

**University of Pardubice  
Faculty of Arts and Philosophy**

**Orphans in American Fiction**

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**Bachelor paper**

**2010**

Univerzita Pardubice  
Fakulta filozofická  
Katedra anglistiky a amerikanistiky  
Akademický rok: 2008/2009

## ZADÁNÍ BAKALÁŘSKÉ PRÁCE

(PROJEKTU, UMĚLECKÉHO DÍLA, UMĚLECKÉHO VÝKONU)

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Studijní program: B7310 Filologie  
Studijní obor: Anglický jazyk pro hospodářskou praxi  
  
Název tématu: Sirotky v americkém románu

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Rozsah grafických prací:

Rozsah pracovní zprávy:

Forma zpracování bakalářské práce: **tištěná/elektronická**

Seznam odborné literatury:

**Irving, John. The Cider House Rules. New York: Ballantine Books, 1997.**  
**Twain, Mark. The adventures of Huckleberry Finn. London: Penguin books, 1985.** Cooley, Thomas and Mark Twain. Adventures of Huckleberry Finn - Norton critical edition. New York: Norton, 1999. Bubíková, Šárka et al. Literary Childhoods. Červený Kostelec: Pavel Mervart, 2008.

Vedoucí bakalářské práce:

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Datum zadání bakalářské práce: **30. dubna 2009**

Termín odevzdání bakalářské práce: **31. března 2010**



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V Pardubicích dne 29. 3. 2010

**Marcela Vašíčková**

**Acknowledgement:**

I would like to express my gratefulness to my supervisor Mgr. Šárka Bubíková, Ph. D. for her help with my bachelor paper and to Mgr. Ladislav Vít for his valuable advice.

## **Abstract**

This paper focuses on the issue of orphans in the nineteenth and the twentieth century. The thesis analyzes the novels *The Cider House Rules* and *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, where different concepts of orphanage are introduced. Presented in this analysis are also the topics relating to the status of the orphans, their childhood, their position in society and relationships, their characteristic features influenced by their lives and the question of loneliness and inferiority. The paper also briefly describes theoretical background of the views of childhood and orphans in the nineteenth and the twentieth century and compares both novels from the point of view of their attitude to the issues presented.

## **Key words:**

childhood; orphans; orphanages; loneliness; *The Cider House Rules*; *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*

## **Název**

Sirotci v americkém románu

## **Abstrakt**

Tato práce se zabývá analýzou sirotků v devatenáctém a dvacátém století. Zaměřuje se na romány *Pravidla moštárny* a *Dobrodružství Huckleberryho Finna*, ve kterých ukazuje jejich odlišné zobrazení sirotků. Hlavní analytická část představuje témata týkající se sirotků, a to jejich dětství, postavení ve společnosti a vztahy, povahové rysy ovlivněny jejich životem a otázku osamění a podřazenosti. Práce také stručně popisuje teoretické pojetí dětství a sirotků v devatenáctém a dvacátém století a porovnává romány z pohledu jejich přístupu ke zmíněným tématům.

## **Klíčová slova:**

dětství; sirotci; sirotčince; osamělost; *Pravidla moštárny*; *Dobrodružství Huckleberryho Finna*

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# 1. Introduction

A multitude of books and articles depicting the concept of childhood in different centuries have been published. The interest in the development of children, through diverse times, caused the fact that there are many publications which deal with this subject matter. This paper is concerned mainly with orphans, children who are without their families for many reasons, and have to live in orphanages in the better cases, or on the streets in the worse ones. This thesis focuses on the situation of orphans in the nineteenth and the twentieth century. Many differences in caring for abandoned children are visible in these two centuries because the attitude to orphans has changed throughout the history. It is apparent in both the novels *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* (example from the nineteenth century) and in *The Cider House Rules* (example from the twentieth century). Therefore, these two novels were chosen in order to introduce not only the perception of orphans in the nineteenth and the twentieth century, but also to illustrate the differences between an orphan living an independent life and an orphan obeying rules in an orphanage. Consequently, the aim of this paper is to provide the comparison of analysed orphans, the ways in which they differ from the common society and how they live and think to understand their problematic issues. The comparison of both novels reflects the diversity of society and its approach to abandoned children.

Theoretical background is an essential point to gain an awareness of the vision of childhood and orphanhood in the recent history. Therefore, the first chapter generally and briefly describes the changes in the concept of childhood and orphans in the nineteenth and the twentieth century, and furthermore, the orphanages and foster care in America during these centuries. Mentioned are the procedures of adoption that were possible at those times and the institutions that were caring for children and orphans not only in America, but also in England and the Czech Republic.

The analysis is the next important chapter in the paper which is subdivided into smaller parts. At first, two main characters of the novels, Homer Wells and Huckleberry Finn, are introduced, their childhoods and relationships from their infancy to adulthood. After that, another section deals with their characteristics influenced by their status of orphans. The following chapter is concerned with loneliness, the inferiority of orphans



and their solitude fears. The next describes in details the relationships of orphans, the attitude of society towards them and the socialization process of the two main protagonists, which is another recurring theme in the novels. The last part in the analysis focuses on the aspect of love that appears in both stories. Presented in the analysis are some critiques and opinions about *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* that describe the understanding of the novel differently. The book *The Cider House Rules* is in this way more or less neglected because the critiques of the novel relating to these analysed topics are really rare and disproportional, on the other hand, there are many critiques of the film which are not appropriate in this case.

The following chapter deals with the comparison of both novels. It describes, and briefly explains, the difference between portrayals of orphans in the books. Afterwards, this part shortly illustrates how the novels differ in depicting orphans.

The final chapter in the paper represents the findings and results of the thesis and outlines the outcomes of the analysed topics. The conclusion summarizes and highlights the most important points that appeared in the analysis and were crucial for depicting orphans.

## **2. Concept of American childhood and orphans in the nineteenth and the twentieth centuries**

The topic of childhood is very often analysed by the contemporary public. Therefore, this paper focuses on American childhood and mainly orphans. Childhood is very often influenced by surroundings and society. As Steven Mintz notes, “childhood is not an unchanging biological stage of life but is, rather, a social and cultural construct that has changed radically over time.” (2004, viii) Šárka Bubíková argues that “while some elements of childhood communicate cross-time and cross-culture, there are great differences at the same time. (2008, 12) Bubíková adds that “apart from what is biologically given, individual experience of childhood has, throughout history, differed to a large extent.” (2008, 12) “Both the definition and experience of childhood have varied according to changing cultural, demographic, economic, and historical circumstances,” as Mintz observes. (2004, viii) His theory confirms that children’s character is formed by culture, customs and community like the figures of Huckleberry Finn and Homer Wells which personality is influenced by society surrounding them. This is acknowledged by N. Ray Hiner and Joseph M. Hawes who suggest that children “are part of a larger system that places demands on them and structures their behaviour in very precise ways. Historians of childhood must be sensitive to this reality.” (1985, xxii) “The essential history of childhood is thus [...] the story of the ways in which the young have been hurried out of it and shoved and socialized into adult roles and responsibilities.” (Rodgers, 1985, 119) Confirming this fact, Mintz claims: “by the mid-nineteenth century, shifts in cultural and religious values and a highly uneven process of economic development made social class, gender, and race more salient sources of childhood diversity.” (2004, ix) However, in the twentieth century “every aspect of childhood was transformed.” (Mintz, 2004, 214) According to Mintz, “in a rapidly changing society [...] many middle-class adolescents clashed with parents over curfews, dating, dress, and appropriate forms of entertainment and leisure activities.” (2004, 221) It led to the new phase called postmodern childhood which “refers to the breakdown of dominant norms about the family, gender roles, age, and even reproduction as they were subjected to radical change and revision.” (Mintz, 2004, 4) Consequently, postmodern children are regarded as individuals who participate in creating of their surroundings.

(Mintz, 2004, 4) All these mentioned facts prove the idea that growing up of children is influenced differently by society, according to the time, in which children live. In other words, the demands on children change depending on the requirements of the culture.

Orphans are formed by their surrounding, too. Nevertheless, orphans are considered to be different from society. Melanie A. Kimball describes characters of orphans, their roles in fiction and explains this fact:

Orphan characters in folktales and literature symbolize our isolation from one another and from society. They do not belong to even the most basic of groups, the family unit, and in some cultures this is enough to cut them off from society at large. In other cultures, orphans are regarded as special people who must be protected and cared for at all costs. In either case, orphans are clearly marked as being different from the rest of society. They are the eternal Other. (1999)

Concerning the fiction, one of the first orphans depicted in American literature was Huckleberry Finn. “Since Mark Twain’s novel was published in 1884, Huck Finn has served as a remarkably malleable emblem of childhood. He has been celebrated as a symbol of youthful resourcefulness and spirited rambunctiousness and decried as a rowdy and reckless risktaker.” (Mintz, 2004, 5) Huck is a typical representative of Mark Twain’s novels, a rascal who experiences adventures. Homer Wells, the main character of *The Cider House Rules*, is, on the contrary, a boy living in an orphanage, describing the life of an orphan with rules. Although there were many orders to keep in orphanages, the children received refuge and were not as lonely as living on the streets.

“The idea that children are in fact fragile [...] lead many British and American nineteenth century thinkers to stress the importance of institutions for children and many were, in fact, put in operation.” (Bubíková, 2008, 18) One of these institutions was the mentioned orphanage, an asylum for abandoned children. According to Steven Mintz, the first orphanages were established in the early eighteenth century. However, not until the nineteenth century did literature start to describe orphans and their asylums. (2004, 157) The examples are Huckleberry Finn or Tom Sawyer, famous orphans in American literature in the nineteenth century. But Mintz notes that “orphanhood was also a fact of life. As late as 1900, 20 to 30 percent of all children lost a parent by age fifteen” and that is an alarming number. (2004, 157) Yet, at that time, “most inmates lived in large institutions of 500 to 2,000, where children wore uniforms,

were forced to walk in single file, were identified by numbers, and slept in barracklike dormitories with little privacy.” (Mintz 2004, 158) Even though that “many orphan asylums were bleak institutions where corporal punishment was the rule, hugs and affection were rare, and bullies terrorized younger children, [...], still, compared with the slums where many children had previously lived, the orphanages were safe and healthy.” (Mintz, 2004, 158) According to Hiner and Hawes, “the most common fate of the abandoned, neglected, orphaned, and dependent children who appeared in distressingly large numbers in the nineteenth century was to be placed in orphanages or juvenile homes.” (1985, 84) However, on the contrary to Mintz, they describe orphanages from the point of view of health differently: “these institutions were usually dismal places, often dangerous to the health and well-being of the children who lived there.” (Hiner and Hawes, 1985, 84) The situation of orphans in the twentieth century changed, improved, and Joseph Illick mentions that the orphanages in the twentieth century were in decline because the mortality of parents was lower. (2002, 151)

The opportunity to adopt a child from an orphanage became possible in the half of the nineteenth century. “Adoption—the notion that adults should be able to become the legal parents of a child who is not their own biological offspring—was another product of the mid-nineteenth century’s commitment to new ideas about childhood.” (Mintz, 2004, 163) And then, before the Civil War, the orphan trains were founded. It was a kind of train where the children were carried to their foster homes, mainly to the western farms. (Mintz, 2004, 164-165) As Mintz suggests, the orphan train was “a precursor to foster care.” (2004, 164) In the nineteenth century “children were increasingly placed in a foster home, which was considered a substitute family ... or put up for adoption by a new family.” (Illick, 2002, 89) Hiner and Hawes add that “foster care developed in the mid-nineteenth century as an alternative to this institutionalization.” (1985, 84) The term institutionalization represents orphanages and juvenile homes. Priscilla Ferguson Clement describes in details the situation of foster care in the nineteenth and the twentieth century: “although in these years fewer children were placed out in families than were institutionalized, foster care increased in popularity, and by the mid-twentieth century had become the most prevalent method of assisting poor dependent children outside their own homes.” (1985, 136) In the twentieth century “adoption also posed a class issue. Middle-class couples,

preponderantly white, wanted to adopt. But the children available were frequently lower-class and black. In the 1960s, white parents adopted about 20,000 black children.” (Illick, 2002, 151) Because of this fact, soon afterwards it was declared that only black families could adopt black children. (Illick, 2002, 151) Peter Uhlenberg describes the subject of adoption and orphanages in the nineteenth and the twentieth century:

The dependency of children upon adults for care and socialization necessitates fully developed social arrangements to deal with orphans in societies with high rates of mortality. Adoption within an extended kinship system and placement of children in orphanages were two mechanisms used to deal with the social problem of orphans in nineteenth-century America. But during the twentieth century orphanhood changed from a common occurrence to a rare event. Consequently, social institutions designed to deal with this problem have virtually disappeared. (1985, 246)

Uhlenberg confirms Illick’s words that in the twentieth century orphanages were in decline. As suggested above, one of the reasons for this fact was the decrease in the mortality of parents.

Similar to the American history of orphanages, the Czech Republic established institutions caring for children, too. According to Lenderová and Rýdl, in the Czech Republic there were about 21 orphanages in the nineteenth century, about 83 orphanages in the twentieth century. The orphans were safe, they got food and clothes, were educated, and the parental love was the ‘only thing’ they missed. Orphans, who did not live in the orphanages, usually lived in foster families, which, unfortunately, were often very poor. (287-288, 2006)

The situation in England was comparable to America. In England there was a strong group offering a protection against cruelty to children and orphans called The London Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children. However, this topic was much more analysed in English literature, examples are Charles Dickens and his *Oliver Twist*, Charlotte Bronte and her novel *Jane Eyre*, and many others. In spite of these facts, America had its own institutions preventing cruelty to children called, for instance, Children’s Aid Society, Home Missionary Society or Aid to Dependent Children, as was mentioned in many publications. These societies cared for the well-being of orphans and other children and assured the process of adoptions and foster care.

### **3. Homer Wells and Huckleberry Finn**

Homer Wells and Huckleberry Finn are the main characters in the analysed books *The Cider House Rules* (1986) and *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* (1957). Both novels deal with orphans and their lives but from a different point of view. The first novel takes place in the twentieth century, the second one in the nineteenth century, therefore, it is apparent that their depiction of orphans will differ, just as the setting and time of novels. Irving's book is concerned with the socialization of Homer and with his relationships to people around him. Consequently, the author is interested in the figure of Homer and his environment. On the other hand, Twain's story is above all an adventure and a quest story, highlights the fact that Huck is a rascal rather than focusing on him as an orphan. In spite of that, these novels tell about the lives of abandoned children, which is the main topic of this paper.

The novel *The Cider House Rules* is narrated by the third, unbiased person. In *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* the narrator is Huck himself. As a result, Huck's narrating is more personal and the whole story focuses solely on him. In *The Cider House Rules* some chapters are interested in other important protagonists in the book, not only in Homer. Furthermore, Homer is described more objectively, in an impersonal way and the book provides some factual information about orphans in terms of their life.

#### **3.1. Childhood, first relationships and families**

Family should grant a good background and safety for children. However, as already mentioned above, the main heroes are orphans. They do not have a real family and both of them have to live in a different world than children having their homes. These two boys are also very dissimilar in their ways and customs which are essentially caused by their childhood. The modern era generally believes that childhood should be a time of joy and happiness, nevertheless, in these novels that is not the case as both of the characters lived through hard times while they were growing up.

Homer grew up in an orphanage in a small town called St. Cloud's in Maine from his birth. "St. Cloud's was not a place that mellowed you." (Irving, 1986, 227) However, the orphanage in which Homer grew up was a good one. "Here in St. Cloud's

[...] we treat orphans as if they came from royal families.” (Irving, 1986, 98) But anyway, it was not a real home for all the children and Homer never experienced pure parental love even though he lived in several foster families, every time he was returned to the orphanage which thus became his true home. Homer changed gradually three foster families. The first one gave him back to the orphanage because Homer never cried and they considered it as something bad and abnormal. The first foster parents claimed that they lived in the same silence as before they had adopted the child, and were scared that there was something wrong with him. The second family shared the same ‘problem’. Therefore, Homer was beaten in order to start crying, which eventually happened. Homer was crying so loudly and so often that it in fact rescued him from the abuse of the second foster family because the people in the town noticed it and spoke only about the crying child. He spent the longest time in the third family, but finally he returned to St. Cloud’s because the family did not trust him and Homer did not feel happy there. Homer felt that the Drapers were a very odd family and very different from what they pretended to look like. (Irving, 1986, 20-38) It is obvious that Homer could not experience a happy childhood and good background was not provided to him. Thus, the nearest connection to parental love Homer could receive was the relationship with the head of the orphanage, Dr. Larch. Dr. Larch cared about Homer and paid him more attention than to the rest of the children in the orphanage because of Homer’s unhappy past. When Homer returned from the third foster family, Dr. Larch wrote into his journal, which he regularly led:

Here in St. Cloud’s we have only one problem. His name is Homer Wells. We have been very successful with Homer. We have managed to make the orphanage his home, and that is the problem. If you try to give an institution of the state, or of any government, anything like the love one is meant to invest in a family—and if the institution is an orphanage and you *succeed* in giving it love—then you will create a monster: an orphanage that is not a way-station to a better life, but an orphanage that is the first and last stop, and the only station the orphan will accept. (Irving, 1986, 39)

And then he adds that “there is no excuse for cruelty, but—at an orphanage—perhaps we are obliged to withhold love; if you fail to withhold love at an orphanage, you will create an orphanage that no orphan will willingly leave. [...] I have made an orphan; his name is Homer Wells and he will belong to St. Cloud’s forever.” (Irving, 1986, 39-40) However, a fourth foster family, who was interested in Homer, appeared and Dr. Larch

believed that it would be the best option for Homer to be adopted because the members of the family were full of happiness, which Homer needed. Unfortunately, the Winkles died when they were camping with Homer and Dr. Larch did not look for another family any more. “That was when Wilbur Larch gave up on finding Homer Wells a home. That was when Dr. Larch said that Homer could stay at St. Cloud’s for as long as Homer felt he belonged there.” (Irving, 1986, 55) Alison Booth mentions that St. Cloud’s “cares for abandoned women and children so much better than the world outside that some of the orphans, Homer Wells above all, never leave.” (2002, 297) Dr. Larch explains in his remarks that the orphans should be adopted before their adolescence because subsequently the orphans can never really grow up. But as Dr. Larch continues Homer is different and that is not his case. (Irving, 1986, 128-129)

For these reasons, Homer stayed in the orphanage and became Larch’s right hand. He was told: “well, then, Homer, [...] I expect you to be of use.” (Irving, 1986, 20) This sentence accompanies Homer all his life and he always wants to be of use, useful. Thus, Homer was trained in doctor-ship by Dr. Larch and, as Homer became older, he started to assist Dr. Larch with care for women patients and with childbirths. The doctor tried to compensate him for his childhood suffering, make him self-confident and provide him some education.

Afterwards, Homer got the opportunity to leave St. Cloud’s. It was connected with the arrival of a young couple Wally and Candy to Maine. They met Homer in the orphanage, where Candy had an abortion done, and they offered him to start working in an apple orchard called Ocean View Orchard. Homer accepted their offer and left Dr. Larch who thought: “Homer has met his benefactor!” (Irving, 1986, 254) The doctor realized that he cannot be selfish and “he must encourage Homer to make friends with this young couple.” (Irving, 1986, 255) The orphan wanted to get to know the world which Larch could not blame him for as he understood that Homer deserves much more and needs to get mature. He knew Homer would be away for a long time and even though Dr. Larch suffered bitterly, he let him go. It started a new chapter in Homer’s life when he experienced maternal love and family life for the first time. He felt very happy at Ocean View:

He tried not to think about St. Cloud’s; the longer he stayed away, the more extreme life there appeared to him—yet when he thought of it, he missed it,



too. And Nurse Angela and Nurse Edna and Mrs. Grogan and Dr. Larch, he missed them all. He was angry at himself for that, too; there were absolutely no signals from his heart to tell him that the life at St. Cloud's was the life he wanted. (Irving, 1986, 421)

Although Homer loved life at Ocean View, he could not forget St. Cloud's. However, he did not want to return there and he stayed where he was for a very long time. But when he was forty, he eventually realized that St. Cloud's is the only place where he belongs to forever. "Suddenly, it was clear to him—where he was going. He was only what he always was: an orphan who'd never been adopted. He had managed to steal some time away from the orphanage, but St. Cloud's had the only legitimate claim to him. In his forties, a man should know where he belongs." (Irving, 1986, 626) Therefore, Homer became the head of the orphanage and took Dr. Larch's position because he had died. Homer knew that he owed it to Dr. Larch and it was his mission to lead the orphanage and be useful.

Twain's protagonist, Huck, grew up in St. Petersburg, a mysterious town near the Mississippi river, with his father who was always drunk and physically abused him. Huck can be considered as a half-orphan but with regard to the behaviour of his parent, he did not get paternal love and care, consequently, he did not have a home and did not enjoy a real family or at least a true father. He got used to being an orphan because he had to take care of himself and learn to be independent as his father very often vanished. Because of that, Huck did not like him, he tried to avoid him and keep in a distance from him: "Pap he hadn't been seen for more than a year, and that was comfortable for me; I didn't want to see him no more. He used to always whale me when he was sober and could get his hands on me; thought I used to take to the woods most of the time when he was around." (Twain, 1957, 21) Therefore, when his father disappeared for a long time, Huck enjoyed his freedom. He found money with his friend Tom Sawyer and was given help by the Widow Douglas. She treated Huck as her son, she cared for him and protected him, but he ran away at the first possible moment because Huck could not bear her decent ways. He was accustomed to a wild lonely life so much that he was not able to change his customs and he did not want to change anything in his life style because "an orphan is a child, forever; an orphan detests change; an orphan hates to move." (Irving, 1968, 563) This passage from *The Cider House Rules* proves that Huck suffered at the widow where he had to adhere to the rules, but finally he returned to her

again because of his friend Tom, who had persuaded him. The following Huck's description of the widow's manners illustrates his torment:

She put me in them new clothes again, and I couldn't do nothing but sweat and sweat, and feel all cramped up. Well, then, the old thing commenced again. The widow rung a bell for supper, and you had to come to time. When you got to the table you couldn't go right to eating, but you had to wait for the widow to tuck down her head and grumble a little over the victuals, though there warn't really anything the matter with them—that is, nothing only everything was cooked itself. [...] 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. [...] Pretty soon I wanted to smoke, and asked the widow to let me. But she wouldn't. She said it was a mean practice and wasn't clean, and I must try to not do it any more. (Twain, 1959, 11)

Life at the Widow Douglas was troublesome for Huck, but much better than when Miss Watson, the widow's sister, started to live with them. It meant for Huck more lectures and harangues:

Her sister, Miss Watson, a tolerable slim old maid, with goggles on, had just come to live with her, and took a set at me now with a spelling book. [...] Miss Watson would say, "Don't put your feet up there, Huckleberry"; and "Don't scrunch up like that, Huckleberry—set up straight"; and pretty soon she would say, "Don't gap and stretch like that, Huckleberry—why don't you try to behave?" (Twain, 1959, 12)

Thus, it was very hard for Huck to endure this scolding and he wished he could whip off. Nevertheless, as Nancy A. Walker mentions there are the differences between Miss Watson and the Widow Douglas because "the widow is a far more gentle reformer than her unmarried sister and often intercedes between Huck and Miss Watson to mitigate the latter's severity." (1995, 495) Huck appreciated the widow much more than her sister and Walker adds that "the widow's method of reforming is to request or explain rather than to scold or nag. Whereas Miss Watson's 'pecking' makes Huck feel 'tiresome and lonesome', he responds favourably to the widow's kind heart." (1995, 495) Consequently, Huck intended to run away even if he was sorry for the widow, he could not bear her sister's demands any more.

Finally, Huck had to disappear because his father returned and wanted to have Huck and his money as well. Huck guessed this time would arise: "I judged the old man would turn up again by and by, thought I wished he wouldn't." (Twain, 1957, 21) This

wish illustrates the idea that Huck felt happier as an orphan, rejected his father and even though he prepared himself for the worst, he was not ready to see his dad who appeared in his room one night. His father tried to persuade him to live together by intimidation, but Huck did not want to. Therefore, his father locked him in a small hut in the forest which could not be found by anybody. It demonstrates the fact that his father did not love him, but he only wanted to own him above all. At first, it was quite good for Huck — he could use bad language, enjoy lazy days and wear dirty clothes, honestly, he did not wish to return to the Widow Douglas, he enjoyed this kind of liberty. However, gradually, his father beat him more and more and he was not able to stand it. As a result, Huck ran away leaving signs as if he was dead. His escape from St. Petersburg meant freedom and happiness for him even though it was the total end of his childhood because he had to face up to many important decisions and dangers. On his runaway he met Miss Watson's slave, Jim, who was escaping as well. Thus, they started to go around together, experienced lots of adventures and Huck showed many of his figures of merit, which are analysed in the chapter Characteristics of Homer and Huck.

During his adventures, Huck lived at some families as well. His first family, the Grangerfords, with whom he stayed on his runaway, were very nice and kind, he liked them very much, they cared about him and he felt well there. In Huck's words, "it was mighty nice family, and a mighty nice house, too." (Twain, 1957, 103) The next family where he stayed was the Wilks, but the most important for him was the Phelps. At the Phelps he got to know what true maternal love is and it changed his approach to life.

### **3.2. Characteristics of Homer and Huck**

Concerning the nature of both orphans, they differ from each other, but both of them are good-hearted and have some common features of orphans that are described in *The Cider House Rules*: "an orphan learns to keep things to himself; an orphan holds things in. What comes out of orphans comes out of them slowly." (Irving, 1986, 686) Furthermore, "an orphan learns how to hold back, how to keep things in." (Irving, 1986, 694) "Orphans have a gullible nature; orphanage life is plain; by comparison, every lie is sophisticated." (Irving, 1986, 357) However, the last statement does not refer to the figure of Huck who is able to recognize liars because he knows how they behave thanks

to his father who showed that behaviour many times. On the other hand, Homer is much more naive which causes him many troubles during his stay at the apple orchard when he is too trustful to black pickers.

Anyway, Irving's portrays his protagonist, Homer, as a nice, friendly and clever young man who tries to help everybody. "Homer Wells had a good, open face; it was not a face that could hide things—every feeling and thought was visible upon it, the way a lake in the open reflects every weather. He had a good hand for holding and eyes you could confess to." (Irving, 1986, 113) Homer was a strong young boy who chose to be an orphan independently, which is another feature that both characters share. It is obvious from the dialogue with an unknown woman that Homer feels well in the position of an orphan:

"Do you mean, if someone wanted to adopt you, you wouldn't go?"  
"I wouldn't go," said Homer Wells. "Right."  
"You wouldn't even consider it?" the woman asked. [...]  
"Well, I guess I'd think about it," Homer Wells said.  
"But I'd probably decide to stay, as long as I can help out around here—you know, be of use." (Irving, 1986, 109)

That is to say that Homer would rather stay somewhere he knows his position and where he can be useful than would start a new life with an unknown family. The reason could be his disappointments or the fact that Homer matured very quickly from a child to a young man and now feels too old to be adopted. "Homer was growing up; he was starting the process of holding himself responsible for things. [...] He was beginning the process of learning how to be a doctor at a time when most boys his age were learning how to drive a car." (Irving, 1986, 146-147) And that scared Dr. Larch: "I worry that I have caused Homer Wells to skip his childhood—I worry that he has absolutely skipped being a child!" (Irving, 1986, 147) But Homer felt that as the oldest orphan in the orphanage he had to skip his childhood to care for the other orphans, as he mentioned above – 'be of use'.

From another point of view, Homer is calmer and quieter than Huck and he likes a certain kind of order. "Homer Wells—an orphan attached to routine—liked for every evening to have a plan." (Irving, 1986, 374) "Other people may look for a break from routine, but an orphan craves daily life." (Irving, 1968, 521) The fact that an orphan needs routine is understandable because an orphan in an orphanage has nothing

more than that. However, this does not match with Huck's life style because he does not live in an orphanage, but he lives on his own. Consequently, he hates routine and rules.

The most important figure in Homer's life is probably Dr. Larch. Homer loves him as if he was his father and the only problem that occurs between them is the question of abortions, which is very often analysed in the novel. Of course, at that time abortions were abused, but Dr. Larch held an opinion that it was a kind of help to women which he provided. Yet Homer did not agree with him and that became a big issue between them. Larch believed that one day Homer would change his mind, but Homer was very decisive and he told Dr. Larch:

"I have to tell you that I *won't* perform an abortion, not ever." [...]

"You disapprove?" Dr. Larch asked Homer.

"I don't disapprove of you," Homer Well said. "I disapprove of *it*—it's not for me."

"Well, I've never forced you," Dr. Larch said. "And I never will. It's all your choice."

"Right," said Homer Wells. (Irving, 1986, 220)

Homer has a different view of life than Dr. Larch because he wishes to have an ideal marriage and family. Dr. Larch would say that Homer is too arrogant to see the real world without illusions about family and abortions, of course. However, a permanent couple is "an orphan's ideal." (Irving, 1986, 523) Homer does not acknowledge cheating and he connects the mentioned abortions with it. Dr. Larch felt disappointed with Homer's decision, but as mentioned above, he believed that it would change when Homer would realize that even an abortion is the case in which to be useful. These circumstances made them start to feel like strangers. However, when Dr. Larch died, Homer changed his mind. When he learnt that the daughter of one black picker was pregnant, he decided to carry out her an abortion for the reason that he got to know that her father Mr Rose, a leader of the pickers, sexually abused her and in this situation he knew that to take her child is the best thing he could do. As it is written in the book, it changed Homer's attitude to abortions very much because he realized that an abortion sometimes means help as Dr. Larch explained to him. "Because he knew now that he couldn't play God in the worst sense; if he could operate on Rose Rose, how could he refuse to help a stranger? How could he refuse anyone? Only a god makes that kind of decision. I'll just give them what they want, he thought. An orphan or an abortion."

(Irving, 1986, 696) This implies that “Homer is the innocent self-help protagonist whose ideal is always mutual welfare.” (Booth, 304) Thus, he was willing to perform abortions and return to St. Cloud’s, where he would be more useful.

From many passages, it is apparent that Homer is righteous and hard working man. His honesty is visible mainly in the situation when Homer and Candy love each other and do not know what to do. Homer decided: “we have to do the right thing. [...] Wally would want to do the right thing, and Dr. Larch was doing what he thought was the right thing, too. If you could be patient enough to wait and see, the right thing must present itself—mustn’t it? What else does an orphan do, anyway, but wait and see?” (Irving, 1986, 442-443) Homer was taught to do the right things and be patient because an orphan has to be patient, all his lifelong, to gain what he wishes.

Everybody in the apple orchard knows how handy and sedulous Homer is, and Wally’s family respects him for that very much. Homer was happy with his choice to work at the apple orchard, but he felt sorry for Dr. Larch. Homer seems to be very sensitive, as a result, he could not stop thinking of Larch and how he had left him. Homer “realized that although he loved where he was, he loved Dr. Larch more than anyone else [...] and he realized that he missed Larch, too—while at the same time he hoped he would never again set foot in St. Cloud’s.” (Irving, 1986, 324) Homer did not want to return to the orphanage, the place where he was not free, but he knew it would be the right thing to do it because of Dr. Larch’s love to him. Therefore, Homer felt very confused and depressed. He could not decide whether to stay or return: “and if I go back to St. Cloud’s, he asked himself, what can I do?” (Irving, 1986, 339) Dr. Larch explains that “when an orphan is depressed [...] he is attracted to telling lies. [...] Orphans are not the masters of their fates; they are the last to believe you if you tell them that other people are also not in charge of theirs. When you lie, it makes you feel in charge of your life. Telling lies is very seductive to orphans.” (Irving, 1986, 421-422) The lie for an orphan means that he can take control of his life and feel independent, which Homer always wished.

In contrast with Homer, Huck is a far bigger rogue. He likes making up and doing knaveries, but he is very warm-hearted and helpful as well. He is vivid, talkative and enjoys many adventures, nonetheless, sometimes he is also scared and timid and he feels alone even though he prefers freedom. The following extract from the text, where

Huck and Jim describe a life on the raft, illustrates it: “we said there warn’t no home like a raft, after all. Other places do seem cramped up and smothery, but a raft don’t. You feel mighty free and easy and comfortable on a raft.” (Twain, 1957, 119) In other words, Huck felt at home everywhere he was free and happy and Jim meant a family to Huck because with him he experienced these feelings.

Even though Huck is making up different stories about his life that he tells to different people, he is a clever boy and every ‘lie’ is well-thought-out and has its own reason because, as noticed above, Huck could control his life anyhow he wanted when he was lying. He did not have a good relationship with his father, yet he learnt something from him: “I learnt that the best way to get along with his kind of people is to let them have their own way.” (Twain, 1957, 127) And it helped Huck immensely in many situations, for instance, when he met the tricksters who called themselves the Duke of Bridgewater and the King of France. He knew that they did not tell the truth to him and that they were liars, but Huck was quiet in order not to cause an issue that could lead into trouble. He said about the king: “he was the *worst* I ever struck.” (Twain, 1957, 168) Travelling with these rascals meant many experiences with vices and lies, for Huck. However, he recognized their bad plans every time and was ashamed of them: “well, if I struck anything like it, I’m a nigger. It was enough to make a body ashamed of the human race.” (Twain, 1957, 162) It is apparent that Huck is more righteous and wiser than he looks.

Huck does not have many vices, but one part of the novel is worth remarking upon. One time, when he was pretending to be dead and got to know that people were looking for him, he did nothing, but just watched them from his shelter:

I hopped up, and went and looked out at a hole in the leaves, and I see a bunch of smoke laying on the water a long ways up—about abreast the ferry. And there was the ferryboat full of people floating along down. [...] I was pretty hungry, but it warn’t going to do for me to start a fire, because they might see the smoke. So I set there and watched the cannon smoke and listened to the boom. (Twain, 1957, 44-45)

Unfortunately, Huck cared more for himself than for others. For example, the Widow Douglas must have been very sad and scared. Focusing on this fact, there is some kind of a presupposition that an orphan should be happy when somebody looks after him, however, it is evident that Huck does not long for company, for people. Somebody

might regard him a bad human if he was able to be so unscrupulous and selfish, but for him it was liberty to run away, he chose to be the orphan and he did not want to change it. Even though this resolution can be considered egoistic, an orphan has the right to make decisions about his own life.

Consequently, Huck may look like a boy with bad customs, without virtue, but it is not true. He has a strong sense of justice even though he thinks that everything he is doing is wrong and immoral, the reader realizes his positive qualities. When Huck learnt that Jim was caught on his runaway, he thought what to do: either if he should write to Miss Watson about her slave, or rescue him by himself. He thought of Jim, about his kindness toward him and how he liked him. Finally, he said: “all right, then, I’ll go to hell,” and he helped him. (Twain, 1957, 210) Nevertheless, it is obvious that it was an unselfish resolution, even in the case that it could be a step into hell as Huck had thought and James M. Cox proves it: “for the more Huck berates himself for doing ‘bad’ things, the more the reader approves him for doing ‘good’ ones. Thus what for Huck is his worst action — refusing to turn Jim in to Miss Watson — is for the reader his best. [...] The reader is sure he is going to heaven.” (1995, 306) Toni Morrison describes the relationship between Huck and Jim:

It has been extremely worthwhile slogging through Jim’s shame and humiliation to recognize the sadness, the tragic implications at the center of his relationship with Huck. My fury at the maze of deceit, the risk of personal harm that a white child is forced to negotiate in a race-inflected society, is dissipated by the exquisite uses to which Twain puts that maze, that risk. (1999, 392)

Huck’s good heart expressed itself especially at the point when he knew that the two rascals, ‘the Duke of Bridgewater’ and ‘the King of France’, were trying to rob the Wilk’s daughters, with whom Huck stayed. He knew about their intentions and he thought: “I felt so ornery and low down and mean that I says to myself, my mind’s made up; I’ll hive that money for them or bust.” (Twain, 1957, 173) The next passage reflects his warm-hearted nature in the situation when he speaks about the poor deceived girls who did not know about the cheaters: “them poor things was that glad and happy it made my heart ache to see them getting fooled and lied to so, but I didn’t see no safe way for me to chip in and change the general tune.” (Twain, 1957, 180) However, Huck did not allow hurting these girls.



Huck is very often taken as a ‘rebel’, but Cox states that “Huck is a boy, a relatively harmless figure who drifts helplessly into his rebellion, making his subversion not only an act which the reader can approve but can indulge. His badness is inverted into goodness.” (1995, 306) And Leo Marx observes that “evil in Huckleberry Finn is the product of civilization.” (1995, 302) This implies that Huck is not the only one who is responsible for his rebellion, but society had a very strong impact on him, too, which was in some cases rather worse. Yet Huck kept his sense of honesty and always kept secrets, for example, Huck was requested by Jim not to tell anyone that he had run away and he did not betray him.

From the experiences that Huck had previously enjoyed, he gained independence and the ability to take care of himself. Kimball mentions that “because orphans are without the natural protection of family, they must stand on their own to conquer their problems.” (1999) Consequently, Huck was able to live in the dark forest and look after himself. “I made a kind of a tent out of my blankets to put my things under so the rain couldn’t get at them. I caught a catfish and haggled him open with my saw, and towards sundown I started my campfire and had supper.” (Twain, 1957, 46) “This wandering is made easier for the orphan characters because they often do not have a home. What the orphans seek, in fact, is a place to belong and the right to be there.” (Kimball, 1999) Huck is a protagonist who is so independent that he is able to live on his own. Bravery is Huck’s next virtue and the following scene illustrates it:

Quick, Jim, it ain’t no time for fooling around and moaning; there’s a gang of murderers in yonder, and if we don’t hunt up their boat and set her drifting down the river so these fellows can’t get away from the wreck there’s one of ’em going to be in a bad fix. But if we find their boat we can put all of ’em in a bad fix—for the sheriff ’ll get ’em. Quick—hurry! I’ll hunt the labboard side, you hunt the stabboard. (Twain, 1957, 75)

Now it is apparent that Huck is a very decisive, brave and righteous boy. Surprisingly, when he meets murderers, he wants justice carried out on them, but he is also sorry for them, especially when he sees that they are imprisoned onboard:

Now was the first time that I begun to worry about the men—I reckon I hadn’t had time to before. I began to think how dreadful it was, even for murderers, to be in such a fix. [...] So says I to Jim: “The first light we see we’ll land a hundred yards below it or above it, in a place where it’s a good

hiding place for you and the skiff, and then I'll go and fix up some kind of yarn, and get somebody to go for that gang and get them out of their scrape, so they can be hung when their time comes." (Twain, 1957, 77)

Almost nobody would feel pity for murderers, which is understandable. However, Huck feels it a duty that everybody should have the opportunity to end as one deserves and that a murderer is a human, too.

Concerning Huck's thinking, he is a very complicated boy. He often debates inwardly what is wrong and what is right. He feels very confused about how a man can make a right decision. The following part reflects it:

I got aboard the raft, feeling bad and low, because I knowed very well I had done wrong, and I see it warn't no use for me to try to learn to do right; a body that don't get *started* right when he's little ain't got no show—when the pinch comes there ain't nothing to back him and keep him to his work, and so he gets beat. Then I thought a minute, and says to myself, hold on; s'pose you'd 'a ' done right and give Jim up, would you feel better than what you do now? No, says I, I'd feel bad—I'd feel just the same way I do now. Well, then, says I, what's the use you learning to do right when it's troublesome to do right and ain't no trouble to do wrong, and the wages is just the same? I was stuck. I couldn't answer that. (Twain, 1957, 95-96)

It can be said that Huck was not taught morality when he was small. Kimball suggests that "orphans begin with a clean slate because they do not have parents to influence them either for good or for evil." (1999) Huck did not have a 'proper guardian' and at the moment when he should decide what is 'good' and 'bad', he did not know what to do and very often felt confused until the moment he met Mary Jane Wilks, as it is described below in the chapter Society and orphans.

### **3.3. Loneliness and inferiority**

The feeling of loneliness and inferiority frequently appears in the analysed novels. "Orphans are a tangible reflection of the fear of abandonment that all humans experience." (Kimball, 1999) This feeling is well known to both of the orphans, thus, some situations are described below in which Homer and Huck felt misunderstood, abandoned or inferior.

As a young boy, Homer experienced some troubles with his class mates. They had a superior attitude to him and other orphans from the orphanage, too. It is obvious that orphans have a difficult status in society and it is not easy to be ‘one of the normal children’ like in *The Cider House Rules*. Furthermore, Homer never had real friends because in the orphanage children did not stay for a long time if they were lucky and Homer did not have anybody to live through his experiences. When Homer decided to leave St. Cloud’s with Wally and Candy, he thought: “my friends. [...] Is it possible. I’m going to be having friends?” (Irving, 1986, 264) For an orphan a friend means somebody who stays with him and helps him and the orphan does not feel alone any more:

What a new sense of security Homer had felt in that moment of laughter with friends in the enclosed dark of the moving car, and what a sense of freedom the car itself gave to him—its seemingly effortless journeying was a wonder to Homer Wells, for whom the idea of motion (not to mention the sense of change) was accomplished only rarely and only with enormous strife. (Irving, 1986, 293)

The feeling of insecurity very often accompanies the feeling of loneliness. Homer did not feel solitary with Wally and Candy because he felt safe.

Homer Wells never felt lonesome like Huck did, he knew that he had a good background at Dr. Larch and then in Wally’s family, however, he missed a real home. He did not feel as if he had a home. Therefore, he compared himself to a Bedouin: “he knew that for the Bedouin—come from nowhere, going nowhere—there was no home.” (Irving, 1986, 325) “He considers that he may be a Bedouin, as he is certainly a nomad.” (Booth, 2002, 302) This feeling was caused by the fact that Homer moved to several foster families and he longed for the place which would belong only to him and where he would belong to. Once, when Candy asked Homer how he felt about their love, Homer realized that he would never be able to live with Candy and that only for one month he could enjoy this feeling of having a family, he answered: “like an orphan.” (Irving, 1968, 542) “He was an orphan who’d had a family for less than a month of his life, and he was not prepared to not have a family again.” (Irving, 1968, 544-545) When an orphan loses the family, which he experienced, it has to be very hard and sad to know that he is alone again. Unfortunately, for the next fifteen years Homer did not have a true family. Candy returned to Wally and even though she loved Homer

and they had a child together, Homer stayed only with his son Angel. However, for Homer Angel meant everything, he loved him, cared for him and taught him. Consequently, Homer realized that he had his own family because he wondered: “and was there a feeling more full of love [...] than to wake up a child in the morning?” (Irving, 1986, 589) Due to his son, he felt useful and much happier.

Compared to Homer, Huck experienced slightly different feelings of loneliness. The watch keeping of Miss Watson often caused Huck to feel alone and depressed: “I felt so lonesome I most wished I was dead” (Twain, 1957, 13) These were Huck’s words in the time when he lived at the Widow Douglas, but could not find understanding between Miss Watson and himself, which caused his sensation of solitude and it mirrors Huck’s sensitiveness. Huck probably got the feeling of inferiority from his father. The moment his father found that Huck could read and write proved that Huck was never supported by him:

You’re educated, too, they say—can read and write. You think you’re better’n your father, now, don’t you, because he can’t? I’ll take it out of you. Who told you you might meddle with such hifalut’n foolishness, hey?—who told you you could? [...] 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 see such a son. (Twain, 1957, 28)

This is just one of the many passages in the book when the father ridicules his son. From the extract mentioned it is apparent that he fears that Huck will be better than he is, because he knows he is already a much better human being now. When the father went to the court and won the guardianship over Huck, he did not feel happiness to be with his son, he felt only satisfaction and power: “but he said *he* was satisfied; said he was boss of his son, and he’d make it warm for *him*.” (Twain, 1957, 30) It is obvious that the father does not wish Huck to be happy, but he wants to manipulate him. T. S. Eliot notes, “Huck Finn is alone: there is no more solitary character in fiction. The fact that he has a father only emphasizes his loneliness; and he views his father with a terrifying detachment.” (1999, 349) Elliot confirms that Huck is a true abandoned orphan.

Once when his father locked him in the hut, Huck felt very scared. His father disappeared for three days and Huck thought that “it was dreadful lonesome.” (Twain, 1957, 32) Huck realized that he could die and nobody would find him. These are exactly

the moments when an orphan feels more alone and isolated than ever before because he knows that he can rely only on himself. The very next situation when Huck felt lonely happened when he was hidden in the forest on his runaway in order not to be found by anybody. At first, he felt pleasure from his evanishment, but even an orphan who is very often alone cannot stand solitude all of the time:

When it was dark I set by my campfire smoking, and feeling pretty well satisfied; but by and by it got sort of lonesome, and so I went and set on the bank and listened to the current swashing along, and counted the stars and drift logs and rafts that come down, and then went to bed; there ain't no better way to put in time when you are lonesome; you can't stay so, you soon get over it. (Twain, 1957, 46)

This is said by a fourteen-year-old boy who should enjoy playing games and live in an innocent world, yet he experienced this feeling so many times that it, unfortunately, helped him to mature far too early. Huck's feelings of loneliness changed when he met up with Jim. "I was ever so glad to see Jim. I warn't lonesome now." (Twain, 1957, 49) Huck had to fight with sensations of solitude almost every day and encountering Jim meant that he was not lonely any more.

The fact that Huck is not self-confident causes that he very often underestimates himself, much more than he deserves. The next case demonstrates it: "I judged I had done it pretty neat—I reckoned Tom Sawyer couldn't 'a' done it no neater himself. Of course he would 'a' throwed more style into it, but I can't do that very handy, not being brung up to it." (Twain, 1957, 191) Huck admires Tom, his friend, however, Tom does not help him to raise his consciousness, but he underestimates him as well: "oh, shucks, Huck Finn, if I was as ignorant as you I'd keep still—that's what I'd do." (Twain, 1957, 234) Of course, these were only boyish words, but Huck might have felt inferior again because friends should encourage their mates, not discourage them.

### **3.4. Society and orphans**

Society plays a fundamental role in the process of orphans forming and their growing up. Kimball argues that "orphans are outcasts, separated because they have no connection to the familial structure which helps define the individual. This outcast state is not caused by any actions of their own but because of their difference from the

‘normal’ pattern established by society.” (1999) Nina Auerbach mentions that “orphanhood seems equated with moral and psychic chaos searching for social form” because surroundings have a strong impact on the status of individuals. (1975, 401) Therefore, when society treats somebody differently, it can very often cause the feeling of being outcast. And this is the case of Huck, in contrast, Homer had a much better experience with his environment, he was accepted into Wally’s family very nicely and quickly, he did not experience lack of care and attention. However, before that he was not a part of society as Dr. Larch notes in his diary:

In other parts of the world [...] there is what the world calls ‘society’. Here in St. Cloud’s we have no society—there are not the choices, the better-than or worse-than comparisons that are nearly constant in any society. It is less complicated here, because the choices and comparisons are either obvious or nonexistent. But having so few options is what makes an orphan so desperate to encounter society—any society, the more complex with intrigue, the more gossip-ridden, the better. Given the chance, an orphan throws himself into society—the way an otter takes to the water. (Irving, 1986, 150)

This statement can be applicable for both orphans, but more for Homer. He did not have the option to choose his friends, education or girlfriend, but he had to accept what the orphanage offered him. Huck was freer in his decisions because he had at least some possibility to choose his friends and a place to live. However, both orphans felt uncertain in society. For Huck it was hard to identify with the customs of society and for Homer to leave the walls of the orphanage and be independent. As written in *The Cider House Rules*: “What did an orphan know about gossip, or care about class?” (Irving, 1986, 160) An orphan does not care about this pettiness. Nina Auerbach states that “the orphan is born to himself and establishes his own social penumbra.” (1975, 395) Then Auerbach adds that an orphan “is able to split his being according to the culture that contains him, his mutuality becoming an important facet of his survival.” (1975, 396)

To continue, Homer was regarded as a good boy who did not have a chance to enjoy anything better than the orphanage. Dr. Larch, Homer’s teacher, tried to help him to understand what is right and wrong and know how to communicate with his surroundings. He said it is “the Lord’s work: teaching Homer Wells, telling him everything, making sure he learned right from wrong. It was a lot of work, the Lord’s work, but if one was going to be presumptuous enough to undertake it, one had to do it

perfectly.” (Irving, 1986, 97) Homer was very grateful for his mentor because he had the opportunity to be, at least somehow, educated. Homer learnt very quickly because Dr. Larch was a good teacher. One night, when Homer carried out his first difficult operation alone, the doctor was very proud of him. Moreover, he behaved more like a father than a teacher, he kissed Homer secretly. “He cried because he had received his first fatherly kisses. [...] Homer Wells cried because he’d never known how nice a father’s kisses could be, and he cried because he doubted that Wilbur Larch would ever do it again—or would have done it, if he’d thought Homer was awake.” (Irving, 1986, 176) Dr. Larch tried to protect Homer and he made up a lie. When Homer went to the apple orchard, Larch told Wally and Candy that Homer had problems with his heart, which was not true. However, “Larch had given his favourite orphan a history that he hoped would keep him safe. He was aware that it was history a father would construct for his son—if a father could make his son believe it.” (Irving, 1986, 263) Larch wanted to provide Homer the best possibilities even though it did not look like a fair decision. The doctor thought: “please be healthy, please be happy, please be careful.” (Irving, 1986, 275) It confirms that Dr. Larch was selfish, but in order to save and protect his ‘son’.

When Homer started to work and live at Ocean View, society did not accept him immediately. “Homer was referred to not as the foundling or as the orphan, but as ‘the hard-luck case from St. Cloud’s’—sometimes ‘the Worthingtons hard-luck case’ was the way it was put.” (Irving, 1986, 303) Only Candy, Wally and their relatives liked him, other people were rather jealous of him. Olive Worthington described Homer to Wally, her son, in these words: “don’t you forget how needy an orphan is. He’ll take everything. He’s come from having nothing—when he sees what he can have, he’ll take everything he sees.” (Irving, 1968, 572) Homer Wells did not know what people are telling about him, he felt very happy and he wished he could stay. He appreciated everybody at Ocean View because Homer learnt many things from people there and was grateful for this opportunity. “What he loved about the life at Ocean View was how everything was of use and that everything was wanted,” not like in St. Cloud’s. (Irving, 1986, 307) Later, when the war began, Homer started to help in the local hospital, which reminded him of St. Cloud’s, and he started to miss the orphanage more and more.

As already mentioned above, an orphan does not care about gossip or class, consequently, Homer's encounter with society caused that he felt very upset. He was confused about the way people behaved to one another because he did not understand comments that were used to criticize other people in their absence. "This mannerism of what he'd seen of society struck Homer Wells quite forcefully; people, even nice people—because surely, Wally was nice—would say a host of critical things about someone to whom they would then be perfectly pleasant." (Irving, 1986, 318) It was the first negative remarkable note of society which Homer realized. Moreover, "as an orphan, he always suspected that people singled him out to stare at." (Irving, 1986, 407-408) That evoked Homer's feeling that people must say many critical things about him, but it was just his deduction. Therefore, Homer enjoyed the opportunities which society provided him, for example, he was so excited at the drive-in movie. It was a wondrous experience for him. "He was especially acute at noticing what human beings did for pleasure—what (there could be no mistake about it) they chose to do—because he had come from a place where choice was not so evident, and examples of people performing for pleasure were not plentiful." (Irving, 1986, 319-320) And that was amazing for this orphan because it gave him the possibility to choose what he wanted to do and not what he ought to do. However, "Homer knew that all orphans were daydreamers" and he realized that he cannot really choose everything he wished. (Irving, 1986, 717)

The family of Wally and Candy liked Homer very much, as mentioned above. They encouraged him and expressed their love to him. They supplied him with their energy and gave him more consciousness, which an orphan really needs. Especially Olive Worthington, the Wally's mother, tried to show Homer how much she loved him and that she took him for her own son. This scene demonstrates how close their relationship was: "Homer Wells walked back through the orchards to the Worthington house; he was touched that Mrs. Worthington had left the light over the stairs on for him, and when he saw the light under her bedroom door, he said quietly, Good night, Misus Worthington. I'm back. Good night, Homer, she said." (Irving, 1986, 406) However, when Wally was missing at war, the nice relationship with Olive Worthington got worse. Olive and Candy did not understand how Homer could be so calm and still, but "because Homer Wells had spent many years wondering if his mother would ever return to claim him, if she even thought about him, if she was alive or dead, he was



better at accepting Wally's undefined status than the rest of them were." (Irving, 1986, 481) "An orphan understands what it means that someone important is 'just missing,' " so he was able to cope with this situation better than the others. (Irving, 1986, 481)

Homer's position in society changed when he started to run Ocean View and became the boss. He was respected by people working there and nobody considered him to be an outcast or orphan any more.

The approach of society to Huck was rather incomparable, in contrast with Homer. "Throughout the novel, Huck has been a self-effacing antihero, one who does not fit into the conventional social roles." (Graff and Phelan, 1995, 280) That is the truth, because Huck is not a member of society, but a boy with very depressive feelings to his environment. According to Toni Morrison, "his deepest, uncomic feelings about his status as an outsider, someone 'dead' to society, are murmuring interludes of despair, soleness, isolation and unlove." (1999, 387) And it is understandable because in the novel *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer*, which is the predecessor of *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, it is described how surroundings did not appreciate Huck well enough. People did not feel any kind of pity, but they were rather scared of him and prevented their children from being friends with Huck in order not to become rogues. The society made from Huck an outcast, but "he's just a boy trying to survive." (Smiley, 1999, 356) Toni Morrison observes that "when Huck is among society—whether respectable or deviant, rich or poor—he is alert to and consumed by its deception, its illogic, its scariness. Yet he is depressed by himself and sees nature more often as fearful. But when he and Jim become the only 'we,' the anxiety is outside, not within." (1999, 388) It demonstrates that Huck's best friend is the slave Jim because only Jim takes Huck as he really is and does not want to change his nature or customs for the reason that they have many things in common. Both of them are running away from society and trying to find a more pleasant life for themselves, without rules to keep. Leo Marx claims that "Huck and Jim seek freedom not from a burden of individual guilt and sin, but from social constraint." (1995, 302) During the time when they are shipping together, Jim becomes 'Huck's father' and Toni Morrison illustrates it:

Huck's desire for a father who is adviser and trustworthy companion is universal, but he also needs something more: a father whom, unlike his own,

he can control. [...] Only a black male slave can deliver all Huck desires. Because Jim can be controlled, it becomes possible for Huck to feel responsible for and to him—but without the onerous burden of lifelong debt that a real father figure would demand. For Huck, Jim is a father-for-free. (1999, 390)

Maybe, mainly because of the fact that Jim represents ‘the good father’ for Huck, they are so happy and free together and do not need any other kind of company. Jim was not only ‘a father’, Huck learnt many other things from him, he took him as a teacher, he admired him: “some young birds come along, flying a yard or two at a time and lightning. Jim said it was a sign it was going to rain. [...] And Jim said you mustn’t count the things you are going to cook for dinner, because that would bring bad luck. The same if you shook the tablecloth after sundown.” (Twain, 1957, 52) Anyhow it can sound foolishly, Huck acknowledged it. Jim became his ‘idol’ and it is very important for an orphan to have somebody one can look up to. Huck stated that Jim “was most always right; he had an uncommon level head for a nigger.” (Twain, 1957, 81) It confirms the idea that Huck admired him. Jim showed his fatherhood when he protected Huck from seeing a dead man (Huck’s father) they found one night. Huck did not know who the man was because of Jim who prevented him: “come in, Huck, but doan’ look at his face—it’s too gashly.” (Twain, 1957, 56) Jim’s love was visible at many moments and he expressed it very often: “Lawsy, I’s mighty glad to git you back ag’in, honey.” (Twain, 1957, 118) The feeling of love is the most important thing that an orphan misses and Huck expressed his love to Jim, too, at least in his thoughts: “I was glad it was according to my judgement of him, too; because I thought he had a good heart in him and was a good man the first time I see him.” (Twain, 1957, 277) Huck greatly changed in his ways and in his thinking throughout the novel and he understood that the nigger, labelled a slave, was a man just like the other white people.

The overall attitude of society towards Huck changed when he and Tom found money. Judge Thatcher started to be concerned about his wealth, people were telling him how rich he was and only the Widow Douglas cared for him with love and honesty, which Huck did not appreciate as he should have to. Yet he never forgot her as described in the scene that arises later in the book: “I wished the widow knowed about it. I judged she would be proud of me.” (Twain, 1957, 80)

Concerning the friends, Tom Sawyer was Huck's lasting friend. Tom was the boy who associated with him even though it was forbidden to him. Huck appreciated it and admired the adventures that Tom thought up. They lived through many experiences and Huck considered Tom to be his brother. Huck once said "Tom Sawyer wouldn't back out now, and so I won't either." (Twain, 1957, 73) This sentence proves that Huck tried to match up to Tom. Or "I wish Tom Sawyer *was* here", shows that he missed Tom very much. (Twain, 1957, 73)

It was with the Phelps family that Huck first came across real maternal love. Sally Phelps cared about him as if he was her own son. She thought that he was Tom Sawyer, her sister's adopted son, and Tom Sawyer pretended to be Sid, his foster-brother. Thus, Huck had the opportunity to experience real family life. Sally Phelps paid him attention and liked him very much, this passage illustrates it: "when we got home Aunt Sally was that glad to see me she laughed and cried both, and hugged me, and give me one of them lickings of hern that don't amount to shucks. (Twain, 1957, 270) And this is what an orphan needs to see, know and have — the essential feeling that there is someone who likes him very much and he cannot feel alone or depressed. The part when Sally is waiting for Sid (Tom) to come back home, shows her deep love to both boys:

When I went up to bed she come up with me and fetched her candle, and tucked me in, and mothered me so good I felt mean, and like I couldn't look her in the face; and she set down on the bed and talked with me a long time, and said what a splendid boy Sid was, and didn't seem to want to ever stop talking about him; and kept asking me every now and then if I reckoned he could 'a' got lost, or hurt, or maybe drowned, and might be laying at this minute somewhere suffering or dead, and she not by him to help him, and so tears would drip down silent, and I would tell her that Sid was all right, and would be home in the morning, sure; and she would squeeze my hand, or maybe kiss me, and tell me to say it again, and keep on saying it, because it done her good, and she was in so much trouble. (Twain, 1957, 273)

This extract from the text represents Aunt Sally's maternal ways and her desperate feelings. Hence, Huck realized how sincere maternal love can be and it was the first time that Huck was not selfish and did not do what he wanted. He felt very bad because of her and thought: "I wished I could do something for her, but I couldn't, only to swear that I wouldn't never do nothing to grieve her any more." (Twain, 1957, 274) Finally, Huck encountered maternal love, yet he did not change his mind when Aunt Sally

wanted to bring him up, when she got to know that he was not Tom. “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.” (Twain, 1957, 283)

To conclude, in contrast with Huck, Homer was grateful for any kind of help and love given by Dr. Larch, the nurses Edna and Angela in the orphanage and by Wally's family. He was very happy when he had the feeling that he belonged somewhere. It does not mean that Huck was thankless, but both of them had the opportunity to have ‘some family’ and each of them behaved in a different way. It shows their otherness. Homer chose the family and adopted the new customs required and Huck preferred an adventurous and free life, but both of them were sure of and pleased with their individual decisions.

### **3.5. Love**

Even the element of love appears in the novels and was not unfamiliar to both characters.

Homer’s first ‘girlfriend’ was Melony, the orphan-girl from his orphanage, but it was not love in all interests and purposes. Melony needed Homer because of her loneliness and their relationship was more or less only sexual. Melony was addicted to Homer and he felt very depressed by this reality. The only two things that connected these two people was the fact that they were orphans and the promise which Homer gave Melony — he will not leave the orphanage as long as Melony stays there. That was the thing that made Homer feel worse and worse. Nevertheless, she took him as sunshine because due to him she did not feel so lonely and poor. However, Homer broke his promise and left her. “Melony functions as the first female character to affect Homer's understanding of the world of sexuality and trust”, but nothing more for him. (Davis and Womack, 1998) Homer’s true love came later at the apple orchard. The love named Candy Kendall.

It was love at the first sight. “Homer Wells had seen her, and only her, from the moment he emerged from the hospital entrance.” (Irving, 1986, 246) From that minute Homer admired Candy more and more, but realized that she was Wally’s girlfriend and he did not try anything to get closer to her. Therefore, Candy became Homer’s good

friend, but he knew that she influenced him. He was in love with her and she did not want to let him go back to St. Cloud's. Homer thought: "How could I not be in love with Candy? [...] And if I stay here, he asked himself, what can I do?" (Irving, 1986, 339) Candy made that he was not able to decide on his own. However, Candy felt very desperate as well and did not know what to do about her unexpected affection for Homer and how to hide it. Homer loved Candy and wanted to stay with her, "I am in love with my best—and only—friend's girlfriend." (Irving, 1986, 421) Even though Homer increasingly longed for Candy, when Wally was shot down and missing at war for Homer it was not an opportunity to be with her. "Reality, for orphans, is so often outdistanced by their ideals; if Homer wanted Candy, he wanted her ideally. In order for Candy to choose Homer, Wally had to be alive; and because Homer loved Wally, he also wanted Wally's blessing." (Irving, 1968, 479) It confirms that Homer felt love more as a kind of burden than happiness. However, they could not control their love and Candy became pregnant. They were to face a hard decision about their future. Homer knew he wanted a child, more than anything else and more than Candy, consequently, they went back to St. Cloud's where Candy gave birth to their baby, and when they returned to Ocean View they declared that they had felt the obligation to adopt the child and help the orphanage. A boy was born to them, named Angel Wells. They felt very happy even though they were aware of the fact that they would have to conceal their secret forever. Homer became a father and Candy stayed Homer's eternal love.

Huck was 'in love', too. Miss Mary Jane Wilks was the name of Huck's 'love', he liked her very much and this feeling made him change his mind about the truth and lie when he tried to help her: "and yet here's a case where I'm blest if it don't look to me like the truth is better and actuly *safer* than a lie. I must lay it by in my mind, and think it over some time or other, it's so kind of strange and unregular. [...] Well, I says to myself at last, I'm a-going to chance it; I'll up and tell the truth this time" (Twain, 1957, 184) And then when Huck told the truth, he realized that "it would make Mary Jane comfortable, and it wouldn't cost nothing." (Twain, 1957, 187) Following is the passage in which is Mary Jane described in Huck's words:

You may say what you want to, but in my opinion she had more sand in her than girl I ever see; in my opinion she was just full of sand. [...] And when it comes to beauty—and goodness, too—she lays over them all. I hain't ever seen her since that time that I see her go out of that door; no I hain't ever seen

her since, but I reckon I've thought of her a many and a many a million times, and of her saying she would pray for me; and if I'd 'a' thought it would do any good for me to pray for *her*, blamed if I wouldn't 'a' done it or bust. (Twain, 1957, 188-189)

Meeting Mary Jane changed Huck enormously, the orphan learnt to love and tell the truth. This proves that affection has a strong impact on orphans as well. Homer and Huck changed their behaviour because of love that influenced them and both of them became unselfish men.

## 4. Comparison of the novels

Both novels take place in different setting and times, as mentioned many times above, and this is the reason for their different portrayal of orphans. Both writers have a distinct approach to their characters and it is visible in the ways of describing them.

Generally, in the nineteenth century, as was noticed in the first chapter, orphans were put into the orphanage and there were many rules which children had to obey. Twain's book takes place in the nineteenth century, but is different from this concept because Huck is depicted as a relatively free young orphan, child, who experiences many adventures and cannot live in orphanages that are not even mentioned in the story. On the contrary, Irving's novel is more comparable with this thought because Homer is the orphan who lives in the orphanage, but the novel takes place in the twentieth century when the overall attitude towards orphanages started to change, as described in the first chapter. Therefore, the orphanage where Homer grows up is committed to the well-being of children and full of nice people, predominantly the nurses working there and Dr. Larch. Furthermore, there is not any corporal punishment, the care for the children is full of love and the children do not suffer hardship.

From a different point of view, Irving's novel portrays orphans more factually, for example, the notes of Dr. Larch are mentioned which describe how orphans differ from other children and what is unique for them. Twain's approach is focused on boyish adventures, moreover, an orphan is a free boy with freedom to do the things he wants to and he cannot keep any rules. The book is dedicated to children and adults, too, in order to remember their childhood years. However, many adults and critics of the novel had some problems with reading and understanding this book. This fact is analysed by Toni Morrison:

The source of my unease reading this amazing, troubling book now seems clear: an imperfect coming to terms with three matters Twain addresses—Huck's Finn estrangement, soleness and morbidity as an outcast child; the disproportionate sadness at the center of Jim's and his relationship; and the secrecy in which Huck's engagement with (rather than escape from) a racist society is necessarily conducted. It is also clear that the rewards of my effort to come to terms have been abundant. My alarm, aroused by Twain's precise rendering of childhood's fear of death and abandonment, remains—as it should. (1999, 392)

However, on the other hand, Richard Hill mentions:

But all of us, even the most solemn and ideologically lockstep among us, know in our hearts that Huck's story was written especially for children. [...] Adults who attempt to fit into sophisticated aesthetic, intellectual, or ideological agendas will never be quite satisfied with the mixed-up and splendid ambuscade that is *Huckleberry Finn*. (1995, 333-334)

Hill's reason confirms that even though the book has hidden thoughts, for children it is a nice reading about adventures. On the contrary to this fact, Irving's book is more concerned with other subject matters than Twain's. For instance, the topic of abortions is analysed, medical terms are introduced, readers encounter ether, which Dr. Larch uses and is addicted to, and other complicated situations that happened at Ocean View. Todd F. Davis and Kenneth Womack notice that "the novel demonstrates the conflicted nature of human dealings and the inadequacy of legalism as a means for responding to our most pressing needs." (1998) Hence, the novel *The Cider House Rules* is more appropriate to adults rather than children, who could feel very confused because of the topics appearing in the novel.

However, both of the stories have very nice attitude towards the analysed orphans because the heroes in the novels are described emotionally, with regard and reflection to real orphans. They are full of hope in the good ends.



## 5. Conclusion

To summarize, both of the novels highlight one important fact: orphans are influenced by the company in which they stay and their surroundings, too. Twain and Irving focus on describing children from their emotional aspect and on the matter that orphans can very often differ in their nature and customs from one another. But some things they share and have in common, for example, the reality that they have to live without their parents. Moreover, orphans have to live independently even though they may live in an orphanage, they are just one of many. Therefore, they get used to caring for themselves and because of this fact they share some similar traits of character.

In the analysis it was proved how both orphans were influenced by their childhood and the first relationships they encountered. Even though Irving's and Twain's novels are very different, the element of childhood was responsible for influencing both of the heroes, their personality, their customs and their behaviour. Huck's rejection of his father meant that he felt much better when he was living alone than in a society, which wanted to change him. And Homer's fondness of Dr. Larch was the reason why he returned to the orphanage and was never really able to start a new life without thinking about him and missing him.

Therefore, their characteristics were rooted mainly in the time of their childhood. Twain's protagonist has been an independent boy since the beginning of his life. Irving's hero gained his independence when he started to work in the apple orchard, Ocean View. However, both of them are strong, righteous characters and have a sense of justice. Huck's problem to recognize what is right and wrong vanished when he met Mary Jane Wilks because he realized that the good thing is that which helps other people feel better. And Homer is aware of the fact that some right things, which humans do, can cause pain to others. However, both orphans make their own decisions, are very warm-hearted, thus, they prefer the well-being of others to their own. For instance, Homer is willing to hide his love and live with this burden in order that Wally would be happy and Huck wants to help the slave Jim even though he thinks that he will go to hell, but because of his love to Jim he knows what to do.

The matter of loneliness is the next important point that appears so often in both novels and proves how complicated and abandoned lives both orphans had. The feeling

of solitude and isolation caused that they felt inferior or uncertain in society. Especially Huck who feels very often so alone and misunderstood that he finds that this changes when he is in the company of Jim. On the contrary, Homer feels rather more 'homeless' than really alone for the reason that for all of his life there was somebody who cared about him, but nobody provided him a home in the right sense.

Generally, a child is formed by society, cultural and other aspects, too. Huck was surely formed by society who, at first, did not care enough about him. Almost everybody neglected him with the exception of the Widow Douglas, who was not noticed as she deserved by Huck. However, as Huck encounters different people in his adventure, he realizes that he is more appreciated than he thought, for example, Jim likes him because Huck helped him on his runaway, Mary Jane Wilks is grateful because of telling her the truth, and finally Sally Phelps likes him as her own son. Homer was, on the other hand, encouraged all his life by Dr. Larch and then by Wally and Candy and their families.

To conclude, the novels try to show the difference between the perception of children living in families and orphans. Therefore, they outline some situations in which it is visible how dissimilar these two worlds are. However, they also demonstrate that there is the possibility to connect these two 'universes' together into one world which can be happy and which has a place for orphans, too.

Furthermore, the authors portray the orphans from a more joyful aspect, especially the novel *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*. Yet being an orphan is a fact of life, orphans have to live on their own and need to get care, love and protection. Many types of societies were introduced in these books, some that can harm them, or on the contrary, help them. The stories illustrate the problems that orphans meet in their lives, the help they can receive and the possibilities they obviously have, which should make adults realize that orphans are dependent on their surroundings and their help. And everything is shown from two different aspects: either from the view of a boy who has to live in the orphanage and adhere to the rules, or from the view of a young boy who lives like an outcast but without restraint and the above mentioned rules.

## 6. Resumé

Téma dětství a osiřelosti je velmi často analyzováno současnou veřejností. Mnoho literárních i odborných publikací týkajících se problematiky dětství a sirotků již bylo vydáno, například historie popisující vývoj dětství nebo velmi známá díla jako anglický román *Oliver Twist* či americký román pro děti *Dobrodružství Toma Sawyera*. *Pravidla moštárny* a *Dobrodružství Huckleberryho Finna* jsou dalšími z nich. Obě americká díla popisují život sirotků, i když z jiného hlediska, a to zejména kvůli jinému prostředí a době, ve které se odehrávají. Přesto se obě knihy zaměřují na citlivou stránku sirotků, jejich prožívání těžkých životních období a situací, které je ovlivňují. Dále se zaměřují na společnost, jež má velký dopad na sirotky a utváření jejich blízkého okolí. Na výše zmíněná fakta se zaměřuje i tahle práce a jejím cílem je podrobněji rozebrat život sirotků, jejich odlišnosti, trápení, myšlení nebo začlenění do společnosti na základě srovnání a analýzy zmíněných románů.

Z historického hlediska, v devatenáctém století se objevily názory, že děti jsou ovlivněny společností, ve které vyrůstají, ekonomickými podmínkami, dobou a zeměpisnou oblastí, ve které žijí. Společnost považovala za důležité způsoby, jakými byly děti vychovávány a v jaké sociální třídě se nacházely. Ve dvacátém století pak byly děti považovány více jako individuality, na které má společnost jistý dopad, přesto si své okolí vytvářejí částečně i samy. Sirotci byli také formováni společností, avšak jelikož často vyrůstali bez rodiny, v sirotčincích, jejich okolí se lišilo. Sirotčince byly popisovány jako neútluná místa, kde tělesné tresty nebyly výjimkou, děti musely dodržovat mnoho pravidel a projevy lásky zde byly spíše vzácností. Možnost adopce nebo částečného osvojení se stala dostupnou v polovině devatenáctého století, děti se dostávaly do pěstounských rodin, které jim měly nahrazovat skutečné rodiče, či byly zcela adoptovány novou rodinou. Adopce měla dětem nabídnout lepší možnosti než sirotčince, jelikož v devatenáctém století bylo mnoho dětí bez domova a tyto instituce byly často velmi plné. Tato skutečnost se změnila ve dvacátém století, kdy být sirotkem už nebylo tak časté z důvodu snížení úmrtnosti rodičů. V devatenáctém i dvacátém století se téma sirotků začalo také velmi často rozebírat i v literatuře a stalo se námětem mnoha anglických i amerických autorů. Dva z nich jsou také Mark Twain a John Irving, jejichž díla jsou analyzována.

Oba prozaici popisují ve zmíněných románech sirotky, jež jsou hlavní hrdinové Huck a Homer, kteří se liší v mnoha aspektech. Například Huck žije svobodně a sám, spíše jako malý dobrodruh, a neustále podniká nová dobrodružství. Homer zase už téměř od malička, kromě vystřídání několika pěstounských rodin, vyrůstá v sirotčinci v St. Cloud's. Nadto se romány odehrávají v jiném století, konkrétně *Dobrodružství Huckleberryho Finna* v devatenáctém století a *Pravidla moštárny* ve dvacátém století, s čímž také souvisí jejich rozdílný popis hlavních hrdinů. Oba dva sirotci se odlišují ve způsobech svého chování, přemýšlení a zvycích. Přesto mají Homer a Huck mnoho společného, a to především proto, že jsou opuštěni svými rodiči, oba sirotci jsou osamělí, nemají opravdovou rodinu a často se cítí podřazení. Na druhou stranu, oba jsou velmi silní, schopni se o sebe postarat a čelit problémům, které je potkávají.

Román *Dobrodružství Huckleberryho Finna* je vyprávěn přímo Huckem, a proto se týká především jeho vnitřních pocitů, dobrodružství, která zažívá a myšlenkami, které cítí. Není zde žádná zpětná vazba od ostatních postav v příběhu, vše je popisováno jen očima Hucka. Twain zde líčí dětská dobrodružství a dívá se na sirotky z radostnějšího úhlu pohledu, s čímž souvisí i fakt, že Huck je stylizován do mladého dobrodruha, užívajícího si klukoviny. Kniha je proto vhodná jak pro děti, tak i dospělé, kteří, jak zmiňují kritici, v příběhu nacházejí jeho skryté myšlenky. *Pravidla moštárny* jsou naopak více objektivní, protože jsou vyprávěny třetí 'nezávislou' osobou, takzvaným nestranným pozorovatelem. V románu se rozebírají obecná fakta týkající se sirotků, čímž je příběh obohacen a poskytuje více možností, jak pochopit sirotky a jejich odlišnosti od dětí z úplných rodin. Dále jsou zde rozebírány i další hlavní postavy, díky nimž si čtenář dotváří pohled na Homera a jeho příběh. V díle jsou také uváděna témata týkající se potratu a jeho provádění, sexuálních motivů, závislosti na éteru, a proto *Pravidla moštárny* nejsou příliš vhodná pro děti ale spíše pro dospělé.

Jak již bylo zmíněno, charakteristickým rysem obou románů je element osamělosti a společnosti. Osamělost způsobuje, že sirotek se naučí spoléhat jen sám na sebe a nevěří, že si zaslouží lásku od ostatních a často se cítí velmi sklíčený a opuštěný. Společnost ho pak může v téhle domněnce utvrdit, či ji vyvrátit. Společnost je totiž ten základní stavební prvek, kterým je sirotek utvářen. Homerovi jeho okolí velmi pomohlo. Dodalo mu sebevědomí a chuť učit se novému. Huck ze začátku zažíval jiné pocity, a to spíše pocity opomíjení, které se však v průběhu jeho příběhu pomalu mění

na pocity začlenění, a to hlavně díky faktu, že Huck střídá mnoho rodin, ve kterých dosahuje určitého zázemí a lásky, což je zřejmé zejména u rodiny Phelpsů. Huck má sice otce, ten je ovšem opilec a fyzicky ho zneužívá, často mizí pryč a nechává syna samotného, avšak Huck je za to šťastný. Proto lze říci, že Huck je sirotkem. Oba dva hrdinové mají strach z naprosté samoty a opuštění, proto si nalézají svá útočiště: Homer v jablečném sadu Mořská vyhlídka kam odchází ze sirotčince, a Huck ve svém příteli, uprchlém otrokovi Jimovi, s nímž se sblíží při jeho putování 'za svobodou'.

Dalším důležitým tématem objevujícím se v románech je dětství, které sirotci prožili, a vztahy, které na ně měly vliv. Homer si prošel několika rodinami, ale vždy se z nějakého důvodu vrátil zpět do sirotčince, což ho utvrdilo v myšlence, že si musí najít svoji vlastní cestu životem, i když zůstane sirotkem. Velmi mu v tom pomohl Dr. Larch, který byl jak jeho učitelem tak částečně i otcem a dále pak jeho přítel v jablečném sadu, kteří mu dodávali pocit rodiny a bezpečí. Huck se díky svému otci uchyluje k podobnému rozhodnutí, avšak, na rozdíl od Homera, odmítá jakoukoliv pomoc, která je mu nabízena a je rozhodnutý žít dobrodružně, bez domova, ale také naprosto svobodně, aniž by se musel měnit. Přesto na svých cestách střídá různé rodiny a sblíží se s Jimem, který pro něj postupně představuje domov a rodinu.

Rozebíraná díla popisují sirotky velmi emotivně. Huck na svém dobrodružství prochází od pocitů smutku a osamocení k pocitům štěstí, a to právě díky Jimovi, s nímž se shledává a který se stává jeho výborným přítelem, učitelem a také částečným otcem. To, že Huck přebývá u různých rodin, mu pomáhá, aby pochopil rozlišnosti společnosti a jak s každým člověkem vycházet. Teprve u rodiny Phelpsů však na chvíli nachází to pravé rodinné štěstí, které se mu snažila poskytnout vdova Douglasová, což však Huck nedokázal dostatečně ocenit a bohužel se necítil u vdovy šťastný. Je důležité, aby sirotek poznal, co to znamená, když ho má někdo rád a Huck si pocitu velmi cenil a i přesto, že nakonec nechtěl u Phelpsů zůstat, jejich vstřícnost mu ukázala, jak je rodina v životě důležitá.

Druhý hrdina, Homer, se ve svém příběhu mění z malého neznalého chlapce v dospělého, samostatného a rozumného muže. Od doktora Larche získává důvěru a otcovskou lásku, je učen doktorství a vědě, přesto teprve na Mořské vyhlídce, v jablečném sadu, se začíná cítit opravdu šťastný a svobodný. Poznává nové typy lidí, kteří se velmi liší od opatrovatelů ze sirotčince, setkává se s mateřskou a mileneckou

láskou. Jeho práce na Mořské vyhlídce mu dodává sebedůvěru a pocit, že má přátele, což je další významná věc v sirotkově životě. Homer nový život miluje a cítí se šťastný, přesto postrádá St. Cloud's a ví, že je jeho povinností vrátit se zpět a nahradit doktora Larche v jeho funkci vedení sirotčince. Homer si uvědomuje své poslání, a to ho naplňuje, protože sirotek, který má poslání se cítí užitečný, což bylo vždy Homerovo přání a provází ho celým jeho příběhem.

Dalším tématem, které se v dílech objevuje, je láska. Oba hlavní hrdinové se zamilují, a tato skutečnost jim velmi změní život. Homer pochopí těžkosti života, zjišťuje, že všechno nemůže být tak, jak si sirotek vysní a že někdy musí člověk ustoupit, aby mohl být někdo jiný šťastný. Huck si díky svému zalíbení uvědomuje, jaký je rozdíl mezi dobrem a zlem, co je správné a špatné, což mu velmi pomůže a stane se z něj nesobecký mladý chlapec.

Přestože oba dva romány popisují život sirotekům velmi citlivě, upozorňují zároveň i na fakt, že sirotek je velmi často tím, čím je, díky společnosti, jak zmiňují i historikové. Například to, že Huck je ze začátku příběhu sobecký, lze a myslí především na sebe, kritici díla vnímají jako vinu společnosti, která k němu z počátku zachovávala odmítavý postoj. Twain tím ukazuje, že sirotci nesmí zůstat opomíjeni a je potřeba se o ně starat, dopřávat jim lásku, přátelství a péči, aby jejich životy byly následně srovnatelné s životy ostatních a i sirotci mohli být začleněni do společnosti, což dokazuje i Irving. Homer, který žije v částečném začlenění a lásce celý svůj život, je pak následně schopen více přijímat nové zvyky a způsoby, které od něj společnost na Mořské vyhlídce vyžaduje a stává se více přizpůsobivým. Dále oba prozaici svými příběhy připomínají fakt, že se sirotci neobjevují pouze v literatuře, ale že být sirotkem je také skutečnost života, což by si měla společnost uvědomit, neopomíjet osiřelé děti, ale naopak jim co nejvíce pomáhat a starat se o ně. Oba dva romány mohou být tedy vnímány i jako díla s didaktickým přístupem.

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