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MORAL DEVELOPMENT IN THE ADVENTURES OF  
HUCKLEBERRY FINN & THE GREAT GATSBY

Moral Development, according to the Webster's dictionary means an improvement or

progressive procedure taken to be a more ethical person, and to distinctly differentiate between

right and wrong. The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn and The Great Gatsby, both pose as pieces

of literature that vividly portray moral development through the narrator's point of view. Mark

Twain, the author of The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn, wants the reader to see and focus on

the search for freedom. As on the other hand, Francis Scott Fitzgerald, author of Great Gatsby,

wants you to see the American Dream, which is a freedom as well, a socio-economic freedom.

These authors have chosen their narrators well, as we see a significant number of action that have

brought them to be ethically developed. Narration in a story is important, and is usually told by a

main character. These narrators face a world of confusion, a world of fear, a world of adventure,

and most of all, a world of opportunity. By these things I mean that Nick Caraway, and

Huckleberry Finn have a chance to mature as time progresses though the novel, and then make a

remarkable move to end up as a hero. The narrators of The Great Gatsby and The Adventures

of Huckleberry Finn develop morally as they relate the story that reflects each one's position in

society.

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The Great Gatsby, by Fitzgerald, is narrated by Nick Caraway. Nick is a sophisticated

observer of character, who starts out as an amoral person. His character is a very peculiar one,

because he is somewhat neutral though this whole story, especially without condemning others of

what they don't have. "Whenever you feel like criticizing anyone, just remember that all the

people in this world haven't had the advantages you've had". This advice was given to Nick by his

father, which stuck to him ever since. This quote reflects a little bit of Nick's personality. He

tends to hold judgements to himself, which opened up a lot of curious natures. He doesn't seem

to be involved with what is going on , but is still aware of everyone's actions. Another character

that has a major role in this story is Jay Gatsby. Gatsby is a person with a dream...the American

Dream, which is done by visualization of his boyhood ambitions like those of Benjamin Franklin.

Gatsby, in the story tries to test Nick's amoral position, by dragging him into an illegal business

deal. Nick falls for this deal, but he admits to the fact that Gatsby stood for everything that Nick

dislikes. Such as the big parties, the "living on the edge" sort of life style. "They're a rotten

crowd," "I shouted across the lawn". "You're worth the whole damn bunch put together..."I've

always been glad I said that. It was the only compliment I ever gave him, because I disapproved

of him from the beginning to the end'. This is a quote uttered by Nick, directed to Gatsby. This

confession has to do with examples of the social class. Nick is coming from a poor background and

made it rich through business and hard work. But in this time-period what ever class you were

born into, you stayed in there. Nick on the other hand comes from a wealthy

background and

knows all the details to the upperclass. This example is one of many that Nick dislikes for

everything that Gatsby stands for. As Nick's moral development starts to get mature, Nick finally

begins to accept Gatsby as a person who is trying to search for a dream- a noteworthy one. This

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time Gatsby is after Daisy. He thinks he can win her love with his wealth. "I'm going to call up

Daisy, and invite her over for tea". This is a conversation between Nick and Gatsby, Nick knows

that classes won't agree, but again tends to keep his judgements to himself. Eventually as time

pass, Nick and Gatsby become the best of friends, discussing everything from affairs of

relationships, to affairs of business. "I thanked him for his hospitality, we were always thanking

him for that...'goodbye, I enjoyed breakfast, Gatsby.' ". Fitzgerald sets up Nick, in a such a way

that he wants to influence the reader to open his story with an open mind. Because an important

aspect of The Great Gatsby, is that Nick is living in the present, and telling Gatsby's story after he

has already passed away, which leads me to say that this moment was hard for Nick...it was

loosing a best friend. "When a man gets killed I never liked to get mixed up in it in anyway. I

keep out. When I was a young man it was different - if a friend of mine died, no matter how, I

stuck with him to the end. You may think that is sentimental, but I mean it- to the bitter end."

The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn, hereafter referred to as Huck Finn for text and Huck

or Huck Finn as character, is narrated by Huck Finn. Huck is a fun-loving character who is

honest most of the time, but will lie when it is necessary to save himself. The underlying theme

of this novel is freedom. Moral development of the narrator is distinctly seen as

time progresses.

Through this moral development he is able to bring out the reality of freedom, which Jim

possessed as a dream. Huck accepts the society's view of slavery, at first, even though he traveled

with a run-away slave. The society's view of slavery is that all slaves are part animal, and should

be treated like one, therefore they are worthless; Huck accepts this at first, but then when he runs

away, he is caught up with Jim, a runaway-slave, and Huck's views begin to change. "...you

wouldn't tell on me ef I 'uz to tell you, would you Huck?", "Blamed if I would, Jim.", "Well, I

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b'lieve you, Huck. I - I run off .", "Jim!". This is a conversation between Jim and Huck, when

they first met in hiding, and Jim reveals that he has run away. One trick that was played on Jim,

from which Huck learned a huge lesson, was when he put snake skin on the foot of Jim's bed at

night, and its mate came and bit Jim on the foot, which led to a swollen leg for four days.

"I went to the cavern to get some food, and found a rattlesnake in there. I killed him, and curled him up on the foot of Jim's blanket, ever so natural, thinking there'd be some fun when Jim found him there. Well, by night I forgot about the snake, and when Jim flung himself down on the blanket while I struck a light, the snakes mate was there, and bit him."

From this, Huck recognizes that Jim is human, and he shouldn't be tricked. He acknowledges the

fact that there is conflict between human morality and spiritual morality. Huck's perception of

human morality is that if Jim is human, and human's must be free, then Jim deserves the right to be

free. Huck views the spiritual morality as something personal. He feels that if he doesn't allow

Jim to be free, then he is going against the human cycle to be free and therefore be sentenced to

hell. To some extent this morality has to deal with listening to Jim, and

considering him wise, by

knowing how to survive in the wilderness, and differentiate between good luck and bad luck.

"Jim told me to chop off the snake's head and throw it away, and then skin the body and roast a

piece of it. I done it, and he eat it and said it would help cure him...", "...and he said that

handling a snake skin was such awful bad luck. He said he druther see the new moon over his

left shoulder a thousand times than handling snake skin." Huck is talking to himself, just listening

and analyzing what Jim is saying. The fact that he has to go to hell, is something personal, and is

believed that if he doesn't allow Jim to go, then this action would take place, and vice versa with

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Jim, if he doesn't get satisfaction from following good luck, and decides to follow bad luck, he too

believes that hell is waiting for him. These two actions are internal conflicts occurring in Huck's

mind, this makes a big step towards moral development. The major thing that this story focuses

on, is the fact that Huck permits Jim to remain free, and doesn't turn Jim in as a run-away slave.

"Aunt Polly, she told all bout who I was, and what; and I has to up and tell how I was

in such a tight place that when Mrs. Phelps took me for Tom Sawyer - she chipped in

and said 'Oh go on and call me Aunt Sally, I used to it, now, and ain't no need to

change it' - that when Aunt Sally took me for Tom Sawyer, I had to stand it..."

"And his Aunt Polly she said Tom was right about old Miss Watson setting Jim free in

her will; and so, sure enough, Tom Sawyer had gone and took all that trouble and

bother to set a free nigger free! and I couldn't ever understand, before, until that

minute and that talk, how he could help a body set a nigger free, with his bringing-

up."

Both of these novels have a series of events that lead up to moral development. In this

case, it is the narrators who leads the progression, and is rewarded at the end.  
In The Great

Gatsby, Nick morally developed through the use of social class, and the socio-economic freedom

that was present at that time. It helped Nick by giving him something to fall back on, in the sense

that the freedom was his motif for everything, and even more when he met Gatsby, but at that

time it was the American Dream. Huck Finn portrays a significant development in moral actions.

He ultimately wanted freedom for himself from his father, and for Jim, a run-away slave.

Although, these novels are different in approaching moral development, their goals for freedom is

a similarity between these two works of literature.

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