

## “The story of the bad little boy”

Samuel Langhorne Clemens, known by his pen name Mark Twain, was an American writer, humorist, entrepreneur, publisher, and lecturer. He was lauded as the "greatest humorist the United States has produced," and William Faulkner called him "the father of American literature".

In the 19th Century particularly, good boys are supposed to enjoy the fruits of the righteousness, and bad boys were destined for eternal damnation, at least according to Sunday School books, but according to Mark Twain, life often contradicted expectation.

It shows the life of a young boy named Jim. He is negligent and mischievous boy who has a “ charmed life”. He grows up doing evil deeds such as disobeying his mother, stealing and causing trouble for others in which he is never punished for. On the other hand, there is a boy named James in Sunday School books. He is also mischievous but realized what he has done something wrong, he asks for forgiveness from the person, unlike Jim. Eventually Jim grows up, gets married and kills his family in order to get money and is never accounted for what he has done. The reader sees the outcome of Jim's charmed life, as he grows up getting everything he wants and in the end is known as the universally respected person in the village and belongs to the Legislature.



**The appearance vs reality** theme found in the short story between Jim and James. Jim and James share similar qualities that make them appear the same, such as age, gender, the role they play as naughty little boys and their names which are meant to sound similar. Jim and James also have differences, James portrayed in the Sunday school books shows to ask for repentance and forgiveness when he sins, however Jim bask in the glory and does not seem to care for the consequence of his actions. **The Fate vs. Free will** theme shows how in the end, Jim lives a happy life, the reader would expect that a boy who is vicious, mean, a bully, and destructive could not possibly be successful in adulthood; Jim's story says otherwise – The ending also connects to the appearance vs. reality theme as both go hand in hand in the short story.

**Jim** – A young child who enjoys hurting people, the story revolves around him.

**The Good Moral Boy** – Basically the opposite of Jim, a good boy who is the ideal child

**The Abusive Mother** – A cruel mother that isn't that fond of loving her son.

**The Sister:** Jim's younger sister that seems to be suffering more than the other members of the family.

There are many symbols in this story. **The Sunday school books**, represent the differences between reality and



fiction as every story have a lesson to teach. **The good moral student**, he is punished by his teacher for something he didn't do. The good suffer as the bad smiles. **The jar of jam** represents what could bring both joy and discomfort. Jim eats all the jam and it makes him happy, he then fills it with tar. This is to get his mother angry and further increases his joy.

## “ The story of the good little boy”

“The Story of the Good Little Boy” is Mark Twain's way of making an observation on literature written by poor authors. He noticed that there was an underlining trend in some stories that people who do good things will always win and get the better of the “bad” characters. Twain is saying that for good literature to be created, you must mirror reality. And in reality, this is not the case.

In “The Story of the Good Little Boy,” there is a youth named Jacob Blivens who desires nothing more than to be absolutely good, just as the “good” characters in the stories he reads. He sees all these characters being good and having amazing things happen to them in their lives, and this is his wish. But, unfortunately, everything in Jacob's life ends in catastrophe and despair. He tries with all his strength to be good, but the bad children always get the better of him; yet he still believes that he can be like the characters in his books. Finally, one day he is walking by a factory and sees some other children picking on



some dogs. When he attempts to help them, he ends up taking the blame for it. Then, the factory explodes, sending pieces of him and the dogs flying. As ridiculous and pointless as this story may seem, Twain wrote this work not for entertainment but to make a point about the difference between realism and common literature.

**The story** explains the contradiction between people's views and the world and how the world actually is.

Humans make mistakes but still try to do their best in everything, especially in **good** deeds. However, even those who do wrong often bring success from it, which is why they may strive to do evil or negative goals. Jacob always tries to be good like the boys in books but only experienced failure and disappointment in return. He struggles with internal conflicts because life is not like the books he read.

There are several names of people mentioned in this story. Those are **Jacob Bilvens, Jim Blake, Tom Jones and Alderman Mc Welter**.

The theme of this story is **bad luck of pious boy**. Life is not like the media portrays it to be. Good does not always prevail. Good example of “**nice guys finish last**”, **innocence of children** and **being good doesn't necessarily bring rewards** are some important themes.

There are two symbols in this story . **Books** represented the distorted reality in story. **Aldermen Mc Welter** and his



actions represent reality. There are some literary elements like **Irony**, **Speaker's tone** (sympathetic yet critical), **foreshadowing**, **hyperbole**, **alliteration** etc.

The pair of short stories followed two boys who lived in the same town and came from similar backgrounds. However, while one boy tries to imitate the good people in the Bible, the other is openly and honestly evil. They both take different paths in life and their endings were not conventional at the time in writing. Twain used the stories to mock and parody the romantic style of writing at times, but the stories have a deeper meaning than it lets on. In Mark Twain's short stories, 'The Story of the Good Little Boy' and 'The Story of the Bad Little Boy', the author mocks the fiction of romantic writing, portrays his reality that humans are inherent 'evil' beings, and blatantly reminds that reality is cruel and brutal to those who do not necessarily deserve it. In both short stories, Mark Twain implied that humans are inherently evil and selfish beings. Both the good little boy and the bad little boy come from extremely similar backgrounds, their personalities and beliefs are very different from each other.

