

The novel *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, written by Samuel L. Clemens, whose pen name was Mark Twain, presents the evils of southern societies during the pre-Civil War period in America. Clemens, a well-respected author, "...began writing *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* in 1876 and, after several stops and starts, completed it in 1883" (19). This novel revolves around the theme of slavery versus freedom, and was published at a time when most southern landowners still "owned" slaves. *Huck Finn* is a novel that incorporates the struggles of a young boy, Huck Finn, with that of a cruel, careless world, on his travel down the Mississippi River in attempt at finding his own identity. In this essay, I will present textual evidence that proves that the Seven Deadly Sins are directly associated with the types of evil in the novel, making Huck's world one of violence, terror, and death. The Seven Deadly Sins will be discussed according to their significance throughout the novel, beginning with: 1.) Pride; 2.) Avarice and Sloth; 3.) Gluttony and Wrath; and 4.) Envy and Lust.

Clemens' main character, Huck Finn, experiences a great deal of violence throughout the novel as a direct result of the most significant Deadly Sin, Pride. Huck's father, Pap, is a drunkard who continuously exemplifies the sin of Pride. Pap finds extreme Pride in the "white man" with the legality of slavery. An example of his Pride is seen when an inebriated Pap verbally attacks free blacks in the States. He states, "It was 'lection day, and I was just about to go and vote myself, if I war'nt too drunk to get there; but when they told me there was a State in this country where they'd let a nigger vote, I drawed out. I says I'll never vote again" (44). This statement relates Pap to the Deadly Sin of Pride because he is constantly comparing his life to that of the lives of others. Pap's vanity and Pride in this novel lead Huck to abandon his physically abusive father

and start his life anew. The Grangerford episode is another relation to the sin of Pride. Huck experiences a fatal shootout between two feuding families: the Shepherdsons and the Grangerfords. Buck Grangerford, Huck's newfound friend on his adventure, is shot and killed because of his own father. Father Grangerford is so encircled with his own egotism and Pride, that he continues an age-old feud with their neighbors, the Shepherdsons. The disagreement between the families began almost thirty years before, and they no longer even knew for what it was that they were fighting. Buck states to Huck, "...but they don't know, now, what the row was about the first place" (104). This example proves that Father Grangerford is too proud to find peace with the Shepherdsons, and consequently, a shootout begins, resulting in his own family's deaths. Pride, the most Deadly Sin, accompanies more evils throughout the novel, leading Huck down a path in which he will view all Seven Deadly Sins.

In addition to Pride, the Deadly Sins of Avarice and Sloth are also apparent in transforming Huck's world into a nightmare of injustice and terror. Judith Loftus, a woman who lets Huck in her home as a female, shows a great deal of Avarice when a three-hundred dollar reward is offered for Jim, the runaway slave accompanying Huck down the Mississippi River to freedom. Judith discovers smoke on the island across the river from her house, and sends her husband out to see if the haze was from Jim. Judith's greed focuses only on the monetary reward for Jim, allowing herself to fall to the Deadly Sin of Avarice. The duke and the king also carry this sin with them. While in the towns of Pokeville and Brickville, the duke and the king perform "acts" of scandal and deceit in order to collect money for themselves. They perform "plays" in an attempt at bringing in hundreds of dollars, and in the end, they are successful. Huck then states, "Them

rapscallions took in four hundred and sixty-five dollars in that three nights” (131). The king and the duke introduce this greed to Huck, allowing him to remain in the middle of a dishonest environment. The money that the men are after is an unfair wealth, in that they will not work to achieve a living. The laziness that both the king and the duke possess is another important Deadly Sin, Sloth. Sloth is a sin consisting of laziness, and spiritual sluggishness. The duke, the king, and Pap all possess this sinful quality. None of these men work and they remain complacent with the way they live their lives. The sluggish nature of the duke, the king, and Pap is directly related to the society of Pokeville. The folks in the town sit around all day, occupying themselves with nothing. The only times that the people will rise is on account of some evils taking place. For example, “There couldn’t anything wake them up all over, and make them happy all over, like a dog-fight – unless it might be putting turpentine on a stray dog and setting fire to him, or tying a tin pan to his tail and see him run himself to death” (124). The evils that the town of Pokeville possesses directly relate to the sin of Sloth. These sins, Avarice and Sloth, are also associated with Gluttony and Wrath; two more sins that will help in displaying acts of violence and death to a young Huck.

Gluttony and Wrath are two deadly sins that are also evident in Clemens’ novel *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*. These two sins introduce Huck to violence and death. While “stealing” money from the residents at the Brickville revival, the duke and the king gorge on the food there. This form of “stock piling” food is also seen on the raft. In the town of Brickville, the king “...had fetched away a three-gallon jug of whisky....”(119). As the duke and the king traveled down the river with Jim and Huck, they were overdrinking to extremes. The notion that they must hoard the whisky is in

fact an act of Gluttony. Pap is comparable to these two scoundrels in relation to his drinking habits. Huck experiences Pap's wrath firsthand as a direct result of his binge drinking. Pap is verbally and physically abusive to Huck throughout Huck's stay with him. He constantly beats Huck with a cowhide and for no apparent reason. Huck states, "But by-and-by pap got too handy with his hick'ry, and I couldn't stand it. I was all over welts." (43). Pap also expresses verbal threats to Huck. He once had a dream about snakes all over him and went delirious on Huck, calling him "...Angel of Death and saying he would kill me..." (46). The Wrath that Huck experiences from his father is an immediate cause of his alcoholism and his lack to stay away from the sin of Gluttony. Another example in the novel of the sin Wrath is when Colonel Sherburn shoots Boggs all because of an insult. Boggs is an intoxicated man who rode into town on his horse and began to talk evils to Colonel Sherburn. Instead of blowing the insults off, and letting Boggs go away and sober up, Colonel Sherburn shoots him dead. Sherburn's uncontrolled Wrath against Boggs led him to this evil action. Although there are only few examples of Envy and Lust in the novel, they accompany the Deadly Sins of Gluttony and Wrath.

Clemens writes of only few evils pertaining to the deadly sin of envy and lust. Huck views the sin of envy when the duke and the king perform one of their "acts." Both men pretend to be people that they are not, in order to receive an inheritance from a dead man. They are so full of Envy for the brothers of the deceased man, Mr. Wilkes, that they will do anything to deceive the townspeople in order for them to believe that they are Wilkes' brothers. The duke and the king resent the good that the Wilkes' family will receive as compensation to his death. This example serves as a definition to the sin of

Envy as carried out by the duke and the king. Although Clemens wrote scarcely on the Deadly Sin of Lust, one example in the novel can be compared to this sin. After taking part in the revival at Brickville, the king is praised by many of the women for his “unselfish” ways. The king is successful at making the townspeople believe that he has spiritually changed his life and would now like to assist the other pirate crews of the ocean in changing their lives. The women in the town are emotional towards the king after his speech at the revival, and want to become active in the king’s supposed search to help the pirates on the sea. They offered him kisses of joy, “...and every little while the prettiest kind of girls... would up and ask him would he let them kiss him...and some of them he hugged and kissed as many as five or six times....”(119). The previous example shows the king’s ultimate drive for pleasure with the women, establishing the sin of Lust. Huck thereafter is introduced to the last Deadly Sin.

In conclusion, the Seven Deadly Sins of Pride, Avarice, Sloth, Gluttony, Wrath, Envy, and Lust are significant in the novel with making Huck’s world full of violence and death. The deadly sins committed throughout the work produce an undesirable life for society, and much less for a child of Huck’s age. The wondrous adventure that Huck assumes he will take on at the beginning of the novel, becomes no match to the evils that the young boy will view on his journey. The Seven Deadly Sins are all directly linked to the evils that Huck experiences. Huck’s eventful, yet horrific adventure becomes the base for which he is forced into manhood. *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* takes the audience from “...the endless summer of childhood pleasures....”, found in Clemens’ *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer* to the “...violence, terror, and death that lurk at the edges of the village”(19).

