***The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn***

***Chapter 30:***

***Synopsis:***

Naturally, the King and the Duke climb on board the raft. Huck tells them he had to run or might have been hung. The Duke forces the King to admit that he hid the gold in the coffin, even though it isn't true. However, the King decides to "own up" anyway. Huck's secret is protected.

Although nothing has really gone the way Huck planned and the King and the Duke are with Huck and Jim again, Fate steps in. The Duke forces the King to admit that he stole the gold and Huck's story is saved, at least as a matter of public issue.

### ***Analysis***

Once the two con men are on the raft, the king grabs [Huck](https://www.coursehero.com/lit/The-Adventures-of-Huckleberry-Finn/character-analysis/#Huck) and accuses him of trying to leave the duke and him behind. Huck tells him a story, but the king is ready to drown him till the duke steps in. He says anyone would have done what Huck did in his situation.

Both the duke and the king believe that the other one put the money in the coffin and will eventually go back and get it for himself. The duke forces the king to say that he did it. Then they get drunk and act friendly towards each other; all is apparently forgiven. When they are asleep Huck tells [Jim](https://www.coursehero.com/lit/The-Adventures-of-Huckleberry-Finn/symbols/#Jim) everything that happened.

To this point the duke and the king have been cold, greedy, thieves. When the king threatens violence against [Huck](https://www.coursehero.com/lit/The-Adventures-of-Huckleberry-Finn/character-analysis/#Huck), the two con men show a whole new side. They will use violence if they deem it necessary. This adds another element as to why Huck desires to be away from the duke and the king. It is one thing to be disgusted by their immoral behavior, but Huck now has reason to fear them.

The way the duke and the king turn on each other is a testament to their base characters. Both the king and the duke are selfish people who only look out for themselves. They assume the other one is the same way. While they supposedly make up at the end of this chapter, they are certain to fight if tension rises again because they do not trust each other.

***Summary:***

* Huck makes up a story to explain his running away so the duke and king won't think he was trying to betray them.
* But how did the gold get into the coffin?
* Naturally, the duke and the king turn on each other, each thinking that his partner was trying to make off with the cash.
* The duke starts strangling the king, so the king "confesses" to stealing and hiding the cash.
* Then they get drunk together and pass out in the raft's wigwam, with all forgotten and forgiven in a haze of booze.
* Huck tells Jim the whole story.

***Significance***:  
The real Harvey Wilks, in an authentic English accent, explains the reasons he and his brother, William, were delayed: their luggage was misdirected, and his mute brother broke his arm, leaving him unable to communicate by signs. Doctor Robinson again declares [the duke and the dauphin](https://www.sparknotes.com/lit/huckfinn/character/the-duke-and-the-dauphin/) to be frauds and has the crowd bring the real and the fraudulent Wilks brothers to a tavern for examination. The frauds draw suspicion when they fail to produce the $6,000 from the Wilks inheritance.

A lawyer friend of the deceased then asks the duke, the dauphin, and the real Harvey to sign a piece of paper. When the lawyer compares the writing samples to letters he has from the real Harvey, the frauds are exposed. The dauphin, however, refuses to give up and claims that the duke is playing a joke on everyone by disguising his handwriting. Because the real William serves as scribe for the real Harvey and cannot write due to his broken arm, the crowd cannot prove that the real Wilkses are indeed who they say they are. To put an end to the situation, the real Harvey declares he knows of a tattoo on his brother’s chest, asking the undertaker who dressed the body to back him up. But after the dauphin and Harvey each offer a different version of the tattoo’s appearance, the undertaker surprises everyone by telling the crowd he saw no tattoo.

The mob cries out for the blood of all four men, but the lawyer instead sends them out to exhume the body and check for the tattoo themselves. The mob carries the four Wilks claimants and [Huck](https://www.sparknotes.com/lit/huckfinn/character/huckleberry-huck-finn/) with them. The mob is in an uproar when the $6,000 in gold is discovered in the coffin. In the excitement, Huck escapes. Passing the Wilks house, he notices a light in the upstairs window and thinks of Mary Jane. Huck steals a canoe and makes his way to the raft, and he and [Jim](https://www.sparknotes.com/lit/huckfinn/character/jim/) shove off once again. Huck dances for joy on the raft. His heart sinks, however, when the duke and the dauphin approach in a boat.

***Critical Study(Ch29-30):***Even [Huck](https://www.cliffsnotes.com/literature/a/the-adventures-of-huckleberry-finn/character-analysis/huckleberry-finn) recognizes that the new claimants to Peter Wilks' fortune appear to be English compared to the duke and the king. The older gentleman introduces himself as Harvey and says they can prove their identity when they retrieve their baggage. In response, the king laughs and tells the crowd it is not surprising that the new "brothers" cannot immediately prove their claim. At this point, the crowd still believes the duke and the king are the true brothers, but the doctor convinces everyone that they must investigate further. After questioning Huck about his English heritage, the town lawyer, Levi Bell, tells Huck that he obviously is not used to lying.

The older gentleman says he can prove who he is because he knows what is tattooed on Peter Wilks' chest. The king says it is a small blue arrow, and the older gentleman says it is a dim "P" and "B." The lawyer decides the only one way to be positive is to exhume Peter Wilks and have a look at his chest.

When they open the coffin, they discover the bag of gold on the body's chest. The crowd becomes so excited that Huck is able to slip away, and he and [Jim](https://www.cliffsnotes.com/literature/a/the-adventures-of-huckleberry-finn/character-analysis/jim) escape on the raft. Before they can get very far, however, they see the king and duke have also escaped. Jim and Huck realize they are not free from the con men. The duke and the king blame one another for stealing the bag of gold, but after getting drunk, they again become comrades and start working their schemes on new villages.

The introduction of the new Harvey and William adds another element of hilarity to the con men's inheritance scam. The contrast between the two sets of "brothers" is obvious, and the ensuing investigation underscores both the ignorance of the town and the eagerness of the townspeople to witness a dispute. Instead of reacting with anger, the town enjoys the added confusion and as the questions continue, the humor and suspense build.

Huck's role as a servant is called into question, and unlike previous escapades, Huck is unable to convince the doctor and lawyer of his English ancestry. Instead of accepting Huck's story, the lawyer tells Huck, "I wouldn't strain myself if I was you. I reckon you ain't used to lying . . . You do it pretty awkward." Although Huck's entire journey has been based on lies and deception, he is unable to fool intelligent men for even a moment. The irony is apparent, as is Huck's reluctance to try and adapt his story. Instead of attempting to lie his way out of another predicament, Huck chooses to remain quiet and observe the comical investigation.

The con men's unwillingness to leave without selling all of the family's possessions represents the greed of the two men. Ironically, it is this same type of greed that allows Huck and the duke and the king to escape. When the townsmen see the gold in Peter Wilks' coffin, they are unable to resist and the ensuing melee is reminiscent of Bricksville. [Twain](https://www.cliffsnotes.com/literature/a/the-adventures-of-huckleberry-finn/mark-twain-biography)'s commentary on the greed and ignorance of the mob mentality is solidified with the duke and the king's escape.

Glossary

**cravats**neckerchiefs or scarves.

**shekel**a half-ounce gold or silver coin of the ancient Hebrews.

**gabble**to talk rapidly and incoherently; jabber; chatter.

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

***Summary Part 1:***

After the duke and king board the [raft](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-adventures-of-huckleberry-finn/symbols/the-raft), the king shakes [Huck](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-adventures-of-huckleberry-finn/characters/huckleberry-finn) by the collar and asks if he was trying to give the con men the slip. Huck says he was afraid of being hanged and ran at the first chance he got. The king threatens to drown Huck, but the duke intervenes and tells the king that he would have done the same thing had he been in Huck’s shoes.

***Analysis Part 1:***

Over the course of the novel, the king has morphed into another Pap in Huck’s life, debauched and, now, murderous. He is a petty, stupid tyrant, whose power over Huck is restrained only by the duke, who is himself hardly a moral authority.

***Summary Part 2:***

The [king](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-adventures-of-huckleberry-finn/characters/the-duke-and-king) cusses the town and everybody in it, but the [duke](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-adventures-of-huckleberry-finn/characters/the-duke-and-king) turns on him again and says that he should be cussing himself for almost getting the two locked up in the penitentiary. The duke is only grateful that the bag of money was discovered in [Peter Wilks](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-adventures-of-huckleberry-finn/characters)’s coffin, which provided an opportunity for him and the king to escape.

***Analysis Part 2:***

It is the duke who rightly identifies the price of freedom here as the need to take responsibility for oneself, which the king refuses to do. Also, society clearly has backwards priorities: they allow the duke and king to escape because they were excited by seeing gold to which they have no claim.

***Summary Part 3:***

It is the very reference to the bag of gold that triggers an argument between 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) over how the money got into [Peter](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-adventures-of-huckleberry-finn/characters)’s coffin in the first place, each blaming the other for wanting to hide the money so he could later have it all to himself. The king, overwhelmed and exhausted, blubberingly confesses that he hid the money in the coffin. The duke shames him for letting the slaves take the blame. Then the two men take solace in drinking, till they’re drunk, mellow, thick as thieves again, and literally sleeping in one another’s arms. As the two sleep, [Huck](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-adventures-of-huckleberry-finn/characters/huckleberry-finn) tells [Jim](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-adventures-of-huckleberry-finn/characters/jim) everything that’s happened.

***Analysis Part 3:***

It is hard to say why the king takes responsibility for something he didn’t do, hiding the gold, except that maybe he is so morally exhausted that he wants to take responsibility for something, anything. The duke rather nobly condemns the king for letting the slaves take responsibility for his actions. But just as the duke and king seem to grow out of their wicked ways, they get drunk and conspiratorial again. Like Pap, the two con men will always be morally stained.