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American Novel : Case Study

The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn by Mark Twain

Full Summary of the Novel

The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn opens by familiarizing us with the events of the novel that preceded it, *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer.* Both novels are set in the town of St. Petersburg, Missouri, which lies on the banks of the Mississippi River. At the end of *Tom Sawyer,* Huckleberry Finn, a poor boy with a drunken bum for a father, and his friend Tom Sawyer, a middle-class boy with an imagination too active for his own good, found a robber's stash of gold. As a result of his adventure, Huck gained quite a bit of money, which the bank held for him in trust. Huck was adopted by the Widow Douglas, a kind but stifling woman who lives with her sister, the self-righteous Miss Watson.

As *Huckleberry Finn* opens, Huck is none too thrilled with his new life of cleanliness, manners, church, and school. However, he sticks it out at the bequest of Tom Sawyer, who tells him that in order to take part in Tom's new "robbers' gang," Huck must stay "respectable." All is well and good until Huck's brutish, drunken father, Pap, reappears in town and demands Huck's money. The local judge, Judge Thatcher, and the Widow try to get legal custody of Huck, but another well-intentioned new judge in town believes in the rights of Huck's natural father and even takes the old drunk into his own home in an attempt to reform him. This effort fails miserably, and Pap soon returns to his old ways. He hangs around town for several months, harassing his son, who in the meantime has learned to read and to tolerate the Widow's attempts to improve him. Finally, outraged when the Widow Douglas warns him to stay away from her house, Pap kidnaps Huck and holds him in a cabin across the river from St. Petersburg.

Whenever Pap goes out, he locks Huck in the cabin, and when he returns home drunk, he beats the boy. Tired of his confinement and fearing the beatings will worsen, Huck escapes from Pap by faking his own death, killing a pig and spreading its blood all over the cabin. Hiding on Jackson's Island in the middle of the Mississippi River, Huck watches the townspeople search the river for his body. After a few days on the island, he encounters Jim, one of Miss Watson's slaves. Jim has run away from Miss Watson after hearing her talk about selling him to a plantation down the river, where he would be treated horribly and separated from his wife and children. Huck and Jim team up, despite Huck's uncertainty about the legality or morality of helping a runaway slave. While they camp out on the island, a great storm causes the Mississippi to flood. Huck and Jim spy a log raft and a house floating past the island. They capture the raft and loot the house, finding in it the body of a man who has been shot. Jim refuses to let Huck see the dead man's face.

Although the island is blissful, Huck and Jim are forced to leave after Huck learns from a woman onshore that her husband has seen smoke coming from the island and believes that Jim is hiding out there. Huck also learns that a reward has been offered for Jim's capture. Huck and Jim start downriver on the raft, intending to leave it at the mouth of the Ohio River and proceed up that river by steamboat to the free states, where slavery is prohibited. Several days' travel takes them past St. Louis, and they have a close encounter with a gang of robbers on a wrecked steamboat. They manage to escape with the robbers' loot.

During a night of thick fog, Huck and Jim miss the mouth of the Ohio and encounter a group of men looking for escaped slaves. Huck has a brief moral crisis about concealing stolen "property"—Jim, after all, belongs to Miss Watson—but then lies to the men and tells them that his father is on the raft suffering from smallpox. Terrified of the disease, the men give Huck money and hurry away. Unable to backtrack to the mouth of the Ohio, Huck and Jim continue downriver. The next night, a steamboat slams into their raft, and Huck and Jim are separated.

Huck ends up in the home of the kindly Grangerfords, a family of Southern aristocrats locked in a bitter and silly feud with a neighboring clan, the Shepherdsons. The elopement of a Grangerford daughter with a

Shepherdson son leads to a gun battle in which many in the families are killed. While Huck is caught up in the feud, Jim shows up with the repaired raft. Huck hurries to Jim's hiding place, and they take off down the river.
A few days later, Huck and Jim rescue a pair of men who are being pursued by armed bandits. The men, clearly con artists, claim to be a displaced English duke (the duke) and the long-lost heir to the French throne (the dauphin). Powerless to tell two white adults to leave, Huck and Jim continue down the river with the pair of "aristocrats." The duke and the dauphin pull several scams in the small towns along the river. Coming into one town, they hear the story of a man, Peter Wilks, who has recently died and left much of his inheritance to his two brothers, who should be arriving from England any day. The duke and the dauphin enter the town pretending to be Wilks's brothers. Wilks's three nieces welcome the con men and quickly set about liquidating the estate. A few townspeople become skeptical, and Huck, who grows to admire the Wilks sisters, decides to thwart the scam. He steals the dead Peter Wilks's gold from the duke and the dauphin but is forced to stash it in Wilks's coffin. Huck then reveals all to the eldest Wilks sister, Mary Jane.

Huck's plan for exposing the duke and the dauphin is about to unfold when Wilks's real brothers arrive from England. The angry townspeople hold both sets of Wilks claimants, and the duke and the dauphin just barely escape in the ensuing confusion. Fortunately for the sisters, the gold is found. Unfortunately for Huck and Jim, the duke and the dauphin make it back to the raft just as Huck and Jim are pushing off.

After a few more small scams, the duke and dauphin commit their worst crime yet: they sell Jim to a local farmer, telling him Jim is a runaway for whom a large reward is being offered. Huck finds out where Jim is being held and resolves to free him. At the house where Jim is a prisoner, a woman greets Huck excitedly and calls him "Tom." As Huck quickly discovers, the people holding Jim are none other than Tom Sawyer's aunt and uncle, Silas and Sally Phelps. The Phelpses mistake Huck for Tom, who is due to arrive for a visit, and Huck goes along with their mistake. He intercepts Tom between the Phelps house and the steamboat dock, and Tom pretends to be his own younger brother, Sid.

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Tom hatches a wild plan to free Jim, adding all sorts of unnecessary obstacles even though Jim is only lightly secured. Huck is sure Tom's plan will get them all killed, but he complies nonetheless. After a seeming eternity of pointless preparation, during which the boys ransack the Phelps's house and make Aunt Sally miserable, they put the plan into action. Jim is freed, but a pursuer shoots Tom in the leg. Huck is forced to get a doctor, and Jim sacrifices his freedom to nurse Tom. All are returned to the Phelps's house, where Jim ends up back in chains.

When Tom wakes the next morning, he reveals that Jim has actually been a free man all along, as Miss Watson, who made a provision in her will to free Jim, died two months earlier. Tom had planned the entire escape idea all as a game and had intended to pay Jim for his troubles. Tom's Aunt Polly then shows up, identifying "Tom" and "Sid" as Huck and Tom. Jim tells Huck, who fears for his future—particularly that his father might reappear—that the body they found on the floating house off Jackson's Island had been Pap's. Aunt Sally then steps in and offers to adopt Huck, but Huck, who has had enough "sivilizing," announces his plan to set out for the West.

Character List

Huckleberry "Huck" Finn

The protagonist and narrator of the novel. Huck is the thirteen-year-old son of the local drunk of St. Petersburg, Missouri, a town on the Mississippi River. Frequently forced to survive on his own wits and always a bit of an outcast, Huck is thoughtful, intelligent (though formally uneducated), and willing to come to his own conclusions about important matters, even if these conclusions contradict society's norms. Nevertheless, Huck is still a boy, and is influenced by others, particularly by his imaginative friend, Tom.

In-depth characterization of Huckleberry Finn

From the beginning of the novel, Twain makes it clear that Huck is a boy who comes from the lowest levels of white society. His father is a drunk and a ruffian who disappears for months on end. Huck himself is dirty and

frequently homeless. Although the Widow Douglas attempts to “reform” Huck, he resists her attempts and maintains his independent ways. The community has failed to protect him from his father, and though the Widow finally gives Huck some of the schooling and religious training that he had missed, he has not been indoctrinated with social values in the same way a middle-class boy like Tom Sawyer has been. Huck’s distance from mainstream society makes him skeptical of the world around him and the ideas it passes on to him.

Huck’s instinctual distrust and his experiences as he travels down the river force him to question the things society has taught him. According to the law, Jim is Miss Watson’s property, but according to Huck’s sense of logic and fairness, it seems “right” to help Jim. Huck’s natural intelligence and his willingness to think through a situation on its own merits lead him to some conclusions that are correct in their context but that would shock white society. For example, Huck discovers, when he and Jim meet a group of slave-hunters, that telling a lie is sometimes the right course of action.

Because Huck is a child, the world seems new to him. Everything he encounters is an occasion for thought. Because of his background, however, he does more than just apply the rules that he has been taught—he creates his own rules. Yet Huck is not some kind of independent moral genius. He must still struggle with some of the preconceptions about blacks that society has ingrained in him, and at the end of the novel, he shows himself all too willing to follow Tom Sawyer’s lead. But even these failures are part of what makes Huck appealing and sympathetic. He is only a boy, after all, and therefore fallible. Imperfect as he is, Huck represents what anyone is capable of becoming: a thinking, feeling human being rather than a mere cog in the machine of society.

Tom Sawyer

Huck’s friend, and the protagonist of *Tom Sawyer*, the novel to which *Huckleberry Finn* is ostensibly the sequel. In *Huckleberry Finn*, Tom serves as a foil to Huck: imaginative, dominating, and given to wild plans taken from the plots of adventure novels, Tom is everything that Huck is not. Tom’s stubborn reliance on the “authorities” of romance novels leads him to acts of incredible stupidity and startling cruelty. His rigid adherence to

society's conventions aligns Tom with the "sivilizing" forces that Huck learns to see through and gradually abandons.

Jim

One of Miss Watson's household slaves. Jim is superstitious and occasionally sentimental, but he is also intelligent, practical, and ultimately more of an adult than anyone else in the novel. Jim's frequent acts of selflessness, his longing for his family, and his friendship with both Huck and Tom demonstrate to Huck that humanity has nothing to do with race. Because Jim is a black man and a runaway slave, he is at the mercy of almost all the other characters in the novel and is often forced into ridiculous and degrading situations.

Pap Finn

Huck's father, the town drunk and ne'er-do-well. Pap is a wreck when he appears at the beginning of the novel, with disgusting, ghostlike white skin and tattered clothes. The illiterate Pap disapproves of Huck's education and beats him frequently. Pap represents both the general debasement of white society and the failure of family structures in the novel.

The duke and the dauphin

A pair of con men whom Huck and Jim rescue as they are being run out of a river town. The older man, who appears to be about seventy, claims to be the "dauphin," the son of King Louis XVI and heir to the French throne. The younger man, who is about thirty, claims to be the usurped Duke of Bridgewater. Although Huck quickly realizes the men are frauds, he and Jim remain at their mercy, as Huck is only a child and Jim is a runaway slave. The duke and the dauphin carry out a number of increasingly disturbing swindles as they travel down the river on the raft.

Widow Douglas and Miss Watson

Two wealthy sisters who live together in a large house in St. Petersburg and who adopt Huck. The gaunt and severe Miss Watson is the most prominent representative of the hypocritical religious and ethical values Twain criticizes in the novel. The Widow Douglas is somewhat gentler in her beliefs and has more patience with the mischievous Huck. When Huck acts in a manner

contrary to societal expectations, it is the Widow Douglas whom he fears disappointing.

Judge Thatcher

The local judge who shares responsibility for Huck with the Widow Douglas and is in charge of safeguarding the money that Huck and Tom found at the end of When Huck discovers that Pap has returned to town, he wisely signs his fortune over to the Judge, who doesn't really accept the money, but tries to comfort Huck. Judge Thatcher has a daughter, Becky, who was Tom's girlfriend in and whom Huck calls "Bessie" in this novel.

The Grangerfords

A family that takes Huck in after a steamboat hits his raft, separating him from Jim. The kindhearted Grangerfords, who offer Huck a place to stay in their tacky country home, are locked in a long-standing feud with another local family, the Shepherdsons. Twain uses the two families to engage in some rollicking humor and to mock a overly romanticizes ideas about family honor. Ultimately, the families' sensationalized feud gets many of them killed.

The Wilks family

At one point during their travels, the duke and the dauphin encounter a man who tells them of the death of a local named Peter Wilks, who has left behind a rich estate. The man inadvertently gives the con men enough information to allow them to pretend to be Wilks's two brothers from England, who are the recipients of much of the inheritance. The duke and the dauphin's subsequent conning of the good-hearted and vulnerable Wilks sisters is the first step in the con men's increasingly cruel series of scams, which culminate in the sale of Jim.

Silas and Sally Phelps

Tom Sawyer's aunt and uncle, whom Huck coincidentally encounters in his search for Jim after the con men have sold him. Sally is the sister of Tom's aunt, Polly. Essentially good people, the Phelpses nevertheless hold Jim in custody and try to return him to his rightful owner. Silas and Sally are the unknowing victims of many of Tom and Huck's "preparations" as they try to free Jim. The Phelpses are the only intact and functional family in this novel, yet they are too much for Huck, who longs to escape their "sivilizing" influence.

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Aunt Polly

Tom Sawyer's aunt and guardian and Sally Phelps's sister. Aunt Polly appears at the end of the novel and properly identifies Huck, who has pretended to be Tom, and Tom, who has pretended to be his own younger brother, Sid.

Themes

Racism and Slavery

Although Twain wrote *Huckleberry Finn* two decades after the Emancipation Proclamation and the end of the Civil War, America—and especially the South—was still struggling with racism and the aftereffects of slavery. By the early 1880s, Reconstruction, the plan to put the United States back together after the war and integrate freed slaves into society, had hit shaky ground, although it had not yet failed outright. As Twain worked on his novel, race relations, which seemed to be on a positive path in the years following the Civil War, once again became strained. The imposition of Jim Crow laws, designed to limit the power of blacks in the South in a variety of indirect ways, brought the beginning of a new, insidious effort to oppress. The new racism of the South, less institutionalized and monolithic, was also more difficult to combat. Slavery could be outlawed, but when white Southerners enacted racist laws or policies under a professed motive of self-defense against newly freed blacks, far fewer people, Northern or Southern, saw the act as immoral and rushed to combat it.

Although Twain wrote the novel after slavery was abolished, he set it several decades earlier, when slavery was still a fact of life. But even by Twain's time, things had not necessarily gotten much better for blacks in the South. In this light, we might read Twain's depiction of slavery as an allegorical representation of the condition of blacks in the United States even the abolition of slavery. Just as slavery places the noble and moral Jim under the control of white society, no matter how degraded that white society may be, so too did the insidious racism that arose near the end of Reconstruction oppress black men for illogical and hypocritical reasons. In *Huckleberry Finn*, Twain, by exposing the hypocrisy of slavery, demonstrates how racism distorts the oppressors as much as it does those who are oppressed. The

result is a world of moral confusion, in which seemingly “good” white people such as Miss Watson and Sally Phelps express no concern about the injustice of slavery or the cruelty of separating Jim from his family.

Intellectual and Moral Education

By focusing on Huck’s education, *Huckleberry Finn* fits into the tradition of the bildungsroman: a novel depicting an individual’s maturation and development. As a poor, uneducated boy, for all intents and purposes an orphan, Huck distrusts the morals and precepts of the society that treats him as an outcast and fails to protect him from abuse. This apprehension about society, and his growing relationship with Jim, lead Huck to question many of the teachings that he has received, especially regarding race and slavery. More than once, we see Huck choose to “go to hell” rather than go along with the rules and follow what he has been taught. Huck bases these decisions on his experiences, his own sense of logic, and what his developing conscience tells him.

On the raft, away from civilization, Huck is especially free from society’s rules, able to make his own decisions without restriction. Through deep introspection, he comes to his own conclusions, unaffected by the accepted—and often hypocritical—rules and values of Southern culture. By the novel’s end, Huck has learned to “read” the world around him, to distinguish good, bad, right, wrong, menace, friend, and so on. His moral development is sharply contrasted to the character of Tom Sawyer, who is influenced by a bizarre mix of adventure novels and Sunday-school teachings, which he combines to justify his outrageous and potentially harmful escapades.

The Hypocrisy of “Civilized” Society

When Huck plans to head west at the end of the novel in order to escape further “sivilizing,” he is trying to avoid more than regular baths and mandatory school attendance. Throughout the novel, Twain depicts the society that surrounds Huck as little more than a collection of degraded rules and precepts that defy logic. This faulty logic appears early in the novel, when the new judge in town allows Pap to keep custody of Huck. The judge privileges Pap’s “rights” to his son as his natural father over Huck’s welfare. At the same time, this decision comments on a system that puts a white man’s rights to his “property”—his slaves—over the welfare and freedom of a black man. In implicitly comparing the plight of slaves to the plight of Huck at

the hands of Pap, Twain implies that it is impossible for a society that owns slaves to be just, no matter how "civilized" that society believes and proclaims itself to be.
Again and again, Huck encounters individuals who seem good—Sally Phelps, for example—but who Twain takes care to show are prejudiced slave-owners. This shaky sense of justice that Huck repeatedly encounters lies at the heart of society's problems: terrible acts go unpunished, yet frivolous crimes, such as drunkenly shouting insults, lead to executions. Sherburn's speech to the mob that has come to lynch him accurately summarizes the view of society Twain gives in *Huckleberry Finn*: rather than maintain collective welfare, society instead is marked by cowardice, a lack of logic, and profound selfishness.

Guilt/Shame

Huck experiences guilt and shame at various points throughout the novel, and these feelings force him into serious questions about morality. Huck's guilt is largely tied to the religious morality he learned from Widow Douglas. Not long after he and Jim set out on their journey, Huck realizes that by helping Jim escape he has done harm to Jim's owner, Miss Watson. He explains: "Conscience says to me, . . . 'What did that poor old woman do to you, that you could treat her so mean?' . . . I got to feeling so mean and so miserable I most wished I was dead" (Chapter 16). Here Huck recognizes that has broken the Golden Rule of Christianity, which states, *Do unto others as you would have them do unto you*. Huck remains conflicted until near the end of the book. The breaking point comes in Chapter 31, when he finds himself unable to pray. Huck realizes that in his heart he doesn't believe Jim should be returned to slavery, and saying so in a prayer would result in him "playing double" and hence lying to God. When he finally resolves to help Jim escape for the last time, Huck banishes the last vestiges of guilt.

Empathy

The theme of empathy is closely tied to the theme of guilt. Huck's feelings of empathy help his moral development by enabling him to imagine what it's like to be in someone else's shoes. The theme of empathy first arises when Huck worries about the thieves he and Jim abandon on the wrecked steamboat. Once he's escaped immediate danger, Huck grows concerned about the men: "I begun to think how dreadful it was, even for murderers, to be in such

a fix." Huck's concern drives him to go and find help. Another significant example of empathy in the book comes in Chapter 23, when Huck wakes up to Jim "moaning and mourning to himself." Huck imagines that Jim is feeling "low and homesick" because he's thinking about his wife and children: "I do believe he cared just as much for his people as white folks for their'n. It don't seem natural, but I reckon it's so." Despite the residual racism in this comment, Huck's capacity for empathy has a strong humanizing power.

Adventure

Ironically given the book's title, the theme of "adventure" in *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* tends to conjure a sense of immaturity and childish make-believe. The book begins by pointing backward to its prequel, *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer*, and the boyish exploits that resulted in Tom and Huck striking it rich. Chapter 2 continues this type of adventure, with Tom and his "Gang" of highwaymen. This spirit of adventure as play follows Huck beyond St. Petersburg. But the real-life situations Huck and Jim find themselves in frequently demonstrate that adventure is not what Tom and his games have made it out to be. The first of these situations occurs in Chapters 12 and 13, when Huck gets excited about a wrecked steamboat, but quickly flees upon discovering that three real murderers are hiding out there. By the end of the book, when Tom returns and tries to enforce an overly complicated and "romantical" plan for Jim's escape, the very foundations of adventure have come to strike Huck as childish and unrealistic. Even so, Huck retains some lust for adventure, which he demonstrates when he declares his intent to leave Pikesville and "light out for the Territory."

Symbols

The Mississippi River

For Huck and Jim, the Mississippi River is the ultimate symbol of freedom. Alone on their raft, they do not have to answer to anyone. The river carries them toward freedom: for Jim, toward the free states; for Huck, away from his abusive father and the restrictive "sivilizing" of St. Petersburg. Much like the river itself, Huck and Jim are in flux, willing to change their attitudes about each other with little prompting. Despite their freedom, however, they soon find that they are not completely free from the evils and influences of the

towns on the river's banks. Even early on, the real world intrudes on the paradise of the raft: the river floods, bringing Huck and Jim into contact with criminals, wrecks, and stolen goods. Then, a thick fog causes them to miss the mouth of the Ohio River, which was to be their route to freedom.
As the novel progresses, then, the river becomes something other than the inherently benevolent place Huck originally thought it was. As Huck and Jim move further south, the duke and the dauphin invade the raft, and Huck and Jim must spend more time ashore. Though the river continues to offer a refuge from trouble, it often merely effects the exchange of one bad situation for another. Each escape exists in the larger context of a continual drift southward, toward the Deep South and entrenched slavery. In this transition from idyllic retreat to source of peril, the river mirrors the complicated state of the South. As Huck and Jim's journey progresses, the river, which once seemed a paradise and a source of freedom, becomes merely a short-term means of escape that nonetheless pushes Huck and Jim ever further toward danger and destruction.

The Raft

Through their journeys on the Mississippi River, the raft Huck and Jim build together comes to symbolize a space outside of the dictates for society where they can redefine proper conduct and behavior. Whereas Huck describes his other homes as stifling or confining, he describes the raft as being "free and easy." Notably, life on the raft is only comfortable so long as everyone treats everyone else with respect. When Huck plays mean tricks on Jim or considers turning him in, they face terrifying fog and even the raft breaking. After Jim and Huck establish a respectful friendship, their life on the raft is pleasant and enjoyable.
At first the duke and dauphin appear to uphold the rules of the raft. The dauphin reminds the duke that a raft is a small space and one person's rudeness can disrupt its atmosphere. However, the duke and the dauphin are not actually prepared to be respectful. Even before they decide to try and sell Jim, their plans for hiding him involve tying him up, which makes Jim uncomfortable. Unsurprisingly, the duke and dauphin throw off the equilibrium of the raft, and eventually bring about the end of Huck and Jim's idyllic society.

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Jim

As the primary Black character in the book, Jim becomes a symbol for the larger injustices of the institution of slavery and anti-Black racism. Every time Huck has a crisis of conscience about stealing Miss Watson's "property," he finds himself stuck on how terrible he'd feel betraying Jim. This apparent contradiction—that Jim is a person whom Huck can choose to be loyal to or betray while also legally being someone's property—highlights the fundamental repugnancy of slavery. Furthermore, Jim's backstory and motivations are inherently sympathetic. He wants to escape both to avoid facing the terrors of enslavement farther south, and also to free his wife and children. By emphasizing that Jim has a family whom he thinks about constantly and cares about, the novel demonstrates how awful it is that he not only faces separation from them but will also have to purchase the right to be near them. Finally, Jim acts as a more responsible father figure to Huck than Huck's own father. Jim's kindness and care toward Huck emphasizes Jim's humanity and implicitly criticizes any society that would consider Huck's betrayal of Jim to be the moral decision.

Topics

Huck Finn is a thirteen-year-old boy. Why does Twain use a child as the center of consciousness in this book ?

In using a child protagonist, Twain is able to imply a comparison between the powerlessness and vulnerability of a child and the powerlessness and vulnerability of a black man in pre–Civil War America. Huck and Jim frequently find themselves in the same predicaments: each is abused, each faces the threat of losing his freedom, and each is constantly at the mercy of adult white men. As we see in Huck's moral dilemmas, however, Jim is also vulnerable to Huck, who, although he occupies the lowest rung of the white social ladder, is white nonetheless. Twain also uses his child protagonist to dramatize the conflict between societal or received morality on the one hand and a different kind of morality based on intuition and experience on the other. As a boy, Huck is a character who can develop morally, whose mind is still open and being formed, who does not take his principles and values for granted. By tracing the education and experiences of a boy, Twain shows that

conclusions about right and wrong that are based on logic and experience often stand at odds with the society's rules and morals, which are often hypocritical rather than logical.

Discuss Twain's use of dialects in the novel. What effect does this usage have on the reader? Does it make the novel less of an artistic achievement ?

Twain's use of dialect, which has proved controversial over the years, lends to the overall realism and vividness of *Huckleberry Finn*. Because it is sometimes difficult to decipher the character's speech while reading, we are almost forced to read aloud: at the very least, to read this novel, one has to be able to "hear" the voices in one's own head. Performance is important in this novel, as Tom Sawyer's follies and the duke and the dauphin's cons demonstrate. Furthermore, in the world of the novel, the way in which a character speaks is closely tied to that character's status in society. Huck, who was born in poverty and has lived on the margins of society ever since, speaks in a much rougher, more uneducated-sounding dialect than the speech Tom uses. Jim's speech, meanwhile, which seems rough and uneducated, is frequently not all that different from Huck's speech or the speech of other white characters. In this way, Twain implies that it is society, wealth, and upbringing, rather than any sort of innate ignorance or roughness, that determines an individual's educational opportunities and manner of self-expression.

Discuss the use of the river as a symbol in the novel.

At the beginning of *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, the river is a symbol of freedom and change. Huck and Jim flow with the water and never remain in one place long enough to be pinned down by a particular set of rules. Compared to the "civilized" towns along the banks of the Mississippi, the raft on the river represents an peaceful, alternative space where Huck and Jim, free of hassles and disapproving stares, can enjoy one another's company and revel in the small pleasures of life, like smoking a pipe and watching the stars.
As the novel continues, however, the real world beyond the Mississippi's banks quickly intrudes on the calm, protected space of the river. Huck and

Jim come across wrecks and threatening snags, and bounty hunters, thieves, and con artists accost them. Although the river still provides refuge when things go wrong ashore, Huck and Jim’s relation to the river seems to change and become less friendly. After they miss the mouth of the Ohio River, the Mississippi ceases to carry them toward freedom. Instead, the current sweeps them toward the Deep South, which represents the ultimate threat to Jim and a dead end for Huck. Just as the Mississippi would inevitably carry Huck and Jim to New Orleans (where Miss Watson had wanted to send Jim anyway), escape from the evils inherent in humanity is never truly possible.