

Social Mobility and Character Development in Horatio Alger's Novel

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Ragged Dick and the Urban Setting of Social Mobility

The story was set in a frame when Central Park was still an uneven area. It was full of workers cabins, and one of those was a boot-black known as Ragged Dick. At the age of three, her mother died, and his father went to sea. Dick shines the boots of the businessman in his daytimes, spends his evenings at the Old Bowery theatre watching inexpensive plays, and wraps himself in newspapers at night to sleep. (Alger, 1868/2004)

After a time of struggle, he started living in a deteriorated room and later shared it with another boy, named Henry Fosdick who was once well-cared. This was perfect for both of them. Dick got the education and Fosdick reached a place to live. They found a way to be successful in their lives. Their struggle teaches us to create our sound fortune; whatever we do in our lives, we should do it with our greatest strength. We should become a saver but be benevolent, not cheat or steal from anybody, and not drink or smoke. If we want to succeed in our lives, we need to follow these steps. (Alger, 1868/2004)

The tale has shown the social construction of class in different ways. The shoe polishers fit in the lowest group of people in the city. Many of them are on the streets, and hardly any possess more than the clothing on their backs. They use their cash as speedily as they produce it. The functioning group of people is offered as being patient about dirt, untrained, and occasionally morally wrong. Their communication is unprocessed, their delivery is messy, and they employ a vast deal of jargon. (Literature and Its Times, n.d.)

Poverty, Work, and the Formation of Dick's Character

Dick was shown as a poor young boy who had to earn for going to a cheap theatre and had a difficult life. He used to sleep in a wooden container full of hay, where he would sleep very peacefully. The piece of clothing he wore was torn, old, and huge. He didn't have any other dress to change and used to cover his head with a cap that would hide his uncombed hairs. Apparently, he was a dirty boy who wouldn't do anything to be clean, but he was still the favorite of people due to his open, straightforward nature, and hard work. He was earning money by polishing people's shoes. He hasn't

been portrayed as a perfect boy, as he used tricks on people and had the weakness of overspending money by going to theatres, treating his friends, and smoking. The people living in the street have the idea of smoking to protect them from the cold. But he never involved him in mean faults. He could only make it for a cheap restaurant to have food. The village where Dick used to live in had hardly two stores, and they had the most reasonable things. (Alger, 1868/2004)

Another young boy, Johnny Nolan was also a booted polisher and a deprived child. He didn't have money once, not even food. He once had worked on a farm. He had plenty of food, a good wage, and a better place to sleep but he ran away from there because he was addicted to the noise of the streets and being independent out there. His father had a severe problem with drinking. His drinking problem made him do worse things, even putting his child's life in danger. The writer also mentioned the case of taxes taken from the poor. (Alger, 1868/2004)

The middle class has the significance of learning and a clean, well-kept look. Their outfit was more improved than the community in the functioning group and used more cash on clothes and their look, though they do not primarily make more than the inexperienced employees. An industrious shoe polisher like Dick makes more than the initial salary in the store that appoints Henry Fosdick. More broadly, people from the skillful work or capitalist group of pupils tend to be welcome in eating places when unclean middle-class citizens are not. A lot of the boys who are born into this team see Dick and Henry as being the shoe polishers. (Literature and Its Times, n.d.)

Honesty, Street Knowledge, and Resistance to Exploitation

Once his customer gave him a bill instead of money and referred him to a shopkeeper. Dick went to the shopkeeper to exchange the bill. The shopkeeper tried to cheat him and told him that it was a fake bill. When he later went to the shopkeeper with the customer, he found out that it wasn't fake, the shopkeeper tried to fool him. (Alger, 1868/2004)

On the other hand, the upper class is important in terms of learning, religious ethics, promptness, and good-quality clothing. They are not portrayed as conducting any unconstructive thing to bootblacks or other people of middle-class workers. However, they talk very sophisticatedly and civilized and do not use jargon or inappropriate language. (Literature and Its Times, n.d.)

Dick's customers were portrayed as wealthy gentlemen. Dick Greyson worked in an office at Fulton Street. Others were the reporters in the Tribune establishment at Spruce Street and Printing House Square. Frank was discovering New York City and he hired Dick to guide him through the city. He felt shy about the clothes of Dick, as Dick had to guide him through the city. He provided him with his old clothes which were better than what Dick was wearing. Dick was very grateful to Frank for his pleasure. (Alger, 1868/2004)

New York City, Opportunity, and the Geography of Advancement

The writer represented the neighbor of the Astor house as the most crowded area, full of busses, carriages, and vehicles. It wasn't easy to cross such roads. That place had so many significant buildings in the city. He also mentioned that Chatham Street which was full of big shops, industries, traders, and hospitals was settled. At some stores, the salesmen were standing at the door to invite people to their stores, and some had the sale going on. All these shops are profiting and making their businesses healthy. (Literature and Its Times, n.d.)

In spite of being clattering good twists that can actually motivate, the general view of Horatio Alger's stories is that they are pretty chronological parts of a set with a fundamental significance of determination and starting further. Up until now, achievement can be uncomplicated if you have the critical fundamentals of individual nature and ambition, with a small piece of fortune thrown in. (Hendler, 2017)

Ragged Dick was written at the moment in time when Herbert Spencer's stories on 'the survival of the fittest' had some persuasion in America. So far, Alger's scheme of achievement has incorporated a tough constituent of public liability. You may produce cash, although, in the end, it should keep support in society. Alger creates Dick to be an instance of an empathetic private enterprise. Most of the bad characters in his tales are rich young men who have not at all had to make any attempt to develop their personalities. Alger's dominant stance was that determined for achievement is not merely to acquire a chance but could provide us stubbornness, authority, stinginess, and cheerfulness – traits which cannot be purchased. (Hendler, 2017; Literature and Its Times, n.d.)

References

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