ibid., pp. 84-85.
school are often factual representations of little Sam's. Twain, like Tom, would often get lost in his own dreamy thoughts and not pay attention to the droning voice of the teacher. When the boredom got overwhelming, the boys searched for some diversion. They would empty their pockets and reveal their small boy "wealth" of fishhooks, bird's eggs, knives, gazoos, marbles and bits of wire. If the boys had the misfortune of being caught by the teacher, they received a sound thrashing. As one of Twain's teachers, Miss Newcomb, later reflected: "...he (Twain) was slow of speech, but certainly not slow about thinking up ways of getting out of studying."  

The description of Miss Newcomb by Dixon Wecter could easily be a stereotype of any female teacher of that period: "Flat-bosomed, prim, and angular, Miss Newcomb was a perfect desiccated specimen of the 'village schoolmarm type' who appears failingly in Mark's retrospect." 18 She, however, was not Sam's only teacher. Shortly after they moved from Florida to Hannibal, Sam was enrolled at the tender age of four and a half, in the small log schoolhouse of Mrs. Horr. "Mrs. Horr," according to Wecter, "taught a dame school expounding the virtues of piety and diligence, good manners, and in the custom of those days always made the boys take off their hats and bow to her when entering the schoolroom." 19 Mrs. Horr had hoped to establish some type of genteel decorum among the primitive and crude students of the lawless wilderness. Training the free

17 Ibid., p. 84.
18 Ibid.
19 Ibid., p. 82.
spirits of the unrestricted society was not the most facile of jobs.

After Sam finished at Mrs. Horr's school, he was promoted to Miss Newcomb's side of the classroom, who was in charge of the older students. Since the school was only a small log cabin, all the classes were held in the same room with various teachers presiding over the different grades. Because Miss Newcomb had the older children, she had the good luck to inherit mischievous Sam from Mrs. Horr. Twain's early school days were entirely female dominated. Later in life, he recalled that he did not actually learn much in these classes. The only thing he was grateful for was that Miss Newcomb had taught him to read and enjoy literature.

This female domination of education ended for Sam when he was enrolled in Mr. Cross' "good common school for boys and girls." Twain once started to write a story revealing the pedagogical methods of Mr. Cross:

The schoolmaster...opened the day with a prayer and a hymn. Then began the multiplication class and the arithmetic class, and next came the grammar class of parsing parrots, who knew everything about grammar except how to utilise its rules in common speech. Then followed the spelling class...and an exercise in Latin for the handful whose parents fancied their offspring upon the pinnacle of learning.

This then was a typical schoolday in the mid-1900's. The whole educational enterprise was based on memorization. In many nineteenth century schools, intelligence was defined as the pupil's capability to automatically parrot back the lessons. This conception of learning made the recitation the central phase of schooling.

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20 Ibid., p. 132.
21 Ibid.
When in the spring of 1847, a Mr. J. Dawson opened his school doors, Sam was promptly enrolled. "J. D. Dawson, a veteran of fourteen years' pedagogy, as he announced himself, offering instruction for young ladies and a few boys of good morals, and of ages under 12 years."22 Claiming to accept only good boys and girls, Dawson nevertheless accepted in reality anyone who could afford the small tuition. Dawson's school went on to become immortalized in the pages of *Tom Sawyer* and *Huck Finn*, as Dobbins' school. Dawson became the frustrated and vengeful Dobbins, tormenting Tom as Dawson must have tormented Twain. For Twain was also not the Model Boy of the village for which Dawson had advertised. If there were other Model Boys in Hannibal, Twain once said: "We never had but one" and he was the teacher's son, "detestably good...I would have drowned him if I had had a chance."23 The Model-Boy-Son was a prig and Twain wryly noted that: "Youth is the prig-time of life."24 Dixon Wecter reports an article in the *Hannibal Gazetter* of December 24, 1846, describing the Model Boy of the mid-nineteenth century: "For the Boys: avoid companions who disobey their parents, profane the Sabbath, use 'filthy language,' 'play truant,' 'are of a quarrelsome temper,' 'addicted to lying and stealing,' maltreat insects and rob bird's nests."25

Needless to say, there were not too many boys in Hannibal who could live up to this deploring description. It appears that the village elders

22Ibid., p. 132.
23Ibid., p. 133.
24Ibid.
25Ibid.
were resorting to the old Puritan doctrine of making little children into miniature adults. They tried to suppress all the excitement and romance of childhood and produce sterile personalities lacking in any warmth or childish mischief. It is a depressing description of a mechanical robot, not a warm, pulsating child. This robot can answer lessons automatically; it is never tempted by childish emotions; and most of all, it automatically accepts everything with which society, the church, and school inundate him. Neither Twain, nor Tom, nor Huck fit this mold. They can see through all the false piety and artificial morality. They cling to their youth, enjoying it as a wonderful fleeting time of life irregardless of the consequences.

Twain was neither a Model Boy nor a model pupil. He never won any prizes for intellectual brilliance except for his spelling achievements. Since reading and spelling and multiplication were the most emphasized subjects, Twain at least had conquered one of them. Twain remembered about sixty years later during one of his torrential bursts of recollection:

that...we had two prizes in our school. One was for good spelling, the other for amiability.... The holders of these prizes hung them about the neck with a string-and those holders were the envy of the whole school. There wasn't a pupil that wouldn't have given a leg for the privilege of wearing one of them a week.... The Friday-afternoon session always closed with 'spelling down.'... I slaughtered both divisions and stood alone with the medal around my neck when the campaign was finished.26

Tom Sawyer's one piece of brilliancy was also spelling. He lost the precious medal only once, when he was so absorbed in Becky that he missed the most simple words and had to concede his medal to a sissy.

Twain did not excel in the other subjects, nor did they interest him as much as spelling. In his Autobiography he admits: "When I was a boy there was not a thing I could do creditably except spell according to the book." 27 He did not feel that he had been "taught" how to spell correctly in the schools, rather he believed: "...the ability to spell correctly is a talent, not an acquirement." 28 He was remorseful at times that he had not been a better student for he admired the intelligensia and liked to "hob-nob" with them on occasions. He wished that he had applied himself better in the subjects that were not inherited and smacked of talent and called for hard work. For Twain felt:

There is some dignity about an acquirement, because it is a product of your own labor. It is wages earned, whereas to be able to do a thing merely by the grace of God and not by your own efforts transfers the distinction to our heavenly home—where possibly it is a matter of pride and satisfaction but it leaves you naked and bankrupt. 29

Basically, Twain is saying, that he had inherited the ability to spell but not the ability to master other subjects. His temperament ordained his spelling skills and circumstances allowed him to show them off; but it was this same temperament that also held him back from mastering other subjects.

Huckleberry Finn describes some of the current ideas about schooling and the attitudes of some people toward education. Huck Finn, that vagrant boy, was for a time forced to attend Dobbins' school with his friend Tom Sawyer to be "sivilized." In that wilderness society, the

27 Ibid., p. 109.
28 Ibid.
29 Ibid.
school was the most relevant agent of civilization besides the church and home. At school, Huck picked up the rudimentary skills such as reading, writing and arithmetic, interspersed with piety and fear. Sunday school was mandatory and Bible reading was the accepted practice in the home.

The Widow, who had taken Huck into her home to "sivilize" him, cared for his bodily, intellectual and spiritual needs. Huck shares one of his Bible instructions with us:

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.  

Huck could not see any reason in learning about great and exciting people if they were dead; his Bible instructions were totally meaningless to him. For Huck, the only worthwhile education is a practical one. It is one that will relate to his young mind and will be more pragmatic for life.

It did not take Huck long to realize the hypocrisy of the situation in which he found himself. All that he had been learning revealed this to him and made him more anxious and fidgety to "light out" for the territory. Despite his efforts, he cannot see the same things that the other people see in this kind of life or education. In his desire to see life as the townspeople see it, he restrains himself from "lighting out" and attempts to some degree to acclimate himself to St. Petersburg's society and conventions. Huck realizes that his ideas are different from those of the Widow and Miss Watson. He wants to see the results of his activities now and not in the hereafter. He wants experiences that will help him to

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survive in the wilderness. He cannot grasp the abstract ideas of the Widow; he takes everything too literally. When the Widow tells him to seek and he shall find, he takes her at her word and prays diligently for fishhooks. When they do not materialize he becomes disillusioned and argued that the Widow must have another God than his because he was: "...so ignorant, and so kind of lowdown and ornery."31

While Tom can see a make-believe caravan with camels and elephants, Huck's pragmatic mind sees what is actually there—a primer school class picnic. He is not as easily deluded with the romantic nostalgia of books as is Tom. Though the books create illusions, Huck still respects their basic knowledge. For Huck, if a book says that this is how something is done, Huck literally believes it for: "...if the books say that is how to do it that is how it shall get done...and of course that's what we've got to do."32 Books, to Huck, represent the intelligence and character that he felt he lacked. They represented a sphere of life that Huck felt he was unworthy to be a part of because of his lowly place on the social ladder. Tom could always get Huck to participate in his pranks by quoting lines from a book even if Huck knew better.

Huck's Pap is an accurate representation of some of the mid-nineteenth century ideas about "book-learning." Pap is furious when he finds out that Huck had been attending school. He threatens Huck:

"...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

31 Ibid., p. 12.
32 Ibid., p. 10.
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. I ain't the man to stand
it—you hear? Pap seems to be boasting that he cannot read or write. But in spite of his
boastful manner, in the following paragraph he shows his admiration for
reading, by asking Huck to take a book and "...lemme hear you read." Huck obliges. Suddenly the irate Pap knocks the book out of Huck's hands
as he realizes that Huck had admitted the truth of really knowing how to
read.

In Pap's twisted mind, learning is equated with sissiness. A real
man, according to Pap, does not need the added frills of an education.
His standards are based on hard-drinking, stealing and "cussing." He is
afraid that the school will destroy his standards and that Huck will turn
into a sissy: "Now looky here," he warns, "you stop that putting on
frills. I won't have it. I'll lay for you, my smarty and if I catch you
about that school I'll tan you good. First you know you'll get religion,
too. I never seen such a son." Pap's big fear is that Huck will show
him up and turn out to be a better man than he. Which is exactly what
Huck does. This ego-deflating thought made Pap furious enough to try to
force Huck back into his servitude. But Huck ignored the Bully's threats,
and went to school "...just the same and dodged him or outrun him most of
the time. I didn't want to go to school much before but I reckoned I'd

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33 Ibid., p. 19.
34 Ibid.
35 Ibid.
Fortunately for the common school movement gathering impetus around this time, most of the people were not as narrow-minded or scared as Pap was. The public schools finally did overcome most obstacles and prejudices. Schools were often regarded as institutions that instilled fine airs and dandified manners to the rough farmers on the fringes of the frontier. What these farmers needed were strong backs, meek spirits, and unintellectual minds to clear the land, build the houses, and raise the crops. They felt that the children had to be trained to survive in the rugged wilderness and not be fed with romantic nonsense applicable only to the big cities of the East. Schools must conform to the environment and answer the needs of the people. The common school movement had to convince these individualistic people that the education they were presenting would augment rather than weaken the present life-style. No progress could be made until the schools were willing to provide concrete examples to the farmers of the success they could achieve by supporting the movement.

The period from 1830 up to the Civil War was a formative one for the common school movement. A large number of schools were established all throughout the United States. There was a tendency to move from privately or religiously controlled schools to public ones. The inadequacies of teacher preparation came under severe criticism, and normal schools were established to remedy the situation. The curriculum was expanded and enriched to meet the demands of the new emerging society.

36 Ibid., p. 22.
Facilities for secondary and higher education were expanded and improved with the establishment of Land Grant colleges along the frontier. The gears of legislation were being oiled to pave the road for establishment of non-sectarian state-controlled schools.

However, all of these accomplishments did not come over night, but involved a long legal battle. As the noted educational historian, Adolph Meyer, has noted:

The grizzly dogma that education was not the seemly business of government still persisted... (and the opponents of the common school) insisted that learning, like dreams of love, was an entirely personal matter and that for a state to undertake to give free instruction to everyone at public expense was an invasion of privacy.37

The appeal by the common school movement was to the pocketbook. The people would be taxed to subsidize the schools, and the states would levy and collect these taxes. Therefore, the state could also make the rules and govern the schools. This was the only logical route to take if the school systems were to be truly democratic. Charity and tuition institutions catered to only a select few and did not meet the needs of a large mass of ignorant farmers and laborers. Children of the masses were receiving only a minimum of education. Proponents of common schooling pleaded to the wealthy factory owners to see to the education of their workers. They pointed out to them that education would only be an asset for them; their workers would become more productive and easier to train to run the machinery.

The masses had to be reached. Horace Mann and Henry Barnard pointed out that they would loosen the shackles and fetters of social, political and economic oppression if there was an educated populace. The only way to reach economic independence was through public financed schooling since the working classes could not afford private academies. The awakening of the masses to the opportunities of education was a slow, laborious process; it was not easy to bring them out of their lethargy or to convince them to accept the new doctrines. On the outset, the common school movement awakened the masses to the possibilities. It was not until after the Civil War and Reconstruction that real measurable progress could be seen. The common school movement before the War was like an embryo waiting for birth.

Twain was disgusted with the education of the mid-nineteenth century. He railed against the silly pedagogical methods such as rote memorization, insipid essays, and moralistic indoctrination. He shunned learning by fear, as most of the teachers tried to "beat" education into the child. He welcomed the common school movement because he saw it as a means to democratize the school system and offer universal education. He enjoyed his childhood immensely and deplored the school's habit of robbing children of their innocence, imagination, and creativity. The schools of this time were expulging too many robot-like students. The education was not meaningful to the lives of the future adults. The lessons were not being related to the children and their individual interests. The teachers were ill prepared and somnolent figures, who commanded more respect and authority than they were worthy of. In the concluding chapter we try to show how Twain's ideas can be applied to present day learning situations.
CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS FOR EDUCATION

Educators and historians owe a deep debt of gratitude to Mark Twain. He was the chronicler of the Middle Border, revealing life and education on the fringe of the retreating frontier. Those rugged and lawless days come to life in his books, sketches, letters and speeches. For the historian, his writings contain a reservoir of wealth on the important social, cultural and political movements that shifted across antebellum America. From Twain, we inherited an intimate glimpse into the events shaping our future history. His works expose the human emotions and intellects that precipitated the country's schism. He bitterly wrote about the attitude toward Negroes. For example, in Huck Finn he wrote: "Good gracious! anybody hurt?" asks Aunt Sally. Huck replies: "No'm. Killed a nigger." And Aunt Sally sighs: "Well, it's lucky; because sometimes people do get hurt."¹ From this brief exchange, we gain an in depth glance at the emotional the intellectual climate of the mid-nineteenth century South and Southwest.

Twain's great novel, Life on the Mississippi, painted a descriptive picture of the pre and post Civil War South. Through this and other

novels such as *Huck Finn*, *Tom Sawyer*, *Pudd'nhead Wilson*, and numerous short sketches, he became the chronicler and historian of the Mississippi valley. As Howard Wilson said of Twain's value as an historian: "He is worth more than a trunkful of hallowed state documents or even an attic full of yellowing newspapers." Twain was a reflection of his times and as a probing journalist reported life as he encountered it, both at home and abroad. Twain was at the crux of nationalism in America; he partook of the nation's colorful birth pangs.

Twain querulously opinionated on every subject conceivable, from the innocuous state of the weather to the passionate tirades against King Leopold of Belgium for his mistreatment of the Congolese natives and even the United States intervention in the Phillipines. With his fiery tongue and pen he was quick to pounce on any radical movement, be it religious, social, or political. In his later prominence, every word he spoke was printed by an adoring press. He was contrary and controversial and in his inimitable way helped to influence and shape American thought.

Though Twain sluffed off humanity with bombastic sarcasm and the epithet "the damned human race" he nevertheless remained until the end sensitive to the foibles, fear and dreams of condemned humanity. In *Huckleberry Finn* and *Pudd'nhead Wilson*, we can share his empathy for the Negro slaves. The democratic Twain is exposed in his two novels of moral democracy, *A Connecticut Yankee* and *The Prince and the Pauper*. *Joan of Arc* is a treatise on justice and revengeful power as it has been wrongfully

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distributed throughout history. *Tom Sawyer* becomes a manual for how to become a success and *The Innocents Abroad* shattered the prevalent theory of the time of the superiority of European culture over American culture as perceived by the Innocent from Missouri. Twain observed men and their affairs with the same enigmatic keenness of an Indian scout or a Daniel Boone forging through the wilderness. Twain's humorous but sarcastic style cut voraciously across many social strata and mores, policies and religions.

Not many things escaped the critical eyes hooded by the white bushy eyebrows. He rhapsodized over the physical environment and cautiously dissected the emotional and psychological make-up of its inhabitants. Through his characters we can grasp the pulse of the nation; they enliven the pedestrian villages and towns. His works become an intimate map into the crossroads and highways of the nineteenth century.

Twain has also left a rich legacy for the educators. He has left for us a wealth of personal "inside" information about the physical classroom and pedagogical methods of that time. He re-created in his works and his *Autobiography* the learning process currently in vogue. Twain exposed the schoolteachers as farces for their lack of dedication and methods. It often appeared that the teachers only needed two things to run an efficient classroom: an unlimited supply of switches and an ear to listen to the boring recitations. The methods and tools of education were primitive, and a teacher was a mechanical machine who assigned boring lessons and then yawningly listened to them after the children had memorized them. Twain presented us with the epitome of mediocrity found in teachers. None of his teachers contained the creativity or versatility
to be effective educators.

Twain felt that informal learning is more valuable than formal conscious learning. He is most impressed by the things learned outside the classroom; the things we pick up from nature, social encounters, superstitions, and survival in the wilderness. He firmly believed that for pupils to mature intelligently they must be exposed to a variety of experiences usually not found in the typical classroom.

Many of Twain's educational ideas can be traced back to his own childhood and training. His physical environment on the outskirts of the frontier with the river and woods for a backyard were a great influence on his early development. The informal education that he received from his surroundings inspired much of his later thinking and writing. He reveled in the freedom found in the wide unlimited expanse of nature.

The country was at that time experiencing great upheavals caused by the westward migration and the over-population of the big cities. The nation was perched precariously on the edge of the Industrial Revolution and people were having problems adjusting their lives to this new way of living. To alleviate these problems, educational reforms had to be instituted. It was a hard struggle for the common school to gain recognition and support because people were not willing, even if out of Christian charity, to dig into their own pockets to educate other children than their own.

Those "radicals" who favored universal education worked actively in the cause of the enlightenment of the masses on rational and unsectarian lines, and advocated compulsory elementary education for all. They felt that the only good government should be one that governed by consent;
hence the people must be educated to elect their representatives. They saw education as an essential concomitant that depended upon the upper classes and the church. Twain embraced these views completely. He did not approve of the two-track system inherited from colonial times. He saw the need for the re-adjustment of the goals of education. Education would have to be democratic if the needs of society are to be fulfilled. Another goal should be the expanding of the curriculum to make it more meaningful to the students it serves. Education must develop citizens who can cope with the problems of living in a mechanistic society. And according to Twain, the goals of education should include the creative child and allow for expression of his ideas, interests and instincts to form a well-rounded person.

Though Twain advocated compulsory education, he nevertheless still preferred nature as the great educator and teacher. The teaching power of nature never ceases; day and night, summer and winter, its silent influence steals into your soul. He felt that all children receive influences from nature unconsciously and informally. It is through the mechanics of formal education that we learn how to cope with nature. The schools are fine institutions for teaching mechanical rudimentary skills such as reading and arithmetic; but to survive in a competitive society, nature is the best educator.

Twain can be compared to Rousseau to some extent. Twain maintained that schools should be more like gardens and the teacher nurtures the young plants and guides them through the right experiences. Twain deplored the de-personalized attitude he found in the schools. They were comparable to robot mills expulging identical little minds with no
individuality. Twain was also disgusted with the schools because they stifled the creative imaginations of children, as was indicated in Chapter IV's description of the "original" compositions given on Examination Night. For Twain, a good school system combined the academic disciplines with the aesthetic ones.

Through his writings, Twain obviously wished to give pleasure, gain recognition, and earn money. His deeper motives were to uplift and enlarge human sensibilities and awareness of their environment. He gave speeches, wrote articles and letters concerning the plight of education. His most powerful sources for expressing his ideas were his boy-books. Here he was able to reveal his ideas under the guise of fiction. By dwelling extensively on childhood and schooling, he was able to vent his emotions and present problems in a humorous fashion with serious undertones.

Twain did not write treatises on education, but we must give him the recognition for the contributions he did make. While he did not have ideas of a starkly radical or original nature, his ideas were pragmatic and synthetic. He deserves credit for championing universal education so eloquently, humorously and sympathetically. He blended his emotions with his art to point out the humaneness of a more natural creative education. He attacked artificiality and hypocrisy of nineteenth century schooling with vigor. He was irate because education was not progressing at the rate he felt it should and could. His innovative ideas were ignored by the majority, as they still are to a large extent today. He did not possess a "how-to-do" manual. He only had salient, pragmatic ideas to help the schools out of the mire that they had been stuck in for such a
long time. His greatest contribution was that he, like Charles Dickens, was able to deflate pomposity and to point out the weaknesses in the educational system.

Twain can rightly be called an educational prophet. He recognized the dangers even in his own day of indiscriminately handing out degrees and glutting the job market. He warned against this practice and in typical fashion educators have ignored it. He deplored the mediocrity of having students graduate based on mere physical attendance rather than on intellectual prowess. Twain saw the public high school as the culprit and source of many of these problems. He strongly advocated vocational training for the dawning industrial age. He railed against the lack of manual arts classes and the over-powering influence of college preparatory courses—a cry that is still heard quite audibly today. He reasoned that not everyone had the mental aptitude or capacity to attend academic institutions. There were some types of temperament better suited to working with their hands than ruminating over classics. Twain did not want these students to be neglected. He saw education as the savior of the human race. The only way these "surplus" students could be saved was to train them in the skills in which they were talented and capable of performing. There should be an alternative for these neglected students. The goals of education must be altered and expanded to make them more acceptable to the society they are trying to save.

Twain was a profound thinker for his day. He saw all of these educational problems developing. We must remember that he was far ahead of his time in defending and advocating these changes. We hear about these problems today and have heard about them for a long time. But we
must not forget what this must have sounded like in the latter half of the nineteenth century. Seen in that perspective, they are truly radical and innovative. Twain saw and reasoned well. He imagined open creative classrooms while others were still entrenched in the mediocrity of the monitory system and the little one room country schoolhouse. Twain had great visions, and in spite of his fatalism and determinism still held a profound hope for the betterment of man through education.

In many aspects he can envision Twain as the forerunner of some modern educational theories such as the open classroom methods favored by pragmatists and existentialists. Twain saw the constraining effects of a conventional structured classroom on the child's development and maturation. The schools of the last century did not stress self-exploration, self-development or individualization. Twain was highly advanced for those times when he noticed that children progress at their own rates and that the classroom should be structured to cater to these needs. He disliked the rapid pace established in the schools and the teaching of materials when a child was unready for them. Teachers did not become involved with the pupils; they were fact dispensing machines without ever relating to the children.

In Twain's idea of informal education, there was room for self-exploration and individualization. He felt it was vitally important for children to be able to communicate with the teacher and establish a congenial atmosphere in the classroom. The teacher must become a guide and director of the self-exploratory process. That knowledge which children discover for themselves is the best quality possible. In the self-explorative process, the teacher hints at the facts and the children
search out the meanings and relevancies to suit their own specific capacities and needs.

One of the key words in education for Twain is relevancy. Twain showed the importance of relevancy in *Huck Finn* when Huck becomes disenchanted with his Bible lessons and he discovers that Moses, whom he wished to emulate, is dead. Huck, in his simple wisdom, rebels against learning about Moses when he cannot apply this teaching to everyday life. Once Moses is exposed, Huck wants nothing more to do with him.

This allegory can also be applied to education. Twain saw the same thing happening in the classroom. Children were being taught obscure facts and evasive events without knowing the reason for learning them. Such education was not relevant to the child's experiences or development. Effective education is a reciprocal interaction between learner and teacher. Unfortunately, the teacher does not always realize this when face-to-face with the pupils. Too often the teacher sees the classroom as one aggregate body of pupils rather than a room of individuals. And at times, the teacher, himself, does not have a rationale that justifies his teaching. For this reason, teachers must be well versed in subject matter, methods, theories and principles. They cannot be, as they were so often in Twain's days, frustrated people who would rather be doing something other than teaching. For Twain, training was all important and he lamented the inadequacy of the teachers entrusted with this noble but precarious task.

Education can surmise a variety of pedagogical implications from Twain's writings. He hinted at open classrooms in his writings in which teachers were to strive for more personalism and involvement with the
students. The schoolroom must not consist of the rigid desk on the platform and the rows of desks bolted to the floor arrangement. Rather a more free arrangement, such as a science corner, reading section, and art exhibit should be improvised. Students should be encouraged to gravitate to the sections that satisfy their interests. The teacher should not occupy a thronelike desk but should be mobile and fit in with the new arrangement. The students' desks forming a circle promotes more intimacy and communication. The teacher who undertakes this new style must be versatile and flexible. He becomes a participator rather than a dispenser of facts. The educational process changes to a more pleasant and natural environment. Children and teachers will be more open and trustful of each other. Twain always maintained that the educational experience should be a pleasant free exchange of ideas between teacher and students. This calls for a change in the present classroom structure. Change can be threatening if it is not voluntary and gradual. But if the change is for the better it will facilitate adaptation and adjustment. The atmosphere will become more harmonious and trusting.

There must be mutual trust between teacher and students. This trust can be instilled in the pupils through individualization. When the students grasp that the teacher is their friend and not just disciplinarian, they will respect the teacher and be willing to trust him. The teacher, to encourage this trust must respect students as individuals with individual interests, strengths and weaknesses. This can only be accomplished if the teacher values individual differences and perceives children for their uniqueness instead of seeing them as problems. The teacher must realize that students have other interests besides those
embraced by him. He must realize that these interests are both legitimate and worth his recognition. This means that the starting point for the educational process are the child's interests. Once the interests of the individual students are recognized, the teacher must give the children the freedom, and opportunity and support to explore them. There must be a firm foundation of trust to let the students make their own choices and take responsibility for their actions. Teachers must possess a genuine trust in the student's desire and capacity to learn through his own explorations if the knowledge gained is to lead to growth and fulfillment of the pupil.

If we are to train students for higher ideals as envisioned by Twain, then education must take on new meaning. Education must go beyond mere mechanical skills and emphasize upon socializing skills. Twain reminds us over and over again that there is nothing training cannot do. As educators we must heed that simple bit of wisdom and never lose faith in it. Our whole future world depends on the training students receive in the schools. If we wish to instigate change for a better world, this change must have its foundation in the schools. Twain saw that nineteenth century schools were direct descendents of previous mediocre ones.

Twain probably would have embraced the modern theory of pragmatism, for he, like William James, saw that man is the measure of all things. For Twain the reality of things is made meaningful through change. Educators must be flexible to adapt to change and must be prepared for new changes. The goals of education must not be static. They must constantly be adapting to the environment, society, and students.
Education becomes a means to higher and higher ideals, and it is also an end in itself—as it better man and society.

Twain believed that since reality is created by a person's interaction with his environment, the child must study the world as it affects him. The child cannot be considered apart from the environment in which he is existing, so the school cannot be separated from life itself. Conscious training should be linked whenever feasible to the immediate problems that the student faces and that he is concerned about solving.

Twain reasoned that change is possible as far as a person's natural temperament allows it to happen. Children are impressionable and plastic to a certain extent. Twain did not carry his progressive theory far enough. In one instance he says that man is capable of reaching "angelhood" and then contradictorily criticizes his own fatalistic view that man's success or failure is pre-ordained at birth. But in spite of his pessimism, Twain gives adequate evidence that he firmly believes that the child is flexible and changeable. His characters are plastic enough to dispute his own pessimistic theory. They are active participators in life, continually involved in reconstructing and interpreting their own experiences.

One of Twain's strongest beliefs is that children learn through associations with nature and society. It is through a child's associations that he is finally initiated into society, learns to live co-operatively, and adapts himself as best he can to social needs and aspirations. Even the vagabond Huck Finn acquiesced for some time to the "sivilizing" of St. Petersburg. Huck knew that in order to find his identity he had to be in some way connected with a society, no matter how much he was
repulsed by their decadent conventions. He could only grow in a society.

Twain held that values are relative. Therefore, educational values should not be stationary but change in response to social and cultural change. Teachers must be alert to these changes and construct learning situations which will lead pupils to a better understanding of their social and physical environment. The pupils and teachers should engage in activities which are useful in problem-solving situations. The subject matter should be so constructed that the materials become relevant and meaningful. This makes it easier for the pupils to learn the basic precepts of mathematics, English, geography, reading, and other core courses. Students will learn better the things in which they display an interest.

The teacher should stimulate the child's natural curiosity to explore the environment. The teacher should guide the students in becoming more interested in the basic tool skills of reading, writing, and arithmetic. He must present these skills in an interesting and exciting manner to arouse the children and make them see the value in learning them. However, this does not mean that the teacher should indulge the pupil's every whim and fancy; this would be irresponsible on the teacher's part and detrimental to the child. The open classroom requires that teachers have control of the learning environment so that all of its educative possibilities can be exploited. The children should be aroused to pursue their interests, but not at a loss to the other important subjects. Children's curiosity must be directed very skillfully in the right direction.
Twain, like Rousseau and Pestalozzi, firmly believed in the worth of the child. He helped to destroy the prevalent myth of child-damnation. He, like the others, saw a child as a respected entity of intrinsic worth. Children should not be regarded as miniature adults, for they are human beings in their own rights and worthy members of society. Twain advocated a thorough study of child psychology and behavior, as did Pestalozzi before him.

Twain was convinced that learning for the child was vitally related to the environment in which it took place. Such an environment had to be carefully considered and specially prepared by the educators. Children considered as individuals rather than abstract aggregate masses obviously learned at different rates of speed and had different needs and interests. The educator had to take all this into consideration to successfully carry out his mandate. Twain felt that this demanded an increased sensitivity and appreciation of child-nature by the teacher.

According to Twain, the schools of the nineteenth century were attuned to an American society that no longer existed. The shift was from an agrarian society to a highly complex industrial culture and the schools were simply ignoring the new emerging America. Twain progressively advocated the reform of the schools to cope with the realities of the present life. The pioneers and reformers of the common school seemed to be the only ones interested in the new society and were willing to change the structure to vastly enlarge the school population and curriculum.

Homogeneous, sleepy villages like Hannibal and St. Petersburg were being replaced by the diverse American city. Waves of immigrants and ethnic enclaves were isolated from the native American citizenry of
Twain's Middle Border. For many of the immigrants as well as the lower socio-economic classes, traditional schooling in the context of the Protestant ethic was simply inadequate. Twain and other progressive thinkers envisioned an educational system that would meet and solve these problems of democratic orientation and assimilation.

The changed attitudes towards the child, the learning process, and the curricula eventually led to the transformation of the school. Twain thought that the school should be a pleasant place wherein the physical, mental, and social growth of the child could flourish. School for him was to be a growing place, an adventure in learning, be it academic or vocational. Twain dreamed of the ideal classroom as one transformed from a dull, monotonous, and depressing place of forced confinement into a place of light and beauty. Such a natural school would be a healthy place conducive to the exploration of eager young minds. The classroom was to be an expedition. Twain did not see the need to fill childish heads with dry and lifeless facts when the child is surrounded by a pulsating nature. Education must keep nature as one of its most important perspectives or it would become lifeless and devoid of any interaction with the learner.

Twain sanctioned an education that would properly and adequately equip a youngster for his journey through life. This must consist of the basics, reading, writing and arithmetic, but it must also encompass problem solving and using the acquired knowledge as a lever to learn about nature and life. The schools must produce free thinking and feeling individuals, not the robots that schools were turning out at an alarming rate. Twain wanted the schools to expose students to the modes and processes of an industrial society. If the education is to be useful, it
must first be practical.

For Twain, one of a teacher's most important goals is to turn out individuals, not parrots. Therefore, the teacher must be trained or transformed from a mere fact machine to an experienced, educated guide. The teacher must become a professional in his field—not a frustrated doctor-schoolteacher like Dobbins in Tom Sawyer. Twain resented the procedure of selecting the village schoolteacher from the ranks of wastrels, spinsters, or theology students. For a viable education, the teacher must have a grasp of more than subject matter; he must be well-rounded in the fields of child psychology, learning theory, and behavioral problems. In short, Twain felt that the teacher must become an educator before he is entrusted with the learning process.

Twain has been dead for more than sixty years but his books are still being read in libraries and homes. While reading Tom Sawyer and Huckleberry Finn, we are for one brief moment transposed to a quieter and calmer time in our nation's history. We are privileged to eavesdrop in that simple era when freedom meant the territory, an island, or a trip down the river. We are reminded of our childhood even if we have never seen the river or the frontier. Twain builds in our imagination startling pictures of what it must have been like to grow up in a Hannibal, St. Petersburg, or a Dawson's Landing. When looking back, we seem to remember only the good things; our home town always basked in eternal sunshine; the people all laughing and smiling and the problems minor compared to present ones.

Reading Twain's boy-books, we can find the kernel of universal childhood. Since childhood is universal, Twain's books are not limited to
American soil; he is read and loved all over the world. He wrote in a universal tongue. He is not limited to a specific time and place. His humor and satire is as fresh today as it was when he first wrote it. Each new reading of his works points out a new bit of information or wisdom that may have been overlooked in a previous reading. His scope is unlimited and for this reason it can truly be said that Mark Twain is a Man for all Seasons.
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