

Undergraduate Thesis Assessment Rubric

Department of English, Faculty of Education, University of West Bohemia

Thesis Author: Michaela Hofrajterová

Title: Huckleberry Finn: Mark Twain's Criticism of "Civilization"

Length: 42pp

Text Length: 52pp

Assessment Criteria	Scale	Comments
1. Introduction is well written, brief, interesting, and compelling. It motivates the work and provides a clear statement of the examined issue. It presents and overview of the thesis.	Very good	<p>This is very well done, but I would take issue with the author's characterization of the Concord ban: the implication is that this ban has something to do with race, whereas in fact the ban had more to do with the book's flippancy towards education, bad grammar and use of dialect. As Jonathan Arac shows in his <i>Huck Finn as Idol and Target</i> (1997), race did not kick in till later in the twentieth century in criticism of the book.</p> <p>Also, it is incorrect to say that African-Americans do not like the book because it reminds them that their forebears were slaves. Rather, as Jane Smiley argued in <i>Harper's</i> in 1996, it is because the book sets the bar for discussion of race in middle and high schools very low. This is a pedagogical question distinct from the status of the book as a literary work. After all, we can agree that <i>Portnoy's Complaint</i> is a good book without wishing to teach it to twelve-year olds.</p>
2. The thesis shows the author's appropriate knowledge of the subject matter through the background/review of literature. The author presents information from a variety of quality electronic and print sources. Sources are relevant, balanced and include critical readings relating to the thesis or problem. Primary sources are included (if appropriate).	Outstanding	<p>I would query the necessity of a biographical review of Twain's life in chapter 1: this does little to advance the argument. But if this is done, it's a missed opportunity not to discuss Twain's attitude to money. The student shows Twain's criticism of financial in <i>Huck Finn</i>, but Twain himself always kept his eye on his pocket book, and financial considerations were extremely pertinent to the subscription publication of the book, and the subsequent reading tour. If I am not mistaken, the book was also popular in the post-bellum South, which means that Twain's indictment of that society</p>

		<p>was perhaps not as savage as the student makes out. The interesting thing is that if you want to interpret the book as condemning slavery you can; otherwise you can just see it (as many people in Maryland, Kentucky and Missouri must have done when they came to listen to Twain promote the book) as realistic in many respects. An outright moral condemnation would have hurt Twain in sales, and he was never one to let morals get in the way of the main chance.</p> <p>I note that the author translated a monograph on Twain. That is an excellent basis for a thesis like this.</p> <p>For this reason, I am going to go a little harder in my criticism. Why do we hear nothing of Arac, Sacvan Bercovitch or Henry Wonham in the secondary sources?</p> <p>Also, I don't think twainquotes is a good source for citation. Why do we have a PBS broadcast by Shelley Fiskin and not his <i>Lighting Out for the Territory: Reflections on Mark Twain and American Culture</i>?</p>
<p>3. The author carefully analyzed the information collected and drew appropriate and inventive conclusions supported by evidence. Ideas are richly supported with accurate details that develop the main point. The author's voice is evident.</p>	<p>Very good</p>	
<p>4. The thesis displays critical thinking and avoids simplistic description or summary of information.</p>	<p>Very good</p>	
<p>5. Conclusion effectively restates the argument. It summarizes the main findings and follows logically from the analysis presented.</p>	<p>Outstanding</p>	
<p>6. The text is organized in a logical manner. It flows naturally and is easy to follow. Transitions, summaries and conclusions exist as appropriate. The author uses standard spelling, grammar, and punctuation.</p>	<p>Outstanding</p>	
<p>7. The language use is precise. The student makes proficient use of language in a way that is appropriate for the discipline and/or genre in which</p>	<p>Very good</p>	

the student is writing.		
8. The thesis meets the general requirements (formatting, chapters, length, division into sections, etc.). References are cited properly within the text and a complete reference list is provided.	Somewhat deficient	<p>There are minor errors in phrasing, punctuation and citation throughout. Also, <i>passim</i> the author will give an in-text reference to "Twain" plus page number. When one then looks at the list of works cited one finds that there are five entries under Twain: how are we to know which to pick?</p> <p>I propose that the examination board decide whether the thesis should be passed with these errors in it.</p>

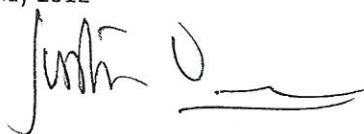
Final Comments & Questions

The grade I recommend is between 1 and 2--to be decided after the defence. But there is a further caveat about whether the thesis should be passed in its present state with the errors noted in point 8 above. I propose this issue should be discussed by the examination board.

Supervisor/Reviewer: doc. Justin Quinn Ph.D.

Date: 20 May 2012

Signature:



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