



## THE COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF THE IMAGE OF THE CHILD IN ENGLISH AND UZBEK LITERATURE (MARK TWAIN AND KUDOYBERDI TOKHTABOYEV

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### ABSTRACT

*This article presents a comparative analysis of the representation of the child in Uzbek and English literature through the works of Khudoyberdi Tokhtaboyev and Mark Twain. The image of the child occupies a central position in children's literature and it serves as a reflection of social values, moral education, and cultural identity. Focusing on "Sariq devni minib" and "The Adventures of Tom Sawyer", the study explores how child protagonists function actively within their respective cultural and social contexts. Using comparative literary analysis, the research identifies both universal and culture-specific features of childhood representation.*

Childhood has long been recognized as one of the most significant themes in literary studies, particularly within children's and young adult literature. In literary texts, the child is rarely depicted as a neutral figure, rather, the image of the child often functions as a symbolic and ideological construct through which societies represent moral values, cultural norms, and social tensions. As scholars of children's literature argue, childhood in literature reflects not only the experiences of young protagonists but also adult perceptions of innocence, morality, and social order (Hunt, 2010; Nikolajeva, 2014).

In many literary traditions, the child serves as an ethical perspective through which the contradictions and injustices of the adult world are interpreted. The child's perspective allows authors to question established norms, critique authority, and explore ethical dilemmas in ways that are both rich in emotional appeal and philosophically significant. Consequently, the image of the child has become a key object of study in literary theory, cultural studies, and comparative literature.

In English literature, Mark Twain is widely regarded as one of the most influential writers who shaped the literary image of childhood. His novels such as "The Adventures of Tom Sawyer" (1876) and "The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn" (1884) present child protagonists whose experiences challenge social norms, moral values, and rigid authority structures of nineteenth-century American society. Twain's children are adventurous,

rebellious, and reflective, representing a vision of childhood rooted in freedom and experiential learning.

However, in Uzbek literature, Khudoyberdi Tokhtaboyev occupies a similarly prominent position in the development of children's prose. His works portray children as emotionally sensitive, morally conscious, and responsible individuals influenced by national traditions and collective values. Unlike purely didactic narratives, Tokhtaboyev's fiction integrates fantasy, realism, and psychological depth to convey ethical lessons indirectly.

Although both authors are central to their national literary traditions, comparative studies examining the image of the child across Uzbek and English literature is limited. Existing scholarship tends to analyze Twain and Tokhtaboyev within national frameworks, the cross-cultural differences of childhood representation underexplored. This article seeks to address this gap by offering a comparative analysis of child images in the works of Tokhtaboyev and Twain.

This study is grounded in the theoretical principles of comparative literature, which emphasize the analysis of literary phenomena across cultural, linguistic, and national boundaries. Comparative literature allows for the identification of both universal patterns and culture-specific features in literary representation.

The concept of childhood in this article is approached not as a purely biological category but as a cultural and literary construct shaped by historical, social, and ideological factors. Scholars such as Hunt (2010) and Nikolajeva (2014) argue that children's literature reflects adult conceptions of childhood and serves as a medium for transmitting social values and moral norms. Methodologically, the study employs textual and close reading analysis of selected works, thematic analysis focusing on morality, freedom, and social relations, comparative literary analysis to identify similarities and differences, cultural-contextual interpretation to situate the texts within their traditions. These methods enable an examination of how child protagonists function within different narrative and cultural frameworks.

In "Sariq devni minib", Khudoyberdi Tokhtaboyev constructs the image of the child through a combination reality and fantasy. The figure of the "Yellow Giant" serves as a symbolic representation of the child's inner fears, desires, and moral struggles. Through imagined dialogues and encounters with the giant, the child protagonist engages in a process of self-reflection and ethical growth. Fantasy in this novel does not function as an escape from reality, but it operates as a psychological mechanism through which the child processes real-life challenges. This narrative strategy reflects a deep understanding of children's cognitive and emotional development, where symbolic thinking is essential. As a result, moral lessons develop naturally from the narrative rather than being imposed didactically (Tokhtaboyev, 1978/2019).

In *Mungli ko'zlar*, Tokhtaboyev presents a more realistic and socially grounded image of the child. The protagonist's "sorrowful eyes" symbolize heightened moral sensitivity and emotional awareness. The child perceives injustice, indifference, and moral failure in the adult world, even when unable to express these perceptions through language. In addition, the child indicates ethical sensitivity, revealing social problems through emotional response rather than rational critique. Tokhtaboyev positions the child within family, school, and community

structures, emphasizing the child's integration into social structures. This portrays the author's belief that moral development occurs through social interaction and the responsibility of the society (Tokhtaboyev, 1983).

On contrast, Mark Twain's "The Adventures of Tom Sawyer" presents childhood as a space of freedom, creativity, and resistance to authority. Tom Sawyer's character is defined by curiosity, imagination, and a persistent desire to escape adult-imposed constraints. The famous whitewashing-the-fence episode exemplifies Tom's ability to transform obligation into play, thereby Tom uses his creativity and cleverness to resist adults' control (Twain, 1876/2014).

Twain employs humor and irony to depict childhood as an alternative moral and social order. Tom does not directly rebel against adult rules, instead, he reinterprets them according to a child's logic. This narrative strategy allows Twain to critique social norms while preserving the playful tone of children's fiction.

In "The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn", Twain deepens his exploration of childhood by focusing on moral conflict and ethical decision-making. Huck Finn's internal struggle over whether to help Jim escape slavery represents one of the most profound moral dilemmas in American literature. Although society teaches Huck that aiding Jim is wrong, his morals leads him to value humanity above legal and social standards (Twain, 1884/2014). Through Huck's moral awakening, Twain elevates the child above the adult world in ethical terms. Childhood becomes a space where genuine moral insight is possible precisely because it is less constrained by society.

A comparative analysis of Tokhtaboyev's and Twain's works reveals both shared and divergent approaches to the image of the child. In both literary traditions, the child can make an ethical judgement independently rather than being a passive obedient of adult instruction. Imagination, emotional depth, and ethical sensitivity are central features of childhood representation in both authors' works.

However, significant differences emerge in ideological orientation. Tokhtaboyev's child is closely connected to collective values, social harmony, and national identity. Morals are framed as a process of integration into the community. In contrast, Twain's child emphasizes individual freedom, skepticism toward authority, and personal moral choice. Narratively, Tokhtaboyev relies on symbolic fantasy and emotional realism, while Twain employs satire, irony, and social realism. These differences reflect different patterns of culture between Eastern collectivist and Western individualist traditions in portraying childhood.

In conclusion, this article has demonstrated that the image of the child in Uzbek and English literature functions as both a universal and culturally specific literary construct. Through a comparative analysis of Khudoyberdi Tokhtaboyev and Mark Twain, the study reveals how childhood serves as a moral reflection, social critique, and cultural expression. By incorporating Uzbek children's literature into an international comparative framework, the article contributes to the diversification of literary studies of childhood representation..

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