

The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn by Mark Twain

Background on the book:

“Persons attempting to find a motive in this narrative will be prosecuted; persons attempting to find a moral in it will be banished; persons attempting to find a plot in it will be shot.”
—author’s note from *The Adventures of*

These humorous warnings were the first words that readers of *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* saw when they opened Mark Twain’s new novel in 1885. At the time, Twain was already well known as a humorist and the author of the nostalgic “boy’s book” *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer*. Therefore, Twain’s readers probably did not expect that Twain would have serious motives for writing *Huckleberry Finn* or that the novel would teach serious moral lessons.

In some ways, *Huckleberry Finn* is a sequel to, or a continuation of, *Tom Sawyer*. Huck was an important member of Tom Sawyer’s group of friends in the earlier novel, and Jim appeared as well. The fictional setting of both books is St. Petersburg, a small Mississippi River port that Twain modeled on his hometown of Hannibal, Missouri. The earlier book tells of the rollicking good times had by all and is recognized as one of American literature’s finest portrayals of a happy childhood. Readers therefore had reason to expect more lighthearted escapades and harmless hijinks in *Huckleberry Finn*.

Readers soon found out, however, that *Huckleberry Finn* is very different from *Tom Sawyer*. The odd notice at the beginning of the novel is the first warning that things may not be exactly as they seem. The warning is ironic because the novel definitely has a motive, a moral, and a plot; and Twain wanted his readers to be aware of each of them. The structure of the book, which centers around a journey, allows Huck and Jim to meet many different kinds of people. The society of the small towns and villages along the great river mirrors American society as a whole, with all its variety. The cast of characters includes many personalities with whom Twain was familiar: liars, cheaters, and hypocrites. The author examines these representative types, mercilessly exposing their weaknesses and displaying their terrible, senseless cruelty to others. Twain is especially bitter about the way slavery degraded the moral fabric of life along the river. His bitterness was, perhaps, rooted in the knowledge that he himself grew up thinking there was nothing wrong with a system that enslaved human beings.

But Twain also holds up a few shining examples of human decency as models. In fact, *Huckleberry Finn* can be seen as hopeful. The novel shows that people can make the right decisions and defy injustice, that an individual’s moral beliefs can lead him or her to reject what is wrong in society, and that sound personal values can overcome evil. Twain himself explained that the novel revolves around conflict between “a sound heart and a deformed conscience.” Huck Finn is a child of his time, like the author who created him. Both character and author struggled to recognize and correct some of the wrongs of their society. Both learned to listen to the teachings of their sound hearts. Even though *Huckleberry Finn* is a serious book addressing important themes, it is also humorous. The novel is filled with hilarious incidents, oddball characters, and goofy misadventures, and the language the characters use is often laugh-out-loud funny.

Like many authors, Twain based his characters on the people he knew. In his *Autobiography*, Twain disclosed the model for his most famous character, a boy he knew growing up in Hannibal: *Huckleberry Finn* was Tom Blankenship. . . . In *Huckleberry Finn* I have drawn Tom Blankenship exactly as he was. He was ignorant, unwashed, insufficiently fed; but he had as good a heart as any boy ever had. His liberties were totally unrestricted. He was the only really independent person . . . in the community.

Many of the first readers of *Huckleberry Finn* were critical of the book. Some found its honest and unflinching portrayal of life to be coarse, while other readers found its dark view of society distasteful. Critics complained, and some libraries banned the book as unsuitable for children. Today, however, *Huckleberry Finn* is generally viewed as a masterpiece of American literature.

The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn is set in the Mississippi River Valley, around 1840. During

the course of the novel, Huck and Jim float down the Mississippi River. They travel from their hometown of St. Petersburg, Missouri, north of St. Louis, hundreds of miles into the Deep South. Some of the places they visit are real, while others are products of Twain's imagination. So important to the novel is the great Mississippi River that many readers consider it as much a character as a place. T. S. Eliot, the great twentieth-century poet who grew up in St. Louis, said, "The River makes the book a great book." It fired the imagination of the young Twain, served as the setting for his beloved riverboats, and became the only real home Huckleberry Finn and Jim were to know.

Important Information:

Setting- The novel is set in an area of the Mississippi River where Huck and Jim travel on a raft. It also occurs in several villages where Jim and Huck visit on their journey: Miss Watson's House, the Grangerford's, Huck's father's house, Aunt Sally's....

Background Information:

Huck is friends with Tom Sawyer, a boy who is constantly seeking difficult solutions to easily solvable problems because he is a hopeless romantic. Huck lives with Miss Watson, who tries to civilize Huck's barbaric style of living and rescue the orphan child from his crude ways. Huck's mother died early in his childhood and his father is an abusive alcoholic who rarely sees his son unless he is in need of money. Huck seeks to run away from Miss Watson and his father, and be able to live on his own and take care of himself.

Major Characters:

Huck Finn- A young boy that seeks to run away from home. He is smart and efficient. Huck is the orphan of an absentee father and a deceased mother. He is uncivilized in manner and habit. He desires to flee his life, living on a raft, floating down the Mississippi River and doing as he pleases.

Jim- A slave on Miss Watson's plantation who later escapes and becomes Huck's first true friend. He is searching for his family and freedom. He is very superstitious and religious.

Huck's father - An abusive, drunk old man who is using Huck for his money and advantages. The Duke and The King - A devious duo who are corrupt and cause trouble. They meet up with Jim and Huck on the raft and scam cities out of money.

Tom Sawyer- A boy about Huck's age. He is an idealist and a hopeless romantic, constantly pretending and creating situations in his head.

Miss Watson- Foster mother who tried to civilize Huck, owner of Jim.

Plot Summary:

Huck lives with Miss Watson who is trying to civilize him. He and Tom Sawyer become friends with her slave Jim. Huck's drunk father returns to try and take Huck back, but Huck fakes his own murder and runs away with Jim to a nearby island. Jim and Huck discover a raft, which they make their new home and set out to sail down the Mississippi River where they will both be free. Jim and Huck travel by night to avoid being caught, and sleep out in the woods during the day time. During the journey, Huck and Jim's friendship grows considerably, and the two become like family. Huck and Jim are separated when their raft hits a steamboat and Huck goes ashore to stay with a family, the Grangerford's. Huck soon becomes involved in their ongoing feud and leaves when several family members are killed. Huck also plays with the concept of morality and debates over the question of whether to turn Jim in or risk being

shunned by society if he is caught with a runaway. The Duke and the King soon join Huck and Jim on the raft, and the four scam several cities out of money by performing plays and circuses. They stay at the Wilkes' house where they steal money from a family of girls whose father just died, by pretending to be their uncles. Huck eventually confesses to the girls, and abandons the Duke and the King when they try to sell Jim. Eventually Huck winds up at Aunt Sally's house and pretends to be Tom Sawyer, who they are expecting. He soon learns that she is keeping Jim hostage until his master comes to get him, and tries to think of a way to free his friend. When the real Tom comes to Aunt Sally's, the two form an intricate plan involving ransom notes and digging holes in order to free Jim. When the plan is activated, Huck and Tom are caught by angry townspeople and are forced to confess their identity and reason for disturbing the slave. Huck learns that Miss Watson set Jim free in her will, and he is no longer a slave. Huck plans to escape being civilized once more, and suggests that he will flee to live in Indian territory.

Themes:

Maturity...Huck is forced to take care of himself because he has no parents. Although he is a young boy, he faces many problems that adults struggle with, and is forced to deal with them maturely. (Jim's freedom, confessing to the Wilk's...)

Friendship...Huck never really had any true friend before Jim, but the time spent with him allowed the two to become very close.

Legality vs. Morality...Huck faces the question of whether he should obey the law and turn in Jim, or if he should risk a bad reputation and keep his friend happy.

Love...Jim loves Huck and he has been a true friend and been through many tough situations. Huck learns to love through his friendship with Jim, who is devoted and willing to do anything for Huck.

Racism...The novel is set in the South. Blacks are slaves with no legal rights and are faced with high degrees of discrimination. Their status is lower than that of a white person, and Huck grows up debating that reality. It is a barrier at first between himself and Jim, which they eventually realize and overcome.

Freedom ...Literally, Jim seeks freedom from slavery. Figuratively, Huck seeks to be free, and not have to live in fear of his father, or being civilized.

Key Issues:

Racism...A major part of the novel, because as a black man fleeing slavery, Jim faces many struggles. He is constantly reminded of the dangers of running and is threatened by his capture. He is also forced to accept the fact that his race makes him inferior to a white, and even a friend like Huck is still of higher status. Huck and Jim overcome the race barrier, only after Huck overcomes the inner struggle of whether to save Jim or not. Huck's idea of racism is based on his upbringing, but he himself questions the validity of these statements of black inferiority.

Friendship...Huck never had a true meaningful friendship. He found this completely, devoted, caring, generous individual in Jim as they traveled together. Although Jim was black, Huck learned that race didn't matter, and that Jim really loved him and would protect him from harm. Huck at first battled with the issue of supremacy by teasing Jim and playing jokes on him which made him feel ignorant. When Huck realized Jim had feelings and could be hurt, and that he missed his family, it became easy for Huck and Jim to remain friends because he realized that aside from skin color, they had similarities.

Freedom...Huck seeks to free himself of his father's neglect and abuse. He wants to live alone, and be able to survive by himself. He struggles to reach freedom by running away, living barbarically, and refusing to be civilized by those who attempt to fix his crude manners. Jim seeks freedom from slavery. He wants to find his lost family and free them. He runs away when he hears Miss Watson talking of selling him "down the river."

Lessons/ morals/ applications:

Huck learns that although society has taught him to regard blacks as inferior, he should listen to his own opinion, even if it means sacrificing his reputation and being labeled. He realized this when he befriended Jim and went out of his way to secure Jim's freedom, by risking his own safety and name.

Huck also learned that although people in his life may have hurt him, he is able to be loved and to love back. He learns this when his friendship with Jim evolves, and they become like family. Huck is able to love Jim back, and is willing to help him escape slave if it will attain happiness.

Huck realizes that Tom's intricate plans for solving problems sometimes are fun, but are not usually the best answers. Huck is a more realistic character and understands that effort and efficiency are better than confusion and complication. He depicts this when Tom's plan to free Jim becomes too involved and eventually backfires. Huck's plan at the beginning was more reasonable, but he used Tom's plan instead.

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Additional Resources on the Web:

Article: Is *Huck Finn* a Racist Book? <http://salwen.com/mtrace.html>

Full Text Online <http://users.telerama.com/~joseph/finn/finntitl.html>
<http://www.projects.ex.ac.uk/trol/grol/twain/huck00h.htm>

Study Guide:

Be prepared to discuss each of the following on the test:

1. understand the difference between the literal events in the story and the comic adventures.
2. read selected passages of dialect and understand their meaning.
3. define "irony" and point to at least five examples from the novel that illustrate this definition.
4. discuss the development of the following major themes in the novel:
 - A. Huck Finn's "rite of passage"
 - B. Man's inhumanity to man
 - C. Individual sympathy in conflict with the laws and expectations of one's culture
 - D. The restrictions on one's freedom in society as opposed to the freedom to live outside of civilization
 - E. The cruelty/oppression of slavery and the dehumanizing of the black people by the white nineteenth-century culture
5. discuss the elements in this novel that prompt critics to label it as one of the most important works in American literature.

6. note and discuss these objects of Twain's satire:
 - A. Sentimentality (being influenced more by emotion than reason) and gullibility (being easily tricked, cheated, or fooled)
 - B. The average man
 - C. Traditional concepts of religion
 - D. Romantic literature with its mournful subject matter in poetry and in ridiculous plots in novels
 - E. A code of honor that results in needless bloodshed
7. Define and give examples of the following literary terms:
 - Simile
 - Setting
 - Allusion
 - Paradox
 - Point of view
 - Digression
 - Satire
 - Malapropism
8. point out differences between the author's and narrator's point of view.
9. infer things that are not directly stated.

The following terms and definitions may help with studying this novel:

1. Allusion - a reference to a person, place, poem, book, event, etc., which is not part of the story, that the author expects the reader will recognize. Example: In *The Glass Menagerie*, Tom speaks of "Chamberlain's umbrella," a reference to British Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain.
2. Coming of Age - a novel or other work of literature in which the main character or characters grow, mature, or understand the world in adult terms. Examples: *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*; *The Cay*
3. Dialect - a particular kind of speech used by members of one specific group because of its geographical location or class. Example: Jim, in *Huckleberry Finn* says, "Shet de do." ["Shut the door".]
4. Digression - an interruption of the main action, accomplished by telling stories unrelated to the main plot. This technique serves to provide background information, explain character motivation, establish interest, build suspense, and/or inform the reader of the action to come. Example: The main story in *The Iliad* frequently is interrupted to supply background information about characters.
5. Irony - a perception of inconsistency, sometimes humorous, in which the significance and understanding of a statement or event is changed by its context. Example: The firehouse burned down.
 - Dramatic Irony - the audience or reader knows more about a character's situation than the character does and knows that the character's understanding is incorrect. Example: In *Medea*, Creon asks, "What atrocities could she commit in one day?" The reader, however, knows Medea will destroy her family and Creon's by day's end.
 - Structural Irony - the use of a naïve hero, whose incorrect perceptions differ from the reader's correct ones. Example: Huck Finn.
 - Verbal Irony - a discrepancy between what is said and what is really meant; sarcasm. Example: A large man whose nickname is "Tiny."

6. Malapropism - misuse of a word for humorous effect. The term comes from a character named Mrs. Malaprop in *The Rivals*, by Sheridan. Example: A lawyer has "obfuscations" to the question, rather than "objections."
7. Paradox - a statement that is self-contradictory on its surface, yet makes a point through the juxtaposition of the ideas and words within the paradox. Examples: "Noon finally dawned for the remaining, weary soldiers"; "He that hath no money; come ye, buy and eat..."—Isaiah 55:1
8. Satire - using humor to expose something or someone to ridicule. Examples: *Animal Farm*; *Gulliver's Travels*. Look up more info on satire at <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Satire>
9. Unreliable Narrator—a narrator who does not understand the full significance of the events he describes and comments on. Huck is an example of an unreliable narrator. He is not intentionally unreliable; his lack of education and experience makes him so. Much of the humor in the first chapters comes from Huck's incomplete understanding of the adults around him and their "sivilized" ways.
10. The Antihero--Traditional heroes are often superhuman. We look up to them because they are braver, stronger, more clever, or more unwilling to sacrifice their principles than we. **Antiheroes**, on the other hand, are very human. Like us, they have faults, make mistakes, and puzzle over difficult decisions. In the end, however, antiheroes usually do the "right thing"—what we, ourselves, hope we would do in similar circumstances. As you read the final chapters of *Huckleberry Finn*, think about the heroes of the novel. Are they traditional heroes or antiheroes? What makes them so?

Chapter by Chapter Vocabulary and Questions:

Chapter I

Vocabulary

commenced – started

kin – relation

middling – moderately

victuals – food

1. What is your reaction to Twain's "Notice"? Is it meant to be taken seriously, humorously, or what?
2. Why does Twain purposely misspell the word "civilize" in the second paragraph?
3. In Huck's mind, what does being civilized involve?
4. A frequently used technique of Twain's is irony. What is ironic about Huck's joining Tom Sawyer's band of robbers?
5. A comic point also arises when we see Huck's perception of things come in conflict with another person's point of view. How does Huck perceive the Widow Douglas calling him "a poor lost lamb"?
6. What is Huck talking about when he says the Widow Douglas would "grumble a little over the victuals"? (Pg. 14)
7. Based on Miss Watson's description of it, what is Huck's opinion of heaven?
8. Who is the narrator in the story, and what do we know about him so far?
9. What literary term is used in the following short quote? "the house was all as still as death..."

Chapter II

Vocabulary

ignorant – unlearned

quality – upper-class people

skiff – small boat

tanyard – section in a tannery where tanning vats are kept

1. Who nearly discovers the two boys? What does Twain reveal about the slave?
2. Tom insists on leaving five cents on the table for the candles he took, but Huck would not. What does this show about Tom's character?
3. What is the purpose of sneaking out at night?
4. What is overblown about the robbers and the oath of secrecy they swear to?
5. What do the robbers say about Huck's father?
6. What comic point turns on the word "ransomed"?
7. Where did Tom get his knowledge of robber bands? How would you describe Tom?

Chapter III

Vocabulary

ingots – molded metal pieces, possibly bricks of gold

lath – thin strips of wood

ornery – common; contrary

resigned – quit

1. What two views of religions (Providence) does Huck get?
2. How is Twain's point of view expressed, and how is it different from Huck's view?
3. Why does Huck believe that the body that is found *is not that of* his father?
4. How are Tom and Huck quite different?
5. What comparison is made in the last line of the chapter?

Chapter IV

Vocabulary

raspy – grating; irritating

stile – set of steps

1. Find an example of irony in the first paragraph.
2. Huck becomes upset when he sees the footprint with the cross mark in the heel. Why?
3. What is the first thing he does? Why do you suppose he does this?
4. What is indicated about Huck through the comments he makes about math and the hair-ball?
5. To understand Jim when he speaks, it is best to read his words aloud. Translate into standard English Jim's phrase, "A body can't tell yit which one gwyne to fetch him at de las'." (Pg. 29) Explain its meaning.
6. Who seems to more superstitious, Jim or Huck?

Chapter V

Vocabulary

cussed – cursed

hifalutin' – flowery; pompous

stanchion – post

temperance – restraint; moderation

1. What is your opinion of Huck's father?
2. What did Pap tear up and why?
3. How is the new judge in town at first taken in by pap?
4. What is Twain saying in the last paragraph of the chapter about pious people who believe in goodness and ignore reality?

Chapter VI

Vocabulary

barked – bumped and scraped

delirium tremens – shaking, hallucinating state brought on by excessive alcohol consumption

fagged – tired

infernal – damnable

1. How would you describe the humor in the sentence below? See if you can spot other examples of this type humor as you read.

“Every time he got money he got drunk; and every time he got drunk he raised Cain around town; and every time he raised Cain he got jailed. He was just suited—this kind of thing was right in his line.” (Pg. 35)

2. Pap, angry at Judge Thatcher and Widow Douglas, takes Huck away to an island and holds him there. What aspect of this life does Huck start liking again?

3. One of the funniest speeches in the book, when read aloud, is pap’s speech on government. (Pgs. 37-38) What makes this speech so funny?

4. Despite the humor, on what dark note does this chapter end?

5. Critics point out that after writing the first three chapters, Twain did not continue this novel for some time. When he returned to it, he altered the tone somewhat. What difference do you see between Chapters 1, 2, and 3, and what follows?

Chapter VII

Vocabulary

gully – trench

palavering – talking idly

roust – roughly drive from bed

rushes – marsh plants

shanty – cabin

1. When Huck finds the canoe on the river, what plan forms in his head?

2. Why does Huck go to the trouble of pretending to have been killed?

3. Huck wishes that Tom Sawyer were there to give the plan “fancy touches.” Why is it a better plan without Tom’s “fancy touches”?

4. What reason might Twain have for including the lines: Everything was dead quiet, and it looked late, and *smelt* late. You know what I mean—I don’t know the words to put it in”? (Pg. 44)

Chapter VIII

Vocabulary

abolitionist – anti-slavery activist

bluff – steep

brash – bold; full of vitality

fan-tods – fidgets; fits

game – animals hunted for meat

hove – past tense of “heave”

lolloped – lounged

speculate – take a risk; buy stock

stern – rear end of a boat

1. Toward the end of the last chapter and in this one, there are a number of descriptions of the river and the river bank, especially at night. Find one and identify the mood created by these descriptions.

2. What does Huck stumble upon on Jackson Island that upsets him? Why?

3. What is Jim’s first reaction when he sees Huck?

4. If Huck keeps quiet about Jim being a runaway, what does he say people will call him?

5. Why will Huck so easily accept the fact that Abolitionists are bad people? What does his decision to keep silent about Jim show about Huck's character?

Chapter IX

Vocabulary

hogshead – large barrel

reticule – drawstring bag

1. In this chapter what is a particularly good description of nature?
2. Where do Huck and Jim find the dead man?
3. Why does Jim tell Huck not look at the dead man's face?

Chapter X

Vocabulary

notion – idea

1. Why does Jim feel so strongly about *not* talking about the dead man?
2. What bad luck happens to them? Why is it Huck's fault?
3. What is humorous about the digression Huck gives on "looking at the new moon over your left shoulder." (Pg. 62)
4. As the chapter ends, where does Huck go and why?

Chapter XI

Vocabulary

contrived – planned

lynched – killed by a mob

1. What does the woman in town tell Huck about what has happened to pap?
2. Who does the woman say is suspected of murdering Huck?
3. What unsettling bit of information does Huck hear from her about the island?
4. What leads the woman to suspect that Huck is not the girl he claims to be? How does she confirm this suspicion?

Chapter XII

Vocabulary

pilot-house – where the pilot works on a ship

starboard – the right side of a ship

texas – structure on a steamboat deck that contains the officers' cabins

1. What can you infer about Jim's natural intelligence from his help with the raft?
2. Critics point to the incident on the stranded steamboat as being traumatic for Huck and something that will scar him for life. What happens on the boat?

Chapter XIII

Vocabulary

bitts – posts fixed to the deck of a ship for securing lines

careened – leaned

plunder – stolen goods

scow – large flat-bottomed boat

yarn – tale

1. How can we tell that, unlike the men, Huck values human life very highly? What else does the conversation Huck has with the steamboat captain reveal about his character?

Chapter XIV

Vocabulary

gaudy – flashy

hawking – hunting with hawks

1. What does Huck read about in the books he gets from the steamboat?
2. What is your opinion of the conversation about: a) King Solomon, b) French language?
3. What can you infer has changed about the relationship between the two runaways?

Chapter XV

Vocabulary

snag – part that sticks out

tow-head – sandbar

1. Why are they trying to get to Cairo, Illinois?
2. How do Jim and Huck get separated?
3. Most readers, at first, think that Huck's trick on Jim is funny. Why do they change their minds?
4. Since Huck feels bad about it, why does it take him fifteen minutes to apologize to Jim?
5. What does this scene say to the reader about Huck and Jim's relative humanity and maturity?

Chapter XVI

Vocabulary

green – new; not yet experienced

spunk – courage

1. When they think they are approaching Cairo, Jim becomes excited and happy; but Huck becomes upset. Why?
2. What about Jim's future plans further upsets Huck?
3. How would you describe the conflict Huck is feeling at this point? Find a quotation in this chapter that depicts Huck's conflicting feelings.
4. What does the confrontation between the slave hunters and Huck point out?
5. At the end of this chapter how are Jim and Huck again separated?

Chapter XVII

Vocabulary

crockery – pottery

disposition – personality; temperament

outlandish – bizarre

pensive – deep in thought

pined – longed

1. Why are the Grangerfords so wary of strangers?
2. Although Huck does not see it as comic, what does the reader find humorous about the titles of the dead girl's pictures?
3. Why does one picture have eight arms, and what is Huck's comment on this picture?
4. Critics claim that Twain is making fun of a type of poetry in the poem "Ode to Stephen Dowling Bots, Dec'd." What type would that be?
5. What do neighbors say about Emmeline?

Chapter XVIII

Vocabulary

aristocracy – ruling class
bowie – hunting knife
capered – frolicked
cavorting – frolicking
decanters – glass containers for storing liquor
junketings – get-togethers; feasts
pommel – front of a saddle
puncheon – smoothed log

1. On page 111, Buck describes to Huck what a feud is. How would you describe the tone of that paragraph?
2. What disparaging remark about the Shepherdsons does Huck make that Buck takes exception to?
3. If, as critics claim, the author's aim is to attack the tradition of feuding and that false code of honor, why does Twain not make one of the families cowardly?
4. What is the allusion that is contained in the elopement of Sophia and Harney?
5. As with the conversation overheard on the boat, Huck is again traumatized and scarred by violence. What scene does this to him in this chapter?
6. How does the reader know that this scene has made a profound impression on Huck?
- 7 Why might Huck claim, "there warn't no home like a raft, after all. Other places do seem so cramped up and smothery, but a raft don't. You feel mighty free and easy and comfortable on a raft"? (Pg. 117)

Chapter XIX

Vocabulary

frauds – fakes
galluses – suspenders
galoot – slang for "fellow"
lineal – direct; in a line
phrenology – the practice of telling people's fortunes by feeling the bumps on their heads
rank – foul-smelling
revival – religious meeting

1. This chapter opens by describing a typical 24-hour period in their lives. What is described and what is the tone?
2. At one point, Huck and Jim seem to have a serious philosophical discussion about whether the stars were made, created by a supreme being, or whether the universe was the result of some kind of accident. What is Jim's theory?
3. How does Huck meet the duke and the Dauphin?
4. What causes the elder man to claim royalty also?
5. What is Huck's opinion of the two?

Chapter XX

Vocabulary

benefactors – those who help others
cipher – figure
concern – business; establishment
dissipating – spreading thin and eventually vanishing
haughty – proud
histrionic – theatrical; overly dramatic
mire – mud
sockdolager – exceptional blow

1. Critics say that Twain is satirizing excessive religious fervor in the camp-meeting incident. What is your opinion? Is he satirizing it or simply describing it?
2. What has the duke done that will allow them to run the raft during daylight hours?

Chapter XXI

Vocabulary

blackguarding – insulting; talking badly about

bodkin – dagger

bray – make a sound like a donkey

illustrious – outstanding; famous

imperative – pressing; important and necessary

soliloquy – dramatic monologue

1. Hamlet's soliloquy on page 136, as remembered by the duke, is a bunch of nice sounding lines from several different Shakespearean plays jammed together, but they mean nothing. What are some lines you recognize, and from what plays do they come?
2. At first, the town loafers seem to be lazy but good-hearted men. What do they do, however, that seems cruel?
3. How do the townspeople describe Boggs? What happens to Boggs?

Chapter XXII

Vocabulary

acquit – dismiss from charges

camelopard – giraffe

nonesuch – a person or things without an equal

sot – drunk

1. What does Col. Sherbourne say about "the average man"?
2. This is probably Twain's bitterest attack on people. Do you think Twain believes that people are as bad as Sherbourne says they are? Do you agree with Sherbourne's comments on people?
3. The business with the drunk, who turns out to be a trick rider, fools the crowd at first. In the end, who is the only one that Huck thinks had been fooled?
4. After their first show fails, the duke plans a second show. Why does he think his last line on the playbill will really draw the crowd?

Chapter XXIII

Vocabulary

greenhorns – inexperienced or unsophisticated people

indifferent – unconcerned

rapscallions – rascals

shines – tricks; capers

1. Why does the crowd that attends the Royal Nonesuch show tell everyone else in town that it is a good show?
2. Huck tells Jim about kings and gets some of his facts straight, but some are totally wrong. What one opinion of Huck's (and probably Twain's) comes across clearly?
3. Why is Huck surprised that Jim cares so much for his children?
4. What story does Jim tell that is filled with sentimentality and sadness?

Chapter XXIV

Vocabulary

duds – clothes

rip – libertine

yawl – a small boat

1. Find the paradox on page 155.
2. Where does the king get all his information about the Wilks family?
3. Huck concludes this chapter by saying, "It was enough to make a body ashamed of the human race." (Pg. 159) To what is he referring?

Chapter XXV

Vocabulary

lingo – slang for "language"

obsequies – funeral rites

passel – large number

sanctified – made sacred

vale – world

1. In this chapter Twain has his characters misuse two words, "diseased" and "orgies." What words should the character have used?
2. On page 162 what is Huck referring to when he says, "I never see anything so disgusting"?
3. How does the king try to cover his mistaken use of the word "orgies"?
4. Who challenges all the nonsense?

Chapter XXVI

Vocabulary

frocks – dresses

nigh – near

pallet – mattress

1. Why does Huck start to feel remorse about this hoax in which he has become involved?
2. Despite the doctor nearly spoiling the plan, the king is still confident. Why?
3. What would you suppose Twain's opinion of the human race is at the time he wrote these passages?

Chapter XXVII

Vocabulary

melodeon – small organ

1. Where does Huck hide the bag of gold?
2. Who do the king and duke believe have taken the gold?

Chapter XXVIII

Vocabulary

grit – courage

1. Why does Huck tell Mary Ann the truth?
2. "I see I had spoke too sudden and said too much, and was in a close place. I asked her to let me think a minute; and she set there, very impatient and excited and handsome, but looking kind of happy and eased-up, like a person that's has a tooth pulled out. So I went to studying it out. I says to myself, I reckon a body that ups and tells the truth when he is in a tight place is taking considerable resks, though I ain't had no experience, and can't say for certain; but it looks so to me, anyway; and yet here's a case where I'm blest if it don't look to me like the truth is better, and actuly *safer* than a lie. I must lay it by in my mind, and think it over some time or other, it's so kind of strange and unregular. I never see nothing like it. Well, I says to myself at last, I'm a-going to chance it; I'll up and tell the truth this time, though it does seem most like setting down on a kag of powder and touching it off just to see where you'll go to." (Pgs. 181-182)

The above quotation explains a great deal about Huck's increasing maturity and understanding of morality, as well as his keen observations. What is explained?

Chapter XXIX

Vocabulary

ingenious – clever

sluice – stream

1. Chapters 27, 28, and 29 move along quickly and hold the reader's attention. Why?
2. At the end of this chapter why is Huck first elated, then depressed?

Chapter XXX

Vocabulary

cravats – neckties

penitentiary – prison

shekel – coin

1. What does the duke remind the king of?
2. Why does the king confess that he is the one who stole the gold and put it in the coffin?
3. What single incident proves the king and duke to be nearly as stupid as the townspeople?

Chapter XXXI

Vocabulary

bullyragging – bullying; teasing

doggery – cheap saloon

mesmerizing – hypnotizing

tight – drunk

1. What is Huck's reaction when he learns that the duke and the king sold Jim for \$40?
2. Why is Huck's conscience troubled in this chapter?
3. Part of Twain's artistry is to attack something while not appearing to be attacking it. Explain how he does this in this chapter.

Chapter XXXII

Vocabulary

aground – onto the shore

waylay – lie in wait for

1. Throughout the novel, we have seen instances where Twain uses descriptions of nature to convey a mood of tranquility, beauty, or force. What mood is conveyed in the description?
2. When Huck makes up a story about a boiler blowing up, he is asked if anyone is hurt. What attitude of the people does Twain attack with Huck's answer?
3. Explain the fortunate coincidence that enables Huck to continue his masquerade.

Chapter XXXIII

1. Why is Huck surprised that Tom gets involved in stealing a slave?
2. Twain, on a number of occasions, has attacked the common man, sometimes savagely; what is his opinion of Uncle Silas and farmers like him?
3. A malaprop is the use of a word that is close to the correct word, but is not the right word. In this wrong context, the word is humorous, often ludicrous. On page 219 when Aunt Sally says, "I was most putrified with astonishment," what word was she thinking of?
4. When Huck hurries to town with Tom, what do they see; and what is Huck's reaction? How is this opinion ironic?
5. At the end of this chapter why is Huck feeling "to blame, somehow—though / hadn't done nothing"? (Pg. 220) What do his comments about a conscience mean?

Chapter XXXIV

Vocabulary

eaves – the lower borders of a roof that overhang the wall

1. Why does Tom want to make Jim's escape more difficult and time-consuming than it needs to be?
2. Some readers criticize Twain because they say he has again robbed Jim of his humanity in this and the succeeding chapters, and reduced him to a non-entity, a character who is nearly unnecessary, except to serve as the reason for Tom's escape plan. Do you agree?

Chapter XXXV-XXXIX

Vocabulary

addled – confused

blithesome – merry

brickbat – a fragment of a hard material

inscription – engraved words

insurrection – revolt

remiss – careless

scutcheon – engraved shield

1. With the return of Tom to the story, Chapters 34 through 43 take on a different tone. In what way?
2. Tom's elaborate plans can be seen as merely a child's imagination filled with incidents from books. However, Twain makes a pointed attack in this planning. Where is it directed?
3. Although not as serious in purpose, these chapters are funny. What do you think are some of the funniest incidents? Be prepared to read them aloud.
4. What concession to reality does Tom make in his plan to dig out Jim?
5. Why will Aunt Sally never again count spoons?
6. How can you explain Jim's willingness to go along with Tom's foolishness?
7. How does Tom further complicate the plan to free Jim?

Chapter XL

Vocabulary

desperadoes – bandits

1. Why does Tom need a doctor? How does it happen?
2. What startling revelation does Huck come to regarding Jim?

Chapter XLI

Vocabulary

gunnel – upper edge of a boat's side

1. Huck shows himself to be a thoughtful, caring person at the end of this chapter. In what way does he do this?

Chapter XLII

Vocabulary

pettish – fretful

scamp – rascal

sultry – hot

tan – whip

1. What stops the angry farmers from lynching Jim?
2. In this chapter, how does Tom's earlier willingness to aid in Jim's escape become understandable?

Chapter the last

1. What superstition does Jim bring up again?
2. Why do you suppose that Jim kept the dead man's identity a secret from Huck?
3. Throughout the story, the river represents peace, happiness, and freedom. The towns and civilization represent rules, boredom, and sometimes cruelty and treachery. In the last paragraph of the story, what does Huck say is preferable?
4. By the end of the novel, most of the loose ends are tied. What do we learn about Huck's father?

Essay Questions:

1. Explain why this novel is sometimes seen as a "rite of passage" story. Consider how Huck is at the beginning, what ordeals he undergoes, and how he survives at the end.
2. Define the term "irony" and cite four examples from the novel that support your definition.
3. By citing incidents from the novel, demonstrate that a major theme is "man's inhumanity to man."
4. Trace the development of Huck's troubled conscience. What is his problem, and how does he finally resolve it?
5. Explain why Huck decides to "light out" for the Indian territory rather than stay with Aunt Sally and be "sivilized" again.
6. Prove the following thesis by citing passages or incidents from the novel: *On the river, Huck finds peace and freedom. When on land, he has to deal with human gullibility, greed, corruption, and cruelty.*
7. In what ways is Jim a less-developed character at the beginning and at the end of the novel than he is in the middle of the novel?
8. List as many points of contrast as you can between Tom and Huck.
9. Why do you suppose Ernest Hemingway said that all modern American literature began with *Huckleberry Finn*?
10. A work of literary art is frequently described as a book that has something important to say and says it with great artistry. What important comments on the human experience does this book make?
11. Identify passages from the novel in which Twain satirizes the average man, human gullibility, and romantic literature.