



POSUDEK OPONENTA DIPLOMOVÉ PRÁCE

Studijní obor: **Anglická a americká literatura (maior) – Česko-německá areálová studia (minor)**

Název práce: **The Issue of Race in American Literature: A Comparative Study of Mark Twain's 19th-Century Novel *The Adventures Of Huckleberry Finn* and Kathryn Stockett's Contemporary Work *The Help***

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characteristics of the thesis

The thesis examines representations of race and race relations in two novels by white writers, written more than a century apart – Mark Twain's *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* and Kathryn Stockett's *The Help*. Both works treat historical discrimination and subjugation of African Americans, portraying slavery and the Jim Crow era respectively. The author provides ample historical background for each novel, explaining in depth the developments that led to institutional oppression of African Americans, and explores the realist elements in the two novels. In addition, the author discusses problems with the representation of African Americans in these works and their criticism by this community.

Overall assessment

This thesis clearly meets and even exceeds the level expected for an M.A. thesis. It demonstrates an awareness of its positioning within existing literature and the social-historical moment, it makes clear arguments regarding each work, and shows originality in their comparison. Although the two novels deal with different topics and are written in a different style, the author manages to point out significant similarities such as the portrayal of African-American as caring figures, the importance of personal acquaintance for overcoming prejudice, and outrage at racial discrimination, but also the underdevelopment of the black characters and a focus on their relation to white people at the expense of other areas of their life.

Having said that, there are some areas that can be improved or further explored. In terms of language, the work is mainly written at a high level of English, but it needs more careful editing, since it contains mistakes and wrong usage in numerous places, for example, using the expression "then society" (p.64) to describe the historical situation, which is a typical Czechism. Regarding academic conventions, it is mostly correct except that article titles are italicised in the text instead of appearing between quotation marks (they are correctly cited in the footnotes and bibliography). One last issue in the area of writing is that the text sometimes gets lost in excessive historical detail and seems to lose focus. This is also reflected in the length of the work which is excessive.

Building on the research presented in the thesis several questions arise, which would be interesting to discuss in the defence:



1. What does the author make of the cruel prank played on Jim by Huck and Tom at the end of the book, when they conceal from him that he has been freed? Through the comparison with *The Help* can we maybe say that the special relationship developed on the isolated raft changes once Huck goes back to the company of his white peers?
2. Does the author consider the fact that both narratives revolve around the care for white children as a coincidence or an inherent feature of what white people consider to be the good qualities of African Americans?
3. What does the portrayal of African American issues in the two novels teach us about the way white authors approach such topics? This may require covering more works, as suggested in the conclusion to the thesis, but maybe a preliminary suggestion can already be made.

Finally, in terms of developing this research, it would be interesting to compare these novels with works written by African Americans on the same topics. The author mentions slave narratives such as *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, an American Slave* and also *The Colour Purple* written by Alice Walker which touches upon the relationship between a black domestic worker and the white child she helped raise even if it is not the centre of the story.

Práci **doporučuji** k obhajobě.

Navrhovaná klasifikace: **výborně**

12. 1. 2023

Datum

Podpis