***The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn***

***Chapter 26:***

***Synopsis:***

That night they have a big supper with a lot of guests. Huck calls one of the nieces the Harelip. She and Huck have a long conversation about his "home" in England. Huck barely lies his way through it, making up things as he goes along. He swears to the truth of this, knowing he is laying his hands on a dictionary. Mary Jane comes in at this moment and defends Huck and demands that the Harelip treat him right. Huck decides to steal the gold that has been tucked under the bed.

Huck, who is probably as fed up with his own lies as he is with those of the royal charlatans, decides to steal the $6000 of gold. He feels too much sympathy for the nieces- in particular, with the beautiful Mary Jane not to take action, despite its potential consequences.

### ***Analysis***

[Huck](https://www.coursehero.com/lit/The-Adventures-of-Huckleberry-Finn/character-analysis/#Huck) is questioned by Joanna, the youngest Wilks sister. He messes up the story repeatedly and has to come up with explanations. At the end of the conversation, Joanna is convinced he has told some lies. As she voices this opinion, Mary Jane walks into the room and hears her. She, along with Susan, rebukes her sister for talking this way to a stranger. They make Joanna apologize. Huck is moved by each of their behavior and resolves not to allow them to have their money stolen.

Huck searches for the money in the king's room. While Huck is searching the duke and the king come into the bedroom, so Huck hides in the closet and listens to their plans. The duke is ready to leave, but the king convinces him to stay and get the rest of the money. When they leave the room, Huck takes the money and hides it in his room. He plans on contacting Mary Jane once he leaves town to tell her where the money is hidden.

[Huck](https://www.coursehero.com/lit/The-Adventures-of-Huckleberry-Finn/character-analysis/#Huck) is finally ready to take action and abide by his conscience. This is not an easy decision as both he and [Jim](https://www.coursehero.com/lit/The-Adventures-of-Huckleberry-Finn/symbols/#Jim) are in a precarious position and have much to lose. To go against the duke and the king who have shown no morals (and would surely want revenge) takes courage and fortitude. Therefore, Huck's decision and actions to protect the sisters' money from being stolen are praiseworthy and represent a significant moment in his development. He adheres to his morals and acts solely for the sake of others.

The chapter also reveals that the king's greed is greater than the duke's. If the king would have been satisfied he and the duke would have had the money. During this time period, $6000 is a significant sum. Huck, who also has $6000 from the money he and [Tom](https://www.coursehero.com/lit/The-Adventures-of-Huckleberry-Finn/character-analysis/#Tom) Sawyer found, says this is enough money to live on. While the king would have $3000, as he would presumably split it in half with the duke, this is still a large of amount of money. However, he is not satisfied and cannot walk away when money is still out there to be had. Greed can be added to all his other flaws.

***Critical Study:***

The king and the duke put on a dramatic display and convince the family and most of the town that they are, indeed, Wilks' brothers. Sobbing, they greet Peter Wilks' daughters as their nieces and cry over the coffin. The king gives a speech that, according to [Huck](https://www.cliffsnotes.com/literature/a/the-adventures-of-huckleberry-finn/character-analysis/huckleberry-finn), is "all full of tears and flapdoodle."

Peter Wilks' will gives all of his possessions to his brothers and divides $6,000 in gold among the daughters and Harvey and William. In order to cement the confidence of the town, the duke and the king offer their portion of gold to the daughters, and the king invites everyone to Peter's funeral "orgies." The misuse of "obsequies" confirms the suspicions of the local doctor, who laughs as he realizes the two are frauds. When the doctor tries to convince the daughters to reject the duke and the king, the daughters give the money back to prove their faith in their "uncles."

The next morning, Joanna quizzes Huck about England, the king, and church. Similar to his disguise as "Sarah Mary Williams," Huck becomes confused trying to keep up with his lies, and the trust and kindness of the daughters makes him realize that he has to act. Later that evening, Huck discovers where the duke and the king hid the gold. He takes the $6,000 and waits for the opportunity to restore it to the rightful owners.

The king's "tears and flapdoodle" speech is a hilarious example of a con man at work, preying on the faith and the perceptions of conventional grief of his victims. Despite the obvious fraud recognized by readers, the family and the town easily accept the king and the duke as English. Huck is appalled by the act, but he also recognizes the persuasive power of "soul-butter" (flattery) and its effect on the ignorant townspeople. The humor increases when the king confuses "orgies" with funeral "obsequies," and his explanation of the Greek and Hebrew origins of the word only adds to the ridiculousness of the scene. In a sense, [Twain](https://www.cliffsnotes.com/literature/a/the-adventures-of-huckleberry-finn/mark-twain-biography) is commenting on humankind's capacity for ignorance, for everyone except the doctor falls victim to the scam.

After viewing the king's speech, Huck realizes how clever, and thus how dangerous, the duke and the king actually are. To act against them clearly jeopardizes his own well being, but, more important, it also jeopardizes the chances of freedom for [Jim](https://www.cliffsnotes.com/literature/a/the-adventures-of-huckleberry-finn/character-analysis/jim). Despite the danger, Huck concludes he must return the gold to the daughters.

Glossary

**doxolojer**the doxology; a hymn of praise to God.

**soul-butter**flattery.

**yaller***-***boys**gold coins.

**obsequies**funeral rites or ceremonies.

**Congress-water**mineral water from Saratoga said to have medicinal properities.

***Summary:***

* It seems in this grand charade that Huck has become the king's [valet](http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/valet), which he thinks is called a "valley."
* (Brain snack: "Valet" would be pronounced "vall-ay" in French, but the Brits usually pronounce it "Valet." Because they're cool like that.)
* They set up to stay in Peter's old house, where all the nieces still live.
* Everyone has dinner together that night, and Joanna, whom Huck undiplomatically calls "hare-lip" in his narrative, pumps him for information about England, where supposedly they've all come from.
* Huck digs himself into a hole making up contradictory stories about famous dead kings that go to his church in two different places in England. Oops.
* He ends up having to swear he's telling the truth over a book. He does it only because it's a dictionary and not the Bible.
* Meanwhile, Mary Jane overhears her sister giving their guest a hard time and lights into her about her lack of manners.
* This makes Huck feel guilty about letting the duke and king rob such a nice girl of her money, and he decides that he just can't allow such low-down thievery to take place right under his nose.
* Time for a new plan: Huck is going to steal the money, hide it, escape, and tell Mary Jane the whole thing by letter once everything has quieted down and the duke and king are out of the picture.
* He heads upstairs and starts hunting around the king's room for the dough.
* Of course, this is a fictional story, and we all know that in stories anyone who's ever hunting around someone else's room and hears footsteps has to hide in the closet.
* So Huck is hanging out behind Mary Jane's dresses in the back of the closet and listening in while the duke and the king (owners of aforementioned footsteps) talk about their plan.
* The duke is nervous, particularly since the doctor spoke out against them in public. He wants to take the cash and split.
* But the king has bigger dreams. He's not satisfied with taking the cash when there's almost $10,000 in property to be sold off first.
* The duke isn't too comfortable with this idea, either, since he doesn't want to leave these poor orphans without a cent and without a house.
* Of course, the king has an answer for this: after they've left, when everyone figures out they're not the real brothers, any sale of property will be invalidated. In other words, the girls will get their stuff back, and they'll actually be stiffing the buyers.
* The duke likes the sound of that, and the two men proceed to move the gold to a new hiding spot in the room. (Which is great for Huck to know.)
* When the conmen leave, Huck darts out of his hiding place and takes the gold.

***Critical Analysis:***

[The dauphin](https://www.sparknotes.com/lit/huckfinn/character/the-duke-and-the-dauphin/) arranges to stay in the Wilks house. [Huck](https://www.sparknotes.com/lit/huckfinn/character/huckleberry-huck-finn/) has supper with Joanna, the youngest Wilks sister, whom he calls “the hare-lip” because of her cleft lip, a birth defect. Joanna tests Huck’s knowledge of England, and he makes several slips, forgetting that he is supposedly from Sheffield and that the dauphin is supposed to be a Protestant minister. Finally, Joanna asks if he has made the entire thing up. Joanna’s sisters, Mary Jane and Susan, interrupt and instruct Joanna to be courteous to their guest, and she graciously apologizes. Huck feels terrible about letting such sweet women be swindled and resolves to get them their money back. He goes to the con men’s room to search for the money and hides when they enter. The duke wants to leave town that night, but the dauphin convinces him to stay until they have stolen all the family’s property. After the men leave the room, Huck finds the $6,000 in gold, takes it to his sleeping cubby, and then sneaks out late at night.

***Significance:***The night of the doctor's warning, Joanna and Huck eat together, since they are the youngest two people present. She asks him all about England, and Huck lies to her in order to sound knowledgeable. She catches him in several of the lies, and Huck keeps pretending to choke on a chicken bone in order to think of a way out. Mary Jane overhears Joanna telling Huck that she does not believe him and makes Joanna apologize to Huck for being so rude. Huck decides he cannot let the King and Duke steal the money from these extremely kind girls.

Huck goes to the King's room and hides when he hears the Duke and King approaching. The conmen debate whether they should leave now that suspicion has been raised or wait until the rest of the property is sold off. They choose to stay and hide their money in the straw tick mattress. Huck steals the money immediately and waits until it is safe to slip downstairs to hide it.

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

***Summary Part 1:***

The [duke](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-adventures-of-huckleberry-finn/characters/the-duke-and-king) and [king](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-adventures-of-huckleberry-finn/characters/the-duke-and-king) and [Huck](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-adventures-of-huckleberry-finn/characters/huckleberry-finn) are all given rooms in the [Wilks](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-adventures-of-huckleberry-finn/characters) home to sleep in. Later that night, the duke and king host a supper for a group of townspeople. The Wilks girls say that they have cooked poorly, but Huck thinks the food is fine and that the girls are just fishing for compliments.

***Analysis Part 1:***

The girl’s fishing for compliments is a very minor kind of fraudulence, where they say one thing while thinking another in order to exploit those around them. The duke and king are different from most people not in kind but degree.

***Summary Part 2:***

One of the Wilks girls, [Joanna](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-adventures-of-huckleberry-finn/characters), whom Huck calls “the hare-lip” because she is afflicted with that condition, asks Huck about England. Huck lies, but the hare-lip catches him in a contradiction, which Huck just barely wriggles out of with yet more lies. Huck resumes, but gets caught in another inconsistency, which he again wriggles out of, only to be caught in yet a third contradiction, all because he is forgetting his earlier lies.

***Analysis Part 2:***

Huck has been caught in lies before, but never as frequently as this. Why he is lying to protect the duke and king is strange in the first place, though, given how disgusted Huck is with the two con men. It could be that Huck contradicts himself so much here because his more mature and guilty subconscious is trying to expose the truth.

***Summary Part 3:***

[Joanna](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-adventures-of-huckleberry-finn/characters) accuses [Huck](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-adventures-of-huckleberry-finn/characters/huckleberry-finn) of telling her lies. Huck denies the accusation, swearing on a dictionary that he has told nothing but the truth. Joanna says she believes some of what he says but not all. Just then, [Mary Jane](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-adventures-of-huckleberry-finn/characters) approaches and tells Joanna that she shouldn’t talk to Huck in that way, because he is a stranger far from his native country. Huck feels bad, because Mary Jane is so good in defending him and yet he is letting the duke and king steal her and her sisters’ money. Huck decides to return the money to the girls.

***Analysis Part 3:***

Mary Jane conforms too much to societal convention for her own good. When she should trust her sister’s intuitions, she trusts Huck blindly because he is a stranger far from home. But Mary Jane, as Huck sees, is also deeply good. Because she is a human victim to Huck, and not just an abstract victim of the duke and king’s scam, Huck maturely resolves to help her.

***Summary Part 4:***[Huck](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-adventures-of-huckleberry-finn/characters/huckleberry-finn) searches the [king](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-adventures-of-huckleberry-finn/characters/the-duke-and-king)’s room for the money but doesn’t find it. Just then the [duke](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-adventures-of-huckleberry-finn/characters/the-duke-and-king) and king enter the room. Huck hides behind a curtain and overhears the two con men debate whether they should stick around to sell the [Wilks](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-adventures-of-huckleberry-finn/characters) home or leave right away to avoid detection. Huck thinks he wouldn’t have felt bad about this an hour or two ago, but that now he does. The king convinces the duke to stick around and sell the house, because doing so wouldn’t harm the Wilks girls.

***Analysis Part 4:***

Huck reflects on how he has morally matured in just two hours: whereas before putting a human face to the duke and king’s victims he would have gone along with their scam, now he feels compelled to expose the duke and king’s wrongdoing. Note also how the king’s tyrannical greed, seemingly boundless, prevents him and the duke from escaping with the money now, a costly mistake.

***Summary Part 5:***As they leave the room, the [duke](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-adventures-of-huckleberry-finn/characters/the-duke-and-king) tells the [king](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-adventures-of-huckleberry-finn/characters/the-duke-and-king) that they should hide the money in another place, because otherwise some slave who comes upstairs to pack up [Mary Jane](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-adventures-of-huckleberry-finn/characters)’s belongings might find the gold and steal some of it. Almost discovering [Huck](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-adventures-of-huckleberry-finn/characters/huckleberry-finn), the king takes the money from behind the curtain and hides it in a straw mattress. After the duke and king leave, Huck takes the money, planning to hide it outside. Huck slips, gold in hand, down the ladder leading from his room to the rest of the house.

***Analysis Part 5:***

The duke and king expose their racism when they suppose that a black person might try to steal the money, when they themselves are stealing the money! It must be said, though, that, while the duke and king are racists, they do not seem to be making a moral judgment against black people here, but rather are just concerned with the practical matter of keeping the money to themselves.