



## Review Paper

# Nature vs. Nurture in Mark Twain's Novel Pudd'nhead Wilson: An over view of Community's Environment

Lubna Ahsan<sup>1</sup>, Burhan Qazi<sup>2</sup>, Syed Shahabuddin<sup>3</sup> and Mahrukh Khan<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Hamdard University, Karachi-PAKISTAN.

<sup>2</sup>Signature Solutions, Karachi-PAKISTAN.

<sup>3</sup>FUUA, Karachi-PAKISTAN

<sup>4</sup>Sir Syed University of Engg. and Technology, Karachi-PAKISTAN

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## Abstract

*It is a complicated dilemma what makes a person who they really are? Mark Twain's novel, "Pudd'nhead" is a precarious analysis of how nature and nurture can grow and support the emotions and free will, which sequentially influences the life of human beings (Twain, Berger and Twain). The story in the novel is about the story of two boys who got switched by a slave woman. The woman switched the boys to protect her son from the darker side of slavery but she makes the other boy live life of a slave (Twain, Berger and Twain). Both the boys learned different attributes and lived different lives. The author analyses their attributes and their behavior towards others by keeping the statement, Nature vs. Nurture, as the title. Mark Twain's hesitant sense of guidance instigated about slavery, moral decomposition, and deceiving existences. The main theme of the novel is inherited or it is the inner quality of a person that makes it who they are (Twain, Berger and Twain).*

**Keywords:** Environment, Society, Tradition, Nature and Nurture'.

## Introduction

Nature versus Nurture has been under consideration since a long time and it has been one of the most captivating "scientific" and "cultural" concerns for the majority of the twentieth century, in defining the behavioral attributes of human beings<sup>1</sup>. The alterations in the environment, the social orders, education, political inspirations, family ethics and beliefs and other external inspirations, amalgamated with physical genes define how manhood will grow into adulthood<sup>2</sup>. Both "nature and nurture", in amalgamation with sentiments and free will, oversee the attitude of human beings and defines who we are. Nature vs. nurture has been analyzed clearly in the novel with the help of two characters. In this paper, we will analyze whether it is nature or nurture that makes a person who he is.

It is often discussed whether a person's character is built by the environment in which a person is brought up<sup>3</sup>. Mark Twain's novel Pudd'nhead Wilson explores the second thought by means of illustrating the growth of two boys who were of the same age, Chambers and Tom. Both the boys were raised by a slave woman named Roxy<sup>4</sup>. The slave woman changed her boy with the boy of the master considering that his boy might live a luxurious life and will not face the realities of slavery and brings the other boy into the life of slavery, who was a born master. Further, in the novel, the author has explained attributes and behavior of both the boys and what was the thing that affected their behavior. Was it their upbringing or the environment in

which they were brought up? The novel is an interesting discussion about nature and nurture.

## Black and White People

Twain never really answered if it is nature or nurture that makes a person what he really is. He never supported one view or the other, an influential case can be made that he supports nurture over nature. Twain does not take up or support the point of view of African Americans as integrally lazy, untrustworthy and dishonest<sup>5</sup>. According to Mark Twain, actions of theft by black slaves are vindicated actions of revolution against their white autocrats. On the other hand, under close observation, the novel also has material that believes in these stereotypes<sup>6</sup>.

It is also described that Chamber is meek and an obedient person<sup>7</sup>. Just as the author described that Chamber was kind hearted and nice to everyone because of his upbringing, he recommends that Tom had adopted his behavior because of the environment in which he is raised. Tom has an extremely opposite personality from Chamber. He is biased to extreme against black people, even with the lady who is his actual mother (who is unknown to him). He continually takes risks about games and puts his own identity into debts, which is an evident of his wealthy brought up<sup>8</sup>.

Roxy and other people recommend that Tom's wicked and malevolent behavior is the outcome of something that is inborn or inherited. In Tom's case it is considered to be ethnic and cultural

heritage. Tom has been upraised poorly, by a sequence of emotional but erroneous wealthy white people. Twain left it as a mystery that which of these factors is responsible for Tom's personality<sup>9</sup>. Chambers, on the other hand, is a white boy who is grown up as a slave and he was not raised in healthy hands. Chambers is comparatively a decent man and he is caring towards others. Twain considers that Nature vs. nurture gave the expression to be an immense point in this novel, Pudd'n' head Wilson<sup>10</sup>. Would the actual Chambers have put up an appearance to be such a non-loving, cold-blooded, unsympathetic, risker if he had grown up as Chambers? I do not consider so. On the other hand, would the actual Tom have put up an appearance to be such a polite, soft-hearted and caring person if he had grown up as Tom? Again, I do not consider that either<sup>11</sup>.

I believe that the Tom who was brought up as Chambers would have had some dissimilarities and disparities. He would have been cultured and polished as he was thought to be, but I am not so sure if he would have involved into betting or gaming. I also do not believe that his attitude would have been unsympathetic and cruel towards the actual Chambers. I genuinely believe that 'nature and nurture' both play an important role in socializing the members of the society<sup>12</sup>. It seemed as if the real Tom had a generous soul and he either inherited it from the world he was grown up in or it was natural that he was like that. It is difficult to evaluate because he was not brought up as a white person is supposed to be, but both 'nature and nurture' could have been put into the equation<sup>13</sup>.

At the end of the novel, when Chamber (who was real Tom) returned to his originality, it seems like the author certainly suggests that the difference in personalities of the boys was a direct outcome of the way they were brought up<sup>14</sup>.

Mark Twain is without a doubt stating that prosperity and position do not have any role to play in the brought up of a man. On the other hand, it is also clear that inheritance does not have any importance in the character building of a person<sup>15</sup>. It is clear in the novel that how a boy was not a slave but he was brought up as a slave. The only difference in the attitude of the boy was that he was brought up as a slave. His character and behavior remained same even after his status and inheritance was reinstated<sup>16</sup>.

*"His gait, his attitudes, his gestures, his bearing, and his laugh--all were vulgar and uncouth; his manners were the manners of a slave. Money and fine clothes could not mend these defects or cover them up; they only made them more glaring and the more pathetic."*

### A Lavish life

The message of the novel definitely is that the brought up creates a person (Swan). A boy who was brought up as a slave became like that, rather than the other way round (Swan) and a boy who was brought up as a son of a master started acting like

that way and lived a lavish life. It is clear that the author makes a powerful commentary on slavery and discrimination in his novel.

I personally believe that the quality of an individual's character is extremely entrenched through their personal involvement and understanding in their life. The things that formulate a person into good or bad is what is presented before them as good or bad<sup>17</sup>. And it is obvious what is good or bad is all related to the norms of the society and culture. It is our environment that influences our characters and our thoughts. If we are living in a community where all the people love each other then we will also start loving people. On the other hand, if we are living around the people who have hateful behavior; somehow, we will adopt that behavior in our nature<sup>18</sup>.

### Conclusion

From the above discussion, I conclude that discussion remains unclear in the novel whether what makes a person that he is because the author of the novel does not really support any of the condition, neither nature nor nurture. The author did not support one or the other statement. According to the author's idea, nature and nurture plays a different role in different conditions. Though, we can make a final point from the discussion that all the characteristics of a person do not come from nature. There are some qualities and characteristics which a person learns when he is growing up. The environment in which a person is brought up also plays a great role in the origination of a person's character. On the other hand, brought up also plays a role in the upbringing of a child.

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