



COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF CHILDHOOD IN AMERICAN AND UZBEK LITERATURE BASED ON THE NOVELS "THE ADVENTURES OF TOM SAWYER" AND "SHUM BOLA"

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ABSTRACT

This article presents a comparative literary analysis of childhood representation in American and Uzbek literature through the examination of Mark Twain's "The Adventures of Tom Sawyer" (1876) and Gafur Gulom's "Shum Bola" (1936). The study employs comparative literary methodology to identify thematic parallels and cultural divergences in the portrayal of boyhood experiences, social environments, and moral development across two distinct literary traditions. The analysis reveals that despite significant temporal, geographical, and cultural differences, both novels share fundamental concerns regarding childhood autonomy, social criticism, and the tension between individual freedom and societal constraints.

Introduction

The representation of childhood in literature serves as a powerful lens through which societies examine their values, social structures, and visions of human development. Childhood narratives across different cultures reveal both universal experiences of growing up and culturally specific understandings of what it means to be a child within a particular social context [1]. Mark Twain's "The Adventures of Tom Sawyer" and Gafur Gulom's "Shum Bola" represent seminal works in their respective literary traditions, each offering profound insights into the childhood experience within American and Uzbek cultural frameworks. While these novels emerged from vastly different historical and geographical contexts—nineteenth-century small-town America and early twentieth-century colonial Central Asia—they share remarkable thematic resonances that warrant scholarly investigation. The purpose of this study is to conduct a comparative analysis of childhood representation in these two canonical texts, examining how each author constructs the child protagonist, depicts the relationship between childhood and society, and employs humor and social criticism through the perspective of young narrators. This comparative approach contributes to the growing body of scholarship on world literature and cross-cultural literary studies, demonstrating how geographically distant literary traditions can illuminate shared human concerns while maintaining their distinctive cultural voices [2].

Methodology And Literature Review

This study employs comparative literary analysis as its primary methodological framework, drawing upon the theoretical foundations established by scholars of comparative literature who emphasize the importance of examining texts across cultural and linguistic boundaries [3]. Scholarly attention to "The Adventures of Tom Sawyer" has been extensive, with researchers examining Twain's novel from perspectives ranging from its critique of antebellum Southern society to its innovative use of child consciousness as a narrative device [4]. Critics have noted how Twain employs Tom's adventures to satirize adult hypocrisy, religious pretension, and social conformity while simultaneously celebrating the imaginative freedom of childhood. The novel's influence on American literature and its establishment of the "bad boy" genre have been thoroughly documented in literary scholarship [5]. Research on Gafur Gulom's "Shum Bola" has developed primarily within Uzbek literary studies, where the novel is recognized as a masterpiece of twentieth-century Uzbek prose [6]. Scholars have examined Gulom's portrayal of pre-revolutionary Central Asian society through the eyes of his young protagonist, noting how the author uses childhood perspective to critique social inequalities, religious hypocrisy, and colonial conditions. The autobiographical elements of the novel and its role in establishing realistic prose traditions in Uzbek literature have received significant scholarly attention [7]. However, comparative studies examining these two novels together remain limited, creating a gap in the scholarship that this analysis seeks to address. The theoretical framework for this comparison draws upon studies of childhood in world literature that identify common patterns in how different cultures represent the transition from childhood to adulthood, the relationship between children and social institutions, and the symbolic functions of child protagonists in social criticism [8].

Results And Discussion

The comparative analysis of "The Adventures of Tom Sawyer" and "Shum Bola" reveals significant parallels in the construction of child protagonists and their relationships to surrounding social environments. Both Tom Sawyer and the unnamed narrator of "Shum Bola" are characterized by their mischievous nature, quick intelligence, and fundamental good-heartedness despite their troublemaking tendencies. These protagonists occupy marginal positions within their respective societies—Tom as an orphan raised by his aunt, and the Uzbek boy as a child from a poor family navigating the hierarchical structures of traditional mahalla life. This marginality provides both characters with a unique perspective from which to observe and critique adult society, a narrative strategy that allows the authors to expose social hypocrisies through the innocent yet perceptive eyes of childhood [9]. The social environments depicted in both novels function as microcosms of their broader national contexts, with the Mississippi River town of St. Petersburg reflecting antebellum American society and the traditional Uzbek mahalla representing pre-revolutionary Central Asian urban life. Both authors employ detailed realistic description to recreate the textures of daily life in these settings, from the religious observances and educational practices to the economic activities and social hierarchies that structure community existence. The child protagonists in both texts navigate these environments with a combination of conformity and resistance, accepting certain social norms while subverting others through their pranks and adventures.

A central thematic parallel between the novels is their treatment of the tension between individual freedom and social constraint. Tom Sawyer's adventures—his escape to Jackson's Island, his exploration of the cave with Becky Thatcher, his pursuit of treasure with Huckleberry

Finn—represent assertions of childhood autonomy against the civilizing pressures of school, church, and domestic life. Similarly, the protagonist of "Shum Bola" engages in various schemes and adventures that challenge the authority of adults and the rigid social expectations of traditional society. Both novels suggest that such childhood rebellion, while often punished, represents a vital expression of human creativity and independence that society ultimately benefits from preserving rather than completely suppressing. The role of humor in both texts serves multiple functions, providing entertainment while simultaneously enabling serious social criticism. Twain's satirical treatment of Tom's Sunday school experiences and the town's response to the boys' supposed drowning exposes religious hypocrisy and emotional superficiality in American society. Gulom employs similar techniques in his depiction of religious figures and social authorities, using his young narrator's observations to reveal the gap between professed values and actual behavior in traditional Central Asian society [10]. This shared use of childhood perspective as a vehicle for social satire demonstrates a common literary strategy across culturally distinct traditions.

Conclusion

The comparative analysis of "The Adventures of Tom Sawyer" and "Shum Bola" demonstrates that despite their emergence from vastly different cultural, historical, and geographical contexts, these novels share fundamental concerns in their representation of childhood. Both works employ mischievous child protagonists whose adventures serve simultaneously as entertainment and as vehicles for social criticism, revealing hypocrisies and injustices in their respective societies through the perspective of innocent yet perceptive young observers. The parallels identified in this analysis—the construction of marginal child protagonists, the detailed depiction of social environments as cultural microcosms, the exploration of tensions between freedom and constraint, and the use of humor for satirical purposes—suggest universal patterns in how literature across cultures approaches the representation of childhood experience. These findings contribute to comparative literary studies by demonstrating the value of examining canonical texts from different national traditions in dialogue with one another, revealing both shared human concerns and culturally specific approaches to common themes. Future research might extend this comparative framework to examine additional childhood narratives from world literature, further developing our understanding of how different societies construct and represent the formative years of human experience through literary art.

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