***The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn***

***Chapter 3:***

***Translation:***

Well, old Miss Watson gave me a talking-to in the morning when she saw my dirty clothes, but the widow only scrubbed off the grime without saying a word. She looked so sad and disappointed that I decided to try my best to behave for awhile. Then Miss Watson took me into the closet to pray for me, but it didn’t make a difference. She told me to pray every day, and that I’d get whatever I prayed for if I did. But that wasn’t true. I tried it. Once I got line for my fishing pole, but not any fish hooks. What good is a line without hooks? I tried praying for hooks three or four times, but I couldn’t make it work. One day I asked Miss Watson to try and pray for hooks for me, but she said I was a fool. She never told me why, and I never really understood what she meant.

I sat down in the woods one time and thought for a long time about it. If you can get whatever you pray for, then I asked myself why Deacon Winn never prayed for the money he lost on pork? Or why can’t the widow get back the silver snuff box that was stolen from her? Or why can’t Miss Watson gain any weight? No, I said to myself, it just wasn’t true. I went and told this to the widow, and she said you can only get “spiritual gifts” from praying. This was just too much for me, so she clarified that I have to do as much as I could to help other people and not think about myself. I guess that included Miss Watson. I went out in the woods and thought about it for a long time, but I couldn’t see what good would come of it, except to the other people. So I finally decided I would just forget the whole thing and not worry about it any more. Sometimes the widow would pull me aside and talk about God in a way that would make me want to know more, but then Miss Watson would talk about the same thing and make me want to forget it all. I finally decided that there were two Gods, and that a guy couldn’t get enough of one if the widow was talking, but was in trouble if Miss Watson started talking about the other. I thought about it and reckoned I would belong to the widow’s God if he wanted me, though I can’t imagine why he’d want me, since I’m so ignorant and rough.

No one had seen my Pap for more than a year. That was fine by me, since I didn’t want to see him anymore. He used to always beat me when he was sober and could catch me, though I usually just ran to the woods whenever he was around. Well, about this time he was found floating on his back along the river about twelve miles upstream from town, dead from having drowned. At least, people said it was him, since the drowned man was about the same size as my father, wore ragged clothing, and had unusually long hair like my pap. But because the body had been in the water so long, his face was unrecognizable, so they couldn’t idenify him. They pulled him from the water and buried him along the riverbank. But something bothered me about it. I finally realized that it was the fact that dead men float face-down, not face-up. So I knew then that the body wasn’t pap, but a woman dressed up in man’s clothes. This put me on edge again, since I knew my old man would turn up sooner or later, even though I wished he wouldn’t.

We played robber every now and then for about a month, but then I quit. In fact, all the boys quit because we hadn’t robbed or killed anybody. We only pretended. We would jump out of the woods and charge at men herding hogs and women taking vegetables to the market, but we never hurt any of them. Tom Sawyer called the pigs “[ingots](javascript:void(0);),” and he called the turnips “julery,” and we would go back to the cave and talk about what we’d done and how many people we’d killed and marked. But I didn’t see what good any of it did. One time Tom sent a boy to run around town with a stick he’d lit on fire as a sign for the Gang to gather. When we got together, he told us that he’d gotten secret news from his spies that a whole band of Spanish merchants and wealthy Arabs were coming to town the next day. They were going to camp in Cave Hollow with two hundred elephants, six hundred camels, and more than a thousand mules, all loaded down with diamonds, and guarded by four hundred solider. We were going to lay in ambuscade—as he called it—and kill them all and then take the loot. He said we had to prepare by sharpening our swords and loading our guns. He’d never been able to raid a turnip cart before, yet here he was saying we needed to get our swords and guns ready, even though our swords and guns were only wooden [lath](javascript:void(0);)s and broomsticks. You could stare at them all you wanted, but in the end that’s all they’d be—laths and broomsticks. I didn’t think we could kill such a large band of Spaniards and Arabs, but I wanted to see the camels and elephants, so I joined in the ambuscade the next day, which was a Saturday. When we got word, we rushed out of the woods and down the hill. But there weren’t any Spaniards and Arabs, and there weren’t any camels or elephants. There was only a picnic of Sunday school kids, and little kids at that. We broke it up and chased the kids to the hollow, but we didn’t get anything from them except some donuts and jam. Ben Rogers got a rag doll and Jo Harper got a hymnal and a Bible, but we had to drop everything and run when the teacher came running over. I didn’t see any diamonds, and I made sure Tom Sawyer knew it. But he said there were tons of them, as well as Arabs and elephants and stuff. I asked why I couldn’t see them, and he said I wouldn’t have to ask if I weren’t so ignorant and had read a book called Don Quixote. He said it was all done by magic. He said there were hundreds of soldiers and elephants and treasure and so on. He said we’d be able to see it all if our enemies, who were magicians, hadn’t transformed the whole thing into a Sunday school picnic, just so they could laugh at us. So I said, okay, then we should go after the magicians. Tom Sawyer said I was a numskull.

***Summary:***

* Huck gets in trouble for his clothes being dirty. It seems that dirty clothes, like slouching at dinner, are a ticket straight to Hell.
* But religion isn't really coming through for Huck (as he points out to Miss Watson), since it fails at such important endeavors as getting him fishhooks when he prays for them.
* What good is prayer if it doesn't get you what you want?
* Miss Watson counters that Huck should pray for spiritual gifts, like helping other people.
* Huck doesn't see any advantage in this, so he drops the subject.
* Next we hear about Huck's father, a.k.a. "Pap," an abusive alcoholic who everyone thinks is dead. Huck isn't so sure, but he really hopes Pap doesn't show up again.
* Tom Sawyer's gang gets together and plays cops n' robbers.
* Huck makes a point of telling us that no one really dies or gets robbed—it's all just in good fun. (Like violent video games, which we know do absolutely no harm to young people.)
* We see one of their games in particular: Tom gathers them all up in a hurry to report that there's a band of "A-rabs" with chests of treasure coming through town, and that they need to go attack.
* But the band isn't made up of "A-rabs" so much as townspeople on a Sunday School picnic. Bummer.
* Tom responds that Huck would be able to see the A-rabs, if he'd read [***Don Quixote***](http://www.amazon.com/Don-Quixote-Miguel-Cervantes/dp/0060934344) and knew that their enemy magicians had made the band appear to be a Sunday School picnic.
* See, there are a bunch of rules about magicians and genies and magic lamps.
* Huck thinks the whole thing is ridiculous. If he were a genie, he'd never let anyone else tell him what to do. He'd just grant his own wishes.
* In fact, he rubs a lamp a few days later to see if Tom was right about genies. (He wasn't.)

***Summary in Brief:***

When Huck got back from his adventure with the "gang," he was quite dirty, but Miss Watson didn't say anything but got him out some clean clothes and prayed with him. Huck was moved enough by the idea of prayer to go to the forest to think about it, but couldn't see a whole lot of truth in it. After all, Miss Watson couldn't put on weight and Deacon Winn couldn't get back the money he had lost on pork. He noticed a difference between Miss Watson's and the widow's idea about the after-life and wound up preferring the widow's. Some people thought a drowned man they found was his Pap's, but he was sure it wasn't. Pap beat him a lot and wasn't much fun to be with.

Tom and the boys played at being a gang, but it turns out that hogs became gold ingots and turnips became jewelry. They then decided that they would lay an "ambuscade"- or ambush- for certain Arabs who were going to be passing by, but all they found was a School picnic. But Tom Sawyer said that he thought it was a school picnic because he hadn't read a book called *Don Quixote.* There were actually hundreds of soldiers- and magicians, treasures and elephants right there in front of them. The problem was that Huck didn't have the right magic lantern or a proper ring. But Huck did get an old tin lamp and an iron ring and, after rubbing them like crazy, decided it was all a fairy tale.

***Analysis in Brief:***

You might say that this chapter is about Huck's testing of Tom Sawyer's veracity. After a fantastic experience in ambushing a school picnic- that Tom said was really a whole panoply of soldiers, magicians, elephants and treasure, Huck decides to give it a test, just like he did with Miss Watson's concept of prayer. Huck is always trying to figure out what is true in a practical way- whether he experimentally prays or rubs an iron ring in a forest. Generally, he settles on conclusions of a practical nature.

***Summary in Detail:***

The next morning Miss Watson gives [Huck](https://www.coursehero.com/lit/The-Adventures-of-Huckleberry-Finn/character-analysis/#Huck) "a good going-over" because he messed up his clothes. The [Widow Douglas](https://www.coursehero.com/lit/The-Adventures-of-Huckleberry-Finn/character-analysis/#Widow_Douglas) cleans Huck's clothes and gives him a look that makes him feel guilty. Miss Watson takes him in the closet, prays, and instructs Huck to pray. She says praying can get you whatever you want. After he tries it and does not get what he wants, he tells Miss Watson, who calls him a fool. The Widow Douglas talks about spiritual gifts and helping others, but Huck thinks about it and decides it is a waste of time. The Widow Douglas talks about a loving God while Miss Watson talks about a punishing God. Huck decides there are two Gods and he prefers the widow's, "if he wanted me."

Later a man is found dead in the river and people believe it is Huck's father. He is happy about the news but comes to doubt it after he learns the person was found floating on his back, suggesting a "woman dressed up in a man's clothes." Huck says a drowned *man* would float on his face.

After a month Huck and the others resign from the gang. When Huck recognizes [Tom](https://www.coursehero.com/lit/The-Adventures-of-Huckleberry-Finn/character-analysis/#Tom)'s tales are fake, he loses interest in the whole matter.

[Huck](https://www.coursehero.com/lit/The-Adventures-of-Huckleberry-Finn/character-analysis/#Huck) continues to show himself as a thinking person. When he is introduced to a new idea he considers and will even try it before he makes a decision. There are multiple instances of that in this chapter. When Huck is told he can get anything if he prays, he asks for fishing hooks multiple times but to no avail. To Huck this is proof that prayer does not work. This scene also reveals Huck's practicality. One might think he would ask for something grander. But Huck asks for what he needs and nothing more.

Huck experiences further confusion when it comes to religion, as the widow presents God in one way and Miss Watson presents God in another way. Huck comes to believe that there must be two Gods. This can seem to represent the two-faced natures of those who pass themselves off as moral people while owning slaves and treating them in horrific ways.

Huck does not want to play the games [Tom](https://www.coursehero.com/lit/The-Adventures-of-Huckleberry-Finn/character-analysis/#Tom) Sawyer and his gang are playing. Huck was promised robbing and killing, and that is what he expected. Therefore he loses interest, similar to the way he lost interest in prayer. The link between the two "games"—robbery and religion—is confirmed when he says about one of Tom's made-up stories, "It had all the marks of a Sunday-school."

***Critical study:***

The next day, [Huck](https://www.cliffsnotes.com/literature/a/the-adventures-of-huckleberry-finn/character-analysis/huckleberry-finn) receives a scolding from Miss Watson because of his dirty clothes, but the Widow Douglas does not reproach him at all. Miss Watson explains to Huck that, through prayer, he can have anything he wants. She makes Huck pray for the next few days, and Huck does not understand why the fishhooks he prays for never arrive.

During this time, Huck is told that his father, Pap Finn, has been found drowned in the river. Because the body was floating on his back, the superstitious Huck does not believe it is Pap and worries that the violent Pap will show up again. The Tom Sawyer Gang disbands because the only adventure they have is attempting to rob a Sunday-school picnic.

In Chapter 3, the practical Huck again struggles to understand religion. When Miss Watson tells Huck he can receive anything he wants through prayer, the literal Huck believes he can receive fishing gear. He contemplates the concept of prayer and wonders why, if someone can get anything, he cannot get any fish-hooks, the widow cannot reclaim her stolen silver snuff-box, and Miss Watson cannot "fat up"? The humorous moment is another example of Huck's literal approach to his surroundings. Because Huck takes everything at face value, he cannot understand the concept of prayer or "spiritual gifts." He does not reject religion, but his literal mindset has difficulty with beliefs that, on the surface, appear to be impractical or untrue.

More important, Huck's struggle compares and contrasts the religions of the Widow Douglas and Miss Watson as he begins to see that religion is practiced differently by his guardians. Through Huck, [Twain](https://www.cliffsnotes.com/literature/a/the-adventures-of-huckleberry-finn/mark-twain-biography) is exploring his own reservations about religion and its ties to the institution of slavery. It is not incidental that it is Miss Watson who owns [Jim](https://www.cliffsnotes.com/literature/a/the-adventures-of-huckleberry-finn/character-analysis/jim) and not the Widow Douglas, and Huck continues to question religion and the rules of his society. Huck eventually decides that there are two kinds of Providence, and he would like to avoid Miss Watson's and go to the one the Widow Douglas describes.

Chapter 3 continues to establish [Tom](https://www.cliffsnotes.com/literature/a/the-adventures-of-huckleberry-finn/character-analysis/tom-sawyer) and Huck as contrasting characters. Whereas Huck takes a literal approach to everything he sees and hears, Tom's knowledge comes solely from the books he reads. At the same time Huck questions religion, he begins to see Tom's "magicians and A-rabs" as fabrication. For Huck, Tom's imagination has the same quality as Miss Watson's religion, and he distrusts the superficial nature of both. This approach serves Huck well throughout the novel. Although he does not completely understand prayer, he does understand the widow's explanation that he "must help other people . . . and look out for them all the time, and never think about myself." By applying his own conscience and beliefs, Huck grows as a character and is able to form his own opinions and not blindly accept society's values and the status quo.

Glossary

**hived**robbed.

**pow-wow**to confer, to have an intense discussion; originally from a North American Indian word.

**"sumter" mule**sumpter mule, a packhorse, mule, or other animal used for carrying baggage.

**lay in ambuscade**hide in ambush.

**slick up**to polish.

**tract**a propagandizing pamphlet, especially one on a religious or political subject.

**sap-head**a fool.

***Critical Analysis:***

After punishing Huck for dirtying his new clothes during his night out with Tom, Miss Watson tries to explain prayer to him. Huck gives up on it after some of his prayers are not answered. Miss Watson calls him a fool, and the Widow Douglas later explains that prayer bestows spiritual gifts, such as acting selflessly to help others. Huck, who cannot see any advantage in such gifts, resolves to forget the matter. The two women often take Huck aside for religious discussions, in which Widow Douglas describes a wonderful God, while Miss Watson describes a terrible one. Huck concludes there are two Gods and decides he would like to belong to Widow Douglas’s, if He would take him. Huck considers this unlikely because of his bad qualities.

Meanwhile, a rumor circulates that Huck’s Pap, who has not been seen in a year, is dead. A corpse was found in the river, thought to be Pap because of its “ragged” appearance. The face, however, was unrecognizable. At first, Huck is relieved. His father had been a drunk who beat him when he was sober, although Huck stayed hidden from him most of the time. Upon hearing further description of the body found, however, Huck realizes that it is not his father but rather a woman dressed in men’s clothes. Huck worries that his father will soon reappear.

After a month in Tom’s gang, Huck and the rest of the boys quit. With no actual robbing or killing going on, the gang’s existence is pointless. Huck tells of one of Tom’s more notable games, in which Tom pretended that a caravan of Arabs and Spaniards was going to camp nearby with hundreds of camels and elephants. It turned out to be a Sunday-school picnic, although Tom explained that it really was a caravan of Arabs and Spaniards—only they were enchanted, like in Don Quixote. The raid on the picnic netted the boys only a few doughnuts and jam but a fair amount of trouble. After testing another of Tom’s theories by rubbing old lamps and rings but failing to summon a genie, Huck judges that most of Tom’s stories have been “lies.”

These chapters establish Huck Finn and Tom Sawyer as foils for each other—characters whose actions and traits contrast each other in a way that gives us a better understanding of both of their characters. Twain uses Tom to satirize romantic literature and to comment on the darker side of so-called civilized society. Tom insists that his make-believe adventures be conducted “by the book.” As Tom himself admits in regard to his gang’s oath, he gets many of his ideas from fiction. In particular, Tom tries to emulate the romantic—that is, unrealistic, sensationalized, and sentimentalized—novels, mostly imported from Europe, that achieved enormous popularity in nineteenth-century America. Tom is identified with this romantic genre throughout the novel. Whereas Tom puts great stock in literary models, Huck is as skeptical of these as he is of religion. In both realms, Huck refuses to accept much on faith. He rejects both genies and prayers when they fail to produce the promised results. Twain makes this contrast between Tom’s romanticism and Huck’s skepticism to show that both points of view can prove equally misleading if taken to extremes.

Although Huck and Tom are set up as foils for one another, they still share some traits, which help to sustain their friendship throughout the novel. Perhaps most important, the two share a rambunctious boyishness; they delight in the dirty language and pranks that the adult world condemns. Yet Huck’s feelings about society and the adult world are based on his negative experiences—most notably with his abusive father—and ring with a seriousness and weight that Tom’s fancies lack. We get the sense that Tom can afford to accept the nonsense of society and romantic literature, but Huck cannot. On the whole, Huck’s alienation from the “civilization” of the adult world is a bit starker and sadder.

Ironically, the novel that Tom explicitly mentions as a model for his actions is Cervantes’s Don Quixote. In his masterpiece, Cervantes satirizes romantic adventure stories as Twain does in Huckleberry Finn. In referencing Don Quixote, Twain also gives a literary tip of the hat to one of the earliest and greatest picaresque novels, which, through its naïve protagonist’s wacky adventures, satirizes literature, society, and human nature in much the same way that Twain does in Huckleberry Finn. By means of the reference to Don Quixote, Twain tells us that, though he intends to write a humorous novel, Huckleberry Finn also fits into a longstanding tradition of novels that seek to criticize through humor, to point out absurdity through absurdity. In this chapter, for instance, Twain comments on Tom’s absurdity and blind ignorance in basing his actions on a novel that is so clearly a satire. Tom, who is interested in contracts, codes of conduct, fancy language, and make-believe ideas, believes in these frilly ideas at the expense of common sense. He cares more about absurd stylistic ideals than he does about people. Tom also displays some of the hypocrisy of civilized society. For instance, he makes the members of his gang sign an oath in blood and swear not to divulge the group’s secrets, but when a boy threatens to betray that promise, Tom simply offers him a bribe.

***Significance:***

The morning after his robber gang adventure, Huck receives a lecture from Miss Watson for dirtying his clothes. She takes him into a closet to pray, and tells him to pray every day so he will get what he wants. Huck tries to pray daily, but becomes disillusioned when all he gets is a fish-line with no hooks, when he prayed extra hard for hooks. When he asks Miss Watson about it, she tells him praying brings spiritual gifts. Unable to see any use for that sort of thing, Huck decides praying is probably not worth his time.

A drowned man is found in the river, and the townspeople believe is Huck's Pap. Huck is unconvinced after he hears the man was found floating on his back. He remarks that everyone knows dead men float face down, so this must have been a woman in man's clothing that looked like his Pap.

Tom Sawyer's robber band falls apart after a few weeks because the boys get bored of pretending they are robbing people. The only real escapade is when they wreck a Sunday School picnic and chase some of elementary school children away. Tom pretends that during this 'battle' there were Arabs and elephants and that the boys were attacking a large army, but Huck is too practical to follow Tom's fantastical imaginations. When Huck asks why they could not see all the elephants, Tom explains that some magicians must have turned the whole army into a Sunday School picnic. Tom then tells Huck all about genies in bottles, and how the genies must obey whoever rubs the bottle. Huck gets an old lamp and tries to find a genie, but when it fails he decides that the genies were just another of Tom's lies.

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

***Summary Part 1:***

After [Huck](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-adventures-of-huckleberry-finn/characters/huckleberry-finn) returns home, [Miss Watson](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-adventures-of-huckleberry-finn/characters/the-widow-douglas-and-miss-watson) scolds him for having dirtied his clothes. The [Widow Douglas](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-adventures-of-huckleberry-finn/characters/the-widow-douglas-and-miss-watson) does not scold Huck, but washes his clothes, looking so sorry as she does so that Huck resolves to behave himself. Miss Watson takes Huck into a closet to pray, telling him that he will receive whatever he asks for, but Huck concludes that this is not the case, on the grounds that, when he prayed for a “fish-line,” he got one, but it didn’t have any hooks and was therefore useless.

***Analysis Part 1:***

Though they seem to hold the same Christian values, Miss Watson is strict without compassion, whereas the Widow is compassionate. As Christianity is a religion rooted in compassion, it could be said that Miss Watson and the Widow really do hold different values. Indeed, Miss Watson tells Huck that one gets whatever one prays for, but this is not a Christian conception of prayer at all. It’s a superstition.

***Summary Part 2:***

[Huck](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-adventures-of-huckleberry-finn/characters/huckleberry-finn) recounts how he sat down, one time, in the back of the woods and thought about prayer. He wonders, if someone gets whatever he or she prays for, why, for example, the [Widow Douglas](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-adventures-of-huckleberry-finn/characters/the-widow-douglas-and-miss-watson) can’t get her silver snuff-box back that was stolen. Huck concludes that, insofar as prayer is concerned, “there ain’t nothing in it.” He tells the Widow this, and she says one can only get “spiritual gifts” by praying, that is, gifts that aid one in being selfless. Huck thinks that selflessness is not advantageous, and decides to just “let it go.” He goes on to say, though, that there must be two Providences, that of the Widow and that of [Miss Watson](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-adventures-of-huckleberry-finn/characters/the-widow-douglas-and-miss-watson), and that he would belong to the former, even though it might not help him considering that he is so “ignorant and…low-down and ornery.”

***Analysis Part 2:***

Huck realizes that Miss Watson’s conception of prayer as getting whatever you ask for doesn’t account for the actual effects of prayer. The Widow Douglas clarifies that one doesn’t get whatever one prays for in Christian thought, but rather that one receives not material but spiritual gifts through prayer. The practical Huck doesn’t value such gifts very highly, but he does conclude that, if given the choice between Miss Watson’s seemingly Christian values and the Widow’s real Christian values, he’d take the latter.

***Summary Part 3:***

[Huck](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-adventures-of-huckleberry-finn/characters/huckleberry-finn) thinks about his father [Pap](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-adventures-of-huckleberry-finn/characters/pap), who hadn’t been seen for more than a year, which is just fine with Huck. Pap is an abusive drunkard. People thought that he had drowned, because a body resembling his had been dredged from the [river](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-adventures-of-huckleberry-finn/symbols/the-mississippi-river), but Huck doesn’t think it was Pap’s body after all, because the body was discovered floating on its back, and men, Huck thinks, float on their faces, so that body must have been a woman’s.

***Analysis Part 3:***

This foreshadows Pap’s reappearance later in the novel, as well as the episode in which Huck disguises himself as a girl, only to be found out for what he is. That Huck knows how women and men float speaks to his familiarity with the destructiveness of nature and horrors of death, shocking given his young age.

***Summary Part 4:***

[Huck](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-adventures-of-huckleberry-finn/characters/huckleberry-finn) turns to thinking about [Tom Sawyer](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-adventures-of-huckleberry-finn/characters/tom-sawyer)’s Gang. They played robber for about a month, before all the boys, including Huck, resigned from the gang because they hadn’t robbed anyone but only pretended to. They would hide in the woods and charge on passers-by, like hog-drovers and women in carts taking produce to market. Tom referred to the hogs as “ingots” and produce as “julery”, but Huck sees no profit in pretending.

***Analysis Part 4:***

More than anything, Tom loves to pretend, and he is very childlike in this way. Play is its own reward for him. In contrast, Huck is interested in material profit, which is an interest shared by the adults in the novel. Unlike Tom, Huck’s childhood, it would seem, has ended prematurely, maybe because of the difficulties of his life, the poverty that he again and again contends with.

***Summary Part 5:***

One time, [Huck](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-adventures-of-huckleberry-finn/characters/huckleberry-finn) goes on to recount, [Tom](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-adventures-of-huckleberry-finn/characters/tom-sawyer) summoned the Gang and told them about a large group of Spanish merchants and “A-rabs” who were going to camp in a nearby cave with their elephants, camels, mules, diamonds, and other exotic riches. After polishing their swords and guns, which were really just “lath and broom-sticks,” the Gang set out to raid the Spanish and Arab camp, only to find a Sunday school picnic in its place. The Gang chased the children at the picnic and seized their goods. When Huck points out to Tom that there were no Spaniards and Arabs, Tom tells Huck he is wrong, that it only seemed that way because magicians transformed the Spaniards and Arabs and their possessions into “an infant Sunday school.”

***Analysis Part 5:***

Tom has a wildly active imagination, fueled by the books he has read. He can turn even something mundane like a Sunday school picnic into the object of adventure. When Huck, always the realist, challenges Tom’s imaginings as fake, Tom can defend their reality with yet new imaginings, as he defends his imaginings of the Arabs and Spaniards with imaginings of magicians. In this way, Tom shows that, with the power of imagination, one can defy the logic of the real world (for better and, we will see, for worse).

***Summary Part 6:***

After calling [Huck](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-adventures-of-huckleberry-finn/characters/huckleberry-finn) a “numskull” for thinking that the Sunday school picnic was just that, [Tom](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-adventures-of-huckleberry-finn/characters/tom-sawyer) explains to Huck that a magician could call up genies to aid them in their enchantments. Huck asks Tom if the Gang can summon genies to help them, but Tom says that, to summon a genie, one must have a lamp or ring to rub, and that the genies are powerful enough to build even palaces. Huck says that the genies are “a pack of flatheads” for serving someone when they could keep the palaces for themselves. Tom retorts that Huck is a “perfect sap-head.” Later, to see if there is anything to what Tom says, Huck got a lamp and ring and rubbed them, but no genie came. Huck concludes that Tom lied about the Arabs and elephants, for the group the Gang robbed “had all the marks of a Sunday school.”

***Analysis Part 6:***

Given that they are so powerful, Huck thinks, genies are foolish for serving others slavishly when they could serve themselves. This reveals one of Huck’s commitments to freedom: if one is able to liberate oneself, one should do so. Though Huck doesn’t cross-apply this commitment to black slaves in bondage now, he later will. Note, also, that Huck tests Tom’s claim about how genies are summoned. Huck is open but skeptical about others ideas and is keen to test what others tell him on his own terms, a trait which enables him to penetrate societal hypocrisy.

***Quotations:***

***Quotation 1:***

Miss Watson she took me in the closet and prayed, but nothing come of it. She told me to pray every day, and whatever I asked for I would get it. But it warn't so. I tried it. Once I got a fish-line, but no hooks. It warn't any good to me without hooks. I tried for the hooks three or four times, but somehow I couldn't make it work. By and by, one day, I asked Miss Watson to try for me, but she said I was a fool. She never told me why, and I couldn't make it out no way. (3.1)

***Explanation 1:***

This is one of those fun bits of [dramatic irony](https://www.shmoop.com/literature-glossary/dramatic-irony.html). We know that you're supposed to pray for things like kindness, grace, forgiveness, and maybe a nice harp waiting for you in Heaven. But no one's bothered to explain this to Huck, so he thinks prayer is kind of like making an Amazon wishlist and waiting for God to click on it.

***Quotation 2:***

"How you talk, Huck Finn. Why, you'd HAVE to come when he rubbed it, whether you wanted to or not." (3.13)

***Explanation 2:***

The Widow's rules (i.e., society's) are arbitrary, and now we see another system of arbitrary rules: fiction. And Tom Sawyer knows what's up. Genies may not exist, but if they did, they'd definitely follow the rules.

***Quotation 3:***

Pap he hadn't been seen for more than a year, and that was comfortable for me; I didn't want to see him no more. He used to always whale me when he was sober and could get his hands on me; though I used to take to the woods most of the time when he was around. (3.3)

***Explanation 3:***

It's hard to tell because of Huck's casual tone, but this is pretty grim. A son who feels better off without his father? No wonder Huck doesn't feel comfortable in society. The #1 societal bond, between families, is nothing but a horrorshow for him.