

Racial attitudes in Melville's 'Benito Cereno' and Twain's 'Huckleberry Finn'



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RACIAL ATTITUDES IN MELVILLE'S 'BENITO CERENO' AND TWAIN'S 'HUCKLEBERRY FINN'

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Grin Verlag Jul 2009, 2009. Taschenbuch. Book Condition: Neu. 213x151x15 mm. This item is printed on demand - Print on Demand Titel. - Seminar paper from the year 2008 in the subject English - Literature, Works, printed single-sided, grade: 1,5, University of Heidelberg (Anglistisches Seminar), language: English, abstract: The American literature is a reflection of the socio-political developments in the different stages of the history of the country, and especially slavery is a crucial topic in it. Many works dealing with slavery have been published in the 19th, 20th and 21st century, and some of them have sparked debates that are not only on literary issues. Two of these are Herman Melville's (1819-1891) *Benito Cereno* (1855) and Mark Twain's (1835-1910, born Samuel Langhorne Clemens) *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* (1884). These two novels are often seen as major works in American literary history, and their authors are among the country's most celebrated. Both books have in common that their stories play in the time before the abolition of slavery. *Benito Cereno* deals with a slave revolt on a ship, while *Huckleberry Finn* depicts the adventures of its eponymous hero and a runaway slave, Jim. Another feature the novels share is the fact that both have been charged to contain racist and pro-slavery attitudes. This paper will evaluate and analyze these assertions in order to show that they are false because they are based on misunderstandings. It aims to provide a profound delineation of the racial attitudes in the two novels. The assumption here is that neither Melville nor Twain wrote racist novels. This shall be proven with the help of a close analysis of the narrative perspectives and literary devices used in the books. Both of the stories, as will be shown later, are told by narrators that...

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