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Patriotism

Patriotism is a key component within our society, allowing us to show our pride for our great country. It pushes us into doing what is right for our country, and believing what appears to be the best for America. Author Mark Twain builds upon this by displaying it as a fabricated force, used in such a way that it can be twisted into righteous and unrighteous ways. Through the use of metaphor, allusions, and chasms, Twain establishes his position on how patriotism can be used beyond what it is truly intended for, and that we need to be careful about how we extend it.

From the start, Twain draws a comparison between patriotism and religion, using an extended metaphor stating "it is agreed, in this country, that if a man can arrange his religion so that it perfectly satisfies his conscience, it is not incumbent upon him to care whether the arrangement is satisfactory to anyone else or not," (Twain). Through this, he proposes that religion does not satisfy all, instead only some, and disregards others. That it can be adjusted to satisfy whoever in a specific situation, and can be man-manipulated within that process. He further argues that it "is merely a religion -- love of country, worship of country, devotion to the country's flag and honor and welfare," (Twain), bringing light to the similarities between patriotism and religion. Yes, it is not an official religion, but it does tend to operate like one. Just like how Christians devote themselves to God, Americans devote themselves to their

country. Twain here portrays it in the sense that people follow this "religion" almost blindly without realizing it. Twain believes that this is "furnished, cut and dried, to the citizen by the politician and the newspaper," (Twain), implying that politicians and the media created this and take advantage of this to push their policies onto Americans in such a way that they wouldn't even think to question the morality or of them.

Beyond the religious comparisons, Twain also integrates allusions to showcase how patriotism appears to be constantly changing. Moreover, he states that it "moved the people of this country to oppose the Mexican War; then moved them to fall in with what they supposed was the opinion of the majority -- majority-Patriotism -- and go down there and fight," (Twain), showcasing the change in heart seen throughout the course of this war. Beforehand, it was used to oppose the war, to prevent action from being taken. But when the majority of people slowly started to strive for action to be taken, suddenly patriotism was in favor of the war. Just like that, it went from one side to the other. As well, he recounts how "before the Civil War it made the North indifferent to slavery and friendly to the slave interest; in that interest it made Massachusetts hostile to the American flag, and she would not allow it to be hoisted on her State House -- in her eyes it was the flag of a faction. Then by and by, training swung Massachusetts the other way, and she went raging South to fight under that very flag and against that foretime protected-interest of hers," (Twain), detailing how patriotism overall tends to contradict itself, in such a way that as ideas change, patriotism also changes to fit those newly changed ideas.

To convey the adaptability that patriotism brings, Twain makes great use of chasms. He states, "it can turn bad morals to good, good morals to bad; it can destroy principles, it can re-create them; it can debase angels to men and lift men to angelship," (Twain), allowing his lines to flow together much more efficiently and to establish great rhythm and a cohesive structure. His

purpose through this is to explain how there really are only two sides to patriotism, right and wrong, and that the control is for the most part in the hands of the politicians.

Patriotism is a complex matter, as it can be used for both good and bad. Twain, through the use of metaphor, allusions, and chasms, conveys his perspective on it, seeing it as a manufactured "religion" used to satisfy the majority when needed; further, to then be used as a tool by politicians to push through policies that would otherwise not get their way through at all. Patriotism can be used for both good and bad, and it is truly important that we use patriotism the way it is intended, and be aware of what others do with it. We cannot let others take advantage of it, for that defies the ideals that America was founded upon. By not doing this, we lose our country, and we lose ourselves.