

# STUDY GUIDE



**steppenwolf**  
FOR YOUNG ADULTS

# Huck Finn

adapted for the stage by **Laura Eason**

based on the novel Adventures of Huckleberry Finn by **Mark Twain**

directed by **Edward Sobel**

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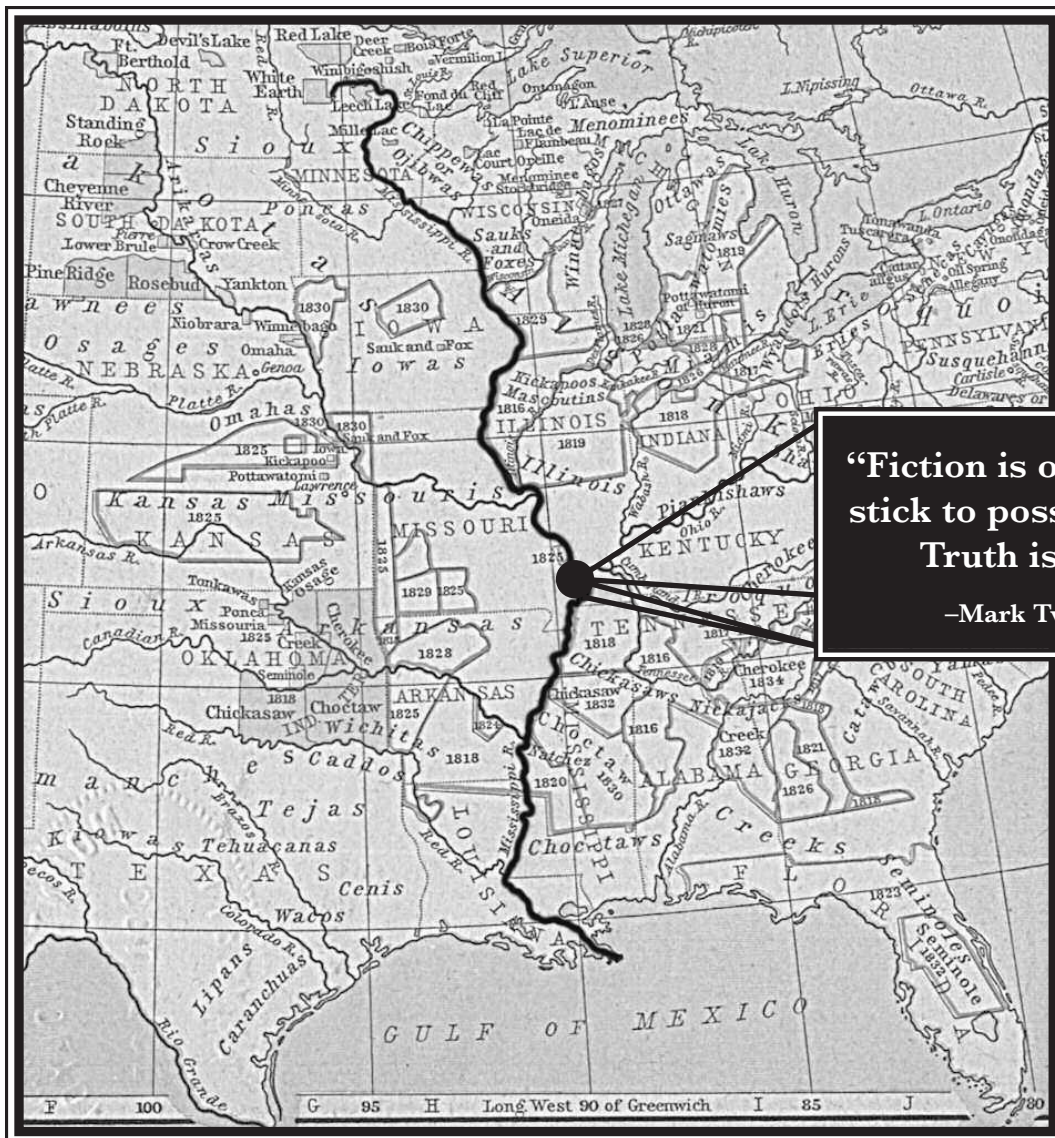
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## Section One: INTRODUCTION

- Satire Today
- Mark Twain: Father of American Satire
- What is Satire?
- Plot Summary of the Play

# Satire Today

What does the movie *Borat*, the comic strip *The Boondocks* and the novel *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* have in common? They are all pieces of American satire. Each of these works comments on societal and political views often in a humorous, attention-grabbing style. Uniquely, these three are unified by their use of an “unreliable” narrator possessing a bold point of view different than those around them. As you learn about Huck Finn consider how these contemporary satirical characters comment on our world. Mark Twain was the first to introduce this type of character into American literature. His novels are some of the most famous examples of satirical writing and some of the first that effectively introduced challenging political views to a wide public.

*Borat* is a character created by the comedian Sacha Baron Cohen. Borat is from Kazakhstan and interviews Americans for a fictitious television show broadcast in his native country. He often makes racist, sexist and anti-semitic remarks and is unaware of many American customs and practices (for instance, he claimed to be surprised that American women had the right to vote). He often provokes the people he is interviewing to demonstrate their own bigotry and hypocrisy. Cohen himself is Jewish and he and the producers of his television show *Da Ali G Show* and his recent film *Borat: Cultural Learnings of America for Make Benefit Great Nation of Kazakhstan* maintain that through this satirical character he is exposing many hateful attitudes that exist in our country. Cohen is currently embroiled in several lawsuits with several people he has interviewed who are angry by the way they were portrayed.



*The Boondocks* is a cartoon by Aaron McGruder. Like *Huck Finn*, the cartoon’s point of view is through the eyes of a child, Huey Freeman, a 10-year-old boy with strong political views who sees himself as a revolutionary. He is bothered by the ignorance in modern-day black television and issues in politics. An observant, intelligent child, he often considers himself playing the voice of reason. *The Boondocks* is very political and occasionally subject to great controversy, usually sparked by the comments and behavior of Huey. The comic strip has been withheld by newspapers several times. In particular, the principal characters often discuss racial and American socio-economic class issues. Some attribute the disputes over the strip to a political correctness that discourages any discussion or recognition of ethnic and cultural distinctions.

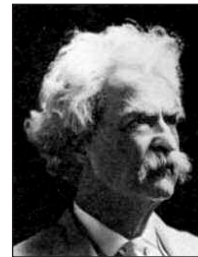




# The Father of American Satire

## Mark Twain

In 1835, Samuel Clemens, who would later choose the pen name Mark Twain, was born in Florida, Missouri. Four years later his family moved to Hannibal which became the inspiration for the fictitious locale of St. Petersburg, Missouri that serves as the setting for *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*.



Advocates for *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* often cite Mark Twain's social and political maturation as evidence for the book's broader conscience. By the time he wrote the book, the Emancipation Proclamation had been issued and he had come to believe unequivocally that slavery was an atrocious evil. He avowed that "Lincoln's Proclamation... not only set the Black slave free, but set the white man free also." Moreover, Twain sensed that white Americans owed African-Americans some kind of 'reparations' for their horrendous wrong-doings. In 1885, Twain wrote a letter to the Dean of the Yale Law School, expressing his desire to pay the tuition and expenses of Warner McGuinn, the law school's first African-American student: "We have ground the manhood out of them... and the shame is ours, not theirs, and we should pay for it."

From 1901 until his death in 1910, Twain was the vice president of the American anti-Imperialist League. From this position, he continued to write extensively on America's troubled politic, most famously protesting the American annexation of the Philippines in his article "The War Prayer." If Twain himself acknowledged the evils of slavery, why, then, would he chose a protagonist as naïve and ignorant as Huck—a protagonist for whom the decision to befriend a slave is tantamount to "going to Hell"?

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**"I came in with Halley's Comet, and I must go out with it. The Almighty surely said that these two freaks of nature came into the world together, and they must go out together."**

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*Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* is perhaps so challenging a text because Twain makes extensive use of both satire and irony. Consider Twain's opening Notice: a so-called 'G.G., Chief of Ordinance,' orders that readers seek no "motive," "moral," or "plot," in this narrative, at the risk of weighty penalty. Directly thereafter, the author issues his Explanatory on dialect, asserting the painstaking accuracy of his literary approach. The light-hearted, satirical comedy of the Notice—its gentle mockery of those who claim to serve as authorities on the written word collides with the seemingly serious allegation portraying language and dialect precisely. From his opening moment, Twain establishes a humorous, satirizing tone that bespeaks far weightier, at times moral, concerns.

### FACT

The four years that he spent on the river were the source of inspiration for his later stories and his famous pen name: Mark Twain (though he did not begin using the name until he began to work for newspapers at the age of 27). In riverboat slang the phrase "mark twain" indicates two fathoms (twelve feet) of depth, which means that the water is safe for boats to pass through.

# Mark Twain's Major Works

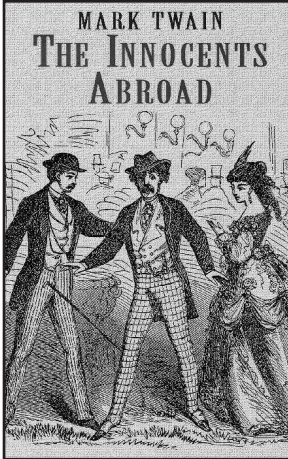
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## 1867 - *Advice for Little Girls*

(Twain's first published work)

## 1867 - *The Celebrated Jumping Frog of Calaveras County*

(Twain's "big break" that was published in newspapers all over the country).



## 1869 - *The Innocents Abroad*

(non-fiction account of Twain's travels through Europe and the Holy Land with a group of religious pilgrims)

## 1876 - *Old Times on the Mississippi*

(Twain's first account of his riverboat roots)

## 1876 - *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer*

Twain also wrote two sequels: *Tom Sawyer Abroad* (1894) and *Tom Sawyer, Detective* (1896)

## 1882 - *The Prince and the Pauper*

(a tale of mistaken identity that explores class conflict)

## 1883 - *Life on the Mississippi*

(a non-fiction account of Twain's days as a Mississippi River steamboat pilot and his most famous work on the subject)

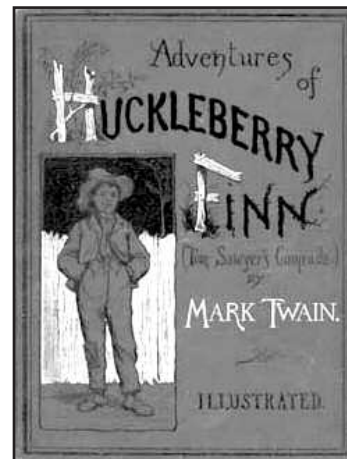
## 1884 - *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*

## 1889 - *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court*

(a time travel story exploring social injustice and the power of technology)

## 1894 - *Pudd'nhead Wilson*

(a detective story with racial themes)





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# WHAT IS SATIRE?

Satire is a literary mode that blends criticism with wit and humor in an effort to improve society. Satire uses humor to expose the folly of its subjects, which may be individuals, institutions, or states. The satirist challenges accepted social ideas or conventions by making them seem ridiculous—not simply to mock or degrade the subject, but instead, to show the reader (or audience) that subject’s hypocrisy or vice. This exposure is meant to encourage change, to improve society morally or restore a moral order that society has abandoned.

## Would you recognize satire if you saw it?

It would include some combination of the following:

- Ridicule or anger
- Irony
- Exaggeration
- Comedy and Wit

Satire is also closely related to burlesque, a type of comedy characterized by ridiculous exaggeration and distortion. In high burlesque, a crude or nonsensical subject matter is presented in a lofty and elevated style, while in low burlesque, a more weighty, dignified subject is treated in a nonsensical, degrading style.

## Questions while you read:

Many people call Mark Twain the best-known American satirist of the 19th Century.

What makes him a satirist?

If we consider Twain a satirist, what do you think the objects of his satire are?

What aspects of society does he target?

What kinds of people does he target?

If satire intends to create social change or improvement, what do you think some of Twain’s goals for society were?

What kind of change was he encouraging?

How does Huck, as a narrator, contribute to the book’s satirical style and intention?

How do you think Twain’s satirical style affected the public and critical response to his book?

Come up with a list of individual people Twain satirizes. Think about how those individual targets might stand in for larger societal institutions (or societal problems) that Twain may be addressing.

# Plot Summary of the Play

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At the start of the play we meet Huck, Huck's strict guardian the Widow Douglas and Huck's best friend, Tom Sawyer. Huck is concerned that his father, Pap, has returned to town and asks Jim, Widow Douglas' slave, to tell him his fortune.

Angry that his son lives a more comfortable life than he, a very drunk Pap kidnaps Huck. Pap hides Huck in a shack by the river where he violently abuses him and Huck decides he has to escape. Huck devises a plan in which it looks like he has been murdered and then escapes in a canoe down the Mississippi River. In the meantime, Huck discovers Jim on Jackson Island, who admits he has run away from Widow Douglas', in fear that she would sell him. They agree to run away together and eventually find a raft. Huck and Jim decide to travel down the Mississippi River to Cairo, Illinois, where the river meets the Ohio River. This will put them in the free states and Jim will be safe from being sold, and Huck will be away from Pap and the Widow Douglas.

Huck and Jim continue to travel down the river, but only at night, to keep Jim out of sight. They come upon a steamboat that has been shipwrecked. Huck then sees a man lying on the deck of the boat. Jim investigates and confirms that the man is dead, but doesn't let Huck look. As they leave the boat, they narrowly escape the two men who murdered the dead man and through a web of lies Huck contributes to their capture. Huck and Jim go through the goods they got off

the steamboat and Jim says he doesn't want to encounter a boat like that again. Huck argues that these are adventures and make the experience of running away that much better. Huck starts to read one of the books they found in the boat about kings and dukes. Jim says he only knows about one king, King Solomon, and how he didn't think much of that story. Huck says King Solomon must be the wisest of all kings because the Widow Douglas told him so. Huck then goes on to tell him about the King of France who was believed to have come to America.

As they get closer to Cairo the sky gets foggy and they can barely see each other. Jim believes he lost Huck forever. When they find each other, Huck pretends he was by Jim's side all along and that Jim was imagining things. Huck repents for tricking Jim when Jim confesses that his heart broke at the thought of losing Huck and that it's wrong to make a friend feel ashamed. Huck apologizes with a newfound sincerity and they focus on getting towards Cairo. Huck then feels a crisis of conscience when Jim admits that when he gets to Cairo he is going to save up all his money to buy his children back, and if that doesn't work, he will have an abolitionist steal them. Huck feels guilty for aiding Jim in stealing his children, who are the property of someone else. He considers turning Jim in.

Through a series of close encounters along the river they discover they missed Cairo and have to turn

around. As they make their way back, Jim tells Huck about his family and his hopes to get them back again. As Huck comforts Jim, two men run towards them along the shore. They are being chased and Huck believes them to be a Duke and the lost King of France, the Dauphin. Huck and Jim are at first impressed and offer to aid and serve the two men. The King and the Duke decide that on their next stop along the river they will put on a Shakespearean play for money, however it's clear neither of them is all that familiar with Shakespeare, and additionally secretly plot to turn Jim in so that they can get a cash reward. They eventually turn Jim into the Phelps family (who happen to be the aunt and uncle of Tom Sawyer)

Huck questions whether it would be better for Jim to return to being a slave back at the Widow Douglas', rather than in a strange new place and considers writing to the Widow Douglas to tell her what happened, even if it meant she would be disgusted with Huck himself. He then realizes that he would rather go to hell than put Jim back into slavery anywhere. He instead resolves to rescue Jim from the Phelps'. He finds Jim there, but trying to free Jim is interrupted by Aunt Sally Phelps who thinks that Huck is Tom, who was supposed to visit them. Huck plays along until Uncle Silas Phelps returns with the actual Tom. Tom is very confused and frightened to see Huck, since he still believes he is dead. The Phelps offer to shelter Huck, and Huck asks for Tom's help in freeing Jim, since he is afraid

of the King and the Duke returning as well. Tom agrees but is only interested in making it an adventure, and not a practical plan to help Jim. Huck realizes he can't depend on Tom to help him, and Huck devises a plan on his own. Huck learns that the King and the Duke get their punishment by being tarred and feathered, and while Huck is relieved that he is free of them, he expresses regret and sympathy for their punishment.

As Huck readies to free Jim, Jim thanks Huck for his friendship and confesses that the dead man they saw on the steamboat was Pap. A letter then comes announcing that the Widow Douglas had died and had freed Jim in her will. Jim had been free all along. Aunt Sally is furious that Tom knew about Jim's freedom since his arrival and never told anyone. Tom claims he wanted the adventure of freeing him, but gives Jim forty dollars in repentance. Jim reminds Huck that he had been rich before and here he was, rich again. Huck decides he has to go out again on another journey before Aunt Sally tries to "civilize him."



# Character Breakdown

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If you have read the book *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, you might notice that the play is a little different from the book. There are many more characters and scenarios in the book than appear in the play. The playwright and adaptor, Laura Eason decided to focus on the relationship between Huck and Jim. Ms. Eason was also interested in the theme of lies that runs through the story and how Huck determines what truth he wishes to believe. The additional characters that appear in the play all revolve around a lie being told. Many of the actors in the play will play more than one part. An actor might play a villain in one scene and a decent person in another. How does this contribute to the idea of lies and truth?

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**Here is a brief overview of the characters that appear in the play:**

- **Huckleberry Finn:** The main character and narrator. A young adventurer who seeks to free himself from the abuse of his father and the social constraints of the Widow Douglas. Tom Sawyer's best friend and a friend to Jim.



- **Widow Douglas-Huck's caretaker:** Even though she often scolds him, she genuinely cares about his well-being and safety. While she has a strong sense of morality that she tries hard to impart in Huck, he is somewhat aware of the hypocrisy of what she says.

- **Tom Sawyer:** Huck's best friend who we meet at the beginning of the novel. He, like Huck, seeks adventure and mischief. He is someone whom Huck admires, but eventually comes to question.

**Pap- Huck's father:** He is an alcoholic criminal who terrorizes Huck. Pap is frustrated that Huck has a better life than he has, and violently lashes out on him as a result.

**Jim- Widow Douglas' slave:** A friend to Huck, but not someone whom Huck really learns to respect until they journey down the river together. Jim believes strongly in superstition and teaches Huck about morality in a different way than the Widow Douglas had.

**The King:** A con man who Huck initially believes to be the lost King of France, also known as the Dauphin. He has conned people into thinking he is also a doctor and a preacher.



**The Duke:** Also a con man running away from a town which he conned into thinking he was a shakespearean actor, and who then tries to convince that he is the Duke of Bilgewater. Both the King and the Duke are responsible for Jim's capture.

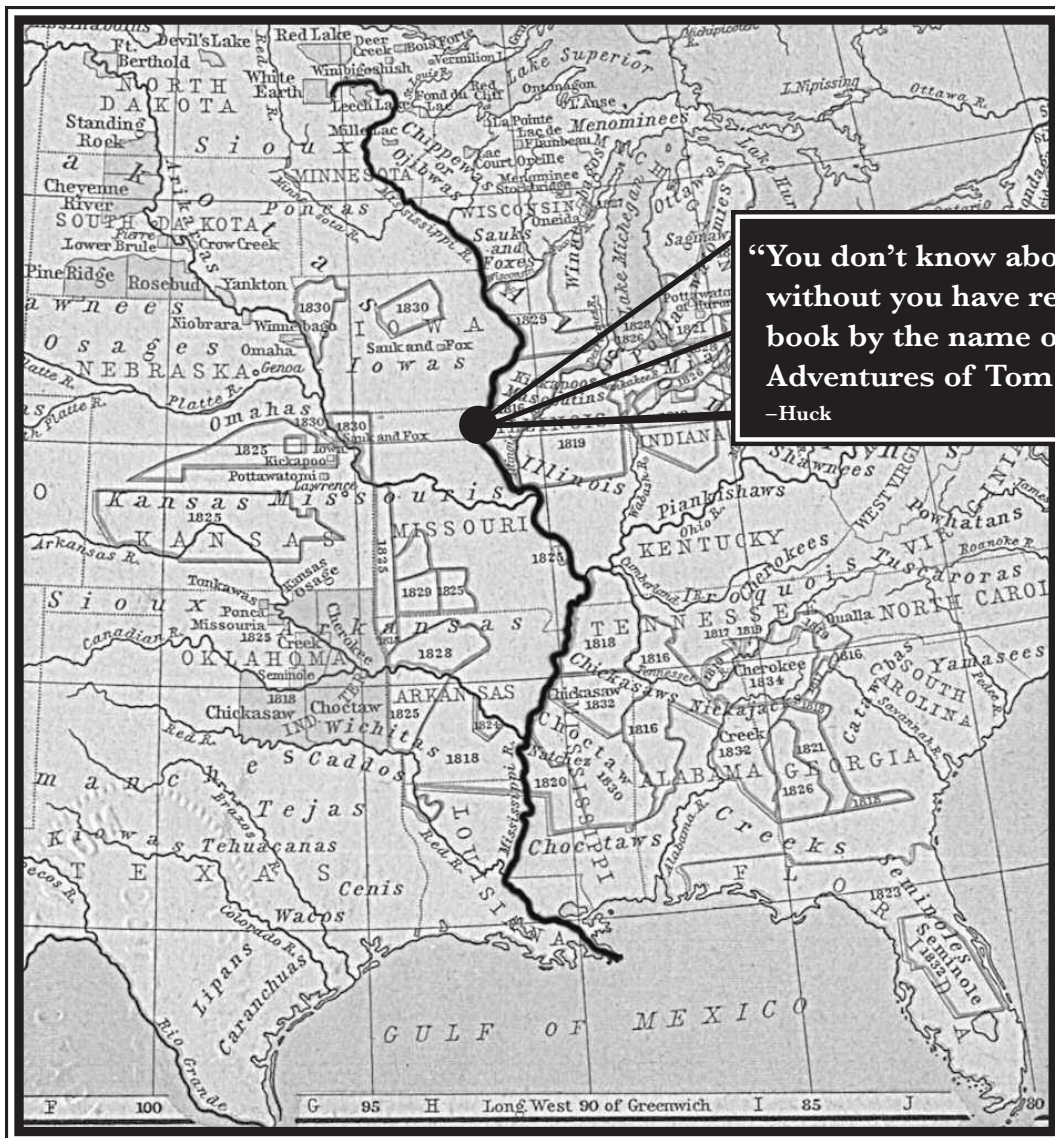
**Additional characters:** Bill and Turner, the Watchman, Loftus and Buck, Parker and Stevenson, Uncle Silas and Aunt Sally Phelps.

#### FACT

All the music in the play is original music written for this play and will help convey Huck and Jim's journey down the river. All the actors (except the ones playing Huck and Jim) will play the music onstage!







## Section Two: **HUCK INTRODUCES HIMSELF**

- Political Backdrop of Adventures of Huckleberry Finn
- Tom and Huck's Relationship
- Tableau activity

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# Political Backdrop

## Adventures of Huckleberry Finn

As a young country, America was very much like Huck Finn—breaking away from the old way of doing things, daring to set off down the river in hopes of becoming the master of one's own destiny.

America in the 1830's is often characterized by the rise of Jacksonian Democracy. Four years after the disputed 1824 election, in which no candidate won a majority of the electoral vote and the House of Representatives was forced to decide the outcome, Andrew Jackson, the founder of the newly developed Democratic Party, won a sweeping victory. His school of government promoted the power of the executive branch while simultaneously extolling the virtue of the common people by seeking to extend the right to vote to all white men, not just property owners. Democrats promoted Manifest Destiny, the idea that America had the divine right to expand its borders and spread democracy. They wanted to enlarge the territory of the United States while still trying to avoid the question of slavery. The era of Jacksonian Democracy was commonly seen as the beginning of the modern political system -an era when politics was revitalized by the introduction of rallies, newspaper coverage, and professional political organizations that were used to make government a matter of public discourse. Political campaigns became a distinctly American affair as they distanced themselves from the old British traditions through the use of new vocabulary - candidates "ran" for office instead of "standing" for example.

Religious movements exemplified in revivals, traveling preachers, and new religious groups also had a lasting impact on American culture in the 1830's. Older Christian denominations began declining in membership as newer groups such as Baptists and Methodists began rapidly increasing in number. The more traditional Christian denominations were seen as

too "aristocratic" and out of touch with the common people and the newer and more dynamic churches began to expand membership quickly. Many Americans who previously felt stifled by the forced formality of church services were now able to connect to their religion passionately and emotionally.

Mark Twain's mother, Jane Clemens, who is often viewed as a basis for Widow Douglas, became a Methodist after moving the family to Hannibal. The Widow's harsh, moralistic treatment of Huck illustrates the attitudes of many of these revival-based religions. These new groups rejected harsh Calvinist doctrines of original sin and predestination, and stressed basic goodness of people. Sin consequently was personified in everyday actions, such as drinking, gambling, and smoking, which were under an individual's personal obligation to control. Following such beliefs, any person (even a ne'er do well such as Huck Finn) had the ability to be saved if he changed his wayward behavior and began doing good works. Just as smoking and gambling were seen as sinful, behavior such as good table manners and a clean appearance were seen as indicative of a holy person.

At this time Missouri was a newly created state, the "gateway to the west," where a common man had as much political influence as a wealthy landowner. This was a time of newfound opportunity for white men. Unfortunately, this abundance of freedom for some was juxtaposed against government—sanctioned inequality of an entire race of people in slavery.

# The Prequel:

## The Adventures of Tom Sawyer

Huckleberry Finn is familiar to audiences from his appearance in Twain's earlier novel *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer*. In that book, Huck is introduced as a character of lower economic status than Tom Sawyer, and is presented more as his sidekick. Tom finds himself in adult situations, such as witnessing a murder, yet he always manages to make himself the hero of the situation, escaping unharmed and innocent. While Huck seeks adventures with Tom, the other issues he faces, such as poverty and an abusive father, prevent him from purely engaging in childhood mischief. Though the two stories may initially seem similar, *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer* primarily deals with tales of

childhood while *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* focuses more on how a boy grows and matures, as well as tackles themes of racism, class conflict and national identity.



TOM SAWYER'S BAND OF ROBBERS.

### Plot outline of Tom Sawyer:

*The Adventures of Tom Sawyer* begins with Tom's famous whitewashing scheme in which he convinces his friends that the chore of painting a fence is fun and thereby tricks them into doing it for him. Shortly after he is thwarted in his attempts to win the heart of Becky Thatcher, he and Huck find themselves witness to a murder in the town graveyard at night. Tom and his friends decide it would be fun to run away to an island to become pirates. When they realize that the town believes that they have died, the boys sneak back to attend their own funerals. When the wrong man is accused of the murder he and Huck witnessed, Tom is moved to testify at the trial. The guilty man, Injun Joe, escapes through the courthouse window. Tom and Huck later run across him stealing some gold that the boys were trying to dig up in an abandoned house and thwart Injun Joe's plans to murder Widow Douglas. Tom again tries to win Becky's heart and the two get lost in a cave where it just so happens Injun Joe is hiding. Tom valiantly escapes with Becky and the cave is sealed up with Injun Joe still in it. Tom and Huck return later to recover the gold and become rich.



# ACTIVITY

A **tableau** is a frozen picture. It is a dramatic representation of people “caught” in a moment.

Review the plot summary and character breakdown on page 10-11 and break students into small groups.

Each group builds and performs three tableaux that show the beginning, middle and end of the play. Each tableau should have a title that should be stated when the tableau is frozen in place. After holding for a few seconds the group can move to the next picture.

Two important parts of a tableau are Action and Character. Each group will have to decide what is happening (the action) and who is involved (the characters). Since a tableau is just a snapshot without action, it is important to make dynamic physical choices that illustrate these two elements.

For instance: How do Widow Douglas and Huck stand differently? If Huck is telling a lie how is his physical action different than if he is telling the truth?



## Things to consider while making a tableau:

- What is the main action or focus of this picture in two words?
- How can you use space to make a stronger relationship and clear picture?
- Is everyone in the group actively involved in the picture?
- What changes in the progression of the pictures to make a beginning, middle and end?

Portions of this exercise provided by Robin Chaplik.



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# Tom and Huck's Friendship

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**Widow:** *Now, Heaven's the place to wish for, to set one's sights on-not a care in the world, just basking in the light and hearing the angels sing-*

**Huck:** *Do you reckon Tom Sawyer'll go there?*

**Widow:** *No, I don't-not by a considerable sight.*

**Huck:** *I'm glad, because I'd like him and me to be together.*

Huck Finn and Tom Sawyer have a very close bond. They are young, adventurous boys who never worry about the trouble they could cause on their adventures. Huck enjoys Tom's company because he is a thrill seeker, and Tom seems to enjoy Huck because Huck is willing to do and try anything. When they are together Tom is the leader, coming up with wild adventures that can fill their day. For example, in scene two of the play, Huck and Tom decide that they are going to start a band of Robbers:

**Huck:** *What are we up to, Tom?*

**Tom:** *Starting a band of robbers called Tom Sawyer's Gang. Everybody that wants to join has got to take an oath and write his name in blood.*

Their imaginations lead them to fantasize about a world without adults, rules and constraints. Tom stays in the fantasy, while Huck, through his escape, will encounter the world as it really is.

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## Tom and Huck's Friendship:

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### Critical Thinking Questions

What is the purpose of Tom's presence early on in the play?

In what ways does Tom's friendship benefit Huck?

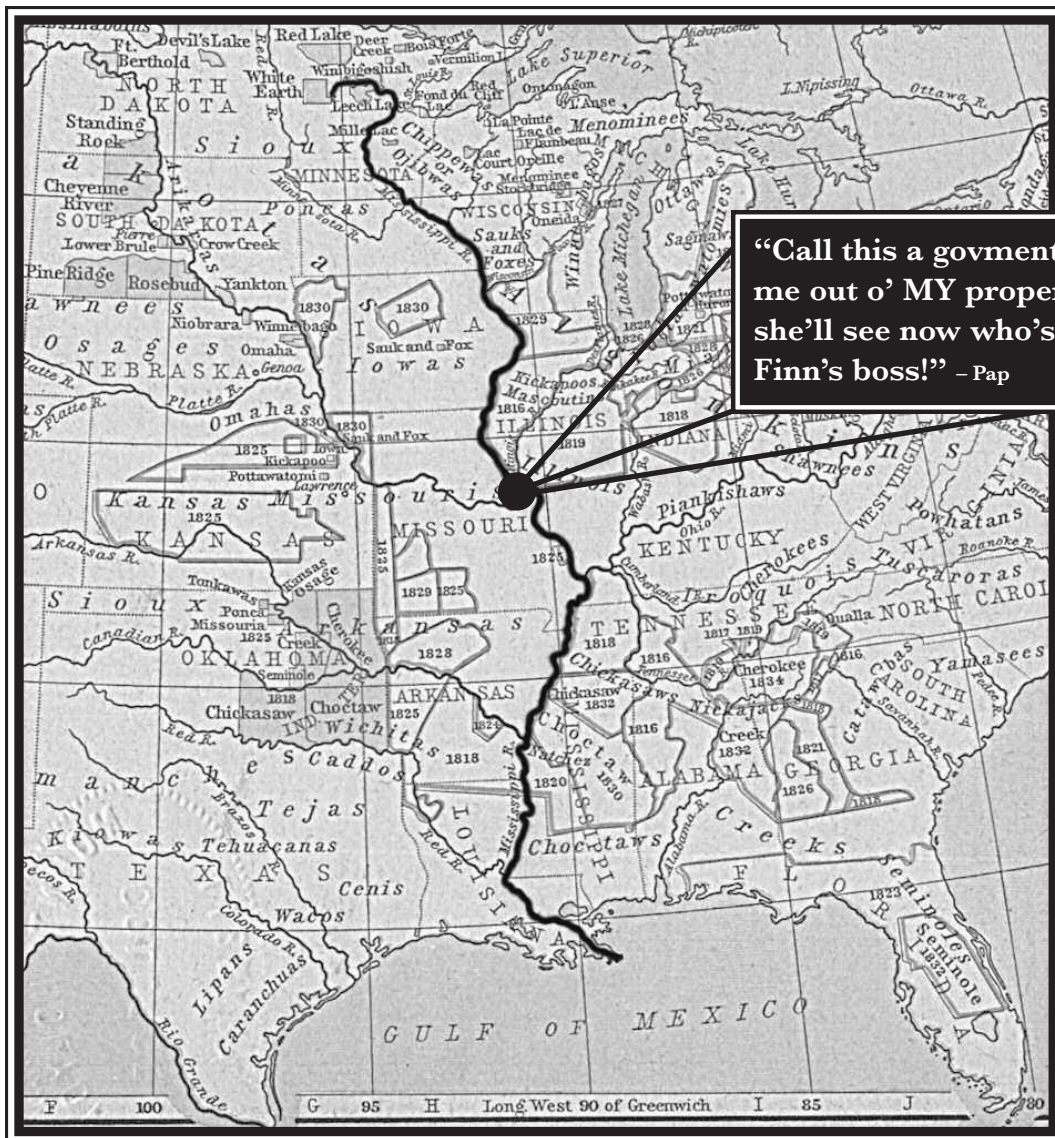
In what ways does Tom's friendship disadvantage Huck?

What is the most important aspect of their friendship?

How does their friendship change by the end of the play?

- Compare and contrast the similarities and differences between Huck Finn and Tom Sawyer.





## Section Three: HUCK'S ESCAPE

- Huck's Family
- Classroom Debate Activity: Running Away v. "Civilized Life"

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# Huck's Family

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Huck does not have a traditional family. Huck's father, Pap is essentially absent from his life, and cares more about serving his own destructive needs, such as drinking and gambling. Widow Douglas has taken Huck in and makes sure he is sheltered and fed. She also makes makes a point to "civilize" him, by teaching him the moral way to live. However Huck's desire for adventure makes life with the Widow constraining. Yet when Pap kidnaps him, his abuse of Huck seems worse than the constraints of living with the Widow Douglas. Life with either of these adults is not a satisfying one. The only other adult in Huck's life is Jim, the Widow Douglas' slave. Jim is an adult, yet his status as a slave keeps him from having the same authority over Huck than the Widow or Pap, and so Huck feels comfortable going to Jim for advice. When Huck is worried that Pap might be coming to hurt him, he seeks Jim

out to tell him his fortune. Jim tells Huck that he can't avoid his father from coming, but that Huck can take comfort in the fact that he will be all right. Jim comforts and understands Huck in ways that the Widow can't. So when Huck eventually decides to escape and finds Jim to be his traveling companion, he feels validated in his decision to break away from the life he left behind.



## ACTIVITY

### Classroom Debate

Have your students analyze the pros and cons of living with the Widow Douglas vs. running away.

Next, hold a classroom debate with your students. This can be done in two ways. The simplest version is to divide your classroom into two groups. Have each side pick a character to advocate for. Give each side time to formulate their ideas and opinions as a group. As the teacher, you will moderate the discussion.

The second version of the exercise is to actually create a courtroom in your class. Ask for volunteers to play the judge, lawyers, Huck and the Widow. Students can also play witnesses such as Tom, and townspeople. The student jury will vote on a final verdict.

**Copy the next page for your students!**

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# Running Away v. “Civilized” Life

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Is it better to be cared for or run away? You decide!

**Running  
away**

Pros

--

Cons

--

**“Civilized  
life with  
The Widow  
Douglas”**

Pros

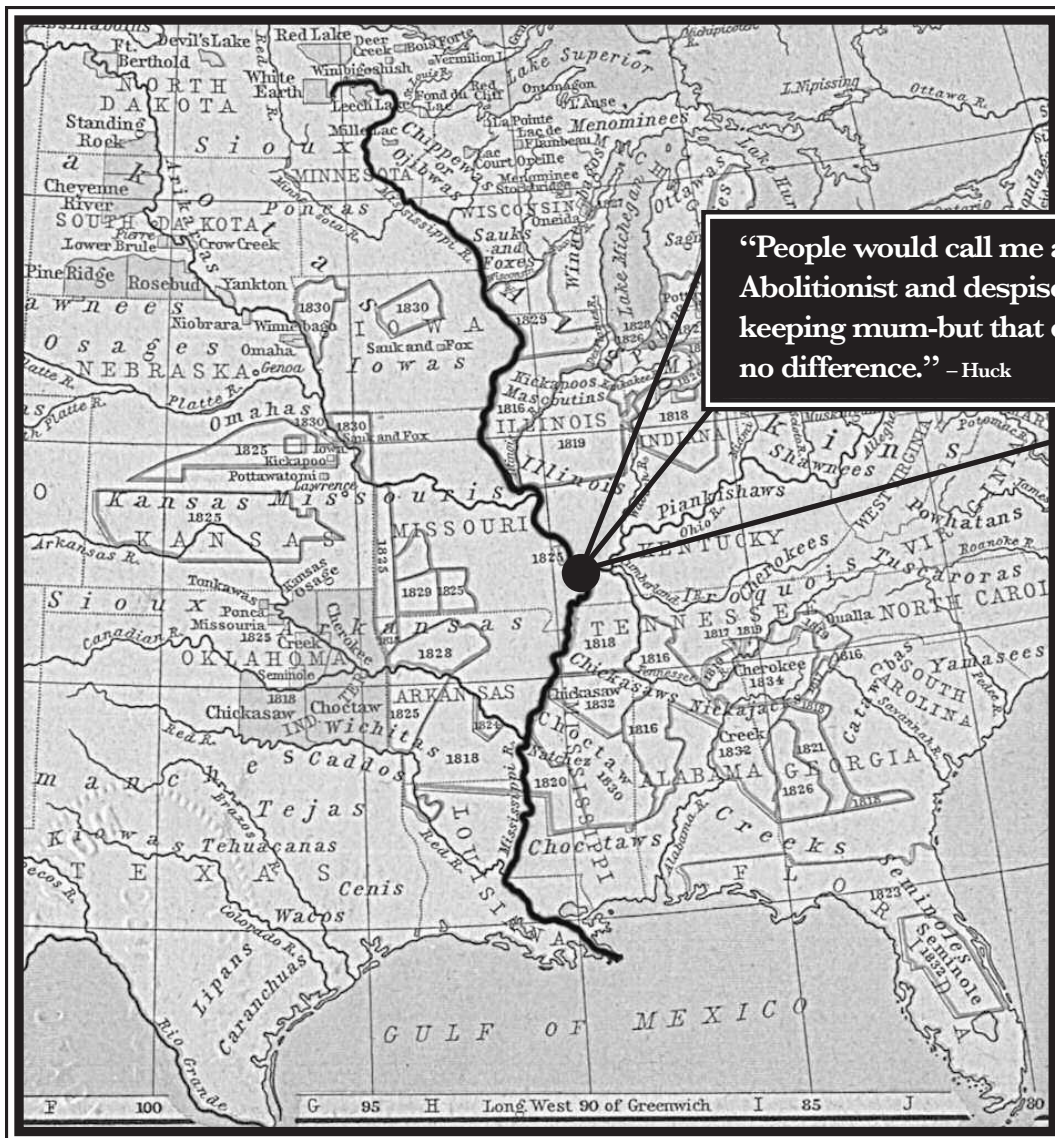
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Cons

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## Section Four: JACKSON ISLAND

- Activity: Making a Decision
- Implications of Huck’s and Jim’s Friendship
- Value Systems: Superstition and Religion

# ACTIVITY

## Making a Decision

This exercise will physicalize the act of decision making. Students will be asked to make a physical stance on a particular issue and their peers will try to convince them to change their position. The difficulty of decision making and the effects of peer pressure will be explored.

Make a long line on the floor out of masking tape. Put a sign on one end that says **“10: Strongly agree with the issue”** and a sign on the opposite end saying, **“1: Strongly disagree with the issue.”** You may also want to put a sign with **“5: Neither agree or disagree with the issue”** on the middle of the line. Ask for a volunteer to “take a stand” on an issue, ranging from the mundane to the controversial. For example: “Parents should allow their children to pick their own religion.”

Have the volunteer stand at the point on the line that indicates his/her position on the issue. Have 2 other volunteers try to pressure the volunteer into moving by making compelling arguments for or against the issue. Encourage them to be persistent and find as many different modes and methods (verbal only) to convince the student to move to the other side. After a few minutes, or if the volunteer has been convinced to move, stop the exercise and discuss the activity.

How did the volunteer change his/her mind?

How did it feel to be under so much pressure?

How did it feel to give the pressure?

What arguments would convince you to move? Why?

### Examples of Issues:

- When you disagree with a friend, it is smartest to just not say anything and let it pass.
- It’s important for families to have dinner together every night.
- Gossip does not hurt anyone—it’s just a part of everyday life.
- Money can’t buy happiness.
- Parents should be given full custody/rights, no matter how they treat their kids.
- All arts should be banned from education. Only practical subjects like math and computer classes will make you successful.

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# Implications of Huck's and Jim's Friendship

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When Huck discovers Jim on Jackson Island, he is thrilled to find a companion and fellow runaway. Huck and Jim are both fugitives: Jim is a runaway slave, and Huck flees the captivity of Pap's abusive hold. Though Jim is an adult and Huck a young boy, neither has had a significant say in his own fate until this moment. But the implications of their flight together are unimaginably greater than Huck appreciates at the moment they set off together. While Huck's schemes allow him to avoid capture readily, Jim is aware of the grave danger at every bend in the river.

In the historical setting of the novel, Jim as a runaway slave would have been worth \$100 if he had been captured. For helping to facilitate his escape, Huck would have faced five to ten years in a state penitentiary. Huck and Jim's developing friendship flies in the face of 150 years of legal restrictions debasing blacks and limiting interracial interactions. They are not only risking jail time and re-enslavement; they are risking ostracization by both their societies.

In 1803, when the French-owned territory of Missouri was purchased by the United States, strict laws about the treatment of black slaves went into effect. These laws, which had been in use for years in the other American territories and states, made no distinction between slaves and other types of personal property. Owners were free to act in any way they wanted towards their slaves. Slaves were not allowed to leave their master's property without a written pass and further limitations were placed on free blacks' rights to

freedom of speech and freedom of assembly. Strict rules were also passed to punish anyone who assisted or harbored a runaway slave.

In 1850, the federal government passed the Fugitive Slave Law. The term Fugitive Slave referred to a slave who had fled from his or her owner. This criminal statute more formally ushered in the emergence of Fugitive slave catchers—typically white men, who returned runaway slaves to masters. Southern slave holders were guaranteed the right to pursue and reclaim their 'property', even from free Northern states. Moreover, the law stated that every single citizen was responsible for the return of fugitive slaves—indicating that any white person, in the North or South, had an obligation to act as slave catcher.

For Huck and Jim the Fugitive Slave Law would have meant constant danger, because society, as well as the very law, encouraged a responsibility to maintain the institution of slavery through the capture and return of slaves. Although Jim and Huck journey towards Cairo in search of freedom, there is little evidence to suggest that Cairo could have guaranteed Jim's safety as a free man. This social and historical context makes Huck's friendship with Jim unique and altogether shocking. Although Huck acknowledges that people might think he is a 'low-down abolitionist' for traveling with a runaway slave, his open mind and naïveté prevent him from appreciating how wildly revolutionary his friendship with Jim really is.

# Value Systems: Superstition and Religion

When Huck finds a snakeskin on Jackson Island, Jim takes it as a sign that will mean they will have bad luck on their journey. As they continue down the river, they superstitiously believe the snakeskin is responsible for some of the bad luck they encounter.

Huck is influenced by two value systems in his life—superstitious beliefs shared with Jim and Christianity taught to him by the Widow. Religion and superstition serve as codes for behavior, giving meaning to how Huck sees the world.

In Twain's era, growing Christian practices were influencing social behavior. These standards, such as cleanliness and social etiquette became a standard code for Southern Americans. Huck has a hard time abiding by these standards that the Widow Douglas believes in. He understands that the Widow believes it is immoral to not be clean, polite and well-educated, but he doesn't understand why those things constitute a

moral person. Huck and Jim also encounter violent and greedy people, like Pap and Bill and Turner on the steamboat. While Huck doesn't feel he fits in with the Widow's sense of morality, Huck also doesn't believe he is as immoral as the thieves, murderers and drunks he encounters either.

So, rather, Huck feels more connected to Jim's belief in superstition, an alternative code of behavior where one specific act will influence a future event, even if there is no rational or causal relationship between the two. Rather than through religion or greed, Huck and Jim's adherence to superstition unites them and guides their decisions as they travel down the river. The river, like superstition, is an alternative to the worlds they left behind. Because superstition was considered immoral and irrational by society, their adherence to it is one of many demonstrations of how Huck and Jim's beliefs are unlike the rest of the world's.

## ACTIVITY

### Creating Superstition

#### Superstition Key

Page 4 of Play

**Salt: The person who spills salt will**

be unlucky

soon cry

be angry without reason

have an unknown enemy

always be poor

be forced to pick every grain of it

out of hell when you die

be disappointed

be whipped before night

have a quarrel

soon lose a friend

Page 7 of Play

**Boot with cross on heel:** to keep off the devil

**Hair ball:** used to tell fortunes.

This is the only superstition in the book of incon testably African origin.

Hair balls are usually used to cast spells but may be carried as an amulet

to protect from spells

Page 11 of Play

**Snakes:** if a snake crosses your path, watch out for false friends

Page 14 of Play

**Snakeskin:** will bring bad luck

Page 15 of Play

**Hairy arms:** sign of wealth



# Creating Superstition

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In *Huck Finn* superstition is used to demonstrate an alternative way at understanding the world and to expose societal hypocrisies of the time. Superstition is the belief that a specific act will influence a future event despite the fact that there is no proven causal relationship between the two.

## 1) Follow the path of superstitions in *Huck Finn*.

Find the following superstitions as they appear in the play and analyze the meanings of each. How do Huck and Jim communicate through the language of superstition?

**Salt:** The person who spills salt will...

**Boot with cross on heel**

**Hair ball**

**Snakes:** if a snake crosses your path...

**Snakeskin**

**Hairy arms**

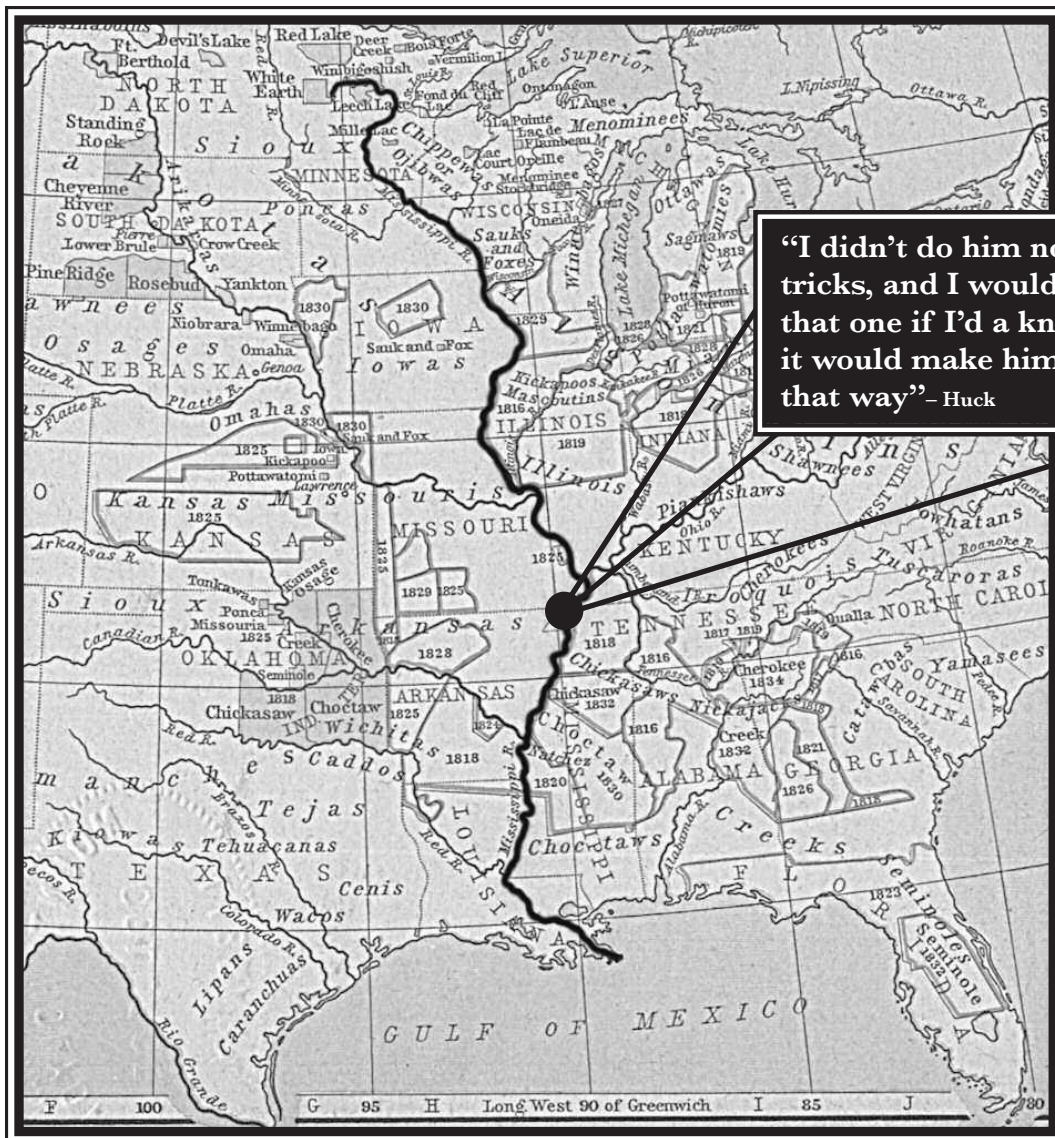
## 2) Write a Short Story

Pick one of the superstitions from the play and use it as a starting point. First take time to brainstorm about setting and character using these questions. What is the essential conflict your character is going through? What role does superstition play in their life? What superstition does your character believe that gives them an explanation for something that has happened in their life? Remember when writing to think about how your character expresses their hopes and fears through superstition, and in what ways their beliefs determine how they live.

## 3) Create A Collage from Your Story

Representing the story of your character's story, create a collage. Be creative! Paste together images from newspapers, magazines—anything you can find—that fully express elements of your short story. Don't worry as much about the artistic quality, but try to capture the essence of your short story. Remember a story has beginning, middle and end.



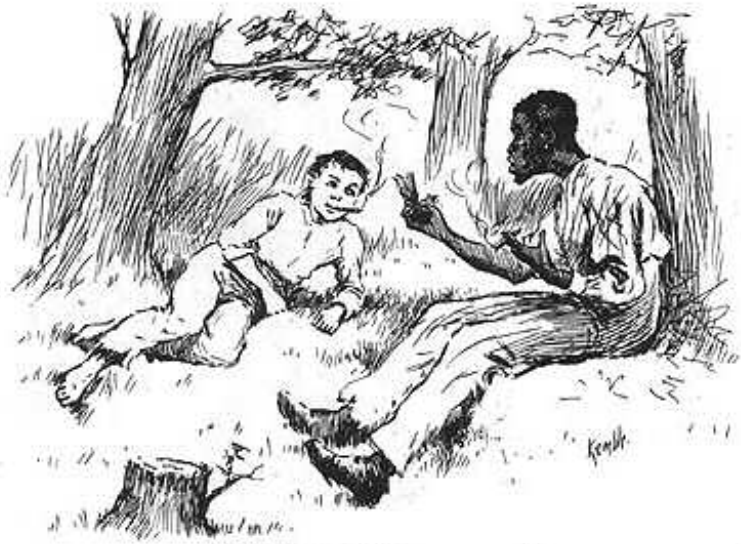


## Section Five: **ON THE WAY TO CAIRO**

- Huck and Jim's Contrasting Views: The Solomon Story
- Adventure Becomes Danger: The Encounter on the Steamboat
- Trickster's Remorse: Huck Learns the Effect of His Actions
- Storytelling Activity

# HUCK AND JIM'S CONTRASTING VIEWS

## The Solomon Story



THE STORY OF "SOLLERMUN."

Parable is a literary technique used in *Huck Finn*. A parable is a short story told in simple narrative terms designed to illustrate or teach some truth, religious principle, or moral lesson. In *Huck Finn*, parable exposes the different perspectives Huck and Jim each have on the world.

Traveling to Cairo, Huck tells Jim about various Kings throughout history, and points to King Solomon as the wisest man that ever lived. In the famous biblical parable, Solomon is best-known for the test he presented to two mothers who both claimed that a young baby was their own. Traditionally, and as Huck was taught, the true mother of the child would rather give away her child than see it cut in two. Solomon's wise test is actually finding out which woman is the true mother through her reaction. Jim, however, challenges conventional interpretation, arguing that Solomon was unable to value an individual human life properly because he had so

many children. A man with only a single child would never consider such a test, because every single child would be precious to him. Jim's reflection presents an inevitable comparison to slavery, and the white conception of slaves as an infinite horde of disposable bodies. Huck's view of the parable contrasts with Jim's system of belief—a man whom society does not value and yet whose own values fully honor human life in a way that his society does not.

Twain's use of the Solomon parable also serves to highlight Huck's development as a character. Huck's inability to understand Jim's insight and his conviction that Jim has missed the point altogether—exposes Huck's failure to think outside the moral standings on which he was raised. The paradox is that while Huck cannot appreciate Jim's interpretation, Huck has already begun to disconnect from his old self. Huck's journey down the river with Jim gives testament to his view of Jim as a human being and a friend.



# ADVENTURE BECOMES DANGER

## The Encounter on the Steamboat

When Jim and Huck approach the abandoned steamboat on the early leg of their journey, they each treat the situation differently. Jim is cautious and wary of exploring, aware of the possible danger and discovery of being caught. Huck sees it as an opportunity for adventure and feels that it is an opportunity to be like Tom Sawyer, an adventurer whom he admires.

At this point in the play, Huck is ignorant of how others might be affected by his actions. Exploring the steamboat puts them both at risk, and possibly even more so for Jim because he is a slave. Huck views the experience as lucky in that they were able to acquire goods from the boat that can serve them well on their journey. Jim, however, is concerned with protecting Huck's innocence, and so shields him from looking at the dead body they find onboard. Jim protects Huck even

further by not disclosing the identity of the dead man—Huck's father.

Yet the promise of adventure and danger preoccupy Huck's decision-making for much of the play. It is hard for him to turn away from the adventure and fun of a situation, even though the stakes of this journey are higher than anything he has ever experienced. He begins to realize the danger when he decides that Bill and Turner, the two thieves they witnessed on the boat, should be punished for their murder. It becomes apparent that Huck is guided by two people; Tom Sawyer, a boy who dreams of adventures without consequence, and Jim, a man who actually takes Huck on an adventurous journey and opens Huck's eyes to the reality of the world while shielding him from some of its ugliest parts.



JIM SEES A DEAD MAN.

# TRICKSTER'S REMORSE:

## Huck Learns the Effect of His Actions

When Jim loses sight of Huck in the fog, Huck convinces him that it never really happened, accusing him of having drunken hallucinations. Jim is not easily convinced of this and calls Huck on his prank, telling him honestly how worried he was for him, how glad he was when Huck returned and how hurt he was by Huck's attempt at making a fool out of him. Huck sincerely apologizes and promises to respect Jim's feelings. With this promise, Huck shows Jim that he views him as a person with inherent dignity who should not be abused simply for entertainment. Huck's holding to this promise is a sign of maturity and growth.

Trickery and deceit proves to be a powerful tool for Huck. He understands that he can hurt another person through insensitive jokes, but he can also use his trickster skill to defend Jim and himself. When Huck comes across two slave catchers, Parker and Stevenson, Huck is able to quickly think on his feet and convince the two men that Huck's "family" is hidden away on the raft, stricken with smallpox. Huck is so convincing in his lie that he not only convinces the men to go away, but he also inspires them to take pity on him and give him some money. While he takes advantage of the two men's sympathy, Huck saves Jim from the brutality they would inevitably show him if they were to catch him.





# ACTIVITY

## Storytelling: Yes...and

Huck relies on making up stories initially for entertainment but eventually as a mode of survival. Huck eventually has to distinguish between when lies are wrong and when lies are necessary. Huck has to rely heavily on his ability to make up stories quickly and convincingly. Here is your opportunity to try it with a partner.

Two players sit in front of the rest of the class. Their relationship and story topic is decided on by the group with the instructor leading: Instructor asks, **“Who are these two? How do they know each other?”** Then to decide the story the instructor asks, **“What is the story they are going to tell us?”**

Keep it simple” (ex: brother and sister telling a story about a road trip with the family) and a story is begun. One person begins by telling the story. After the first line, every line of this scene must start with “yes, and”. Story continues on, with the storytellers taking turns telling the story. This is an exercise in accepting offers; you should never deny anything in improvisation and always try to further the scene. By saying yes, and you are forced to accept what the other person said and move on from that point. One rule is that you can’t ask questions. Also, never say “yes, and” and then turn around and deny it later in the line.

### Tips:

Always come up with something new in each line, don’t just repeat what the last person said or comment on how you feel about it. “Yes, and I saw you do that and I didn’t like it” is not as good as “Yes, and that was my mother you actually ran over. The funeral was yesterday.”

## Questions

How does it feel to have to make up a story on the spot?

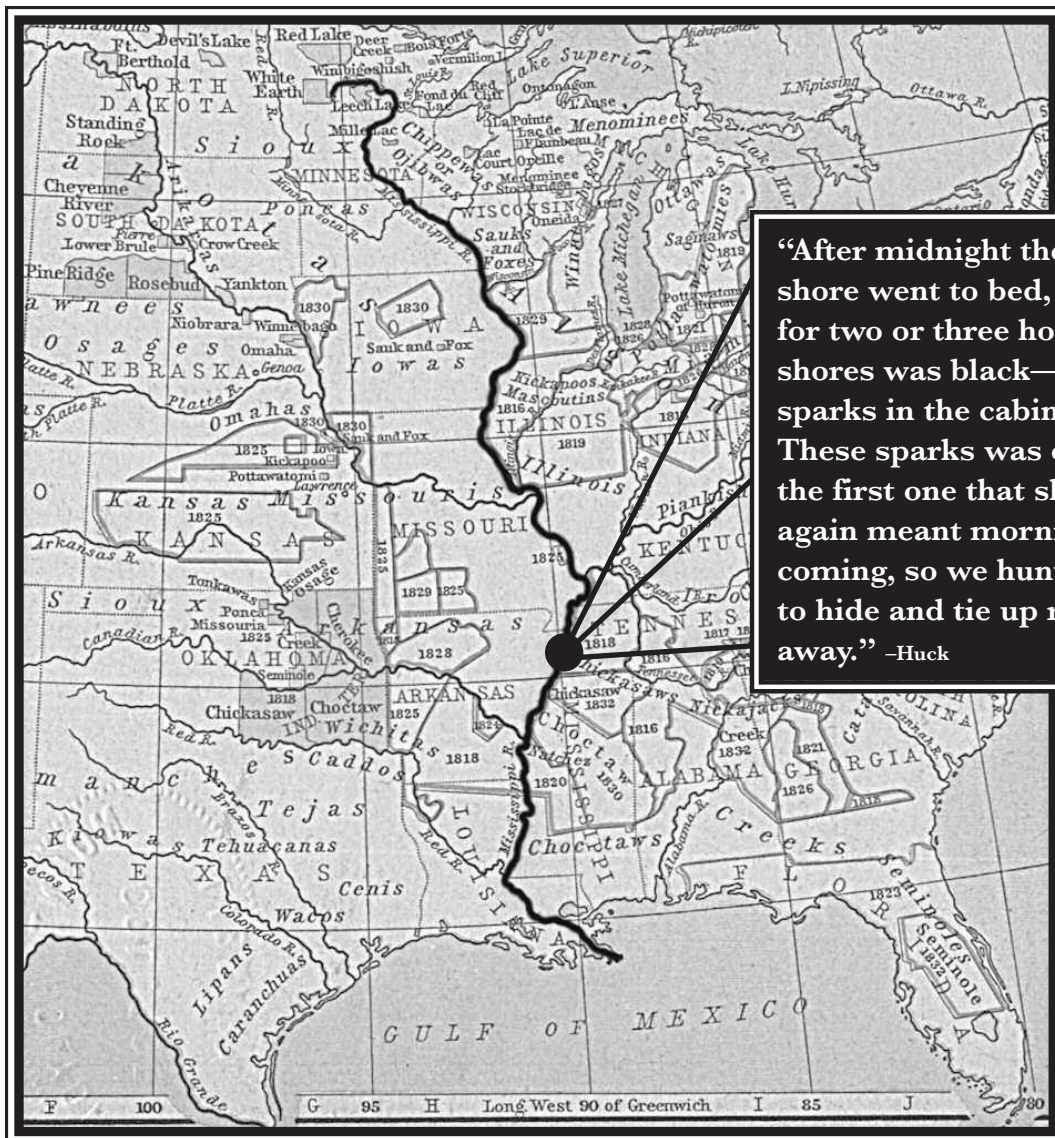
What are the challenges?

Why does Huck choose to lie more often than tell the truth?

What do his lies get him in return?

Which is easier—lying alone or having a partner in crime?





Section Six:

## THE RIVER/MISSING CAIRO

- Free State vs. Slave State
- The Mississippi River: A Pathway to Freedom
- Jim’s Portrayal

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# FREE STATE, SLAVE STATE

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**Jim:** *“Dis Mississippi river’s gwyne take us down to Cairo, right dah at de bottom of Illinois. Dat’s where de Mississippi meets de Ohio.*

**Huck:** *The Ohio river that runs up into the free states.*

**Jim:** *Dat’s right. So, once we hit Cairo, we kin sell dis raff and wid dat mone, we can git a steamboat and all the way up de Ohio to the free states!”*

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Missouri was a slave state that remained part of the Union during the Civil War. Surrounded on three sides by “free soil,” abolitionists from Iowa and Illinois often aided slaves escaping from Missouri. During the important presidential election of 1860 Mark Twain’s hometown of Hannibal was solidly pro-union, with only 13% of Marion County’s vote going to the secessionist candidate. However, Abraham Lincoln and his pro-Union anti-slavery platform did not do well in the state either. Stephen Douglas won Missouri’s electoral votes mostly on his reputation of supporting the doctrine of “popular sovereignty,” the idea that the residents of the state were in charge of determining the laws of that state, especially the decision whether or not to accept slavery. Missouri was straddling the difficult line of wanting to maintain its Union ties while not wanting to destroy their economic dependence on slavery. In 1860, the newly elected governor Claiborne Fox Jackson was a pro-slavery secessionist advocate—a fact that he hid during the campaign but revealed when he took office. When Lincoln ordered Jackson to commit troops to the Union cause after the secession of South Carolina, Jackson

refused and instead ordered the militia to assemble outside of St. Louis. Mark Twain himself answered the governor’s call for volunteers and served for a time in the Missouri State Guard. However, his unit disbanded after two weeks and, though many of his friends went on to join the Confederate cause, Twain decided to travel with his brother out West.

Despite Governor Jackson’s attempts to ally Missouri with the Confederacy, the state remained in the Union as a slave state for the duration of the war. It remained a slave state until 1865 when the legislature abolished slavery in the state before the 13th Amendment made slavery illegal throughout the country. However, the participation of individual citizens belies the conflicted nature of the region’s allegiances. For the siege of Vicksburg, the battle that secured the Mississippi River for the Union, Missouri furnished 39 regiments: 17 Confederate, 22 Union. During the entirety of the war, 25% of the Missourians who fought did so for the Confederacy. Though it remained part of the Union it was not the staunchest of positions.

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# MISSISSIPPI RIVER: A Pathway to Freedom

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On Huck and Jim's journey, the Mississippi River serves as both a literal and symbolic search for freedom. Adrift on their raft, both Huck and Jim can escape the confines of the worlds they left behind: Huck escapes Pap's abusive hold and the Widow Douglas' "civilizing", and Jim flees oppression under slavery and is his own free man. On the raft, Huck and Jim are independent agents, free from society's codes and regulation. The world of the river is simultaneously a more civilized culture without slavery but also a society with fewer rules.

As both the literal and symbolic path to freedom, the river ebbs and flows, constantly changing. In their personal journey to freedom, Huck and Jim's ideas of what true freedom will bring and how to achieve it is challenged and changed. Huck and Jim evolve throughout their journey, their perspectives on one another frequently shifting. Floating free, Huck and Jim create their own world and unit, apart from society, governed by little more than the free currents of the river.

Despite the freedom that the river provides and represents, the reality of society is never farther away than the river's banks. As their journey progresses, Huck and Jim are continuously interrupted by the looming presence of the society they have attempted to abandon—each time they stop ashore, the threat of Jim's capture dis-

rupts their sense of safety. This wavering dynamic reflects the terrifying instability of Jim's condition.

Although the river provides an escape from danger, that respite is temporary, with threats arising more and more frequently at every turn. As the river shifts from providing a space of idyllic retreat, to a mere momentary escape from hardship, Twain exposes the looming danger perpetually at bay in the Antebellum South.

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**“The River gives the book its form. But for the River, the book might be only a sequence of adventures with a happy ending. A river, a very big and powerful river, is the only natural force that can wholl determine the course of human peregrination.... Thus the River makes the book a great book... Mark Twain is a native, and the River God is his God.”**

—T.S. Eliot





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# JIM'S PORTRAYAL

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**“The people whom Huck and Jim encounter on the Mississippi are drunkards, murderers, bullies, swindlers, lynchings, thieves, liars, frauds, child abusers, numbskulls, hypocrites, windbags and traders in human flesh. All are white. The one man of honor in this phantasmagoria is ‘Nigger Jim,’ as Twain called him to emphasize the irony of a society in which the only true gentleman was held beneath contempt.”**—Russell Baker, essayist

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At the start of *Huck Finn*, Jim might appear to be a simple-minded and uncomplicated character. Through Huck's eyes, Jim is initially simply a slave, whose intense superstitions render him ridiculous. In subscribing to the attitudes in which he was brought up, Huck does not see Jim as the complex human being that he is. He is little more than the Widow Douglas' property, and an easily manipulated target for Huck and Tom's tricks.

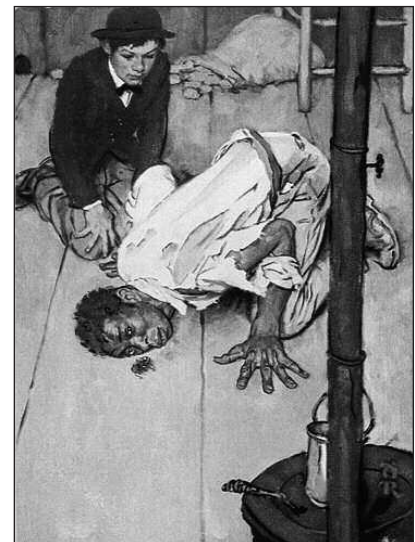
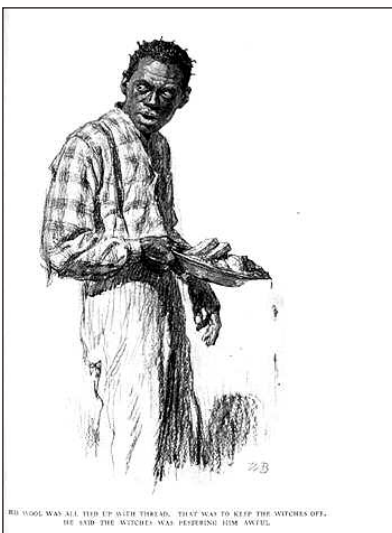
But as Huck matures along his journey, he ever so gradually begins to see Jim in a more fully realized light. Jim is in fact one of the few, if not the only, model for respectable adulthood in the story. Jim fills a variety of roles, both as companion and protector and seeks to shield Huck from some of the evils they encounter, most notably the murder of Huck's own father.

But we learn that Jim too has a life of his own, one that he is trying to regain by escaping slavery. Jim has a family with whom he is willing to risk his life to reunite and runs from the Widow Douglas because he fears permanent separation from them. When Jim tells Huck about the moment at which he discovered his daughter could not hear—and the terrible regret he felt at the way he had treated her—Jim truly exposes his humanity. He cannot be identified only as a slave, or only as a friend to Huck; he has a life beyond what Huck knows about him. Twain writes Jim not only as a man of honor, in spite of society's contempt of him, but also as a human, who, like everyone, possesses faults and a complex range of emotions. It is this admission that helps Huck realize his own responsibility towards helping Jim to freedom.

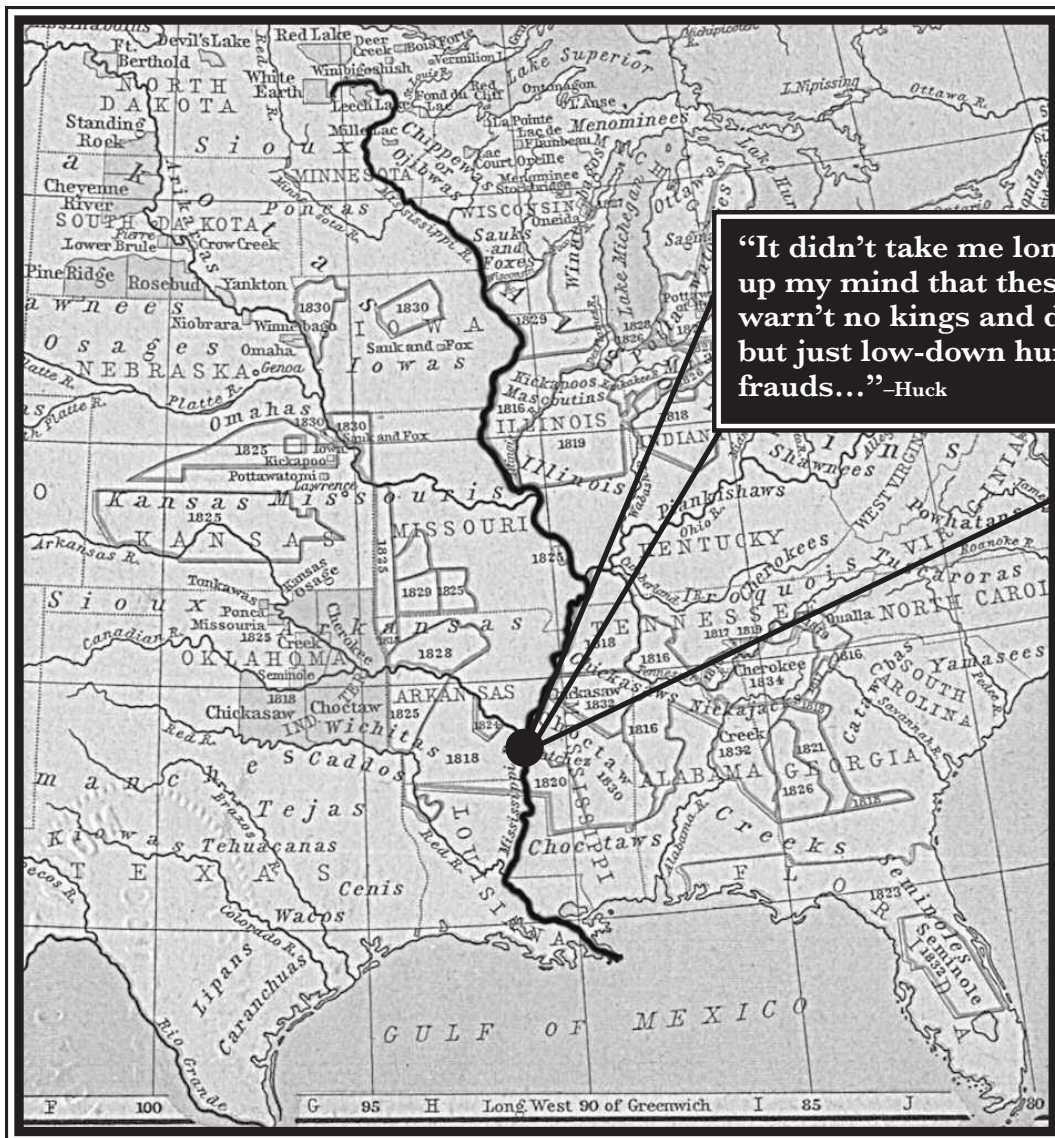
The character of Jim has been debated since the inception of the book. Some argue that he is perceived one-dimensionally that Twain wrote him merely to be a symbol for Huck's emancipation from the racist attitudes around him. Critics also feel that Twain's depiction of Jim is racist and stereotypical, and that these aspects cloud Twain's message. What do you think?

Here are a number of depictions of Jim from various editions of *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*. Many of the editions only portrayed pictures of Jim on his knees, or in some form of lower status from Huck. Others use stereotypically African-American physical attributes.

- Looking at these pictures, what might you infer about the character of Jim, especially if you didn't know anything about him?
- Do you think they capture Jim fully?
- What is the difference between a portrayal and a caricature?







## Section Seven: **THE KING AND THE DUKE**

- The King and the Duke/Huck's Moral Dilemma
- Discussion and Essay Questions



# Huck's Moral Dilemma

## The King and The Duke

As Huck's journey down the river continues he begins to become aware of the hypocrisy in the world around him. The King and Duke are further examples of corruption and pretension. These men falsely pose themselves as royalty, actors, doctors, preachers and even friends to Huck, when in actuality they are consistently taking advantage of Huck and Jim for their own financial gain. Huck has to determine for himself that these two men are con artists. Yet, Huck continues to put up with them for some time because he realizes it is easier to play along and pretend he has been tricked, rather than "cause a fuss" and risk further danger for Jim. We are also reminded of Huck's own vulnerability. Because he is a child, the King and the Duke feel entitled to take advantage of him and tell him what to do. They threaten him with the same violence

that Pap did early on in the story. This danger becomes paramount when The Duke and The King pretend to have captured Jim and sell him back into slavery. Huck is faced with a moral dilemma—should he tell the Widow Douglas where Jim is and, at least allow Jim to return to slavery in a safe place, but in doing so admit his own moral failing of harboring a slave? Or should he "go to hell" by finding Jim and devising a plan to free him? Huck's decision to continue to help Jim comes from a place of empathy. By remembering back to moments they have shared on the river, Huck is reminded of his friendship with Jim. This act of Huck's imagination allows him to see Jim as a human being. Huck decides Jim's freedom is worth the price of hell.





## ACTIVITY

### Discussion/Essay Questions

Throughout *Huck Finn* a variety of lies are told. Discuss which seem to be useful and which are harmful. Why?

Each stage of Huck's growth culminates in crisis of conscience and a decision to assist Jim, and each decision is more consequential than the previous.

What are these stages and decisions; when do they occur; and what are their consequences?

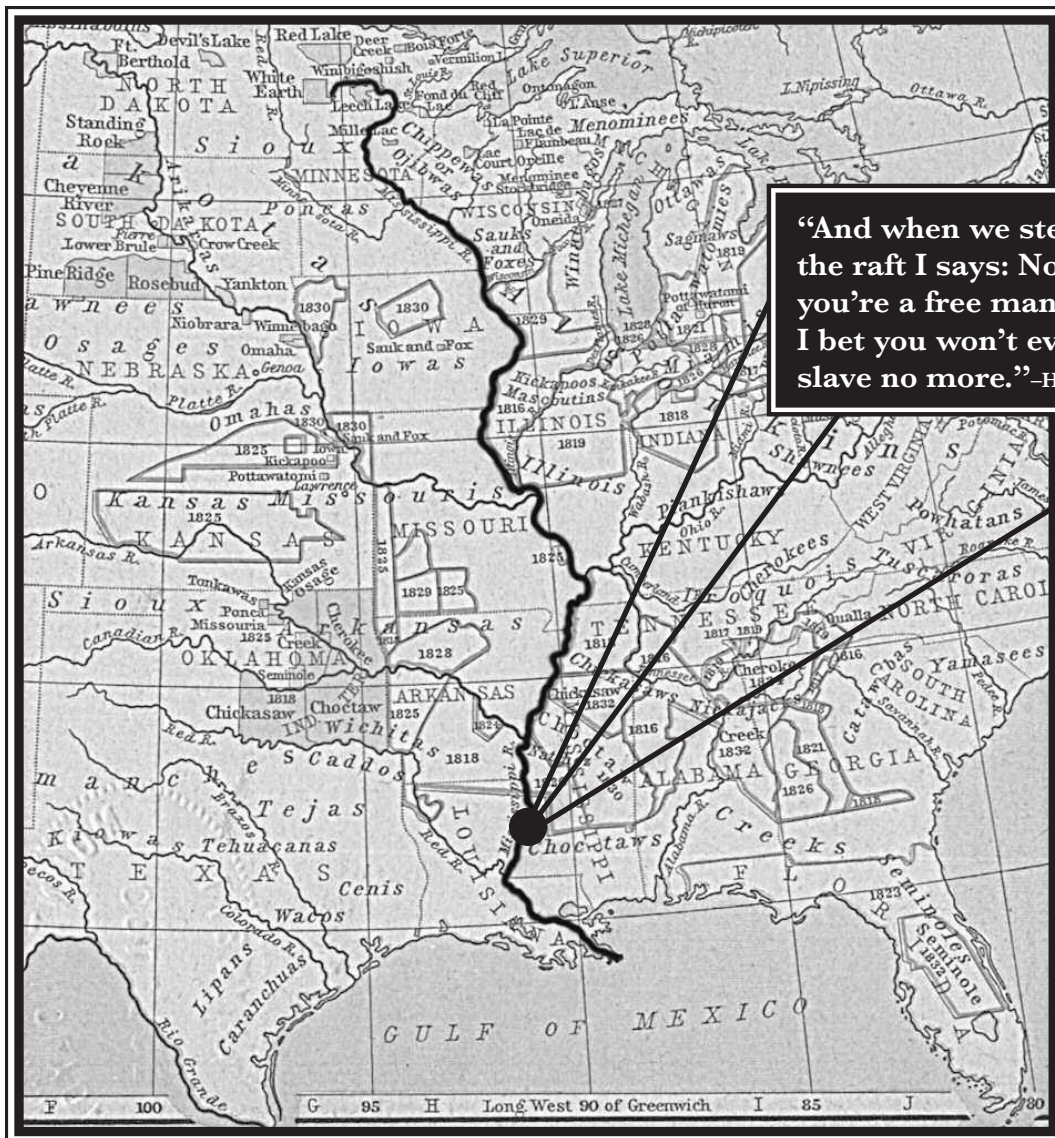
When was a time you told a lie that you felt was needed or was for a good purpose?

How did you reconcile the act of lying with what you hoped would come from your lie?

Where in society today do we use the act of lying as a purposeful means of entertainment?

Are there dangers in exercising our imaginations to create and purport lies?





## Section Eight:

# FREEING JIM

- Who is Free? The End of the Play
- Discussion Questions
- Controversy Surrounding the Book
- Questions about Controversy

# WHO IS FREE? The End of the Play

Huck's escape from the King and the Duke and his decision to help Jim in spite of what it might cost him, signifies a major climax of the story. When he finds Jim at the Phelps' house, Huck and Jim's journey comes to an end.

Huck returns to find that Tom is the same adventurer he always was, but lacks the maturity and awareness of the world that Huck has grown to possess. Jim, we discover, has been free all along. Huck learns that Pap and Widow Douglas, the two people he sought to escape, have died, and he is free of them.

Huck initially believes that his journey down the river is to free himself from Pap and the Widow Douglas; but he then comes to the assertion that in

running away from home and aiding Jim in his quest for freedom, he frees himself of social constraints and proscribed notions of morality. In the end, he and Jim both learn that their perceived notions of freedom are turned upside down as well, in that their "captors" are dead and they have both been free to live as they choose all along.



## ACTIVITY

### What Will Happen Next?

- Jim says he was rich and he will be rich again. Does he mean this only in terms of money, or could he mean something else?
- Will Tom and Huck remain friends in the same way they always have?
- What will happen to Jim the day after the story ends? What has history told us about slaves who were freed?
- If Huck is to choose between living with the Phelps' to be "civilized" all over again and going out on more adventures, and if Jim is freed because Tom told him so, is the resolution at the end of the play a satisfying one?" Why or why not? What, if anything, frees Huck?

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# CONTROVERSY SURROUNDING

## Adventures of Huckleberry Finn

The most-taught novel in American schools from the junior high to graduate level, *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* is a well established fixture of the American literary canon. Mark Twain is recognized as one of, if not the single most important voice in American literature. Ernest Hemingway himself famously asserted that “all modern American Literature comes from one book by Mark Twain called *Huckleberry Finn*.” Yet despite generations of critical acclaim, and the novel’s immense popularity among readers since its publication in 1885, Twain’s most celebrated work has also sparked America’s most enduring literary controversy.

At the time of its publication, Twain’s use of contemporary speech and dialect immediately set his novel apart from the mainstream. *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* boldly departed from the conventions of traditional English novels, speaking directly to its readers in a style they were accustomed to hearing in their daily lives. By bursting forth with the audacious, brash, and at times crass, voice of its narrator, the uneducated and ‘uncivilized’ Huck, Twain introduced a vivacity and immediacy to the page rarely witnessed in English or American literature. His interest in the music of human speech is displayed in his efforts to authentically portray several highly differentiated Southern dialects. In his opening explanatory note, Twain informs his readers that the dialects he employs have been observed and recorded “painstakingly...with trustworthy guidance and

support of personal familiarity.” Twain’s effort to render spoken language realistically-- extending beyond dialect to include slang and the occasional swear word-- was met with much criticism from the literary elite of his time. Twain’s protagonist was equally troubling for many readers: Huck’s rough, backwoods upbringing and wavering moral standpoint did not comply with traditional Sunday school values. Most famously, the public library in Concord, Massachusetts banned the book from its shelves on grounds of immoral content and “rough, ignorant dialect.” The library’s committee of censors unanimously voted to exclude the book, condemning its “systematic use of bad grammar and an employment of inelegant expressions,” deeming it “flip-pant” and “trash only suitable for the slums.” Amidst the turmoil of the Reconstruction, Twain’s decision to depict life under slavery was troubling for many Americans struggling to find order in the wake of slavery’s dismantling. His narrative of a white boy, who rejects society’s codes by aiding and befriending a runaway slave, challenged the American desire to white-wash the past.

In more recent years, *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* has provoked controversy on the grounds of its alleged racism. Although the leading literary critics of the 1940s and ‘50s bolstered and cemented *Huckleberry Finn*’s canonization, the 1980s and ‘90s heralded a significant turn in the public conception of the book. Today, many teachers, librarians, and parents consider



Twain's use of racist, derogatory language—most crucially, the frequent instance of the word “nigger”—an abomination, and assert that teaching *Huckleberry Finn* in schools perpetuates institutionalized racism. They argue that Twain's depiction of racism may be harmful to young minds, and that the word “nigger”, when read or spoken, presents a threat. As a result, *Huckleberry Finn* has been removed from hundreds of school curriculums

across the country. Some libraries and schools have conceded to shelving ‘edited’ versions of the novel, which eliminate the word “nigger.” *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* is now fifth on the American Library Association's list of The 100 Most Frequently Challenged Books—a list which includes such other American classics as *To Kill a Mockingbird* and *The Catcher in the Rye*.

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## Questions:

This book is one of the most frequently banned books in America, making it very controversial.

The Playwright chose not to use the word “nigger” in the play version, even though it appears throughout the novel. Do you agree with her choice?

Do you think it is different to read the word in a book than to hear it said out loud in a play?

When Mark Twain wrote the book, the word was commonly used. How does time affect the use of this word?

What are some things about this play you observed that could be considered controversial?

What are the benefits of continuing the legacy of this controversial story?

What is there to gain as it is passed down through generations?

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## Digital History

[www.digitalhistory.uh.edu](http://www.digitalhistory.uh.edu)

## Twain Web

[www.twainweb.net](http://www.twainweb.net)

[www.twainweb.net/filelist/skeptic.html](http://www.twainweb.net/filelist/skeptic.html)

## Gutenberg

[www.gutenberg.org](http://www.gutenberg.org) (original text and photos)

## Mark Twain's Mississippi River

<http://dig.lib.niu.edu/twain/index.html>

[www.u-s-history.com](http://www.u-s-history.com)

## About.com

[http://classiclit.about.com/od/adventuresofhuckleberry/a/huckfinn\\_writer.htm](http://classiclit.about.com/od/adventuresofhuckleberry/a/huckfinn_writer.htm)

## Civil War in Missouri Facts

<http://home.usmo.com/~momollus/MOFACTS.HTM>

## Huck and Jim Images

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