

The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn



by Mark Twain

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eNotes: Table of Contents

1. [The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn: Introduction](#)
2. [The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn: Twain's Seven Dialects](#)
3. [The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn: Overview](#)
4. [The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn: Mark Twain Biography](#)
5. [The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn: Summary](#)
6. [The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn: Summary and Analysis](#)
 - ◆ [Chapter 1 Summary and Analysis](#)
 - ◆ [Chapters 2 and 3 Summary and Analysis](#)
 - ◆ [Chapters 4 and 5 Summary and Analysis](#)
 - ◆ [Chapters 6 and 7 Summary and Analysis](#)
 - ◆ [Chapters 8 and 9 Summary and Analysis](#)
 - ◆ [Chapters 10 and 11 Summary and Analysis](#)
 - ◆ [Chapters 12 and 13 Summary and Analysis](#)
 - ◆ [Chapters 14 and 15 Summary and Analysis](#)
 - ◆ [Chapters 16 and 17 Summary and Analysis](#)
 - ◆ [Chapters 18 and 19 Summary and Analysis](#)
 - ◆ [Chapters 20 and 21 Summary and Analysis](#)
 - ◆ [Chapters 22 and 23 Summary and Analysis](#)
 - ◆ [Chapters 24 and 25 Summary and Analysis](#)
 - ◆ [Chapters 26 and 27 Summary and Analysis](#)
 - ◆ [Chapters 28 and 29 Summary and Analysis](#)
 - ◆ [Chapters 30 and 31 Summary and Analysis](#)
 - ◆ [Chapters 32 and 33 Summary and Analysis](#)

- ◆ [Chapters 34 and 35 Summary and Analysis](#)
 - ◆ [Chapters 36 and 37 Summary and Analysis](#)
 - ◆ [Chapters 38 and 39 Summary and Analysis](#)
 - ◆ [Chapters 40 and 41 Summary and Analysis](#)
 - ◆ [Chapters 42 and 43 Summary and Analysis](#)
7. [The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn: Quizzes](#)
 - ◆ [Chapter 1 Questions and Answers](#)
 - ◆ [Chapters 2 and 3 Questions and Answers](#)
 - ◆ [Chapters 4 and 5 Questions and Answers](#)
 - ◆ [Chapters 6 and 7 Questions and Answers](#)
 - ◆ [Chapters 8 and 9 Questions and Answers](#)
 - ◆ [Chapters 10 and 11 Questions and Answers](#)
 - ◆ [Chapters 12 and 13 Questions and Answers](#)
 - ◆ [Chapters 14 and 15 Questions and Answers](#)
 - ◆ [Chapters 16 and 17 Questions and Answers](#)
 - ◆ [Chapters 18 and 19 Questions and Answers](#)
 - ◆ [Chapters 20 and 21 Questions and Answers](#)
 - ◆ [Chapters 22 and 23 Questions and Answers](#)
 - ◆ [Chapters 24 and 25 Questions and Answers](#)
 - ◆ [Chapters 26 and 27 Questions and Answers](#)
 - ◆ [Chapters 28 and 29 Questions and Answers](#)
 - ◆ [Chapters 30 and 31 Questions and Answers](#)
 - ◆ [Chapters 32 and 33 Questions and Answers](#)
 - ◆ [Chapters 34 and 35 Questions and Answers](#)
 - ◆ [Chapters 36 and 37 Questions and Answers](#)
 - ◆ [Chapters 38 and 39 Questions and Answers](#)
 - ◆ [Chapters 40 and 41 Questions and Answers](#)
 - ◆ [Chapters 42 and 43 Questions and Answers](#)
 8. [The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn: Essential Passages](#)
 - ◆ [Essential Passages by Character: Jim](#)
 - ◆ [Essential Passages by Theme: Moral Law vs. Civil Law](#)
 9. [The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn: Characters](#)
 10. [The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn: Themes](#)
 11. [The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn: Style](#)
 12. [The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn: Historical Context](#)
 13. [The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn: Critical Overview](#)
 14. [The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn: Character Analysis](#)
 15. [The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn: Essays and Criticism](#)
 - ◆ [Huckleberry Finn: An Overview](#)
 - ◆ [Beyond the Popular Humorist: The Complexity of Mark Twain](#)
 - ◆ [The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn: History of Controversy](#)
 - ◆ [Huck's Final Triumph](#)
 - ◆ [The Role of Jim in Huckleberry Finn](#)
 16. [The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn: Suggested Essay Topics](#)
 17. [The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn: Sample Essay Outlines](#)
 18. [The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn: Compare and Contrast](#)
 19. [The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn: Topics for Further Study](#)
 20. [The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn: Media Adaptations](#)
 21. [The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn: What Do I Read Next?](#)
 22. [The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn: Bibliography and Further Reading](#)

The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn: Introduction

Although probably no other work of American literature has been the source of so much controversy, [Mark Twain's](#) *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* is regarded by many as the greatest literary achievement America has yet produced. Inspired by many of the author's own experiences as a river-boat pilot, the book tells of two runaways—a white boy and a black man—and their journey down the mighty Mississippi River. When the book first appeared, it scandalized reviewers and parents who thought it would corrupt young children with its depiction of a hero who lies, steals, and uses coarse language. In the last half of the twentieth century, the condemnation of the book has continued on the grounds that its portrayal of Jim and use of the word "nigger" is racist. The novel continues to appear on lists of books banned in schools across the country.

Nevertheless, from the beginning *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* was also recognized as a book that would revolutionize [American literature](#). The strong point of view, skillful depiction of dialects, and confrontation of issues of race and prejudice have inspired critics to dub it "*the* great American novel." Nobel Prize-winning author [Ernest Hemingway](#) claimed in *The Green Hills of Africa* (1935), for example, that "All modern American literature comes from one book by Mark Twain called *Huck Finn*. . . . There was nothing before. There has been nothing as good since."

The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn: Twain's Seven Dialects

Twain's Seven Dialects in the "Explanatory"

Twain's "Explanatory" in *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* was written to clarify the different dialects used in the novel. Ironically, his explanation has been the subject of confusion and controversy among critics ever since it was published. The varying dialects have often been difficult to differentiate, and some inconsistencies are apparent in the speech patterns of the characters. It is easy to see why critics could view the "Explanatory" as just another one of Twain's comic witticisms they had come to associate with his writings. The consistencies of the characters' nonstandard speech patterns far outweigh the inconsistencies, however, and this leads us to believe Twain was serious about the seven dialects used in the novel.

David Carkeet, who has done extensive research in Twain's use of literary dialects, believes "Clemens's recall was imperfect; his attempt at consistency, at least in Huck's dialect, falls short." Carkeet attributes this "imperfect recollection" to the fact that Twain wrote three-fifths of the novel after he had put the book aside for two years. This led to several pronunciation changes, particularly in the speech of Huck, in the last three-fifths of the novel.

Carkeet concludes that the seven dialects were assigned to the following characters:

Missouri Negro: Jim (and four other minor characters)

Southwestern: Arkansas Gossips (Sister Hotchkiss et al.)

Ordinary "Pike County": Huck, Tom, Aunt Polly, Ben Rogers, Pap, Judith Loftus

Modified "Pike County": Thieves on the [Sir Walter Scott](#)

Modified "Pike County": King

Modified "Pike County": Bricksville Loafers

Modified “Pike County”: Aunt Sally and Uncle Silas Phelps

Representing the living speech of Twain’s day, the following examples of the seven dialects typify a uniqueness of language found in the areas along the Mississippi River.

Missouri Negro: Jim “Goodness gracious, is dat you, Huck? En you ain’ dead-you ain’t drownded-you’s back ag’in? It’s too good for true, honey, it’s too good for true. Lemme look at you chile, lemme feel o’ you. No, you ain’ dead! you’s back ag’in, ‘live en soun’, jis de same ole Huck-de same ole Huck, thanks to goodness!”

Extremist form of the backwoods Southwestern dialect: Arkansas Gossips (Sister Hotchkiss) “Look at that-air grindstone, s’I; want to tell me’t any cretur ‘t’s in his right mind’s a-goin’ to scrabble all them crazy things onto a grindstone? s’I.”

Ordinary “Pike County”: Huck “My folks was living in Pike County, in Missouri, where I was born, and they all died off but me and pa and my brother Ike.”

Modified “Pike County”: Thief on the Sir Walter Scott, Jake Packard “I’m unfavorable to killin’ a man as long as you can git aroun’ it, it ain’t good sense, it ain’t good morals. Ain’t I right?”

Modified “Pike County”: King “Well, I’d ben a-runnin’ a little temperence revival thar ‘bout a week . . . and business a-growin’ all the time, when somehow or another a little report got around last night that I had a way of puttin’ in my time with a private jug on the sly.”

Modified “Pike County”: Bricksville Loafers “Gimme a chaw ‘v tobacker, Hank.”

“Cain’t; I hain’t got but one chaw left. Ask Bill.”

Modified “Pike County”: Aunt Sally and Uncle Silas Phelps “Good-ness gracious!” she says, “what in the world can have become of him?”

“I can’t imagine,” says the old gentleman; “and I must say it makes me dreadful uneasy.”

“Uneasy!” she says: “I’m ready to go distracted! He must ‘a’ come; and you’ve missed him along the road. I know it’s so—something tells me so. . . . Why Silas! Look yonder-up the road!—ain’t that somebody coming?”

Twain wrote in the late nineteenth century when literary dialects were the fashion of the times. Although he helped to create the dialectal mode of writing in American literature, he, at the same time, drew from his contemporaries who were following the same tradition. It is impossible to imagine *Huckleberry Finn* written in standard English. Twain’s writings were not made up of the dead language of the European past, but exuded the living colloquial speech of his day. This is what has made *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* a truly American novel.

The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn: Overview

List of Characters

Huckleberry Finn—Narrator of the novel. Son of the town drunkard. The Widow Douglas, his guardian, tries to “sivilize” him.

Jim—Miss Watson’s black slave. Huckleberry Finn’s traveling companion on the raft. Widow Douglas—Huck’s guardian while his pap is gone. She is determined to civilize Huck.

Miss Watson—The widow’s sister who tries to improve Huck’s manners.

Tom Sawyer—Huck’s best friend who conjures up intriguing plans derived from his imagination and the books he reads.

Pap—Huck’s drunken father who kidnaps Huck and locks him in a cabin.

Aunt Polly—Tom Sawyer’s aunt and guardian.

Judge Thatcher—The good-hearted judge who invests Huck’s money.

Tommy Barnes, Jo Harper, and Ben Rogers—Members of Tom and Huck’s gang.

Mrs. Judith Loftus—A lady whom Huck visits while he is disguised as a girl.

Bill and Jim Turner, Jake Packard—Men whom Huck discovers arguing on a sinking ship.

The Grangerfords and the Shepherdsons—Two feuding families. The Grangerfords adopt Huck for a time.

The duke and the king—Two conmen who pretend to be royalty. They join Huck and Jim on the raft. They also appear as impostors at the funeral of Peter Wilks.

Buck Harkness—He tries to turn the people against Colonel Sherburn.

Boggs—Drunkard in Arkansas who is shot by Colonel Sherburn.

Colonel Sherburn—The man who shoots Boggs.

Peter Wilks—A wealthy man who has died. The family is waiting for his brothers from England to attend the funeral.

Mary Jane, Joanna, and Susan—The three nieces of the dead Peter Wilks.

William and Harvey Wilks—Peter Wilks’ two brothers from England whom the duke and the king impersonate.

Levi Bell and Dr. Robinson—A lawyer and a doctor who suspect that the king and the duke are frauds.

Silas Phelps—Aunt Sally’s husband who buys Jim.

Aunt Sally Phelps—Silas Phelps’ wife. Tom Sawyer’s Aunt Sally.

Summary

Mark Twain blends many comic elements into the story of Huck Finn, a boy about 13 years old, living in pre-Civil War Missouri. Huck, the novel’s narrator, has been living with the Widow Douglas and her sister, Miss Watson, in the town of St. Petersburg. They have been trying to “civilize” him with proper dress, manners, and religious piety. He finds this life constraining and false and would rather live free and wild. When his father hears that Huck has come into a large amount of money, he kidnaps him and locks him in an

old cabin across the river. To avoid his father's cruel beatings, Huck elaborately stages his own death and then escapes to Jackson's Island. He finds Jim, Miss Watson's runaway slave, on the island, and the two decide to hide out together. To avoid danger of discovery, they decide to float down the river on a raft they had found earlier. Sleeping during the day and traveling at night, they plan to connect with the Ohio River at Cairo, Illinois, which would lead them north into the free states, where slavery is outlawed. They miss Cairo in the fog one night and find themselves floating deeper into slave territory. While they are searching for a canoe, a steamship hits the raft and damages it. Huck and Jim are separated.

Huck swims ashore where he meets the feuding Grangerfords and Shepherdsons. He claims to be George Jackson, a passenger who fell from a steamboat and swam to shore. After witnessing a violent eruption of the feud in which many people are killed, he finds Jim, and they return to the raft.

They continue down the river. Two conmen, calling themselves a king and a duke, find their way to the raft. In one of the towns the king and the duke impersonate the two brothers of Peter Wilks, who has just died and left a small fortune. Huck thwarts their plan to swindle Wilks' family out of their inheritance. The king and the duke escape, but further down the river the two decide to sell Jim to Silas Phelps, who turns out to be Tom Sawyer's uncle.

Visiting his aunt and uncle, Tom persuades Huck to join him in an elaborate, ridiculous plan to free Jim. Huck prefers a quicker escape for Jim but caves in to Tom's wishes. Only after Tom's plan has been played out, and Jim recaptured, does Tom reveal that Miss Watson had actually freed Jim two months earlier, just before she died. Huck decides to "light out for the Territory," to head west toward the frontier before anyone can attempt to "sivilize" him again.

Estimated Reading Time

The reading of the novel is slowed somewhat by an unfamiliarity with Twain's use of regional dialects and nonstandard English. After the first few chapters, a familiarity with the unique speech of each of the characters should, however, speed the reading process. The reader should be able to finish the novel in approximately 12 hours.

The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn: Mark Twain Biography

Best known as [Mark Twain](#) Samuel Clemens was born 30 November 1835 and raised in Hannibal, Missouri. There he absorbed many of the influences that would inform his most lasting contributions to American literature. During his youth, he delighted in the rowdy play of boys on the river and became exposed to the institution of slavery. He began to work as a typesetter for a number of Hannibal newspapers at the age of twelve. In the late 1850s, he became a steamboat pilot on the Mississippi River. This job taught him the dangers of navigating the river at night and gave him a firsthand understanding of the river's beauty and perils. These would later be depicted in the books [Life on the Mississippi](#) and *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*.

Mark Twain

After a brief stint as a soldier in the Confederate militia, Clemens went out west, where he worked as a reporter for various newspapers. He contributed both factual reportage and outlandish, burlesque tales. This dual emphasis would characterize his entire career as a journalist. During this phase of his career, in 1863, he adopted the pseudonym Mark Twain, taken from the riverboat slang that means water is at least two fathoms (twelve feet) deep and thus easily travelled. His second book, [The Innocents Abroad](#) (1869), a collection of satirical travel letters the author wrote from Europe, was an outstanding success, selling almost seventy thousand copies in its first year. On the heels of this triumph, Clemens married Olivia Langdon and moved to the East, where he lived for the rest of his life. In the East, Clemens had to confront the attitudes of the eastern upper class, a group to which he felt he never belonged. Nevertheless, he did win influential friends, most significantly William Dean Howells, editor of the *Atlantic Monthly*.

Clemens's first two novels, [The Gilded Age](#) (1873), written with Charles Dudley Warner, and [The Adventures of Tom Sawyer](#) (1876), a children's book based on his boisterous childhood in Hannibal, won Clemens widespread recognition. Shortly afterwards, he began to compose a sequel to Tom's story, an autobiography of Tom's friend, Huck Finn. He worked sporadically on the book over the next seven years, publishing more travel books and novels in the meantime. When it was finally published, *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* was an immediate success, although it was also condemned as inappropriate for children. The book draws on Clemens's childhood in Hannibal, including his memories of the generosity of whites who aided runaway slaves, in addition to the punishments they endured when caught. In fact, in 1841, his father had served on the jury that convicted three whites for aiding the escape of five slaves.

In the 1890s, Clemens's extensive financial speculations caught up with him, and he went bankrupt in the depression of 1893-94. With an eye to paying back his many debts, he wrote a number of works, including continuing adventures of Tom Sawyer and Huck Finn. He spent his final decade dictating his autobiography, which appeared in 1924. Clemens died on 21 April 1910.

The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn: Summary

Chapters 1-7: Huck's Escape

Mark Twain begins *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* with a notice to the reader. He identifies Huckleberry Finn as "Tom Sawyer's Comrade" and reminds the reader that this novel resumes where [The Adventures of Tom Sawyer](#) left off: in St. Petersburg, Missouri, on the Mississippi River, "forty to fifty years" before the novel was written (so between 1834 and 1844, before the American Civil War). He tells the reader that several different "dialects are used," which have been written "painstakingly," based on his own "personal

familiarity with these several forms of speech."

The novel's title character, Huckleberry Finn, narrates the story. He summarizes the end of *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer*, in which he and Tom discovered a large amount of stolen gold. He lives now with the Widow Douglas, who has taken him in as "her son," and her sister, Miss Watson. His father, "Pap," has disappeared:

Pap hadn't been seen for more than a year, and that was comfortable for me; I didn't want to see him no more. He used to always whale me when he was sober and could get his hands on me; though I used to take to the woods when he was around.

The widow attempts to "sivilize" Huck and teach him religion. Huck finds her ways confining. Miss Watson nags him to learn to read, to "set up straight," and to behave. Huck remains superstitious, and he mostly resists the women's influence; after bedtime, he escapes out his window to join Tom Sawyer for new adventures. The boys meet Jim, "Miss Watson's nigger," and they play a trick on him. Jim, like Huck, is superstitious, and when he wakes up he thinks that witches played the trick.

Tom, Huck, and other boys meet in a cave down the river, and form a Gang, a "band of robbers." But Huck tires of the Gang's adventures, because they are only *imaginary*. When Pap shows up in St. Petersburg, he causes Huck some *real* problems. Pap wants Huck's reward money from the end of *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer*. Signs of his son's increased civilization irritate him: the proper clothing, and the ability to read and write. Huck secures his money by "selling" it to Judge Thatcher. Huck's father brings a lawsuit against the judge, but "law" is "a slow business." Eventually Pap kidnaps Huck, and takes him up the river to a shack on the Illinois side of the river. At first, Huck enjoys the return to freedom, but living with his father has its difficulties; "by-and-by pap [gets] too handy with his hick'ry," and he either leaves Huck locked in the cabin alone, or beats him. Huck decides to escape, and cuts a hole in the cabin. After his father lays in some supplies, Huck lays his plans. He catches a canoe as it floats down the river. Left alone, Huck stages his own murder: he kills a wild pig and leaves its blood around the shack and on his jacket, then leaves a fake trail showing a body being dragged to the river. He then loads up the supplies and takes off down river. He stops to camp on Jackson's Island, two miles below St. Petersburg.

Chapters 8-18: Down the River

On the island, Huck feels liberated. Seeing his friends search for his body troubles him only slightly. After a few days, he discovers that he is not alone on the island: Jim has run away from Miss Watson, who had threatened to sell him down the river. Jim's escape troubles Huck, but together they enjoy a good life: fishing, eating, smoking, and sleeping. They find a house floating down the river, with a dead man in it, from which they take some valuables. Huck appreciates the lore that Jim teaches him, but still likes to play tricks. He leaves a dead rattlesnake on Jim's bed, and Jim gets bitten by the snake's mate. He recovers, but interprets the bite as the result of Huck touching a snake-skin—a sure bringer of bad luck. Jim suspects that there is more to come.

One night, Huck dresses as a girl and goes across to town to "get a stirring-up." He discovers that there is a reward offered for Jim and that the island is no longer a safe hiding place. He rushes back to the island, and he and Jim float down the Mississippi, sleeping by day and drifting by night. Living this way, they get to know each other, and Jim tells Huck about his children. They also have several adventures. They board a wrecked steamboat and steal some ill-gotten goods from three thieves on board, inadvertently leaving them to drown.

Huck and Jim get separated in a fog. They call out, but for hours at a time, they seem lost to each other. Huck falls asleep, and when he awakens, he sees the raft. He sneaks aboard and convinces Jim it was all a dream. When Huck points to evidence of the night's adventure and teases him for being gullible, Jim teaches Huck a lesson:

"When I got all wore out wid work, en wid de callin' for you, en went to sleep, my heart wuz mos' broke bekase you waz los', en I didn' k'yer no mo' what become er me en de raf. En when I wake up en fine you back ag'in, all safe en soun', de tears come, en I could 'a' got down on my knees en kiss' yo' foot, I's so thankful. En all you wuz thinkin' 'bout wuz how you could make a fool uv ole Jim wid a lie. Dat truck dah is *trash*, en trash is what people is dat puts dirt on de head er dey fren's en makes 'em ashamed."

It was fifteen minutes before I could work myself up to go and humble myself to a nigger; but I done it, and I warn't ever sorry for it afterwards, neither I didn't do him no more mean tricks, and I wouldn't done that one if I'd 'a' knowed it would make him feel that way.

Chapters 19-33: The King and Duke

Huck and Jim plan to drift down to Cairo, Illinois, and then steamboat North, but they realize that they passed Cairo in the fog. A steamboat crashes into their raft and separates them again. Huck swims ashore and is taken in by the Grangerford family, who are embroiled in a feud with another local family, the Shepherdsons. He lives with the Grangerfords, while Jim hides in a nearby swamp and repairs the raft. When the feud erupts into new violence, and Huck's new friend, Buck Grangerford, is killed, Huck and Jim set off once again down the river.

From the film *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, starring Mickey Rooney, MGM, 1939.

Huck and Jim rescue two "rascallions," who identify themselves as a duke and a king. They take the prime sleeping quarters on the raft and expect Jim and Huck to wait on them. They employ different schemes to make money along the river. They attend a religious camp-meeting, and the king takes up a collection for himself. In "Arkansaw," they rent a theater and put on a Shakespearean farce called "The Royal Nonesuch." Next, a boy they meet confides that an inheritance awaits one Mr. Wilks, an English gentleman, in his town. Seeing their opportunity, the king and duke assume the identity of Mr. Wilks and his servant, and go to claim the money. Huck feels increasingly uneasy about their unscrupulous behavior, and vows to protect their

victims. He hides the cash they try to steal. When the real Mr. Wilks arrives, Huck and Jim try—but fail—to escape without the rascally "king" and "duke."

Next, the king and duke betray Jim as a runaway slave, and "sell" their "rights" to him to a farmer, Silas Phelps. Huck realizes what has happened and determines to rescue Jim. He seeks the Phelps farm. By a stroke of luck, they are relatives of Tom Sawyer's, and mistakenly identify Huck as Tom, come to pay a visit. When Tom arrives a few hours later, he falls in with Huck's deception, pretending to be his brother Sid.

Chapters 34-43: Jim's Rescue

Tom agrees to help Huck rescue Jim. He insists that the escape follow models from all of his favorite prison stories: he smuggles in items past the unwitting Phelpses. He makes Jim sleep with spiders and rats, and write a prison journal on a shirt. He also warns the Phelpses anonymously. In the escape, Tom gets shot in the leg. Jim and Huck each return and are caught in the act of seeking help for Tom.

Finally Tom reveals that Jim is in fact no longer a slave: Miss Watson died and set him free in her will. Tom's Aunt Polly arrives and clears up the case of mistaken identity. Huck, upset by the trick played on him and Jim, accepts Tom's explanation that he wanted "the *adventure*" of the escape. Tom gives Jim forty dollars for his trouble. Now that everyone knows he is still alive, Huck worries about Pap, but Jim tells him not to bother: Pap was the dead man in the house floating down the river. Huck ends the novel with a plan to "light out for the Territory ahead of the rest" before the women try again to "civilize" him.

The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn: Summary and Analysis

Chapter 1 Summary and Analysis

New Characters

Huckleberry Finn: the protagonist and narrator

Widow Douglas: Huck's guardian

Miss Watson: the widow's sister

Tom Sawyer: Huck's best friend

Summary

Huck Finn introduces himself as a character who has already appeared in Mark Twain's earlier novel, *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer*. He briefly reviews the end of Tom Sawyer's story, reminding the reader how he and Tom found money that robbers had hidden in a cave. Judge Thatcher has invested the money for them, six thousand dollars apiece in gold, and the interest alone is now worth a dollar a day, a large amount of money at that time.

The Widow Douglas has taken Huck in as her son, and is trying to civilize him by teaching him proper dress and proper manners. To make matters worse, the Widow's sister, Miss Watson, lives with her and relentlessly nags Huck about his behavior.

Huck is lonely and discouraged despite the Widow Douglas' efforts to give him a good home. He accidentally kills a spider and is sure it will bring him bad luck. Soon after the clock strikes midnight, Huck sneaks out of his upstairs bedroom window to answer Tom Sawyer's mysterious call.

Discussion and Analysis

Twain's choice of a 13-year-old narrator supplies much of the humor in the novel. The narrator, Huck Finn, reports the events and ideas through his own eyes, and often his innocence and truthfulness contrast sharply with the Widow Douglas' sense of propriety. In the first chapter, Miss Watson holds herself up to Huck as the epitome of a virtuous woman. Although Huck does not see the contradiction between her intolerance of him and her belief that she was going to the "good place" (heaven), he naively replies, "Well, I couldn't see no advantage in going where she was going, so I made up my mind I wouldn't try for it." It is this kind of frankness that allows Twain to comment on the hypocrisy of society through the eyes of a young and innocent narrator.

Through Huck's encounters with Miss Watson and the Widow Douglas, Twain satirizes the religious sensibility of the day. Huck finds the widow's story of Moses boring and unrelated to everyday life. Miss Watson's concept of the "good place," where one would go around playing a harp and singing all day, does not appeal to him at all. Besides, they required their slaves to come in for prayers before they went to bed at night, a flagrant contradiction to the principles of Christianity in which they professed to believe. In this novel, Twain satirizes the pious Christians who professed kindness and civility, but who bought and sold slaves as property before the Civil War.

The theme of individual freedom is brought out in Huck's aversion to the Widow Douglas and her attempts to change him. Later in the novel, the journey down the river will be an escape from the hypocrisy of society's corrupt institutions and a search for freedom from that society for both Huck and Jim.

Chapters 2 and 3 Summary and Analysis

New Characters

Jim: Miss Watson's black slave

Jo Harper and Ben Rogers: two members of Tom and Huck's gang

Tommy Barnes: the youngest member of the gang

Summary

As Huck and Tom Sawyer tiptoe through the garden, Huck stumbles over a root, which gets the attention of Jim, Miss Watson's slave. He calls out, but the boys, afraid of being caught sneaking out at night, become extremely quiet. Jim sits down between them but falls asleep before he is aware that they are near enough to touch. Tom cannot resist the temptation to play a trick on Jim. He hangs Jim's hat in the tree, knowing that Jim will wonder how it got there. The next day, seeing his hat in the tree, Jim conjures up stories about witches and how they rode him around the world. He is proud of this and consequently the envy of all the other slaves in the neighborhood.

Having sneaked out, Huck and Tom meet Joe Harper, Ben Rogers, and the other members of Tom's "band of robbers." Tom Sawyer's gang is patterned after the "pirate books," and "robber books" that he has read. They take a skiff down the Mississippi River for several miles to explore the cave that Tom has found earlier. As they organize their gang, the boys take an oath to keep the gang a secret, signing their names in blood. If anyone tells the secret, that boy and his family must be killed. Tom sets the rules. They will become masked highwaymen, stopping stages and carriages, killing the people on board and robbing them of their possessions. Tom wants to kidnap people for ransom, but neither he nor the other boys know what "ransom" means.

When Huck returns early in the morning, his clothes are very dirty, and he receives a scolding from Miss Watson. There is news in town about a drowned body found up the river. Most people think it is Huck's father, but Huck is sure that it is not.

The boys play robbers for a month but soon tire of it, since they haven't killed anyone. Furthermore, Tom's "Spaniards" and "A-rabs" with hundreds of elephants, camels, and mules, loaded down with diamonds, turn out to be only a Sunday school picnic. Tom blames the incident on magicians who have, with the help of genies, changed the Spaniard and A-rab scene into a Sunday school picnic, but Huck feels it is only "one of Tom Sawyer's lies."

Discussion and Analysis

In these chapters we meet Jim, a prominent character in the novel. His superstitious beliefs are a recurrent thematic element throughout the novel. In this case, it has been his bad luck to have ridden around the world with witches. Twain's satire of the institution of slavery will reach its greatest height through the character of Jim, and his warm human relationship with Huck, in subsequent chapters.

Tom Sawyer is introduced in this chapter as a foil to Huck. Tom's imaginative but impractical romantic notions, taken from the books he reads, are challenged by Huck when he goes to the woods to rub the old tin lamp. When the genie does not appear, he decides that the whole thing is just another one of "Tom Sawyer's lies." Twain is satirizing Tom's romantic adventure stories. Tom must do everything by the book, and the height of absurdity is his insistence upon kidnapping people for ransom when he doesn't even know what the word means.

The Mississippi River is introduced as a symbolic image. Twain contrasts the freedom and peacefulness of life on the river with the corruption of society on the shore. In one short line we sense the river's power: "the river, a whole mile broad, and awful still and grand." Life on the river will ultimately become an idyllic escape for Huck and Jim.

Chapters 4 and 5 Summary and Analysis

New Characters

Judge Thatcher: former judge who invests Huck's money for him

Pap: Huck's father

The new judge: tries to reform Pap

The new judge's wife: takes Pap into her house

Summary

Huck has been going to school for about three or four months and has learned to read and write. Although he plays "hooky" occasionally, he is learning to tolerate school. He is also becoming more comfortable living with the widow.

Huck has almost forgotten his father until one day he sees his footprints in the snow. Pap's bootheel has left the imprint of a cross made of nails, used to ward off the devil. Afraid his father has come for his money, Huck wastes no time getting to Judge Thatcher's whom he begs to take the six thousand dollars and one hundred fifty dollars interest. The judge, surprised and puzzled, finally buys the "property" from him for a dollar.

Huck then consults Jim, who relies on his hairball from the stomach of an ox to tell Huck's fortune. Jim listens while the hairball talks to him, but he does not get a straight answer. Huck's fears are not unfounded, however; when he goes up to his room, he finds Pap waiting for him. Huck is startled and afraid, but Pap's dirty, sickly image soon calms his fears, and he speaks right up when his father starts harassing him about his fine clothes and his education. Pap, however, threatens to "take it out of him" for trying to be better than his own father. He grabs the dollar the judge had given Huck, so he can go downtown for some whiskey. He tries to get the rest of Huck's money from Judge Thatcher, but the judge ignores his request. Later Judge Thatcher and the Widow Douglas go to court to try to win custody of Huck, but the new judge grants custody to Pap. Pap promises to "turn over a new leaf." The new judge and his wife give him dinner, a new coat, and a clean bed, but he sneaks out in the middle of the night and trades his new coat for a jug of whiskey. He gets drunk, falls off the porch, and breaks his arm.

Discussion and Analysis

Huck is slowly becoming accustomed to the proper dress and manners he had such an aversion to earlier in the novel. Huck's changed attitude toward school and living in a civilized manner makes his father's sudden appearance seem even more untimely.

Huck's fear that his father is back in town drives him to see Judge Thatcher. Huck realizes that Pap has come for his six thousand dollars. If he gets rid of the money, Huck is sure his father will leave him alone. His vivid memories of his father's beatings prompt him to give the money to Judge Thatcher. At first the judge seems confused by the immediacy of Huck's secret request, but when the judge arranges to buy his "property" for one dollar he seems to understand Huck's dilemma. He is afraid Pap will be after him for the money.

Superstition is a recurrent theme in these chapters. After Huck spills the salt, he is certain that bad luck will be the result. His fears are justified when he sees Pap's footprints in the snow. In desperation he goes to Jim for help. Jim's hairball, taken from the stomach of an ox, speaks to him, but the spirit inside the hairball keeps wavering from one answer to another. The hairball tells him that perhaps Pap will stay or perhaps he'll leave. Twain's subtle mockery of superstition is reflected in the tone of this scene.

Pap's attitude, contrary to that of a normal, loving parent, is one of jealousy and anger because of his son's accomplishments. He scolds Huck for his ability to read and write only because he does not want him to be better than his father.

Chapters 6 and 7 Summary and Analysis

Summary

Huck continues to go to school despite the thrashings from his father. With a firm resoluteness he is determined to continue his education, more to spite his father than for any other reason. Pap is waiting around for the court to decide about Huck's money, but it is a slow process. He hangs around the Widow Douglas' house too much, and she threatens to make trouble for him. Angered by her attempts to intimidate him, he decides to kidnap Huck and head for the Illinois side of the river in a skiff. They settle in an old abandoned cabin where he keeps Huck locked up when he goes into town for supplies. In spite of all this, living in the woods is relaxing and easy for Huck, and he wonders why he had ever liked the civilized life at the widow's.

Pap sometimes locks him in the cabin for days at a time, however, and beats him habitually. One night he gets drunk and chases Huck around the cabin with a knife. When his father threatens to hide him in an even more desolate area, so the widow will never be able to find him, he begins to plan an elaborate scheme of escape by faking his own death.

The “June rise” of the river brings with it a canoe loosened from its moorings somewhere upstream. Thinking it might come in handy, Huck quickly hides it in the bushes along the bank. Later Pap finds a log raft floating down the river. He locks Huck in the cabin and promptly goes back into town to sell the logs. Huck then begins his plan of escape. Before Pap has crossed the river, Huck has sawed his way out of the cabin. He loads his canoe with the necessary supplies, then shoots a wild pig, smashes the door with an ax, and scatters the pig’s blood around. He covers the ax with hair and blood to make it look as if he had been murdered. He then hides in the canoe until dark. Just as he is leaving, he hears his pap coming back unexpectedly. Staying in the shade of the riverbank, he escapes unnoticed and heads toward Jackson’s Island in the middle of the river. He arrives just before breakfast.

Discussion and Analysis

Twain’s characterization of Pap in these chapters is a sad commentary on a society that would grant custody of a child to such a father. After his father’s drunken harangue in the middle of the night, and his earlier threat to hide him in an even more remote area, Huck decides he must escape to save his life.

He prefers the freedom of the woods to living in the civilized manner of the Widow Douglas. His freedom is, however, tainted by his father’s frightening behavior. He wants to leave, but he is sure he does not want to go back to the widow. Consequently, his plan of escape must convince them both that he is dead. He plans each step with intricate detail. He wishes Tom Sawyer were there to throw in the “fancy touches,” but Tom’s romantic plan, based on the books he had read, would probably have failed, as it did in the raid on the Sunday school picnic. Here again, Twain is satirizing Tom’s false romantic notions. Huck is practical and down-to-earth, and Twain endorses his actions by portraying him as a survivor.

Chapters 8 and 9 Summary and Analysis

Summary

Huck has a comfortable feeling as he wakes up on Jackson’s Island the next morning. Too lazy to get up and cook breakfast, he watches the sun filter through the tall trees, spotting the ground with “freckled places.” His peace is soon interrupted, however, with the loud “boom” of the cannon being fired from a ferryboat loaded with prominent townspeople who are looking for his murdered body. The cannon is fired over the water periodically to make Huck’s supposed dead body come to the surface. Since he has had no breakfast, he is getting hungry, but he does not dare risk starting a fire because he is afraid they will see the smoke. He suddenly remembers that loaves of bread, filled with quicksilver, are also used to locate drowned bodies. Snagging one of the loaves with a stick, he removes the quicksilver and eats the bread for breakfast. The ferryboat skirts the shore of the island, sounding the cannon occasionally, while its passengers look for Huck’s washed-up body. After an uneventful search, the boat finally leaves.

Three days pass and Huck gets lonely. He decides to explore the three-mile-long island. He feels satisfied that the different types of berries and green summer grapes that he finds will come in handy, but he is suddenly startled by the ashes of a campfire that is still smoking. Terrified, he runs back to his camp, hides his possessions in his canoe, and climbs a tree. After two hours he decides to come down and paddle to the Illinois side of the river, but after arriving he soon hears the voices of other campers. Afraid they will spot him, he goes back to the island. After a fearful, sleepless night, he resolves to find out who is on the island with him. When he discovers the spot where he had seen the ashes, he notices a tall man wrapped in a blanket still sleeping. Hiding in the bushes, Huck waits and soon realizes it is Miss Watson’s slave, Jim. Relieved and happy, Huck jumps out, startling Jim, who thinks that he is seeing Huck’s ghost. Huck convinces him that he is, indeed, very much alive; he tells Jim the story of his escape. Jim, in turn, also confesses that he has “run off.” Huck promises not to tell, in spite of the fact that people will call him a “low-down Abolitionist.” Jim explains that he had seen slave traders in the area and overheard Miss Watson say she was tempted to sell him down the river for eight hundred dollars.

Huck and Jim move their belongings into a cave in a high bluff that Huck had found earlier while he was exploring the island. Here they are sheltered from thunderstorms and hidden from people who might happen to come to the island. The move seems to come just in time, for it begins to rain and the river continues to rise for ten or twelve days, flooding the low spot where Huck's camp had been before. They explore the island in their canoe, and one night they find a large raft that has floated down in the rising waters.

Another night a two-story frame house floats by. They climb into the top story and find many useful items. As they are rummaging around, they run into a dead man who has been shot in the back. Jim covers him with old rags and asks Huck not to look at his ghastly face. They load their new-found possessions into the canoe and head back to the island.

Discussion and Analysis

The playful, relaxed tone at the beginning of Chapter 8 is set in juxtaposition to the preceding chapter where Huck frantically escapes from the clutches of his abusive father. It is noteworthy that he does not, however, run into the waiting arms of the Widow Douglas. Twain's theme of individual freedom is apparent in the contrast of the natural life on the island where Huck is "comfortable and satisfied," to the respectable, hypocritical life on the shore where he faces the tyranny of his father and the Widow Douglas. Although the island offers peace and freedom, by the same token it is also the agent of loneliness and fear. This is true when Huck cannot sleep for fear of the dangers that might be connected to the smoking campfire he has discovered. He has left behind all of society, but now he is lonely. The island and the river, symbolic of freedom, are also subjected to dangerous river currents and treacherous storms, but it is at those times that Huck's language is at its most artistic level.

"And here would come a blast of wind . . . and then a perfect ripper of a gust would follow along and set the branches to tossing their arms as if they was just wild; and next, when it was just about the bluest and blackest—fst! it was as bright as glory . . . and then go rumbling, grumbling, tumbling, down the sky towards the under side of the world, like rolling empty barrels down-stairs."

This poetic description of a frightening thunderstorm is followed by his words to Jim. "I wouldn't want to be nowhere else but here." To Huck the constraints of society are missing on the island and that is all that matters.

Huck quickly makes his decision to help Jim escape from slavery even though people would call him a "low-down Abolitionist." Throughout the novel, Huck encounters this moral dilemma several times. The choice between the hypocritical values of society and Huck's friendship with Jim is the central conflict of the novel. This is also where Twain employs his most biting satire. One example is the comment Jim makes about being poor. He decides that he is not poor now because he owns himself, and he is worth eight hundred dollars.

Superstition is shown as pervading the society of Huck's day. Shooting cannons to bring a dead body to the surface seems the ultimate satiric treatment of the theme of superstition, particularly since the participants are the educated townspeople. Ironically, the floating bread on the water finds Huck as it was meant to do. Similarly, the house that floated down with the floodwaters of the river supplied Huck and Jim with many items for their survival on the island.

Chapters 10 and 11 Summary and Analysis

New Characters

Mrs. Judith Loftus: a lady whom Huck visits in town

Summary

The next morning Huck wants to discuss the dead man he and Jim had seen in the two-story frame house, but Jim says talking about it will bring bad luck. Huck argues that touching a snakeskin with his hands was supposed to have brought bad luck too, but to the contrary they have found all those useful items in the floating house and eight dollars besides. They have, in his opinion, had nothing but good luck. Jim's predictions come true, however, when a rattlesnake bites him that evening. Huck plays a joke on Jim by putting a dead rattlesnake in his blanket. When Jim goes to bed, the snake's mate is curling around the dead snake and bites Jim in the heel. Jim's leg is swollen for four days, and Pap's whiskey comes in handy for the pain.

Huck is getting bored on the island and decides to go into town to see what is happening. Jim likes the idea but cautions him to go at night so he will not be seen. He suggests that Huck disguise himself as a girl. Thinking it is a good idea, Huck dresses in the calico gown and sunbonnet they had found earlier in the floating house.

Trying hard to concentrate on being a girl, Huck paddles to town in his canoe and finds the house of a woman who has been in town only two weeks. Passing as Sarah Williams, he tells her his mother is ill, and he is looking for his uncle's house. She insists it is too dark for a girl to be out alone, and she wants Huck/Sarah to wait so her husband can escort him to his uncle's house.

Huck learns the latest gossip as he waits. Although Mrs. Loftus is new in town, she has already heard of Huck's supposed murder and Jim's escape. She tells him that at first people thought it was Pap who murdered Huck, but later, after Jim ran away, he became the murder suspect and there is a three hundred dollar reward offered for Jim. She has seen smoke on Jackson's Island, and her husband is going over after midnight to check out her suspicions that Jim might be hiding on the island.

When Huck hears this, he tries to stay calm but suddenly forgets his name is Sarah Williams. When she throws him a ball of lead, he claps his legs together to catch it in his lap. Since girls would spread their legs to catch a ball in their skirt, Mrs. Loftus realizes Huck is a boy. He finally admits it but tells another story about being an orphan who was being abused by his stepfather, so he ran away and decided to live with his uncle. She finally lets him go, telling him to be sure to contact her, Mrs. Judith Loftus, if he needs any help.

He quickly heads back to the island, makes a fire in his old campsite, and goes back to the cave. Jim is already asleep. He warns him to get going because "They're after us." Without a word, Jim hurriedly gets to work packing the raft and the canoe. Huck checks to see whether there is a strange boat on the river. When he sees that all is clear they slip away in dead silence.

Discussion and Analysis

In Chapter 10 the theme of superstition is again brought out when the rattlesnake bites Jim. Jim thinks his bad luck is attributed to the fact that Huck has touched a snakeskin with his bare hands a few days ago, but Huck knows the real reason. He is aware that he acted irresponsibly when he put the dead rattlesnake in Jim's blanket for a joke. Although it is too late, he remembers that the mate of a dead snake will come later and curl around it. Sorry for what he has done, Huck calls himself a fool and does not tell Jim it is his fault because he knows it would hurt him. In these chapters we begin to see Huck's growing concern for Jim's welfare. When Mrs. Loftus tells Huck that people in town think Jim is Huck's murderer, Huck is shocked. One can almost see his hand clasp over his mouth after his short retort, "Why he—." He hopes Mrs. Loftus has not noticed because he feels he should keep quiet to protect Jim. By contrast, Huck responds with little emotion to the suggestion that "Some think old Finn done it himself." In light of Huck's relationship with his father, the idea does not surprise him.

Huck's hurried return to the island and his warning to Jim that "they're after us," shows the close relationship that has already formed between them. In reality they are after Jim but in Huck's close identity with Jim, it never occurs to Huck that he and Jim are not in this together.

Chapters 12 and 13 Summary and Analysis

New Characters

Jim Turner: robber and potential informer on the *Walter Scott*

Bill and Jake Packard: robbers conspiring to kill Jim Turner

Captain: watchman of the ferryboat

Summary

After traveling all night, Huck and Jim tie up to a towhead on the Illinois side of the river. The towhead, a sandbar thick with cottonwood trees, is an ideal spot to hide during the day and watch the steamboats go up and down the river. Killing time until dark, Huck tells Jim all about his conversation with the woman on the shore. He explains that he had built the campfire to throw the woman's husband off track, but Jim maintains that if her husband was as smart as she obviously was, he would have used dogs to track a runaway slave.

When they are sure it is dark, Jim builds a wigwam in the middle of the raft for protection from the hot sun and the rain. In the middle he builds a firebox in order to keep warm on cool nights. They also build an extra steering oar and a stick to hang a signal lantern for the steamboats coming downstream. Since the river is still in flood stage, the boats traveling upstream against the current are no problem to them. They are taking the easy water on the sides.

They travel for five nights, drifting with a strong four-mile-an-hour current before they come upon the brilliant lights of St. Louis. Huck goes ashore every night for supplies and buys staples such as bacon but he "lifts a chicken" and "borrows a watermelon." They also shoot wildlife with their gun. All in all, they eat very well.

Five nights below St. Louis they run into a fierce thunderstorm. From their wigwam shelter they spot a wrecked steamboat in the glare of the lightning. Despite Jim's warning to leave it alone, Huck has an itching desire to go aboard to see what he can find. Jim finally gives in, however, and soon they are groping in the dark toward the "texas" containing the pilothouse and officers' quarters. When they see a light and hear voices, Jim is ready to go back, but Huck's curiosity gets the best of him when he hears a loud voice cry out: "Oh, please don't, boys; I swear I won't ever tell!" A loud argument ensues, and, although Jim has already gone back to the raft, Huck reasons that Tom Sawyer wouldn't go back now and neither will he. Huck creeps closer and sees two looters who are ready to kill their partner in crime, Jim Turner, because he has threatened to inform the authorities.

Seeing the seriousness of the situation, Huck backs away into a stateroom, but Bill and Jake Packard unknowingly follow him into the same room to discuss the matter. They decide to wait the two hours or so for the steamboat to break up and drown Jim Turner, saving them the trouble. As soon as Huck can get away he finds Jim to inform him that a "gang of murderers" is operating, and they need to cut their boat loose so that the murderers cannot get away. Jim then tells him the raft has broken loose during the storm.

They realize they need to find the robbers' boat for themselves. Happily they find the "skiff," but just as they are ready to climb in, Packard beats them to it. Luckily Huck and Jim escape detection. Packard and Bill are in the boat ready to take off when they get into an argument about the money left in Jim Turner's pockets.

They go back, and while they are gone, Huck and Jim move into the boat. They cut the rope, and the current takes them downstream.

A little while later Huck's conscience begins to bother him, and he decides to get somebody to rescue the robbers. Huck and Jim catch up with their raft a few miles downstream. Jim boards the raft, and Huck stays in the skiff. He instructs Jim to take the raft two miles downstream while he finds someone who might help with the rescue. He finds a watchman on a ferryboat who is impressed with his sob story about his family, stuck on the wrecked *Walter Scott*, who will drown unless someone rescues them. Following a lead from the watchman, Huck convinces him that the niece of Hornback, a very wealthy man in town, is on board the *Walter Scott*, and that the reward will surely be a sizable one.

In a little while the steamboat comes floating downstream deep in the water. Huck sees the ferryboat moving around the wreck in an effort to locate the bodies, but it soon heads for shore. Although he does not expect to find anyone alive, Huck paddles around it and shouts, but there is no response, so he joins Jim two miles downstream. They head for shore and get some much-needed sleep.

Discussion and Analysis

Chapter 12 is the beginning of the adventurous odyssey down the Mississippi. In contrast to life on the shore, the journey on the river is presented as a solemn experience where "we didn't ever feel like talking loud, and it warn't often that we laughed." It would almost seem disrespectful to the "big, still river" to disturb its peacefulness. In the journey down the river we see Huck's movement away from civilization, with its corrupt institutions, and toward the natural world of the river. Here Huck's feeling for the natural beauty of the river gives the novel a mythological characteristic.

When Huck "lifts a chicken," or "borrows a watermelon," Twain is satirizing the human need to rationalize our wrongdoings. It is another attack on Pap, who brought Huck up to believe it is all right to "borrow" things if one intends to bring them back someday.

Exploring the wrecked steamboat, the *Walter Scott*, is an irresistible adventure for Huck. Here again, he wishes Tom Sawyer were with him. He speaks admiringly of Tom's ability to enjoy an adventure with "style." The reason for going on board the steamboat is to see whether they could confiscate anything of value to Huck and Jim. This time Huck has bit off more than he can chew, and he almost gets trapped on the boat when his raft floats away. He is saved only by chance when the thieves go back to get the money.

As Huck and Jim escape from the steamboat leaving the robbers to die, Huck's conscience begins to bother him, and he decides to find help for them. As his relationship with Jim deepens, Huck shows a growing concern for other human beings as well.

As in the earlier situation with Mrs. Loftus, Huck fabricates another one of his stories to convince the captain of the ferryboat to rescue the people on the wrecked *Walter Scott*. Following a lead from the captain himself about Hornback's wealth, Huck creates a story about Hornback's niece who is supposedly trapped on the wrecked steamboat. The captain of the ferryboat immediately takes action to save her.

Chapters 14 and 15 Summary and Analysis

Summary

Jim and Huck take a breather after their narrow escape from the wrecked steamboat and the gang of robbers. They spend time looking over their "truck," or goods, that the robber gang had stolen and loaded into the skiff. They find interesting articles of clothing, books, blankets, and boots, but the most valuable find is the boxes of cigars. They spend all afternoon talking, and Huck reads the newly-acquired books about kings,

dukes, and earls. They get into a lengthy discussion about how royalty wears fancy clothes and everyone addresses them with “your majesty, your lordship, or your grace.” King Solomon from the Bible is the only king Jim has ever heard of, and he is not impressed with him. He does not think a wise king would suggest cutting his child in half and giving each wife one-half just to settle a dispute.

Huck changes the subject by telling Jim about Louis XVI of France who was beheaded. His son, the Dauphin, supposedly died in prison. There were rumors, however, that he had escaped and had come to America. Jim does not seem to understand the idea that the Dauphin would speak French.

Huck also explains to Jim that their experience in the steamboat was called an adventure, but Jim wants nothing more to do with Huck’s adventures. He does not relish the thought of coming so close to death again.

In three more nights Huck and Jim intend to reach Cairo, Illinois where they will pick up the Ohio River and travel north into the free states. They run into some trouble, however, when the raft, tied to a sapling, is pulled by the strong current and tears the tree out by the roots. Jim and the raft are immediately swallowed up in the fog, and he and Huck are separated for several hours. The fog finally clears and Huck finds the raft. When he sees that Jim is asleep, he quietly sneaks on board. He plays a trick on Jim, pretending he had been there all along, and that Jim had dreamt the whole experience of being lost in the fog. Jim is finally convinced.

In an effort to get Jim back to reality, however, he points to the “leaves” and “rubbish” left on the raft. When Jim realizes Huck’s trick has made a fool of him, he is deeply hurt. Huck apologizes and promises there will be no more “mean tricks.”

Discussion and Analysis

In Chapter 14 Huck and Jim are relaxing after their big scare on the *Walter Scott*. Their new reading material stimulates discussion about kings and dukes. Their easy bantering back and forth illustrates their human characteristics. Twain’s satiric treatment of royalty is evident in this scene. Huck’s exasperation with Jim’s lack of understanding of King Solomon leads him to change the subject. Talk of Louis XVI and his son the “Dolphin” (Dauphin) is a foreshadowing of the conmen’s appearance as the king and the duke in Chapter 19.

There is imminent danger that Jim and Huck will be permanently separated when they lose sight of each other in the fog one night. Huck is immediately “dismal and lonesome.” Later Jim is elated when he realizes Huck is, indeed, alive and well. The threat of possible separation has brought their relationship into painful focus, especially in the last scene when Jim is hurt by Huck’s trick which is designed to make a fool of Jim. Through it all, they discover how they feel about each other. Jim’s heart was broken when he thought Huck was lost, and Jim learns that Huck would not have played a trick on him “if I’d ‘a’ knowed it would make him feel that way.”

Jim’s interpretation of his supposed dream carries with it ominous predictions of trouble ahead. If they minded their own business, however, and didn’t talk back to the “quarrelsome people,” he thinks they would get to the free states and out of trouble.

Chapters 16 and 17 Summary and Analysis

New Characters

Two men on a skiff: men looking for runaway slaves

Buck Grangerford: a boy Huck’s age

Bob and Tom: members of the Grangerford family

Betsy: Grangerford's slave

Summary

Huck and Jim rest all day and start for Cairo at dark. When he thinks about Cairo and gaining his freedom, Jim's excitement mounts, but Huck becomes increasingly uneasy. Painfully aware that he is helping a slave escape to freedom, his conscience suddenly bothers him. This time he cannot seem to rationalize his actions as he has done before. He does not think Miss Watson, Jim's owner, deserves such treatment. When Jim incessantly chatters on about buying his wife and children or getting an Abolitionist to help steal them, Huck reaches the breaking point. He decides that he must paddle ashore in the canoe at the first sign of a light and turn Jim in. Unaware of Huck's intentions, Jim helps prepare the canoe, padding the seat with his coat. He tells Huck that he is the best friend he has ever had. At this, Huck falters a bit, but he still feels he must turn Jim in. When two men in a skiff come along, he weakens, however. He tells them one of his stories about his sick family on board, leading the men to believe they all have smallpox. Out of guilt for not helping a young boy with a sick family, they each give him twenty dollars and hurriedly leave. He feels bad for having "done wrong" but reasons that he would have felt just as bad if he had turned Jim in and done the right thing. Next time, Huck decides, he will just do what is the "handiest."

The next town they come to is on high ground. Since there is no high ground around Cairo, they begin to suspect that perhaps they had passed Cairo in the fog that night. Jim immediately blames the rattlesnake skin for his bad luck. At daylight their suspicions are confirmed when they see the clear Ohio River water flowing into the muddy Mississippi. Since they cannot take the raft upstream, they will try to paddle the canoe back to Cairo. When they get back to the raft after dark, however, the canoe is missing. Their only choice is to continue downriver until they can purchase another canoe. But their streak of bad luck is not over yet. That night a steamboat runs straight into their raft. Huck and Jim dive off into the water, and Huck swims to shore, but he sees no sign of Jim.

On land Huck runs into a pack of vicious dogs who will not let him pass. The owners of the dogs come out fully armed, demanding to know his name and his possible association with the Shepherdsons. Seeing that he is harmless, they cordially invite him to stay as long as he likes. He befriends their 13-year-old son Buck, who is Huck's age.

Huck gives his name as George Jackson but forgets it by morning. He tricks Buck into spelling his name, and then he remembers. Huck goes into a long description of the house. He naively admires the furnishings in the Grangerford parlor and takes an interest in the morbid crayon drawings and sentimental poetry having been created by their dead daughter Emmeline Grangerford.

Discussion and Analysis

For the second time, Huck faces a moral decision forcing him to come to grips with the idea that he is helping a slave escape to freedom. On Jackson's Island his decision was made without thinking. His only concern then was that people would call him a "low-down Abolitionist." Twain's biting satire reaches its greatest height when Huck censures Jim for wanting to steal his own wife and children. Huck, a product of the society of his day, believes that Jim's rights to his own children are superseded by those of the slaveowner. He accuses Jim of trying to steal "children that belonged to a man I didn't even know; a man that hadn't ever done me no harm." Huck does eventually make a choice not to turn Jim in, but in doing so he also believes he has done the wrong thing. Ironically, he sees his choice as a weakness, when in reality it is his greatest strength.

After the raft has drifted south of Cairo, their journey down the Mississippi, deeper into slave territory, is necessarily thwarted. The raft is then destroyed by the steamboat and Huck and Jim are separated. It is at this point, critics believe, Twain's difficulty with the plot caused him to set the book aside for two years. In the meantime Twain was publishing other works.

In Chapter 17, as was true in earlier chapters, Huck's character remains consistent in his ability to conjure up a story when he needs it to get himself out of a difficult situation. The slave hunters are vulnerable to his subtle suggestion that there might be smallpox aboard the raft, and the spontaneity and ease with which he pulls up a believable story to tell the Grangerfords characterizes Huck as a young boy with an amazing understanding of the foibles of human nature.

Huck's lengthy description of the Grangerford house, decorated with gaudy furnishings and the pen and crayon drawings of Emmeline Grangerford, is a satire against morbid art and poor taste in decorating. Twain's satire is punctuated at the end of the chapter with an example of Emmeline's repulsive, sentimental poetry. Buck does not need to convince us that Emmeline seldom thought about her verse but would, instead, just "slap down a line," then scratch it if it didn't rhyme and "slap down another one."

Chapters 18 and 19 Summary and Analysis

New Characters

Colonel Grangerford: father of the Grangerford family

Mrs. Grangerford: mother of the family

Miss Charlotte: member of the family (twenty-five years old)

Miss Sophia: her twenty-year-old sister

Harney Sheperdson: the man Miss Sophia marries

Jack: Huck's personal servant

Duke of Bridgewater: an imposter

The Dauphin: an imposter, supposed son of the late Louis XVI, King of France

Summary

Huck's description of Colonel Grangerford, from his white linen suit to his gentlemanly ways, paints a picture of a typical aristocratic landowner of the day. He is a wealthy man who supplies each member of his family with a private servant.

The Shepherdsons are another aristocratic clan in the area. According to Huck they are as "well-born, and rich, and grand" as the Grangerfords. While Huck and Buck Grangerford are out hunting one day, Buck hears a horse and suddenly takes cover in the bushes. When Harney Shepherdson gallops by, Buck opens fire with his gun and knocks Harney's hat off of his head. Harney, gun in hand, heads straight for the boys, but they run all the way home where they must face the colonel. He feels Buck should have stepped into the middle of the road to face his enemy with bravery.

Huck questions Buck about the feud and he naively explains that it is a quarrel one man has with another man. He kills him, and the brothers retaliate with more killing until "everybody's killed off, and there ain't no more feud." The feud started 30 years ago, but nobody knows why.

On Sunday the Grangerfords and Shepherdsons sit in church together with their guns held "between their knees" while they listen to the minister's sermon on brotherly love. In the afternoon Miss Sophia secretly asks Huck to get the Testament she has forgotten at church. He sees no one at church except a few hogs who

have wandered in through the open door. Pulling a note from the Testament, Miss Sophia makes Huck promise not to tell anyone.

Jack, Huck's servant at the Grangerfords, has been following Huck around and when they are out of range of any people he beckons him to the swamp to show him some water moccasins. When Jack leaves, Huck is suddenly startled as he runs into Jim's hiding place. Jim is not surprised to see him. He tells Huck that he heard him yelling on the river the night the raft was hit by the steamboat but was afraid if he answered he might be caught and sold into slavery again. He has not contacted Huck for fear the dogs at the Grangerfords would track him down. He has been repairing the damaged raft that had been found snagged in some willow trees.

The next day Miss Sophia runs off to marry Harney Shepherdson, and the feud breaks out into a full-blown shooting match. Many people from both sides are killed. After Huck sees Buck's dead body, he takes off into the woods to find Jim and the raft. He vows never to go back, and he and Jim lose no time getting the raft onto the river again.

For several days Huck and Jim enjoy the peacefulness of the river as they again navigate the raft at night and go into hiding during the day. Early one morning Huck finds a canoe and decides to paddle up a creek for some berries. Before long he sees two men running toward him. He immediately thinks they must be after him but soon finds they are fugitives themselves, being chased by people and dogs. Relieved, he eagerly shows them a way to keep the dogs from following their scent.

The dogs are chasing a 30-year-old man who has been selling a product that takes the tartar off the teeth, but also takes the enamel along with it. The seventy-year-old man with him has been holding a temperance revival but is caught drinking on the side. He is expecting the townspeople to tar and feather him. Huck takes them to the raft. The two have not met before but share the commonality of defrauding small town people and then moving on. The 30-year-old soon claims to be the rightful Duke of Bridgewater. Not to be outdone, the older one says he is the "disappeared Dauphin," son of Louis XVI of France. It doesn't take Huck long to realize that the men are not kings nor dukes but "low-down humbugs, and frauds" instead.

Discussion and Analysis

In Huck's description of Colonel Grangerford, Twain satirizes aristocratic gentlemen for being well-born, and "that's worth as much in a man as it is in a horse." The 30-year-old feud between the Grangerfords and the Shepherdsons is further criticism of aristocratic pretensions of respectability. This is particularly true when the feuding families sit in church together, their guns "between their knees," listening to a sermon on brotherly love and agreeing later that it was, indeed, a good sermon. Ironically, there is a controlled sense of respectability in Colonel Grangerford's gentle reprimand to Buck for "shooting from behind a bush," rather than bravely stepping out into the road to defend the family honor. The colonel's expectations for a 13-year-old boy make his values seem even more incongruous. Twain also brings out the ridiculousness of the feud when he has Buck describe it in the clear, straightforward language of a 13-year-old boy who doesn't even know why they are feuding.

Huck's disappointment in the Grangerford family mounts when the feud reaches a full-scale shoot-out. "It made me so sick, I most fell out of the tree." Ironically, the only redeeming feature in the whole episode is Harney and Miss Sophia's successful escape across the river.

The scene on the raft is appropriately set in juxtaposition to the bloody feud between the Shepherdsons and the Grangerfords. It brings to light the corruption and hypocrisy on the shore in opposition to the idyllic life on the raft where peace and harmony prevail. Huck's words reflect his gratitude to be back on the raft. Ironically, the raft is small, but Huck feels that "Other places do seem so cramped up and smothery, but a raft don't."

The foreshadowing of the appearance of the duke and dauphin was set in Chapter 14 when Huck read about kings, dukes, and earls in the books from the *Walter Scott* steamboat. Huck finds a canoe, but he does not use it to paddle upstream to the Ohio River as they had originally planned. This gives us a clue that the novel's setting will continue to focus on the journey down the Mississippi. The king and the duke are conmen who make a living presenting themselves with false identities. They do not fool people for long, however. Even Huck soon realizes that "these liars warn't no kings nor dukes at all, but just low-down humbugs and frauds."

Chapters 20 and 21 Summary and Analysis

New Characters

Boggs: drunkard shot by Colonel Sherburn

Colonel Sherburn: the man who shoots Boggs

Summary

The king and the duke question the idea of traveling by night and hiding by day. Huck responds with common sense to their suspicions that Jim might be a runaway slave. He assures them that a runaway would not be traveling south. In order to be more convincing, however, he produces another imaginary story about his whole family dying and leaving him, after the debts are paid, with only sixteen dollars and the family slave Jim. His pa and four-year-old brother had fallen off the raft and drowned, so he and Jim are the only ones left. He explains that they travel at night because people are always assuming Jim is a runaway slave, and this is their way of avoiding trouble.

Satisfied with Huck's story, the king and the duke begin to settle down on the raft, making themselves at home. One night they instruct Huck and Jim to act as watchmen until a storm blows over. Without any apparent twinge of conscience they both crawl into the wigwam occupying the only beds on the raft. To make matters worse, there is a big thunderstorm that night, but Huck does not mind. He says he wouldn't have wanted to miss it "because a body don't see such a storm as that every day in the week, not by a long sight." When he is finally overcome with exhaustion, however, Jim offers to take Huck's watch. The wigwam is too full, however, so he decides to sleep out in the rain anyway.

The next day the king and the duke begin planning another "campaign," as they call it. They decide to make some money in the next town performing the balcony scene in Shakespeare's [Romeo and Juliet](#) and the swordfight in [Richard III](#). The king will play the part of Juliet. That night they stop in town for supplies and the king decides to "work the camp meeting" for a few extra dollars. He introduces himself as a pirate from the Indian Ocean who has just become a changed man as a result of the camp meeting. He cons the people at the meeting into taking up a collection by telling them he is planning to go back to reform other pirates. In this way he collects eighty-seven dollars and seventy-five cents. In the meantime the duke has managed to swindle the owner of a printing office out of \$9.50 while he also prints a handbill about Jim's escape from a plantation south of New Orleans. This gives them an alibi in case they are questioned about Jim while traveling in the daytime. They are simply going down to claim their reward for Jim's capture.

The king and the duke begin rehearsing for the Shakespearean performance that will take place in one of the next towns. When they reach a little "one-horse" town in Arkansas, the circus has already come to town, drawing the people they need for their show. The duke enthusiastically rents the courthouse and distributes the playbills around town.

While they wait for the circus to leave town, a man named Boggs rides into town for his "monthly drunk." He shouts around, threatening to kill Colonel Sherburn. People laugh and do not take him seriously until the

colonel himself steps out with a gun, threatening to kill Boggs if he doesn't stop by one o'clock. In spite of the warning, Boggs continues his ceaseless tirade against Colonel Sherburn. Heeding the seriousness of the situation, the townspeople send for Boggs' daughter, but she is too late. He is dying from Colonel Sherburn's gunshot wound just as she arrives.

Discussion and Analysis

Huck must necessarily produce another story at this point in the novel to protect Jim and settle the minds of the duke and the king. Throughout the novel Twain engages our sympathies for Huck when he fabricates his wildly imaginative stories. It is understood that Huck's stories are, ironically, a necessary ploy for the survival of an innately moral young man caught up in a pretentious, hypocritical society. Huck's stories are, in any case, more credible than those of the king and the duke.

Since the duke must teach Hamlet's soliloquy to the king, we sense that he is probably the one who is better educated. He has no copy of [Hamlet](#) on the raft, however, so he draws from "recollections vaults." The result is words and lines taken from several of Shakespeare's plays and thrown together in a nonsensical way. Judging from the shiftless ne'er-do-wells who hang around the muddy streets of the little river town, the people will most likely not notice mistakes in Shakespeare's text.

The thunderstorm in these chapters is reminiscent of the one observed earlier by Huck and Jim on Jackson's Island. In Huck's description of the storm he holds the natural forces in awe with no fear of the thunder and lightning. Huck's appreciation for the natural world around him is again brought out in his artistic description of the storm. Jim's tender feeling for his friend Huck is apparent when he serves half of Huck's watch for him because Huck is sleepy.

The camp meeting with all its sensationalism is a perfect opportunity for the king to make a few dollars. In this scene Twain is satirizing the gullibility of the people who hang on the king's every word. Having played these fraudulent games before, he demonstrates his skill in manipulating the crowd to take up a collection for him which amounts to \$87.25. The duke has not fared as well, managing to cheat the owner of the printing office out of \$9.50.

Chapters 22 and 23 Summary and Analysis

New Character

Buck Harkness: man who leads the lynch mob

Summary

After the shooting, someone in town suggests that Colonel Sherburn should be lynched, and the people, led by Buck Harkness, suddenly go wild. The crowd turns into an angry mob, stopping at nothing in pursuit of revenge against Sherburn. Even children run for their lives to get out of the way of the raging mob. In a frenzy they tear down Colonel Sherburn's picket fence and pour into his yard, ready for action.

The crowd suddenly calms down, however, when Sherburn steps out onto the roof of his porch flashing a double-barrel gun. At first he simply stares at them, saying nothing, but then he laughs scornfully, and stages a long diatribe criticizing the mob for its cowardice. He accuses them of hanging on to the coattail of Buck Harkness who is only "half a man." Sherburn orders them to leave, and the crowd breaks up with Buck Harkness on their heels.

After the excitement Huck decides to go to the circus. To avoid paying, he slips under the tent on the back side. With wide-eyed amazement, he watches the beautiful women on horses with their million-dollar outfits, the men showing their acrobatic skills, and the clowns cracking the funniest jokes Huck has ever heard. A

supposed drunk comes along and insists upon riding the horses. The ringmaster finally gives in. At first the crowd laughs at him, but he turns out to be an accomplished rider and a part of the act.

The king and the duke stage their Shakespearean show, but they only attract twelve people who laugh inappropriately throughout the performance. Since these “lunkheads couldn’t come up to Shakespeare,” the duke decides to change to low comedy. He advertises their next show as the tragedy of *The King’s Cameleopard*, or *The Royal Nonesuch* with a caption at the bottom that reads, “ladies and children not admitted.” He thinks this would surely draw a crowd. The first night the house is packed, but the show is a fraud, consisting of the king displaying his painted body and demonstrating a few of his ludicrous antics on stage. Too embarrassed to admit they had been taken in, the townspeople speak favorably about the show in town the next day. The second night the house is again full, but the third night the king and duke hustle down to the raft and take off down the river to avoid the anger of the crowd. They have successfully conned the townspeople out of four hundred and sixty-five dollars.

Discussion and Analysis

Colonel Sherburn’s speech to the would-be lynch mob is a harsh invective against mob action of any kind. Twain speaks out against lynch mobs who do not fight with courage but come like cowards in the middle of the night wearing masks. As Sherburn demonstrates, the mob crumbles with cowardice when they come face to face with one strong individual.

We see the aggressive action in Twain’s use of extended metaphor presenting the mob as “the front wall of the crowd” rolling “in like a wave.” But when Sherburn steps out “the wave sucks back” in calm passivity. The metaphor is sustained until the end when the “crowd washed back sudden, and then broke all apart.” We get the picture that the mob is as ephemeral as the ocean waves.

The king and the duke again expose the gullibility of the townspeople in the presentation of their play, *The Royal Nonesuch*. They pack the house with the fetching caption “ladies and children not admitted,” knowing full well man’s obsession with off-color and suggestive humor. Since their Shakespearean presentation, though poorly done, was not a success, the king and duke have no scruples against giving people what they want as long as it brings in money. *The Royal Nonesuch*, an obscene play, caters to the lowest common denominator, which is Twain’s way of saying that it draws a crowd because people are morally corrupt.

Jim’s reference to the king and duke as “regular rapsallions” is Twain’s way of satirizing royalty. Huck responds with “all kings is mostly rapsallions.” He then goes on to characterize different kings, but he is confused and historically inaccurate. He makes his point just the same. “Take them all around, they’re a mighty ornery lot.”

The sensitive personality of Jim is held in juxtaposition to the lynching mobs and the swindling king and duke in these chapters. Huck speaks warmly about the many times Jim has taken his night watch for him just so he could sleep. He is also portrayed as a family man who misses his wife and children. He is nearly overcome with guilt for slapping his daughter because she was not listening to him when, in fact, she had become deaf after a bout with scarlet fever.

Chapters 24 and 25 Summary and Analysis

New Characters

Mary Jane Wilks: nineteen-year-old daughter of Peter Wilks

Susan Wilks: her sister, age 15

Joanna Wilks: the youngest sister, age 14

Dr. Robinson: Peter Wilks' friend before Wilks died

Summary

The king and the duke waste no time making plans to “work the towns” again for more money as soon as an opportunity arises. Their escapades into town have been difficult for Jim, however. He has been posing as a runaway slave who needs to be tied up while they are gone. To avoid any further discomfort for Jim, the duke devises an ingenious disguise so that people will think he is a sick Arab instead of a runaway slave. He dresses Jim in a King Lear outfit with a white wig and whiskers and paints his face, hands, neck, and ears a dull blue to make him look sick. The idea is to scare people away with his sickly, offensive appearance, but if that doesn't help, the duke advises him to step out of the wigwam and howl “like a wild beast.”

They had all bought new clothes in the last town, and the king and Huck dress up and head for the steamboat in the canoe. The duke wants to try his luck in a village on the other side of the river, however. On their way to the steamboat, Huck and the king pick up a local young man who is taking a trip to South America. He leads the king into a conversation about Mr. Peter Wilks who has just died and left a small fortune. They are expecting his two brothers, Harvey and William, from England any day now. The king subtly prods him for more information until he not only knows the details surrounding Peter Wilks' death, but also the names of most of his family and close friends.

When they drop the young man at the steamboat dock, the king decides to stay in the canoe. As soon as they are alone, he instructs Huck to drop him off in a town a mile upstream and bring the duke back promptly. When he arrives, the king tells the duke the whole story and asks him to pose as the deaf and dumb brother of Peter Wilks while he acts as the other brother.

They flag a steamboat to the next town, and when they arrive people flock to the shore to meet them. The king asks directions to the place where Mr. Peter Wilks lives. One of the townspeople gently breaks the news that Mr. Wilks has died, and the king begins to moan and cry, making signs to the duke, his supposed deaf brother. The behavior of the two frauds convinces the townspeople that they are, indeed, the true brothers of Peter Wilks.

The news of their arrival spreads like wildfire and people come on the run to join them on their way to the Peter Wilks' house. When they arrive at the house, Mary Jane, Susan, and Joanna, Wilks' daughters, hug them and cry for joy. When the king and duke spot the coffin in the house, they see further opportunity to put on a convincing act with their sobbing, causing everyone in the room to break down and cry.

Calling them by name, the king invites Peter Wilks' closest friends to have supper with the family that evening. Remembering the names given to him earlier by the young informant, he calls out an impressively accurate list of names.

Mary Jane, the oldest daughter, produces her father's letter that specifies the terms of the inheritance. His daughters would receive the house and three thousand dollars in gold. Six thousand dollars in property and gold, along with the tanyard, was designated to go to Harvey and William, his brothers. The letter also reveals the hiding place of the six thousand dollars, which provides the king and duke an opportunity to get their hands on the cash. There is four hundred and fifteen dollars missing, however. To avoid suspicion they add their own money to make up the difference. They hand all the money to the girls, planning to steal it back later.

They manage to deceive all the townspeople until Dr. Robinson, one of the late Peter Wilks' closest friends, speaks up calling the king a fraud. He criticizes his fake English accent and accuses him of being an imposter.

Mary Jane responds defiantly to the accusation by handing the king all of the six thousand dollars. She asks him to invest it for them, demonstrating her complete trust in the king.

Discussion and Analysis

In the Wilks episode, Twain attacks the gullibility of human beings with the most biting satire demonstrated in the novel thus far. In spite of the fact that the king only “tried to talk like an Englishman” the townspeople never question his true identity.

Ironically, when Dr. Robinson, a respected member of the town, does speak up with the truth, nobody believes him. Swayed by the king’s sentimentality, the townspeople hold the word of the king, a person whom they have just met, above that of Dr. Robinson whom they have known all their lives. Twain has artfully placed this scene in the atmosphere of a funeral setting when people are most vulnerable, and, therefore, most gullible. Mary Jane’s determination to avoid any more pain at a time like this prompts her to reject the doctor’s advice completely.

So far in the novel, Huck has been a silent spectator in the ludicrous antics of the king and the duke, but in the Wilks episode he becomes highly critical and judgmental. When the king and duke first arrive, the gullibility of the townspeople, who swallow their deceitful charades, fills him with shame. “It was enough to make a body ashamed of the human race.” The depraved attitude of the frauds in the coffin scene is simply too much for Huck. “I never see anything so disgusting.” Huck’s moral position at this point in the novel is a foreshadowing of the ultimate moral decision he must make regarding Jim’s freedom later on in the novel.

The humor in the king’s repeated use of the word “orgies” in reference to the funeral ceremonies is a satire on the excessive indulgences in sentimentality exhibited in the funerals of Twain’s day. Embarrassed by the king’s use of the wrong word, the duke passes him a note telling him to correct it to “obsequious.” The king explains that although orgies is not the commonly used term for funerals, it is the right term. “Orgies is better, because it means the thing you’re after more exact.” Though the king goes on with an inaccurate definition of the word, he has unknowingly made his point.

Chapters 26 and 27 Summary and Analysis

Summary

After Dr. Robinson leaves, Mary Jane takes the visitors up to their rooms. The duke is assigned the spare room, Huck will sleep in the garret or attic, and the king is given Mary Jane’s room.

At supper that night, Huck is obligated to stand behind the king and the duke and wait on them since he is posing as their servant. The women make degrading comments about their own cooking in order to draw compliments from their guests. Huck and Joanna eat later in the kitchen. The charade is nearly exposed as she questions him about England. His information is sketchy at best, and he often contradicts himself. While Joanna is accusing him of lying, Mary Jane and Susan step into the room and immediately jump to his defense. Mary Jane reprimands Joanna for making Huck feel ashamed and forces her to apologize. Huck is so impressed with her kindness that he asks himself, “this is a girl that I’m letting that old reptile rob her of her money?” He feels “ornery” and “low down” for not telling them about the king’s fraudulent intent. Finally he can stand it no longer, so he makes up his mind to get their money back from the king and the duke, no matter what. He thinks of several ways to get the money, but for the sake of the girls and for his own safety as well as Jim’s, he does not dare take chances. He finally realizes that he will need to steal the money in such a way that they will not suspect him.

He hides among Mary Jane’s gowns in the king’s room. After the king and duke enter the room he eavesdrops while they are discussing their plans. Nervous about Dr. Robinson’s suspicions, the duke wants to

take the money and run, but the king has other ideas. He plans to stay long enough to sell the property. The duke finally agrees to stay. He inadvertently reveals the hiding place of the bag of gold. To keep it safe from the servants they decide to move it from the closet to the featherbed. Huck grabs it immediately after they leave the room and takes it up to his garret. That night, after everyone is in bed, he tries to sneak outside to hide the money in the yard but finds the front door locked. When he hears someone coming, he quickly hides the money under the lid of the coffin, hoping to retrieve it later. Desperately, he tries to see whether the money is still in the coffin the next day, but someone is always around. Uncertainty about the money plagues him as they bury Mr. Wilks.

The king and the duke promise that they will take the girls to England to live with them. They are in a hurry to return so they convince them to sell the property immediately. The day after the funeral the king sells the slaves and splits the family in two. Both the Wilks girls and their servants are grief-stricken, not realizing that the whole thing is a sham. Since the sale is not legal the slaves will soon be back.

On the day of the auction the king and duke suddenly discover that the bag of gold, worth six thousand dollars, is missing. Huck pushes the blame onto the servants since he knows they are already gone and will not be harmed by the accusation.

Discussion and Analysis

In these chapters Huck's humanitarian effort to help the Wilks girls is significant in his human development. He is extremely fond of Mary Jane and her sisters and feels morally obligated to recover their money since they will need it later on for their livelihood. As we have seen in his relationship to Jim, Huck's morality is based on his natural instincts and shows a responsiveness to human need rather than an adherence to the rules of society. It is when he feels "ornery and low down and mean" for allowing the king to defraud the Wilks girls that he makes his moral decision to help them. Since his decision could bring danger to himself and to the girls, he weighs his strategy carefully before he decides that stealing the money would, in fact, be the safest course to take.

In his rush to accumulate as much money as possible before they are found out, the king overrides the duke's fears about selling the slaves to a slaveholder. Later, when Huck convinces them that the slaves have stolen the six thousand dollars, the king and the duke feel tricked. Ironically, the slaves have supposedly beat them at their own game by pretending to be sorry they were leaving, then snatching the bag of money as they left. It was, of course, Huck who had taken the money, but the duke wishes he would have kept the slaves around for their "histrionic talent." He feels he could have used them in his con games but regrets that the king had "sold 'em for a song."

In this episode of the novel, Twain repeats the theme of the separation of families through the buying and selling of slaves. This is reminiscent of Miss Watson's intention of selling Jim down the river and separating him from his family. This incident reveals not only the pain of separation of mother and sons, demonstrating the humanity of the slaves, but also the caring response of the Wilks girls. It is at this point that Huck almost breaks down and exposes the king and the duke, but he knows the sales are fake, and the slaves will be home soon. His human sympathy for the injustice in this incident foreshadows his ultimate commitment to Jim as Huck struggles with his conscience in subsequent chapters.

Chapters 28 and 29 Summary and Analysis

New Characters

Harvey Wilks: Peter Wilks' true brother

William Wilks: deaf brother of Peter Wilks

Levi Bell: Peter Wilks' lawyer friend

Hines: a husky man who believes the king is an imposter

Summary

In the morning, Huck passes Mary Jane's room and sees her crying through the open door. Heartbroken about the separation of the slaves' families, she tells Huck that her beautiful trip to England is spoiled. Uneasy about her crying, Huck quickly replies that the slaves will be back in less than two weeks. He has spoken too soon, but since he is in a "tight place," he decides to tell the truth even though it is risky. He asks Mary Jane to promise to leave town for four days if he tells her why the slaves will soon be back. If she leaves she will not be tempted to reveal to the king and the duke that she knows the truth. She gives her word, and Huck blurts out the whole story about the two rogues who have posed as her uncles and duped her out of her inheritance. Shocked, she immediately wants to tar and feather them and throw them in the river, but Huck gently reminds her of her promise. She calms down, telling him she will do whatever he asks.

After some deliberation he thinks he can get the two frauds jailed in town so he and Jim can be rid of them. He shortens Mary Jane's stay to one day, asking her to place a candle in the window by eleven as a signal to Huck that she is at home. If he does not respond, she will know he is gone, and she can have the king and duke arrested and jailed. Huck advises her to check with the Bricksville townspeople where *The Royal Nonesuch* was played if she needs evidence of their fraudulent activities. She agrees to stand by Huck and attest to the fact that he is not involved with them in case he gets caught. Since he will not be seeing her again, he writes her a note telling her where the bag of money is hidden and asks her not to read it until he is gone. After she leaves, Huck explains to her sisters that Mary Jane has gone to see a sick friend. He asks them to tell their uncles it is a rich friend, however, who is interested in buying the house. The sick friend has a communicable disease, and it will delay their trip to England. Neither story is true, of course, but Huck wants to allay the suspicions the king and the duke might have about Mary Jane's absence by telling them that she is working for the auction. Since the girls are eager to start on their trip, Huck knows they will cover for Mary Jane. During the auction two more men arrive on the steamboat claiming to be Wilks' brothers, Harvey and William.

Surprised by their rude reception, Harvey Wilks is not prepared for the other claimants of Peter Wilks' inheritance. William and Harvey have been down on their luck lately. William has broken his arm, and their baggage has been misplaced in another town. William speaks only sign language, and the arm he normally uses for signing is broken. Besides, he usually writes for both brothers, but now he cannot sign his name for proof of identification. All other identification is with their lost luggage. Huck is convinced of Harvey Wilks' identity from the beginning because of his true English accent. "I see straight off he pronounced like an Englishman—not the king's way."

The majority of the townspeople still rally around the king and the duke, but a few people begin to question the king. Hines, a man in the crowd, claims to have seen him in a canoe the day before the funeral. After a long debate about identities, the new Harvey Wilks suggests that the true brother would know what was tattooed on Peter Wilks' chest. To settle the argument they must exhume the body. When they open the coffin, they are shocked to find the bag of gold. In the excitement Huck escapes in the dark and runs until he finds a boat to take to the raft. He sees Mary Jane's candle in the window but has no time to stop. He and Jim escape down the river thinking they are free of the king and the duke at last. Their happiness is short-lived, however, for soon they hear them coming over the water in a skiff.

Discussion and Analysis

Throughout the novel Huck has been telling lies or concocting stories to get himself out of tight situations. It has, in fact, been necessary for his survival on the river and particularly in the towns along the river. In Chapter 28, however, we finally hear him telling Mary Jane the truth. After thinking it over, he decides that

“the truth is better and actuly safer than a lie.” He has, in fact, already blurted out part of the truth about the slaves who will be back in two weeks. In a sense he has reached a point of no return and must tell her the whole story. He undoubtedly respects Mary Jane enough to trust her with the truth. “She was the best girl I ever see, and had the most sand.” He feels a moral obligation to expose the king and the duke and keep them from exploiting her. When she leaves town, however, he must tell another one of his stories to protect her from the two frauds.

Ironically, when the men question Huck about being English, he cannot convince them. Levi Bell, the lawyer, tells him to quit trying. “I reckon you ain’t used to lying, it don’t seem to come handy...You do it pretty awkward.” Perhaps he is awkward because the story is not his own creation. He is lying for the king and the duke and simply does not have his heart in it.

Twain’s plot falls into place when the body of Peter Wilks is exhumed to solve the identification problem. The whereabouts of the bag of gold has not been ascertained. Twain uses a believable chain of events as an angry crowd rushes to the cemetery on a dark, blustery night. Not only do they find the money, but it also affords an opportunity for yet another escape for the king and the duke, and, in this case, for Huck.

Chapters 30 and 31 Summary and Analysis

Summary

The king, angry at Huck for trying to give them “the slip,” grabs him by the collar when they catch up with the raft. Afraid for his life, Huck tries to appease him with a story about the nice man who had held his hand on the way to the cemetery. Because he reminded him of his dead son, the man let him go, telling him to run for his life. Jim verifies Huck’s story, and finally the duke comes to Huck’s defense, reminding the king that he had not been concerned about Huck’s whereabouts when they had run from the scene.

The king and duke begin to argue and blame each other for hiding the money in the coffin. They both acknowledge the fact that they were tempted to keep the money for themselves, but neither one admits actually hiding it. Impatient and angry, the duke catches the king by the throat, forcing him to admit he had done it. That settles the argument and before long they are “thick as thieves” again. Later, when they are asleep, Huck tells Jim the whole story.

For fear of being recognized they do not dare stop at any of the towns along the river for several days. They are approaching the warm southern climate where Spanish moss hangs from the trees. The king and duke feel it is finally safe to “work the villages” again, but they have little success. Their usual jobs of “missionarying,” “doctoring,” and “mesmerizing” do not work out, and they are soon broke and desperate. They begin to talk in whispers for several hours at a time, and Huck and Jim feel uneasy. They decide to get rid of the two frauds when the next opportunity arises.

One morning they stop the raft in the village of Pikesville where the king wants to look around to make sure they have not heard of *The Royal Nonesuch*. Huck suspects that he wants to try something terrible like robbing a house. The king instructs the duke, Huck, and Jim to wait for him at the raft. If he does not come back by noon they will know it is all right to come into town. When the king doesn’t show up, Huck and the duke go into town to look for him. When the duke finds the king in a miserable state of drunkenness, he gets angry and they begin to argue. Huck sees his chance to slip away and head for the raft, but when he gets there, Jim is gone. Out on the road he meets a young boy who has seen a man fitting Jim’s description. He tells Huck that Jim is a runaway from a southern plantation who was sold by an old fellow for \$40. He is now on the Phelps Plantation a few miles away.

Huck goes back to the raft to think. He cannot believe that the king could sell Jim back into slavery for “forty dirty dollars.” Desperately he tries to think of what he should do. The more he thinks the more his conscience bothers him. He begins to feel “wicked and low-down and ornery” for having stolen Jim, another person’s property. He tries to pray, but the words will not come. He finally decides to write a letter to Miss Watson, telling her that Jim is on the Phelps Plantation. When he finishes the letter his conscience is relieved, and he feels good and “all washed clean of sin.” He begins to think of all Jim has meant to him, however, and how good he has always been to him. He tears up the letter and decides that he will “go to hell” rather than allow Jim to be sold as a slave. He makes plans to “steal Jim out of slavery again.”

He hides his raft on a wooded island, and after a good night’s sleep he takes the canoe to shore where he accidentally meets the duke. Surprised to see Huck, he asks about the raft, and Huck tells him the raft and Jim have been stolen. The duke begins to tell Huck that Jim is on the Silas Phelps Plantation but changes his mind and tells him he is 40 miles away instead. He wants Huck out of town for the next three days so Huck will not tell the townspeople that he and the king are frauds.

Discussion and Analysis

In Chapter 30 the duke is seen in a better light than we have seen him so far in the novel. He jumps to Huck’s defense, reminding the king that he would not have done any different than Huck did in order to escape. “Did you inquire around for him (Huck) when you got loose?” The duke is able to identify with Huck as another human being running from an angry mob to save his own life. Until now the duke has been portrayed as a deceitful rogue symbolizing evil and demanding to be addressed as “your grace.”

In these climactic chapters Huck faces his ultimate moral decision to help Jim escape from slavery. It is the central crisis in Huck’s development. In three different incidents, he struggles with this choice.

The first time, in Chapter 8, Huck has just met Jim on Jackson’s Island. His easy decision not to tell that Jim is a runaway slave comes in the wake of his determination to leave Pap and his resolution never to go back to live with the Widow Douglas. It matters little to Huck that people would call him “a low-down Abolitionist . . . that don’t make no difference . . . I ain’t a-going back there, anyways.” His recent abandonment of society and its laws helps him to make a moral decision on human terms rather than on societal ones.

The second time is in Chapter 16 when Huck and Jim are nearing Cairo where they plan to take a steamboat up the Ohio River to the free states. In this incident the intensity of his decision has deepened. As he struggles with his conscience about allowing a slave, worth \$800, to go free, the irony is clear—it never occurs to him that society might be wrong, and that he could be right. He simply realizes it is impossible for him to turn Jim in.

Although his second decision centers around the economic worth of slaves, Huck’s ultimate moral choice focuses on religion. “There was the Sunday school, you could ‘a’ gone to it . . . they’d ‘a’ learnt you there that people that acts as I’d been acting . . . goes to everlasting fire.” He tries to pray, but he “can’t pray a lie.” Ironically, when he writes the letter to Miss Watson telling her where Jim is, he is relieved to know he is no longer lost and going to hell. But he cannot leave it at that. His mind instinctively drifts to Jim’s friendship and the good times they have had on the raft. Jim is undoubtedly the most devoted friend he has ever had. Huck’s ultimate moral decision in the novel is, ironically, to “go to hell” for freeing Jim. He does not justify his choice. He simply makes the decision to take up wickedness again. Twain’s bitter satire in this passage is a harsh invective against a society that would live by such false standards.

Chapters 32 and 33 Summary and Analysis

New Characters

Mr. Silas Phelps: Tom Sawyer's uncle

Mrs. Sally Phelps: Tom's aunt

Summary

Huck arrives at the Phelps Plantation, noticing that things are rather "still and Sunday-like." Everyone seems to be out in the fields, and Huck paints a rather bleak picture of the depressing surroundings. As he approaches the kitchen, he hears the hum of a spinning wheel. He walks up to the house, trying to decide what to say but finally leaving it to Providence. He has aroused fifteen of the sleeping dogs that quickly surround him with their barking and howling. With her rolling pin raised, a servant steps out and silences them. Hearing the commotion, Mrs. Phelps runs out to greet Huck with her spinning stick still in her hand and her children hanging around her skirts. Thinking he is Tom Sawyer, her nephew, she welcomes him with open arms.

Perplexed by her display of affection, he tries to guess who she thinks he is. She questions him about his family, but not knowing who his family is, he cannot answer and finally decides that this might be one of those times when he should risk telling the truth. It isn't until Mr. Phelps comes home, and she introduces Huck as Tom Sawyer, that he breathes easy again. They have been expecting Tom to arrive on the steamboat for the past few days and are relieved and happy that he is finally here. Comfortable with his new identity, Huck can easily invent believable stories about Tom Sawyer's family.

The noise of the steamboat on the river, however, suddenly reminds him Tom could be arriving any minute. He must ward off Tom's appearance until he can explain the misunderstanding to him. He tells Tom's aunt and uncle that he needs to go into town to pick up his baggage. Convincing them to let him go alone, he heads for town in the wagon and meets Tom Sawyer along the way. Tom thinks he is seeing a ghost, but Huck tells him that he was not murdered. Huck explains the case of mistaken identity at the Phelps Plantation to Tom. Coming up with a plan, Tom assures him all will be well. He puts his trunks in the wagon and tells him he will follow later. Huck also confides in Tom about his intent to steal Jim. To his surprise, Tom agrees to help him. Shocked that Tom would do such a thing, Huck's high opinion of him falls considerably.

In a little while Aunt Sally and Uncle Silas Phelps see a stranger coming up the driveway. The stranger is Tom Sawyer. They quickly set another plate for dinner to welcome him. He pretends to be on the wrong plantation, but they invite him to stay for dinner just the same. During the course of the conversation the so-called stranger suddenly reaches over and kisses Aunt Sally on the mouth. Shocked and insulted she calls him an "owdacious puppy." He apologizes and tells her he thought she would like it. He finally ends the practical joke by identifying himself as Sid Sawyer, Tom's brother. They laugh at his joke, showering him with hugs and kisses.

During supper one of the children begs to see the show in town that night. His dad tells him the show has been cancelled because the runaway slave informed on the actors. Huck knows immediately that it was Jim who was trying to expose the king and the duke. That night he and Tom sneak out to try to warn the pair about the danger they are in, but it is too late. They have been tarred and feathered and are being driven out of town. Huck feels responsible somehow even though he was not to blame. He denounces his conscience that "takes up more room than all the rest of a person's insides" but is of no value to him. Tom Sawyer agrees.

Discussion and Analysis

Twain's depressing description of the Phelps Plantation is set in contrast to previous descriptions of the peace and tranquillity of life on the river. It is a "one-horse cotton plantation" with "sickly grass patches" and a yard that is "bare and smooth." Even the sound of the spinning wheel makes Huck feel lonesome. Huck's depiction of the plantation, symbolic of loneliness and death, reflects his mood after the loss of Jim and their idyllic life on the raft. Here, as in earlier chapters, the theme of freedom on the river stands in opposition to

the constraints of life on the shore. Jim has, after all, been sold back into slavery again, and in Huck's view, life on the shore carries with it a dismal outlook.

The appearance of Tom Sawyer lightens the tone of these chapters. We see Tom merely as a light-hearted practical joker whose morality is aligned with the society he is a part of. Huck respects his opinion, however, and holds him up as his ideal. He is astonished when Tom agrees to help him steal Jim, and because of this, his estimation of Tom is lowered. Ironically, Huck still believes his natural morality is wrong and Tom's morality, based on the mores of society, is right. What he is not aware of is that Tom knows Jim has already been given his freedom by Miss Watson. This will not be divulged until the end of the novel. Tom is, therefore, only playing the game of stealing Jim out of slavery.

Thus far in the novel Jim has been patiently bearing the inconveniences the king and duke have caused him and Huck on the raft. The "rapscallions" go too far, however, when they sell him as a slave. The king and duke underestimate Jim's intentions to get even. Although the duke mentions his suspicions to Huck, it is doubtful that he credits Jim with the ability to be instrumental in having them tarred and feathered and run out of town. Jim's action in this episode reflects a deep sense of justice.

When Huck watches the king and duke being run out of town it makes him "sick to see it." His feeling is reminiscent of his reaction to the Grangerford and Shepherdson feud in Chapter 18. During their last battle when most of the men are killed, Huck is repulsed as he watches the carnage from the tree. "It made me so sick I most fell out of the tree." In spite of all the king and duke have done to him, Huck's humanity is again revealed when he not only sympathizes with the pair, but tries to warn them of trouble ahead.

Chapters 34 and 35 Summary and Analysis

New Character

Nat: a slave who brings food to Jim

Summary

Tom uncovers the secret of Jim's whereabouts on the Phelps Plantation by observing one of the slaves bringing watermelon, along with other food, to a nearby hut. Since he would not be feeding watermelon to dogs, it follows that someone must be in the hut. The door to the hut is locked, and Uncle Silas holds the key. Sure that the prisoner must be Jim, Huck and Tom begin immediately to make plans to rescue him. Huck's plan is easy. He suggests they steal the key out of Uncle Silas's pants pocket, release Jim, and take off down the river on Huck's raft. Tom criticizes the plan for being "mild as goosemilk." Knowing they will do it Tom's way no matter what Huck proposes, he gives in to Tom's elaborate plans.

Huck is still wondering why a respectable, kind, and intelligent boy like Tom would stoop so low as to steal Jim out of slavery. He tries to stop him, but Tom says he knows what he is doing.

After dark they examine the hut and plan the rescue. Huck suggests several simple and practical methods such as having Jim climb out of a high window or sawing a hole in the cabin the way he had done when he escaped from Pap. Tom, however, holds out for some complicated method that would take twice as long. They finally decide to spend a week digging him out.

When they arrive at the house, Huck simply pulls the latchstring and walks in through the door. This is not romantic enough for Tom, however, who enters by climbing the lightning rods. He finally makes it after three tries and several painful falls.

In the morning they go down to the slave cabins to befriend the dogs so that they will not bark at them while they are digging Jim out. They meet the man who brings food to Jim. He naively invites them to come and see his prisoner. Jim, surprised and happy to see them, blurts out the boys' names. The man asks Huck and Tom whether Jim knows them, but they flatly deny it. They convince him that the witches are causing him to hear things. When they get a chance they whisper the plan of escape to Jim. He squeezes their hands in gratitude and promises to pretend they are strangers from now on.

Tom, disgusted that the plan of escape is too easy, is constantly trying to "invent all the difficulties." He wishes for a watchman to drug, or a dog to give a sleeping mixture to. Though one could easily slip the chain off the bedpost, Tom wants to saw the leg off Jim's bed to remove the chain. He goes so far as to consider amputating Jim's leg to get the chain off.

Instead of picks and shovels, Tom insists on digging him out with case knives because he has read about this in books. He also insists that the escape should take thirty-seven years. They need to hurry though, for when Mr. Phelps hears Jim is not from New Orleans, he will probably advertise him. They decide to "let on" or pretend that they had been at it for thirty-seven years. Huck tries to bring Tom back to practical reality, but Tom accuses him of never "having read any books at all."

Huck borrows a bedsheet from the clothesline for a rope ladder that will be put in a pie and smuggled in for the escape. He also takes a white shirt so Jim can keep a journal on it. He takes three case knives, and Tom suggests making a saw out of one of them. When Huck gingerly suggests borrowing a saw from the smokehouse, Tom is discouraged and gives up on Huck, afraid he will never be able to teach him anything about the way it should really be done. Huck finally obeys his order to get the knives.

Discussion and Analysis

Huck's practical, down-to-earth solutions to problems are set in juxtaposition to Tom's romantic, unrealistic solutions in the plan to free Jim. Twain is satirizing the romantic notions inherent in the adventurous and courageous escapes that were made popular through the romance literature of his day. The contrasting personalities of Huck and Tom and their constant attempts to counter each other, lends much of the satiric humor to these chapters. On a deeper level the humor is lost, however, when we consider that Tom already knows Jim is free. He is simply playing the game for the sake of adventure. In the meantime he keeps Jim imprisoned with little regard for his suffering.

Huck admires Tom's ability to solve the mystery of Jim's hiding place. Tom's observations about dogs and their dislike for watermelons clearly puts him on an intellectually superior level, and Huck is sure he would not trade Tom's head for that of a "duke, nor mate of a steamboat, nor clown in a circus." Huck knows his plan to free Jim cannot equal Tom's, but he thinks about it just to be doing something. He is right. When he proposes his simple plan of stealing the key from Mr. Phelps' pants pocket and unlocking Jim's door, Tom does not go for it. Ironically, Huck's plan is superior to Tom's, because it is quick and efficient, and safe for Jim. Tom's plan is more bookish and has more style, but, ironically, does not accomplish what Huck's plan would. It is also a potentially dangerous plan. As Huck says, it could "get us all killed besides."

When Huck borrows the bedsheets from the clothesline, Tom sets him straight by saying it is called stealing. Huck tells him his father taught him to call it borrowing. As long as he represents a prisoner, Tom thinks it is not wrong to steal, but when Huck steals a watermelon, Tom forces him to pay the owners a dime. Ironically, Tom makes the distinction between the real world and the world of romance, but Huck cannot see any advantage in representing a prisoner if he needs to "chaw over a lot of gold-leaf distinctions." Tom feels it is all right to steal as long as they are enacting the romance story, but Huck goes beyond the story to real life. Tom's respectable upbringing tells him that is morally wrong, but Huck in his natural morality cannot see the distinction.

Chapters 36 and 37 Summary and Analysis

Summary

Tom and Huck get right to work digging a tunnel into Jim's cabin with their case knives. After several hours their hands are sore in spite of the fact that they have made little progress. Tom finally admits that his plan will not work, so they change to picks pretending they are case knives. Happy that Tom is finally becoming level-headed, Huck wholeheartedly agrees with the change of plan. They dig a sizable hole and decide to continue the next day. As usual Tom tries to climb up the lightning rod to the second floor. Dead tired and sore, he finally agrees to "let on" that the stairs are lightning rods after a bit of coaxing from Huck.

Between them the boys manage to pilfer a pewter spoon, a brass candlestick, six candles, and three tin plates. The next night when everyone is in bed they finally dig their way into Jim's cabin in two and one-half hours. Happy to see them, Jim wants to cut the chain and clear out immediately, but Tom shows him that it would be highly "unregular." He explains the plan to Jim, telling him that in case of danger the plan could be quickly altered. Tom assures Jim they will, indeed, see that he gets away. They talk about old times, and Jim informs them about the prayers Uncle Silas has with him every day or two. Aunt Sally also stops by often to make sure he is comfortable. This gives Tom the idea of smuggling things to Jim through his aunt and uncle's pockets. Jim must then sneak them out. Despite Huck's objections Tom goes right ahead with his plan.

Aunt Sally begins to notice that things are missing around the house. A big argument ensues between her and Uncle Silas. She rails at him for losing his shirt but finally concedes that the calf probably got the shirt off the line. She is sure the rats got the candles, but the pewter spoon is still a mystery. In the middle of her long diatribe on the need for Uncle Silas to stop up the rat holes, a servant announces a bedsheet is also missing. This is almost more than she can take. In the middle of it all, Uncle Silas reaches into his coat pocket and timidly pulls out the pewter spoon secretly put there by Tom. Eventually she orders all of them out of the house. Later, Tom conjures up a plan to confuse Aunt Sally about the count of the sheets and spoons by alternately taking one out and then sneaking it back so her count is inconsistent. She finally becomes thoroughly confused about the true number of her sheets and spoons.

Tom and Huck decide to bake the rope ladder into a witch pie to satisfy the hunger of the witches who are constantly aggravating Nat, giving him no peace. Nat is, of course, grateful and cooperative. The boys take the rope ladder, made with a torn-up sheet, to the woods. They have enough rope for forty pies, however, so they finally throw most of the rope ladder away. They bring the witch pie to Jim's cabin, and Nat turns his back to ward off the witches. Following directions explicitly, Jim quickly breaks open the pie, hides the rope ladder inside his mattress, and throws out the tin plates after scratching some marks on them.

Discussion and Analysis

Twain's ironic use of the word "moral" in this section of the novel is reminiscent of the earlier incident on the *Walter Scott*. When the gang of murderers on board contemplate killing Jim Turner, they decide "it ain't good sense, it ain't good morals." Ironically, the *Walter Scott* would break up and kill him regardless. The moral thing to do would be to untie him and thereby save his life. In this section of the novel Tom's statement is almost identical. "It ain't right, and it ain't moral." In both cases the means to an end is all-important. In Tom's case, the moral thing to do would be to free Jim as quickly as possible instead of prolonging his agony. Huck's reply "I don't care shucks for the morality of it, nohow," shows that his morality is on human, practical terms where the end result is all-important. Besides, he does not care "what the authorities think" as long as it satisfies his own moral sensibilities.

The theme of superstition is brought out in Nat's belief that witches are haunting him. When the dogs appear in Jim's cabin, Tom leads him to believe he has seen witches. He exploits his fear of witches in order to carry out his plan.

Twain is satirizing religious people like Uncle Silas and Aunt Sally who pray with Jim and make sure he has enough to eat but are waiting eagerly for the reward offered for his capture. If no one claims him they will, of course, sell him. It is doubly ironic that even Jim, being a product of society himself, does not see through this double standard. He simply comments that “both of them was kind as they could be.”

Tom explains his elaborate plan of escape to Jim all the way from smuggling the rope ladder pie into his cabin to tying things to Aunt Sally’s apron strings. Jim cannot see the sense in most of the plan, “but he allowed we was white folks and knowed better than him.” Jim is, of course, the sensible one who questions Tom’s preposterous plan, and, ironically, the “white folks” are obviously lacking in common sense.

Chapters 38 and 39 Summary and Analysis

Summary

While Jim and Huck file pens out of candlesticks and a saw out of a case knife, Tom is busy working on the coat of arms for Jim. He comes up with one that is unintelligible, but it does not seem to matter as long as it comes from a book. Huck questions the meaning of such terms as “fess” and “bar sinister,” but Tom refuses to answer. Since dungeon walls were always made of stone, Tom suddenly strikes upon the idea that they could chisel both the coat of arms and the mournful inscriptions on one rock. He suggests they use the grindstone down at the mill. Huck and Tom find it too heavy to move to the cabin, however, so they decide to ask Jim to help them. He willingly takes the chain off the bedpost, wraps it around his neck, and slips out through the tunnel the boys have dug. He and Huck easily roll the grindstone back to the cabin as Tom “superintends” the whole thing. With a nail for a chisel and an old iron bolt for a hammer, Jim starts to work on the grindstone.

Tom decides every authentic prisoner should have to contend with spiders, snakes, rats, and a flower to water with his tears. Although Tom feels a rattlesnake would mean more “glory” for Jim, he finally decides to “let it go” after Jim threatens to leave if he forces the issue. Reluctantly Jim agrees to garter snakes instead but complains about the “bother” and “trouble” it is to be a prisoner. Tom instructs him to play music to the rats and provides him with an onion to make tears to water his Pitchiola flower. When Jim complains, Tom loses his patience and reprimands him for not appreciating the fact that he had “more gaudier chances than a prisoner ever had in the world to make a name for himself.” Promising to behave, Jim finally apologizes.

The boys catch fifteen rats and decide to hide them under Aunt Sally’s bed, but a little Phelps boy unknowingly releases them from the cage. The boys find Aunt Sally on top of the bed screaming in fear. Busily catching spiders, bugs, frogs, and caterpillars, Huck and Tom even try for a hornet’s nest but decide to give it up. They catch several dozen garter snakes and hide them in a bag in their bedroom. When they go back upstairs all the snakes have mysteriously disappeared, only to show up later all over the house. Aunt Sally, incensed by the whole ordeal, gives Huck and Tom their just reward by spanking them each time she sees another snake.

Unable to get any rest, Jim complains that the rats and snakes do not all sleep at the same time, keeping him on guard day and night. Each time a rat bites Jim, he writes on his shirt or journal with the fresh blood.

Since there has been no news from the plantation below New Orleans, Uncle Silas thinks he will advertise Jim in the New Orleans and St. Louis papers. The mention of St. Louis hits home to Huck, who realizes that Miss Watson will probably see the ad. Tom, however, must continue to do things by the book. The next item on his agenda is the distribution of anonymous letters warning people about Jim’s escape. Huck dresses up like a servant girl and shoves the first warning under the front door. The next night skull and crossbones are placed on the door, but the third night the note warns that “a desperate gang of cutthroats” will invade the property and steal Jim.

Discussion and Analysis

It is ironic that in Tom's exaggerated plan to free Jim, he must call him out of prison to help roll the heavy, oversized grindstone, and, thereby, carry out the plans for his own escape. Jim could, in fact, walk away anytime, but he obviously loves the boys and would not think of betraying their trust in him. This ludicrous incident is one of the most humorous in the novel.

Twain is ridiculing the romantic mind of Tom who "superintended" the whole project. In the eyes of Huck "he knowed how to do everything." He does, of course, choose a grindstone that is too heavy for the boys to handle, and when the entrance into the cabin is not big enough for the stone, it is Jim, not Tom who quickly solves the problem. Jim also endures the tortures inflicted upon him by Tom because that is supposedly his role as a prisoner. Only in the case of the rattlesnakes does Jim refuse to cooperate with Tom's fantastic schemes. Jim's practical nature comes to the foreground when Tom, in wild abandonment, is willing to risk Jim's life just for the sake of the glory. Tom puts Jim through an ordeal that leaves him with adverse feelings about the entire prisoner experience. "He said if he ever got out this time he wouldn't ever be a prisoner again, not for a salary." Since a salary is totally foreign to Jim, the last phrase might be interpreted to mean not for a million dollars.

Tom subjects Aunt Sally, as well as Jim, to undue cruelties in this section of the novel. She must endure his antics involving rats and snakes in the house, and anonymous notes designed to terrify her and other members of the household. The suffering of others is secondary to Tom's passion to dramatize the romantic notions he has only read about in books. The incongruity of Tom's treatment of Aunt Sally and Jim is especially apparent when we consider how kind and loving both of them have been toward Tom.

Tom's knowledge of the terminology of the coat of arms is limited at best. The language is confused to the point of being unintelligible. When Tom refuses to explain the meaning of "fess" and "bar sinister" it is evident he does not know. It is obvious that Tom often covers his lack of understanding in this way. Huck, however, attributes Tom's refusal to his personality. "If it didn't suit him to explain a thing to you, he wouldn't do it." Tom is covering his ignorance and, thereby, saving face with Huck who looks up to him.

Chapters 40 and 41 Summary and Analysis

New Characters

The Doctor: removes the bullet from Tom's leg

Old Mrs. Hotchkiss: a neighbor of the Phelps

Summary

After the last warning note has been sent, Huck and Tom take a picnic lunch and go fishing in the river. They check out the raft to make sure everything is in order. When they arrive home for supper that night, everyone in the house is in a state of frenzy. Worried about the threatening letter, Aunt Sally hustles them up to bed after supper without a word.

At half past eleven the boys get up and begin eating the lunch they had stolen from the cellar cupboard. Noticing the butter is missing, Tom sends Huck back to the cellar to get it while he goes to Jim's cabin to prepare the scene for the escape. Huck finds the butter and stealthily climbs up the stairs, when suddenly he runs into Aunt Sally. He quickly shoves the bread and butter under his hat. Aunt Sally questions him about his mysterious activities in the cellar, but getting nowhere she sends him into the "setting-room" until she has time to get to the bottom of it. In the room he sees fifteen farmers with guns ready to attack the cutthroats who are coming to steal Jim. The room is hot, and the butter under his hat melts and trickles down his forehead. He lifts his hat, revealing the stolen bread and butter. Relieved that his brain is not "oozing out" from brain fever,

Aunt Sally hugs him and lets him go.

He runs to Jim's cabin and frantically tries to explain that the men are coming, and there is no time to lose. The men fill the dark cabin just as Huck, Tom, and Jim slip out the hole and into the lean-to. Tom finally gives the all clear signal, and the three make a run for it. Tom's britches catch on a splinter on the top rail of the fence, however, and when he pulls loose, the splinter snaps and makes a noise. Soon gunfire is heard, dogs are released, and the chase is on. The dogs are friendly, however, and the runaways make it to the raft safely. Everyone is happy, but Huck and Jim suddenly notice Tom has been shot in the leg. Tom insists they go on, but Jim refuses to leave before they get a doctor for Tom. Huck goes for the doctor, instructing Jim to hide in the woods when the doctor arrives.

Huck gets the doctor out of bed and tells him a story about Tom kicking his gun in his dreams and shooting himself in the leg. The doctor is a kind old man who agrees to help, but insists on going alone because he feels the canoe is safe for one person only. He becomes suspicious when Huck blurts out that it easily held three. Waiting for the doctor's return, Huck sleeps on a lumber pile all night. The doctor has not returned by morning, and Huck runs into Uncle Silas in town. Under pressure to explain their absence, he tells Uncle Silas that he and Sid (Tom) were all over the river last night looking for the runaway slave. Huck claims Sid is at the post office so they wait awhile, but when he does not show up, they go home to Aunt Sally who is overjoyed to see Huck.

The house is still full of people who are eager to overstate the truth about what happened the night before. Mrs. Hotchkiss is worse than the others, claiming the runaway was not in his right mind.

That night Aunt Sally tucks Huck in and asks him not to leave. Seeing her caring nature, he finds it impossible to sneak out this time, but his mind is on Tom and he sleeps restlessly. He slides down the lightning rod several times during the night, but when he sees Aunt Sally waiting up for Tom, he goes back upstairs.

Discussion and Analysis

Tom's plan of escape takes on an air of sensationalism as the three runaways battle the suspense of gunfire, tracking dogs, screaming voices, pounding footsteps, and a breathtaking slide through the tunnel with the gunmen breathing down their necks. What tops off the whole romantic episode for Tom, however, is the bullet wound in his leg. They are all glad to get to the raft, "but Tom was the gladdest of all because he had a bullet in the calf of his leg." He does not want to stop now when everything is going so well. He attempts to bandage his own wound and challenges them to set the raft loose and continue the escape down the river. When Tom realizes Jim will not budge before they get a doctor for him, he instructs Huck to blindfold the doctor, put a purse full of gold in his hand, and make him swear to silence. Tom is, of course, continuing his escape plan in style according to the book. The next step is to confuse the doctor by taking him to the raft in a roundabout way so he will not chalk the raft and find it again. Ironically, if Huck had followed Tom's instructions, it would probably have caused Tom's death.

When Huck is on his own, he ignores Tom's fanciful instructions and does what Huck does best—invents a story. His fantastic story is not as believable, however, as the ones he has conjured up in the past. When he tells the doctor Tom kicked his gun in his dreams, the doctor replies, "Singular dream." Interpreted to mean "peculiar dream," we sense a hint of the doctor's suspicion about the whole story. To ease his concern about what he might find there, the doctor decides to go to the raft alone, using the excuse that the canoe will not safely hold two people. Huck's slight slip of the tongue adds to further suspicion when he tells the doctor the canoe carried "the three of us easy enough." The doctor leaves Huck on the shore with instructions to go home and prepare the Phelps family for the surprise that Huck had talked about.

When Tom insists on continuing down the river with the bullet still lodged in his leg, Jim's response is an expected one for it is consistent with his character throughout the novel. Jim's unselfishness in giving up his

freedom for the sake of Tom is no surprise to Huck. “I reckoned he’d say what he did say.” When we consider the fact that Jim could have executed his own escape from the Phelps Plantation at any time, we realize his love for Huck and Tom, his friends, was worth more to him than his long-sought freedom. He could not seek his own freedom at the expense of his friend’s life. Ironically, he feels Tom would do the same for him, but Tom is more concerned with completing his escape with style.

Chapters 42 and 43 Summary and Analysis

Summary

The next morning Uncle Silas looks for Tom in town but comes back discouraged. He hands Aunt Sally a letter from her sister that he had picked up at the post office the day before. She starts to open the letter, but glances out of the window and drops it as she sees Tom being brought in on a mattress. He is followed by the doctor and Jim, who has his hands tied behind his back. Thinking Tom is dead, Aunt Sally runs up to him, but he is delirious and can only mutter something unintelligible. Aunt Sally is happy just to see him alive.

While the others go into the house with Tom, Huck follows the men who take Jim back to his cabin. He hears them cursing Jim and giving him an occasional blow on the head for running away. They threaten to hang him as an example to other runaway slaves. They chain both his legs and hands to a big staple driven into the bottom log of the cabin. He is put on a diet of bread and water, and farmers with guns plan to guard his door at night while bulldogs will be on the watch during the day. In a little while the doctor comes to check on Jim. When he sees his deplorable situation, he asks them not to punish him too severely since Jim demonstrated exemplary behavior while he was with the doctor. He explains that Jim stepped out of hiding when Tom became seriously ill and incoherent, threatening to kill the doctor. Jim offered to help and he did it well. He tells them Jim is worth one thousand dollars and kind treatment too. At this the men soften their approach slightly. Huck hopes they will remove some of the chains and alter his diet but doesn’t dare suggest it.

The first chance Huck gets, he slips into the sick room. Bewildered and a bit confused, Tom soon wakes up, asking about the raft and Jim. Huck tells him all is well. Aunt Sally listens in shock as he suddenly blurts out the whole story about their fantastic scheme to free Jim, the runaway slave. Aunt Sally calls him a rascalion, threatening to punish him if she catches him meddling with Jim again. Surprised to learn Jim did not escape, Tom orders them to release him immediately because he is not a slave. He tells them that Miss Watson, who died two months ago, “set him free in her will.” Puzzled, Huck asks Tom about his motives for planning the escape. Tom tells him he did it for the adventure.

Aunt Polly appears in the doorway and the game of mistaken identities is over. She has come eleven hundred miles to see why Aunt Sally has not answered her letters. Knowing the letters would spell trouble for him, Tom admits intercepting them.

Aunt Polly confirms Jim’s freedom and Jim is released. Uncle Silas, Aunt Sally, and Aunt Polly make a fuss over Jim for helping the doctor nurse Tom. Tom gives him forty dollars for being a patient prisoner. Pleased and excited, Jim tells Huck it is his hairy breast that has made him rich again just as he had predicted on Jackson’s Island.

Tom suggests that the three of them go for “howling adventures” in Indian territory. When Huck complains that he has no money for such adventures, Tom tells him the six thousand dollars is still there since his father has never been back for it. Jim then reveals the secret about Huck’s pap. Hesitantly, he tells him Pap was the dead man in the floating house they were exploring on the river. With no show of emotion, Huck announces his plan to “light out for the territory ahead of the rest.” Aunt Sally wants to adopt him and “sivilize” him and “he can’t stand it.” He has been through that before.

Discussion and Analysis

Twain portrays Jim as a noble character when he bravely steps out of hiding to help the doctor save Tom's life, knowing full well it will cost him his freedom and possibly his life. The doctor attests to the fact that he never saw anyone who was more faithful "and yet he was risking his freedom to do it." Jim is a profoundly sensitive human being whose feeling and sacrifice for Tom comes as no surprise. We have seen him sacrifice his sleep by taking Huck's watch on the raft. We have seen his joy when Huck returns after their separation in the fog and his deep hurt when Huck plays a trick on him. We also see him as a caring family man whose dream is to, someday, buy his wife and children out of slavery. Jim's nobility lies in his sensitive nature and is consistent throughout the novel. In the case of Tom, we would not have expected Jim to behave any other way.

The men who take Jim back to his cabin in chains get "very huffy" and want to hang him as an example to the other slaves. Their scandalous values are clear when they decide not to do it since they do not own Jim, and if the owner ever showed up, he would certainly make them pay for his loss of property. When the doctor appears on the scene to tell them of Jim's actions in nursing Tom back to health, they should, ironically, be saluting him for his heroism, but they only "soften up a little."

When Huck realizes Tom knew all along that Jim had been set free, he understands why a boy with a respectable upbringing like Tom would get mixed up in the messy business of helping a slave escape. Tom tells him he did it strictly for adventure. He was planning to prolong the adventure all the way to the "mouth of the river," and then take Jim home on a steamboat in style and bring him into town as a hero with a "torchlight procession" and a "brass band."

The novel has come full circle as we see Huck "light out for the territory," afraid Aunt Sally will "civilize" him again as the Widow Douglas tried to do in the first chapter. Taught through his many difficult decisions to follow his instinctive, natural morality, Huck has grown into a more mature, sensitive human being. He belongs in the wilds of the "territory" where he can again be free from the hypocrisy inherent in society's constraints.

The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn: Quizzes

Chapter 1 Questions and Answers

Study Questions

1. Give a brief summary of the end of the novel, [The Adventures of Tom Sawyer](#).
2. Why did Twain choose a young boy as the narrator for the novel?
3. Name one of the major themes of the novel.
4. Give an example of superstition in Chapter 1.
5. Compare the character of the Widow Douglas to her sister, Miss Watson.
6. At what period in history does the story take place?
7. Give an example of satire (a device in literature that blends criticism of society with humor) in Chapter 1.
8. What do the Widow Douglas and Miss Watson try to teach Huck in order to civilize him?

9. What did the slaves do before they went to bed at night?

10. Who gave the catcall after midnight?

Answers

1. Tom and Huck found the six thousand dollars in gold that the robbers had hidden in the cave. Judge Thatcher invested it for them.

2. Twain uses Huck's comments as an innocent and truthful criticism of society.

3. One major theme of the novel is individual freedom. Huck searches for freedom from the constraints of a corrupt society, and Jim searches for freedom from slavery.

4. Huck accidentally flips a spider into a candle and is sure it will bring him bad luck.

5. The Widow Douglas seems less demanding of Huck than does Miss Watson. She asks her sister to "ease up" on Huck during the spelling lesson.

6. The story takes place before the Civil War, when slavery was still legal in the southern United States.

7. One example of satire is Huck's decision not to go to the "good place" if Miss Watson would be there.

8. They teach him proper dress, proper manners, and regular Bible reading.

9. They came into the house for prayers.

10. Tom Sawyer was calling for Huck.

Chapters 2 and 3 Questions and Answers

Study Questions

1. Where does Tom take Huck and the gang?

2. What does Jim think has happened when he finds his hat hanging in the tree?

3. When Tom's gang tries to rob the rich "Spaniards" and "A-rabs," who do they actually rob?

4. Where does Tom get his ideas for robbing and killing people?

5. If anyone reveals the secrets of the gang, the boy and his family must be killed. Whom does Huck offer as his family to be killed?

6. Contrast the personalities of Huck and Tom.

7. Whose slave is Jim?

8. Who are Joe Harper and Ben Rogers?

9. What purpose does the Mississippi River serve in the novel?

10. How wide is the river in this chapter?

Answers

1. Tom takes Huck and the gang to the cave through the hole that he had discovered earlier.
2. Jim thinks that he has been ridden around the world by witches.
3. The gang tries to rob a Sunday school picnic. To their humiliation, it is a primer class filled with very young children.
4. He gets them from the books he reads. One of those books is [Don Quixote](#).
5. Huck offers Miss Watson because he would rather give her up than anyone else.
6. Huck is literal-minded, realistic, and practical, but Tom is romantic and imaginative.
7. Jim is Miss Watson's slave. This is another criticism of Miss Watson as an unfavorable character in the novel.
8. Joe Harper and Ben Rogers are boys in Tom Sawyer's gang.
9. The Mississippi River acts as a symbolic setting in the novel, representing an idyllic escape from the corruption of society. 10. The river is a mile wide, which gives it a majestic power.

Chapters 4 and 5 Questions and Answers

Study Questions

1. How does Huck feel about school in these chapters?
2. How does Huck know his pap is back in town?
3. Why is Huck in a big hurry to give Judge Thatcher his money?
4. What does Judge Thatcher give Huck in exchange for the six thousand dollars?
5. Huck consults Jim about his father. What does he want to know?
6. How does Pap feel about Huck's ability to read and write?
7. Who goes to court to gain custody of Huck?
8. Who takes Pap into their house in an attempt to reform him?
9. Does Pap turn over a new leaf as he says he will? Explain your answer.
10. What is Twain's commentary on superstition in Chapter 4?

Answers

1. At first he hated school, but as time went on it became easier and he actually began to like it.

2. He sees his footprints in the snow. Pap has a unique cross in his left bootheel to ward off the devil.
3. He feels that if he gets rid of his six thousand dollars, Pap will leave him alone.
4. He gives him one dollar. In this way Huck has sold it rather than given it away.
5. Jim relies on his hairball to work magic. Huck wants to know about his father, but the hairball wavers back and forth giving him opposing answers.
6. Pap is jealous of his son. He does not want his son to be better than he is, nor to put on “airs.”
7. Judge Thatcher and the Widow Douglas want the court to take Huck away from his father. They want to save Huck from his father’s abuse.
8. The new judge and his wife give him their spare room, food to eat, and new clothes to wear.
9. No. He sneaks out in the middle of the night, exchanges his coat for whiskey, gets drunk, and breaks his arm.
10. Twain is subtly satirizing superstition in this chapter, particularly in the hairball incident. It is obvious neither the hairball’s spirit nor Jim are sure of anything since one answer is consistently juxtaposed with the opposite answer following it.

Chapters 6 and 7 Questions and Answers

Study Questions

1. Pap kidnaps Huck. Where does he take him?
2. Why does Huck want people to think that he is dead?
3. Does Pap get Huck’s six thousand dollars?
4. What does Pap do with Huck when he goes to town for supplies?
5. What tool does Huck use to escape from the cabin?
6. Why does Huck kill the pig?
7. What does the “June rise” of the river bring with it for Huck?
8. Why does Huck wish Tom Sawyer were with him?
9. Why does Huck suddenly enjoy school?
10. Huck sleeps in the canoe just before he escapes to Jackson’s Island. What is he waiting for?

Answers

1. Pap takes Huck to a deserted cabin in the woods on the Illinois side of the Mississippi River.
2. He does not want his pap nor the Widow Douglas to search for him.

3. No. He does not have the patience to wait around for the court's decision.
4. He locks Huck in the cabin so he will not run away.
5. He uses a rusty old saw. His pap is careful not to leave any knives around while he is gone, but Huck finds the saw between the rafter and clapboards of the roof.
6. He killed the pig so he could smear the blood around to make it look as if he had been murdered with an ax.
7. The "June rise" causes a canoe to wash up on shore that Huck hides for his escape.
8. Huck wishes Tom Sawyer was there to help him stage his own death. He feels Tom would give it that "fancy touch."
9. He goes to school to spite his father. His father forbids him to go near the school.
10. Huck is waiting for it to get dark so he will not be seen on the river.

Chapters 8 and 9 Questions and Answers

Study Questions

1. What interrupts Huck's comfortable and relaxed feeling the first morning on the island?
2. Why are the townspeople on the river that morning?
3. What is found in the bread that is floating on the water?
4. Whose campfire does Huck find?
5. What will people say if they discover that Huck is harboring a slave?
6. What is Miss Watson tempted to do with her slave, Jim?
7. What happens to the island when it rains?
8. What do Huck and Jim find on the island that has been washed down by the flood?
9. A large two-story house floats down the river past the island. What do Huck and Jim find in the house?
10. Where do Huck and Jim make their home on the island?

Answers

1. The interruption is the loud "boom" of the cannon coming from the ferryboat.
2. They are on the river to try and locate Huck's dead body.
3. Quicksilver is put in the bread because they feel that it will locate a dead body in the river.
4. Huck finds Jim's campfire, but he does not know whose it is at the time.

5. People will call Huck a low-down Abolitionist.
6. Miss Watson is tempted to sell him down the river for eight hundred dollars.
7. It becomes flooded with three or four feet of water at the lower end of the island.
8. They find a large raft.
9. Huck and Jim find a dead man in the house. In the last chapter of the novel Huck will learn that it was the body of his father.
10. They make their home in a cave on a high bluff. This provides shelter when it rains and protection from people who might be looking for Jim.

Chapters 10 and 11 Questions and Answers

Study Questions

1. What does a rattlesnake do when its mate dies?
2. Jim thinks there is a reason why the rattlesnake bit him. What is the reason?
3. Why does Huck dress like a girl?
4. How long does it take for Jim's swelling on his leg to go down?
5. What is the name of the forty-year-old woman whom Huck talks to in town?
6. What crime is Jim accused of?
7. Why does Huck build a fire at his old campsite?
8. How does Mrs. Loftus know that Huck is not a girl?
9. What reward is offered for Huck's father?
10. How does Huck react when Mrs. Loftus says that people think Jim murdered Huck?

Answers

1. The rattlesnake finds its mate and coils around it.
2. Jim thinks the snake bit him because Huck touched a snakeskin with his bare hands.
3. Huck dresses to disguise himself so nobody will recognize him in town.
4. It takes four days and four nights.
5. Her name is Mrs. Judith Loftus. Her husband wants to find Jim for the three hundred dollar reward.
6. Jim is accused of murdering Huck.

7. He builds a fire to distract the people who are hunting for Jim until they can get off the island.
8. Mrs. Loftus observes the way Huck catches the lump of lead by clapping his legs together. She can also tell by the way he threads a needle.
9. The reward is two hundred dollars because he is a murder suspect.
10. Huck is completely surprised, but he tries to stay calm so she will not suspect his connection with Jim.

Chapters 12 and 13 Questions and Answers

Study Questions

1. What is a towhead?
2. After it gets dark Jim builds a protection from the rain. What does he build?
3. What is the “texas” part of a steamboat?
4. Why does Huck want to rescue the robbers on the wrecked steamboat?
5. Why does Huck wish Tom Sawyer could be with him to explore the wrecked steamboat?
6. What does Huck finally say to get action from the captain of the ferryboat?
7. What does Huck mean when he says “I lifted a chicken” and “borrowed a watermelon”?
8. What happens to the raft while Huck and Jim explore the wrecked steamboat?
9. Do they find the raft again?
10. What happened to the skiff at the end of Chapter 13?

Answers

1. A towhead is a sandbar that has a thick growth of cottonwoods on it.
2. Jim builds a wigwam in the center of the raft. He adds a place to build a fire in cool weather.
3. The “texas” on a steamboat contains the pilothouse and officers’ quarters.
4. Huck’s conscience bothers him after he takes their boat and leaves them to die.
5. Huck knows that Tom would add excitement and “style” to his adventure.
6. He tells him that the niece of the richest man in town is trapped on the wrecked steamboat.
7. Huck means that he stole them both, but rationalizes his actions by saying that it is not stealing if you intend to pay the owner back someday.
8. The raft has floated away in the storm and Huck and Jim are left stranded.

9. Yes. They catch up with the raft a few miles downstream.

10. Huck and Jim sank the skiff so there could be no incriminating evidence in connection with the robbers.

Chapters 14 and 15 Questions and Answers

Study Questions

1. How did Jim feel about Huck's "adventure" on the *Walter Scott*?

2. Which king was familiar to Jim?

3. Who was the French king who was beheaded?

4. Who was his son?

5. Why are Huck and Jim separated in the fog?

6. What kind of trick does Huck play on Jim?

7. How does Jim feel about the trick?

8. How many nights will it take to get to Cairo?

9. Where has Huck learned about kings?

10. Which river will Huck and Jim travel to get to the free states?

Answers

1. Jim said he did not want any more adventures because he did not want to risk getting caught, nor did he want to risk his life.

2. King Solomon was the biblical king who had many wives.

3. His name was Louis XVI. He was the king during the French Revolution.

4. His son was the Dauphin, Louis Charles, who was imprisoned and was thought to have died there. Rumors had it that he might have escaped, however, and fled to America.

5. The raft has broken away from the young tree (sapling) it was tied to, and Huck's canoe follows one side of an island while Jim's raft follows the other side.

6. Huck tricks Jim into believing that he has been on the raft all along and that they were never separated in the fog.

7. Jim feels that Huck has been making a fool of him and he is hurt.

8. It will be three nights of good traveling, but the fog changes their plans.

9. Huck has probably learned about kings from books he has read and is continuing to read on the raft.

10. The Ohio River will lead them into Illinois and to the free states. Illinois was, in fact, a free state in the antebellum South.

Chapters 16 and 17 Questions and Answers

Study Questions

1. Why does Huck's conscience bother him as they approach what they think is Cairo?
2. What does Huck tell the slave hunters about his predicament?
3. What do the men in the skiff do for Huck?
4. Does Huck feel better after he has protected Jim from the slave hunters?
5. What destroys the raft?
6. How can Huck and Jim tell that they have missed Cairo in the fog?
7. Why does Jim think they have had such bad luck?
8. Why does Huck go into long descriptions of the furnishings and pictures in the Grangerford's house?
9. Who do the Grangerfords think Huck might be when the dogs bark at him?
10. What has happened to Jim in these chapters?

Answers

1. He feels he is responsible for helping Jim, a runaway slave, gain his freedom.
2. He tells them that his pap, his mam, and Mary Ann are sick on the raft. He leads them to believe they have smallpox.
3. Out of guilt they each give him \$20.
4. He does not feel better at first. He feels as if he has done the wrong thing.
5. A steamboat navigating on a semi-foggy river runs into them.
6. They can tell that they are below the Ohio River because clear water from the Ohio is drifting into the muddy Mississippi.
7. He feels it all comes from handling the snakeskin.
8. Twain is using satire to attack sentimentalism and bad taste in art and in home furnishings.
9. They think Huck could be a Shepherdson, their enemy.
10. Jim dives off the raft when the steamboat wrecks it, and Huck calls his name repeatedly but cannot find him.

Chapters 18 and 19 Questions and Answers

Study Questions

1. Why are the Grangerfords and Shepherdsons feuding?
2. Name the couple who run off and get married?
3. What happens to the young couple after the shooting starts?
4. What secret does Miss Sophia ask Huck to keep?
5. Why does Huck think the duke and the king are after him when they first meet?
6. Do Huck and Jim expect to paddle their newly-found canoe up the Ohio River?
7. When Huck pulls the men out of the river, what has happened to them?
8. How does Jim feel when he sees Huck again? What does he think has happened to him?
9. Where is Huck while the shooting is going on?
10. Who leads Huck to Jim?

Answers

1. Nobody really knows except that years ago somebody shot a man who won a lawsuit.
2. Miss Sophia, a Grangerford, and Harney Shepherdson run off and get married.
3. The young couple make it safely across the river.
4. She asks Huck not to tell about the note left in her Testament.
5. He is still on guard because he is a runaway who is traveling with a runaway slave.
6. Their plans for traveling up the Ohio River have changed.
7. One of the men is Buck. He has died in a gun battle between the feuding families.
8. Jim is happy to see Huck. He was afraid Huck had been killed in the gun battle.
9. Huck has crawled up in a tree.
10. Jack helps Huck find Jim by telling him that he wants him to see a “whole stack o’ water moccasins.” He is actually leading him to Jim, but does not want to get mixed up in any trouble.

Chapters 20 and 21 Questions and Answers

Study Questions

1. How does Huck explain the fact that they travel at night and sleep during the day?

2. What do the people at the camp meeting expect the king to do with the money they collect for him?
3. How does Jim treat Huck during the storm at night?
4. How do the duke and the king plan to make it safe for Jim to travel during the day?
5. What does the duke mean when he says he will call back Hamlet's soliloquy from "recollection's vaults"?
6. Why is the duke's version of Hamlet's soliloquy confusing?
7. Who is assigned the role of Juliet in the "Shakespearean Revival"?
8. Why does Colonel Sherburn murder Boggs?
9. What is Colonel Sherburn's ultimatum in regard to Boggs?
10. Who is called for to quiet Boggs down?

Answers

1. He tells them a story about Jim being the family slave. Since his family is all dead, Jim is all he has left. They travel at night because people suspect Jim of being a runaway when they see him.
2. They expect him to use it when he goes back to change the lives of his fellow pirates.
3. When Huck gets tired, Jim takes half of his watch so Huck can get some sleep.
4. The duke prints a playbill that advertises Jim as a runaway slave. When people see them they will tie Jim's hands and feet, show them the playbill, and tell people they are turning Jim in for the reward.
5. The duke has no copy of [Hamlet](#) aboard the raft. He says he will need to recall it from memory.
6. The duke's version is confusing because it is not Hamlet's soliloquy. It contains jumbled lines from several of Shakespeare's plays, and it makes no sense.
7. The 70-year-old king with a bald head is assigned the role of Juliet.
8. Colonel Sherburn is tired of being harassed and threatened by the drunken Boggs.
9. He gives Boggs until one o'clock to quiet down. If he doesn't, he will kill him.
10. The townspeople call for Boggs' daughter, but she arrives after he has been shot by Sherburn.

Chapters 22 and 23 Questions and Answers

Study Questions

1. Who faces the mob single-handed?
2. Who is Twain satirizing in this situation?

3. What attracts the crowd at the showing of *The Royal Nonesuch*?
4. Why do the king and the duke leave during the third performance?
5. Approximately how many people attend the Shakespearean performance?
6. Why do the king and duke change to another show?
7. What does Huck mean when he says that all kings are “rapscallions”?
8. What does Jim do for Huck that shows he cares about him?
9. Who is Jim homesick for in these chapters?
10. What disease caused Jim’s daughter’s deafness?

Answers

1. Sherburn steps onto his porch and criticizes them for being cowards. He then orders them to leave.
2. Twain is satirizing the lynch mobs who come like cowards after dark wearing masks. He thinks mob activity is cowardly.
3. The caption at the bottom of the handbill that reads “ladies and children not admitted.”
4. The king stays on the raft, and the duke escapes after he has collected the money. They leave to avoid the anger of the townspeople who have been swindled out of their money.
5. Twelve people attend the performance. They laugh inappropriately and leave before it is over.
6. Since their primary purpose is to make money they decide to do a show that will attract more people.
7. He does not have much respect for royalty. He sees them as insensitive men who generally get their own way.
8. Jim often serves his watch for him at night so Huck can get some sleep.
9. Jim is homesick for his wife and children and is afraid he will never see them again.
10. Scarlet fever left her with a hearing impediment.

Chapters 24 and 25 Questions and Answers

Study Questions

1. What does the duke do so that Jim does not need to be tied up in the wigwam all day?
2. Who gives the king the information about the Wilks family?
3. What are the names of the three Wilks sisters?
4. Who meets the king, the duke, and Huck when they reach the shore in the yawl?

5. How do the Wilks girls react when they see the king and the duke?
6. How does the crowd react when the king names several of Peter Wilks' closest friends and invites them for supper?
7. Does the duke say anything to the townspeople?
8. Why do the king and duke give the Wilks sisters \$415 of their own money?
9. Who is Dr. Robinson? How does he feel about the king and the duke?
10. What does Dr. Robinson think about the king's English accent?

Answers

1. The duke paints his face and other parts of his body blue so he will look like a sick Arab rather than a runaway slave.
2. The king gets all his information from a "young country jake" who is taking a trip to South America. They pick him up and take him to the steamboat.
3. The three Wilks sisters are Mary Jane (19 years old), Susan (15), and Joanna (14).
4. About two dozen people meet them at the boat dock, but the news travels fast and soon the streets are flooded with curiosity seekers.
5. They welcome their long-lost uncles with open arms, since they have never seen their real uncles and don't know what they look like.
6. The crowd is impressed. The fact that he knows them by name gives him credibility as the true brother of Peter Wilks.
7. No, he does not say anything because he is supposedly the deaf brother of Peter Wilks.
8. They find that the money hidden in the basement is short \$415. They want to make sure they will not be suspected of stealing.
9. Dr. Robinson is a well-respected citizen in town. He thinks the king and the duke are frauds and imposters who should be driven out of town.
10. Dr. Robinson thinks the king's imitation of an Englishman is the worst he has ever heard.

Chapters 26 and 27 Questions and Answers

Study Questions

1. Why do the women insult their own food?
2. What incident in the novel convinces Huck that he must get the money back to the Wilks girls?
3. In what way will Huck get the money from the king and the duke?

4. Where does Huck hurriedly hide the money? Why does he choose this particular spot?
5. How do the king and the duke justify selling the property so soon after the funeral?
6. Where do the slaves go when they are sold?
7. Why does the king sell the slaves the day after the funeral? How does the duke feel about this?
8. Why does the duke wish he had kept the slaves?
9. How do the Wilks girls react when the slaves are sold?
10. Why doesn't Huck tell on the king and the duke when they allow the slaves to be separated from their families?

Answers

1. The women make degrading comments about their food so that they can elicit compliments from their guests.
2. The kindness of Mary Jane and Susan, and Joanna's apology for her accusations while they are eating in the kitchen convinces Huck that these girls do not deserve to be defrauded by the king and the duke.
3. Huck decides that stealing the money would be the safest course of action.
4. Huck hides the money in Peter Wilks' coffin. His plan to take the money outside is thwarted when the door is locked. When he hears Mary Jane's footsteps, he quickly slips the bag of gold under the coffin lid and disappears.
5. The king and duke promise to take the Wilks girls home to England to live with them. The king is in a hurry to get back because his congregation needs him back in the pulpit.
6. The two sons were sold up the river to Memphis and their mother was sold down the river to New Orleans.
7. The king meets a slaveholder and makes a quick sale. The duke feels that it was "quick sales and small profits." He is proven right when they later assume that the slaves took their six thousand dollars with them.
8. The duke admires the con game that he thinks they have played when they pretended to be sorry to leave but took the money with them. He feels he could have made a fortune with their acting talents.
9. The girls' hearts are broken to see them sold away from the town and separated from their families.
10. Huck comes close to telling on the king and the duke when he sees the reaction of the girls, but he knows they will soon be back since the sales are illegal.

Chapters 28 and 29 Questions and Answers

Study Questions

1. Why does Huck tell Mary Jane the truth?
2. Why does Hines think that the king is an imposter?

3. Why does Huck ask Mary Jane to leave town?
4. How does Huck tell Mary Jane that he put the bag of money in the coffin?
5. How does Levi Bell propose to find who the true Wilks brothers are?
6. What were the misfortunes of the Wilks brothers?
7. How do they finally solve the problem of identification?
8. Why don't they believe Huck when he says he's English?
9. On his way to the raft what does Huck see in the middle of town?
10. Why did Hines let go of Huck's hand allowing him to get away?

Answers

1. He sees how sad she is about the separation of the slave families and tells her they will soon be back.
2. He saw the king in a canoe the day before the funeral.
3. Huck asks Mary Jane to leave so her face will not reveal the truth about the king and the duke after Huck has told her the whole story.
4. He does not have the heart to tell her in person so he writes her a note and asks her not to read it until he has gone.
5. He tries to compare their handwriting to letters Peter Wilks has received from his brothers, but it does not work because William Wilks has broken his arm and cannot write.
6. Their baggage has been dropped off in the wrong town, and one of the brothers has broken his arm.
7. By exhuming the body of Peter Wilks to find out who is right about the tattoo on his chest.
8. Huck does not have an English accent.
9. Huck sees the candle burning in Mary Jane's window.
10. Hines was so surprised to see the bag of gold in the coffin that he forgot himself and let go of Huck's hand.

Chapters 30 and 31 Questions and Answers

Study Questions

1. What do Huck and Jim do as soon as Huck gets back to the raft?
2. Who do the king and the duke blame for stealing the money?
3. Who captured Jim and sold him?

4. Where did Jim go after he was sold?
5. What does Huck tell the duke about the raft when he meets him in town?
6. Why can't Huck pray when he tries?
7. Why does Huck tear up his letter to Miss Watson?
8. Why is Chapter 31 a climactic chapter in the novel?
9. How does Huck feel about his decision to "buy Jim out of slavery"?
10. Why doesn't Huck tell on the king and duke when he has a chance?

Answers

1. Huck and Jim hurriedly take off down the river in the raft to try to get away from the king and the duke.
2. They blame each other for stealing the money.
3. Jim was captured by the king. He sold him for \$40.
4. Jim was sold to the owner of the Phelps Plantation.
5. He tells him the raft and Jim have both been stolen.
6. He can't pray because his heart isn't right. He says, you "can't pray a lie."
7. He wants to turn Jim in, but he can't go through with it.
8. It is the ultimate moral decision for Huck to help Jim to freedom.
9. Huck feels that he is wicked for doing so, but he values Jim's friendship above everything else.
10. He wants to be rid of them and have nothing more to do with them.

Chapters 32 and 33 Questions and Answers

Study Questions

1. Why does Huck go to the Phelps Plantation?
2. Who is Huck mistaken for at the Phelps Plantation?
3. How does Huck feel when he learns that Aunt Sally thinks he is Tom Sawyer?
4. How does Tom react when Huck tells him he is going to steal Jim from the Phelps Plantation?
5. Who is the stranger that arrives at the Phelps Plantation after Huck? What does the stranger call himself?
6. Who informs Mr. Phelps about the king and the duke and their *Royal Nonesuch* show?

7. What happens to the king and the duke as a result?
8. What do Huck and Tom do to try to warn the king and the duke about possible trouble ahead?
9. How does Huck feel when he sees what the townspeople have done to the two frauds?
10. Why does Huck's conscience bother him concerning the incident with the king and duke?

Answers

1. Huck goes to the Phelps Plantation to try to find Jim.
2. Huck is mistaken for Tom Sawyer.
3. Huck feels relieved because he knows he can easily impersonate Tom. He can also give information about Tom's family.
4. Tom agrees to help Huck with his plan to steal Jim, but Tom already knows that Jim has been freed by Miss Watson.
5. The stranger who arrives at the Phelps Plantation is Tom Sawyer who is disguised as Sid Sawyer, Tom's brother. Since Huck is Tom and Tom is Sid, they are supposedly brothers.
6. Jim informs Mr. Phelps and Burton of the scandalous *Royal Nonesuch* show. Burton tells the townspeople.
7. The king and duke are tarred and feathered and run out of town.
8. Huck and Tom sneak out of the house to try to warn the fraudulent pair about their impending danger, but it is too late. They watch the tarred and feathered couple being ridden out of town on a rail.
9. It makes him feel sick to see what the townspeople have done to them. He says "human beings can be awful cruel to one another."
10. It is central to Huck's character to feel that he is to blame even though he hasn't done anything wrong. He makes a harsh statement against the wisdom of trusting one's conscience.

Chapters 34 and 35 Questions and Answers

Study Questions

1. How does Tom finally guess Jim's whereabouts?
2. Why is Huck in awe of Tom's intelligence?
3. Why does Huck think Tom's plan for freeing Jim is better than his?
4. What is Huck's first and most practical plan of escape?
5. What are some of Huck's other plans of escape for Jim?
6. Why does Tom want to saw the bedpost leg in half?

7. Why does Huck think Tom's plan is foolish?
8. Where does Huck get the bedsheets for the rope ladder?
9. What plan do they finally adopt to free Jim?
10. How long does Tom think it should take to dig Jim out?

Answers

1. Tom sees a slave bringing a plate of food with watermelon on it to a hut on the Phelps Plantation.
2. Huck thinks Tom is exceptionally intelligent because he thought of the fact that dogs do not eat watermelons. Tom reasoned that there must, therefore, be a person in the hut.
3. Tom's plan is more romantic and has more style.
4. Huck suggests stealing the key from Mr. Phelps, unlocking the door to the hut, and escaping down the river on his raft.
5. Huck suggests that Jim crawl out of the high window. He also suggests sawing out as he had done earlier in the novel.
6. He wants to saw it in half so he can slip the chain through it and release Jim.
7. Huck thinks it is foolish because one could simply slip the chain off the bedpost without sawing it in half.
8. He takes them from the clothesline.
9. They decide to dig him out with case knives.
10. Tom thinks it should take thirty-seven years. They decide they will only imagine it took them thirty-seven years.

Chapters 36 and 37 Questions and Answers

Study Questions

1. When the case knives are too slow for digging, what do Huck and Tom decide to use instead?
2. When Tom goes upstairs to bed what does he pretend the stairs are?
3. According to Tom why do the witches come to visit Nat at breakfast?
4. How many new shirts has Aunt Sally made in the last two years?
5. Why does Uncle Silas find the missing spoon in his pocket?
6. What two missing items have been stolen off of the clothesline?
7. What do Huck and Tom bake into the witch's pie?

8. What do Huck and Tom do to confuse Aunt Sally about her silverware?
9. Why do they need a bedsheet?
10. Why do Tom and Huck want to confuse Aunt Sally?

Answers

1. They decide to change to pick and shovel because it will be faster.
2. Tom pretends the stairs are a lightning rod.
3. Tom says the witches are hungry, and he will bake them a witch pie to satisfy their appetite at breakfast.
4. Aunt Sally has made two shirts in the last two years. If she makes a new one for Uncle Silas it will be her third shirt in the last two years.
5. Because Tom puts it there earlier. Jim is supposed to take it from Uncle Silas on one of his visits.
6. The bedsheet and the shirt are taken from the clothesline.
7. They bake a rope ladder into the witch's pie.
8. They add and remove the spoons alternately to confuse the count.
9. They need a bedsheet to make a rope later.
10. The boys want to confuse Aunt Sally so she will not keep such close watch over her belongings. They want to use some of the items for their plan of escape. They are hoping she will not notice the missing items.

Chapters 38 and 39 Questions and Answers

Study Questions

1. How were pens and saws made by Jim and Huck?
2. What does Tom decide to use for the coat of arms and the mournful inscriptions?
3. What does Jim threaten to do if Tom forces him to live with rattlesnakes?
4. What does Tom substitute for the rattlesnakes?
5. What animal bites him? What does he do with the blood?
6. How is Jim supposed to water his flower?
7. What happens to the rats under Aunt Sally's bed? How does Aunt Sally feel about them?
8. Where do the garter snakes go after they crawl out of the bag in the boys' bedroom?
9. Why does Jim have trouble sleeping at night?

10. What does Tom's last anonymous letter reveal?

Answers

1. Pens were filed out of candlesticks, and the saw was made out of a case knife.
2. Tom decides to use the grindstone at the mill.
3. Jim threatens to leave rather than risk his life with rattlesnakes.
4. Tom substitutes garter snakes for rattlesnakes. Jim agrees even though he is not happy about that either.
5. Whenever a rat bites Jim, he uses the blood to write on his shirt that is used as a journal.
6. Jim is given an onion to water his flower with his own tears.
7. The little Phelps child opens the cage door and lets the rats out. They run all over the bedroom and frighten Aunt Sally.
8. The garter snakes are spread all over the house. They hang from the rafters and drop into plates and on people's necks.
9. Jim cannot sleep because the rats, snakes, and spiders are bothering him all day and all night.
10. The letter says that a "desperate gang of cutthroats" will come to steal Jim exactly at midnight.

Chapters 40 and 41 Questions and Answers

Study Questions

1. Where has Huck forgotten the butter for the boys' lunch?
2. Who does Huck find in the "setting-room?"
3. What happens to Tom's britches when the three are escaping to the river and the raft?
4. Why don't the dogs pay any attention to Huck, Jim, and Tom?
5. What has happened to Tom during the escape?
6. What does Huck tell the doctor about Tom's bullet wound?
7. Why does the doctor leave Huck on the shore when he goes to take care of Tom?
8. Where does Huck sleep all night?
9. What is going on at the Phelps Plantation when Huck gets there?
10. Why doesn't Huck leave the house at night to check on Tom at the raft?

Answers

1. Huck has left the butter in the cellar.

2. Huck finds fifteen farmers in the “setting room.” Each of them is carrying a gun for protection.
3. Huck’s britches are caught on a splinter on the top rail of the fence. When he pulls loose, the splinter snaps back and makes a noise.
4. The dogs know them and are friendly.
5. Tom was shot and has a bullet lodged in his leg.
6. Huck tells the doctor Tom was dreaming and kicked his gun, and it shot him in the leg.
7. The doctor tells Huck the canoe is not safe for two people.
8. Huck sleeps on a lumber pile.
9. The house is still full of people telling exaggerated stories about what happened the night before.
10. Huck swears that “he wouldn’t do nothing to grieve her anymore.”

Chapters 42 and 43 Questions and Answers

Study Questions

1. When Tom finally comes home who accompanies him?
2. How do the men treat Jim as a runaway slave?
3. What do they threaten to do to Jim to teach the other slaves a lesson?
4. Why don’t they do what they feel like doing to Jim?
5. What is Jim’s punishment when he gets back to his cabin?
6. When Tom wakes up what does he reveal to Aunt Sally?
7. Who arrives to surprise her sister?
8. Who first reveals Jim’s freedom? How is Jim freed?
9. What happened to Pap?
10. What does Huck plan to do at the novel’s end?

Answers

1. The doctor, Jim, and the men attending to Jim, accompany Tom to his home.
2. They curse him and give him an occasional blow on the head.
3. They threaten to hang Jim to teach the other slaves a lesson.

4. They are afraid Jim's owner might come back to claim him, and they would be obligated to pay for the loss of property.
5. He is chained to the floor with both legs, and his arms are also chained. He is put on a diet of bread and water.
6. Tom reveals the whole plan of Jim's escape to Aunt Sally.
7. Aunt Polly arrives from St. Petersburg and surprises everyone including her sister, Aunt Sally.
8. Tom reveals Jim's freedom to Huck and Aunt Sally. Jim was freed by Miss Watson in her will.
9. Pap was found dead by Jim in the floating house earlier in the novel. Jim does not tell Huck until the end of the novel.
10. Huck plans to "light out for the territory ahead of the rest" so Aunt Sally will not try to adopt him and "civilize" him.

The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn: Essential Passages

Essential Passages by Character: Jim

Essential Passage 1: [Chapter 2](#)

As soon as Tom was back we cut along the path, around the garden fence, and by and by fetched up on the steep top of the hill the other side of the house. Tom said he slipped Jim's hat off of his head and hung it on a limb right over him, and Jim stirred a little, but he didn't wake. Afterwards Jim said the witches bewitched him and put him in a trance, and rode him all over the state, and then set him under the trees again, and hung his hat on a limb to show who done it. And next time Jim told it he said they rode him down to New Orleans; and, after that, every time he told it he spread it more and more, till by and by he said they rode him all over the world, and tired him most to death, and his back was all over saddle-boils. Jim was monstrous proud about it, and he got so he wouldn't hardly notice the other niggers. Niggers would come miles to hear Jim tell about it, and he was more looked up to than any nigger in that country. Strange niggers would stand with their mouths open and look him all over, same as if he was a wonder. Niggers is always talking about witches in the dark by the kitchen fire; but whenever one was talking and letting on to know all about such things, Jim would happen in and say, "Hm! What you know 'bout witches?" and that nigger was corked up and had to take a back seat. Jim always kept that five-center piece round his neck with a string, and said it was a charm the devil give to him with his own hands, and told him he could cure anybody with it and fetch witches whenever he wanted to just by saying something to it; but he never told what it was he said to it. Niggers would come from all around there and give Jim anything they had, just for a sight of that five-center piece; but they wouldn't touch it, because the devil had had his hands on it. Jim was most ruined for a servant, because he got stuck up on account of having seen the devil and been rode by witches.

Summary

Huck, bored and lonely at the widow's home, takes off in the night with Tom Sawyer, looking for some adventures. They come across Jim, Miss Watson's slave, asleep under a tree. Knowing how superstitious Jim is, Tom decides to play a prank on the slave. He removes his hat and hangs it on a nearby tree. When Jim

wakes up and sees his hat, he is convinced that it was witches who put it there. In the future, he makes up a wild tale in which he was transported all across the state in a trance and then returned to the tree where the witches hung up his hat. He later elaborates it further, stating that he was carried down to New Orleans, and then even further until at last his account includes a trip clear around the world. His supposed encounter with witches then gives Jim a new sense of importance around the slave community, which he relishes. Huck proclaims that Jim was almost ruined as a servant because he became so proud of having seen the devil and ridden with witches. Jim's gullibility and superstitious nature thus are set up for further development in the rest of the story.

Essential Passage 2: [Chapter 15](#)

It had clouded up pretty dark just after I got on to the raft, but it was clearing up again now.

“Oh, well, that's all interpreted well enough as far as it goes, Jim,” I says; “but what does *these* things stand for?”

It was the leaves and rubbish on the raft and the smashed oar. You could see them first-rate now.

Jim looked at the trash, and then looked at me, and back at the trash again. He had got the dream fixed so strong in his head that he couldn't seem to shake it loose and get the facts back into its place again right away. But when he did get the thing straightened around he looked at me steady without ever smiling, and says:

“What do dey stan' for? I'se gwyne to tell you. When I got all wore out wid work, en wid de callin' for you, en went to sleep, my heart wuz mos' broke bekase you wuz los', en I didn' k'yer no' mo' what become er me en de raf'. En when I wake up en fine you back ag'in, all safe en soun', de tears come, en I could 'a' got down on my knees en kiss yo' foot, I's so thankful. En all you wuz thinkin' 'bout wuz how you could make a fool uv ole Jim wid a lie. Dat truck dah is *trash*; en trash is what people is dat puts dirt on de head er dey fren's en makes 'em ashamed.”

Then he got up slow and walked to the wigwam, and went in there without saying anything but that. But that was enough. It made me feel so mean I could almost kissed *his* foot to get him to take it back.

It was fifteen minutes before I could work myself up to go and humble myself to a nigger; but I done it, and I warn't ever sorry for it afterward, neither. I didn't do him no more mean tricks, and I wouldn't done that one if I'd 'a' knowed it would make him feel that way.

Summary

Huck and Jim are traveling down the Mississippi, intending to reach Cairo, Illinois, and then head up the Ohio River to the northern states and freedom. However, a dense fog arises, and Jim and the raft drift from the bank, stranding Huck on shore. When the fog clears, Huck finds the raft and quietly sneaks on board, surprising Jim. Huck, however, still taking advantage of Jim's gullibility, convinces him that he had been on the raft the whole time. However, when Jim spots the leaves and twigs on the raft, he realizes that Huck has tricked him. Jim does not see this as an innocent prank, but as a hurtful lie from someone whom he had trusted. In a show of humility, Huck eventually apologizes to Jim for having lied and vows that he will not play any more mean tricks on him.

Essential Passage 3: [Chapter 23](#)

I went to sleep, and Jim didn't call me when it was my turn. He often done that. When I waked up just at daybreak he was sitting there with his head down betwixt his knees, moaning and mourning to himself. I didn't take notice nor let on. I knowed what it was about. He was thinking about his wife and his children, away up yonder, and he was low and homesick; because he hadn't ever been away from home before in his life; and I do believe he cared just as much for his people as white folks does for their'n. It don't seem natural, but I reckon it's so. He was often moaning and mourning that way nights, when he judged I was asleep, and saying, "Po' little 'Lizabeth! po' little Johnny! it's mighty hard; I s'pec I ain't ever gwyne to see you no mo', no mo'!" He was a mighty good nigger, Jim was.

But this time I somehow got to talking to him about his wife and young ones; and by and by he says:

"What makes me feel so bad dis time 'uz bekase I hear sumpn over yonder on de bank like a whack, er a slam, while ago, en it mine me er de time I treat my little 'Lizabeth so ornery. She warn't on'y 'bout fo' year ole, en she tuck de sk'yarlet fever, en had a powful rough spell; but she got well, en one day she was a-stannin' aroun', en I says to her, I says:

"'Shet de do'."

"She never done it; jis' stood dah, kiner smilin' up at me. It make me mad; en I says ag'in, mighty loud, I says:

"'Doan' you hear me? Shet de do'!"

"She jis stood de same way, kiner smilin' up. I was a-bilin'! I says:

"'I lay I *make* you mine!'"

"En wid dat I fetch' her a slap side de head dat sont her a-sprawlin'. Den I went into de yuther room, en 'uz gone 'bout ten minutes; en when I come back dah was dat do' a-stannin' open *yit*, en dat chile stannin' mos' right in it, alookin' down and mournin', en de tears runnin' down. My, but I *wuz*mad! I was a-gwyne for de chile, but jis' den—it was a do' dat open innerds—jis' den, 'long come de wind en slam it to, behine de chile, *ker-blam!*—en my lan', de chile never move'! My breff mos' hop outer me; en I feel so—so—I doan' know *how*I feel. I crope out, all a-tremblin', en crope aroun' en open de do' easy en slow, en poke my head in behine de chile, sof' en still, en all uv a sudden I says *pow!* jis' as loud as I could yell. *She never budge!* Oh, Huck, I bust out a-cryin' en grab her up in my arms, en say, 'Oh, de po' little thing! De Lord God Amighty fogive po' ole Jim, kaze he never gwyne to fogive hisself as long's he live!' Oh, she was plumb deaf en dumb, Huck, plumb deaf en dumb—en I'd ben a-treat'n her so!"

Summary

Jim and Huck, now accompanied by two men who present themselves as a king and a duke, involve the two travelers in their conniving schemes to swindle money from the townspeople along the river. Jim is not impressed by his first run-in with royalty, declaring that they must all be "rapscallions," and not to be trusted. He is disturbed by their dishonesty, as he was disturbed by Huck's lying to him previously as a prank. Jim tells Huck about his family, whom he intends to buy into freedom once he escapes to the north. His sensitivity is revealed as he transparently tells a story that puts him in a negative light. His daughter, Elizabeth, was a one-year-old when she contracted scarlet fever. One day, after she recovered, he told her to shut the door. The child seemed to completely ignore his repeated commands, so he slapped her on the side of her head. Later, when she is still crying, Jim prepares to discipline her further when the door slams shut in the wind. Elizabeth

does not even flinch, and then Jim realizes that she is deaf. His shame and grief for his unintended cruelty to his daughter still haunts him.

Analysis of Essential Passages

Although *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* is frequently criticized as a racist work, Mark Twain in fact uses the character of Jim to rewrite—to *unwrite*—negative representations of African Americans in literature. Through the eyes of Huck, Jim moves from being a racial stereotype of the Negro slave toward being an actual human being, someone with depths of character and a sensitive nature. Jim can thus arguably be described as the beginning of a more realistic, nuanced portrayal of African American characters in American literature.

Here is how Twain develops his portrayal of Jim. In the beginning of the novel, Jim is a pure caricature of the type that epitomized the [Jim Crow](#) years after the [Civil War](#). His deep superstitions and over-the-top gestures make him a comic figure and the butt of Tom Sawyer's and Huck Finn's practical jokes. Tom Sawyer represents the ignorant white view of the time period, while Huck shows the beginnings of a more modern sensitivity, taking less sport in pranking Jim than Tom does. Yet even Huck at this point still sees Jim simply as a slave; the idea of Jim being a real person has not yet occurred to Huck. It is only as the pair go down the river, engaging in meaningful conversation and mutual support, that Huck's views change.

When Jim is hurt by Huck's lying to him, the boy begins to see the full depth of Jim's personality. He understands that Jim has been genuinely grieving and worrying about him. Jim is a true friend, although this level of friendship is yet beyond Huck's conception. The light begins to dawn, however, and though it takes some time, Huck does manage to humble himself and apologize to Jim.

Twain could very well have portrayed Jim as a flawless, angelic, "Uncle Tom" type of person, incapable of being mean-spirited. Yet Jim is honest with Huck when he tells about his daughter, Elizabeth. The short-temperedness of the normal parent is portrayed as Jim disciplines his young daughter for disobedience. Yet the obvious heartbrokenness of Jim as he realizes that his child is deaf and that he has beaten her without cause reveals his humanity.

Twain is adept at pulling the nineteenth-century reader to a new level of understanding. Rather than immediately portraying Jim "as good as a white man," he starts where the average reader of the time was, gradually showing more and more of Jim's humanity. Long before it is revealed that Miss Watson freed him, ironically making him a free man for most of the trip, Twain frees Jim from the chains of the stereotype to make him an equal of Huck Finn, capable of the full range of emotions, thoughts, and dreams as any white man. Ultimately, Twain's novel advances the steady, though agonizingly slow, march toward civil rights in the twentieth century.

Essential Passages by Theme: Moral Law vs. Civil Law

Essential Passage 1: [Chapter 8](#)

"How do you come to be here, Jim, and how'd you get here?"

He looked pretty uneasy, and didn't say nothing for a minute. Then he says:

"Maybe I better not tell."

"Why, Jim?"

“Well, dey's reasons. But you wouldn't tell on me ef I 'uz to tell you, would you, Huck?”

“Blamed if I would, Jim.”

“Well, I b'lieve you, Huck. I—I *run off*.”

“Jim!”

“But mind, you said you wouldn't tell—you know you said you wouldn't tell, Huck.”

“Well, I did. I said I wouldn't, and I'll stick to it. Honest *injun*, I will. People would call me a low-down Abolitionist and despise me for keeping mum—but that don't make no difference. I ain't a-going to tell, and I ain't a-going back there, anyways. So, now, le's know all about it.”

Summary

Huck has escaped his father by going to Jackson Island. After a few days, Huck notices signs of some other inhabitants on the island. Frightened that it might be his father, he hides for a few hours and then goes in search of who it might be. He comes across a figure sleeping by a fire and discovers it is Jim, Miss Watson's slave. The two join forces and prepare a meal. Huck explains to Jim his deception in order to escape. He then asks Jim how it is that he is alone on the island. Jim confesses that he has run away, which had been a crime in the slave states prior to the [Civil War](#). He begs Huck not to turn him in. Huck has promised he would not and he intends to stick by it. This promise is problematic because Huck can be held liable for not reporting a runaway slave. However, at this first instance of a moral choice, Huck refuses to turn Jim in to the authorities, even if he is called a “low down Abolitionist,” a term that is of high contempt in the South.

Essential Passage 2: [Chapter 16](#)

“Dah you goes, de ole true Huck; de on'y white genlman dat ever kep' his promise to ole Jim.”

Well, I just felt sick. But I says, I *got* to do it—I can't get *out* of it. Right then along comes a skiff with two men in it with guns, and they stopped and I stopped. One of them says:

“What's that yonder?”

“A piece of a raft,” I says.

“Do you belong on it?”

“Yes, sir.”

“Any men on it?”

“Only one, sir.”

“Well, there's five niggers run off to-night up yonder, above the head of the bend. Is your man white or black?”

I didn't answer up prompt. I tried to, but the words wouldn't come. I tried for a second or two to brace up and out with it, but I warn't man enough—hadn't the spunk of a rabbit. I see I was weakening; so I just give up trying, and up and says:

“He's white.”

Summary

As Jim and Huck approach Cairo and freedom, Huck becomes more bothered by what he is doing. On the one hand, Jim is fast becoming his friend. Jim has confided in Huck, relating to him his plans to buy his family eventually. On the other hand, Huck feels bound by the law, which states that it is a crime to aid an escaping slave. As Huck prepares to go to shore to ascertain their exact location, he decides his conscience is leading him to report Jim to the authorities. He feels the heaviness lifting somewhat; he is feeling that he is doing the right thing. Almost sensing the choice that Huck has before him, Jim mentions that he can count on Huck, who has promised not to tell of Jim's location. These words are still in Huck's ears when he approaches men who are looking for escaped slaves. When the men ask Huck if the other man on the raft is white or black, Huck is presented with a moral choice, more insistent than before. With some hesitation, he chooses once again to stick to his promise to Jim. He goes against the law and tells the men that his friend is white.

Essential Passage 3: [Chapter 31](#)

So I was full of trouble, full as I could be; and didn't know what to do. At last I had an idea; and I says, I'll go and write the letter—and *then* see if I can pray. Why, it was astonishing, the way I felt as light as a feather right straight off, and my troubles all gone. So I got a piece of paper and a pencil, all glad and excited, and set down and wrote:

Miss Watson, your runaway nigger Jim is down here two mile below Pikesville, and Mr. Phelps has got him and he will give him up for the reward if you send.

HUCK FINN.

I felt good and all washed clean of sin for the first time I had ever felt so in my life, and I knowed I could pray now. But I didn't do it straight off, but laid the paper down and set there thinking—thinking how good it was all this happened so, and how near I come to being lost and going to hell. And went on thinking. And got to thinking over our trip down the river; and I see Jim before me all the time: in the day and in the night-time, sometimes moonlight, sometimes storms, and we a-floating along, talking and singing and laughing. But somehow I couldn't seem to strike no places to harden me against him, but only the other kind. I'd see him standing my watch on top of his'n, 'stead of calling me, so I could go on sleeping; and see him how glad he was when I come back out of the fog; and when I come to him again in the swamp, up there where the feud was; and such-like times; and would always call me honey, and pet me, and do everything he could think of for me, and how good he always was; and at last I struck the time I saved him by telling the men we had smallpox aboard, and he was so grateful, and said I was the best friend old Jim ever had in the world, and the *only* one he's got now; and then I happened to look around and see that paper.

It was a close place. I took it up, and held it in my hand. I was a-trembling, because I'd got to decide, forever, betwixt two things, and I knowed it. I studied a minute, sort of holding my breath, and then says to myself:

“All right, then, I'll *go* to hell”—and tore it up.

Summary

Huck has learned that the king has sold Jim back into slavery on the Phelps Plantation for forty dollars. Aside from the anger that the king would do such a thing, Huck has been brought to the final point where he must deal with his conscience. He feels terrible for “stealing another person's property,” namely Jim, who as a

slave was indeed Miss Watson's "property." He has tried to pray for forgiveness so that he can be the kind of boy he knows he should be, but his prayers seem empty and unheard. Thinking that he cannot pray because of his "sin" of breaking the [Fugitive Slave Law](#), he writes a letter to Miss Watson, informing her of Jim's whereabouts. Immediately he feels washed and clean of sin, until he thinks about the adventures that he and Jim had on the river. He remembers the many times that Jim saved his life and watched over him, even sacrificing his own comfort for Huck. He remembers that Jim claimed that Huck was his best friend, and only friend, in the whole world. Finally making his final moral choice, Huck tears up the letter, proclaiming that he is willing to go to hell if that is what it takes to see Jim on the road to freedom.

Analysis of Essential Passages

Throughout the novel, Huckleberry Finn is routinely faced with a choice: to follow the civil law and turn Jim in as a runaway slave, or to follow the moral law, which instructs him that it would be wrong to betray a friend. In the antebellum South, following the civil law (embodied in the Fugitive Slave Act of 1793) was akin to moral law. To do right was to follow the law. In this case, the law states that Huck is obligated to notify the authorities of the location of an escaped slave. To fail to do so makes him liable to prosecution; to aid in a slave's escape was even more serious. Huck is not ready to seriously consider that disobeying the law would be the right thing to do.

Initially, Huck is more than willing to keep Jim's escape a secret, even if he should be called a "low down Abolitionist." However, this is not yet a moral choice, but rather the choice for adventure. The thrill of defying authorities is the benefit that he sees, not taking a stand against slavery. It becomes an uneasy choice throughout the course of his adventures, as time and time again he is confronted with the possibility that he is committing a sin by breaking the law.

Huck has little use for organized religion, but he still has a sense of "sin," though it is seriously skewed in its interpretation. He views God as just one more authority figure, bent on making sure that His laws and man's laws are adequately followed. Huck makes little distinction between the two, and he definitely has not developed his philosophy to the point that civil law and moral law may in fact be in conflict. Although he does not consciously realize this, he does identify the difficulty of the choice.

As Jim is finally sold back into slavery on Phelps Plantation, Huck has come to the crucial point in the dilemma. He must make a final choice. At first, he feels relieved that he has stepped onto the side of civil law. Huck has written a letter to Miss Watson informing her of the location of her escaped slave, but while doing so, he remembers the humanity of Jim throughout their adventures. The love that Jim showed to Huck begins to tip the balance. Though Huck does not come to the point of separating moral law from civil law, he nevertheless recognizes that moral law is in fact a higher law. If breaking the civil law is a sin, resulting in his eternal condemnation, he is willing to accept it. He chooses moral law and refuses to betray his friend. Huck chooses love over law.

The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn: Characters

Aunt Polly

Tom Sawyer's guardian. She arrives at the Phelps's farm and reveals Tom and Huck's true identities.

Aunt Sally

See Mrs. Sally Phelps

Boggs

During his travels with the King and Duke in "Arkansaw," Huck meets Boggs, a drunk in Bricksville. Boggs continually curses at townspeople, and despite several warnings, he provokes the wrath of Colonel Sherburn

and is killed by him.

Widow Douglas

The Widow Douglas has adopted Huck and attempts to provide a stable home for him. She sends him to school and reads the Bible to him. Although at first Huck finds life with Widow Douglas restrictive, eventually he gets "sort of used to the widow's ways, too, and they warn't so raspy on me." Later, when Huck refers to her, she represents all that is good and decent to him. Nevertheless, at the close of the novel Huck decides to "light out for the Territory" instead of returning to her home.

The Duke

On their journey down the Mississippi, Huck and Jim pick up two con men who claim to be descendants of royalty. The Duke is a young, poorly dressed man of about thirty. Although they had never met before, the King and Duke soon join forces to concoct a number of scams to play on the innocent inhabitants of the various towns along the riverbanks. Even though he is aware of their true characters, Huck plays along—he has little choice, since the two men are stronger and can turn Jim in at any time. Eventually, however, Huck betrays them when they scheme to cheat the Wilks sisters out of their inheritance. The King and Duke later turn Jim in for a meager reward. The men later get their reward when they are tarred and feathered by an angry crowd. With these two characters, Twain ridicules the aristocratic pretensions of some Americans.

Huck Finn

See Huckleberry Finn

Huckleberry Finn

The narrator and hero of *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* is the title character, the fourteen-year-old son of the town drunk who was introduced in [The Adventures of Tom Sawyer](#). At the end of that book, Huck was adopted by the Widow Douglas and her sister Miss Watson, who brought him to live in town where he could attend church and school. But at the beginning of [Adventures of Huckleberry Finn](#), we learn that their attempts to "sivilize" him have been only partially successful. Huck learns to read and write, but he continues to climb out of his window at night to meet up with Tom Sawyer's gang.

Huck's life in town is abruptly ended when his father returns and kidnaps him, hoping to lay his hands on Huck's fortune. But Huck escapes by faking his own death, and he heads to Jackson's Island. There he meets up with Jim, Miss Watson's slave, who has run away because of her threat to sell him "down the river." The two of them embark on a journey down the Mississippi River and live a life of freedom on the raft, which has become their refuge from society. On their trip, Huck confronts the ethics he has learned from society that tell him Jim is only property and not a human being. By this moral code, his act of helping Jim to escape is a sin. Rather than betray Jim, though, Huck decides, "All right, then, I'll go to hell." Huck learns to decide for himself in various situations the right thing to do.

In the last third of the book, Huck defers to Tom Sawyer, whose outlandish schemes to free Jim direct the action. Huck is no longer in charge, and his moral quest appears to have been abandoned. But once Jim is freed, Huck decides he will "light out for the Territory" to escape the civilizing influence of another mother figure, this time Tom's Aunt Sally. For some critics, this decision redeems Huck from the charge that he has allowed Tom to distract him from discovering his inner code of ethics. To others, it means that Twain sees no hope for civilization to redeem itself: because it cannot rid itself of fundamental failures like slavery, someone like Huck must escape its influence altogether.

Pap Finn

Huck's father, Pap, is an irredeemable drunk who schemes to get Huck's fortune away from him. When he returns to find Huck living at the Widow Douglas's and going to school, he accuses Huck of trying to be better than his father. Pap kidnaps Huck and brings him to a cabin in the woods where he beats his son and confines

him to their shack. Pap also submits Huck to his drunken tirades against a free black man, reflecting the attitudes poor southern whites had about blacks who had the right to vote and were highly educated. Shortly after Huck escapes, Pap is killed, although Huck does not learn this until the end of the book.

The Grangerfords

Huck is taken in by the Grangerfords after the raft is broken up by a larger boat on the river. The family is wealthy and Huck is impressed by their gaudily decorated home, although the reader is aware of their shallow faithfulness to ideals of gentility and decorum. Their feud with the Shepherdsons, based on a brutal, senseless code of honor, makes Huck "sick." He leaves after one of the Grangerfords's daughters runs off with one of the Shepherdson boys, and most of the men in the family are killed in the ensuing battle.

Buck Grangerford

The youngest son of the Grangerford family. He is Huck's age, but is killed in the feud with the Shepherdsons. Huck "haint ever heard anything" like how Buck swears after missing an opportunity to kill Harney Shepherdson. Nevertheless, he cries when he discovers Buck's body, "for he was mighty good to me."

Emmeline Grangerford

One of the Grangerfords's daughters, who died in adolescence and left behind a large number of sentimentally morbid poems and drawings that Huck admires. Her family tells Huck, "She warn't particular; she could write about anything . . . just so it was sadful."

Jim

Jim, a runaway slave who has escaped from his owner, Miss Watson, for fear of being sold to a plantation in New Orleans, is Huck Finn's companion as they travel on a raft down the Mississippi river. He has been recognized by critics as a complex character, at once a superstitious and ignorant minstrel-show stereotype but also an intelligent human being who conveys more depth than the narrator, Huck Finn, is aware of. As their journey progresses, however, Huck does grow to see Jim as more than a stereotype, despite comments like, "he had an uncommon level head for a nigger." Jim confronts Huck's prejudice when he scolds Huck for trying to play a trick on him without taking his feelings into consideration. Pointing to some leaves on the raft, he tells Huck, "dat truck dah is *trash*; en trash is what people is dat puts dirt on de head er dey fren's en makes 'em ashamed." On their journey, Huck becomes aware of Jim's humanity and decides he will assist Jim in his quest to become free.

In the last third of the book, Huck enlists the help of Tom Sawyer to help free Jim, only to learn at the end that Tom knew all along that Jim had been freed by Miss Watson. In this section, critics have argued, Jim is once again cast as a shallow caricature of a gullible slave, and the novel's serious theme of race relations is reduced to a farce. But other critics have seen a consistency of character in Jim throughout the book, as a slave who wears the mask of ignorance and docility as a defense against white oppression, occasionally giving Huck (and the reader) glimpses behind the mask. Forrest G. Robinson has argued that Jim learns Huck "is quite unprepared to tolerate the full unfolding of the human being emergent from behind the mask," and so the real Jim retreats in the last third of the book to ensure that Huck will continue to help him. But according to Chadwick Hansen, Jim is never a "fully-rounded character" in his own right; rather he serves the function of making Huck confront his conscience and overcome society's influence.

The King

On their journey down the Mississippi, Huck and Jim pick up two con men who claim to be descendants of royalty. The King is a bald, grey-bearded man of about seventy years. Although they had never met before, the King and Duke soon join forces to concoct a number of scams to play on the innocent inhabitants of the various towns along the riverbanks. Even though he is aware of their true characters, Huck plays along—he has little choice, since the two men are stronger and can turn Jim in at any time. Eventually, however, Huck betrays them when they scheme to cheat the Wilks sisters out of their inheritance. The King and Duke later

turn Jim in for a meager reward. The men later get their reward when they are tarred and feathered by an angry crowd. With these two characters, Twain ridicules the aristocratic pretensions of some Americans.

Mrs. Judith Loftus

A sympathetic woman whom Huck meets while he is dressed up like a girl. She sees through his costume, but inadvertently warns Huck that her husband is on his way to Jackson's Island to capture Jim.

Mrs. Sally Phelps

Tom Sawyer's aunt. When Huck arrives on the Phelps farm, they are expecting Tom, so Huck pretends to be their nephew, while Tom pretends to be his brother, Sid. She good-naturedly scolds "Sid" for pretending to be a stranger and then kissing her unasked.

Reverend Silas Phelps

Tom Sawyer's uncle. When Huck arrives on the Phelps farm, they are expecting Tom, so Huck pretends to be their nephew, while Tom pretends to be his brother, Sid. Phelps appears to be a kindly, good-natured, and trusting man, but he is holding Jim prisoner while waiting for his master to reclaim him.

Tom Sawyer

Tom Sawyer picks up where he left off in *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer* by continuing to lead the other boys in imaginative games based on his reading of romantic adventure literature. But in this novel, his antics are much less innocent and harmless. At the beginning of *Huck Finn*, he provides comic relief in Huck's otherwise straight-laced life at the Widow Douglas's. But his reappearance at the end has troubled many critics. When Tom finds out that Huck is going to free Jim, he wholeheartedly takes up the challenge, creating elaborate schemes to free the man when he could just tell the family that Jim has already been freed by Miss Watson. Neither Huck nor Jim approve of Tom's "adventures," although they feel compelled to submit to his authority in such matters. Many critics have noted the thoughtless, even cruel nature of Tom's games, as they make Jim's life miserable and terrorize Aunt Sally. But Tom is ultimately punished for his forays into fantasy; during Jim's escape he is shot and seriously wounded.

Colonel Sherburn

A Southern aristocrat who kills a drunk, Boggs, in the town of Bricksville, in "Arkansaw." He endures Boggs's taunts and gives him a warning before shooting the man in front of his own daughter. The town threatens to lynch him, but his scornful speech about the cowardice of the average American man and the mobs he participates in breaks up the crowd.

Judge Thatcher

He keeps Huck's money safely out of Pap's hands by "buying" Huck's fortune for a dollar. Later he and the Widow Douglas petition a higher court to take Huck away from his father, but the court's "new judge" says families shouldn't be separated.

Miss Watson

The Widow Douglas's sister and Jim's owner. She represents a view of Christianity that is severe and unforgiving. It is her attempts to "sivilize" Huck that he finds most annoying: "Miss Watson she kept pecking at me, and it got tiresome and lonesome." When Jim overhears her admit the temptation to sell him down South despite her promise not to do so, he runs away. Her guilt at this turn of events leads her to set Jim free in her will.

Wilks sisters

The sisters—Mary Jane, Susan, and Joanna—are orphaned when their guardian uncle, Peter, dies. The King and Duke impersonate their long-lost uncles in an attempt to gain their inheritance. Their trusting and good-hearted nature in the face of the King and Duke's fraud finally drives Huck to take a stand against the

two scoundrels.

The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn: Themes

Freedom

In *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* both Huck and the runaway slave Jim are in flight from a society which labels them as outcasts. Although Huck has been adopted by the Widow Douglas and been accepted into the community of St. Petersburg, he feels hemmed in by the clothes he is made to wear and the models of decorum to which he must adhere. But he also does not belong to the world Pap inhabits. Although he feels more like himself in the backwoods, Pap's drunken rages and attempts to control him force Huck to flee. At the end of the book, after Jim has been freed, Huck decides to continue his own quest for freedom. "I reckon I got to light out for the Territory ahead of the rest, because Aunt Sally she's going to adopt me and sivilize me, and I can't stand it. I been there before." Huck is clearly running from a civilization that attempts to control him, rather than running in pursuit of something tangible. He is representative of the American frontiersman who chooses the unknown over the tyranny of society.

As a slave, Jim has likewise been denied control over his own destiny, and he escapes to prevent being sold down to New Orleans, away from his wife and children. But Jim is chasing a more concrete ideal of freedom than Huck is. For Jim, freedom means not being a piece of property. Jim explicitly expresses his desire to be free as they approach Cairo and the junction with the Ohio River: "Jim said it made him all over trembly and feverish to be so close to freedom." But after they pass Cairo in the confusion of a foggy night, Jim's quest for freedom is thwarted and he must concentrate on survival. After Jim's capture, Tom and Huck attempt to free him in a farcical series of schemes that actually make escape more difficult and dangerous. Huck indicates that a simple removal of the board that covers the window would allow Jim to escape, but Tom declares that is too easy. "I should *hope* we can find a way that's a little more complicated than *that*, Huck Finn," Tom says. After Jim escapes and is recaptured, Tom reveals that he has been free all along. Miss Watson had died and left him free in her will. The irony of freeing a free man has concerned many critics, who believe Twain might have been commenting on the failure of Reconstruction after the Civil War.

Conscience

Huck's main struggle in the book is with his conscience, the set of morals with which he has been raised. As they begin to approach Cairo, and Jim looks forward to his freedom, Huck says his conscience "got to troubling me so I couldn't rest." He rationalizes that he didn't lure Jim away from his owner, but "conscience up and says every time, 'But you knowed he was running for his freedom, and you 'could 'a' paddled ashore and told somebody.'" During this scene he wakes up to the fact that he is helping a slave gain freedom, something he has been brought up to believe is wrong. So in an attempt to relieve his guilt, he sets off for shore, telling Jim he is going to find out if they have passed Cairo, but really intending to turn Jim in. When he meets up with two men looking for a runaway slave, he confronts a true test of conscience, and fails, in his eyes. The two men ask him about the man on board, and Huck protects Jim by making up an elaborate tale about his father who is dying of smallpox, a highly contagious disease. When he returns to the raft, Jim rejoices in his cover-up, but Huck instead is "feeling bad and low, because I knowed very well I had done wrong." He decides that he is naturally bad, and that he only did what made him feel better. Not being able to analyze his actions, Huck fails to recognize that he has taken a stand against a morally corrupt society. Later, after Jim has been turned in by the King and Duke, Huck must again wrestle with his conscience as he decides to play an active role in freeing Jim. Up until this point he had only protected Jim from discovery; now he must help Jim escape, an even more serious crime. But rather than let his "conscience" guide him, Huck listens to his heart, which tells him that Jim is a human being, not property. He turns his back forever on society's ethics and decides he'd rather "go to hell" than turn his back on Jim. Through Huck, Twain attacks that part of the conscience that unquestioningly adheres to society's laws and mores, even when they are wrong.

Race and Racism

Probably the most discussed aspect of *Huck Finn* is how it addresses the issue of race. Many critics agree that the book's presentation of the issue is complex or, some say, uneven. No clear-cut stance on race and racism emerges. Despite the fact that Huck comes to respect Jim as a human being, he still reveals his prejudice towards black people. His astonishment at Jim's deep feelings for his family is accompanied by the statement, "I do believe he cared just as much for his people as white folks does for their'n. It don't seem natural, but I reckon it's so." And even after he has decided to help free Jim, Huck indicates that he still does not see black people overall as human beings. When Aunt Sally asks "Tom Sawyer" why he was so late in arriving, he tells her the ship blew a cylinder head. "Good gracious! Anybody hurt?" she asks. "No'm. Killed a nigger." "Well, it's lucky; because sometimes people do get hurt," she responds. As some critics have pointed out, Huck never condemns slavery or racial prejudice in general but seems to find an exception to the rule in Jim.

Nevertheless, the fact that Huck does learn to see beyond racial stereotypes in the case of Jim is a profound development, considering his upbringing. He lived in a household with the Widow Douglas and Miss Watson where slaves were owned. And Pap's rantings over a free black man indicate his deep racial prejudice. When confronted with the fact that a free black man was highly educated and could vote, Pap decides he wants nothing to do with a government that has allowed this to happen. He wants the free man, whom he calls "a prowling, thieving, infernal, white-shirted free nigger," to be sold at auction. In other words, all black people are slaves, white man's property, in his eyes. Such are the views on race with which Huck has been raised. But there is no agreement as to what Twain's message on the subject of race is. While some critics view the novel as a satire on racism and a conscious indictment of a racist society, others stress the author's overall ambivalence about race. Critics have had a difficult time reconciling the stereotypical depictions of Jim and other slaves in the book with Huck's desire to free Jim.

The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn: Style

Narrator

The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn was a breakthrough in American literature for its presentation of Huck Finn, an adolescent boy who tells the story in his own language. The novel was one of the first in America to employ the child's perspective and employ the vernacular—a language specific to a region or group of people—throughout the book. Many critics have characterized the smoothness of Huck's language as the most unique feature of the book. Lionel Trilling sees Twain's creation of Huck's voice as a measure of his genius. He writes that Huck's language has "the immediacy of the heard voice." Shelley Fisher Fishkin has suggested that Twain created Huck's style of speech from that of a real boy, an African-American child that he met in the early 1870s, combined with dialects of white people he had heard as a child. But Huck's unique perspective is that of a lower-class, southern white child, who has been viewed as an outcast by society. From this position, Huck narrates the story of his encounters with various southern types, sometimes revealing his naivete and, at other times, his acute ability to see through the hypocrisy of his elders. Many readers have commented on Huck's unreliability as a narrator, though, especially in his admiration of the gaudy taste exhibited by the Grangerfords and his inability to see through his own prejudices when he tells Aunt Sally that no one was hurt on board the ship, although a "nigger" was killed.

Setting

Another distinctive aspect of the novel is its setting. Because it takes place when slavery was at its height in America, *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* addresses in a roundabout way the prejudices of southern whites that had laid the foundation for slavery and were still omnipresent in the Reconstruction South of Twain's time. The discussion of slavery in the text, then, takes on a new meaning for a post-Civil War audience. It forced them to confront the legacy of slavery in spite of their eagerness to forget its devastating impact and rid themselves of its curse. The physical setting of the novel, most specifically the river and the raft, has also drawn the attention of critics. The Mississippi River itself serves as a kind of no-man's land in the text, a place outside of society that is governed by different rules. The raft becomes a new world for Huck

and Jim, where they can be themselves and make up their own rules by which to live. On either side of the river lies the shore, which represents a return to society. Significantly, it is Huck who makes excursions into towns along the river banks for food, information, and fun. While Huck can be a kind of vagabond, travelling from one place to another without being a part of society, Jim must hide on the raft, the only place where he can be safe.

Burlesque

Burlesques, or parodies of elevated or serious forms of literature, were popular as far back as Shakespeare, but they were also the favorites of working-class theatergoers in America starting in the 1840s. In America, burlesques often poked fun at aristocratic types who were subjected to the lowly conditions of the American city or frontier, and they extolled the virtues of a democracy over the pretensions of Europe's high society. Burlesques also became associated with minstrel shows as they were incorporated into the latter in the 1850s. [Mark Twain](#) is well known for his adept adaptations of burlesques in his works. In *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* he used the technique to critique the aristocratic pretensions of the King and Duke, and the romantic fantasies of Tom Sawyer. In fact, the last third of the book descends into burlesque, according to the novel's critics, as Tom's outlandish schemes to free Jim take center stage. In addition, some scenes between Jim and Huck are modeled on burlesques, especially their conversation about Frenchmen, in which Jim subtly outsmarts Huck, revealing the wisdom of the supposedly ignorant.

Realism and Regionalism

Mark Twain was a major contributor to the interconnected Realist and Regionalist movements, which flourished from the 1870s to the 1920s. Realism refers to the insistence on authentic details in descriptions of setting and the demand for plausible motivations in character's behaviors. Writers of the Regionalist movement also adhered to these principles as they explored the distinct and diverse regions of post-Civil War America that they feared were being swallowed up by a national culture and economy. Realist and Regionalist techniques are exemplified in *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* by the specific and richly detailed setting and the novel's insistence on dialect which attempts to reproduce the natural speech of a variety of characters unique to the Mississippi Valley region. In addition, Huck's momentous decision to free Jim, even if it means going to hell, is seen as a classic episode of Realist fiction because it demonstrates the individual's struggle to make choices based on inner motivations, rather than outside forces.

The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn: Historical Context

Slavery

The issue of slavery threatened to divide the nation as early as the Constitutional Convention of 1787, and throughout the years a series of concessions were made on both sides in an effort to keep the union together. One of the most significant of these was the Missouri Compromise of 1820. The furor had begun when Missouri requested to enter the union as a slave state. In order to maintain a balance between free and slave states in the union, Missouri was admitted as a slave state while Maine entered as a free one. And although Congress would not accept Missouri's proposal to ban free blacks from the state, it did allow a provision permitting the state's slaveholders to reclaim runaway slaves from neighboring free states.

The federal government's passage of Fugitive Slave Laws was also a compromise to appease southern slaveholders. The first one, passed in 1793, required anyone helping a slave to escape to pay a fine of \$500. But by 1850, when a second law was passed, slaveowners had become increasingly insecure about their ability to retain their slaves in the face of abolitionism. The 1850 Fugitive Slave Law increased the fine for abetting a runaway slave to \$1000, added the penalty of up to six months in prison, and required that every U.S. citizen assist in the capture of runaways. This law allowed southern slaveowners to claim their fugitive property without requiring them to provide proof of ownership. Whites and blacks in the North were outraged by the law, which effectively implicated all American citizens in the institution of slavery. As a result, many

who had previously felt unmoved by the issue became ardent supporters of the abolitionist movement.

Among those who were outraged into action by the Fugitive Slave Law was [Harriet Beecher Stowe](#) whose novel [Uncle Tom's Cabin](#) (1852) galvanized the North against slavery. Dozens of slave narratives—first hand accounts of the cruelties of slavery—had shown white Northerners a side of slavery that had previously remained hidden, but the impact of Stowe's novel on white Northerners was more widespread. [Abraham Lincoln](#) is reported to have said when he met her during the Civil War, "So you're the little lady who started this big war." White southerners also recognized the powerful effect of the national debate on slavery as it was manifested in print, and many southern states, fearing the spread of such agitating ideas to their slaves, passed laws which made it illegal to teach slaves to read. Missouri passed such a law in 1847.

Despite the efforts of southerners to keep slaves in the dark about those who were willing to help them in the North, thousands of slaves did escape to the free states. Many escape routes led to the Ohio River, which formed the southern border of the free states of Illinois and Indiana. The large number of slaves who escaped belied the myths of contented slaves that originated from the South.

Reconstruction

Although *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* takes place before the Civil War, it was written in the wake of Reconstruction, the period directly after the Civil War when the confederate states were brought back into the union. The years from 1865 to 1876 witnessed rapid and radical progress in the South, as many schools for blacks were opened, black men gained the right to vote with the passage of the Fifteenth Amendment in 1870, and the [Civil Rights](#) Act of 1875 desegregated public places. But these improvements were quickly undermined by new Black Codes in the South that restricted such rights. White southerners felt threatened by Republicans from the North who went south to help direct the course of Reconstruction. Most galling was the new authority of free blacks, many of whom held political office and owned businesses. While prospects did improve somewhat for African Americans during Reconstruction, their perceived authority in the new culture was exaggerated by whites holding on to the theory of white superiority that had justified slavery.

Currier & Ives print of a riverboat titled "Wooding up on the Mississippi."

In response to the perceived threat, many terrorist groups were formed to intimidate freed blacks and white Republicans through vigilante violence. The Ku Klux Klan, the most prominent of these new groups, was formed in 1866. Efforts to disband these terrorist groups proved ineffective. By 1876, Democrats had regained control over the South and by 1877, federal troops had withdrawn. Reconstruction and the many rights blacks had gained dissipated as former abolitionists lost interest in the issue of race, and the country became consumed with financial crises and conflicts with Native Americans in the West. Throughout the 1880s and

1890s, new Jim Crow laws segregated public spaces in the South, culminating in the Supreme Court's decision in the case *Plessy v. Ferguson* in 1896, which legalized segregation.

Minstrel Shows

As the first indigenous form of entertainment in America, minstrel shows flourished from the 1830s to the first decade of the twentieth century. In the 1860s, for example, there were more than one hundred minstrel groups in the country. Samuel Clemens recalled his love of minstrel shows in his posthumously published [Autobiography](#), writing, "If I could have the nigger show back again in its pristine purity and perfection I should have but little further use for opera." His attraction to blackface entertainment informed *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, where, many critics believe, he used its humorous effects to challenge the racial stereotypes on which it was based.

Minstrel shows featured white men in blackface and outrageous costumes. The men played music, danced, and acted burlesque skits, but the central feature of the shows was the exaggerated imitation of black speech and mannerisms, which produced a stereotype of blacks as docile, happy, and ignorant. The shows also depicted slavery as a natural and benign institution and slaves as contented with their lot. These stereotypes of blacks helped to reinforce attitudes amongst whites that blacks were fundamentally different and inferior. The minstrel show died out as vaudeville, burlesques, and radio became the most popular forms of entertainment.

The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn: Critical Overview

When it was first published, responses to [Adventures of Huckleberry Finn](#) were fairly nonexistent until the Concord Public Library in Massachusetts announced that it was banning the book from its shelves. This action set off a public debate over the merits of the book. The most vocal were those who deemed the book to be unsuitable for children, fearing their corruption by exposure to its lower-class hero. Howard G. Baetzhold reports that beloved children's author [Louisa May Alcott](#) said about the book, "if Mr. Clemens cannot think of something better to tell our pure-minded lads and lasses, he had best stop writing books for them." Critics who demanded that literature be uplifting cited rough language, lack of moral values, and a disrespectful stance towards authority as the book's faults. But some critics rallied behind the author and wrote reviews that praised the book as a lasting contribution to American literature.

These early reactions are a fair indication of how the book has been received ever since. On the one hand, respected scholars have claimed the book as the core text of an American literary canon, where it has enjoyed a secure position since the 1950s. As Leo Marx claims, "Everyone agrees that *Huckleberry Finn* is a masterpiece." H. L. Mencken went so far as to dub the novel "perhaps the greatest novel ever written in English." Although some have questioned the formal coherence of the novel, arguing that the ending and Tom's burlesque escapades disrupt the text's quest for freedom, the general consensus has emerged that *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* is one of the most important works of American fiction ever written. But despite this resounding stamp of approval from the nation's leading literary scholars, secondary schools around the country have at various times questioned its suitability for students, even going so far as to ban the book. Whereas detractors of the novel from the previous century had been primarily concerned with its lack of decency and moral values, in the wake of the [Civil Rights](#) movement, the main concern of administrators, parents, and librarians has become that it promotes racism and demeans African American children with its extensive use of the word "nigger." Ultimately, the fear is that the complexity of the racial issues in the text may be too much for schoolchildren to comprehend. As Peaches Henry explains, "Parents fear that the more obvious aspects of Jim's depiction may overshadow the more subtle uses to which they are put."

Although in the past there have been sharp contrasts between the responses of scholarly and lay readers of *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, the debate over the book's racial messages has more recently become the center of debate amongst literary scholars as well. The crux of the controversy is whether or not the novel

presents an indictment of racism or simply reflects the generally accepted racist attitudes of the time period in which it was written. For most critics, the issue boils down to the depiction of Jim. For some, Jim is nothing more than a minstrel show stereotype, "the archetypal 'good nigger,' who lacks self-respect, dignity, and a sense of self separate from the one whites want him to have," in the words of Julius Lester. In these critics' eyes, Twain reveals his racism when he allows Tom to derail and hence belittle Jim's serious attempts to gain freedom and Huck's efforts to overturn society's view of blacks as property. But to others, a subtle satire on slavery and racism emerges from the text and takes precedence over any stereotypical depictions of African-Americans. Eric Lott argues, for example, "Twain took up the American dilemma (of race) not by avoiding popular racial presentations but by inhabiting them so forcefully that he produced an immanent criticism of them." According to Lott, the use of minstrel show stereotypes, exaggerated and ridiculous depictions of whites's false perceptions of blacks, has the effect of "making nonsense out of America's racial structures." Many critics agree with Lott, seeing the novel itself as a critique of the racism expressed by its narrator, Huck.

For many critics, however, Twain's conscious intentions about racial messages are not the issue. They see instead a variety of perhaps unconscious effects in the novel that point to new ways to understand the text's complex evocation of America's racial predicament. For example, Forrest G. Robinson sees a depth to Jim that he thinks previous scholars have missed. Jim is both the stereotypical "darky" and the complex human being, wearing a mask of contentment and gullibility that represents the kind of prejudice whites have about him as an African American. But behind the mask, the real Jim is a shrewd agent in his own defense. In essence, Robinson argues that whether Twain was aware of it or not, Jim is a complex African American character that reflects the situation of slaves at the time as they attempted to survive in a racist society. Such readings draw attention to the complex ways the novel addresses, in Robinson's words, "the nation's most painful and enduring dilemma." These readings accept Twain's ambivalence and contradictory responses to the issue, rather than attempting to vilify the author or insulate him from accusations of racism. In a related vein of argument, Peaches Henry declares that we may not be able to decide once and for all whether the novel is racist or subversive, but the book deserves our attention because "[t]he insolubility of the race question as regards *Huckleberry Finn* functions as a model of the fundamental racial ambiguity of the American mind-set."

The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn: Character Analysis

Huck Finn

Huck Finn is a loner, an adventurer, and the protagonist and narrator of the novel. We see the events of the book through his eyes and learn as he learns about his world and his place in it. Huck is a no-nonsense boy who rebels against the restraints of his society, both in word and in deed; part of his rebellion has racial overtones, making this book controversial both at its time and today.

Huck is the 13-year-old son of St. Petersburg, Missouri's town drunk, an abusive man who seems to care little for anything but the bottle. After one beating too many, Huck finally leaves their shack on the banks of the Mississippi River to find another world. But despite his "street smarts," Huck is vulnerable to the characters he meets on his journey down the river – only Jim, the escaped slave who is vulnerable in his own way, treats Huck as an equal. The "schooling" Huck has received is spotty at best, unlike that of a Tom Sawyer. Although the Widow Douglas tries to "civilize" him, it's in Huck's nature to be wild, at least within the confines of his world. Out in the "real world," Huck is forced to think for himself and make difficult choices, often outthinking the adults who seem to be taking advantage of his youth and inexperience.

Huck's youth is what enables him to get away with his actions and the change of attitude he undergoes in the novel – an adult like [Mark Twain](#) couldn't question his society and its morals without social stigma and closed minds. Through the voice of a child, wild though he may be, Twain is allowed to challenge accepted

norms of power, race, religion and humanity in his society. Stealing Jim is a crime, yet freeing him, from Huck's perspective, is the right thing to do. When Huck lies to the slave-hunters he is forced to reevaluate his position on lying – is it always wrong, or does the morality of helping Jim find a normal life make it all right?

Huck's imperfections offer a model for readers – if he can resist “civilization” and become a fully realized human being, perhaps we can, too. His questions become our own, and although he is very much a product of his time, Huck is a symbol of sorts for the kind of future Mark Twain imagines.

Jim

Jim is a paradoxical figure in *Huckleberry Finn* – he is at once the weakest and the strongest character in the novel. As an escaped slave, he is vulnerable to every aspect of society, even Huck, who helps him escape from Miss Watson's house. Jim is constantly on the run and at risk of being caught and returned to servitude, so he must act accordingly with the role he has been given, at least until he can be free and return to his family.

On the other hand, Jim functions as the only true adult in the novel. His childish superstition conceals a true intelligence and an understanding of the natural world, as evidence on Jackson Island. He is the only genuine father figure Huck has, teaching him the ways of the world and sheltering him from danger – it is telling that Jim obstructs Huck's view of his “natural” father's corpse and conceals the news from Huck until he feels the boy is ready to know.

Jim is therefore a kind of role model – he is strong and determined despite a world that won't allow him to express his true feelings or live a free life. Jim teaches Huck about inner strength, and that people's differences are less important than their respect for each other as individuals.

Tom Sawyer

Tom moves from the forefront in the book bearing his name to a supporting player in *Huckleberry Finn*. He is a dreamer to Huck's realist – Tom's prime purpose in the book seems to be convincing Huck to live a life based on adventure books, when Huck's true life is far more of an adventure story than those books could ever tell. Tom helps Huck free Jim near the novel's end with his adventure-book tricks, but his presence in the novel seems to be primarily as a foil – Tom is a product of the very “civilized” society Huck is escaping from, and eventually learns to reject.

Widow Douglas/Miss Watson/Judge Thatcher

The wealthy sisters and the judge are examples of one life Huck doesn't want to lead – the Widow could be said to represent proper society, Miss Watson, religion, and the judge, punishment. Their influence is something both Huck and Jim must overcome to grow.

Pap

Huck's drunken, abusive father is the example of the other life Huck doesn't want to lead – society's complete outcast. Pap is a failure as a father and as a white man, and whether he knows it or not Huck aspires to more. Pap is a role model for what could happen to Huck if he doesn't give in to the more “civilized” forces or undertake his journey.

The Duke/The Dauphin

This pair of con men, supposedly the deposed Dauphin (King) of France and Duke of Bridgewater, are Huck's teachers for a significant part of his journey. They represent a life on the road (and sometimes on a raft) in which anything can happen and innocents are taken advantage of. Huck and Jim realize the two are scoundrels, but they are helpless to do anything for fear of being given over to “authority figures” – in fact, the “nobility” sell Jim to a local farmer before being tarred and feathered themselves. Society's vengeance on the pair show Huck that there are good aspects to being “civilized,” if only in working together to

eliminate a threat to that society's well-being.

The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn: Essays and Criticism

Huckleberry Finn: An Overview

Told in the voice of its first-person narrator, the central themes of Mark Twain's *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* necessarily reflect the values, interests and concerns of an affable but unruly adolescent who is, by his own account, a petty thief, an inveterate idler, and a liar to boot. In Huck's vernacular vocabulary, the key evaluative word is "comfortable." At any given point in his story, Huck appraises his situation by the degree to which he feels comfortable. As Twain manipulates it, "comfortable" is a multivalent term. On the one hand, Huck clearly wants to be free of external restraint, of work, and of punishment for his misdeeds. Capture and rescue serve as a recurrent pattern within the novel's plot. At the same time, Huck wants to be rid of the pangs of his own conscience, particularly the ironic guilt that he experiences as he becomes increasingly involved in helping the runaway slave Jim attain freedom. Ultimately, Twain's unlikely hero moves toward the adoption of a standard that enables him to resolve his misgivings on this count, embracing a variation of the Golden Rule. In the course of his narrative, Huck develops the capacity to place himself in the shoes of other people. This is, however, an imperfect solution because many of the people whom he encounters along the Mississippi are con artists, gullible victims, or outright hypocrites.

The connection between being comfortable and being free from established authority is established at the outset of Twain's book as Huck finds himself rankling under the care of the Widow Douglas and Miss Watson. Although he appreciates his foster parents' desire to raise him as a conventionally "good" boy, he is uncomfortable with their program to "civilize" him. Huck attaches value to education, religion, and middle-class manners, but he resists the confinements of school and church, of wearing respectable clothes and being reminded to sit up straight at the dinner table. In response to the continuous "ecking of his benevolent, self-appointed parents, Huck seeks refuge in Tom Sawyer's gang of robbers. But he quickly becomes bored with the imaginary freedom that being part of the gang offers to him.

When his Pap arrives in St. Petersburg and essentially kidnaps his son, Huck finds himself free of all these "civilizing" restraints. Despite his captivity at the hands of a cruel task-master, he initially takes to the freedom that Pap's position outside of society provides to him, recalling that "it was kind of lazy and jolly, laying off comfortable all day, smoking and fishing, and no books or study" (p.21). Yet Huck soon finds himself the object of his drunken Pap's hickory switch, and escapes from the arbitrary punishments of the cabin by faking his own murder. On Jackson Island, he is once again free but his alliance with Jim forces him to take flight anew, entering into the "world elsewhere" of rafting along the river. Nevertheless, this form of freedom brings him (and Jim) into contact with charlatans, and the need to escape from the clutches of the King and the Duke. At the novel's end, Huck still seeks comfort in an illusory freedom that may lie somewhere that he has never been. Fearing that Tom's Aunt Sally will try to "civilize" him, he vows "to light out for the Territory ahead of the rest" (p.263). In contrast to Jim, who conceives freedom in positive terms, feeling "trembly and feverish" as they approach they approach the free northern state of Illinois, Huck sees freedom in terms of the absence of external compulsion.

Even if Huck were able to achieve a state of comfortable liberty, he finds himself liable to another type of constraint, one that makes him even more uncomfortable than external coercion, the pangs of his own conscience. While he and Tom scheme to arrange Jim's escape from Phelps farm, Huck proclaims, "it don't make no difference whether you do right or wrong, a person's conscience ain't got no sense, and just goes for him anyway. If I had a yaller dog that didn't know no more than a person's conscience does, I would poison him" (p.194). Despite his surface amorality, Twain's misfit lad periodically experiences twinges of guilt. He easily surmounts his sense of guilt while watching friends search for his corpse in the wake of his "murder."

And he is able to rationalize the borrowing of farmer's crops, when Jim suggests that they should only steal a few items, allowing him to declare that "we warn't feeling just right, before that, but it was all comfortable now" (p.58).

The enduring source of Huck's internal discomfort stems from being "conscience" that by shielding Jim, he is committing an offense against the slave's owner, Miss Watson. At a relatively early juncture in his adventures, Huck's conscience accuses him with the thought, "What had poor Miss Watson done to you, that you could see her nigger go off right under your eyes and never say a single word?" (p.75). After the King and the Duke sell Jim to the Reverend Phelps, Huck's feelings of guilt about Jim surface again. He writes a letter to Miss Watson, apprising her of the whereabouts of her property, and recalls, "I felt so good and all washed clean of sin for the first time I had ever felt so in my life" (p.179). But Huck doesn't send this message, and by doing so, he defies his conscience and, by his own lights, consigns himself to damnation, replying to his inner voice, "'All right then I'll go to hell'---and tore it (the letter) up" (p.180). Huck shoves his guilt feelings aside, and resolves to "steal" Jim out of slavery, but he is still convinced that this is a shameful course.

Although he does not acknowledge it as such, it is Huck's development of a higher standard than that of contemporary mores that enables him to partially overcome the dictates of his conscience and act the part of a "nigger-stealer." After tricking Jim into believing that he died in their raft's crash with a steamboat, Huck experiences unexpected remorse. Seeing his companion alive, Jim is characteristically heartened, but he then expresses his resentment at feeling grief while "all you wuz thinkin 'bout wuz how you could make a fool uv ole Jim wid a lie" (p.73). Huck apologizes to Jim, humbling himself to a nigger, because he empathizes with his victim and puts himself in Jim's position. Gradually, Huck embraces the Golden Rule of doing unto others as you would have them do unto you. The most explicit expression of this moral yardstick comes from Mary Jane Wilks, a young woman whom Huck openly admires for having "sand." When Huck is caught in a blatant lie, Mary Jane chastises his interrogator by demanding "How would you like to be treated so?" (p.147). This remark clearly leaves a powerful impression on Huck, for he immediately decides to double-cross the King and the Duke by re-stealing the gold that they have robbed from Mary Jane and her sister.

Huck's movement toward an ethical code is complicated by the superstitious gullibility of the adults around him. He is himself a trickster in a world of ready-made victims, fools with whom he cannot identify lest he be labeled a fool as well. Jim recognizes that "dese kings o' ourns is regular rapsallions; dat's jist what dey is; dey's reglar rapsallions," but Huck sees nothing amiss here because "all kings is mostly rapsallions, as fur as I can make out" (p.129). Watching the King and Duke "work" small-town crowds, Huck is more offended by the credulity of the dupes than by the duplicity of the con artists. As the mountebanks pull the wool over the family and neighbors of the late Peter Wilks, it is the responses of the victims, their slavish willingness to believe, that Huck finds disconcerting, declaring that, "it was enough to make a body ashamed of the human race" (p.137).

Twain furnishes Huck with ample cause to be ashamed of the human race, for many of the good adults whom he encounters in his adventures are hypocrites. While Miss Watson extols the virtues of honesty, her promises to Jim that she would never "sell him South" are evidently broken. The Reverend Phelps appears to be a good-hearted and kindly soul, yet he purchases Jim with an eye toward receiving a reward from the slave's rightful owner. Although Twain's Mississippi society is filled with such hypocrisy, it is in the feud between the Grangerfords and the Shepherdsons that the fundamental falseness of social interaction is most acutely presented. Taken in by the Grangerfords, Huck is duly impressed by their wealth and respectability. But he learns from Buck Grangerford that no one can recall "why the family is at war with the Shepherdsons." Huck becomes part of the Grangerford clan, and recollects, "Next Sunday we all went to church. . . . The men took their guns, so did Buck and kept them between their knees or stood them handy against the wall. The Shepherdson's done the same. It was pretty ornery preaching---all about brotherly love, an such-like tiresomeness. . . ." (p.93). The "admirable" figures in Huck's world overtly endorse Christian principles yet hatred, greed, and fear often drive their actions. Even Huck's idol, Tom Sawyer, puts Jim through humiliating

experiences for the ostensible end of "rescuing" him, knowing all the time that Jim is already a free man.

Whether slavery and race relations should be seen as an explicit theme of novel, they are at the heart of a running critic controversy about the book and its author's intentions. Many modern readers have objected to Twain's portrayal of Jim, who can be seen as superstitious, ignorant, and servile "Uncle Tom" Negro. At the same time, Jim is one novel's most appealing adult characters in the book, a gentle and loyal individual, who does not hate, cheat or trick anyone, who fears and evades violence but never commits any. There are also intimations that Jim is wiser than he lets on to be, that he is able to con Huck into helping him. When the two meet on Jackson's Island, Jim explains that he was forced to abscond from Miss Watson because he had learned of her plans to "sell" him South. But he then adds, "she picks on me all de time, en treats me pooty rough." (p.38). This statement is tailor-made to appeal to Huck's sensibility, for he too feels constantly "pecked" by Miss Watson.

In the end, Twain sets Jim free from the shackles of slavery through the device of Miss Watson's will, but Jim's wife and children remain in servitude, and Jim himself is still a "nigger" even in the eyes of those who have sympathized with his plight. Whether Twain himself was a racist cannot be determined from the text. Plainly Pap's form of racism is targeted for parody, an ignorant white man resenting the very idea of a "free nigger" being able to read and write. Aunt Sally's relief at learning from Huck that only a "nigger" had been killed in the steamboat crash is also qualified by a tone of ironic humor. But Huck himself appears to take Jim as an exception to the rule that black people are inherently inferior to whites. He recognizes that Jim "cared just as much for his people as white folks does for their'n" (p.131), but he still considers it a shame that the "respectable" Tom Sawyer "stooped" to the business of helping to rescue Jim. Plainly, Twain's purpose in *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* was not to present his opinion about broad social issues that continued to confound people in his day, but to entertain them with an amusing, picaresque tale that touches upon timeless subjects such as freedom as seen through the eyes of a highly particularized character.

Beyond the Popular Humorist: The Complexity of Mark Twain

The popularity of the literary work of Samuel Langhorne Clemens, "[Mark Twain](#)," is a clearly known fact in the history of American letters. Creator of two of the best loved heroes of this nation's literature, Tom Sawyer and Huckleberry Finn, the man from Hannibal, Missouri, nevertheless, might very well be described as a challenge to those who would determine the bases for popular acceptance on the American literary scene.

Perhaps one of the more common interpretations given this matter is found in the following comment by Hamlin Garland: "The people can never be educated to love the past. . . . Students may be taught to believe they believe, the masses of American readers want the modern comment. They want the past colored to suit their ideas of life. . . . There is small prophecy in it, after all. We have but to examine the ground closely . . . we have but to examine closely the most naive and local of our novels, and the coming literature will be foreshadowed there." (FN1)

Certainly the appeal of Twain as a local colorist is beyond denial; the attraction of regional material, with its consoling view of life and the charm of its novelty, is totally understandable. However, such an explanation of the power of Mark Twain over generations of readers is, indeed, simplistic in the extreme. There is a texture in the literary material of Mark Twain which, of necessity, invalidates easy resolutions. Initially, the warm and spirited humanity of the writer issues from his pages; "The boys dressed themselves, and went off grieving that there were no outlaws any more, and wondering what modern civilization could claim to have done to compensate for their loss. They said they would rather be outlaws a year in Sherwood Forest than President of the United States forever." (FN2) However, later in his career, the writer treated similar situations in such a manner as to bring out discordant values. The subject of Jim's freedom, in *The Adventures of Huckleberry*

Finn, is a case in point:

“Him?” says Aunt Sally; “the runaway nigger: They’ve got him back, safe and sound, and he’s in that cabin again, on bread and water, and loaded down with chains, till he’s claimed or sold!” “They hain’t no right to shut him up . . . he’s as free as any cretur that walks this earth! . . . Old Miss Watson died two months ago, and she was ashamed she was ever going to sell him . . . and she set him free in her will.” “Then what on earth did you want to set him free for, seeing he was already free?” “Sal, that is a question, I must say; and just like women! Why, I wanted the adventure of it. . . .”(FN3)

Although the essentially humorous tone and colorful setting are not lost for a moment, Twain does manage to introduce into this passage a very disturbing element. The injustice that characterizes Jim’s fate through the course of the novel is inescapable. Huck frequently reflects upon the morality that demands Jim’s return to his owner. The fact that the slave could have made good his escape, that he is, in point of fact, a free man, is of no consequence to the crushingly ignorant standards that dictate the terms of man’s inhumanity to his fellow creature.

Other works by Twain reveal a similar approach. The surface narrative maintains itself as a consistent and flowing proof of the author’s strength, but there is an edge to the images depicted that is certainly discernible as vivid satire to say the least. *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur’s Court*, written in 1889, depicts the modern sensibility transferred to a feudalistic society wherein the claims of chivalry and honor are seen as shams and false displays. The hero becomes endeared to the heart of King Arthur by his feats of seeming magic, which are actually the application of some of the more common principles of modern science being applied to simple problems at opportune moments. The Boss, as he is termed, experiences life in a society in which the value of the individual is dependent solely upon his lord; rights and dignities are privileges few commoners can afford. During a particularly harrowing tour of Arthurian society, in which even the monarch is himself shocked, the Boss reflects upon humanity at the site of a savage pillaging:

“The painful thing observable about all this business was the alacrity with which this oppressed community had turned their cruel hands against their own class in the interest of the common oppressor. This man and woman seemed to feel that in a quarrel between a person of their own class and his lord, it was the natural thing for that poor devil’s whole caste to side with the master. . . .”(FN4)

The indictment of inhumanity and hypocritical reasoning is both direct and just. However, Twain’s vision sees beyond this age of barbarity: “It reminded me of a time thirteen centuries away, when the ‘poor whites’ of our South who were always despised and frequently insulted by the slave-lords around them . . . were yet ready to side with slave-lords in all political moves for the upholding and perpetuating of slavery. . . .”(FN5) Although the charm and humor of this novel are never lacking, its depiction of life in an age of barbaric custom strikes the modern reader with a sense of immediacy that is not to be dismissed. Indeed, it is characteristic of Twain’s later, more mature work that an edge of cynicism touches most every scene. There is not necessarily a distortion in any of this. The open-heartedness of his early materials is based primarily upon an interpretation of the innate goodness and simplicity of the human character. With developing insights, critical and stringent observations about the shortcomings and betrayals of that goodness are explicable. The author’s disillusionment with men because of racial injustice should be noted primarily in reference to their initial sense of equality. Twain’s growing sense of humanity is, perhaps, most effectively depicted in “The Man That Corrupted Hadleyburg.” The narrative is a simple recognition and affirmation that humanity has within itself the seeds of its own destruction. More often than not, man will choose the easier way; there is consolation in the fact that he has the resilience to stop and then retrace his steps.

There is in the writing of Mark Twain a complexity and sophistication that the term “local colorist” cannot adequately sustain. His work is vividly American in its simplicity and its maturing disillusionment. “He wrote books that have in them something eternally true to the core of his nation’s life.” (FN6)

Footnotes

1. Hamlin Garland, “Literary Prophecy,” *Modern American Fiction: Essays in Literary Criticism*, ed. A. Walton Litz (New York: Oxford University Press, 1963), p. 31.
2. Mark Twain, [The Adventures of Tom Sawyer](#) (New York: The Heritage Press, Inc., 1936), p. 85.
3. Mark Twain, *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* (New York: The Heritage Press, Inc., 1940), p. 340.
4. Mark Twain, *Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur’s Court* (New York: Dodd, Mead and Company, Inc., 1960), p. 296.
5. Ibid. p. 298.
6. Jerry Allen, *The Adventures of Mark Twain* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1954), p. 302.

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The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn: History of Controversy

The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn has been a source of controversy since its publication in 1884. It was banned from many public libraries on its first appearance for being “trash.” Although today it is widely regarded as a—if not the—classic American novel, it still poses problems for its readers. *Huckleberry Finn* has long been identified as expressing something essentially American: in the words of Bernard De Voto, “the novel derives from the folk and embodies their mode of thought more purely and more completely than any other ever written.” In some ways, the debate about the Americanness of *Huckleberry Finn* reveals the larger struggle to define American identity. Those who first condemned the novel as being “trash” objected to it on grounds of both literary merit and racial, social, and economic class: they rejected its portrayal of a slave and an uneducated, poor boy as the most typical kind of American citizens. The opposite point of view, which celebrates the novel as an expression of the “folk,” asserts its subject is the quintessential, or typical,

American story characters without social advantages trying to "make good."

Twain creates the impression of American folk culture through his use of dialect and phonetic spelling, which mimics speech, rather than writing. As he points out in his opening notice to the reader, different characters use different dialects; in this world, where not everyone receives the same kind of education, people speak differently from one another. Many critics read *Huckleberry Finn* as a lesson in the way that identity is formed by social realities. They focus on the fact that Twain uses language to show that access to culture and education defines character. Depending on how you read it, the spoken language can either make characters more believable, complex, and therefore dignified, or it can make them seem merely uneducated, caricatured, and "backward."

Twain's attempt to capture the sounds of vernacular (local) speech is part of the novel's realism, part of its documentary quality. And yet, the novel also has elements of romance, which is the very opposite of realism. For instance, Twain relies on unbelievable coincidences in his plot, like the fact that the Phelpses *just happens* to be Tom Sawyer's relatives, and he *just happens* to be arriving on the same day that Huck comes to the farm. Twain manages to merge elements of these two kinds of writing by using a third literary tradition to structure his novel. This literary tradition is called the picaresque—the comedy of the road, the traveling adventure; only here, instead of on a road, the journey takes place on a river. The episodes along the river suggest that the Mississippi winds through a semi-wild frontier. Twain makes the American landscape a site of endless adventures. The river, symbolizing both the power of nature and the inevitable passing of time, is what keeps the raft, and the story, moving. This picaresque framework, although it is usually associated with romance, makes the novel's realistic, documentary moments possible. As Huck and Jim move down the Mississippi, they encounter a diverse swath of American society. Huck gives firsthand descriptions of feuding families, a camp-meeting religious revival, a lynch mob, and other complex social phenomena. Twain connects the picaresque structure, which leaves room for endless variation and adventures, with the endless variation of America's inhabitants. As in his earlier novel, [Life on the Mississippi](#), Twain draws on his own childhood experience and his knowledge as a river man to give the book its convincing details. Samuel Clemens even took his pseudonym, "Mark Twain," from his life on the river.

If *Huckleberry Finn* is the authentically American adventure story, it also explores one of America's most lasting problems: racism. Many critics have questioned Twain's portrayal of "the nigger Jim." Twain's consistent use of the word "nigger" is itself troubling to readers today. It is important to notice that Twain uses a great deal of irony in general, and that what Huck thinks is not the same thing that Twain thinks. There are two main questions here: does Twain simply use stereotypes? And if he does, does he do so in order to make those stereotypes seem true, or to show them as false and oversimplified? On the one hand, Jim's humanity makes him the novel's most appealing character. Jim fills a gap in Huck's life: he is the father that Pap is not; he teaches Huck about the world and how it works, and about friendship. But on the other hand, parts of Jim's character belong to a traditional stereotype of the "happy darky"—an imaginary portrayal of the slave as simple, childlike, and contented. Although Jim runs away, he does not strike the reader as overtly "rebellious" or dangerous. Jim never seems to suspect Huck's crisis of conscience about whether or not he should be helping a slave to escape. And, instead of being angry with Tom Sawyer for the trick he plays at the end of the novel, Jim is simply happy to take his forty dollars.

How we read Jim influences how we read the novel's primary structural "problem," its ending. One way of thinking about this problem is to ask whether *Huckleberry Finn* seems to go in a line, or in a circle. On the journey down the river, Huck learns that Jim has real feelings, recognizes his humanity, and vows not to play any more tricks on him. If the novel is a *bildungsroman*—a narrative about a character coming of age—this is the moment in which Huck learns his most valuable lesson. Huck seems to be traveling onward, in a line of development. But the ending chapters seem to circle us back into the childlike, irresponsible world of boyish adventure that Huck has supposedly left behind. The long and drawn out trick that Tom Sawyer plays on Jim makes the reader doubt if any real development has taken place. Which side of the joke is Huck on? Even

though he does not know that Jim has been freed, he lets Tom turn the escape into a game, and seems to feel little, if any, remorse for toying with Jim's fate. He seems to have forgotten what he learned about the importance of Jim's feelings. Finally, even though Jim is technically "free," he is not recognized as a man by the other characters, or by the larger social world he inhabits. [Toni Morrison](#) argues that the novel needs Jim's enslavement to make the other characters seem free by contrast. She explains, "freedom has no meaning to Huck or to the text without the specter of enslavement, the anodyne to individualism; the yardstick of absolute power over the life of another; the signed, marked, informing, and mutating presence of a black slave." At the end of the novel, for instance, Huck plans to "light out for the Territory" in search of more adventures. But Jim's wife and children are still slaves. Because of his racial identity in a racist society, Jim always remains more confined than Huck does.

Writing *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* took [Mark Twain](#) several years. He began the project as a sequel to [The Adventures of Tom Sawyer](#), as another children's book. But as he wrote, it became more complex; it raises questions that make it a challenging book for readers of all ages. To understand the novel's complexity, one has to take its dual historical context into account. Twain locates the action in the past, before the civil war, and before the legal abolition of slavery. But much of the novel speaks to Twain's contemporary audience, who lived during Reconstruction, a time when the South especially was trying to deal with the effects of the Civil War. The "king" and "duke" owe something of their depiction to the post-Civil War stereotype of carpetbaggers (a derogatory stereotype of Northerners come to prey on the defeated South). Jim belongs, at least partially, to a postwar Vaudeville tradition of the "happy darky," played on stage by white men in blackface, who used a parodied version of black dialect. This popular stereotype conveyed a white nostalgia, and enacted an imaginary construction of the slave before Emancipation, before the "disappointments" of Reconstruction. Twain tries to come to terms with this nostalgia, but whether he critiques it, or indulges in it, is up for debate.

During his lifetime, Twain was best known for being a humorist, a user of irony and a writer of satire. In this novel, he uses Huck as a relatively naive narrator to make ironic observations about Southern culture and human nature in general. As usual, Twain finds a likely object of satire in religious fervor, in the cases both of Miss Watson and of the visit the "king" pays to the camp-meeting. But the irony in *Huckleberry Finn* exists at several levels of narration: sometimes Twain seems to aim his irony at Huck, while other times, Huck himself is an ironic and detached observer. For instance, when the rascally "king" and "duke" come aboard the raft, Huck tells the reader:

It didn't take me long to make up my mind that these liars warn't no kings nor dukes at all, but just low-down humbugs and frauds. But I never said nothing, never let on; kept it to myself; it's the best way; then you don't have no quarrels, and don't get into no trouble. If they wanted us to call them kings and dukes, I hadn't no objections, 'long as it would keep peace in the family, and it warn't no use to tell Jim, so I didn't tell him. If I never learnt nothing else out of Pap, I learnt that the best way to get along with his kind of people is to let them have their own way.

This passage ironically undercuts the way we think Huck has been relating to the two frauds; he does not, in fact, "feel right and kind towards" them. In fact, the connections among the foursome on the raft are extremely tenuous. Huck's choice of metaphor compounds the irony: he compares the two men to his father, and decides to think of them as part of his "family," throwing the whole notion of "family" into an ironic light. Huck thinks he can avoid "trouble" by pretending not to know that they are frauds, but trouble is all they bring. Huck's decision to "let them have their own way" is wishful, because he really has no choice. Finally, although Huck seems to condemn them, he recognizes them as liars partially because he is one himself—he tricks people out of money on more than one occasion. This passage explicitly reminds us that Huck can dissemble and pretend, just as Twain does in his writing. As readers of *Huckleberry Finn*, we are continually challenged to locate the multiple objects of the novel's satire.

Twain's irony complicates the question of race and racism in the world of *Huckleberry Finn*. What the novel makes clear, though, as their journey continually separates and reunites Huck and Jim—white and black—is that their fate is intertwined. Their destinies must be worked out in relation to each other. For Twain, *that* is the great, and greatly troubled, American adventure.

Source: Pearl James, in an essay for *Novels for Students*, Gale, 1997. James is a doctoral candidate at Yale University.

Huck's Final Triumph

Throughout the book Huck's attitude toward the life around him is remarkably ambivalent. Though he clearly is rebelling against respectability and civilization, he rebels because they make him uncomfortable and ill at ease. He fights them by running away. When he can no longer abide the "pecking" of the Widow and Miss Watson, and the privations they force upon him, he flees, but only to the rags and sugar-hogshead of the other side of town. He does not need to go farther. In fact, he must stay within commuting distance of respectable folk. And he quickly and easily returns when a lure is held up to him. The agent who entices Huck back from rags to respectability is, of course, Tom Sawyer. Tom at this time clearly symbolizes Huck's ideal.

Tom seems to be a rebel. He battles the world around him. He attacks the status quo, and seemingly threatens to overturn it. Yet his battles are all shams. If he ever overthrew his paper dragons, his crusading spirit would collapse. He lives happily in his society. After the lark of playing battler, he always joyously returns to the safety and security of Aunt Polly. This clash of danger and safety appeals to Huck, and it is epitomized in the person of Tom. Huck will therefore make any sacrifice for his hero, even to giving up the comfort and freedom he so immensely enjoys. Tom has saturated and captivated Huck's consciousness. Near or far he is the older boy's evil genius.

But Huck is not satisfied or happy for long in his enslavement. Though he sees the world through Tom's rose-colored glasses, and though his spontaneous reaction to any situation is usually Tom's, Huck is restive. He is galled by his fetters and tries to break away. The fact is that he cannot live without Tom—or with him. He seeks a *modus vivendi* [a manner of living] with Tom and his world, but cannot find it. Huck's victory over this forced compromise constitutes one of the great achievements in the book.

Demonstration of Huck's ambivalence begins at the outset of the novel. Huck recounts how in *Tom Sawyer* he was adopted by Widow Douglas, could not tolerate her "sivilizing" him and therefore ran away to his rags, where he was "free and satisfied." But Tom lured him back with the promise that he could become a member of the band of robbers. "So I went back," Huck states matter-of-factly. The close bond between the two boys is further revealed when Miss Watson tries to get Huck, who is hell-bent, to reform and thus prepare for the other destination; Huck is content with hell when Miss Watson assures him that Tom will be there too: "I wanted him and me to be together."

But no sooner does Huck join the band of robbers than the two boys' incompatibility manifests itself and he begins to drag his feet. After playing robber for a month, Huck resigns. He can no longer pretend that hogs are "ingots" and turnips are "julery." He wants to see the "di'monds," A-rabs, and elephants. For his protests, Tom calls him a "numskull," and "perfect sap-head." Huck's revulsion overcomes him, "I judged that all that stuff was only one of Tom Sawyer's lies. It had all the marks of a Sunday school." Tom the romantic dreamer, the sham adventurer, thus symbolizes everything that frightens Huck: St. Petersburg civilization, religion, romantic literature. From this monster Huck flees.

Yet fly as he will, Huck cannot shake off Tom, who is a ghost that refuses to be laid. When Huck "kills" himself to escape from Pap, he does it on Tom's terms. "I did wish Tom Sawyer was there, I knowed he would

take an interest in this kind of business, and throw in the fancy touches" Again, on the night of the storm, when Huck is trying to convince Jim to board the wrecked *Walter Scott*, the force that drives Huck aboard is not the promise of loot—of "seegars" and "solid cash"—but the irresistible urge to imitate Tom. "I can't rest, Jim, till we give her a rummaging. Do you reckon Tom Sawyer would ever go by this thing? Not for pie, he wouldn't ... I wish Tom Sawyer was here."

Later, in Tennessee while the King and Duke play Peter Wilks' brothers, when Huck has adroitly maneuvered Mary Jane away from the house and has satisfactorily lied to the other girls, he congratulates himself, with his inevitable comparison: "I felt very good, I judged I had done it pretty neat—I reckon Tom Sawyer couldn't a done it no neater himself." Still later, in Pikesville, when Huck discovers that the King has turned in Jim for the sum of forty dollars, he decides to write home and have Jim's owner send for him. But he automatically thinks of writing to Tom and having him tell Miss Watson where Jim is. The point is that in Huck's mind St. Petersburg—that world—and Tom are one and the same, inseparable, with Tom the symbol.

With Tom so constantly and completely—and so heavily—on his mind, Huck naturally—and not surprisingly—acquiesces in the deception when Aunt Sally mistakes him for Tom. Huck's first impulse has always been to give in to Tom. Why should he not be flattered to be Tom? Indeed, discovering that he was supposed to be Tom Sawyer "was like being born again," in the sense of being reborn into the world of St. Petersburg and of Tom. "Being Tom Sawyer was easy and comfortable," Huck confesses immediately. Once it is settled that Huck will be Tom and Tom will be Sid, the future looks rosy. Everything will be "easy and comfortable." Huck relaxes completely, suspending his mental processes—becoming again the blind disciple. For example, it is inconceivable that the Huck of the voyage, with his mind alerted for signs of Jim, could see a slave enter an isolated cabin with food—part of it watermelon—and not suspect its purpose. Yet the somnolent Huck does: "Well, it does beat all, that I never thought about a dog not eating watermelon. It shows how a body can see and don't see at the same time."

But in Huck's acquiescence there immediately becomes manifest the old attraction-revulsion tug-of-war he felt in St. Petersburg. And after the initial joy of being Tom has worn off, Huck begins to protest. In the old environment, the last time the boys shared an adventure, it took Huck a month to break away. Now, however, Huck's new nature shows through quickly. When he and Tom are concocting schemes for the release of Jim, Huck gives his plan first, then sits back waiting for the "superior" one; when Tom springs his, Huck reflects ironically: "I see in a minute it was worth fifteen of mine, for style, and would make Jim just as free a man as mine would, and maybe get us all killed besides "

After this initial resistance, Huck protests each new detail of the plan, as the more mature person realizes the absurdity of Tom's childish pranks. He protests, but he gives in each time. Each protest, in fact, is weaker than its predecessor. In this increasing weakness lies Huck's downfall. His resistance—his maturity—is being abraded. He is coming more and more under the mesmeric influence of Tom. Finally he capitulates completely: "Anyway that suits you suits me," he says when Tom wants him to dress up like a servant-girl to deliver the warning of the release of Jim.

Throughout the remainder of the evasion, Huck protests not at all. During the actual escape he apparently enjoys himself. It is action, of course, instead of romantic theorizing, and therefore appeals to the pragmatic Huck. But—far more significantly—Huck's new self is being subsumed under Tom's. (©eNotes.com) So fast has been the activity since Tom's arrival that Huck has not had a chance to be alone and to reflect, and it is only when he has searched his soul through active thinking that his true self emerges. Now, caught up in activity, he is becoming the old Huck again, so completely under the influence of Tom that he is ready to "slide out" with Tom and Jim and "go for howling adventures amongst the Injuns, over in the Territory, for a couple of weeks or two."

At this point Huck is faced with the greatest crisis of his life. Once before he was confronted with a mighty decision, when he had to choose between being respectable and returning Jim to Miss Watson, and being himself, listening to the voice of his heart, not returning Jim—and going to hell. He chose the latter course, but only after great soul-searching, in solitude and silence: "I ... set there thinking—thinking ... And went on thinking. And got to thinking" In this even greater crisis if the new boy is to prevail over the old, clearly he needs time to think and think. Luckily time is provided.

Source: Ray B. Browne, "Huck's Final Triumph," in *Ball State Teacher's College Forum*, Vol. 6, No. 1, Winter, 1965, pp. 3-12.

The Role of Jim in Huckleberry Finn

At the beginning of the second chapter of *Huckleberry Finn*, we meet one of the most important characters in the novel. "Miss Watson's big nigger, named Jim, was setting in the kitchen door. . . ." Jim is to play a role second only to that of Huck in this novel, but the reader is seldom conscious at any one point of the extent of Jim's importance. Even in Jim's biggest scenes, we more often than not come away thinking of Huck rather than Jim. The main point I wish to make in this paper is that Jim is not merely a noble cause or an ignoble foil, in either of which cases he would be more particularly important for the action episodes of the book than he in fact is; he is rather what one might call a moral catalyst, and thereby of central importance in the portrayal and illumination of the character of Huckleberry Finn. True, the action depends upon the presence of the runaway slave, and from this status evolves the double search for freedom which Professor [Edgar Marquess] Branch defines [in his *The Literary Apprenticeship of Mark Twain* (1950)] as the explicit theme of the book: "Huck's story of his struggle to win freedom for himself and Jim." His role as the runaway slave may certainly be argued as showing Jim's indirect importance to the varied action in the book, but it is my thesis that Jim's primary function is to further the characterization of Huckleberry Finn: by his presence, his personality, his actions, his words, to call forth from Huckleberry Finn a depth of tenderness and moral strength that could not otherwise have been fully and convincingly revealed to the reader. For Mark Twain's gift for characterization was, as Professor [Edward] Wagenknecht has observed [in his *Mark Twain: The Man and His Work* (1935)], a very great "ability to *evoke* character, as distinct from *constructing* it."

It is Jim's openness, his unashamed dignity, that makes Huck's struggle with and conquest of his pride, that is, his ashamed dignity, deeply moving and fully significant. We have seen earlier in the book touches of gentleness in Huck, we have seen that he does not mean to hurt the feelings of the Widow Douglas, and later we are to see him grieving that he has deceived and brought sorrow to Aunt Sally. But it is this incident [when Huck lies to Jim] which, above all others, shows his concern about "hurting others" in its full meaning, as a deep and affectionate respect for human dignity. We have seen and are to see this concern carried far beyond respect for the visible and admirable dignity of Jim, the Widow Douglas, Mary Jane Wilks, and Aunt Sally, to include respect for the besmirched if not invisible dignity of the Duke and Dauphin as, tarred and feathered, they are ridden out of town astride a rail (Ch. XXXIII). And there is Huck's attempt to secure rescue for the stranded murderers: "I begun to think how dreadful it was, even for murderers, to be in such a fix I says to myself, there ain't no telling but I might come to be a murderer myself yet, and then how would I like it?" Professor Wagenknecht comments: "What a triumph of Christian humility! What a triumph of understanding and imagination! It is Mark Twain's version of the generally misquoted and misattributed utterance of old John Bradford, on seeing some criminals on the way to execution. 'But for the grace of God there goes John Bradford.'"

Jim is a gentle and loyal person; he is not vengeful, he does not hate, he cannot cheat or trick another. He fears and evades violence, but he does not commit violence—as do so many of the characters in this book, whether as individuals or with the clan or mob. His most memorable speeches are characterized by an open honesty and a deep capacity for unselfish love. We recall the wounded love for Huck that brought about Jim's angry

speech quoted above, and the love for his little deaf daughter in that other powerfully dramatic, though brief, narration (Ch. XXIII). In a world peopled by Pap Finn, the Duke and the Dauphin, lynchers, feuders, and murderers, Huck is almost constantly on the defensive. It is when he is alone with Jim in the secure little world of the raft drifting down the Mississippi that Huck hears a voice of love that makes sense in a world of hatred, and can reply from his own heart with his apology and with his famous moral victory "All right, then, I'll go to hell." Mr. Branch has pointed out in considerable detail the significance of the Widow Douglas, but she was not a comrade to Huck. Huck was ill at ease with her, and they sometimes simply could not understand each other's thoughts and feelings. With Jim, this barrier of age, position, sex, and background does not exist. It is in response to the open tenderness in Jim that there is the opportunity and the necessity for the tender side of the "realistic" Huck Finn to be spontaneously and convincingly revealed to the reader. Mr. Branch pays tribute to the integrity that lies back of and gives strength to this tenderness in Jim: of those people in Huck's world who live consistently from the heart. "Jim, of course, is foremost in selflessness and magnanimity. Because he is incapable of deceit, his innocence, whether comic or pathetic, is haloed with grandeur. His search for freedom is carried forth in humility and sanctified by elemental justice." When Jim's dignity *is* violated without remorse, it is by the amoral Tom, not the moral Huck, and this will be discussed later in this paper.

Jim's personality is strongly influenced by his faith in superstition, especially evil omens. His first serious appearance in the novel, after his brief appearance as the butt of Tom's prank, is to cast a rather ominous prediction for Huck by means of this ox hair-ball. The reader has been prepared before this for a serious attitude on the part of the characters towards superstition, when, in the first chapter, Huck is terrified to realize that he has accidentally killed a spider. Even the simile with which he describes the atmosphere takes on Hie morbid touch of his fear: "I set down again, a-shaking all over, and got out my pipe for a smoke; for the house was all as still as death now, and so the widow wouldn't know." After Jim has completed his splendidly ambiguous prophecy with the disheartening sentence: "You wants to keep 'way firm de water as much as you kin, en don't run no resk, 'kase it's down in de bills dat you's gwyne to git hung," this chapter concludes with a one-line paragraph: "When I lit my candle and went up to my room that night there sat pap—his own self" Thus enters for the first time a genuinely evil force into the novel, in the form of the malicious and dangerous town drunkard. Later, the wreck of the raft, which leads to the Grangerford feud episode, is also preceded by an evil omen: Huck carelessly handles a snake-skin. (On this is also blamed—accurately—Jim's rattlesnake bite and—inaccurately—the near disaster on the *Walter Scott*.) As a final instance of the direct role of superstition in the plot, there is the fact that the rescue episode would have been foiled at the start if the great superstitious fear of Uncle Silas had not made communication with the prisoner Jim not only possible but relatively easy.

Jim is, as Mr. Branch observes, Huck's mentor in this dark and shifting realm. But he is more than an instructor in fear, as Mr. Branch might seem to suggest; he is here again the voice of love and conciliation in an erratically malicious and quarrelsome world, although a voice touched with fear in this realm as with grief in the human realm. Jim's only rebellion in the human realm was born of love, not hate: he planned (though futilely) to free his wife and children, to steal them away from their "rightful owners." Huck and Jim are essentially not rebels: they seek to escape, not to fight. They ask only to be left alone. This is true in the human realm, and it is true as they try to ward off "bad luck" with charms and magic formulas.

We need not smile with condescension on this superstitious response to unseen malevolence. This "mythical, fatalistic level" is merely more picturesque in Huck's world than in our present world. It would be hypocritical of us to laugh at Jim and Huck's belief in the concrete existence of evil as Evil Powers, merely because the present unwritten code observes a different form. We no longer put in our time with dead cats and salt shakers in order to save ourselves from harm. Instead, we modern realists construct fierce, nationalistic mythologies peopled with spotless heroes and mustachioed villains, the roles remaining the same, but the cast changing every twenty years. So we who have humbled ourselves before one huge fear, who accept the supremacy of Evil or Violence, and struggle to clothe ourselves most adequately in his livery, hoping that our stockpile of A-Bombs will prove the highest in the end, laugh in relieved contempt at the multitude of little fears we no

longer share. Still, even this side of a graceful admission of a common weakness, the reader who reads this novel responsively is eventually saturated by the awe and humility of these people (I mean especially Huck and Jim) towards what they do not understand but feel to exist above and beyond their limited power. The reader is aware of the more-than-human struggle that tinges the novel throughout, through all the petty and tragic human struggles. And that more-than-human struggle is most often made vivid through the words and actions and personality of Jim.

Source: Frances V. Brownell, "The Role of Jim in *Huckleberry Finn*," in *Boston Studies in English*, Vol. 1, 1955, pp. 74-83.

The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn: Suggested Essay Topics

Chapter 1

1. The Widow Douglas and her sister, Miss Watson, are both trying to “civilize” Huck. Compare and contrast their attitudes toward Huck. What method does each one use in her efforts to turn him into a “respectable” citizen? How do those methods differ? How are they the same? Cite examples from the novel to support your argument.
2. Analyze the scene where Huck flips the spider into the candle. Why does he feel that this would bring him bad luck? How does this scene foreshadow superstition in the novel? Support your answer with examples from the novel.
3. Twain chooses a 13-year-old boy as narrator for his novel. In what way does this help to accomplish Twain’s purpose? Discuss the ways in which a young, innocent narrator can make a profound statement about the hypocrisy of his society. Explain your answer.

Chapters 2-3

1. Although Huck Finn and Tom Sawyer are presented as contrasting characters in the novel, they are alike in many ways. Compare and contrast the characters of Huck and Tom, giving examples from the novel to support your argument.
2. Analyze Jim’s idea that he has been ridden around the world by witches. Why was he proud? Were the slaves the only ones who believed Jim’s story? Does Huck believe it? Explain your answer.
3. Analyze the role of respectability in Tom Sawyer’s supposedly lawless gang. Why is it mandatory for each member to have a respectable family? Examine the idea that Huck, who has had more experience with breaking the law than any of the others, comes close to being excluded from the gang.

Chapters 4-5

1. Superstition is a recurring theme in the novel. Analyze Twain’s satiric treatment of the hairball scene. Examine the answers Huck receives about his life. How does Jim keep the hairball’s comments believable?
2. Analyze the relationship of Huck and his father. In what ways was he different from the ideal? How did this influence Huck’s feelings about society as a whole? Explain your reasoning.
3. Analyze Judge Thatcher’s reactions to Huck’s request to take his money. Why did the judge exchange one dollar for six-thousand dollars? Was he cheating Huck? Explain your answer.

Chapters 6-7

1. Huck seems to adapt to almost any situation. He has become accustomed to civilized life with the Widow Douglas. Later he finds life in the woods carefree and easy. Analyze the character of Huck. Discuss possible reasons for his adaptability to different situations. Use examples from the novel to support your argument.
2. In the novel Pap does not appear to be a civilized man. Discuss ways in which he does, however, fit into the larger society. Does he compare to the Widow Douglas in any way? Explain your answer.
3. Huck wishes Tom Sawyer were with him to add some “fancy touches” to his plan of escape. Discuss the difference between Huck’s scheme of faking his death and the attack on the “A-rabs” and “Spaniards” in Chapter 3. Cite examples from the novel to support your ideas.

Chapters 8-9

1. Huck’s most poetic language is prompted by a severe thunderstorm on the island. Discuss the reasons for this. In what way does the storm inspire him? Why is he not afraid of the storm? Use examples from the novel to support your argument.
2. If Huck keeps Jim’s secret of his escape, people will call him a “low-down Abolitionist.” In what way are those words more effective when spoken by a young narrator? Explain the irony in Huck’s statement. What is Twain’s message about the hypocritical values of his society? Explain your answer with examples from the novel.
3. Miss Watson could sell Jim for eight hundred dollars. He, therefore, feels rich because he owns himself. Explain Twain’s use of satire in Jim’s statement . What was Twain’s attitude toward slavery in this passage? Explain your answer.

Chapters 10-11

1. Huck’s growing concern for Jim’s welfare is evident in many ways. Discuss the events where this concern is reflected in Huck’s behavior. In what ways does he protect Jim from danger? Cite examples from the novel to support your argument.
2. Huck’s ability to tell a story in order to get himself out of a “tight” situation is one of his greatest strengths. How does this apply to his encounter with Mrs. Judith Loftus? What does he do when she realizes he is a boy? Explain your answer.
3. When Huck curls up the snake at the foot of Jim’s blanket, he does not tell Jim that he has done it. What is his reason for keeping his little joke a secret? What lesson does Huck learn from it? How would Jim have felt if Huck would have told the truth? Discuss your answer.

Chapters 12-13

1. Huck’s journey on the river is filled with adventures, but it is also a symbolic journey. What does his journey symbolize? How does his relationship with Jim tie in to the symbolism? Compare the symbolism of the shore to that of the river. Use examples from the novel to support your view.
2. *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* is often referred to as the embodiment of mythological characteristics. In what way does the journey down the river represent these characteristics? How is Huck’s escape from society and his love for the natural world of the river incorporated into this idea? Explain your answer.
3. Twain uses satire to expose people’s ability to rationalize their wrongdoings. In what way does Twain employ that device in the incident where Huck “lifts chickens” and “borrows watermelons”? What do the words “lifts” and “borrows” connote? Give examples from the novel to support your argument.

Chapters 14-15

1. The relationship between Huck and Jim is brought into focus in these chapters. How does their frightening separation in the fog draw them closer together? How do they feel about each other at this point in the novel? Give examples from the novel to support your viewpoint.
2. Huck and Jim carry on a lengthy conversation about royalty. In what way does Twain satirize royalty in these chapters? What is Jim's opinion of King Solomon? Why does he feel that way? Give examples from the novel to support your argument.

Chapters 16-17

1. Huck makes a moral decision concerning Jim's freedom in Chapter 16. How does this decision affect Huck as a character in the novel? Discuss the first time in the novel that he made a decision to help Jim escape to freedom. How did the decision affect him then? Cite examples from the novel to support your view.
2. There is irony in the statement Jim makes about stealing his children. In what way is it ironic that Jim's children belong to someone else? Why did Huck feel it was morally wrong for Jim to claim his children as his own? Give examples from the novel to support your argument.
3. Critics believe Twain stopped writing the novel for a few years after he finished Chapter 16. Why would this have been a difficult place for Twain to continue? How does the setting of the novel change at this point? Explain your answer.

Chapters 18-19

1. Harney Shepherdson and Miss Sophia are victims of the feud between the Grangerfords and the Shepherdsons. Compare and contrast their conflict with that of Shakespeare's Romeo and Juliet. In what way was their situation the same? How was it different? Was Huck sympathetic with the young couple? Give examples from the novel to support your argument.
2. Twain employs satire throughout the novel to speak out against the hypocrisy and corruption in his society. In what way is the church service, attended by the Grangerfords and the Shepherdsons, an attack on the religion of Twain's day? How does the hog incident add to the satire? Explain your answer.
3. In these chapters life on the raft is contrasted sharply with the violence and bloodshed Huck has recently encountered on the shore. How does this contrast bring out the theme of freedom in the novel? How does Huck feel about life on the raft? How does Jim feel? Use examples from the novel to support your viewpoint.

Chapters 20-21

1. In the novel Huck continually tells stories to get himself out of tight situations. Why doesn't this bother Huck's conscience? In what way is Huck forced to tell a lie? Is Huck morally wrong in doing so? Defend your argument with examples from the novel.
2. It is during a natural phenomenon such as a thunderstorm that Huck uses his most artistic language. Discuss Huck's feeling about the thunderstorm. Why is he not afraid of the storm? How does this symbolize his life on the river as opposed to life on the shore? Explain your answer.
3. There are many examples of gullibility in the novel. In what way does Twain satirize the gullibility of the people at the camp meeting? How does the king trick them into taking up a collection? Why do they believe him? Support your argument.

Chapters 22-23

1. Twain is satirizing the lynch mob in these chapters. In what way can the individuals in a mob be seen as

cowards? Discuss the psychology of a lynch mob. Why is Sherburn successful in breaking up the mob? Cite examples from the novel to support your argument.

2. Through the characters of the duke and the king, Twain is satirizing royalty. What qualities in a king would make him a “rascallion?” How does Huck’s reference to kings throughout history prove his point? Explain your answer.

3. The relationship between Huck and Jim is growing deeper as the novel progresses. How is Jim’s humanity expressed through the eyes of Huck? How does Jim feel about Huck? How can Huck tell? Explain your answer.

Chapters 24-25

1. In these chapters Twain satirizes the gullibility of the townspeople who believe an imposter like the king, but, ironically, do not believe Dr. Robinson. Write an essay comparing the gullibility of the townspeople to people in today’s world. In what ways are people gullible? What makes them gullible? Explain your answer.

2. Huck has become more critical of the duke and the king than he was in preceding chapters. Why has this change taken place in his character? Explain Huck’s moral development as it relates to previous chapters in the novel. Cite examples from the novel to support your argument.

3. The ultimate sacrifice in the eyes of the townspeople is when the king and the duke give the Wilks girls the whole six thousand dollars. Why do they give it away? What is their motive? What do they hope to gain? Support your argument with examples from the novel.

Chapters 26-27

1. The king and the duke have been involved in several fraudulent schemes along the river. Compare and contrast the Wilks episode to *The Royal Nonesuch* in the last town. Why does Huck take action against the frauds in the Wilks episode? Why was he merely an observer in *The Royal Nonesuch*? How do they compare? How are they different? Use examples from the novel to support your argument.

2. The two frauds have supposedly been duped through their sale of the slaves. In what way do the king and the duke judge the slaves by their own standards? In what way do they think the slaves have played a game in order to get away with the money? Defend your argument with examples from the novel.

3. The separation of families through the selling of slaves is a recurrent theme in the novel. What is Twain’s attitude about this controversial issue? Cite at least two examples from the novel that deal with the separation of families and point out the way in which Twain satirizes the issue.

Chapters 28-29

1. The novel is filled with examples of stories Huck tells when he is in a tight situation. In Chapter 28 he decides that truth is better than lies, however. Why does he have a change of heart in this chapter? How does Huck feel about Mary Jane? Does he trust her with the truth? Does he ever lie to her? Why does he depend on lies to get through difficult situations? Cite examples from the novel to support your argument.

2. Throughout the course of the novel, Twain uses descriptions of thunderstorms. Compare and contrast the description of the thunderstorm in Chapter 29 with descriptions in other parts of the novel. How are they the same? How is this one different? Cite examples from the novel to support your argument.

3. Mary Jane is one of Huck’s favorite people in the novel. What qualities does she possess that makes Huck fond of her? How is she different from her sisters? Explain your answer.

Chapters 30-31

1. Huck makes his ultimate moral decision in Chapter 31 of the novel. What is Twain satirizing in this episode? Explain Huck's natural morality as opposed to society's morality. Use examples from the novel to support your answer.
2. Twain sheds a slightly different light on the duke in these chapters. What is different about the actions of the duke? How does this make us feel about him? Is the duke less evil than the king? Explain your answer.
3. Huck faces a moral decision to help Jim escape in three different episodes of the novel. Explain each dilemma and describe how it affects Huck's development as a character. Cite examples from the novel to support your argument.

Chapters 32-33

1. Twain paints a bleak, depressing picture of the Phelps Plantation. Compare and contrast Huck's view of life on the plantation to life on the raft. In what way is his view affected by his recent loss of Jim? Cite examples from the novel to support your argument.
2. Huck is shocked when Tom Sawyer tells him he will help steal Jim out of slavery. What does Tom know about Jim and how does that affect his decision? How does Huck view Tom as a member of society? How does he view himself? Support your answer with examples from the novel.
3. Jim acts as an informant in the case of the king and duke's *Royal Nonesuch* show. In what way is justice being done? Why do you think Jim is seen in a different light in this section of the novel? Do his actions seem believable? Defend your argument with examples from the novel.

Chapters 34-35

1. The contrasting personalities of Huck and Tom provide the reader with the satiric humor in these chapters. In what way do their personalities contrast? How are Tom's romantic notions brought out in the plan to free Jim? How does Huck disagree? Cite examples from the novel to support your argument.
2. Tom and Huck disagree on the idea of stealing and borrowing. What does Huck call borrowing? What does Tom consider stealing? When does Tom consider stealing all right? When is it wrong? Support your argument with quotes from the novel.
3. In this section of the novel Tom already knows that Jim has been freed by Miss Watson. In view of this fact, how do you interpret his actions in the plan of escape? Is Tom unusually cruel to Jim by making him wait unnecessarily? Why doesn't he tell Huck and Jim? Explain your answer.

Chapters 36-37

1. Two different types of morality are demonstrated in the novel. Contrast Huck's morality with Tom's. How are they different? Explain the origins of each of the boys' sense of morality? Cite examples from the novel to support your argument.
2. Twain often satirizes the religious sensibilities of his day through the characters in the novel. In what way is he satirizing Uncle Silas's prayers with Jim? Do you feel Uncle Silas is being kind to Jim? Why does Jim feel his kindness? Explain your answer.

Chapters 38-39

1. Jim is taken out of his prison to help Huck and Tom with the grindstone. In what way is this humorous incident ironic? Why does Jim go back to his prison? Why doesn't he leave while he has the chance? Why don't the boys help him to escape? Explain your answer.

2. Tom often prescribes cruel treatment for Jim in order to carry out his elaborate plan of escape. How does one account for his lack of sensitivity to Jim’s feelings? Is Tom a cruel person? How does Tom treat other people in the novel? Cite examples from the novel to support your argument.

3. Tom works on a coat of arms for Jim. Does he have sufficient knowledge of this subject? Is his knowledge limited? Why doesn’t he give Huck the definitions of “fess” and “bar sinister”? Support your answer with examples from the novel.

Chapters 40-41

1. Jim unselfishly gives up his freedom so they can get a doctor for Tom. Does this act seem consistent with Jim’s character? Why does he do it? Describe one other instance in the novel where Jim is unselfish. Cite examples from the novel to support your argument.

2. Tom is happy when they reach the raft in spite of the fact that he has a bullet in his leg. Why is he happy? Why doesn’t he want to see a doctor? What instructions does Tom give Huck about the doctor? How is this a part of Tom’s plan of escape? Explain your answer with examples from the novel.

3. Huck invents stories throughout the novel to get himself out of tight situations. Is Huck’s story to the doctor as believable as his stories have been in the past? Does the doctor doubt Huck? Are there any flaws in his story. Use examples from the novel to support your argument.

Chapters 42-43

1. Jim is often referred to as a noble character in the novel. In what way is his nobility shown in the last few chapters. How does he show courage by helping the doctor? Why does he do it? What price does he pay? Support your answer with examples from the novel.

2. The men who are attending to Jim want to hang him as an example to other slaves who might attempt to escape. Why do they decide against it? How does this incident satirize the morality of the men? Cite examples from the novel to explain your answer.

3. At the end of the novel Huck wants to escape so Aunt Sally will not try to “sivilize” him. How has the meaning of the word “sivilize” changed for Huck? In what way has Huck grown as a character in the novel? Give examples from the novel to support your argument.

The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn: Sample Essay Outlines

The following paper topics are designed to test your understanding of the novel as a whole and to analyze important themes and literary devices. Following each question is a sample outline to help get you started.

• Topic #1

Humor is a tool [Mark Twain](#) uses in *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* to satirize the evil in his society. Write a paper analyzing the satiric situations in the novel that suggest the hypocrisy and ridiculousness of society’s prevailing attitudes toward the institutions of religion, education, and slavery before the Civil War.

Outline

I. Thesis Statement: Mark Twain exposes the evil in his society by satirizing the institutions of religion, education, and slavery.

II. Twain satirizes religion

A. The Widow Douglas and Miss Watson

1. Miss Watson's prayers are never answered
2. Widow Douglas tucks her head down to pray before meals

B. The Grangerfords and the Shepherdsons

1. The feuding families sit calmly in church together
2. The families have forgotten the reason for their feud

C. Huck's decision not to turn Jim in as a runaway slave

1. Huck decides to "go to hell" rather than turn in his friend Jim
2. Huck struggles with his conscience over harboring a runaway slave

III. Twain satirizes education

A. Huck drops out of school

1. Twain uses Huck, an uneducated narrator, to criticize society's corruption, including education

B. Tom Sawyer reads books, but his plans and schemes fail because they are impractical

C. Jim is a loving father-figure to Huck. He cannot read but is wise beyond book-learning

IV. Twain satirizes slavery

A. The slaves come in for prayers at night at the Widow Douglas' house

B. Jim escapes from his owner

1. He has overheard her saying that she cannot resist selling Jim.
2. He would be sold down river where slaves were mistreated

C. Jim wants to go north to earn his freedom

1. To free his wife and children, Jim plans to buy them

D. Jim and Huck's close relationship

1. On the raft, away from civilization, Jim and Huck are almost equals

V. Conclusion: The satire in this novel is a critical commentary on the hypocrisy in the institutions of religion, education, and slavery.

• Topic #2

The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn is often referred to as "The Great American Novel." Write a paper showing how the novel vividly depicts the American scene along the Mississippi River before the Civil War. Describe the lifestyle, language, and mode of travel of the townspeople along the river.

Outline

I. Thesis Statement: In the novel, Twain represents American life along the Mississippi River before the Civil War through his authentic depiction of the lifestyles, dialects, and modes of travel of the townspeople who lived there.

II. Twain depicts American lifestyles along the river

A. Lifestyle of the Widow Douglas and Miss Watson

1. Superstitious beliefs
2. Attitudes about civilized life and education
3. Religious beliefs

B. Lifestyles of the Grangerfords and the Shepherdsons

1. Aristocratic life
2. Feuding families

C. Lifestyle in Bricksville, Arkansas

1. Sherburn shoots Boggs
2. Lynch mob goes after Sherburn

D. Fraudulent activities of the king and the duke

1. Cheating the Wilks sisters out of their inheritance
2. Pretending to be Peter Wilks' brother at the funeral

E. Lifestyle on the Phelps Plantation

1. Attitudes about slavery
 2. Family relationships
- F. Behavior of the townspeople
1. Tar and feather the king and the duke
 2. Threaten a runaway slave with guns

III. Twain depicts American dialects along the river

A. Missouri Negro

1. Jim and some minor characters

B. Southwestern

1. Arkansas gossips (Sister Hotchkiss)

C. Ordinary "Pike County"

1. Huck, Tom, Aunt Polly, Ben Rogers, Pap, and Judith Loftus

D. "Pike County"

1. Thieves on the Walter Scott
2. The King
3. Bricksville loafers
4. Aunt Sally and Uncle Silas Phelps

IV. Twain depicts American modes of travel along the river

A. Steamboat episodes

1. The wrecked Walter Scott
2. The steamboat that wrecked the raft
3. The King and Duke arrive at Peter Wilks' place on a steam boat

B. Rafts

1. Simple and inexpensive travel
 2. Used by Huck and Jim
- C. Canoes
1. Used to travel from the raft to the shore
 2. Used for travel upstream

V. Conclusion: The novel depicts the lifestyles, modes of travel, and colloquial speech of Twain's day and is therefore a genuine American novel.

• **Topic #3**

Mark Twain would have us believe that aristocrats were ridiculous and out of place in frontier America. Write a paper analyzing the aristocratic characters Twain satirizes in the novel. Explain the way in which he used these characters as a harsh commentary on the whole idea of an aristocracy.

Outline

I. Thesis Statement: Twain ridicules the aristocratic characters in *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* by portraying them as fraudulent, pretentious, overly sentimental, and violent.

II. Aristocratic characters in the novel

A. Fraudulent activities of aristocratic characters

1. The so-called king and duke defraud the townspeople

B. Violent activities of aristocratic characters

1. The Grangerfords and the Shepherdsons kill each other for revenge, yet sit across from each other in church with guns propped against the pews

2. Colonel Sherburn kills Boggs
3. Phelps neighbors use guns to hunt a runaway slave
- C. Sentimentality of aristocratic characters
 1. The sentimental art and poetry of the Grangerfords is satirized
 2. Wrecked steamboat is named after Walter Scott, whose sentimental fiction glamorized the aristocracy
- D. Pretentiousness of aristocratic characters
 1. The king and the duke pretend to be royalty
 2. The king and duke lower themselves to associate with “two felons on a raft” (Huck and Jim)
 3. Grangerfords are pretentious about their house and furnishings

III. Conclusion: Twain satirizes aristocracy through the subtle ridicule of the aristocratic characters in the novel.

• **Topic #4**

Through the eyes of a 13-year-old narrator who simply speaks his mind, Twain reveals the conflicts inherent in the society of his day. Write a paper discussing Huck’s point-of-view in the novel. In what ways does his natural innocence help to expose the hypocrisy of people and institutions in the novel?

Outline

I. Thesis statement: Through Huck’s innocent point-of-view, we see the conflict between individual freedom in the natural world and the constraints society places on the individual in the civilized world.

II. Huck’s point-of-view and the conflict between natural freedom and civilized society

A. The Widow Douglas tries to “civilize” Huck

1. Proper dress and manners
2. Proper education

B. Huck’s father

1. Exploits Huck for his money
2. Locks Huck in the cabin all day
3. The new judge grants his father custody of Huck
4. Huck is physically abused by his father

C. Religious hypocrisy

1. Miss Watson’s slaves come in for prayers every night
2. Holding him captive, Aunt Sally and Uncle Silas pray with Jim

D. Religious teachings about slavery

1. If you help a runaway slave to freedom, you will go to hell

E. Slavery from Huck’s point-of-view

1. Decides to tear up the letter to Miss Watson and steal Jim out of slavery again
2. Huck’s point-of-view brings out Jim’s humanity

III. Conclusion: Through the point-of-view of a young narrator who longs for the freedom of the natural world, we are led to condemn the hypocrisy of a constraining society.

The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn: Compare and Contrast

- **1840s:** Under the Slave Codes, enacted by individual southern states, slaves could not own property, testify against whites in court, or make contracts. Slave marriages were not recognized by law.

1884: As the result of Black Codes enacted by states during Reconstruction, African Americans could now legally marry and own property, but the codes also imposed curfews and segregation. The Fifteenth Amendment granted black men the right to vote, but individual states prohibited them from doing so.

Today: The right to vote is universal for all citizens above the age of eighteen, and other rights are not restricted by race.

- **1840s:** The steamboat was the most popular mode of travel and the Mississippi and Ohio Rivers were the main thoroughfares in the West.

1884: The railroad had taken over as the means of mass transportation all across America.

Today: Most goods are transported within the U.S. by truck, and airplanes and cars allow people to travel long distances in short periods of time.

- **1840s:** Means of entertainment were beginning to flourish in America. Among the many new kinds of literature available were slave narratives and romantic adventures. The first minstrel show was staged in 1843.

1884: The field of literature, in the form of books and periodicals, had become the province of the masses. The minstrel show continued to be popular, as did the music of ragtime which was associated with it.

Today: Entertainment, especially film, television, and music, is a multi-billion-dollar industry.

- **1840s:** The Mississippi River ran freely, making travel dangerous, due to snags, large pieces of trees lodged in the river.

1884: The Mississippi River Commission had been founded in 1879 to improve navigation. Over the next decades, a series of levees were built which also alleviated flooding problems.

Today: The level of the Mississippi River and its banks are tightly controlled so that navigation is very safe and floods are less frequent.

The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn: Topics for Further Study

- Study the history and form of the minstrel show in the nineteenth century and find evidence in [Adventures of Huckleberry Finn](#) that Twain was influenced by minstrels in his creation of the novel.
- Research the history of the novel's censorship in America, and argue for or against the exclusion of *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* from a school's curriculum.
- Using history texts and primary sources like slave narratives, research the conditions under which slaves lived in the 1840s to gain a deeper understanding of what Jim's life might have been like, and tell Jim's story from his perspective.

The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn: Media Adaptations

- In the 1930s, *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* was adapted twice as a black-and-white film under the title *Huckleberry Finn*, once in 1931 by director Norman Taurog for Paramount, and then in 1939 by MGM. The latter is the most famous of the novel's adaptations. It was directed by Richard Thorpe and starred Mickey Rooney as Huck and Rex Ingram as Jim. The 1939 film is available on video from

MGM/UA Home Entertainment.

- An adaptation of the novel was produced for the "Climax" television program in 1954 by CBS. It starred Thomas Mitchell and John Carradine and is available from Nostalgia Family Video.
- Another film version of the book was released by MGM in 1960, this time in color as *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*. Directed by Michael Curtiz, the film starred Eddie Hodges as Huck, Archie Moore as Jim, and Tony Randall as the King. This adaptation is also available on video from MGM/UA Home Entertainment.
- PBS produced a version titled *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* for "American Playhouse" in 1986. The movie was directed by Peter H. Hunt and the cast included Sada Thompson, Lillian Gish, Richard Kiley, Jim Dale, and Geraldine Page. It is available from MCA/Universal Home Video.
- Walt Disney produced *The Adventures of Huck Finn* in 1993. This film, starring Elijah Wood as Huck and Courtney B. Vance as Jim, deleted racial epithets and translated the characters' dialects to suit modern tastes. It was directed by Stephen Sommers, who also wrote the screenplay. The film is available from Walt Disney Home Video.
- In 1994, the novel was updated in the film adaptation *Huck and the King of Hearts* produced by Crystal Sky Communications. In this version, Chauncey Leopardi plays Huck, who lives in a trailer park, and Graham Green plays Jim, who is a Native American con artist fleeing a hoodlum from whom he has stolen drug money. The movie was directed by Michael Keusch and written by Chris Sturgeon. It is available on home video.
- The novel has also been recorded on sound cassettes many times since 1980. Unabridged versions are available from Books, Inc. and Books in Motions. Abridged versions are available from Metacom, Listen for Pleasure Ltd., and Time Warner Audiobooks, which released a study guide along with the tape.

The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn: What Do I Read Next?

- Mark Twain's [Life on the Mississippi](#) (revised, 1883) tells of the author's years as a steamboat pilot through a series of short articles.
- Frederick Douglass's *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass* (1845) is the most prominent slave narrative written, and depicts his development from slave to free man.
- *A Short History of Reconstruction* (1990) by Eric Foner, an abridged version of his award-winning study *Reconstruction: America's Unfinished Revolution*, explains the complex reasons for the failure of Reconstruction.
- In [Slavery and Freedom: An Interpretation of the Old South](#) (1990), James Oakes presents a thorough history of slavery as it was practiced and preached during the period in which [Adventures of Huckleberry Finn](#) takes place.
- Harriet Beecher Stowe's classic [Uncle Tom's Cabin](#) (1852) depicts the inhumanity of an institution which separates slave families on the auction block and corrupts southern whites by giving them absolute power over their slaves.
- In his essay "On the Duty of Civil Disobedience," published in 1849, Henry David Thoreau argues that each person is responsible for acting on his own principles, no matter what the laws of the state. He applied this reasoning specifically to slavery.

The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn: Bibliography and Further Reading

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