Childhood Experience Essay, Research Paper

Childhood experienceHave you ever thought of an answer to reply to your children, when they ask you, What was the world like when you were a child? , What things that happened that impressed you most when you were a child? or How interesting is your childhood experience? . Everybody must have had their childhood. Some of the experiences may cause them to smile, or even laugh, while some of them may bring back bitter memories. It is always hard to express the childhood incidents or experience in a clear and interesting way, since they were past memories that happened long time ago. Moreover, when a person has grown up, they will never have the same feeling which they might have in their childhood. However, the authors Harper Lee and Mark Twain can express their own childhood inside the stories they created, in a lively and realistic way. The two novels To Kill a Mockingbird and The Adventures of Tom Sawyer have a very similar characteristic. It is the way they describe a person s childhood experience, and their feelings and new knowledge that come out from those experiences. This characteristic, however, has given me a big revelation after reading the two novels. The novels show that the childhood experience of a person has a great positive influence on his personality, behaviour, and ways on dealing with others. This idea has been shown by the authors in both novels. From the novel To Kill a Mockingbird, one could discover that innocent behaviour and misunderstanding can lead a child to view a person or thing incorrectly and incompletely. This behaviour can also lead a child to a wrong perspective. In the first part of To Kill a Mockingbird, the main characters Scout, Jem, and Dill thought that the Radley family and their member, Boo Radley, as strange and unnatural human beings. They described Radley s house as That is a sad house…. (Harper Lee, 48). This is a fact they heard from their neighbours. Until one day, their neighbour Miss Maudie s house was found on fire. While Scout was standing outside in the cold watching the fire, someone from behind her and put a blanket around her shoulders. Later, Scout and Jem realized that there was only one person in town who had not fought to put out the fire — Boo Radley. Scout asked, Thank who? (Harper Lee, 76). Jem replied, Boo Radley. You were so busy looking at the fire you didn t know it when he put the blanket around you. (Harper Lee, 76) It was then that Scout and Jem started to realize that Boo Radley was basically a kind and normal person, and that he was not a strange person as they thought at the beginning of the story. This incident proves that misunderstanding can bring a child into wrong perspectives, and that experience through time helps to solve the problem. There is also another proof from the novel The Adventures of Tom Sawyer. In the story, the main character, Tom Sawyer, thought that school was a restriction to him and therefore he decided to skip school and found his world of freedom from the forest and rivers. His aunt, Polly said, Didn t you want to go in a-swimming, Tom? (Mark Twain, 13) Afterwards, Aunt Polly tried to punish him for skipping school by ordering him to wash a long, huge fence. However, this did not have any effect on Tom. He continued to do what he thought was right — skips classes. He did not seem to care why his aunt Polly punished him. This is, once again, another example to show how innocent behaviour can lead a child to have wrong perspective and behaviour. Although it has been said that innocent behaviour usually leads a child into the wrong path, there are still some exceptions. Having said that, it should be remembered that the nature of a child really helps to develop his or her own positive personality and behaviour, together with their childhood experience. For example, in To Kill a Mockingbird, the character Scout, was a smart and clever girl. However, she did not get any close friends other than her new friend Dill and her brother Jem, as seen from the story. From the scene where Scout argued and embarrassed Mr. Cunningham, her friend Walter Cunningham s father, dissuading him from trying to kill Tom Robinson, one can discover her talent in speaking and arguing with people. She said, Hey, Mr. Cunningham, how s your entailment gettin along? (Harper Lee, 155), reminding Mr. Cunningham that Scout s father, Atticus, had once helped him with legal problems. Scout continued to talk about young Walter, and how she once lent him money to buy lunch when the boy had nothing to eat. I go to school with Walter, he s your boy, ain t he? (Harper Lee, 156) This kind of friendly talk made Mr. Cunningham ashamed and finally left the jail instead of killing Tom Robinson. This nature helped her to grow up and become more mature through the experiences she encountered throughout the whole plot. Another example can be found from the novel The Adventures of Tom Sawyer. In the story, Tom Sawyer was a typical boy in his time. He was an imaginative, active, and smart boy. From the incident where he tried to use his clever technique to make other boys complete the punishment given out by Aunt Polly as mentioned in the previous paragraph, one can discover how smart and clever he was. Tom said, Oh you think you are mighty smart, don t you? I could lick you with one hand tied behind me, if I wanted to. (Mark Twain, 15) showing his confidence in his own talent and knowledge. From the fact that he hated and skipped school all the time, he had experienced many unpredictable happenings that helped him to understand, to learn more, and to develop his own perspective.

After discussing how the innocent behaviour of a child and his own nature may have positive influence on him, it s now time to talk about the results that came out from their childhood experience. From the two novels discussed in the previous paragraphs, the results can be seen clearly from either the characters in the story or the children nowadays. After they went through a journey of maturity, they finally became young adults who were responsible, caring, and intelligent. Examples can be drawn from the novel To Kill a Mockingbird. After the two major incidents happened in the story, namely, the Boo Radley incident and Tom Robinson s Trial, the character Scout started to realize that how important it was to understand a person and to have tolerance among people. Scout felt sympathy and grief after knowing the death of Tom Robinson, because he had committed no crime. She realized why her father Atticus told her not to kill a mockingbird; it s because it was a harmless bird and innocent of any wrong. Miss Maudie explained to the children, Mockingbirds don t do one thing but sing their hearts out of us. (Harper Lee, 102) and that it d be a sin to kill a Mockingbird. Scout knew that a bad person like Bob Ewell in the story, could attack people physically, but he had no real power to control people s minds. Another example can be found on The Adventures of Tom Sawyer. Tom Sawyer was scared after the scene of murder by Injun Joe in the cemetery. He then knew that Injun Joe was a very very bad person. He therefore stood up in the witness box to point out Injun Joe s crime. Also, from the last part of the story, Tom s care for his girlfriend, Becky, is evident. Tom took care of Becky when they were both in the cave. Becky felt she would die soon and made Tom promise that he would return to her and hold her hand when he could find a way out. She said, Can you find the way, Tom? It s all a mixed-up crookedness to me. (Mark Twain, 191). Tom kissed her and tried to act brave as he left her to try to find a way out of the cave. He grew even mature after all these bitter and unpleasant experiences. Sometimes it is very hard to find out why the childhood experience of a person has a formative, or even a great positive influence, on either their personality, behaviour, and ways on dealing with others. The two novels discussed above did give a very precise and clear answer to this question. However, to understand why this kind of experience may cause positive influence on a child, one must not only look from their innocent behaviour and their nature; other factors also count. It may be the era in which the child was born, or his family background, or may be the inherent personality of the child. Nobody except a psychologist may have a perfect solution to this question. But one hard core can be declared, the above question is one of the ideas which flow out from the two novels To Kill a Mockingbird from Harper Lee, and The Adventures of Tom Sawyer from Mark Twain. The two authors have done an excellent job in proving the idea discussed above — childhood experience of a person has a positive influence on their perspectives and values.