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"Omnia vincit amor" (Virgil 10.69), love conquers all, is an axiom that originated from the Greek poet Virgil over two thousand years ago. This sentiment has proven to be correct throughout the history of humanity. Society's composition and principles have varied throughout history. As individuals within a society interact with others, their behavior and beliefs change, and society's beliefs as a group are changed by these individuals' actions in the reduction of prejudice. In *Othello*, *Pride and Prejudice*, and *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, society's prejudice is surmounted by love that forms between the characters portrayed in each work. The strength of love over society's values is shown with Othello and Desdemona's relationship in *Othello* by William Shakespeare, with Darcy and Elizabeth Bennett's relationship in *Pride and Prejudice* by Jane Austen, and with Huck and Jim's relationship in *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* by Mark Twain.

The popular play, *Othello*, by William Shakespeare, demonstrates that the love between Othello and Desdemona overcomes the social prejudices of the time. The prejudice of Shakespeare's era is evident in Iago's words:

Even now, now, very now, an old black ram

Is tupping your white ewe. Arise, arise!

Awake the snorting citizens with the bell,

Or else the devil will make a grandsire of you.

(1.1.97-100)

Iago attempts to equate Othello to a lowly animal. Despite Brabantio's opinions, Desdemona loves Othello for his deeds, honor, and bravery in battle. Brabantio allows society's prejudice to control his sentiments toward his daughter, Desdemona. When Othello explains his story, he says "She wished she had not heard it, yet she wished / That heaven had made her such a man. She thanked / me," (1.3.187-189). Desdemona confirms her love for Othello, by saying:

That I (did) love the Moor to live with him
My downright violence and storm of fortunes
May trumpet to the world. My heart's subdued
Even to the very quality of my lord.

(1.3.283-286)

Desdemona, learning of Othello's deeds and character, loves Othello. She judges Othello for his individual character, not society's prejudice. After Othello has murdered his wife and committed suicide due to Iago's influence, Lodovico says, "Myself will straight aboard, and to the state / This heavy act with heavy heart relate" (5.2.434-435). This implies that Lodovico and his men are saddened by these events. They believe it is a tragedy, although Othello and Desdemona's union is not accepted by society. Shakespeare portrays Desdemona as an innocent and honorable woman who obediently gave up her life, and portrays Othello as an honest and ethical man. Othello decides that he must kill himself after learning that his wife is innocent. They are portrayed ultimately as good people, not derelicts of society. Shakespeare allows the audience to understand the effects of a society's prejudiced views concerning certain individuals through tragedy, and shows that those prejudices are erroneous.

The motif of love transcending prejudice is made evident in *Pride and Prejudice* through social status and social class. Prejudice is portrayed in this book through social opinions and

views. The importance of social status in the book is illustrated by many characters. Prejudice is used by these individuals to judge others. Miss Bingley believes that an accomplished woman must have certain characteristics. Darcy says, "All this she must possess, and to all this she must yet add something more substantial, in the improvement of her mind by extensive reading" (Austen 29). The society considers the maintenance of social status to be important. Lady Catherine, Darcy's aunt, hears of Darcy's interest in marrying Elizabeth Bennet. She says to Elizabeth, "Because honour, decorum, prudence, nay, interest, forbid it ... Your alliance will be a disgrace; your name will never be mentioned by any of us" (Austen 266). For Lady Catherine, social class is an important factor. For Darcy, a man of high status, his love for Elizabeth Bennet transcends social prejudice. Darcy realizes the faults of his sense of superiority over Elizabeth. He eventually cherishes Elizabeth's individual characteristics such as loyalty, courage, and honesty, over social status. A man's character is more important than social status to Elizabeth, who is capable of recognizing prejudice in others. Darcy confesses to Elizabeth, "As a child I was taught what was *right*, but I was not taught to correct my temper. I was given good principles, but left to follow them in pride and conceit" (Austen 276). He realizes that his judgement of others is based on society's vision of superior social class. When Darcy learns of Elizabeth's character, he falls in love. Elizabeth refuses his marriage proposal, despite the possibility of her acquiring social status and wealth. Elizabeth gradually changes her view of Darcy after learning of his good character, and falls in love with him. Lady Catherine, the Bingley sisters, and others eventually tolerate and accept their union. Austen displays how individuals' regard for others' qualities triumphs over social prejudice.

Mark Twain demonstrates that an individual can overcome social prejudice through friendship in *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*. Twain's story is set in a time when slavery was

legal in the southern states. Huckleberry's father is illiterate and unmannered, but he believes that the negroes are his inferior. He says, "but when they told me there was a State in this country where they'd let that nigger vote, I drew out. I says I'll never vote agin" (Twain 28). Continuing his speech, he says, "I says to the people, why ain't this nigger put up at auction and sold?" (Twain 29). Huckleberry's father is not greatly knowledgeable of the professor. His beliefs demonstrate the general beliefs of many others of his time. Twain shows the irrationality and hypocrisy of social prejudice with the words of Huckleberry's father. When referring to Jim, Huckleberry mentions an old saying, "give a nigger an inch and he'll take an ell" (Twain 110). Huckleberry believes that he is wrong in helping Jim escape slavery, and believes that he will go to hell as a result. Twain makes a statement about the nature of mobs. When a mob tries to lynch Colonel Sherburn, he says, "The idea of *you* lynching anybody! It's amusing. The idea of you thinking you had pluck enough to lynch a *man*!" (Twain 171). Sherburn makes a speech about the mentality of an average person, and the army, saying "The pitifulest thing out is a mob; that's what an army is—a mob; they don't fight with courage that's born in them, but with courage that's borrowed from their mass," (Twain 172). Friendship overcomes the prejudice of a mob when Huckleberry helps Jim. Huck learns of Jim's good character during their journeys and he loves Jim as a friend. Huckleberry plans to bring Jim into slavery again, but does not continue with his plan. He values his friendship more than he values his society's interests. When Jim is sold into slavery by the duke and king, Huckleberry says, "I was a trembling, because I'd got to decide, forever, betwixt two things, and I knowed it" (Twain 242). Huckleberry chooses to free Jim, saying "All right, then, I'll *go* to hell!" (Twain 242). Huck resolves his learned prejudice when he decides to free Jim. When the doctor learns of Jim's assistance in treating Tom Sawyer, he believes that Jim should be rewarded for his good

character. Twain demonstrates that the consideration of an individual is stronger than the prejudices of a crowd.

Love overcoming prejudice is effectively portrayed through these narratives. In each work, social prejudices are questioned as individuals interact with others. Individual characteristics become more significant and triumph over prejudice, enabling these individuals to feel love for those who are the object of societal prejudice. The strength of their relationships discounts the prevailing social standards of the time. Prejudice is surmounted by these individuals' experiences of questioning the social norms and values of their society. The judgement of society causes these individuals to overcome the prejudices of society. As a result of their experiences, the characters realize the incorrectness of their beliefs and social norms, and overcome prejudice.

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