***The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn***

***Chapter 13:***

***Translation:***

I caught my breath and almost fainted. We were trapped on a wrecked ship with a gang of murderers! But this wasn’t the time to get emotional. We HAD to find that boat so that we could escape. We made our way down the starboard side, shaking with fear as we went. It was slow work, and it seemed like a week passed before we made it to the stern. No sign of a boat, though. Jim said he didn’t believe he could make it any further. He said he was so scared he hardly had any strength left. But I said we had to continue because we’d be in trouble if we stayed on this wreck. So we continued on. We headed toward the stern of the cabin area. When we got there, we scrabbled along toward the skylight in front. We hung on to the shutters because the edge of the skylight was in the water. When we got pretty close to the hallway door, we saw the skiff! I could just make it out. I felt so thankful that we’d found it. I was a second away from climbing aboard when just then the door opened. One of the men stuck his head out just a couple of feet from me. I thought I was a deadman, but he jerked it back in and said: “Put that damn lantern out, Bill!” He flung a bag of something into the boat, and then climbed in and sat down. It was Packard. Then Bill came out and climbed aboard. Packard said in a low voice: “All right—off we go!” I was so weak that I could barely hang onto the shutters. But I heard Bill say: “Hold on—did you do it?” “No. Didn’t you?” “No. So he’s still got his share of the cash?” “Well, come on then. No use in taking loot and leaving money behind.” “Hey, won’t he suspect that we’re up to something?” “Maybe, maybe not. But we’ve got to get it—can’t just leave it here. Come on.” So they got out of the boat, climbed back on board the steamboat, and went back inside the cabins. The door slammed shut because it was on the side of the boat that was tilted upward. I jumped in the boat in a split second, and Jim came running after me. I got out my knife, cut the rope, and away we went! We didn’t touch the oars and we didn’t speak—not even a whisper. We barely breathed. We glided along quickly, dead silent, past the tip of the paddlewheel at the stern. A second or two more and we were a hundred yards downstream from the wreck. The darkness swallowed it up, every bit of her. We e knew we were safe. When we were three or four hundred yards downstream, we saw the lantern appear like a spark in the darkness at the cabin door. We knew that the scoundrels had realized their boat was gone and that they were now in just as much trouble as Jim Turner. Jim started rowing, and we took off after our raft. I began to worry about the men on the wreck—I guess I hadn’t had time to think about them before. I began to think how awful it would be to be in their position, even if they were murderers. After all, I might become a murderer like them one day? How would I like to be stranded like that? So I turned to Jim and said: “The first light on shore that we see we’ll go back and land a hundred yards up or downstream from it. We’ll find a good hiding place for you and the skiff. Then I’ll make up a good story to convince somebody to go out to that wreck to rescue the gang. That way, they can be hanged when their time comes.” But that idea turned out to be a failure. The storm soon picked up again, and this time it was worse than before. The rain poured down, we couldn’t see any lights on shore. I suppose everyone was in bed. We drifted downstream, watching for lights and our raft. After a long time, the rain finally left up. The clouds remained, though, and the lightning kept flashing. Pretty soon we could see something black floating ahead of us in the river. We headed for it. It was the raft. We were so glad to get back on board. We saw a light to the right on the shore, so I said we should head toward it. The skiff was half full of the loot that the gang had stolen from the wreck, so we piled all up on the raft. I told Jim to stay on the raft and float about two miles downstream. There, he should make a fire and keep it burning til I came back. I picked up the oars in the skiff and started rowing toward the light on the shore. As I got closer, I could see a few more lights and realized it was a village up on a hillside. I continued heading toward the light and as I got closer, I saw that it was a lantern hangingin on a ferry. I looked for the ferry’s watchman, wondering where he’d be sleeping. Eventually I found him sitting near the [bitts](javascript:void(0);)at the front of the boat. He was asleep with his head resting between his knees. I nudged his shoulder two or three times and began to cry. He woke up startled, but when he saw who it was, he only yawned and stretched. Then he said: “Hey, what’s up? Don’t cry, kid. What’s the matter?” I said: “Pap and mom and my sis, and….” Then I broke down in tears. He said: “Come now, don’t cry like that. We all have our problems, and yours will work out in the end. What’s the matter with your family?” “They’re… they’re…. Are you the watchman of the boat?” “Yes,” he said in a self-satisified way. “I’m the captain, owner, mate, pilot, watchman, and head deck-hand of this ferry. And sometimes I’m the cargo and the passengers too. I’m not as rich as that guy Jim Hornback, and I can’t go throwing money around to every Tom, Dick, and Harry like he can. But I’ve told him many times that I would never trade places with him. I say the sailor’s life is the life for me, and I’ll be darned if I’d live two miles out of town where nothing exciting ever happens. No, I wouldn’t, not for all the riches in the world, says I….” I interrupted him and said: “They’re in an awful lot of trouble and….” “WHO is?” “My pap and mom and sis and Miss Hooker. And if you’d take your ferryboat and go up there….” “Up where? Where are they?” “On the wreck.” “What wreck?” “Well, there’s only one!” “What, you don’t mean the wreck of the steamboat Walter Scott?” “Yes.” “Good God! What are they doing there, for goodness sake?” “Well, they didn’t go there on purpose.” “I’m sure they didn’t! My God, they don’t stand a chance if I don’t get them off there fast enough! Why, how in the world did they ever get into such a mess?” “Well, Miss Hooker visiting in the town up there….” “You mean Booth’s Landing. Go on.” “She was visiting Booth’s Landing, and around evening she started to head back across the river in the horse ferry with her n----- woman to stay the night with her friend, Miss What’s-her-name—I can’t remember. Anyway, the ferry lost its steering oar and swung around and went floating down the river, stern first, for about two miles until it ran into the wreck. The ferryman and the n----- woman and the horses were lost, but Miss Hooker was able to grab hold of the wreck and climb aboard. About an hour after nightfall my family and I came along on our trading skiff. It was so dark that we didn’t notice the wreck until we’d run into it ourselves. Everyone survived, except Bill Whipple—oh, he was the nicest guy! I wish I’d died instead of him!” “My word! That’s the craziest thing I’ve ever heard! What did you all do after that?” “Well, we yelled and carried on to get someone’s attention, but the river is so wide that no one could hear us. So pap said someone had to go ashore to get help. I was the only one that could swim, so I went for it. Miss Hooker said that if I couldn’t get anyone to help me, I should come here and find her uncle, who’d help. I reached the shore about a mile downstream, and have been running around trying to get someone to help. But no one would help me. They just say, ‘What? On a night like this with the current as strong as it is? It wouldn’t be any use trying. Go for the steam ferry.’ Now, if you’d go and….” “By George, I’d LIKE to help you, but, darn it, I don’t know if I can. But who in the world is going to PAY for it? You imagine your pap can….” “Oh that’s no problem. Miss Hooker told me specifically that her Uncle Hornback….” “Great God! Hornback is her uncle? Look here, then. You head for that light over there. Turn west and go for about a quarter of a mile until you come to the tavern. Tell them to send you out to Jim Hornback’s, and he’ll pay the bill. And don’t waste any time getting there, because he’ll want to hear the news. Tell him that I’ll have his niece safe and sound before he can get to town. Hurry up now. I’m going up around the corner to wake up my engineer.” I headed out toward the light, but, as soon as he turned the corner, I went back and got into the skiff. I drifted in the smooth water along the shore for about six hundred yards, then wedged the skiff in among some other wooden boats. I wasn’t going to be able to relax until I actually saw the ferry leave. For the most part, I was feeling pretty good for having gone out of my way to rescue that gang. Not many people would have done it. I wished the widow knew what I had done. I thought she’d be proud of me for helping those scoundrels, because scoundrels and deadbeats are the kinds of people that the widow and other good people are the most interested in helping. Well, before long I saw the steamboat wreck itself come floating down the river! A cold shiver ran through me, and I took the skiff and headed toward her. The boat had sunk pretty deep, and I knew in a moment that anyone inside was probably dead. I rowed all around the wreck, calling out to anyone still inside, but I didn’t get an answer. Everything was dead quiet. I felt a little heavy-hearted about the gang, but not for long. I figured that if they could be firm about these things, so could I. Then I saw the ferryboat coming along, so I headed, pointed diagonally, out toward the middle of the river. When I figured I was out of sight, I started rowing. I looked back and saw the ferry searching for any sign of Miss Hooker’s remains, since the captain knew her uncle Hornback would want them. Eventually, the ferry gave up and went back to shore. I focused on rowing and went zipping down the river. It seemed a might long time before I saw Jim’s light. It seemed a thousand miles away when I finally saw it. The sky was beginning to get a little gray in the east by the time I got there, so we headed for an island. We hid the raft, sunk the skiff, went to bed, and slept like the dead.

***Summary:***

* Huck is not too thrilled about being stuck on a sinking ship with three robbers, two of whom have no qualms about murdering their friend. But he determinedly resolves that "it warnt no time to be sentimentering" (13.1).
* They make their way down to the far end of the ship and find the robbers' skiff. As the robbers approach, they hide in the darkness and watch Jake and Bill load it up with the stolen supplies.
* When the two robbers go back for more, Huck and Jim jump into the skiff and start off down the river, hoping to catch up with their own raft.
* Everything is great, except that Huck starts to have a moral crisis about leaving the men to die on the sinking steamship.
* Moral crises always come at super inconvenient times, right?
* As soon as they see lights on the shore, they'll stop and send someone back to the ship to help.
* When they reach the raft, Huck heads for shore in the skiff.
* He soon comes upon a ferryboat at the outset of a little town and greets the watchman. It's time for Huck, master of deception, to work some magic.
* Huck breaks down in tears and pretends that his family is stuck on the steamship and in mortal peril.
* He hams this up quite a bit.
* The watchman is all, "Great Scott!" He'd loved to help, but he doesn't know who's going to pay for the trouble it will take to go over and rescue these folks.
* Huck pretends that one of the women stuck on the ferry is the niece of the richest man in town.
* Apparently the watchman isn't as savvy as Mrs. Judith Loftus, because he takes off to rescue them.
* Huck knows he should beat it, too, but he feels like he has to stay and make sure the men are okay first.
* Also, he stops to congratulate himself on being such a good guy. If only the widow could see!
* But by the time the wreck comes floating toward him on the river, it looks like no one survived.
* Still, Huck isn't too heavy-hearted over the dead robbers. If they can stand it, he says, so can he.

***Analysis:***

Finally, Huck and Jim find the murderers' skiff. They are about to leave when they remember that they have forgotten to go through Jim Turner's belongings and get their share (before they leave him there to drown when the steamboat capsizes). When they left to go back to their partner, Huck and Jim jumped in the boat and cut the cord, not daring to even dip their oars, for fear of making noise. On the way, they encounter their old raft. They find that they amassed a fair amount of loot from the "Walter Scott" which they now put on the raft.

They had intended to get some help for the murderers, at least so they can be hung at the right time, but it starts to rain. Later on, Huck makes up a tall tale and gets a ferryboat captain to try and save them. But, by the time they get there, there is little doubt that the murderers are probably drowned. Finally, they watch the ferryboat slip away. They find shelter and go to sleep.

Huck and Jim, in their attempts to salvage the steamboat, had encountered some very dangerous individuals. They are stuck there until they find the murderers' skiff. After they leave the murderers, Huck has his usual strange battle with conscience. He now feels a bit sorry for the criminals, trapped as they are on a doomed steamboat- and takes on a disguised identity to encourage a ferryboat captain to rescue them. Huck's constant battle with right and wrong is one of the more charming aspects of this tale.

***Synopsis:***

Huck and Jim head for the robbers’ boat. The robbers put some stolen items in their boat but leave in order to take some more money from their victim inside the steamboat. Jim and Huck jump into the robbers’ boat and head off as quietly as possible. When they are a few hundred yards away, Huck feels bad for the robbers left stranded on the wreck because, after all, he himself might end up a murderer someday. Huck and Jim find their raft and then stop so that Huck can go ashore to get help. Once on land, Huck finds a ferry watchman and tells him his family is stranded on the Walter Scott steamboat wreck. Huck invents an elaborate story about how his family got on the wreck and convinces the watchman to take his ferry to help. Huck feels proud of his good deed and thinks the Widow Douglas would have approved of him helping the robbers because she often takes an interest in “rapscallions and dead beats.” Jim and Huck sink the robbers’ boat and then go to sleep. Meanwhile, the wreck of the Walter Scott drifts downstream and, although the ferryman has gone to investigate, the robbers clearly have not survived. Mrs. Loftus is one of the more sincere people Huck encounters throughout the course of the novel, but her attitude toward Jim makes her goodness somewhat problematic. Mrs. Loftus is clearly a clever woman, as we see in the tests she spontaneously designs to unmask Huck. Despite her charity toward Huck, however, Mrs. Loftus and her husband are only too happy to profit from capturing Jim, and her husband plans to bring a gun to hunt Jim like an animal. Mrs. Loftus makes a clear distinction between Huck, who tells her he has run away from a mean farmer, and Jim, who has done essentially the same thing by running away from an owner who is considering selling him. Whereas Mrs. Loftus and the rest of white society differentiate between an abused runaway slave and an abused runaway boy, Huck does not. Huck and Jim’s raft becomes a sort of haven of brotherhood and equality, as both find refuge and peace from a society that has treated them poorly. The two even engage in a bit of moral philosophizing about stealing. Though their resolution to give up stealing a few items to render their other stealing less sinful seems childish, it nevertheless represents an attempt to reconcile practical and moral concerns.

The pattern of Huck’s childishness getting both himself and Jim into trouble continues in these chapters, as Huck follows his boyish, Tom Sawyer–like impulses and nearly has a run-in with the robbers on the wrecked steamboat. There is no good reason why Huck and Jim should tie up to the wrecked ship, particularly at night and in a storm, but Huck is unable to resist. The two are lucky to escape, and the incident proves to be another reminder that even on the river they are not safe from the problems that plagued them at home—violence, cruelty, and powerlessness at the hands of any white adult. Huck’s attempts to reconcile the situation show that he is learning, despite his initial immaturity. When Huck acts like Tom Sawyer, trouble follows, but when he acts like himself—when he seeks to interpret and react to experience in a practical manner—things generally turn out fine.

The fact that Jim sees the foolishness of many of Huck’s endeavors but never restrains Huck reminds us of Jim’s extremely tenuous position as an escaped slave. In a number of instances in the novel, Jim protests when Huck formulates a foolish plan, but eventually gives in to the boy. Twain never explicitly explains Jim’s reasoning, but the implication is always there that Jim’s caution stems from his constant fear of being caught and returned to his former owner. After all, Huck, though a child, is a free, white child who could turn in Jim at any time and collect a large reward for doing so. Although this idea seems never to cross Huck’s mind, it lurks beneath the surface of Jim and Huck’s interactions and reminds us of the constant fear Jim lives with as an escaped slave.

***Critical Analysis:***

[Jim](https://www.cliffsnotes.com/literature/a/the-adventures-of-huckleberry-finn/character-analysis/jim) and [Huck](https://www.cliffsnotes.com/literature/a/the-adventures-of-huckleberry-finn/character-analysis/huckleberry-finn) continue down the river between the Missouri mountains and the "heavy timber" of Illinois, hiding the raft during the day and running several hours at night. The fifth night after they pass St. Louis, they come upon a steamboat crippled on a rock. Although Jim does not want to board the wreck and argues that they should ignore it, Huck convinces him that they need to explore.

On board, they overhear voices and see that two men have tied up a third and are discussing his fate. Certain that the wreck will come loose and sink, the two men decide to leave the tied man to a watery death. When Jim tries to untie the men's skiff and trap them on the wreck, he discovers the raft has broken loose and floated away. While the men are inside the cabin, Huck and Jim take the skiff and leave the wreck. Eventually they find the raft and pull the skiff and the men's supplies up on the deck.

When they come upon a village, Huck finds a ferryboat watchman and begins another elaborate story. He tells him that his family is up on the steamboat wreck, which readers learn is named the *Walter Scott.* The man hurries off to sound the alarm with visions of a reward in front of him.

Later that evening, Huck sees the wreck, which has come loose from the rocks and is quietly sinking as it drifts down the river.

[Twain](https://www.cliffsnotes.com/literature/a/the-adventures-of-huckleberry-finn/mark-twain-biography)'s decision to name the boat the *Walter Scott*continues his mockery of romantic novels and their authors. The wreck's importance to the novel, however, is found in the contrasting images of peace and brutality and Huck's inevitable deliberations on death.

Chapter 12 signals a separation from Huck and Jim's familiar surroundings as the two begin their journey down the Mississippi. The peaceful images of the river are similar to those that readers have seen in the many film adaptations of *Huck Finn*: Huck and Jim on a large and comfortable raft, free from outside interference and enjoying the serenity of their new life. Although the river is seen as a safe haven for Huck and Jim, the viciousness of the shore arrives in the form of the *Walter Scott* wreck. In this manner, Twain is able to interrupt the peaceful environment of the river by combining it with the brutality of men. The pattern is one that will recur when the duke and the king board the raft in Chapter 19.

Despite their savageness and unfeeling attitude, Huck cannot help but "worry about the men" as he leaves them to die. Huck's compassion is evident, and he does attempt to save the men by alerting the ferryboat watchman. The "Angel of Death," however, claims more victims as the *Walter Scott*breaks apart and sinks.

Glossary

**tow-head**sandbar with thick reeds.

**harrow-teeth**wood or metal spikes used to plow land.

**mushmelon a**cantaloupe or other moderate sized melon.

**jackstaff**an iron rod or wooden bar on a ship to which the sails are fastened.

**Sir Walter Scott**(1771-1832) Scottish poet and novelist, author of *Ivanhoe.*

***Critical Study:***

[Huck](https://www.coursehero.com/lit/The-Adventures-of-Huckleberry-Finn/character-analysis/#Huck) is scared as he realizes he is in a dangerous place. After quietly searching, he and [Jim](https://www.coursehero.com/lit/The-Adventures-of-Huckleberry-Finn/symbols/#Jim) find the robber's skiff. Just as they are about to get in, however, the robbers come out and are ready to take off. Instead they go back in to the third robber to get his money, and this break allows Huck and [Jim](https://www.coursehero.com/lit/The-Adventures-of-Huckleberry-Finn/character-analysis/#Jim) to take the skiff and escape.

Once they are in the clear Huck feels guilty about leaving the robbers on the boat to die. Huck and Jim find their raft and then stop. Huck goes ashore and finds the ferry shore watchman.

Huck makes up another story, and the watchman goes after the boat. Once the watchman leaves, Huck takes off in the skiff and meets Jim down river. They sink the skiff and fall asleep on their raft. On his way to meet Jim, Huck sees the wreck float by and realizes the robbers have likely died.

[Huck](https://www.coursehero.com/lit/The-Adventures-of-Huckleberry-Finn/character-analysis/#Huck) decides to try to get the robbers help because he might end up being a murderer himself. While there is meant to be a certain honor among thieves, it is hard to imagine any thief or murderer thinking as Huck does. Being raised by an abusive drunk who always is looking to knock him down has left Huck with a low opinion of himself. He does not recognize his heroic and decent qualities. Later on he rightfully feels proud of himself.

When Huck comes to recognize that he has done a nice thing, he wants the widow to know about it. He seeks the approval of adults and wants to be highly thought of. This can be attributed to his father and even the widow herself who was not proud of Huck when he was in her care. Huck does the right thing out of the goodness of his heart. The widow does things because of her religious beliefs. One can read into this that adherence to religion is not what causes a person to behave morally, which would seem to fit into [Twain](https://www.coursehero.com/lit/The-Adventures-of-Huckleberry-Finn/author/)'s point of view.

***Significance:***

Having lost their raft, Huck and Jim search along the crashed ferryboat for the robbers' skiff. Just as they find it, the two robbers emerge and place the goods they have looted into the skiff. The robbers then remember that their partner still has his share of the money, so they return to steal it from him. Before they can return back to the boat, Huck and Jim jump into the skiff, cut the rope, and speed away downstream. Before morning, they manage to find their raft again and recapture it.

Huck then goes ashore and finds a ferry night-watchman. To try to save the robbers, because he feels guilty leaving them for dead, he tells the man that his family ran into the wreck while traveling downriver and that they are stuck there. The man immediately gets his ferry moving to try and save them. However, before he gets very far, the wreck floats by, having come loose and sunk even further. Huck realizes that all three men aboard the wreck have surely drowned. Disappointed, but proud of his effort, Huck paddles downriver until he meets up with Jim. Together they sink the skiff and tie up to wait for daylight.

***Summary and Analysis Part by Part:***

***Summary Part 1:***

Terrified, [Huck](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-adventures-of-huckleberry-finn/characters/huckleberry-finn) and [Jim](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-adventures-of-huckleberry-finn/characters/jim) search for the skiff the men used to reach the wreck, at long last finding it. Just as they do, one of the three men pokes his head out of a door mere feet away from Huck. But the man doesn’t see him in the dark. After the man goes back with his partner into the steamboat, Huck and Jim make a break for the skiff, jump in, and cut it loose. They drift in silence.

***Analysis Part 1:***

In this suspenseful scene, it is bad luck that one of the three men aboard the boat almost discovers Huck and Jim, but good luck that he doesn’t. Fortunes change like this all the time in the novel, which points to the silliness of Huck and Jim’s superstitious beliefs that center only on bad luck.

***Summary Part 2:***

[Huck](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-adventures-of-huckleberry-finn/characters/huckleberry-finn) realizes it must be dreadful to be in the position the robber-murderers are in, trapped on the steamboat without any means of escape. After all, he figures that he himself might become a murderer one day, and then, he says, “how would I like it?” He thinks of ways to save the murderers from the steamboat, but the storm threatens to make any rescue impossible.

***Analysis Part 2:***

Whereas someone like Miss Watson would condemn the robbers, Huck’s moral system, not conforming to society’s, is based more on an elastic empathy. He is imaginatively free enough to truly do unto others as he would have done unto him, and is not afraid to put himself into an immoral person’s shoes.

***Summary Part 3:***

In the darkness, [Huck](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-adventures-of-huckleberry-finn/characters/huckleberry-finn) and [Jim](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-adventures-of-huckleberry-finn/characters/jim) spot their unmanned [raft](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-adventures-of-huckleberry-finn/symbols/the-raft) and paddle towards it. Upon reaching it, Jim boards, and Huck tells him to signal with a light when he has floated two miles so that Huck, in the skiff, can meet up with him. Soon afterward, as Huck paddles toward Jim’s light, Huck sees a village on the shore. After arriving there, he lies to a watchman, telling him that “pap, and mam, and sis, and Miss Hooker” are up the [river](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-adventures-of-huckleberry-finn/symbols/the-mississippi-river) in a wrecked steamboat, in dire trouble. The watchmen refuses to help, at first, but then paddles top help once Huck lies that the watchman will be paid for rescuing them.

***Analysis Part 3:***

Huck’s lies are often self-serving, but here he lies on behalf of the robber-murderers, in order to save them. Huck lies because he thinks that if he were to tell the truth, the watchman wouldn’t help the people drowning upstream. The robbers would let their companion drown; society would let all the robbers drown. Huck would always prevent people from drowning if at all possible.

***Summary Part 4:***

[Huck](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-adventures-of-huckleberry-finn/characters/huckleberry-finn) feels good about going to so much trouble to save the gang in the steamboat. He thinks that the [Widow](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-adventures-of-huckleberry-finn/characters/the-widow-douglas-and-miss-watson) would be proud of him, because “rapscallions and dead beats is the kind the widow and good people takes the most interest in.” Before long, the wreck is towed by the watchman’s ferryboat to the village. Huck, heavy-hearted, realizes that all the robbers must have died. He shoves off and, at last, rejoins [Jim](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-adventures-of-huckleberry-finn/characters/jim), on an island, where the pair “turned in and slept like dead people.”

***Analysis Part 4:***

Huck thinks that, to be truly good, one must take an interest in marginalized and misguided peoples. Note how it is after realizing that the robbers must have drowned that Huck sleeps like a dead person himself, both because he is exhausted, but also because he is, maybe subconsciously, experiencing what it is like to be dead, taking the ultimate sympathetic interest in the robbers.